

ALMONI

COMPANION VOLUME TO "HALEK"

By

John H. Nicholson



THE RIDDLE OF HALEK.

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“*H A L E K*”

(3rd EDITION)

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ALMONI

BY

JOHN H. NICHOLSON

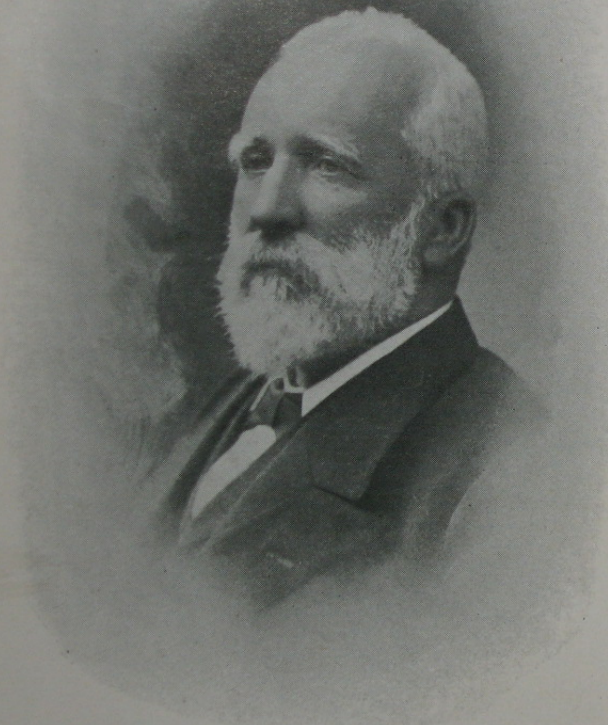
COMPANION VOLUME TO "HALEK"

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*Yours truly,
John H. Nicholson.*

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PREFACE

About the year 1856, when I was some seventeen years old, an allegorical history of a man's life on this earth flashed upon me one beautiful evening, towards the close of a day's tramping in the neighbourhood of the Abercrombie Diggings, New South Wales.

I remember that the amber light of sunset cast a mystic glamour upon the landscape as I walked along like one in a dream.

Wordsworth, in his "Intimations of Immortality," has lines which recall this vision of mine:—

The youth who daily from the East
Must travel, still is nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid,
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

About the year 1873 the vision was realised by the writing of the first eight or nine chapters of "The Adventures of Halek," under which title my book was published in London, the first printed copy appearing in Queensland in 1882.

In 1896, I published, in Brisbane, a second edition under the title "Halek."

On the 26th of October, 1903, I began to write, in my hermitage, the companion volume to "Halek," under the title "Almoni," and, on the 18th of the following December, I fancied I had finished it; but some chapters which I had intended for "Lirusan," the third volume of the projected trilogy, were added to "Almoni," so as to bring that volume to a fairly satisfactory conclusion.

PREFACE

Now for a brief explanation of a few names employed in "Halek" and "Almoni":—

The Island which is the scene of Halek's adventures is peopled by Pagamas, Karomas, and Sahitamas.

He that is wasting his substance in a far country is a Pagama; he that has arisen, and is on his way to the Father, is a Karoma; he that has realised his oneness with the Father, and dwells in the peace of love, is a Sahitama.

The elder brother, who is angry at the loving welcome given to the prodigal, is an imperfect Karoma, who will some day be drawn to return, as the prodigal returned.

The Black-Whites, so often mentioned in my books, must not be identified with members of any one church, but with the hypocrites, the pharisees, and the liars of any church, or of no church.

It may be that what Robert Louis Stevenson calls "the cold and cumbersome machinery of allegory" is unpleasantly prominent in "Halek;" but in "Almoni" the touches of allegory are as the pungent atoms which lurk in a salad—

And, scarce suspected, animate the whole.

Thrice in "Halek" our pilgrim falls in love, without once coming into possession of what he calls "the pure joys and fine delights of companionship;" but in "Almoni," he falls in love with one who raises him into a realm of bliss for which only his tribulations and renunciations could have prepared him.

I may mention, that my friend, Dr. Seffer, who is determined to have "Halek" translated into Swedish, has become acquainted, in San Francisco, with a gifted lady (Miss Anna Cordes), who is so determined to have the book translated into German that she has begun to translate it herself.

JOHN H. NICHOLSON.

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ALMONI.

CHAPTER I.

MIRALDA BIDS ME A SECOND FAREWELL. I AM CITED TO APPEAR BEFORE THE COUNCIL OF TRIERS.

THE volume "Halek" is, in the main, an account of my adventures as a pilgrim from Pagam to Sahitam; while in the volume "Almoni" I narrate my adventures after I had resolved on going from Sahitam to Pagam as a messenger.

I had just bidden farewell to Alfariz, the Prince of Sahitam, and as it chanced that Hethron, the court-poet, was then with me in the palace, he insisted on my abiding with him, until I should set out on the mission which I desired to undertake.

We left the palace together, and walked down the avenue of palms, till we came to the pavilion midway between the palace and the marble gateway by which you leave the park. In this pavilion we would sit a while together—perhaps for the last time.

Presently Hethron said that much of the pleasure he took in studying the art of poetry would be lost

when I left him; and he complained, jestingly, that when I returned from the wilderness of Pagam, as he called it, my perception as poet and musician would be so blunted that I would not know a dirge from a dance.

"I shall the better understand all poems," said I, "for it is of the pains as well as of the joys of life that the finest verse is woven."

Then Hethron asked: "Wilt thou play the deep music of Meshran to the shouting savages of Pagam?"

"I know not what it may be necessary for me to do," I replied; "but it is certain that the beauty of music and of poetry should tend to make men love the beauty of rightness."

Scarcely had I concluded this speech, when a maiden of lowly demeanour, and wistful eyes, came softly into the pavilion, laid a hand upon my shoulder, and gazed into my face with an expression of tender melancholy.

Her name was Miralda. She was then about sixteen years of age, and had been admitted into the palace as child-friend to Iodalla, the wife of Alphariz. I had rendered her some trifling service, and she was exceedingly grateful.

Miralda had already bidden me farewell, but she was manifestly unwilling to let me pass out of her life, without giving me one more token of her regard.

She had not much to say, however, only "Farewell, good Halek!" Then, with one soft side-glance, her eye-lids dropped, and she began to move away.

"Go not yet," said I; "thou mayest not again have such an opportunity of holding pleasant converse with two old men who esteem thee as we do. Sit here, beside me."

"Nay," said she, gravely; "If I sit down I shall weep. Farewell."

Then she stepped lightly away, and looked not back.

"Halek," said Hethron, "when thou returnest from Pagam, thou wilt have some lovely things to relate."

"Yes," said I, "and some sad things."

Then we sat in silence, and Hethron, drawing a small book from his girdle, set himself to writing therein.

While he was thus engaged, an old man appeared at the open side of the pavilion, and bowed profoundly, first to me, and then to Hethron, who perceived him not.

"Sirs," said he, "one of you I know to be the court-poet, and the other, if I mistake not, is Halek, the son of Mazor, for whom I have a missive."

"I am he," said I.

The old man looked keenly at me for a while, and his voice was low and broken, as he said,—

"Peace be with you! I am but newly come from Pagam. I have sons and daughters there. When the time serves I will tell you of them." Then he bowed to us again, and left us.

While Hethron still wrote, I examined the roll which had been brought me. My name was written

thereon in black letters, and the name of the sender in red, the exact hue of the red used in signing the petitions in the only temple of Pagam I had ever frequented—the temple where I had first seen Turoni, the beautiful maiden who had first quickened the inner pulses of my soul. The name in red was well-known to me: it was that of an officer attached to a temple on a lonely mount some dozen furlongs from the eastern gate of the city.

The writer of the roll directed me, in the fewest possible words, to go, in the shortest possible time, to the Temple of the Mount.

Now, I had expected some such notification, for none may leave Sahitam as a messenger to Pagam, until he have been examined and approved of by the officers, who have the care of these missions; but not having given much thought to their mode of proceeding, I had fancied that my services to Alphariz would entitle me to receive the written credentials of these officers.

The peremptory tone of this mandate was displeasing to me; for though, as a youth, I had bowed in humble silence before the rod of Kobesh, my lawful master, I was now inclined to be over-mindful of my prerogatives as a man, who had also learnt to be a master.

I sat perfectly still, until Hethron, having replaced his book in his girdle, regarded me with an expression of kindly solicitude.

He soon addressed me.

“Whence this clouded face? Wherefore this look of perplexity?”

“I will ask thee a question,” said I—“a nice question for thee, who art a nice taster of words, and a skilful assayer of phrases—What does *at once* mean?”

“Who says this *at once*?” demanded Hethron, “and to what does it refer?”

“The Intendant of the College of Triers orders me to go *at once* to the Temple of the Mount.”

“In that case,” said Hethron, with a judge-like gravity, “*at once* does not mean sooner than is possible, but sooner than thou in thy present mood art inclined to go.”

Hethron then said that this examination was a mere form, and that he would not only walk to the Temple with me, but wait until my business was concluded.

“It will be all over,” said he, “ere thou have had time to examine the examiners.”

“But read this letter,” said I. “Note the curt-ness of the command.”

“It has not one superfluous dot,” said Hethron; “and this bears out what I have already told thee—this examination of theirs is equally brief; the Worshipful Brethren will not give thee one superfluous pang.”

“Thou knowest nothing of these matters,” said I.

“True,” replied Hethron, “but I have instinct and common-sense. It will be on this wise: One

says—*Art thou Halek the son of Mazor? Thou makest a bow. Art thou able to do anything that any other man could do, only better?* Bow again. Thou art then provided with a document which, as curtly as possible, informs the Pagamas that the Worshipful Brethren approve of thee as a messenger.”

There was no resisting the raillery of this lovable man; my momentary ill-humour vanished, and we straightway set out for the Temple of the Mount.

When we were come within the precincts of this tranquil synagogue, we were met by the old man who had brought me the letter, and after courteously motioning to Hethron to be seated, he conducted me to a chamber where I found myself in the presence of Worshipful Brother Dumi (the Intendant), and the officers of his Council.

All present rose and bowed to me as my name was given by the janitor. When I had returned their salutation, I took the seat indicated to me, and straightway scanned the face of the Intendant. It was marked by a gracious dignity. He rose and looked at me; then, putting forth his hand as though he were laying it gently on mine, he began to speak in a soft, clear, and melodious voice, somewhat as follows :—

“Alphariz, the Prince, has presented you, Brother Halek, with the insignia of our brotherhood. He is a prince indeed—first among those who have laboured for the weal of the oppressed. He has also laboured in Pagam, as you propose to labour. He has also

written that which remains among us as a gospel of hope to the pilgrim, when he sinks in the mire, when he struggles in the snare of the fowler, when he cannot look up.

“I must now, for the guidance of the brethren here met together, acquaint them with certain particulars of your past life.”

Here the Intendant took a paper from the table, and, after he had looked through it, proceeded to say:

“Halek, the son of Mazor, has served an apprenticeship with a jeweller in Karom. He has dwelt for some years in the solitude of the Diamond Mountains. He has studied alchemy, oratory, music, and poetry. He has been a teacher to the sons of Alphariz, the Prince.

“Being conscious now of energies which seem to lack employment, and of emotions which seem to remain fruitless, he desires to dedicate the remainder of his sojourn in the Island to the highest teaching which man can attempt—the teaching which begets, in those who dwell at their ease in the perishable pleasures of the outer man, a desire for the delights of the real man—the delights which alone are real, in that they can be abundantly satisfied without weariness, satiety, or disgust, in that they grow continually from strength to strength, in that they are communicated to all around, with yet further increase of their delightfulness.

“Brother, you may now speak for yourself; and if

I have erred in aught that I have communicated to my brethren of the Council, you will correct me."

I rose, bowed to the company, and replied, without haste or uneasiness—

"Except in one trifling particular, the Worshipful Intendant has correctly laid before you those things concerning me which he has thought worthy of mention. It can scarcely be said that I have studied alchemy; but I have unveiled some of the occult properties of what I have termed the *crystal numbers*, because they are built up into regular forms by the continual multiplication of units by units. I have also made some remarkable discoveries as regards the relation of these crystal numbers to the harmonious combination of sounds in music."

"In a certain sense, then," said the Intendant, smiling, "you may be said to have studied the alchemy of numbers. We will now hold a consultation."

At a sign from the Intendant, the janitor handed a tablet and a pen to each of the brethren, who straightway began writing. When all had signified that they desired to add nothing to what they had written, the janitor took the tablet from him who sat at the end to the right of the Intendant, and carried it to him who sat at the other end, while each of the brethren passed his tablet to him who sat next to him on the right. Each then read what the others had written. Some, I observed, made notes on the tablet they were reading; and when all had again placed

the pens in front of them, the tablets were again passed on to the right, and read, until he at the extreme right received his own tablet again.

Then the Intendant wrote something on a fresh tablet, which was read by each brother who also wrote thereon, but only a word or two. This tablet was then put into a small cedar case, carefully sealed, and handed to me by the Intendant, with these words:

"Keep this as I now give it to you, nor open it till you open it here, and read it in the presence of the brethren here assembled. We meet again on the first day of the next month. But if we would see you in the meantime, we will send for you."

"Then," said I, in a tone which betrayed my disappointment, and my displeasure, "I am not to be sent forth at once! Methought, from the wording of your mandate, that I was to be forthwith entrusted with a mission."

"We required your presence to-day," replied the Intendant, "because this is the last day of this sitting. And now, farewell, Brother Halek."

Here he bowed, and the brethren bowed in like manner, whereupon the janitor opened the door for me, and I left the Council Chamber.

The janitor would again speak to me of his family in Pagam, and his sore trouble on their account, but I told him I was not then in a mood which permitted me to give my mind to his troubles, and that my friend had already waited a long time for me.

I then rejoined Hethron, and we walked towards

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his house, which he had requested me to regard as my own, as soon as I left the palace of Alphariz, the Prince.

CHAPTER II.

I AM TOLD THAT LIRUSAN, A DAUGHTER OF HETHRON, WILL SOON COME HOME. MY GARDEN AND HOUSE IN THE PARK OF HETHRON. AGAIN BEFORE THE TRIERS.

“Worshipful Messenger,” said Hethron, when we had descended the hill, “why art thou so silent?”

“I am not yet a messenger,” I replied, “nor in aught worshipful, and I am silent because I have so much to say.”

“It appears, then,” said Hethron, “that the Triers have not yet sufficiently tried thee.”

“They have sufficiently tried my patience!”

“If they have tried thee in this matter, and have not found thee wanting, it is well thou hast been tried.”

“But they continue this trial of my patience for yet another month, during which I can do nothing but wait.”

“Patient and cheerful waiting is easy to him who knows his strength.”

“At this moment I know nought but my weakness.”

“Then hast thou already gained something from the Triers.”

"I am aweary, aweary! How to pass this month, I know not."

"But thou knowest where to pass it; and now I will tell thee one of my reasons for being loath to part with thee so soon. Thou gavest me a copy of thy poem, 'Adaroni'—thy best poem, wrought out in the solitude of the Diamond Mountains."

"I pray thee," said I, "speak not of that poem to me. Lormuz, the court-poet of Karom, made me loathe it; and to this day I never think of that poem without tasting again the bitterest medicine I ever swallowed."

"Bitter words become in the end most bitter to him who said them."

"True," said I; "but they do not thereby become sweet to him who heard them."

"Bitter words," rejoined Hethron, "become sweet to him who himself becometh sweet."

"Thou, a poet of Sahitam," I continued, "hast praised my work; Lormuz, the Karoma, could only say this: 'You call certain men in your poem *noble*, as the gardener who soweth the seed of a noble plant, and marketh the place with the name of the plant. If, however, the seed perish, he will not call his friends to behold the place where he had intended the plant to flourish.'"

"Did not my praise pluck the sting from this hornet?" asked Hethron.

"It did," said I; "but the buzzing of the hornet still soundeth in mine ears."

"Thou hast said thou art conscious only of weakness, and now thou showest me some of thy weakness—I would have thee strong."

"I shall be strong," said I, "but not in the writing of verses—my generous ambition is slain."

"Can the ambition of a poet," asked Hethron, "be slain by the jawbone of an ass?"

"Nay," said I, "but it may be slain by the pen of a greater poet. Thou, Hethron, hast long since shown me that I cannot soar in the azure heights of poetry, and I have shown thee that I will not creep along its narrow lanes."

Hethron here gave me a loving pressure, and remained silent a while; then he said—

"Perceivest thou not that these petulant fancies of thine, these peevish complaints, spring from the living heart of a poet?"

To this I made but a petulant reply—"To me they seem thorns and briars, where once were roses and lilies."

"Worshipful poet," said Hethron, laughing, "permit me now to disclose to thee a matter which will attune thee to sweet music, if aught can so attune thee: Thou gavest me thy poem, 'Adaroni;' I sent it to Lirusan, my youngest daughter, the only one of my children whom thou has not yet seen. As thou knowest, she has the care of the children of my brother Hebel, the alchemist. Now every year, for the space of a month at least, she refreshes herself, and us, by a visit to her home. When I first invited

thee to my house, she was away, and now she will be here within a few days. I wish thee to meet her."

"Happy," said I, "thrice happy, and abundantly blessed art thou! Thou hast a wife and daughters who love thee, thou art the court-poet, thou lackest nothing. I have naught but gold and jewels."

"And thine honest intentions," added Hethron. "But this is another interruption! I will begin again: Thou gavest me thy poem, 'Adaroni'; I sent it to Lirusan; she has taken it to her heart, and does now attempt to write an Adaroni-poem for herself. Though in Karom none cared for thy poems, here is one, herself a writer of high verse, who thinketh thy verse higher than her father's."

"But not higher than her own," said I; "and, howe'er it be, that which could be slain by the jaw-bone of an ass, will not be brought to life by the tongue of a woman. Thou knowest how I loved Turoni, I have also told thee how I loved the Spring-blossom Shashuna; but I never told thee into what dreams Nahamah carried me, until I knew she was the betrothed of another. I am now risen above the bewildering turmoil of these emotions, as well as above the music and verse-making which serve to excite, or to express them."

"Be it so," replied Hethron, "be it ever with thee as thou wilt. Be thou aweary and—aweary."

"Nay," said I, "he who progresses daily, and labours daily for the good of others, cannot long be

aweary. It is the idleness of Sahitam that wearies me. But all this will soon be changed."

"Then," said Hethron, "we may now change the subject of our profitless wrangling. Methought that the casket which thou so lovingly holdest to thy side contained the written evidence of thy trial, and a proclamation that my bosom friend was a messenger."

"Indeed," said I, "I know not what it be." And then I began to tell him what had happened to me in the Temple of the Triers; and by the time I had finished the account of my adventures we had reached the beautiful gate of the park which Hethron had caused to be laid out on a half-island which stretches far into the lake Taltum.

Now, this volume of mine is not undertaken for describing beautiful lands or lakes, beautiful faces or flowers; so I will say nothing of the garden of Hethron, with its shaded walks, its rustic pavilion, its tower for the astronomer, its chamber for the alchemist, its chamber for the scribe, and its underground chamber, dark and silent, with bare walls, bare ceiling, all cut out of the rock. I will say something, however, of its chamber for the poet, for I occupied it, and always enjoyed there placid slumber, unbroken contemplation, fruitful seeking, and a delightful sense of being shut out from those disturbing influences, which find their way into our thoughts, even as the air enters a chamber through the smallest chink.

The chamber was built in the centre of a garden. It contained an alcove where I slept, and three windows, which were hung with embroidered curtains. It contained only three books, the book of "Adaroni," a sheaf of the best poems of Sahitam, and a collection of short sayings, proverbs, riddles, and the like. No rain could beat into the chamber, and its three small windows could be closed with coloured matting of reeds, one of which I often gazed on, for it reminded me of a kind of fruit-basket in the making of which I had many a time helped my beloved Turoni.

The garden in which this silent retreat is situated is enclosed by high walls, surmounted by climbing plants on a trellis. One small door of carved cedar leads into the garden, and this door is kept shut, but never locked, for here no person, not even the master of the house, would enter the garden of a visitor unless invited to do so.

Along three sides of the enclosure is a walk two paces in width, and on the fourth side is a pond more than twenty paces in circuit. This pond is paved with smooth tiles, and supplied every day with fresh water by a conduit from the lake.

My manner of life at this time was extremely simple, as it hath ever been, and indeed so was the life of Hethron and his household.

The first meal enjoyed in company was usually served about an hour after the rising of the sun, and the next meal about an hour after the setting thereof.

No person was constrained to be present at any meal. If one came late, or not at all, no questions were asked.

At any other time of the day, if one of the household were hungry, he desired one of the little maids to bring him something to eat. If he thirsted, he asked for such beverage as he desired.

If two or more chanced to hunger at the same time, they ate in company, and enlivened the repast with bright conversation. I have never seen in this mansion any approach to the gloomy formality of the ordinary well-to-do Pagama of Siroth, who will not sup except his outer garments be of the deepest black, while the cloth round his neck is of snowy whiteness.

In this delightful hermitage I soon ceased fretting over what appeared to be the unnecessary delay of the College of Triers. I read much in the book of Adaroni, and ventured to begin the making of short sayings and proverbs which might be of use in stirring the Pagamas out of their slothful indifference.

Every day I saw Hethron, and we had much brotherly conversation, generally in my own little garden, but sometimes in his.

Of music we had no lack. Ambileni, the beloved wife of Hethron, had a song for almost everything she did—a song of sunrise, a song of love for everybody, a song of gathering fruit, a song of thanks after a meal. And the little maids always knew when they might join in with their skilful harmonies, while

Hethron was at all times ready to supply the deep notes which the song required. Taltar, the eldest daughter of Hethron, sang not at any time, but could always play a delicate accompaniment upon the dulcimer or upon the cithern.

Hethron never spoke to me now of Lirusan, nor did I think to ask when she was coming. One day, however, when I had been some three weeks in the enjoyment of my peaceful life on the half-island, a letter announced that Lirusan would shortly arrive.

"I am curious to see her," said I, "because I never knew a woman who could write poems."

"She has also been known," said Taltar, "to make other persons write poems."

"Halek looks grave," said Ambileni.

"It is not," said I, "that I do not approve of a young man writing poems to the maiden of his choice: verse and song appear to be the natural speech of young lovers."

Then Ambileni sounded the first notes of a song. Hethron rolled forth his mellow thunder, Taltar tinkled upon the cithern, while all the little maids chanted the higher notes of the chorus; but I sat silent, recalling the blissful hours I had passed with Turoni and Shashuna at the moonfeasts of Karom.

Three days after this letter from Lirusan, the old janitor brought me a letter from the Intendant of the College of Triers.

It was to request my attendance at the Temple of

the Mount, as soon as it was convenient for me to attend.

As we walked slowly to the Temple, he told me what he wished me to do for him, if I should be sent to the part of Pagam where his children were living.

I found the Triers in conclave assembled, and after a decorous salutation, I took my seat as I had done before.

I was then requested to read the tablet which had been entrusted to me. It contained words which for bitterness far exceeded the bitterness of Lormuz. Yet were they not bitter, but sweet, though I knew it not at the time.

I was declared unfit to become a messenger under the authority of the Worshipful Brethren of the Mount.

I was not told how they came to this conclusion.

I was informed, however, that in six months they could entrust me as their accredited messenger, if, during those six months, I would pursue certain studies under the direction of one of the Triers, and pledge myself to base my teaching on their teaching.

When I could master myself to speak, I said—"I also am a master—I am not an untaught youth—I have cultivated my powers—I am also rich and accustomed to win men by my generosity. This is the way of great teachers whose names still live."

"But not the way of the Great Teacher," said the Intendant; "not the way of Him whose name shall live for ever, and shine forth yet more and more."

I knew to whom the Intendant alluded, but I remained silent. I bowed and sat down.

"This decision of ours cannot be altered," said the Intendant. "We have had no discussion since we last met. You were present at our meeting. In that tablet you have read what I then wrote, and what all the brethren agreed to."

"Must *I* agree to it?" I asked.

"*You* must do what you wish to do," was the reply; "but if you do not wish to do what it were wise to do, then ask of the Counsellor, and wait patiently for his counsel. Of course, with your riches you can go to any part of Pagam, and do what you will, and you may proclaim the gospel of healing, but you will not heal, because you yourself are not yet healed."

Then did I perceive so sad and loving a look from one of the brethren, that I straightway exclaimed—"Fain would I obey in all things, but in this matter I cannot obey. I will, however, stay yet one month, and I will begin my studies under the direction of one here who has himself been through what I purpose going through. But at the end of that month, if you still cannot receive me, I will of myself set out for Pagam, and begin the work for which I feel myself fitted, and which alone will satisfy that within me which is best and truest."

Then the janitor was again called in, and the writing of opinions was again gone through, followed by the exchange of tablets as before.

Then the Intendant spoke as follows: "Beloved Brother, you do indeed purpose all that is worthy of a true man; but you are not yet able to submit your will to those in authority. We, therefore, being unwilling that you lose valuable teaching by breaking from us, resolve that as soon as we can put your case before the Superior Comptroller of our Temples, and receive his ruling in the matter, we will acquaint you with whatsoever we shall have succeeded in doing. From you we ask a promise, in writing, that if you be entrusted with the charge of a temple, you will at once enter upon those duties which you have so steadfastly set before you, and, in all matters connected with this mission, follow our directions. We ourselves do but obey, and *to obey* is the first lesson taught to our disciples."

I thanked the Intendant and the Councillors both humbly and warmly for the great brotherly kindness they had shewn in thus yielding to my wayward and, as yet, ungovernable nature, rather than compel me to secede from their communion, and establish in Pagam a fraternity which I could direct in accordance with my own wishes.

Again the Intendant wrote on a tablet, and, as before, it was submitted to the brethren. While this was in progress, the Intendant desired me to write my promises; and when I had done so, he placed the document in a small silken satchel, which he carefully sealed.

The tablet which had been prepared for me by the

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brethren, was then in like manner placed in a cedar case, and delivered to me with the usual injunction that I should neither read it, nor break the seal, until I did so in the presence of the Worshipful Brethren.

Before I was permitted to depart, he who had given me that look of an especial love, told me that he had been appointed to be my instructor, and that until I could be sent to Pagam as an accredited messenger from the Temple of the Triers, I would be required to visit him daily at any convenient hour before noon; unless, as was customary with students under the supervision and control of the brethren, I chose to occupy one of the chambers allotted to the use of the students.

CHAPTER III.

THE WORSHIPFUL BROTHER ALMUT TAKES CHARGE OF ME. THE BEGINNING OF MY LOVE FOR LIRUSAN.

IT was with no small degree of satisfaction that I now wended my way to the house of Hethron, after so fearlessly asserting the rights of my standing, and so successfully securing them.

The gentle brethren of the Temple being most of them old and feeble, it seemed to me that they could not fairly estimate the intensity of my emotions, and the irresistible force with which they swayed me.

I could not avoid looking forward to the time when I should rise to the dignity of councillorship, and by sure degrees advance till I became the Most Worshipful Comptroller of Missions, to whom even the Superior of the circuit of Karom would have to defer in doubtful and difficult matters.

Yet it was not the desire of dominion which led me to those delightful anticipations; but it was the desire that I should be strong in the repression of that which is evil, and in the promotion of that which is good.

Hethron, when I told him how I had fared at the hands of the Triers, not only approved of the stand

I had taken, but commended the moderation with which I had expressed my feelings. For my own part, however, I had some lurking doubt as to whether I had comported myself with unimpeachable discretion.

But the Triers had not rebuked me, and had, as it appeared to me, considered my warmth of manner to be quite excusable, if not wholly justifiable.

So I resumed the tranquil course of my studies and meditations, without one uneasy thought; but after three or four days, Pilpad came, of his own accord, with the utmost kindness, to hint that it would be well if I went back with him to the Temple, where, as he told me, the brother deputed to guide my official studies as a messenger had for two days been expecting me.

This information caused me to upbraid myself severely. It was true that I had promised to receive instruction; but, thinking that the brethren would let me know on what day this instruction should begin, I had let the matter rest there.

So I went in all haste with the kindly janitor, and, as we walked together, he took the opportunity of telling me more concerning his evil-minded children in Pagam.

On arriving at the temple I was ushered into a commodious chamber, containing a few ancient rolls disposed in an orderly manner upon a table in the centre of the chamber.

My teacher sat with his face turned to the sun-

light, which came through an exceedingly fine curtain of threads loosely woven together.

I soon perceived that this venerable man spoke from an interior knowledge. He could readily answer the questions which I put to him; but, during our first sitting, he did little more than ask me questions; and it was not long before I found that he always conducted me to a blank wall of speculation, at which I could only stand helpless. Then he would show me a door through that impenetrable and, apparently, interminable wall.

He sent me home that day with a small tablet on which was written the following:—

“One is All. This All is Spirit. Spirit alone is real. Only that is real which endureth for ever. Only that which had a beginning can have an end.

“The temporary is an accommodation to those who are progressing in the infinite.

“All terms used to express our relation to the One are but figures.

“The name *Father*, as applied to the One-All, meaneth not that which it meaneth to the Pagamas. In like manner the One-All is not a Great King. Jeshua, whose kingdom was not of this world, was a king.

“Wrath is not in the One-All. Diseases, calamities, and death come not from the One-All, who is the all of love.

“He that abideth in love, abideth in the One-All, and hath all the powers of the universe on his side.

"We are ever with the One-All, we live in Him, and cannot live out of Him.

"Only that can perish which hath never lived. All evil must perish, but all good endures for ever."

When I had hastily looked through this, I asked whether Jeshua, the Great Teacher, had not spoken of our Father in Adaroni; and the reply was that so long as the highest of teachers taught the lowest of disciples he would be constrained to use figures.

"Keep this tablet," said Almut—for this was the name of my teacher—"and study it. Only when you have unlearned much, can you begin to learn."

When I showed this tablet to Hethron, he told me that Brother Almut, the writer thereof, was a friend of his, and that Lirusan had a warm regard for him.

"From what I hear of Lirusan," said I, "I feel sure that she loves everybody."

"Yes," said Hethron, "and all love her. I would like to be with her when you read to her certain parts of your Adaroni poem."

"There was a time," said I, "when it pleased me to please others by reading my poems to them. I will never read one line of that poem to any one again; it has passed away into Aven, and is no more. I used to think it lived and was beautiful. I used to live in it."

"And thou wilt again live in it," said Hethron.

I remained silent, and shook my head.

"Then thou wilt live in another," persisted Hethron.

"In Adaroni," said I.

"A lovely poem, in which an artist lives while he feels it, is Adaroni for the time."

"For the time," said I.

"For all time," persisted Hethron. "When the poet enters Adaroni, his true poems go with him, and grow there into greater beauty, even as a wild flower choked by thorns may be transplanted by a gardener into a richer soil where naught hinders its growth."

"Then, beloved Hethron," said I, "when thou art in thy garden in Adaroni, it will be hard to see thee for the flowers that will climb and blossom all around thee."

Next day, when I was in my chamber, absorbed in a certain new study of the crystal numbers, whereof I have already spoken, Hethron called at my outer door, and I bade him enter.

He walked swiftly through the garden, and then waited at the door of the chamber, where he again called me, somewhat impatiently. I bade him come in, and when he was just going to speak, I held up my hand that he should wait a moment.

He waited many moments—a long time. Then I began: "Congratulate me! Here is a number that has interested me for five years, and I have just succeeded in showing its relation to the key-number whereof I spoke to thee yesterday."

"That is highly interesting to thee," said Hethron;

"and I will now ask thee to congratulate me, for I have at this moment in my house a person in whom I have been interested for twenty years!"

I guessed it was Brother Alnut; but it was his daughter Lirusan, and she had arrived some hours since.

"She is now ready to see thee," said Hethron.

When I was introduced, in a somewhat playful manner, by the good-natured father, Lirusan rose, smiled, and bowed. The mother, father, and sister watched us curiously, and remained silent.

I felt that Lirusan wished to engage me in conversation about my work as a poet; but she did not succeed; and I was pleased with myself for being silent.

She began by asking if I still wrote poems.

"Never," said I.

"I am sorry for that," said she, "for I have already learnt by heart one beautiful poem of yours."

"Your father," said I, "writes verses, every day of his life, which are worthier of learning by heart than mine are."

"But," remarked Hethron, "no fair maiden gives me to understand that she desires to have them. If she did, I would grant her what she wished."

"Then, dear father," said Lirusan, "recite to me the poem thou didst but lately speak of in one of thy letters—if *I be fair enough*."

"That is a fair request," answered Hethron. And he began to recite a poem he was then composing, and which he had already shown to me.

Hethron and his family made an interesting group just then—he standing a few paces back, Ambileni weaving a many-coloured mat for a table, Taltar gazing tranquilly on Lirusan, and Lirusan intently listening to her father.

For my part I looked away at the blue outline of the mountains, which I was longing to cross on my journey to Pagam.

Hethron recited his poem in a deep, solemn voice, and he had been proceeding somewhat monotonously, when I happened to look over to Lirusan: she was transfigured.

I will not attempt to put into words the wonders of such a transfiguration. I could not take my eyes off her; but she knew not that I was observing her.

After a while her half-closed lips trembled; she leaned forward, opening her eyes yet wider, and, as Hethron's voice sank at the close of his recitation, she started up and embraced him, hiding her face on his shoulder, and exclaiming, "Beautiful! beautiful!"

For my part I felt as if awestricken, but I was careful that none might see how the transfigured face of Lirusan had affected me.

I noted carefully all that happened. Lirusan sank into a seat, played with a diamond ring that she wore, drooped her long eyelashes, and looked as uninteresting as she had looked before her father had begun to recite.

Hethron glanced towards me, and smiled. Then

he said, "Halek has renounced the delights of poetry; he will go forth to labour among the Pagamas, he will be a prophet in the wilderness, a hermit, or a second Brother Almut."

The mother nodded her head at me, and said to Lirusan, "Our good friend has run through the gaieties of youth, and addresses himself now to the prosaic realities of the life in Benuben. He will see enough of them in Pagam."

By this time I had almost forgotten that Hethron had recited, and I certainly had neglected to give him a word of thanks. But it mattered not—we understood each other.

Lirusan at last came nearer to me, and said, reproachfully, "You were not moved by that poem."

"I had already heard it," was my reply.

"In that case," said Lirusan, with a winning smile, "we can pardon your indifference. Were you counting up long rows of figures all the time?"

"I was not thinking of figures all the time."

"A part of the time, then?"

"No part of the time."

"Tell me what you were thinking of; please tell me."

"Those mountains," said I; and then I was silent, for I saw that I was being closely observed.

"You were thinking of those mountains while your best friend was reciting his best poem!"

"I once passed a most memorable night in a cave there, on my journey from Pagam."

"And I think," said Taltar, "that when you go

back to Pagam, as you intend, you ought to pass several more nights in a cave, where none can disturb your meditation by the reading of poems."

"If he had his wish," said the mother, "he would pass two years in a cave."

Here I put on a careless look, and again fixed my eyes on the distant mountains. Then Hethron helped them to rally me, until I found an opportunity of slipping out to the piazza, whence I speedily betook myself to my room in the silent garden.

It is so delightful to be alone when you would think of one alone. It is the next best thing to being alone with that one.

First of all I sat still for a long time, going over all I could remember of this my first interview with one who had so suddenly enthralled and enraptured me that all possible enchantments of all the women I had ever known were swept away as though they had never existed, save in the fantastic imaginations of a poet.

Then I walked rapidly up and down my garden; and then I wrote a poem.

This was the subject: I said that I was once reclining in a sombre grove, when I chanced to fix my eyes on a large grey moth which rested, perfectly still, on the grey bark of a tree. While I wondered whether it were really a moth, it suddenly opened its grey upper wings, and showed me, for one moment only, the beautiful black and orange embroidery of its under wings.

I then went on to show that, in like manner, the coy and lovely maiden unconsciously protects herself by looking uninteresting, and that the delight of the beholder is all the greater when there is the sudden unveiling of unsuspected and unspeakable beauties.

Of course I lost little time next day in showing my verses to Lirusan.

She read them over to herself, and I scanned her face the while. When she had read the last line, the long eyelashes again lifted, and again the glamour and the glow held me entranced.

The wondrous maiden then said, "A pretty conceit! And of course you must have felt this, some time or other, or you would not have kept that tiny leaf so long, and so carefully, for I note that it is still fresh and fair and uncrumpled. I am not so careful."

"Nor are the roses," said I.

Lirusan looked down, pensively, as I proceeded somewhat on this wise: "Yes, I felt that, when I wrote it, and I feel it now."

She still looked down, and appeared to wait for further information as to the little poem that had pleased her so much.

But when she found that I held my peace, she spoke again: "Of course you were young when you wrote this, and—and—I suppose you had really seen—somebody?"

"No," said I, quickly, "I had really seen somebody first, and then I felt young again afterwards."

She still would not look at me; and began to read the verses again.

I watched her in silence, resolved I would wait for her to speak. And at last she spoke, quickly, as though not wishing to dwell on this point: "I would not dare to ask how old you were when you wrote this, that were unmannerly; but please tell me how many years it is since you wrote it."

I replied, "Twenty-five," and, before I could say *hours*, as I was honestly about to do, she exclaimed, "Before I was born! There is, then, some delightful mystery hidden here. May I keep this?"

"Keep it, Lirusan—keep it," I murmured. "I wrote it for you twenty-five hours ago!"

She looked at me now, with a long wondering gaze, as though she read me to the inmost, and I, looking into her deep eyes, saw myself—mirrored there—my young, my real self—a poet still.

This was the beginning of my love for Lirusan.

CHAPTER IV.

I BID LIRUSAN TAKE HEED LEST SHE STUMBLE WHILE
GAZING HEAVENWARDS. A TERRIBLE STORM.

On this memorable day it was considerably past the hour at which I used to arrive at the Temple of the Mount before I left the enchanted garden of Hethron.

On my way to the Temple I tried to recite the contents of the tablet given me by Brother Almut; but found myself more than once trying to imprint something else on my memory, so that I might ever be able to recall it.

Shortly after noon I was again in the house of Hethron; but, to me, it was now as a deserted village—Lirusan was not there.

I saw no more of her that day, for the sisters were gone to visit their friend, the Princess Iodalla.

The lively court-poet, the tuneful Ambileni, and two talkative visitors, one but newly come from Karom, made a cheery company at our evening meal. In the body I sat with them; in the spirit I was with Lirusan.

By and by Hethron said: "Before friend Halek had set his mind on going back to labour for the good of the Pagamas, he used to be bright and

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companionable, but now he is ever weary and weary."

"He walked quickly hither in the heat of the day," said Ambileni; "and instead of reposing in his cool chamber when he returned, he walked round and round this garden."

"Preparing himself for his pilgrimage to Pagam," said Hethron.

To this I made curt answer, "Wrong, every way: the journey hence to Pagam is not a pilgrimage, and we are sent in chariots."

Ambileni laughed at my answer, and said to Hethron, "I will sing him '*The Bridegroom cometh with Song.*'"

"And Halek will go away with a frown," said Hethron. "He is of a somewhat stubborn nature—kindly, but stubborn withal—he will not always dance when you pipe to him."

A sort of stubbornness made me now resolve that I would gain upon Hethron's raillery, so I laughed heartily, and, for the rest of the evening, played the noisy merry-maker.

And still Lirusan came not.

When Ambileni left the visitors, Hethron kept them company till a late hour, but I at last slipped away unperceived.

I knew not what to do; I feared some mischance had befallen the sisters; though I also thought they might have returned, and betaken themselves to their own chambers.

At length, I asked one of the little maids, and was informed that the sisters were not yet returned, so I at once went forth, and, walking up and down the avenue by which they must return, I soon had the satisfaction of seeing them coming towards me under the escort of two servants with lamps.

"Why, Halek," cried Taltar, "this is a pleasure we thought not to have!"

The servants then being permitted to give up their care of the sisters, I offered to go with them to the house.

Taltar asked what I had been doing on this road, and I said I had been walking up and down between the beautiful lime-trees.

After a while, Lirusan said, "I do not wonder at it; under the clear heavens in the still night. Beautiful!" Then she gazed upwards as one entranced.

"Child of earth," said I, "stumble not while gazing heavenwards."

Here I took her very gently by the arm, and drew her somewhat nearer to me.

Taltar perceived this not; and Lirusan said, softly,

"With you none could stumble."

I rejoined, "If I myself stumble while gazing—"

"But," Lirusan said, "two stumble not when each holds the other."

Taltar now joined in the exchange of pleasantries, and by this time we were within a few paces of the gate of the garden.

So we parted for the night, they together, I alone;

they to sleep, I to be overtaken by a terrible tempest whereof I had had no foreboding.

Full often are we led by paths we see not, full often does a sudden storm obscure the sky; but after the storm there comes one serene day.

I could not sleep; I was overpowered by the tumult of my emotions, the in-rushing of thoughts, the bursting forth of importunate longings, which bore me into a realm of abundant delights and sure peace.

After a while the tempest broke, with hailstones and coals of fire, voices and thunderings.

I was as one lying bound in a dungeon; as one whose voice could be heard by none.

My spirit within me was overwhelmed with anguish and a sense of desolation.

Two appeared to be contending over me. One said, "Thou truly lovest Lirusan, and she as truly loves thee. Love is lord of all, and the life of all."

Another said: "This is not love, but an earth-born phantasy, working evil to that which hath long been slowly growing within thee. This phantasy plucketh the blossoms that would bring fruit.

"If thou art going downwards, thou canst not at the same time be going upwards. What dost thou now choose?"

And I replied, "I choose the love of Lirusan."

Then a terrible voice called forth, as from on high,—"Denier—traitor! Thy whole life is but a

pretence. Weak art thou, and unstable; vile, yea, utterly worthless! Thou pretendest thou knowest truths, but thou only knowest that there are truths. Thou pretendest thou lovest the Great King with all thine heart, but thou lovest thyself only, for loving Lirusan is only a way of loving thyself."

Then did I, constrained by this intolerable anguish, suddenly rouse myself and exclaim—"O Thou! Thou knowest that I love Thee!"

Then seemed it as though an armed band of wicked men had been suddenly dispersed.

After some deep sighs I fell asleep.

I slept in peace, and when I awakened, it was as though I had passed a measureless period of time in one of the marble palaces of Sahitam, or in some solemn temple of Adaroni, where I had beheld the beauty of the Great King, and discovered that I was indeed His child, His disciple, and His servant, framed to possess inalienable rights, and unassailable powers, heir of all things, and able to rise above all the heavens of which I could form any conception.

The morning sun was shining through my chamber. All was clear to me. Earthly evil was passed away. I sang a new song. I said, "I shall never be moved. As I intend only right, naught but right can come to me. The Lord is the strength of my life, and my joy for ever."

I seemed to have tried the spirits, or that they had been tried for me, and pronounced to be phantoms of night and misty nothingness.

If I did not truly love Lirusan, then did man never truly love woman. The delight I felt therein was seen by me to be one of the purest delights of Adaroni. And I also felt that all would be well with us.

Lower considerations than those of loving and being loved troubled me not. It is true that I was more than double the age of Lirusan, but I felt sure that if we truly loved each other, this was a matter which need give us no concern. As to wealth I had enough.

It was indeed a terrible storm through which I had passed; but I afterwards counted as precious the agony which had wrung from me the cry—*O Thou! Thou knowest that I love Thee!* for it was the beginning of my knowledge of that love. Up to that time I had only known that it appeared to be our duty to love the Father, but now I knew that I did love Him, that it could not be otherwise, and that this love was always there, even when lost sight of, and forgotten.

So do the stars shine on, so do the sun and the moon pursue their splendid paths, although we see them not.

It may be truly affirmed that an appeal from the cruel tyranny of the accusers, who threaten with sword and spear—an appeal, I say, from them to Him who knows all things, is never made in vain; for love responds to love, and the whole power of the universe protects him who loves.

CHAPTER V.

LOVE AND ITS ENTRANCING DELIGHTS. WE HEAR A
MUSIC-PLAY BY MESHRAN.

Had the entrancing delights of my love for this most lovable woman turned me aside from my intention of becoming a teacher and a healer among my brethren of Pagam, I had straightway doubted the quality of these delights; for love is ever one with truth, and ever manifests itself in deeds which are for the good of all.

But it consorts with the probationary life of the lower world, that good be tried by conflict with evil, and be finally strengthened and established, not by one victory alone, but by many victories; for although the Father gives good things without money, and without price, we make them truly ours only by passing triumphantly through all doubts and fears, temptations and wrestlings.

What might be the final issue of my love for this wondrous Lirusan, I could not conjecture; nor did I seek to mark out the course thereof with such assurance that I could decree the manner of its growth.

I had for some time been dull and listless in spiritual matters.

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All doors into the shrine of mystic rapture seemed to be closed. I paced the outer courts with impatience.

My mission to the Pagamas was a door whereby I could enter upon labours which would absorb all my sympathies, and demand all my powers.

The teaching of Almut, instead of encouraging me, did rather lead me to search myself, in order to be assured that, in some specious form or other, I was not still thinking of my own honour and my own merits.

For I had begun to see that much which I vaunted as a princely generosity, was debased with a self-satisfied comparison of my own liberality and the sordid meanness of others.

A man is ever his own most subtle deceiver.

The intense joys and pains into which I had been raised by my love for Lirusan had been the means of showing me that I did love the One, and that I was of Him, even as a flower is of the plant in which it grows.

Now, as love is one, and as love is of God, the woman whom a man truly loves, is, while he loves her, a means whereby the love of God flows into the man, while the man is the means whereby the love of God flows into the woman.

For my own part I saw clearly that although I thought chiefly of Lirusan, it was in reality the love of God which I enjoyed, for there is no other love.

My love for Lirusan was, therefore, a sacred thing,

and as my heart was filled to overflowing with this marvellous passion, I would not descend to the consideration of aught but this love and its delights, than which I could conceive of nothing more delightful.

After three days of perfect intercourse with this maiden, in whom I could not discover the faintest savour of aught but the highest good and the tenderest grace, I suddenly asked myself: "Wilt thou now leave this paradise for the wilderness of Pagam?"

I did not honestly meet this question; for I now hoped that, instead of an early mandate to depart, many months would elapse before the Triers of the Temple would consider me sufficiently prepared for the sufferings and self-denials which form a great part of the life of one called to be a messenger to the Pagamas.

It grieves me to say that these considerations began forthwith to undermine the honesty of my intentions.

I was ready to go to Pagam; but I felt as if I could not go from Lirusan.

This was my position when something came to pass which made it still harder for me to decide that I would go from Lirusan: Alphariz, the Prince, was visited by Meshran.

This Meshran, as I have related in my book, "The Pilgrim," had, from a very early age, been led to take music as his choice-work.

Already, in Karom, had his music, in the Hall of the Harpers, reached my very heart, and raised me so far beyond my lower selfhood that I appeared to stand alone on some serene height, where I took into my heart the music of the enduring peace, the awful chorus of the hierarchies, the sovereign majesty of truth, the sacred bliss of love, the mysteries of pain, and the significance of man, the immortal.

Then, moved by the noble music of Meshran, who was himself noble, did the lovable maiden, Turoni, say to me, "*I love thee.*"

Then, raised to a mount of clear vision by the might of music, and all trembling with delight in the love of Turoni, did I foresee the time when I also should enjoy the glorious triumph of the artist, who has long laboured alone, now in darkness, now in light, but who has ever held on his way with childlike trust, and ever sought to bring forth his perfect song, the perfect image of the beauty that dwells in him as in a secret and unapproachable shrine.

Some triumphs I had enjoyed in the halls of Karom; but my love of art had become sullied with the love of praise.

Turoni had remained sweet and noble, when I had failed so to remain. She was raised far above me. We were parted.

My love for Shashuna could never have satisfied me, though she was pure and lovely. I am now abundantly pleased that she became the wife of Zakku.

Then, as I have recorded in my book, I ceased to strive for excellence as poet or musician.

When I renounced these ennobling pursuits, I tried to console myself by rating them far below their value, and I knew not that the living virtue of my renunciation was destroyed by a desire of establishing for myself a monument of merit, whereon I could securely stand, though all else were dissolved.

Then again, in its turn, the love even of a good man for a good woman seemed, by degrees, to fade away into the vaporous nothingness of Aven.

I congratulated myself on being raised far above this enthralling passion, this wondrous and bewildering bliss. I ascended yet higher, and the snow-white summit of my Mount of Merit appeared to be almost attained.

My heart was fixed on a mission to the Pagamas, and I recked not what I might have to suffer among them. I was impatient to set out.

Then, suddenly, a maiden glides into my lonely life, and straightway leads me captive.

At first—for my yielding to this love wrought a vast change in me—I had to pass through the Terrible Tempest, as I have recorded. Then, when I uttered my resolve, *I choose the love of Lirusan*, I was dealt with in a different manner.

The Mount of Merit vanished, for I fled from it. All my thoughts, all my feelings, were centred in my love for the one maiden who was, to me, perfectly lovable.

I did not try to persuade myself that I had not truly loved Turoni; but I persuaded myself that she had not truly loved me—that she had been blind to my peculiar talents, and my singular merit. I could not remember that Turoni had ever praised me for aught but attending to her garden, and helping her to weave baskets.

She knew me to be both impulsive and unstable. She often urged me to cultivate greater patience and restfulness. She feared to commit herself to my keeping while I was without such wealth as would suffice to maintain her above want. In a word, she did not love me as I desired to be loved.

Lirusan loved me as I desired to be loved, and the effect of her love on me was as though a magician spoke to a bare tree, and it was suddenly covered with leaves and flowers.

Everything favoured this love; but the arrival of Meshran favoured it more than aught else, for his marvellous music so stirred the heart of Lirusan that it compelled her to utter something of the love with which it was laden.

The music I heard on this memorable night excelled all the music of Pagam, as the music-plays of Sahitam excel all the moon-feasts of Karom.

Almut had supped with us, and he went with us to the hall.

Now the seats in the first and second rows of our halls differ from those in the public halls of Karom, in this respect: each seat is so curved that

while those who sit thereon can view the stage, they can at the same time see each other.

The seats are also of various sizes, the smallest being for four, and the largest for twelve people.

The members of one family, or party, engage a seat the day before the music-play is given; and though there be an unoccupied space in such seat, none may use it, unless invited to do so.

Hethron and Ambileni sat in the centre of the seat; Taltar at the right hand of her father, and Almut to the right of Taltar. Lirusan sat to the left of her mother, and I to the left of Lirusan.

The members of one family are, in a measure, screened from the eyes of those in the next seats, while they are able, by looks and gestures, to convey to each other their approval or disapproval of the various passages of the music-play.

The stage was nearly dark, and it was festooned with black drapery, against which we saw a harp raised on a pedestal.

Presently the master-musician entered. It was indeed Meshran, but looking so sad that at first I knew him not. A black cloak hung from his shoulders. His foot-fall could not be heard. His eyes were fixed upon the ground as he walked to the harp. Then he leaned his arms upon it for a while, and once he looked up.

Then his arms slid down, and one loud chord was sounded, of a sadness and harshness that appalled

me. I started, and looked over to Hethron, but he observed me not.

The same chord again, and then an interweaving of delicate tones that seemed like the play of soft colours on rippling water.

But still it was sad and pensive. Then a fierce chord like a thunderbolt; and then, a mighty song of impassioned pleading.

The singer's voice seemed as though striving to pierce the walls of a dungeon, and the subdued pulsing of the harp seemed like the living spirit of hope which naught could silence.

Then we became aware of other music—not from the harp of Meshran—and we discovered that it proceeded from an unseen player, behind the curtains.

It was the deep voice of a viol, brought forth by a master, and, after a few notes, a soft chant of voices made an accompaniment to the melody from the viol, which seemed to me like the progressive and accumulative arguments of some great oration.

When the viol ceased, we heard one sweet voice: it was a woman who sang. Lirusan looked at me, and her lip trembled. Almut glanced at us both, but only for a moment.

Then a light from above was uncovered, and Meshran looked up, with an expression of rapture.

After a while, his voice joined in the song of the unseen maiden, as he again brought forth the trembling music of his harp.

But, suddenly, the voice of the viol sounded again—

low, thunderous, ominous, fateful, pitiless, inexorable, and the two sweet songs died away; but the soft chanting followed all the windings of the thunderous viol, and sang ever that love was lord of all, that hope would never fail, and that somewhere, at last, it would be well with all.

Then the voice of the maiden sounded again, sweet and low, yet as with tears. And the voice of Meshran answered full and strong, with all the might of manhood; and the chanting of the many voices became louder, till at length the deep voice of the viol melted into tenderness, while the rich chords from the harp seemed to be flung forth by Meshran like jewels scattered by the hands of a king.

Then all the lamps overhead were uncovered, the dark cloak fell from the shoulders of Meshran, and revealed him in the splendid garb of a prince, while his clarion voice pealed forth the answering love of one who had passed through tribulation and thralldom, and who was now come into full possession of those delights which all our hunger and all our hopes declare to be the inalienable heritage of man the immortal.

The hall rang with acclamations. Then the player of the viol, and the band of singers who sang accompaniments, came upon the stage, and grouped themselves around Meshran—the maiden, whose love-song he had answered, being next to him. And once more the viol, the harp, and sweet voices

blended in harmonies that raised us into the mystic and ineffable peace of love.

It was ended, yet not ended. My heart throbbed with it for days. And Lirusan? I would not look at her while my own eyes were brimming over. It had not yet ended for her.

On leaving the hall, Hethron and Ambileni walked together in silence, broken only by an occasional word from Hethron.

Almut and Taltar formed another silent couple. Lirusan clung to my arm with both her hands—I think, I am not sure—I was as in a dream.

When we came to the garden of Hethron, Almut parted from us. Lirusan and I, without a word, continued our walk up the garden. We were alone.

When I finally yielded her up to her sister and mother, I again said, *I choose the love of Lirusan.*

It was hours before I could compose myself to sleep. I recalled parts of the music-play, and that which was sweeter—the living reality of love breathed forth by her I loved.

I wrote a poem wherewith to greet Lirusan the moment I caught sight of her in the early morning. Then I calmed somewhat, and wrote much in my daily record.

I said, among other things: "Music is the voice of the eternal peace. Music dwelleth in the inner sphere. Music is the finest utterance of our finest thoughts.

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"Wouldst thou have fine thoughts? Do not think, but listen.

"He who hath been in the darkness, in the deeps, who hath been through fire, through the waters, is also he who hath ascended into heaven, and satisfied his soul with love, who hath known himself to be a priest and a king. He alone can hear the song of the immensities, deep as thunder, clear as the carol of birds, sweet as the voices of lovers. All things join in the eternal harmony--*Thou and I shall join therein.*"

Before Meshran left us, I sought him out, and opened my heart to him. He responded like a prince indeed, and told me the story of his love for the singer, who had, at first, only represented the bride in their music-play, but who became at length his true bride and wife.

CHAPTER VI.

A VISIT FROM SHARUN. I WRITE A POEM ENTITLED, "WHAT WILL HER ANSWER BE?" I FIND A PLACE OF REFUGE WITHIN THE PRECINCTS OF THE TEMPLE OF THE MOUNT MEDITATION.

I was now by no means anxious to be sent to Pagam at any moment, and was far from displeased when Almut hinted that, unless I made more rapid progress in my studies, it would be a long time before the brethren would send me forth under the seal of their authority and sanction.

And yet I learned more of the inner teaching of the brethren during this happy time than I had ever learned before.

Whichever way I looked at my affairs I was satisfied; until something happened upon which I had not for one moment reckoned.

There dwelt in the village of Andala, a day's journey from the house of Hethron, a certain man who possessed a quarry of the finest marble that is to be met with in any of the principalities of the Island. Being now very old, he had handed over to his eldest son the management of his property. Sharun, this eldest son, had become acquainted with Lirusan, for the quarry of his father adjoined the fields of

Hethron's brother, to whose children Lirusan had for some years been both mother and teacher.

I had heard Lirusan mention the name of Sharun; but when she spoke of him, to any of us, it was always with an air of indifference, or, at any rate, with what appeared to be an air of indifference.

Of the manner in which Sharun was received by Lirusan I can say nothing, for the reason that he arrived when I was engaged with Almut; but when I made my first meal in company with him, I could plainly see that Hethron and Ambileni, Taltar and Lirusan herself, regarded him with singular favour.

He was twenty-four years of age, well-built and active, not given to merriment, but able to laugh heartily at the pleasantry of others. Impulsive he certainly was not; unstable he was not. Not one unmeasured word of his, not one unconsidered gesture, indicated that he felt such intensity of emotion as might be expected in one who had fixed his love on so charming a woman as Lirusan.

Really, for aught a stranger could tell, Sharun might merely have been a brother, who had returned after a long absence.

On further reflection, however, I perceived that a stranger, judging from the demeanour of Lirusan towards myself, or from my demeanour towards Lirusan, would not have known that we loved each other as we did. So I sought to thrust aside all anxious thoughts and baseless imaginations.

Years afterwards, I learnt that my first thoughts as to the unexpected visit of this young man were quite correct. For once, I, so little given to suspicion, and to searching out the motives of others, divined the hand that had beckoned to Sharun—the mother of Lirusan had secretly warned the young man he would do well to come and claim the treasure he had once called his own.

Now for the second day, as duly and carefully set down in my record.

“It were impossible that one certain look, and one certain tone, in which, though but for one moment of this long day, Lirusan made me exult with a secret joy—it were impossible, I say, that such tokens could be granted by an honest maiden to any man whom she did not love with the most perfect devotion.

“Night, silence, solitude, and a dull pain that oppresses me unceasingly. Thrice might Lirusan have come to me when I was alone in the arbour of roses; but she came not.

“I solaced myself with my thoughts, as I best could, but not altogether successfully; for there came to me from the house, the strong voice of Sharun, accompanied by the tinkle of the cithern of Taltar.

“The good Almut must have divined something of my trouble, for, when I left him to-day, he put his arm around me, and presented me with a beautifully-wrought tablet of ivory, whereon he had made the following inscription:—

“*Thou seekest to know the will of the One, and to*

do it; fear not, therefore, neither be impatient. He will give thee the desires of thine heart. The One is the only Power, and in Him all good things are possible."

This I learnt by heart, and often repeated it to myself when my faith was sorely tried. I not only repeated it, I felt that it was true, for the past had proved it, the present promised it, and my own heart said that I, who could rejoice when roses were blooming in the gardens of others, would some day behold them blooming in my own.

Many small, unnoticed circumstances must be linked together before it can happen that a certain man meets a certain woman who is to be to him a chaplet of roses or a crown of thorns.

It much delights me to trace back, and see how the conjunction of apparently trivial incidents brings about that which is afterwards seen to be what the Sahitamas speak of as "*The will of the One*," or, as some call it, "The Sovereign Will." What the One wills, that alone can be, for that alone is the good in itself, and only the good endures. It is the inward that governs the outward, and not the outward the inward.

This reminds me of a reply which Hethron once made to a sophist of Pagam. The sophist said, "Our fate comes through the ruling of the stars."

Hethron replied, "And the ruler of all things ruleth the stars also."

The sophist said, "If the head of a man be of a

certain shape, certain acts must follow, so the man is neither to be praised nor blamed."

Hethron replied, "The will of the man can be disciplined to be one with the will of the One; the real man rules the carnal man, and the shape of the head will also be ruled thereby."

The sophist said, "There are soothsayers who teach that a man's fate is written on his hands."

"A man's fate," said Hethron, "is in his hands, not on them."

The sophist spoke as a Pagama, from a knowledge of externals only; Hethron spoke as a Karoma. To the Pagama matter is all; matter cannot perish; mind is evolved from matter by the age-long working of laws which must be unalterable laws, as simple as that the whole of something must be greater than a part thereof.

But now to trace out something of the development of my faith, from the combination of certain small events.

The love of Lirusan, calling forth to life artistic instincts which seemed to have died in me, and spurring me to be ever devising or carrying out something that would give me delight by delighting others, did now set me to have my doubts resolved by a device. I wrote a short poem, setting forth such a case as that wherein I now was.

I pictured my meeting with Lirusan, the music-play of Meshran, our talk in the garden, and the arrival of Sharun, whom all appeared to regard as

one whose suit would be favoured did he sue for the hand of Lirusan.

Then I said how foolish I was to torture myself by all manner of conjectures, when Lirusan herself could give me an answer which would silence my doubts at once and for ever.

The names used in this poem were not our names, and only Lirusan could have read in my poem the history of what had already passed between us, and the anticipation of that which was to come.

"Here," said I to myself, "is the rock whereon build our palace walls. Lirusan, who has ever responded to me, will now respond to my full and masterful setting forth of those things which do so closely concern us."

Next morning, all around me seemed to smile. I wanted to sing aloud—"Praise Him, for He is good, and His tender mercies are over all His works! Thank Him for life, thank Him for love!"

The poem was entitled, "What will her answer be?" and I passed my time very agreeably in imagining various convincing ways in which a maiden, placed as Lirusan was, might answer as a lover might wish to be answered.

But I caught no glimpse of Lirusan.

The morning meal was always served in that part of the piazza which faced the east, the too great glare of the sun being relieved by various beautiful plants which had climbed up the pillars, and offered

their scented cups to all who sat in the shade of the balcony.

I knew where Lirusan was accustomed to sit, and each time I approached the piazza, I looked to see if she were there.

At length I concluded that it was not prudent to draw observation by not coming to breakfast until she came, so I joined the others the moment I heard the "Sunrise Song" of that happy company.

Yes, they were all happy—they had no secrets. I had a secret, and was not happy. There are no secrets in the blissful abodes of Adaroni, where all know as they are known.

Yet did I not censure the concealment of my engrossing love for Lirusan. I thought it wise to wait, before I allowed it to be known by any but Lirusan herself; and, I observed, that she behaved even as I did. None could have guessed her secret.

The manner of Sharun to me was, at all times, unexceptionally pleasing; he was deferential without being coldly formal, and suave without being effusive. In fact, though in years he was younger than I, there were points in which he was my senior. He was, in every respect, a perfect Sahitama, sincere and kindly in all that he did or said.

How widely do the Pagamas differ from the Sahitamas in these minor points! A Pagama will stop you with a kindly smile, and ask how you are; but ere you can answer, he will tell you that it is raining, and that he hopes it will cease to rain at such an

hour, because he has promised to walk at that hour with a friend, whom he has not set eyes on for more than two years and a-half, this friend having been managing an important business in a far country, where it is so hot that even the natives of that part are not able to remain there during the summer months. If, at the close of this little oration, you inform your friend that you are quite well, he will tell you, as he hurries away, how glad he is to hear that you are well.

A Sahitama never tells you how such and such a drug affects him, for he takes none. He has no need to inform you that he has passed a very good night, for he has no bad ones. He could not tell you that he dare not eat the salted roe of one certain fish because it causes a pain down his left leg, for he eats in moderation of all things, and no ill effects follow either his eating or his drinking, or his doing of aught that it is his duty to do.

Lirusan sat not with us at the table, and nobody asked Taltar any questions about it; but it chanced that just as I left the piazza, Lirusan entered it from the music-hall. I came back then, and stayed a few minutes to give the early greeting, before I went to my lodge.

Here I re-read the poem, made a few alterations in the wording, struck out four weak lines, and replaced them by one strong one. I was pleased that I had an opportunity of polishing my verses before

submitting them to the fine judgment of the woman I loved.

Suddenly I heard her voice singing not far from the wall that shut me out from the rest of the world. I called out, "Lirusan!" and she answered, "Yes, Halek! Come to me, quickly."

I hastened down my garden, and, in a moment, stood by her side.

She was gathering roses, and she gave me one, as only she could have done it.

I hastily told her that I had composed a poem, every line of which I wished to examine with her, because it demanded an answer to a question of great importance.

I did not afterwards set down in my record the exact words I made use of in this speech to Lirusan, but I remember every word of what followed.

"I shall be delighted to go over your poem with you; but will it take much time?"

"Can you not give me half-an-hour?" I asked.

The light of her eyes faded somewhat, as she said, "To-morrow I would give half a day; but to-day Sharun has hired a pleasure-boat, wherein Taltar and I go with him up the lake, round to the hall of the merchants, where his brother holds an important office. The boat now waits, and I am gathering, as quickly as I can, a nosegay for the brother of Sharun."

I tried to speak, but could not.

Lirusan took my hand, and her voice was strangely

tender. "Dear Halek, all will go well with those who do well. Trust and be patient."

This somewhat soothed me, for Lirusan's words were one with those on the tablet given me by Almut.

Lirusan looked towards the house, and then at me. Then she said, "The instant we return—in the pavilion."

Again I could not doubt her look or the tone of her voice; but I felt grievously disappointed, and deeply wounded.

That day, under the severe catechising of Almut, my thoughts were continually wandering, and the gloom of some vague evil darkened all within me.

As the day wore on, my gloom increased; and, long before the boat returned to the steps, I was as one distraught, though outwardly calm and cold.

It was nearly dusk when I, at length, heard the measured sound of oars; and, walking down the piazza, on my way to the steps, I passed Ambileni, who chanced to be looking out of the window of her sitting-room.

My face must have betrayed my displeasure, for, as I passed the window, Ambileni stopped me, and said, "You have been lonely to-day without the young people; but lovers think only of themselves."

I looked enquiringly at the mother, who then whispered: "Sharun and Lirusan have been lovers for a long time."

I bowed and passed.

In a moment I was at the steps. Taltar had left

the boat; Sharun was just holding out his hand to Lirusan. I greeted Taltar with some careless remark, and then, as Lirusan and myself went together up the steps, I forced myself, with all the power that was in me, to say quietly and distinctly—"I met you to tell you I require no answer to the difficult question in my poem. Thanks, thanks, Lirusan, for the help you would have given me."

Taltar and Sharun were now in the avenue, Lirusan and I a few paces behind them. Lirusan hastened to my side, and said, in a low, pleading voice—"To-morrow."

I said, "Yes; or the day after."

With these words we parted.

* * * * *

The next day I rose from a labyrinth of dismal dreams, and poisonous reasonings.

The sun was risen, but it was night with me, and I seemed unable to come into another current of thought.

I held obstinately to my central theme: I have deceived myself. The love that seemed to be in Lirusan was in me. She did but reflect it, as she would reflect the love of any other who had an opportunity of showing his love for her.

I stood proudly on my Mount of Merit, saw no wrong in myself, and was too magnanimous to accuse another of wrong. All was well. The real man must now be wrought out of my rough-hewn marble,

the man who, seeking naught from others, cannot be wounded by others. Strength would come, light would come, and perfect peace.

With many such thoughts I walked steadily along the shaded path which led to the Mount of the Temple. I entered its silent precincts, took a draught of clear cold water from a cistern, and then seated myself on a stone bench which commanded a view of the neighbourhood.

I cast my thoughts back to that evening when, as I have recorded in "The Pilgrim," I felt that I must either have all or end all. I recalled the pain I felt when, on arriving at the house of Turoni, I found her enjoying the poetry of Zakku, and the music of Erimoth, while I, her lover, was shut out in the darkness.

Well do I know the nature of the cruel emotions that drove me then to the Diamond Mountains, and finally lost me the love of Turoni for ever. But I saw not that something of the same nature was again testing me to the uttermost fibre. Nor was I enlightened until I had paid the uttermost farthing. For a long time I knew not that I had to pay anything. The teacher of spiritual lessons gives us long credit, but, in the end, we *must* pay.

"Here," said I to myself, "will be found the peace that will abide with me, even as it at all times abides with the gracious and single-minded Almut, who never leaves the solitude of the Mount except to pay an occasional visit to his bosom friend, Hethron."

The torture I now suffered did not make me complain as one who fancies he is treated unjustly. Nay, it was even a sort of satisfaction to me, for I knew well that pain comes before peace, and that the pain would pass as though it had never been, while the peace would remain, because it had ever been—joy and harmony subsisting eternally in the very heart of all things.

In certain serene hours I had already perceived this peace, which is one with love, and I had a clear perception that out of this peace a man can have no satisfaction, no security, no grace, nor gladness, but only strife, discontent, helplessness, disgust, and weariness.

To toil merely that you can get, to get merely that you may have, to have in abundance that which you ought not to have, while thousands of your brethren have not enough—what satisfaction is to be found herein? Woe unto him who findeth satisfaction herein, for he shall not come out of his prison till he has paid the uttermost farthing! He that smote shall be smitten—smitten till he be healed.

All men seek an enduring satisfaction. I sought it. I had not found it, even in the heights to which I fancied I had attained. I knew that I had once known the true, the only satisfaction; but now I had lost it. I wandered in a maze of thoughts, knowing only that I knew not enough; but that if I honestly desired to know more, more would be given to me—

not through men, not through books, not through penances, vigils, nor meditations, but through prayer, obedience, and lowliness.

"Now," said I to myself, "the path is plain. Turn not to the right nor to the left, go cheerfully and steadily forward, till thou come to the sanctuary."

My courage now revived somewhat, and I already felt more drawn towards Almut, who had shown a fatherly affection for me.

I carefully examined his last helping words, and I noted that first I must desire to know the will of the One.

"Yes," said I, "I do desire to know it. And to do it? Yes, I am sure I would do it, if I knew it."

The tablet had—*He will give thee the desires of thine heart, and all good things are possible with the One.*

Here I admitted that I desired the love of Lirusan, and concluded that if this were a good thing for me, it would be given to me, and, that if it were not given to me, it was because it was not a good thing for me, and would bar me from having some better thing.

All this appeared to me to be wise teaching, and I thought that I had received it as a little child; but there came a cloud of remembrances, a mighty wave of pain, pride, and wrath. My heart became as adamant, when I thought of the way in which Lirusan had treated me. I could, I did, forgive her; but it was right that she should be cast into a prison,

as I was even then, and that she should not be suffered to come thence till she had paid the uttermost farthing.

This apparently righteous decree of mine afforded me a sort of gloomy satisfaction. I knew I was right; I knew she was wrong. I had in all things been honest, with the simplicity and the fervour of a youth. She, who had been false to her first lover, and false to her second, could be false to many more.

When she knew the intensity, and the sincerity, of my love, she should at once have told me that she was the promised wife of another.

Again, if she had allowed my love to blot out her love for that other, she should bravely have told him that another had won her, and she should not on any account have allowed him to take all her time, and keep her from me, who thought nothing but that my love had been accepted as truly as it had been given.

Thus did I harden my heart, and, though I perceived it not at the time, I was merely revenging myself upon Lirusan by resolving never to speak to her again.

So I, who hated all thoughts of returning evil for evil, and who boasted that I always returned good for evil now mingled with my resolve of seeking peace a secret satisfaction that I could make Lirusan suffer as she deserved to suffer.

Seek peace, and pursue it, saith the prophet. I sought peace, and kept my back turned to it, and found it not, for out of love there is no peace.

CHAPTER VII.

THE YOUNG MAN SAPHRONI. THE MYSTERY OF THE BROWN CURTAIN.

How long I sat there and meditated on my rankling wounds I know not, but at length Pilpad espied me, and told me that the Worshipful Brethren Almut and Zimri would be glad to have me join in the early meal.

It interested me to learn what admirable companions these two were to each other. Brother Almut had been inclined to the pleasures of the good-natured prodigal; Brother Zimri had been engrossed with the desire of having more money than other people. To be the richest man in Pagam had, for many years, been his one aim; now, his poverty was his treasure.

Brother Almut, Brother Zimri, a young student named Saphroni, Pilpad the janitor, a gardener, and a cook were the only dwellers within the walls. No women, save such as come to worship and to be instructed, were permitted to enter the enclosure.

After a while, Almut himself came to me, and, taking my hand in both his, gave me a cheery welcome.

"While the cook is preparing you something

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nice," said he, "I will introduce you to Brother Zimri."

Then we ascended by a gently-winding path, that was bordered with yellow lilies.

Brother Zimri, who was slowly pacing up and down a broad piazza, received me with a grave kindness, and, after brief salutation, he bade Almut show me my room.

I was conducted to a chamber floored with red stone. It contained a narrow couch in the middle of the room; a stone slab, built into the wall, served as a table on one side, and a smaller slab on the other side served as a shelf, on which stood a ewer and a coarse bowl.

"Brother Zimri calls this my room," said I, "O that it were indeed mine!"

"It is yours as long as you need it," said Almut; "you are a student of the Temple of the Mount. You might have come here from the first; but our friend Hethron, who told me that Alphariz had presented you with the signets and the sandals of a messenger, told me also that you intended to abide with him until you left Sahitam."

I should have set it down that although a prince may give the signets and the sandals to one of whose worth he is assured, and although the priest of his own household may conduct the ceremony of investiture, the Council of the Triers, consisting of a president, instructors, and examiners, alone have the power to appoint a messenger to any of the

missions under the authority of the Superior Comptroller.

The students are housed, fed, clothed, and instructed out of the money which belongs to the mother church, and which has been accumulating for many generations. Out of this rich fund the cost of the journeys of messengers is also defrayed.

All that is required of a student is to study, and to conform, in the minutest particular, to the ordinances of the central or mother church.

Methinks the requirements of the temples may be summed in one word—*obey*.

Though you learn all else, and do not learn to obey, none of the temples will recognise you, nor can you receive any appointment at their hands.

When I first resolved to become a messenger, I thought I was fit to be one, even as a young man may think he is a poet because he writes lines of a carefully-measured length; which is as though a man should call himself a carpenter merely because he can saw a plank into certain lengths.

Almut left me, and gently closed the door. After washing, I walked round the room much, it seemed to me, like a newly-caged lion. I counted the paces that took me once round—forty paces of a moderate length. The room was twelve paces long.

Each time I made my round I looked inquisitively at a strong, brown curtain which shut off one end of the room, without diminishing the walking space by more than a handbreadth.

Now, this curtain did not open in the middle; and each side thereof was fastened to the wall by loops, so that, unless one slipped two or three of these loops off their hooks, one could not see what was behind the curtain; moreover, although it did not reach to the ceiling, within a cubit, it was so high that no man could look over it.

It so happens, that from earliest manhood I had disliked prying into what was not meant for me to see, and hearing what was not meant for me to hear.

But I could not avoid wondering what was behind the curtain which was so carefully fastened, and so near to the ceiling that no man could look over it, unless he moved the couch and stood upon it.

At length it occurred to me that if I knelt on the floor, I could thrust my head under the curtain, and obtain a view of what it concealed. But this, again, was prying, and stooping to pry. This I could not do. So I walked round and round the room, still wondering why the curtain was so securely fastened, and what was the mystery thereof.

Once I thought that there might be nothing at all behind the curtain, and at last I thought that, for some good reason, it hid a door which opened into another room. I eventually learnt that there was a door behind the curtain.

But further conjectures were stopped, for a time, by a gentle tapping, and on going to the door, by which I had entered, I saw a youth, who told me,

with a winning smile, that he had been sent to show me to the refectory.

The gentle youth's name was Saphroni, and he became, ere long, my bosom-friend. Like myself, he was a student, but he belonged to a particular division of the disciples of Jeshua, and made a rule of never doing aught which the Great Teacher Jeshua would not have done.

I was greatly surprised to learn that Saphroni had already been admitted as a teacher in one of the temples of the city, for, although well-grown and manly in his speech, he had the face of a boy.

Our simple but delicious fare was seasoned with bright and kindly conversation, and, when the repast was concluded, Saphroni and myself went to the examination hall. After some little conversation, I asked Saphroni what he had in his room, and ascertained that he had everything that I had, except a curtain. I would not, just then, permit the youth to know why I was so inquisitive. Moreover, having made up my mind to remain here until I was sent to Pagam, I knew I would have plenty of time for finding out all I wished, and for taking Saphroni into my confidence, should I find him one on whom I could rely.

Now, leaving for the present all other matters, I will bring the subject of the mysterious curtain to a close.

When I retired to my room for the night, a small bronze lamp was given to me. I set it on the table,

opened my wallet, and took out a change of dress, a silken cap, together with my signets, my sandals, and a few tablets and letters that I specially valued. The first thing that somewhat vexed me was that I could not find that foolish poem which Lirusan was to have read with me. I wished now to see it; I had not destroyed it; but in my throes of indignation I had not noticed where I put it.

Then I chanced to observe in the curtain a small opening, hardly to be seen, but so large that if a man put his eye close to it, he could see through. I, however, would not try to peep through it.

I was walking round the room as before, when, by a sudden impulse which I did not control, I thrust my hand against the curtain, at that part where the hole was.

I was perfectly sure that I felt the shoulder and arm of a man. For a moment I was startled, but I presently reasoned the matter out on this wise: Some person stands there. If a good person, he will not harm me; if a bad one, he cannot, for the One who is love is also power; His love and his power are with me, for He is with me. Then I refused either to look again, or to put forth my hand again, or to ask if any person was there. I soon fell asleep, and slept tranquilly till daylight.

The next day, after breakfast, I begged Almut to grant me a conversation with him, alone. He did so. I set it down in my record, and it was to this effect:—

I: "Did you know that I would some day come to stay here?"

He: "I felt sure of it."

I: "May I ask why you felt sure of it?"

He: "I noted your face when you were listening to the music-play. I knew that you would soon be in some difficult straits, for the mother of Lirusan had long ago told me something which she had favoured, but which her husband had not favoured. The mother asked for my advice."

I: "Was that room specially meant for me, or kept for me?"

He: "It was."

I: "For what reason?"

He: "Because it had been the room of Kalito, the finest harper of Sahitam. He left that room four years ago, and none has had it since. It was kept till we should again have a musician among us."

I: "How came you to know that I play the harp?"

He: "Hethron has told me much about you, and our president has gone carefully through the record of your pilgrimage—the book you presented to Alphariz, the Prince."

I: "And was there any special reason why the president should take this trouble?"

He: "In good time, Brother Halek, you will discover that he has a special reason for this, and now I will answer no more questions."

I: "I pray you—let me ask one more."

He: "One more, then."

And I was so persistent that I ceased not till I had ascertained that the door between my room and the next was always kept open for the sake of allowing a current of fresh air to pass through; that the thick curtain was there to prevent the air from blowing immediately on the sleeper; that it was Kalito who had stretched the curtain so tightly out against both walls, because when the wind was high, the constant flapping of the curtain was displeasing to him; that after he had left them for Adaroni, his harp was placed in the doorway, because when there, it occupied nothing of the space of either room, and was not in the way.

All was now explained; the small hole in the curtain was not used in any way by anybody, and never would be. What I thought the shoulder of a man standing up, was merely the shoulder of the harp, draped with woollen cloth to protect it from the dust and heat.

Shortly after this conversation, Zimri told Pilpad, in my hearing, to let all who were then within the precincts of the temple be told that a second Kalito was come among them, and would give them music every day he was with them.

Now, the Sahitamas do not flatter; so I was much gratified, and began by playing some of the best passages from that work of mine which I called "Night and Morning," as recorded in "The Pilgrim."

Every day, Zimri, who was a fair judge of music,

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would say to me, "What playest thou?" and I always answered, "Night and Morning;" for, although I was young when I composed this music-play, it has ever been considered fine music, and hearing it again greatly revived my spirits.

At length Zimri pretended to make a mistake about the title, and called it "*From Morning till Night.*"

Then I gave up playing pieces of my own composition.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHARACTER OF SAPHRONI. A TREATISE BY
ALMUT.

Five or six days of this changed life: studying, playing on the harp, gardening, strolling about, conversing with Saphroni, did much to mitigate the fierceness of my anger—for it was anger that I felt, and fierce anger, though at the time I deceived myself as to the nature of my feelings. At length, however, I began to see that I should have written to my kindly host, my warm friend Hethron, to inform him as to my abode, and the progress of my affairs.

So I wrote as follows: "Beloved Hethron, thou and I being conversant with the ways of men, and at all times reasonable, are not likely to hurt each other wittingly or unwittingly. Thou wilt not misinterpret my silence. It will gladden thee to know that I am now ashamed of my negligence in the matter of study, and of my great disinclination to obey the orders of others. I am changed in these points. For the rest I may inform thee that I go not beyond the walls of the Mount, and hope soon to be sent on a mission. Ere I set out from Sahitam I will visit thee and bid thee farewell.

"Greet all the kindly and honest people of thy

family from thy friend Halek, who was ever an unwilling framer of courtly epistles."

This letter was delivered by Saphroni, who delivered it to one of the little maids of the household of Hethron. It needed no reply, and I expected none.

Saphroni became my dearest friend, and has remained, in my estimation, flawless and peerless.

I had more to learn from him than he had to learn from me. I wrote an edifying treatise on the sure means whereby a man may attain peace—Saphroni had attained it; but ever comported himself towards me as though I were a wise teacher, and he my humble disciple. I devised comprehensive and elegant sentences, setting forth the wisdom of humility—Saphroni was humble without appearing to know it. I played every day much on the harp, and pointed out to Saphroni many skilful effects I produced by certain combinations—Saphroni knew more of the mysteries of music than I did, and played better; but it was long before I found it out.

The chief difference between us was that he told nobody he was a musician, not even the brethren; never played till he had been invited to play; and when he did play, he never pointed out anything as having been discovered by himself.

If never brilliant, he was never gloomy. Gentle and gracious he was at all times. He seldom ran, he never called aloud, he was seldom surprised, and never

confused. He looked into your face with honest and kindly eyes. He was always willing to hear people talk about themselves; he seldom spoke about himself. He never reproved, he never ridiculed, he never doubted your word. For my part, I found no fault in him.

But enough, at this time, concerning Saphroni, for I would here set forth, in order, something of the instruction I received from Brother Almut, together with the decision of the Council of Triers as to my setting out for Pagam.

The following is a summary of much of the teaching of Almut, as given in his treatise:—

A TREATISE BY ALMUT.

FIRST DIVISION.

See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the Mount, by the teaching of Jeshua.

1. Knowing the Truth.
2. Fearing the Name.
3. Loving the One.

SECOND DIVISION.

1. Humility.
2. Purity.
3. Love.

THIRD DIVISION.

1. Graciousness.
2. Patience.
3. Silence.

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KNOWING THE TRUTH.

In the beginning it is the One that worketh in thy darkness, and says, "Let there be light."

The light is good. After a period of darkness, the light shines in thee again, and more good things are brought forth, till the divine man is fully formed within thee, the man in the image and likeness of the One. Then all things are to be governed by this divine man, which is thy true self, and one with the One. Then, at last, all is known as being very good.

Then, after temptations and tribulations, strivings, defeats, and agonies, thou attainest the final triumph, and thou knowest that all things are thine; thou dwellest in the eternal peace of love.

FEARING THE NAME.

This includes reverencing, cherishing, and protecting the good that is in others, as well as the good that is in thyself. Fearing the name means obeying the laws of the One, and causing others to obey them.

LOVING THE ONE.

This means loving to know the truth, and loving to do the good deeds which are the fruits of loving the truth. If thou love the One, thou lovest the All. If thou love any one, it is a step towards loving the One, and the All.

Thou canst not serve God in any way except by serving man.

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HUMILITY.

He that hath not humility hath nothing. He that layeth not his foundation on humility, buildeth in vain—storms will destroy his proud palace, and make it a desolation.

He that hath humility hath all things, for he that hath humility hath love, and *love* containeth all things.

But he that desireth humility, and striveth after it by the patient and faithful doing of his duty, will attain humility, because by this faithful and patient doing of his daily duties he hath been preparing for the coming and the indwelling of love. What the Prophet says of love, may be affirmed of humility, thus: Humility suffereth long, and is kind; humility envieth not; humility vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; endureth all things.

Humility is, as it were, the soft accompaniment to the clarion song of love.

PURITY.

The flesh warreth at all times against the spirit. Wisdom cometh to the pure, and also abideth with them. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they alone are able to love. Love is life; to be carnally-minded is death.

LOVE.

If thou hast not learned to give in love, graciously, to all men, thou canst not receive the things of love.

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A cup of water, a word, a look, a thought, given in the name of love, giveth much to the giver; while a purse of gold, not given with love, giveth naught to the giver, but the barren satisfaction of those who have naught to give but riches.

Humility, purity, love; these three are always together. Where one is, the other two are; where one is wanting, the other two are wanting.

GRACIOUSNESS.

Graciousness and gentleness are the delicate spices which flavour the coarse food of this lower sphere. They are as the perfume to the rose, as the song to the bird, as the tender feeling which a musician puts into his playing.

Graciousness and gentleness have this great value for him who would rise, that they can be manifested in all his intercourse with others. He can show it in softening a harsh tone or a savage look. It can be shown in his choice of words, or by his silence. But to make graciousness and gentleness habitual, demands much repression of the lower, temporary self, constant watchfulness, and hard striving.

As graciousness and gentleness must be attained before we can possibly dwell with those who are always gracious and gentle, it would seem as if some people would require to live many different lives before their graciousness and gentleness are habitual.

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PATIENCE.

To bear with patience the oft-repeated faults of a brother, to bear with patience the oft-repeated faults of thyself, demands much wisdom in the inward parts.

But the patience that endureth meekly through years of unrecognised and thankless toil, in the performance of even the humblest duties of a household, this is indeed a noble jewel; shapeless it may be, dull and rough, but in the day when the Great King maketh up His jewels, it will shine forth, and be unto Him as a peculiar treasure.

SILENCE.

And when thou hast attained to all these things—
be silent.

After sweet music, silence is also sweet. Moreover, in thy silence thou wilt hear many things.

* * * * *

The teaching of Almut had been continued for exactly twenty days, when he directed me to go over this summary, and tell him if I agreed with it, and would accept it as the basis upon which I framed my own teaching of the Pagamas.

The venerable brother was much pleased when I said that all my ideas as to the principles of progress in good were in accord with this teaching; and he then told me that if I would consent to begin my teaching by taking charge of a certain small district,

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he had been empowered to tell me that within seven days I would receive my commission, and be brought commodiously and expeditiously to the temple of which I would be the one officer. He also assured me that I would only be required to remain for one year as a noviciate under their authority; and that at the end of that year I would be permitted to relinquish my charge.

Some clouds were now dispersed; and I would not suffer my thoughts to dwell on memories of Lirusan. I looked forward to the great things I would do when I had charge of a temple, with none to command this thing or that, as long as I laboured honestly. I resolved that when I left Pagam, I would bring a body of disciples with me into Karom. Yes! the timid youth who had bent under Kobesh, and fared forth from Pagam alone, would some day leave it with a company of zealous truth-seekers, whom he has helped out of the darkness of indifference, and the mire of carnality.

That night, I lay down and fell asleep with a feeling of perfect satisfaction. I had, at last, humbled myself to go at the bidding of the brethren, and to teach under their directions.

I also resolved that, ere I departed from Sahitam, I would say some gracious words to Lirusan, and assure her of my forgiveness.

Next day, while the dark-robed brethren of the Temple of the Mount were arriving, Saphroni and I paced up and down the piazzas, and held affectionate

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converse with each other. It grieved him that I would so soon be taken from him; but he promised that, if the brethren permitted it, he would send me letters.

He, himself, did not expect to be sent anywhere on a mission till he was at least two years older; and he also said that, when my appointed year in Pagam was come to an end, it was reasonable to hope that he would still be at the Temple of the Mount, rejoicing to welcome me back, and to hear the recital of my adventures.

Shortly before noon, Pilpad informed me that the brethren, being now in conclave assembled, were awaiting my attendance.

CHAPTER IX.

I AGAIN APPEAR BEFORE THE TRIERS. THE SEVERE
RULES IMPOSED ON ME BY THE BRETHREN OF
THE MOUNT.

After I had saluted Brother Dumi (the Intendant) and the brethren, I took my seat opposite them, and noted, to my extreme satisfaction, that one and all regarded me with an affectionate interest.

The Intendant requested me to hand him the sealed casket containing the last tablet which had been given me. I handed it to him, and he straight-way opened it, took out the tablet, and gave it to Pilpad, who deposited it on a certain shelf. I was never enlightened as to the nature of what had been written on this tablet.

The Intendant then addressed me on this wise:—

“Brethers Almut and Zimri have had much familiar intercourse with thee; I have made a careful study of the record of thy life as it stands in the book thou hast written for Alphariz, the Prince; thou hast declared thyself willing to base thy teaching of the Pagamas upon such of our teaching as has been from time to time delivered unto thee at the hands of the brethren; we do now, therefore, appoint thee to take charge of our temple,

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but newly built in the town of Khoshek, where thou didst serve thine apprenticeship to the business of a jeweller. Thou knowest many of the inhabitants of that town, and wilt be able to begin thy labours among men who knew thee in thy youth, and who have naught against thee.

“Moreover, we are now able to draw up for thy guidance, when thou hast taken upon thee the office of teaching in one of our temples, certain rules as to what thou shalt do, and also as to what thou shalt not do.

“These rules, which I shall read to thee before the brethren, are to be strictly observed by thee for the space of one year, at the end of which time we rescind them, and thou shalt then draw up for thyself such rules as may then appear good unto thee.”

INSTRUCTIONS AS TO WHAT THOU WILT BE REQUIRED TO DO.

“1. Study each day, with prayer and meditation, some pregnant passage contained in The Book.

“2. Examine each day what seems to have been thy finest deed during that day, and see if it be without taint of self-love.

“3. Gather the poor and the unhappy into thy temple, and declare unto them the gospel of wealth and joy.

“4. Set down in the record of each day only the evil thou hast done.

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"5. Send us, every three months, an account of the poor and unhappy whom thou hast brought into the way of peace."

INSTRUCTIONS AS TO WHAT THOU SHALT NOT DO.

"Thou shalt touch no manner of harp, flute, cithern, sackbut, dulcimer, cornet, or viol, nor teach men to touch them, nor make thee any manner of song.

"2. Thou shalt write no manner of poem, nor frame, with sought-out words, any tractate on humility, or on any other virtue; nor shalt thou deliver orations to terrify the weak, so that they flee to thee for help.

"3. Thou shalt not seek to unveil the occult properties of anything.

"4. Thou shalt not consort with diviners, astrologers, or false prophets, nor with them that gather things of the earth, nor with them that gather and store up the names of these things, for all these things are but fleeting shows, and the names thereof are but sounds that shall perish utterly.

"5. Thou shalt teach nothing but how men can find rightness; for love, joy, and peace are not to be found out of rightness.

"6. Sit not with perfumers, nor with them that grind the faces of the poor; eat not of their delicacies; neither be thou arrayed in their purple.

"7. Speak neither good of thyself, nor yet evil, for good people will see thy good, and evil people will see

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thine evil. Neither say to any man what thou couldst do, wert thou not forbidden by these rules. Neither speak of these rules to any man; they are for us all, as brethren."

* * * * *

"For the space of one year, then, it will be with thee as though thou hadst left thy last life behind thee, as though thou hadst slept awhile in Adaroni, and hadst been then, of thy free-will, re-born into another life in the Island, that thou mightest add to thy store of wisdom the treasures of another and a higher life. It must be with thee even as it was with Rimnag, whose history thou has clearly set forth in thy book of wise teachings. Thou must cease to be Halek. Choose what name thou wilt, and thou shalt be known to us by that name in thy new life.

"If thou wouldst now say aught to us, thy brethren, we will hear thee, with pleasure, and with due attention."

I replied—"I would say this: In that volume of mine, which the Worshipful Intendant has named, there stands the story of Rimnag—a man whom I knew well. He was once a helpless and a besotted lover of all carnal pleasures. He was, at the same time, so puffed up with ideas of his own talents and virtues, that he estranged all friends, and at last lost the love of his very betrothed. One of the wise physicians of Karom undertook his difficult cure, on condition that he would, for a certain time, cease to

be Rinnag. This man, who believed that he was marked out to become a prince, was told that he must become a porter, and labour in a far-off city, where he was not known, save as a poor man who wrought hard for a meagre hire. I set down this story, and it is true; but, Worshipful Brethren, there is no likeness between us.

"Rinnag was vain, selfish, carnal, ever a wine-bibber and a merry-maker; he cared not for poems or music; he was, moreover, false of speech, and niggardly, a generous rewarder of no man."

"Brother Halek," said the Intendant, "we do not think thou art such an one as this Rinnag—wert thou such an one thou wouldst not be here. We will not argue with thee; we seek not to persuade thee. Thou art not yet a prince among the brethren of the Temple of the Mount, and if thou wouldst rise to be a prince among us, thou must first bear burdens, and live unknown in a land of travail and tears."

"I do not think," said I, "that I can possibly keep all these rules. I cannot say that I will promise to keep them, nor even that I will try to keep them."

"Take them, written here on this thy most secret tablet, which thou mayest show to none. Read them over to-night, in the quiet of thine own chamber, and set a mark against such rule as thou thinkest thou will be unable to keep."

"In the first place," said I, "I would set a mark against my going to Khoshek, of all places in Pagam."

"Consider this to-night," said the Intendant, "and when thou appearest again before us, bring thy tablet of rules, that we may see, by the marks thou settest to them, which thou thinkest thou canst keep, and which thou thinkest thou canst not keep."

This ended the conference of the brethren. They came about me, spoke to me most lovingly and encouragingly; one telling me that when he had been sent to Pagam he had taken with him a set of rules which were, to mine, as a rod of iron to a silken band.

In vain did they try to soften me; I remained obdurate and unresponsive.

At last they left me alone, and I continued sitting there. It became dark, and I still sat there. Supper was served. Pilpad called me, and entered the examination hall, but observed me not. Saphroni called me, with his silvery voice, and in a tone of distress. I relented somewhat, and answered him.

He came to me in the darkness, put his arms round me, and implored me to tell him what ailed me.

"Nothing, or everything," said I, harshly. "I will tell thee to-morrow."

"Come and sup with us, and then play to us on the harp, with those strong hands of thine."

"Friend," said I, "I would rather play a tune on Almut with a strong cudgel—were he strong enough to bear it, and were he not one of the dearest old men that I have ever met."

"If so dear, what hath he done?" asked Saphroni.

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"What Zimri hath done," said I.

"And what have they both done, that thou art in such ill humour?"

"Treated me as though I were a boy, like thyself," said I, contemptuously.

But Saphroni merely laughed at this, and said he admired the earnestness with which I could say things I did not mean. Then he drew me to the supper table, and in a short time Almut and Zimri completed what Saphroni had begun—they banished all my moroseness, and made me acknowledge to myself that, if I could not live in concord with the Sahitamas, it would be impossible for me to accommodate myself to the repulsive manners of the Pagamas, or to endure, in silence, their barbarous unkindliness.

After supper, Saphroni and I were walking up and down a pleasant path behind the house of the brethren, when Almut came towards us, and accosted us in a cheery voice. We both greeted him, then he turned to walk with us, and, drawing my arm through his, he pressed it for a moment to his side, and said: "How cool, how soothing, how pure this evening air when all is still!"

"Thou, thyself, art pure and still," I replied. "Windy tempest and a torrent of rain would better accord with my feelings."

Here Saphroni slipped away.

Almut said: "There cometh after the rain a day serene. All things are necessary for thy growth ;

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things thou seest, and things thou seest not ; ministrations thou comprehendest, and ministrations thou comprehendest not. All things work for the good of him who seeks good."

"For years have I sought good with all my heart," said I.

"Then for years hast thou been gaining good ; and if thou still seek good, thou shalt receive yet more."

"I know that," I replied ; "but at times all is bright, then, suddenly, all is dark. At times, love is in me, and again frost and thick snow ; peace to-day, and to-morrow a tempest."

We now walked in silence for a little while, when Almut suddenly stopped, and asked me if I read much in the songs of the prophets.

"Yes," said I, "I have read them many a time."

"Canst thou not, then, find therein an answer to thyself, even as Jeshua did when he was tempted in the wilderness?"

"I can think of no answer," said I ; "moreover, it may be that if I found one I could not feel it."

"Dost thou remember that the great messenger to the gentiles, he to whom Jeshua spake ; he who was weak and small, and infirm ; he who suffered beyond all other messengers—dost thou remember that he did exhort men to rejoice always?"

"I remember that," said I.

"Now, *always*," continued Almut, "means whether it be night with thee, or day ; whether thou be in peace, or in tribulation."

"Can a man be sad and joyous at the same time?"

"Spiritually, yea," replied Almut, "for it is only the lower man that can be sad; the real man dwelleth at all times in peace, and the lower man must be raised till he be at one with the higher. Remind thyself that sadness is only for a time; that great pains usually lead to great delights. Remind thyself that he who is never sad is more to be pitied than he who is often sad."

"Good brother," said I, "already is a change come over me: thy kindness hath refreshed me. I know that I am inclined to be impatient, and at times even rebellious; but I know that I shall fight through these evils, and through all others, though they compass me about like bees."

"Now," said Almut, "I will tell thee where thou mayest find an answer to thy complaining of thy changes, thine inability to abide in perfect peace: Read that song of the prophet which begins: *Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not thyself from my supplication.* Then, thou readest: *My heart is sore pained within me;* and then thou findest the word that driveth back the tempter: *Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.* So I say, that if thy pain make thee call to the living God, thou shouldst rejoice that thou art so pained; whereas he that forgetteth God, and rejoiceth in his prosperity, should be sad that he rejoiceth."

Now was I raised by this loving man into a realm of sweet and reasonable thoughts; but his kindness

did not stop here, for he brought me a little roll containing the Parables of Shomez, the gardener, and said that I could find therein much wise teaching which would be of service to me, if I ever undertook a mission to the Pagamas.

Before I went to sleep, I read several of these parables, and particularly liked one called "Planting a Seed."

I think it was from this parable that Almut had drawn his words concerning the ministrations we comprehend, and those we comprehend not. I copied the conclusion of the parable into my record, and this is it:—

FROM A PARABLE BY SHOMEZ, THE GARDENER.

The tree being now full grown, and laden with ripe fruit, the gardener speaketh on this wise to himself: "I am a good gardener, and this tree is grown thus because of my knowledge, and my care. I have seen to it that I set the seed in good ground, in a good position; I have supplied the roots of the tree with all that the tree hath need of; I have pruned it, cleansed it from noxious things, mulched it, watered it, dug about it, and provided all those things whereby the tree liveth and beareth fruit. These be my ministrations. There are also the ministrations of the sunshine and the shade, the winds, and the rains; all of which things I comprehend."

Here endeth the knowledge of many a gardener;

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but there be gardeners who know not that every leaf on the tree taketh in food from the air in which the tree hath its being; even as our souls are fed from the unseen spirit wherein we live and move. And it was said by the law-giver of old: *Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.*

The gracious kindness of Almut, and the pleasant hour I had passed in reading the Parables of a Gardener, seemed to have dispersed many of the clouds which hung around me; and when my beloved Saphroni had sat with me for a while, I felt sufficiently tranquil to lay me down in peace for the night.

CHAPTER X.

A STORM; A MEDITATION; A RESOLUTION.

The dawn of a new day; but to me it seemed rather as the coming of a darker night. Seeing that I had laid me down in peace, I cannot explain why I should not have awakened in peace; but I must record the fact that the instant I was awake, ere I had time to look up, a host of unkindly and ungenerous thoughts concerning the way in which the brethren had treated me, stormed in upon me, and made me feel that it would be a hard matter for me to take their yoke upon me, and yield an unquestioning obedience to all their commands.

What! Should I, who had made renunciation after renunciation, be now called upon to surrender all the precious prerogatives of manhood, and asked to begin a new life as a hireling or a beggar?

In my overweening arrogance I looked upon the aged brethren as withered recluses, who had never known the enthralling delights of the sovereign passion. I was as yet unable to comprehend their unvarying placidity, their easy self-control, their graciousness, their grand lowliness. It seemed to me that they did not hear the delicate music of the inner spheres, and that they dwelt beyond the

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prophetic instincts of the artist with his unspoken hopes, and his unassailable faith that he shall find his perfect song at last.

If the sacred flame of the poet, the maker of lovely forms, had ever burnt within their hearts, methought it had long ago died out, leaving only grey ashes.

I said, "I will do what I can now do. It may be that in a little time, I also may cease to look for a coal of fire in the grey ashes of what had once been an ardent soul."

But I must decide what I would choose to do—undertake a mission among the Pagamas as a master teacher, who looks only to the teaching and counseling of the One, or become an officer of a temple, under the authority of the brethren.

I was fully resolved that I would, as soon as possible, set out for Pagam, and ease my chafing spirit with the balm of congenial labour; and I strengthened my resolution by reminding myself that the mightiest impulses given to the world's progress had come through men who had separated themselves from the feelings, the teachings, and the manners of the generation in which they were born.

What secretly galled me was that these brethren would compel me to accept for myself, what I had thought needful only for the besotted seeker of carnal pleasures. I could not entertain the idea that what had been good for Rimnag would be good for me,

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neither could I admit that the judgment of the brethren was in all things infallible.

I set myself, however, to review my past life in Pagam, in Karom, and in Sahitam, as clearly set forth in my volume, "The Pilgrim," and, strange to say, the first point upon which I dwelt was, that I was in certain important particulars cast in the same mould as my father. He was certainly of a most generous disposition, and gave liberally to the poor; but when opposed in his designs he was both hasty in his anger, and violent in his resentment.

I recalled the anger I felt when Erimoth spoke to me with severity, I recalled the wrath which was roused in me by what seemed to be presumption on the part of Zakku when he gave me brotherly counsel, and I felt certain that much as I admired and loved Saphroni, it would be impossible for me to receive an indignity at his hands without having a delicate revenge, which I would call by some other name.

I had long ago perceived that when I had urged Turoni to go with me, against her wishes, to the Hall of the Harpers, nothing but her absolute surrender to my wishes had satisfied me. In that matter, I had ever perceived that I would rule, with gentleness if it would serve, but if gentleness would not serve, I would rule with a rod of iron. I had long admitted to myself that had Turoni become my wife, and had not been submissive as a child, she would have roused in me that spirit which kills love—the spirit of ruling.

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When I looked into my generosity, I saw that it had been chiefly shown by giving away that which I myself did not need. I could not avoid seeing that my generosity had always been pleasant to me, not only because I gratified others, but because I desired to be as a munificent prince, who is so great himself that all his possessions are but as dust on the wheels of his chariot.

Then, again, I was willing to admit that when in Karom I had been inordinately ambitious of excelling as an artist.

It is true that the music and the poems of the Sahitamas soon convinced me that I could not hope to excel as an artist; but I never gave up the idea of excelling. Then I set myself to excel as a teacher of the children of Alphariz; and finally I resolved to excel as a writer of histories, this manner of writing being much esteemed among the Sahitamas. I spoke once of this to Alphariz, the Prince, and he commanded me to write a book for his library. This I did, and both Alphariz and the noblemen of his court were never weary of commending my work.

Their hearty commendation of my book, however, was not altogether good for me, and my admiration of these badges of a messenger, the diamond sandals, and the ruby signets, made me occasionally think that I was really nobler than all who had not so been distinguished; even as among a certain tribe of Pagamas, he who has rendered important services to

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his chief is proud of being permitted to paint one side of his nose blue and the other red.

Then, again, I began to suspect that it was my self-love which had been so deeply wounded by Lirusan's apparent preference for a younger man than I. The possibility that she could love another better than she loved me, or think another to be worthier of her love than I was, was something that never entered my mind, and when I found myself face to face with it my wrath overpowered me.

There yet remained one thing, the greatest thing, as it then appeared to me—in which excellence would be beyond all other excellence—I resolved that I would excel as a messenger of peace. Now, I am certain that I was led into this by my honest desire of doing good to the unhappy poor who fill the cities of Pagam. The misery of their faces remains ever with me, the viciousness of their youth, the villainy of their manhood, the emptiness of their old age, had ever seemed to be most pitiable, and if not easily remedied, at least remediable, for I would base my labours on the fact that all men desire to be happy, and that most men desire an enduring happiness.

Thus did I search out the inmost of my past life; and I at length admitted that the brethren were wise in the marking out a course so difficult for me to follow. But I was not bound to follow it at once, nor at once to put myself under their authority. I thought it quite likely that, when I was ten, or perhaps twenty, years older, I would be glad to take

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shelter under a roof with kindly brethren for my companions; but I could not bring myself to yield to them at once.

I would first have the pleasure of asserting my right to do what seemed right to me; and to do it in the way that seemed the right way to me. I resolved that on the morrow I would tell them, most respectfully, that while I accepted their teaching, and admired their virtues, I would not join the fraternity at once; but that I hoped to do so after I had carried out, to success or to failure, certain ideas I had long cherished, and which I believed to be in accordance with the teaching of the Counsellor, who was the express image of the Father.

I began to look at the list of commands as to what I was to do, and was not to do.

In the first place, I would rather wait another year than go to Khoshek, where I had been known as the servant of a tradesman.

Then I considered the prohibitions.

First prohibition—no music, not even a tinkling dulcimer. It is not wrong to love playing on a harp, nor is it wrong to be pleased that you win approbation for your playing. I went through all their prohibitions, and placed, not without a certain contemptible satisfaction, a large black mark opposite each rule.

With the rules laid down for what I must do, I could find no fault, nay, I approved of them, for I had already been accustomed to the observing of such

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rules. Nor did I object to the rule that I should send to the brethren, at stated times, an account of the numbers I had aroused from besotted indifference to an earnest seeking after rightness.

At length, having carefully and honestly considered everything, I went to sleep without one anxious thought or the slightest misgiving, for I sought first of all to know the will of the One, and to do it. Were it the will of the One that I should so change my life as to become a servant instead of a master, I should be made to perceive it was his will. At present it appeared to be only the will of the brethren.

CHAPTER XI.

SAPHRONI AND I BATHE IN THE LAKE TILTARIM. I CALL MY FIRST DISCIPLE, AND HE DECLARES THAT HE WILL FOLLOW ME.

A clear, sweet voice called "Halek!" and I awakened. It was early morning. Rosy and golden gleams transfigured the grey clouds; birds were singing and calling. For a little while I knew not where I was, and my thoughts surged forth to Lirusan. I must have been dreaming of her. She had been to me as the sunrise after a sad night. It was her spring smile that had brought forth again in me the blossoms of poetry and music, and the unspeakable tenderness of love.

It was the love of Lirusan that had hung golden embroideries on the grey clouds of my life; but the glory is passed away; it is now common daylight, and I must forth to labour.

Farewell, Lirusan! I shall see thee to-day for the last time; I shall bid thee farewell for ever. It was spring, and it is winter. It will be spring again, and when all evil weeds have been torn up and cast out, roses will bloom again in the garden of my soul.

Again a clear voice calling "Halek!" And again

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did I behold Lirusan gathering roses for the brother of Sharun. I recalled my rushing to her side, and then her question, and then her look towards the house, and then the cruel day during which I waited for her, while my lively imagination framed a thousand trivial matters that were as gall and wormwood to me. Then my turning from her—my mocking words—her silence.

For the third time I heard the clear call, "Halek!" exactly as Lirusan had called me the last time she had smiled upon me.

At length I opened my eyes, and looked around my miserable cell. I knew now that it was Saphroni who had been calling me, as he had often called me before, that we might go together and bathe in the lake.

When Saphroni and I used to walk down to the lake we always had much pleasant conversation; but this morning I was utterly weighed down, and, foolishly enough, nay, wrongly, I began to give some of my gloomy thoughts to Saphroni.

"Thou art but a boy," said I, "beware how thou beginnest to love. I shall soon leave thee, and I would warn thee: Examine well the beginning of love. I never did this, so now I have with pain to examine the end thereof. But this good comes at last: that I am done for ever with the love of man for woman. At its best a dream, at its worst a disease. Jeshua said that in heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage. I will be thankful

that now in mine old age my heart is set on rightness first."

"But," urged Saphroni, "a man's rightness may lie in loving a noble woman."

"Well put," I rejoined; "but if she love him not, his rightness lies in leaving her. This has been my lot from my youth up, and I have suffered much pain through love; so now I rejoice that I am come into a plain path, leading upwards to realms of bliss unspeakable."

I had quite saddened this ingenuous youth, and I soon felt that how well soever I might preach the gospel of joy to the Pagamas, I was now certainly using my power on the side of gloom.

"I have failed," said I, "in all things. Behold yon fisher, mending his net: I desire with my whole heart to have one man to believe in me with his whole heart—since no woman can do so. I have daily spoken graciously, and done some kindly act to that fisher. If I now went to him and said 'Leave all, and follow me,' what would he do?"

"Nothing," answered Saphroni.

"Thou hast well said, Saphroni; because—only thou art too kindly to say it—in me is nothing."

"Nay," exclaimed Saphroni, "there is much in thee—thou art a teacher with power—but thou still dwellest in the wilderness."

"Dost thou then believe in me with thy whole heart?"

"Yes, master, with my whole heart."

"I say, then, to thee, Saphroni, Follow me."

He looked down for an instant, and a bright gleam from the newly-risen sun illumined his fair countenance; then he looked suddenly up, and said, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest."

The sudden avowal of this young man's belief in me did for a while so astonish me that I could not speak.

Then he: "Whither goest thou?"

I told him that I had resolved not to labour under the authority of the Triers; but that, trusting to the inner teaching of the One, as promised to us in the book of Adaroni, I would go forth to Pagam by myself, and there work in the vineyard of the Great King, according to such wisdom and strength as should be vouchsafed to me.

Then Saphroni told me that, although he had rejoiced to be under the care of the Council of Triers, and might reasonably hope to receive at their hands a suitable appointment, when they judged him old enough, he was willing to give up all his hopes, and join me in my mission to the Pagamas.

This was a new and a delightful thing for me, and I thought of a great prophet who was many years before any believed in him, save one woman.

No woman had believed in me. Turoni and Shashuna, who had known me for years, had not believed in me as I desired. It seemed to me that even Lirusan had not believed in me; but that she had merely been carried away by the rush of my

own ardent emotions. She manifestly believed in the suavity, the gentleness, the comeliness, and the youth of Sharun.

As she had known him for some years, it is possible that she had discerned in him greater virtues, and more brilliant parts, than I had been able to discover. But be these things as they may, it was clear to me that she had chosen to pass a whole day with him instead of with me, and this without vouchsafing one word of explanation.

Again, for aught I knew, Lirusan might have been bound by the most solemn promise to become the wife of Sharun, and it was also possible that, since his coming to them, the father and mother of Lirusan had so placed matters before their daughter, as to make her think she had acted imprudently in so swiftly and so fully responding to my fervid impulses. Again, I could not know how much the father and mother knew of our sudden love, so my conjectures were useless. I knew only that I had been rejected, and that Sharun had been chosen. I blamed nobody. I blamed not myself.

This bright page was turned over, but brighter pages were to come. I needed no woman to believe in me—Saphroni believed in me, and to have one man like Saphroni willing to follow me was more precious to me than aught else could be, for now that I was fully resolved to undertake a mission to the Pagamas with my own teaching, and my own money, nothing could give me greater courage than the

knowledge that my first call had been met by the swift answer of so devoted a disciple.

Moreover, men and women whom I might fail to rouse from their apathy, might be drawn by the graciousness, the joyousness, the frankness, and the childlike simplicity of my dear Saphroni, the first-fruits of my lonely labours. I say my *lonely labours*, for in truth I had always been alone, and I was now thankful to have a friend whom I could at all times confide in and rely on.

And now I had two duties to perform ere I left Sahitam—to acquaint the Triers with my decision, and to bid farewell to the house of Hethron.

We do not always know when we are being guided, and often we know not whither we are being guided. In the end, however, we shall know both *whither* and *why*.

My first intention was to tell the brethren that I was going on a mission of my own, and that I was going to take one of their beloved disciples, who was ready to devote himself to my service. I was impatient for this meeting of the brethren, and imagined various courtly speeches of the Worshipful Intendant, to which I would return speeches equally courtly, and more cogent.

When we were come back from the lake, I asked Almut, in as few words as I needed, when I could again appear before their Council, and declare my intentions.

"On the third day," replied Almut.

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"Not sooner?"

"Not sooner."

I bowed, and he bowed.

A wonderful man, this Almut. I never could tell how much he knew of anything, nor how long he had known anything, but I was soon to be enlightened by Hethron.

So I had now two days in which to conclude my long rest in Sahitam. I made up my mind that I would give the afternoon to the somewhat unpleasant task of bidding farewell to Hethron, Ambileni, Taltar, Lirusan, and Sharun.

According to my custom, I went through the task in my mind, that I might not be carried away into an expression of aught but kindness; but all I could arrange beforehand in my mind was that, after my interview with Hethron, I would sit awhile so as to let those come who desired to come; but that, if nobody came, I would ask no questions.

I had not much difficulty in determining the manner of my greeting to Hethron, for we had ever been on excellent terms with each other, and he had more than once treated me as though I were a wayward youth, and he an affectionate, though a disapproving, father. My intercourse with Ambileni had ever been of the pleasantest, for it was only on the day when she last spoke to me that I began to think she had not wholly approved of me in the character of a suitor for the hand of a maiden twenty years younger than myself.

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I had no difficulty in deciding as to the manner of bidding farewell to Taltar; but I found that I could not satisfy myself as to the best way in which I could take leave of the queenly Lirusan.

As to Sharun, I thought that he could not complain, if I bade him farewell just as I had bidden farewell to Lirusan; and I felt that no person would have expected more from me.

I saw that the one word *farewell*, uttered gravely, perhaps solemnly, must be better than any sudden outpouring of thronging thoughts, or than any careful interweaving of courtly phrases and meaningless amplifications.

CHAPTER XII.

I GO TO BID FAREWELL TO HETHRON. LIRUSAN GIVES ME A LETTER.

The manner of my reception by Hethron was not such as I had expected ; and when I told him that I had finally decided not to surrender my freedom, but to carry out my first intention of establishing a mission in Pagam, of which I would be master and director, he took up his first position of asserting that my enthusiasm was based on mere emotion, and that few would respond thereto.

Hethron and myself had already gone through this subject, and he had nothing further to say than what he had already said ; but I had something new to tell him—that my first appeal as a master had been met with a swift response from a noble disciple.

“That is well,” said Hethron, “now keep him, and gain others.”

To this I returned—“If I so easily gained him, I may surely hope to gain many others, when I have him to aid me.”

“Thou wast ever given to hoping,” said Hethron.

“And I shall continue to hope while I have my being. There are two things to which all possible pains and disappointments could not bring me—I

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could neither despair nor rebel. I know that some, where, at last, all will be well with us. This I live and this I teach. The children of God shall have the things of God ; the things of God are eternal life, eternal progression in love, in wisdom, and in noble works.

“This I live also,” said Hethron, “and in my humble way I teach it. I write a few lines for a few people ; thou wouldst kindle a sacred flame in the hearts of thousands.”

“Thou hast rightly judged me, most generous of friends. This was my aim from the first moment that the sacred flame was kindled in my own heart. It stands recorded in my former book, it shall be recorded in the last.”

So my meeting with Hethron was in no way discouraging ; but still no others of his household came to bid me farewell, and I began to be uneasy, for I would fain have parted from them all with words of peace.

At length I told Hethron that I had left something in the room which I had occupied—I wished not to leave behind me the poem I had written for Lirusan—the poem entitled “What will her answer be ?”

I had not yet said the last words of farewell to Hethron, and I intended to return to him when I had collected what few things I had left behind me.

After I had been a short time in that room, where I had enjoyed so much, and suffered so much, I was

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overcome by a sweet sadness. I sat down at the table, and buried my face in my arms.

Suddenly I heard a voice—a voice laden with joy and pain, with reproach and tenderness. The voice said "Halek!" and I saw Lirusan standing in the doorway, smiling through her tears, and stretching forth her hands to me.

In an instant I was by her side. Here was love, here was humility; I saw them both, and worshipped.

My love for Lirusan had not perished. It had been hidden for a time. It had been with me in the sanctuary, and now that love came forth again, humility came forth with it. This was the beginning of my new life with Lirusan.

I asked for no explanations; she gave none. I felt not that I had aught to forgive, but that I greatly needed to be forgiven. I felt that so to have loved, though but for one day, was to love for ever in the realm of the eternal realities.

After a while I said—"Mayest thou find fulness of joy and perfect peace in the way thou hast chosen, and may he whom thou hast chosen also find fulness of joy and perfect peace. But when thou and I have played through the shows of this little life, we shall put off the garb of players, and be to each other such as in truth we are. Thou playest now here; I go hence to play my part in Pagam. Farewell—farewell—Lirusan—fare thee well!"

Then did Lirusan murmur: "He for whom I once

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had such fondness as a foolish girl may have, is gone; he cares no more for me, if indeed he ever cared. We are no players now, who speak the things another thought. I am Lirusan, who did ever love thee."

"And I am that unworthy Halek whom thy love alone makes worthy."

"Thou art my Halek! Thou goest not hence this day, for thou art pale and faint."

"Yes, faint; thou dost bewilder me with so much love."

"'Tis but thy love I now return to thee."

"Thou art a queen, and I am a poor minstrel."

"The only minstrel whose song hath reached my heart."

"Thou art the only queen whom I would serve."

"I am a queen that will serve thee. Sit there, good minstrel. So;—now rest thee till I come again. And here is something that I wrote to thee, when every day I looked for thee and saw thee not."

* * * * *

To what a region of bliss unutterable was I now raised by the master power of love given, and love returned! Yes, I was bewildered, amazed, enraptured, faint.

I opened the little letter that had been slipped into my hand. Ah! sweet, pitiful letter. Shame be mine that I compelled such a woman to write me such a letter!

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"Come back to me soon, Halek. I never knew what pain was until now. This, wet with many tears, from thy Lirusan."

Lirusan had carried this letter for days, hoping that she could find an opportunity of sending it.

I may say here that Lirusan explained to me all that I had misunderstood, and that I told her how I myself had suffered.

This also I may set down: That when she learnt how I had suffered, she sought to persuade me that the fault was hers, that she should have done this, or that, and that she ought not to have done what she had done. But, say what she would, I perceived full well that she had in all things acted wisely, and that I had simply been carried away by a combination of abominable evils which it must now be the first business of my life to root out.

When Lirusan returned she brought me some delicious sherbet.

I said, "Drink first thereof, I pray thee." Then she drank thereof, without a word; but she looked earnestly into my face.

Then she presented me with a delicate roll, flavoured with some rare spice.

"Do thou eat first," said I.

Then she broke the roll and ate thereof, giving me also a portion. We ate a little of this bread in silence. We uttered no word, for we knew each other's thoughts. We meant this to be our betrothal.

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After a while, I noticed that Lirusan still held the cup, and regarded it attentively.

This I understood, and said, "When I am away from thee, I fain would have that precious cup, and daily drink thereout."

Then she gave it to me.

I then bethought me that I had never given her aught but my love, which I had so barbarously and so cruelly taken away from her. I frowned when I thought of myself. She straightway asked what grieved me. I said, "Thy love, Lirusan, makes me hate myself!"

Then she, with a merry smile—"Thou shalt not hate the man I love."

To which I answered, "I hate the man who loved thee not. He shall perish, and his name shall be blotted out."

How the hours went by I cannot tell. We could not come down to the realm of shows; we could not separate. We knew nothing but our love. And I had the new delight of learning the sweetness of humility, which ever dwells with love.

One promise Lirusan extracted from me—that though I doubted all else, I would never doubt her faithfulness.

We were suddenly startled by the cheery voice of Hethron, who was in the garden.

I looked to Lirusan for consent, and then cried, "Come nearer!" Upon this, Hethron walked up the garden, till he stood outside the door of my house;

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then he spoke again, "Children, there is an old man here who has lost a daughter."

Lirusan, bright with merriment, whispered to me—"Tell him there is a young man in here who has found—but, never mind; I will to my mother and to Taltar."

In an instant she fled past her father, and out of the garden.

Hethron entered. I met him, and we clasped hands in silence, for indeed the sensitive love of the Sahitamas enables them to perceive many things without words; and Lirusan's face told her father all.

"Dost thou know," said Hethron at last, "that thy ill behaviour worked much good for thee?"

"How so?" I asked.

"On this wise: I am fully persuaded that if thou hadst not wrung Lirusan's unaccustomed heart with such cruel pain, she had never known how much she loved thee."

To this I said gravely, "I knew."

"Why didst thou leave her, then?"

"Because I thought another had contrived to rob me of the tender love which had but begun in her; and the sweeter I found her love, the less could I endure the loss thereof."

"We need no further explanation," said Hethron. "But be assured of this—pain is the master in that cruel school where love is taught."

"It is well," said I, "that they who must so learn to love need not remain always at school."

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"True delights," said Hethron, "are bought with pain; the pain passes, the delights remain."
"False delights," said I, "do bring pain after them, and both delight and pain are blotted out, and cease to be."

"Thou lovest as a young man," said Hethron, gently, "and thou discourest as an old one. But now let me tell thee that I rejoice with thee in my inmost heart, for I know my Lirusan, and I know thee. But ye are so near akin, ye might not marry, were it not that Lirusan has what thou never hadst: pardon me if I tell thee bluntly—thou hast not yet the gentleness and humility, the meekness and placidity, the gracious lowliness of heart which can endure indignity and wrong. And thou wouldst be a prophet to the Pagamas? Be first a servant of the lowly brethren of the Mount! I do beseech thee fling from thee thy love of being first. Learn to be last."

I asked, "What says Lirusan?"

"She knows nothing of this," said Hethron. "She thinks thou wilt become an officer of a temple under the brethren; and she wishes this for thee. Almut has told me of the war that is declared twixt them and thee."

I urged: "If I fail to do by myself what thou thinkest I could do under the authority of the brethren, I can return, and either join myself with them, or sell all I have in Karom, and live here beside thee. Moreover, my first disciple is a youth of

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such ardent devotion, and of such rare nobility, that I cannot easily bring myself to draw back from an enterprise in which he desires to join me. He believes in me! How could I say to him—'Yesterday thou didst promise to follow me, but to-day I find I do not need thee, because I intend to become an officer of the Church of the Brethren?'"

"Halek would be Halek still," said Hethron.

"Almut said this to thee," said I, "and that was wrong of him."

"Almut is thy true friend," said Hethron, "and mine. What he saith of thee to me is always right. Take a new name."

"I will take a new name, if I consent to serve under them; and if Lirusan bid me serve them for a year, I will do so."

"I wish thee to give up this unreasoning enthusiasm for attempting something great; I, Lirusan's father, wish thee to curb thyself, and to be, for one short year, a humble, faithful servant of those men who once served, and who are now able to rule with love."

I listened. I reflected: If love and humility were come forth in me, where was humility? I stood in a sort of trance, and it seemed as though I heard a voice from some far-off shrine saying in solemn tones—Except thou learn this gracious lowliness, which men call humility, thou wilt in the end destroy the love for thee that now lives in Lirusan, and then thou wilt again cease to love her, even as yesterday thou didst not love her. There cometh in

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the end the one stripe too much, the one cruel word too much, and the love that was for thee will be thine no more for ever. Then shalt thou be smitten, till thou be healed; and it may be that thou suffer many and sore stripes ere thou be healed.

I could see clearly that this was according to the unalterable and imperishable laws of Adaroni.

I listened, I bowed the heart; I yielded. Hethron perceived that I had so yielded, and as he graciously led me forth by the arm, he said—"Halek! so easily perturbed; but so honest! Thou belongest now to all of us; and I shall ever speak mine inmost mind to thee. Do thou the same by us, for in thine inmost mind, as in ours, there is naught but what is good."

All things seemed now to be made new, for in love are all things renewed each day for ever. Love suffereth no diminution, but increaseth by all things. Love hath no night nor winter. Wisdom is the light thereof.

The mother and the sister welcomed me as though of all men I was the most welcome; but this was shown by their gracious demeanour rather than by any speeches they made me.

After we had supped, more lamps were lighted. The little maids, and the gardeners, two grave and gentle men who had fine voices, took up their positions at the end of the room. Hethron sat between Ambileni and Lirusan, Taltar and I sat nearly opposite to them. Taltar had brought a cithern, which sounded like a harp.

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Presently Lirusan, by word or sign, conveyed some thought to her father, for his face lighted up, and he smiled at me. Then Lirusan left the room, and was followed by one of the gardeners. I knew well that some pleasant surprise was intended for me.

Ere long Lirusan returned. The gardener brought a magnificent harp which Lirusan had insisted on carrying off from the house of a friend who lived near them.

This harp was then placed in front of me by the hands of the queen who would serve me, and I, the poor minstrel, looked the love I could not utter. She read all my tender thoughts.

"Mother," she said, "this is a poor minstrel whom I found to-day, and he will join us in our music-play to-night."

I could have spoken many, many things could I have spoken, for my heart was full. But I said to myself—Learn to be calm and restful. Learn to keep thy strokes of wit, and thine apt rejoinders. He who knoweth hasteth not.

Yes, I was really beginning to be willing to learn, and I had at any rate begun to perceive the loveliness of that humility of which I had hitherto only written.

Not here will I set down the marvels of that evening. They are set down in my heart, they are set down in the heart of Lirusan; and when we two be come into the abodes of the Eternal Peace, they shall be read forth to us by a brighter light, with a lovelier meaning. They cannot be lost. Only evil thoughts and emotions perish utterly, as though they had never been.

CHAPTER XIII.

I TELL SAPHRONI THAT I HAVE GIVEN UP MY INTENTION OF SECEDING FROM THE WORSHIPFUL BRETHREN. SAPHRONI CONSENTS TO BE PRESENTED TO HETHRON. I TAKE A NEW NAME.

Next day, lovely light still glowed on all around me; it could not yet fade into the common light wherein we toil and strive, and press on to reach our hidden goal, our perfect song, the flower and the fruit of our being.

On my way to the Temple of the Mount, I overtook Pilpad, and he again began to tell me of the troubles of his wretched children, who were still in Pagam—one in a prison, and one mated with a most unlovable woman. He said, very simply, that he knew not which of his poor sons was the unhappier.

The loathsome images of evil which the complaints of Pilpad raised in me, showed black and horrible in the brightness of my happy love; and ere I reached the precincts of the temple, I felt more strongly than ever my desire to do something which would stir the hearts and minds of these far-off Pagamas, so that they would no more call darkness light, and bitter sweet.

I felt, now, free from all my own burdens, doubts,

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and anxieties. I fully agreed with the view taken by Hethron and all his family—that, before Lirusan became my wife, it would be well for us both if at least a year should be allowed to pass; for Lirusan was still very young; and I was, as I would probably ever be, but little given to prudent calculations. So it was agreed that while the father and mother made all sorts of prudent calculations for me, the queen and the minstrel could continue to love each other to their heart's content.

A year would soon pass in the engrossing labours of one who had taken upon himself to be a messenger among the Pagamas.

Ere we reached the gates at the summit of the hill, I heard the harp of the great Kalito sounding the sunrise harmonies of the music of Meshran. It was Saphroni who played. Requesting Pilpad not to announce my arrival, I again sat down on the stone bench, whereon I had sat and meditated on the day when I had fled from the happy house of Hethron.

I would collect my thoughts before I informed Saphroni of the great change in my plans.

I now desired to mould my life as a messenger after the pattern given by Jeshua, and it suddenly occurred to me that, whereas the Divine Teacher had more than once reproved his disciples with much vehemence, he had never overwhelmed them with outpourings of praise. Now, I had always been given to praising, perhaps to flattering, those who

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had pleased me. In all things I had been unstable, easily moved, swift of speech, often extravagant.

Presently the music ceased, and Saphroni, who had hourly expected me, caught sight of me sitting alone on the bench; but, unlike myself, he was ever thoughtful. I never knew him say one word he could wish to recall; I never knew him do one act for which I could honestly reprove him.

After some little time Pilpad approached me, saying that Saphroni would come to me, unless I desired to continue my meditations.

This respectful courtesy pleased me, and I sent word to Saphroni that he might come when he chose.

Our conversation proceeded very pleasantly till I said—"We do not always know whither we are being led."

"That is true," said Saphroni.

"In the fulness of time," said I, "we know both *whither* and *why*. I have been led to give up my intention of seceding from the Brethren of the Temple, and of undertaking a mission to Pagam as a master whose authority is in himself."

"That grieves me," said Saphroni, in a low voice. "I had long desired to find one master among men, one strong man who could rule, where I could obey. Thou art vehement, I am gentle; thou art swift, I am slow; thou art a rushing torrent in the mountains, I am a quiet stream in the meadows. Thou canst speak what I can only feel."

"Friend," said I, "thou speakest now what I feel."

"Master, thou shalt in the end speak all thou feelest."

"What hath loosened thy tongue to-day?"

"Thine absence for a day," he replied.

"Then," said I, "if I remained away from thee for a year, thou wouldst become a mighty orator."

"Again, master, I never knew how much I loved thee, till thou hadst stayed away so long without a word."

"This is the fervid imagination of a boy," said I.

"None but thyself," urged Saphroni, "can ever take that fervid imagination from me. Hast thou never heard that love grows by absence?"

"What knowest thou of love?" I asked.

"Nothing!" he replied, "nothing, as yet, if this be not love I feel for thee!"

I asked, "Hast thou never thought of one fair maiden more than of another?"

"Never," he replied. "Thoughts of fair maidens trouble me not. First I would know that I am such a man as one fair maid, some day, might learn to love. To thee I am a boy, and I desire to have thee for a master. Thou and I could stir the selfish hearts of those who feed the swine of Pagam. If thou wilt not be my master, and if thou find me not another master, then hast thou wronged me."

"Disappointed thee, not wronged thee; and let it ever be thy comfort to know that those who in the

end enjoy the fullest, sweetest, and most glorious triumph, are those who on their toilsome path trod disappointments under foot, marched through them, on them, by them, till at last the gospel of their dearest hopes, once whispered in the darkness, is proclaimed with clarions from the palace walls."

"Master," urged Saphroni, "there lives a power in thee that must come forth. Wilt thou not let me join thee, that I at last may stand with thee, and hear the clarion on the palace walls when thou hast gained thy victory?"

"Thou speakest of things too high for thee," said I.

"But not of things too high for thee."

"Listen," said I, "and let not us sound these higher notes again, till we know more. We do not yet know why we are being led in one direction. I am resolved first, before I would venture upon a mission of my own, to place myself for one year under the authority of the Worshipful Brethren. They appoint me to the charge of one of their temples in Pagam, as thou knowest. There I shall learn much that I must learn, things whereof it would not become me to speak to thee. This I promise thee, my first disciple, thou shalt ever remain my best beloved disciple; and if, when my year of trial under the brethren is completed, I find that I am then called to go forth with one peculiar message that I myself must give, I shall call on thee, Saphroni, to accompany me."

"Thanks for that promise, master. Call when thou wilt, I come."

"And if I should not call thee at the end of that year?"

"I shall say, as I say now, Call when thou wilt, I come."

"And if I never call thee?"

"Then I shall pray the Father that He give me a message for myself, and send me to go alone whither it pleases Him."

"I am loath to leave thee," said I; "but this thought comes to me, that when I have made my submission to the brethren, and consent to go to Khoshek, whither, as I told them, I was greatly disinclined to go, they will allow thee to abide with me for that one year."

This sudden hope quite moved the dear youth, and he could not easily find words wherewith to thank me. He felt sure that the brethren would grant this, my first request.

He was now at peace with himself, and, as we were walking across to our rooms, he asked me how it had come about, that I had so readily given up a project which I had but yesterday so warmly cherished.

"Friends, whom I esteem, have persuaded me to submit myself to the Council of Triers, and they consider that I myself shall be much benefited by compelling myself to do so."

"These are dear friends, then, who think they know thee well?"

"Thou hast heard of Hethron, the court-poet—he has been my true friend for years, long ere I saw thee."
"I do not believe," said Saphroni, "that he knows thee as I do."

"He knows me better," I replied, "and from the first, while I was in the service of Alphariz, the Prince, he sought to regulate what he called my unreasoning enthusiasm."

"And at last he has regulated it!" said Saphroni, bitterly. "He has advised thee, a bird of sweet song, to enter a cage, that can be hung in shade or shine, even as thy masters may see fit. Thou wouldst pine away in a cage. Thou couldst not sing, if thou couldst never soar."

"Thy figure will not hold," said I, "for I can leave Pagam when I will, and return to the loving companionship of thyself and Hethron. All of his household counsel me not in such haste to scorn the ruling of the Worshipful Brethren, and, in an ill-humour, enter upon a mission of my own in spite of them."

"I begin now," said Saphroni, "to see this, as thy friends see it. Hethron is old and sage."
"He is loving and sage," said I; "and it will please thee to know that he desired to see thee, who lovest me so much."

"That is strange," said Saphroni.

"It is not strange," said I, "for I spoke much to him of thee—my first disciple. I told him how good thou art."

"This thou shouldst not have done, said Saphroni, in as grave a tone as though I were the youth and he the old man.

"Was it wrong of me to praise thee?" I asked.

"Praise never pleases me," said Saphroni, "nor does reproof disturb me."

"If praise delight thee not," said I, "come not with me that Hethron may have speech with thee. They all desire to see thee, for in my outpouring of honest emotions, I praised thee much."

"Now I tell thee of this," said Saphroni, "thou wilt praise me no more, or not tell me thou hast done so. Will Hethron come hither to visit thee?"

"I have to visit him, ere I depart, and I am commanded to bring thee with me."

"Are there many in the house of Hethron?"

"There is his wife, Ambileni, a most engaging woman; then there are his two daughters, Taltar and Lirusan."

"Of course I go as thou desirest, but I shall be ill at ease, for I greatly dislike sitting with strangers to whom I have been praised."

No one could talk with Saphroni and not admire him; but in this conversation there seemed to be some jangling note that marred the melody. What it was I knew not at the time.

As soon as opportunity offered, I contrived to be admitted into the sitting-room of Almut and Zimri.

These two old men were well versed in the ancient tongue of the temple, and when I was announced by

Pilpad, they were passing their time in devising questions not readily answered by anybody, and quite unanswerable by me.

They greatly enjoyed puzzling each other as to what letters in a small book, well-known to them, occupied the three points of a triangle in one page, and what letters occupied the angles of a square; even as some person finds the points of certain letters in the stars, and sets another to find them.

I could not avoid noticing that all their puzzling of each other had no spice of ungenerous rivalry in it, as is so often the case when the Pagamas try in their various games to puzzle and outwit one another.

I begged them not at once to discontinue their pastime, and they not only readily allowed me to amuse myself with observing them, but explained to me in what way their ingenuity was exercised.

The courteousness of these venerable brethren was so engaging, that I at length ventured to see if I could interest them in my pastime of discovering the construction of the crystal numbers, to which I had formerly given so much study.

To my great delight they soon became warmly interested in the wonderful building up of these numbers, and neither of them reminded me that when I became an officer of a temple, and was subject to their authority, this pastime, together with certain others, would be forbidden to me.

At length I informed them that, having to appear on the morrow before the Council of the Triers, for

the last time, I desired now to propitiate them, as I had before desired to repel them; and I begged them to let the brethren know, before they sat formally in conclave, that they would have before them a brother who now acknowledged the justice of their decision, and who was minded to submit himself, for the space of one year, to their rule and governance.

I concluded my speech by thanking them for their kindness to me, and by asking them to give me their aid in persuading the brethren to let Saphroni accompany me.

Their reply to this was in no way discouraging; but all they could promise me was that Saphroni would be permitted to accompany me, if he himself desired it, and if the brethren had not good reasons for his not accompanying me.

My heart was fixed, my decision irrevocable. I would, for my own sake, force myself to obey, force myself to starve out that brute self which sought ever to be on a pinnacle, and yet was ever calling from a pit for help.

Man was made to have dominion over all things, but first to have dominion over his lower self. I resolved to obtain the mastery over this animal-man.

All was silent within the precincts of the Temple of the Mount. The last sound I heard was a song which Saphroni was singing softly to himself in the darkness of his own room.

I stepped outside into the still night. I contem-

plated the starry heavens, and I said to myself: These things are but shows, yet each hath its place, its work. Man is one with Him whose thoughts these shining orbs express. Man himself is but an expression of the thoughts of God.

What has my striving been since I was raised from the dust of Pagam?

To exalt myself, to forget that I am but as a drop out of an ocean—now in the clouds, now on the earth, again in the ocean.

The brethren, who have passed from the death of self to the life of the All, admonish me that I cease to be myself, that I cease to be *Halek*. I will take a new name. I do now desire to know myself, not as a person in myself, but as a reflection of the One Person—the Father. I recognise that as an individual I am still myself, not to be blended with, or to be confounded with, any other. I am that which the experience of ages has made me. No man has had exactly my experience. No other man can perform my part, how small soever it be, in the consummation of the thoughts of God. I recognise that instead of being a person, I am a personified thought of the One Person, and that hierarchies innumerable, thronged by thoughts innumerable, do still but imperfectly represent the One who is the All. O that I could subdue this unformed clod of the lower mind, whereby the divine mind is so oft obscured!

I will take a new name, so that every time I hear it, I may remember I am to be, and am becoming, a

new creature, who hath put off the body of this death.

Almoni: Be that my name, to signify that the lower man is *bound, silent*, and that I am content to be unknown until I know.

Almoni: This is the name which I will announce to the brethren as my new name. They will call me *Brother Almoni*—Brother Nobody, who did aforetime seek to be Somebody.

CHAPTER XIV.

I AM RECEIVED INTO THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE MOUNT. SAPHRONI SUDDENLY AIRS HIS ELOQUENCE. A BANQUET WITH THE BRETHREN.

At last the hour arrived when I was to appear for the last time before the Council of the Triers; and I was much pleased when Pilpad announced to me that my beloved Saphroni would be permitted to be present during my final examination.

We entered the hall together, and, after the customary salutations to the brethren, we took our seats in front of the tribunal.

The moment I entered, I became aware that a brother, whose face was strange to me, sat next to the Intendant, and was regarding me with much attention. His eyes were clear and soft, the curves of his lips expressed benignity and placidity. His hair was white, and a star of burnished gold shone in the centre of his black robe.

The Worshipful Intendant rose, and addressed me somewhat as follows:—

“With much satisfaction, Brother Halek, have I this day heard that you propose uniting yourself with our brotherhood. I will now look over the tablet of the rules which have been drawn up for your guidance.”

Here I handed to Pilpad the last tablet which had been given to me, and Pilpad gave it to the Intendant, who quickly looked over it, and handed it with a look of perplexity to the strange brother, who handed it to the next, who seemed inclined to laugh.

I watched the face of each brother as he looked at the tablet, and after a while I remembered that I had set a black mark opposite each separate rule, for I had been told to place a black mark against such rules as I thought I could not obey, and, in my obstinate perversity, I had so marked out the entire contents of the tablet.

When the tablet came again into the hands of the Intendant, he rose, and, keeping his eyes bent on the tablet, as though unwilling to look at me, he spoke as follows :—

“ You were instructed, when we last met here in conclave, that you should carefully peruse these rules, and set a mark against such as you might then deem so severe as to be beyond your kindly acceptance. I see you have placed a black mark against each rule. How you can reconcile your labour as a messenger under our authority, with a repudiation of all the rules which are drawn up under our authority, is a question which I confess myself unable to solve.”

Here the new brother asked permission to speak ; and, when he had looked pleasantly upon everybody, he said : “ Worshipful Intendant, I perceive that our dear Brother Halek is in greater perplexity than we are, and that he has been desiring to speak ; but his

modesty, and his ignorance of the usages of the Council of Triers, prevent him from making known his wishes. He will explain the apparently inexplicable.”

At a signal from the Intendant, I stood up to speak. “ Worshipful Intendant, I forgot—that is to say, those marks—they must now signify that I accept all the rules.”

My awkward, but honest explanation, was at once understood. All the brethren were amused ; two or three laughed.

I was then asked the name by which I henceforth desired to be known, and, when I had given it, all rose, and assumed a significant posture—the left arm with the hand open pointed upwards, while the right arm extended downwards with the hand open.

“ *Brother Almoni !* ” said the Intendant, and the brethren repeated after him—*Brother Almoni !* I was directed to stand in the position of a Brother of the Mount.

“ This,” said the Intendant, “ is the posture of a true brother. While one hand is raised towards heaven, thou prayest thus : *Take hold of the hand that is lifted in the darkness, help me, and give me good things.* ”

“ While the other hand is extended earthwards, thou sayest : *Brother, take hold of the hand that is held out to thee in kindness, I will raise thee, help thee, and give thee of the good things the Father giveth to me.* ”

Then after an interval of silence, the Intendant said: "We, the loving brethren here assembled, do now, in the name of God our Father, appoint thee to the care of our first church in Khoshek of Pagam. And thou, Brother Almoni, dost now, by thy silence and by the posture of thine arms, promise that thou wilt, for the space of one year, labour faithfully and diligently in the same Khoshek, so thou mayest move both men, women, and children to begin the pilgrimage from Pagam to Karom, and thence to Sahitam. Thou dost also promise that thou wilt not wittingly break one of these rules which are here imposed upon thee as a child, a disciple, and a servant of the Lord of Hosts."

This was the manner of ordination to the office of an accredited messenger from Sahitam to Pagam, and the solemnity thereof was such that I did now, of a truth, feel myself to be a new man, and did most earnestly resolve that I would give all heed and watchful care to this new man, whose life among the Pagamas must be in all things a continual attestation of his fitness for the work to which he had been consecrated.

While I was engaged in this pleasant meditation, Saphroni passed his arm round my shoulders and whispered: "Ask that I may go with thee." When I told him I would do so, he looked into my face with an expression of love, joy, and peace. I thanked the Father that he had bestowed on me the love of so pure and childlike a brother as Saphroni.

In the meantime, the brethren had been writing on tablets, and exchanging them according to the usage of the Council of Triers. At length the Intendant addressed me: "Brother Almoni, thou hast now perfect faith in thy brethren, so thou canst accept one more rule. For a while it will afflict thee, but in the end all will be well. It is required of thee that, during this year of thy probation, thou neither send letters to friends in Sahitam, nor receive any from them."

I at once bowed in silence, and said: "Worshipful Brethren, I yield in all things to your injunctions, and do now venture to ask that my beloved friend, Saphroni, may accompany me, and abide with me during the year of my probation."

It was at once declared that my request could not be granted, and the reasons given being sufficiently weighty, I judged it prudent not to urge my suit; although the pleading eyes of Saphroni did powerfully move me to do so. I bowed in silence to their decision.

Not so Saphroni. He started from his seat, and astonished me by his impetuosity.

"Worshipful Intendant," he exclaimed, "suffer me to speak! Ye are indeed set in authority over me, and I have not at any time transgressed even the smallest of your rules. Yet do you now move me to transgress them all; for though I am to outward seeming a mere youth, he, whom you now forbid me to accompany, has made me feel that there

is the power of a man in me. The Worshipful Brethren have instructed me; but this man has opened his heart to me in such wise that, albeit I do not wholly comprehend him, I know that it was his kindness which first revealed to me what it was to love. He must be a true messenger, for he brought a message to me. And now, Worshipful Brethren, I will let no man separate me from him."

Here the Intendant rose, and, with a gentle smile, asked Saphroni to retire for a little while; and so lovingly was this order given, that Saphroni checked his flowing harangue, and left the hall with a gentle step.

The Intendant then addressed me: "Hast thou, Brother Almoni, asked Saphroni to follow thee?"

"I have asked him."

"Wouldst thou now ask him to follow thee?"

"Having promised that I will in all things submit myself to your direction, I could not ask him to follow me, when ye forbid me so to do."

"Was it wise of thee to ask him?"

I replied: "It was with the wisdom which comes not through many questions."

Here I made a gesture of impatience; but when the wondrous voice of the strange brother said: "*Brother Almoni!*" I smiled, and remembered that I was taking my first lesson in the difficult art of being silent.

Had this assembly been composed of Pagamas who had a similar cause of contention, what objurgations,

what denunciations, what scoffs, threats, and lies had we been compelled to hear!

One Worshipful Brother would have said that a certain brother (whom he was obliged to call *worshipful*) was but a lewd fellow, whose father had been a camel-driver.

Then the Worshipful Brother, who had been accused of having a father who had driven camels, would have said he could bring witnesses to prove that his father never knew a camel from an ox; but that the mother of the Worshipful Brother who had attempted to calumniate his father, had been so poor that she had been known to send her sons to beg bread in the streets.

It would then be likely to happen that the Worshipful son of the mother who might have been poor, would have endeavoured to strangle the Worshipful Brother whose father might have driven camels.

Now came a rapid writing on tablets, and the Intendant said:—

"Brother Almoni, none do now censure thee; but we add, with reluctance, one more rule to those which do already so straitly confine thee within the bounds of a severe, but salutary, discipline—this rule will be written on thy tablet, ere thou set out for Pagam: *Call none to follow thee until a greater has called thee.* The janitor will now desire the lad to return."

I confess that I was already beginning to be proud of my humility, and that I exulted in saying to myself: I defy all the Worshipful Brethren here assembled

to stir me to one hasty word, or to one unseemly gesture.

But what wisdom lieth in the prayer: *Lead us not into temptation!* I now feel assured that had I been further tried, I had suddenly found myself in a pit, for I had been proudly smiling from a pinnacle.

When Saphroni had again taken his place by my side, the Intendant said:—

“Brother Almoni, and our dear Saphroni, we have to commend you both for your brotherly love one to another. The disciples whom Jeshua sent forth two by two, as messengers, could not have been more devoted and zealous than ye two are. So now ye shall have a reward: We do all agree that in recognition of the gracious and silent submission of the elder, and the lovely conduct of the younger, ye shall be companions as far as Khoshek. In ten days our carriage will be despatched to bear you hence, on your long journey. You can have much pleasant conversation on the way. Saphroni will return to this temple to complete his studies. At the end of the year, ye meet again here, and we pray that your brotherly love will continue.”

This closed the business of the conference, and Saphroni and myself considered that we had been most kindly dealt with.

Then we enjoyed a feast of good things, eating and drinking together without any burdensome ceremonies.

I sat between the Worshipful Intendant and the strange brother with the wonderful voice, and he

soon made himself known to me—it was Lomai! My delight and surprise were great. For years I had carried with me the magnificent letter he sent me, in his capacity of physician, when I had put lover and friend far from me, when I had sullenly turned from my daily work, when I said: *More than others I deserve, and God has given me less.* But this matter being fully recorded in my former treatise, I will here speak no more thereon.

When I admired the star of burnished gold worn by my brother Lomai, and when I recalled in how wise and loving a manner he had turned me to rightness, I repeated to him that saying of the prophet: *They that turn many to rightness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.*

The brightest banquet of my life was that in the house of Hethron, when I sat at the side of the queenly Lirusan; but this banquet with the brethren will never be forgotten by me; and I observed one thing thereat which touched me beyond all the kindly speeches made to me—it was the arm of the Worshipful Intendant round the shoulders of Saphroni, who sat next to him.

When the festal repast was concluded, Pilpad and Saphroni removed all the vessels from the table, and left only the vases containing flowers.

Then the Intendant requested that the harp of Kalito be brought; and my first thought was that Almut would desire me to play; but, to my surprise, it was the Intendant who desired me to do so.

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"Brother Almoni," said he, "thy skill in music hath already been highly spoken of to me, and I would gladly listen to thee before thou leave us."

"Worshipful Sir," I replied, "thy request was so graciously made that I would fain comply with it, but the graciousness with which thou callest me Brother *Almoni*, persuades me to ask thy forgiveness if I touch not the harp to-night; moreover, Saphroni plays better than I."

How vain are some men! How very vain was I! The approbation which the brethren manifested on hearing my reply, moved me to a delight which I could not wholly conceal.

But this approbation was shown in their faces only, and the Intendant, after bowing to me, told Saphroni to play; whereupon the honest youth went straightway to the harp and played his best.

Now, his best was very good, and I noted that the brethren did not fail to applaud with many expressions of delight.

Saphroni's eyes glowed under all this praise, and a half smile showed the natural satisfaction of an artist who pleases good judges.

While I was engaged in noting the mien of my beloved friend, the Intendant had moved so gently to the harp, that I had not noticed him leave my side; and I discovered that he could play better than Saphroni. Now, as Saphroni played better than I, my satisfaction at not playing that night was abundant reward for my declining to play.

CHAPTER XV.

I PRESENT SAPHRONI TO THE COURT-POET. LIRUSAN
FINDS MY POEM—"WHAT WILL HER ANSWER BE?"
AGAIN I SAY: "I CHOOSE THE LOVE OF LIRUSAN."

Now was the high noon of my happiness; instead of striving to make headway in opposition to the current of the immensities I now bent my course in accordance with them.

I knew myself to be the child, the disciple, and the servant of the One from whom all things are. I felt that I was at one with the One. I had trusted before I could see, and now I could see that this childlike trust cannot fail of inheriting all the promises of the Father. I had bowed my haughty neck to the only yoke that makes the burden light.

I loved, and was loved in return. I had called one disciple, he had been willing to leave all, and follow me. I had received precious instruction from brethren who were older and wiser than myself, and I now had well-grounded hopes of satisfying my purest, my noblest desire, which was that I might be enabled to preach such a reasonable gospel of hope as would comfort the hopeless, arouse the indifferent, and encourage all men to enter into that living

reality, that blissful activity of love and wisdom which men call peace.

Hitherto, I had more or less deceived myself by fancying that I was perfect, merely because I committed no gross breaches of the law, and because I had renounced many things. But further progress was impossible to me, until I ceased applauding myself for what I had done, and satisfying myself with what I had not done.

All the instruction, all the discipline of the brethren of the Mount, had been unceasingly directed, not to humiliate me, but to make me willing to be humble; for the Divine Teacher was Jeshua the lowly, and only the lowly could follow him.

Much of the conduct of the Intendant, and of Almut in particular, was afterwards explained to me. The Worshipful Intendant was a friend of Alphariz; Almut was a friend of Hethron; both had noted my course from the time I had entered upon my duties as an instructor of the young princes; but while they had acknowledged that some germ of power lay buried in me, they were aware that I knew very little, and that I thought I knew very much. It was the ever watchful Almut who had caused a letter to be conveyed to me, ere I had left the park of the Prince; it was he who had added that last and most severe command, that during the year of my noviciate I should neither write to, nor receive letters from, anyone

in Sahitam. All the brethren agreed that the discipline through which Rimnag had passed was precisely the discipline necessary for me. In a word—they saw that only by living a new life could I become a new man.

I am able to declare that from the moment I was willing to be as a little child I felt as though, in a mystic and incommunicable manner, I had entered into Adaroni, or, as the brethren called it, the Kingdom of Heaven. This also is according to the teaching of Jeshua.

When my somewhat tedious examination was come to an end, and when I once more communed with my own heart, nothing drew my attention so much as their final command: *Call no man to follow thee, till a greater call thee.*

Of my riches, of my affairs under the joint stewardship of Ebul and Zakku, of my many thoughts and divers projects for the welfare of Lirusan—I mean as to park, garden, and servants—I will here say naught particularly, for I knew not what lay before me.

Nothing now remained for me to do, ere I left Sahitam, save to bid farewell to Lirusan, and take Saphroni with me, that Hethron might have the satisfaction of knowing one so good, so gracious, and so lovable as my first disciple had proved himself to be.

Yea, he was lovable! He would as readily, and as silently, do a kindly deed as certain trees drop

their purple fruit at the slightest touch. He always had ripe fruit—it was never winter with him; yet did he make no show of giving aught, nor did he ever say that any good deed of his gave him delight; but when I would say to him, *I am so happy!* he would turn his eyes on me, and show me, without a word, that he was happier than I.

It was about the fourth hour of the day when I desired Saphroni to come with me to the house of Hethron; and, as I do well remember, he told me that I must forgive him for not coming with me, as he desired not to consort with princes, or with court-poets.

I said, half in jest: "I shall have thee with me for many days, when we set out for Pagam; but Hethron I shall not see for the space of a year—what sayest thou if I stay with him till I leave Sahitam? Wouldst thou rather that I return to-night, or remain with Hethron?"

"Thou knowest," was all he said by way of reply.

"Then," said I, "thou art entrapped—if thou wouldst have me back with thee to-night, do thou, when thou hast supped, come to the gate of the garden of Hethron, and bid one of the maids say thou waitest outside. If thou trouble not thyself to do this, I will not trouble to walk backwards and forwards every day that we remain here."

"Thou hast fairly trapped me," he said. "I will come for thee, and we will walk back together."

Being now one of the family of Hethron, in the matter of visiting or departing, I observed not certain usages of the Sahitamas; I waited not in the ante-chamber of the visitors, but walked up the alley of the pomegranates, knowing well who would be likely to see me before others saw me, or, at any rate, who would come to me, when it was known that I was there.

It was not long before Lirusan was by my side, and in earnest conversation with me. She was indignant that I was forbidden to write to her, or to receive letters from her.

I replied that I also had felt indignant at being so treated; but that, having already been much benefited by having in all things submitted my most masterful and stubborn will to theirs, I would endeavour not to murmur that my year of exile should never be cheered by an interchange of letters between us.

Lirusan said: "We have both been unfortunate in our attempts at writing to each other—I carried for many days a letter which I at last gave into thy hand."

"And I wrote a letter to thee, which was meant to bring us nearer; but which threatened to keep us apart for ever."

"We could not be held apart for ever," said Lirusan.

After a while I said: "'Tis passing strange that this mischief-working poem of mine has not yet been

found. It is somewhere in the poet's retreat. Let us search for it."

We searched for it, and Lirusan's quick eye soon discovered it. We sat down and read it together.

Ah! blissful spring-tide of love, that maketh all things new. The delights of a gracious and a generous answer to the one question of a lover are enhanced in proportion to the pain that he has endured before he had this answer. Again I said:
I choose the love of Lirusan!

I supped, of course, with Lirusan, and had the delight of feeling that her father, her mother, and her sister had received me into the circle of their most intimate affection. It seemed as though I had garnered up vast quantities of love which would last me and keep me in ever-bright hope until the year of exile was concluded; and I resolved that, as the brethren had permitted me to make a stay in Karom, through which I must pass, I would then give my stewards such instructions as would enable me to marry Lirusan, and purchase a house and park for her, as soon as I was once more master of my own actions.

During supper, our conversation turned upon Saphroni, and various questions were asked as to his people, his talents, and his prospects.

Ambileni, observing that I spoke of Saphroni as a mere boy, asked me his age, and I replied that he was the same age as Lirusan, but that as he had a very gentle voice, and an imperceptible

beard, he might be taken for a youth of about sixteen.

Taltar said: "If he be really so noble a man as thou sayest he his, then could I wish to call him friend."

"That thou couldst not avoid doing," said I, "didst thou know him as I do."

"We would love him," said Lirusan, "not only because he is noble in himself, but because he is the friend of our dearest friend."

"To be Halek's friend," said Hethron, "gives him a valid claim to our friendship. We must remember that he is Halek's first disciple."

Lirusan objected: "Thou shouldst say his *second* disciple; I am Halek's first disciple, and was his disciple before I had seen him."

"Reading thy poem on Heaven," said Hethron to me, with a playful smile, "was then heaven enough for her, but now she is not content if she be not with him who wrote it."

"Friend," said I, "and friends, ye make me forget that I am learning to be *Almoni*—nobody."

"To me thou art everybody," said Lirusan, softly, with one of those looks which had from the first enthralled me.

Just then I heard a knock at the half-open door, and the knock was followed by a low voice murmuring, *Almoni!*

"'Tis Saphroni," said I, springing to my feet and going to the door.

There stood Saphroni, but how changed! He was pale, and appeared to be dazed; but I would ask no questions, and Hethron at once sought to put him at his ease by speaking of our journey to Pagam. Ambileni spoke to him in her most winsome manner, Taltar even put her hand upon his shoulder when she pressed him to drink a cup of milk. Lirusan also tried to engage him in conversation, but he appeared to be even more stupid with her than with the others; so, as he was evidently ill at ease, I determined that I would not stay as long as I had intended.

At last I thought of something that would interest him, and at the same time afford me an opportunity of having a few words alone with him. I proposed to show him that delightful garden, and that sequestered lodge where I had lived during my happy days with Hethron.

When we were come outside, I at once asked Saphroni if aught ailed him, and he assured me that nothing ailed him in mind, body, or estate, as the saying goes. I walked beside him, I put my arm round his shoulders, I rallied him, but as I could not conjecture the cause of his unwonted dulness, I dismissed the matter from my mind; and after a short stay in the poet's lodge, and a visit to one of the pavilions, I told him that we would now bid farewell to the master of the house.

Saphroni said: "I yield a most willing obedience to thee, as thou knowest, and thou dost ever have thy

will; do now for once let me have mine: I would stay a while in this wonderful pavilion. Go thou and say farewell for us both, then come hither for me and I will go hence."

"Be it so, there will then be, as is meet, a wonderful man in a wonderful pavilion."

Saphroni objected, "I am not wonderful."
"But thou hast undergone a wonderful change. Howbeit I yield, and ask no further questions save this: Wilt thou some day explain to me this mysterious change in thee?"

He replied: "If I can ever explain it, and if thou still demand the explanation, I will give it."

My disciple had his way. I returned to the house, gave the good-night greeting to all, and a special greeting to Lirusan.

Then I rejoined Saphroni, and we wended our way in silence to the temple-crowned hill.

The course of my history brings me now to the last day we passed in Sahitam, before we departed for the wilderness of Pagam, as it has been called.

Lirusan and I had agreed that we would have that day to ourselves; but as I had promised Alphariz and Iodalla that I would visit them before I set out on my mission, Lirusan went with me to the palace.

While Alphariz and I were engaged in conversation, I could not take my eyes off the two most beautiful women I had ever seen—the spring blossom Miralda and my queenly Lirusan.

I gazed upon them as in a sort of dream; but I appeared to be listening for a strange message which came not. Again do I say we know not always whither we are led, nor when we are being led. Something, I know not what, made me, when those in the chamber were so placed as to permit it,—something made me, I say, speak more tenderly to Miralda than I had ever spoken before, and while I wondered at this, a voice seemed to say, "She is of thy kindred in a way thou knowest not now."

What profits it to speak of the last sweet-sad hours I passed with Lirusan in the enchanted garden?

When Lirusan and I were again alone with each other, under the solemn stars, I committed her into the keeping of the Most High, and when I at length parted from her, I felt strong to endure whatsoever might befall me.

Once more I rested on the stone bench within the silent precincts of the Mount, and, as I sat there in communion with my inner self, I saw that it is only our lower hopes which deceive us, in order that we may be led to set our hopes on love, wisdom, power, and peace, which never deceive those who trust in them, for our inborn hungering after these things must in time be abundantly satisfied.

That night, ere I closed my eyes in sleep, I made the following entry in my Record: Jeshua said that in Adaroni they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in Adaroni.

The more I consider the life and the teaching of Jeshua, the more clearly do I perceive that he had a sure knowledge of those things whereof he spoke.

If now the delights of the love of a man for a woman on this lower plane are so marvellous, how great must be the delights of the angels which are in Adaroni!

In this, our darkness, we can but faintly perceive, as it were, a far-off glimmering of paradisiacal splendour, and, as the prophet says: *It doth not yet appear what we shall be.*

CHAPTER XVI.

WE SET OUT FOR PAGAM. KISH, THE DRIVER. WE
ARRIVE IN KAROM.

On the morning of our departure for Pagam, Saphroni and I were up betimes, and were informed by Almut that he would accompany us to the village, where a commodious waggon awaited us. We carried some few things with us, and when we were in the village I bought of a merchant, with whom I was acquainted, dried fruit and dried fish, meal, butter, honey, and many small cheeses flavoured with cummin.

I had been permitted to take some twenty pieces of gold, besides a small purse of silver—sufficient money to support me in Khoshek until I had established the service of the Temple of the Brethren, whence it was supposed I would be able to derive such gains as would meet all my wants. What I had over and above the twenty pieces of gold and the small purse of silver, I was requested to leave behind me in charge of Brother Zimri.

The body of the waggon was a convenient height from the ground, sufficiently capacious, and provided with a canopy of strong cloth, under which we were sheltered from the hot sun. This waggon furnished

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us also with three separate bed-chambers, I sleeping in the waggon and Saphroni under it, while the driver slept in a sort of tent formed by hanging a strong cloth over the shafts of the waggon. Our horse was as placid as our driver, and the driver was remarkable for his placidity.

One day, as we were proceeding leisurely along our way, Saphroni and I being seated beside the driver in the front of the waggon, the road that we should follow turned off to the left, but the horse desired to keep straight on; Kish, for this was the name of our driver, drew the rein so as to make the horse come to a stand. This was now the position: The horse was between the two roads, and by a pulling of the rein, Kish had conveyed his command that the horse should take the road on the left. This command having been once given, nothing further was done, and we there sat silent for a long time. A whip lay at the feet of the driver, because all drivers carry them, but I never saw Kish use it. I felt sure that at last the whip would be used, but I was mistaken. Now and then the driver would say, "Come!" gently, as though he were speaking to one of us. I forebore to show my want of belief in our driver's skill, but Saphroni did at length laugh heartily, and offered to lead the horse to our proper road. Kish, however, shook his head, and looked as if he wanted to sleep until the horse would yield without being forced. After a while, Kish again said "Come!" as gently as before, and

this time the horse, with equal gentleness, turned in the right way.

When I would know how Kish had so trained his horse, he answered :

“He knew he had to go sooner or later, and once he made it later—he remembers.”

The journeying alone, day after day, with a hidden man, would have been extremely dull for any person who is of a companionable nature, but Saphroni and I were not only interested in all we saw, but heightened that interest by our exchange of thoughts. He was again the Saphroni as I had known him from the first.

We enjoyed making our camp for the night, and each found something to do towards providing for the comfort of our little household.

We discovered that Kish was not only a skilful driver of horses, but a deft maker of barley cakes, which he baked on the coals, and served up with butter and honey.

There was always abundance of grass and herbage for our horse, which never went far from the camp, for the reason that every night after the driver had arranged his couch of goat-skins under the shafts, he called the horse and gave him a plentiful supper of grain, with a few bits of cake. When the horse had supped, he was tethered for the night where the grass was thickest, and in the morning he was again allowed to wander about as he chose, until we wanted him to begin the day's work.

When the horse had been securely tethered, Kish always went to bed, and we saw no more of him till the dawn of day, when the cheerful crackling of the fire let us know that our cook was providing coal from a certain kind of wood which gave better coals than any other wood—for Kish did all things as well as it was possible for him to do them, and this one quality alone would have been sufficient to make me admire him.

When we were within some four or five furlongs of Hoshav, Kish made a camp for himself, and I took Saphroni with me to my house, which, with its large garden, I had intended, as recorded in my former book, to leave by will to Shashuna, who had been to me as a loving daughter, and who had been for some years the wife of my faithful friend Zakku.

From time to time, Zakku had sent me information as to the state of my affairs, which were managed by my factor or steward, Ebul, who was a master jeweller, and also a good man of business, knowing when to buy, when to sell, and how to dispose of money to the best advantage.

I may say that Ebul and Zakku were joint stewards, the one transacting my business with merchants, and the other keeping the record thereof.

Of the delight and surprise of Zakku I need say nothing. Shashuna embraced me, and even shed tears of joy. This greatly moved me, for the manner in which she had once rejected me was such as,

though I showed it not, did for many months cause me secret displeasure.

Here two rooms were at once prepared for us, and Saphroni was not long in winning the admiration of everybody in the house, even of the palsied Batual, who could only smile as usual, and move an arm.

Leaving Saphroni to devise amusement for the children of Shashuna, I hastened to the house of Esbah, the widow of Kabri.

Here I found Ebul, who continued to use the workshop of his late master, and to direct the workmen employed by Esbah.

My own store of jewels, and such of my money as Ebul had not put out at usury, were, of course, in my own house in the keeping of Zakku.

So well had my business been attended to in my absence, that I was richer by some two thousand *sababs* than when I returned from the Diamond Mountains. But how changed was my position!

When I returned to Hoshav with my diamonds, rubies, star-opals, and other valuable gems, it was to find that Turoni had been taken to Adaroni, and that my wealth was become valueless to me. Now, however, I rejoiced in the abundance of my riches, for I had also the love of a noble woman who would share my wealth with me.

In the evening I had Zakku to myself, and when we were alone I told him all that had befallen me since I had left Karom for Sahitam. I spoke to him

of Lirusan, and pointed out to him, with much satisfaction, that this queenly and simple-hearted woman had begun by loving my poems and ended by loving me.

Telling this, led me to ask Zakku whether he had ceased to cultivate his powers as a poet. For answer, he handed me a poem-play which he was then composing. I read the prologue to this poem, and instantly became aware that I was in the presence of a master. My surprise that this could be the work of Zakku was unbounded, but I concealed it.

Though he had always known that I had a poor opinion of the poems which he used to recite in the halls, he did not seek to draw from me an admission that I had changed my opinion. This modest behaviour of his pleased me, but I said nothing further as to the poem, except that I would take it to my room and read it carefully.

I read all he had written—what was manifestly the first-half of the play—and I was delighted with the subtle strokes with which he gradually brought forth a character, the unexpected and yet perfectly reasonable turns of the story, the power, the delicacy, the easy flow of the language. I was so astonished that my first words, when I saw him the next morning, were:

“Zakku, thou art the greatest poet in Karom!”

“That may not mean much,” replied he, good-naturedly.

“Thou art the greatest poet in Sahitam.”

"Then," replied he, "the poets of Sahitam are not better than the poets of Karom."

"I can do that for thee which no other man can do," said I.

He replied: "Thou hast already done for me what no other man would do."

I was becoming vehement, but I restrained myself, and said:

"Since I saw thee last, thou hast gained a new style—I have gained a new name. Whatever *Halek* may have done for thee touches not *Almoni*, and thou must now call me *Almoni*."

"Wherefore a new name?" he asked.

"To signify that I cultivate new qualities."

"What new qualities?"

"For one—the power of holding my tongue," said I.

"But," urged Zakku, "why should one who uses his tongue as thou dost, seek to hold it?"

"Wait," I answered, "till thou be come to *Sahitam*."

"I do earnestly desire to go thither," said Zakku, "and, but that I dwell so commodiously in this beautiful house of thine, I would long since have left this *Karom* of petty strifes and ignoble imitations."

"Is *Lormuz* still the court-poet?" I asked.

"He is," replied Zakku, "and he would be generous, if he were the only poet in *Karom*."

"I do remember," said I, "that he gave some

cruel cuts to a certain young man who sought to rival him."

"Speakest thou of a certain one who has newly changed his name?"

"I speak of him," I replied, "and am sorry I did speak of him. So now to speak of thee. Thou must copy for me this poem-play of thine, send it to me by a trusty messenger, or come thyself, for I shall be right glad to see thee. As I told thee, I am debarred from writing letters to *Sahitam*, and from receiving letters from *Sahitam*. I tell thee I will help thee.

"For one thing, if my commodious house keep thee here I will soon turn thee out of it, and that ere long, for I know certain things I may not speak of now, and I know that thou wilt bless the day thou showedst me that play of thine."

Before I left *Hoshav*, I visited *Shomez* and his wife, *Nahamah*, she that had been a grief-sister to *Esbah*, when *Kabri* was taken to *Adaroni*. But I did not find it convenient to visit *Lormuz*, and I believe he knew not I was in *Hoshav*, although I was living within a bow-shot of his garden wall.

The day after this conversation, which did not stir *Zakku* to ask me more particularly as to how I proposed to befriend him, we were again on the road, and after two days we arrived in *Pagam*.

One evening, when we were preparing our camp, *Kish* informed me that next night we would be in *Khoshek*. This surprised me, for I had thought we

had to travel at least two days before I should again set eyes on that small town where I, for so many years, toiled as an unthanked slave for Khobesh, the goldsmith.

Kish had betaken him to his couch, the horse was grazing a hundred paces from us. Saphroni and I were sitting close to the blazing fire, for the nights were somewhat cold.

We had for a long time been sitting silent, and at length I noticed that Saphroni was in deep thought.

"The day after to-morrow," said I, "we part for a year—I remain here alone, thou returnest to Sahitam."

He sighed deeply, and at length he said: "I was thinking of Lirusan. How beautiful she is!"

"Thou dost amuse me," said I, "for I never saw thee lift thine eyes to her face. And never before had I seen thee so unamiable."

"I was not unamiable," said he, "and I will now explain to thee what I said I would explain to thee if I could. I observed her face at the open door before I knocked, and, I will tell thee, honestly, though thou rally me for my foolishness, the sudden sight of her struck me, as it were, a blow that dazed me—I could not speak."

"It is to be hoped, then," said I, "thou see not many pretty faces, or thou wilt become dazed for life."

"Nay," he replied, "I am not frightened of that—there are no more faces like hers."

"I had not thought thou couldst be so easily moved," said I; "think no more of this; put it away from thee."

He spoke not for some time, and then he prayed me not to be angry with him, begged me to have patience with him, and said that when he was as old as I, he would be as far above these bewildering emotions as I myself was.

"Beloved Saphroni," said I, "thou art not likely to see that pretty face again till I return from Khoshek, and then thou wilt have forgotten all about it, and wilt be glad thou didst take thy master's advice in this, as thou hast taken it in other matters."

Gently then, and sweetly, he said: "Peace be with thee, beloved master! I would that thy year were accomplished, and that thou wouldst then break loose from the fetters of the Worshipful Brethren, and, with thy money, build a grand temple where thou and I can work the good we will—in our own way."

I sat long at the fire after Saphroni had gone to sleep, and I thought long upon many things, but chiefly on the manner in which the character of this gentle youth was developing.

The first sign he had given that he could be roused was when the brethren refused to let him abide with me during my year in Pagam; the second time he had surprised me was this night, when he showed me that, though gentle and calm in his

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demeanour, he was one who, at heart, was as opposed to being ruled and as fond of ruling as I had been.

His having been dazed by the beauty of Lirusan was so perfectly natural, and was so frankly confessed, that I gave it no further thought.

CHAPTER XVII.

I ENTER UPON MY MISSION. THE PAGAMAS, KAROMAS, AND SAHITAMAS COMPARED.

This morning did the waggon leave me. I had seen the last of my beloved Sahitamas for a long time.

I write this in my own house, within the precincts of that parcel of ground which the Superior Comptroller of the Church of the Brethren bought of Belzar, whom the Prince of the Pagamas had set over all the churches of the Black-Whites, the Perfumers, and the Reasoners.

Farewell now to Karom and to Sahitam until the end of the appointed days, when I shall return to them.

I am now under strict injunctions to touch no manner of harp, flute, cithern, sackbut, dulcimer, cornet, or viol; not to write any manner of poem, nor any manner of treatise; nor consort with them that gather the things of the earth, nor with them that search out strange names for the naming of the things of the earth; but I am enjoined to keep my record, and as this book which I now write is in some sort a record, I do now promise myself the pleasure of writing therein daily.

First, then, as to my parcel of ground. It is enclosed by a low wall of unhewn stones. In the midst of this ground, which I will make into a garden, is the temple with its outer court, its inner court, and its chambers for the officers who dwell there.

This was the first church or temple of the brethren in Pagam, and the people of Pagam agree in this that the brethren of the Temple of the Mount were sons of Belial, had no right to call any of their houses *temples*, and had no right to use the word *Mount* in speaking of their teaching, for the reason that they did not teach that which they pretended to teach, namely—the true doctrines of Jeshua, who taught from the mount and drew all men up the the mount after him.

But, before proceeding with my history, it will be necessary to give some information for those who have neither travelled nor read.

The island lying between Adaroni on the east, and Kashep on the west, is divided into three provinces, namely—Pagam, Karom, and Sahitam.

The people of these three provinces differ greatly from each other. If we liken them to three classes in a school, it may be said that the Pagamas are learning to know the letters, the Karomas to understand words, and the Sahitamas to know the things themselves.

A Pagama will be taught until he become a Karoma, a Karoma until he become a Sahitama, and

it doth not yet appear, nor need we here inquire, what the Sahitamas become; for if we say they become Adaronas, that is to say, angels, and if the state, the powers, and the delights of the Adaronas are but dimly perceived by us who still remain on the Island, we do but use words which each man has to interpret for himself. So, for the present, we speak of the subjects of the Great King as they appear while they are on the Island.

As in three classes of a school, some in the lowest class may know many words, and those in the next class may know many things which are being learnt by those in the highest class, so, when I say the Pagamas do a certain thing, the Karomas another certain thing, and the Sahitamas something different from what is done by those below them, I do not mean that all Pagamas do this certain thing, or that only Pagamas do this certain thing, or that they never do some other thing, which might also be done by the Karomas.

This being made clear, I will now give the distinguishing features of these three peoples.

The first question with the Pagama is: What carnal pleasure, what money, or what fame can I get by any particular course?

The first question with the Karoma is: Will this make me a better man?

By far the greater part of the Pagamas can be content, as far as religious observances are concerned, with the laying up a stock of merit for themselves

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merely by going regularly to the temple, by listening with a reverent air to the interpretation of laws which they have no immediate intention of keeping, by asking over and over for things they do not desire to have, and by singing songs of joy to express their thanks for what they have not received.

Here follows a list of some of the points of difference between the three peoples of the Island:—

(1.)

The Pagama denies.
The Karoma believes.
The Sahitama knows.

(2.)

The Pagama is content if others think he is good.
The Karoma is content if he himself thinks he is good.
The Sahitama is content to know that there is only One Good.

(3.)

The Pagama generally returns evil for evil, and very often evil for good.
The Karoma tries not to return evil for evil.
The Sahitama always returns good for evil.

(4.)

The Pagama blames others first.
The Karoma, who reflects, will blame himself first.
The Sahitama blames nobody.

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(5.)

The Pagama hungers and thirsts after definitions and proofs.
The Karoma hungers and thirsts after rightness.
The Sahitama hungers and thirsts after perfection.

(6.)

The Pagama derides.
The Karoma reasons.
The Sahitama feels.

(7.)

The Pagama hews the stone.
The Karoma builds the palace.
The Sahitama lives in it.

(8.)

The Pagama thinks he is paid less than he has earned.
The Karoma thinks he is paid more than he has earned.
The Sahitama says that no man can have anything he has not earned.

(9.)

The Pagama blames the laws for being difficult to keep.
The Karoma blames himself for finding the laws difficult.
The Sahitama feels as if he had made the laws himself.

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(10.)

The Pagama hoards up names and displays them as though they were jewels.

The Karoma uses names and has the things also.

The Sahitama knows that which has no name.

(11.)

The Pagama believes in matter, and says he also believes in spirit.

The Karoma believes in both.

The Sahitama knows that matter is a temporary appearance of which spirit is the enduring substance.

There are many sects among the Pagamas, and these sects may be divided into two classes—those who say they know enough, and those who say they wish to know more.

Chief among those who say they know enough are the Black-Whites, who, of course, call themselves The Only Ones, as do all the other sects in Pagam.

In every temple of the Black-Whites there is a black stone, and the all-in-all of the faith of the Black-Whites is to believe that this stone is white. Some say that this stone was originally white, but that the officers of the temple have covered it with black paint.

Be this as it may, all who worship in these temples must, at a certain part of their service to the Great King, declare solemnly that they believe the stone to be white. Many learned men have

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written treatises on the whiteness of the black stone, and as many men of distinguished piety and of eminent virtues have declared their belief in the same; some have argued that only those think the stone to be black whose lives are evil.

Then, again, even among the Black-Whites themselves, there are some who maintain that their black stone is whiter than the black stone in other temples. But this is really of very little consequence, for all Black-Whites believe that in the final hour of reckoning, those of their temple will be accounted worthy to enter Adaroni, whatever may be the fate of others.

Our brethren, however, do not call themselves The Only Ones, for they hold that an honest man can obtain a saving faith, as it is termed, in any one of the numerous sects of Pagam—in those that teach from the Book of Adaroni, and in those that teach from other scriptures.

The kindliness of this view of the Worshipful Brethren is readily perceived, and its reasonableness may be shown by the following propositions:—

Truth and love are the water and the bread by which we live.

Faith is a force by which the activity of our life is maintained.

All deeds, in accord with truth and love, are good deeds.

Good deeds are to the health of the soul what exercise is to the health of the body.

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Every sect in Pagam teaches some truth and some love, in which truth and love a man may have a saving faith.

This faith will stir a man to avoid evil deeds and to do good ones.

Only in the progressive activities of the spiritual life do men find rest, peace, perfect satisfaction, enduring delights, joys unutterable, pleasures for evermore.

This is the faith of the sect calling themselves the Brethren of the Mount, and, like other sects, they build their temples where they teach such portions of truth and love as they possess, and they send forth their messengers whose first and last and most vital work is to show by their own lives how sweet and lovely a thing it is to be good.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A THUNDER-STORM. SHUREK, THE POTTER. THE HONEST UNCLE OF THE POTTER.

Next day, long before dawn, I was awakened by a sudden and terrific burst of thunder. After a while, it rained heavily, and, as a careful householder, I rejoiced to think that my cistern would soon be full, for we had observed that there was but little water therein when we arrived.

Being unable to sleep by reason of the roaring of the storm, I arose that I might light my lamp, for I desired to begin my first day here by reading the treatise of Almut, and meditating on one of the inspired songs which I especially esteemed.

It was with a sense of satisfaction that I was able to lay my hand at once upon my flint and steel, and I said to myself that I would be orderly and careful in all things, even the smallest.

My lamp was easily lighted, the thunder was becoming gradually less violent, and I soon ascended into Arum, as the brethren term the height of rapt contemplation, where all sense of evil, past and to come, is lost in a delightful perception of the inner good that rules for ever in the heart of the universal reality.

ALMONI

The rain was now falling steadily, and it may be that the sound thereof on the tiled roof of the temple had lulled me to sleep. When I awakened, I was able to remember that I had been saying in my dream: *Almoni and Lirusan! What music is there in those two names thus joined!*

When it was broad daylight, I set about arranging things as I would have them.

The rooms here set apart for the Uzza, as the officer in charge of a temple is called in Pagam, were four: a dormitory, a refectory, a parlour, and a store-room.

In the store-room were shelves, on which I arranged my stores of food, such as meal, cheeses, dried grapes, oil of olives, and dried fish. Here also I kept the vessels used for cooking.

In my refectory I arranged my plates, trenchers, jars, cups, and bowls. In the parlour I had nothing except a table, three benches, a low divan, and some sayings of wise men which I had myself copied in large letters on coloured parchment.

On the wall, opposite that part of the table which I chose for my seat when dining, I had fixed one of my favourite tablets, containing only the words: *Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

Below this tablet a shelf ran across the entire end of the room, and on this shelf I disposed my peculiar treasures, so that, as I sat at the table, I had only to lift up mine eyes and I could count them over.

ALMONI

We, of the Island, need so many outward shows, lest we forget.

In a small satchel, made for me by Lirusan, embroidered with gold, and having on the outside the letters *L* and *A* entwined, I kept the love-letter of my dear Lirusan:

Come back to me soon, Halek. I never knew what pain was till now. This, wet with many tears, from thy Lirusan.

Of course, I knew this letter by heart; but I would often read it, and note the formation of each letter.

On the other side of the tablet stood our cup of betrothal. It was white as snow, pure and flawless as Lirusan's love.

Here also I kept the treatise, copied out with his own hand by Almut, together with a small treatise by Zimri, which had been copied for me by my beloved Saphroni.

Here also I kept the letter of lamentation sent to me by Kabri, shortly before he was removed to Adaroni.

Here also I kept my record, in which I had garnered up a number of thoughts which had come to me at various times—some in seasons of rejoicing, but the greater part when I was in sore affliction.

After I had arranged all my various things to my satisfaction, I set about making my first meal for myself; but it was a simple one, as I had at that time not cared what I ate. So I set on the table the

last of the wheaten cakes of Sahitam, and a jar of honey, beside which I placed Lirusan's cup. Then I took my pitcher to the cistern that I might fill it with the cool fresh rain water.

Here I had a foretaste of my life among the people for whom I desired to labour with all my heart, and mind, and strength—the cistern was empty; some person had removed the stopper by which the water could be let off so that the cistern might be cleaned.

About two hundred paces from the lower wall of my enclosure stood a black tent made of skins. It was the nearest habitation to my ground, and about five hundred paces on another side stood a large inn, where every day numbers of people drank bilbal, kivis, or pon, as they chose.

I was not sorry that my acquaintance with the dweller in the black tent should begin with my asking him to do me a kindness; and I thought of Jeshua, who had begun a wonderful conversation with a woman by asking her to give him some water.

When I was come within a few paces of the tent, I heard a muffled voice, as of a man reciting prayers to an idol, as is the custom of certain savages. I stood outside and waited till the prayer had ceased, then I said: *Peace be with you.* Upon this a woman came to the door and looked at me with dull eyes. I smiled pleasantly, and, holding out my pitcher, begged her to give me a little water.

At this request her face brightened somewhat, and she brought me a little water, which she poured into my pitcher.

Then the peculiar whining chant began again, and I said softly to the woman: "I thank thee, and will see thee again; but now thy husband prayeth."

Upon this she looked angrily at me and said: "Yes, I thank the Great King that my husband is not as those sons of Belial, who say they teach what Jeshua taught, and who only teach what their cunning masters bid them teach, that they may rob the poor, and work evil under the cloak of piety."

"Are there such men in Pagam?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied, "and more still coming—from a place they call Sahitam."

"Peace be with thee," said I; and again I smiled upon her, as I honestly could, for, indeed, I felt only pity for so unlovable a woman.

While I was eating my breakfast, I heard a voice outside: "Peace be with thee!" and I replied: "With thee be peace!" rising at the same time to meet my visitor.

I bade him be seated, and offered him a cluster of dried grapes. He took the grapes, and, while he ate them at his leisure, he spoke in this wise:

"I know not thy name, but thou art a good man, for thou speakest gently to women who cannot speak gently. Had I not been praying, I had shaken the life out of that woman."

"Is she not thy wife?"

"Yes; and I only wish she was the wife of a certain weaver, whom I hate."

"Why dost thou hate him?"

"First, because he has used me spitefully, secondly, because he is an unbeliever—at least, he goes to no temple."

"Some day I will speak to him," said I, "it may be that I can prevail on him to come to my temple."

"If thou succeed," said my visitor, "it will repent thee; the Uzza of our temple desires to have him."

"What is thy temple?"

"I am one of the real Black-Whites, and our black stone is the first that was ever sent over to the Island by the Great King of Adaroni. But thou art a good man, I am thy neighbour, thou hast been to my tent, my wife has given thee water, and I will defend thee."

"Have I enemies, then?"

"Hast thou enemies!" he exclaimed. "Ask, rather, hast thou friends? I know thou art a son of Belial, but thou art my neighbour, and we must love our neighbours. I am come to tell thee something. Some cunning fellow, seeing that a storm would shortly break, removed the stopper from thy cistern, just to show thee what the Pagamas think of thee for coming among them, and impudently thinking, as they would say, that thou canst teach more to them who already know enough."

"Wilt thou have another cluster of dried grapes?" I asked.

"Not just now," he answered. "I came not to eat grapes, but to repair thy cistern in such sort that no person, save he who made the stopper, can take it out. I am a travelling potter, and I understand all the tricks in my own trade, and in all other trades."

"I thank thee for thy offer," said I. "What wilt thou demand of me for so mending my cistern?"

"The method of doing this so that only he who mended can mar it, is a secret that has been handed down for seven hundred generations, and only one member of the family knows it. I am Shurek, of the tribe of the Hallunkim, and we are the only really clever people in Pagam."

"And what wilt thou demand of me for so mending my cistern?"

"I fear thou couldst not afford to pay me what I demand, for this requires a rare clay which is found only in a small pit up a certain mountain. I demand two gold pieces."

"That," said I, "is indeed a large fee for the patching up a small hole."

"But," rejoined Shurek, "not too large a fee for thy supply of water as long as thou remainest here."

"I am poor," said I, "canst thou not (as thou sayest thou wilt be my friend) do it for one gold piece?"

"I could," he replied, "but I will not."

"I will patch it up myself," said I.

"Thou mayest do so," said he, "but do what thou

wilt, the clay of thy stopper will melt away ere ever thy cistern be half-full. I know all about it, and, as I am thy friend, I tell thee, although thou art a son of Belial who art come here to teach us."

Now, I had for some time been feeling that I could not trust this man. I was persuaded in my own mind that it was he who had removed the stopper, and that unless I paid him for repairing the cistern I should never be able to keep water therein. So I offered to give him one piece of gold if he would mend my cistern the way he said he would mend it. After adjuring me to tell no man that he had done this work for me at so low a rate, he clapped me on the shoulder, and winked with one eye, as he assured me that I was as clever a fellow as he had ever met, and that he would defy any of the lewd fellows of Khoshek to defraud me in any way. He wound up his praise of my cleverness by bidding me only let him know if any man wronged me, and he would make him restore to me fourfold that whereof he had defrauded me.

That same day he brought up a ball of white clay and various powders. After pounding, compounding, and testing, adding more of this powder, and then more of some other powder, he produced a stopper which he said must not be baked in the fire, but dried in the sun for the space of seven days. The material of this stopper, he said, was so hard that nobody could force through it without breaking the floor of the cistern, and yet so soft that by

forcing a small quantity of a certain fiery liquid into the stem of the stopper (which projected somewhat through the floor of the cistern), the stopper would presently melt away into mud. He also explained to me that in a year's time, if I wished to clean the cistern, I need only send for him, and he would at once remove the stopper for me, clean the cistern, and put in a new stopper for me, for a *tirik*—the smallest piece of silver used in Pagam.

But this did not conclude the business of the cistern, for he then told me that he had an uncle, a water-carrier—an honest man who had only one fault, and who supplied his customers with the best water to be found within ten miles of Khoshek.

As I was here to turn people from their evil ways, I asked what was the one fault of the honest man, his uncle, and was told that he allowed his wife and little children to be poorly fed and poorly clad in order that he might have money to spend at the inn. I was also informed that this uncle only drank the best kivis, and that he never used scurrilous language, even when he had been drinking to the health of the Prince, but that he had, unfortunately, got into a habit of trying to strangle people who did not agree with him in certain points of doctrine.

I did not feel that I wished the honest uncle of Shurek to begin by getting into the habit of supplying me with water, so I hesitated; but Shurek

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at once said I need not trouble, for he would send his uncle to me at once. Before I could say more, Shurek took his leave, and in a very short time I heard peals of laughter from the potter and his wife.

CHAPTER XIX.

MY OLD MASTER, KOBESH. THE MAN BRITULO. THE CUP OF LIRUSAN DISAPPEARS.

Having now arranged my household goods, and had my cistern mended, I thought I would visit my old master, Kobesh. Fortunately, I could secure all the doors and windows, so that nobody could get in without breaking a door or the shutters.

My visit was in every way unpleasant. My old master was more intolerant than when he was younger. He was more than ever persuaded that only Black-Whites could enter Adaroni, and that even some Black-Whites could not. He said he was not surprised that I had given up all reputable ways of making a living, and that I had at last sold myself for a time, till I myself might be able to buy others and to rule over them while pretending to teach them.

Zibara, the first wife of Kobesh, was in Adaroni. She had been a zealous defender of the whiteness of the black stone. The second wife was both young and comely, but Kobesh told me, when we were alone, that though his first wife had been far from attractive to the eye, and much older than she should have been, he had loved her more than he

could possibly love any other, whatever her charms, for none had been able to shake her faith in the whiteness of the black stone, and her sure knowledge that this faith gives people who hold it a right to enter Adaroni, and abide there for ever and ever.

Delsi, the daughter of Kobesh, was married, and was supposed to have gone to Karom with her husband.

Kobesh did not ask me to visit him again, nor did I wish to do so.

The sun was setting when I again found myself within that small enclosure where I was master.

A man was waiting for me. It was the honest uncle of Shurek. He had emptied three skins of water into my cistern, and he said he would like to have the money. He also said he would not have toiled up that steep bit of hill if I had not been a friend of his nephew, Shurek, the potter.

I gave him his money, and his manner was at once extremely courteous. He asked me what I was going to do with the parcel of ground, and when I told him I was going to turn it into a beautiful garden, he said that as soon as I began to make the garden he would send his little son to help me. When I told him that I could do the work myself, he said that I could, but that unless I had somebody to watch it, the fruit and the flowers would all be filched away. He said they were a set of dishonest rascals in Khoshek. When I said I did not need a boy, he said he was a poor man with a large

family, and that if I refused to help a poor man whose children were starving, and half-naked, I was a son of Belial, and should be hunted out of the town. When I ventured to remonstrate, he begged my pardon, and said he had forgotten that I was a friend of his nephew, Shurek. Then he bade me farewell, and wanted to kiss my hand, but I said that where I came from, a man did not kiss the hand of another man, except when some great occasion demanded that and other significant rites.

At last, my first day as a messenger was completed. I was sad, I was weary; but I felt profoundly thankful that during the whole of that day I had not for a moment forgotten that I was there first to set an example, and I did feel that I was becoming a new creature. I now had a most comforting sense of being a child, a disciple, and a servant of the Most High.

It was a lovely night, there was no moon, but the sky was clear. I reclined on the ground close to the temple. This made me think of the conversations I had held with Saphroni by our camp fire. Then I thought of Lirusan, then of love and pain, of hungerings and disappointments, but I clearly saw that our higher instincts are always to be trusted.

So I gradually rose above my own pleasures and pains, until at last, on some serene height, I contemplated the beauty of truth, the entrancing delights of goodness, the inscrutable mysteries of the infinite, the cyclic procession of the immensities,

the glorious and inalienable heritage of man the immortal.

This ascending to a height, by closing the mind to places, persons, and times, so that our quiet waiting brings us into a condition in which we lose all sense of evil in ourselves and in others, is, as I have already stated, what the Brethren of the Mount call *going into Arum*.

The brethren say that their finest thoughts do not come by thinking, and that the musician does not compose his finest music, but that he hears it, and then attempts to record it.

The day after my visit to Kobesh, I set myself to find the family of Pilpad; but it was two days before I succeeded in doing so, and, as is so often the case when a man performs a duty, I met with a great and unforeseen reward.

Saphseph, the eldest son of our estimable janitor, had married, when very young, a certain woman who was not only fair to look upon, but who had brought him a considerable dowry. In temper, however, she was a shrew, a scold, a constant fault-finder, of a loud voice, and a threatening eye. She had contracted these evil qualities during her girlhood, and when her position as wife and mother enabled her to gratify her singular desire of appearing more unamiable than she was, she was able to boast that she had the most submissive husband and the most obedient children in Khoshek. This was true, but her children dreaded her, while her husband hated her.

In the course of years, her sons and daughters became tyrants in their turn, and when they ill-treated her, the father, who was naturally a gentle man, would sit still and smile.

There are many families in Pagam where love is absolutely unknown, where the nearest approach to peace is not to be actually fighting, and where all the pleasures of life are cankered.

In some households, a mother sets herself, without knowing it, to rear daughters whose hearts she has distorted by allowing them to be present when she is gloating over the faults of her neighbours, saying how she cannot endure one woman for one evil, and another woman for another evil. This terrible distorting of the hearts of the children by a mother, who thinks she loves them, is the more terrible when she is a punctilious observer of all matters connected with her temple, her creed, and her position among the wealthy.

I will confess that, when I was fully acquainted with the callous and complacent barbarity of the ordinary well-to-do mothers in Pagam, I no longer wondered why they were so zealous in sending messengers to reclaim the savages—it was a subtle suggestion that they themselves did not need messengers.

Then I tried to find out how it is that so many mothers rear daughters who cannot possibly make their husbands happy, and I found that the mothers corrupted their daughters, because they themselves

had been corrupted by men who behaved to them as though the first duty of women was to minister to men.

The selfish carnality of men corrupts the women, who, in their turn, rear sons who are all selfishness, and daughters who are all show.

The teachers, the Uzzas, the overseers of the temples, instead of feeding the lambs, deck them with ribbons and then slay them.

But the people wish to be deceived, and they will pay large sums of money to those who can deceive them in such a manner, that only a few seers lift up the voice of lamentation.

Where shall the messenger from Sahitam begin to teach? The answer is, *anywhere*.

Jeshua taught men, he taught women, he took little children in his arms, and taught them the lesson of lessons. He reprov'd the hypocrites, the unloving; he raised the lowly, comforted the sorrowful, lightened the burdens of the heavy-laden.

But my thoughts have carried me away from Saphseph and his family. I was unable to do any good there. The husband appeared to enjoy nothing except the ill-treatment which the woman, who had domineered over him, now received at the hands of her children. But, as I have said, I had a great reward: the eldest daughter of Saphseph was a most beautiful woman to look at, and of such charming ways, that any young man might be excused for desiring to have her for a wife. Her eyes expressed

love, her voice was sweet and soft, and her smiles were fraught with tenderness. She spoke graciously both to her father and her mother, and appeared to be the most dutiful of daughters. Her name was Hephshi.

Now, Hephshi had many admirers; but she admired only one, a youth named Britulo.

The instant I spoke to Britulo, he came over to me, and grasped both my hands, saying: "*I have waited for thee!*" For my own part, I can only say that the instant I looked upon him my heart was stirred within me, and I said to myself: "*I have found a man!*" We were both right.

At the end of my first three months, my report was to the effect that one man believed in my message, and that eight women thought they did. At the end of my second three months, I said one man still believed my message, three said they did, and one woman had persuaded her husband to arrange for having me stoned as a blasphem'er.

I know that if the Black-Whites, the Reasoners, and the Perfumers had permitted their children to come to my temple, I could have laid the foundation of a work which would have borne abundant fruit in future generations. But these three sects are careful that their children shall not stray from their fold.

At the end of my next three months, I said that many came to the temple, and some had begun giving their tirik regularly, as the only thing they

could do to show their gratitude to me for teaching them.

Britulo was a garden-maker, and when he told me this, I said that if I were not so poor I would ask him to arrange the flower-beds and the fruit-plot in my parcel of ground.

To my surprise, he exclaimed: "Master, thou who wilt lay out flower-beds in me, wouldst accept four *tiriks* a month for keeping them in order! Shall I make thee pay more for thy garden which shall perish? Nay, but less! I will work for thee without money!"

One day I was visited by one of the numerous beggars of Khoshek. He said he was hungry. I could see that he was filthy. I desired him to sit on a bench in the refectory, and I washed his hands, his face, and his feet. Then I gave him a linen tunic, nearly new, a pair of old sandals, and a girdle which I did not need. After this I gave him as much as he could eat, and a draught of milk. When he would eat no more, he began to look about him, and say what a beautiful place I had, and how thankful I ought to be for it. Then he looked through the window at my garden, in which I already had some flowers. This, he said, reminded him of his boyhood, and he began to weep, so I went out and gathered for him some of my best flowers.

This touched him so much that he seized my hand and kissed it, saying that he wished he could repay

me for my kindness, as his wife was bedridden, and had not seen a flower for many years.

"Friend," said I, "I am already repaid a thousand-fold. Peace be with thee! Come when thou wilt, I will succour thee if I can."

About an hour after he had left me, I missed the white cup of Lirusan; but the idea that this infirm old man would have taken it, when I was gathering my few flowers for him, was so abhorrent to me, that I put it from me, fancying it might have been taken by some of the young men of Khoshek, who delight in giving pain both to men and animals, as I had often observed.

The loss of this cup saddened me, and vexed me. I longed to find out who had taken it, and I resolved to recover it if possible.

That night, influenced probably by the loss of my precious cup, I had a dream which considerably added to my distress. I saw in my dream Lirusan and Saphroni walking together. I saw Saphroni draw her gently towards him, as I had done when I met the sisters after their visit to Iodalla. I saw Saphroni do this, and knew that he said something. What he said I knew not, but I saw Lirusan turn her face to him and smile.

After this I lay awake, while all manner of distressing thoughts came about me like poisonous flies. I remembered how Saphroni had been smitten with the beauty of Lirusan, and, worst of all, I kept thinking how easily she might be drawn aside from

me, even as she had been drawn aside from Sharun. I reflected that, if Saphroni sought her love and obtained it, he would only be dealing with me as I had dealt with Sharun, "and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." I also noted that Saphroni was the most lovable man I had ever met, and that, in point of age, he was more suited to be Lirusan's husband than I was. Finally, I got an evil thought from those words of the guileless youth: *I wish the year of thy probation was ended.* I said to myself that he wished this, not that he might again have me with him, but that he might then be able to go again with me to the house of Hethron, where he might some day find an opportunity of letting Lirusan know what emotions she had aroused in him.

The day after my cup had been taken, I was fairly stupefied with surprise at discovering that somebody had taken the embroidered satchel containing the letter of Lirusan. This was clearly a malicious act, for it could be of no value to any person.

In my perplexity I was so foolish as to ask advice of Shurek, the potter, who had an honest uncle, but I would not have done this had he not come to borrow something of me. He said it was a great shame, and a terrible disgrace to the town, that a respectable man in charge of a temple, even though it were only a Temple of the Brethren of the Mount, should be so impudently robbed, and he said that if I would give him a piece of gold, he would consider

it his duty to get that cup back for me. I promised that I would reward him, though I wondered whether it might not be possible that he already knew more of it than he chose to admit. I especially noted that he sought to gain some advantage out of it, by telling me that if I did not want to be robbed of everything, I must keep a servant, and that if I would give him a piece of gold, he would find for me a servant who was the most honest man in all Pagam—a relation of his own.

I was never inclined to regard things that some consider to be omens of evil, but I will frankly confess that the loss of the only things Lirusan had given me, together with my vivid dream, combined to pull me down towards the pit.

I read carefully in the book of Adaroni, and sought out passages written by men who had been troubled, and who had been delivered; I neglected none of my duties, but I kept sinking deeper and deeper in the mire till the waters came unto my soul.

About this time I resolved to take a journey to Unoti, where I thought my father and my only brother were still dwelling. I had been all my life more or less estranged from these two, and they had not once written to me since I informed them that I was setting out for Sahitam.

Upon making inquiries, however, I learnt that my father dwelt in some remote region of Karom, and that my brother had been removed to Adaroni.

CHAPTER XX.

I GATHER A SMALL CONGREGATION. SAPHRONI AND
BRITULO CONTRASTED. SHUREK DRIVES ME INTO
A PASSION.

The brethren call all their temples, Temples of the Mount. If it can be obtained, the summit of a hill is chosen for the site of the temple, but even were the temple built on a plain it would still be called a Temple of the Mount. Every tenth day I called the people to prayer by beating on a gong, as is the manner of the Uzzas in this part of Pagam. When the people had taken their seats, they joined in the solemn hymn used by the brethren in Sahitam. Then we prayed aloud that we might incline our hearts to keep the laws of the Great King. Then I discoursed on some passages from the Book of Adaroni, and when the discourse was finished we sat in silence for a while. After this, I would permit the people to say in what points they objected to my teaching, and to ask me questions thereon. It was also my custom to inquire if there were any subject on which they felt the need of more particular information, and I would then use my utmost endeavours to prepare for them, by reading and meditation, such a discourse as would help to resolve their difficulties.

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Every day I visited one or more of my congregation, and made myself acquainted with their troubles.

One tenth day, being sorely grieved that even those who professed themselves anxious to progress in spiritual matters still showed by their conduct to one another in their homes, that love was the last thing they thought of, I concluded my discourse with the parable of the fig tree, which, year after year, bore no fruit. I applied the parable to themselves, and reproached them with showing nothing but leaves. Their consciences told them that my reproof was just, for they knew I was well acquainted with the way the parents behaved to their children, and the children to their parents.

Hepshi was one who heard this homily with displeasure. I noted her sullen lip and angry eye. She knew I had discovered that when Britulo was not in their house she treated her mother after a barbarous fashion. Loving Britulo as I did, and seeing noble work before him, I had thrown out hints which had made him more watchful, and, perhaps, not so complacent towards Hepshi as she wished him to be. The maiden soon came to regard me as one who would seek to dissuade Britulo from marrying her, for she was well aware that I knew how much higher he was than she. As far, however, as direct persuasion goes, I had done no more than speak to him, in a general way, of the severe penalties an old man will have to pay for a certain ill-advised step in his youth.

Whenever I spoke in this strain to Britulo, he would look grave. I never mentioned the name of Hephsi, nor did the young man ever ask whether it was himself and Hephsi I had in my mind when I spoke in this admonitory manner.

But, at last, by ways which I knew not at the time, this noble young man became to me in brotherly love even as Saphroni, while he was able to render me services where Saphroni, from the gentleness of his disposition, would have been useless.

I had many a time said that I had never known so noble a man as Saphroni. I can say I never knew a nobler man than Britulo.

They were formed of the same fine clay, both were vessels made unto honour, but unto different honour, even as milk and honey, both of which are good, differ from each other in every way.

Where Saphroni would be gentle, Britulo would be fiery. Where the one would be sweetly silent, the other would threaten and thunder.

Both were loving, honest, fearless, and generous in all their thoughts. Both sought rightness first.

Saphroni was of a middle stature. He had calm, grey eyes, and his face usually expressed benignity. He always appeared to speak with deliberation, because he always spoke slowly and softly.

Britulo was taller than Saphroni, his eyes were dark, and charged with strange lights. His face was rugged, and he let his beard grow as it would. When delivering his most magnificent discourses, he would

stand straight, with his strong arms hanging down, slightly back from his sides, and with the hands tightly shut. At such times he would shine with a right royal majesty.

Saphroni could smile and beckon; Britulo could frown and command. Saphroni excelled in persuading men; Britulo in convincing them.

But let me now endeavour to record the orderly progress of events which, ever unfolding one from the other, brought about such issues as I could not have imagined.

The point from which I now take my departure is this: The day after I had told Shurek of my losses, he came to the temple about sunset, and told me that he had been thinking on certain matters, and had concluded it was his duty, if he read the Book of Adaroni aright, not to condemn a brother unheard. He further said that although I was, in the main, a son of Nothingness, and could therefore, in the end, come to nothing, he considered me to be a righteous man, one who would love the truth if he only knew it. So he would see if he could help me in aught concerning the mysteries of their faith, without a knowledge of which, according to him, a man would perish everlastingly.

"Friend," said I, somewhat roughly, "thou canst help me in nothing but in finding the cup which has been stolen from me. The man whom I suspect of taking it was old and infirm; he cannot be gone far. Moreover, he must be known to the watchmen and

the keepers of the gates of the town. Thou thyself knowest everybody in Khoshek, and as thou art a travelling potter, thou art likely to know everybody in the neighbourhood. I will give thee a piece of gold if thou find this cup, and return it to me."

"Now, I perceive," said he, "that even thou art not always clever! Thinkest thou that I will lose my time seeking a cup which I may never find, and for which thou mayest refuse to give me one *tirik* when I return it to thee? And, in good sooth, I could make finer cups than that at the rate of two *tiriks* the score! Thinkest thou I will seek thy cup for nothing? Nay, by my faith, that will I not do! If thou set so great a value on thy cup—because, as I conjecture, some daughter of Belial gave it thee ——"

What he might have said further, I know not, for I suddenly caught him by the throat with both hands, and held him, shaking him to and fro till he was speechless. I myself was speechless.

After a while I thrust him from me, and loosed him; but still I spoke not.

Thrice did he make as though he would spring upon me; but I stood still, with my arms folded across my breast; and he judged it unwise to meddle with me.

He was the first to speak.

"Thou didst value this cup at a gold piece; but when I have reckoned with thee, thou wouldst give all thou hast, if thou hadst never seen the cup, or never lost it."

Then he spat at me, and walked backwards out of the chamber.

Now, what was to be done? Alas, I had lost that which was more to me than the cup of Lirusan? I had lost my peace of mind, I had fallen from my Mount of Merit—I was in the mire of self-reproach. Moreover, I had, as it were, declared war against the whole family of the Black-Whites, whom Shurek would now incite to overthrow me. What had I now to report to the gentle teachers of the Mount? That a poor ignorant potter, having spoken disrespectfully of a noble woman, I had taken him by the throat and choked him into silence. How doth such a deed consort with the teaching of gentleness?

Then, like a flash of light, came the thought that I would tell all to Britulo, and see what he would advise me.

I fastened all windows and doors, and went straightway to the house of Saphseph.

Britulo sat in an arbour with Hephsi, and as they appeared to be having an earnest conversation, I should have turned aside, and gone to the dwelling-house, but some of my old impulsiveness made me greet them as I passed; and Britulo, observing that it was not well with me, started up from the side of Hephsi, and asked me what had befallen me. Before I could answer him, Hephsi left the arbour, and went towards the house, saying to Britulo, "If thou canst leave me in this way to put thine arms around a blasphemer, thou mayest live with him for aught I care."

"Hephsi," said I, "speak not thus; Britulo left thy side but for a moment; he will return to thee."

Then Britulo hastened after the maiden, and spoke sweetly to her, but she continuing to rate him, after her shrewish fashion, he at last came back to me.

"To-morrow she will be kind again to thee," said I.

"To-morrow," said he, "she may be kind again, as thou sayest; but I note that she is only kind when she has her own way."

"'Tis the manner of many in Pagam," said I "and not of the women only."

Our conversation deepened, and when Britulo had heard all, he was greatly stirred.

"Friend," said he at length, "I am only a Black-White, because my father is—at heart I am what thou art, call thyself by what name thou wilt. Not all the beggars and thieves and potters in Pagam shall prevail against us two together. I will be as thy brother, or as thy son, or as thy servant."

"Such bonds, such relations," said I, "were the only ones recognised by Jeshua. The brethren do ever acknowledge these ties of real kinship."

"Well said!" exclaimed Britulo, "and the powers of hell, if there be any such powers, shall not prevail against us two. I live, henceforth, with thee, and for thee. No beggars, no thieves, no man who, as thou sayest, has nothing honest about him except an uncle, shall ever set foot within thy rooms,

without our permission. If thou wouldst go abroad, I stay at home; would I go abroad, thou stayest at home. We will trust nobody but ourselves."

Thus it came to pass, that the loss of the cup and the letter of Lirusan brought to me, and bound to me forever, one who was to be indeed a prince and a priest among the children of this probationary island.

Bright love hath ever the eternal Now! Love will not let our hearts be troubled with gloomy forebodings, anxious cares, or disquieting doubts.

CHAPTER XXI.

MORE ENEMIES. A SORE CONFLICT OF THOUGHTS.
BRITULO DISCOURSES ON GARDENING. A FEW
PALM LEAVES.

If Saphroni had been permitted to be my companion during my terrible year in Pagam, I would not have had Britulo to live with me; and each day convinced me that, without the aid of a man like Britulo, I would have been compelled to resign my care of this our first temple among so barbarous a people.

The trusty messenger whom I had sent to Sahitam with the report of my first three months in Pagam, returned with letters from the Intendant, from Almut, from Lomai, and from Zimri. All commended me for the steps I had taken to bring their teaching before the Pagamas, and they congratulated me on having so soon gained so zealous a disciple as Britulo.

Although I felt sure that Hephshi would not be a suitable wife to my friend, I would rather that the quarrel between them had not been in any way connected with myself; for Britulo, who now went rarely to the house of Saphseph, told me that the whole family was embittered against me, as well as against himself.

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So the number of my enemies increased. But for some reason or other, the number of my congregation increased also, although it was chiefly women who professed themselves desirous of being instructed.

This did by no means please Britulo, who regarded all women with mistrust.

Forty days, or thereabouts, after Hephshi had dismissed Britulo, she came to our worship, and brought with her a new admirer.

It is true that Britulo merely laughed at this; but it caused me some secret uneasiness, and, at last, after much debating within myself, I determined to trust Britulo with the precious secret which I had kept from Saphroni, who could not have entered into my feelings, nor have continued to regard me with the same reverence, had I lowered myself by trusting him in such a matter.

Saphroni, moreover, was much younger than Britulo; and though I could find reasons enough why I should not have told him of my hopes with regard to Lirusan, I could only find one valid reason why I should have told him; and it was long before I perceived that it would have been better to have told him. But without the inner counsel, our seeming best is oft our worst.

And yet, as soon as I had told Britulo something of my troubles, I felt that I should not have done so; for One is our counsellor—He putteth down and setteth up whom He will, and no man is allowed to

see the bright designs of the One, until they dawn upon him in their wonderful glory.

It seemed, at the time, that Britulo was confirming my doubts, and thus making it almost impossible for me to bear on bravely, as beseemeth a man.

This conflict of thoughts recalled to me the sullen phantoms which had over-shadowed my life in Karom.

Britulo maintained that such love as had warned me to what he called a feverish life, was in every way an evil; and he assured me that he specially thanked me for having helped him to break from the yoke of Hephsi. Then he ventured to say that the time would come when I would thank him for a similar service.

Now, a word as to my work among the Pagamas. Before I was aware of it, I had lost much of the love with which I had begun my labours among them; and finding that the example of my kindly life—with the one exception of my treatment of Shurek—that my reasonings, my exhortations, my pleadings, brought not one man or woman so far out of the love of evil, as to make them give any of it up, I ceased to plead, and had recourse to denunciations, threatenings, comminations—not without a certain delicate mockery, which each man enjoyed as long as he thought it was pointed at somebody else.

One morning, Britulo asked if I would permit him to give a discourse on gardening, saying that he had always found a garden to be like a volume of wise,

as well as of beautiful, things. Now, I already looked forward to the time when he would be a powerful soldier, and a leader of men in the war against evil, so I granted his request, only praying him to let this his first discourse be very short.

He began with a beaming smile all round; then he remarked that, as a wise man can learn of everything, a wise man could learn of a garden. But a fool, he said, could only learn of a wise man.

Here, the broad-breasted smith, who was newly come into favour with Hephsi, called out, "Then I can learn naught of thee."

"Pardon me," said Britulo, "if you are a wise man you can learn even of a fool."

The smith's face became of a deep red, and I perceived that we had made one more enemy; but Britulo maintained his beaming smile, and proceeded as if this encounter had revealed a new power in him.

For a considerable time he spoke of the beauty of the leaves, their varying forms, their different shades of green, but at last he suddenly broke into a personal application:—

"Yes," said he, "the leaves are beautiful; but—what would we think if our vines, our olive trees, and our fig trees never bore fruit? What would we do if they never showed anything but leaves? Ye—ye—are the trees that have nothing but leaves!"

His vehemence was evidently beyond his control,

and I was at length compelled to stop him, for I could not tell when he would stop of his own accord.

Two or three days after this, Britulo was working at our garden, and I, having passed much of the night, unknown to Britulo, in walking up and down outside the temple, was resting on my couch, and studying the treatise given me by Almut.

A high wind was blowing, and I noticed a dry palm leaf flutter through the open window, near my couch. Presently, a second leaf was blown in, and, yet again, another. I remember thinking, at the time, that these leaves must have been blown a long way, because there was no palm tree near our temple.

I gave no further heed to the matter, and went on with my studies. By and by, I went to prepare some lentils, with onions, a dish much relished by Britulo; and, as I left the couch, I picked up the leaves from the floor, intending to use them as kindling.

As I picked up the leaves I chanced to observe that they had been written upon with the point of a needle, and I read on one leaf—*For the fool*; on another leaf I read—*For the pharisee*; and on the third leaf there was written—*Leaves ye tread under foot will drive you hence*.

I saw clearly what was intended, for I at once called to mind how, as I have recorded in my former book, the woman Zenah had burnt me out of my house, when I had once roused her wrath.

I showed Britulo the inscriptions on the palm-

leaves, and told him of Zenah; but he laughed and said: "Thou hast terrified the potter, and I have terrified everybody else; no one will dare to do anything to us."

All that day I could eat nothing, and Britulo thought I was afraid because of the threat conveyed on one of the leaves; he knew nothing of the ceaseless conflict that was going on within me.

Night came, and I could not sleep, nor shake off the thoughts which oppressed me.

I took myself severely to task for losing my temper with Shurek. He knew so little, I knew so much. It was now myself with whom I was angry, not with him; and I wondered what form his revenge would take, for I felt certain that he would seek to avenge himself.

And now that I am come through this valley of the shadow, I can see that the spring of all my sickly self-communings was my haunting dread that Sharun would yet contrive to regain the love of Lirusan.

I was ashamed to confess to Britulo the reason why sleep had forsaken me, and why food had lost its savour. I preferred to let him think I feared the threats of the Black-Whites.

Our congregation had now dwindled to twenty. I could still only say that I had gained one disciple, and it galled me that I was compelled to give the Worshipful Brethren so poor an account of myself; for my want of success as a messenger seemed

abundantly to justify their doubts as to my fitness for the work they had entrusted to me.

Britulo, Saphroni, and myself appeared to be made for each other; we understood each other from the first. I could take no credit to myself for having gained their love.

What I had been sent to do, I had not done—I had not made people hunger and thirst after rightness.

I often visited those who came to hear me, and I knew that all of them, except Britulo, lived just as they had lived before their love of novelty had drawn them to the Temple of the Mount. And while they attended this temple, they often spoke to me as if they prided themselves on being more intelligent than their friends who still frequented the temples of the Black-Whites.

One day I asked them what was the use of having more light than others, if this light did not show us how to walk in the path of life. I wound up by saying that unless their lives were nobler than the lives of those who were still in darkness, it might be affirmed that they themselves were still in darkness—in gross darkness.

My people, young and old, sat reverently through this discourse; two or three seemed to feel it; and one old man, who had a most villainous face, stayed behind to tell me how he enjoyed hearing me, and how he hoped it might move the young men to give up their wicked lives.

Three nights afterwards, as I lay half asleep, some person called out: *We who dwell in gross darkness will show thee a great light!*

Then the shutters of the window near my couch were burst open with a sort of battering ram, which we afterwards found; and a bundle of blazing palm-leaves was dropped on me. I sprang out of bed and called Britulo. While we were putting out the fire, we heard a crash at the shutters in the visitors' room, where Britulo slept. We hurried into the room, and found it full of smoke and flames. Laughter and mocking shouts came from both sides of us, and I recognised the hoarse voice of my neighbour the potter.

As soon as the flames were mastered, Britulo drew out the wooden bar of the outer door, and with this weapon rushed upon our enemies, who evidently had not expected this sally, for ere they could turn and fly Britulo had smitten two of them.

Next morning we found that the tent of Shurek had been removed, and in the course of the day we heard that Shurek's arm had been broken by one of the lewd fellows who had been carousing at the inn.

I had always been a man of peace, and the thought that I should never be free from persecution, while I remained in charge of this outpost in the wilderness of carnality, did much to deepen the gloom which was fast making my life unendurable.

Britulo, however, seemed to be as cheerful as ever. He said he knew that Shurek would never dare to

come near us again, but I felt certain that sooner or later he would wreak his vengeance upon us for breaking his arm.

After this I never slept at night, but was always on the watch, for I could sleep during the day, when Britulo was upon the watch.

CHAPTER. XXII

A LETTER IS DESPATCHED TO ZAKKU. I STUDY THE
VISION OF KABRIL. I GIVE BRITULO THE
PARABLE OF THE MOUSE. UNEXPECTED MEDICINE.

Next day I wrote a letter to Zakku, and sent it by a trusty man, on as fleet a horse as I was able to procure. Zakku replied to the letter by returning with all speed; but before he could come to me, I was as one distraught.

I told Zakku all that had befallen me. I told him that Lirusan had promised to be my wife, and that as I was no longer a young man, I thought it possible that a man who was of her own age, who was also a most lovable man, who had certainly fallen in love with her, and who could have access to her, while I could not even hear from her—I thought it possible that such a man, under such circumstances, might be able to make her love him more than she loved me. I told him I had so long brooded over all this, that I was at last unable to put it away from me.

"That which thou fearest," said Zakku, "is possible—but most unlikely to happen."
"Alas!" said I, "I know of such a case—I won the love of Lirusan when she was betrothed to another; and this torturing fire which consumes me

I can bear no longer. Go thou to Lirusan; say not that I doubt; choose for her the best of my rose-coloured diamonds, and say I send it to her as a present for a bride. *Only be thou sure to find out—that which I must know.*"

When my faithful friend had departed on his mission, I felt much easier, because I would soon have my haunting doubts removed—one way or another.

Then it chanced that I one day thought of the letter of Kabri, wherein I particularly noted these words: "*Many sorrows lie before you; and if you come into that woeful despair wherein I have long dwelt, you may find solace in this record of a dream which solaced me!*"

"*Mine enemies had been too mighty, and too many for me; they had compassed me about on every side; they had broken down all my strong walls, and taken my tower of refuge.*"

* * * * *

"*Thy garden was destroyed by weeds, for thou hadst been guilty of long negligence: it was beyond thy cleansing, and was become the hold of unclean beasts. But thou didst aforesaid duly tend and cherish this tree of Adaroni; and when thou hadst discovered its forlorn condition, thou didst earnestly strive to uproot the weeds, and to save the tree, that it might live; therefore will I again plant it for thee in the garden of Adaroni; where thou mayest tend it, and watch its marvellous unfoldings, and at last eat of*

its delicious fruit, and rest thee in the shade of its branches."

* * * * *

"*Then I awakened, filled with the solace of my dream, for I perceived it to signify that I should, in a little while, be removed to Adaroni.*"

This old letter gave me a new thought. I prayed to the Father that he would take me out of this terrible Island—terrible because its pleasures bring pain, and because they who are the best fitted for happiness, are also they who feel unhappiness the most keenly.

This is a record of my selfishness, my blindness, my weakness, my impatience, my want of everything save the capacity for loving—and it appeared that this love which I had sought was for ever to be denied me. What then? This: that my hungering heart would be filled with enduring love somewhere in the immeasurable realms of Adaroni. Was it wrong of me to pray that the Father would send quickly and take me hence? I was so tortured that I could not answer the question.

In the meantime I did not neglect any of my duties, and I had the satisfaction of noting that several persons, who used to greet me in the coldest manner, were beginning to regard me with a friendly look; but Britulo said, with a merry laugh, that the people in the town believed it was I who had broken the arm of Shurek, the potter, and scattered the

troop of ruffians, who had attempted to burn my house in the night.

Whether the baser sort of Black-Whites had really begun to respect me, because they thought I had broken a man's arm, I know not; but it is certain that we were now permitted to live without molestation.

Several young women now desired to hear discourses from Britulo; and I occasionally allowed him to exercise his skill in oratory, but not until he had promised that the instant I gave a sign, by passing my hand over my forehead, he would bring his oration to a close as speedily as possible.

The report of my third period of three months was such as brought no commendation from the Worshipful Brethren, but they expressed themselves as being pleased that the Black-Whites no longer showed their animosity by injuring either us, or our property.

I regained nothing of the courage, nothing of the zeal, with which I had entered upon my labours. My spirit was broken, and the only thing that sustained me, as I thought, was the belief that I had at last suffered enough, and that my prayer for release would soon be granted.

One night I set myself to teach Britulo by means of a parable.

He said he had heard me moaning in my sleep, and repeatedly asking to be taken to Adaroni. So he came to me, and offered to sit a while on the side

of my bed, till I could shake off, what he called, the misery of my dreams.

"Friend," said I, "it is the misery of my waking hours that oppresses me."

"Dost thou suffer all the time thou art awake?"

"All the time."

"Then," said he, "I cannot comprehend the God thou hast sought to make me comprehend."

"That which thou canst comprehend cannot be God;" said I. "Thou canst not even comprehend thyself, whom thou hast known these thirty years, and whom thou canst study when thou wilt."

Britulo argued: "I cannot see how it is possible for God to permit thee to suffer as thou dost, if He be the all-powerful, the all-knowing, and the all-loving. This is what my mother says continually. She had one daughter, a sweet innocent child. Some terrible disease tortured her for years, until at last the poor child was sent for.

"Till I knew thee, I always believed that when a man departs from the Island, he is got rid of somehow, whether he had been good, or whether he had been bad. I considered that he had had his part in the All, and that when he had fulfilled that part, he fell like a leaf from a tree, was trodden into the mire, and lost for ever. Now I know there is One, whose child I am, whose servant I will be; but I cannot understand why we suffer so much here; why the innocent suffer; and why the most loving seem to suffer most of all."

I gave him this parable: "A mouse woke a man by gnawing a dry crust. The man arose and took the crust away.

"The mouse, telling this to another mouse, might have said:

"The man who lives here is the greediest creature possible. He feasts several times a day, and has great store of food laid up in boxes, yet he rises from his bed to rob me of a small piece of *crust*."

"That is a good parable," said Britulo. "Now do thou take it to thyself, and no longer moan and groan that thou mayest be sent for by the One, whom thou canst not comprehend, even as well as a mouse could comprehend a man."

Britulo was right; I was wrong; but so weak that, although I said to myself I would no longer pray to be taken away, I continued to think there was nothing more for me to do on this probationary Island, except to keep silence, and wait for the summons. While stating this, it is but right for me to add that a kind of humility lay behind this desire of mine to depart, for I had proved on more than one occasion—notably in my conduct to Shurek—that I was not yet fitted for the care of a mission, even in Pagam; but it did not occur to me to ask myself whether I was fitted to dwell in Adaroni.

I am ashamed to say, that about this time, I ceased to give instruction in the temple, and that I stayed in my dormitory, while Britulo read from the Book of Adaroni, and expounded the laws and the

testimonies, according to the teaching he had received from me, who had received it from the brethren.

Then, after a while, it displeased me to discover that all the congregation would rather hear Britulo, than they would hear me; and I noted this contemptible jealousy of mine as one more proof that I was not yet fit to be a messenger of peace, a light to them that sit in darkness, a binder-up of wounds, a master, and a healer.

For months together I had had no consciousness of oneness with the Divine, no love, no light, no peace. But as I neglected not prayer and searching of the Scriptures, I persuaded myself that I had not erred in any way, and that all I could do was to wait in my darkness till God said within me, *Let there be Light*.

I said to myself, exactly as I had said many years ago, that I was now unable to do anything but await the end; if possible, with dignity—if not, with indifference.

As before, the inner voice whispered: Whatsoever be true or false, whatsoever be right or wrong, or doubtful, it is always wrong to give up your daily labour, or to neglect any of the smallest duties of life, while you are able to perform them.

As before, when I had lost Turoni, so now, when I fancied I might lose Lirusan, I had allowed myself to sink into the mire of abject helplessness.

As before, I hardened my heart, and persuaded myself that I had not done so. I was a rebel, and knew it not.

The first time I had rebelled, two men had ministered to me, Pasakh and Lomai. They drew me out of the pit. This, my second rebellion, was otherwise dealt with.

I had given up all teaching in the temple, even as I had formerly given up teaching the children of Shomez.

I now see that as long as I could walk, and stand, and speak, I should have attended to my duties as the shepherd of my flock.

But, to relate briefly the manner in which I was brought to my senses :—

I had been lying down half asleep nearly the whole of the day, eating nothing, and drinking nothing but water. I could hear Britulo trying to sing at his work in the garden. Sometimes he would come in, and sit with me; but I could see that he was displeased.

Towards the middle of the night, I thought I heard a little child crying outside.

I got up and went out, for the distress of another did always distress me.

When I was come outside, the crying stopped, and I was suddenly seized by the throat, and shaken to and fro, while a hoarse voice, like that of a raven, muttered, "I told thee that when I reckoned with thee, thou wouldst wish thou hadst never seen that cup, or never lost it. Now I have reckoned with thee for taking me by the throat, thou son of Belial. Now will I reckon with thee for my broken arm."

Then, still holding me by the throat, so that I could not call out, he began to beat me with a heavy cudgel, and this he did until I fainted.

When I was come to myself, I was on my couch, and Britulo was bathing my bruises.

My first thought struck me a blow which pained me more than the blows of Shurek—the inner voice said: *Thou seest now that things were not at the worst; nor are they now at the worst, if thou turn not from thy rebellion and be as a little child.*

I listened and wept. The blows of Shurek had brought blessed tears—the sweetest tears I had ever shed; and I said to myself—*Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

BROTHER ABBEKO INTRODUCES HIMSELF. LETTERS FROM SAHITAM. I TAKE A CUP OF MILK TO A MAN WHO GIVES ME SOMETHING MOST PRECIOUS IN RETURN.

I began to mend at once. Three days after that terrible reckoning I gave to my little flock the best discourse I had ever given them. I explained, as I could now do, what was the meaning of being smitten until you were healed.

One day when Britulo was away—for he was engaged in laying out a park for a wealthy spice-merchant—and I, as was now often the case, lay half asleep on a couch, I heard a strange voice calling, *Brother Almoni!*

I struggled to my feet with some difficulty, for I was not fully awake, and I was become as weak in body as in mind. While I was getting to my feet, I cried, *Enter!*

The man who stood before me, had a whip in his hand, and for some time I did not know him. At last he said, "Come!" in a tone of good humoured reproach. Then I scanned his face more closely.

"Kish!" I exclaimed.

He smiled, and said, "Kish."

Then he beckoned, and a slender, sad-looking man

ALMONI

entered the room, saluted me very respectfully, and told me that he was Brother Abbeko, who had been appointed by the Worshipful Brethren to take over the care of this the first temple of the Mount in Pagam.

In the course of the evening I learnt that he had been a physician, and that he had once belonged to the straitest sect of the Reasoners—who accept nothing without proof, and who, when they have obtained their proofs, find they care but little for the things they are at last able to prove.

I was as one in a dream, for it wanted yet two months to complete the term of my probation, and how it could have come about that my successor was already here, was beyond my comprehension.

The first thing I thought was that the Worshipful Brethren desired to remove me as unfitted for the post; but Brother Abbeko, as if reading my thoughts, said, "The brethren give thee great praise, and send thee these letters. There is also a letter from my friend Zakku, the poet, who tells me that, as he will see thee when thou passest through Karom, on thy way to Sahitam, he will merely send thee a word of greeting."

I was eager to read these letters; but it was impossible to do so, until I had attended to the needs of the travellers.

I soon made a brisk fire of palm-leaf stalks, and set out the table with a dainty dish of eggs and milk, made into cakes by seething in oil.

Kish brought in some barley cakes, which he had brought with him from Sahitam.

While Brother Abbeko and the admirable, but uncommunicative, Kish were concluding their repast with melons and figs, I chanced to observe that somebody still sat in the waggon, so, as it had been a hot day, I hastened to him with a cup of cool milk and water, that he might somewhat refresh himself, before Kish took charge of the horse.

The horse appeared to be asleep, and so did the man in the shade of the canopy. He heard me, however, and when he moved forward, I looked into his face, and noted a smile that could only be one of Saphroni's. I was so astonished, that I could not speak.

"Beloved Master!" said he, bending over the front of the waggon, till he could put both arms around me, "thou art already better than thou hast been. Here is a letter from thy friend, Lirusan."

"Hast thou seen much of her lately?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "I have not set eyes on her since I behaved so badly when I was with thee in her father's house—Brother Almut gave me the letter."

"I am very weak," said I; "wilt thou support me to the temple?"

As we walked slowly to the gate, the dear youth explained to me why he had let Brother Abbeko and Kish shew themselves first. He had been told that I was broken in mind and body, so he deemed it unwise to let me have all my unexpected happiness

at once—he thought that, before I saw him, he would let me see Brother Abbeko, and be informed that I was forthwith to return to Sahitam.

"How did the Worshipful Brethren know that I was broken in body and in spirit?" I asked.

"Thy new disciple, Britulo, told everything to thy steward, Zakku, on the morning he left thee, and gave him a long letter for Brother Almut. The matter was laid before the Worshipful Brethren in conclave assembled, and as the noviciate, Brother Abbeko, had been sedulously qualifying himself for the care of a mission, they despatched him at once. For my part, I insisted upon accompanying him, that I might wait upon thee during thy journey back to Sahitam; so I made one of the party sent to bring thy noble soul out of prison, and thy poor body out of Pagam."

I still could not understand all this sudden influx of good; and I ventured to ask how it was that he had never thought of trying to see Lirusan again, when her wonderful beauty had so stirred him.

"In the first place," said Saphroni, "it was even as thou didst say it would be—I soon ceased thinking about her, for my time was given to hard studies. Moreover, I gathered from Brother Almut, who is a great friend of the court-poet's, that Lirusan was living with her uncle, who is an alchemist, so I could not have seen her, even if I had wished to."

We were now in my dormitory. I was trembling

from head to foot. The agony of these last moments of suspense was something I shall never forget. The thought that Sharun, profiting by my absence, had prevailed upon Lirusan to return to her first love,—this thought sprang upon me like a raging lion, and gripped me by the heart, till I was like to faint; but mastering myself somewhat, I turned my back to Saphroni, and read the letter of Lirusan. No man ever received a more tender, a more gracious, a more queenly letter than that. I again gave thanks to God that I had chosen the love of Lirusan. *Her letter told me that Sharun had married her sister Taltar.*

In my overpowering joy, I saw a sweet new life dawning for me, and I wrote that evening in my record as follows:—

“From this time forth I will cast my burden on the Lord, and He will sustain me. Now I know that He doth not suffer the righteous to be moved.

“I will never again hide my talent *in the earth*; so shall I be ruler over many things *in the spirit*.

“I will praise Thy holy name, O God! I will speak of Thy wondrous works in the great congregation; I will thank Thee for Thy glorious gifts.”

Now I have a surer and more interior knowledge of the two greatest facts in the universe of realities: that God is good, and that we are one with Him. Whence it follows that neither height nor depth, nor things past, nor things to come, can separate the real man from the real God.

Our consciousness of this oneness with the One may be obscured by our lapses into evil; and unless the spiritual man be daily nourished and renewed by spiritual food, he will gradually descend from the glorious heights to which he has been raised. But he cannot wholly forget these glorious heights; nor can he possibly find peace, until he again rise into them, which he can do by a watchful resistance to that which is evil, and by a careful performance of that which is good.

It may be well to give in this place, the definition of *good* as given to me by Brother Almut:—

That is good which tends to the enduring happiness of all.

The letter from Almut gave me much satisfaction. He said: “Lirusan, thy first disciple, as she still calls herself, will come to meet thee on thy arrival in Sahitam. All the brethren commend thy fidelity and thy courage. Hadst thou let us know sooner how it was with thee, we had the sooner sent for thee; for Brother Abbeko is as eager to go on a mission as thou wast. We hope he will do as well as thou hast done. Zakku has told us of the noble disciple thou hast gained for us. The fiery letter of Britulo, informing us of many things, and pleading thy cause, makes us desirous of having him with us. Bring him with thee, if he will come.”

I could now see how my want of healing faith in the One had brought its own punishment; I could now see that if I had roused myself to perform the

duties I was able to perform, if I had looked up, instead of down, if I had resolutely refused to dwell upon the loss I might have suffered, and honestly believed that only good can finally come to those who do good, I had been spared the cruel and the prolonged tortures which had all but brought me to despair; although I had aforetime proved the truth of this favourite saying of the Sahitamas: *None of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.*

It is according to the beneficent laws of Adaroni that all evil shall punish itself, until it be utterly and forever destroyed.

Britulo did not return home till after sunset, for the park of the spice-merchant was a great distance out of Khoshek.

Saphroni and Britulo soon became friends, and talked together during the whole evening.

Kish stretched himself on his couch under the shafts of the waggon.

Brother Abbeko and I exchanged information, he telling me of affairs at the Temple of the Mount, and I giving him such particulars as would guide him in the difficult task of moving the Black-Whites to give up show for substance.

We did not hasten our departure, for I had much to do in Khoshek. I had many farewell exhortations to give, and many kindly words to leave behind me.

Britulo said he could not follow me for some time; that he would remain at least three months in Karom; and that he would then come to me in

Sahitam, where he hoped to have the pleasure of laying out a large park for me.

Next day, feeling strong in body, now that I was again filled with the spirit of peace, I asked Saphroni to walk with me to a sequestered glade in the forest, whither I had often repaired when I would escape the sights and sounds which so often reminded us of our nearness to the inn.

We took our seats by the side of a clear stream which, in that part of its course, was completely over-arched by trees.

Before I left the temple, I had taken Britulo aside, and thanked him that his great love for me had helped to bring me from the valley of the shadow up to the sunny heights of praise.

I began my conversation with Saphroni by telling him what Britulo had done for me, and then I said: "Thou art now my second disciple."

I looked keenly at him as I said this, but his face betrayed no emotion, and, after a little while, he said sweetly and softly—as he ever spoke—"That is but just, for he has rendered thee such great services. I have done nothing for thee; so he must be the first of thy disciples. Whether I be first or second, I will serve thee with my whole heart; and Britulo is a man born to be first in all things. I love him well!"

"Dearest of men," said I, "it is true that thou art only second; but I said not that Britulo was the first."

"He ought to be," exclaimed Saphroni; "he looks like a king."

"My first disciple," said I, "looks like a queen; and her name is Lirusan."

"Now speakest thou in riddles," said Saphroni.

"What dost thou care for Lirusan?"

"I love her; she will be my wife."

Then did he look long and earnestly at me. At length he broke forth into swift speech:—

"She looks like a queen indeed! She is a queen, and thou art worthy of her! Had she not been the bosom-friend of a princess, and the daughter of a court-poet, or had she not been quite so beautiful, I might in time have loved her even as thou dost; for as I stood that evening at the half-open door, and gazed into her wondrous eyes, I felt—I know not what I felt; but I know that I never behaved so stupidly before."

"Beloved Saphroni," said I, "thou hast ever comported thyself reasonably, and modestly. Say naught against thyself. And now, hear further. A marriage-feast will be held in the house of Hethron, and I wish thee to be there."

"I shall be there."

"And thou must bring thyself to look upon Lirusan, and to admire her, and to talk to her, without being dazed and stupid; for, according to certain plans of mine, which are, as yet, but vaguely shadowed forth, thou and Britulo will some day live in our house."

"Master!" exclaimed Saphroni, "now thou art beginning to show thyself. I see great things in thine eyes. I will do as thou biddest me."

"This," I continued, "brings me to tell thee something I wish thee to do for me. At this marriage-feast there will be many guests; and among them there will be a little maiden whom I would entrust to thy keeping for the evening. Take care of her, and when she will go home, do thou go with her, for the child would not like to go alone."

"How old is she?" asked Saphroni.

"About seventeen," I replied.

"Is she not nearly old enough to take care of herself?" he asked.

"Very nearly," I replied; "but until she is quite old enough, do thou be kind to her for one evening. She is very beautiful."

The instant I had pronounced the words *very beautiful*, he closed the conversation by saying: "Then take care of her thyself!"

I laughed outright at this, and then Saphroni laughed, and suggested that perhaps Britulo would take care of her for me, as he looked as though fifty beautiful women could not abash or bewilder him for one moment.

"Comest thou to the marriage-feast?" I asked.

"Of a surety," he replied.

"Good!" said I, "and the little maid, Miralda, will be there. Wouldst thou let me grieve her by telling her that thou didst refuse to attend upon her?"

"Master, I will take care of her for thy sake, and for the sake of Lirusan; perhaps the maiden may not utterly stupefy me; but, to begin with, she has a very pretty name."

There was a certain delicate humour in Saphroni; and his merry look testified that he not only saw what I meant, but that he was by no means disinclined to oblige me in this matter.

The day after this conversation I once more found myself seated in the front of a waggon, with Saphroni, the gentle, on one side, and Kish, the inscrutable, on the other.

As we drove slowly away I thought to myself: Here is the close of my unprofitable mission to Pagam.

But I was mistaken.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OUR JOURNEY TO SAHITAM IS DELAYED BY A STRANGE ADVENTURE. A FINAL INTERVIEW WITH SHUREK, THE POTTER.

Saphroni and I were not long without finding something to speak about. It chanced that our waggon passed over the place where my great enemy, Shurek, used to be encamped; and I made Saphroni note this, saying to him, in the words of one of the ancient singers, *Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and he shall not be.*

My application of these words delighted Saphroni, and he, at once, began to commend my readiness, adding, that he seemed never able to remember words as I could.

"Friend," said I, "thou hast ever with thee the good things whereof words are but signs."

"Thou, master, hast the things, and the signs also."

"Thou, disciple, who didst ever bid me cease from praising thee, canst not open thy mouth to me without some honeyed speech."

"I do but put a little honey on thy good bread."

"Were Britulo here, I would desire him to shake thee into silence."

"According to Britulo, thou couldst do that thyself."

"Nay, I would never shake thee into silence."

"Were I a potter, thou mightest."

I did not reply to this, for I was vexed that Britulo had told Saphroni how I had treated Shurek

"Now, when I cease from praising thee, thou art angry," said Saphroni, putting an arm around me.

At this instant, a man ran from behind, and called to us to stop.

When he was come up, he gave me a slip of palm-leaf, on which were the words: "*In the name of the One! Come back.*"

"From whom is this?" I asked.

"From Shanah, the wife of Gur, the keeper of the inn hard by thy temple."

"What will she with me?"

"I know not, unless it be that thou heal her; she is sick, and in sore distress."

I desired Kish to turn back, and I told the man to hasten to the inn, and say that I would follow.

"This is strange," said I to Saphroni, "for I have only once spoken to Gur, of the hostelry, and I never even knew he had a wife."

Britulo, when I told him the circumstances, said, sternly, "Master, thou shalt not go!"

"I go at once," said I.

"Hast thou forgotten," said Britulo, "how Shurek befooled thee? He is befooling thee again, with the story of a sick woman. He and his honest uncle

have been drinking kivis together, at the inn, and they would say farewell to thee in such a fashion that thou remember them."

"Britulo," said the younger disciple, with an unwonted show of dignity, "when Almoni says he will go, it is almost sure that he will go; but if thou tell him he shall not go, it is quite sure that he will go."

"Then," said Britulo, "I also go; and I take with me a certain staff which he who tends the sheep in Pagam may sometimes find needful."

"I am not yet the shepherd of a flock," said Saphroni; "but I would learn by observing what shepherds do; I also go."

"I also go," said Abbeko, "for I am a shepherd, who has not yet seen his sheep."

"How many sheep go ye to see?" asked Kish.

"One," said I, "who is sick."

"Then are there more shepherds than sheep," replied Kish. "Now I stay to take care of the horse. Brother Abbeko would do well to stay with his house and his garden. I speak, for I am an old man, and I know the ways of the Pagamas."

I went to the inn, accompanied by Britulo, who carried a stout cudgel, and by Saphroni, who walked by my side, and held me by the arm.

Gur met us at the door, and bowed with the utmost show of respect and friendliness.

We were shown into a narrow room, where five men were drinking, and amusing themselves by

throwing small cubes of ivory on a table, to see how near they could go to a certain mark. Saphroni told me that the sides of the cubes were inscribed with numbers; but I had not observed this.

Gur pressed us all to drink some of his drinks—bilbal, kivis, or pon—but we refused; and I was relieved from the embarrassment of persistent refusal by the entry of a youth, who came to me with a pleasant smile, and then looked at Gur, who said, "Take him, and bring him back—we will drink with him afterwards."

The youth took me gently by the hand, and began to lead me away. Britulo wanted to come with us, but Gur pulled him back.

A few paces brought us to the door of the room of Shanah, who at once took my hand and kissed it, weeping.

I must here set down her story as briefly as I can.

She had been afflicted from her youth up, and had never heard a gospel of peace that she had been moved to accept, until she heard my first discourse after I had been brought to my senses by the punishment I had received at the hands of Shurek. I had revealed to her that all the pains of the Pagama lead him to hate evil, and to turn from it. So Shanah forthwith turned from evil, and this turning from evil was daily making her a new creature. She was come out of the valley of the shadow, and was now on the sunny heights of praise.

The gospel she had received from me she had taught to her son; both had set their minds on leaving Pagam, and on accomplishing the pilgrimage through Karom to Sahitam.

She had intended visiting me, and she was greatly distressed when her son told her that I was gone.

This was her story; and it needed only this to send me on my way with a sure knowledge that I had at last turned one to rightness.

When I would depart, Shanah begged me so earnestly to eat and drink with her that I could not refuse.

Her son brought two small cups of wine and some spiced bread.

The cup which Shanah handed to me was the cup of Lirusan!

My astonishment was such that I could not speak; but when I had drunk the wine, I begged that I might keep the cup.

"Keep it," said Shanah. "I wished thee to drink out of it, because it is the most beautiful cup I possess. I had it of a certain beggar, who gave it to my husband for a day's food and drink."

Then I told Shanah how I had obtained that cup, and how I valued it.

In the meantime the son hastened to tell his father about the cup; and after a little while Gur entered the room, fixing his eyes earnestly upon his wife.

"Friend," said he, "thou hast rejoiced the heart of my wife, and we have already had much talk

concerning thee, and the men of Karom. If my wife, and Iddo our son, resolve to leave Pagam, I will accompany them with all my heart, for I have long since wearied of this hateful life. Come now, and drink wine with me and thy friends before ye depart: they will not eat or drink without thee."

"Now," said I to myself, "I did not wish to drink wine with Shanah, and I was rewarded for drinking; so I will now drink with Gur."

Wine and meat were brought. We took our seats, and Gur waited upon us with much civility.

Presently, he said to me, "Worshipful Master, I perceive thou art a right good fellow. If thou art a son of Belial, I would like to be one myself. But, to be honest with thee, it surprised me to hear that thou, a teacher of peace, didst break the arm of Shurek. He at first said it had been broken by certain young men who had been drinking here; but I forced him to tell the truth."

"Friend," said I, "if he told thee I broke his arm, he did not tell thee the truth. It was through a fault of mine that it was broken; but I broke it not; and was, moreover, so grieved that I would willingly have given him two gold pieces to indemnify him."

I had scarcely concluded this speech, when Shurek thrust aside a ragged curtain, and stood before me, holding out his hand.

"Wouldst thou do this?" he asked.

"Yes," said I, "and I rejoice that I have seen

thee before I departed, for no honest man would leave behind him any whom he had wronged, and with whom he had not sought to be reconciled. Here are two pieces of gold."

"Master," said Shurek, in a soft voice, "if all sons of Belial are like thee, I would we had more of them in Pagam."

To this I replied, "I leave behind me a man whom thou wouldst call a son of Belial. I call him Brother Abbeko: be thou kind to him."

"He shall call me Brother Shurek!" said the potter. "I will do good to him for nothing even as to thee I did evil for nothing! Let us now drink another cup of wine together, or some of the old kivis which Gur keeps for the travelling merchants."

Britulo, Saphroni, and myself, declined the old kivis, and drank, instead, a delicious sherbet, which appeared to contain wine, and which was flavoured with violets; for the Pagamas show much skill in the compounding of drinks which please the palate.

Shurek, however, had some of the old kivis brought to him, and he at once held out the cup to Britulo, saying: "Thou art the son of Belial, who broke my arm; but, as I drink this kivis, so do I put for ever out of sight the injury thou didst me. I deserved it; but I wish thou hadst received the beating for it."

"So do I," said Britulo. "I would have given thee two pieces of gold to give me that cruel beating, instead of giving it to Brother Almoni!"

"Sirs," exclaimed Gur, who had been intently listening, "I wish I had sooner found out what manner of men ye were. I only begin to know you now ye are leaving us."

Then our kindly host filled large cups of bilbal for the men who had been tossing the pieces of ivory; and as we finally took our departure, with as much honour as though we were kings and princes, I rejoiced to think that I had done something to make Brother Abbeko's mission among the Pagamas a much pleasanter matter than mine had been.

CHAPTER XXV.

WE ARRIVE IN SAHITAM. AN IMPORTANT CONFERENCE.
A BRIDEGROOM GOING TO HIS BRIDE.

Our journey to Sahitam was only delayed by our three days of resting at the house of Zakku.

He gave me, as had been agreed on, a fair copy of his poem, which I was to deliver to Alphariz, the Prince. Before we reached Otham, I had read the poem thrice, discovering each time fresh beauties, so I had no reason to repent me of my promise that I would do all in my power to aid him in obtaining from Alphariz the post of court-poet in Sahitam.

Had I yielded to my first impulse, I would have hastened to Lirusan as soon as I reached Otham, late as it was, but Almut met me, and asked me to wait till the morrow, because there was a certain weighty matter whereon he would confer with me, before I had speech with any one.

So I contented myself with sending a letter to Lirusan, by the janitor. Then I lay me down, but slept not till he returned with loving words in answer to mine.

In the night I had a strange dream, or vision. Methought I was mounting swiftly through the air, when I suddenly found myself in a grove, where was

a pool of clear water, overshadowed by strange trees with broad leaves, through which the sunlight shone.

Then I perceived Lirusan before me. Her face was transfigured with a beauty beyond the power of words to express, and as we stood, face to face, earnestly regarding each other, we sang, and it seemed to me that although it was a new song, I could sing it while I looked into her eyes.

While we were thus singing, I heard the voice of a viol—deep, long-drawn, solemn. This voice appeared to be pronouncing some terrible, some irrevocable edict, to be commanding something to be done, the doing of which was as the sundering of soul and spirit. Then the air darkened. Our song ceased. Lirusan turned from me, covered her face with her hands, and sobbed.

Then, awakening in sore dismay, I arose, and walked round the room in a clinging torture that was as fire. A foreboding of evil, as if through the machinations of secret foes, weighed me down, palsied me, so that all knowledge of God was for a while blotted out. I thought not of looking up, but continued walking about in such a helpless stupor, that I believe I must still have been in some sort of dream.

How long I suffered thus, I know not; but at length, as I had often done before, I framed a short saying: "God is love; God is with me; I will neither fail nor fear." This I repeated several times, and suffered not my thoughts to wander from it.

After a while, I began to wonder whether this dream portended evil to Lirusan. So I joined her in my prayer—

She is thine, and I am thine; Thou art Love; Love is the one Power. None of them that trust in Thee shall be desolate, for Thou wilt surely deliver them out of all their afflictions.

Then my torment ceased, and sweet tears came to my eyes. I lay me down again in peace, coming again into the delights of my vision, while the pain thereof had melted away like clouds.

The first thing I said to myself, in the morning, was this, and in due time I set it down in my record:—

"The children of God shall have the gifts of God. God endureth for ever, so do His children, and so do His gifts. Our love may be, for a time, fought against by that which we call evil, but love overcometh that which is against love, yea, love mounteth from glory to glory, and the riches thereof are unsearchable.

"According to the Book of Adaroni, many have been warned in a dream. If trouble assail me, I will go through it bravely, as I have gone through this dream, remembering always that he learns not love who bears not many a pang.

"Be it here noted that the torture, as of fire, which appears to be killing love, is only burning up the evil within us, until it perishes, so that even the remembrance thereof is blotted out."

When we had breakfasted, Brother Almut sent Saphroni with a sealed letter to Brother Dumi, the Worshipful Intendant of the College of Triers; and as soon as the young man had left us, Almut led me to an inner room, where was a bright fire of wood.

Before the fire were three seats, and I soon found that I was advanced to the dignity of making one in what may be called an informal conclave of the Brethren of the Mount, for Zimri and Almut took the side seats, and I was requested to take the other.

To Zimri fell the task of questioning me as to what I had done in Pagam. Almut scarcely spoke, until Zimri had drawn from me the information they desired to have, after which they requested me to give them a particular account of my new disciple, Britulo. They were satisfied with all I told them, and, after sitting in silence for a while, Almut then addressed me:—

“Many of the Pagamas appear to me to be in the condition of Britulo—they would gladly receive the gospel of hope, did not the apostles thereof encumber it with hopeless absurdities. Britulo built on the rock—that is to say, on the truth as it is in Jeshua. Thou, Brother Almoni, didst clear away the refuse and the rags, the thorns and the briers, the sand and the stones, until thou camest to the rock of the Divine mind, which is ever one with common sense.

“The Pagamas,” he went on to say, “have good wheaten flour and good oil, but they mix noxious herbs therewith.”

“Good cake dipped in gall is bad cake,” said Zimri.

“Well put,” said Almut; “and certain Karomas not only dip their cakes in gall, but insist upon your eating their cakes—and no other cakes.”

“Thou speakest of the imperfect Karomas,” said Zimri, “many of whom are hypocrites, and know it not.”

“I speak of them—of the Black-Whites—who say that they alone have the truth. I speak of those who are unloving, even when they discourse on Love.”

“The land of Karom,” said Zimri, “is over-run with hypocrites; with elder brethren who never at any time transgressed the commands of their Father, and who are so angry when the prodigal son comes back in *his* way, instead of in *their* way, that they will not call this prodigal son by the name of brother.”

“An elder brother,” said Zimri, with a merry twinkling of the eyes, “once sought my advice in a matter which had caused him much anxiety. He told me that from the manner in which a certain psalm was worded, he suspected that it had been written upon the Sabbath, in which case he thought it should not be allowed to appear on the roll of sacred songs.”

“These are the people,” said Almut, “whose condition grieves us, so that we have built a temple, and will send messengers thither.”

Zimri here interposed: "Pardon me, brother, that I counsel thee to say no more of this matter till thou hast given Almoni to understand that he must not speak thereof, even to Saphroni."

"Brother Zimri is prudent," said Almut; "but I know that thou art not given to running hither and thither, so I do not impose silence upon thee touching this matter of the Intendant and Brother Zimri; and I myself propose that thou, Almoni, be sent as the head and sole Intendant of this mission—others of the brethren desire to set Brother Lomai at the head thereof."

Zimri then demanded of me whether I would take charge of this new mission; and I replied, "My chief desire is to serve God, and as this can only be done by serving my fellow-men, so as to ennoble them, and make them worthy of living for ever, I esteem naught more precious than the attainment of such a position, among the Brethren of the Mount, as will aid me in the effectual carrying out of my highest projects. I will also venture to say that I could work better among the Karomas than among the Pagamas."

They both looked approvingly upon me, but forebore to praise me, for which I, in turn, looked approvingly upon them, for I was beginning to abhor praise of any sort.

"This, then," said Almut, "closes our conference. We only wish to know that thou art willing to take charge of this mission. We feel certain that thou

wilt be chosen, for thou hast advantages over Lomai. In the first place, thou takest with thee the two zealous disciples whom thou hast already gained. Saphroni is twenty, Britulo thirty, and thou forty years of age. Thou art the teacher, the poet, and the historian of the mission; Britulo is the fiery soul, who can flash forth a bright speech like a sword, if such a speech be needed; Saphroni, with his graciousness, his lowliness, and his steadfast kindness, could win over any whom thou hadst failed to reach, and whom Britulo had succeeded in offending.

"Lomai, it is true, takes with him his daughter—a sweet and noble woman—and thou Almoni, hast no daughter of thine own, but thou mayest, perchance, take some other person's daughter!"

Here the brethren arose and laid hands on my shoulders, smiling, and patting me in such sort as could not fail to show me that they loved me.

At parting, Zimri said this: "There will soon be a meeting of the brethren; I know not when. Lomai has signified his willingness to take charge of the new mission; and thou art also willing to take charge thereof. Be silent and wait patiently, being sure that if thou fail of obtaining this post of usefulness, it will be that thou mayest obtain another post which will please thee better."

Almut walked with me to my dormitory, and then gave me a proof of the trust he reposed in me by telling me that the final consideration which had made the Worshipful Intendant so suddenly

shorten my year's probation in Pagam, was that he was determined to have me set over their first mission to the Karomas.

The sudden and unexpected appearance of Brother Abbeko, who had released me from the dungeon of my distempered imaginations, was now fully and satisfactorily explained; but it was years before I was told how it came to pass that Brother Dumi, who had seemed to be a severe and unyielding taskmaster to me, not only selected me as the man who should have the control of so important an embassy as that to the chief city of Karom, but had shown himself to be my most active and zealous partisan.

When I at length turned my steps towards the house of Hethron, I was glad to be alone, and I was immediately raised beyond my lower self by the swift surging of such exquisite emotions as music alone is able to utter.

It may be that the music of the great masters could have expressed my triumphant satisfaction, and something of my love; but only the music which is the voice of the Eternal Peace, could have made me feel that I was an imperishable and an unconquerable soul, who, being made in the image and likeness of God, could only be satisfied with the things of God, and who, in the fulness of time, would recognise, and come into possession of, his own peculiar and inalienable part in the powers and the glories of the everlasting hierarchies.

It was a song of sweet peace, with its winding melody and its pulsing chorus, which now sounded within me; it was the song of one who had passed through great tribulation; it was the song of a bridegroom going to his bride.

When I entered the outer park of Hethron, I met a gardener, who saluted me, and told me that everybody, save the servants of the household, were abroad.

I thanked the man for this information, and immediately turned from him with a smile, as though I were well pleased to know this; but, of a truth, it both perplexed and pained me; but I resolutely put all distressing thoughts aside, and sped along with light steps till I reached the garden.

I looked on all sides, but saw nothing of Lirusan. I entered the ante-chamber of the visitors, and I stood there a while; but saw nothing of Lirusan.

"Never mind this," said I to myself. "Perhaps Lirusan is all this time wondering why I did not come to her on my arrival in Otham; or why I did not come to her this morning long before I came."

Then I struck on the silver shield the seven taps which I alone used to give—three swiftly following each other, then three more, and then one louder than the others. As I struck the last note, a curtain was thrust aside, and I knew nothing in all the world, or out of it, but that I held Lirusan in my arms.

What did I ask her? Nothing. What did she ask me? Nothing. What did I seek to explain?

Nothing. What did she seek to explain? Nothing. We were as little children in the Kingdom of Heaven.

It seemed as though the past had never been, and as though the future concerned us not. Love hath nor time nor space. Love knows but the eternal now. Love is the rightful heir of heaven and earth.

We two were then like happy children; and I remember that when we were dining together—or, at least, pretending to eat and drink together, I suddenly said, "Where is thy father?"

Lirusan looked puzzled, and said, "My father?"

"Yes, thou hast a father, hast thou not?"

"O yes, of course, I have—Hethron—yes."

On that memorable day I learnt something concerning Lirusan which I had not known—that she could hide the deepest emotions under childlike sportiveness.

Now did I begin to feel the meaning of not entering the kingdom until you become as a little child. I know not which of us twain was then the younger; but I do know that always to love means to be always young, and always to feel that you are in the Kingdom of Heaven.

After we had made some sort of a repast on a few dates and a little bread, Lirusan proposed that we should go and see the sequestered lodge where we had become betrothed; but we had not been there long, before a little maid came to tell Lirusan that her mother was returned, and had brought Miralda with her.

Then Lirusan took me by the hand, and led me, in a playful manner, to her mother, saying:—

"Here is our poor minstrel back again with us, at last!"

Ambileni met me and kissed me.

Miralda did not come forward; but her eyes shone, and when I went to her, she looked in my face with a glad smile, and said, "I am so happy that I have at last seen thee happy."

I replied, in a low voice, "Thou dear child, I hope soon to see thee as happy as I am." This was a riddle to her.

The loving eyes of Ambileni must have emboldened me, for I said, "Mother, wilt thou let me have a word with thee?"

Then a look of love from Lirusan thanked me for calling Ambileni *Mother*; and she took Miralda to the piazza.

"Mother Ambileni," said I, "wilt thou send, forthwith, one of the servants with a letter?"

"Certainly," said Ambileni.

"And wilt thou permit me to ask Saphroni to come here at once, that I may have a companion to walk home with me?"

"I would like to see him again," replied Ambileni, "for I saw but little of him the last time he was here."

Then the charming mother of my Lirusan gave me one of those eloquent looks, which, as far as I have observed, can only be given by a Sahitama.

"Thou art a wise and a dear mother," said I, laying my hand on her arm; and at this instant I heard a laugh behind me. I knew only one man who had this musical laugh; and yet it startled me, for at the moment I was not thinking of him. It was the laugh of Hethron, and it was to me as eloquent as the kiss of Ambileni.

Then they explained why they had been away, although they knew I was coming that morning: it was because they would make a feast in honour of my return.

Hethron had been to see Meshran, and made him promise to come in the evening, that I might hear what I had not heard for many months—the music of a master, played by the master himself. Ambileni had not only been in the city and commanded all manner of dainty meats to be brought, but, knowing how fond Miralda was of good music, and what pleasure it would give her to see me again, she had walked to the palace, and insisted on bringing Miralda away with her.

Now all the reasons which Hethron and Ambileni gave for not being at home when I came were both real and sufficient; yet I well knew that one reason had not been mentioned; and from what Hethron had told me of his wooing of Ambileni, when they were both very young, I felt certain that it was the kindly old poet himself who had planned the disposition of their time for that day.

O, the transforming power of love! Behold, it

makes all things new, and keeps them new! The riches of love are indeed unsearchable.

Saphroni arrived in due time, and I took care to meet him in the ante-chamber of the visitors.

After he had saluted the company with the simple and gracious courtesy which distinguishes the Sahitamas, I obeyed a sudden impulse, and led him to the table which Miralda was adorning with vases, flowers, and beautifully-wrought tablets inscribed with short sayings from prophets and poets.

The meeting of these two children of the kingdom was the loveliest thing I had ever beheld in my life. If he that reads this record have a heart like unto theirs, he can behold therein this meeting; but if the spring-tide of love be not yet come to him, I may be silent, for who by words could bring the perfume of the rose to him who hath never known it?

A blissful day! Nothing was wanting! Were these true delights? Yea! Are there many in this lower land who enjoy such delights, and who have had an opportunity of enjoying them? Nay. What then? Why this: that as all our discipline, all our gaining of knowledge, all our noble striving, all our overcoming of evil is that we become capable of these delights, there must be another and a better land where we can enter into the joy of our Lord.

And after man is become capable of these exquisite delights, shall he ever fall thence, or cease to be? Nay, for that were against the Divine mind, which is one with the common sense of man, who is the

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very offspring and incarnation of the Divine mind. It were as impossible as that a wise man should cause a palace to be built, which, as soon as it is finished, he should order to be destroyed. God is goodness and wisdom; the works of goodness and wisdom are beautiful, and endure for ever. Jeshua said, *All shall be fulfilled*. Now, shall all be fulfilled that it may then pass away, or that it shall endure? Jeshua lived His magnificent life, and died His glorious death, for those who shall live for ever. Yes! All that is of God shall be fulfilled. All our aspirations towards goodness, all our hopes of happiness shall be fulfilled. This is the gospel of hope; it is the gospel of Jeshua, who by His life and by His death, made the fulfilment of our highest hopes possible for us.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A MUSIC-PLAY. SAPHRONI AND MIRALDA.

While Ambileni had provided a banquet, Hethron had provided a feast of music.

Lirusan and Miralda, assisted by many a sprightly maiden, were still engaged in laying out the large table in the refectory, when we had a sudden inpouring of guests, of whom, in my estimation, Meshran was the chief. He brought with him his wife, Seruna, together with Paraz, and a company of singers. Paraz is he that played the viol in the wondrous music-play which I have elsewhere recorded.

Everything this evening was as we could have desired, and I could not avoid recalling the moon-feasts of Karom, the evening when I sang my "Song to Turoni," and one other evening, when the music of Meshran filled mine eyes with sweet tears, and raised me to the knowledge that somewhere at last it would be well with me.

Ah, great heart of man, what can fill thee, that thou hunger no more?

Work in thy little day, and rejoice. Rest thee in thy little night, and be still. Thou shalt hunger many times, and thou shalt be filled many times

with sweet food. Some day thou shalt know as thou art now known; then shalt thou ask no more questions.

When the banquet was concluded, the guests walked whither they would. Saphroni and Miralda, who had sat together at the supper, now sat together in the piazza. Lirusan and I passed them. Saphroni looked grave, and even solemn. He appeared not to observe me as I passed; but Miralda gave me one look that said, "I thank thee for this."

Strange to say, a pensive sadness, or an unutterable tenderness—I know not which to call it—came over me, as I drew Lirusan's arm through mine, and guided her to the steps which led to the waters of the lake. I had not set foot on those steps since that evening when I had repulsed the dear woman who now leaned on my arm, and who had promised to be my wife.

It is true that Lirusan had always blamed herself for what had then happened; it is true that, for a long time, I also had blamed her, and her alone. *At last I had forgiven her.* But now, for a long time, I had felt that she had been faultless, and that I had erred grievously. My pride, my vanity, my obstinacy, my tremendous self-love, had been broken, and I now felt a longing to confess my fault to her, according to the teaching of the Book of Adaroni. So I told her all—how I had first wronged her by my doubts, and then taken my revenge in a delicate and hypocritical fashion, a revenge which can be successfully accom-

plished only by the elder brother who thinks he hath never at any time transgressed his father's commands.

Then I told Lirusan I had tortured myself in Pagam by doubting her love; and thus I struck the last blow at my hideous pride. I began all things anew with Lirusan, and, having confessed all, I promised all, feeling sure that I would in all things be true and faithful to that one sweet and noble woman who would link her life with mine. I was deeply moved, and I spoke much. I only heard Lirusan say, "My Almoni!"

In my overflowing thankfulness, I said, *Now the Lord my God hath given me rest on every side.*

The tuneful note of the silver shield announced that the music-play would soon begin.

Many friends and strangers, invited or not invited, now came quietly into the hall from the back, until a goodly company was gathered together. Any poor wayfarer, passing at the time, might have entered the hall, by one of the doors at the back, or he might have seated himself in the piazza, till the play was ended, whereupon he would have instantly departed.

But this custom of the Sahitamas could not be observed out of Sahitam, where all men do at all times to others as they would wish others to do unto them.

This does not mean that it is impossible for a Sahitama to err, but that there are certain ways in which a Sahitama never errs.

It may here be noted that there is a wide difference between those who were born in Pagam and those who came into Sahitam, through Karom, as pilgrims. Some of these do occasionally fall into evils from which they had fancied themselves absolutely free. Those who were born in Sahitam, whose father, mother, friends, and servants were Sahitamas, must, nevertheless, undergo temptations, and some of them do, for a short time, wear the cruel yoke of servitude, until they have arisen, sword in hand, and driven their enemies out of the pleasant land. But I will not, here, speak of these things, for I would endeavour to record the beauties of this music-play.

Once again the silver shield was struck. All were silent, and turned their faces to the stage, the back of which was taken up with the representation of an open glade in a forest. The deep, burning blue of the sky, the softened white of the clouds, and the sombre foliage of the trees were grouped and balanced so as to satisfy the eye, even as harmonies satisfy the ear.

Then Paraz appeared, and, after one grave look in front of him, he bent over his viol, and drew from it one long, grave note, which sent a tremor through me. Then the melody rose, and sank again, with an appealing tenderness. Then came a masterful pleading, with an irresistible passion that rose, and rose, conquering all things, circling and rising till it had gained the shrine of love celestial, the love which

cannot be uttered, for, in the secret sanctuary of the spirit divine, pleading is silenced in adoration.

When the music ceased, not a sound was to be heard. Lirusan drew one deep breath, and, with trembling lip, whispered, half to herself, "Beautiful!"

I looked over to Saphroni and Miralda. She was smiling, somewhat gaily, I thought; but he appeared not to be aware of her presence. When, at last, he looked at me, his deep grey eyes gave me a glimpse of a Saphroni who was now awakened, and who was now standing, entranced, on the threshold of a new life.

This impassioned melody, the beauty of which had been heightened by the subdued accompaniment which Meshran played on the harp, and by the delicate ebbing and flowing of a choral murmur from the singers behind the curtain, was one of the many melodies of the great Bakh, whom his great successor, Beyitto, declared to be an ocean of music. But this saying of Beyitto proceeded from the childlike modesty which distinguished the great masters in any of the noble arts, for Beyitto himself was the ocean of music.

This melody was the opening of the music-play, and, as far as I remember, was altogether, in what the Sahitamas call, the strong mode. It was followed by a song in the plaintive mode. It was a woman who sang. Meshran played there too, softly, on the harp, and the long-drawn, deep moaning of the unseen viol seemed to connect the sweet song of the

woman with the love and the pity of our next of kin whom we have not yet seen.

But this book is not a record of banquets and plays, so I will proceed to the unfolding of my history.

To speak honestly, I was weary of this music-play long before it was concluded. I craved the sweetness of silence; I longed to be alone with Lirusan; so I whispered: "As soon as this ends, follow me, and speak to nobody." It was the first time I had given a command to Lirusan, and the instant I had so spoken, my words jarred upon me.

When the last note had died away, I passed through the nearest door, and Lirusan followed me.

I led the way to the lodge of the astrologer, as it was called, and on our way thither I prayed: *My God! Let not him who hath breasted the waves of adversity be now swept away by the tide of prosperity.*

We entered the lodge, and Lirusan followed me up the stairs which led to the roof. We sat down, side by side. The moon was high in the heavens. Not a sound was to be heard. We passed into a realm beyond the reach of music. We had entered into the sacred silence. Our love for each other was exalted and transfigured till we knew it to be one with the love of the One—the love of the All.

How long we sat there I know not; but we were brought back to earth by the voice of Saphroni. He was calling me. "Come up hither," I answered.

"Where is Lirusan?" he asked.

"I know not," said I.

"May I bring Miralda with me?"

"Yes, bring her."

Here Lirusan laughed; and Saphroni called to me: "Thou saidst thou didst not know where Lirusan was, and, lo! she is with thee!"

"True; but I did not know where I myself was."

Then I heard Saphroni and Miralda laughing all the way up the narrow stairs, and, in good sooth, we four had a rare meeting.

Saphroni said, "Ambileni bade Miralda find Lirusan, so I came with her, that I might find thee; for I knew that would mean finding Lirusan also."

Saphroni and I, it being now about midnight, walked home together to the temple within the silent precincts of the Mount.

We were not yet inclined to separate, so we sat on the stone bench inside the gate.

I asked: "What did Miralda think of that opening melody?"

"She said it was very pretty."

"What didst thou think of it?"

"I thought it was a man telling a maiden how passionately he loved her."

"Thou hast rightly judged."

"I am going to learn the viol."

"Why?"

"To tell Miralda something by and by—something she knows not yet."

"Couldst thou not tell her in words?"

"Not so well as in music."

"And what is it thou wouldst tell her?"

"Master, thou knowest. Speak no more thereof to-night. I want to be alone in my room in the dark."

Then we arose and separated for the night.

As the sun rose next morning, I heard a gentle tapping at my door, and a gentle voice saying, "Almoni!"

I answered drowsily, not rightly knowing it was Saphroni who called me.

When I bade him enter, he came in, seated himself on the side of my bed, clasped one of my hands in both of his, and smiled upon me. He wanted me to go to the lake with him and bathe; but I told him I wished to lie there and meditate, so he said no more, and left me with a placid look of satisfaction.

On that morn most sweet, my heart was filled with such delightful thoughts, and such abundant consolation, that I asked myself whether the awakening in Adaroni of a soul that had fallen asleep on earth could in aught surpass that whereof I was now most vividly conscious.

I thought of the Eternal Father, who first forgiveth all our iniquities, who then healeth all our diseases, and at last crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercies. Then did all that was within me bless His holy name.

I resolved that, throughout my life, I would make

all things according to the pattern showed me in the Mount.

Now, to the Worshipful Brethren, *the Mount* signifies the sanctuary of the Mount whence Jeshua, who spoke as never man had spoken, had given His high and holy teaching to the poor in spirit, calling thus to them: *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

I say it in all humility, I had learnt to be humble and gracious; and I had found rest and peace, and joys unspeakable.

But I had attained this promised peace only after many temptations, fallings, risings, strivings, triumphs, darkenings, tears and fears, doubts and defections. My one question was now, How shall I abide in this peace of love? And straightway there came to me this word of Jeshua:

The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please Him.

Then I asked myself, How I could do always those things that please the Father? And again the words of Jeshua came to me:

Without me ye can do nothing. I am the way, the truth, and the life. Abide in me.

How then can I abide in Jeshua the Anointed?

Answer: By taking up the cross daily; that is, by at least endeavouring to destroy the lusts of the lower man, and to rise into the life of the spiritual man.

I then asked myself, What especially distinguished the usual daily life of Jeshua while he was here? And I saw that He lived only to show His love to us, by helping us out of all our troubles, and by teaching us truth and love.

Then I concluded my meditation by resolving that I would each day think of others first, and help them to be good by being good to them. I saw that every person has it in his power to do this, if not in great things, then certainly in little things.

I saw also that the true artist beautifies everything, beginning with himself; I saw that he is truly great who ennobles the little things of life, so that they become of great value to him by the manner in which he does them. The Divine Jeshua had, by the manner of His life, beautified and ennobled all things.

So my meditation on heavenly things brought me to a practical consideration of earthly things, and the way in which I might work effectively therein.

I knew that, as Lirusan was now one in heart and soul with me, I need not be anxious concerning our future; so I next thought of my dear friend, Zakku, without whose intervention I might, for aught I knew, still have been in a veritable dungeon of despair.

I had promised Zakku that I would do all that in me lay to procure for him the honourable post of court-poet in Sahitam. I could certainly do much to help him in this matter, but the first thing to be done was to present his poem to Alphariz, the Prince,

and I determined to do so this day. I promised myself the pleasure of visiting Lirusan in the evening.

When Saphroni returned, I told him whither I was going, and he would fain have come with me, that he might see Miralda; but Brother Almut reminded him of the long time he had been away, and counselled him to proceed at once with his studies, if he desired soon to be appointed to some office of importance, and if he desired to excel as a teacher and a healer under the sanction and authority of the Brethren of the Mount.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN INTERVIEW WITH BROTHER DUMI, THE INTENDANT
OF THE COLLEGE OF TRIERS. AN ARGUMENT
WITH LIRUSAN.

When our morning repast was ended, Almut desired me not to go from the precincts of the temple till I had seen Brother Dumi, the President of the College, who had sent word that he would dine with us on that day, and that he desired to confer with me on a matter of grave importance.

Saphroni betook himself to his studies, and I, in the seclusion of a pavilion, began to read once more that wonderful poem of Zakku, which he had entitled "The Temptation of a Prince," and which I would that day ask a prince to accept.

But, all through our lives, fine threads which we do not readily perceive bind one event to another. I had not read twenty lines of this poem before I became aware that I was only looking at the words, and that the music of Zakku's verses had caused musical verse to begin sounding in me.

When I was in Pagam I had composed, but not written, short poems, all with the title, "To Lirusan," and they were all gloomy. I chose now the gloomiest of these, and wrote above it the title,

"Winter in Pagam." Then I set down the love-song I had just composed, and gave it the title, "Spring in Sahitam." Now, I may say, this love-song was, in my opinion, the best poem I had ever written, better, by far, than the best passages in my poem, "Adaroni," which Lirusan so greatly admired.

"Yea," said I to myself, "all goes well with me, even this delay has been to my advantage."

An hour or so before noon Brother Dumi arrived, and I was immediately shown into his parlour.

He questioned me closely as to the reasons of many things in my reports, which I could not have made sufficiently clear, in writing, without much labour.

When he had thoroughly satisfied himself on all points, he told me that he desired to give me charge of their first temple in Karom; and he asked me if I would accept this important position at their hands. I thanked the venerable brother for preferring me as he did, and assured him that he could depend upon my faithfulness in all matters connected with my sacred charge.

Our interview afforded me great satisfaction, but it would not become me to set down more of his commendation of my unworthy self than that he pronounced me to be both honest and fearless.

Brother Dumi then explained to me why it was especially needful, in the present juncture of affairs, that none, but a certain few whom he named, should be informed, just yet, that I was a candidate for the

office of Director of the first Temple of the Mount in Karom; and he reminded me that it was an inviolable rule of the Worshipful Brethren to confide nothing of their private affairs to any but the brethren.

The manner of my reception by Alphariz, and by Iodalla, was such as convinced me of the rank I held in their esteem, and gave me a reasonable assurance that my good offices with regard to Zakku would not be altogether fruitless.

On my way to the palace I had given much thought as to the mode in which so delicate a matter were best conducted; and, although Hethron had assured me that he desired to be freed from the duties which his office demanded, and that the emoluments pertaining to this office were a matter of no moment to him, I concluded that it would not become me to speak of Hethron's wishes with regard to himself, nor of my wishes with regard to Zakku.

After enjoying a delightful conversation with Alphariz, with Iodalla, and their two charming sons, my former pupils, I drew Zakku's poem from my girdle, presented it to the Prince, and begged him, if it would not be taking too much of his time, to favour me by reading at least a portion thereof.

He immediately glanced at the superscription—"The Temptation of a Prince"—and smiled, saying, "The title tempts a prince to read it."

"It would also tempt a princess to read it," said Iodalla.

Alphariz was soon absorbed in reading. I continued to converse with Iodalla.

"Here sounds a new music!" exclaimed Alphariz. "I thank thee for this."

That for which I came was now well begun: I was satisfied, I was triumphant; and as I walked along the winding lane, which brought me by a short way to the home of Lirusan, I sang aloud, as lustily as a young shepherd who has naught on earth but his good conscience, his health, and his daily labour.

My singing had been heard. Lirusan came forth to meet me, radiant with joy.

"Princess," said I, "this day have I already presented a poem to a prince; it is meet that I now present a poem to thee."

As we walked slowly along, she put her right arm through mine, and bent her face from me a little while she read my verses. When she had read the first piece she said, "Poor Almoni! I would I had been with thee in Pagam. Thou hadst had no winter there."

Then she read the second piece, and exclaimed, with an ardent glow, such as I had seldom observed in her: "It is most wonderful that thou shouldst have been moved to bring me just this day the finest verse thou hast ever penned, or that I ever read! Thou hast now proved thyself to be what I have always pronounced thee to be—the finest of our poets, but one who hath not yet unsealed his heart. Thou couldst not possibly have delighted me more

than by bringing me this day such a poem. It was not by chance thou didst do this. But I will unfold this mystery to thee gradually, that I bewilder thee not by a sudden shock. Come with me, and I will show thee some of the signs of spring in Sahitam."

When we had passed through the orchard of orange trees, we ascended a rising ground, from the top whereof to the shore of the lake is not more than two furlongs.

"Now," said Lirusan; "my father's park is the loveliest in Sahitam, and this rising ground is the loveliest place in the park. Here a beautiful house will be built. It will be the home of the new court-poet.

"My father desires to give his last years to writing the history of the court-poets of Sahitam, and he wishes his work to contain passages from their best poems. As he would give all his time to carrying out his project, he will, as soon as may be, free himself from the duties of court-poet."

"He hath already spoken to me of this," said I; "but I am anxious on one head—who will be the next court-poet?"

Here she laid her hands on my shoulders and hid her face, too happy to speak.

I was too troubled to speak. I looked forward into the darkness, and I heard, as in my vision, the voice of the viol—low, thunderous, fateful.

She also had had her dream; and, when she was calmer, she unfolded it to me.

"Ever since we heard that music-play, in the palace of Alphariz, I have been dreaming how happy we would be wert thou the court-poet, and if thou wouldst build here in our park the house whereof thou hast so often spoken to me. For now that Taltar is married, I could not, I would not, leave our dear mother and father. My father would live nowhere than in his own beloved mansion; my mother would live nowhere but with him.

"On the night of our festival, the music-play of Meshran inspired me: I saw our future before us; I laid it before my father and mother. My father, who dearly loves thee, is overjoyed at the thought of yielding up the post of court-poet to thee; and the greatest happiness I ever knew was planning this surprise for thee."

Then I made answer: "All I have is thine, and if ten thousand pieces of gold suffice to build for thee such a mansion as thou desirest, thou mayest have them when thou wilt."

Then did Lirusan withdraw herself from me, and, while she scanned my face, she said, "Thou smilest, but gravely; there is no gladness in thine eye."

"Dearest," said I, "I cannot accept the post of court-poet. I have promised to do all I can to obtain that post for one who has rendered me such great services that, had he not so served me, I were no longer here. I told thee, in brief, what Zakku had done for me; but, filled as thou and I have been with ourselves, I would not speak to thee of aught else."

The bright glow faded from the face of my Lirusan; and I looked to see her burst into tears, and turn from me, as in my vision; but she only looked down and remained silent. I would she had spoken. Her silence dismayed and awed me.

As we were walking slowly to the house, she said, "Thou wilt fulfil thy promise to Zakku; but if, after thou has done for him what thou canst, thou art still unable to procure this post for him, then thou couldst take this office upon thyself without breaking faith with thy friend."

"I desire not this post," said I. "Moreover, it is many years since I have written aught worthy of a court-poet of Sahitam."

"But," said Lirusan, "in thy years of silence thou hast learnt things worthy to be written by a poet of Sahitam."

"I have lost the power of bringing forth the deep, sweet music of our human speech."

"Nay! Thou makest better music than before. When thou wast young thou couldst not have framed a love-song sweet as this thou gavest me to-day."

"Any verse-maker," said I, "can pour forth a love-song if he be in love."

But Lirusan was not to be so easily vanquished: "I know all thy poems; tell me one of thine as good as this!"

"This is the first time," said I, "that we have been entangled in argument."

"And I have vanquished thee."

"Not yet," I replied.

"Then will I try this weapon," said she: "Who awakened the poet's heart in thee after thy years of silence?"

"My Lirusan."

"How did she do this?"

"By the tenderness of her love."

"Now, oughtest thou not, for love's sweet sake, to yield the fruits of thine awakened powers to her whose love did call them forth?"

"I ought to, if I could," said I.

"Then have I vanquished thee?"

"Not yet," said I.

"Thou hast, this very day," she continued, "presented a poem to Alphariz, the Prince; it was no love-song, and yet thou must have been well assured of its worth."

"It was a poem of Zakku's," I replied. "But naught can come between thee and me. Whether I be court-poet or not, thy love will ever bring to me sweet verse and music that accords therewith. And as our love is built upon the rock of rightness, the rain may descend, and the floods may come, and the winds may blow, but our love falls not. I am ever thine Almoni; thou art ever my Lirusan."

Alas, my words of comfort reached her not. She spoke not until I told her that, ere I returned to the temple, I would lay the matter before her father, that I might have the benefit of his counsel. This, my intention, seemed not to please her, for she laid an

injunction upon me not to move in this matter for the space of three days, and not to come to her till the end of the three days.

I inquired, next day, when the conference of the Worshipful Brethren would take place; and Almut informed me that it could not be held till Brother Lomai was returned from his yearly visit to Karom.

On the third day I visited Lirusan, and was rejoiced to see that she had regained her usual cheerful serenity. She had now the satisfaction of informing me that Alphariz had declared he could appoint none but a Sahitama to the office of court-poet in Sahitam; while her father had declared that he himself would hold the office till I could be persuaded to accept it. They both pronounced it unlawful to give that honourable position to any man who had not dwelt in Sahitam for the space of one year. Having told me these things, she pleaded her cause most earnestly, saying: "All I ask of thee is that, when my father retires, thou wilt allow the Prince to name thee as his successor. My father says, if thy friend Zakku dwell here for three years, and if he approve himself a poet worthy to succeed a long line of noble predecessors, he may be permitted to become the court-poet, when thou shalt see fit to retire. Now, thou art a poet, and I desire for thee that thou become our king of poets. If I can stir thy will to rise until thou be the undisputed king of noble song, I do a noble deed. 'Tis but thy modesty which blinds

thee to thine own excellence. Bethink thee, also, that only if thou rise canst thou raise others."

To this pleading I made answer thus: "Shall I write better verse because I bear a title?"

"Thou didst formerly strive to excel as a poet, and thy striving was not in vain; for the Prince declares thee worthy of the post so many noble poets held before thee. Being now worthy of so high a post, accept it when it is offered to thee, and by finer and ever finer verse make thyself worthy of retaining it. Without a generous ambition thou canst not rise; and I, who love thee, fain would see thee rise."

Then I: "Dearest of women, thou couldst ask me naught I would not do for thee. Now, trust me. Wait a while. Thy pleading doth perturb me. Let me go into the silence with this. Thou knowest I lie not. I cannot yet tell thee all. When I can tell thee all, I will. Let me see thee each day, till these clouds be overpast. Wilt thou wait and trust me? Or wilt thou make me suffer pain beyond all pain I yet have known?"

Then she: "I will wait and trust thee."

These cruel days, till Lomai came, need no record.

It was ten days before Almut informed me that on the morrow Lomai would arrive, and that the brethren would then hold their conference, and that I would be informed whether the greater number had given their voices for Lomai or for me.

So on the morrow I would know which of us would be appointed to the charge of the first temple

of the Mount in Karom; and in my overwrought state I resolved that if, after all their protestations, they chose Lomai instead of choosing me, I would utterly renounce my allegiance to them, and with the aid of my staunch disciples, Saphroni and Britulo, undertake at my own cost, and in my own way, a mission to the Black-Whites of Karom, which would be more effective than any manner of mission in the direction whereof I would be hampered and hindered by being continually obliged to refer to the final decisions of my superiors.

On the morrow then, whatsoever the decision of the brethren might be, my lips would be unsealed, and I could at last show Lirusan why it had been impossible for me to speak sooner. In the meantime I could somewhat relieve my mind by telling her that on the morrow I would explain all.

Now I had noted that, for some time, Hethron and Ambileni, as well as Lirusan, were gradually becoming less friendly towards me, and I admitted that I had really tested their endurance to the uttermost. Hethron and Ambileni had each asked me why I seemed so resolutely set against accepting a post so honourable as that of court-poet; and I could only answer that I could tell them naught till I could tell them all; and that I hoped soon to explain everything to them.

As soon as Almut had assured me that the conference would be held on the morrow, I hastened to see Lirusan.

She received me with the usual tokens of pleasure, but instead of walking up the garden with me, as was her custom, she remained seated in the parlour. Ambileni was also in the room. Hethron I had not seen. After a few words of greeting, Lirusan suddenly asked me if I had any idea when I would be able to give her a reasonable excuse for not granting the only request she had ever made to me.

What now follows was inexplicable at the moment; but I believe that I was affected by the secret anger of Lirusan, which had been daily growing, without even her own knowledge; and that, resenting her anger, without knowing that I did so, there was a spice of sullenness in my manner when I answered: "I will explain everything to-morrow."

Then she rose, and used to me the words I had used to her on that evening by the lake—the words for which I had, with such contrition, asked her forgiveness. These, now, were the words of Lirusan: "Thanks, thanks, Almoni, for thy promise; but the day after to-morrow will do just as well." Then she left the room, sat not with us at supper, and I saw her no more that day.

I told Hethron how deeply Lirusan had pained me; and, to my astonishment, even he was against me. He said, "Now canst thou know how thou must have pained Lirusan when thou didst repulse her, as she has now repulsed thee."

"'Tis true! I taught her this. I reap that which I sowed."

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Hethron put an arm around me, and whispered: "All will be well—she loves thee well. I know thee well, and trust thee, although thou hast caused her sore distress. I know not what ails her. When she regains her strength, she will be as heretofore—our noblest and our brightest, our most loving and most gentle."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LIRUSAN REFUSES TO LEAVE SAHITAM. A MYSTERIOUS LETTER FROM HETHRON. I GO TO SAY FAREWELL TO LIRUSAN.

At last came the day which saw the Worshipful Brethren of the Mount assembled in conclave.

Lomai came not, but sent a letter in which he announced his withdrawal from the candidature of this office of director; so I had the singular satisfaction of being appointed, on that same day, with the approval of the whole College of Triers, to the charge of their first mission to the Karomas.

At last, I was able to explain everything to those whom I so truly loved, and to whom I had caused so much vexation. But my joy was swiftly turned into mourning—Lirusan lay sick of a fever.

I besought Ambileni, to give Lirusan the assurance of my love, to explain to her why it had been impossible for me to speak sooner, and to tell her that I was appointed to a post in Karom, where I would do a thousandfold more good than in the post of court-poet.

The mother gave the message; but brought no word for me.

Next day I came again, and Hethron informed me

that Lirusan said she would never leave Sahitam to live in Karom; and he told me that, if I desired to become her husband, I must needs live in Sahitam.

Ambileni said, that if I was not willing to give up all for Lirusan, I did not love her as she would be loved, in which case she never could be happy as my wife.

I left the house of Hethron with a sad heart; I ascended the Mount of the Temple with a brave one. The marshalling of legionary thoughts had been swift and sure. I prayed, and was immediately strengthened.

My meditation was in this wise: A great work has been given me to do. I am chosen to cry:—"Woe unto the hypocrites, who dwell at ease in Karom, and who dishonour the Lord their God by their lives and by their teachings!"

I and mine will lead them to the still waters of Sahitam. To accomplish this work we must dwell among the Karomas. My disciples are Lirusan, Saphroni, and Britulo. I shall not lose one of them.

Then a voice said, "Thou hast already lost Lirusan."

I answered, "I cannot lose the love of God."

The voice said, "Thou hast done enough work; rest thee now in this pleasant land."

I answered, "He hath not done enough who can do more."

The voice said, "Thou canst do but little good in Karom."

I answered, "I will at least endeavour to do that little in the name of the Lord who moves me thereto."

Then did mine enemies flee from me, and I sang this song of triumph:—

I have heard the tumult of my foes, the thunder of the chariots, and the shouting of the captains.

I will gird myself with strength unto the battle; I will not fear what man can do unto me.

He that seeketh rightness first, overcometh all things.

These few words meant for me many things. First of all they indicated that the battle of my life still lay before me, that my finest purposes would yet be accomplished, and that at last all would be well with me and with my Lirusan.

"Such love as ours," said I to myself, "cannot be plucked out like an evil weed, and be thrown aside to perish; but it shall increase and blossom, and bear fruit, even in this lowly vale; and for the present I will look no further, for it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but I know that we shall be abundantly satisfied with the age-long unfolding of the riches of love."

That same evening I told Almut of the unexpected refusal of Lirusan to accompany me to Karom, and of my unshaken resolve to proceed thither as soon as the wishes of the Intendant should be made known to me.

Almut applauded this resolution of mine, and showed me that in the end it must work in my favour.

"I have known Lirusan," said he, "since she was a child. Being herself noble, she will love thee the more for thy nobleness. Didst thou for her pleading give up those exalted hopes of thine, and devote thy most precious years to perfecting thyself as poet or musician, thou wouldst in the end despise thyself, and a woman loves not him who despises himself.

"She may yet relent; she may become thy wife, as she has promised, and set out with thee to Karom. But if not, she will still love thee, and none other. She is but young; thou art not old; thou knowest not what a year may bring forth. I need not speak more particularly; but be assured that thy tempestuous wooing of Lirusan will yet bring thee to a haven of love, joy, and peace. I speak as I am moved to speak. Go forth, now, in the name of the Lord. If thou art willing to lose thy life, thou shalt find it."

Next day I again visited Hethron; and when I asked Ambileni to bear a message to Lirusan, she told me that she was then sleeping, and must not be awakened, because she had been awake all the night.

This pierced me to the heart; and I could not conceal my distress. To comfort me, the mother promised to send me word if, at any time, Lirusan should wish to have speech with me. I went away

without seeing Hethron, and, indeed, without asking after him.

Having suffered much aforetime by concealing myself from my beloved Saphroni, I sought him out, and gave him the history of my disappointment. He straightway rewarded me by expressions of such love as I could never have conceived it possible for me to awaken in him, and I perceived that it is the stress of adversity which brings forth the strongest love.

"Master," said he; "I never knew till this hour how much I loved thee; and so it will be with Britulo. No love of ours can make thee cease to long for the love of Lirusan, but we can go on loving thee, till in the end thou winnest the perfect love of Lirusan also."

Next day I again visited Hethron. I saw him this time; but not Ambileni. He told me that Lirusan had left her couch, but still kept to her room.

I asked whether I could not be permitted to see her; but, to my great grief, Hethron assured me that Lirusan would not see me.

I knew not what to think, and I went away with a heavy heart, for I began to give up hope.

Now came a letter of instruction from Brother Dumi, desiring me to make ready for my journey to Karom, so that I might set out in three days.

I prepared; I was ready to set out on the morrow. That morning I wrote a letter to Hethron, telling him

that I would leave Otham next day, and entreating him to prevail on Lirusan to let me, at least, say farewell to her. Saphroni took the letter, and at last brought this answer:—

“Sup with us; I am silent; be thou silent.”

I was at a loss how to interpret this epistle. It gave me but little hope that the pain of my departure would be lightened by any exchange of kindly thoughts with the one being towards whom my kindest thoughts were continually directed.

Lirusan sat not with us at supper. Both Hethron and Ambileni manifested a tender sadness, from which I drew no favourable augury.

They spoke of many things, but not of Lirusan, further than to inform me that she was regaining her strength; but that the fever had not yet left her.

I could not protract my stay; yet something seemed to whisper that I might yet see Lirusan. At last, Ambileni bade me farewell, and left the room. Shortly afterwards, I heard two strokes sounded on the silver shield in the music hall.

Then Hethron rose, and said: “Go to the poet’s room, and thou wilt see Lirusan. Till this moment we knew not that she would see thee.”

The instant that Hethron said I would see Lirusan in the poet’s room, I comprehended everything—it was there that I had folded her in my arms after I had first repulsed her, and then held aloof from her till I had wrung a touching appeal from her.

A lamp was burning in the lodge; and, as I

glanced through the window, I saw Lirusan sitting at the table, as I had sat, her face bowed on her arms, as mine had been.

Then I approached the inner door, and said, *Lirusan!* even as she had said, *Halek!* She raised her beautiful face; it was thin and pale; tears sprang to her eyes; she rose, and met me with outstretched arms, as I met her.

* * * * *

Late as it was when I returned to the Temple of the Mount, Saphroni was on the watch for me, and he was the first to hear my good news—that ere many days Lirusan would be my wife, and go with me to Karom.

He was overjoyed, and uttered such exclamations, that Brothers Almut and Zimri sallied forth from their parlour to ask what had happened.

“This is what I expected,” said Almut.

“I suppose,” said I, “that when the Intendant learns the altered position of my affairs he will allow me to postpone my departure until I can take Lirusan with me.”

“The management of this is in my hands,” said Almut; “I give thee a month, if Lirusan will have it so.”

Next day I went betimes to see how it fared with Lirusan. A night of sweet sleep, and the return of peace, had restored her serene radiance. I went not that day from the precincts of the en-

chanted garden ; and Hethron bade me take up my abode with him until I took his beautiful daughter with me to Karom.

Of that first day of overflowing happiness I will here say nothing ; but, according to my custom, I made a record thereof, which it would delight me and mine to read in future years.

I said : "I will praise the Lord for his loving kindness, and his tender mercies ! I had been a fugitive in a far country ; an exile from the commonwealth of love. I have been led by paths which I knew not ; I have been brought within sight of my garden. I hear, now, therein voices, and a viol making sweet music for a bridegroom.

"The white lilies, the red roses, and the lowly violets do now bloom there, and they shall no more fade away.

"Now doth my heart beat with the chorus of the unseen immensities, the eternal realities of spirit ! All the promises, and all the powers of all the heavens shall be fulfilled here or hereafter, in the hungering and the hoping, in the aspiration and the striving, in the toil and the tears, in the unconquerable faith and the noble endurance of man the Immortal."

Next day I had a long conversation with Hethron concerning his withdrawal from the office of court-poet ; and I promised him that he should read the poem of Zakku.

In the afternoon I went to the palace, and was

met with many hearty congratulations on my approaching marriage with Lirusan.

Alphariz informed me that he considered "The Temptation of a Prince" to be a masterpiece ; he thanked me for bringing it under his notice, and gave me a letter for Zakku, in which he expressed his opinion of the poem, and counselled him to lose no time in coming to Sahitam.

I at once forwarded the Prince's letter to Zakku, and informed him that he might begin preparing for his journey to Sahitam.

On the tenth day from that on which I came to say farewell to Lirusan, she became my wife.

A wing of the commodious mansion of Hethron was given over to us till we were ready to set out for Karom.

One day I took Lirusan in a carriage to say farewell to Alphariz and Iodalla.

Now Lirusan had set her mind on taking Miralda with her to Karom. So the maiden was sent for : and Iodalla asked her, "Wilt thou go with Lirusan to Karom, and be to her as thou hast been to me ?"

The wise young woman glanced swiftly at each of us, and then said : "I will do all that you wish me to do."

"Dear child !" said Iodalla, embracing her, "thy sweet sister Imba shall now live with us."

While Miralda was trying to thank Iodalla for this delightful and sudden surprise, Lirusan stepped

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softly to her, and kissed her, saying, "Thou wilt be happy with us, for thou wilt make us happy."

A few days after our visit, Miralda came to live with us, and as it was often necessary for Saphroni to be with us, our part of the house was by no means solitary; and we had more music and singing than ever.

At last the day came when our happy company set out for Karom; and here I bring this volume to a close, with a reasonable hope, however, of some day beginning another volume—the record of those labours and those delights to which I now confidently look forward as the fulfilment of my aspirations when I was only a dreamer of dreams.

THE END.

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