

danger while he lived; but the manner of his passing, our love being its cause, was ever afterward a source of sorrow to her. But in the sweetness of our love-life there was little time for pain. The days sped on like a morning dream till half a score of years were gone, each moment of which was fuller of heaven-sent joy than the one before it. Hours beyond number, as the days went on, did we sit in our balcony after nightfall, watching the gay groups in the gondolas, listening to their mirth and laughter; and sometimes, when in the mood for it, Zelka would sing some of the plaintive airs of the desert, I accompanying her on the flute.

At such times the people on the lagoon would often hush their music to hear ours, it was so weird and apparently formless—so wholly unlike the rhythmic lyrics of Italy.

One night, when the whole lagoon was listening and Zelka was singing as I never heard her sing before and my humble playing was stirred by infection from her to something unusual in force and spirit, a second flute from an adjacent gondola joined mine; and we instantly knew from his manner of playing, that the unknown performer was an Arab, for he made no error in following the wild progression and abrupt inconsecutiveness which makes Eastern music so incomprehensible to the rest of the world. When we accosted him the stranger said he was a Moor; and such indeed, his face, manner and language made him seem. Whether he was in search of some new Desdemona we never knew.

Several nights he joined us, mingling his music with ours; and when he finally left Venice he gave me, as a souvenir, a flute—a strange little instrument of ivory and silver, covered with inscriptions in Arabic. Some desert Belonians had brought it to Fez, from whom our Moroccan friend had obtained it. The quality of its tone was strangely high and pathetic, with an almost human vibrancy. It was a snake charmer's flute, so Zelka said. She had seen many of them in the desert; in fact her father had had one very like it.

Perhaps it was only fancy, but strange thrills went through me whenever I played it; and it disturbed Zelka also, for she never sang more than one or two songs when I accompanied her on it, while she generally sang a dozen when I used either of my other flutes.

One night she stopped in the middle of a song and covered her face with her hands.

'Please put it by,' she said. 'I always fancy I can smell sandalwood and soumere berries, my dead father's favourite perfume, when you play on that flute.'

For a week I did not touch the uncanny thing; and then, one night, she asked me to get it.

'I must not give way to such idle fears,' she said. 'Mine is a brave race. I must be worthy of it. Play the flute till midnight, and I will overcome my folly and sing with it.'

She was as good as her word and sang without a tremor, though, in the moonlight, I thought I saw an ever-increasing pallor overspread her face. Just at midnight she suddenly fixed her eyes wildly upon mine, let a high note die in her throat and gave a little gasp; but in a moment she had recovered herself and went on singing, so I said nothing. Presently a strong and pungent odour filled my nostrils—mistakably it was sandalwood and soumere berries. Then my wife's voice stopped entirely. Looking toward her, I saw nothing—a strange mist was in my eyes. Nor, try as I would, could I rise. A chill was in all my body, and some will or power which was stronger than mine was holding me motionless.

How long this phenomenon lasted I do not know, but from what I have since been told, it was until after midnight hour was wholly done. To me it seemed longer than the entire span of my former life.

When I was free to move, I sprang to my wife's side. Her eyes were fixed in a vacant stare on some object straight before her. Her throat plainly wore the print of finger-clutches, as if someone had been trying to strangle her, and yet I knew perfectly well that no person could have reached her, as my chair completely blocked the balcony window. Following the direction of her stolid gaze, I glanced over my shoulder. There was a luminous flash, swift as lightning, and then, felled by a sledge-like blow on the head, I dropped backward across the motionless body of my wife.

Sheik Ibrahim came to Cairo, two years afterward, where I then was, and where we made a mutual exchange of confidences.

'It was Kaji Hamed's flute which Allah sent you by the Moor,' he said. 'He had loved it and played it so much that it was a part of his life. Since you had stolen his daughter, your playing of the flute was the profanation of a holy thing; and so, summoned by your breath and touch, his soul came into it. At midnight it won power to act, because she was his own flesh and blood, his soul had mightier compass of will over her than over you, whom, try as he would, he could only strike down.'

Was this true, or was the Moor a spy first, and then a murderer, sent by the crafty sheik to avenge his brother's death and release Zelka from what to him was profanation? If the latter is the true explanation, which I doubt, what saved my life? Why did the mere playing of the flute so terrify my wife, and how came the soumere, the rare desert berries, in Venice?

Whichever way it was, to one of these causes I owe the death of the sweetest wife the Eastern world ever gave to a Venetian husband.

COLOURING THE CHEEKS.

So secretly and quietly has the new art of colouring the cheeks been practised by a few ladies that it has not yet become public property. A beautiful woman in society has one great defect to her loveliness, and that is her complexion. Not many months ago she was far away from home, and she noticed the lovely natural bloom in the cheeks of a friend, who formerly had no colour. She noticed also that the charming roses never appeared in her cheeks in the day. In a moment of unusual candour, when the heart was overflowing with charity and goodwill to her guest, the lady explained the nature of her art. A colouring matter, the composition of which is not known to the writer, is put into the cheeks by means of a small hypodermic syringe, such as is used in morphine injections. It became a fad with the French ladies to inject perfumes beneath the skin by the hypodermic needle to make a sweet and subtle odour emanate from their persons, and some person has originated this idea for rouging the cheeks.

SCIENTIFIC AND USEFUL.

THE INDIA-RUBBER TREE.

The India-rubber tree cannot stand shade, and unless the seedlings are fully exposed to light and well drained, they cannot grow. Owing to this it is found that in the depths of the forest, where light and air are shut out by the dense crowd of trees of many species, natural reproduction takes place by the germination of seeds carried by birds high up in the crowns of other trees, aerial roots descending in process of time to the ground, and developing into a huge hollow cylinder round the foster stem, which is soon killed. The descent of the roots may take years, but once they have taken hold of the ground, the further growth is exceedingly rapid.

ORIGIN OF NEBULÆ.

What was the original state of things? How had it come about that by the side of ageing worlds we had nebulae in a relatively younger stage? Had any of them received their birth from dark suns, which had collided into new life, and so belonged to a second or later generation of the heavenly bodies? During the short historic period there was no record of such an event; still it would seem to be only through the collision of dark suns, of which the number must be increasing, that a temporary rejuvenescence of the heavens was possible, and by such ebbings and flowings of stellar life that the inevitable end to which evolution in its apparently uncompensated progress was carrying us could, even for a little, be delayed.

REMEDY FOR SNAKE POISONING.

It is said that a remedy for blood poisoning caused by the bites of snakes and rabid dogs has been discovered in Africa, by a Dr. Engels, in the 'wild-growing, black, noble palm.' Five hundred negroes bitten by poisonous snakes were treated with the extract of the noble palm, and four hundred and eighty-seven were cured in five days. Of sixty-seven farmers and negroes bitten by rabid dogs sixty-five were saved, while two died of weakness. The remedy is injected under the skin, and causes a moderate fever not exceeding 35.5 deg. C. On the third day the patient is without fever, swelling and inflammation of the affected part have disappeared, and on the fifth, or, latest, on the seventh day the patient is cured.

PLANT MEMORY.

Venus's fly-trap is one of the plants which consumes insects. When a fly gets into the cup a leaf closes on it like a lid, and prevents the victim's egress. There are certain sensitive hairs which the intruder almost inevitably touches, and that is the signal for shutting the trap-door. But the curious thing is that the leaf won't move till a hair has been touched twice; so long as only one touch has been received there is no response, but immediately on the second signal being given down the lid goes. Another curious thing is that the plant remembers for a certain space of time that one touch has been given, and then seems to forget all about it. If the second touch is given within fifteen to thirty seconds the plant knows that it is the second, and closes up; but if a longer time elapses other two touches must be given before the lid moves. This seems to suggest a memory, though evidently a somewhat short time.

Sir William Macgregor, Governor of British New Guinea, in exploring the Fly River, speaks favourably of the natives of the large island of Kiwai, notwithstanding their ill-repute as cannibals. As agriculturists, he considers they deserve great credit; they produce large quantities of vegetable food. The cultivation of the banana receives from them much attention. In a vocabulary of their language which he compiled, there is a list of no fewer than thirty six different varieties of bananas; and from personal experience, he could testify that the distinctions were not fanciful, but indicate real, substantial differences. Some of the varieties, he says, are very good. They also plant and cultivate aggro-trees, of which they distinguish twenty-five varieties; of yams they grow twenty kinds, three of which are remarkably good; and of sweet potatoes ten, two of which are suited for exportation.

During the American War, an officer had to send a messenger across an opening where the bullets were flying dangerously. He selected a very brave man and cautioned him as to his peril, telling him to ride for his life on reaching the open field. The officer watched him through his field-glass, saw him fling himself behind the flank of his horse for safety, and finally saw him drop from the steed as if mortally wounded. A second man was sent safely on the same errand, while the wounded soldier was cared for. He had merely fainted. On coming to, he found the surgeon at work over him, and anxiously inquired as to the precise nature of the wound. He was told by the surgeon that he had been squarely hit and that the injured part could never be made whole again. 'But rest easy,' said the doctor, 'for the shock only took effect—in the canteen.' The man had not been injured in the least, but had been deceived by the flowing of the contents of his cherished canteen, which under the circumstances he naturally mistook for his heart's blood. The soldier is living yet to laugh over his ludicrous mishap.

MAKING A THIEF OF ELECTRICITY.

Short-weight gold coins are becoming common. From a careful examination of light pieces now being found, it is evident that the thief has been aided by electricity. The service of an ordinary galvanic battery and some cheap acid is all that is necessary to conduct the operation of the electric process. The scheme is similar to that employed in plating with gold by electricity. The coin is placed in the fluid and attached to it are wires from the poles of the battery leading to another piece of metal prepared to receive, in the form of plating, the metal to be removed from the coin. The battery being set in motion, sufficient gold to form a plating is quickly transferred, and as it is removed uniformly from all parts of the coin, the

liability of disfigurement is reduced to a minimum. The only effect is to blur the characters slightly. An authority at the mint has estimated that about 5 per cent's worth of gold can be removed in this way from a gold piece without exciting the suspicion of the casual observer. To the skilled eye of the expert, however, the effect is generally apparent at a glance.

RESCUED FROM BRIGANDS.

M. DE RAYMOND, a French farmer was captured by brigands at Omourda in August last, and on his head a ransom of five thousand Turkish pounds was set. Two dragomans, with a guard of twelve gendarmes, accompanied M. Ruttier upon his mission to convey the ransom to the bandit chief. One day at noon, a strange peasant presented himself, and asked to see the leader of the party. He proved to be an emissary of the brigands. With a good deal of mystery he produced a letter, remarking that he had been 'enjoined by those who held M. de Raymond captive to bring you this under the pain of death.' He so good as to read it privately and say nothing about its contents to anyone, especially the gendarmes. I am charged in the event of your desiring to release M. de Raymond, to act as your guide to the spot where he is confined. You may bring three men with you. The brigands await us at an appointed rendezvous. Should you utter a single word calculated to compromise me, you will only compass my ruin without saving your friend. Decide quickly, for there is no time to lose. I will await you 200 paces from this place.'

Having delivered this message, the man disappeared. M. Ghibert then opened the my-terious missive, and found that it contained a communication in pure Greek exactly corresponding with the peasant's verbal announcement. At the foot of the note, which was in the handwriting of Thomas, the brigand chief, was a postscript written by M. de Raymond to the effect that he was quite well, and was anxiously expecting the ransom which was to set him free. M. Ghibert thought it prudent to act in accordance with the peasant's warning. He told the man to wait for him at the place he had indicated, and without saying a word to any member of the party at the farm, he mounted his horse and galloped as fast as the animal could carry him to Kioiosto, in order to seek the advice of the French Consul. That officer urged him not to lose a single moment in availing himself of the peasant's guidance to send the ransom to the robber chief.

M. Tackheila, another dragoman of the Consulate, a man possessed of great physical strength, and his servant, a sturdy peasant, were selected to carry out this critical mission, both of them being familiar with the country. It was evening before M. Ghibert, accompanied by these agents, got back to the farm. The £5,000 required for M. de Raymond's ransom were then handed to M. Tackheila and his servant in two sums of £2,500, and shortly before ten o'clock at night they set out on foot upon their expedition. After nearly fourteen hours' hard walking they arrived at the outskirts of a forest. It was now noon on the Saturday. The guide, who throughout the journey had kept from two to three hundred paces in front of M. Tackheila and his servant, here stopped until they came up. He requested them to envelop their heads in white handkerchiefs, and to continue to follow him. They complied with these directions, and the party then entered the forest. They had not proceeded far when they suddenly found themselves confronted by three brigands armed to the teeth, who appeared to spring out of the earth. Covering the travellers with their rifles they demanded whether they had brought with them M. de Raymond's ransom. Receiving a reply in the affirmative, the bandits declared they were ready to escort the messengers to the headquarters of the gang. While one of them went on in advance to announce their approach to the chief, the other two guided the party through the brushwood by devious paths.

In this fashion the journey was continued about two hours longer, and then a halt was called in an extremely remote and picturesque retreat. A few minutes later the brigand chief, Thomas, attended by five of his gang and accompanied by M. de Raymond, appeared. M. Tackheila and his servant then each produced his quota of the ransom, and the bandit leader set down to count it, examining the coins with great care and evident suspicion. When he had finished, M. Tackheila informed him that he was the dragoman of the French Consul, at Rodosto, and that, in addition to the £5,000 which he had brought as M. de Raymond's ransom, he had with him a sum of £100 intended to cover the expenses of the journey back to Kioiosto. He expressed a hope that this money would not be taken from him. To this the chief replied in the most affable manner, 'Why, of course not. You shall keep everything you have upon you. No one shall molest you. We have no right to anything but the ransom we have exacted. Here is M. de Raymond, whom I deliver up to you safe and sound. You may depart in all security, for you have my assurance that no harm shall befall you.'

Thereupon Thomas took a sheet of notepaper and began to write out in the most business-like manner a formal declaration that, having received the ransom set upon the head of M. de Raymond, that gentleman was now free, and that for the future he would be at liberty to traverse these regions in perfect security, and would never again be molested or interfered with by any member of the band. Before leaving Thomas pointed out to the party the route they had to follow upon the return journey, although M. de Raymond said he had some acquaintance with his country, having previously made several shooting excursions in the district. The robber chief also insisted upon kissing M. de Raymond, and begged him not to harbour resentment for the trouble and inconvenience to which he had been put. The brigand who had struck M. de Raymond over the head on the occasion of his capture, also approached, and besought his forgiveness for an injury which he declared he had only inflicted under the stress of circumstances. He could not, he said, allow the prisoner to depart without thus begging his pardon, and asking permission to kiss him. It was in this manner that M. de Raymond was restored to liberty. The brigand chief and his attendants disappeared as mysteriously as they had arrived, and the party set out upon their return journey.

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