

understand what a mighty brother of the pen once said to me :

"My boy, if you don't want to have your brains fretted into fiddle-strings at forty, keep this in mind. Begin the day with a plate of stodgy porridge and an hour's conversation with an ass—the biggest ass in town for preference."

The bore leaves me at last, but Musa has no further thought for Andromeda. She comes running to me with a new toy.

"See ; see what I have found !" she cries. "A gem of a Polynesian legend on the Shining Mountain of the Beyond ! Quick, fix it before the opal fire goes out of it, and leaves it a pebble again !"

I try being stern with Musa.

"Do you take me for a curator of a museum, madam ?" I ask with portentous politeness. "Do you think I haven't enough stones and bones jingling about my study already ?"

Musa stamps her foot.

"Fix it, fix it as I see it now, or I leave you !" she cries. I obey ; am I not Musa's serf ? And, moreover, I am much enamoured of this thing she has found on the Shining Mountain of the Beyond. She is as good as gold, now she has her will. Far into the night she works with me, and in the grey dawn the legend is finished, the dross of ages refined away, the primeval truth at the heart of it laid bare. Hot from the loved toil of that long vigil, I take it in my hand critically, fondly, hopefully.

"It will do," says Musa carelessly. "It has a vein of the fire opal in it, a creamy curve where the jagged point was ; but oh, if you saw it as I saw it on the Shining Mountain where the gem-stories lie !"

Next day I am a trifle headachy, and Musa, neurotic and naughty, is grizzling over the impressionist sketch. I say tentatively :

"Isn't it time to do something for Andromeda ?"

"What is time ?" asks my April lady with a calm disdain. Too well I know that in Musa's country there

is neither time nor place, and that gold and silver there are as trivial as flying thistledown here. Has she not left me stranded high and dry for six months on the last couplet of a sonnet ? And is it not in holy places, under the stern regard of canons and bishops, that she forces her wildest quips and cranks upon me, while at a bachelor's supper she will hang on my vision with her head on one side, singing "Willow, willow !" like poor Barbara ?

But it is in novel-writing that Musa's full feminine genius for contradiction finds scope. How can I convince the normal Philistine that I can no more hinder the lives and marriages of my dream-folk from going wrong than he can stop an earthquake ?

I set out on the enterprise with a definite scheme as to plot and character. The main moral is the purification of parish politics—you can't sell a novel without a moral now-a-days, any more than you can let a house without a bathroom. As to the leading characters, A. is an Apollo whose fiery soul frets the matchless mould of clay in which it is cased ; B. is a glorified Orson of the backblocks, all muscle and fidelity ; C. is a figuring machine in a bank, whose gray neutrality throws up the heroic colouring of A. and B. ; D. is a lovely vision in cream chiffon and Banksia roses. D.'s affections are to waver between Apollo and Orson, finally declining on the latter.

Musa is chilly and dissatisfied for a week or two. Then she warms into the collar, takes the bit between her teeth, and travels. Most of the people I had shuffled to the front she hustles into dusty corners ; non-entities I had put back in the shadow she pets and brings into the front row. A. becomes a blatant prig ; B. degenerates into a mere cornerman, whose ghastly jokes are not even enlivened by the banjo. She strikes all manner of astonishing sparks out of C., the despised figuring machine, and finally marries him to D. under my very nose, and