

# **AVILLION; OR, THE HAPPY ISLES.**

Dinah Maria Craik

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# AVILLION; OR, THE HAPPY ISLES.

Dinah Maria Craik

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I offer these, that were of my May-days,

To May.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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## AVILLION; OR, THE HAPPY ISLES. A Fireside Fancy.

"I am going a long way,  
With these thou seest if, indeed, I go  
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)  
To the island-valley of Avillion." *TENNYSON.*

CHAPTER I.

**WE** sat together on the deck, Liliias and I, listening to the boom of the wide Atlantic, and looking into each other's eyes. A thriftless occupation, but infinitely sweet. We had not grown tired of it yet, though we had been married three weeks; our love was not even a shadow the less. It seemed impossible for us to date its beginning; Heaven grant we may never know its end!

We had been wedded three weeks. Three weeks! Could it be, then, that only one little month had passed since that day the day of days! when But I will tell all concerning it. I will chronicle its every hour, whether of suffering or joy; for now both are alike written goldenly on this happy heart of mine.

I had been ill for a long time indeed, from my youth up I have rarely known the blessing of continuous health. But though this circumstance gave a languor and a half-melancholy dreaminess to my whole character, I think, too, it made me more humble, more loving, more thankful for all the love which was showered upon me. And when my long illness came, this blessing increased tenfold. I heard people compassionate "poor Wilfred Mayer," and say how hard it was that a young man should have the strength and glory of his youth brought thus low. I did not feel it so; I knew that there was power, aye, and beauty, in my soul; and I cared not for the feeble body. Besides, I lived in such an atmosphere of love. There was my father; my bold, frank-hearted brother, younger than I, yet assuming all the tender protection of eldership; Hester, the most loving of sisters; and one, dearer than any sister Liliias Hay.

But the day that day! In the morning I, feeble always, seemed feebler than ordinary. I lay back in my arm-chair, listening to the soft pattering of the April rain upon the window-sill, without any connected thought, except a fear that the weather might keep Liliias Hay in-doors: and I did not like to miss seeing her, even for a day. I heard the sound of an opening door; but it was only the physician accompanied by a second, whom I had not seen before. I was disappointed, and paid little heed to either, until I noticed that they drew my sister aside, and spoke earnestly. While she listened, Hester turned pale, looked at me, and began to weep. Her tears seemed to fall on my heart like ice-drops, piercing me with a shuddering dread. I felt, I knew, that that smooth-tongued stranger had, with his calm, stolid lips, pronounced my death-doom.

And I must die! The Shadow, hovering near me so long that I had ceased to regard it, was then close at hand—its very breath was upon me! **I MUST DIE!**

Hester came to my side with the second physician. I looked fixedly upon **him**, my doomer. I believe I said some words which betrayed my thoughts; for he answered, with a bland, cheerful smile, "that I must not imagine anything so serious; a voyage, perhaps a summer in Madeira, would soon "

I turned away; I would hear no more of the smiling lie. Thank God, it was not breathed by Hester's lips! No; she only wept, and kissed me once or twice softly.

"In a week he must go!" I heard the physician whisper. Then I knew there was no hope. They went away, and left me alone.

I tried to think of peace, of religion; I tried to say, "Thy will be done;" but the strong writhings of human passion shut out from me even the face of God. To die, to leave all my dear ones, to part from Liliias Hay! I uttered her name almost with a groan the thought was horrible. In this fearful moment I knew how madly, how despairingly, I loved her. She knew it, too, though I had never told her so. There was no need. The deep tenderness between us had grown from year to year, until it became a part of our life. I say **our life**; for we seemed to have but one. Neither said, "I love;" but the daily tide of our existence as it flowed harmoniously on, cried out with its thousand voices, "See, how these two love one another!"

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I had hitherto been content that it should be so, knowing well that Liliias would wed no man save me, and that one day the loving friendship between us would be changed for a closer bond. But now I must die die without having called her wife, without even having taken her once to my heart. O misery! that blessed, long-dreamed-of moment would never come; I must go down into the dark grave; I must lay my head in the dust **there**, and not on the pure, faithful bosom of my Liliias Hay!

I groaned aloud; I writhed in my anguish. Life and youth were yet strong within me. **I could not die**. Sometimes I resolved at all hazards to tell Liliias of my love. Perhaps I might draw life from the lips of my betrothed; perhaps a wife's prayers might yet stand between me and the Destroyer. I would risk it! I would ask her to wed me now at once. What, wed youth with sickness, peace with misery, life with death? God forgive the sinful thought! No; rather let me die alone, with dumb lips that carried their eternal secret mournfully to the grave. Best so best even for **her** sake.

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I grew calmer. My frozen despair melted into a dew of tears. I began to pray the prayers that my dead mother had taught me when I was a child. They made me feel like a child now, peaceful and humble. When Hester came in again, I was able to look in her face and smile. She did not weep, but talked with me calmly and affectionately, about my journey. I said I would rather remain at home; but she prayed nay, they all prayed that I would embrace any chance that might spare me longer to their dear love. I promised. Then my sister left the room, and brought in Liliias Hay.

Liliias was very pale, but composed and tearless. She came and sat down beside me, in her usual place. I laid my hand on her lap; she took it, and held it for a long time without a word.

"You know all, Liliias; that I am going to Madeira?"

"Yes."

I marvelled, nay, I was almost pained, that she said no more. My Liliias! I did not know thy heart even then!

They were all in the room: my father, Charles, Hester, and one who was to be Hester's bridegroom that very month. As they began to consult as to who should accompany me on this voyage of doom, young Fortescue drew her nearer to him with an anxious look. Hester cast her eyes down; but I saw the struggle in her heart. I would not put the claim even of a dying brother before that of an affianced husband. I said I would rather have Charles with me; and, after some resistance, Hester assented. They soon went away, and left me, as they often did, alone with my friend Liliias.

**My friend!** Was it friendship, when her every tone, her very movement, caused my heart to thrill, even through the cold sluggish pulses of disease. How keenly I suffered! How I yearned to lay my cheek on the dear hand I held, and pray her to take my poor dying head to her bosom, and let my last breath utter the life-long love which on earth might never be fulfilled. But I uttered it not. Even when, speaking of my going away so soon, her words came brokenly, and she leaned her brow against my chair in a long tearful silence, I only laid my hand softly on her hair, and bade "God bless her." Better, I thought, that she should mourn as a **friend** than as a widow. Liliias, my faithful one, was I right?

Then we talked in a quiet, ordinary way, about my journey and its arrangements.

"Hester will go with you, surely; of course, Hester must go," said Liliias.

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"No, Hester must not, ought not," I answered earnestly. "Nothing should divide two who love one another." And then I trembled at my words, and I saw Lilius tremble too. But soon after she spoke of some indifferent subject, and continued to do so until the time came for her to go home. We bade each other "good-night" (we dared not say "good-bye"), parting as usual with the long, lingering hand-clasp only. She walked slowly to the door, her step seeming to me like the rending of soul and body. Whether by gesture or groan I betrayed the agony I know not; but Lilius turned round. The next moment she had flung herself on her knees beside me.

"Wilfred, Wilfred! in life or death I cannot part with you. Hush!" and her voice grew solemn with unutterable tenderness "do not speak. Let me say the truth, long known to us both that " But she could not say it. Only she caught my hands wildly, fondly, fast "Oh, Wilfred! do not say, you shall not go alone. Friend! lover! **husband!** take me with you!"

I fell forward my head on her shoulder. My lips asked feebly and blindly for the holy seal of troth-plight. I felt it the first pure kiss of Lilius Hay; and then I felt no more, but sank into a swoon of joy.

It lasted not long; for with returning consciousness came that iron will of self-martyrdom, which would have made me die with my love unspoken: I lifted myself from her enclasping arms.

"Lilius," I cried, "this must not be. You would give me life, and I you death. I dare not take the boon."

She arose; quick blushes diffused her face and neck, and then faded away. O love! my faithful love! I could dream I saw thee now, leaning over me with that white marble brow, and low, solemn voice.

"Wilfred, you think of yourself alone you have not remembered **me**. Your love is my life you have no right to take that from me. If I must suffer, better better a thousand times that I should suffer with you than apart." And she sank once more on her knees beside me. "Oh, Wilfred! my only comfort my only hope in this world cast me not from you. Let me be your wife, to watch, tend, and cherish you, until until you go away, and then to follow soon, oh, soon!"

I opened my arms, crying, "Lilius, come." And thus, in one long embrace, silent as death or love, we plighted our troth to each other.

A week after I and my **wife** were in the midst of the wide ocean, on our way to Madeira.

Reader, you do not wonder now that it was almost heaven to me to lie silent on the twilight-shadowed deck, doing nothing, save look into the eyes of my Lilius.

They were eyes, now bright with hope as well as love: for it seemed as though the shadows of doom were passing away from mine. I drank in the soft breezes of the southern sea; they gave me new life, as all said. But I knew, O my wife! that this new life was brought by that precious love of thine.

## CHAPTER II.

**IT** was a pleasant voyage by day under the sunny heaven, by night beneath the stars. Many a time Lilius and I sat for hours together on the deck, hand in hand like little children; pleased with the veriest trifles a cloud on the sky, a flying fish on the water talking sweet idleness, half sense, half nonsense, as loving and happy ones ever will; and then my wife would shake her head with a mock reproof, and say, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves we, burthened between us with the conjoined weight of nearly fifty years. She was so happy, that she even used to sport with me, sometimes jesting about my having compelled herself to become the wooer at last. She kept buzzing about me like a merry little bee, her blithe voice lulling me either by song or speech, until, still feeble, I

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often sank to sleep on the deck, with my head on her lap. And then, many and many a time did I wake, feeling my hair wet with the dew of passionate tenderness which had rained on me from those dear eyes. "Thank God, thank God, for the blessedness of love!" was all my heart could cry. But thus it did cry, day and night, in a loud pæan of joy that even angels might hear.

Friend reader, I dare say thou thinkest we were a couple of simpletons! We smile on thee calmly. Poor fool! thou hast never loved.

One night we watched the twilight into starlight, and could not tear ourselves from the quiet, lonely deck. It was a strange and awful thing to be sweeping in the darkness over that vast, desolate sea, with not a sound near us, save the flapping of a sail and the wind in the cordage singing almost like a human voice, or one which, though all spiritual now, yet comes laden with the echo of its remembered mortal wail. Our converse partook of the character of the scene, and glided from the sweet trifling of contented earthly love, into the solemn communion of two spirits, wedded not only for life but for immortality. We spoke of the deep mysteries of our being, of the unseen and immaterial world. All these things were ever to me full of a strange fascination, in which Liliás shared. Why should she not? All our lives we had thought alike, she following whither I led. But she ever walked meekly, knowing that the man is the head of the woman. Her wisdom was born and taught of love, as a woman's should be. And to me it brought not weariness but strength; I thanked Heaven that the wife of my bosom was also the wife of my soul!

In the midst of our talk there came by our only fellow-passenger, a German doctor. He startled us both, as he moved from behind a sail, the setting moon lighting up his always pallid face and long, gray hair. He seemed to us, in our present visionary mood, almost phantom-like in his appearance.

Liliás started, and then laughed. "It is only Herr Foerster. Let us speak to him."

"No," I said, for I did not like the man. He was a mystic. He vexed me with his wild aspect, his floating locks, and his perpetual harangues about Kant and Swedenborg, and Jacob Boehmen. Dear Liliás combated my prejudice in her own gentle way. Where I condemned the eccentric philosopher, who hung out his wisdom as a sign to catch men's eyes, she pitied the strange old man, half-mad, and wholly desolate.

"See, Wilfred, how wistfully he is looking out over the waters. We know not what sorrowful thoughts may be in that poor brain of his. You will let me speak to him, dearest?"

She had her way, for it was the right way, and I knew it. In a few minutes the old German was sitting with us, inclined to begin his fantastic lore. But the mood had changed since yesterday, and his speech was less mystic, and more full of dreamy poetry. I was thankful that he had forgotten Kant. As his countenance lighted up, and his speech grew earnest, I began to feel that there was sincerity even in his eccentricities, and method in his madness.

"You were standing mute and absorbed when I spoke to you, Herr Foerster," said Liliás. "Were you thinking about home?"

"I have no home."

There was scarcely any sorrow in his eye or tone. He had passed these human weaknesses.

"But I was watching for a home, a true home one in search of which I have traversed these seas for ten years. I shall find it some time I know I shall."

Liliás looked at him compassionately; and then glanced involuntarily first to the sea, then upwards to the starry, steel-blue sky.

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"No: you mistake;" and the old mystic shook his head with a half-scornful smile, "I seek nothing so vague as that: I have no wish to die. Perhaps" and his voice grew mysterious "Perhaps I never may die."

My wife crept nearer to me, and gazed earnestly on the man whom I now thought surely mad; but there was no sign of frenzy in his manner. Reassured, Lilius again spoke.

"Where and what is this homile you seek?"

He pointed to the young moon just dipping into the western sea, amidst a bank of fantastic clouds "Look there! do you not see beyond that pale crescent, where sea and sky meet, a luminous verge, resembling white hills and shining towers? **Resembling**, did I say? Nay, it is! That is the very spot I seek the land beyond sunset the Island of the Blest."

Surprised and somewhat startled by his sudden vehemence, neither Lilius nor I made any answer. He went on, changing abruptly from the energy of enthusiasm to the calmness of eager reasoning.

"You will doubt this, I know. You will think me mad. Many have done so but I smile at them. The same was said of the great Ithacan of Columbus of other noble spirits who have set out on a like track."

"But none have ever found its ending, Herr Foerster," said I. "No man ever yet reached the Island of the Blest."

"Rather say, no man ever came back from thence. How should he?" And the German smiled a calm superior smile. As he went on, his plain, well-arranged arguments almost staggered my doubts as to his insanity. His speech was so like truth.

"Men in all ages have believed in the existence of this land. Legends, variously modified by different ages and climes, have all agreed in this universal fact, that far westward, in the midst of the vast mysterious ocean, untraversed and untraversable by man, lies an island, whose dwellers have all joys of humanity without its pain all the sensuous delights of earth, combined with the purity of heaven. Who knows but that the angels carried God's Eden and planted it there in the midst of the sea?"

"This faith is very beautiful," said Lilius, attracted even against her will. "I had rather believe thus, than believe that the divine garden trodden of angels, visited by God was transformed into a howling wilderness."

I could not but smile at her graceful fancy; but the influence of this strange man was upon me also. "You say, Herr Foerster, that this belief has extended over all ages. How so?"

"Is it not among the Greeks? Listen to Homer." And with his grand, rich German accent, he poured out in kindred strength a torrent of that majestic Greek, which was in truth worthy to be the speech of Olympus

"The large utterance of the early gods."

"It sounds glorious," murmured Lilius; "but I am a woman, and have only a woman's learning. I should like to hear it in our English tongue."

Herr Foerster obeyed.

"Thus it runs, then:—

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"But thee the ever-living gods will send  
Unto the Elysian plain and distant bounds  
Of earth  
There life is easiest unto men: no snow,  
Or wintry storm, or rain, at any time  
Is there; but evermore the ocean sends  
Soft-breathing air of Zephyr to refresh  
The habitants.'

"So says the blind seer and poet for poets are all seers. Hear, too, the grand Pindar, still speaking the belief of his country as in those days bard, prophet, and priest were one:

"They speed their way  
To Kronos' palace, where, around  
The Island of the Blest, the airs  
Of ocean breathe, and golden flowers  
Blaze: some on land  
From shining trees, and other kinds  
The water feeds. Of these  
Garlands and bracelets round their arms they bind.'

"Do you hearken, friends?"

We did indeed sit listening, in a silence that was not without awe. The scene, the hour, the gestures and tones of this man, carried with them a supernatural influence. More and more he spoke, collecting with infinite learning every mythical fable that could suggest or confirm this belief; the story of Ulysses, who sailed far into the wild desert of waters in search of the land beyond the sunset; the Roman superstition of the Island of Atlantis, which ancient fable, if fable it were, had left its impress on the Atlantic; the legends of mediæval lore, that spurred on to enterprise a Columbus and a Gama; the fantastic romance concerning the "happy land of Faerie," the Island of Avalon and its dwellers, once of earth King Arthur, Sir Launfal, Ogier le Danois all these fanciful creations of history and fiction were brought together by our companion enthusiast, or madman, whichever he were with a reality utterly astounding.

"You see," he continued, "that each legend coincides in one fact the Happy Islands that lie in the western sea. Universal fable proves individual truth at least, I believed so; and when the world became desolate to me, I turned my thoughts to a new land the land of the blest."

"You have suffered, then," whispered Lilius' tender voice.

"Few men long so ardently for another world, as they whose hope is gone from this. But I must not speak of these things now: all are past long past. Why did you make me think of them? You oh, you twain have no need to seek the Happy Isles."

He drooped his face a moment, and then went on, harshly and wild as before. "I dreamed this dream, night and day, until I was convinced it was a truth. I squandered all my wealth for whom should I keep it? and then set sail. Ten years, ten long years, have I spent on these seas, passing from ship to ship suffering famine and drought, fire and wreck; yet never, oh! never have I touched the land of the blest. But, hark you!" and he caught my hand "I know they are here, in this very ocean. I see them sometimes at sunset, or at dawn, far off in the horizon they never come nearer. But they will come near: ah, yes! I know that some day I shall find the Happy Isles."

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He stretched his clasped hands towards the ocean in full confidence of faith.

"Poor dreamer!" I thought. "Are they wise or mad to be envied or pitied the many who, like thee, toss blindly on the world's dark sea, vainly seeking the Happy Isles?"

But I had not time for more speech; for suddenly there seized me a racking pain, darting arrow-like through breast and brain. It was the fore-warning of sufferings I well knew of old. They came upon me, thronging thick and fast, sharp rending pains which lowered my manhood to the shrieking agony of a child. And there, alone beside me, sat the faithful one who had followed me over the seas true woman, true wife! Thank Heaven it was her thought as well as mine thank Heaven! that she **was** my wife now; that it was hers to fold her cool hands round my brow, to gather me to her bosom as a mother would a sick child. Every form and phase of tenderest love sister-love, mother-love, wife-love seemed mingled into one, and poured out upon me from the heart of my Liliás. I knew now would that every man on earth knew! how infinite a faithful woman's love can be!

Stronger and stronger grew these torturing pains, until my senses became dim. I scarce felt even the winding arms of my Liliás, until they were removed, and I perceived bending over me the German mystic. He spoke, I thought, of some rare drug which would surely lull my sufferings.

"It is very fearful this new power!" answered Liliás.

I heard **her** voice, every tone.

Those around her spoke a few words. I only knew their effect by her convulsive shudder and smothered cry; but soon after she said

"Herr Foerster, you are a good man; I trust you with my life more than my life, remember! Let my husband try this, and God be merciful to him and me!"

The German stooped down. To my distempered fancy his eyes appeared to flame like demons', and his tongue to hiss in her ear

"You have no fear?"

"No!" she replied.

"It is well and you are wise! Two hours more of these tortures, and "

I heard no more; but as he went away I felt Liliás shiver; she drew me closer to her, and kissed passionately my lips and eyes. I strove to speak, but my mind would not concentrate itself so as to frame one intelligible sentence. The German came back. He knelt before me, and I perceived a faint fragrance that diffused itself on the air I breathed. One struggle I made to convince myself that all was real that I was clasped safe in my wife's arms and then I gave myself to the delicious numbness which stole over me. My eyes closed; the gathering lights that flitted before them disappeared: it was as though some spirit hand were folding over sight and hearing a dim, gray veil. A few times I felt my heart booming up and down, like a creature of life; I seemed almost to behold it beating in my bosom its great pulses heaving continually louder and higher, like waves of the sea; and once or twice I distinguished those rending pains pains darting lightning-like pains that could be seen as well as felt: for in this strange spell all the various senses seemed to be confounded and mingled.

Then all grew peace. Closer and closer gathered over me the solemn veil: one by one my heart's leaping pulses sank lower and lower as if dull fingers pressed them into stillness. All pain ceased, and with it all perception of being. I faintly stirred my hand, to convince myself of my bodily existence. I tried to make my lips express the

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thoughts which dwelt in my still conscious mind.

"I sleep, Liliias, I sleep!" It sounded less like my own human voice than that of a spirit; but it was answered.

"Yes, my own dearest, you will sleep soon." Then all the outward world became dim the sounds and sights about me fading as earth-landscapes fade before one who voyages through the air, rising higher and higher, until cities, towers, and trees are all an undistinguishable mass. Thus I seemed to soar out of my bodily organs into a new existence. All sensation vanished: I no longer breathed; yet I seemed to feel no need of vital air. My heart lay still; but its hushed pulses gave me no pain. I no longer bore the burden of a weary body: it was as though I had become incorporeal, and had passed out of the world of matter into that of spirit.

I said to myself, "This is death!" but the thought found no echo on my lips they would not give forth one sound. Then I knew more clearly the change that had taken place. It seemed at first that I was really dead become a disembodied spirit. Yet my soul was not free from the clay which it no longer had power to animate into living and breathing man. It roved hither and thither, within its lost tabernacle, and could not flee away. My brain yet maintained power of thought and perception; through it I heard, and saw, and felt, though my outward senses were benumbed. Then, when the first delicious torpor had gone by, there came upon me a vague horror. Could it be that I was dead, yet not dead a tranced body tenanted by a living soul? Was this my fearful doom?

It broke upon me with the first sound conveyed by my incorporeal senses the cry of my wife Liliias! Then I heard what no man on earth ever heard before the wail of his beloved over his own dead corpse!

### CHAPTER III.

**I**N a dark cabin around all coldness, silence, death they left me; me, still me, for the eternal essence had not quitted, could not quit, its clay tenement. I knew all they did to me the demons, with that arch-demon looking on, smiling at his horrible work! I felt it all my palsied limbs being straightened, the dead-weights laid on my eyes, my helpless hands decently composed; with my spirit's senses I saw and heard every whit, and yet my corporeal life was gone. Wonder, rage, terror, swept over my soul as vainly as blasts over a frozen lake no sound, no movement, enabled the bodily organs to reflect the mind; I had power over them no more.

The German with his fellow-ministers left me, and I lay wrapped in terrible repose. I, of all human flesh, was the first who had **felt death**. There was a marvel, a mystery, even a pride, in this awful thought. I shrouded myself in it, and, piercing through the terror and the gloom, my soul went travelling over every phase of wild speculation. I, the immortal, indivisible **I**, looked down almost pityingly upon that poor atom of helpless mortality that was myself. It was a dear self dear, with all its imperfections; for it was the human form which Liliias held precious, even beautiful. The pale, powerless head she had cherished on her bosom; the cold, nerveless hands had lain, hour after hour, enfolded tenderly in hers.

They were so folded once more; but it was the frenzied clasp of the widow, not the wife.

She came Liliias, my beloved; her footsteps sounded through the stillness of the death-chamber; her sobs pierced the darkness of the desolate night. Oh, fearful spell! that not even such a cry could break!

I knew her hand was upon my pulseless heart; I knew her kisses were showered on my dumb lips; yet I could not answer; no more than the corpse which I appeared. A veil, far wider than that between the dead and the living, was drawn between me and the beloved of my soul. How I longed to rend at once the feeble thread that linked me to mortality, and pass through any agony, soever great into the state of a disembodied spirit. Then, perchance, I might hold communion with her, as the departed are sometimes permitted to do.

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She would not believe that the life had entirely gone from my poor shrouded form. She wrapped the cold hands in her bosom; she laid her cheek beside mine on the same pillow; and so, weeping bitterly until her strength failed, she fell asleep. But she awoke soon, calling wildly on my name. Oh God! I would have almost perilled the immortal soul Thou gavest me to answer her. Why, thou Divine, didst Thou make this terrible human love so strong?

Lilias, shuddering, let my hands fall. **When they fell**, impassive as clay, she uttered a cry such as would almost have broken a death-slumber. It could not break mine.

She seized the lamp, and held it so that the light fell on my face. There was one start, one gasping sigh, and then she stood calm. Over her terror, her grief, her despair, had passed the awful peace given by the presence of Death.

She laid down the light, moving slowly, with hushed steps. Then she came, and knelt down, not by my pillow, but at the couch's foot. She kissed me no more, she clasped me no more; I was no longer her living husband, I was the solemn image of Death. That image froze her human love into mute awe. Her tears ceased, her sobs were stilled. For a moment she hid her face as if to shut out from sight the dead face, once so beloved; and then she paused. It was beloved still! But as she gazed, there was in her look less of passionate earthly love than of the sublime yet awful tenderness with which one would behold an angel of God or a departed soul.

After a while, Lilias lifted her voice and prayed the widow's first prayer. Yet it began with a thanksgiving. She thanked Heaven for all I had been to her; for the love which had awakened her girlhood's soul, calling into life its strength, joy, and beauty; for the blessed fate which had worked out, in due time, that love's fulfilment, so that every dower of her rich heart might be poured in a full tide on him who was its awakener. No murmurings were there for the love taken away; but blessings for the love that **had been**.

"And thou, my husband!" she cried, "my own beloved! who art not here, not in this form lying cold before me, but now standing a spirit among the immortal ones, glorious and beautiful as they, forsake me not! Live thou in my heart; change this human anguish into memory peaceful and divine! Love me, love me, up in heaven as I love thee on earth! Oh, thou who wert who art my soul's soul, through life and **after**, what shall part thee from me!"

She looked not down towards the pale figure beside which she knelt, but upwards into heaven. Thither her lifted hands were stretched, thither her eyes were turned; and I, yet prisoned in that dull clay, mourned not that she regarded it no more, but rejoiced in the immortal strength and purity of the devotion which had loved, not my poor dying body, but **me**.

There came faces and voices to the door, and Lilias arose. She arose, not the weeping, broken-hearted girl, stricken and desolate, but the widow of the dead calm, patient, almost sublime in her sorrow. Many pitying friends gathered round her; there was only one which stole in the rear, glaring at her and at me from amidst his gray elf-locks the Destroyer who had worked upon us this doom.

They besought Lilias to take some rest; but she meekly refused. Covering my face, she took her seat at the head of what she deemed her husband's corpse; and there remained, motionless and mute, a solemn watcher over the living Dead. At last, her human strength yielded to this weight of woe; she sank down, slowly, slowly, on the breast that could shelter her no more. Falling thence she lay a dull, unconscious heap on the cabin floor.

**It** marked her, even there, that flaming, fiendish eye. It watched her everywhere her and me. Creeping snake-like into the chamber, the Mystic gathered her in his foul clutch, indifferently, as though that precious form had been some victim slain by his hand. He bore her away, with a triumphant smile; and I, her husband, bound in adamantine bonds, lay a living spirit prisoned in a dead corse.

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Again I was alone. The wind rose, and the ship rocked madly on the deep. I, lying there, might have been a stone. All sense, all power, was dead within me. Only the brain was alive with sight, and sound, and perception. Phantom after phantom rose, peopling the vessel's hold. They danced in the darkness, like motes in a sunbeam; they shrieked in the blast, a whirlwind of unearthly voices; they filled the very air, the air that I had once breathed.

Thus I lay amidst these horrors, until a human presence, more demon-like than themselves, put them to flight. The German Mystic came and stood over his victim.

Love had been powerless to unloose the spell; how then should Hate have strength to break it? I, who would have heaped worlds upon worlds to crush my enemy, soul and body, into ashes was doomed to lie still as a sleeping babe, while his cursed fingers wandered over my dead heart, my sunken pulse; while, in his ghastly mirth, he bent my helpless limbs, making me assume mocking attitudes of life.

At last, he dropped upon my lips some liquid, and my tongue felt itself unloosed. I howled upon him imprecations, threatenings, prayers; but he only smiled! I shrieked, until I thought the sound might pierce to the ocean's depths; and still he only smiled.

"Poor deceived one, it is vain!" he cried: "thy voice rings no louder than the sigh of a summer wind. No human ear could hear it, save mine, which is deaf as the rock. I must work my will."

He laid his finger on my lips, and they were sealed as with an iron band. He began to speak once more.

"Listen, thou dumb one who hearest all! Against thee I bear no malice, no revenge; thou art but my instrument to work out the great end. Through thee I must find the Happy Isles. Thou, whose bliss on earth seemed so secure that it took from thee all desire for heaven thou art the one chosen for this work. Therefore, I must send thee a living, trance-bound human soul to the place where the dead lie; to the unfathomable depth of the great sea, that there, perchance, thou mayst discover the way to the Land of Immortality."

At this my soul within me sent up a cry, such as might have risen to the crystal walls of heaven when the Son of the Morning fell. But it could not pass my frozen lips.

"Patience, poor struggler against destiny!" answered that voice of doom, and yet it now seemed not fierce but pitiful, even mild. "Is it so hard that thou, who hast been most blessed who, loved and loving, hast found earth a very heaven shouldst sacrifice a few years more of an existence that haply may soon become wretched as mine, in order that a fellow-being, equal to thyself in all but happiness, may exchange a life which to him has been a long torture, for rest and peace?"

His voice became plaintive, nay, humble. But I saw only the hand that rent from me love, hope, life, and I cursed him still.

"I hear thy unspoken thoughts," he replied. "But they avail not. Thou hast no pity on me on whom neither God nor man ever took pity. Thou hast no tenderness for thy brother-man, towards whom the human eye was never turned in love. Now, then, I stand as an avenger. I make thee a sacrifice for all the suffering and outcast of thy kind. Thou shalt go first, and find out the pathway on which they may follow to the land of peace. It is just, and I am a righteous instrument to fulfil this doom. The time is at hand."

While he spoke the hurricane rose louder and louder, and amidst its boomings came the din of clamorous voices, calling aloud that the dead should be brought forth. The sea would not rest, they said, until it had received its lawful prey.

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The Mystic met them at the cabin door. "It shall be done now, at once, while the widow sleeps. Poor mourner! It will save her one parting pang the less."

He was a demon incarnate, with that cast-down eye that silvery tongue!

They swathed me **me** living me, in the cerements of the grave; they bore me, a loathed weight, to the poop. There, out in the midnight blackness, they stood, unconscious murderers; **he** leading them on. Above the howl of the seething waves, I heard his low voice breathing the mockery of a funeral prayer. A lifting up a plunge and I sank down, down into the yawning ocean-hell.

### CHAPTER IV.

**I BELIEVE** that death itself the real parting of soul and body is less horrible than many tortures, not only mental but corporeal, which we endure during life. Many a man has dreamed that he was dying has felt vividly all the circumstances of that supreme hour the gradual ebbing away of existence, or the passing suddenly from life into eternity. May it not be that this kind of dream, in which we rarely suffer any pain, whether seeming to die slowly or by violence, is but the striving of the spirit within us to foreshadow the moment of its departure; to make known, in the only possible way, the solemn secret which none who have passed death's portals can ever return to unfold?

Thus I died, if death it could be called, as softly, as painlessly, as one dies in dreams. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," the change came. I sank down, down into an abyss of blackness, silence, and nothingness! and then I rose up—rose like a bird, or a cloud in the air. I beheld light, I heard sounds. I felt a life within me; richer, fuller, than any human life. Around me was neither void, nor spiritual heaven, nor terrible hell. It was earth earth purified into Paradise.

I stood on the shore of the Happy Isles!

As the sunshine of that blessed land fell on me, my grave-cerements seemed to melt off like misty robes of air. With them melted the icy spell which had bound me. Once again I moved and breathed like living man like that man of men who rose up beneath the finger of God from the life-pregnant dust of Eden.

As glorious as Eden itself was the land whereon I stood. Words cannot picture it. Perchance you may form the best image of its beauty, when you look up at those cloud landscapes which grow visible on summer-evenings, and talk to your little son at your knee about the heavenly country which he dreams is something like that which his young eyes behold in the pictured sky. No other earthly similitude can approach so near to this vision of the Happy Isles.

Around them the sea folded itself like a girdle, a crystal circle, encompassing them with wide and loving arms, like Infinity. For there, Infinity and Eternity, the great mysteries into which the deepest and purest human faith cannot pierce without trembling, became near and familiar things. Still, the land was not heaven, but earth earth with its curse taken away, and made pure and beautiful as it was in the Eden-time.

I walked with human feet along the lovely shore. I gazed with human eyes upon the view beyond a region of pastoral, untrodden beauty, blue hills rising sky-wards, feathered down to the very strand with trees. The land, though unlike any which I had known on earth, was such as I had pictured many a time in fancy, when dreaming over that time of which Homer and Hesiod sung the time when Hellas, the garden of the young world, was trodden by gods, demi-gods, and heroes.

It seemed that I beheld the golden age of Greece. On these purple hills the Latmian shepherd might have

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roved amidst these thick woods Oreads and Dryads might have made their happy bowers. The sea itself, azure—shining and crystal—clear, seemed to catch its brightness from myriads of Nereid—eyes below, and the breeze that went sighing by was less an earth—wind than the audible breath of Zephyrus over his goddess—love.

Now I discerned the beauty of those ancient myths suited to the time when the world was in its childhood, and needed to be taught by childish parables which spiritualized all nature in poetic symbols, and filled the whole earth with the dim presence of half—understood Divinity.

I, too, felt within myself the spirit of the golden age. I was a Greek. I bounded over the strand, my bosom swelling with immortal fire such as the great and glorious Titan poured into the soul of man. Life, young life, leaped in my veins; not that dull current transfused through eighteen hundred years but the rich flood, sensuous yet pure, which coursed through the grand frames of the ancient heroes. I walked, I leaped, I ran; feeling no longer the pain and weakness of the body I had once borne, but a strength and beauty akin to that of the conqueror Theseus, or the goddess—born son of Peleus.

Up from the sea—shore, across a sloping hill such an one as might have blossomed beneath the footsteps of Paris and his woodland bride, ere Enone's wail had made fair Ida itself a place of desolation up, higher and higher, I climbed; until from the hill summit I looked down on the scene below.

It was a deep vale, amphitheatred by forest and mountain. There, as in a nest of peace, dwelt the beings who peopled this new world; I saw them already not with narrow human vision, but with an eye that seemed at once to behold and to know. They were human in semblance in beauty superhuman. Their speech was music; their smile was sunshine: their very presence was an atmosphere of joy. But it was a joy such as immortals feel calm, deep, tranquil. They had the power, never known on earth, to look on the noon—day sun of happiness with undazzled and unblinded eyes.

I stood on the mountain—top, and stretched forth my arms with a gesture of glad and yearning desire. The rising sun cast my shadow, dark and grand in its giant outline, upon the Happy Vale. Then I heard arising a billowy sound of many voices, swelling into a hymn. It came pealing on in the majestic cadences of Homer's tongue, and its burthen evermore ran thus:

"Rejoice, rejoice! Another mortal has reached the Happy Isles!"

Winding up from the valley, the graceful procession neared me. Old men advanced first, rich in the beauty of age for age has beauty as well as youth. Wisdom, peace, and tranquil thought, dwelt on each grave brow; the light of their eyes, though dimmed, was not obscure. Life's evening descended upon them in gray—clouded peace, bringing no regret nor fear.

Next came women aged matrons, with their children's children clinging to their robes; young mothers, to whom mother—love was unmingled with fear, for their offspring would go down to the grave if graves were here sinless as on the day of birth. Then advanced Manhood strong, mighty in stature, the perfect type of physical beauty, ennobled by the indwelling beauty of the soul. After this full development of humanity came young men and maidens, meek, tender, modest, who carried in their bosoms the rose of love; but it was a thornless rose. Last of all were seen the children infant buds, wherein lay folded the perfect man.

These all cried aloud, with one voice of jubilant song, "Welcome! welcome to the Happy Isles!"

In the midst of them I passed on to the centre of the vale a palace of verdure, branch—roofed, and fretted overhead with azure and gold the blue sky and the darting sunlight. There was seen no work of men's hands.

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Neither was there a throne the ruler stood among his people like a father among his children. His only show of sovereignty was that which nature stamped upon his mien and gesture. These tokens pointed silently, "Behold a king among men!"

He **was** a king! I felt it as I looked upon him. He stood among them, loftiest in stature, grandest in beauty. It was meet that he should be so, for in this perfect land the symbol and the reality were one; the outward manifestation was complete as the inward truth. Therefore this kingly soul shone forth through a kingly semblance. The temple was worthy of the god.

I say **god**, because there was something god-like in him. Perhaps the best type by which I can embody him is the Phidian Jove but it was Jove unthroned, uncrowned, save by the circumfluent presence of his own deity.

I bowed myself before him, even to the ground, and my soul within me bowed likewise. He raised me, repeating the words of the choral salutation, "Stranger, whomsoever thou art, welcome to the Happy Isles!"

I have often thought that if there be one physical manifestation in which the indwelling divinity of manhood most shows itself, it is the human voice. From the moment I heard his voice I could have worshipped at the feet of that king. In its majestic sweetness was a pensive under-tone; speaking of endurance, but endurance sublimated into peace of wisdom, but wisdom made holy by meekness of power, but power softened by love.

"O thou Greatest One," I cried, "tell me who art thou?"

He smiled: his smile was like that of Jove, which makes earth to laugh in sunshine.

"Askest thou this? Then, thou art not yet equal with us; but I will make thee so."

He placed one hand on my brow, the other on my heart; and his eyes looked solemnly into mine. An influence seemed to pass into my soul, raising me to a higher state of being. Hitherto, my existence had been one of mere sensation, like Adam's with the tree of wisdom untasted. In the deepest and most delicious sense, I had learned **to feel** I now learned **to know**.

I sank before him, crying out,

"Thou art the greatest, the wisest, of ancient heroes, the bold adventurer into unknown seas. Hail Ulysses, King of Ithaca!"

The monarch lifted his head with a noble pride. "**I was** King of Ithaca; **I am** Ulysses. That name, which the Divine Spirit caused to be much honoured on earth, follows me here. My petty kingdom is forgotten; but Ulysses, the true Ulysses, reigns in the Happy Isles. And thou, O man! tell us, for our knowledge extends not beyond these lands, whence comest thou?"

I strove to answer the question; but a thick oblivion seemed to have gathered over my past life: only, as I gazed listlessly on the crowd that watched me with curious eyes, I saw two young lovers stand, leaning in each other's arms. The sight brought a passing gleam of remembrance, and then a sharp pang of regret.

"O King! all is dim with me; but it seems that I have been happy have known love. I cannot rest, even here. Let me go back to earth once more."

"Is it even so?" And he cast on me a look of sublime compassion. "Drink peace and oblivion with the dews of the Happy Isles!"

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He drew me beneath the spreading branches, and shook from them a shower of pearly drops, which fell, sweet as honey, on my lips and brow. As they touched me, I ceased to suffer and regret, and became altogether blessed.

I sat at the feet of the wisest of the Greeks while he judged his people. Little need of judgment was there, when there was no crime, and only enough of cloudy sorrow to show more clearly the eternal sunshine of happiness around them. They gathered round their king, drinking wisdom from his lips, and learning the few arts and sciences that their rich world needed. He blessed the young, he counselled those of maturer years, he spoke peace to the aged. As they departed each their several ways, I inwardly marvelled at many things concerning them, which even now seemed a mystery.

"Ulysses," I cried; "I, too, would fain learn of thee!"

The king bent his head in acquiescence.

"Tell me, then, of these thy people did they journey with thee to the sunset? And if so, how is it that some are young, some aged? Is there birth and death here?"

He led me to a little distance, where stood a magnificent tree. Its branches bore at once foliage, flowers, and fruit. Of its leaves, some wore the tender green of spring, some the gold or ruddy hue of autumn; and as they fell for they did fall each, touching the earth, became a seedling plant, and so recommenced a new and different existence.

"Here," said the sage, "as the life of a tree, is the life of men: peacefully flow their fourscore years and ten; then they bid adieu to those they love, fall calmly asleep, and in that slumber the soul passes from the worn-out body into that of a new-born babe. Thus it is with the native dwellers in this land."

"But with those thou ledest from Greece, and with thyself?" I asked, gazing on the majestic form of perfect manhood, on which no added year might have passed since Calypso's immortal eyes, tear-dimmed, watched it disappear along the island-shore.

The Ithacan answered,

"Men's souls differ from one another in greatness. I and my followers, though mortal, bore within us the germ of immortality, which gave us will to seek, and strength to find, the Happy Isles. Therefore, it needed not for us to pass through a succession of lives in order to attain perfection. We are already perfect."

"Then to thee and thine comes no change; but the body, now made the complete manifestation of the soul, is immortal as itself?"

"Even so. Now, come hither and behold!"

Still following him, I entered a pleasant glade, thick sown with amaranth and asphodel. Through it ran murmuring a little stream, in whose mirror looked the pale flower that wastes for love of its own image.

There was neither sun nor moon; but the whole atmosphere was pervaded with a serene twilight, like that of the dawn of day. It showed the quiet vale, and the countenances of those who dwelt therein. They were men of various mien; but over all was spread the same air of purity, happiness, and rest. The stalwart soldier leaned on his useless weapons; the poet, sitting on the flower-enamelled grass, sang his innocent songs, happy as a little child; the sage, lying calmly beneath the tree-shadows, found his deepest wisdom in the enjoyment of perfect peace.

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It was a picture of the world's sinless infancy, when it lay, as a babe does, soul and body alike wrapped in slumbrous stillness. Would an awakening come? Or was this the culmination of existence?

As the idea crossed my spirit, I looked upon my guide. His face, too, wore the same expression that of a soul which, desiring nought, or else having nought to desire, finds its struggles and sufferings merged into entire contentment.

In this Elysium, there seemed to be no future; but was there a past? I turned unto the king, and said,

"Tell me, Ulysses, have these all drunk of the Lethe dew, and lost the memory of their former life?"

"No!" he answered; "but they see it pictured dimly and painlessly like a remembered dream."

"And thou?"

His countenance shone with sublime triumph.

"To me the past is sweet as the remembrance of toil in rest: I look on it calmly, rejoicingly, as the victor of the goal looks back on the ended race."

So saying, the Ithacan turned from the entrance of the vale, and went on, I following his footsteps, to the margin of the sea.

## CHAPTER V.

**ON** the verge of the strand Ulysses stood, and looked towards the vast ocean which had served as a pathway to his hero-feet. It kissed them now in tiny wavelets, obediently acknowledging his sovereignty. The moist touch seemed laden with some passing memories of earth; for the king stretched forth his arms and cried

"Oh, life long past! oh, toils long conquered! oh, land long forsaken! must I then remember ye once more?"

He leaned against an overhanging rock: I crouch- ing on the silver sands at his feet, looked up with wonder and reverence to the face of the son of Laertes.

"Wisest of the Greeks " I began.

"Thou sayest right," interrupted he. "I was the wisest of the Greeks. The great gods poured wisdom into my soul when I yet hung upon the bosom of Anticlea. As a child, I yearned for the might and energy of youth; as a youth, I desired to attain the full knowledge of man. But when manhood came, the sceptre of Laertes only cumbered my hands; and the petty realm of Ithaca confined my soul.

"The wise men said to me, 'Son of Laertes, waste not thy strength in idle dreaming. Emulate Hercules and Theseus: take in thine hand arrow and spear, and rid the land of monsters.' And the young men whispered, 'Go forth with us, let us fight against men, and take captive fair women; this is glory.' But I knew that both voices were false: I felt within me something beyond the glory of the hunter or the warrior. So I stayed, vainly chafing at the limits of the narrow island.

"At last a vision came to me 'Go,' it said, 'wed the daughter of Jove Helen most beautiful of all the women of earth. Mingle thy mortal blood with that of divinity, and thou shalt become thyself divine.' I believed the deceitful dream, self-created out of the longings of unsatisfied youth; I went and stood with the princes of Greece at the

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court of Tyndarus."

Ulysses paused: and I, whose memory, while a blank as regarded my own past, went side by side with that of the mighty Ithacan cried: "Tell me of that perfect type of woman the ideal of beauty to the ancient world tell me of Helen of Troy."

"Helen of **Lacædmon** rises before me now," answered Ulysses. "She stands veiled at the foot of the throne. Around her are the young warriors, thirsting with ambition and eager love. Love! what was love to me? I sought not the fairest woman in Greece, but the being, Jove-born, whose embrace might impart unto my mortality the power and wisdom of the god.

"The veil was lifted: Helen stood revealed. The warriors knelt entranced before her. Fools! to mistake that incarnation of voluptuous human beauty for the divine Woman, the child of Jove! I turned away, half in sorrow, half in scorn, and wooed no more the daughter of Leda."

"But the son of Laertes returned not without a bride," I said, earnestly regarding the face of the king. Wisdom sat there placid yet stern, unbending firmness, and indomitable will; but there was no sign of human tenderness. I saw that in the great Ithacan's soul an insatiable thirst for knowledge had filled the place of love.

He answered carelessly: "My people said it was meet a woman should sit by the hearth of Ulysses, to tend the age of Anticlea, and bring up sons to mount Laertes' throne. So Penelope sailed with me in the black ships to Ithaca."

There was a silence during which the little waves sang their under-melody, until it grew into the boom of the rising tide. The sea dashed and foamed against the rocks that confined it; and its loud roar sounded mournful even in the Happy Isles.

Ulysses beheld, and a new spirit dawned in his majestic eyes. "Child of the after world," he cried, turning suddenly round, "thou seest in that sea the image of my soul. It would not could not stay murmuring among the golden sands: it must rise and rise, even though it dashed itself howling upon the bitter rocks. I sat, an enslaved king, upon my paltry throne, holding sway over the human beasts for they were soulless as beasts to whom the purple and the diadem made me appear divine; I ruled them, and then scorned myself for stooping to such a dominion. Why was I thus pent up within the limits of my narrow isle? I for whose aspirings the world itself appeared too bounded and too small."

"Yet," I answered him, timorously and softly, "when the summons came, the monarch of Ithaca used his wisdom for a stratagem, rather than depart with those who warred for Helen, against Troy. Why did the kingly warrior pretend madness, and sow salt on the sea-shore?"

A look, as like human anger as that immortal face could assume, darkened the brow of the king. "Because the folly of mankind forced greatness itself to cunning. Was it meet that Ulysses, gifted in the wisdom of the gods, should go forth with a barbarian race to quarrel over an adulterous woman? But fate is stronger than human will: and so I, with my twelve ships, sailed for the Phrygian shore."

"And thou wert among the mightiest there?"

"I was **the** mightiest! Wisdom is greater than valour. It was I who ruled the wavering Agamemnon, and led the virgin-sacrifice to Aulis. I, by my counsels, caused the destruction of Troy."

As he spoke, there came before my mind's eye a vision of the pillaged city, the murdered Priam, the aged Hecuba grovelling in her children's gore. And I said, mournfully, "Alas, for Troy!"

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The face of Ulysses expressed neither triumph nor compassion, as he answered. "Troy fell: it was destined that she should fall. The will of the Supreme must be accomplished. The world's tide must swell onward, whether men, cities, or kingdoms, lie engulfed in its course. Greece learned wisdom from that ten years' miserable war; and from the ravaged town may have arisen a new and a greater Ilium."

"It has it has!" I answered, thinking of Eneas whose descendants builded Rome, and longing to impart the knowledge to which the wisest of the ancient world had not attained. But his impassive look asked it not. The perfection of his Elysium seemed to be, **never to desire**. Instead of speaking of a future which to him was indifferent, I pursued my questions concerning the past.

"Great Ulysses! to thy ten years before Troy succeeded another period of greater glory still the glory of endurance. Let me bow, heart and soul, before the patient wanderer over many seas, the hero struggling with destiny, conquering alike the jaws of Scylla and the Sirens' song enslaved neither by fear, ambition, nor love;" and here I paused, doubtful, remembering fair Circe's isle.

But the king answered unmoved. "If ever love subdued me, it was an immortal's love, which I thought might lift my being and endow it with something divine. But even Circe's charms were laid at my feet: I sought them not. And the winds that wafted our flying ship from the enchanted isle, testified that wisdom and virtue were dearer to Ulysses than the clasp of a goddess's imploring arms."

"Yet when the end was gained, the travail past, and the son of Laertes reached his native land, did that wisdom and virtue find their perfect fruition in happiness and peace? Else wherefore did thy bold feet quit for ever the Ithacan shore?"

Ulysses advanced a few paces, and lifted his hand in the attitude of speech. He stood as he might have stood before the throne of Agamemnon, his lips dropping words sweet as honey, but strong and all-subduing as the wine which Hebe poured out for Jove.

"I was a man before my age. I discerned faintly a higher life than that of brute warfare and sensual pleasure, and turned with loathing from my brethren. I sought this diviner life everywhere in the renown of battle, in the purer glory of travails conquered, in the delights of a goddess's love. But wisdom, which is alone happiness, ever flitted before me like a vain shadow: it was no nearer to me in Circe's or Calypso's island than in the gore-encrusted fields of Troy. So I turned my footsteps and sought it in my own home. I gave laws to my people; I taught them the lore of distant lands; I stooped my warrior's hand to guide the plough and melt the ore; I spoke of that wisdom which is better than physical prowess of peace, which is more glorious than war."

"And they rewarded thee?"

"They muttered among themselves that fame had lied, and that the returned Ulysses was the same madman and coward whom their fathers had seen sowing the shore with salt. And throughout the isle men lived like brutes; each lifting his hand against his brother, as though Ulysses had never reigned in Ithaca."

"Alas!" I murmured. "Woe for him who is the herald of a coming age! But surely there was peace and content by the hearth of the returned spouse, the noble father, the dutiful son? Surely there was rest for thee amidst thy kindred?"

He replied, calmly as ever; "A great man often finds no kindred but the gods. So it was with me and mine. I walked with them; I was not of them. Laertes looked on me and marvelled, as Typhon might have done at the monster offspring which called him sire. Anticlea 'was not.' Pale shade of mother-love, thou at least in thy solemn Hades hadst acknowledged thy Ulysses! Telemachus, dull follower of a past age's lore, with nought of fiery youth save its presumption, sought to guide into safe proprieties the errant sceptre held by his father's daring hand. Good

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he was tender too; but the aged eagle despises the filial cares of the hooded crow. Ulysses was alone still."

"Yet Penelope?" I began inquiringly.

"Penelope sat by the hearth and span."

In that one sentence, where the only reproach was indifference, I read the sole atoning plea for the husband who once more quitted, and for ever, a wife faithful for twenty years. I saw before me the fair dull embodiment of virtuous inanities, fulfilling the lifeless round of conjugal and maternal duty, scared with horror at the bold soul that, over-leaping the world's boundary of assumed right and wrong, would fain dive for itself into the mysteries of the divine and the true. I knew how it was that not even the coldly-faithful Penelope could keep her lord within the bounds of Ithaca.

"But," I cried, "tell me how the end came; and how it was that thou and thy crew set sail for the Happy Isles?"

Ulysses paused, and a rapt expression, which might be either memory or prophecy, arose in his eyes, which were fixed on the distant cloud-hung main.

"I see my palace, as on that day of brutal feasting, when, moved to scorn and wrath, I stood in the midst, and called them beasts. They proved the justice of the name. They rose up against the hand that fed them: they would have torn asunder the only true man in Ithaca. Cowards! I hear their howling now. I see the white face of my son Telemachus, pleading caution, expediency, while on the other hand arise Penelope's weak railings against her rude, iron-hearted lord, whom she deemed the cause of all. But I stood up, among fools and beasts, **A MAN** the man who had conquered gods and monsters, earth and hell—Ulysses."

"And Ulysses was victor once more," I cried eagerly.

"Go, ask the Ithacans, if Ithaca yet exist, concerning the aged monarch, whose age was more glorious than their puling youth. With me, to fight was to conquer. I crushed them like dust under my sceptre, and then I cast it among them I would be no more their king."

"What followed?"

"I gathered from far and wide those tried companions of my ancient glory who yet breathed the upper air; neither them nor me did the dull world understand. Gladly they arose at their chieftain's summons gladly they prepared to follow Ulysses to the West. Once more the old ship rocked in the bay, and on every aged cheek the sea-wind blew, alluring with delicious hope across the unknown wave. Thus Ulysses departed."

"But it was in peace?"

"Ay, in peace! From the tomb of Laertes to the strand did the crawling slaves track these footsteps, even with acclamations. The new-crowned head of Telemachus was bent for my blessing, and Penelope herself followed me to the shore. Her countenance expressed demure regret, but her eyes were bright, and not with tears. I saw that ere the prow had turned from the land, she likewise had turned away, hurrying joyfully to where the released people cried, 'Long live the King Telemachus!' He was a meet king for them."

"Even so, O great Ulysses! And thou "

"I looked on Ithaca no more; but stretched my sail towards the boundless expanse of waters, when I might attain my full desire. So the shore faded from us for ever, and we sailed on and on, night and day, towards the sunset, until we reached the Happy Isles."

## AVILLION; OR, THE HAPPY ISLES.

As Ulysses ceased, the sublime calm of his countenance deepened more and more. There was scarcely need for the question that burst from my lips

"And they are, indeed, the **Happy Isles**? Thou art perfectly blessed?"

"Seest thou not I am," replied the king. "Here all desires are fulfilled we have wisdom, peace, virtue, glory, together with every delight of sense exalted into purity. We have no longings unattained we live a life like that of childhood, one delicious present."

"But the future?" I said, as a doubt crossed my mind a doubt that was not reflected in the countenance of Ulysses.

"I understand not thy words," he said.

"Dost thou desire nought expect nought? Is there not even here a something beyond an Infinite, whereunto the soul may lift itself a perpetual Future?"

"What is the Future?" said the king's calm voice.

Then I knew that I was in an Elysium where there was no to-morrow. My spirit, born in later time, possessed a power greater than that of the greatest in the elder world their heaven was sensuous delight and rest; mine ?

I knew not, as yet, what it was, or in what sphere of being. I only knew that I was different from those among whom I moved. As Ulysses left me, passing with slow, majestic footsteps across the shining sands, I felt that there was something wanting even in this Paradise. The sea appeared no longer a loving guard, but a crystal barrier, awful even in its beauty. And when the moon rose looming out of the waters like a thing of life, coming from whither? there rushed back upon me the eternal secret, the thirst for the mysterious Beyond.

I lay beneath the shadow of the rock, immersed in thoughts too deep to belong to the Happy Isles, but appertaining to another state of existence. Whether that existence had been, or was to be, I knew not. The moon climbed higher in the heavens, spanning the far sea with a glimmering bridge of light: it drew nearer and nearer, until it reached my very feet a silver pathway leading was it to Infinity or Nothingness?

Should I arise and follow? The impulse dawned, strengthened, grew into a madness. The Island of the Blest, the peaceful vale all faded from me. I yearned for something to hope for something yet to come. I looked at that unsubstantial, dazzling line, and then at my own material frame, which, though spiritualized and made beautiful, bore yet a human likeness. Dare I walk the waves with mortal feet?

I dare! for each earthly particle is interpenetrated with my immortal soul. Faith, and Will, and Infinite Desire, can accomplish all things.

I turned one look on the beautiful land, sleeping beneath the curtain of night then I set my foot on the living line of radiance.

That immortal pathway sustained my immortal feet! On it I walked over the fathomless abyss, on, on whither?

## CHAPTER VI.

**OUT** into the dim obscure, guided and sustained only by that slender moonlight line, I passed without fear. As I went, olden thoughts entered my mind; and this strange journey seemed a shadowing of something on earth some wild ocean of fate, to be crossed by one pale ray.

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Gradually the moon set, and the path was gone!

I felt it vanish from beneath my feet with the darkness came imminent death! I cried out aloud, and the cry brought to me the knowledge that I had passed into another sphere of being for, lo! in my despair I called upon God the Christian's God!

At once, in a moment, the abyss of darkness was ablaze with light, showing me that I had almost reached the land. Looking up, I saw on the near shore a palace whose splendour lightened the whole isle, and glimmered even on the waves. But amidst these waves I was struggling still. I saw afar off life, safety, bliss, and yet Death was ready to engulf me.

There rose to my lips words faintly remembered as being known of old, solemn and holy

**"What shall I do to be saved!"**

But still around me the greedy waves hissed and roared. Then the cry at my heart changed to one humble, helpless, yet not hopeless

"Lord, what wilt Thou do, that I may be saved?"

Instantly I saw a light boat crossing the seething waters. In it stood a youth, pale, beautiful; serene and holy of mien as he who abode at Patmos the beloved apostle John. Again I cried, and the answer was

"Brother, peace! Help is near."

Then, his blessed hands lifted me out of that yawning grave, and I sank before him saved!

He made on my forehead the sign of the cross, saying

"Welcome, brother! This is the island of Avillion, where dwell many good Christian knights, with those knights of Faërie who serve God, and believe in His word. I, too, abide among them, because my life on earth was spent in faith and purity, and in the quest of the Sangreal."

"Who then art thou, my preserver?"

The youth put aside his shining helmet, looking upward a holy yet humble joy.

"I am Galahad, the only one of King Arthur's knights to whom God gave strength and patience to find the holy Greal."

As he spoke, the boat touched the strand. He signed me with the cross once more, leaped on the shore, and disappeared.

"Oh, leave me not!" I cried. "Good knight and true, I need thy guidance even here! How shall I tread alone the unknown isle; how enter the shining palace?"

And I looked tremblingly at the castle where dwelt King Arthur and Morgue la Faye; I knew it was so; for now all my prescience came back upon me, even as in the Island of Ulysses. But while I gazed, not daring to approach the presence of so great a hero, that which I had deemed a king's palace became a temple of the King of Kings. From the cathedral windows gleamed the altar lights, which I knew were burning round the Sangreal; and through the wide-opened doors came the holy matin-hymn, lifted ere yet the sky was purple with dawn. "*Dilexi quoniam*"

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began the psalm; and as it proceeded, verse after verse pealed on my heart and memory.

*"The sorrows of death compassed me, the pains of hell gat hold upon me..... Then called I upon the name of the Lord....."*

*"Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling."*

*"I will walk before the Lord in the light of the living."*

I entered the open temple-gate, and paid my vows at the threshold of the King of Heaven.

From thence I passed amid the train of worshippers men and women, Christian knights, and ladies pure and fair to the presence of Arthur and Morgue la Faye. They sat together on a throne, alike, and yet unlike; for she was the most beautiful dame in the whole land of Faërie, while on the face of her mortal brother lingered still the traces of his long warfare on earth. Yet he was a noble king to behold; and as he sat leaning upon Excalibur, his fair hair falling on either side his broad forehead, and his limbs showing grand and giantlike through his garments' folds, I felt rising within me the same ardour which had impelled so many brave knights to fight, bleed, or die, for Arthur of Britain.

Around the presence-chamber were grouped the most noted of the dwellers in Avillion. I beheld and knew them all. Side by side stood the two bold adventurers from the land of the Cymiri, who sailed westward in search of the Gwerdonnan Lian the Green Isles of the Ocean and returned no more; Prince Madoc, and Merlin, the mightiest sage of those early days. Afar from these, half hid in a delicious twilight shadow, Sir Launfal, the pure and faithful knight, lay resting at the feet of the beloved Tryamour. Near the throne leaned Ogier le Danois, the valiant and pious, who at his birth was chosen by Morgue la Faye to be her *loyal amoureux*. He ever kept at her side, looking up into her calm, queen-like eyes, and ready to obey her lightest behest, as true knight should for the sake of his dear ladye. But apart from all, kneeling in a little oratory, I saw Sir Galahad. His face was turned eastward, and the early sunbeams fell around his head like a glory. It seemed like the smile of God's love resting first and nearest upon him who on earth had loved God only.

Concealed behind the massive pillars which sustained the hall, I beheld all these, and then felt, piercing even to my hiding-place, the eagle glance of Arthur the king.

"Come forth!" he said. "Whence art thou?"

I answered trembling; for his voice was loud and deep, as the noise of many waters; and yet it sounded familiar, for the accents, though stronger and more rugged, were those of my native speech. The long-forgotten world, with all its memories, all its ties, rushed back upon my thought.

"Great king, I come from thine own far-off island in the northern seas. There, Arthur of Britain is remembered still."

His countenance changed, and his mailed fingers tightened over Excalibur.

"Is it so? Bringest thou tidings from my king-dom? Do the men of Carlyon ask for Arthur to return once more?"

And his frame, hitherto calm as a giant image of a marble knight, was stirred with human emotion. This land, then, was not like that of Ulysses, an elysium of undesiring repose.

"I cannot answer thee, O King!" I cried, while a confused mass of earthly memories struggled dimly in my brain.

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But Morgue la Faye arose, and struck her wand on the area below the throne. Immediately the ground divided, and formed a deep crystal well.

"Look down, and tell what thou seest," said the sweet tones of the Queen of Faërie.

"I see a land where men run about like ants, each laden with a golden burthen, or struggling to gain the same; I see palaces built for and inhabited by fools, and squalid huts where great and wise men grovel in misery."

"Oh, my Britain! oh, my country!" groaned the king. "The time is not yet come; they look not for Arthur!"

But his immortal sister said tenderly, "Wait! The ages that pass by but nearer bring the Joyful day, when Arthur shall come on earth again. Child of man, look into the spring once more!"

"Aye, look!" cried the king. "Tell me of my palace, the many-towered Camelot; of Tintagel, fair home of my mother Igrayne; of the plain near the sea, where my brave army fought with Mordred; of the valley, where I lay wounded and tended by Sir Bedivere!"

"I see a castle on a cliff."

"Ah!" eagerly interposed the king of knights, "it is my ancient castle of Dovor, where Sir Gawaine's ashes lie. Do they still say the masses for his soul, and does the passing bell ring nightly over the desolate sea shore?"

"It is a shore, not desolate but thronged with human habitations. The sea is black with ships, the hum of commerce rises up to the castle-wall. Men and women, their souls and bodies alike enfeebled by luxury and thirst of gold, tread mincingly over the bones of the stalwart-limbed and noble-hearted knight."

"Alas! alas!" Arthur again began, but the Faërie lady's hand was on his lips.

My vision continued. "I behold a plain, intersected far and near with iron net-work; over it speed, thundering and bowling, breathing smoke and flame, giant-steeds stranger than those which Merlin harnessed to his chariot. He chained demons within the centre of the earth; this generation has created subject-demons from the dull dead metals that lie enwombed there."

"And these mighty dwellers in Britain have forgotten their fathers. Of Arthur and his bold knights no trace or memory remains on earth," said the King, while a shadow gloomed on his brow, like a cloud sweeping over a gray mountain-top.

"Not so," I answered. "The world's truths of mystical allegory are enduring as itself. The Round Table has crumbled into dust, and the raven hoots where stood the towers of Tintagel; but still many an old romaunt, and many a new poet's songs, keep up the name and the glory of Arthur."

The king folded his hands upon Excalibur, and leaned his forehead against the hilt. "Then I have lived," he said, and peace again stole over his majestic countenance.

Turning from the scene around me, I again sought the depths of the magic well. My vision obeyed now, not the command of Arthur, but the impulse of my own being. I saw no land, but a black heaving sea, upon which rode a single ship. Within its darkest cabin I beheld a woman sitting alone. She rocked herself to and fro in her desolation; she lifted helplessly her pale, sorrowful face.

Then I leaped up with a great cry, and from my now conscious heart burst forth the name of **Lilias**.

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But immediately Morgue la Faye bound round my temples a slender circlet of gold. As it touched my brow all memory vanished, and I fell down in a swoon.

### CHAPTER VII.

**WHEN** I awoke, or seemed to awake, the presence—chamber, and all the beautiful and noble forms with which it was thronged, had disappeared. I lay in a dim cavern that was hollowed out of a basaltic rock. Huge pillars sustained the roof; glistening stalactites peopled the place with fantastic images of natural objects, animals, and even the human form. These icy phantasms of life grinned from dim hiding—places, making the solitude horrible. It was as though a troop of spectres had suddenly been congealed into material form; each grotesque or ghastly shape still transparent as air, but fixed in an awful immobility.

As I beheld, it seemed that the most fearful vision that ever startled human eye, would be less terrible than these embodied phantoms. I strove to break the spell. I called aloud, but the echoes of my own voice rang through the cavern like the shrieks of innumerable spirits. Then I felt the thin golden thread on my brow, and remembered all that had chanced since I clung to the saving hand of Sir Galahad, within sight of the island—shore. And while I pondered, it seemed as though my nature had become like that of the other dwellers in Avillion, and I had entered on a new sphere of being. In this sphere, my memory, alive to the past of others, was utterly dead to my own. From the golden thread a balmy influence passed into my brain, stilling all those pangs which in the human world so often teach us that to suffer needs but **to remember**.

My life seemed only to have begun from the moment when my feet touched the shore of Avillion. But from that time it was a full, real life, acute to enjoy, and as acute to endure. Kneeling on the floor of the cavern, the terror that convulsed me plainly showed that I was human still. And like the cry which weak humanity sends up to heaven, was that which, bursting from my shrinking soul, became a prayer to God.

"O Thou, who tookest me out of the deep waters, save me from this hell!"

I lifted up mine eyes, and saw standing beside one of the gigantic pillars, a form of flesh and blood. I knew it well the dark, sombre face, in whose upper lineaments was stamped the impress of intellect and beauty, equally divine, while the lower features denoted stormy human passions ambition, sensuality, and obstinate will a mixture of the angel and the beast. It was Merlin the demon—born.

Still, to behold living and breathing man was bliss unutterable in this horrible place. I leaped forward and clasped the knees of the enchanter. He looked down upon me with contemptuous triumph.

"Weak child of the after ages, how thou quailst with fear at these poor shadows! With all the boasted glories of thy modern time, the magician of the elder world is greater than thou."

At this scornful speech, I arose, trembling still, but striving to answer him boldly. "Merlin, why comest thou to mock me, after affrighting me with thy horrible phantasms? What sent thee thither?"

"The merciful tenderness of Morgue la Faye, and mine own will. I desired to see if one of the vaunted later world was bolder than the greatest magician of ancient time. I am content: now let there be peace between us." He reached his hand; but I paused, irresolute. "Thou fearest to clasp the hand of Merlin, the demon—born!"

He had spoken aloud the words in my heart. I dared not deny them.

"Fool! I **am** the son of a demon of a spirit great, strong and good, because he **was** strong. What is virtue, but that power which is the mightiest? Therefore my demon sire was as worthy of worship as any of your angels."

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I shrank aghast, and instinctively made the sign which was used as a symbol in those olden times to whose simplicity I had apparently returned the sign of the holy cross. The magician made it likewise.

"Fear not," he said: "I, too, worship God. I, with men and spirits, must needs revere the one Omnipotent Spirit, the origin of all."

As he spoke I regarded him with less of dread; for upon his dark face had dawned something which made it like unto an angel's. Such a light might have irradiated the brow of the great Hierarch of heaven, before he rebelled and fell.

"Merlin, I fear thee not, nor hate thee: God made us all men, angels, and demons (or, as thou callest them, spirits). We are alike His children, or may become such, one day. Give me thy hand, and guide me from this dreary cave once more into the fair valley of Avillion, if indeed I am still near there."

"This is Avillion. Thou art in the island of the blest," said the magician.

I marvelled greatly. "How can it be so, when I suffer trial, and terror, and pain? Dost thou call this happiness?"

Then Merlin answered, taking up his parable, like the prophets of olden time:

"Can the day exist without the night, or the sunshine without the shade? Does not good itself need the opposition of evil? Far higher than a dull life of perpetual selfish bliss, is that state of being which consists of temptation and triumph, struggle and victory, endurance and repose. Thus, in our life here, is intermixed just so much of evil and of suffering as will purify and lift us one stage nearer to divine perfection."

"Then all suffer, and are tempted, and must be?"

"Thou scarce knowest which thy words imply," replied Merlin; and now his speech was soft, almost heavenly, so that I loved to listen to him. "Here, as on earth, temptation comes from man, suffering from God. One is a torturing flame, the other a refining fire. In Avillion, some have to struggle against the evil within themselves: some are ordained to suffer for, with, or from their brethren."

"Which, Merlin, is thy destiny?"

"It comes upon me now!" cried the enchanter, while the heavenly influence passed from his face, and it kindled with lurid fire. He gnashed his teeth, and his glaring eyes were fixed upon a dim alcove, where stood among the stalactite images one that was likeliest to humanity.

Horror! while we beheld for my gaze was rivetted too there was a change in the icy phantom. The indistinct thing took form like a statue; the statue seemed transforming into flesh; roundness and colour came into the transparent limbs; the rigid hair stirred with life. Momently the icy shape was becoming a beautiful woman.

Merlin looked, and his face was like one struggling with the death-agony.

"Vivienne! for whom I burned in such mad passion, art thou following me still? Look!" and he clutched my hand. "Dost thou not see her, with her bare, white-gleaming limbs; her floating, perfumed tresses, in every golden thread of which she netted my soul? Dost thou not feel her young breath, that once came upon my already wrinkled brow like the breath of spring? Vivienne my love, my beautiful: it is she it is she!"

He drew a long gasping sigh, and stretched out his arms with a gesture of uncontrollable passion. But still his feet were steadfast: he approached no nearer to the alluring phantasm, which appeared continually changing from

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crystal to flesh, and then back again into crystal. Merlin's gleaming eyes drank in athirst every varying line of the lovely form.

"See!" he cried, "her brow unbends, she will smile soon; she who was so harsh, so cold! Her ripe lips part sunnily; she leans forward, her lithe form drooping like an aspen. Vivienne Vivienne, come!"

But that instant, the cry of delirious joy became a shriek of horror. He pressed his hands upon his eyes.

"Temptress! fiend! nay, I mingle all foul names in one, and call thee **woman**. Begone!"

He clung to the basalt pillar against which he had leaned. His face was hidden, but I saw that in the stalwart arm every muscle and nerve was quivering.

"Still there? Is not the struggle ended yet? Be thyself, Merlin! Remember the time on earth: thy mad passion that counted a life's wisdom as nothing to one heartless woman's love. Think of the long wanderings after her fair, cursed footsteps cheated, befooled, mocked think of her treachery at last. Ah, Vivienne, smilest thou still? So didst thou, luring me to enter the magic cave so rung thy light laugh: I heard it as the spell closed rock shut down upon me, writhing in a darkness that might have been eternal. Murderess, I defy thee! Thy tortured slave is thy victor now!"

He sprang away, and disappeared in the gloom. Immediately the woman's form became congealed once more into its semi-transparent substance. There was a sound like the roar of many floods, and the whole scene melted away.

I found myself on the margin of a lake, surrounded with mountains. Silvery mists hung over the water, and trembled on the hill sides: all things looked pale, shadowy, and pure. At first, I seemed to be in a deep solitude; but presently I became aware of a boat gliding over the lake. There, reclining on a golden bed, even as that wherein he traversed the sea to the city of Sarras, I saw the form of him who alone was pure enough to behold the Sangreal the virgin-knight, Sir Galahad.

## CHAPTER VIII.

AS Sir Galahad neared the shore I saluted him with a reverent and joyful heart. In him seemed perpetually to abide the spirit of holiness, and that love of God which is the fountain from whence diverse wide streams of universal love. He was at once Galahad the Christian champion, before whose righteous arm fell alike the world's temptations and its opposing powers Galahad, the pious knight who saw appear the goblet which held the Holy Grail, in the mystic covering of white samite Galahad the youth, at once loving and pure; devoted to heaven, yet not free from human ties witness his friends, Sir Bors and Sir Percival, and the holy self-devoted maid, Sir Percival's sister Galahad, the tender son, who dying "kissed Sir Bors and Sir Percival, saying, 'Salute my father, Sir Launcelot, and bid him remember this unstable world,'" and then was borne upward by angels.

All these things, as I had read of them in old romaunt and history, returned vividly to my memory. I said unto him

"O Galahad, knight beloved of God and man, is this indeed the form whose breath parted while yet in prayer before the holy table, in the sacred city of Sarras? Did the angel-hands then bear thee, not at once to heaven, but to this happy Island of Avillion?"

He smiled serenely, and answered

"Yea! It was God's will that I should still serve him in the flesh, and so I dwell in Avillion, among those who have

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journeyed thither, like Arthur, without seeing death."

"And is thine, like theirs, an existence whose bliss consists in trial conquered?" I asked, remembering, Merlin and the horrible cave.

A faint shade of sadness overspread the beautiful face:

"Not for myself I suffer, but for my brethren. I minister here as angels do on earth. They weep over human sin and sorrow; but their tears are holy, and soon dried they know that the All-wise and All-merciful cannot but make all clear at last."

"But, save thee, the dwellers in Avillion have each this mournful doom of trial?"

"Call it not **doom**," he answered gently, "since it is God's will, and therefore must be good. Now, of all whom thou hast seen here, whose inner struggle wouldst thou behold? Desire, and the desire will be fulfilled it is ever so in the Happy Isle of Avillion.

"I would see Arthur," I said.

The young knight lifted me by the hands, and instantly, with the speed of a winged thought, we stood unseen by the couch of the son of Uther Pendragon.

The King, seemed to strive with troubled dreams. His huge limbs tossed restlessly, and his sleeping fingers ever sought blindly the renowned Excalibur, which lay beside him at once his sceptre and his sword. He called oftentimes upon his good knights of the Round Table Tristram, and Launcelot; also, Gawaine, his near kinsman, so well beloved, and by Sir Launcelot's fatal hand slain. Then, suddenly awaking, he lifted up his voice and cried

"O valiant companions of old! O dear land of Britain! when will Arthur revisit ye once more? Why must this yearning never be allayed? even in the happy vale of Avillion it brings perpetual pangs!"

And he smote upon his manly breast, that was long since healed of the "grievous wound," but rent with an inward struggle, harder perhaps to bear.

Galahad came and stood beside him. I wist not whether Arthur beheld the vision; but his countenance softened into peace even as that of a sleeper when an unseen angel passes by. He took Excalibur once more, but used it neither as a sceptre nor a sword. Lifting up the hilt, which was made in the form of a cross, he kissed it with devotion.

"O Thou, for whose blood in the Sangreal my good knights spent so many years in a patient quest, give me patience too, that I may wait until Arthur be worthy of his kingdom, and his kingdom of him! Quell this impure earthly ambition, both in memory and in desire let me grow meek, and pray, until the time comes when the son of Uther shall reign again in Britain."

He kissed once more the battle-cross formed by the elfin sword, and then lay down and slept like a little child.

As Galahad passed out, the whole chamber was lightened by the holy gladness of his smile. Truly it might be seen that he had been among the angels; that in the eyes which had beheld the shining of the Sangreal dwelt the reflection of its brightness evermore.

I followed after, traversing with him the blessed isle. For it was blessed, even though it was not a region of unmixed joy, or perfect repose. Each human soul was pressing onward, and on each brow was the divine light of

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Hope. They drew strength even from the trials endured as he who pushes forward in a race feels his cheek fanned by the fresh breeze into health and beauty, while the listless lingerer on perfumed banks droops wearily, howsoever the sun may shine.

"But," I said to Sir Galahad, "when the trial is over rest comes? I would fain see this rest."

He took nte to a bower where reclined two lovers in the cool of day

"Enter, brother!" said Galahad, "my ministry is needless here."

So I passed, alone and still invisible, to the presence of Sir Launfal and Tryamour.

As grief grows keener from the memory of joy, go happiness is deepened by the remembrance of vanished sorrow. I felt this when I beheld Launfal and his beloved. He talked with her of the troublous time on earth; but he spoke even of suffering with a smile.

"Dost remember, love, the Forest of Carlyon: how I lay in poverty, despondency, and pain when the three Faërie maids came riding by, and brought me unto a region of peace and beauty, even to thee? O dear eyes, that looked upon me in my darkness and my misery, and loved me amidst all!"

And, as he lay at her feet, he drew down to his own the lovely head, and kissed the drooping eyes radiant as those of a princess of Faërie; but tender as those of a loving woman.

Then again spoke Launfal:

"How hard it was, after that season of bliss, to mix once more with the vileness of earth how bitter, save for those hours when a wish brought me the dear presence of my Faërie love. Then, when for that pure smile I had to endure the false queen Guinever's more cursed in her love than in her hate "

"O my faithful one! yet thou didst remember me!" And as Tryamour bent over him, her long locks, dropping immortal balm, fell in golden waves on the bosom of her knight and love.

"I remembered thee? Could I forget my life, my other soul? Yet in the dungeon and at the stake did I endure, nor implored thee to come and save me: I never asked of thee aught not even love yet thou gavest me all!"

She smiled upon him with her heavenly eyes, and bade him remember earth's sorrows no more.

"Nay, it is sweet to remember," answered Launfal. "Here, in this dear bower, let me think of the lonely dungeon where I lay in perpetual darkness, knowing that the first entering gleam of daylight would be a signal to guide me unto death. Let me call back the moment when dazzled, blinded, I staggered forth at last. By degrees, all grew clear: I heard the leafy rustling of the great pile formed of yet green trees ah! cruel lengthening of torture, planned by that revengeful woman-fiend! I saw her sitting on the pollated throne, beside her deluded spouse, my dear lord King Arthur! He loved me once even now he blanched at the sight of me, and turned away his troubled face; perchance, he could not yet believe that I had so wronged his honour. Then came the chains, the lighted torch, the approaching flame "

"Speak no more!" shuddering said the Faërie lady with the woman's heart.

"Yet a little; but only of thee of thee, Tryamour! as the steps of thy fair palfrey sounded musically along the palace terrace, and thou stoodest forth with thy immortal beauty to proclaim the honour of thy true knight. Oh! the rapture, when I felt the cool breeze wrapping my freed limbs as with a garment, and the swift steed bore me on,

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ever following thee, past the gleam of the now harmless pyre, past the shoutings of the multitude, far, far over forest, mountain, and sea, into the happy vale of Avillion."

He looked up; first heavenwards, and then into that earthly heaven, the eyes of her he loved. As I beheld him, it seemed that his face, sublimed by past suffering, was more beautiful even than hers, which bore the cloudless aspect of perpetual bliss. I saw how it was that, in some things, **a man** is greater than an angel.

As these two sat together, leaning cheek to cheek in the silence of perfect love, the birds in the linden-trees over-head broke forth into singing; and lo! amidst the marvels of the Happy Isle, I distinguished one more that their very song was speech. Thus it ran:

"But for the rain, the green earth would wither; without the evening gloom, man could not behold the stars. So, storm bringeth freshness; night, dawn, trial, peace; and death, immortality!"

I fell on my face, praying nay, almost weeping, as one sometimes does in a heart-poured prayer such as was mine. When it ended, I arose; but the marriage-bower, and those happy ones who abode therein, I saw no more.

## CHAPTER VIII.

**I STOOD** once more beside the lake amidst the hills. It was still veiled in that perpetual mist; and the solitary marge was dimly illumined by a light like that of a gray June midnight, when the pale half-moon has just set. There was no sound, not even of a stirring leaf; for the hills sloped down to the water-side, bare and treeless; lake, mountain, and sky sky, lake, and mountain reflected each other in ghost-like silence and repose.

At length, through the mist, I heard a sound of many footsteps. They came nearer; and I distinguished the form of Merlin, leading a mounted band of the dwellers in Avillion. Suddenly he paused, and the loud trumpet-tone of his voice rang over the still shore:

"Who will go with me across the Lake of Shadows?"

There stepped forward the giant figure of King Arthur Morgue la Faye following. Behind them Sir Galahad stood, meek, yet fearless; and these three alone answered Merlin's summons. But the King paused, and said,

"How shall we cross the awful lake? Galahad, thou only among us who has known death, aid us now."

The young knight advanced to the margin, and stretched his arms out over the water that lay before him, solemn, soundless, unrippled by a single wave. Then I saw glide towards him the boat in which he had formerly reclined, with its purple sails shadowing the golden bed. It came on, impelled invisibly; for there was no man therein.

"Enter!" said Galahad, in his angel-voice; and immediately the vessel rocked beneath the great bulk of the two mightiest of Britain's ancient sons, Arthur and Merlin. "Enter thou, too, my brother," said they to me.

So I entered tremblingly, yet eagerly, after Morgue la Faye. Then Merlin uttered a spell, and the boat darted forward from the strand without either wind or tide.

Far out into the lake we sailed. The silvery vapours shut out from my vision alike shore and sky. I cast my eyes downwards; and lo! it seemed that, like a bird of the air sweeping over a city of earth, the boat glided over a new world lying beneath the waters. In its mysterious depths, I saw palaces, towers, tombs, outlined dimly through a gigantic shroud of mist, like that which hung above the surface. At times, stirring amidst this shroud, I distinguished denser vapours, which scarce bore airy form, but resembled the *cirri* that float in a summer evening

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sky.

Merlin arose. As the masses of his black robe fell heavily around him, he might have been likened to a thunder-cloud lifting itself slowly from the horizon. He wore no magic symbols; he held no books of power. In the strength of his soul alone lay the necromancer's might.

"Ye who desired to visit the Lake of Shadows say, who among you seeks to call up the ghastly habitants of the City of the Dead?"

King Arthur spoke first:

"I yearn for tidings of my kingdom on the earth. Therefore I would fain summon those who lie buried in Britain, and whose spirits may still hover round the spot where their bones repose. Which among them, deemest thou, is most able to answer my summons?"

"Love only has power over death," replied the enchanter. "Call one of those who were dearest to thee on earth."

"They were few indeed!" And a grim, almost scornful smile swept over Arthur's face. "Ambition was all to me. I loved my royal kingdom more than any of its subject dwellers save, perhaps, Guinever and Gawaine."

"Choose between them!" said Merlin's stern voice.

The monarch paused, irresolute.

"Gawaine, thou wert a valiant knight; indeed I loved thee, my sister's son! But Guinever sat with me on that dear-prized throne. I summon her, not as the wife of Arthur, but the Queen of Britain."

Morgue la Faye's hand dropped from her brother's, and Merlin's dark brow was knitted in wrath. Nevertheless he leaned over the vessel's side, dipped his fingers in the lake, and uttered the spell:

"Soul of Guinever Queen of Britain, arise!"

Slowly lifting itself out of the deep appeared one of the cloud-like vapours. Gradually it became a human form, wearing a nun's garb. Then I remembered the story of the death of her whose spirit parted ere Sir Launcelot came to Almesbury, over whom "*he wept not greatly, but sighed.*" Perchance that one long tear-less sigh followed the frail Guinever's fleeting soul even to its resting-place; for in the wail that arose from the waters, I heard evermore the words

"Launcelot! Launcelot!"

"Peace, complaining spirit! False queen, false wife, false woman, answer thy lord!" cried the enchanter.

Arthur spoke stern, cold, passionless. He thought neither of pity, anger, nor revenge only of his Britain. But to all his questions came from the suffering soul no word, save the cry of "Mercy, mercy! I repent! Let me rest!" And ever and anon, in mournful plainings, was repeated the wail, "Launcelot! Launcelot!"

The king sat down wrathful and silent; and the phantom faded into a wreath of mist that seemed continually to hover round the vessel.

Then Sir Galahad arose, and stood before Arthur and Merlin, meek reproach, mingled with sorrow, clouding his eyes.

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"Oh, men!" he said: "sinful yourselves, yet so harsh to judge the sinning is there no pity in God's dear heaven for such as these? The convent-cell at Almesbury yet bears record of the tears, the sackcloth, the bloody scourge sad portion of her who was once a queen! The aisles of Glastonbury yet ring with those funeral orisons wrung from the penitent despair of the knighted monk!"

And turning from where Arthur and Merlin sat together both shrinking into silence before his words Galahad dipped his hands in the lake, writing in the stirless waters the sign of the holy cross.

"Oh, dear father, my lord Sir Launcelot, whose sins may God pardon! no voice but mine shall summon thee here. Let me look on thy face once more!"

There was a pause; and then rising from the misty depth, I saw the mailed image of a knight. It was Guinever's lover faithful in sin, but yet most faithful the bravest of the champions of the Round Table Sir Launcelot du Lac. Beneath the shadowy helmet were the features still, and ashen gray as they might have appeared to his brother monks who gazed down weepingly into the deep grave at Joyous Garde.

He spoke not, and none spoke with him. Only his son Galahad, with clasped hands, knelt and prayed.

Even while the spirit lingered, there came and hovered over his helm a cloud-like shadow; and through the silence was heard that continual wail "Launcelot, Launcelot!" But it won no answer, either in word or look, from the pale spectre of Guinever's knight.

The phantoms both grew dimmer; and then I was aware of another sight coming near the vessel. It seemed an open boat; and therein, resting on a bed, was a woman dressed in fair array; and "*she lay as though she had smiled.*" By this, and by the writing in her hand, I knew the vision was she who had died for love of Sir Launcelot Elaine, the fair maid of Astolat. I looked on the beautiful dead image, and thought of the time when the waters of Thames had floated up to the feet of Sir Launcelot this poor broken lily, that asked no guerdon for love faithful even unto death, but burial from his hand. And when I remembered this, my heart melted with pity, and I wept.

"Dost thou weep for me?" said a voice, sweet in its sadness, like a vesper-bell heard over the sea at night. I felt it came from the pale lips that looked "*as if they smiled.*" Weepest thou for me, because I died? Nay: for love's bliss was greater than death's pain."

"How so when the love proved vain?" I asked.

She did not answer my words; but went on murmuring softly, as one does in musing aloud:

"Dear my lord Sir Launcelot! was it sin or shame that I should love thee, who came and stood before me like an angel in a dream? I never thought tenderly of living man, save thee. Thou wert the sun that unfolded my life's flower: when the sun set, it faded, and I died."

The voice was thrilled with a meek sorrow that roused my pity into wrath.

"Surely it was evil in the sun to scorch the poor flower," I cried, remembering how the concealed knight took and wore in the fray the token of Elaine la Blanche; and how, when she swooned at his wound, he, saying no word of any former love, prayed her brother, Sir Lavaine, to bring her to him, and took her in his arms and kissed her. Then I thought of all the days of fondest tendance which to the knight brought renewed life, to the fair maid death. And lastly, of the cruel scorn which, knowing her pure love, instead of requital offered pitiful gold. And my swelling heart told me that Sir Launcelot had done a grievous wrong.

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But again the voice seemed to answer my thoughts, though it spoke not to me, but dreamily and vague:

"Was it, then, so sorrowful to die for thee, my Launcelot? or did my death lay aught to thy charge? Nay: it was no sin of thine. I worshipped thee, as one should only worship Heaven; Heaven punished me then pityingly took me home: I am content!"

Again my tears fell to hear that low, tender voice; and I marvelled in my heart whether on earth it had been ever thus uncomplaining. The spirit answered once more:

"What was I, that I should murmur against thee, O my lord Sir Launcelot? Only once—when I lay in my tears, and darkness, and despair I heard the blithe sound of thy trumpets, and saw thee going forth again into the fair world; while I forgotten, forsaken was to thee less than the grass under thy footsteps. Oh, forgive me, my lord and love, for that one cry of reproach against thee! I **would** have been aye, ten thousand times that trodden grass, if for a moment it gave freshness to thy feet!"

I looked on the calm features, where no movement of the lips gave token of the voice which spake. But the deep peace of the smile that sat on the dead face was an echo of the words which the spirit uttered. And when I thought of the pure soul which had departed in the tower of Astolat praying and confessing meekly unto God, and remembering with tender and forgiving love Sir Launcelot I said in my heart that unto such, against whom earth's hopes are closed, does the kingdom of heaven open.

While I watched this vision, Arthur, Merlin, and Sir Galahad sat at the vessel's prow, each absorbed in thought; little to them was maiden's love or maiden's woe. But Morgue la Faye came near with her woman's soul shining tearfully in her majestic eyes, and cried

"Tell me thou pure and meek spirit, whom I have summoned from thy rest does the remembered love of earth wound thee even in Paradise?"

Elaine la Blanche answered:

"I love still, but I suffer no more: God looked on me in mercy, and drew wholly unto Himself that love which in life was divided. I am happy—yet I forget thee not: I never could forget thee, my lord Sir Launcelot!"

While the voice yet spoke, there stood beside the bed another spirit also in woman's form. Before its glory the mists dispersed, and light broke forth upon the waters. Soon another voice was heard, sweet as that which had murmured its patient sorrow; but clear and joyous as the angels' harping before the throne.

"Galahad, dear brother of my soul, say unto my brother in the flesh, Sir Percival and to that true knight Sir Bors that far exceeding the holy city of Sarras, to which we four journeyed together, is the Eternal city, New Jerusalem. Say, I rejoice that I died, a willing sacrifice, for the glory of God."

Galahad lifted his brow, radiant with exceeding joy.

"Maiden through life pure and heaven—devoted, as was the virgin—mother of Nazareth say, where does thy soul abide?"

"In Paradise; ministering there as many of God's servants do on earth, and as thou dost in Avillion. Therefore my spirit, inter—penetrated and made strong by its love of God which in life was entire and undivided is commanded to succour this soul, once tortured by earthly love. Sister, come!"

Over the bier she bent, lifting by the hand the pale form, even like Him who lifted the dead, and said, "Arise."

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Elaine arose. To the opening eyes came a brightness, less of earth than heaven; to the lips came a voice no mournful complainings, but melodious hallelujahs. And so, linked hand-in-hand, the sister-souls passed from sight, not sinking like the rest into the dim city of the dead, but soaring upwards unto the mount of God.

### CHAPTER IX.

AS one who falls, flooded and dazzled by a sunshine cloud or as Paul fell, blinded by the heavenly vision near Damascus so sank I. Human eye and ear could not endure the glorious radiance, the angelic melody. Beneath them, my brain and sense seemed numbed or rather exhaled into delicious death.

From this trance I awoke, feeling on my brow the light touch of a woman's hand. It brought strange, undefined remembrances. Wistfully I looked up.

I lay in the midst of the great hall, once filled with many knights and ladies. It now held only the fair presence of Queen Morgue la Faye. But she stood beside me less as a queen than a woman. Her gorgeous robes were thrown aside, and in her white garments she seemed a simple earthly maid, even resembling I strove to remember what or who she resembled; but my thoughts fled away, like winged birds, ever fluttering on before, yet impossible to seize. Amidst them I heard continually the murmuring of the little fount which had sprung up at Morgue la Faye's bidding from the cloven marble floor. It seemed singing to me an olden song of some long-past existence; and yet, when I drew nearer, its waters were as smooth and as opaque as the marble which encircled them. But still, rising from their depths, came that mystic murmur, as it were a voice from the inner earth.

I leaned eagerly over the well, and my greedy ear drank in its musical whispers. Morgue la Faye said to me

"Child of man, what dost thou hear?"

"I hear a sound, like the evening wind in the full-leaved linden-trees that grew where was it they grew? Or like that Eolian harp we put between the ivied window, and listened **who** listened, and **when**? Alas! alas! the thoughts slip from me; I cannot grasp them!"

"Bend down thy head again over the water."

"I feel I feel a perfume; it comes from a violet-bank, the bank where but no, all is gone. Again, it is like a rose-garden; I am walking there in sunshine and gladness; and now it changes to a sweet clematis-breath wafted through that still autumn night, with the stars shining coldly overhead, and the waning crescent glimmering through the trees. Ah me! ah me! it is fled from me! No more! no more!" And uttering these mournful words, the perpetual dirge of life, I fell down weeping beside the mysterious spring.

Morgue la Faye stood on the other brink; for the well had grown wider and broader, and even now was swelling out into an infant stream. She stood, her falling hands meek-folded, her head half bent, watching me. A gleam of womanly pity softened the steel-like brightness of her eyes.

Perceiving it, I cried imploringly,

"O Queen of Avillion, I am not of thy nature, but only mortal man! Why dost thou try me thus?"

"Because, as thou sayest, thou art not of our nature," she answered softly. "Thou canst not stay in our happy isle; but I have no power, nor yet desire, to cast thee thence. Thou must depart of thine own will."

"Depart!" I echoed sorrowfully; for now that the spell had ceased, I felt no more the vague memories and wild

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longings which it had awakened. I thought with fear of quitting the beautiful island for some unknown region, perhaps of horror and woe.

"Poor mortal!" Morgue La Faye continued. "Art thou then so loath to depart? Do the sounds and sights of former times, which I have raised up before thee, fail to win thee back to earth?"

"I know not of what thou speakest," I answered, trembling. "True, I had a vision; but it is gone now. I would fain stay in Avillion."

"It cannot be," said the firm but still gentle voice of King Arthur's sister, as she crossed the spring, its waters sinking not beneath her airy footsteps. Then she bade me kneel, and took from my head the slender thread of gold which continually encircled it.

Instantly my brain reeled beneath the thronging memories with which it teemed. All came back to me my land, my home, my Liliás each thought piercing my soul like arrows tipped with that bitterest poison, the remembrance of eternally-lost joy.

I dashed myself on the ground at the feet of Morgue la Faye:

"Cruel queen, why didst thou take from me that blessed spell of Oblivion? Why torture me with these memories of earth? O Liliás my wife! my love! my beautiful! would to Heaven that I might see thy face once more!"

Morgue la Faye lifted me from the earth, where I grovelled in mad despair, and led me to the brink of the magic well.

"Now, poor child of mortality, cast thine eyes down once more."

I did so. Oh marvel! As the clouds of oblivion had passed from my soul, so passed the dusky shadow from beneath the water, which became crystal clear. While I gazed, there grew defined from out its depths the image of a scene an earth-landscape one that I knew oh how well! Blue and dim rose the mountains those giant spectres of my childhood, which, night after night, enclosed the descending sun in their craggy, ghostly arms; beneath them lay the valley, and the broad river, and the woody slope, where stood a Home.

We had chosen it as our home, our wedded home, when the melancholy voyage ended Liliás and I should return to our own land and our own people. There it stood, near the spot where we had both dwelt from childhood a house reverend and beautiful with years. Over its brown walls climbed the ivy, mingling with the dear clematis, cherished of old; its painted gothic windows transmitted every sunbeam in rainbow-tinted glory; and from its protecting eaves the brooding swallows merrily flew their cheerful homes without being meet emblems of that most blessed one within.

A moment, and the scene changed to the interior. I saw the quaint labyrinthine chambers, whose gloom was made beautiful by the presence of youth and happiness. Pictures shone from the dark-panelled walls; in a recess, the ivory-keyed instrument smiled over the soul of music shut up within it; above the green, branch-adorned hearth, fresh-gathered flowers bent to their own fair images in the mirror.

And near them, pure and lovely as they, was my own life's flower, whom I had chosen to adorn and bless my home my wife Liliás!

She sat droopingly, her cheek resting against the crimson chair the same where mine had rested in many an hour of mental and bodily suffering. The remembrance seemed to strike her then; for suddenly she lifted her face, wherein was love so intense that it almost became agony, and cried **aye, I heard the very tone**

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"Wilfred, beloved, come!"

I would have plunged into hell itself to answer that call! Hearing it, I sprang madly into the waters, there to seek the vision and the voice.

In a moment, Avillion and its dwellers had vanished from me for ever.

### CHAPTER X.

**AWAKING**, I found myself, not in the happy home not in the dear arms of my Liliás but lying in the depth of a thick wood, which, though in all things resembling earth, was yet unknown to me.

I had gained a strange new land but different from both those I had mysteriously traversed; it was neither Elysium nor Avillion. It was a human world. I trod it with the body of a living man a man of modern time. I repeated to myself the name I bore in my father's house, Wilfred Mayer. Another name, not less familiar, I murmured, mingled with many tears; the name of my long-parted wife my dear Liliás. Every home-recollection came back to me, as to one who after a season of madness is restored to health and reason. The intervening time was dim; I could scarce tell whether it were vision or reality. But all seemed ended now. I felt a real man, dwelling on a real earth.

I touched the moss whereon I lay the same green carpet of which Liliás and I had often heaped fairy-cushions in her childish days; when I, a sickly youth, was glad to make myself a child for and with her. Thinking of this, I laid my cheek on the soft moss, kissed it, and wept.

Suddenly I heard a footstep passing by. It was a stranger human like myself. The face was such a one as in this nineteenth century may be seen sometimes nay, often in street, or mart, or social dwelling; not radiant in superhuman beauty, nor yet devoid of an inward spiritual charm; the face neither of a god nor an angel, but of **a good man**. The moment I saw it, I acknowledged this; stretched out my hand to him, and called him "brother."

"You say right," he answered, smiling. "We are all brothers here, and though I cannot say I know your face, yet there is something in it which seems familiar to me. Therefore, welcome, brother!"

"Welcome to where? for indeed I know not."

"To quiet spot on God's earth, which its inhabitants try to make as near as they can to Paradise. We call it Eden-land, or the Happy Isle."

"Another Happy Isle!" I cried, and again became bewildered. "Oh, friend! I have dreamed such wild dreams, if indeed they be dreams. Help me to clear my poor wandering brain. I desire nought but quiet, and home, and Liliás."

"Liliás? I knew the name once; it was a sorrowful name to me, but its memory is softened here. Come, stranger and brother, you shall speak no more, think no more, until you have rested and grown calm. Follow me to my home."

He took my hand and guided me through the wood. I noticed more closely his face, his bearing, even his garments. The latter were simple and manly; such as one in our century and our English clime might wear, consulting ease and grace rather than fantastic fashion. We entered his dwelling, which was characteristic as his dress entered by an unlatched door. Then he began to fulfil the gentle precept which I saw written over his hearth. "*Feed the hungry, and clothe the naked.*"

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In a brief time I stood beside him, already feeling like a denizen of this new home and new world. Then we sat down together by that hospitable hearth, and he said to me

"My brother or rather my son, for you are a youth compared with these white hairs will you now tell me by what name I shall call you?"

"Its sound will bring back mournful remembrances," said I. "It is mine, and my father's also, Wilfred Mayer."

The stranger clasped my two hands in his, and then looked at me eagerly, fondly, parting back my hair as though I had been a little child. "I could weep now," he said, "save that in this happy place are no tears shed, not even for earth's memories. I rejoice, and thank Heaven, that I look in the face of my sister's son."

"You are then "

"Ay, say the name, since it is not forgotten on earth," and he smiled with a calm pleasure; "the name I bore when we were all little children together **Cyril**."

"I learned it when I was a child too," cried I, clasping his hand once more. "Well I remember how on many a stormy winter's night my mother would stand by my little bed, pale and grave, and teach me in my simple prayers to say, 'God preserve Uncle Cyril far over the seas.'"

"Did she so? my dear Hester my true sister!" murmured the old man with a tremulous lip. "Go on, tell me more."

"He was always a mystery to me, this Uncle Cyril, whom I had never seen, and of whom no one spoke, without looking sorrowful. Once, too, when there came to us, with her babe in her arms, the mother of Liliias "

"You mistake," cried Cyril. "The mother of Liliias died at her birth. Nay, but I forget time's passing. Perhaps there was a second Liliias? Go on, Wilfred."

"I remember that day well: how I, a blithe schoolboy, was touched by her sweet, quiet face, and hearing she had come from abroad, asked her, as I did all strangers, if she brought news of Uncle Cyril; how she looked very mournful, and my mother took me away, telling me not to speak to her of Uncle Cyril more."

Cyril drooped his head lower on his hands, only saying softly, "Go on, my sister's child, go on."

"I remember also, though faintly, for I was still very young, how there used to come letters from abroad, over which my mother looked grave, nay, wept sometimes, and I knew they were from Uncle Cyril. Over the last she did not weep but smiled, took me on her knee, and told me that Uncle Cyril was coming home. Week after week passed, but he came not. My father sometimes hinted of ships that set sail for home, and vanished strangely on the wide deep, never reaching land. And day by day my mother's face grew sadder, and she started at every sound. When I asked her what had become of Uncle Cyril's ship, she would shudder and say that God alone knew no living man could tell."

I paused, but he motioned me to continue.

"Month after month went by, and a strange awe came over me. All day I pondered about the missing vessel, whose fate no man knew. Sometimes at night I dreamed about it; I saw it on fire, or becalmed until all the crew perished by slow famine or maddening thirst, or striking on a rock, and sinking in a moment, as though some great demon from the world below had sucked it in with all its living freight. Every wild sea-tale that I had read every wilder fancy that boyhood's dreamy brain could conceive were gathered up to give form and shape to

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the story. Yet still it was there a nameless horror a mystery sealed, until the great day when the sea should give up her dead."

"Amen!" said my companion, solemnly. "But tell me still of that dear home."

"There, week by week, hope grew fainter faded died. At last my mother told me, sadly, but without weeping, to leave out one name in my childish prayers for that Uncle Cyril was with God, and needed them no more. But the awe and expectation would not pass away; and many a night I started up in my little bed, dreaming that he was come."

I ceased, and a deep silence fell upon us both, as we sat by the red embers of the sinking fire for the climate had changed in this new world, and I felt no longer the glow of perpetual summer, but the pleasant chill of autumn. I thought of the region, and of my companion, with a curiosity born scarce of fear but wonder. Had Cyril indeed passed through the awful gate, and did I stand in the Land of the Dead, with one of its unearthly inhabitants? He might have read my thought; for my hand was caressed once more by his own hand of flesh and blood, as he said

"My kinsman, Wilfred Mayer, know that God's power and mysteries, even on earth, are greater than men dreamy of. Listen to the tale of one who, though he has seen strange things, and been led through strange paths, yet looks, like thee, to the same ending of the journey death's calm sleep, and the waking unto an eternal morrow."

He lifted his eyes to heaven: I drew near and listened to his words.

"There was a boy once, born with every passion in his nature so vehement, that a feather's touch might turn him either to good or evil. It is so sometimes: Gabriel and Lucifer were both archangels, and the boldest of all the apostles was he who stood consenting unto thee death of Stephen. We cannot fathom these mysteries.

"Well! the boy of whom I speak had two good angels ever at his side his twin sister Hester, and one who was of distant kindred, though she had grown up with them, eating the same bread, and drinking of the same cup. Of these two the youth loved one dearly, as a brother should; the other God alone knoweth how he loved **her!** In this love were mingled esteem, reverence, tenderness, passion. Every one of his heart's fibres clung around her, day by day. And because they had so twined slowly, imperceptibly, like household links she never felt or saw them; but when dearer bonds came, she untwined these, smilingly, unconsciously slipped from them; they fell and the boy's heart broke!

"I speak wildly: it did not break; but its softness became iron its full, rich tide was turned to gall. She lived to weep a sister's tears mark you, **only a sister's!** over an outcast and a prodigal. She never knew the truth; if she had why even then it would have been the same. She had done no wrong she never loved him.

"He became a wanderer over the wide world. The face of God, which he had mocked in the glare of cities, he learned to see revealed in the terrible loneliness of the desert in the wonders of the mighty deep. Still he wandered on God's mercy following him. Who could hide from the presence of the Eternal? In the grand mountain solitudes It came, bringing awful peace It soothed him in the deep river-flow It smiled upon him in the green, sunny savannah. So, through the wide arms of Nature the Nature which He had made God drew unto himself this erring soul; and it grew pure and calm.

"After many years, the man yearned to see the home whence the boy had fled with curses. He embarked for England his heart's desire flying swifter than the vessel; but an unseen hand prevented both. Nor ship nor crew were ever heard of more."

"Tell me, O strange relater of this marvellous tale, whither sped the fated ship or how?"

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His voice changed, and his countenance likewise. He spoke now like one, who forgetting himself, had become a teacher among his brethren.

"I said before, in this world, concerning which proud man thinks he knows all, there are many mysteries of which he knows nothing. Who has ever found a path through the region of eternal ice? Whose daring bark has sailed over the mighty Antarctic Sea?"

"It is true! It is true! But my sense is bewildered; explain the mystery further."

He went on:

"Men traverse the seas, year after year, safely; but then comes a tale of some ship which has vanished mysteriously from the face of the deep how, or by what means, none can ever tell. In the thronged ocean—path lay no floating wreck, no glimpse of a flaming vessel, gives token how she perished: men shudder, marvel, and forget, until they hear a like tale."

"It is even so!" I sighed.

"Noon, listen! **The vessels perish not:** He to whom belong land and sea, hides them in the hollow of His hand, and brings them safe to a haven in the midst of the deep an island—garden the Eden whence Adam was driven. It is here!"

I started in trembling wonder:

"This, then, is Paradise?"

"Not Paradise, such as when man needed continually the visible presence of angels; but an Eden suited for earth's late-born children a land where men of this modern time may live in peace, and worship God."

He rose up, for while we talked night had fallen:

"Now, my son are you not even as my son? go! Rest and sleep. To-morrow I will show the wonders of this land."

## CHAPTER XI.

**I LAID** me down, and slept the deep sleep of healthful weariness. At dawn I awoke; there was, then, night and day, sunrise and sunset, in this Eden—land? The golden darts fell on my eyelids, and slumber passed away. My mind was clear: I remembered all the past, even its sufferings; but suffering itself was calm. I waited meekly for the strange mysteries of my fate to work themselves out: they were a mingled and knotted web; but the beam was held by a Hand Divine.

I lay on my bed, my once—tortured heart beating peacefully beneath my folded hands. Ere the dawn—streaks had faded from the sky, Cyril stood beside me.

"My son, arise! He who loves not the early morning loves not the memory of his youth."

I arose, and clad myself in the simple garments of this land. As I felt my limbs free to bound, and the sweet morning air played round my bare throat, and tossed my long wavy hair, it seemed to me that even these little things influence man's character, and that he in whose soul dwells the love of the beautiful, will ever follow

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nature's most perfect Art, in order that in himself he may show, as far as he can, the image of that grace which he delights to behold in others.

We quitted Cyril's dwelling, and went out towards the forest.

"Whither do you lead me, my kind guide?" I said.

He answered, "To worship, with morning freshness, the God of the morning."

He walked along a little further, quite silent, and then stood still. We were in a narrow valley, lying east and west, enclosed on two sides by the gray mountains and purple woods, and between them, from out the sea which bounded the valley eastward, burst the sunwise. Oh! it was glorious!

"Beautiful! how beautiful is morning!" murmured Cyril. And turning round, he said, "It ever seems to me, dear kinsman, as though the earth at dawn recovers its Eden-freshness; or that when night, the shadow of God's protecting hand laid over it, is withdrawn, there comes a passing vision of the glory departing."

"It is so," I answered. "Nay, it seems as though He who called Himself the 'bright and morning star,' and 'the Sun of Righteousness arising,' had especially hallowed the dawn of day."

"And meant that man should hallow it too. Therefore, come and see how we hail the morning."

I followed him far in the forest to a great temple. Its strong tree-pillars had never been reared; they had risen of themselves through the mystic inward principle of life, which no human power can give to the meanest blade of grass. Its walls were formed of interlacing verdure, its pavement tessellated with flowers. Through its leafy arches rang the voices of innumerable choristers, invisible cherubs of the air, hymning continually. And its roof was the blue infinite ether, through which the moon climbed, and the stars wandered in their courses. Upwards rose the prayers and praises of the worshippers; there was not one human veil between them and heaven.

I heard from afar the loud song; I saw the multitude like that "which no man can number;" every age, sex, and rank, uniting in the same solemn strain. There, for the first time **and the last**, I beheld a church on earth praising God with one voice.

"Is it the Sabbath?" I whispered.

"Every day is a Sabbath here."

"And the priest? I see none."

"Every man is a priest a priest in his own household. Yet there are degrees of honour, men called on to be teachers among the flock; but none says to his brother, 'Stand aside, I am holier than thou;' none cries arrogantly, 'My truth is the only truth, and thine a lie.' For we know that each flower may drink in the same sun, yet assume a different hue, and give forth a different perfume, according to its nature and clime. Forms are nothing: it is the spirit within which is the life."

"Still," I said, "there can be but one sun and one dew to give that life."

"Yes," he answered, "and if the flower grow strong and shed its odours, no matter what flower it be, doubt not but the true life is there. How else could the fruits exist? Yet these are mysteries amidst which the wisest among us can but grope blindly; only we know that one day all will be made plain."

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"Amen!" said I, as the multitude arose from their knees, and their morning worship done, went about that which is also a kind of worship daily toil for themselves and their dear households.

"But," said I unto Cyril, "I see here labour and endurance; Eden-land is then no place of continual rest."

"Rest!" cried Cyril, while his brow shone with a prophet-like radiance. "Does the Omnipotent rest, when He sends through the wide universe His love, which is Himself? Do the angels rest when they traverse infinite space to do his bidding? And think you that we shall rest when we become, like them, ministering spirits? No; in earth or heaven there is not, there ought not to be, any perpetual rest."

As he ceased, we came to a little hill which overlooked a wide champaign. There I saw the tokens of all necessary toil: the labourer delved the field, the woodman cleared the forest, the manufacturer and mechanic plied their handiwork, for ornament as well as use. I pondered awhile, and then said to my guide

"Another mystery comes to me. In this land there are both rich and poor?"

"There are, because Eden-land is a reflex of the world our modern world. Therein, while earth lasts, rich and poor **must** 'meet together.' Equality is but a fantastic dream. Until men's natures are made all similar, their outward lives and circumstances will vary. The oak and the bramble may spring from the same soil, but one crawls on the earth while the other tops the forest. Yet the same life-principle germinates in both."

We stood where we could see at once town and hamlet, cottage and lordly dwelling, the blue sky bending over all. And I began to moralize and think how Heaven had made every created thing for good. I wondered if the world of human hearts were pure and peaceful as the outer world which I beheld. So, as we sat by the way-side, I spoke my thoughts to Cyril.

He smiled, and said my desire should be presently fulfilled. We reclined under a woodbine-hedge; I lay pulling garlands of white convolvulus, and thinking how strange it was to see again all the flowers I loved the flowers of earth, but far more beautiful. There came, rising and falling, the song of the reapers in the field, and against the horizon twined and curled in fairy wreaths, the smoke from the distant furnace where the metal-workers plied their trade. There was poetry and happiness even in labour and poverty.

As I mused there came past one of the gleaners; a girl a very Ruth laden with golden-eared wheat, She went along singing, tossing the wavy sheaf over her shoulder, and leading by the other hand an old man who crept feebly along.

While he tottered on, the echoes of his cumbrous staff kept time to the girl's light-hearted warble and as they passed us by and wound down the hilly road, it seemed to me like the seraphs, Hope and Cheerfulness, making music to the sound of Poverty's heavy tread. And like a sweet poem accompanying the strain came Cyril's half-musing speech:

"I do not believe that the All-merciful and Almighty ever created or permitted evil. That which we call so, can be only a mysteriously-disguised form of good. If want and sorrow were not, where then would be charity? If none suffered, who could show love, pity, and sympathy? If help were never needed, who could know the joy of gratitude? O man, canting of a sinful and miserable world! how darest thou to speak thus of that earth on which its Maker looked, 'and behold it was very good'?"

He sat, forgetting me and all else, in a reverie deep and calm. I looked on the face, where every mark of earthly pain was obliterated, and I could have knelt before him.

## AVILLION; OR, THE HAPPY ISLES.

From our wayside-nook I marked many a passer-by. The poor man carolled gaily on foot, the rich man rolled in his gay equipage, serene yet thoughtful; for riches have many cares, and the great are Heaven's stewards upon earth. Then came a various multitude, their faces not disguised with false smiles; but each brow was clear as the day, each man's heart being written on his countenance. Here was the region where none dreaded Truth.

Yet there were as many varying shades of character as in the land from whence I had drawn my being. The wise man raised his thoughtful brow to heaven that heaven which seemed nearer to him than earth. Yet he was not lifted up by pride, so as to scorn his brethren; but walked among them, humble as the most unlearned of them all. The unlettered man, without mocking or envying the gifts to which he could not aspire, moved on his lowly way, his diligence and benevolence strewing earth with flowers, though they could not make him wings to soar upward to the stars.

Women passed by, clad not in costly garments, but with that robe of meekness which is above all price. Wearing it, they appeared perpetually fair; for a beautiful soul makes a beautiful face, and she who is ever-loving, will surely be loved evermore. In Eden-land were no neglected daughters, estranged sisters, or forsaken wives; for each had learned that to love is to win love, and that while man's glory is in a wise and tender sway, woman's strength is often in her weakness; that from her cradle to her grave, no woman was ever truly happy, unless she could look up to man in some relation of life either father, brother, husband, or friend, and say, humbly and lovingly, "I will obey thee, for thou art greater than I."

These scenes I beheld these thoughts I pondered over; then I returned with Cyril to the little cottage in the forest, and the sun set upon my first day in Eden-land.

## CHAPTER XII.

**IT** was again dawn in the forest-temple; the worshippers were departing, each his several way, to his home or to his merchandize. I noticed the various groups, and my mind was bewildered with many conjectures. Did there reign here, as in the olden world, the two mighty ones, Love and Death? How, then, could perfect happiness exist?

I uttered my thoughts aloud, but Cyril smiled serenely at my doubts. He answered them not, save by the meek and trusting speech

"All that is, is good; we learn this lesson in Eden-land." And then he pointed to a train which had separated itself from the rest, and passed into a green alley of linden-trees.

"Let us follow them!"

We did so. There was in the midst an old man, gentle and saint-like in mien, to whom they all listened earnestly. He taught, not of religion, but of that which is next to it in holiness Love. He spoke of all tender affection of kindred, of friendship, and lastly of that mysterious bond between man and woman which heaven ordained to complete the being and fulfil the happiness of either true and faithful wedded love.

Love, then, was known here. I marvelled, remembering all its miseries on earth: changed love hopeless love lost love. But as these doubts arose, they faded before the words of him who spake, answering as it were to my inward thought.

"Love that changes is not love it is a dream, a delusion, an idol worshipped with the senses, not the heart. Pure love is rarely hopeless, save through wrong done each to the other, or evil coming from the world outside. And lost love who shall call that **lost** which heaven takes? Therefore in this our happy dwelling, where there is no sin,

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there can be no sorrow; and love, given to be man's chief joy, and out of which his own erring will alone has created misery, is here no longer a curse but a blessing."

And as I looked around, on the faces of young and old there came a tender light, a blushing joy, which echoed his words in smiles. I thought of the world wherein I had once dwelt, and sighed to remember how man there made a hell of what should have been a heaven.

Again the pastor spoke of the sacredness of love; how that between two young hearts that leaned each to each like meeting flowers, no blast of human fate should be suffered to come. Then he spoke of two who loved one another but worldly fortune stood between, and Poverty's iron arms tore them asunder.

"Shall this be, O my brothers?" he cried. "Come, ye childless ones! who have none to inherit your countless stores, give unto these, and babes' voices may yet rise up in prayer for you. Ye lonely ones in whose heart love was a fresh fountain, until God sent the Angel of Death to seal the waters on earth, that they might spring forth purer and brighter in heaven remember the time of youth, and make these blest with the blessedness to which ye yourselves once looked! All ye who know what love is, bid these love one another, and be happy!"

While he yet spake, many came and showered offerings at his feet: aged parents, whose children had gone away to be no longer supports on earth but watching angels in heaven, and who, clinging feebly to each other, went slowly following to their rest; women to whom the name of wife was a long—vanished or never—fulfilled dream who had learned to walk, meek and hale, over the grave of love, the treasures of their virgin hearts unknown, save to heaven and the unseen land of souls.

And then the whole multitude shouted and sang for joy, and went to seek the bridegroom and the bride.

It was a marriage not like earthly marriages, celebrated in pomp and gay hypocrisy, but quiet, solemn full of a happiness too deep for mirth. The young bride knelt, clothed in white, her head myrtle—garlanded. The wedding guests were there, save those who loved them both: the mother who gave a daughter and received a son; and the sisters who took into their dear circle of affection one more, to whom "sister" had hitherto been an unuttered name. She murmured it now in a tone which foretold gentle yielding, and household peace between them all for evermore. Ruth—like, she had said in her heart, "Thy people shall be my people;" and in that spirit she came among them. Once she turned, and knelt with her bridegroom for the blessing of the mother whom she had made his mother also. Then she arose, left all, and followed him who was to her

"Friend, father, brother, home, and universe!"

I stood with Cyril, and beheld this happy sight this true **marriage**. In both our hearts was one thought; the same, and yet different; there came to our lips one name "Lilias!" It was uttered with a sigh, which might have been mournful; but in this land of peace and holiness even the sting of sorrow was taken away. The regret for lost joy, and for joy never realized, had alike grown calm. We looked upon it as souls departed look back on their earth—sufferings; from whose immortal height of perfect knowledge and perfect peace, the deepest woe appears only a light cloud round the mountain's foot whose summit is in the skies.

Cyril and I grasped each other's hands, and left the scene.

The day fled like one of those quiet happy days of which every hour goes by, leaving some grateful odour of duties performed and pleasures enjoyed; and like this, Cyril said, passed every day in Eden—land. As we sat watching the sunset over the western hills, there came into my mind solemn thoughts of the closing of man's brief day. In the morning I had beheld the golden shadow of the angel of Love; now it seemed to me that in the souging of the solemn trees, in the gathering clouds that darkened the sky, I felt the presence of the angel of

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Death. I spoke my thoughts to Cyril, and he answered

"It may be so. Arise, and let us go forth to meet him."

We went forth, up the mountain, towards the cottages of the mountaineers; and as we climbed higher and higher, we seemed to follow the steps of the departing sun, and the eventide became clear and beautiful, though solemn still. It was a twilight less like the fading than the dawning day.

And like the twilight peace without was that which dwelt within the dwelling which Cyril entered. There lay feebly fluttering within its prison, waiting the hour of its summons an immortal soul. As I crossed the threshold, I seemed to feel the breath of the Death—angel who stood there, invisible, with folded wings, until those pinions should be lifted to bear away one sore spirit to the unseen land.

"Hush! tread softly," said a young man's voice. He who spoke arose from the ground where he had been kneeling at the feet of two people, on whom he gazed with the tenderness of an only child. They were both old; but the woman's face, as it rested on her husband's breast, had a pallor deeper than that of age. From the path they had long trodden together her feet were now the first to glide. She knew it he knew it and yet both leaned calmly, heart to heart as ever, until the hour of parting should come. A brief parting it was so brief, that they talked of it without a single tear.

She turned a little, and gave her hand to Cyril.

"I am going," she said, and smiled.

"The blessing of all whom thy pure life has blessed, go with thee, my sister," he answered.

We all echoed "Amen:" even the aged husband and the son. They never so much as said, "Beloved! stay with us a little longer;" for they knew that God had called her. Who should set himself, his human will and human love, against God's?

She spoke of many things things of earth—life's joys and its sorrows. She was thankful for all, and showed how all had worked together for good. Much of her speech was a mystery to me; but thus far I understood that these, like Cyril, had come through much affliction to the Happy Isle.

Then she laid her head closer to that true breast on which it had lain so many years, and her feeble fingers twined themselves amidst the shining curls of her tall son, who rested his cheek on her lap as though he were again a little child. Thus she reclined, silently enclasped until death by those whose love had brightened life. They waited with her: they went so near the dark portal as almost to hear the echo of the voice that called; and then they gave her from their tender arms, into those of God.

She was dead! No, not dead: she had only "gone away." **He** said so: the old man whose wife she had been; half of whose soul she had taken with her to the eternal land. There was no murmuring no weeping: for here, they believed what the people of earth only **said** that death, a righteous and peaceful death, is immortal gain. They knew that her spirit was now new—born into a diviner existence, thence to rise, sphere after sphere, until its pure essence became one with the All—Divine. So they laid her down yet not **her**, but the likeness of her beloved form and went out, father and son clasped in each other's arms. They stood looking upwards, following, as it were, her flight among the stars.

I watched them with a solemn wonder. It had troubled me at first to think that even in this happy place there was death awful death the great punishment of life. But now all was changed. I saw that nothing which God ordains is **punishment**; that greater, far greater than they who revelled in a perpetual Elysium of repose greater than the

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many-centuried dwellers in Avillion, were these of Eden-land who right pass through the gate of death into immortality.

After a space, I know not whether of hours or days for the time seemed strange to me I heard Cyril's voice saying

"Come, my son, come with me into our garden!"

"Is it a fair garden?" I asked, as I walked with him.

"Very fair, in Heaven's sight!"

His words were strange; but I knew their import when he brought me to the spot: a little dell, sheltered among the hills, and planted all thick with flowers at once an earthly and a heavenly garden. It was a place of graves.

Thither, while we entered, the son and the husband were bringing their beloved dead.

The burial was such as I had never seen in the former world. It was here no more than laying in the earth holy seed sown for the resurrection. No black garments were allowed no mock solemnities of crawling stranger-steps and muffled stranger-faces. A few prayers were said, less to hallow the rest of the dead that needed no hallowing than to speak peace and hope to the living. Then the soft earth fell, a kindly veil; and flowers were planted above, that no sign should be left of the mingling of dust with dust, save what was beautiful and dear.

Thus, in the summer twilight, we all stood around the new mound in that peaceful "garden;" and the little birds sang, and one pale, beautiful star came out in heaven, like the spirit of the departed watching us smilingly.

Then arose in the still air the voice of Cyril.

"We thank Thee, O Lord of life, that thou hast for a season sent death into Thy world, to make our faith eternal, and our love immortal as Thyself!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

**THUS** I dwelt with Cyril in Eden-land. Day by day we traversed it together, and I learned all things pertaining thereunto. After a space, my spirit began to turn within itself, and I pondered less over the marvellous things around me than over my own individual life. I tried to gather up the awful mysteries of my fate since the day when I had lain on the bosom of ray Lilius, struggling with the horrible pain from which the German mystic had freed me, only to plunge me into worse horrors.

And when Cyril, watching my countenance, tried to read therein my thoughts, I opened my heart to him and related the fearful tale. As I went on, my passions rose; and the hatred and revenge with which the Mystic had inspired me, filled my soul once more.

Cyril looked upon me with his calm eyes. "My son my son! there is yet much alloy in that proud spirit. Know you not, that he who enters Eden-land must learn as his first lesson to forgive?"

"I forgive? Oh, Cyril! I cannot. It is bitter bitter! Was he not worse than a murderer? My own life was nothing: but Lilius oh, Lilius!"

My heart melted within me: I could have wept!

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He, too, was softened: he ever was at the sound of that name. But he gently reproved me.

"Wilfred, your fate is hard: but have you no pity for that miserable man? How know you what undeserved suffering he might have endured what torments might have goaded him on to seek the Happy Isles. You are at peace then pardon him."

"I know no peace," I cried. "My soul yearns even here for home and for Liliás. Oh, friend and kinsman, is there nothing to kill this worm that continually gnaws at my heart the bitter memory of the past?"

Cyril answered solemnly

"He who has pardoned, or will pardon, the sins of the whole world the whole universe forbids us to know peace, even here, until we too have pardoned all our enemies.

I sat speechless, in a dull despair.

"Then let me die!" was my thought; but I dared not breathe it. To die to pass unforgiving into the presence of the All-Merciful!

"Come go with me, my son, and I will show you it is not so hard to forgive."

I followed Cyril, even to the "garden." There, beside the little mound which his own hands had so lately raised, sat the husband of the dead. He was watering the flowers, and playing with them tenderly, as if they were his children.

"Herman," said Cyril, as the old man raised his meek and placid face, "tell this young passionate spirit that shrinks from forgiving wrong tell my son Wilfred the story of thy life, and that of the pure soul who is now with God."

"She was a pure, beautiful soul. ever! And she suffered much wrong; but she forgave it all all! Must I indeed recount these things again?" said the old man, dreamily.

There was no answer, and he continued

"She was of your land, Cyril the land which on earth is renowned for its wealth, its wisdom, and its just laws. Just laws? Merciful Heaven! is there justice beneath the sun?"

He paused a moment, and then went on

"I was a stranger and a foreigner, and she an English girl, yet she loved me. I came of a wild, half-mad race (so men said), yet still she loved me. There was none to rule her except an old, rich, cruel woman, with whom she dwelt. This wretch turned me from the door, like a dog, and put me openly to shame. Then my gentle love arose rose like a tigress bereft of her young; she said aloud mark the words, for they were marked, ay, and for blood! **'that retribution would follow.'**

"That night the wicked woman lay slain in her bed, and they snatched my newly-married wife from my arms, and accused her as a murderess.

"O evil, evil world! O horrible destiny which wrapped her round as with a coil! My pure innocence! To say that the little hand which I cherished like a bird in my bosom, bore on it the life-drops of a murdered human creature!

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"Well, the bloodhounds of the law hunted her down: they made all clear, even to the mark of her fairy feet, fled trembling to me when the house was still she knowing not whence the awful stillness came. It was all plain plain enough for the law to believe in; though some tender, merciful souls, who felt the responsibility of that accusation which can rarely be definitely proved, on whose truth or falsehood hangs a human life these still doubted of her guilt. But their few faint arguments were vain. Her doom was pronounced the doom of **DEATH!**

"I dare not speak of myself or her: I speak of the world. I cry as I had done then, but despair made me mad and dumb 'O man, how darest thou set thyself in the place of God, to judge life and death! How darest thou wrest His Word to sanction murder? When He said "blood for blood," He ruled His people with a visible sway: His eye inevitably marked the slayer. Can **thine**? Art thou omniscient too? Know that if one man perish innocent, it is enough to lay on thy head, and on the head of each administrator of a cursed law, the sin of Cain the murderer!"

As he ceased, the old man sank on the grass exhausted; but his terrible words rang on my ear like a judgment. Oh, that through me they might pierce the world!

He spoke again, fainter:

"Her doom approached. Pleadings for mercy came: 'She was so young! Even if guilty, it was hard to die!' But the law's iron tongue knelled, 'Let her die!' and man echoed it. One, a priest, even preached the justice of taking life for life O God! and this man called himself a disciple of Him who was put to death at Calvary!

"Hour after hour fled; each tick of the clock falling on my ear like blood-drops. I sat beneath the dial, and as it moved I cursed Time aye, almost Him who created Time that it should be made the instrument of a slow death! Each man that passed me by, carelessly lounging through the brief hours on which hung another life, precious as his own, I yelled after him, 'Thou, too, art a murderer!'

"At last but one day came between her and death. Then, and not till then, they suffered me to feel the peace of her presence; for it was peace, even then. Her words fell on my burning heart like dew. Her meekness was beautiful, her forgiveness was sublime! She clung to my bosom; she knelt at my feet: she stopped my outcries of despair with embraces, my curses with prayers.

"Those who stood by melted into tears, and one who half-believed her guilty, went forth from the cell to spend his whole existence in striving to annul that terrible law of death by which man arrogates to himself the judgments of God.

"When the first paroxysm was over, her calmness made me calm. I entreated, and that good man who went from us entreated also, that we might have a brief space alone. The law which robs its victims of a whole precious lifetime of repentance or atonement might well grant the mercy of a few short minutes, whether to guilt or innocence: so it was permitted to her.

"I took her in my arms and cradled her in my breast; my darling, on whose sinless brow lay the brand of murder! Suddenly the thought came, that one day more and the form I clasped, the fair neck whereon my kisses rained, would

"My blood curdled into ice, and then a horrible determination entered my soul. I said, in a hissing whisper, 'Love, I will save thee!' and I showed her a ring I wore, small and beautiful, but which shut up within it poison death. 'Sweetest, it is nothing; it will come in a moment, like sleep. My beloved, have pity on us both! let me save thee.'

"She looked amazed and doubting: 'How?'

"Wilt thou, now, in my safe arms, wilt thou die?'

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"She drew herself from me not in alarm, but in meek reproach:

"No, love, not even for thee! I am in God's hands. I will not take the life He gave.'

"She snatched the ring, from me, and trampled it under foot.

"We were to have one more interview the last. But ere it came, a superhuman energy and cunning had dawned within me, and taught me how to save her. My father, a German physician, was a man of wondrous knowledge. From him I had learned a secret which would make the frame as rigid as stone, so as to be for a time insensible to all assaults against life, while it preserved all the appearance of death, until suspended animation returned. I made the elixir: I calculated all the time before it would take effect, and how long its power would last. I hid the tiny phial; fastening it by a hair among my long, thick curls; and then I went to the prison.

"When, human agony mastering all her strength, she lay fainting in my arms, I dropped on her lips the potion, death-bringing yet life-restoring, and then I went away, without a farewell.

"I heard the howl of the multitude, the thousands met to gloat over the sight of a slaughter according to law a score of men formally destroying one helpless woman, who seemed already dead.

Not an hour after, the true murderer, conscience-stricken, gave himself up to justice, and the ministers of the law ay, some of them honest men found that on their heads and that of their children lay the guilt of innocent blood!

"I let them think so; I wished the curse to sink them to the lowest deep; and then I snatched from them my own pure dead, and fled. She woke to life and happiness upon her husband's breast!

"I wrote to my poor dream-haunted father, a German philosopher, whose worn brain was already half maddened with misery, and bade him seek us in the West, where human wickedness could trouble us no more. Then we two, my wife and I, sailed far away. But doom followed us still. The vessel never reached the land at least, no earthly land. **That** happened which I may not speak of to earthly ears and we and all the ship's crew came hither to the island of peace. Thank God, bless God, for all!"

"And thy father?" I cried, while a sudden light darted through my mind; "tell me who was thy Father?"

"We forget all such sorrows here; but his name on earth was Johann Foerster."

I fell on my knees:

"Bear witness, heaven! that now at last from the bottom of my soul **I forgive!**"

Then I told him my story, and we embraced one another, and were at peace.

While we yet sat in the holy "garden" and talked, our speech was broken by a heavy thundering sound which came from the overhanging hills. I looked up, and saw that a portion of the rock had loosened from its place, and was falling, bringing death in its passage, to the plain beneath. A moment more, and, shuddering, I saw that right in the path of this avalanche of doom lay sleeping a young mountaineer. It was Herman Foerster's son!

With the speed of thought I sprang up the crags, my feet sinking at each step. I reached the spot; I shook him out of his sleep; but he clung to me, half bewildered still. It was too late. I heard the father's shriek; I saw Cyril's upturned face; and then the thunder rolled over us, stunning, deafening. It passed, and we were both alive.

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Alive! but for how long? The ground had been torn from under us. We stood on a jutting precipice a mere speck left between the perpendicular rock above and the yawning abyss below. Even this narrow spot of safety crumbled and quivered beneath our feet. We were two, and there was room but for one.

I paused. Revenge lay in my grasp. The grandson of Johann Foerster, the youth in whose veins ran my enemy's blood, was in my hands. Which should it be life or death? vengeance or self-sacrifice? Life or death, revenge or sacrifice!

My choice was made. In one sigh of prayer I committed my soul to God; in one murmur I uttered the name of Lilius; then, with one farewell grasp of the boy's hand, I plunged into the awful void below.

I awoke. Oh, marvel beyond belief! I lay on the vessel's deck I felt round my neck those dear soft arms. All had been a dream!

I heard the tender voice of my wife:

"Wilfred, dearest, you have slept scarce an hour, and you wake, all calm, and so well!"

I leaned my head on her bosom, and our tears mingled together. Then I met the kind, half-melancholy gaze of the old German mystic. Lilius turned even from me to clasp his hand, and thank him.

He replied

"Thank not me, but God!"

I spoke to him, the mistiness of my dream, which I knew was only a dream, struggling vainly with reality:

"Dear friend, stay with us, and let us be to you in the stead of all you have lost!"

But he only shook his head, and said meekly

"It is impossible! I have not yet found the Happy Isles!"

In our dear home the home my wandering fancy pictured I dwell with Lilius. The old house is musical with sweet young voices; baby footsteps patter, fairy-like, through its dim chambers. It is indeed a haunted house haunted by all good spirits of peace, and happiness, and love. Lilius and I look towards the future and smile; the shadows of death, and sickness, and sorrow, have passed from us, and we shall grow old among our children's children.

Yet never, while life lasts, shall we altogether lose the memory of that strange dream of mine.