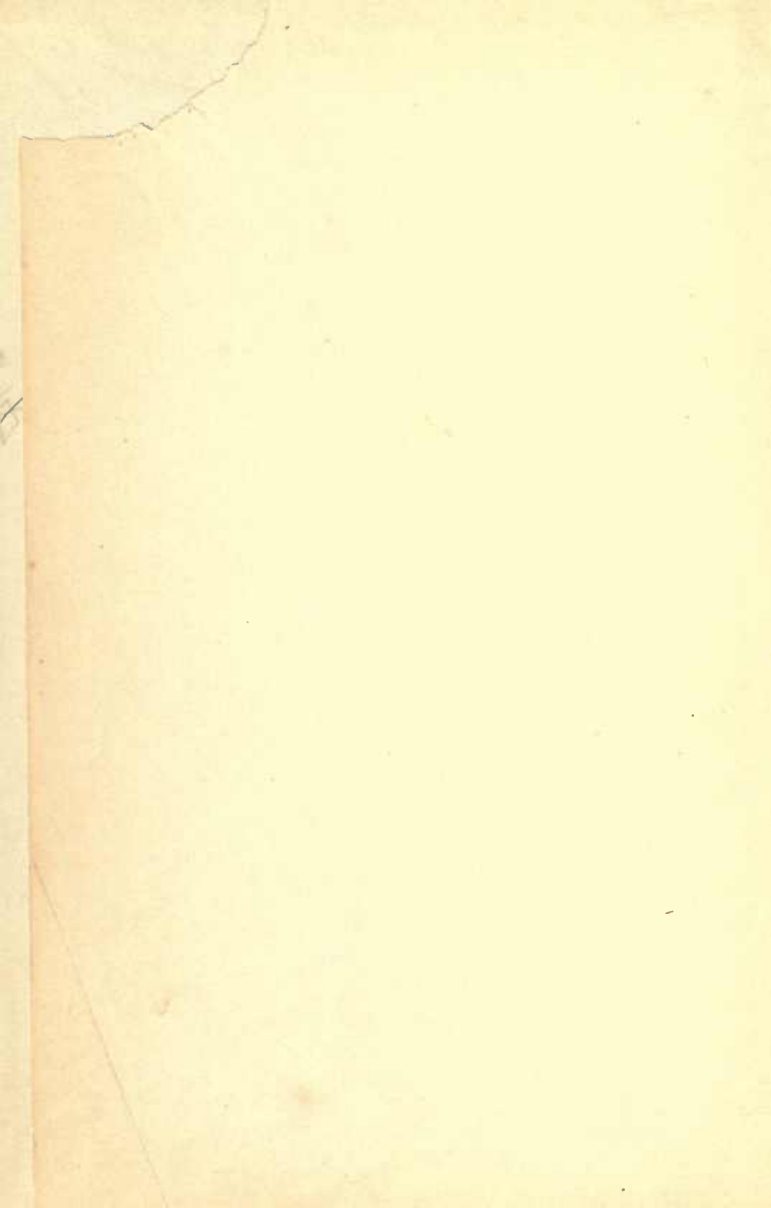




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SEOLA.

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SEOLA'S JOURNAL.

FINDING THE MANUSCRIPT.

Extract from the Author's Note-Book of Travel.

NORTH SYRIAN MTS., May 23, 18—.

THIS month must be marked in white ; it is the date of a wonderful discovery.

Toiling along the steeps of the Anti-Libanus, on our way to Jabrada, we halted for the midday repast, and, while the guides were preparing it, reclined in the shade of the scanty foliage. As we leisurely surveyed the sterile landscape, our attention was attracted to an object quite unexpected in this desert place, a flower of surprising beauty, which hung from a broad shelf of rock opposite. Edmund sprang forward to gather the wonderful blossom, and, upon reaching the perilous steep, to sustain himself laid hold of the root of a decayed tree which had once grown there. His weight had scarce been thus suspended, when the stump gave way and slid down, carrying with it

the earth in which it had been embedded, a portion of the rock, and the rash intruder who had dared disturb its venerable repose.

When it appeared that no injury was sustained, we turned to examine the spot from whence the avalanche descended. Upon the perpendicular face of the rock, now fully exposed, was a clearly defined triangle about eight feet in altitude. A complicated figure sculptured in the centre marked it the work of man. Speculation as to its character was cut short by Monsieur S——, who exclaimed: “That figure is the Phœnician Daleth! Plainly as our own language it says: ‘This is a door.’ Ah, what lies behind?”

In great excitement we sent to the valley for aid; the triangular rock was removed, and proved to be the door of an artificial cave, about twelve feet square, cut into the mountain. The sides of this cavern were smooth, the ceiling was arched, and in the centre of the dome, among unknown sculptured characters, we perceived a cross of peculiar design.

Upon a marble slab, slightly raised from the floor, a heap of dust, tattered fibre, and shreds of gold outlined two human figures lying in the set

repose of the dead. Diadems that once crowned the heads of the sleepers had fallen to the floor, and by the side of one of the shapes, where the hand had been, was a cylindrical object which we immediately secured.

Then spoke the leader of our party:—

“No doubt this is the oldest tomb in the world. The inscriptions must antedate even those of the subterranean temples of Ellora and Elephanta. But why should we, with sacrilegious hand, disturb these sacred ashes? Let them repose through the rolling ages, as we ourselves hope to rest, till the great day of transformation.”

Without further words he ordered the door to be carefully replaced, and we left the shelving rock, where again the dust of ages will gather, other seeds germinate and shoot upwards, and again a leafy veil shimmering in the wind will shut out from human eyes the mysterious Daleth of Old Syria.

The relic thus obtained (doubly precious now that further spoliation was forbidden) proved to be a cylinder of purple amethyst about a foot in length and three inches in diameter. Upon one side, engraved with extraordinary delicacy, was the representation of a terrible flood, and upon the

other a tree, under whose wide-spread branches were sitting a noble-looking man and woman with young persons grouped around them. Beneath each figure were detached inscriptions.

In removing the dust from the crystal a spring was touched, and the cylinder opened, disclosing a linen roll, like those of Egypt (though incomparably finer), covered with minute characters, which, under the rays of the sun, became intensely blue.

It occurred to one of our number, an enthusiastic archæologist, that this was a memorial of the Great Deluge; the man might represent Japhet, the son of Noah, who, according to the Hebrew scriptures, was the father of seven sons; the woman was his wife, and the other female figures his daughters.

Upon this supposition we applied ourselves assiduously, and, after the most exhaustive comparison and combination, found that the names of the men corresponded with those given in the tenth chapter of Genesis; the mother's name proved to be Seola, those of the daughters Lebuda, Astlik, Simourga, Elbeth, and Jael.

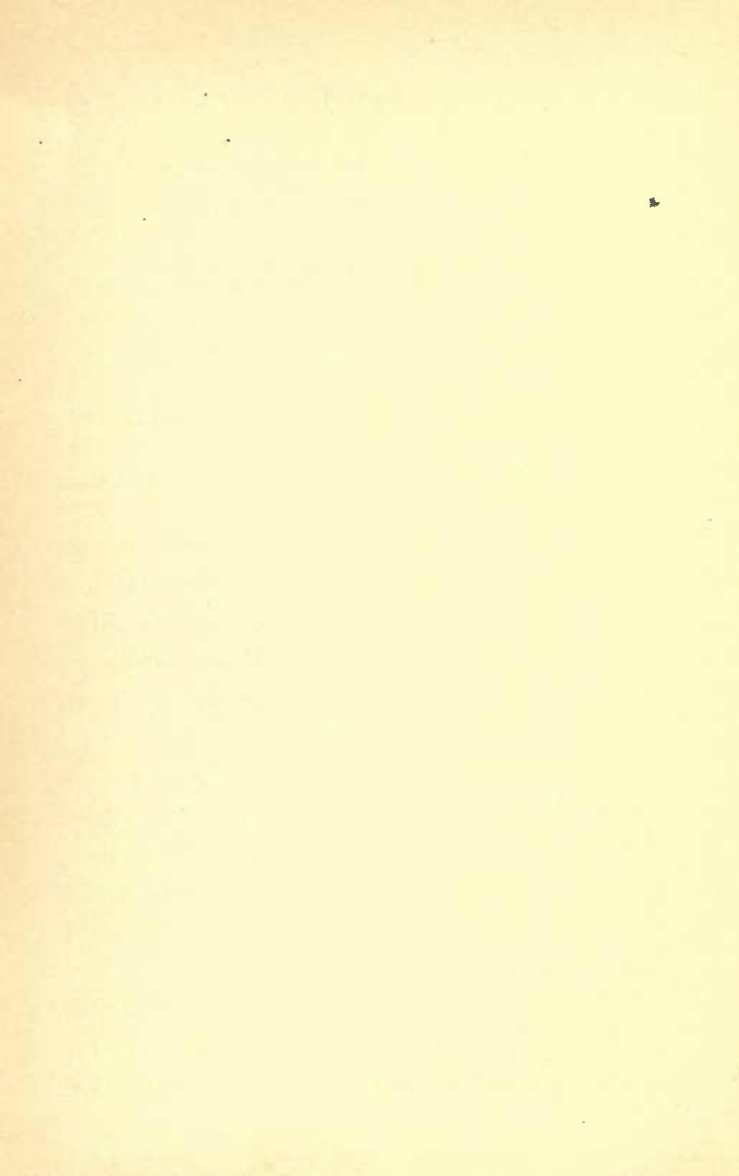
The mystery was unravelled, and we found ourselves in possession of the greatest archæological

discovery of the nineteenth century,—an antediluvian memoir, *The Journal of Seola, wife of the patriarch Japhet!*

Foreseeing the perishable nature of the precious document, travel was suspended, and the energies of the entire party were devoted to the work of deciphering. Under the supervision of our learned archæologist good progress was made, though, in our haste and ignorance, great freedom of translation was unavoidable, and frequently our insight into obscure passages was scarcely more than conjecture.

It was fortunate that no delay was suffered; the delicate characters rapidly faded in the light; the tissue, hermetically sealed for so many ages, had lost its tenacity; day by day it became disintegrated in the unaccustomed atmosphere, and almost before the last pages were finished, it crumbled to powder.

The beautiful but frail casket in which it had been preserved was accidentally shattered, and, but for the story which had so marvellously come into our possession, the adventure in the Syrian mountains might have vanished from memory like a dream of the morning.



SEOLA.



CHILD OF THE HERMITAGE.

West Bank of the Euphrates.
First Moon. Evening.

After Adam.
Four Cycles.

THIS day completes another year of my life ; its events have made me unusually thoughtful.

Immediately after the morning sacrifice Alee-mon called me to the garden. His countenance, always serious, was even sad as we sat down under our favorite cypress-tree.

“Seola, my daughter,” he said, “you are no longer a child ; maturing years and experience will bring to you, as to every human being, care, perplexity, and sorrow. Your brother, who would have been a companion and protector, is dead ; I buried him at Sippara. You are alone.

“Shut out from the world in this impenetrable forest, your life will be eventless, occupied by the routine of domestic labor and religious duty ; God

grant you a tranquil mind. Fortunately you inherit my fondness for study. Having been carefully instructed in the wisdom of the sages, you will find comfort, when your household duties are over, among the manuscripts of ancient lore and relics of other days which I have preserved for this purpose; but lest you should have many restless hours, and sigh for that companionship which you will never find, I earnestly advise you to commence a journal of your life, a record of the circumstances of each day and of your mental experience. This will be a diversion, and vary the monotony of a sequestered life. I have many things to communicate, but not upon this day, the anniversary of my marriage and of our departure from Sippara, as also of your birth."

With this he rose and retired into the shadows of the grove. His lightest wish is law with me,—my wise and pious father,—so this evening I took from the library a reed, linen roll, and amethyst cylinder, his birthday gifts, and have come to my arbor study, to begin the journal. Without doubt it will be a dull affair; fortunately no stranger eye will ever rest upon it.

What have I to record? The storms or fair weather, the quality of the harvest, our success or

failure in dyeing and weaving, the increase of the flocks, an occasional alarm from wild beasts. Yet I am always happy; the garden abounds in fruit and flowers; we have many cattle; we ride, cool evenings, in a boat upon the river, and when the great rains come on, we listen to stories from father, or to mother's songs. 'We' means, beside myself, Charmos and Elbeth, our servants. They came to this place with my parents before I was born, and are now getting aged. Charmos must soon depart. Elbeth is not so old as her husband, and will live, I trust, a long time.

There is but one thing to trouble me: mother is often unhappy and weeps. At such times father is stern and sad, Elbeth sighs, they chide my youthful gayety, and I am oppressed with gloom.

These moods of my parents are mysterious, connected, I imagine, with the remembrance of their former life, but I have never presumed to question them. To-day I accidentally received an intimation confirming this supposition, but still I am perplexed. While tying the vines beneath my mother's window, I heard her say (forgetting perhaps that I was near), —

“This is Seola's birthday; how beautiful she is growing!”

I was greatly surprised, but still more so when my father groaned and answered, —

“Would to God she was deformed, or dark as the daughters of Cain! Woman, why wert thou made so fair? O fatal, fatal gift of beauty! but for it, how lovely and pure thy soul! The earth would not now be the theatre of unimaginable sin, nor would Lucifer and his wicked peers control the affairs of men; the dreadful demigods would not crush under their feet the hearts and hopes of mankind, nor you, my wife, and I, your most unhappy husband, be exiled to this lonely hermitage. And another grief is added to our overburdened hearts: our child, now attaining womanhood, possesses the fatal heritage! Would to God she had died in your arms, as did her young brother.”

By this time my mother was sobbing, and, frightened by the violence of her grief, I silently withdrew, much agitated.

What can it mean? Why should not men and women be beautiful as the birds and flowers? Are they not all so? Alas! I have seen none but those of my own family.

I once read in an old manuscript of festivals, wars, travels, and marriages; perhaps these are

connected with the misery of which my father spoke. I will ask him some day when he is instructing me.

Ha! — a serpent glanced across my feet so quickly I scarce saw him. He too was beautiful, but filled me with terror. Will he seek the dove's nest? I must follow — * * * * *

O, my dear birds! The father and mother are gone; one little white trembler remains alone. But I have taken thee as my special care, pretty dove; the serpent shall do thee no harm. These venomous beasts always come forth in the night; we must leave this place and retire to my chamber, where, beneath the inscribed talisman, we shall be safe —

No — I will stay and repeat it solemnly, "*God alone is mighty. Depart, Evil One!*"

That will be a protection.

How lovely is the grove in the twilight! The palms wave in the soft wind; the flowers exhale their odors; the insects chirp lazily; the birds are silent; the Euphrates sparkles in the fading light.

The river (now that I think of it) appears unreal to-night, not placid and calm, but agitated, and swelling upward; like a voice, it seems to say, "Coming, coming."

What is coming, old river? Nothing, I suppose, to Seola, who will, perchance, tread these lonely banks for many hundred monotonous years.

The charm hath wrought; the serpent cometh not; but it is growing dark; now must we go within. O glorious golden hours! O smiling yellow moon! O bower and grove and river, dear silent friends, do you not give me joy of another birthday? True, I am no longer a child, yet I love you none the less; with you I am always happy. Good-night.

ALEEMON'S STORY.

Second Moon. First Day.

A MONTH has passed since I began my journal ; nothing has happened worth recording until to-day, when I found an opportunity to question my father. Mother went early with Elbeth to gather grapes for drying, and I had my tasks as usual in the cypress grove. When they were finished, knowing that candor would be most acceptable, I said, —

“O my father, on my birthday, by chance, I heard a conversation between yourself and mother, in which you spoke of beauty as a dangerous gift ; as being the cause of a dreadful condition of the world, and of your own unhappiness. Would you kindly tell me the meaning of your words ?”

An expression of deep pain crossed his features, as he replied, —

“Perhaps the time has now come, my daughter, when it is proper to tell you what must sooner or later certainly be brought to your knowledge. It is a strange and mournful story, in which there

is but one light to relieve the deep shadows of sin and sorrow.

“ Know then, Seola, that after our first parents admitted the Deceiver to their counsels, and had been driven from their happy home, sin and death became the unavoidable and dread attendants of every human life. But more fatal than all other miseries of the fall was the power of interference in human affairs which the Tempter had acquired. He constantly used, and from his evil nature abused, this power, slowly gaining possession of the hearts of men, till, grown bold by success, he enticed other Star-Spirits from their allegiance to the Almighty, promising to establish them as great princes in the world which he had conquered. They came and took possession of Mount Hermon in the sides of the North. By some subtle process, of which our most learned sages are ignorant, the seraphim changed themselves from the winged serpent-form into the likeness of men, grand, strong, and beautiful. These majestic beings became enamored with the beauty of women, and took to themselves many wives. A race of magnificent but frightfully depraved creatures, giants in intellect and stature, were the products of these unnatural marriages, and

they, with despotic cruelty, aided their sires in the subversion of the world. The story of the crimes and abominations which prevailed would be too shocking for your ears. The worshippers of God struggled in vain to stem the tide of diabolical iniquity; those who resisted the imperious will of the Devas, or the Darvands their children, were disabled or put to death.

“Lucifer, the most powerful of the incarnate angels, established his court at Sippara, City of the Sun, where the learning and wealth of the whole world were concentrated. Upon this city he lavished his immense resource. Its glory was past description; its towers, palaces, and battlements glittered with gold and gems: its pomp and pageantry excelled everything previously known. But while feasting and seraphic music filled the royal saloons, deeds of awful violence made the subterranean vaults to shudder. But glory be to the All-Powerful, for the fulfilment of the decrees Lamech and Achima, my parents, were preserved, and near this city of supreme glory and guilt I was reared in the ways of righteousness. Being devoted to the acquisition of learning, I was spoken of as ‘Aleemon the sage of Sippara.’ I had one brother;

his name was Noah: I know not if he still lives. He was upright and courageous, and being gifted with extraordinary powers of oratory, he fearlessly denounced the foul living of the Evil Ones, and called upon God for deliverance. How often have I listened with awe, when like a torrent his sublime words were poured out in warning, and have trembled with fear of the Devas' vengeance! But he seemed to bear a charmed life; his hearers were spellbound while he was addressing them, and all plots for his assassination failed. I know now that God had set an hedge about him.

“Our parents died early, and we, with our few servants, were left in the world sole worshippers of the true God. To dispel his grief, my brother journeyed to a distant country in the North, and there, high among the dark stony mountains, where bleak winds destroy all but a scanty vegetation, he found a noble family who had retreated thither to escape the wickedness of the world. After many months' sojourn, the eldest daughter was given him in marriage, and he returned to Sippara bringing with his wife a young girl whose parents had died in that distant land. She was a lovely child, and with advancing years grew into the perfection of womanhood. Her name was Lebuda.

“Noah's heart was comforted, and I still found consolation in studying the works of a purer age.

“Soon after this change in our family a shocking event occurred in the city, which drew from my impetuous brother a violent expression of indignation. Fearing that he might fall a victim to his rashness, notwithstanding his former deliverance, I expostulated with him, but he gave no heed to my caution.

“One evening, after he had with unusual eloquence addressed a great assemblage, I remained upon the mountain and conversed with him till the stars came out clear and glittering above the marble city. I spoke of the desperate condition of the world, its entire subversion by the Evil Ones. For myself I feared nothing, my unobtrusive life exempted me from suspicion or attack; but I portrayed his danger, and besought him by the love he bore his young bride and me, his only brother, to be more moderate in his attempts at reformation. I took his hand, and well I remember my closing words:—

“‘O my brother, I believe as firmly as yourself that God is more powerful than Lucifer; but what ages have rolled away since the giant offspring of

these execrable marriages have defiled the earth with unnatural crime! We are powerless, dear brother; God has forgotten the world.'

"He was so long silent that I looked up in alarm, for the hand which I held in mine had grown stony cold. In the gathering gloom I saw his face beam with unearthly radiance. His eyes, dilated by strange emotion, were fixed upon the northern sky; his hands were raised, the whole attitude that of rigid attention, as if he were trying to catch some distant sound. He was evidently unconscious of my presence, and, though much alarmed, I dared not disturb him. After remaining in this rapt posture a few moments, he sighed heavily, his hands fell, his head was bowed, and he whispered, 'Even so, O God most mighty!'

"Presently turning toward me, he said, without any allusion to our previous discourse, 'Aleemon, thrice the Voice has spoken, and I know that the vision is true. Heard you aught, my brother?'

"And with awe I answered, 'Nay.'

"He continued: 'There is tumult in the North, the region of the mighty winds; at first like the tremor of leaves in a breeze, it increases to a gale, it crashes like a tornado; the thunder bellows, the

earth quakes, the sea roars, its waters surge and swell, an awful night with blackest tempest enshrouds the world ; but above the crash and convulsion of the elements I hear a Voice, clear and low, though so terrible. It is the voice of God. I know not the words, but the same meaning always is given : "The end of all flesh is come ; for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. But with thee will I establish my covenant, and will save thee and thy family. Build a boat, wide and commodious ; it shall be thy refuge when floods of water overwhelm the guilty world."

"I am called, my brother, and must do a prophet's work : over me the Evil Ones have no power ; God hath appointed bounds which they cannot pass. But you are in danger ; you must fly, though not alone, lest grief and solitude consume you. Take for your wife the beautiful Lebuda, who has long loved you well.'

"I answered : 'This revelation astonishes me ; I know that you are indeed a prophet. The hour of doom approaches. God has not forgotten the world. I am agitated and confused ; my course does not seem clear, but I will seriously consider your words.'

“As we silently descended the mountain, the hum of the illuminated city came wafted toward us with a new and mournful significance, and, absorbed each in his own solemn thoughts, we sought our quiet home.

I was married to Lebuda, and was happy in her love, but I did not fly. I lingered near Sippara, where, in the great repositories, I could so conveniently continue my favorite pursuits. Here your brother was born and died; his infant form reposes in a cave of the mountain.

“A few years I remained unmolested, for I passed in and out of the city by the most unfrequented streets, and never interfered in its affairs. I completed the copy of many valuable works, particularly those of Seth, and hopefully drifted along the stream of time.

“But upon a certain evening, when Lebuda came near the environs of the city to accompany me in the homeward walk, a crowd of Darvands and men followed us, discussing her beauty in a way which aroused my quiet nature to furious wrath.

“‘Honor to the great serpent!’ said one, ‘we have found the queen of love.’

“‘What fair flesh and perfect bloom! My royal

father shall have a gift at my hands,' said a towering Darvand.

" 'Not so fast, my brother,' answered another giant; 'I have a better plan.'

" Terrified and enraged, I fled fast as I could drag the half-fainting Lebuda. Darkness was rapidly coming on, and, hoping to elude our pursuers, I doubled the narrow path through winding ways, for well I knew if we approached our home directly, fire and steel would in a few moments finish their wicked designs. As the darkness increased, one and another of the men became discouraged and turned back, till the last pursuer disappeared.

" Trembling and exhausted, we reached the dwelling, where, to our surprise, my brother awaited us. With the aid of our servants, he administered to our necessities, and when we were sufficiently restored to look calmly at our perilous situation, he spoke.

" 'You remember, my brother, the evening of the third vision, when we sat together upon Mount Hermon, I warned you that you must fly. My words were prophetic. Too long have you lingered near Sippara; a few hours only are left for your escape. Lucifer is already informed of the exceeding beauty of Lebuda, for among women there is none so fair.

With to-morrow's dawn his emissaries are to begin the search, which, if you remain, will terminate in your death, and the transfer of Lebuda to the royal palace. Arise, and depart hence. Haste, look not back till you reach the Hermitage on the banks of the Upper Euphrates, known only to us and our father. There, in the seclusion of the vast cypress forest, you must hide from all eyes save those of the Omniscient.'

"There was no further delay. Our household stores were loaded upon the beasts of burden, Lebuda and Elbeth placed on the camels, and, driving a small herd of cattle, we soon passed a defile in the mountain which shut the city forever from our gaze.

"Here my brother, who had thus far accompanied us on a fleet horse, dismounted, and, embracing me, with many tears bade me a last farewell.

" 'We shall meet no more in this world,' said he. 'I see before me a black and yawning gulf, but I have no fear, though the earth be swallowed up, and the heavens consumed: we shall meet again in peace. Aleemon, thou and I alone are left, worshippers of God: he will not forget us.'

"Then giving me the rein of his fleet steed, he

motioned that I should mount and press onward, and from that moment I saw him no more."

Here my father paused and gave himself up for a few moments to absorbing melancholy. He then resumed:—

"Before dawn we were several leagues from Sippara, but rested not until we had entered the dense forest that skirts for six days' journey the western shore of the upper river. We there refreshed ourselves, and offered the sacrifice of a young heifer. Having received the token of acceptance by fire from heaven, on the following day we resumed our journey with more courage, plunging deeper and deeper into the forest, guided by a living stone, and after four days' journey we reached the Hermitage, which Lamech had prepared in the hour of inspiration.

"Here we have lived in safety; our garden has flourished like Eden of old; the flocks and herds have increased; and you, my beloved child, our most precious possession, were sent to cheer the solitude. In calm tranquillity have I passed the rolling years, giving you counsel or instruction, and increasing that treasury of ancient lore hitherto concealed from your innocent eyes, but which you may

now peruse with advantage. Therein is contained the record of families and nations, with many a story from the lives of those who have preceded us in this world of hope and fear, of pain and pleasure. You will there also find a description of the great kingdom of Lucifer (to which God grant you may ever remain a stranger), and of other people and countries in distant parts of the earth, where, safe from the Evil Ones and their children, we might have hoped to dwell, but for the stern injunction of the prophet that we must remain concealed; discovery will be fatal.

“I am content; but your mother, now that you are grown and do not require her maternal care, is often unhappy. She feels vaguely the loss of that life in which she is fitted to shine, and where she would have been the admiration of all eyes. I observe her growing uneasiness with extreme anxiety. I know not what it portends. Guard your own heart, and assist me, my dear child, to divert your mother, lest an evil thought should enter her mind.”

THE DISCOVERY.

AT this moment my mother appeared coming down the avenue. She was flushed with labor, and, as she slowly moved forward, I, for the first time, realized her exceeding loveliness. She was now in the full maturity of her charms, and of perfectly developed proportions. Her large blue eyes drooped with a sad expression; her features were of faultless symmetry, her bosom, shoulders, and arms beautifully rounded, and her color faint and delicate as that of the shells we sometimes find in the drift of the river; but the crowning glory of her stately figure was the wonderful hair. It was of a light golden color, and, if extended to its full length, swept to her feet, and enwrapped her form. It hung in heavy waves, curling at the ends, and when, for convenience, she coiled it at the back of her head, it fell upon her shoulders like the long plumes of a bird.

How graceful was her step, how firm and free! My father, with admiration and love in his eyes, arose and led her to a seat by his side.

“How fares the grape-harvest, Lebuda?” said he.

“My lord,” she replied, “the sun came into the vineyard too brightly, and blinded our eyes. It was fearful, and I left the place to be sheltered by your side.”

Aleemon turned inquiringly, for there was more in her words than met the ear. He was about to give utterance to some thought that oppressed him, when a sudden flash and illumination, which dazzled us and took our breath, checked his reply.

Glancing upward, we beheld directly overhead, in an opening between the cypress-tops, some object like a bright cloud passing swiftly, and heard a peculiar sound of exultation ring out above the forest. I looked at my father in amazed inquiry. His face was ashy pale; he trembled, and fixed an earnest gaze upon the cloud. Breathless, he cried, “The Devas!” and then, with terror depicted upon every lineament, drew us within his arms and hurried toward our home, round which interwoven boughs of gigantic trees and vines had formed a perfect screen. To the innermost chamber of this secluded dwelling we retreated, and, making

secure every avenue of approach, my father went out to confer with Charmos.

After many hours he returned, looking pale and fatigued, but spoke with composure.

“From the earliest generation it has been considered a sacred duty that every human being should, once during life, make a pilgrimage to the site of ancient Eden, and in that place of saddest memory offer prayer and sacrifice. I fear I have incurred the displeasure of the Almighty by deferring this rite. Therefore, Lebuda, do thou, with the help of Elbeth and Seola, prepare necessary food, also awnings to screen us from the heat of the sun and the night dews. Charmos and I will make ready the boat, and at daybreak to-morrow we will go forth upon the pilgrimage.”

The unusual excitement in our household and the anticipation of a journey make me almost wild with joy. I can scarce compose myself to write; but I must finish the journal, there will be so much to record after my return. Four days of travel through a strange country, the wonders of ruined Eden, perhaps the sight of human beings, ourselves unseen of them. Why should the others look serious? I can only rejoice, and yet I seem as one

about to pass into a shadow ; there comes a presentiment of change. The serpent crossed my feet, — a bad omen. The river whispers, “ Danger is coming ! ” I must beware.

CHANGE.

Second Moon.

O TIME of grief and loss! O days and nights of woe! O dumb and lifeless hours! Is this the happy valley where my youth was passed? I seem aged now. The cypresses are black like funereal yews; their shade is darkness, and yet the sunlight is hateful to my eyes, dim with weeping. O, that I could find the grave! My mother mourns, but not with my deep sorrow. In her soft eyes is no retrospective glance, but a gentle light like coming day.

How shall I recover the broken thread of my story? How make up the calendar of sorrow marked by the dial as ten suns only, but weighted with the woe of years? Yet this journal, lightly begun at the suggestion of my beloved father, must be continued as a sacred duty.

The day was fair and the omens auspicious as we stepped upon the boat made ready to receive us. Father and Chamos, with long poles, pushed from the shore, and aided the wide-spread sail that

propelled us slowly along. The great branch of the Euphrates which we were ascending, though now deserted and lonely, in far-gone ages was lively with the boats of pilgrims to Eden, and heavy vessels bearing the productions of other lands to the great cities on its shore; but the Wicked Ones, who control the affairs of the world, have desolated this plain, striving to obliterate from the memory of mankind every reminiscence of the lost Paradise!

I was too much occupied with the unaccustomed scene to find room for mournful thoughts. Only when my eyes fell upon the snow-white lamb resting by the green herbs provided for his food, and I observed the grave faces of my parents, did I remember the strange event of yesterday and realize the serious object of our journey.

As the hours of this delightful day drew to a close, and the declining sun warned us of the necessity for repose, father and Charmos warped the boat into a shady cove, and made it fast for the night.

We lingered long over supper, spread upon the deck of our little vessel, and when it was finished, tired with the day's journey, I lay upon the mast,

and fell asleep listening to the voices of my parents as they chanted the evening orison.

Before our boat was unmoored in the morning we went ashore to view the ruins of an ancient city, once famous for its magnificence and learning, now only a mound of ashes overgrown with a straggling forest. Seth, the founder of this city, was a great sage, the inventor of the characters used in writing. He caused two wonderful pillars to be erected, upon which was inscribed the history of the world. These precious memorials of better days were destroyed by order of the Devas, but not until scribes of our family had copied some portions of the writing.

The scene grew wilder and more drear after we resumed our journey. The banks were tangled with luxuriant shrubs and vines; birds of brilliant plumage flitted among the trees; bright lizards and spotted serpents darted in and out or lay coiled around their trunks. When night came on and the journey drew to a close, the river became narrower, and tall trees, arching over our heads, made the way solemn and gloomy; our spirits grew heavy and conversation died. As the red sun, like a blazing fire, sank out of sight behind the great

forest, we approached a rock which rose in the middle of the river.

“ Here,” said my father, “ our journey terminates. Upon this rock, which parts the stream as it issues out of the garden, once stood the vigilant guard with sword of flame. Alas ! the transplanted tree of life perished in the ungenial soil of the wicked world ; it renews its life-giving leaves in the garden of heaven. But the cherub, though no longer visible, still continues on earth to fulfil the high behests of the Eternal ! Just beyond this frowning warder lies the gateway of a ruined Paradise : none care now to force an entrance, or seek in its pure air the lost joys of innocence :

“ Here must we offer our sacrifice, the last which will ever ascend from this place ; I feel a melancholy pleasure in the thought. The future is dark to my vision ; beyond to-morrow’s light stretches an impenetrable veil ; the hand of God has lowered it, and I have no fear.”

My father’s voice grew unreal, a far-off look came into his eyes ; a sigh, such as had become habitual with him, heaved his bosom ; unconscious of our presence, he whispered, —

“ Ah, my brother, does not the hour draw near ? ”

THE FORSAKEN EDEN.

AT early dawn we were astir with preparation for the solemn rite. Upon the rock was built an altar ; the offerings were placed thereon. As I climbed the pathway to cover the sacrifice with lilies gathered at the water's edge, the scene beyond filled me with astonishment.

A vast expanse lay stretched before us, bounded by mountains, rosy and purple in the morning light. Born in these far-off heights, fed by springs and rills, four great rivers, widening as they advance, rolled through a broad extended plain. Here were calm lakes and valleys, and the verdure of meadow and grove. But no flocks reposed upon the grassy banks, nor cattle browsed the rank savannas, nor lion lifted his voice in the dark glen. No harvester reaped the nodding corn, or loaded with purple grapes the creaking wain. The crimson apples lay in heaps, the nuts dropped noiselessly on the sod, the empty stubble rustled in the wind, the untouched orange and fig, decaying on

the ground, went back into the parent stem to bloom again and again in vernal beauty.

Sound there was none, but sighing of the winds as they swept mournfully across the lonely Eden ; no motion save the shadow of light clouds flitting over tenantless plains. Silence and solitude forever brooded there. A belt of funereal yews, undergrown with a thicket of brush-thorns, hedged in this land of supernal but desolate beauty. Directly in front of the Warder's Rock was a narrow opening bounded by two ancient yews of magnificent proportions ; between these trees had sprung up a gigantic vine, whose wide-spread branches, twined and interwoven, made a vast impenetrable screen, closing the gateway of the garden of the Lord. The tangles of this deadly vine had formed themselves into spectral characters, which, facing outward, perennially renewed the inscription,—

“ SIN, DESPAIR, DEATH. ”

Through a mist of tears the last look of mortal eyes was now bestowed upon the forsaken beauty of the Lost Paradise.

OMENS.

TURNING toward the altar, my father lifted his voice in solemn confession and prayer. We then removed to the boat, and waited at a distance, repeating in the usual form our oblation: —

“Accept, most Holy Father, the offering of thy sinful but repentant children, and give the gracious token by fire.”

A moment of breathless suspense, and the answer came, — but in a manner which filled us with terror. A fearful rumbling, like subterranean thunder, was heard, the earth shuddered, the rock heaved, and with a loud explosion burst asunder. Fierce flames and sulphurous vapors rushed upward from a yawning chasm, that swallowed the altar of sacrifice and the very rock upon which we had been standing. The waters of the river bubbled, hissed, and then fell back to the old channel, our boat surged and tossed in the terrible convulsion, and the pallor of fear overspread our faces.

We turned with anxious inquiry toward the father. Upon his countenance, pale as our own, was

no sign of doubt or alarm. His hands were folded upon his breast, his head was bowed in resignation, and he sighed, "I accept the decree. The will of the Most High be done."

Then without further words we hastened away from the scene of dire portent.

*
SEOLA RECEIVES THE GIFT OF
PROPHECY.

THE current was now in our favor ; we shot rapidly down the river, the sun rode high in a stainless heaven, and when, for the third time since our departure from home, it sank behind the western forest, we drew into the quiet cove where we had first landed.

Tranquillity was in some measure restored as distance increased between ourselves and the appalling scenes of the morning, yet was the evening benediction of Aleemon unusually earnest. Fatigued by the unwonted adventures of the day, all of the party, except myself, were soon wrapped in deep slumber. Charmos and Elbeth rested quietly under a palm-tree on shore, my parents reclined upon a platform raised under the tent-screen, and I lay upon a mat at their feet. The air was serene and the sky still clear ; the moon was in the full, and I discovered what I could not remember to have seen before, the awful ruin of its scarred surface, the deep chasms, where rest motionless seas

of fog, the flickering light and occasional fires which shoot from its expiring volcanoes.

How tranquilly I rested in its weird beams and listened to the only sound that varied the intensity of silence, — the ripple of the river as it lightly flowed past our boat!

Forgotten by the world, far from any human habitation, in the midst of a great wilderness, shrouded by the shadows of night, what cause was there for apprehension? Yet some unwonted agitation — a fear or rather an expectation — rendered me for a long time wakeful, and I repeated again and again these words: "Enlighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death." Presently my thoughts became confused, and I passed into the land of forgetfulness. Did any shadow of coming evil flit across my dreams? Alas! it was the final hour of childhood, the last untroubled slumber which would ever seal my eyes; for before morning dawned, an event occurred which dispelled all careless phantasy, and changed forever the color and current of my existence.

I slept I know not how long, when I was startled by a flash of light, and perceived, although the moon had set, the air was illumined by such an

extraordinary brilliance that my eyes involuntarily closed again.

How can I relate what followed, incredible even to myself, but which I know is only too real? I was powerless to move, and my eyes were certainly closed; but by some new and strange sense, some gift of second sight, I perceived standing directly behind me two majestic beings, in form and lineament like men, far more stately and beautiful, but whose faces filled me with dismay.

Upon each royal brow gleamed a star luminous as their eyes, and the trailing garments were of shape and texture I had never seen before. From the taller and grander of these figures emanated the electric flash which had awakened me. The look of admiration he fixed upon my mother, whose transcendent beauty reflected the unnatural light, was almost as dreadful as the scowl that alternated upon his features when he turned toward my father. I was certain that they were Devas, the incarnate celestials of whose existence I had recently become aware. He who was tall and bright at length spoke in words I had never before heard, but which, by some new perception of sound, I well understood.

“More beautiful than Eve, and as true to her lord. The man must die. Prince of the West, send forth your baleful fire.”

The dark Deva raised his hand, and from the extended finger a slender shaft of light like a pale star-beam shot forward and quivered over my father's heart.

The bright being spoke again: “Smite the girl also, Hesperus.”

“Not so, my Lord Lucifer,” said Hesperus, surveying me attentively; “this is no common maiden. Seest thou her soul?”

“I see it not,” replied the other.

“Above us.”

The Devas glanced upward.

“Unlike all others,” exclaimed Lucifer, “clear and strong, perhaps dangerous. She must die!”

“My lord,” responded Hesperus, “I have done you some service; I have hitherto asked no favor, but now I would save this maiden,” hesitating a moment, — “for myself.”

“The Star of Evening would be reflected in beautiful eyes at last,” said Lucifer, turning upon him a smile of surprise and triumph.

I shivered, but there was no motion; I groaned,

but I heard not my own voice. I lay as in the deepest swoon till the morning sun shone upon our little boat and a shriek from Lebuda aroused me. She was trying to raise my father, and loudly entreating him to speak. Our old servants awoke and came hurriedly forward, but all help was in vain. Aleemon was dead.

In our distress and confusion we knew not what to do ; our piteous cries rent the air.

At that moment two grand-looking persons came to the water's edge and kindly proffered their assistance. They seemed to be men ; but by the newly acquired sense I knew that the name of one was Lucifer and of the other Hesperus.

Lebuda, too much distracted to observe my whispered caution, willingly yielded to their seeming kindness : the body of Aleemon was covered with a sail-cloth, and we floated homeward, hurried along by the current of the stream. Our new acquaintances told my mother that her husband had died of a sudden and fatal disease peculiar to that locality ; it was a miracle we were not all dead ; she must submit to the inevitable ; they would convey us to our home and render all the aid and consolation in their power.

After a few melancholy hours we reached the Hermitage and moored the boat at the foot of the cypress avenue. I was filled with indignant grief when he, called Lucifer, with tender assiduity, aided my mother and devoted himself to her care, while the wicked Hesperus conveyed the body of his murdered victim to a closely screened bower in a remote part of the garden. Here Charmos felled the tall trees, and, despite my protestations and his own grief, covered the dead father and the living arbor, deep, deep beneath the heavy cypresses, shut out from the sunlight and my loving eyes forever.

I fled to my little room, and now, hidden within it, as the shadows of night come on, how gladly would I lie down and wake no more! Oh! is not this a dream, a delusion? But yesterday my father looked on me so kindly; his voice was sweet as he gave wise counsel or related stories of the olden time; his hand was strong and warm as he aided my weak attempts to climb the rock of sacrifice. Now his eyes are without light, his face is stony; he answers not when I implore him; his cold hands lie motionless, though the trees weigh heavily upon his breast; he regards not my mother as she sits weeping by the side of haughty Lucifer.

O strange, inexplicable Death! I walk as in a dream. Stay, sweet vision, thy words I do not comprehend. I catch the gleam —

Alas! my life is changed; and yet the moon rises round and bright as of old; the white clouds hasten through the sky; the winds play idly with the cypress branches, all unconscious or careless of the fearful mystery in the arbor; and the voice of the river, as in days gone by, breathes through the soft night-air the same strange word, "Coming, coming, coming!"

DISASTER.

SEVEN days have passed since last I wrote, bringing other alarming events. I once longed for change and adventure. God forgive my childish folly!

I left my chamber on the morning after the dreadful day, with heavy heart and a vague sense of disquiet and danger; my mother came forward, embraced me with much affection, and for a few moments we wept in each other's arms. Sensible of a flash of light across my tired eyes, I raised them and saw the Lord Lucifer, magnificent and haughty, standing near, with a look of impatience, as if the scene displeased him; the Devas had not left the Hermitage. Not wishing to obtrude our grief upon strangers, I hastily withdrew to the arbor study, hoping to remain unobserved; but the dark Hesperus followed me, saying, —

“Seola, I rejoice to behold your beauty, yet your eyes are dim with weeping. Let not grief overpower you; time will soothe this sorrow and the days again be bright.”

These words shocked and pained me, and when

he extended to me his hand — the hand that had slain my father — I recoiled with sudden horror.

“Forgive,” he said in deprecating tones; “I cannot pardon myself if I frighten or offend you. Farewell!”

Lucifer was preparing to depart: taking the hand of Lebuda, as she acknowledged her obligation for his kindness, the proud lord replied, —

“We would lightly esteem all service rendered to one so unhappy and so fair. Command us ever.”

The look which accompanied these words was bold and ardent, but her eyes, downcast, comprehended not the meaning.

After our new acquaintances left us, with the sense of relief came also that of desolation. Death has extinguished the light of our household; the desire of our eyes is taken; we are left alone in an almost impenetrable forest; our servants are aged; a doubtful future is before us. Yet miserable as solitude must be, an introduction to the great world is far more to be dreaded.

I often discuss our prospects with my mother, but her natural reticence is increased by misfortune, and I seldom obtain a confidential response.

Elbeth shares my dismal forebodings. One day,

soon after the departure of the Devas, she led me to the grape-arbor and thus addressed me:—

“Seola, I am alarmed for Charmos. Since the death of your father he is greatly changed: he scarcely eats or sleeps; his life seems departing. He says naught but, ‘Alas, my master! O my God!’ He is old now; I fear he will die; and I have still more terrible fears. Our strange visitors, I love them not; it is many years since we left Sippara, and since I saw the transformed sons of God; but, dear child, I fear that the beings who have found the Hermitage are not men. Your mother, fairest of women, was concealed from the eyes of the Devas in this wilderness; she has been discovered, and we are safe no longer.”

She clasped me in her aged arms, and exclaimed with deep emotion, —

“And you, poor child, are like your mother. God save you!”

To which I added devoutly, —

“Save me from sin, O God!”

Third Moon.

The time had passed heavily; we bleached and prepared for spinning the store of flax, gathered the

hemp, clipped the hair of the camels and wool of the sheep to make warm fabrics for wet weather, and many an hour I spent in learning from my patient mother the art of dyeing thread and weaving the fine white linen, of which our summer garments are fashioned. The monotony of the dreary days was relieved by light labor in the garden, drying grapes, dates, and sweet herbs. We conversed little, except upon the subject of our daily occupations, and our life went on in a dull, eventless round, till yesterday at mid-sun, when Elbeth rushed into our apartments, saying, —

“Charmos has disappeared ; he was gathering dates upon the river-bank, when a sudden flash of lightning and roll of thunder burst from a clear sky. I saw him fall, and flew to his assistance. The camels and kine in great affright were running around the place where he had fallen, but him I found not. O my mistress ! O my child ! Where is he, where is my husband ?”

We went forth in haste to the river : a half-filled basket was standing under the date-tree ; the cattle bellowed, and with heads erect looked down the stream. Upon its hurrying waters we perceived the mantle of our good old servant floating out of sight.

Then we lifted up our voices and wept, threw dust upon our heads, and in grief and despair sat upon the earth, while the dew and darkness of night fell around us.

WOOING OF THE STAR-SPIRITS.

As day began to dawn, a boat was seen coming down the stream, and from the unusual light that pervaded the water, and a sudden illumination as it neared the shore, I recognized with sinking heart the presence of Star-Spirits.

Perceiving our group, the boat drew to the landing; two well-remembered forms advanced to the spot where we were sitting, and Lord Lucifer spoke thus, —

“Passing this shore upon a hasty affair of state, we were reminded of our last sorrowful visit, and turned aside to inquire how fares the lovely Lebuda.”

Then surveying the group earnestly, with hypocritical surprise he exclaimed, —

“Ah! what new calamity has befallen thee, most beautiful of women? Why is that glorious head defiled with ashes, which should be crowned with flowers, nay, with a royal diadem?”

“Alas! my lord,” Lebuda answered, “Charmos is dead! The decrees of fate are against us.”

“O fairest of earth’s daughters,” said he, extending his hands to aid her, “even fate relents in the presence of thy tears; thou shalt be protected. Arise; forget thy sorrow while we take counsel with regard to the future.”

I had no time to remonstrate, for Hesperus immediately addressed me:—

“And thou wilt need a friend, Seola. Turn not away, but consider my words. Lebuda will depart with Lucifer; if thou remain alone in this wilderness, death will soon ensue and thy fair form become a prey to savage beasts. Remove to Sippara, and greater danger threatens; but if I may claim the sacred right of protection, safety and happiness are assured. Seola, thou hast power never before conferred on mortal maid; thou art inspired by ambition lofty as that which animates my own spirit. Thou wert born to be an archangel’s bride. Become the partner of Hesperus, share in his glory, and the unimaginable fervor of a seraph’s passion will enkindle thy human soul; love and honor shall be thine, such as woman has never known; the treasures of earth will be laid at thy feet; a princess shalt thou reign, in my kingdom and in my heart.

“But lest the breath of a wicked world should dim the lustre of my precious pearl, I have prepared a Paradise in the far West, remote from the haunts of men. The fierce sun cannot penetrate its shade, nor Deva’s glance intrude upon its privacy ; above floats the white cloud, and in cool recesses flowers distil perfume ; doves nestle in overhanging boughs, in the fountain white swans sail, and on the margin lilies nod. Thither shall Seola retire if the grandeur of royalty becomes oppressive.”

Then my soul became enlarged, and I replied, —

“O Hesperus, though I am a weak and ignorant maiden, humblest of the daughters of men, by some power I can neither explain to another nor myself understand, I know that thou art a Star-Spirit, made for purity and glory, but now only less wicked than yon proud being who walks by my mother’s side. I know that a crisis impends in the affairs of earth, a pall hangs over the kingdom of the Devas ; the day of reckoning draws nigh, and all who are found at that dread moment in the service of Lucifer will sink to darkness and despair. I am permitted to warn you ; more than that I cannot do.

“Be your bride? Share your power and glory? Sooner would I die by lingering starvation; sooner would I give my body to wild beasts or devouring flames. I fear naught but the death of the soul. Ambitious? In that thou saidst truly, but my ambitions rise beyond the bounds of sense and time.”

I was astonished at my own earnestness, and hid my blushing face; but, marvellously sustained, I walked away from Hesperus, who, overcome by the conflict of disappointed passions, became deadly pale and remained motionless.

The Devas soon left us: I do not know what passed between Lucifer and my mother; she was thoughtful and restless, but spoke not, and upon myself filial awe imposed reluctant silence. An impassable barrier seemed to have arisen between us; confidence was at an end.

* * * * *

The rainy season set in with unusual severity; furious tempests scowled from the sky, and electric fires ran along the tree-tops. Was it because I missed the sheltering arms of my father, that the thunder seemed more fearful than ever? Certainly, an excited imagination did not mislead me, for many cattle died of the stroke, trees were set on fire, the

date-bearing palms were thrown down, the river rose and flooded the garden ; destruction raged over the Hermitage. Our food and garments became mildewed ; we drew near to the gates of death. I could but connect these misfortunes with the power of the Devas, who I knew were malignant, as they were grand and beautiful.

One memorable evening after a day of boisterous storm, when the gale had shaken our habitation till it was ready to fall, the declining sun struggled through the clouds, and a sudden light pervaded the scene,—a peculiar brilliance which I but too well understood.

Like sunbeams, like the scintillation of stars, Lucifer and Hesperus appeared before us ; their voices were sweet and their words gentle. Following them was a troop of strange beings, black in complexion and dwarfish in stature, but of great strength. They bore upon their backs large bundles wrapped in oilskins : carefully unrolling these, they knelt and placed at my mother's feet baskets of fruit, meats, and drinks unlike any we had hitherto known ; some of the packages contained beautiful fabrics, shawls and girdles rich with embroidery, and — most ravishing to my unaccustomed sight ! — jewels of crystal and gold.

But curious admiration was checked when I discovered upon every package a uniform mark, in shape like a winged serpent. I looked at the bearers of the treasures ; upon the breast of the tunics which they wore, and upon the band which crossed their foreheads, was the same emblem. I knew the deadly meaning of the seal. It was the seraphic form in which the Tempter appeared to our mother Eve, and I fled to my own apartment in great alarm.

Here, from the little window, I looked out long and earnestly into the darkening sky. No trace of the storm remained ; the moon, now in its second quarter, was scarcely obscured by fleecy clouds stretched over the whole heavens ; and through a thousand soft openings was disclosed the dark blue vault studded with twinkling stars. The anxious tumult in my breast was calmed ; all nature seemed to bend over me with a smile and benediction. I was alone, indeed, without human companionship, but now and ever with the Lord.

A light step at the door interrupted my meditation, and Lebuda entered the chamber.

“The banquet is prepared ; will you not join us, Seola ?”

The question did not harmonize with my mood,

and I answered, perhaps too briefly, "No, my mother."

"Our life is so sad and dull, will you not aid to brighten it?"

"I cannot, my mother."

"The Lord Lucifer honors you with an invitation; will you not accept it? Hesperus inquires for you, and anxiously awaits your coming; will you not see him?"

Then I fell upon my knees and clasped Lebuda's hand.

"Dear mother," I exclaimed, "God has enlightened my mind, therefore permit me to speak. Lucifer and Hesperus are treacherous friends. They have destroyed Aleemon and Chamos, and can easily take our lives; but over the immortal part of our nature they have no power, except as it is conferred by our own will. In the world of spirit a pure woman is stronger than the most malignant demon. For their wicked purpose the Devas desire possession both of the soul and body; therefore they condescend to temporize, to persuade, to allure. O mother, do not yield, lest you embrace Death!"

"Seola," she answered soothingly, "you are a

child, utterly without knowledge of the world ; your judgment is immature, a timid fancy has misled you. In this wilderness death is indeed inevitable ; in Sippara, my early home, whither my heart has ever turned, we shall find, under the protection of its powerful lord, not only life, but happiness. Lay aside these unseasonable fears, and come with me to the banquet."

Again I answered, — I could say naught else, — "Nay, my mother."

With a sigh Lebuda retired ; and when I had partaken of the simple food Elbeth brought for my repast, I commended my soul to God, and afterward slept in peace, though at intervals, during the night, I was awakened by unusual noises in the forest, — the crash of falling trees and the sound of mechanical implements.

My first consciousness in the morning was self-reproach that I had left my mother and Elbeth so long alone with our dangerous guests.

Robed more closely than usual, and with a fold of linen over my head, I opened the door of my room, and saw at the farther extremity of the avenue the majestic form of Lucifer standing before Lebuda, who sat with her face averted from

his gaze. As I slowly walked toward them I observed, more perfectly than ever, the magnificent proportions of the Deva, — the massive head crowned with golden curls, the powerful shoulders and shapely limbs, the grace and harmony of every motion, the strength and elasticity of the figure, scarcely concealed by folds of a cerulean robe thickly set with silver stars.

Did my eyes deceive me? Upon his shoulders appeared something like transparent wings, which vanished into the flowing drapery. Verily this was a son of God, — the Light-Bearer of the heavens!

With quickened sense I could distinguish every word.

“Let me persuade you; I have now held possession of the earth for many cycles, and am still unconquered, yea, stronger and more secure than of old; for Heaven abandons the strife.

“Lucifer will reign in perennial manhood forever, but not alone; power for his strong hand, love for his heart. Among all of mortal mould, never, until the happy hour in which your matchless form enchained my eyes, have I met my peer.

“Lebuda must never die, rendered immortal by our great love; the equal and companion of Lu-

cifer, she must reign through the rolling ages, Queen of the Earth and Bride of the Sun."

Taking from a fold in his garment a jewelled bracelet, he clasped it upon her arm, saying, —

"By this token the compact is sealed."

I saw the band of flashing gems, bright, like coals of fire, and where it closed together were two entwined serpents. In terrified expostulation I cried out, —

"Beware, O my mother!"

Lucifer turned sharply, and bestowed upon me such a look of displeasure as almost deprived me of strength. I stepped suddenly backward, and found myself in the arms of Hesperus. The tender firmness of the embrace was irresistible. A thrill responsive shot through my frame, an impulse to return the pressure almost overpowered me; but at that perilous moment I caught the scornful smile of Lucifer as he retreated with Le-buda, and I cried out, —

"Help me, God Almighty!"

At that word the clasping arms relaxed, the magnetic chain was dissolved; with one bound I was free, and stood confronting Hesperus.

He was robed in trailing garments of royal pur-

ple, a band of gold encircled his head, where rested a pale star, and, glowing with emotion, he was beautiful as Lucifer.

My face flashed with indignation and fright ; yet, though repulsed, the Deva said with patient earnestness : —

“ Listen, Seola. I speak to you in confidence, for you are no less discreet than fair. Lucifer has had many wives, and to all, as to Lebuda, he promised immortality ; but, when wearied of his queen, he subtly persuades her, and the victim retires at the solicitation of her sated lord, drinks of the amaranthine cup, and dies by a petrifying poison !

“ Fear nothing,” he added, seeing me shudder ; “ together we will defeat his artifice ; his counsellor possesses the antidote for his deadly narcotic, and can aid you to save Lebuda from the fate of her predecessors.

“ But I have more to say, Seola. Unlike Lucifer, Hesperus has no roaming desire. Ambition, not pleasure, called him from the service of the Eternal.

“ I wage war against Heaven, because I would have power and reign a great prince. I will be the peer of Lucifer, nay, his dictator. I would reign

in solitary grandeur, and yet — only the One Supreme is self-contained, and dwells in awful solitude. Sometimes I long for dual being, for another self to share my bounteous life, upon whose heart my own may rest in times of trouble and weariness. The women of this world have I found weak and base. I turned from them in disgust until mine eyes met thine, O thou most regal maid! The daughters of the sky are cold; them we love without desire; but thou, warm palpitating child of earth, art fair as forms that flit across the plains of heaven, and yet as pure.

“Thou art mine other self, O strongest soul, completest womanhood! Love for thee now fills my heart, transforms my being. I would hold thee forever and forever, brightest jewel in my crown, rarest bliss in earth or heaven. Hesperus, the passionless, bows to one of mortal mould. Accept his adoration, make him happier, exalt him with thy love, my queen, Seola.”

With a look of infinite yearning he extended his arms. I was attracted, as is steel by the magnet; my brain grew dizzy, my sight indistinct, the pleading voice became a confused sound. Then memory whispered Aleemon's name, reason conquered feeling, and I replied:—

“Hesperus, not even the safety of my mother shall tempt me. Sin is more dreadful than death, holiness more to be desired than glory. I am inspired with wisdom and strength beyond my own comprehension ; I know that you fell from holiness when you renounced the service of the Lord of Heaven : still lower are you debased this day.

“You ask my love ; the gift would be fatal, the union accursed. So far, you may be restored. If I yield to your persuasion we shall sink, but not together, into everlasting perdition.”

I then drew forth a small dagger, which since the visit of the Immortals I had always carried, and spoke again : —

“I know not what spirit moves me. I love you not, O Hesperus, yet would I plunge this weapon into my own heart to save you from the sin of my embrace.”

I held the point of the dagger firmly upon my bosom, and Hesperus, after gazing upon me in astonishment, silently withdrew.

Not in vain, O Aleemon, didst thou warn thy child ; not in vain did thy heart grow chill beneath the deadly blight ! And yet — the thread of my fate is twined with that of Hesperus.

GREATER CHANGE.

Sippara.

Palace of Light, North Tower.

Fourth Moon.

O INCREDIBLE mutation of human affairs ! One month ago I was an orphan child, laboring unknown and uncared for in a lonely forest ; now I am the daughter of a queen, in a marble palace, attended by slaves, looking out from the midst of sumptuous appointments upon the splendors of the richest city in the world.

Day is just breaking, — the hour when we were wont to commence our early toil, that we might rest through the hot and drowsy hour of noontide ; but here night is turned into day, and in the glare of ten thousand lamps feasting and revelry fill up the passing hours. I have just returned from such a scene ; but before sleep seals mine eyes, I must record the events of the last few fateful days.

After Hesperus left me in the cypress-grove, I turned away and wandered alone upon the bank of the river. Swollen by heavy rains, it hurried on with whirling eddies, repeating the old sound in agitation and unrest ; the whole air was filled with

electric uneasiness, the winds rushed wildly around, the leaves bristled on the trees. A flutter and a stir, then Elbeth's voice calling from the avenue, —

“Come, Seola, come, my child!”

As we drew near the dwelling a bewildering scene met the eye. It was so like the pictures in an ancient manuscript I had just finished reading (“The History of King Irad,” most famous monarch of the Land of Nod), that I could scarce persuade myself this was not a dream. Objects I had never before seen were easily recognized, and I gave them their appropriate names. How wonderful did everything appear to my uninitiated vision, revealed in the bright morning sunshine!

Before the entrance of our dwelling stood a huge golden chariot, lined, cushioned, and canopied with a soft shining fabric of palest hue. Yoked to the royal car were six white elephants with harness and trappings of scarlet and gold. Mounted upon the back of each huge beast was a black dwarf robed in scarlet and holding a guiding wand in his hand. In front and rear were seen a band of gigantic men, clad also in scarlet, with black plumes upon their heads, and marshalled in battle array. These I knew must be the terrible beings

of whom my father had spoken, — Darvands, the offspring of angels and women. Strong and beautiful were they, but the expression of their faces made me recoil, and even fly for protection to the side of Lucifer and Hesperus, between whom Lebuda stood, never half so lovely and radiant as at this moment. Depending from her head and enveloping her perfect figure was a transparent veil through which gleamed a white robe, — alas! not of linen, but of a texture similar to the blue and silver garment of the Lord Lucifer, who stood haughty and impatient while he waited my coming.

“Seola,” said my mother in deprecating tones, “wilt thou not go with us?”

Trembling with consternation, but strong in courage not my own, I replied, —

“Our garden is overflowed, our date-trees are destroyed by lightning, our camels and kine have perished, my father and Charmos are dead; I can but go with you. God save me from sin!”

At the last words a hiss arose from the giants and a scowl overspread the features of Lucifer; his hand grasped the hilt of his sword, but Hesperus stepped quickly to the front, and, raising his hand significantly, said, —

“My lord, the maiden is mine.”

“Give me one moment to prepare,” I cried, “and I will accompany you.”

I hastened to the study, and with the assistance of Elbeth placed in a basket the manuscripts and writing materials of Aleemon, and the amethyst cylinder presented by him on my last birthday ; I covered all with a web of fine linen, and gave it in charge of the black dwarfs. For one instant I yielded to the sharp pang of separation.

“Farewell to the happy past,” I cried, “farewell to the home of my heart, to forest, bower, and river, and to my father’s grave, a sad farewell !”

Then I returned to the waiting group. Lucifer and Lebuda were already seated in the chariot. Elbeth and myself were directed to occupy a screened apartment on one side of the car. Hesperus took a place opposite, and obedient to a command from Lucifer, the gorgeous cavalcade moved forward without the slightest obstruction. This was indeed a marvel, for we were in the depths of a tangled forest. I now perceived what had caused the unusual noises of the night. The trees had been felled and a broad highway constructed ; thus we passed swiftly without jar or sound.

The Darvands were arranged with precision in advance and rear, but none were permitted to approach the chariot ; silent and sullen, they ran with measured tread, subdued by fear of the royal displeasure.

For some hours the scenery and surroundings were familiar : dense forest, overarching trees, birds and blossoms like those of the Hermitage ; but presently we emerged into a vast plain, where no trees obstructed the sunlight nor glancing shadows checkered the pathway. The broad day glared from low meadows and flashed from sluggish streams. At a distance were cities glimmering in the light ; in the near cornfields and vineyards laborers toiled in the sun and looked up with stealthy glance as the train passed by.

Night was now approaching. The journey which had occupied Aleemon for four days had been performed by the fleet elephants in a few hours. We were drawing near Sippara. During our progress the voices of Lucifer and Lebuda were often heard in earnest conversation, but with sense absorbed in our new and changeful surroundings, and soul preoccupied with conjecture as to an inscrutable future, I gave little heed to their discourse.

As I seriously meditated my soul became enlightened and many doubtful matters were made plain. When the dull pressure of sense is gone, how clear the vision ! Troops fill the sky and spectres walk the earth, voices are on the breeze, all nature speaks. But, gloom or glory, accents loud or low, the spirit hath no fear.

And I heard a voice, as it were the breath of the wind, saying, "Fear not, little one, the Devas cannot compel the resolute, righteous soul. Thou hast set thy face to do the will of the Most High ; be thou faithful unto the end. The time is at hand."

Then was brought to mind the marvellous deliverance of my father's brother, also in what way the strength of Hesperus had become weakness, and I prayed earnestly, "God of the Prophet, be thou my defence."

SIPPARA IN THE SUNLIGHT.

As the last rays of the setting sun streamed over the landscape, we passed the gorge in Mount Hermon where Aleemon had parted from his brother the prophet, and I beheld, with the fresh delight of a child of the wilderness, the magnificent city and valley of Sippara, seat of the empire of Lucifer.

Its marble towers and palaces glittered with gold; statues and fountains gleamed white among fern-palms, spice-groves, and gardens, where falling waters sparkled in the sunset fire. Along its paved streets, throngs of people and carriages were moving, and a confused hum mingled with the fragrance ascending from grove and garden. Through the midst of the city flowed a broad river, and upon its bosom, reflecting the warm colors of the sky, boats with silken sails were gliding, while myriads of unseen bells, fitfully shaken by the evening breeze, filled the air with sound more musical and soothing than the murmur of bees at noontide.

Upon the mountain top was a lofty building from which all the surrounding country could be overlooked; this, I afterward learned, is called Lucifer's Tower, the place where the great monarch watches the motion of the stars, or holds consultation with his angelic confederates.

At the right of this imposing edifice stood another, vastly larger and more wonderful, the glorious Palace of Light. It was built upon massive arches of stone, in shape like a star, thus enclosing a great court. Upon the long lines of wall, which formed the star-points, rose marble structures, miracles of beauty, and toward the sunset and sunrise, and to the north and south, four lofty towers, overlaid with gold, aspired to reach the skies. Upon the highest of these a tall shaft was erected, and around it was entwined the monstrous image of a winged serpent. As the breeze struck its pinions it writhed around the standard, and the scales of green and the fiery eyes glittered like those of living creatures.

Below the Tower of Lucifer was a fair lake wherein were floating gardens of exceeding beauty.

"That place," said Elbeth, with a shudder, "I well remember; it is the Lake of Sacrifice."

And now, as the royal train entered an avenue of spice-trees leading to the city, Lucifer checked our advance, and dismissed the Darvands, whose superhuman strength had, during the day, kept pace with the swift elephants. To avoid their bold gaze I turned toward the mountain, and saw, upon the declivity, a group which at once attracted my attention. In advance was a dignified man and three younger persons, who were directing the removal of timber which had been cut from the dense groves far in the heights. The halt of the chariot brought this party to rest, giving us an opportunity to observe them more closely.

The eldest person, evidently the father, was of handsome, grave, even melancholy aspect. His flowing beard and peculiar expression caused my heart to throb with mournful memories, for I imagined I could trace a resemblance to my beloved father.

Two of the young men were dark and stern, but the other was fair and stately as a palm-tree. He pushed from his white brow the curling locks, and surveyed the royal train with grave curiosity until his eyes rested upon the chariot. In a moment there came to his face a flush and bright

consciousness like recognition, and, as we moved forward, he seemed about to follow.

We passed from sight, and my cheeks burned with shame, for had I not too earnestly returned his gaze?

But why distress myself? Why care for the stranger I may never meet again, and who, perchance, forgot me before I reached the city?

The sun set, the glory died out of the scene, a chill pervaded the gray atmosphere as we passed under a grand archway in the southern wall of the palace and entered the magnificent court. Depressed though I had suddenly become, I could but marvel at the wonderful architecture. Carvings, inscriptions, and tinted images that rivalled their living models, everywhere met the eye; while through tessellated footpaths and carriage-ways pressed an expectant throng who kneeled upon the ground and hailed the monarch's arrival with shouts of adulation. As the chariot halted before the most superb of the corner towers, where gay courtiers stood in waiting, Lucifer lifted Lebuda in his arms; together they floated, rather than walked, up the marble stairway, and vanished from sight in the broad illuminated hall. I followed in

great bewilderment. There was no abrupt sound or motion, like retreating footsteps, only the noiseless glide of a serpent.

Through long corridors, where gilded pillars upheld the vaulted ceiling, we were escorted to apartments in the northern tower. Here every imaginable luxury awaited us, and obsequious slaves stood ready to anticipate our wants. The chambers appropriated to Lebuda exceed the wildest dreams of imagination. The ceiling of the principal apartment is arched, and painted to represent the star-lit sky, in which the day-star outshines all others. Transparent curtains, draped from the centre of the dome, soften but do not obscure its lustre. Upon the walls are gorgeous tapestried scenes of war and the chase. Always triumphant, the magnificent form of the great monarch is seen in every posture, displaying strength and beauty.

In the small banquet-room are portrayed the revels of the gayest and most dissolute of the Devas. The figures are not pleasing, but the flowers and fruit rival those upon the tables, heaped in golden baskets.

The bedroom is like a garden of roses. There

again is reproduced the majestic but voluptuous form of the Light-Bearer reclining beneath sheltering vines, or wandering through sequestered walks in company with one alone, whose lineaments reproduce but too faithfully Lebuda's beauty.

The bath is a scalloped pearl-shell, into which flows perfumed water. Mats are spread upon the jasper floors, soft and bright like grassy lawn sprinkled with flowers. Everywhere glows the action, color, and warmth of life, and a light like that of the full moon pervades the balmy air.

Fatigued by long travel and unwonted excitement, I soon took leave of my happy mother for the night, and retired to the adjoining chamber, prepared for my especial use.

What a contrast to that which I had just left! Cool, colorless, sombre, a realm of thought, not sense; wall and ceiling all of ivory, polished and carved in leafy boughs, flowers, birds, and butterflies; long mirrors reflecting beautiful designs, and startling me with the reduplication of my own white image standing entranced and motionless. Upon the marble floor of blue and gray were mats of bleached wool and goat's-hair. Chairs and divans invited repose, and in a small recess

stood a dainty table containing every utensil for writing.

Through the high ceiling a subdued light entered, etherealizing every object.

It was a dream, — a dream of peace and purity and spirituality. Above the couch had been placed an inscription of frosted silver inlaid upon ivory.

“Rest, sweet soul,
In the home of spirit.”

But for the caution, now become habitual, I should have given expression to the rapture such beauty inspired; for I thought, “Here would I ever rest!” But, looking more intently, I saw, what had at first escaped notice, the characters used for the words “soul” and “spirit” were those implying personality.

“Rest, sweet Seola,
In the home of thy Spirit.”

Ah, Hesperus! thy love has prepared this welcome; but the home of a Star-Spirit cannot be Seola's place of rest.

Then I forgot fatigue in the sense of danger, and remained a long time absorbed in thought.

Upon one side of the chamber a tall screen of ivory lace-work stood before a broad arched door,

opening upon a balcony. The air of the chamber had suddenly grown oppressive, and I went forth into the silent night.

Beneath was a garden of exceeding beauty ; thickets of trees and parterres of flowers interspersed lawns where gleamed alabaster vases, marble images, and jets of water rising misty and ghost-like as they were swayed by the night-wind.

All was secluded and dusky, save the light from an extraordinary fountain in the midst of the garden, where, instead of water, were bubbling waves of fire. As these occasionally shot upward in flame, the unnatural light penetrated the recesses of the grove, and by the fitful flash I perceived a stately figure pacing the dim aisles, whose grand proportions and dignified carriage could not be mistaken.

The solitary wanderer paused as if his attention were attracted. I would have retired unobserved, but in an instant he was by my side and detained me gently, saying, —

“Do not fear ; never shall one curl of thy golden hair shrink from the unwelcome touch of Hesperus. O Seola, beautiful, beloved, look forth into the western sky ! Seest thou, brightest of yon celestial group, a star radiant and tender as thine own

eyes? There once I reigned, happy and pure. I would return unto mine ancient realm. I have seen thy soul, Lily of light, and I tire of earth, its baseness and sin.

“O my adored, if thou wilt be mine, we will fly to that fair world, leaving earth and its inglorious mortality. The joys of sense I now resign; thou dost not fear to die: with one kiss, the first and last, I will gently take thy breath, and thy strong soul, united with my spirit, will rise to yonder star, there to reign forever. Upon the vault of heaven I read: ‘*The Hour of Fate. Seola guides!*’”

The majestic form drooped, the haughty head bent low, the seraphic voice, sweet and sad as the wind-harp, trembled. “Have pity, Seola!”

The tenderest chords of my nature vibrated to the appeal for sympathy, to the grief of such a being. He constrained me by his woe, he entranced me by the melancholy of his eyes; again I felt the strange magnetism that had so nearly overpowered me at the Hermitage, and I cried out in an agony of distracting emotion:—

“O God, deliver me from the power of this Spirit! Save him from himself; save him from my love! Why are the creatures of God so tempted?”

Then a voice fell from heaven, saying, "To show forth his great power!"

With that strength returned, and I raised my head; the Deva had left me.

Then I retired to my chamber and sat in anxious fear, far into the night. At length, reassured by continued quiet, the tumult in my breast was hushed, and I composed myself to record the adventures of this fateful journey.

A weight has fallen upon my soul, my heart is as lead, my steps falter, a discord enters life, harsh, intolerable. Yet listen, doubting Seola; does not a soft voice whisper, "The jarring symphony, the chord of suspense, prelude the eternal harmonies"?

* * * * *

The marriage, Lebuda informs me, will not be celebrated for several days; certain rites of purification are required, which with preparation of the wardrobe and decorations will cause delay.

This intelligence gives me hope; events may transpire to change entirely the aspect of affairs. Ah, how much that was unlooked for has occurred since the waning of the last moon!

* * * * *

THE DREAM.

I CANNOT rest; the gloom of this unholy place increases and overpowers my spirit. I had fallen asleep, and at that dread hour when the Giant Constellation plunges headward into the western waters, I perceived, but not by outward sense, two gaunt and ravening spectres stand by the bedside of my mother. Upon the forehead of one was stamped Murder, and upon the other Lust.

“She is mine,” said Murder.

“We will share her,” said the other.

“Agreed; we will share her *when the tide turns.*”

“O God,” I groaned, “save my deluded mother, and carry away these dreadful creatures, *when the tide turns.*”

With that the forms slowly vanished, and I awoke. The meaning of the vision is not revealed. I am perplexed, yet must I again betake myself to slumber, for trying scenes are before me.

THE PRINCESS SEOLA IN THE CITY
OF THE SUN.

IN the morning I visited Lebuda and found her surrounded by ladies of the court and artists preparing for the approaching ceremony. My presence was not required, and, learning that the grand monarch and his counsellor were to be absent during the day, I ventured into the halls of the Palace of Light. From the dome over the great colonnade a thousand lustres reflected the rays of the sun, revealing more perfectly than the lamps of evening the exquisite finish and decoration of the architecture, the colored mosaic of the floor, the brilliant paintings upon the walls and sculptured reliefs of the ceiling, where are portrayed love-scenes of the Immortals and beautiful women, battles between dragons and angels, triumphal processions, bands of strange captives, and representations of festivals and pageants, all the carvings tinted with the colors of life.

I saw many slaves and workmen employed as I

passed through a long marble gallery till I reached the eastern tower. Here, finding a curtained balcony, I went forth to enjoy the view of the city and valley which lay in that direction. Glory and grandeur far as the eye could reach!

The mountain-slope was beautified by walks and carriage-ways, groves, arbors, and fantastic structures. The shaded avenues converged towards the palace, and were at this hour filled with gay figures and elegantly appointed vehicles passing in an ever-changing, ever-renewed stream of life and beauty; while upon its lofty eminence the enormous serpent still twined and twisted like a thing of life. The buildings of the marble city harmonized in style with the Palace of Light: upon the highest point of each glittered a golden star, but at a distance, near the entrance of the valley, was a singular structure, entirely unlike the others, being of wood, bulky and low, without any attempted beauty of proportion, at which I wondered greatly.

And while I mused, a woman attended by a slave came through the open door and sat down on the opposite side of the balcony.

She was attired after the elegant but dissolute style of the palace, and though beautiful in face

and figure, had a worn and melancholy expression. I saluted her respectfully, and inquired if I should disturb her by remaining. She answered that these were her apartments, and that my presence was an honor. I then questioned her with regard to the low building in the distance, so incongruous with that scene of splendor. She answered, "That is Tebah, intended to float upon the great waters."

"A boat?" I exclaimed in astonishment. "It is far from the river, and much too large to float upon its surface."

"Yes," said the woman, with a scornful smile, "that enormous boat has been more than a hundred years in building, — the work of a fanatical old man and his sons, who believe that this valley will presently become a sea, upon which they will be securely borne while the floods continue. They declare that the God of heaven is displeased with the present state of the earth, and has determined to destroy all living beings.

"It may be true, as the old man says, that there is a God in heaven, but Lord Lucifer certainly possesses the world; all is now under his control: the princes of the earth," she added with a sigh, "have yielded to his might, and now that the

Prince of the Power of the Air" (here her voice sank to a whisper) "is subject to his will, none are left to oppose his majesty. So the foolish preacher has built his own tomb, which Lord Lucifer will consume by lightning some day, after his family are insnared within it."

Then said I, with increasing interest, —

"O my mistress, make known the name of the preacher!"

She answered: "He is called 'Noah, King of the Waters': unlike any other man of these times, he has taken but one wife; two of his sons have followed his example; but the third, who is by far the handsomest man in Sippara, has never married or even loved. The fair ones of Sippara would sacrifice a score of Darvands to see him at their feet, but the toils are spread in vain."

Musing, she added, "Ah, cruel Japhet, through love for thee, unhappy Sakontala died!"

Instantly my thought reverted to the group I had seen upon the mountain-side: the timber was for the building of Tebah; the patriarch was my father's brother, the resemblance was not accidental; the sons were my cousins; and the beautiful youth whose gaze had, I fear, found in my eyes a

too responsive answer, was the youngest son, he of whom the woman spoke. Why did I tremble lest I was in error? Ignorant of my interest in this family, she changed the subject, and with languid indifference said:—

“And are you not the daughter of the new queen? She is surpassingly beautiful, according to report, though mature, and may not hold sway longer than did the last favorite.”

“When did — the queen die?” I inquired.

“I know not if she be dead; ’t is but a moon’s quarter since she drank the amaranthine cup, and was placed in the crypt of immortality. It is said that Lord Lucifer can recall the sleepers, but I have been in this palace many long years, and have seen none come forth from that chamber. Why are the queens not warned, say you?”

“All remember the fate of that rash maid, who, to save her beloved mistress, spoke one word of caution, unavailing. For ages, sailors driven out of their course by wintry storms, have heard screams issue from the frozen caves of the lone rock Zem, where still the wretched Tamee suffers.

“Lucifer may offer to woman the cup immortal, but not from love.

“And I dare speak thus to you? O child, truth and honor, like a halo, encircle your brow, your eyes disarm doubt and jealousy, yet by this trust my life is endangered!

“Yet what care I? Long since I became apathetic, hopeless: even ambition dies in this smothering atmosphere; the reflections of the picture are bright, but the shades are midnight gloom. I know the secrets of this place too well. Would you know them? Then must your eyes be closed to sights that will sear, your hearing be dulled to the cry of pain and woe, love and pity must hold no place in your breast, and your heart be turned to stone. I am reckless and tired of life, or I would not speak thus. Suspicion lurks in every alcove; Revenge hides behind each column; Envy and Jealousy walk the corridors; Treachery and Conspiracy scarce conceal their malignant forms in the tapestried chambers; while Torture and Murder gloat over the work of the foul fiends in the vaults below. You are beautiful; take my advice, and secure the protection of a Deva or the son of a celestial, otherwise you will not be safe for one hour. Aurenion, my lord, is scribe to Hesperus the counsellor, and has access to the keys of the palace;

with him have I wandered through its secret recesses, and nerved my heart against despair by witnessing woes greater than my own."

Touched by pity for this unhappy woman, I asked her name and story, and how she had become an inmate of the Palace of Light.

THE STORY OF SIMOURGA THE SORCERESS.

“My name,” said the woman, “is Simourga ; I was born a thousand measures from Sippara, on the shores of the great inland sea, a land of perpetual spring, of beauty and delight. My father was a powerful prince, who governed a happy people by just and equal laws, for he was a worshipper of God. He refused the fealty and tribute exacted by Zamiel, a fierce Deva, who precipitated himself upon the earth after the descent of Lord Lucifer, and established his kingdom on the borders of the land in which for ages the dynasty of Napethos had borne sway. The monarchs of our line, who were warlike and wise, remained undisturbed after the other princes of the world succumbed to the Deva powers.

“O happy days, when in my father’s royal bark, with Angeros my betrothed for a companion, we sailed across the midland sea and passed the narrow gate of rocks which Giant Atlas tore asunder when he would reach the Atlantine shore ! To the

far west, upon the bosom of the deep, lay the Amber Isles, raised by the dwarfs of ocean in distant ages when Wandu and Wejas strove.

“Thither the light winds wafted us, and many months we remained in the land of unclouded skies and never-failing verdure, gathering gold and purple fruit, breathing health and delight from the air of ocean, till my father was summoned to defend his kingdom from an attack of the Devas. Vain struggle! Zamiel made alliance with Lord Lucifer. They united their armies of Darvands, strong, crafty, cruel warriors, and swept over our kingdom like fire across the stubble. Our city and palace were burned, the army slaughtered, my father, his generals and priests, were tortured. Anígeros was slain; my mother died of a broken heart; but I was taken to the court of Zamiel, and spared on account of my beauty.

“Accursed possession, it is leaving me now!

“I should have been the queen of Zamiel but for the arrival of a fairer captive; in that fortune favored me.

“I was married to the Darvand, and soon after our union, when the counsellor of Lord Lucifer came to the court of Zamiel upon an embassy,

Aurenion entered his service and removed to Sippara, for the queen had been strangled, and he feared from certain tokens that his father's fancy for me might return.

“Here have I lived, unhappy certainly, though with the most constant of the demigods, for Aurenion is encouraged to continence by his master, who condemns the universal license.

“When I came to this place I retained the impress of my early faith, but I have long since abandoned all expectation of intervention from Heaven. I have listened to tales of war and subjugation, to stories of mighty deeds by the immortal men; I have seen the unsparing cruelty and undisturbed domination of their giant sons, till I am convinced that faith in God is a fiction of the imagination. The weak minds of the common herd crave a religion, and Lucifer has supplied it in the worship of his symbol, the serpent.

“The kingdoms of earthly princes have passed away,—all but those of Blackland, which the Devas never visit, except to obtain wild animals or dwarfs of humankind. God, if there be one, cares not for men, nor takes notice of their affairs; he leaves the earth to my lords Lucifer, Zamiel, Hesperus, Asmo-

deus, Sanyanza, Obora, Satan, and many others, who reign in distant regions, and pay allegiance to the Light-Bearer, who seduced them from heaven and placed them in power.

“No doubt thou art still deluded by fantastic hope: this will soon be dissipated, and thou wilt acknowledge that God has forsaken the earth, thou wilt abandon the fallacy of prayer, and curse thy fate and the Devas, as I do at this moment.”

THE OGMYRS.

ASTONISHED by such a history, and shocked at the impiety of Simourga, I hesitated to reply ; just then a procession of strange figures, passing a narrow pathway which led from the city, diverted our attention. In advance was a band of men, hideous in aspect, with scarlet feathers on their heads, upon their bodies red tunics emblazoned with yellow dragons, and in their hands sharp scimitars.

“The Ogmyrs !” said Simourga, with a shudder.

“Who are the Ogmyrs ?” I inquired.

“Priests of the Devas who attend Ferrusharraba, the Great Serpent, and offer the sacrifice upon which he and his brood are fed, every day at noon.”

I cast another timid glance at the procession of Ogmyrs: their cruel and unrelenting faces were occasionally turned backward toward a line of naked men who tottered after them with feet hampered by heavy chains and hands bound behind their backs ; their heads were bowed, and their mournful wail betokened fear and despair.

“These,” said Simourga, “are victims about to be slain at the Lake of Serpents, receiving punishment perchance for some slight offence to our masters, or without pretext sacrificed in malignant wantonness to satisfy the clamor of the superstitious and imbruted crowd.”

Appalled at the sight of such monstrous cruelty I arose in great fear, and hastened to the solitude of my own apartment lest I should witness some other horror.

Toward evening I was roused by the entrance of Lebuda, now doubly radiant in the gorgeous robes and gems presented by her enamored lord.

“Seola,” said she, “our simple life at the Hermitage has unfitted us for the splendor and magnificence now at our command ; this royal state confuses me ; I fail to realize the proper bearing of events ; sometimes my heart misgives me, and I fear the change is evil ; but these doubts are the result of ignorance and unfamiliarity with the world. The Lord Lucifer is grand and noble ; he excuses my deficiency, and devotes himself to my happiness ; he would exalt me to his own lofty standard : thus gratitude, as well as love, bids me overcome every scruple.

“ This evening the crystal court is to be illuminated in honor of our arrival, and I am to be presented to the people of Sippara as their future queen. You are invited to share in the ceremonies of the hour : slaves will soon place at your disposal robes of honor and jewels fit for the daughter of a queen. O my child, do not refuse to accompany me, and participate in my fortune and glory ! You are the only tie that binds me to the past ; I may yet wish to retrace my steps ; let not this link be broken.”

“ I will accompany you,” I answered, “ but let not the queen be displeased if I refuse the jewels and robes of state. The gifts of Lucifer would ill become the daughter of Aleemon.”

Then I wept, and continued, —

“ O my mother, the change is naught but evil ! You will never retrace your steps.”

“ You are excited, and speak wildly,” said Lebuda. “ I will leave you to calm yourself before the night comes on.”

My appearance must have justified her words, for I felt the strange tremor and flush, the supernatural power of speech and sight, which since the night of Aleemon’s death has often inspired me.

Lebuda retired, and presently came maids and eunuchs bearing the gifts of Lucifer, and also a jewel-casket of exceeding beauty sealed with the signet of Hesperus.

After they had retired, I laid aside the royal gifts, enwrapped myself in a veil of finest linen, transparent and white as the marvellous flower that never sees the sun, and thus awaited the signal of illumination.

JAPHET.

WE entered the crystal court amid a blaze of light, with sounds of ravishing music and acclamations of the crowd. A band of Darvands and a body-guard of blacks escorted us to a high dais in the centre of the court, where Lucifer with royal majesty awaited the queen ; and as she, in robes of more than earthly splendor, took her seat by his side, a tempest of applause from the spectators fairly shook the lofty building. I was placed in a golden chair upon a step of the dais, and for a moment gazed enchanted with the magnificence of the architecture. The inner court was surmounted by a lofty crystal dome thickly hung with glittering prisms, a thousand pillars of jacinth intertwined by golden wreaths upheld the immense arch, and the marble walls were made airy by delicate and graceful perforations through which the cool night-breeze could penetrate.

In glancing over the gay throng, my eyes rested upon a figure standing in an open archway, which at once startled me and riveted my attention. Tall,

graceful, serious, in this white-robed figure my eyes and heart recognized the youth of the mountain, whom I doubted not was the youngest son of the Prophet. O, could I but have speech with him, one of my own kindred, a man unpolluted in the midst of universal corruption, one I could safely trust! But if this were not the young man I had seen, if Simourga had mistaken his character, if he should have no interest in my welfare, or should despise the daughter of Lucifer's queen! These doubts rent my bosom, and destroyed all interest in the scene before me. I was dimly conscious, as in a confused dream, of wonderful feats performed by men and wild beasts, of enchantments, intoxicating odors, dancing, music, and feasting; but one thought absorbed me, Shall I speak with this young stranger? Does he regard me with kindness?

The night wore slowly away; I remained motionless upon the step of the dais, and still in the doorway the white figure was seen.

But although I had eyes for none other, I was not myself unobserved. Gyar, a favorite son of Lucifer, stood near, regarding me with bold and insolent admiration, often addressing me in language of offensive flattery. I grew alarmed, and was long-

ing to change my position, when Hesperus, the master of ceremonies, accosted me in tones melancholy rather than presumptuous.

“Seola, wouldst thou go forth from this place?”

I hesitated to reply, for, more than present discomfort, I feared his solitary escort. He seemed to divine my thought, for a deeper shadow overspread his grand features, as he gave the order to a band of black eunuchs:—

“Attend the princess whithersoever she will.”

“Ho! ho!” said the Dārvand with a leer; “what careth my Lord Hesperus, the Passionless?”

The eyes of the Deva flashed fire: he raised his hand in menace, and bestowed upon my tormentor a look so terrible that he shrank back in silence.

Fearing the consequence of a moment's delay, I directed the guard to take me to the open air, and passed quickly through the crowd, whose rude gaze and free remarks made the breath of night doubly welcome as we drew near an entrance to the garden.

Then was made manifest the guiding hand of the Almighty; for it came to pass that, when the black men essayed to reach the northern tower, a band of dancing-girls entered the court, and we were pressed backward by the throng to the eastern side,

where still remained the unknown youth. He respectfully stepped aside as we passed. I seated myself upon the balcony, and the cool breeze soon restored my courage.

The wonderful scene I then beheld is impressed upon memory, ineffaceable in outline, color, and shading. The moon hung low in the deep blue sky ; in the east could be seen the faint flush of dawn ; the palms and acacias rustled and whispered secrets of the night and of coming day ; blending with their mysterious breath were sounds of revelry in the palace, music and the measured tread of dancers, the harsh voice of giants, the sycophantic tones of men, light assured laughter of beautiful women, musical accents of the high-born Immortals, sighs of tired and panting slaves. The glare from illuminated hall and dome, shimmering through panel and archway, shone out upon cool terrace and projecting balcony, out upon obelisk, statue, and fountain ; it mingled strangely with the perfume of the tropical night and beams of the setting moon which crossed, but did not dispel, the black ominous shadows moving noiselessly through this paradise of sin. At the farther end of the balcony stood the blacks in fixed immo-

bility, and relieved against that dark background, in the full blaze of glory which streamed through the archway, stood the white-robed stranger like an angel of light. His earnest eyes met mine with entreaty ; his hand was half extended.

A sudden sense of the supreme importance of the moment, a feeling that the golden opportunity of my life was passing away, that he would vanish in the darkness and be lost forever, overpowered all reserve. Unmindful of the exposed situation, of prying eyes around, and of the danger that might follow, after a moment of hesitation I bade him approach. He came forward, and by a manner composed and respectful at once reassured me.

“Fair princess, you are Seola, daughter of the queen ; I am Japhet, son of the Prophet ; hopelessly separated are we by worldly distinctions, and yet the rapt purity of your face, the simplicity of your dress, the indifference or distaste you manifest to the pageantry within, give token that by sympathy we are not divided. Do you ask why I am voluntarily in scenes where you appear only by compulsion ? Know, then, — O beautiful stranger, forgive my boldness, — that I saw you in the chariot of Lucifer on the evening of your entrance into Sippara,

and the hope of meeting you once more led me to enter the palace, and join an assembly whose character and amusement my soul abhors. I dared not hope to hold converse with you, and now that I have the opportunity, with thronging thoughts and desires I wait your favor."

Hearing this, my heart revived, and I answered,—

"O son of the Prophet, permit me to make known my brief history. You called my name rightly, Seola, and I am daughter of the queen, but my father was Aleemon, the Sage of Sippara, son of Lamech and brother of Noah."

With heightened color and joy in his eyes he drew nearer, and said,—

"O princess, thou art my cousin! Thou, the daughter of Aleemon, I see thee at last."

Then, taking my hand, he trembled, grew pale, and seemed unable to repress the low, rapid words:—

"Seola, your face and voice are an inspiration, a revelation of which I have dreamed, for which I have prayed; you are the fulfilment of my heart's prophecy, the promise of Heaven. Forgive this abruptness, this vehemence. I am amazed; I cannot control myself. I have waited for you so long;

yet now all my former years seem like a dream, and this brief moment, the waking to life and reality."

Though much affected by these words, I repressed emotion, and answered quietly, —

"We are indeed of near kin ; the discovery gives me inexpressible happiness. There is much to be spoken, but the night wanes ; to remain longer in this place would invite observation and danger. Even now I perceive the glance of Hesperus directed toward us. We must part."

But Japhet could not refrain. "Dear cousin," said he, "ask me not to leave you, — rather come with me to my father's house, where among kindred you will find safety. You cannot realize the dangers of this glittering palace. The thin film of splendor scarce hides its sin and crime. If you are again immersed in the tide of false glory, I fear you will flit from me forever, as your image has faded from my longing sight, in presentient but unsubstantial dreams ; naught but a miracle can save you in this accursed place."

Again my mind was suddenly enlightened, and the purpose of the Most High revealed. The gift of prophecy was bestowed, for my own salvation and that of others ; and I answered confidently, —

“The miracle has been performed. I am possessed of a talisman more potent than the wiles and violence of Deva or Darvand. We shall meet again.”

At this moment there was a tumult in the court, and a herald's voice announced the retirement of the queen.

I motioned Japhet to leave me. He vaulted lightly over the railing of the balcony, and in a moment was lost in the darkness below. I gave the order to the blacks, and they moved toward the northern tower. As I passed the son of Lucifer, his bold eyes saluted me, and he muttered, —

“The princess is fairer than the queen; her step outgraces even the dancing of Zulah. Where were my father's eyes when he preferred the mother? By his immortal body I swear this is a morsel fit for a god. The Deva thwarted me, but if he win not the damsel, she is mine. Our lords are delicate in their wooing; a Darvand doth not hesitate nor relent.”

His brutal expression and villanous language were terrifying. I hastened the guard, and unmolested reached the chamber.

Here have I endeavored to review calmly my

perilous situation and the adventures of the evening which seem so unreal. I could doubt my own identity, but the sacred manuscripts of my father lie before me, and in the mirrors which adorn this magnificent apartment, are reflected the familiar form and dress of the Child of the Hermitage. Now will I lie down to rest, and, forgetting these new conditions, wander in dreams through the cypress-groves, and listen once more to the voice of Aleemon blending with the murmur of the river.

* * * * *

When this journal was laid aside for the night my adventures were not over. With a sense of danger averted, and a vague foreboding of peril to come, I sought my couch. The lights in the chamber were extinguished, there was no moon in the sky, and pale starlight coming through the window made every object shadowy and undefined. A creeping chill came over me as a fresh breeze swept suddenly through the chamber. Was I dreaming?

I opened wide my eyes and perceived with terror that a large panel in the opposite wall moved inward, and the shaggy head of the abhorred Gyar peered from behind it. In an instant he seized

me with giant grip, enveloped my head in the bed-covering and darted through the open wall, down an unfamiliar corridor, toward a staircase which I knew must lead to the vaults below. Whirled rapidly along, helpless in an iron clutch, I struggled in vain to make audible my smothered screams. For deeds of violence and cries of despair produced no impression upon dull sleepers well accustomed to such sounds; no curious eye looked forth from the silent dormitories, no vigilant watchman raised his hand to interfere, as the Darvand fled swiftly down the darkened hall to the steep and fatal descent.

But just as I felt myself lowered, an astral light filled the air, the arms of Gyar were wrenched asunder, and alone he was plunged headlong into the darksome pit, while the wrathful voice of Hesperus rung through the stillness of the night:—

“Lustful monster, insatiate ravisher, wouldst thou pluck fruit of the celestial Persea? Wouldst thou dissolve this pearl of Paradise in the cup of thy sin?”

Again I was carried rapidly through the long corridor back to my own apartment and placed upon the bed. Swift and sudden as his coming

was the departure of the Deva. There was a profound sigh, the displaced panel moved into its former position, a sound of closing bolts and bars followed, then silence, solitude, and shade.

I now felt that safety was assured, and with supreme gratitude for the marvellous deliverance, thoroughly exhausted I sank into slumber.

THE SORCERESS AND THE PROPHET.

I SLEPT soundly till midday, and was then roused by a voice at the chamber door which I recognized as that of Simourga. She called my name, and when I admitted her offered to assist at my toilet. The extreme simplicity of my dress rendered aid unnecessary, and after some hesitation she spoke again :—

“ Seola, I believed that all fear of God and sympathy for my own kind were dead in this withered heart ; but your innocence and purity, sweet child of the wilderness, have brought back vividly the memory of early days, when like you I was uncontaminated by the wickedness of the world, when in faith I knelt with my princely father to offer the daily sacrifice, when we mingled our tears and lamentations at the tomb of the brother beloved and early lost, when with pleasure I pondered upon the wisdom and piety of the ancients and dreamed I might one day emulate their noble deeds. Why was I brought to this evil place, where in the pur-

suit of power and pleasure I have forgotten myself and God? Seola, I love you because you are what I once was, and I abhor myself for what I have now become: you may perchance escape downfall and perdition, but how can I be restored? For the Sorceress of Sippara there is no atonement, only the dreadful end.

“But what folly has seized me that I bemoan my fate in this insane manner? Let us drink and be gay; man dies and Pleasure flies; we must keep pace while she wings her way over banquet-halls and perfumed couches.”

With that, she took from her bosom a small amphora of transparent jade, and pouring out a few crystals, round and red like drops of blood, threw them into the lustral, where, according to the custom of the palace, fragrant oils were kept burning to perfume and purify the air. As the tiny balls touched the flame, they burst with a ringing sound, and the apartment was filled by a dense mist of pungent, intoxicating fumes, in which every object was intensified, and the sorceress herself appeared the incarnation of youth and beauty. The vapors were slowly resolved into the semblance of moving figures, surrounded by all sen-

suous delights, while strains of voluptuous music enchanted the ear. In the midst of this bewildering scene I perceived a well-remembered Deva kneeling before my own glorified image. My brain was dazed, but, conscious there was danger in such delight, I exerted to the utmost my fast failing will, and fled from the atmosphere of enchantment to the balcony, where, in the fresh air and sunlight, I soon regained full possession of reason.

In a few moments the unnatural scene had vanished, and Simourga came to me in great agitation, saying, —

“For the first time Maya fails, but Homa remains; drink, fair girl; let us quaff the cup of Homa, — nectar of the Immortals, longed for by men; antidote of sorrow, balm of memory, dissipator of fear, — give me a draught that I may steep my brain in forgetfulness. Where is the Homa, girl?”

Her excitement was painful as she returned and searched the apartment wildly: long habit had again overmastered an awakening conscience.

With profound pity I took her hand and said, —

“Simourga, that for which you search is not here; the Homa and your enchantments are alike dangerous; they do not heal, they poison the soul;

but I have a cordial for a mind diseased : listen, and I will tell you of this medicament. Simourga, the Devas are cruel, unrelenting, full of hate. The Almighty is compassionate and forgiving ; the restorative to virtue and happiness is belief in his mercy."

"But I cannot hope, and for me there is no mercy ; you know not, simple one, the extent of my wickedness. I must drink the Homa ; it stupefies the brain, and yet, when its power is over, I wake to greater horror. Whither can I turn ? Only to death, and —"

After a moment of silence she exclaimed, —

"What day is this ? The day when the Prophet warns the scoffing crowd, — almost the very hour, — hasten ! hasten ! He is wise, he is pure ; no drop of Homa has passed his lips, confusing reason and weakening will ; he can instruct us. We will go to the mountain-side ; the chariot awaits my call, the name of Aurenion upon its front is a passport, though all men in the kingdom of Lucifer know and fear Simourga the Sorceress. Yea, to the Prophet will I go, though my power be thus broken and my life the forfeit !"

Anxious to enlighten Simourga, and also to look

once more upon the face of Aleemon's brother, I gladly acceded to this proposal, and we were soon on our way through the city to the mountain. I was delighted with the changing scenes of the busy marts, so new and unfamiliar, the buildings of various forms and uses, the long rows of colossal images which bordered the highways, as we entered the royal avenue where dwell the giant sons of Lucifer. The road was broad, so that fifty chariots could pass at once ; upon its borders were gardens of exceeding beauty, ornamented with flowers and fountains. Stately peacocks paced the white walks, birds of gorgeous plumage flitted through the shrubbery, and golden fishes darted across the crystal basins.

Beyond these gardens stood palaces sculptured and painted with various devices, and made gay by silken banners which contrasted with the foliage of tall trees.

Before every mansion stood a slender obelisk, intertwined with living vines now full of scarlet blossoms. Upon the green turf were little people disporting in capricious joy, whose graceful figures, quick motions, and innocent faces were an unexpected delight. They were the first I had ever seen, and in a transport of admiration I exclaimed, —

“O the children, the beautiful children!”

Simourga looked upon me with surprise.

“You were brought up in a desert, in utter ignorance of the world; you have never seen children, and yet you recognize them in an instant, and give them the appropriate name. And so it is in all things; without mistake, you accord to new and unfamiliar objects their proper designation. Your power of speech is marvellous; whence comes it?”

I answered, smiling, but somewhat puzzled, —

“Is it not so with every person? It was certainly thus with Adam, our primogenitor; the word must have occurred to him, as to me, with the occasion for its use. Indeed, I am myself often surprised by this power: I do not remember that I possessed it before Aleemon’s death. Perhaps it is the special gift of God.”

As I mused upon these things, the chariot crossed a bridge that spans the river at this point, and, looking intently into the stream, I questioned my companion:—

“Simourga, dost thou perceive shells in the deep water, and strange creatures creeping among them?”

“I see nothing but sand,” she replied.

Gazing into the sky, again I asked, “Canst thou

see the stars shining dimly in the bright glare of day?"

And she answered, "I see but sunlight and the floating clouds."

Once more I anxiously demanded, "Does the wind bring to thy hearing sounds and words unlike those we utter?"

Simourga looked up in alarm. "This is insanity; thou art ill, Seola."

I replied, "Nay, dear Simourga, I am in perfect health; but I would learn from thee that concerning the experience of others which I dare not ask of my mother or Elbeth lest they should think me childish and vain, for sometimes I do perceive the things of which I have spoken."

Just then we reached the heart of Sippara, and here, on either side, were rows of colossal statues, the most fearful and imposing in this city of wonders. Effigies of monster serpents coiled upon the earth with long outstretched necks, from which pointed forward great pinions meeting in mid-air. The effect of these hideous forms was frightful. I shivered as we passed into their shadow. I would have questioned Simourga of the wonders around us, but she placed her hands over my eyes, and bade the charioteer drive more swiftly.

As we emerged into the country, many people were seen going toward the mountain. We followed, and were soon in presence of the famous Prophet, and, alighting from our car, drew near to listen. Standing with his three sons upon a low terrace, he addressed the dense crowd; his face was solemn even to sadness, and the words that met our ears were these:—

“Lo! for a hundred years have I lifted up my voice in warning and entreaty; my soul has been daily vexed with your abominable deeds; you have wallowed in gluttony and drunkenness, in lust and lechery; you have said to Avarice, ‘Thou art our father,’ and to Sensuality, ‘Thou art our mother.’ Reckless and besotted, you have embraced Destruction.

“O abject slaves of a merciless despot, your manhood is lost, your lives are forfeited, your souls are doomed! With strong groaning and tears, with fasting and sacrifice, have I sought the Almighty on your behalf. Repent! Repent, before the thunders of Heaven shall burst upon your guilty heads!”

Then throwing up his arms wildly, he exclaimed,—

“O God, it is vain, all in vain! The day of wrath is at hand!

“The night-winds whisper a dreadful secret; in far-off regions I hear mutterings of the approaching storm; the ominous roar of ocean is borne upon the blast; it gapes to devour its prey. The seals of Death and Hell are broken, and Vengeance rushes forth on the wings of Destruction. Too late! too late! you will hear my voice no more; the Prophet’s work is ended!”

He ceased, and there was a great commotion in the crowd; but I gave no heed to it, for Simourga, shaken like a reed in the wind, cried out, —

“O Prophet of God, I repent! Is there no mercy for me?”

He heard her, and was about to approach, when a malignant demon who hovered behind a black cloud swooped from the sky, and aimed a dart at the unconscious Prophet; but an archangel, till that moment unperceived, rose in his might, and, crying out, “Thine adversary is near, O Apollyon!” struck the other with great fury; and a battle began, so fearful that I swooned and saw not the end.

Presently I recovered, and found myself supported in the arms of my cousin, who, attracted by the cries of Simourga, had discovered me as I fell.

“Thou art cold and pale, beloved,” said Japhet, in alarm; “thy form is rigid and thy gaze fixed; thou wilt not so soon leave me? This cannot be thy death!”

Then, suddenly inspired, I answered, —

“Not in thy arms shall I yield up my parting breath; in the last hour of life I shall repose upon the breast of one fairer even than thou, but so much resembling thee, O Japhet!”

“Seola,” said he, with awe, “hast thou, like my father, prophetic power?”

And I replied solemnly, “God knoweth.”

I turned toward Simourga, and found her engaged in discourse with the Prophet, who, unconscious of the attack upon his life (for his supernatural perception extends not to vision), was absorbed in giving her instruction and comfort. He did not notice my presence, nor that his son was with me. I therefore stepped quietly into the chariot, Simourga followed, and we turned toward the palace.

It was late before we recrossed the city, but artificial lights made the warm night like day. The streets swarmed with a mixed multitude, men and Darvands with their beautiful wives and children,

all abroad to catch the breeze, which at this hour sweeps down the valley.

As we drove along, impious language shocked our ears, revealing discontent, jealousy, and hatred. Simourga appeared ill at ease and thoughtful; to divert her mind and inform myself, I inquired, —

“Why do these people continue in bondage so galling? Why not resist, though in the attempt they perish?”

“What can be done?” she replied. “Countless plots have been formed, conspiracies to destroy the life of Lucifer, by fire and flood, by steel and poison: his body is deathless, his heaven-forged weapons irresistible. The other Devas remember who gave them carnal joys in immortal bodies; and he who gives, can also withhold. The power and grandeur of the Darvands, nay, their very existence depends upon the will of the Devas; therefore they yield outward obedience, while within smoulder fires of hatred and rebellion.

“Aurenion alone is humane; he respects the memory of his mother (a dark-browed beauty from Blackland, dead, and supplanted by other women many long years ago), he abhors Zamiel for his injustice and cruelty to Hinduhua, but what avails the hate of despair?”

By this time we had reached the palace. Simourga embraced me affectionately at parting, and when I said, according to custom, "God be with you," to my surprise she added devoutly, —

"May it be so to the end."

As I entered my apartment, the voice of Lebuda summoned me to her chamber; she was surrounded by admiring slaves and tire-women, who were displaying, for her inspection and choice, elegant costumes designed for the coronation. She asked my approval of a robe so glittering and transparent that it might have been formed of woven sunbeams, and a veil of similar texture, embroidered with minute gems that reflected the lamplight like rain in sun-struck trees. Totally unconscious of danger, she is absorbed in the ceremonials and magnificent preparations of which she is the brilliant centre. Lucifer is rarely in the queen's apartments, being, it is remarked with some surprise, unusually occupied in affairs of state.

While the preparatory baths, oils, and cosmetics have greatly heightened Lebuda's beauty, they seem to have stupefied her reason and conscience.

Ah, my deluded mother, how gladly would I again warn her of the perils by which we are envi-

roned! But there is no opportunity; jealous eyes, quick ears, and ready tongues are ever near.

To this inanimate scroll will I commit my story and intrust my fear, hoping that some gleam of maternal affection may lead her to peruse this page and admit once more to her confidence the child who would cheerfully lay down her life to save her.

THIRD DAY AT SIPPARA.

I ROSE at dawn of day, and, calling Elbeth to accompany me, went forth to breathe the fresh air of morn. This I knew would be my last opportunity to walk the streets in safety, for at noon the subordinate princes with their retinues were expected in Sippara, whither they had been summoned to pay the annual tribute and take part in the ceremony of the coronation. During their stay the city will be filled with Darvands, who are without the spirituality and self-repression of their sires: the earth is filled with violence through them.

At that early hour the long corridors of the palace were silent; the court was empty, and gave back a hollow echo to our footsteps as we passed out through the eastern gate. The city of Sin was asleep; the intriguing brain, the heart throbbing with anguish or anger, the hand of stealth, the feet swift to pursue evil, must sometimes rest, and this was the hour of tranquillity in Sippara. Nature was also in repose; too calm and silent

seemed the morning's dawn, the unclouded sky too still and bland; no zephyr lifted the drooping leaves, no chirp of bird or insect disturbed the brooding silence; only in the far distance the howl of a solitary dog was heard.

A gray haze hung motionless over the sleeping city, an ominous hush pervaded the valley. I paused to listen. I sat upon the earth and leaned my head upon a projecting rock. Did I feel a tremor coming from the bowels of earth, the parturient throes of an unborn earthquake? I looked up into the deeps of the soft blue sky; could I not discern in the far-off mist a rush, an electric whirl, the smothered tumult of generating elements, the struggles of a chained tempest? I spoke,—Elbeth wondered at my strange words; I myself wondered.

I rose and hastened on until a short turn in the pathway brought me directly in front of the building called Tebah. Here was animation; the smoke of early sacrifice slowly floated heavenward, and the Prophet with his family bowed before the altar.

Greatly affected by this reminder of my former life, I stepped forward and knelt with the worshippers. The quick eye of Japhet detected the pres-

ence of strangers, and when the group arose, he came forward with words of welcome, and, taking my hand respectfully, led me to his father.

“This,” said he, “is the maiden of whom I spake, the child of Aleemon, who has this morning worshipped with us the God of her father.”

The Prophet gazed upon me earnestly, and tears came to his eyes as he embraced me, saying, —

“Thou hast Lebuda’s face and form, but Aleemon’s steadfast soul looks forth from thine eyes. Thrice welcome, my daughter.”

The other members of the family received me kindly, and when I entered the dwelling entreated me to take the highest seat. After a brief hour, in which our hearts were comforted by words of counsel and affection, I arose to take leave, but the Prophet detained me, saying, —

“Wilt thou not remain with us, daughter of my beloved brother? There is one vacant room in the Tebah; surely it was reserved for thee.”

As I endeavored to frame a reply, Japhet came quickly to my side, and added his eloquent entreaties to those of his father; his eyes beamed with anxious love, his glowing face reflected the blush which suffused my cheeks.

“The vacant room, dear cousin, adjoins my own; let it be thine. My brothers have chosen companions, but I am still alone; without thy sweet presence so shall I ever remain, for none but Seola can become the bride of Japhet.”

Taking courage, I replied: “By the ties of kindred and affection, by the bonds of religion and sympathy, by the presence of impending danger, I am thine, but for the moment our paths diverge. I must return to my mother. I shall come to thee again, for God wills it shall be so.”

Japhet would have accompanied me. “The way is full of peril,” he said.

But I declined, answering, “Fear not, my guard is strong.”

Then bidding my friends farewell, I hastened along the streets, which now showed signs of awakening life, and soon reached the palace.

As I entered the chamber, to my surprise I found a Darvand awaiting my return, in whose grave countenance and swart complexion I recognized Aurenion. His features were overcast with melancholy, and heavy sighs shook his giant frame.

He presented me a linen scroll sent by Simourga, which I opened, and in astonishment read as follows:—

“Peace be with thee, Seola, child of Heaven; thy coming was the dawn of light to a soul long overshadowed with that gloom which is the penalty of sin. The dew of thy youth fell upon my parched and blackened heart; the sunlight of thine innocent smile warmed to life the withered blossoms of love and pity; but, far better than all, thy simple piety awoke the faith of my childhood. With horror I reviewed my life, and longed to renew the broken bond.

“Simourga, inmate of the Palace of Light, sought the Prophet of God, received his exhortation, and accepted his faith! I knew well the penalty,—death, swift and dreadful; the fatal summons was not delayed. This moment Gyar and his band stand at my chamber door; the subterranean cave receives me; thou wilt see me no more.

“I send by Aurenion, in token of my grateful love, a casket I have long preserved, the only reminiscence of my former life, a present from my royal father. Keep it, dear Seola, and sometimes think of Simourga, but never with grief; the sentence of death passed upon each human being at birth must now be executed, but my redeemed soul will ascend to God. I have hope in his mercy.”

Tears blinded my eyes as I received from the hands of Aurenion a casket containing various utensils necessary for woman's handiwork.

"Alas! alas!" said he, "I could not save Simourga; to-day I leave this accursed place and return to the kingdom of Zamiel. Hesperus is next to Lucifer in power; he can protect, Seola."

"O Aurenion," I entreated, "can you not believe in the God of Simourga?"

He gloomily answered, "No," and departed.

I was now distracted by grief and self-accusation, for there came to mind the visit in the eastern tower, when I saw the wretched victims driven by Ogmyrs to the death-sacrifice, and held that discourse with Simourga which led to her disobedience of the laws of the palace.

Was not I in some measure the cause of her offence? She must be rescued, — but in what manner could I give her aid?

Aurenion is helpless, Lucifer unrelenting; to appear in his presence would increase his displeasure.

Hesperus is powerful, but from him I could ask no favor. Must Simourga be abandoned to her fate? The idea was intolerable.

Afterward I became more calm, and reflected

that in the confusion produced by the entrance of the princes with their trains the attention of every one, even the cruel Ogmyrs, would be absorbed, and the sacrifice forgotten. Then could Aurenion, who was familiar with every passage through the subterranean vaults, make his way to Simourga, and undiscovered carry her to a place of safety. But where was Aurenion? He had left me in despair, determined to fly from Sippara; there must be no moment of delay.

I rushed into the halls, and to my agitated inquiries received answer that he had gone to the eastern tower; thither I followed, but the apartments of Simourga were tenantless. I ran through the galleries into the court, and when near the gate, a man informed me that he had met Aurenion on his way to the Tower of Lucifer, where Lord Hesperus, his master, transacted the business of state.

All who could move had flocked to the city to witness the entrance of the royal trains, and unobserved I flew along the deserted street, climbed the rock, and almost breathless reached the great tower. The gate was ajar. I entered, and quickly ascended the long stairway leading to the cham-

bers. Here I found a door, and, opening it cautiously, for a moment forgot my errand through astonishment and wonder. I stood beneath a vast representation of the heavens; the dome was of azure deep as midnight, and upon it were suspended gold and silver orbs, like the sun, moon, and stars. The walls were hung with gorgeous drapery, against which were placed weapons of war and instruments of unknown service.

At the farther extremity of this vaulted chamber was a throne, and ranged upon the sides were raised floors after the manner of halls of council. Doors also opened without, and scarce had I time to make a hasty survey, when voices issuing from another chamber recalled my wandering sense and filled me with alarm. I could not be mistaken; Hesperus and Aurenion were in the next apartment engaged in earnest conversation. Frightened at the temerity which had led me to such a place, and full of apprehension as to the consequence if I were discovered, I shrank behind a large pillar, and was entirely screened from sight. Presently a door opened and the speakers came forth.

“The Preacher is guarded by the Almighty, him we may not molest,” said Hesperus gravely;

“but vengeance must overtake the daring one who leaves the Palace of Light to listen to his fables. The offence of Simourga is unpardonable.”

“But, my lord,” said Aurenion (I trembled at his words), “Simourga went not forth alone; the princess Seola was her companion. Together they drove through the streets of the city, and, coming out on the farther side, impelled by curiosity, or perhaps the desire of the young girl, they stopped to listen. O my lord, you know not the passion of love, and fail to appreciate my distress.”

“The daughter of the queen accompanied Simourga?” said Hesperus with heightened interest.

Then, musing, he continued: “Perchance love in my heart has awakened pity. O Aurenion, I am not insensible to thy distress. Take this key to the outer entrance of the vaults; go while the guards are gazing at the procession, liberate Simourga, and fly with all speed. Hearken!—the trumpets of heralds; the Devas approach the town; Lucifer holds to-day a grand consultation; marriage pageants are of little moment in presence of the danger which now threatens.”

The object of my coming was accomplished, but when I would have fled, a misty wall uprose on

every side, and in its shade my form grew dark and vanished from sight. By this token I knew that I had become invisible, and, repeating mentally the words, "Over the resolute righteous soul the Devas have no power," I leaned against the pillar and remained motionless.

COUNCIL OF THE DEVAS.

THE descending footsteps of Aurenion had scarce died away, when the tramp of armed Darvands, the bright electric flash, and the musical voices of the Devas announced the presence of Lucifer and his peers. They came, a band of celestial forms, clad in angelic livery, princely and resplendent, with words and voices of heavenly sweetness ; their eyes flashed immortal fire ; their airy footsteps gave no echo. Upon each royal brow blazed its own peculiar star, set with the color of its nativity, but in the features could be seen lines traced by ages of unrestrained passion and despotic power. Princes of the East and of the West, of the North and of the South, warders of the Upper Spheres, King of the Centre, Guardian of the Outer Circle, and others of unknown name.

But where is the Monarch of Waters ?

Where the Prince of the Power of Air ?

No answer ; but from afar a sound like the booming of the sea in a rising storm.

The warrior sons retired, and the proud Devas bowed before the throne.

And now a change, — each form looms indistinct, each voice grows terrible. I had come to this place to speak to Aurenion, I must witness a council of Devas.

I hear, — every nerve is strained, I tremble and falter, — the friendly column supports me. Remember, repeat, if thou canst, Seola!

Ah, no, — I cannot, words unearthly, — yet must I catch the meaning, and before oblivion seals every sense, give form to that I scarcely comprehend. Listen; it is the voice of Lucifer.

In some distant, awful hour he dared to penetrate the secret chamber of the Creator and seize the mystery of life and incarnation. Who but the Light-Bearer could soar so high? Swelling with pride, he revolted and drew after him a third part of the host of heaven and did cast them to the earth. They subjugated the human race, won the love of woman, and established a sovereignty; for many cycles their kingdom has remained undisturbed, but now the enemy is roused and sternest danger threatens.

He calls upon Agni, and the God of Fire, swift,

subtle, uncertain, moves forward, his step marked by a scorched footprint. On his head gleams no star, but in place thereof a crown of thin flames. His eyeballs glow like living coals, his voice is hollow and gusty; the Devas shrink from his hot breath, all save the Lord Lucifer, before whose piercing glance Agni grows pale and almost disappears.

He bids the Great Master look to the stars that draw upon the central fires; they struggle to be free; they heave the bed of ocean; they strive to burst the ribs of earth; the demons cannot restrain their fury.

Agni vanishes, and the aerial voice is heard of Obora, Prince of the Upper Sphere. In his circle is a great planet between the Red World and the Green; uninhabited, cracked, and fissured, deep-seamed and rent by volcanic fire. Deep, jarring, splitting sounds now issue from the centre of this desolate orb: it is about to fall in pieces. Its disruption will endanger the Earth.

And Hesperus is called. He, ranging in the twilight hour along the bounds of day and darkness, beholds with alarm strange mustering of the heavenly host. The balance of the worlds is unsettled,

the Wan Planet is threatened with disruption, the Earth with dire convulsion ; fire and tempest will prevail, and a great deluge come by breaking in of water from the sea.

A cry of horror burst from all the band, succeeded by the hush of fear.

Then like waves that growl above the wreck, outspake Satan, darkest and most fierce. He would abandon this troublesome world, leave it to the wrath of the foe ; he scorned the men, and did detest the women and the children.

In the fifth circle is an untenanted world of exceeding beauty : there, free from the offence odious to himself as to the Lord of Heaven, he would establish a kingdom greater and more glorious.

But Lucifer in wrath rebuked the other. He will yield nothing to the Lord of Heaven ; not even shall the approaching marriage be deferred ; naught but utter ruin can change his purpose. He owns the Earth by conquest, he holds it by might ; if it be destroyed in the fury of the elements, then and not till then shall it be abandoned ; themselves he defies the Eternal to destroy ! He cannot quench the spark that emanates from his own immortal nature.

And now the Master rouses the courage of the Devas by the triumphs of former struggles, their passion by mention of their beautiful wives and children, their pride by thought of province and power. They must convert the enemy's expected victory into failure, and thus aggrandize their rank to the splendors of the seventh heaven.

The Strong One is bound by his own law; by that law they must precipitate the hour of doom!

Then follow words vague and awful, like rushing meteors and roaring winds, not to be written, not to be recalled, whose import I could scarce comprehend. I only knew that by a desperate plot the Wan Planet could be shattered, the Green World and the Red shaken, that Earth might be saved.

He ceased, and heavy thunder shook the dome; fire and smoke filled the vault, but, rising above the tumult, I heard this dreadful blasphemy:—

“Honor to the Light-Bearer,
Praise to the Way-Preparer,
Glory to the God-Darer,
Lucifer our King.”

Again was heard the voice of the Great Prince,—
“Who will lead?”

ALL. Hesperus! Hesperus!

HESPERUS. And hereafter reign, the equal of Lucifer the king.

The fires burned low, and the features of the great king grew dark, but he answered grandly, —

“Agreed, right royal prince: thou only, besides Lucifer, canst discern the forces: thou, Hesperus, never clouded by fumes of Homa, never shaken with throbs of passion.

“Summon thine associates in peril and glory: seven is the mystic number. Command Onda and Ockba, twain and twain: fear not to call El-kol-ah the mighty, and Him Unnaméd, twain and One!

“At midnight depart; thou carest not for banqueting. Away! away! Our peril admits no delay!”

Mid flashing lights, and sounds that jarred the tower, with words and signs obscure and awful, the Devas departed, all but the Lord Hesperus, who retired to his chamber and closed the door.

This was my moment for flight, but by reason of fear and astonishment I was rendered powerless. However, the reflection that delay would but increase the danger of discovery, gave me supernatural strength; I noiselessly crept from my place of concealment, and, safely outside the gate of the tower, flew rather than ran to my retreat in the

palace. Once only I dared to glance backward ; I had not been discovered. Upon the dizzy height of the dome stood Hesperus alone : his seraphic eyes, which blenched not at the noontide sun, earnestly scanned the vault of heaven. Absorbed, motionless, he read the stars, and strove to forecast the possibilities of the morrow.

HESPERUS AND LUCIFER.

EVENING had now fallen upon the earth; the day, sultry and hot, was over, and, exhausted by its extraordinary adventures, I threw off the upper wrap, with which, since coming to Sippara, I had always concealed my head and bosom, removed the vest, and, loosening my hair, suffered it to flow to my feet. How like it is to Lebuda's! I unbound my sandals, and for a few moments enjoyed the repose and freedom of solitude. The Palace of Light overlooked the city, and as my chamber was in the highest tower, no intruding eye could violate its seclusion, though the latticed door where I sat was opened wide upon the small balcony to admit the evening air.

"For the moment," I exclaimed, "I am alone and safe, but, O, what danger and wrath hang over the world! I hear advancing footsteps: the Avenger hastens, the day of woe is at hand. How great is our exposure and peril! O my mother, we sleep upon a volcano; we are curtained by storm-clouds; pitfalls and snares are beneath our feet!

How shall we escape destruction? O my God, how shall we escape?" Then, retiring to the shadow of the chamber, I kneeled to pray.

"O God of Aleemon, lead me unstained from this City of Sin. Show me a way of escape, even if it be by the dreary gate of Death! But not for myself alone would I implore thy mercy. My mother, — though her beautiful form should perish, save her soul! O thou Most Holy, restore her to Aleemon undefiled by the embrace of Lucifer! And for one other would I dare to lift up my voice. O God of infinite mercy, Hesperus thou didst create for glory. His sin is not so dreadful as that of his associates in rebellion. O thou compassionate One, give him power to repent, restore him to thy love, make him again a bright archangel, strong to do thy service, loving thee more than others of the heavenly host, who know not the joy of pardoned sin!" At this instant I became conscious of a presence in the room, and heard a breathing like a deep-drawn sigh. Hastily rising, I saw in the doorway of the balcony, distinctly revealed against the starlit sky, the form of Hesperus.

There was a rustle, a slight upward motion, and the form vanished.

My heart beat thick with alarm, and my cheeks grew hot with shame. Hesperus, wishing to say farewell before his perilous undertaking, had come to the tower. He had seen me disrobed, had heard my prayer! The sigh—was it from wounded love or penitent sorrow?

Far too anxious and agitated for sleep, I wrapped myself in a mantle and went out upon the balcony. Presently I heard voices below in earnest conversation. I could not see the speakers, but I recognized the now familiar tones of Hesperus.

“I can serve thee no longer: though this decision is made at a moment when peril stimulates courage, thou wilt not accuse me of cowardice.”

“Can a Deva know madness?” said Lucifer, in a tone of incredulity.

“I but return to sanity and duty,” answered the other. “The Almighty law is eternal fitness: it cannot be broken. We are not revolutionists, but rebels who conspire against a beneficent Ruler. I repent, and shall resist no more.”

“And this to one who exalts thee above all others, who now makes thee his equal? Dost thou ask favor of the Eternal,—thou who hast ravaged the earth, defied his law, blasphemed his name,—thou, the Counsellor of Lucifer?”

“I know not,” gloomily spake Hesperus. “I remember that I have sinned ; I will sin no more : this for myself, the rest with God.”

“Prince of the West, this change is but the weakness of new-born passion. Seola affects piety for her own purpose. She is but human, as thou mayst soon prove.”

“Lord Lucifer,” said Hesperus with dignity, “the love of woman may sink a Spirit to perdition, or bear him upward to the gates of glory.”

“The damsel hath bewitched thee. Accursed the hour in which she perished not with her father. She shall die when Lebuda is wholly mine.”

“Till the rites are celebrated I remain in thy service, though Zamiel, as he desires, shall command the Mystic Seven ; and know thou, O Lucifer, Seola, like the Prophet, is secure, guarded by the power of the Nameless One.”

THE PAGEANT.

CORONATION morning rose bright and clear. At break of day the great court was astir with workmen and Darvands who were to complete the preparations.

As my windows opened upon this court, the noise awakened me, and I rose and watched their labor.

Towers, walls, houses, and hanging gardens, all bore a festive appearance. Flags and ensigns fluttered in the wind, garlands hung from the shaft of the great serpent, flowering shrubs and vines filled every projection, and the air was heavy with perfume.

Across the great arches were banners, with tinkling bells wrought in airy legends:—

“LUCIFER AND LEBUDA.”

“QUEEN OF THE EARTH.”

“BRIDE OF THE SUN.”

Gilded pavilions were made ready to receive the queens of other Devas, and in the centre of the

court rose a great throne upon which Lucifer was to crown Lebuda at once Bride and Queen.

This throne of more than human grandeur rested upon the backs of four brazen dragons from whose mouths flowed a perpetual stream of Homa. There were no steps to the throne, but from a wide opening in the wall of the palace, leading directly to it, was an aerial pathway resembling a broad sunbeam.

And as I observed these wonders, a sudden hush pervaded the court; each workman suspended his labor, and a subdued murmur ran through the crowd: "Make way, make way! The Prince of the Power of Air cometh."

The place was vacant in a moment, and an awful form, indistinct and shapeless, descended from the air to complete the decorations. Closely screened by the lattice, I fled not, but breathlessly observed his motions, wondering thereat with great admiration. He beckoned the clouds; they came, and he shook out their folds; he called the winds, and they rushed to obey his mandates; in the vast cavern of his mouth were they confined till driven forth to do his bidding. Across his vague shoulders were flung iris-hued bows, and his quiver held forked lightnings.

With fitful force he began the labor, raising from the corner towers tall columns of vapor, white and glistening like those that precede a thunder-storm. These he united by prismatic arches thrown across the court, meeting at a point above the throne. Over the lofty dome thus formed, this awful being stretched a cloud-curtain rosy in hue, which softened while it did not obscure the sunlight. From the bosom of this cloud were reflected a thousand opaline colors, dissolving, blending as the mass swayed in the light breeze.

An occasional flash of lightning or a dash of hail gave intimation of danger, and explained the terror this Presence inspired.

He vanished like a shadow, and long time I remained entranced by the changeful aspects of his wondrous creation, unmindful of the passing hours, and unobservant of the assembly now thronging court and pavilion, roof and terrace.

The spell was sharply broken by a messenger who came in haste to inform me that my presence was required by the queen. Thereupon I obeyed the summons, and was taken through a screened garden into an inner chamber exceeding all others in splendor and magnificence. Over the alabaster

walls and vaulted ceiling ran a golden trellis covered with mimic vines and flowers painted with divers colors, perfumed with mist and sprinkled with gems like dew. Beneath a canopy of silver lace, the couch of down was spread ; around the apartment were placed gold and ivory furniture, mirrors and statues, and above all, curtains of azure, adjusted for shade or seclusion.

Within this atmosphere of light and shadow, color and perfume, stood the royal pair, unapproachable in majesty and beauty. The world has never seen, will never again behold, a vision of such transcendent perfection.

Lucifer the Light-Bearer was attired in robe of heavenly blue, bedecked with diamonds and jewelled fringe that swept the floor like dancing flames. Upon his forehead blazed a pentacle of starry gems, from which issued a spray as it were a fountain of fire, and in his hand was held a sceptre set with a similar glory, while from every jewel-point quivered and flashed the electric light peculiar to his majestic presence.

Lebuda, as Dawn, recipient and reflector of light, was draped or rather enshrouded in garments rosy and nebulous as the cloud now overhanging the

palace. In every blushing fold lay pearls pure as morning dew, and a veil of mist and sunbeams, secured upon her forehead by a coronet of sapphire, covered, but did not conceal, the golden hair which rippled to her feet. Her eyes were large and lustrous as the morning star, her color tinted like the flush of day, and when she moved, a perfume floated in the air, sweet as the breath of morn.

Beautiful Lebuda, incarnation of woman's grace and loveliness, my tears fall fast for thee!

While Hesperus, grave and silent, received the orders of Lucifer, I conversed with my mother apart.

"Seola," she began in gently chiding tones, "why art thou still in rustic garb, ill suited to this festal day? Array thyself quickly in robes of state, that thy presence and beauty may grace our coronation."

I kissed her hand in humility, and answered, —

"O my mother, verily God hath given me power to pierce the veil of futurity, to perceive that which cannot be apprehended by outward sense. By this I am warned to take no part in these passing scenes. Forgive me if I but observe thee at a distance; my heart is with thee even unto the end."

"My child," she said, "thy words fill me with

alarm; they are the clear echo of a dull voice within my own soul, a reproof, a menace; my conscience is troubled, but reason is clouded. I am driven forward by an irresistible power, tangled in a net from which I cannot extricate myself. I fear yon haughty lord, yet must I obey his will. O that Aleemon still lived!" By this, the only allusion to my father she had ever made, we were both greatly agitated. I restrained myself with difficulty, and soothed her, saying,—

"The evil is irreparable: the diet of the palace, its baths and perfumes,—I have taken none of them, and can perceive clearly that we both do but execute the decrees of the Most High. Let us hold fast the thread of faith Aleemon placed in our hands, and it will lead us, perchance through fire and blood, safe to the haven of eternal rest."

"Pray for me, my daughter," she answered, greatly moved. "I have lost the power of prayer. We part, I fear, forever. Farewell! farewell!"

At this moment the shaft of the revolving serpent made no shadow; it was the high noon of midsummer: the sounding trumpets announced that all was in readiness.

Lucifer took the hand of Lebuda; together they

floated through the long corridor, through the broad doorway, down the aerial pavement, to their place upon the golden throne.

Profound silence reigned throughout the vast assemblage as Lucifer removed from his sceptre the diamond spray, placed it in the coronet which encircled the brow of Lebuda, saying, —

“ Thus do I create thee my companion and equal, the Perfection of beauty, Bride of Lucifer, Queen of the Earth and the Sun.”

At that instant the cloud-screen overhead was rent asunder, and a blaze of sunlight streamed upon the royal pair, conferring such dazzling effulgence that the astonished multitude, after a moment of stupefaction, burst into a storm of applause, shouting, “ A god! a goddess!” “ Glory to Lebuda, peerless in beauty!” “ Glory to Lucifer, LIGHT-CREATOR, King of the Earth and the Sun!”

This blasphemous adulation of created beings filled me with horror, a feeling which seemed to find voice in a growl of thunder from a black cloud overhead, as it suddenly closed together.

And now the blare of trumpets announced the approach of the tribute-bearers, an almost interminable procession, who were this day to lay the treas-

ures of earth and sea at the feet of the mighty prince. The giant sons of Lucifer led the van, their athletic forms clad in silver scales, and on their heads nodding plumes. Fair were they in complexion, with light curling locks; for though the numerous wives of Lucifer were of every style of beauty, the sons resembled their royal sire. They were mounted upon horses whose black glossy bodies were thickly dappled with spots like white clouds, and whose fierce rolling eyes and airy tread seemed to scorn the earth.

Following the Children of Light, came a thousand white elephants bearing magnificent presents to the mighty monarch.

Next in rank were the sons of Obora, in armor of burnished green, seated in superb chariots drawn by harnessed lions, whose savage nature tamely yielded to the superhuman strength and fear-inspiring voices of the terrible beings who held the reins. After them, the sons of Zamiel, Zanyanza, Akbiel, Asmodeus, and other celestial princes, all mighty men, men of renown, arrayed in the costume of their fathers' kingdoms, presenting munificent offerings to the King of Kings.

A man and woman who served in the halls of

the north tower came to the balcony, where I was sitting with faithful Elbeth, and, leaning upon the rail, idly surveyed the scene.

From the remarks of these persons I learned that they had witnessed many similar displays, though they agreed this pageant excelled all others, wondering greatly that the Prince of the Power of Air had acknowledged allegiance to Lucifer. They pointed out the most famous of the giants, recounted their deeds of prowess, brutality, and debauchery, and by their free conversation brought the hot blood tingling to my cheeks.

“That towering giant with a living serpent in his crest, he who rides the famous charger Aldebaran,” said the man, “is Orak, son of Lucifer, cruel, relentless, and withal proud as his celestial father.”

Turning to the woman, he added, “You have heard the last story of Maima and her infant?”

“Yes,” she replied, “I know many evil deeds of Orak, but he is not so ill as yon giant son of Asmodeus who lolls in the chariot drawn by pards. How gross and bestial is his form! No doubt a diet of human flesh has its influence. His kingdom is almost depopulated to furnish his table, for the monster is dainty, though a glutton. If there were Dar-

vandas, no doubt the human race would soon be exterminated in all the kingdoms."

"I see no Deva daughters," I ventured to remark.

"None have been born," she replied. "Here comes Seraphus, the marvel of princes. It is believed he is immortal, for he alone of the Darvands hath wings, and though nearly a thousand years old, shows no signs of decrepitude. Ah, what a haughty bearing! Hide your face, my lady," said the woman, hurriedly; "he turns this way: his glance upon a fair maiden is deadly lightning; it scorches and kills."

Shame and indignation filled my soul as I drew my veil close, and more fully realized the appalling condition of the world under this perverted angelic sway. Truly these beings make the earth tremble, they shake the kingdoms, and destroy the government thereof; they listen not to the cry of the prisoner! Dazzled by the magnificence of the Devas and their giant offspring, overawed by their unscrupulous tyranny, men have abandoned the struggle, and drift with the stream of ungodliness; they say, —

"The Lord hath forgotten the earth, the Lord seeth not."

Yet the Prophet has ceased not to warn them that the day of wrath approaches, and now the fatal decree has gone forth; even at this moment of exultation the footsteps of the Avenger echo along the pathway of time.

Through the long summer afternoon, amid plaudits of a gazing throng, the brilliant procession streamed past, bearing to treasure-houses on the wall the wealth and glory of the world. Implements of labor, munitions and weapons of war, chariots and horses, herds of elephants, camels, and cattle, rare and curious animals from every clime, slaves and dwarfs, passed slowly by. There were also to be seen bundles of fur, bales of richest fabric, brodered vestments, mirrors, vases, drinking-cups, caskets of gems, gold and silver, coral, amber, and treasures of the sea, baskets of fruit, strange plants, spices, perfumes, and a band of dancers and beautiful captives.

And now appeared the culminating wonder,—a fleet of air-ships winging their flight above the great assembly. These marvellous structures are the invention of a Darvand who lived in the early ages, and discovered in the hollow bones of birds that which would have escaped the eyes of mere mor-

tals forever, the secret of flight. It has been carefully concealed, and the use of these aerial barges confined to the royal families with whose colors they are superbly decorated.

Upon the prow of each vessel stood a beautiful queen, who, as the ships paused on fluttering sails before the throne, gracefully dropped at the feet of the newly crowned empress tokens of admiration and loyalty.

As the fleet sailed slowly away and disappeared in the overhanging mist, a strain of seraphic music from the Devas proclaimed the triumph of rebellion and sensuality.

O sin and shame, the deadliest guilt, lauded by angel tongues!

The pageant was ended, the feast was to begin. The sun, which all day long looked calmly down upon this scene of splendor, now sank in the west; above the descending orb rolled upward billowy clouds of crimson hue: the ruddy glow stained tower and pavilion, marble colonnade and house-top. And thus, when Lucifer and his bride passed up the luminous pathway into the banquet-hall, Lebuda appeared immersed in a crimson tide.

"Too red, too red," Elbeth spoke abruptly; "my mistress seems bathed in blood."

THE ANGELS ABANDON THE EARTH.

THE sun went down, the crimson faded and deepened to purple, gray shadows fell, and with a shiver I retired to the solitude of my chamber, while Elbeth prepared a simple repast. Before it was finished, the confusion and uproar in the banquet-hall became so great that I trembled for the safety of my mother.

“Go, Elbeth,” I cried; “linger near Lebuda; you may be of service to your mistress, and I shall be less anxious.”

Thus left alone, I went forth upon the balcony and gave myself up to melancholy reflection. Could I do aught for my mother? She was now irrevocably bound to Lucifer; body and soul seemed lost. In the All-Powerful alone was help.

I looked out upon the heavens. Twilight had faded into night; no vapor dimmed the sky, only a faint luminous cloud rising above the garden.

As my soul went out to God in prayer, a passing thrill gave token that the fetters of sense were removed. At once the light cloud disappeared,

and I saw celestial forms soaring upward, radiant and pure, though powerful as those of the Devas.

A tremor fills the air ; it wavers, faints, and dies, — again it swells upon the breeze.

Is it the rising wind, moaning among the palms?

No! no! Voices celestial float earthward from the vanishing cloud, — words are formed ; they weave a requiem, — the warp is music, the woof a sigh.

SONG OF THE ANGELS.

Mourn — for the Star of Day

Dieth at dawn ;

Weep — for the Moon's soft ray

Paleth ere morn.

No rosy blush may rise,

No perfume-breathéd sighs ;

The burning kiss,

The dreams of bliss,

To anguish turn.

Behold — the mists of death

Now darken heaven ;

Listen — the roaring waves

Are madly driven,

And shrieks of wild despair

Convulse the shuddering air :

Life's flame expires ;

The natal fires

No longer burn.

The giant sons must die :
 The Lords of Light
 In caverns dark must lie,
 In rayless night.
 E'en Mercy sighs, " Too late !"
 'Neath prison bars they wait,
 In blind dismay,
 The dreadful day
 That seals their fate.

Like the last quiver of a bell the sound dies in the distance.

But who is he remains on earth enwrapped in mournful thought ? His face is stern and sad, his hand rests upon the hilt of a sword, his black garments rustle in the night-breeze like withered leaves, and his voice blending with the melancholy sound whispers, —

" O hand, be firm ; heart, unrelenting : ye do but execute the decrees of the Most High."

Who is he that joins not his peers in their flight from the dooméd earth ?

It is Azreel, Angel of Death !

I close my heavy eyes, and press my throbbing heart ; my thoughts revert to Aleemon resting beneath the cypress-trees. O that I were lying unconscious by his side !

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

THERE was but one moment to dream, for now an awful uproar arose throughout the palace,—shouts, curses, yells; then a confused crowd rushed madly into the garden, men and giants brandishing deadly weapons and uttering unintelligible cries.

Towering above all others, the mighty celestials pressed forward, rage and fury depicted on their dreadful faces.

And lo! the fountain of fire in the midst of the garden, moved by some infernal influence, shot up furiously into the sky, lighting with unnatural glare the great court, the palace and surrounding heights,—a fearful mockery of day. The struggling crowd surged toward the basin, and, bathing their blades in waves of flame, howled forth oaths and blasphemies so horrible, that I pressed my hands upon my ears to shut out the stunning words. In vain did I oppose such feeble barriers, for high above all other sounds was heard the voice of Lucifer rallying the Devas.

“To arms, to arms, celestials! The hour of fate

hastens, but we will foil our hated foe. Yet will I ascend and be like the Most High. To my victorious allies will I give the kingdoms of the world and its glory. Seraphus, the hour has come. Loosen the Steeds of the Sun!"

The vaulted dome re-echoed the voice terrible as a roll of thunder, shouts from the maddened Devas answered the appeal, fire flashed from heaven-forged armor, and the clash of alarms swelled the distracting din.

The winged Darvand sped toward Mount Hermon and uttered a piercing cry, which was answered by a roar beneath the mountain, so furious that the palace shook and the crowd shrieked with fear. The doors of the vault burst with a clang, and there rushed forth, like the blast of a furnace, horses of fire winged with flame. Driven by the wind, they assumed strange distorted shapes, smoke and lightning issued from their nostrils as they rapidly approached the palace.

I grew terrified and turned to flee, when a fearful sight held me motionless. On the wall of the garden stood a dark and gloomy form, whose features of deepest melancholy, by sudden flashes of the Fire Fountain, I recognized to be those of Hes-

perus. Lucifer also perceived him, and springing forward swung the sharp sword above his head.

“Traitor,” he shouted, “mount Asparatha, and retrieve thine honor and fortune!”

“Traitor no longer,” returned Hesperus; “loyal at last to my rightful king.”

Then Lucifer swooped downward with his awful blade.

“Die, base ingrate,” he thundered. “I take the worthless life I gave.”

Smitten by the well-aimed blow, Hesperus fell forward. My eyes closed, and I sank upon the floor of the chamber.

From an insensible condition I was awakened by the voice of my old servant, who raised me unceremoniously, and in breathless terror began, —

“My child, awful omens have been seen. Scarce were the king and queen seated at the banquet, when a messenger (sent to inquire why the Homa fountain had ceased to flow) came in haste and informed Lucifer that the water in the wells had suddenly sunk and the bed of the river was dry.

“‘Strike off the head of the liar,’ commanded the enraged prince.

“‘My lord,’ interposed the Counsellor, ‘death on a wedding-day is but an evil omen.’

“Lucifer paused: not so the sword of the executioner. One swift blow, and the head of the unfortunate messenger rolled upon the floor.

“A strange light now filled the banquet-hall, and on the ceiling ran letters of fire traced by no mortal hand. The green serpent in the golden tank threw himself violently out of the water, his red crest erect, and with horrible hissing and convulsion expired.

“At this moment Satan rushed in. His countenance was distorted by rage, and he roared like a midnight tempest.

“‘Besotted fools,’ he cried, ‘forgetful of our tremendous emprise, wantoning away moments upon which hangs the fate of Eternity, I could hate you as I hate the weak race to which your sensual bodies are enslaved! Drivelling idiots, leave your women and banqueting. Zamiel and his force have been driven from the Wan Planet, and a strong guard of the enemy, who but this evening left the earth, have taken possession.

“‘The great comet Zummundera, intrusted to the care of that weakling, Varunus, broken from its watcher, is madly aiming at the earth’s orbit; your kingdom will perish by fire instead of flood. Away,

away to the Wan World! Unless you can dismember it, all is lost! lost! lost!

“With a bound the Devas sprang from the table, seized their armor, and, exchanging fearful words and tokens, rushed to the Fire Fountain.

“The ladies conveyed the queen from the hall before I could gain access to her, and as I waited, uncertain what course to take, I saw the dark Deva, Satan, turn back.

“‘One cause of weakness less, one body more to fill the crypt of immortality!’ he growled, as he passed swiftly toward the bridal chamber. O my child, his face was so malignant, I fear —”

While she yet spake, a piercing scream rang out through the now empty corridors, a sound which is only heard when the soul parts from the body, — the cry of mortal anguish.

Startled from the paralyzed condition into which I had fallen, I flew along the halls, followed closely by the affrighted Elbeth, the song of the angels resounding in memory, —

“Weep, for the Moon’s soft ray
Paleth ere morn.”

We reached the door of the bridal chamber. O sight of woe! there prone upon the marble floor lay

the beautiful form of my mother writhing in the agonies of death. The infernal steel had done its work, the life-blood poured fast from the cruel wound in her bosom ; yet was she conscious, and as I sobbing embraced her, whispered faintly, —

“Saved, O my daughter!” And her violet eyes were closed in death.

Frantic with grief and terror, I dashed away the restraining arms of Elbeth, and rushed out into the moonlight. All was quiet in court and palace, but afar could be heard a confused sound like the surges of ocean. As I passed the wall from which a few moments previous I had seen the Deva fall, I groaned aloud, —

“O night of death and woe! O my mother! O Hesperus! O my God!”

A deep sigh answered, and from the dense shadow of the wall came back the words, —

“O my God!”

There was such pathos in the tone, that, forgetting my own grief and fear, I turned toward the spot whence the sound proceeded, and there upon the grassy bank I saw the dying Hesperus. I was now but too familiar with the tokens of dissolution, and knew that few moments would intervene be-

fore the spirit must be loosened from its tenement of flesh. Forgiving the past, even the death of my father, I bent with reverent awe, and, raising the head of the dying angel, laid it gently on my bosom, carefully parting from his damp brow the heavy locks. His eyes opened: how changed since first I saw them! No longer burning with unholy fire, they were turned solemnly upward; the pale lips unclosed, and words faintly spoken were not addressed to mortal ear.

“The pledge — to die by the Tempter’s hand, and, dying, rest upon Seola’s virgin breast.

“Steadfast still, and pure, she holds the thread of fate, and stays my soul, poised on the brink of death.

“The fire burns low — low in the West. The beams are quenched — Dark, dark and cold!

“I die — I sink —

“Thou callest me. I rise! O God, I rise again!”

As the last sigh of the angel passed away, a slight rustle caught my ear; I turned quickly, and in a recess of the massive wall beheld an object which chained mine eyes and curdled my blood with fright.

Outlined in the darkness by phosphoric gleams

was a huge equine shape with drooping wings and ghastly eyes, the terrible Asparatha, whose existence, by some mysterious bond, must terminate with that of his master. Panting, trembling, fading, like a mist moved in the breeze, like a heat-wave ascending from a rock, the Steed of the Sun vanished, or was exhaled with the breath of the Evening Star.

THE PROPHETESS SEOLA LOOKS UPON THE SPIRIT WORLD.

AGAIN I fled from the scene of death and went aimlessly forward. The men, uncertain of purpose, had gone to the Tower of Lucifer, and a hushed fear as of some impending calamity had fallen upon the women and children. I paused not till I exceeded the limits of the deserted city, and, coming upon an open plain, gazed long and earnestly into the southern sky. By the tremor that agitated my frame, by the increasing luminosity of distant stars, by a clearer vision of the full-orbed moon, and by an intensified quickening of every sense, I was conscious of the superhuman Power.

And whether in the body or spirit only, God knoweth, I went out past sun and moon, past grand and solemn orbs, through fields of drifting stars, out into cold and darksome space till I hung upon the verge of God's Infinity. Then knew I of a surety that the Most High had freed my soul, for I perceived the Invisible, the Inaudible, the Intangible; that which human mind had never before

conceived, what unaided mortal sense can never comprehend.

I looked upon the Energies of Nature ! Wheels within wheels, forever turning, changing, returning. Impalpable resistance, imponderable weight. Nor night nor discord, age or death. Swift as thought, firm as the will of God.

There reigns Eternal Order!

There dwells Eternal Noon!

Beneath a dome clear as crystal I saw the Dial of Time. There are the cycles measured, there are recorded the immeasurable eternities. And above all was the Great Centre which binds the sweet influence of the stars, and surrounding it were placed the Seven Burning Lights.

At this sight I trembled and cried out with fear lest it might be loosened and crash through all the worlds ; but a mighty seraph, who watched the unutterable wonder, answered my fear, saying, —

“ Omnipotence alone can loosen the bands established by Eternal Will. Child of Earth, look thou westward.”

Straining my eyes through the illimitable plains of ether, I perceived a long line of worlds, stretching in direct and almost endless continuity. One

immense star was wheeling into place, silent, sublime, awful!

But most portentous was the terrible oncoming of a fiery comet; its body was like a scimitar, its head and wings like a dragon. Vast as a thousand suns, but swift as a meteor's flash, it rushed along, blinding the eye with its glare and making a tenebrous twilight more terrible than darkness.

The seraph spake: "When Gu-ardor moves into line and the comet reaches the Moon, a convulsive thrill will undulate from the Great Centre to the infinite regions of outer space."

His eyes turned toward the Dial, and, following their inclination, I perceived that the index was slowly sinking to the lowest point of the great circle, beneath which, in letters black as night, I discerned this inscription,

"THE HOUR OF DOOM."

Again I followed the solemn eyes of the seraph, which were fixed with intense eagerness upon a luminous spot high above the atmosphere of the earth; there, like a phantom host in battle array, I saw the rebel Devas upon their steeds of flame, and by his superior brightness knew that Lucifer held command.

The loyal angels had driven the Evil Workers from the volcanoes of the Wan Planet, and strove to repel Zamiel, now reinforced by the demon host. In the thickest of the fight the towering form of the Light-Bearer flashed forth a blaze that dazzled and scorched all who opposed him.

O hell's intensest rage, O heaven's majestic wrath ! how can mortal speak their power ?

Who can write the roar of the tempest, the violence of fire ? Who can utter the rush of the whirlwind, or the surge of ocean thundering along the shore ? Who indite the transit of thought, or the flitting lights of the northern sky ?

Yet spirit can listen to spirit, though none may repeat the sound.

* * * * *

Before this blast of hell the angelic band slowly gave way, and the triumphant voice of Lucifer, clear but distant, rang out like an archangel's trumpet.

“Princes of Lucifer, the battle is won ; the earth is ours. We defy the Strong One ; we will drag the proud Eternal from his throne !”

Then the heavens stood aghast, earth was shaken, the stars grew pale and circled slower on their wheels of fire. All nature shuddered at the possible consummation.

At this moment a sudden hush, a pulseless silence, fell on all created things, as from the northern sky, stretching across the ethereal vault, there appeared — THE SHADOW OF A HAND!

Without delay or haste, the Shadow moved forward and fell upon the incarnate host, who, pressing sorely the defeated band, perceived not its advance. Suddenly a spasm as of cold passed over them, the electric fire slowly faded, ashy pallor overspread every face, the strong pinions drooped, the weapons fell from nerveless hands, despair took possession of each thick-beating heart.

Colder and darker grew the host, sinking lower and lower, when, with the suddenness of lightning's flash, the great comet, which in the absorbing interest of this supreme moment had been rapidly approaching unperceived, swerved from its course by the weight of the falling Devas, wheeled and circled round them, condensing and hardening as it passed under the SHADOW OF THE HAND, until they were hopelessly encompassed and bound in links of adamantine chain. A faint blue flame parting from the Light-Bearer gave token of the last struggle, as deeper and darker the incarnation of despair sank into the rayless gloom of a black unfathomable abyss.

The divine flame flickered as if about to expire, but a mighty seraph, pausing between earth and heaven to watch the fearful spectacle (whose face I did not discern), sprang forward and caught the dying ray, parted from Lucifer, and it blazed anew in dazzling effulgence, set upon the brow of him whom the angels hail "Aurus, henceforth Guardian of the Gates of Light!"

And one dark Deva felt not the chain, but, like lightning as it falls from heaven, flitted away to a distant star; it was Satan, the Hater of Women!

The Shadow still moved forward till it reached the crystal dome; at that instant Gu-ardor touched the line, the pointer on the Dial trembled to the Hour of Doom, one Light of the Burning Seven went out in gloom, and a throb from the Great Centre quivered through the limitless expanse of the all-embracing Soul.

Then from that region of the skies where once the Devas held their ancient reign — O doleful fate! — the predestined stars shot wildly from their spheres, and following each his dethroned lord, sank from sight, quenched and blackened in the dreary void.

The Wan Planet felt the shock; weakened in its centre by the labor of the Devas, it reeled, shiv-

ered for an instant, then the incoherent mass burst asunder, and the fragments, flying wildly, were scattered in space.

Too late, too late, to save the kingdom of the Devas ; for the Earth, swayed by the mighty undulation of commingling forces, tossed and staggered like a cockle-shell upon a stormy sea.

Again deep silence fell on all created things, till from the incalculable heights where the unseen OM forever and forever broodeth, like the solemn chime of bells came voices of the heavenly hosts in antiphonal chant :—

“Glory, glory forevermore ! Thou alone art great, Lord God Almighty !”

Then fell I as one dead, without speech or sense or motion, and lay prone upon the cold earth.

* * * * *

How long I was insensible I know not, but with returning consciousness I felt great drops of rain upon my face, flashes of lightning dazzled my eyes, and a crash of thunder distracted my ears. Then darkness became intense, but I could hear advancing footsteps of men and their agitated voices.

“An awful tempest,” said one. “Saw you aught like the flame that rushed from the Fire Fountain

up to the black clouds when the Tower of Lucifer crumbled to ashes?"

"But less appalling," said another, "than the bolt from heaven that blotted out the northern tower. Surely this is no natural storm, no earthly fire! The old monomaniac's words are true. Hell has broken in upon us."

"Listen," said the first speaker, pausing breathless by the place where I stood; "heard you not a sigh? What fills the air? A crash, a breath, a whisper! Let us fly. Whither shall we go? Where is Lucifer? Why comes he not to control the Prince of the Power of Air?"

In terror they ran forward, stumbling in the darkness, leaving me scarcely less affrighted than themselves.

At this moment of perplexity I heard one calling my name, "Seola, Seola." Sweeter than the music of a seraph was the voice coming through the gloomy night.

"O Japhet," I cried, as I fell into his extended arms, "my mother is murdered, Hesperus has fallen, the north tower is burned, Elbeth must have perished —"

"But I am with you, my beloved," said he; "the

barriers that separated us are removed, and wilt thou not be mine?"

And I answered, "Dear Japhet, I am thine."

Aided by the fitful lightning, we went toward the Tebah, into which Japhet told me the family had removed. He also informed me that, being near the palace when the alarm was sounded, he entered the halls and sought me in vain, but among the women who had gathered around the body of the murdered queen, was poor Elbeth, almost stupefied with terror. He roused her, and together they went to my chamber, hoping that I might have fled thither. Not finding me, Japhet proposed that such articles as belonged to me should be removed from the palace to the habitation of the Prophet, to which it was possible I might have retreated. Being convinced that the great catastrophe was near, he hired some idlers who stood in the halls, and soon everything was transferred to the Tebah. But the lost one was not there; whereupon dear old Elbeth went back to await my return. Alas, it was to meet her fate, for in a few moments the tower and all within became a prey to the fury of the elements. Faithful friend, thou hast gone to rest, although thy soul went out on wings of flame.

Meantime Japhet sought me through the storm, directed by a peculiar aureola which encircled my head. This he attributed to the incessant lightning, but in my heart I felt that it was the lingering glory of the unseen world.

Wet and weary, we reached the much-desired haven, where our anxious friends gave cordial welcome. None questioned as to my absence from the palace, and I told the vision to none; to no other human eye was it unveiled.

I changed my dripping garments, and after some much-needed refreshment, retired to the little room Japhet had unwittingly prepared for my reception. Here, among the articles so hastily removed from the palace, I found my journal, and before the events of this day of wonders fade from memory, I confide to it the secrets I can intrust to no other.

This night, by the solemn words of the Prophet and my own irrevocable vow, I have been united to Japhet in the sacred bonds of marriage, an event of gravest importance in the life of other maidens, but in my own, dwarfed to insignificance by the dread prescience which overshadows it. Have I been too lightly won?

There could be no coy indecision. Danger confronts me, crying harshly, —

“Waste no breath in amorous sighs, spend no moments in idle dalliance; stern themes demand thy thought; trials more severe, thine energies.”

Was ever wife so wedded? Was ever marriage journey so begun? Our love had birth in danger and gloom, dire portents in earth and heaven attend our nuptials, and shrouded horror hangs over the future. May that powerful HAND, whose shadow can sink to despair the hosts of mighty Lucifer and shatter to fragments great worlds, control the elements now gathering for devastation, and carry us safely through that perilous voyage in which there is neither map nor chart, rudder nor compass, sun nor star to guide.

The memory of this night's experience overpowers me; I can scarce trust my own recollection. Was it illusion, or have I indeed been permitted to behold the Spirit World and witness the mystery and majesty of God's power in the energies of nature?

As I look forth into the night, the answer is given. The storm is over; the stars are silently climbing the eastern heavens, but as my eyes sweep inquiringly across the serene vault, many familiar objects are wanting. Quenched is one

lamp of the Burning Seven, vacant the place of the Wan Planet, and lost forever the bright constellation that madly plunged to outer darkness, sharing the doom of the fallen Star Spirits.

Were none saved?

Slowly, fearfully, I turn to the West ; there, high above the dusky mountain, like a smile shining through tears, still trembles the Evening Star !

THE TEBAH AND ITS INMATES.

Sixth Day.

THE first day of my new life is made memorable by other marvels.

We were awakened at dawn by a deep roar as of a wild beast coming down the valley. Hurrying to the door, an extraordinary sight met our eyes. A large lion with his mate stood irresolute upon the bank of the dry river. He bent his shaggy head to the earth, smelling the ground as if he perceived something unusual, then stopped abruptly, looked up into the sky, sniffed the air, roared again, and ran forward. Frightened by his savage mien, we all hastily retreated, except the Prophet, who went out to meet him. The ferocious beast crouched low, dragged himself upon the ground and crept close to the master, fawning and rubbing against his side. The Prophet fondled the lion as he would a dog, and led him unresisting through the door to a narrow stall at the farther end of the boat; his mate passively followed; the bar was raised, and they were made

secure. This event was so significant that a solemn silence fell upon us; but we had little time to consider before a loud bellow was heard, and a huge elephant with his mate came plunging across the plain, throwing his trunk in the air and sniffing in fear as the lion had done. He also came near and suffered himself to be led quietly to his quarters; soon a frightened stag and doe peeped timidly over the hill, and, after surveying our party for a moment, came to the place where we were standing; two beautiful spotted dogs followed them, but looked not upon the game, only upward at the sky, and howled.

And now the valley seemed alive with animals, thronging over the hills and swarming from the groves. None molested another, all seemed urged forward by the instinct that danger was abroad and safety with the Prophet.

The sons assiduously aided the father, and without confusion the patient brutes were bestowed in the places assigned them.

Presently the familiar note of a wood-thrush caught my ear, and, looking upward, I perceived a tree near by filled with feathered songsters and fowls of many species. With the enticement of

grain scattered upon the ground they followed us, and were easily settled in their new home.

Meantime a crowd of idlers had gathered to witness this extraordinary scene ; some, jeering the Prophet, inquired why he had concealed his magic under the pretence of piety, and defied him to frighten them by this exhibition of his art.

Some endeavored to drive back the animals, but were repulsed by angry growls, or a snap of the teeth too fierce to be again invited. Some looked on stupidly, while the more thoughtful seemed puzzled, and said, —

“ What means this unnatural course of the wild animals ? They sniff the air as if in fear, and quietly submit themselves to be imprisoned in this strange building, which appears prophetically arranged for their reception. Is it possible the mad Prophet has told the truth ? ”

“ You speak folly,” said another ; “ wonders will never cease while the world stands : these animals are governed by some law with which we are unacquainted ; our sages must be consulted.”

“ Let us not forestall trouble,” said another ; “ believe in danger when it appears. The end comes soon enough. How hot the day grows ! ”

Indeed, the heat had become intense, and after the hold of the vessel was full, we ceased from receiving the animals and sought refreshment and repose.

Toward evening Japhet took me to examine this marvellous building. The beasts, dull and sleepy, gave little heed to our coming, though sometimes they started and uttered a cry of fear. Their quarters are divided from those of the family by a thick wall that excludes all sound, and is arranged to admit a sufficiency of fresh air. Food and drink are in abundant store; but, being closely confined and quiet, it is thought they will require little care.

One hundred and twenty years was the Tebah in building as planned by Divine Wisdom. It was begun by workmen who, while they despised the architect, were willing to receive his wages, for the Prophet has always prospered in affairs, and is exceeding rich. As the sons grew in strength they assisted the father, and the finishing was accomplished by themselves alone. Thus have they become vigorous, self-reliant, brave.

During all these years the comfort and convenience of the family have been made a study; nothing has been forgotten. My own little room is beau-

tiful. I dare not write the loving words of my husband, as we sit together in this elegant apartment, which is really fit for a queen.

We are now fairly established in our new habitation; a mixed, incongruous family. One God hath made us all, and he will control.

I hear voices of men and Darvands under the window; they bring a terrible rumor. The Serpents of the Lake are loose! The disappearance of water in the valley extends to their lair under the mountain; maddened by thirst and the sultriness of the air, they have burst the barriers, and are now ravaging the country. The speakers without crouch under the shadow of the Tebah, greatly terrified; their words are frightful,—they curse the heated air and failing wells, they curse the Devas for their continued absence, they curse themselves and God.

THE DREAM INTERPRETED.

AGAIN we are warned that the time is at hand. This morning being the fourth since the family entered the Tebah, the Prophet arose early and went, as was his custom, to open the door. It resisted his efforts, and he called in haste for his sons ; but their united strength availed not, it could not be unclosed.

The young men gazed at each other in troubled surprise, but the father comforted them, saying, —

“Be not dismayed, O my sons, and let not anxious thoughts arise in your hearts ; the hand of God is in this thing ; for life or death we are imprisoned. His righteous will be done.”

After the morning repast and a sacrifice of unusual solemnity, we sat for a long time in silent meditation. The language I heard in my dream at the Palace of Light constantly came into my mind : “*When the tide turns.*” At length I could keep silence no longer, and spoke : —

“O Prophet of God, before the death of my mother I was on a certain night wrapped in pro-

found slumber; then saw I, as in a vision, by the bedside of Lebuda two dread spectres disputing the possession of her body. At length they agreed, saying, 'We will share her between us *when the tide turns.*' Canst thou interpret the dream?"

After regarding me steadfastly he answered, —

"God hath sent into thy soul a ray of divine knowledge; cherish the gift, my daughter, so wilt thou become a prophetess of the Lord."

He then continued, addressing the family, —

"It is given me to interpret the words of Seola's dream. Let not their terrible significance alarm you. God hath spoken, and nature obeys his voice.

"The earth, which has been for many days slowly sinking, is pressed outward under the bed of ocean; the fountains of the great deep are broken up, the waters rise, they swell upon the ocean's brim, the flood-gates burst, and the '*tide turns*'; the sea flows away from its old fountain, and creeps into the basin which is forming to receive it.

"At the hour of Lebuda's death the *tide turned.*

"As the earth continues to sink, it creeps nearer and yet more near; soon will the valley of Sippara and the realms of all the Devas be naught but the bed of a great sea, upon which, by the mercy

of God, we shall ride in safety. The multitudes I have warned in vain ; they must die. God have mercy on their souls !”

He paused a moment : “ Hark ! the muttering thunder. Even now the tempest gathers, which shall add to the horrors of the sea.”

Again we relapsed into silence, unbroken save by the moans of the animals, who instinctively feel the coming woe, and the loud complaints of the passers-by. The water in the cisterns is almost exhausted, and suffering from the drought is extreme.

Four moons ago, I wrote in this journal my father’s words : “ Shut out of the world in this lonely valley, your life will be eventless.” Ah, how rapid has been the march of events ! But I cannot stop to review the past. Though all nature is profoundly calm, and even the smoke hangs motionless in the silent air, I feel that there is hurry, hurry, distracting haste, pervading everything. I hear again the voice of the old river ; it ripples, it murmurs no longer ; strange waters mingle with its own, they rise and swell, they surge and roar, “ Desolation, destruction, coming ! coming ! coming !”

ASTROLOGY.

WHEN the family met this morning it was observed that the usually cheerful face of our brother Ham was anxious and careworn. The mother, keenly alive to the welfare of her children, inquired the cause.

“I have been engaged all night,” said the astrologer, “in watching the heavens. Their appearance is extraordinary and alarming. I have carefully consulted the records of Seth, and find nothing similar. Never have the stars been in like position, and they were two drops of the clepsydra late in rising and setting. But most unnatural of all, is the disappearance of many stars and of the great comet, which four days since spread its vast wings across the sky. It is nowhere to be seen.”

I trembled, as the vision came to remembrance; but my lips were sealed and I made no sign.

Then answered the Prophet, —

“The disappearance of the stars is indeed unaccountable, but I understand their late rising. It is caused by the sinking of the earth. We

are at the lowest point. Another observation, and we shall know of a certainty with regard to this matter; it must be done to-night, for soon dense vapors settling into the valley will blot out the lights of heaven. But thou must sleep, my son, lest thy strength become exhausted before the great trial. Rest to-night, and I will keep the watch."

But he constrained his father, saying, —

"Nay, I cannot sleep."

Then spake the mother, —

"Let us all rest through the day, and at night keep watch together; surely none of us can sleep."

To this they agreed. The heat was intense, there was little labor to be performed, and we gladly resigned ourselves to the forgetfulness of slumber.

WATCHING.

AFTER the sun went down, we rose and prepared for the important work of evening. The astrologer had already taken note of the sunset, but spake not ; indeed, the tremendous uncertainty overshadowing our future rendered us all silent.

The moon was at the full, and the moment of its rising would relieve our anxiety, or confirm our fears of variation. An increasing light in the east gave token of its approach ; forty drops of the clepsydra, and it should appear. Forty and three were marked before the red disk peered above the mountain crest.

We are sinking rapidly !

“ The flood-tide,” said the Prophet, “ will soon be upon us. Remote portions of the territory are already under water ; escape is impossible. Even if the Devas should return, and attempt the removal of their retinues now in waiting at Sippara, it could not be accomplished ; the flood from three great seas flows inward, they would be met on every side by the advancing waters, and their doom hastened.

In a few hours it will inevitably reach us : but fear not, my children ; let your faith in God be strengthened by the very terrors that surround us ; they are but a fulfilment of his word given for our safety."

Notwithstanding this assurance, all looked anxious and fearful, as we sat by the window and watched the blood-stained moon slowly mount the bronzed heavens ; for in the ominous silence we knew an implacable sentry held ward, one that the bravest cannot meet without terror, even Azreel, the Angel of Death !

SUSPENSE.

ALL night we watched the heavens, and in the morning saw the sun rise, red and blazing, above the parched valley. Four drops from the clepsydra marked his increasing tardiness : surely, swiftly, we are sinking ; the certainty is awful, yet why should I fear, who have witnessed the power of the SHADOW OF HIS HAND ?

As day advanced the heat became terrific ; we gasped in the suffocating air. Sippara lay shimmering in the glare, silent and lifeless as a city of the dead ; vegetation withered beneath the fervid rays of the sun ; man and beast, overpowered by the stifling atmosphere, forgot in the misery of the present moment their fear for the future.

As the dial marked midday, there came a deep rumble and a shock, followed by a crash and a thick cloud of dust rising above the Palace of Light. In a moment the city was alive with people roused from stupor by the sudden alarm. The cause was soon evident : as the dust passed away, we discovered that the south tower had fallen, car-

rying with it a large portion of the court wall and the summer-house in the garden, burying under the wreck many poor creatures who had therein sought shelter from the scorching heat.

Their dismal shrieks and groans were quickly silenced, for a deep fissure opened in the earth below the foundation, and the entire mass—stone, timber, trees, and miserable human beings—was swallowed in a fiery chasm.

Great was the excitement in the city. The alarms sounded; queens and proud ladies shrieked from window and balcony; men ran wildly to and fro. Above the din could be heard the harsh voices of the Darvands calling loudly upon their celestial sires, or heaping upon them curses for their cowardly desertion. But the intense heat soon overpowered even their supernatural endurance, the shock was not repeated, and silence again brooded over the scene.

Sultry and hot the day closed in. Exhausted by the vigils of the night, the excitement, and the stifling heat, we yielded to excessive drowsiness and sought the oblivion of slumber.

THE HOUR OF DOOM.

Soon after midnight I was wakened by a sound in the air, like a shriek or wail passing over the valley ; afterward came short sudden gusts, succeeded by hollow intervals of intense calm. Breathless I listened ; all was confused, inharmonious, dissonant. The Spirits of Air seemed to be in revolt ; high in the heavens the light wind and hoarse tempest strove ; there were voices in complaint, — moaning, angry vociferation. Beneath, a sullen, far-off roar caused the earth to tremble. I covered my head to shut out all sense and compel oblivion. In vain ! As faint dawn glimmered in the east, a heavy blast swirled down from the north with a force that shook our building and chilled us to the bone. In a few moments came a hot wind from the opposite direction ; the air was filled with dust and at the same time an unusual dampness and a saline odor.

THE HOUR HAD COME !

Unconsciousness of the awful certainty could be no longer feigned. “ O Japhet,” I cried, “ Azreel

and the Prince of the Power of Air rage above the valley, and the earth shudders at the unwonted tread of the Monarch of Waters." We rose hastily, — the family were already assembled, and sat in silence with bowed heads and faces covered.

We approached the broad window ; one glance upward, and we shrank aghast from the appalling sky. Around the cramped, distorted horizon a lurid haze had settled ; over this crawled a rack of tawny vapor, and high above was a dome of black clouds, like great rocks rolling in the sky. Yet no wind now stirred the leaves, a painful stillness filled the air.

The city was also roused ; housetop and tower were crowded with men gazing at the portentous heavens.

Suddenly the bed of the river filled with water ; whence it came none could discover. The people rushed to the shore, anxious to welcome the element of which they had so long been deprived ; they dipped vessels in the stream and applied them to their lips, but started back in dismay, crying, —

“ The water is salt ! Whence comes it ? There is no sea near ! ”

One moment of fearful speculation, and by a com-

mon impulse all eyes were turned to the north, whence had come the chill blast and terrene shudder.

O sight of terror, before which even the heart of a Deva must quail! Entirely across the entrance of the valley, crowding the very mountain-tops, appeared a mighty wall, tottering, crashing, falling, pressed forward by some invisible power.

Upon its awful front, in confusion which dazed the sight, were borne trees and timber, fragments of buildings, earth, rocks, and mutilated bodies of animals and creatures of the sea; but most dreadful of all, tossed in uncertain motion, were the ghastly corpses of dead men and women. Beyond and above, heaped against the lowering sky, were seen on-coming, cold, angry seas, raging breakers, monster water-spouts clutching the clouds and roaring as if all the waters of the world were dashed together in the frenzy of destruction. With piercing shrieks the crowd turned to flee, but, lo! another horror,—another flood hung above the city, borne onward from the south,—the Oceans of Death were closing above the valley. Paralyzed with despair, all stood motionless, till a cry arose,—

“To the hills, to the hills!”

Then up the rocky steep they rushed,—strong

men, delicate women, and confused childhood, panic-stricken by the fear of imminent death. As the mass pressed madly on, many were dashed over the rocks and fell shrieking into the gulf below.

Strange power of the human mind! Amid the wild unreality of that tremendous scene, as in a picture surrounded by most terrible accessories, I saw and recognized in the flying crowd some of the attendants of the palace and other royal households. One group impressed itself vividly as the lightning flash that revealed it,—a beautiful woman (her dress a queen's), with an infant pressed to her snowy bosom, while by the hand she led a child whose strong features and powerful limbs too surely betrayed celestial parentage. Her hair and garments streamed in the wind, which she vainly strove to breast, and her voice of despair sounded shrill above the roar of the storm,—

“Save us, Ob-ora, save us!”

Alas! far from the reach of Mildra's voice, in chains and darkness, Ob-ora lay, waiting the last great day of judgment.

In another instant all sense and feeling were absorbed in the mortal peril that assailed ourselves. The floods rushed together, sky and ocean min-

gled, the writhing vapors were torn by a mighty force, the windows of heaven opened, and an inundation from the clouds swelled the wild waters surging through the valley; sharp electric discharges split the heavy vault, the dun air was whirled into a tornado, the winds shrieked and howled like infuriate demons, twisting and tearing everything in their course as with a visible hand. To increase the horrible distraction and din, immense flocks of birds and bats of every species were hurtled through the darkening air into the greedy wave, despite helpless screams and flutterings.

And now approached the unimaginable horror: an earthquake of awful violence rocked the valley, one moment stretching it out like a plain, tossing the wreck to the very clouds, and the next sinking it so deep that the mountain-tops seemed about to close and crush us. The mighty waves in quick succession roared above the hills, and anon settled into a trough of inky blackness. The fierce antagonism of fire and flood ensued, the ribs of earth were cracked, its crust was rent asunder, subterranean fires belched forth, and a terrific eruption of hissing water and melted rock, with chaos and thick darkness, shut us in.

The avalanche hung over us for a breath, and then descended ; above the howling of the storm, the roaring waters and bellowing earthquake, the awful crash was heard. The vessel staggered, heaved, and spun round in the boiling maelstrom, like a dry leaf in a tempest.

O that horrible sickening swirl !

Dizzy and stunned, we fell prostrate, the color forsook our faces, the warm current of life was frozen, our hearts ceased to beat, we were within the jaws of Death, we sank in the abyss Duyhak !
“Lost! lost, O God!”

How do I live to write these words !

At this moment of direst wrath, with a mighty cry, the Prophet uttered a—Name. Then blinding light dazzled our eyes, a black shadow passed by, for one instant there was silence more awful than the rage of the elements ; but even as the hollow reverberation of the voice died away, the vessel made a tremendous lurch, plunged completely under water, trembled in every joint, righted again, and, crashing through a thousand wrecks, came up unharmed.

“God be praised!” exclaimed the Prophet, “we are afloat.” And with pale, earnest lips we echoed,
“God be praised!”

PERIL AND GLOOM.

OUR danger was by no means over ; the torrents of destruction were yet contending for mastery ; at one time that from the north would prevail, and drive us almost upon the remaining towers of the city ; again we were dashed back the length of the valley by the southern wave. Entangled among wrecks which covered the mighty surge, the timbers groaned and creaked as if they would part ; we could feel the commotion beneath, as we were helplessly dragged across rocks, tree-tops, and submerged buildings.

But our vessel was planned by a divine architect, even by Him who sent the deluge, and knew what would be required in this hour of unexampled peril : our awkward bark lived in a boiling sea, where the stateliest ship would have been shattered to fragments.

After many hours — or days, we knew not which — of convulsive turmoil, the waters in a measure subsided, though still fearfully agitated and rising rapidly along the hillsides ; we breathed more freely,

and the Prophet looked after the frightened beasts, from whom we had heard nothing but occasional moans of pain.

At length, with half-averted gaze we ventured to approach the window. O vision of gloom! The heavens were gathering blackness, and heavy masses of cloud were driving across the murky sky. Was it day, or night now drawing to a close? The lurid sun (or moon) was drowning in a black watery mist; its sickly light revealed but too well the horror below. We were drifting near a mountain of unfamiliar outline, whose top was crowded with living beings in every attitude and aspect of despair. Women and children there were none; their feeble natures had yielded long before this terrible consummation; but men and Darvands, animals, birds, and serpents, were clustered in indistinguishable confusion. Some sat in motionless apathy, with despairing faces upturned to the pall-like sky; some with frantic cries and outstretched arms wildly implored our aid; others with insane laughter sprang into the water, in desperate attempts to reach our vessel.

But shrieks of terror, strangled cries of the drowning and howl of the beasts, were in an in-

stant hushed, as the struggling orb which shed its melancholy ray upon the scene sank below the horizon, and sudden darkness swallowed all!

The vision was too dreadful for human endurance; we fell upon the floor of the vessel almost as lifeless as the bodies floating upon the surges around us.

And now a terrific storm arose; heaven and earth were shaken by bursts of thunder; incessant flashes of lightning illumined the night; rain came down in torrents, and we could hear swollen streams roaring over the mountain steeps.

“O God,” we cried, “have pity upon the poor creatures exposed to the furious elements! Hear their cries for mercy, and pardon their sins even at this fearful hour!”

Again feeble daylight made the darkness visible, and again, amid tempest, rain, and grim shadows, thicker darkness shut us in.

We could light neither lamps nor fires; we were exhausted by fasting, want of sleep, and continual effort to save ourselves from bruises as the vessel pitched and rolled upon the waves; we could scarcely hear our own voices; our faces were haggard; our strength failed from the terrible tension; we were ready to die. Again and again had

day blackened into night and night paled into day. Then spake the Prophet:—

“The All-Powerful has preserved us from the ravening floods when we were utterly helpless,— forever blessed be his name!— but he does not that for man which man can do for himself. We are perishing from want of food and sleep; take in your hands dried fruit and cakes, that your courage may revive. Afterwards I will give you to drink a preparation from leaves of the plant *re-hui* and seeds of the *pa-chest-el*, which long ago I provided for this hour. The draught will cause prolonged sleep and forgetfulness, and after many hours you will awake refreshed.”

We ate bread and drank the medicament, then made our beds secure, and, lying down, soon fell into sleep and pleasant dreams.

DRIFTING.

How long we slept is uncertain, but at intervals I was dimly conscious that we were beaten about by incoming waves; although the thunder and lightning had ceased, the wind still howled in the sky, and the pitiless rain drove in great sheets against the vessel and into the sea.

Hunger at length roused us; the water was quiet, save for long dead swells struggling with the currents; we built fires, dried our damp garments, and settled ourselves for the confinement.

I am once more able to write in my journal, though how to date this record I am uncertain: sun, moon, and stars have not appeared for many days, and the clepsydra was broken in that terrific shock when the seas met.

THE CORONAL OF HESPERUS.

THE rain still pours in torrents from the leaden sky; a black mist enshrouds the horizon. To dispel the melancholy which is settling over us, we yesterday assembled in the mother's apartment, and I read from the writings of Aleemon a story of olden times, "The Love of Elbenat, a Star Spirit, for Carmala, a Princess of the Kingdom of Nouphta." We were all much affected by the great trials and virtue of the princess, unshaken even to the hour of deliverance, when the gate of death closed upon her fair form, and Elbenat could see her no more.

This story was a gift from my father when I was but a child. Often had I retired to the recesses of the forest, to linger over the scroll and dream undisturbed of the fortunes of Carmala.

How mysterious then seemed the love of a Star Spirit for a mortal maiden! And now—is the mystery solved? Alas, no!

The sadness of my heart increased, and, fearing some word or look might betray it, I presently withdrew to the solitude of my own chamber.

Here I looked once more upon the memorials of my former life, — the treasures and parchments of Aleemon, the shawl and robe wrought by Lebuda's hand, and the rare utensils, Simourga's dying gift.

Where are the departed ones? Their bodies lie beneath the waves: do their spirits also rest, or wander in some far-off realm of bliss and forgetfulness?

And Hesperus —

My eyes fell upon the jewel-casket, gift of the Star Spirit, which poor Elbeth had conveyed from the palace, — the last service of her devoted life. It had never been opened: I might now look upon its contents. With trembling fingers I pressed the spring. It unclosed; a soft perfume was exhaled, and a light vapor passed from an ivory tablet which bore this inscription, —

Sigh with me, Seola,
 Answer sigh by sigh;
 Drink with me, Seola,
 The cup of ecstasy.

Love with me, Seola;
 Then shall bliss unknown,
 Born of seraph's passion,
 Ever be thine own.

Reign with me, Seola;
 Sweet soul, do not fear;
 Crown of glory waits thee,
 Magnet of my star.

I raised the tablet, and beneath, upon a silken cushion, was lying a diadem of rarest beauty, — a wreath of silver lilies exquisitely wrought and frosted snowy white; depending from the slender filaments were quivering pearls, and deep in the heart of each delicate flower an opal glowed like a smothered fire.

Ah Hesperus!

Tears drop from my eyes upon the precious garland. I hear the footsteps of my husband. Why do I fear that he will find me weeping?

He looks upon my grief with sad surprise, discovers the casket, divines the cause of my tears, reverently takes the glistening crown from its repose, places it upon my forehead, saying, —

“Seola, my queen!”

Dear Japhet, how gently didst thou remind me that henceforth my realm must be only where thou art king!

After a few moments of thoughtful silence my husband spoke again, —

“Beloved, your life before the happy hour when first we met is to me unknown.”

I comprehended his reasonable desire, and without reserve confided to him my strange history.

At which he marvelled greatly and forgave my tears, embraced me tenderly, and in return for such confidence related many wonderful events of his own life, particularly an adventure that once befell him when lost in the Enchanted Mountains.

JAPHET'S ADVENTURE.

“ You well know, my dear Seola, the Prophet instructed his sons in everything that would strengthen character and tend to a virtuous life ; but as we approached manhood, a great fear seized him lest we should yield to surrounding temptation and be lost.

“ Upon one occasion, after a serious exhortation, he concluded with these words :—

“ ‘ My sons, within the sealed chamber there is a shrine whose crystal doors close upon a mystery which has been preserved in our family for many generations. Being divinely instructed, Adam found in the depths of the earth a spar of heteroclite gems, which by some peculiar inhesion could gather and concentrate electric rays ; with these gems he inwrought upon a sapphire of extraordinary size and transparency the Name of Him who, dying, will overcome the warder of the tree of life and bring to man redemption. This mysterious possession upon the day of his departure he confided to Seth, and thus it has ever been transmitted from father to son, in the solemn hour of dissolution.

“ ‘But we have fallen on perilous times ; a great danger threatens ; and I am warned that for the preservation of my sons it is necessary the secret be now confided to them. The order is thus broken. With this generation the miraculous treasure will disappear, and, although not lost to the children of men, will be hidden from their eyes, till in distant ages it will arise like a star and become the beacon-light of the world.

“ ‘To-day I shall unveil the mystery of mysteries, forbidding you on penalty of death to speak while in its presence. The Name you will behold is a spell of superhuman power ; it controls the death element, and must never be uttered but in the moment of mortal peril ; and remember, O my sons, if in the heart of him who speaks, or in the soul of him who hears, there lurks one unforgiven sin, swift and sure destruction will inevitably follow.’ ”

As I, Seola, listened to this story, musing upon the past, there came to remembrance the unknown words spoken to Hesperus in the council-chamber of the Tower, — “ Command Onda and Okba twain and twain, the mighty El-kol-ah and Him *unnamed*, twain and one,” — and I knew that Lucifer had dealt deceitfully, hoping thereby to destroy him.

Japhet continued ; —

“ We then unbound our sandals, washed our feet, veiled our faces, and awe-stricken passed into the sacred presence. The chamber was hung with cloth of gold, the air was heavy with the odor of fragrant gums ; no sunlight could penetrate, but from the sapphire shrine streamed forth a pale, unearthly glow. After a moment of prostration, the Prophet arose and in profound silence reverently opened the doors ; one glimpse, and of their own impulse they closed again ; but in that brief interval the ineffable word had stamped itself on heart and brain in letters of fire.” Japhet's voice here became low and contemplative. “ Not the fire that pains and sears, but that which warms, vitalizes, illumines, and blesses.

“ Dearest Seola, you can imagine the impression made upon my youthful mind ; I strove to be kept pure, that I might be worthy to speak the word of awful power. You shall hear what afterward befell, but to none other have I related the story of my strange adventure in the Enchanted Mountains.

“ It happened upon a certain day that I went forth alone, driving an ass which was to bring

home light timber suitable for finishing the Tebah.

“I penetrated deep into the forest, unconscious of distance, till I obtained the requisite quantity. I then attempted to turn the head of the animal homeward, but he resisted the rein and trembled as from fright. I perceived at the same time that we were at the foot of an unknown mountain, whereon the growth and surroundings had a weird and ghostly look. Sprays of blossoms depending from the trees appeared like outstretched arms, vines upon the earth like nets spread to entangle the feet, and from every rocky point gleamed a phosphorescent fire. Day was declining, and as in some alarm I urged the frightened brute, I heard youthful voices, and discovered two beautiful girls coming down the steep laden with wild-flowers. Surprised at the sight of a stranger, they stopped abruptly, and the one in advance stepped upon a rolling stone and fell forward among the rocks. She was evidently much injured, and lay motionless. Her companion ran toward me, exclaiming, ‘Help! help, kind stranger! Sakontala will die.’

“Prompted by every instinct of humanity, I sprang forward and raised her. ‘Whither shall she be carried?’

“‘To her home a short distance beyond the mountain.’

“The young girl led the way, and I followed with my helpless burden. How beautiful she looked, lying pale and faint in my arms, her head resting on my shoulder, and her heart fluttering against my breast!”

“What was the girl Sakontala like?” I demanded of my husband, interrupting the story, for my own heart was beating strangely.

“Unlike thee, my Seola, as the witch-fire of the marsh is unlike the moon at its full,” said Japhet, and resumed:—

“Intent upon my charge, I did not observe that the path led into the depths of the forest, till we reached an open gate, which closed against our companion as we passed through, leaving us alone. At this I grew uneasy, but could not return till the helpless girl was in a place of safety. At a short distance appeared a lonely building, and thither she faintly indicated that I should carry her. Her voice was tremulous and sweet, and in the new interest awakened by its tones I forgot prudence, and, passing in at the door, laid her gently upon a couch. The place seemed without inhabi-

tant, and, much bewildered, I said, 'Where shall I find your friends? Can I do aught to serve you?'

"Rising with more ease than I had deemed possible, she answered: 'Remain; I have no friends, and there is but one I desire. Beautiful youth, you are not unknown to me; I have often seen you in these forests; I am uninjured, save only the wound to my heart; the fall was a feint to attract your attention, to awaken your interest.'

"At these words the blood rushed hot into my face and retreated as rapidly to my heart, leaving me cold and pale. I realized my danger; I had crossed the boundaries of the Enchanted Land of Simourga. I was caught in the toils of her most fascinating nymph. She saw her advantage, knew escape was impossible; she felt assured that no virtue was proof against her power, but seeing displeasure in my face continued to dissemble. Coming nearer, she said, with downcast eyes and deprecating voice, —

"'Forgive my stratagem; beloved youth, grief and chagrin consume me, while Japhet frowns.'

"Then said I, 'Is deceit so fair?'

"At this the girl burst into tears, saying, 'Love for thee taught me to deceive.'

“And I answered coldly, ‘Unsought love, and unrequited.’

“Then in an agony of grief she threw herself at my feet and would have clasped them, but that moment I saw the curtain move gently as if swayed by the wind. I parted it, and sprang out quickly into a garden below. I ran along the winding path, till I reached a cluster of trees beneath which a low fountain bubbled forth. Heated and fatigued, I dipped my hands and was about to drink, when, lo! the water became red like blood. As I turned again to flee, a soft arm detained me, and a tall woman, who must have come from the rock or fountain, said,—

“‘Whither wouldst thou fly, O youth so lithe of limb, so fair of face? Art thou athirst and weary? Come with me to the Bower of All-Delight, drink of the ageless river, rest and refresh thyself, and afterward depart in peace.’

“With that a troop of laughing girls surrounded me, saying,—

“‘Shall our Sakontala sigh in vain? For many days has she refused the company of lovers, languishing for the youth of the forest; and will she release him now that he is within our domain?,

“Dear Seola, I was helpless as they led me to a vast chamber hewn in the mountain. Its ceiling was supported by pillars of porphyry, and many lamps lighted walls richly emblazoned with vermilion and gold. The farther extremity of the chamber was concealed by a heavy curtain, and, relieved against the gorgeous folds, stood an arbor of golden trees whose fruit glowed and glistened like rubies. Beneath these gem-laden boughs stood the high-priestess of Simourga, the world-renowned nymph, Sakontala.

“How transformed since the moment when I saw her in tears at my feet!

“The white garments were exchanged for robes of scarlet and gold, on her head was a coronet of gems, and in her hand a golden censer. How wonderfully beautiful in the light of a thousand lamps! But a cold, reproachful air possessed those features, so recently glowing with passionate grief and love. By her side stood a magnificent Darvand, but she gave him no heed, and fixed her eyes upon me alone.

“Perceiving that I remained immovable, she spoke:—

““Impassive youth, from the moment you strayed

into this domain you were mine ; Simourga yields throne and sceptre to Sakontala. I have wrung secrets from earth and heaven. I can weave the mystic threads of fate, and forecast the astral destiny of man. By these powers I know thee mine. From plants that seek the shade I mix a draught that will inspire love or aversion. Thus I can hold thee mine. In this magic censer, which no other hand can wield, is imprisoned a subtle fluid, which, according to my will, produces sleep or deadly lethargy, bestows renewed life and power of delight or chills with torpor. By this thou art irrevocably mine ; but I would hold thee in silken cords, not iron chains.

“ ‘Choose then, O Son of the Prophet, life and happiness as the beloved lord of Sakontala, or —’

“The words ‘Son of the Prophet’ recalled my scattered senses, and without giving the enchantress time to complete the sentence, I finished it, exclaiming in a loud voice, ‘I take the alternative, — Death!’

“A spasm of wrath and implacable hate passed over the face of Sakontala ; she dashed the censer to the pavement ; it flew into a thousand pieces ; flames burst forth, and a stifling vapor pervaded the

air. At the same instant the curtain behind the golden arbor was withdrawn, and upon an ebon throne I beheld the King of Terrors with lifted hand and venomed dart ready to pierce me through, while from beneath his feet uprose a hissing serpent, coiling his body for a spring.

“My doom was pronounced, my senses failed, I resigned my spirit to God; but in the giddy rush of thought, like a meteor’s flash came the remembrance of the enshrined Name, and, though trembling in every nerve, I cried out, calling upon Him that hath power over Death.

“Seola, you have heard the Name.”

“That which the Prophet spake when the Tebah was in the abyss of waters?”

“The same!” Japhet continued with a shudder: “In an instant a cross of dazzling flame whirled through the air, and in the fire — O fearful sight! — appeared, stark and stony, the face of a man, the face of an ox, the face of an eagle, and the face of a lion.

“Then deep thunder crashed through the hollow vault; the serpent recoiled upon the image, whose great eyeballs rolled backward in their sockets as it tottered into a pit foul with the dead; the dart

took fire and fell upon Sakontala; the thousand lamps burned green and blue, and flickered upward as if about to expire; the figures standing around, in the unnatural glare, appeared like livid corpses, and, shrieking wildly, fled away, driven by the blast of fire; the lights sank, and I was left in darkness alone. As I stood irresolute, not knowing what course to take, I felt a dead blow upon my bosom which nearly deprived me of breath; turning in the direction from whence it came, I saw a faint glimmer at a great distance. Toward this I groped my way through a narrow ascending passage, till I perceived the light of day coming through the crevice of a door. Here, to my great surprise, I found myself at the wall of the Palace of Light, and recognized the door to be a carved panel in the foundation, which had often attracted my attention.

“Day was just breaking. I had been all night in the cavern of the enchantress. It was the quiet hour, and, devoutly thanking God, I hastened home unobserved, sought the retirement of my own room, and, thoroughly exhausted, sank upon the bed.

“When the family rose, my mother came to the

chamber and regarded me earnestly with an inquiring look.

“I divined her thought, and answered it, saying, ‘God was with me.’

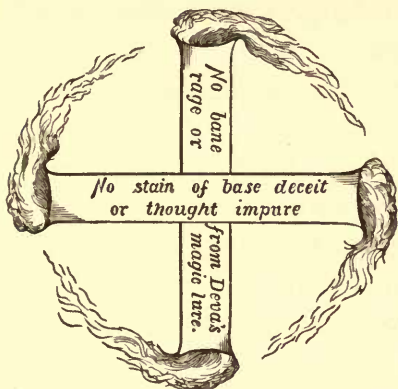
“She replied, ‘Sleep in peace,’ and, kissing my forehead, withdrew.

“I slept long, and when I rose and was refreshing myself with a bath I became conscious of an unusual sensation upon my left breast, just where the dead blow in the darkness had fallen. Upon examination I could discern letters of unknown form, but as they were directly beneath my eyes I did not attempt to decipher them. To this hour they remain unread, for I hesitate to discover the writing to my friends who know nothing of the adventure.

“But thou, Seola, soul of my soul, from thee I would conceal naught; thou art skilled in ancient lore; dost thou fear to look upon this unknown inscription?”

In much agitation I answered, “I have no fear, O my husband.”

Then Japhet drew back the folds of his vestment, and directly over his heart, in characters illegible to aught but the prophetic eye, I saw a strange symbol which I slowly interpreted.



As I read these words, a great admiration and awe came over me. O miracle of mercy! There was no dross in thy pure soul; my lord still lives, yet bears upon his heart the brand of Him who hath power over Death!

AGAIN THE TIDE TURNS.

EVENING. Still the rain pours; its ceaseless patter fatigues the sense. We cannot mark the hours, we know not how many days have passed since the storm began, for neither sun, moon, nor stars have appeared since the night of our melancholy watch, when we discovered by a changing horizon that the earth was sinking. The water-currents are growing sluggish, but they still turn inward, swirling with inconstant motion.

MIDNIGHT. The astrologers have just obtained a glimpse of the moon wading in the thick vapors. From its position and form, they calculate that one entire change and one quarter have passed since it was last in view; thus we know that this is the thirty-seventh day of our voyage. The black days were more than we realized, and our subsequent sleep was unnaturally prolonged.

* * * * *

Three other monotonous days passed. During this time our vessel lay like a log upon the water,

which sank to a dead calm. Our spirits were heavy, the tone of our thought gray like the sky and sea ; we spake little, and the hours went tediously by.

Yesterday, as night came on, the wearisome sound of rain ceased, and just as the sun set, its light, like a new glory, streamed for a moment over the waters. We welcomed its return, and rejoiced in the life-giving beams.

For some hours the dead calm continued, the sea was like a mirror ; but about midnight, under the light of the full moon, we discovered a reversed motion of the currents : they were gently flowing outward toward the ocean beds ! This we beheld with joy, for we knew that the water was returning from off the face of the earth. Again *the tide turns !*

The sky, so long scowling and tempest-tossed, was once more calm ; the tranquil moon looked down upon the rippling waves ; but there — O woful sight ! — were seen swollen and disfigured bodies of the drowned swaying in the tide ; pale corpses floating, floating far out into the solemn sea ; no sign of life, no sound, no motion, save when some frightful monster with quick splash rose out

of the water and sprung forward to seize his unre-sisting prey.

The moon set ; in silent thought we passed the darkened hours, and when the sun in all his glory rose out of the sea, we joined the Prophet in devout prayer and sacrifice.

THE STAR AND AZREEL.

* * * * *

THIS evening I stood alone and watched the waves, as in capricious play with the wind and tide they rippled against the sides of the vessel.

Twilight brooded over the boundless ocean,— a sea where naught hath breath, no cities are on its shore, no islands on its bosom, no ships ploughing the waves nor birds skimming the surface, only the peaceful sea and silent air.

The Tebah drifted in the breeze, the night deepened, and a shadow fell upon my soul as the past rose at memory's call.

It was but a few days, and yet it seemed an age since I listened to the wind in the cypress-tops, and to the voice of the river flowing on, calm as the current of my young life. Ah, what unsuspected depths of passion, what unimagined strength of will, then awaited the tempest of fate! God only knows the struggle. His power was my salvation. The trial

passed with more than triumph, yet gentle peace hath flown.

Why sinks my heart with nameless grief? Why are mine eyelids heavy with unshed tears?

O star of sad and tender light, over the sullen wave will thy assuring beam ever come back to me?

Then through the chambers of the soul there swept subtlest strains of music, the aroma of song. There was no outward sound, for still I heard the plash of wave and the breath of wind. It seemed an echo, or a chord responsive of my inner life, answering a spirit voice.

And as I lifted mine eyes inquiringly, behold a star in the west, sinking into the waters of the sea, and on its slant and setting beams was borne the spirit song. But when I would have cried out, the light was hidden, and a dark object, as it were the image of a man, obscured the sight. Had any one of mortal mould outlived the awful storm?

Upon a rock projecting from the water stood motionless a tall figure enshrouded in black robes, leaning upon a heavy sword, and as we floated near I recognized the dread form of Azreel, the Dark Angel!

Death stood between me and my joy!

His eye swept slowly over the waste of waters, and I heard these words:—

“The work is finished, the decrees of the Most High are fulfilled, and I go to Him from whom I came.”

So saying, he loosened his black cowl and mantle, and cast them with the dagger into the sea; for the insignia of pain and woe are not permitted to enter the bowers of heavenly bliss.

As he soared upward, there was revealed a form so ineffably fair, a face so radiant with the promise of eternal youth, that in sudden surprise, scarcely conscious of the meaning, I murmured:—

“O beautiful Death, no longer disguised, I see thee as thou art, the angel of Immortality! Leave not the world so soon; I would ascend with thee to God!”

At this moment a hand was laid upon my shoulder, and a voice spoke softly, “Dost thou dream, Seola?” I turned toward the speaker: my eyes met those of Japhet; his arms enfolded me, and—I forgot Azreel and heaven.

SIPPARA UNDER THE SEA.

THE sea is evidently retreating, the outline of mountains is sometimes visible. To-day we drifted over the valley of Hermon, and saw beneath the sinking waters Sippara under the sea. How silent now the place late so full of business and revelry ! Alas, alas, for the Glory of the Earth, desolate City of Sin !

The sun sends down his trembling beams upon a heap of ruins once proudly called the Palace of Light, — upon deserted court and battlement ; on tower and pinnacle, statue and fountain, yellow and distorted in the ebbing tide. The many-hued banners, which floated gayly in the breeze, cling colorless and begrimed against their mouldering standards ; sea-weed is tangled in the boughs of shade-trees ; the flower-stalk droops in dull decay, its leaves stripped from the stem ; driftwood and gravel are lodged against the glorious images in grove and garden ; fishes turn aside from the obelisks dank with sea-mould, and dragons of the deep

start in quick fear from the shattered form of the revolving serpent, more hideous even in ruin than themselves.

Is this dim, defiled heap the golden throne where late were seen the forms of Lucifer and his peerless queen bathed in celestial radiance, gems and sunlight blending, while from the astonished crowd shouts of impious adulation ascended to the skies?

O melancholy satire, mournful taunt! Here writhes in sluggish ferocity the Terror of the Sea; his abhorrent arms clutch both jewelled frieze and gilded pediment; his protruding eyes stare into the muddy court below, where sink livid bodies, fit prey for his cruel beak and insatiate maw.

Through tessellated walks where fond lovers strayed, glide eels and water-snakes; and in the royal avenue where chariots rumbled and horses neighed, sidles and crawls with limping gait a nameless horror. Slimy, shapeless creatures squeeze themselves through lattice windows, and drag their loathsome bodies across silken couches, where erst the Deva embraced his beautiful bride; crawfish lodge in carved ceilings; the slug and snail nestle undisturbed in plumed canopies; the starfish and tube-worm repose in crystal vases; the anemone

unfolds its vital leaves ; and in the bath of pearl a sea-spider weaves his shroud of lace.

Deep, deep beneath the pitiless wave master and slave rest together,—the murderous giant and innocent babe, the haughty queen beside the shrivelled beggar ; nor pride nor scorn nor pleasure nor anguish stirs now their pulseless hearts.

By the dreadful lake of sacrifice the Ogmyrs lie, and the serpents they nourished with blood of slaughtered victims refrain not to fatten upon their bodies and bite the hand that fed them.

Surely the feet of retribution haste not for man's impatience nor falter for his despair ! Yet I could weep for thee, Sippara, beautiful City of Sin !

SEOLA FORETELLS THE GLORY OF
THE JAPHETIC TRIBES.

Fourth Moon.

SINCE the night of the departure of Azreel from the earth, Japhet seldom leaves me alone. He saw not the angel, but my words alarmed him; and so it happened that when I came this evening to enjoy the fading light he came also and sat by my side.

After so many days of darkness and storm, how glorious was the sun as he sank into the waste of waters, leaving a glittering track stretched endlessly away to his place of rest!

Presently my companion spoke, while a far-off look came into his beautiful eyes:—

“Seola, I have a peculiar love for the sunset; I often wonder what land it looks upon as it passes from sight; in the west there is some attraction which I cannot resist; my eyes turn thither and my heart follows. What think you, my beloved?”

“Japhet,” I answered, “I can interpret your feeling; the same comes often to myself: ah, how vividly at this moment!”

Though the warm blood suffused my face and bosom as I spoke, the words faltered not:—

“My husband, thou art rightly called Extension: thy children and mine will ever journey to the west; our hearts do but precede their footsteps.

“A divine breath scatters the dull cloud that veils futurity, and through the rifts I see the majestic but awful pageant of human life move down the path of Time, — onward, onward, resting never, — merged in the ocean of Infinity!

“Noblest of all, the sons of Japhet lead the van, — the men are stern and brave, the women chaste and fair, — with delicate bloom, with golden locks and eyes of heavenly blue, Lebuda’s heritage bestowed by northern skies.

“The little band grows strong; now it becomes a tribe, a host, yea, mighty nations. Like a whirlwind they sweep from the north; the men of war ride upon horses, they fill the plain! Alas, they strive, — the brothers join in deadly fight, — I hear the noise of battle, the thunder of enginery, — IRAN, TURAN, blazoned on hostile banners. Over Turan I see the deadly sign, — alas, that son of mine should raise the serpent’s crest! It falls, the ser-

pent bites the dust, and high toward heaven mount Iran's sacred flames!

“Westward they press, to a land of hills and valleys, lakes and streams; they fell forests and level mountains, they uncover the hidden treasures of earth; waste places bloom like a garden, cities are founded, towers and pinnacles gleam in the morning light, palaces rise, temples point up to heaven, and Plenty smiles and Order rules the land.

• “Kings and queens ride forth in martial array, with banner, lance, and waving plume; their armor glistens in the sun; the trumpets sound, the hosts of darkness fly, — the sons of Japhet conquer.

“Westward still they press, whither the bright sun leads the way, following the track of the sailing stars; their argosies float upon the stormy sea, the winds are obedient to their will, lightnings carry their message, the imprisoned fire drags their burdens and screams along an iron way.

“I hear the voice of nations as the voice of many waters; their anthems swell; they shout in joy, ‘We are free! We are free!’

“Our children are rulers of the world, they are servants of the Most High!”

My eyes closed, and as I sank away overpowered by the ecstasy of the vision, Japhet caught me in his arms, exclaiming, —

“Come back to me, Seola; hear me thank God for my seer, my priestess, my queen!”

The vision faded; the dark past and the brilliant future both were lost in present happiness.

END OF THE VOYAGE.

ANOTHER moon passed ; the hot rays of the sun and a warm wind blowing continually from the east produce an enormous evaporation of the water, and sometimes bring an odor of the land. The animals which have lain torpid and dumb are now uneasy, the birds also sing and flutter upon their perches ; perhaps, by some subtile instinct, they perceive reviving vegetation. To-day, the door of separation being for a moment left open, a white dove came timidly through and flew to the window ; the Prophet cautiously opened it ; away she sprang, and was soon lost in the distance. How eagerly we watched her flight, and how joyfully hailed the return, when at evening she alighted with a fresh olive-leaf in her beak ! After passing through the most tremendous scenes, how strange that the flight of a bird should so interest us ! Yet by her intuition the dove has given the welcome promise of peace. As the moon rose that memorable night, there appeared, like a spectre on the horizon, a distant island, toward which our vessel

was drifting, and we retired to rest with joyful expectation.

At daybreak a jar and a grating sound upon the keel awakened us, and springing up we discovered the vessel to be fast aground upon a rocky point, where a few stunted trees were growing, — without doubt the top of a high mountain. O, fairer than groves of the Hermitage or gardens of Sippara did the dwarfed and scanty vegetation of that mountain-top appear !

With unsteady hands we prepared for landing, the Prophet and his sons having gone in advance to build the altars. As we stepped forth into the fresh air of morning and again touched the solid ground, an extraordinary scene met our eager gaze. Below and all around were spread the sullen waters of the flood ; the western sky was covered by a retreating thunder-storm, and, as the sun rose in the cloudless east, a vision of beauty ravished the eye : from the bosom of the lowering cloud there sprang high into heaven an arch of sunbeams, glowing with diverse colors, which, reflected from the quiet sea, formed an unbroken circle of shaded glory.

Our exclamations of rapture were hushed as the

Prophet kneeled before the altar and poured forth his soul in adoring praise:—

“Almighty Being, whose voice causeth the pillars of earth to tremble and the sea to remove from its ancient caverns, the elements have wrought thine awful will, the floods of ocean have swept away those who defied thy law, they have washed from earth the stain of sin. We are witnesses to all coming generations of thine irresistible power and majesty.

“But, O Omnipotent One, thou dost temper wrath with mercy and provide salvation for such as honor thy commands.

“Marvellously hast thou guided us through earthquake and flood to a haven of safety, and as our eyes are raised to heaven, lo! the bow appeareth, a token and promise to all thy children while the earth endures. Accept our praise, accept our sacrifice, and give us the answer by fire.”

He ceased, and the deep hush of expectation stilled our beating hearts. Then the voice of God shook the mountain, and from the cloud beneath the arch shot swiftly forth a lambent flame; the fire descended, curled round the altar: hissing and smoking it sent up toward heaven a tall column of

incense which reflected the sunlight and glowed like a pillar of fire.

We rose from the earth: the brothers went forward and reverently took from the blazing pile each one a burning brand, applied it to an altar previously prepared, and thus solemnly lighted his household fire. And I said in my secret heart,—

“Be it thine, Seola, to cherish this sacred fire and keep bright, on hearth and altar, the pure flames of love and devotion.”

* * * * *

Here the manuscript abruptly ended, but upon the back of the linen roll was an inscription in bolder characters, which after careful study we found to be:—

THE STORY OF JAVAN.

After the Flood, 700 Years.

Land of Iapeti.

SEOLA, priestess, seer, queen, our honored and loving mother, has left us for that unknown land to which all past generations have journeyed, and whither all the living must follow. Seven days ago she called^{*} me to her side.

“My dear Javan,” she said, “I am the last of those who survived the Great Deluge. I have lived eight hundred years; these eyes, now dim with age, have pierced the farthest heavens; to their prophetic vision was unveiled the incomprehensible, the unutterable, even the SHADOW OF HIS HAND, beneath whose chill the hosts of mighty Lucifer sank down to darkness and despair, whose touch thrilled the universe and shattered worlds. The sight was more than mortal could endure. I fell as one dead, and lay prone upon the earth in the midst of night and storm.

“From that prolonged swoon the voice of your beloved father called me back to life and happiness.”

Here my mother ceased speaking, and for some moments her thoughts seemed far away. At length she resumed :—

“Again, as on that dreadful night, have I heard his voice sound through the shades of death, ‘Seola, Seola, my beloved,’ and again have I replied, ‘Dear Japhet, I come ; not to the shelter of the perishable Tebah, to scenes of horror and despair, but to perennial bowers in the Paradise of God.’

“And now I must depart. To ^{*}you, O Javan, in whose arms it was foretold I should die, I commit the journal, faithfully kept according to the word of Aleemon. That portion pertaining to our life after the flood, the death of Noah, and the unhappy war that followed in consequence of the dissatisfaction of Shem, the peace effected by my prophetic power, the reasons for my refusal to be crowned with the coronal of Hesperus as queen of nations, and the chronicles of our prosperity,—all this I intrust to your care for the benefit of my descendants. They are, by a decree of the Most High, scattered afar, possessing the Isles of the Gentiles ; let the treasure also be justly divided, and conveyed to them with a mother’s love and blessing.

“The history of the Great Deluge has been transmitted by other survivors ; my record thereof enclose in the amethyst cylinder brought from the library of Aleemon, and place it in my hand when you lay me by the side of your father in the tomb.”

Here my mother motioned all in attendance to retire, which we did, weeping with grief at her approaching death.

* * * * *

In the night there was a commotion in the royal pavilion ; the attendants were summoned. I went in hastily and raised Seola in my arms. Her life was departing ; the old prophetic fire flashed from her eyes, and wondrous words burst from her lips :—

“The heavens are opened ; I see the Paradise of God. In a bower of supernal beauty sits Aleemon, and Lebuda is by his side.

“There also walk Simourga and the redeemed Aurenion.

“Elbeth and Charmos bloom in eternal youth.

“Hesperus, glorious in light, holds aloft a coronal of stars.

“He speaks, — ‘Seola comes ; grow bright, immortal crown, for she will reign.’

“What do I hear? The angels answer him, ‘Joy to thee, AURUS, Guardian of the Gates of Light!’

“And Japhet descends to convey me to this realm of bliss.

“But who are these? Azreel, Angel of Death and Immortality, thou art welcome — but this bright being by thy side? What love, what sweetness, in his face! and on his forehead and in his hand a Name, — the enshrined Word, — the Cross, but not of flame!”

There was a moment of silence, and her voice whispered softly:—

“Hush! the sound of the river, ‘Coming, coming, — nor night, nor discord, age nor death, — ETERNAL LIFE! ETERNAL HARMONY!’”

Seola was laid beside our father in the tomb of the mountain. On her brow was set the well-deserved crown her humility had declined, and “The Journal,” encased in imperishable crystal, will be placed in her hand, perchance for the benefit of future ages, when the wonderful events therein recorded may have passed from the memory of men. Upon the ceiling of the tomb have we

sculptured the emblem which she saw in dying vision, and when the shadows of death gather over us, may we also apprehend its meaning, and with latest breath bless the God of Japhet and Seola.

The words of Javan are ended.

APPENDIX TO SEOLA.

SEOLA is a fantasy, revealed to the writer while listening to the performance of an extraordinary musical composition. It was sudden and unforeseen as the landscape which sometimes appears to a benighted traveller, for one instant only, illumined by the lightning's flash.

It does not therefore pretend to be either history or theology, but yet the theory upon which the story is founded is in strict accordance with the sacred writings of the Hebrews and traditions of other ancient nations. It may be briefly stated.

In the early ages of the world angelic beings became incarnate, assumed the likeness of men, left the service of God, visited the earth, mingled in its affairs, formed the most intimate connection with women, and became the fathers of a progeny physically magnificent and spiritually corrupt. These powerful and depraved beings subverted the government of the earth and filled it with intolerable crime. The Almighty put an end to this unnatural condition by sending a great Deluge to

destroy the kingdom of the Devas with their giant offspring, and by imprisoning in chains and darkness the angels who had been guilty of the offence, though certain evil spirits are still permitted to roam the earth.

This theory, set forth in a work entitled "From Dawn to Sunrise," having been the subject of much comment, it may be proper to recapitulate the evidence of its truth in this place.

We read in Gen. vi.: "The *sons of God* saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. . . . There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the *sons of God* came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them; the same became mighty men, which were of old, men of renown." The Hebrew term BNE ELOHIM, translated *sons of God* in every other instance where it is used in the Bible, unmistakably means angelic beings, as in Job i. 6 and ii. 1: "The *sons of God* (BNE ELOHIM) came together, and Satan came also with them." Also, Job xxxviii. 7: "When the morning stars sang together, and all *the sons of God* shouted for joy." This was at the creation of the world, before man existed, and can by no possibility mean human beings. See also Dan. iii. 25, Ps. xxix. 1 and lxxxix. 6. By comparison of these texts we must conclude that the author of the Book of Genesis intends

to state, in explicit language, that angels were joined in marriage with women.

In 1 Cor. xi. 10, St. Paul says: "For this cause ought the woman to have power [or a covering] on her head, *because of the angels.*"

If the corporeity of angels be doubted, read the first eight verses of Gen. xviii., descriptive of the entertainment of angels by Abraham. "And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, *and they did eat.*" Chap. xix. 3: The angels visited Lot in Sodom, "and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat." Ps. lxxviii. 25: "*Men did eat angels' food.*" Gen. xxxii. 24-30: "And Jacob was left alone, and *there wrestled a man with him* until the breaking of the day. . . . And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

The punishment which was awarded to this antediluvian crime is divulged in the New Testament (Jude i. 6, 7): "*The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for*

an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Also, 2 Peter ii. 4: "*God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.*" Christ also, in Luke xvii. 26 – 28, classifies together the Sodomites and the antediluvians, — both sought after strange flesh.

The fallen angels will share in the redemption of Christ, the saints being judges. 1 Peter iii. 18, 19: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. By which *also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah*"; and, verse 22: "Jesus Christ, who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, *angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.*" Eph. iv. 9: "*He descended into the lower parts of the earth.*" Matt. xii. 40: "*The Son of Man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*" 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3: "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that *we shall judge angels?*"

The rebellious spirits were not all banished from earth. Job i. 7: "And the Lord said unto Satan,

Whence comest thou? Then *Satan* answered, *From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.*" Job ii. 7: "So went *Satan* forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job," etc. Matt. iv. 1: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit to be tempted of *the devil.*" Eph. ii. 2: "In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to *the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh* in the children of disobedience." Rev. xx. 2: "That old serpent, which is *the devil, and Satan.*"

Tradition confirms the Bible in these remarkable statements. The oldest Zend writers describe the great wickedness of the Kafaters, children of the Wicked One, who lived in the early ages of the world, and who perished in an extraordinary rain-storm sent for their destruction. The Aztec tradition is to the effect that a race of giants lived on the earth before the flood, who were exceedingly wicked. A similar Chaldean legend exists. The book of Enoch states that two hundred angels came down to reside upon the earth near Mount Hermon, lured by the love of beautiful women.

The reputed writings of Seth (still extant, it is said, in Asia) contain an account of the love of Star-Spirits for the women of this world, by which a race of genii were produced.

The Book of Tobit contains a similar story,—the love of Asmodeus (literally the *spirit of concupiscence*) for Sarai, a beautiful and pious woman.

The demigods and heroes of Indian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman mythology, the jinns and genii of the Orient, also the Eastern custom of veiling women, may find a reasonable explanation as traditional reminiscences of this strange period of the world's history.

Few disputed historical facts are so strongly corroborated. The Jewish church and synagogue shared this belief. It was probably received by the Seventy,—the manuscripts are about equally divided. Peter and Jude unqualifiedly assert their belief, and our Saviour inferentially. Philo, Josephus, and most of the Rabbins are clearly in favor of this rendering, as are Justin, Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrosius, and Lactantius.

Among modern interpreters who accept this view may be mentioned Koppen, Tholuck, Twesten, Nitzsch, Drechsler, Hofman, Baumgarten, Delitsch, Huther, Dr. Maitland, Dr. Kitto Dr. H. Crosby (N. Y. University), Professor Charles Mead, Andover, and Dr. J. H. Kurtz, Professor of Theology at Dorpat. There is a growing sentiment among modern theologians and Hebrew scholars, that the passage in question (Gen. vi.) does not admit of any other meaning.

After the indorsement of such authorities, any word

from a romance-writer would necessarily be superfluous.

If the introduction of steeds of fire should appear to any person fanciful, we would again, as in all the supernaturalism of this story, refer the caviller to the Hebrew scriptures. Is. lxvi. 15: "Behold, the *Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind*, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire." 2 Kings ii. 11: "Behold there appeared a *chariot of fire, and horses of fire*, and parted them both asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." 2 Kings vi. 17: "And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and behold, the *mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire.*" Zech. vi. 1-3: "Four chariots between two mountains of brass, with *red, black, white, bay, and grizzled horses*. The *four spirits of the heavens*, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. They that go toward the north have quieted *my spirit* in the north country." If any reader desires to pursue this inquiry still further, he is respectfully referred to Ps. civ. 3, 4; Ps. lxxviii. 17; Zech. i. 8; Rev. vi. 2-8.

For evidence of an advanced antediluvian civilization, see Gen. iv., last part of the 17th verse, also verses 19-22. Witness also the tremendous prehistoric ruins between the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and the rivers Tigris and Euphrates.

Without admitting or denying the literal truth of these statements in the Bible, it is patent that the ideas therein contained may be legitimately used in a work of the imagination.

The proper names used in this story have been, as far as practicable, taken from Biblical and traditional antediluvian personages or from very ancient Semitic or Aryan roots.

The use of the Latin form for two of the principal characters was an unavoidable concession to popular prejudice, as also a sacrifice to euphony. The name Seola (old Norse) was selected, first, because of its euphony, and, secondly, on account of its signification.

NOTES.



SEOLA, in the old Norse or Erse, means the *soul*.

Pages 14, 15. "They came and took possession," ancient traditions. See also Gen. vi. "Darvands," old Zend for *children of the Evil One*; "Deva" meaning in Sanscrit *spirit*, in Zend *demon*. SARAPH, translated from the Hebrew as *seraph* (see Is. vi.), is also used to signify *a snake*. A Chaldean inscription mentions an antediluvian sage as "Alemon, sage of Sippara," which latter word means *City of Books*, or *City of Ra*, the sun god. In the Bible Noah is called "*a preacher of righteousness*." "Set an hedge": see Job i. 10.

Page 16. Lebuda and Achima, traditional names of antediluvian women, first daughters of Adam and Eve.

Page 23. "Living stone," ancient name for *magnet*.

Page 81. The word translated *Ark*, Gen. vi., is not ARUN, *a box*, but TEBAH, and signifies "something designed to preserve those who take refuge in it."

Page 82. "Noah," or "Nanachus," is from a very ancient root NA, which in all languages refers to water.

Pages 86, 87. "Midland Sea," *Mediterranean*. "Gate of rocks," *Gibraltar*. "Amber Isles," *Bermudas*. "Wandu and Wejas," Scandinavian giants, *Wind* and *Water*.

Page 90. The historian Justin relates that in the early ages of the world the Spirit of Evil was worshipped in the

form of a great serpent called "Ferusharabha." The worship of the serpent is always accompanied by the most revolting forms of human sacrifice.

Page 103. "Persea," the *sacred peach*.

Page 107. "Maya," Sanscrit for *illusion*. "Homa" or "Soma," an intoxicating drink made from the milkweed, used by the ancient Aryan tribes, believed by them to have been of antediluvian origin, and regarded, in a certain sense, as a spirit or deity.

Page 155. "Yet will I ascend and be like the Most High." For blasphemous language of Lucifer, see Is. xiv.; also Matt. iv. 9.

Page 156. "Asparatha," old Scythic word meaning *a horse*. See Bopp's Comparative Grammar.

Page 157. "Varunus," *the dark sky*, Sanscrit.

Page 163. Job xxxviii. 39: "Canst thou *bind the sweet influence of the Pleiades* [*'Seven stars,'* Hebrew CИMAH], or loosen the band of Orion [Heb. CESIL]?" This group once consisted of eight stars: that called Halcyone is supposed to be the centre of the visible Universe. One Pleiad has disappeared.

Page 166. For punishment of the Devas see 2 Pet. ii. 4; also Jude i. 6.

Page 167. "Guardian of the Gates of Light." The star that ushers in the day and sets just after the sun may be supposed to open and close the portals of light. Luke x. 18: "I saw Satan like lightning fall from heaven." "The Wan Planet felt the shock." Astronomers inform us that a great planet once existed between Mars and Jupiter which

was shattered, and that the fragments, called asteroids, are now to be seen in that portion of the solar system.

Page 182. "I have been engaged all night in watching the heavens." The Chaldeans and Egyptians, descendants of Ham, were great astrologers.

Page 193. "Duyhak." The old Zend writers say that souls weighted with sin, after death, fall into *a dreadful abyss* called Duyhak.

Page 197. "*Re-hui, pa-chest-el.*" These words occur in a medical prescription taken from a very ancient Egyptian tomb.

Page 203. "The Name of him who, dying, will overcome the warder of the tree of life and bring to man redemption." Heb. ii. 14: "*Will destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.*" See also *cherub* in Ezekiel and Revelations. All the nations of antiquity that have left a literature attach immense power and sacredness to the spoken or manifested Word or *Name* of Deity. The Hindu Aryan held that it must never be uttered except in prayer. In Sanscrit, the most sacred Name or Word (*Vach*) was OM, so called by the Brahmins: it was also called SARASVATI or SAKTI, the female form of Brahma; by the Buddhists, AVALOHITESVARA; by the Persians HONOVER, *the Creating Word*. The same idea exists in the *Chochmah* of Solomon (translated Wisdom), *Memra* of the Targum, *Logos* of the Greek, and *Vox* of the Latin, all seeming to mean *the MANIFESTATION of Deity*. The names given to the Word (Logos) of the New Testament are qualifying words, or those which imply a characteristic,—Immanuel, *God with us*; Jesus, i. e. Joshua, *a Saviour*; Adonai, *Lord*; Christ, *the Anointed*, etc.

THE NAME may be yet all unknown to mortals, for it is said (Rev. ii. 17), "I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a NEW NAME written, which *no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*"

If a doubt should arise in the mind of any that the sacred symbol of all nations, heathen as well as Jewish and Christian, is not cruciform, the reader is referred to Dr. Lundy's Monumental Christianity, Chapters I. and VI.

Page 221. "I forgot Azreel and heaven." Ah, Seola, thou wert but human, yet thy sons and daughters may not condemn thee; the near and present absorb us also, and we forget the highest good.

Page 226. IRAN TURAN. In the oldest Zend and Sanscrit legends frequent reference is made to a great religious war which was perpetually waged for fifteen hundred years between the Aryan tribes, worshippers of the Supreme Deity, and the Turanian serpent worshippers. It is called "a war of the gods," or "a war of hostile brothers IRAN and TURAN." Before the tremendous proportions of this struggle for religious principle all modern warfare "pales its ineffectual fires." It might well claim the attention of the prophetic eye. For further particulars see "From Dawn to Sunrise," chapter on Ophiolatry.

Page 227. "Our children are rulers of the world." The Hebrew name Japhet means *extension*. The Japhetic tribes, particularly the Gommerian, excel in everything that tends to human progress. They do now and probably ever will control the governments of the world.

Pages 233, 234. "Javan," or Ioun, fourth son of Japhet

and father of the Greeks and Romans, the most beautiful of the tribes of men. "Iapeti," very ancient name of Japhet. An old Sanscrit legend says: "After Xisthuthrus [i. e. Noah] sailed for Armenia, war broke out between Zerman, Charmos, and Japhetos, on account of the division of the land, for Zerman would have his sons lords of all the earth, but their sister Astlik made peace between them."

"Possessing the Isles of the Gentiles": see Gen. x. 4.

THE END.

