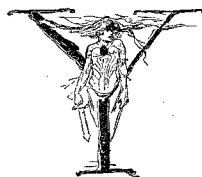


"THERE WERE NINETY AND NINE."



YOUNG Harringford, or the "Goodwood Plunger," as he was perhaps better known at that time, had come to Monte Carlo in a very different spirit and in a very different state of mind from any in which he had ever visited the place before. He had come there for the same reason that a wounded lion, or a poisoned rat, for that matter, crawls away into a corner, that it may be alone when it dies. He stood leaning against one of the pillars of the Casino with his back to the moonlight, and with his eyes blinking painfully at the flaming gas above the green tables inside. He knew they would be put out very soon, and as he had something to do then he regarded them fixedly with painful earnestness, as a man who is condemned to die at sunrise watches through his barred windows for the first gray light of the morning.

That queer, numb feeling in his head, and the sharp line of pain between his eyebrows which had been growing worse for the last three weeks, was troubling him more terribly than ever before, and his nerves had thrown off all control and rioted at the base of his head and at his wrists, and jerked and twitched as though, so it seemed to him, they were striving to pull the tired body into pieces and to set themselves free. He was wondering whether if he should take his hand from his pocket and touch his head he would find that it had grown longer, and had turned into a soft, spongy mass which would give beneath his fingers. He considered this for some time, and even went so far as to half withdraw one hand, but thought better of it and shoved it back again as he considered how much less terrible it was to remain in doubt than to find that this phenomenon had actually taken place.

The pity of the whole situation was, that the boy was only a boy with all his man's miserable knowledge of the world, and the reason of it all was, that he had entirely too much heart and not enough money to make an unsuccessful gambler. If he had only been able to lose his conscience instead of his money, or even if he had kept his conscience and won, it is not likely that he would have been waiting for the lights to go out at Monte Carlo. But he had not only lost all of his money and more besides, which he could never make up, but he had lost other things which meant much more to him now than money, and which could not be made up

or paid back at even usurious interest. He had not only lost the right to sit at his father's table, but the right to think of the girl whose place in Surrey ran next to that of his own people, and whose lighted window in the north wing he had watched on those many dreary nights when she had been ill, from his own terrace across the trees in the park. And all he had gained was the notoriety that made him a byword with decent people, and the hero of the race-tracks and the music-halls. He was no longer "Young Harringford, the eldest son of the Harringfords of Surrey," but the "Goodwood Plunger," to whom Fortune had made desperate love and had then jilted, and mocked, and overthrown.

As he looked back at it now and remembered himself as he was then, it seemed as though he was considering an entirely distinct and separate personage—a boy of whom he liked to think, who had had strong, healthy ambitions and gentle tastes. He reviewed it passionlessly as he stood staring at the lights inside the Casino, as clearly as he was capable of doing in his present state and with miserable interest. How he had laughed when young Norton told him in boyish confidence that there was a horse named Siren in his father's stables which would win the Goodwood Cup; how, having gone down to see Norton's people when the long vacation began, he had seen Siren daily, and had talked of her until two every morning in the smoking-room, and had then staid up two hours later to watch her take her trial spin over the downs. He remembered how they used to stamp back over the long grass wet with dew, comparing watches and talking of the time in whispers, and said good-night as the sun broke over the trees in the park. And then, just at this time of all others, when the horse was the only interest of those around him, from Lord Norton and his whole household down to the youngest stable-boy and oldest gaffer in the village, he had come into his money.

And then began the then and still inexplicable plunge into gambling, and the wagering of greater sums than the owner of Siren dared to risk himself, the secret backing of the horse through commissioners all over England, until the boy by his single fortune had brought the odds against her from 60 to 0 down to 6 to 0. He recalled, with a thrill that seemed to settle his nerves for the moment, the little black specks at the starting-post and the larger specks as

the horses turned the first corner. The rest of the people on the coach were making a great deal of noise, he remembered, but he, who had more to lose than any one or all of them together, had stood quite still with his feet on the wheel and his back against the box-seat, and with his hands sunk into his pockets and the nails cutting through his gloves. The specks grew into horses with bits of color on them, and then the deep muttering roar of the crowd merged into one great shout, and swelled and grew into sharper, quicker, impatient cries, as the horses turned into the stretch with only their heads showing towards the goal. Some of the people were shouting "Firefly!" and others were calling on "Vixen!" and others, who had their glasses up, cried "Trouble leads!" but he only waited until he could distinguish the Norton colors, with his lips pressed tightly together. Then they came so close that their hoofs echoed as loudly as when horses gallop over a bridge, and from among the leaders Siren's beautiful head and shoulders showed like sealskin in the sun, and the boy on her back leaned forward and touched her gently with his hand, as they had so often seen him do on the downs, and Siren, as though he had touched a spring, leaped forward with her head shooting back and out, like a piston-rod that has broken loose from its fastening and beats the air, while the jockey sat motionless, with his right arm hanging at his side as limply as though it were broken, and with his left moving forward and back in time with the desperate strokes of the horse's head.

"Siren wins," cried Lord Norton with a grim smile, and "Siren!" the mob shouted back with wonder and angry disappointment, and "Siren!" the hills echoed from far across the course. Young Harringford felt as if he had suddenly been lifted into heaven after three months of purgatory, and smiled uncertainly at the excited people on the coach about him. It made him smile even now when he recalled young Norton's flushed face and the awe and reproach in his voice when he climbed up and whispered, "Why, Cecil, they say in the ring you've won a fortune, and you never told us." And how Griffith, the biggest of the book-makers, with the rest of them at his back, came up to him and touched his hat resentfully, and said, "You'll have to give us time, sir; I'm very hard hit"; and how the crowd stood about him and looked at him curiously, and the Certain Royal Personage turned and said, "Who—not that boy, surely?" Then how, on the day following, the papers told of the young gentleman who of all others had won a fortune, thousands and thousands of pounds they said, getting back sixty for every one he had ventured;

and pictured him in baby clothes with the cup in his arms, or in an Eton jacket; and how all of them spoke of him slightly, or admiringly, as the "Goodwood Plunger."

He did not care to go on after that; to recall the mortification of his father, whose pride was hurt and whose hopes were dashed by this sudden, mad freak of fortune, nor how he railed at and provoked him until the boy rebelled and went back to the courses, where he was a celebrity and a king.

The rest is a very common story. Fortune and greater fortune at first; days in which he could not lose, days in which he drove back to the crowded inns choked with dust, sunburnt and fagged with excitement, to a riotous supper and baccara, and afterward went to sleep only to see cards and horses and moving crowds and clouds of dust; days spent in a short covert coat, with a field-glass over his shoulder and with a pasteboard ticket dangling from his buttonhole; and then came the change that brought conscience up again and the visits to the Jews, and the slights of the men who had never been his friends, but whom he had thought had at least liked him for himself, even if he did not like them; and then debts, and more debts, and the borrowing of money to pay here and there, and threats of executions; and, with it all, the longing for the fields and trout springs of Surrey and the walk across the park to where she lived. This grew so strong that he wrote to his father, and was told briefly that he who was to have kept up the family name had dragged it into the dust of the race-courses, and had changed it at his own wish to that of the Boy Plunger—and that the breach was irreconcilable.

Then this queer feeling came on, and he wondered why he could not eat, and why he shivered even when the room was warm or the sun shining, and the fear came upon him that with all this trouble and disgrace his head might give way, and then that it had given way. This came to him at all times, and lately more frequently and with a fresher, more cruel thrill of terror, and he began to watch himself and note how he spoke, and to repeat over what he had said to see if it were sensible, and to question himself as to why he laughed, and at what. It was not a question of whether it would or would not be cowardly, it was simply a necessity. The thing had to be stopped. He had to have rest and sleep and peace again. He had boasted in those reckless, prosperous days that if by any possible chance he should lose his money he would drive a hansom, or emigrate to the colonies, or take the shilling. He had no patience in those days with men who could not live on in adversity, and who were found in the gun-room with a hole in their

heads, and whose family asked their polite friends to believe that a man used to firearms from his school-days had tried to load a hair-trigger revolver with the muzzle pointed at his forehead. He had expressed a fine contempt for those men then, but now he had forgotten all that, and thought only of the relief it would bring and not how others might suffer by it. If he did consider this, it was only to conclude that they would quite understand, and be glad that his pain and fear were over.

Then he planned a grand *coup* which was to pay off all his debts and give him a second chance to present himself a suppliant at his father's house. If it failed, he would have to stop this queer feeling in his head at once. The Grand Prix and the English horse was the final *coup*. On this depended everything — the return of his fortunes, the reconciliation with his father, and the possibility of meeting her again. It was a very hot day, he remembered, and very bright; but the tall poplars on the road to the races seemed to stop growing just at a level with his eyes. Below that it was clear enough, but all above seemed black — as though a cloud had fallen and was hanging just over the people's heads. He thought of speaking of this to his man Walters, who had followed his fortunes from the first, but decided not to speak, for, as it was, he had noticed that Walters had observed him closely of late, and had seemed to spy upon him. The race began, and he looked through his glass for the English horse in the front and could not find her, and the Frenchman beside him cried, "Frou Frou!" as Frou Frou passed the goal. He lowered his glasses slowly and unscrewed them very carefully before dropping them back into the case; then he buckled the strap, and turned and looked about him. Two Frenchmen who had won a hundred francs between them were jumping and dancing at his side. He remembered wondering why they did not speak in English. Then the sunlight changed to a yellow, nasty glare, as though a calcium light had been turned on the grass and colors, and he pushed his way back to his carriage leaning heavily on the servant's arm, and drove slowly back to Paris, with the driver flecking his horses fretfully with his whip, for he had wished to wait and see the end of the races.

He had selected Monte Carlo as the place for it, because it was more unlike his home than any other spot, and because one summer night, when he had crossed the lawn from the Casino to the hotel with a gay party of young men and women, they had come across something under a bush which they took to be a dog or a man asleep, and one of the men had stepped forward and touched it with his foot, and had then turned sharply and said, "Take

those girls away"; and while some hurried the women back, frightened and curious, he and the others had picked up the body and found it to be that of a young Russian whom they had just seen losing, with a very bad grace, at the tables. There was no passion in his face now, and his evening dress was quite unruffled, and only a black spot on the shirt front showed where the powder had burnt the linen. It had made a great impression on him then, for he was at the height of his fortunes, with crowds of sycophantic friends and a retinue of dependents at his heels. And now that he was quite alone and disinherited by even these sorry companions there seemed no other escape from the pain in his brain but to end it, and he sought this place of all others as the most fitting place to die.

So, after Walters had given the proper papers and checks to the commissioner who handled his debts for him, he left Paris and took the first train for Monte Carlo, sitting at the window of the carriage, and beating a nervous tattoo on the pane with his ring until the old gentleman at the other end of the compartment scowled at him. But Harrington did not see him, nor the trees and fields as they swept by, and it was not until Walters came and said, "You get out here, sir," that he recognized the yellow station and the great hotels on the hill above. It was half-past eleven, and the lights in the Casino were still burning brightly. He wondered whether he would have time to go over to the hotel and write a letter to his father and to her. He decided, after some difficult consideration, that he would not. There was nothing to say that they did not know already, or that they would fail to understand. But this suggested to him that what they had written to him must be destroyed at once, before any one would claim the right to read it. He took his letters from his pocket and looked them over carefully. They were most unpleasant reading. They all seemed to be about money; some begged to remind him of this or that debt, of which he had thought continuously for the last month, while others were abusive and insolent. Each of them gave him actual pain. One was the last letter he had received from his father just before leaving Paris, and though he knew it by heart he read it over again for the last time. That it came too late, that it asked what he knew now to be impossible, made it none the less grateful to him, but that it offered peace and a welcome home made it all the more terrible.

"I came to take this step through young Hargraves, the new curate," his father wrote, "though he was but the instrument in the hands of Providence. He showed me the error of my conduct towards you, and proved to me that my

duty and the inclination of my heart were towards the same end. He read this morning for the second lesson the story of the Prodigal Son, and I heard it without recognition and with no present application until he came to the verse which tells how the father came to his son 'when he was yet a great way off.' He saw him, it says, 'when he was yet a great way off,' and ran to meet him. He did not wait for the boy to knock at his gate and beg to be let in, but went out to meet him, and took him in his arms and led him back to his home. Now, my boy, my son, it seems to me as if you had never been so far off from me as you are at this present time, as if you had never been so greatly separated from me in every thought and interest; we are even worse than strangers, for you think that my hand is against you, that I have closed the door of your home to you and driven you away. But what I have done I beg of you to forgive; to forget what I may have said in the past, and only to think of what I say now. Your brothers are good boys and have been good sons to me, and God knows I am thankful for such sons, and thankful to them for bearing themselves as they have done.

"But, my boy, my first-born, my little Cecil, they can never be to me what you have been. I can never feel for them as I feel for you; they are the ninety and nine who have never wandered away upon the mountains, and who have never been tempted, and have never left their home for either good or evil. But you, Cecil, though you have made my heart ache until I thought and even hoped it would stop beating, and though you have given me many, many nights that I could not sleep, are still dearer to me than anything else in the world. You are the flesh of my flesh and the bone of my bone, and I cannot bear living on without you. I cannot be at rest here, or look forward contentedly to a rest hereafter, unless you are by me and hear me, unless I can see your face and touch you and hear your laugh in the halls. Come back to me, Cecil; to Harringford and the people that know you best, and know what is best in you and love you for it. I can have only a few more years here now when you will take my place and keep up my name. I will not be here to trouble you much longer; but, my boy, while I am here, come to me and make me happy for the rest of my life. There are others who need you, Cecil. You know whom I mean. I saw her only yesterday, and she asked me of you with such splendid disregard for what the others standing by might think, and as though she dared me or them to say or even imagine anything against you. You cannot keep away from us both much longer. Surely not; you will come back and make us happy for the rest of our lives."

The Goodwood Plunger turned his back to the lights so that the people passing could not see his face, and tore the letter up slowly and dropped it piece by piece over the balcony. "If I could," he whispered; "if I could." The pain was a little worse than usual just then, but it was no longer a question of inclination. He felt only this desire to stop these thoughts and doubts and the physical tremor that shook him. To rest and sleep, that was what he must have, and peace. There was no peace at home or anywhere else while this thing lasted. He could not see why they worried him in this way. It was quite impossible. He felt much more sorry for them than for himself, but only because they could not understand. He was quite sure that if they could feel what he suffered they would help him, even to end it.

He had been standing for some time with his back to the light, but now he turned to face it and to take up his watch again. He felt quite sure the lights would not burn much longer. As he turned, a woman came forward from out the lighted hall, hovered uncertainly before him, and then made a silent salutation, which was something between a courtesy and a bow. That she was a woman and rather short and plainly dressed, and that her bobbing up and down annoyed him, was all that he realized of her presence, and he quite failed to connect her movements with himself in any way. "Sir," she said in French, "I beg your pardon, but might I speak with you?" The Goodwood Plunger possessed a somewhat various knowledge of Monte Carlo and its *habitués*. It was not the first time women who had lost at the tables had begged a napoleon from him, or asked the distinguished child of fortune what color or combination they should play. That, in his luckier days, had happened often and had amused him, but now he moved back irritably and wished that the figure in front of him would disappear as it had come.

"I am in great trouble, sir," the woman said. "I have no friends here, sir, to whom I may apply. I am very bold, but my anxiety is very great."

The Goodwood Plunger raised his hat slightly and bowed. Then he concentrated his eyes with what was a distinct effort on the queer little figure hovering in front of him, and stared very hard. She wore an odd piece of red coral for a brooch, and by looking steadily at this he brought the rest of the figure into focus and saw, without surprise,—for every commonplace seemed strange to him now, and everything peculiar quite a matter of course,—that she was distinctly not an *habituée* of the place, and looked more like a lady's maid than an ad-

venturess. She was French and pretty—such a girl as might wait in a Duval restaurant or sit as a cashier behind a little counter near the door.

"We should not be here," she said, as if in answer to his look and in apology for her presence. "But Louis, my husband, he would come. I told him that this was not for such as we are, but Louis is so bold. He said that upon his marriage tour he would live with the best, and so here he must come to play as the others do. We have been married, sir, only since Tuesday, and we must go back to Paris to-morrow; they would give him only the three days. He is not a gambler; he plays dominoes at the cafés, it is true. But what will you? He is young and with so much spirit, and I know that you, sir, who are so fortunate and who understand so well how to control these tables, I know that you will persuade him. He will not listen to me; he is so greatly excited and so little like himself. You will help me, sir, will you not? You will speak to him."

The Goodwood Plunger knit his eyebrows and closed the lids once or twice, and forced the mistiness and pain out of his eyes. It was most annoying. The woman seemed to be talking a great deal and to say very much, but he could not make sense of it. He moved his shoulders slightly. "I can't understand," he said wearily, turning away.

"It is my husband," the woman said anxiously: "Louis he is playing at the table inside, and he is only an apprentice to old Carbut the baker, but he owns a third of the store. It was my *dot* that paid for it," she added proudly. "Old Carbut says he may have it all for twenty thousand francs, and then old Carbut will retire and we will be proprietors. We have saved a little, and we had counted to buy the rest in five or six years if we were very careful."

"I see, I see," said the Plunger, with a little short laugh of relief; "I understand." He was greatly comforted to think that it was not so bad as it had threatened. He saw her distinctly now and followed what she said quite easily, and even such a small matter as talking with this woman seemed to help him.

"He is gambling," he said, "and losing the money, and you come to me to advise him what to play. I understand. Well, tell him he will lose what little he has left; tell him I advise him to go home; tell him—"

"No, no!" the girl said excitedly, "you do not understand; he has not lost, he has won. He has won, oh, so many rolls of money, but he will not stop. Do you not see? He has won as much as we could earn in many months—in many years, sir, by saving and working, oh, so very hard! And now he risks it again, and I cannot force him away. But if you, sir, if

you would tell him how great the chances are against him, if you who know would tell him how foolish he is not to be content with what he has, he would listen. He says to me, 'Bah! you are a woman'; and he is so red and fierce, he is imbecile with the sight of the money, but he will listen to a grand gentleman like you. He thinks to win more and more, and he thinks to buy another third from old Carbut. Is it not foolish? It is so wicked of him."

"Oh, yes," said the Goodwood Plunger, nodding, "I see now. You want me to take him away so that he can keep what he has. I see; but I don't know him. He will not listen to me, you know; I have no right to interfere."

He turned away, rubbing his hand across his forehead. He wished so much that this woman would leave him by himself.

"Ah, but, sir," cried the girl desperately, and touching his coat, "you who are so fortunate, and so rich, and of the great world, you cannot feel what this is to me. To have my own little shop and to be free, and not to slave, and sew, and sew until my back and fingers burn with the pain. Speak to him, sir; ah, speak to him. It is so easy a thing to do, and he will listen to you."

The Goodwood Plunger turned again abruptly. "Where is he?" he said. "Point him out to me."

The woman ran ahead with a murmur of gratitude to the open door and pointed to where her husband was standing leaning over and placing some money on one of the tables. He was a handsome young Frenchman, as *bourgeois* as his wife, and now terribly alive and excited. In the self-contained air of the place and in contrast with the silence of the great hall he seemed even more conspicuously out of place. The Plunger touched him on the arm, and the Frenchman shoved the hand off impatiently and without looking around. The Plunger touched him again and forced him to turn towards him.

"Well!" said the Frenchman quickly. "Well?"

"Madame, your wife," said Cecil with the grave politeness of an old man, "has done me the honor to take me into her confidence. She tells me that you have won a great deal of money; that you could put it to good use at home, and so save yourselves much drudgery and debt, and all that sort of trouble. You are quite right if you say it is no concern of mine. It is not. But really, you know, there is a great deal of sense in what she wants, and you have apparently already won a large sum."

The Frenchman was visibly surprised at this approach. He paused for a second or two in some doubt, and even awe, for the disinherited one carried the mark of a personage of con-

sideration and of one whose position is secure. Then he gave a short, unmirthful laugh.

"You are most kind, sir," he said with mock politeness and with an impatient shrug. "But madame, my wife, has not done well to interest a stranger in this affair, which, as you say, concerns you not."

He turned to the table again with a defiant swagger of independence and placed two rolls of money upon the cloth, casting at the same moment a childish look of displeasure at his wife: "You see," said the Plunger, with a deprecatory turning out of his hands. But there was so much grief on the girl's face that he turned again to the gambler and touched his arm. He could not tell why he was so interested in these two. He had witnessed many such scenes before, and they had not affected him in any way except to make him move out of hearing. But the same dumb numbness in his head, which made so many things seem possible that should have been terrible even to think upon, made him stubborn and unreasoning over this. He felt intuitively—it could not be said that he thought—that the woman was right and the man wrong, and so he grasped him again by the arm, and said sharply this time:

"Come away! Do you hear? You are acting foolishly."

But even as he spoke the red won, and the Frenchman with a boyish gurgle of pleasure raked in his winnings with his two hands, and then turned with a happy, triumphant laugh to his wife. It is not easy to convince a man that he is making a fool of himself when he is winning some hundred francs every two minutes. His silent arguments to the contrary are difficult to answer. But the Plunger did not regard this in the least.

"Do you hear me?" he said in the same stubborn tone and with much the same manner with which he would have spoken to a groom. "Come away."

Again the Frenchman tossed off his hand, this time with an execration, and again he placed the rolls of gold coin on the red; and again the red won.

"My God!" cried the girl, running her fingers over the rolls on the table, "he has won half of the twenty thousand francs. O sir, stop him, stop him!" she cried. "Take him away."

"Do you hear me?" cried the Plunger, excited to a degree of utter self-forgetfulness, and carried beyond himself; "you've got to come with me."

"Take away your hand," whispered the young Frenchman, fiercely. "See, I shall win it all; in one grand *coup* I shall win it all. I shall win five years' pay in one moment."

He swept all of the money forward on the

red and threw himself over the table to see the wheel.

"Wait, confound you!" whispered the Plunger, excitedly. "If you will risk it, risk it with some reason. You can't play all that money; they won't take it. Six thousand francs is the limit, unless," he ran on quickly, "you divide the 12,000 francs among the three of us. You understand, 6000 francs is all that any one person can play; but if you give 4000 to me, and 4000 to your wife, and keep 4000 yourself, we can each chance it. You can back the red if you like, your wife shall put her money on the numbers coming up below eighteen, and I will back the odd. In that way you stand to win 24,000 francs if our combination wins, and you lose less than if you simply back the color. Do you understand?"

"No!" cried the Frenchman, reaching for the piles of money which the Plunger had divided rapidly into three parts, "on the red; all on the red!"

"Good heavens, man!" cried the Plunger, bitterly. "I may not know much, but you should allow me to understand this dirty business." He caught the Frenchman by the wrists, and the young man, more impressed with the strange look in the boy's face than by his physical force, stood still, while the ball rolled and rolled, and clicked merrily, and stopped, and balanced, and then settled into the "seven."

"Red, odd, and below," the croupier droned mechanically.

"Ah! you see; what did I tell you?" said the Plunger, with sudden calmness. "You have won more than your 20,000 francs; you are proprietors—I congratulate you!"

"Ah, my God!" cried the Frenchman in a frenzy of delight, "I will double it."

He reached towards the fresh piles of coin as if he meant to sweep them back again, but the Plunger put himself in his way and with a quick movement caught up the rolls of gold and dropped them into the skirt of the woman, which she raised like an apron to receive her treasure.

"Now," said young Harringford, determinedly, "you come with me." The Frenchman tried to argue and resist, but the Plunger pushed him on with the silent stubbornness of a drunken man. He handed the woman into a carriage at the door, shoved her husband in beside her, and while the man drove to the address she gave him, he told the Frenchman, with an air of the chief of police, that he must leave Monte Carlo at once, that very night.

"Do you suppose I don't know?" he said. "Do you fancy I speak without knowledge? I've seen them come here rich and go away paupers. But you shall not; you shall keep

what you have and spite them." He sent the woman up to her room to pack while he expostulated with and browbeat the excited bridegroom in the carriage. When she returned with the bag packed, and so heavy with the gold that the servants could hardly lift it up beside the driver, he ordered the coachman to go down the hill to the station.

"The train for Paris leaves at midnight," he said, "and you 'll be there by morning. Then you must close your bargain with this old Carbut, and never return here again."

The Frenchman had turned during the ride from an angry, indignant prisoner to a joyful madman, and was now tearfully and effusively humble in his petitions for pardon and in his thanks. Their benefactor, as they were pleased to call him, hurried them into the waiting train and ran to purchase their tickets for them.

"Now," he said, as the guard locked the door of the compartment, "you are alone, and no one can get in, and you cannot get out. Go back to your home, to your new home, and never come to this wretched place again. Promise me—you understand?—never again!"

They promised with effusive reiteration. They embraced each other like children, and the man, pulling off his hat, called upon the good Lord to thank the gentleman.

"You will be in Paris, will you not?" said the woman, in an ecstasy of pleasure, "and you will come to see us in our own shop, will you not? Ah! we should be so greatly honored, sir, if you would visit us; if you would come to the home you have given us. You have helped us so greatly, sir," she said; "and may Heaven bless you!"

She caught up his gloved hand as it rested on the door and kissed it until he snatched it away in great embarrassment and flushing like a girl. Her husband drew her towards him, and the young bride sat at his side with her face close to his and wept tears of pleasure and of excitement.

"Ah, look, sir!" said the young man joyfully; "look how happy you have made us. You have made us happy for the rest of our lives."

The train moved out with a quick, heavy rush, and the car wheels took up the young stranger's last words and seemed to say, "You have made us happy—made us happy for the rest of our lives."

It had all come about so rapidly that the Plunger had had no time to consider or to weigh his motives, and all that seemed real to him now, as he stood alone on the platform of the dark, deserted station, were the words of the man echoing and reëchoing like the

refrain of the song. And then there came to him suddenly, and with all the force of a gambler's superstition, the thought that the words were the same as those which his father had used in his letter, "you can make us happy for the rest of our lives."

"Ah," he said, with a quick gasp of doubt, "if I could! If I made those poorfools happy, may n't I live to be something to him, and to her? O God!" he cried, but so gently that one at his elbow could not have heard him, "if I could, if I could!"

He tossed up his hands and drew them down again and clenched them in front of him, and raised his tired, hot eyes to the calm purple sky with its millions of moving stars. "Help me!" he whispered fiercely, "help me." And as he lowered his head the queer numb feeling seemed to go, and a calm came over his nerves and left him in peace. He did not know what it might be, nor did he dare to question the change which had come to him, but turned and slowly mounted the hill, with the awe and fear still upon him of one who had passed beyond himself for one brief moment into another world. When he reached his room he found his servant bending with an anxious face over a letter which he tore up guiltily as his master entered. "You were writing to my father," said Cecil, gently, "were you not? Well, you need not finish your letter; we are going home."

"I am going away from this place, Walters," he said as he pulled off his coat and threw himself heavily on the bed. "I will take the first train that leaves here, and I will sleep a little while you put up my things. The first train, you understand—within an hour, if it leaves that soon." His head sank back on the pillows heavily, as though he had come in from a long, weary walk, and his eyes closed and his arms fell easily at his side. The servant stood frightened and yet happy, with the tears running down his cheeks, for he loved his master dearly.

"We are going home, Walters," the Plunger whispered drowsily. "We are going home; home to England and Haringford and the governor—and we are going to be happy for all the rest of our lives." He paused a moment, and Walters bent forward over the bed and held his breath to listen.

"For he came to me," murmured the boy, as though he was speaking in his sleep, "when I was yet a great way off—while I was yet a great way off, and ran to meet me—"

His voice sank until it died away into silence, and a few hours later, when Walters came to wake him, he found his master sleeping like a child and smiling in his sleep.

Richard Harding Davis.



CONGO IDOLS.

FETISHISM IN CONGO LAND.

BY E. J. GLAVE, ONE OF STANLEY'S PIONEER OFFICERS.

ILLUSTRATED AFTER SKETCHES FROM LIFE BY THE AUTHOR.



ONE OF MY CREW.

FETISHISM is the result of the efforts of the savage intelligence seeking after a theory which will account for the apparent hostility of nature to man. It is the first feeble striving of ignorance to ascertain the position of humanity in the universal scheme, and the endeavors by a hundred

tentative experiments to discover what power man may possess over his own life and destiny in the face of all this seeming antagonism. The African of the interior can find no note of sympathy in the world immediately surrounding him. Life is to him no free gift, but rather something to be dexterously snatched from the hand of adverse circumstances. Everything in earth or sky seems to threaten his existence. The hut of the inland village stands on the confines of an impenetrable forest, the haunt of savage beast and venomous reptile. The dweller on the river bank pursues his vocation in constant danger. Let him escape unscathed all the dangers incidental to his search for mere subsistence, let him lay up what is to him wealth, still he can never enjoy either good fortune or health in security, for one is at the mercy of his fellow-man,—the midnight raids of neighboring tribes,—and the other is imperiled by fevers, agues, and strange diseases which his skill is unable to cure or avert. The imagination of

the savage surrounds life with an atmosphere of awe and mystery. He walks continually in fear. Evil in countless undefined shapes is lurking everywhere. Influences obnoxious to him lie concealed in every object. Trees, stones, herbs, all contain imprisoned spirits which, if released by any heedless action on his part, may rend and destroy him. He must be ever watchful to propitiate or control the malevolent powers that menace him at every turn. Ill luck may be transmitted to him through object animate or inanimate when he is least aware. A native will never point at another with his finger, as the belief exists that an evil influence can be by this means conveyed to another. It behooves him to be very careful. He fears when health and fortune are favorable that some chance action of his may deprive him of both. He will therefore often turn in his path to retouch some object he has accidentally come in contact with, for fear the virtue that is in him may suddenly leave and some strange, hurtful influence may be conveyed to him instead. At night the chief will trace a slender line of ashes round his hut and firmly believe that he has placed a barrier which will protect him and his, while they sleep, against the attacks of the evil spirit. Upon stepping over this in the morning he takes the precaution to trace on the ground a small ring round him; in this he stands, and, uttering a devotional prayer, asks that the Moloki, or evil spirit, may not torment him during the day. When he is least conscious he