

INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR.

YOKOHAMA, *April*, 1901.

It has often been pointed out how strange are the prophecies made from time to time by writers of what purports to be merely fiction.

Of all the remarkable tales with which Mr. R. Kipling has delighted the world, none is more striking than that of McIntosh Jellaludin and his mysterious manuscript. And now, only a few years after reading that incredible tale, I myself, at Yokohama, come across a series of circumstances wonderfully analogous. But I will truthfully set down this history just as it all happened.

I went one memorable Wednesday night to No. 29. For my advent in this most reputable quarter of the city, which is, after all, Yama, and equally handy for the consul, the chaplain, and the doctor, readers of Rossetti will expect no excuse; for their sakes I may frankly admit that I was actuated by other motives than interest and solicitude for my companion, a youth still blindly groping for Romance, beneath the skirts of tawdry and painted Vice. Perhaps I may have hoped to save him from what men call the graver and angels the lesser consequences of his folly. This for the others.

As to the character of the mansion at which we arrived, after a journey no less dubious than winding, I will say that, despite its outward seeming, it was, in reality, a most respectable place; the main occupation of its inhabitants seemed to be the sale of as much "champagne" as

possible ; in which inspiring preface my friend was soon deeply immersed...

Golden-haired, a profound linguist, swearing in five Western and three Oriental languages, and comparable rather to the accomplished courtesans of old-time Athens than to the Imperial Peripatetics of the "Daily Telegraph" and Mr. Raven-Hill, her looks of fire turned my friend's silky and insipid moustache into a veritable Burning Bush. But puppy endearments are of little interest to one who has just done his duty by No. 9 in distant Yoshiwara ; so turned to the conversation of our dirty old Irish hostess, who, being drunk, grew more so, and exceedingly entertaining.

Of the central forces which sway mankind, her knowledge was more comprehensive than conventional. For thirty years she had earned her bread in the capacity of a Japanese Mrs. Warren ; but having played with fire in many lands, the knowledge she had of her own subject, based on indefatigable personal research, was as accurate in detail as it was cosmopolitan in character. Yet she had not lost her ideals ; she was a devout Catholic, and her opinion of the human understanding, despite her virginal innocence of Greek, was identical with that of Mr. Locke.

On occasions I am as sensitive to inexplicable interruption as Mr. Shandy, and from behind the hideous yellow partition came sounds as of the constant babbling of a human voice. Repeated glances in this direction drew from my entertainer the information that it was "only her husband," indicating the yellow-haired girl with the stem of her short clay pipe. She added that he was dying.

Curiosity, Compassion's Siamese twin, prompted a desire to see the sufferer.

The old lady rose, not without difficulty, lifted the curtain, and let it fall behind me as I entered the gloom which lay beyond. On a bed, in that

half-fathomed twilight, big with the scent of joss-sticks smouldering in a saucer before a little bronze Buddha-rupa, lay a man, still young, the traces of rare beauty in his face, though worn with suffering and horrid with a week's growth of beard.

He was murmuring over to himself some words which I could not catch, but my entrance, though he did not notice me, seemed to rouse him a little. I distinctly heard—

“These are the spells by which to re-assume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom”

He paused, sighing, then continued—

“To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite ;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;
To defy power which seems omnipotent ;
To love, and bear ; to hope till hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent :
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great, and joyous, beautiful, and free :
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.”

The last phrase pealed trumpet-wise: he sank back into thought. “Yes,” he said slowly, “neither to change, nor falter, nor repent.” I moved forward, and he saw me.

“Who are you?” he asked.

“I am travelling in the East,” I said. “I love Man also; I have come to see you. Who are you?”

He laughed pleasantly. “I am the child of many prayers.”

There was a pause.

I stood still, thinking.

Here was surely the very strangest outcast of Society. What uncouth bypaths of human experience, across what mapless tracks beyond the

social pale, must have led hither—hither to death in this Anglo-Saxon-blasted corner of Japan, here, at the very outpost of the East. He spoke my thought.

“Here I lie,” he said, “east of all things. All my life I have been travelling eastward, and now there is now no further east to go.”

“There is America,” I said. I had to say something.

“Where the disappearance of man has followed that of manners: the exit of God has not wished to lag behind that of grammar. I have no use of American men, and only one use for American women.”

“Of a truth,” I said, “the continent is accursed—a very limbo.”

“It is the counterfoil of evolution,” said the man wearily. There was silence.

“What can I do for you?” I asked. “Are you indeed ill?”

“Four days more,” he answered, thrilling with excitement, “and all my dreams will come true—until I wake. But you can serve me, if indeed—Did you hear me spouting poetry?”

I nodded, and lit my pipe. He watched me narrowly while the match illuminated my face.

“What poetry?”

I told him Shelley.

“Do you read Ibsen?” he queried, keening visibly. After a moment’s pause: “He is the Sophocles of manners,” I said, rewarded royally for months of weary waiting. My strange companion sat up transfigured. “The Hour,” he murmured, “and the Man! What of Tennyson?”

“Which Tennyson?” I asked.

The answer seemed to please him.

“In Memoriam?” he replied.

“He is a neurasthenic counter-jumper.”

“And of the Idylls?”

“Sir Thomas did no wrong; can impotence excuse his posthumous emasculation?”

He sank back contented. “I have prayed to my god for many days,” he said, “and by one of the least of my life’s miracles you are here; worthy to receive my trust. For when I knew that I was to die, I destroyed all the papers which held the story of my life—all save one. That I saved; the only noble passage, perhaps—among the many notable. Men will say that it is stained; you, I think, should be wiser. It is the story of how the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. They were not drowned, you know (he seemed to lapse into a day-dream), and they came out on the Land of Promise side. But they had to descend therein.”

“They all died in the wilderness,” I said, feeling as if I understood this mystical talk, which, indeed, I did not. But I felt inspired.

“Ay me, they died—as I am dying now.”

He turned to the wall and sought a bundle of old writing on a shelf. “Take this,” he said. “Edit it as if it were your own: let the world know how wonderful it was.” I took the manuscript from the frail, white hand.

He seemed to forget me altogether.

“*Namo tassa Bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhasa,*” he murmured, turning to his little black Buddha-rupa.

There was a calm like unto—might I say, an afterwards?

“There is an end of joy and sorrow,
Peace all day long, all night, all morrow,”

he began drowsily.

A shrill voice rose in a great curse. The hoarse anger of drunken harlotry snarled back. “Not a drop more,” shouted my friend, adding many things. It was time for my return.

“I will let them know,” I whispered. “Good-bye.”

“There is not one thing with another ;
But Evil saith to Good : ‘My brother—’”

He went on unheeding.

I left him to his peace.

My re-appearance restored harmony. The fulvous and fulgurous lady grew comparatively tranquil; the pair withdrew. The old woman lay sprawled along the divan sunk in a drunken torpor.

I unrolled the manuscript and read.

Brutal truth-telling humour, at times perhaps too Rabelaisian; lyrics, some of enchanting beauty, others painfully imitative; sonnets of exceedingly unequal power, a perfectly heartless introduction (some fools would call it pathetic), and, as a synthesis of the whole, an impression of profound sadness and, perhaps, still deeper joy, were my reward. Together with a feeling that the writer must have been a philosopher of the widest and deepest learning and penetration, and a regret that he showed no more of it in his poetry. First and last, I stood amazed, stupefied: so stand I still.

Dramatic propriety forbade me seeing him again; he was alone when he started.

Let us not too bitterly lament! He would hate him who would “upon the rack of this tough world stretch him out longer.”

To the best of my poor ability I have executed his wishes, omitting, however, his name and all references sufficiently precise to give pain to any person still living. His handwriting was abominably difficult, some words quite indecipherable. I have spent long and laborious hours in conjecture, and have, I hope, restored his meaning in almost every case. But in the sonnets of the 12th, 18th, 23rd, 24th, 29th, 35th, 41st, 43rd and 48th days, also in “At Last,” “Love and Fear,” and “Lethe,” one or

more whole lines have been almost impossible to read. The literary student will be able readily to detect my patchwork emendations. These I have dared to make because his whole pattern (may I use the word?) is so elaborate and perfect that I fear to annoy the reader by leaving any blanks, feeling that my own poverty of diction will be less noticeable than any actual hiatus in the sense or rhythm. I attempt neither eulogy nor criticism here. Indeed, it seems to me entirely uncalled for. His words were: "Let the world know how wonderful it was," that is, his love and hers; not "how wonderful it is," that is, his poem.

The poem is simple, understandable, direct, not verbose. More I demand not, seeing it is written (almost literally so) in blood; for I am sure that he was dying of that love for Alice, whose marvellous beauty it was his mission (who may doubt it?) to reveal. For the burning torch of truth may smoke, but it is our one sure light in passion and distress. "The jewelled silence of the stars" is, indeed, the light of a serener art; but love is human, and I give nothing for the tawdry gems of style when the breast they would adorn is that of a breathing, living beauty of man's love, the heart of all the world. Nor let us taint one sympathy with even a shadow of regret. Let us leave him where

"Sight nor sound shall war against him more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore."

NOTE.—The sudden and tragic death of the Editor has necessitated the completion of his task by another hand. The introduction was, however, in practically its present form.