

this babble of cause and effect ! How all experience may deceive us ! Hurrah ! " (I broke off), " there is our oasis ! How the palms wave and the minarets glitter and the waters gleam ! "

" No ! " said Hassan ; " it is a mirage . "

" Scoundrel , " I retorted, now thoroughly incensed with his stupidity and falsehood, " how do you know ? "

" I have been here before (says he as cool as custard), and I know there is no oasis within many days' journey. By my eyes I could not tell . "

" Then you judge an optical phenomenon by treacherous memory, slave, beast, reptile, socialist that you are ? "

" And yet I (even I) cannot get beyond William the First ten sixty-six, William the Second ten eighty-seven, Henry the First . . . and I knew them all, once ! "

" Why, Hassan, you are a bundle of uncertainties. Come now, confess ! That remark of yours about the sun was interrogative ? Or at most a feeler ? You wanted to know what I thought about it ? You had an intuition and wanted to test it ? "

" No , " said the Sahara of obstinacy ; " I just passed the remark . "

" Yes, I see, a mere idle frivolous bit of small-talk. A sort of joke ? "

" No joke in the summer , " he growled .

" Don't answer me back ! " I snapped. (Something had made me irritable—not the heat of the sun, of course.) " I don't want you to speak ; I'm trying to argue with you (I was on the right side of the Rationalist Press Association, that time !). But—you didn't mean you were *sure*, did you ? You sort of threw out the suggestion ? "

" Dead sure , " says he, and hits the camel again .

Disgusted with his brutality and Bœotian bathos, I fell back, and walked alone, meditating .

He was *sure*, thought I. And Perdurabo is sure that he will endure unto The End, that his *khu* will be a mighty *khu* for ever and ever, and that he hath indeed talked with his holy guardian angel and seen God face to face. And Charles Watts is sure that Perdurabo is an ass, and suspends his opinion about Hassan ben Brahim until he has submitted the question to Hæckel and got a firman or an ukase about it. And Aleister Crowley is sure that nobody can distinguish between Perdurabo and Hassan and Charles Watts, saying—