

the world," she began — and that was another quite new idea to him! — "there is much to be learnt. You see, your majesty does not know what to eat, or how to eat it. You eat like a goat. Then you pay an evening call upon a lady with an old quilt of goats' hair cloth, shaggy and dirty, for all attire. You dress like a goat. You haven't shaved for a month. You look like a goat. Then your skin is rough and hard. You feel like a goat. Then you come here having touched goats' flesh with your fingers and not having washed. You smell like a goat. I am sure, too, from what you did just then that you make love like a goat. I shall soon change all this. I always wanted a great king to play with." This last new view of life set El-gebel agape indeed. His brain was dizzy with the strangeness of it all; and, supremely, he was overcome; no man can endure the suspicion that he is personally offensive; the repetition of the word "goat" was more than he could stand. The obvious remedy, a stroke of his sword, would not cure his memory of that. He could not look at Krasota; El-gebel the Terrible was doing what in a lesser man might have been called blushing; he got up, and went out of the tent. Krasota suavely assuring him that the record of his visit would be engraved on gold by her family for countless generations, and praying openly to the gods that he might enjoy the blessings of untroubled repose, the dreams of love and victory.

### III.

The following night the king left Krasota to her own devices, merely sending her word to prepare his food for him; not until the third night of the journey through the mountains did he return to her tent. In these two days he had taken all possible pains to remove the reproach of goatishness. He had halted the army beside a ravine, and ordered the display of the spoils, and an inventory to be made by the bard of the tribe, so that the great victory might be sung worthily.

He had picked out a magnificent hooded mantle of blue silk, a broad band of gold, studded with rough jewels, evidently intended for the head, and a large oval mirror of polished silver with an ivory handle. With these he returned to his tent, and proceeded to experiment. He saw after a few trials that it was hopeless to frame his hairy countenance in such a setting; so he exercised his usual determination and thoroughness, and had not only his chin but his whole head shaved clean. Then he went to bathe in the ravine, and removed the main evidence of the four months that had elapsed since he had taken off his goats' hair tunic. Not yet satisfied, he had sent officers to search for perfume, which, under the instruction of Krasota, they found easily; it was with the contents of a great flask of 'atr of roses that he rubbed himself till his skin shone again. Now when he put on the blue robe, and drew the hood over his head, and fixed it with the band of gold, he was not so displeased with the comment of the mirror. So he sent word to Krasota that he would dine in her tent that night.

With characteristic tact, she made no remark whatever about the change in his appearance; she began the conversation by congratulating him on his brilliance as a cavalry tactician. She had watched the battle, it appeared, from the roof of her temple. From that she led him on to a discussion of his own country, and his plans for its advancement. These consisted solely in trying to find some other folk to rob. "Majesty," she said, "your country lacks four things; without these you are of no more account than a flock of goats." (How El-gebel began to hate that word goat!) "First, you must plant wheat instead of this dreadful maize,

which is only fit for goats to eat; next, you need oil instead of rancid goats' fat, so you must plant olives. Then without wine of the vine, man is no better than a goat; and lastly, you ought to breed bulls. They are the strongest animals on earth; you can find no beast for plowing like the ox; the cow gives a sweet delicate milk very different from the stinking milk of goats; and the flesh is excellent to eat, as your majesty knows; I am sure you never want to eat goats' flesh any more." It was at this time that El-gebel meditated ordering the wholesale destruction of the unfortunate animal which seemed to occupy so large a place in the thoughts, and so small an one in the affections, of his fair captive. However, in this matter of affections —

He was a little less clumsy than on the former occasion; but Krasota, patting his great hand gently, as one who consoles a troubled child, continued to talk politics. "Bulls," said she, "are more important to you than you suppose. I have heard from officers appointed by your favor to guard me that the vitality of the nation is incarnated in the king; if you should happen to fall ill or to grow old, like your august father, it would be a very serious thing for you. Now we will have a temple, and you will make me priestess, and there shall be a perfectly black bull with a white star upon his forehead as the god in whom the life of the nation is concealed. We will assure his continued vigor by killing him every year on the day of Spring, and his life shall pass into that of his successor in the usual way. This will make for the stability of your rule." El-gebel was not slow to grasp the great advantages of the plan proposed, and agreed at once to her suggestion that a party of officers with a guard should be sent back to the plain the next morning to collect cattle and vine-dressers and all the other people and things necessary for the various reforms proposed. The king was more delighted than ever with his prisoner, and renewed his advances. This time she heaved a sigh. "I wish it were possible, O king," she murmured, "to forget duty in rapture unspeakable such as it is the evident intention of your majesty to bestow upon his devoted slave; but there is much work to do. The officers of the commission must be carefully picked, and there is not a moment to lose. Suppose that your majesty should have contracted the fever of the plains!"

El-gebel saw the force of this argument, and spent his night in drawing up dispositions for the morrow instead of in sloth and dalliance.

The following evening, before sunset, they came to the last crest of the mountains. El-gebel reined in his horse, and waited for Krasota's litter. "Look," said he, "there is my city!" It was little better than a collection of huts, built partly of stones plastered with mud, partly of rude brick, partly of wood. "We shall not reach it to-night," continued the king; "when we reach the bottom of the ravine it will be pitch dark, and the torrents are dangerous." He kicked his horse, and began the descent. The climb was even more difficult than it looked; it was very late when they reached an open space at the mouth of the ravine and the order to pitch camp was given.

The morning dawned; Krasota found herself looking up into the mountain. Giant precipices, red as blood, towered on each side of her! and from the western cliff a river burst, in one magnificent jet, a crystal arch of water that matched the sky for azure. Plunging to the gulf, it joined the multitudinous springs that bubbled everywhere from the bed of the ravine, and almost at her feet their torrents raged afoam, a roar of many waters.