

The grassy plateau on which she stood was smooth and green, shadowed by ancient walnut-trees. As she gazed upon the beauty of the scene, the king joined her. "We start for the city in an hour," said he. "City!" she retorted, "it is not fit for a goat to live in! I will stay here in the tent, until you bring the sacred bull. Then architects shall bring their builders, and the builders their quarrymen, and here I will have my temple." The king knew that to argue the matter would ensure a further reference to goats; he acquiesced. "Very good!" he answered, "then I will stay here to-morrow with a few of my men. I am anxious to make progress in the matter you know of." "You will go to the city," she replied firmly, "unless you are the greatest fool in Asia. Ten to one somebody has started a rebellion, and if the army should arrive without you, you would find another king there when you did come. Besides — I may as well be frank — you had much better forget all that foolishness. You have plenty of that in the city. I am sacred. I am going to make you a really great king; and if we mix pleasure and business, business will suffer. Also, you stir up all sorts of jealousy if you bring back a strange woman; one of your wives will probably find a way to poison you. No: you must tell every one that I am a virgin priestess of immense power, and that I am on your side. Come, you have sense — wonderful sense, for a man — show it by not destroying your ambition for an hour's pointless pleasure! Besides, you would not find such delight if you suppose," she added, seeing him flush with anger, evidently ready to take immediate measures to constrain her inclination. "I am highly imaginative, and I am sure that I should be able to do nothing but beat." El-gebel swallowed his wrath; he was intensely irritated at the way he was put off; but he could not deny that she was clever at the art of putting off. He felt no more inclination to caress her than if she had been one of the goats she was always discussing. He recognized her wisdom as a higher type than his own savage cunning; he gave her up. She knew the gesture. "O king!" said she, "men have surnamed you The Terrible; in five years they will change it to The Great and Terrible. I am more than half in love with you, as a mother with her child; and I will bring you to glory of which you do not dream — I swear it by the sacred Bull!" Then she put a friendly hand on his. "Do you know how I recognize a great man? He is always like a baby. He cries for the moon; he is single-hearted and simple; he has that true inner wisdom which life teaches small men to forget; and he builds on trust because he knows that if he allows himself to be suspicious he will have no time for any thing else. Now, see, they are holding your stallion for you; go, and prosper!"

"I shall come to see you every week," replied the king; "on business."

She followed him with her eyes until he was lost to sight in the dust of the plain. Then she sat down under the oldest of the walnuts, and began to plan the details of her temple.

#### IV.

Eight years later the word of Krasota had been abundantly fulfilled. Under her magic guidance the very face of Nature had been changed. Cybistra was now a handsome capital, with marble palaces and temples; the rough and arid plain between it and the ravine of Ibreez was become a land of corn and vine; green lanes happy with hazel and hawthorn, poplar and willow, led from field to field. Nightingales had found out this paradise, and lent their lusty aid to joy. Ibreez itself was now a comely village, sprung up about the Temple of the Bull.

The swiftness and completeness of El-gebel's victory had smoothed the path of reform. The spoils of Tarsus were all so obviously desirable that it seemed worth while to take any trouble to have them on the spot. It was better to sit under one's own vine and fig-tree than to travel five days to sit under somebody else's! One chief, indeed, imbued with what we may call the stern old Covenanting spirit, had seen the cloven hoof of degeneracy in the effeminate substitution of other things for goats, which to him were the be-all and end-all of life, and the hall-mark of Virtue. He took aside another chief whom he knew to be disaffected toward El-gebel from having heard him utter frequent complaints almost amounting to threats, and said something about the evil influence of foreign women on the morals of kings. His confidant was of course the head of El-gebel's secret police, and the old chief slept with his forefathers. Others took notice.

The people imported by the king from the plains to plant and dress the vines, to quarry and to build, to plow the ground and sow the corn, to irrigate the deserts and to level the roads, to breed the cattle and to weave the silk and the wool, were a great source of strength to the nation. In the lovely mountain air they forgot the effeminacy which had made them so easy a prey to the mountaineers. They were of the same stock and language as their conquerors, and they mingled happily, smooth against rough, to a medium that promised a great race.

King El-gebel, surnamed The Great and Terrible, stood on the brink of the ravine with Krasota and the young but already famous sculptor Ebal. Some distance below them rose the Temple of the Bull, a group of domes rising out of each other like soap bubbles on the surface of water. The temple was built of the red rock of the district, but the domes were barred with blue porcelain tiles to symbolize the sacred river. Within the great courtyard was the ancient meadow with its walnuts, almost as when Krasota had first seen it save for that polished wall that girt it, red rock with diamonds of white marble inlay, and that under the oldest walnut was a mighty basin of marble and syenite, filled with the limpid water of three springs, and overflowing to a rivulet flower-prank that tumbled to the torrents. There shook his mighty limbs and disported himself the great black bull with the white star upon his forehead, then leapt from the basin and plunged headlong round the meadow, bellowing with all the furious joy of animal life. But the king had not come to Ibreez to see the Sacred Bull; it was the day of the completion of the masterpiece of Ebal.

Upon the laboriously polished face of a crimson rock that rose sheer out of the water of a branch of the main stream were two colossal figures. The mystery of the Uniting of the Strength of the Bull and the Wisdom of the Man was symbolized by the divine image, fourteen feet in height, a bearded man wearing a high pointed cap from which branched several pairs of bulls' horns. This figure was clad in a short tunic, belted, with bare legs and arms to emphasize his power. Around the wrists were bracelets; upon the feet, high boots with toes turned up like sabots. In his right hand he bore a vine-branch heavy-laden, for it was he that had brought the vine; in his left a branch of bearded wheat, so tall that the stalks touched the ground.

Before him stood with both hands raised in adoration the image of El-gebel himself. He was dressed in the official costume which Krasota had devised for him, a domed cap encircled by flat bands adorned with a rose of jewels. From neck to ankle