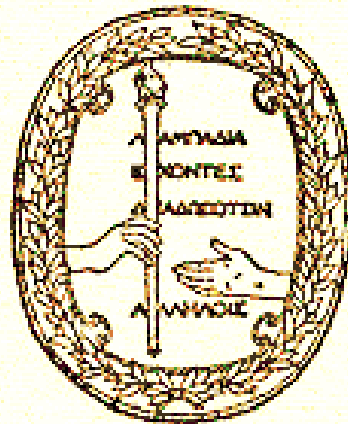


COMTE DE GOBINEAU

THE
CRIMSON HANDKERCHIEF
AND OTHER STORIES

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY
HENRY LONGAN STUART



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A DAUGHTER OF PRIAM

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The Cyclades are one of those parts of the world to which the epithet "seductive" could be applied with complete truth. Many of them, it is true, are nothing save barren rocks. Nevertheless, upon the bosom of those Grecian seas where the bands of the gods have sown them, these same rocks glitter like so many precious stones. A flawless atmosphere bathes them in its limpid light. Their setting is an ocean of the deepest and truest blue. According to the hour at which you see them, they appear to be so many amethysts, sapphires, rubies, or topazes. No matter how sterile, bare, and naked the reality, it disappears under a grace and majesty truly incomparable. The Cyclades, in fact, might be compared to great ladies born and reared in the midst of wealth and elegance, and to whom no refinement of luxury has been unknown. Disasters have visited them, on a vast and noble scale commensurate with their station. They have retired from the world with the debris of their fortune. They pay no visits; they receive no friends. But they remain great ladies. Supreme refinements that the parvenue will never know - a charming serenity - an adorable smile, cling to them from their day of prosperity.

A few years ago, and a little before dawn, the *Aurora*, a corvette of the British navy, was making her way through the midst of this archipelago. She was on her way from Corfu, and, according to the wise prescriptions of the Admiralty, mindful of its coal bunkers, was proceeding under sail. Her commander, Henry Fitzalan Norton, was asleep in his berth when a seaman, sent by the navigating officer, knocked upon his cabin door.

"Sir! Sir!"

At the sound of the familiar voice the commander opened his eyes and answered:

"What is it?"

"We are just off Naxos, sir."

"All right."

Norton had been playing a late hand at whist the night before in the ward room, and was tired. He turned over with the full intention of going to sleep again. But he was not suffered to doze. A black, curly bulk stretched itself lazily at the side of his berth; there was the sound of a prolonged yawn; a tongue of the pinkest and longest Bickered affectionately in the direction of his chin, and two eyes, as intelligent as only the eyes of a retriever can be, reproached him for his laziness.

"For Heaven's sake," they seemed to say, "let us get up! I've slept quite long enough and so have you!"

"Oh, well," answered his master, "if I must, I suppose I must. Here goes, Dido. . . here goes!"

To be brief, the commandant "showed a leg."

Dawn was creeping up the sky, but it was still dark. By the light of a candle whose feeble glimmer presently illuminated Norton's hasty toilet, the strange medley of objects that were crowded compactly together in the little stateroom were rather to be guessed at than recognized. It is the fashion among landsmen to expatiate upon the luxury of the naval officer. But nothing is really simpler than the place where he lives, moves, and has his being. If it be on a French man o' war, administrative infallibility leaves nothing to chance. Its walls will be white, with a profusion of gilt moldings, apparently patterned upon the private rooms in a restaurant. Except in the case of a

vice-admiral, the furniture will be invariably upholstered in red. For him the naval department allows of one exception, and insists upon yellow. In this respect the laws of the Medes and Persians, or the regulations of Minos, are lax by comparison. On his table will be a few magazines, arranged in neat piles, and a Naval Year book. If the officer be a married man a few photographs may be allowed to alleviate the severity of the paneled walls.

In the British navy, individual taste is allowed a little more scope. The cabin of the commanding officer is not always furnished in the same color; its upholstery may be varied at will. There are fewer obscure bulkheads and recesses, fewer doors opening upon cramped cupboards four feet by four; the use of curtains allows light and air to circulate more freely. Another characteristic difference is the presence of pictures, works of art, and, above all, of books. In this respect, Norton's cabin, despite its small proportions, was amply equipped. There were engravings after the old Italian masters, two or three small canvases picked up at Messina or Malta, and, everywhere that shelves could be fitted, books of every shape and size—mathematical treatises, works on political economy, history, German philosophy, and recent novels. Books, in fact, were crowded together, piled up, volume on volume. They even overflowed upon the chairs. Henry Norton knew his profession thoroughly and practiced it conscientiously. This did not prevent him from being a passionate admirer of Dickens and Tennyson.

He was a young man of thirty-three, with a fair and open face. He spoke seldom, thought a good deal, indulged in quite a little daydreaming, and altogether presented that curious mixture of the practical and the romantic common among his countrymen. Although successful in the career he had chosen (he was already full commander), he showed no pronounced taste for society. Equally, no disposition to spleen had ever been noticed in him.

As soon as he was dressed he went above and climbed to the bridge. The deck was already being swabbed down and the darkness was full of familiar noises in which the swish of water buckets and the heavy thud of mops predominated. The navigating officer, wrapped in his greatcoat, was waiting stolidly for the end of his watch. Norton returned his salute and gazed about him silently. Dawn was coming up apace. Norton, as he watched it, mentally approved the observation of the old poets, who have described it as "rosy-fingered." In general it may be remarked that no country in the world so justifies the ancient impersonations of nature as the Levant. All its phenomena, are so clearly manifested, stand out with such precision of detail, are indued with such life and charm, that it seems the most natural thing in the world to imagine the gates of the day opened by a charming girl, or to see the planet of day whirled across the celestial plains by sleek and fiery coursers, their reins handled by the most beautiful and most intelligent of all the gods.

The sea was profoundly calm, and blue as a cornflower. Its surface seemed to be not so much wrinkled as coquettishly pleated, in order that rivulets of light, pouring from the emergent planet, might ripple the more becomingly across its bosom. Only far away, on the rim of the eastern horizon, something still lingered of the delicate shadow of dawn. Nearer at hand, in a circle that widened as one watched it, a tumult of blossoms, saffron and pale rose, was dyeing the molten plain to their own transcendent hues. Little by little, the saffron deepened to orange, the pink was flecked with scarlet. Ribbons of gold streaked the expanse in every direction. A day that was warm, overwhelming, dazzling, and imperious took possession of the world anew.

Here and there, some nearer, some more distant, rose mountainous islets whose outlines were infinitely fine, delicate, and accomplished. This one was Paros; a little farther, its sister island, Antiparos; still farther, Santorin emerged from the haze. Finally, directly on the bow of the *Aurora*, Naxos was revealed, not merely in its general bulk, but its summits, its foothills, its valleys, its gorges, its rocks. White as a bride, the city opened to view.

To reach it would still take some hours. The wind had fallen to light airs and the corvette made little way. Meantime, the detail of the coast line became clearer every minute. The mouth of the harbor could be plainly distinguished among the rocks. To a little islet on the right, a few fragments of masonry still clung, ruins of a temple to Hercules. The city, whose lowest houses were bathed by

the tide, rose upwards, street on street, like the tiers in an amphitheater. Its summit was crowned by a heterogeneous mass of buildings, surrounded by ramparts which, for all the ruin of time and the depredations committed on them, still merited its ambitious title of citadel. The impression of the whole was fresh, gay, and attractive. The *Aurora* was drawing slowly nearer and nearer to this hospitable shore, when an unforeseen accident befell which was like to have changed the prosperous manner of her arrival to tragedy.

At the very moment when the corvette was rounding the harbor entrance a sudden gust of wind from seaward filled her canvas, every stitch of which was set to make the most of the light breeze prevailing. The vessel, not three hundred yards away from the rocky coast, took her head, and a serious accident seemed imminent, when her commander shouted a sharp command, at which the entire crew leaped on deck and swarmed up the shrouds. So quickly was the order given and executed that dozens of caps and hats blew overboard and littered the sea. But in an instant the sails were furled and the *Aurora's* course checked, not quickly enough, however, to prevent a few feet of her planking from grazing a steep rock.

It was an accident, but, luckily, of the slightest. Once it had been ascertained that the danger so narrowly escaped entailed merely a stay at Naxos of five or six days at the most, and that some slight repair, in any case, was due the *Aurora's* machinery, commander and officers, far from deploring the contretemps, were delighted by it. The order to anchor was given, and even while it was being carried out, two men came aboard and asked for the vessel's executive.

The new arrivals were dressed very much alike, in frock coats, long trousers, black waistcoats and white cravats, and carried in their hands the high hats customary with civilized people all over the world. It was rather the details of their costume than its general fashion which struck Norton with surprise. These presented the most absolutely archaic form conceivable in modern attire. The most superficial observer would not have been able to assign to them a date more recent than, say, 1820. The enormous rolling collars, the gored sleeves, very large at the shoulder and very tight below the elbow, the high waists and voluminous skirts, the peg-top trousers strapped under the boot *au cosaque*, the black silk waistcoats, leaving a vast expanse of shirt bosom exposed, would have drawn tears from Beau Brummel, if he had been present to contemplate these mementoes of his youth. The ample cravats, of tuckered muslin, were six inches high at the very least, and terminated in a system of knots and bows that would have driven a topsman of the *Aurora* to despair. They were crowned by two ends of a high starched shirt collar that must have seriously interfered with the brim of the hats, which at this moment reposed in the hands of the possessors of this remarkable wardrobe. The hats deserve a word to themselves. Eighteen inches high and with great curly brims, their very proportions inspired a respect that was increased immeasurably by the rough and bristling aspect of the beaver nap of which they were built.

Norton remained a few moments, almost stupefied by this vision from the remote past. He could recall only the heroes of a vanished age, and had much ado to concentrate his attention upon the faces of his guests. Both alike bespoke the utmost dignity and respectability. The two visitors were alike in the fact that their hair, like their clothes, followed the fashions of a bygone age. It was slicked down upon the temples in two vast curls, the "heartbreakers" of forty years ago, that might be compared to the pavilions with which our great monuments are decorated, and rose above the foreheads in two high gray toupees, recalling with greater exactness the pediments that lend dignity to the doorways of our lesser courts of law.

Strikingly similar as was their equipment, the two strangers differed widely in personal appearance. The first to climb the ladder was short, plump, and fresh-colored, with a jovial and contented expression. His companion, on the contrary, was tall and extremely lean. His yellow countenance breathed suffering and sadness, but at the same time a complete resignation. Norton could not deny that both old men were distinguished in the extreme. The memory of certain old French and Italian gentlemen, seen by him in his early youth, flashed rapidly through his head.

Still under the influence of his first impressions, and anxious to know how far they were justified, he took the two callers below into his cabin and inquired courteously as to their business with him. The plump Naxiote introduced himself as M. Dimitri de Moncade, consular representative of Her Britannic Majesty's government, come to offer his good offices. He then presented his friend, M. Nicolas Phrangopoulo, consul for the Hanseatic cities. The conversation took place in Greek. Thanks to a stay of several years on the Levant station, Norton spoke the idiom fluently. Neither M. de Moncade nor M. Phrangopoulo had the slightest acquaintance with any other.

We have already made it clear to our readers that the commander of the *Aurora* was a man of an inquiring turn of mind and anxious for fresh information. The mere appearance of the two men now seated in his cabin was sufficient to arouse his curiosity and to make him anxious to know more about them, were it only as material for future observations concerning the island of Naxos. So far as good manners would permit he sought to lead the conversation in an informatory direction, and his efforts were crowned with considerable success. The following is a brief summary of what he was able to piece together:

The consular agent of Her Britannic Majesty owed his functions to the fact that his father and grandfather had already and with great credit exercised them before him. Naturally his reward was confined to the social consideration which they conferred upon his person. No vulgar question of emolument had ever entered into the bargain. He had known Admiral Codrington, and a luncheon upon his flagship about the time of the battle of Navarino remained one of his most precious memories. Once every seven or eight years his eyes were gratified by the sight of a British man o' war, which happened to be cruising off Naxos. In the year 1836 he had made a trip to Athens, and had acquired a fund of knowledge on all manner of things which the subsequent passage of time had never been permitted to disturb. He asked Henry Norton for some news of His Grace the Duke of Wellington, and evinced a sensible regret on learning that the great captain had been dead a dozen years. In a few well-chosen phrases he recapitulated his sterling merits as man and soldier and it is quite likely that his was the last funeral oration ever pronounced over the ashes of the victor of Waterloo.

The painful emotions inevitable on such an occasion being a little dissipated, M. de Moncade offered a few sarcastic observations on the subject of the French in general and more specifically on the revolutionary spirit. Without being very definite, he managed to make it clear that memories of the Greek War for Independence afforded him little personal satisfaction, the more so as the government at Athens had seen fit to obtrude a provincial governor upon his island, whereas, never, never, so long as the Sultan was master of the archipelago, had any Turk, great or small, been seen at Naxos. His own esteem was confined entirely to the old native families, that is to say, those of European origin. He was incapable of forgetting that his own ancestors hailed from the south of France, where it was possible that his name still existed. He knew for a fact, positive and beyond any conjecture, that no misalliance had ever weakened the blueness of the blood circulating in his own veins.

Livelier and more talkative than M. Phrangopoulo, M. de Moncade nevertheless was careful frequently to associate the latter with his own opinions and reminiscences. Norton learned that his companion was of no less aristocratic stock, and that his name, despite its Greek form, was an additional witness to his gentility, signifying, as it did, "son of France," the original patronymic of his race having, unfortunately, been lost. All the opinions of M. de Moncade, political and social, were shared by his friend, who was content to signify the fact by nodding or shaking his head at the proper time. His knowledge of the things of the outside world, it was quite plain, was no less profound and thorough.

Never once, in his whole life, had he left the island of his birth. Like M. de Moncade, the British consul, his functions as representative at Naxos of the Hanseatic towns rested upon an hereditary and unpaid basis. Less fortunate, however, than the former, he might have ended his days without

once laying eyes on a citizen of the Germanic power whose interests he served, were it not for the fact that in the year 1845 a trading brig from Hamburg, laden with lumber, had allowed itself to be driven from its course during a heavy gale and gone to pieces on the rocks of Antiparos. The cargo was a total loss; the crew, luckily, was saved. The captain of the luckless brig, Peter Ganseman, stayed a month at Naxos. Before going home, he left in the hands of M. Phrangopoulo a document, certifying to all whom it might concern, and to posterity at large, that M. Phrangopoulo was the most honorable man he had ever met, and that to his good offices both he and his crew owed their support during their enforced sojourn on the island. This, he added, was a piece of generosity all the more to be commended because the worthy consul appeared to him to be living in a condition not far removed from destitution.

One may not be altogether an optimist and yet believe that many good actions have their reward in this base world. M. Phrangopoulo, at least, obtained his from the fact that the visit of Captain Ganseman remained the highlight of his life. As the skipper only spoke German, he had naturally been unable to communicate many new ideas to his host. But he was the hero of the capital event in the records of the consulate, and the imagination of the old gentleman persisted in dwelling upon the theme to such an extent that it became for him a veritable chapter from the *Arabian Nights*. The chance to have his certificate translated for him never came his way. But he thought all the more of it on this account, and made no more question of what it said than if some one had laid in his hand the four sacred books of Confucius in the original text.

Norton's imagination never stood in need of much stimulus. The mere contact with these strange beings now set it into ferment. Consider the circumstances! An island on the Greek archipelago in all its pristine beauty, represented by two relics of European nobility; these two survivals, able to speak only Greek, absolutely ignorant, in a meretricious and meddlesome age, of everything passing in the world outside, living only a few miles from Athens, but by this very ignorance further removed from the universe than if they were the inhabitants of one of the central states of America. Here was one of those violent paradoxes that the commander of the *Aurora* adored. So greatly was it to his taste that he made up his mind, before savoring its full charm, to seek further demonstrations of its strangeness. His new friends asked for nothing better, and the talk went on.

There is no mail boat, he was told, between the bulk of the isles and the Greek mainland, and this for a very good reason. Having neither commerce nor industry, being equally disinterested in exports or imports, these remote spots of territory neither send nor receive letters. Every fortnight or so a schooner leaves Syra for Paros with letters and parcels. Sometimes, by a rare coincidence, there is one among them for Naxos; in this case some boat or other from the smaller island takes charge of it. With the help of God and in God's good time it reaches its destination.

By this means newspapers did occasionally reach the island. But their interest was practically *nil* for a populace who were stay-at-homes both by circumstance and inclination, who read nothing, knew nothing of the world and cared nothing for it, owned no property save their vines, their olive bushes, their orange and pomegranate trees, at most here and there a few sheep, and who passed their lives like the happy man of whom Horace sings, in a state of mediocrity that was far from being gilded. These very practical philosophers could not, of course, help picking up, at haphazard and piecemeal, the few subjects, that served them for general conversation.

For the rest, too poor to need any man's help, sufficiently clad and nourished, living under too clement a sky for their delightful poverty to entail any suffering, lazy with a fine conviction, proud of their past and knowing how to preserve their dignity in the present, these Naxiote gentlemen, Henry quickly gathered, pass their days in peace with all men and would be very surprised to be told they are not the equal of the most bustling figures in the most active of modern societies.

Naturally, and in common with the inhabitants of all Greece, they keep a solid reverence for the origins of the country which they inhabit, and are not backward in claiming their share of its heritage of glory. But what they are fondest of recalling is the era of the crusades. It was at that epoch that the French duchy of the Cyclades was founded, whose knights became the feudal lords

of the islands. Most of the gentry of Naxos love to trace their ancestry to this period. But often they deceive themselves. The old French duchy has passed through many vicissitudes. One by one the conquering races have died out and been replaced by others, equally European in origin, but less ancient. The Venetians brought an access of Italian blood in their train. French and Spanish adventurers of the seventeenth century contributed their quota, to say nothing of the Greeks. Towards the end, when the last scion of the European ducal house found himself obliged to place his coronet in Turkish hands, no representative of Islam was sent the islanders. Far from changing their in command, he entered his gig in company with M. de Moncade and M. Phrangopoulo, followed closely by Dido, not less enchanted than her master with the idea of going ashore. The party was rowed towards a little wooden landing stage, where a notable party of the inhabitants - to be exact, a dozen or so of fisherfolk, awaited them with joyful curiosity. Among them were a few women, holding beautiful infants in their arms. One and all saluted the stranger with the utmost good humor. With his guests on either hand, Norton took his way along a narrow footpath lined by sunken foundations, with ruins and rubbish of every sort, and after a pretty stiff ascent of some minutes arrived at a recessed archway, a last relic of the old citadel. Passing through this gloomy entry, he found himself in a narrow street paved with flat stones, which was, in fact, the main artery of the city. Winding continually, the street climbed the hill, between two-storied houses whose general detail recalled the architectural forms of the eighteenth century in Italy. Upon the main door of each Norton noted shields, carved with armorial bearings. The whole street was so dark and cool, so few were the passers-by, that it was far more like the courtyard of a large private house than a public thoroughfare. Now and again a mule, loaded with vegetables or fruit, picked its way along, setting down its hard little hooves one by one with neat deliberation.

M. de Moncade stopped before an arched doorway ornamented with a shield, like all the rest, and, making the commander a profound bow, besought him to honor him by resting a few moments at his house. Pushing open a worm-eaten wooden door, the consul of Her Britannic Majesty at Naxos ushered Norton into a vast vaulted chamber resembling nothing so much as one of those cellars which the rich abbots of old built to house the vats and barrels filled with their legendary vintages.

Under the arch in whose midst the door was cut, and through three level windows comprised in its woodwork, a dim light filtered into this somber abode. The walls were washed with lime. The floor, upon the level of the street outside, was paved in a manner exactly similar. A tattered old carpet was laid at the far end of the apartment, and here and there pieces of furniture were grouped upon it - a carved cassone in the Venetian manner, two or three armchairs upholstered in yellow Utrecht velvet, a few straw-bottomed chairs, and a table bearing alabaster vases such as are sold to tourists in Florence. Two portraits, one of Queen Victoria and another of the Prince Consort, apparently executed by a mortal enemy of the Hanoverian dynasty, were pointed out to the commander with a certain pride, and it was intimated to him that few such master pieces existed on the island.

No sooner had Norton taken a seat than he was seized with a violent desire not to spend the rest of his day in staring at the whitewashed vault above his head, and asked the advice of his new friends as to the best means of passing his time. He already perceived that he was not to be left alone for a moment of his stay, while even to hint that solitude might be a pleasure would be considered a grave affront to his hosts. He was also soon to realize that the prospect of an incognito during his sojourn in Naxos was a vain hope. The apparition of a British man o' war in the port was so extraordinary an event that the entire social life of the country would feel its repercussion; nothing else would be spoken of; the news was even now flying from end to end of the isle with such incredible rapidity that in less than an hour it would have reached the most remote and inaccessible of its valleys. To satisfy such justifiable curiosity was a clear duty. The leading citizens, the two bishops, the two or three representatives of the great local families must one and all be shown what type of the human family was a British naval commander, this strange entity of which a few of the most erudite had had word, but which not one had seen. This duty accomplished,

a country trip would be taken to the home of M. Phrangopoulo, where the rest of the day would be spent.

Henry resigned himself to the program arranged by his hosts. Round the doors of their houses men, women, and children were clustered, and saluted the stranger smilingly. These honest folk had the careless and tranquil air which comes from unlimited leisure and the absence of any save primitive needs. The greater part of the women were surprisingly beautiful. A peerless sky, a city extravagantly picturesque, small and closely built like the abode of one great family, an immutable serenity on many faces, an extreme charm and good humor upon all these were the impressions that the young officer received on his way, and he was not the man to fail to be profoundly moved by them.

Two hours had passed since the two old gentlemen boarded the *Aurora*. Norton had ceased to find them singular, still less ridiculous. What he now noted was only their exquisite politeness, their desire to be agreeable to the chance-met stranger, their true distinction, and the authentic nobility of their manners.

At each successive visit coffee and cigarettes were offered him. There were a certain number of questions as to the European courts. Once these inevitable topics had been discussed to the general satisfaction (and with a leisureliness at which Dido alone was allowed to show impatience), the three friends left the limits of the citadel. Descending a slope which was covered with ruins, they found, awaiting them under the wall of a little hovel, three mules ordered by M. Phrangopoulo, which were to have the honor of taking the travelers on that last lap of their journey.

To attempt to walk along the paths near the sea at Naxos would be a task, if not impossible, at least difficult and tiring in the extreme. Their foundation is a fine, deep, and drifting sand. Tall dense hedges, covered with flowers, bind this unstable soil together and climb the rocks which border the paths. There is a smiling sky-but a grilling sun. Soon the mountains are reached, smooth of contour and split by deep ravines. Evergreen oaks and pistachio trees throw their shadows upon little rivulets, adorably clear and cold, whose banks are set thickly with a mass of oleanders. Here and there stray sheep and cattle. Upon the crests of the hills are little square castles, their battlemented walls, of a dazzling white, almost bare of windows and with a roofed turret at each angle. These tiny strongholds; so thoroughly feudal in character, produce a singular effect upon the traveler's mind when seen in a Greek island. They are relics of the days when the neighboring seas were infested by Barbary pirates, who made periodical descents upon the coast, carrying off the fairest of its daughters to sell upon the slave markets of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Smyrna, and giving rise to a vast number of romances, for the most part, naturally, unpublished. The populace, naturally reluctant to be made the raw material of poetic incident, eventually gave up inhabiting the island at sea level. For this reason, in the entire archipelago, the chief buildings are to be sought upon the tops of hills and mostly at an elevation from which the horizon can be easily swept. In all the world there is nothing more beautiful than these castles. Vines, enormous orange bushes, fig-trees, peach trees, and orchards of every sort grow to their very walls, little cultivated, no doubt, but richer, stronger, and more tenacious for their savage liberty.

At the end of two or three hours, the travelers came within sight of one of these little castles, perched upon the reverse of a hill. Whiter than its neighbors, more elegantly built and seeming to rear its four slim turrets with a more consciously coquettish air, set among trees and bushes more thickly tufted and of a more vivid green and loaded more richly with oranges and lemons, it had struck Norton's eyes from afar and held them fascinated. When M. de Moncade, who did most of the talking, informed him that it was the goal of their journey, and that, once a small river had been crossed, they would find themselves upon his friend's property, the British sailor had the strange feeling that a sort of Rubicon lay before him, that, once he had passed it, all his old life would be left behind, and that a new existence lay waiting for him on the thither side. Oftenest such visions prove fallacious; they depend largely upon the individual humor, the weather, a physical well-being perhaps more or less keenly felt at the moment. Nervous temperaments notably are influenced a

thousand times by such premonitions, which spring from everything and from nothing. What is far worse, they abandon themselves willingly to the belief that these moods are of a prophetic character and really forecast the future. And, naturally, they are frequently led astray. But it would be only one superstition the more to deduce it as an axiom that presentiments are invariably deceptive.

This much is certain. Norton made his way to the little manor with a receptive heart, his soul full of an unreasoning joy, his brain swarming with a thousand ideas, a thousand thoughts, a thousand emotions, each livelier, gayer, and more animated than its fellow.

In a mountainous island like Naxos one is always climbing or descending. Again the travelers had before them a steep, narrow, serpentine path, full of loose stones, that led them past farm inclosures and cottages before it attained the summit on which the castle stood. Dismounting at the foot of a narrow stone staircase, they climbed to a terrace almost equally narrow, off which led a room not very unlike that which Norton had admired in the town a few hours before. It was again little more than a cellar, its ceiling vaulted like a chapel, its walls and ceiling washed with lime. It was more simply, or, if one prefers the word, more meagerly furnished than that of M. de Moncade. A low sofa, covered in calico, was at one end of the chamber. Upon the far side was an open wooden stairway apparently leading to the rooms occupied by the family at night. One surmised that in days gone by, when the chateau had been built upon the slope of a hill for fear of surprise by corsairs, it had been judged wise to add one precaution the more in case the invader were suffered to land, and to be able, by breaking away the staircase at need, to defend the upper portion of the house. The manor contained only four or five rooms in all. It was surmounted by a flat roof flanked by four sentry boxes at its angles. The maize harvest was at this moment spread out upon it to dry in the sun.

None of these details were missed by Norton in the course of his inspection. With his eyes still dazzled by the beauty of the landscape that stretched away from the foot of the old Venetian manor house, he returned to the great *salon*, where a spectacle of quite another order awaited him. The women of the family were gathered together upon the sofa. Madame Marie Phrangopoulo, a stout and placid matron, was rolling the beads of her rosary between short, fat fingers. The mistress of the mansion had the great black eyes of her countrywomen and an air of unalterable serenity. Upon her smooth face rested not the lightest shadow of animation. Nevertheless, some score of years ago she must have been what in the archipelago is termed a beauty. The lady at her side, who was introduced to Norton as her daughter-in-law, was a brunette. She had strongly cut features, glossy black hair, and a depth in her steady regard which inspired reflection. Possibly nothing lay behind it. These things are mysteries upon which it is unprofitable to speculate. The lady was Madame Triantaphyllon Phrangopoulo. Two little lads, one with chestnut hair and another dark as his mother, clung to her skirts. Beautiful as young angels, they looked at the stranger with that air, made up of implacable mistrust and profound admiration, that is so charming in children. The young woman held a baby boy upon her knees. He was squeezing an orange between his tiny fingers and concentrating his entire attention upon the operation. An infant a few months old was carried by a little Syrian servant maid.

Here an observation is in place concerning the exact manner in which the past of these islands is reflected in their present. In ancient days more Asiatics than Greeks settled in the Cyclades; more colonists reached them from Phoenicia than from Hellas. The antiquities that are unearthed from time to time reproduce the distorted form of the gods of Tyre and Sidon oftener than the elegant deities of Athens. And today things are much the same. Emigrants from Athens show no alacrity in settling upon these shores. Natural charms appeal to them little in comparison with the lure of Constantinople, of bustling Smyrna, or wealthy Alexandria. But the people of ancient Canaa have not forgotten the old routes. For this reason one often meets with servants of their stock at Naxos, whose offspring mingle with the descendants of the crusading knights.

Norton was turning these things over in his instructed mind when the door of the gallery above him opened. So unexpected was the apparition it disclosed that for a moment he believed himself

the prey of an hallucination. A young girl descended the steps, for whose attire modest would be an exaggerated term. She wore a dress of brown cotton with white polka dots, quite evidently cut out and sewn by herself, and so absolutely unpretentious that it had best be termed a garment. It had full sleeves, tight at the wrist, and its austerity was unrelieved by either lace or muslin. But the girl's slight figure was of an exquisite symmetry; her cheeks had the carnation of a nereid painted by Rubens. Her eyes, of a brilliant sapphire blue, had the very transparency of the jewel. Her auburn hair, thick, abundant, and carelessly gathered in a knot at the nape of her neck, as though the very difficulty of controlling it rendered her impatient, was fine and lissom as so much silk. Her mouth was a rose; a smile of the sweetest revealed teeth that were fully worthy of the old comparison with twin rows of pearls. More remarkable, however, than all, and so convincing that a single look gathered its significance, was the adorable and flawless candor, the serene charm of absolute security, that breathed from her person.

Do we fall in love at the first blow or only after repeated wounds? Specialists are still disputing this great question. Probably what is true of death is true also of the love which, upon no less an authority than that of the Scriptures, may be stronger than death. In battle, when a man is not killed at the first lunge, it is only because the aim was amiss. But the thrust which at last fells the soldier to the ground from which he shall never rise, reeks nothing of onslaughts that went before.

So in love. When love overthrows man or woman it is because its aim has been a true one. Consequently, it must happen that men or women sometimes love from the first moment of an encounter. Norton would probably have refused to admit this axiom. Temperaments as proud as his are unwilling to imagine themselves as overcome at an initial shock. Nevertheless, as the young woman passed across the room to reach her mother's side, the young sailor had need of all his civilized phlegm to cover the emotion she produced upon him and to assume a cold and composed air worthy of the flag he served. It was scarcely his fault if the bearing of the beautiful girl, supple, noble, and full of an incredible grace, recalled to his memory the famous passage of Virgil on the manner in which the goddesses advance. Still less was he to be blamed when, the girl having taken her seat, he perceived that the eyes of the entire family centered upon her, noticed that every face was smiling with open admiration, and heard M. de Moncade, with all the air of a man who expresses an undisputed truth, addressing him in the following remarkable speech:

"I'll wager that you have never yet in all your life seen anything so beautiful as my goddaughter Akrvie."

Everyone appeared to await the British commander's reply with the utmost confidence. The object of the remark just uttered smiled in her turn without the slightest self-consciousness, and appeared quite as convinced that only one answer was possible. Poor Norton, aghast at this infraction of everything that he had held a social convention, could only bow confusedly. It is still doubtful whether one of those pitiful suspicions, of which sophisticated people keep so ready a supply on hand, did not, at this moment, arise in his breast. If this were so, it must be said to his credit that the infamy was involuntary and in no wise the fruit of reflection. What actually happened, was that, in a reaction that did honor to his good sense, and trampling upon the prostrate form of British cant, he answered M. de Moncade quietly:

"No. I did not believe that anything so perfect as mademoiselle existed anywhere."

"Don't think," went on the British Consul at Naxos, "that my daughter has no rivals in the island. When you come to mass on Sunday you will see how pretty our girls are. But there is no other like her. That is a simple fact, and she knows it herself. Will you have a cigarette?"

While he was lighting it, Norton was saying to himself:

"I am either crazy already or will soon be. The girl is lovely. Why seek to deny it? But what a little dowdy! She looks well here because I see her with her halo of orange trees and oleanders and all the rest of it. But imagine her in a drawing-room at home! Can't I just hear Lady Jane! And then, what kind of an education can this wretched girl have had? Suppose I try to make her talk."

In countries of the Levant, congenial folk who are happy when together are capable of enjoying one another's society for hours without once breaking silence. You stretch your legs, you smoke, you look at your neighbor - and you hold your tongue. The idea of proffering some bright remark never so much as enters anyone's head. Perhaps this explains why people in this part of the world are never bored. Norton might have indulged the reverie this sudden apparition had aroused indefinitely and without arousing any comment. The master of the house, aided by a little servant lad, was busy over some scientific brew of lemonade. Madame Maria still fingered her rosary in beatific silence. Madame Triantaphyllon still rocked her plump baby, who had finally succeeded in making a hole in his orange and had fallen asleep sucking it. The two boys had left the room with the little Syrian nurse-girl and her charge. M. de Moncade went on smoking with all the unhurried dignity of a Mohican chieftain celebrating the calumet of peace. The belle of Naxos had seen no reason to take her eyes off the new arrival. Without a spice of coquetry in her regard, she continued to examine this specimen of humanity, different from anything hitherto encountered.

Pursuing his half-disdainful project, Norton proceeded to open a conversation with her. His idea, innocent enough in all conscience, was to make a brief inventory of the furniture of Akrivie's mind before proceeding to that of her heart. There is, by the way, no better specific for gathering overhasty and misleading impressions.

The mind in question struck him as singular. He could discover absolutely none of the attainments common with girls of any sort of social status in the lands of schools and drawing-rooms. She appeared neither to have acquired any knowledge, nor to be aware of its absence. By chance he found out that she thought Spain was quite near America, though, beyond the fact that it was probably a long way from Naxos, she had no idea where it was to be found. He was pedantic enough to enlighten her ignorance, but could see that she paid little or no attention to his words. On the other hand, he found her sensible to the prospects of the Christians again owning Constantinople. Unlike her father and godfather, she hated the Turks and asked nothing better than their total annihilation. She knew for a fact that these monsters ate little babies raw; she was also aware that a raid from them upon the coast was still to be looked for any day in the week.

Finding her ideas in the political sphere so full of the matter of poetry, Norton touched upon literature. Here he encountered a total blank. She had never read anything except her prayer book and had no comments to make upon that. The young sailor was surprised to find that an imagination capable of conceiving a reconquest of Stamboul and of surrounding it with a number of rich inventions had no suspicion of any charms to be sought in the printed word. He entered upon a long analysis of the beauties of the island and seacoast. Akrivie seemed gratified that the English gentleman liked her country. Knowing no other, she was, of course, fully aware of its perfections and advantages. But, having no means of making comparisons, she was somewhat indifferent to the enthusiasm of others upon the subject. In three words-she knew nothing, thought of nothing, and could converse upon nothing. Nevertheless, she smiled, her beautiful eyes widened, as she listened. She was altogether ravishing.

Norton stubbornly refused to believe her a fool. On the contrary, her occasional flashes of common sense, uttered with an air of the most absolute and imperturbable conviction, her visible strength of mind, the impression of perfect sanity which he received from this primitive spirit, affected him far more profoundly than the most sophisticated of effusions which, for a mind as cultured as his, would merely have revived old memories and recalled old quotations. Not finding what he sought, he suspected all manner of other things whose utility, whose intrinsic value, and whose very name were unfamiliar to him, yet which might well have their own inestimable price. The franker Akrivie's laugh grew, the more she opened her great eyes, seeming to invite his examination to the very depths of her soul, the less he understood her. To the attraction of her great beauty a mystery was quickly added whose existence the poor girl was far from suspecting herself.

On one point she showed herself essentially feminine. By what might have been accident or inspiration, the idea entered the young captain's head of talking dress. Akrivie's interest was

instantly and visibly aroused, no less than that of her sister-in-law. Beneath even the lethargy of her mother a slight quiver ran. But Norton soon saw that, to be understood here, he must proceed by slow degrees.

Both Akrivie and Triantaphyllon considered a velvet dress as the height of *chic*. Golden bangles seemed to them the summit of felicity for the most exacting of mortals. Upon fashion, strictly speaking, they had the vaguest ideas. Yet Norton was never bored. The further intimacy advanced, the greater grew his interest. He was surprised when his hosts advised him that, if he wished to go aboard the *Aurora* before dark, an intention he had frequently expressed, it was time to start. His return the following day was suggested, and with such obvious sincerity, that he willingly gave his word.

It is probable that lovers, like those elect beings whom the gods inspire, have a psychic illumination denied to ordinary mortals. What calmer minds would consider insignificant accidents, they are willing to cherish as signs, wonders, and extraordinary portents. During the entire day, Norton, who was, under ordinary circumstances, a rational enough fellow, had paid great attention to the conduct of Dido. At the moment Akrivie had appeared at the head of the staircase, Dido was lying in her accustomed place at her master's feet. With her nose resting upon her outstretched paws she had all the air of reposing herself after the fatigues of the journey. As the young girl descended the steps, Dido's eyes followed her closely. She went to meet the newcomer and, finding no notice was taken of her advances, followed her affectionately to the sofa. Throughout the entire visit, two black eyes that glittered like a pair of carbuncles, set in the midst of a shock of hair that was even blacker, had never once been taken off the young girl. Two or three times the retriever had even lifted a heavy paw and set it upon the knee of the human creature who had inspired her with such a lively sympathy, until she succeeded, to her visible satisfaction, in obtaining a caress. Finally, when the goodbys had all been said, it was found necessary to call Dido three or four times before she would obey her master's voice.

This strange conduct on the part of his favorite did not fail to impress the commander. Never before had such a thing happened. Never before had anything whatsoever distracted Dido a hair's breadth from the affection she owed her master and her master alone. Thompson himself, the great and magnificent Thompson, whose duty was to regulate every domestic detail of his life, had never received anything surpassing in its nature a mild esteem or remotely approaching such marked preference. At finding that Dido had no more common sense than himself, something that was almost consternation took possession of Norton.

It was already night when the commander went aboard the *Aurora*. As he mounted the companion and saw the lantern swinging at its head, as the watch came to receive him and he answered the salute of its officer, he had the feeling that his old life, the life in which he had till now been most at his ease, was welcoming him back. But this time his impressions of it all were somehow different. He was conscious of an impatience to be done with reality as speedily as possible and to immerse himself again in his dream. Meantime, he had to listen to the report of his second-in-command. All was well. Repairs had already begun upon the very slight damage the corvette had received. The officers had spent the day ashore. They had already located an excellent cricket pitch and begun an exciting game, which they proposed to play out the following day. Mutton had been found that, on the word of the cook, was superb, and fresh vegetables had rejoiced the hearts of the mess. In fact, so the lieutenant assured his executive, Naxos was a splendid place. Norton, who had his own reasons for agreeing with his subaltern, assented with a faint sinking of the heart. He went below, followed by Dido, in whom, and again with a certain terror, he fancied he perceived an absent-mindedness similar to his own.

Once in his bunk, he could only toss sleeplessly from side to side. He lit a cigar, went on deck, and began one of those lonely promenades in which sailors are accustomed to nurse their vague reveries their frustrated desires, their projects that come to naught, and the boredom that weighs upon their lives. From the extreme stern to the foot of the mainmast and back again he paced, his

soul a thousand leagues from the little world of planks and cords in which his body was confined. The moon was at full, the night sky was soft, velvety, and set with myriads of stars. Like a general at inspection, his memory was busy with a strange review, the recall of all the gracious women to whom, at one time or another, he had vowed tender admiration. The Irish girl with the fair face and delicate features who had had his calf love just after leaving Eton: Molly Greaves, who had cried so much when he left his uncle's house at the end of his first leave: Catherine Ogleby, to whom he had been engaged and who had married an officer in the Guards while he was on the China station: Mercedes da Silva at Buenos Ayres; Jacinta at Santiago; a certain Marianne Ackerbaum in one of the Baltic ports. Yes, he admitted, he had been in love with them all, some more, some less - but he had loved. That is to say, he had hoped, he had trusted, he had been deeply stirred, through them he had known pleasure, suffering, fear, the boredom of separation, intense joy, real sadness. Today all this was dust and ashes. But he had loved; and just as ashes raked together can be carried to a new hearth and made to feed a new fire, so from the memory of all his spent loves did his sudden love for the young girl of Naxos leap up, higher and more ardent than any.

The comparisons which he was in a position to make between the sentiments which had engrossed his heart one after another and the sentiment which invaded it now, necessarily convinced him that this time he was in love after a new fashion, which was much stronger, much more imperative, and most certainly more penetrating, and which did not spare a single fiber of his being.

Was it only because she was beautiful? Certainly her beauty was not to be compared with anything he had ever dreamed of, not to say seen. But this alone did not explain the miracle. Who loves a woman today merely because she is beautiful? In ancient days, of course, among the barbarians. . . ! But it is a very different matter with the sophisticates of our own day. An energetic King David, son of Jesse, bent at all costs upon possessing the fair Bathsheba, of whom he knows nothing except that she has fine shoulders, has his best general killed, piles wickedness on wickedness, and risks embroiling himself for all eternity with Jehovah. For the mere prospect of abducting a creature reputed the fairest in the world, but whom he has never seen, however great his confidence in her reputation, Paris, son of Priam, lets loose a whole series of disasters. But these are far from being contemporary sentiments. For Norton, the analytical Norton, no long selfexamination was necessary in order to convince himself that the agitation which reigned in his heart was the result of something far beyond the influence of a pair of fine eyes.

Whence, then, did it come? Akrivie was not clever; her ignorance, indeed, was abysmal and allcomprehensive; she was void of the slightest shadow of coquetry; she had sought as little to please as to displease her admirer. If he had inspired her with any sentiment at all, it must have been one of pure curiosity; if any impression at all had persisted, it must have been one of the singularity of strangers in general, and of captains of the British navy in particular. Nevertheless, in this creature, so essentially different from all the women he had ever loved in greater or less degree, Norton sensed some nameless quality that intrigued him, that charmed him, that made him the man in love he truly was. He spent considerable time in solving the mystery. Finally he seemed to succeed, and the solution did credit to his intelligence.

The conditions of life which created her background for Akrivie were exactly those of women three thousand years ago - isolation, a limited sphere of affection, absolute ignorance of the world outside. Hence the result it produced upon the daughter of Naxos was precisely that which we are watching when we read of heroines in the morning of the world. The inborn qualities of this young girl had never been effaced. They had been concentrated - a very different matter. Like some tree whose branches, instead of proliferating into leaves, flowers, and fruits, soar towards the sky, straight, strong, and smooth, there was in her a deal of charm, but even more of majesty, allurements - but allurements not devoid of grandeur. No curiosity for things without distracted her, not a single energy of her mind had ever been diverted from what had its covenanted claim to her love. The entire force of her character was confined within a narrow circle which no instinct impelled her to enlarge.

Akrivie, in short, was the woman of the Homeric epoch. She lived, moved, and had her reasons for being, in a household where she was by turn daughter and sister, awaiting a day when she should be, no less exclusively, wife and mother. In such characters it is useless to seek for originality; they are, they cannot help but be, mere reflections, and their glory and merit, which are by no means small, reside in that very fact. Nothing less resembles the accomplished woman, as actual society has invented and more or less reproduced her, who desires and seeks, succeeds or makes shipwreck, at her own risk and peril. So different are the two types that any comparison is an injustice to both.

For good or ill, such at least was Akrivie, and as such Norton saw her. With perfect justification, she recalled to his mind one of those beautiful young girls, painted upon ancient Athenian amphorae, bearing water from the public fountain to the city, and watching with a serene and level eye, as heroes fight and die for their possession, until the chance of battle gives them to the conqueror.

Strangest, perhaps, of all, was this: Norton was a man of the world *par excellence*, meet for the best and most brilliant societies of Europe. Yet latent in his heart, and without his ever having been made aware of it by a similar accident, lurked an instinctive attraction for just the sort of feminine temperament whose revelation now took him by storm. True, until today it was precisely the opposite qualities which had most appealed to him. But, looking a little closer, he perceived that these attractions had never been enduring ones. Even the ruptures that ended them had come about without any such suffering as would flatter him into a belief that he was the perfect lover. To the vivacity of one of his mistresses, the tender surrender of another, the wit and intelligence of a third, some obscure antagonism in himself had offered a resistance, which strongly resembled ingratitude and for which he secretly accused himself. And now he was in love with a sort of grown-up child, a stranger to his habits, to his manners, to his ideas, to everything which he ostensibly admired. And this, too, without any discoverable reason save her complete antithesis to what he had believed her admired before.

As a matter of fact, it was because he was an Englishman and English to his finger tips that the marvel had come about. The old Anglo-Norman stock, the most active, the most ambitious, the most turbulent, and the most devoted to its own interests that the world has ever seen, is at the same time the most apt to recognize and to practice self-sacrifice. Norton had been born into a class where rank and high social position are considered a birthright. But he had never relied upon the influence so easily within his reach. No man who had issued from the ranks could have taken greater pains to win promotion in the career he had chosen than he. And this quite as much through pride as strength of character. He had cruised in all waters, studied his profession tirelessly. He had read enormously, thought a great deal, and on every occasion where a chance for action offered itself had seized it. As we have seen, he had an infinity of poetry in his composition. But never, in anyone case, had reverie been allowed to interpose itself between him and the work in hand. To the world at large he had shown but one aspect of his character - its rigidity, its sober judgment, the enthusiasm, devoted to practical ends, which makes for worldly success.

And now it was at the moment when he saw himself, one of the youngest officers of his grade and with the way to high rank clear before him - it was this moment, we repeat, that he chose to cast a disillusioned glance over everything that had gone before! He asked himself what was the real worth of all the things for which he had striven so tenaciously. The question had been running in his head for some months. Each time it recurred he had found it harder to solve the problem, or rather, to speak more strictly, he had been forced to descend one degree lower in the scale of reason in order to return a contemptuous answer. It was at this crisis in his life that chance had brought him to the island of Naxos, where nothing existed that he had ever yet contemplated, and had shown him Akrivie.

The young captain was absolutely frank with himself. Throughout his lonely walk under the stars, he perceived with perfect lucidity the crossroad at which he had arrived. He saw himself

drawn apart by two divergent forces. It was as though he sat in a twofold judgment - upon the man he had been yesterday, and upon the man he would be tomorrow. All the energy he could muster in his mind was utilized to defer a decision. He told himself, not without a certain bitterness, that the card he was about to deal himself would be a decisive one, and that such a cast should not be made under the perilous influence of a sublime night and a troubled heart.

But he was a man of a logical mind, and master of himself to a supreme degree. To the great joy of Dido, who slept badly on the bare deck and had for some hours been anxious to stretch herself out on the bearskin rug in her master's cabin, he decided to turn in. He was up early next morning, and found the greater part of the mess taking a hasty breakfast before going ashore to finish their cricket match, having first donned the bizarre costumes which the English insist upon for such eventualities. High boots or low shoes of brown leather, tight trousers of white flannel, or baggy knickerbockers of shepherd's plaid, shirts of scarlet or sky blue, blazers striped with infinite combinations of color, exposing neck and arms to the sun, voluminous caps or straw hats decorated with wide ribbons - finally the immense bat, main accessory of the game, carried over one shoulder - it is thus outfitted that all self-respecting English gentlemen offer themselves, on such occasions, to the admiration of the public. Whether the scene be an English meadow or an Australian savannah, whether the stumps be set beneath a Chinese pagoda or on some icy level within a few degrees of the North Pole, an Englishman of decent standing who should refuse to don this costume would be compromised beyond hope of redemption.

Norton wished his fellow officers good luck, and, having gained the shore in his gig, found Messieurs de Moncade and Phrangopoulo awaiting his arrival, still swathed in their antique habits of ceremony and choking in their white cravats. Hands were briskly shaken and, mounting upon a mule, he again took his way toward the chateau in their company.

The day passed badly for Henry. No incident that could positively be termed unfortunate marred its harmony. But lovers have a faculty all their own for appreciating trifles light as air. The reception of the British sailor by the ladies of the castle was even more cordial than on the preceding day, if only for the reason that he was no longer quite a stranger. Madame Marie was no more talkative than before, but seemed more at her ease. Madame Triantaphyllon smiled at seeing her youngest born in the arms of the sailor from overseas and fearlessly taking up fistfulls of his hair. It was Akrivie's bearing, unimpressed as ever, that gave the lovestruck commander of the *Aurora* pain. The very absence of any shadow of change in it was proof positive to him that he had made no impression whatever upon her and was not likely to. This formula, by the way, has a prominent place in the phrase book of all lovers.

Nothing, in fact, happened, and the longer nothing went on happening the more confirmed grew Norton in his previous conviction concerning the belle of Naxos. A struggle began in his mind between the civilized man, desirous of being loved and feeling he has failed, and the man, bored and a little disgusted with life, who is quite inclined to burn what he has adored and to adore what he has never known. He returned to his ship a trifle crestfallen, ready to swear that Akrivie was a little fool, and just as ready to insist that she was a lofty spirit, worthy to be his sponsor in a life better, freer, more rational and more becoming a man than any whose prescriptions he had followed till now.

This night he did not walk the deck, but when master and dog went below, only Dido slept. As the cricket match ashore had teemed with remarkable incidents, he was obliged to listen to an animated discussion in the officers' mess, which lasted until a late hour. When day dawned he had not slept a wink, and after giving his instructions to his second-in-command and listening to the customary report, which seemed to him, possibly for the first time in his life, a perfectly ridiculous and absolutely insupportable piece of red tape, he rejoined his two hosts, whose individuality seemed more than ever submerged beneath their perennial black broadcloth.

This third day was marked by an important incident. Norton proposed an excursion at sea to his new friends. The volcano at Santorin, newly in eruption, was made the pretext. A few years ago this

ancient phenomenon of nature had resumed its activity, and the young commander praised the prodigious character of the spectacle so warmly that the inhabitants of the chateau finally became curious. Madame Marie, it is true, shook her head disdainfully and was unshakable in her resolution not to stir a foot; Madame Triantaphyllon admitted that she would like to see the British corvette - the rest did not interest her. Akrivie evinced a little more animation. For her, as for her sister-in-law, the corvette was the main attraction, but the prospect of a voyage was far from displeasing. Of the volcano she made small account. A mountain in flames was to her a pure paradox and inspired no reflections. The two old men were far more excited and accepted the captain's invitation with alacrity. It was arranged that Akrivie should occupy the captain's cabin; Madame Triantaphyllon was to accompany her sister-in-law aboard and lunch upon the *Aurora*; after an inspection from stem to stern she would return home, leaving the corvette to its voyage, which was scheduled to last three days at most.

There was no end to the discussion that followed. The most naive and childlike questions were posed, all with extreme gayety. But poor Norton again had the experience of noting that Akrivie betrayed not the most fleeting emotion of which he could conceive himself the cause.

The next day, everything passed according to program. The Naxiote family came aboard at six o'clock. Breakfast was served and the man o' war was inspected from its quarter-deck to its hold. Madame Triantaphyllon found the whole thing extraordinary. For days afterwards a strange confusion of masts, shrouds, sheets of canvas, copper cylinders, and smoke ran riot in her brain. What she found most wonderful was the great stern chaser. On this she could not make up her mind to lay a hand, though dying with the desire to stroke its smooth brass surface. Two hours at least before the party were rowed ashore she was chafing to return. It was the first time in her life she had left her family alone so long, and she was anxious in the extreme. She was hardly less concerned over what might befall her relatives during their unheard-of adventure and embraced Akrivie tightly before leaving the corvette, shedding many bitter and silent tears upon her shoulder. Finally she departed, the anchor was raised, and the *Aurora*, churning the water slowly, left the harbor and gained the open sea.

As the vessel proceeded on her course towards Paros, Akrivie seemed to shake off her impassivity and to pay a good deal of attention to what was going on around her. Watching her closely, like a gardener under whose eyes some rare bud is breaking into blossom, Norton noted that she was by no means as inaccessible to impressions as he had heretofore judged her. It was evident that she was trying to understand something of the people around her, and they, in their turn, did not fail to do their best to obtain one glance from so adorable a nymph. The admiration of the wardroom may easily be guessed. The first officer threw out his chest slightly as he passed her, conscious of the effect his snowy white trousers, irreproachable shirt front, golden buttons, and gleaming watch chain must be making.

The navigating lieutenant was not too absorbed by his duties to strike an advantageous pose from time to time, giving a careless twirl to his red whiskers. The junior officers made a point of having all manner of armchairs brought upon the quarter-deck from below and of compounding ingenious beverages with all manner of ingredients. The doctor, as befitted his sixty years, sought only to obtain some information upon the flora of Naxos, supplementing his scanty Greek with gestures that would have given Demosthenes, had that famous orator been there to listen, a sharp attack of nerves. It often happened that M. Phrangopoulo was in the middle of a dissertation upon some large tree when the man of science believed he was receiving valuable details upon some microscopic herb.

M. de Moncade was never done admiring the propeller, which was by now making its sixty-seven turns a minute. What captivated Akrivie were the middies, especially the youngest and smallest. Upon these susceptible youngsters the presence of a pretty girl aboard produced an immediate effect. But, as discipline forbade their setting foot on the quarter-deck, they were obliged

to content themselves by devouring her with their eyes. She asked no questions, but Norton felt she was missing nothing, and was amused by her undisguised wonder.

When the corvette was off Antiparos and had just entered a narrow channel between the island and an islet covered with brush, Akrivie waved her hand in an admiring gesture towards the cliffs and said to Henry, "They are marble!" They were indeed marble, of the whitest, and the effect is unforgettable. Vainly have the sea, the wind, aeons of rain and storm breathed and beaten upon these enormous masses of a divine matter. Keeping all their pristine nobility, they display the pomp of an unsullied purity for league after league of seacoast. Travelers tell us that the mere fact of Genoa being built of gray marble earns it its title of "Genoa the Superb." What can one say of an island where the very rocks are marble, and marble that is true parent of the predestined matter out of which Venus and so many thousands of divinities were chiseled for the admiration of the world?

It is not likely that Akrivie analyzed her sensations, or found any reasons for them in her brain of an ignorant little country girl. But she felt, none the less, the full significance of the splendor displayed before her eyes as though by some magnetic power, or maybe, as love-struck Henry did not fail to say to himself, by that affinity that beautiful things hold one for the other.

It was decided to spend the day upon the island, and not to leave for Santorin till evening. Everyone was in high spirits at the prospect. If it is a pleasant thing to have a pretty woman as shipmate, it is a still pleasanter thing to have her as companion on shore. The sea air, the unaccustomed vivacity of the conversation round her, the sight of so many things seen for the first time, had brought color to Akrivie's cheeks. Her eyes sparkled. She laughed happily at the frank rivalry to help her disembark, shown by her new friends.

The nearer one drew to shore, the more apparent became the real structure of the island, stripped now of the charm lent it by the purity of the atmosphere and the vivid colors that are its accompaniment. It was in truth an austere spot, stony and barren, whose vegetation consisted only in scattered bushes and an occasional tree, gnarled and twisted by the wind. As soon as the keel of the boat grounded upon the beach, Norton sent several of the middies *en reconnaissance*. In a few minutes one of them, Charley Scott, returned at a brisk run and informed his commander that behind a little hill, not three hundred yards from the shore, he could see a big house. The party bent their steps towards it, and M. Phrangopoulo, after a brief conference with M. de Moncade, told Norton something about the proprietor of the mansion towards which they were hastening.

Five or six years ago, it seems, a Greek from one of the Ionian Isles, Count Spiridion Mella, had come to Antiparos with the intention of planting vineyards and competing with the product of Santorin. Whether he had succeeded or failed no one seemed to know. Successful or not, he represented, in this remote corner of the earth, the omnipresence and universal movement of European industry. Count Mella had been a good many things in his time. As a young man his name had been borne upon the rolls of a crack regiment in Russia. He had been aide-de-camp to a general; he had even made some stir in the smart world of Moscow. Resigning his commission, he had taken his way to Constantinople and busied himself with politics. Praised by some, suspected by others, he had had much ado to pick his steps with safety along the tortuous path he had chosen, and after many stormy years had compromised upon a business career in Alexandria.

In Egypt he had formed business connections which took him to the Indies. The profits of the enterprise must have been small. In any case, Count Mella returned to his Greek home with a very modest competence, and settled for several years in the Peloponnesus. Meantime he had aged; seventy years more or less were whispering in his ear the suggestion that for him the era of adventure was drawing to a close. He profited by their counsel to take to himself a young bride, and after two years of married life had come to tempt fortune once more at Antiparos. By turns Russian officer, Greek (or Turkish) man of politics, Egyptian merchant, commercial traveler in India, this Ionian count found himself at the close of his life a vinegrower in the Cyclades. His type is by no means rare in the Near East, and it is impossible not to concede it a deal of activity, a deal of resourcefulness, and a serene and stoical philosophy when fortune frowns.

As the party from the *Aurora* drew near the big house, a figure which Norton, from the description furnished by his friends from Naxos, imagined could only be that of Mella, advanced along the path to meet them. The count was a man of middle height, dressed shabbily but with some pretension to elegance, and by no means looking the age that M. Phrangopoulo gave him. He showed himself an hospitable host, led the explorers to his house, built in the middle of barren rocks, and drew their attention to four miserable little trees, about six feet in height, planted along its terrace, which could not help, he asserted, but grow to a great altitude if the wind gave them a chance. He showed them, with a mysterious and complacent air, five or six fragments of statuary, horribly mutilated, that had come to light while digging the foundations for his house, and began a long dissertation upon the ancient masterpieces which he was sure some day to discover. What he had to show, meantime, were only a few defaced specimens of the latest and worst period. The celebrated discovery of the statue found in 1821 in the island of Milo has become the favorite legend of the Cyclades. There is hardly a rubbish heap of any size in the archipelago from which the natives do not dream of another Venus de Milo emerging in the near future.

Antiparos is not large. It boasts a certain number of fishermen's huts and even a village. But its leading attraction is of another sort. Count Mella urged his guests not to lose such an opportunity of visiting the famous grotto situated on the highest point of the island. All the British officers were filled with enthusiasm for the expedition. Norton, only too glad to roam the country with Akrivie at his elbow, put no difficulties in their way. A boat was sent back to the corvette to bring some seamen, ropes, ladders, and torches, and the ascent to the grotto began.

No island in the Greek archipelago is so absolutely barren that it does not possess a little vegetation in the interior. Like those beautiful women for whom the slightest ornament more than suffices, you may suddenly come upon nooks and corners where a little bush lends the scenery a grace quite incomparable. The region traversed by the British visitors was extremely picturesque. Their path lay through large masses of white marble, streaked, now with black, now with a rusty stain that in places approached the most vivid orange. From crevices where a little earth had managed to lodge, thorny bushes sprouted, from whose gray branches minute spear-shaped leaves, meager and colorless, fluttered in the wind. Here and there along the ravines, which in winter time would be the beds of raging torrents, but which now contained scarce a cupful of water, thick clumps of oleander, ablaze with flowers, were to be discovered, as glory is said to be sought in the steepest and most inaccessible comers. Charley Scott, the young midddy from north of the Tweed, found a means of gathering two imposing bouquets of the pink blossoms. Blushing to the tips of his ears, he seized a moment when the rest of the party were behind to proffer one of them to Akrivie; the other he gave to Thompson with an entirely unauthentic story that the young girl had picked them herself and wished him to carry one. Thus, before the end of the day, Akrivie in addition to her host of admirers could boast of at least two devoted slaves among the personnel of the *Aurora*.

Norton soon noticed he had a rival. Far from being disturbed or put out of temper, he felt his old liking for his young subaltern immensely increased by the discovery that his admiration was shared. Charles Scott had long been a favorite of his commander, who knew that his mother, the widow of a clergyman, and without private means, had put her boy into the navy only at the expense of dire economies and by resigning herself to a long life of selfdenial. Nor was Charles ungrateful. A consciousness of all he owed his mother was always present, not only to the boy's intelligence, but to his heart as well. To live for her and for his sister Effie, a young girl about the same age as Akrivie, was the motive of his life. No idea save that of making existence a joy for the two women ever entered his head. There was no mansion or palace on which his eye fell during his cruises that he did not examine with a critical eye and promise himself to purchase some day to house the family idols. So natural was his urge to give them everything that it hardly presented itself under the guise of a debt. For himself, he had quite made up his mind that he would never marry. So soon as Effie should have wedded the youngest, handsomest and richest member of the House of Lords, he would be a fairy godfather to all her children. To tell the truth, the impression made upon him by Akrivie was largely due to the fact that she reminded him of his sister.

Norton thought as much, and spoke to the young midy:

"Scott, don't you think this girl looks something like Effie?"

"Yes, sir," the lad answered, blushing more deeply than ever. "Yes, indeed."

The innocent idyll was somewhat marred when another of the Aurora's "snotties" permitted himself some ill-advised comments on his brother officer's infatuation. A brisk personal encounter was the immediate result. Charles was the aggressor and put such energy into his reprisals that his luckless adversary had to be rescued from his hands with both eyes discolored and blood streaming from his mouth. The doctor, who was the sole eyewitness of the encounter (the first lieutenant, you may be sure, was not in sight), observed sententiously, as he bathed the bruised face of Mr. Scott's victim, that wherever Venus made her appearance Mars was sure to be within hail. The medical officer of the corvette was a man steeped in the classics to saturation. Nevertheless, he contrived a plausible story of a fall from the rocks to account for Mr. Sharp's battered appearance.

The party had by now reached the highest point of the island, and the entrance to the grotto, already visible when they stood on the topmost peak, appeared to them in all its majesty as they gathered under the immense vault. It is, in fact, a vast cupola quarried by nature out of the marble heart of the island, whose great height somewhat masks its depth. The ropes were uncoiled, torches were lit, and the sailors, of all men the best adapted für such enterprises, prepared für the descent under the expert eye of a lieutenant who had some knowledge of the locality.

One can easily understand geologists or naturalists who make such things their business, and can discover a glimmer of light in the inmost recesses of the earth, entering upon such adventures with a light heart. For other mortals it is a different matter. Scientists can justify the risk with the attraction of unexpected booty. If they break their legs or necks, it is all in the day's work and no ridicule attaches to the mishap. The same thing cannot be said of ignorant amateurs. In order to descend the grotto of Antiparos, it is necessary to creep like a fox down narrow passages that open off to right, to left, and from the floor of the main entrance. You enter the pitchy darkness, bent double so as not to dash out your brains against the rock overhead. You stumble with difficulty and in the most absurd postures over a wet pavement that seems to slide treacherously under your feet, and fumble in the darkness for the end of a rope. You climb or you toboggan, according to whether the gallery goes up or down. Suddenly it takes a sharp turn. You grope over the rocky wall with the hand that is not clutching the rope, trying to keep your feet, but with no idea, since everything is equally black, in which direction a fall is to be feared.

This is merely the first chapter of the adventure. It seems to end when you at last feel a level floor underfoot. But you need not be in a hurry with self-congratulation. You stand on the edge of a precipice, and it is as well not to linger too long. In any case, the second chapter is about to begin.

Moving your torch along the wall against which you are keeping, closely but none too securely, you perceive a sort of opening to which a rope ladder is fastened. Of this you see only the head; all the rest disappears in a void of incredible blackness. No amount of peeling can make out more, the pupils of your eyes still keeping their normal daylight dilation of a few minutes since.

You risk yourself upon the ladder, and descend, with all the precautions that instinct suggests. The wall down which you are crawling has sufficient inclination to keep the ladder from swaying, but it also leaves you very little toe hold or finger hold. You will be well advised, however, to persevere, having no idea whatsoever into what you will fall if you let go, nor of the conditions that might greet your overspeedy arrival at the bottom. You discover these when your feet have left the last rung. You are standing upon a sort of narrow floor, your shoes splashing in the water that trickles through the pores and fissures of the surrounding rock. It is as cold as a cellar and you breathe none too easily. Humidity takes you by the throat; the air is heavy and saturated with moisture. But the torches which flare here and there in the darkness wave to tell you that your ordeal is not yet at an end. You lower your head; you seize the end of a rope made fast to a sharp point of rock, and slide once more. This time at least you are done with a means of locomotion that

entails suspension in midair. You have come to a plot of ground that inclines sharply. It is composed of nothing more nor less than irregularly shaped masses of marble that have fallen from the roof overhead and upon whose sharp edges walking becomes a matter of keeping your equilibrium. Aching in every joint, you reach the bottom of the grotto, you throw back your head, and are rewarded as you deserve for your inept and multiplied efforts. You see nothing that is really worth the trouble of a dozen steps!

The vault, for all its height, lacks character. To begin with, it is clear whence you started, and you grudge the pains your descent has cost you. This effectually disposes of the sympathy without which admiration cannot exist. Then, as you gaze upwards, the impressiveness of sheer height is robbed by successive accumulations of debris and by one circumvolution after another of shattered and shapeless projections from the rock. The total space comprised under the spherical vault must be very great. But it is broken midway by large outcrops which form a series of small compartments, while, all along the faces of the cavern, long pendent stalactites have formed a series of *cabinets particuliers* exactly like the bricked cavities in which the more precious wines of a cellar are kept.

As for the famous stalactites themselves, they are the familiar horrors, so appreciated by the lovers of "the marvels of nature," so many great sugar loaves which have broken their mold, shapeless, unstable, big or small in the wrong places, and, somehow, pretentious without being impressive. The only thing which allays the boredom of the ill-advised sightseer is to read the eloquent testimony to human imbecility that is offered in the inscriptions left behind by his predecessors. One especially is quite remarkable. You can find it in a recess behind one of the bigger stalactites: "*Hélène de Tascher femme incomparable! Trésor du Marquis de Chabert !*" Poor Marquis de Chabert! How long and vainly he must have fought against a natural but irresistible indiscretion before finally yielding to it in the uttermost recess of the grotto of Antiparos!

When the British officers had seen everything, or, rather, convinced themselves that there was nothing to see, the ascent to daylight began. Incidentally it may be observed that if coming down is a troublesome feat, climbing back is worse. Happily, accidents were limited to one slight fall without great damage, and to considerable wear and tear on nether garments. Norton had sacrificed a few precious moments which he might have spent with Akrivie to the propriety of not leaving his brother officers in the lurch. He was somewhat rewarded by the effect which a terrible recital of the difficulties and dangers of the enterprise in the mouth of Count Mella had produced upon the imagination of the beauty of Naxos. So vividly did the Corfiote noble present these, that, while he was finishing a hair-raising account of a party of twenty-three persons, one of them a Turkish pasha, crushed to a pulp by a fall from the roof of the grotto, Akrivie, who took it for a literal account of something that had just happened, was asking herself how she was ever going to get back to her island.

It was at this auspicious moment that Norton and his companions appeared aboveground and were received like heroes. So expansive was the joy of the young girl that poor Henry, who had little suspicion of its real cause, felt a vague hope taking shape in his bosom. Already inclined to exaggerate his progress in the esteem of his sleeping beauty, he began to lose a little of the mental balance he had preserved hitherto. It was from this moment, in fact, that finding favor in Akrivie's eyes presented itself as a possibility.

The immediate effect of his self-deception was a rush of high spirits and a charmingly communicative mood. Happiness and good luck are entirely separate things. It is possible, indeed, to be so taken off guard by the first as to neglect some of the precautions necessary to the wayfarer through this thorny world. But Henry was from now on in that state of mind where everything is viewed under so fallaciously brilliant a light that, for a long time afterwards the slightest details, the slightest incidents which surrounded the happy moment, are recalled as the most delightful experiences life has furnished.

The visit to the grotto had consumed a good deal of time. On the way back to the beach it was necessary to bid a hasty farewell to Count Mella. Norton had permitted the wardroom to make the

strangers its guests for the evening, and a dinner, prepared with every elaboration of which the officers' mess was capable, only awaited their return.

Life in the navy, when it is passed at sea, always ends by subjecting marine officers to a twofold influence. During the first years of their service, love of the career militates successfully against the boredom of long days spent on duty. Nevertheless, there are occasions when its monotony weighs on the spirit and when any distraction which makes a break is ardently welcomed and ecstatically enjoyed. A time comes when enthusiasm has abated and the officer continues to serve only because necessity compels him; in other words he is disillusioned but resigned. In this deplorable state of mind, which is merely the despondency that comes from bondage without hope, his sole consolation is precisely this morose monotony which, at the beginning, was felt a burden. This is the real reason why old naval officers come to have a horror for anything which breaks the routine of their day-to-day existence and why they hate the presence of strangers, more especially of women, aboard. Such things disturb a peace that has become near neighbor to stupefaction, and force them, only too fatally, to think.

By happy accident, there were none save junior officers on the *Aurora*, and the repellent thoughts which I have just described were completely absent. Charley Scott was not the only one to meditate in secret on the perfections of Akrivie, or to heave sighs on her account. Rumor persisted that the old doctor himself had a restless night after this memorable day, that he discovered a new plant on the beach at Milo, and that a celestial voice, heard by none other, bade him call the attention of the botanical world to his discovery under the title of *Akrivia Incomparabilis*. In a word, one corvette of Her Majesty's fleet rested on the bosom of the ocean, fragrant, like some spice-ship of the old world, with sentiments of the discreetest and most delightful order.

Whether through a reaction to so general a sympathy, or because she found herself more at her ease, Akrivie began at every instant to display new graces and merits to the infatuated eyes of her victim. He perceived that in everything she said there lurked a nuance of delicacy and enthusiasm. She knew little; indeed, one might go further, and say she knew nothing; but her understanding was just and sensible. Her conversation was full of little peculiarities that pleased singularly even when they raised a smile. She had no curiosity about trifles, but seemed naturally attracted by serious things, and quite content if allowed to contemplate what she could not understand. More and more Norton found himself comparing her to the great-hearted daughters of Priam, to whom the duty of leading the chariot horses to the drinking trough, or of mixing wine and water in amphorae, was no humiliation.

This disposition of the daughter of Naxos to become enthusiastic over things that were either great or seemed great to her, found a wonderful opportunity for its display next evening. Night had fallen, and the only light was that which came from the stars, reflected in a smooth sea of a universal dark blue tint, when a spot of light, red as blood, appeared on the horizon.

Norton pointed it out.

"That must be the volcano of Santorin," said he.

He glanced at the girl over his outstretched arm, anxious to see what impression would appear on her flowerlike face.

He was not disappointed. The effect produced was instantaneous and almost sublime. A profound and undisguised wonder was its prevalent quality. Akrivie seemed literally to grow in stature before the marvel offered her eyes. There was nothing obvious in her admiration. There was neither banal curiosity nor any pretense of conventional emotion. No expression of rapture issued from her lips. Everything in her reaction was sincere, frank, worthy of the exciting cause.

Nothing more completely beautiful, indeed, is to be imagined than the spectacle which presently revealed itself, in all its savage grandeur, before the eyes of the party on the *Aurora*. It was by now too dark to distinguish the contour of Santorin and its neighboring islets. Their outlines could only be vaguely guessed at as so many masses of a deeper eclipse resting upon the dark sea. Against this

somber background, like some immense set piece of firework, and surrounded with a luminous nimbus, stood out the immense cone of a whole mountain on fire. Down its savage sides streams of glowing lava poured a veritable mantle of imperial purple, that seemed to sink and swell restlessly into new coils and folds, and to separate, as the base of the mountain was reached, into a deep fringe, orange, saffron and vermilion. A few of these burning fillets outstripped the others. Reaching the base of the mountain, they plunged into the sea, where they were extinguished in millions of fiery particles. At the summit of the volcano one detonation succeeded another, hurling into the air masses of phosphorescent matter in whose glare the thick coils of smoke became suddenly visible, to fall back into darkness as suddenly, until a new explosion lit them up in another place. A prolonged roar, like the basso in some terrible symphony, was punctuated by strident explosions, as one jet after another of molten lava spurted from the monster's heart. Some seemed to come from the base of the mountain, others from its heaving flanks; others shrieked and hissed at the very apex. The entire spectacle was as terrible as the power of Jupiter himself, yet so imposing, so serious, on so vast a scale that it commanded veneration rather than fear.

Akrivie passed half the night upon the bridge of the corvette, apparently unable to rid herself of the emotions that had her in their grip. She asked no questions as to the cause of the upheaval, nor on its probable effects. Norton did his best to explain it and to teach her a few simple scientific facts. But his explanations fell on deaf ears. Akrivie had little but contempt for an exposition of causes so miserably disproportioned to the effect, and altogether too pedestrian to correspond to the emotions with which her soul was full, as she watched it. The young commander guessed, and the surmise somehow gave him pleasure, that she would have listened to him with more docility if he had told her of guilty giants kept prisoner under the waves to expiate their crimes, and howling out their despair, or of gods bent on astounding the universe with their power. Probably, as a devout Christian, she would have preferred to have had the whole thing expounded as proof of the power of Saint George or Saint Demetrius. In any case, the discrepancy between what she felt and what she was being told was so inherent that the beauty of Naxos forgot one theory before the next was advanced, and was quite as evidently composing in her own mind a notion, rather vague and confused, but quite poetic and fitting, of what a volcano really was. Norton, as he watched her, was enchanted to find her so much of a piece. Logical characters love their likes. The absurd causes them far less distress than the inconsistent.

There was little sleep that night, and dawn was breaking as the corvette dropped anchor before Santorin. On her bows lay the beach, dominated by the town of Thera. Santorin is really nothing more than a segment of the shattered crest of an ancient crater, a jagged rocky semicircle, which is broken open on one side, and falls away steeply, east and west, in a sort of inclined plain, towards the far side of the ocean, where, in prehistoric times, the summit of the parent mountain arose. The center of this ancient crater has been entirely invaded by the sea, and is so deep that, at the very edge of the beach, soundings of sixty, seventy, and eighty fathoms can be taken. A few hundred yards away, at the only spot where an anchor can find bottom, a cluster of jagged rocks still rises above sea level. A little farther out at sea, volcanic eruptions, some of them anterior to our epoch, others subsequent, have formed a number of islets, and it was in the midst of these that the volcano, believed extinct for some centuries, had erupted afresh, upheaving the surface and once more altering the configuration of this unstable soil. Such is the general aspect of the harbor of Santorin. In stormy weather it is impossible to approach the island, save at the imminent risk of being dashed against its treacherous beach.

Today, happily, none of these conditions existed, and the captain's gig of the *Aurora* had no difficulty in reaching the narrow ledge that serves as jetty. Horses were hired for the ascent, and our adventurers followed a path that clung to the side of the mountain in multiple turns and twists. After a ride of more than half an hour the summit was attained.

Both M. de Moncade and his friend had relatives in the island. Santorin, like Naxos, once formed part of the Duchy of the Cyclades, and a certain number of families of Frankish origin still inhabit it. Destiny, indeed, has been far kinder to it than to the sister island, where the headquarters of the old

dukes were once maintained. At Santorin are famous vineyards, prosperous trading houses, frequent communication with Smyrna, occasionally even with Athens. The old commercial relations with Constantinople have been maintained, and a brisk trade with far Odessa, where the bulk of the local wine is sold, keeps its inhabitants in touch with the outer world. It would be as well, however, not to expect too much outward evidence of this correspondence with other lands.

Its residences are like those of Naxos, built in the same fashion and to serve the same manner of living. You find the same big vaulted halls with one or two smaller rooms, the same precautions against some sudden invasion from the sea, and the identical neighborliness, which makes the street a sort of common backyard to the houses. The strangers were received with the frank and pleasant hospitality general in all the Greek islands. The celebrated wine of the country had to be sampled and admired, there were lamentations on the damage that the exhalations from the new volcano were causing to the vines, and the dangers with which it was menacing the health of the inhabitants. Eye trouble, due to a fine and impalpable dust of pumice stone mingled with sulphur, with which the air was laden, had become endemic. There was also much talk about the annoyance caused by storms, which are undisputed masters of this tiny island, abandoned to their full fury. These topics were soon exhausted, and, after various cousins to the remotest degrees, connections and friends, had been embraced, the visitors made haste to descend, to take boat anew and to proceed towards the turbulent spot which was the real goal of their excursion.

Everything in this new expedition was original, singular, and attractive. The sea was of a yellow hue approaching gold and sheets of broken pumice stone floated on its surface. During the early days of the eruption, the travelers were told, it had been littered with an even thicker mass of dead fish. The remains of a number of little houses, which had once served as bathing stations, were either submerged by the sea or disappearing little by little under a mound of volcanic debris. A pier, finished on the eve of the eruption, now plunged sheer into the sea. Every- where blackened stones, over which hovered sulphuric fumes, were heaving restlessly. At times their motion seemed to be governed by a regular and vertical rhythm; at other times, breaking away from the mass, they rolled into the waves, constantly increasing the extent of the island, which bade fair, unless it were destined to disappear through some fresh geologic freak, to become very much larger with time. The whole beach was as black as soot, covered with smoke, and too hot for a hand to be laid upon it. The ocean was of such a temperature that anyone falling into it would have been scalded to death.

To land upon the volcano was out of the question. Not only was its base a mass of burning cinders, but streams of lava, flowing from unexpected directions, would have rendered the enterprise madness. Nevertheless, a means existed for viewing the angry monster at closer range. This was by climbing to the summit of an old volcano directly opposite. Akrivie was so assured of her courage that her habitual composure hardly changed as she begged her father and godfather to permit her to be one of the adventurers. The party, therefore, was complete when it started. At the most difficult points in the ascent Akrivie consented to lean upon one or other of her two guides. Sometimes she relied upon Norton, forever at her side. But sometimes she dispensed with his assistance, accepting just as naturally that of Charley Scott, who, needless to say, felt the sweetness of the contact to the very fibers of his being.

The climb could not be called difficult. But it was very tiring. For two-thirds of the route the travelers were walking over cinders into which the foot sank at each step. Here and there along the path were stunted bushes that afforded a little hold at the steepest points, and the precaution was by no means needless, in view of the sheer fall to the sea that a slip might entail-a sea, it must not be forgotten, now almost at boiling point.

Once the ashen zone had been passed, there a few large flat rocks over which to climb, a few sharply pointed ones to avoid, and the party stood upon a vast tableland, barren, upheaved, fissured, full of holes and crevices, from which volcanic gases had once spouted. Everything here was scorched and roasted, marked with fire-stains of red and yellow in a thousand fantastic designs; the

rocks, piled one on another, lent the spot a quite indescribable appearance of violence and discord. In places splotches of native sulphur, large and small, covered the ground. At the base of some calcined bulwark, as though to hint at what might yet befall, a thick lazy column of smoke ascended and seemed to disperse its soot in the flawless blue of the sky.

Our travelers had something to do besides speculate on past and future. In their very faces, and seemingly only a few yards away, a drama of the present, poignant and turbulent, was being played out. By crawling to the southern edge of the plateau they might look down into an abyss that seemed some inner circle of hell-somber, sinister, and chaotic, tortured from time to time by fleeting shadows which the pall of smoke poised on the top of the angry giant opposite was casting over the desolation heaped up by him aeons ago.

At every instant the opposite flank of the volcano seemed to burst and spew out fresh torrents of fire. The noise was so frightful that, to be heard, it was necessary for our lovers of the sublime to shout close to one another's ears; sometimes, when the monster's voice rose to full compass, it was necessary to wait a few moments to be heard at all. At brief intervals a shower of pumice, mingled with fragments of half-calcined rock and stones dragged up from the bowels of the earth, was flung into the air, and it was necessary to be on guard against its too generous distribution.

Hour succeeded hour in this spellbound contemplation. Like some dreamer by the seashore, watching wave follow wave, Akrivie, Norton, and their companions seemed to lose all count or sense of time as one powerful explosion after another threw up its column of smoke and flame and scattered its rain of projectiles at haphazard. When one crisis of the drama seemed to be over, they waited for another. It may be mentioned, however, that certain of the ship's officers, more prosaic than our amateurs of the picturesque, had persuaded M. de Moncade to descend with them some time before, and that this little group of materialists was found later seated in the shade of a tree at some distance from the boat, eating plum cake and alleviating a natural thirst with ginger beer.

Finally, the hour arrived for return. Norton, as he rose to his feet, told himself bitterly that only a few hours now must elapse before Naxos again hove into sight, that Akrivie would return to her castle amid the oleanders, that the *Aurora* would sail away, and that he would go on living the old life, bearing within him a memory to render its daily routine more intolerable than ever. Akrivie's growing confidence, joined to the impressions of the young girl that he had received upon Antiparos, had succeeded in convincing him that he was, if not loved, at least singled out for an especial sentiment. Norton was far from a coxcomb and never yet had yielded to suggestions that flattered his self-esteem. But, being the man he was, he loved with a certain natural measure of confidence, and after comparing what he believed must be the state of mind of the girl and the idea which he had formed of her character, with which he was quite as much in love as with her person, he decided, after mature reflection, to take a step whose supremely romantic character was, if anything, enhanced by the deliberation he brought to it. Englishmen alone are capable of these decisions, and if we are to understand Norton at all, it is necessary to understand, once and for all, that what he was doing, was merely putting into practice the tastes and ideas of many of his compatriots.

In the remotest countries of the globe, and preferably in those farthest from any form of civilization, it is a common experience to find one of these islanders, who has settled down serenely in the completest solitude. That local conditions have permitted him to discover. Rarely is such a person of the plebeian class. Generally he is a refugee from the great world, well born and well connected, who has once been, or may even still be, a man of wealth. In nearly every case he is a cultured being, with habits of elegance that find their expression in a strong *penchant* for simplicity. This simplicity may approach the savage; in any case, it is never vulgar. In going over the recollections of my travels, I can recall a list of these runaways from civilization. One I encountered at the extreme end of Nova Scotia, another in the forests near Sydney, a third in the mountains of Mingrelia, not far from Koutais, a fourth in that absolutely primitive region situated northeast of Greece, towards the Turkish frontier. I could cite many another from countries less

extraordinary but quite as lonely and, morally, quite as far distant from British society. I can only conclude by repeating that a taste for self-exile and renunciation is so strongly marked in this people of powerful personalities that it infects their very women. Lady Esther Stanhope and Zanthé are not the only wanderers who have preferred such places as the Arabian desert or Damascus to the life of drawing-rooms.

Norton, then, was in the full plenitude of his racial ideals when, perceiving Akrivie seated in a great armchair upon the deck, and for a moment alone, he went quietly up to her and said:

"Mademoiselle, I love you. I would like to know, if I may hope that you partake my sentiment."

Akrivie bestowed upon him a glance of the most charming innocence and candor.

"Certainly, monsieur. I like you very much." Norton was far from contented at the extreme facility of this counter-declaration, made instantly and without the slightest hesitation. It was not what the young commander wanted, and he resumed with an air of the deepest conviction:

"I am infinitely grateful, mademoiselle; but I am still anxious to know if you like me well enough let me ask for your hand."

Akrivie, smiling and with a charming gesture tendered him her hand. . . .

"I mean to let me ask you to be my wife."

"No!" answered Akrivie, this time also without hesitation. She blushed deeply, the tears came in her eyes, and, rising abruptly, she went below to her cabin. Norton remained rooted to the spot, watching his house of cards lying in ruins about him.

The blow was a sharp one-one, too, that the young naval officer by no means expected. But it is for such moments of crisis that strong character reserve their supreme and saving decisions. The *Aurora's* commander looked the situation straight in the face, and his argument ran something after this fashion:

"If she really did love me she would not be the girl I picture her, a daughter of antiquity and the simple life, an absolute stranger to the forms of sentiment. Of course Akrivie does not love me, She can love no one except her parents, her husband, and her children; outside of them, the world simply does not exist for her. I have been led astray by my cursed modern education. Let me get back to facts. What I have just heard, far from discouraging me, ought to make me more determined than ever. It proves to what a degree the jewel I have discovered is pure and flawless. Am I looking for the emotions of one more love affair à l'*Européenne*? No! What I am on the track of is a life whose elements are something absolutely apart. There is but one condition on which I can ever forgive myself this last blunder, and that is immediately to retrace my steps."

Looking around him, he perceived M. Phrangopoulo and M. de Moncade on deck near one of the big guns. They were asking questions on range finding at sea. He went straight towards them and besought a moment's speech. His face was so grave that the two friends instantly composed their own features to match it.

"Gentlemen," said the executive of the *Aurora*, "it is my intention to leave the navy as soon as possible. I like Naxos and I mean to settle upon it. Probably I shall take up farming; in any case, it will be my definite place of residence. It is good for no man to be alone, and I intend to marry. A woman from abroad would find it difficult to accommodate herself to a strange land. I prefer to give my name to a daughter of the country. If you see nothing against it, I would be extremely obliged for the hand of your daughter and goddaughter."

This little speech was made in the most formal manner. M. de Moncade opened his eyes very wide. M. Phrangopoulo drew himself up with an air of native dignity and, perhaps for the first time in his life, did not allow his friend to speak before him.

"Monsieur," he replied, "I am extremely flattered by your choice and, in the name of my family, I thank you. But I would like to be permitted a few observations. My daughter has no fortune. At

the same time, our birth imposes upon us certain duties and, in the matter of alliances, many necessary precautions. Of your merit I make no doubt whatsoever. Of your perfect honor, as you may easily believe, I entertain not the shadow of a suspicion. But I have no knowledge of your family and should be deeply grieved if, out of any circumstances that are a matter of the past, an obstacle should arise which all my good will to yourself could not overcome. In one word, monsieur, we are noble. My daughter can marry only a man of her own rank."

Norton's reply to this declaration was instant and decisive. He was, in fact, extremely well satisfied with the turn his negotiations had taken. His suit, for all the enthusiastic love which prompted it, was being treated with the formality, the inflexibility, and the absence of outward manifestations of sentiment which are at once the first principle and the ultimate triumph of propriety.

"Monsieur," he responded, with the frigid air which the circumstances called for, "I am quite prepared to offer you, upon the subject of myself and of my family all the information which it is your right to demand. If you will be good enough to cast your eyes upon certain documents which I shall present to you, and to deliberate between yourselves, I shall be most happy to have your answer not later than this evening. Naxos is already in sight and the moment of our arrival there seems to be a very fitting one in which to know your decision."

With these words the commander briefly outlined his social position. He justified it with a short extract from the Peerage and Baronetage of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Finally he brought up a Navy list, containing his name, that of the vessel he commanded, and his record of service. It had not escaped him that no word had been uttered as to his financial position. He was willing to clear up this point, but perceived that no importance was attached to it. The two arbiters of his destiny retired to deliberate, leaving him walking to and fro, his hands behind his back.

The ordeal was not a long one. In half an hour M. de Moncade came on deck to tell him that Akrivie's hand was his and that M. Phrangopoulo had gone to his daughter's cabin to communicate to her the decision taken in her regard. Only a few moments more elapsed before M. de Moncade, who had gone below to see how matters were progressing, mounted the companion again and bade Norton come and enjoy the bliss that was now his right. The young sea captain received the momentous news with a phlegm befitting his profession and nation.

When he took Akrivie's hand he perceived that her eyes were full of tears.

"Don't you love me?" he asked her gently. The young girl shook her head from side to side.

"It is not that," she answered. "But I would have liked you to be a Greek."

The story of Norton and his Akrivie is nearly at an end. The wedding was fixed for a few months ahead. Norton needed this time to resign his command, to retire from the navy, and to return to Naxos. The business was dispatched even quicker than he had dared to hope.

Eight days after the bridal ceremony he happened to overhear an animated discussion that was going on between his young wife and Madame Triantaphyllon. The former was insisting that the English were just as good sailors as the Greeks. Unable or unwilling to furnish any reasons for her opinion, she kept repeating, with infinite pride and persistence:

"I am English, I am." "Dear daughter of Priam!«» said Norton to himself tenderly. "She is beginning to understand that she has a husband."

Akrivie picked up her new language very quickly. She was told a host of new facts; she even read a little, but attached not the slightest importance to anything she found in books. Her husband took her for a trip to England. She was received very hospitably and with all the deference due to so original a beauty. In a Yorkshire country house where she was a guest an adventure befell her very fitting to make her realize her own merits. A delightful young man made her his confidante upon an

intimate and personal matter. He was spending his nights, it appeared, deploring the lot of so superior a woman, united, by blind and barbarous destiny, to a man incapable of appreciating her! As a matter of fact, it is by no means too sure that Akrivie ever did, succeed in understanding her husband. What is quite certain is that she understood the delightful young man less. England, if the truth must be told, bored her prodigiously; she showed her homesickness so plainly that Henry, who was not having too good a time himself, took her straight back to Naxos.

Today she has two charming children who play hide and go seek among the orange trees. She never lets them out of her sight, and maintains, as a tenet quite as established as anything in her Bible, the absolute superiority of her husband over all the rest of Christendom put together.