AMBROSE MALET.

More than thirty years ago I was making a fortnight's tour in Belgium. I had lately been ordained to a curacy, and was taking my first holiday. I was a fresh-looking young fellow in those days, holding serious views of life, and though young for my years, had the fullest sense of the dignity, no less than the responsibilities, of the sacred profession I had lately entered.

To do right myself, and to see everybody else right, seemed to me the most important thing in life, and the first part of the proposition, at any rate, is not a bad formula for a man to start with on his life's career.

I had set out on my travels alone, and plunging at once into some of the more picturesque Belgian scenery, found myself on the evening of the third day, supping in the big hotel of a little village lying among the hills and woods. I was supping alone at the end of a long table of an empty salle a manger when a young man entered, and calling for coffee and cognac, sat down in the circle of light just opposite to me. He was a man of about 30, with a pleasant and remarkably clever face; and, presently falling into conversation with him, I discovered he was the village doctor. He was a native of the place, able to give me information, of which I was in need, concerning the surrounding country; and we were engaged in talking, with my traveling map spread on the table between us, when a waiter entered and addressed a few words to my companion in a low voice.

"Excuse me for a moment," he said, turning to me courteously, "there is a sick man upstairs who requires my attendance. I shall not be gone many minutes."

In less than a quarter of an hour he returned, and sat down opposite to me again; but he did not at once resume our conversation. He sat with his hands clasped behind his head, gazing before him in silence.

"A sad case," he said at last, letting his hands fall to his side; "a life thrown away. A young fellow wounded mortally in a duel, and brought in here yesterday to die. All the doctors in Europe could not save him. He won't live through the night."

"In a duel?" I said, surprised. Such things, so far, had lain outside the range of my experience.

"Yes, with some Frenchman. They had come here across the frontier. Such affairs are not uncommon hereabout, but they rarely terminate fatally. The other fellow has made off. This one, by the bye, is a countryman of yours. Stay, I have his name somewhere."

He fumbled in his pocket for a notebook, and abstracting a card, handed it to me across the table. I read the name, I let the card drop.

"Good God!" I said. "Ambrose Malet."

"Do you know him?" said the doctor.

"I know the name—it may be another man," I answered, in profound agitation. "Is he young—a big, loose-limbed man, with marked features, a large nose, dull brown hair lying straight across his forehead, and the kindest, the most genial smile imaginable?"

"Your description answers in every particular," said the doctor, "except, indeed, as regards the smile, which I have not seen. He looks sad enough, poor fellow. He is young, about your own age, I should think." He looked at me with a momentary humorous gleam that seemed to say: "In all other respects as unlike you as possible. He has gray eyes and wears no beard, on his little finger is a green signet ring. If you are a friend of his I shall be glad. I asked him to-day if I should send to any one, and he replied that he had no relations and not a friend in the world that would come to him."

The tears rushed to my eyes; I could not help it. I rose, and, walking to one of the long windows, stood with my back turned to the room, looking out on the moonlit garden.

Three years before, at Oxford, Ambrose Malet had been my best friend. A lonely man, a solitary soul, he had sought me out through one of those contradictions that sometimes provoke and cement the firmest friendships. He was little known personally at Oxford, yet made his mark at once as a man of powers so unusual that everything might be expected of him. The expectation was founded on a misconception of his character; and yet perhaps not. Who shall say? since death came at six and twenty to solve the problem after its own fashion. A prodigious and unfailing memory, an almost incredible facility for acquiring and assimilating knowledge, were combined with one of the strongest and most original minds I have ever come across. He took, without appreciable effort, every honor that Oxford has to offer, and he took them with absolute indifference. Knowledge, and always more of the knowledge that he acquired with such ease, seemed all that he desired. He read for hours, not as the bookworm reads, or the ordinary student, but with a prodigious, devouring curiosity, an insatiable craving, until in one direction or another he reached the final limit and faced the blank beyond. At such times, as I learned to know, he fell into a despondency that lasted sometimes for days; then rousing himself he would start again on some other track, to arrive at the same result. His mind, I say, was one of the strongest I have met with, but it had no impulse that I ever discovered toward original creation, little even toward original research.

He would take up some branch of science and devour every book on it he could find, but that done, he made no independent effort toward fresh discovery—he turned to something else. Some spring that moves to practical action, some link common between man and life, was lacking in him; his soul dwelt solitary and apart, thirsting, drinking, insatiable; only demanding incessantly what no man ever yet had—no, nor can have over until the end of time.

He had few acquaintances at Oxford, and no intimate friend but myself. Sometimes he would come to my rooms and silently watching me as I plodded on at my reading. My vocation had early been fixed, and I never wavered in my choice, I had never any idea but that of entering the church. Malet would sit smoking and watching me in silence. Not unfrequently we took long walks together.

Sometimes our walk would begin and end in almost total silence. At other times his flow of conversation was almost unceasing, and I have not yet met the man who can talk as Malet did when the mood was upon him. I would not, if I could, try to reproduce those talks. What withered and scentless weeds are those that would fain represent the radiant bowers of last year's garden! He was sometimes gay, more often serious. He was no orthodox believer; his unorthodoxy shocked me at first; he saw it, and while never hiding his opinions, was careful to avoid shocking me again. But all his views of the conduct of life were simple, pure, and noble. I have never met purer or nobler, and I can trace their effect on my own mind to this day. But he had planned no future career; the hopes and ambitions of other men seemed to have no meaning for him. Something, I say, was wanting in him, some link, that reconciles common humanity to life, that binds society together, that helps the eternal duty of man to man. A tender heart, an endless craving, a solitary soul—such was Ambrose Malet.

I [illegible] a few raised one winter [illegible] in starlit sky. [illegible] one day we shall know," he said; "yes we shall know—we shall know."

"You believe in the mortality of the soul, Ambrose?" I said. "How do you reconcile that with your other opinions?"

"On no logical grounds," he answered briefly, and changed the subject.

I have said he had a tender heart; that is to say little. He had a capacity for profound and passionate love. In the course of our rambles we made the acquaintance—an ordinary young man's adventure—of a farmer's daughter, a young girl who, not without intention, as I had afterward reason to believe, strongly attracted us both. I was in love, if not for the first time in my life, as much as I had ever been before. But Lucy Smiles was not a girl I could have made my wife, and I must do myself the justice to say that, recognizing the fact early in our acquaintance, I broke off, with some resolution, even the semblance of a flirtation. With Malet it was different; he felt deeply and passionately in love with the girl. The difference in station and education seemed not to affect him; it was impossible, indeed, that an intellect such as his could ever look for or expect the sympathy that springs from equal minds, and on the one occasion on which he spoke to me on the subject—for a reserve had sprung up between us in the matter—I inferred, though he did not state it in so many words, that he hoped to make Lucy his wife immediately on leaving Oxford. Shortly afterward, the girl disappeared from her father's home. Certain circumstances threw suspicion on Malet; nothing was, nothing could be proved against him; but, to tell the story briefly, I thought I had reason to believe the worst, and I believed it. All my incipient love for the girl herself blazed up in a flame of passion and jealousy, and what I held to be righteous indignation at the story of her disappearance and of her parents' despair. Malet said very little; he gave me his word that he had had nothing to do with the matter; he saw that I did not believe him, and he said no more. I, on my side, broke with him. He had been my best friend; on more than one occasion he had served me in a way that should have won my undying gratitude. But what gratitude survives a sense of wrong? And, indeed, I held myself not ungrateful, but just.

What storm of memories, old affection, remorse, swept over me matters little now. Where were doubts and past suspicions? Alas, that, living or dying, clearness of vision should come to enlighten us at the supreme moment only. I turned from the window to the doctor.

"Can I see him?" I said; "he was the best friend I had in the world."

"Certainly you can see him," he answered. "I rejoice indeed that you or any one belonging to him should be here. I will take you to him at once. He has a little fever, but is otherwise quite quiet; no acute suffering, happily. Nothing can harm him now."

He led the way as he spoke, up flight after flight of the shallow hotel stairs, and down a long passage to a remote and silent part of the house. At the end of the passage a door stood ajar. The doctor paused before we reached it. "You will no doubt wish to remain with your friend?" he said.

"Undoubtedly," I answered.

He gave me one or two brief directions, then, signing to me to wait for a moment, opened the door and went in.

He was alone. He lay with closed eyes, his hands spread out on the counterpane, his head supported by pillows. The night was warm, and though the little casement stood wide open, he seemed oppressed by the heat, and to breathe with difficulty. He was not changed; in early youth even his features had been too marked to alter readily; only the lines with which I had been familiar had deepened, and the pallor of mortal sickness overspread his countenance.

He opened his eyes as the doctor's step approached his bedside.

"What time is it?" he said feebly.

"About half-past 9," said the doctor. He laid his hand on his patient's wrist as he spoke, and stood for a moment noting the pulse. "There is a friend of yours here," he said then, "who wants to see you. I have brought him up."

His forehead and mouth contracted painfully for a moment. "A friend of mine?" he said. "But I have no friends."

I came forward. His glance fell upon me and was suddenly illuminated. "Frank!" he cried.

He held out both hands; I grasped them in mine. For a long time we remained motionless. I could not speak; in what words could I address him after my long silence? And I saw that he was dying.

His hold relaxed at last. The doctor had silently disappeared and we were alone. It was he who spoke first. "You never believed me about Lucy, Frank," he said, looking at me.

"Don't speak of it," I cried. "I know that I was wrong, utterly wrong. I want to tell you that. Never mind the rest."

"On the contrary I mind it very much," he said, in a feeble voice. "I suspected at the time who was at the bottom of Lucy's disappearance, but I could never bring it home to him. I could never come upon a trace of her until a few weeks ago, when I saw her by chance in Paris." His voice sank and he failed a little with weakness, but in a moment he rallied and went on. "She was living there with some Frenchman—never mind his name. I hunted her up and tried to persuade her to go home to her parents. He resented my interference; we fought—and here I am."

"It was that!" I cried, confounded; "it was on account of Lucy?"

"Poor child, poor girl!" he murmured, closing his eyes.

I stood speechless for a while. For the first time I realized Malet's part in the duel of which the doctor had spoken. In face of his mortal malady, I had forgotten for the moment that malady's cause.

"Well," he said at last, as I did not speak. "Good heavens, Ambrose!" I said, "you are the last man, yes, the last man, in the world I should have thought would fight a duel."

He smiled a little. "Why not?" he said. "I had no intention of killing the poor wretch who challenged me; he was safe enough from me."

"But the sin of it—" I began.

"Oh, the sin of it—the sin of it," he said. "Sit down, Frank," he went on, raising his head and looking at me with a smile by the dim light of the candle. "So you're a parson now, a priest I suppose you would call yourself, and you are going to save men's souls. Well, you'll do a world of good, old fellow, one way or another. I know so much of you."

His head fell back on the pillow. "Move the light, will you?" he said. "There is nothing to do, and it hurts my eyes. We don't need a candle to talk by."

I rose and set the candle on a deal table in the passage outside. The door stood ajar; only a thread of light fell through the opening. But though the moon was on the other side of the house its suffused whiteness filled the room, and through the open casement its light could be seen falling on a tree-covered hill that, rising just behind the hotel garden, defined its summit against the pale summer heavens. I took my place again beside Malet's bed. I could see his face plainly in the twilight as he lay with it turned toward the window, his eyes fixed on the sky. For a long time he was silent. He spoke again, quite suddenly.

"You never believed me about Lucy," he said.

"For God's sake, Ambrose, don't speak of that again!" I cried in anguish. "Forgive me, forgive me! the loss of all these years has been mine."

"No, no," he said; "it is no matter. All is over now, and it is all one. Life, too, will be over in a few hours, and that is well. Strange," he went on after a pause, "that men should dread death as they do. I have thought so always; now that I am dying, I think so more than ever. To dread the unknown—when to know the unknowable is the great and unattainable desire of life!"

"Most men think otherwise," I said; "the love of life is strong."

"Yes, yes, I know it," he said, "and it is better so; it should be so. But something has gone wrong between me and life. I have felt a stranger in it always. Death is best."

He lay quiet again for a long while. His breathing was difficult and oppressed. Now and then the wind stirred the trees on the hill outside; the shadows slowly moved with the advancing night; otherwise all was still. But presently he began to turn restlessly in the bed; the hands, hot with fever, strayed over the counterpane. When he spoke again his mind was wandering a little.

"I suppose you go back to Oxford at once, old fellow," he said. "I should like to get back there if it were only for a day. My mother is dead, you know; poor mother. The meadows down by the river; it would be cooler there than here; we might have another walk together. Lucy—"

The words died away in a murmur; but all at once, half raising himself in bed: "No one has believed in me, no one has cared for me," he said, in a strange, loud, solemn voice, such as I have never heard him use before; "and knowledge is ignorance, and one drinks and drinks and the eternal thirst is never quenched, never—"

He looked round wildly till, his eyes falling on me in the imperfect light, gradually full consciousness returned. He lay back quietly.

"Give me some water, will you Frank?" he said, in an exhausted voice.

I did as he desired.

"I must have been asleep, I think," he said, as his head sank again on the pillow. "I should have liked to tell you all about my wanderings, Frank. I have wandered a good deal since we last met; but I suppose there won't be time. What o'clock is it?"

He felt under the pillow for his watch. I went to the door and, looking at my own watch by the candle outside, told him the hour.

"It is later than I thought," he said, and again lay silent, his face turned to the window. I sat down beside him and took his hand in mine. He let it lie there. "Strange," he said again; "one lives alone, and one dies alone; and yet human fellowship is sweet. I like to feel your hand in mine, Frank."

He was growing weaker. I could see it by the way his head lay on the pillow, and by the increasing difficulty with which he swallowed the cordial I gave him from time to time. I asked him presently whether he had any wishes I could fulfill.

"No," he said at first; then, "bury me here, of course," he said; one spot of earth is like another, and there is no one at home to mourn for me."

"Don't say that," I said; "I—" I broke down, and, laying my head on the counterpane, cried like a girl. It distressed him.

"Don't," he said twice, and in a minute I had conquered the weakness. "I have longed for death," he said, "and now it has come. Yes, I am glad to die. Something was wrong between me and life; I could have made nothing of it. Death is best, and what comes after."

"You do believe, Ambrose?" I cried. The words were involuntary; for, though the thought had been in my mind since I entered the room, I had not meant to utter it. He looked at me with eyes whose kindness and affection I can never forget.

"Good old Frank!" he said. "If you ever see Lucy," he went on, after a pause, "tell her from me to go back to her parents. I have written to them; she will have no difficulty. Tell her so from me."

The room was growing darker; the moon had set. I could not make out the changes in his face any more. But he still kept it turned toward the window. "How bright the stars are to-night," he said once. "Surely we shall know." And once again: "Soon I shall know." Then a long silence.

About midnight the doctor had come in, had laid his hand on his patient's pulse, and gone without a word. I brought the light back into the room in the darkest hour before dawn; but Ambrose took no notice. About dawn he died.

* * * * * * *

An hour later I went through the front door of the hotel, and out into the courtyard to breathe the morning air. The night had been a terrible one to me; I did not, until afterward, know how terrible and poignant. No, only in a later years I came to understand what sales of self-sufficiency had fallen from my eyes, and that, from that day forward, I was a changed man. I went out into the courtyard, looking up at the morning sky, which half the pathos of the light that dawns after one whom we love has died. As I crossed the courtyard on my way to the gates that shut it in from the road one of them was pushed back and a woman came toward me. She wore a veil that concealed her face, but, seeing me, she started, and by a sudden impulse, I suppose, threw it back. Then I saw who she was.

"Lucy!" I said.

The blood rushed to her face, then forsook it. It was a lovely face still, though strangely altered since I had last seen it. She stared at me uncertainly for a moment.

"I didn't expect to meet you, sir," she said at last. "I came to ask after Mr. Malet. Can you tell me how he is."

"He is dead," I answered.

She gave a cry and dropped down on a bench by which we were standing. For a long time she did not say a word, nor after that cry utter a sound. She sat with her hands clasped round her knees, gazing fixedly before her. A look of indescribable dreariness, rather than of grief, gradually overspread her face. As for me, who shall say what emotions I felt? I had once loved the girl—yes, I had loved her; and up in yonder room lay the man whose death she had caused.

At last she spoke.

"I wanted to see Mr. Malet again," she said, in a low voice, without looking up. "I followed them; they did not know it. Can't I see him now?"

She rose as she spoke, but, before I could answer, dropped on to the seat again.

"No, I couldn't," she said. "I never saw any one dead yet. I couldn't go."

"Lucy," I said, "Mr. Malet left a message for you. He bade me entreat you to go back to your parents. He had written to them, he said. You will have no difficulty with them."

Again she sat silent, gazing drearily before her.

"Mr. Malet said the same to me," she said at last. "Of course he couldn't understand. It's not only father and mother, it would be the neighbors, the whole life—no, I can never go home again—never!"

She rose as she spoke, pulling down her veil [illegible] her cloak tightly round her [illegible] chill morning air. I made one more effort, though what it cost me I could not say. It was a moment surely for angel's tongues to plead, and on my tongue the words seemed to weigh like lead.

"Lucy," I said, "surely, Mr. Malet's wish—"

"Don't!" she said very sharply, turning from me.

"At least promise me," I said, laying a detaining hand on her shoulder, "that for his sake, as for your own, your life shall henceforward be different."

She turned suddenly, and seizing my hand without looking at me, wrung it with a convulsive sob. The next moment she had disappeared in the mist.

Whither did she go? Alas, I have never known. But, visiting in after years Ambroise Malet's grave, I found laid on it a fresh wreath of immortelles. A stranger had passed and left it there, I was told.—Temple Bar.

SHE LOST HER FAITH.

IT WAS AN "UNCOMMONLY QUIET AND ORDERLY NIGHT."

The Ways of a Lover Whose Habits Were Not Such as a Maiden Wants in a Man She Is to Tie Up to for Life.—How She Made the Discovery.

I have a young friend who has lost most all of her faith in masculine human nature. She probably still believes in her father and brother, and, of course, her confidence in her favorite clergyman is unimpaired; but as for the rest of the sterner sex she thinks of it as I should dreadfully hate to have any one think of me. But I must hurry to tell you just how it all happened. My friend Miss Flora (never mind her other name) went to Europe about five years ago to complete a musical and generally artistic course in Italy. As a school girl of 16 she formed a fond attachment for a young Knickerbocker. They exchanged rings and, as they both thought, their alleged hearts in the bargain. While she was away she was a great deal more steadfast to her troth, as girls usually are, than he was, I think. At any rate, she got a good many hints from friends at home, just before she returned, that made her doubt whether his habits were just such as she wanted in a man she was to tie up to for life. The consequences was that when she heard that she heard that her Charley was going wrong she did something different from sitting down, as most girls would, and having a good weep. First she wrote to him all she had heard, and he, preferring to lie rather than lose her and her half million, wrote back that he was a saint, and whoever said he wasn't was a liar, so to speak.

A DARING SCHEME.

She didn't believe him, and she wrote to me. "I am coming home," she said, "with the most daring scheme that I ever had, and you and your cousin Bob are in it." I knew it would be something breathless, but I was hardly prepared for what it turned out to be. She wanted to get male toggery for herself and me, and then have Cousin Bob to introduce us as young foreigners to "her Charley," as she always called him. I was like Artemus Ward during the war, perfectly willing to sacrifice all my wife's relations, but I would not go myself. "My figure is not exactly the sort for male attire, my dear," said I; "but you'll do, with your hair clipped, and you can have Cousin Bob." She wanted to put in a night around town with her Charlie, and, as Bob knew him very well, it was as easy as an old stocking. Bob wouldn't hear of it at first. "I kick," he said. "All right said I; "kick if you want to, but you'll either do what I want or you don't go anywhere with me or my friends next summer." Well, he did it, but he said I'd regret it the longest day I lived.

Flora got herself up in the style of a law student—one of those buttoned up things in black, with a mouth and the handle of a cane always in it, and eye-glasses, and the stare of a baby trying to look like an old bachelor. She's a born actress, and she looked true to life. She went with Bob and her Charlie and half a dozen others, mostly gold-plated young snobs, to see a burlesque. Flora pretended to be just from France and unable to speak English, so that no nobody tried to talk to her except Bob.

AN HOUR OF WICKEDNESS.

Her plan worked to a dot. She saw and heard enough to satisfy her. To use her own words: "If I went to a nunnery to-morrow I'd have had more than my share of wickedness just from that night." Every one of the young men, except Bob knew some of the girls on the stage, and they talked about them, she says, just as jockeys might be supposed to talk about horses. One of the young men flirted with a woman in the audience, met her after the play, and went away to supper with her, while the rest strolled to an all night chop house on Sixth avenue. Flora stood it there just one hour. She drank Rhine wine, to which she is accustomed, but the conversation of the young men, the stories they told and the way they behaved with the waitresses who attended them caused her to beg Bob to take her home. He told me that he had been wanting to do that from the first.

"It was nothing extraordinary," said he; "in fact, it was an uncommonly quiet and orderly night the boys were having, but they talked freely, and although I should have thought nothing of it ordinarily, still when I knew that a sweet and innocent girl was a listener and looker-on there I suffered such torture as I never did before in my life. It gave me a new view of life, and ever since then I have been half ashamed of myself in feminine company."

As for Flora, I can't tell you what she said. She came and flung herself on my bed and cried, the next day, till I thought she would weep herself crazy. "Beasts" and "brutes" were the only words she could find to apply to her companions of the night before, and she assured me that in all the French novels, all the criminal reports and all the startling talk she had ever read or heard she had never conceived a tenth of the perfectly awful horribleness of these young men.

TO CAP THE CLIMAX.

Well, that is not all. There is more to Flora's case, and in fact, I come in here myself. Flora wrote to her Charley, telling him that she was the French student who spent that evening with him. He tried to see her, but she said she would rather touch a toad. Then he wrote to her that he was far better than an average young man; in fact, that he was rather a model—sober, honest, industrious, and without being addicted to any vice except smoking. To cap the climax, her own people took his side, and she has had assurances that he is an uncommonly nice young man from—whom do you think? Why, from two clergymen, from cousin Bob, from a great reformer, from a college professor, from a banker and from male relatives a score in number.

Flora is disheartened and disgusted. She has not given up the sex. She means to find some decent, clean, manly, self-respecting, ambitious fellow, who leads one life, as open as a book, and she means to point to him, and tell all who have assured her to the contrary that it is not impossible to be decent and be a man at the same time. But, my gracious! It's been a revelation!—Clara Belle in Cincinnati Enquirer.

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The London Telegraph says: The members of the house of Bonaparte affected immediately or prospectively by the vote of French chambers are:

Prince Napoleon and his wife, Princess Clothilde of Savoy, and their children, Prince Victor, Prince Louis, and Princess Marie.

Princess Mathilde (Princess de San Donato.)

Prince Roland Bonaparte, son of the late Prince Pierre Bonaparte.

Of the house of France (Orlean-Bourbon:)

Prince Philippe (Comte de Paris) and wife, Princess Isabelle de Montpensier, and children, Princess Amelia (crown princess of Portugal,) Prince Philippe (Duke d'Orleans,) Princess Helene, Princess Isabella, Princess Louise, Prince Ferdinanda.

Prince Robert (Due de Chartres) and his wife, Princess Francoise de Joinville, and children, Prince Henri, Princess Marguerite, Prince Jean.

Prince Louis (Duc de Nemours) and his wife, Princess Victorine de Saxe-Cobourg et Gotha, and children.

Prince Fredinand Philippe (Duc d'Alencon,) his wife, Princess Sophia of Bavaria, and children, Princess Louise, Prince Emmanuel, Princess Marguerite (Pricess Czartoryski,) Princess Blanche.

Prince Francois (Prince de Joinville,) his wife, Princess Francoise of Brazil, and children, Princess Francoise (Duchess de Chartres,) Prince Pierre (Duc de Penthieve.)

Prince Henri (Duc d'Aumale.)

The other branches of the Bourbon family are non-resident in France.

It is believed that, in the event of the Orleans prince being compelled to quit France the Comte de Paris will again take up his residence at Twickenham. Several well-known mansions in the neighborhood have already been placed at his disposal.

The Comte de Paris formerly occupied Yore house, where Princess Amelia was born, and which is now in the posession of Rt. Hon. M. E. Grant-Duff, governor of Madras. Orleans house, the former residence of the Duc d'Aumale, is at present occupied by Mr. William Cunard.

H. H. Bromwell & Co., Chicago's.

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The Streator *Free Press* says: "The democrats are waking up to the fact that they haven't got a walk-a-way in La Salle county this year." It takes a good deal of faith, nevertheless, for a republican to accept a nomination in that county with hope of drawing anything but a blank.—*Chicago Daily News.*

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