to the stream to wash, after which the morning meal was served. At breakfast one of the women, no longer quite young, advanced and publicly kissed Job. He sprung to his feet and pushed the woman, a buxom party of about 30, from him.

"Well, I never!" he gasped; whereupon she embraced him again.

"Be off with you! Get away, you minx!" he shouted, waving the wooden spoon with which he was eating his breakfast up and down before the lady's face. "Beg your pardon, gentlemen. I am sure I haven't encouraged her. Oh Lord! she's coming for me again. Hold her, Mr. Holly; please hold her! I can't stand it; I can't indeed. This has never happened to me before, gentlemen, never. There's nothing against my character;" and here he broke off and ran as hard as he could down the cave, and for once I saw the Amahagger laugh. As for the woman, however, she did not laugh. On the contrary, she seemed to bristle with fury, which the mockery of the other women about only served to intensify. She stood there literally snarling and shaking with indignation; and seeing her, I wished Job's scruples had been at Jericho—forming a shrewd guess that his admirable behavior had endangered our throats. Nor, as the sequel shows, was I wrong.

The lady having retreated, Job returned in a great state of nervousness and keeping his weather eye upon every woman who came near him. I took an opportunity to explain to our hosts that Job was a married man and had had very unhappy experiences in his domestic relations, which accounted for his presence here and his terror at the sight of women; but my remarks were received in grim silence, it being evident that our retainer's behavior was considered as a slight to the "household" at large, although the women, after the manner of their more civilized sisters, made merry at the rebuff of their companion.

At first we were much puzzled as to the origin and constitution of this extraordinary race, points upon which they were singularly uncommunicative. As the time went on—for the next four days passed without any striking event—we learned something from Leo's lady friend, Ustane, who, by the way, stuck to that young gentleman like his own shadow. As to origin they had none, at least so far as she was aware. There were, however, she informed us, mounds of masonry and many pillars near the place where She lived, which was called Kor and which the wise said had once been houses wherein men lived, and it was suggested that they were descended from these men. No one, however, dared go near these great ruins because they were haunted—they only looked on them from a distance. Other similar ruins were to be seen, she had heard, in various parts of the country—that is, whenever one of the mountains rose above the level of the swamp. Also the caves in which they lived had been hollowed out of the rocks by men, perhaps the same who had built the cities. They themselves had no written laws, only custom, which was, however, quite as binding as law. If any man offended against the custom he was put to death by order of the father of the "household." I asked how he was put to death and she only smiled and said that I might see one day soon.

They had a queen, however. She was their queen, but she was very rarely seen, perhaps once in two or three years, when she came forth to pass sentence on some offenders, and when seen was muffled up in a big cloak, so that nobody could look upon her face. Those who waited upon her were deaf and dumb, and therefore could tell no tales, but it was reported that she was lovely as no other woman was lovely, or ever had been. It was rumored also that she was immortal, and had power over all things, but she, Ustane, could say nothing at all of that. What she believed was that the queen chose a husband from time to time, and as soon as a female child was born, this husband, who was never again seen, was put to death. Then the female child grew up, and took the place of the queen when its mother died and had been buried in the great caves. But of these matters none could speak for certain. Only She was obeyed throughout the length and breadth of the land, and to question her command was certain death. She kept a guard, but had no regular army, and to disobey her was to die.

I asked what the land was, and how many people lived in it. She answered that there were ten "households" like this that she knew of, including the big "household," where the queen was; that all the "households" lived in caves, in places like this stretch of raised country, dotted about in a vast extent of swamp, which was only to be threaded by secret paths. Often the "households" made war on each other until She sent word that it was to stop, and then they instantly ceased. That and the fever which they caught in crossing the swamps was what kept their numbers from increasing too much. They had no connection with any other race; indeed, none lived near them, or were able to thread the vast swamps. Once an army from the direction of the great river (presumably the Zambesi) had attempted to attack them, but they got lost in the marshes, and at night, seeing the great balls of fire that move about there, tried to come to them, thinking that it was the enemy's camp, and half of them were drowned. As for the rest, they soon died of fever and starvation, not a blow being struck at them. The marshes, she told us, were absolutely impassable except to those who knew the paths, adding, what I could well believe, that we should never have reached this place where we then were had we not been brought there.

These and many other things we learned from Ustane during the four days' pause before our real adventures began, and, as may be imagined, they gave us considerable cause for thought. The whole thing was exceedingly remarkable, almost incredibly so, indeed, and the oddest part of it was that so far it did more or less correspond to the ancient writing on the sherd. And now it appeared that there was a mysterious queen clothed by rumor with awful and wonderful attributes, and commonly known by the impersonal but to my mind rather awesome title of She. Altogether, I could not make it out, nor could Leo, though of course he was exceedingly triumphant over me because I had persistently mocked at the whole thing. As for Job, he had long since abandoned any attempt to call his reason his own, and left it to drift upon the sea of circumstance. Mahomed, the Arab, who was, by the way, treated civilly, indeed, but with chilling contempt, by the Amahaggar, was, I discovered, in great fright, though I could not quite make out what he was frightened about. He would sit crouched up in a corner of the cave all day long, calling upon Allah and the Prophet to protect him. When I pressed him about it, he said that he was afraid because these people were not men and women at all, but devils, and that this was an enchanted land; and, upon my word, once or twice since then I have been inclined to agree with him. And so the time went on till the night of the fourth day after Billali had left, when something happened.

We three and Ustane were sitting round the fire in the cave just before bed time, when suddenly the woman, who had been brooding in silence, rose and laid her hands upon Leo's golden curls and addressed him. Even now when I shut my eyes I can see her proud, imperial form, clothed alternately in dense shadow and the red flickering of the fire, as she stood, the wild center of as weird a scene as I ever witnessed, and delivered herself of the burden of her thoughts and forebodings in a kind of rhythmical speech that ran something as follows:

Thou art my chosen—I have waited for thee from the beginning!
Thou art very beautiful. Who hath hair like unto thee, or skin so white?
Who hath so strong an arm? Who is so much a man?
Thine eyes are the sky, and the light in them is the stars.
Thou art perfect and of a happy face, and my heart turned itself toward thee.
Ay, when mine eyes fell on thee I did desire thee—
Then did I take thee to me—thou, my beloved,
And hold thee fast, lest harm should come unto thee.
Ay, I did cover thine head with mine hair, lest the sun should strike it;
And altogether was I thine, and thou wast altogether mine.
And so it went for a little space, till Time was in labor with an evil Day;
And then what befell upon that day? Alas! my beloved, I know not!
But I, I saw thee no more—I, I was lost in the blackness.
And she who is stronger did take thee; ay, she who is fairer than Ustane.
Yet didst thou turn and call upon me, and let thine eyes wander in the darkness.
But, nevertheless, she prevailed by beauty, and led thee down horrible places;
And then, ah! then, my beloved——

Here this extraordinary woman broke off her speech or chant, which was so much musical gibberish to us, for all we understood of what she was driving at, and seemed to fix her flashing eyes upon the deep shadow before her. All in a moment they acquired a vacant, terrified stare, as though they were trying to realize some half seen horror. She lifted her hand from Leo's head and pointed into the darkness. We all looked, and could see nothing; but she saw something, or thought she did, and something evidently that affected even her iron nerves, for, without another sound, down she fell senseless between us.

Leo, who was growing really attached to this remarkable young person, was in a great state of alarm and distress, and I, to be perfectly candid, was in a condition not far removed from superstitious fear. The whole scene was an uncanny one.

Presently, however, she recovered, and sat up with an extraordinary convulsive shudder.

"What didst thou mean, Ustane?" asked Leo, who, thanks to years of tuition, spoke Arabic very prettily.

"Nay, my chosen," she answered, with a little forced laugh, "I did but sing unto thee after the fashion of my people. Surely, I meant nothing. How could I speak of that which is not yet?"

"And what didst thou see, Ustane?" I asked, looking her sharply in the face.

"Nay," she answered again; "I saw naught. Ask me not what I saw. Why should I fright ye?" And then turning to Leo with a look of the most utter tenderness that I ever saw upon the face of a woman, civilized or savage, she took his head between her hands and kissed him on the forehead as a mother might. "When I am gone from thee, my chosen; when at night thou stretchest out thine hand and canst not find me, then shouldst thou think at times of me, for of a truth I love thee well, though I be not fit to wash thy feet. And now let us love and take that which is given us and be happy, for in the grave there is no love and no warmth, nor any touching of the lips. Nothing perchance, or perchance but bitter memories of what might have been. To-night the hours are our own; how know we to whom they shall be long to-morrow?"

[To be Continued.]

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AN INTERVIEW WITH DICKENS.

The Advice the Great Author Gave an Ambitious Young Newspaper Reporter.

In a musty little dressing room just off the stage of St. James' hall, in Buffalo, Charles Dickens gave an ambitious young newspaper reporter his first lesson in interviewing. That was more than twenty years ago and during Mr. Dickens' last visit to this country. The great novelist gave two public readings in Buffalo, and on the day after his first reading in that city he went to Niagara Falls with a party of friends. It was to obtain his "impressions" of the falls that the ambitious young reporter sought Mr. Dickens a few minutes before the raising of the curtain on his second night's entertainment. As luck would have it the distinguished author was alone in the dressing room. He was sitting at a rude pine table reading a newspaper by the light of a sputtering candle.

"What is it, young man?" he said, somewhat gruffly, as soon as he became aware of the reporter's presence.

"I am a reporter for The Buffalo Express," said the intruder, with forced calmness.

"Yes, yes! well, what is it?" exclaimed Mr. Dickens, in a tone so freezing that the reporter shivered and instinctively turned toward the door in expectation of an admonition to "Get out!"

"Well, what do you want?" repeated the great Boz.

"Wh-wh-what do you think of Niagara Falls?" stammered the reporter.

"None of your"—began the famous novelist with rising asperity.

"I beg your pardon, excuse me; I thought"—nervously interjected the reporter, as he edged toward the door.

"Wait a moment. Come here!" Mr. Dickens' demeanor and tone had changed completely. The reporter looked up in surprise. The expression of annoyance in the face of the novelist had given way to one of amused interest. "So you were sent to interview me, were you?" said he pleasantly. "Well, I hope you will excuse my candor in saying that your paper could not have sent a person less likely to succeed, even if I were willing to be interviewed, which I am not. My young friend let me give you a word of advice. When you want to interview a man don't act as if you were afraid of him, and don't throw a net at him as though you were seeking a fish in invisible depths. No man whose opinions are worth publishing will respond to a wholesale invitation to unbosom himself. Don't ask weak or frivolous questions! You must have an intelligent plan of campaign when you go interviewing. First of all you must know just what you want to say and your questions must be sufficiently incisive to awaken the interest of the person to whom they are addressed. Once you get a man interested in a subject it will require only a little ingenuity to keep him talking. After what I have seen to-day I cannot help feeling an interest in Niagara Falls, but if you will excuse me for saying so, you lack the ingenuity to set me talking on the subject. I wish you well, however. Good night."

Mr. Dicken's "impressions" of Niagara Falls were not printed in any Buff newspaper the next day, but his pithy remarks on the subject of interviewing were printed on the tablets of that young reporter's memory—in red ink, as it were.—New York Times.

Cockroaches on the Race Course.

"Bet you $10 on my bug!"

"Five to two on the little 'un!"

Such were the cries that greeted the ears of a reporter as he passed the door of a Cadillac square saloon and caused him to turn back and enter. It was a curious sight that met his eyes. On the floor were drawn two concentric circles with chalk, one six, the other about twelve feet in diameter. Within the inner circle stooped two men who held each a teacup, bottom upward, on the floor, their rims in contact and as near the middle of the circle as possible. Between the inner and outer circle stood a flashily dressed man with an open watch in his hand and without the outer circle were eighteen or twenty excited spectators.

"Are you ready?" asked the man with the watch.

"We are," answered they of the cups.

"One, two, three, go!" said the timekeeper.

The two men in the inner circle simultaneously raised the cups and stepped beyond the line, revealing two cockroaches, one considerably larger than the other. The bugs seemed at first to be thoroughly confused, running about in circles and darting first in one direction and then in another. Suddenly, however, the smaller roach took a bee line toward the bar and crossed the chalk line while the other insect was still seeking its bearings. The greatest confusion prevailed, as each trainer deftly covered his roach with a cup and secured it, the captor of the smaller one exclaiming:

"Three out of five and the money is mine."—Detroit Free Press.

A Lucky Decorative Idea.

One of the most successful "fakes" ever worked in the artistic line was by a young Pittsburg engraver in Chicago. He was out of money and out of work. It was several years ago, just at the beginning of the decorative art craze. One day he was passing a shell store with a friend when an idea struck him. He was considerable of an artist as well as an engraver. He went in and proposed to the proprietor to take some of the shells and paint a little landscape in each and sell them for mantel ornaments.

The shrewd old proprietor said that the thing would catch the popular fancy and finally arranged to pay $1 a piece for painting them. They took a dozen of the shells home and the pictures suited the old man. The shell paintings had a great sale, and in the next three months the artists made a little over $1,200, and didn't work very hard either. At the end of that period competition cut the price in half again and they went out of the business, but it was a great snap for the amateurs while it lasted.—Pittsburg Dispatch.

The Depreciation of English Land.

The depreciation in the value of English land is witnessed by one or two statements published last week. We are, in the first place, told that within a radius of twelve miles around Louth, in Lincolnshire, there are now 22,400 acres of land without tenants. In the same shire the largest farm in England has been thrown on the owner's hands. It is 2,700 acres in extent and the tenant paid £1 per acre. This year a reduction of 50 per cent. was made to him, but finding, although an experienced and energetic farmer, that even at this reduction he could not make two ends meet, he has thrown up his farm.—London Court Journal.

The man who is good natured all day does more for the race than he who wins a battle.—Petersburg Index-Appeal.

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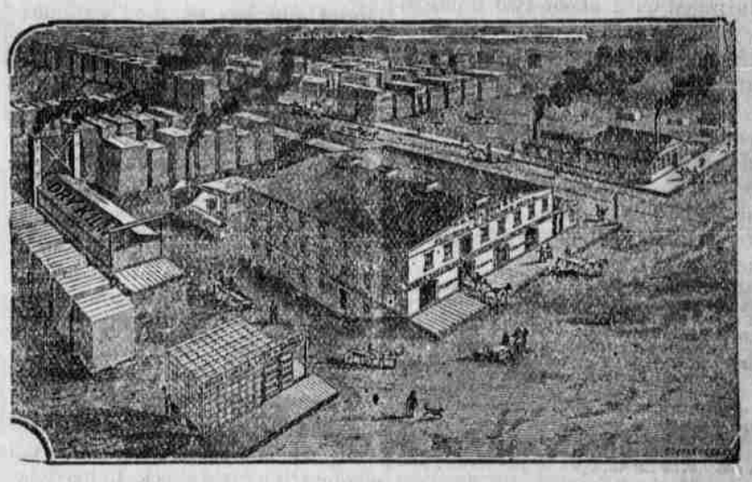

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