

II

An ingeniously constructed framework of light posts and thin laths occupied the greater part of the deck amidships of the Emma. The four walls of that airy structure were made of muslin. It was comparatively lofty. A door-like arrangement of light battens filled with calico was further protected by a system of curtains calculated to baffle the pursuit of mosquitoes that haunted the shores of the lagoon in great singing clouds from sunset till sunrise. A lot of fine mats covered the deck space within the transparent shelter devised by Lingard and Jorgenson to make Mrs. Travers' existence possible during the time when the fate of the two men, and indeed probably of everybody else on board the Emma, had to hang in the balance. Very soon Lingard's unbidden and fatal guests had learned the trick of stepping in and out of the place quickly. Mr. d'Alcacer performed the feat without apparent haste, almost nonchalantly, yet as well as anybody. It was generally conceded that he had never let a mosquito in together with himself. Mr. Travers dodged in and out without grace and was obviously much irritated at the necessity. Mrs. Travers did it in a manner all her own, with marked cleverness and an unconscious air. There was an improvised table in there and some wicker armchairs which Jorgenson had produced from somewhere in the depths of the ship. It was hard to say what the inside of the Emma did not contain. It was crammed with all sorts of goods like a general store. That old hulk was the arsenal and the war-chest of Lingard's political action; she was stocked with muskets and gunpowder, with bales of longcloth, of cotton prints, of silks; with bags of rice and currency brass guns. She contained everything necessary for dealing death and distributing bribes, to act on the cupidity and upon the fears of men, to march and to organize, to feed the friends and to combat the enemies of the cause. She held wealth and power in her flanks, that grounded ship that would swim no more, without masts and with the best part of her deck cumbered by the two structures of thin boards and of transparent muslin.

Within the latter lived the Europeans, visible in the daytime to the few Malays on board as if through a white haze. In the evening the lighting of the hurricane lamps inside turned them into dark phantoms surrounded by a shining mist, against which the insect world rushing in its millions out of the forest on the bank was baffled mysteriously in its assault. Rigidly enclosed by transparent walls, like captives of an enchanted cobweb, they moved about, sat, gesticulated, conversed publicly during the day; and at night when all the lanterns but one were extinguished, their slumbering shapes covered all over by white cotton sheets on the camp bedsteads, which were brought in every evening, conveyed the gruesome suggestion of dead bodies reposing on stretchers. The food, such as

it was, was served within that glorified mosquito net which everybody called the "Cage" without any humorous intention. At meal times the party from the yacht had the company of Lingard who attached to this ordeal a sense of duty performed at the altar of civility and conciliation. He could have no conception how much his presence added to the exasperation of Mr. Travers because Mr. Travers' manner was too intensely consistent to present any shades. It was determined by an ineradicable conviction that he was a victim held to ransom on some incomprehensible terms by an extraordinary and outrageous bandit. This conviction, strung to the highest pitch, never left him for a moment, being the object of indignant meditation to his mind, and even clinging, as it were, to his very body. It lurked in his eyes, in his gestures, in his ungracious mutters, and in his sinister silences. The shock to his moral being had ended by affecting Mr. Travers' physical machine. He was aware of hepatic pains, suffered from accesses of somnolence and suppressed gusts of fury which frightened him secretly. His complexion had acquired a yellow tinge, while his heavy eyes had become bloodshot because of the smoke of the open wood fires during his three days' detention inside Belarab's stockade. His eyes had been always very sensitive to outward conditions. D'Alcacer's fine black eyes were more enduring and his appearance did not differ very much from his ordinary appearance on board the yacht. He had accepted with smiling thanks the offer of a thin blue flannel tunic from Jorgenson. Those two men were much of the same build, though of course d'Alcacer, quietly alive and spiritually watchful, did not resemble Jorgenson, who, without being exactly macabre, behaved more like an indifferent but restless corpse. Those two could not be said to have ever conversed together. Conversation with Jorgenson was an impossible thing. Even Lingard never attempted the feat. He propounded questions to Jorgenson much as a magician would interrogate an evoked shade, or gave him curt directions as one would make use of some marvellous automaton. And that was apparently the way in which Jorgenson preferred to be treated. Lingard's real company on board the Emma was d'Alcacer. D'Alcacer had met Lingard on the easy terms of a man accustomed all his life to good society in which the very affectations must be carried on without effort. Whether affectation, or nature, or inspired discretion, d'Alcacer never let the slightest curiosity pierce the smoothness of his level, grave courtesy lightened frequently by slight smiles which often had not much connection with the words he uttered, except that somehow they made them sound kindly and as it were tactful. In their character, however, those words were strictly neutral.

The only time when Lingard had detected something of a deeper comprehension in d'Alcacer was the day after the long negotiations inside Belarab's stockade for the temporary surrender of the prisoners. That move had been suggested to him, exactly as Mrs. Travers had told her husband, by the rivalries of the parties and the state of public opinion in the Settlement deprived of the presence of the man

who, theoretically at least, was the greatest power and the visible ruler of the Shore of Refuge. Belarab still lingered at his father's tomb. Whether that man of the embittered and pacific heart had withdrawn there to meditate upon the unruliness of mankind and the thankless nature of his task; or whether he had gone there simply to bathe in a particularly clear pool which was a feature of the place, give himself up to the enjoyment of a certain fruit which grew in profusion there and indulge for a time in a scrupulous performance of religious exercises, his absence from the Settlement was a fact of the utmost gravity. It is true that the prestige of a long-unquestioned rulership and the long-settled mental habits of the people had caused the captives to be taken straight to Belarab's stockade as a matter of course. Belarab, at a distance, could still outweigh the power on the spot of Tengga, whose secret purposes were no better known, who was jovial, talkative, outspoken and pugnacious; but who was not a professed servant of God famed for many charities and a scrupulous performance of pious practices, and who also had no father who had achieved a local saintship. But Belarab, with his glamour of asceticism and melancholy together with a reputation for severity (for a man so pious would be naturally ruthless), was not on the spot. The only favourable point in his absence was the fact that he had taken with him his latest wife, the same lady whom Jorgenson had mentioned in his letter to Lingard as anxious to bring about battle, murder, and the looting of the yacht, not because of inborn wickedness of heart but from a simple desire for silks, jewels and other objects of personal adornment, quite natural in a girl so young and elevated to such a high position. Belarab had selected her to be the companion of his retirement and Lingard was glad of it. He was not afraid of her influence over Belarab. He knew his man. No words, no blandishments, no sulks, scoldings, or whisperings of a favourite could affect either the resolves or the irresolutions of that Arab whose action ever seemed to hang in mystic suspense between the contradictory speculations and judgments disputing the possession of his will. It was not what Belarab would either suddenly do or leisurely determine upon that Lingard was afraid of. The danger was that in his taciturn hesitation, which had something hopelessly godlike in its remote calmness, the man would do nothing and leave his white friend face to face with unruly impulses against which Lingard had no means of action but force which he dared not use since it would mean the destruction of his plans and the downfall of his hopes; and worse still would wear an aspect of treachery to Hassim and Immada, those fugitives whom he had snatched away from the jaws of death on a night of storm and had promised to lead back in triumph to their own country he had seen but once, sleeping unmoved under the wrath and fire of heaven.

On the afternoon of the very day he had arrived with her on board the Emma--to the infinite disgust of Jorgenson--Lingard held with Mrs. Travers (after she had had a couple of hours' rest) a long, fiery, and perplexed conversation. From the nature of the problem it could not be exhaustive; but toward the end of it they

were both feeling thoroughly exhausted. Mrs. Travers had no longer to be instructed as to facts and possibilities. She was aware of them only too well and it was not her part to advise or argue. She was not called upon to decide or to plead. The situation was far beyond that. But she was worn out with watching the passionate conflict within the man who was both so desperately reckless and so rigidly restrained in the very ardour of his heart and the greatness of his soul. It was a spectacle that made her forget the actual questions at issue. This was no stage play; and yet she had caught herself looking at him with bated breath as at a great actor on a darkened stage in some simple and tremendous drama. He extorted from her a response to the forces that seemed to tear at his single-minded brain, at his guileless breast. He shook her with his own struggles, he possessed her with his emotions and imposed his personality as if its tragedy were the only thing worth considering in this matter. And yet what had she to do with all those obscure and barbarous things? Obviously nothing. Unluckily she had been taken into the confidence of that man's passionate perplexity, a confidence provoked apparently by nothing but the power of her personality. She was flattered, and even more, she was touched by it; she was aware of something that resembled gratitude and provoked a sort of emotional return as between equals who had secretly recognized each other's value. Yet at the same time she regretted not having been left in the dark; as much in the dark as Mr. Travers himself or d'Alcacer, though as to the latter it was impossible to say how much precise, unaccountable, intuitive knowledge was buried under his unruffled manner.

D'Alcacer was the sort of man whom it would be much easier to suspect of anything in the world than ignorance--or stupidity. Naturally he couldn't know anything definite or even guess at the bare outline of the facts but somehow he must have scented the situation in those few days of contact with Lingard. He was an acute and sympathetic observer in all his secret aloofness from the life of men which was so very different from Jorgenson's secret divorce from the passions of this earth. Mrs. Travers would have liked to share with d'Alcacer the burden (for it was a burden) of Lingard's story. After all, she had not provoked those confidences, neither had that unexpected adventurer from the sea laid on her an obligation of secrecy. No, not even by implication. He had never said to her that she was the only person whom he wished to know that story.

No. What he had said was that she was the only person to whom he could tell the tale himself, as if no one else on earth had the power to draw it from him. That was the sense and nothing more. Yes, it would have been a relief to tell d'Alcacer. It would have been a relief to her feeling of being shut off from the world alone with Lingard as if within the four walls of a romantic palace and in an exotic atmosphere. Yes, that relief and also another: that of sharing the responsibility with somebody fit to understand. Yet she shrank from it, with unaccountable

reserve, as if by talking of Lingard with d'Alcacer she was bound to give him an insight into herself. It was a vague uneasiness and yet so persistent that she felt it, too, when she had to approach and talk to Lingard under d'Alcacer's eyes. Not that Mr. d'Alcacer would ever dream of staring or even casting glances. But was he averting his eyes on purpose? That would be even more offensive.

"I am stupid," whispered Mrs. Travers to herself, with a complete and reassuring conviction. Yet she waited motionless till the footsteps of the two men stopped outside the deckhouse, then separated and died away, before she went out on deck. She came out on deck some time after her husband. As if in intended contrast to the conflicts of men a great aspect of serenity lay upon all visible things. Mr. Travers had gone inside the Cage in which he really looked like a captive and thoroughly out of place. D'Alcacer had gone in there, too, but he preserved--or was it an illusion?--an air of independence. It was not that he put it on. Like Mr. Travers he sat in a wicker armchair in very much the same attitude as the other gentleman and also silent; but there was somewhere a subtle difference which did away with the notion of captivity. Moreover, d'Alcacer had that peculiar gift of never looking out of place in any surroundings. Mrs. Travers, in order to save her European boots for active service, had been persuaded to use a pair of leather sandals also extracted from that seaman's chest in the deckhouse. An additional fastening had been put on them but she could not avoid making a delicate clatter as she walked on the deck. No part of her costume made her feel so exotic. It also forced her to alter her usual gait and move with quick, short steps very much like Immada.

"I am robbing the girl of her clothes," she had thought to herself, "besides other things." She knew by this time that a girl of such high rank would never dream of wearing anything that had been worn by somebody else.

At the slight noise of Mrs. Travers' sandals d'Alcacer looked over the back of his chair. But he turned his head away at once and Mrs. Travers, leaning her elbow on the rail and resting her head on the palm of her hand, looked across the calm surface of the lagoon, idly.

She was turning her back on the Cage, the fore-part of the deck and the edge of the nearest forest. That great erection of enormous solid trunks, dark, rugged columns festooned with writhing creepers and steeped in gloom, was so close to the bank that by looking over the side of the ship she could see inverted in the glassy belt of water its massive and black reflection on the reflected sky that gave the impression of a clear blue abyss seen through a transparent film. And when she raised her eyes the same abysmal immobility seemed to reign over the whole sun-bathed enlargement of that lagoon which was one of the secret places of the earth. She felt strongly her isolation. She was so much the only being of her kind

moving within this mystery that even to herself she looked like an apparition without rights and without defence and that must end by surrendering to those forces which seemed to her but the expression of the unconscious genius of the place. Hers was the most complete loneliness, charged with a catastrophic tension. It lay about her as though she had been set apart within a magic circle. It cut off--but it did not protect. The footsteps that she knew how to distinguish above all others on that deck were heard suddenly behind her. She did not turn her head.

Since that afternoon when the gentlemen, as Lingard called them, had been brought on board, Mrs. Travers and Lingard had not exchanged one significant word.

When Lingard had decided to proceed by way of negotiation she had asked him on what he based his hope of success; and he had answered her: "On my luck." What he really depended on was his prestige; but even if he had been aware of such a word he would not have used it, since it would have sounded like a boast. And, besides, he did really believe in his luck. Nobody, either white or brown, had ever doubted his word and that, of course, gave him great assurance in entering upon the negotiation. But the ultimate issue of it would be always a matter of luck. He said so distinctly to Mrs. Travers at the moment of taking leave of her, with Jorgenson already waiting for him in the boat that was to take them across the lagoon to Belarab's stockade.

Startled by his decision (for it had come suddenly clinched by the words "I believe I can do it"), Mrs. Travers had dropped her hand into his strong open palm on which an expert in palmistry could have distinguished other lines than the line of luck. Lingard's hand closed on hers with a gentle pressure. She looked at him, speechless. He waited for a moment, then in an unconsciously tender voice he said: "Well, wish me luck then."

She remained silent. And he still holding her hand looked surprised at her hesitation. It seemed to her that she could not let him go, and she didn't know what to say till it occurred to her to make use of the power she knew she had over him. She would try it again. "I am coming with you," she declared with decision. "You don't suppose I could remain here in suspense for hours, perhaps."

He dropped her hand suddenly as if it had burnt him--"Oh, yes, of course," he mumbled with an air of confusion. One of the men over there was her husband! And nothing less could be expected from such a woman. He had really nothing to say but she thought he hesitated.--"Do you think my presence would spoil everything? I assure you I am a lucky person, too, in a way. . . . As lucky as you, at least," she had added in a murmur and with a smile which provoked his

responsive mutter--"Oh, yes, we are a lucky pair of people."--"I count myself lucky in having found a man like you to fight my--our battles," she said, warmly. "Suppose you had not existed? . . . You must let me come with you!" For the second time before her expressed wish to stand by his side he bowed his head. After all, if things came to the worst, she would be as safe between him and Jorgenson as left alone on board the Emma with a few Malay spearmen for all defence. For a moment Lingard thought of picking up the pistols he had taken out of his belt preparatory to joining Jorgenson in the boat, thinking it would be better to go to a big talk completely unarmed. They were lying on the rail but he didn't pick them up. Four shots didn't matter. They could not matter if the world of his creation were to go to pieces. He said nothing of that to Mrs. Travers but busied himself in giving her the means to alter her personal appearance. It was then that the sea-chest in the deckhouse was opened for the first time before the interested Mrs. Travers who had followed him inside. Lingard handed to her a Malay woman's light cotton coat with jewelled clasps to put over her European dress. It covered half of her yachting skirt. Mrs. Travers obeyed him without comment. He pulled out a long and wide scarf of white silk embroidered heavily on the edges and ends, and begged her to put it over her head and arrange the ends so as to muffle her face, leaving little more than her eyes exposed to view.--"We are going amongst a lot of Mohammedans," he explained.--"I see. You want me to look respectable," she jested.--"I assure you, Mrs. Travers," he protested, earnestly, "that most of the people there and certainly all the great men have never seen a white woman in their lives. But perhaps you would like better one of those other scarves? There are three in there."--"No, I like this one well enough. They are all very gorgeous. I see that the Princess is to be sent back to her land with all possible splendour. What a thoughtful man you are, Captain Lingard. That child will be touched by your generosity. . . . Will I do like this?"

"Yes," said Lingard, averting his eyes. Mrs. Travers followed him into the boat where the Malays stared in silence while Jorgenson, stiff and angular, gave no sign of life, not even so much as a movement of the eyes. Lingard settled her in the stern sheets and sat down by her side. The ardent sunshine devoured all colours. The boat swam forward on the glare heading for the strip of coral beach dazzling like a crescent of metal raised to a white heat. They landed. Gravely, Jorgenson opened above Mrs. Travers' head a big white cotton parasol and she advanced between the two men, dazed, as if in a dream and having no other contact with the earth but through the soles of her feet. Everything was still, empty, incandescent, and fantastic. Then when the gate of the stockade was thrown open she perceived an expectant and still multitude of bronze figures draped in coloured stuffs. They crowded the patches of shade under the three lofty forest trees left within the enclosure between the sun-smitten empty spaces of hard-baked ground. The broad blades of the spears decorated with crimson tufts of horsehair had a cool gleam under the outspread boughs. To the left a

group of buildings on piles with long verandahs and immense roofs towered high in the air above the heads of the crowd, and seemed to float in the glare, looking much less substantial than their heavy shadows. Lingard, pointing to one of the smallest, said in an undertone, "I lived there for a fortnight when I first came to see Belarab"; and Mrs. Travers felt more than ever as if walking in a dream when she perceived beyond the rails of its verandah and visible from head to foot two figures in an armour of chain mail with pointed steel helmets crested with white and black feathers and guarding the closed door. A high bench draped in turkey cloth stood in an open space of the great audience shed. Lingard led her up to it, Jorgenson on her other side closed the parasol calmly, and when she sat down between them the whole throng before her eyes sank to the ground with one accord disclosing in the distance of the courtyard a lonely figure leaning against the smooth trunk of a tree. A white cloth was fastened round his head by a yellow cord. Its pointed ends fell on his shoulders, framing a thin dark face with large eyes, a silk cloak striped black and white fell to his feet, and in the distance he looked aloof and mysterious in his erect and careless attitude suggesting assurance and power.

Lingard, bending slightly, whispered into Mrs. Travers' ear that that man, apart and dominating the scene, was Daman, the supreme leader of the Illanuns, the one who had ordered the capture of those gentlemen in order perhaps to force his hand. The two barbarous, half-naked figures covered with ornaments and charms, squatting at his feet with their heads enfolded in crimson and gold handkerchiefs and with straight swords lying across their knees, were the Pangerans who carried out the order, and had brought the captives into the lagoon. But the two men in chain armour on watch outside the door of the small house were Belarab's two particular body-guards, who got themselves up in that way only on very great occasions. They were the outward and visible sign that the prisoners were in Belarab's keeping, and this was good, so far. The pity was that the Great Chief himself was not there. Then Lingard assumed a formal pose and Mrs. Travers stared into the great courtyard and with rows and rows of faces ranged on the ground at her feet felt a little giddy for a moment.

Every movement had died in the crowd. Even the eyes were still under the variegated mass of coloured headkerchiefs: while beyond the open gate a noble palm tree looked intensely black against the glitter of the lagoon and the pale incandescence of the sky. Mrs. Travers gazing that way wondered at the absence of Hassim and Immada. But the girl might have been somewhere within one of the houses with the ladies of Belarab's stockade. Then suddenly Mrs. Travers became aware that another bench had been brought out and was already occupied by five men dressed in gorgeous silks, and embroidered velvets, round-faced and grave. Their hands reposed on their knees; but one amongst them clad in a white robe and with a large nearly black turban on his head leaned forward a

little with his chin in his hand. His cheeks were sunken and his eyes remained fixed on the ground as if to avoid looking at the infidel woman.

She became aware suddenly of a soft murmur, and glancing at Lingard she saw him in an attitude of impassive attention. The momentous negotiations had begun, and it went on like this in low undertones with long pauses and in the immobility of all the attendants squatting on the ground, with the distant figure of Daman far off in the shade towering over all the assembly. But in him, too, Mrs. Travers could not detect the slightest movement while the slightly modulated murmurs went on enveloping her in a feeling of peace.

The fact that she couldn't understand anything of what was said soothed her apprehensions. Sometimes a silence fell and Lingard bending toward her would whisper, "It isn't so easy," and the stillness would be so perfect that she would hear the flutter of a pigeon's wing somewhere high up in the great overshadowing trees. And suddenly one of the men before her without moving a limb would begin another speech rendered more mysterious still by the total absence of action or play of feature. Only the watchfulness of the eyes which showed that the speaker was not communing with himself made it clear that this was not a spoken meditation but a flow of argument directed to Lingard who now and then uttered a few words either with a grave or a smiling expression. They were always followed by murmurs which seemed mostly to her to convey assent; and then a reflective silence would reign again and the immobility of the crowd would appear more perfect than before.

When Lingard whispered to her that it was now his turn to make a speech Mrs. Travers expected him to get up and assert himself by some commanding gesture. But he did not. He remained seated, only his voice had a vibrating quality though he obviously tried to restrain it, and it travelled masterfully far into the silence. He spoke for a long time while the sun climbing the unstained sky shifted the diminished shadows of the trees, pouring on the heads of men its heat through the thick and motionless foliage. Whenever murmurs arose he would stop and glancing fearlessly at the assembly, wait till they subsided. Once or twice, they rose to a loud hum and Mrs. Travers could hear on the other side of her Jorgenson muttering something in his moustache. Beyond the rows of heads Daman under the tree had folded his arms on his breast. The edge of the white cloth concealed his forehead and at his feet the two Illanun chiefs, half naked and bedecked with charms and ornaments of bright feathers, of shells, with necklaces of teeth, claws, and shining beads, remained cross-legged with their swords across their knees like two bronze idols. Even the plumes of their head-dresses stirred not.

"Sudah! It is finished!" A movement passed along all the heads, the seated bodies

swayed to and fro. Lingard had ceased speaking. He remained seated for a moment looking his audience all over and when he stood up together with Mrs. Travers and Jorgenson the whole assembly rose from the ground together and lost its ordered formation. Some of Belarab's retainers, young broad-faced fellows, wearing a sort of uniform of check-patterned sarongs, black silk jackets and crimson skull-caps set at a rakish angle, swaggered through the broken groups and ranged themselves in two rows before the motionless Daman and his Illanun chiefs in martial array. The members of the council who had left their bench approached the white people with gentle smiles and deferential movements of the hands. Their bearing was faintly propitiatory; only the man in the big turban remained fanatically aloof, keeping his eyes fixed on the ground.

"I have done it," murmured Lingard to Mrs. Travers.--"Was it very difficult?" she asked.--"No," he said, conscious in his heart that he had strained to the fullest extent the prestige of his good name and that habit of deference to his slightest wish established by the glamour of his wealth and the fear of his personality in this great talk which after all had done nothing except put off the decisive hour. He offered Mrs. Travers his arm ready to lead her away, but at the last moment did not move.

With an authoritative gesture Daman had parted the ranks of Belarab's young followers with the red skullcaps and was seen advancing toward the whites striking into an astonished silence all the scattered groups in the courtyard. But the broken ranks had closed behind him. The Illanun chiefs, for all their truculent aspect, were much too prudent to attempt to move. They had not needed for that the faint warning murmur from Daman. He advanced alone. The plain hilt of a sword protruded from the open edges of his cloak. The parted edges disclosed also the butts of two flintlock pistols. The Koran in a velvet case hung on his breast by a red cord of silk. He was pious, magnificent, and warlike, with calm movements and a straight glance from under the hem of the simple piece of linen covering his head. He carried himself rigidly and his bearing had a sort of solemn modesty. Lingard said hurriedly to Mrs. Travers that the man had met white people before and that, should he attempt to shake hands with her, she ought to offer her own covered with the end of her scarf.--"Why?" she asked. "Propriety?"--"Yes, it will be better," said Lingard and the next moment Mrs. Travers felt her enveloped hand pressed gently by slender dark fingers and felt extremely Oriental herself when, with her face muffled to the eyes, she encountered the lustrous black stare of the sea-robbers' leader. It was only for an instant, because Daman turned away at once to shake hands with Lingard. In the straight, ample folds of his robes he looked very slender facing the robust white man.

"Great is your power," he said, in a pleasant voice. "The white men are going to be

delivered to you."

"Yes, they pass into my keeping," said Lingard, returning the other's bright smile but otherwise looking grim enough with the frown which had settled on his forehead at Daman's approach. He glanced over his shoulder at a group of spearmen escorting the two captives who had come down the steps from the hut. At the sight of Daman barring as it were Lingard's way they had stopped at some distance and had closed round the two white men. Daman also glanced dispassionately that way.

"They were my guests," he murmured. "Please God I shall come soon to ask you for them . . . as a friend," he added after a slight pause.

"And please God you will not go away empty handed," said Lingard, smoothing his brow. "After all you and I were not meant to meet only to quarrel. Would you have preferred to see them pass into Tengga's keeping?"

"Tengga is fat and full of wiles," said Daman, disdainfully, "a mere shopkeeper smitten by a desire to be a chief. He is nothing. But you and I are men that have real power. Yet there is a truth that you and I can confess to each other. Men's hearts grow quickly discontented. Listen. The leaders of men are carried forward in the hands of their followers; and common men's minds are unsteady, their desires changeable, and their thoughts not to be trusted. You are a great chief they say. Do not forget that I am a chief, too, and a leader of armed men."

"I have heard of you, too," said Lingard in a composed voice.

Daman had cast his eyes down. Suddenly he opened them very wide with an effect that startled Mrs. Travers.--"Yes. But do you see?" Mrs. Travers, her hand resting lightly on Lingard's arm, had the sensation of acting in a gorgeously got up play on the brilliantly lighted stage of an exotic opera whose accompaniment was not music but the varied strains of the all-pervading silence.--"Yes, I see," Lingard replied with a surprisingly confidential intonation. "But power, too, is in the hands of a great leader."

Mrs. Travers watched the faint movements of Daman's nostrils as though the man were suffering from some powerful emotion, while under her fingers Lingard's forearm in its white sleeve was as steady as a limb of marble. Without looking at him she seemed to feel that with one movement he could crush that nervous figure in which lived the breath of the great desert haunted by his nomad, camel-riding ancestors.--"Power is in the hand of God," he said, all animation dying out of his face, and paused to wait for Lingard's "Very true," then continued with a fine smile, "but He apportions it according to His will for His

own purposes, even to those that are not of the Faith."

"Such being the will of God you should harbour no bitterness against them in your heart."

The low exclamation, "Against those!" and a slight dismissing gesture of a meagre dark hand out of the folds of the cloak were almost understandable to Mrs. Travers in the perfection of their melancholy contempt, and gave Lingard a further insight into the character of the ally secured to him by the diplomacy of Belarab. He was only half reassured by this assumption of superior detachment. He trusted to the man's self-interest more; for Daman no doubt looked to the reconquered kingdom for the reward of dignity and ease. His father and grandfather (the men of whom Jorgenson had written as having been hanged for an example twelve years before) had been friends of Sultans, advisers of Rulers, wealthy financiers of the great raiding expeditions of the past. It was hatred that had turned Daman into a self-made outcast, till Belarab's diplomacy had drawn him out from some obscure and uneasy retreat.

In a few words Lingard assured Daman of the complete safety of his followers as long as they themselves made no attempt to get possession of the stranded yacht. Lingard understood very well that the capture of Travers and d'Alcacer was the result of a sudden fear, a move directed by Daman to secure his own safety. The sight of the stranded yacht shook his confidence completely. It was as if the secrets of the place had been betrayed. After all, it was perhaps a great folly to trust any white man, no matter how much he seemed estranged from his own people. Daman felt he might have been the victim of a plot. Lingard's brig appeared to him a formidable engine of war. He did not know what to think and the motive for getting hold of the two white men was really the wish to secure hostages. Distrusting the fierce impulses of his followers he had hastened to put them into Belarab's keeping. But everything in the Settlement seemed to him suspicious: Belarab's absence, Jorgenson's refusal to make over at once the promised supply of arms and ammunition. And now that white man had by the power of his speech got them away from Belarab's people. So much influence filled Daman with wonder and awe. A recluse for many years in the most obscure corner of the Archipelago he felt himself surrounded by intrigues. But the alliance was a great thing, too. He did not want to quarrel. He was quite willing for the time being to accept Lingard's assurance that no harm should befall his people encamped on the sandbanks. Attentive and slight, he seemed to let Lingard's deliberate words sink into him. The force of that unarmed big man seemed overwhelming. He bowed his head slowly.

"Allah is our refuge," he murmured, accepting the inevitable.

He delighted Mrs. Travers not as a living being but like a clever sketch in colours, a vivid rendering of an artist's vision of some soul, delicate and fierce. His bright half-smile was extraordinary, sharp like clear steel, painfully penetrating. Glancing right and left Mrs. Travers saw the whole courtyard smitten by the desolating fury of sunshine and peopled with shadows, their forms and colours fading in the violence of the light. The very brown tones of roof and wall dazzled the eye. Then Daman stepped aside. He was no longer smiling and Mrs. Travers advanced with her hand on Lingard's arm through a heat so potent that it seemed to have a taste, a feel, a smell of its own. She moved on as if floating in it with Lingard's support.

"Where are they?" she asked.

"They are following us all right," he answered. Lingard was so certain that the prisoners would be delivered to him on the beach that he never glanced back till, after reaching the boat, he and Mrs. Travers turned about.

The group of spearmen parted right and left, and Mr. Travers and d'Alcacer walked forward alone looking unreal and odd like their own day-ghosts. Mr. Travers gave no sign of being aware of his wife's presence. It was certainly a shock to him. But d'Alcacer advanced smiling, as if the beach were a drawing room.

With a very few paddlers the heavy old European-built boat moved slowly over the water that seemed as pale and blazing as the sky above. Jorgenson had perched himself in the bow. The other four white people sat in the stern sheets, the ex-prisoners side by side in the middle. Lingard spoke suddenly.

"I want you both to understand that the trouble is not over yet. Nothing is finished. You are out on my bare word."

While Lingard was speaking Mr. Travers turned his face away but d'Alcacer listened courteously. Not another word was spoken for the rest of the way. The two gentlemen went up the ship's side first. Lingard remained to help Mrs. Travers at the foot of the ladder. She pressed his hand strongly and looking down at his upturned face:

"This was a wonderful success," she said.

For a time the character of his fascinated gaze did not change. It was as if she had said nothing. Then he whispered, admiringly, "You understand everything."

She moved her eyes away and had to disengage her hand to which he clung for a

moment, giddy, like a man falling out of the world.