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## **THE WEAVERS**

By Gilbert Parker

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## INTRODUCTION

When I turn over the hundreds of pages of this book, I have a feeling that I am looking upon something for which I have no particular responsibility, though it has a strange contour of familiarity. It is as though one looks upon a scene in which one had lived and moved, with the friendly yet half-distant feeling that it once was one's own possession but is so no longer. I should think the feeling to be much like that of the old man whose sons, gone to distant places, have created their own plantations of life and have themselves become the masters of possessions. Also I suppose that when I read the story through again from the first page to the last, I shall recreate the feeling in which I lived when I wrote it, and it will become a part of my own identity again. That distance between himself and his work, however, which immediately begins to grow as soon as a book leaves the author's hands for those of the public, is a thing which, I suppose, must come to one who produces a work of the imagination. It is no doubt due to the fact that every piece of art which has individuality and real likeness to the scenes and character it is intended to depict is done in a kind of trance. The author, in effect, self-hypnotises himself, has created an atmosphere which is separate and apart from that of his daily surroundings, and by virtue of his imagination becomes absorbed in that atmosphere. When the book is finished and it goes forth, when the imagination is relaxed and the concentration of mind is withdrawn, the atmosphere disappears, and then. One experiences what I feel when I take up 'The Weavers' and, in a sense, wonder how it was done, such as it is.

The frontispiece of the English edition represents a scene in the House of Commons, and this brings to my mind a warning which was given me similar to that on my entering new fields outside the one in which I first made a reputation in fiction. When, in a certain year, I determined that I would enter the House of Commons I had many friends who, in effect, wailed and gnashed their teeth. They said that it would be the death of my imaginative faculties; that I should never write anything any more; that all the qualities which make literature living and compelling would disappear. I thought this was all wrong then, and I know it is all wrong now. Political life does certainly interfere with the amount of work which an author may produce. He certainly cannot write a book every year and do political work as well, but if he does not attempt to do the two things on the same days, as it were, but in blocks of time devoted to each separately and respectively, he will only find, as I have found, that public life the conflict of it, the accompanying attrition of mind, the searching for the things which will solve the problems of national life, the multitudinous variations of character with which one comes in contact, the big issues suddenly sprung upon the congregation of responsible politicians, all are stimulating to the imagination, invigorating to the mind, and marvellously freshening to every literary instinct. No danger to the writer lies in doing political work, if it does not sap his strength and destroy his health. Apart from that, he should not suffer. The very spirit of statesmanship is imagination, vision; and the same quality which enables an author to realise humanity for a book is necessary for him to realise humanity in the crowded chamber of a Parliament.

So far as I can remember, whatever was written of *The Weavers*, no critic said that it lacked imagination. Some critics said it was too crowded with incident; that there was enough incident in it for two novels; some said that the sweep was too wide, but no critic of authority declared that the book lacked vision or the vivacity of a living narrative. It is not likely that I shall ever write again a novel of Egypt, but I have made my contribution to Anglo-Egyptian literature, and I do not think I failed completely in showing the greatness of soul which enabled one man to keep the torch of civilisation, of truth, justice, and wholesome love alight in surroundings as offensive to civilisation as was Egypt in the last days of Ismail Pasha—a time which could be well typified by the words put by Bulwer Lytton in the mouth of Cardinal Richelieu:

"I found France rent asunder,  
Sloth in the mart and schism in the temple;  
Broils festering to rebellion; and weak laws  
Rotting away with rust in antique sheaths.  
I have re-created France; and, from the ashes  
Of the old feudal and decrepit carcass,  
Civilisation on her luminous wings  
Soars, phoenix-like, to Jove!"

Critics and readers have endeavoured to identify the main characteristics of *The Weavers* with figures in Anglo-Egyptian and official public life. David Claridge was, however, a creature of the imagination. It has been said that he was drawn from General Gordon. I am not conscious of having taken Gordon for David's prototype, though, as I was saturated with all that had been written about Gordon, there is no doubt that something of that great man may have found its way into the character of David Claridge. The true origin of David Claridge, however, may be found in a short story called 'All the World's Mad', in *Donovan Pasha*, which was originally published by Lady Randolph Churchill in an ambitious but defunct magazine called 'The Anglo-Saxon Review'. The truth is that David Claridge had his origin in a fairly close understanding of, and interest in, Quaker life. I had Quaker relatives through the marriage of a connection of my mother, and the original of Benn Claridge, the uncle of David, is still alive, a very old man, who in my boyhood days wore the broad brim and the straight preacher-like coat of the old-fashioned Quaker. The grandmother of my wife was also a Quaker, and used the "thee" and "thou" until the day of her death.

Here let me say that criticism came to me from several quarters both in England and America on the use of these words thee and thou, and statements were made that the kind of speech which I put into David Claridge's mouth was not Quaker speech. For instance, they would not have it that a Quaker would say, "Thee will go with me"—as though they were ashamed of the sweet inaccuracy of the objective pronoun being used in the nominative; but hundreds of times I have myself heard Quakers use "thee" in just such a way in England and America. The facts are, however, that Quakers differ extensively in their habits, and there grew up in England among the Quakers in certain districts a sense of shame for false grammar which, to say the least, was very childish. To be deliberately and boldly ungrammatical, when you serve both euphony and simplicity, is merely to give archaic charm, not to be guilty of an offence. I have friends in Derbyshire who still say "Thee thinks," etc., and I must confess that the picture of a Quaker rampant over my deliberate use of this well-authenticated form of speech produced to my mind only the effect of an infuriated sheep, when I remembered the peaceful attribute of Quaker life and character. From another quarter came the assurance that I was wrong when I set up a tombstone with a name upon it in a Quaker graveyard. I received a sarcastic letter from a lady on the borders of Sussex and Surrey upon this point, and I immediately sent her a first-class railway ticket to enable her to visit the Quaker churchyard at Croydon, in Surrey, where dead and gone Quakers have tombstones by the score, and inscriptions on them also. It is a good thing to be accurate; it is desperately essential in a novel. The average reader, in his triumph at discovering some slight error of detail, would consign a masterpiece of imagination, knowledge of life and character to the rubbish-heap.

I believe that *'The Weavers'* represents a wider outlook of life, closer understanding of the problems which perplex society, and a clearer view of the verities than any previous book written by me, whatever its popularity may have been. It appealed to the British public rather more than *'The Right of Way'*, and the great public of America and the Oversea Dominions gave it a welcome which enabled it to take its place beside *'The Right of Way'*, the success of which was unusual.

## NOTE

This book is not intended to be an historical novel, nor are its characters meant to be identified with well-known persons connected with the history of England or of Egypt; but all that is essential in the tale is based upon, and drawn from, the life of both countries. Though Egypt has greatly changed during the past generation, away from Cairo and the commercial centres the wheels of social progress have turned but slowly, and much remains as it was in the days of which this book is a record in the spirit of the life, at least. G. P.

"Dost thou spread the sail, throw the spear, swing the axe, lay thy hand upon the plough, attend the furnace door, shepherd the sheep upon the hills, gather corn from the field, or smite the rock in the quarry? Yet, whatever thy task, thou art even as one who twists the thread and throws the shuttle, weaving the web of Life. Ye are all weavers, and Allah the Merciful, does He not watch beside the loom?"

# BOOK I

## CHAPTER I

### AS THE SPIRIT MOVED

The village lay in a valley which had been the bed of a great river in the far-off days when Ireland, Wales and Brittany were joined together and the Thames flowed into the Seine. The place had never known turmoil or stir. For generations it had lived serenely.

Three buildings in the village stood out insistently, more by the authority of their appearance and position than by their size. One was a square, red-brick mansion in the centre of the village, surrounded by a high, redbrick wall enclosing a garden. Another was a big, low, graceful building with wings. It had once been a monastery. It was covered with ivy, which grew thick and hungry upon it, and it was called the Cloistered House. The last of the three was of wood, and of no great size—a severely plain but dignified structure, looking like some council-hall of a past era. Its heavy oak doors and windows with diamond panes, and its air of order, cleanliness and serenity, gave it a commanding influence in the picture. It was the key to the history of the village—a Quaker Meeting-house.

Involuntarily the village had built itself in such a way that it made a wide avenue from the common at one end to the Meeting-house on the gorse-grown upland at the other. With a demure resistance to the will of its makers the village had made itself decorative. The people were unconscious of any attractiveness in themselves or in their village. There were, however, a few who felt the beauty stirring around them. These few, for their knowledge and for the pleasure which it brought, paid the accustomed price. The records of their lives were the only notable history of the place since the days when their forefathers suffered for the faith.

One of these was a girl—for she was still but a child when she died; and she had lived in the Red Mansion with the tall porch, the wide garden behind, and the wall of apricots and peaches and clustering grapes. Her story was not to cease when she was laid away in the stiff graveyard behind the Meeting-house. It was to go on in the life of her son, whom to bring into the world she had suffered undeserved, and loved with a passion more in keeping with the beauty of the vale in which she lived than with the piety found on the high-backed seats in the Quaker Meeting-house. The name given her on the register of death was Mercy Claridge, and a line beneath said that she was the daughter of Luke Claridge, that her age at passing was nineteen years, and that "her soul was with the Lord."

Another whose life had given pages to the village history was one of noble birth, the Earl of Eglington. He had died twenty years after the time when Luke Claridge, against the then custom of the Quakers, set up a tombstone to Mercy Claridge's memory behind the Meeting-house. Only thrice in those twenty years had he slept in a room of the Cloistered House. One of those occasions was the day on which Luke Claridge put up the grey stone in the graveyard, three years after his daughter's death. On the night of that day these two men met face to face in the garden of the Cloistered House. It was said by a passer-by, who had involuntarily overheard, that Luke Claridge had used harsh and profane words to Lord Eglington, though he had no inkling of the subject of the bitter talk. He supposed, however, that Luke had gone to reprove the other for a wasteful and wandering existence; for desertion of that Quaker religion to which his grandfather, the third Earl of Eglington, had turned in the second half of his life, never visiting his estates in Ireland, and residing here among his new friends to his last day. This listener—John Fairley was his name—kept his own counsel. On two other occasions had Lord Eglington visited the Cloistered House in the years that passed, and remained many months. Once he brought his wife and child. The former was a cold, blue-eyed Saxon of an old family, who smiled distantly upon the Quaker village; the latter, a round-headed, warm-faced youth, with a bold, menacing eye, who probed into this and that, rushed here and there as did his father; now built a miniature mill; now experimented at some peril in the laboratory which had been arranged in the Cloistered House for scientific experiments; now shot partridges in the fields where partridges had not been shot for years; and was as little in the picture as his adventurous father, though he wore a broad-brimmed hat, smiling the while at the pain it gave to the simple folk around him.

And yet once more the owner of the Cloistered House returned alone. The blue-eyed lady was gone to her grave; the youth was abroad. This time he came to die. He was found lying on the floor of his laboratory with a broken retort in fragments beside him. With his servant, Luke Claridge was the first to look upon him lying in the wreck of his last experiment, a spirit-lamp still burning above him, in the grey light of a winter's morning. Luke Claridge closed the eyes, straightened the body, and crossed the hands over the breast which had been the laboratory of many conflicting passions of life.

The dead man had left instructions that his body should be buried in the Quaker graveyard, but Luke

Claridge and the Elders prevented that—he had no right to the privileges of a Friend; and, as the only son was afar, and no near relatives pressed the late Earl's wishes, the ancient family tomb in Ireland received all that was left of the owner of the Cloistered House, which, with the estates in Ireland and the title, passed to the wandering son.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GATES OF THE WORLD

Stillness in the Meeting-house, save for the light swish of one graveyard-tree against the window-pane, and the slow breathing of the Quaker folk who filled every corner. On the long bench at the upper end of the room the Elders sat motionless, their hands on their knees, wearing their hats; the women in their poke-bonnets kept their gaze upon their laps. The heads of all save three were averted, and they were Luke Claridge, his only living daughter, called Faith, and his dead daughter's son David, who kept his eyes fixed on the window where the twig flicked against the pane. The eyes of Faith, who sat on a bench at one side, travelled from David to her father constantly; and if, once or twice, the plain rebuke of Luke Claridge's look compelled her eyes upon her folded hands, still she was watchful and waiting, and seemed demurely to defy the convention of unblinking silence. As time went on, others of her sex stole glances at Mercy's son from the depths of their bonnets; and at last, after over an hour, they and all were drawn to look steadily at the young man upon whose business this Meeting of Discipline had been called. The air grew warmer and warmer, but no one became restless; all seemed as cool of face and body as the grey gowns and coats with grey steel buttons which they wore.

At last a shrill voice broke the stillness. Raising his head, one of the Elders said: "Thee will stand up, friend." He looked at David.

With a slight gesture of relief the young man stood up. He was good to look at—clean-shaven, broad of brow, fine of figure, composed of carriage, though it was not the composure of the people by whom he was surrounded. They were dignified, he was graceful; they were consistently slow of movement, but at times his quick gestures showed that he had not been able to train his spirit to that passiveness by which he lived surrounded. Their eyes were slow and quiet, more meditative than observant; his were changeful in expression, now abstracted, now dark and shining as though some inner fire was burning. The head, too, had a habit of coming up quickly with an almost wilful gesture, and with an air which, in others, might have been called pride.

"What is thy name?" said another owl-like Elder to him.

A gentle, half-amused smile flickered at the young man's lips for an instant, then, "David Claridge—still," he answered.

His last word stirred the meeting. A sort of ruffle went through the atmosphere, and now every eye was fixed and inquiring. The word was ominous. He was there on his trial, and for discipline; and it was thought by all that, as many days had passed since his offence was committed, meditation and prayer should have done their work. Now, however, in the tone of his voice, as it clothed the last word, there was something of defiance. On the ear of his grandfather, Luke Claridge, it fell heavily. The old man's lips closed tightly, he clasped his hands between his knees with apparent self-repression.

The second Elder who had spoken was he who had once heard Luke Claridge use profane words in the Cloistered House. Feeling trouble ahead, and liking the young man and his brother Elder, Luke Claridge, John Fairley sought now to take the case into his own hands.

"Thee shall never find a better name, David," he said, "if thee live a hundred years. It hath served well in England. This thee didst do. While the young Earl of Eglington was being brought home, with noise and brawling, after his return to Parliament, thee mingled among the brawlers; and because some evil words were said of thy hat and thy apparel, thee laid about thee, bringing one to the dust, so that his life was in peril for some hours to come. Jasper Kimber was his name."

"Were it not that the smitten man forgave thee, thee would now be in a prison cell," shrilly piped the Elder who had asked his name.

"The fight was fair," was the young man's reply. "Though I am a Friend, the man was English."

"Thee was that day a son of Belial," rejoined the shrill Elder. "Thee did use thy hands like any heathen sailor—is it not the truth?"

"I struck the man. I punished him—why enlarge?"

"Thee is guilty?"

"I did the thing."

"That is one charge against thee. There are others. Thee was seen to drink of spirits in a public-house at Heddington that day. Twice— thrice, like any drunken collier."

"Twice," was the prompt correction.

There was a moment's pause, in which some women sighed and others folded and unfolded their hands on their laps; the men frowned.

"Thee has been a dark deceiver," said the shrill Elder again, and with a ring of acrid triumph; "thee has hid these things from our eyes many years, but in one day thee has uncovered all. Thee—"

"Thee is charged," interposed Elder Fairley, "with visiting a play this same day, and with seeing a dance of Spain following upon it."

"I did not disdain the music," said the young man drily; "the flute, of all instruments, has a mellow sound." Suddenly his eyes darkened, he became abstracted, and gazed at the window where the twig flicked softly against the pane, and the heat of summer palpitated in the air. "It has good grace to my ear," he added slowly.

Luke Claridge looked at him intently. He began to realize that there were forces stirring in his grandson which had no beginning in Claridge blood, and were not nurtured in the garden with the fruited wall. He was not used to problems; he had only a code, which he had rigidly kept. He had now a glimmer of something beyond code or creed.

He saw that the shrill Elder was going to speak. He intervened. "Thee is charged, David," he said coldly, "with kissing a woman—a stranger and a wanton—where the four roads meet 'twixt here and yonder town." He motioned towards the hills.

"In the open day," added the shrill Elder, a red spot burning on each withered cheek.

"The woman was comely," said the young man, with a tone of irony, recovering an impassive look.

A strange silence fell, the women looked down; yet they seemed not so confounded as the men. After a moment they watched the young man with quicker flashes of the eye.

"The answer is shameless," said the shrill Elder. "Thy life is that of a carnal hypocrite."

The young man said nothing. His face had become very pale, his lips were set, and presently he sat down and folded his arms.

"Thee is guilty of all?" asked John Fairley.

His kindly eye was troubled, for he had spent numberless hours in this young man's company, and together they had read books of travel and history, and even the plays of Shakespeare and Marlowe, though drama was anathema to the Society of Friends—they did not realize it in the life around them. That which was drama was either the visitation of God or the dark deeds of man, from which they must avert their eyes. Their own tragedies they hid beneath their grey coats and bodices; their dirty linen they never washed in public, save in the scandal such as this where the Society must intervene. Then the linen was not only washed, but duly starched, sprinkled, and ironed.

"I have answered all. Judge by my words," said David gravely.

"Has repentance come to thee? Is it thy will to suffer that which we may decide for thy correction?" It was Elder Fairley who spoke. He was determined to control the meeting and to influence its judgment. He loved the young man.

David made no reply; he seemed lost in thought. "Let the discipline proceed—he hath an evil spirit," said the shrill Elder.

"His childhood lacked in much," said Elder Fairley patiently.

To most minds present the words carried home—to every woman who had a child, to every man who

had lost a wife and had a motherless son. This much they knew of David's real history, that Mercy Claridge, his mother, on a visit to the house of an uncle at Portsmouth, her mother's brother, had eloped with and was duly married to the captain of a merchant ship. They also knew that, after some months, Luke Claridge had brought her home; and that before her child was born news came that the ship her husband sailed had gone down with all on board. They knew likewise that she had died soon after David came, and that her father, Luke Claridge, buried her in her maiden name, and brought the boy up as his son, not with his father's name but bearing that name so long honoured in England, and even in the far places of the earth—for had not Benn Claridge, Luke's brother, been a great carpet-merchant, traveller, and explorer in Asia Minor, Egypt, and the Soudan—Benn Claridge of the whimsical speech, the pious life? All this they knew; but none of them, to his or her knowledge, had ever seen David's father. He was legendary; though there was full proof that the girl had been duly married. That had been laid before the Elders by Luke Claridge on an occasion when Benn Claridge, his brother was come among them again from the East.

At this moment of trial David was thinking of his uncle, Benn Claridge, and of his last words fifteen years before when going once again to the East, accompanied by the Muslim chief Ebn Ezra, who had come with him to England on the business of his country. These were Benn Claridge's words: "Love God before all, love thy fellow-man, and thy conscience will bring thee safe home, lad."

"If he will not repent, there is but one way," said the shrill Elder.

"Let there be no haste," said Luke Claridge, in a voice that shook a little in his struggle for self-control.

Another heretofore silent Elder, sitting beside John Fairley, exchanged words in a whisper with him, and then addressed them. He was a very small man with a very high stock and spreading collar, a thin face, and large wide eyes. He kept his chin down in his collar, but spoke at the ceiling like one blind, though his eyes were sharp enough on occasion. His name was Meacham.

"It is meet there shall be time for sorrow and repentance," he said. "This, I pray you all, be our will: that for three months David live apart, even in the hut where lived the drunken chair-maker ere he disappeared and died, as rumour saith—it hath no tenant. Let it be that after to-morrow night at sunset none shall speak to him till that time be come, the first day of winter. Till that day he shall speak to no man, and shall be despised of the world, and—pray God—of himself. Upon the first day of winter let it be that he come hither again and speak with us."

On the long stillness of assent that followed there came a voice across the room, from within a grey-and-white bonnet, which shadowed a delicate face shining with the flame of the spirit within. It was the face of Faith Claridge, the sister of the woman in the graveyard, whose soul was "with the Lord," though she was but one year older and looked much younger than her nephew, David.

"Speak, David," she said softly. "Speak now. Doth not the spirit move thee?"

She gave him his cue, for he had of purpose held his peace till all had been said; and he had come to say some things which had been churning in his mind too long. He caught the faint cool sarcasm in her tone, and smiled unconsciously at her last words. She, at least, must have reasons for her faith in him, must have grounds for his defence in painful days to come; for painful they must be, whether he stayed to do their will, or went into the fighting world where Quakers were few and life composite of things they never knew in Hamley.

He got to his feet and clasped his hands behind his back. After an instant he broke silence.

"All those things of which I am accused, I did; and for them is asked repentance. Before that day on which I did these things was there complaint, or cause for it? Was my life evil? Did I think in secret that which might not be done openly? Well, some things I did secretly. Ye shall hear of them. I read where I might, and after my taste, many plays, and found in them beauty and the soul of deep things. Tales I have read, but a few, and John Milton, and Chaucer, and Bacon, and Montaigne, and Arab poets also, whose books my uncle sent me. Was this sin in me?"

"It drove to a day of shame for thee," said the shrill Elder.

He took no heed, but continued: "When I was a child I listened to the lark as it rose from the meadow; and I hid myself in the hedge that, unseen, I might hear it sing; and at night I waited till I could hear the nightingale. I have heard the river singing, and the music of the trees. At first I thought that this must be sin, since ye condemn the human voice that sings, but I could feel no guilt. I heard men and women sing upon the village green, and I sang also. I heard bands of music. One instrument seemed to me more than all the rest. I bought one like it, and learned to play. It was the flute—its note so soft and pleasant. I learned to play it—years ago—in the woods of Beedon beyond the hill, and I have felt no

guilt from then till now. For these things I have no repentance."

"Thee has had good practice in deceit," said the shrill Elder.

Suddenly David's manner changed. His voice became deeper; his eyes took on that look of brilliance and heat which had given Luke Claridge anxious thoughts.

"I did, indeed, as the spirit moved me, even as ye have done."

"Blasphemer, did the spirit move thee to brawl and fight, to drink and curse, to kiss a wanton in the open road? What hath come upon thee?" Again it was the voice of the shrill Elder.

"Judge me by the truth I speak," he answered. "Save in these things my life has been an unclasped book for all to read."

"Speak to the charge of brawling and drink, David," rejoined the little Elder Meacham with the high collar and gaze upon the ceiling.

"Shall I not speak when I am moved? Ye have struck swiftly; I will draw the arrow slowly from the wound. But, in truth, ye had good right to wound. Naught but kindness have I had among you all; and I will answer. Straightly have I lived since my birth. Yet betimes a torturing unrest of mind was used to come upon me as I watched the world around us. I saw men generous to their kind, industrious and brave, beloved by their fellows; and I have seen these same men drink and dance and give themselves to coarse, rough play like young dogs in a kennel. Yet, too, I have seen dark things done in drink—the cheerful made morose, the gentle violent. What was the temptation? What the secret? Was it but the low craving of the flesh, or was it some primitive unrest, or craving of the soul, which, clouded and baffled by time and labour and the wear of life, by this means was given the witched medicament—a false freedom, a thrilling forgetfulness? In ancient days the high, the humane, in search of cure for poison, poisoned themselves, and then applied the antidote. He hath little knowledge and less pity for sin who has never sinned. The day came when all these things which other men did in my sight I did—openly. I drank with them in the taverns—twice I drank. I met a lass in the way. I kissed her. I sat beside her at the roadside and she told me her brief, sad, evil story. One she had loved had left her. She was going to London. I gave her what money I had—"

"And thy watch," said a whispering voice from the Elders' bench.

"Even so. And at the cross-roads I bade her goodbye with sorrow."

"There were those who saw," said the shrill voice from the bench.

"They saw what I have said—no more. I had never tasted spirits in my life. I had never kissed a woman's lips. Till then I had never struck my fellow-man; but before the sun went down I fought the man who drove the lass in sorrow into the homeless world. I did not choose to fight; but when I begged the man Jasper Kimber for the girl's sake to follow and bring her back, and he railed at me and made to fight me, I took off my hat, and there I laid him in the dust."

"No thanks to thee that he did not lie in his grave," observed the shrill Elder.

"In truth I hit hard," was the quiet reply.

"How came thee expert with thy fists?" asked Elder Fairley, with the shadow of a smile.

"A book I bought from London, a sack of corn, a hollow leather ball, and an hour betimes with the drunken chair-maker in the hut by the lime-kiln on the hill. He was once a sailor and a fighting man."

A look of blank surprise ran slowly along the faces of the Elders. They were in a fog of misunderstanding and reprobation.

"While yet my father"—he looked at Luke Claridge, whom he had ever been taught to call his father—"shared the great business at Heddington, and the ships came from Smyrna and Alexandria, I had some small duties, as is well known. But that ceased, and there was little to do. Sports are forbidden among us here, and my body grew sick, because the mind had no labour. The world of work has thickened round us beyond the hills. The great chimneys rise in a circle as far as eye can see on yonder crests; but we slumber and sleep."

"Enough, enough," said a voice from among the women. "Thee has a friend gone to London—thee knows the way. It leads from the cross-roads!"

Faith Claridge, who had listened to David's speech, her heart panting, her clear grey eyes—she had



her mother's eyes—fixed benignly on him, turned to the quarter whence the voice came. Seeing who it was—a widow who, with no demureness, had tried without avail to bring Luke Claridge to her—her lips pressed together in a bitter smile, and she said to her nephew clearly:

"Patience Spielman hath little hope of thee, David. Hope hath died in her."

A faint, prim smile passed across the faces of all present, for all knew Faith's allusion, and it relieved the tension of the past half-hour. From the first moment David began to speak he had commanded his hearers. His voice was low and even; but it had also a power which, when put to sudden quiet use, compelled the hearer to an almost breathless silence, not so much to the meaning of the words, but to the tone itself, to the man behind it. His personal force was remarkable. Quiet and pale ordinarily, his clear russet-brown hair falling in a wave over his forehead, when roused, he seemed like some delicate engine made to do great labours. As Faith said to him once, "David, thee looks as though thee could lift great weights lightly." When roused, his eyes lighted like a lamp, the whole man seemed to pulsate. He had shocked, awed, and troubled his listeners. Yet he had held them in his power, and was master of their minds. The interjections had but given him new means to defend himself. After Faith had spoken he looked slowly round.

"I am charged with being profane," he said. "I do not remember. But is there none among you who has not secretly used profane words and, neither in secret nor openly, has repented? I am charged with drinking. On one day of my life I drank openly. I did it because something in me kept crying out, 'Taste and see!' I tasted and saw, and know; and I know that oblivion, that brief pitiful respite from trouble, which this evil tincture gives. I drank to know; and I found it lure me into a new careless joy. The sun seemed brighter, men's faces seemed happier, the world sang about me, the blood ran swiftly, thoughts swarmed in my brain. My feet were on the mountains, my hands were on the sails of great ships; I was a conqueror. I understood the drunkard in the first withdrawal begotten of this false stimulant. I drank to know. Is there none among you who has, though it be but once, drunk secretly as I drank openly? If there be none, then I am condemned."

"Amen," said Elder Fairley's voice from the bench. "In the open way by the cross-roads I saw a woman. I saw she was in sorrow. I spoke to her. Tears came to her eyes. I took her hand, and we sat down together. Of the rest I have told you. I kissed her—a stranger. She was comely. And this I know, that the matter ended by the cross-roads, and that by and forbidden paths have easy travel. I kissed the woman openly—is there none among you who has kissed secretly, and has kept the matter hidden? For him I struck and injured, it was fair. Shall a man be beaten like a dog? Kimber would have beaten me."

"Wherein has it all profited?" asked the shrill Elder querulously.

"I have knowledge. None shall do these things hereafter but I shall understand. None shall go venturing, exploring, but I shall pray for him."

"Thee will break thy heart and thy life exploring," said Luke Claridge bitterly. Experiment in life he did not understand, and even Benn Claridge's emigration to far lands had ever seemed to him a monstrous and amazing thing, though it ended in the making of a great business in which he himself had prospered, and from which he had now retired. He suddenly realized that a day of trouble was at hand with this youth on whom his heart doted, and it tortured him that he could not understand.

"By none of these things shall I break my life," was David's answer now.

For a moment he stood still and silent, then all at once he stretched out his hands to them. "All these things I did were against our faith. I desire forgiveness. I did them out of my own will; I will take up your judgment. If there be no more to say, I will make ready to go to old Soolsby's hut on the hill till the set time be passed."

There was a long silence. Even the shrill Elder's head was buried in his breast. They were little likely to forego his penalty. There was a gentle inflexibility in their natures born of long restraint and practised determination. He must go out into blank silence and banishment until the first day of winter. Yet, recalcitrant as they held him, their secret hearts were with him, for there was none of them but had had happy commerce with him; and they could think of no more bitter punishment than to be cut off from their own society for three months. They were satisfied he was being trained back to happiness and honour.

A new turn was given to events, however. The little wizened Elder Meacham said: "The flute, friend—is it here?"

"I have it here," David answered.

"Let us have music, then."

"To what end?" interjected the shrill Elder.

"He hath averred he can play," drily replied the other. "Let us judge whether vanity breeds untruth in him."

The furtive brightening of the eyes in the women was represented in the men by an assumed look of abstraction in most; in others by a bland assumption of judicial calm. A few, however, frowned, and would have opposed the suggestion, but that curiosity mastered them. These watched with darkening interest the flute, in three pieces, drawn from an inner pocket and put together swiftly.

David raised the instrument to his lips, blew one low note, and then a little run of notes, all smooth and soft. Mellowness and a sober sweetness were in the tone. He paused a moment after this, and seemed questioning what to play. And as he stood, the flute in his hands, his thoughts took flight to his Uncle Benn, whose kindly, shrewd face and sharp brown eyes were as present to him, and more real, than those of Luke Claridge, whom he saw every day. Of late when he had thought of his uncle, however, alternate depression and lightness of spirit had possessed him. Night after night he had troubled sleep, and he had dreamed again and again that his uncle knocked at his door, or came and stood beside his bed and spoke to him. He had wakened suddenly and said "Yes" to a voice which seemed to call to him.

Always his dreams and imaginings settled round his Uncle Benn, until he had found himself trying to speak to the little brown man across the thousand leagues of land and sea. He had found, too, in the past that when he seemed to be really speaking to his uncle, when it seemed as though the distance between them had been annihilated, that soon afterwards there came a letter from him. Yet there had not been more than two or three a year. They had been, however, like books of many pages, closely written, in Arabic, in a crabbed characteristic hand, and full of the sorrow and grandeur and misery of the East. How many books on the East David had read he would hardly have been able to say; but something of the East had entered into him, something of the philosophy of Mahomet and Buddha, and the beauty of Omar Khayyam had given a touch of colour and intellect to the narrow faith in which he had been schooled. He had found himself replying to a question asked of him in Heddington, as to how he knew that there was a God, in the words of a Muslim quoted by his uncle: "As I know by the tracks in the sand whether a Man or Beast has passed there, so the heaven with its stars, the earth with its fruits, show me that God has passed." Again, in reply to the same question, the reply of the same Arab sprang to his lips—"Does the Morning want a Light to see it by?"

As he stood with his flute—his fingers now and then caressingly rising and falling upon its little caverns, his mind travelled far to those regions he had never seen, where his uncle traded, and explored. Suddenly, the call he had heard in his sleep now came to him in this waking reverie. His eyes withdrew from the tree at the window, as if startled, and he almost called aloud in reply; but he realised where he was. At last, raising the flute to his lips, as the eyes of Luke Claridge closed with very trouble, he began to play.

Out in the woods of Beedon he had attuned his flute to the stir of leaves, the murmur of streams, the song of birds, the boom and burden of storm; and it was soft and deep as the throat of the bell-bird of Australian wilds. Now it was mastered by the dreams he had dreamed of the East: the desert skies, high and clear and burning, the desert sunsets, plaintive and peaceful and unvaried—one lovely diffusion, in which day dies without splendour and in a glow of pain. The long velvety tread of the camel, the song of the camel-driver, the monotonous chant of the river-man, with fingers mechanically falling on his little drum, the cry of the eagle of the Libyan Hills, the lap of the heavy waters of the Dead Sea down by Jericho, the battle-call of the Druses beyond Damascus, the lonely gigantic figures at the mouth of the temple of Abou Simbel, looking out with the eternal question to the unanswering desert, the delicate ruins of moonlit Baalbec, with the snow mountains hovering above, the green oases, and the deep wells where the caravans lay down in peace—all these were pouring their influences on his mind in the little Quaker village of Hamley where life was so bare, so grave.

The music he played was all his own, was instinctively translated from all other influences into that which they who listened to him could understand. Yet that sensuous beauty which the Quaker Society was so concerned to banish from any part in their life was playing upon them now, making the hearts of the women beat fast, thrilling them, turning meditation into dreams, and giving the sight of the eyes far visions of pleasure. So powerful was this influence that the shrill Elder twice essayed to speak in protest, but was prevented by the wizened Elder Meacham. When it seemed as if the aching, throbbing sweetness must surely bring denunciation, David changed the music to a slow mourning cadence. It was a wail of sorrow, a march to the grave, a benediction, a soft sound of farewell, floating through the room and dying away into the mid-day sun.

There came a long silence after, and David sat with unmoving look upon the distant prospect through the window. A woman's sob broke the air. Faith's handkerchief was at her eyes. Only one quick sob, but

it had been wrung from her by the premonition suddenly come that the brother—he was brother more than nephew—over whom her heart had yearned had, indeed, come to the cross-roads, and that their ways would henceforth divide. The punishment or banishment now to be meted out to him was as nothing. It meant a few weeks of disgrace, of ban, of what, in effect, was self-immolation, of that commanding justice of the Society which no one yet save the late Earl of Eglington had defied. David could refuse to bear punishment, but such a possibility had never occurred to her or to any one present. She saw him taking his punishment as surely as though the law of the land had him in its grasp. It was not that which she was fearing. But she saw him moving out of her life. To her this music was the prelude of her tragedy.

A moment afterwards Luke Claridge arose and spoke to David in austere tones: "It is our will that thee begone to the chair-maker's but upon the hill till three months be passed, and that none have speech with thee after sunset to-morrow even."

"Amen," said all the Elders.

"Amen," said David, and put his flute into his pocket, and rose to go.

## CHAPTER III

### BANISHED

The chair-maker's hut lay upon the north hillside about half-way between the Meeting-house at one end of the village and the common at the other end. It commanded the valley, had no house near it, and was sheltered from the north wind by the hill-top which rose up behind it a hundred feet or more. No road led to it—only a path up from the green of the village, winding past a gulley and the deep cuts of old rivulets now over grown by grass or bracken. It got the sun abundantly, and it was protected from the full sweep of any storm. It had but two rooms, the floor was of sanded earth, but it had windows on three sides, east, west, and south, and the door looked south. Its furniture was a plank bed, a few shelves, a bench, two chairs, some utensils, a fireplace of stone, a picture of the Virgin and Child, and of a cardinal of the Church of Rome with a red hat—for the chair-maker had been a Roman Catholic, the only one of that communion in Hamley. Had he been a Protestant his vices would have made him anathema, but, being what he was, his fellow-villagers had treated him with kindness.

After the half-day in which he was permitted to make due preparations, lay in store of provisions, and purchase a few sheep and hens, hither came David Claridge. Here, too, came Faith, who was permitted one hour with him before he began his life of willing isolation. Little was said as they made the journey up the hill, driving the sheep before them, four strong lads following with necessities—flour, rice, potatoes, and suchlike.

Arrived, the goods were deposited inside the hut, the lads were dismissed, and David and Faith were left alone. David looked at his watch. They had still a handful of minutes before the parting. These flew fast, and yet, seated inside the door, and looking down at the village which the sun was bathing in the last glowing of evening, they remained silent. Each knew that a great change had come in their hitherto unchanging life, and it was difficult to separate premonition from substantial fact. The present fact did not represent all they felt, though it represented all on which they might speak together now.

Looking round the room, at last Faith said: "Thee has all thee needs, David? Thee is sure?"

He nodded. "I know not yet how little man may need. I have lived in plenty."

At that moment her eyes rested on the Cloistered House.

"The Earl of Eglington would not call it plenty." A shade passed over David's face. "I know not how he would measure. Is his own field so wide?"

"The spread of a peacock's feather."

"What does thee know of him?" David asked the question absently.

"I have eyes to see, Davy." The shadows from that seeing were in her eyes as she spoke, but he did not observe them.

"Thee sees but with half an eye," she continued. "With both mine I have seen horses and carriages, and tall footmen, and wine and silver, and gilded furniture, and fine pictures, and rolls of new carpet—of Uncle Benn's best carpets, Davy—and a billiard-table, and much else."

A cloud slowly gathered over David's face, and he turned to her with an almost troubled surprise. "Thee has seen these things—and how?"

"One day—thee was in Devon—one of the women was taken ill. They sent for me because the woman asked it. She was a Papist; but she begged that I should go with her to the hospital, as there was no time to send to Heddington for a nurse. She had seen me once in the house of the toll-gate keeper. Ill as she was, I could have laughed, for, as we went in the Earl's carriage to the hospital—thirty miles it was—she said she felt at home with me, my dress being so like a nun's. It was then I saw the Cloistered House within and learned what was afoot."

"In the Earl's carriage indeed—and the Earl?"

"He was in Ireland, burrowing among those tarnished baubles, his titles, and stripping the Irish Peter to clothe the English Paul."

"He means to make Hamley his home? From Ireland these furnishings come?"

"So it seems. Henceforth the Cloistered House will have its doors flung wide. London and all the folk of Parliament will flutter along the dunes of Hamley."

"Then the bailiff will sit yonder within a year, for he is but a starved Irish peer."

"He lives to-day as though he would be rich tomorrow. He bids for fame and fortune, Davy."

"'Tis as though a shirtless man should wear a broadcloth coat over a cotton vest."

"The world sees only the broadcloth coat. For the rest—"

"For the rest, Faith?"

"They see the man's face, and—"

His eyes were embarrassed. A thought had flashed into his mind which he considered unworthy, for this girl beside him was little likely to dwell upon the face of a renegade peer, whose living among them was a constant reminder of his father's apostasy. She was too fine, dwelt in such high spheres, that he could not think of her being touched by the glittering adventures of this daring young member of Parliament, whose book of travels had been published, only to herald his understood determination to have office in the Government, not in due time, but in his own time. What could there be in common between the sophisticated Eglington and this sweet, primitively wholesome Quaker girl?

Faith read what was passing in his mind. She flushed—slowly flushed until her face—and eyes were one soft glow, then she laid a hand upon his arm and said: "Davy, I feel the truth about him—no more. Nothing of him is for thee or me. His ways are not our ways." She paused, and then said solemnly: "He hath a devil. That I feel. But he hath also a mind, and a cruel will. He will hew a path, or make others hew it for him. He will make or break. Nothing will stand in his way, neither man nor thing, those he loves nor those he hates. He will go on—and to go on, all means, so they be not criminal, will be his. Men will prophesy great things for him—they do so now. But nothing they prophesy, Davy, keeps pace with his resolve."

"How does thee know these things?"

His question was one of wonder and surprise. He had never before seen in her this sharp discernment and criticism.

"How know I, Davy? I know him by studying thee. What thee is not he is. What he is thee is not." The last beams of the sun sent a sudden glint of yellow to the green at their feet from the western hills, rising far over and above the lower hills of the village, making a wide ocean of light, at the bottom of which lay the Meeting-house and the Cloistered House, and the Red Mansion with the fruited wall, and all the others, like dwellings at the bottom of a golden sea. David's eyes were on the distance, and the far-seeing look was in his face which had so deeply impressed Faith in the Meeting-house, by which she had read his future.

"And shall I not also go on?" he asked.

"How far, who can tell?"

There was a plaintive note in her voice—the unavailing and sad protest of the maternal spirit, of the keeper of the nest, who sees the brood fly safely away, looking not back.

"What does thee see for me afar, Faith?" His look was eager.

"The will of God, which shall be done," she said with a sudden resolution, and stood up. Her hands were lightly clasped before her like those of Titian's *Mater Dolorosa* among the Rubens and Tintoretts of the Prado, a lonely figure, whose lot it was to spend her life for others. Even as she already had done; for thrice she had refused marriages suitable and possible to her. In each case she had steeled her heart against loving, that she might be all in all to her sister's child and to her father. There is no habit so powerful as the habit of care of others. In Faith it came as near being a passion as passion could have a place in her even-flowing blood, under that cool flesh, governed by a heart as fair as the apricot blossoms on the wall in her father's garden. She had been bitterly hurt in the Meeting-house; as bitterly as is many a woman when her lover has deceived her. David had acknowledged before them all that he had played the flute secretly for years! That he should have played it was nothing; that she should not have shared his secret, and so shared his culpability before them all, was a wound which would take long to heal.

She laid her hand upon his shoulder suddenly with a nervous little motion.

"And the will of God thee shall do to His honour, though thee is outcast to-day. . . . But, Davy, the music-thee kept it from me."

He looked up at her steadily; he read what was in her mind.

"I hid it so, because I would not have thy conscience troubled. Thee would go far to smother it for me; and I was not so ungrateful to thee. I did it for good to thee."

A smile passed across her lips. Never was woman so grateful, never wound so quickly healed. She shook her head sadly at him, and stilling the proud throbbing of her heart, she said:

"But thee played so well, Davy!"

He got up and turned his head away, lest he should laugh outright. Her reasoning—though he was not worldly enough to call it feminine, and though it scarce tallied with her argument—seemed to him quite her own.

"How long have we?" he said over his shoulder. "The sun is yet five minutes up, or more," she said, a little breathlessly, for she saw his hand inside his coat, and guessed his purpose.

"But thee will not dare to play—thee will not dare," she said, but more as an invitation than a rebuke. "Speech was denied me here, but not my music. I find no sin in it."

She eagerly watched him adjust the flute. Suddenly she drew to him the chair from the doorway, and beckoned him to sit down. She sat where she could see the sunset.

The music floated through the room and down the hillside, a searching sweetness.

She kept her face ever on the far hills. It went on and on. At last it stopped. David roused himself, as from a dream. "But it is dark!" he said, startled. "It is past the time thee should be with me. My banishment began at sunset."

"Are all the sins to be thine?" she asked calmly. She had purposely let him play beyond the time set for their being together.

"Good-night, Davy." She kissed him on the cheek. "I will keep the music for the sin's remembrance," she added, and went out into the night.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CALL

"England is in one of those passions so creditable to her moral sense, so illustrative of her

unregulated virtues. We are living in the first excitement and horror of the news of the massacre of Christians at Damascus. We are full of righteous and passionate indignation. 'Punish —restore the honour of the Christian nations' is the proud appeal of prelate, prig, and philanthropist, because some hundreds of Christians who knew their danger, yet chose to take up their abode in a fanatical Muslim city of the East, have suffered death."

The meeting had been called in answer to an appeal from Exeter Hall. Lord Eglington had been asked to speak, and these were among his closing words.

He had seen, as he thought, an opportunity for sensation. Politicians of both sides, the press on all hands, were thundering denunciations upon the city of Damascus, sitting insolent and satiated in its exquisite bloom of pear and nectarine, and the deed itself was fading into that blank past of Eastern life where there "are no birds in last year's nest." If he voyaged with the crowd, his pennant would be lost in the clustering sails! So he would move against the tide, and would startle, even if he did not convince.

"Let us not translate an inflamed religious emotion into a war," he continued. "To what good? Would it restore one single life in Damascus? Would it bind one broken heart? Would it give light to one darkened home? Let us have care lest we be called a nation of hypocrites. I will neither support nor oppose the resolution presented; I will content myself with pointing the way to a greater national self-respect."

Mechanically, a few people who had scarcely apprehended the full force of his remarks began to applaud; but there came cries of "'Sh! 'Sh!" and the clapping of hands suddenly stopped. For a moment there was absolute silence, in which the chairman adjusted his glasses and fumbled with the agenda paper in his confusion, scarcely knowing what to do. The speaker had been expected to second the resolution, and had not done so. There was an awkward silence. Then, in a loud whisper, some one said:

"David, David, do thee speak."

It was the voice of Faith Claridge. Perturbed and anxious, she had come to the meeting with her father. They had not slept for nights, for the last news they had had of Benn Claridge was from the city of Damascus, and they were full of painful apprehensions.

It was the eve of the first day of winter, and David's banishment was over. Faith had seen David often at a distance—how often had she stood in her window and looked up over the apricot-wall to the chair-maker's hut on the hill! According to his penalty David had never come to Hamley village, but had lived alone, speaking to no one, avoided by all, working out his punishment. Only the day before the meeting he had read of the massacre at Damascus from a newspaper which had been left on his doorstep overnight. Elder Fairley had so far broken the covenant of ostracism and boycott, knowing David's love for his Uncle Benn.

All that night David paced the hillside in anxiety and agitation, and saw the sun rise upon a new world—a world of freedom, of home-returning, yet a world which, during the past four months, had changed so greatly that it would never seem the same again.

The sun was scarce two hours high when Faith and her father mounted the hill to bring him home again. He had, however, gone to Heddington to learn further news of the massacre. He was thinking of his Uncle Benn— all else could wait. His anxiety was infinitely greater than that of Luke Claridge, for his mind had been disturbed by frequent premonitions; and those sudden calls in his sleep—his uncle's voice—ever seemed to be waking him at night. He had not meant to speak at the meeting, but the last words of the speaker decided him; he was in a flame of indignation. He heard the voice of Faith whisper over the heads of the people. "David, David, do thee speak." Turning, he met her eyes, then rose to his feet, came steadily to the platform, and raised a finger towards the chairman.

A great whispering ran through the audience. Very many recognised him, and all had heard of him—the history of his late banishment and self-approving punishment were familiar to them. He climbed the steps of the platform alertly, and the chairman welcomed him with nervous pleasure. Any word from a Quaker, friendly to the feeling of national indignation, would give the meeting the new direction which all desired.

Something in the face of the young man, grown thin and very pale during the period of long thought and little food in the lonely and meditative life he had led; something human and mysterious in the strange tale of his one day's mad doings, fascinated them. They had heard of the liquor he had drunk, of the woman he had kissed at the cross-roads, of the man he had fought, of his discipline and sentence. His clean, shapely figure, and the soft austerity of the neat grey suit he wore, his broad-brimmed hat

pushed a little back, showing well a square white forehead— all conspired to send a wave of feeling through the audience, which presently broke into cheering.

Beginning with the usual formality, he said: "I am obliged to differ from nearly every sentiment expressed by the Earl of Eglington, the member for Levizes, who has just taken his seat."

There was an instant's pause, the audience cheered, and cries of delight came from all parts of the house. "All good counsel has its sting," he continued, "but the good counsel of him who has just spoken is a sting in a wound deeper than the skin. The noble Earl has bidden us to be consistent and reasonable. I have risen here to speak for that to which mere consistency and reason may do cruel violence. I am a man of peace, I am the enemy of war—it is my faith and creed; yet I repudiate the principle put forward by the Earl of Eglington, that you shall not clinch your hand for the cause which is your heart's cause, because, if you smite, the smiting must be paid for."

He was interrupted by cheers and laughter, for the late event in his own life came to them to point his argument.

"The nation that declines war may be refusing to inflict that just punishment which alone can set the wrong-doers on the better course. It is not the faith of that Society to which I belong to decline correction lest it may seem like war."

The point went home significantly, and cheering followed. "The high wall of Tibet, a stark refusal to open the door to the wayfarer, I can understand; but, friend"—he turned to the young peer—"friend, I cannot understand a defence of him who opens the door upon terms of mutual hospitality, and then, in the red blood of him who has so contracted, blots out the just terms upon which they have agreed. Is that thy faith, friend?"

The repetition of the word friend was almost like a gibe, though it was not intended as such. There was none present, however, but knew of the defection of the Earl's father from the Society of Friends, and they chose to interpret the reference to a direct challenge. It was a difficult moment for the young Earl, but he only smiled, and cherished anger in his heart.

For some minutes David spoke with force and power, and he ended with passionate solemnity. His voice rang out: "The smoke of this burning rises to Heaven, the winds that wail over scattered and homeless dust bear a message of God to us. In the name of Mahomet, whose teaching condemns treachery and murder, in the name of the Prince of Peace, who taught that justice which makes for peace, I say it is England's duty to lay the iron hand of punishment upon this evil city and on the Government in whose orbit it shines with so deathly a light. I fear it is that one of my family and of my humble village lies beaten to death in Damascus. Yet not because of that do I raise my voice here to-day. These many years Benn Claridge carried his life in his hands, and in a good cause it was held like the song of a bird, to be blown from his lips in the day of the Lord. I speak only as an Englishman. I ask you to close your minds against the words of this brilliant politician, who would have you settle a bill of costs written in Christian blood, by a promise to pay, got through a mockery of armed display in those waters on which once looked the eyes of the Captain of our faith. Humanity has been put in the witness-box of the world; let humanity give evidence."

Women wept. Men waved their hats and cheered; the whole meeting rose to its feet and gave vent to its feelings.

For some moments the tumult lasted, Eglington looking on with face unmoved. As David turned to leave the table, however, he murmured, "Peacemaker! Peacemaker!" and smiled sarcastically.

As the audience resumed their seats, two people were observed making their way to the platform. One was Elder Fairley, leading the way to a tall figure in a black robe covering another coloured robe, and wearing a large white turban. Not seeing the new-comers, the chairman was about to put the resolution; but a protesting hand from John Fairley stopped him, and in a strange silence the two new-comers mounted the platform. David rose and advanced to meet them. There flashed into his mind that this stranger in Eastern garb was Ebn Ezra Bey, the old friend of Benn Claridge, of whom his uncle had spoken and written so much. The same instinct drew Ebn Ezra Bey to him—he saw the uncle's look in the nephew's face. In a breathless stillness the Oriental said in perfect English, with a voice monotonously musical:

"I came to thy house and found thee not. I have a message for thee from the land where thine uncle sojourned with me."

He took from a wallet a piece of paper and passed it to David, adding: "I was thine uncle's friend. He hath put off his sandals and walketh with bare feet!" David read eagerly.

"It is time to go, Davy," the paper said. "All that I have is thine. Go to Egypt, and thee shall find it so. Ebn Ezra Bey will bring thee. Trust him as I have done. He is a true man, though the Koran be his faith. They took me from behind, Davy, so that I was spared temptation—I die as I lived, a man of peace. It is too late to think how it might have gone had we met face to face; but the will of God worketh not according to our will. I can write no more. Luke, Faith, and Davy—dear Davy, the night has come, and all's well. Good morrow, Davy. Can you not hear me call? I have called thee so often of late! Good morrow! Good morrow! . . . I doff my hat, Davy—at last—to God!"

David's face whitened. All his visions had been true visions, his dreams true dreams. Brave Benn Claridge had called to him at his door—" Good morrow! Good morrow! Good morrow!" Had he not heard the knocking and the voice? Now all was made clear. His path lay open before him—a far land called him, his quiet past was infinite leagues away. Already the staff was in his hands and the cross-roads were sinking into the distance behind. He was dimly conscious of the wan, shocked face of Faith in the crowd beneath him, which seemed blurred and swaying, of the bowed head of Luke Claridge, who, standing up, had taken off his hat in the presence of this news of his brother's death which he saw written in David's face. David stood for a moment before the great throng, numb and speechless. "It is a message from Damascus," he said at last, and could say no more.

Ebn Ezra Bey turned a grave face upon the audience.

Will you hear me?" he said. "I am an Arab." "Speak—speak!" came from every side.

"The Turk hath done his evil work in Damascus," he said. "All the Christians are dead—save one; he hath turned Muslim, and is safe." His voice had a note of scorn. "It fell sudden and swift like a storm in summer. There were no paths to safety. Soldiers and those who led them shared in the slaying. As he and I who had travelled far together these many years sojourned there in the way of business, I felt the air grow colder, I saw the cloud gathering. I entreated, but he would not go. If trouble must come, then he would be with the Christians in their peril. At last he saw with me the truth. He had a plan of escape. There was a Christian weaver with his wife in a far quarter—against my entreaty he went to warn them. The storm broke. He was the first to fall, smitten in 'that street called Straight.' I found him soon after. Thus did he speak to me—even in these words: 'The blood of women and children shed here to-day shall cry from the ground. Unprovoked the host has turned wickedly upon his guest. The storm has been sown, and the whirlwind must be reaped. Out of this evil good shall come. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' These were his last words to me then. As his life ebbed out, he wrote a letter which I have brought hither to one"—he turned to David—"whom he loved. At the last he took off his hat, and lay with it in his hands, and died. . . . I am a Muslim, but the God of pity, of justice, and of right is my God; and in His name be it said that was a crime of Sheitan the accursed."

In a low voice the chairman put the resolution. The Earl of Eglington voted in its favour.

Walking the hills homeward with Ebn Ezra Bey, Luke, Faith, and John Fairley, David kept saying over to himself the words of Benn Claridge: "I have called thee so often of late. Good morrow! Good morrow! Good morrow! Can you not hear me call?"

## GLOSSARY

Aiwa—Yes.

Allah hu Achbar—God is most Great.

Al'mah—Female professional singers, signifying "a learned female."

Ardab—A measure equivalent to five English bushels.

Backsheesh—Tip, *douceur*.

Balass—Earthen vessel for carrying water.

Bdsha—Pasha.

Bersim—Clover.

Bismillah—In the name of God.

Bowdb—A doorkeeper.

Dahabieh—A Nile houseboat with large lateen sails.

Darabukkeh—A drum made of a skin stretched over an earthenware funnel.

Dourha—Maize.



Effendina—Most noble.  
El Azhar—The Arab University at Cairo.

Fedddn—A measure of land representing about an acre.  
Fellah—The Egyptian peasant.

Ghiassa—Small boat.

Hakim—Doctor.  
Hasheesh—Leaves of hemp.

Inshallah—God willing.

Kdnoon—A musical instrument like a dulcimer.  
Kavass—An orderly.  
Kemengeh—A cocoanut fiddle.  
Khamsin—A hot wind of Egypt and the Soudan.

Kourbash—A whip, often made of rhinoceros hide.

La ilaha illa-llah—There is no deity but God.

Malaish—No matter.  
Malboos—Demented.  
Mastaba—A bench.  
Medjidie—A Turkish Order.  
Mooshrabieh—Lattice window.  
Moufettish—High Steward.  
Mudir—The Governor of a  
Mudirieh, or province.  
Muezzin—The sheikh of the mosque who calls to prayer.

Narghileh—A Persian pipe.  
Nebool—A quarter-staff.

Ramadan—The Mahommedan season of fasting.

Saadat-el-bdsha—Excellency Pasha.  
Sdis—Groom.  
Sakkia—The Persian water-wheel.  
Salaam—Eastern salutation.  
Sheikh-el-beled—Head of a village.

Tarboosh—A Turkish turban.

Ulema—Learned men.

Wakf—Mahommedan Court dealing with succession, etc.  
Welee—A holy man or saint.

Yashmak—A veil for the lower part of the face.  
Yelek—A long vest or smock.

## **ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:**

There is no habit so powerful as the habit of care of others

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE WEAVERS: A TALE OF ENGLAND AND EGYPT  
OF FIFTY YEARS AGO - VOLUME 1 \*\*\*

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