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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo  
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm  
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller  
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
Cotton Dostoyevsky Dostoyevsky Smith Willis  
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Henry Willis  
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Nietzsche  
Stockton Turgenev Balzac Vatsyayana Crane  
Burroughs Verne Verne  
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Gogol Busch  
Homer Tolstoy Tolstoy Gogol Busch  
Darwin Thoreau Thoreau Twain Plato Scott  
Potter Zola Lawrence Lawrence Lawrence Harte  
Kant Jowett Stevenson Dickens Plato Harte  
Andersen Andersen Andersen Harte  
London Descartes Cervantes Burton Hesse  
Poe Aristotle Wells Wells Wells Cooke  
Hale James Hastings Hastings Hastings Cooke  
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**The Weavers: a tale of England  
and Egypt of fifty years ago -  
Volume 2**

Gilbert Parker

# Imprint

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## CHAPTER V

### THE WIDER WAY

Some months later the following letter came to David Claridge in Cairo from Faith Claridge in Hamley:

David, I write thee from the village and the land of the people which thou didst once love so well. Does thee love them still? They gave thee sour bread to eat ere thy going, but yet thee didst grind the flour for the baking. Thee didst frighten all who knew thee with thy doings that mad mid-summer time. The tavern, the theatre, the cross-roads, and the cockpit – was ever such a day!

Now, Davy, I must tell of a strange thing. But first, a moment. Thee remembers the man Kimber smitten by thee at the public-house on that day? What think thee has happened? He followed to London the lass kissed by thee, and besought her to return and marry him. This she refused at first with anger; but afterwards she said that, if in three years he was of the same mind, and stayed sober and hard-working meanwhile, she would give him an answer, she would consider. Her head was high. She has become maid to a lady of degree, who has well befriended her.

How do I know these things? Even from Jasper Kimber, who, on his return from London, was taken to his bed with fever. Because of the hard blows dealt him by thee, I went to make amends. He welcomed me, and soon opened his whole mind. That mind has generous moments, David, for he took to being thankful for thy knocks.

Now for the strange thing I hinted. After visiting Jasper Kimber at Heddington, as I came back over

the hill by the path we all took that day after the Meeting—Ebn Ezra Bey, my father, Elder Fairley, and thee and me—I drew near the chairmaker's but where thee lived alone all those sad months. It was late evening; the sun had set. Yet I felt that I must needs go and lay my hand in love upon the door of the empty hut which had been ever as thee left it. So I came down the little path swiftly, and then round the great rock, and up towards the door. But, as I did so, my heart stood still, for I heard voices. The door was open, but I could see no one. Yet there the voices sounded, one sharp and peevish with anger, the other low and rough. I could not hear what was said. At last, a figure came from the door and went quickly down the hillside. Who, think thee, was it? Even "neighbour Eglinton." I knew the walk and the forward thrust of the head. Inside the hut all was still. I drew near with a kind of fear, but yet I came to the door and looked in.

As I looked into the dusk, my limbs trembled under me, for who should be sitting there, a half-finished chair between his knees, but Soolsby the old chair-maker! Yes, it was he. There he sat looking at me with his staring blue eyes and shock of redgrey hair. "Soolsby! Soolsby!" said I, my heart hammering at my breast; for was not Soolsby dead and buried? His eyes stared at me in fright. "Why do you come?" he said in a hoarse whisper. "Is he dead, then? Has harm come to him?"

By now I had recovered myself, for it was no ghost I saw, but a human being more distraught than was myself. "Do you not know me, Soolsby?" I asked. "You are Mercy Claridge from beyond—beyond and away," he answered dazedly. "I am Faith Claridge, Soolsby," answered I. He started, peered forward at me, and for a moment he did not speak; then the fear went from his face. "Ay,

Faith Claridge, as I said," he answered, with apparent understanding, his stark mood passing. "No, thee said Mercy Claridge, Soolsby," said I, "and she has been asleep these many years." "Ay, she has slept soundly, thanks be to God!" he replied, and crossed himself. "Why should thee call me by her name?" I inquired. "Ay, is not her tomb in the churchyard?" he answered, and added quickly, "Luke Claridge and I are of an age to a day—which, think you, will go first?"

He stopped weaving, and peered over at me with his staring blue eyes, and I felt a sudden quickening of the heart. For, at the question, curtains seemed to drop from all around me, and leave me in the midst of pains and miseries, in a chill air that froze me to the marrow. I saw myself alone—thee in Egypt and I here, and none of our blood and name beside me. For we are the last, Davy, the last of the Claridges. But I said coldly, and with what was near to anger, that he should link his name and fate with that of Luke Claridge: "Which of ye two goes first is God's will, and according to His wisdom. Which, think thee," added I—and now I cannot forgive myself for saying it—"which, think thee, would do least harm in going?" "I know which would do most good," he answered, with a harsh laugh in his throat. Yet his blue eyes looked kindly at me, and now he began to nod pleasantly. I thought him a little mad, but yet his speech had seemed not without dark meaning. "Thee has had a visitor," I said to him presently. He laughed in a snarling way that made me shrink, and answered: "He wanted this and he wanted that—his high-handed, second-best lordship. Ay, and he would have it, because it pleased him to have it—like his father before him. A poor sparrow on a tree-top, if you tell him he must not have it, he will hunt it down the world till it is his, as though

it was a bird of paradise. And when he's seen it fall at last, he'll remember but the fun of the chase; and the bird may get to its tree-top again—if it can—if it can—if it can, my lord! That is what his father was, the last Earl, and that is what he is who left my door but now. He came to snatch old Soolsby's palace, his nest on the hill, to use it for a telescope, or such whimsies. He has scientific tricks like his father before him. Now is it astronomy, and now chemistry, and suchlike; and always it is the Eglington mind, which let God A'mighty make it as a favour. He would have old Soolsby's palace for his spy-glass, would he then? It scared him, as though I was the devil himself, to find me here. I had but come back in time—a day later, and he would have sat here and seen me in the Pit below before giving way. Possession's nine points were with me; and here I sat and faced him; and here he stormed, and would do this and should do that; and I went on with my work. Then he would buy my Colisyum, and I wouldn't sell it for all his puff-ball lordship might offer. Isn't the house of the snail as much to him as the turtle's shell to the turtle? I'll have no upstart spilling his chemicals here, or devilling the stars from a seat on my roof." "Last autumn," said I, "David Claridge was housed here. Thy palace was a prison then." "I know well of that. Haven't I found his records here? And do you think his makeshift lordship did not remind me?" "Records? What records, Soolsby?" asked I, most curious. "Writings of his thoughts which he forgot— food for mind and body left in the cupboard." "Give them to me upon this instant, Soolsby," said I. "All but one," said he, "and that is my own, for it was his mind upon Soolsby the drunken chair-maker. God save him from the heathen sword that slew his uncle. Two better men never sat upon a chair!" He placed the papers in my hand, all save that one which spoke of him. Ah,

David, what with the flute and the pen, banishment was no pain to thee! . . . He placed the papers, save that one, in my hands, and I, womanlike, asked again for all. "Some day," said he, "come, and I will read it to you. Nay, I will give you a taste of it now," he added, as he brought forth the writing. "Thus it reads."

Here are thy words, Davy. What think thee of them now?

"As I dwell in this house I know Soolsby as I never knew him when he lived, and though, up here, I spent many an hour with him. Men leave their impressions on all around them. The walls which have felt their look and their breath, the floor which has taken their footsteps, the chairs in which they have sat, have something of their presence. I feel Soolsby here at times so sharply that it would seem he came again and was in this room, though he is dead and gone. I ask him how it came he lived here alone; how it came that he made chairs, he, with brains enough to build great houses or great bridges; how it was that drink and he were such friends; and how he, a Catholic, lived here among us Quakers, so singular, uncompanionable, and severe. I think it true, and sadly true, that a man with a vice which he is able to satisfy easily and habitually, even as another satisfies a virtue, may give up the wider actions of the world and the possibilities of his life for the pleasure which his one vice gives him, and neither miss nor desire those greater chances of virtue or ambition which he has lost. The simplicity of a vice may be as real as the simplicity of a virtue."

Ah, David, David, I know not what to think of those strange words; but old Soolsby seemed well to understand thee, and he called thee "a first-best gentleman." Is my story long? Well, it was so strange, and it fixed itself upon my mind so deep-

ly, and thy writings at the hut have been so much in my hands and in my mind, that I have put it all down here. When I asked Soolsby how it came he had been rumoured dead, he said that he himself had been the cause of it; but for what purpose he would not say, save that he was going a long voyage, and had made up his mind to return no more. "I had a friend," he said, "and I was set to go and see that friend again. . . . But the years go on, and friends have an end. Life spills faster than the years," he said. And he would say no more, but would walk with me even to my father's door. "May the Blessed Virgin and all the Saints be with you," he said at parting, "if you will have a blessing from them. And tell him who is beyond and away in Egypt that old Soolsby's busy making a chair for him to sit in when the scarlet cloth is spread, and the East and West come to salaam before him. Tell him the old man says his fluting will be heard."

And now, David, I have told thee all, nearly. Remains to say that thy one letter did our hearts good. My father reads it over and over, and shakes his head sadly, for, truth is, he has a fear that the world may lay its hand upon thee. One thing I do observe, his heart is hard set against Lord Eglington. In degree it has ever been so; but now it is like a constant frown upon his forehead. I see him at his window looking out towards the Cloistered House; and if our neighbour comes forth, perhaps upon his hunter, or now in his cart, or again with his dogs, he draws his hat down upon his eyes and whispers to himself. I think he is ever setting thee off against Lord Eglington; and that is foolish, for Eglington is but a man of the earth earthy. His is the soul of the adventurer.

Now what more to be set down? I must ask thee how is thy friend Ebn Ezra Bey? I am glad thee did find all he said was true, and that in Damascus

thee was able to set a mark by my uncle's grave. But that the Prince Pasha of Egypt has set up a claim against my uncle's property is evil news; though, thanks be to God, as my father says, we have enough to keep us fed and clothed and housed. But do thee keep enough of thy inheritance to bring thee safe home again to those who love thee. England is ever grey, Davy, but without thee it is grizzled—all one "Quaker drab," as says the Philistine. But it is a comely and a good land, and here we wait for thee.

In love and remembrance.

I am thy mother's sister, thy most loving friend.

## **FAITH.**

David received this letter as he was mounting a huge white Syrian donkey to ride to the Mokattam Hills, which rise sharply behind Cairo, burning and lonely and large. The cities of the dead Khalifas and Mamelukes separated them from the living city where the fellah toiled, and Arab, Bedouin, Copt strove together to intercept the fruits of his toiling, as it passed in the form of taxes to the Palace of the Prince Pasha; while in the dark corners crouched, waiting, the cormorant usurers—Greeks, Armenians, and Syrians, a hideous salvage corps, who saved the house of a man that they might at last walk off with his shirt and the cloth under which he was carried to his grave. In a thousand narrow streets and lanes, in the warm glow of the bazaars, in earth-damp huts, by blistering quays, on the myriad ghiassas on the river, from long before sunrise till the sunset-gun boomed from the citadel rising beside the great mosque whose pinnacles seem to touch the blue, the slaves of the city of Prince Kaid ground out their lives like corn between the millstones.

David had been long enough in Egypt to know what sort of toiling it was. A man's labour was not his own. The fellah gave labour and taxes and backsheesh and life to the State, and the long line of tyrants above him, under the sting of the kourbash; the high offi-

cials gave backsheesh to the Prince Pasha, or to his Mouffetish, or to his Chief Eunuch, or to his barber, or to some slave who had his ear.

But all the time the bright, unclouded sun looked down on a smiling land, and in Cairo streets the din of the hammers, the voices of the boys driving heavily laden donkeys, the call of the camel-drivers leading their caravans into the great squares, the clang of the brasses of the sherbet-sellers, the song of the vendor of sweetmeats, the drone of the merchant praising his wares, went on amid scenes of wealth and luxury, and the city glowed with colour and gleamed with light. Dark faces grinned over the steaming pot at the door of the cafes, idlers on the benches smoked hasheesh, female street-dancers bared their faces shamelessly to the men, and indolent musicians beat on their tiny drums, and sang the song of "O Seyyid," or of "Antar"; and the reciter gave his sing-song tale from a bench above his fellows. Here a devout Muslim, indifferent to the presence of strangers, turned his face to the East, touched his forehead to the ground, and said his prayers. There, hung to a tree by a deserted mosque near by, the body of one who was with them all an hour before, and who had paid the penalty for some real or imaginary crime; while his fellows blessed Allah that the storm had passed them by. Guilt or innocence did not weigh with them; and the dead criminal, if such he were, who had drunk his glass of water and prayed to Allah, was, in their sight, only fortunate and not disgraced, and had "gone to the bosom of Allah." Now the Muezzin from a minaret called to prayer, and the fellah in his cotton shirt and yelek heard, laid his load aside, and yielded himself to his one dear illusion, which would enable him to meet with apathy his end—it might be to-morrow!—and go forth to that plenteous heaven where wives without number awaited him, where fields would yield harvests without labour, where rich food in gold dishes would be ever at his hand. This was his faith.

David had now been in the country six months, rapidly perfecting his knowledge of Arabic, speaking it always to his servant Mahommed Hassan, whom he had picked from the streets. Ebn Ezra Bey had gone upon his own business to Fazougli, the tropical Siberia of Egypt, to liberate, by order of Prince Kaid,—and at a high price—a relative banished there. David had not yet been fortunate with his own business—the settlement of his Uncle Benn's estate—

though the last stages of negotiation with the Prince Pasha seemed to have been reached. When he had brought the influence of the British Consulate to bear, promises were made, doors were opened wide, and Pasha and Bey offered him coffee and talked to him sympathetically. They had respect for him more than for most Franks, because the Prince Pasha had honoured him with especial favour. Perhaps because David wore his hat always and the long coat with high collar like a Turk, or because Prince Kaid was an acute judge of human nature, and also because honesty was a thing he greatly desired—in others—and never found near his own person; however it was, he had set David high in his esteem at once. This esteem gave greater certainty that any backsheesh coming from the estate of Benn Claridge would not be sifted through many hands on its way to himself. Of Benn Claridge Prince Kaid had scarcely even heard until he died; and, indeed, it was only within the past few years that the Quaker merchant had extended his business to Egypt and had made his headquarters at Assiout, up the river.

David's donkey now picked its way carefully through the narrow streets of the Moosky. Arabs and fellaheen squatting at street corners looked at him with furtive interest. A foreigner of this character they had never before seen, with coat buttoned up like an Egyptian official in the presence of his superior, and this wide, droll hat on his head. David knew that he ran risks, that his confidence invited the occasional madness of a fanatical mind, which makes murder of the infidel a passport to heaven; but as a man he took his chances, and as a Christian he believed he would suffer no mortal hurt till his appointed time. He was more Oriental, more fatalist, than he knew. He had also early in his life learned that an honest smile begets confidence; and his face, grave and even a little austere in outline, was usually lighted by a smile.

From the Mokattam Hills, where he read Faith's letter again, his back against one of the forts which Napoleon had built in his Egyptian days, he scanned the distance. At his feet lay the great mosque, and the citadel, whose guns controlled the city, could pour into it a lava stream of shot and shell. The Nile wound its way through the green plains, stretching as far to the north as eye could see between the opal and mauve and gold of the Libyan Hills. Far over in the western vista a long line of trees, twining through an oasis flanking

the city, led out to a point where the desert abruptly raised its hills of yellow sand. Here, enormous, lonely, and cynical, the pyramids which Cheops had built, the stone sphinx of Ghizeh, kept faith with the desert in the glow of rainless land-reminders ever that the East, the mother of knowledge, will by knowledge prevail; that:

"The thousand years of thy insolence  
The thousand years of thy faith,  
Will be paid in fiery recompense,  
And a thousand years of bitter death."

"The sword—for ever the sword," David said to himself, as he looked: "Rameses and David and Mahomet and Constantine, and how many conquests have been made in the name of God! But after other conquests there have been peace and order and law. Here in Egypt it is ever the sword, the survival of the strongest."

As he made his way down the hillside again he fell to thinking upon all Faith had written. The return of the drunken chair-maker made a deep impression on him—almost as deep as the waking dreams he had had of his uncle calling him.

"Soolsby and me—what is there between Soolsby and me?" he asked himself now as he made his way past the tombs of the Mamelukes. "He and I are as far apart as the poles, and yet it comes to me now, with a strange conviction, that somehow my life will be linked with that of the drunken Romish chair-maker. To what end?" Then he fell to thinking of his Uncle Benn. The East was calling him. "Something works within me to hold me here, a work to do."

From the ramparts of the citadel he watched the sun go down, bathing the pyramids in a purple and golden light, throwing a glamour over all the western plain, and making heavenly the far hills with a plaintive colour, which spoke of peace and rest, but not of hope. As he stood watching, he was conscious of people approaching. Voices mingled, there was light laughter, little bursts of admiration, then lower tones, and then he was roused by a voice calling. He turned round. A group of people were moving towards

the exit from the ramparts, and near himself stood a man waving an adieu.

"Well, give my love to the girls," said the man cheerily. Merry faces looked back and nodded, and in a moment they were gone. The man turned round, and looked at David, then he jerked his head in a friendly sort of way and motioned towards the sunset.

"Good enough, eh?"

"Surely, for me," answered David. On the instant he liked the red, wholesome face, and the keen, round, blue eyes, the rather opulent figure, the shrewd, whimsical smile, all aglow now with beaming sentimentality, which had from its softest corner called out: "Well, give my love to the girls."

"Quaker, or I never saw Germantown and Philadelphia," he continued, with a friendly manner quite without offence. "I put my money on Quakers every time."

"But not from Germantown or Philadelphia," answered David, declining a cigar which his new acquaintance offered.

"Bet you, I know that all right. But I never saw Quakers anywhere else, and I meant the tribe and not the tent. English, I bet? Of course, or you wouldn't be talking the English language – though I've heard they talk it better in Boston than they do in England, and in Chicago they're making new English every day and improving on the patent. If Chicago can't have the newest thing, she won't have anything. 'High hopes that burn like stars sublime,' has Chicago. She won't let Shakespeare or Milton be standards much longer. She won't have it – simply won't have England swaggering over the English language. Oh, she's dizzy, is Chicago – simply dizzy. I was born there. Parents, one Philadelphia, one New York, one Pawtucket – the Pawtucket one was the step-mother. Father liked his wives from the original States; but I was born in Chicago. My name is Lacey – Thomas Tilman Lacey of Chicago."

"I thank thee," said David.

"And you, sir?"

"David Claridge."

"Of – ?"

"Of Hamley."

"Mr. Claridge of Hamley. Mr. Claridge, I am glad to meet you." They shook hands. "Been here long, Mr. Claridge?"

"A few months only."

"Queer place—gilt-edged dust-bin; get anything you like here, from a fresh gutter-snipe to old Haroun-al-Raschid. It's the biggest jack-pot on earth. Barnum's the man for this place—P. T. Barnum. Golly, how the whole thing glitters and stews! Out of Shoobra his High Jinks Pasha kennels with his lions and lives with his cellars of gold, as if he was going to take them with him where he's going—and he's going fast. Here—down here, the people, the real people, sweat and drudge between a cake of dourha, an onion, and a balass of water at one end of the day, and a hemp collar and their feet off the ground at the other."

"You have seen much of Egypt?" asked David, feeling a strange confidence in the garrulous man, whose frankness was united to shrewdness and a quick, observant eye.

"How much of Egypt I've seen, the Egypt where more men get lost, strayed, and stolen than die in their beds every day, the Egypt where a eunuch is more powerful than a minister, where an official will toss away a life as I'd toss this cigar down there where the last Mameluke captain made his great jump, where women—Lord A'mighty! where women are divorced by one evil husband, by the dozen, for nothing they ever did or left undone, and yet 'd be cut to pieces by their own fathers if they learned that 'To step aside is human—' Mr. Claridge, of that Egypt I don't know much more'n would entitle me to say, How d'y'e do. But it's enough for me. You've seen something—eh?"

"A little. It is not civilised life here. Yet—yet a few strong patriotic men—"

Lacey looked quizzically at David.

"Say," he said, "I thought that about Mexico once. I said Manana— this Manana is the curse of Mexico. It's always to-morrow—to-morrow—to-morrow. Let's teach 'em to do things to-day. Let's show 'em what business means. Two million dollars went

into that experiment, but Manana won. We had good hands, but it had the joker. After five years I left, with a bald head at twenty-nine, and a little book of noble thoughts—Tips for the Tired, or Things you can say To-day on what you can do to-morrow. I lost my hair worrying, but I learned to be patient. The Dagos wanted to live in their own way, and they did. It's one thing to be a missionary and say the little word in season; it's another to run your soft red head against a hard stone wall. I went to Mexico a conquistador, I left it a child of time, who had learned to smile; and I left some millions behind me, too. I said to an old Padre down there that I knew—we used to meet in the Cafe Manrique and drink chocolate— I said to him, 'Padre, the Lord's Prayer is a mistake down here.' 'Si, senor,' he said, and smiled his far-away smile at me. 'Yes,' said I, 'for you say in the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread."' 'Si, senor,' he says, 'but we do not expect it till to-morrow!' The Padre knew from the start, but I learned at great expense, and went out of business—closed up shop for ever, with a bald head and my Tips for the Tired. Well, I've had more out of it all, I guess, than if I'd trebled the millions and wiped Manana off the Mexican coat of arms."

"You think it would be like that here?" David asked abstractedly.

Lacey whistled. "There the Government was all right and the people all wrong. Here the people are all right and the Government all wrong. Say, it makes my eyes water sometimes to see the fellah slogging away. He's a Jim-dandy—works all day and half the night, and if the tax-gatherer isn't at the door, wakes up laughing. I saw one"—his light blue eyes took on a sudden hardness—"laughing on the other side of his mouth one morning. They were 'kourbashing' his feet; I landed on them as the soles came away. I hit out." His face became grave, he turned the cigar round in his mouth. "It made me feel better, but I had a close call. Lucky for me that in Mexico I got into the habit of carrying a pop-gun. It saved me then. But it isn't any use going on these special missions. We Americans think a lot of ourselves. We want every land to do as we do; and we want to make 'em do it. But a strong man here at the head, with a sword in his hand, peace in his heart, who'd be just and poor—how can you make officials honest when you take all you can get yourself—! But, no, I guess it's no good. This is a rotten cotton show."

Lacey had talked so much, not because he was garrulous only, but because the inquiry in David's eyes was an encouragement to talk. Whatever his misfortunes in Mexico had been, his forty years sat lightly on him, and his expansive temperament, his childlike sentimentality, gave him an appearance of beaming, sophisticated youth. David was slowly apprehending these things as he talked—subconsciously, as it were; for he was seeing pictures of the things he himself had observed, through the lens of another mind, as primitive in some regards as his own, but influenced by different experiences.

"Say, you're the best listener I ever saw," added Lacey, with a laugh.

David held out his hand. "Thee sees things clearly," he answered.

Lacey grasped his hand.

At that moment an orderly advanced towards them. "He's after us—one of the Palace cavalry," said Lacey.

"Effendi—Claridge Effendi! May his grave be not made till the karadh-gatherers return," said the orderly to David.

"My name is Claridge," answered David.

"To the hotel, effendi, first, then to the Mokattam Hills after thee, then here—from the Effendina, on whom be God's peace, this letter for thee."

David took the letter. "I thank thee, friend," he said.

As he read it, Lacey said to the orderly in Arabic "How didst thou know he was here?"

The orderly grinned wickedly.

"Always it is known what place the effendi honours. It is not dark where he uncovers his face."

Lacey gave a low whistle.

"Say, you've got a pull in this show," he said, as David folded up the letter and put it in his pocket.

"In Egypt, if the master smiles on you, the servant puts his nose in the dust."

"The Prince Pasha bids me to dinner at the Palace to-night. I have no clothes for such affairs. Yet—" His mind was asking itself if this was a door opening, which he had no right to shut with his own hand. There was no reason why he should not go; therefore there might be a reason why he should go. It might be, it no doubt was, in the way of facilitating his business. He dismissed the orderly with an affirmative and ceremonial message to Prince Kaid—and a piece of gold.

"You've learned the custom of the place," said Lacey, as he saw the gold piece glitter in the brown palm of the orderly.

"I suppose the man's only pay is in such service," rejoined David. "It is a land of backsheesh. The fault is not with the people; it is with the rulers. I am not sorry to share my goods with the poor."

"You'll have a big going concern here in no time," observed Lacey. "Now, if I had those millions I left in Mexico—" Suddenly he stopped. "Is it you that's trying to settle up an estate here—at Assiout—belonged to an uncle?"

David inclined his head.

"They say that you and Prince Kaid are doing the thing yourselves, and that the pashas and judges and all the high-mogul sharks of the Medjidie think that the end of the world has come. Is that so?"

"It is so, if not completely so. There are the poor men and humble—the pashas and judges and the others of the Medjidie, as thee said, are not poor. But such as the orderly yonder—" He paused meditatively.

Lacey looked at David with profound respect. "You make the poorest your partners, your friends. I see, I see. Jerusalem, that's masterly! I admire you. It's a new way in this country." Then, after a moment: "It'll do—by golly, it'll do! Not a bit more costly, and you do some good with it. Yes—it—will—do."

"I have given no man money save in charity and for proper service done openly," said David, a little severely.

"Say—of course. And that's just what isn't done here. Everything goes to him who hath, and from him who hath not is taken away

even that which he hath. One does the work and another gets paid—that's the way here. But you, Mr. Claridge, you clinch with the strong man at the top, and, down below, you've got as your partners the poor man, whose name is Legion. If you get a fall out of the man at the top, you're solid with the Legion. And if the man at the top gets up again and salaams and strokes your hand, and says, 'Be my brother,' then it's a full Nile, and the fig-tree putteth forth its tender branches, and the date-palm flourisheth, and at the village pond the thanksgiving turkey gobbles and is glad. 'Selah!'

The sunset gun boomed out from the citadel. David turned to go, and

Lacey added:

"I'm waiting for a pasha who's taking toll of the officers inside there — Achmet Pasha. They call him the Ropemaker, because so many pass through his hands to the Nile. The Old Muslin I call him, because he's so diaphanous. Thinks nobody can see through him, and there's nobody that can't. If you stay long in Egypt, you'll find that Achmet is the worst, and Nahoum the Armenian the deepest, pasha in all this sickening land. Achmet is cruel as a tiger to any one that stands in his way; Nahoum, the whale, only opens out to swallow now and then; but when Nahoum does open out, down goes Jonah, and never comes up again. He's a deep one, and a great artist is Nahoum. I'll bet a dollar you'll see them both to-night at the Palace—if Kaid doesn't throw them to the lions for their dinner before yours is served. Here one shark is swallowed by another bigger, till at last the only and original sea-serpent swallows 'em all."

As David wound his way down the hills, Lacey waved a hand after him.

"Well, give my love to the girls," he said.