At nine next morning we left Sherea for Ura, which was a train journey of 315 miles.

The cold wind blew the rain in gusts against our carriage windows as we commenced our journey. Presently the sunshine came, and the rain disappeared. Shortly after dinner we entered what had lately been the Kingdom of Ura, but was now Undara. The land showed signs of careless farming; instead of the trees being planted at regular intervals for timber, the fields were either quite bare or clothed with the woods and weeds planted by nature. The hedges were uncut, and everything showed an absence of care. As we passed through the outskirts of Ura we saw that the city was well laid out, though without the symmetrical regularity or uniformity of buildings which characterized Zara.

On reaching the station we found Vernon waiting for us, and were taken by him to a compressed air wagonette, which had room for our luggage and six people. On this we went to his house, where we were to be his guests during our stay at Ura.

He lived on the banks of the river, about seven miles from the centre of the town. As we passed along, I saw that the houses were built like those in an American city, some very handsome, others hovels, and all sorts between. On the edge of the footpaths were men selling matches or toys, which would not provide them with the necessaries of life even supposing they got them for nothing, which was out of the question—apart from which nobody seemed to purchase their ware. Pale-faced women stood in the gutter, most of whom had a baby in their arms, holding out a box of matches, their whole stock, which they implored people to purchase. Beggars, Vernon told me, were not allowed; but anyone who could purchase a box of matches, or gather a few flowers, might, under pretence of trying to sell them, beg all day long. Loafer of all sorts were in the streets, some in filthy rags, with pinched faces, ready to hold a horse or do any similar thing to earn a penny; others, well dressed and well fed, sauntered about with a piece of glass screwed in one eye, and either a stick or an umbrella in their hand. Trams went down most of
the thoroughfares, and carriages, drawn by well-fed horses driven by stout, strong men, moved along the streets crowded with ill-fed and ill-clad humanity. After being in Zara I could not fail to notice these things, and wonder how the wealthy people could be happy, while living in waste and idleness, amongst fellow-beings who were starving and miserable. Verily, people can get used to anything. Vernon's house was, like himself, unusual in every way. As we approached it we saw, close to the river-bank, a two-storey house, like two houses joined together. The front one had a double veranda, or balcony and veranda, running all round it; on one side, attached to or joined by the verandas, was a second house, similar to the first, but without any veranda. The house was surrounded by some fifteen or twenty acres of land, dotted about which were windmills of various sorts, and several stables and outhouses. Vernon blew a whistle, and the gate was opened by a woman. Two horses and several dogs welcomed us according to their natures, from the fields and yard. In the veranda, Cora Novel and a very tall, clever-looking woman, whom I afterwards found was Gea Barga, stood to receive us. Gea Barga I shall describe as I afterwards found her. What first impressed one was the quickness and vivacious energy of her manner, which, though both polite and charming, was utterly uncompromising. What she made up her mind to she said, and though not obstinate, but open to reason, she swayed not one iota from her opinions till she was dislodged from them, as a garrison from a fortress, after a hard struggle and by a superior power. Her brown hair, parted in the middle, was brushed back from her forehead and done in a simple knot at the back of her head. Her oval face was very expressive, and her brown eyes always moving and full of thought; her nose was nearly straight, and her lips full. In repose she would pass for a healthy country girl, but her manner gave one the idea of restless ability of the highest order.

Cora and Gea disappeared up-stairs with Mary, while Vernon took the duke and me to a large room on the ground floor.

"Duke, I have put you and Frank in the one room so that you may always have a trusty attendant near you. Frank, if you want anything, ring. Now I will leave you."

I looked round the room; it was simply but handsomely furnished, and divided in the middle, by a double set of curtains, into a bedroom with two beds, and a study or sitting-room.

"I see you are interested in Vernon's arrangements, Frank," said the duke.

"Yes," I replied; "Mary told me he had an extraordinary house, but I was not prepared for so much novelty."

"It is a wonder of convenience," the duke asserted with conviction, "and has power of all sorts on tap. The river is working water-wheels and the wind windmills, by the power of which all manner of experiments are always going on. Besides his two
secretaries, he has a very clever mechanic who makes models of all his ideas, so that the amount and variety of work done under his supervision is wonderful."

"I think a man's home should be a place of rest, and not a great workshop, like this seems to be. Do you not agree with me?"

"To a certain extent. Rest with different people means different things. The only rest Vernon can take is change of work; he supervises everything himself, from his horses, dogs, and garden to his inventions, writing, and various enterprises."

"Sleeps six hours and works the rest?"

"No, he is a great sleeper, and sleeps about nine hours out of the twenty-four; but work is a pleasure to him, and he cannot be idle."

"I suppose he has his mother, or a sister, to superintend his household arrangements?"

"No, his mother has a house of her own; his household consists only of women, and the old man who acts as a modeller and lathe-man."

"What an extraordinary arrangement! What is his idea for doing this? He surely is not perfectly sane?"

"He is perfectly sane, but has fancies. He does not like men, he is afraid they would not be kind to his animals; and he likes to be surrounded by women, whose presence soothes him. He is very nervous and ambitious, and resents the slightest opposition in those about him."

Vernon became a greater puzzle the more I saw of him. He did not pretend to understand himself, and believed that he had only met one person who did. We went into the drawing-room, where we found Gea telling Mary of some of the new regulations soon to be enforced, and Cora, as usual, quietly listening. Cora left us, and almost immediately returned with Vernon.

"Well, Vernon," said the duke, "how are your arrangements for carrying out the federation proceeding?"

"Very well, indeed," answered Vernon, with satisfied decision.

"A copy of my pamphlet will to-morrow, be printed in all the daily papers, and a majority of Parliament, who are to meet your delegates, will be in favour of an early meeting of the Federal Parliament at Ura, when we will propose the commencement of public works and the embankment of the river; three months after which your laws for the arrest of all vagabonds and idlers will come into operation. We will then enforce the progressive income tax, and confer by purchase twenty-eight titles, which will bring the State a sum of over a million of money. The borrowed money, and inauguration of the public works, will cause a state of prosperity that will bring the minority who are now against us over to our side; so that hardly one per cent. of the population will be left to oppose us."
"I have no doubt you will succeed," the duke said, with admiration; "but I think you underrate the opposition you will meet."

"Surely not; the only people who will be against us are the mean rich, who are not one in every five thousand. On our side will be all the clergy and women—a solid and persistent body. These will support us, as we do away with the vagabonds of both sexes, and make marriage again a universal, instead of a decreasing institution. Then all the workers and middle-class people will support us, as we better their condition in every way. The generous wealthy will also support us, so that we have, as I said before, only the mean rich against us."

"What is the progressive income-tax?" I asked.

"All incomes over 200 crowns a year pay a tax of 2½ per cent. on the excess up to 500. That is, on 500, a yearly tax of 7½ crowns is made. This tax is increased 1½ per cent. for every 500 crowns up to 9000 crowns. For instance, an income of 2000 crowns pays a yearly tax of 82½ crowns, and one of 9000 crowns a similar tax of 117½ crowns."

"I think you will have a difficulty in getting any man with a good income to agree to this tax," I asserted, firmly.

"When you read our pamphlet, Doctor Frank," said Cora—ever one in Vernon's house used the pronoun "our" for everything they did—"you will see at once how rich and poor alike must support it."

"Will you read the pamphlet to us, Cora?" asked the duke.

"Certainly," said Cora, beaming with pleasure.

Supper was announced, so the reading was postponed. Vernon was a perfect host—vivacious, attentive without being obtrusive, and strong in the faculty of making people appear at their best. The table was beautifully laid, but the supper was more elaborate than was the custom at Zara, wine being on the table, and coffee served after the sweets. After supper, tobacco and cigars were brought out, and the ladies stayed with us while we smoked.

"I always feed my dogs after supper," said Vernon, "so I pray you will excuse me."

Mary and I went with him, as we were both fond of animals.

"Do you always feed your animals, Vernon?" I asked.

"Always. My dogs devote their lives to me. They never leave me of their own free will, and would die for me, without hesitation, as some of my dogs have done when we have been hunting. My horses are equally devoted to me, and it is a very little thing to see they are cared for."

Vernon took an electric lantern, and we went into the yard. Three great hounds and two Esquimaux dogs came fawning round their master, while a big striped cat demurely picked her way after us. The dogs were fed, and we went into the stable, with
them following us, here Vernon offered each of the horses water, and saw they were well fed. Surely animals have a language of their own; rudimentary but still sufficient to express different degrees of love or hatred. The winnowing horses, and the dogs gambolling and uttering half barks, half growls of joy, showed unmistakably their happiness.

"Are they always as exuberant as this, Vernon?"

"Not quite, I have only been home a few days. They miss me very much, and always greet me very impressively for some time after I return."

We went in again, and listened to Cora reading the pamphlet. Her reading at first was spoilt by over-anxiety to do justice to her work, but soon she forgot her audience, and then, her clear sympathetic voice was a pleasure to listen to. The pamphlet commenced by pointing out that innovations were naturally looked on with distrust and suspicion; but that the fact that certain laws and regulations had enabled another community to escape many evils that afflicted us, should induce all wise people to carefully and favourably consider the advisability of giving them a fair trial at Ura. It continued with a statement that though the good of the community was certainly first, every section of the community looked on a new law more or less from their own point of view as affecting themselves; and that therefore it would be best to consider how the new laws would affect the various sections of the community, before their general effect was reviewed. In every community, it continued, the foremost, the noblest, and the most desirable, are the people of wealth, who give generously to support the destitute. The new laws would do away with destitution, and this noble class would as willingly give to the weak and destitute indirectly in the form of a tax, as they did directly in the form of charity. Those few contemptible people—almost unknown in Ura—who had wealth, and gave nothing to their unfortunate fellow-creatures, would be forced by the tax to do their duty; and as a man who was forced to do his duty was far more worthy than a man who evaded his duty, they would be distinctly elevated. Again, the wicked men and women who live by developing and encouraging all manner of wickedness in the young or foolish members of the wealthy class, would be suppressed; so that most of the dangerous temptations that wealth forced on people would be removed. Then he went on to address the middle-class people, but here his task was simple, for they received many benefits, but were hardly otherwise affected by the income-tax at all. Then he addressed the workers of the community, whom he called the body and strength of the nation, and said he felt the glory of the near to-morrow, when even the humblest labourer would gain that self-esteem that alone elevated the wealthier people over his head. When in his thoughts and manner he would be gentle and modest, and
become temperate in all things. He pointed out that he need
now never fear that his wife and children would stay hungry at
home while he sought for work in vain, as the Government
would always supply work, with longer hours certainly, but im-
measurably better than idleness. Then he addressed the com-
munity, and pointed out how the unfortunate creatures that
preyed on society would be removed; how the fiend hunger, that
tempted men to thieve and lie, and women to forget their good-
ness, would be a thing forgotten. That temptations removed,
and the people freed of the human parasites that lived on their
labour, to drag them down to shame and misery, they would
become healthy in mind and body, and happy in all things. The
pamphlet, full of able argument, and sweet persuasions, finished
with an expression of the pride that Vernon felt in belonging to
a country which had progressed with giant strides in the past,
and was now within measurable distance of universal happiness.
"That such a people have honoured me—honoured me far beyond
my deserts—has elevated me beyond myself, and made me live
that I may strive on—strive ever to try and deserve some of the
applause they have generously accorded me."

"Now, Doctor Frank," said Nora, her eyes bright, and cheeks
flushed, "do you still think that rich people will refuse to welcome
the laws of Zara?"

"You have not only comprehended our laws, Vernon," said the
duke, "but you have written of them, so that those who read
will comprehend them also."

Gea Barga and Mary sang and played, till nearly midnight.
The duke and the girls went to bed, and Vernon and I chatted
of the coming changes at Ura. He brought out a map, and
showed me the course of the Yanga, running in a succession of
curves that were nearly half circles, and how a new course for the
river walled to utilize its power would be made in a straight line
which, when finished, would contain the river, and the old course
be filled up. This would save an immense cost in making the
river walls and bridges, and no power would be lost. He also
showed me a new plan of the city of Ura laid out systematically,
at right angles, like Zara, which would not interfere with any of
the great buildings, and in accord with which the city would
gradually be remodelled. These improvements would take years
to effect, and the borrowed money would create an enthusiasm
that would force them all into being, and crush all opposition.
Further, the progressive income-tax would not only bring in a big
revenue, but would act beneficially in reducing the amount of
extravagant display, enervating luxury and laziness.

"I must not keep you up any longer, Frank," he said at last;
"will you come with me to see the horses and dogs, before you
retire? I always attend to them last thing at night."

"Thanks, yes," I answered readily.
We went into the stable, where Vernon put on a long coat, and bedded and watered his horses.

"What do you want two horses for, Vernon?" I asked.

"The second horse I keep principally for company for the first; I have had them some time, and would not like to part with either now."

We next chained up all the dogs, except two, which were allowed to sleep in the veranda, on the mat at Vernon's bedroom door.

"You are very good to your animals, Vernon," I said, as I watched the considerate gentleness with which he treated them all.

"And they are very devoted to me. I cannot understand the affection a dog feels for a man; in health or sickness, plenty or hunger, a dog will not leave its master; strangers may tempt him with warmth and food, but he is always true to the man he loves. No other animal is like him. It is one of the most wonderful things in nature."

"Are not your horses the same?"

"No, they love a place, not a person, though they get to understand, and be fond of their master; I am sure mine know when I am tired or unwell, and become gentle and well behaved."

"That is a strange idea."

"Some people think so. One day when I was going out riding, I said to the housemaid who brought out my gloves and whip, "My horse seems to know I am unwell, and behaves very obediently out of sympathy."

"I do not think it is quite that," she said, "but when you are unwell your temper is so free."