CHAPTER IV.

DOMESTIC ECONOMY.

Next morning I awoke late, and, as I had quite got over my feeling of strangeness, lay enjoying the comfort of a warm bed, and the luxury of realizing I was in a comfortable room.

There are things you have to do without for a term, if you wish to fully appreciate them. I thought of the endless snow, my dying comrades, the grim despair that haunted us, the seal flesh; ugh! The nastiness of seal's flesh passeth all description. And now? Kind people and the loveliest woman I ever met to attend on me. A man who loves his wife thinks her, for all in all, the most charming woman on earth, and the only way he can realize what she is, is to remember what he thought of her the first time they met, otherwise he can only see her through "love's beautiful light." Now I was not yet quite under the glamour of love, so only saw in Mary charms she really possessed, and they were phenomenal. I soon began to feel lonely, so I turned to the phonograph and said,—

"Good morning, Mary."

In a few seconds a reply came clear and distinct,—

"Good morning, Frank, you're an awful sleeper, I am not Mary."

"Please who are you?"

"I'm Mitho, I've got a holiday, so that I may stay at home and help Mary." There was a pause. Again I spoke,—

"I wish Mary would come."

"Frank, don't you fall in love with Mary, it's no use, because—here she comes."

What could the child mean? I suppose it's presumption in me to aspire to a woman like Mary, who was to have married the Duke's son.

Again the microphone sounded,—

"Shall I bring you up your breakfast?"

"Please." In a little while a knock came, and Mary entered. She was dressed in blue, so dark that in the shade it seemed black; she had on an apron that went from her neck to her feet, and wore large white cuffs. She looked lovelier than ever.
Clara has made your breakfast herself,” she said, “so you must consider that you are very highly honoured; during the morning we will visit her, and see the cooking arrangements of the block.”

Mary spread out the breakfast, which consisted of fresh rolls, fish patties, omelets, and hop tea with cream and beet sugar.

“I am going to have breakfast with you, so that you will not feel lonely.”

I did feel lonely, very lonely. Mitho’s broken sentence had showed me the folly I was guilty of, in letting love for Mary fill my heart. After breakfast was done we left Mitho to clear away, and, going to the lift, ascended to the eighth storey. The lift, which was always moving, was operated by compressed air, and seemed very similar to a class of lift frequently seen in English and American cities. We now ascended a glass rotunda by a winding stair, and reaching its summit, for the first time I began to realize the wonders of Zara, and the wretched way in which cities in the Middle World are laid out. The day was clear, and far as we could see the city and suburbs lay in a bird’s-eye view beneath us on either side of the river Voa. The Duke’s house was in the middle of the city, which was laid out in blocks of nine squares divided by streets of medium width. These blocks were skirted by very wide streets which ran from the outskirts of the city right through it, at right angles to one another. Down the centre of each of these streets ran trams in either direction, so that you could go from any one part of the city, in the trams, to any other, by simply making one change.

The beauty and splendour of the city was beyond description. All the mansions—for the word house but inadequately described them—were eight stories high, and in the centre of each was a garden, in many cases roofed over with glass, as indeed were very many of the streets. Scattered throughout the town were public gardens, and magnificent towered structures reared their heads on every side. Far away in the distance were large houses each in its own grounds, and farther still, barely visible northwards, a large railway station.

“Zara is certainly a more beautiful city than any in the Middle World. What is its population?” I asked.

“Nearly two millions,” said Mary.

The city seemed comparatively a small one, certainly not more than four miles square, and though its suburbs stretched away far in the distance all round it, they evidently contained comparatively few people. Mary took a telescope from an unlocked drawer.

“Look through this,” she said, “and your view will be extended, and perhaps your wonder increased.”

I looked, my view was extended, and my wonder very much increased. As far as I could see—between ten and twelve miles—
the land continued laid out in blocks at right angles to each other. Immediately around me, and extending on all sides for about two miles, were the square blocks I have described. Beyond these again the same blocks contained only one house; further away still, the trams, which intersected the whole district, decreased, by one terminating here and there, which allowed the blocks to very much increase in size, till they became so large as to contain several hundred acres. Coming down from the direction of some mountains, in the far dim distance, was a silver thread that widened till it became the River Voa, and flowed through the suburbs and city, then away again through the further suburbs, and on, till it became smaller and smaller, and was lost to view. The river was spanned at short intervals to allow the trams and passengers to cross, every second bridge being large enough for the crossing of the general traffic as well. Further it was noticeable that the river was walled, and divided into three channels, the two outer of which were small, and generally covered in, while the centre one contained the main body of the water, and was a highway for vessels that passed up and down, with a smokeless rapidity. I gazed entranced; it seemed a city of common sense, where the obstruction of individual selfishness had been overcome, and the general good alone considered. And again the thought returned to me, Why should I wonder? this is only what all sensible people advocate in the "Middle World," and what, ere the birth, and passing away of a few decades, will be universal everywhere.

"Frank, have you forgotten me?" asked Mary.

The thought of Mitho's words came bitterly back to my mind.

"I shall never be able to do that, though some day the prominence of your memory may be partially effaced, by time and work."

Fool that I was to become enamoured of this woman in an hour. Like a callow youth my existence was flooded with the thought of her. Would that the forgetfulness of youth would come to my relief.

"Frank, do not speak like that," Mary said, with a gentle sweetness that increased my despondency.

"Pardon me, when I have got used to my surroundings I will be better. Will you tell me about Zara?"

"Yes, but tell me when you are tired, and we will go down again. You must not forget that you are only a convalescent, but remember that I am your nurse, and expect you to help me to bring back your strength.

Could it be that this gentle, considerate woman was a heartless flirt, who was sporting with me? Mitho's words had spoilt the paradise of her presence, by suggesting my expulsion. I would not believe she could be blind to my growing love, or that she would encourage it only to crush it.
"Sit down, and I will wrap you up," she said, "so that you can talk comfortably.
She tucked the rug about me, and as her hands touched me, I glowed with joy. Then she sat next me.
"Now, Frank, ask me about Zara, and I will tell you all I know."
"First tell me why the city and the country are laid out in squares, with such regular method."
"For the better conduction of the traffic of all sorts, and the general convenience, both of which are best suited by trams, which are only universally applicable to streets at right angles. As you see, the extreme distance any part of the city is away from a tram line, is not more than one hundred and fifty yards; and sixteen-seventeenths of the city are within one hundred yards of a tram line. Having once reached a tram, you can go from any one point to any other point in Zara, by twice changing, and if you do not mind walking a distance of one hundred and fifty yards, or less, you can go from point to point with only one change. This is the principal reason, but the benefit is manifold."
"But, surely," I asked, in surprise, "Zara was never laid out so splendidly in the first instance, and the difficulties in the way of bringing an established city to such angular uniformity would be impossible, both on account of the individual opposition and fabulous expense. How was it managed?"
"It was laid out by William O'Brien," explained Mary, in reply, "a civil engineer from the 'Middle Globe,' who, like you, was lost in the snow. He came to Zara in 1784, when it was a camp of the savages, who alone peopled Fregida, as he called all the country of the North Pole."
"How wonderful! Please tell me more about him."
"In the records which he has left behind him, and which are now in the museum under yonder huge Symbol of the Sun"—she pointed to a stately tower near at hand—"which indicates the favourite maxim of the 'Great Law-giver,' as O'Brien is called—'Light, more light!'—it is recorded that a numerous and scientific party of picked men sailed in the ship Arctic, from Greenwich, and, after many hardships and dangers, such as you experienced—poor Frank—the ship was frozen in the ice, and the crew left her, believing they were near the North Pole, which was, they truly surmised, a fertile region. Scurvy and cold killed them one by one, till the three survivors were rescued by a party of the Rodas, and brought on here. They were three strong men, and well equipped, so they at once gained authority in the tribe, and each took a wife. They then organized a large party, who returned to the ship and brought away all that was of value, and on their return built the foundation of Zara, where they all lived. Some years after they formed another expedition, which went south, and returned with many weapons, tools of all sorts, and
three women from the 'Middle Globe.' These women they gave to three of the leading chiefs, who married them. Subsequently they founded Gurla and Ura, which were governed by the two men who came with the Law-giver—the first by Edward Vance, who was a seaman; and the second by James Smith, who, like you, was a doctor of medicine and a surgeon. These cities have each progressed in a wonderful way, though Zara is the most perfect and powerful of them all, and will soon be joined by the Uras, with whom they will form one nation. You will then see how easy it is to 'bring an established city to an angular uniformity.'

"It will be a most interesting experiment," I replied, wonder-stricken.

"Rather say," she replied, "it will be a most splendid and God-like achievement, the result of which will be superb in its immensity for the progress of happiness and goodness."

"I adopt your suggestion, and am glad it will be conducive of both happiness and goodness.

"The two are so inseparable as to be almost one."

"It is not always so with us."

"But it will be when you have reached the highest civilisation."

"I hope so. Please tell me more about the usefulness of angularity in a city."

"Well, the trams do away with nearly all other traffic, for during certain periods of the day they go slowly, and heavy goods are carried. Further, they enable all animals for traffic, or other purposes, to be kept off the streets, which are thus enabled to be kept in order for about one-tenth of what it costs to maintain streets in Ura, where the haulage is principally performed by horses. The streets are thus kept easily and perfectly clean, so that dust, such as invades the houses of Ura to the destruction of everything, and the general increase of work, is not known."

"These advantages are both immense and apparent," I said, in amazement. "Permit me to compliment you on the way you have championed the trams."

Mary laughed.

"I have not championed the trams, but only mentioned a very few of their advantages."

"Please tell me some more."

"Well, they enable all the sewerage to be taken to the grower, which is done during the first three hours of every day."

"Do you not take your sewerage underground, and thence away to filtering stations inland, or to the sea?"

"Decidedly not," answered Mary, "though both the Uras and Gurlas do, but very ineffectually. With us the refuse and excreta are taken, through flushed pipes, to a filtering compartment, which is in every house; here the water, strained of its impurities, passes through the sewers—which are kept perfectly
clean—to the Voa, which is an unpolluted river. As I said, every morning, during the first three hours of the day, the scavengers come, and all refuse is removed to the farmers; hence our city is perfectly clean and healthy.

"This seems a most excellent idea, and far preferable to having covered sewers, full of corruption and foul gas, down every street, into which some of their fever-breeding odours must escape."

"It certainly is. Then we have an underground passage beneath every second street, and so all our wires—telegraphic, telephonic, and others—are easily got at when necessary, and these are carried along the edge of the footpath to their destination."

"This is certainly wonderful."

"Remember, I have only told you a few of the advantages of a regularly laid-out town. Now, shall we call on Clara and John Ouna? You will be just as surprised at the way they organize the feeding arrangements for nine hundred and odd people who live beneath this roof."

When we had descended, I asked—

"Is not nine hundred people a great number to be in the one mansion?"

"On the contrary," Mary replied, "it is unusually few, for each mansion contains one thousand and twenty-five rooms, of twenty-five feet square each. From the size of the rooms you must make an allowance for halls, vestibules, and lifts; but even then, you see, there is abundance of room for a thousand people. To feed these, John has a kitchen on either side of the square, and eight dining-rooms; so, you see, he is kept very busy."

"He must, indeed; I suppose he supervises everything?"

"Yes; he and his wife, between them, organize and supervise every detail, from purchasing the provisions up to the disposal of the refuse."

"And how are they paid?"

"They are paid a salary, and have to stand for re-election yearly; the position is a very good one, and he engages everyone under him."

"They, of course, would leave if he failed to be re-elected?"

"Oh, no, they are kept on during good behaviour; it is only the head that has to pass the approval of a re-election every year, though it is extremely seldom he is not re-elected to his old position."

We now entered the kitchen, and shook hands with John.

"My Clara has something to bring back the flesh to your bones, Frank," he said, "and make you feel fit for work when you leave Mary's sheltering care."

"There is lots of time to talk about that, John," said Mary, "especially if he is to wait till his bones are as well covered as yours are."
John laughed merrily, and replied,—
"I was thin enough when Cupid's touch was in my heart, and had only my fat to feed on; but when Clara took possession, the flame went out, and I have since been able to laugh and grow fat."
"Frank is surprised at the city of Zara," continued Mary, "and the splendid way in which it is laid out. Now, I have told him he will be equally surprised at the kitchen and management of Clara and yourself."
"Well, I think he will be much more surprised. My Clara is a genius, and the way she manages is wonderful."
Clara entered, carrying a small tray.
"What has John been saying about my management?"
She did not wait for an answer, but turned to me,—
"Sit down, Frank, and have something to eat. Mary said I might get it for you."
We went over to a small table, and, while I ate the delicacies provided for me, which consisted of raw oysters and brown bread and butter, Clara pointed out the specialties of the kitchen.
"Underneath," she said, "is a cellar, in which we keep vegetables, dairy produce, and meat, in a temperature a little above freezing-point; along that wall we have flour, oatmeal, cornmeal, and similar things. Those vats you see are the filters, in which all the slops are placed. As they are poured in they stir up a sediment of charcoal, chemically prepared, which absorbs any smell they may have. The water then drains away to the sewers, and the sediment is taken by the nightman."
"What do you do with your waste?" I asked.
John laughingly pretended to misunderstand me,—
"What do I do with my waist? why, tie it up with my apron-strings to be sure. There's a good deal of waist about Bel and me."
"Frank comes from a nation like the Uras, or Gurlas, John; so expects waste as a matter of course," Mary interposed.
"The great Law-giver," said John gravely, "preached 'Waste not, want not,' and we waste nothing; all the peelings, broken loaves, and things that can be eaten by pigs or poultry, but not by human beings, are put in those barrels, where all the moisture drains into the filter below, and they, also, are taken away after we go to bed, but not one scrap of meat, bread, or food of any sort is wasted. Waste is the one thing I never forgive, and for which I take no excuse."
"That is as it should be, John," said Mary; "you are a credit to Clara." He laughed.
"I am surprised at your kitchen, John," I said in wondering amazement at the good man's earnestness, "and think Clara is a wonder of management. I have travelled all over the globe, and amongst the most enlightened people, have seen good food wasted in tons, when people were hungry, and sometimes starving,
within a mile of the place. This I have seen in American hotels, and Americans are second to none in the 'Middle Globe' for enlightenment.'"

John kissed his wife on the forehead and replied:

"It is a disgrace that such things should be. If I thought I could replace Clara, I would send her to show them management."

"John and Clara cook everything but their bread; that is made at an outside bakery," explained Mary.

The kitchen was wonderful, the busy assistant cooks were well organized, and accompanied their active and intelligent labours with merry chatter and mirthful freedom. I had seen something like it, on a very small scale, in some of the houses in Australia, when the daughters of the house were in the kitchen working and supervising, with the same energy and intelligent grace that they would summon to their aid in the performance of any of their many accomplishments. It seemed beyond belief to see all the work of a kitchen performed by people of the highest intelligence and most perfect courtesy.

"Clara will take you to the dining-rooms now," said John, "and I must ask you to excuse my escort, as I am wanted here."

Courtesy, which is the lubricator of our speech and actions, permeated all the movements of this man, so that they were as soft as his ruddy face or plump body. On entering the first dining-room we found three girls, or rather young women, arranging the tables, which were beautifully ornamented with pot plants, and cut flowers and, were it not for the absence of the wine glasses, might easily have passed for the dining-tables of some wealthy artist of the Middle Globe.

One of the girls, who evidently was in command, came over to us. She had a bright round face, and short curling hair, her dress consisted of knickerbockers, with a jacket, and stand-up collar, such as boys often wear, but which never, for their masculine donners, display such shapely legs and tiny chubby feet and hands.

"This is my daughter, Bel, Frank," said Clara, introducing us. "I was almost jealous of her for taking up so much of her father's love, till a lover came and won her."

Bel smiled, and held out a dimpled hand, that was a model for an artist.

"I am glad to see you are getting strong again, Frank," said Bel. The gentle sympathy of these courteous people was a constant delight.

"Everyone," explained Clara, "has their meals here, and one universal charge is made; it is so small that everyone can afford it."

"Do you really mean to say," I asked, "that there is no dif-
ference whatever made; for instance, would the Duke dine with a scavenger?

"As a matter of fact," replied Clara, "the Duke very often does dine with a scavenger, which is easily explainable. The scavenging cannot be entrusted to the penal workers, and as it is unpleasant, and has to be done at hours when people wish to be asleep, it has to be very well paid for; otherwise there would be no one to do it; it therefore attracts only the energetic or ambitious, amongst whom is a friend of the Duke, who is an inventor, and too proud to accept assistance; he therefore does the scavenging, as it brings him in the necessary money, while leaving him sufficient leisure to pursue this work."

"But surely he is an untidy man, or worse?" I asked in surprise.

"On the contrary," said Clara, smiling at my astonishment, "he is one of the most fastidious and dandified men in Zara, and one whom the Duke predicts will rise to the highest honours."

This was very strange, and certainly not in accordance with the ideas of the "Middle Globe."

"By-the-bye, I suppose you take the smoke and hot air from your kitchen fires, as you do from your other fires, and conduct it up through the house, so that it gives up its warmth, before it escapes?"

"Well, very nearly," answered Clara, "the only difference is that it is first washed, so that it leaves the kitchen as clean smoke. With us all the heat is absorbed, when required, in the house; while with most of the houses of Ura and Gurla, fully three-fourths of the heat escapes, which is a foolish and needless waste."

And as I thought to myself, so it is with us, our chimneys are very little, if any, better, than those used by the Grecians and Trojans, many centuries ago.

"Supposing any one wants some extra luxury, on account of illness, or for any other reason, can they not have it here, if they pay for it?"

"Certainly not," Clara replied, "they can only have it in their rooms; to allow them to have extra luxuries here would encourage people to be ostentatious, and tend to create envy, or discontent, all of which are feelings common to the Uras and Gurlas, but not in Zara; we always avoid leading people into temptation!"

"All that you say is so wise, and so simple, that I am ashamed of having failed to see it for myself."

The young Bel laughed and said,—

"Do not be ashamed, Frank, the Duke who is very wise, says that you will succeed, and I am sure you will, so far as to make one man wish your cremation was to take place to-day, instead of that of your friend. Do you not think so, Mary?"

"I hope no one would wish another any harm," said Mary
gravely, "and I would do all in my power—as I'm sure we all
would—to prevent such a thing."

"You cannot keep your appetite, and eat a good dinner, Mary
deary," said Clara Bel, "and an empty heart is worse than an
empty stomach."

What could these people mean? I felt miserable, for I was
sure they alluded to a lover of Mary's, and still I loved her deeper,
and deeper; fool that I was.

"Now, Frank, you can go and get ready for dinner, which will
soon be ready," said Mary, so with a heavy heart I went.