

# THE LAND BEYOND THE BLOW

by

AMBROSE BIERCE



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**THE LAND BEYOND THE BLOW**

(After the method of Swift, who followed Lucian, and  
was himself followed by Voltaire and many others.)

## CONTENTS

[Thither](#)

[Sons of the Fair Star](#)

[An Interview with Gnarmag-Zote](#)

[The Tamtonains](#)

[Marooned on UG](#)

[The Dog in Gangewag](#)

[A Conflagration in Chargaroo](#)

[An Execution in Batrugia](#)

[The Jumjum of Gokeetle-Guk](#)

[The Kingdom of Tortirra](#)

[Hither](#)

[Notes](#)

## THITHER

A CROWD of men were assisting at a dog-fight. The scene was one of indescribable confusion. In the center of the tumult the dogs, obscure in a cloud of dust, rolled over and over, howling, yarring, tearing each other with sickening ferocity. About them the hardly less ferocious men shouted, cursed and struck, encouraged the animals with sibilant utterances and threatened with awful forms of death and perdition all who tried to put an end to the combat. Caught in the thick of this pitiless mob I endeavored to make my way to a place of peace, when a burly blackguard, needlessly obstructing me, said derisively:

“I guess you are working pockets.”

“You are a liar!” I retorted hotly. That is all the provocation that I remember to have given.

## SONS OF THE FAIR STAR

WHEN consciousness returned the sun was high in the heavens, yet the light was dim, and had that indefinable ghastly quality that is observed during a partial eclipse. The sun itself appeared singularly small, as if it were at an immensely greater distance than usual. Rising with some difficulty to my feet, I looked about me. I was in an open space among some trees growing on the slope of a mountain range whose summit on the one hand was obscured by a mist of a strange pinkish hue, and on the other rose into peaks glittering with snow. Skirting the base at a distance of two or three miles flowed a wide river, and beyond it a nearly level plain stretched away to the horizon, dotted with villages and farmhouses and apparently in a high state of cultivation. All was unfamiliar in its every aspect. The trees were unlike any that I had ever seen or even imagined, the trunks being mostly square and the foliage consisting of slender filaments resembling hair, in many instances long enough to reach the earth. It was of many colors, and I could not perceive that there was any prevailing one, as green is in the vegetation to which I was accustomed. As far as I could see there were no grass, no weeds, no flowers; the earth was covered with a kind of lichen, uniformly blue. Instead of rocks, great masses of metals protruded here and there, and above me on the mountain were high cliffs of what seemed to be bronze veined with brass. No animals were visible, but a few birds as uncommon in appearance as their surroundings glided through the air or perched upon the rocks. I say glided, for their motion was not true flight, their wings being mere membranes extended parallel to their sides, and having no movement independent of the body. The bird was, so to say, suspended between them and moved forward by quick strokes of a pair of enormously large webbed feet, precisely as a duck propels itself in water. All these things excited in me no surprise, nor even curiosity; they were merely unfamiliar. That which most interested me was what appeared to be a bridge several miles away, up the river, and to this I directed my steps, crossing over from the barren and desolate hills to the populous plain.

For a full history of my life and adventures in Mogon-Zwair, and a detailed description of the country, its people, their manners and customs, I must ask the reader to await the publication of a book, now in the press, entitled *A Blackened Eye*; in this brief account I can give only a few of such particulars as seem instructive by contrast with our own civilization.

The inhabitants of Mogon-Zwair call themselves Golampis, a word signifying Sons of the Fair Star. Physically they closely resemble ourselves, being in all respects the equals of the highest Caucasian type. Their hair, however, has a broader scheme of col-

or, hair of every hue known to us, and even of some imperceptible to my eyes but brilliant to theirs, being too common to excite remark. A Golampian assemblage with uncovered heads resembles, indeed, a garden of flowers, vivid and deep in color, no two alike. They wear no clothing of any kind, excepting for adornment and protection from the weather, resembling in this the ancient Greeks and the Japanese of yesterday; nor was I ever able to make them comprehend that clothing could be worn for those reasons for which it is chiefly worn among ourselves. They are destitute of those feelings of delicacy and refinement which distinguish us from the lower animals, and which, in the opinion of our acutest and most pious thinkers, are evidences of our close relation to the Power that made us.

Among this people certain ideas which are current among ourselves as mere barren faiths expressed in disregarded platitudes receive a practical application to the affairs of life. For example, they hold, with the best, wisest and most experienced of our own race, and one other hereafter to be described, that wealth does not bring happiness and is a misfortune and an evil. None but the most ignorant and depraved, therefore, take the trouble to acquire or preserve it. A rich Golampi is naturally regarded with contempt and suspicion, is shunned by the good and respectable and subjected to police surveillance. Accustomed to a world where the rich man is profoundly and justly respected for his goodness and wisdom (manifested in part by his own deprecatory protests against the wealth of which, nevertheless, he is apparently unable to rid himself) I was at first greatly pained to observe the contumelious manner of the Golampis toward this class of men, carried in some instances to the length of personal violence; a popular amusement being the pelting them with coins. These the victims would carefully gather from the ground and carry away with them, thus increasing their hoard and making themselves all the more liable to popular indignities.

When the cultivated and intelligent Golampi finds himself growing too wealthy he proceeds to get rid of his surplus riches by some one of many easy expedients. One of these I have just described; another is to give his excess to those of his own class who have not sufficient to buy employment and so escape leisure, which is considered the greatest evil of all. "Idleness," says one of their famous authors, "is the child of poverty and the parent of discontent"; and another great writer says: "No one is without employment; the indolent man works for his enemies."

In conformity to these ideas the Golampis—all but the ignorant and vicious rich—look upon labor as the highest good, and the man who is so unfortunate as not to have enough money to purchase employment in some useful industry will rather engage in a useless one than not labor at all. It is not unusual to see hundreds

of men carrying water from a river and pouring it into a natural ravine or artificial channel, through which it runs back into the stream. Frequently a man is seen conveying stones—or the masses of metal which there correspond to stones—from one pile to another. When all have been heaped in a single place he will convey them back again, or to a new place, and so proceed until darkness puts an end to the work. This kind of labor, however, does not confer the satisfaction derived from the consciousness of being useful, and is never performed by any person having the means to hire another to employ him in some beneficial industry. The wages usually paid to employers are from three to six *balukan* a day. This statement may seem incredible, but I solemnly assure the reader that I have known a bad workman or a feeble woman to pay as high as eight; and there have been instances of men whose incomes had outgrown their desires paying even more.

Labor being a luxury which only those in easy circumstances can afford, the poor are the more eager for it, not only because it is denied them, but because it is a sign of respectability. Many of them, therefore, indulge in it on credit and soon find themselves deprived of what little property they had to satisfy their hardfisted employers. A poor woman once complained to me that her husband spent every *rylat* that he could get in the purchase of the most expensive kinds of employment, while she and the children were compelled to content themselves with such cheap and coarse activity as dragging an old wagon round and round in a small field which a kind-hearted neighbor permitted them to use for the purpose. I afterward saw this improvident husband and unnatural father. He had just squandered all the money he had been able to beg or borrow in buying six tickets, which entitled the holder to that many days' employment in pitching hay into a barn. A week later I met him again. He was broken in health, his limbs trembled, his walk was an uncertain shuffle. Clearly he was suffering from overwork. As I paused by the wayside to speak to him a wagon loaded with hay was passing. He fixed his eyes upon it with a hungry, wolfish glare, clutched a pitchfork and leaned eagerly forward, watching the vanishing wagon with breathless attention and heedless of my salutation. That night he was arrested, streaming with perspiration, in the unlawful act of unloading that hay and putting it into its owner's barn. He was tried, convicted and sentenced to six months' detention in the House of Indolence.

The whole country is infested by a class of criminal vagrants known as *strambaltis*, or, as we should say, "tramps." These persons prowl about among the farms and villages begging for work in the name of charity. Sometimes they travel in groups, as many as a dozen together, and then the farmer dares not refuse them; and before he can notify the constabulary they will have performed a great deal of the most useful labor that they can find

to do and escaped without paying a *rylat*. One trustworthy agriculturist assured me that his losses in one year from these depredations amounted to no less a sum than seven hundred *balukan!* On nearly all the larger and more isolated farms a strong force of guards is maintained during the greater part of the year to prevent these outrages, but they are frequently overpowered, and sometimes prove unfaithful to their trust by themselves working secretly by night.

The Golampi priesthood has always denounced overwork as a deadly sin, and declared useless and apparently harmless work, such as carrying water from the river and letting it flow in again, a distinct violation of the divine law, in which, however, I could never find any reference to the matter; but there has recently risen a sect which holds that all labor being pleasurable, each kind in its degree is immoral and wicked. This sect, which embraces many of the most holy and learned men, is rapidly spreading and becoming a power in the state. It has, of course, no churches, for these cannot be built without labor, and its members commonly dwell in caves and live upon such roots and berries as can be easily gathered, of which the country produces a great abundance though all are exceedingly unpalatable. These *Gropoppsu* (as the members of this sect call themselves) pass most of their waking hours sitting in the sunshine with folded hands, contemplating their navels; by the practice of which austerity they hope to obtain as reward an eternity of hard labor after death.

The Golampis are an essentially pious and religious race. There are few, indeed, who do not profess at least one religion. They are nearly all, in a certain sense, polytheists: they worship a supreme and beneficent deity by one name or another, but all believe in the existence of a subordinate and malevolent one, whom also, while solemnly execrating him in public rites, they hold at heart in such reverence that needlessly to mention his name or that of his dwelling is considered sin of a rank hardly inferior to blasphemy. I am persuaded that this singular tenderness toward a being whom their theology represents as an abominable monster, the origin of all evil and the foe to souls, is a survival of an ancient propitiatory adoration. Doubtless this wicked deity was once so feared that his conciliation was one of the serious concerns of life. He is probably as greatly feared now as at any former time, but is apparently less hated, and is by some honestly admired.

It is interesting to observe the important place held in Golampian affairs by religious persecution. The Government is a pure theocracy, all the Ministers of State and the principal functionaries in every department of control belonging to the priesthood of the dominant church. It is popularly believed in Mogon-Zwair that persecution, even to the extent of taking life, is in the long run beneficial to the cause enduring it. This belief has, indeed, been

crystallized into a popular proverb, not capable of accurate translation into our tongue, but to the effect that martyrs fertilize religion by pouring out their blood about its roots. Acting upon this belief with their characteristically logical and conscientious directness, the sacerdotal rulers of the country mercilessly afflict the sect to which themselves belong. They arrest its leading members on false charges, throw them into loathsome and unwholesome dungeons, subject them to the cruelest tortures and sometimes put them to death. The provinces in which the state religion is especially strong are occasionally raided and pillaged by government soldiery, recruited for the purpose by conscription among the dissenting sects, and are sometimes actually devastated with fire and sword. The result is not altogether confirmatory of the popular belief and does not fulfil the pious hope of the governing powers who are cruel to be kind. The vitalizing efficacy of persecution is not to be doubted, but the persecuted of too feeble faith frequently thwart its beneficent intent and happy operation by apostasy.

Having in mind the horrible torments which a Golampian general had inflicted upon the population of a certain town I once ventured to protest to him that so dreadful a sum of suffering, seeing that it did not accomplish its purpose, was needless and unwise.

“Needless and unwise it may be,” said he, “and I am disposed to admit that the result which I expected from it has not followed; but why do you speak of the *sum* of suffering? I tortured those people in but a single, simple way—by skinning their legs.”

“Ah, that is very true,” said I, “but you skinned the legs of one thousand.”

“And what of that?” he asked. “Can one thousand, or ten thousand, or any number of persons suffer more agony than one? A man may have his leg broken, then his nails pulled out, then be seared with a hot iron. Here is suffering added to suffering, and the effect is really cumulative. In the true mathematical sense it is a sum of suffering. A single person can experience it. But consider, my dear sir. How can you add one man’s agony to another’s? They are not addable quantities. Each is an individual pain, unaffected by the other. The limit of anguish which ingenuity can inflict is that utmost pang which one man has the vitality to endure.”

I was convinced but not silenced.

The Golampians all believe, singularly enough, that truth possesses some inherent vitality and power that give it an assured prevalence over falsehood; that a good name cannot be permanently defiled and irreparably ruined by detraction, but, like a star, shines all the brighter for the shadow through which it is seen; that justice cannot be stayed by injustice; that vice is powerless against virtue. I could quote from their great writers hundreds of utterances affirm-

ative of these propositions. One of their poets, for example, has some striking and original lines, of which the following is a literal but unmetrical translation:

A man who is in the right has three arms,  
But he whose conscience is rotten with wrong  
Is stripped and confined in a metal cell.

Imbued with these beliefs, the Golampis think it hardly worth while to be truthful, to abstain from slander, to do justice and to avoid vicious actions. "The practice," they say, "of deceit, calumination, oppression and immorality cannot have any sensible and lasting injurious effect, and it is most agreeable to the mind and heart. Why should there be personal self-denial without commensurate general advantage?"

In consequence of these false views, affirmed by those whom they regard as great and wise, the people of Mogon-Zwair are, as far as I have observed them, the most conscienceless liars, cheats, thieves, rakes and all-round, many-sided sinners that ever were created to be damned. It was, therefore, with inexpressible joy that I received one day legal notification that I had been tried in the High Court of Conviction and sentenced to banishment to Lalugnan. My offense was that I had said that I regarded consistency as the most detestable of all vices.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH GNARMAG- ZOTE

MOGON-ZWAIR and Lalugnan, having the misfortune to lie on opposite sides of a line, naturally hate each other; so each country sends its dangerous political criminals into the other, where they usually enjoy high honors and are sometimes elevated to important office under the crown. I was therefore received in Lalugnan with hospitality and given every encouragement in prosecuting my researches into the history and intellectual life of the people. They are so extraordinary a people, inhabiting so marvelous a country, that everything which the traveler sees, hears or experiences makes a lively and lasting impression upon his mind, and the labor of a lifetime would be required to relate the observation of a single year. I shall notice here only one or two points of national character—those which differ most conspicuously from ours, and in which, consequently, they are least worthy.

With a fatuity hardly more credible than creditable, the Lulugwumps, as they call themselves, deny the immortality of the soul. In all my stay in their country I found only one person who believed in a life “beyond the grave,” as we should say, though as the Lulugwumps are cannibals they would say “beyond the stomach.” In testimony to the consolatory value of the doctrine of another life, I may say that this one true believer had in this life a comparatively unsatisfactory lot, for in early youth he had been struck by a flying stone from a volcano and had lost a considerable part of his brain.

I cannot better set forth the nature and extent of the Lulugwumpian error regarding this matter than by relating a conversation that occurred between me and one of the high officers of the King’s household—a man whose proficiency in all the vices of antiquity, together with his service to the realm in determining the normal radius of curvature in cats’ claws, had elevated him to the highest plane of political preferment. His name was Gnarmag-Zote.

“You tell me,” said he, “that the soul is immaterial. Now, matter is that of which we can have knowledge through one or more of our senses. Of what is immaterial—not matter—we can gain no knowledge in that way. How, then, can we know anything about it?”

Perceiving that he did not rightly apprehend my position I abandoned it and shifted the argument to another ground. “Consider,” I said, “the analogous case of a thought. You will hardly call thought material, yet we know there are thoughts.”

“I beg your pardon, but we do not know that. Thought is not a thing, therefore cannot *be* in any such sense, for example, as the hand *is*. We use the word ‘thought’ to designate the result of an

action of the brain, precisely as we use the word 'speed' to designate the result of an action of a horse's legs. But can it be said that speed *exists* in the same way as the legs which produce it exist, or in any way? Is it a thing?"

I was about to disdain to reply, when I saw an old man approaching, with bowed head, apparently in deep distress. As he drew near he saluted my distinguished interlocutor in the manner of the country, by putting out his tongue to its full extent and moving it slowly from side to side. Gnarmag-Zote acknowledged the civility by courteously spitting, and the old man, advancing, seated himself at the great officer's feet, saying: "Exalted Sir, I have just lost my wife by death, and am in a most melancholy frame of mind. He who has mastered all the vices of the ancients and wrested from nature the secret of the normal curvature of cats' claws can surely spare from his wisdom a few rays of philosophy to cheer an old man's gloom. Pray tell me what I shall do to assuage my grief."

The reader can, perhaps, faintly conceive my astonishment when Gnarmag-Zote gravely replied: "Kill yourself."

"Surely," I cried, "you would not have this honest fellow procure oblivion (since you think that death is nothing else) by so rash an act!"

"An act that Gnarmag-Zote advises," he said, coldly, "is not rash."

"But death," I said, "death, whatever else it may be, is an end of life. This old man is now in sorrow almost insupportable. But a few days and it will be supportable; a few months and it will have become no more than a tender melancholy. At last it will disappear, and in the society of his friends, in the skill of his cook, the profits of avarice, the study of how to be querulous and in the pursuit of loquacity, he will again experience the joys of age. Why for a present grief should he deprive himself of all future happiness?"

Gnarmag-Zote looked upon me with something like compassion. "My friend," said he, "guest of my sovereign and my country, know that in any circumstances, even those upon which true happiness is based and conditioned, death is preferable to life. The sum of miseries in any life (here in Lalugnan at least) exceeds the sum of pleasures; but suppose that it did not. Imagine an existence in which happiness, of whatever intensity, is the rule, and discomfort, of whatever moderation, the exception. Still there is some discomfort. There is none in death, for (as it is given to us to know) that is oblivion, annihilation. True, by dying one loses his happiness as well as his sorrows, but he is not conscious of the loss. Surely, a loss of which one will never know, and which, if it operate to make him less happy, at the same time takes from him the desire and capacity and need of happiness, cannot be an evil. That is so intelligently understood among us here in Lalugnan that sui-

cide is common, and our word for sufferer is the same as that for fool. If this good man had not been an idiot he would have taken his life as soon as he was bereaved."

"If what you say of the blessing of death is true," I said, smilingly, for I greatly prided myself on the ingenuity of my thought, "it is unnecessary to commit suicide through grief for the dead; for the more you love the more glad you should be that the object of your affection has passed into so desirable a state as death."

"So we are—those of us who have cultivated philosophy, history and logic; but this poor fellow is still under the domination of feelings inherited from a million ignorant and superstitious ancestors—for Lalugnan was once as barbarous a country as your own. The most grotesque and frightful conceptions of death, and life after death, were current; and now many of even those whose understandings are emancipated wear upon their feelings the heavy chain of heredity."

"But," said I, "granting for the sake of the argument which I am about to build upon the concession" (I could not bring myself to use the idiotic and meaningless phrase, "for the sake of argument") "that death, especially the death of a Lalugwump, is desirable, yet the act of dying, the transition state between living and being dead, may be accompanied by the most painful physical, and most terrifying mental phenomena. The moment of dissolution may seem to the exalted sensibilities of the moribund a century of horrors."

The great man smiled again, with a more intolerable benignity than before. "There is no such thing as dying," he said; "the 'transition state' is a creation of your fancy and an evidence of imperfect reason. One is at any time either alive or dead. The one condition cannot shade off into the other. There is no gradation like that between waking and sleeping. By the way, do you recognize a certain resemblance between death and a dreamless sleep?"

"Yes—death as you conceive it to be."

"Well, does any one fear sleep? Do we not seek it, court it, wish that it may be sound—that is to say, dreamless? We desire occasional annihilation—wish to be dead for eight and ten hours at a time. True, we expect to awake, but that expectation, while it may account for our alacrity in embracing sleep, cannot alter the character of the state that we cheerfully go into. Suppose we did not wake in the morning, never did wake! Would our mental and spiritual condition be in any respect different through all eternity from what it was during the first few hours? After how many hours does oblivion begin to be an evil? The man who loves to sleep yet hates to die might justly be granted everlasting life with everlasting insomnia."

Gnarmag-Zote paused and appeared to be lost in the profundity of his thoughts, but I could easily enough see that he was

only taking breath. The old man whose grief had given this turn to the conversation had fallen asleep and was roaring in the nose like a beast. The rush of a river near by, as it poured up a hill from the ocean, and the shrill singing of several kinds of brilliant quadrupeds were the only other sounds audible. I waited deferentially for the great antiquarian, scientist and courtier to resume, amusing myself meantime by turning over the leaves of an official report by the Minister of War on a new and improved process of making thunder from snail slime. Presently the oracle spoke.

“You have been born,” he said, which was true. “There was, it follows, a time when you had not been born. As we reckon time, it was probably some millions of ages. Of this considerable period you are unable to remember one unhappy moment, and in point of fact there was none. To a Lalugwump that is entirely conclusive as to the relative values of consciousness and oblivion, existence and nonexistence, life and death. This old man lying here at my feet is now, if not dreaming, as if he had never been born. Would not it be cruel and inhuman to wake him back to grief? Is it, then, kind to permit him to wake by the natural action of his own physical energies? I have given him the advice for which he asked. Believing it good advice, and seeing him too irresolute to act, it seems my clear duty to assist him.”

Before I could interfere, even had I dared take the liberty to do so, Gnarmag-Zote struck the old man a terrible blow upon the head with his mace of office. The victim turned upon his back, spread his fingers, shivered convulsively and was dead.

“You need not be shocked,” said the distinguished assassin, coolly: “I have but performed a sacred duty and religious rite. The religion (established first in this realm by King Skanghutch, the sixty-second of that name) consists in the worship of Death. We have sacred books, some three thousand thick volumes, said to be written by inspiration of Death himself, whom no mortal has ever seen, but who is described by our priests as having the figure of a fat young man with a red face and wearing an affable smile. In art he is commonly represented in the costume of a husbandman sowing seeds.

“The priests and sacred books teach that death is the supreme and only good—that the chief duties of man are, therefore, assassination and suicide. Conviction of these cardinal truths is universal among us, but I am sorry to say that many do not honestly live up to the faith. Most of us are commendably zealous in assassination, but slack and lukewarm in suicide. Some justify themselves in this half-hearted observance of the Law and imperfect submission to the Spirit by arguing that if they destroy themselves their usefulness in destroying others will be greatly abridged. ‘I find,’ says one of our most illustrious writers, not without a certain force, it

must be confessed, 'that I can slay many more of others than I can of myself.'

"There are still others, more distinguished for faith than works, who reason that if A kill B, B cannot kill C. So it happens that although many Lalugwumps die, mostly by the hands of others, though some by their own, the country is never wholly depopulated."

"In my own country," said I, "is a sect holding somewhat Lalugwumpian views of the evil of life; and among the members it is considered a sin to bestow it. The philosopher Schopenhauer taught the same doctrine, and many of our rulers have shown strong sympathetic leanings toward it by procuring the destruction of many of their own people and those of other nations in what is called war."

"They are greatly to be commended," said Gnarmag-Zote, rising to intimate that the conversation was at an end. I respectfully protruded my tongue while he withdrew into his palace, spitting politely and with unusual copiousness in acknowledgment. A few minutes later, but before I had left the spot, two lackeys in livery emerged from the door by which he had entered, and while one shouldered the body of the old man and carried it into the palace kitchen the other informed me that his Highness was graciously pleased to desire my company at dinner that evening. With many expressions of regret I declined the invitation, unaware that to do so was treason. With the circumstances of my escape to the island of Tamtonia the newspapers have made the world already familiar.

## THE TAMTONIANS

IN all my intercourse with the Tamtonians I was treated with the most distinguished consideration and no obstacles to a perfect understanding of their social and political life were thrown in my way. My enforced residence on the island was, however, too brief to enable me to master the whole subject as I should have liked to do.

The government of Tamtonia is what is known in the language of the island as a *gilbuper*. It differs radically from any form known in other parts of the world and is supposed to have been invented by an ancient chief of the race, named Natas, who was for many centuries after his death worshiped as a god, and whose memory is still held in veneration. The government is of infinite complexity, its various functions distributed among as many officers as possible, multiplication of places being regarded as of the greatest importance, and not so much a means as an end. The Tamtonians seem to think that the highest good to which a human being can attain is the possession of an office; and in order that as many as possible may enjoy that advantage they have as many offices as the country will support, and make the tenure brief and in no way dependent on good conduct and intelligent administration of official duty. In truth, it occurs usually that a man is turned out of his office (in favor of an incompetent successor) before he has acquired sufficient experience to perform his duties with credit to himself or profit to the country. Owing to this incredible folly, the affairs of the island are badly mismanaged. Complaints are the rule, even from those who have had their way in the choice of officers. Of course there can be no such thing as a knowledge of the science of government among such a people, for it is to nobody's interest to acquire it by study of political history. There is, indeed, a prevalent belief that nothing worth knowing is to be learned from the history of other nations—not even from the history of their errors—such is this extraordinary people's national vanity! One of the most notable consequences of this universal and voluntary ignorance is that Tamtonia is the home of all the discreditable political and fiscal heresies from which many other nations, and especially our own, emancipated themselves centuries ago. They are there in vigorous growth and full flower, and believed to be of purely Tamtonian origin.

It needs hardly to be stated that in their personal affairs these people pursue an entirely different course, for if they did not there could be no profitable industries and professions among them, and no property to tax for the support of their government. In his private business a Tamtonian has as high appreciation of fitness

and experience as anybody, and having secured a good man keeps him in service as long as possible.

The ruler of the nation, whom they call a *Tnediserp*, is chosen every five years but may be rechosen for five more. He is supposed to be selected by the people themselves, but in reality they have nothing to do with his selection. The method of choosing a man for *Tnediserp* is so strange that I doubt my ability to make it clear.

The adult male population of the island divides itself into two or more *seitrap*.<sup>1</sup> Commonly there are three or four, but only two ever have any considerable numerical strength, and none is ever strong morally or intellectually. All the members of each *ytrap* profess the same political opinions, which are provided for them by their leaders every five years and written down on pieces of paper so that they will not be forgotten. The moment that any Tamtonian has read his piece of paper, or *mroftalp*, he unhesitatingly adopts all the opinions that he finds written on it, sometimes as many as forty or fifty, although these may be altogether different from, or even antagonistic to, those with which he was supplied five years before and has been advocating ever since. It will be seen from this that the Tamtonian mind is a thing whose processes no American can hope to respect, or even understand. It is instantaneously convinced without either fact or argument, and when these are afterward presented they only confirm it in its miraculous conviction; those which make against that conviction having an even stronger confirmatory power than the others. I have said any Tamtonian, but that is an overstatement. A few usually persist in thinking as they did before; or in altering their convictions in obedience to reason instead of authority, as our own people do; but they are at once assailed with the most opprobrious names, accused of treason and all manner of crimes, pelted with mud and stones and in some instances deprived of their noses and ears by the public executioner. Yet in no country is independence of thought so vaunted as a virtue, and in none is freedom of speech considered so obvious a natural right or so necessary to good government.

At the same time that each *ytrap* is supplied with its political opinions for the next five years, its leaders—who, I am told, all pursue the vocation of sharpening axes—name a man whom they wish chosen for the office of *Tnediserp*. He is usually an idiot from birth, the Tamtonians having a great veneration for such, believing them to be divinely inspired. Although few members of the *ytrap* have ever heard of him before, they at once believe him to have been long the very greatest idiot in the country; and for the next few months they do little else than quote his words and point to his actions to prove that his idiocy is of entirely superior quality to that of his opponent—a view that he himself, instructed by his dis-

coverers, does and says all that he can to confirm. His inarticulate mumblings are everywhere repeated as utterances of profound wisdom, and the slaver that drools from his chin is carefully collected and shown to the people, evoking the wildest enthusiasm of his supporters. His opponents all this time are trying to blacken his character by the foulest conceivable falsehoods, some even going so far as to assert that he is not an idiot at all! It is generally agreed among them that if he were chosen to office the most dreadful disasters would ensue, and that, *therefore*, he will not be chosen.

To this last mentioned conviction, namely that the opposing candidate (*rehtot lacsar*) cannot possibly be chosen, I wish to devote a few words here, for it seems to me one of the most extraordinary phenomena of the human mind. It implies, of course, a profound belief in the wisdom of majorities and the error of minorities. This belief can and does in some mysterious way co-exist, in the Tamtonian understanding, with the deepest disgust and most earnest disapproval of a decision which a majority has made. It is of record, indeed, that one political *ytrap* sustained no fewer than six successive defeats without at all impairing its conviction that the right side must win. In each recurring contest this *ytrap* was as sure that it would succeed as it had been in all the preceding ones—and sure because it believed itself in the right! It has been held by some native observers that this conviction is not actually entertained, but only professed for the purpose of influencing the action of others; but this is disproved by the fact that even after the contest is decided, though the result is unknown—when nobody's action can have effect—the leaders (ax-sharpeners) continue earnestly to “claim” this province and that, up to the very last moment of uncertainty, and the common people murder one another in the streets for the crime of doubting that the man is chosen whom the assassin was pleased to prefer. When the majority of a province has chosen one candidate and a majority of the nation another, the mental situation of the worthy Tamtonian is not over-easy of conception, but there can be no doubt that his faith in the wisdom of majorities remains unshaken.

One of the two antagonistic idiots having been chosen as ruler, it is customary to speak of him as “the choice of the people,” whereas it is obvious that he is one of the few men, seldom exceeding two or three, whom it is certainly known that nearly one-half the people regard as unfit for the position. He is less certainly “the people's choice” than any other man in the country excepting his unsuccessful opponents; for while it is known that a large body of his countrymen did not want him, it cannot be known how many of his supporters really preferred some other person, but had no opportunity to make their preference effective.

The Tamtonians are very proud of their form of government, which gives them so much power in selecting their rulers. This power consists in the privilege of choosing between two men whom but a few had a voice in selecting from among many millions, any one of whom the rest might have preferred to either. Yet every Tamtonian is as vain of possessing this incalculably small influence as if he were a Warwick in making kings and a Bismarck in using them. He gives himself as many airs and graces as would be appropriate to the display of an honest pin-feather upon the pope's-nose of a mooley peacock.

Each congenital idiot whom the ax-grinders name for the office of *Tnediserp* has upon the "ticket" with him a dead man, who stands or falls with his leader. There is no way of voting for the idiot without voting for the corpse also, and vice versa. When one of these precious couples has been chosen the idiot in due time enters upon the duties of his office and the corpse is put into an ice-chest and carefully preserved from decay. If the idiot should himself become a corpse he is buried at once and the other body is then haled out of its ice to take his place. It is propped up in the seat of authority, and duly instated in power. This is the signal for a general attack upon it. It is subjected to every kind of sacrilegious indignity, vituperated as a usurper and an "accident," struck with rotten eggs and dead cats, and undergoes the meanest misrepresentation. Its attitude in the chair, its fallen jaw, glazed eyes and degree of decomposition are caricatured and exaggerated out of all reason. Yet such as it is it must be endured for the unexpired term for which its predecessor was chosen. To guard against a possible interregnum, however, a law has recently been passed providing that if it should tumble out of the chair and be too rotten to set up again its clerks (*seiraterces*) are eligible to its place in a stated order of succession. Here we have the amazing anomaly of the rulers of a "free" people actually appointing their potential successors!—a thing inexpressibly repugnant to all our ideas of popular government, but apparently regarded in Tamtonia as a matter of course.

During the few months intervening between the ax-men's selection of candidates and the people's choice between those selected (a period known as the *laitnediserp ngiapmac*) the Tamtonian character is seen at its worst. There is no infamy too great or too little for the partisans of the various candidates to commit and accuse their opponents of committing. While every one of them declares, and in his heart believes, that honest arguments have greater weight than dishonest; that falsehood reacts on the falsifier's cause; that appeals to passion and prejudice are as ineffectual as dishonorable, few have the strength and sense to deny themselves the luxury of all these methods and worse ones. The laws against bribery, made by themselves, are set at naught and those of civility and good breeding are forgotten. The best of

friends quarrel and openly insult one another. The women, who know almost as little of the matters at issue as the men, take part in the abominable discussions; some even encouraging the general demoralization by showing themselves at the public meetings, sometimes actually putting themselves into uniform and marching in procession with banners, music and torchlights.

I feel that this last statement will be hardly understood without explanation. Among the agencies employed by the Tamtonians to prove that one set of candidates is better than another, or to show that one political policy is more likely than another to promote the general prosperity, a high place is accorded to colored rags, flames of fire, noises made upon brass instruments, inarticulate shouts, explosions of gunpowder and lines of men walking and riding through the streets in cheap and tawdry costumes more or less alike. Vast sums of money are expended to procure these strange evidences of the personal worth of candidates and the political sanity of ideas. It is very much as if a man should paint his nose pea-green and stand on his head to convince his neighbors that his pigs are fed on acorns. Of course the money subscribed for these various controversial devices is not all wasted; the greater part of it is pocketed by the ax-grinders by whom it is solicited, and who have invented the system. That they have invented it for their own benefit seems not to have occurred to the dupes who pay for it. In the universal madness everybody believes whatever monstrous and obvious falsehood is told by the leaders of his own *ytrap*, and nobody listens for a moment to the exposures of their rascality. Reason has flown shrieking from the scene; Caution slumbers by the wayside with unbuttoned pocket. It is the opportunity of thieves!

With a view to abating somewhat the horrors of this recurring season of depravity, it has been proposed by several wise and decent Tamtonians to extend the term of office of the *Tnediserp* to six years instead of five, but the sharpeners of axes are too powerful to be overthrown. They have made the people believe that if the man whom the country chooses to rule it because it thinks him wise and good were permitted to rule it too long it would be impossible to displace him in punishment for his folly and wickedness. It is, indeed, far more likely that the term of office will be reduced to four years than extended to six. The effect can be no less than hideous!

In Tamtonia there is a current popular saying dating from many centuries back and running this way: "*Eht eciffo dluohs kees eht nam, ton eht nam eht eciffo*"—which may be translated thus: "No citizen ought to try to secure power for himself, but should be selected by others for his fitness to exercise it." The sentiment which this wise and decent phrase expresses has long ceased to have a place in the hearts of those who are everlastingly repeating it, but with regard to the office of *Tnediserp* it has still a remnant

of the vitality of habit. This, however, is fast dying out, and a few years ago one of the congenital idiots who was a candidate for the highest dignity boldly broke the inhibition and made speeches to the people in advocacy of himself, all over the country. Even more recently another has uttered his preferences in much the same way, but with this difference: he did his speechmaking at his own home, the ax-grinders in his interest rounding up audiences for him and herding them before his door. One of the two corpses, too, was galvanized into a kind of ghastly activity and became a talking automaton; but the other had been too long dead. In a few years more the decent tradition that a man should not blow his own horn will be obsolete in its application to the high office, as it is to all the others, but the popular saying will lose none of its currency for that.

To the American mind nothing can be more shocking than the Tamtonian practice of openly soliciting political preferment and even paying money to assist in securing it. With us such immodesty would be taken as proof of the offender's unfitness to exercise the power which he asks for, or bear the dignity which, in soliciting it, he belittles. Yet no Tamtonian ever refused to take the hand of a man guilty of such conduct, and there have been instances of fathers giving these greedy vulgarians the hands of their daughters in marriage and thereby assisting to perpetuate the species. The kind of government given by men who go about begging for the right to govern can be more easily imagined than endured. In short, I cannot help thinking that when, unable longer to bear with patience the evils entailed by the vices and follies of its inhabitants, I sailed away from the accursed island of Tamtonia, I left behind me the most pestilent race of rascals and ignoramuses to be found anywhere in the universe; and I never can sufficiently thank the divine Power who spared me the disadvantage and shame of being one of them, and cast my lot in this favored land of goodness and right reason, the blessed abode of public morality and private worth—of liberty, conscience and common sense.

I was not, however, to reach it without further detention in barbarous countries. After being at sea four days I was seized by my mutinous crew, set ashore upon an island, and having been made insensible by a blow upon the head was basely abandoned.

## MAROONED ON UG

WHEN I regained my senses I found myself lying on the strand a short remove from the margin of the sea. It was high noon and an insupportable itching pervaded my entire frame, that being the effect of sunshine in that country, as heat is in ours. Having observed that the discomfort was abated by the passing of a light cloud between me and the sun, I dragged myself with some difficulty to a clump of trees near by and found permanent relief in their shade. As soon as I was comfortable enough to examine my surroundings I saw that the trees were of metal, apparently copper, with leaves of what resembled pure silver, but may have contained alloy. Some of the trees bore burnished flowers shaped like bells, and in a breeze the tinkling as they clashed together was exceedingly sweet. The grass with which the open country was covered as far as I could see amongst the patches of forest was of a bright scarlet hue, excepting along the water-courses, where it was white. Lazily cropping it at some little distance away, or lying in it, indolently chewing the cud and attended by a man half-clad in skins and bearing a crook, was a flock of tigers. My travels in New Jersey having made me proof against surprise, I contemplated these several visible phenomena without emotion, and with a merely expectant interest in what might be revealed by further observation.

The tigerherd having perceived me, now came striding forward, brandishing his crook and shaking his fists with great vehemence, gestures which I soon learned were, in that country, signs of amity and good-will. But before knowing that fact I had risen to my feet and thrown myself into a posture of defense, and as he approached I led for his head with my left, following with a stiff right upon his solar plexus, which sent him rolling on the grass in great pain. After learning something of the social customs of the country I felt extreme mortification in recollecting this breach of etiquette, and even to this day I cannot think upon it without a blush.

Such was my first meeting with Jogogle-Zadester, Pastor-King of Ug, the wisest and best of men. Later in our acquaintance, when I had for a long time been an honored guest at his court, where a thousand fists were ceremoniously shaken under my nose daily, he explained that my luke-warm reception of his hospitable advances gave him, for the moment, an unfavorable impression of my breeding and culture.

The island of Ug, upon which I had been marooned, lies in the Southern Hemisphere, but has neither latitude nor longitude. It has an area of nearly seven hundred square *samtains* and is peculiar in shape, its width being considerably greater than its length. Politically it is a limited monarchy, the right of succession to the

throne being vested in the sovereign's father, if he have one; if not in his grandfather, and so on upward in the line of ascent. (As a matter of fact there has not within historic times been a legitimate succession, even the great and good Jogogle-Zadester being a usurper chosen by popular vote.) To assist him in governing, the King is given a parliament, the Uggard word for which is *gabagab*, but its usefulness is greatly circumscribed by the *Blubosh*, or Constitution, which requires that every measure, in order to become a law, shall have an affirmative majority of the actual members, yet forbids any member to vote who has not a distinct pecuniary interest in the result. I was once greatly amused by a spirited contest over a matter of harbor improvement, each of two proposed harbors having its advocates. One of these gentlemen, a most eloquent patriot, held the floor for hours in advocacy of the port where he had an interest in a projected mill for making dead kittens into cauliflower pickles; while other members were being vigorously persuaded by one who at the other place had a clam ranch. In a debate in the Uggard *gabagab* no one can have a "standing" except a party in interest; and as a consequence of this enlightened policy every bill that is passed is found to be most intelligently adapted to its purpose.

The original intent of this requirement was that members having no pecuniary interest in a proposed law at the time of its inception should not embarrass the proceedings and pervert the result; but the inhibition is now thought to be sufficiently observed by formal public acceptance of a nominal bribe to vote one way or the other. It is of course understood that behind the nominal bribe is commonly a more substantial one of which there is no record. To an American accustomed to the incorrupt methods of legislation in his own country the spectacle of every member of the Uggard *gabagab* qualifying himself to vote by marching up, each in his turn as his name is called, to the proponent of the bill, or to its leading antagonist, and solemnly receiving a *tonusi* (the smallest coin of the realm) is exceedingly novel. When I ventured to mention to the King my lack of faith in the principle upon which this custom is founded, he replied:

"Heart of my soul, if you and your compatriots distrust the honesty and intelligence of an interested motive why is it that in your own courts of law, as you describe them, no private citizen can institute a civil action to right the wrongs of anybody but himself?"

I had nothing to say and the King proceeded: "And why is it that your judges will listen to no argument from any one who has not acquired a selfish concern in the matter?"

"O, your Majesty," I answered with animation, "they listen to attorneys-general, district attorneys and salaried officers of the law generally, whose prosperity depends in no degree upon their suc-

cess; who prosecute none but those whom they believe to be guilty; who are careful to present no false nor misleading testimony and argument; who are solicitous that even the humblest accused person shall be accorded every legal right and every advantage to which he is entitled; who, in brief, are animated by the most humane sentiments and actuated by the purest and most unselfish motives.”

The King’s discomfiture was pitiful: he retired at once from the capital and passed a whole year pasturing his flock of tigers in the solitudes beyond the River of Wine. Seeing that I would henceforth be *persona non grata* at the palace, I sought obscurity in the writing and publication of books. In this vocation I was greatly assisted by a few standard works that had been put ashore with me in my sea-chest.

The literature of Ug is copious and of high merit, but consists altogether of fiction—mainly history, biography, theology and novels. Authors of exceptional excellence receive from the state marks of signal esteem, being appointed to the positions of laborers in the Department of Highways and Cemeteries. Having been so fortunate as to win public favor and attract official attention by my locally famous works, “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,” “David Copperfield,” “Pilgrim’s Progress,” and “Ben Hur,” I was myself that way distinguished and my future assured. Unhappily, through ignorance of the duties and dignities of the position I had the mischance to accept a gratuity for sweeping a street crossing and was compelled to flee for my life.

Disguising myself as a sailor I took service on a ship that sailed due south into the unknown Sea.

It is now many years since my marooning on Ug, but my recollection of the country, its inhabitants and their wonderful manners and customs is exceedingly vivid. Some small part of what most interested me I shall here set down.

The Uggards are, or fancy themselves, a warlike race: nowhere in those distant seas are there any islanders so vain of their military power, the consciousness of which they acquired chiefly by fighting one another. Many years ago, however, they had a war with the people of another island kingdom, called Wug. The Wuggards held dominion over a third island, Scamadumclitchclitch, whose people had tried to throw off the yoke. In order to subdue them—at least to tears—it was decided to deprive them of garlic, the sole article of diet known to them and the Wuggards, and in that country dug out of the ground like coal. So the Wuggards in the rebellious island stopped up all the garlic mines, supplying their own needs by purchase from foreign trading proas. Having few cowrie shells, with which to purchase, the poor Scamadumclitchclitchians suffered a great distress, which so touched the hearts of the compassionate Uggards—a most humane and con-

scientious people—that they declared war against the Wuggards and sent a fleet of proas to the relief of the sufferers. The fleet established a strict blockade of every port in Scamadumclitchclitch, and not a clove of garlic could enter the island. That compelled the Wuggard army of occupation to reopen the mines for its own subsistence.

All this was told to me by the great and good and wise Jogogle-Zadester, King of Ug.

“But, your Majesty,” I said, “what became of the poor Scamadumclitchclitchians?”

“They all died,” he answered with royal simplicity.

“Then your Majesty’s humane intervention,” I said, “was not entirely—well, fattening?”

“The fortune of war,” said the King, gravely, looking over my head to signify that the interview was at an end; and I retired from the Presence on hands and feet, as is the etiquette in that country.

As soon as I was out of hearing I threw a stone in the direction of the palace and said: “I never in my life heard of such a cold-blooded scoundrel!”

In conversation with the King’s Prime Minister, the famous Grumsquitzzy, I asked him how it was that Ug, being a great military power, was apparently without soldiers.

“Sir,” he replied, courteously shaking his fist under my nose in sign of amity, “know that when Ug needs soldiers she enlists them. At the end of the war they are put to death.”

“Visible embodiment of a great nation’s wisdom,” I said, “far be it from me to doubt the expediency of that military method; but merely as a matter of economy would it not be better to keep an army in time of peace than to be compelled to create one in time of war?”

“Ug is rich,” he replied; “we do not have to consider matters of economy. There is among our people a strong and instinctive distrust of a standing army.”

“What are they afraid of,” I asked—“what do they fear that it will do?”

“It is not what the army may do,” answered the great man, “but what it may prevent others from doing. You must know that we have in this land a thing known as Industrial Discontent.”

“Ah, I see,” I exclaimed, interrupting—“the industrial classes fear that the army may destroy, or at least subdue, their discontent.”

The Prime Minister reflected profoundly, standing the while, in order that he might assist his faculties by scratching himself, even as we, when thinking, scratch our heads.

“No,” he said presently; “I don’t think that is quite what they apprehend—they and the writers and statesmen who speak for them. As I said before, what is feared in a case of industrial dis-

content is the army's preventive power. But I am myself uncertain what it is that these good souls dislike to have the army prevent. I shall take the customary means to learn."

Having occasion on the next day to enter the great audience hall of the palace I observed in gigantic letters running across the entire side opposite the entrance this surprising inscription:

"In a strike, what do you fear that the army will prevent which ought to be done?"

Facing the entrance sat Grumsqutzy, in his robes of office and surrounded by an armed guard. At a little distance stood two great black slaves, each bearing a scourge of thongs. All about them the floor was slippery with blood. While I wondered at all this two policemen entered, having between them one whom I recognized as a professional Friend of the People, a great orator, keenly concerned for the interests of Labor. Shown the inscription and unable or unwilling to answer, he was given over to the two blacks and, being stripped to the skin, was beaten with the whips until he bled copiously and his cries resounded through the palace. His ears were then shorn away and he was thrown into the street. Another Friend of the People was brought in, and treated in the same way; and the inquiry was continued, day after day, until all had been interrogated. But Grumsqutzy got no answer.

A most extraordinary and interesting custom of the Uggards is called the *Naganag* and has existed, I was told, for centuries. Immediately after every war, and before the returned army is put to death, the chieftains who have held high command and their official head, the Minister of National Displeasure, are conducted with much pomp to the public square of Nabootka, the capital. Here all are stripped naked, deprived of their sight with a hot iron and armed with a club each. They are then locked in the square, which has an inclosing wall thirty *clowgebs* high. A signal is given and they begin to fight. At the end of three days the place is entered and searched. If any of the dead bodies has an unbroken bone in it the survivors are boiled in wine; if not they are smothered in butter.

Upon the advantages of this custom—which surely has not its like in the whole world—I could get little light. One public official told me its purpose was "peace among the victorious"; another said it was "for gratification of the military instinct in high places," though if that is so one is disposed to ask "What was the war for?" The Prime Minister, profoundly learned in all things else, could not enlighten me, and the commander-in-chief in the Wuggard war could only tell me, while on his way to the public square, that it was "to vindicate the truth of history."

In all the wars in which Ug has engaged in historic times that with Wug was the most destructive of life. Excepting among the comparatively few troops that had the hygienic and preservative

advantage of personal collision with the enemy, the mortality was appalling. Regiments exposed to the fatal conditions of camp life in their own country died like flies in a frost. So pathetic were the pleas of the sufferers to be led against the enemy and have a chance to live that none hearing them could forbear to weep. Finally a considerable number of them went to the seat of war, where they began an immediate attack upon a fortified city, for their health; but the enemy's resistance was too brief materially to reduce the death rate and the men were again in the hands of their officers. On their return to Ug they were so few that the public executioners charged with the duty of reducing the army to a peace footing were themselves made ill by inactivity.

As to the navy, the war with Wug having shown the Uggard sailors to be immortal, their government knows not how to get rid of them, and remains a great sea power in spite of itself. I ventured to suggest mustering out, but neither the King nor any Minister of State was able to form a conception of any method of reduction and retrenchment but that of the public headsman.

It is said—I do not know with how much truth—that the defeat of Wug was made easy by a certain malicious prevision of the Wuggards themselves: something of the nature of heroic self-sacrifice, the surrender of a present advantage for a terrible revenge in the future. As an instance, the commander of the fortified city already mentioned is reported to have ordered his garrison to kill as few of their assailants as possible.

“It is true,” he explained to his subordinates, who favored a defense to the death—“it is true this will lose us the place, but there are other places; you have not thought of that.”

They had not thought of that.

“It is true, too, that we shall be taken prisoners, but”—and he smiled grimly—“we have fairly good appetites, and we must be fed. That will cost something, I take it. But that is not the best of it. Look at that vast host of our enemies—each one of them a future pensioner on a fool people. If there is among us one man who would willingly deprive the Uggard treasury of a single dependent—who would spare the Uggard pigs one *gukwam* of expense, let the traitor stand forth.”

No traitor stood forth, and in the ensuing battles the garrison, it is said, fired only blank cartridges, and such of the assailants as were killed incurred that mischance by falling over their own feet.

It is estimated by Wuggard statisticians that in twenty years from the close of the war the annual appropriation for pensions in Ug will amount to no less than one hundred and sixty *gumdums* to every enlisted man in the kingdom. But they know not the Uggard customs of exterminating the army.

## THE DOG IN GANEGWAG

AT about the end of the thirty-seventh month of our voyage due south from Ug we sighted land, and although the coast appeared wild and inhospitable, the captain decided to send a boat ashore in search of fresh water and provisions, of which we were in sore need. I was of the boat's crew and thought myself fortunate in being able to set foot again upon the earth. There were seven others in the landing party, including the mate, who commanded.

Selecting a sheltered cove, which appeared to be at the mouth of a small creek, we beached the boat, and leaving two men to guard it started inland toward a grove of trees. Before we reached it an animal came out of it and advanced confidently toward us, showing no signs of either fear or hostility. It was a hideous creature, not altogether like anything that we had ever seen, but on its close approach we recognized it as a dog, of an unimaginably loathsome breed. As we were nearly famished one of the sailors shot it for food. Instantly a great crowd of persons, who had doubtless been watching us from among the trees, rushed upon us with fierce exclamations and surrounded us, making the most threatening gestures and brandishing unfamiliar weapons. Unable to resist such odds we were seized, bound with cords and dragged into the forest almost before we knew what had happened to us. Observing the nature of our reception the ship's crew hastily weighed anchor and sailed away. We never again saw them.

Beyond the trees concealing it from the sea was a great city, and thither we were taken. It was Gumammam, the capital of Ganegwag, whose people are dog-worshippers. The fate of my companions I never learned, for although I remained in the country for seven years, much of the time as a prisoner, and learned to speak its language, no answer was ever given to my many inquiries about my unfortunate friends.

The Ganegwagians are an ancient race with a history covering a period of ten thousand *supintroes*. In stature they are large, in color blue, with crimson hair and yellow eyes. They live to a great age, sometimes as much as twenty *supintroes*, their climate being so wholesome that even the aged have to sail to a distant island in order to die. Whenever a sufficient number of them reach what they call "the age of going away" they embark on a government ship and in the midst of impressive public rites and ceremonies set sail for "the Isle of the Happy Change." Of their strange civilization, their laws, manners and customs, their copper clothing and liquid houses I have written—at perhaps too great length—in my famous book, "Ganegwag the Incredible." Here I shall confine my-

self to their religion, certainly the most amazing form of superstition in the world.

Nowhere, it is believed, but in Ganegwag has so vile a creature as the dog obtained general recognition as a deity. There this filthy beast is considered so divine that it is freely admitted to the domestic circle and cherished as an honored guest. Scarcely a family that is able to support a dog is without one, and some have as many as a half-dozen. Indeed, the dog is the special deity of the poor, those families having most that are least able to maintain them. In some sections of the country, particularly the southern and southwestern provinces, the number of dogs is estimated to be greater than that of the children, as is the cost of their maintenance. In families of the rich they are fewer in number, but more sacredly cherished, especially by the female members, who lavish upon them a wealth of affection not always granted to the husband and children, and distinguish them with indescribable attentions and endearments.

Nowhere is the dog compelled to make any other return for all this honor and benefaction than a fawning and sycophantic demeanor toward those who bestow them and an insulting and injurious attitude toward strangers who have dogs of their own, and toward other dogs. In any considerable town of the realm not a day passes but the public newsman relates in the most matter-of-fact and unsympathetic way to his circle of listless auditors painful instances of human beings, mostly women and children, bitten and mangled by these ferocious animals without provocation.

In addition to these ravages of the dog in his normal state are a vastly greater number of outrages committed by the sacred animal in the fury of insanity, for he has an hereditary tendency to madness, and in that state his bite is incurable, the victim awaiting in the most horrible agony the sailing of the next ship to the Isle of the Happy Change, his suffering imperfectly medicined by expressions of public sympathy for the dog.

A cynical citizen of Gumammam said to the writer of this narrative: "My countrymen have three hundred kinds of dogs, and only one way to hang a thief." Yet all the dogs are alike in this, that none is respectable.

Withal, it must be said of this extraordinary people that their horrible religion is free from the hollow forms and meaningless ceremonies in which so many superstitions of the lower races find expression. It is a religion of love, practical, undemonstrative, knowing nothing of pageantry and spectacle. It is hidden in the lives and hearts of the people; a stranger would hardly know of its existence as a distinct faith. Indeed, other faiths and better ones (one of them having some resemblance to a debased form of Christianity) co-exist with it, sometimes in the same mind. Cynolatry is tolerant so long as the dog is not denied an equal divinity

with the deities of other faiths. Nevertheless, I could not think of the people of Ganegwag without contempt and loathing; so it was with no small joy that I sailed for the contiguous island of Ghar-garoo to consult, according to my custom, the renowned statesman and philosopher, Juptka-Getch, who was accounted the wisest man in all the world, and held in so high esteem that no one dared speak to him without the sovereign's permission, countersigned by the Minister of Morals and Manners.

## A CONFLAGRATION IN GHARGAROO

THROUGH the happy accident of having a mole on the left side of my nose, as had also a cousin of the Prime Minister, I obtained a royal rescript permitting me to speak to the great Juptka-Getch, and went humbly to his dwelling, which, to my astonishment, I found to be an unfurnished cave in the side of a mountain. Inexpressibly surprised to observe that a favorite of the sovereign and the people was so meanly housed, I ventured, after my salutation, to ask how this could be so. Regarding me with an indulgent smile, the venerable man, who was about two hundred and fifty years old and entirely bald, explained.

“In one of our Sacred Books, of which we have three thousand,” said he, “it is written, *‘Golooloo ek wakwah betenka,’* and in another, *‘Jebek uq seedroy im aboltraqu ocrux ti smelkit!’*”

Translated, these mean, respectively, “The poor are blessed,” and, “Heaven is not easily entered by those who are rich.”

I asked Juptka-Getch if his countrymen really gave to these texts a practical application in the affairs of life.

“Why, surely,” he replied, “you cannot think us such fools as to disregard the teachings of our gods! That would be madness. I cannot imagine a people so mentally and morally depraved as that! Can you?”

Observing me blushing and stammering, he inquired the cause of my embarrassment. “The thought of so incredible a thing confuses me,” I managed to reply. “But tell me if in your piety and wisdom you really stripped yourself of all your property in order to obey the gods and get the benefit of indigence.”

“I did not have to do so,” he replied with a smile; “my King attended to that. When he wishes to distinguish one of his subjects by a mark of his favor, he impoverishes him to such a degree as will attest the exact measure of the royal approbation. I am proud to say that he took from me all that I had.”

“But, pardon me,” I said; “how does it occur that among a people which regards poverty as the greatest earthly good all are not poor? I observe here as much wealth and ‘prosperity’ as in my own country.”

Juptka-Getch smiled and after a few moments answered: “The only person in this country that owns anything is the King; in the service of his people he afflicts himself with that burden. All property, of whatsoever kind, is his, to do with as he will. He divides it among his subjects in the ratio of their demerit, as determined by the *waguks*—local officers—whose duty it is to know personally every one in their jurisdiction. To the most desperate and irreclaimable criminals is allotted the greatest wealth, which is taken from them, little by little, as they show signs of reformation.”

“But what,” said I, “is to prevent the wicked from becoming poor at any time? How can the King and his officers keep the unworthy, suffering the punishment and peril of wealth, from giving it away?”

“To whom, for example?” replied the illustrious man, taking the forefinger of his right hand into his mouth, as is the fashion in Ghargaroo when awaiting an important communication. The respectful formality of the posture imperfectly concealed the irony of the question, but I was not of the kind to be easily silenced.

“One might convert one’s property into money,” I persisted, “and throw the money into the sea.”

Juptka-Getch released the finger and gravely answered: “Every person in Ghargaroo is compelled by law to keep minute accounts of his income and expenditures, and must swear to them. There is an annual appraisalment by the *waguk*, and any needless decrease in the value of an estate is punished by breaking the offender’s legs. Expenditures for luxuries and high living are, of course, approved, for it is universally known among us, and attested by many popular proverbs, that the pleasures of the rich are vain and disappointing. So they are considered a part of the punishment, and not only allowed but required. A man sentenced to wealth who lives frugally, indulging in only rational and inexpensive delights, has his ears cut off for the first offense, and for the second is compelled to pass six months at court, participating in all the gaieties, extravagances and pleasures of the capital, and—”

“Most illustrious of mortals,” I said, turning a somersault—the Ghargarese manner of interrupting a discourse without offense—“I am as the dust upon your beard, but in my own country I am esteemed no fool, and right humbly do I perceive that you are *ecxroptug nemk puttog peleemy*.”

This expression translates, literally, “giving me a fill,” a phrase without meaning in our tongue, but in Ghargarese it appears to imply incredulity.

“The gaieties of the King’s court,” I continued, “must be expensive. The courtiers of the sovereign’s entourage, the great officers of the realm—surely they are not condemned to wealth, like common criminals!”

“My son,” said Juptka-Getch, tearing out a handful of his beard to signify his tranquillity under accusation, “your doubt of my veracity is noted with satisfaction, but it is not permitted to you to impeach my sovereign’s infallible knowledge of character. His courtiers, the great officers of the realm, as you truly name them, are the richest men in the country because he knows them to be the greatest rascals. After each annual reapportionment of the national wealth he settles upon them the unallotted surplus.”

Prostrating myself before the eminent philosopher, I craved his pardon for my doubt of his sovereign’s wisdom and consistency,

and begged him to cut off my head. “Nay,” he said, “you have committed the unpardonable sin and I cannot consent to bestow upon you the advantages of death. You shall continue to live the thing that you are.”

“What!” I cried, remembering the Lalugwumps and Gnarmag-Zote, “is it thought in Ghargaroo that death is an advantage, a blessing?”

“Our Sacred Books,” he said, “are full of texts affirming the vanity of life.”

“Then,” I said, “I infer that the death penalty is unknown to your laws!”

“We have the life penalty instead. Convicted criminals are not only enriched, as already explained, but by medical attendance kept alive as long as possible. On the contrary, the very righteous, who have been rewarded with poverty, are permitted to die whenever it pleases them.

“Do not the Sacred Books of your country teach the vanity of life, the blessedness of poverty and the wickedness of wealth?”

“They do, O Most Illustrious, they do.”

“And your countrymen believe?”

“Surely—none but the foolish and depraved entertain a doubt.”

“Then I waste my breath in expounding laws and customs already known to you. You have, of course, the same.”

At this I averted my face and blushed so furiously that the walls of the cave were illuminated with a wavering crimson like the light of a great conflagration! Thinking that the capital city was ablaze, Juptka-Getch ran from the cave’s mouth, crying, “Fire, fire!” and I saw him no more.

## AN EXECUTION IN BATRUGIA

MY next voyage was not so prosperous. By violent storms lasting seven weeks, during which we saw neither the sun nor the stars, our ship was driven so far out of its course that the captain had no knowledge of where we were. At the end of that period we were blown ashore and wrecked on a coast so wild and desolate that I had never seen anything so terrifying. Through a manifest interposition of Divine Providence I was spared, though all my companions perished miserably in the waves that had crushed the ship among the rocks.

As soon as I was sufficiently recovered from my fatigue and bruises, and had rendered thanks to merciful Heaven for my deliverance, I set out for the interior of the country, taking with me a cutlass for protection against wild beasts and a bag of sea-biscuit for sustenance. I walked vigorously, for the weather was then cool and pleasant, and after I had gone a few miles from the inhospitable coast I found the country open and level. The earth was covered with a thick growth of crimson grass, and at wide intervals were groups of trees. These were very tall, their tops in many instances invisible in a kind of golden mist, or haze, which proved to be, not a transient phenomenon, but a permanent one, for never in that country has the sun been seen, nor is there any night. The haze seems to be self-luminous, giving a soft, yellow light, so diffused that shadows are unknown. The land is abundantly supplied with pools and rivulets, whose water is of a beautiful orange color and has a pleasing perfume somewhat like attar of rose. I observed all this without surprise and with little apprehension, and went forward, feeling that anything, however novel and mysterious, was better than the familiar terrors of the sea and the coast.

After traveling a long time, though how long I had not the means to determine, I arrived at the city of Momgamwo, the capital of the kingdom of Batrugia, on the mainland of the Hidden Continent, where it is always twelve o'clock.

The Batrugians are of gigantic stature, but mild and friendly disposition. They offered me no violence, seeming rather amused by my small stature. One of them, who appeared to be a person of note and consequence, took me to his house (their houses are but a single story in height and built of brass blocks), set food before me, and by signs manifested the utmost good will. A long time afterward, when I had learned the language of the country, he explained that he had recognized me as an American pigmy, a race of which he had some little knowledge through a letter from a brother, who had been in my country. He showed me the letter, of which the chief part is here presented in translation:

“You ask me, my dear Tgnagogu, to relate my adventures among the Americans, as they call themselves. My adventures were very brief, lasting altogether not more than three *gumkas*, and most of the time was passed in taking measures for my own safety.

“My skyship, which had been driven for six moons before an irresistible gale, passed over a great city just at daylight one morning, and rather than continue the voyage with a lost reckoning I demanded that I be permitted to disembark. My wish was respected, and my companions soared away without me. Before night I had escaped from the city, by what means you know, and with my remarkable experiences in returning to civilization all Batrugia is familiar. The description of the strange city I have reserved for you, by whom only could I hope to be believed. Nyork, as its inhabitants call it, is a city of inconceivable extent—not less, I should judge, than seven square *glepkeps!* Of the number of its inhabitants I can only say that they are as the sands of the desert. They wear clothing—of a hideous kind, ’tis true—speak an apparently copious though harsh language, and seem to have a certain limited intelligence. They are puny in stature, the tallest of them being hardly higher than my breast.

“Nevertheless, Nyork is a city of giants. The magnitude of all things artificial there is astounding! My dear Tgnagogu, words can give you no conception of it. Many of the buildings, I assure you, are as many as fifty *sprugas* in height, and shelter five thousand persons each. And these stupendous structures are so crowded together that to the spectator in the narrow streets below they seem utterly devoid of design and symmetry—mere monstrous aggregations of brick, stone and metal—mountains of masonry, cliffs and crags of architecture hanging in the sky!

“A city of giants inhabited by pignies! For you must know, oh friend of my liver, that the rearing of these mighty structures could not be the work of the puny folk that swarm in ceaseless activity about their bases. These fierce little savages invaded the island in numbers so overwhelming that the giant builders had to flee before them. Some escaped across great bridges which, with the help of their gods, they had suspended in the air from bank to bank of a wide river parting the island from the mainland, but many could do no better than mount some of the buildings that they had reared, and there, in these inaccessible altitudes, they dwell to-day, still piling stone upon stone. Whether they do this in obedience to their instinct as builders, or in hope to escape by way of the heavens, I had not the means to learn, being ignorant of the pigmy tongue and in continual fear of the crowds that followed me.

“You can see the giants toiling away up there in the sky, laying in place the enormous beams and stones which none but they could handle. They look no bigger than beetles, but you know that they are many *sprugas* in stature, and you shudder to think what would ensue if one should lose his footing. Fancy that great bulk whirling down to earth from so dizzy an altitude! . . .

“May birds ever sing above your grave.

“JOQUOLK WAK MGAPY.”

By my new friend, Tgnagogu, I was presented to the King, a most enlightened monarch, who not only reigned over, but ruled absolutely, the most highly civilized people in the world. He received me with gracious hospitality, quartered me in the palace of his Prime Minister, gave me for wives the three daughters of his Lord Chamberlain, and provided me with an ample income from the public revenues. Within a year I had made a fair acquaintance with the Batrugian language, and was appointed royal interpreter, with a princely salary, although no one speaking any other tongue,

myself and two native professors of rhetoric excepted, had ever been seen in the kingdom.

One day I heard a great tumult in the street, and going to a window saw, in a public square opposite, a crowd of persons surrounding some high officials who were engaged in cutting off a man's head. Just before the executioner delivered the fatal stroke, the victim was asked if he had anything to say. He explained with earnestness that the deed for which he was about to suffer had been inspired and commanded by a brass-headed cow and four bushels of nightingales' eggs!

"Hold! hold!" I shouted in Batrugian, leaping from the window and forcing a way through the throng; "the man is obviously insane!"

"Friend," said a man in a long blue robe, gently restraining me, "it is not proper for you to interrupt these high proceedings with irrelevant remarks. The luckless gentleman who, in accordance with my will as Lord Chief Justice, has just had the happiness to part with his head was so inconsiderate as to take the life of a fellow-subject."

"But he was insane," I persisted, "clearly and indisputably *ptig nupy uggydug!*"—a phrase imperfectly translatable, meaning, as near as may be, having flutter-mice in his campanile.

"Am I to infer," said the Lord Chief Justice, "that in your own honorable country a person accused of murder is permitted to plead insanity as a reason why he should not be put to death?"

"Yes, illustrious one," I replied, respectfully, "we regard that as a good defense."

"Well," said he slowly, but with extreme emphasis, "I'll be *Gook swottled!*"

("Gook," I may explain, is the name of the Batrugian chief deity; but for the verb "to swottle" the English tongue has no equivalent. It seems to signify the deepest disapproval, and by a promise to be "swottled" a Batrugian denotes acute astonishment.)

"Surely," I said, "so wise and learned a person as you cannot think it just to punish with death one who does not know right from wrong. The gentleman who has just now renounced his future believed himself to have been commanded to do what he did by a brass-headed cow and four bushels of nightingales' eggs—powers to which he acknowledged a spiritual allegiance. To have disobeyed would have been, from his point of view, an infraction of a law higher than that of man."

"Honorable but erring stranger," replied the famous jurist, "if we permitted the prisoner in a murder trial to urge such a consideration as that—if our laws recognized any other justification than that he believed himself in peril of immediate death or great bodily injury—nearly all assassins would make some such defense. They would plead insanity of some kind and degree, and it would

be almost impossible to establish their guilt Murder trials would be expensive and almost interminable, defiled with perjury and sentiment. Juries would be deluded and confused, justice baffled, and red-handed man-killers turned loose to repeat their crimes and laugh at the law. Even as the law is, in a population of only one hundred million we have had no fewer than three homicides in less than twenty years! With such statutes and customs as yours we should have had at least twice as many. Believe me, I know my people; they have not the American respect for human life."

As blushing is deemed in Batrugia a sign of pride, I turned my back upon the speaker—an act which, fortunately, signifies a desire to hear more.

"Law," he continued, "is for the good of the greatest number. Execution of an actual lunatic now and then is not an evil to the community, nor, when rightly considered, to the lunatic himself. He is better off when dead, and society is profited by his removal. We are spared the cost of exposing imposture, the humiliation of acquitting the guilty, the peril of their freedom, the contagion of their evil example."

"In my country," I said, "we have a saying to the effect that it is better that ninety-nine guilty escape than that one innocent be punished."

"It is better," said he, "for the ninety-nine guilty, but distinctly worse for everybody else. Sir," he concluded with chilling austerity, "I infer from their proverb that your countrymen are the most offensive blockheads in existence."

By way of refutation I mentioned the English, indignantly withdrew from the country and set sail for Gokeetle-guk, or, as we should translate the name, Trustland.

## THE JUMJUM OF GOKEETLE-GUK

ARRIVING at the capital of the country after many incredible adventures, I was promptly arrested by the police and taken before the Jumjum. He was an exceedingly affable person, and held office by appointment, "for life or fitness," as their laws express it. With one necessary exception all offices are appointive and the tenure of all except that is the same. The Panjandrum, or, as we should call him, King, is elected for a term of ten years, at the expiration of which he is shot. It is held that any man who has been so long in high authority will have committed enough sins and blunders to deserve death, even if none can be specifically proved.

Brought into the presence of the Jumjum, who graciously saluted me, I was seated on a beautiful rug and told in broken English by an interpreter who had escaped from Kansas that I was at liberty to ask any questions that I chose.

"Your Highness," I said, addressing the Jumjum through the interpreting Populist, "I fear that I do not understand; I expected, not to ask questions, but to have to answer them. I am ready to give such an account of myself as will satisfy you that I am an honest man—neither a criminal nor a spy."

"The gentleman seems to regard himself with a considerable interest," said the Jumjum, aside to an officer of his suite—a remark which the interpreter, with characteristic intelligence, duly repeated to me. Then addressing me the Jumjum said:

"Doubtless your personal character is an alluring topic, but it is relevant to nothing in any proceedings that can be taken here. When a foreigner arrives in our capital he is brought before me to be instructed in whatever he may think it expedient for him to know of the manners, customs, laws, and so forth, of the country that he honors with his presence. It matters nothing to us what he is, but much to him what we are. You are at liberty to inquire."

I was for a moment overcome with emotion by so noble an example of official civility and thoughtfulness, then, after a little reflection, I said: "May it please your Highness, I should greatly like to be informed of the origin of the name of your esteemed country."

"Our country," said the Jumjum, acknowledging the compliment by a movement of his ears, "is called Trustland because all its industries, trades and professions are conducted by great aggregations of capital known as 'trusts.' They do the entire business of the country."

"Good God!" I exclaimed; "what a terrible state of affairs that is! I know about trusts. Why do your people not rise and throw off the yoke?"

“You are pleased to be unintelligible,” said the great man, with a smile. “Would you mind explaining what you mean by ‘the yoke’?”

“I mean,” said I, surprised by his ignorance of metaphor, but reflecting that possibly the figures of rhetoric were not used in that country—“I mean the oppression, the slavery under which your people groan, their bondage to the tyrannical trusts, entailing poverty, unrequited toil and loss of self-respect.”

“Why, as to that,” he replied, “our people are prosperous and happy. There is very little poverty and what there is is obviously the result of vice or improvidence. Our labor is light and all the necessaries of life, many of the comforts and some of the luxuries are abundant and cheap. I hardly know what you mean by the tyranny of the trusts; they do not seem to care to be tyrannous, for each having the entire market for what it produces, its prosperity is assured and there is none of the strife and competition which, as I can imagine, might breed hardness and cruelty. Moreover, we should not let them be tyrannous. Why should we?”

“But, your Highness, suppose, for example, the trust that manufactures safety pins should decide to double the price of its product. What is to prevent great injury to the consumer?”

“The courts. Having but one man—the responsible manager—to deal with, protective legislation and its enforcement would be a very simple matter. If there were a thousand manufacturers of safety pins, scattered all over the country in as many jurisdictions, there would be no controlling them at all. They would cheat, not only one another but the consumers, with virtual immunity. But there is no disposition among our trusts to do any such thing. Each has the whole market, as I said, and each has learned by experience what the manager of a large business soon must learn, and what the manager of a small one probably would not learn and could not afford to apply if he knew it—namely, that low prices bring disproportionately large sales and therefore profits. Prices in this country are never put up except when some kind of scarcity increases the cost of production. Besides, nearly all the consumers are a part of the trusts, the stock of which is about the best kind of property for investment.”

“What! “I cried,—“do not the managers so manipulate the stock by ‘watering’ it and otherwise as to fool and cheat the small investors?”

“We should not permit them. That would be dishonest.”

“So it is in my country,” I replied, rather tartly, for I believed his apparent *naïveté* assumed for my confusion, “but we are unable to prevent it.”

He looked at me somewhat compassionately, I thought. “Perhaps,” he said, “not enough of you really wish to prevent it. Per-

haps your people are—well, different from mine—not worse, you understand—just different.”

I felt the blood go into my cheeks and hot words were upon my tongue’s end, but I restrained them; the conditions for a quarrel were not favorable to my side of it. When I had mastered my chagrin and resentment I said:

“In my country when trusts are formed a great number of persons suffer, whether the general consumer does or not—many small dealers, middle men, drummers and general employees. The small dealer is driven out of the business by underselling. The middle man is frequently ignored, the trust dealing directly, or nearly so, with the consumer. The drummer is discharged because, competition having disappeared, custom must come without solicitation. Consolidation lets out swarms of employees of the individual concerns consolidated, for it is nearly as easy to conduct one large concern as a dozen smaller ones. These people get great sympathy from the public and the newspapers and their case is obviously pitiable. Was it not so in this country during the transition stage, and did not these poor gentlemen have to”—the right words would not come; I hardly knew how to finish. “Were they not compelled to go to work?” I finally asked, rather humbly.

The great official was silent for several minutes. Then he spoke.

“I am not sure that I understand you about our transition state. So far as our history goes matters with us have always been as they are to-day. To suppose them to have been otherwise would be to impugn the common sense of our ancestors. Nor do I quite know what you mean by ‘small dealers,’ ‘middle men,’ ‘drummers,’ and so forth.”

He paused and fell into meditation, when suddenly his face was suffused with the light of a happy thought. It so elated him that he sprang to his feet and with his staff of office broke the heads of his Chief Admonisher of the Inimical and his Second Assistant Audible Sycophant. Then he said:

“I think I comprehend. Some eighty-five years ago, soon after my induction into office, there came to the court of the Panjandrum a man of this city who had been cast upon the island of Chicago (which I believe belongs to the American archipelago) and had passed many years there in business with the natives. Having learned all their customs and business methods he returned to his own country and laid before the Panjandrum a comprehensive scheme of commercial reform. He and his scheme were referred to me, the Panjandrum being graciously pleased to be unable to make head or tail of it. I may best explain it in its application to a single industry—the manufacture and sale of gootles.”

“What is a gootle?” I asked.

“A metal weight for attachment to the tail of a donkey to keep him from braying,” was the answer. “It is known in this country that a donkey cannot utter a note unless he can lift his tail. Then, as now, gootles were made by a single concern having a great capital invested and an immense plant, and employing an army of workmen. It dealt, as it does today, directly with consumers. Afflicted with a sonant donkey a man would write to the trust and receive his gootle by return mail, or go personally to the factory and carry his purchase home on his shoulder—according to where he lived. The reformer said this was primitive, crude and injurious to the interests of the public and especially the poor. He proposed that the members of the gootle trust divide their capital and each member go into the business of making gootles for himself—I do not mean for his personal use—in different parts of the country. But none of them was to sell to consumers, but to other men, who would sell in quantity to still other men, who would sell single gootles for domestic use. Each manufacturer would of course require a full complement of officers, clerks and so forth, as would the other men—everybody but the consumer—and each would have to support them and make a profit himself. Competition would be so sharp that solicitors would have to be employed to make sales; and they too must have a living out of the business. Honored stranger, am I right in my inference that the proposed system has something in common with the one which obtains in your own happy, enlightened and prosperous country, and which you would approve?”

I did not care to reply.

“Of course,” the Jumjum continued, “all this would greatly have enhanced the cost of gootles, thereby lessening the sales, thereby reducing the output, thereby throwing a number of workmen out of employment. You see this, do you not, O guest of my country?”

“Pray tell me,” I said, “what became of the reformer who proposed all this change?”

“All this change? Why, sir, the one-thousandth part is not told: he proposed that his system should be general: not only in the gootle trust, but every trust in the country was to be broken up in the same way! When I had him before me, and had stated my objections to the plan, I asked him what were its advantages.

“‘Sir,’ he replied, ‘I speak for millions of gentlemen in uncongenial employments, mostly manual and fatiguing. This would give them the kind of activity that they would like—such as their class enjoys in other countries where my system is in full flower, and where it is deemed so sacred that any proposal for its abolition or simplification by trusts is regarded with horror, especially by the working men.’”

“Having reported to the Panjandrum (whose vermiform appendix may good angels have in charge) and received his orders, I called the reformer before me and addressed him thus:

“Illustrious economist, I have the honor to inform you that in the royal judgment your proposal is the most absurd, impudent and audacious ever made; that the system which you propose to set up is revolutionary and mischievous beyond the dreams of treason; that only in a nation of rogues and idiots could it have a moment’s toleration.’

“He was about to reply, but cutting his throat to intimate that the hearing was at an end, I withdrew from the Hall of Audience, as under similar circumstances I am about to do now.”

I withdrew first by way of a window, and after a terrible journey of six years in the Dolorous Mountains and on the Desert of Despair came to the western coast. Here I built a ship and after a long voyage landed on one of the islands constituting the Kingdom of Tortirra.

## THE KINGDOM OF TORTIRRA

OF this unknown country and its inhabitants I have written a large volume which nothing but the obstinacy of publishers has kept from the world, and which I trust will yet see the light. Naturally, I do not wish to publish at this time anything that will sate public curiosity, and this brief sketch will consist of such parts only of the work as I think can best be presented in advance without abating interest in what is to follow when Heaven shall have put it into the hearts of publishers to square their conduct with their interests. I must, however, frankly confess that my choice has been partly determined by other considerations. I offer here those parts of my narrative which I conceive to be the least credible—those which deal with the most monstrous and astounding follies of a strange people. Their ceremony of marriage by decapitation; their custom of facing to the rear when riding on horseback; their practice of walking on their hands in all ceremonial processions; their selection of the blind for military command; their pig-worship—these and many other comparatively natural particulars of their religious, political, intellectual and social life I reserve for treatment in the great work for which I shall soon ask public favor and acceptance.

In Tortirran politics, as in Tamtonian, the population is always divided into two, and sometimes three or four “parties,” each having a “policy” and each conscientiously believing the policy of the other, or others, erroneous and destructive. In so far as these various and varying policies can be seen to have any relation whatever to practical affairs they can be seen also to be the result of purely selfish considerations. The self-deluded people flatter themselves that their elections are contests of principles, whereas they are only struggles of interests. They are very fond of the word *slagthrit*, “principle”; and when they believe themselves acting from some high moral motive they are capable of almost any monstrous injustice or stupid folly. This insane devotion to principle is craftily fostered by their political leaders who invent captivating phrases intended to confirm them in it; and these deluding aphorisms are diligently repeated until all the people have them in memory, with no knowledge of the fallacies which they conceal. One of these phrases is “Principles, not men.” In the last analysis this is seen to mean that it is better to be governed by scoundrels professing one set of principles than by good men holding another. That a scoundrel will govern badly, regardless of the principles which he is supposed somehow to “represent,” is a truth which, however obvious to our own enlightened intelligence, has never penetrated the dark understandings of the Tortirrans. It is chiefly through the dominance of the heresy fostered by this popu-

lar phrase that the political leaders are able to put base men into office to serve their own nefarious ends.

I have called the political contests of Tortirra struggles of interests. In nothing is this more clear (to the looker-on at the game) than in the endless disputes concerning restrictions on commerce. It must be understood that lying many leagues to the southeast of Tortirra are other groups of islands, also wholly unknown to people of our race. They are known by the general name of *Gropilla-Stron* (a term signifying “the Land of the Day-dawn”), though it is impossible to ascertain why, and are inhabited by a powerful and hardy race, many of whom I have met in the capital of Tanga. The Stronagu, as they are called, are bold navigators and traders, their proas making long and hazardous voyages in all the adjacent seas to exchange commodities with other tribes. For many years they were welcomed in Tortirra with great hospitality and their goods eagerly purchased. They took back with them all manner of Tortirran products and nobody thought of questioning the mutual advantages of the exchange. But early in the present century a powerful Tortirran demagogue named Pragam began to persuade the people that commerce was piracy—that true prosperity consisted in consumption of domestic products and abstinence from foreign. This extraordinary heresy soon gathered such head that Pragam was appointed Regent and invested with almost dictatorial powers. He at once distributed nearly the whole army among the seaport cities, and whenever a Stronagu trading proa attempted to land, the soldiery, assisted by the populace, rushed down to the beach, and with a terrible din of gongs and an insupportable discharge of stink-pots—the only offensive weapon known to Tortirran warfare—drove the laden vessels to sea, or if they persisted in anchoring destroyed them and smothered their crews in mud. The Tortirrans themselves not being a sea-going people, all communication between them and the rest of their little world soon ceased. But with it ceased the prosperity of Tortirra. Deprived of a market for their surplus products and compelled to forego the comforts and luxuries which they had obtained from abroad, the people began to murmur at the effect of their own folly. A reaction set in, a powerful opposition to Pragam and his policy was organized, and he was driven from power.

But the noxious tree that Pragam had planted in the fair garden of his country’s prosperity had struck root too deeply to be altogether eradicated. It threw up shoots everywhere, and no sooner was one cut down than from roots underrunning the whole domain of political thought others sprang up with a vigorous and baleful growth. While the dictum that trade is piracy no longer commands universal acceptance, a majority of the populace still hold a modified form of it, and that “importation is theft” is to-day a cardinal political “principle” of a vast body of Tortirra’s people.

The chief expounders and protagonists of this doctrine are all directly or indirectly engaged in making or growing such articles as were formerly got by exchange with the Stronagu traders. The articles are generally inferior in quality, but consumers, not having the benefit of foreign competition, are compelled to pay extortionate prices for them, thus maintaining the unscrupulous producers in needless industries and a pernicious existence. But these active and intelligent rogues are too powerful to be driven out. They persuade their followers, among whom are many ignorant consumers, that this vestigial remnant of the old Pragam policy is all that keeps the nation from being desolated by small-pox and an epidemic of broken legs.

It is impossible within these limits to give a full history of the strange delusion whose origin I have related. It has undergone many modifications and changes, as it is the nature of error to do, but the present situation is about this. The trading proas of the Stronagu are permitted to enter certain ports, but when one arrives she must anchor at a little distance from shore. Here she is boarded by an officer of the government, who ascertains the thickness of her keel, the number of souls on board and the amount and character of the merchandise she brings. From these data—the last being the main factor in the problem—the officer computes her unworthiness and adjudges a suitable penalty. The next day a scow manned by a certain number of soldiers pushes out and anchors within easy throw of her, and there is a frightful beating of gongs. When this has reached its lawful limit as to time it is hushed and the soldiers throw a stated number of stink-pots on board the offending craft. These, exploding as they strike, stifle the captain and crew with an intolerable odor. In the case of a large proa having a cargo of such commodities as the Tortirrans particularly need, this bombardment is continued for hours. At its conclusion the vessel is permitted to land and discharge her cargo without further molestation. Under these hard conditions importers find it impossible to do much business, the exorbitant wages demanded by seamen consuming most of the profit. No restrictions are now placed on the export trade, and vessels arriving empty are subjected to no penalties; but the Stronagu having other markets, in which they can sell as well as buy, cannot afford to go empty handed to Tortirra.

It will be obvious to the reader that in all this no question of “principle” is involved. A well-informed Tortirran’s mental attitude with regard to the matter may be calculated with unfailing accuracy from a knowledge of his interests. If he produces anything which his countrymen want, and which in the absence of all restriction they could get more cheaply from the Stronagu than they can from him, he is in politics a *Gakphew*, or “Stinkpotter”; if not he is what that party derisively calls a *Shokerbom*, which signifies

“Righteous Man”—for there is nothing which the Gakphews hold in so holy detestation as righteousness.

Nominally, Tortirra is an hereditary monarchy; virtually it is a democracy, for under a peculiar law of succession there is seldom an occupant of the throne, and all public affairs are conducted by a Supreme Legislature sitting at Felduchia, the capital of Tanga, to which body each island of the archipelago, twenty-nine in number, elects representatives in proportion to its population, the total membership being nineteen hundred and seventeen. Each island has a Subordinate Council for the management of local affairs and a Head Chief charged with execution of the laws. There is also a Great Court at Felduchia, whose function it is to interpret the general laws of the Kingdom, passed by the Supreme Council, and a Minor Great Court at the capital of each island, with corresponding duties and powers. These powers are very loosely and vaguely defined, and are the subject of endless controversy everywhere, and nowhere more than in the courts themselves—such is the multiplicity of laws and so many are the contradictory decisions upon them, every decision constituting what is called a *lantrag*, or, as we might say, “precedent.” The peculiarity of a *lantrag*, or previous decision, is that it is, or is not, binding, at the will of the honorable judge making a later one on a similar point. If he wishes to decide in the same way he quotes the previous decision with all the gravity that he would give to an exposition of the law itself; if not, he either ignores it altogether, shows that it is not applicable to the case under consideration (which, as the circumstances are never exactly the same, he can always do), or substitutes a contradictory *lantrag* and fortifies himself with that. There is a precedent for any decision that a judge may wish to make, but sometimes he is too indolent to search it out and cite it. Frequently, when the letter and intent of the law under which an action is brought are plainly hostile to the decision which it pleases him to render, the judge finds it easier to look up an older law, with which it is compatible, and which the later one, he says, does not repeal, and to base his decision on that; and there is a law for everything, just as there is a precedent. Failing to find, or not caring to look for, either precedent or statute to sustain him, he can readily show that any other decision than the one he has in will would be *tokoli impelly*; that is to say, contrary to public morals, and this, too, is considered a legitimate consideration, though on another occasion he may say, with public assent and approval, that it is his duty, not to make the law conform to justice, but to expound and enforce it as he finds it. In short, such is the confusion of the law and the public conscience that the courts of Tortirra do whatever they please, subject only to overruling by higher courts in the exercise of *their* pleasure; for great as is the number of minor and major tribunals, a case originating in the lowest is never really

settled until it has gone through all the intermediate ones and been passed upon by the highest, to which it might just as well have been submitted at first. The evils of this astonishing system could not be even baldly catalogued in a lifetime. They are infinite in number and prodigious in magnitude. To the trained intelligence of the American observer it is incomprehensible how any, even the most barbarous, nation can endure them.

An important function of the Great Court and the Minor Great Court is passing upon the validity of all laws enacted by the Supreme Council and the Subordinate Councils, respectively. The nation as a whole, as well as each separate island, has a fundamental law called the *Trogodal*, or, as we should say, the Constitution; and no law whatever that may be passed by the Council is final and determinate until the appropriate court has declared that it conforms to the *Trogodal*. Nevertheless every law is put in force the moment it is perfected and before it is submitted to the court. Indeed, not one in a thousand ever is submitted at all, that depending upon the possibility of some individual objecting to its action upon his personal interests, which few, indeed, can afford to do. It not infrequently occurs that some law which has for years been rigorously enforced, even by fines and imprisonment, and to which the whole commercial and social life of the nation has adjusted itself with all its vast property interests, is brought before the tribunal having final jurisdiction in the matter and coolly declared no law at all. The pernicious effect may be more easily imagined than related, but those who by loyal obedience to the statute all those years have been injured in property, those who are ruined by its erasure and those who may have suffered the severest penalties for its violation are alike without redress. It seems not to have occurred to the Tortirrans to require the court to inspect the law and determine its validity before it is put in force. It is, indeed, the traditional practice of these strange tribunals, when a case is forced upon them, to decide, not as many points of law as they can, but as few as they may; and this dishonest inaction is not only tolerated but commended as the highest wisdom. The consequence is that only those who make a profession of the law and live by it and find their account in having it as little understood by others as is possible can know which acts and parts of acts are in force and which are not. The higher courts, too, have arrogated to themselves the power of declaring unconstitutional even parts of the Constitution, frequently annulling most important provisions of the very instrument creating them!

A popular folly in Tortirra is the selection of representatives in the Councils from among that class of men who live by the law, whose sole income is derived from its uncertainties and perplexities. Obviously, it is to the interest of these men to make laws which shall be uncertain and perplexing—to confuse and darken

legislation as much as they can. Yet in nearly all the Councils these men are the most influential and active element, and it is not uncommon to find them in a numerical majority. It is evident that the only check upon their ill-doing lies in the certainty of their disagreement as to the particular kind of confusion which they may think it expedient to create. Some will wish to accomplish their common object by one kind of verbal ambiguity, some by another; some by laws clearly enough (to them) unconstitutional, others by contradictory statutes, or statutes secretly repealing wholesome ones already existing. A clear, simple and just code would deprive them of their means of livelihood and compel them to seek some honest employment.

So great are the uncertainties of the law in Tortirra that an eminent judge once confessed to me that it was his conscientious belief that if all cases were decided by the impartial arbitrament of the *do-tusis* (a process similar to our “throw of the dice”) substantial justice would be done far more frequently than under the present system; and there is reason to believe that in many instances cases at law are so decided—but only at the close of tedious and costly trials which have impoverished the litigants and correspondingly enriched the lawyers.

Of the interminable train of shames and brutalities entailed by this pernicious system, I shall mention here only a single one—the sentencing and punishment of an accused person in the midst of the proceedings against him, and while his guilt is not finally and definitively established. It frequently occurs that a man convicted of crime in one of the lower courts is at once hurried off to prison while he has still the right of appeal to a higher tribunal, and while that appeal is pending. After months and sometimes years of punishment his case is reached in the appellate court, his appeal found valid and a new trial granted, resulting in his acquittal. He has been imprisoned for a crime of which he is eventually declared not to have been properly convicted. But he has no redress; he is simply set free to bear through all his after life the stain of dishonor and nourish an ineffectual resentment. Imagine the storm of popular indignation that would be evoked in America by an instance of so foul injustice!

In the great public square of Itsami, the capital of Tortirra, stands a golden statue of Estari-Kumpro, a famous judge of the Civil Court.<sup>2</sup> This great man was celebrated throughout the kingdom for the wisdom and justice of his decisions and the virtues of his private life. So profound were the veneration in which he was held and the awe that his presence inspired, that none of the advocates in his court ever ventured to address him except in formal pleas: all motions, objections, and so forth, were addressed to the clerk and by him disposed of without dissent: the silence of

the judge, who never was heard to utter a word, was understood as sanctioning the acts of his subordinate. For thirty years, promptly at sunrise, the great hall of justice was thrown open, disclosing the judge seated on a [lofty] dais beneath a black canopy, partly in shadow, and quite inaccessible. At sunset all proceedings for the day terminated, everyone left the hall and the portal closed. The decisions of this august and learned jurist were always read aloud by the clerk, and a copy supplied to the counsel on each side. They were brief, clear and remarkable, not only for their unimpeachable justice, but for their conformity to the fundamental principles of law. Not one of them was ever set aside, and during the last fifteen years of the great judge's service no litigant ever took an appeal, although none ever ventured before that infallible tribunal unless conscientiously persuaded that his cause was just.

One day it happened during the progress of an important trial that a sharp shock of earthquake occurred, throwing the whole assembly into confusion. When order had been restored a cry of horror and dismay burst from the multitude—the judge's head lay flattened upon the floor, a dozen feet below the bench, and from the neck of the rapidly collapsing body, which had pitched forward upon his desk, poured a thick stream of sawdust! For thirty years that great and good man had been represented by a stuffed manikin. For thirty years he had not entered his own court, nor heard a word of evidence or argument. At the moment of the accident to his simulacrum he was in his library at his home, writing his decision of the case on trial, and was killed by a falling chandelier. It was afterward learned that his clerk, twenty-five years dead, had all the time been personated by a twin brother, who was an idiot from birth and knew no law.

## HITHER

**LISTENING** to the history of the golden statue in the great square, as related by a Tortirran storyteller, I fell asleep. On waking I found myself lying in a cot-bed amidst unfamiliar surroundings. A bandage was fastened obliquely about my head, covering my left eye, in which was a dull throbbing pain. Seeing an attendant near by I beckoned him to my bedside and asked: "Where am I?"

"Hospital," he replied, tersely but not unkindly. He added: "You have a bad eye."

"Yes," I said, "I always had; but I could name more than one Tortirran who has a bad heart."

"What is a Tortirran?" he asked.

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The Tamtonian language forms its plurals most irregularly, but usually by an initial inflection. It has a certain crude and primitive grammar, but in point of orthoepy is extremely difficult. With our letters I can hardly hope to give an accurate conception of its pronunciation. As nearly as possible I write its words as they sounded to my ear when carefully spoken for my instruction by intelligent natives. It is a harsh tongue.

<sup>2</sup> Klikat um Delu Owvi.