CHAPTER XIII.

IF Keyork Arabian inclined to the psychic rather than to the physical school in his view of Unorna's witchcraft, and in his study of hypnotism in general, his opinion resulted naturally from his great knowledge of mankind and of the unacknowledged, often unsuspected, convictions which in reality direct mankind's activity. It was this experience, too, and the certainty to which it had led him, that put him beyond the reach of Unorna's power so long as he chose not to yield himself to her will. The important point was that she should not lose anything of the gifts she possessed, and Keyork was wise enough to see that the exercise of them depended in a great measure upon her own conviction regarding their exceptional nature.

Unorna herself believed in everything which strengthened and developed that conviction, and especially in the influences of time and place. And to this end everything was in her favor. She needed not to close her eyes to fancy that 30 days had not really passed between then and now, as she left the house in the afternoon with the Wanderer by her side.

He had come back, and had found her once more herself, calm, collected, conscious of her own powers. No suspicion of the real cause of the disturbance he had witnessed crossed his mind; still less could he guess what thing she meditated as she directed their walk toward that lonely place by the river which had been the scene of her first great effort. She talked lightly as they went, and he, in that strange humor of peaceful, well-satisfied indifference which possessed him, answered her in the same strain.

They came out upon the open place by the river which she remembered so well. Unorna glanced about her, and her face fell. The place was the same, but the solitude was disturbed. It was not Sunday, as it had been on that day a month ago. All about the huge blocks of stone groups of workmen were busy with great chisels and heavy hammers, hewing and chipping and fashioning the material that it might be ready for use in the early spring.

They turned in a new direction, Unorna guiding her companion by a gesture. They were near to the Jewish quarter, and presently were treading their way through narrow and filthy streets thronged with eager Hebrew faces, and filled with the hum of low-pitched voices chattering together, not in the language of the country, but in a base dialect of German.

Unorna gathered her furs more closely about her, in evident disgust at her surroundings, but still she kept on her way, her companion wondering what made her choose to walk that way. Then he saw that she was going toward the cemetery. They reached the door, were admitted, and found themselves alone in the vast wilderness. The stillness in the place is intense. Not a murmur of distant life from the surrounding city disturbs the silence. As she reached the highest point Unorna stood still, turned quickly toward the Wanderer, and held out both her hands toward him.

"I have chosen this place because it is quiet," she said, with a soft smile.

Hardly knowing why he did so, he laid his hands in hers and looked at her, and saw for the hundredth time that she was very beautiful. There was a faint color in her cheeks, and her full lips were just parted as though a loving word had escaped them which she would not willingly recall. Against the background of broken neutral tints her figure stood out, an incarnation of youth and vitality. If she had often looked weary and pale of late, her strength and freshness had returned to her now in all their abundance. The Wanderer knew that he was watching her, and knew that he was thinking of her beauty and realizing the whole extent of it more fully than ever before, but beyond this point his thoughts could not go.

Looking into her sunlike eyes, he saw there twin images of himself that drew him softly and surely into themselves until he was absorbed by them, and felt that he was no longer a reality, but a reflection. Then a deep unconsciousness stole over all his senses and he slept, or passed into that state which seems to lie between sleep and trance.

Unorna needed not to question him this time, for she saw that he was completely under her influence. Yet she hesitated at the supreme moment, and then, though to all real intents she was quite alone, a burning flush of shame rose to her face, and her heart sank within her. She felt that she could not do it.

She dropped his hands. They fell to his side as though they had been of lead. Then she turned from him and pressed her aching forehead against a tall, weatherworn stone that rose higher than her own height from the midst of the hillock.

Her woman's nature rebelled against the trick. It was the truest thing in her, and perhas the best, which protested so violently against the thing she meant to do; it was the simple longing to be loved for her own sake, and of the man's own free will, to be loved by him wtih the love she had despised in Israel Kafka. But would this be love at all, this artificial creation of her suggestion reacting upon her mind? Would it last? Would it be true, faithful, tender? Above all, would it be real, even for a moment? She asked herself a thousand questions in a second of time.

Then the ready excuse flashed upon her—the pretext which the heart will always find when it must have its way. Was it not possible, after all, that he was beginning to love her even now? Might not that outburst of friendship which had surprised her and wounded her so deeply be the herald of a stronger passion? She looked up quickly and met his vacant stare.

"Do you love me?" she asked, almost before she knew what she was going to say.

"No." The answer came in the far-off voice that told of his unconsciousness; a mere toneless monosyllable breathed upon the murky air. But it stabbed her like the thrust of a jagged knife. A long silence followed, and Unorna leaned against the great slab of carved sandstone.

"You must love me," she said; "you must love me, because I love you so. Will you not love me, dear? I have waited so long for you."

The Wanderer did not move. His face was as calm as sculptured stone.

"Do you despise me for loving you?" she asked again, with a sudden flush.

"No. I do not despise you." Something in her tone had pierced through his stupor, and had found an answer. She started at the sound of his voice. It was as though he had been awake and had known the weight of what she had been saying, and her anger rose at the cold reply.

"No—you do not despise me, and you never shall!" she exclaimed, passionately. "You shall love me, as I love you—I will it with all my will! We are created to be all, one to the other, and you shall not break through the destiny of love. Love me, as I love you—love me with all you heart, love me with all your mind, love me with all your soul, love me as man never loved woman since the world began! I will it, I command it—it shall be as I say—you dare not disobey me—you cannot if you would.

"Enter into my soul and read what love is, in his own great writing. Read how he steals suddenlly into the sacred place and make it his, and tears down the old gods and sets up his dear image in their stead—read how he sighs, and speaks, and weeps, and loves—and forgives not, but will be revenged at the last! See how I love you—see how sweet it is—how very lovely a thing it is to love as woman can. There—have you felt it now? Have you seen into the depths of my soul and into the hiding places of my heart? Let it be so in your own, then, and let it be so forever. You understand now. You know what it all is—how wild, how passionate, how gentle and how great! Take to yourself this love of mine—is it not all yours? Take it, and plant it with strong roots and seeds of undying life in your own sleeping breast, and let it grow and grow till it is even greater than it was in me, till it takes us both into itself, together, fast bound in its immortal bonds, to be two in one, in life and beyond life, for ever and ever and ever to the end of ends.!"

She ceased, and she saw that his face was no longer expressionless and cold.

At last she spoke,

"Then, love, since you are mine, and I am yours, wake from the dream to life itself—wake, not knowing that you have slept, knowing only that you love me now and always—wake, love, wake!"

"What is it?" he asked in his kind and passionate voice. "What were you going to ask me, Unorna?"

It was gone. The terribly earnest appeal had been in vain. Not a trace of that short vision of love remained impressed upon his brain.

With a smothered cry of agony Unorna leaned against the great slab of stone behind her and covered her eyes. The darkness of night descended upon her, and with it the fire of a burning shame.

Then a loud and cruel laugh rang through the chilly air, such a laugh as the devils in hell bestow upon the shame of a proud soul that knows its own infinite bitterness. Unorna started and uncovered her eyes; her suffering changed in a single instant to ungovernable and destroying anger. She made a step forward, and then stopped short, breathing hard. The Wanderer, too, had turned, more quickly than she. Between two tall gravestones, not a dozen paces away, stood a man with haggard face and eyes on fire, his keen, worn features contorted by a smile, in which unspeakable satisfaction struggled for expression with a profound despair. The man was Israel Kafka.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE Wanderer looked from Unorna to Kafka with profound surprse.

"Who is this man?" he asked. "And what does he want of you?"

Unorna made as though she would pass him. But he laid his hand upon her arm with a gesture that betrayed his anxiety for her safety. At his touch her face changed for a moment, and a faint blush her dyed cheek.

"You may well ask who I am," said the Moravian, speaking in a voice half-choked with passion and anger. "She will tell you she does not know me—she will deny my existence to my face. But she knows me very well. I am Israel Kafka."

The Wanderer looked at him more curiously. He remembered what he had heard but a few hours earlier from Keyork concerning the young fellow's madness. The situation now partially explained itself.

"I understand," he said, looking at Unorna. "He seems to be dangerous. What shall I do with him?"

"Leave him to me," she answered imperiously. "He will obey me."

"Yes," he said, in a low tone, which did not express submission. "Leave me to her! Leave me to the Witch and to her mercy. It will be the end this time. She is drunk with her love of you, and mad with her hatred of me."

Unorna grew suddenly pale, and would have again sprung forward. But the Wanderer stopped her and held her arm. At the same time he looked into Kafka's eyes, and raised one hand, as though in warning.

"Be silent!" he exclaimed.

"And if I speak, what then?" asked the Moravian, with his evil smile.

"I will silence you," answered the Wanderer, coldly. "Your madness excuses you, perhaps, but it does not justify me in allowing you to insult a woman."

Kafka's anger took a new direction. Even madmen are often calmed by the quiet opposition of a strong and self-possessed man. And Kafka was not mad. He was no coward, either, but the subtlety of his race was in him.

"I insult no one," he said, almost deferentially. "Least of all her whom I have worshiped long and lost at last. You accuse me unjustly of that, and, though my speech may have been somewhat rude, yet may I be forgiven for the sake of what I have suffered. For I have suffered much."

Seeing that he was taking a more courteous tone, the Wanderer folded his arms and left Unorna free to move, awaiting her commands, or the further development of events.

"And are you going to charm our ears with the story of your sufferings?" Unorna asked, in a tone so cruel that the Wanderer expected a quick outburst of anger from Kafka in reply. But he was disappointed in this.

"No," began Kafka, "I was not thus favored in my nativity. The star of love was not in the ascendant, the lord of magic charms was not trembling upon my horizon, the sun of earthly happiness was not enthroned in my mid-heaven. How could it be? She had it all, this Unorna here, and nature, generous in one mad moment, lavished upon her all there was to give. For she has all, and we have nothing, as I have learned and you will learn before you die."

He looked at the Wanderer as he spoke. His hollow eyes seemed calm enough, and in his dejected attitude and subdued tone there was nothing that gave warning of a coming storm. The Wanderer listened, half interested and yet half-annoyed at his persistence. Unorna herself was silent still.

Israel Kafka spoke dreamily, resting against the stone beside him, seemingly little conscious of the words that fell in oriental imagery from his lips.

"And love was her first captive," said the Moravian, "and her first slave. Yes, I will tell you the story of Unorna's life. She is angry with me now. Well, let it be. It is my fault—or hers. What matter? She cannot quite forget me out of mind—and I? Has Lucifer forgotten God?"

He sighed, and a momentary light flashed in his eyes. Something in the blasphemous strength of the words attracted the Wanderer's attention. Utterly indifferent himself, he saw that there was something more than madness in the man before him. He found himself wondering what encouragement Unorna had given the seed of passion that it should have grown to such strength, and he traced the madness back to the love, instead of referring the love to the madness. But he said nothing.

"So she was born," continned Kafka, dreaming on. "And nothing resisted her. Neither man nor woman nor child had any strength to oppose against her magic. The wolf hounds licked her feet, the wolves themselves crouched fawning in her path. For she is without fear—as she is without mercy. Is that strange? What fear can there be for her who has the magic charm, who holds sleep in the one hand and death in the other, and between whose brows is set the knowledge of what shall be hereafter? Can any one harm her? Has any one the strength to harm her? Is there anything on earth which she covets and which shall not be hers?"

Though his voice was almost as soft as before, the evil smile flickered again about his drawn lips as he looked into Unorna's face. He wondered why she did not face him and crush him, and force him to sleep with her eyes as he knew she could do. But he himself was past fear. He had suffered too much, and cared not what chanced to him now. But she should know that he knew all, if he told her so with his latest breath. Despair had given him a strange control of his anger and of his words, and jealously had taught him the art of wounding swiftly, surely and with a light touch. This one chance of wounding was given to him, and he would use it to the utmost, with all subtlety, with all cruelty, with all determination to torture.

"Whatsoever she covets is hers to take. No one escapes the spell in the end, no one resists the charm. And yet it is written in the book of her fate that she shall one day taste of the of fruit of ashes, and drink of the bitter water. It is written that whosoever slays with the sword shall die by the sword also. She has killed with love, and by love she shall perish. I loved her once. I know what I am saying."

Again he paused, lingering thoughtfully upon the words. The Wanderer glanced at Unorna, as though asking her whether she should not put a sudden end to the strange monologue. She was pale and her eyes were bright; but she shook her head.

"Let him say what he will say," she answered, taking the question as though it had been spoken. "Let him say all he will. Perhaps it is the last time."

"I will tell my story, not that any one may judge between you and me. There is neither judge nor justice for those who love in vain. So I loved you. That is the whole story. Do you understand me, sir? I loved this woman, but she would not love me. That is all. And what of it, and what then? Look at her and look at me—the beginning and the end."

In a manner familiar to Orientals, the unhappy man laid one [illegible] upon his own breast, and with the other hand he pointed at Unorna's fair young face.

She laughed in a [illegible] But Israel Kafka's eyes [illegible] and the somber fire beamed [illegible] he spoke again. The weary, tortured smile left his wan lips and his pale face grew stern.

"Laugh, laugh, Unorna?" he cried. "You do not laugh alone. And yet—I love you still. And he who dies for you, Unorna—of him you ask nothing, save that he will crawl away and die alone and not disturb your delicate life with such an unseemly sight."

"You talk of death," exclaimed Unorna scornfully. "You talk of dying for me, because you are ill today. To-morrow Keyork Arabian will have cured you, and then, for aught I know, you will talk of killing me instead. This is child's talk—boy's talk. If we are to listen to you, you must be more eloquent. You must give us such a tale of woe as shall draw tears from our eyes and sobs from our breasts—then we will applaud you and let you go. That shall be your reward."

The Wanderer glanced at her in surprise. There was a bitterness in her tone of which he had not believed her soft voice capable.

"Are you mad, indeed?" asked the Wanderer, suddenly planting himself in front of Kafka. "They told me so—I can almost believe it."

"No; I am not mad yet," answered the younger man, facing him fearlessly. "You need not come between me and her. She can protect herself. You would know that if you knew what I saw her do with you when I came here."

"What did she do?" The Wanderer turned quickly as he stood and looked at Unorna.

"Do not listen to his ravings," she said. The words seemed weak and poorly chosen, and there was a strange look in her face, as though she were either afraid or desperate or [illegible]

"She loves you," said Israel Kafka slowly. "And you do not know it. She has power over you as she has over me, but the power to make you love her she has not. She will destroy you, and your state will be no better than mine to-day. We shall have moved on a step, for I shall be dead and you will be the madman, and she will have found another to love and to torture. The world is full of them. Her altar will never lack sacrifices."

The Wanderer's face was grave.

"You may be mad or not," he said. "I cannot tell. But you say monstrous things, and you shall not repeat them."

Unorna laughed.

"Would you be a martyr?" she asked.

"Not for your faith, but for the faith I once had in you, and for the love that no martyrdom could kill. Ay—to prove that I have I would die a hundred deaths, and to gain yours I would die the death eternal."

"Your wrong, your right, your truth, your falsehood, you yourself, are swallowed up in the love I bear you! I love you always, and I will say it, and say it again—ah, your eyes, I love them, too! Take me into them, Unorna—whether in hate or love—but in love—yes—love—Unorna—golden Unorna!"

With the cry on his lips—the name he had given her in other days—he made one mad step forward, throwing out his arms as though to clasp her to him. But it was too late. Even while he had been speaking, her mysterious influence had overpowered him, as he had known that it would, when she so pleased.

She caught his two hands in the air and pressed him back and held him against the tall slab. The whole pitilessness of her nature gleamed like a cold light in her white face.

"There was a martyr of your race once," she said, in cruel tones. "His name was Simon Abeles. You talk of martyrdom! You shall know what it means—though it be too good for you, who spy upon the woman whom you say you love."

The hectic flush of passion sank from Israel Kafka's cheek. Rigid, with outstretched arms and bent head, he stood against the ancient gravestone. Above him, as though raised to heaven in silent supplication, were the sculptured hands that marked the last resting place of a Kohn.

"You shall know now," said Unorna. "You shall suffer indeed."

CHAPTER XV.

UNORNA'S voice sunk from the tone of anger to a lower pitch. She spoke quietly, and very distinctly, as though to impress every word upon the ear of the man who was in her power. As the Wanderer gazed and listened, Israel Kafka was transformed. He no longer stood with outstretched arms, his back against a crumbling slab, his filmy eyes fixed upon Unorna's face. He grew younger, his features were those of a boy of scarcely 13 years, pale, earnest and brightened by a soft light, which followed him hither and thither, and he was not alone. He moved with others through the old familiar streets of the city, clothed in a fashion of other times, speaking in accents comprehensible but unlike the speech of today, acting in a dim and far-off life that had once been.

The Wanderer looked, and, as in dreams, he knew that what he saw was unreal, he knew that the changing walls and streets and houses and public places were built up of gravestones, which, in truth, were deeply planted in the ground, immovable and incapable of spontaneous motion; he knew that the crowds of men and women were not human beings, but gnarled and twisted trees rooted in the earth, and that the hum of voices that reached his ear was but the sound of dried branches bending in the wind; he knew that Israel Kafka was not the pale-faced boy who glided from place to place, followed everywhere by a soft radiance; he knew that Unorna was the source and origin of the vision, and that the mingling speeches of the actors, now shrill in angry altercation, now hissing in low, fierce whisper, were really formed upon Unorna's lips and made audible through her tones, as the chorus of indistinct speech proceeded from the swaying trees.

In one corner of the dusky place there was a little light. A boy stood there, beside a veiled woman, and the light that seemed to cling about him was not the reflection of gold. He was very young. His pale face had in it all the lost beauty of the Jewish race, the lips were clearly cut, even pure in outline and firm, the forehead broad with thought, the features noble, aquiline—not vulture like.

He stood there looking on at the scene in the market place, not wondering, for nothing of it was new to him; not scorning, for he felt no hate; not wrathful, for he dreamed of peace. He would have had it otherwise—that was all.

"Let us go," he said, in a low voice. "The air is full of gold and heavy. I cannot breathe it."

"Whither?" asked the woman.

"Thou knowest," he answered. And suddenly the faint radiance that was always about him grew brighter, and spread out arms behind him, to the right and left, in the figure of a cross.

They walked together, side by side, quickly and often glancing behind them, as though to see whether they were followed. And yet it seemed as though it was not they who moved, but the city about them which changed. All at once they were standing before the richly carved doorway of the Teyn church, the very doorway out of which the Wanderer had followed the fleeting shadow of Beatrice's figure but a month ago. And then they paused and looked again to the right and left, and searched the dark corners with piercing glances.

"Thy life is in thine hand," said the woman, speaking close to the boy's ear. "It is yet time. Turn with me and let us go back."

"What is there to fear?" he asked.

"Death," answered the woman, in a trembling tone. "They will kill thee, and it shall be upon my head."

"And what is death?" he asked again, and the smile was still upon his face, as he led the way up the steps.

The woman bowed her head, and drew her veil more closely about her, and followed him. Then they were within the church, darker, more ghostly, less rich in those days than now.

"Is it thus?" he asked, and the heavenly smile grew more radiant as he made the sign of the cross.

"Be it not upon me!" she exclaimed, earnestly. "Though I would it might be forever so with thee."

"It is forever," the boy answered.

He went forward and prostrated himself before the high altar.

An old man in a monk's robe came forward out of the shadow of the choir, and stood behind the marble rails, and looked down at the boy's prostrate figure, wonderingly. Then the low gateway was opened and he descended the three steps and bent down to the young head.

"What wouldst thou?" he asked.

"I am a Jew. I would be a Christian. I would be baptized."

"Fearest thou not thy people?"

"I fear not death."

"Come with me." Trembling, the woman followed them both, and all were lost in the gloom of the church. Suddenly a clear voice broke the silence:

"Ego baptizo te in nomine Patris et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti."

Then the woman and the boy were standing again without the entrance in the chilly air, and the ancient monk was upon the threshold under the carved arch; his thin hands, white in the darkness, were lifted high, and he blessed them and they went their way.

In the moving vision the radiance was brighter still, and illuminated the streets as they moved on. Then a cloud descended over all, and certain days and weeks passed, and again the boy was walking swiftly toward the church. But the woman was not with him, and he believed he was alone, though the messengers of evil were upon him. Two dark figures moved in the shadow, silent, noiseless in their walk, muffled in their long garments. He went on, no longer deigning to look back, beyond fear as he had ever been, and beyond even the expectation of a danger. He went into the church, and the two men made gestures and spoke in low tones, and hid themselves in the shade of the buttresses outside.

The vision grew darker, and a terrible stillness was over everything for the church was not opened to the sight this time. There was a horror of long waiting with the certainty of what was to come. The narrow street was empty to the eye, and yet there was the knowledge of evil presence of two strong men waiting in the dark to take their victim to the place of expiation. And the horror grew in the silence and emptiness until it was unbearable.

The door opened, and the boy was with the monk under the black arch. The old man embraced him, and blessed him, and stood still for a moment watching him as he went down. Then he also turned and went back, and the door was closed.

Swiftly the two men glided from their hiding place and sped along the uneven pavement. The boy paused and faced them, for he felt that he was taken. They grasped him by the arms on each side, Lazarus, his father, and Levi, surnamed the Short-handed, the strongest and the cruelest and the most relentless of the younger rabbis. Their grip was rough, and the older man held a coarse woollen cloth in his hand, with which to smother the boy's cries if he should cry out for help. But he was very calm and did not resist them.

"What would you?" he asked.

"And what doest thou in a Christian church?" asked Lazarus in fierce tones.

"What Christians do, since I am one of them," answered the youth, unmoved.

Lazarus said nothing, but he struck the boy on the mouth with his hard hand so that the blood ran down.

"Not here!" exclaimed Levi, anxiously looking about.

And they hurried him away through dark and narrow lanes. He opposed no resistance to Levi's rough strength, not only suffering himself to be dragged along, but doing his best to keep pace with the man's long strides, nor did he murmur at the blows and thrusts dealt him from time to time by his father from the other side. During some minutes they were still traversing the Christian part of the city. A single loud cry for help would have brought a rescue, a few words to the rescuers would have roused a mob of fierce men, and the Jews would have paid with their lives for the deeds they had not yet committed. But Simon Abeles uttered no cry and offered no resistance. He had said that he feared not death, and he had spoken the truth, not knowing what manner of death was to be his. Onward they sped, and in the vision the way they traversed seemed to sweep past them, so that they remained always in sight though always hurrying on. The Christian quarter was passed; before them hung the chain of one of those gates which gave access to the city of the Jews. With a jeer and an oath the bearded sentry watched them pass—the martyr and his torturers. One word to him, even then, and the butt of his heavy halberd would have broken Levi's arm and laid the boy's father in the dust. The word was not spoken. On through the filthy ways, on and on, through narrow courts and torturous passages to a dark low doorway. Then, again, the vision showed but an empty street, and there was silence for a space, and a horror of long waiting in the falling night.

Lights moved within the house, and then one window after another was bolted and barred from within. A dull noise, bad to hear, resounded as from beneath a vault, and then another and another—the sound of cruel blows upon a human body. Then a pause.

"Wilt thou renounce it?" asked the voice of Lazarus.

"Kyrie eleison! Christe eleison!" came the answer brave and clear.

"Lay on, Levi, and let thy arm be strong!"

"Dost thou repent? Dost thou renounce? Dost thou deny?"

"I repent of my sins—I renounce your ways—I believe in the Lord——"

The sacred name was not heard. A smothering groan, as of one losing consciousness in extreme torture, was all that came up from below.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]