

THE DAUGHTER OF THE HORSELEECH

A FABLE

Tria sunt insaturabilia, et quartum, quod nunquam dicit: Sufficit. Infernus, et os vulvae. . . .—Prov. xxx. 16.

THE Great White Spirit stretched Himself and yawned. He had done an honest six day's work if ever a man did; yet in such physical training was He from His lengthy "cure" in that fashionable Spa Pralaya that he was not in the least fatigued. It was the Loi du Répos Hebdomadaire that had made Him throw down His tools.

"Anyway, the job's finished!" He said, looking round Him complacently. Even His critical eye assured Him that it was very good.

And indeed it must be admitted that He had every right to crow. With no better basis than the Metaphysical Absolute of the Qabalists he had unthinkably but efficiently formulated Infinite Space, filled the said Space with Infinite Light, concentrated the Light into a Smooth-pointed Whitehead (not the torpedo) and emanated Himself as four hundred successive intelligences all the way from Risha Qadisha in Atziluth down to where intelligence ends, and England begins.

He took a final survey and again faintly murmured: "Very good! Beautifully arranged, too!" He added, "not a hole anywhere!"

It somewhat surprised Him, therefore, when a tiny, tiny silvery little laugh came bell-like in His ear. It was so tiny that he could hardly credit the audacity of the idea, but for all its music, the laugh certainly sounded as if some one were mocking Him.

He turned sharply round (and this was one of His own special attributes, as transcending the plane where activity and rotundity are incompatibles) but saw nothing; and putting His legs up, lighted His long pipe and settled down to a quiet perusal of a fascinating "cosmic romance" called Berashith by two pseudonymous authors, G. O. Varr and L. O. Heem—of ingenious fancy, exalted imaginative faculty, and a tendency, which would later be deemed undesirable, to slop over into the filthiest details whenever the love-interest became dominant. Oh, but it was a most enthralling narrative! Beginning with a comic account of the creation, possibly intended as a satire on our men of science or our men of religion—'twould serve equally well in either case—it went on to a thrilling hospital scene. The love-interest comes in chapter ii.; chapter iii. has an eviction scene, since when there have been no snakes in Ireland; chapter iv. gives us a first-rate murder, and from that moment the authors never look back.

But the Great White Spirit was destined to have his day of repose disturbed.

He had just got to the real masterpiece of literature "And Adam knew Hevah his woman," which contains all that ever has been said or ever can be said upon the sex-problem in its one simple, sane, clean truth, when glancing up, he saw that after all He had overlooked something. In the Infinite Universe which he had constructed there was a tiny crack.

A tiny, tiny crack.

Barely an inch of it.

Well, the matter was easily remedied. As it chanced, there was a dainty little Spirit (with gossamer wings like a web of steel, and scarlet tissue of silk for his robes) flitting about, brandishing his tiny sword and spear in a thoroughly warlike manner.

"Shun!" said the Great White Spirit.

"By the right, dress!

"Snappers, one pace forward, march!

"Prepare to stop leak!

"Stop leak!"

But the matter was not thus easily settled. After five hours' strenuous work, the little spirit was exhausted, and the hole apparently no nearer being filled than before.

He returned to the Great White Spirit.

"Beg pardon, sir!" he said; "but I can't fill that there 'ole nohow."

"No matter," answered the Great White Spirit, with a metaphysical double entendre. "You may go!"

If anything, the crack was bigger than before, it seemed to Him. "This," He said, "is clearly the job for Bartzabel." And he despatched a "speed" message for that worthy spirit.

Bartzabel lost no time in answering the summons. Of flaming, radiant, far-darting gold was his crown; flashing hither and thither more swiftly than the lightning were its rays. His head was like the Sun in its strength, even at high noon. His cloak was of pure amethyst, flowing behind him like a mighty river; his armour was of living gold, burnished with lightning even to the greaves and the armed feet of him; he radiated an intolerable splendour of gold and he bore the Sword and balance of Justice. Mighty and golden were his wide-flashing wings!

Terrible in his might, he bowed low before the Great White Spirit, and proceeded to carry out the order.

For five and twenty years he toiled at the so easy task; then, flinging down his weapons in a rage, he returned before the face of his Master and, trembling with passion, cast himself down in wrath and despair.

"Pah!" said the Great White Spirit with a smile; "I might have known better than to employ a low material creature like yourself. Send Graphiel to Me!"

The angry Bartzabel, foaming with horrid rage, went off, and Graphiel appeared.

All glorious was the moon-like crown of the great Intelligence Graphiel. His face was like the Sun as it appears beyond the veil of this earthly firmament. His warrior body was like a tower of steel, virginal strong.

Scarlet were his kingly robes, and his limbs were swathed in young leaves of lotus; for those limbs were stronger than any armour ever forged in heaven or hell. Winged was he with wings of gold that are the Wind itself; his sword of green fire flamed in his right hand, and in his left he held the blue feather of Justice, unstirred by the wind of his flight, or the upheaval of the universe.

But after five and sixty centuries of toil, though illumined with intelligence almost divine, he had to confess himself defeated.

"Sir," he cried strongly, "this is a task for Kamael the mighty and all his host of Seraphim!"

"I will employ them on it," said the Great White Spirit.

Then the skies flamed with wrath; for Kamael the mighty and his legions flew from the South, and saluted their Creator. Behold the mighty one, behold Kamael the strong! His crownless head was like a whirling wheel of amethyst, and all the forces of the earth and heaven revolved therein. His body was the mighty Sea itself, and it bore the scars of crucifixion that had made it two score times stronger than it was before. He too bore the wings and weapons of Space and of Justice; and in himself he was that great Amen that is the beginning and the end of all.

Behind him were the Seraphim, the fiery Serpents. On their heads the triple tongue of fire; their glory like unto the Sun, their scales like burning plates of steel; they danced like virgins before their lord, and upon the storm and roar of the sea did they ride in their glory.

"Sir," cried the Archangel, "sir," cried Kamael the mighty one, and his legions echoed the roar of his voice, "hast Thou called us forth to perform so trivial a task? Well, let it be so!"

"Your scorn," the Great White Spirit replied mildly, "is perhaps not altogether justified. Though the hole be indeed but a bare inch—yet Graphiel owns himself beaten."

"I never thought much of Graphiel!" sneered the archangel, and his serpents echoed him till the world was filled with mocking laughter.

But when he had left, he charged them straitly that the work must be regarded seriously. It would never do to fail!

So for aeons three hundred and twenty and five did they labour with all their might.

But the crack was not diminished by an hair's breadth; nay, it seemed bigger than before—a very gape in the womb of the universe.

Crestfallen, Kamael the mighty returned before the Great White Spirit, his serpents drooping behind him; and they grovelled before the throne of that All-powerful One.

He dismissed them with a short laugh, and a wave of His right hand. If He was disturbed, He was too proud to show it. "This," he said to himself, "is clearly a matter for Elohim Gibor."

Therefore He summoned that divine power before Him.

The crown of Elohim Gibor was Space itself; the two halves of his brain were the Yea and Nay of the Universe; his breath was the breath of very Life; his being was the Mahalingam of the First, beyond Life and Death the generator from Nothingness. His armour was the Primal Water of Chaos. The infinite moon-like curve of his body; the flashing swiftness of his Word, that was the Word that formulated that which was beyond Chaos and Cosmos; the might of him, greater than that of the Elephant and of the Lion and of the Tortoise and of the Bull fabled in Indian legend as the supports of the four letters of the Name; the glory of him, that was even as that of the Sun which is before all and beyond all Suns, of which the stars are little sparks struck off as he battled in the Infinite against the Infinite—all these points the Great White Spirit noted and appreciated. This is certainly the person, thought He, to do my business for me.

But alas! for five, and for twenty-five, and for sixty-five, and for three hundred and twenty-five myriads of myriads of myriads of kotis of crores of lakhs of asankhayas of mahakalpas did he work with his divine power—and yet that little crack was in nowise filled, but rather widened!

The god returned. "O Great White Spirit!" he whispered—and the Universe shook with fear at the voice of him—"Thou, and Thou alone, art worthy to fill this little crack that Thou hast left."

Then the Great White Spirit arose and formulated Himself as the Pillar of Infinitude, even as the Mahalingam of Great Shiva the Destroyer, who openeth his eye, and All is Not. And behold! He was balanced in the crack, and the void was filled, and Nature was content. And Elohim Gibor, and Kamael the mighty and his Seraphim, and Graphiel, and Bartzabel, and all the inhabitants of Madim shouted for joy and gave glory and honour and praise to the Great White Spirit; and the sound of their rejoicing filled the Worlds.

Now for one thousand myriad eternities the Great White Spirit maintained Himself as the Pillar of Infinitude in the midst of the little crack that he had overlooked; and lo! He was very weary.

"I cannot stay like this for ever," He exclaimed; and returned into His human shape, and filled the bowl of His pipe, and lit it, and meditated. . . .

And I awoke, and behold it was a dream.

Then I too lit my pipe, and meditated.

"I cannot see," thought I, "that the situation will be in any way amended, even if we agree to give them votes."

ETHEL RAMSAY.