

The Story of the Amulet

(Volume II)

by E. Nesbit

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The Story of the Amulet (Volume II)

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CHAPTER 9

ATLANTIS

You will understand that the adventure of the Babylonian queen in London was the only one that had occupied any time at all. But the children's time was very fully taken up by talking over all the wonderful things seen and done in the Past, where, by the power of the Amulet, they seemed to spend hours and hours, only to find when they got back to London that the whole thing had been briefer than a lightning flash.

They talked of the Past at their meals, in their walks, in the dining room, in the first floor drawing room, but most of all on the stairs. It was an old house; it had once been a fashionable one, and was a fine one still. The banister rails of the stairs were excellent for sliding down, and in the corners of the landings were big alcoves that had once held graceful statues, and now quite often held the graceful forms of Cyril,

Robert, Anthea, and Jane.

One day Cyril and Robert in tight white underclothing had spent a pleasant hour in reproducing the attitudes of statues seen either in the British Museum, or in Father's big photograph book. But the show ended abruptly because Robert wanted to be the Venus of Milo, and for this purpose pulled at the sheet which served for drapery at the very moment when Cyril, looking really quite like the Discobolos with a gold and white saucer for the disc was standing on one foot, and under that one foot was the sheet.

Of course the Discobolos and his disc and the would be Venus came down together, and everyone was a good deal hurt, especially the saucer, which would never be the same again, however neatly one might join its uneven bits with Seccotine or the white of an egg.

'I hope you're satisfied,' said Cyril, holding his head where a large lump was rising.

'Quite, thanks,' said Robert bitterly. His thumb had caught in the banisters and bent itself back almost to breaking

point.

'I AM so sorry, poor, dear Squirrel,' said Anthea; 'and you were looking so lovely. I'll get a wet rag. Bobs, go and hold your hand under the hot water tap. It's what ballet girls do with their legs when they hurt them. I saw it in a book.'

'What book?' said Robert disagreeably. But he went.

When he came back Cyril's head had been bandaged by his sisters, and he had been brought to the state of mind where he was able reluctantly to admit that he supposed Robert hadn't done it on purpose.

Robert replying with equal suavity, Anthea hastened to lead the talk away from the accident.

'I suppose you don't feel like going anywhere through the Amulet,' she said.

'Egypt!' said Jane promptly. 'I want to see the pussy cats.'

'Not me too hot,' said Cyril. 'It's about as much as I can stand here let alone Egypt.' It was indeed, hot, even on the second landing, which was the coolest place in the house.

'Let's go to the North Pole.'

'I don't suppose the Amulet was ever there and we might get our fingers frost bitten so that we could never hold it up to get home again. No thanks,' said Robert.

'I say,' said Jane, 'let's get the Psammead and ask its advice. It will like us asking, even if we don't take it.'

The Psammead was brought up in its green silk embroidered bag, but before it could be asked anything the door of the learned gentleman's room opened and the voice of the visitor who had been lunching with him was heard on the stairs. He seemed to be speaking with the door handle in his hand.

'You see a doctor, old boy,' he said; 'all that about thought transference is just simply twaddle. You've been over working. Take a holiday. Go to Dieppe.'

'I'd rather go to Babylon,' said the learned gentleman.

'I wish you'd go to Atlantis some time, while we're about it, so as to give me some tips for my Nineteenth Century article when you come home.'

'I wish I could,' said the voice of the learned gentleman.
'Goodbye. Take care of yourself.'

The door was banged, and the visitor came smiling down the stairs a stout, prosperous, big man. The children had to get up to let him pass.

'Hullo, Kiddies,' he said, glancing at the bandages on the head of Cyril and the hand of Robert, 'been in the wars?'

'It's all right,' said Cyril. 'I say, what was that Atlantic place you wanted him to go to? We couldn't help hearing you talk.'

'You talk so VERY loud, you see,' said Jane soothingly.

'Atlantis,' said the visitor, 'the lost Atlantis, garden of the Hesperides. Great continent disappeared in the sea. You can read about it in Plato.'

'Thank you,' said Cyril doubtfully.

'Were there any Amulets there?' asked Anthea, made anxious by a sudden thought.

'Hundreds, I should think. So HE'S been talking to you?'

'Yes, often. He's very kind to us. We like him awfully.'

'Well, what he wants is a holiday; you persuade him to take one. What he wants is a change of scene. You see, his head is crusted so thickly inside with knowledge about Egypt and Assyria and things that you can't hammer anything into it unless you keep hard at it all day long for days and days. And I haven't time. But you live in the house. You can hammer almost incessantly. Just try your hands, will you? Right. So long!'

He went down the stairs three at a time, and Jane remarked that he was a nice man, and she thought he had little girls of his own.

'I should like to have them to play with,' she added pensively.

The three elder ones exchanged glances. Cyril nodded.

'All right. LET'S go to Atlantis,' he said.

'Let's go to Atlantis and take the learned gentleman with us,' said Anthea; 'he'll think it's a dream, afterwards, but it'll certainly be a change of scene.'

'Why not take him to nice Egypt?' asked Jane.

'Too hot,' said Cyril shortly.

'Or Babylon, where he wants to go?'

'I've had enough of Babylon,' said Robert, 'at least for the present. And so have the others. I don't know why,' he added, forestalling the question on Jane's lips, 'but somehow we have. Squirrel, let's take off these beastly bandages and get into flannels. We can't go in our unders.'

'He WISHED to go to Atlantis, so he's got to go some time; and he might as well go with us,' said Anthea.

This was how it was that the learned gentleman, permitting himself a few moments of relaxation in his chair, after the fatigue of listening to opinions (about Atlantis and many other things) with which he did not at all agree, opened his eyes to find his four young friends standing in front of him in a row.

'Will you come,' said Anthea, 'to Atlantis with us?'

'To know that you are dreaming shows that the dream is nearly at an end,' he told himself; 'or perhaps it's only a game,

like "How many miles to Babylon?".' So he said aloud: 'Thank you very much, but I have only a quarter of an hour to spare.'

'It doesn't take any time,' said Cyril; 'time is only a mode of thought, you know, and you've got to go some time, so why not with us?'

'Very well,' said the learned gentleman, now quite certain that he was dreaming.

Anthea held out her soft, pink hand. He took it. She pulled him gently to his feet. Jane held up the Amulet.

'To just outside Atlantis,' said Cyril, and Jane said the Name of Power.

'You owl!' said Robert, 'it's an island. Outside an island's all water.'

'I won't go. I WON'T,' said the Psammead, kicking and struggling in its bag.

But already the Amulet had grown to a great arch. Cyril pushed the learned gentleman, as undoubtedly the first born, through the arch not into water, but on to a wooden floor, out

of doors. The others followed. The Amulet grew smaller again, and there they all were, standing on the deck of a ship whose sailors were busy making her fast with chains to rings on a white quay side. The rings and the chains were of a metal that shone red yellow like gold.

Everyone on the ship seemed too busy at first to notice the group of newcomers from Fitzroy Street. Those who seemed to be officers were shouting orders to the men.

They stood and looked across the wide quay to the town that rose beyond it. What they saw was the most beautiful sight any of them had ever seen or ever dreamed of.

The blue sea sparkled in soft sunlight; little white capped waves broke softly against the marble breakwaters that guarded the shipping of a great city from the wilderness of winter winds and seas. The quay was of marble, white and sparkling with a veining bright as gold. The city was of marble, red and white. The greater buildings that seemed to be temples and palaces were roofed with what looked like gold and silver, but most of the roofs were of copper that

glowed golden red on the houses on the hills among which the city stood, and shaded into marvellous tints of green and blue and purple where they had been touched by the salt sea spray and the fumes of the dyeing and smelting works of the lower town.

Broad and magnificent flights of marble stairs led up from the quay to a sort of terrace that seemed to run along for miles, and beyond rose the town built on a hill.

The learned gentleman drew a long breath. 'Wonderful!' he said, 'wonderful!'

'I say, Mr what's your name,' said Robert. 'He means,' said Anthea, with gentle politeness, 'that we never can remember your name. I know it's Mr De Something.'

'When I was your age I was called Jimmy,' he said timidly. 'Would you mind? I should feel more at home in a dream like this if I Anything that made me seem more like one of you.'

'Thank you Jimmy,' said Anthea with an effort. It seemed such a cheek to be saying Jimmy to a grown up man.

'Jimmy, DEAR,' she added, with no effort at all. Jimmy smiled and looked pleased.

But now the ship was made fast, and the Captain had time to notice other things. He came towards them, and he was dressed in the best of all possible dresses for the seafaring life.

'What are you doing here?' he asked rather fiercely. 'Do you come to bless or to curse?'

'To bless, of course,' said Cyril. 'I'm sorry if it annoys you, but we're here by magic. We come from the land of the sun rising,' he went on explanatorily.

'I see,' said the Captain; no one had expected that he would. 'I didn't notice at first, but of course I hope you're a good omen. It's needed. And this,' he pointed to the learned gentleman, 'your slave, I presume?'

'Not at all,' said Anthea; 'he's a very great man. A sage, don't they call it? And we want to see all your beautiful city, and your temples and things, and then we shall go back, and he will tell his friend, and his friend will write a book about

it.'

'What,' asked the Captain, fingering a rope, 'is a book?'

'A record something written, or,' she added hastily, remembering the Babylonian writing, 'or engraved.'

Some sudden impulse of confidence made Jane pluck the Amulet from the neck of her frock.

'Like this,' she said.

The Captain looked at it curiously, but, the other three were relieved to notice, without any of that overwhelming interest which the mere name of it had roused in Egypt and Babylon.

'The stone is of our country,' he said; 'and that which is engraved on it, it is like our writing, but I cannot read it. What is the name of your sage?'

'Ji jimmy,' said Anthea hesitatingly.

The Captain repeated, 'Ji jimmy. Will you land?' he added. 'And shall I lead you to the Kings?'

'Look here,' said Robert, 'does your King hate strangers?'

'Our Kings are ten,' said the Captain, 'and the Royal line, unbroken from Poseidon, the father of us all, has the noble tradition to do honour to strangers if they come in peace.'

'Then lead on, please,' said Robert, 'though I SHOULD like to see all over your beautiful ship, and sail about in her.'

'That shall be later,' said the Captain; 'just now we're afraid of a storm do you notice that odd rumbling?'

'That's nothing, master,' said an old sailor who stood near; 'it's the pilchards coming in, that's all.'

'Too loud,' said the Captain.

There was a rather anxious pause; then the Captain stepped on to the quay, and the others followed him.

'Do talk to him Jimmy,' said Anthea as they went; 'you can find out all sorts of things for your friend's book.'

'Please excuse me,' he said earnestly. 'If I talk I shall wake up; and besides, I can't understand what he says.'

No one else could think of anything to say, so that it was in complete silence that they followed the Captain up the

marble steps and through the streets of the town. There were streets and shops and houses and markets.

'It's just like Babylon,' whispered Jane, 'only everything's perfectly different.'

'It's a great comfort the ten Kings have been properly brought up to be kind to strangers,' Anthea whispered to Cyril.

'Yes,' he said, 'no deepest dungeons here.'

There were no horses or chariots in the street, but there were handcarts and low trolleys running on thick log wheels, and porters carrying packets on their heads, and a good many of the people were riding on what looked like elephants, only the great beasts were hairy, and they had not that mild expression we are accustomed to meet on the faces of the elephants at the Zoo.

'Mammoths!' murmured the learned gentleman, and stumbled over a loose stone.

The people in the streets kept crowding round them as they went along, but the Captain always dispersed the crowd

before it grew uncomfortably thick by saying

'Children of the Sun God and their High Priest come to bless the City.'

And then the people would draw back with a low murmur that sounded like a suppressed cheer.

Many of the buildings were covered with gold, but the gold on the bigger buildings was of a different colour, and they had sorts of steeples of burnished silver rising above them.

'Are all these houses real gold?' asked Jane.

'The temples are covered with gold, of course,' answered the Captain, 'but the houses are only oricalchum. It's not quite so expensive.'

The learned gentleman, now very pale, stumbled along in a dazed way, repeating:

'Oricalchum oricalchum.'

'Don't be frightened,' said Anthea; 'we can get home in a minute, just by holding up the charm. Would you rather go back now? We could easily come some other day without

you.'

'Oh, no, no,' he pleaded fervently; 'let the dream go on. Please, please do.'

'The High Ji jimmy is perhaps weary with his magic journey,' said the Captain, noticing the blundering walk of the learned gentleman; 'and we are yet very far from the Great Temple, where today the Kings make sacrifice.'

He stopped at the gate of a great enclosure. It seemed to be a sort of park, for trees showed high above its brazen wall.

The party waited, and almost at once the Captain came back with one of the hairy elephants and begged them to mount.

This they did.

It was a glorious ride. The elephant at the Zoo to ride on him is also glorious, but he goes such a very little way, and then he goes back again, which is always dull. But this great hairy beast went on and on and on along streets and through squares and gardens. It was a glorious city; almost everything

was built of marble, red, or white, or black. Every now and then the party crossed a bridge.

It was not till they had climbed to the hill which is the centre of the town that they saw that the whole city was divided into twenty circles, alternately land and water, and over each of the water circles were the bridges by which they had come.

And now they were in a great square. A vast building filled up one side of it; it was overlaid with gold, and had a dome of silver. The rest of the buildings round the square were of oricalchum. And it looked more splendid than you can possibly imagine, standing up bold and shining in the sunlight.

'You would like a bath,' said the Captain, as the hairy elephant went clumsily down on his knees. 'It's customary, you know, before entering the Presence. We have baths for men, women, horses, and cattle. The High Class Baths are here. Our Father Poseidon gave us a spring of hot water and one of cold.'

The children had never before bathed in baths of gold.

'It feels very splendid,' said Cyril, splashing.

'At least, of course, it's not gold; it's or what's its name,' said Robert. 'Hand over that towel.'

The bathing hall had several great pools sunk below the level of the floor; one went down to them by steps.

'Jimmy,' said Anthea timidly, when, very clean and boiled looking, they all met in the flowery courtyard of the Public, 'don't you think all this seems much more like NOW than Babylon or Egypt ? Oh, I forgot, you've never been there.'

'I know a little of those nations, however,' said he, 'and I quite agree with you. A most discerning remark my dear,' he added awkwardly; 'this city certainly seems to indicate a far higher level of civilization than the Egyptian or Babylonish, and '

'Follow me,' said the Captain. 'Now, boys, get out of the way.' He pushed through a little crowd of boys who were playing with dried chestnuts fastened to a string.

'Ginger!' remarked Robert, 'they're playing conkers, just like the kids in Kentish Town Road!'

They could see now that three walls surrounded the island on which they were. The outermost wall was of brass, the Captain told them; the next, which looked like silver, was covered with tin; and the innermost one was of oricalchum.

And right in the middle was a wall of gold, with golden towers and gates.

'Behold the Temples of Poseidon,' said the Captain. 'It is not lawful for me to enter. I will await your return here.'

He told them what they ought to say, and the five people from Fitzroy Street took hands and went forward. The golden gates slowly opened.

'We are the children of the Sun,' said Cyril, as he had been told, 'and our High Priest, at least that's what the Captain calls him. We have a different name for him at home.' 'What is his name?' asked a white robed man who stood in the doorway with his arms extended.

'Ji jimmy,' replied Cyril, and he hesitated as Anthea had

done. It really did seem to be taking a great liberty with so learned a gentleman. 'And we have come to speak with your Kings in the Temple of Poseidon does that word sound right?' he whispered anxiously.

'Quite,' said the learned gentleman. 'It's very odd I can understand what you say to them, but not what they say to you.'

'The Queen of Babylon found that too,' said Cyril; 'it's part of the magic.'

'Oh, what a dream!' said the learned gentleman.

The white robed priest had been joined by others, and all were bowing low.

'Enter,' he said, 'enter, Children of the Sun, with your High Ji jimmy.'

In an inner courtyard stood the Temple all of silver, with gold pinnacles and doors, and twenty enormous statues in bright gold of men and women. Also an immense pillar of the other precious yellow metal.

They went through the doors, and the priest led them up

a stair into a gallery from which they could look down on to the glorious place.

'The ten Kings are even now choosing the bull. It is not lawful for me to behold,' said the priest, and fell face downward on the floor outside the gallery. The children looked down.

The roof was of ivory adorned with the three precious metals, and the walls were lined with the favourite oricalchum.

At the far end of the Temple was a statue group, the like of which no one living has ever seen.

It was of gold, and the head of the chief figure reached to the roof. That figure was Poseidon, the Father of the City. He stood in a great chariot drawn by six enormous horses, and round about it were a hundred mermaids riding on dolphins.

Ten men, splendidly dressed and armed only with sticks and ropes, were trying to capture one of some fifteen bulls who ran this way and that about the floor of the Temple. The

children held their breath, for the bulls looked dangerous, and the great horned heads were swinging more and more wildly.

Anthea did not like looking at the bulls. She looked about the gallery, and noticed that another staircase led up from it to a still higher storey; also that a door led out into the open air, where there seemed to be a balcony.

So that when a shout went up and Robert whispered, 'Got him,' and she looked down and saw the herd of bulls being driven out of the Temple by whips, and the ten Kings following, one of them spurring with his stick a black bull that writhed and fought in the grip of a lasso, she answered the boy's agitated, 'Now we shan't see anything more,' with

'Yes we can, there's an outside balcony.'

So they crowded out.

But very soon the girls crept back.

'I don't like sacrifices,' Jane said. So she and Anthea went and talked to the priest, who was no longer lying on his face, but sitting on the top step mopping his forehead with his robe, for it was a hot day.

'It's a special sacrifice,' he said; 'usually it's only done on the justice days every five years and six years alternately. And then they drink the cup of wine with some of the bull's blood in it, and swear to judge truly. And they wear the sacred blue robe, and put out all the Temple fires. But this today is because the City's so upset by the odd noises from the sea, and the god inside the big mountain speaking with his thunder voice. But all that's happened so often before. If anything could make ME uneasy it wouldn't be THAT.'

'What would it be?' asked Jane kindly.

'It would be the Lemmings.'

'Who are they enemies?'

'They're a sort of rat; and every year they come swimming over from the country that no man knows, and stay here awhile, and then swim away. This year they haven't come. You know rats won't stay on a ship that's going to be wrecked. If anything horrible were going to happen to us, it's my belief those Lemmings would know; and that may be why they've fought shy of us.'

'What do you call this country?' asked the Psammead, suddenly putting its head out of its bag.

'Atlantis,' said the priest.

'Then I advise you to get on to the highest ground you can find. I remember hearing something about a flood here. Look here, you' it turned to Anthea; 'let's get home. The prospect's too wet for my whiskers.' The girls obediently went to find their brothers, who were leaning on the balcony railings.

'Where's the learned gentleman?' asked Anthea.

'There he is below,' said the priest, who had come with them. 'Your High Ji jimmy is with the Kings.'

The ten Kings were no longer alone. The learned gentleman no one had noticed how he got there stood with them on the steps of an altar, on which lay the dead body of the black bull. All the rest of the courtyard was thick with people, seemingly of all classes, and all were shouting, 'The sea the sea!'

'Be calm,' said the most kingly of the Kings, he who had

lassoed the bull. 'Our town is strong against the thunders of the sea and of the sky!'

'I want to go home,' whined the Psammead.

'We can't go without HIM,' said Anthea firmly.

'Jimmy,' she called, 'Jimmy!' and waved to him. He heard her, and began to come towards her through the crowd. They could see from the balcony the sea captain edging his way out from among the people. And his face was dead white, like paper.

'To the hills!' he cried in a loud and terrible voice. And above his voice came another voice, louder, more terrible the voice of the sea.

The girls looked seaward.

Across the smooth distance of the sea something huge and black rolled towards the town. It was a wave, but a wave a hundred feet in height, a wave that looked like a mountain a wave rising higher and higher till suddenly it seemed to break in two one half of it rushed out to sea again; the other

'Oh!' cried Anthea, 'the town the poor people!'

'It's all thousands of years ago, really,' said Robert but his voice trembled. They hid their eyes for a moment. They could not bear to look down, for the wave had broken on the face of the town, sweeping over the quays and docks, overwhelming the great storehouses and factories, tearing gigantic stones from forts and bridges, and using them as battering rams against the temples. Great ships were swept over the roofs of the houses and dashed down halfway up the hill among ruined gardens and broken buildings. The water ground brown fishing boats to powder on the golden roofs of Palaces.

Then the wave swept back towards the sea.

'I want to go home,' cried the Psammead fiercely.

'Oh, yes, yes!' said Jane, and the boys were ready but the learned gentleman had not come.

Then suddenly they heard him dash up to the inner gallery, crying

'I MUST see the end of the dream.' He rushed up the higher flight.

The others followed him. They found themselves in a sort of turret roofed, but open to the air at the sides.

The learned gentleman was leaning on the parapet, and as they rejoined him the vast wave rushed back on the town. This time it rose higher destroyed more.

'Come home,' cried the Psammead; 'THAT'S the LAST, I know it is! That's the last over there.' It pointed with a claw that trembled.

'Oh, come!' cried Jane, holding up the Amulet.

'I WILL SEE the end of the dream,' cried the learned gentleman.

'You'll never see anything else if you do,' said Cyril. 'Oh, JIMMY!' appealed Anthea. 'I'll NEVER bring you out again!'

'You'll never have the chance if you don't go soon,' said the Psammead.

'I WILL see the end of the dream,' said the learned gentleman obstinately.

The hills around were black with people fleeing from

the villages to the mountains. And even as they fled thin smoke broke from the great white peak, and then a faint flash of flame. Then the volcano began to throw up its mysterious fiery inside parts. The earth trembled; ashes and sulphur showered down; a rain of fine pumice stone fell like snow on all the dry land. The elephants from the forest rushed up towards the peaks; great lizards thirty yards long broke from the mountain pools and rushed down towards the sea. The snows melted and rushed down, first in avalanches, then in roaring torrents. Great rocks cast up by the volcano fell splashing in the sea miles away.

'Oh, this is horrible!' cried Anthea. 'Come home, come home!'

'The end of the dream,' gasped the learned gentleman.

'Hold up the Amulet,' cried the Psammead suddenly. The place where they stood was now crowded with men and women, and the children were strained tight against the parapet. The turret rocked and swayed; the wave had reached the golden wall.

Jane held up the Amulet.

'Now,' cried the Psammead, 'say the word!'

And as Jane said it the Psammead leaped from its bag and bit the hand of the learned gentleman.

At the same moment the boys pushed him through the arch and all followed him.

He turned to look back, and through the arch he saw nothing but a waste of waters, with above it the peak of the terrible mountain with fire raging from it.

He staggered back to his chair.

'What a ghastly dream!' he gasped. 'Oh, you're here, my dear dears. Can I do anything for you?'

'You've hurt your hand,' said Anthea gently; 'let me bind it up.'

The hand was indeed bleeding rather badly.

The Psammead had crept back to its bag. All the children were very white.

'Never again,' said the Psammead later on, 'will I go into the Past with a grown up person! I will say for you four, you

do do as you're told.'

'We didn't even find the Amulet,' said Anthea later still.

'Of course you didn't; it wasn't there. Only the stone it was made of was there. It fell on to a ship miles away that managed to escape and got to Egypt. I could have told you that.'

'I wish you had,' said Anthea, and her voice was still rather shaky. 'Why didn't you?'

'You never asked me,' said the Psammead very sulkily. 'I'm not the sort of chap to go shoving my oar in where it's not wanted.'

'Mr Ji jimmy's friend will have something worth having to put in his article now,' said Cyril very much later indeed.

'Not he,' said Robert sleepily. 'The learned Ji jimmy will think it's a dream, and it's ten to one he never tells the other chap a word about it at all.'

Robert was quite right on both points. The learned gentleman did. And he never did.

CHAPTER 10

THE LITTLE BLACK GIRL AND JULIUS CAESAR

A great city swept away by the sea, a beautiful country devastated by an active volcano these are not the sort of things you see every day of the week. And when you do see them, no matter how many other wonders you may have seen in your time, such sights are rather apt to take your breath away. Atlantis had certainly this effect on the breaths of Cyril, Robert, Anthea, and Jane.

They remained in a breathless state for some days. The learned gentleman seemed as breathless as anyone; he spent a good deal of what little breath he had in telling Anthea about a wonderful dream he had. 'You would hardly believe,' he said, 'that anyone COULD have such a detailed vision.'

But Anthea could believe it, she said, quite easily.

He had ceased to talk about thought transference. He had now seen too many wonders to believe that.

In consequence of their breathless condition none of the

children suggested any new excursions through the Amulet. Robert voiced the mood of the others when he said that they were 'fed up' with Amulet for a bit. They undoubtedly were.

As for the Psammead, it went to sand and stayed there, worn out by the terror of the flood and the violent exercise it had had to take in obedience to the inconsiderate wishes of the learned gentleman and the Babylonian queen.

The children let it sleep. The danger of taking it about among strange people who might at any moment utter undesirable wishes was becoming more and more plain.

And there are pleasant things to be done in London without any aid from Amulets or Psammeads. You can, for instance visit the Tower of London, the Houses of Parliament, the National Gallery, the Zoological Gardens, the various Parks, the Museums at South Kensington, Madame Tussaud's Exhibition of Waxworks, or the Botanical Gardens at Kew. You can go to Kew by river steamer and this is the way that the children would have gone if they had gone at all. Only they never did, because it was when they were discussing the

arrangements for the journey, and what they should take with them to eat and how much of it, and what the whole thing would cost, that the adventure of the Little Black Girl began to happen.

The children were sitting on a seat in St James's Park. They had been watching the pelican repulsing with careful dignity the advances of the seagulls who are always so anxious to play games with it. The pelican thinks, very properly, that it hasn't the figure for games, so it spends most of its time pretending that that is not the reason why it won't play.

The breathlessness caused by Atlantis was wearing off a little. Cyril, who always wanted to understand all about everything, was turning things over in his mind.

'I'm not; I'm only thinking,' he answered when Robert asked him what he was so grumpy about. 'I'll tell you when I've thought it all out.'

'If it's about the Amulet I don't want to hear it,' said Jane.

'Nobody asked you to,' retorted Cyril mildly, 'and I haven't finished my inside thinking about it yet. Let's go to Kew in the meantime.'

'I'd rather go in a steamer,' said Robert; and the girls laughed.

'That's right,' said Cyril, 'BE funny. I would.'

'Well, he was, rather,' said Anthea.

'I wouldn't think, Squirrel, if it hurts you so,' said Robert kindly.

'Oh, shut up,' said Cyril, 'or else talk about Kew.'

'I want to see the palms there,' said Anthea hastily, 'to see if they're anything like the ones on the island where we united the Cook and the Burglar by the Reverend Half Curate.'

All disagreeableness was swept away in a pleasant tide of recollections, and 'Do you remember ...?' they said. 'Have you forgotten ...?'

'My hat!' remarked Cyril pensively, as the flood of reminiscence ebbed a little; 'we have had some times.'

'We have that,' said Robert.

'Don't let's have any more,' said Jane anxiously.

'That's what I was thinking about,' Cyril replied; and just then they heard the Little Black Girl sniff. She was quite close to them.

She was not really a little black girl. She was shabby and not very clean, and she had been crying so much that you could hardly see, through the narrow chink between her swollen lids, how very blue her eyes were. It was her dress that was black, and it was too big and too long for her, and she wore a speckled black ribboned sailor hat that would have fitted a much bigger head than her little flaxen one. And she stood looking at the children and sniffing.

'Oh, dear!' said Anthea, jumping up. 'Whatever is the matter?'

She put her hand on the little girl's arm. It was rudely shaken off.

'You leave me be,' said the little girl. 'I ain't doing nothing to you.'

'But what is it?' Anthea asked. 'Has someone been hurting you?'

'What's that to you?' said the little girl fiercely. 'YOU'RE all right.'

'Come away,' said Robert, pulling at Anthea's sleeve. 'She's a nasty, rude little kid.'

'Oh, no,' said Anthea. 'She's only dreadfully unhappy. What is it?' she asked again.

'Oh, YOU'RE all right,' the child repeated; 'YOU ain't agoin' to the Union.'

'Can't we take you home?' said Anthea; and Jane added, 'Where does your mother live?'

'She don't live nowheres she's dead so now!' said the little girl fiercely, in tones of miserable triumph. Then she opened her swollen eyes widely, stamped her foot in fury, and ran away. She ran no further than to the next bench, flung herself down there and began to cry without even trying not to.

Anthea, quite at once, went to the little girl and put her

arms as tight as she could round the hunched up black figure.

'Oh, don't cry so, dear, don't, don't!' she whispered under the brim of the large sailor hat, now very crooked indeed. 'Tell Anthea all about it; Anthea'll help you. There, there, dear, don't cry.'

The others stood at a distance. One or two passers by stared curiously.

The child was now only crying part of the time; the rest of the time she seemed to be talking to Anthea.

Presently Anthea beckoned Cyril.

'It's horrible!' she said in a furious whisper, 'her father was a carpenter and he was a steady man, and never touched a drop except on a Saturday, and he came up to London for work, and there wasn't any, and then he died; and her name is Imogen, and she's nine come next November. And now her mother's dead, and she's to stay tonight with Mrs Shrobsall that's a landlady that's been kind and tomorrow the Relieving Officer is coming for her, and she's going into the Union; that means the Workhouse. It's too terrible. What can we do?'

'Let's ask the learned gentleman,' said Jane brightly.

And as no one else could think of anything better the whole party walked back to Fitzroy Street as fast as it could, the little girl holding tight to Anthea's hand and now not crying any more, only sniffing gently.

The learned gentleman looked up from his writing with the smile that had grown much easier to him than it used to be. They were quite at home in his room now; it really seemed to welcome them. Even the mummy case appeared to smile as if in its distant superior ancient Egyptian way it were rather pleased to see them than not.

Anthea sat on the stairs with Imogen, who was nine come next November, while the others went in and explained the difficulty.

The learned gentleman listened with grave attention.

'It really does seem rather rough luck,' Cyril concluded, 'because I've often heard about rich people who wanted children most awfully though I know I never should but they do. There must be somebody who'd be glad

to have her.'

'Gipsies are awfully fond of children,' Robert hopefully said. 'They're always stealing them. Perhaps they'd have her.'

'She's quite a nice little girl really,' Jane added; 'she was only rude at first because we looked jolly and happy, and she wasn't. You understand that, don't you?'

'Yes,' said he, absently fingering a little blue image from Egypt. 'I understand that very well. As you say, there must be some home where she would be welcome.' He scowled thoughtfully at the little blue image.

Anthea outside thought the explanation was taking a very long time.

She was so busy trying to cheer and comfort the little black girl that she never noticed the Psammead who, roused from sleep by her voice, had shaken itself free of sand, and was coming crookedly up the stairs. It was close to her before she saw it. She picked it up and settled it in her lap.

'What is it?' asked the black child. 'Is it a cat or a organ monkey, or what?'

And then Anthea heard the learned gentleman say

'Yes, I wish we could find a home where they would be glad to have her,' and instantly she felt the Psammead begin to blow itself out as it sat on her lap.

She jumped up lifting the Psammead in her skirt, and holding Imogen by the hand, rushed into the learned gentleman's room.

'At least let's keep together,' she cried. 'All hold hands quick!'

The circle was like that formed for the Mulberry Bush or Ring o' Roses. And Anthea was only able to take part in it by holding in her teeth the hem of her frock which, thus supported, formed a bag to hold the Psammead.

'Is it a game?' asked the learned gentleman feebly. No one answered.

There was a moment of suspense; then came that curious upside down, inside out sensation which one almost always feels when transported from one place to another by magic. Also there was that dizzy dimness of sight which

comes on these occasions.

The mist cleared, the upside down, inside out sensation subsided, and there stood the six in a ring, as before, only their twelve feet, instead of standing on the carpet of the learned gentleman's room, stood on green grass. Above them, instead of the dusky ceiling of the Fitzroy Street floor, was a pale blue sky. And where the walls had been and the painted mummy case, were tall dark green trees, oaks and ashes, and in between the trees and under them tangled bushes and creeping ivy. There were beech trees too, but there was nothing under them but their own dead red drifted leaves, and here and there a delicate green fern frond.

And there they stood in a circle still holding hands, as though they were playing Ring o' Roses or the Mulberry Bush. just six people hand in hand in a wood. That sounds simple, but then you must remember that they did not know WHERE the wood was, and what's more, they didn't know WHEN the wood was. There was a curious sort of feeling that made the learned gentleman say

'Another dream, dear me!' and made the children almost certain that they were in a time a very long while ago. As for little Imogen, she said, 'Oh, my!' and kept her mouth very much open indeed.

'Where are we?' Cyril asked the Psammead.

'In Britain,' said the Psammead.

'But when?' asked Anthea anxiously.

'About the year fifty five before the year you reckon time from,' said the Psammead crossly. 'Is there anything else you want to know?' it added, sticking its head out of the bag formed by Anthea's blue linen frock, and turning its snail's eyes to right and left. 'I've been here before it's very little changed.' 'Yes, but why here?' asked Anthea.

'Your inconsiderate friend,' the Psammead replied, 'wished to find some home where they would be glad to have that unattractive and immature female human being whom you have picked up gracious knows how. In Megatherium days properly brought up children didn't talk to shabby strangers in parks. Your thoughtless friend wanted a place

where someone would be glad to have this undesirable stranger. And now here you are!'

'I see we are,' said Anthea patiently, looking round on the tall gloom of the forest. 'But why HERE? Why NOW?'

'You don't suppose anyone would want a child like that in YOUR times in YOUR towns?' said the Psammead in irritated tones. 'You've got your country into such a mess that there's no room for half your children and no one to want them.'

'That's not our doing, you know,' said Anthea gently.

'And bringing me here without any waterproof or anything,' said the Psammead still more crossly, 'when everyone knows how damp and foggy Ancient Britain was.'

'Here, take my coat,' said Robert, taking it off. Anthea spread the coat on the ground and, putting the Psammead on it, folded it round so that only the eyes and furry ears showed.

'There,' she said comfortingly. 'Now if it does begin to look like rain, I can cover you up in a minute. Now what are

we to do?'

The others who had stopped holding hands crowded round to hear the answer to this question. Imogen whispered in an awed tone

'Can't the organ monkey talk neither! I thought it was only parrots!'

'Do?' replied the Psammead. 'I don't care what you do!' And it drew head and ears into the tweed covering of Robert's coat.

The others looked at each other.

'It's only a dream,' said the learned gentleman hopefully; 'something is sure to happen if we can prevent ourselves from waking up.'

And sure enough, something did.

The brooding silence of the dark forest was broken by the laughter of children and the sound of voices.

'Let's go and see,' said Cyril.

'It's only a dream,' said the learned gentleman to Jane, who hung back; 'if you don't go with the tide of a dream if

you resist you wake up, you know.'

There was a sort of break in the undergrowth that was like a silly person's idea of a path. They went along this in Indian file, the learned gentleman leading.

Quite soon they came to a large clearing in the forest. There were a number of houses huts perhaps you would have called them with a sort of mud and wood fence.

'It's like the old Egyptian town,' whispered Anthea.

And it was, rather.

Some children, with no clothes on at all, were playing what looked like Ring o' Roses or Mulberry Bush. That is to say, they were dancing round in a ring, holding hands. On a grassy bank several women, dressed in blue and white robes and tunics of beast skins sat watching the playing children.

The children from Fitzroy Street stood on the fringe of the forest looking at the games. One woman with long, fair braided hair sat a little apart from the others, and there was a look in her eyes as she followed the play of the children that made Anthea feel sad and sorry.

'None of those little girls is her own little girl,' thought Anthea.

The little black clad London child pulled at Anthea's sleeve.

'Look,' she said, 'that one there she's precious like mother; mother's 'air was somethink lovely, when she 'ad time to comb it out. Mother wouldn't never a beat me if she'd lived 'ere I don't suppose there's e'er a public nearer than Epping, do you, Miss?'

In her eagerness the child had stepped out of the shelter of the forest. The sad eyed woman saw her. She stood up, her thin face lighted up with a radiance like sunrise, her long, lean arms stretched towards the London child.

'Imogen!' she cried at least the word was more like that than any other word 'Imogen!'

There was a moment of great silence; the naked children paused in their play, the women on the bank stared anxiously.

'Oh, it IS mother it IS!' cried Imogen from London, and

rushed across the cleared space. She and her mother clung together so closely, so strongly that they stood an instant like a statue carved in stone.

Then the women crowded round. 'It IS my Imogen!' cried the woman.

'Oh it is! And she wasn't eaten by wolves. She's come back to me. Tell me, my darling, how did you escape? Where have you been? Who has fed and clothed you?'

'I don't know nothink,' said Imogen.

'Poor child!' whispered the women who crowded round, 'the terror of the wolves has turned her brain.'

'But you know ME?' said the fair haired woman.

And Imogen, clinging with black clothed arms to the bare neck, answered

'Oh, yes, mother, I know YOU right 'nough.'

'What is it? What do they say?' the learned gentleman asked anxiously.

'You wished to come where someone wanted the child,' said the Psammead. 'The child says this is her mother.'

'And the mother?'

'You can see,' said the Psammead.

'But is she really? Her child, I mean?'

'Who knows?' said the Psammead; 'but each one fills the empty place in the other's heart. It is enough.'

'Oh,' said the learned gentleman, 'this is a good dream. I wish the child might stay in the dream.'

The Psammead blew itself out and granted the wish. So Imogen's future was assured. She had found someone to want her.

'If only all the children that no one wants,' began the learned gentleman but the woman interrupted. She came towards them.

'Welcome, all!' she cried. 'I am the Queen, and my child tells me that you have befriended her; and this I well believe, looking on your faces. Your garb is strange, but faces I can read. The child is bewitched, I see that well, but in this she speaks truth. Is it not so?'

The children said it wasn't worth mentioning.

I wish you could have seen all the honours and kindnesses lavished on the children and the learned gentleman by those ancient Britons.

You would have thought, to see them, that a child was something to make a fuss about, not a bit of rubbish to be hustled about the streets and hidden away in the Workhouse. It wasn't as grand as the entertainment at Babylon, but somehow it was more satisfying.

'I think you children have some wonderful influence on me,' said the learned gentleman. 'I never dreamed such dreams before I knew you.'

It was when they were alone that night under the stars where the Britons had spread a heap Of dried fern for them to sleep on, that Cyril spoke.

'Well,' he said, 'we've made it all right for Imogen, and had a jolly good time. I vote we get home again before the fighting begins.'

'What fighting?' asked Jane sleepily.

'Why, Julius Caesar, you little goat,' replied her kind

brother. 'Don't you see that if this is the year fifty five, Julius Caesar may happen at any moment.'

'I thought you liked Caesar,' said Robert.

'So I do in the history. But that's different from being killed by his soldiers.'

'If we saw Caesar we might persuade him not to,' said Anthea.

'YOU persuade CAESAR,' Robert laughed.

The learned gentleman, before anyone could stop him, said, 'I only wish we could see Caesar some time.'

And, of course, in just the little time the Psammead took to blow itself out for wish giving, the five, or six counting the Psammead, found themselves in Caesar's camp, just outside Caesar's tent. And they saw Caesar. The Psammead must have taken advantage of the loose wording of the learned gentleman's wish, for it was not the same time of day as that on which the wish had been uttered among the dried ferns. It was sunset, and the great man sat on a chair outside his tent gazing over the sea towards Britain everyone knew

without being told that it was towards Britain. Two golden eagles on the top of posts stood on each side of the tent, and on the flaps of the tent which was very gorgeous to look at were the letters S.P.Q.R.

The great man turned unchanged on the newcomers the august glance that he had turned on the violet waters of the Channel. Though they had suddenly appeared out of nothing, Caesar never showed by the faintest movement of an eyelid, by the least tightening of that firm mouth, that they were not some long expected embassy. He waved a calm hand towards the sentinels, who sprang weapons in hand towards the newcomers.

'Back!' he said in a voice that thrilled like music. 'Since when has Caesar feared children and students?'

To the children he seemed to speak in the only language they knew; but the learned gentleman heard in rather a strange accent, but quite intelligibly the lips of Caesar speaking in the Latin tongue, and in that tongue, a little stiffly, he answered

'It is a dream, O Caesar.'

'A dream?' repeated Caesar. 'What is a dream?'

'This,' said the learned gentleman.

'Not it,' said Cyril, 'it's a sort of magic. We come out of another time and another place.'

'And we want to ask you not to trouble about conquering Britain,' said Anthea; 'it's a poor little place, not worth bothering about.'

'Are you from Britain?' the General asked. 'Your clothes are uncouth, but well woven, and your hair is short as the hair of Roman citizens, not long like the hair of barbarians, yet such I deem you to be.' 'We're not,' said Jane with angry eagerness; 'we're not barbarians at all. We come from the country where the sun never sets, and we've read about you in books; and our country's full of fine things St Paul's, and the Tower of London, and Madame Tussaud's Exhibition, and ' Then the others stopped her.

'Don't talk nonsense,' said Robert in a bitter undertone.

Caesar looked at the children a moment in silence. Then

he called a soldier and spoke with him apart. Then he said aloud

'You three elder children may go where you will within the camp. Few children are privileged to see the camp of Caesar. The student and the smaller girl child will remain here with me.'

Nobody liked this; but when Caesar said a thing that thing was so, and there was an end to it. So the three went.

Left alone with Jane and the learned gentleman, the great Roman found it easy enough to turn them inside out. But it was not easy, even for him, to make head or tail of the insides of their minds when he had got at them.

The learned gentleman insisted that the whole thing was a dream, and refused to talk much, on the ground that if he did he would wake up.

Jane, closely questioned, was full of information about railways, electric lights, balloons, men of war, cannons, and dynamite.

'And do they fight with swords?' asked the General.

'Yes, swords and guns and cannons.'

Caesar wanted to know what guns were.

'You fire them,' said Jane, 'and they go bang, and people fall down dead.'

'But what are guns like?'

Jane found them hard to describe.

'But Robert has a toy one in his pocket,' she said. So the others were recalled.

The boys explained the pistol to Caesar very fully, and he looked at it with the greatest interest. It was a two shilling pistol, the one that had done such good service in the old Egyptian village.

'I shall cause guns to be made,' said Caesar, 'and you will be detained till I know whether you have spoken the truth. I had just decided that Britain was not worth the bother of invading. But what you tell me decides me that it is very much worth while.'

'But it's all nonsense,' said Anthea. 'Britain is just a savage sort of island all fogs and trees and big rivers. But

the people are kind. We know a little girl there named Imogen. And it's no use your making guns because you can't fire them without gunpowder, and that won't be invented for hundreds of years, and we don't know how to make it, and we can't tell you. Do go straight home, dear Caesar, and let poor little Britain alone.'

'But this other girl child says ' said Caesar.

'All Jane's been telling you is what it's going to be,' Anthea interrupted, 'hundreds and hundreds of years from now.'

'The little one is a prophetess, eh?' said Caesar, with a whimsical look. 'Rather young for the business, isn't she?'

'You can call her a prophetess if you like,' said Cyril, 'but what Anthea says is true.'

'Anthea?' said Caesar. 'That's a Greek name.'

'Very likely,' said Cyril, worriedly. 'I say, I do wish you'd give up this idea of conquering Britain. It's not worth while, really it isn't!'

'On the contrary,' said Caesar, 'what you've told me has

decided me to go, if it's only to find out what Britain is really like. Guards, detain these children.'

'Quick,' said Robert, 'before the guards begin detaining. We had enough of that in Babylon.'

Jane held up the Amulet away from the sunset, and said the word. The learned gentleman was pushed through and the others more quickly than ever before passed through the arch back into their own times and the quiet dusty sitting room of the learned gentleman.

It is a curious fact that when Caesar was encamped on the coast of Gaul somewhere near Boulogne it was, I believe he was sitting before his tent in the glow of the sunset, looking out over the violet waters of the English Channel. Suddenly he started, rubbed his eyes, and called his secretary. The young man came quickly from within the tent.

'Marcus,' said Caesar. 'I have dreamed a very wonderful dream. Some of it I forget, but I remember enough to decide what was not before determined. Tomorrow the ships that have been brought round from the Ligeris shall be

provisioned. We shall sail for this three cornered island. First, we will take but two legions.

This, if what we have heard be true, should suffice. But if my dream be true, then a hundred legions will not suffice. For the dream I dreamed was the most wonderful that ever tormented the brain even of Caesar. And Caesar has dreamed some strange things in his time.'

'And if you hadn't told Caesar all that about how things are now, he'd never have invaded Britain,' said Robert to Jane as they sat down to tea.

'Oh, nonsense,' said Anthea, pouring out; 'it was all settled hundreds of years ago.'

'I don't know,' said Cyril. 'Jam, please. This about time being only a thingummy of thought is very confusIng. If everything happens at the same time '

'It CAN'T!' said Anthea stoutly, 'the present's the present and the past's the past.'

'Not always,' said Cyril.

'When we were in the Past the present was the future.

Now then!' he added triumphantly.

And Anthea could not deny it.

'I should have liked to see more of the camp,' said Robert.

'Yes, we didn't get much for our money but Imogen is happy, that's one thing,' said Anthea. 'We left her happy in the Past. I've often seen about people being happy in the Past, in poetry books. I see what it means now.'

'It's not a bad idea,' said the Psammead sleepily, putting its head out of its bag and taking it in again suddenly, 'being left in the Past.'

Everyone remembered this afterwards, when...

CHAPTER 11

BEFORE PHARAOH

It was the day after the adventure of Julius Caesar and the Little Black Girl that Cyril, bursting into the bathroom to wash his hands for dinner (you have no idea how dirty they were, for he had been playing shipwrecked mariners all the morning on the leads at the back of the house, where the water cistern is), found Anthea leaning her elbows on the edge of the bath, and crying steadily into it.

'Hullo!' he said, with brotherly concern, 'what's up now? Dinner'll be cold before you've got enough salt water for a bath.'

'Go away,' said Anthea fiercely. 'I hate you! I hate everybody!'

There was a stricken pause.

'I didn't know,' said Cyril tamely.

'Nobody ever does know anything,' sobbed Anthea.

'I didn't know you were waxy. I thought you'd just hurt

your fingers with the tap again like you did last week,' Cyril carefully explained.

'Oh fingers!' sneered Anthea through her sniffs.

'Here, drop it, Panther,' he said uncomfortably. 'You haven't been having a row or anything?'

'No,' she said. 'Wash your horrid hands, for goodness' sake, if that's what you came for, or go.'

Anthea was so seldom cross that when she was cross the others were always more surprised than angry.

Cyril edged along the side of the bath and stood beside her. He put his hand on her arm.

'Dry up, do,' he said, rather tenderly for him. And, finding that though she did not at once take his advice she did not seem to resent it, he put his arm awkwardly across her shoulders and rubbed his head against her ear.

'There!' he said, in the tone of one administering a priceless cure for all possible sorrows. 'Now, what's up?'

'Promise you won't laugh?'

'I don't feel laughish myself,' said Cyril, dismally.

'Well, then,' said Anthea, leaning her ear against his head, 'it's Mother.'

'What's the matter with Mother?' asked Cyril, with apparent want of sympathy. 'She was all right in her letter this morning.'

'Yes; but I want her so.'

'You're not the only one,' said Cyril briefly, and the brevity of his tone admitted a good deal.

'Oh, yes,' said Anthea, 'I know. We all want her all the time. But I want her now most dreadfully, awfully much. I never wanted anything so much. That Imogen child the way the ancient British Queen cuddled her up! And Imogen wasn't me, and the Queen was Mother. And then her letter this morning! And about The Lamb liking the salt bathing! And she bathed him in this very bath the night before she went away oh, oh, oh!'

Cyril thumped her on the back.

'Cheer up,' he said. 'You know my inside thinking that I was doing? Well, that was partly about Mother. We'll soon

get her back. If you'll chuck it, like a sensible kid, and wash your face, I'll tell you about it. That's right. You let me get to the tap. Can't you stop crying? Shall I put the door key down your back?'

'That's for noses,' said Anthea, 'and I'm not a kid any more than you are,' but she laughed a little, and her mouth began to get back into its proper shape. You know what an odd shape your mouth gets into when you cry in earnest.

'Look here,' said Cyril, working the soap round and round between his hands in a thick slime of grey soapsuds. 'I've been thinking. We've only just PLAYED with the Amulet so far. We've got to work it now WORK it for all it's worth. And it isn't only Mother either. There's Father out there all among the fighting. I don't howl about it, but I THINK Oh, bother the soap!' The grey lined soap had squirted out under the pressure of his fingers, and had hit Anthea's chin with as much force as though it had been shot from a catapult.

'There now,' she said regretfully, 'now I shall have to

wash my face.'

'You'd have had to do that anyway,' said Cyril with conviction. 'Now, my idea's this. You know missionaries?'

'Yes,' said Anthea, who did not know a single one.

'Well, they always take the savages beads and brandy, and stays, and hats, and braces, and really useful things things the savages haven't got, and never heard about. And the savages love them for their kind generousness, and give them pearls, and shells, and ivory, and cassowaries. And that's the way '

'Wait a sec,' said Anthea, splashing. 'I can't hear what you're saying. Shells and '

'Shells, and things like that. The great thing is to get people to love you by being generous. And that's what we've got to do. Next time we go into the Past we'll regularly fit out the expedition. You remember how the Babylonian Queen froze on to that pocket book? Well, we'll take things like that. And offer them in exchange for a sight of the Amulet.'

'A sight of it is not much good.'

'No, silly. But, don't you see, when we've seen it we shall know where it is, and we can go and take it in the night when everybody is asleep.'

'It wouldn't be stealing, would it?' said Anthea thoughtfully, 'because it will be such an awfully long time ago when we do it. Oh, there's that bell again.'

As soon as dinner was eaten (it was tinned salmon and lettuce, and a jam tart), and the cloth cleared away, the idea was explained to the others, and the Psammead was aroused from sand, and asked what it thought would be good merchandise with which to buy the affection of say, the Ancient Egyptians, and whether it thought the Amulet was likely to be found in the Court of Pharaoh.

But it shook its head, and shot out its snail's eyes hopelessly.

'I'm not allowed to play in this game,' it said. 'Of course I COULD find out in a minute where the thing was, only I mayn't. But I may go so far as to own that your idea of taking things with you isn't a bad one. And I shouldn't show them all

at once. Take small things and conceal them craftily about your persons.'

This advice seemed good. Soon the table was littered over with things which the children thought likely to interest the Ancient Egyptians. Anthea brought dolls, puzzle blocks, a wooden tea service, a green leather case with *Necessaire* written on it in gold letters. Aunt Emma had once given it to Anthea, and it had then contained scissors, penknife, bodkin, stiletto, thimble, corkscrew, and glove buttoner. The scissors, knife, and thimble, and penknife were, of course, lost, but the other things were there and as good as new. Cyril contributed lead soldiers, a cannon, a catapult, a tin opener, a tie clip, and a tennis ball, and a padlock no key. Robert collected a candle ('I don't suppose they ever saw a self fitting paraffin one,' he said), a penny Japanese pin tray, a rubber stamp with his father's name and address on it, and a piece of putty.

Jane added a key ring, the brass handle of a poker, a pot that had held cold cream, a smoked pearl button off her winter coat, and a key no lock.

'We can't take all this rubbish,' said Robert, with some scorn. 'We must just each choose one thing.'

The afternoon passed very agreeably in the attempt to choose from the table the four most suitable objects. But the four children could not agree what was suitable, and at last Cyril said

'Look here, let's each be blindfolded and reach out, and the first thing you touch you stick to.'

This was done.

Cyril touched the padlock.

Anthea got the Necessaire.

Robert clutched the candle.

Jane picked up the tie clip.

'It's not much,' she said. 'I don't believe Ancient Egyptians wore ties.'

'Never mind,' said Anthea. 'I believe it's luckier not to really choose. In the stories it's always the thing the wood cutter's son picks up in the forest, and almost throws away because he thinks it's no good, that turns out to be the magic

thing in the end; or else someone's lost it, and he is rewarded with the hand of the King's daughter in marriage.'

'I don't want any hands in marriage, thank you.' said Cyril firmly.

'Nor yet me,' said Robert. 'It's always the end of the adventures when it comes to the marriage hands.'

'ARE we ready?' said Anthea.

'It IS Egypt we're going to, isn't it? nice Egypt?' said Jane. 'I won't go anywhere I don't know about like that dreadful big wavy burning mountain city,' she insisted.

Then the Psammead was coaxed into its bag. 'I say,' said Cyril suddenly, 'I'm rather sick of kings. And people notice you so in palaces. Besides the Amulet's sure to be in a Temple. Let's just go among the common people, and try to work ourselves up by degrees. We might get taken on as Temple assistants.'

'Like beadles,' said Anthea, 'or vergers. They must have splendid chances of stealing the Temple treasures.'

'Righto!' was the general rejoinder. The charm was held

up. It grew big once again, and once again the warm golden Eastern light glowed softly beyond it.

As the children stepped through it loud and furious voices rang in their ears. They went suddenly from the quiet of Fitzroy Street dining room into a very angry Eastern crowd, a crowd much too angry to notice them. They edged through it to the wall of a house and stood there. The crowd was of men, women, and children. They were of all sorts of complexions, and pictures of them might have been coloured by any child with a shilling paint box. The colours that child would have used for complexions would have been yellow ochre, red ochre, light red, sepia, and indian ink. But their faces were painted already black eyebrows and lashes, and some red lips. The women wore a sort of pinafore with shoulder straps, and loose things wound round their heads and shoulders. The men wore very little clothing for they were the working people and the Egyptian boys and girls wore nothing at all, unless you count the little ornaments hung on chains round their necks and waists. The children

saw all this before they could hear anything distinctly.

Everyone was shouting so.

But a voice sounded above the other voices, and presently it was speaking in a silence.

'Comrades and fellow workers,' it said, and it was the voice of a tall, coppery coloured man who had climbed into a chariot that had been stopped by the crowd. Its owner had bolted, muttering something about calling the Guards, and now the man spoke from it. 'Comrades and fellow workers, how long are we to endure the tyranny of our masters, who live in idleness and luxury on the fruit of our toil? They only give us a bare subsistence wage, and they live on the fat of the land. We labour all our lives to keep them in wanton luxury. Let us make an end of it!'

A roar of applause answered him.

'How are you going to do it?' cried a voice.

'You look out,' cried another, 'or you'll get yourself into trouble.'

'I've heard almost every single word of that,' whispered

Robert, 'in Hyde Park last Sunday!'

'Let us strike for more bread and onions and beer, and a longer mid day rest,' the speaker went on. 'You are tired, you are hungry, you are thirsty. You are poor, your wives and children are pining for food. The barns of the rich are full to bursting with the corn we want, the corn our labour has grown. To the granaries!'

'To the granaries!' cried half the crowd; but another voice shouted clear above the tumult, 'To Pharaoh! To the King! Let's present a petition to the King! He will listen to the voice of the oppressed!'

For a moment the crowd swayed one way and another first towards the granaries and then towards the palace. Then, with a rush like that of an imprisoned torrent suddenly set free, it surged along the street towards the palace, and the children were carried with it. Anthea found it difficult to keep the Psammead from being squeezed very uncomfortably.

The crowd swept through the streets of dull looking houses with few windows, very high up, across the market

where people were not buying but exchanging goods. In a momentary pause Robert saw a basket of onions exchanged for a hair comb and five fish for a string of beads. The people in the market seemed better off than those in the crowd; they had finer clothes, and more of them. They were the kind of people who, nowadays, would have lived at Brixton or Brockley.

'What's the trouble now?' a languid, large eyed lady in a crimped, half transparent linen dress, with her black hair very much braided and puffed out, asked of a date seller.

'Oh, the working men discontented as usual,' the man answered. 'Listen to them. Anyone would think it mattered whether they had a little more or less to eat. Dregs of society!' said the date seller.

'Scum!' said the lady.

'And I've heard THAT before, too,' said Robert.

At that moment the voice of the crowd changed, from anger to doubt, from doubt to fear. There were other voices shouting; they shouted defiance and menace, and they came

nearer very quickly. There was the rattle of wheels and the pounding of hoofs. A voice shouted, 'Guards!'

'The Guards! The Guards!' shouted another voice, and the crowd of workmen took up the cry. 'The Guards! Pharaoh's Guards!' And swaying a little once more, the crowd hung for a moment as it were balanced. Then as the trampling hoofs came nearer the workmen fled dispersed, up alleys and into the courts of houses, and the Guards in their embossed leather chariots swept down the street at the gallop, their wheels clattering over the stones, and their dark coloured, blue tunics blown open and back with the wind of their going.

'So THAT riot's over,' said the crimped linen dressed lady; 'that's a blessing! And did you notice the Captain of the Guard? What a very handsome man he was, to be sure!'

The four children had taken advantage of the moment's pause before the crowd turned to fly, to edge themselves and drag each other into an arched doorway.

Now they each drew a long breath and looked at the

others.

'We're well out of THAT,' said Cyril.

'Yes,' said Anthea, 'but I do wish the poor men hadn't been driven back before they could get to the King. He might have done something for them.'

'Not if he was the one in the Bible he wouldn't,' said Jane. 'He had a hard heart.' 'Ah, that was the Moses one,' Anthea explained. 'The Joseph one was quite different. I should like to see Pharaoh's house. I wonder whether it's like the Egyptian Court in the Crystal Palace.'

'I thought we decided to try to get taken on in a Temple,' said Cyril in injured tones.

'Yes, but we've got to know someone first. Couldn't we make friends with a Temple doorkeeper we might give him the padlock or something. I wonder which are temples and which are palaces,' Robert added, glancing across the market place to where an enormous gateway with huge side buildings towered towards the sky. To right and left of it were other buildings only a little less magnificent.

'Did you wish to seek out the Temple of Amen Ra?' asked a soft voice behind them, 'or the Temple of Mut, or the Temple of Khonsu?'

They turned to find beside them a young man. He was shaved clean from head to foot, and on his feet were light papyrus sandals. He was clothed in a linen tunic of white, embroidered heavily in colours. He was gay with anklets, bracelets, and armlets of gold, richly inlaid. He wore a ring on his finger, and he had a short jacket of gold embroidery something like the Zouave soldiers wear, and on his neck was a gold collar with many amulets hanging from it. But among the amulets the children could see none like theirs.

'It doesn't matter which Temple,' said Cyril frankly.

'Tell me your mission,' said the young man. 'I am a divine father of the Temple of Amen Ra and perhaps I can help you.'

'Well,' said Cyril, 'we've come from the great Empire on which the sun never sets.'

'I thought somehow that you'd come from some odd, out

of the way spot,' said the priest with courtesy.

'And we've seen a good many palaces. We thought we should like to see a Temple, for a change,' said Robert.

The Psammead stirred uneasily in its embroidered bag.

'Have you brought gifts to the Temple?' asked the priest cautiously.

'We HAVE got some gifts,' said Cyril with equal caution. 'You see there's magic mixed up in it. So we can't tell you everything. But we don't want to give our gifts for nothing.'

'Beware how you insult the god,' said the priest sternly. 'I also can do magic. I can make a waxen image of you, and I can say words which, as the wax image melts before the fire, will make you dwindle away and at last perish miserably.'

'Pooh!' said Cyril stoutly, 'that's nothing. I can make FIRE itself!'

'I should jolly well like to see you do it,' said the priest unbelievably.

'Well, you shall,' said Cyril, 'nothing easier. Just stand

close round me.'

'Do you need no preparation no fasting, no incantations?' The priest's tone was incredulous.

'The incantation's quite short,' said Cyril, taking the hint; 'and as for fasting, it's not needed in MY sort of magic. Union Jack, Printing Press, Gunpowder, Rule Britannia! Come, Fire, at the end of this little stick!'

He had pulled a match from his pocket, and as he ended the incantation which contained no words that it seemed likely the Egyptian had ever heard he stooped in the little crowd of his relations and the priest and struck the match on his boot. He stood up, shielding the flame with one hand.

'See?' he said, with modest pride. 'Here, take it into your hand.'

'No, thank you,' said the priest, swiftly backing. 'Can you do that again?'

'Yes.'

'Then come with me to the great double house of Pharaoh. He loves good magic, and he will raise you to

honour and glory. There's no need of secrets between initiates,' he went on confidentially. 'The fact is, I am out of favour at present owing to a little matter of failure of prophecy. I told him a beautiful princess would be sent to him from Syria, and, lo! a woman thirty years old arrived. But she WAS a beautiful woman not so long ago. Time is only a mode of thought, you know.'

The children thrilled to the familiar words.

'So you know that too, do you?' said Cyril.

'It is part of the mystery of all magic, is it not?' said the priest. 'Now if I bring you to Pharaoh the little unpleasantness I spoke of will be forgotten. And I will ask Pharaoh, the Great House, Son of the Sun, and Lord of the South and North, to decree that you shall lodge in the Temple. Then you can have a good look round, and teach me your magic. And I will teach you mine.'

This idea seemed good at least it was better than any other which at that moment occurred to anybody, so they followed the priest through the city.

The streets were very narrow and dirty. The best houses, the priest explained, were built within walls twenty to twenty five feet high, and such windows as showed in the walls were very high up. The tops of palm trees showed above the walls. The poor people's houses were little square huts with a door and two windows, and smoke coming out of a hole in the back.

'The poor Egyptians haven't improved so very much in their building since the first time we came to Egypt,' whispered Cyril to Anthea.

The huts were roofed with palm branches, and everywhere there were chickens, and goats, and little naked children kicking about in the yellow dust. On one roof was a goat, who had climbed up and was eating the dry palm leaves with snorts and head tossings of delight. Over every house door was some sort of figure or shape.

'Amulets,' the priest explained, 'to keep off the evil eye.'

'I don't think much of your "nice Egypt",' Robert whispered to Jane; 'it's simply not a patch on Babylon.'

'Ah, you wait till you see the palace,' Jane whispered back.

The palace was indeed much more magnificent than anything they had yet seen that day, though it would have made but a poor show beside that of the Babylonian King. They came to it through a great square pillared doorway of sandstone that stood in a high brick wall. The shut doors were of massive cedar, with bronze hinges, and were studded with bronze nails. At the side was a little door and a wicket gate, and through this the priest led the children. He seemed to know a word that made the sentries make way for him.

Inside was a garden, planted with hundreds of different kinds of trees and flowering shrubs, a lake full of fish, with blue lotus flowers at the margin, and ducks swimming about cheerfully, and looking, as Jane said, quite modern.

'The guard chamber, the store houses, the queen's house,' said the priest, pointing them out.

They passed through open courtyards, paved with flat stones, and the priest whispered to a guard at a great inner

gate.

'We are fortunate,' he said to the children, 'Pharaoh is even now in the Court of Honour. Now, don't forget to be overcome with respect and admiration. It won't do any harm if you fall flat on your faces. And whatever you do, don't speak until you're spoken to.'

'There used to be that rule in our country,' said Robert, 'when my father was a little boy.'

At the outer end of the great hall a crowd of people were arguing with and even shoving the Guards, who seemed to make it a rule not to let anyone through unless they were bribed to do it. The children heard several promises of the utmost richness, and wondered whether they would ever be kept.

All round the hall were pillars of painted wood. The roof was of cedar, gorgeously inlaid. About half way up the hall was a wide, shallow step that went right across the hall; then a little farther on another; and then a steep flight of narrower steps, leading right up to the throne on which Pharaoh sat. He

sat there very splendid, his red and white double crown on his head, and his sceptre in his hand. The throne had a canopy of wood and wooden pillars painted in bright colours. On a low, broad bench that ran all round the hall sat the friends, relatives, and courtiers of the King, leaning on richly covered cushions.

The priest led the children up the steps till they all stood before the throne; and then, suddenly, he fell on his face with hands outstretched. The others did the same, Anthea falling very carefully because of the Psammead.

'Raise them,' said the voice of Pharaoh, 'that they may speak to me.'

The officers of the King's household raised them.

'Who are these strangers?' Pharaoh asked, and added very crossly, 'And what do you mean, Rekh mara, by daring to come into my presence while your innocence is not established?'

'Oh, great King,' said the young priest, 'you are the very image of Ra, and the likeness of his son Horus in every

respect. You know the thoughts of the hearts of the gods and of men, and you have divined that these strangers are the children of the children of the vile and conquered Kings of the Empire where the sun never sets. They know a magic not known to the Egyptians. And they come with gifts in their hands as tribute to Pharaoh, in whose heart is the wisdom of the gods, and on his lips their truth.'

'That is all very well,' said Pharaoh, 'but where are the gifts?'

The children, bowing as well as they could in their embarrassment at finding themselves the centre of interest in a circle more grand, more golden and more highly coloured than they could have imagined possible, pulled out the padlock, the Necessaire, and the tie clip. 'But it's not tribute all the same,' Cyril muttered. 'England doesn't pay tribute!'

Pharaoh examined all the things with great interest when the chief of the household had taken them up to him. 'Deliver them to the Keeper of the Treasury,' he said to one near him. And to the children he said

'A small tribute, truly, but strange, and not without worth.
And the magic, O Rekh mara?'

'These unworthy sons of a conquered nation ...' began
Rekh mara.

'Nothing of the kind!' Cyril whispered angrily.

'... of a vile and conquered nation, can make fire to
spring from dry wood in the sight of all.'

'I should jolly well like to see them do it,' said Pharaoh,
just as the priest had done.

So Cyril, without more ado, did it.

'Do more magic,' said the King, with simple
appreciation.

'He cannot do any more magic,' said Anthea suddenly,
and all eyes were turned on her, 'because of the voice of the
free people who are shouting for bread and onions and beer
and a long mid day rest. If the people had what they wanted,
he could do more.'

'A rude spoken girl,' said Pharaoh. 'But give the dogs
what they want,' he said, without turning his head. 'Let them

have their rest and their extra rations. There are plenty of slaves to work.'

A richly dressed official hurried out.

'You will be the idol of the people,' Rekh mara whispered joyously; 'the Temple of Amen will not contain their offerings.'

Cyril struck another match, and all the court was overwhelmed with delight and wonder. And when Cyril took the candle from his pocket and lighted it with the match, and then held the burning candle up before the King the enthusiasm knew no bounds.

'Oh, greatest of all, before whom sun and moon and stars bow down,' said Rekh mara insinuatingly, 'am I pardoned? Is my innocence made plain?'

'As plain as it ever will be, I daresay,' said Pharaoh shortly. 'Get along with you. You are pardoned. Go in peace.' The priest went with lightning swiftness.

'And what,' said the King suddenly, 'is it that moves in that sack?'

Show me, oh strangers.'

There was nothing for it but to show the Psammead.

'Seize it,' said Pharaoh carelessly. 'A very curious monkey. It will be a nice little novelty for my wild beast collection.'

And instantly, the entreaties of the children availing as little as the bites of the Psammead, though both bites and entreaties were fervent, it was carried away from before their eyes.

'Oh, DO be careful!' cried Anthea. 'At least keep it dry! Keep it in its sacred house!'

She held up the embroidered bag.

'It's a magic creature,' cried Robert; 'it's simply priceless!'

'You've no right to take it away,' cried Jane incautiously. 'It's a shame, a barefaced robbery, that's what it is!'

There was an awful silence. Then Pharaoh spoke.

'Take the sacred house of the beast from them,' he said, 'and imprison all. Tonight after supper it may be our pleasure

to see more magic. Guard them well, and do not torture them yet!'

'Oh, dear!' sobbed Jane, as they were led away. 'I knew exactly what it would be! Oh, I wish you hadn't!'

'Shut up, silly,' said Cyril. 'You know you **WOULD** come to Egypt. It was your own idea entirely. Shut up. It'll be all right.'

'I thought we should play ball with queens,' sobbed Jane, 'and have no end of larks! And now everything's going to be perfectly horrid!'

The room they were shut up in **WAS** a room, and not a dungeon, as the elder ones had feared. That, as Anthea said, was one comfort. There were paintings on the wall that at any other time would have been most interesting. And a sort of low couch, and chairs. When they were alone Jane breathed a sigh of relief. 'Now we can get home all right,' she said.

'And leave the Psammead?' said Anthea reproachfully.

'Wait a sec. I've got an idea,' said Cyril. He pondered for a few moments. Then he began hammering on the heavy

cedar door. It opened, and a guard put in his head.

'Stop that row,' he said sternly, 'or '

'Look here,' Cyril interrupted, 'it's very dull for you isn't it? just doing nothing but guard us. Wouldn't you like to see some magic? We're not too proud to do it for you. Wouldn't you like to see it?'

'I don't mind if I do,' said the guard.

'Well then, you get us that monkey of ours that was taken away, and we'll show you.'

'How do I know you're not making game of me?' asked the soldier. 'Shouldn't wonder if you only wanted to get the creature so as to set it on me. I daresay its teeth and claws are poisonous.' 'Well, look here,' said Robert. 'You see we've got nothing with us? You just shut the door, and open it again in five minutes, and we'll have got a magic oh, I don't know a magic flower in a pot for you.'

'If you can do that you can do anything,' said the soldier, and he went out and barred the door.

Then, of course, they held up the Amulet. They found

the East by holding it up, and turning slowly till the Amulet began to grow big, walked home through it, and came back with a geranium in full scarlet flower from the staircase window of the Fitzroy Street house.

'Well!' said the soldier when he came in. 'I really am !'

'We can do much more wonderful things than that oh, ever so much,' said Anthea persuasively, 'if we only have our monkey. And here's twopence for yourself.'

The soldier looked at the twopence.

'What's this?' he said.

Robert explained how much simpler it was to pay money for things than to exchange them as the people were doing in the market. Later on the soldier gave the coins to his captain, who, later still, showed them to Pharaoh, who of course kept them and was much struck with the idea. That was really how coins first came to be used in Egypt. You will not believe this, I daresay, but really, if you believe the rest of the story, I don't see why you shouldn't believe this as well.

'I say,' said Anthea, struck by a sudden thought, 'I

suppose it'll be all right about those workmen? The King won't go back on what he said about them just because he's angry with us?'

'Oh, no,' said the soldier, 'you see, he's rather afraid of magic. He'll keep to his word right enough.'

'Then THAT'S all right,' said Robert; and Anthea said softly and coaxingly

'Ah, DO get us the monkey, and then you'll see some lovely magic. Do there's a nice, kind soldier.'

'I don't know where they've put your precious monkey, but if I can get another chap to take on my duty here I'll see what I can do,' he said grudgingly, and went out.

'Do you mean,' said Robert, 'that we're going off without even TRYING for the other half of the Amulet?'

'I really think we'd better,' said Anthea tremulously. 'Of course the other half of the Amulet's here somewhere or our half wouldn't have brought us here. I do wish we could find it. It is a pity we don't know any REAL magic. Then we could find out. I do wonder where it is exactly.'

If they had only known it, something very like the other half of the Amulet was very near them. It hung round the neck of someone, and that someone was watching them through a chink, high up in the wall, specially devised for watching people who were imprisoned. But they did not know.

There was nearly an hour of anxious waiting. They tried to take an interest in the picture on the wall, a picture of harpers playing very odd harps and women dancing at a feast. They examined the painted plaster floor, and the chairs were of white painted wood with coloured stripes at intervals.

But the time went slowly, and everyone had time to think of how Pharaoh had said, 'Don't torture them YET.'

'If the worst comes to the worst,' said Cyril, 'we must just bunk, and leave the Psammead. I believe it can take care of itself well enough. They won't kill it or hurt it when they find it can speak and give wishes. They'll build it a temple, I shouldn't wonder.'

'I couldn't bear to go without it,' said Anthea, 'and

Pharaoh said "After supper", that won't be just yet. And the soldier WAS curious. I'm sure we're all right for the present.'

All the same, the sounds of the door being unbarred seemed one of the prettiest sounds possible.

'Suppose he hasn't got the Psammead?' whispered Jane.

But that doubt was set at rest by the Psammead itself; for almost before the door was open it sprang through the chink of it into Anthea's arms, shivering and hunching up its fur.

'Here's its fancy overcoat,' said the soldier, holding out the bag, into which the Psammead immediately crept.

'Now,' said Cyril, 'what would you like us to do? Anything you'd like us to get for you?'

'Any little trick you like,' said the soldier. 'If you can get a strange flower blooming in an earthenware vase you can get anything, I suppose,' he said. 'I just wish I'd got two men's loads of jewels from the King's treasury. That's what I've always wished for.'

At the word 'WISH' the children knew that the

Psammead would attend to THAT bit of magic. It did, and the floor was littered with a spreading heap of gold and precious stones.

'Any other little trick?' asked Cyril loftily. 'Shall we become invisible? Vanish?'

'Yes, if you like,' said the soldier; 'but not through the door, you don't.'

He closed it carefully and set his broad Egyptian back against it.

'No! no!' cried a voice high up among the tops of the tall wooden pillars that stood against the wall. There was a sound of someone moving above.

The soldier was as much surprised as anybody.

'That's magic, if you like,' he said.

And then Jane held up the Amulet, uttering the word of Power. At the sound of it and at the sight of the Amulet growing into the great arch the soldier fell flat on his face among the jewels with a cry of awe and terror.

The children went through the arch with a quickness

born of long practice. But Jane stayed in the middle of the arch and looked back.

The others, standing on the dining room carpet in Fitzroy Street, turned and saw her still in the arch. 'Someone's holding her,' cried Cyril. 'We must go back.'

But they pulled at Jane's hands just to see if she would come, and, of course, she did come.

Then, as usual, the arch was little again and there they all were.

'Oh, I do wish you hadn't!' Jane said crossly. "It WAS so interesting. The priest had come in and he was kicking the soldier, and telling him he'd done it now, and they must take the jewels and flee for their lives.'

'And did they?'

'I don't know. You interfered,' said Jane ungratefully. 'I SHOULD have liked to see the last of it.'

As a matter of fact, none of them had seen the last of it if by 'it' Jane meant the adventure of the Priest and the Soldier.

CHAPTER 12

THE SORRY PRESENT AND THE EXPELLED LITTLE BOY

'Look here, said Cyril, sitting on the dining table and swinging his legs; 'I really have got it.'

'Got what?' was the not unnatural rejoinder of the others.

Cyril was making a boat with a penknife and a piece of wood, and the girls were making warm frocks for their dolls, for the weather was growing chilly.

'Why, don't you see? It's really not any good our going into the Past looking for that Amulet. The Past's as full of different times as as the sea is of sand. We're simply bound to hit upon the wrong time. We might spend our lives looking for the Amulet and never see a sight of it. Why, it's the end of September already. It's like looking for a needle in '

'A bottle of hay I know,' interrupted Robert; 'but if we don't go on doing that, what ARE we to do?'

'That's just it,' said Cyril in mysterious accents.

'Oh, BOTHER!'

Old Nurse had come in with the tray of knives, forks, and glasses, and was getting the tablecloth and table napkins out of the chiffonier drawer.

'It's always meal times just when you come to anything interesting.'

'And a nice interesting handful YOU'D be, Master Cyril,' said old Nurse, 'if I wasn't to bring your meals up to time. Don't you begin grumbling now, fear you get something to grumble AT.'

'I wasn't grumbling,' said Cyril quite untruly; 'but it does always happen like that.'

'You deserve to HAVE something happen,' said old Nurse. 'Slave, slave, slave for you day and night, and never a word of thanks. ...'

'Why, you do everything beautifully,' said Anthea.

'It's the first time any of you's troubled to say so, anyhow,' said Nurse shortly.

'What's the use of SAYING?' inquired Robert. 'We EAT

our meals fast enough, and almost always two helps. THAT ought to show you!'

'Ah!' said old Nurse, going round the table and putting the knives and forks in their places; 'you're a man all over, Master Robert. There was my poor Green, all the years he lived with me I never could get more out of him than "It's all right!" when I asked him if he'd fancied his dinner. And yet, when he lay a dying, his last words to me was, "Maria, you was always a good cook!"' She ended with a trembling voice.

'And so you are,' cried Anthea, and she and Jane instantly hugged her. When she had gone out of the room Anthea said

'I know exactly how she feels. Now, look here! Let's do a penance to show we're sorry we didn't think about telling her before what nice cooking she does, and what a dear she is.'

'Pences are silly,' said Robert.

'Not if the penance is something to please someone else.

I didn't mean old peas and hair shirts and sleeping on the stones. I mean we'll make her a sorry present,' explained Anthea. 'Look here! I vote Cyril doesn't tell us his idea until we've done something for old Nurse. It's worse for us than him,' she added hastily, 'because he knows what it is and we don't. Do you all agree?'

The others would have been ashamed not to agree, so they did. It was not till quite near the end of dinner mutton fritters and blackberry and apple pie that out of the earnest talk of the four came an idea that pleased everybody and would, they hoped, please Nurse.

Cyril and Robert went out with the taste of apple still in their mouths and the purple of blackberries on their lips and, in the case of Robert, on the wristband as well and bought a big sheet of cardboard at the stationers. Then at the plumber's shop, that has tubes and pipes and taps and gas fittings in the window, they bought a pane of glass the same size as the cardboard. The man cut it with a very interesting tool that had a bit of diamond at the end, and he gave them, out of his

own free generousness, a large piece of putty and a small piece of glue.

While they were out the girls had floated four photographs of the four children off their cards in hot water. These were now stuck in a row along the top of the cardboard. Cyril put the glue to melt in a jampot, and put the jampot in a saucepan and saucepan on the fire, while Robert painted a wreath of poppies round the photographs. He painted rather well and very quickly, and poppies are easy to do if you've once been shown how. Then Anthea drew some printed letters and Jane coloured them. The words were:

'With all our loves to shew We like the thigs to eat.'

And when the painting was dry they all signed their names at the bottom and put the glass on, and glued brown paper round the edge and over the back, and put two loops of tape to hang it up by.

Of course everyone saw when too late that there were not enough letters in 'things', so the missing 'n' was put in. It was impossible, of course, to do the whole thing over again

for just one letter.

'There!' said Anthea, placing it carefully, face up, under the sofa. 'It'll be hours before the glue's dry. Now, Squirrel, fire ahead!'

'Well, then,' said Cyril in a great hurry, rubbing at his gluey hands with his pocket handkerchief. 'What I mean to say is this.'

There was a long pause.

'Well,' said Robert at last, 'WHAT is it that you mean to say?'

'It's like this,' said Cyril, and again stopped short.

'Like WHAT?' asked Jane.

'How can I tell you if you will all keep on interrupting?' said Cyril sharply.

So no one said any more, and with wrinkled frowns he arranged his ideas.

'Look here,' he said, 'what I really mean is we can remember now what we did when we went to look for the Amulet. And if we'd found it we should remember that too.'

'Rather!' said Robert. 'Only, you see we haven't.'

'But in the future we shall have.'

'Shall we, though?' said Jane.

'Yes unless we've been made fools of by the Psammead.

So then, where we want to go to is where we shall remember about where we did find it.'

'I see,' said Robert, but he didn't.

'I don't,' said Anthea, who did, very nearly. 'Say it again, Squirrel, and very slowly.'

'If,' said Cyril, very slowly indeed, 'we go into the future after we've found the Amulet '

'But we've got to find it first,' said Jane.

'Hush!' said Anthea.

'There will be a future,' said Cyril, driven to greater clearness by the blank faces of the other three, 'there will be a time AFTER we've found it. Let's go into THAT time and then we shall remember HOW we found it. And then we can go back and do the finding really.'

'I see,' said Robert, and this time he did, and I hope

YOU do.

'Yes,' said Anthea. 'Oh, Squirrel, how clever of you!'

'But will the Amulet work both ways?' inquired Robert.

'It ought to,' said Cyril, 'if time's only a thingummy of whatsitsname. Anyway we might try.'

'Let's put on our best things, then,' urged Jane. 'You know what people say about progress and the world growing better and brighter. I expect people will be awfully smart in the future.'

'All right,' said Anthea, 'we should have to wash anyway, I'm all thick with glue.'

When everyone was clean and dressed, the charm was held up.

'We want to go into the future and see the Amulet after we've found it,' said Cyril, and Jane said the word of Power. They walked through the big arch of the charm straight into the British Museum.

They knew it at once, and there, right in front of them, under a glass case, was the Amulet their own half of it, as

well as the other half they had never been able to find and the two were joined by a pin of red stone that formed a hinge.

'Oh, glorious!' cried Robert. 'Here it is!'

'Yes,' said Cyril, very gloomily, 'here it is. But we can't get it out.'

'No,' said Robert, remembering how impossible the Queen of Babylon had found it to get anything out of the glass cases in the Museum except by Psammead magic, and then she hadn't been able to take anything away with her; 'no but we remember where we got it, and we can '

'Oh, DO we?' interrupted Cyril bitterly, 'do YOU remember where we got it?'

'No,' said Robert, 'I don't exactly, now I come to think of it.'

Nor did any of the others!

'But WHY can't we?' said Jane.

'Oh, I don't know,' Cyril's tone was impatient, 'some silly old enchanted rule I suppose. I wish people would teach you magic at school like they do sums or instead of. It would

be some use having an Amulet then.'

'I wonder how far we are in the future,' said Anthea; the Museum looks just the same, only lighter and brighter, somehow.'

'Let's go back and try the Past again,' said Robert.

'Perhaps the Museum people could tell us how we got it,' said Anthea with sudden hope. There was no one in the room, but in the next gallery, where the Assyrian things are and still were, they found a kind, stout man in a loose, blue gown, and stockinged legs.

'Oh, they've got a new uniform, how pretty!' said Jane.

When they asked him their question he showed them a label on the case. It said, 'From the collection of .' A name followed, and it was the name of the learned gentleman who, among themselves, and to his face when he had been with them at the other side of the Amulet, they had called Jimmy.

'THAT'S not much good,' said Cyril, 'thank you.'

'How is it you're not at school?' asked the kind man in blue. 'Not expelled for long I hope?'

'We're not expelled at all,' said Cyril rather warmly.

'Well, I shouldn't do it again, if I were you,' said the man, and they could see he did not believe them. There is no company so little pleasing as that of people who do not believe you.

'Thank you for showing us the label,' said Cyril. And they came away.

As they came through the doors of the Museum they blinked at the sudden glory of sunlight and blue sky. The houses opposite the Museum were gone. Instead there was a big garden, with trees and flowers and smooth green lawns, and not a single notice to tell you not to walk on the grass and not to destroy the trees and shrubs and not to pick the flowers. There were comfortable seats all about, and arbours covered with roses, and long, trellised walks, also rose covered. Whispering, splashing fountains fell into full white marble basins, white statues gleamed among the leaves, and the pigeons that swept about among the branches or pecked on the smooth, soft gravel were not black and tumbled

like the Museum pigeons are now, but bright and clean and sleek as birds of new silver. A good many people were sitting on the seats, and on the grass babies were rolling and kicking and playing with very little on indeed. Men, as well as women, seemed to be in charge of the babies and were playing with them.

'It's like a lovely picture,' said Anthea, and it was. For the people's clothes were of bright, soft colours and all beautifully and very simply made. No one seemed to have any hats or bonnets, but there were a great many Japanese looking sunshades. And among the trees were hung lamps of coloured glass.

'I expect they light those in the evening,' said Jane. 'I do wish we lived in the future!'

They walked down the path, and as they went the people on the benches looked at the four children very curiously, but not rudely or unkindly. The children, in their turn, looked I hope they did not stare at the faces of these people in the beautiful soft clothes. Those faces were worth looking at. Not

that they were all handsome, though even in the matter of handsomeness they had the advantage of any set of people the children had ever seen. But it was the expression of their faces that made them worth looking at. The children could not tell at first what it was.

'I know,' said Anthea suddenly. 'They're not worried; that's what it is.'

And it was. Everybody looked calm, no one seemed to be in a hurry, no one seemed to be anxious, or fretted, and though some did seem to be sad, not a single one looked worried.

But though the people looked kind everyone looked so interested in the children that they began to feel a little shy and turned out of the big main path into a narrow little one that wound among trees and shrubs and mossy, dripping springs.

It was here, in a deep, shadowed cleft between tall cypresses, that they found the expelled little boy. He was lying face downward on the mossy turf, and the peculiar

shaking of his shoulders was a thing they had seen, more than once, in each other. So Anthea kneeled down by him and said

'What's the matter?'

'I'm expelled from school,' said the boy between his sobs.

This was serious. People are not expelled for light offences.

'Do you mind telling us what you'd done?'

'I I tore up a sheet of paper and threw it about in the playground,' said the child, in the tone of one confessing an unutterable baseness. 'You won't talk to me any more now you know that,' he added without looking up.

'Was that all?' asked Anthea.

'It's about enough,' said the child; 'and I'm expelled for the whole day!'

'I don't quite understand,' said Anthea, gently. The boy lifted his face, rolled over, and sat up .

'Why, whoever on earth are you?' he said.

'We're strangers from a far country,' said Anthea. 'In

our country it's not a crime to leave a bit of paper about.'

'It is here,' said the child. 'If grown ups do it they're fined. When we do it we're expelled for the whole day.'

'Well, but,' said Robert, 'that just means a day' s holiday.'

'You MUST come from a long way off,' said the little boy. 'A holiday's when you all have play and treats and jolliness, all of you together. On your expelled days no one'll speak to you. Everyone sees you're an Expelleder or you'd be in school.'

'Suppose you were ill?'

'Nobody is hardly. If they are, of course they wear the badge, and everyone is kind to you. I know a boy that stole his sister's illness badge and wore it when he was expelled for a day. HE got expelled for a week for that. It must be awful not to go to school for a week.'

'Do you LIKE school, then?' asked Robert incredulously.

'Of course I do. It's the loveliest place there is. I

chose railways for my special subject this year, there are such splendid models and things, and now I shall be all behind because of that torn up paper.'

'You choose your own subject?' asked Cyril.

'Yes, of course. Where DID you come from? Don't you know ANYTHING?'

'No,' said Jane definitely; 'so you'd better tell us.'

'Well, on Midsummer Day school breaks up and everything's decorated with flowers, and you choose your special subject for next year. Of course you have to stick to it for a year at least. Then there are all your other subjects, of course, reading, and painting, and the rules of Citizenship.'

'Good gracious!' said Anthea.

'Look here,' said the child, jumping up, 'it's nearly four. The expelledness only lasts till then. Come home with me. Mother will tell you all about everything.'

'Will your mother like you taking home strange children?' asked Anthea.

'I don't understand,' said the child, settling his leather

belt over his honey coloured smock and stepping out with hard little bare feet. 'Come on.'

So they went.

The streets were wide and hard and very clean. There were no horses, but a sort of motor carriage that made no noise. The Thames flowed between green banks, and there were trees at the edge, and people sat under them, fishing, for the stream was clear as crystal. Everywhere there were green trees and there was no smoke. The houses were set in what seemed like one green garden.

The little boy brought them to a house, and at the window was a good, bright mother face. The little boy rushed in, and through the window they could see him hugging his mother, then his eager lips moving and his quick hands pointing.

A lady in soft green clothes came out, spoke kindly to them, and took them into the oddest house they had ever seen. It was very bare, there were no ornaments, and yet every single thing was beautiful, from the dresser with its rows of

bright china, to the thick squares of Eastern looking carpet on the floors. I can't describe that house; I haven't the time. And I haven't heart either, when I think how different it was from our houses. The lady took them all over it. The oddest thing of all was the big room in the middle. It had padded walls and a soft, thick carpet, and all the chairs and tables were padded. There wasn't a single thing in it that anyone could hurt itself with.

'What ever's this for? lunatics?' asked Cyril.

The lady looked very shocked.

'No! It's for the children, of course,' she said. 'Don't tell me that in your country there are no children's rooms.'

'There are nurseries,' said Anthea doubtfully, 'but the furniture's all cornery and hard, like other rooms.'

'How shocking!' said the lady; 'you must be VERY much behind the times in your country! Why, the children are more than half of the people; it's not much to have one room where they can have a good time and not hurt themselves.'

'But there's no fireplace,' said Anthea.

'Hot air pipes, of course,' said the lady. 'Why, how could you have a fire in a nursery? A child might get burned.'

'In our country,' said Robert suddenly, 'more than 3,000 children are burned to death every year. Father told me,' he added, as if apologizing for this piece of information, 'once when I'd been playing with fire.'

The lady turned quite pale.

'What a frightful place you must live in!' she said. 'What's all the furniture padded for?' Anthea asked, hastily turning the subject.

'Why, you couldn't have little tots of two or three running about in rooms where the things were hard and sharp! They might hurt themselves.'

Robert fingered the scar on his forehead where he had hit it against the nursery fender when he was little.

'But does everyone have rooms like this, poor people and all?' asked Anthea.

'There's a room like this wherever there's a child, of course,' said the lady. 'How refreshingly ignorant you are! no,

I don't mean ignorant, my dear. Of course, you're awfully well up in ancient History. But I see you haven't done your Duties of Citizenship Course yet.'

'But beggars, and people like that?' persisted Anthea 'and tramps and people who haven't any homes?'

'People who haven't any homes?' repeated the lady. 'I really DON'T understand what you're talking about.'

'It's all different in our country,' said Cyril carefully; and I have read it used to be different in London. Usedn't people to have no homes and beg because they were hungry? And wasn't London very black and dirty once upon a time? And the Thames all muddy and filthy? And narrow streets, and '

'You must have been reading very old fashioned books,' said the lady. 'Why, all that was in the dark ages! My husband can tell you more about it than I can. He took Ancient History as one of his special subjects.'

'I haven't seen any working people,' said Anthea.

'Why, we're all working people,' said the lady; 'at least my husband's a carpenter.'

'Good gracious!' said Anthea; 'but you're a lady!'

'Ah,' said the lady, 'that quaint old word! Well, my husband WILL enjoy a talk with you. In the dark ages everyone was allowed to have a smoky chimney, and those nasty horses all over the streets, and all sorts of rubbish thrown into the Thames. And, of course, the sufferings of the people will hardly bear thinking of. It's very learned of you to know it all. Did you make Ancient History your special subject?'

'Not exactly,' said Cyril, rather uneasily. 'What is the Duties of Citizenship Course about?'

'Don't you REALLY know? Aren't you pretending just for fun? Really not? Well, that course teaches you how to be a good citizen, what you must do and what you mayn't do, so as to do your full share of the work of making your town a beautiful and happy place for people to live in. There's a quite simple little thing they teach the tiny children. How does it go ...?'

'I must not steal and I must learn, Nothing is mine that

I do not earn. I must try in work and play To make things
beautiful every day. I must be kind to everyone, And never let
cruel things be done. I must be brave, and I must try When I
am hurt never to cry, And always laugh as much as I can, And
be glad that I'm going to be a man To work for my living and
help the rest And never do less than my very best.'

'That's very easy,' said Jane. '_I_ could remember that.'

'That's only the very beginning, of course,' said the
lady; 'there are heaps more rhymes. There's the one beginning

'I must not litter the beautiful street With bits of paper
or things to eat; I must not pick the public flowers, They are
not MINE, but they are OURS.'

'And "things to eat" reminds me are you hungry? Wells,
run and get a tray of nice things.'

'Why do you call him "Wells"?' asked Robert, as the boy
ran off.

'It's after the great reformer surely you've heard of HIM?
He lived in the dark ages, and he saw that what you ought to
do is to find out what you want and then try to get it. Up to

then people had always tried to tinker up what they'd got. We've got a great many of the things he thought of. Then "Wells" means springs of clear water. It's a nice name, don't you think?'

Here Wells returned with strawberries and cakes and lemonade on a tray, and everybody ate and enjoyed.

'Now, Wells,' said the lady, 'run off or you'll be late and not meet your Daddy.'

Wells kissed her, waved to the others, and went.

'Look here,' said Anthea suddenly, 'would you like to come to OUR country, and see what it's like? It wouldn't take you a minute.'

The lady laughed. But Jane held up the charm and said the word.

'What a splendid conjuring trick!' cried the lady, enchanted with the beautiful, growing arch.

'Go through,' said Anthea.

The lady went, laughing. But she did not laugh when she found herself, suddenly, in the dining room at Fitzroy

Street.

'Oh, what a HORRIBLE trick!' she cried. 'What a hateful, dark, ugly place!'

She ran to the window and looked out. The sky was grey, the street was foggy, a dismal organ grinder was standing opposite the door, a beggar and a man who sold matches were quarrelling at the edge of the pavement on whose greasy black surface people hurried along, hastening to get to the shelter of their houses.

'Oh, look at their faces, their horrible faces!' she cried. 'What's the matter with them all?'

'They're poor people, that's all,' said Robert.

'But it's NOT all! They're ill, they're unhappy, they're wicked! Oh, do stop it, there's dear children. It's very, very clever. Some sort of magic lantern trick, I suppose, like I've read of. But DO stop it. Oh! their poor, tired, miserable, wicked faces!'

The tears were in her eyes. Anthea signed to Jane. The arch grew, they spoke the words, and pushed the lady through

it into her own time and place, where London is clean and beautiful, and the Thames runs clear and bright, and the green trees grow, and no one is afraid, or anxious, or in a hurry. There was a silence. Then

'I'm glad we went,' said Anthea, with a deep breath.

'I'll never throw paper about again as long as I live,' said Robert.

'Mother always told us not to,' said Jane.

'I would like to take up the Duties of Citizenship for a special subject,' said Cyril. 'I wonder if Father could put me through it. I shall ask him when he comes home.'

'If we'd found the Amulet, Father could be home NOW,' said Anthea, 'and Mother and The Lamb.'

'Let's go into the future AGAIN,' suggested Jane brightly. 'Perhaps we could remember if it wasn't such an awful way off.'

So they did. This time they said, 'The future, where the Amulet is, not so far away.'

And they went through the familiar arch into a large,

light room with three windows. Facing them was the familiar mummy case. And at a table by the window sat the learned gentleman. They knew him at once, though his hair was white. He was one of the faces that do not change with age. In his hand was the Amulet complete and perfect.

He rubbed his other hand across his forehead in the way they were so used to.

'Dreams, dreams!' he said; 'old age is full of them!'

'You've been in dreams with us before now,' said Robert, 'don't you remember?'

'I do, indeed,' said he. The room had many more books than the Fitzroy Street room, and far more curious and wonderful Assyrian and Egyptian objects. 'The most wonderful dreams I ever had had you in them.'

'Where,' asked Cyril, 'did you get that thing in your hand?'

'If you weren't just a dream,' he answered, smiling, 'you'd remember that you gave it to me.'

'But where did we get it?' Cyril asked eagerly.

'Ah, you never would tell me that,' he said, 'You always had your little mysteries. You dear children! What a difference you made to that old Bloomsbury house! I wish I could dream you oftener. Now you're grown up you're not like you used to be.'

'Grown up?' said Anthea.

The learned gentleman pointed to a frame with four photographs in it.

'There you are,' he said.

The children saw four grown up people's portraits two ladies, two gentlemen and looked on them with loathing.

'Shall we grow up like THAT?' whispered Jane. 'How perfectly horrid!'

'If we're ever like that, we sha'n't know it's horrid, I expect,' Anthea with some insight whispered back. 'You see, you get used to yourself while you're changing. It's it's being so sudden makes it seem so frightful now.'

The learned gentleman was looking at them with wistful kindness. 'Don't let me undream you just yet,' he said. There

was a pause.

'Do you remember WHEN we gave you that Amulet?'

Cyril asked suddenly.

'You know, or you would if you weren't a dream, that it was on the 3rd December, 1905. I shall never forget THAT day.'

'Thank you,' said Cyril, earnestly; 'oh, thank you very much.'

'You've got a new room,' said Anthea, looking out of the window, 'and what a lovely garden!'

'Yes,' said he, 'I'm too old now to care even about being near the Museum. This is a beautiful place. Do you know I can hardly believe you're just a dream, you do look so exactly real. Do you know ...' his voice dropped, 'I can say it to YOU, though, of course, if I said it to anyone that wasn't a dream they'd call me mad; there was something about that Amulet you gave me something very mysterious.'

'There was that,' said Robert.

'Ah, I don't mean your pretty little childish mysteries

about where you got it. But about the thing itself. First, the wonderful dreams I used to have, after you'd shown me the first half of it! Why, my book on Atlantis, that I did, was the beginning of my fame and my fortune, too. And I got it all out of a dream! And then, "Britain at the Time of the Roman Invasion" that was only a pamphlet, but it explained a lot of things people hadn't understood.'

'Yes,' said Anthea, 'it would.'

'That was the beginning. But after you'd given me the whole of the Amulet ah, it was generous of you! then, somehow, I didn't need to theorize, I seemed to KNOW about the old Egyptian civilization. And they can't upset my theories' he rubbed his thin hands and laughed triumphantly 'they can't, though they've tried. Theories, they call them, but they're more like I don't know more like memories. I KNOW I'm right about the secret rites of the Temple of Amen.'

'I'm so glad you're rich,' said Anthea. 'You weren't, you know, at Fitzroy Street.'

'Indeed I wasn't,' said he, 'but I am now. This beautiful

house and this lovely garden I dig in it sometimes; you remember, you used to tell me to take more exercise? Well, I feel I owe it all to you and the Amulet.'

'I'm so glad,' said Anthea, and kissed him. He started.

'THAT didn't feel like a dream,' he said, and his voice trembled.

'It isn't exactly a dream,' said Anthea softly, 'it's all part of the Amulet it's a sort of extra special, real dream, dear Jimmy.'

'Ah,' said he, 'when you call me that, I know I'm dreaming. My little sister I dream of her sometimes. But it's not real like this. Do you remember the day I dreamed you brought me the Babylonish ring?'

'We remember it all,' said Robert. 'Did you leave Fitzroy Street because you were too rich for it?'

'Oh, no!' he said reproachfully. 'You know I should never have done such a thing as that. Of course, I left when your old Nurse died and what's the matter!'

'Old Nurse DEAD?' said Anthea. 'Oh, NO!'

'Yes, yes, it's the common lot. It's a long time ago now.'

Jane held up the Amulet in a hand that twittered.

'Come!' she cried, 'oh, come home! She may be dead before we get there, and then we can't give it to her. Oh, come!'

'Ah, don't let the dream end now!' pleaded the learned gentleman.

'It must,' said Anthea firmly, and kissed him again.

'When it comes to people dying,' said Robert, 'good bye! I'm so glad you're rich and famous and happy.'

'DO come!' cried Jane, stamping in her agony of impatience. And they went. Old Nurse brought in tea almost as soon as they were back in Fitzroy Street. As she came in with the tray, the girls rushed at her and nearly upset her and it.

'Don't die!' cried Jane, 'oh, don't!' and Anthea cried, 'Dear, ducky, darling old Nurse, don't die!'

'Lord, love you!' said Nurse, 'I'm not agoin' to die yet a while, please Heaven! Whatever on earth's the matter with

the chicks?'

'Nothing. Only don't!'

She put the tray down and hugged the girls in turn. The boys thumped her on the back with heartfelt affection.

'I'm as well as ever I was in my life,' she said. 'What nonsense about dying! You've been sitting too long in the dusk, that's what it is. Regular blind man's holiday. Leave go of me, while I light the gas.'

The yellow light illuminated four pale faces. 'We do love you so,' Anthea went on, 'and we've made you a picture to show you how we love you. Get it out, Squirrel.'

The glazed testimonial was dragged out from under the sofa and displayed.

'The glue's not dry yet,' said Cyril, 'look out!'

'What a beauty!' cried old Nurse. 'Well, I never! And your pictures and the beautiful writing and all. Well, I always did say your hearts was in the right place, if a bit careless at times. Well! I never did! I don't know as I was ever pleased better in my life.'

She hugged them all, one after the other. And the boys did not mind it, somehow, that day.

'How is it we can remember all about the future, NOW?' Anthea woke the Psammead with laborious gentleness to put the question. 'How is it we can remember what we saw in the future, and yet, when we WERE in the future, we could not remember the bit of the future that was past then, the time of finding the Amulet?'

'Why, what a silly question!' said the Psammead, 'of course you cannot remember what hasn't happened yet.'

'But the FUTURE hasn't happened yet,' Anthea persisted, 'and we remember that all right.'

'Oh, that isn't what's happened, my good child,' said the Psammead, rather crossly, 'that's prophetic vision. And you remember dreams, don't you? So why not visions? You never do seem to understand the simplest thing.'

It went to sand again at once.

Anthea crept down in her nightgown to give one last kiss to old Nurse, and one last look at the beautiful

testimonial hanging, by its tapes, its glue now firmly set, in glazed glory on the wall of the kitchen.

'Good night, bless your loving heart,' said old Nurse, 'if only you don't catch your deather cold!'

CHAPTER 13

THE SHIPWRECK ON THE TIN ISLANDS

'Blue and red,' said Jane softly, 'make purple.'

'Not always they don't,' said Cyril, 'it has to be crimson lake and Prussian blue. If you mix Vermilion and Indigo you get the most loathsome slate colour.'

'Sepia's the nastiest colour in the box, I think,' said Jane, sucking her brush.

They were all painting. Nurse in the flush of grateful emotion, excited by Robert's border of poppies, had presented each of the four with a shilling paint box, and had supplemented the gift with a pile of old copies of the Illustrated London News.

'Sepia,' said Cyril instructively, 'is made out of beastly cuttlefish.'

'Purple's made out of a fish, as well as out of red and blue,' said Robert. 'Tyrian purple was, I know.'

'Out of lobsters?' said Jane dreamily. 'They're red when they're boiled, and blue when they aren't. If you mixed live and dead lobsters you'd get Tyrian purple.'

'_I_ shouldn't like to mix anything with a live lobster,' said Anthea, shuddering.

'Well, there aren't any other red and blue fish,' said Jane; 'you'd have to.'

'I'd rather not have the purple,' said Anthea.

'The Tyrian purple wasn't that colour when it came out of the fish, nor yet afterwards, it wasn't,' said Robert; 'it was scarlet really, and Roman Emperors wore it. And it wasn't any nice colour while the fish had it. It was a yellowish white liquid of a creamy consistency.'

'How do you know?' asked Cyril.

'I read it,' said Robert, with the meek pride of

superior knowledge.

'Where?' asked Cyril.

'In print,' said Robert, still more proudly meek.

'You think everything's true if it's printed,' said Cyril, naturally annoyed, 'but it isn't. Father said so. Quite a lot of lies get printed, especially in newspapers.'

'You see, as it happens,' said Robert, in what was really a rather annoying tone, 'it wasn't a newspaper, it was in a book.'

'How sweet Chinese white is!' said Jane, dreamily sucking her brush again.

'I don't believe it,' said Cyril to Robert.

'Have a suck yourself,' suggested Robert.

'I don't mean about the Chinese white. I mean about the cream fish turning purple and "

'Oh!' cried Anthea, jumping up very quickly, 'I'm tired of painting. Let's go somewhere by Amulet. I say let's let IT choose.'

Cyril and Robert agreed that this was an idea. Jane

consented to stop painting because, as she said, Chinese white, though certainly sweet, gives you a queer feeling in the back of the throat if you paint with it too long.

The Amulet was held up. 'Take us somewhere,' said Jane, 'anywhere you like in the Past but somewhere where you are.' Then she said the word.

Next moment everyone felt a queer rocking and swaying something like what you feel when you go out in a fishing boat. And that was not wonderful, when you come to think of it, for it was in a boat that they found themselves. A queer boat, with high bulwarks pierced with holes for oars to go through. There was a high seat for the steersman, and the prow was shaped like the head of some great animal with big, staring eyes. The boat rode at anchor in a bay, and the bay was very smooth. The crew were dark, wiry fellows with black beards and hair. They had no clothes except a tunic from waist to knee, and round caps with knobs on the top. They were very busy, and what they were doing was so interesting to the children that at first they did not even

wonder where the Amulet had brought them. And the crew seemed too busy to notice the children. They were fastening rush baskets to a long rope with a great piece of cork at the end, and in each basket they put mussels or little frogs. Then they cast out the rope, the baskets sank, but the cork floated. And all about on the blue water were other boats and all the crews of all the boats were busy with ropes and baskets and frogs and mussels.

'Whatever are you doing?' Jane suddenly asked a man who had rather more clothes than the others, and seemed to be a sort of captain or overseer. He started and stared at her, but he had seen too many strange lands to be very much surprised at these queerly dressed stowaways.

'Setting lines for the dye shell fish,' he said shortly. 'How did you get here?'

'A sort of magic,' said Robert carelessly. The Captain fingered an Amulet that hung round his neck.

'What is this place?' asked Cyril.

'Tyre, of course,' said the man. Then he drew back and

spoke in a low voice to one of the sailors.

'Now we shall know about your precious cream jug fish,'
said Cyril.

'But we never SAID come to Tyre,' said Jane.

'The Amulet heard us talking, I expect. I think it's
MOST obliging of it,' said Anthea.

'And the Amulet's here too,' said Robert. 'We ought to be
able to find it in a little ship like this. I wonder which of
them's got it.'

'Oh look, look!' cried Anthea suddenly. On the bare
breast of one of the sailors gleamed something red. It was the
exact counterpart of their precious half Amulet.

A silence, full of emotion, was broken by Jane.

'Then we've found it!' she said. 'Oh do let's take it and
go home!'

'Easy to say "take it",' said Cyril; 'he looks very strong.'

He did yet not so strong as the other sailors.

'It's odd,' said Anthea musingly, 'I do believe I've seen
that man somewhere before.'

'He's rather like our learned gentleman,' said Robert, 'but I'll tell you who he's much more like ' At that moment that sailor looked up. His eyes met Robert's and Robert and the others had no longer any doubt as to where they had seen him before. It was Rekh mara, the priest who had led them to the palace of Pharaoh and whom Jane had looked back at through the arch, when he was counselling Pharaoh's guard to take the jewels and fly for his life.

Nobody was quite pleased, and nobody quite knew why.

Jane voiced the feelings of all when she said, fingering THEIR Amulet through the folds of her frock, 'We can go back in a minute if anything nasty happens.'

For the moment nothing worse happened than an offer of food figs and cucumbers it was, and very pleasant.

'I see,' said the Captain, 'that you are from a far country. Since you have honoured my boat by appearing on it, you must stay here till morning. Then I will lead you to one of our great ones. He loves strangers from far lands.'

'Let's go home,' Jane whispered, 'all the frogs are drowning NOW. I think the people here are cruel.'

But the boys wanted to stay and see the lines taken up in the morning.

'It's just like eel pots and lobster pots,' said Cyril, 'the baskets only open from outside I vote we stay.'

So they stayed.

'That's Tyre over there,' said the Captain, who was evidently trying to be civil. He pointed to a great island rock, that rose steeply from the sea, crowned with huge walls and towers. There was another city on the mainland.

'That's part of Tyre, too,' said the Captain; 'it's where the great merchants have their pleasure houses and gardens and farms.'

'Look, look!' Cyril cried suddenly; 'what a lovely little ship!' A ship in full sail was passing swiftly through the fishing fleet. The Captain's face changed. He frowned, and his eyes blazed with fury.

'Insolent young barbarian!' he cried. 'Do you call the

ships of Tyre LITTLE? None greater sail the seas. That ship has been on a three years' voyage. She is known in all the great trading ports from here to the Tin Islands. She comes back rich and glorious. Her very anchor is of silver.'

'I'm sure we beg your pardon,' said Anthea hastily. 'In our country we say "little" for a pet name. Your wife might call you her dear little husband, you know.'

'I should like to catch her at it,' growled the Captain, but he stopped scowling.

'It's a rich trade,' he went on. 'For cloth ONCE dipped, second best glass, and the rough images our young artists carve for practice, the barbarian King in Tessos lets us work the silver mines. We get so much silver there that we leave them our iron anchors and come back with silver ones.'

'How splendid!' said Robert. 'Do go on. What's cloth once dipped?'

'You MUST be barbarians from the outer darkness,' said the Captain scornfully. 'All wealthy nations know that our finest stuffs are twice dyed dibaptha. They're only for the

robes of kings and priests and princes.'

'What do the rich merchants wear,' asked Jane, with interest, 'in the pleasure houses?'

'They wear the dibaptha. OUR merchants ARE princes,' scowled the skipper.

'Oh, don't be cross, we do so like hearing about things. We want to know ALL about the dyeing,' said Anthea cordially.

'Oh, you do, do you?' growled the man. 'So that's what you're here for? Well, you won't get the secrets of the dye trade out of ME.'

He went away, and everyone felt snubbed and uncomfortable. And all the time the long, narrow eyes of the Egyptian were watching, watching. They felt as though he was watching them through the darkness, when they lay down to sleep on a pile of cloaks.

Next morning the baskets were drawn up full of what looked like whelk shells.

The children were rather in the way, but they made

themselves as small as they could. While the skipper was at the other end of the boat they did ask one question of a sailor, whose face was a little less unkind than the others.

'Yes,' he answered, 'this is the dye fish. It's a sort of murex and there's another kind that they catch at Sidon and then, of course, there's the kind that's used for the dibaptha. But that's quite different. It's '

'Hold your tongue!' shouted the skipper. And the man held it.

The laden boat was rowed slowly round the end of the island, and was made fast in one of the two great harbours that lay inside a long breakwater. The harbour was full of all sorts of ships, so that Cyril and Robert enjoyed themselves much more than their sisters. The breakwater and the quays were heaped with bales and baskets, and crowded with slaves and sailors. Farther along some men were practising diving.

'That's jolly good,' said Robert, as a naked brown body cleft the water.

'I should think so,' said the skipper. 'The pearl divers

of Persia are not more skilful. Why, we've got a fresh water spring that comes out at the bottom of the sea. Our divers dive down and bring up the fresh water in skin bottles! Can your barbarian divers do as much?'

'I suppose not,' said Robert, and put away a wild desire to explain to the Captain the English system of waterworks, pipes, taps, and the intricacies of the plumbers' trade.

As they neared the quay the skipper made a hasty toilet. He did his hair, combed his beard, put on a garment like a jersey with short sleeves, an embroidered belt, a necklace of beads, and a big signet ring.

'Now,' said he, 'I'm fit to be seen. Come along?'

'Where to?' said Jane cautiously.

'To Pheles, the great sea captain, said the skipper, 'the man I told you of, who loves barbarians.'

Then Rekh mara came forward, and, for the first time, spoke.

'I have known these children in another land,' he said. 'You know my powers of magic. It was my magic that

brought these barbarians to your boat. And you know how they will profit you. I read your thoughts. Let me come with you and see the end of them, and then I will work the spell I promised you in return for the little experience you have so kindly given me on your boat.'

The skipper looked at the Egyptian with some disfavour.

'So it was YOUR doing,' he said. 'I might have guessed it. Well, come on.'

So he came, and the girls wished he hadn't. But Robert whispered

'Nonsense as long as he's with us we've got some chance of the Amulet. We can always fly if anything goes wrong.'

The morning was so fresh and bright; their breakfast had been so good and so unusual; they had actually seen the Amulet round the Egyptian's neck. One or two, or all these things, suddenly raised the children's spirits. They went off quite cheerfully through the city gate it was not arched, but roofed over with a great flat stone and so through the street,

which smelt horribly of fish and garlic and a thousand other things even less agreeable. But far worse than the street scents was the scent of the factory, where the skipper called in to sell his night's catch. I wish I could tell you all about that factory, but I haven't time, and perhaps after all you aren't interested in dyeing works. I will only mention that Robert was triumphantly proved to be right. The dye WAS a yellowish white liquid of a creamy consistency, and it smelt more strongly of garlic than garlic itself does.

While the skipper was bargaining with the master of the dye works the Egyptian came close to the children, and said, suddenly and softly

'Trust me.'

'I wish we could,' said Anthea.

'You feel,' said the Egyptian, 'that I want your Amulet. That makes you distrust me.'

'Yes,' said Cyril bluntly.

'But you also, you want my Amulet, and I am trusting you.'

'There's something in that,' said Robert.

'We have the two halves of the Amulet,' said the Priest, 'but not yet the pin that joined them. Our only chance of getting that is to remain together. Once part these two halves and they may never be found in the same time and place. Be wise. Our interests are the same.'

Before anyone could say more the skipper came back, and with him the dye master. His hair and beard were curled like the men's in Babylon, and he was dressed like the skipper, but with added grandeur of gold and embroidery. He had necklaces of beads and silver, and a glass amulet with a man's face, very like his own, set between two bull's heads, as well as gold and silver bracelets and armlets. He looked keenly at the children. Then he said

'My brother Pheles has just come back from Tarshish. He's at his garden house unless he's hunting wild boar in the marshes. He gets frightfully bored on shore.'

'Ah,' said the skipper, 'he's a true born Phoenician. "Tyre, Tyre for ever! Oh, Tyre rules the waves!" as the old

song says. I'll go at once, and show him my young barbarians.'

'I should,' said the dye master. 'They are very rum, aren't they? What frightful clothes, and what a lot of them! Observe the covering of their feet. Hideous indeed.'

Robert could not help thinking how easy, and at the same time pleasant, it would be to catch hold of the dye master's feet and tip him backward into the great sunken vat just near him. But if he had, flight would have had to be the next move, so he restrained his impulse.

There was something about this Tyrian adventure that was different from all the others. It was, somehow, calmer. And there was the undoubted fact that the charm was there on the neck of the Egyptian.

So they enjoyed everything to the full, the row from the Island City to the shore, the ride on the donkeys that the skipper hired at the gate of the mainland city, and the pleasant country palms and figs and cedars all about. It was like a garden clematis, honeysuckle, and jasmine clung about

the olive and mulberry trees, and there were tulips and gladiolus, and clumps of mandrake, which has bell flowers that look as though they were cut out of dark blue jewels. In the distance were the mountains of Lebanon. The house they came to at last was rather like a bungalow long and low, with pillars all along the front. Cedars and sycamores grew near it and sheltered it pleasantly.

Everyone dismounted, and the donkeys were led away.

'Why is this like Rosherville?' whispered Robert, and instantly supplied the answer.

'Because it's the place to spend a happy day.'

'It's jolly decent of the skipper to have brought us to such a ripping place,' said Cyril.

'Do you know,' said Anthea, 'this feels more real than anything else we've seen? It's like a holiday in the country at home.'

The children were left alone in a large hall. The floor was mosaic, done with wonderful pictures of ships and sea beasts and fishes. Through an open doorway they could see a

pleasant courtyard with flowers.

'I should like to spend a week here,' said Jane, 'and donkey ride every day.'

Everyone was feeling very jolly. Even the Egyptian looked pleasanter than usual. And then, quite suddenly, the skipper came back with a joyous smile. With him came the master of the house. He looked steadily at the children and nodded twice.

'Yes,' he said, 'my steward will pay you the price. But I shall not pay at that high rate for the Egyptian dog.'

The two passed on.

'This,' said the Egyptian, 'is a pretty kettle of fish.'

'What is?' asked all the children at once.

'Our present position,' said Rekh mara. 'Our seafaring friend,' he added, 'has sold us all for slaves!'

A hasty council succeeded the shock of this announcement. The Priest was allowed to take part in it. His advice was 'stay', because they were in no danger, and the Amulet in its completeness must be somewhere near, or, of

course, they could not have come to that place at all. And after some discussion they agreed to this.

The children were treated more as guests than as slaves, but the Egyptian was sent to the kitchen and made to work.

Pheles, the master of the house, went off that very evening, by the King's orders, to start on another voyage. And when he was gone his wife found the children amusing company, and kept them talking and singing and dancing till quite late. 'To distract my mind from my sorrows,' she said.

'I do like being a slave,' remarked Jane cheerfully, as they curled up on the big, soft cushions that were to be their beds.

It was black night when they were awakened, each by a hand passed softly over its face, and a low voice that whispered

'Be quiet, or all is lost.'

So they were quiet.

'It's me, Rekh mara, the Priest of Amen,' said the whisperer. 'The man who brought us has gone to sea again,

and he has taken my Amulet from me by force, and I know no magic to get it back. Is there magic for that in the Amulet you bear?'

Everyone was instantly awake by now.

'We can go after him,' said Cyril, leaping up; 'but he might take OURS as well; or he might be angry with us for following him.'

'I'll see to THAT,' said the Egyptian in the dark. 'Hide your Amulet well.'

There in the deep blackness of that room in the Tyrian country house the Amulet was once more held up and the word spoken.

All passed through on to a ship that tossed and tumbled on a wind blown sea. They crouched together there till morning, and Jane and Cyril were not at all well. When the dawn showed, dove coloured, across the steely waves, they stood up as well as they could for the tumbling of the ship. Pheles, that hardy sailor and adventurer, turned quite pale when he turned round suddenly and saw them.

'Well!' he said, 'well, I never did!'

'Master,' said the Egyptian, bowing low, and that was even more difficult than standing up, 'we are here by the magic of the sacred Amulet that hangs round your neck.'

'I never did!' repeated Pheles. 'Well, well!'

'What port is the ship bound for?' asked Robert, with a nautical air.

But Pheles said, 'Are you a navigator?' Robert had to own that he was not.

'Then,' said Pheles, 'I don't mind telling you that we're bound for the Tin Isles. Tyre alone knows where the Tin Isles are. It is a splendid secret we keep from all the world. It is as great a thing to us as your magic to you.'

He spoke in quite a new voice, and seemed to respect both the children and the Amulet a good deal more than he had done before.

'The King sent you, didn't he?' said Jane.

'Yes,' answered Pheles, 'he bade me set sail with half a score brave gentlemen and this crew. You shall go with us,

and see many wonders.' He bowed and left them.

'What are we going to do now?' said Robert, when Pheles had caused them to be left along with a breakfast of dried fruits and a sort of hard biscuit.

'Wait till he lands in the Tin Isles,' said Rekh mara, 'then we can get the barbarians to help us. We will attack him by night and tear the sacred Amulet from his accursed heathen neck,' he added, grinding his teeth.

'When shall we get to the Tin Isles?' asked Jane.

'Oh six months, perhaps, or a year,' said the Egyptian cheerfully.

'A year of THIS?' cried Jane, and Cyril, who was still feeling far too unwell to care about breakfast, hugged himself miserably and shuddered. It was Robert who said

'Look here, we can shorten that year. Jane, out with the Amulet! Wish that we were where the Amulet will be when the ship is twenty miles from the Tin Island. That'll give us time to mature our plans.'

It was done the work of a moment and there they were

on the same ship, between grey northern sky and grey northern sea. The sun was setting in a pale yellow line. It was the same ship, but it was changed, and so were the crew. Weather worn and dirty were the sailors, and their clothes torn and ragged. And the children saw that, of course, though they had skipped the nine months, the ship had had to live through them. Pheles looked thinner, and his face was rugged and anxious.

'Ha!' he cried, 'the charm has brought you back! I have prayed to it daily these nine months and now you are here? Have you no magic that can help?'

'What is your need?' asked the Egyptian quietly.

'I need a great wave that shall whelm away the foreign ship that follows us. A month ago it lay in wait for us, by the pillars of the gods, and it follows, follows, to find out the secret of Tyre the place of the Tin Islands. If I could steer by night I could escape them yet, but tonight there will be no stars.'

'My magic will not serve you here,' said the Egyptian.

But Robert said, 'My magic will not bring up great waves, but I can show you how to steer without stars.'

He took out the shilling compass, still, fortunately, in working order, that he had bought off another boy at school for fivepence, a piece of indiarubber, a strip of whalebone, and half a stick of red sealing wax.

And he showed Pheles how it worked. And Pheles wondered at the compass's magic truth.

'I will give it to you,' Robert said, 'in return for that charm about your neck.'

Pheles made no answer. He first laughed, snatched the compass from Robert's hand, and turned away still laughing.

'Be comforted,' the Priest whispered, 'our time will come.'

The dusk deepened, and Pheles, crouched beside a dim lantern, steered by the shilling compass from the Crystal Palace.

No one ever knew how the other ship sailed, but suddenly, in the deep night, the look out man at the stern

cried out in a terrible voice

'She is close upon us!'

'And we,' said Pheles, 'are close to the harbour.' He was silent a moment, then suddenly he altered the ship's course, and then he stood up and spoke.

'Good friends and gentlemen,' he said, 'who are bound with me in this brave venture by our King's command, the false, foreign ship is close on our heels. If we land, they land, and only the gods know whether they might not beat us in fight, and themselves survive to carry back the tale of Tyre's secret island to enrich their own miserable land. Shall this be?'

'Never!' cried the half dozen men near him. The slaves were rowing hard below and could not hear his words.

The Egyptian leaped upon him; suddenly, fiercely, as a wild beast leaps. 'Give me back my Amulet,' he cried, and caught at the charm. The chain that held it snapped, and it lay in the Priest's hand.

Pheles laughed, standing balanced to the leap of the ship

that answered the oarstroke.

'This is no time for charms and mummeries,' he said. 'We've lived like men, and we'll die like gentlemen for the honour and glory of Tyre, our splendid city. "Tyre, Tyre for ever! It's Tyre that rules the waves." I steer her straight for the Dragon rocks, and we go down for our city, as brave men should. The creeping cowards who follow shall go down as slaves and slaves they shall be to us when we live again. Tyre, Tyre for ever!'

A great shout went up, and the slaves below joined in it.

'Quick, the Amulet,' cried Anthea, and held it up. Rekh mara held up the one he had snatched from Pheles. The word was spoken, and the two great arches grew on the plunging ship in the shrieking wind under the dark sky. From each Amulet a great and beautiful green light streamed and shone far out over the waves. It illuminated, too, the black faces and jagged teeth of the great rocks that lay not two ships' lengths from the boat's peaked nose.

'Tyre, Tyre for ever! It's Tyre that rules the waves!'

the voices of the doomed rose in a triumphant shout. The children scrambled through the arch, and stood trembling and blinking in the Fitzroy Street parlour, and in their ears still sounded the whistle of the wind, and the rattle of the oars, the crash of the ships bow on the rocks, and the last shout of the brave gentlemen adventurers who went to their deaths singing, for the sake of the city they loved.

'And so we've lost the other half of the Amulet again,' said Anthea, when they had told the Psammead all about it.

'Nonsense, pooh!' said the Psammead. 'That wasn't the other half. It was the same half that you've got the one that wasn't crushed and lost.'

'But how could it be the same?' said Anthea gently.

'Well, not exactly, of course. The one you've got is a good many years older, but at any rate it's not the other one. What did you say when you wished?'

'I forget,' said Jane.

'I don't,' said the Psammead. 'You said, "Take us where YOU are" and it did, so you see it was the same half.'

'I see,' said Anthea.

'But you mark my words,' the Psammead went on, 'you'll have trouble with that Priest yet.'

'Why, he was quite friendly,' said Anthea.

'All the same you'd better beware of the Reverend Rekh mara.'

'Oh, I'm sick of the Amulet,' said Cyril, 'we shall never get it.'

'Oh yes we shall,' said Robert. 'Don't you remember December 3rd?'

'Jinks!' said Cyril, 'I'd forgotten that.'

'I don't believe it,' said Jane, 'and I don't feel at all well.'

'If I were you,' said the Psammead, 'I should not go out into the Past again till that date. You'll find it safer not to go where you're likely to meet that Egyptian any more just at present.'

'Of course we'll do as you say,' said Anthea soothingly, 'though there's something about his face that I really do like.'

'Still, you don't want to run after him, I suppose,'

snapped the Psammead. 'You wait till the 3rd, and then see what happens.'

Cyril and Jane were feeling far from well, Anthea was always obliging, so Robert was overruled. And they promised. And none of them, not even the Psammead, at all foresaw, as you no doubt do quite plainly, exactly what it was that **WOULD** happen on that memorable date.

CHAPTER 14

THE HEART'S DESIRE

If I only had time I could tell you lots of things. For instance, how, in spite of the advice of the Psammead, the four children did, one very wet day, go through their Amulet Arch into the golden desert, and there find the great Temple of Baalbec and meet with the Phoenix whom they never thought to see again. And how the Phoenix did not remember them at all until it went into a sort of prophetic trance if that can be called remembering. But, alas! I

HAVEN'T time, so I must leave all that out though it was a wonderfully thrilling adventure. I must leave out, too, all about the visit of the children to the Hippodrome with the Psammead in its travelling bag, and about how the wishes of the people round about them were granted so suddenly and surprisingly that at last the Psammead had to be taken hurriedly home by Anthea, who consequently missed half the performance. Then there was the time when, Nurse having gone to tea with a friend out Ivalunk way, they were playing 'devil in the dark' and in the midst of that most creepy pastime the postman's knock frightened Jane nearly out of her life. She took in the letters, however, and put them in the back of the hat stand drawer, so that they should be safe. And safe they were, for she never thought of them again for weeks and weeks.

One really good thing happened when they took the Psammead to a magic lantern show and lecture at the boys' school at Camden Town. The lecture was all about our soldiers in South Africa. And the lecturer ended up by saying,

'And I hope every boy in this room has in his heart the seeds of courage and heroism and self sacrifice, and I wish that every one of you may grow up to be noble and brave and unselfish, worthy citizens of this great Empire for whom our soldiers have freely given their lives.'

And, of course, this came true which was a distinct score for Camden Town.

As Anthea said, it was unlucky that the lecturer said boys, because now she and Jane would have to be noble and unselfish, if at all, without any outside help. But Jane said, 'I daresay we are already because of our beautiful natures. It's only boys that have to be made brave by magic' which nearly led to a first class row.

And I daresay you would like to know all about the affair of the fishing rod, and the fish hooks, and the cook next door which was amusing from some points of view, though not perhaps the cook's but there really is no time even for that.

The only thing that there's time to tell about is the

Adventure of Maskelyne and Cooke's, and the Unexpected Apparition which is also the beginning of the end.

It was Nurse who broke into the gloomy music of the autumn rain on the window panes by suggesting a visit to the Egyptian Hall, England's Home of Mystery. Though they had good, but private reasons to know that their own particular personal mystery was of a very different brand, the four all brightened at the idea. All children, as well as a good many grown ups, love conjuring.

'It's in Piccadilly,' said old Nurse, carefully counting out the proper number of shillings into Cyril's hand, 'not so very far down on the left from the Circus. There's big pillars outside, something like Carter's seed place in Holborn, as used to be Day and Martin's blacking when I was a gell. And something like Euston Station, only not so big.'

'Yes, I know,' said everybody.

So they started.

But though they walked along the left hand side of Piccadilly they saw no pillared building that was at all like

Carter's seed warehouse or Euston Station or England's Home of Mystery as they remembered it.

At last they stopped a hurried lady, and asked her the way to Maskelyne and Cooke's.

'I don't know, I'm sure,' she said, pushing past them. 'I always shop at the Stores.' Which just shows, as Jane said, how ignorant grown up people are.

It was a policeman who at last explained to them that England's Mysteries are now appropriately enough enacted at St George's Hall.

So they tramped to Langham Place, and missed the first two items in the programme. But they were in time for the most wonderful magic appearances and disappearances, which they could hardly believe even with all their knowledge of a larger magic was not really magic after all.

'If only the Babylonians could have seen THIS conjuring,' whispered Cyril. 'It takes the shine out of their old conjurer, doesn't it?'

'Hush!' said Anthea and several other members of the

audience.

Now there was a vacant seat next to Robert. And it was when all eyes were fixed on the stage where Mr Devant was pouring out glasses of all sorts of different things to drink, out of one kettle with one spout, and the audience were delightedly tasting them, that Robert felt someone in that vacant seat. He did not feel someone sit down in it. It was just that one moment there was no one sitting there, and the next moment, suddenly, there was someone.

Robert turned. The someone who had suddenly filled that empty place was Rekh mara, the Priest of Amen!

Though the eyes of the audience were fixed on Mr David Devant, Mr David Devant's eyes were fixed on the audience. And it happened that his eyes were more particularly fixed on that empty chair. So that he saw quite plainly the sudden appearance, from nowhere, of the Egyptian Priest.

'A jolly good trick,' he said to himself, 'and worked under my own eyes, in my own hall. I'll find out how that's

done.' He had never seen a trick that he could not do himself if he tried.

By this time a good many eyes in the audience had turned on the clean shaven, curiously dressed figure of the Egyptian Priest.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' said Mr Devant, rising to the occasion, 'this is a trick I have never before performed. The empty seat, third from the end, second row, gallery you will now find occupied by an Ancient Egyptian, warranted genuine.'

He little knew how true his words were.

And now all eyes were turned on the Priest and the children, and the whole audience, after a moment's breathless surprise, shouted applause. Only the lady on the other side of Rekh mara drew back a little. She KNEW no one had passed her, and, as she said later, over tea and cold tongue, 'it was that sudden it made her flesh creep.'

Rekh mara seemed very much annoyed at the notice he was exciting.

'Come out of this crowd,' he whispered to Robert. 'I must talk with you apart.'

'Oh, no,' Jane whispered. 'I did so want to see the Mascot Moth, and the Ventriloquist.'

'How did you get here?' was Robert's return whisper.

'How did you get to Egypt and to Tyre?' retorted Rekh mara. 'Come, let us leave this crowd.'

'There's no help for it, I suppose,' Robert shrugged angrily. But they all got up.

'Confederates!' said a man in the row behind. 'Now they go round to the back and take part in the next scene.'

'I wish we did,' said Robert.

'Confederate yourself!' said Cyril. And so they got away, the audience applauding to the last.

In the vestibule of St George's Hall they disguised Rekh mara as well as they could, but even with Robert's hat and Cyril's Inverness cape he was too striking a figure for foot exercise in the London streets. It had to be a cab, and it took the last, least money of all of them. They stopped the cab a

few doors from home, and then the girls went in and engaged old Nurse's attention by an account of the conjuring and a fervent entreaty for dripping toast with their tea, leaving the front door open so that while Nurse was talking to them the boys could creep quietly in with Rekh mara and smuggle him, unseen, up the stairs into their bedroom.

When the girls came up they found the Egyptian Priest sitting on the side of Cyril's bed, his hands on his knees, looking like a statue of a king.

'Come on,' said Cyril impatiently. 'He won't begin till we're all here. And shut the door, can't you?'

When the door was shut the Egyptian said

'My interests and yours are one.'

'Very interesting,' said Cyril, 'and it'll be a jolly sight more interesting if you keep following us about in a decent country with no more clothes on than THAT!'

'Peace,' said the Priest. 'What is this country? and what is this time?'

'The country's England,' said Anthea, 'and the time's

about 6,000 years later than YOUR time.'

'The Amulet, then,' said the Priest, deeply thoughtful, 'gives the power to move to and fro in time as well as in space?'

'That's about it,' said Cyril gruffly. 'Look here, it'll be tea time directly. What are we to do with you?'

'You have one half of the Amulet, I the other,' said Rekh mara. 'All that is now needed is the pin to join them.'

'Don't you think it,' said Robert. 'The half you've got is the same half as the one we've got.'

'But the same thing cannot be in the same place and the same time, and yet be not one, but twain,' said the Priest. 'See, here is my half.' He laid it on the Marcella counterpane. 'Where is yours?'

Jane watching the eyes of the others, unfastened the string of the Amulet and laid it on the bed, but too far off for the Priest to seize it, even if he had been so dishonourable. Cyril and Robert stood beside him, ready to spring on him if one of his hands had moved but ever so little towards the

magic treasure that was theirs. But his hands did not move, only his eyes opened very wide, and so did everyone else's for the Amulet the Priest had now quivered and shook; and then, as steel is drawn to the magnet, it was drawn across the white counterpane, nearer and nearer to the Amulet, warm from the neck of Jane. And then, as one drop of water mingles with another on a rain wrinkled window pane, as one bead of quick silver is drawn into another bead, Rekh mara's Amulet slipped into the other one, and, behold! there was no more but the one Amulet!

'Black magic!' cried Rekh mara, and sprang forward to snatch the Amulet that had swallowed his. But Anthea caught it up, and at the same moment the Priest was jerked back by a rope thrown over his head. It drew, tightened with the pull of his forward leap, and bound his elbows to his sides. Before he had time to use his strength to free himself, Robert had knotted the cord behind him and tied it to the bedpost. Then the four children, overcoming the priest's wriggings and kickings, tied his legs with more rope.

'I thought,' said Robert, breathing hard, and drawing the last knot tight, 'he'd have a try for OURS, so I got the ropes out of the box room, so as to be ready.'

The girls, with rather white faces, applauded his foresight.

'Loosen these bonds!' cried Rekh mara in fury, 'before I blast you with the seven secret curses of Amen Ra!'

'We shouldn't be likely to loose them AFTER,' Robert retorted.

'Oh, don't quarrel!' said Anthea desperately. 'Look here, he has just as much right to the thing as we have. This,' she took up the Amulet that had swallowed the other one, 'this has got his in it as well as being ours. Let's go shares.'

'Let me go!' cried the Priest, writhing.

'Now, look here,' said Robert, 'if you make a row we can just open that window and call the police the guards, you know and tell them you've been trying to rob us. NOW will you shut up and listen to reason?'

'I suppose so,' said Rekh mara sulkily.

But reason could not be spoken to him till a whispered counsel had been held in the far corner by the washhand stand and the towel horse, a counsel rather long and very earnest.

At last Anthea detached herself from the group, and went back to the Priest.

'Look here,' she said in her kind little voice, 'we want to be friends. We want to help you. Let's make a treaty. Let's join together to get the Amulet the whole one, I mean. And then it shall belong to you as much as to us, and we shall all get our hearts' desire.'

'Fair words,' said the Priest, 'grow no onions.'

'WE say, "Butter no parsnips",' Jane put in. 'But don't you see we WANT to be fair? Only we want to bind you in the chains of honour and upright dealing.'

'Will you deal fairly by us?' said Robert.

'I will,' said the Priest. 'By the sacred, secret name that is written under the Altar of Amen Ra, I will deal fairly by you. Will you, too, take the oath of honourable partnership?'

'No,' said Anthea, on the instant, and added rather rashly. 'We don't swear in England, except in police courts, where the guards are, you know, and you don't want to go there. But when we SAY we'll do a thing it's the same as an oath to us we do it. You trust us, and we'll trust you.' She began to unbind his legs, and the boys hastened to untie his arms.

When he was free he stood up, stretched his arms, and laughed.

'Now,' he said, 'I am stronger than you and my oath is void. I have sworn by nothing, and my oath is nothing likewise. For there IS no secret, sacred name under the altar of Amen Ra.'

'Oh, yes there is!' said a voice from under the bed. Everyone started Rekh mara most of all.

Cyril stooped and pulled out the bath of sand where the Psammead slept. 'You don't know everything, though you ARE a Divine Father of the Temple of Amen,' said the Psammead shaking itself till the sand fell tinkling on the bath edge. 'There IS a secret, sacred name beneath the altar of

Amen Ra. Shall I call on that name?'

'No, no!' cried the Priest in terror.

'No,' said Jane, too. 'Don't let's have any calling names.'

'Besides,' said Rekh mara, who had turned very white indeed under his natural brownness, 'I was only going to say that though there isn't any name under '

'There IS,' said the Psammead threateningly.

'Well, even if there WASN'T, I will be bound by the wordless oath of your strangely upright land, and having said that I will be your friend I will be it.'

'Then that's all right,' said the Psammead; 'and there's the tea bell. What are you going to do with your distinguished partner? He can't go down to tea like that, you know.'

'You see we can't do anything till the 3rd of December,' said Anthea, 'that's when we are to find the whole charm. What can we do with Rekh mara till then?'

'Box room,' said Cyril briefly, 'and smuggle up his meals. It will be rather fun.'

'Like a fleeing Cavalier concealed from exasperated Roundheads,' said Robert. 'Yes.'

So Rekh mara was taken up to the box room and made as comfortable as possible in a snug nook between an old nursery fender and the wreck of a big four poster. They gave him a big rag bag to sit on, and an old, moth eaten fur coat off the nail on the door to keep him warm. And when they had had their own tea they took him some. He did not like the tea at all, but he liked the bread and butter, and cake that went with it. They took it in turns to sit with him during the evening, and left him fairly happy and quite settled for the night.

But when they went up in the morning with a kipper, a quarter of which each of them had gone without at breakfast, Rekh mara was gone! There was the cosy corner with the rag bag, and the moth eaten fur coat but the cosy corner was empty.

'Good riddance!' was naturally the first delightful thought in each mind. The second was less pleasing, because

everyone at once remembered that since his Amulet had been swallowed up by theirs which hung once more round the neck of Jane he could have no possible means of returning to his Egyptian past. Therefore he must be still in England, and probably somewhere quite near them, plotting mischief.

The attic was searched, to prevent mistakes, but quite vainly.

'The best thing we can do,' said Cyril, 'is to go through the half Amulet straight away, get the whole Amulet, and come back.'

'I don't know,' Anthea hesitated. 'Would that be quite fair? Perhaps he isn't really a base deceiver. Perhaps something's happened to him.'

'Happened?' said Cyril, 'not it! Besides, what COULD happen?'

'I don't know,' said Anthea. 'Perhaps burglars came in the night, and accidentally killed him, and took away the all that was mortal of him, you know to avoid discovery.'

'Or perhaps,' said Cyril, 'they hid the all that was mortal,

in one of those big trunks in the box room. SHALL WE GO BACK AND LOOK?' he added grimly.

'No, no!' Jane shuddered. 'Let's go and tell the Psammead and see what it says.'

'No,' said Anthea, 'let's ask the learned gentleman. If anything has happened to Rekh mara a gentleman's advice would be more useful than a Psammead's. And the learned gentleman'll only think it's a dream, like he always does.'

They tapped at the door, and on the 'Come in' entered. The learned gentleman was sitting in front of his untasted breakfast.

Opposite him, in the easy chair, sat Rekh mara!

'Hush!' said the learned gentleman very earnestly, 'please, hush! or the dream will go. I am learning ... Oh, what have I not learned in the last hour!'

'In the grey dawn,' said the Priest, 'I left my hiding place, and finding myself among these treasures from my own country, I remained. I feel more at home here somehow.'

'Of course I know it's a dream,' said the learned

gentleman feverishly, 'but, oh, ye gods! what a dream! By jove! ...'

'Call not upon the gods,' said the Priest, 'lest ye raise greater ones than ye can control. Already,' he explained to the children, 'he and I are as brothers, and his welfare is dear to me as my own.'

'He has told me,' the learned gentleman began, but Robert interrupted. This was no moment for manners.

'Have you told him,' he asked the Priest, 'all about the Amulet?'

'No,' said Rekh mara.

'Then tell him now. He is very learned. Perhaps he can tell us what to do.'

Rekh mara hesitated, then told and, oddly enough, none of the children ever could remember afterwards what it was that he did tell. Perhaps he used some magic to prevent their remembering.

When he had done the learned gentleman was silent, leaning his elbow on the table and his head on his hand.

'Dear Jimmy,' said Anthea gently, 'don't worry about it. We are sure to find it today, somehow.'

'Yes,' said Rekh mara, 'and perhaps, with it, Death.'

'It's to bring us our hearts' desire,' said Robert.

'Who knows,' said the Priest, 'what things undreamed of and infinitely desirable lie beyond the dark gates?'

'Oh, DON'T,' said Jane, almost whimpering.

The learned gentleman raised his head suddenly.

'Why not,' he suggested, 'go back into the Past? At a moment when the Amulet is unwatched. Wish to be with it, and that it shall be under your hand.'

It was the simplest thing in the world! And yet none of them had ever thought of it.

'Come,' cried Rekh mara, leaping up. 'Come NOW!'

'May may I come?' the learned gentleman timidly asked.

'It's only a dream, you know.'

'Come, and welcome, oh brother,' Rekh mara was beginning, but Cyril and Robert with one voice cried, 'NO.'

'You weren't with us in Atlantis,' Robert added, 'or you'd

know better than to let him come.'

'Dear Jimmy,' said Anthea, 'please don't ask to come. We'll go and be back again before you have time to know that we're gone.'

'And he, too?'

'We must keep together,' said Rekh mara, 'since there is but one perfect Amulet to which I and these children have equal claims.'

Jane held up the Amulet Rekh mara went first and they all passed through the great arch into which the Amulet grew at the Name of Power.

The learned gentleman saw through the arch a darkness lighted by smoky gleams. He rubbed his eyes. And he only rubbed them for ten seconds.

The children and the Priest were in a small, dark chamber. A square doorway of massive stone let in gleams of shifting light, and the sound of many voices chanting a slow, strange hymn. They stood listening. Now and then the chant quickened and the light grew brighter, as though fuel had

been thrown on a fire.

'Where are we?' whispered Anthea.

'And when?' whispered Robert.

'This is some shrine near the beginnings of belief,' said the Egyptian shivering. 'Take the Amulet and come away. It is cold here in the morning of the world.'

And then Jane felt that her hand was on a slab or table of stone, and, under her hand, something that felt like the charm that had so long hung round her neck, only it was thicker. Twice as thick.

'It's HERE!' she said, 'I've got it!' And she hardly knew the sound of her own voice.

'Come away,' repeated Rekh mara.

'I wish we could see more of this Temple,' said Robert resistingly.

'Come away,' the Priest urged, 'there is death all about, and strong magic. Listen.'

The chanting voices seemed to have grown louder and fiercer, and light stronger.

'They are coming!' cried Rekh mara. 'Quick, quick, the Amulet!'

Jane held it up.

'What a long time you've been rubbing your eyes!' said Anthea; 'don't you see we've got back?' The learned gentleman merely stared at her.

'Miss Anthea Miss Jane!' It was Nurse's voice, very much higher and squeaky and more exalted than usual.

'Oh, bother!' said everyone. Cyril adding, 'You just go on with the dream for a sec, Mr Jimmy, we'll be back directly. Nurse'll come up if we don't. SHE wouldn't think Rekh mara was a dream.'

Then they went down. Nurse was in the hall, an orange envelope in one hand, and a pink paper in the other.

'Your Pa and Ma's come home. "Reach London 11.15. Prepare rooms as directed in letter", and signed in their two names.'

'Oh, hooray! hooray! hooray!' shouted the boys and Jane. But Anthea could not shout, she was nearer crying.

'Oh,' she said almost in a whisper, 'then it WAS true. And we HAVE got our hearts' desire.'

'But I don't understand about the letter,' Nurse was saying. 'I haven't HAD no letter.'

'OH!' said Jane in a queer voice, 'I wonder whether it was one of those ... they came that night you know, when we were playing "devil in the dark" and I put them in the hat stand drawer, behind the clothes brushes and' she pulled out the drawer as she spoke 'and here they are!'

There was a letter for Nurse and one for the children. The letters told how Father had done being a war correspondent and was coming home; and how Mother and The Lamb were going to meet him in Italy and all come home together; and how The Lamb and Mother were quite well; and how a telegram would be sent to tell the day and the hour of their home coming.

'Mercy me!' said old Nurse. 'I declare if it's not too bad of You, Miss Jane. I shall have a nice to do getting things straight for your Pa and Ma.'

'Oh, never mind, Nurse,' said Jane, hugging her; 'isn't it just too lovely for anything!'

'We'll come and help you,' said Cyril. 'There's just something upstairs we've got to settle up, and then we'll all come and help you.'

'Get along with you,' said old Nurse, but she laughed jollily. 'Nice help YOU'D be. I know you. And it's ten o'clock now.'

There was, in fact, something upstairs that they had to settle. Quite a considerable something, too. And it took much longer than they expected.

A hasty rush into the boys' room secured the Psammead, very sandy and very cross.

'It doesn't matter how cross and sandy it is though,' said Anthea, 'it ought to be there at the final council.'

'It'll give the learned gentleman fits, I expect,' said Robert, 'when he sees it.'

But it didn't.

'The dream is growing more and more wonderful,' he

exclaimed, when the Psammead had been explained to him by Rekh mara. 'I have dreamed this beast before.'

'Now,' said Robert, 'Jane has got the half Amulet and I've got the whole. Show up, Jane.'

Jane untied the string and laid her half Amulet on the table, littered with dusty papers, and the clay cylinders marked all over with little marks like the little prints of birds' little feet. Robert laid down the whole Amulet, and Anthea gently restrained the eager hand of the learned gentleman as it reached out yearningly towards the 'perfect specimen'.

And then, just as before on the Marcella quilt, so now on the dusty litter of papers and curiosities, the half Amulet quivered and shook, and then, as steel is drawn to a magnet, it was drawn across the dusty manuscripts, nearer and nearer to the perfect Amulet, warm from the pocket of Robert. And then, as one drop of water mingles with another when the panes of the window are wrinkled with rain, as one bead of mercury is drawn into another bead, the half Amulet, that was the children's and was also Rekh mara's, slipped into the

whole Amulet, and, behold! there was only one the perfect and ultimate Charm.

'And THAT'S all right,' said the Psammead, breaking a breathless silence.

'Yes,' said Anthea, 'and we've got our hearts' desire. Father and Mother and The Lamb are coming home today.'

'But what about me?' said Rekh mara.

'What IS your heart's desire?' Anthea asked.

'Great and deep learning,' said the Priest, without a moment's hesitation. 'A learning greater and deeper than that of any man of my land and my time. But learning too great is useless. If I go back to my own land and my own age, who will believe my tales of what I have seen in the future? Let me stay here, be the great knower of all that has been, in that our time, so living to me, so old to you, about which your learned men speculate unceasingly, and often, HE tells me, vainly.'

'If I were you,' said the Psammead, 'I should ask the Amulet about that. It's a dangerous thing, trying to live in a

time that's not your own. You can't breathe an air that's thousands of centuries ahead of your lungs without feeling the effects of it, sooner or later. Prepare the mystic circle and consult the Amulet.'

'Oh, WHAT a dream!' cried the learned gentleman. 'Dear children, if you love me and I think you do, in dreams and out of them prepare the mystic circle and consult the Amulet!'

They did. As once before, when the sun had shone in August splendour, they crouched in a circle on the floor. Now the air outside was thick and yellow with the fog that by some strange decree always attends the Cattle Show week. And in the street costers were shouting. 'Ur Hekau Setcheh,' Jane said the Name of Power. And instantly the light went out, and all the sounds went out too, so that there was a silence and a darkness, both deeper than any darkness or silence that you have ever even dreamed of imagining. It was like being deaf or blind, only darker and quieter even than that.

Then out of that vast darkness and silence came a light

and a voice. The light was too faint to see anything by, and the voice was too small for you to hear what it said. But the light and the voice grew. And the light was the light that no man may look on and live, and the voice was the sweetest and most terrible voice in the world. The children cast down their eyes. And so did everyone.

'I speak,' said the voice. 'What is it that you would hear?'

There was a pause. Everyone was afraid to speak.

'What are we to do about Rekh mara?' said Robert suddenly and abruptly. 'Shall he go back through the Amulet to his own time, or '

'No one can pass through the Amulet now,' said the beautiful, terrible voice, 'to any land or any time. Only when it was imperfect could such things be. But men may pass through the perfect charm to the perfect union, which is not of time or space.'

'Would you be so very kind,' said Anthea tremulously, 'as to speak so that we can understand you? The Psammead

said something about Rekh mara not being able to live here, and if he can't get back ' She stopped, her heart was beating desperately in her throat, as it seemed.

'Nobody can continue to live in a land and in a time not appointed,' said the voice of glorious sweetness. 'But a soul may live, if in that other time and land there be found a soul so akin to it as to offer it refuge, in the body of that land and time, that thus they two may be one soul in one body.'

The children exchanged discouraged glances. But the eyes of Rekh mara and the learned gentleman met, and were kind to each other, and promised each other many things, secret and sacred and very beautiful.

Anthea saw the look. 'Oh, but,' she said, without at all meaning to say it, 'dear Jimmy's soul isn't at all like Rekh mara's. I'm certain it isn't. I don't want to be rude, but it ISN'T, you know. Dear Jimmy's soul is as good as gold, and '

'Nothing that is not good can pass beneath the double arch of my perfect Amulet,' said the voice. 'If both are willing, say the word of Power, and let the two souls become one for

ever and ever more.'

'Shall I?' asked Jane.

'Yes.'

'Yes.'

The voices were those of the Egyptian Priest and the learned gentleman, and the voices were eager, alive, thrilled with hope and the desire of great things.

So Jane took the Amulet from Robert and held it up between the two men, and said, for the last time, the word of Power.

'Ur Hekau Setcheh.'

The perfect Amulet grew into a double arch; the two arches leaned to each other making a great A.

'A stands for Amen,' whispered Jane; 'what he was a priest of.'

'Hush!' breathed Anthea.

The great double arch glowed in and through the green light that had been there since the Name of Power had first been spoken it glowed with a light more bright yet more soft

than the other light a glory and splendour and sweetness unspeakable. 'Come!' cried Rekh mara, holding out his hands.

'Come!' cried the learned gentleman, and he also held out his hands.

Each moved forward under the glowing, glorious arch of the perfect Amulet.

Then Rekh mara quavered and shook, and as steel is drawn to a magnet he was drawn, under the arch of magic, nearer and nearer to the learned gentleman. And, as one drop of water mingles with another, when the window glass is rain wrinkled, as one quick silver bead is drawn to another quick silver bead, Rekh mara, Divine Father of the Temple of Amen Ra, was drawn into, slipped into, disappeared into, and was one with Jimmy, the good, the beloved, the learned gentleman.

And suddenly it was good daylight and the December sun shone. The fog has passed away like a dream.

The Amulet was there little and complete in jane's hand,

and there were the other children and the Psammead, and the learned gentleman. But Rekh mara or the body of Rekh mara was not there any more. As for his soul ...

'Oh, the horrid thing!' cried Robert, and put his foot on a centipede as long as your finger, that crawled and wriggled and squirmed at the learned gentleman's feet.

'THAT,' said the Psammead, 'WAS the evil in the soul of Rekh mara.'

There was a deep silence.

'Then Rekh mara's HIM now?' said Jane at last.

'All that was good in Rekh mara,' said the Psammead.

'HE ought to have his heart's desire, too,' said Anthea, in a sort of stubborn gentleness.

'HIS heart's desire,' said the Psammead, 'is the perfect Amulet you hold in your hand. Yes and has been ever since he first saw the broken half of it.'

'We've got ours,' said Anthea softly.

'Yes,' said the Psammead its voice was crosser than they had ever heard it 'your parents are coming home. And what's

to become of ME? I shall be found out, and made a show of, and degraded in every possible way. I KNOW they'll make me go into Parliament hateful place all mud and no sand. That beautiful Baalbec temple in the desert! Plenty of good sand there, and no politics! I wish I were there, safe in the Past that I do.'

'I wish you were,' said the learned gentleman absently, yet polite as ever.

The Psammead swelled itself up, turned its long snail's eyes in one last lingering look at Anthea a loving look, she always said, and thought and vanished.

'Well,' said Anthea, after a silence, 'I suppose it's happy. The only thing it ever did really care for was SAND.'

'My dear children,' said the learned gentleman, 'I must have fallen asleep. I've had the most extraordinary dream.'

'I hope it was a nice one,' said Cyril with courtesy.

'Yes.... I feel a new man after it. Absolutely a new man.'

There was a ring at the front door bell. The opening of a door. Voices.

'It's THEM!' cried Robert, and a thrill ran through four hearts.

'Here!' cried Anthea, snatching the Amulet from Jane and pressing it into the hand of the learned gentleman. 'Here it's yours your very own a present from us, because you're Rekh mara as well as ... I mean, because you're such a dear.'

She hugged him briefly but fervently, and the four swept down the stairs to the hall, where a cabman was bringing in boxes, and where, heavily disguised in travelling cloaks and wraps, was their hearts' desire three fold Mother, Father, and The Lamb.

'Bless me!' said the learned gentleman, left alone, 'bless me! What a treasure! The dear children! It must be their affection that has given me these luminous apercus. I seem to see so many things now things I never saw before! The dear children! The dear, dear children!'

• End •