## JUDITH ARMYTAGE.

By Julian Hawthorne



HEN he graduated from the theological college, Geoffrey Armytage thought be had a live call to preach unto the nations; but after preaching to the parish-

ioners of Marl for 10 years he suspected he was on the wrong tack. The bent of his mind was speculative and metaphysical rather than theological or religious. He flattered himself that he was too strong for orthodoxy; but, in truth, he was too weak; he could not steer a straight course. He had married meanwhile and course. He had married meanwhile, and Judith was born: so he could not afford to quit the ministry. There he bung, between necessity and inclination—or conscience, as he called it—for nearly 10 years more.

A stranger by the name of Belzibo came to Marl one summer (it was a pretty, mounto Marl one summer (it was a pretty, mountainous spot), and sat in Armytage's church for six Sundays in succession. Mr. Belzibo was hard to make out. He was about 65, shabbily clad, with a ragged, grizzly beard and glowing eyes, set under shaggy eyebrows. He was of unusual hight, very lean, and walked with his hands clasped behind him and his grotesque visage thrust forward. His head was high above the ears and conical, covered with short gray hair. The top of his right ear had been cut off.

Nobody liked him, or knew what to

Nobody liked him, or knew what to make of him, and everybody feared him, except Judith Armytage, who was then eighteen. She treated him with a sort of unceremonious indifference, as if he were neither peculiar nor important. This was neither peculiar nor important. This was noticeable because, ordinarily, Judith was courteous, shy, and highly impressionable. She seemed to regard Belzibo not as a human creature exactly, but rather as a kind of animal-a thing without a soul-not a thing to

Belzibo came to dine at the parsonage one day. Mrs. Armytage had died some years before. The clergyman and Judith sat opposite each other at the small, square dining table, Belzibo at Judith's right; the fourth side was, of course, empty. After Judith had poured out the coffee, Belzibo abruptly said, "Armytage, have I your leave to make that girl my wife!"

"You? Your wife! Why—Judith"—stam-

mered Armytage, amazed.
"I have money, plenty of it," the other add-

"Do you know anything of this, daughter?" asked the clergyman.
"It is not worth heeding," said she, quite composedly. "There is your coffee, sir."
"I was a fine man 40 years ago," Belzibo rejoined, staring at the vacancy across the table.

table.

Judith looked at him and smiled.

"You don't believe it? Look!" said he.
He lifted his bony finger and pointed across the table. Armytage and his daughter both looked there. Armytage saw nothing. Judith turned pale, half rose from her chair and sank back again with a low cry.

"What is the matter, my dear?" inquired her father.

Judith shook her head and moistened her lips.
"What are 40 years?" ejaculated Belzibo,

with a dark glance at her.

"I knew you had lost it," returned she, commanding herself to speak.

"What is it?" repeated Armytage,

Belzibo grinned. "Metempsychosis," said

he. After a pause, he added, addressing Judith: "You will meet him again; and I will have you after all."

She had now recovered herself and said:
"I don't believe in those things. At any
rate it would make no difference. You are
what you are and I am I." With this she rose from the table and went out.

rose from the table and went out.

"Really, this is most extraordinary," exclaimed the clergyman.

"Let us change the subject," said Belzibo.

"I take an interest in you. You have no business in a pulpit. Your brain was built for other business. You want to burrow into the obscurity of things. The philosopher's stone—or Hermitic philosophy? What is the soul? What the body? What their creation? Is nature soluble and to be recomtion? Is nature soluble and to be recompounded? These are the kind of problems for you. Quit the church and take them up."
"It can't be," answered Armytage, with

from my calling. We cannot do what we would." "Pshaw! We can if we will. That's it.

When I was 25 I killed a man-murdered

him,"
"Mr. Belzibo!" protested the clergyman, his jaw falling.
"There, there! It may have been a case

of suicide. And I shouldn't mind repeating it now. How would you like ten thousand a year and a fine house and grounds of your it now. I fear you are talking at random, Mr.

Belzibo.

"Listen to me. Promise me to leave the pulpit and take up philosophy and you shall have them. Is it a bargain?" 'Come, come, Mr. Belzibo. I really

Belzibo struck the table heavily with his nand. "Is it a bargain, I say," he cried.
'Yes or no? Ten thousand a year and a

splendid property on condition you leave the ministry. I am in earnest, you fool—in dead Yes or no? Answer me!" "But I don't know-well then ves of

course!" faltered Armytage, flinching under the fierce stare and frightened by the imperious will.

perious will.

Belziho leaned back in his chair with a chuckle. Then he got up and, going over to Armytage, held out his hand.

"It's a bargain," said he. "Give me your hand on it. A bargain!"

Armytage faintly put forth his hand, which the other grasped in a cold, bony clutch

II

A week later news came that Belzibo, who had left Marl on the day following the above incident, was dead, and in due course Mr. Armytage was informed that the will of the deceased made him heir to \$200,000 and a handsome dwelling house, "The Cedars,"

standing in grounds 100 acres in extent or the sea shore. The house was completely furnished and contained a valuable library,

furnished and contained a valuable library, particularly rich in works on the occult sciences and speculative philosophy.

Armytage had said nothing to Judith about the "bargain" he had made with Belzibo; indeed, he had supposed the man must be jesting or crazy, and had tried to forget the affair. The news of the bequest gave him a shock, only partly disagreeable. Here was a future of luxury passad we his favorite but hitherto unenjoyed pursuits. Nothing was said in the will about conditions, but the whole thing was incomprehensible. It almost looked as if Belzibo had gone off and killed himself in order to keep his engagement. But why? To suppose that he cared for Armytage was absurd, and as for Judith, ment. But why? To suppose that he cared for Armytage was absurd, and as for Judith, had she not refused him with scorn? This was uncomfortable, but then, there was the

"An unlooked for blessing, indeed!" remarked he to Judith.
"I think it would be better not to accept

it," replied she.

"My dear, money is not to be sought to the exclusion of higher things, but neither are we to reject fortune when it comes. This bequest puts the world at your feet and leaves me free to study and—medi-

"You might, perhaps, do some good with it in the church," said Judith.

"I—it has been my intention—I have for some time determined to take the first opportunity to retire from the ministry," re-

turned her father.

She looked at him with a startled expres sion. "Don't do it, father!" she said earnest-ly. "No good will come of it. If you must keep the bequest, sell the Cedars and the estate, and live here; use the money in the parish.

"Perhaps. I will think it over. But I am getting old, and-there are other reasons. I will think it over, and decide," said Army-

The next morning he came down to breakfast with a ghastly look. "I must accept the legacy and give up the fight," were his first words to his daughter.

Judith glanced up at him and her face darkened. But she make no reply, and for several minutes there was silence. At length she said, in a quiet tone: "How did you sleep last night, father?"

Did you see it, too?" returned he, drawing in his breath.

"If it will make you more comfortable," she rejoined, evading a direct answer, "I am willing to go to the Cedars. The mischief has been done, and we will make the best of

it." So to the Cedars they went. Indeed, almost any one would have done so in their place. Mr. Armytage's sudden abandonment of the pulpit caused some gossip, as a matter of course, and super-titious old wimen declared that Belzibo was no other than the great Prince Beelzebub himself, and that he had bought the clergyman's soul and paid for it in real estate and cash. But this was abourd; for Mr. Belzibo was a retired sup-owner, who had made his fortune years be-fore, in the East Indian trade; and, assum-ing that he has a soul of his own, what would he want with anybody else's?

III.

The library more than made good the account given of it by its late owner; it contained everything in literature that could aid in making a man a modern magian. Mr. Armytage spent nearly all his time there, reading and writing. The comage in his habits and pursuits seemed to make a change in his character. A certain cheerfulness and playfulness of demeanor disappeared, and he became grave and reticent and averse to company. But he was evidently growing profoundly learned, and one cannot do that without making some

Ou the other hand, it is difficult for society On the other hand, it is difficult for society to distace wealthy people, especially when one of the people is a beautiful girl living a luxurious surroundings. Accordingly the Armytages had a great many visitors, or in other words, Judith had plenty of admirers. She showed a talent for managing things, and the household affairs proceeded in an orderly and handsome manner. Each quest was made to feel comfortable and as if careful attention were being shown him or careful attention were being shown him or her; as the same time no one was distinguished above the rest. Mr. Armytage was uni-formly produced upon fitting occasions, and middle-aged gentlemen and ladies were on hand to ask him about his studies and to exaid to them. Altogether it appeared to be

a successful menage.

Among the guests who turned up with a certain persistence that showed a liking for being there was John Revell, a man of 30 and upward, who had been in the army. He had lived a nomadic and adventurous life on his own account, and had sojourned several years in India. He was dark, quiet and massive, with a large square head, and eyes habit ally introsquare spective, but sometimes gleaning out in a look of exceeding penetration. He would pace up and down the veranda with his hands in his pockets and his head bent; he would sit motionless for hours in a corner with a book; he would often converse with Arymtage, betraying an extraordinary fa-miliarity with occult subjects; he spoke

little to Judith, but he watched her quietly. One summer afternoon, as she was walk ing along on a path bordering the shore, he came up from among some rocks on the beach and joined her. "Who is this Mr. Noel Mar?" he asked her after some general conversation. "Is he an old friend of your

We have known him about a year," said

"He resembles a man I once saw in India;" continued Revell. "He is much younger than that man would be now, but there is a than that man would be now, but there is a collection of the collecti strong likeness. He called himself Sart He was a rich man, engaged in trad-He called himself Sartane some sort, but he was not in very go d re pute. He had an unusual familiarity with the life of some of the native people, and it was said of him that he was an adept in

black magic. His end was rather odd."
"What was it?" asked Judith, who had listened with interest.
"He was found dead in his bungalow one morning, with a knife between his ribs. At the inquest it was in doubt whether he had committed suicide or been murdered. The

oody was named up in the coffin and left in charge to be buried the next day. But when they lifted the coffin to put it in the hearse it was unexpectedly light, and they opened it. The body was gone, and was never

"It had been stolen."
"It would seem so. But the seals were unroken. The natives said he had come to

the evil one. I was reminded of the story by your Mr. Mar."

"He is not my Mr. Mar," said Judith; and, after a pause, she added, "You never saw the former owner of our house, did von?"

Revell shook his head. "He was a retired merchant in the East India trade. He told us that he had once killed a man. He, too, resembled Mr. Mar very much; only he was a great deal

"What became of him?" asked Revell.
"He died here. His body was found lying in that clump of cedars. There was no apparent cause of death. But he seemed to have known that he was about to die, for he had executed his will only the day before, and had left directions that his body was to be buried where it was found."

They walked on in silence and presently came to the cedar grove. It stood on a sandy knoll near the water. Beneath the largest tree there was a low headstone, marking a grave, though there was no inscription on it. But as they approached they saw a figure stretched upon the mound—the figure of a man. It was, in fact, Mr., Mar, who now rose and advanced to meet them with a smile. He was a fine-looking personage, still young, with deep-set eyes beneath thick, dark brows and a narrow but lofty forebead. He was tall and slender and his bearing was graceful and in-

"The gentleman who rests there has chosen his place well," he remarked. "On a fine moonlight night one might expect to see his ghost there.

Ghosts sometimes walk by daylight,"

said Revell.
"And do I look like one?" rejoined Mar, laughing. "In that case I suppose the proper thing to do is to vanish and leave the living to their own desires. But be on your guard! for though I become invisible to the eye I may haunt you still!" So saying, with another laugh he turned off amidst the

another large he turned of amidst the shrubbery and was gone.

After a moment Revell turned to Judith and held out his hands.

"I love you," he said, in a deep voice.

"Will you be my wife?"

She looked searchingly in his eyes. "But—can you save me?" she asked.

He only nodded and threw his arms around

IV.

Meantime Mar returned along the shore towards the house, throwing roses at the waves as he went, and talking in an under-tone to himself. On arriving at the house he went direct to Mr. Armytage's study, and entered without knocking. Armytage, seated at his table, looked up with a pale

"I can waste no more time, Geoffrey," said the younger man. "It must be now!"
"She will never have you," returned the other, querulously. "You might at least do something to overcome her antipathy."
"Her antipathy is half her charm. Besides, I don't like that fellow Revell round her. He has hear sayding.

her. He has been spying on me, and means to make trouble."
"It would be more trouble after than be-

fore."
"Not for me!" said Mar, smiling, "Come,
and that's enough. I have fulfilled my part of the bargain. You are very comfortable here. Do you want to be kicked out into the wilderness, to starve to death? Do you think I would let up on

Mr. Armytage groaned. "Why don't you tell her yourself, then?"
"It will come more gracefully, from you.
She might think I was romancing."
"I wish you were dead!" said ....nytage.

Mar laughed again. "Is there not a grave under the cedars?" said he. Arymtage rose from his chair and walked to the window, which looked out across the sea. After standing there a few moment he said, without turning around, "I will at tend to it." When, soon after, he again faced about, he was alone.

Late that evening a great bank of clouds that had been gradually accumulating in the west rolled up over the Cedars and burst in a thunderstorm, which raged furiously until far into the night, and raised a surf that sounded upon the shore like the explos-

ions of cannon. The study was lighted by a lamp pendant from the ceiling, moderated by a screen of silken gauze. Arymtage and Mar were con-versing in low tones at the table. "I shall take her away tonight." said the latter, "as soon as the ceremony is over. I don't like the looks of that fellow Revell. Do you take care to play your part straight. You know what I can do with you!"

'Are you a man or a devil?" said the

"A distinction without a difference, father-in-law! But I am so far different that I am fed by souls, as other men by flesh and wine: without them I perish. But woe to him who cheats me of my chosen meal

I pay a fair price and I will be served!"
"She is coming!" exclaimed Armytage in

a whisper. "Oh, my daughter!"

Mar stepped behind the curtains in the window as Judith entered. The clock struck The reverberations of the thunder and the waves filled the room with heavy, muffled murmurs.

"Do you want me tonight, father?"
Judith asked.

"One more experiment that I wish to try, my dear," replied he, in a deprecating tone. "I can promise you that it will be the last. You have already helped me to discover secrets known to no one else. Your clairvoyance is without parallel. One more voyage into the other world and we are

'Father," said Judith, "I am your daughter, but I am a woman, too, with an immor tal soul. I have given you a power over me by which you might destroy me if you

would If you were to betray me would. If you were to betray me, do you think that any gain it might bring you would make you happy! I have a right to my own life and love and happiness. Will you not stop here! Let us live an open and hon-est life among human beings and let these subtle mysteries go—for your sake as much as mine! It would be better to starve so than to live with anything between us and truth. Think, father!"

"My dear, your distrust hurts me! What can I desire but your well-being! And I am a better judge of what will secure that than a girl like you can be. Why should you beside the state of t tate now more than at another time? Do you

doubt my love for you?"

Judith remained gazing at him a few moments, with a strange smile on her lips. He avoided her glance, affecting to be occupied with some papers on the table. In those few silent moments a great stake was won and lost. Presently she said: "I am ready, then," and seated herself on a low, reclining chair, a little removed from the table. She seated herself at ease, folded her hands and closed her eyes. He father stood up and looked at her.

The light of the lamp became fainter till

the room was very dusky. A sound like the low, mellow note of a distant bell came to the ear in monotonous regularity. Judith lay motionless, save for a slow, inward respiration. The pulsations of the bell were like the beating of a heart, gradually becoming less and less. The cheeks and lips of the girl grew colorless. She lay like one dead, for even her breathing had become impercentible. imperceptible.

imperceptible.

Armytage made a sign, and Mar stepped forth from behind the curtain. He trod noiselessly to the side of the girl and contemplated her with a peculiar grimace, in which a sort of burning hunger was mingled with an expression of malice. But presently he shook his head and frowned.

"After all," muttered he, "it is not Judith that I shall get, but another woman. What is a soul? What will become of her whom we call Judith? Well, no matter! Make your conjuration. I will find means to reach her through the vells of identity."

Armytage now seated himself beside Ju-

Armytage now seated himself beside Judith and laid his hand on hers. "Judith," he said to her in a husky voice, "You love Robert Mar. You will always love him, You will be his wife and do his bidding. No one else can ever come between you and him. Waking or sleening you will be his. him. Waking or sleeping, you will be his. Body and soul, you will be his till your life

He paused and they heard the roll of the thunder, the booming of the surf and the

rush of the rain.
"That will do," said Mar. "Now, rouse her and let us finish." er and let us finish."

Armytage struck his hands sharply toether. "Wake!" exclaimed he. "Wake,

But not an eyelash quivered; not a breath stirred her bosom. She lay like one dead. Was she dead, indeed! "What does this mean?" demanded Mar, suspiciously. "Are you trying to play me a trick? You might as safely play with that

lightning!"
"I don't understand it!" returned Army tage, in a voice of alarm, as he made renewed efforts to arouse her. "My God, what can have happened! Have we murdered her! Judith! Judith!"

"You cannot deceive me," said Mar, with a sneer. "Unless she awakens at once, you must suffer the consequences. You know

must suffer the consequences. You know what they are!"

"Oh, God—Judith—mercy—save me!" cried the other, falling in agony on his knees beside his daughter. There was no response. After a moment of dead silence, while even the voice of the storm seemed hushed, Mar slowly raised his arms. Armytage started wildly to his feet, uttering a piercing scream that died away in a guttural quaver. With his hands before his face, he appeared to be striving to fight away some enemy that his hands before his face, he appeared to be striving to fight away some enemy that clutched at his throat. He staggered backward, stumbling and recling, till he was caught in an angle of the wall, where he crouched down, a chuckle of imbecile laughter dribbling through his lips. Then an iron hand fell on Mar's neck. "What are you doing, Bolzito Sartane?" said the deep voice of John Revell.

Mar turned with a savage cry and strug-gled furiously to free himself. He was strong and lithe as a serpent, but he was held by the strength of a lion. The struggle lasted but for a few breathless minutes. Revell forced him down, and, with his knee upon his breast, disarmed him of the knife concealed in his side. Then he flung him off

and confronted him sternly. not a a safe place for you. God sent me to protect this girl. I fought you and your wretched victim there with your own weapons. Now, be off, or I will show you no more consideration than you meant to show

"But she is dead!" snarled the other, gasp-

"No, she lives," replied Revell, "and her life in future will be safe from any influence except what comes from her own heart and will. Awake, Judith," he continued, beckoning to the sleeping girl. "The trouble is past. You are free."

sst You are free."

She sighed, moved, unclosed her eyes and slowly raised herself on one arm. Her glance, at first bewildered, finally rested on Revell, and with a smile she rose and came to him. He put one arm round her shoulders and so faced the defeated enemy. But he, by whatever name he might be known, seemed to dread the regard of her aves more than the dread the regard of her eyes more than the power of man. There must have been the remnant of something human in him. He covered his face and slunk back into the shadow of the room. They did not see him pass the threshold, but when Revell revived the light of the lamp he was gone.

The storm passed away during the night, and the morning was as fresh and pure as a maiden's soul. Walking along the dimpling margin of the blue sea, Judith and her lover came to the grove of cedars. The largest of them had been struck by a lightning bolt and was spilt from summit to base, and the headstone of the grave was shattered.

And there lay the body of a man, seeming to wear the features of Mar. Yet the face was that of an aged man, with grizzled hair and furrowed skin. He dead but there was no mark of death upon him. Perhaps he had died long before, or perhaps the vision of an unattainted love had him with the death to which comes no hereafter.

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