LADY ALYMER.

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW IDEA.

d Aylmer was sitting alone in his li-, smoking a cigarette, and wondering answer Dick would bring him, when ght proper to come again to give in ction.

was a handsome old man, not so very years, but aged in wickedness. A ome man still, with aquiline features, ed face and a goodly crop of white, hair. Your first thought on looking was, "What a charming old gentle- your second, "What a pair of steely your third, "What a Mephistophe- Yes, without the shadow of a doubt, Aylmer was a wicked man, with a art filled to the brim, and running with all manner of evil.

ey say, you know, that women novel- always make their heroines all good, they are as insipid as the dummies in a ler's window; or else that they go to other extreme, and make their villains ch unmitigated villains that it is impossi- to find one single ray of virtue where- h to redeem their character from its y pall of utter blackness. But let me you that if all the women novelists who te stories in the English language were concentrate their efforts upon the task trying to depict the villainy of Lord ylmer's natural depravity, I am afraid that in the end they would have to call in the aid of their masculine confreres to ade- quately complete the portrait. For the noble lord was all bad, thoroughly bad—what up in the North country they call "bad, core through." Yet he had a delight- ful manner when he chose, and in early middle age had made a genuine love-match with a beautiful young woman at least sixteen years younger than himself—a penniless as well as a beautiful young woman, upon whom he had lavished so much love and attention that within three months of his marriage his love had burned itself out and was as dead as any dead volcano. A few weeks later, Lord Aylmer practically separated himself from his wife, although they continued to share the same house, and he appeared before the world as much as possible as if no breach had ever been opened between them.

Not by Lord Aylmer's desire, this—oh! no, but because her ladyship had never been so genuinely in love with him as he had been with her, and was moreover perfectly alive to the solid worldly advantages of being Lord Aylmer's wife, the mistress of Aylmer's Field and of the handsome town house in Belgrave square.

"Of course, I know that there are oth- ers," she said in reply to a dear friend, who thought it her duty to open this young wife's eyes, "and, of course, I know that Aylmer wants to get rid of me; but I don't mean to be got rid of, and I put up with the others because I think doing so the least of two evils. There is only one Lady Aylmer, and she is a strong and healthy young woman, who means to be Lady Aylmer for at least fifty years longer. Yes, I know, my dear, all that you feel about it. I quite appreciate your feeling toward me. Oh, yes! it was your duty to tell me, but I am not going to cut myself out of all that makes life worth living, just to oblige a husband who has got tired of me in three months."

To this decision Lady Aylmer had from that time forward kept most rigidly. As far as her husband was concerned, nothing seemed to annoy her, and whenever she wished to do so and condescended to try to get her own way by means of a little flat- tery, she generally succeeded; and now that Lord Aylmer had got into the "sixties," she was simply a stately, even-tempered, iron- willed and exceedingly healthy woman, who looked as if she meant to live to be ninety.

It was partly on the subject of his wife's extreme healthiness that Lord Aylmer was thinking that morning as he smoked his cigarette and tried to assure himself that the twinges in his left foot were merely a sign of a coming shower and nothing in the world to do with gout at all. And just as a worse twinge than usual made him wince and shiver, the door opened gently and a man-servant made his appearance.

"Mr. Aylmer is here, my lord," he said. "Will your lordship see him?"

"Certainly, of course," exclaimed his lordship. "Show him here at once."

The man retired, and in a minute or two returned with Dick, who said "Good- morning" to his uncle with an air of cheer- ful civility.

"H'gh!" grunted the old lord, "morning. Well?"

"Well, sir," said Dick, "I have thought the matter over, and although I have not and never have had any wish to go to India, I have decided that it will be best for me to accept the appointment you were good enough to get for me.

"Oh!—er, I'm glad you've come to your senses at last," said the old lord a shade more graciously. "Well, you had better go and see Barry Boynton about it—that will be the best. And then you'll have to get your affairs put in order, make your will and all that."

"I have made my will," said Dick, promptly, "although it's true I haven't very much to make it for."

"Ah! that's good—those things ought always to be done before they are wanted. By the bye, Dick, are you hard up or any- thing of that kind?" Do you want any money?"

"No, sir, thanks. I could do with a hundred or two, of course—who couldn't? But I am not in debt or anything of that sort."

The old lord caressed his white mus- tache and looked at his heir with a sort of comical wonder. "'Pon my soul!" he re- marked, "I can't tell how you do it.'

"Eh?" said Dick, not understanding, and in fact not interested in his uncle's thoughts.

"Well, how do you do it? Expensive regiment—flat in Palace Mansions—Rivi- ere, and all the rest."

Dick shrugged his shoulders. "Well, sir, I don't owe a penny in the world, I've you my word."

"Ah! Mrs. Harris must be a young lady of very moderate desires," said Lord Aylmer, lighting another cigarette. "Have one?"

"No, thank you, sir," returned Dick.

"And what will become of Mrs. Harris when you are gone to India, eh?" the old man asked with a great air of interest.

"Well, sir, said Dick, "I always make it a rule never to talk about my friends' private affairs, even when I happen to know them."

"You won't tell me," Lord Aylmer chuck- led. "Oh, very well, very well, never mind. I can take a hint as well as any- body."

"When it suits your purpose," Dick's thoughts ran, as he watched the handsome, wicked old face.

Then he got up from his chair. "If you don't want me any longer, sir, I shall go and pay my respects to the lady. By-the bye, I hope you are less anxious about her than you were a short time ago."

Lord Aylmer jumped up in a fury and stamped his gouty foot hard upon the floor. "Damme," he cried, "that woman is like an indian-rubber ball, and as hard as nails into the bargain."

"Then she is better," said Dick, with an air of profound and anxious interest.

"Better!" Damme," the old savage cried, "she's outrageously well, sir. Damme, her healthiness is positively aggresive."

"But that must be a great relief to your mind, sir," said Dick with perfect gravity.

"'Relief!" the other echoed, then seem- ed to recollect himself a little. "Ah! yes, yes, of course—to be sure. Well, go and see her. I dare say you will find her in the boudoir."

Dick felt himself dismissed with a wave of the old lord's hand, and being never very anxious to remain in his presence, he betook himself away, and went to find her ladyship. But Lady Alymer was not in the house—had, in fact, been gone some time before he reached it; so Dick jumped into a cab and went back to Palace Man- sions to Dorothy, who met him with a new idea.

"Dick, darling," she said, "I know that you are worrying about me, and what I shall do when you are gone and I have thought of something."

"Yes. Have you thought that, after all it would be safe for you to go right out and risk everything?"

"No, because you do not go till Septem- ber, and by then I shall have got very near to the time. No, it is not that at all; but you will have leave until you sail, won't you?"

"Yes."

"Then might we not to go sea for a month. I am pining for a breath of sea air, and it will be good for you, too."

"That is easy enough. Where shall we go? Tenby—or would you rather be nearer to Graveleigh."

"We could not go to any of the places near Graveleigh, Dick—I should be meeting people there."

"Yes; but we might go to Overstrand or Cromer, or go down to one of the little quiet places near Ramsgate. Why, if you like, we might even go to Ramsgate or Margate itself."

"I don't in the least care where!" Dor- othy replied. But what I wanted to say is this—you remember my cousin, Esther Brand?"

"I've heard you speak of her."

"Well, when you are gone, would you let me write to her and ask her to come and stay with me till I am ready to come after you? She is young and kind, and I am very fond of her, and altogether it would be very different for me than if I had no- body except Barbara."

"My dearest, you shall do exactly as you think best about that," Dick said, without hesitation. "It is a good idea, and if she is nice and won't worry you about being married in this way"——

"She won't know, dear," Dorothy cried, "I shall show her my marriage-lines, and say that you are gone, and that I am going to join you as soon as I can."

"She will be sure to ask my regiment."

"Not at all. Besides, you are going out to an appointment, are you not?"

"Yes, true. Well, then, do as you think best about it," he said. "Of course, I shall be a great deal easier in my mind, and then she will be able to see you off, and all that. Oh, yes, it will be a very good thing in every way."

Dorothy clapped her hands together and laughed quite joyously. "Oh, Dick, dear," she cried, "I'm so glad you don't mind—I feel quite brave about being left now. I do wish, though, that you could see Esther. She is so tall and strong, very handsome, smooth, dark hair and great dark eyes—quite a girl who ought to be called Esther or Olive. And then she has always been rich, and for five years she has been absol- utely her own mistress, and has travelled about everywhere."

"Won't she think it odd that you have never written to her all this time?"

"I don't think so. Esther is not a girl who thanks you for letters unless you have something special to say."

Dick put his arm round his little wife's waist. "And you have something very, very special to tell her, haven't you?" he said tenderly, then cried with an uncon- trollable burst of anguish. "Oh, my love my love, you don't know—you will never know what it will cost me to go away and leave you just now, when you will want, me most of all."

"Never mind, Dick," she said, bravely, "I am not afraid.

Looking at her, he saw that she spoke the truth and only the truth—her eyes met his, clear and true, and the smile which played about her sweet mouth was not marred by any expression of the agony which she had suffered during the few previous days. A week ago she had been more Dick's sweetheart than his wife; now she was not only his wife, but had also in her eyes the proud light of motherhood—"Filled was her soul with love, and the dawn of an opening heaven."

CHAPTER V.

ALONE.

There is no need for me to tell of the month which Dick and his wife passed together at a secluded little watering place on the Norfolk coast, nor of the scramble which Dick had at the last to get ready for the appointed day of sailing for the Shining East. It is enough to say that under an unusually painful parting he tore himself away, and Dorothy found herself left alone in the pretty flat, face to face with the sorest trial of her life.

A week before she had written to her cousin, Esther Brand, but she had had no reply. That had not surprised her much, for Esther was a restless soul, never so happy as when moving about from place to place. Apart from that, London is scarcely the place to look for rich and idle people in September, and Dorothy had addressed her letter to her cousin's bankers, knowing that it would be the surest and probably the quickest way of finding her. But when Dick was gone, Dorothy began to get very anx- ious for a letter from Esther, to watch for the post, and to wonder impatiently what Esther could possibly have done with her- self and whether she had got her letter or not. But for several days there was still silence, and at last, just when Dorothy was beginning to despair, it came.

"Here is your letter, Miss Dorothy," cried Barbara, hurrying into the room with it.

"Oh, Barbara!" Dorothy cried, excitedly.

In a moment she had torn it open and was reading it aloud to Barbara. "Oh, it is from Russia, Fancy Miss Brand being in Russia, Barbara, and she says:

"My Very Dear Little Dorothy:—So you are married! I can hardly believe it—in- deed, since having your letter this morning, I have been saying to myself over and over again, 'Dorothy Strode is married—little Dorothy has got married,' and still I do not in the least realize it. So you are very happy, of course, and you are going to have a baby—that is almost an 'of course' also

And your husband has got a good ap- pointment in India which he does not dare to refuse. That looks like bread-and-cheese and kisses, my dear little cousin. However, not that money makes any difference to one's happiness, and so long as you love him and he loves you nothing else matters, money least of all. But why, my dear, have you waited so long before you told me of your new ties? I have wondered so often where you were and what had become of you, and about four months ago I wrote to the old house and had your letter returned by a horrid young man, David Stevenson, whom I disliked always beyond measure. He informed me that you had left immedi- ately after dear auntie's death and that he did not know your present address. I felt a little anxious about you, but eminently relieved to find that you were evidently not going to marry that detestable young man, who is, I have no noubt, all that is good and estimable and affluent, but whom, as I said, I have never liked.

"Well, my dear child, you must let me be god-mother to the baby when it comes, that I may spend as much money over its coral and bells as I should have done over a wedding gift to you. As for coming to you—my darling child, of course I shall come straight back, and help Barbara to make up to you for the temporary loss of your spouse. I gather from your letter that he is all that is good and kind and brave, to say nothing of being handsome and loving and true—you lucky little girl!

"Expect me when you see me, dear, which will be as soon as I can possibly get myself to London. If I were on the other side of the frontier, I could pretty nearly fix both day and time. As it is, I can only say that I will lose no time in being with you, and I will stick to you till I see you safe on board the P. and O. steamer.

"My love to Barbara—how she and I will yarn together over the old place and the old days!—and much love to you, dear little woman. From your always affection- ate

"ESTHER."

This letter in itself was enough to put Dorothy into the wildest and gayest of spirits, and Barbara was almost as much delighted; for, truth to tell, the old ser- vant had looked forward with no little dis- may to the prospect of supporting her loved young mistress through her hour of lone- liness and trial, and was therefore greatly relieved to find that the responsibility of the situation would fall upon the strong and capable shoulders of Miss Esther Brand instead of lying upon her own weaker ones.

"It is so good and sweet and dear of Esther," Dorothy repeated over and over again. "Just like her to throw everything else aside on the chance of being able to do a good turn to some one in need. Now, I don't feel half so nervous as I did."

"Nor I," echoed Barbara speaking out of her very heart; then she added, with a sig- nificant smile: "Miss Esther never could abide David Stevenson—neither could I."

Dorothy could not help laughing. "Ah! I think you were all just a little hard on David. I didn't want to be Mrs. David, it is true. But apart from that, I don't see that there was so much amiss with him."

"H'm!" remarked Barbara, with another sniff, "perhaps not. But for all that, Miss Dorothy—Ma'am, I should say—David Ste- venson was a mean boy, and I never could abide meanness in man, woman or child."

"He was most generous to me," said Dorothy, with a sigh.

"Yes, to serve his own ends," said Bar- bara, sharply. "You may take such gene- rosity as that for me. Not that I was speaking of that, ma'am, for I wasn't, but of the time when David was a boy—a hor- rid boy, who thought nothing of stealing the best apples and letting another take the blame of it."

"Oh, Barbara! Barbara!" cried Dorothy, "you've got hold of a wrong story. Why, I know that once when David stole some of Auntie's apples, and young Tom Merri- man got the blame, David came and told Auntie himself."

"Yes; and for why?" demanded Bar- bara, with uncompromising sternness. "Be- cause I happened to have got the young limb at it and collared him before he could get away. 'You are stealing Miss Dims- dale's apples, David Stevenson, I said, laying hold of him sudden-like; 'and you stole them other apples that Tom Merri- man has been sacked for.' 'And what's that to you, you old sneak?' he asked. 'Sneak or no sneak,' said I, 'you'll turn out your pockets to me, my fine gentleman; and you'll go straight up to the house and you'll tell Miss Dimsdale that it was you stole the apples last week, and then you'll go and ask Tom Merriman's pardon for having let him lie under your fault.' 'That I shan't,' say he. 'Then,' says I. 'I just walks you right off to Miss Dimsdale, and she'll see you with your pockets full, red- handed as you are. No,' says I, 'it's no use to struggle, I've got you safe by the arms, and so I mean to keep you, whether you like it or not. And if once Miss Dims- dale knows the truth, do you know what she'll do, David Stevenson?' says I. 'No,' says he sulkily. 'What?' 'She'll never step to think that you're David Stevenson, of Holyrod,' I says, 'but she'll just hand you over to the constable at once, and I don't think, my young gentleman,' I adds, 'that Tom Merriman having got the sack to fill your inside with ill-gotten goods I'll help you with the bench in the very least.'"

"Well, so I suppose he gave in," said Dorothy, who was deeply interested.

"Well, of course he had to," returned Barbara, with practical plainness; "but, all the same, he never forgave me for having been the one to get the better of him, and never forgot it, not to the very last day we were at the Hall. Ah! Miss Dorothy, darling, if you had thought proper to marry David Stevenson, you would have had to do without me. He never would have had me about him, and I wouldn't have taken service under his roof—no, not to save my- self from ending my days in the work- house."

"Barbara, Barbara!" cried Dorothy, chidingly, "not for me?"

"Well if you had put it in that way, Miss Dorothy, you might have got over me," the old woman answered.

But stay! I think I ought to say here that, although I have called her old in many parts of this story, Barbara was not, and could not reasonably be called an old woman in the common acceptation of the word. She was a year or so over fifty, and a very strong, hale woman at that, and at this time to Dorothy she was as a very rock and tower of strength.

Well, by virtue of the letter from Esther Brand and in the joy of expectation at her coming, Dorothy passed that day with quite a light heart, and even sat down to the little piano and sang one or two of the songs that Dick liked best. And then she went to bed and slept, leaving the door open between her room and Barbara's for company and she dreamed, as she always did, about Dick.

Nor was it a pleasant dream. She saw Dick on board of a large steamer, wearing white clothes and a sailor hat, looking very bronzed and happy. He was leaning over the side of the ship, with a cigarette in his mouth, just as she had seen him many a time, and by his side there stood a beauti- ful lady—not a girl like Dorothy herself, but a beautiful woman of about thirty years old, such a woman as Dorothy fancied her old friend at home, Lady Jane Stuart, might have been at that age. They seemed to be talking earnestly together, and after a time—such a long time it seemed in her dream—Dick took one of the lady's hands and raised it to his lips; then she laughed and said something, and Dick caught her to him and kissed her on the lips. Immediate- ly afterward, while Dorothy, with frozen lips, was gazing at them, Dick turned his head and looked her full in the eyes with the glance of an utter stranger.

With a shriek, Dorothy awoke—the sun was streaming in at the sides of the window blinds, and Barbara was just coming through the doorway with a little tray bearing Dorothy's early cup of tea.

"Did I scream, Barbara?" Dorothy gasp- ed.

"A bit of a cry. What ailed you, ma'am?" Barbara asked.

"Oh! I was so frightened—I had such a horrid dream about the master. I thought"—

But Dorothy did not complete the sen- tence, for Barbara put out her hand with a horrified look. "Nay, now, Miss Dorothy, don't tell it. Whatever you do, don't tell me."

"But why?" cried Dorothy open-eyed.

"You should never tell a dream before noon, Miss Dorothy," returned Barbara, portentously.

"Oh!" exclaimed Dorothy, "isn't it lucky?" She knew that Barbara was a great believer in luck, and signs and omens.

"It's fatal, answered Barbara, solemnly, whereat Dorothy burst out laughing and the worst feelings of dread with which she had awakened passed away.

"I think," she said, after breakfast, when Barbara was clearing the table, "that I shall put on my hat and go up to the High Street; I cannot finish this till I get some more lace;" then she held it up and showed it off to Barbara. "Isn't it sweet?" she ex- claimed, with intense satisfaction.

"It's lovely," returned Barbara, who was overjoyed at the prospect of a baby. "Then do you wish me to go with you, ma'am, or will you go alone?"

"Do you want to go?" Dorothy asked.

"Well, ma'am, to be honest, I don't. I want to turn the room out for Miss Esther. You see, she may come nearly as fast as her letter, and I shouln't like to put her into a dirty room."

"It can't be dirty, Barbara," cried Doro- thy, laughing, "because nobody has ever slept in it."

"Well, ma'am," Barbara retorted. "I can't say that I know a dirtier person than Mr. Nobody—on the whole."

Dorothy laughed. "Well, then you evi- dently have a lot to do, and I would just as soon go alone. So I will go soon, before I get tired or the day gets hot;" for, although September was half over, the weather just then was most sultry and trying to those not in the best of health.

She was soon ready, and went into the cozy kitchen to ask Barbara is there was anything that she wanted, but she did not happen to want anything at all.

"Do I look all right?" Dorothy asked, turning herself about.

"Yes, you look very sweet this morning, Miss Dorothy," said Barbara. "I wish the master could see you this minute."

"So do I," echoed Dorothy, promptly. "Well, he will see me soon enough, soon enough. Good-by, Barbara."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

ENGLISH SPRING.

Ideal Weather Prevailing—London's Meta- morphosis—Shopkeepers' Complaints.

A despatch from London says:—Ideal spring weather has prevailed during the past week and London is looking its best. The parks are crowded morning and after- noon, and everybody seems to be enjoying the change from the cold and fogs of win- ter to the sunshine of coming summer. Thus the season begins auspiciously, though there is the usual stack of complaints from tradesmen who grumble because the mem- bers of the Royal family intend to spend but little time in town. Then, again, the shopkeepers are grumbling because the Queen is going to crowd two drawing-rooms into a fortnight, for, in their opinions, there cannot be too many public displays, and they have particular sympathy with such events as Queen's drawing-rooms, because, naturally, they are occasion for a great display of finery and a consequent expenditure of much money.

ROUND THE WHOLE WORLD

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE FOU CORNERS OF THE GLOBE.

Old and New World Events of Interest Chronicled Briefly—Interesting Had penings of Recent Date.

In Italy 30 persons out of 10,000 die by the assassin's knife.

To-day it costs £187,500,000 per annum to maintain the peace of Europe.

The expenses of the Queen's household are estimated at £172,000 a year.

The use of blood as a curative agent is said to be on the increase in Paris.

The smallest number of telegraphic mes- sages is sent in Norway, the largest in Great Britain.

At the head of the 250 women nurses in the hospitals of Japan is the Countess Nere, wife of Admiral Nere.

The Algerian mountain, Dshebel Naibo, is slowly sinking. In the time of Caesar it was 400 feet high; now it is only 800.

The Pastor's College in connection with Spurgeon's church has sent out 921 persons into the ministry; 23 in the past year.

The Orsini family at Florence is about to sue the Emperor of Austria to recover a sum of money due to it ever since 1749.

Miss Braddon, the novelist, has lost her husband, Mr. John Maxwell. He was a publisher, and 25 years ago started Temple Bar.

Robbing graves is the only crime under Chinese law, for which the thief may be justly killed on the spot by anyone finding

Elizabeth Vierebe died recently in a German village, aged 93. She had been a servant in one household for seventy-nine years.

A wealthy English woman has married a coloured man, who, previous to this union, had made his living as a clog dancer, in variety halls.

The Hudson Bay sales in London this year of martin furs alone netted the com- pany over $200,000. Other grades have also brought advanced prices.

Abbeyleix, in Leinster, is troubled over a venerable pauper of 105, who, having been a Protestant all his life, has now concluded to become a Catholic.

The statistics issued by the syndicate of silk merchants at Lyons show the produc- tion of raw silk in the world for 1893 to be over 27,000,000 pounds.

Australia is the only country in the world to which ruminating animals are not indigenous, and yet cattle and sheep of various breeds thrive there amazingly.

Overland telegraphic communication be- tween India and China has at last been established by the junction of the Burmese and Chinese lines on the 16th of March.

The smallest race of human beings known are the inhabitants of Andaman Islands. Their average stature is 3 1-2 feet, and few of them weigh more than 65 lbs.

M. Guzman, a musical enthusiast, has left 50,000 francs to the city of Paris to pay for musical entertainments for the sick poor in hospitals and asylums.

The Czar is the most comfortably fixed financially, of any European monarch. He has no civil list, salary or allowance. He just helps himself to all he needs, and the treasurer's only duty is to see those needs supplied.

State Councillor Joseph Kemp, who has been nominated President of the Swiss Confederation for the year 1895, is the first Conservative Catholic who has been appointed to the highest office of the little republic. He is 60 years of age.

Gallini, in his "Travels in Africa," de- clares that the people of the west coast are exceedingly fond of dancing. He once tried to tire them out, but as long as he could raise his hands to his violin they continued to dance, and he was forced to desist.

Gen. Sommer, commanding an Austrian brigade in Bosnia, has been experimenting successfully with dogs for war purposes. A hundred and fifty dogs have been taught to carry the mails into the mountains to distances that occupy them two or three hours.

The Earl and Countess of Devon have just celebrated their diamond wedding. The Earl, who is rector of Powdenham and a prebendary of Exeter Cathedral, is one of the most popular men in Devonshire, and the Countess has been unwearied in good works.

Vincent Silva, a member of a band of robbers and assassins in New Mexico, killed his wife because he was afraid she would betray him to the authorities. When he boasted of his deed to some companions they killed him and buried him in the grave with his wife.

The Empress Dowager of Russia has a jointure of $500,000 per annum, and a palace in St. Petersburg, a country place and the villa Livadia, where the Czar died, for life, all the establishments to be kept up by the State, quite independent of her income. The young daughters get $200,000 a year when they come of age.

The Austrian state railways are now using liquid fuel. It is reported that the results obtained from the Holden injectors have been excellent in all respects, partic- ularly on account of the control the system gives the firemen over the fire, and that these injectors are to be adopted on the engines of the Metropolitan railway of Vi- enna.

The Japanese speak backward, write backward, read backward and even think backward, according to European notions, wear white for mourning. The post of honor is at the left, not the right, of the host. The best room is in the rear of the house, not the front. They prepare to enter a house by removing the shoes not the hat. They tie their horses' heads to the back end of the stall, and laugh at funerals.

Jacobites still exist in England. On the 30th of January, the anniversary of the execution of King Charles I., they held a memorial service and decorated his statue at Charing Cross with flowers. On a card was the inscription: "Remember, O King and Martyr, we have not forgotten. God save Queen Mary." "Queen Mary" is the niece of the last Duke of Modena, who is the oldest lineal descendant of King Charles