

the suggestion of the adventurer about him was softened by a pair of frank and pleasant grey eyes. Gerald Venner was tanned to a fine, healthy bronze by many years of wandering all over the world; in fact, he was one of those restless Englishmen who cannot for long be satisfied without risking his life in some adventure or other.

The two friends sat there quietly over their fish, criticising from time to time those about them.

"After all," Gurdon said presently, "you must admit, my dear fellow, that there is something in our civilization. Now, isn't this better than starving under a thin blanket, with a chance of being murdered before morning?"

Venner shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"I don't know," he said. "There is something in danger that stimulates me; in fact, it is the only thing that makes life worth living. I dare say you have wondered why it is that I have never settled down and become respectable like the rest of you. If you heard my story, you would not be surprised at my eccentric mode of living; at any rate, it enables me to forget."

Venner uttered the last words slowly and sadly as if he were talking to himself, and had forgotten the presence of his companion. There was a speculative look in his eyes, much as if London had vanished and he could see the orchids on the table before him growing in their native forests.