

knew there was no prospect of getting away, for with Gordon shut up in Khartoum, and the storm clouds of battle gathering in the desert, no man in health could think of applying for leave. Alec Flood was an old friend of his whom he had come across two or three days before, and with whom this evening he had been dining at Shepherd's Hotel. Flood was one of those men, whom you always do come across, blessed with a comfortable income and a restless disposition; he literally 'wandered up and down upon the earth.' As for his friends, it did not signify what part of the world they had betaken themselves to, they were always prepared to see Alec Flood turn up in his usual listless fashion. He never seemed to know where he was going, and, what was very exasperating to people of ordinarily well-regulated minds, he never seemed to care. If he was late for train or steamer, going to such and such a place, he would get into the next, perfectly regardless of what its destination might be. 'What does it matter,' he said upon one of these occasions, 'I haven't made up my mind, you see, where to go, but I'm quite determined *to go* for the present.' Cairo amused him, it was not that he hadn't done it all before, but he had met Cuxwold and two or three other old friends, and so had resolved to pull up there for a little. Unmarried, and with no profession, he was free to roam wheresoever he would. Like Ulysses he had seen men and cities, and could discourse pleasantly of both, and was cordially welcomed in all such society as he affected; but on this point he was somewhat fastidious, and by no means to be beguiled by all cards of invitation.

'I say,' exclaimed Cuxwold at length, 'we can't spend the whole evening in this drowsy old verandah; what do you say to coming over there?' and he jerked his head, in the direction of the building that shone out so brilliantly against the lights of Cairo.

'Anything to see much?' rejoined the other sententially.

'Well a music hall is a music hall,' rejoined Jack Cuxwold. 'It's not so entertaining as the Oxford, still one hears a good song sometimes; and they've a girl there