

marvels? Sturt was an honest man and a gentleman, and nobody ever accused him of wilful deception; yet it is perfectly certain that he wrote down elaborate descriptions of things that have no real existence, and in which he very probably believes still, when everybody else in the world has abandoned them."

"It is one thing to be mistaken in the extent of a sheet of water, and another to take an outsider for a Mason," said Lockyer. "A man might be incorrect in his measurement of a certain plateau, without being necessarily liable to dreams of salvation from fricassée. There is no analogy between geographical theories and personal experiences. Stuart told us either truth or falsehood; and to me, at least, he does not look like an impostor."

"Do you suppose anybody whose personal experience has brought him face to face with the bunyip must be an impostor? And, even granting your dilemma, there was wonderful temptation. It was necessary to account for the retreat, and it was necessary to embellish the path. And then Stuart is a clever man, and conciliatory, and he may have got round the simple-minded natives diplomatically,—more as a medicine man than a Mason. If he did make masonic overtures, it was creditable to his modesty to attach importance to their efficacy; but other people will be more inclined to give the credit to his own tact and daring."

"I don't see why you should be at pains to explain away a simple statement of fact, which cannot but be gratifying. If you were the bitterest Anti of the States you couldn't be more unbelieving."

"Perhaps not; but I could be much more subtil. What do you suppose Faith is to gain from alliance with Superstition? These legends echo sonorously through the Lodge atmosphere; but let Stuart tell his story upon Change to-morrow, and he will be laughed at for a zealot, and the Craft derided as a puerility. Who is going to explain for him where his black fellows learned their lore?"

"Light is from the East," proclaimed Lockyer sententially.

"Ay, and we are in 142°, and ought to have intelligence above such clap-trap. But Light is altogether too far from the East for you to argue that such mean orientals are its children. And if they be not inspired, who have been their instructors?"

"Why ask? It is of no moment. Enough for us to find the culture ready to our uses, without puzzling over how it came there. We have but to employ it and be thankful. Do you suppose the builders of the Temple worried themselves as to who had hewn their marbles, or shaped their cedars? They found each man his material fitted to his hand, and assigned it unhesitatingly to its proper niche. And shall we, whose toil is in the nobler temple, resting its pillars on the corners of the