

since then have reached high places in the civil, military and political life of the Empire; like you, I trod suddenly on the edge of a mystery. Would to God I had let it pass, that I had allowed my fatal curiosity to die in its first yearning for what instinct should have warned me, was a fatal knowledge! But like you, I persisted; when suddenly, one terrible day, I discovered what I had longed to know, and from that day to this I have not known one hour's peace or true happiness. It has wrecked my life, destroyed all my former ambitions for what might have been great achievement, and embittered my nature.

"It was in the Low Countries that this fatal answer to my quest came; and when the awful significance and utter hopelessness of my position had lost its first effect, and I could at length collect my faculties, I lost no time in making my plans. I sold my commission, and fleeing from the life of the Old World, I buried myself out here in these vast wilds, in the vain hope of regaining that old simplicity, that one-time carelessness, which I had lost. But all has been in vain. With what I know, life to me is nothing, nor am I anything to life. I am like one cast away. I have tried everything to forget my position in the common cares and every-day vocations of my fellow-men. I have toiled like a blackamoor, I have performed the most menial offices, I have literally for days, yea, months, earned my bread by the sweat of my brow, I have been in turn, axeman, cook, and attendant to common laborers. I have done all this in order to forget, and feel as other men feel, but all in vain. Here I am, apart from the great human vortex,