

IN MY HEART.

BY J. R. CLERK.

In my heart are many chambers through which I wander free;
Some are furnished, some are empty, some are sombre, some are light;
Some are open to all comers, and of some I keep the key,
And I enter in the stillness of the night.

But there's one I never enter; it is closed to even me:
Only once its door was opened, and it shut for evermore;
And though sounds of many voices gather round it, like the sea,—
It is silent, over silent, as the shore.

In that chamber, long ago, my love's casket was concealed,
And the jewel that it sheltered I knew only one could win;
And my soul foreboded sorrow, should that jewel be revealed,
And I almost hoped that none might enter in.

Yet day and night I lingered by that fatal chamber-door,
Till—she came at last, my darling one, of all the earth my own;
And she entered—and she vanished with my jewel, which she wore;—
And the door was closed—and I was left alone.

She gave me back no 'ewel, but the spirit of her eyes
Shone with tenderness a moment, as she closed that chamber-door.
And the memory of that moment is all I have to prize;
But that, at least, is mine for evermore.

Was she conscious, when she took it, that the jewel was my love?
Did she think it but a bauble, she might wear or toss aside?
I know not, I accuse not, but I hope that it may prove
A blessing, though she spurn it in her pride.

HALF A MILLION OF MONEY

WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR OF "BARBARA'S HISTORY,"
FOR "ALL A YEAR ROUND," EDITED BY
CHARLES DICKENS.

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CHAPTER LXXI. THE GREAT COMMERCIAL AUTHORITY.

The young men had no difficulty in finding the mansion of Mr. Melchisedek. It was a large, white, Oriental looking-house, with innumerable lattices, a fountain playing in the court-yard, and a crowd of Nubian and Egyptian servants in rich Eastern dresses lounging about the gates.

When Saxon inquired for the master of the house, a grave Armenian in a long dark robe and lofty cap stepped forward and conducted the visitors across the court-yard, through a long corridor, and into a small room furnished like a European counting-house. Here they were received by a gentlemanly person seated before a large desk covered with papers.

"Mr. Melchisedek, I presume?" said Saxon. The gentleman at the desk smiled, and shook his head.

"I am Mr. Melchisedek's secretary," he replied. "At your service."

"I particularly wish to see Mr. Melchisedek himself," said Saxon, "if he will oblige me with five minutes' conversation."

The Secretary smiled again; much as a vizier might smile at the request of a stranger who asked to see the sultan.

"If you will do me the favour to state the nature of your business," said he, "I will acquaint Mr. Melchisedek with the particulars. He may then, perhaps, grant you an interview."

So Saxon explained all about the inquiries which he was anxious to make, and the secretary, taking their cards with him, left the young men for a few minutes to themselves.

"The Commercial Authority seems to be a mighty man in the land," said Lord Castletowers.

"The Commercial Authority has a princely garden," replied Saxon looking out of the window upon a maze of gorgeous flower-beds, clumps of sycamores and palms, and alleys of shadowy cypress-trees.

"Princely, indeed!" said the Earl; and quoted a line or two of Tennyson:—

"A realm of pleasure, many a mound,
And many a shadow-cliqueer'd lawn
Full of the city's stilly sound,
And deep myrrh-thickets bowing round.
The stately cedar, tamarsick,
Thick rosaries of scented thorn,
Tall orient shrubs, and obelisks
Graven with emblems of the time,
In honour of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid!"

by the way, Trefalden, what if the Commercial Authority keeps the Persian girl 'with argentlidded eyes' hidden up behind yonder lattices?"

At this moment the door softly re-opened, and, instead of the secretary, the Armenian appeared. He bowed almost to the ground, and requested the offenders to follow him.

Up a broad flight of marble steps they went, and through a long suite of rooms magnificently furnished in a semi-Oriental style, with divans and hangings, carpets in which the foot sank noiselessly, statues, massive bronzes, ornamental clocks, and large paintings in heavy Italian frames. Having led them through five of these stately reception-rooms, the Armenian paused at the entrance to the sixth, held the velvet curtain aside, and stood back to let them pass.

A spacious room, still more Oriental, and, if possible, still more costly in its decorations, opened before them. The windows admitted the last crimson light of the setting sun. The air was heavy with a mixed perfume of orange blossoms and roses, and the scented fumes of Turkish tobacco.

As the young men entered, a gaunt figure clothed all in white rose from a sofa at the upper end of the room, and stood to receive them.

This was Mr. Melchisedek.

The great Commercial Authority was, beyond doubt, a very extraordinary-looking individual. He was a Jew pur et simple. It needed no ethnologist to see that. A Jew of marked Arabian type, with deep-set fiery eyes, a complexion almost the colour of a Roxburgh binding, a high narrow, intellectual forehead, and a "sable-silvered" beard and moustache. He wore a crimson fez, and a suit of fine white linen, that shone all over like the richest satin. The buttons of his coat and waistcoat were also of linen; but in his shirt he wore three superb brilliants, and the long, slender brown hand which held his chibouque was all ablaze with jewels.

Handing this chibouque to one of four gorgeously attired Nubian slaves that stood behind his sofa, Mr. Melchisedek inclined his head, pointed to a couple of divans, and said, in the tone of a sovereign giving audience:

"Gentlemen, you are welcome."

Pipes and coffee were then brought round in the Eastern fashion, and for some minutes the trio smoked and sipped in silence.

Mr. Melchisedek was the first to speak.

"May I inquire," he said, "which gentleman I am to address as Mr. Trefalden?"

"Myself, if you please," replied Saxon bluntly.

The Commercial Authority removed his pipe from his lips, and looked at him with some appearance of interest.

"I know your name well, Mr. Trefalden," he said. "You came lately into the possession of a fortune founded one hundred years ago."

"I did," replied Saxon, laughingly. "But I did not expect to find that fact known in Egypt."

All remarkable financial facts are known among financial men," replied Mr. Melchisedek; "and the fame of the Trefalden legacy has been considerable."

Hereupon he resumed his pipe, and a second round of coffee made its appearance.

Saxon and Castletowers exchanged glances. The semi-Oriental gravity of the man, the peculiarities of his appearance, the pacha-like splen-

dour of his palace, and the train of slaves about the place, amazed and amused them.

In obedience to a sign from the Earl, Saxon left Mr. Melchisedek to conduct the conversation according to his own pleasure.

Presently the Nubians removed the coffee cups and brought round a silver bowl of rosewater, and three embroidered napkins. The guests dipped their fingers in the one and dried them in the other. The slaves then closed the lattices, lit the lamps, and withdrew.

They were no sooner gone than Mr. Melchisedek turned to Saxon, and said:

"If I understand my secretary aright, Mr. Trefalden, you have been informed that a second Anglo-Indian Company, calling itself the New Overland Route Company, has lately been incorporated; and you wish to know whether that information be correct?"

"Not precisely," replied Saxon, "for I have reason to know that such a company has actually been formed; but—"

"May I inquire what the reason is?" said Mr. Melchisedek.

"I have taken shares in it."

"Will you permit me to see your debentures?"

"I have none—that is to say, they are doubtless in the care of my lawyer. He takes charge of all my papers, and transacts all my business."

Mr. Melchisedek looked at Saxon with something like a grim smile hovering about the corners of his mouth, and said in his oracular tone:

"Sir, there is no such company."

"But—"

"There is no such company. All joint stock companies must be publicly registered as the act directs. They do not exist as companies till that registration has taken place, and, being registered, they become capable of legally carrying on the business for which they are formed, according to the provisions of their deeds of settlement. No such company as this New Overland Route Company has been registered in England or elsewhere—consequently no such company exists."

Saxon changed colour and was silent.

Mr. Melchisedek touched a silver bell, and the Armenian chamberlain presented himself upon the threshold.

"My volume of maps," said the master laconically.

The Armenian vanished; but, presently reappeared with a huge folio, which Mr. Melchisedek opened at the Eastern Hemisphere.

"Be so good, Mr. Trefalden," said he, "as to show me this supposititious route."

Saxon drew his finger along the map from Marseilles, through the straits of Messina, to Sidon on the coast of Syria; from Sidon to Palmyra; from Palmyra along the valley of the Euphrates, down the Persian Gulf, and over to Bombay. He explained the scheme as he proceeded. It seemed so brilliant, so easy, so perfect, that before he came to the end of his commentary his tone of voice had become quite triumphant, and all his doubts had vanished.

But the great Commercial Authority only smiled again more grimly than before.

"You have been grossly imposed upon, Mr. Trefalden," he said. "No offices as you describe have been erected here or elsewhere. No surveyors have been sent out. No deputations have been dispatched. The whole transaction is less than a bubble—a mere figment of the imagination."

"But may it not be possible that, without your knowledge—"

"No Oriental undertaking can be set on foot without my knowledge," replied Mr. Melchisedek, stiffly. "I employ agents throughout the East, whose business it is to keep me informed on these subjects."

"Good Heavens!" murmured Saxon. "I do not know how to believe it!"

"Besides," added the Commercial Authority, "the thing is impracticable."

"Why so?"

"In the first place, the obstacles to the Euphrates route by land are innumerable—perhaps altogether insurmountable. In the second place,