

THE WIZARD'S SON.

BY DAVID CLARALLAN.

"There shall not be found among you
a charmer or a wizard or a necromancer."
Deuteronomy xviii. 2.

I. REVILEMENT.

THE mists of an April morning of the year 611 B. C. hung heavy over mountain and valley; the sun was still low on the eastern horizon, yet the high-road north of Jerusalem was rife with holiday throngs. Gay processions of peasants and distant townfolk were making for the Temple, invariably preceded by bleating, garlanded lambs and by festively attired youths blowing pipe and flute and clashing cymbals. For it was the last day of the Passover Feast, that glad festival of Redemption which had been given so powerful a significance ever since the great Reformation fifteen years before. All the gateways to Mount Moriah had been thronged for a week. Tents of such pilgrims who lacked hospitable friends in Jerusalem were pitched in the northern valley or on the slopes of Olivet or by the banks of the Kidron. An invading army it was, of joyous worshippers, who brought sacrificial offerings, chanted glad songs, and indulged in merry feasting. Every morning for a week the maidens of Jerusalem had issued forth to gather the brilliant red or pure white blossoms which, thick as a carpet, overspread slope and plain, and had returned, laden with wreaths and garlands, to adorn not only the mighty gates and pillars of the Temple court, but door-posts and porticoes of their own dwellings. On this last morning, too, groups of white-robed figures might have been seen flitting hither and thither in copses and open fields, or sitting in circles weaving wreaths. Laughter and girlish chatter floated musically or shrilly, as the case might be, upon the air.

One such group had found a shadowy, secluded nook within a grove of willows and cypresses at the base of a furze-covered mound.

The girl did not finish. A shower of great white narcissus blossoms came pouring down upon both from hands invisible. They looked up the hillock. No one in sight.

"See, even the spirit of spring applauds you, Nelkah," Naomi began again. "Where can it be hiding, the mischief? But wait, I'll seize it before it escapes." A few bounds, a scramble up the thorn-mixed heather, a seizing of two or three bushes to assist her in the ascent, and Naomi had reached the summit of the mound.

"O! O! O! How beautiful! O Nelkah! Jerusha! Gomer! Come up here. Was ever such wealth of flowers? And *such* flowers!"

A half dozen girls answered the outcries, and were soon bending with Naomi over what was indeed a bed of loveliest blossoms: iris, crocus, narcissus, planted in rows alternately white and purple and red. They gathered in friendly rivalry, laughing, chatting, teasing all the while. Nelkah only, last to reach the summit, did not stoop in the pretty contest. She remained erect, looking around for a sign of the one whose flower-shower had led to the discovery of so bounteous harvest. Where could the donor, the proprietor belike of this rich flower bed, be hiding? She could only see a little white lamb nibbling the tender herbage at the foot of a solitary olive tree.

All at once she burst into a laugh, as sweet as had been her singing. Her companions turned.

"Look, girls! No, not down there. Here, up here in this olive tree. Descend, my spirit of spring! Descend, that we may thank you for your offering. Oh, what a funny spirit!"

On one of the higher branches of the little tree, a sturdy urchin had been seeking to screen himself behind the silvery-green foliage. His bare, brown legs, hanging farther down than he thought, had betrayed him to Nelkah; but now, agile as a cat, he clambered farther up. It seemed as if the slender branches on which at last he rested would break beneath his weight.

"Come, come, child!" Nelkah spoke imperiously as one accustomed to have her way. "You showered me with blossoms for my song. You would like to hear another, is it not so? Well, come then, and I'll sing to you again. If you are stubborn, I'll—" She did not finish the threat, but looked upward smiling.

The boy appeared not to hear. Suddenly, however, just as Nelkah, with a stamp of her foot, was turning away, he dropped from branch to branch and to the ground, picked up the little lamb, and stood against the tree-trunk, his face crimson and his eyes down-cast.

Not a very attractive little figure, certainly. The nude chest

and limbs were rather mud than flesh-colored, and his hands and face, much freckled, were grimy as though they had lacked washing for many days. The dark locks, long and abundant, were unpardonably disheveled, and the short kirtle of goat-skin was matted with burs and long dry grasses. His features were unbeautiful, being sharp and pinched. Not until he raised his eyes—large grey eyes with mournful shyness in their depths—did Nelkah, who had been gazing at him with good-humoured contemptuousness, regard him with somewhat of favor.

"You claim your reward, then? Well, child, to judge from your look, a sad song would suit you better than a merry. Or shall it be joyous and chase away that old look from your face? Come, say which it shall be: sad or merry?"

He put one dirty arm across his eyes as if he hoped thereby to become invisible. His voice was surprisingly sweet as he answered, stammering: "Oh, sing the song you sang down yonder. There cannot be anything in the world as beautiful as that song."

"Why, child,—nothing as beautiful as that? Have you then never heard the choristers chanting in the Temple, or the maidens singing in the night of the New Moon? No? Are you a stranger in Judah? Not that, either? Why, where then have you been living all these years and not heard our minstrelsy?"

She followed his indicating finger to the northwestward. A stone hut, embowered in vines, nestled some distance away against a bald, cavernous hillock. To its farther side yawned an ugly, stone-filled rift.

"Ugh! There? By the 'Place of Stoning'? What a site for a dwelling! No wonder you have made your garden elsewhere; and a beautiful one it is with its broad rows of blossoms. Who taught you to—? Well, well, you need entreat no more with those mournful eyes. I'll sing. And I'll show you that there are melodies more beautiful than my simple spring song."

She sank down on the soft grass. Her companions, still laughing and chatting, had ceased their gathering and were twining wreaths and garlands. Their merriment ceased the moment Nelkah's glorious voice filled the air with music. Every word she sang was clear as the tinkle of a bell, every note a pearl in the chain of mournful melody.

"He is slain in the wars, my Beloved, my Beloved.
O starlight, you've stolen his glance!
He lies 'neath the turf, my Beloved, my Beloved.
O nightwind, you've stolen his voice!

O star eyes, you look down with longing and love,
 O zephyrs, you whisper of joy.
 The love it is dead. You are lying, bright stars.
 The joy it has perished, false wind.

"He is slain in the wars, my Beloved, my Beloved.
 O blossoms, you spring from his blood!
 He is slain in the wars, my Beloved, my Beloved.
 O dew-drops, you weep, weep with me!
 O blossoms, crushed under the fury of storms,
 You're symbols of what is my fate.
 O dew-drops that mourn throughout the long night,
 You must die in the sunlight like me!"

"Why, child, I do believe you are weeping!"

Nelkah, silent as all the others for some few seconds after she had ceased singing, turned her face to the lad and was surprised to see tears falling down his grimy little cheeks. "Does melody affect you so always? Oh, I forgot, you are a heathen to music. Or can you sing?"

"No, but I think I could if only I might hear you often. Oh, I long to sing! I long to listen again! I do not know what it is within me, this longing and this joy!" The child looked at her appealingly. "I never felt so before."

Young and wilful as she was, Nelkah recognized in the boy a spirit kindred to her own in its passionate love of music. "I think I could tell you what it is," she began, softly. "Listen, boy—but what is your name?"

"Tola, lady."

"Tola? A pretty name. Well, Tola, if you will come here tomorrow (but with hands and face clean, mind, and with those tangled locks more orderly), I will come with my harp, and—"

"Nelkah! Nelkah!"

A deep voice from the copse below had interrupted her.

"Your father, Nelkah," called one of the smaller girls who had run to the edge of the mound at the call. "He has come with two slaves to fetch you home in a litter. How fortunate! We can pile your seat with our beautiful garlands and keep them fresh for the 'Holy Place.' Here we are, my lord Joshua," she called again, scrambling down the furzy slope. "Oh, you should see the paradise of blossoms found up there! Such ropes of flowers as we'll bring to the Temple today!"

She had been addressing a man of about forty, whose embroidered blue turban and girdle, and whose blue-bordered tunic proclaimed him one of the higher priests of the sanctuary. A man of

a stern and impatient aspect; keen, flashing black eyes, lips full even in their compression, a furrowed forehead, and a bearing all pride and self-confidence.

"Where is Nelkah?" he asked the girl with some asperity. "Has she dared to climb that thorny mound? How did she expect to get down again, weak as she still is?"

"O, my lord Joshua, she has found a cavalier who will only too willingly assist her," the girl answered mischievously. "A youth who listens spell-bound to her singing and who would"—

"A youth!" The priest glared at her savagely, but the girl only giggled, and exchanged humorous glances with two of her companions who, garland-laden, were descending the slope, and who knowing well Joshua's jealousy of his only child's affection, fathomed his wrath and enjoyed it greatly.

"Oh! I must see his face when he discovers who his darling's cavalier is," exclaimed one of them, flinging her odorous burden to the others. And forthwith she climbed back to the summit.

She saw the priest by Nelkah's side, anger changed to perplexity—"A child that has never been to the Temple, not even during the feast of the New Moon and the Passover, and who yet so greatly cares for music!" he was saying. "Have your parents lived here always, boy?"

"My father is dead," the child answered, shyly. "But we, mother and I, have lived here always."

"Yes, father, and in such a place of all places; you must take him away from his horrible home. Ugh! It makes me shudder only to think of sleeping o' nights in so dismal a spot. I seem to hear the groans and cries of the dying wretches even from here. While, there, so close—" A tremor completed the sentence.

"Where then does he dwell?" asked Joshua, more mystified than before.

"Yonder, father, yonder where last year those two wretched assassins were stoned to death by our people. Where only two months ago, ere I was ill, that beautiful young Egyptian sorceress who had charmed the king's son, found her awful end. Look, is it not a hateful spot?"

Joshua's face had become livid. A look of such ferocity darted from his eyes upon the affrighted Tola that even Nelkah felt herself paling. "Out of my sight!" he cried savagely, seizing the boy roughly by the shoulder. "How dared you, an outcast, an abomination in Judah, approach so near to the daughter of a priest?—Did he touch you, Nelkah? Are those flowers his? Throw them from

you! Hence, all of you!" Three frightened girls had been watching the scene near enough to hear every one of the violent words. "Every flower, throw it away! Ah; that no harm come to you because of this, daughter."

"Why, father, what can you mean?" Nelkah had recovered herself and approached Joshua with an air of impatient deprecation. "See how you are hurting the child. Look at his eyes. Are they the eyes of one evil? Poor boy, how pitiful! What can you have done?"

She strove to unclasp the priests' powerful hand from the thin shoulder. In so doing her delicate white fingers touched Tola's brown skin.

"Nelkah, are you mad? There is pollution in his touch! 'Tis the son of a sorcerer, this unclean knave, and one himself accursed. He has bewitched you already. Begone! What?" as she did not obey, "do you wish to be thrown again upon a bed of sickness? Shall I lose you indeed, whom I came so near losing last month? Away!" He flung the child passionately from him, encircled Nelkah with his strong right arm, and bore her forcibly down the steep incline.

II.

WHY?

Tola was at first too affrighted and bewildered to more than gaze, wild eyed after the retreating figures. He stood for some moments as motionless as a statue. But with the last flutter of Nelkah's gown in the shrubbery below, bewilderment was absorbed in an upwelling of bitter sorrow. The heaviness as of bereavement oppressed his young heart strangely. The vista of joys which the young girl's invitation to meet him on the morrow had so briefly unfolded, the awakening by her singing of a new, intense, almost painful delight, the sense of her sympathetic presence, were all suddenly effaced by a feeling of utter isolation more humiliating than he had ever experienced in his lonely young life. True, many a time before he had felt the tears start when, meeting children on the high-road, they had evaded him as though he were a contaminating leper. Once only he had had a real companion, had known the delights of friendship for two whole days. But when on the third, he had wandered to the house of his friend (a young shepherd boy living below Rekem) and had been questioned by the lad's mother as to his name and abode, a look of rage and terror like Joshua's had flashed from the woman's eyes, and he had been driven

forth with curses like those that now rankled in his heart. Why was this? Why were he and his mother—his sad, silent, beautiful mother, whose strangeness of aspect, and wild, gleaming eyes made even him shudder at times,—why were they shunned by all?

A sorcerer's son? Alas! he had never known his father, never known what was his father's fate. His mother's look when years before he had childishly put the question as to how his father had died, had chilled him to the heart. He had never ventured to repeat it. And what did Nelkah mean when she said he abode in so wretched a spot, "The Place of Stoning?" *The Place of Stoning!* What was that?

Two incidents of the past flashed across his memory at the self-questioning, explaining her meaning and causing him to shudder with sudden horror. The first had occurred almost four years ago, when he was a rather happy child of eight, content to play about his little home, tending the few herbs and flower patches on the plot of ground before their door-step, romping with the old goat and her kids, or chasing butterflies, or making caverns in the soft ground with an old broken spear he had found in some shrubbery near the lane. Occupied with this latter treasure one sunny noon while his mother was standing just within the doorway watching him with one of her rare smiles and talking to him with more of animation than was her wont, he had been interrupted in his play by the sound of distant shouts and yells. As the shrill outcries came nearer he turned to ask his mother their meaning. He had barely been shocked into silence by her ghastly and distorted features, when she seized him as though he were a babe, carried him into their little chamber, closed the rickety door, and throwing an old blanket over both their heads, sat huddled with him in her lap for over an hour; trembling, sobbing, moaning; while from without, fiercer and wilder and nearer had been heard the shout: "Stone him! Stone him, the slayer of his brother! Stone him, the accursed of the Lord!" What followed was too vague for remembrance. He only recalled that for days thereafter, the strange light that so often affrighted him, gleamed more brightly in his mother's eyes, and that her attacks of morbid melancholy, too, were become more sustained.

The second event was more recent, more vivid. It occurred on a cold day in the month of Shebat, only eight weeks before the Passover Feast. He had wandered at early morn to the high-road half a mile to the east of his home. He had been very happy that morning, for by his side limped a little snow-white lamb found

a few days before almost dead, near one of the caverns of the hillock that overhung their hut. He had nursed the tiny creature back to health, and though it was permanently maimed (one of its hind legs having been badly crushed and broken in some encounter), it had been his greatest joy. Its companionship was almost human. He read devotion in its soft eyes, and that, in his solitary, almost empty life, was as the finding of a well to the thirster in the wilderness. He was making his way toward his favorite spot (the little mound where Nelkah had discovered him), when he saw a motley crowd issuing from the city's central gate; men and women, evidently in great excitement, and whose voices, in broken shouts, were audible even at a great distance. True to years of instinctive shrinking from hostile fellow-creatures, he had snatched up his little pet and hidden himself behind a clump of thistles. The outcries became louder and shriller. Soon they became distinguishable. Curses and threats were what he heard, and oftenest repeated were the well-remembered words: "Stone her! Stone her! Accursed witch, stone her!"

In spite of his fear and shrinking, a natural curiosity had urged him some steps out of his hiding place, and he had beheld in front of the enraged, fiercely inveighing swarm, one unforgettable form, so pitiful, so fair, so instinct with terror, that her image would surely not fade from his mind while memory endured. A girl of about eighteen, clad in a garb he had never seen before, with a strange, foreign beauty of which even intensest fear could not rob her. Missiles: mud, sticks, dried thistles, and rocks were hurled at her. A few yards away Tola saw her stagger and fall, saw her beaten and dragged, up the highway; and then, filled with a choking pity and grief, he had been unable to look further, but had buried his face in the lamb's fleece and sobbed: "Oh! what are they going to do to the poor creature? What are they going to do?"

Now he understood. *The Place of Stoning!* Nelkah's words: "Where only two months ago that beautiful young Egyptian sorceress found her end", rang in his ears. Oh! God; yes, he understood. Hard by his home, in the ugly rift on the hillock's further side, that fair, pitiable woman had been stoned to death! Like the other, that fratricide whom he had never seen, like—Oh, God! yes, that accounted for his mother's wild look, her ceaseless brooding; that accounted for their being shunned by old and young—in that rift his own father, whom they called a sorcerer, had met a horrible end.

Sorcerer? What was that? What had his father, what had

that beautiful Egyptian done to be reviled even in death? Not a child in Jerusalem that could speak at all but would have been able to answer the question which this unhappy, isolated, ignorant lad was now asking himself.

Shallum, Tola's father, had been one of those half-despised, half-venerated soothsayers and necromancers who, prior to the pious King Josiah's reforms, abounded in Judah. They were consulted as oracles, employed as mediators between the dead and the living; they catered, in short, to every superstitious instinct of a credulous people. Tola's mother had been a Moabite slave-girl, the property of the high-priest Hilkiah, but freed on the day that her master's daughter, Abigail, married the young priest Joshua. Vashni (Tola's mother) accompanied Abigail to her new home. Two years later, in spite of the latter's entreaties, the beautiful Moabite girl married Shallum, of whom she had become passionately enamoured. The marriage took place at a time when, owing to King Josiah's recent religious reforms, all soothsaying was being denounced as accursed, and both they who practiced the "black art" and they who sought its aid were threatened with extremest penalties. Not many months after, the Mosaic law began to be enforced to the letter. Soothsayers were condemned to death. The calling, from being lucrative and semi-honorable, was now attended with danger and penury, nor could those heretofore engaged in it find other employment on account of the dread of their supposed evil powers. But for Abigail's secret aid to her former favorite, Shallum and Vashni would have been reduced to beggary.

Like all Israelite women, Abigail longed for a son. But for four years, Nelkah, her first born, was her only child. At the end of the third year, the priest's wife had been urged by Vashni (whose faith in her husband's powers were equal to her love for him) to consult the young soothsayer. Her visit and that of another (an old soldier who had come to purchase an ointment for his leprous son) were discovered. Joshua, who with his father-in-law, the high-priest Hilkiah, was among the most fanatic in zeal for the new laws, had the unfortunate Shallum ejected from the city and warned him that a continuance of his secret practices would be visited with death. Almost a year after, a pestilence broke out among the cattle of a herdsman with whom Shallum had quarrelled the week previously. The man accused the soothsayer of casting spells upon him and his beasts. The poor fellow was pronounced guilty and condemned to death.

Frantic with grief, Vashni, then mother of a babe but a week

old, fled to her former mistress's home; but Abigail, whose intercession she hoped for, could not be seen. A little son had just been born to her. Joshua, at whose feet Vashni knelt in an agony, spurned the beautiful suppliant. He had her, faint with terror and weakness, dragged to the spot where her husband was just being assailed by an angry horde.

Those whose hearts had been touched by Vashni's suffering, looked upon Abigail's death the next day and that of her infant son only two days after, as a retribution for Joshua's hardness of heart. The priest himself, however, saw in his bereavement only a fulfillment of Shallum's curse. He came to regard Vashni herself as an accessory cause and grew to hate and fear her. The poor young woman, whom grief had literally crazed, had indeed been seen hovering around the priest's house during the night before Abigail's funeral, the night of the babe's death.

Vashni's insane desire to dwell near the scene of her husband's execution, the madness that at times flashed in her eyes, her fearful withdrawal from the few who would have befriended her in her distress, and above all, her frequent nightly visits to "the Place of Stoning," whence her moans and sobs were heard by chance wayfarers, caused her soon to be shunned as a witch.

Of all this, Tola knew nothing. As he sobbed with head pressed against the little ewe lamb that had limped up to him, he was oppressed only by an indefinite kind of misery, stronger perhaps, because of its indefiniteness. He was, however, too accustomed to obloquy to remain long in this state of extreme dejection. By and by, he ceased sobbing, looked sorrowfully at the half dismantled rows of his pretty spring blossoms, looked more sadly still at the scattered wreaths and garlands, and sighing deeply, rose from under the olive tree to efface as far as possible, the traces of his late adventure. He worked very patiently, yet all the while he kept reiterating to himself: "Sorcerer? What is that? Why were they so afraid of me? Even *she* was afraid. I saw it in her last sad look. O why? Why?"

The pretty beds soon presented an orderly aspect, but in the disordered little mind, the shame and the mystery were not yet wholly put away. Long he sat on the mound brooding.

Just before noon, shrill trumpet-blasts sounded from Moriah. Tola gazed thither. O, that glad world of men and women, boys and girls! Why was it shut out to him? Anon, crowds came streaming out of the northern gate nearest the Temple, and each one of those distant figures seemed the especial object of the boy's

envy. A bitter longing to be one of them made him sob aloud once more. The little lamb snuggled closer to the child as if essaying to give him comfort. He pressed the pretty animal close. "O, Dodi (dear one), Dodi, if you could help me, you would. Yes." as the wistful eyes reflected his own yearning; "I know you would, poor little beast. But what can you do, Dodi? What can you do?"

A sympathetic bleat was his response.

Tola started. It was as if this bleat had spoken the solution to his trouble. He stared at the lamb and his expression became suddenly luminous. The sharp little features became softer, and in spite of dirt and freckles, wonderfully attractive. "Dodi," he whispered, "I know now. How strange that I never thought of it before. There in that beautiful Temple—look, yonder shines its highest white tower; we can see it from here, it is so high and gleaming—there where all those who despise me go to sing and rejoice, there dwells a god who could help me. He is very good to those who visit him with gifts; they are all happy; none are lonely and despised like me. O, Dodi, I think if I were to bring him something he desires very much, he would help me too. And I know what he desires most of all, that strange, great god. It is the blood of a little lamb. I have seen the herdsmen take their best and carry it to him. O my poor Dodi, you, too, saw the snow-white lambs with garlands about their heads; you saw the beautiful rams with the gilded horns only this morning, and don't you remember, I told you they would be taken to the god and that you were happier than they with all their beauty, for you might live and they had to die? O my Dodi, and now you too must die! And would you really be willing? Really? And ought I to do it?" He clasped the little creature convulsively.

The sudden intuition, the longing to be freed from the burden of obloquy resting upon him, proved stronger than his affection for his pet. After a few moments of struggle, he had resolved not only to offer up the lamb, but what would be almost as difficult for one so fearsome of human contact as he, to brave the contemptuous glances and the reviling words of those whom he might meet. The goal he hoped to attain was worth the sacrifice and the encounter.

"Only we must not appear before that great god as we are, Dodi," he said as he descended the mound. "The lady whose singing is as the voice of the stars, told me not to come grimy to her. Surely, then, the great god would not look kindly upon us unless we were clean. You will not like the cold bath, my Dodi; but it must be."

He walked rapidly beyond the copses toward his home, and down into a gully where in this rainy season, bubbled a little well. With the patience of a woman, he first pulled all the briars and burs from his goat-skin kirtle, then stepped into the spring and washed vigorously from head to foot. He emerged dripping and really almost clean. The lamb was less patient under the ordeal. It bleated pitifully, and all the caressing words lavished upon it by its young master were unavailing to soothe it. But soon, sitting in Tola's lap and drying in the warm afternoon sun, it looked up gratefully into the boy's face. How altered that face by hope and by cleanliness. It was almost pretty, framed in the glistening, dishevelled curls.

Tola looked toward Jerusalem's battlements, endeavoring to summon up courage and proceed to the city. The streaming of people out of the gates had by this time ceased. Only isolated groups emerged from beneath the huge archways into the high-road and thence dispersed into by-paths to right and left. Tola would have encountered but comparatively few at this early afternoon hour, but his heart beat violently even at thought of meeting those few. "I cannot, Dodi; not yet. What if they were to drive me away? O, I would never dare try again. I must wait. We will wait. Till evening, Dodi. Yet, this evening when all is dark—perhaps there will not even be moonlight. No, there will be no moonlight. There was none last night. Dodi, that is it. We will wait until tonight, when all are asleep, when even the great god is asleep and will not know of our coming until morning. Then he will see us both in his Temple, and then—O Dodi, I am sure of it, he will be kind. He will make the people understand. They will see what I have done and they will smile. And you—O, Dodi! ought I? Ought I, really?" But even as he spoke, he knew that the animal nestling so confidently in his arms, would be dead that night. "Yes, we will wait until evening, Dodi."

He walked slowly in the direction of his home. He had not given a thought to his mother's distress if he were not home by sundown. Had he gone to the Temple, his return might have been delayed until after nightfall. He had always had liberty to roam from morning until eve; but on the two or three occasions when dusk had found him still absent, the anxiety his mother had suffered had made her ill for days after. He had never been so certain of her love as on those occasions of her fear for his safety. She was so taciturn, so almost indifferent when he played about the house; and only at times when after a day's absence he would come back,

did he see lovelight replace the strange, often wild, glare in her eyes, did he feel her caressing touch and hear words of tenderness.

It was so this afternoon. Before the door, he saw her tall, slim figure, with its long, straight black hair-masses falling almost to her knees, her slender brown hand shading her eyes. He saw the light of joy flash upon him, as she ran toward him, crying: "Have you come, Tola? O, my boy! my boy! I thought some harm had befallen you." And she clasped him close.

"But how fresh you are, my Tola! And your hair, it is like— O, Abigail, my sweet mistress!"

In her disordered mind the sight of him so fresh and clean was associated somehow with the days when she, a fair, indulged slave-girl, had shared with her mistress, the luxury of the household bath. Tola and no one else could have understood the connection. But the boy was too accustomed to his poor, mad mother's irrelevancies to heed the strange name. He heeded only the caress and her evident gladness, and was grateful that he had not distressed her by prolonged absence. O yes, it was well indeed that he had concluded to wait until evening.