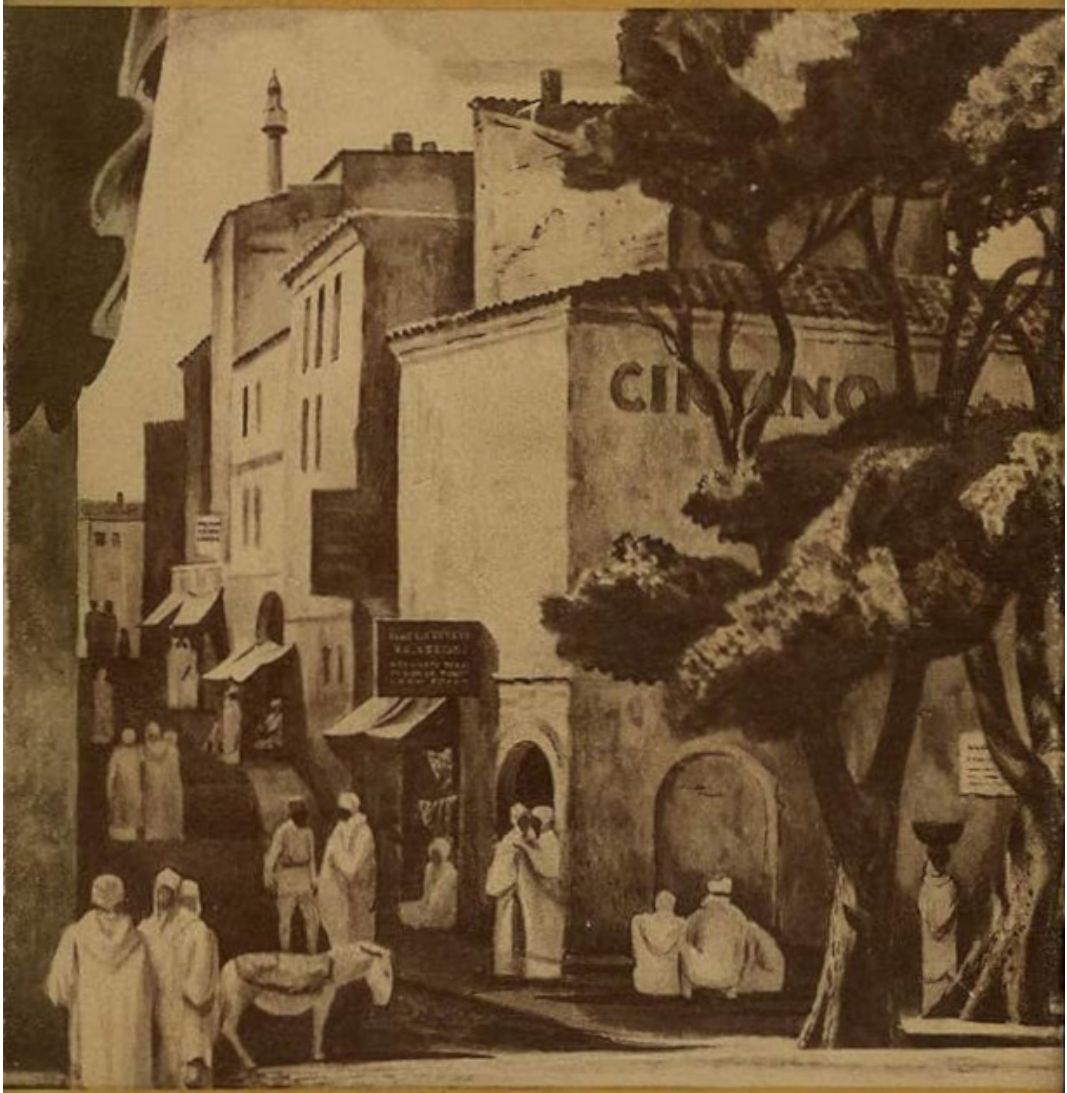
Salah and his AMERICAN



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Salah

AND HIS AMERICAN

BY LELAND HALL

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‘*Nous sommes une triste chose: un animal rendu à la liberté se débrouille; une créature humaine doit se revendre.*’

PANAÏT ISTRATI.

Salah and His American

CHAPTER ONE

About noon on a Wednesday early in July I debarked at Casablanca for the third time in my life. Joyful as I was to set foot again in Morocco, I did not wish to linger in 'Casa', which, though built on Moroccan soil, is virtually a modern French city. I had not come to Africa to seek Europe there. My immediate destination was Marrakesh, the great native city a hundred and fifty miles to the south; but having landed too late to catch the midday bus, I resigned myself to twenty-four hours in Casablanca, to its rush and its merciless noise.

For, beautiful as it is, and amazing even to an American as a monument to the rapidity of European development, Casablanca is surely the noisiest place in the world. A year before, there had appeared in one of the local papers a citizen's complaint against the racket of unmuffled motors, continual day and night, which robbed him of peace and sleep. The letter drew an editorial answer to the effect that every citizen of Casablanca should take pride in lying awake to the roar of truckloads of grain or wool speeding to European markets. He should hear in it the triumphal blare of progress.

To my ears the ruthless noise made blatant, not so much the success of commercial enterprise in a land newly opened, as the destruction of an ancient civilization native to that land, which I had cherished. Too blatantly it proved that the native would survive European 'protection' only in so far as he could rid himself of his own heritage and conform to the machine. That adaptation, which we call so arrogantly progress, still seems to me a loss, a brutal sacrifice. I did not foresee how, within a few weeks, I should guide a gentle native in the direction of it.

Meanwhile, after lunch I went up to the offices of the Transportation Company in the Place de France to secure my seat on the next day's bus; and this being done, I wandered round a bit. Shops were closed for the siesta hour; and though now and then a truck thundered on its way, the streets were empty save for a native here and there asleep in some ribbon of shade on the sidewalk. The necessities and luxuries of Europe displayed in windows of

the Parisian stores which have branches in Casablanca seemed deeply withdrawn behind glass from the sunlight flooding the town. Occasionally, down the middle of the street, came walking a pair of men from the outlying country, clad in heavy woollen robes, with turbans of coloured yarn twisted round their heads, their slippers stuffed in their sacks to spare them, and their lean feet bare. They walked hand in hand, fearing to be parted from each other in the amazing town; slowly and with dignity, the real and living landsmen walking through the fantasy of our civilization.

I noted in the windows the things I must buy when the shops opened again: a felt hat, best protection against the burning sun of Marrakesh; canvas shoes with cord soles, comfortable in the hot dust of that city; razor blades and tooth-paste, little things without which the European is homesick. I had hours to spare.

In time my wandering brought me back to the Place de France. Here in a shady corner was a stack of rugs, and sitting close by, a group of lazy youths who would later deploy the rugs before the crowds in the sidewalk cafés. As I passed, one of them called to me in Arabic and sprang to his feet. It was Brahim, who for a short while the year before had been our houseboy in Marrakesh.

He plied me with questions. Where had I been? Whence had I come? Whither and when was I going? How were my father and mother, my sisters and brothers, my uncles and aunts? In my turn I asked for all his relatives, likewise; when and why he had come from Marrakesh, and if he had news of Abdullah there, of Omar, Moulay Ali, and Hamt the Chleuh coachman. The others meanwhile made ready for me a place on the pavement, and I sat down with them, quite below the notice of up-nosed Europeans walking by.

The group was typical of idlers to be met anywhere in Morocco. One youngster was handsome, cleanly and beautifully dressed; one was shabby and vivacious; one was earnest, one a clown. Yet for all the wide variance, they chatted together in some social accord which is beyond our experience.

My Arabic, though scant, went better than I had expected, and in a few minutes I was talking to them of my plans. I was going to Marrakesh to study Arabic hard for three months; then I hoped to buy a mule and set out over the mountains to Tarudant and Tiznit, cities in the region of Morocco south of the Atlas Mountains which is called the Sous. All this they discussed with me critically. One would hardly discuss the details of plans for an outing in the Adirondacks with a group of Bowery loafers; but in

Morocco the native blood in the cities still throbs directly to the life-giving rhythm of the country, the pastures and the farms.

They said my Arabic was now sufficient to my needs, and advised me henceforth to spend my time on Chleuh, which is the language of most of the Sous. As for a mule, that was certainly the beast for my journey. A horse was too costly and too nervous, and a donkey had not sense enough to keep the trail. One of the youths had lived in Tarudant. There was plenty of water there, he said, with olives, almonds, walnuts, honey. The walls of the town were perfect, with eight gates, and there were gardens outside and in.

When I asked about Tiznit, they were silent. None of them had been there. But a voice came to me distinctly, saying: 'I have been to Tiznit.' Turning, I saw the face of a young negro, who had been sitting silent against the wall apart from us, his chin resting on his updrawn knees. When I looked at him, he averted his eyes.

'So you have been to Tiznit,' I called over my shoulder. He bowed his forehead on his knees. The others gave him no chance to reply, whether he would have done so or not.

'The negro has been in the Sous,' they said, laughing.

'Do you speak Chleuh?' I called again to the black boy. He turned his head quite away. It was the others who said in chorus: 'Of course he speaks it. That is where he grew up.'

Then we resumed our conversation, forgetting the negro. Each suggested himself as my guide in the journey, and several, wanting jobs, asked if I could not engage them as my servant in Marrakesh and later. But though they were the most delightful companions, I had no belief in their responsibility, not even in Brahim's.

All through the night, noises from the port and the occasional coming and going of taxicabs kept me between sleeping and waking. My mind played with the problem of finding a suitable servant-guide for my trip over the mountains. Besides being trustworthy, this fellow must know the Sous and must speak Chleuh as well as Arabic. He must also be willing to work and to assume responsibility.

There is no man more responsible or harder working than the pure-blooded Chleuh, or Berber, of the Sous; but the best of these have not come into close contact with Europeans, and they generally speak no language but their own, not even Arabic. Though they are wonderfully open to persuasion, the man who cannot speak with them cannot persuade them, and

driving them is dangerous. They are quick-tempered and they hold long grudges.

Therein they differ from the negro, who, like the white Berber, is native to the African continent. He is in many ways the most faithful and devoted of men; he is easy-going and never holds resentments. I had travelled thousands of miles with negroes in their own parts of Africa and had never known a moment's feeling of insecurity with them.

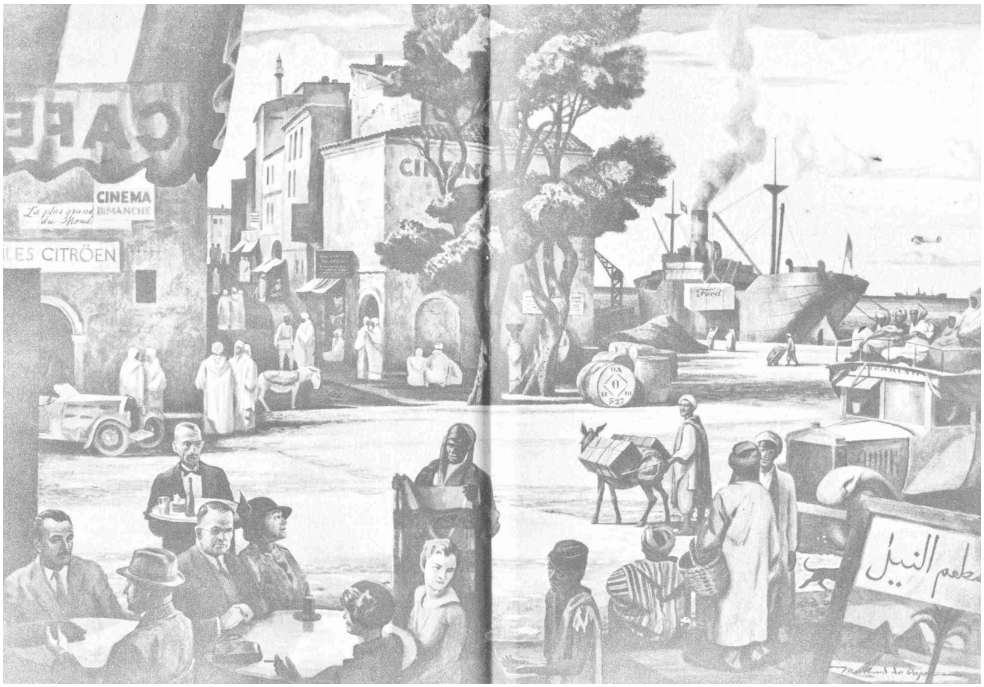

Illustration by Maitland de Gogorza

Now the bright glance of the negro who had sat beside our group in the square that afternoon came back to my mind. He was a fellow out of place in Casablanca—at least so I instinctively felt; a pure-blooded black, if looks did not deceive, who knew the Sous and who spoke both Chleuh and Arabic. This fellow might well be worth a try. Of course, nothing would be rasher than to pick a man at random out of the loafers in the streets of 'Casa' for your house servant. But this was not quite at random. The fellow was a negro, and that was a great deal. The negroes are not treacherous. I had three months in Marrakesh in which to train and to observe him; and if at any moment he proved unsatisfactory, I could fire him. One misses too much in this life by not taking chances.

On the other hand, one does not take chances in the morning; and by the time I started up town the next day to buy a few last things, the negro had passed wholly from my mind. Then I ran into him in the street. If he had not saluted me shyly I should not have recognized him, for I saw all of him now, not just a black face, with chin sunk on updrawn knees. He was about six feet tall and straight as an arrow, with the square shoulders and narrow hips characteristic of certain tribes of his race. From his shoulders hung a ragged jacket, the buttonholes so frayed that it refused to stay buttoned across his black breast. From his hips hung a pair of native trousers down to his lean calves. He had no fez or other covering on his head, and his enormous feet were bare and dusty.

'Look here,' I said, yielding to impulse, 'I am going to Marrakesh this afternoon and need a servant. Would you like to come and work with me?'

'No,' he said.

So, it appeared, there was no further question of taking a rare chance, and I went on about my shopping. But on my return, laden with parcels, I ran again into the negro. He had perhaps been waiting for me.

'I will go with you,' he said.

'Very well. Take these parcels and follow me.'

He relieved me of the parcels and dropped behind to a respectful distance. Conscious of his following me, I went down the street with the absurd desire to walk faster and faster. Arrived at the hotel, I took the parcels from him, for he was too shabby to cross that clean threshold; and he waited for me in the sun by the doorpost, standing very straight.

'What's your name?' I asked, when I came out.

'Salah.'

'Here's thirty-five francs. Go buy yourself a ticket to Marrakesh on the one o'clock bus, and wait for me at the station.'

'Give me more money,' he said, stonily.

'Why?'

'To buy clothes. I will not travel in the bus dressed like this.'

'I'll get you clothes in Marrakesh.'

'I want them now. I won't travel like this. Give me the money.'

Up to this point we had had the talk to ourselves, which was surprising; because if a Christian stops to talk with a native, especially with a black man as shabby as Salah, other natives gather round instantly. Often it is mere curiosity; sometimes it is a desire to be of help, at least to have a finger in the pie. Sometimes, also, it is love of the grim comedy inherent in a Christian's anger and in his threatening the native with jail. We were joined now by a Moorish workman, in khaki trousers and a clean faded blue shirt, on his way to lunch from the docks. He spoke French well, so that I could use him as an interpreter.

Salah, his back against the post, looked at him as stonily as at me. He understood no word of French.

'Tell him this,' I said to the workman. 'I offer him a job as my servant in Marrakesh. He must do what I command. If he does not like the place, he is free to go. If I find him unsatisfactory, I shall send him away. I will pay him three francs a day and his food. But this is a trial, and I will not buy him clothes before I know what he's worth.'

All this the Moor translated to the black man. Then Salah twisted his hands; his face seemed to move with feeling, slowly, as tar boils; and at bay before the two of us, he cried out:

'It is shameful. I will not travel in these clothes.'

There was no doubting his sincerity. It dispelled my suspicion that he had been trying merely to get money out of me. At the same time, his stubbornness was surprising; for although the poorest Moor or black man is vain and fond of nice clothes, he nevertheless wears his rags with a laugh and no shame. I could not then know that Salah had once been used to fine raiment.

Meanwhile, the Moor was going on in clear-cut Arabic.

'The Christian says he will not buy you clothes in Casablanca. What are you? You're a negro. You haven't a job. The Christian is kind to you as it is. Shame on you for asking more.'

Baited thus, Salah turned his head away; and I cut in.

'Give me back the thirty-five francs.'

He did so at once.

'It's noon now,' I said to him. 'The bus leaves at one o'clock. Meet me there or not, as you choose. That's all.'

Salah went away, and because his demand for special favours had struck me disagreeably, I was glad to be rid of him, and so easily. There was little likelihood that he would choose to come with me now.

Our interview must have been a sharp disappointment to him. The penniless Moroccan, and still more the African negro, does not yet look for jobs quite as we do, for a contract in which he receives fixed wages for a regular time service. Under pressure of hunger he must enter such spiritless engagements, but his hope is still for a generous patron who will rather give to him than pay him. It is not wholly true that he dreams of such an engagement as of an escape from toil. He will work under it, but in his own time. It is quite possible that he will do more than work, that he will identify his patron's interests with his own. For such a patron not only bestows gifts; he grants protection and confers position. Slow to fade from the eyes of the young Moroccan loafer is the light of that dream, even now when European industry has established itself well in his land, with its uninspired regularities and its creed that Time is Money.

My offer must have fallen on Salah's dormant hopes like a spark on tinder. Here was not a job, but a patron. Then, like a bucket of water, came my refusal to buy him even clothes so that he might look decent from the beginning. He would never seek me out. I put him from my mind. Time enough to engage a servant, anyhow, when I should have found a house in Marrakesh and work for him to do.

Ali, a gay young husky whom I had known in years before, came to the hotel about half-past twelve for my bags, and we went up together to the square. Five or six big motor buses were backed to the curb, gleaming white in the hot sun, with ladders running from the sidewalk to the top of them, and native porters going slowly up and down, stowing baggage aloft. There was a confusion of native and European voyagers shouting and hurrying about. We pushed through to the wide and lofty cavern of luggage and waiting rooms combined. Here my baggage was weighed in, and after Ali had stowed it on the Marrakesh bus, I invited him to drink a coffee with me at the café near by. Then I saw Salah, taller in his raga than those about him. He stood firm amid the jostling crowd, waiting, but looking neither to right nor left. I made my way to him.

'I've changed my mind,' I said. 'I have not a house in Marrakesh nor any work for you to do, so I shan't need you after all. Here's five francs. Good-bye.'

A down-and-out Spaniard came close to us, eyeing the five franc note as if waiting to snatch it from Salah's hand. Salah did not look at me. A shadow fell on his black face.

'Is he your servant?' asked Ali, in French.

'I thought I'd take him for a servant, Ali, but I don't need any servant yet.'

'He thought he'd take you for a servant,' Ali said pleasantly in Arabic, 'but now he doesn't need you. He's good to you. He's given you five francs. Now go away.'

'I understand,' Salah said. He looked at the five franc note, then at me. 'What's this for?' he asked.

'It's for you—a gift,' I said. 'Good-bye.'

'Get out,' the Spaniard shouted. But Salah did not move. Ali and I went on to the café, the Spaniard sticking to us.

'Two coffees in a hurry,' I ordered.

'Make it three,' said the Spaniard.

I could not forget the shadow on Salah's face.

'Oh, he's all right,' said Ali, sipping his coffee.

The Spaniard rubbed his shoulder against mine and whispered in my ear: 'Have you got a pencil? Write down my name and address. Then if you'd like to send anything to the negro, a suit of clothes, or shoes, or money, or anything, send them to me and I'll see that he gets them.'

But I did not take the Spaniard's name or address. I wondered if he would get Salah's five francs before the sun set.

It was time to go; we could hear a bus engine racing and the starter crying *en voiture*! But when I came out from the café, Salah was still waiting, not just where we had left him, but a little apart. His blackness and his rags isolated him. Over the heads of the crowd, he looked me for a moment in the eyes. The sorrow of his disappointment was strangely deep.

'Never mind, Salah,' I said, going to him. 'When I get to Marrakesh, I will look around for a house, and in a few days I will send you money and you can come and join me.'

This was lightly said, to make him smile. But the sorrow in his look darkened to bitterness. He utterly doubted my word. This was too much for

me.

‘How can I send the money, Ali?’

‘Send it to the girl who sells tickets.’

Rushing to the ticket grill, I explained to the girl that I might wish to send money for a black man’s transportation to Marrakesh. She was very pretty, with a lot of fair hair. Europeans, she said, often sent money as I thought of doing; and she wrote down her name for me on a slip of paper. The native interpreter beside the grill had noticed Salah, and volunteered to find him when the money should come. It was all arranged in a trice.

Salah was standing where I had left him.

‘Within a week I’ll send the money,’ I said to him. ‘You must inquire every day at the office here. The interpreter will be on the watch for you. Now, cheer up.’

But the look of bitterness and distrust might have been carved into his face. His lips never moved, and no ray lightened the sombreness of his eyes.

All along the way to Marrakesh the air grew steadily hotter. Across the plains, shorn of their harvest now and scorched rusty, slender winds strode upright, whirling up dust in columns to scatter it aloft in coppery-yellow canopies. Nowhere was the horizon clear; the sun burned us through a veil. Everyone was thirsty.

In the great city itself twilight had fallen when we arrived. The air was motionless there and exceedingly hot. In the Djemaa el Fna, an immense open tract in the middle of the city, was gathered as at every evening a multitude of natives, thousands of them grouped in circles round the mountebanks, the dancers, the storytellers, the snake-charmers. Above the mass of heads, of turban and fez, floated the dust kicked up by countless feet, sharing the twilight with the sky above; yet along the level of the ground, against the light of acetylene lamps set there, feet and ankles and the skirts of robes were sharply defined. Streaming from the mass at all angles came a criss-cross of sounds: fifes and coarse oboes, triangles, harsh fiddles, shouting, laughter, and the persistent clear bell of the water-carriers.

Here was din enough, but not the rush of prosperity to European markets. It was that native vitality itself which, now exalting, now infuriating the European, ultimately shatters his nerves. For one cannot be of it, and one cannot rule it. With the coming of night it would cease its

clamour; and over the empty square strains of jazz from the European dance hall above the Café de Paris would weave their anaemic platitudes.

After a bath at the hotel, I changed into the cotton suit that would alone prove tolerable through the heat of summer in Marrakesh. With shirt unbuttoned and no necktie, for this was not an English colony and we dressed for comfort, not for principle, I went to the Café de France at the other end of the Djemaa, rival of the duller and more conventional Café de Paris. At these two cafés a considerable proportion of the few hundred Europeans living within the city came together every night. Here we drank our drinks and talked our languages, found what company we could in the midst of a hundred and fifty thousand natives, a majority of whom were perhaps better bred and more intelligent than we, but quite different from us.

During the summer several rows of tables are set well out in the street before the Café de France. The street is wide there, with only the stretch of the Djemaa on the other side; and a suspicion of coolness may settle down from the sky. A low wooden barricade hems these tables in. Without it, natives would press too close for a sight of the vaudeville turns on the terrace of the café behind, which are the nightly entertainment for Europeans and something of an insult to human intelligence. The Moors are curious about them.

Here, on the night of my return to Marrakesh, I met several friends of the year before, and among them a man named Masters, and his wife, who had been exceedingly kind to me in the past.

‘Have you arranged where you are going to live?’ they asked me.

No; I had just arrived.

‘We have a fine native house, which we have furnished completely,’ they said. ‘And we have a woman servant who is the most competent in Marrakesh. But in three days we have to go to Agadir for six weeks or more. Take our house for that time. You’ll be doing us a favour; for though we have every confidence in Fathima, we’ll feel a little easier to have someone in the house in case anything goes wrong.’

On the next night they invited me to dinner and showed me over the house. It was of one storey only, spacious rooms giving on a courtyard which was tiled in blue and green, and a garden. All the rooms were not only comfortably, but beautifully furnished. In the salon, for instance, there was a divan with yellow silk cover and yellow silk cushions, a bookcase over it with interesting books in French and in English. A Persian rug

covered the floor; there were easy chairs, handsome old European pieces of furniture of one sort or another. So it was pretty much throughout the house. My heart sank.

'I cannot take over such a place,' I said. 'You know I come to Morocco only to see the natives, the ordinary natives. I could hardly receive them here.'

'Have anyone you like come to the house,' they protested, and went on telling me more about it. Here was the bathroom, a real bathroom, and here the bar. Unfortunately, the pump chain in the well was broken, but the well water, as I knew, was of no use except to wash the tiles and water the garden. Besides, the public fountain was but a step or two down the street.

They reminded me of their Fathima's good points, and they presented me to her as the man who was coming to hold their place in the house. She was a graceful, energetic girl, finely but simply dressed. She spoke Arabic with me in a shrill, honest voice.

Then I remembered Salah in his rags.

'Lord,' I said, 'I almost forgot. I have a servant of my own. At least—' and I told them of my engagement with Salah.

'Let him drop,' said the man; but the woman thought it would be picturesque to have a black servant.

'What will Fathima think of it?' I asked.

'How old is he?'

Mistaking what was in their minds, I replied that he was quite old enough to be a father; but Madame told me there was no need to fear such complications with Fathima. She had a man of her own, a superior Moor from the M'Tougga country who came to see her every week, a big, powerful man, besides. It was he who kept her so finely dressed, and she was proud of him. Moreover, Fathima lived in an almost separate apartment of the house behind the kitchen.

'But,' said Madame, 'I suppose the black man is dirty, and I will ask you one concession. Have him sleep in the entry passage. There's a bench there, and it will be easy to keep clean.'

When these hospitable people went away to Agadir, I took up my abode in their house. Never before had I enjoyed such comforts in Morocco. Fathima proved herself at once a responsible housekeeper. It was she who engaged the water-carrier to bring extra skinfuls from the fountain. She did

not like to see the plants and shrubs in the garden dying of thirst. As cook, waitress, laundress, in every branch of housework, she was exceptionally able. Nothing was lacking to my comfort, least of all any detail of service.

CHAPTER TWO

There was no need of Salah; his arrival might even disturb the order prevailing in the house under Fathima's sole regulation. Had I had in Casablanca the faintest inkling of finding house and servant ready for me in Marrakesh, I would never have entered into an engagement with him. By all reasonable codes, my present condition released me from that engagement; and I should have dropped him if I had kept of him any other memory than the one I had.

Memory is not the word. His name conjured a presence, and even without the name that presence appeared before me, with the reality of something looming in a fog, imminent and detached from relations save only to him who sees it. There was, of course, another Salah, clearly defined in terms of what is more commonly called reality: a vagrant negro idling in the streets of Casablanca. With only a little knowledge of life in Morocco, one could fix him to a dot in economic and social bearings, chart him in the practical modern fashion. But through the chart I always saw his face, fixed in the look which came upon it when carelessly I promised to send for him. He should have smiled then. But he had not smiled. The shadow of disappointment had deepened to the gloom of disbelief, a tragic look which accused not only me, but humanity, of faithlessness. This vision, it was, which haunted me; so that I took the only means of banishing it. I kept my word.

Fathima found little ways of showing that the advent of a black man to the house would be distasteful to her. Trouble seemed to threaten; and I had no sooner sent the money to the pretty girl who sold tickets than I tried to find some other place for Salah in Marrakesh. But no one would take a negro out of the gutter. My only comfort, then, was that, having kept my word and possibly having bought him a few clothes, I could fire him. From the beginning, indeed, I had always reserved the right to fire him.

He was to leave Casablanca in the morning and arrive in the hottest time of the day. We were in a spell of weather torrid even for Marrakesh. The soil in the garden was cracked; the rose bushes, the geraniums, the cannas were mere stalks, all but dead of thirst. Evidently the water-carrier did not bring enough water for them. Well, there, at least, was work for Salah, the only work in sight.

There being no one I could depute to meet him at the bus, I went myself. On the way I bought two big iron pails. Half a dozen urchins fought to carry them to the house for me, but I had a good notion of who was going to carry those pails back to the house.

I must have waited an hour at the station, sweating and depressed by the futility of the whole business. But just as I was about to order a boy to watch for a black man who would arrive from Casablanca, the bus came in, raising the temperature a few degrees and choking everybody with dust and fumes. A hundred hot people ran out to it in the sun, pressing so close the passengers could hardly descend. The bus emptied itself slowly. Since almost all the passengers were in robes and turbans like the crowd, they lost their identity when they stepped down into it. They simply disappeared, like drops of water in a brook.

Not so Salah. He was the last to leave. He was bareheaded and still in that ragged jacket which would not stay buttoned across him, and he was even blacker than I remembered him. Just before he stepped down, he swept a glance over the crowd and saw me in the background. Black and disreputable, he pushed through the crowd and hastened towards me as if he would fall on my neck.

In a tone that blasted his smile, I ordered him to pick up the pails.

'Now follow me,' I said. And he followed without a word. I heard the pails clanking behind me all the way through the burning sun.

Fathima came out from her kitchen to the courtyard. At sight of Salah, she giggled; but that black masterpiece of futility straightened in his rags and never looked down at her.

'His name is Salah,' I said to her; and to him: 'You will take your orders from Fathima; you will do what she tells you.'

'Come to the kitchen,' she said, not unkindly, and he followed her, leaving the pails on the tiles where he had set them down.

When, a little later, she was serving my lunch, I asked anxiously if she thought Salah any good. These people have flashes of insight. But Fathima, with a shrill laugh, only tossed her head, standing off from all commitments. Through the meal I kept my ear for sounds from the kitchen, murmurs of talk or some more dire sound. Nothing broke the silence. At least they had not clashed at the beginning.

After she served my coffee, I had her tell Salah to fetch water for the garden. His bare feet made no sound on the tiling, not the faintest thud. He

passed the door of the dining-room like a shadow, and out of view from where I sat. But a moment later I heard the clank of pails, the opening of the outer door very softly. I had the thought of running after him to tell him where the fountain was; then remembered it was as natural for him to find a fountain in Marrakesh as for me to find a streetcar in New York. His eye would remark signs where mine detected nothing: nicks in the sun-baked walls, footprints through the dust, drippings from other pails. In this part of the city, where the streets were mere alleys, too narrow for vehicles, someone was always going to and from the fountain for water. He would see that, would know it; for he belonged to the life in which I was the stranger.

So, he began by bringing water to the garden, in which later he was to watch every sprout with pleasant pride. I heard the noise of the pails, the splashing of the water; but he himself was so noiseless that when I came out from the dining-room it was astonishing to see him at it. The glare of the sun was painful to my eyes; the heat took my breath away. Salah had removed his jacket. The sun beat on his bare head and body, and in the courses of his lean muscles his sweat ran steadily. Henceforth it would be better for the garden to water it before the heat of the day; but now we had to find something for Salah to do.

‘I am going to sleep for a while,’ I said to him. ‘Keep on bringing water. When I wake up, we’ll see about getting you some clothes.’

I went into my bedroom, pulling the door nearly shut to keep out the sun, partially stripped, and got under the mosquito net for a nap. One has to do that every day during the summer.

When I woke up, Salah was sitting cross-legged on the floor, just within the doorway.

‘Why aren’t you bringing water?’

‘The garden is soaked,’ he answered. ‘Come and see.’

‘Where is Fathima?’

‘I don’t know. Come; it is time to buy my clothes.’

I got up. While I was dashing myself with cool water, Salah brought my shirt and jacket and watched me attentively, how I put them on. He went for my glasses and my shoes, without my asking; and when my shoes were on, tied the laces and rubbed the leather with his black hand, appraising it. There was no suggestion of servility, hardly of any desire to please; there was immense curiosity. It was all new to him; he noted each detail.

‘Every night,’ I said, ‘you’re to bring two pails of water fresh from the fountain and leave them here in the bathroom.’

Then I showed him how I wished my mosquito net arranged for the night: a chair brought to the foot of the bed, a handful of net gathered and caught with a string, the string tied to the chair. This held the net from dragging over the foot of the bed and my feet. A mosquito net is no protection where it touches you. Salah never lost nor broke that particular length of string.

Meanwhile, he was attentive and silent; but as soon as we had left the house, bent on the purchase of his clothes, his whole manner changed. He suddenly laughed joyously; he rubbed against me as we walked; and, like a giant baby, he took my hand. I sent him to walk behind me of course; but when we came to crowded thoroughfares, or those crossroads in the souqs where one has to fight one’s way, he seized my hand and clung to me, unlaughing.

To be clung to thus by a six foot black man in rags was embarrassing; but I could not rid myself of him short of striking him, which might have been the proper thing to do, I suppose, to teach him his place, but which I could not bring myself to. His behaviour, as a matter of fact, was the first of many indications I was to have of what Salah, not I, assumed his ‘place’ to be; of a relationship which he insisted upon with all the power of guilelessness, and which, intolerable to me at first, I was to find one of the sad obligations in my experience to break.

We penetrated at last into the heart of the maze which is the shopping district of Marrakesh. Too narrow for motors or carriages, roofed with a lattice of vine from which grapes hung in green clusters, this network of lanes roared with the turmoil of buyers. Dust in a vapour of sweat hung over the mass of turbans and fezzes and shorn heads, of hoods and veils. Vaguely here and there reared above them a haughty figure on a mule, which could go neither forward nor back; and like madmen the auctioneers, screaming the wares they held high above their heads, fought tooth and nail to make way through the crowd. The merchants sat cross-legged in their booths, fanning themselves, or rapt in pages of the Koran.

We tried first for slippers, or the sort of mules which natives wear. When the souqs are tranquil, as they are in the early morning, I can get along pretty well with bargaining, which is the only approach to a sale. But in rush hours, the tumult scatters my wits, and through the din my ears can make nothing of the merchant’s Arabic. Therefore, grabbing what I could hold to in the

walls so as not to be swept away, and careful to keep out of sight of the prospective merchant, I ordered Salah to do the buying himself. I never knew a Moor, or a black man in Africa, who could not and would not fight till sunset for a bargain.

So Salah placed himself before a booth, filled with yellow slippers for men, and crimson slippers embroidered with gold for women. The merchant, exquisitely groomed, in filmy white robes and with a snowy turban, scarcely looked at him. To be sure, so lean and tall in his rags, Salah had not the appearance of a likely buyer. He might, however, be the shrewder for that. Lazily and contemptuously, the shop-keeper reached at last for a pair of slippers and handed them to Salah.

They were patently small but Salah, bustled by the mob and clinging to the floor of the shop with one hand, bent over and measured a canary slipper against his enormous black foot. The discrepancy worried him; yet he had stubbornness, and he kept after the merchant till he got a pair that seemed big enough for him. He then asked the price.

Now I waited for the bargaining; but Salah said nothing. He came to me with the slippers. He dragged me before the shop, which was a fatal thing to do; for as soon as the merchant saw me, a Christian, buying for Salah, the chances of a reasonable price dwindled. Irritated, I called Salah the few bad names I knew in Arabic.

'It's your language,' I said to him sharply, 'not mine. Tell the man he asks an infamous price. Offer him a third of it.'

But Salah could not bring himself to do this. He stood mute and bewildered. Therefore I dragged him away, and tried to find a shirt shop; for if one could be sure of anything in this world, it was that every merchant and every salesman in the slipper market now knew that not a black man, but I, really, was buying slippers, and would boost the price on them.

We got on no better with the shirts. Fifteen to twenty francs was enough to pay for a shirt, the long, full native shirt, with trig collar of braid. The merchant asked Salah fifty, saying they were of very fine European cotton with the best of braiding, which they were not. Again Salah turned to me, as much as to say: 'Here, buy them please, and let's go off.' Unable to keep in the background, I bearded the merchant myself.

'Your shirts are too dear,' I began; but he stared at me from his booth, rigid with the spite of inanimate things you bump against.

As for Salah, I could no longer suspect that he was merely indifferent; that since I was to pay the money, he took no thought of the price. It was evident that about trading, about money values, he knew little, perhaps nothing.

On the cause of such exceptional ignorance this was neither the time nor the place to ponder. It might be stupidity, though Salah did not seem stupid. However it was, I was ready to go home rather than to pay high prices here and now for his ignorance and my inaptitude.

Just when it seemed likely that Salah would have to continue living half-naked yet a while, someone grabbed my arm and pulled me into an arcade. It was a dapper young rascal who, in years past, had always presumed a special bond between himself and me because he had once gone to America in the train of a merchant. Among the natives he was supposed to speak English. He probably told them he could; but when he talked with me he put such pretension aside. But he spoke French easily. While his name was Mohammed, all his mates called him Hari, a nickname which might mean the silky one.

The Moors are quite as trustworthy as we, to be trusted within their own conventions as we within ours. One has, of course, to reckon on the conventions; and there are, naturally, exceptions. Instinctively, I had always suspected Hari to be one of the exceptions; not wholly because he had been in America, not because he got his living by guiding foreign visitors unlucky enough to fall into his clutches, but because he was so silky. Nevertheless, he greeted me with what seemed genuine feeling, and a good deal of it, while Salah, divided from us, turned and twisted in the buffetings of the crowd.

‘And what are you doing here?’ Hari asked at last.

Wisdom cautioned me to lie. Now, in my confusion and inadequacy, I was just the prey Hari subsisted on. But I was too desperate not to tell him the truth.

‘Well, that’s easy,’ he said. ‘Come along with me. Where’s the black?’

He called sharply to Salah, and looked him up and down.

‘What do you want for him?’ he asked me in French.

‘Shirts.’

‘All right. Two’s enough.’

‘Slippers.’

Hari eyed Salah's bare feet.

'A pair of pants and a jellaba,' I said, in Arabic.

Hearing a familiar tongue, Salah said, anxiously:

'A fez.'

'Oh,' Hari sneered, 'you want a fez, do you?'

Salah twisted miserably.

Delaying only to ask me the shops where we had already tried, Hari plunged into the crowd, with me in his wake and Salah trying to hold my hand. When in a few minutes we hitched ourselves, so to speak, before a shop, I was breathless and even Hari was perspiring. Salah stood at my elbow.

Hari smiled at the merchant; the merchant smiled at Hari. Their eyes narrowed.

'This Christian,' Hari began, removing his fez and mopping his brow, 'is a very good man indeed and fond of all Moslems. He is a friend of mine, an American. He wants a couple of shirts for the poor black man.'

The merchant took down a couple of shirts and offered them to Hari, who examined them carefully.

'How much?'

'Forty francs each.'

Hari guffawed.

'You're talking to me, not to the Christian,' he said.

'They're extra fine shirts.'

'I'll give you fifteen apiece. That's what they're worth.'

The merchant took back the shirts.

'Come along, be sensible,' said Hari, soft and silky. 'I asked for a price, not a fable. Look at the poor black. Think how good the Christian is to buy clothes for such a thing.'

'Twenty francs apiece,' said the merchant. His look at me was that of the tender heart touched by pity. His look at Hari was different.

'Fifteen,' said Hari. 'Look, the negro hasn't even a pair of slippers for his feet. (Softly) You know I can get them for fifteen next door. Why make

trouble?'

The merchant handed over the shirts and I handed over thirty francs. It had taken about two minutes. Salah hugged the shirts to his black breast.

As we turned away from the shop, a man wildly auctioning slippers was thrown against us. Hari snatched the pair of slippers he held high above his head.

'How much?'

'Thirty francs,' the man gasped, hoarsely.

'Ten.'

'Slippers! Slippers!' the man yelled through the crowd. To Hari he whispered: 'Twenty.'

Hari dropped the pair he had snatched into the mud, and instantaneously extracted another from the nested row of them the man supported in the hollow of his arm.

'Try them on,' he said to Salah; and to me: 'If they're big enough, they're worth twenty.'

In a minute and a half the slippers were ours. But according to the custom, we gave the man only fifteen francs, and he disappeared with the slippers. For there is a regulation in the souqs which requires that new slippers shall be stamped when sold, a way of checking sales. Presently the auctioneer returned with ours, and on the flap of the right one was the imprint of a star. We then paid him the remaining five francs, and went through the usual scene of refusing him a tip for the stamp. Of Hari he did not dare claim an additional five francs as the price of it, which is what they do with the unadvised.

With no loss of time we proceeded to other shops and bought pants, jellaba, and fez. At each one Hari and the merchant enacted their comedy of prices; and in every case Hari got a price as low as even a native could expect. By contrast with Salah's ignorance, Hari's skill shone very bright.

There was more in the game than appeared; of that, I was sure. I had known many guides. Their whispered asides to the merchant are often to the effect that if he will not make a reasonable price, they will henceforth conduct their clients to other shops than his. But the reasonable price is oftenest one that will give both merchant and guide a fat commission; and though Hari may have used extortionist tricks of his trade, he certainly did so to no one's advantage but mine.

What was delightful to watch was the convention of talk, which in this case amounted to artistry. Probably both Hari and the merchants knew perfectly well at the outset the price they would agree upon. But such agreement must come only through palaver, beautiful palaver. What more teeming with sweet rhetoric than a charitable Christian, who out of the goodness of his heart would clothe a half-naked and miserable black man? Hari could passionately plead; the merchant tenderly melt. So they not only saved their faces, but beautified them.

Yet Hari was no more moved by Salah's poverty or my generosity than the merchants were. If Salah demurred, as he did over the colour of his jellaba and the quality of his fez, Hari turned upon him with the sharpest scorn and virtually said to him: 'Take what you're given, and shut up.' Salah looked black then and growled, to the cynical amusement of the merchants.

But he was much set up by the purchases. Hari walked home with me and Salah carried his things proudly behind us.

Hari not only refused the gratuity I offered him; he deprecated my thanks and even my admiration.

'It's my business,' he said. 'I am always in the souqs and I know what things are selling for. If I wished to buy something in New York, I should be lost; then you would help me as I have helped you.'

But, as I explained to him, it is not the same with us, where prices are fixed; and, with no appeal, we must pay double and triple the worth of things. I told him about advertising, and how we are hypnotised into buying things we never truly want, and are held up to pay for being hypnotised into the bargain.

'Lots of palaver,' said Hari.

'Yes; but all on one side, alas.'

At parting, I predicted for him a career as a rich merchant. Then I led poor Salah into the house.

It was nearly seven o'clock. Fathima sallied from her own domain and announced herself ready to serve my supper. There was always a sort of military promptness about her. Seeing the purchases in Salah's arms, she advanced to have a look at them. She made no move to touch them, and though her eyes popped out of her head, she would not have asked about them. It was plain from the start that she regarded Salah as, if not beneath her, at any rate so sharply divided from her that she would take no interest in

anything concerning him. But curious to have her opinion on the things we had bought, I handed them to her one by one for her inspection.

No Moor, high or low, male or female, differs on such an occasion from any other. Fathima took the jellaba, spread it, estimated the length and breadth of it.

'Good,' she said. 'How much?'

When I told her the price, she said, not dear. She knew the prices of things.

She hefted the slippers, examined the soles, the tops, the lining, the sewing.

'Good,' she said. 'How much?'

The 'how much' comes instantly to their lips, a little irritating at first to one of us, who have been trained to repress it. But if you live in the country long enough, you will come out with it as promptly as they; for the reason that no prices are fixed and you have to learn from each other and by each other the market values of what you need.

In Fathima's opinion we had got the lot at rather below average prices; and she looked from one to the other of us as if wondering which had been shrewd enough to do so.

Salah folded everything carefully and laid it in a neat pile on his bench.

'As soon as you have had your supper,' I said to him, 'you must go to the baths. You are not to put on your new clothes till you have had a bath.'

'I know,' he replied. 'I will take the clothes with me to the baths. Give me a little money for the bath and for soap.'

When I had done so, he asked me to buy him a chest to keep his clothes in. For this I rebuked him at once. I had spent quite enough money on him; let him hang his clothes on the hooks in the vestibule where he was to sleep. But this request, which at the time seemed an impudent expression of desire for more, was in later days to strike me with another significance. For I had taken into my house a young man who not only had no possessions in this world, but had neither name nor place in it.

While I was eating my supper, night fell in the courtyard. Darker than the night, Salah appeared and leaned against the lintel of the door, looking at me.

'What do you want?' I asked him.

He turned his face away, and spoke his ‘Nothing’ to the shadows.

‘Have you had your supper?’

‘Yes. Bread and tea.’

‘No meat?’

‘There was meat this noon. It is good food.’

‘Your place is in the kitchen.’

‘No,’ he said. ‘Fathima is there. My place is here.’

Where he would have gone if I had scolded him, I do not know; perhaps to sit on the bench alone in the vestibule till it was time to go to the baths. I did not scold him, however, because he turned and smiled at me, a smile innocent of all hope and all appeal.

After a few more mouthfuls, I said to him:

‘Where do you come from?’

‘From the Sous.’

‘Your mother and father?’

‘They died there when I was little. I hardly remember them.’

This was a disappointment. They must have been pure-blooded black to breed such a son as Salah; and I thought they might have instilled in him a few legends, a few songs, perhaps, from more distant Africa.

‘Who brought you up?’

‘Haida. I was slave to Haida.’

‘Slave!’ I looked at him with some doubt. ‘Do you mean servant or slave?’

‘Slave,’ he answered, smiling.

‘Haida bought you?’

‘No. My mother and father he bought. I was born his slave.’

‘Well, what are you now?’ I asked.

‘I ran away a year and a half ago.’

‘Why?’

‘I was still little. The big slaves beat me too much.’

‘But where did you go?’

‘I got to Casablanca, and worked with a man who had a farm outside the city. Then I was sick; and when I got well, I worked in a lemonade factory. The French tried to enlist me as a soldier. The Senegalese—you know them? They are funny people, black like me. When they meet me in the street, they speak to me in their own language. I do not know their language. Then there was a Christian who wanted to train me as a boxer. He said I should make a good boxer, because I am strong and do not drink nor smoke.’

‘And now?’ I asked, curious.

‘Now I am with you. I will teach you Chleuh, and I will go with you to the Sous, which I know. I will go with you everywhere.’

The vision of such a lifelong attachment shone placidly in his eyes. Doubtless to him it seemed as simple and real as to me it seemed rather disagreeably fantastical.

‘Let’s see you earn your keep here,’ said I.

CHAPTER THREE

Slavery still exists in Morocco. Though the French have suppressed the trade, they have wisely refrained from abolishing the institution; which, indeed, is so deeply rooted in the social organization of the country that they could not extirpate it without perhaps destroying the whole fabric. This fabric, be it borne in mind, they are there by international agreement to 'protect.' Warp and woof, it is a very different fabric from ours; and to one living in it, slavery shows anything but an abhorrent face. But it takes us a little while to get used to it. The word offends though the practice may please; and it is hard for us to surrender our privilege of being shocked.

Some years ago I was invited with a group of tourists to feast at the house of the old M'Touggui, one of the grand old caids of the Atlas. We were waited on by men, and with a gentle hospitality. Some were black, some white: good-looking fellows all, and beautifully dressed. When someone told us they were slaves, we thrilled to it, and whispered among ourselves that it should not be. Later on, I was several times invited to that house, so that the slaves came to know me. If, when I passed the house in walking, there was a group of them taking the air by the portal and gossiping and laughing, they greeted me and sometimes would chat.

When the old M'Touggui died, I wondered what his slaves would do and asked a Moroccan friend about them.

'Do?' he questioned in reply. 'What would you have them do?'

'Why, claim their freedom now; run away.'

'Run away? Of course not. They have very little work to do; they are well fed and well dressed; they belong to a great house. What better could they ask for in this world?'

The slaves themselves, for the most part, thought in this manner about their state. Salah had chosen to run away because he had been beaten by the older slaves; but he so little valued his new condition, so little understood it, that he virtually offered himself to me for a lifetime with a simple and natural happiness. Had I been willing, or able, to assume the rôle of master, to assume it properly, that is, he would have expected me to call him slave, the very word. No shame attached to that word.

Once a friend and I went camping in the mountains, taking Salah along to wait on us. As we sat by the fire in the afternoon, two Berbers passed on the trail near by, homeward bound, as it happened, from a pilgrimage to the shrine of Moulay Ibrahim, the great saint of Southern Morocco. They accepted our invitation to join us in a cup of tea; and leaving their donkeys in the trail, came and sat round the fire with us.

Salah loved this sort of thing. While happily for us the Berbers could speak a little Arabic, Salah could also talk with them in their own language. He may have told them who he was and where he came from. To us they made comment on how safely people could now cross the mountains. Only five years ago, they said, Christians sitting as we were, might have been shot from behind some rock overhanging the valley.

'Even we,' they continued, 'would not have dared to travel alone as we are travelling now. And as for the negro, he would have been snatched up in a moment and sold.'

'I'll sell him to you now,' I said, joking.

Salah grinned.

'You can't,' he said. 'Since the French have come, no one can sell me.'

'And we should not dare to buy him; it is forbidden,' the Berbers said, uneasily, as if they suspected I was laying a trap for them. Such things still happen.

'But he's my slave; I can sell him if I want to,' I persisted. 'He isn't much good. He's yours now for five francs.'

At this Salah flashed with indignation.

'Five francs!' he cried. 'Ten years ago, when I was little, they would not sell me for fifteen hundred; and now I'm worth every cent of twenty-five hundred. Look at me. I'm big and strong. Five francs, indeed!'

In calling him my slave I had in no way offended him. My offer to sell him had amused him. But to cheapen his value was almost an insult.

At first, the knowledge that Salah had been till recently a slave hardly affected my consideration of him. Picturesque it might be to own a slave, to hang a big silver ring in his ear or rivet a band of copper round his black ankle; to have him trot beside your horse if you went riding through the city, or hold a parasol above you if you went walking. But in face of his futile presence in the house, the picturesqueness seemed wholly literary. If I felt a

twinge of conventional pity, it is forgotten for the true pity of his freedom which later overwhelmed me.

No; Salah was an encumbrance on the household and a drain on my pocket-book. There was little for him to do; and since nothing could be worse for him, according to our ideas, than idleness, I had not even the satisfaction of feeling that in keeping him I did well by him.

The day after his arrival, I awoke in the cool of the morning to the sound of the iron pails and the swish of water poured on the garden. The sun was not yet risen above the wall of the court. It was quiet; Salah made no unnecessary sound. In a little while, he appeared in the doorway of my room, without knocking or attracting my attention. He saw my eyes open.

'Get up,' he said. 'Your coffee is ready.'

That was part of his scheme. Every morning he was to come to my room and call me. If I was not awake, he would not rouse me, but would wait silently; and day after day I opened my eyes to see the big fellow standing erect just beyond the net, or sitting cross-legged on the floor by the bed, watching me. I had no sooner turned my sleepy gaze on him than he would say: '*Noudh*,' which means, arise; and then he would vanish.

After breakfast Fathima went out on her marketing, leaving Salah to wash dishes in the kitchen. I tried more than once to put some responsibility of training him on her shoulders. 'Teach him to cook,' I said, 'and how to clean house.' I also ordered Salah not only to obey Fathima, but to watch her at her work. He ought to learn something. But she never took an interest in him, except, I must say, to feed him. This she did pleasantly and generously; and Salah was grateful to her for it. He ran out to fetch charcoal and other things for which she might unexpectedly find a need. Of course, he was happy to get out at any moment into the streets of the city, which was strange and new to him. Nevertheless, it pleased him to lend Fathima a helping hand. He kept her water jars always full, and was always willing to wash her dishes. Tenderer feelings were doubtless ready to sprout in his heart.

Pretty little thing, she was, dainty about her clothes and her person. She would go two or three afternoons a week to the baths and change to immaculate garments, of which she had a store. On the days her lover was to visit her, she would dress with special care, never overloading herself with clothes, as so many Moorish women do, but appearing even more slender. She put massive silver bracelets on her arms, and hung a gold medallion from the smoothly drawn head band to rest upon her forehead.

Her lover—Fathima always called him her man, and she may have been one of his wives—was a well-to-do landowner. She was proud of him, as well she might be. One day when she had work to do in her kitchen, she brought him into the front part of the house and presented him to me. She left me to entertain him. He was a fine-looking fellow, bearded and dignified, spotlessly dressed as the Moors love to be. He took an interest in my Arabic. He was cultivated, in the manner of the country; so I brought out my Arabic reader for him to see. At once he was enchanted. I listened in similar enchantment to his soft voice reading aloud, vibrating with the story of Sindbad's third voyage.

While he was at it, Fathima stole in from the kitchen, and stood transfixed in the doorway. Perhaps she understood only a little more of it than I, for it was literary Arabic, the 'beautiful speech,' which common people do not speak nor pretend to understand. Now and then he would translate a passage into the common tongue for her. Then she marvelled.

But Salah stayed by himself in the vestibule. Even in his new clothes, he was no less the negro and the slave, whom Fathima, just a little more exalted, would not suffer in the presence of her lord.

Though Fathima had all the appearance of a Chleuh, she denied she was of this race, which the Arabicized Moroccan regards as loutish. Salah used to make fun of her for this. It struck him as comical that though she could not speak Chleuh, she could sing, with their original words, the Chleuh songs she had heard on the 'makina'—that is, the phonograph. So if he chanced to be sitting on the threshold of the dining-room when she came in at her service, he would laugh softly and show the whiteness of his teeth and say: 'Fathima does not know Chleuh, but she sings the Chleuh songs she learned from the "makina." Sing them, Fathima.' Then he would twist his lithe body into a knot, which proved him unbearably amused.

She laughed shrilly and came back at him in rapid Arabic, willing to joke with him, yet ever maintaining a wide distance between them. I never realized how fixed this distance was till the day I brought out my camera to photograph them. One, like the other, was pleased at the prospect. Each dressed with a special care. Yet when having taken a few snapshots of them separately I suggested one of them together, Fathima, shrill and honest, shook her head and cried:

'No; not with the negro.'

After Salah had cleaned the breakfast dishes, he would wash down all the tiled flooring of the house and court. While he was at this, my teacher, Si

Mohammed, would come to give me my daily lesson in Arabic. That was my one serious business.

Si Mohammed was an old and dear friend of mine. By birth he was Tunisian; but his family had moved to Tangier in his boyhood, and by training and association he was Moroccan. He was reddish in colouring, with cropped, not shorn, hair under his old fez, a European moustache, and usually a stubble on his chin. His eyes, bright with intelligence and fun, were hazel.

In the early days of our acquaintance, he had asked me what Americans thought of Arabs, or perhaps of Moroccans, whom we so generally call Arabs. I began by telling him, rightly or wrongly, that most of us thought they were black. Flushing with resentment, he pulled up a sleeve of his jellaba to show me an arm whiter than my own. He thrust the fez from his forehead, revealing the untanned skin close to his hair.

'This is an absurd headgear,' he pursued. 'It gives no shade. Our sun is hot; how can our faces be other than tanned?'

He plunged back into the lesson with the determination that one American, at least, should be soundly taught what Arabs are. Yet the colour prejudice in Morocco is only aesthetic, not racial.

In all other ways, Si Mohammed was without vanity. His robes were never new, though they were neat; and under them he persisted in wearing an unbuttoned European vest and a European shirt, without collar, but with a tarnished old stud in the neckband. He was extraordinarily modest. To a profound knowledge of pure Arabic—that is, of the Koran, the historians, the poets, the romancers—he had added a thorough knowledge of French, which he spoke almost without accent and which he read and wrote with the utmost ease. Spanish he knew only a little less well; and he still read English, though for some years he had had no practice in speaking it. As interpreter and adviser to important Moroccan missions, he had been many times to Europe; he had been, and still was, *homme de confiance* to statesmen and powerful caids; he was in continual demand as interpreter and scribe among rich Europeans.

Thus his life had been passed in high places, close to persons and events behind the change in the course of Moroccan destiny. He had had a thousand opportunities to grab a fortune. Yet here he was in his old robes and his old European shirt, with tarnished stud at his throat and broken-down shoes, interested in giving lessons for next to nothing. And such lessons!

Europeans used to speculate about him. Si Mohammed, they said, was a good fellow, but there must be something wrong about him. Otherwise, why, with all his chances and all his ability, was he not rich?

But there was nothing wrong about Si Mohammed. How often would he chuckle, red-faced and amused, at his own state! 'I never cared for money,' he used to say. 'Therefore I never got it.' Then, more seriously, perhaps lapsing into what seemed almost vacuity, he would add: 'What of all of it can we take with us when we die?' Mohammed had found comfort with the lowly. He had welcomed them to his tent, had built the fire and brewed the tea for them with his own hand. And before he came to die, he had scattered all he owned among the poor.

On the richness and wisdom of Mohammed's teaching Si Mohammed had founded his life. Never had he been blinded by the glories which fade. He believed that of all the misfortunes which had fallen upon Morocco, the most grievous was the Christian occupation; but that this, like the others, the Moors had brought upon themselves by departing from the teachings of their Prophet. With an emotion too deep and too limpid for fanaticism, he used to say: 'We are punished unto destruction.'

To Si Mohammed I referred the pleasures and the perplexities of my Moroccan life. I never concealed from him my affection for his people. Rendered confident by this, he would, nevertheless, not allow me to believe fondly that they were all good. On the contrary, he was unsparing in revealing their defects. But this was not exceptional; the Moor is quite aware of his own kind.

When he came to the house in the Douar Graouia to welcome my return and to take up our lessons almost where we had dropped them, the sight of black Salah astonished him. I explained how it had happened, and asked him to make it plain to Salah that his stay depended on his willingness to work and to learn. At the end of the lesson, then, Si Mohammed, bristling, his worn-down shoes making no uncertain thumps on the tiling, advanced upon Salah, who was still at his task of washing.

'Who are you?' Si Mohammed began.

Salah stood up straight as a sapling. A friendly little smile faded from his face.

'I was slave to Haida.'

'Where do you come from?'

'From Haida's country in the Sous.'

‘God has been good to you,’ said Si Mohammed, truculently. ‘He has brought you to the house of a kind master. Do you know that, or don’t you?’

Salah stood even straighter. Stiffly at his full height, he looked blacker than ever.

‘I know it,’ he said.

‘See that you work and make yourself worthy of God’s goodness to you’; and my teacher went on in what seemed an unnecessarily sharp and humiliating sermon. When he had finished, he pushed Salah roughly aside and went on his way. If I had been Salah, thus reminded of my abjectness, I would shortly have followed him out of the house, away for ever from the presence of a flawless master. But when the door had closed on Si Mohammed, Salah gave me a smile.

‘He likes you,’ said the black fellow, and bent again to his washing.

Thereafter, Salah looked forward to Si Mohammed’s coming, always brought him at once a carafe of cool water and a glass, for Si Mohammed suffered from the heat. Moreover, he delighted in my lessons, hanging round the door out of sight to overhear them. They often took the form of dictation. Half in Arabic, half in French, I would tell Si Mohammed some event in my days. This he recounted in proper Arabic for me to write. The vigour with which he forced me to spell was almost terrific. If I mistook a *cad* for a *sin*, he exercised me in hisses of one sort or another till we were in a steam over the two sibilants; and perhaps the only reason why I did not dislocate my larynx with the *qaf*, for which I had been unlucky enough to write a *kef*, was that I could never quite pronounce it.

For Salah, who could neither read nor write, letters of the alphabet had no interest; but the anecdotes of daily life, especially if he had played any part in them, stirred him to transports. No sooner had Si Mohammed gone, than he came almost leaping into the room, an ebon radiance on his face; and sitting half-doubled on a cushion, he would say: ‘Tell it to me, now; tell it to me.’ He listened critically to my every syllable, his excitement giving way meanwhile to earnestness; and without ever so much as a by your leave, took upon himself to school my pronunciation.

There was something strongly affecting in this solicitude for my speech. Though he knew well that his ignorance of French must hinder his advancement, he never asked me to teach it him. In this regard he did not look beyond his present employment with me; and as time went on I amassed more proof than his indifference to learning European languages

that he did not seek to gain from me anything that would help him in the future. He fostered my Arabic as our only means of mutual understanding, joyously confident that the better I knew his tongue, the better should I know him; and knowing him better, would hold to him the more. Such confidence, which in one of us might smirk with self-esteem, was plainly in him the opposite of the fear we stir in conquered peoples: the fear that, unwilling to take him as he was, I would force him into something different.

When I recited my Arabic lessons to him, or read tales from a simple Moroccan reader, he was happy. But he would have been happier still had I undertaken to learn Chleuh instead of Arabic. If, pure-blooded negro as he was, child of uprooted blacks, without kindred or home, he had properly a language of his own, it was Chleuh. To be sure he spoke Arabic fluently; but such memories as he had, whether painful or pleasant, such habits as defined his individuality, attached him to the Berber Sous, south of the mountains, to masters and households, fellow slaves and country folk, among whom Arabic was a foreign, formal tongue. When some Chleuh came to visit me and Salah could talk with him, a warm naturalness kindled in him.

This was the more curious because actually Salah seemed more remote, in appearance and in character, from the Chleuh than from the Arabicized Moroccans. If looks are trustworthy evidence, the Chleuh in the Sous has kept his blood pure. He is so recognizably of a physical type, that many are inclined to think him of a race of his own, possibly, for all his language, not Berber. He is tall and slender, often almost beardless; high cheek bones and set of eye give him sometimes a Mongolian cast. His eyes are light hazel, with an enamelled brilliance; and his smooth skin is a golden white, honey-coloured, it always seemed to me. Possibly even more hospitable than the Arab, he is independent, fiercely so, as Arab and European have learned to their cost, and warlike.

Salah was a negro, black as coal. His black nose was flattened to his black face, and his thick lips were black. From his poll, the barber shaved a tight, black wool. If you asked him what he was, he would say, not without pride: ‘I am a black man. I was a slave.’

In many ways he held himself distinct from all Moroccans; yet there was no mistaking that he felt closer to the Chleuh than to the Arab, simply by reason of the fact that he had grown up among them and had, in his most impressionable years, ‘belonged’ to them.

Among the first of the Moroccans to visit me in my borrowed house was Hamt, a public cab driver. He was a Chleuh, a fellow of sharply defined

personality, solitary by nature and defiant. He had sprung from a wealthy and warlike tribe, but, out of place in Marrakesh, was going rapidly to the dogs. It would not surprise me to hear he had come to his end in prison, or even on the scaffold. There was in him a passionate resistance to conformity, rooted in the almost physical need of independence which is characteristic of his race; and this, under the restrictions of the city and the occupation to which he had fallen, was changing to ill-will.

Nevertheless, to him more than to any other except Si Mohammed, I owe what little skill I possessed in Moroccan Arabic, what insight I gained into the ways of the land. In his boyhood south of the Atlas he had been schooled in Arabic. He could read and write well. During the previous year he had come often to the house to give me lessons. But well as he knew Arabic, he sneered at it, and was always trying to force me from it to Chleuh. When we walked together through the streets, he would not endure my trying to chat in Arabic with various shop-keepers and craftsmen.

'Sons of dogs, the Arabs,' he would growl. 'Chleuh are men.'

Christians were in general beneath his contempt. He believed they would ultimately be confounded by the power of the Moslem saints.

By the time I knew him he had already taken to drink; and when, after my absence from the country, he came again to see me, it was evident that he had declined steadily. It was not his shabbiness that declared the fact. Instantly resentful of the European luxury which now surrounded me, he boasted of working hard these days and having no time to change his clothes for social visits. But that in his face which had been proud was now sullen; his handsome eyes were muddy, he reeked of drink; and on one of his trembling hands glared the fresh scar of a knife wound.

When I saw him thus, I hoped that Salah would not come near. It was not that I held Hamt less warmly in my heart; I loved him too well for that. But I feared what is often to be feared among these people who watch how to gain our favour: a little lest Salah assume Hamt's behaviour a sure approach to my friendship; more lest I lose his respect for picking such a man as my friend.

When Salah came into the room, Hamt looked at him a moment in astonishment; then quizzically:

'Who are you?'

'I was slave to Haida.'

‘From my country!’ Hamt cried, and he fell at once to talking with Salah in Chleuh. Though I could understand nothing of what they said, their faces almost told a story. Hamt’s sullenness dropped from him, his old spirit revived; and Salah’s aloofness, which was his defence against strangers and the unknown, gave way to confidence and almost to affection.

After Hamt had gone, Salah was happy as a child. He all but threw his arms round my neck in his delight that a Chleuh had come to the house. Henceforth, he looked for Hamt in the streets, especially at night when Hamt was likely to be drunk; and I rather believe he helped Hamt home once or twice. He grieved over Hamt’s drinking; but I found that instead of losing caste for having received so degraded a character in my house, I had risen in his esteem for having won a Chleuh’s affection.

Once or twice before this, moved by my so frequently baffled curiosity about Salah, I had asked him how old he was. It is a question which rises among the first to our lips. I do not know why, unless it is some reflex from our statistical habits of living. We believe that the number of a man’s years is definite information about him, just as if one man’s growth did not differ from another’s, and a year were an invariable quantity of experience. The Moroccans have never kept birth records and few of them can give you the number of their years. They are babies; they are little; they are big; there is white in their beards; they are old. That is all.

‘Salah, how old are you?’ I had asked, and he looked blank, as one of us might look if asked the cubic contents of our thorax. When I asked again, he felt my insistence gave the question some hidden importance. He was troubled by his inability to answer, really anxious. Worry twisted his black face. Whether or not he knew that the earth wheels round the sun in 365 days and some hours, he had not the faintest idea of how many times it had done so since his birth.

Now, after Hamt’s first visit, I caught myself again asking Salah how old he was. In the next moment, I looked to see his anxious frown. But hardly had it clouded his eyes, when a look of relief swept it away.

‘Ask Hamt,’ he said, serenely. ‘He knows my country.’

Never again did the question trouble him.

Of the many natives who came to see me, only Si Mohammed and Hamt the Chleuh ever won Salah’s respect or his affection. The others he held himself quite apart from. I think he truly disdained them. In many ways it was plain that, for all he spoke their languages, he did not consider himself

one of them, a Moroccan. Often he said to me: ‘I know them and you do not. I know why they come to see you, and you do not. They come because they expect gifts or money from you.’ I believe that in many cases he was wrong, yet he would never modify his assertions. The comedy of my Moroccan relations, delightful to me, he watched critically and with ironic fun.

Meanwhile, he brought pails of water to the garden, which began to grow anew; he washed the tiles; he ran errands for Fathima and for me; he brushed my clothes and my shoes, and attended me while I dressed. In the afternoon, dressed in his own new clothes, he took an outing in the city. Before sundown he returned. Sometimes he would bring me a dish or two to the supper table; and if there were European guests, he would serve the coffee, fairly clumsy and shy at it. He wandered out at night, too, as I always did. But when I came back, Salah would be stretched asleep on the bench in the vestibule, or, if the night was hot, on the tiles in some corner of the courtyard, assimilated to the shadows. He never stirred as I passed him.

Over my bed the mosquito net would hang as I had wished it to hang; on the table beside would stand a carafe of cool water and a glass, an ash-tray, cigarettes, and matches; in the bathroom there waited the two pails of water for my nightly dowsing. The house was so still it seemed as if some spirit had arranged these comforts, as if Salah in his blackness had been absorbed into the dark of the night itself. Surely that deeper shadow in the corner was not he. But always in the morning he was waiting by my bed, ready with his ‘Get up!’ the moment my eyes opened.

There was scarcely work for him to do; yet as the days went on, I acquired the habit of him, I was pleased to have him round. Though he was sometimes vexatious, there was no evil in him whatsoever. If now and then it troubled me to think he should not be let to live so idly, why, his stay with me would last but a few weeks at the most, and then I could turn him loose a little better fed and much better dressed than I had found him. The Moors are wiser than we. No one of them would judge that in Salah’s case a few weeks of discipline were more to be desired than a bit of flesh on the bones and a decent suit of clothes.

CHAPTER FOUR

Suddenly our establishment was upset. The friends who had lent me the house telegraphed they were returning to it from Agadir within twelve hours. Now was the time for me to realize my original plan of having a house of my own, which I had half forgotten; but where find a house and how furnish it at such short notice?

Fathima was cross. Madame had said she would be gone six weeks; she had no right, therefore, to return at the end of barely two. What ought she to prepare for dinner? Madame and Monsieur were particular about their food, full of difficult Christian manners. And the house itself! It must be cleaned for Madame.

Cleaning for Madame meant having everything out of all the rooms and beaten or brushed; every floor washed down; the high walls and angles dusted with a mop on a twelve foot pole; every bit of woodwork, every inch of every door, wiped with a wet cloth and rubbed with kerosene; and a hundred other things, such as the scouring of kitchen vessels, polishing brass and glass, inspection of china. If Fathima had never tried out Salah's energy before, she did so now. She produced from somewhere a lop-sided ladder, and set Salah to work on the wood of the doors and the door-frames. She then fetched two lanky, powerful women from the neighbourhood; and before I had finished my breakfast, they had even the table out from under my coffee cup. Salah gave me a sad look; but of course I had to leave him to them and go seek a shelter for the night.

At the Café de France I ran into Michelet, as errant and charming a spirit as has ever been incarnate. His wife, with their little son, had gone from the heat of the summer months to France; and he was living alone in an apartment of the Bahia, one of the great palaces of Marrakesh.

'Come and stay with me,' he urged. 'I am going mad for want of company.'

Impetuously he brushed every objection aside, and I accepted his invitation for at least as many days as it might take me to find a house for myself.

Not until after lunch did I return to the place where I had been living. The rooms may have looked a little brighter; they certainly smelt of

cleansing oils and polishes. When I told Salah of our new lodgings, he glanced dumbly round the familiar court.

'Why must we go there?' he asked. 'Why may we not have a house of our own?'

'You will have your room, and I shall have two rooms for myself. They will be our own.'

'But who is this Christian? I do not know him and he does not know me. Who is his servant? Will she feed me?'

He had been happy here. He was doubtful of what a change might bring. Now I could have discharged him; but when I had packed my valise, he brought his new clothes and laid them thereon, having not even a box in which to keep what was his own. He gathered here and there little personal things of mine which I had overlooked; he went to Fathima and demanded from her the household articles I had supplied the want of. He knew all that was mine; he brought everything together.

'These things are ours,' he said.

Ours, of course, now. His and mine were the same. Therefore, when he had run out and fetched a cab, it seemed natural that he should carry 'our' things to it, and that when I had got in, he should climb up beside the driver and go with me.

We entered our new residence through a massive doorway, where guardians lolled. There was a plain outer court, which gave no hint of the splendours in the palace beyond; and a door in the wall of this opened into Michelet's apartment. Here was a miniature courtyard, choked with a mass of nasturtiums clambering like grape-vine, with nicotianas, rose bushes, cannas grown high as your head; all tangled and untrimmed, overhanging and blocking the passage-way round the side. On the ground floor were two large rooms; on the upper, four completed the sides of the square. From a corner at the head of the stairs a door led into the kitchen, vaulted and blackened with charcoal smoke. Beyond the kitchen was another vaulted chamber, with a window high under the ceiling, through which morning sunlight penetrated downwards in a dusty shaft.

To Salah was assigned one of the rooms on the ground floor. We had to cut away some of the vinery in order to pull the door open. For me there were two of the upper rooms, one with a window opening on the tops of the green, which I used for my bedroom. The other, which I used as a study, had

a window on the bare outer court. Here every morning the quacking of ducks and the crowing of cocks reverberated shrill enough to deafen you.

It was late in the afternoon when we arrived. Michelet was absent; so was the woman servant. The place felt lonely. By the failing light, Salah helped me unpack. Then we found a length of rotting straw mat for him to lay on the floor of his room to sleep on. And then we slipped out of the house as we had slipped into it.

We both went to the house we had just left; I to dine in splendour with my returned friends; he to eat happily with Fathima in the familiar kitchen.

I never knew at what time Salah came in from his nightly wanderings, and the way to my new quarters did not pass the door of his room. But I found a scant mosquito net hung over my cot, and on the bedside table, a carafe of water and a bright glass, the ash-tray and the cigarettes. Whether Michelet was in or not I did not know. The house was silent as a tomb. But in the half-light of my candle I discovered a note my host had left for me. It was a spiritual and poetic welcome, with, however, this practical postscript: I shall ask you to give my servant a sharp scolding in the morning for the way she has neglected her work.

This was because I could speak a little Arabic.

I awoke as day began to break, conscious of being in a strange place. Salah was sitting cross-legged on the floor by my cot, and when I stirred he laid his hand on the edge of it.

‘Get up,’ he whispered.

‘Good Lord,’ I groaned, ‘it isn’t day yet.’

‘Get up,’ he whispered again.

‘But breakfast isn’t ready.’

‘The servant does not live in the house, and she has not come yet.’

‘And Monsieur Michelet?’

‘I don’t know. I think he is asleep in some room. Give me money, and I will go out and buy you milk and fruit and bread. I can make your coffee.’

Half an hour later he served me my breakfast in an ante-room he had discovered was used as a dining-room; and thereafter he always prepared and served me my breakfast.

My rooms, long unoccupied and uncared for, were thick with dust. I put Salah to cleaning them. We both knew now what constituted a thorough cleaning, and I stayed by to supervise. But in a few minutes, he said:

'Go away!'

He used the phrase one uses to a troublesome beggar. '*Ceer*,' he said; '*ceer fi halak!*'

I jumped at his insolence; but before I could reply he went on: 'Leave me alone. I will do everything well; but leave me alone, and I will call you when it's done.'

It seems as I look back that thus was first announced the conflict between us. It was never to end, nor could either of us ever have ended it; for it was between what I most valued in him and what he most needed in me; between his independence, the like of which I had never before seen, and my method. The victory of either would have been the defeat of our common aim.

In due time Salah called me back to my rooms. They were as if re-made. He had folded and put away my clothes and found a place for all my belongings.

Henia, the woman servant, arrived about nine o'clock. She came immediately to my room and, kneeling on the floor beside me, humbly kissed my hand. Her eyes were full of tears. Michelet had told her I was an American and friend of the young American couple for whom she had worked the year before, with whom she never tired of telling me how happy she had been. They, I knew, had prized her highly.

Poor Henia. She was young; she was pretty and slender, but she was worn out. Her husband, a good man, she said, was bedridden—in the last stages of tuberculosis, I gathered. She calmly imitated his coughing. They lived near the mosque of Sidi ben Sliman, a good two miles away in another part of the town; and this walk Henia took twice a day. The soles of her feet were so deep with callus that often she limped painfully. Her spirit seemed broken; she was full of complaint and woe. Nevertheless, she was still competent. She was honest, too; and of all my attempts to establish some regularity in the household, which, by the way, was almost paralyzed with confusion, she welcomed none so gladly as my keeping account of the money spent.

Michelet had no idea of the spell he cast over her, a sort of terror which sprang from her bewilderment in regard to what he expected. If he was in

the house she whispered. As she knelt beside me that morning, she heard from a distance the shuffle of his slippers; and she had fled from the room before he appeared gaily in the door.

Michelet had a sensitive, high-bred face. In sad moods it was like a mask; but in any company, for in any company he thrilled like a harp to any wind, it was brilliantly alive with intelligence and spirit. He was generous and fearless to a fault; and I used to marvel that the culture of Europe had produced in him an independence flaming above Salah's like the sun above a brook.

'Well,' he asked, after our morning salutations, 'did you scold her?'

His apprehensions were so sensitive that, though Henia had vanished, he knew she had been with me.

'Not yet. What do you wish me to say?'

'Tell her the work is not done. She does not keep the house dusted. Your rooms are fresh, I see.'

'Yes. My black man will keep care of them.'

'Where is he?'

But Salah likewise had disappeared, as if he had caught the spiritual fear of him which haunted the rooms, the uncertainty of his every act and his every word.

Michelet gave a brief account of Henia's delinquencies. She had gravitated into the habit of coming between half-past eight and nine in the morning, which was late in view of the fact that she brought the morning's milk and the bread with her. She then did something about the house, he was not just sure what, though she cooked for him often. But, if she had not been told to expect guests for dinner, she stole away home in mid-afternoon.

'And she does not give me good meals,' he concluded.

Now, he paid Henia generous wages. In fact, I am sure he overpaid her; for he lost count of the days, and when some intuition told him the days had run on, he would give her a lump sum which must often have covered more than her due. He was extraordinarily lavish with what he had. He wondered why it was that, paying her far above the average, he got so little out of her; and my scolding was to correct the discrepancy.

Finding Henia alone, I told her that Michelet wished her to come earlier in the morning. To this she replied that he was never up in the morning when

she did come; and since he would be angry if she made the slightest noise, she could not move in the house, much less do any work in it. When I told her he wished her to stay later at night, she said that as a rule he did not come home for dinner; therefore there was no reason for her staying. I suggested she might at least sweep and dust the rooms. Thereupon she led me to a corner where shirts and white suits and socks and handkerchiefs were amassed in a pile.

'I can never catch up with the washing,' she said. 'Oh, he wears so many clothes,' she moaned, 'and the laundry breaks my back.'

Realizing her general weariness, I did no more than mention these causes of Michelet's dissatisfaction. And I relieved her of the early morning, telling her Salah could run out for necessary supplies and could prepare breakfast. He could take over some of the heavier work of the house as well.

'He's a good boy,' I said to her. 'I will put him under your orders and he will help you.'

Later I took up with Michelet himself what I suspected to be the most serious of his complaints: that Henia would not, or could not, prepare him fitting repasts.

'What shall we have to-day?' I asked.

'I don't care; anything.'

'Well, let's draw up a menu for lunch and dinner.'

So we set to it; but at the end of half an hour the two menus were far from satisfactorily compiled, and I had evidence that Michelet was an epicure. He consented at last, however, to a certain lunch and a certain dinner.

'But why all this trouble?' he cried, as I wrote out the list. 'Give her some money and tell her to prepare us two good meals. She ought to be able to do that.'

I do not know who could have done that for Michelet. His appetite was as variable as the winds.

Henia listened carefully to the menus I read to her. She counted approximately the cost of what she must buy; and when I had given her the money, which was less than I should have expected, she went off to her marketing. In a cheerless mood she later prepared the lunch and laid the table neatly. Good cook as she was, she might have shown some animation,

now that she had a chance to prove her skill; but, no; she was dull and mechanical.

'Come, cheer up,' I said, as it drew near noon, the hour we had agreed upon for lunch.

'Where is monsieur?' she whispered.

'He went to his office.'

'He won't come back,' she said aloud, with a heavy sigh.

At noon there floated over the roof-tops the silver ringing of a bell, hung in some obscure arch over one of the streets in the neighbourhood, and blithely swung from within some sanctuary of the Catholic church. I never heard a sweeter, clearer bell. By it, morning, noon, and night, the Mohammedans round about spaced their days.

Henia came to my room.

'Now the bell strikes,' she said. 'Will you eat?'

'We must wait for monsieur.'

Again she sighed heavily, 'He will not come.'

Mournful prediction. Alone at one o'clock, I ate what I could of the carefully planned and prepared lunch. In the midsummer heat what was left would quickly spoil, and I delivered it to Henia.

'I do not eat your food,' she said.

'Then give it to Salah.'

But Salah would not eat it either. He merely grinned at it.

No word came from Michelet. At six he returned to the house, evidently in a rush.

'What!' he cried, distressed; 'you did not receive the message I sent? Oh, these natives! you cannot depend on them even to carry a message.'

'Well, we've got a good dinner, anyhow.'

'My dear friend, I'm so sorry. I ran into Berthelon just now and he insists on my going to his place for dinner. Where is my other white suit? Henia simply will not get my laundry done when I need it.'

So it went on; and the only time you could expect Michelet home to a meal was when he said he would not be. On those occasions, if I was not in,

he would feed on the curds of the morning's milk, which Henia always set out in bowls for him and which soured almost at once in the great heat.

'You see,' he would say of these snatches, 'what I really love is the simplest food. A bowl of curds, a little bread and jam, a glass or two of wine, a bit of cheese, what man could ask more?'

And so Henia would leave the milk in God's good souring hand, and steal away home in mid-afternoon.

On the second morning after my arrival at the Bahia, Michelet got up for breakfast. At sight of Salah waiting on me, his first, he started.

'My heavens,' he said, 'you told me he was black, but not so black as that!' And he fixed him with his vivid gaze, before which Salah squirmed and twisted, a trick of shyness he had before certain people.

'*Ouaqf!*' I shouted, which made him stand up straight, though for a moment he grinned, showing the whiteness of his teeth.

'*Mon ami*,' said Michelet to me, 'he is superb, magnificent. Shall we take him with us to Paris, to New York?'

His imagination began to play gaily. He saw us attended along the boulevards, up Fifth Avenue, by such a black retainer; at receptions and in salons, with Salah standing behind our chairs. We should never go to call but we would take him with us, to ring the bell, to announce us, to hand us our cigarettes and our handkerchiefs. And how would we dress him? In purple, in green?

'He shall have a white coat now. Tell him!'

Impulsive and generous, Michelet ran to his wardrobe and brought back a coat of smooth white flannel. Nothing would do but Salah must put it on at once. This Salah retired to the kitchen to accomplish, and reappeared highly pleased. But at our cries of admiration and our talk about him in a tongue he could not understand, his pleasure faded and he stood rather at attention. We had him take off the coat soon after, and cautioned him to wear it only on special occasions.

What I had planned as a short stay in this abode lengthened into weeks. My days were fuller than they had been. Si Mohammed came in the morning as he had come to the other house; and in the late afternoon, now, came a young Moor, Tanjawi, who wished to exchange Arabic for English. Not infrequently there were European guests for dinner.

Salah always regarded my stay as transitory. This was not my house, not his.

'Take a little house of your own,' he said to me many times. He wanted, like all his race, to be at home; and he urged that he was capable of doing all the work for me, which, as a matter of fact, he little by little undertook at the Bahia.

Henia was not light-hearted company. As I came to know him better, I relished Salah's love of fun and his laughter. With Fathima, at the other house, there had always been some play for this, although she knew how to insist upon the wide difference between them. But we could not laugh and chuckle with Henia as we had done with Fathima. Henia was cross.

Moreover, in spite of his abounding good-nature, Henia did not like him. She neglected to buy food for him; and even if I ordered her to do so, would cook his one meal grudgingly. At last she became so difficult that Salah bought and cooked his own food. He helped her in many little ways; but she seemed to be jealous of his help, even when she counted on it, as if she felt he might undermine her position, though it may have been she envied only his strength. For the world was bearing hard on Henia, and she was growing sick.

They had their own notions of a division of labour. Salah was always ready to fetch water, run errands, blow the cook fires, and even watch some of the cooking for her; but he rebelled against cleaning the general rooms.

'It's Henia's work; let her do it,' he would say.

Of course, in the end he had no choice but to obey me in this. We had impatient moments about it. That dark sullenness, which was his protest against injustice, would settle upon him as if he would never laugh again. But suddenly he would say 'Go away,' would close the doors behind me, and give the rooms the cleaning they needed. Though Henia probably never thanked him for it, he could laugh at her then.

Once he planned a revenge on her. It came to naught. Indeed, it should have fallen upon his own head, and would have done so had I not been more amused than offended at finding myself the only victim of it.

We ran out of coffee one day. Michelet undertook to bring some home that night so that we should not lack it for breakfast the next morning. But towards evening I suspected that he would forget it, and ordered Salah to run out for some before the shops closed. Henia happened to be still in the house and overheard my command. With a cross look at Salah, she said:

'*I* will bring the coffee. I must come early to-morrow morning, for I have an enormous washing to do. I will bring the coffee in time for early breakfast.'

When I cast doubt on her arriving betimes, she filled with resentment, which spent itself later, perhaps, on Salah.

Now, the next morning, even earlier than usual, Salah loomed beside my cot and said, 'Get up.'

'Is breakfast ready?'

'No. Henia has not come yet. There isn't any coffee.'

'Did monsieur bring any?'

'He is still asleep.'

To wake him was out of the question. Salah looked at me shrewdly a moment. Then he grinned. 'Monsieur has not brought any coffee,' he said, which was a safe assumption on his part. He grinned again. He laughed softly, that early morning, in his delight that Henia had failed to arrive.

'She's no good,' he said, and that was the salt in his glee. 'You must scold her.'

Salah knew that nothing put me in a worse temper than breakfast without coffee.

'Shall I run out and get coffee for you?' he asked, innocently smiling.

Good coffee was very expensive in Marrakesh, and one had to buy it in considerable bulk.

'We'll wait,' I said, in a grimness he must have observed with satisfaction. 'She'll be here soon.'

But an hour's waiting did not bring Henia. Michelet had not stirred.

'Go out and get the coffee,' I barked at Salah. 'But keep an eye out for Henia; and if you meet her on the way, don't bring any.'

Of course, one's Arabic is always a little uncertain; but what I meant, and what he certainly knew I meant, was that if he met Henia he should find out whether or not she was bringing coffee before he went on to get any himself.

Usually Salah was quick about errands. But the time dragged on, and in nearly another hour it was Henia, not he, who appeared.

‘Have you brought the coffee?’ I roared at her.

Seeing that I was hateful, she removed her ‘haik’ and her veil with more than her usual listlessness.

‘No,’ she said. ‘Oh, delicious God, how my feet hurt.’

‘Did you meet Salah?’

‘No.’

‘Where the devil is he?’

‘How do I know? If you talk so loud, you’ll wake monsieur.’

At least, I believed that Salah could not delay much longer now and that, faithful fellow as he was, he would bring the coffee and put an end to the nightmare of the morning.

And even sooner than I expected him, Salah came.

‘Where’s the coffee?’ I asked.

‘I did not bring any.’

I was furious.

‘Why?’

‘You told me not to bring any if I met Henia.’

‘But you did not meet her.’

‘Oh, yes, I did,’ said Salah, his eyes gleaming with mischief. ‘I saw her but she did not see me. I sneaked along the wall.’

In a flash Henia had re-donned her haik and her veil and run out; and by the time she returned bringing coffee, which later proved vile, my anger had given way to exhaustion and Salah’s plot was baffled. He must have been disappointed.

But there was nothing to be gained by scolding Henia. What the general situation cried for was regularity and this it was impossible to establish. Salah looked out for me; Henia left the house earlier and earlier in the afternoon. Even Salah took to roaming away during my siesta and was not prompt to return. Thus while the sun declined and twilight deepened, I was often left to myself in apartments which seemed under some spell, so flitting was the presence of those who might have enlivened them. When Tanjawi came, we hastened through them to my study room, through the window of which entered at least the sounds of homely life in the outer court, if it was

no more than Lhassan, the porter, blowing the brazier for his tea, or the clucking of hens let out to wander round within the court before dark.

Tanjawi was a young fellow related to a distinguished Moroccan family, which, like many others, had been spoiled of its fortune during the political turnover resulting from the French occupation. The story of the disaster was a pretty lurid one, and Tanjawi went over it many times with me in the hope that I should see in it the material of a profitable scenario. But it was intricate and so complicated with details which could have no significance to audiences unfamiliar with Moroccan society, that I discouraged him. There was now a chance that some of the fortune might be recovered through process of law. Awaiting such an outcome, Tanjawi led a life of complete idleness. He said that both his energy and his spirit were paralyzed by the sense of family wrongs. He was not a robust fellow, and he brooded over the past; yet I think his weariness was often an affectation.

He was an interesting but depressing transitional type of young Moor. He spoke French almost without accent, too fluently, in fact, with that fluffy elegance which deadens rather than quickens talk. With the language, he had adopted European states of mind long since old-fashioned, literary refinements and romantic sentiments quite foreign to the Moroccan nature. On the basis of these he appeared to turn against his own people. He shuddered at the coarseness of spoken Arabic, at its earthy savour, too strong for literature. My need to learn it rather than literary Arabic wounded, he said, his soul. From the life of the common people he held himself quite aloof.

One day Henia ran breathless into my study and, kneeling beside me, poured out a story. She had a young sister who a year or more ago had lived with another girl of, according to Henia, much lighter character. This girl, not Henia's sister, had a lover from the country, a rich young landowner. After one of his visits to her, he went to the baths; and when he came away from the baths he discovered he had lost the sum of five thousand francs. To his mistress and to Henia's sister he reported the loss; and returned at once to the baths in search of the money, but found no trace of it.

Shortly after, he married his sweetheart and took her to live in the country with him. Now, a year being passed, he had come to town to accuse Henia's sister of having stolen the five thousand francs twelve months before. This was, of course, a bolt from the blue for Henia and her sister, also; and Henia had just come from consulting with certain wise men as to what she should do about it.

In her excitement she spoke rapidly, so that I missed the detail of what she said; but knowing it to be a true story of the land, I asked Tanjawi to fill it in for me. A look of soul-sickness passed over his face.

'It's too vulgar,' he sighed, 'and could have no interest for you.'

In order to drag it out of him, I had all but to fortify him with sips of sugared water. When at the end I said I was discouraged at not having understood Henia better, his eyelids closed wearily.

'How could you understand such frightfully uncultivated speech?' he moaned.

In the morning Si Mohammed was with me when Henia returned from before the judge. The affair was happily ended for her. Since the accuser could give no reason for having delayed a year in bringing his charge, the judge had sternly told him to 'arise and gather his head.'

'One of our vulgar phrases,' said Si Mohammed, laughing; 'which has a lot of zest.' (Meaning, in zesty English: Get to hell out of here.)

But under all his affectation, Tanjawi's wits were not asleep. He wished to take up English seriously in case the 'state of his health' allowed him to go during the coming autumn to the *lycée* in Casablanca. He was always 'too weary' to work on the lists of words I gave him; nevertheless, he picked up whole phrases at a hearing. When sometimes I stirred him out of his pose, he showed himself a shrewd and merciless critic of many things European.

Once I reported to him a troubled conversation between French officials, the theme of which was the marked ingratitude, or lack of appreciation, if you will, among the Moors for much of apparent benefit which the French had done for them; such as the improvement of sanitary conditions, the establishment of schools and hospitals, good roads and transportation service.

'What has our gratitude to do with it?' Tanjawi asked curtly. 'We never besought you to come. You took it upon yourselves to "protect" us. You have done no more than your job, if you have done that. Why should we be grateful?'

Usually Salah returned just before the angelus bell to prepare my supper, a task which, together with my breakfast, my laundry, the complete care of my rooms and my clothes, he had assumed. About the house, he was always silent, never wearing his slippers. I seldom heard him come or go. His

noiseless apparition often startled me; and Tanjawi turned pale and held his breath the first time Salah took sudden shape before him.

'There's a big black man beyond the door,' he gasped.

When I called Salah into the room, Tanjawi looked at him with a sort of horror.

'I cannot endure them,' he said to me in French. 'How can you have him about the house?'

Though I urged Tanjawi to talk with him, and though it proved that he knew the son of Salah's former master, a fact which would have made Salah his devoted friend, he never overcame his revulsion. Consequently Salah, who was distressed if any errand took him from the house when Si Mohammed was there, put off his return to it if he expected to find Tanjawi there. This made my supper late, but I could not prevail upon Salah to do otherwise.

Meanwhile, after some weeks, came an opportunity of taking quite another kind of trip into the Sous than the one I had planned. This was to go with my friend, Bruce, in his little Fiat round by way of Agadir. Thus we should have a glimpse of the country and a visit to the old cities south of the mountains, Tarudant and Tiznit, which Salah knew. As I was as far as ever from learning Chleuh, without the knowledge of which I could not hope to gather more than surface impressions of the country; and as it seemed likely that my time in Morocco would be cut short anyhow, I considered such a tour as a lucky ending to the summer.

When Bruce and I had definitely decided on it, I broke the news to Salah.

'You will take me with you?' he asked.

'No.'

'I should so love to go,' he said, his eyes growing liquid with feeling.

'You can't go, Salah. There isn't room.'

'What shall I do?'

'Why, I don't know,' I said. 'You're free.'

He was thoughtful a moment.

'How long shall you be gone?'

'About two weeks.'

‘And then?’

‘Then I shall have to return to my country.’

‘And I shall go with you there.’

‘No, Salah.’

‘Yes. I will go with you, everywhere.’

‘But, Salah, you can’t.’

I tried to explain what made it virtually impossible for me to take him with me: the expense, the immigration barriers. These things remained unreal to him, falsehoods on my part. Too sad to bear himself straight, he looked as if I had thrashed and broken him. But in a little while he recovered from his bewilderment, and to my grief he smiled.

‘You are just fooling with me,’ he said, and sitting on the floor, he laid his forehead on my knee.

CHAPTER FIVE

Then I realized that I could not cast off Salah. I had thought from the first that at any moment I was free to fire him; and now I was not. We were bound together by something the nature of which I did not then clearly understand, except that it was some simple and undeniable force. If to understand a thing means to give it a name, I am still at a loss; for our words respond only to our way of living, while the bond which now made itself felt between Salah and me can find neither the thing nor the name to fit it in the way of living in twentieth-century America, nor twentieth-century Europe for that matter. The ancient name is a horror now, still dangling on the gallows where Freedom hanged the thing; but what bound Salah and me was warm with life and not ugly.

Had he been my servant, I should have felt no obligation. He had worked for me but a few weeks, and I had been as generous as he industrious. But he had not been my servant; Salah was not a servant. Money did not hire him. He was not my friend, though there was surely affection between us. He trusted in me like a child, yet I was not his father. Something of all these relationships there was, nevertheless; and they created a mutual possessiveness. Repudiate an ownership as I would, the fact remained that he was mine for the reason that I was his.

Suppose a man picked up a stray dog, as many men have done, and took it to his house, fed it, cared for it. The dog would attach itself to the man for the kindness and the comfort it had known with him; and the man would grow fond of the dog for pleasure in its company and attachment. The dog would guard the house and all things belonging to its master. It would establish ownership upon these things and upon the man, and the man would own the dog.

Suppose that human affairs require the man to go and live in another place far away, whither he cannot remove the dog. Will he then close up his house and take no more thought of the dog than to leave bones by the back door—enough to feed it for a few days, which any other dog may steal? Will he not try to find the dog another home, another master?

Let me say that I am not one of those who, the more they see of dogs, the less they think of men. Salah was a man, and I thought more of him than of any dog I had ever known or heard of. He was a human being with gifts of mind and of speech. He had known griefs which dogs do not know; he

had hopes which dogs cannot have. He had said things to me which had thrown a new light upon humanity and its aspirations.

To many aspects of our relation the vocabulary of slavery might apply. But the whole congeries of words is either overlaid with literary picturesqueness, or worse still, overburdened with horrors created by Theory and Principle, which, themselves, may one day prove more tyrannical in their aims than slavery itself. In the perplexity, mild enough, God knows, which harassed my final weeks in Marrakesh, I imagined with what sorrow many a ruined slave-owner in the Southern States found himself forced to cast off slaves who still clung to him, to find for themselves the ashes of Freedom harsher and bitterer than Legree's whip.

But we were caught in a contradiction, Salah and I. He had run away to freedom, and he did not yet know what freedom is. I had stumbled into an ownership and could not assume the title. In my mind it was an unrighteous thing to own a man; in his heart it was a crueller one to be disowned. During the days which now hurried us towards the parting of our ways, we confronted each other starkly. It was plain that I was the heartless system, the Theory and Principle; that he was the man. But what a man: isolated! What an unready child!

Of the general course of his life up to the time of our meeting I was now informed. His parents were slaves in the house of Haida, an independent caid in the neighbourhood of Tarudant. Into the household and property of Haida he had been born. If I, or anyone else, asked him about his parents, he invariably answered:

'They died. I was little, very little.'

Among the vague recollections he had of them was the sound of a language neither Arabic nor Chleuh; and this seems an indication that they had been brought up from Central Africa to be sold. The Senegalese soldiers in Morocco, as I have said elsewhere, often approached Salah in the streets even now and addressed him in words of their own tongue. They recognized him as pure black, like themselves; and there can hardly be doubt that he was.

But he knew nothing of whence his parents had come. Their origin and their race or tribe would have meant little to him, anyhow. His father had left practically no impression on his memory; his mother had lived somewhat longer, and he remembered she used to sing to him, though the songs had left no trace. To neither could he give even a name; he did not assume that they had had one.

He did not know who had given him the name of Salah, common in Mohammedan countries, with something the meaning of ‘Honest One.’

‘It was probably his father who named him,’ Si Mohammed said. ‘His owners might not know for years that he had been born.’

The breeding among the slaves themselves, Si Mohammed gave me to understand, had little interest for masters in Morocco, where slaves are less frequently valued as labour than as attendants in the house. Those who met Salah in my house took his lack of any parental bond as a matter of course; but I remember one of his strangely innocent remarks about it.

‘I knew no father and mother,’ he said, ‘and that is unfortunate; for there was no one in the world to tell me right from wrong.’

He was very much in earnest when he said this. The naïve credence was touching; but what struck me most was that in all his orphanhood he should have found only the lack of moral guidance regrettable. Salah was a slave, well fed and well clothed as became his master’s house; and the loss of his parents had meant no hardship. Nor was there in him any sign of that sternness which absence of affection may develop.

He spoke of his boyhood with pleasure. He never lacked for playmates. His master bought an automobile, and would dress Salah up to take him here and there as a page. He loved this.

On the death of Haida, Salah passed with the rest of the property to Ould Malek, Haida’s son; and here for a few years his life still progressed happily. But Ould Malek was an incompetent, or perhaps too independent a ruler. The French relieved him of his authority. This greatly reduced his revenue, so that he could no longer keep up his state; and having sold many of his holdings in the Sous, he moved for a while to Marrakesh, where he still owned a fine house. But he could not sell his slaves, since the French had forbidden the trade; and having no longer the money wherewith to maintain them, he turned most of them free. A few he took with him to Marrakesh. Salah, who must have been not only a lovable but a handsome lad, he gave as a present to his sister, married to some notable in the Sous.

In his new circumstances, Salah, being still a youngster, was put upon by the older slaves, and was often beaten by them. Three or four years, I think, he bore it. Evidently he grew rapidly. I doubt if he were much more than seventeen when I fell in with him; yet he was already six feet tall and large of frame, and plainly had not grown to his big hands and feet. Therefore, he

may not have had the strength, for all his size, to hold his own against the mature slaves. I doubt if he lacked spirit.

Eventually he decided to run away. That certainly proved spirit in him, for he could not do so without danger. He knew that the mountains, which he must put between himself and the house from which he fled, were infested with brigands; and that if he fell into their power, he was exposed to worse treatment than he ever had suffered.

He did not regard his flight, even while his plans ripened, as an escape from slavery. I do not know at what moment, or by what accident, the idea of freedom entered his mind.

One dark night he stole away from the house and ran towards the mountains. When day came, he hid. The next night he ran up into the pass, and in the following day, half-waking, half-sleeping, he hid among the rocks. The sight of men below on the trail frightened him. On one of our excursions into the mountains, he showed me a spot where he had lain during one day, parched with thirst. The third night, he ran down into the plain north of the mountains, in which Marrakesh is built. Then he walked on the forty miles across the plain to the city. Arrived within the walls, he inquired his way to the house of his true master, Ould Malek; and he went straight to that house for refuge.

Here the slaves who had once been his comrades received and fed him, and announced his coming to the master. Ould Malek sent for him.

‘So you have run away,’ said Ould Malek.

‘Yes; they beat me in your sister’s house.’

‘And what now?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘I am going to Casablanca. If you like, I will take you, and you may live with me.’

Then Salah said: ‘No. I am free.’

So, then, the notion of freedom had been born in him. One asks how? when? While he took cover like an animal during the long day? While, during the night, he ran over the mountains straight towards the house of his master?

‘Very well,’ said Ould Malek. ‘But if you wish to return to me, I will take care of you.’

A few days later Salah made his way alone to Casablanca, where for the following year and a half he earned his living. Eight months of this time he worked on a farm outside the city. How he got the job I never knew, nor just what his work was. During the days when he was bringing water to the garden for me, he watched every plant and gleefully reported each sign of new growth. I know he was fond of animals, too. He would have been a good man in stable or field. At any rate, he was happy on the farm; which certainly meant that the farmer for whom he worked liked and trusted him.

When the farmer went to Europe for a vacation, Salah left the farm and came to work in a lemonade factory in town. A sweetened charged water with citrous flavour is a favourite drink among the Moors who frequent European cafés, and in Casablanca there are several bottling works which produce it. In the 'fabrica', as Salah used to call it, he earned twelve francs a day at quite unskilled labour, and he kept himself in town. He soon fell sick. The people in whose house he hired a room had him sent to the hospital, where doctors and nurses alike must have been kind to him. Salah loved them all, and beamed when he told stories of his convalescence.

After his recovery, he returned to work in the lemonade factory, but the dullness of his tasks began to irk him. He would earn a little money at them, and then loaf till it was gone; and he began to wonder how he could find a better job. The garages tempted him. He loved to watch the motor cars, which possibly recalled the care-free days of his boyhood; but he was reluctant to work in such company as the ordinary garage helpers in Casablanca. In fact, if you are seeking a young Moor cut loose from his own traditions and thoroughly vitiated by European influences, with nothing gained except a few words in the machinist's vocabulary, you will find him in Moroccan garages.

Salah said: 'They lie and they steal, and they are drunk all the time.'

For one who knows Morocco it may be difficult to credit a young black, already accustomed to the waterfront life of Casablanca, with moral sensibilities; yet hundreds of young Moroccans, walking the streets of cities for work, will shun a company brought low by European influences. Moreover, in addition to what repugnance for garage life Salah might have felt, as a young black man, country bred and not yet crafty, he doubtless feared being ridiculed, or robbed of what little belonged to him.

Salah was young, abounding in good-nature. In him was some quality which endeared him to his first employer and to the doctors and nurses in Casablanca, as it later did to me. His first experiences in earning his living

were happy. Yet I think he was often homesick in Casablanca. Doubtless what induced him to come with me was my talk of a journey into the Sous, his own land, so far as he had one, and the opportunity he saw therein of returning 'home'. My refusal to learn Chleuh, which at first he tried ardently to teach me, must have been an unpleasant disillusionment. That I should eventually go to the Sous without him was a grievous blow. That upon my return from the Sous I should simply go away for ever without him, threw him back to where he had been; indeed, to begin all over again his essays in freedom.

The curious thing was that the year and a half in Casablanca had had virtually, so far as I could see, no effect upon him. In earning his living he had proved his independence, his freedom; yet he set no store by it. His heedlessness in this regard was on several little occasions quite plain to me.

Once, for example, I had to disappoint him. It was at the time of the Mohammedan feast of the Maouloud, which, celebrating the birth of the Prophet, corresponds to our Christmas. The feast chanced to open on a Sunday, and all the city was making ready for it. Every Saturday my friend, Bruce, and I left town to camp out in the mountains over the week-end. Sometimes we took Salah to wait on us, sometimes Larbi, a dear old Moorish servitor who worked as porter in Bruce's bank.

In the week before the Maouloud, it seemed probable that on the coming Saturday, which was the eve of the feast, we should take Larbi with us. Old as he was, the merry-makings were of no great matter to him; he would be happier in the mountains with us than in the city. Therefore I promised Salah his holiday, and he made his plans for enjoying the festivities in town. I gave him a new pair of slippers for the occasion; he washed and re-washed his clothes, and had them mended at the tailor's. He looked forward to the day with as much excitement as any Christian child towards Christmas.

Unhappily, on Saturday morning Larbi fell ill. He could not accompany us, and still we needed an attendant, to guard our things if we left camp for an excursion on foot. I had to order Salah to come. Frankly, I dreaded it. When I returned to the house Saturday noon to break the news to him, he ran down from the terrace, whither he had gone to see if the white coat Michelet had given him was drying properly from its washing. He was full of joy.

'Salah, you've got to come with us.'

He looked incredulous. When I insisted, he bluntly refused to go. He was quiet. Henia backed him up for once.

We had a lot of palaver. They told me I did not understand; that no Moors worked for Christians on the days of the big feasts (which was very largely true); that a man who forced another to work for him on the Maouloud could be summoned before the pasha and sentenced to jail.

As a matter of fact, Christians in town had usually to release their servants from practically all their work during such feasts. However, I was firm. Salah followed me to my room and sat on a low stool by the wall. His may have been only a childlike grief; yet the light had so gone from his face, his dark lips were so quivering, his eyes so full of misery, that I could hardly look at him. Well, I reminded him of all I had done for him and of how little I exacted in return. I upbraided him for unwillingness and ingratitude. Suddenly in the midst of this, he raised his head.

'I will go with you,' he said, 'but on Monday I will leave you.'

'Where will you go?' I asked.

'I will return to my master, Ould Malek.'

He did not leave me on Monday. His grief had vanished, leaving no trace of resentment. But I had seen his one recourse when life should prove too hard for him, and it was not to seek another job in this world of wages.

Now and again during the summer Ould Malek spent a few days in his Marrakesh house. Then Salah was gay and went to visit in the house which 'belonged' to him, often had a little chat with Ould Malek himself. So far as I know, he made no new friends in Marrakesh; and if he came in rejoicing from a stroll, I could be sure he had met one of Ould Malek's slaves, and that they had talked together of older, finer days.

But it was not only this orientation, if one may call it so, which his experience of Casablanca and independence had left unaffected. The simplicity and true gentleness of his nature, qualities to which competitive life in almost any city does violence, were still whole. He had yielded nothing of himself to profitable compromise on the one hand, or to sham and trickery on the other. Having failed utterly to learn and, I often thought, even to perceive the standards by which we steer ourselves towards gain, he was as unconscious of what we should call his virtues as of what we should call his faults. He remained altogether so natural a person as to stand quite clear of our conventional measurements, anyhow. Our ordinary words did not apply to him.

Suppose, for instance, someone had thought of engaging him as a house servant, and had put me the typical questions about his character.

Was he honest? I should have answered that Salah simply did not know how to lie or steal. Yet I had a bottle of lotion, refreshing in that hot land after a shave. It was scented with a cheap perfume, and Salah used most of it. I never saw him take it; but it disappeared suspiciously fast from the bottle, and I used to catch a whiff of it from Salah's wool now and then. By the time we left our first dwelling there remained but a spoonful of it in the bottle, which was, in fact, one of the little things I abandoned and which Salah faithfully recovered. Did he hide it then as a witness against him; did he keep it for himself? Not at all; he placed it for me on the shelf before the shaving mirror.

I never took him to task for this; partly because I could buy better lotions if I needed them, partly because precisely by identifying my things with his own, Salah was in many ways invaluable to me. But one morning he dispersed a fragrance round him wherever he walked. For a moment I thought there had been more left in the bottle of lotion than I had realized; but in the next I remembered that Michelet had a big bottle of toilet water.

I confronted Salah, then, with my bottle; which now at any rate was quite dry.

'You've taken this,' I said.

'Oh, no; Fathima . . .'

But I looked at him and he smiled sheepishly.

'It's gone. It was ours and it makes no difference. But Monsieur Michelet has a bottle of scent, and that is not ours.'

'I know,' he said, snapping up straight and seeming to grow blacker.

That was all. And Michelet was certain that Salah had never touched his bottle.

No room in the house, no cupboard was ever locked. We left money, jewellery, watches, clothing, handkerchiefs, socks, everything, lying about. I knew what I had, but I never counted anything. Salah did that. I dare say he knew how many needles and buttons were in my sewing case. In the bottom of my duffle bag he discovered some old socks and a shirt or two which I had forgotten. Salah begged for them; pleaded with me.

'Put them back,' I said. 'I'm going to give them to Hamt and Embarak and Alil.'

Promptly I forgot them again till I packed to go away. They came to light then and Salah again pleaded with me; but I sent him out with them to find

the three men and deliver them. I never asked whether he had done so. Afterwards Hamt and Embarak and Alil met me in the streets and thanked me for them.

Salah was honest by nature, and as Nature is honest. Now and then he fibbed a story, but at such times he could never keep his black face quite serious. I no more doubted his word than I doubted his blackness. As for the lotion, he had merely shared it.

One evening he returned very late for my supper, and I scolded.

'Gently, gently,' he said, laughing. 'I was walking in the Djemaa el Fna and a thief tried to snatch my sack. I grabbed him and shouted. But he fought, so I struck him. We fought harder and I knocked him down. I fell on him, for he was trying to tear my clothes. Then someone hit me on the head with a stick, and there was the policeman. He took us both before the judge. The judge said the thief was a bad man, who should go to prison some day; but he only boxed my ears for fighting.'

'Was the thief a big man, and did you hit him hard?'

'He was a big man, but I knocked him down because I am strong. It is a bad thing to steal, don't you think so?'

'And the judge boxed your ears? Hard?'

'Yes. Pretty hard. But that's nothing,' he laughed, and set to work.

Was Salah industrious? Oh, most certainly no! After the first few days during which he took up the tasks I had set, I had almost to belabour him for any additional work. Yet he would sit by the hour helping me with my Arabic; no errand was too far; no load too heavy; and in the end he took almost complete care of me. Everything he did, he did well.

But though I could swear that Salah did not know how to lie or steal, that everything he did, he did well, I could not recommend him as a servant. His honesty and his service bore no relation to his wage, could be bound by no contract. He was a slave, with a slave's pride and indomitable spirit of liberty, with all a slave's startling arrogations. He was surely one of the last of the Nobles.

Perhaps I should say a black slave, for I was never certain how far Salah's nature was owing to his condition and how far to his race. The Westerner's mind has but to contemplate either to find itself at once rudderless in uncharted seas. Whence came Salah's courage; what did he live by, what hope for? What was he who was so undefined by any of our

relations and who was in the process of severing those which had previously defined him?

It is plain that only our logic, only our theory ask these questions; that Salah himself could not be reduced within the limits of their answers. The future will answer them in terms of our system, because into that system Salah had elected to venture. In five years we shall know how much money he can earn, and how he earns it; and whether he is bold enough to swing others in his wake.

Yet I was well acquainted with him. I knew his past and he talked to me sometimes of the future. If I did not go out at night, but sat reading in my room, Salah, seeing the light, would come up for a chat. One evening he had met a former slave of Ould Malek's, one who had been set free and who was now a soldier, finding his living assured. They had drunk tea together, and the ex-slave had told him of life in the army.

'But I will not enlist,' Salah always said.

Often he met Hamt, drunk after the day's work. That was laughable, but it was also sad. During the summer Hamt's wife had borne him a son, their first child; and for a while he had given up drinking. 'I must save money for my son,' he said. His pride sweetened again out of sullenness, the affection in his nature kindled once more for his little heir. Remorselessly, illness claimed the child. Hamt's son died. His wife was inconsolable; and Hamt, dumbly submissive to his grief, took her on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Moulay Ibrahim in the mountains. They prayed for two days at the shrine. When they returned, Hamt took to drinking again.

'Do you ever pray, Salah?' I asked him.

'I know the prayers, but I don't say them yet.'

'Nor go to the mosque?'

'Not yet. I am young. Later I will marry; and on my way home from work, I will bathe and go to the mosque to pray.'

'So you are going to marry?'

'Surely; and some day, God willing, there'll be children. There, now, is what I can love; little children I could hold in my two hands, thus.'

'But they're a care and a trouble, Salah. They cry in the night so that you cannot sleep.'

‘What of that? I will get up and hold them and they won’t cry. It doesn’t sound bad, a baby, when it cries. Besides, they laugh, and that is wonderful.’

I reminded him that in order to marry and bring up children, he must make money and save it, a problem of the future with which, so far as I could see, he never reckoned. He had no conception of the value or of the power of money. With mine he was extremely careful. If he returned from an errand in the daytime and found me absent, he put the change on my writing-table, wrapped in a piece of paper. If darkness had fallen and I was out of the house, he put it on the table beside my bed, so that I should find it before going to sleep. Again, I am as sure that he never took a cent of it for himself as I am that he was black.

But with his own money Salah was utterly spendthrift. To be sure, there was very little of it—only three francs a day till towards the end. But he demanded these three francs every day for the pleasure of throwing them apparently wildly about. With his first pay he bought a water-melon. He had paid twice what it was worth; and when he brought it home, his eyes gleaming, his mouth watering, he found it green and uneatable through and through. After a moment’s rueful glance, he threw his head back and laughed long. Fathima said the vendor was a cheat; but that meant nothing to Salah as yet.

Another day he spent his three francs for a pair of socks. Of course, he put them on as soon as he had bought them. By the time he reached home they were full of holes. I forbade his wearing socks. Nevertheless, soon after, away went a day’s wages on a pair of Boston garters so worn that there was no spring whatever left in the elastic. With the exception of a pair of cheap cuff-links, which he wore with the old shirts I gave him, I do not know that Salah ever got with his three francs, which he spent entirely every day, one single thing that lasted till the next morning.

He had not only no notion of the worthlessness of the things he bought, even native things, but, as I had seen for myself on the day we went to outfit him in the souqs, none of bargaining, of challenging a price, which is the essential of all trade in Morocco. In him there was no meanness and no guile; or if there was, the sheltered years of his slavery had left him ignorant of how to deal with them in this practical world. Such nobility was enviable and worthy of worship; but I could not see how he was going to get along without some vulgarity.

I reasoned with him to let me hold back a part of his money each day, so that at the end of the week or the month, he could have a considerable sum.

It was quite in vain. Meanwhile, he wore out his slippers and needed a new pair, or came to want something else. Then, naturally, he simply asked me to buy whatever it was he required; and I could never establish in his mind, not so much the fact that as a free man he had no longer the right to expect these things of me, but the principle of any relation whatsoever between his money and his needs.

Yet he was not extravagant in his demands; he was on the whole modest and not at all envious. The only threat I could hold over him was that I would send him back to Casablanca, where he had had to live on his earnings; but the mere suggestion so distressed him that I seldom had the heart to use it.

On the other hand, he realized quite as soon as I that the life he led with me was not the life he should be leading. In neither of our abodes had he had sole responsibility of the house. He longed for this and would have assumed it creditably. It would have given some exercise and training to his abilities. More than once he said to me: 'If you will only take a house of your own, I will look out for you.'

At the same time, he was awakening to consciousness of strength and aptitudes in himself for more than unskilled labour, for more than housework. Why would I not buy an automobile, and then he would be my chauffeur?

One day he came and stood by me as I was writing on the typewriter. He watched me a few minutes, then put his black hands over the keys to stop me.

'That is a machine,' he said. 'If you took it all apart now and I watched you, I could put it together again.'

He was not bragging. He told me of Ould Malek's present chauffeur, who was still a slave. He had never worked in a garage, he had never been taught to drive. He had simply watched the older chauffeur; and now he could drive and was familiar with all parts of the motor.

Such was Salah, whom within a few days I was going to leave. At first he would not accept my departure; but when all doubt of it had been dispersed from his mind, he believed only that I was no longer satisfied with him and was shaking him off. To Si Mohammed I explained what made it impossible for me to take Salah to America, and asked him to make this clear to Salah.

Salah trusted Si Mohammed. He listened intently to all that was said to him. But his face grew darker and darker. At the end he went and stood with his back against the wall by the window, clasping and unclasping his hands.

'Your Christian master wishes to do something for you before he goes,' Si Mohammed added brusquely, watching Salah as I watched him, in a sort of fascination.

The boy moved his head from side to side.

'Let him give me a trade,' he said, indistinctly; and then, clearing his throat, he cried aloud: 'Only give me a way to earn my living!'

CHAPTER SIX

There used to run about through the wider streets of Marrakesh a small automobile, Citroën, I think, fitted with two steering wheels. Across the rear of it was hung a sign in big letters: *Auto-école*. This instruction car had already attracted the attention of the natives. I sent Salah that afternoon to hunt it down, and charged him, as he valued his future, not to return without the name and address of the owner, or of the man who gave driving lessons in it. I was leaving in four days, and had decided that within that time Salah should be started towards a career.

He succeeded in finding the proprietors of the car, who, according to their business card, had also a garage and repair shop in the Rue Bab Agnaou. Salah reported that they were pleasant men, though they spoke little or no Arabic.

Early the next morning I went to interview them. They were a couple of young Frenchmen, neither of whom had been long enough out from France to acquire the nerves and the cynicism of more experienced colonials. Having but recently set up in business for themselves, they were anxious to please; and their confidence in the honesty of their toil and in their industriousness made a favourable impression on me which later events never quite obliterated.

To what I told them of Salah they listened as doctors listen to a case which has no specially interesting feature. That he was black, a slave, willing, honest: all this had no importance for them. They laughed good-naturedly. ‘We have all kinds,’ they said. ‘If they have two hands, two feet, and two eyes, we teach them to drive. That’s our business; we guarantee their licence.’

‘How long do you generally take to it?’ I asked.

That naturally depended on the intelligence of the pupil. The majority were ready in ten days to pass the driving tests; ‘for,’ they added, ‘these natives are quick to learn.’ I told them how I was going in a few days for a fortnight’s trip through the Sous, and how I wished Salah to have his licence by the time of my return, so that I could depart for America knowing that he was established to that extent in his new life.

‘If he has ordinary intelligence,’ they assured me, ‘ten days at the most will see him through. But has he his *carte d’identité*?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘He must have a *carte d’identité*; otherwise he will not be granted a licence.’

They cleared up my misty ideas about this identity card, required by police regulations in France and in French colonies. It is a combination of what we should call a birth certificate and a rogues’ gallery record. Without it, even the most law-abiding person may be challenged on his civil status. If Salah had not his identity card, let him apply for it at once.

Provided he had no prison record, there would be no difficulty about it. If he had been in jail there was no use trying. Salah, being innocent of previous convictions, should get three photographs of himself. He should then depose his application before an official in the Municipal Service, who, in all probability, would send him on to the *Sûreté* in the Rue Er-R’mila. Here the real business began. They would take photographs of his face from three angles; strip him, examine him for scars or other marks, weigh him, measure him, take his finger-prints, and so forth; thus compiling a total of what they name, without the slightest hesitation, *specifications anthropomorphiques*. (Many Moors who could not speak French would mention their *carte anthropomorphique* quite casually, bothered not at all by the length of the word, but unable to pronounce the p, which is not in their language.)

Salah’s ‘specifications’ and all the photographs, including those he had brought, would then be sent to Rabat; whence in due time, all going well, a card would be returned to him, assigning him a unique identity among all the anthropomorphical inhabitants of the globe. My Salah, I thought, who had seemed so undefined, would be definite enough then.

‘How old is the negro?’ asked one of the masters of the auto-school.

‘I don’t know. He’s six feet tall, or more; but he is certainly not so old as he looks. Maybe seventeen.’

‘To get his licence he must be eighteen at least. Nineteen or twenty would be better. If he’s big he can get by with it. And, incidentally, he’d better not tell the *Sûreté* people he wants his card to get a chauffeur’s licence. They might make trouble for him then.’

‘For heaven’s sake, why?’

They did not know why; and I could never discover whether it was because of some policy restricting the number of chauffeurs, or of some obscure economic favouritism.

The matter being thus talked over and all seeming propitious in spite of the big words, I asked them the price of tuition. They named the figure; four hundred francs. It seemed to me dear, but they stiffly objected to reducing it.

Later in the day I got the money at the bank and returned with it to the garage about twilight. The younger master led me into the office. They were so newly installed that the electric wiring was not completed, and it was almost dark in the office. He had some difficulty in finding the receipt book; and when he came to write in it, he had to bend his head till his nose rubbed the paper.

'Will you pay it all now?'

I thought I might as well.

It was so dark that the writing on the receipt was invisible. I counted out four notes of a hundred francs, feeling them with my fingers.

'*Voilà*,' he said, handing me the receipt and taking the money. 'Tell the negro to come here to-morrow morning at ten o'clock for his first lesson.'

A slight mental uneasiness accompanied me on the walk home. Four hundred francs was a considerable sum of money, and there was a possibility that I had merely thrown it away. But this I could contemplate in a fatalistic calm which was pleasant. Not with the same calm could I face the likelihood that with four hundred francs I had bound Salah to a new bondage. I had set a harness on him that he could be driven like the rest of us; and, in my hands temporarily, the reins were heavy even before I felt on them the first wayward tug of a human destiny.

In the evening I told Salah that he was to report for his first lesson in driving the next morning. He was almost too happy for words; the shade of my coming departure was for the time wholly scattered, and he saw a bright road ahead of him.

'I know I shall learn quickly,' he said.

A little later, something puzzled him. It was how the lessons could be paid for during my absence.

'They are already paid for,' I said.

Natural as breathing, he asked how much?

He kept at me till I told him. The amount seemed to him colossal, hardly to be named in more than a whisper. It sobered him, and he went away silent about his work. Before going out for his night's stroll, he returned to my

room; and with one of those little smiles of his, extraordinarily expressive, he said:

'Some day I will pay you the money.'

Though I could only smile for my part at the utter improbability, his impulse touched me none the less. At the same time I wished he had not given word to it, and hoped he would forget what he had said. He had exposed himself to judgment in our code; and to the end of his life and mine everyone would ask: Did Salah pay? and scorn the innocence of his word.

In the morning Salah was up at dawn, and of course had me up and at breakfast. Before eight o'clock he had done his chores, and with special care. My rooms were washed down, and not a fleck of dust was left in them.

'May I,' he then asked, 'wear the white jacket monsieur gave me?' And I could not refuse him permission to do so for his first lesson. Afterwards he would wear his dark clothes round motor cars and engines.

Fortunately Si Mohammed came early that morning. For one of us it would be almost immoral to send Salah off without some good advice. My Arabic might not make this emphatic enough, nor make clear one or two things besides he had now to understand. Si Mohammed lent himself whole-heartedly to my needs.

'I am afraid,' I said, 'that Salah is a little over-confident. He thinks, for instance, that he knows how to change a tyre; and if the masters at the school begin to teach him that, it's in his nature to laugh and say he knows it already. Tell him that no matter what he thinks he knows, he is to act always as if he knew nothing; to watch and to listen humbly. For he is ignorant; and if he pretends otherwise, no one will take pains to teach him.'

If this was not excellent advice, God forgive me; for Si Mohammed turned it upon Salah with all the vigour of a drubbing. The lad bore it well.

'I understand,' he said.

We took up the matter of the identity card. Salah, as I had expected, had none; he had no idea of what one was and was slow to be impressed with its importance. But even in the excitement of the impending lesson, he was delighted at the prospect of having his picture taken. He promised that as soon as the lesson was over he would immediately visit a photographer. I knew of none to send him to; but Salah had often seen an ambulant photographer waiting for trade in front of the Café Glacier, and was sure he took little photographs such as were needed in his case.

‘Now,’ I said, ‘don’t start for your lesson till quarter of ten. Stay in the house. If you go out, the Lord only knows what will happen to you.’

‘He’s a bright boy,’ said Si Mohammed after Salah had disappeared and we were turning to my lesson. ‘There’ll be no difficulty. The identity card is a formality.’

At quarter of ten, Salah came before us.

‘I am going now,’ he said.

In the white coat he looked handsome and pure, like a live offering prepared for dedication.

‘And if the man says, “Come here and I’ll show you how to change a tyre”?’

‘I will go and watch carefully, for I know nothing.’

So we gave him our blessing, and he set forth.

After Si Mohammed had gone in his turn, Michelet rose from his bed and came in for a chat.

‘And so Salah has gone for his first lesson,’ he said. ‘You are certainly full of contradictions. Like me, you believe these natives have rare virtues, and that our civilization destroys them. Yet you turn Salah into a chauffeur, to suffer all the speed and racket of our lives, to hang about garages. You expose him to every vice our machine age has made possible.’

‘But he must have a trade,’ I protested. ‘We cannot dress him in purple and green and parade him about the world with us. I cannot keep him; you cannot.’

‘Nevertheless, it is a contradiction,’ Michelet maintained ardently.

But like a vessel of dark crystal filled with wine was Salah with his joy when he returned to the house at noon. He had driven the car himself. The very first day he had felt the power to run a machine. He had done well. So had the master said.

He had been unable to locate the photographer, who, however, he had been told, would be round the café in the late afternoon.

Meanwhile, minor problems were cropping up every hour. Where, for instance, was Salah going to live during my absence? Michelet was leaving for Rabat even before I left for the Sous. I was to close the apartment. It was

out of the question for Salah to stay there. Michelet expected the visit of several friends and would need all the rooms.

I talked things over with Tanjawi that afternoon. Unless the revulsion with which black people filled him was affectation, I have to thank him for a generous offer. Salah, he said, could come and live in his house. There would be some work for him to do; and though Tanjawi could not pay him, he would give him a good room and food. But I knew Salah would never consent to live in Tanjawi's house; nor would I have urged him to do so.

It was Tanjawi who brought up an obstacle in the way of the identity card.

'Salah must have a name,' he said.

A name? Was not Salah enough? Certainly not. Would it be enough for one of us, applying for a passport and being asked our name, to reply simply: My name is John, or Peter, or Philip?

There are family names in Morocco; but the vast majority of the people seem to be without one, to name themselves only sons or daughters of John, or Peter, or Philip, which here, of course, would be Mohammed, or Ibrahim, or Ahmed. No more precise nominal identity seemed ever to be demanded of an ordinary person than that he was John, son of John (Mohammed ben Mohammed), or Mary, daughter of John (Fathima bint Mohammed). Sometimes there was a place name, such as Ali el Fassi, or Ali from Fez, and sometimes a tribe name.

'Well, I'll give Salah a name,' I said. 'What difference? I'll call him Salah ben Mohammed.'

'Oh, but you cannot do that,' Tanjawi cried. 'Mohammed is one of our names, and he is a slave. But wait and I'll find you a name for him.'

As I remember, the name he evoked from his knowledge was something like Ferraji, which had no special significance but was common among slaves. I must not call Salah son of Ferraji. He must simply be Salah Ferraji.

In the morning Si Mohammed laughed at such precious care.

'To be sure,' he said, 'Salah ought to have a name. After all, he was the son of somebody. Call him ben Abdallah. We're all slaves of God, anyhow.' (*Abd* is the Arabic word for slave, and the name Abdallah means slave, or servitor, of God.)

We called in Salah.

‘You don’t know your father’s name at all?’ Si Mohammed asked him for the last time.

‘I was a baby when he died. I do not remember him at all.’

‘Well, we’ve decided that his name was Abdallah. Do you understand?’

Salah shrugged his shoulders.

‘Don’t forget that,’ I said, sharply. ‘When you go to get your identity card, they’ll ask you what your father’s name was.’

‘But I don’t know—’ Salah began.

We had him stand up straight as a soldier; and if he had not known how to lie before, we gave him a drilling in it now. After a little while, when either Si Mohammed or I shot the question at him, What was your father’s name? he brought his heels together, and looking his blackest and most aloof, answered: Abdallah.

With Si Mohammed I took up the question of where Salah was to lodge.

‘Don’t worry about that. Of course, he could stay with Tanjawi or with me; but I doubt if he’d like that. These fellows know how to look out for themselves. It’s still warm, the rains won’t begin for another month; Salah can sleep anywhere. He’s done it before, you may be sure. If he wants to be under a roof, he can sleep in one of the cafés for a penny or two.’

In fact, I remembered half a dozen native cafés where after midnight I had seen men sleeping soundly on the mats, their hoods drawn over their heads. It did not matter that Salah, like all negroes, had peculiar need of a place of his own. It would do him no harm to live like a gipsy for a couple of weeks. As Si Mohammed said, he’d done it before.

Now there was the question of Salah’s food.

‘I want to leave some money for him to live on while I’m away,’ I said.

Hundreds of youngsters, and even men, live for months at a stretch on nothing but bread and tea. Three francs a day, according to Si Mohammed, would allow Salah to do this; but I felt he ought to have meat. Si Mohammed decided that five francs a day would be sufficient allowance.

More of a problem still was how to leave the money. Salah could not be trusted with it. If I gave him seventy-five francs outright, he would spend it all in a couple of days. Since Si Mohammed might be often absent from Marrakesh, he could not deal it out to him.

‘But let me think it over,’ my teacher said, ‘and I shall hit upon someone.’

He knew as well as I that it had better be a native than a European; that it must be someone whose honesty was beyond the temptation inherent in handling money for a black as easily cheated as Salah.

By now Salah had his three photographs. They were not so repellent as our passport photographs usually are, for the blacks photograph well; and though they were vague and badly printed, Salah enjoyed looking at them. He would have liked to keep them, all but one, which he offered to me; but I sent him with them to the Municipal Building, there to make his initial application for an identity card. Everyone said this was a simple matter which Salah could conduct for himself.

But he returned in a state of irritation rare with him, having accomplished nothing. He had been passed with scant grace from one office to another, only to come upon the proper official just as he was leaving for lunch and a siesta. It was plain that Salah was confused. He backed away from officialdom and disguised his shyness in a contemptuous indifference. That in itself might fatally impede getting the identity business started at all. I could not reason or scold Salah out of it. There was but one solution: in spite of the hundred and one things I had to do, I accompanied Salah in the heat of the afternoon to the Municipal Building.

At that season the French officials who might have cut through much of the red tape for me were still absent on their leaves. I had to deal with Monsieur Rustam, an Algerian interpreter temporarily in charge of the bureau through which applications were made.

He sat in a little office before a desk cluttered with papers and documents. The air was hot, and blue with his cigarette smoke. ‘Monsieur’ Rustam was a fattish little man, pasty of skin, easily agitated, and always peering distractedly through the small but thick lenses of his pince-nez. These, by the way, often slipped from his nose. Agitated with respect, he rose when I came into the office followed by Salah, who in the smoke seemed like a genie.

‘Ah, yes,’ he said, when I had explained our case; ‘it’s a mere formality. It is not my business; I have to act for Djilali, who is away. But I am immensely pleased to be of service to you, monsieur.’

Thereupon, he began plunging his little hands among the papers on his desk, knocking a good many off on the floor; and unable to find what he was

searching for, he loudly called for a door-tender.

‘Go find me some application blanks for identity cards,’ he ordered. ‘They should be here and are not.’

While we waited for the door-tender to return, Rustam offered me a cigarette, and we talked in French of my efforts to learn Arabic. Salah meanwhile blotted himself out in a shadowy corner.

When the blanks had come, Rustam jabbed a pen into the inkwell and called Salah before him.

‘What’s your name?’

‘Salah.’

Rustam’s pen scratched.

‘Salah what?’

‘Salah.’

Rustam gave a nervous squeal. He threw his arms wide apart, almost sweeping everything off the desk.

‘Salah what?’ he cried. ‘What’s your father’s name?’

Salah drew himself up like a soldier.

‘Abdallah,’ he replied.

‘Abdallah what?’

I held my breath.

‘Abdallah,’ said Salah, with a look at me.

‘What’s your mother’s name?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘What! You don’t know?’

‘She hadn’t any.’

‘Didn’t you have any mother?’

Salah began the story I had by now heard him tell so often; how he had been a slave, and his parents were slaves and had died when he was a baby.

‘This is very irregular,’ said Rustam to me. ‘These names he gives are no names.’ And to Salah: ‘Who is your master?’

‘I was slave to Haida.’

‘Haida’s dead,’ said Rustam.

‘I know. Then I belonged to Quid Malek, Haida’s son.’

‘Ould Malek who has a house in Marrakesh?’

‘Yes.’

‘Did he know your father and mother?’

‘I don’t know. He knows me.’

‘Let us hope he remembers his father’s slaves; that there was one named Abdallah, who was your father.’

‘But why all this?’ I broke in. ‘Slaves don’t have names.’

‘Very well. But this negro can’t have an identity card without the names of his parents. Abdallah? What does that mean? There are a thousand Abdallahs. We have to be particular. That is the rule. I think Ould Malek is in town; and since I wish to help you all I can, monsieur, in this irregular business, I will go myself to Ould Malek’s house and take Salah with me. We may be able to establish his parents’ identity. Failing that, I hardly know what we can do.’

He then took down on the blank a few more details Salah was able to give about his life, where he had lived, and so forth; and when that was done, he made an appointment to go to Ould Malek’s house the next morning with Salah.

But on the next morning it proved that Ould Malek was not in Marrakesh. Again I interrupted my own affairs to return in the afternoon with Salah to Rustam’s office. Salah was impatient and balky; I had to force him to come with me. He believed that there was but one way to get the application through Rustam, and that was to give him a hundred francs.

‘It is always so,’ he said, with cold disgust, ‘in the offices of the Christians.’

Since Salah had had no experience of the world, I could no more say whence had come this notion into his mind than whence had come his notion of freedom. But it was firmly implanted.

‘Rustam is a Mohammedan,’ I said.

‘I know. That’s why you need to give him only a hundred francs. If he were a Christian, it would cost you five hundred.’

But Rustam was not corruptible. It would have made things easier if he had been. He was following his instructions and had not the authority to recognize an exception. I doubt if he relished his little powers, as many who work in offices do. He maintained the letter of the law because he had seen many a Mohammedan cast out for deflection.

Now I realized that in creating a name for Salah's father we had only raised another obstacle in our path. Therefore I told Rustam how we had imposed the lie on Salah. I do not know whether this altered the affair so much as he protested or not.

'Why did you not tell me the truth in the first place?' he said querulously.

He took a fresh blank for Salah's case, and wrote 'unknown' in the spaces left for parents' names. He suggested that we send this, with photographs of Salah, to Ould Malek, who was in the Sous, and wait for Ould Malek's confirmation. He doubted if we could have a reply in less than ten days.

'My one purpose,' I said, 'is to get Salah started before I leave for the Sous myself day after to-morrow morning at five o'clock. He has no name, he has no place. How could he have? I must secure them for him in the beginning. Otherwise I can do nothing for him.'

Rustam took still another blank, began all over again. When he had got what he could from Salah, he jabbed his pen in the inkwell and wrote across the sheet: *SOUS TOUTES RESERVES!!!* There stood the words in block letters, followed by three exclamation points, and all triply underlined.

'You cannot apply to the *Sûreté* without a blank from my office. Take this one.'

'Is it serious, what you have scrawled there?' I asked.

'Very. My duty leaves me no other course. The *Sûreté* depends on us for the preliminary information on which an identity card is issued. Salah can give little information about himself. I hereby declare that what he can give is suspicious in the highest degree.'

Salah and I went directly to the *Sûreté*. I had no idea of what lay ahead of us; Rustam had made me feel that the blank we carried might do us more harm than good. But I was sure of one thing: we had advanced to the second stage in our progress towards the identity card; and it was clear as daylight that Salah alone would never have got that far.

We descended narrow stairs to the inner court of a building, well below the level of the street. Posted on the walls round the court were photographs of villainous-looking Moors, front views and both side views, printed with sharpest definition, showing up every wrinkle and scar; charts of facial and bodily measurements; placards of magnified finger-prints. The atmosphere was scientific; it was an experimental laboratory in wickedness.

In a room giving on the court, three men sat at a table. One was a clerk; there was a typewriter before him and a filing cabinet within reach. The other two were in uniform, their stiff collars for the moment parted, their heads uncovered and the hair dank on their foreheads. I walked into the room; Salah stopped in the doorway.

'*Bonjour, messieurs*,' I began.

They lifted their eyebrows. I had no doubt of being in an agency of the cleverest police system in the world.

The men in uniform threw a keen glance at me and one at Salah, so swiftly that I could not swear to having seen it. I laid the application blank on the table.

'This the negro?' the clerk asked, looking dully at Salah.

'Yes.'

'Not much information.'

'There's none to give. He was born a slave. I'd like to see him get a name and a status in the world.'

'Naturally,' said the clerk.

'Slave?' echoed one of the men in uniform. 'Poor devil.'

'Have you got ten francs?' the clerk asked of me. 'That's the application fee.'

I laid ten francs on the table.

'Three photographs? You seem to have prepared everything.'

I brought forth the photographs.

'Tell the black boy to return in half an hour.'

'No more fees? Nothing more to have ready?'

'Nothing. We'll look out for him.'

'He doesn't speak any French.'

‘We’re used to that.’

I was tempted to ask the uniformed men if they could speak Arabic. The *Sûreté* men I had met would never concede they could speak a word of the native language. Yet nothing escaped their hearing.

I spoke of Salah’s good qualities, the anomalies of his position.

‘If you’ve got to have his father’s name, call it Abdallah,’ I said.

‘Why not?’ said the clerk. ‘I’ll put the matter through for you at once. Provided he’s not on the police records in Rabat, there’ll be no difficulty.’

‘When will the card be returned?’

‘Ten days, perhaps. Of course, a prison record—’ and the clerk shrugged his shoulders.

‘How old do you think the negro is?’ I asked.

‘How old do you say?’

‘About twenty, don’t you think?’

‘That’ll go all right. Take the negro away with you now and tell him to return in half an hour.’

Salah walked close to me in the street, holding my hand as he had done in the early days. The prospect of returning alone to the *Sûreté* alarmed him.

I shook him off with some spleen.

‘For heaven’s sake, Salah,’ I burst out, ‘you’re not a baby. Do something for yourself. Everything is arranged. I won’t go back with you.’

So he withdrew into his imperturbable self and left me.

With some malice I called him back.

‘Have you ever been in jail?’ I asked.

‘I in jail? Why should I have been in jail? I have never done anything bad in my life.’

Confound it, that was probably true. There was no evil in him. Nevertheless, I cannot deny that now, when I saw so clearly the difficulties in Salah’s way, his helplessness got on my nerves. It had often taken the guise of indifference, or even unwillingness; while I had gone to and fro, to and fro, through the dusty streets, put off my own business, which now rushed me, and had continually bothered myself over every detail of his

future ease which it was possible for me to arrange in advance. Yet his reluctance seemed always to accuse me of not having done enough.

Well, I had done my best, and that must be enough. His instruction in driving had been paid for and he had begun his lessons. Within a fortnight he would be ready to pass the driving tests. Within a fortnight, too, he would have his identity card. That meant that when I returned from the Sous for a day or two before my final departure, he would be ready, with his chauffeur's licence, to take a better job than he had ever had before. His new life was made for him, he had only to take hold of it. Therefore I shook off his hold on me and sent him back to the *Sûreté* alone.

CHAPTER SEVEN

On the next morning I had to go out and do things Salah's business had prevented my doing the day before. I was late getting back home.

'I'm sorry,' I said to Si Mohammed, who was waiting in my room. 'I had to take Salah to the *Sûreté* yesterday afternoon. He could not have done it himself.'

'Yes, it's confusing to one of us. It takes us a long while to understand. And is everything arranged?'

'Everything's arranged, and I'm worn out.'

'Never mind the lesson, then. I have found a man you can leave Salah's money with, an old friend of mine who has a shop on the Djemaa el Fna. Salah can call at the shop each morning on his way to the garage.'

I thanked him from the bottom of my heart.

'It is not for you to thank me,' he said, rising, 'but for all of us to thank you.'

I accompanied him through the rooms. At the head of the stairs he turned with his usual brusqueness.

'It is a fine thing you have done for Salah,' he said. 'How many thousands of our young men are going to destruction, all the best in them perishing, for lack of a bit of patience and a kind word that would set them right! For we are quicker to feel than you know, and more willing, too; but your ways are hard.'

And I was reminded of how, when you, a Christian, give alms to a beggar sitting by the roadside in Morocco, it is often not the beggar who thanks you, but the rich Moor passing in the street, who turns and says quietly, 'May God give you grace.' Complicated with faults as the Moors may seem to us, insincere and unstable, they still worship an impersonality in their ideals which transcends many a smaller virtue. What is good is good, whether to their profit or not.

Si Mohammed restored the sweat-stained fez to his head and gripped my hand.

'I will wait for you at the Café de France at seven to-night. Bring Salah with you, and I will present you and him to the Hadj Abdallah in his shop.'

Michelet now claimed my attention. He was in the double throes of finishing correspondence on his typewriter and packing, at once. It was about eleven o'clock and he was to leave for Rabat on the one o'clock bus.

'I can never do it,' he cried, tapping madly on the machine. 'I wish you would tell Henia to hurry with the ironing. I simply have not a clean shirt to take with me.'

Below in the courtyard, Henia was ironing desperately.

'Oh, my feet,' she groaned. 'Oh, my feet!'

Then, careful to make no noise, she set her hot iron on a tile and drew me into a corner.

'He's forgotten my money,' she whispered; 'and how shall I live if he doesn't pay me? Speak to him for me. I am afraid.'

On tiptoe I carried up a pile of ironed shirts to Michelet. He was still in his pyjamas, looking handsome and wild.

'Do tell Henia to heat the water for my bath.'

Henia flew from her ironing to the kitchen and back again.

Now Michelet tore the paper from the machine and became calm.

'There are one or two things I must ask you about the house,' I said.

'And a thousand things I must charge you with. You haven't seen my cuff-links, have you? Henia, Henia!' he called.

Up came Henia, out of breath.

'The thing, the thing!' he cried at her, one of the few Arabic words we all knew. And he gripped his wrist frantically. '*Fain el haja?*'

Downstairs ran Henia, and then ran up again, bringing the cuff-links.

While Michelet was in his bath we had a more or less ordered talk. He regretted leaving me with the responsibility of closing the house, but since he was going to-day and I to-morrow morning, there was nothing else to do. He supposed there was no danger of theft; nevertheless, there were a good many valuable things lying about and it would be wise to take precautions. In particular, he wished the door keys to be hidden in one of the drawers of his desk.

There were, as I have neglected to say, two entrances to the apartment. One was from the court of the palace, and this was never locked; for the

court itself was under guard of two or three porters and watchmen, and no one could approach or leave Michelet's door without being observed. But there was another door which Michelet and I used for our private entrance because it saved a long walk round by the porters' lodge. This door gave on a dark back street. There were two keys; and I was specially charged to see that the door was locked on the inside and both keys hidden in the corner of Michelet's desk agreed upon. Then I could leave by the porters' gate.

Moreover, I would of course have all the rooms put in order and ready for the several friends Michelet would bring back with him in a week or so. This meant no more than having them cleaned again, and removing my own things and Salah's to make place for the newcomers.

He was allowing Henia a few days' release. After that, she would come each day, entering, as she always did, by the porters' gate, and keep everything in readiness for his return.

Since there was a little doubt about my being able to get off to-morrow morning early, let me be good enough to telegraph him as soon as my departure was effected.

About noon Salah, who had come by the garage and got another appointment for a lesson in the afternoon, returned. Michelet's valises were now packed, and we dispatched Salah uptown with them to Michelet's office, there to wait till Michelet arrived.

Henia hung round.

'Lord, I owe Henia money,' Michelet said to me. 'But I don't want her following me round. I have no money with me. Tell her I'll send it somehow.'

'Send it by Salah,' I said; 'but have someone tell Salah to come straight back.'

Michelet glanced round his rooms. They looked as if a tornado had raced through them.

'Tell Henia she's to touch nothing on my desk.' He always feared someone would put an arranging hand to his desk and the several work tables about, in the confusion of which he stowed memoranda, letters, and all sorts of papers, returning to them as unerringly as a squirrel to the nuts it has buried.

Finally, the host, who for weeks had been the kindest and best of companions, went off, and the guest was alone in the house. I had the feeling

that he had left the doors and windows all open, that the sanctuary was defenceless. Henia removed the linen from his bed, and shut up his room. Then, aggrieved without her money and impatient to be gone, she put on her outer garments and sat in the fireless kitchen.

Pretty soon Salah came back, imperturbable and detached. Henia followed him grumbling to my room. First he laid a key on the table beside me.

'Monsieur left the back door open. I shut it and locked it with the key he left in the lock. Here it is.'

Next he laid money on the table.

'This is for Henia, seventy-five francs, and more than she deserves. Count it.'

Hungrily she took her money and fled from the house.

'What time is your lesson, Salah?'

'At four o'clock.'

'You must stay in the house till then.'

'Shall you be here?'

'No. That is why you must stay.'

'I don't want to stay here alone. Where am I going to live after you're gone?'

'That's your business. I'm leaving money for you with a friend of Si Mohammed's.'

'Who?'

'I don't know. You must be at the Café de France at seven o'clock tonight. Si Mohammed will take you and me to his friend.'

'I don't want to go to his friend. Why don't you leave the money with me?'

'You'd spend it all the first day. You're to have five francs a day while I'm gone.'

'How can I live and hire a room with that?'

I lost patience with him.

‘What do you think you are?’ I cried. ‘You can sleep in a café like better men than you.’

‘It’s not good in the cafés,’ he said, stubbornly. ‘There are lice in the mats. And they will steal my clothes. You have never given me a box to keep them in. I wish you had left me in Casablanca.’

I tried to berate him, but anger choked the Arabic in my throat and I could only splutter. With a look of scorn on his black face, he withdrew to the kitchen to cook himself a meal. I was going out for lunch, and when I was ready to go, I put my head in the kitchen door.

‘Salah, stay in this house till your lesson time, whether I am here or not. Be outside the Café de France at seven to-night, and not one minute late.’

‘Good-bye,’ he said, without turning, and short of thrashing him, there was nothing more to do.

We were in a spell of extreme September heat, and nothing went easily for me that afternoon. When I got back home, limp as a rag, it was nearly five. Salah had gone to his lesson. If ever I needed him, I needed him then, to comb the rooms and bring together the things which belonged to me, which he knew even better than I.

But I could not count on that. I had to shift for myself. Wearily I assembled my various possessions and divided them into three parts: what I would take with me, what leave behind, what give away. There were the two iron pails I had bought the day Salah came from Casablanca. These were valuable to the natives, and could be easily stolen. There was the fly-tox sprayer, with a container half-full of the chemical itself, relatively expensive in Marrakesh. These, too, the natives valued, and were using them more and more to free their houses of mosquitoes and other insects. They would make welcome presents.

In my bags were odds and ends I might as well give away. I went over my clothes, counted them; and nothing was missing. Of course, I made something of a litter, but Salah could clear that up for me. Among the stuff that should be thrown away I came across the empty bottle of shaving lotion, testimony of Salah’s easy appropriation. I had a moment’s panic. If ever a house invited theft, that lonely and abandoned apartment did so. Its owner had gone away; Henia had flown; before sunrise the next morning, I should be miles hence; and only Salah would be left. But after a while I threw the empty bottle aside, and with it the thoughts it had alarmed.

I hid Michelet's key in the drawer of his desk. On the desk stood a little jewelled alarm clock. I brought it to my room, and set it then and there for four o'clock the next morning. I had to get up then to catch the five o'clock bus for Safi. So the hot twilight fell, and locking the back door behind me, I went up to the Café de France.

There was a great racket on the Djemaa el Fna, a great coming and going among the acetylene lamps. The café band added to the din. Looking round for Salah in the outlying shadows and not seeing him, I joined a friend at one of the café tables, and the waiter brought us two good stiff drinks. Others came and sat with us. It was the beginning of a farewell party, which promised to be a lively one. Presently, out of the tail of my eye I saw Salah hovering near the café; but Si Mohammed had not come and I let him wait unnoticed.

Ten or fifteen minutes flowed by gaily for us in the café. Then Salah tried to catch my attention, and excusing myself from my friends, I went out to him.

'Where's Si Mohammed?' he demanded.

'He hasn't come yet.'

'I won't wait here any longer.'

'Very well, then I shan't be able to leave any money for you.'

'I don't care. I'm going home. Are you coming?'

'No; and you're going to wait here.'

'I won't wait here. If you come home, I'll get your supper for you, but I won't wait here.'

Now, I could have forced him to wait; but I wanted him out of my sight. On his account only was Si Mohammed coming; for his welfare I had brought money to leave; I had hoped Si Mohammed's friend might become a good friend to Salah through the little business of the money, and God knows, Salah needed a friend. But let him go his own way, now. Whether he was merely indifferent to the pains I had taken or blind to his own interest, I did not know, nor at that moment care. I rather hoped he would suffer for this.

'Go where you will,' I said. 'But at ten o'clock you're to help me pack.'

'You want me in the house at ten o'clock?' he asked, sullenly.

‘Yes. And at four o’clock to-morrow morning, you’ll carry my bags to the car. Now, get out.’ And for once I said to him ‘*Ceer fi halak*,’ which is the phrase one uses to a troublesome beggar.

A quarter of an hour later Si Mohammed arrived. He tarried a moment with us at the table, for we were all fond of him, and our affectionate greetings pleased him. But soon he pulled me by the arm, and we left the brilliance of the café and crossed over through the native crowd milling in the square.

‘I’m sorry I was late,’ he said. ‘I had business in the country. Where is Salah?’

‘He would not wait.’

‘But why?’

‘I don’t know. I may have put you to trouble for nothing. Salah is wholly ungrateful.’

‘Poor fellow,’ said Si Mohammed.

‘I begin to doubt if he’s worth helping.’

‘That is as God wills, monsieur.’

‘I am not sure that I ought to leave the money. Your friend will be only another I have troubled on Salah’s behalf.’

‘It will not bother him in the least, monsieur. But of course you will leave the money or not as you choose.’

About Si Mohammed and me as we stood hesitating, the native throng streamed and swirled. We were jostled. From a little farther down the square rose the wild power of their music, piercing our ears with arrows of sounds, jabbing at the frenzy dormant in us all. I wondered how it was that Salah’s advance seemed brought to a standstill, whence had arisen the obscurity in which all we had done seemed aimless and the future impenetrable. He wanted things his own way; he rebelled at my direction. Still, I would leave the money for him.

We elbowed our way to the barrier of low shops which confines the Djemaa el Fna on one side. They were hardly more than booths. In most of them the acetylene lamp was burning, and the merchant sat still trading among his wares. They were like so many Punch and Judy stages, each separate from the other; and before each stood a half-circle of friends and traders, with the harsh light falling on their faces.

At the approach of Si Mohammed with a European, the group before Hadj Abdallah's shop parted and fell pleasantly silent.

'I have brought the Christian who wishes to leave money with you for his negro,' Si Mohammed said; and all who were standing within the light smiled as if they had heard the story already, and some said 'Thank you' for my act.

But the Hadj Abdallah did not smile. Under the roll of his turban his face was thin and sharp, pointed with a white beard. He was old, yet keen; in his look kindliness was balanced with shrewdness. His title of Hadj meant that he had made the pilgrimage to Mecca; and like all such, he had an air of awaiting heaven at the end of his life with a little more assurance than others.

He accepted my hand, but reached immediately for a sheet of paper and a pencil from the shelf beside him. With these he made certain gestures, speaking meanwhile. I failed to understand his rapid and somewhat indistinct words.

'The Hadj wishes you to know,' Si Mohammed translated, 'that on this paper and with this pencil he will keep account of each payment he makes to Salah during your absence. He will not write figures. Since you have said that he is to pay Salah five francs each day, figures are unnecessary; and the Hadj will make but vertical marks, thus.'

I attempted to tell the Hadj in Arabic that I had faith in his goodwill, that I expected no accounting of the money; but with a shrewd look, the Hadj waved paper and pencil slightly in the air.

'He says,' Si Mohammed went on, 'that nevertheless for each payment he will make a mark. When you return you will count the marks with him. Then he will hand over to you what is left and there can be no dispute.'

I took out my wallet; and since the exchange of money is never without fascination here, the friendly onlookers drew closer. To the Hadj I handed a hundred franc note. He folded it and put it in his sack with the paper and pencil.

'Salah is a good boy,' I said, 'and honest.'

The Hadj nodded solemnly; the others said, 'Thank you.'

'I will tell him to come for his first payment to-morrow morning. You will know him because he is so black.'

‘I shall know him,’ said the Hadj laconically. ‘My shop, observe, is number 83; the wall is painted green; there is a barber’s shop next door to the right.’

‘And see,’ said Si Mohammed, pulling me back a little to look at the wall, ‘there in the frame beside the door is a square of marble. *Er r’khem*, we call it in Arabic. The Hadj Abdallah is the only merchant of marble in Marrakesh, the only one in Southern Morocco.’

Again the Hadj nodded solemnly. The square of marble distinguished his shop from all others.

Now two men, running up breathless, seized my good teacher by the arm and talked with him excitedly.

‘Gently, gently,’ Si Mohammed said to them; and to me: ‘Our affair is arranged. Let us bid the Hadj goodnight.’

As the Hadj shook hands with me, I tried to express my gratitude. All those standing round the shop offered their hands warmly. Then with Si Mohammed I turned away and went slowly to join my friends across the street in the café. With the crowd streaming by us, Si Mohammed took leave of me. The two newcomers, having urgent business with him, would not cease talking to him.

‘By the way,’ I said, ‘I have two good pails, a fly-tox sprayer, and half a tin of fly-tox. If you could use them, I should be happy to send them to your house.’

‘I will keep them for you,’ he replied, ‘if you do not wish to take them with you, and will return them when you come back.’

‘Oh, they are not for me. Could you not use them for yourself? Take them as a souvenir.’

By the street light I saw his face turn red with pleasure.

‘Does Salah know your house?’

‘I think not. But have him leave them with the Hadj. Though I must be a great deal out of town in the coming days, when I am here I will try to keep in touch with Salah. Please God, we shall meet once more when you return from the Sous. This cannot be the end when we have begun to understand each other.’

I thanked him not only for what he had done for Salah, but for months of guidance in the language and the thought of Morocco. His business claimed

him then, and I rejoined my friends in the café.

Not long after ten I got back home. The apartments were dark; on the way to light up I stumbled over the litter I had made. Salah was not in the house.

My head was buzzing a little from the effects of the party; I sat down to write a letter or two before Salah should return and bring his steady wits to my packing. In the surrounding silence the typewriter was noisy.

When I had finished the letters, it was half-past eleven; and still Salah had not come. I did not conceive he had gone away and would not return; I did not ask where he might be. Being tired, I wanted at least a little sleep, and I set to packing swiftly. As I worked, the hopes I had had for him gave way to a slow indignation, which I should have liked to express to him. I tried to frame sentences in Arabic which would hit the mark squarely, but failed. If he could refuse to wait for Si Mohammed, if, on the eve of my going, he could shirk his tasks, there were perhaps no words in any language to shame him. I thought of undoing what I had done for him; but the night had closed up on my good deeds, and before it opened I should be carried beyond reach of undoing them.

By half-past twelve my valise was strapped. What was left over I had carried in my duffle bag through the darkness to one of the vaults behind the kitchen. Then I began to undress. As I was taking off my shirt, Salah appeared, grinning like a naughty boy.

‘Where have you been?’

‘I went to walk,’ he said, and stopped smiling.

‘Go to your room.’

He glanced round.

‘Is everything done?’

‘Yes. To-morrow morning at four you’ll carry my bags to the station.’

He wished to explain, but I cut him short.

‘I am done with you, Salah. Perhaps I’ve been a bad teacher. You’ve got to learn from life itself. If you were hungry, I would give you nothing.’

He turned away dumbly.

Twice during the night he came carrying a lighted lamp to my bedside.

‘I am not sleeping,’ he said, ‘but staying awake to watch the time. What time is it now?’

At four o’clock, when the alarm woke me, even the stars seemed to have withdrawn out of sight in the blackness of the sky. While I was dressing, Salah came up.

‘What am I to carry?’ he asked.

Without speaking, I pointed to the bag and valise. Being dressed, I led the way downstairs by the light of matches. It was too early to rouse the porters by the main gate; we left by the back door. I locked it behind me. I led the way rapidly through a mile or more of streets, in which nothing stirred, in which I heard not a sound save the scuff of Salah’s slippers following me, or a sigh when he shifted the valise from one shoulder to the other. I do not like the sound of feet carrying my burdens; the silence ached for words, but none passed between us.

The Djemaa el Fna was deserted. Far at the other end shone the lights of the bus station. Instead of turning in the direction of these, I crossed one end of the square towards the barrier of shops. All were shut and padlocked in the row; each was blank. The lights back in the street hardly lit the faces of them and I had to peer closely to see the numbers stencilled above the shutters. I found 83, but the Hadj Abdallah had taken in his square of marble for the night.

Here we stopped. Salah did not put down the valise from his shoulder.

‘This,’ I said, speaking to him for the first time, ‘is Hadj Abdallah’s shop. It has a number: 83, but you cannot read numbers. In the daytime the Hadj will hang a square of marble on the wall. Here on the right is a barber’s shop. Do not forget. Every morning you will come here to Hadj Abdallah in his shop and he will give you five francs.’

Then I went on towards the bus station, and Salah followed in silence.

The buses stood inactive. A porter came drowsily and took the bags from Salah’s keeping. Salah hesitated to let them go; he wished to put them on top of the bus himself; but I took him away from the station into the empty street. In the darkness my eye could not distinguish his black features.

‘Here is the key to monsieur’s apartment. You will return there immediately, sweep and wash my rooms. You will get your own things together, sweep and wash your room. You will lock the back door on the inside and hide this key in the second right-hand drawer of monsieur’s desk. Do not tell Henia, nor any one, it is there. Then you will take your things,

the two pails, and the fly-tox, and you will leave the house by the porters' gate. You will not return to it, do you understand?'

'Yes.'

'On the table by my bed, I forgot to say, is a little clock with a bell. That is monsieur's. Put it on his desk.'

'Yes.'

'The two pails and the fly-tox you will take to Hadj Abdallah's later in the morning and leave them there for Si Mohammed. Do not let them out of your sight, for they could be easily stolen.'

'I know.'

'Here are three telegrams. As soon as the post-office is open, go there and send them.'

'Yes.'

'Here are a hundred francs in small notes. You will pay for the telegrams. Then you will take twenty-five francs to Fathima in the other house. I wished to give her a present and did not get round to it. That will leave you about thirty francs, with which you are to buy yourself a pair of cord shoes. Your slippers, as you say, are not convenient for driving.'

'Yes.'

'And that is all.'

'When are you coming back?'

'I don't know. I do not wish to see you again. You have failed—But never mind. Good-bye.'

For a moment he did not bring himself to speak. At last he said, cloudily:

'Go in peace; and—and thank you.'

He went his way and I mine. When I regained the station he had passed out of sight: but my thoughts followed him, and in my ears, till the roar of the motor drowned it out, I seemed to hear the scuff of his slippers going on and on through the streets.

When the dawn broke, a vision of Salah confronted me sharply, Salah as he must appear to others. I saw him at large, with money in his pockets and rid of restraining influences, and in his hands the key wherewith I had

delivered to him my friend's house and all that was in it. The wind of my folly chilled me to the core.

But that vision faded; that chill passed. I did not know what was written in the book of Salah's destiny; but so surely as the sun now rose on the first stage of my journey, it rose upon Salah at the faithful accomplishment of those tasks with which I had trusted him.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Though I went far from Marrakesh and among new scenes and strange people, I found Salah was not easily to be forgotten. The lack of his familiar services morning, noon, and night, brought him constantly to mind. More than once I caught myself on the point of shouting for him to do this thing or that which I had lost the habit of doing for myself. His absence was definite. But if I tried to recollect him, he appeared blurred, in a sort of double image. There was the man himself, on whom I had learned to depend for many things and whom I trusted like the firm ground beneath my feet; then there was another, surprising and inexplicable. The two did not correspond.

For a while I believed this second, troublesome shade was the projection of Salah's nature, of that inner self in black man or Oriental whom tradition tells us no Westerner can ever understand; but as I thought it over, I perceived it had no shape and even no reality except what my standards, my limited conventions, and, alas, my irritability, created for it. I still thought I had done well by Salah, and I had expected him to do well by himself, but arbitrarily, according to the standards of what I, not he, judged well.

It was hardly to be doubted that in European ways I was more experienced and probably wiser than he. On the other hand there was the real Salah whom I missed, not only his services but also his gentle company; and his natural fineness was far less to be doubted than my wisdom.

At Salah's request I had undertaken to force him within a few days into our way of living. Michelet had said it was a contradiction, that there was no soul in it. But there had been no time to think about it. I had given Salah no choice; such and such things had to be done, and I did them. Though I did them for him, towards the end he had resisted. I did not know why. But he might have had a hundred reasons, instinctive or growing out of conditions in Moroccan society with which I was unacquainted.

He had refused to wait for Si Mohammed to come and present him to the Hadj Abdallah. But I could have forced him to wait. I could have, and probably should have, said: 'I don't care whether you want to wait or not. I say you're to wait.' And he would have waited. It was for me to direct him. If water breaks through the dyke, we do not cry out upon the incomprehensible mystery of water; we remark that the dyke failed to hold at that point.

As for his returning too late that night to help me with packing, he had come in like a naughty boy, grinning. I had given him no chance to explain. Moreover, I remembered now that Salah had said to me: 'We cannot be sure of waking at four in the morning, therefore I will stay up all night.' Perhaps he had thought he could do his work in those hours. He did not know about the alarm clock. During that night, as it was, he had come to my bedside with the lighted lamp to remind me he was watching the time.

Sadly indeed came back to me the memory of that walk through the darkness to the bus station; for as my exasperation faded out of it, its only tone was Salah's grief.

As I judged Salah by what I expected of him, he certainly judged me by his own expectations. Si Mohammed, whom he trusted, had told him I was a kind master, that God had been good to him. In one of his perplexed moods, Salah had said to me that many Mohammedans believed I was a 'good' Christian.

Well, I had bought him a few clothes, not of the best, and had haggled over the price, or got a tricky Moor to do it for me. I had refused to buy him anything to keep them in. I had paid him low wages and had been on the whole niggardly about money for him. I had given him to understand that I wished to learn Chleuh, and to take a companion with me into the Sous who could speak both Chleuh and Arabic. But I had repulsed his offers to teach me Chleuh, and had gone into the Sous with a Christian, leaving him altogether out of it.

To be sure, I had paid a lot of money to have him learn to drive an automobile; but since I had that amount of money and was a Christian, to boot, I doubtless had a great deal more. Why, therefore, did I not buy an automobile, as he asked me to, and teach him to drive it myself, and have him drive for me? Why had we not taken him along with us into the Sous? Thus in a day or so he could have learned to drive and could have helped us in many ways.

I had said he was an excellent boy because he did not lie; and I had forced him to lie about his father's name, which was a matter of no importance and which had only made trouble in the end.

Because he had been an hour or two late on the last night of my stay, I had held a grudge against him and had gone away with harsh words, telling him I did not wish ever to see him again. Yet I had laid on him the responsibility of closing the house behind me, and even of putting himself out of it into the street. As for five francs a day, that would keep him from

starving; but it would not get him a room to live in, and I had told him to go lie down on the mats of the cafés, which were full of lice, and to sleep among men who would be seeking to steal what they could lay their hands on.

He, Salah, and I, the Christian, could well enough have been sufficient to each other. Had he not faithfully guarded my belongings? Had he not offered to stay with me always? And now I, who had pretended to care for him, abandoned him, just let him drop.

So Salah surely pondered on me. There is no mystery there. Who can say which of us two was the more surprising and inexplicable to the other?

However, all that was now past and done with. The old Salah stood clear in it all. The new Salah was for the future, not for me, though I had sometimes the feeling that I had created him. With some satisfaction I realized that I had set him on a track from which he could hardly derail himself. There was a mechanical certainty that during my absence from Marrakesh he would be carried to his identity card and his licence. It would be pleasant to greet Salah as a free man on my return. I would ask to hold the certificates in my hand, and then I could point to them and say: 'No need for either you or me to understand how it happened; these papers are net result; they are facts and incontrovertible. You are one of us now. Henceforth we meet on common ground.'

Then it would be clear to him that though I could not take him with me, I had done yet better by him. Then his value as a man would be ready for the test; he could see himself in a clear glass. If he was lazy and irresponsible, he would lose his job; industrious and faithful, he would go on to ever higher wages. That would be plain to him; he would feel the system, meting clear punishments and equally clear rewards. The world was before his will. No matter what the accident of his birth and former state, upon himself alone depended his future now; and that was a better thing than being a slave.

Now learn to read, Salah, and I will feed your new strength, your new hopes. For we have stories, in simple words for the young, of men born penniless like you who have acquired wealth beyond Haida's who owned you, beyond the great pasha's himself. When you have learned to read, you will come to my country, where, as Si Mohammed knows, we have freed slaves and declared all men equal. Therefore, my country is the land of hope. Hope, Salah, is not for slaves; and you had little till I hoped for you. So, will you not thank me now?

‘But what, honestly, do you hope for Salah?’ Bruce asked me, as we sat at noonday to take the shade of an argan tree, solitary in the scorched plains of the Sous. Before us, the air quivered with heat; through its quivering rose the range of the Atlas, lofty in a mythological haze. These were the southern slopes we looked on, Salah’s country which he longed to see. Beside us sat an old shepherd of the country. He gave us water to drink in a wooden bowl. In return we handed him a bit of civilization, an insidious little diplomat: not a lump of that sugar which they say won the north, but a box of matches.

‘Why—’ I hesitated, ‘I hope Salah will learn to be free.’

‘No, you don’t,’ said this Scotchman, who had fought through all the long war. ‘You cannot honestly hope that. You value him for what he is. How can you desire him to become like one of us?’

‘But he would like to.’

‘I doubt it. He does not know what our lives really are. Do you fancy Salah as a well-paid chauffeur?’

‘Yes—with the right boss.’

‘Exactly. With the right boss. And who is the right boss going to be? And what has that to do with it anyhow, if Salah is free?’

‘I hope he’ll find an employer who’ll pay him just wages and not work him too hard.’

‘So, that’s the extent of your hopes for him? That he will earn his hire. He’ll perhaps never do it. Wages are calculated, and the best he can give has no money value. He’ll squirm like a fish on a hook, you know. He sniffed at the bait of freedom, but it took you to put the hook in his mouth.’

‘Yet surely as a slave, he was not free in the sea.’

‘But he was free in his bowl, freer, truly, than we are, and safer, too. I’ll tell you what I hope for Salah: that he’ll go to Ould Malek and beg to be taken back—on his knees.’

‘He won’t do that.’

‘No? Then I hope you’ll inherit a fortune, or make one, which is more moral for you. You can buy half a dozen automobiles for him to play with. At night you can translate him stories of self-made men, and how simple and honest and noble most of them were. That would be at least good for your Arabic.’

Thus we chatted about Salah now and then as we drove through the Sous. Over these roads he had driven as a youngster, well dressed and care-free, envious only of the older slave who drove the car for the master, and hoping that some day he, too, might drive. We went to Tarudant, in the midst of its olive groves; and to Tiznit, sharply cut in its red walls from the surrounding plain, with the blue of the Anti-Atlas beyond, where just now Europe was bombing from the air the last strongholds of the Chleuh to the south. Perhaps not long hence, Salah would be driving one of the trucks we met on the way, heavy with supplies and ammunition.

When we returned to Marrakesh, we took rooms at an hotel; for Bruce had given up his house and I had none. The two days we had to spend in the city before going on were so filled with engagements in advance that I hardly knew when or how I could look up Salah; but early in the morning after our return, I went to the auto-school to learn what I could of his progress.

CHAPTER NINE

The garage yard was crowded with automobiles in various stages of disintegration. It was a busy place. Half a dozen young Moors, neophytes, were working and sweating over engine parts, acquiring knowledge of the machine. I should have been pleased to find Salah among them, but he was not there.

The two patrons, intent on a set of gears, were not aware of my approach till I addressed them. Their faces and their clever hands were blackened with grease. It was impossible not to admire their industry and their courage; for it is hard to labour at finicky machines in a hot land, and to build up a successful business anywhere.

Interrupted at their work, they did not at once recognize me. I reminded them of Salah. Ah, the big negro; yes, he had done well, he had learned quickly. They had sent up a batch for their driving tests the day before, and if the negro had had his identity card, he would have passed with them.

'But surely he has his identity card now,' I said.

'No, he hasn't got it. Otherwise, he'd have had his licence yesterday.'

'There's been a slip somewhere,' I insisted.

'Not at all. If he gets his card in the coming week, we'll send him up. He's ready.'

In the coming week? Yes. Candidates for a licence could be tested only one day in the week, Tuesday. There was no changing that. Therefore, ready or not, Salah could not possibly have his licence before I left; not even if his identity card was now in his pocket. Carefully as I had devised, I was not to hold the certificates, the incontrovertible facts in my hand. This was a sharp disappointment. However, talking with the automobile men would not better it; and they were impatient to resume their work.

'But tell me,' I said, seeking some assurance now that everything was thrown into uncertainty, 'did he do well, the black man?'

'Yes, very.'

'You think he has a knack for it?'

'Yes. He's a good egg.'

With that I had to be contented. It was something. It re-affirmed my belief in Salah's ability and in his willingness.

From the auto-school I proceeded to another garage, where I had arranged a meeting with Bruce. He had not yet arrived, and I waited for him in the shade within the wide door. In the street the sun was fierce and blinding.

Looking straight before him, Salah passed down the middle of the street. He looked bulkier than I remembered him; but I saw in a glance that this was because, having nowhere to store his clothes, he was wearing most of them, even an old pyjama jacket I had given him, the cloth belt of which he had twisted round his neck.

At my shout, he stopped. I could not describe the expression which came into his face when he saw me approaching him.

A smile fled from his lips and recurred in fluent tremors of the muscles; a steady inner light suffused his eyes. But after we had shaken hands, he leaned against the wall, continually looking at me and looking away in an uncertainty I almost mistook for silliness.

'I have come from the school,' I said to him. 'They tell me you have done well. I am proud of you.'

These words, intended to be bracing, had no effect on him. It was as if he had not heard them. Looking at the wall, not at me, he said:

'I'm sick.'

With some hesitation, but not with shame, he answered my questions as to the nature of his illness. My first thought was of his career, the future I had mapped out for him. It was curious how persistently I clung only to that in him now. My single dread was lest he carry the infection to his eyes, and, blinded thereby, be evermore unable, for all identity cards and licences, to drive an automobile. Only later did I recall his own dreams, beyond my meddling, of wife and children. No foresight whatsoever troubled him, however, as he talked with me. He was conscious only of his need to trust me. This he did with some misgiving, not certain that a Christian would regard his case with a tolerance like the natives! When I simply told him we must go to a doctor at once, he stood up straight as he had used to do and looked at me steadily.

As we walked down the street a little way he told me freely of all that had happened. My thoughts were, of course, running ahead of his talk. I could not imagine how to invest a Christian doctor with an authority that

would command Salah after my departure. The respect we feel for science other races cannot be forced to adopt. Their reluctance to do so is not owing wholly to ignorance and fear. Their minds accept Fate as absolute, and what is absolute they submit to. If our doctor were absolute, they would submit to him; but they quickly perceive his liability to mistakes, his inability in extremity; and in this business of living, to which we are all committed, they cannot differentiate his failures from his cures. Be all to us or nothing, they might say.

A kind master Salah would still accredit with authority, knowing them both subject to Fate; but for him a Christian doctor would be a tyrant of straw. I hardly tried to persuade him into respect; our only hope was that I could persuade the doctor to take some friendly interest in a black man, whose character outwardly showed few signs of deserving it. This, I feared, was scant indeed.

It was now necessary for Salah to have a room. I ordered him to use the time till I should be free to introduce him to the doctor, in seeking one.

'How shall I find a room?' he asked.

'You have a tongue in your head. Inquire.'

'How much shall I pay?'

'You can get a room to yourself for twenty-five francs a month.' That, I was certain of; there were Moors of my acquaintance who paid but fifty francs a month for houses of three or four rooms.

In face of what seemed to me so simple a problem he was disquieted. A sad and doubtful mood fell upon him. This was far from the Salah I had thought to find: Salah marching confidently into the future with his name and his licence. I tried to raise his spirits.

'I am proud of you,' I said. 'They tell me at the school that you have worked faithfully and that you drive well.'

'They lie!' he said, shortly.

'Whatever do you mean? They say you have done well.'

'I have done nothing. They have taught me nothing.'

Now his face was as if carved in bitterness; there was on it the look which had haunted me after I had dismissed him in Casablanca with a loose promise. And he told me of reporting day after day at the garage, time and

again to be put off and at the best to be given only a five minute run in the automobile.

His words suddenly took a turn which filled me with dread.

‘It is because I had no money, with which to buy drinks and cigars for the patrons. There were others like me, who had no money and got no teaching. But the rich Moors, they made presents of boxes of cigars and invited the patrons to drink in the cafés. They were given an hour and more each day and were taught every detail.’

Alas, the easy complaint! My hope in Salah went cold.

‘You begin badly,’ I said to him. ‘You talk the words of men who have failed through their own fault.’

Yet even as I spoke, and with conviction, I became perplexed. The patrons had said that Salah had done well, that he had shown goodwill.

‘They told me, Salah,’ I added, ‘that you would have got your licence yesterday if you had had your identity card. Have you been to get your card?’

‘Three times. It will come soon now. But even if I’d had my card, I could not have passed the test. It is all lies, everything.’

‘You mean you do not know how to drive?’

He laughed scornfully.

‘I can get in the car, start it, drive ahead, and stop it. I have asked them to teach me to turn, which I have never tried. I have asked them to teach me to use the reverse, which I have never touched. How can I pass the test if I cannot turn and cannot back? But they say there has not been time. Go to them this afternoon and demand the four hundred francs you paid for me. They have done me no good.’

Remembering his face as it shone with joy after his first lesson, I could not bear to look at it now, distorted with the sense of wrong. I thought he must be in some measure victim of a fancied grievance; he had expected too much, his vanity had been wounded. But I could not let it go at that. Salah had never lied to me. If he was telling the truth now, one could do his nature no more lasting harm than by remaining deaf to his outcry against what at least seemed to him perfidy in others.

Before meeting him again late in the afternoon, I went to the auto-school. The interview was not easy. To begin with, it is insulting to a

European to bring the word of a native against him, especially of such a poor native as the black man whose complaint I had to adjust. Though I approached the matter as tactfully as I could, it was not surprising that the patrons bridled. Never before, they said, had any one found fault with their teaching, and they had brought hundreds successfully through the driving tests. They intrenched themselves behind the identity card. If the negro had had his card, he would have had his licence yesterday.

When I came back to the point that Salah said they had not taught him enough in two weeks to pass the test whether he had his card or not, they revoked all the good they had formerly said of him. They had noticed he was stubborn and fault-finding. Nevertheless, they had treated him quite as they treated all their applicants; and if he said otherwise, he lied.

But, wait. They called to a well-dressed Moor standing near by in the yard. I complained, they said to him, that my servant had not been given full instruction like the others. Would he not tell me simply whether or not the negro had been taken out regularly.

'Yes,' replied the Moor with unction, 'I have seen the negro go out every day, just like the rest of us.'

But the worst was my feeling that the more I irritated the young mechanics, the less consideration was Salah likely to receive from them afterwards. I conceded that probably Salah had expected too much; but if I was to set him right, I should like to see him drive.

They seized upon this almost eagerly. By all means let me come the next morning and go out with him. Then I should see for myself whether or not they had taught him. With this agreement, I left them and went to meet Salah.

When I told him that the next morning I was to go out in the car with him, his face brightened. He was proud, possibly, that I trusted myself to his driving such as it was.

On the way to the doctor's, we met three Moors. Salah stopped to talk with them, and then presented them to me.

'These men,' he said, 'went up for their driving test yesterday and failed.'

'We did not know enough,' they said. 'We are not stupid; we wish to learn; but though we have been at the school a month now, we failed. Day after day we go round to the school, but they will not take us out. That is because we have not money. They take out the rich men.'

Whether or not this was so, they believed it was. They were not, like Salah, indignant about it. They were free men, and had more acquaintance than he with the difficulties in the way of earning a living and of bettering one's self.

There was not in their appearance the slightest indication of any special aptitude for machinery. It was rather probable that they had none. So it might be with Salah, though he had seemed promising. I could not help feeling that in the long run the alleged fact of their having received scant attention would point as well to their inability, which made them useless in the garage, as to what might be called dishonesty on the part of two young Europeans, who, with the aim of picking up extra money, advertised instructions in driving. Perhaps the life of pedestrians in Morocco would be appreciably safer if no one of this quartet ever saw the inside of an automobile.

Yet it was not by such reasoning as this that one could heal their soreness. Our civilization, we pretended, offered an opportunity to all, equally. Fate might rule that they should never be chauffeurs, never build up a successful repair shop, never be magnates in the motor car industry, nor presidents of republics. Well, why not let them accept their fates, as they had done for generations? Instead of that, we denied Fate, meddled in it, and took their money only to show them that they could do nothing against Fate after all.

Not that we talked in this fashion, standing in a street in Marrakesh, Salah, and the three Moors, and I—full within sight of the tower of the Koutoubia, built up by men's hands in austere and irreproachable beauty hundreds of years before the first automobile. No; the three Moors were disconsolate, Salah's laughter had a smarting irony, and I could think of nothing to say except that there were millions of us the world over who took it for granted that we should be for ever in something of their fix.

Arrived at the doctor's office, Salah became timid. I left him in the ante-room with the doctor's *shaoush*, or door-tender; but they would not talk to each other. Within the office all was scientific. The skill was there, the oath to cure, likewise. And the doctor undertook Salah's case, on my account, he said, because we were friends. That was something. I paid a rather big fee in advance, which was something more. Then we had Salah come in.

'He's good and black,' said the doctor.

He made an appointment with him for the next morning and wrote it in his engagement book.

‘We’ve got a new method,’ he said to me, ‘and I think I’ll try it out on him.’

He prepared me a list of things I had to buy at the pharmacy, and with this Salah and I took the way up town. Twilight had fallen. We had to hug the walls of the street to avoid the stream of public carriages rolling down from the Djemaa el Fna, heavily laden with natives going home. We were choked with dust. But above the walls the twilight was clear in the sky, and the figures of the cab drivers, high on their seats, were sharply silhouetted, they and their whips. There was a loud clatter of hoofs, mingled with the shouting and singing of the drivers.

In an angle of the wall I halted and laid my hands on Salah’s shoulders. Phrases came precise to my tongue from one of the old stories Hamt used to tell me.

‘My boy,’ I said, ‘I charge you with one thing.’

‘What thing?’

‘That no matter what happens, you will go always to the doctor’s at the time he sets for you.’

‘I will go,’ he said.

‘No matter if he laughs at you, or scolds you, or frightens you, or beats you, you will go.’

‘I will go,’ Salah said.

But his solemn words failed to lift me from my depression. I believed he would keep his promise; that was all I could believe. I began to see at last that nobody in the world through which he had to make his way would take the slightest interest in him. Contracts might be made to hold, but nobody would care what became of him.

Perhaps no master ever cared what became of his slaves; but he had to feed them and clothe them and heal them when they were sick. That was because as slaves they were intrinsically valuable. Free men have no value except what they can acquire, and they must always be fighting to raise their own prices. Liberty is quite indifferent to them; Freedom need not care what becomes of a man in the struggle to which it has delivered him. Of course, there’s charity; but that is mechanical.

After buying the things prescribed by the doctor, I asked Salah how he had fared in his search for a room.

‘There are no rooms,’ he said.

‘You mean you have not tried to find one.’

‘I tried. I walked in many places.’

‘Did you ask?’

‘Whom could I ask? I am a stranger here still. I asked the master of the café where I have been sleeping. He knows of only one room, and that is ten francs a day.’

‘Three hundred francs a month! You’re crazy; you can hire a big house for that.’

It seemed so improbable that there could be no room for reasonable hire in the city, that I suspected Salah had made no effort. I upbraided him. It was tiresome. Three hundred francs was so outrageous a price that I even wondered if Salah had some scheme of getting money from me, if at last I was going to catch him in duplicity.

For his part, he dragged me at once to the master of the café in question. This sharp-eyed young native declared flatly that there were no rooms to be had except the one he offered for ten francs a day.

‘I can get a house for that,’ I said.

‘Where?’ he questioned, insolently.

I suppose he had set the price high because he recognized that Salah had no judgment and had assumed that some foreigner would pay for him, anyhow. When the few scathing expressions I could use in Arabic had made him smile, I hauled Salah away.

‘I can’t help it, Salah,’ I said. ‘You will simply have to bestir yourself and find a room.’

On my way back to the hotel, convinced that Salah could be terribly lazy when he chose to be, I passed a cab-stand, whence one of the drivers called to me. It was Alil, whom I had known for many years and who had often taken me up beside him for a free ride. He was the son of fisher-folk in Safi on the coast, and had begun life himself as a fisherman. Though for years he had driven his cab from sunrise till midnight, his hand had not yet lost its cunning with knots.

‘Alil,’ I said, ‘tell me where I can hire a single room.’

‘That’s hard now.’

‘But surely there are rooms in Marrakesh.’

‘I have just married, and I could not find a room to bring my wife to, so I brought her to my brother’s house, where we are crowded. But when is the “head” of the month? Five, six, seven days? I will find out for you when the head of the month comes. Then people will move and rooms will change hands. You will find a room then, but not now, except by great good luck.’

I regretted my harsh words to Salah, my suspicions of him.

But great good luck awaited me. On night duty at the hotel I found Moulay Ali. In the old days there had been three of them: Abdallah ben Kadi, Moulay Ali, and little Omar, guides and errand boys at the first hotel where I lived in Morocco. Theirs were the first of those kindnesses which had made Morocco a land of happy memories for me. They had seen me through adventures, had taught me my first Arabic words, had introduced me to little native cafés, to songbirds in cages, craftsmen at their handiwork, gardens and vistas. I had written their letters for them, and had carried messages to their friends in distant parts of Morocco. They had confided their troubles to me. I knew their lives: how Abdallah’s wife was a shrew, how Omar’s step-father was scheming to lay hands on his mother’s property.

Moulay Ali had grown older, but was still the honest, gentle fellow I remembered, quiet about his own business, asking no more of the world than to earn a modest livelihood and be tranquil. So many of them are like that, it is a pity to see the rush of European industry breaking up the peace of their former ways, goading them to longer hours of work, and driving them for quiet to remote corners of the city.

‘Monsieur,’ said Moulay Ali, when I had told him my need of a room for Salah, ‘if you would be so good as to accept it, I could offer a room in my house. My mother left yesterday to visit my sister in Casablanca, and she will remain there a month and a half or two months. If she were with me, I could not take a strange man into the house; but now there are only my brother and me, and we will take your servant to live with us.’

It was not only for the room I gave thanks to heaven, but for what seemed the unquestionable good fortune that Salah would be left in keeping of my friends, for so I considered Moulay Ali and Abdallah, whom I knew better than many of my own race I call friends. Both these men were not only kindly by nature; they were steady and sober. They would watch Salah and help him, and he could trust them. They spoke French well, so that I could explain fully what I hoped for Salah. They might even keep me

posted, somehow, after my departure, though letter-writing would be limited for them, who could not afford a public scribe.

Moulay Ali offered the room to me for nothing. I knew he was too poor for me to accept it so, and paid him a round sum. Since he was on night work, he had to sleep in the morning; but late to-morrow afternoon let me bring Salah to him at the fountain near Bab Doukala, and he would conduct us to his house.

The next morning brought cool weather for the first time after the summer, an air that was fresh and cleared of dust. The surface of North Africa, which for months had floated and swirled in superheated air, lay still, every fleck of it; and across the tawny streets of Marrakesh shadows laid an unflinching blue.

At an early hour Salah and I met before the auto-school. He was not the Salah of Michelet's white jacket, purely dressed as for a dedication. Somewhere he had left the bulk of clothes he had worn the day before, so that his litheness, as of a young boxer, was not concealed. But except that the dungaree jacket I had bought him, now shrunken up from his wrists and his waist, still buttoned across his breast, except that he wore a dirty fez on his head and frayed cord soles on his feet, he was very like the youth I had met in Casablanca. The raiment you had set your heart upon, where was it now, Salah? And where were the hopes it had once sufficed to fulfil? He might yet be dressed in livery, if he would learn to drive a car and repair it.

The younger of the two patrons joined us. His face and hands were clean with the morning. He was matter of fact and self-assured. We went directly to the automobile, with its double controls; and when I was in the back seat, the patron ordered Salah to take the driver's place, which he did, having to bend his length, his feet too wide for the pedals, all ungainly because the Lord had grown him too big for a little Citroën. He was calm. They say negroes have no nerves. The patron sprang in beside him, and said: 'Go to it.'

No flurry in Salah now. Switch and self-starter he surely knew, and we slipped into motion through low speed with no jerk and little noise. Then into second and into high, and into a steady run along the road out from Marrakesh, which never swerves nor dips in the four kilometres to Gueliz. Salah's driving was in tune with the clear reserve of early day, similarly refreshing; and with my mind cleared of doubt of his ability, my hope, and my pride, soared free of the business in hand.

‘And what will you say now?’ asked the patron, turning to speak to me even with some glow in his eyes, for no one could be dull in such a morning air. ‘Will you say now that we have taught him nothing? It was bad of him to lie like that.’

Thus the spell was broken. Sooner or later it had to be. Our ways did not lie in one road on and on across the Moroccan plains. We had come as far as Gueliz; we had to go back. Turning easily to the right, Salah drove us in a circle through the outer streets of Gueliz, now free of traffic, and again into the highway, headed for Marrakesh. It was all without a hitch, without instruction from the patron. So then I dropped my hat from the car.

‘Stop!’ I cried, and Salah brought the car to a stop.

‘What is the matter?’ the patron asked.

‘My hat has blown off. Tell Salah to back a little.’

‘There is not time for that,’ said the patron; and getting out quickly, he fetched me my hat from the road behind.

‘Go on,’ he said briefly to Salah; and once more we started smoothly on.

‘Wait a minute,’ I cried to them again. ‘There’s nothing coming in the road now. Tell Salah to turn round.’

But this the patron would not do; and when I found he avoided all my tests of other than straight-away driving, I knew that Salah had not lied.

It was a pity. The boy drove naturally well and in two weeks could easily have learned and tried out most of the tricks of driving. That in itself, as Bruce has said, would not make a first-class chauffeur of him. He had yet to learn the engine. But the point was not precisely there. Nor was it that my efforts had failed definitely to secure his first advance within a given time. The identity card in itself would have baulked that. It was merely that Salah himself had been held back where with every right he had demanded to be helped forward. But no one could tell how this wrong, slight, perhaps, in our view, but to him greater than any implied in his slavery, might have twisted his native goodwill into crookedness of feeling and of hope.

The patron was, as men go, an honest man. I could not gainsay the fact that without his identity card, Salah could not have applied for his licence, anyhow.

‘When Salah has his card,’ the patron said, ‘we shall teach him all he needs to know to pass the test. Reversing and turning are matters of half an

hour. We never guaranteed to make him a first-class chauffeur. We guaranteed you his licence. We will keep our word.'

He shook hands with me on this, and I trusted him; but not quite as I had trusted Salah when once before I left him burdened with responsibilities. There was a shade of difference.

CHAPTER TEN

It was sad for me to think as we came from the garage together in mid-morning that at the same hour the very next day I should have left Salah for good and all. Yet in a sense we had parted company three weeks before, in the hour when I determined to send him to the auto-school. By that decision I had broken the relations in which he had become personal and familiar to me, and had set him at a distance to grow by and for himself. Already Salah was something of a stranger in the making. Even were I able to keep in touch with him across the distance now to come between us, the future must inevitably complete our estrangement.

The conditions of his life as a free man would work upon him selectively, choosing to develop from his rich and untried nature only those qualities which struggle for existence in the new life required. The rest of him might wither away, would, undoubtedly, wither away. And what but a stranger would Salah, the well-trained and well-paid chauffeur, be to me who had known the young slave? Even now the picture of him as he sat behind the steering wheel, driving through the morning, threw into vagueness most of what I had rejoiced in: his delight in my Arabic lessons, his pride of the Chleuh, the simple story of his orphanhood, in which he had found only the lack of moral guidance to regret, and of his escape across the mountains: all his memories and his dreams. His singular fullness and honesty of heart could have no bearing on the new career. They were not the stuff that sells well, nor even, perhaps, that sells at all. The whole Salah had once been marketable; now they would buy only a piece of him, and leave the whole impaired.

Two things I could do to preserve his integrity for yet a little while: I could leave money for him to live on till he was fully prepared to earn a good living; and I could install him for a month in a house among honest companions.

When we had come to the corner of the street, I had to tell him I could not be bothered with him as I rushed about putting ends here and there to my stay in Marrakesh.

‘But I will find time,’ I said, ‘to leave more money for you with the Hadj Abdallah.’

‘How much will you leave?’

‘I don’t know. I have not much to spare; and besides, you must learn quickly to fend for yourself.’

‘I understand,’ he said. ‘And are you really going to-morrow?’

‘To-morrow morning early.’

‘When shall I come to the hotel to help you?’

‘Oh, Salah, you need not come to the hotel.’

‘Then I shall not see you again?’

‘Yes. I have found a room for you in the house of my friend, Moulay Ali. There is no man in Marrakesh more honest or kinder than he. It is good luck for you. You will meet me at the Bab Doukala fountain this afternoon, and Moulay Ali will take us to his house.’

‘I do not know Moulay Ali,’ he said; ‘I do not know his house.’

‘That makes no difference. You must take my word for it. I tell you it is good luck for you.’

‘How much did you pay for the room?’

This was none of his business, and I told him so. His questions irritated afresh the old scratches his stubbornness had made in the past. His native distrust impugned my judgment, and I would not give him the benefit of any doubt. But now that I was going away for ever I would not yield to his whims as I had once done. I ordered him flatly to meet me at the appointed place and time. A little longer the dyke must hold, and the water must flow where I willed.

My interview with the old Hadj, without Si Mohammed to interpret, was curtailed. No sooner was I standing before his shop than he reached for the slip of paper and the pencil, to show me the account he had kept of his disbursements to Salah. There they were, in groups of four little vertical strokes, with a stroke across them; and there were left, as I could see, fifteen francs unpaid. His hand moved at once to draw me fifteen francs from the cashbox; but I stopped him by asking if I could leave more money. Yes; he would be glad to go on with the arrangement.

As usual, when I took out my wallet the bystanders drew near to see; but these were strangers to the transaction, and not knowing why I left the money, did not say ‘Thank you.’ They heard me thank the Hadj and ask if there was not some little thing he desired from America, which I could send him as a token.

‘Send me a postcard now and then, with a picture on it,’ the old man said. Then the others repeated round the circle: ‘Send him a postcard with a picture on it.’

I shook hands with the Hadj Abdallah and bade him good-bye.

‘Return to us soon,’ he said.

So throughout the day I cut off one by one my associations with Marrakesh, till Salah loomed all but isolated in the few remaining hours.

Punctual as ever, Moulay Ali awaited me at the Bab Doukala fountain. Salah was not in sight; but when, after a few minutes, Moulay Ali and I began slowly to walk away, he appeared from the shadow of a door, where he had stood apart, watching us.

Moulay Ali, half his size, called him gently by name, and said he hoped Salah would be comfortable in his house; but except for a slight smile when he returned Moulay Ali’s salutations, Salah did not brighten. On the way to the house, he walked behind us.

The space available for Salah was the end of the single room which formed one side of a beggarly little courtyard. A mattress lay on the floor, which Moulay Ali said was comfortable; and there were hooks on the wall, from which he removed some of his own clothes to make room for what Salah would bring. In the other end of the room lay a double mattress, on which Moulay Ali slept with his brother. There was a shelf encumbered with various knick-knacks, including snapshots in gaudy frames and an alarm clock, which ticked loudly. Since the sun was already low in the west, the miserable courtyard was full of gloom.

Moulay Ali’s hospitality transcended the dreariness of his home. In regard to this, he said that living was high, and he could not yet afford better quarters for his mother and himself; but soon he hoped to have a brighter house, and Salah would be welcome to come and live with them there. He begged us to be seated on the mattresses while he made tea. I did not wish him to go to this trouble, however, and we remained standing about the room. In an effort to rouse Salah’s interest, Moulay Ali took the snapshots from the shelf and explained them to him. This worked a little.

Having located the house and seen the room, Salah had now only to move in. That meant no more than fetching the clothes he was not wearing from whatever corner in the city where he had left them, and I was impatient for him to do so at once. But he knew that I was to drink tea with Moulay Ali and a few others a little later down by the Bab Doukala gate, and he

asked not to be separated from me now. He would bring his clothes later in the evening.

Moulay Ali said that he and his brother each had a key to the house; but that they could arrange to share one, so that Salah could have the other and be free to come and go as he liked.

'Thank you,' Salah said, with some feeling.

Again I suggested that Salah fetch his clothes now, and that he join us later where we should be sitting round our tea in the 'mouth' of the Doukala gate. But when we left the house, I had not the heart, seeing him so reluctant, to send him away from us. He followed us through the streets of the Doukala district, now thronged with supper buyers and alight with candles and flares of acetylene.

Like flotsam thrown hither and yon, we were borne down between the rows of shops and into the wider street below, where the crowd streamed out, and the shops, with their lights, gave way to shadowy walls. We continued down to the ancient gate itself. In an angle where the street turns to pass through the gate, there was a small Moorish café, humble and lit only by a couple of candles. We did not enter here, but crossed over to the deep shadow obscuring the other side of the street, out of which a voice or two called to us.

There, on the sidewalk, two straw mats were spread. A double door in the wall was wide open on the darker night of a shop behind. It was a blacksmith's shop, but the glow of the forge was banked, and the smith sat with Abdallah and one or two others on the mats outside. I could hardly distinguish them, but their hands grasped my ankles and guided my feet across the mats to a low bench along the wall. Here I sat down, and presently Salah, seeing through the dark, came and sat on the ground beside me.

They asked him as well as me what he would drink, and called across the street to the café for our tea. While we waited, they offered us their glasses, from which we drank as they would later drink from ours. Before long, a tiny boy came running from the candlelight across the way bringing our hot glasses in a caster frame.

The Moors talked in low voices, not at first of my departure, but of changes which had come over the city and its life since I had first known them. In those days—did I not remember?—one could sit a tranquil hour in any one of a hundred cafés, and listen to the tinkle of small music or the

sleepy chirp of the bird in its cage. Now there was electric light in most of the cafés, which was hard on the eyes; there were phonographs which made a racket; and young men drank and came to the cafés to quarrel. The price of a glass of tea had doubled, too.

Still, they did not complain. They could find quiet in corners like this. The little café across the street was still pleasant in the old way; but during the summer they liked the shadow and being out under the stars. The blacksmith was a hospitable fellow and welcomed them to his mats. He liked quiet, too.

'I make a noise all day,' he said.

Even the occasional rush of a taxi down through the gate could not disturb the peace of this group, sitting thus for an hour or so after their day's work; that peace, the love of which you will find in the heart of even the noisiest Moor, inherited from ancestors who did not live in cities. Thoughtfulness, which we have no time for, and laughter, at the cost of which we have built our civilization, were part of it.

After a while, they spoke of my departure. This was not the first time I had taken leave of them. In the old days I had drawn pictures of the European coast, the ocean with a steamer on it, and the coast of America; and thus we had counted together the days in each stage of the long journey. That was an old story, now. Now they questioned, not how far away America was, but how much it cost to get there.

They spoke to Salah.

'You will be sad when he's gone,' they said.

But this was intolerable to me, and I broke in and told them that Salah was learning a trade and would soon make a fine living.

'What, Salah,' they cried, 'can you drive an automobile?'

Salah replied in a heavy voice: 'This man has paid four hundred francs for my sake.'

'Where did you come from, Salah?' they asked.

'I was slave to Haida, in the Sous.'

'Now he has a trade,' I repeated; 'and Moulay Ali in the goodness of his heart has offered him a place to live in where he can be happy.'

The smith stood up and softly pulled to one of the doors of his shop. It was time for all to go home and eat. It was indeed late. So they rolled the

mats from the sidewalk and put them in the shop. The smith pulled to the other door and shot the bolt across.

Abdallah lived in the same street with Moulay Ali, and they took leave of me together at the corner. To them I commended Salah.

'At what time will you come to the house?' Moulay Ali asked him then.

'I don't know,' said Salah.

Abdallah reasoned with him. It was necessary for Moulay Ali to know at what time he was coming.

'Maybe I won't come to-night. Maybe I will come to-morrow morning.'

'I will leave the door unlocked for you, Salah,' said Moulay Ali, 'and you may come in when you like.'

Salah and I walked on alone. No one else was in the streets; they were empty even of shadows, for the moon was already high. But when we turned a corner, we saw a man walking down the middle of the street towards us. There was something mechanical and stiff in his walk. As we drew near, he did not change his course; and in a narrowing of the street, where we met at last, he almost walked into us.

It was Hamt, so drunk that his eyes were rigid in their sockets. He could speak only slowly, and a word at a time. Someone had told him that I was having tea in the 'mouth' of the Doukala gate; and knowing that I was leaving Marrakesh on the morrow, he was on his way to say good-bye to me.

He turned to accompany us; but being unable to regain the mechanical stride which had kept him steady, he lurched between Salah and me. To Salah he spoke monotonously in Chleuh. This made me a little uneasy, perhaps only because I could understand nothing he said, and because I knew that when he was drunk, he was wholly anarchistic. Salah did not laugh at him, nor look at him.

When we came to a branch in the road, I decided to send Hamt away. It was grotesque; neither my fondness for Hamt nor the big tears rolling down his cheeks made it any less so.

'The Chleuh are men,' he said.

'And you, Hamt?' I asked, unable to voice the reproach I felt.

'I am done for,' he said, clearly. 'But don't forget that the Chleuh are men.'

‘He is right,’ Salah said.

He turned to Salah then and began to speak of me, who, he said, was the one good Christian he had met; but his drunkenness gave a mockery to his words, which struck harshly on me at that moment; and though I could not shut him up, I did turn him round and head him away. After all, I had still to get my supper. Side by side, Salah and I watched Hamt till we were sure he did not need our help. He caught his mechanical stride, and after a while his bowed head came up.

‘Now, Salah,’ I said, ‘I must go and eat. I want you to get your clothes and take them at once to Moulay Ali’s.’

‘I do not wish to go to Moulay Ali’s.’

He appeared distressed.

‘Why not?’

‘I do not like the house.’

‘But it is better than nothing, and Moulay Ali will be a good friend to you.’

‘I do not know Moulay Ali,’ he said; and he added: ‘You do not know the Moroccans.’

So it went on for some minutes, until, for the last time, I lost patience with him.

‘It is you I do not know, Salah,’ I said, bitterly. ‘I begin to think the automobile men were right; that you are stubborn and full of ill will.’

‘You think the automobile men are right?’

‘Yes; I believe them now.’

Then, and only then in all our acquaintance, I saw Salah angry. His eyes flashed.

‘God, God,’ he cried with great force, ‘*I do not lie to you*.’

The next moment he was humble.

‘I will take my things to Moulay Ali’s house,’ he said, ‘because you wish it.’

My heart filled with feeling for him; I could not steady my voice, nor find words to say to him. He followed me a few steps.

‘May I come to the hotel to-morrow morning?’ he asked.

Never were Salah and I more strangers to each other than during the few minutes we spent together the next morning. He came up to my room in the hotel as I was making ready to close my bags. I gave him some odds and ends not worth carrying with me, but as I would have given them to any hotel porter who chanced to come for my luggage; and he accepted them like any windfall, with a flash of pleasure.

Without my asking he told me he had spent the night at Moulay Ali's house, and that the mattress was comfortable. Had he reported sitting up half the night in a discussion with Moulay Ali's brother over the scale of native wages in Morocco, or trade-unionism, or the amount of capital necessary to set up an automobile repair shop, I should have recognized him as the Salah my mind had been busy creating. The mention of a mere creature comfort awoke no former acquaintance. I had never bought him a mattress, nor even a box for his clothes. I had done bigger things; I had bought him opportunity.

Bustling in the excitement of taking wing, I turned over my duffle bag for him to lock, while I stowed soap, shaving things, and toothbrush in my valise. I began humming a song. This caught his attention.

'And you are happy to be going?' I heard him ask. He stood still in a queer surprise, holding the padlock in his hand ready to snap.

I think I know now what surprised him. It was not that I, who had certainly been good to him after a fashion, could part from him without sign of grief; but that I, who sang as I departed on a long voyage, was a stranger to him, whose life was never truly here, but in distant lands he could not even imagine. Vanished was that person providing home and food and clothing, a superior name and a station, that security in which his mind and his spirit were free from the vexatious uncertainties of life, that human being whom he could hate or love but need never compute. In his place stood an American, whatever that might be, who was going to a country where Salah could not follow him, and who left behind a little money and much advice for Salah to live on.

To that substitution Salah clung as long as he could cling; unreal as it was to him, he yet had nothing else in the modern world to cling to. Not quite yet. When Bruce and I drove to the bank, where we had to pick up a few things, Salah stood on the running-board of the automobile.

We never said farewell. Arranging with Bruce to meet me in another place, I left Salah at the bank expecting my return. For at the last moment I

feared lest our first relation revive and fill me too full of sorrow in having no choice but to throw him, heart and soul, to the machine.

Since the day of that evasion I have come to know there was a choice. Admitting the impossibility of taking Salah with me, there was, nevertheless, an alternative to putting him in the way of earning a living. The energy I had spent in arranging a social status for him and a trade, the pressure I had brought to bear on him, I might have applied in persuading him to return to his master, Ould Malek, as a slave.

That is, of course, only my side of the case. It seems almost natural for us to cry out in horror at slavery; yet for Salah slavery would mean relative security, comfort, and perhaps affection. These advantages it may no longer be believed Freedom assures us; her only grant is the right to fight for them, her only deliverance is to a battle whereof there is no end. For most of us there is no victory. Our spirit is enslaved to an illusion; our bodies and our intelligence are indentured to competition among free men, in which mercy is less to seek than in the whims of a human master.

In fact, we are not free, and our system is merciless, especially without mercy to that gentle honesty which was Salah's when I knew him. He cannot survive among us according to his nature. He must change, must adapt himself, must school himself, cease his laughter and study how to become astute. I fancy he will find no more strength to persevere than endures in an ignorant notion of freedom.

There are those who say the fight is worth fighting, no matter what the result; and they will believe that though Salah sink to the meanest level of our social order, he will still be the richer for holding to himself the right to take his own chances, which slavery would have denied him. But this creed is no more beyond reasonable doubt than a belief that in slavery Salah's chances for what we call happiness—chances which are seldom for us to fight over or relinquish—would be favourable.

But I am as ignorant of slavery as Salah was of freedom; and in any case, my doubt and my perplexity are futile. It was never truly for me to choose. Salah had chosen for himself.

A week after my departure he received his identity papers, the importance of which he had always scorned. Whether he would or no, he is now ticketed with a name and a civil status. Moreover, he has been granted his licence to drive an automobile. Thus provided, he stood in the gateway of his future; but his first step took him beyond my following. He

disappeared from among those through whom I might have had news of him.

What shall we hope for him? What might we hope for one who, like him, was better than most of us Children of Adam, one who was rarely fine and true? My affection knows not even what to pray for in this headlong world; for it is vain to pray that Freedom, which we so much praise, may cherish the goodness I loved in him which Slavery had let grow free.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Some pages of advertising from the publisher were excluded from the ebook edition.

[The end of *Salah and His American* by Leland Hall]