

selves one of the little group that "stood in the court-yard under the shade of the date-palm, intently watching the gilded shrine on the Zig-gaurat of Bel." A closer acquaintance with the members of that little party, tells us that he with the long white beard, who holds in his hand the wand of office, is Mutusa-ili, chief priest of the Empire, and sage of Nebuchadnezzar. And those are his pupils that cluster round him. That bright-eyed youth standing nearest his master is Susa, son of a wealthy family which is held in great favor by the king.

The reader is next introduced to the king of Babylon, that mighty despot whose every whim was law. He is represented as returning from one of his mountain expeditions, bringing with him thousands of captives, for a new whim has seized the monarch of late. His Median queen must have a mountain home, and there must be laborers to build it. Allit Arioch, the gay young captain of the king's body guard, rides beside the royal carriage. Wild songs of joy greet the long procession from all sides; horns and timbrels are sounded shrilly. But hark! a cry of warning rings out. The steeds of a war-chariot are dashing madly through the croud; a slave is crushed by the heavy car, but no matter, he is only a slave. The wild chariot dashes on, the multitude flee before it; but one, a beautiful young maiden, is left behind. Allit sees her peril, and moved by the spirit of gallantry, spurs his steed to her side; the next moment she is snatched from death, and borne to a spot of safety.

Little did the gallant captain think that he had that day saved the life of the maiden who in the future would wield resistless power over him, in moulding his better nature; little did he think that the day was not far distant, when with this same maiden in his arms, he should be fleeing across the desert, fleeing from an angry mob, but with him one who made danger seem as nothing.

You ask the name of this fair enchantress, and she answers, "I am Lalitha, the only daughter of Mutusa-ili, the sage."

The reader has all the while been wondering, Who is this "Master of the Magicians?" We find the question answered in the delineation of the character of the prophet Daniel; here we realize the attributes of him who must be "Master." What thoughts of his native land must have surged through his breast, as he witnessed that long line of captives driven like dumb cattle through the streets of Babylon.

Let us follow Daniel, as he proceeds to the

harem, in obedience to a command he has received from the queen. We pass through the royal gardens, enter the vestibule of the king's palace, and on into the inner court, where the richness of an oriental harem bursts upon our view. Tropical plants, tinkling fountains, rich draperies, and flowers of burning hues, are seen on every hand, while the sound of hidden music is borne to our ears, charming us into a gentle languor. In the midst of this scene of beauty, in her robes of state, sits Amytis, the beautiful but dreaded queen of Nebuchadnezzar.

Some one has said that if a writer pictures an angel, he invariably depicts a devil to set over against it. Nebuchadnezzar and Amytis seem disciples of the evil one. The two are alike in many respects, but the king has a few redeeming characteristics, while the queen is a perfect exemplification of evil at all times.

While it is necessary that we know something of the principal characters of a novel, it is equally necessary that we have an idea of the manner in which the book is written. "The Master of the Magicians" shows plainly the care taken by its authors to represent with great historical accuracy, so far as is compatible with "the necessities of art," the events on which hinges the plot of the story, to render dry historical facts in such a manner as to gain at once the reader's attention.

The descriptions are especially vivid; in them we find clearness and conciseness combined, and a beautiful imagery giving an additional charm to the whole. He who thinks the recital of hunting scenes uninteresting, should read the author's description of the lion hunt, in which the queen herself takes part. But this is only one of the many beautiful descriptions which are to be found in the book.

Those who take delight in strong dramatic situations, will find abundant opportunities for exercising their critical powers. What scene could be more thrilling than that in which Lalitha, through the jealousy of Amytis, is cast upon the dark Euphrates with nothing but a leaking bark between her and the hideous jaws of the devouring crocodiles! The scene in the king's presence-chamber, the morning on which he receives the interpretation of his dream, is grandly described. In the portrayal of the king's madness is shown a deep and careful study into the intricate workings of the human mind under varying conditions. But these examples only serve to give one a faint idea of the many beauties to be found in the book.