

CHAPTER IX. -The coming Race

The flesh of the animals when killed is never eaten. Indeed, the Ana regard with abhorrence the idea of making the carcass of any living thing the nutriment of their bodies; and their food, artificially prepared, is not analogous to anything we use. I should class it rather among vegetables than meats. Many of their plants are composed of farinaceous substances easy of digestion, in which they contrive to mingle those mineral salts which are healthful to the system, especially lime, but which in our apothecary vade-mecums would seem to have very indigestible names.

So dexterous have they become in these chemical preparations that they can communicate to masses of the nutriment as prepared for the herculean appetite of an Ana the taste and the semblance of whatever production of the upper world, animal or vegetable, he may desire. Even in the vegetable kingdom their botanists produce new varieties- some of them of great beauty- so far as beauty can be applied to plants in which colour is wanting.

Traditions so darkly hint that the ancestors of the Vril-ya being wiser in all mechanical inventions than suited to their social state of primitive lawlessness, destroyed themselves by the effects of some terrible explosive compounded by blind chance, that, with a unanimous representation from the College of Sages, they forbade the making of any compound in which the qualities of explosion could be found. At the same time, with a wondrous fatuity to which human reason is subjected in all states of existence, they continued to store in their magazines of research the two component parts of the deadly compound, saying philosophically, "Knowledge is in itself a good, though it may be occasionally applied to evil."

The same sage authorities forbid all attempts to construct any aerial vessel; and, indeed, the superstitious dread with which they regard the few bold spirits that from time to time have sought to solve the mysteries of aerial space suffices, without law, to prevent such investigations. But while these experiments are discontinued, lest they should result in the invention of some new agent of destruction that might perchance annihilate the species, the vivid imagination of the Vril-ya persuades them that it is reserved for posterity to become the Ariels of the air, and that, when the An has reached that phase of his destinies, the earth itself will become too small for his habitation and his numbers; he will necessarily discover a mode, by mechanical contrivances, for visiting wings of birds and planets now only visible to his wondering ignorance, and poor indeed will be his heritage of Vril, if, even on his globe, matter, the most opposite to the aërial lightness of ether, will not supply him with the means to launch himself into the ocean of space.