

CHAPTER XXIII. -The coming Race

Chapter 23 of "The Coming Race" begins with the protagonist expressing discomfort following a conversation about the affections of Aph-Lin's daughter, Zee. Zee's attraction to him, viewed with casual indifference by her father, creates a risk deemed both flammable and unreciprocated. This unease influences the protagonist's visit to Aph-Lin's countryside estate, distinct in architecture and surrounded by complex machinery showing agricultural advancements.

The country home is described as a harmonious integration of nature and technology, with walls partly made of trees and filled with a transparent material resembling glass. The house boasts automata servants and a room that blurs the boundaries between indoor comfort and garden beauty, featuring climbing flowers, varied scenic views, and a fountain of luminous liquid, likely naphtha, offering a subdued glow that complements the tranquility of the setting. The protagonist muses on the place's suitability for romantic endeavors, yet dismisses the thought due to Zee's imposing figure and intellect, far removed from the conventional attributes of femininity as per his world view.

Aph-Lin discusses his administrative duties as the Commissioner of Light, emphasizing the custom-driven compliance and self-governing harmony that characterize their society. Their conversation touches upon governance, succession, and the societal aversion to personal wealth seen more as a responsibility than a privilege. This mindset starkly contrasts with the protagonist's observations about the societal norms of his own world.

The chapter delves deeper into the Vril-ya's vegetarian diet, showcasing their advanced agricultural practices, including the cultivation of nutritious grains and fruit, alongside animal husbandry of non-earthly species for milk and wool. The protagonist notes the emphasis on innovation in food cultivation and preparation, underpinning the absence of meat in their diet without compromising nutritional value.

Aph-Lin reflects on wealth and its perceived burden, connecting obligations to communal roles and charitable duties, highlighting a cultural emphasis on simplicity and the welfare of others over personal luxury.

An encounter with Zee exposes the distinct social norms related to courtship among the Vril-ya, as she openly declares her affection for the protagonist, a behavior that conflicts with his standards of propriety. Despite his discomfort and rejection, Zee's actions are viewed as normal and even expected, underscoring the matriarchal and forthright nature of Vril-ya's society in matters of the heart.

The chapter concludes with a stark realization of the vast cultural chasms between the protagonist's world and that of the Vril-ya, especially in gender roles, societal obligations, and expressions of love.