

**THE TENTS OF SHEM,
A NOVEL. IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. III**

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The tents of Shem, a novel. In three volumes, vol. III by Grant Allen

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GRANT ALLEN

**THE TENTS OF SHEM,
A NOVEL. IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. III**

THE TENTS OF SHEM

A Novel

BY

GRANT ALLEN

AUTHOR OF

'HAEVLEN,' 'THE DEVIL'S LIE,' 'THIS MORTAL COIL,' ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES

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THE TENTS OF SHEM.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CIVILIZED SOCIETY.

IN the Fort at St. Cloud, Madame l'Administratrice had gathered around her hospitable board for the moment a party which might almost have enabled her to forget Paris. The little woman, indeed, was in high spirits. And not without reason. On her right hand sat an eminent dignitary of her Church, on a pastoral tour through his extensive diocese. On her left sat that distinguished light of the British Bar, Mr. Thomas Kynnersley Whitmarsh, Q.C., pouring forth French small-talk, in his usual glib fashion, with perfect fluency and most

imperfect grammar. The officer of the Génie, ablaze with medals, had taken in the wife of the neighbouring Commandant—the lady whose husband had married her out of pure depravity; and the neighbouring Commandant had returned the compliment by offering his one remaining arm to the plain and somewhat faded sister of the officer of the Génie. Iris and Vernon Blake, thus linked by malice prepense of madame's, sat opposite the last couple at their good friend's board; and Mrs. Knyvett herself, in the place of honour, forgetful for the night of her bronchial troubles, consoled that amiable cypher, M. l'Administrateur, with congenial conversation in scrappy fragments, jerked out at intervals with the purest boarding-school Parisian accent.

The dinner itself was a monumental triumph of Franco-African *cuisine*. Nothing like it had ever been attempted in Kabylie. The soup would have done honour to Véfour or Bignon; the fish

was fresh-caught grayling from the snow-fed mountain-streams of the greater Djurjura; no suspicion of garlic disgraced the sweet-breads; no faint reminiscence of hircine flavour raised doubts (too familiar to the mind of the Algerian *bon-vivant*) as to the possible substitution of kid for lamb in the succulent *rôti*. The burgundy had blushed on the sunny Côte d'Or, no imitative colonial brand from the slopes of Atlas; the olives had ripened on Provençal hills, and been bottled in oil and stuffed with anchovy by the cunning hands of Maille of Paris. Madame l'Administratrice herself beamed with joy and with *crème de Ninon*. Monseigneur had deigned to compliment her on her *beignets à la reine*; and monseigneur was well known to recoup himself for his Lenten fast in due season by making the best of the good things of this world when the Church permitted such occasional relaxation.

* And who would say we were lost among

the deepest recesses of the African mountains?' monseigneur observed reflectively with a faint sigh, plunging his fork as he spoke into his tenth *olive farcie*, and stroking with his left hand that long, flowing beard which the rules of the Church permit to add so much dignity to the dress and appearance of the missionary clergy. 'With madame's commissariat, and madame's flow of wit, a man of the world would judge himself in Paris.'

'For my own part,' Uncle Tom remarked, rolling a mouthful of burgundy on his palate with obvious approbation, 'I refuse to believe this is Africa at all. Our friends here have made us so perfectly comfortable, and so perfectly at home, that I shall be quite sorry, I declare, when the time comes for us to go back to the shelter of my dingy club in dear dirty old London.'

'And yet, *on y est très bien, à Londres aussi*,' monseigneur went on, with an abstracted eye, his mind reverting dreamily to