

F. Marion Crawford

The Upper Berth; By the Waters of Paradise

EAN 8596547323884

DigiCat, 2022

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G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS NEW YORK

27 West Twenty-third St.

LONDON

24 Bedford St., Strand

The Knickerbocker Press

1894

PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

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The two stories by Mr. Crawford, presented in this volume, have been in print before, having been originally written for two Christmas annuals which were issued some years back. With the belief that the stories are, however, still unknown to the larger portion of Mr. Crawford's public, and in the opinion that they are well worthy of preservation in more permanent form, the publishers have decided to reprint them as the initial volume of the "Autonym" library.

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This will be followed by volumes by S. R. Crockett, and others.

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The Upper Berth.

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Somebody asked for the cigars. We had talked long, and the conversation was beginning to languish; the tobacco smoke had got into the heavy curtains, the wine had got into those brains which were liable to become heavy, and it was already perfectly evident that, unless somebody did something to rouse our oppressed spirits, the meeting would soon come to its natural conclusion, and we, the guests, would speedily go home to bed, and most certainly to sleep. No one had said anything very remarkable; it may be that no one had anything very remarkable to say. Jones had given us every particular of his last hunting adventure in Yorkshire. Mr. Tompkins, of Boston, had explained at elaborate length those working principles, by the due and careful maintenance of which the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé Railroad not only extended its territory, increased its departmental influence, and transported live stock without starving them to death before the day of actual delivery, but, also, had for years succeeded in deceiving those passengers who bought its tickets into the fallacious belief that the corporation aforesaid was really able to transport human life without destroying it. Signor Tombola had endeavoured to persuade us, by arguments which we took no trouble to oppose, that the unity of his country in no way resembled the average modern torpedo, carefully planned, constructed with all the skill of the greatest European arsenals, but, when constructed, destined to be directed by feeble hands into a region where it must undoubtedly explode, unseen, unfeared, and unheard, into the illimitable wastes of political chaos.