

WILLIAM HENRY HUDSON



A CRYSTAL AGE

DYSTOPIAN CLASSIC

William Henry Hudson

A Crystal Age

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Shane Fisher

(Dystopian Classic)

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Introduction

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A Crystal Age turns the dream of a perfectly peaceful society into a troubling question about what must be surrendered to achieve it. William Henry Hudson's speculative novel, first published in 1887, blends pastoral utopia with disquieting undercurrents. Set in a far-future, rural society where industry has retreated and custom rules, the book invites readers to weigh serenity against selfhood. Without relying on elaborate machinery, Hudson imagines change through manners, rituals, and feelings, using the quiet surface of an ideal order to reveal deeper tensions. What follows is not a tale of rebellion and spectacle, but a measured encounter with difference, rendered in lucid prose attentive to landscape and temperament.

Situated in the late Victorian moment, the novel emerges from an era fascinated by evolution, social reform, and blueprints for better worlds. Hudson turns away from factories and parliaments to examine the quieter instruments of transformation: household organization, seasonal labor, reverence for the natural world, and a carefully codified morality. As a result, A Crystal Age straddles genres, reading at once as utopia, pastoral, and cautionary fable. Its imagined future is not overtly tyrannical; its challenges are subtle, embedded in norms that feel humane yet prove exacting. The tension lies in how benevolence can harden into discipline, and how contentment can mask constraint.

At the novel's outset, a solitary traveler from a recognizable present wanders into wild country, suffers an accident, and awakens among people who seem both familiar and strangely remote. They bring him into a large household whose rhythms are ordered by ritual, work in the fields, and an almost liturgical respect for plants and creatures. Communication is possible, but understanding proves more elusive, as the newcomer slowly untangles expectations about companionship, duty, and belonging. The narrative remains close to his perceptions, allowing readers to discover the society alongside him, and to feel the simultaneous allure and chill of its serene completeness.

Hudson writes in a reflective first-person voice that merges curiosity with restraint, a perspective shaped by the author's keen attention to landscape. Descriptions of hedgerows, birds, and streams do more than decorate the page; they establish the ethical weather of the book, suggesting a world calibrated to natural cycles. The prose is lucid and unhurried, the plot less a chain of shocks than a sequence of observations and surprises that accumulate by degrees. This measured pacing grants the society a plausible texture, while also permitting moments of quiet irony, as ideals that appear generous reveal their stern, unintended edges.

The book's central themes gather around the meeting of individual desire and communal harmony. Hudson examines how a code designed to minimize suffering can curtail spontaneity, affection, and grief, raising unsettling questions about the governance of private life. He also explores the seductions of purity, the pull of ritual, and the

way memory reshapes the past to justify the present. Nature is not only a scenic backdrop but a moral horizon, against which human arrangements are measured and sometimes found wanting. Through these lenses, the future becomes a mirror held up to the reader's own assumptions about progress, love, and duty.

For contemporary readers, *A Crystal Age* matters because it questions improvement without recourse to catastrophe or gadgets, asking instead how rules and virtues can quietly shape bodies and bonds. In an age debating sustainability, demographic pressures, and the ethics of care, its pastoral experiment feels newly pointed: it imagines sufficiency, yet forces us to notice what sufficiency excludes. The novel therefore anticipates later dystopian concerns while maintaining a distinctive gentleness, showing that control can be tender as well as severe. Its caution is not shrill but persistent, encouraging prudence about social blueprints that promise harmony at the price of interior freedom.

Approached as a quiet thought experiment rather than a prophecy, this novel rewards patience and close attention to nuance. It invites readers to honor the appeal of order while staying awake to the claims of feeling, and to consider how a humane ideal can drift, almost imperceptibly, into austerity. As an early work of speculative fiction by William Henry Hudson, it also offers a valuable window on late nineteenth-century hopes and hesitations. To read *A Crystal Age* today is to enter a still, unsettling room: the air seems pure, the furnishings modest, yet the silence asks searching questions about what makes a life.

Synopsis

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Published in 1887, William Henry Hudson's *A Crystal Age* follows a young Englishman who, after a countryside accident, awakens in an unfamiliar world. He finds himself tended by a serene, self-contained community whose speech, manners, and rhythms appear both simple and refined. The narrator, educated in Victorian habits and scientific curiosity, gradually realizes he has been transported into a distant future rather than a remote province. Hudson frames the tale as a travel narrative turned cultural encounter, with the newcomer's field-notes sensibility guiding descriptions of landscape, household organization, and the subtle codes governing the people who rescue and shelter him.

He is adopted into an expansive Household, a kinship unit that replaces the nuclear family. Work is shared, possessions are common, and grace in conduct matters more than invention or profit. Religious feeling centers on a maternal ideal and on rites that fuse daily labor with art, music, and contemplation. Among his companions is Yoletta, a young woman whose poise exemplifies the community's values and whose presence awakens in him sentiments shaped by the age he left behind. Learning their language, he submits to instruction in custom and ritual, discovering how courtesy and restraint sustain their peace.

The society he observes is pastoral and deliberately post-industrial. Fields are cultivated with care, buildings

harmonize with the landscape, and tools are simple by choice rather than lack of skill. Violence, hunting, and animal slaughter are taboo; diet, dress, and ceremony emphasize innocence toward living things. Historical knowledge of machinery and conquest survives only as cautionary memory, and there is little interest in commerce or expansion. Beauty is measured in quiet excellence of craft and in collective devotion. To the narrator, trained to admire progress, this ethic of renunciation seems at once admirable and constraining, inviting both gratitude and doubt.

As he shares their routine—gardening, study, music—his attachment to Yoletta deepens into romantic hope. Yet the Household understands love differently. Personal passion, with its possessive claims, is treated as a dangerous relic of a coarser time, and marriage in the historical sense is unknown. Bonds are spiritual, communal, and regulated by principles meant to preserve harmony. The narrator, still carrying the grammar of his century, struggles to reconcile his private longing with a culture that sublimates desire into service and reverence. His misread gestures, though sincere, expose the gulf between an individual's wish and a society's sacred order.

Moments of crisis arise when instinct drives him to acts his hosts cannot condone. Protective impulse becomes transgression; gratitude expressed as singular preference appears as breach of decorum. The Household judges conduct not by intent but by its disturbance of collective purity, and he finds that apology and conformity require inner change, not merely outward compliance. These

frictions do not turn the community hostile, yet they clarify the conditions on which belonging rests. Through trial, censure, and renewed instruction, he weighs whether accommodation must include the renunciation of emotions he believes natural, and whether such sacrifice is plausible or just.

Through patient conversation and ritual observation, he learns why this world prizes serene innocence over passionate attachment. The age that preceded it is remembered for cruelty toward nature and conflict among people; purification became the charter of survival. The result is a tender, meticulously regulated common life in which aesthetic and moral ideals coincide. But the narrator perceives a cost: by insulating the community from strife, it has also diminished the ordinary drama of choosing and erring. The question emerges whether moral beauty can flourish without room for disruptive feeling, and whether restraint can protect goodness without emptying it of heat.

The story moves toward a resolution that tests both the narrator's devotion and the community's steadfast creed, without offering facile victories. Hudson's tale endures less for a final turn than for the debate it stages between progress and purity, appetite and reverence, individuality and social grace. Written decades before many celebrated utopias and dystopias, it anticipates later inquiries into the costs of engineered harmony and the spiritual hunger that persists beneath systems of reform. A Crystal Age remains resonant as a pastoral thought experiment, inviting readers to examine which human energies a just future should discipline, and which it must preserve.

Historical Context

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William Henry Hudson (1841–1922), an Anglo-Argentine naturalist and novelist, published *A Crystal Age* in London in 1887. Written in late-Victorian Britain, the book imagines a future rural England encountered by a displaced outsider. Its background is an era of rapid industrialization, imperial expansion, and confident institutions—from Parliament and the Church of England to learned societies that organized knowledge. Urban growth, railway networks, and factory labor redefined daily life and social order. Against this setting, Hudson’s narrative invokes an ordered pastoral community to examine what civilization might forsake or preserve. The work quietly questions Victorian assumptions about progress, authority, and modern habits.

Debates about evolution shaped intellectual life when Hudson wrote. Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) popularized natural and sexual selection; Herbert Spencer extended evolutionary logic to society. Francis Galton coined 'eugenics' in 1883, while Malthusian concerns about population restraint and heredity circulated widely. These controversies touched morality, reproduction, and the governance of desire. As a practicing naturalist, Hudson brought close observation of organisms and environments to his fiction. *A Crystal Age* engages these discussions indirectly, contrasting instinct, discipline, and social

regulation in ways that echo late-Victorian efforts to reconcile biology with ethical order.

Industrial Britain's transformation produced nostalgia for the countryside. The long Agricultural Depression (roughly 1873-1896) weakened rural livelihoods, while mechanization and cheap imported grain accelerated depopulation. Smoke, crowding, and notorious London fogs spurred sanitary reforms such as the Public Health Act of 1875. Artistic currents, including the Arts and Crafts movement associated with William Morris, rejected factory standardization in favor of handcraft and vernacular design. In this climate, pastoral writing offered an imagined refuge of balance and purpose. Hudson's future England, steeped in craft and landscape, responds to these pressures by testing whether simplicity can remedy the social and environmental costs of modern industry.

Late-Victorian readers knew a growing tradition of speculative societies. Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872) satirized contemporary habits; Richard Jefferies's *After London* (1885) envisioned a re-wilded England; Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) and William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890) proposed contrasting utopias; H. G. Wells would soon explore evolutionary futures. *A Crystal Age* belongs to this 'romance of the future,' yet it is unusually botanical and ethical in emphasis. By imagining alternative customs and technologies, it interrogates Victorian commitments to property, hierarchy, and mechanical progress without programmatic manifestos, offering instead a literary experiment that measures modern civilization against a meticulous ideal of nature-bound life.

Questions of gender, marriage, and sexual conduct were publicly contested in the 1870s and 1880s. Agitation led by Josephine Butler secured repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts in 1886, while the 1877 prosecution of Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant for publishing a birth-control manual made reproductive politics headline news. Debates about divorce, the 'New Woman,' and social-purity campaigns challenged inherited domestic norms. Such arguments shaped fiction's treatment of desire and restraint. Hudson's future society emphasizes decorum, kinship, and regulated intimacy, reflecting—and scrutinizing—Victorian anxieties about passion, purity, and social stability, while keeping the narrative focus on character, ritual, and the moral uses of self-control.

Natural history supplied both method and sensibility for Hudson. Nineteenth-century Britain fostered field clubs, county naturalists, and societies such as the Linnean Society and the British Association for the Advancement of Science. After emigrating from Argentina to London in 1874, Hudson built a literary career from essays and studies of birds and landscapes, later publishing *The Naturalist in La Plata* (1892) and *A Shepherd's Life* (1910). He admired Richard Jefferies and wrote a study of him in 1905. *A Crystal Age's* attentive description of plants, seasons, and animal life arises from this milieu, anchoring its social thought in close observation of living environments.

Victorian publishing shaped how speculative works circulated. Mudie's Select Library and other circulating libraries dominated distribution, favoring novels that met prevailing standards of propriety. While the three-volume

format waned in the late 1880s, single-volume romances of ideas found room alongside serialized essays and scientific reportage in periodicals and cheap editions. Informal censorship operated through market taste more than statute. Within this ecosystem, *A Crystal Age's* restrained tone and rural thought-experiment could circulate to the large, middle-class readership served by lending libraries. It speaks in the language of moral improvement and observation, satisfying gatekeepers while quietly unsettling assumptions about progress.

Published on the cusp of the 1890s, Hudson's book reflects the era's unsettled balance between science and faith, industry and countryside, discipline and desire. Its themes of social discipline, pastoral order, and human flourishing echo debates that would preoccupy Edwardian discussions of degeneration and over-organization, yet the novel takes landscape rather than machinery as its measure of the good life. By projecting an England reordered around nature, craft, and ethical ritual, *A Crystal Age* holds a mirror to Victorian institutions—church, family, property, and the scientific ethos—asking what they nurture and what they deform. The result is a calm, historically pointed critique.

A Crystal Age (Dystopian Classic)

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PREFACE

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Romances of the future, however fantastic they may be, have for most of us a perennial if mild interest, since they are born of a very common feeling—a sense of dissatisfaction with the existing order of things, combined with a vague faith in or hope of a better one to come. The picture put before us is false; we knew it would be false before looking at it, since we cannot imagine what is unknown any more than we can build without materials. Our mental atmosphere surrounds and shuts us in like our own skins; no one can boast that he has broken out of that prison. The vast, unbounded prospect lies before us, but, as the poet mournfully adds, "clouds and darkness rest upon it." Nevertheless we cannot suppress all curiosity, or help asking one another, What is your dream—your ideal? What is your News from Nowhere, or, rather, what is the result of the little shake your hand has given to the old pasteboard toy with a dozen bits of colored glass for contents? And, most important of all, can you present it in a narrative or romance which will enable me to pass an idle hour not disagreeably? How, for instance, does it compare in this respect with other prophetic books on the shelf?

I am not referring to living authors; least of all to that flamingo of letters who for the last decade or so has been a wonder to our island birds. For what could I say of him that is not known to every one—that he is the tallest of fowls, land or water, of a most singular shape, and has black-

tipped crimson wings folded under his delicate rose-colored plumage? These other books referred to, written, let us say, from thirty or forty years to a century or two ago, amuse us in a way their poor dead authors never intended. Most amusing are the dead ones who take themselves seriously, whose books are pulpits quaintly carved and decorated with precious stones and silken canopies in which they stand and preach to or at their contemporaries.

In like manner, in going through this book of mine after so many years I am amused at the way it is colored by the little cults and crazes, and modes of thought of the 'eighties of the last century. They were so important then, and now, if remembered at all, they appear so trivial! It pleases me to be diverted in this way at "A Crystal Age"—to find, in fact, that I have not stood still while the world has been moving.

This criticism refers to the case, the habit, of the book rather than to its spirit, since when we write we do, as the red man thought, impart something of our souls to the paper, and it is probable that if I were to write a new dream of the future it would, though in some respects very different from this, still be a dream and picture of the human race in its forest period.

Alas that in this case the wish cannot induce belief! For now I remember another thing which Nature said—that earthly excellence can come in no way but one, and the ending of passion and strife is the beginning of decay. It is indeed a hard saying, and the hardest lesson we can learn of her without losing love and bidding good-by forever to hope.

W. H. H.

Chapter 1

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I do not quite know how it happened, my recollection of the whole matter ebbing in a somewhat clouded condition[1q]. I fancy I had gone somewhere on a botanizing expedition[1], but whether at home or abroad I don't know. At all events, I remember that I had taken up the study of plants with a good deal of enthusiasm, and that while hunting for some variety in the mountains I sat down to rest on the edge of a ravine. Perhaps it was on the ledge of an overhanging rock; anyhow, if I remember rightly, the ground gave way all about me, precipitating me below. The fall was a very considerable one—probably thirty or forty feet, or more, and I was rendered unconscious. How long I lay there under the heap of earth and stones carried down in my fall it is impossible to say: perhaps a long time; but at last I came to myself and struggled up from the *debris*, like a mole coming to the surface of the earth to feel the genial sunshine on his dim eyeballs. I found myself standing (oddly enough, on all fours) in an immense pit created by the overthrow of a gigantic dead tree with a girth of about thirty or forty feet. The tree itself had rolled down to the bottom of the ravine; but the pit in which it had left the huge stumps of severed roots was, I found, situated in a gentle slope at the top of the bank! How, then, I could have fallen seemingly so far from no height at all, puzzled me greatly: it looked as if the solid earth had been indulging in some curious transformation pranks during those moments or

minutes of insensibility. Another singular circumstance was that I had a great mass of small fibrous rootlets tightly woven about my whole person, so that I was like a colossal basket-worm in its case, or a big man-shaped bottle covered with wicker-work. It appeared as if the roots had *grown* round me! Luckily they were quite sapless and brittle, and without bothering my brains too much about the matter, I set to work to rid myself of them. After stripping the woody covering off, I found that my tourist suit of rough Scotch homespun[2] had not suffered much harm, although the cloth exuded a damp, moldy smell; also that my thick-soled climbing boots had assumed a cracked rusty appearance as if I had been engaged in some brick-field operations; while my felt hat was in such a discolored and battered condition that I felt almost ashamed to put it on my head. My watch was gone; perhaps I had not been wearing it, but my pocket-book in which I had my money was safe in my breast pocket.

Glad and grateful at having escaped with unbroken bones from such a dangerous accident, I set out walking along the edge of the ravine, which soon broadened to a valley running between two steep hills; and then, seeing water at the bottom and feeling very dry, I ran down the slope to get a drink. Lying flat on my chest to slake my thirst animal fashion, I was amazed at the reflection the water gave back of my face: it was, skin and hair, thickly encrusted with clay and rootlets! Having taken a long drink, I threw off my clothes to have a bath; and after splashing about for half an hour managed to rid my skin of its accumulations of dirt. While drying in the wind I shook the

loose sand and clay from my garments, then dressed, and, feeling greatly refreshed, proceeded on my walk.

For an hour or so I followed the valley in its many windings, but, failing to see any dwelling-place, I ascended a hill to get a view of the surrounding country. The prospect which disclosed itself when I had got a couple of hundred feet above the surrounding level, appeared unfamiliar. The hills among which I had been wandering were now behind me; before me spread a wide rolling country, beyond which rose a mountain range resembling in the distance blue banked-up clouds with summits and peaks of pearly whiteness. Looking on this scene I could hardly refrain from shouting with joy, so glad did the sunlit expanse of earth, and the pure exhilarating mountain breeze, make me feel. The season was late summer—that was plain to see[2q]; the ground was moist, as if from recent showers, and the earth everywhere had that intense living greenness with which it reclothes itself when the greater heats are over; but the foliage of the woods was already beginning to be touched here and there with the yellow and russet hues of decay. A more tranquil and soul-satisfying scene could not be imagined[3q]: the dear old mother earth was looking her very best; while the shifting golden sunlight, the mysterious haze in the distance, and the glint of a wide stream not very far off, seemed to spiritualize her "happy autumn fields," and bring them into a closer kinship with the blue over-arching sky. There was one large house or mansion in sight, but no town, nor even a hamlet, and not one solitary spire. In vain I scanned the horizon, waiting impatiently to see the distant puff of white steam from some passing engine. This

troubled me not a little, for I had no idea that I had drifted so far from civilization in my search for specimens, or whatever it was that brought me to this pretty, primitive wilderness. Not quite a wilderness, however, for there, within a short hour's walk of the hill, stood the one great stone mansion, close to the river I had mentioned. There were also horses and cows in sight, and a number of scattered sheep were grazing on the hillside beneath me.

Strange to relate, I met with a little misadventure on account of the sheep—an animal which one is accustomed to regard as of a timid and inoffensive nature. When I set out at a brisk pace to walk to the house I have spoken of, in order to make some inquiries there, a few of the sheep that happened to be near began to bleat loudly, as if alarmed, and by and by they came hurrying after me, apparently in a great state of excitement. I did not mind them much, but presently a pair of horses, attracted by their bleatings, also seemed struck at my appearance, and came at a swift gallop to within twenty yards of me. They were magnificent-looking brutes, evidently a pair of well-groomed carriage horses, for their coats, which were of a fine bronze color, sparkled wonderfully in the sunshine. In other respects they were very unlike carriage animals, for they had tails reaching to the ground, like funeral horses, and immense black leonine manes, which gave them a strikingly bold and somewhat formidable appearance. For some moments they stood with heads erect, gazing fixedly at me, and then simultaneously delivered a snort of defiance or astonishment, so loud and sudden that it startled me like the report of a gun. This tremendous equine blast brought

yet another enemy on the field in the shape of a huge milk-white bull with long horns: a very noble kind of animal, but one which I always prefer to admire from behind a hedge, or at a distance through a field-glass. Fortunately his wrathful mutterings gave me timely notice of his approach, and without waiting to discover his intentions, I incontinently fled down the slope to the refuge of a grove or belt of trees clothing the lower portion of the hillside. Spent and panting from my run, I embraced a big tree, and turning to face the foe, found that I had not been followed: sheep, horses, and bull were all grouped together just where I had left them, apparently holding a consultation, or comparing notes.

The trees where I had sought shelter were old, and grew here and there, singly or in scattered groups: it was a pretty wilderness of mingled tree, shrub and flower. I was surprised to find here some very large and ancient-looking fig-trees, and numbers of wasps and flies were busy feeding on a few over-ripe figs on the higher branches. Honey-bees also roamed about everywhere, extracting sweets from the autumn bloom, and filling the sunny glades with a soft, monotonous murmur of sound. Walking on full of happy thoughts and a keen sense of the sweetness of life pervading me, I presently noticed that a multitude of small birds were gathering about me, flitting through the trees overhead and the bushes on either hand, but always keeping near me, apparently as much excited at my presence as if I had been a gigantic owl, or some such unnatural monster. Their increasing numbers and incessant excited chirping and chattering at first served to amuse, but in the end began to irritate me. I observed, too, that the

alarm was spreading, and that larger birds, usually shy of men—pigeons, jays, and magpies, I fancied they were—now began to make their appearance. Could it be, thought I with some concern, that I had wandered into some uninhabited wilderness, to cause so great a commotion among the little feathered people? I very soon dismissed this as an idle thought, for one does not find houses, domestic animals, and fruit-trees in desert places. No, it was simply the inherent cantankerousness of little birds which caused them to annoy me. Looking about on the ground for something to throw at them, I found in the grass a freshly-fallen walnut, and, breaking the shell, I quickly ate the contents. Never had anything tasted so pleasant to me before! But it had a curious effect on me, for, whereas before eating it I had not felt hungry, I now seemed to be famishing, and began excitedly searching about for more nuts. They were lying everywhere in the greatest abundance; for, without knowing it, I had been walking through a grove composed in large part of old walnut-trees. Nut after nut was picked up and eagerly devoured, and I must have eaten four or five dozen before my ravenous appetite was thoroughly appeased. During this feast I had paid no attention to the birds, but when my hunger was over I began again to feel annoyed at their trivial persecutions, and so continued to gather the fallen nuts to throw at them. It amused and piqued me at the same time to see how wide of the mark my missiles went. I could hardly have hit a haystack at a distance of ten yards. After half an hour's vigorous practice my right hand began to recover its lost cunning, and I was at last greatly delighted when of my nuts went hissing like a bullet through

the leaves, not further than a yard from the wren, or whatever the little beggar was, I had aimed at. Their Impertinences did not like this at all; they began to find out that I was a rather dangerous person to meddle with: their ranks were broken, they became demoralized and scattered, in all directions, and I was finally left master of the field.

"Dolt that I am," I suddenly exclaimed, "to be fooling away my time when the nearest railway station or hotel is perhaps twenty miles away."

I hurried on, but when I got to the end of the grove, on the green sward near some laurel and juniper bushes, I came on an excavation apparently just made, the loose earth which had been dug out looking quite fresh and moist. The hole or foss was narrow, about five feet deep and seven feet long, and looked, I imagined, curiously like a grave. A few yards away was a pile of dry brushwood, and some faggots [5] bound together with ropes of straw, all apparently freshly cut from the neighboring bushes. As I stood there, wondering what these things meant, I happened to glance away in the direction of the house where I intended to call, which was not now visible owing to an intervening grove of tall trees, and was surprised to discover a troop of about fifteen persons advancing along the valley in my direction. Before them marched a tall white-bearded old man; next came eight men, bearing a platform on their shoulders with some heavy burden resting upon it; and behind these followed the others. I began to think that they were actually carrying a corpse, with the intention of giving it burial in that very pit beside which I was standing; and, although it looked most unlike a funeral, for no person

in the procession wore black, the thought strengthened to a conviction when I became able to distinguish a recumbent, human-like form in a shroud-like covering on the platform. It seemed altogether a very unusual proceeding, and made me feel extremely uncomfortable[4q]; so much so that I considered it prudent to step back behind the bushes, where I could watch the doings of the processionists without being observed.

Led by the old man—who carried, suspended by thin chains, a large bronze censer[3], or brazier rather, which sent out a thin continuous wreath of smoke—they came straight on to the pit; and after depositing their burden on the grass, remained standing for some minutes, apparently to rest after their walk, all conversing together, but in subdued tones, so that I could not catch their words, although standing within fifteen yards of the grave. The uncoffined corpse, which seemed that of a full-grown man, was covered with a white cloth, and rested on a thick straw mat[4], provided with handles along the sides. On these things, however, I bestowed but a hasty glance, so profoundly absorbed had I become in watching the group of living human beings before me; for they were certainly utterly unlike any fellow-creatures I had ever encountered before. The old man was tall and spare, and from his snowy-white majestic beard I took him to be about seventy years old; but he was straight as an arrow, and his free movements and elastic tread were those of a much younger man. His head was adorned with a dark red skull-cap, and he wore a robe covering the whole body and reaching to the ankles, of a deep yellow or rhubarb color; but his long wide