



## CHAPTER II

### A HINT OF THE EAST

IN the August of 1887 I happened to be staying in Devonshire, with a friend and neighbour who had returned recently from the East. He was a man of as many wanderings and as many exploits as Ulysses; and his house from top to bottom was a museum of barbaric treasures. Enormous heads with horns, from the most secret places of Africa, peered down on the glass and flowers of the dinner-table; the distended jaws of a crocodile yawned over the grand piano; one went upstairs to bed past rows of poisoned arrows and the blazing ruby discs of enamelled Eastern shields. Indeed, hardly an object caught the eye anywhere which did not literally, to quote a sentence of Macaulay's, carry the mind 'over boundless seas and deserts, to dusky nations living under strange stars.'

One morning, as I was sitting with my host in the smoking-room, he produced from the cupboards