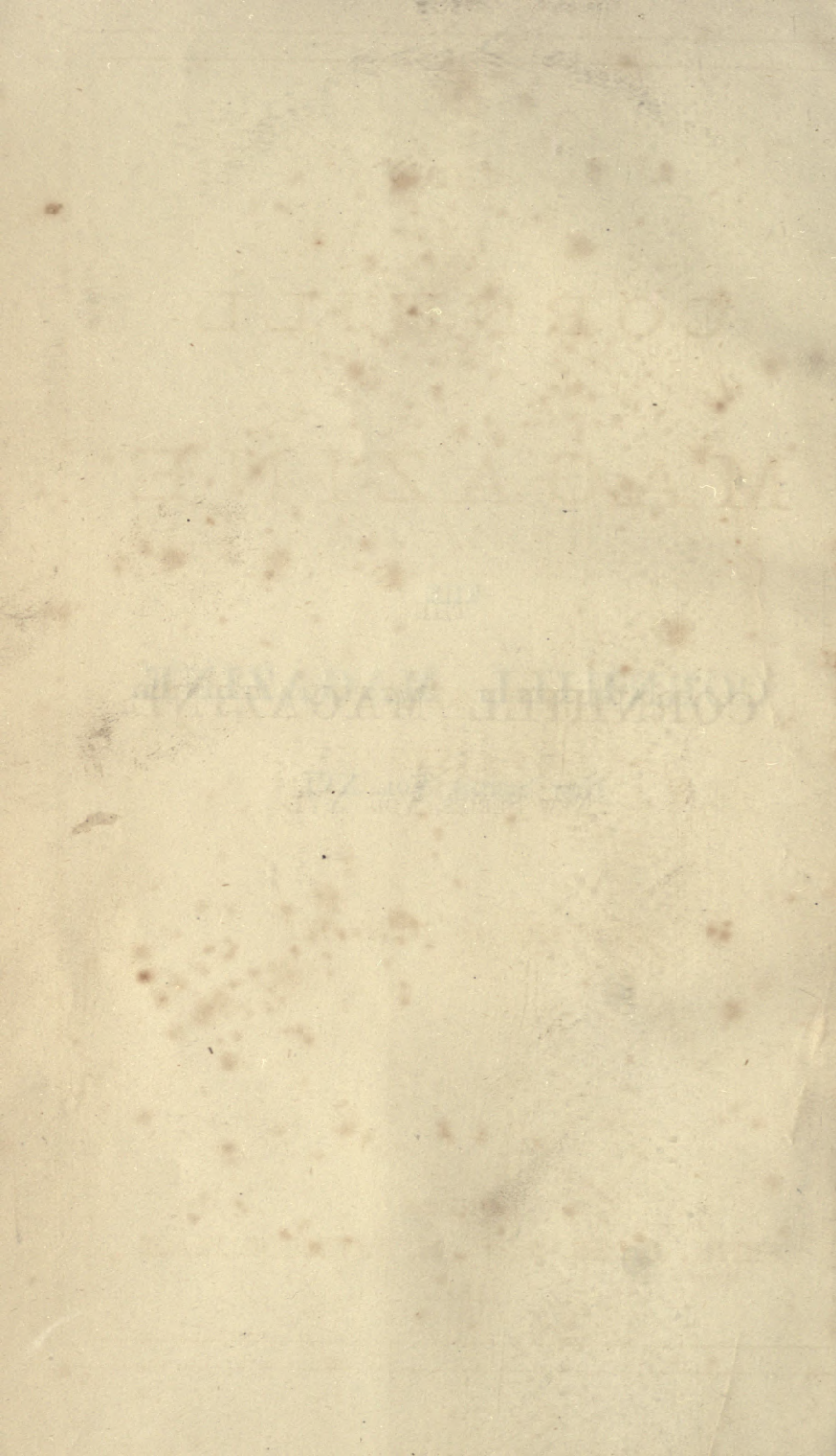


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NEW SERIES, VOL. XVI.



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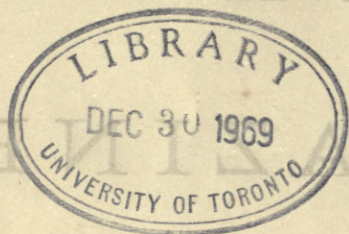
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THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

JANUARY 1891.

THE WHITE COMPANY.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE,
AUTHOR OF 'MICAH CLARKE.'

CHAPTER I.

HOW THE BLACK SHEEP CAME FORTH FROM THE FOLD.

THE great bell of Beaulieu was ringing. Far away through the forest might be heard its musical clangour and swell. Peat-cutters on Blackdown and fishers upon the Exe heard the distant throbbing rising and falling upon the sultry summer air. It was a common sound in those parts—as common as the chatter of the jays and the booming of the bittern. Yet the fishers and the peasants raised their heads and looked questions at each other, for the Angelus had already gone and Vespers was still far off. Why should the great bell of Beaulieu toll when the shadows were neither short nor long?

All round the Abbey the monks were trooping in. Under the long green-paved avenues of gnarled oaks and of lichened beeches the white-robed brothers gathered to the sound. From the vineyard and the vine-press, from the bouvary or ox-farm, from the marl-pits and salterns, even from the distant ironworks of Sowley and the outlying grange of St. Leonard's, they had all turned their steps homewards. It had been no sudden call. A swift messenger had the night before sped round to the outlying dependencies of the Abbey, and had left the summons for every monk to be back in the cloisters by the third hour after noontide. So urgent a message had not been issued within the memory of old lay-brother Athanasius, who

had cleaned the Abbey knocker since the year after the Battle of Bannockburn.

A stranger who knew nothing either of the Abbey or of its immense resources might have gathered from the appearance of the brothers some conception of the varied duties which they were called upon to perform, and of the busy wide-spread life which centred in the old monastery. As they swept gravely in by twos and by threes, with bended heads and muttering lips, there were few who did not bear upon them some signs of their daily toil. Here were two with wrists and sleeves all spotted with the ruddy grape juice. There again was a bearded brother with a broad-headed axe and a bundle of faggots upon his shoulders, while beside him walked another with the shears under his arm and the white wool still clinging to his whiter gown. A long straggling troop bore spades and mattocks, while the two rearmost of all staggered along under a huge basket of fresh-caught carp, for the morrow was Friday, and there were fifty platters to be filled and as many sturdy trenchermen behind them. Of all the throng there was scarce one who was not labour-stained and weary, for Abbot Berghersh was a hard man to himself and to others.

Meanwhile, in the broad and lofty chamber set apart for occasions of import, the Abbot himself was pacing impatiently backwards and forwards, with his long white nervous hands clasped in front of him. His thin thought-worn features and sunken haggard cheeks bespoke one who had indeed beaten down that inner foe whom every man must face, but had none the less suffered sorely in the contest. In crushing his passions he had wellnigh crushed himself. Yet, frail as was his person, there gleamed out ever and anon from under his drooping brows a flash of fierce energy, which recalled to men's minds that he came of a fighting stock, and that even now his twin-brother Sir Bartholomew Berghersh was one of the most famous of those stern warriors who had planted the cross of St. George before the gates of Paris. With lips compressed and clouded brow, he strode up and down the oaken floor, the very genius and impersonation of asceticism, while the great bell still thundered and clanged above his head. At last the uproar died away in three last, measured throbs, and ere their echo had ceased the Abbot struck a small gong which summoned a lay-brother to his presence.

'Have the brethren come?' he asked, in the Anglo-French dialect used in religious houses.

‘They are here,’ the other answered, with his eyes cast down and his hands crossed upon his chest.

‘All?’

‘Two and thirty of the seniors and fifteen of the novices, most holy father. Brother Mark of the Spicarium is sore smitten with a fever and could not come. He said that——’

‘It boots not what he said. Fever or no, he should have come at my call. His spirit must be chastened, as must that of many more in this Abbey. You yourself, brother Francis, have twice raised your voice, so that it hath come to my ears, when the reader in the refectory hath been dealing with the lives of God’s most blessed saints. What hast thou to say?’

The lay-brother stood meek and silent, with his arms still crossed in front of him.

‘One thousand Aves and as many Credos, said standing with arms outstretched before the shrine of the Virgin, may help thee to remember that the Creator hath given us two ears and but one mouth, as a token that there is twice the work for the one as for the other. Where is the master of the novices?’

‘He is without, most holy father.’

‘Send him hither.’

The sandalled feet clattered over the wooden floor, and the iron-bound door creaked upon its hinges. In a few moments it opened again to admit a short square monk with a heavy composed face and authoritative manner.

‘You have sent for me, holy father?’

‘Yes, brother Jerome, I wish that this matter be disposed of with as little scandal as may be, and yet it is needful that the example should be a public one.’ The Abbot spoke in Latin now, as a language which was more fitted by its age and solemnity to convey the thoughts of two high dignitaries of the order.

‘It would perchance be best that the novices be not admitted,’ suggested the master. ‘This mention of a woman may turn their minds from their pious meditations to worldly and evil thoughts.’

‘Woman! woman!’ groaned the Abbot. ‘Well has the holy Chrysostom termed them *radix malorum*. From Eve downwards, what good hath come from any of them? Who brings the plaint?’

‘It is brother Ambrose.’

‘A holy and devout young man.’

‘A light and a pattern to every novice.’

‘Let the matter be brought to an issue then according to

our old-time monastic habit. Bid the chancellor and the sub-chancellor lead in the brothers according to age, together with brother John the accused and brother Ambrose the accuser.'

'And the novices?'

'Let them bide in the north alley of the cloisters. Stay! Bid the sub-chancellor send out to them Thomas the lector to read unto them from the "Gesta beati Benedicti." It may save them from foolish and pernicious babbling.'

The Abbot was left to himself once more, and bent his thin grey face over his illuminated breviary. So he remained while the senior monks filed slowly and sedately into the chamber, seating themselves upon the long oaken benches which lined the wall on either side. At the further end, in two high chairs as large as that of the Abbot, though hardly as elaborately carved, sat the master of the novices and the chancellor, the latter a broad and portly priest, with dark mirthful eyes and a thick outgrowth of crisp black hair all round his tonsured head. Between them stood a lean white-faced brother who appeared to be ill at ease, shifting his feet from side to side and tapping his chin nervously with the long parchment roll which he held in his hand. The Abbot, from his point of vantage, looked down on the two long lines of faces, placid and sun-browned for the most part, with the large bovine eyes and unlined features which told of their easy unchanging existence. Then he turned his eager fiery gaze upon the pale-faced monk who faced him.

'This plaint is thine, as I learn, brother Ambrose,' said he. 'May the holy Benedict, patron of our house, be present this day and aid us in our findings! How many counts are there?'

'Three, most holy father,' the brother answered in a low and quavering voice.

'Have you set them forth according to rule?'

'They are here set down, most holy father, upon a cantle of sheep-skin.'

'Let the sheep-skin be handed to the chancellor. Bring in brother John, and let him hear the complaints which have been urged against him.'

At this order a lay brother swung open the door, and two other lay brothers entered, leading between them a young novice of the order. He was a man of huge stature, dark-eyed and red-headed, with a peculiar half humorous, half defiant expression upon his bold well-marked features. His cowl was thrown back

upon his shoulders, and his gown, unfastened at the top, disclosed a round sinewy neck, ruddy and corded like the bark of the fir. Thick muscular arms, covered with a reddish down, protruded from the wide sleeves of his habit, while his white skirt, looped up upon one side, gave a glimpse of a huge knotty leg, scarred and torn with the scratches of brambles. With a bow to the Abbot, which had in it perhaps more pleasantry than reverence, the novice strode across to the carved prie-dieu which had been set apart for him, and stood silent and erect with his hand upon the gold bell which was used in the private orisons of the Abbot's own household. His dark eyes glanced rapidly over the assembly, and finally settled with a grim and menacing twinkle upon the face of his accuser.

The chamberlain rose, and having slowly unrolled the parchment-scroll, proceeded to read it out in a thick and pompous voice, while a subdued rustle and movement among the brothers bespoke the interest with which they followed the proceedings.

‘Charges brought upon the second Thursday after the feast of the Assumption, in the year of our Lord thirteen hundred and sixty-six, against brother John, formerly known as Hordle John, or John of Hordle, but now a novice in the holy monastic order of the Cistercians. Read upon the same day at the Abbey of Beaulieu in the presence of the most reverend Abbot Berghersh and of the assembled order.

‘The charges against the said brother John are the following, namely, to wit :

‘First, that on the above-mentioned feast of the Assumption, small beer having been served to the novices in the proportion of one quart to each four, the said brother John did drain the pot at one draught to the detriment of brother Paul, brother Porphyry, and brother Ambrose, who could scarce eat their none-meat of salted stock-fish, on account of their exceeding dryness.’

At this solemn indictment the novice raised his hand and twitched his lip, while even the placid senior brothers glanced across at each other and coughed to cover their amusement. The Abbot alone sat grey and immutable, with a drawn face and a brooding eye.

‘Item, that having been told by the master of the novices that he should restrict his food for two days to a single three-pound loaf of bran and beans, for the greater honouring and glorifying of St. Monica, mother of the holy Augustine, he was heard by brother

Ambrose and others to say that he wished twenty thousand devils would fly away with the said Monica, mother of the holy Augustine, or any other saint who came between a man and his meat. Item, that upon brother Ambrose reproving him for this blasphemous wish, he did hold the said brother face downwards over the piscatorium or fish-pond for a space during which the said brother was able to repeat a Pater and four Aves for the better fortifying of his soul against impending death.'

There was a buzz and murmur among the white-frocked brethren at this grave charge; but the Abbot held up his long quivering hand. 'What then?' said he.

'Item, that between nones and vespers on the feast of James the Less the said brother John was observed upon the Brockenhurst road, near the spot which is known as Hatchett's Pond, in converse with a person of the other sex, being a maiden of the name of Mary Sowley, the daughter of the King's verderer. Item, that after sundry japes and jokes the said brother John did lift up the said Mary Sowley and did take, carry, and convey her across a stream, to the infinite relish of the devil and the exceeding detriment of his own soul, which scandalous and wilful falling away was witnessed by three members of our order.'

A dead silence throughout the room, with a rolling of heads and upturning of eyes, bespoke the pious horror of the community. The Abbot drew his grey brows low over his fiercely questioning eyes.

'Who can vouch for this thing?' he asked.

'That can I,' answered the accuser. 'So too can brother Porphyry, who was with me, and brother Mark of the Spicarium, who hath been so much stirred and inwardly troubled by the sight that he now lies in a fever through it.'

'And the woman?' asked the Abbot. 'Did she not break into lamentation and woe that a brother should so demean himself?'

'Nay, she smiled sweetly upon him and thanked him. I can vouch it and so can brother Porphyry.'

'Canst thou?' cried the Abbot, in a high, tempestuous tone. 'Canst thou so? Hast forgotten that the five-and-thirtieth rule of the order is that in the presence of a woman the face should be ever averted and the eyes cast down? Hast forgot it, I say? If your eyes were upon your sandals, how came ye to see this smile of which ye prate? A week in your cells, false brethren, a

week of rye-bread and lentils, with double lauds and double matins, may help ye to a remembrance of the laws under which ye live.'

At this sudden outflame of wrath the two witnesses sank their faces on to their chests, and sat as men crushed. The Abbot turned his angry eyes away from them and bent them upon the accused, who met his searching gaze with a firm and composed face.

'What hast thou to say, brother John, upon these weighty things which are urged against you?'

'Little enough, good father, little enough,' said the novice, speaking English with a broad West Saxon drawl. The brothers, who were English to a man, pricked up their ears at the sound of the homely and yet unfamiliar speech; but the Abbot flushed red with anger, and struck his hand upon the oaken arm of his chair.

'What talk is this?' he cried. 'Is this a tongue to be used within the walls of an old and well-famed monastery? But grace and learning have ever gone hand in hand, and when one is lost it is needless to look for the other.'

'I know not about that,' said brother John. 'I know only that the words come kindly to my mouth, for it was the speech of my fathers before me. Under your favour, I shall either use it now or hold my peace.'

The Abbot patted his foot and nodded his head, as one who passes a point but does not forget it.

'For the matter of the ale,' continued brother John, 'I had come in hot from the fields and had scarce got the taste of the thing before mine eye lit upon the bottom of the pot. It may be, too, that I spoke somewhat shortly concerning the bran and the beans, the same being poor provender and unfitted for a man of my inches. It is true also that I did lay my hands upon this jack-fool of a brother Ambrose, though, as you can see, I did him little scathe. As regards the maid, too, it is true that I did heft her over the stream, she having on her hosen and shoon, whilst I had but my wooden sandals, which could take no hurt from the water. I should have thought shame upon my manhood, as well as my monkhood, if I had held back my hand from her.' He glanced around as he spoke with the half-amused look which he had worn during the whole proceedings.

'There is no need to go further,' said the Abbot. 'He has confessed to all. It only remains for me to portion out the punishment which is due to his evil conduct.'

He rose, and the two long lines of brothers followed his example, looking sideways with scared faces at the angry prelate.

‘John of Hordle,’ he thundered, ‘you have shown yourself during the two months of your novitiate to be a recreant monk, and one who is unworthy to wear the white garb which is the outer symbol of the spotless spirit. That dress shall therefore be stripped from thee, and thou shalt be cast into the outer world without benefit of clerkship, and without lot or part in the graces and blessings of those who dwell under the care of the Blessed Benedict. Thou shalt come back neither to Beaulieu nor to any of the granges of Beaulieu, and thy name shall be struck off the scrolls of the order.’

The sentence appeared a terrible one to the older monks, who had become so used to the safe and regular life of the Abbey that they would have been as helpless as children in the outer world. From their pious oasis they looked dreamily out at the desert of life, a place full of stormings and strivings—comfortless, restless, and overshadowed by evil. The young novice, however, appeared to have other thoughts, for his eyes sparkled and his smile broadened. It needed but that to add fresh fuel to the fiery mood of the prelate.

‘So much for thy spiritual punishment,’ he cried. ‘But it is to the grosser feelings that we must turn in such natures as thine, and as thou art no longer under the shield of holy church there is the less difficulty. Ho there! lay brothers—Francis, Naomi, Joseph—seize him and bind his arms! Drag him forth, and let the foresters and the porters scourge him from the precincts!’

As these three brothers advanced towards him to carry out the Abbot’s direction, the smile faded from the novice’s face, and he glanced right and left with his fierce brown eyes, like a bull at a baiting. Then, with a sudden deep-chested shout, he tore up the heavy oaken prie-dieu and poised it to strike, taking two steps backward the while, that none might take him at a vantage.

‘By the black rood of Waltham!’ he roared, ‘if any knave among you lays a finger-end upon the edge of my gown, I will crush his skull like a filbert!’ With his thick knotted arms, his thundering voice, and his bristle of red hair, there was something so repellent in the man that the three brothers flew back at the very glare of him; and the two rows of white monks strained away from him like poplars in a tempest. The Abbot only

sprang forward with shining eyes; but the chancellor and the master hung upon either arm and wrested him back out of danger's way.

'He is possessed of a devil!' they shouted. 'Run, brother Ambrose, brother Joachim! Call Hugh of the Mill, and Woodman Wat, and Raoul with his arbalest and bolts. Tell them that we are in fear of our lives! Run, run! for the love of the Virgin!'

But the novice was a strategist as well as a man of action. Springing forward, he hurled his unwieldy weapon at brother Ambrose, and, as desk and monk clattered on to the floor together, he sprang through the open door and down the winding stair. Sleepy old brother Athanasius, at the porter's cell, had a fleeting vision of twinkling feet and flying skirts; but before he had time to rub his eyes the recreant had passed the lodge, and was speeding as fast as his sandals could patter along the Lyndhurst Road.

CHAPTER II.

HOW ALLEYNE EDRICSON CAME OUT INTO THE WORLD.

NEVER had the peaceful atmosphere of the old Cistercian house been so rudely ruffled. Never had there been insurrection so sudden, so short, and so successful. Yet the Abbot Berghersh was a man of too firm a grain to allow one bold outbreak to imperil the settled order of his great household. In a few hot and bitter words, he compared their false brother's exit to the expulsion of our first parents from the garden, and more than hinted that unless a reformation occurred some others of the community might find themselves in the same evil and perilous case. Having thus pointed the moral and reduced his flock to a fitting state of docility, he dismissed them once more to their labours and withdrew himself to his own private chamber, there to seek spiritual aid in the discharge of the duties of his high office.

The Abbot was still on his knees, when a gentle tapping at the door of his cell broke in upon his orisons. Rising in no very good humour at the interruption, he gave the word to enter; but his look of impatience softened down into a pleasant and paternal smile as his eyes fell upon his visitor.

He was a thin-faced, yellow-haired youth, rather above the

middle size, comely and well shapen, with straight lithe figure and eager boyish features. His clear, pensive gray eyes, and quick, delicate expression, spoke of a nature which had unfolded far from the boisterous joys and sorrows of the world. Yet there was a set of the mouth and a prominence of the chin which relieved him of any trace of effeminacy. Impulsive he might be, enthusiastic, sensitive, with something sympathetic and adaptive in his disposition; but an observer of nature's tokens would have confidently pledged himself that there was native firmness and strength underlying his gentle, monk-bred ways.

The youth was not clad in monastic garb, but in lay attire, though his jerkin, cloak, and hose were all of a sombre hue, as befitted one who dwelt in sacred precincts. A broad leather strap hanging from his shoulder supported a scrip or satchel such as travellers were wont to carry. In one hand he grasped a thick staff pointed and shod with metal, while in the other he held his coif or bonnet, which bore in its front a broad pewter medal stamped with the image of Our Lady of Rocamadour.

'Art ready, then, fair son?' said the Abbot. 'This is indeed a day of comings and of goings. It is strange that in one twelve hours the Abbey should have cast off its foulest weed, and should now lose what we are fain to look upon as our choicest blossom.'

'You speak too kindly, father,' the youth answered. 'If I had my will I should never go forth, but should end my days here in Beaulieu. It hath been my home as far back as my mind can carry me, and it is a sore thing for me to have to leave it.'

'Life brings many a cross,' said the Abbot gently. 'Who is without them? Your going forth is a grief to us as well as to yourself. But there is no help. I had given my foreword and sacred promise to your father, Edric the Franklin, that at the age of twenty you should be sent out into the world to see for yourself how you liked the savour of it. Seat thee upon the settle, Alleyne, for you may need rest ere long.'

The youth sat down as directed, but reluctantly and with diffidence. The Abbot stood by the narrow window, and his long black shadow fell slantwise across the rush-strewn floor.

'Twenty years ago,' he said, 'your father, the Franklin of Minstead, died, leaving to the Abbey three hides of rich land in the hundred of Malwood, and leaving to us also his infant son on condition that we should rear him until he came to man's estate. This

he did partly because your mother was dead, and partly because your elder brother, now Socman of Minstead, had already given sign of that fierce and rude nature which would make him no fit companion for you. It was his desire and request, however, that you should not remain in the cloisters, but should at a ripe age return into the world.'

'But, father,' interrupted the young man, 'it is surely true that I am already advanced several degrees in clerkship?'

'Yes, fair son, but not so far as to bar you from the garb you now wear or the life which you must now lead. You have been porter?'

'Yes, father.'

'Exorcist?'

'Yes, father.'

'Reader?'

'Yes, father.'

'Acolyte?'

'Yes, father.'

'But have sworn no vow of constancy or chastity?'

'No, father.'

'Then you are free to follow a worldly life. But let me hear, ere you start, what gifts you take away with you from Beaulieu. Some I already know. There is the playing of the citole and the rebeck. Our choir will be dumb without you. You carve too?'

The youth's pale face flushed with the pride of the skilled workman. 'Yes, holy father,' he answered. 'Thanks to good brother Bartholomew, I carve in wood and in ivory, and can do something also in silver and in bronze. From brother Francis I have learned to paint on vellum, on glass, and on metal, with a knowledge of those pigments and essences which can preserve the colour against damp or a biting air. Brother Luke hath given me some skill in damask work, and in the enamelling of shrines, tabernacles, diptychs and triptychs. For the rest, I know a little of the making of covers, the cutting of precious stones, and the fashioning of instruments.'

'A goodly list, truly,' cried the superior with a smile. 'What clerk of Cambrig or of Oxenford could say as much? But of thy reading—hast not so much to show there, I fear?'

'No, father, it hath been slight enough. Yet, thanks to our good chancellor I am not wholly unlettered. I have read

Oekham, Bradwardine, and other of the schoolmen, together with the learned Duns Scotus and the book of the holy Aquinas.'

'But of the things of this world, what have you gathered from your reading? From this high window you may catch a glimpse over the wooded point and the smoke of Bucklershard, of the mouth of the Exe, and the shining sea. Now, I pray you, Alleyne, if a man were to take a ship and spread sail across yonder waters, where might he hope to arrive?'

The youth pondered, and drew a plan amongst the rushes with the point of his staff. 'Holy father,' said he, 'he would come upon those parts of France which are held by the King's Majesty. But if he trended to the south he might reach Spain and the Barbary States. To his north would be Flanders and the country of the Eastlanders and of the Muscovites.'

'True. And how if, after reaching the King's possessions, he still journeyed on to the eastward?'

'He would then come upon that part of France which is still in dispute, and he might hope to reach the famous city of Avignon, where dwells our blessed father, the pop of Christendom.'

'And then?'

'Then he would pass through the land of the Almain and the great Roman Empire, and so to the country of the Huns and of the Lithuanian pagans, beyond which lies the great city of Constantine and the kingdom of the unclean followers of Mahmoud.'

'And beyond that, fair son?'

'Beyond that is Jerusalem and the Holy Land, and the great river which hath its source in the Garden of Eden.'

'And then?'

'Nay, good father, I cannot tell. Methinks the end of the world is not far from there.'

'Then we can still find something to teach thee, Alleyne,' said the Abbot complaisantly. 'Know that many strange nations lie betwixt there and the end of the world. There is the country of the Amazons, and the country of the dwarfs, and the country of the fair but evil women who slay with beholding, like the basilisk. Beyond that again is the kingdom of Prester John and of the great Cham. These things I know for very sooth, for I had them from that pious Christian and valiant knight, Sir John de Mandeville, who stopped twice at Beaulieu on his way to and from Southampton, and discoursed to us concerning what he had

seen from the reader's desk in the refectory, until there was many a good brother who got neither bit nor sup, so stricken were they by his strange tales.'

'I would fain know, father,' asked the young man, 'what there may be at the end of the world.'

'There are some things,' replied the Abbot gravely, 'into which it was never intended that we should inquire. But you have a long road before you. Whither will you first turn?'

'To my brother's at Minstead. If he be indeed an ungodly and violent man, there is the more need that I should seek him out and see whether I cannot turn him to better ways.'

The Abbot shook his head. 'The Soeman of Minstead hath earned an evil name over the country side,' he said. 'If you must go to him, see at least that he doth not turn you from the narrow path upon which you have learned to tread. But you are in God's keeping, and Godward should you ever look in danger and in trouble. Above all, shun the snares of women, for they are ever set for the foolish feet of the young. Kneel down, my child, and take an old man's blessing.'

Alleyne Edricson bent his head while the Abbot poured out his heartfelt supplication that Heaven would watch over this young soul, now going forth into the darkness and danger of the world. It was no mere form for either of them. To them the outside life of mankind did indeed seem to be one of violence and of sin, beset with physical and still more with spiritual danger. Heaven, too, was very near to them in those days. God's direct agency was to be seen in the thunder and the rainbow, the whirlwind and the lightning. To the believer, clouds of angels and confessors, and martyrs, armies of the sainted and the saved, were ever stooping over their struggling brethren upon earth, raising, encouraging, and supporting them. It was then with a lighter heart and a stouter courage that the young man turned from the Abbot's room, while the latter, following him to the stair-head, finally commended him to the protection of the holy Julian, patron of travellers.

Underneath, in the porch of the Abbey, the monks had gathered to give him a last God-speed. Many had brought some parting token by which he should remember them. There was brother Bartholomew with a crucifix of rare carved ivory, and brother Luke with a white-backed psalter adorned with golden bees, and brother Francis with the 'Slaying of the Innocents' most daintily

set forth upon vellum. All these were duly packed away deep in the traveller's scrip, and above them old pippin-faced brother Athanasius had placed a parcel of simnel bread and rammel cheese, with a small flask of the famous blue-sealed Abbey wine. So, amid hand-shakings and laughings and blessings, Alleyne Edricson turned his back upon Beaulieu.

At the turn of the road he stopped and gazed back. There was the wide-spread building which he knew so well, the Abbot's house, the long church, the cloisters with their line of arches, all bathed and mellowed in the evening sun. There too was the broad sweep of the river Exe, the old stone well, the canopied niche of the Virgin, and in the centre of all the cluster of white-robed figures who waved their hands to him. A sudden mist swam up before the young man's eyes, and he turned away upon his journey with a heavy heart and a choking throat.

CHAPTER III.

HOW HORDLE JOHN COZENED THE FULLER OF LYMINGTON.

IT is not, however, in the nature of things that a lad of twenty, with young life glowing in his veins and all the wide world before him, should spend his first hours of freedom in mourning for what he had left. Long ere Alleyne was out of sound of the Beaulieu bells he was striding sturdily along, swinging his staff and whistling as merrily as the birds in the thicket. It was an evening to raise a man's heart. The sun shining slantwise through the trees threw delicate traceries across the road, with bars of golden light between. Away in the distance, before and behind, the green boughs, now turning in places to a coppery redness, shot their broad arches across the track. The still summer air was heavy with the resinous smell of the great forest. Here and there a tawny brook prattled out from among the underwood and lost itself again in the ferns and brambles upon the further side. Save the dull piping of insects and the sough of the leaves, there was silence everywhere—the sweet restful silence of nature.

And yet there was no want of life—the whole wide wood was full of it. Now it was a lithe, furtive stoat which shot across the path upon some fell errand of its own; then it was a wild cat

which squatted upon the outlying branch of an oak and peeped at the traveller with a yellow and dubious eye. Once it was a wild sow which scuttled out of the bracken, with two young sounders at her heels, and once a lordly red staggard walked daintily out from among the tree trunks, and looked around him with the fearless gaze of one who lived under the King's own high protection. Alleyne gave his staff a merry flourish, however, and the red deer bethought him that the King was far off, so strolled away whence he came.

The youth had now journeyed considerably beyond the furthest domains of the Abbey. He was the more surprised therefore when, on coming round a turn in the path, he perceived a man clad in the familiar garb of the order, and seated in a clump of heather by the roadside. Alleyne had known every brother well, but this was a face which was new to him—a face which was very red and puffed, working this way and that, as though the man were sore perplexed in his mind. Once he shook both hands furiously in the air, and twice he sprang from his seat and hurried down the road. When he rose, however, Alleyne observed that his robe was much too long and loose for him in every direction, trailing upon the ground and bagging about his ankles, so that even with trussed-up skirts he could make little progress. He ran once, but the long gown clogged him so that he slowed down into a shambling walk, and finally plumped into the heather once more.

‘Young friend,’ said he, when Alleyne was abreast of him, ‘I fear from thy garb that thou canst know little of the Abbey of Beaulieu.’

‘Then you are in error, friend,’ the clerk answered, ‘for I have spent all my days within its walls.’

‘Hast so indeed?’ cried he. ‘Then perhaps canst tell me the name of a great loathly lump of a brother wi’ freckled face an’ a hand like a spade. His eyes were black an’ his hair was red an’ his voice like the parish bull. I trow that there cannot be two alike in the same cloisters.’

‘That surely can be no other than brother John,’ said Alleyne. ‘I trust he has done you no wrong, that you should be so hot against him.’

‘Wrong, quotha!’ cried the other, jumping out of the heather. ‘Wrong! why he hath stolen every plack of clothing off my back, if that be a wrong, and hath left me here in this sorry frock of

white falding, so that I have shame to go back to my wife, lest she think that I have donned her old kirtle. Harrow and alas that ever I should have met him!

‘But how came this?’ asked the young clerk, who could scarce keep from laughter at the sight of the hot little man so swathed in the great white cloak.

‘It came in this way,’ he said, sitting down once more: ‘I was passing this way, hoping to reach Lymington ere nightfall, when I came on this red-headed knave seated even where we are sitting now. I uncovered and louted as I passed, thinking that he might be a holy man at his orisons, but he called to me and asked me if I had heard speak of the new indulgence in favour of the Cistercians. “Not I,” I answered. “Then the worse for thy soul!” said he; and with that he broke into a long tale how that on account of the virtues of the Abbot Berghersh it had been decreed by the Pope that whoever should wear the habit of a monk of Beaulieu for as long as he might say the seven psalms of David should be assured of the kingdom of Heaven. When I heard this I prayed him on my knees that he would give me the use of his gown, which after many contentions he at last agreed to do, on my paying him three marks towards the regilding of the image of Laurence the martyr. Having stripped his robe, I had no choice but to let him have the wearing of my good leathern jerkin and hose, for, as he said, it was chilling to the blood and unseemly to the eye to stand frockless whilst I made my orisons. He had scarce got them on, and it was a sore labour, seeing that my inches will scarce match my girth—he had scarce got them on, I say, and I not yet at the end of the second psalm, when he bade me do honour to my new dress, and with that set off down the road as fast as feet would carry him. For myself, I could no more run than if I had been sewn in a sack; so here I sit, and here I am like to sit, before I set eyes upon my clothes again.’

‘Nay, friend, take it not so sadly,’ said Alleyne, clapping the disconsolate one upon the shoulder. ‘Canst change thy robe for a jerkin once more at the Abbey, unless perchance you have a friend near at hand.’

‘That have I,’ he answered, ‘and close; but I care not to go nigh him in this plight, for his wife hath a gibing tongue, and would spread the tale until I could not show my face in any market from Fordingbridge to Southampton. But if you, fair sir, out of your kind charity would be pleased to go a matter of two

bow-shots out of your way, you would do me such a service as I could scarce repay.'

'With all my heart,' said Alleyne readily.

'Then take this pathway on the left, I pray thee, and then the deer-track which passes on the right. You will then see under a great beech-tree the hut of a charcoal-burner. Give him my name, good sir, the name of Peter the fuller, of Lymington, and ask him for a change of raiment, that I may pursue my journey without delay. There are reasons why he would be loth to refuse me.'

Alleyne started off along the path indicated, and soon found the log-hut where the burner dwelt. He was away faggot-cutting in the forest, but his wife, a ruddy bustling dame, found the needful garments and tied them into a bundle. While she busied herself in finding and folding them, Alleyne Edricson stood by the open door looking in at her with much interest and some distrust, for he had never been so nigh to a woman before. She had round red arms, a dress of some sober woollen stuff, and a brass brooch the size of a cheese-cake stuck in the front of it.

'Peter the fuller!' she kept repeating. 'Marry come up! if I were Peter the fuller's wife, I would teach him better than to give his clothes to the first knave who asks for them. But he was always a poor fond silly creature, was Peter, though we are beholden to him for helping to bury our second son Wat, who was a 'prentice to him at Lymington in the year of the Black Death. But who are you, young sir?'

'I am a clerk on my road from Beaulieu to Minstead.'

'Aye, indeed! Hast been brought up at the Abbey then. I could read it from thy reddened cheek and downcast eye. Hast learned from the monks, I trow, to fear a woman as thou wouldst a lazar-house. Out upon them! that they should dishonour their own mothers by such teaching! A pretty world it would be with all the women out of it.'

'Heaven forfend that such a thing should come to pass!' said Alleyne.

'Amen and amen! But thou art a pretty lad, and the prettier for thy modest ways. It is easy to see from thy cheek that thou hast not spent thy days in the rain and the heat and the wind, as my poor Wat hath been forced to do.'

'I have indeed seen little of life, good dame.'

'Wilt find nothing in it to pay thee for the loss of thy own

freshness. Here are the clothes, and Peter can leave them when next he comes this way. Holy Virgin! see the dust upon thy doublet! It were easy to see that there is no woman to tend to thee. So!—that is better. Now buss me, boy.'

Alleyne stooped and kissed her, for the kiss was the common salutation of the age, and, as Erasmus long afterwards remarked, more used in England than in any other country. Yet it sent the blood to his temples again, and he wondered, as he turned away, what the Abbot Berghersh would have answered to so frank an invitation. He was still tingling from this new experience when he came out upon the high road and saw a sight which drove all other thoughts from his mind.

Some way down from where he had left him the unfortunate Peter was stamping and raving tenfold worse than before. Now, however, instead of the great white cloak, he had no clothes on at all, save a short woollen shirt and a pair of leather shoes. Far down the road a long-legged figure was running, with a bundle under one arm and the other hand to his side, like a man who laughs until he is sore.

'See him!' yelled Peter. 'Look to him! You shall be my witness. He shall see Winchester gaol for this. See where he goes with my cloak under his arm!'

'Who then?' cried Alleyne.

'Who but that cursed brother John! He hath not left me clothes enough to make a gallybagger. The double thief hath cozened me out of my gown.'

'Stay though, my friend, it was his gown,' objected Alleyne.

'It boots not. He hath them all—gown, jerkin, hosen and all. Gramercy to him that he left me the shirt and the shoon. I doubt not that he will be back for them anon.'

'But how came this?' asked Alleyne, open-eyed with astonishment.

'Are those the clothes? For dear charity's sake give them to me. Not the Pope himself shall have these from me, though he sent the whole college of cardinals to ask it. How came it? Why, you had scarce gone ere this loathly John came running back again, and, when I oped mouth to reproach him, he asked me whether it was indeed likely that a man of prayer would leave his own godly raiment in order to take a layman's jerkin. He had, he said, but gone for a while that I might be the freer for my devotions. On this I plucked off the gown, and he with

much show of haste did begin to undo his points; but when I threw his frock down he clipped it up and ran off all untrussed, leaving me in this sorry plight. He laughed so the while, like a great croaking frog, that I might have caught him had my breath not been as short as his legs were long.'

The young man listened to this tale of wrong with all the seriousness that he could maintain; but at the sight of the pury red-faced man and the dignity with which he bore him, the laughter came so thick upon him that he had to lean up against a tree-trunk. The fuller looked sadly and gravely at him; but finding that he still laughed, he bowed with much mock politeness and stalked onwards in his borrowed clothes. Alleyne watched him until he was small in the distance, and then, wiping the tears from his eyes, he set off briskly once more upon his journey.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE BAILIFF OF SOUTHAMPTON SLEW THE TWO MASTERLESS MEN.

THE road along which he travelled was scarce as populous as most other roads in the kingdom, and far less so than those which lie between the larger towns. Yet from time to time Alleyne met other wayfarers, and more than once was overtaken by strings of pack-mules and horsemen journeying in the same direction as himself. Once a begging friar came limping along in a brown habit, imploring him in a most dolorous voice to give him a single groat to buy bread wherewith to save himself from impending death. Alleyne passed him swiftly by, for he had learned from the monks to have no love for the wandering friars, and, besides, there was a great half-gnawed mutton bone sticking out of his pouch to prove him a liar. Swiftly as he went, however, he could not escape the curse of the four blessed evangelists which the mendicant howled behind him. So dreadful were his execrations that the frightened lad thrust his fingers into his ear-holes, and ran until the fellow was but a brown smirch upon the yellow road.

Further on, at the edge of the woodland, he came upon a chapman and his wife, who sat upon a fallen tree. He had put his pack down as a table, and the two of them were devouring a great pasty, and washing it down with some drink from a stone jar. The chapman broke a rough jest as he passed, and the

woman called shrilly to Alleyne to come and join them, on which the man, turning suddenly from mirth to wrath, began to belabour her with his cudgel. Alleyne hastened on, lest he make more mischief, and his heart was heavy as lead within him. Look where he would, he seemed to see nothing but injustice and violence and the hardness of man to man.

But even as he brooded sadly over it and pined for the sweet peace of the Abbey, he came on an open space dotted with holly bushes, where was the strangest sight that he had yet chanced upon. Near to the pathway lay a long clump of greenery, and from behind this there stuck straight up into the air four human legs clad in parti-coloured hosen, yellow and black. Strangest of all was it when a brisk tune struck suddenly up and the four legs began to kick and twitter in time to the music. Walking on tip-toe round the bushes, he stood in amazement to see two men bounding about on their heads, while they played, the one a viol and the other a pipe, as merrily and as truly as though they were seated in choir. Alleyne crossed himself as he gazed at this unnatural sight, and could scarce hold his ground with a steady face, when the two dancers, catching sight of him, came bouncing in his direction. A spear's length from him they each threw a sommersault into the air, and came down upon their feet with smirking faces and their hands over their hearts.

'A guerdon—a guerdon, my knight of the staring eyes!' cried one.

'A gift, my prince!' shouted the other. 'Any trifle will serve—a purse of gold, or even a jewelled goblet.'

Alleyne thought of what he had read of demoniac possession—the jumpings, the twitchings, the wild talk. It was in his mind to repeat over the exorcism proper to such attacks; but the two burst out a-laughing at his scared face, and, turning on to their heads once more, clapped their heels in derision.

'Hast never seen tumblers before?' asked the elder, a black-browed swarthy man, as brown and supple as a hazel twig. 'Why shrink from us, then, as though we were the spawn of the Evil One?'

'Why shrink, my honey-bird? Why so afeard, my sweet cinnamon?' exclaimed the other, a loose-jointed lanky youth with a dancing roguish eye.

'Truly, sirs, it is a new sight to me,' the clerk answered. 'When I saw your four legs above the bush I could scarce credit my own eyes. Why is it that you do this thing?'

‘A dry question to answer,’ cried the younger, coming back on to his feet. ‘A most husky question, my fair bird! But how? A flask, a flask!—by all that is wonderful!’ He shot out his hand as he spoke, and plucking Alleyne’s bottle out of his scrip, he deftly knocked the neck off, and poured the half of it down his throat. The rest he handed to his comrade, who drank the wine, and then, to the clerk’s increasing amazement, made a show of swallowing the bottle, with such skill that Alleyne seemed to see it vanish down his throat. A moment later, however, he flung it over his head, and caught it bottom downwards upon the calf of his left leg.

‘We thank you for the wine, kind sir,’ said he, ‘and for the ready courtesies wherewith you offered it. Touching your question, we may tell you that we are strollers and jugglers, who, having performed with much applause at Winchester fair, are now on our way to the great Michaelmas market at Ringwood. As our art is a very fine and delicate one, however, we cannot let a day go by without exercising ourselves in it, to which end we choose some quiet and sheltered spot where we may break our journey. Here you find us; and we cannot wonder that you, who are new to tumbling, should be astounded, since many great barons, earls, marshals and knights, who have wandered as far as the Holy Land, are of one mind in saying that they have never seen a more noble or gracious performance. If you will be pleased to sit upon that stump, we will now continue our exercise.’

Alleyne sat down willingly as directed with two great bundles on either side of him which contained the strollers’ dresses—doublets of flame-coloured silk and girdles of leather, spangled with brass and tin. The jugglers were on their heads once more, bounding about with rigid necks, playing the while in perfect time and tune. It chanced that out of one of the bundles there stuck the end of what the clerk saw to be a cittern, so, drawing it forth, he tuned it up and twanged a harmony to the merry lilt which the dancers played. On that they dropped their own instruments, and putting their hands to the ground they hopped about faster and faster, ever shouting to him to play more briskly, until at last for very weariness all three had to stop.

‘Well played, sweet poppet!’ cried the younger. ‘Hast a rare touch on the strings.’

‘How knew you the tune?’ asked the other.

‘I knew it not. I did but follow the notes I heard.’

Both opened their eyes at this, and stared at Alleyne with as much amazement as he had shown at them.

‘You have a fine trick of ear then,’ said one. ‘We have long wished to meet such a man. Wilt join us and jog on to Ringwood? Thy duties shall be light, and thou shalt have twopence a day and meat for supper every night.’

‘With as much beer as you can put away,’ said the other, ‘and a flask of Gascon wine on Sabbaths.’

‘Nay, it may not be. I have other work to do. I have tarried with you over long,’ quoth Alleyne, and resolutely set forth upon his journey once more. They ran behind him some little way, offering him first fourpence and then sixpence a day, but he only smiled and shook his head, until at last they fell away from him. Looking back, he saw that the smaller had mounted on the younger’s shoulders, and that they stood so, some ten feet high, waving their adieus to him. He waved back to them, and then hastened on, the lighter of heart for having fallen in with these strange men of pleasure.

Alleyne had gone no great distance for all the many small passages that had befallen him. Yet to him, used as he was to a life of such quiet that the failure of a brewing or the altering of an anthem had seemed to be of the deepest import, the quick changing play of the lights and shadows of life was strangely startling and interesting. A gulf seemed to divide this brisk uncertain existence from the old steady round of work and of prayer which he had left behind him. The few hours that had passed since he saw the Abbey tower stretched out in his memory until they outgrew whole months of the stagnant life of the cloister. As he walked and munched the soft bread from his scrip, it seemed strange to him to feel that it was still warm from the ovens of Beaulieu.

When he passed Penerley, where were three cottages and a barn, he reached the edge of the tree country, and found the great barren heath of Blackdown stretching in front of him, all pink with heather and bronzed with the fading ferns. On the left the woods were still thick, but the road edged away from them and wound over the open. The sun lay low in the west upon a purple cloud, whence it threw a mild chastening light over the wild moorland and glittered on the fringe of forest, turning the withered leaves into flakes of dead gold, the brighter for the black depths behind them. To the seeing eye decay is as fair as

growth, and death as life. The thought stole into Alleyne's heart as he looked upon the autumnal country side and marvelled at its beauty. He had little time to dwell upon it, however, for there were still six good miles between him and the nearest inn. He sat down by the roadside to partake of his bread and cheese, and then with a lighter scrip he hastened upon his way.

There appeared to be more wayfarers on the down than in the forest. First he passed two Dominicans in their long black dresses, who swept by him with downcast looks and pattering lips, without so much as a glance at him. Then there came a grey friar, or minorite, with a good paunch upon him, walking slowly and looking about him with the air of a man who was at peace with himself and with all men. He stopped Alleyne to ask him whether it were not true that there was a hostel somewhere in those parts which was especially famous for the stewing of eels. The clerk having made answer that he had heard the eels of Sowley well spoken of, the friar sucked in his lips and hurried forward. Close at his heels came three labourers walking abreast, with spade and mattock over their shoulders. They sang some rude chorus right tunefully as they walked, but their English was so coarse and rough that to the ears of a cloister-bred man it sounded like a foreign and barbarous tongue. One of them carried a young bittern which they had caught upon the moor, and they offered it to Alleyne for a silver groat. Very glad he was to get safely past them, for, with their bristling red beards and their fierce blue eyes, they were uneasy men to bargain with upon a lonely moor.

Yet it is not always the burliest and the wildest who are the most to be dreaded. The workers looked hungrily at him, and then jogged onwards upon their way in slow lumbering Saxon style. A worse man to deal with was a wooden-legged cripple who came hobbling down the path, so weak and so old to all appearance that a child need not stand in fear of him. Yet when Alleyne had passed him, of a sudden, out of pure devilment, he screamed out a curse at him, and sent a jagged flint stone hurtling past his ear. So horrid was the causeless rage of the crooked creature, that the clerk came over a cold thrill, and took to his heels until he was out of shot from stone or word. It seemed to him that in this country of England there was no protection for a man save that which lay in the strength of his own arm and the speed of his own foot. In the cloisters he had heard vague talk of the law—the mighty law which was higher than

prelate or baron, yet no sign could he see of it. What was the benefit of a law written fair upon parchment, he wondered, if there were no officers to enforce it? As it fell out, however, he had that very evening, ere the sun had set, a chance of seeing how stern was the grip of the English law when it did happen to seize the offender.

A mile or so out upon the moor the road takes a very sudden dip into a hollow, with a peat-coloured stream running swiftly down the centre of it. To the right of this stood, and stands to this day, an ancient barrow, or burying mound, covered deeply in a bristle of heather and bracken. Alleyne was plodding down the slope upon one side, when he saw an old dame coming towards him upon the other, limping with weariness and leaning heavily upon a stick. When she reached the edge of the stream she stood helpless, looking to right and to left for some ford. Where the path ran down a great stone had been fixed in the centre of the brook, but it was too far from the bank for her aged and uncertain feet. Twice she thrust forward at it, and twice she drew back, until at last, giving it up in despair, she sat herself down by the brink and wrung her hands wearily. There she still sat when Alleyne reached the crossing.

‘Come, mother,’ quoth he, ‘it is not so very perilous a passage.’

‘Alas! good youth,’ she answered, ‘I have a humour in the eyes, and though I can see that there is a stone there I can by no means be sure as to where it lies.’

‘That is easily amended,’ said he cheerily, and picking her lightly up, for she was much worn with time, he passed across with her. He could not but observe, however, that as he placed her down her knees seemed to fail her, and she could scarcely prop herself up with her staff.

‘You are weak, mother,’ said he. ‘Hast journeyed far, I wot.’

‘From Wiltshire, friend,’ said she, in a quavering voice; ‘three days have I been on the road. I go to my son, who is one of the King’s regards at Brockenhurst. He has ever said that he would care for me in mine old age.’

‘And rightly too, mother, since you cared for him in his youth. But when have you broken fast?’

‘At Lyndenhurst; but alas! my money is at an end, and I could but get a dish of bran-porridge from the nunnery. Yet I trust that I may be able to reach Brockenhurst to-night, where I

may have all that heart can desire ; for, oh ! sir, but my son is a fine man, with a kindly heart of his own, and it is as good as food to me to think that he should have a doublet of Lincoln green to his back and be the King's own paid man.'

'It is a long road yet to Brockenhurst,' said Alleyne ; 'but here is such bread and cheese as I have left, and here, too, is a penny which may help you to supper. May God be with you!'

'May God be with you, young man!' she cried. 'May He make your heart as glad as you have made mine!' She turned away, still mumbling blessings, and Alleyne saw her short figure and her long shadow stumbling slowly up the slope.

He was moving away himself, when his eyes lit upon a strange sight, and one which sent a tingling through his skin. Out of the tangled scrub on the old overgrown barrow two human faces were looking out at him ; the sinking sun glimmered full upon them, showing up every line and feature. The one was an oldish man with a thin beard, a crooked nose, and a broad red smudge from a birth-mark over his temple ; the other was a negro, a thing rarely met in England at that day, and rarer still in the quiet southland parts. Alleyne had read of such folk, but had never seen one before, and could scarce take his eyes from the fellow's broad pouting lip and shining teeth. Even as he gazed, however, the two came writhing out from among the heather, and came down towards him with such a guilty, slinking carriage, that the clerk felt that there was no good in them, and hastened onwards upon his way.

He had not gained the crown of the slope, when he heard a sudden scuffle behind him and a feeble voice bleating for help. Looking round, there was the old dame down upon the roadway, with her red wimple flying on the breeze, while the two rogues, black and white, stooped over her, wresting away from her the penny and such other poor trifles as were worth the taking. At the sight of her thin limbs struggling in weak resistance, such a glow of fierce anger passed over Alleyne as set his head in a whirl. Dropping his scrip, he bounded over the stream once more, and made for the two villains, with his staff whirled over his shoulder and his grey eyes blazing with fury.

The robbers, however, were not disposed to leave their victim until they had worked their wicked will upon her. The black man, with the woman's crimson scarf tied round his swarthy head, stood forward in the centre of the path, with a long dull-coloured

knife in his hand, while the other, waving a ragged cudgel, cursed at Alleyne and dared him to come on. His blood was fairly aflame, however, and he needed no such challenge. Dashing at the black man, he smote at him with such good will that he let his knife tinkle into the roadway, and hopped howling to a safer distance. The second rogue, however, made of sterner stuff, rushed in upon the clerk, and clipped him round the waist with a grip like a bear, shouting the while to his comrade to come round and stab him in the back. At this the negro took heart of grace, and picking up his dagger again he came stealing with prowling step and murderous eye, while the two swayed backwards and forwards, staggering this way and that. In the very midst of the scuffle, however, whilst Alleyne braced himself to feel the cold blade between his shoulders, there came a sudden scurry of hoofs, and the black man yelled with terror and ran for his life through the heather. The man with the birth-mark, too, struggled to break away, and Alleyne heard his teeth chatter and felt his limbs grow limp to his hand. At this sign of coming aid the clerk held on the tighter, and at last was able to pin his man down and glance behind him to see whence all the noise was coming.

Down the slanting road there was riding a big burly man, clad in a tunic of purple velvet and driving a great black horse as hard as it could gallop. He leaned well over its neck as he rode, and made a heaving with his shoulders at every bound as though he were lifting the steed instead of it carrying him. In the rapid glance Alleyne saw that he had white doeskin gloves, a curling white feather in his flat velvet cap, and a broad gold-embroidered baldric across his bosom. Behind him rode six others, two and two, clad in sober brown jerkins, with the long yellow staves of their bows thrusting out from behind their right shoulders. Down the hill they thundered, over the brook and up to the scene of the contest.

‘Here is one!’ said the leader, springing down from his reeking horse, and seizing the white rogue by the edge of his jerkin. ‘This is one of them. I know him by that devil’s touch upon his brow. Where are your cords, Peterkin? So!—bind him hand and foot. His last hour has come. And you, young man, who may you be?’

‘I am a clerk, sir, travelling from Beaulieu.’

‘A clerk!’ cried the other. ‘Art from Oxenford or from Cambridge? Hast thou a letter from the chancellor of thy college

giving thee a permit to beg? Let me see thy letter.' He had a stern square face, with bushy side whiskers and a very questioning eye.

'I am from Beaulieu Abbey, and I have no need to beg,' said Alleyne, who was all of a tremble now that the ruffle was over.

'The better for thee,' the other answered. 'Dost know who I am?'

'No, sir, I do not.'

'I am the law!'—nodding his head solemnly. 'I am the law of England and the mouthpiece of his most gracious and royal majesty, Edward the Third.'

Alleyne louted low to the King's representative. 'Truly you came in good time, honoured sir,' said he. 'A moment later and they would have slain me.'

'But there should be another one,' cried the man in the purple coat. 'There should be a black man. A shipman with St. Anthony's fire, and a black man who had served him as cook—those are the pair that we are in chase of.'

'The black man fled over to that side,' said Alleyne, pointing towards the barrow.

'He could not have gone far, sir bailiff,' cried one of the archers, unslinging his bow. 'He is in hiding somewhere, for he knew well, black paynim as he is, that our horses' four legs could outstrip his two.'

'Then we shall have him,' said the other. 'It shall never be said, whilst I am bailiff of Southampton, that any waster, riever, draw-latch or murtherer came scathless away from me and my posse. Leave that rogue lying. Now stretch out in line, my merry ones, with arrow on string, and I shall show you such sport as only the King can give. You on the left, Howett, and Thomas of Redbridge upon the right. So! Beat high and low among the heather, and a pot of wine to the lucky marksman.'

As it chanced, however, the searchers had not far to seek. The negro had burrowed down into his hiding-place upon the barrow, where he might have lain snug enough, had it not been for the red gear upon his head. As he raised himself to look over the bracken at his enemies, the staring colour caught the eye of the bailiff, who broke into a long screeching whoop and spurred forward sword in hand. Seeing himself discovered, the man rushed out from his hiding-place, and bounded at the top of his speed down the line of archers, keeping a good hundred paces to the

front of them. The two who were on either side of Alleyne bent their bows as calmly as though they were shooting at the popinjay at a village fair.

‘Seven yards windage, Hal,’ said one, whose hair was streaked with grey.

‘Five,’ replied the other, letting loose his string. Alleyne gave a gulp in his throat, for the yellow streak seemed to pass through the man; but he still ran forward.

‘Seven, you jack-fool!’ growled the first speaker, and his bow twanged like a harp-string. The black man sprang high up into the air, and shot out both his arms and his legs, coming down all a-sprawl among the heather. ‘Right under the blade bone!’ quoth the archer, sauntering forward for his arrow.

‘The old hound is the best when all is said,’ quoth the bailiff of Southampton, as they made back for the roadway. ‘That means a quart of the best malmsey in Southampton this very night, Matthew Atwood. Art sure that he is dead?’

‘Dead as Pontius Pilate, worshipful sir.’

‘It is well. Now, as to the other knave. There are trees and to spare over yonder, but we have scarce leisure to make for them. Draw thy sword, Thomas of Redbridge, and hew me his head from his shoulders.’

‘A boon, gracious sir, a boon!’ cried the condemned man.

‘What then?’ asked the bailiff.

‘I will confess to my crime. It was indeed I and the black cook, both from the ship “La Rose de Gloire,” of Southampton, who did set upon the Flanders merchant and rob him of his spicery and his mercery, for which, as we well know, you hold a warrant against us.’

‘There is little merit in this confession,’ quoth the bailiff sternly. ‘Thou hast done evil within my bailiwick, and must die.’

‘But, sir,’ urged Alleyne, who was white to the lips at these bloody doings, ‘he hath not yet come to trial.’

‘Young clerk,’ said the bailiff, ‘you speak of that of which you know nothing. It is true that he hath not come to trial, but the trial hath come to him. He hath fled the law and is beyond its pale. Touch not that which is no concern of thine. But what is this boon, rogue, which you would crave?’

‘I have in my shoe, most worshipful sir, a strip of wood which belonged once to the bark wherein the blessed Paul was dashed up against the island of Melita. I bought it for two rose nobles

from a shipman who came from the Levant. The boon I crave is that you will place it in my hands and let me die still grasping it. In this manner, not only shall my own eternal salvation be secured, but thine also, for I shall never cease to intercede for thee.'

At the command of the bailiff they plucked off the fellow's shoe, and there sure enough at the side of the instep, wrapped in a piece of fine sendal, lay a long dark splinter of wood. The archers doffed caps at the sight of it, and the bailiff crossed himself devoutly as he handed it to the robber.

'If it should chance,' he said, 'that through the surpassing merits of the blessed Paul your sin-stained soul should gain a way into paradise, I trust that you will not forget that intercession which you have promised. Bear in mind, too, that it is Herward the bailiff for whom you pray, and not Herward the sheriff, who is my uncle's son. Now, Thomas, I pray you despatch, for we have a long ride before us and sun has already set.'

Alleyne gazed upon the scene—the portly velvet-clad official, the knot of hard-faced archers with their hands to the bridles of their horses, the thief with his arms trussed back and his doublet turned down upon his shoulders. By the side of the track the old dame was standing, fastening her red wimple once more round her head. Even as he looked one of the archers drew his sword with a sharp whirr of steel and stepped up to the lost man. The clerk hurried away in horror; but, ere he had gone many paces, he heard a sudden sullen thump, with a choking whistling sound at the end of it. A minute later the bailiff and four of his men rode past him on their journey back to Southampton, the other two having been chosen as grave-diggers. As they passed, Alleyne saw that one of the men was wiping his sword-blade upon the mane of his horse. A deadly sickness came over him at the sight, and sitting down by the wayside he burst out a-weeping, with his nerves all in a jangle. It was a terrible world, thought he, and it was hard to know which were the more to be dreaded, the knaves or the men of the law.

(To be continued.)

WINTER ON EXMOOR.

THERE are few parts of England which, for those initiated to its charm, bear a stronger fascination, a more romantic interest, than the forest of Exmoor. Not many years ago it was almost a *terra incognita*; but since the production of Blackmore's famous book, the finest romance that has been added to English literature, and probably to the literature of the world, since the Waverley novels, the land of Lorna Doone has attracted thousands of visitors. Just as 'Rob Roy' and 'Ivanhoe' served to attract people to the highlands of Scotland, so this fascinating book draws shoals of summer visitants to the heathery plateau beside the Severn sea.

But, in order to enjoy thoroughly this delightful country, it is necessary to stay in it, to tramp or ride daily over its wild hills, to fish in its brawling streams, to study the quaint ways and speech of its primitive inhabitants. Then one gets well saturated with the spirit of the moor, and once this is the case the soul longs to return; and when you do return, so hearty is your welcome, so kindly the interest taken in your doings, that you seem to have come back to your own land, and to stand once more upon your native heath.

The interest of the casual visitor is centred in the Doone Valley; and with this he, or more often she, is generally disappointed. 'Where are the mighty crags, the unscalable cliffs, the dark-mouthed tunnel with its threefold entrance and masked gallery overhead?' 'Why, I thought to see some ruined huts, with the doorway in which the Doones were measured!' 'Can this be the dreadful waterslide, this scanty runlet trickling down among some smallish boulders polished by continual friction of water, and fringed with silken weed, with here and there a little dark pool between? Why, the barelegged children of yonder pic-nic party are scaling it with no great difficulty, and not an atom of danger. How could such a place as this have ever been impregnable? Go to! it is quite a fraud.'

But, my dear lady, is there not such a thing as artistic exaggeration? Must not the romancist be allowed his licence no less than the poet? Come, exert your own imaginative faculty and build all these things up for yourself. See, here at least in these

mounds of earth at the head of the valley the foundations of huts may yet be traced, with the river running through as a street runs between its two lines of houses; and across the river the great hill sloping up, clothed with larches and hazels where the red deer lurk, and come down to drink in the Bagworthy¹ water at even, forms a steepish climb, I assure you, and may easily be accepted as the prototype of those almost perpendicular cliffs adown which, when covered with snow, the doughty John Ridd precipitated himself in his home-made snow-shoes. It is a difficulty, I grant you, that even supposing you were able to ascend that watercourse where the children paddle when the wintry stream comes foaming down from the moor above, it would lead you out of the Doone Valley instead of into it: but we must put up with these things, they are not essentials. The charm of the book does not depend on these little exaggerations. It is to be found in its truth, its natural reality—in the gracious love of the queenly Lorna, superior to all accidental circumstances of wealth and station; in the haughty bearing of the fierce outlaws; the dry humours of Master Huckaback; the daring impudence of Tom Faggus, and the beautiful equine picture of his charming Winnie mare; the powerful portrait of black Judge Jeffreys; above all, in the honest ways and quaint modesty of ‘Girt Jan Ridd’ himself, a man to shake whom by the hand one would ride forty miles to-day were he still in the flesh. Although probably as great artistic liberty has been taken in regard to the persons or types which served as the originals of these characters as with the locality itself, yet so great is the author’s power of delineation that while one stays upon the moor they seem more real than the persons now actually living there; and so long as the English language continues to be spoken and read, so long will this corner of England continue to exercise a fictitious interest, apart from and beyond its intrinsic advantages in the way of sport, fine air, and picturesque scenery.

Exmoor proper now comprises some twenty thousand acres, mostly in Somerset, but a small portion in Devon, commencing a few miles beyond Dulverton on the east, and extending to within a similar distance of Barnstaple and South Molton on the west and south. All this estate belongs to Sir Frederick Winn Knight, who keeps nearly the whole of it in his own hands. Descending the steep road from Ilfracombe and Lynton, we pass his residence,

¹ Pronounced Badgery.

an old-fashioned manor-house, long and low, its white face chequered with the shadows of tall trees, one of which stands boldly out in the road itself, defiant of highway surveyors, a terror to drivers on dark nights. Behind the house rises a lofty roofless structure of dark stone, evidently designed to supersede the present mansion, but for some reason or other abandoned. Maybe we can guess the reason when we hear that the only son and heir of this lovely heritage lies in the picturesque churchyard on the slope of the opposite hill. What a lovely view there must be from that little oriel window!—a stretch of emerald meadow, dotted with sheep, with the Barle winding like a silver ribbon along the bottom, with dark plantations clothing the high ground on either side, and the road from South Molton slanting down the escarpment of the hill to cross the limpid stream by a bridge which leads into the little village of Simonsbath. Here we will put up at the inn, yeleft the William Rufus, from a tradition that the red king used to hunt the red deer on Exmoor forest; and herefrom we also will hunt, and in due time fish, and tramp the country round, laying in good store of health; for the air here is not to be surpassed, or equalled, save by that which blows about the Dartmoor tors or whistles over the Dorset downs.

It would be difficult to decide which is the finer country, this or the sister moor. Dartmoor is larger, wilder, and perhaps grander in the bolder outline of its cloud-capt tors; but Exmoor, notwithstanding its wildness, has a sweet and gentle charm which is all its own, while for scenery it is hard to be excelled. Climb to the top of Dunkery Beacon, and the scene on a clear day is something to be remembered, so infinite in variety and extent, a panorama of misty woods and gleaming water and glowing heather blended in one of Nature's finest harmonies. Looking eastward a fine champaign country is bounded by the Quantock hills, beyond which lies the wide Huntspill level with the faint blue line of the Mendips in the far distance. More southward over Brendon may be discerned the rich vale of Taunton, studded with countless villages, each with its square grey tower; while the western side is occupied by Exmoor itself, a plateau of purple moorland furrowed with dark combes which, clothed with scrub oaks and feathery larches, draw deeper and deeper down towards the sea, thus commencing the loveliest bit of coast scenery on the whole seaboard of Britain. To the north the sea itself, the wide estuary of the Severn with the islands of Flat and Steep Holm,

Lundy in the far west, and across the sparkling firth the low-lying shores of South Wales.

Supposing one were offered one's choice of all the beautiful homes of fair England, where could one more delightful be found than the lovely little seat of Lord Lovelace above Porlock Weir, with its terrace walk along the cliff overlooking the Bristol Channel, and its grand woods rising in masses of heavy foliage hundreds of feet upwards, oak and elm and spreading walnut, tough mountain ash and Spanish chestnut; with outlying clumps of thorn and hazel thrown out like skirmishers of a great army scaling the steep cliffs to gain the rough and broken waste above? Deep in the heart of the great woods stands the tiny church of Culbone, so small that a man of wide reach could span its chancel walls; yet a church solidly built and well-proportioned, with a nave (containing some three pews on either side of the aisle), porch, choir, tower, and belfry, all complete, standing in a beautiful little churchyard with old mossy gravestones and bright green sward.

Leaving this forest shrine, what a climb it is to the moorland above! The path winds zigzag for some distance, which makes matters easy; but when you leave the great woods and come to the open country you must harden your heart and buckle to if you mean to reach the top. Nothing tires more than to dawdle up hill, but by resolute walking the steep part is soon overcome, and the path, now but a track of silver sand running through a black peaty soil, comes out through new plantations by Culbone stables, a favourite meet of the staghounds. Thence down through the Oare valley and past another little church, the one at whose altar poor Lorna was shot on her wedding morn by cruel Carver Doone; and past the residence of Squire Nicholas Snow, for so many years the popular Master of the Exmoor hounds (where overshadowing the kennels is the most beautiful of ash trees), till we come to Meolsmeet; and thence after a luncheon of speckled trout, fragrant moor-made honey, home-baked bread, and the brightest of ale, we may stroll up the Doone valley at our leisure, and tramp across to our inn at Simonsbath in the cool of the evening, while the sweet autumnal breeze is yet fraught with the rich scent of gorse and heather.

Simonsbath is a quaint little place; the old manor-house with its embryonic ruins, towering above the stream like a ruined castle of Rheinland, its range of stabling and farm buildings, a church

and picturesque parsonage, the aforesaid 'William Rufus,' the resort of a few sportsmen and tourists, with a scattered group of cottages, make up the entire village. Its inhabitants are interesting if only for the calm and leisurely way in which they accept life, in itself a tonic after the prevailing hurry and jactitation of our modern existence. They work, too, in the same leisurely and composed fashion. Outside the stithy was an agricultural implement, a cultivator or some such thing, sent to be repaired. One day the smith came out with a hammer and tapped it in several places. This was all he did for it during the six months of our stay, but I think on the occasion of a subsequent visit it was nearly finished. The bath in which one Simon is said to have been drowned, and thus given his name to the place, is a wide pool in the stream, a likely place for some big trout were it not so constantly disturbed by anglers. The tradition and date of Simon are obscure, but it is to be inferred that he flourished in some pre-natatory period, or else committed suicide, since there seems no necessity for anyone who could swim a stroke or two to be drowned in such a place.

The Exmoor folk are of a very pleasant and sociable character. They are quite proud of themselves since the book, and, as a matter of course, every pony and cart-mare is called 'Larna.' But their greatest glory seems to consist in having been spoken to on some occasion by Jack Russell, whose memory is still green on Exmoor, ay! and will be for a hundred years to come. They love to tell you what the famous west-country parson said to them as he rode through the village on his return from hunting, or how he once came and preached in their parish church.

The villagers, who have but few forms of recreation (they do play skittles in the road on summer evenings, the balls and pins reposing inviolate in the ditch between whiles), were particularly pleased with some entertainments we devised for their amusement during the winter months. When 'The Area Belle' was performed in the school-room, the country-folk, most of whom had never seen any sort of a play, trooped in from near and far, and money (three-penny bits and pennies) was turned away from the door. The piece had quite a run, and it certainly was a very notable performance. The *espiglerie* of the Village Belle, the neat-handed waitress of our little inn, who played her part *con amore*; the amatory utterances of the blacksmith as Pitcher; and the way in which a young officer of militia artillery as Tossler ate pickles with his knife in the memorable supper scene were inimitable, and brought down

the house. The audience were no less grateful than appreciative. Said the head-man, or 'mayor' as we called him, of the village to the writer, who was stage-manager and prompter: 'This night will be spoken of by our grandchildren!' Probably the grandchildren will be less unsophisticated; it was a curious fact, by the way, that a genuine smock-frock for Chalks, the milkman, had to be imported from Warwickshire. The musical parts of our entertainments were not quite so successful as the theatrical, though they also gave satisfaction, especially to the performers. 'What are the Wild Waves saying?' is a charming duet, full of true pathos; but when a strident tenor and a rasping bass insisted on singing it in broad Zummerzet at a rustic concert, the effect perhaps was not quite what the composers intended. On Christmas Day we had quite an old-fashioned treat, when fiddles and bass-voils supplemented the harmonium in church, and the performers sang us carols and drank port-wine negus in the afternoon. The church on Exmoor (the 20,000 acres are all one parish) is a modern structure, with no features of interest; but it stands in one of the prettiest churchyards in England, with a yew-shaded walk, where the voices of the wind and running water sing ever a soft requiem for the dead.

Exmoor is famous for three things—the excellence of its mutton, its improved breed of ponies, and its wild red deer. The owner of Exmoor has probably the largest flock in England, some 10,000 sheep, mostly of the native breed, but a considerable number of cheviots have been imported. How small, by the way, our flocks are, compared with those of Eastern lands, we learn from a French traveller named Chardin, who declares that he saw a clan of Turcoman shepherds whose mixed flocks of sheep and goats numbered no fewer than 3,000,000, besides 400,000 head of other beasts—camels, horses, oxen, cows, and asses, pasturing on their wide steppes and table lands; and other travellers have confirmed his statements. The Exmoor sheep are parcelled out in small flocks on different parts of the moor, and tended mostly by Scotch shepherds. Here comes the head-shepherd stalking through the mist, a big-boned, strong-featured Scot, looking with his plaid, crook, and bonnet, with his faithful colley at heel, as though he had just stepped out of a Landseer picture. He lives in the stone farmhouse in yonder valley, and may well fancy himself on his native heather, so wild is the glen, so far removed his dwelling from other habitation. There are several of these, quite large houses, substantially built and commodious, occupied only by

shepherds or hinds; for farms are not readily let on Exmoor, it is no easy matter to make them pay. The Exmoor folk do not mind isolation; they seem to consider it an advantage. One woman, who lived in a block of four cottages not far from Simonsbath, told us she felt crowded there amongst so many neighbours; and before we left she had migrated to a solitary hut by some abandoned mine-works in the heart of the moor, which had once been the scene of a particularly brutal murder. I called on her one evening while fishing, and found her very happy, singing as she prepared her husband's supper, while her ruddy three-year-old boy played on the threshold, looking across the hills for the first glimpse of his daddy returning from work. She was a pleasant-looking woman, quite too young to have tried the world and found it vanity. Use is everything, and since she felt no loneliness it seemed to me she had chosen the better part of life.

Sir Frederick Knight's ponies have now acquired a wide reputation, and deservedly so, for sweeter animals are not to be found. The original Exmoor is a tiny creature, seldom more than eleven, or at most twelve hands high; but wonderfully strong and hardy, and surefooted as a goat. The best specimens of the original breed are in the possession of the Acland family. The favourite colours are brown with a mealy muzzle, and bay with black points, entirely free from white, so much as a star on the forehead being disallowed. Grey is a legitimate colour, though not common; but a genuine Exmoor colour is a very light bay or dun with a still lighter shade under the belly and inside the arms and thighs, with very often a dark list or stripe down the back. Ponies with this peculiar marking are said always to be good ones. Neither chestnut nor black is a true Exmoor colour.

Even in the original Exmoor there was always supposed to be an infusion of Eastern blood, so perhaps the legend of Katerfelto may be something more than a myth; but by crossing the native stock systematically with a very small thoroughbred and a horse imported from the East (I should say from his appearance a Persian or Gulf Arab), a stud of very beautiful ponies has been produced, many of them fourteen hands and over, docile and clever, fit for almost anything, harness, children's hunters, polo, or light-weight hacks. The admixture of warmer blood has of course rendered them less impervious to climate, and they can no longer stand the severe winter on the moor, but require to be brought in and fed in paddock or strawyard. Sir Frederick's yearlings are sold every

autumn at Bampton Fair, but a few of the best are kept back for private customers and for home use.

Look at these half-dozen three-year-olds in the paddock; did you ever see more charming little horses, graceful as deer, with good shoulders and flat bone, yet with true pony action, fine-tempered, and full of quality? That pair of steel-greys is to be reserved for her ladyship's phaeton, and are such a match it would be a sin to separate them; but look at this beautiful bay, would you wish for a neater covert hack, or a sweeter mount for Hyde Park? And they are as good as they look; for all their quality they will stand a lot of work; those clean limbs with fair usage will keep free from splint, curb, or spavin; those round dainty hoofs are stronger and more lasting than cups of steel. Any one of these is worth from thirty to forty pounds, but if you have room to run a pony for a year or two you can buy a younger one at Bampton for much less money. The price of wild ponies varies considerably from year to year. The writer bought two or three on Dartmoor soon after the Franco-German War, which so sent up the price of horseflesh in this country, when good-looking three-year-olds were being sold in the drove by auction for so much as twenty pounds and more. Since then they have been much cheaper, and lately dearer again. They are never likely, however, to be so cheap as they were once when, as a Devonshire squire told me, a four-year-old was bought for him when a boy for fifty shillings, on which he whipped-in to his father's hounds for four seasons. These ponies are extremely tough and lasting: the same people had a very old one, a perfect Methuselah among ponies. They bought him of some gipsies as an old worn-out animal, just fit to do odd jobs about the place in a little cart; but the creature improved so much on better keep that he was promoted to the pony carriage, wherein he had been running for fifteen years when I came to know him first, and was going several years after that. The Exmoor ponies are far superior to the Dartmoor at present, but pains are being taken, notably by the farm bailiff of the Convict Prison, to improve the latter breed also, and sires have been brought from Exmoor for the purpose. Ponies are so common in these districts that the humblest use them: there are children on the moor who have never seen a donkey; and should one pass their way in a travelling tinker's cart people will turn out to gaze at it as a rare and curious animal.

But the most notable of the fauna of Exmoor is the red deer,

for this is now the sole locality in South Britain in which he is found in a wild state. The chase of the red deer, conducted as it is and has been on Exmoor for the last three centuries at least, is to my mind the finest sport an advancing civilisation has left us. A few riding men affect to despise it because, forsooth, there is so little jumping. But jumping is not hunting; your true sportsman does not hunt to ride, but rather rides to hunt, and jumps only when it is necessary to keep with hounds. Nevertheless, though he may encounter nothing more formidable than a low furze bank or a two-foot brook in his day's ride, yet it takes a good man and a good horse to get to the end of such a run as the Devon and Somerset very frequently afford. The greatest obstacles are the bits of boggy ground, for though such a thing as a dangerous mire is in these days of drainage scarcely to be found even on Exmoor, deep holding bits are very common. Out on the Chains, the wildest part of Exmoor, two years ago, I got into one of these nasty places, where my little thoroughbred mare plunged so desperately that it seemed as though her slender legs must snap; but her gameness pulled us through before I had time to throw myself off, and soft as it was I have been in a worse bog in a Midland covert.

Stag-hunting begins about the second week in August and continues till the middle of October, when the hinds come in for their share of attention. The opening meets at Cloutsham Ball are something to see, the field often comprising a couple of thousand people, with many fine horses, fair women, and distinguished men. These affairs are of course more of the nature of a big picnic; the good runs come later, when it is not so fiercely hot, and there are not so many people to mob the tufters and generally get in the way. The best runs of all are often after the hinds in the winter, when perhaps a dozen of the local gentry, with two or three ladies, a few farmers, and maybe a visitor or two, keen sportsmen all, make up the field.

Let us meet them and see what they do. It is late in November, we will suppose, and we have to wait about an hour or two for the mist to clear off. Time for a glance at the pack as they lounge and nose about in the heather, knowing as well as we do that there will be no work for them yet awhile. The true staghound, whatever he was like (and the author of *Katerfelto* has given us a noble sketch of him), being long extinct, the modern pack is composed of big foxhounds, drafted from some of

the best kennels in England. Here are no fewer than four from the famous Blackmore Vale; a straight-built, smart-looking hound from another Dorsetshire pack, Lord Portman's; a couple from the Bicester, one of Lord Portsmouth's famous blood; others from Mr. Garth's, Lord Fitzhardinge's and the Duke of Beaufort's, all fine up-standing powerful hounds, from twenty-four to twenty-six inches at the shoulder; in short, whenever a promising young foxhound grows so big as to spoil the symmetry of the pack to which he belongs, it is now the custom to send him to the Devon and Somerset.

But now as the day advances the mist rolls off the hills, and business commences. Tufters are thrown into covert, while the main pack is kennelled in the barn of a neighbouring farmstead. The tufters work diligently, and before long there are several deer on foot, when a little manœuvring is required before a hind can be separated from her companions, and the pack laid on to her.

Walk your horse out here amid the heather, and we may see the deer break covert and go away up the hill. Hark! a clatter and rattle of branches as a noble stag leaps out of the brake and trots away, stopping however in a few seconds to look round and listen. What a splendid fellow! but he is not our quarry to-day. A couple of hinds and a calf follow, and presently two younger stags. They all stop and listen, but there is a blast of the horn from the other side of the covert, at which they all make off, the old stag leading, at an easy gallop, up the hill, pointing for Dunkery which looms above us.

But the horn keeps going, and there is some cracking of whips and hollaing, with an occasional deep bay from the tufters. Some farmers ride out too, and place themselves between the vanishing deer and the covert they have left. They must have got another hind there, and be trying to keep her from following the rest.

This manœuvre is successful, and presently a single hind goes away over the shoulder of the hill and the pack is laid on. They hunt her slowly over rough and broken ground, but in a few minutes she disappears into a combe, deep and dim, where if there are more deer lying we shall have to begin again *de novo*. This does not appear to be the case, but it takes a good hour to get her out. Meanwhile we wait upon the high ground above, enjoying the sweet air and late autumnal tints, for the mere excitement of the chase is by no means the sole charm of this moorland hunting.

The staunch hounds keep her moving, and at last the persecuted hind breaks covert again, and betaking herself to the open trusts to her speed to escape her relentless foes. Over a high bank she bounds, followed by the whole pack, and away over the moor at a stretching gallop. Now you must sit down and ride if you mean to see more of it. So easily goes the hind that you have no idea of the pace till you feel your own horse moving under you, and the strong breeze whistling past your ears as he carries you against it. The little field is already scattered over the dark face of the moor, the relative speed of their mounts already telling, while the hind is out of sight and the hounds gaining upon the horses. In front of us are two red coats, the huntsman on his clever wiry little horse that can stay in a wonderful manner up and down these severe hills; and next to him a man well known in the shires, the stride of whose big bay tells on the level ground, but who will very likely come back to some of those now behind before the gallop is ended. Then a lady on a very short docked grey is going extremely well; she is an *habituée* of the hunt, and knows the country, so we cannot do better than keep that grey in sight, for his rider will see all that is to be seen. See the whip's dark chestnut gallop down the side of that combe straight as he can go, as if he were a rabbit rather than a horse. We prefer skirting the edge of the combe, which will at least save our horses somewhat; they are not used to such precipitous descents.

So we hunt on and on, now checking, now running, getting further and further into the heart of the moor. Hinds (we are told by Mr. John Fortescue, brother of the late Master, whose interesting book upon the subject may be commended to all sportsmen) run as strongly as the best stag will do, but he thinks are more apt to run in a circle. If this be doing so, it will be a mighty big one, judging from the segment we have already described. Nor will she live to complete it, for now towards the close of the brief autumnal day, when the sun is already tinging the woods of Brendon with his dying flame, the hunted hind sinks to the Bagworthy water, and there in the beautiful Doone valley we see the kill. A magnificent if cruel spectacle it is when the great hounds, maddened with their lust for blood, leap on the rocky boulders and plunge into the foaming flood, while their deafening clamour mingled with the roar of waters rends the vale. The death of a stag is a still nobler sight, for he uses his antlers

with deadly effect, and there is for a brief moment a *combat à outrance* when they set him up to bay. But the poor hind, unarmed, and spent with her rapid flight, can but roll helplessly in the torrent, where amid clouds of spray she is instantly submerged and drowned by the furious pack. The whip and huntsman are off their horses in a moment, and with some difficulty contrive to noose her with their thongs, and haul her halfway up the bank. The hind is doubtless already dead, but the keen hunting knife gives her the *coup de grâce*, and the stream flows on tinged with a crimson stain. This is the least pleasing part of the performance, and the lady on the grey, who was among the first up, turns her horse's head away and chats with a friend while it is going on. The Leicestershire gentleman on his splendid hunter is conspicuous by his absence, and the farmers on their stout strong-quartered little nags seem to have had the best of the run.

Well, it is a fine and genuine sport, well deserving the popularity it has of late years attained. Many who have once tasted its delights (and the writer among them) care comparatively little for other hunting after it. Yet we, the casual visitors, have perhaps but little idea of the trouble and expense that are incurred to provide the sport from which we derive so much enjoyment.

A most important official of the hunt, who has not in this paper been yet presented to the reader, is the harbourer, whose business it is to ascertain the whereabouts of a deer suitable (*i.e.* in respect of age and sex) to be hunted, in the locality of the advertised meet. He has to be about by daylight to discover, study, and follow up the slot or track of the deer, and finally harbour him in whatever combe or covert he may have selected for his morning siesta, from which he is destined to be so rudely disturbed. Such work as this obviously involves not merely a thorough knowledge of the country, but a considerable proficiency in a branch of *venerie* now nearly extinct, the science of woodcraft. It is in fact the work of a lifetime to acquire it, and calls for a ready intelligence on the part of the individual to compete with the natural cunning of the deer, who is by no means (the red species at least) 'the poor dappled fool' commiserated by the melancholy Jaques, but as Red Rube, the harbourer in *Katerfelto*, describes him—'a creatur three parts contrairiness and only a quarter venison.'

Protected as they are for the purposes of sport, there is now a

very large head of deer on Exmoor, as many perhaps within the same area (for the bounds of the moor have been considerably narrowed by encroaching tillage) as there ever were, and they do a vast amount of damage to the neighbouring farms. 'The wild stag'—to quote a picturesque description, again from Katerfelto—'in the West of England has a lordly habit of feasting during night, and seeking repose in the small hours towards the dawn of day. Gliding like a ghost through cornfield and orchard, he travels many a league after sundown, feeding on the best that moorland soil and scanty harvests can afford, nibbling the half-ripened ears on one hill-farm at midnight, flinging the turnips overhead in wasteful profusion on another, ten miles off, within an hour; seeking, before dawn, the shelter of some wooded combe, in which he means to harbour, at an equal distance from both.'

Such liberal notions of refreshment on the part of the deer require a large compensation fund to cover his depredations, which, together with the actual hunting establishment, makes the chase of the wild deer an expensive recreation. Some part of the expenses is defrayed by subscription, but it requires a man of ample means, as well as of considerable personal qualifications, to give satisfaction as a Master. The present Master is Mr. Basset, of Watermouth Castle, who succeeded Lord Ebrington some three seasons back. Before the latter came Mr. Bisset, who held the post for many years, riding at last nearly twenty stone; but, like Mr. Chandos Pole and other well-known welter weights, managing generally to be well up with his hounds. Well-bred horses of size and bone sufficient to carry such men as these are rare, and when found command a terrible price.

There is no determinable period to hind hunting, as with the stags; it depends upon the number of hinds it is considered advisable to kill, and on the condition of the crops. There are no crops of very great importance on Exmoor itself, but some of the hunting is done on the Quantocks, whence deer are more liable to run on to cultivated land.

In the absence of wooded shelter the hunted deer when hard pressed takes invariably to water, and nearly always it is in that element that he is pulled down. When his bolt is nearly shot he makes generally for one of the larger streams, the Barle, the Lyn, or Bagworthy water; but oftentimes he takes to the open sea and swims far out, either to escape altogether, or be pursued in boats

and taken. The red deer is a splendid swimmer, and the country folk believe that if he chose to swim across either to Ireland or to France, it is not the distance which would stop him. This water work tells very much upon the hounds, which besides are exposed to perils of which their brethren in the kennels they have left know nothing. Their work often takes them among the precipitous cliffs and chines by the Bristol Channel, where sometimes in their eager preoccupation they fall over and are dashed against the sharp rocks below; while many a staunch hound has received his death-stroke from the sharp brow antlers of a furious stag, and mingled his life-blood with the foaming stream, while his comrades chanted his requiem with savage bay, as they leaped or swam at a more respectful distance from their terrible prey. As was the case with human warriors in old-fashioned conflict, it is generally the best and bravest hounds that come off worst in these encounters.

The fishing on Exmoor is but a mild sport as compared with the hunting, yet thoroughly enjoyable by those who can content themselves with a basket of small trout, caught on lovely streams which wind their way through some of the most beautiful scenery in England. The fish, though small, are very game, and plentiful, though it is not always an easy matter to fill one's basket, so quickly do the swiftly flowing streams run themselves fine—'clear as gin,' as the old fishermen say—and, moreover, the trout are of excellent flavour. Leave to fish is liberally given by the owners of the water, who are far more generous in this respect than most proprietors; and altogether, though the lordly salmon is now rarely found in the moorland rivers, and the trout seldom attain the size of those which the accomplished manipulator of the dry fly takes from the Wiltshire chalk streams, yet the average fisherman may enjoy as good a day's sport here as on most other waters.

The resident has a long winter to go through before the snow melts finally from off the hills of Exmoor. For nearly three months after Christmas we were from time to time snowed up, the drifts being in some places tremendous. Then when the carpet of snow is so thick and soft that one cannot hear the sound of his own steps, and all is still in the fields around, the withered leaves rustling in the beech hedges give forth a weird mysterious sound, as of something pursuing one along the deserted roads.

Now the shepherds have a hard time in collecting and often in

digging out their sheep. A whole flock will sometimes be buried out of sight by a heavy fall during the night, and their guardians have to tramp miles through the blinding drift before their place of sepulture can be found. The collies find the place at last, and begin to sniff and whimper and burrow in the snow. A long iron rod thrust downward verifies the sagacity of the dogs; then off come the coats, and half a dozen shovels in sturdy hands soon clear away the snow, and discover the palpitating flock in an alcove hollowed out by the steam of their own breath, with possibly one or two of the weaker brethren smothered, or trampled beneath the feet of their frightened comrades. The cautious shepherd when he sees the heavy banks of cloud laden with snow driving up low over Dunkery, and covering the hills with a dusky pall, knows it is time to be stirring, and will endeavour to collect his flock into some fold-yard on one of the outlying farms; or, at least, into the dark plantations beside the Barle, where he will hang bundles of hay to the lowest branches of the dwarf oaks and firs, so that they need not stray forth again to search for food on the frozen moor.

It is not everyone who would care to endure a winter on these bleak uplands, but the true lover of nature is content with her in all her moods. The cold, though sharp, is healthy and bracing; and there is always some sort of exercise to be obtained by day, while at night the guests of the little inn gather round the blazing fire of peat, with the dogs stretched out before them, yelping now and again in retrospective joy as they recall the delights of the day's rabbiting in their dreams, while their masters smoke the friendly pipe and heed not the wintry blast skirling over the wild hills without, as they converse on ethics, literature, politics, and art, or discuss the ever grateful subject of sport, both that of the past, and that to come when the turbid Barle and foaming Lyn shall have carried off all the snow from the moor, and the speckled trout begin to rise, and the ring of the horn is heard anew on Brendon hills and through the deep woods of Haddon.

A POMPEII IN BOHEMIA.

It was in the strange fascinating old town of Tabor that we first heard a hint of this hidden new strangeness in a country where surprises are ever in store for the Englishman who penetrates into the unknown world of Bohemian mediævalism.

From the lips of a professor in this old-walled, many-towered town, we had heard drop the words, in answer to a question had we seen Pribenic, 'But they should ; it is a mediæval Pompeii.' And so we ordered a carriage to be ready for an early start, with especial requests that a driver might be found who spoke German ; for the directions to find this Pompeii were very vague, no road led to it, we must leave the carriage and dive into the forest, and find the destroyed town for ourselves. No guides would proffer their services ; all that we could learn was that we were to seek for the ruins, far in the forest, of a dead town and fortress, and yet a town that had lived in an exciting period of history ; and now we were driving out under the old towers and archways, where still the pulleys of the drawbridge are in place as they were used by their famous builder, Ziska ; driving on along the causeway with a lovely panorama before us, *en route* to trace out the walls and houses of this destroyed town. We soon found our coachman did not know German. It was true after long thought he could muster up a phrase or two which he had learnt when soldiering ; but he could not understand us or answer our questions, so our doubts increased as we drove on.

We were soon descending the hill that leads down to the picturesque valley of the Lusinetz, with the Eastern-like domes and towers of the monastery and pilgrimage church of Klokot high up on the opposite heights. As we descended to the bridge that crosses the swift-flowing river we could look back and see all the towers and walls of Tabor, and note where the crumbling old walls were still propped up with timber to prevent their sliding down into the valley, and we could well see how carefully the Taborites were restoring their walls, and capping them with red-tiled pents, to thus preserve the memories of the powerful past and vigorous history of this little town.

The outskirts of the town were passed and we slowly ascended

the opposite hill, where some bright figures, in the pink and red colours so loved by the peasantry, were climbing up a green sloped hill, bespeckled with yellow flowers, and bordered on each side with dark fir slopes. Behind these figures came another in black velvet jacket, and deep red skirts, and pink headdress; and a little way behind another figure in soft light green.

As we topped the hill, we saw behind us the whole town of Tabor, on its isolated rocky plateau, impregnable in bygone days. A red-backed shrike flew out of the hedge as we drove on, and gay butterflies of rare types divided our attention with the peasantry and the landscape.

A short drive brought us to the little village of Slapy, where the flocks of geese, and children in pinks and yellows, formed picturesque bright groups; but on we passed, over an open plain with a wide prospect of distant mountains around, until we came in sight of the red tower of Malesich; and now we drew near to where we must leave our carriage, for the coachman pointed to a fir forest and said, 'Pribenic'; we motioned to the village, making him understand we wanted someone who spoke German to guide us, but he pointed to a farm lying in the middle of the plain, and, saying 'Deutsch,' struck off the road across a bone-breaking track towards this farm; arrived there, the only guide who could be got was a sharp lad who spoke but Cech; but on being shown a map, seized at once upon it, and by dint of signs we soon made him understand we wanted to see a town at the bottom and a fort at the top of a hill, and away we went beneath the fierce blazing sun, under his guidance.

We dived into the forest, and could hear the cuckoo not far off, while beneath our feet sprang up lovely flowers and forget-me-nots in rich profusion. The pines were just bursting with the plume-like clusters of young bright green shoots, and the warm sun was now veiled; but it brought forth the health-giving resinous odour of the pines.

Onwards we trudged until, as we neared a faint path that struck downwards into the valley, we saw by the side of it fragments of worked stone capitals and bits of columns, that told us we were on the right track. Here in this silent forest lay traces of a past teeming life, and our curiosity was raised to a high pitch as we pointed to these remnants of some chapel or hall, and waved our hands round and upwards to our guide to make him understand we would go everywhere, wherever anything like this was to be seen.

Shortly afterwards we saw a little to the left of the track traces of houses, and then a rounded hole such as our archæologists love to describe as a pit dwelling; but we passed on, still descending the hill, until we burst suddenly on to a small level green mead, with a lovely river flowing swiftly on around its richly flower-decked sward; high above it, on the opposite shore, rising up clothed in all the fresh beauty of spring foliage, rose a rocky tree and flower clad cliff. A bluff of high black rock jutted out on our right, rising some 200 feet above the river, and on our left were remnants of the walls of the town, some eight feet high, a thick, well-built wall, that we followed up for a hundred yards. In some parts it rose to a height of fifteen to twenty feet, and measured in thickness about four to five feet. We penetrated inside this wall, to find the level space all overgrown with young trees and brushwood, and teeming with insect life; ants and lizards, butterflies of rare beauty, songbirds that twittered in the hot noon sun, whilst, in the grass patches, wild orchids and hyacinths, anemones and rich forget-me-nots, made the place a paradise in its beauty; but we soon stumbled in the brushwood upon groups of round pit holes with the banks around them, and the stones that had formed the houses, lying where they had been overthrown some four centuries ago.

We worked in and out amidst the undergrowth, and traced three lines of houses, many of this round description, and others square; and as we passed on, now climbing up the hill, we passed thick clusters of walls until we stepped out on to a round point that was really the summit of the bluff we had noted below, and where we could now see a round tower had formerly stood. Our lad let a stone drop from here into the river, showing the steep descent from this point of outlook and defence. Further up we climbed, soon coming upon a remnant of a square tower, and yet further up to another round tower, and from here was a most lovely outlook down upon the river that stretched away into a narrow pine gorge, broken just beneath us by a pleasant green island that divided the stream into two glittering arms.

And now above us was the topmost tower of all, and up upon its ruined débris we climbed; some steps were still in position, and some of the moulded brickwork could be traced, laid in alternate couples of flattened angular ones, and square with a shoulder to them, to give a broken ornamental line to the masonry. This tower, which we presumed to be the topmost keep, was hexagonal in shape, and the angles were faced with well-worked blocks;

but the ruin and débris had filled up all entrances, and we could but stand upon its summit and look out over the lovely scene around us. The air, now warm with the scent of the pines, and filled with the twink and chirp of birds and hum of insects ; and coming up to us from below was the rush of the river as it swept on now as centuries ago, when all these dwellings were peopled with bitter enthusiasts who fought to the death for their party and their faith.

Our artist friend lingered to make a sketch of this topmost tower, and whilst we sat beneath the pines and awaited him, we were able to read up the history of this strange forsaken town in the account our friends at Tabor had given us.

In the thirteenth century the two towers had been built of Great Pribenic and Little Pribenic ; for there had been on the opposite side of the river another tower, connected it appears with a bridge ; but all trace of the bridge is gone, and from this side we could see no glimpse of the other tower. In the fifteenth century the town and towers were in the hands of the mighty family of the Rosenbergs, the bitter enemies of the sect of the Wyclifites known from their town as the Taborites.

Under Ziska, their famous leader, the Taborites were in the year 1420 everywhere victorious, and on November 13 they attacked this town of Pribenic with its two defending forts. Hitherto this place had been considered impregnable, and for safety a great mass of treasure, of gold and silver, precious stones, and costly apparel, and also of holy relics and rare books, had been brought here ; and there was also imprisoned here the famous leader and priest of the Taborites, Wenzel Koranda, who had been captured by the Rosenbergs two months before whilst on his road from Tabor to Bechyn. But on this thirteenth of November Wenzel managed to free himself of his chains, and to set some of his brother prisoners free ; and together they overpowered their guards and bound and enchained them in their places.

One of these guards named Odolen begged for his freedom, and offered in return to do anything Wenzel demanded of him ; so he was despatched in all haste to Tabor to acquaint the Taborites of what Wenzel had done.

The commander at Tabor at the time was Zbynek of Buchow. Ziska the day before had made the bloody and ruthless capture of the strangely interesting town of Prachatitz ; but Zbynek had the energy and decision of his great leader, and with the armed folk

he had about him at once sallied forth to besiege the town of Pribenic. The garrison was terror-struck by this sudden and unexpected attack, and their fear was increased when, from the summit of their own keep, they heard the war-cry of their enemies, Tabor Hurra! Tabor! and stones began to pour down upon them, proving that their own stronghold was already in the enemy's hand, and the stone balls they had probably piled up to defend any attack were being used against them.

The fight did not last long, and the Taborites were victorious, and took possession of the tower and town through whose ruins we had been wandering; and the little garrison of the lesser fort on the opposite side of the river, seeing their friends had lost the day, quickly evacuated their position, leaving the Taborites in full possession of Great and Little Pribenic. The Rosenbergers despatched help from Sobeslaw, a town that lay some miles away on the banks of the Lusinetz, but this only resulted in making the defeat of the Rosenberg party the more decisive.

The victory was not gained without some of the hideous cruelties which disgraced all parties in this bitter race and religion war. Amongst the prisoners in the castle was found the Monk Bishop of Nicopolis and priest of Milicin, the same who three years ago at the instigation of Ceneck of Wartenberg had ordained a number of Hussite priests, but who since had turned into their bitterest enemy. The victorious Taborites seized this bishop, and, in spite of his streaming tears and earnest promises to do whatever they wished, they dragged him to the bridge and drowned him beneath it with the most horrible cruelties.

This capture of Pribenic was of the utmost importance to the Taborites, for it taught their arch and powerful enemy Ulrich of Rosenberg their strength was too great for him to withstand; and he turned from fighting to treaties, and agreed not only to accept the conditions of the Taborites, which shortly were: 1, that the word of God should be free; 2, that the body and blood of Christ should be given to all the faithful without exception; 3, that the worldly possessions of the priesthood should be abolished; 4, that the deadly sins throughout his territory should be suppressed as much as possible, and this under the earnest money of ten thousand schock (60) of Prager Groschen; but he also promised to use his influence with King Sigismund that he should also strive to obtain the acceptance of these articles throughout Christendom.

Thus it will be seen that this mediæval Pompeii, as the Taborites

of to-day fondly but exaggeratingly term it, amidst whose ruins we were sitting, had played no unimportant part in the struggle for freedom of thought and conscience in the great Wyclifite movement, and as we slowly descended the steep hillside, silently upon the soft slippery spines of the firtrees that formed a carpet over the débris of tower and turret and court and cottage, we halted once more to look down upon the pretty island that divides the once blood-stained Lusinetz. What facts the walls and ruins of this town would yield if they were cleared from the débris and overgrowth of four centuries, we could not tell.

‘A perfect paradise’ were the words that came to the lips to describe the soft calm and beauty of the scene as we now looked upon it. That little town beneath us had witnessed the destruction of a strange sect who thought they could bring back again a Paraisaical life; a sect terming themselves Adamites, some of whom went about naked, and whose religious rites descended into orgies of lust and gluttony. Driven fiercely out of Tabor by Ziska, they seized upon this probably deserted town of Pribenic; but they were again driven from here to their last refuge, an island in the Nezarka further south between Neuhaus and Wessely. In an article upon Pribenic there is not space to go further into the history of this curious sect; but many of their tenets singularly agree with those of the modern Positivist, such as the teaching there was neither God nor devil, but simply good and bad people; certainly if any spot could make one long to go back to the primitive joys of Paradise, this lovely silent corner, where all nature beneath the warm sunlight seemed jubilant with fresh joy and gladness, was the very spot to induce that longing; but we had yet further surprises in store for us upon this day, and we made signs to our guide that we wished now to return to the edge of the forest, where we had left our carriage. After halting to get a sketch of some of the fallen pillars and capitals, we made our way out of the cool, shadowy pines to where our coachman had drawn up beneath some fruit trees.

Bidding adieu to our lad, from whom, had we been able to talk with him, we should probably have heard many a legend and tradition (he had made us understand that there was much treasure hidden within the ruins), we drove on, passing many peasants in gay colours, until we came to the little village of Malesich, where our horses were to be baited, and we were to get what lunch we could find; this turned out to be good black rye

bread and cheese (luckily not stinking as the hand cheeses), and some excellent beer, but there was preparing for us a scene which carried us almost as far back in the centuries as had done the walls and towers of ruined Pribenic.

We quickly strolled out from the close room of the inn to the great wide open village common, whereon flocks of geese were feeding and one or two stalls for the sale of goods and sweetmeats had been put up. The little church was near these, a plain white building with red onion-domed tower, and surrounded by a high white wall. Going within this wall we saw a group of women attired in the most astounding hues, and as we halted to note them, more came in until the churchyard was nearly filled with peasants dressed in a perfect blaze of colour. Some wore white muslin skirts reaching just to the knee. Green and yellow aprons over these, with much lace work and brilliant red headdresses. Others were attired in pinks, browns, purples, yellows, blacks, red, marone, blue, whilst many beneath these brilliant colours wore the white open-worked muslin skirts. The churchyard was soon filled with this mass of colour, and we expected to see all go into the church; but we awakened their curiosity and they examined us as freely as we examined them, especially when a note book and sketch book were produced. As one or two began to go into the church, so we also entered, and were struck with the strange sight that met our eyes.

The church was already crowded with worshippers in every conceivable combination of colour, whilst at the altar were standing two groups of children, the boys in quiet grey and brown on the right-hand side with a banner, the girls on the left in the same vivid colours as worn by their mothers. All were chanting in soft low and musical tones some responses after the priest. For only a few moments did this last after our entry, and then the boys with their banner led the way down the church, the little girls with their banner followed them, a brass band which we had not noticed behind the pulpit, then a priest in his yellow robes, and then the women, and last of all the men. We went out into the churchyard to watch this strange procession, and as they streamed on, those in the churchyard joined in, and the whole mass of colour moved out on to the village common, out towards a clump of green chestnut trees in its centre, beneath which was a railed-in statue to St. John of Nepomuc. The bells struck out as the procession filed out of the church, and the

scene was strangely fascinating as this marvellously intense mass of every hue moved on upon the green sward, backed by the old white gabled houses with their heavy dark archways and barred gates that surrounded the common.

When it neared the statue, the whole mass of colour sank upon the sward, and the priest's voice was heard rising, in the hushed stillness, from whence he stood beneath the flowering chestnuts that half hid the statue of the holy 'Jan,' and then the quiet suppressed tones arose from the whole mass in response.

As the low musical responses arose from the mass before us, and then the low united voices were lifted up in prayer in the common tongue of the people, surely we thought no scene in Europe could surpass what we were looking upon for strange beauty and interest.

When the service was over the bells again struck out, and the procession reformed. The church was again filled to overflowing. A well-sung hymn to the Virgin ended this, to us, strangely interesting service; but our artist friend had been unable to resist the temptation, and when we came out we found him hard at work upon a colour sketch of the church, dotting in the colours of the women folk before it, but with such a crowd round him as artist rarely has to criticise his work. On one side of him was a brilliant colour group of girls, and on the other a grey group of lads and men.

As we drove back into Tabor that night and saw its towers and walls lit up by the rays of the sinking sun, we felt that our search for a mediæval Pompeii had given us a bit of mediæval life such as even Naples could not afford us; and we were well content with our day at Pribenic and Malesich.

A MILITARY INCIDENT.

YES! I will write it down at last! For years and years I have kept to the resolve that none should ever know the history of an event which was the turning-point of my life, but to-day a change has come over me. To-day has been for me a happy day; one of the happiest, indeed, I have ever known.

I am an old fellow now, and have served my Queen for many a long year, in many a distant land. It has pleased God to bless my career, and to have enabled me to do my duty to the satisfaction of my superiors. I have met with far greater rewards for my services than they merit, and to-day has come my crowning triumph. My Gracious Sovereign (whom God ever bless and preserve!) has this day sent me, with a letter so kindly and so sweet that it made my old eyes dim to read it, the Grand Cross of the Bath!—the soldier's blue riband of fame!

As I sit in my quiet room, it hangs over my mantelpiece, in the place of honour, over the little glass-protected case where hang my other decorations, my five war medals and—most prized of all—the bronze Victoria Cross I won at Delhi. It hangs, glittering in its silvery pride, where my sweet daughter Effie placed it this evening, amid the shouts of her curly-headed little ones.

Then how my darling addressed the pretty mob about grandfather's new honour! How her face, her figure, the tones of her voice reminded me of her dead mother, my dear wife, whose absence was the one thing which dimmed the happiness of the day!

Could I help that feeling of choking in the throat as I listened to my Effie's words as, in tones which trembled now and again with her love for her old soldier father, she told them of the honour he had won, and bade the two sturdy blue-eyed lads, who gazed up at her with parted lips as she spoke, follow his footsteps and gain, like him, the love of all round him, the admiration of his country, and the approbation of his Queen?

Much she said—far too much for my humble deserts—but she spoke with the partial feeling of a loving daughter. She told them once more the story they had so often heard, of how the Victoria

Cross on the little shelf was won, and then, as she hung the last glittering trophy on the wall, she called on the little throng to give three cheers for their dear old grandfather; and the little childish trebles, as they cried out in my honour, moved me more than the cheers of the thousands who were welcoming back the defenders of Harounabad, and I could only clasp my Effie to my heart as she cried with her kindly emotion. And now the old house is quiet; the nursery banquet is over and the little revellers are in bed. I sit alone in my room, and think, and think. And more vividly than for many years comes up in my mind the memory of that evening, now so long ago, when, but for God's mercy—for never will I call it, or think it, chance—I should not have been living now, enjoying an honourable old age, surrounded by loving children.

Many a time since then have I looked death in the face, but it was always honourable death. Numerous have been my perils and hairbreadth my escapes, but never was I nearer death, and shameful death, than that evening.

I have said none has ever heard the story, and none *shall* ever know it while I am alive, but I shall seal this and place it in my desk, so that it will not be read until after my death. I could not bear to tell Effie of it, but I know she will forgive me anything after I am gone from her.

Here is my story; it may be that some may learn a lesson from it:—

When I was a lad, I joined as an ensign the —nd Regiment of Foot. My father was not a rich man, but was yet able to give me an allowance which should have been ample for my needs. I had a happy home, my mother was one of the best of women, though it may be she had been a little over-indulgent to me. I was a lad of a somewhat impetuous temperament, excitable and headstrong; I had never learned the value of self-control and was too much given to self-indulgence. Gifted with a strong imagination, there was a romantic vein in my nature which led me to find the keenest enjoyment in adventure. The youngsters of the regiment were rather a loose lot, and were considered by the other corps in the garrison as being a decidedly 'fast' set of men, but even amongst these I soon acquired a 'bad eminence,' and, with one exception, I was looked upon as the worst of the lot.

This exception, Claude Helmsdorf, was my most intimate friend. He was a German by blood, but his parents were natural-

ised English people. There was that in Claude's disposition which endeared him to me above all my companions. His tastes were the same, and he had the same half-sentimental, half-grotesque sort of philosophy which made me something of an enigma to my other more matter-of-fact comrades.

We were neither of us happy without excitement. The dull monotony of garrison life at Gibraltar, where the regiment was quartered, gave us scant openings, but what we *could* do we did. Drinking, gambling, and other kindred vices, so far as means were available, we indulged in without stint. Occasionally we used to go on short leave into Spain, where, in a somewhat less strict society, we could plunge more deeply into our favourite vices. We got into numerous scrapes, some of them very serious ones. More than once we nearly lost our lives in mad escapades after women. On these occasions each had found the other true as steel, and our mutual affection grew daily stronger and stronger. Pleasures such as those which alone had any zest for us cannot be obtained for nothing, and after two years of this life money troubles began to harass us. Now and then a lucky *coup* at the gaming-table would keep matters straight for a short while, but the luck would soon turn, and again the clamouring of creditors would assail us.

No troubles wear down a man's courage and patience like money troubles, and on my excitable and emotional nature the long strain began to tell. I grew morose and gloomy, and had fits of terrible mental depression, which did not escape the notice of those about me. I knew it was whispered that Helmsdorf and I were getting into serious difficulties, and this knowledge was gall and wormwood to me. At last I wrote, in desperation, to my father. I sent him a penitent letter, stating that I was in great straits for money, finally imploring help, hinting that my reputation and the retention of my commission depended on a favourable answer. Once before, in a less serious crisis of my affairs, I had made an appeal which was successful, but my father, while granting my request, had written in terms which made me feel far from hopeful when writing the second time.

My forebodings proved true; one dull, dark afternoon Helmsdorf found me in my room in the casemate barracks reading my father's answer. It had come overland, and, as was not unusual in the dilatory Spanish post of that time, was some days overdue. I looked up as Claude entered. I remember his face

as well as if it had all taken place yesterday: it was drawn, haggard, and pinched; his eyes were unnaturally bright and restless, while a hectic spot flamed on each cheek.

‘Bad news, eh?’ he asked quietly, but with a kind of bitter laugh.

I handed him the letter, which he read aloud:—

‘My dear Edward,—The last time you wrote to me, to say you were in difficulties, I managed, at considerable inconvenience to myself, to send you the sum you asked for. At the same time I warned you that you must not expect me to help you again. I am a poor man, as you well know, and such money as I have I need for myself, your mother and your sister. You cannot expect that I am going to cause them discomfort in order to supply you with luxuries. Your being placed in the army (contrary to my judgment) cost me a larger sum of money than I felt justified in spending. I gave you an allowance which I had (and still have) good reason to believe sufficient for young officers of your standing, even without stinting themselves extraordinarily.

‘You exceeded this allowance very considerably a year ago and wrote to me for assistance, which I gave. You now write to me for a far larger sum.

‘I regret that I must refuse your request. Were I richer, I do not know that I should be wise to grant it; as it is, I cannot. You have bitterly disappointed——’

‘Pshaw!’ cried Helmsdorf, throwing the letter on the floor, ‘never mind the sermonising part. The main thing is, he refuses to help. Now, what are you going to do?’

I did not answer. My mind was full of the blackest despair.

‘You gave a cheque for your mess bill to Holmes, didn’t you?’ asked Helmsdorf slowly.

I nodded.

‘And another to the Quartermaster, who cashed it; didn’t you?’

I did not answer.

‘And one or two besides to other fellows, I think. Have they been honoured, do you suppose?’

I laughed—a bitter, joyless laugh in answer to the cold, sardonic smile on Helmsdorf’s face.

‘As far as I can calculate,’ went on Claude, ‘these cheques will be returned protested by the mail due to-day or to-morrow.’

I groaned, as the horror of the shame so near at hand oppressed my mind.

‘Garrison Orders, Gibraltar, 19th June,’ murmured Helmsdorf, as if quoting to himself.

‘A General Court-Martial will assemble at ——’

I sprang up with an oath. ‘What do you mean by playing the fool with me? By ——!’

‘Gently, gently, old boy!’ said Helmsdorf, raising his hand deprecatingly. ‘There will be *two* prisoners tried at that court-martial; that is, if there are any!’

‘What do you mean?’ I asked, looking earnestly at him.

Helmsdorf laughed.

‘We have been through all sorts of troubles together before now!’ he said, ‘and I shan’t desert you in this. I am in the same sort of fix as you are; the charge will run much the same—that is, if there *is* a charge!’ he added in the same slow tones.

‘I don’t know what you mean, Claude!’ I said at length.

Helmsdorf laughed again.

‘My dear boy, you know I have been acting Paymaster for Dolby while he was on leave.’

‘Yes!’ I said.

‘Well! Dolby’s leave is up, and he is due back by the mail expected to-day; the mail which brings your cheques back, in fact.’

‘Yes!’ I said again.

‘He will look in the treasury chest for 150*l.* which ought to be there.’

I looked fixedly at Helmsdorf.

‘Well! He won’t find them!’

There was a long silence.

At first a horror of what he had done made me feel sick, but with a rush the reflection came upon me with awful force, that I was no less a *thief* than he!

‘What are you going to do?’ asked Helmsdorf at length.

I did not answer. A sullen despair was filling my heart.

‘I have made up *my* mind!’ went on Helmsdorf.

I looked up inquiringly.

Helmsdorf pointed to my pistol-case, which lay on a table near the wall. I started, as I seemed to see the embodiment of dark ideas, which had of late flitted like baleful shadows over my mind. He proceeded quietly:

‘They shall not have more than *one* prisoner to try——’

‘They shall not have any!’ I broke in fiercely.

Helmsdorf laughed loudly—a wild, discordant laugh.

‘What! Will you come too, Ned?’

‘Ay, let us go together! I care for nothing then! You are the only being in this accursed world for whom I care a snap of the fingers!’

He seized my hand with a grasp of iron and wrung it.

‘We’ve been through all sorts of things together, old fellow; we won’t part now! We don’t leave much. There are too many blanks in the lottery of this world to make it worth living in. Life is a Dead-sea Apple at best! Shall we stay to face the shame, the disgrace, the pity, the——? Hark!’

The boom of a gun came sullenly over the quiet harbour.

The mail was in.

I uttered an oath and strode towards the pistol-case. Helmsdorf stopped me.

‘Steady, old fellow!’ said he. ‘Let’s go to work quietly. Look here!’

He led me by the arm to the window, which looked out into a large courtyard.

‘See! There is old Pensioner Williams lighting the lamps. He’s a very methodical old chap, and will be ten minutes at least lighting them round the court. I know his habits perfectly; he will light all round the court first, and last of all he will light the two lamps on that post in the centre of the yard.

‘Now, Ned, old fellow, listen to me. I shall go to my room and get my pistols ready. I shall write a few lines to say it’s nobody’s fault but my own, and to tell Dolby I am sorry I let him in. By that time the lamps will be nearly all lighted. I shall watch Old Williams, and when he lights the *right*-hand lamp of those two in the centre I shall go. When he lights the *left*-hand lamp you will come too. We might have a bet,’ he added with ghastly merriment, ‘which lamp he will light first.’

There was a pause.

‘Is that agreed?’ asked Helmsdorf.

Oh, the black despair in my young heart!

‘Yes!’ I answered calmly, and we shook hands once more. We felt we should not meet on earth again.

‘You remember the story of Clive?’ cried Helmsdorf, whose spirits seemed wildly excited. ‘How he snapped a pistol twice at

his head, and when it failed to go off the second time he took it as a sign from Heaven that he was preserved for something famous! Perhaps something of the kind may happen to one of us!’

His manner changed suddenly. He seized me by the shoulders and looked straight into my eyes. I have never forgotten his look, and never shall. It comes back to my recollection over the mists of years with the reality of life.

‘Good-bye, Ned,’ he said at length, ‘till then!’

He left the room and closed the door. I heard him walk down the corridor to his room, which was only four or five from me. I heard his door shut and all was quiet. I looked out into the courtyard through my window. It was a dull, murky evening. The sounds of the life and movement of the barracks some distance beyond reached me faintly, making the surrounding stillness more marked. The old pensioner was moving his ladder to commence lighting the second side of the court. I felt I must prepare. Never in my life was I calmer. I went to my pistol-case and loaded my pistols with scrupulous care. That finished, I took pen and paper and sat down to write to my father.

How often in after years, when the torturing remembrance of that horrible evening comes before me, have I shuddered to think of the black wickedness of my heart at the time! No thought of my kind mother seemed to come over me; I only seemed to feel a sort of selfish satisfaction in punishing my father for his refusal to assist me, and a kind of relief at the near prospect of release from my disgrace.

‘My dear Father,’ I wrote, ‘by the time you get this you will have heard that I am dead. I gave cheques on the agents, thinking you would be sure to help me, as I was in trouble, and, as I had told you, I wanted the money urgently. As I find from your letter that you have not placed any money to my credit, these cheques will be dishonoured.

‘Of course you know this means the loss of my commission, my honour, and all that makes life worth having.

‘I do not blame you, as I suppose you are saying what is true when you tell me you cannot afford to help me. I see no way out of my trouble but this. I cannot face the shame before me. Give my love to my dear Mother and Effie.

‘Ever your affectionate Son,

‘EDWARD ENGLETHORPE.’

I laid down the pen and looked out of the window. Old Williams had just finished lighting the last lamp in the court, and was advancing with his ladder to the lamp-post in the centre. My heart gave one throb. I took up my pistol and waited. He began with the *right-hand* lamp!

There was a sort of buzzing in my ears as I idly watched. My hour was then postponed a brief space. I saw him arrange the wick, and then, with his taper, light the lamp. Hardly had the flame shone forth when I heard a sound like the slamming of a distant door. The singing in my ears grew louder. Old Williams descended his ladder, placed it against the opposite rest, and ascended to light the *second* lamp, that on the left. I placed the muzzle of my pistol between my teeth. What was the old man fumbling about? Would it never light? I was quite calm and motionless. I recollect that I could think quite distinctly. I determined I would not touch the trigger till the lamp was alight, and I sat grimly watching.

But it never did light. After handling it for some time the old man lifted the lamp out of its socket; it was evidently out of repair. He took it down with him, shouldered his ladder, and went away, leaving *one* lamp burning only. Then there came upon me a sudden and violent reaction. I laid down the pistol and sat trembling in every limb. I don't know how long I sat in the dark helpless, half-stunned with shuddering thoughts which I felt powerless to give shape to. At length I was roused by a knock at the door.

'Mail letters, sir,' said the voice of the post-sergeant through the gloom.

I rose mechanically and opened the door. There were two letters for me. I took them and dismissed him. I lit a candle and tore open the first. It was from my agents:—

'Sir,—We beg to acquaint you that a draft for 400*l.* has been placed this day to your credit.

'We have honoured the drafts payable to Captain Holmes, Quartermaster Braham, Messrs. Saccone & Co., and Messrs. De Larios, leaving your account with the balance of 127*l.* 4*s.* 3*d.* in your favour.—We remain, sir,

'Your obedient Servants,

'HAMMOND & Co.'

I opened the other letter. It was from my mother.

‘Why, dearest Ned, did you not write and tell *me* of your troubles? You know, my darling, how dearly I love you, and that I would gladly starve myself rather than that you should want.

‘I wish, dear, you had written to me as well as to your father. Of course young men will be young men and do foolish things, though I know you are too good to do anything *really* wrong. Your father is a little stern, but he loves you dearly. When your letter came it made him dreadfully unhappy.

‘I soon saw something was wrong about you, though he did not want to tell me anything about it.

‘But it is no use trying to conceal anything from mothers, and I soon got at it, though not till his answer had been sent to you.

‘I can guess how his refusal must have disappointed you, but he really had not got the money. He let me go to Aunt Raby, and after a tremendous interview with the old lady I got her to lend us 400*l.* on your father’s security. There was such a scene! She declared at first she would not do it. She abused you for your extravagance, my dear, so much that I very nearly lost my temper; but I knew it would spoil my chance, so I was as patient as could be, and did not leave her till I got out of her a nice big cheque, with which I at once rushed off to Hammonds and got it put to your credit. My poor darling, I can well imagine how unhappy you have been! I have been picturing you tossing about getting no sleep, and looking thin and ill!

‘I am not going to scold you, dear; I know that the trouble you have had is severe punishment enough. I feel, somehow, quite sure that you are going to be wiser in future, and not be quite so extravagant. I could not scold you, my darling, for I am too happy when I think how happy you will be when you hear your worries are over.

‘I wish so much, oh, so much! that you would ask your Colonel to let you come home on leave for a little. You have been away so long, and I do so long to see you again. I am sure a change would be so good for you in every way. *Do, do try and get leave.*

‘With much love from your father, and heaps of kisses from Effie (who is growing so pretty and youngladyish), and from me. (Oh, my darling, you can never know how dear you are to me.) Believe me,

‘Ever your loving Mother,

‘MARY ENGLETHORPE.

‘P.S. Old Stimson, the carpenter, was here to-day. He asked after you, and says he wants so much to see you again. He seems to think you will be a general at least when you get back!’

As I read the letter, in the dear familiar hand, the thought of the old home life came to me like the breath of the sweet country air of England amidst the glow of barren tropical rocks. As I read the gentle words, telling of love, patience, trustfulness, and forgiveness, could I do else than fall on my knees, with tears raining down my face, and try, ah, how feebly! from my long unpractised lips, to thank God again and again, and to ask for His blessing on my kind parents, so unsuspecting of the hideous fate that was so nearly mine?

But suddenly, like a lurid flash of lightning, came the thought of that awful room, so near, and what it held.

It may have been the sound of feet on the stairs, the murmur of many voices which recalled me.

They were coming towards my room. In an instant my mind was made up. I would never divulge to living soul what had passed between Helmsdorf and myself. I rapidly shut and replaced the pistol-case. The door flew open; two officers with scared and white faces came in breathless.

‘Good God!’ cried one to me. ‘Helmsdorf has shot himself.’

I uttered an exclamation of horror.

‘Where? When?’ I cried.

‘In his room! Anstice went in and found him dead! Come and see!’

No one will ever know what it cost me to go.

I passed, feeling as if I were dreaming, through the little crowd of officers and soldier-servants which stood, scared and silent, outside Helmsdorf’s door, and entered the room.

There he was, sitting in his chair, at the table by the window which looked into the courtyard, quite dead, his head and shoulders on the table, the pistol resting beside them.

A thin stream of blood oozed from his mouth, and had run to the edge of the table, whence it fell slowly, drop by drop, on to the floor.

‘Here is a paper, sir, with writing,’ said Helmsdorf’s soldier-servant, who was standing by, crying.

This was what was written there:—

‘Good-bye, dear boys! Sorry to leave you, but there is no way out of it. I have come to grief, and nothing can put me right in this world! I don’t know about the next.

‘Tell Dolby I am sorry about the money. I don’t know exactly how much is short.

‘I got my accounts wrong soon after I took over and never could get them right again. Good-bye! How slow Old Williams is! He is lighting my lamp first. Here goes——’

I do not remember anything for some days after this.

It seems that I swooned after reading the letter, and was carried to my room.

It surprised no one that I should be so much moved by the terrible end of one who was well known to have been my dearest friend.

The first subsequent event I recollect is lying on the sofa in my room, the kind old regimental surgeon by my side, bathing my head.

‘The Colonel agrees with me; a trip home will do you good, my boy. You’ve been too long out here, and you know you have not been quite so steady in your habits as you might have been,’ he added, with a look of meaning, though full of kindness.

‘You’re to be put on board to-morrow; the shock has tried you a good deal.’

‘But, doctor,’ I asked with a shudder, ‘is he——? Have they——? I mean the funeral.’

The old surgeon’s face grew very sad.

‘There was no funeral, poor lad!’ he said gravely. ‘The coroner’s inquest which sat found a verdict of *felo de se*. I tried to show he could not have been in his right mind at the time. Indeed, I don’t think he was. The letter he left was very incoherent, and I pointed this out to the court when I gave my evidence. No sane man would write about the lamplighter being slow at such a time; and talking about *his* lamp being lighted! What could he mean? But no one will ever know what the poor fellow meant now,’ he added, sighing.

After a pause he continued: ‘I did my best, but it was useless. The money was wrong beyond a doubt, and we could not get any evidence to show he was not sane except the letter, so far as it went, and they said they could not conscientiously give a verdict other than the one they gave.’

‘What have they done then?’ I gasped. ‘What does it mean—their verdict?’

‘It explains,’ said the old doctor sadly, ‘why there was no funeral. Poor Helmsdorf did a felon’s deed, and he lies in a felon’s grave. They carried him out last night at midnight and buried him beyond the lines—— But what a fool I am!’ he burst out excitedly, as he saw how terribly I was agitated. ‘Calm yourself, my dear boy, calm yourself!’ And no woman could have soothed me more kindly or more patiently.

My story is done. I need not go on to say how, when I reached home, I found the love I so little deserved awaiting me unchanged; nor how, to escape terrible memories, I exchanged to another regiment, and, a changed man in heart and soul, strove to live a nobler and a worthier life.

It has stirred me, as I have written this, more than I have ever been stirred since the awful day itself, but it may be for my good.

I look up once more at the outward signs of honours and successes in life. I see the miniatures of the little faces of my children’s children, and every sign and symptom of a happy and honourable old age, but the pages I have just written, still wet with tears (for I have wept as I have written), remind me of what, but for God’s mercy and goodness to me, might have been!

A SECRET RELIGION.

LAST winter in the town of Tarsus—at present very different from what it was in the days of St. Paul, being a decidedly mean city—I spent some weeks amongst a certain race of people known in the East as Ansairee, Nusayree, or Nasari. They practise a secret religion amongst themselves, whilst outwardly professing to be Moham-medans. It is a species of freemasonry amongst them; and, like the lady who hid in the clock, I grew very ambitious to unravel the mystery which surrounds them.

Lord Beaconsfield, in his romantic story of ‘Tancred,’ has given us a poetic and somewhat visionary account of this same people, whose natural habitat is the Lebanon. His young hero penetrated into the heart of these mountains, and got on intimate terms with the Queen of the Ansairee—a sort of faint shadow of ‘She.’ The Lebanon is undoubtedly the headquarters of the adherents of this religion, those who live at Tarsus being merely colonists from the central head; but then Tarsus forms a particularly favourable point for studying the people, inasmuch as they live here—not as they do in the Lebanon in remote mountain villages dangerous to approach, but in a town amongst Greeks, Armenians, and Turks, who are ever ready to spy on their mysterious observances and communicate the results. Some years ago an Ansairee named Suleiman abjured his faith, and, after becoming in turn a Jew and a Greek, finally settled down as a Protestant, and was baptised under the auspices of an American missionary. This missionary persuaded Suleiman to write down a detailed account of the Ansairee secret faith, which was published in the ‘Transactions’ of the society. Although I do not rely much on the account of so extensive a renegade, nevertheless it formed a very valuable basis of operation from which to prosecute my inquiries.

The Ansairee of Tarsus are a race of Arab *fellaheen*. Of fine stature, and exceedingly industrious, they speak almost exclusively a dialect of Arabic, which their fathers brought with them about fifty years ago from the Lebanon when they came as colonists. They live for the most part in huts made of reeds on the outskirts of the town, and they are nearly all gardeners, owning that rich belt of gardens which surrounds the present town, and which is watered by irrigation from the classic stream of the Cydnus. They

are reported to number something like ten thousand, the greater portion of whom dwell in and around Tarsus, though some inhabit villages scattered over the Cilician plain. Some of their gardens are really beautiful spots to look upon in the early spring, redolent with the fragrance of orange-blossom and gay with the red blossom of the pomegranate; but in summer these gardens are the hotbed of malaria, which makes Tarsus one of the most pestilential spots in the East.

Our investigations into the secret religion of the Ansairee had not proceeded very far when we found ourselves in possession of a curious fact. Last year, when travelling in the north of Persia, we investigated the religious tenets of a race existing there, and called by the Persians the 'Ali-ullah-hi,' whose religion is also secret, and based on the theory that Ali is God. We soon became aware that the religion of the Ansairee of Tarsus is almost identical. The village in the mountains of Persia which we visited as one of the headquarters of the sect is called 'Barba Nasare,' and the Ansairee of the Lebanon and Tarsus all claim as the founder of their religion a man who lived early in the eleventh century, called the 'old man of Nasare' ('barba' being the Arabic for 'old man'). Similarly, the Ali-ullah-hi of Persia say that Nasare was their founder, and after him they have called their village. 'Ali' is the name for God, the Allah of the Mussulmans, the God of the Christians among them all, and hence their Persian appellation 'Ali is God.' The identity of the religions gave us the somewhat startling fact of the vast extent of this secret religion, which has hitherto been supposed to be confined to the Ansairee Mountains, a branch of the Lebanon, and the adjacent villages, whereas in reality it extends from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Caspian, and may be said to be the religion of the nomad tribes who traverse these wild regions with their flocks. Future investigation proved to us that the large tribe known as Afshahs also belong to it, and another tribe called the Kizilbash also conform to a variant of the same religion, and many Kourdish tribes besides.

It is probably owing to the wildness of the district in which these people live that they have for so long been able to preserve their mysteries in secret; but the reason why they were started and the growth of the Ansairee belief will be probably for ever veiled in obscurity. Ostensibly they are all members of the Mussulman faith, the only evidence to the contrary being that they have no mosques, say no prayers openly, and do not go to Mecca or any other point of pilgrimage.

This secret religion is one full of difficulties to the investigator, but the facts which I now propose to set forth are derived from three distinct sources. Firstly, the translation of the renegade Suleiman's statement; secondly, the information given me concerning the religions of the tribes in the north of Persia by persons of reliable intelligence; and, thirdly, personal investigation made this year at Tarsus, and evidence given me by Greeks, Armenians, and Protestants of that place. These three sources of information, which on the face of it can have had no possible chance of collusion, agree in the broad lines and most of the details; and I think we may now definitely consider the mysteries of this religion and its vast extent to be satisfactorily demonstrated.

The fundamental principle of the religious mystery is to believe that Ali is God. And in their forms of prayer, which are rather invocations than supplications, and some of which are couched in very fine language, the Ansairee address their god Ali in terms of rapturous adoration; a favourite mode of address is 'Prince of Bees,' the explanation of which is that the angels are supposed to take the form of bees and visit the earth to suck its sweetest fragrance. Ali is also addressed as 'the Creator of all things,' 'the Seed-burster,' 'the Light of men,' 'the one true God,' &c. They have a special prayer in which they revile those who blasphemously say, as the Shiites of Persia do, that Ali ever took upon himself the form of man or ate and drank, or propagated his species, or was born of a woman. Ali is their great idea of the all-powerful, all-seeing God who rules heaven and earth. The adherents of this vast secret religion, though adopting the general principles, are divided, as all religions are, into various sects. I learnt in Tarsus that four sects are generally supposed to exist.

First, the northerners, called the *Shemali*, or those who believe that Ali resides in the sun. To this sect the Ali-ullah-hi of northern Persia all belong, their *ziarets* or holy places are set upon the summits of hills, and the probable origin of this sect may doubtless be found in the existence of sun worship in Persia, and the attempt of the early apostles of the religion to blend as far as possible their new doctrine with that practised around them. Even to this day they are noted for their skill in fire-eating; and on the sacred tombs of their departed saints they affirm that the holy light of Ali is seen to descend, much as the Zoroastrians of this very district used to say of their fire temple in olden days.

The second sect into which the Ansairee are divided is that of the *Kalazians*, or moon-worshippers: that is to say, they affirm

that Ali dwells in the moon, which he created as a palace for himself. When they look at the moon they profess to see Ali himself in the dark parts with the crown on his head and the sword of Mohammed in his hand ; he is to them, in fact, a veritable man in the moon. Whilst we were at Mersina and Tarsus we were witnesses ourselves to several disagreeable nocturnal addresses to Ali in the moon from his devoted followers the Arab fellaheen. At full moon it was hard to sleep from the noise they made, beating tambourines, and howling hideously ; and to the new moon it is their custom to make low obeisance and other forms of adoration by way of welcome, spreading out the hands as they pray to represent the crescent of the new moon. At Tarsus and Mersina the Arabs are nearly all Kalazians, hence we had a good opportunity of studying their peculiarities.

The next sect of Ansairee say that Ali dwells in the air, and commence their prayers with the formula, ' O thou who art the air.' Ali, they say, pervades everything, is omnipresent and omniscient.

The fourth sect say that Ali dwells in the twilight. But of these two latter sects we had no opportunity of forming any opinion ; and I presume they are only to be found in the recesses of their own mountains. To all intents and purposes the Ansairee may be said to consist of the two former sects, and all my remarks refer exclusively to them.

One of the most curious features of the Ansairee faith is their belief in a Trinity : Ali, the Father ; Mohammed, the Son ; and Salman el Farsi, the Holy Ghost. Ali, the Father, became man through his veil or representative, Mohammed ; and Mohammed appointed Salman to superintend the affairs of this world after his return to his father's kingdom. This mystery of a Trinity is the second item in the Ansairee religion, and is universally believed in by all the four sects ; it is called ' the mystery of the A.M.S.,' from the initial letters of the three individuals of their Trinity. An Ansairee—or a Nasari, as their sect is more commonly called in the north—when taking an oath, will always swear by his ' faith in the mystery of the Ain, Min, Sin ;' and one of the most common forms of prayer amongst them is to say the words ' Ain, Min, Sin ' five hundred times in succession.

Concerning the third person of their Trinity, Salman the Persian—or, as he is more commonly abbreviated, Sin—the Ansairee have many curious legends. They call him ' the communicator,' the medium by which Ali makes his will known to

man; he is supposed to have superintended the creation of the world, and to govern the atmospheric conditions of our globe.

The mystery of the covenant of the Ain, Min, Sin may be said to be the one point which joins all Ansairee together, be they inhabitants of the Mediterranean shores or the mountains of northern Persia. There is something of freemasonry about it; and a body of nomads are said to know their fellows by a certain shake of the hands, and the oath, 'I adjure thee, by the faith of the covenant of Ali, the Prince of Believers, and by the covenant of the Ain, Min, Sin,' after taking which oath an Ansairee dare not lie. It is also admitted by all the sects of the Ansairee that the old man, Nasare, born at the village of Nasaria, in Arabia, was the discoverer of this holy mystery; but he is somewhat cast into the shade by another divine, called Al Khusaibi, who perfected their religion, to whom most of the prayers they have now in use are attributed, and who taught that all great men and prophets, in all ages, are incarnations of Ali. In his list of incarnations Al Khusaibi includes Plato, Socrates, Alexander the Great, Jesus Christ, and Mohammed, the founder of Islamism; in fact, all the great leaders of various ages; whereas celebrated women, and the wives of these great men, are supposed to be incarnations of Salman Al Farsi, with the curious exception of the wives of Noah and Lot.

Many of the religious festivals and observances practised by the Ansairee would seem to be of distinctly Christian origin. So that some observers, including Dr. Wolff, have been induced to believe that the religion represents a species of decayed Christianity, and that the name of their founder, Nasari, is really derived from Nazarene. This may possibly be the case, and that the early incentive to mystery and secrecy was to avoid persecution; and that in the lapse of ages corrupt practices crept in, possibly through the instrumentality of Al Khusaibi, the so-called perfecter of their religion. This, however, is pure speculation; and, as we find amongst the observances many strong traces of Judaism and pure Mohammedanism, I personally feel inclined to think that the original founders of the Ansairee faith borrowed the points which pleased them best from the religions of the people with whom they were in immediate contact.

At all their secret religious feasts the cup of wine forms an important feature. It is called by them 'The image of Ali.' This cup is first tasted by the sheikh in the south, or the seid in the north, who presides at the feast, and then handed round to those

assembled, each recipient kissing the hand of the one who passes him the cup. Women are never admitted into this communion, though the Mohammedans circulate stories concerning the scenes of gross immorality which occur at these festivities; but they say the same thing of the Baabis and other religious sects which do not conform to their ritual; and, from our personal observation, I should not think there is any truth in these calumnies. In Persia a sheep without blemish is roasted at the feasts of the Ali-ullah-hi, the horns and the hoofs being first removed; this is then brought into the assembly-room and placed before the seid, who distributes portions of it to all who are present. But of this ceremony I could find no trace among the Kalazians of the south.

The Ansairee have many feast-days in their year. With the Mohammedans, they observe the feasts of Ramazan and Bairam, and with the Christians they observe New Year's Day, the feast of St. John the Baptist, Epiphany, St. Mary Magdalene, Good Friday, and Christmas. On the feast of Epiphany, which they call 'Yetas,' the Ansairee of Tarsus may be seen in crowds on the banks of the river Cydnus, washing themselves and their clothes and making general holiday. Similarly, on Good Friday, it is not uncommon to see an Ansairee attending a midnight service in the Greek church; passing, with the Christians, under the representation of the Entombment, and hoping thereby to derive the same benefit that the Greeks attach to this ceremony. Their idea about Christmas is very curious. They observe the day as a holiday at the same time as the Greeks, and call it the Feast of Meelad, and offer up to Ali on Christmas Eve the following prayer: 'Thou didst manifest in that night thy name, which is thy soul, thy veil, thy throne, to all creatures as a child, and under human form.' But at the same time they do not believe in the Crucifixion. There is something repellent to them in the idea of a portion of the Godhead being offered up as a sacrifice for men. But they say that Ali took up Eesa, as they call Jesus, to himself. Ali always, they believe, has an incarnation of the Deity on earth on occasions when it is necessary. This incarnation is a great man, a leader of men; but this is not the invariable rule, and oftentimes the incarnation of Ali upon earth may pass unnoticed by those with whom he mixes. Some of their prayers are couched in really very beautiful and sublime language, full of the rich redundancy of the Arab tongue; and at prayer-time great solemnity is observed, when 'it is forbidden either to take or to give, to sell or to buy, to report the news, to whisper, to be

noisy, to be restless, or to tell stories over the myrtle; but let there be silence, listening, attention, and saying of Amen.'

The expression 'over the myrtle' requires some explanation. It is the common expression amongst the Ansairee of Tarsus for their religious services, from the fact that the floor is strewed with myrtle-branches for the occasion. This may arise from the prevalence of myrtle in those parts, and I do not know if it is used elsewhere. The town of Mersina, close to Tarsus, is called after the myrtle, which grows there in abundance, as it does all over the littoral of the Cilician plain.

From a Greek, a native of Tarsus, who professed to have seen an Ansairee religious service when hidden in a lemon-tree in a garden, I had an account of one of their secret meetings. Not that one can attach much faith to the words of a Greek of that place; but curiously enough he represented the place as all strewn with myrtles, and I do not imagine that he could have invented this without it really came before his notice.

At Tarsus, as I have already stated, the Ansairee are all gardeners, and the love of flowers amongst the Ansairee women, who go about unveiled, is very marked. All of them wear an extravagant number of flowers about their person, and their reed huts are often gaily decorated with the produce of their gardens. During my stay at Tarsus I was lucky enough to be present at an Ansairee wedding. The festivity took place at one of the reed houses buried in the gardens, and the people were assembled in a courtyard walled in by reeds; in one corner stood the *takht* or throne, a sort of balcony raised on poles, where the inhabitants sleep in summer to obtain the greatest amount of coolness and the least possible number of insects; in another corner of the yard stood the mud oven, where on most days of the week you may see the Arab women baking their flabby oat-cake. The green trees of the adjoining garden shaded this courtyard. The orange-blossom was just then a little past its best, and the Japanese medlars, the *yeni dunyah* of the Arabs—the first fruits of the earth—were just beginning to assume consistency.

Every woman assembled for the wedding was decorated with an enormous quantity of the gay spring flowers, and the effect of the whole was brilliant, though the costumes were not particularly gay. The women danced by themselves whilst the men looked on; and hired musicians played the flute and the drum to accompany them. The chief woman dancer, an elderly woman for so frivolous an amusement, led the circle of women, waved her handkerchief

in the air, and occasionally performed a *pas seul*; then the circle moved round and round with a sort of mazurka step, sometimes singing, sometimes silent; and all this was done openly with unveiled faces—a great contrast to their Turkish sisters, who would think it the height of immodesty to perform such gyrations before men. The bride sat on a stool in front of the cottage door, dressed in a rich satin dress, and with her eyebrows deeply blackened. She looked particularly self-conscious, but not in the least shy; and the bridegroom bustled about, giving glasses of mastic to the assembled guests. Such ceremonies as these the Turks look upon with undisguised horror, more especially as the Ansairee outwardly profess to be Mohammedans. The result is that they hate these double-faced people even more than the Christians, and if an Ansairee slaughters an animal no pious Mussulman would purchase it in the market. The head sheikh of the Ansairee always goes to the mosque every Friday as a sort of scapegoat for his people, and sometimes others go to make pretence of prayers; but the whole sect is an abomination to the Turks, who cannot say enough that is bad against them.

During my stay at Tarsus I paid a visit to Sheikh Hassan, the chief of the Kalazians and one of the most influential men in Tarsus. There is also another sheikh, the chief of the few Shemali who reside in the place; but his followers are few and his influence is in no way to be compared to that of Sheikh Hassan. He is a very wealthy man, for the Ansairee pay tithes to their chief priest, and he lives in one of the best houses in the outskirts of the town. Hassan Effendi is a dignified Arab, with a handsome benign face, and a long white beard. He met us at the top of his wooden staircase and conducted us to his divan; he was dressed in a long mustard-coloured robe, and wore a white turban bound round his head. Several other influential Ansairee were in the room at the time, and consequently our conversation never for a moment turned on the subject of religion; but we discussed the chances of a good harvest, and he told us about his fields of sesame and the mill in which he grinds his grain. He told us that he, when a boy, about fifty years ago, came to Tarsus with a large number of other Ansairee from the Lebanon in search of work; by reason of their diligence they have prospered and multiplied exceedingly, and are now quite the most influential body of men in the town, and the Turkish governor does pretty nearly what they wish. Sheikh Hassan has the reputation of being very charitable; every Friday 150 poor fellaheen assemble at his house,

and he gives them alms and food ; during the recent famine his liberality was most marked, and in every way he appeared to be a most estimable old gentleman. His room was plain but comfortable, with the usual divan all round it, whitewashed walls, and two texts out of the Koran framed on the walls, to prove to the world what a good Mohammedan he would have them believe he is. On one point, and on one only, did he in the least commit himself. Seeing several women about, and children, I asked him if he was married and if he had any children. He appeared somewhat annoyed at the question, and replied that he was neither married nor had he any children ; and then I recollected that the sheikhs or chief priests of the Ansairee are not supposed to be married or given in marriage, but that the women around them become mothers from time to time by some supernatural agency.

I paid Sheikh Hassan a visit on two occasions, and was quite charmed with his dignified bearing and kindly manners. After death they say he will become a star at once, without having to submit to any of those unpleasant corporal transmigrations which form so integral a part of their religious belief.

This belief in metempsychosis is very curious amongst the Ansairee. Ordinary Mussulmans, they say, pass into jackals after death ; and it is a common saying amongst them, when the jackals howl at night, 'Listen to the Mussulmans calling to prayer.' Bad men after death have to 'walk in low envelopes,' as their expression goes, making use of the Arabic word 'kamees' for the envelope of the body, which exists amongst us in the word 'chemise.' For what reason I know not, Christian doctors are supposed to go into very low envelopes indeed, and become swine when this life is over. Jewish rabbis become apes, and so forth.

The stars, they say, are 'envelopes of light,' the destination of the great and good Ansairee who have, like Sheikh Hassan, distinguished themselves in this life by their charity and integrity ; and there are 50,000 of them who form the great 'light world,' or the inhabitants of the seventh heaven who surround Ali, and are perpetually illuminated by his presence. Most Ansairee pretend to a knowledge of what they did in a former existence, whether as animals or men ; and at Tarsus it is a common theory amongst them that Frankish travellers, intent on archæological research, come to look for treasures which they remember to have seen in these spots during a former existence.

A man, they say, who has not acted rightly in this life may be

punished in the next existence by being born a woman, and a woman who does her duty in this life may be rewarded in the next by being born a man. Womanhood is considered by them a sort of probationary step between the animal world and the lords of creation, and their women are treated by them with great contempt and never permitted to participate in the sacred mysteries of religion.

The initiation of males into the mysteries generally takes place between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. It is done in solemn conclave, and by several probationary steps. The youth is brought by his father or nearest male relative, the sheikh or seid hands round the 'cup' of wine, and before tasting it the novice has to swear 500 times by the mysteries of the Ain, Min, Sin never to reveal anything he hears. The sheikh's sandal is put on his head, bound on by a white rag, as he swears, and the greatest solemnity is maintained. There have to be twelve sponsors, who also take an oath that they will pursue the youth to death if he reveals their secrets, and will cut him in pieces. It is commonly reported, though with what truth I cannot say, that the tongues of two renegade Ansairee are kept in pickle at Tarsus, and shown to the youths at their initiation as an awful warning; certain it is that they have kept their secret very well, and that the danger of apostasy must be very considerable. After a probationary period of forty days, further mysteries are revealed to the youth under the same solemn circumstances, and he then has to repeat several of the Ansairee prayers which the sponsors have taught him during the interval. Two sponsors, generally taken from amongst the leading men, have to become responsible for the good conduct and vigilance of the other twelve, and then at a third meeting the youth has to repeat sixteen prayers to Ali and is admitted into full communion. There are certain higher grades to be attained to only by men of influence and undoubted character; but to these the rank and file of the Ansairee do not aspire. The ordinary or third degree is the one into which every male is admitted, and the secrets of this degree and its passes are known to them all; thus it is possible for an Ansairee of Tarsus or the Lebanon to enter into fellowship with a co-religionist of the north of Persia, be he Shemali, or Kalazian, or a member of the other two sects. As most of the nomad tribes belong to this religion, it gives them a wonderful bond of union, and must act amongst them much as freemasonry or the secrets of other orders used to act in the disturbed days of Western Europe.

CURIOSITIES OF GAMING.

GAMING is quaintly described in the 'Harleian Miscellany' as 'an enchanting witchery, begot betwixt Idleness and Avarice. It has this ill property,' proceeds the writer, 'above all other vices, that it makes a man always unsatisfied with his own condition. He is either lifted up to the top of mad joy with success, or plung'd to the bottom of despair by misfortune; always in extreams, always in a storm. Hannibal said of Marcellus that he could be quiet neither as conqueror nor conquered. Thus (such is the itch of play) gamesters neither winning nor losing can rest satisfied. If they win, they think to win more; if they lose they hope to recover.' Cotton, enlarging on this theme in 'The Compleat Gamester,' adds that gaming is a paralytical distemper, which, seizing the arm, the man cannot chuse but shake his elbow.' This of course refers to throwing dice. As an instance of the difficulty of giving up the habit of gaming when once contracted, another writer, after quoting the 'Miscellany,' laments that he had known a 'grave gentleman, well stricken in years,' who played at hazard when he could no longer see the points on the dice. 'Of whom,' continues the narrator, 'this quibble was raised, "that Mr. Such a one plays at dice by the ear."' He further relates an anecdote of a *rara avis* who had the moral courage to resist further temptation. A Sir Humphrey Foster, having lost his estate by gambling, had nothing left but a dead horse. Staking the carcass as a last resource, he 'did by happy fortune recover it [his estate] again, then gave over, and wisely too.'

The mention of the dead horse brings to mind the story told of Joe Haynes, a sharper, who threw for a live horse, on condition that the horse should throw for himself. A pair of dice was placed between the horse's lips, and fell six. Haynes threw eight. He was then accused of cheating the horse, when he replied, 'Ask the horse.' The horse saying nothing, Haynes won.

The old writers referred to combine in inveighing against gaming, and one of their points is the way in which gamesters pursue their avocation to the bitter end. Cotton, however, is very inconsistent. He first expresses the hatred he bears to the

'hellish society' of gamesters, warns his readers against play, and, when discussing 'the character of a gamester,' remarks that 'some say he was born with cards in his hand, others that he will die so.' Nevertheless, the author then gives 'Instructions how to play all manner of usual and gentile games,' and under 'Bone = Ace' he observes, 'I will briefly describe it, and the rather because it is a licking game for money.'

In 'Annals of Famous Gamesters,' a man named Richard Bouchier is spoken of as an inveterate player. His ill-luck drove him so nearly mad that he bought a twopenny cord, and, having borrowed twenty pounds, vowed he would hang himself if he lost. The dice favoured him, and having won a large sum of a 'particular gentleman,' who was 'fretting and fuming,' he 'very courteously' pulled the cord out of his pocket, and handing it to the loser, said, 'Having now, sir, no occasion for this implement myself, it is at your service with all my heart.' It is further stated that 'this expression' made the 'particular gentleman' look very 'sour' upon the winner.

It is said that men have even gone so far as to stake their lives. It is reported of one Skelton, a prize-fighter, that when he had lost all his money at play he staked his clothes, lost, and was stripped naked. He then staked his life, and lost. The winner, assisted by Skelton himself, at once hanged him on a lamp-post. A watchman passing by cut him down and brought him to. The first thing Skelton did, on recovering consciousness, was to reproach his preserver for preventing him from paying his debts of honour. *Se non è vero.*

Certain it is some men have been so addicted to gaming that nothing short of death could keep them away from the table. Lookup, a card and billiard sharper, is said to have died with cards in his hand when playing humbug, or two-handed whist. Foote, who is supposed to have represented him in the character of Loadem in the farce of 'The Minor,' is reported to have observed, on hearing the circumstances of the death, that 'Lookup was humbugged out of the world at last.'

This same Lookup challenged Lord Chesterfield to play at billiards. Lookup was to put a patch over one eye, and Lord Chesterfield was to give five points in a game of twenty-one up. His lordship, having lost several games in succession, threw down the mace (billiards was then played with a mace), declaring that he thought Lookup played as well with one eye as with two. 'I

don't wonder at it, my lord,' quoth Lookup, 'for I have only seen out of one eye for these ten years.'

As an illustration of the way in which some sportsmen refer all matters to a gaming standpoint, the following from Lord Orford's 'Letters' may be introduced. A gentleman friend of the writer on being asked, shortly after his marriage, whether he had any hopes of becoming a father, answered, 'Upon my word, I don't know. I haven't a bet on it.'

Swearing is a vice often attributed to gamesters, but it is by no means proved that these gentry are more prone to that practice than their neighbours. Paschasius Justus records that when he once told a gamester he had never uttered an oath, the other responded, 'Then you are ignorant of a great pleasure.' At one time swearing became so prevalent in the Spanish army that an order was issued forbidding the use of bad language under certain penalties. A soldier who had lost all his money at cards, and not daring to violate the order, evaded it by saying to his adversary, 'I thank you, Mr. Pontius Pilate.' (*'Beso la mano, Señor Pilato.'*)

The authority quoted does not state the nature of the penalties. But in another case, which appertains more closely to gaming, the consequence of disobedience must have been extremely unpleasant. In the army commanded by Richard I. and Philip of France, during the crusade in 1190, it became known that play ruled high. It was therefore proclaimed that no person in the army should play at any game for money, below the estate of knights and clergymen, and that they should not lose more than twenty shillings in one day. The two kings to play for what they please, their attendants for not more than twenty shillings. This seems rather a high limit, considering the comparative value of money at that date. Offenders were to be whipped naked through the army for three days.

The money element is insisted on by all writers and in all enactments on the subject of gaming. Jeremy Taylor thus admirably shows the absurdity of playing for high stakes: 'If a man be willing to lose his own money, and not at all desirous to get another's, to what purpose is it that he plays for it? If he be not indifferent, then he is covetous, or he is a fool; he covets that which is not his own, or unreasonably ventures that which is. If without the money he cannot mind his game, then the game is no divertisement, no recreation; but the money is all the sport,

and therefore covetousness is all the design.' Despite all penalties, and all good advice, the 'fool's argument'—a bet—is practically universal. Some amusing anecdotes in connection with stakes may be quoted in conclusion.

Gayton ('Festivous Notes upon Don Quixote') gives the following: 'A lady once requested a gentleman to play at gleeck [an obsolete card game]; was refused, but civilly, and upon three reasons, "The first whereof, madam," said the gentleman, "is, I have no money." Her ladyship knew that was so material and sufficient that she desired him to keep the other two reasons to himself.'

The Countess Du Barry, when punting at faro, on seeing a card turn up which lost her a considerable sum, exclaimed, 'Ah! I am done brown!' (*Ah! Je suis frite!*) The countess's mother was a cook. 'Madam,' was the reply, 'your family is an authority on that subject.'

On one occasion, when the *Grand Monarque* was playing backgammon, a question arose respecting a doubtful throw at a critical part of the game, on which some heavy bets had been made. The surrounding courtiers remained prudently silent. Count de Grammont happened at this moment to enter the room, and the king desired him to settle the matter. He instantly said, 'Sire, your majesty is in the wrong!' 'How,' returned Louis, 'can you decide without knowing the question?' 'Because,' answered the count, 'had there been any doubt all these gentlemen would have given it in favour of your majesty.'

What has been called an 'elegant insolence' was once offered to the same king at play. He dropped a coin on the floor, and stooped down to look for it, but could not find it. An ambassador who was present took from his pocket a thousand-franc note, and lighted it, in order to assist the king in the search.

Another royal anecdote is of Charles II. and Rochester. The king, holding a great hand at cards, exclaimed, 'I could bet my soul to an orange on this game.' 'If your majesty will lay odds, I will take them,' replied the witty Rochester.

To adduce some more recent examples. At White's Coffee House, now White's Club, a young Irishman was seen to play very high, and the question was asked, 'Where are his estates?' the presumption being that he must possess large landed property to warrant his risking such amounts. Overhearing the conversation, the youngster said, 'My estates, is it? Sure, and I

have a map of them in my pocket,' and produced an enormous roll of bank notes. These he proceeded to examine with some show of disappointment. On a hope being expressed that he had not lost anything, he explained that he was only looking for 'a little one, a fifty or so, just to set the caster.'

Osbaldestone's great match against time, to ride two hundred miles, at Newmarket, in ten hours, is within the memory of men still living. Before the match, long odds were offered against the accomplishment of the feat in nine hours. Prior to taking odds Gully consulted the Squire as to whether he could do it in nine hours, and received this characteristic answer: 'I can do it if the horses can.' The distance was covered in 8 hours 42 minutes.

At the time when Padwick was the arbiter in many financial turf transactions, a bookmaker, to whom an absent-minded client had paid a bet twice over, begged Padwick's opinion as to what he ought to do—that is, as to whether he should return the money overpaid, or not. Padwick rose to the occasion, and, in joke of course, told the bookmaker to 'ask him for it again.'

One more instance. A friend of the late Mr. James Merry backed his dog to draw Mr. Merry's badger, on certain conditions. Shortly before the appointed day it was found that the dog was too ill to be produced at the specified time, so forfeit was paid. Mr. Merry was then told of the dog's illness, and was laughed at for letting off the other side so easily. 'I do not know,' he replied, 'how ill your dog may be, but I do know that my badger is dying.' It should be remarked, for the benefit of those not versed in sporting etiquette, that there is nothing unfair in accepting a forfeit under such circumstances. The dog might have died before the day, and the badger might have had a spark of life left, in which case the whole bet, instead of the forfeit, must have been paid.

EIGHT DAYS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE TOUCHSTONE OF PERIL.'

I will a round unvarnished tale deliver.—*Othello*.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE JUMOO GATE.

THE rebel leaders march the column out of the palace and then into Star Street, and the troopers dismount from their horses and the sepoys pile their arms by the side of the conduit which runs down the middle of it. While the men rest, and wash, and drink, and eat, the waters of insurrection are swiftly on the rise. The entry of the mutineers into the palace was as the opening of flood-gates. The cry has gone abroad that the *raj* (rule) of the English is over; the real, though not nominal, sovereignty of the English has passed away; the nominal sovereignty of the Nuwáb has become, once more, the real one. The commotion increases. Lawlessness grows more bold. The villainy of the place is on the stir. Sheitanpara begins to pour forth all its ruffianry. The cavalry-men had tasted of English blood at Abdoolapore the evening before—when they had made of that Sabbath eve a Witch's or Devil's Sabbath. Being informed that not very far off from where they are making their brief bivouac is the house and emporium of the Englishman who with his sons keeps the only 'Europe shop' in the place, half-a-dozen of the troopers, accompanied by a crowd of roughs and ruffians, make for the place, and soon the unfortunate Englishman and the whole of his family, eight souls in all, have been slain. The destruction of whole English families was one of the terrible features of that terrible time. Many a child in England was suddenly to find itself fatherless, motherless, sisterless, brotherless, all at once: the sole survivor of a once large family circle. The dwelling-place and the shop are gutted, and afford splendid plunder. The game of murder and pillage has begun. The ruffians are soon warming to their work. The houses of other Europeans are attacked. Fear is withdrawing its restraint. The amusement is beginning to be considered safe. The wild-beast madness is coming on. The cry

of 'Kill the —— Feringhee!'—the blank space being filled up with many an opprobrious epithet, many a foul term of abuse—is rapidly becoming more frequent and more full. Louder and louder grows the tumult. The conflagration is beginning to roar.

There is one man in the city who, placed high above the tumult, pursues the usual daily round of his duties undisturbed; the only man in the place who does so. He is the man who strikes the hours on the great historical gong above the main gateway of the palace, as the members of his family have done for many generations back, ever since the great disc of sonorous metal was swung on to the great tripod, two centuries and a half ago. He raises the mallet and delivers the stroke, as little disturbed by what is going on below as would be the wheels and hammer of a clock, of which he is the human representative. He, uncaring, notes the passage of the hours which to so many are to be their last ones on the earth. He, untroubled, numbers out the hours to those whose hours are numbered. While that English family is being murdered below he is delivering the needful ten strokes on the gong. The rustics in the neighbouring villages, who have ample leisure to note the idle passing hours, having nothing to employ them until the heavy deluge of 'the rains' shall come and soften the iron-bound earth and enable them to drive their light ploughshares through it, say to one another, 'It is striking ten o'clock'; but the sound passes unheeded over the din-filled streets immediately below.

The natives of India are great walkers, and their calf-less legs carry their light bodies over very long distances. But still the sepoy, having once seated themselves, are inclined to linger in the pleasant shade of the trees and by the pleasant margin of the running water. The Soubahdar Matadeen Panday is, however, very urgent with the leader of the mutineers for an immediate move on the Jumoo Gate; it is so needful to secure it at once. It stands on the main line of communication with the cantonment. If the sepoy cannot be got to move, why not send some of the troopers? All that is needed is for them to go to the gate: the guard itself, men of his own regiment, will secure it for them. The leader of the insurgents, bold and active, determined to make his enterprise successful, says 'Certainly,' and he will go himself. He is soon moving down Star Street with a squadron of his men.

While he is approaching the Jumoo Gate from within, one of the regiments from the cantonment is approaching it from without.

It is the 66th, the one commanded by Colonel Barnes, and to which the Soubahdar Rustum Khan, the Sikunder Begum's present paramour-in-chief, belongs.

We must go back to the time when the Brigadier had received the first intimation of the approach of the mutineers. 'They are now, probably, about four miles off,' Mr. Melvil had written. 'They must be kept from crossing the bridge, from entering the city—they may create a disturbance there.' The Brigadier orders out all the troops. His aide-de-camp is soon galloping about, his orderlies are soon flying hither and thither. Officers of all ranks are soon galloping along all the roads, as you might have seen them galloping three-quarters of an hour before; but this time they are galloping towards the infantry and artillery lines, and not away from them. The lines of the three sepoy regiments covered a large space of ground—the sepoys live in separate huts and not together in one barrack like our men. The Grenadiers occupied the lines farthest from the town, the 66th the lines nearest to it. This had a bearing on the events of the day. The Brigadier would rather have sent the Grenadiers, as being the best regiment and commanded by the best officer, down to the scene of action. (He, and those about him, had formed the opinion that the mutineers must simply be trying to escape from an English force behind them; that they were making for the bridge under Khizrabad simply in order to get as soon as possible out of the English-ruled Doâb into the foreign territory beyond Khizrabad; that they must be a disorganised rabble whom one regiment and a couple of guns would be sufficient to check; that the only danger to be apprehended was that of their getting into the city and producing a disturbance, a 'bazaar émeute,' as the Brigadier called it, there.) But as the Grenadiers' lines are the farthest off, and time is now the most important element in the matter—the only important element the Brigadier and those about him think—he determines to send the nearest regiment, which is the 66th. Colonel Barnes is ordered to march quickly down and prevent the mutineers from crossing the bridge of boats; at all events, prevent them from entering the city. He is to be accompanied by a couple of guns. But as there is some delay in the arrival of these—the sepoys were ready at once, because they had not taken off their uniforms—the Brigadier directs Barnes to leave two companies to follow with the guns, and push on at once with the remaining six companies, which he does.

The regiment has first to traverse a side-road along which there are no trees and on which the sun, the only enemy some of the English officers think they have to dread, is beating fiercely down, and across which the hot-wind has begun to blow, raising up clouds of dust. At any other time Tommy Walton and Loo Hill would not have liked trudging it through that hot, blinding sand. But they do not mind it now. They are too full of excitement. They may have a chance of taking share in a bit of fighting, of smelling gunpowder for the first time. And so they step out cheerily, cheek by jowl with their dusky men.

And now they have entered on the carefully watered Mall, with its double avenue of trees casting their coolness into the air, and it is more comfortable here, even though it is near ten o'clock. And now they are descending the long slope leading down from the ridge, now traversing the plain lying between it and the city walls, still of course along the pleasant shady Mall. They have reached the Jumoo Gate. They are crossing the long drawbridge. They have passed through the outer gate. They have entered the wide enclosure where William Hay has his men turned out and under arms. And now they have passed through the inner gateway—the inner and outer gates were both wide open—into the street beyond. Colonel Barnes and all the mounted officers are riding carelessly together at the head of the regiment, as if they were on an ordinary march. They have still the width of the city to traverse before they arrive on the scene of operations. The street, or more properly road, they have entered on soon begins to have other roads running out of it or crossing it. Two main ones leave it a short way beyond the Jumoo Gate. The first one runs off to the left into the English quarter; the other one runs off to the right, a little further on, and leads into the heart of the city, to Star Street. Now, as the six companies of the 66th are approaching the head of this road from the Jumoo Gate, the rebel leader with his squadron of cavalry is approaching it from Star Street. But both roads have thick avenues of trees along their sides, and the angle between them is filled up by the grounds of the mansion of a Mohammedan noble, thickly planted with trees and surrounded by a high brick wall. The two parties are therefore not aware of one another's close vicinity. The mounted English officers are riding carelessly together at the head of the regiment. They think the scene of action is still far off. The men are marching with sloped arms. The muskets are not

loaded. Colonel Barnes stated afterwards, in his official report, that he had led the men into the city 'with unloaded muskets because he anticipated nothing more than a bazaar riot, which he could quell by the use of the bayonet alone.' As the head of the regiment comes within about a hundred yards of the corner, the front rank of the cavalry squadron enters the same road, and wheeling to the left, towards the Jumoo Gate, the troopers and the sepoy find themselves face to face; and they continue to advance towards one another, for the sepoy cannot halt without the word of command, and in the first moments of stupefaction and surprise Colonel Barnes cannot give it—he is so taken aback; he had thought these men were on the other side of the river. And the troopers cannot halt, for they are pushed on by the men coming round the corner, who do not know what is ahead of them. Then Colonel Barnes shouts out 'Halt!' and gives the order to load. The first order is obeyed, but not the second. The leader of the mutineers hails this joyously. He has not had time to note which regiment this is. He was afraid it might be the Grenadiers. '*Bhai-bund!*' ('Bond-brethren!'), he shouts.

'*Bhai-bund!*' shouts the Soubahdar Rustum Khan from the head of the regiment.

And then from the troopers comes the shout of '*Mar Sala Feringhee ho!*' ('Slay the Feringhee brothers-in-law!') And they dash forward at the English officers on horseback and shoot them down with their carbines and pistols—those on foot are bayoneted by their own men. Soon all is over. Four only of the English officers who were with their regiment that day escaped with their lives. All were not killed on the spot; some made a run for it, back towards the Jumoo Gate or down some of the side-roads and lanes; but the troopers were after them, and had the speed of them, and most of them were overtaken and slain. But two of them managed to escape by leaping over walls, and two of those left for dead on the road itself survived their wounds. Eight bodies lay together not far from that corner of fatal meeting. And now there are yells and shouts of triumph, and the two bodies of mutineers exchange boisterous and boastful greetings. The Soubahdar Rustum Khan has seized and mounted poor old Barnes' splendid weight-carrying charger and assumed the command of his regiment.

He and his co-religionist, the leader from Abdoolapore, exchange a brief greeting. 'We have come to seize the Jumoo

Gate,' says the latter. 'We have only to enter it,' says the former, pointing his sword towards the open portal, which is full in view.

The men, the sepoy, go right about face, and Rustum Khan leads them towards the gateway, waving his sword, and the troopers come following after. The sepoy have passed over a good portion of the distance, when the pleasing void of the gateway is disagreeably obstructed by the tall form of an English officer, by the black muzzles of a couple of guns, by the side of which stand two gunners with blazing port-fires in their hands. The sepoy come to a sudden halt. Rustum Khan waves his sword and calls on them to charge. But the movement is now the other way. The regiment recoils, and recoils, and recoils still more, and still further back. If they keep to that road, which runs in a direct line with the gateway for a long way, the disagreeable fear of those guns will be on them for a very great while. And so when the sepoy, heading backwards, reach the corner of the road leading towards Star Street, that along which the troopers have come, they rush into it and will not halt until they have got a good way down it. And then news is brought to Rustum Khan that the guns are no longer pointing down the road—because the massive gate has been closed. 'How frightened they are of cannon!' says Rustum Khan to the leader of the rebel force from Abdoolapore. 'But the guns could only have been discharged once. Only a few men would have been killed, and we should have been in the gateway. Now we have lost our chance. We can do nothing here without guns. We must now proceed to supply ourselves with them from the Arsenal. We shall have difficulty in gaining the day over the English so long as they have guns and we have none. It is a great affliction to have missed this splendid chance of seizing this gateway. But still it is a great thing to have got almost the whole of the regiment on our side at once; the remaining two companies will be more a source of weakness than of strength to the English. So will the 76th, now that so many of them have joined you—more especially the Soubahdar Major Matadeen Panday. The English have only the Grenadiers and the guns to depend on now. We must make for the Arsenal at once.'

As this major portion—it is thought the whole—of one of the three local regiments marches into Star Street in company with the troopers, whose grey jackets are now the symbol of mutiny—as the news of its defection from the English cause, and

of the slaughter of its English officers, which has set on that defection the seal of blood, made it an irrevocable step, flies around—the commotion in that main central thoroughfare becomes greater than ever. Now do peace and order take their final flight, not to return for many a day. Now does lawlessness begin to reign supreme. Now does the Devil's Quarter empty itself. Now do its most crime-laden inhabitants come forth from their secret hiding-places. The sons of Belial issue forth. Now do the butchers, the men of blood, ever foremost in deeds of violence, leave their slaughterhouses to take part in another kind of shambles. There begin to be incursions into the English quarter: the dwelling-place of the ruling race is losing its sanctity. The roughs and ruffians of the bazaars lying within or along the borders of this quarter, begin to gather together ready for mischief. They have begun to rob and are ready to murder.

A native Christian bugler had carried the news of what was happening at the corner back to the Jumoo Gate. Hay had called on his men to hasten to the help of the officers of the 66th, but they had refused to move. Then the other two companies of the 66th arrive, with the two guns. It is an awkward situation for the English officers—two companies of the very regiment that had just attacked its officers, and Hay's fifty men who had just refused to obey his orders. But the officer in charge of the guns is a man of prompt action, and he knows that he can depend on his own men, natives though they be. And so he loads his two pieces and points them through the gateway; and that having caused the rebellious regiment to retire, he promptly turns their muzzles inwards, facing the two companies of the same corps within, so as to check any inclination they might have had to help their brethren or to rush after them; and then he gets his artillerymen to close the massive gates. This done, he sends up information of what has happened to the Brigadier.

The Brigadier's feelings on receiving that information may easily be conceived. The defection of the 66th quite changes the situation. It gives the preponderance of strength to the enemy. The 76th was weakened by having to furnish the city and palace guards; it was, besides, unreliable—had been in a disaffected condition for some years back. The Grenadiers and the battery of artillery are all he has to rely upon now. And with this force he has to make head against the mutineers, now four regiments strong; ensure the safety of the huge city; guard the

wide-spread cantonment. And on his shoulders was laid the heavy burden, the weight of which was so terribly felt at the coming siege of Cawnpore, with its tragical ending; at the siege of Lucknow, with its brighter termination—the burden of the care for the lives of a great number of helpless women and children. And apart from the terrible local consequences that might ensue from it, of which this slaying of their officers by the 66th was a foretaste, the mere fact of the mutiny of these three regiments at Abdoolapore, of this regiment in his own command, was almost enough to overwhelm the old man, the pride, the joy, the honourable traditions of whose life had all been bound up with the sepoy army. (The great blow that the mutiny of the Bengal Army inflicted on the feelings of the English officers belonging to it has never been sufficiently appreciated or sympathised with, as the mutiny was held to be in some sort their own fault.) Moreover this sudden and unexpected defection of one of the oldest regiments in the Company's army, which had always rendered the Company most excellent and faithful service, brings on him this great fear: Are even the Grenadiers, are even the native artillerymen, to be trusted? That is the worst of an alien and mercenary army—you never know at what moment it may fail you. It is a thing apart from yourself. We English people have to pursue our imperial course, but it is as well to bear in mind that our ultimate dependence must be on the men of our own race. It is best to be on one's own legs, but if you are on horseback you must ride. However sore the old man's feelings, however troubled his thoughts, he has now to act. It is obvious that the Jumoo Gate must be secured. The possession of that may keep the city in awe. It bars the straight road from the city to the cantonment. He orders Colonel Grey to proceed at once with half his regiment and a couple of guns to the gateway which is now in such imminent peril of being lost. (This is to be the last forward movement of the English.) He himself then marches down with the remaining portions of the two regiments, the Grenadiers and the 76th, and the remaining two guns, to the ridge, and posts himself on it by the side of the Flagstaff Tower. He thus has command of both the roads leading down to the cantonment from the city.

And soon by the side of the Flagstaff Tower are crowded together all those buggies and barouches and palanquin carriages which were to be seen moving up and down the Mall in the early morning or late evening, or gathered together round the band-

stand. And in these vehicles, which afford hardly any shelter from the sun—none from the fiery dust-laden blast—the delicately nurtured women who have hurried out from the innermost recesses of carefully cooled and darkened houses have to pass the rest of the day. In them they sit solitary or in the midst of a closely packed crowd of little children, whose sufferings from the heat and glare and the want of their usual comforts add so greatly to their own. Those sufferings become very great in the terrible midday and early afternoon hours. And the women are weighed upon by a great fear for the safety of the lives of their husbands, their children, and themselves: a fear that goes on increasing as from the city outspread before them, and from the midst of the English quarter, rise up columns of smoke, and the news of the murder of the English shopkeeper and his family reaches the spot and spreads among them. Their hearts might have sunk utterly within them, had they not been buoyed up by one hope, by a continually increasing hope—a hope which increased the more it was disappointed—the hope that the pursuing English force from Abdoolapore must now be near at hand, its continually delayed arrival only showing that its arrival could not longer be delayed.

When Colonel Grey passes into the enclosure at the Jumoo Gateway, with his entirely reliable men, the balance of power there is once more in favour of the English. But he cannot move to any distance beyond it, lest the gates should be closed behind him; nor has he orders to do so. But there is now no enemy near, and the bodies of the murdered officers are lying not far off. So he sends out a party to bring them in. They are brought in, lying side by side at the bottom of a long Government wagon, and covered with some ladies' dresses which had been found lying about in the road. And when they are taken out it is found that Colonel Barnes, though desperately wounded, is not dead, and Colonel Grey has him forwarded immediately in a litter to the cantonment. The bodies of the other poor fellows, of those who had passed through the gateway so shortly before, in the first flush of their youth, in the full strength of their manhood, are laid side by side, a ghastly row, in the shadow of one of the walls, and again covered over with the women's dresses. And William Hay, passing the spot shortly afterwards, is horror-stricken as he recognises the dresses as belonging to Beatrice and Lilian Fane and their mother.

Their house has been sacked then. What has become of them?

We have now narrated the general events of the day, so far as was needful for our purpose. Henceforward we have only to follow the fortunes of those English girls, the events in whose lives during these eight momentous days were to form the thread of our narrative, and serve to give it a limit and some sort of roundness.

CHAPTER XX.

MISS LYSTER'S SECRET.

MRS. FANE and her daughters have bathed and breakfasted. They are reading quietly in the drawing-room. A profound silence reigns in the darkened apartment. No sound from the outer world penetrates into it. Lilian has allowed her book to drop into her lap: she is not musing over what she has read—she never does muse—but she is thinking that she has to give young Walton his final answer to-day. Of course she has made up her mind to refuse him: such a boy and girl engagement would be too ridiculous, too absurd. It would be the joke of the whole station. What a ludicrous, what an inferior position should she occupy in comparison with her sister and May Wynn! No, she must make an engagement such as theirs, as good as theirs; and she did not care to wait four or five years—she would be quite an old young woman by then. She wanted to enter on the dignity and delights of married life as soon as she could. It would be a triumph to marry immediately after she had come out. And, best reason of all, she did not—did not care for him—in that way. She could not at his age. She was sorry for him—he really was a very nice lad. She wished she had refused him at once.

The sisters are seated close together in order to make the most of the single ray of light allowed to enter the room. How daintily fresh and fair they look in their pretty new-washed dresses! The old bearer now enters the room; they are too absorbed in their reading and thinking to observe his hurried, instead of his usual calm, dignified walk—the troubled look on his face in place of the usual serene, self-satisfied one. Mrs. Fane, leaning back in her chair, puts out her hand towards the silver salver, without looking up at him, and seeing that the note is in

her husband's handwriting takes it up indifferently : Lucius has probably forgotten something—wants something to be sent to him. She opens it carelessly between her forefinger and thumb as she continues to lean back in her chair. Then she sits up.

‘Mutinous sepoy from Abdoolapore—got into the city—may be a disturbance,’ she cries in an agitated tone of voice. She is a woman of a strong, firm spirit ; but this news has come on her very suddenly. Major Fane had written two missives to his wife that morning. When he and Mr. Melvil had parted, after the first sight of the mutineers, he had written a note to the Brigadier to inform him of the fact, and another to his wife informing her of it too. ‘Sepoy regiments at Abdoolapore have mutinied and come here ; but they will not be able to get into the city, so do not let yourself be troubled,’ was the purport of the first one. By some misconception both the notes had been taken up to the Brigadier's quarters, and so Mrs. Fane had not yet received hers. The second was as it were a continuation of the first one : ‘The mutineers have somehow got into the city ; there may be a disturbance ; you and the girls had better go over to Hay at the Jumoo Gate. Do this at once.’

‘Mutineers!—in the city!’ cries Beatrice ; and she thinks of Hay at the Jumoo Gate.

‘Mutineers!’ cries Lilian, merely re-echoing the word ; she has not yet disengaged her thoughts from her own affairs.

‘You had better go over to Hay Sahib at the Jumoo Gate, madam,’ says the old bearer. (He is the sirdar, or head bearer, as you can tell by his dignified look and bearing.)

‘How do you know what is in the note?’ asks Mrs. Fane, glancing up at him with surprise.

‘I did not know. Is that what the Major Sahib has written—You had better go there at once?’

‘Yes,’ says Mrs. Fane, turning to her daughters, ‘that is what your father has written : that we should go over to the Jumoo Gate—to William——’

‘Shall I order the carriage, madam?’

Then the ayah comes in with hurried but still silent footsteps, because of her naked feet ; and then in an agitated voice, but still with that air of delight and satisfaction which accompanies the conveyance of disagreeable or troublesome news, especially on the part of those to whom, from their lowly station, the temporary superiority is welcome, says to her mistress :

‘The men of the *Lind-ki-pultun*’ (Lind’s Regiment—the 66th was so called after the officer who had raised it ninety years before) ‘have murdered all their officers——’

‘Murdered all their officers! The men of the 66th!’ cries Mrs. Fane in a tone of horror, and now rising from her seat.

‘And their bodies are lying in the road near the Jumoo Gate.’

‘What?’ cries Mrs. Fane.

‘All their dead bodies are lying in the open road near the Jumoo Gate.’

The girls are dumb with horror.

‘*Heera Lal!*’ whispers a man at the doorway. He is the sweeper, the man of lowest caste, whose touch would be pollution to any other servant in the house. He dare not raise his voice or set his foot within the room, even at such a time as this.

‘What is it?’ says the bearer.

‘A crowd of people from the bazaar are plundering Ismith’ (Smith) ‘Sahib’s house.’

Mr. Smith was a clerk in one of the offices, who lived a little way off.

‘Plundering Mr. Smith’s house!’ exclaims Mrs. Fane.

‘Tell them to get the carriage ready,’ cries the bearer. ‘Madam, you and the young ladies had better get ready at once. There is no time to be lost.’

Mrs. Fane stands for a moment bewildered. It is so unexpected, so astonishing. *They* have to fly from their home, *they* of the ruling race, who have dwelt in such high security, to whose persons and property a peculiar sanctity has attached! She have to fly her house in the broad light of day! To have to fear and fly—she! It is a terrible shock to her pride. A bitter feeling of humiliation and degradation passes over her. To have to run before a mob of natives! But no time is to be allowed her for indulgence in feelings of any kind. As they pass from the drawing-room into the adjoining dining-room, in order to reach their bedrooms and get ready to go out, Mrs. Fane begins to think of what she shall do with regard to the safe custody of the house—whether she had not better take some of their valuables with them; but no time is to be allowed her for thinking either. Some servants now come rushing in and shout out: ‘They are coming! They are coming! They are nearing the front gate!’ The time for moving quietly and speaking with ‘bated breath, as these servants had been so specially trained to do, has gone by.

‘Then they cannot get away in the carriage?’ says the old bearer.

‘No; the people will soon be at the gate.’

‘You must get out by the back way; you must go on foot, madam.’

‘On foot—in the sun—at this hour of the day?’

‘Quick, madam, quick—get your head-gear quickly, in the name of God!’

They rush into their bedrooms and come out quickly with their hats. They push aside the side-flap of one of the heavy grass-screens or mattresses attached to the western doors of the dining-room and pass through it. They hurry across the verandah, that west verandah in which they had sat so joyfully, so securely, but a few hours before. Passing out from the cool, dark, silent house so suddenly, how terrible to their frames is the shock of the heat, how terrible to their eyes the shock of the dazzling sunshine, how terrible to their ears the shock of the shrill yelling of the crowd, how terrible this insecurity after the security, this disquiet after the quiet, of a few, only a few minutes before! They pass into the garden, the space enclosed by a brick wall, which, as is usual in the East, is orchard, flower-garden, and little park all in one. They can now move along hidden from the view of the crowd.

Getting to the far end of the garden, they pass out through a wicket into a narrow lane which runs along the compound on that side. It is on the opposite side of the compound from the Jumoo Gate, and so they must make for the latter by a round-about way; but it cannot be helped: they could not have got into the road which led to it straight. The lane lies quiet and still, filled only with the fierce hot sunshine. But as they advance along it the sound of a tumult of some kind grows stronger and stronger in their ears—they are approaching it, or it is approaching them, or both. If it proceeds from a crowd in the lane, what are they to do? They may overtake it, must meet it. For some distance the lane runs between brick walls. But now they arrive at the extensive well-wooded grounds which surround the Government College (for native youth), and which are bounded here by a hedge. They may be able to get through this, if need be. The old bearer goes up to an opening in it and looks through. He draws back with a loud exclamation:

‘It is here,’ he cries, ‘the noise, the tumult—at the College.’

The seekers after knowledge' (students) 'are plundering it. Look!'

Mrs. Fane goes up to the narrow gap and looks through. It is a curious sight. From the handsome front of the building—it was one of the chief educational establishments in the province—to the handsome main gateway directly facing it, extends a crowd of lads and boys and men moving off laden with the plunder of their Alma Mater. The noise does not come from them so much as from those within the building. Having secured their plunder, those outside are only eager to get away with it as soon as they can, and do not waste their breath in much yelling or shouting. It is a curious sight, the more curious when you come to consider that a couple of hours ago these boys and lads and young men were standing in rows on naked feet, or squatted comfortably in circles on the floor, or seated uncomfortably in lines on the alien benches, in all the strict subjection of school discipline. Here are lads running away with forms; here are lads running away with valuable books from the library; here are two lads walking away with the celestial globe, and two others conveying the terrestrial one. That tall man, whose flowing snowy-white garments show in this bright glare like the shining robes of an angel of light, is the Persian professor, who has promptly seized the occasion—being quite convinced that the English rule is over, once for all and for ever—to make himself possessor of some very valuable copies of the works he was employed to teach. Mrs. Fane does not indulge in these reflections. Her only thought is that they have nothing to fear in moving down the lane. And they do move down the whole length of it—it is a very long one—without meeting a single soul. It opens into a metalled or main road, which leads to the Jumoo Gate, now no great distance off. But they have not gone a dozen yards that way when the bearer calls out that the crowd of men they can see in the distance is moving towards them: they must retrace their steps. What are they to do? If they have seen the crowd, the crowd has also, most probably, seen them; in fact, the sound of a sudden shout or yell seems to proclaim that it has. What are they to do? They must keep together; but they are as conspicuous here as a group of orientals would be in the streets of an English city. If they turn back along the lane the crowd may not pursue them down it—it may pass on along the road; but, on the other hand, it may pursue them down it,

and then they will be completely cut off from the Jumoo Gate, will be driven away from it and back again to the house. They cannot escape from the mob along the open roads, if it once sets up the chase of them. Their only chance of escape would lie in separating and going different ways; but there is a horror in the mere thought of that—more especially to the mother.

‘You must get off the road as soon as you can. You had better take refuge for a little while in the house of Mrs. Lyster. It is not very far off; you can remain there until the crowd has passed by, and then make again for the Jumoo Gate. The house is a safe one,’ cries the old bearer.

As the reader remembers, Mrs. Lyster is the ‘mysterious mother’ of Miss Lyster.

They hasten towards the house. The bearer’s remark that it is a safe one refers to a certain peculiarity in its arrangements. The building was, as it were, a cross between the ordinary bungalow of the Europeans and the dwelling-places of the better classes of natives. The latter are built entirely with a view to privacy and safety; they consist simply of verandahs and rooms, lower and upper, surrounding a central courtyard, access to which is obtained by means of one single gateway only. The former is a thatch-roofed house, with numerous doorways, standing in the midst of grounds, the compound surrounded by a hedge or low brick wall which men would have little difficulty in getting over, just as they would have little difficulty in climbing over or bursting open the flimsy gate or gates. The enclosure of Mrs. Lyster’s house was much larger than a courtyard, much smaller than a compound. The dwelling-place was built across one of the shorter sides of the parallelogram of the enclosure, and the servants’ houses ran across the opposite end. Along one of the longer sides, and not far from the house, stood some store-rooms, the rest of that side consisting of a high brick wall; and the side parallel to this one was formed by a similar high brick wall, its run broken only by the gateway in the middle of it: when this gate was closed the house and enclosure were safely cut off from the outer world. In the middle of the enclosure was a flower-garden; along its edges and in front of the servants’ houses were some fine large trees. When the fugitives arrive at the gate they find the servants just about to close it, and as they pass in it is closed behind them. When they reach the entrance verandah of the house, the old bearer seated there, after the usual fashion, as an English footman

sits in the hall, looks at them in a very curious way: it is of course a most extraordinary thing that they should come at that hour of the day and in that manner—on foot; but there is something more in his face than that.

The standing order is '*Durwaza bund*' ('Not at home,' literally, 'Doors shut'), he says, and he does not know if the young lady can see them.

'Of course she will admit them under the circumstances. They cannot go away,' says Mrs. Fane.

'Well, I will go and see,' says the old man, still looking at them in that curious sort of way. Nor does he usher them into any cool inner room, but leaves them standing there in the fiery hot verandah, leaves them in fact just outside the door of the drawing-room, whose position Mrs. Fane knows, for she had made some formal visits before, and on one occasion had been admitted. (This was a year or so before; now, as the bearer said, the formula of 'Not at home' was always used.) As they stand there, very hot and drenched through to the skin, but with their composure restored by the shutting of the gate, they hear the sound of music and singing in this adjoining room. They know the voice and the playing of Miss Lyster herself: she sings and plays remarkably well; but it is not she. This is a fitful, varied, broken, discontinuous kind of singing and playing: now a passage out of an opera, now a bit out of a song—'Of all the girls that I love best, Is Sally in our alley!' It is a strange voice, sweet but broken. Then comes a sudden silence. Their presence is being announced. Then a sudden shrill laugh. Then comes a sudden bustle, such as often attends the arrival of visitors at an unusual, unexpected hour—a curious giggling laugh—the slamming of doors. They have to wait some time before the servant comes back and says that Miss Lyster will see them, and admits them into an ante-room, and then into the drawing-room. The girls, who have never been in it before, look around the apartment with startled eyes, the more so because of the poor appearance (from the outside) of the house, which they had always heard spoken of as one that would not ordinarily have been occupied by people of their own and Miss Lyster's class. Their own drawing-room is pretty; that of Mr. Melvil very splendid. But here is a rare and perfect combination of splendour and beauty. There was here none of the superficial, finicking, overloaded, bewildering prettiness of the ordinary feminine drawing-room, overcrammed with things.

There was here a perfect excellence: the repose, the dignity, the combination of simplicity and splendour, due to having but a few things, each one good of its kind. Each piece of furniture was of beautifully carved mahogany, dark with age; on the floor was a superb Persian carpet, a rare work of art; there were some splendid china vases, some of the beautiful ones Wedgwood had then begun to make: on the walls some beautiful pictures from the pencils of George Beechey and Zoffany; and over it all hung the mellowing tint of age. Had they been in a frame of mind to make any such comparisons, they would have thought how well Miss Lyster with her lofty look and carriage—graceful, refined, and faded—seems to suit the room she now enters with her smooth gliding walk.

‘I am very sorry that you should have had to wait so long in the verandah,’ she says in her sweet and gentle, but sad-toned voice. ‘I did not hear the carriage.’

‘We came on foot,’ says Mrs. Fane.

‘Came on foot! At this hour of the day! I see you do look very dusty and—and—hot’ (‘wet’ was the word she had nearly used). ‘But why?’

‘Have you not heard? The sepoy regiments at Abdoolapore have mutinied and come here and have got into the city, and there is a great disturbance, and the people are going about plundering the houses of the Europeans; and they have plundered the house of Mr. Smith, the man who lives not far from us, and were coming to ours, and we had to rush out from it, and we were making for the Jumoo Gate, when we saw a crowd of people—There they are!’

The sound of a great yelling and shouting penetrates into the room, even though the screens of split bamboos are all down and the doors all closed.

‘I hope your gate is a strong one.’

‘Yes, a very strong one.’

The sound has ceased; it is not renewed. Miss Lyster goes to the door leading into the verandah, and, opening it, asks one of the servants the meaning of the noise.

‘A crowd of people stopped at the gate and shouted, but they have passed on.’

‘No, I had not heard,’ says Miss Lyster. This was so, because the servants whom Mrs. Fane and her daughters had found shutting the gate had only just returned from a neighbouring bazaar,

and having heard there what was happening, and seeing the crowd on the road, had thought it prudent to close the gate the moment they had reached it.

‘If the road is now clear I think we had better go on to the Jumoo Gate at once,’ says Mrs. Fane. ‘My husband wrote to me to go there, so as to be with William Hay. Why not you come with us too, Miss Lyster—you and your mother?’

‘We could not go with you. We are quite safe here. Our gate is very strong.’

‘Yes, but you are here all by yourselves. The gate is not so strong but that it could be burst open by a crowd.’

There is a look of trouble on Miss Lyster’s quiet, if grief-worn face.

‘My mother could not go.’

‘Why not? Is she such an invalid? Cannot she move about?’

‘Oh, yes—but——’

‘It is such a little way. She could go in your carriage.’

‘She *would* not. I hope it may not be necessary. I do not know what we should do then.’ She speaks with a most unwonted agitation of manner.

‘Hy—eh! Hy—eh! Ho—oh!’ It is impossible to express in writing the sound that once more comes through the closed doors into the room. Then comes a loud reverberation, the sound of rattling: the gate is being struck with something heavy—shaken. And then, in the midst of it, from an adjoining apartment comes into the room the sound of the same sweet cracked voice singing a merry lilt:

Upon the sands at Margate,
As gaily we did ride,
Trab—trab——

And then some of the house servants come rushing into the room, a heavier wave of sound following them as they throw open the door—the khansaman, the major-domo, the head servant of the establishment, rushes in without his cummerbund round his waist, without his turban on his head, breaches of domestic decorum and discipline of which he would not have been guilty except under the most extraordinary circumstances—and shout out: ‘A great crowd of people are at the gate, and are trying to burst it in. They must burst it in. They have hammers and hatchets with them. You must hide yourselves—hide yourselves.’

‘They cannot hide themselves here,’ says the old khansaman, striving to tie together the little bits of string which answer the purpose of buttons on his long coat, which he has only just thrown on. ‘The evil-doers will of course burst into every room. You must come and hide in one of our houses, Miss Baba,’ addressing Miss Lyster.

‘Oh, this is terrible!’ cries Miss Lyster, wringing her hands.

Even at that moment of terrible agitation for herself—terrible because she had her two beautiful young daughters (what a bane their beauty might prove now!) by her side, and the roar of a mob of ruffians at the only gateway of the house in her ears—Mrs. Fane experiences a feeling of surprise at this great agitation so openly displayed on the part of one who was usually so calm and quiet and self-possessed, serenely self-possessed.

‘My mother has not left the house for years,’ says Miss Lyster, turning to Mrs. Fane.

‘But you said she was not an invalid. She is not bed-ridden?’

‘Oh no, she is not; it is a fancy. First she used to walk about in the compound—we chose this house because when the gate is closed the compound is so private—but for the past three years she has not set foot out of the house. After my father’s death she said she could not bear to look on an English face again, and for all these years she has not seen anyone—not even the doctor—seen no white face but my own, spoken English only with me.’

Incidents press; but it was strange to note how even at such a moment as this the past overbore the present with the poor young lady. Mrs. Fane knew that Colonel Lyster, a very popular, rising man, had been killed by a fall from his horse.

‘But for the last three or four years she has had the idea—the fancy—that if she were to leave the house the sky would fall upon her. I have not been able to persuade her to go out of the house. She will not do so now.’

‘You know, Rumzan Khan,’ turning to the khansaman, an old and faithful servant of the house, ‘that the Mem Sahib will not set foot out of doors.’

‘If she does not set foot out of the house now, she will never set foot out of it again,’ says the old man. He is not taking advantage of the situation; he does not mean to be rude or to distress her; he is simply stating what he believes to be a fact—

and such plain statement of facts, without regard to feelings, is common among the coarser orders all the world over, more especially in India. 'He is now almost an idiot,' a loving and affectionate son will say of his father, while the old man stands by in smiling acquiescence.

The bamboo screen before the door of an inner apartment is lifted, and the subject of the conversation enters the room. She looks like a walking picture, like an embodied vision of the past. Very full skirts, and very long waists, with a very long pointed peak in front and tight sleeves, were the fashion of the day. The fashion of some fifteen years before had been the reverse of this: the waist higher up with simply a band or sash round it, sleeves full at the shoulder, skirts not hooped out, but fitting closer and flowing more freely—a style of dress very well adapted for gay and frolic youth, mirthful dancing girlhood, for which period of life it was now exclusively reserved. And so it was very startling to see a grey-haired old lady appear in this dress; doubly startling as not in accord with the fashion of the time, nor with her time of life. But, though strange, it was not in any way ridiculous or absurd. Beauty has an overruling power and can make any dress appropriate: and this old lady has a most beautiful face and figure. Her face has a childish beauty, her figure a girlish lightness and uprightness which fit them for the dress. She looks like a beautiful vision of the past revived. And as Miss Lyster says, 'Mrs. Fane and her daughters, mamma' ('mother' was not in fashion in her infancy), the old lady shakes hands with them with the winning sweetness of manner that has descended to her daughter. But as Mrs. Fane observes the peculiar, childish, unsteady look in the eyes, the infantile smile on the lips, and then the somewhat over-elaborate toilette for the time of day, the too many bows and ribbons, the too much jewelry, the over-elaborate dressing of the hair, done in the evening fashion of a bygone time, strikes her more forcibly, and the secret of the house flashes upon her—the old lady is of weak intellect. Mrs. Fane for the next few minutes (remember how much more quickly thoughts and occurrences pass than they can be recorded) lives in an exaggerated form that dual existence which is so common to us all. Her mind is entirely occupied with the thought of the danger to her daughters, and yet it works mechanically, like a machine into which something is thrown, on this new fact: this then is the secret of the mysterious mother; this the reason for the old lady's

strict seclusion ; this the reason of her daughter's devoted attention ; this the reason for the choice of this house with its secluded compound and high brick wall and single gateway.

And it was so. Some sort of epileptic seizure, developed or given the mastery by the sudden shock of her husband's death, had gradually weakened Mrs. Lyster's powers. She had then come to need her daughter's constant care : she was her only child. And so it had come to pass that she had eaten up her daughter's life—everything lives by devouring something else. Those terrible cañons in Western America have been cut out by the action of soft drops of water. What terrible rifts are made in our lives by the action of very small things ! Kate Lyster's precious life had been worn away by a constant trickle of talk. A beauty, Mrs. Lyster still retained her love of dress ; a conversationalist, she is now an incessant talker. Making her husband's death the limit of her own life, cutting herself off completely from intercourse with those about her, her talk was entirely about the bygone time. Her daughter had to listen to interminable stories about dead persons and things with an attention that must never be allowed to flag, lest her mother should reproach her with want of interest, lest she should wound and offend her, spoil her pleasure. That dead past of her mother's had eaten up her own living present. Then, as reason lost its controlling power, the poor lady began to be governed more and more by fancies. She had taken up that fancy that she would never look upon any English face except that of her daughter again, and so she would not go beyond the grounds of the house. Then she had taken up the fancy that she could not step out of doors, for fear the sky should fall on her, and so she never left the house, had not done so for the past four years. And, like all people in her condition, she was very obstinate in her fancies, was not to be reasoned with—that of course not—or persuaded out of them. Miss Lyster's great agitation at the present moment was simply due to the fact that she did not know how she should be able to get her mother out of the house.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GODOWN.

‘It was very good of you to come and see us at this hour of the day,’ says the old lady very sweetly to Mrs. Fane; but you must have found it terribly hot in the sun.’

‘Yes,’ says Mrs. Fane.

‘But what noise is that in the road, Kitty dear?’ goes on the old lady, turning to her daughter. ‘People screaming and shouting. It is not the Holee time.’ (The Holee is the Hindoo saturnalia.)

‘Oh, no,’ says Miss Lyster.

‘Do you remember, Kate, how fond you used to be when a little girl, before you went to England with your aunt Maria—poor Maria! that was the last time I saw her—it was at Allahabad—when she came out again she went to Banda, and died there of fever—of getting those funny sugar sweetmeats, horses and dogs, and elephants, and the parched rice, and having an illumination of your own at the Holee time? And how the native officers used to come and throw the red powder over your father——?’

And then she comes to a dead stop: any allusion to her husband makes her pause.

‘My dear mamma, the noise you hear,’ says her daughter quickly, ‘is that of some people who are trying to break open the gate. There is a disturbance in the city. The people are going about doing mischief. If they can get in and find us here, they will abuse us and call us names—and may hurt us, may hurt you—may laugh at you.’ Her saying that showed how agitated she was.

‘They have come to rob the house?’

‘Yes—yes—and——’

‘I had to run out of our house once because of robbers—it was at Ajmere. You would not remember *that*, Kate, because it was the year you were born. I had to run away with you in my arms—in the middle of the night. Ajmere was a terrible place for dacoits. They used to come on their camels and rob a house and then disappear—take the things away on their camels. They used often to kill people. They broke into a seth’s (banker’s) house there, and because they could not get the gold bangle off a poor little child’s wrist they cut its hand off. It happened when

we were there. And one night when I was all alone in the house the ayah rushed in and said the dacoits were outside the gate on their camels; and I had my rings on, and I snatched you up, and we rushed out of the house at the back and went and hid ourselves in a field. And they robbed the house, took away all our silver and my watch and chain and your father's guns, for which he was more sorry than for anything else. He was not there, he was away at Nuseerabad—and that was how I was alone in the house.'

'And we must get out of the house and hide ourselves now as you did then.'

'But you know I cannot go out of the house now, Kate.' And then her face, whose smiling placidity had seemed to them so strange in the midst of their agitation and trouble, begins to work.

'We must, dear; it is only a step to the outhouses. We can run across in a second. It is not as if we were going to remain out in the open. It is only from one roof to another.'

'It does not matter if it is only for the hundredth part of a second,' says the poor old lady, the walking image of a past time, her face beginning to work still more. 'If I only put my head out of doors, the——' (she checks herself as she glances at Mrs. Fane) 'you know what will happen.'

It may safely be said that Mrs. Fane now takes a much deeper interest in the poor old lady's illness than she had done before.

'Only to the godown, dear.'

The godown, or store-room, stood only a few yards from the house, along the side of the compound facing the gateway.

'It is only a step—a hop, skip, and a jump.'

'I cannot go out of the house! I cannot go out of the house!' the poor old lady now begins almost to scream.

'For my sake, dear,' says the daughter, pleadingly.

'I cannot! I cannot!' says the mother, still more vehemently.

'You must come, dear, because Mrs. Fane and her daughters are here. You would not have anything happen to them in our house?'

'Of course not, my dear; most certainly not. You go with them, Kate; I can remain in the house by myself.'

'How can you? They will injure you—hurt you—annoy you.'

Mrs. Fane does not view the old lady's weakness with the same tenderness that her daughter does. She thinks that she could overcome it if she would only try—'make an effort,' that effort which is so much easier to recommend than make, which seems so easy in the case of others, so difficult in our own. At all events, this is not the time for gentle dealing.

'Do you not see, madam, that by giving way to this foolish fancy of yours—how can the heavens fall?—you may cause us to lose our lives; that by this delay you are exposing your daughter, my daughters, to the most frightful risk?'

She speaks in a stern tone of voice. At the mere sound of it the poor afflicted lady had shrunk back a little.

'Oh, you must not speak harshly to her,' says her daughter to Mrs. Fane, in a low, quick whisper. 'She must not be thwarted; it may bring on a fit.'

She was quoting. How many years ago was it that the doctor had said, 'She must not be thwarted; it may bring on a fit'? In the interval between lay the vanished and sacrificed prime of her life. A few words which we can so easily utter may represent the misery of years in the life of another. Mrs. Fane hears the words with an angry impatience. But to Miss Lyster they represent the haunting horror of years: this has been the terror that has weighed upon her for years, that her mother should have a sudden seizure, brought on perhaps by some unavoidable opposition to her wishes, her whims and fancies, and should die in it.

'It is for your own sakes that I cannot go out with you,' says the old lady, replying to Mrs. Fane.

'For our own sakes?' says Mrs. Fane impatiently.

'Yes, for your own sakes. You don't know it, but if I were to go out of doors with you the sky would fall, and then we should all be killed. I do not want you to be killed. It would be my doing—it would be murder.'

Mrs. Fane feels as if she were distracted. What is to be done? They cannot leave Mrs. Lyster in the house by herself, and it appears as if they shall not be able to get her out of it. And the crowd may soon be surging up to the house. It is maddening, thinks Mrs. Fane as she glances at her daughters.

The description of Mrs. Lyster's appearance and condition, which was necessary, or seemed necessary, has caused her entrance into the room to seem far back. But between it and the present

moment but a brief interval has elapsed, and yet even in that brief interval the noise of the shouting has increased.

‘Another crowd has come and joined the other one,’ said one servant, an eager-eyed young fellow, to whom all this seems like a play or spectacle, who had just come in from without, to the fellow-servant by whose side he had placed himself.

And now there comes a sudden crash, and the character of the noise has changed: the shrill yelling and howling of the crowd is accompanied by a heavy thud, as the continuous rattle of musketry may be accompanied by the discharge of a heavy gun, with its deeper roar, in slower sequence.

‘They have brought a beam,’ says the same young fellow, who has run out and run in again, eagerly to Ruheem Buksh, the old khansaman, by whose side he has now placed himself. ‘They will soon break the gate in now.’ He wonders what will happen then.

‘You must not remain here talking any longer,’ says the old man to Miss Lyster; ‘you must get into hiding at once.’

‘I cannot persuade the “big lady”—meaning her mother—to leave the house.’

‘Then she must be made to,’ says the old man. ‘You catch her left arm, Tulsi’ (to the young servant), and, stepping forward, he seizes the old lady by the right arm, and the two men run her out of the room and across the verandah, and then across the few yards of the open to the door of the godown, and put her in—the others, her daughter and Mrs. Fane and her daughters, rush in close behind her. Mrs. Lyster was as it were hurried off her legs. She had been run across the open, had passed from under the inimical sky to under the friendly roof before she had even time to scream. She was so slight and slender that they had no difficulty in hurrying her along; her weight afforded no impediment. But, over and above all this, the extraordinary circumstance of their daring to touch her, to lay their hands, their black hands, upon her, had paralysed her. She was so overpowered for the moment that she passed beneath the open sky without her hallucination having had time to act upon her; otherwise it might have endowed her with that terrible epileptic strength against which the two men would not have been able to cope.

The godown was a long, narrow, earthen-floored room. It had one window in the end looking towards the house, to which there were no shutters, only wooden bars across it, and one

doorway, the one they had gone in by, the door of which was wanting, probably for the reason that nothing of any value had been kept in the place for a long time back; there were now in it only some old deal cases and some bundles of firewood.

The old servant who has accompanied Mrs. Fane looks at this open doorway with a troubled face.

'They are not safe in there,' he says to Mrs. Lyster's old khansaman.

'They can hide themselves in the far corner behind the firewood; it is dark there. And if any one comes up to the doorway he will see at once that there is no need for him to go in, that there is nothing there for him to take.'

'They may go rummaging about the place—and those white dresses are so easily seen; and there are five of them. It would be better to get the ladies down to the farther offices.'

'We could not get my mistress there—never. The demon would get hold of her, work within her, and she would fall on the ground and roll about and tear herself, and we should not be able to move her.'

In India almost every disease is still held due to some malign supernatural agency; men are there still possessed of devils.

'Otherwise it would have been an excellent thing to have got them down to my house. They would have been quite safe within it. My wife is a *purda nashin*' (sitter behind the curtain).

In England we are apt to have only one idea in reference to this sitting-behind-the-veil, this 'zenana system' of the East—that it is a cruel tyranny, a horrid confinement, inflicted on the women by the men. We are not aware that the women themselves have a great pride and pleasure in it, regard it as an honour and a distinction, a mark of social position, of separation from the common herd, of delicacy and refinement, of ladyhood. Great as the difference between the two may seem, there is no doubt that the taking the veil in the Catholic Church was derived from this domestic custom of the East—from the taking of the veil, the sitting behind the curtain, of the girls of the better class when they had passed out of childhood and arrived at their early womanhood: in both cases the veil is the symbol of superior purity, of segregation. To become *purda nashin* is an object of ambition, of choice. When a man has risen in the world his wife will set up her *purdah*, as with us in a similar case she would set

up her carriage. When Ruheem Buksh had been only a poor khidmutgar, his first wife, having to do all the marketing and perform all the domestic duties, had used the veil only to the same extent as the wife of any other servant in the compound : but now that he was a khansaman, a man of means, and could keep a little servant-girl, his second young wife was a *purda nashin* ; a peculiar sanctity now attaches to her person and her chamber—that was now sacred ground, safe from all intrusion : no man dare set foot in it. That was why the old khansaman said that the ladies would be quite safe if they could only enter it.

Then a bright idea comes into Mrs. Fane's servant's head : 'Why not pretend that this is your house—that the people of your household' (it would have been held indelicate for him to say 'your wife') 'are within—why not hang up a curtain to this door?'

'Good—well thought of! It shall be done.' And the old man hurries away, and then soon comes back again in company of another servant who helps him to carry a charpoy, one of the common, rude, light bedsteads, on which he has thrown a *pardah* or curtain. The curtain is soon hung up before the doorway and the bedstead placed across it, and the two old men—the old khansaman and Mrs. Fane's bearer—place themselves upon it.

In the meantime the stout gate still continues to resist the pushing and hammering brought to bear upon it. It is creaking and bending, and some of the planks have started, and the central chain has given way ; but the bolt at the bottom, a thick iron rod dropping into a socket in a slab of stone, still holds good and prevents the gate from being thrust open.

'We shall not be able to effect an entrance in this way for hours,' cries a man in the crowd, impatient for the plunder. 'Hoist me up to the top of the wall, and I will drop down on the inside and draw up that incestuous bottom bolt.'

So said, so done.

'Keep back from the gate until I open it for you,' the man had said before being hoisted on to the wall. 'If you keep pushing at it you will knock me down.'

There is a sudden silence, all the deeper because of the preceding din and clamour—because of the preceding rattling and crashing, and resonance and reverberation. The fast-beating hearts of the English women, cowering down in the dust behind the brushwood in that far-distant stifling corner, now stand still. What may this silence forebode? Can the crowd have moved

away? Have some guardians of law and order appeared upon the scene? That hope is soon extinguished. The gate has been pushed open and the crowd heaves into the enclosure with a sudden terrible yell. The hearts of the English women contract with a sickening spasm. The pressure from behind carries the foremost men of the crowd right up to their hiding-place, which, as has been said, stands directly facing the gateway. But soon the crowd is moving across the enclosure in the form of a quadrant, one end of which rests on the gateway and the other on the front of the house, which stands at right angles to the wall in which the gateway is situated. This stream soon swells and widens and loses its form; the crowd has passed in at the gateway, and the space in front of the house is inundated with human beings. And now there is a hideous commingling of sounds, of the shouting of men and the shrill yelling of women and boys, of shrieks and calls and cries, of fierce objurgation and contention, of the upsetting and breaking of furniture, the smashing of crockery and glass. These are awful moments to those in hiding in the godown. They are moments of agony, like those of one struggling in the water for his life and having the noise of the breakers in his ears. When they had first settled themselves down in that stifling corner they had thought of the terrible heat—it had been like stepping into a fiery furnace. But now, when the awful clamour, the sound of the rushing feet, the shouting just without that open doorway, guarded only by a curtain, close outside the shutterless window, informs them that the place is in possession of the mob, they lose all consciousness of anything else in an overpowering rush of fear; for some moments they have lost their senses in a swoon of terror—all but Mrs. Lyster.

‘My dear Kate, I am very glad that we got in here from under the sky; but why should we sit in this corner? You know there is always danger of snakes in these corners. You ought not even to put your hand into a corner; it is always dangerous. When we were at Dinapore we had such a nice young lad as under-bearer, and he went into a godown like this one to get something, and it was lying in a corner, I suppose like this one, behind some boxes, and instead of moving the boxes away first, as he should have done, he put his hand down behind them, and a cobra bit him on the finger and he was dead in a few hours, poor boy,’ says the old lady.

But the moments, the first terrible moments have gone by, and no one has entered their place of refuge; it is evident that the attention of the people is concentrated on the house. It is the first shock of danger or misfortune that overpowers; then the lost senses come back, the mind recovers its power of action. It is the first entry on a novel situation that confuses; then comes the sense of familiarity—and it is curious how soon the sense of familiarity may arise even in circumstances of very great danger. But, apart from this, Mrs. Fane has blue blood in her veins—comes of a proud, spirited race, with whom the way of the lion and not the way of the ostrich was the way of meeting danger. They were courageous without thinking, but they also held that cowardice was not only shameful but foolish; that courage was wisdom, best conduced to your own safety; the path of honour was the path of safety; the coward only provoked and invited the danger he wished to avoid—his legs lost the power of running away; never give in; fight it out; keep the seeing eye, the steady heart, the thinking head, the striking arm to the very last. This danger weighs on her so terribly because of her daughters. But this crouching down is irksome to her proud spirit. She must see what is going on. So she steps from the corner and walks to the barred window at the end of the room. She places herself on one side of it. The hanging up of the curtain to the doorway has had the additional advantage of making it very dark in the room—anyone standing out in the dazzling sunshine at some distance from the window could not see anything through it.

It is a strange and terrible sight. The bamboo screens have been torn down from the front of the verandah, from the many outer doorways, and the doors so jealously closed to keep out the heat have all been thrown wide open; the curtained, closed, homelike, secure look of the place is gone; it looks unclothed, its sanctity fled; it is being profaned, violated; rude feet intrude into what a few moments before was a sanctuary. An Indian home, with its numerous doorways and rooms opening into one another, lends itself to plunder, to the speedy removal of all that is in it. And as the crowd of marauders swarm upon the house as thickly as a flight of locusts upon a tree, so do they clear it as quickly and completely as the locusts clear the tree of its foliage and leave the branches bare. The people, the men and women, and the boys and girls, and the little children, are making away as fast as they

can with what they have been able to get hold of. Most of the men have only their caps or turbans on their heads, their loin-cloths round their loins: how their dark bodies glisten with the abundant moisture! Right opposite to the window are the two doorways leading into the drawing-room, whose rarely valuable and artistic adornment had so taken Beatrice and Lilian Fane by surprise a few, fifteen or twenty, minutes ago—and from these Mrs. Fane sees the three-quarter naked men, the women whose thrown-back sheets give to view the whole expanse between the top line of the petticoat and the bottom line of the bodice—they are within fifteen yards of her—pour forth with its beautiful contents in their dirty naked arms. Costly vases are being carried away in grimy hands that have probably never held anything but an earthen pipkin before. A boy is dragging away through the dust a valuable carpet that he cannot carry. Beautiful shawls are clasped under reeking armpits. There is the sound of destruction within the apartment: a picture comes skimming out of one of the doorways and lies there in the dust.

Mrs. Fane can see the dark excited faces. It is strange to have them so near her. She notes, with a feeling of satisfaction, how intent the crowd is upon its work. It seems to have no thought of any other part of the premises than the dwelling-place—and the gateway. No one approaches the godown: no one seems even to look towards it. There is of course a great deal in the house which the plunderers cannot or do not care to carry away—difference of habit rendering them of no use to themselves and their fellow-countrymen—especially at such a moment as this. To-morrow the place will be completely cleared out. To-morrow the furniture-makers and furniture-dealers will come and remove the tables, and sofas, and such like things to their workshops and warehouses. To-morrow no man will be afraid to have an English article, such as an easy-chair, standing conspicuous in front of his miserable little hut. But just now the object is to get possession of the things that can be easily carried away and easily concealed—to get hold of them as quickly as possible, and get away with them as quickly as possible. Mrs. Fane notes, again with satisfaction, how fast the crowd is thinning. Soon there are but a few people left about the house. Then Mrs. Fane gives a start. A horseman dashes in at the open gateway and pulls up his foaming steed close in front of the godown. She knows that French-grey uniform very well. He waves his bloody

sword in the air and shouts out: 'Where are those Christian dogs? Bring them out that I may slay them.'

'There are none here,' says the old khansaman seated on the bedstead in front of the doorway.

'Where have they gone to?'

'To the Jumoo Gate.'

'Then I may find them on the road,' and the young fellow turns his horse round and dashes away again.

'What!' says a man from a neighbouring bazaar who knows the premises well, to the old khansaman—'what! have you made this godown your home?'

'Yes,' replies the old man, quietly.

'Since when?' says the fellow, glancing suspiciously at the curtain.

'Oh, since a few days ago.'

'A few days ago! I was here yesterday evening, and you were in the old place then.'

'You mind your own business, and look out for yourself, you thieving scoundrel, for here are some of the Grenadiers from the cantonment.'

And it was even so. A corporal's guard of the Grenadiers is at this moment marching in through the gateway.

'You have come to take the ladies away?' cries the old man, jumping up and running towards them.

'Yes,' says the corporal in charge.

'God be praised!' cries the old man; and, running back, he pushes aside the curtain and calls to those within.

'Come out! come out! A guard of sepoy's has come to take you away.'

Mrs. Fane's heart gives a leap of joy that is almost painful. She and her daughters are soon at the door. The heat and the glare without are terrible. But they step out into them with a feeling of delight. The open air which they would have so dreaded yesterday is most welcome to them now. They have escaped from the gin, the net; they have come out of the jaws of death.

'But you *must* come out, madam,' the old khansaman is heard exclaiming pleadingly. 'You cannot remain here for ever.'

'I *must* remain here for ever now,' replies the old lady. 'I must remain here now until I die.'

'The house has been plundered, mother, and we must go

away from it for a time, dear ; and we have no time to lose. Come out, dear !' her daughter is heard exclaiming coaxingly.

'But I cannot.'

'If you remain I must remain with you, and we shall both be killed.'

'Perhaps not. But if I were to step out to you now'—she was standing just within the doorway and her daughter and the khansaman just without—'we should both most certainly be killed. I could not do it.'

'This is very strange,' says the corporal of the guard, who has stepped up to the doorway. 'Are not you, madam'—addressing Mrs. Lyster—'the wife of the Colonel Sahib who commanded the 31st regiment, the *Gillis ki pultun*' (Gillies' regiment)?

'Yes,' says Mrs. Lyster, starting and trembling.

'You remember the Soubahdar Bhowanny Singh?'

'Of course—of course.'

'I am his son. I was first in the same regiment, though I am now in the Grenadiers. My name is Heera Lall. I used to go with the Soubahdar Bhowanny Singh, my father, very often to your house, and the Colonel Sahib and yourself showed me great kindness and favour.'

'The Soubahdar Bhowanny Singh! My poor husband liked him very much—and you are his son?'

and she steps out and looks at him and bursts into tears.

'I have been sent to bring you to the Jumoo Gate. We must not delay. Strange, most strange, that I should be the means of saving your life—that it should be so written in the book of fate! It is in return for your kindness to me.'

The party moves off, the afflicted old lady prattling away to the naik. This present present is very present to the others, the dead and gone past more present to her. As they move away Miss Lyster glances towards the house. She should like to run in and bring away those bundles of letters which hold the only memorial of the lost looks and words of love—of that precious love which had to be sacrificed on the altar of filial piety. But after all they are safe enough where they are. They are not likely to be carried away. They are more precious than gems to her, but to no one else. And the wave of destruction has passed ; the burst of lawlessness is over. The arrival of these sepoys shows that peace and order are about to resume their sway. They will be back in the house in the evening.

The road to the Jumoo Gate now lies safe and open. The news of the arrival of the Grenadiers has had its effect. The five Englishwomen have soon reached the gate. They pass in through the wicket. Their hearts jump for joy. Sweet is security, delightful the sense of escape from danger. How rapturous the feel of the firm land after that of the unsustaining, engulfing water! William Hay runs forward to meet them. Imagine the rapture of that meeting. He clasps Beatrice by the hand: how fervent his 'Thank God!' Lilian's youthful spirits recover themselves with a bound. She feels inclined to skip and laugh. Her bright blue eyes go roving around. They come to a stand on some ladies' dresses lying there on the ground. What! surely she knows the pattern? Yes—they are her sister's and her own; there are no others like them in the station—they were a novelty even in England. Beatrice and William Hay and her mother are entirely occupied with one another. Mrs. Fane has some eager questions to ask. She, Lilian, will bring up one of the dresses and surprise Beatrice. She moves towards them quietly and unperceived—they are not very far off. She lifts one up. She stands there holding it in her hand, transfixed, horror-stricken. She has uncovered the bodies of young Walton and young Hill, lying there so terribly close together, lying there side by side in the deep sound sleep of death, as they had lain side by side that morning in the deep sound sleep of youthfulness and perfect health—chums still. She is gazing down on the face, the ghastly face, of her poor boy-lover—the rigid face she had always seen so animated, so full of mirth and gaiety; her horrified eyes are riveted on those fixed, wide-open, upturned, glazed, unlooking eyes which she had last seen so full of boyish tenderness, so full of pleading, of a boyish gravity that would have seemed so ludicrous to an older looker-on: there is nothing ludicrous in them now. And then she throws the dress back with a shriek. Then William Hay, seeing what has happened, hurries to the spot, and quickly readjusting the dress—how the poor, fond, dead boy would have trembled at the touch of it a few hours before (strange that it should come to form his winding-sheet)!—takes Lilian by the arm and leads her trembling and sobbing away, hurries them all away from the spot, and conducts them up to his quarters.

(To be continued.)

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BY A. CONAN DOYLE,
AUTHOR OF 'MICAH CLARKE.'

CHAPTER V.

HOW A STRANGE COMPANY GATHERED AT THE 'PIED MERLIN.'

THE night had already fallen, and the moon was shining between the rifts of ragged drifting clouds, before Alleyne Edricson, foot-sore and weary from the unwonted exercise, found himself in front of the forest inn which stood upon the outskirts of Lyndhurst. The building was long and low, standing back a little from the road, with two flambeaux blazing on either side of the door as a welcome to the traveller. From one window there thrust forth a long pole with a bunch of greenery tied to the end of it—a sign that liquor was to be sold within. As Alleyne walked up to it he perceived that it was rudely fashioned out of beams of wood, with twinkling lights all over where the glow from within shone through the chinks. The roof was poor and thatched; but in strange contrast to it there ran all along under the eaves a line of wooden shields, most gorgeously painted with chevron, bend, and saltire, and every heraldic device. By the door a horse stood tethered, the ruddy glow beating strongly upon his brown head and patient eyes, while his body stood back in the shadow.

Alleyne stood still in the roadway for a few minutes reflecting upon what he should do. It was, he knew, only a few miles further to Minstead, where his brother dwelt. On the other hand, he had never seen this brother since childhood, and the reports which had come to his ears concerning him were seldom to his

advantage. By all accounts he was a hard and a bitter man. It might be an evil start to come to his door so late and claim the shelter of his roof. Better to sleep here at this inn, and then travel on to Minstead in the morning. If his brother would take him in, well and good. He would bide with him for a time and do what he might to serve him. If, on the other hand, he should have hardened his heart against him, he could only go on his way and do the best he might by his skill as a craftsman and a scrivener. At the end of a year he would be free to return to the cloisters, for such had been his father's bequest. A monkish upbringing, one year in the world after the age of twenty, and then a free selection one way or the other—it was a strange course which had been marked out for him. Such as it was, however, he had no choice but to follow it, and if he were to begin by making a friend of his brother he had best wait until morning before he knocked at his dwelling.

The rude plank door was ajar, but as Alleyne approached it there came from within such a gust of rough laughter and clatter of tongues that he stood irresolute upon the threshold. Summoning courage, however, and reflecting that it was a public dwelling, in which he had as much right as any other man, he pushed it open and stepped into the common room.

Though it was an autumn evening and somewhat warm, a huge fire of heaped billets of wood crackled and sparkled in a broad, open grate, some of the smoke escaping up a rude chimney, but the greater part rolling out into the room, so that the air was thick with it, and a man coming from without could scarce catch his breath. On this fire a great cauldron bubbled and simmered, giving forth a rich and promising smell. Seated round it were a dozen or so folk, of all ages and conditions, who set up such a shout as Alleyne entered that he stood peering at them through the smoke, uncertain what this riotous greeting might portend.

'A rouse! A rouse!' cried one rough-looking fellow in a tattered jerkin. 'One more round of mead or ale and the score to the last comer.'

'Tis the law of the "Pied Merlin,"' shouted another. 'Ho, there, Dame Eliza! Here is fresh custom come to the house, and not a drain for the company.'

'I will take your orders, gentles; I will assuredly take your orders,' the landlady answered, bustling in with her hands full of leathern drinking-cups. 'What is it that you drink, then? Beer

for the lads of the forest, mead for the gleeman, strong waters for the tinker, and wine for the rest. It is an old custom of the house, young sir. It has been the use at the "Pied Merlin" this many a year back that the company should drink to the health of the last comer. Is it your pleasure to humour it?'

'Why, good dame,' said Alleyne, 'I would not offend the customs of your house, but it is only sooth when I say that my purse is a thin one. As far as two pence will go, however, I shall be right glad to do my part.'

'Plainly said and bravely spoken, my sucking friar,' roared a deep voice, and a heavy hand fell upon Alleyne's shoulder. Looking up, he saw beside him his former cloister companion, the renegade monk, Hordle John.

'By the thorn of Glastonbury! ill days are coming upon Beau-lieu,' said he. 'Here they have got rid in one day of the only two men within their walls—for I have had mine eyes upon thee, youngster, and I know that for all thy baby-face there is the making of a man in thee. Then there is the Abbot, too. I am no friend of his, nor he of mine; but he has warm blood in his veins. He is the only man left among them. The others, what are they?'

'They are holy men,' Alleyne answered gravely.

'Holy men? Holy cabbages! Holy bean-pods! What do they do but live and suck in sustenance and grow fat. If that be holiness, I could show you hogs in this forest who are fit to head the calendar. Think you it was for such a life that this good arm was fixed upon my shoulder, or that head placed upon your neck? There is work in the world, man, and it is not by hiding behind stone walls that we shall do it.'

'Why, then, did you join the brothers?' asked Alleyne.

'A fair enough question; but it is as fairly answered. I joined them because Margery AlsPAYE, of Bolder, married Crooked Thomas of Ringwood, and left a certain John of Hordle in the cold, for that he was a ranting roving blade who was not to be trusted in wedlock. That was why, being fond and hot-headed, I left the world; and that is why, having had time to take thought, I am right glad to find myself back in it once more. Ill betide the day that ever I took off my yeoman's jerkin to put on the white gown!'

Whilst he was speaking the landlady came in again, bearing a broad platter, upon which stood all the beakers and flagons

charged to the brim with the brown ale or the ruby wine. Behind her came a maid with a high pile of wooden plates, and a great sheaf of spoons, one of which she handed round to each of the travellers. Two of the company, who were dressed in the weather-stained green doublet of foresters, lifted the big pot off the fire, and a third, with a huge pewter ladle, served out a portion of steaming collops to each guest. Alleyne bore his share and his ale-mug away with him to a retired trestle in the corner, where he could sup in peace and watch the strange scene, which was so different to those silent and well-ordered meals to which he was accustomed.

The room was not unlike a stable. The low ceiling, smoke-blackened and dingy, was pierced by several square trap-doors with rough-hewn ladders leading up to them. The walls of bare unpainted planks were studded here and there with great wooden pins, placed at irregular intervals and heights, from which hung overtunics, wallets, whips, bridles, and saddles. Over the fireplace were suspended six or seven shields of wood, with coats-of-arms rudely daubed upon them, which showed by their varying degrees of smokiness and dirt that they had been placed there at different periods. There was no furniture, save a single long dresser covered with coarse crockery, and a number of wooden benches and trestles, the legs of which sank deeply into the soft clay floor, while the only light, save that of the fire, was furnished by three torches stuck in sockets on the wall, which flickered and crackled, giving forth a strong resinous odour. All this was novel and strange to the cloister-bred youth; but most interesting of all was the motley circle of guests who sat eating their collops round the blaze. They were a humble group of wayfarers, such as might have been found that night in any inn through the length and breadth of England; but to him they represented that vague world against which he had been so frequently and so earnestly warned. It did not seem to him from what he could see of it to be such a very wicked place after all.

Three or four of the men round the fire were evidently under-keepers and verderers from the forest, sunburned and bearded, with the quick restless eye and lithe movements of the deer among which they lived. Close to the corner of the chimney sat a middle-aged gleeman, clad in a faded garb of Norwich cloth, the tunic of which was so outgrown that it did but fasten at the neck and at the waist. His face was swollen and coarse, and his watery protruding eyes spoke of a life which never wandered very far

from the wine-pot. A gilt harp, blotched with many stains and with two of its strings missing, was tucked under one of his arms, while with the other he scooped greedily at his platter. Next to him sat two other men of about the same age, one with a trimming of fur to his coat, which gave him a dignity which was evidently dearer to him than his comfort, for he still drew it round him in spite of the hot glare of the faggots. The other, clad in a dirty russet suit with a long sweeping doublet, had a cunning foxy face with keen twinkling eyes and a peaky beard. Next to him sat Hordle John, and beside him three other rough unkempt fellows with tangled beards and matted hair—free labourers from the adjoining farms, where small patches of freehold property had been suffered to remain scattered about in the heart of the royal demesne. The company was completed by a peasant in a rude dress of undyed sheepskin, with the old-fashioned galligaskins about his legs, and a gaily dressed young man with striped cloak jagged at the edges and parti-coloured hosen, who looked about him with high disdain upon his face, and held a blue smelling-flask to his nose with one hand, while he brandished a busy spoon with the other. In the corner a very fat man was lying all asprawl upon a truss, snoring stertorously, and evidently in the last stage of drunkenness.

‘That is Wat the limner,’ quoth the landlady, sitting down beside Alleyne, and pointing with the ladle to the sleeping man. ‘That is he who paints the signs and the tokens. Alack and alas that ever I should have been fool enough to trust him! Now, young man, what manner of a bird would you suppose a pied merlin to be—that being the proper sign of my hostel?’

‘Why,’ said Alleyne, ‘a merlin is a bird of the same form as an eagle or a falcon. I can well remember that learned brother Bartholomew, who is deep in all the secrets of Nature, pointed one out to me as we walked together near Vinney Ridge.’

‘A falcon or an eagle, quotha? And pied, that is of two several colours. So any man would say except this barrel of lies. He came to me, look you, saying that if I would furnish him with a gallon of ale, wherewith to strengthen himself as he worked, and also the pigments and a board, he would paint for me a noble pied merlin which I might hang along with the blazonry over my door. I, poor simple fool, gave him the ale and all that he craved, leaving him alone too, because he said that a man’s mind must be left untroubled when he had great work to do. When I came

back the gallon jar was empty, and he lay as you see him, with the board in front of him with this sorry device.' She raised up a panel which was leaning against the wall, and showed a rude painting of a scraggy and angular fowl, with very long legs and a spotted body.

'Was that,' she asked, 'like the bird which thou hast seen?'

Alleyne shook his head, smiling.

'No, nor any other bird that ever wagged a feather. It is most like a plucked pullet which has died of the spotted fever. And scarlet, too! What would the gentles, Sir Nicholas Boarhunte, or Sir Bernard Brocas, of Roche Court, say if they saw such a thing—or, perhaps, even the King's own Majesty himself, who often has ridden past this way, and who loves his falcons as he loves his sons? It would be the downfall of my house.'

'The matter is not past mending,' said Alleyne. 'I pray you, good dame, to give me those three pigment-pots and the brush, and I shall try whether I cannot better this painting.'

Dame Eliza looked doubtfully at him, as though fearing some other stratagem, but, as he made no demand for ale, she finally brought the paints, and watched him as he smeared on his background, talking the while about the folk round the fire.

'The four forest lads must be jogging soon,' she said. 'They bide at Emery Down, a mile or more from here. Yeomen prickers they are, who tend to the King's hunt. The gleeman is called Floyting Will. He comes from the north-country, but for many years he hath gone the round of the forest from Southampton to Christchurch. He drinks much and pays little; but it would make your ribs crackle to hear him sing the "Jest of Hendy Tobias." Mayhap he will sing it when the ale has warmed him.'

'Who are those next to him?' asked Alleyne, much interested.

'He of the fur mantle has a wise and reverent face.'

'He is a seller of pills and salves, very learned in humours, and rheums, and fluxes, and all manner of ailments. He wears, as you perceive, the vernicle of Sainted Luke, the first physician, upon his sleeve. May good St. Thomas of Kent grant that it may be long before either I or mine need his help! He is here to-night for herbergage, as are the others except the foresters. His neighbour is a tooth-drawer. That bag at his girdle is full of the teeth that he drew at Winchester Fair. I warrant that there are more sound ones than sorry, for he is quick at his work and a trifle dim in the eye. The lusty man next him with the

red head I have not seen before. The four on this side are all workers, three of them in the service of the bailiff of Sir Baldwin Redvers, and the other, he with the sheepskin, is, as I hear, a villein from the midlands who hath run from his master. His year and day are well-nigh up, when he will be a free man.'

'And the other?' asked Alleyne in a whisper. 'He is surely some very great man, for he looks as though he scorned those who were about him.'

The landlady looked at him in a motherly way and shook her head. 'You have had no great truck with the world,' she said, 'or you would have learned that it is the small men and not the great who hold their noses in the air. Look at those shields upon my wall and under my eaves. Each of them is the device of some noble lord or gallant knight who hath slept under my roof at one time or another. Yet milder men or easier to please I have never seen: eating my bacon and drinking my wine with a merry face, and paying my score with some courteous word or jest which was dearer to me than my profit. Those are the true gentles. But your chapman or your bearward will swear that there is a lime in the wine, and water in the ale, and fling off at the last with a curse instead of a blessing. This youth is a scholar from Cambrig, where men are wont to be blown out by a little knowledge, and lose the use of their hands in learning the laws of the Romans. But I must away to lay down the beds. So may the saints keep you and prosper you in your undertaking!'

Thus left to himself, Alleyne drew his panel of wood where the light of one of the torches would strike full upon it, and worked away with all the pleasure of the trained craftsman, listening the while to the talk which went on round the fire. The peasant in the sheepskins, who had sat glum and silent all evening, had been so heated by his flagon of ale that he was talking loudly and angrily with clenched hands and flashing eyes.

'Sir Humphrey Tennant of Ashby may till his own fields for me,' he cried. 'The castle has thrown its shadow upon the cottage over long. For three hundred years my folk have swinked and sweated, day in and day out, to keep the wine on the lord's table and the harness on the lord's back. Let him take off his plates and delve himself, if delving must be done.'

'A proper spirit, my fair son!' said one of the free labourers. 'I would that all men were of thy way of thinking.'

‘He would have sold me with his acres,’ the other cried, in a voice which was hoarse with passion. ‘“The man, the woman and their litter”—so ran the words of the dotard bailiff. Never a bullock on the farm was sold more lightly. Ha! he may wake some black night to find the flames licking about his ears—for fire is a good friend to the poor man, and I have seen a smoking heap of ashes where overnight there stood just such another castlewick as Ashby.’

‘This is a lad of metal!’ shouted another of the labourers. ‘He dares to give tongue to what all men think. Are we not all from Adam’s loins, all with flesh and blood, and with the same mouth that must needs have food and drink? Where all this difference then between the ermine cloak and the leathern tunic, if what they cover is the same?’

‘Aye, Jenkin,’ said another, ‘our foeman is under the stole and the vestment as much as under the helmet and plate of proof. We have as much to fear from the tonsure as from the hauberk. Strike at the noble and the priest shrieks, strike at the priest and the noble lays his hand upon glaive. They are twin thieves who live upon our labour.’

‘It would take a clever man to live upon thy labour, Hugh,’ remarked one of the foresters ‘seeing that the half of thy time is spent in swilling mead at the “Pied Merlin.”’

‘Better that than stealing the deer that thou art placed to guard, like some folk I know.’

‘If you dare open that swine’s mouth against me,’ shouted the woodman, ‘I’ll crop your ears for you before the hangman has the doing of it, thou long-jawed lack-brain.’

‘Nay, gentles, gentles!’ cried Dame Eliza, in a sing-song heedless voice, which showed that such bickerings were nightly things among her guests. ‘No brawling or brabbling, gentles! Take heed to the good names of the house.’

‘Besides, if it comes to the cropping of ears, there are other folk who may say their say,’ quoth the third labourer. ‘We are all freemen, and I trow that a yeoman’s cudgel is as good as a forester’s knife. By St. Anselm! it would be an evil day if we had to bend to our masters’ servants as well as to our masters.’

‘No man is my master save the King,’ the woodman answered. ‘Who is there, save a false traitor, who would refuse to serve the English king?’

‘I know not about the English king,’ said the man Jenkin,

‘What sort of English king is it who cannot lay his tongue to a word of English? You mind last year when he came down to Malwood, with his inner marshal and his outer marshal, his justiciar, his seneschal, and his four-and-twenty guardsmen. One noontide I was by Franklin Swinton’s gate, when up he rides with a yeoman prickler at his heels. “Ouvre,” he cried, “ouvre,” or some such word, making sign for me to open the gate; and then “Merci,” as though he were adrad of me. And you talk of an English king!’

‘I do not marvel at it,’ cried the Cambrig scholar, speaking in the high drawling voice which was common among his class. ‘It is not a tongue for men of sweet birth and delicate upbringing. It is a foul, snorting, snarling manner of speech. For myself, I swear by the learned Polycarp that I have most ease with Hebrew, and after that perchance with Arabian.’

‘I will not hear a word said against old King Ned,’ cried Hordle John in a voice like a bull. ‘What if he is fond of a bright eye and a saucy face. I know one of his subjects who could match him at that. If he cannot speak like an Englishman I trow that he can fight like an Englishman, and he was hammering at the gates of Paris while alehouse toppers were grutching and grumbling at home.’

This loud speech, coming from a man of so formidable an appearance, somewhat daunted the disloyal party, and they fell into a sullen silence, which enabled Alleyne to hear something of the talk which was going on in the farther corner between the physician, the tooth-drawer and the gleeman.

‘A raw rat,’ the man of drugs was saying, ‘that is what it is ever my use to order for the plague—a raw rat with its paunch cut open.’

‘Might it not be broiled, most learned sir?’ asked the tooth-drawer. ‘A raw rat sounds a most sorry and cheerless dish.’

‘Not to be eaten,’ cried the physician, in high disdain. ‘Why should any man eat such a thing?’

‘Why, indeed?’ asked the gleeman, taking a long drain at his tankard.

‘It is to be placed on the sore or swelling. For the rat, mark you, being a foul-living creature, hath a natural drawing or affinity for all foul things, so that the noxious humours pass from the man into the unclean beast.’

‘Would that cure the black death, master?’ asked Jenkin.

‘Aye, truly would it, my fair son.’

‘Then I am right glad that there were none who knew of it. The black death is the best friend that ever the common folk had in England.’

‘How that then?’ asked Hordle John.

‘Why, friend, it is easy to see that you have not worked with your hands, or you would not need to ask. When half the folk in the country were dead it was then that the other half could pick and choose who they would work for, and for what wage. That is why I say that the murrain was the best friend that the borel folk ever had.’

‘True, Jenkin,’ said another workman; ‘but it is not all good that is brought by it either. We well know that through it cornland has been turned into pasture, so that flocks of sheep with perchance a single shepherd wander now where once a hundred men had work and wage.’

‘There is no great harm in that,’ remarked the tooth-drawer, ‘for the sheep give many folk their living. There is not only the herd, but the shearer and brander, and then the dresser, the curer, the dyer, the fuller, the webster, the merchant, and a score of others.’

‘If it come to that,’ said one of the foresters, ‘the tough meat of them will wear folks’ teeth out, and there is a trade for the man who can draw them.’

A general laugh followed this sally at the dentist’s expense, in the midst of which the gleeman placed his battered harp upon his knee, and began to pick out a melody upon the frayed strings.

‘Elbow room for Floyting Will!’ cried the woodmen. ‘Twang us a merry lilt.’

‘Aye, aye, the “Lasses of Lancaster,”’ one suggested.

‘Or “St. Simeon and the Devil.”’

‘Or the “Jest of Hendy Tobias.”’

To all these suggestions the jongleur made no response, but sat with his eye fixed abstractedly upon the ceiling, as one who calls words to his mind. Then, with a sudden sweep across the strings, he broke out into a song so gross and so foul that ere he had finished a verse the pure-minded lad sprang to his feet with the blood tingling in his face.

‘How can you sing such things?’ he cried. ‘You, too, an old man who should be an example to others.’

The wayfarers all gazed in the utmost astonishment at the interruption.

‘By the holy Dicon of Hampole! our silent clerk has found his tongue,’ said one of the woodmen. ‘What is amiss with the song then? How has it offended your babyship?’

‘A milder and better mannered song hath never been heard within these walls,’ cried another. ‘What sort of talk is this for a public inn?’

‘Shall it be a litany, my good clerk?’ shouted a third; ‘or would a hymn be good enough to serve?’

The jongleur had put down his harp in high dudgeon. ‘Am I to be preached to by a child?’ he cried, staring across at Alleyne with an inflamed and angry countenance. ‘Is a hairless infant to raise his tongue against me, when I have sung in every fair from Tweed to Trent, and have twice been named aloud by the High Court of the Minstrels at Beverley? I shall sing no more to-night.’

‘Nay, but you will so,’ said one of the labourers. ‘Hi, Dame Eliza, bring a stoup of your best to Will to clear his throat. Go forward with thy song, and if our girl-faced clerk does not love it he can take to the road and go whence he came.’

‘Nay, but not too fast,’ broke in Hordle John. ‘There are two words in this matter. It may be that my little comrade has been over quick in reproof, he having gone early into the cloisters and seen little of the rough ways and words of the world. Yet there is truth in what he says, for, as you know well, the song was not of the cleanest. I shall stand by him, therefore, and he shall neither be put out on the road, nor shall his ears be offended indoors.’

‘Indeed, your high and mighty grace,’ sneered one of the yeomen, ‘have you in sooth so ordained?’

‘By the Virgin!’ said a second, ‘I think that you may both chance to find yourselves upon the road before long.’

‘And so belaboured as to be scarce able to crawl along it,’ cried a third.

‘Nay, I shall go! I shall go!’ said Alleyne hurriedly, as Hordle John began to slowly roll up his sleeve, and bare an arm like a leg of mutton. ‘I would not have you brawl about me.’

‘Hush! lad,’ he whispered, ‘I count them not a fly. They may find they have more tow on their distaff than they know how to spin. Stand thou clear and give me space.’

Both the foresters and the labourers had risen from their bench, and Dame Eliza and the travelling doctor had flung themselves between the two parties with soft words and soothing gestures, when the door of the 'Pied Merlin' was flung violently open, and the attention of the company was drawn from their own quarrel to the new-comer who had burst so unceremoniously upon them.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW SAMKIN AYLWARD WAGERED HIS FEATHER-BED.

HE was a middle-sized man, of most massive and robust build, with an arching chest and extraordinary breadth of shoulder. His shaven face was as brown as a hazel-nut, tanned and dried by the weather, with harsh well-marked features, which were not improved by a long white scar which stretched from the corner of his left nostril to the angle of the jaw. His eyes were bright and searching, with something of menace and of authority in their quick glitter, and his mouth was firm-set and hard, as befitted one who was wont to set his face against danger. A straight sword by his side and a painted long-bow jutting over his shoulder proclaimed his profession, while his scarred brigandine of chain-mail and his dinted steel cap showed that he was no holiday soldier, but one who was even now fresh from the wars. A white surcoat with the lion of St. George in red upon the centre covered his broad breast, while a sprig of new-plucked broom at the side of his headgear gave a touch of gaiety and grace to his grim war-worn equipment.

'Ha!' he cried, blinking like an owl in the sudden glare. 'Good even to you, camarades! Holà! a woman, by my soul!' and in an instant he had clipped Dame Eliza round the waist and was kissing her violently. His eye happening to wander upon the maid, however, he instantly abandoned the mistress and danced off after the other, who scurried in confusion up one of the ladders, and dropped the heavy trap-door upon her pursuer. He then turned back and saluted the landlady once more with the utmost relish and satisfaction.

'La petite is frightened,' said he. 'Ah, c'est l'amour, l'amour! Curse this trick of French, which will stick to my throat. I must wash it out with some good English ale. By my hilt! camarades,

there is no drop of French blood in my body, and I am a true English bowman, Samkin Aylward by name; and I tell you, mes amis, that it warms my very heart-roots to set my feet on the dear old land once more. When I came off the galley at Hythe, this very day, I down on my bones, and I kissed the good brown earth, as I kiss thee now, ma belle, for it was eight long years since I had seen it. The very smell of it seemed life to me. But where are my six rascals? Holà, there! En avant!

At the order, six men, dressed as common drudges, marched solemnly into the room, each bearing a huge bundle upon his head. They formed in military line, while the soldier stood in front of them with stern eyes, checking off their several packages.

‘Number one—a French feather-bed with the two counterpanes of white sandell,’ said he.

‘Here, worthy sir,’ answered the first of the bearers, laying a great package down in the corner.

‘Number two—seven ells of red Turkey cloth and nine ells of cloth of gold. Put it down by the other. Good dame, I prythee give each of these men a bottrine of wine or a jack of ale. Three—a full-piece of white Genoan velvet with twelve ells of purple silk. Thou rascal, there is dirt on the hem! Thou hast brushed it against some wall, coquin!’

‘Not I, most worthy sir,’ cried the carrier, shrinking away from the fierce eyes of the bowman.

‘I say yes, dog! By the three kings! I have seen a man gasp out his last breath for less. Had you gone through the pain and unease that I have done to earn these things you would be at more care. I swear by my ten finger-bones that there is not one of them that hath not cost its weight in French blood! Four—an incense-boat, an ewer of silver, a gold buckle and a cope worked in pearls. I found them, camarades, at the Church of St. Denis in the harrying of Narbonne, and I took them away with me lest they fall into the hands of the wicked. Five—a cloak of fur turned up with minever, a gold goblet with stand and cover, and a box of rose-coloured sugar. See that you lay them together. Six—a box of monies, three pounds of Limousine gold-work, a pair of boots, silver tagged, and, lastly, a store of naping linen. So, the tally is complete! Here is a groat apiece, and you may go.’

‘Go whither, worthy sir?’ asked one of the carriers.

‘Whither? To the devil if ye will. What is it to me? Now, ma belle, to supper. A pair of cold capons, a mortress of brawn, or what you will, with a flask or two of the right Gascony. I have crowns in my pouch, my sweet, and I mean to spend them. Bring in wine while the food is dressing. Buvons, my brave lads; you shall each empty a stoup with me.’

Here was an offer which the company in an English inn at that or any other date are slow to refuse. The flagons were regathered, and came back with the white foam dripping over their edges. Two of the woodmen and three of the labourers drank their portions off hurriedly and trooped off together, for their homes were distant and the hour late. The others, however, drew closer, leaving the place of honour to the right of the gleeman to the free-handed new-comer. He had thrown off his steel cap and his brigandine, and had placed them with his sword, his quiver and his painted long-bow, on the top of his varied heap of plunder in the corner. Now, with his thick and somewhat bowed legs stretched in front of the blaze, his green jerkin thrown open, and a great quart pot held in his corded fist, he looked the picture of comfort and of good-fellowship. His hard-set face had softened, and the thick crop of crisp brown curls which had been hidden by his helmet grew low upon his massive neck. He might have been forty years of age, though hard toil and harder pleasure had left their grim marks upon his features. Alleyne had ceased painting his pied merlin, and sat, brush in hand, staring with open eyes at a type of man so strange and so unlike any whom he had met. Men had been good or had been bad in his catalogue, but here was a man who was fierce one instant and gentle the next, with a curse on his lips and a smile in his eye. What was to be made of such a man as that?

It chanced that the soldier looked up and saw the questioning glance which the young clerk threw upon him. He raised his flagon and drank to him, with a merry flash of his white teeth.

‘A toi, mon garçon,’ he cried. ‘Hast surely never seen a man-at-arms, that thou should’st stare so?’

‘I never have,’ said Alleyne frankly, ‘though I have oft heard talk of their deeds.’

‘By my hilt!’ cried the other, ‘if you were to cross the narrow sea you would find them as thick as bees at a tee-hole. Could’st not shoot a bolt down any street of Bordeaux, I

warrant, but you would pink archer, squire, or knight. There are more breastplates than gaberdines to be seen, I promise you.'

'And where got you all these pretty things?' asked Hordle John, pointing at the heap in the corner.

'Where there is as much more waiting for any brave lad to pick it up. Where a good man can always earn a good wage, and where he need look upon no man as his paymaster, but just reach his hand out and help himself. Aye, it is a goodly and a proper life. And here I drink to mine old comrades, and the saints be with them! A rouse all together, mes enfants, under pain of my displeasure. To Sir Claude Latour and the White Company!'

'Sir Claude Latour and the White Company!' shouted the travellers, draining off their goblets.

'Well quaffed, mes braves! It is for me to fill your cups again, since you have drained them to my dear lads of the white jerkin. Holà! mon ange, bring wine and ale. How runs the old stave?—

We'll drink all together
To the grey goose feather
And the land where the grey goose flew.'

He roared out the catch in a harsh unmusical voice, and ended with a shout of laughter. 'I trust that I am a better bowman than a minstrel,' said he.

'Methinks I have some remembrance of the lilt,' remarked the gleeman, running his fingers over the strings. 'Hoping that it will give thee no offence, most holy sir'—with a vicious snap at Alleyne—'and with the kind permit of the company, I will even venture upon it.'

Many a time in the after days Alleyne Edricson seemed to see that scene, for all that so many which were stranger and more stirring were soon to crowd upon him. The fat, red-faced gleeman, the listening group, the archer with upraised finger beating in time to the music, and the huge sprawling figure of Hordle John, all thrown into red light and black shadow by the flickering fire in the centre—memory was to come often lovingly back to it.

At the time he was lost in admiration at the deft way in which the jongleur disguised the loss of his two missing strings, and the lusty, hearty fashion in which he trolled out his

little ballad of the outland bowmen, which ran in some such fashion as this:

What of the bow?
 The bow was made in England:
 Of true wood, of yew wood,
 The wood of English bows;
 So men who are free
 Love the old yew-tree
 And the land where the yew-tree grows.

What of the cord?
 The cord was made in England:
 A rough cord, a tough cord,
 A cord that bowmen love;
 So we'll drain our jacks
 To the English flax
 And the land where the hemp was wove.

What of the shaft?
 The shaft was cut in England:
 A long shaft, a strong shaft,
 Barbed and trim and true;
 So we'll drink all together
 To the grey goose feather
 And the land where the grey goose flew.

What of the men?
 The men were bred in England:
 The bowmen—the yeomen—
 The lads of dale and fell.
 Here's to you—and to you!
 To the hearts that are true
 And the land where the true hearts dwell.

‘Well sung, by my hilt!’ shouted the archer in high delight. ‘Many a night have I heard that song, both in the old war-time and after in the days of the White Company, when Black Simon of Norwich would lead the stave, and four hundred of the best bowmen that ever drew string would come roaring in upon the chorus. I have seen old John Hawkwood, the same who has led half the Company into Italy, stand laughing in his beard as he heard it, until his plates rattled again. But to get the full smack of it ye must yourselves be English bowmen, and be far off upon an outland soil.’

Whilst the song had been singing Dame Eliza and the maid had placed a board across two trestles, and had laid upon it the knife, the spoon, the salt, the tranchoir of bread, and finally the smoking dish which held the savoury supper. The archer settled

himself to it like one who had known what it was to find good food scarce; but his tongue still went as merrily as his teeth.

'It passes me,' he cried, 'how all you lusty fellows can bide scratching your backs at home when there are such doings over the seas. Look at me—what have I to do? It is but the eye to the cord, the cord to the shaft, and the shaft to the mark. There is the whole song of it. It is but what you do yourselves for pleasure upon a Sunday evening at the parish village butts.'

'And the wage?' asked a labourer.

'You see what the wage brings,' he answered. 'I eat of the best, and I drink deep. I treat my friend, and I ask no friend to treat me. I clap a silk gown on my girl's back. Never a knight's lady shall be better betrimmed and betrinketed. How of all that, mon garçon? And how of the heap of trifles that you can see for yourselves in yonder corner? They are from the South French, every one, upon whom I have been making war. By my hilt! camarades, I think that I may let my plunder speak for itself.'

'It seems indeed to be a goodly service,' said the tooth-drawer.

'Tête bleu! yes, indeed. Then there is the chance of a ransom. Why, look you, in the affair at Brignais some four years back, when the companies slew James of Bourbon, and put his army to the sword, there was scarce a man of ours who had not count, baron, or knight. Peter Karsdale, who was but a common country lout newly brought over, with the English fleas still hopping under his doublet, laid his great hands upon the Sieur Amaury de Chatonville, who owns half Picardy, and had five thousand crowns out of him, with horse and harness. 'Tis true that a French wench took it all off Peter as quick as the Frenchman paid it; but what then? By the twang of string! it would be a bad thing if money was not made to be spent; and how better than on woman—eh, ma belle?'

'It would indeed be a bad thing if we had not our brave archers to bring wealth and kindly customs into the country,' quoth Dame Eliza, on whom the soldier's free and open ways had made a deep impression.

'A toi, ma chérie!' said he, with his hand over his heart. 'Holà! there is la petite peeping from behind the door. A toi, aussi, ma petite! Mon Dieu! but the lass has a good colour!'

'There is one thing, fair sir,' said the Cambridge student in

his piping voice, 'which I would fain that you would make more clear. As I understand it, there was a peace made at the town of Brétigny some six years back between our most gracious monarch and the King of the French. This being so, it seems most passing strange that you should talk so loudly of war and of companies when there is no quarrel between the French and us.'

'Meaning that I lie,' said the archer, laying down his knife.

'May heaven forfend!' cried the student hastily. '*Magna est veritas sed rara*, which means in the Latin tongue that archers are all honourable men. I come to you seeking knowledge, for it is my trade to learn.'

'I fear that you are yet a 'prentice to that trade,' quoth the soldier; 'for there is no child over the water but could answer what you ask. Know then that though there may be peace between our own provinces and the French, yet within the marches of France there is always war, for the country is much divided against itself, and is furthermore harried by bands of flayers, skinners, Brabaçons, tardvenus, and the rest of them. When every man's grip is on his neighbour's throat, and every five-sous-piece of a baron is marching with tuck of drum to fight whom he will, it would be a strange thing if five hundred brave English boys could not pick up a living. Now that Sir John Hawkwood hath gone with the East Anglian lads and the Nottingham woodmen into the service of the Marquis of Montferrat to fight against the Lord of Milan, there are but ten-score of us left, yet I trust that I may be able to bring some back with me to fill the ranks of the White Company. By the tooth of Peter! it would be a bad thing if I could not muster many a Hamptonshire man who would be ready to strike in under the red flag of St. George, and the more so if Sir Nigel Loring, of Christchurch, should don hauberk once more and take the lead of us.'

'Ah, you would indeed be in luck then,' quoth a woodman; 'for it is said that, setting aside the prince, and mayhap good old Sir John Chandos, there was not in the whole army a man of such tried courage.'

'It is sooth, every word of it,' the archer answered. 'I have seen him with these two eyes in a stricken field, and never did man carry himself better. Mon Dieu! yes, ye would not credit it to look at him, or to hearken to his soft voice, but from the sailing from Orwell down to the foray to Paris, and that is clear twenty years, there was not skirmish, onfall, sally, bushment,

escalado or battle, but Sir Nigel was in the heart of it. I go now to Christchurch with a letter to him from Sir Claude Latour, to ask him if he will take the place of Sir John Hawkwood; and there is the more chance that he will if I bring one or two likely men at my heels. What say you, woodman: wilt leave the bucks to loose a shaft at a nobler mark?’

The forester shook his head. ‘I have wife and child at Emery Down,’ quoth he; ‘I would not leave them for such a venture.’

‘You, then, young sir?’ asked the archer.

‘Nay, I am a man of peace,’ said Alleyne Edricson. ‘Besides, I have other work to do.’

‘Peste!’ growled the soldier, striking his flagon on the board until the dishes danced again. ‘What, in the name of the devil, hath come over the folk? Why sit ye all moping by the fireside, like crows round a dead horse, when there is man’s work to be done within a few short leagues of ye. Out upon you all, as a set of laggards and hang-backs! By my hilt! I believe that the men of England are all in France already, and that what is left behind are in sooth the women dressed up in their paltocks and hosen.’

‘Archer,’ quoth Hordle John, ‘you have lied more than once and more than twice; for which, and also because I see much in you to mislike, I am sorely tempted to lay you upon your back.’

‘By my hilt! then, I have found a man at last!’ shouted the bowman. And, ‘fore God, you are a better man than I take you for if you can lay me on my back, mon garçon. I have won the ram more times than there are toes to my feet, and for seven long years I have found no man in the Company who could make my jerkin dusty.’

‘We have had enough bobance and boasting,’ said Hordle John, rising and throwing off his doublet. ‘I will show you that there are better men left in England than ever went thieving to France.’

‘Pasques Dieu!’ cried the archer, loosening his jerkin, and eyeing his foeman over with the keen glance of one who is a judge of manhood. ‘I have only once before seen such a body of a man. By your leave, my red-headed friend, I should be right sorry to exchange buffets with you; and I will allow that there is no man in the Company who would pull against you on a rope; so let that be a salve to your pride. On the other hand, I should

judge that you have led a life of ease for some months back, and that my muscle is harder than your own. I am ready to wager upon myself against you, if you are not afeard.'

'Afeard, thou lurdén!' growled big John. 'I never saw the face yet of the man that I was afeard of. Come out, and we shall see who is the better man.'

'But the wager?'

'I have nought to wager. Come out for the love and the lust of the thing.'

'Nought to wager!' cried the soldier. 'Why, you have that which I covet above all things. It is that big body of thine that I am after. See, now, mon garçon. I have a French feather-bed there, which I have been at pains to keep these years back. I had it at the sacking of Issodun, and the King himself hath not such a bed. If you throw me, it is thine; but, if I throw you, then you are under a vow to take bow and bill and hie with me to France, there to serve in the White Company as long as we be enrolled.'

'A fair wager!' cried all the travellers, moving back their benches and trestles, so as to give fair field for the wrestlers.

'Then you may bid farewell to your bed, soldier,' said Hordle John.

'Nay; I shall keep the bed, and I shall have you to France in spite of your teeth, and you shall live to thank me for it. How shall it be, then, mon enfant? Collar and elbow, or close-lock, or catch how you can?'

'To the devil with your tricks,' said John, opening and shutting his great red hands. 'Stand forth, and let me clip thee.'

'Shalt clip me as best you can, then,' quoth the archer, moving out into the open space, and keeping a most wary eye upon his opponent. Hé had thrown off his green jerkin, and his chest was covered only by a pink silk jupon, or undershirt, cut low in the neck and sleeveless. Hordle John was stripped from his waist upwards, and his huge body, with his great muscles swelling out like the gnarled roots of an oak, towered high above the soldier. The other, however, though near a foot shorter, was a man of great strength; and there was a gloss upon his white skin which was wanting in the heavier limbs of the renegade monk. He was quick on his feet, too, and skilled at the game; so that it was clear, from the poise of head and shine of eye, that

he counted the chances to be in his favour. It would have been hard that night, through the whole length of England, to set up a finer pair in face of each other.

Big John stood waiting in the centre with a sullen, menacing eye, and his red hair in a bristle, while the archer paced lightly and swiftly to the right and the left with crooked knee and hands advanced. Then, with a sudden dash, so swift and fierce that the eye could scarce follow it, he flew in upon his man and locked his leg round him. It was a grip that, between men of equal strength, would mean a fall; but Hordle John tore him off from him as he might a rat, and hurled him across the room, so that his head cracked up against the wooden wall.

'Ma foi!' cried the bowman, passing his fingers through his curls, 'you were not far from the feather-bed then, mon gar. A little more, and this good hostel would have a new window.'

Nothing daunted, he approached his man once more; but this time with more caution than before. With a quick feint he threw the other off his guard, and then, bounding upon him, threw his legs round his waist and his arms round his bull-neck, in the hope of bearing him to the ground with the sudden shock. With a bellow of rage, Hordle John squeezed him limp in his huge arms; and then, picking him up, cast him down upon the floor with a force which might well have splintered a bone or two, had not the archer with the most perfect coolness clung to the other's forearms to break his fall. As it was, he dropped upon his feet and kept his balance, though it sent a jar through his frame which set every joint a-creaking. He bounded back from his perilous foeman; but the other, heated by the bout, rushed madly after him, and so gave the practised wrestler the very vantage for which he had planned. As big John flung himself upon him, the archer ducked under the great red hands that clutched for him, and, catching his man round the thighs, hurled him over his shoulder—helped as much by his own mad rush as by the trained strength of the heave. To Alleyne's eye, it was as if John had taken unto himself wings and flown. As he hurtled through the air, with giant limbs revolving, the lad's heart was in his mouth; for surely no man ever yet had such a fall and came scathless out of it. In truth, hardy as the man was, his neck had been assuredly broken had he not pitched head first on the very midriff of the drunken artist, who was slumbering so peacefully in the corner, all unaware of these stirring doings. The luckless limner,

thus suddenly brought out from his dreams, sat up with a piercing yell, while Hordle John bounded back into the circle almost as rapidly as he had left it.

‘One more fall, by all the saints!’ he cried, throwing out his arms.

‘Not I,’ quoth the archer, pulling on his clothes. ‘I have come well out of the business. I would sooner wrestle with the great bear of Navarre.’

‘It was a trick,’ cried John.

‘Aye was it. By my ten finger-bones! it is a trick that will add a proper man to the ranks of the Company.’

‘Oh, for that,’ said the other, ‘I count it not a fly; for I had promised myself a good hour ago that I should go with thee, since the life seems to be a goodly and proper one. Yet I would fain have had the feather-bed.’

‘I doubt it not, mon ami,’ quoth the archer, going back to his tankard. ‘Here is to thee, lad, and may we be good comrades to each other! But, holà! what is it that ails our friend of the wrathful face?’

The unfortunate limner had been sitting up rubbing himself ruefully and staring about with a vacant gaze, which showed that he knew neither where he was nor what had occurred to him. Suddenly, however, a flash of intelligence had come over his sodden features, and he rose and staggered for the door. ‘Ware the ale!’ he said in a hoarse whisper, shaking a warning finger at the company. ‘Oh, holy Virgin, ’ware the ale!’ and clapping his hands to his injury, he flitted off into the darkness, amid a shout of laughter, in which the vanquished joined as merrily as the victor. The remaining forester and the two labourers were also ready for the road, and the rest of the company turned to the blankets which Dame Eliza and the maid had laid out for them upon the floor. Alleyne, weary with the unwonted excitements of the day, was soon in a deep slumber, broken only by fleeting visions of twittering legs, cursing beggars, black robbers, and the many strange folk whom he had met at the ‘Pied Merlin.’

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE THREE COMRADES JOURNEYED THROUGH THE WOODLANDS.

AT early dawn the country inn was all alive, for it was rare indeed that an hour of daylight would be wasted at a time when lighting was so scarce and dear. Indeed, early as it was when Dame Eliza began to stir, it seemed that others could be earlier still, for the door was ajar, and the learned student of Cambridge had taken himself off, with a mind which was too intent upon the high things of antiquity to stoop to consider the fourpence which he owed for bed and board. It was the shrill outcry of the landlady when she found her loss, and the clucking of the hens, which had streamed in through the open door, that first broke in upon the slumbers of the tired wayfarers.

Once afoot, it was not long before the company began to disperse. A sleek mule with red trappings was brought round from some neighbouring shed for the physician, and he ambled away with much dignity upon his road to Southampton. The tooth-drawer and the gleeman called for a cup of small ale apiece, and started off together for Ringwood Fair, the old jongleur looking very yellow in the eye and swollen in the face after his overnight potations. The archer, however, who had drunk more than any man in the room, was as merry as a grig, and having kissed the matron and chased the maid up the ladder once more, he went out to the brook, and came back with the water dripping from his face and hair.

‘Holà! my man of peace,’ he cried to Alleyne, ‘whither are you bent this morning?’

‘To Minstead,’ quoth he. ‘My brother Simon Edrieson is socman there, and I go to bide with him for a while. I prythee, let me have my score, good dame.’

‘Score, indeed!’ cried she, standing with upraised hands in front of the panel on which Alleyne had worked the night before. ‘Say, rather, what it is that I owe to thee, good youth. Aye, this is indeed a pied merlin, and with a leveret under its claws, as I am a living woman. By the rood of Waltham! but thy touch is deft and dainty.’

‘And see the red eye of it!’ cried the maid.

‘Aye, and the open beak.’

‘And the ruffled wing,’ added Hordle John.

‘By my hilt!’ cried the archer, ‘it is the very bird itself.’

The young clerk flushed with pleasure at this chorus of praise, rude and indiscriminate indeed, and yet so much heartier and less grudging than any which he had ever heard from the critical brother Jerome or the short-spoken Abbot. There was, it would seem, great kindness as well as great wickedness in this world, of which he had heard so little that was good. His hostess would hear nothing of his paying either for bed or for board, while the archer and Hordle John placed a hand upon either shoulder and led him off to the board, where some smoking fish, a dish of spinach, and a jug of milk were laid out for their breakfast.

‘I should not be surprised to learn, mon camarade,’ said the soldier, as he heaped a slice of the fish upon Alleyne’s tranchoir of bread, ‘that you could read written things, since you are so ready with your brushes and pigments.’

‘It would be shame to the good brothers of Beaulieu if I could not,’ he answered, ‘seeing that I have been their clerk this ten years back.’

The bowman looked at him with great respect. ‘Think of that!’ said he. ‘And you with not a hair to your face, and a skin like a girl. I can shoot three hundred and fifty paces with my little popper there, and four hundred and twenty with the great war-bow; yet I can make nothing of this, nor read my own name if you were to set “Sam Aylward” up against me. In the whole Company there was only one man who could read, and he fell down a well at the taking of Ventadour, which proves that the thing is not suited to a soldier, though most needful to a clerk.’

‘I can make some show at it,’ said big John; ‘though I was scarce long enough among the monks to catch the whole trick of it.’

‘Here, then, is something to try upon,’ quoth the archer, pulling a square of parchment from the inside of his tunic. It was tied securely with a broad band of purple silk, and firmly sealed at either end with a large red real. John pored long and earnestly over the inscription upon the back, with his brows bent as one who bears up against great mental strain.

‘Not having read much of late,’ he said, ‘I am loth to say too much about what this may be. Some might say one thing and some another, just as one bowman loves the yew, and a

second will not shoot save with the ash. To me, by the length and the look of it, I should judge this to be a verse from one of the Psalms.'

The bowman shook his head. 'It is scarce likely,' he said, 'that Sir Claude Latour should send me all the way across seas with naught more weighty than a psalm-verse. You have clean overshot the butts this time, mon camarade. Give it to the little one. I will wager my feather-bed that he makes more sense of it.'

'Why, it is written in the French tongue,' said Alleyne, 'and in a right clerky hand. This is how it runs: "À le moult puissant et moult honorable chevalier, Sir Nigel Loring de Christchurch, de son très fidèle amis Sir Claude Latour, capitaine de la Compagnie blanche, châtelain de Biscar, grand seigneur de Montchâteau, vavasseur de le renommé Gaston, Comte de Foix, tenant les droits de la haute justice, de la milieu, et de la basse." Which signifies in our speech: "To the very powerful and very honourable knight, Sir Nigel Loring of Christchurch, from his very faithful friend Sir Claud Latour, captain of the White Company, chatelain of Biscar, grand lord of Montchâteau, and vassal to the renowned Gaston, Count of Foix, who holds the rights of the high justice, the middle and the low."'

'Look at that now!' cried the bowman in triumph. 'That is just what he would have said.'

'I can see now that it is even so,' said John, examining the parchment again. 'Though I scarce understand this high, middle, and low.'

'By my hilt! you would understand it if you were Jacques Bonhomme. The low justice means that you may fleece him, and the middle that you may torture him, and the high that you may slay him. That is about the truth of it. But this is the letter which I am to take; and since the platter is clean it is time that we trussed up and were afoot. You come with me, mon gros Jean; and as to you, little one, where did you say that you journeyed?'

'To Minstead.'

'Ah, yes. I know this forest-country well, though I was born myself in the Hundred of Easebourne, in the Rape of Chichester, hard by the village of Midhurst. Yet I have not a word to say against the Hampton men, for there are no better comrades or truer archers in the whole Company than some who learned to

loose the string in these very parts. We shall travel round with you to Minstead, lad, seeing that it is little out of our way.'

'I am ready,' said Alleyne, right pleased at the thought of such company upon the road.

'So am not I. I must store my plunder at this inn, since the hostess is an honest woman. Holà! ma chérie, I wish to leave with you my gold-work, my velvet, my silk, my feather-bed, my incense-boat, my ewer, my naping linen, and all the rest of it. I take only the money in a linen bag, and the box of rose-coloured sugar, which is a gift from my Captain to the Lady Loring. Wilt guard my treasure for me?'

'It shall be put in the safest loft, good archer. Come when you may, you shall find it ready for you.'

'Now, there is a true friend!' cried the bowman, taking her hand. 'There is a *bonne amie!* English land and English women, say I, and French wine and French plunder. I shall be back anon, *mon ange*. I am a lonely man, my sweeting, and I must settle some day when the wars are over and done. Mayhap you and I— Ah, *méchante, méchante!* There is *la petite* peeping from behind the door. Now, John, the sun is over the trees; you must be brisker than this when the bugleman blows "Bows and Bills."'

'I have been waiting this time back,' said Hordle John gruffly.

'Then we must off. Adieu, *ma vie!* The two livres shall settle the score and buy some ribbons against the next kermesse. Do not forget Sam Aylward, for his heart shall ever be thine alone—and thine, *ma petite!* So, *marchons*, and may St. Julian grant us as good quarters elsewhere!'

'The sun had risen over Ashurst and Denny woods, and was shining brightly, though the eastern wind had a sharp flavour to it, and the leaves were flickering thickly from the trees. In the High Street of Lyndhurst the wayfarers had to pick their way, for the little town was crowded with the guardsmen, grooms, and yeomen prickers who were attached to the King's hunt. The King himself was staying at Castle Malwood, but several of his suite had been compelled to seek such quarters as they might find in the wooden or wattle-and-daub cottages of the village. Here and there a small escutcheon, peeping from a glassless window, marked the night's lodging of knight or baron. These coats-of-arms could be read, where a scroll would be meaningless,

and the bowman, like most men of his age, was well versed in the common symbols of heraldry.

‘There is the Saracen’s head of Sir Bernard Brocas,’ quoth he. ‘I saw him last at the ruffe at Poitiers some ten years back, when he bore himself like a man. He is the master of the King’s horse, and can sing a right jovial stave, though in that he cannot come nigh to Sir John Chandos, who is first at the board or in the saddle. Three martlets on a field azure, that must be one of the Luttrells. By the crescent upon it, it should be the second son of old Sir Hugh, who had a bolt through his ankle at the in-taking of Romorantin, he having rushed into the fray ere his squire had time to clasp his solleret to his greave. There too is the hackle which is the old device of the De Brays. I have served under Sir Thomas de Bray, who was as jolly as a pie, and a lusty swordsman until he got too fat for his harness.’

So the archer gossiped as the three wayfarers threaded their way among the stamping horses, the busy grooms, and the knots of pages and squires who disputed over the merits of their masters’ horses and deerhounds. As they passed the old church, which stood upon a mound at the left-hand side of the village street, the door was flung open, and a stream of worshippers wound down the sloping path, coming from the morning mass, all chattering like a cloud of jays. Alleyne bent knee and doffed hat at the sight of the open door; but ere he had finished an ave his comrades were out of sight round the curve of the path, and he had to run to overtake them.’

‘What!’ he said, ‘not one word of prayer before God’s own open house? How can ye hope for His blessing upon the day?’

‘My friend,’ said Hordle John, ‘I have prayed so much during the last two months, not only during the day, but at matins, lauds, and the like, when I could scarce keep my head upon my shoulders for nodding, that I feel that I have somewhat overprayed myself.’

‘How can a man have too much religion?’ cried Alleyne earnestly. ‘It is the one thing that availeth. A man is but a beast as he lives from day to day, eating and drinking, breathing and sleeping. It is only when he raises himself, and concerns himself with the immortal spirit within him, that he becomes in very truth a man. Bethink ye how sad a thing it would be that the blood of the Redeemer should be spilled to no purpose.’

‘Bless the lad, if he doth not blush like any girl, and yet preach like the whole College of Cardinals,’ cried the archer.

‘In truth I blush that anyone so weak and so unworthy as I should try to teach another that which he finds it so passing hard to follow himself.’

‘Prettily said, *mon garçon*. Touching that same slaying of the Redeemer, it was a bad business. A good padre in France read to us from a scroll the whole truth of the matter. The soldiers came upon Him in the garden. In truth, these Apostles of His may have been holy men, but they were of no great account as men-at-arms. There was one, indeed, Sir Peter, who smote out like a true man; but, unless he is belied, he did but clip a varlet’s ear, which was no very knightly deed. By these ten finger-bones! had I been there, with Black Simon of Norwich, and but one score picked men of the Company, we had held them in play. Could we do no more, we had at least filled the false knight, Sir Judas, so full of English arrows that he would curse the day that ever he came on such an errand.’

The young clerk smiled at his companion’s earnestness. ‘Had He wished help,’ he said, ‘He could have summoned legions of archangels from heaven, so what need had He of your poor bow and arrow. Besides, bethink you of His own words—that those who live by the sword shall perish by the sword.’

‘And how could man die better?’ asked the archer. ‘If I had my wish, it would be to fall so—not, mark you, in any mere skirmish of the Company, but in a stricken field, with the great lion banner waving over us and the red oriflamme in front, amid the shouting of my fellows and the twanging of the strings. But let it be sword, lance, or bolt that strikes me down: for I should think it shame to die from an iron ball from fire-crake or bombard or any such unsoldierly weapon, which is only fitted to scare babes with its foolish noise and smoke.’

‘I have heard much even in the quiet cloisters of these new and dreadful engines,’ quoth Alleyne. ‘It is said, though I can scarce bring myself to believe it, that they will send a ball twice as far as a bowman can shoot his shaft, and with such force as to break through armour of proof.’

‘True enough, my lad. But while the armourer is thrusting in his devil’s-dust, and dropping his ball, and lighting his flambeau, I can very easily loose six shafts, or eight maybe, so he hath no great vantage after all. Yet I will not deny that at the intaking

of a town it is well to have good store of bombardrs. I am told that at Calais they made dints in the wall that a man might put his head into. But surely, comrades, someone who is grievously hurt hath passed along this road before us.'

All along the woodland track there did indeed run a scattered straggling trail of blood-marks, sometimes in single drops, and in other places in broad ruddy gouts, smudged over the dead leaves or crimsoning the white flint stones.

'It must be a stricken deer,' said John.

'Nay, I am woodman enough to see that no deer hath passed this way this morning; and yet the blood is fresh. But hark to the sound!'

They stood listening all three with side-long heads. Through the silence of the great forest there came a swishing, whistling sound, mingled with the most dolorous groans, and the voice of a man raised in a high quavering kind of song. The comrades hurried onwards eagerly, and topping the brow of a small rising they saw upon the other side the source from which these strange noises arose.

A tall man, much stooped in the shoulders, was walking slowly with bended head and clasped hands in the centre of the path. He was dressed from head to foot in a long white linen cloth, and a high white cap with a red cross printed upon it. His gown was turned back from his shoulders, and the flesh there was a sight to make a man wince, for it was all beaten to a pulp, and the blood was soaking into his gown and trickling down upon the ground. Behind him walked a smaller man, with his hair touched with grey, who was clad in the same white garb. He intoned a long whining rhyme in the French tongue, and at the end of every line he raised a thick cord, all jagged with pellets of lead, and smote his companion across the shoulders until the blood spurted again. Even as the three wayfarers stared, however, there was a sudden change, for the smaller man, having finished his song, loosened his own gown and handed the scourge to the other, who took up the stave once more and lashed his companion with all the strength of his bare and sinewy arm. So, alternately beating and beaten, they made their dolorous way through the beautiful woods and under the amber arches of the fading beech-trees, where the calm strength and majesty of Nature might serve to rebuke the foolish energies and misspent strivings of mankind.

Such a spectacle was new to Hordle John or to Alleyne

Edricson ; but the archer treated it lightly, as a common matter enough.

‘These are the Beating Friars, otherwise called the Flagellants,’ quoth he. ‘I marvel that ye should have come upon none of them before, for across the water they are as common as gallybaggers. I have heard that there are no English among them, but that they are from France, Italy and Bohemia. En avant, camarades ! that we may have speech with them.’

As they came up to them, Alleyne could hear the doleful dirge which the beater was chanting, bringing down his heavy whip at the end of each line, while the groans of the sufferer formed a sort of dismal chorus. It was in old French, and ran somewhat in this way :

Or avant, entre nous tous frères
Battons nos charognes bien fort
En remembrant la grant misère
De Dieu et sa piteuse mort,
Qui fut pris en la gent amère
Et vendus et trais à tort
Et bastu sa chair, vierge et dère
Au nom de ce battons plus fort.

Then at the end of the verse the scourge changed hands and the chanting began anew.

‘Truly, holy fathers,’ said the archer in French as they came abreast of them, ‘you have beaten enough for to-day. The road is all spotted like a shambles at Martinmas. Why should ye mishandle yourselves thus ?’

‘C’est pour vos péchés—pour vos péchés,’ they droned, looking at the travellers with sad lack-lustre eyes, and then bent to their bloody work once more without heed to the prayers and persuasions which were addressed to them. Finding all remonstrance useless, the three comrades hastened on their way, leaving these strange travellers to their dreary task.

‘Mort Dieu !’ cried the bowman, ‘there is a bucketful or more of my blood over in France, but it was all spilled in hot fight, and I should think twice before I drew it drop by drop as these friars are doing. By my hilt ! our young one here is as white as a Picardy cheese. What is amiss then, mon cher ?’

‘It is nothing,’ Alleyne answered. ‘My life has been too quiet. I am not used to such sights.’

‘Ma foi !’ the other cried, ‘I have never yet seen a man who was so stout of speech and yet so weak of heart.’

‘Not so, friend,’ quoth big John; ‘it is not weakness of heart, for I know the lad well. His heart is as good as thine or mine, but he hath more in his pate than ever you will carry under that tin pot of thine, and as a consequence he can see further into things, so that they weigh upon him more.’

‘Surely to any man it is a sad sight,’ said Alleyne, ‘to see these holy men, who have done no sin themselves, suffering so for the sins of others. Saints are they, if in this age any may merit so high a name.’

‘I count them not a fly,’ cried Hordle John; ‘for who is the better for all their whipping and yowling? They are like other friars, I trow, when all is done. Let them leave their backs alone, and beat the pride out of their hearts.’

‘By the three kings! there is sooth in what you say,’ remarked the archer. ‘Besides, methinks if I were le bon Dieu, it would bring me little joy to see a poor devil cutting the flesh off his bones; and I should think that he had but a small opinion of me, that he should hope to please me by such provost-marshal work. No, by by hilt! I should look with a more loving eye upon a jolly archer who never harmed a fallen foe and never feared a hale one.’

‘Doubtless you mean no sin,’ said Alleyne. ‘If your words are wild, it is not for me to judge them. Can you not see that there are other foes in this world besides Frenchmen, and as much glory to be gained in conquering them? Would it not be a proud day for knight or squire if he could overthrow seven adversaries in the lists? Yet here are we in the lists of life, and there come the seven black champions against us: Sir Pride, Sir Covetousness, Sir Lust, Sir Anger, Sir Gluttony, Sir Envy, and Sir Sloth. Let a man lay those seven low, and he shall have the prize of the day, from the hands of the fairest queen of beauty, even from the Virgin-Mother herself. It is for this that these men mortify their flesh, and to set us an example, who would pamper ourselves overmuch. I say again that they are God’s own saints, and I bow my head to them.’

‘And so you shall, mon petit,’ replied the archer. ‘I have not heard a man speak better since old Dom Bertrand died, who was at one time chaplain to the White Company. He was a very valiant man, but at the battle of Brignais he was spitted through the body by a Hainault man-at-arms. For this we had an excommunication read against the man, when next we saw our holy father at Avignon; but as we had not his name, and knew

nothing of him, save that he rode a dapple-grey roussin, I have feared sometimes that the blight may have settled upon the wrong man.'

'Your Company has been, then, to bow knee before our holy father, the Pope Urban, the prop and centre of Christendom?' asked Alleyne, much interested. 'Perchance you have yourself set eyes upon his august face?'

'Twice I saw him,' said the archer. 'He was a lean little rat of a man, with a scab on his chin. The first time we had five thousand crowns out of him, though he made much ado about it. The second time we asked ten thousand, but it was three days before we could come to terms, and I am of opinion myself that we might have done better by plundering the palace. His chamberlain and cardinals came forth, as I remember, to ask whether we would take seven thousand crowns with his blessing and a plenary absolution, or the ten thousand with his solemn ban by bell, book and candle. We were all of one mind that it was best to have the ten thousand with the curse; but in some way they prevailed upon Sir John, so that we were blest and shriven against our will. Perchance it is as well, for the Company were in need of it about that time.'

The pious Alleyne was deeply shocked by this reminiscence. Involuntarily he glanced up and around to see if there were any trace of those opportune levin-flashes and thunderbolts which, in the 'Acta Sanctorum,' were wont so often to cut short the loose talk of the scoffer. The autumn sun streamed down as brightly as ever, and the peaceful red path still wound in front of them through the rustling yellow-tinted forest. Nature seemed to be too busy with her own concerns to heed the dignity of an outraged pontiff. Yet he felt a sense of weight and reproach within his breast, as though he had sinned himself in giving ear to such words. The teachings of twenty years cried out against such license. It was not until he had thrown himself down before one of the many wayside crosses, and had prayed from his heart both for the archer and for himself, that the dark cloud rolled back again from his spirit.

(To be continued.)

*ILLUSTRATIONS OF ANIMAL LIFE IN
TENNYSON'S POEMS.*

IN a country where 'White's Selborne' is almost a Classic, where Frank Buckland's wonderful stories are rapidly sold in cheap editions at the bookstalls, and where the stronger meat of Darwin and of Wallace is digested by thousand of readers, we may rest assured that natural history is a popular science, and an interest in animal life is very widely spread. In spite of the constantly-increasing masses of our population aggregated in the towns, and the decrease in opportunities for sport—of which we hear complaints from all parts of the kingdom—a love of animals appears to be inherent in the people, for whom any new facts concerning them and their modes of life, or, indeed, the old stories freshly told, would seem to have a perpetual attraction. It would therefore be surprising if the poet who so thoroughly represents the spirit of the people and of the age for which he writes, and who grasps so strongly the facts of modern science, should neglect that source of imagery which is supplied by the animal side of Nature, whose mirror, as Shakespeare says, he holds up to our gaze.

Tennyson has given us no elaborated descriptions of animal life—nothing to be placed alongside of Shelley's 'Skylark,' or his fight between the eagle and the snake; neither is there anything weird and uncanny in his poems, like Coleridge's mastiff in 'Christabel,' which even in sleep recognises the powers of evil; or the avenging spirit of the albatross, and the elfish light of the water-snakes around the ship of the Ancient Mariner. On the other hand, his touch, though apparently slight and quite unlaboured, always throws some characteristic trait into strong relief: he presents us with picture after picture which remains stored in our memory; and he entirely transcends the farmhouse view of animals, which we find—without any disrespect be it spoken—in the poems of Wordsworth. It is interesting to note the permanence of his impressions of the salient points in the nature of each bird or beast—impressions which manifest themselves again and again in various parts of his verses.

We will draw attention, first, to the musical sweetness of some

little idylls of animal life, as often as not contained in a couplet. We can never forget

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees ;

or, to turn to a picture of a stranger scene, the lair of the Kraken—
'the abysmal sea,' where in the sickly light

Unnumbered and enormous polypi
Winnow with giant arms the slumbering green ;

or, again, at the mournful parting of King Arthur and Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights, the sad barge moves away—

Like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs.

Such word-painting is not uncommon throughout the poems, and it is remarkable how frequently Tennyson produces the effect which he desires, either wholly or in part, by means of a description of animal life. For example, he thus discloses the magical effect of the poet's song—a song which

Made the wild swan pause in her cloud,
And the lark drop down at his feet ;
The swallow stopt as he hunted the bee,
The snake slipt under a spray ;
The wild hawk stood with the down on his beak,
And stared, with his foot on the prey ;
And the nightingale thought, I have sung many songs,
But never a one so gay ; &c.

That is a description of Orphic fascination, which arrests each creature in the ardour of a favourite pursuit. Here, again, in 'Aylmer's Field,' we are presented in graphic touches with the desolation which has come upon the stately heritage which the coarse scheming of its owners has failed to retain, now left a broken ruin, where

Lies the hawk's cast, the mole has made his run
The hedgehog underneath the plantain bores,
The rabbit fondles his own harmless face,
The slow-worm creeps, and the thin weasel there
Follows the mouse, and all is open field.

Tennyson seems, by the way, to have adopted the mouse as the symbol of ruin or sorrow ; it appears again in 'Mariana':—

The mouse
Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,
Or from the crevice peer'd about ;

Hildebrand is a monarch of too hasty speech to care for accuracy. Again, in the 'Idylls of the King' we hear of Gawain, when a boy, that he

Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw.

We do not know that a colt is referred to in any other sense, except only where St. Simeon alleges that Asmodeus and Abaddon annoyed him sadly

With colt-like whinny and with hoggish whine,

and they perhaps were youthful fiends.

Another noticeable trait brought out by Tennyson, which we fancy was suggested by the classical studies of his youth, occurs twice in his earlier poems; the curious way in which a dog dreams of the chase, and shows what he is dreaming of

With inward yelp and restless forefoot.—'Lucretius.'

and the idea recurs in 'Locksley Hall,' in the bitter description of the squire:—

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams.

But the dog is referred to in every kind of relation throughout the poems, some of which we may mention later. The fox is not very often mentioned; 'foxlike in the vine' reminds us of verses of Theocritus:—

ἀμφὶ δέ μιν δ' ἄλῶπτεκες ἄ μὲν ἀν' ὄρχωσ
Φοιτῆ, σινομένα τὰν τρώξιμον—

but it is no more than a passing reference in a passage of singular beauty; and so, too, is the line—

Lighter-footed than the fox,

of the Prince who has the good fortune to kiss and wake the Sleeping Beauty. 'Cat-footed' occurs in the same sense in 'The Princess.'

Insects are generally used by the poet to suggest flashing light or swiftness:—

The lightning-flash of insect or of bird;

and also, without mention of species—

Dull-coated things, that making slide apart
Their dark wing-cases, all beneath them burns
A jewell'd harness, ere they pass and fly.

The dragon-fly is honoured by specific mention:—

With his clear plates of sapphire mail,
A living flash of light, he flew;

and, again, we have the gleam of the firefly:—

Glitter firefly-like;

and the Pleiads shine

Like fireflies tangled in a silver braid.

Among birds which occur most frequently may be mentioned the cock, the dove, the swan, 'in among the stars,' or 'fluting a wild carol ere her death'; the hawk, and the eagle. The latter is, as usual in poetry, employed to symbolise dominion and lofty aims, and we do not know that there is anything special in the poet's treatment of the king of birds; he is referred to in sonorous verses, such as:—

The crane, I said, may chatter of the crane,
The dove may murmur of the dove, but I,
An eagle clang an eagle to the sphere.

And again:—

Shall eagles not be eagles? wrens be wrens?
If all the world were falcons, what of that?

Passing from the king of birds to the king of beasts, we are at once reminded of that tremendous simile:—

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion creeping nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying fire.

And it is interesting to note that, long after 'Locksley Hall' was written, in 'Tiresias' the Demos is contemptuously compared by that seer once again to the lion:—

To cast wise words among the multitude
Was flinging fruit to lions.

This may or may not be a fancied permanence of the poet's impressions. Before we leave mountain and desert we may hear, with Jephthah's daughter, 'the lion roaring from his den,' and then, descending with the anonymous darling of the shepherd, we may 'let the wild lean-headed eagles yelp alone.'

The lion appears in heraldry on Launcelot's shield, and 'claspt by a passion flower' on Maud's gate; we hear of French eagles flying over the Pyrenees, and of Roman eagles barked at by the British raven. And, lastly, the term 'lion' is applied to Sir Richard Grenville in 'The Revenge':—

The lion there lay dying, and they yielded to the foe.

Other persons, however, are not quite so complimentarily referred to by the names of animals: Maud's brother is the 'oiled and curled Assyrian bull,' and her father a 'lean, grey wolf'; the Spaniards are 'dogs of Seville'; the Sepoy pioneer, 'a murderous mole' (but not in this case a 'four-handed' one); robbers are in the 'Idylls' called 'wild bees,' and 'wolves, of woman born'; and we find a minstrel referred to as a 'gray cricket' chirping by the hearth.

It now behoves us to see how far Tennyson approaches, under our present head, the form of democratic art as set out by its English exponent, Mr. J. A. Symonds. Does he avoid the note of condescension, the unnatural transfiguration of rusticity and humble life in his poems, which mark the didactic pastoral? No doubt a large number of his efforts stand condemned, and, first and foremost, the famous 'Idylls of the King,' the romanticism of which, with their high-born heroes and lofty dames, stinks in the nostrils of the school of Walt Whitman. But many of his smaller poems, notably 'The Brook,' 'The Revenge,' 'The Siege of Lucknow,' and the dialectical poems, appear to us to approach the new ideal. How well we all know the loquacity of old Phillip in 'The Brook,' when

He praised his land, his horses, his machines;
He praised his ploughs, his cows, his hogs, his dogs
He praised his hens, his geese, his guinea-hens,
His pigeons.

What can come nearer to the heart of every man than the bluff illustration in 'The Revenge'?—

For a dozen times they came with their pikes and musqueteers,
And a dozen times we shook 'em off, as a dog that shakes his ears
When he leaps from the water to the land.

Who has not lain awake, like Mariana—though, Heaven help her! she lived in a moated grange—and

Heard the night-fowl crow,
The cock sing out an hour ere light,
From the dark pen the oxen's low?

Indeed, what strikes the thoughtful reader of Tennyson most is the homeliness of the greater part of his illustrations; we do not have to go far afield in the realms of imagination to seek for

Horses that have broken fence,
And glutted all night long breast-deep in corn;

or

Swallows coming out of time
Will wonder why they come;

or

The crested bird
That claps his wings at dawn.

And then, how such lines as the following appeal even to children and the simplest persons:—

The martin flew
The parrot scream'd, the peacock squall'd;

or

The cock couldn't crow, and the bull couldn't low,
And the dog couldn't bark ;

or

es 'ansom a tabby as iver patted a mouse ;

or

Like threaded spiders one by one we dropt ;

or the Newfoundland dog,

Two-footed, at the limit of his chain,
Roaring to make a third ;

or

And whit, whit, whit, in the bush beside me,
Chirrupt the nightingale ;

or

A neck to which the swan's
Is tawnier than her cygnet's ;

which is one of few references to the colour of the swan made by the poet, who sings oftenest of her flight, and sometimes of her song, but rarely mentions her 'pure cold plumes' for their dazzling whiteness ; or, lastly—

A rough dog, to whom he cast his coat—
'Guard it !' and there was none to meddle with it.

Anti-vivisectionists will sympathise with the Princess when she reviles

The monstrous males that carve the living hound ;

And, perhaps, even with the hospital nurse, upon whose imagination a surgeon's red hair has such a powerful effect that she believes he could find it in his heart to

Mangle the living dog that had loved him and fawned at his knee.

We hope we have done something to enable the reader to see the beasts of the field and the birds of the air with the poet's fanciful eye ; but we trust he will glean the field for himself, where a plentiful harvest is left ungathered. He will find them touched with a brightness of fancy that does not fail to delight even when most artificial or borrowed ; but, more often, throwing its soft charm upon some slight or rarely noted beauty of form or habit, the verse lingers with us, and suggests itself again and again. The man who can read the poems of Tennyson without gathering some fresh interest in animal life, and perceiving some novelty in its aspect towards himself, must indeed be

Deaf as the blue-eyed cat,
And thrice as blind as any noonday owl.

ISCHIA AND ITS EARTHQUAKE.

At the time of the disaster in 1883, Casamicciola fancied that it was in peril of anything rather than an earthquake. The peasants of Ischia troubled themselves but little about the history of the past, or they might have known that, spite of its surface-beauty and fertility, theirs was an island with a bitter bad record against Nature. And the more cultured visitors, who flocked to its shores for the baths and the summer breezes, had but to recur to their Virgils to learn afresh that beneath their hotels lay the giant Typhœus, who ever and anon writhed in his agony and shook all the land. The peasant, however, had his daily cares and pleasures to absorb him; and the visitors were concerned with their health, and not the legends of a poet.

Besides, had not all Ischia, only the other year, received an assured guarantee against considerable earthquakes for an indefinite time to come?

In 1881, Typhœus had rolled in his grave, and filled the island with terror. The panic was such that the Mayor of Casamicciola wrote to the learned Professor Rossi, of Rome, seismologist and much else, asking for authoritative consolation. The Professor hastened to reply. Experience and records of the past enabled him to ease their minds completely. First of all, inasmuch as no one country can esteem itself more secure than another against the shocks of unforeseen earthquakes, the people of Ischia might just as well stay where they were as flee elsewhere. And, secondly, inasmuch as the same land is not once in ten thousand times revisited by a destructive earthquake within the space of a few years, the island of Ischia was really one of the most secure spots on the crust of the globe.

Upon the strength of this professorial comfort Ischia took heart again. The peasants, having buried their dead, repaired their shattered houses, and tilled their vineyards as of yore. The hotel-keepers made light of the catastrophe, as they were bound, and seemed to regard an earthquake as an innocuous natural phenomenon, the possibility of a recurrence of which might be noted upon their business advertisements as an attraction for visitors rather than a deterrent. And the proprietors of baths

made much of certain new hot fountains which had sprung to light with the displacement of the soil. Thus the summer boats continued to carry their hundreds of tourists to the island, and the villas and hotels were, on the night of July 28, 1883, full of the wealthy of divers nations.

Imagine the situation. The bath-village of Casamicciola lies in a bosky hollow secluded from the sea, though less than a mile from it. Above it the land breaks picturesquely; here a knoll, and there a knoll. Villas and hotels becrested these dainty points; whence there was a fair outlook over the blue sea towards Vesuvius and the Elysian fields by Baia. And high above the village and the scattered houses rises the white head of Mount Epomeo, with its broad shoulders of rock and its precipices, looking like a perched eagle with pinions outstretched. Vineyards and orange groves, cherry orchards and chestnut woods, cover the land with their verdure almost to the bald summit of the mountain. You would have thought Nature could not be so pitiless as to summon ruin hither.

It was about half-past nine in the evening. Dinner was over in the hotels. The guests were amusing themselves in different fashions. Some had gone out upon the terraces—exquisite resorts, balmy with blossoms, and seeming to hang between the starry heavens and the green earth. Others were smoking over their wine. And others again were in the drawing-rooms. The blow fell more sudden than a thunderbolt, and took each man where he stood.

The Piccola Sentinella hotel, the best in the place, spite of its fifty rooms, was full to the passages. It numbered several marquises and barons among its guests; Americans also, and English. A certain Briton of the party was a skilled pianist, but a misanthropic man, wont to play for his own pleasure, and leave the piano when his solitude was broken. This evening, however, they had persuaded him to be amiable. He consented to entertain his associates, if a fair girl of the company, a marquis's daughter, would first sing to his music. The girl agreed, and took her station by him. When she had sung, he was called upon to keep his promise. Straightway he began a Funeral March. Then was heard the fatal roar of the earth; the house was shaken like a leaf; the walls of the room and the roof fell in, and in an instant all were buried. When, subsequently, the excavators dug into the drawing-room, they found the dead pianist sitting

cross-legged before the smashed piano, and the girl who had sung to his accompaniment dead by his side.

It was the same with hundreds of lesser houses in Casamicciola as with the Piccola Sentinella. The inmates felt the shock, had but just time to hear the noise of collapsing buildings, and then their own walls were about them, and they were either killed on the spot, suffocated by degrees, starved, or poisoned to death in situations of incredible horror, or, if among the fortunate few, released in course of time unharmed or with curable injuries.

The night that followed the earthquake was a grim and ghastly night. Singly, and by twos and threes, the survivors extricated themselves from their domestic ruin, and groped their way to the seashore. It was by such a track as they had never dreamed of. The road was expunged by the mountains of broken buildings which had tumbled obliquely over it. Across these they had to clamber, with crevices of death at every step and with the cry of the dying all about them. For the moment, thought save of self-preservation had fled from them; and it was not until they found themselves in company that they prepared for the work of relief. It is as easy to-day as in 1883 to realise the breadth of the calamity. For Casamicciola is still much as the earthquake left it—a place of wrecked tenements, with its very trees buried to the boughs in the ruin of the masonry that fell about them.

The midnight telegrams from Casamicciola to Naples, imploring immediate help, met with a ready response. Later, there were cavillers in plenty who accused the military of tardiness in embarkation, and the City Council of irresolution, at a time when every minute might save a life. But let justice be done to both. Each did their best as they understood it. Throughout the 29th hundreds of soldiers were at work among the ruins, and hourly a steamer landed a significative cargo of coffins and bread, bedsteads, litters, wine, and all kinds of necessaries.

But the need was even greater than the supply of aid. Five or six thousand people suddenly deprived of house-room and every (even the commonest) requirement of daily life! Half this population dead, or buried alive in various strata of *débris*! A hand or a head above the stones and timber in one place! Elsewhere the dead and the living jammed together as in a vice! Cries from the heart of huge piles of ruin, as from a tomb! Tears and entreaties from mothers and children that something may be done

for their dear ones whose groans they can hear beneath them, but whom they cannot rescue! We English are happy that we know little or nothing of such woe as this of Casamicciola in 1883.

It is impossible to tell such a tale with other than an elegiac note. Yet the work of rescue now and then provoked a smile. On the second day, at one place, they disinterred an old woman, unharmed.

‘God bless you!’ she cried, as they helped her out. ‘But for pity’s sake,’ she added impetuously, ‘dig a little deeper and save my——’

‘What? Is there anyone else alive here?’ they inquired anxiously.

‘My hen!’ continued the old dame.

But it was not a time to trouble about hens.

A multitude of anecdotes of escapes well-nigh miraculous are of course current in the place. They laboured hard to save the bishop of the island, whose house had fallen in upon him; but it was in vain. For hours they toiled towards him, obeying the directions that came to them from beneath

‘Softly! Not there. . . . More this way,’ and so forth.

Later, when their efforts to reach him had been of no avail, the bishop’s voice grew indistinct, more and more hoarse and feeble. ‘Save me! save me!’ he repeated. Then they heard him groan again and again; and when they came upon him he was dead.

More fortunate were two young Neapolitan ladies, the one twenty years old and the other seventeen. An iron girder had dropped aslant so as to form an arch over them. But between them and the air lay ten feet of masonry. They were imprisoned thus for sixty-seven hours, with nothing but a single pear to eat. And yet when they were brought forth into the light they were ruddy and full of vigour.

On the fifth day also two victims were disinterred alive. The one, a big youth, by trade a tailor, was found lying by the putrefied body of his father. He began to swear freely when he was released, and with professional eagerness demanded to be attired in a seemly coat.

‘How have you contrived to exist, being buried so long a time?’ they asked him.

‘I had courage,’ was his reply. ‘I dug out a corner with my hands, and I had a bottle of vinegar to drink.’

This hearty rogue refused the food they offered him, but snatched a flask of Marsala from the hands of a soldier, and, having drunk deeply, walked off unaided towards the beach.

In the same house, five hours later, they found his cousin. A table had been his rock of safety, he being underneath it. But the poor fellow was not in good condition. He had sustained himself upon a number of tomatoes within his reach; but the fruit had got impregnated with the fumes of corruption from the dead body of his uncle, and his blood was thus cruelly poisoned.

The salvation of these and other poor people may be ascribed to the King. On the second day after the calamity, the stench that exhaled from the prostrate village began to be insupportable. Many of the workers were overcome by it. There was talk of the menace of typhus; and some spoke of cholera as the result of it. The question was then broached—Ought not the entire place to be covered up with lime? It was a colossal idea, for thousands of men working daily for weeks would not suffice to achieve it, and tens of thousands of tons of lime would be needed. There were arguments in favour of the plan, and many arguments against it. But no steps were taken in the matter until the King himself had visited Casamicciola.

It was in truth, however, a hideous proposition. Even the supporters of it granted that in all human probability there were living men and women yet under the ruins; but these were to be sacrificed for the public profit. A uniform depth of six feet of quicklime was to be spread over all the village, making it a grave for ever; and the hapless ones who yet lived were thus in theory condemned to a death of the most awful kind conceivable.

And so King Humbert came over from Naples, and saw all that was to be seen. At times they demurred when a very ghastly spectacle was near, but the King took affairs into his own hand. 'I wish to see it—I ought to see it,' he said imperatively. 'It is horrible. I did not think there had been such a massacre,' he added at length, as they took him from one scene of ruin to another. Corpses still lay here and there, bruised and disfigured, half or a quarter exposed to the air. And not all the camphor and pungent perfumes in the world could keep off the sickening stench which met them with more and more intensity as they advanced farther and farther into the misshapen village.

But after the King's visit all thought of quicklime and decomposing fluids was suspended. Once he was assured that

there were yet persons to be saved, his Majesty had put his veto upon the barbarism. He quoted Colletta, the historian of the kingdom of Naples, and his narratives of the earthquakes in Calabria in the last century, and reminded the authorities of the girl Eloisa Basili, who was in 1783 exhumed alive on the twelfth day of her interment. This poor girl was found 'holding in her arms a child which had died on the fourth day, and which was therefore by that time quite corrupted. She had been unable to free herself from the dead body, so tightly was she compassed about by the ruin of the house.' Colletta says further of her, that from the time of her rescue until she died, in her twenty-fifth year, nine years after the earthquake, she never smiled, and seemed indeed to live in a state of composed indifference. She would neither marry (though she was beautiful), nor go into a convent; but she preferred to sit in solitude under a tree, remote from all dwellings. Whenever she chanced to see a baby, she turned and looked another way.

But let us glance from the tragedy itself and see for a moment how Italy and all Europe bestirred themselves on behalf of this bereaved and devastated little place. George Eliot has somewhere derided, and reasonably, what she held to be our insular idea of the typical Italian—a creature in picturesque rags, thankful for halfpence. In truth, however, the Italians are a noble-hearted people. I wonder how we of England should have developed had we grown up under the conditions of character-nurture that have been upon Italy for the past many a generation!

What an extraordinary scene was that in Rome on August 6, eight days after the earthquake! The day was set apart for a quest of alms for Casamicciola. A spacious waggon was drawn up and down the streets of the city, heralded by the wail of a trumpet. The Municipal Guard and citizens attended the car on foot, and two ladies dressed in black sat upon the box. The waggon was inscribed 'Casamicciola,' and the flag of Italy, bound with crape, fluttered in front of it. Such a procession was well calculated to touch Italian sympathies. The people sobbed in the streets.

But they also offered Casamicciola better tribute than tears. The most various of articles showered into the car from the houses on either side of the streets—a bundle of clothes from one storey, a shirt from the window above, money tied in a handker-

chief from the third floor, and from the attic perchance a pair of earrings, removed by their owner from her ears in haste ere the car should pass on.

In the poorer quarters of the city the procession aroused real enthusiasm of generosity. A cobbler ran from his shop and threw into the car the coat he had been wearing.

‘What will you do now?’ asked his wife. ‘You have no other.’

‘Mia cara in this warm weather it’s enough if I have my shirt,’ said he.

A cabman likewise stripped himself to his shirt, and gave cloak, coat, waistcoat, and even his watch and chain to the commissioners.

A woman untied her apron, and reft her baby of its frock, that she might not be backward in giving. The shopkeepers offered contributions in kind—packets of macaroni, bottles of oil, sausages, and bread. Curious also was the donation of the proprietress of a wine-shop in the Via Monteroni. She gave an iron bedstead (large enough for two), set up for use, with mattresses, pillows, and blankets complete; and with her neighbours’ aid this was duly hoisted into the car, upon the other things. It may be imagined that one waggon did not suffice to exhaust such Roman charity as this. A single district contributed four waggon-loads of things. The coppers of the poor were alone enough to fill four and twenty sacks.

Milan, too, had its charity procession for Casamicciola, and the other cities of Italy sent what help they could.

In all, not less than three million francs came into the hands of the Relief Committee. It would be very odd, said the cynics, if, with such admirable opportunities, the distributors of the relief were not guilty of maladministration. They went further by-and-by, and charged them with misappropriation.

But such calamities as Casamicciola’s in 1883 cannot be atoned for wholly by charitable collections. As a health resort, Casamicciola is ruined. Perhaps in a decade or two it will begin to hold up its head again. For the present, it is left to brood over its misfortune. The tourists of the nations, if they come to it, take every precaution that they be not left a single night in its midst. They view its mountain through their opera glasses from the sea-shore or the deck of the steamer, perhaps even venture to eat their dinner within ten minutes’ walk of the remains of the village, and then withdraw satiated. As for staying in the neigh-

bourhood, they would as soon take up temporary abode in a churchyard vault.

It was, therefore, with an air of pleased surprise the other day that the proprietor of the one little makeshift of a hotel in the place (with beds for four) agreed to receive me for a night or two when I requested it. He, poor fellow, had lost sadly by the earthquake. His earlier hotel was a large building, much frequented, and the source of a steady income. But it went to the ground with the rest, and it lies still where it fell. Fortunately, the landlord was not in at the time; and by some miracle he has also contrived to retain possession of a family of ten fine young men and women, his children. It will have to be a very shrewd earthquake to touch them hardly a second time, for the new hotel is the lightest of single-storey *châlets*, with no roofing except a sheet of galvanised iron. A blow of the fist staggers the thin wooden walls of the building; and one goes to bed in it with some fancy that one zephyr stronger than another may at any moment prove to a marvel that the house is famously collapsible. Much, however, may be forgiven to a hotel the bedrooms of which let immediately upon a garden of orange-trees and flowers, and whence one views to perfection the blue bay of Naples beyond.

Perhaps it is hardly fair to give absolute credence to the stories of a man with so keen a grudge against Nature in his heart as the landlord of this poor little hotel. But, in the face of official reports, mine host assures his guest that many a luckless villager was stifled prematurely, and even consumed alive, by the acids and lime which were eventually dispersed about the ruins of Casamicciola. He makes light, too, of the various endeavours for the relief of those who were buried alive, and will tell with the ghost of a scoff of the dilettante way in which the toilers worked. 'Hush!' one of them would say on a sudden, as they passed a heap of ruin, 'I hear a voice!' For a moment they would pause, stand with distended ears, perhaps lie with the cheek to the ground, and the next moment be convinced that they were deceived. 'It was nothing—only a fragment of a wall giving way underneath.' Then they would pass by on the other side.

He tells, moreover, of the periodical visits of the Subscribed Funds Committee. These gentlemen were positively embarrassed by Europe's generosity. Had less money been accumulated, the distribution would have been made more equitably, and without

scandal. As it was, this was the manner of it. Every other day or so, for a while, the committee chartered a special steamer from Naples, and arrived in the island with a bag of gold. Before proceeding to work they breakfasted. And such breakfasts! They brought divers wines with them in the steamer, and all Ischia was requisitioned for wines and fruits of the first quality for their table. While they ate and drank (and they did not spare the wine), the people outside clamoured for the alms that Europe had sent them. But the Casamicciola police kept these impatient and importunate ones aloof. Only when the commissioners had well feasted did the work of charity begin. And then what a farce it was! The repleted worthies hurriedly made the tour of the district, or listened with cigars in their mouths to the tales of the petitioners, who had lost fathers or husbands (bread-winners in one form or another), and at the judgment of the moment gave according to their pleasure: here twenty francs; there ten; to an unprepossessing claimant nothing at first, but a gold piece if he worried the commissioners by his intolerable persistence; and so on till the bag was empty. This done, the officials returned to Naples with their responsibilities discharged!

Amid all this smoke there may be a spark or two of fire; but I, for one, do not care to singe my fingers by groping for it.

I happened to arrive in Casamicciola on the eve of a festa. They had shown me the ruined village, with its hot springs bubbling idly away and never a patient to profit by them, and babbled of the disaster in so distressful a minor key that I was heart and soul with the place at the instant of its downfall. And from the village we had strolled below to the sea-shore, with bare walls and cottages with big cracks obliquely across them ever about us. Here we were met by the procession of priests and banners, and mahogany-coloured men and women in their best clothes, with a string band in the van. It was a suggestive scene. The very church whence they filed had a gaping seam upon its forehead. The houses (new, for the most part, and as light and small and bandboxy as the hotel) were beset with Madonna statues at the corners; and within, one saw the paintings of more Madonnas, with lighted lamps before them. On the way, the procession passed another church that was no longer a church. Only the façade of it stood erect, with the inscription on its pediment 'To the glory of God,' &c. Behind was an

agonising heap of broken walls, twisted iron, and fallen rafters. Adjacent, too, was the ruin of an eating-house. The word 'restaurant' still invited the wayfarer to set foot within it, though the body had no more chance of entertainment here than the soul of solace in the church hard by. But the trumpets brayed through the street with a tumult of triumph; the banners blew out; the priests held themselves strongly through it all; and the eager-eyed peasants buzzed their murmurs of delight. No doubt processions and porcelain Madonnas at the corners of the houses are a vigorous antidote to fear. They are certainly worth more than the certificates of security of professors who assume to feel the pulse of the earth. Moreover, even my carping landlord placed me in a bedroom the chief ornament in which was a brace of bullock's horns nearly three feet in height, mounted singly, and set erect upon marble pedestals. The horns were as emphatic and recognised a plea for good fortune as the Madonnas. Some prefer to fix them outside the houses, one at each end of the roof; but my host used them as bedside amulets.

Typhœus is but a scurvy giant if he cannot keep his sufferings to himself for a period, in acknowledgment of these diverse appeals for pity.

I have already mentioned Monte Epomeo. For at least a century or two it has been the custom in Ischia to keep a hermit on the top of this mountain, which looks so steeply upon Casamicciola. The man is worth seeing, if only to disabuse one of the notion that a hermit is essentially, in look and act, an ascetic. He is in fact a strong stout fellow, by no means devoted to a routine of prayer and unbearable privations.

Epomeo is 2,625 feet above the sea. The hermit's temperature is therefore much cooler than that of Casamicciola. In winter he is snowed upon, and at all times the clouds help to keep his chambers moist. He is not a hermit of any religious order; nor is he a regular priest with a passion for solitude. No one can say he serves any particular purpose, except it be to do what his predecessors did—ring the church bell at noon; and shoot the small birds and quails which come among the crags of his high quarters as if they supposed that here, at all events, they were assured of a retreat from the guns of mankind.

This hermit inhabits a suite of apartments hewn in the rocky peak of the mountain—bedroom, buttery, kitchen, refectory, stables, and I know not what else. At one time the little church

of St. Nicolas, adjacent to him, was richly provided with friars. The panels of the seats they occupied still cling to the chilly refectory walls. But their day has gone by, and the hermit is their sole representative. In the nave of the church is a flat tombstone with an iron ring in it. The well-like vault underneath contains a medley of what is left of the previous hermits. But the recluse of to-day is not doomed to lie upon the remains of his predecessors. He tells with a gleeful twinkle of the eye of the recent Act of Parliament which forbids such interments. When he dies, he will get comfortable quarters in a lowland grave. But his life is so healthy, and he is so robust, that he cannot possibly die ere the middle of the next century.

Being asked if he, like the rest of Ischia, lived in perpetual terror of earthquakes, this happy irresponsible man replied that he had other things to occupy him. Moreover, he was firm in his belief that the part of the mountain in which his house was chiselled could not be dislodged, though Typhœus gave ever so mighty a heave. In 1883, Epomeo broke beneath him, and hurled its fragments down upon the ruins of Casamicciola. But the hermitage stood fast. Quoting some words from the sole literary treasure he possessed—a ragged Visitors' Book—he might have said: 'From the mountain's height I contemplate the misery of mortals;' though truly, to an energetic mind, his own unconscionable inactivity were a misery beyond all.

And yet there was something taking about the man's simplicity. He was jubilant as a child because he could add to our luncheon on the mountain top a wee bit of a bird he had shot that day. He broiled it lightly over the charcoal, and served it in its blood. His vineyard was not more than a stone's cast below him. It grew a detestable wine, fit for none but a self-mortifying hermit. The toil it afforded him; his flaccid thought about life and the nether world of mortals; the noontide bell, and his orisons, made up the sum of his affairs. A stranger picknicking on his terrace (whence there is a sheer precipice) makes a gala day for him. And he is charmed to show to such an one every spectacle of his domain, from the morsels of skulls and locks of hair in the church's reliquary to his chill bedchamber with its green damp walls, and the broad prospect of sea and land at his feet.

My landlord in Casamicciola condemned this hermit as the liver of a disgraceful life. His may not be a life of much potential good, but he would surely have more chance elsewhere to fall into yet deeper disgrace.

The other sights of Ischia are mainly of the rural kind. Over against the capital there is a stream of lava, still black, which burst from a crater of Epomeo in 1302. Since that time earthquakes have been the sole indication of subterranean activity in Ischia. On the south side of the island there is less verdure. The mountain is here riven by several very steep ravines, the white tufa of which glares intolerably in the sunlight. One is confronted everywhere by caverns in the tufa, artificial, with padlocked gates to them. In these caves the peasants store their wine. You may buy fifty litres of mellow 'Ischia bianco,' thus cellared, for about fifty pence.

Ischia is not more than twenty miles in circuit, and as it is furrowed by tracks in all parts the tour of the isle exacts but a day. I made this excursion on a stiff-eared ass, with, for guide, a man who had lost ten relations by the earthquake. Notwithstanding his wholesale bereavement, this poor fellow was quick to smile and jest. Perhaps he had come all of a sudden on that 28th July to the state of the philosopher to whom life is but a farce, dashed here and there with the semblance of tragedy. Be that as it may, it was odd to hear him tell of the finding and burial in one heap of his wife and children, and his brothers and their wives and children, much as if he were recounting a story from the 'Arabian Nights.'

It was a breathless summer morn when I left Ischia, with a steely unruffled sea. From the deck of the steamer the white purpled head of Epomeo and the green vale at its base (with ruined Casamicciola hidden from sight) were quite bewitching. The luncheon-carrier, Michael, had, with winning ingenuousness, the other day at parting squeezed my hand between his two brown palms, while he said, somewhat plaintively, 'You will come again, will you not?' Here, too, by the steamer's side, the dolorous landlord of the little hotel gave me farewell in like terms. Four bedrooms, and never a guest for a week at a time! Six years ago, and two-score bedrooms besieged by applicants for beds! The contrast is harrowing.

Why does not a modern St. George (not a professor of seismology, but some valorous free-lance of science) get at the fell giant Typhœus, and slay him once and for all? Such an one may be promised a statue upon Epomeo in the stead of the hermitage and the hermit.

A PHANTOM PORTRAIT.

‘DEAR MIKE,—Will you look in at my shop this evening? Quiller is in town, and is going to dine with me at the club. I can’t stand an evening of him alone, but if you and Teddy O’Brien will support me, with pipes and potations I think we shall be a match for him. Come early, and I’m your friend for life.—DICK GRAVES.’

I had nothing particular to do, so I sent word round to Dick that I should turn up, having first made sure that Teddy O’Brien, whose studio was in the same block, would go also. Quiller we knew of old, as all the world knew him—a man who had seen everything, done everything, been everywhere—and these occasional visits of his were a perpetual terror to Graves. Why he paid them we never knew. There was a kind of traditional friendship between the families certainly, but Quiller was a man who scoffed at tradition. He was in every way out of sympathy with a set of ardent and impecunious painters. As journalist, as traveller, as man-of-the-world, he had outlived his enthusiasms. Life contained no new experiences, no surprises for him. It was only a monotonous round of the known and the expected.

Dick Graves, who usually shone as a host, was not at his best that evening. He was nervous at first, and rather silent, leaving the burden of talk to Teddy and myself; and we had the ill-luck as the punch circulated to light on a vein of humorous stories, at which we laughed consumedly ourselves without evoking even a smile from the guest of the evening.

‘Will you fellows look over my Cornish sketches,’ said Graves, suddenly jumping up in desperation. ‘I think there are some you have not seen’—and he began to rummage about among a pile of old canvases.

Quiller resumed his seat, and sat half-absently, half-contemptuously, watching us as we turned over the paintings—possibly he was amused by our jargon of ‘tone’ and ‘quality,’ and the rest. At length I picked up from the heap a painting that caught my eye, and propped it on the easel near the lamp. It was quite unlike Graves’s usual work, and I stood looking at it for a moment, not quite knowing why I did so. It was the head of a

young woman, pale and slightly worn. She was leaning a little forward, looking out of the picture, her mouth parted by a slight, tremulous smile, and in her eyes a look that was a strange mingling of emotions, as if a new hope and happiness had come into a life of sorrow—a look half-wistful, half-exultant. I turned to speak to Graves, and saw that Quiller had got up, and was standing gazing at the picture with a look of fascination or of fear. Here at last was something that interested him.

‘Where did you get that?’ he asked, abruptly.

‘What do you think of it?’ said Graves, slowly.

‘It’s a good head,’ said Teddy O’Brien.

‘It’s a wonderful model,’ said I.

‘A face to haunt one,’ said Quiller, in a tone quite unlike his ordinary cynical one.

‘Ah, that’s it,’ said Graves. ‘It’s more than human.’

‘Who is it?’ said Quiller, in his abrupt way, again.

‘Pon my soul I can’t tell you, for I don’t know. It’s a queer story, and one I’m almost ashamed to ask you to believe. I sha’n’t blame you if you think I’m humbugging.’

We settled ourselves by the fire with our pipes, and Dick began his story in a manner, for him, so unusually grave and impressive that it seemed to leave no room for doubt as to his perfect good faith in the matter.

‘I went into Cornwall, as you know, at the end of the summer, and after loafing round Newlyn for a while, I went to the south coast, to try and find some place that had been less painted. I stayed a few days at Polperro, but it was all so much like the smaller exhibitions in Town that I could not stand it, and I finally landed at——,’—naming a small seaport town—‘where there were no painters and not many visitors. I stayed at the “Ship Inn,” and looked round for some place to hang up my palette. After some inquiries I found a small cottage which had been empty for some time, but which had evidently been used as a studio, for there was a wall knocked out at one side and a good-sized room added, with a high north light. On the south, the kitchen and “parlour,” which opened one into the other, had a view of the loveliest little harbour in the world. The place was just what I wanted, and the rent was absurd—only 10*l.* a year; so I took it for six months, on the understanding I was to keep it on if I chose. I bought a few things to make the place comfortable, and got an old woman to look after it for me; but I lived most of

the time at the "Ship Inn," and just at first I spent very little time at the studio, only taking in my canvases at night. When October set in cold and wet, I had to do some work indoors, and then it was I began to think there was something queer about the place. One day I had been painting a young girl from the village, the granddaughter of my ancient dame, and I was putting a few touches to the background, when I heard a sound close behind me, like a very gentle sigh. I looked round quickly, but there was no one in sight—no one in the room, in fact. I went on painting, with an uncomfortable feeling of something uncanny, and in a few minutes the sound was repeated actually at my ear. I dropped my brush with the start I made, and then I went all through the house to see if any one was in it. I knew that Annie and her grandmother had gone home, and I thought—I hoped—that some poor soul had crept in to shelter from the rain by the kitchen fire. Well, there was not a soul near the place. I locked up carefully that night when I went back to the inn, and in the solace of a glass of grog and a pipe before I went to bed I almost persuaded myself there was nothing in it. In the morning I had really forgotten it, I fancy; but when I got back to the studio a curious thing had happened. Right across the face in my picture were a couple of brush-marks, such as you might make if you were trying the tooth of a canvas, completely spoiling my work of the day before. I called up Annie and her grandmother, and accused them of playing tricks. They were indignant at the idea, and finally I had to apologise for my suspicions. We searched the house together, but could find no means by which any one could have entered, and at last I was obliged to conclude that I must have done the damage myself when I let my brushes fall. In a few days, however, it became impossible to explain the thing by this or any other natural means: constantly my canvases were tampered with, and I grew to have the feeling that after twilight I was never alone in the room; that faint sigh, which had so startled me at first, I came to listen for and expect, and I began at last to clothe it with a personality, and to wish I had some means of comforting the poor soul who had no other language in which to express her despair. I did not think it was she who had defaced my canvases, however, and I took to carrying my work back with me at night to the inn, where the canvases were secure from interference.

'I suppose the thing would have ended there but for an acci-

dent. There was a race meeting in the town, and the "Ship" was invaded by a low set of fellows, who got drunk, and made beasts of themselves generally. The place became unbearable, and I determined to camp in the studio until they cleared out. I made up a big fire, got my old woman to leave me some hot water in the kettle, and with the help of a rug and a pillow stuffed into the back of my chair I made myself tolerably comfortable for the night. How long I slept I don't know. I awoke suddenly, not as one does in bed, with a drowsy feeling of relief that it is too early to get up, but with every sense on the alert, and a curious impression that something unusual was happening. The fire was still bright, and made a glow on the opposite wall; but what made the room so light was the moon shining in through the square window in the roof. I could see everything in the room quite plainly, but I seemed oppressed by some weight that made me powerless to move. I sat there staring at what happened as helpless as if I had been bound. My painting things were just as I had left them: my canvas, on which I had sketched in a head, on the easel, and close by, on a stool, paints, brushes, and palette. They *had* been there, that is to say, for now there stood in front of the easel, with his back to me, a tall man, with a stoop in his shoulders, and dark grey hair; he had my palette in his hand, and he was painting with a sort of nervous intensity that it thrilled one to see. I looked to see what he was painting, for he kept glancing over towards the patch in the moonlight; but at first I could see nothing. Then I heard that little gentle sigh, but not, it seemed to me, so utterly weary and heartbroken as formerly; it was a sigh almost of content. And as I pondered on this my eyes seemed to become more accustomed to the light; and there in the moonlight, on the very chair on which Annie had sat, was a woman, leaning slightly forward, young, beautiful, and very pale—but you have seen the picture. I looked at her now more than at him, only glancing now and then to see how the work went on. As I watched her the face changed, and the sorrowful, worn look gave place to a kind of wondering happiness—he has not quite got it in the picture; it was as if the feeling were so intense it made a kind of radiance round her. I don't know how long I watched. At last a sound made me turn and look at the painter; he had thrown down the palette and brushes, and was standing looking at his work; then he turned

slowly, and held out his hands with a supplicating gesture. She had risen, too, and come a step forward, with a wonderful light in her eyes, and just as she put her hands in his a cloud crossed over the moon and blotted out the figures from my sight. When it passed the patch of moonlight was empty, and there was only the painted head and the palette lying on the floor to convince me I had not been dreaming. After that I must have fallen asleep, for it was broad daylight when I next remember anything, and I heard the welcome and familiar sound of my old woman preparing my breakfast. The smell of frying pilchards was refreshingly mundane, and I got up stiff and sore from my uneasy couch, prepared to find that my phantoms of the night before had been nothing but a dream. No; there was the picture, just as you see it, and on the floor were the palette and brushes. I picked them up, and looked curiously at them. If you'll believe me, I could never make up my mind to clean the paint off that palette, and it hangs there just as that fellow left it.'

We sat silent for some minutes when Graves had done. I confess the story impressed me a good deal, and glancing up I could see that Quiller was strangely moved.

'And did you never have any explanation of the thing?' said I at last.

'No,' said Graves. 'I never had any explanation, and I don't suppose I ever shall.'

Quiller had risen, and stood near the fire.

'I think I can give it,' he said, knocking the ashes out of his pipe.

Graves stared at him; no one spoke, and he went on, as if unwillingly.

'That must have been Drake's cottage you had; he was before your time—I daresay you never heard of him. He lived there with his wife—and that's her portrait.'

Graves's stare of surprise became more profound, and Teddy and I looked on in silent wonder. Quiller went on, speaking like a man that has been carried quite out of himself.

'There was a tragic story told about Drake and his wife. He was a good deal older than she, and changeable and moody in his ways; and she, poor child, was ambitious to help him to be great. At first he was tender and thoughtful towards her, and then he seemed to forget how fragile and sensitive she was—he neglected her, and grew more and more morose and moody. He used to get

very savage about his models, and complain that it was impossible to get any one with intelligence enough to sit decently. Once his wife asked him whether she could not sometimes help him by sitting, and he only laughed at her, I remember. "You—you!" he said—that was all. Then the poor child had an illness, which, if she had been happier, might have ended differently, and been a new happiness to both of them; but she was too worn out with sorrow and disappointment, and in the end she died. In her delirium she was always calling to her husband, "Let me help you, let me be of some use; only once, dear—paint me only once:" and poor Drake, who woke up to a sense of his loss, was heart-broken at his inability to satisfy her. The tenderest and most passionate tones of his voice never reached her, and she died without ever knowing him again. After that Drake was a changed man; he seemed to have only one idea—to paint the portrait of his wife. Canvas after canvas he spoiled, and when I went to see him he would say, "She cannot rest until I have done it. I must succeed; sooner or later I must satisfy her." At length he became so unmanageable, eating nothing, and spending long, sleepless nights walking about the country, that his friends came and took him away. He died some months after in an asylum.'

'By Jove!' said Teddy O'Brien when Quiller had finished, and then relapsed into silence.

I looked at Graves, but he was lost in a wonderment too deep for words.

'The portrait's very like her,' said Quiller, with a strange awe in his tone. 'I'm glad poor Drake succeeded at last.'

'You think——' said I, and broke off.

Quiller was putting on his coat. He answered my unfinished question with a solemnity for which I was not prepared.

'For twenty-two years those two poor ghosts have been waiting their opportunity. Let us be thankful that in the end they found it.'

He seemed to forget to take leave of us in any way, and went without another word. As the door closed each of us drew a deep breath of relief. Dick raised his head with an air of stupefaction.

'That's a rum story,' said Teddy O'Brien; 'why did you never tell it before?'

'The rummiest thing about it is the sequel,' said I. 'Dick, old man, is your part true?'

‘I don’t know,’ said Dick; ‘I begin to think it must be.’

‘Great Scotland Yard!’ said Teddy O’Brien, ‘did you make it up?’

‘Every word of it—on the spur of the moment.’

‘Did you know——?’

‘Not a word. Quiller seemed struck by that picture, and it was the only sign of human interest he had shown, so I thought I’d humour him. I didn’t mean a ghost story when I began, but it somehow developed into that. I would have given a good deal to take a rise out of him, but I never hoped for anything so complete as this.’

‘It was a curious coincidence that you should have taken Drake’s cottage,’ said O’Brien.

‘Yes,’ said Dick, drily; ‘but the most curious part of it all is that the cottage was made up too.’

‘Great Scotland Yard!’ said Teddy O’Brien again.

‘And who painted the head?’

‘I painted it myself,’ said Dick, ‘and I begin to think it must be a deuced good picture.’

THE CASTLE OF ALNWICK.

‘THEY are building at Northumberland House, at Sion, at Stanwick, at Alnwick and Warkworth Castles! They live by the etiquette of the peerage, have Swiss porters, the Countess has her pipers—in short, they will soon have no estate,’ wrote Walpole, in 1752, of the Earl and Countess of Northumberland (afterwards Duke and Duchess). This conviction was a mistake on the part of the author of the ‘Castle of Otranto,’ for the fortunate couple in question, far from getting through their estate, actually augmented it; and their representatives enjoy the additions they made to it, as well as the various possessions mentioned, to this day, even to the pipers, with, perhaps, the exception of the Swiss porters, who have been from time to time replaced by men of other nationalities.

Seventeen years after the date of Horace Walpole’s gossip, Pennant, setting out for his tour in Scotland, also touched upon the ducal porters, or rather upon the absence of one at Alnwick Castle. ‘You look in vain,’ he said, ‘for any marks of the grandeur of the feudal age; for trophies won by a family eminent in our annals for military prowess and deeds of chivalry; for halls hung with helms and hauberks, or with the spoils of the chase; for extensive forests and venerable oaks. You look in vain for the helmet on the tower, the ancient sign of hospitality to the traveller; or for the grey-headed porter to conduct him to the hall of entertainment. The numerous train, whose countenances gave welcome to him on his way, are now no more; and instead of the disinterested usher of the old times, he is attended by a valet eager to receive the fees of admittance. There is a vast grandeur in the appearance of the outside of the castle; the towers magnificent, but injured by the numbers of rude statues crowded on the battlements. The apartments are large, and lately finished in the Gothic style with a most incompatible elegance. The gardens are equally inconsistent, trim in the highest degree, and more adapted to a villa near London than the ancient seat of a great baron.’ Other writers followed on the same lines. Wordsworth, writing to a friend, said anyone visiting Alnwick with his head full of the ancient Percies would be woe-

fully disappointed. The American poet Halleck harped upon the same string:—

The present representatives
 Of Hotspur and his 'gentle Kate'
 Are some half-dozen serving-men
 In the drab coat of William Penn;
 A chamber-maid, whose lip and eye,
 And cheek, and brown hair, bright and curling,
 Spoke Nature's aristocracy;
 And one, half-groom, half-seneschal,
 Who bowed me through court, bower, and hall
 For ten-and-sixpence sterling.

The ancient stronghold thus frequently deemed spoilt by 'incompatible elegance' consists, all the same, of a mighty keep of a most knightly and stately aspect, composed of a ring of towers encircling an inner courtyard of an irregular contour. This keep, part of which rises to an altitude of a hundred feet, stands almost in the centre of an area of several acres in extent, enclosed by a high curtain-wall, which has towers and garrets along its course at somewhat close intervals. Below the curtain-wall northwards, at the distance of a long stone's-throw, flows the River Alne through green pastures, with here and there a gentle bend, and here and there a white-fringed fall to a lower level; and, close at hand, there is a fine stone bridge over it, on which is a pedestal surmounted by a lion of the same heraldic variety as that which used to guard Northumberland House at Charing Cross. Close up to the walls on the side of the castle farthest from the river is built the old cold-grey stony Border town, with a view, evidently, to enjoy the security of its protection. Westwards, the barbican opens into a wide space, or *place d'armes*, from which departs a short broad street of good stone houses leading to the ancient church, and, beyond that edifice, to the adjacent country now forming the ducal parks, and once the pleasant lands of two monastic houses, Alnwick Abbey and Hulne Priory, and to the wide hilly, heathery moors that skirt it.

Those who understand the testimony of the stones point out the keep and curtain-wall have remains of the grand old massy Norman castle built by Eustace de Vesey about the middle of the twelfth century; and these remains are in positions which make it clear that the extent of land originally occupied by the edifice was, as near as may be, identical with that now covered by it. The great bulk of the building, however, at present consists of

the alterations and additions made by Henry Percy on his acquisition of the Norman structure by purchase, in 1309, from Anthony Bek, Bishop of Durham, who was left trustee by the last of the De Vescies. Probably the old fortress of the Norman noble then required bringing up to date, so to say, for the stones still bear evidence that Henry Percy, the first lord of Alnwick, built a new barbican and gatehouse of entrance, seven or eight towers on the curtain-wall, a draw-well in the inner courtyard in an arched recess, and renewed the east side of the keep. The heraldry on a line of shields enriching two towers made to strengthen the entrance to the innermost courtyard furthermore inform us that his son probably completed this portion of the improvements. More of the work of this period may have been removed from time to time in subsequent alterations, especially in the course of those mentioned by Walpole, but this very considerable amount is still standing, wind-worn and silver-grey, and firm, compact, and stalwart. We may note the slits for the cross-bows, the holes and grooves in the merlons of the embattled parapets for the wooden shutters which filled in the embrasures and thus increased the strength of the defence, the grooves for the portcullises, the traces of fosses both within and without the walls, the machicolations and other cunning devices that once made the chances of defence superior to those of attack. We may see there were three strong gateways at distant intervals to be forced before the entrance in the inner courtyard could be approached by assailants. We may still see, too, on the parapets and towers the 'rude statues' mentioned by Pennant, that are stone figures of men in various warriorlike attitudes, by which the defenders endeavoured to confuse besiegers as to the extent of the garrison.

There is also structural evidence that the son of Hotspur likewise strengthened the fortress by heightening the walls and adding parapets to them; and it is on record he obtained a license to crenelate the town wall. Old surveys and plans show isolated buildings in different parts of the enclosure, such as a chapel and an exchequer-house, that have been removed, some of which may have also been built in his time.

All these early Percy works had, in their turn, become considerably dilapidated when the first duke and duchess resolved to re-embellish the structure in the taste of their day. The grand old fabric that had seen King John, Henry III., Edward I.,

Edward II., and Edward III. ride into its courtyard successively, in the course of years, and take up temporary residence within its walls, in all the pride and pomp of royal circumstance, had been neglected for some time, and had even been used as a school in 1691. At need, more than 3,000 men and a large number of horses had been put up within its precincts. Centuries of similar hard service and the various fortunes of the family, which involved much non-residence, must have left it in considerable disrepair. Four old surveys extant describe the dilapidations and necessary repairs to this 'very gudlye howsse of thre wards,' as the earliest of them, dated 1538, calls 'the castelle of Alnwyke.' There was, therefore, no unconsidered destruction of ancient work; and the hostile criticisms bestowed upon the reparations must have been evoked chiefly by the 'elegance' that had toned down all irregularities that told of actual service, and presented an aspect of formal regularity, long, low, level lines, and lavish ornamentation. The end aimed at was the attainment of a sumptuous and convenient residence, in accord with the requirements of the day; and, when this was accomplished, Capability Brown was employed to beautify and enrich the scenery around that constant warfare had, probably, kept bleak and bare. These were the days of Ranelagh, the 'Rambler,' Strawberry Hill, and the Cock Lane ghost; of Johnson, Goldsmith, Reynolds, Burke, and Garrick; in fine, when Dr. Burney's house in St. Martin's Lane was a centre of interest, and Mrs. Montagu's mansion another; and Mrs. Thrale and Boswell had scarcely begun to monopolise the great lexicographer. The Duchess of Northumberland was in touch with the literary taste of the day, and some of her 'Bouts Rimés,' placed in the urn in the garden of Sir John Miller's villa, near Bath, have been preserved, and speak for her sprightly versatility. 'Sir,' said Dr. Johnson, 'the Duchess of Northumberland may do what she pleases.'

When Algernon, the fourth duke, came into possession, the renovations effected by his accomplished grandparents were showing symptoms of decay. The walls of the dining-room, into which the great hall of the ancient Percies had been converted, were leaning over several inches, and were also full of fissures. Other portions of the work of the last century were also exhibiting signs of weakness, whilst the work of the earlier Percies and of the Norman builder was sound. It was resolved, therefore, that the comparatively light and slight buildings of the first duke and duchess should be replaced by new, that should be

more in accordance with the manner of masonry in Plantagenet times, of which there was so much remaining. The treatment of the interior then became a question for consideration. Trophies and spoils of the chase, and the helms and hauberks missed by Pennant, would hardly be accepted as suitable decorations for the home of a nobleman in the reign of Queen Victoria, modern luxury having artistic requirements that these would not meet. Eventually, it was decided that the style of art that adorned the palaces of Italian nobles in the days of Michael Angelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and Raphael should be adopted. This combination of magnificence and refinement was thereupon adapted to the circumstances of the case by Italian artists, who journeyed from Rome for the purpose. The learned antiquary, the Commendatore Canina, accompanied them, and gave the sanction of his experience and judgment to the undertaking. Signor Montiroli, architect, brought the irregular external forms of the towers forming the keep into the necessary geometrical outlines in the interior that the style of adornment required. Signor Mantovani, who came fresh from the task of restoring some of Raphael's work in the Vatican, painted characteristic friezes for the state-rooms. Signor Bulletti, accredited from Cardinal Antonelli as the best carver in Italy, with the assistance of a staff of carvers under the direction of Mr. John Brown, was entrusted with the work of carving the superb decorations of the ceilings, doors, and window shutters. Choice marbles, granite, mosaic work, statuary, and other requisites were sent from Italy from time to time, and for some years the castle was a veritable school of Italian art. The coffered ceiling in the basilica of San Lorenzo suggested the treatment of that of the dining-room. The friezes by Giulio Romano in the Castle of San Angelo, Rome, furnished the thought that prevails in those in the drawing-room. Decorations in St. Peter's are reflected in those of the saloon. The Camera Borgia, in the Vatican, lent suggestions for the embellishment of the boudoir for the Duchess; and altogether an atmosphere of Italian art was successfully introduced.

Meanwhile, some hundreds of workmen dotted the fine old pile, removing the work Walpole and Pennant decried, and gradually rearing with mighty scaffolding and a great travelling crane, and many other appliances, the Prudhoe tower, designed by Mr. Salvin, which with its flag-turret now rises high above the rest of the structure with a grand effect of strength and endurance.

(It takes a hundred and sixty-seven steps to climb to the leads on the summit.) In the course of these works of demolition and digging for the necessary foundations, many interesting facts came to light. It was ascertained there had been at one time a fosse or moat round the keep, within the curtain-walls. In the portion of this fosse that was excavated were found fragments of horse-gear, and a triple-spiked iron claw, or calthrope, intended to lame horses. In the walls taken down were found tooled stones that had formed the heads, sills, jambs and mullions of windows, probably of the Percy towers that the works of the last century had superseded. There were also several coins, keys, old tools, and bones of animals brought to light; and a bottle placed there by the eighteenth-century masons, with a paper enclosed in it stating: 'This castle was built by Mathew and Thomas Mills, master masons, in the year 1764.' Still more interesting relics were found in an ornamental sarcophagus in the chapel when dismantled, consisting of a packet of letters from the Duchess to the Duke, small intaglio portraits of them both, several medallions struck in commemoration of the restoration of the castle, and some silver coins of the reign of George II. Those who were present when these souvenirs were found say the letters powdered away when they were lifted up, but all that could be preserved were placed in safe keeping. When the plaster-work was removed from the walls of the dining-room there were found behind it the marks of the daïs of old times, the hooks for suspending tapestry, a hood-moulding terminating with a lion's claw, that indicated the place where stood the dressoir or buffet, and a small recess with a water-drain in it, the core of the old home that must have been in the thoughts of generations of Percies in the battle-field, in sea-fights, when languishing in Loch Leven or the Tower, in 'Open Parliament,' in exile, in the Field of the Cloth of Gold, in the Pilgrimage of Grace, and other crucial times.

Having thus briefly noted the history of the stronghold, we may now enter it. We pass through the same massively ribbed barbican by which the ancient Percies and their royal guests entered, which has the Percy lion and motto on its bold front, and step out of its cavernous shade, through another ribbed archway, into the grass-laid outer bailey. Around is the encircling grey curtain-wall with its Edwardian towers and parapets, and before us stands the gallant keep. From among the towers of which it is composed projects the apsidal end of the chapel, easily

distinguished by its high-pitched roof and gilded cross; and above them all rises the high square turret on the Prudhoe tower with its flagstaff. A curving roadway conducts us through a second gateway to the inner bailey, in which is placed the entrance to the innermost courtyard, guarded by two semi-octagonal towers. This third gateway, in which is incorporated part of the castle of the Norman noble De Vesey, seems to be still reverberating with the knightly life of old times. It has a strong dungeon in the thickness of its walls and a dark *oubliette* below it; and adjoining it is the ancient draw-well, also in the thickness of the masonry. There can be no disappointment here for those whose heads are full of the ancient Percies, as Wordsworth puts it, for scarcely a stone has been touched in this portion of the structure for five hundred years. In the courtyard, however, we come into the presence of the first indications of the Cinque-cento innovations. The lamp with which it is lighted is in the likeness of one that lights the Strozzi Palace in Florence; and the bronze knocker on the entrance door, under the arcade of the *portecochère*, is an antique from Venice. From the entrance-hall the decorations increase in richness, up the wide staircase, to the loggia or vestibule paved with Venetian mosaic-work at the head of it, and thence to an ante-room, the library, the drawing-room, the saloon, or music-room, and the dining-room, till the sumptuousness culminates in the boudoir, or sitting-room of the Duchess. One chamber, a breakfast-room, has been hitherto left as the first duke and duchess used it; but this has become too unsafe to be allowed to remain in that condition, and is now likewise in the course of alteration. The dining-room, too, differs from the bulk of the Italian work in so far as the carved wood-work, in pine and cedar, is left uncoloured. For the rest, there is a tone as of a gorgeous Italian sunset. Gold and purple, carmine, orange, luminous sea-greens, blend in an enchanting feast of colour, with varying predominance of tints in each chamber. The backgrounds of the panelled ceilings are coloured, and then spread with delicate carved ornamentation that is gilded. The walls are lined with satin damasks of different hues that harmonise with the prevailing tints in the Cinque-cento friezes. The chimney-pieces, with the full-sized figures supporting the mantelshelves, are of Carrara marble and of much sculpturesque beauty. The dados are of walnut inlaid with satin-wood and maple; the window shutters of mahogany with carved panels of walnut and

limewood; the doors of polished walnut; and the floors are of oak, covered with soft-piled carpets, of which one is the result of a thousand guineas' worth of loomwork. Pictures by the greatest of the old Italian masters, mirrors, choice cabinets, inlaid tables, and other rich furniture and fittings complete an effect as of a sunset on a sea of gold.

Without going into minute details, it may be mentioned the fact of the keep being composed of distinct towers precluded the adoption of the cube form, or double cube form, declared by Charles II. to be the perfection of proportion for a room, and necessitated a great variety of contours. Each apartment differs from the rest in this matter, but all agree in general exquisiteness. There are on the principal floor eighteen chambers. The library may be described as an oblong apartment fifty-four feet long, with a bay projecting from the centre of it that is twenty-four feet wide and sixteen feet long, which form admits of an arrangement of the ceiling into four compartments. In the centre of each is a carved trophy illustrating the arts and sciences. There are two tiers of bookcases made of oak inlaid with sycamore, full of rare books, and a light gallery for access to the upper one, which is approached by a staircase in the thickness of the wall; and there are three marble mantelpieces, with busts of Bacon, Shakespeare, and Newton upon them. The music-room and drawing-room are not quite so spacious; but the dining-room is more so, being sixty-four feet long. The chapel is forty-six feet long. This is lighted by lancet-windows and enriched with mosaic work of a similar character to that placed in Westminster Abbey by Abbot Ware before the shrine of Edward the Confessor. Only the gallery is on this floor: the ground-floor, seated for the household, is on a lower level. The state bed-chambers follow the outline of the towers in which they are placed, and the dressing-rooms attached to them are hexagonal, or octagonal, or otherwise, according to the exigencies of their situations. These superb apartments are approached from a corridor, corbelled out into the courtyard, which corridor is hung with pictures of much interest. Ward's two paintings of the chargers of the Duke of Wellington and Napoleon, and Canaletto's views of Northumberland House and Westminster Bridge, Sir David Wilkie's 'Gentle Shepherd,' and a woodland scene by Creswick, and the 'Return from Deer-stalking,' by Landseer, are here.

The baronial or abbatial-looking kitchen is placed in the line of circumvallation, or curtain-wall. Walls and groined roof alike

are of massive masonry. It is thirty-four feet square, and rises to a height, lantern-fashion, of forty feet. This is supplemented with sculleries and offices connected with the various culinary departments, a set of larders for meat, fish, stock, and game, and many appliances, such as lifts, hydraulic apparatus, marble slabs, and streams of water; and below it is a vast vault for coals; and above some of these departments are bed-chambers for the numerous staff employed in them. Here the old character of the castle is maintained, and Italian art is only dreamt of in the occasional production of an Italian dish. In the kitchen hangs the huge dish on which is placed the baron of beef on festive occasions. When this is placed on the table it is preceded by a piper, playing 'Chevy Chase.'

Some of the ancient towers on the curtain-wall are used as museums. The walls are about five feet thick, and there is a footwalk on the top of them here and there. Some towers are pierced with narrow slits only on the lowest stage, and lighted by larger mullioned and transomed windows above. The stone steps leading to the upper floors are sometimes external, and sometimes placed inside and lit by cross-bow openings. The constable's tower has, in the chamber above the ground-floor, a cusped double-light window with a quartre-foil heading, and a stone seat in the thickness of the wall on either side of it. This old-world room, once the constable's lodging, now contains the arms, powder-horns, &c., of the troops raised to repel the threatened invasion in the beginning of the century. The sally-port tower contains a collection of antiquities. Another tower holds the Egyptian collection gathered together by the late Duke Algernon. A geological collection, made by the Duchess Charlotte Florentia, was placed in the Abbot's tower. Offices for the heads and clerks of the various business departments occupy more of the buildings along this encircling line.

The stable-courts lie beyond it. In one of these stands the new great guest-hall, in which banquets are frequently given and entertainments held. It is a hundred and thirty-five feet long, with an open-timbered roof. Learned societies (the British Association, last year), tenants and neighbours are frequently hospitably regaled in it, and an annual ball fills it with revelry, light and music. It has been once recently fitted up as a bazaar for a charitable purpose, when it was filled with lively crowds for nearly a week. The crowning rejoicings of which it has been the scene were those held at the coming of age of the present Earl

Percy, when young and old, rich and poor, were entertained in different ways and different times for three days. Except when required for entertainment, this great hall does duty as a coach-house. Here stands the gilded state-coach with its thick wheels, and highly ornamented panels and carvings of the days of sedan-chairs, fans, powder, and patches; and side by side with it the most recent, luxurious, and severely simple vehicles of our own day of various descriptions. In the airy, well-lighted stables, though there are no rows of war-horses, or of sumpter-mules, or fair ladies' palfreys, nor in the harness-rooms any broided reins, or velvet housings 'trapp'd with gold,' there is much to admire. The name of the steed to which it belongs is placed at the head of each stall; a fringe of plaited straw gives a neat finish to each straw-strewed compartment; and the utmost order and cleanliness prevail. The gentle, powerful, sleek animals, well groomed and so well housed, would probably not care to change places with those of old times, notwithstanding their rich trappings and more intimate companionship with knights and squires.

The gardens Pennant found too trim for his taste lie to the east of the castle. Here, again, we are reminded of the possessions of Italian princes in past centuries, notwithstanding the cold skies and keen winds of the 'North Countrie.' There are terraces sloping up one above another, parterres bright with flowers arranged with geometric precision, parterres green with convolutions of box and ivy without flowers, leafy screens of linden trees, squared hedges of yew and privet almost as compact as masonry, banks with festoons of foliage on them, wide walks bordered on either side with wide flower-beds all the more brilliant for the contrast with their smooth grass bordering, and on three sides of the goodly acres thus treated stands a high red-brick wall covered with fruit trees. In the heart of the garden, in the centre of the parterres, is a large fountain, or *carrée d'eau*, with a polished semicircular red granite lip, or rim. At the lower end of this division, or opening, stands a fine conservatory, a hundred feet long, with two other glass-houses about as long on either side of it, at a little distance, wing-fashion. At the upper end, at the full height of the sloping terraces, is an Italian-looking gateway of three arches filled with ornamental ironwork of the lightest workmanship, which gives access to other portions of the gardens and grounds. To the west of the fountain is a quadrangular *allée vert* of linden trees trained to form a green colonnaded cloistral walk round a central Paradise, to use an old word for the

grassy square enclosed by it; to the east is the rose garden—some thirty beds of choice roses cut out of greensward, which is an addition to an older starlike device of roses near it, originally thought of, probably, by Capability Brown. And beyond all this are many kitchen gardens, glass-houses where pines are grown in great numbers, vineries, ferneries, an orchid-house, and most of the items that go to make up Lord Bacon's idea of man's greatest happiness.

The ornamental pleasure-grounds encircle the gardens and extend westwards, where they enclose the river, and finally merge in the parks mentioned, round which runs a high stone wall about twelve miles long. The parks are traversed by forty-seven miles of roads, and contain all that remains of Alnwick Abbey and Hulne Priory, and some of the loveliest spots in this 'dear kingdom of England,' as the Saxon poet called our native land. On the summit of a heather-clad mount, about two miles westwards of the castle, is an ornamental column erected by the first Duke of Northumberland, from the balcony of which may be seen many miles of the borderland committed by so many sovereigns to the keeping of the Percies, with the Alne winding below, the ocean spreading along the north-east coast, with Grace Darling's lighthouse as a central spot of interest upon it, the Cheviots rising up like a natural barrier to the Scots, and, in the same direction Flodden Field, with, we must conclude, somewhere among the distant hills, the scene of 'Chevy Chase,' or of the series of encounters in the course of centuries that were concentrated into the narrative set forth in that poem. Bamborough Castle, the seat of Saxon kings in the days of the Heptarchy, is also visible from this mount (known as Brislee), as well as Dunstanborough and Warkworth Castles. Hulne Priory is near the foot on the opposite side of the river. It is said the resemblance to the scenery round Mount Carmel, in Syria, was the reason of the selection of this spot for the site of the monastery. The gigantic firs, the pines, the seas of heather, the glades, the deer, the wide openings of greenest verdure, the close plantations, the majesty of some of the monarchs of the forest, the profuseness of animal, bird, and plant life, not to mention fish life in the beautiful river, create an impression perhaps even more acute than that afforded by the castle, that enables us to realise how much the Percies gave or lost in olden times when their estates were confiscated; and something, too, of the magnanimity of the sovereigns who restored them, time after time, to them and their heirs.

NOBODY CARES!

A wearily-wan little face,
 A feeble, forlorn little smile,
 Poor faltering feet,
 That must pace their beat
 For many and many a mile—
 A star stealing out in the dusk;
 A lamp that luridly flares;
 In the wide city's whirl
 Just a nameless girl—
 Nobody cares!

* * * * *

A desolate, dearth-stricken room,
 A pillow pushed up to the wall;
 A flicker that shows
 A face in repose:
 Silence, and that is all,
 Save just on the woe-begone cheek
 That look which such raptness wears,
 That Light on the brow—
 Ah, who shall say now,
 ‘Nobody cares’?

EIGHT DAYS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE TOUCHSTONE OF PERIL.

I will a round unvarnished tale deliver.—*Othello.*

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SACK OF THE BANK.

THOSE of us whose memory of India goes back, as does mine, to nearly fifty years ago, cannot avoid that feeling of pride which we are told that we Anglo-Indians should not entertain at the thought of the work we have done there. The change wrought in that period has been marvellous, and enormously to the benefit of the people. For one thing, we have given them a security of life and property such as was never known, dreamt of, in the land before. When we arrived on the scene we found robbery and murder carried on as open professions, and under religious sanction. Those who would 'rob you for two pice and murder you for an anna' (their own saying) were very numerous. There were the guilds of poisoners; there was the fraternity of stranglers, whose name has become known in Europe, the Thugs, with whom death was the unalterable antecedent of robbery; there was the federation of thieves who stole into houses by boring holes through the walls; there were the gangs of bold dacoits who carried houses by storm. And so Sheitanpâra lifted up its head when it heard that the rule of those who had interfered so cruelly with the callings of its inhabitants, with their poisoning and strangling, with their robbery by violence, or by thimble-rigging and strap-play and other ingenious devices, was over. The denizens of the Devil's Quarter leaped up at the thought that they should be able to call this day their own. The news of the murder of the English shopkeeper and his family, of the plunder of his shop and house, set them all astir. Here was the bloody token of the downfall of the English power! Why, here was sanctioned robbery, applauded murder! But when the leaders among them began to consider how they should best realise this sudden and unexpected opportunity, it was not towards the houses of the English people that the thoughts of those highflyers turned. Those houses generally

contained little that they thought worth the taking. There was hardly ever any money in them—that was kept at the bank—no costly clothing, no jewels or gems. Except in the case of a valuable gun or a good horse, the things in them best worth stealing were the copper pots and pans in the kitchen, and the conveying of these they left to inferior practitioners. True, there was the delight of killing the English, but that must be indulged in only if it came in their way. They left the plundering of them to the lower orders of their community, to the mob, to the rougs and rogues and ruffians of the town.

Their own thoughts turned towards the houses of their own fellow-countrymen, the dwelling-places of their wealthy fellow-citizens, in which were the underground stores of gold, and silver, and gems—the women and children laden with jewelry, the wearers of necklets, and bracelets, and anklets (all of solid gold), of earrings, and nose-rings, and toe-rings, and girdles of silver and gold—where were the valuable shawls and pieces of cloth of gold: houses well worth the robbing. To-day was a day in which a man might make his fortune. But there was one dwelling-place of the English towards which the thoughts of the chief robbers in Sheitanpâra turned at once to-day, as they had so often turned before. This was the Bank-house. The leading freebooter among them had often thought, with a longing mind and an itching palm, of the gold and silver collected together in one heap there, of the piles of gold mohurs and rupees. And now there was a chance of getting at these. When he hears that the 66th has taken the decisive step of slaying its officers, he makes up his mind that to-day at least the English will not be able to maintain that peace and order which, to him at all events, have been such disagreeable results of their rule. To-day lawlessness seems likely to prevail, and, if so, the Bank will be one of the first objects of attention to those who mean to take advantage of it. He must bestir himself if he wishes to be first in the field. He gets together his band, and adding slightly to its numbers—he does not care to make it too large—he starts for the Bank.

The Bank stands by the side of a road that runs from Star Street to the English quarter. Doonghur Singh, the dacoit, would have preferred to have gone round and approached it from the side of the English quarter, so as to have had the best chance of arriving on the scene of action alone; but the distance was too great. He might arrive at the Bank only to find that others had

been there before him—to find the gold and silver, yea, even the coppers gone. No, he must make for it from Star Street. As he enters on the road leading to the Bank, he is as much surprised as delighted to find the road so vacant and still. The swirl in Star Street has drawn all the traffic from the neighbouring streets into it: and so the renowned freebooter enjoys the satisfaction of seeing the road running on before him unoccupied by any large throng or band of people, in fact almost empty. But he is a well-known man in Khizrabad, and his entry on the road has been noticed. ‘The Bank is about to be plundered!’—the cry flies around. Soon the band of professional marauders has at its heels a hurrying crowd, a rushing crowd, with which it must now make a race of it. Some men belonging to the Bank are coming down the road: they rush back in order to give Mr. Hilton warning; but they will not reach the Bank-house much before the others, whose feet are winged by the thought of the rich prize that may await the first men in the race.

We have said that, while the mutineers from Abdoolapore were marching up from the River Gate to Star Street, Mrs. Hilton and her daughters, seated in the pleasant western upper verandah of the house, were absorbed in the reading of their English, their *home* letters. The transporting power of the carpet of the Prince Kumar-ul-Zaman in the ‘Arabian Nights’ was nothing compared to that of a sheet of paper which will carry you over such enormous spaces, over oceans and continents in a second of time. To what a distance have they been carried within the last few minutes—how many thousands of miles away! Away from the vast, flat, alien plain around them, with its mud-walled villages, the only habitations of men upon it—no man daring to dwell alone by himself in mansion, farm-house, or cot—and its numerous mango groves; from the vast plain, just now looking at its worst, where the trees are dust-laden and for hundreds of miles there is not a single flower, scarce a blade of green grass to be seen—where what is not dry barren plain or dry morass is dry brown fallow. Back to their fair native land, now in all the beauty of the spring-time, with its varied surface and its beautiful widespread greenery, and its tall ancestral trees, and its trim lawns and numerous orchards, its scattered cots, and farms, and mansions—marks of centuries of security, as the absence of them in India is a mark of the opposite—and its gorse-covered commons now aflame with gold, even the barren land fair; and its delightful hedgerows,

and its green meadows filled with flowers—one of the most delightful sights in the world. When the two girls are borne away to that distant place by the pieces of paper in their hands, they do not care to look on the aspect of the land, but on the faces of their friends—as yet their greatest friends; to hear of their fortunes, follow their thoughts, share in their hopes and fears. The aspects of any land, its physical characteristics, are not of such moment to them just now as human life, above all their own. India has been to them as yet only a land of excitement, pleasurable excitement and delight, the land in which they have come to pass their lives, meet their parents, perchance their husbands. They have just seen it under its fairest aspect, during the beautiful winter season. They have not lived long enough in the land they have come to to have a deep craving for the land they have left; not long enough in a desiccated atmosphere to have an intense craving for cool, moist air; not long enough on these flat plains to have a deep desire for a land that rises and falls; not long enough beneath this fiery cope of heaven to have a passionate yearning for a shrouded sky. The aspect of their distant native land, as it was when those letters left it, comes up more vividly before Mrs. Hilton's mental gaze, though she had not seen it for ten years, than before that of the girls who had left it scarcely a year ago.

The letters Mrs. Hilton is most concerned in come from the place in which she was born, and in which she lived until she married and came out to India; its very sticks and stones form a part of her being. Now is the time for rural excursions, and as mention is made of them how each well-known spot rises up again, clear and distinct, before Mrs. Hilton's eyes. 'The children have been to Carswell Glen,' she reads in the letter from her mother—an old lady still as brisk and active and cheerful as herself, in whose charge her younger children are—and the aspect of the place in the early spring-time is as clear before her as is that of the Ghilâni Bagh, on which she looks down from the verandah. It was a long narrow dale or valley lying between the high moorland and the sea, cut out by a little stream on its descent from the former to the latter. How clearly she saw that wider middle portion to which the children had gone to gather primroses! The hurrying brook, the beautiful groups of trees, the moss-grown mill with its calm still pool above and its rushing stream below, the meadows filled with buttercups and daisies, and the golden primroses growing in such profusion

everywhere, under these trees, in that hollow, in the cool shadow of the bank above the mill-pond. And then she becomes absorbed in all those little details about the children which have so great an interest for her : about Mary's frock and Tommy's jacket, and the change in the colour of Susan's hair (which Mrs. Hilton sighs at), and the loss of her first tooth. And then, when they all meet together at breakfast the contents of the letters have to be discussed. And Mr. Hilton delays leaving to smoke his cigar, which he does before going down to his office. And when he has retired to his own room the mother and daughters still continue the interchange of information and the discussion thereof. Then Mr. Hilton reappears unexpectedly and says to his wife, 'There *is* a disturbance in the city.'

The emphasis means, 'Here is the disturbance I have apprehended and we have so often talked about.' He was also thinking of the discussion at Mr. Melvil's three days before, on the night of the dance, when Mr. Melvil had so pooh-pooched the notion of such an occurrence.

'A disturbance—in the city?' says Mrs. Hilton, not able to disengage her mind at once from the piece of interesting home gossip she and her daughters have been discussing.

'Yes: a man in the office has brought the news. He does not seem very clear as to what has given rise to it, but it seems rather a serious one. You and the girls had better get out of the city and go up to the cantonment—go to Mrs. Campbell's.'

'But we cannot go away and leave you here, John,' says Mrs. Hilton.

'I shall be able to manage better by myself, when you are away,' says Mr. Hilton. 'We have the guard, and I shall have the gates closed, and the compound walls are high, and I will send a man to the police, and, by-the-way, you might drive round by the Brigadier's and tell him that there is a disturbance in the city.'

'But, John,' cries Mrs. Hilton.

'You know I must remain here, Molly, and you had better get the girls up to the cantonment,' says Mr. Hilton, looking earnestly at his wife. 'I think I shall be able to keep things straight here, but if it comes to the worst I shall be able to get away better by myself. And, by-the-way, as you must pass through the Jumoo Gate, you might see Hay, and he might be able to send down some of his men to defend the Bank. You will get there sooner in the carriage than a man could on foot. So go

and get your bonnets and hats'—and he tells the man who has come in to clear away the breakfast things to run down and order the carriage to be got ready at once. As he is speaking the race for the Bank has begun. Mr. Hilton then hurries down to the Bank rooms. The Bank has a guard consisting of four burkandazes (literally 'lightning-throwers'—they are fond of high-sounding epithets in the East), and a duffadar of its own. These men are armed with swords only, but if they will show fight they may keep back a crowd, defend a doorway. And so Hilton sends a peon to order them to come up to the Bank rooms at once. He then tells another peon to run and shut the gate that leads into the Bank grounds on the cityward side. But all this is of no use. The peon would hardly have been in time to close the gate had he gone himself as ordered, but as he went to the chokidar, whose business it was to close and open the gates, and told him to do so, the chokidar arrived at the gateway only when the foremost marauders were rushing through it, and being a robber born and bred himself (in India you always take on a thief to be your chokidar or watchman, not on the principle of setting a thief to catch a thief, but because his wages form a kind of blackmail paid to his fraternity), he promptly joins them.

And now the rushing stream has reached the Bank-house. Mr. Hilton gallantly throws himself in front of it. He is not seized, or struck down, or thrust aside, but simply borne away as if he were a bit of wood in front of a mass of rushing water. The marauders have poured into the long hall in the middle of which is the square underground cellar or vault, specially made for the purpose, which forms the strong room of the Bank. And they have produced the hatchets and crowbars they employ in their large-scale burglaries, and brought them to bear on the door which leads down into the vault, and which of course lies on the same level with the floor. Doonghur Singh, the experienced leader of the band of dacoits, has disposed his men around the mouth of the vault. They stand three deep and shoulder to shoulder, so as to keep everyone else back, to prevent anyone else from approaching the treasure-house. The sound of the hatchets and hammers rings through the room. There is no other sound. The dense crowd stands hushed and silent. The shouts and yells with which the crowd had approached the building had died away the moment it had entered it, and every man had to devote his fullest attention to the business before him. Every man is doing his best to thrust

himself forward, to work his way as near as he can to the vault. Soon there is no possibility of further movement, the room is so closely packed. But even when there was the naked feet made no noise. In a few minutes after the bursting in of the crowd you would have said that the room was as full as it could be. But the fierce desire of the people to get as near as possible to that central spot produces compression (had not the marauders thrown themselves into the circular form they could not have withstood that pressure), and when no further compression seems possible more and more people keep squeezing in at the doors, keep wriggling themselves in between the others, keep thrusting themselves in between them and the wall.

Then the horizontal flap or lid or door is lifted, and an extraordinary scene ensues. On the first knowledge of the fact a sort of moan goes up from the crowd. The leader of the dacoits and the two or three men he has selected rapidly descend into the vault to make the most of the few minutes they are likely to have fully and freely and uninterruptedly at their command; to get hold of the bags containing the gold mohurs; to the first-comers the gold, to the next the silver, to the last the copper; to the first the coveted gold, with so much more value in so much less compass, with so much less weight. Why, a man could hardly carry the rupees that would be needed to give him a decent income for life; he could very easily carry the gold that would make him rich. And the gold is being removed. And these skilful professional thieves may pretty nearly clear out the vault. And so a groan, and then a howl goes up from the crowd. Most of the men are so closely packed together that they can do nothing but groan and howl and utter bitter execrations; they are obliged to stand still; they cannot move. But those immediately round the ring of freebooters commence an attack upon them, attempt to pull them down; to move them aside. But the freebooters stoutly maintain their formation, prevent the circle from being broken; they know everything depends on that, and they know that what is being taken out of the vault is being taken out for their own benefit, for the benefit of the whole band. Doonghur Singh and those who have descended with him are handing up the bags of gold to the men who form the innermost row of the ring. And the members of the general public perceiving this are nearly driven mad by it. These obstructionists must be removed; this ring must be broken. And so the roughs grapple with the robbers

—they have no boots on their feet with which to kick them—and there is a fierce wrestling and furious struggling all round the ring, and the huge hall resounds with yells and cries.

‘Thieves and robbers!’ shout the outsiders, ‘would you prevent us from having any share whatsoever in the booty? Down with the rascals!’

And though fighting is more the business of the freebooters, there are many bold, strong men, many professional athletes, among the amateur robbers, and they are rendered furious at the thought of these bags of gold being taken possession of by others within arm’s length of them; they bring all their energies into play, and soon the ring is beginning to be broken into. And now the leader of the band of freebooters, standing on one side of the vault, shouts aloud some order in the secret language of the fraternity, and the men standing on the other side suddenly run round to him, thus leaving a wide opening, through which the pressing people pour as the dammed-back water rushes through the opened sluice-gate; and as that water would fall into a hole or hollow if it met it on its way, so do the people fall into the underground vault. They rush down the narrow flight of steps, tumble down them, leap straight down over the edges, and soon the chamber is filled as full as it can be, and then ensues within its four smooth walls, beneath its flat horizontal roof, a scene which it would be impossible to describe. It is as if a wounded deer had fallen down to the bottom of a pit, and a pack of wolves had rushed down upon it there. Terrible is the scramble. Every man is fiercely eager, not only to get hold of some of the coveted wealth, but to get away with it; and that is the difficulty. It is easy enough to descend into the vault, but to reascend, that is not so easy. It is possible to slip or swing yourself down over the edges into the vault, but you can get out again only by means of the steps, and terrible is the struggle between those madly eager to get down and those fiercely anxious to get up.

The dacoits and their leader have marched away with their booty. The marauders had passed into the Bank rooms through the verandah which ran along in front of them on the south side of the house. Along the east side ran another verandah, in front of which stood the stately portico, with its tall stone columns, and within it the entrance-hall, from which the main staircase ascended to the upper storey. When the Bank chamber which held the treasure vault was crammed to its utmost, when it was not possible for

another single person to force himself into it, when men stood on the threshold and blocked the opening of every doorway, a big butcher, a most brawny ruffian, appeared upon the scene. He was a man of gigantic stature. His only clothing was a small linen skull-cap on the top of his head, and a narrow strip of linen between his legs. His coarse and brutal countenance was horrible to look on. He carried in his right hand one of the instruments of his trade, a long, heavy, sharply-pointed broad-backed chopper or knife. He peers in at one of the doorways, and sees that even he, with all his strength, could not cleave his way through that compacted mass. By the time that he is likely to reach the vault his getting there will not be very profitable; he will come in only for a scramble for coppers. Surely it would be better to be the first to rob the rooms above than the last to rob the rooms below? And so while the mob is entirely occupied at the present scene of action he slips round the corner into the adjoining east, or front, verandah, thence into the entrance-hall, and then proceeds to move quietly up the staircase.

Mrs. Hilton and her daughters have prepared themselves to drive up to the cantonment. Their bedrooms lay on the north side of the huge square building. The freebooters and the attendant crowd have traversed the short distance between the gateway and the southern verandah, have filled up the large room containing the vault, and the ladies, with the whole width of the house between, are not aware of what has happened. Mrs. Hilton is under the impression that her husband has had the gates of the compound closed, that the house still retains its ordinary security. (Very marvellous is that unseen influence which gives our homes a sanctity which even our friends will not encroach upon unauthorised, which makes our lives secure, which guards the persons of men against hurt, and those of women against outrage.) And so the good lady and her daughters are hastening towards the staircase with no other thought than that they will pass down it as usual.

As they are hurrying across the wide landing-place the huge-statured butcher has begun to ascend the staircase. The three women suddenly balance themselves on the very edge of the descent, stop themselves in the act of putting their feet down on the first step, as they catch sight of that ferocious countenance and that huge naked frame coming round the curve in the middle of the staircase. They are at the top, he half way up. For one moment

the blood seems frozen in their veins, for one moment they remain balanced, poised in the air. They are accustomed to the sight of nudity such as his, but only in the open air. The appearance of the man in that condition on their staircase in the broad light of day is significant of a terrible change in the usual condition of things. But they are not thinking of that; this is not what affects them, appals them. It is the terrible look on the man's face as he catches sight of them, which is like a sudden, stunning blow. And now the fellow shakes the knife at them, and salutes them with a ferocious grin.

Mrs. Hilton was a woman of a quick, ready resolution, Maud of a proud high courage, Agnes of an utter fearlessness. Whatever the form of it, they were all brave; if they remain standing at the edge of the staircase it is not because they are paralysed—they have soon recovered from that first sudden shock—but no one of them can fly and leave the others. They see that if this man, with the obvious design to assail them, is once on the same level with themselves they cannot cope with him, cannot *all* escape from him. Two doorways lead into the huge drawing-room behind them, and they would not have time to close both these against him; and even if they had he would be able to burst them open with his mere weight.

Often what we have jested about becomes a stern reality in our lives. Now what they had joked about at Mr. Melvil's entertainment only three days before—that about Mrs. Hilton having to defend her home with her husband's hog-spear—actually comes to pass. Mrs. Hilton remembers that this spear is standing in a corner of this very landing, only a little way behind her. She springs back and seizes it. She springs forward again to the edge of the staircase and makes a half lunge at the man, now only two steps below the top; a half lunge because she is afraid of his seizing the head of the spear, because she has a womanish fear of feeling it strike him. A full lunge would have settled the controversy, for the man's naked chest was on a level with her held-down hands. But the dart of the bright point towards him makes the man quickly descend a couple of steps: then Mrs. Hilton goes down two steps after him, the spear held down at the charge; and the man continues to retreat, and she continues to press upon him; and that she does so affords the highest proof of her courage, for the sound of the blows on the door of the strong-room is now reverberating through the house, and Mrs. Hilton recognises what

it means ; but still she continues to press on the man, and now he has reached the corner where the staircase turns almost at right angles. He glares up at her and shakes the knife at her even more ferociously than before, and then, snarling out some terrible terms of abuse which she does not understand, shouts out, 'I will bring some others with me, and we will then cut your throat,' disappears round the angle. Mrs. Hilton moves slowly up the staircase, keeping an eye behind her ; but the moment she has reached the landing she and the girls fly into the adjacent drawing-room, across it into the adjoining bedroom, across that into the verandah beyond, and then down the back staircase. And when they have gained the bottom of the staircase, imagine the delight of the wife when she beholds her husband, the delight of the daughters when they behold their father, turning the corner of the house. Mr. Hilton had met with no adventure ; he had simply been extruded from the Bank parlour ; had waited a little until he had been joined by some of the principal clerks, who, to his joy, had brought away some of the principal books ; then, seeing the strong-room forced, he was coming round to this back staircase in order to make his way to the upper rooms to his wife and children, whom he too was now overjoyed to see.

They all hasten together towards the stables. The numerous servants, and their wives, and their numerous children, are all standing out in front of the offices. The horses are just being put to. The carriage is now ready. They have got in and driven off. They have reached the gateway that leads into the English quarter. Here there comes a sudden stoppage. It comes from a party of sepoy, at the head of whom is the old Brahmin, the old Soubahdar Matadeen Panday, who had proposed to himself an early visit to the Bank from the very first moment that the mutineers from Abdoolapore had entered the palace. It was only the knowledge of the importance of securing the Jumoo Gate that had delayed him. When he had returned to Star Street with the 66th after the slaying of its officers, he had immediately started for the Bank with a party of his own men. Notwithstanding Mr. Hilton's remonstrances—he even uses threats, at which the sepoy laugh—the carriage is turned round, and Mr. Hilton is informed that he and his 'house-folk' are prisoners, and shall be conveyed as such to the palace. Old Matadeen Panday was enormously pleased at this seizure, because he thought he would be able now to plunder the Bank easily and

thoroughly. Imagine then his chagrin, his disappointment, his rage, his fury, when on reaching the Bank-house he finds that its treasure-room is not only in the hands of the mob, but that it has been almost completely emptied out. He pours forth the vials of his wrath on such of the men as he sees without: calls them thieves and robbers, rogues and rascals; and then, not thinking it worth while to enter into a struggle for the poor gleanings of the treasure-vault, he marches his men away.

It seems like a dream to the Hiltons to find themselves dismounting at the gateway of a large square enclosure in the palace; to find themselves passing through it; to find themselves conducted across a dirty courtyard, and ushered into a long dirty apartment, and there to find themselves face to face with the very last man they should have expected to see there—Mr. Melvil. He, the local monarch and king, in such a situation! A few hours ago it would have seemed inconceivable. Mr. Melvil questions them eagerly about all that they have gone through. ‘Was it not strange that I should actually have to use my husband’s hog-spear?’ says Mrs. Hilton. She forbears from saying, ‘You see there was a disturbance in the city after all.’ A glance at Mr. Melvil’s face has shown her how deeply he feels his present situation. Mr. Melvil condoles with them—condoles with Mr. Hilton about the loss of the money in the Bank’s strong-room.

‘But you say the books were saved?’

‘Yes, the principal ones. I hope none of them may be injured. The mob came for the money.’

Mr. Melvil’s minute and reiterated enquiries are made in a very kindly manner. But the Hiltons can see that they are not prompted solely, or mainly, by concern for them. He seems to be collecting the information for official purposes; and such is indeed the case. ‘Reports’ form a leading feature in official life in India. Mr. Melvil was a great hand at writing them. He will have to send in a report of the occurrences of to-day, in which the plunder of the Bank must occupy a prominent place. He is already planning that report in his mind. But in the midst of all his enquiries breaks forth this impatient cry: ‘That I should be in here now when I ought to be out in the city giving orders, commanding and directing.’ ‘That I should be condemned to inaction on such a day as this.’ The angry complaint is repeated over and over again, in various forms. He was an able and ambitious man. But it was not of himself alone that he was

thinking, not only of the loss of a chance of distinction. He knew that the want of his guiding-hand this day might be productive of the most serious consequences to his countrymen and the Government of which he was so devoted a servant. For the admiral to be absent from the fleet, the general from the army, on the day of action—it was terrible. Mr. Melvil paces continually up and down the room in his excitement. ‘That I should be in here on such a day as this!’

CHAPTER XXIII.

INTO THE LION'S DEN.

HAY, being the officer on duty for the week, had to take the main part of his establishment of servants down to the quarters at the Jumoo Gate. Lennox had settled, therefore, to return to his own temporary home in the adjoining native State on this Monday too. But it is hard to part with the girl you love a couple of days after you have become engaged to her. He really has had only one day with her, he argues with himself, for Sunday is a *dies non*. He must have one more evening ride with her, one more moonlight stroll. And so something turns up that makes it really absolutely necessary for him to remain in Khizrabad one day more—to stay over Monday.

He has seen his lady-love home from the parade-ground, and as he leans back in an easy-chair in Hay's quiet, deserted bungalow after his return, she occupies the whole of his thoughts for a good while to come. And when he has turned his thoughts away from her personally, it is still in connection with her that he must continue to think. He has to arrange for the furnishing of their future home. His own personal surroundings have always been characterised by an extreme plainness. Upholstery had no charms for him. He was not deeply affected by the colour of a cup. The form and fashion of his teapot and his sideboard, and the relationship between the two, were matters of no moment to him. For him the harmony of the spheres did not lie in the harmony between curtain and carpet. He would have considered our modern æsthetical young man a very despicable fellow. He had been accustomed to dress roughly and live roughly—in camp fashion. That camp life had shown him how little a man really needs.

(We have already noted how plain living was the rule of life with Lennox's friend and cousin, William Hay, too. But with Lennox it was purely natural, a matter of constitution; with Hay artificial, in the sense that it was not so much due to natural inclination as to early inculcation and example, to its being placed before him and chosen by him as the preferable thing. The feminine delicacy of his temperament rather inclined Hay to fastidiousness, made him desire everything about him, in his surroundings, as in his conduct, to be delicate, and nice, and proper.) But now Lennox has to take thought for these things. In the remote frontier station to which he expects and desires to return there is very little of what he wants to be got, and it is not easy to transport things to it. He has to order many things for the home he desires to prepare for May Wynn out from England. He would very much rather put the whole business into May's own hands, and give her *carte blanche*. He will do so as far as he can. But she might be diffident in carrying out the task; might consider what he deemed only fitting for her extravagant. There were some things he must buy himself. He meant to buy for her the most beautiful Arab horse within reach, no matter what the cost of him may be. He himself loved a good horse, though he did not care for teapots, and to see May's beautiful figure on a beautiful horse was one of the chief pleasures he looked forward to.

And he has something to do at once in connection with his marriage. He has to write and announce it, and describe May Wynn to his best friend—his mother. The relationship between him and his mother had always been very close and dear and intimate. There was a great similarity between them. It often happens that a man may derive his stronger, more masculine characteristics from his mother, his softer and more feminine ones from his father. Philip Lennox was indeed the son of his mother. It was from her that he had derived his large, strong frame, his regular features, and his lofty, austere, unbending character. He had been loved as the only son. As so often happens, his mother had looked to him for that complete satisfaction of her love and pride, which she had not derived from her husband. And, more fortunate than most mothers, she had not been disappointed. She had received of love enough; the love of the mother and son for one another was the deeper because that was a commodity they did not, owing to the austerity of their characters, share much

with others, neither receiving it from, nor bestowing it on, many. And her pride too had received high gratification. Her son had not yet written his own despatch, as he told her he meant to do, but he had been mentioned in many an one. He had already made a name for himself. Her weak, kind-hearted, amiable husband having lost them their estate, had taken it to heart so much as to die, leaving his young widow in very straitened circumstances. Philip Lennox knew what privations his mother had undergone for his sake, to launch him properly in the world.

It had been his pride and his joy to make amplest return for this. It had been but a few months before that he had insisted, now that she was getting so old, on her keeping a carriage. For some time past she had been urging him to marry. She should leave the world happier if she knew that she had not left him in it alone and solitary. Probably she understood also the need of a softening influence in his life. And now he has to write and tell her of his engagement. However glad she may be to hear this it must have a sad side for her too. He would now be parting from her: 'for this cause shall a man leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife.' And then he has to describe May Wynn to her. How is he to give any description of her excellencies of mind and body and soul, of person and intellect and character, which will not be deemed rapturous and exaggerated, sober and exact and below the mark as he may know them to be? He recalls her sweet face as he had seen her first this morning, seated by the side of her father. And then, somehow, the father's face rising up with the daughter's, he remembers his intention of consulting Mr. Wynn about certain religious difficulties with which he was troubled, and which a residence in India is apt to engender. And then those doubts and difficulties present themselves to him in a new light. How was his statement of them likely to affect the relationship just established between himself and Mr. Wynn and his daughter? Would it horrify them very much? Would it shock and distress May very much? Suppose he found it impossible to overcome those doubts and difficulties, how would it affect their relationship? He had hitherto considered the matter only, as it were, from an abstract point of view, as one appertaining not to this world; but now he sees that it is not only a matter of choice but of necessity, of right, that he should make known these doubts to Mr. Wynn and to May. Then he begins to think of the appearance of the troops on parade that morning. A born

soldier, that is a sight that interests him always. He had watched the set-up of the three different regiments attentively this morning; made an estimate of their respective fighting power. While he is so thinking one of his servants comes rushing in, and cries out in a loud voice, 'Sir! Cherisher of the poor! the sepoy regiments have mutinied!'

'What!' says Lennox, raising himself up a little from his easy lounging attitude.

'The sepoy regiments have mutinied!'

'What, all three?'

'Yes; all three. Both the sepoy regiments and the cavalry regiment also.'

'But there is no cavalry regiment here, man void of understanding.'

'At Abdoolapore.'

'Oh, at Abdoolapore,' says Lennox, his voice less sharp, more indifferent.

'But they are here!' cries the man, that tone of indifference making him raise his own voice still higher.

It was not Abdula the Afreedee, Lennox's own body-servant, that fierce-looking, fierce-tempered young fellow whom so many wondered at his keeping about him, as one might wonder at anyone keeping a wild cat instead of a tame one, a young lion in place of a dog—he would not have been agitated, unless pleasurably, by such news—but another.

'Here!' says Lennox.

'Yes; they have got into the city, and——'

There is plenty of excitement in Lennox's voice now as he gets swiftly up and exclaims, 'Got into the city! Good God!'

'Was there no information of their coming?' he asks, as he pushes back the chair.

'I do not know. But all the regiments here have been made to accoutre and arm again, and *Gillis-ki-pultun*' (Gillies' Regiment, the 66th) 'is marching down to the city with two guns.'

'Order my horse,' says Lennox as he moves into the adjoining bedroom—he has been sitting in Hay's pretty little drawing-room—in order to put on his coat and get his hat.

In a few minutes Lennox is thundering along the roads leading down to the Jumoo Gate. His noble coal-black steed is not puzzled and fretted as he was three mornings before by alternate loosening and tightening of the reins—by being allowed

to bound forward one moment and thrown back on his haunches the next. To-day, from the moment when he had bounded forward at topmost speed responsive to the sharp pressure of his master's unarmed heels, to the one blow of the whip, enough for him with his fiery temper, there had been nothing but a free head and a flowing rein. He might devour the road to the top of his bent. Men tumble out of his way as he goes flying by. And now the sparks are flying from under his mighty hoofs as they fall on the iron bolts and bars of the drawbridge at the Jumoo Gate, for not even here is his progress stayed, not until he has passed through the outer gate and dashed into the enclosure between it and the inner one. Then he is pulled up. (As it was known that Hay was not at his bungalow to-day, the official summons to hasten to the lines had not been carried to it as it had been to the bungalows of the other officers. The bungalow stood in a remote part of the station. Hay's servants had left for the Jumoo Gate early in the morning. Thus it had happened that the strange and unexpected 'local news' of this morning had reached it and Lennox so very late.)

When Lennox got to the Jumoo Gate, the Gillies' Regiment, so called after the man who had raised it nearly a century before, had passed through the gateway; had passed out of the service of the Company to which it had proved so faithful for a hundred years; had mutinied; had slain its officers, and the terrible news had been sent up to the Brigadier in cantonments.

It may be imagined with what excitement Hay communicates the intelligence of all that has happened; with what excitement Lennox receives it; with what excitement they discuss the situation.

'The English troops from Abdoolapore ought to be here very soon,' says Hay in conclusion.

'Here very soon!' cries Lennox, and in his voice there is that deep, strong intonation, on his face the look which on the wild western frontier had made the fierce men about him very silent, very prompt in their obedience, elated though they might be at the thought that it meant woe to the enemy.

'If they *are* coming, their doing so ought to have been needless. Forty miles! Why, these mutinous scoundrels should not have been allowed to get ten miles away from the place. Why, there is a whole regiment of English cavalry there—a troop of horse artillery. Mark my words, if they have not come already

they are not coming at all. If the Brigadier is counting on this he is making a mistake. I must get to him and tell him so. He ought to have marched down into the city himself with all the force at his command—he ought to have brought the Grenadiers.’

‘I suppose he does not wish to leave the cantonment defenceless.’

‘He ought to have placed himself at once in touch with these fellows, and never lost touch of them. They may play the very devil in the city.’

‘But why do you think our men from Abdoolapore are not likely to come at all?’

‘Because old Heaviside is in command there. I saw him when he was up at Peshawar. They soon removed him from there. He is now nothing but stomach; cares for nothing but eating, unless it be his rubbers of whist. He can hardly mount a horse. He has no go, no energy, no decision. I must get up to the Brigadier. I wish I had put on my uniform at once. I must go back for it. But I must first do what I came down here for: get May and her father out of the city.’

‘I have written to Mrs. Fane that she had better come here with the girls.’ This letter never reached them. ‘I would go for them, but of course I cannot leave my post.’

‘No; but I can call for them on my way back with the Wynns.’

‘Will you, old chap? That would be very good of you.’

‘Yes. All the women and children should be got out of the city at once. Parties should be sent for them.’

‘We have no one to send,’ says Hay, glancing towards his own men with their sullen lowering looks, glancing across the enclosure at the company of the 66th—‘none whom we can trust.’

‘I must lose no time in getting our friends together and getting them in here,’ says Lennox.

‘I shall be very glad to see them safe on their way to the cantonment. I have been in a terrible state of mind for the past half-hour,’ says Hay. ‘But you have no weapons, Phil. The scoundrels of the 66th have moved on to the city, but there are crowds of ruffians on the roads. You can hear them yelling and shouting. They may possibly attack you, delay you. I wish you had your pistols or your sword—that sword.’

Lennox had made his name at his distant dangerous outpost not merely by the force of his will and his intellect, but also by

the force of his strong right arm. In repelling the incursions into his own territory, in conducting the punitive expeditions into that of the enemy, he had to do a great deal of the actual fighting as well as all the generalship. He had to be foremost in the attack as well as foremost in the pursuits, those long-sustained unrelenting pursuits which had tended to make his name feared as much as had his fiery onslaughts. The official piece of iron provided by the military outfitter was not suited for such work as this. Lennox had therefore had a sword specially made for himself of choicest metal, a long straight cavalry sword, equally good to cut or thrust with. It has been mentioned already, I think, that Lennox had with much difficulty prevented the formation—or, rather, the extension beyond the original members—of a sect calling itself by his name and paying him divine worship. The supernatural virtue that was held to attach to him personally was also held to reside in this famous blade. It was held to be of ethereal temper. See how it went through limb and body, as if they were made of butter and not of flesh and bone! Its flash meant death as surely as the gleam of the sword of Azrael. This was the weapon Hay referred to.

‘Oh, Monarch will carry me through any crowd we are likely to come across, and I do not think I shall need anything more than this,’ and he holds up the hunting-crop in his hand. It is an ordinary hunting-crop, but Lennox had chosen one with a very heavy metal handle, and he had strengthened the junction of that with the stick or stem, and he had had the whole of the stem from handle to loop covered with a coil of fine brass wire, as the natives often cover their sticks and clubs, not only to ornament, but strengthen them. Always to ride about his district armed would have been a slur on his own administration; and yet it was as well to have about one something that would ward off the sudden blow of a club, the sudden slash of a sword, that would serve as a life-preserver; and this crop served these purposes very well.

‘It is only a few minutes’ ride, at the pace I intend to go.’

When Lennox passes out of the gateway he does not take the road along which the regiment had marched, but one to the left, one leading directly into the English quarter. The pace he intends to go is the utmost speed of his horse. He does not choose the softer sides of the road, seek the shade of the trees, but goes straight down the hard, wide, burning centre. He comes to the corner of

a bazaar where the road is blocked by a crowd of men. The crowd is stationary, and facing his way, looking towards the important gateway he has just come from. There is a movement in the crowd, a closer compacting into the middle of the road as if to stop him ; but Lennox does not draw rein, and his horse passes through the crowd like an 'eight-oar' through a mass of foam. Abuse and execration—they may send that after him if they will. Again a glaring, straight, open length of the road, soon passed over, and now he has to turn a sharp corner, and as he does so he finds himself almost on the top of a group of children—boys. He has to tighten rein, to pull up dead. They scatter with a yell of peculiar shrillness ; they keep running even when far beyond reach of the horse's hoofs, as if they were fleeing from Lennox's presence, as if they feared a pursuit from him, as if he had detected them in the commission of a crime. Such indeed was their fear, as Lennox understands when he sees the object round which they had been gathered, an object which prevents him from immediately continuing his course. There in the middle of the road, with the vivid sunshine on the lifeless face, lies the body of a man in English dress. Lennox recognises the body as that of an old Eurasian clerk in one of the public offices. The poor old man had evidently been on his way to his office, for at some distance further down the road stands his palanquin carriage. The horse has been taken out of it, and one man is walking off with him and the whip, while others are removing the cushions out of the carriage, round which a large group of men is standing. Lennox sees that they are armed with swords and spears, as well as with the usual heavy lethal club. (It is a band from the Devil's Quarter.) He can retreat easily enough, but the sight of that armed band, of the dead man in the road, renders that impossible. He must now keep his onward way ; he must get to the Wynns' as soon as he can.

There is the broad metalled centre of the road for wheeled traffic, on either side the earthen track under the shadow of the line of trees for horsemen and pedestrians ; beyond these the ditches, beyond these a high brick wall on one side and a thick hedge on the other. He cannot get round this plainly murderous band, he must get through it ; and he would have had no difficulty in dashing through it as he had dashed through the one at the corner of the bazaar, only with more risk of injury to himself or his horse, which he feared most, from the men being so

much better armed ; but the plundered vehicle has been turned at right angles to the road, and completely blocks up the middle portion of it. He has not that broad space to feint and swerve and manœuvre about in. He must pass down one of the narrow side paths. And there his attention will be distracted, his progress impeded, by the branches of the trees ; his own height and the tallness of his steed raises his head a long way from the ground. The stems of the trees would also be serviceable to his adversaries ; they could get behind them and dodge round them. After a brief interval of observation and silence, of watching to see whether he headed a band or came alone, the marauders greeted him with a yell, and then with a volley of abuse in which the words Feringhee, and Christian, and Kafir are coupled with Incestuous, and Brother-in-law, and Pig, and many another opprobrious epithet. They were evidently at first under the impression that Lennox would be sure to go back, but when it becomes apparent that this is not the case, that he intends, on the contrary, to proceed on his way, that he is moving up towards them, they at once prepare to stop him. They throw themselves into the side pathways, they show that they know how to take advantage of the lines of trees, they are men accustomed to highway robbery. There is only one little stratagem that Lennox can resort to. He heads his horse as if he meant to pass the carriage standing across the road on the right-hand side, and then by a sudden movement of the body, by a sudden pressure of the thighs, by signifying his wish to his horse as much as by the direct pull on the rein, he suddenly turns big Monarch round almost at right angles, and dashes across the road on to the opposite side path. The men standing here are taken by surprise ; he has passed through them. But it is with diminished speed, and he passes too close to the line of trees, behind the stems of two of which a couple of the marauders have hidden themselves. One of these leaps suddenly forward, and throwing himself on the reins stops the horse and bears him back on his haunches : the other man, jumping out, makes a thrust at Lennox with his spear. For this Lennox is obliged to him. He might have slain or fatally wounded his horse. That he had not done so was not due, as Lennox supposed, to a mistakenly eager desire to kill him, Lennox, to want of experience in such matters. To bring down the horse or pony with a swinging blow on the fore-leg with his club, to overpower the sword-armed horseman in the confusion and helplessness of his fall, was a trick which

the dacoit, for such he was by birth and profession, had often practised on many a trader riding along with well-filled bags; but here he thought, in the first place, that Lennox, having only his riding-whip in his hand, was an easy prey, and in the second place he was anxious not to injure the noble beast he desired to secure as a prize for himself.

Lennox parries the thrust; and now it fared ill with this dacoit that he wore not on his head his fighting turban, the twisted folds of which are capable of resisting a sword-cut, that his shaven crown is covered only by a thin linen skull-cap which would not break the blow of a switch. For full upon that shaven crown comes the heavy handle of the whip. The blow would have sent him to the ground were his thickest turban on his head; but not as now stone dead. His thievings and his maraudings, which seemed to him so legitimate, so commendable, and his earning of money for his wife and children, and his offerings to his gods, all are over now, perchance for ever. Then Lennox bends forward and strikes the other man a blow on his nearest arm. The man lets the broken limb drop to his side, and jumps back with a howl of pain. Then Lennox dashes forward again. A few minutes of galloping at that headlong pace bring him to the church. Its broad compound stretches out quiet and still, and looking across it there rises up the high pyramidal roof of the parsonage—as it was sometimes called—with the criss-cross work of split bamboos running along the ridge. There stand the two ancestral mango trees shading the little wicket—spot most memorable to him on earth; his eye rests fondly on it even now as he dashes by. And now he has entered the little side road leading down to the house, now he has passed through the gateway into the quiet, secluded, tree-shaded compound. It lies as still and quiet as usual; the turmoil of the sunshine is the only turmoil there. But when he gets up to the front of the house he sees that here everything is not as usual—the dear, delightful usual, against which we sometimes chafe as monotonous and dull, so full of calm, and peace, and quiet, of truest happiness. Instead of one servant seated in the verandah to receive and announce visitors he sees four or five of them standing in a group outside the house engaged in eager conversation. There is a sudden curious stir and movement among them, a sudden curious look upon their faces, as Lennox pulls his foaming steed up within a few feet of them.

‘Is your mistress in the house?’ he calls.

‘No!’ they all shout out in unison, as if with a single voice.

‘The Padre Sahib and the Miss Baba are both on their way to the palace,’ cries the most nimble-tongued of them all, eager to be the first to deliver the news.

‘On their way to the palace!’ cries Lennox in some surprise, though with a feeling of relief. If they have reached the palace-fortress it is all right, they will be safe enough behind its lofty walls.

He has no knowledge of what has gone on in the palace, of what is going on there now. For no intimation of it had reached Hay, from whom he had derived all his information. That the mutinous sepoys from Abdoolapore had got into the city, that the 66th had been sent down against them, and had mutinied and slain its officers, that was all that Hay, the English officers with him at the Jumoo Gate, the Brigadier and his staff, all of them knew at the present time. That bands of the *bud-mashes* (literally ‘evil-livers,’ correspondingly ‘roughs’) of the town were going about plundering and murdering he had seen for himself, and knew in addition. But his feeling of satisfaction receives a shock when his eager and voluble informant bawls out—

‘As prisoners!’

‘As prisoners!’ cries Lennox, with a sensation at his heart such as he had never in his life experienced before. May Wynn a prisoner! In the hands of the mutinous sepoys, in the hands of a band of ruffians!

‘This man will be able to tell you all about it, sir,’ says the long-coated, long-bearded, big-turbaned old khansaman, who, as the head of the household, considered that it was his own business to have informed Lennox of what had happened, but whose age and dignity prevented him from being able to compete in volubility with the young man who had spoken—the gardener. What business was it of his? He was an outdoor and not an indoor servant! His concern was with the growing of flowers and vegetables, and not with the movements of the family. The khansaman points to a dapper little man, whose dress, as well as the leading rein—or rather rope—in his hand proclaims him a groom.

‘We had driven out of the compound and got as far as the *pukee suruk*’ (metalled road), says the groom.

‘I had gone down to the city to make some purchases—some potatoes and other things,’ says the old khansaman, interrupting

him, 'and when I reached Star Street I heard much noise and clamour there—a great *bulba*.' He draws a breath.

'And many of the shopkeepers had shut their shops. And there was great confusion. And everywhere people were shouting and screaming. And all the bad men of the town had come out and got together, and were moving this way and that, and plundering the shops, and ill-treating the people. And I heard them crying out, "Kill the Feringhees! Kill the Feringhees!" and a shopkeeper told me that they had killed Mr. Brasput (Beresford, the English shopkeeper) and all his family, and plundered his shop. And they were crying out that the rule of the English was over, and that of the Nuwâb Sahib re-established.'

'Ha!' exclaims Lennox.

'And I was told that the two regiments of sepoy and the one regiment of troopers at Abdoolapore had mutinied and come over here, and that their coming was the cause of all this disturbance.'

Another pause to draw breath. 'Go on,' cries Lennox, harshly.

'And so I came home and told all these things to the master, and as this house is in such a lonely position I advised him to go up to the cantonment, and he said to the Misse Baba (young lady) in English—but I understand English, I was a seeker of knowledge (student) at the Bareilly College—that the sun was very hot, but that it would be best for them to go, if only that they might find out what had really happened; and they settled to go up to the house of the Brigade-Major, who is a great friend of my master's. And so the carriage was got ready and they started.'

'We had got to the metalled road,' continues the groom, 'when four sowars (troopers) came galloping up and stopped the carriage, and they cried out, "Kill the Feringhee brother-in-law!" but the coachman said, "It is the Padre Sahib"; and then they said, "Well, if it is the Padre Sahib, let us take them up to the palace—they have got some other prisoners there," and they told the coachman to turn the carriage round the other way, and drive on, and they rode on either side of the carriage. And when I saw which way they were going, I let go the carriage and ran back; I was frightened'—such frank admissions of cowardice are not uncommon in the East, especially among the timid Bengalees—'and I also thought that it would be better to come here and give information of what had happened.'

'How long ago was this?' Lennox asked.

'Only a few minutes ago!'—again a chorus of voices.

‘Then they will not have reached the palace yet?’

‘Oh, no!’

‘Along the usual road?’

‘Yes.’

Lennox has turned his horse and dashed furiously out of the compound and soon regained the metalled road along which he had come from the Jumoo Gate, and dashes furiously along it. The road makes many sharp turns and twists, but the trouble of getting round the corners is the only trouble he meets with on it. It lies as deserted as it usually does at this hour of the day. Now he has reached the point where the road crosses the watercourse which traverses the city, so greatly to its benefit. Taken off from the Jumna at the point where the river emerges from its parent mountains, the canal rejoins it here, below the city walls. At the point to which Lennox has now reached the stream has its first drop down the descent to the valley of the river, and here has been put up a mill. It is a pretty scene. The broad placid pool above the mill is surrounded by trees which have attained to a splendid height and a magnificent spread of foliage; around it is a margin of green grass, delightful to the eye.

And everything here is going on as usual. Within, the upper stone is whirling round and the little bit of wood is rattling and dancing upon it, and giving a gentle but continuous shaking to the mouth of the hopper, to which it is attached, so that the grain comes dribbling forth in a continuous stream, and the white flour is flying out from between the stones and adding to the white heap around, and the miller is moving about with his bare black body all white. Without is a little drove of donkeys, on to whose backs the sacks of flour are being loaded, and here are some ponies and long-eared mules from whose backs the sacks of grain are being lifted, and women are seated about waiting for their measure of meal, and the birds are drinking at the pool or flying about among the trees, and the curly-tailed squirrels are racing about, and the crows are cawing—somewhat hoarsely, because of the heat—and from far up in the air comes the shrill keen cry of the kites. On to this peaceful scene Lennox arrives, all hot and furious, his horse’s coal-black steaming sides all flecked with foam. Here he pulls up for a moment. Two roads run towards the palace from here, this metalled one and another unmetalled, but more direct. They may possibly have taken that. He has pulled up to inquire.

‘Has a carriage containing an English lady and gentleman passed this way?’

‘Yes, the Padre Sahib and his daughter.’

‘Yes—yes! Which way have they gone?’

‘They were escorted by some troopers.’

‘Which way?’

‘That,’ pointing down the unmetalled road; and soon Lennox’s horse’s hoofs are sending up clouds of dust along it. Swiftly along, under the shadow of the old ancestral trees. And here he is under the palace walls, and yet he has not caught sight of the carriage. There it is: he has caught sight of the back of it, with the troopers riding alongside. And now he urges his horse on more furiously than ever. But he has view of the whole length of the carriage now: can see the white skirt of May Wynn’s dress. The carriage has turned at right angles towards the palace. Now it is upon the drawbridge: now it has passed in through the gateway. He pulls up. What must he do now?—go in after it, or go back? His strongest desire is to return. He has a burning desire for action. The strife-fever is upon him. This is a day in which a man may earn distinction, render good service. He has a strong, perhaps overweening, sense of his own capacity. He fears that old Brigadier Moss will not prove equal to the occasion: his mental and his physical powers are both on the wane. It will be best for *her* that his own strong brain and arm should this day have the freest play and fullest exercise. That is his temptation. He has pulled his horse up to a walk. They have reached the curve where the road turns at right angles towards the palace. Here he brings him to a standstill for a moment. Into the palace, or back to the cantonment? He has put his horse to a gentle trot; he has crossed the drawbridge and passed in through the gateway. He has entered the lion’s den voluntarily, of his own accord.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE POWDER MAGAZINE.

MR. MELVIL and Major Fane had observed the approach of the mutineers from the top of one of the walls of the Arsenal. When Melvil had driven away to have River Gate closed, Fane had ordered the freshly-arrived guard of the 76th to keep under arms;

and, though he did not think that absolutely necessary, had ordered the cityward gate of the Arsenal, at which the guard was posted, to be closed, only the wicket being left open, and had then moved away himself—an orderly holding over his head the great umbrella covered with coarse red canvas which is in such constant use at this time of the year—towards the Water Gate, which he orders to be barricaded as well as closed. He orders some ammunition to be taken up to the guns which command the bank of the river, though it seems to him that the simple closing of the two gates, the massive gates, the only two leading into the place, is the only precaution needed. Then he proceeds on his usual morning tour of inspection.

As the Arsenal opens at six and closes at twelve it was just now in full swing of work. There is no sound of machinery, for there is none, but bellows are blowing, and forges glowing, anvils ringing, and files rasping, and there is the sound of the sawing of wood. There is the rumbling of the heavy magazine-carts as they move to and fro. Men are busy everywhere, in the workshops, and the store-rooms, and the office, and out in the open yards. Here they are busy manufacturing the cartridges which are the ostensible cause of the wrath of the enemy now at the gate; there they are making leather accoutrements, that work marking those employed on it as low-caste men. Here stores are being issued, there received; men are busy packing and unpacking. Native accountants, seated cross-legged on the floor, are busy writing from right to left. Black Bengalees, clad in loose transparent muslin garments, are carrying on the clerky duties for which they are so eminently fitted; most of the English noncommissioned officers, born before the days of school-boards, write their own language with stronger, stiffer, less dexterous fingers than these men. Outside, in the yards and enclosures, men are piling up shot and shell, moving guns about. In the great armoury men are putting things up and taking them down, are busy polishing all metal work up to the extremest degree of brightness. The tide of work is in fullest flow. Then comes a sudden ebb, a sudden check, a sudden universal slackness as the news of the closing of the gates, and the reason for it, flies like magic through the place. The pens, whether of reed or of steel, glide less swiftly over the paper; the rasping of the files is not now so continuous; the clang of the anvils is less full; the forges do not glow as fiercely. Men loiter

in their movements, pause in their work, eye and hand are no longer bent fully upon it, the mind is withdrawn from it. The artisans hang over their work, look around them and talk. There is a sudden movement of awakening—the absorption in work is a sort of sleep—and expectation. The ordinary routine of the place is broken. It is resumed, voices are hushed, heads bent and hands busy again, everyone at work, as Major Fane passes through the various yards and workshops and store-rooms, for his quiet, easy presence always has a very commanding influence. But when he has made his round and reached his own particular sanctum the mere slackness in work gives place to a great commotion. This is not merely due to the withdrawal of his presence. A fresh gust of rumour has struck the place. The intelligence has passed through the whole place, one man, one native communicating it to another, ere it has penetrated into Fane's own room. But now one of the two commissioned officers under him comes hurrying into the room, and says hastily :

‘ Good God, Fane, the mutineers have got into the city ! ’

‘ Oh ! Ah ! Hah ! ’ says the Major quietly, looking up from his writing, and letting his eye-glass drop out of his eye. ‘ How ? ’

‘ Through River Gate. ’

‘ It had not been closed ? ’

‘ No. ’

‘ That is stwange. ’

‘ They say the sepoy guard let them in. ’

‘ Oh, ah !—haw ! ’

‘ And the men of the new guard here belong to the same regiment. ’ The young officer himself was, like Major Fane, a ‘ gunner. ’

‘ So they do, ’ says Fane, as he quietly wipes his pen, a quill-pen, and passes it carefully through one of the holes in the cover of the little leaden receptacle, full of water, made for the purpose of standing quills in at this season of the year, in order to prevent their nibs from separating and curling up. ‘ Who has brought the news ? ’

‘ Some drivers who have been down to the town. ’

Fane has the men called and questions them. They tell what they have seen and heard with excited volubility and at great length, but the sum and substance of it is that the mutineers from Abdoolapore have entered the city and been received into the palace. They heard the town-crier proclaiming that the

Nuwâb had reassumed his ancient sovereignty; that obedience was to be rendered now to his commands alone, the rule of the English was over.

‘Ha!’ says Major Fane. This puts a new feature on the outbreak.

No wonder the young officer under Fane was disturbed at the news. It is disturbing. At this moment the mastery of the Arsenal seems to lie with the sepoy guard at the gate. The physical force is with it. Besides the workmen engaged by the day or the job the Arsenal has a regularly enrolled body of men, the classies. But these men are not trained soldiers; though accustomed to the handling of arms, they have not been taught the use of them. The mass of the *employés* were like the mob of clerks, wholly and solely an incumbrance. The Englishmen in the Arsenal were all trained and disciplined soldiers, picked and chosen men, all belonging to that famous corps, the Bengal Artillery, but of commissioned and noncommissioned officers there were only nine of them, all told. The young officer is thinking that if the mutineers appear at the gate this minute the guard there will most probably welcome them and admit them. (It would most probably have been so; the events of the coming months were to prove to what a great extent example is compulsive as well as contagious.) And what could nine Englishmen do against these?

Just as Fane has dismissed the drivers one of the English ‘conductors of ordnance’ comes in and says that the men in his yard have struck work, have refused to obey his orders, and have been very insolent to him, more especially the head foreman, a Mahomedan named Nubee Buksh.

‘Haw!’ says Major Fane. ‘Vewy well, Flannagan; I will come wound in a few minutes. Go back and tell the men so.’

It soon seems as if their native establishment is likely to prove more than a mere incumbrance to them: to prove an active foe. And there are about four hundred of them, and nine Englishmen! And no sooner has Conductor Flannagan left the room than a little old man with a long flowing beard and a peculiarly gentle and deferential cast of countenance enters the room.

‘*Kya hye?*’ (‘What is it?’) asks Major Fane, somewhat sharply.

‘Cherisher of the poor!’ says the old man, with a sort of surprised and startled fearfulness—he has never heard the Major

Sahib speak so sharply, so quickly as that before; whatever the import of his words, the tone of his voice has always been soft.

‘If forgiveness be granted me, I will speak!’

‘What is it? Speak quickly.’

‘I am a very old servant of the Great Company——’

‘Yes.’

‘I have now eaten its salt for nearly forty years.’

‘Yes—well?’

‘And I have always served it faithfully.’

‘What did you wish to speak to me about?’

‘And will serve it faithfully to the end.’

‘Vewy well. But what have you got to say?’

‘This,’ says the old man, glancing round the room; ‘you must not trust any of the Mussulmans here. They are all against you, every one of them.’

‘Ah! How do you know?’

‘They think your sovereignty is over, and their own re-established.’

‘Oh, ah! Do they?’

‘Yes.’

‘Do they say so?’

‘They are saying so.’

‘If you hear anyone say so again report him to me. You are keeping your men to their work?’

‘Yes.’

‘Now you may go.’

As soon as the man has left the room, Fane gives certain directions to the young officer, and then resumes his interrupted work.

‘They are sure to blame me for not trusting them,’ he says to himself in the middle of signing his name to a number of documents.

The Government of India was extremely sensitive on two points—its land revenue and the fidelity of its native soldiery. All those in a position of authority towards sepoys, especially those commanding sepoy regiments, found themselves in a double difficulty. If they trusted their men and these mutinied, then they ‘came to grief’; if they distrusted them, and the men did not mutiny, then they were liable to ‘come to grief’ also. To trust or not to trust, that was the difficult question of the time. This is what Fane is thinking of; but whether he is thinking of that

or of the work on the desk before him, the one constant thought behind it all is the thought of his wife and children.

The documents before Fane do not seem to be of such an important character as to need to engage his attention at such a moment as this. They are mere ordinary returns; why delay over them when his presence is so urgently needed in the yards and workshops? Apparently he himself has a notion that he is wasting his time, for he keeps glancing at the watch he has placed on the table before him. But he continues sitting there until he has passed fully half an hour over those futile documents; but he will waste no more. He rises the moment the half-hour is past. That is the time he has allowed himself to remain quiet in his office. He puts on the huge uncouth pith helmet, which is so abhorrent to his soul, and goes outside. His orderly expands the huge umbrella, and Fane moves under its ample shade towards the City Gate. There are very few people about here; most of them are at work in the smaller enclosed yards, in the workshops, under cover. You descend to this gateway from the wide enclosure within it by means of a long stone-paved ramp, which ran between high walls built to command and so defend it, and this long sloping ramp has, also for defensive purposes, a sharp turn in the middle of its length. At the top of the ramp Fane is met by a couple of sergeants, stalwart Irishmen, with big limbs and big hearts, a couple of picked men of his native establishment, and one of the commissioned officers, all of them, even the commissioned officer, carrying firearms. He now dispenses with the umbrella, and the little party goes down the ramp at a set, even pace. They see that the whole of the sepoy guard is still under arms and is clustered round the gateway. For some distance in from the gateway the ramp runs strictly between the high smooth flanking walls. Fane stops at the beginning of this length and beckons to the native officer in charge of the guard to come up to him.

‘It is necessary that you should march the guard to the Jumoo Gate and report yourself to Captain Hay. The men will pass out through the wicket, and you will form them in the road outside.’

The native officer is a tall, well-built, handsome man. The regular, clear-cut features and the light complexion, as much as the caste mark on his forehead, indicate the Brahmin of high caste. His face wears the tribal look of priestly pride and self-

complacency, and an individual one of boldness and insolence. He has saluted Fane with his drawn sword in a very off-hand sort of way.

‘We are in charge of the gateway here,’ he says, ‘by the orders of the Brigadier as put in the order-book. It would not be proper for us to leave our post.’

‘I will take the responsibility of that. You are under my orders here.’

‘We should have an order from the officer of our regiment in charge of the city guards.’

‘You know who I am. My order is sufficient for you. It must be obeyed, and at once.’

The man coolly surveys Fane from head to foot, such survey being in itself an insolence and a mark of insubordination. He sees a tall, commanding figure, a handsome, well-cut face, Brahmin as much as his own, with a quiet but very determined look upon it.

‘It is incumbent on me to obey your orders,’ he says, ‘but the sepoy may not obey mine.’

There is heard from among the sepoys the clinking sound of the loading of their muskets.

‘They may refuse to move from here. How can you compel them to go?’

‘In that way,’ says Major Fane quietly, pointing up the slope with the clouded cane, for the nice conduct of which he is so famous. At the top of the incline appear a couple of guns with their black muzzles pointing straight down it; by their side appear a couple of Englishmen with lighted portfires in their hands.

‘If the sepoys are not outside the gate in five minutes after I have reached the guns I will fire at them. The guns are double-shotted with grape. Now go!’ and Fane with his following moves up towards his pieces of ordnance. As he had pointed his cane and spoken there had come over the handsome countenance of the native officer—it was so light-coloured that it was more easy than it usually is to trace the play of emotion on it—the look of startled surprise and bafflement, and anger and dejection that there is on the face of a chess-player who, swelling with the pride and joy and triumph of having the game in his hands, suddenly hears the adversary cry ‘Checkmate!’ And the sepoy guard has begun to pour out through the open wicket like water, even before the

officer has got down to it. The sight of the two guns was enough; they had sent down their own message, and before the appointed five minutes is over not one of the dark-faced, red-coated, Eastern-bodied, Western-clad men is left within the place. Then Fane orders his men to move down to the gateway and close the wicket, and bolt and bar it securely. This is done; and then the young officer who has accompanied Fane breathes more freely than he has done for the past half-hour. That danger is over. Fane then mounts to the top of the river wall, and with a telescope he has brought with him searches the Abdoolapore road, through the glittering haze, through the quivering atmosphere, through the blinding glare, as far as his eye can follow it. But there is no marching column of English troops upon it.

‘Well, they ought to be here soon now,’ says Fane, as he shuts up the telescope, and he remains on the wall discussing the situation of affairs with his young friend and subordinate. ‘This 76th has been shaky for some years past. I think the 66th is to be depended on; but even if it is not the Brigadier ought to be able to hold his own with the Grenadiers and De Haviland’s battery. The English troops from Abdoolapore should be here very soon.’

The young officer has not been surprised at Fane going up to the top of the wall, but he is surprised at his lingering there; he has expected him to hurry back to the yards and workshops in which disaffection has been reported. But Fane has his own purpose in that lingering. He has told the classies who had been employed in bringing out the guns and the ammunition to go back to their work. He thinks that the diffusion by them of the news of the expulsion of the sepoy guard and the closing of the wicket, of the fact that the only means of exit from the place is now commanded by a couple of guns, is likely to have as subduing an influence on the rest of the *employés* as his own presence. He could not go through the whole place at once; and he wants as it were to lengthen out this operation at the gateway. It is now past eleven o’clock, and at twelve o’clock he can legitimately get rid of his establishment. However, after a little while he moves back to his office, and then gives certain orders to some of the upper members, native and European, of his staff. And now the twelve slow strokes and the twelve succeeding quick ones on the great gong above the main gateway of the palace have proclaimed the midday hour, and the most part of the establishment of the

Arsenal is eager to be off, though there are not wanting many among the Mahomedans who would willingly have remained back—in possession of it.

But most of the men are very anxious to be out of the Arsenal for one thing, and back in their own houses for another. They have got ready to rush away the moment the clock has struck, but find they are not to be allowed to do this. Major Fane has given orders that they are to be taken down to the City Gate in batches and detachments. And it is with no pleasant feeling that the women-like Bengalee clerks, shuffling along in their loose transparent loin-cloths, descend the long ramp down which the two guns are pointing, and it is with a very delighted feeling that they pass through the wicket of the gateway, and find themselves in the wide open road beyond. But now the whole of the establishment has been passed out, with the exception of about thirty men whom Fane has ordered to be kept back to help the Englishmen, for whom, of course, there is no leaving of the Arsenal just now. Great is the grumbling among the men so kept back. Why, this is the time for them to cook their bread; they have had nothing to eat since this time yesterday; they are very hungry; this is great oppression—terrible tyranny. And so the moments slip by. An hour has passed, as the one single stroke on the great gong proclaims. And now a trusty *employé* whom Fane had sent out to obtain information of what is going on in the city comes back. The tale he has to tell, as soon as he can get breath to do so—he has run all the way from the town, he says—is very startling. He tells of the mutiny of the 66th, of the slaying of its officers, and that now that regiment, together with the mutinous regiment from Abdoolapore, and a large body of the Nuwâb's troops, is on its way to attack the Arsenal, the whole force being under the command of Rustum Khan, the Soubahdar Major of the regiment.

‘And they are bringing ladders with them, ladders from the palace.’

‘Hah! those,’ says Fane. He has seen them very often during the last few days. He went often to the palace to see Jack Kent, a brother artilleryman and an old Addiscombe chum. (He knows not that he is now dead.) He has now to arrange to meet this attack.

If the reader will draw two equal lines meeting at something less than a right angle, and from the ends of these draw two very

short lines at right angles to them, and join the ends of those by a straight line, he will produce a figure which will nearly enough represent the outline of the Arsenal. The first two lines would represent portions of the main circumvallation of the town, the Arsenal being placed in the corner where the east and north walls of the city meet: the other three would represent the inner walls which cut that corner off. The main, outer city walls are mounted with guns: but the inner walls are purely enclosure walls, though of course much thicker than usual: their only defensive feature is a crenelated parapet: they mount no guns, have no moat. Supposing the reader were standing within the figure with his back to the angle, the gateway leading out into the city would be a little to the right of the angle formed by the meeting of the left-hand short line with the longer line joining the two shorter ones. A great portion of the space within the Arsenal was occupied by large, separate, enclosed yards, and as the gates leading into these are now closed and locked, the space within each of them is now withdrawn from the field of contest: supposing the enemy to have mounted the outward walls he could not easily descend from them into the yards, and if he did so he could not easily get out of them, the gates being locked from the outside. The field of action was in fact limited to the open space in front of the City Gate. A masonry ramp led down into this from the main circumvallation wall, on one side, and the inner, or enclosure wall, on the other. Thus, then, the enemy could gain access to this open space, in which stood the office buildings and the bomb-proof powder magazine, either by gaining the top of the wall by escalade and then descending by the ramps, or by forcing their way in at the gateway. The first thing to be done, then, is to prevent the enemy from mounting the wall or forcing the gate. But suppose they succeed in doing either the last fight must be in this open space. Fane makes his dispositions accordingly. Close in front of the office buildings, so as to prevent himself from being taken in the rear, he places six guns, most of them being 6-pounders, in such a manner as to bear on the ramps and the approach from the gateway, and a 24-pounder howitzer is placed so as to be able to play on any portion of the walls. The ammunition is brought out, and the guns at once double-charged with grape. Fane himself is of opinion that the enemy will try and enter by the gateway, as it would not be very difficult for him to blow, or even burst, the

wicket open; and so he has a line of chevaux-de-frise laid down in front of the guns he has placed specially to command the road leading in from it.

While these measures are being carried out a thought occurs to one of the men engaged in carrying them out—the same Michael Flannagan mentioned before. It occurs to him because his eye chances to rest on the bomb-proof roof of the powder magazine, half-buried in the earth. His name and his speech of course at once betrayed him, but even if you had not heard him speak you would have known at once that he was an Irishman. He had the national cast of feature, look, and carriage in the most unmistakable form. He steps up to Fane, and saluting him says:

‘Shure, sorr, ye will niver let them dirty bleaguards git hould of the place?’

‘Not if we can help it, Flannagan. Certainly not.’

‘But they nade niver git hould of it, sorr—or of moighty little of it!’

‘What do you mean, Flannagan?’

‘Shure, sorr, if we blow up the magazine there,’ pointing towards the little row of domes, ‘there will be moighty little left for them to git hould of.’

‘Oh! ah! Blow up the magazine. Hah! Vewy good ideeaw—certainly—yes.’

The main powder-magazine of course stood without the walls of the city and at a good distance from them. But there was a large store of loose powder in this magazine too, and here was kept all the ammunition, both ball and blank, and here were stored the fuses, and rockets, and portfires, and the material for making them. There was plenty of explosive material in the place. And now the order is given, and the tops are taken off the casks and the powder turned out loose in great black heaps on the floor: the cartridges, ball and blank, are taken out of the boxes and cases and placed on the top of the powder, or in separate heaps and mounds: and the rockets and fuses and portfires are put together into heaps too: and then the train is laid and carried to a point a little way outside the building: it cannot be carried very far. And so when Flannagan claims as the reward of his idea the privilege of carrying it out, should it be necessary, everyone knows that the brave Irishman is claiming the reward of certain death; at all events, for explosions are curious things, of almost certain death. He himself thinks that

if he has to carry out the explosion there will be about as much left of him as of the powder barrels and the cartridge cases, and that Misthress Flannagan and the childre will niver see him again, niver no more.

Then Fane divides the natives he has kept in with him into two bands, one of which is to defend the gateway, the other the inner wall, and places one of his two commissioned officers in command of each. He then tells off the other Englishmen to the charge of the guns. And hardly has he made his arrangements—those for facilitating and making certain the explosion of the powder-magazine had taken some time—before the enemy has appeared on the scene.

Fane receives a message that his presence is required at the gateway, and on getting there and mounting to the top of the wall by the side of it sees a horseman in the road beneath who carries a handkerchief in his hand. He recognises the horse; it is poor old Barnes' first charger, but not the rider: but his people soon tell him, with a curious intonation in their voices—the sight has impressed them very greatly, it appears to them a visible sign of the changed relations of the two races, the Englishman is now out of the saddle and the native in it—it is one of the native officers of Colonel Barnes' regiment, the Soubahdar Rustum Khan, they say. These natives all knew, too, that Rustum Khan at present occupied the position of the Sikunder Begum's paramour, and that added greatly to the effect produced on them by the sight of him in his present audacious position. Rustum Khan salutes Major Fane, not with a military salute, but with an easy graceful salaam, and then requests him to direct the gate to be opened so that the troops sent by his Highness the Nuwâb of Khizrabad for the purpose—and he waves the handkerchief towards the road leading from the town on which he has left his following—may pass in and take possession of his Highness's ancient place of arms.

'If you do not go away from here at once I will order you to be fired at,' says Fane; 'for I look on you as a traitor, a deserter, a mutineer, and a thief.'

Rustum Khan turns his horse and gallops away, followed by the two troopers attached to him as orderlies. A few hours ago he was trudging along in the dust on foot. And the moment he has begun to gallop back the foremost men of his column have made a rush at the wall. The open spaces of the ladder they carry

glimmer high up in the air. Fane hurries towards the spot with the three other Englishmen he has with him. And the officer he has placed in charge of the body of natives allotted to the guarding of the wall is also hurrying with these men towards the same spot.

And now amid great shouts and cries the top of the ladder has been fixed a little below the top of the wall, and some men have begun to ascend it. And the English officer induces his men to fire a volley over the wall, but they are not accustomed to the use of firearms, nor is their heart in the work, and the volley is a very innocuous one; but as those who have gone through such scenes know, the mere rattle and roar of musketry has its effect—the fear of being killed has a greater effect in a battle than the mere killing—and the cooler and better-directed fire of the Englishmen—Fane and the two other officers had also armed themselves with muskets—having dropped several of the assailants, these retire to the shelter of a hedge on the other side of the road which ran just below the Arsenal wall, and Fane orders the ladder to be hurled down. And now it is perceived that this attack was not made by the order of Rustum Khan. He is seen riding about and disposing his men carefully and methodically behind the shelter of the hedges and dwarf walls which run along the edge of the road. And Fane, recognising that his trained intelligence may be the most dangerous force against them, orders him to be fired at; but he continues to ride about uninjured and undiscomposed. But now Fane feels the want of any flanking defences. Had there been a bastion or salient in the middle of the straight run of wall he and the other Englishmen could from it have foiled any attempt at escalade on either side of it. And now Rustum Khan has placed his men, and they open fire on the whole length of the wall, and the fire of these trained soldiers is very different from the fire of the untrained *employés* of the Arsenal.

Sergeant Reilly is killed, and the young artillery officer commanding the party badly wounded; but they must still fight on. And now from the gateways of two compounds on the other side of the road rush out two separate bodies of men, each carrying ladders, which they proceed to rear against the wall at two separate points. And the defenders are divided into two parties to meet these attacks, Fane leading one and the young officer the other. And as they reach the spots where the ladders are reared, a thought occurs to one of the classics, and mounting on

to the parapet wall, he does not try to throw down the ladder whose top he has seized, as everyone observing him from above or below fully expects him to do, but jumping on to it he goes scurrying down it as fast as he can, and his companions immediately follow his example—they have no desire to remain where they are, or to fight their fellow-countrymen. And now amid great shouts of praise and cries of welcome from those below, the men of both Fane's bands begin to swarm down both the ladders, and the men he has stationed at the gateway seeing what is happening, rush away from their post and join those at the nearest ladder, and the Englishmen cannot control or coerce those who so largely outnumber them, and they have to throw themselves together to prevent themselves from being overpowered singly in case their men, instead of merely deserting them, should become actively hostile, to which the sepoy from below are now loudly urging them. There is a short period of great confusion and disorder, and then there is nothing for the Englishmen to do but to get back to the guns in the enclosure and there fight out the final fight.

They could of course have run down to the Water Gate and passed out through it on to the river and so got safely out of the place long before the sepoy had mounted the wall in any numbers. But the thought of this occurs to none of them: could not have been entertained if it had. Why, there are eight of them—enough to fight, too many to run away. And Fane and Frost and Smith, commissioned officers, and Hurley and Scully and Doolan and Flannagan, and Reilly (now lying dead on the wall above) and Cooper: these were they who fought the great fight this day.

Fane tells off the men to the guns. And Michael Flannagan has taken his stand by the train, the setting fire to which is to be the last blow on their side in the fight.

'When I lift my hat,' says Fane.

It will take the sepoy some little time to mount the walls and make their way towards them, and that time is utilised in loading muskets and laying them down by the side of the guns for the use of those who are to cover the men appointed to fire and load the latter. And so the moments go by, their fierce heat unfelt. And now the sepoy come shouting along the top of the inner wall, and now they come pouring down the ramp to their easy victory, only eight men before them; and Fane watches them quietly, and then gives the word of command, and two guns send forth

their deadly contents, and it is as if over the whole length of the ramp had been passed the sharp sickle of death. The rushing sepoy go down before it as the standing corn goes down before the sweep of the scythe. And men rush across the enclosure, even up towards the guns, and wave their arms, and fall to the ground, and lie there writhing in their agony. War is not a pretty thing. And the Englishmen ply the men on the wall with their muskets, and cause them to run back. The pieces having been reloaded, the Englishmen have again nothing to do but wait. And a good many of the minutes so unexpectedly fraught with such momentous consequences go by, and their opponents have not appeared again.

Now the cause of this is seen. They have been making a circuit behind them. A party of sepoy now appears on the banquette of the wall on the other side of the enclosure, the outer, or river, or city wall, while another party appears again on the inner wall at the top of the fatal ramp. And both these parties fire down on the Englishmen and the Englishmen return the fire, not only with their muskets, but with the howitzer, which is brought to bear with such effect on the men on the outer wall as to scatter them. And then it is loaded again—the natives themselves attribute our success in the battles against them greatly to our quickness in the loading and firing of our guns—and brought to bear on the party on the inner wall, and scatters it too. And then again two bodies of sepoy appear simultaneously on the two opposite walls, as if to distract the attention and divide the fire of the Englishmen, and as the howitzer sends its deadly hail across the top of the inner wall, the men on the opposite wall rush on and begin to descend the slope leading down from that wall to the enclosure, which said slope or ramp is open and free, and not encumbered with dead and wounded as the one on the opposite side is. But two pieces had been trained on this ramp, and they have been standing ready loaded for a long time, and now they are discharged, and though the men do not go down in a shock as they had before, a good many of them fall, and the rest go back. But now the Jemadar Rustum Khan himself appears upon this wall, and quietly makes observation of the placing of the guns below, while the Englishmen take shots at him.

What his orders are is soon seen. Rustum Khan does not mean to let them bring their superior engines of destruction,

which have so greatly multiplied their numbers, into play against him in the same wholesale way. He directs his men to scatter themselves along the banquette, and lying down upon it to take steady separate aim at the Englishmen. There are now only six of them. Frost, the young officer who had been so troubled at the news of the mutineers having got into the town, had been killed by a shot through the head, and Sergeant Hurley was killed on the occasion of the second rush. And of these six there is not a man, except Fane himself and Flannagan, who was sheltered by the powder magazine, who is not more or less badly wounded.

But still they continue to play on the wall with their howitzer and their muskets. And so the fight goes on. And the heat of the sun, of the air, is terrible, for it is now about three o'clock in the afternoon, the hottest time of the day. And now as Scully and Doolan, the two Irishmen who have done such splendid service in the loading and firing of the guns, both being tall, strong, powerful men, are standing by the muzzle of the howitzer, and about to reload, the bullets take them, and the sponging rod drops from the hand of the one, and the powder bag from the hand of the other, and one falls to the ground and the other reels back, and there is a shout from the walls; and then, as if they had risen out of the earth, at the edge where the level road across the enclosure and the steep incline leading down to the gateway meet, appears a line of red coats and dark faces—they had come in through the gateway which Rustum Khan had had opened—and then along the level roadway comes a swift rush for the guns.

The time has come. Fane quietly lifts his hat. The earth trembles, and the tall walls rock. The air is rent with the sound of the great explosion. It closely resembles a volcanic eruption. There is the uprushing column of flame and smoke; the air is filled with the white dust of the mortar of the shattered building, to represent the volcanic ashes: and the fragments of masonry hurled into the air represent the cast-up rocks, to which they are not unequal in size. The larger of these fragments descend close around; some of the smaller are carried to enormous distances. The first terrible noise of the explosion is succeeded by the sharp hissing of rockets and pinging of bullets rushing through the air; by the dull thud of the descending fragments of masonry striking the earth; by the crash of falling buildings. The office building is blown down; a long length of the arsenal

wall blown over. If the smaller fragments of the closely cemented brick and mortar were carried to long distances the bullets were carried still farther. Writing with reference to this, a native eye-witness and chronicler of the events of the day, says: 'It' (the explosion of the magazine) 'did great damage to the adjacent houses, and killed about five hundred passengers walking in different streets. The bullets fell in the houses of people to such a degree that some children picked up two pounds, and some five pounds of it, from the yards of their houses.' However that may be, many thousands of bullets were hurled into the air, for the magazine was very full of ball ammunition. The explosion of the powder magazine, with its massive side walls half buried in the earth, and its massive circular roof, was also like the bursting of a huge shell. A huge black cavern now marked the place where it had stood.

The assailants suffered severely. Many were killed by the direct shock and concussion of the explosion, many by the rockets and bullets and fragments of masonry flying about. Many were destroyed by the heavier masses of masonry in their descent; many who were gathered together on the top of it, or at its base, were killed by the blowing down of the long length of battlement near the magazine.

The survivors on the spot were conscious only of the sudden obscuring of the sun, and of the dark shadow which the huge dense cloud of smoke cast over them. Those who were observing the place of conflict from a distance saw a great pyramid of flame leap suddenly high into the air, were stunned by the shock of the explosion, and then saw that a tall black column of smoke had taken the place of the flame—saw that this black shaft remained solid for some time, and then gradually widened out at the top until it looked like a gigantic mushroom.

(To be continued.)

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BY A. CONAN DOYLE,
AUTHOR OF 'MICAH CLARKE.'

CHAPTER VIII.

THE THREE FRIENDS.

ALLEYNE'S companions had passed on whilst he was at his orisons; but his young blood and the fresh morning air both invited him to a scamper. His staff in one hand and his scrip in the other, with springy step and floating locks, he raced along the forest path, as active and as graceful as a young deer. He had not far to go, however; for, on turning a corner, he came on a roadside cottage with a wooden fence-work around it, where stood big John and Aylward the bowman, staring at something within. As he came up with them, he saw that two little lads, the one about nine years of age and the other somewhat older, were standing on the plot in front of the cottage, each holding out a round stick in their left hands, with their arm stiff and straight from the shoulder, as silent and still as two small statues. They were pretty blue-eyed yellow-haired lads, well made and sturdy, with bronzed skins, which spoke of a woodland life.

'Here are young chips from an old bow-stave!' cried the soldier in great delight. 'This is the proper way to raise children. By my hilt! I could not have trained them better had I the ordering of it myself.'

'What is it then?' asked Hordle John. 'They stand very stiff, and I trust that they have not been struck so.'

'Nay, they are training their left arms, that they may have a

steady grasp of the bow. So my own father trained me, and six days a week I held out his walking-staff till my arm was heavy as lead. Holà, mes enfants! how long will you hold out?’

‘Until the sun is over the great lime-tree, good master,’ the elder answered.

‘What would ye be, then? Woodmen? Verderers?’

‘Nay, soldiers,’ they cried both together.

‘By the beard of my father! but ye are whelps of the true breed. Why so keen, then, to be soldiers?’

‘That we may fight the Scots,’ they answered. ‘Daddy will send us to fight the Scots.’

‘And why the Scots, my pretty lads? We have seen French and Spanish galleys no further away than Southampton, but I doubt that it will be some time before the Scots find their way to these parts.’

‘Our business is with the Scots,’ quoth the elder; ‘for it was the Scots who cut off daddy’s string fingers and his thumbs.’

‘Ay, lads, it was that,’ said a deep voice from behind Alleyne’s shoulder. Looking round, the wayfarers saw a gaunt, big-boned man, with sunken cheeks and a sallow face, who had come up behind them. He held up his two hands as he spoke, and showed that the thumbs and two first fingers had been torn away from each of them.

‘Ma foi, camarade!’ cried Aylward. ‘Who hath served thee in so shameful a fashion?’

‘It is easy to see, friend, that you were born far from the marches of Scotland,’ quoth the stranger, with a bitter smile. ‘North of Humber there is no man who would not know the handiwork of Devil Douglas, the black Lord James.’

‘And how fell you into his hands?’ asked John.

‘I am a man of the north country, from the town of Beverley and the wapentake of Holderness,’ he answered. ‘There was a day when, from Trent to Tweed, there was no better marksman than Robin Heathcot. Yet, as you see, he hath left me, as he hath left many another poor border archer, with no grip for bill or bow. Yet the king hath given me a living here in the southlands, and please God these two lads of mine will pay off a debt that hath been owing over long. What is the price of daddy’s thumbs, boys?’

‘Twenty Scottish lives,’ they answered together.

‘And for the fingers?’

‘Half a score.’

‘When they can bend my war-bow, and bring down a squirrel at a hundred paces, I send them to take service under Johnny Copeland, the Lord of the Marches and Governor of Carlisle. By my soul, I would give the rest of my fingers to see the Douglas within arrow-flight of them.’

‘May you live to see it,’ quoth the bowman. ‘And hark ye, mes enfants, take an old soldier’s rede and lay your bodies to the bow, drawing from hip and thigh as much as from arm. Learn also, I pray you, to shoot with a dropping shaft; for though a bowman may at times be called upon to shoot straight and fast, yet it is more often that he has to do with a town-guard behind a wall, or an arbalestier with his mantlet raised, when you cannot hope to do him scathe unless your shaft fall straight upon him from the clouds. I have not drawn string for two weeks, but I may be able to show ye how such shots should be made.’ He loosened his long-bow, slung his quiver round to the front, and then glanced keenly round for a fitting mark. There was a yellow and withered stump some way off, seen under the drooping branches of a lofty oak. The archer measured the distance with his eye; and then, drawing three shafts, he shot them off with such speed that the first had not reached the mark ere the last was on the string. Each arrow passed high over the oak; and, of the three, two stuck fair into the stump; while the third, caught in some wandering puff of wind, was driven a foot or two to one side.

‘Good!’ cried the north countryman. ‘Hearken to him, lads! He is a master bowman. Your dad says amen to every word he says.’

‘By my hilt!’ said Aylward, ‘if I am to preach on bowmanship, the whole long day would scarce give me time for my sermon. We have marksmen in the Company who will notch with a shaft every crevice and joint of a man-at-arm’s harness, from the clasp of his bassinet to the hinge of his greave. But, with your favour, friend, I must gather my arrows again, for while a shaft costs a penny a poor man can scarce leave them sticking in wayside stumps. We must, then, on our road again, and I hope from my heart that you may train these two young goshawks here until they are ready for a cast even at such a quarry as you speak of.’

Leaving the thumbless archer and his brood, the wayfarers struck through the scattered huts of Emery Down, and out on to

the broad rolling heath covered deep in ferns and in heather, where droves of the half-wild black forest pigs were rooting about amongst the hillocks. The woods about this point fall away to the left and the right, while the road curves upwards and the wind sweeps keenly over the swelling uplands. The broad strips of bracken glowed red and yellow against the black peaty soil, and a queenly doe who grazed among them turned her white front and her great questioning eyes towards the wayfarers. Alleyne gazed in admiration at the supple beauty of the creature; but the archer's fingers played with his quiver, and his eyes glistened with the fell instinct which urges a man to slaughter.

'Tête Dieu!' he growled, 'were this France, or even Guienne, we should have a fresh haunch for our none-meat. Law or no law, I have a mind to loose a bolt at her.'

'I would break your stave across my knee first,' cried John, laying his great hand upon the bow. 'What! man, I am forest-born, and I know what comes of it. In our own township of Hordle two have lost their eyes and one his skin for this very thing. On my troth, I felt no great love when I first saw you, but since then I have conceived over much regard for you to wish to see the verderer's flayer at work upon you.'

'It is my trade to risk my skin,' growled the archer; but none the less he thrust his quiver over his hip again and turned his face for the west.

As they advanced, the path still trended upwards, running from heath into copses of holly and yew, and so back into heath again. It was joyful to hear the merry whistle of blackbirds as they darted from one clump of greenery to the other. Now and again a peaty amber-coloured stream rippled across their way, with ferny overgrown banks, where the blue kingfisher flitted busily from side to side, or the grey and pensive heron, swollen with trout and dignity, stood ankle-deep among the sedges. Chattering jays and loud wood-pigeons flapped thickly overhead, while ever and anon the measured tapping of Nature's carpenter, the great green woodpecker, sounded from each wayside grove. On either side, as the path mounted, the long sweep of country broadened and expanded, sloping down on the one side through yellow forest and brown moor to the distant smoke of Lymington and the blue misty channel which lay alongside the sky-line, while to the north the woods rolled away, grove topping grove, to where in the furthest distance the white spire of Salisbury stood out

hard and clear against the cloudless sky. To Alleyne, whose days had been spent in the low-lying coastland, the eager upland air and the wide free country-side gave a sense of life and of the joy of living which made his young blood tingle in his veins. Even the heavy John was not unmoved by the beauty of their road, while the bowman whistled lustily or sang snatches of French love songs in a voice which might have scared the most stout-hearted maiden that ever hearkened to serenade.

‘I have a liking for that north countryman,’ he remarked presently. ‘He hath good power of hatred. Couldst see by his cheek and eye that he is as bitter as verjuice. I warm to a man who hath some gall in his liver.’

‘Ah me!’ sighed Alleyne. ‘Would it not be better if he had some love in his heart?’

‘I would not say nay to that. By my hilt! I shall never be said to be traitor to the little king. Let a man love the sex. Pasques Dieu! they are made to be loved, les petites, from wimple down to shoe-string! I am right glad, mon garçon, to see that the good monks have trained thee so wisely and so well.’

‘Nay, I meant not worldly love, but rather that his heart should soften towards those who have wronged him.’

The archer shook his head. ‘A man should love those of his own breed,’ said he. ‘But it is not in nature that an English-born man should love a Scot or a Frenchman. Ma foi! you have not seen a drove of Nithsdale raiders on their Galloway nags, or you would not speak of loving them. I would as soon take Beelzebub himself to my arms. I fear, mon gar, that they have taught thee but badly at Beaulieu, for surely a bishop knows more of what is right and what is ill than an abbot can do, and I myself with these very eyes saw the Bishop of Lincoln hew into a Scottish hobeler with a battle-axe, which was a passing strange way of showing him that he loved him.’

Alleyne scarce saw his way to argue in the face of so decided an opinion on the part of a high dignitary of the Church. ‘You have borne arms against the Scots, then?’ he asked.

‘Why, man, I first loosed string in battle when I was but a lad, younger by two years than you, at Neville’s Cross, under the Lord Mowbray. Later, I served under the Warden of Berwick, that very John Copeland of whom our friend spake, the same who held the King of Scots to ransom. Ma foi! it is rough

soldiering, and a good school for one who would learn to be hardy and war-wise.'

'I have heard that the Scots are good men of war,' said Hordle John.

'For axemen and for spearmen I have not seen their match,' the archer answered. 'They can travel, too, with bag of meal and gridiron slung to their sword-belt, so that it is ill to follow them. There are scant crops and few beeves in the borderland, where a man must reap his grain with sickle in one fist and brown bill in the other. On the other hand, they are the sorriest archers that I have ever seen, and cannot so much as aim with the arbalest, to say nought of the long-bow. Again, they are mostly poor folk, even the nobles among them, so that there are few who can buy as good a brigandine of chain-mail as that which I am wearing, and it is ill for them to stand up against our own knights, who carry the price of five Scotch farms upon their chest and shoulders. Man for man, with equal weapons, they are as worthy and valiant men as could be found in the whole of Christendom.'

'And the French?' asked Alleyne, to whom the archer's light gossip had all the relish that the words of the man of action have for the recluse.

'The French are also very worthy men. We have had great good fortune in France, and it hath led to much bobance and camp-fire talk, but I have ever noticed that those who know the most have the least to say about it. I have seen Frenchmen fight both in open field, in the intaking and the defending of towns or castlewicks, in escalados, camisades, night forays, bushments, sallies, outfalls, and knightly spear-runnings. Their knights and squires, lad, are every whit as good as ours, and I could pick out a score of those who ride behind Du Guesclin who would hold the lists with sharpened lances against the best men in the army of England. On the other hand, their common folk are so crushed down with gabelle, and poll-tax, and every manner of cursed tallage, that the spirit has passed right out of them. It is a fool's plan to teach a man to be a cur in peace, and think that he will be a lion in war. Fleece them like sheep, and sheep they will remain. If the nobles had not conquered the poor folk it is like enough that we should not have conquered the nobles.'

'But they must be sorry folk to bow down to the rich in such a fashion,' said big John. 'I am but a poor commoner of England myself, and yet I know something of charters, liberties, franchises,

usages, privileges, customs and the like. If these be broken, then all men know that it is time to buy arrow-heads.'

'Ay, but the men of the law are strong in France as well as the men of war. By my hilt! I hold that a man has more to fear there from the ink-pot of the one than from the iron of the other. There is ever some cursed sheepskin in their strong boxes to prove that the rich man should be richer and the poor man poorer. It would scarce pass in England, but they are quiet folk over the water.'

'And what other nations have you seen in your travels, good sir?' asked Alleyne Edricson. His young mind hungered for plain facts of life, after the long course of speculation and of mysticism on which he had been trained.

'I have seen the low countryman in arms, and I have nought to say against him. Heavy and slow is he by nature, and is not to be brought into battle for the sake of a lady's eye-lash or the twang of a minstrel's string, like the hotter blood of the south. But, ma foi! lay hand on his wool-bales, or trifle with his velvet of Bruges, and out buzzes every stout burgher, like bees from the tee-hole, ready to lay on as though it were his one business in life. By our lady! they have shown the French at Courtrai and elsewhere that they are as deft in wielding steel as in welding it.'

'And the men of Spain?'

'They too are very hardy soldiers, the more so as for many hundred years they have had to fight hard against the cursed followers of the black Mahound, who have pressed upon them from the south, and still, as I understand, hold the fairer half of the country. I had a turn with them upon the sea when they came over to Winchelsea, and the good queen with her ladies sat upon the cliffs looking down at us, as if it had been joust or tourney. By my hilt! it was a sight that was worth the seeing, for all that was best in England was out on the water that day. We went forth in little ships and came back in great galleys—for, of fifty tall ships of Spain, over two score flew the Cross of St. George ere the sun had set. But now, youngster, I have answered you freely, and I trow it is time that you answered me. Let things be plat and plain between us. I am a man who shoots straight at his mark. You saw the things I had with me at yonder hostel: name which you will, save only the box of rose-coloured sugar which I take to the Lady Loring, and you shall have it if you will but come with me to France.'

‘Nay,’ said Alleyne, ‘I would gladly come with ye to France or where else ye will, just to list to your talk, and because ye are the only two friends that I have in the whole wide world outside of the cloisters; but indeed it may not be, for my duty is towards my brother, seeing that father and mother are dead, and he my elder. Besides, when ye talk of taking me to France, ye do not conceive how useless I should be to you, seeing that neither by training nor by nature am I fitted for the wars, and there seems to be nought but strife in those parts.’

‘That comes from my fool’s talk,’ cried the archer; ‘for, being a man of no learning myself, my tongue turns to blades and targets even as my hand does. Know then that for every parchment in England there are twenty in France. For every statue, cut gem, shrine, carven screen, or what else might please the eye of a learned clerk, there are a good hundred to our one. At the spoiling of Carcassonne I have seen chambers stored with writings, though not one man in our Company could read them. Again, in Arles and Nîmes, and other towns that I could name, there are the great arches and fortalices still standing which were built of old by giant men who came from the south. Can I not see by your brightened eye how you would love to look upon these things? Come then with me, and, by these ten finger-bones! there is not one of them which you shall not see.’

‘I should indeed love to look upon them,’ Alleyne answered; ‘but I have come from Beaulieu for a purpose, and I must be true to my service, even as thou art true to thine.’

‘Bethink you again, mon ami,’ quoth Aylward, ‘that you might do much good yonder, since there are three hundred men in the Company, and none who has ever a word of grace for them, and yet the Virgin knows that there was never a set of men who were in more need of it. Sickerly the one duty may balance the other. Your brother hath done without you this many a year, and, as I gather, he hath never walked as far as Beaulieu to see you during all that time, so he cannot be in any great need of you.’

‘Besides,’ said John, ‘the Socman of Minstead is a by-word through the forest, from Bramshaw Hill to Holmesley Walk. He is a drunken, brawling, perilous churl, as you may find to your cost.’

‘The more reason that I should strive to mend him,’ quoth Alleyne. ‘There is no need to urge me, friends, for my own wishes would draw me to France, and it would be a joy to me if I could go with you. But indeed and indeed it cannot be, so here

I take my leave of you, for yonder square tower amongst the trees upon the right must surely be the church of Minstead, and I may reach it by this path through the woods.'

'Well, God be with thee, lad!' cried the archer, pressing Alleyne to his heart. 'I am quick to love, and quick to hate, and 'fore God I am loth to part.'

'Would it not be well,' said John, 'that we should wait here, and see what manner of greeting you have from your brother. You may prove to be as welcome as the king's purveyor to the village dame.'

'Nay, nay,' he answered; 'ye must not bide for me, for where I go I stay.'

'Yet it may be as well that you should know whither we go,' said the archer. 'We shall now journey south through the woods until we come out upon the Christchurch road, and so onwards, hoping to-night to reach the castle of Sir William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, of which Sir Nigel Loring is constable. There we shall bide, and it is like enough that for a month or more you may find us there, ere we are ready for our viage back to France.'

It was hard indeed for Alleyne to break away from these two new but hearty friends, and so strong was the combat between his conscience and his inclinations that he dared not look round, lest his resolution should slip away from him. It was not until he was deep among the tree trunks that he cast a glance backwards, when he found that he could still see them through the branches on the road above him. The archer was standing with folded arms, his bow jutting from over his shoulder, and the sun gleaming brightly upon his head-piece and the links of his chain-mail. Beside him stood his giant recruit, still clad in the home-spun and ill-fitting garments of the fuller of Lymington, with arms and legs shooting out of his scanty garb. Even as Alleyne watched them they turned upon their heels and plodded off together upon their way.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW STRANGE THINGS BEFELL IN MINSTEAD WOOD.

THE path which the young clerk had now to follow lay through a magnificent forest of the very heaviest timber, where the giant boles of oak and of beech formed long aisles in every direction,

shooting up their huge branches to build the majestic arches of Nature's own cathedral. Beneath lay a broad carpet of the softest and greenest moss, flecked over with fallen leaves, but yielding pleasantly to the foot of the traveller. The track which guided him was one so seldom used that in places it lost itself entirely among the grass, to reappear as a reddish rut between the distant tree trunks. It was very still here in the heart of the woodlands. The gentle rustle of the branches and the distant cooing of pigeons were the only sounds which broke in upon the silence, save that once Alleyne heard afar off a merry call upon a hunting bugle and the shrill yapping of the hounds.

It was not without some emotion that he looked upon the scene around him, for, in spite of his secluded life, he knew enough of the ancient greatness of his own family to be aware that the time had been when they had held undisputed and paramount sway over all that tract of country. His father could trace his pure Saxon lineage back to that Godfrey Malf who had held the manors of Bisterne and of Minstead at the time when the Norman first set mailed foot upon English soil. The afforestation of the district, however, and its conversion into a royal demesne had clipped off a large section of his estate, while other parts had been confiscated as a punishment for his supposed complicity in an abortive Saxon rising. The fate of the ancestor had been typical of that of his descendants. During three hundred years their domains had gradually contracted, sometimes through royal or feudal encroachment, and sometimes through such gifts to the Church as that with which Alleyne's father had opened the doors of Beaulieu Abbey to his younger son. The importance of the family had thus dwindled, but they still retained the old Saxon manor-house, with a couple of farms and a grove large enough to afford pannage to a hundred pigs—'sylva de centum porcis,' as the old family parchments describe it. Above all, the owner of the soil could still hold his head high as the veritable Socman of Minstead—that is, as holding the land in free socage, with no feudal superior, and answerable to no man lower than the king. Knowing this, Alleyne felt some little glow of worldly pride as he looked for the first time upon the land with which so many generations of his ancestors had been associated. He pushed on the quicker, twirling his staff merrily, and looking out at every turn of the path for some sign of the old Saxon residence. He was suddenly arrested, however, by the appearance of

a wild-looking fellow armed with a club, who sprang out from behind a tree and barred his passage. He was a rough, powerful peasant, with cap and tunic of untanned sheepskin, leather breeches, and gallingaskins round legs and feet.

'Stand!' he shouted, raising his heavy cudgel to enforce the order. 'Who are you who walk so freely through the wood? Whither would you go, and what is your errand?'

'Why should I answer your questions, my friend?' said Alleyne, standing on his guard.

'Because your tongue may save your pate. But where have I looked upon your face before?'

'No longer ago than last night at the "Pied Merlin,"' the clerk answered, recognising the escaped serf who had been so outspoken as to his wrongs.

'By the Virgin! yes. You were the little clerk who sat so mum in the corner, and then cried fy on the gleeman. What hast in the scrip?'

'Nought of any price.'

'How can I tell that, clerk? Let me see.'

'Not I.'

'Fool! I could pull you limb from limb like a pullet. What would you have? Hast forgot that we are alone far from all men? How can your clerkship help you? Wouldst lose scrip and life too?'

'I will part with neither without a fight.'

'A fight, quotha? A fight betwixt spurred cock and new-hatched chicken! Thy fighting days may soon be over.'

'Hadst asked me in the name of charity I would have given freely,' cried Alleyne. 'As it stands, not one farthing shall you have with my free will, and when I see my brother, the Socman of Minstead, he will raise hue and cry from vill to vill, from hundred to hundred, until you are taken as a common robber and a scourge to the country.'

The outlaw sank his club. 'The Socman's brother!' he gasped. 'Now, by the keys of Peter! I had rather that hand withered and tongue was palsied ere I had struck or miscalled you. If you are the Socman's brother you are one of the right side, I warrant, for all your clerkly dress.'

'His brother I am,' replied Alleyne. 'But even if I were not, is that reason why you should molest me on the king's ground?'

‘I give not the pip of an apple for king or for noble,’ cried the serf passionately. ‘Ill have I had from them, and ill I shall repay them. I am a good friend to my friends, and, by the Virgin! an evil foeman to my foes.’

‘And therefore the worst of foemen to thyself,’ said Alleyne. ‘But I pray you, since you seem to know him, to point out to me the shortest path to my brother’s house.’

The serf was about to reply, when the clear ringing call of a bugle burst from the wood close behind them, and Alleyne caught sight for an instant of the dun side and white breast of a lordly stag glancing swiftly betwixt the distant tree trunks. A minute later came the shaggy deer-hounds, a dozen or fourteen of them, running on a hot scent, with nose to earth and tail in air. As they streamed past the silent forest around broke suddenly into loud life, with galloping of hoofs, crackling of brushwood, and the short sharp cries of the hunters. Close behind the pack rode a fourrier and a yeoman-pricker, whooping on the laggards and encouraging the leaders, in the shrill half-French jargon which was the language of venery and woodcraft. Alleyne was still gazing after them, listening to the loud ‘Hyke-a-Bayard! Hyke-a-Pomers! Hyke-a-Lebryt!’ with which they called upon their favourite hounds, when a group of horsemen crashed out through the underwood at the very spot where the serf and he were standing.

The one who led was a man between fifty and sixty years of age, war-worn and weather-beaten, with a broad thoughtful forehead and eyes which shone brightly from under his fierce and overhung brows. His beard, streaked thickly with grey, bristled forward from his chin, and spoke of a passionate nature, while the long finely-cut face and firm mouth marked the leader of men. His figure was erect and soldierly, and he rode his horse with the careless grace of a man whose life had been spent in the saddle. In common garb, his masterful face and flashing eye would have marked him as one who was born to rule; but now, with his silken tunic powdered with golden fleurs-de-lis, his velvet mantle lined with the royal minever, and the lions of England stamped in silver upon his harness, none could fail to recognise the noble Edward, most warlike and powerful of all the long line of fighting monarchs who had ruled the Anglo-Norman race. Alleyne doffed hat and bowed head at the sight of him, but the serf folded his hands and leaned them upon his cudgel, looking

with little love at the knot of nobles and knights-in-waiting who rode behind the king.

‘Ha!’ cried Edward, reining up for an instant his powerful black steed. ‘Le cerf est passé? Non? Ici, Brocas; tu parles Anglais.’

‘The deer, clowns?’ said a hard-visaged, swarthy-faced man, who rode at the king’s elbow. ‘If ye have headed it back it is as much as your ears are worth.’

‘It passed by the blighted beech there,’ said Alleyne, pointing, ‘and the hounds were hard at its heels.’

‘It is well,’ cried Edward, still speaking in French: for, though he could understand English, he had never learned to express himself in so barbarous and unpolished a tongue. ‘By my faith, sirs,’ he continued, half turning in his saddle to address his escort, ‘unless my woodcraft is sadly at fault, it is a stag of six tines and the finest that we have roused this journey. A golden St. Hubert to the man who is the first to sound the mort.’ He shook his bridle as he spoke, and thundered away, his knights lying low upon their horses and galloping as hard as whip and spur would drive them, in the hope of winning the king’s prize. Away they drove down the long green glade—bay horses, black and grey, riders clad in every shade of velvet, fur, or silk, with glint of brazen horn and flash of knife and spear. One only lingered, the black-browed Baron Brocas, who, making a gambade which brought him within arm-sweep of the serf, slashed him across the face with his riding-whip. ‘Doff, dog, doff,’ he hissed, ‘when a monarch deigns to lower his eyes to such as you!’—then spurred through the underwood and was gone, with a gleam of steel shoes and flutter of dead leaves.

The villein took the cruel blow without wince or cry, as one to whom stripes are a birthright and an inheritance. His eyes flashed, however, and he shook his bony hand with a fierce wild gesture after the retreating figure.

‘Black hound of Gascony,’ he muttered, ‘evil the day that you and those like you set foot in free England! I know thy kennel of Rochecourt. The night will come when I may do to thee and thine what you and yours have wrought upon mine and me. May God smite me if I fail to smite thee, thou French robber, with thy wife and thy child and all that is under thy castle roof!’

‘Forbear!’ cried Alleyne. ‘Mix not God’s name with these

unhallowed threats! And yet it was a coward's blow, and one to stir the blood and loose the tongue of the most peaceful. Let me find some soothing simples and lay them on the weal to draw the sting.'

'Nay, there is but one thing that can draw the sting, and that the future may bring to me. But, clerk, if you would see your brother you must on, for there is a meeting to-day, and his merry men will await him ere the shadows turn from west to east. I pray you not to hold him back, for it would be an evil thing if all the stout lads were there and the leader a-missing. I would come with you, but sooth to say I am stationed here and may not move. The path over yonder, betwixt the oak and the thorn, should bring you out into his nether field.'

Alleyne lost no time in following the directions of the wild, masterless man, whom he left among the trees where he had found him. His heart was the heavier for the encounter, not only because all bitterness and wrath were abhorrent to his gentle nature, but also because it disturbed him to hear his brother spoken of as though he were a chief of outlaws or the leader of a party against the state. Indeed, of all the things which he had seen yet in the world to surprise him there was none more strange than the hate which class appeared to bear to class. The talk of labourer, woodman and villein in the inn had all pointed to the wide-spread mutiny, and now his brother's name was spoken as though he were the very centre of the universal discontent. In good truth, the commons throughout the length and breadth of the land were heart-weary of this fine game of chivalry which had been played so long at their expense. So long as knight and baron were a strength and a guard to the kingdom they might be endured, but now, when all men knew that the great battles in France had been won by English yeomen and Welsh stabbers, warlike fame, the only fame to which his class had ever aspired, appeared to have deserted the plate-clad horseman. The sports of the lists had done much in days gone by to impress the minds of the people, but the plumed and unwieldy champion was no longer an object either of fear or of reverence to men whose fathers and brothers had shot into the press at Crécy or Poitiers, and seen the proudest chivalry in the world unable to make head against the weapons of disciplined peasants. Power had changed hands. The protector had become the protected, and the whole fabric of the feudal system was tottering to a fall. Hence the

fierce mutterings of the lower classes and the constant discontent, breaking out into local tumult and outrage, and culminating some years later in the great rising of Tyler. What Alleyne saw and wondered at in Hampshire would have appealed equally to the traveller in any other English county from the Channel to the marches of Scotland.

He was following the track, his misgivings increasing with every step which took him nearer to that home which he had never seen, when of a sudden the trees began to thin and the sward to spread out into a broad green lawn, where five cows lay in the sunshine and droves of black swine wandered unchecked. A brown forest stream swirled down the centre of this clearing, with a rude bridge flung across it, and on the other side was a second field sloping up to a long, low-lying wooden house, with thatched roof and open squares for windows. Alleyne gazed across at it with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes—for this, he knew, must be the home of his fathers. A wreath of blue smoke floated up through a hole in the thatch, and was the only sign of life in the place, save a great black hound which lay sleeping chained to the door-post. In the yellow shimmer of the autumn sunshine it lay as peacefully and as still as he had oft pictured it to himself in his dreams.

He was roused, however, from his pleasant reverie by the sound of voices, and two people emerged from the forest some little way to his right and moved across the field in the direction of the bridge. The one was a man with yellow flowing beard and very long hair of the same tint drooping over his shoulders; his dress of good Norwich cloth and his assured bearing marked him as a man of position, while the sombre hue of his clothes and the absence of all ornament contrasted with the flash and glitter which had marked the king's retinue. By his side walked a woman, tall and slight and dark, with lithe graceful figure and clear-cut composed features. Her jet-black hair was gathered back under a light pink coif, her head poised proudly upon her neck, and her step long and springy, like that of some wild tireless woodland creature. She held her left hand in front of her, covered with a red velvet glove, and on the wrist a little brown falcon, very fluffy and bedraggled, which she smoothed and fondled as she walked. As she came out into the sunshine, Alleyne noticed that her light gown, slashed with pink, was all stained with earth and with moss upon one side from shoulder to hem. He stood in the shadow of

an oak staring at her with parted lips, for this woman seemed to him to be the most beautiful and graceful creature that mind could conceive of. Such had he imagined the angels, and such he had tried to paint them in the Beaulieu missals; but here there was something human, were it only in the battered hawk and discoloured dress, which sent a tingle and thrill through his nerves such as no dream of radiant and stainless spirit had ever yet been able to conjure up. Good, quiet, uncomplaining mother Nature, long slighted and miscalled, still bides her time and draws to her bosom the most errant of her children.

The two walked swiftly across the meadow to the narrow bridge, he in front and she a pace or two behind. There they paused, and stood for a few minutes face to face talking earnestly. Alleyne had read and had heard of love and of lovers. Such were these, doubtless—this golden-bearded man and the fair damsel with the cold proud face. Why else should they wander together in the woods, or be so lost in talk by rustic streams? And yet as he watched, uncertain whether to advance from the cover or to choose some other path to the house, he soon came to doubt the truth of this first conjecture. The man stood, tall and square, blocking the entrance to the bridge, and throwing out his hands as he spoke in a wild eager fashion, while the deep tones of his stormy voice rose at times into accents of menace and of anger. She stood fearlessly in front of him, still stroking her bird; but twice she threw a swift questioning glance over her shoulder, as one who is in search of aid. So moved was the young clerk by these mute appeals, that he came forth from the trees and crossed the meadow, uncertain what to do, and yet loth to hold back from one who might need his aid. So intent were they upon each other that neither took note of his approach; until, when he was close upon them, the man threw his arm roughly round the damsel's waist and drew her towards him, she straining her lithe supple figure away and striking fiercely at him, while the hooded hawk screamed with ruffled wings and pecked blindly in its mistress's defence. Bird and maid, however, had but little chance against their assailant, who, laughing loudly, caught her wrist in one hand while he drew her towards him with the other.

'The best rose has ever the longest thorns,' said he. 'Quiet, little one, or you may do yourself a hurt. Must pay Saxon toll on Saxon land, my proud Maude, for all your airs and graces.'

'You boor!' she hissed. 'You base underbred clod! Is this

your care and your hospitality? I would rather wed a branded serf from my father's fields. Leave go, I say—— Ah! good youth, Heaven has sent you. Make him loose me! By the honour of your mother, I pray you to stand by me and to make this knave loose me.'

'Stand by you I will, and that blithely,' said Alleyne. 'Surely, sir, you should take shame to hold the damsel against her will.'

The man turned a face upon him which was lion-like in its strength and in its wrath. With his tangle of golden hair, his fierce blue eyes, and his large, well-marked features, he was the most comely man whom Alleyne had ever seen; and yet there was something so sinister and so fell in his expression that child or beast might well have shrunk from him. His brows were drawn, his cheek flushed, and there was a mad sparkle in his eyes which spoke of a wild untamable nature.

'Young fool!' he cried, holding the woman still to his side, though every line of her shrinking figure spoke her abhorrence. 'Do you keep your spoon in your own broth. I rede you to go on your way, lest worse befall you. This little wench has come with me, and with me she shall bide.'

'Liar!' cried the woman; and, stooping her head, she suddenly bit fiercely into the broad brown hand which held her. He whipped it back with an oath, while she tore herself free and slipped behind Alleyne, cowering up against him like the trembling leveret who sees the falcon poisoning for the swoop above him.

'Stand off my land!' the man said fiercely, heedless of the blood which trickled freely from his fingers. 'What have you to do here? By your dress you should be one of those cursed clerks who overrun the land like vile rats, poking and prying into other men's concerns, too caitiff to fight and too lazy to work. By the rood! if I had my will upon ye, I should nail you upon the abbey doors, as they hang vermin before their holes. Art neither man nor woman, young shaveling. Get thee back to thy fellows ere I lay hands upon you: for your foot is on my land, and I may slay you as a common draw-latch.'

'Is this your land, then?' gasped Alleyne.

'Would you dispute it, dog? Would you wish by trick or quibble to juggle me out of these last acres? Know, base-born knave, that you have dared this day to stand in the path of one whose race have been the advisers of kings and the leaders of

hosts, ere ever this vile crew of Norman robbers came into the land, or such half-blood hounds as you were let loose to preach that the thief should have his booty and the honest man should sin if he strove to win back his own.'

'You are the Socman of Minstead?'

'That am I; and the son of Edric the Socman, of the pure blood of Godfrey the thane, by the only daughter of the house of Aluric, whose forefathers held the white-horse banner at the fatal fight where our shield was broken and our sword shivered. I tell you, clerk, that my folk held this land from Bramshaw Wood to the Ringwood road; and, by the soul of my father! it will be a strange thing if I am to be bearded upon the little that is left of it. Begone, I say, and meddle not with my affair.'

'If you leave me now,' whispered the woman, 'then shame for ever upon your manhood.'

'Surely, sir,' said Alleyne, speaking in as persuasive and soothing a way as he could, 'if your birth is gentle, there is the more reason that your manners should be gentle too. I am well persuaded that you did but jest with this lady, and that you will now permit her to leave your land either alone or with me as a guide, if she should need one, through the wood. As to birth, it does not become me to boast, and there is sooth in what you say as to the unworthiness of clerks, but it is none the less true that I am as well born as you.'

'Dog!' cried the furious Socman, 'there is no man in the south who can say as much.'

'Yet can I,' said Alleyne, smiling; 'for indeed I also am the son of Edric the Socman, of the pure blood of Godfrey the thane, by the only daughter of Aluric of Brockenhurst. Surely, dear brother,' he continued, holding out his hand, 'you have a warmer greeting than this for me. There are but two boughs left upon this old old Saxon trunk.'

His elder brother dashed his hand aside with an oath, while an expression of malignant hatred passed over his passion-drawn features. 'You are the young cub of Beaulieu, then,' said he. 'I might have known it by the sleek face and the slavish manner, too monk-ridden and craven in spirit to answer back a rough word. Thy father, shaveling, with all his faults, had a man's heart; and there were few who could look him in the eyes on the day of his anger. But you! Look there, rat, on yonder field where the cows graze, and on that other beyond, and on the

orchard hard by the church. Do you know that all these were squeezed out of your dying father by greedy priests, to pay for your upbringing in the cloisters? I, the Socman, am shorn of my lands that you may snivel Latin and eat bread for which you never yet did hand's turn. You rob me first, and now you would come preaching and whining, in search mayhap of another field or two for your priestly friends. Knave! my dogs shall be set upon you; but, meanwhile, stand out of my path, and stop me at your peril!' As he spoke he rushed forward, and, throwing the lad to one side, caught the woman's wrist. Alleyne, however, as active as a young deer-hound, sprang to her aid and seized her by the other arm, raising his iron-shod staff as he did so.

'You may say what you will to me,' he said between his clenched teeth—'it may be no better than I deserve; but, brother or no, I swear by my hopes of salvation that I will break your arm if you do not leave hold of the maid.'

There was a ring in his voice and a flash in his eyes which promised that the blow would follow quick at the heels of the word. For a moment the blood of the long line of hot-headed thanes was too strong for the soft whisperings of the doctrine of meekness and mercy. He was conscious of a fierce wild thrill through his nerves and a throb of mad gladness at his heart, as his real human self burst for an instant the bonds of custom and of teaching which had held it so long. The socman sprang back, looking to left and to right for some stick or stone which might serve him for weapon; but finding none, he turned and ran at the top of his speed for the house, blowing the while upon a shrill whistle.

'Come!' gasped the woman. 'Fly, friend, ere he come back.'

'Nay, let him come!' cried Alleyne. 'I shall not budge a foot for him or his dogs.'

'Come, come!' she cried, tugging at his arm. 'I know the man: he will kill you. Come, for the Virgin's sake, or for my sake, for I cannot go and leave you here.'

'Come, then,' said he; and they ran together to the cover of the woods. As they gained the edge of the brushwood, Alleyne, looking back, saw his brother come running out of the house again, with the sun gleaming upon his hair and his beard. He held something which flashed in his right hand, and he stooped at the threshold to unloose the black hound.

‘This way!’ the woman whispered, in a low eager voice. ‘Through the bushes to that forked ash. Do not heed me; I can run as fast as you, I trow. Now into the stream—right in, over ankles, to throw the dog off, though I think it is but a common cur, like its master.’ As she spoke, she sprang herself into the shallow stream and ran swiftly up the centre of it, with the brown water bubbling over her feet and her hand outstretched to ward off the elinging branches of bramble or sapling. Alleyne followed close at her heels, with his mind in a whirl at this black welcome and sudden shifting of all his plans and hopes. Yet, grave as were his thoughts, they would still turn to wonder as he looked at the twinkling feet of his guide and saw her lithe figure bend this way and that, dipping under boughs, springing over stones, with a lightness and ease which made it no small task for him to keep up with her. At last, when he was almost out of breath, she suddenly threw herself down upon a mossy bank, between two holly-bushes, and looked ruefully at her own dripping feet and bedraggled skirt.

‘Holy Mary!’ said she, ‘what shall I do? Mother will keep me to my chamber for a month, and make me work at the tapestry of the nine bold knights. She promised as much last week, when I fell into Wilverley bog, and yet she knows that I cannot abide needlework.’

Alleyne, still standing in the stream, glanced down at the graceful pink-and-white figure, the curve of raven-black hair, and the proud, sensitive face which looked up frankly and confidently at his own.

‘We had best on,’ he said. ‘He may yet overtake us.’

‘Not so. We are well off his land now, nor can he tell in this great wood which way we have taken. But you—you had him at your mercy. Why did you not kill him?’

‘Kill him! My brother!’

‘And why not?’—with a quick gleam of her white teeth. ‘He would have killed you. I know him, and I read it in his eyes. Had I had your staff I would have tried—ay, and done it, too.’ She shook her clenched white hand as she spoke, and her lips tightened ominously.

‘I am already sad in heart for what I have done,’ said he, sitting down on the bank, and sinking his face into his hands. ‘God help me!—all that is worst in me seemed to come uppermost. Another instant, and I had smitten him: the son of my own

mother, the man whom I have longed to take to my heart. Alas! that I should still be so weak.'

'Weak!' she exclaimed, raising her black eyebrows. 'I do not think that even my father himself, who is a hard judge of manhood, would call you that. But it is, as you may think, sir, a very pleasant thing for me to hear that you are grieved at what you have done, and I can but rede that we should go back together, and you should make your peace with the Socman by handing back your prisoner. It is a sad thing that so small a thing as a woman should come between two who are of one blood.'

Simple Alleyne opened his eyes at this little spurt of feminine bitterness. 'Nay, lady,' said he, 'that were worst of all. What man would be so caitiff and thrall as to fail you at your need? I have turned my brother against me, and now, alas! I appear to have given you offence also with my clumsy tongue. But, indeed, lady, I am torn both ways, and can scarce grasp in my mind what it is that has befallen.'

'Nor can I marvel at that,' said she, with a little tinkling laugh. 'You came in as the knight does in the jongleur's romances, between dragon and damsel, with small time for the asking of questions. Come,' she went on, springing to her feet, and smoothing down her rumpled frock, 'let us walk through the shaw together, and we may come upon Bertrand with the horses. If poor Troubadour had not cast a shoe, we should not have had this trouble. Nay, I must have your arm: for, though I speak lightly, now that all is happily over I am as frightened as my brave Roland. See how his chest heaves, and his dear feathers all awry—the little knight who would not have his lady mishandled.' So she prattled on to her hawk, while Alleyne walked by her side, stealing a glance from time to time at this queenly and wayward woman. In silence they wandered together over the velvet turf and on through the broad Minstead woods, where the old lichen-draped beeches threw their circles of black shadow upon the sunlit sward.

'You have no wish, then, to hear my story?' said she, at last.

'If it pleases you to tell it me,' he answered.

'Oh!' she cried, tossing her head, 'if it is of so little interest to you, we had best let it bide.'

'Nay,' said he eagerly, 'I would fain hear it.'

'You have a right to know it, if you have lost a brother's favour through it. And yet—— Ah well, you are, as I under-

stand, a clerk, so I must think of you as one step further in orders, and make you my father-confessor. Know then that this man has been a suitor for my hand, less as I think for my own sweet sake than because he hath ambition and had it on his mind that he might improve his fortunes by dipping into my father's strong-box—though the Virgin knows that he would have found little enough therein. My father, however, is a proud man, a gallant knight and tried soldier of the oldest blood, to whom this man's churlish birth and low descent—— Oh, lackaday! I had forgot that he was of the same strain as yourself.'

'Nay, trouble not for that,' said Alleyne, 'we are all from good mother Eve.'

'Streams may spring from one source, and yet some be clear and some be foul,' quoth she quickly. 'But, to be brief over the matter, my father would have none of his wooing, nor in sooth would I. On that he swore a vow against us, and as he is known to be a perilous man, with many outlaws and others at his back, my father forbade that I should hawk or hunt in any part of the wood to the north of the Christchurch road. As it chanced, however, this morning my little Roland here was loosed at a strong-winged heron, and page Bertrand and I rode on, with no thoughts but for the sport, until we found ourselves in Minstead woods. Small harm then, but that my horse Troubadour trod with a tender foot upon a sharp stick, rearing and throwing me to the ground. See to my gown, the third that I have befouled within the week. Worth me when Agatha the tirewoman sets eyes upon it!'

'And what then, lady?' asked Alleyne.

'Why, then away ran Troubadour, for belike I spurred him in falling, and Bertrand rode after him as hard as hoofs could bear him. When I rose there was the Socman himself by my side, with the news that I was on his land, but with so many courteous words besides, and such gallant bearing, that he prevailed upon me to come to his house for shelter, there to wait until the page return. By the grace of the Virgin and the help of my patron St. Magdalen, I stopped short ere I reached his door, though, as you saw, he strove to hale me up to it. And then—ah-h-h-h!'—she shivered and chattered like one in an ague-fit.

'What is it?' cried Alleyne, looking about in alarm.

'Nothing, friend, nothing! I was but thinking how I bit into his hand. Sooner would I bite living toad or poisoned snake. Oh, I shall loathe my lips for ever! But you—how brave you

were, and how quick! How meek for yourself, and how bold for a stranger! If I were a man, I should wish to do what you have done.'

'It was a small thing,' he answered, with a tingle of pleasure at these sweet words of praise. 'But you—what will you do?'

'There is a great oak near here, and I think that Bertrand will bring the horses there, for it is an old hunting-tryst of ours. Then hey for home, and no more hawking to-day! A twelve-mile gallop will dry feet and skirt.'

'But your father?'

'Not one word shall I tell him. You do not know him; but I can tell you he is not a man to disobey as I have disobeyed him. He would avenge me, it is true, but it is not to him that I shall look for vengeance. Some day, perchance, in joust or in tourney, knight may wish to wear my colours, and then I shall tell him that if he does indeed crave my favour there is wrong unredressed, and the wronger the Socman of Minstead. So my knight shall find a venture such as bold knights love, and my debt shall be paid, and my father none the wiser, and one rogue the less in the world. Say, is not that a brave plan?'

'Nay, lady, it is a thought which is unworthy of you. How can such as you speak of violence and of vengeance. Are none to be gentle and kind, none to be piteous and forgiving? Alas! it is a hard, cruel world, and I would that I had never left my abbey cell. To hear such words from your lips is as though I heard an angel of grace preaching the devil's own creed.'

She started from him as a young colt who first feels the bit. 'Gramercy for your rede, young sir!' she said, with a little curtsey. 'As I understand your words, you are grieved that you ever met me, and look upon me as a preaching devil. Why, my father is a bitter man when he is wroth, but hath never called me such a name as that. It may be his right and duty, but certes it is none of thine. So it would be best, since you think so lowly of me, that you should take this path to the left while I keep on upon this one; for it is clear that I can be no fit companion for you.' So saying, with downcast lids and a dignity which was somewhat marred by her bedraggled skirt, she swept off down the ruddy track, leaving Alleyne standing staring ruefully after her. He waited in vain for some backward glance or sign of relenting, but she walked on with a rigid neck until her dress was only a white flutter among the leaves. Then, with a sunken head and a heavy

heart, he plodded wearily down the other path, wroth with himself for the rude and uncouth tongue which had given offence where so little was intended.

He had gone some way, lost in doubt and in self-reproach, his mind all tremulous with a thousand new-found thoughts and fears and wonderments, when of a sudden there was a light rustle of the leaves behind him, and, glancing round, there was this graceful, swift-footed creature, treading in his very shadow, with her proud head bowed, even as his was—the picture of humility and repentance.

‘I shall not vex you, nor even speak,’ she said; ‘but I would fain keep with you while we are in the wood.’

‘Nay, you cannot vex me,’ he answered, all warm again at the very sight of her. ‘It was my rough words which vexed you; but I have been thrown among men all my life, and indeed, with all the will, I scarce know how to temper my speech to a lady’s ear.’

‘Then unsay it,’ cried she quickly; ‘say that I was right to wish to have vengeance on the Socman.’

‘Nay, I cannot do that,’ he answered gravely.

‘Then who is ungentle and unkind now?’ she cried in triumph. ‘How stern and cold you are for one so young! Art surely no mere clerk, but bishop or cardinal at the least. Shouldst have crozier for staff and mitre for cap. Well, well, for your sake I will forgive the Socman and take vengeance on none but on my own wilful self who must needs run into danger’s path. So will that please you, sir?’

‘There spoke your true self,’ said he; ‘and you will find more pleasure in such forgiveness than in any vengeance.’

She shook her head, as if by no means assured of it, and then with a sudden little cry, which had more of surprise than of joy in it, ‘Here is Bertrand with the horses!’

Down the glade there came a little green-clad page with laughing eyes, and long curls floating behind him. He sat perched on a high bay horse, and held on to the bridle of a spirited black palfrey, the hides of both glistening from a long run.

‘I have sought you everywhere, dear Lady Maude,’ said he in a piping voice, springing down from his horse and holding the stirrup. ‘Troubadour galloped as far as Holmhill ere I could catch him. I trust that you have had no hurt or scath?’ He shot a questioning glance at Alleyne as he spoke.

‘No, Bertrand,’ said she, ‘thanks to this courteous stranger.’

And now, sir,' she continued, springing into her saddle, 'it is not fit that I leave you without a word more. Clerk or no, you have acted this day as becomes a true knight. King Arthur and all his table could not have done more. It may be that, as some small return, my father or his kin may have power to advance your interest. He is not rich, but he is honoured and hath great friends. Tell me what is your purpose, and see if he may not aid it.'

'Alas! lady, I have now no purpose. I have but two friends in the world, and they have gone to Christchurch, where it is likely I shall join them.'

'And where in Christchurch?'

'At the castle which is held by the brave knight, Sir Nigel Loring, constable to the Earl of Salisbury.'

To his surprise she burst out a-laughing, and, spurring her palfrey, dashed off down the glade, with her page riding behind her. Not one word did she say, but as she vanished amid the trees she half turned in her saddle and waved a last greeting. Long time he stood, half hoping that she might again come back to him; but the thud of the hoofs had died away, and there was no sound in all the woods but the gentle rustle and dropping of the leaves. At last he turned away and made his way back to the high road—another person from the light-hearted boy who had left it a short three hours before.

(To be continued.)

EPITAPHS.

THE word Epitaph was originally given to that form of monumental inscription by which the surviving relatives sought to commemorate the merits of some departed friend, but universal custom has extended it to anything in the form of a short written memorial of the dead, whether inscribed on a tombstone or not. Looking to its intention, an epitaph must necessarily be short and concise, and cannot by any possibility comprise such details as are appropriate to an elegy, or to such a commemorative poem as Tennyson's 'In Memoriam.' There is nothing, as we shall afterwards see, to prevent its becoming the vehicle of satire, or even of vindictive remarks. But what is its accepted purpose is shown from the custom of all nations, and is well expressed in the following couplet, taken from a tombstone in a Suffolk churchyard:—

Tombs have no use, unless it be to show
The due respect which friend to friend doth owe.

The chief purpose of an epitaph is to rescue from the sweeping hand of oblivion the memory of someone removed by death who was specially dear to his surviving friends, or whose character and virtues were deemed so worthy of admiration that the recital of them would have the tendency to cause those who read to emulate his example. But, while an inscription on a tomb or statue of one of the world's great ones, would perpetuate his name and fame to future generations, still the perusal of it would not have such a stimulating effect on the great mass, who are not cast in the heroic mould, as one which appeals to the common lot of humanity, wherein, for instance, is recorded the triumph of virtue over adverse surroundings, as in the case of the ancient Greek, of whom nothing is known but what his epitaph records: 'Epictetus, who lies here, was a slave and a cripple, poor as the beggar in the proverb, and the favourite of Heaven.'

On the sarcophagi or coffins of the ancient Egyptians we find the earliest monumental inscriptions in existence, and the Pyramids themselves are believed to be monuments erected in memory of the departed rulers of that famous land. Those inscriptions which have been deciphered show a great similarity, not only to one

another, but to those of the present day. They almost invariably commence with a prayer to the deity (Osiris or Anubis) on behalf of the deceased, which is followed by the name, descent, and position held by him while in life. The difference between them and many modern epitaphs lies in the fact that they do not attempt to delineate the character or merits of the deceased, nor, except in the initial prayer, to give any expression to the feelings of the survivors.

The earliest epitaphs to be found in England were written during the period of the Roman occupation, and commemorate some of the more prominent officers of the Roman legion. The use of Latin, thus commenced, continued, with a slight intermingling of Norman-French after the Conquest, till well down in the Middle Ages, and, in occasional instances, down even to the present day. Indeed, some writers have gone so far as to express the opinion that Latin should be employed exclusively, not only on account of its beauty as a language, but, being one of the dead languages, its meaning can never be subject to those fluctuations and changes which invariably fall to the lot of one in everyday use. But that this opinion is not well founded will be apparent when we consider that epitaphs are intended to be read, not only by the learned, but by the friends and acquaintances of the deceased, and the people at large, who might thereby be stimulated to emulate the virtues of the departed one. As an argument to the contrary, it may be mentioned that the inscriptions in pre-Reformation times, written in Latin, are much more intelligible now than those written in the Old English of the period, which can be read only, and that with extreme difficulty, by some dry-as-dust Old Mortality! The oldest epitaph in English, which is found in a churchyard in Oxfordshire, and dates from the year 1370, to modern readers would be unintelligible, not only from its antique typography, but from its obsolete language, the first two lines of which run as follows, and may be taken as a sample of the whole: ‘man com & se how schal alle dede be: wen yow comes bad & bare: noth hav ven we away fare: all ys werines y^t ve for care.’¹

The inscriptions from the end of the thirteenth century to the time

¹ Man, come and see how shall all dead be,
When you come poor and bare;
Nothing have, when we away fare:
All is weariness that we for care.

of the Reformation are mostly written on brass, and are expressed in the first person singular, as if the deceased was the speaker, wherein he states his rank and attainments while in life, contrasts them with the lowly and loathsome character of his body when laid in the grave, and closes with a prayer that the passer-by might pray for the rest of his soul. In fact, these old tombstones serve as an unimpeachable record of the gradual development of religious thought from one generation to another. Thus, in 1416, we find the following concluding request on the tomb of a young barrister who died at the early age of twenty-one:—

Desiring you that this shall see
Unto the Maiden pray for me,
That bare both God and Man.

Twenty-one years later we find one John Spycer claiming credit in the chancery of Heaven for having presented to the Church a lamp to be lighted day and night, and also a gable window, whereupon he prays:—

Now, Jesu, that diedst on a tree, on us have mercy and pitie ;
Mary, Mother, Maiden clear, have mercy on me, John Spycer.

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which was only formally declared to be an article of faith in the Romish Church so recently as 1855, is clearly enunciated on the tombstones as early as the middle of the fifteenth century. As may be supposed, at this period, when the Church held the terrors of Purgatory over every one, where ‘every door was barred with gold, and opened but with golden keys,’ frequent allusion is made to the sore ‘adversitie,’ the ‘outlawry,’ the ‘pains,’ and other names for the cleansing fires of Purgatory. But after Henry VIII. broke away from Rome, these allusions, as well as the pious formula ‘Pray for the soul,’ gradually disappear, and in half a century afterwards cease almost entirely. Ten years after the rupture, we find the following epitaph, on one Lambe, permeated with the full development of the Reformation doctrine, of immediate immortality through the merits of Christ alone, without priestly or other intervention:—

O Lambe of God, whiche sinne didst take away,
And (as a lambe) was offered up for sinne ;
Where I poore Lambe went from the flock astray,
Yet thou (good Lorde) vouchsafe thy Lambe to winne
Home to thy fold, and hold thy Lambe therein :
That at the day when lambes and goats shall sever
Of thy choice lambes, Lambe may be one for ever.

It must have been rather trying for people in those times to know whether to call themselves Catholics or Protestants, as Henry VIII. was first the one and then the other, and his son Edward VI., during his short reign, caused the pendulum of State to swing straight towards Protestantism, only to rebound towards the old faith under his sister Mary, and again to oscillate to Protestantism under Elizabeth. Thus, in 1599, one Edward Grimstone declares that, whatever others did, as for himself he was unchangeable :—

By twice two Kings and Queens his life was graced,
Yet one religion held from first to last.

But, while Roman Catholicism and Protestantism were thus struggling for the mastery, it is surprising to find how the old Pagan mythology finds a place alongside the expression of Christian hope, not only in the Reformation times, but even a century later, as witness the following, on the tomb of a boy who died in the year 1633, aged nine years :—

Great Jove hath lost his Ganymede, I know,
Which made him seek another here below,
And findinge none, not one like unto this,
Hath ta'ne him hence into eternall bliss.
Cease, then, for thy dear Meneleb to weep—
God's darlinge was too good for thee to keep;
But rather joye in this great favour given,
A child is made a saint in heaven.

The one just quoted belongs, strange to say, to that stage of English history when a fierce Puritanism was asserting itself, which resulted in the great Civil War, the execution of King Charles I., and the triumph for a time of that strange phase of religious enthusiasm—or, as some would style it, coarse bigotry—under Cromwell and his saints. As may be supposed, the tombstones breathe the spirit of the times in their fierce intolerance and narrow exclusiveness. The following occurs at the close of an inscription in Grey Friars' Churchyard, Edinburgh, under date 1635 :—

Oh! that men were
wise to

Know the multitude of those that are to be damned, the paucity of those that are to be saved, and the vanity of transitory things.
Understand evil committed, good things omitted, and the loss of time.
Foresee the danger of death, the last judgment, and eternal punishment.

Listen to the shout of assurance from the tombstone of old

Thomas Brooke, who died at Huddersfield, in the year 1638, in the eighty-seventh year of his age:—

In the Church
 Mylitant I fout
 so unshaken
 that to the
 Church tryump
 hant I am taken.
 I am one o' th'
 Church still.
 Greeve not frends
 to know me ad
 vanced higher:
 Whilst I stayed
 I prayed, and now
 I sing in y^e quier.

As may be supposed, epitaphs, in a great measure, reflect also the literary characteristics of the age which produces them. It is during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when our literature was adorned by such a galaxy of brilliant writers, that the literary beauties of the epitaph first begin to show themselves. To define what constitutes a good epitaph is extremely difficult, as each age, not to speak of the individual units who compose that age, has its own standard of taste. The beauty of many a one consists in its extreme simplicity. What could be more startlingly effective than the mere statement of the *name* of the deceased, the perusal of which immediately recalls to the mind of the passing reader the leading characteristics of his life as emblazoned in the pages of history? Thus, on the tomb of one of Napoleon's generals is engraved the simple name of the deceased, 'Massena,' which, no doubt, would be well known at the time, but is now comparatively meaningless, except to a few who have made history, and especially the history of the Napoleonic campaigns, a special study. Every traveller to Geneva will recall the unpretentious monument erected to the memory of the famous Protestant divine, John Calvin, consisting of a small stone, not a foot high, with nothing on it but the letters 'J. C.' Simple, yet striking, as recalling one whose writings have moulded to a great extent the religious thought of nations and individuals down to the present day. But while this extreme simplicity might do in a very few cases, still, an epitaph to be generally acceptable must appeal to the general kinship of humanity, and, in addition, should emphasise, in short, crisp language, those special characteristics which distinguished the deceased from the general mass of mankind. It should also

deal with him as a mortal not superior to human frailties, but, as committed to the dust, trusting to the Divine mercy, and in hopes of a glorious resurrection. Anything in the way of fulsome flattery is wholly out of place in presence of the awful mystery of death, which, instead of commending itself to the onlooker, arouses his feelings of scorn or derision. Anything, also, of a vindictive or abusive character is most inappropriate over the remains of those whose 'love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished, and who have no more a portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun.' What could be more unseemly than the following, bearing date 1600, on a tomb in Babraham, in Cambridge-shire?—

Here lyes Horatio Palavicene
 Who robb'd the Pope to lend the Queene.
 He was a thief. A thief! thou ly'st:
 For whie? he robbed but Antichrist.
 Him Death with besome swept from Babram
 Into the bosom of oulde Abram;
 But then came Hercules with his club,
 And struck him down to Beelzebub.

But while epitaphs usually give all their tribute to the deceased, they occasionally are used as advertising mediums for the living, and bear by whose appointment and at whose cost they have been put up. This brings us to notice those epitaphs which have been specially written to commemorate the virtues of members of various professions and trades.

The calling of a watchmaker naturally suggests itself as suitable for an epitaph, and, accordingly, we find many expressive and appropriate ones. Here is one, or rather the portion of one, on a self-taught watchmaker, who, although we are duly told of his skill as a tradesman, and that 'of Berkeley five times mayor this artist was,' yet

When his own watch was down on the Last Day,
 He that made watches had not made a key
 To wind it up, but useless it must lie
 Until he rise again no more to die!

Or another, who, having integrity as the Mainspring, and prudence as the Regulator of all the actions of his life, departed this life 'wound up, in hopes of being taken in hand by his Maker, and of being thoroughly cleaned and repaired, and set a-going in the world to come.' We hardly see the appropriateness of the description of a deceased grocer,

Who in his life was *tost on many a wave,*
 And now he lies *anchored* in his own grave;

but, at the same time, we are glad to learn from him, and, through him, of others of the same occupation, that

To heaven he has gone, the way before,
Where of grocers there is many more.

One lady's nurse, a Mrs. Ann Clark, who lived at Tiverton, and died there in 1733, says of herself:—

On helpless babes I did attend
Whilst I on earth my life did spend.

And, as showing how faithfully she carried out her appointed lot in life, her epitaph finishes up with the momentous statement that 'John Bradley was the first child she received into this world in 1698, and since above 5000'—which, calculating the years in which her service lasted, makes an average of one hundred and forty-three per annum!

We do not know whether the size of families among our ancestors, as a rule, resembled those of patriarchal times or not, but it is no uncommon matter to have it recorded that the deceased left behind him fifteen, nineteen, and even more, hopeful children. One good man is described as the forty-first child of his father and as leaving twenty-seven children of his own. Sir William Sutton, who died in 1640, after nine years of married life, was the parent of sixteen children,—

Their generous offspring, parents' joy of heart,
Eight of each sex: of each an equal part
Ushered to Heaven their father, the other
Remained behind him to attend their mother.

While olive plants seemed to have flourished in those days, Bluebeard also seems to have had several worthy representatives. For example:—

Here lieth he, ould Jeremy, who hath *eight* times married been,
But now in his old age, he lies in his cage, under the grass so green.

But 'ould Jeremy' was fairly excelled by a Gloucestershire gentleman, who died six years later (1725), and is thus immortalised:—

Here lies old Mr. Richard Tully,
Who lived an C and 3 years fully,
And threescore years before the Mayor
The sword of this city he did bear.
Nine of his wives do bye him lye,
So shall the *tenth* when she doth die.

Surely, since he was so very much married, he found more pleasure in his married life than many others who have erected

monuments and inscribed epitaphs in memory of their departed partners in life, such as they who wrote :—

To free me from domestic strife,
Death called at my house, but he spake with my wife ;

or—

Here Isabel, my wife, doth lie :
She's at peace, and so am I.

But we should form an entirely wrong impression if we were to believe that married life as portrayed in the tombstones were such, even in a small degree, as is here satirised. Some of the most beautiful inscriptions we have are by the surviving spouse, deeply lamenting the separation that has been caused by the hand of death. What could be more devoted than the following, in memory of Mrs. Anna and Mrs. Dorothy Freeborne, wives of Mr. Samuel Freeborne, who departed this life, one on the 31st of July, anno 1641 ; the other August the 20th, anno 1658, one aged 33 years, the other 44 :—

Under this stone two precious gems do lie,
Equal in weight, worth, lustre, sanctity :
Yet perhaps one of them do excel :
Which was't who knows ? Ask him that knew them well
By long enjoyment. If he thus be prest,
He'll pause, then answer : truly both were best :
Were't in my choice that either of the twain
Might be returned to me to enjoy again,
Which should I choose ? Well, since I know not whether,
I'll mourn for the loss of both, but wish for neither.
Yet here's my comfort, herein lies my hope,
The time a coming cabinets shall ope
Which are lockt fast : then shall I see
My jewels to my joy, my jewels me.

Or one more, as follows : 'In memory of Rebecca Leyborne, interred at the foot of this pillar, born June the 4th, 1698, deceased February 18, 1756. A wife more than twenty-three years to Robert Leyborne, D.D., who never saw her once ruffled with anger, or heard her utter even a peevish word ; whether pained or injured the same good woman : in whose mouth, as in whose character, was no contradiction : Resigned, gentle, courteous, affable ; without passion, though not without sense, she took offence as little as she gave it : she never was or made an enemy ; to servants mild ; to relations kind ; to the poor a friend ; to the stranger hospitable ; always caring how to please her husband, yet was her attention to the one thing needful. How few will be able to equal what all should endeavour to imitate.' But we

cannot better close the subject of married life than by quoting two epitaphs, one on a gentleman, and the other on a lady, who had never enjoyed that felicity. The first says:—

'Tis true I led a single life,
And nare was married in my life;
For of that seek I nare had none:
It is the Lord, His Will be done.

The other on a maiden lady who died at the age of seventy, and is thus commemorated:—

VIRGINITY was had in estimation,
And wont to be observed with veneration:
ABOVE, 'tis still so, single life is fed,
None may marry, nor are married,
But live angelic lives: and VIRGINS crowned
All with their coronets the LAMB surround.
This maiden LANDLADY hath one obtained,
Who tho' much sought in marrying still refrained,
And now the inheritance undefiled has gained.

Mark here how the old maid's pride wished it to be distinctly understood that the reason of her having lived and died in single blessedness was certainly not from want of offers!

We have already referred to the large families of many of the departed, but one other noticeable feature is the extreme longevity of many, as recorded in their epitaphs. Thus, Thomas Parr, who was buried in Westminster Abbey in 1635, is thus described: 'The Old, Old, very Old Man, Thomas Parr, was born at the Glyn, within This Chapelry of Great Willaston, and Parish of Alberbury, in the County of Salop, In the year of our Lord 1483. He lived in the Reigns of Ten Kings and Queens of England (viz.) K. Edw. 4, K. Edwd. 5, K. Rich. 3, K. Hen. 7th, K. Hen. 8th, K. Edw. 6, Q. Mary, Q. Eliz., K. James 1st, and K. Charles 1st; died the 13 and was buried in Westminster Abbey on the 15th of November 1635, aged 152 years and 9 months.' Or, again, Stephen Rumbold, who

Lived to the age of an hundred and one, sanguine and strong,
An hundred to one you don't live so long.

Several others are recorded as having lived over the century, but whether it is that the race is degenerating, or that this sceptical age insists on facts and statistics from the register of births, and so minimises the chance of any exaggeration—however it is—a modern centenarian is a most unusual if not almost an unknown phenomenon.

As may be supposed from the variety of minds, and the composite character of the population of these islands of ours, the form of epitaphs and their literary style have greatly varied and at times have assumed peculiar and fantastic forms. The earliest of these peculiarities, viz., contraction, shows itself when the English language first comes into use for such inscriptions, and of which one example will suffice:—

Lo al y^t eu' I spēt y^t sū tūne had I
 Al y^t I gaf ī g^od ētēt y^t n^ow haue I
 Y^t I neyiu' gaf ne lēt y^t now abie I
 Y^t I kepe til I wēt y^t lost I.¹

The next period when strange forms occur is the Elizabethan, when the old paths in religion and commerce were being left behind, and the strong spirit of the English people was forcing its way into new lands, and into fresh realms of thought. Of these fresh departures in the literature of the churchyard, we shall just glance at a few.

1. *The Paradox*.—This form, which had its origin at the time just mentioned, has continued in use down even to the present day. The strange contrasts which it presents attract the attention, and cause the thoughts to pass suddenly from one aspect in which the death under notice may be contemplated to another exactly the opposite. And it may be truly said that this is but a natural transition, arising from the surroundings, when we contrast man's bodily frame in the full flush of health and vigour, with the same frame cold in death, and given over to corruption, or the soul of man cribbed, cabined, and confined in its fleshly investiture, and subject to griefs and trials, with the same spirit abiding in a glorious immortality with Him in Whose presence there is fulness of joy. Here is one dated 1611, in memory of Mrs. Ann Gibson, erected by her sorrowing husband:—

What is she dead? doth he survive?
 No, both are dead, and both alive.
 She lives, he's dead, by love, through grieving:
 In him, for her, yet dead, yet living.
 Both dead and living? then what is gone?
 One half of both, not any one.
 One mind, one faith, one hope, one grave
 In life, in death, they had, and still they have.

¹ Lo, all that ever I spent, that sometimes had I;
 All that I gave in good intent, that now have I;
 What I never gave nor lent, that now suffer I;
 That I kept till I went, that lost I.

2. *The Dialogue*.—On some of the tombstones of this period the inscriptions take the form of a dialogue, setting forth reasons and answers why the departed one ought to have lived, or if he must needs have died, discussing as to whom the dual parts of his nature should be given over. Thus, on Sir James Pemberton:—

Virtue and Death being both enamoured,
On worthy Pemberton in heat of love,
To be possessed of what each coveted,
Thus did they dialogue, and thus they strove.

And then follow about two dozen lines in metre, as if spoken by the disputants alternately, with the first and third lines rhyming, and ending up with the solution arrived at:—

And so they ceased. *Death* triumphs o'er his grave,
Virtue o'er that which *Death* can never have.

3. The third noticeable peculiarity we may not inappropriately term *fantastic conceits*. The troublous times of the Civil War, the triumph of the Puritans, and the subsequent Restoration, are specially full of these strange and fantastic vagaries. Let two examples suffice. A disconsolate husband speaks thus to the reader: 'Put off thy shoes, thou treadst on Holy earth, where lies the rarest Phoenix' (*i.e.*, his wife); and then he addresses her dear departed shade as follows:—

Blest Saint! once mine equal: O might I now adore thee,
My Bliss, my Love, that thou art gone before me.
O let thy cinders warm that bed of dust for me
(Thy mournful husband) till I come by thee.

Here is another, short and to the point, in the form of an acknowledgment from our mother earth: 'Received of PHILIP HARDING his borrowed earth July 4th, 1673.'

4. *Anagrams, Acrostics, Rebuses, and Puzzles*.—We are accustomed to these names at the end of some of our weekly papers and periodicals, where the editor tries to while away the tedium of an evening round a cosy fire, by providing a means of pleasurable research to his readers, but we rarely associate them with the cold desolation and pensive melancholy of the churchyard. But so it is that in this strange unsettled seventeenth century we find them in large numbers and in great and puzzling variety. An anagram, according to the dictionary definition, is 'a transposition of the letters of a word or sentence to form a new word or sentence.' Thus, the transposition of the letters of the name, Marya Arundell,

makes up the words 'Man a dry laurel,' which leads the writer of her epitaph to moralise as follows :—

Man to the marigold compar'd may bee,
 Men may be liken'd to the laurell tree ;
 Both feede the eye—both please the optic sense ;
 Both soon decaye—both suddenly fleete hence.
 What then infer you from her name but this ?—
 Man fades away—Man a dry Laurell is.

In like manner, Mistress Cicely Puckering has for an anagram :—

I sleep secure : Christ's my King ;

with the lines beneath :—

Death's terrors nought affright me, nor his sting :
 I sleep secure, for Christ's my sovereign King.

That 'reverend, religious, and learned preacher' (as his epitaph calls him), Daniel Evance, has for his anagram, 'I can deal even' ; and several, when they cannot get a suitable transposition into English, make up a Latin anagram from an English name.

An acrostic is another fanciful form, whereby the initial letters of the deceased's name are written downwards, and each one made to form the first letter of the lines of his epitaph.

Another variety is what is known as a rebus, being an emblematical representation of words and syllables by means of pictures. Thus at the top of a tombstone in Norfolk there are represented, inclosed in three sets of angels' wings, an hour-glass, a pearl, and an eye, with a rhyming inscription beneath, commencing,—

Lo, Time—Pearl—Ey, a Rebus, which to thee
 Speaks what I whilom Was, a *Timperley* !

Then we have puzzles without any key to decipher them. It is only by guesswork that we can hope to arrive at the true interpretation of such a one as the following, on a doctor who died at the patriarchal age of one hundred and twenty-five :—

Here lies Dr. Ward, whom you knew well before ;
 He was kind to his neighbours, good to the poor.

1	2	3	4	5	6
To God,	to Prince,	Wife,	Kindred,	Friend,	the poor,
1	2	3	4	5	6
Religious,	Loyal,	True,	Kind,	Stedfast,	Dear,
1	2	3	4	5	6
In Zeal,	Faith,	Love,	Blood,	Amity,	and Store,
He hath see liv'd, and see deceas'd lyes here.					

One grotesque variety is inscribed in the form of a parallelogram, with the inscription in Latin round the borders, and some of it so placed that the passer-by would require to stand on his head to read it.

A very common form of monumental hilarity is produced by playing upon the name of the deceased when such lends itself to the occasion.

Here is one on a Devonshire clergyman, of the name of William Mason, who died in 1639, at the early age of twenty-eight:—

MASON, how is't that thou so soon art gone
 Home from thy work? What, was the fault i' th' stone,
 Or did thy hammer fail, or didst suspect
 Thy Master's wages would thy work neglect?
 Christ was thy CORNER STONE, Christians the rest,
 Hammer the Word, GOOD LIFE thy line all blest.
 And yet art gone, 'twas honour not thy crime
 With stone hearts to work much in little time:
 Thy Master saw 't, and took thee off from them
 To the bright stones of NEW JERUSALEM.
 Thy work and labour men esteem a base one;
 God counts it blest. Here lies a blest FREE MASON.

It will be observed that these, although they are made up by a play upon words, are not intentionally ludicrous as are so many, especially in the rural districts of England. The Scotch, being by nature a graver and more demure people, look upon death, as a rule, in its more awful aspect, and rarely indulge in those pleasantries, if they are really intended as such, of which a few examples will now be given:—

To the memory of Ric: Richards, who by Gangrene lost first a toe, afterwards a leg, and lastly his Life on the 7th day of April, 1656.

Ah! cruell Death to make three meals of one,
 To taste and taste till all was gone.
 But know, thou Tyrant, when the trumpe shall call,
He'll find his feet, and stand when thou shalt fall.

What would our teetotal and Good Templar friends say to the following, in view of the assertion, so frequently put forth by them, that drinking has the tendency to shorten human life?—

Here old John Randall lies, who counting from his tale
 Lived three score years and ten, such virtue was in ale.
 Ale was his meat, ale was his drink,
 Ale did his heart revive,
 And if he could have drunk his ale
 He still had been alive: But he died January five,
 1699.

Here's another short one from Ockham, in Surrey, the name of the departed one not being given ; but, from his tombstone, he thus declares his sad end :—

The Lord saw good, I was lopping off wood,
And down fell from the tree,
I met with a check, and I broke my neck,
And so Death lopped off me.

These may be multiplied indefinitely—but to what good end ? as they only tend to show either that the survivors had little sense of the loss they had sustained, or did not realise the momentous issues involved in the passing of an immortal soul into the regions of the unseen. But, while levity is objectionable, there is also another form of epitaph which, although probably not intended to be facetious, is also objectionable from its strange medley, in recording too many characteristics of the deceased, the effect of which is to convey to the mind of the reader a sense of the ludicrous, when these various qualities of excellence are placed on the one tombstone in close juxtaposition to one another. Thus a Mr. Philips is described as one 'whose absolute contempt of riches, and inimitable performances on the violin, made him the admiration of all that knew him ; he was born in Wales, made the Tour of Europe, and after the experience of both kinds of fortune died in the year 1732.'

THE PIPE.

I.

‘ Randolph Crescent, N.W.

‘ My dear Pugh,—I hope you will like the pipe which I send with this. It is rather a curious example of a certain school of Indian carving. And is a present from

‘ Yours truly, JOSEPH TRESS.’

It was really very handsome of Tress—very handsome! The more especially as I was aware that to give presents was not exactly in Tress’s line. The truth is that when I saw what manner of pipe it was I was amazed. It was contained in a sandalwood box, which was itself illustrated with some remarkable specimens of carving. I use the word ‘remarkable’ advisedly, because although the workmanship was undoubtedly, in its way, artistic, the result could not be described as beautiful. The carver had thought proper to ornament the box with some of the ugliest figures I remember to have seen. They appeared to me to be devils. Or perhaps, they were intended to represent deities appertaining to some mythological system with which, thank goodness, I am unacquainted. The pipe itself was worthy of the case in which it was contained. It was of meerschaum, with an amber mouthpiece. It was rather too large for ordinary smoking. But then, of course, one doesn’t smoke a pipe like that. There are pipes in my collection which I should as soon think of smoking as I should of eating. Ask a china maniac to let you have afternoon tea out of his Old Chelsea, and you will learn some home truths as to the durability of human friendships. The glory of the pipe, as Tress had suggested, lay in its carving. Not that I claim that it was beautiful, any more than I make such a claim for the carving on the box, but, as Tress said in his note; it was curious.

The stem and the bowl were quite plain, but on the edge of the bowl was perched some kind of lizard. I told myself it was an octopus when I first saw it, but I have since had reason to believe that it was some almost unique member of the lizard tribe. The creature was represented as climbing over the edge

of the bowl down towards the stem, and its legs, or feelers, or tentacula, or whatever the things are called, were, if I may use a vulgarism, sprawling about 'all over the place.' For instance, two or three of them were twined about the bowl, two or three of them were twisted round the stem, and one, a particularly horrible one, was uplifted in the air, so that if you put the pipe in your mouth the thing was pointing straight at your nose.

Not the least agreeable feature about the creature was that it was hideously lifelike. It appeared to have been carved in amber, but some colouring matter must have been introduced, for inside the amber the creature was of a peculiarly ghastly green. The more I examined the pipe the more amazed I was at Tress's generosity. He and I are rival collectors. I am not going to say, in so many words, that his collection of pipes contains nothing but rubbish, because, as a matter of fact, he has two or three rather decent specimens. But to compare his collection to mine would be absurd. Tress is conscious of this, and he resents it. He resents it to such an extent that he has been known at least on one occasion to declare that one single pipe of his—I believe he alluded to the Brummagem relic preposterously attributed to Sir Walter Raleigh—was worth the whole of my collection put together. Although I have forgiven this, as I hope I always shall forgive remarks made when envious passions get the better of our nobler nature, even of a Joseph Tress, it is not to be supposed that I have forgotten it. He was, therefore, not at all the sort of person from whom I expected to receive a present. And such a present! I do not believe that he himself had a finer pipe in his collection. And to have given it me! I had misjudged the man. I wondered where he had got it from. I had seen his pipes; I knew them off by heart—and some nice trumpery he has among them, too!—but I had never seen *that* pipe before. The more I looked at it, the more my amazement grew. The beast perched upon the edge of the bowl was so like life. Its two bead-like eyes seemed to gleam at me with positively human intelligence. The pipe fascinated me to such an extent that I actually resolved to—smoke it!

I filled it with Perique. Ordinarily I use Birdseye, but on those very rare occasions on which I use a specimen I smoke Perique. I lit up with quite a small sensation of excitement. As I did so I kept my eyes perforce fixed upon the beast. The beast pointed its upraised tentacle directly at me. As I inhaled

the pungent tobacco that tentacle impressed me with a feeling of actual uncanniness. It was broad daylight, and I was smoking in front of the window, yet to such an extent was I affected that it seemed to me that the tentacle was not only vibrating, which, owing to the peculiarity of its position, was quite within the range of probability, but actually moving, elongating—stretching forward, that is, further towards me, and towards the tip of my nose. So impressed was I by this idea that I took the pipe out of my mouth, and minutely examined the beast. Really, the delusion was excusable. So cunningly had the artist wrought that he had succeeded in producing a creature which, such was its uncanniness, I could only hope had no original in nature.

Replacing the pipe between my lips I took several whiffs. Never had smoking had such an effect on me before. Either the pipe, or the creature on it, exercised some singular fascination. I seemed, without an instant's warning, to be passing into some land of dreams. I saw the beast, which was perched upon the bowl, writhe and twist. I saw it lift itself bodily from the meer-schaum. . . .

II.

‘Feeling better now?’

I looked up. Joseph Tress was speaking.

‘What’s the matter? Have I been ill?’

‘You appear to have been in some kind of swoon.’

Tress’ tone was peculiar, even a little dry.

‘Swoon! I never was guilty of such a thing in my life.’

‘Nor was I, until I smoked that pipe.’

I sat up. The act of sitting up made me conscious of the fact that I had been lying down. Conscious, too, that I was feeling more than a little dazed. It seemed as though I was waking out of some strange, lethargic sleep—a kind of feeling which I have read of and heard about, but never before experienced.

‘Where am I?’

‘You’re on the couch in your own room. You *were* on the floor; but I thought it would be better to pick you up and place you on the couch—though no one performed the same kind office to me when I was on the floor.’

Again Tress’s tone was distinctly dry.

‘How came *you* here?’

‘Ah, that’s the question.’ He rubbed his chin—a habit of his which has annoyed me more than once before. ‘Do you think you’re sufficiently recovered to enable you to understand a little simple explanation?’ I stared at him, amazed. He went on stroking his chin. ‘The truth is that when I sent you the pipe I made a slight omission.’

‘An omission?’

‘I omitted to advise you not to smoke it.’

‘And why?’

‘Because—well, I’ve reason to believe the thing is drugged.’

‘Drugged!’

‘Or poisoned.’

‘Poisoned!’ I was wide awake enough then. I jumped off the couch with a celerity which proved it.

‘It is this way. I became its owner in rather a singular manner.’ He paused, as if for me to make a remark; but I was silent. ‘It is not often that I smoke a specimen, but, for some reason, I did smoke this. I commenced to smoke it, that is. How long I continued to smoke it is more than I can say. It had on me the same peculiar effect which it appears to have had on you. When I recovered consciousness I was lying on the floor.’

‘On the floor?’

‘On the floor. In about as uncomfortable position as you can easily conceive. I was lying face downwards, with my legs bent under me. I was never so surprised in my life as I was when I found myself *where* I was. At first I supposed that I had had a stroke. But by degrees it dawned upon me that I didn’t *feel* as though I had had a stroke.’ Tress, by the way, has been an army surgeon. ‘I was conscious of distinct nausea. Looking about, I saw the pipe. With me it had fallen on to the floor. I took it for granted, considering the delicacy of the carving, that the fall had broken it. But when I picked it up I found it quite uninjured. While I was examining it a thought flashed to my brain. Might it not be answerable for what had happened to me? Suppose, for instance, it was drugged? I had heard of such things. Besides, in my case were present all the symptoms of drug-poisoning, though what drug had been used I couldn’t in the least conceive. I resolved that I would give the pipe another trial.’

‘On yourself? Or on another party, meaning me?’

‘On myself, my dear Pugh—on myself! At that point of my investigations I had not begun to think of you. I lit up and had another smoke.’

‘With what result?’

‘Well, that depends on the standpoint from which you regard the thing. From one point of view the result was wholly satisfactory—I proved that the thing was drugged, and more.’

‘Did you have another fall?’

‘I did. And something else besides.’

‘On that account, I presume, you resolved to pass the treasure on to me?’

‘Partly on that account, and partly on another.’

‘On my word, I appreciate your generosity. You might have labelled the thing as poison.’

‘Exactly. But then you must remember how often you have told me that you *never* smoke your specimens.’

‘That was no reason why you shouldn’t have given me a hint that the thing was more dangerous than dynamite.’

‘That did occur to me afterwards. Therefore I called to supply the slight omission.’

‘*Slight* omission, you call it! I wonder what you would have called it if you had found me dead.’

‘If I had known that you *intended* smoking it I should not have been at all surprised if I had.’

‘Really, Tress, I appreciate your kindness more and more! And where is this example of your splendid benevolence? Have you pocketed it, regretting your lapse into the unaccustomed paths of generosity? Or is it smashed to atoms?’

‘Neither the one nor the other. You will find the pipe upon the table. I neither desire its restoration nor is it in any way injured. It is merely an expression of personal opinion when I say that I don’t believe that it *could* be injured. Of course, having discovered its deleterious properties, you will not want to smoke it again. You will therefore be able to enjoy the consciousness of being the possessor of what I honestly believe to be the most remarkable pipe in existence. Good-day, Pugh.’

He was gone before I could say a word. I immediately concluded, from the precipitancy of his flight, that the pipe *was* injured. But when I subjected it to close examination I could discover no signs of damage. While I was still eyeing it with jealous scrutiny the door reopened, and Tress came in again.

‘By the way, Pugh, there is one thing I might mention, especially as I know it won’t make any difference to you.’

‘That depends on what it is. If you have changed your mind, and want the pipe back again, I tell you frankly that it won’t. In my opinion, a thing once given is given for good.’

‘Quite so; I don’t want it back again. You may make your mind easy upon that point. I merely wanted to tell you *why* I gave it you.’

‘You have told me that already.’

‘Only partly, my dear Pugh—only partly. You don’t suppose I should have given you such a pipe as that merely because it happened to be drugged? Scarcely! I gave it you because I discovered from indisputable evidence, and to my cost, that it was haunted.’

‘Haunted?’

‘Yes, haunted. Good-day.’

He was gone again. I ran out of the room, and shouted after him down the stairs. He was already at the bottom of the flight.

‘Tress! Come back! What do you mean by talking such nonsense?’

‘Of course it’s only nonsense. We know that that sort of thing always is nonsense. But if you should have reason to suppose that there is something in it besides nonsense, you may think it worth your while to make inquiries of me. But I won’t have that pipe back again in my possession on any terms—mind that!’

The bang of the front door told me that he had gone out into the street. I let him go. I laughed to myself as I re-entered the room. Haunted! That was not a bad idea of his. I saw the whole position at a glance. The truth of the matter was that he did regret his generosity, and he was ready to go any lengths if he could only succeed in cajoling me into restoring his gift. He was aware that I have views upon certain matters which are not wholly in accordance with those which are popularly supposed to be the views of the day, and particularly that on the question of what are commonly called supernatural visitations I have a standpoint of my own. Therefore it was not a bad move on his part to try to make me believe that about the pipe on which he knew I had set my heart there was something which could not be accounted for by ordinary laws. Yet, as his own sense would have told him it would do, if he had only allowed himself to

reflect for a moment, the move failed. Because I am not yet so far gone as to suppose that a pipe, a thing of meerschaum and of amber, in the sense in which I understand the word, *could* be haunted—a pipe, a mere pipe.

‘Hollo! I thought the creature’s legs were twined right round the bowl!’

I was holding the pipe in my hand, regarding it with the affectionate eyes with which a connoisseur does regard a curio, when I was induced to make this exclamation. I was certainly under the impression that, when I first took the pipe out of the box, two, if not three, of the feelers had been twined about the bowl—twined *tightly*, so that you could not see daylight between them and it. Now they were almost entirely detached, only the tips touching the meerschaum, and those particular feelers were gathered up as though the creature were in the act of taking a spring. Of course I was under a misapprehension: the feelers *couldn’t* have been twined, though, a moment before, I should have been ready to bet a thousand to one that they were. Still, one does make mistakes, and very egregious mistakes, at times. At the same time, I confess that when I saw that dreadful-looking animal poised on the extreme edge of the bowl, for all the world as though it were just going to spring at me, I was a little startled. I remembered that when I was smoking the pipe I did think I saw the uplifted tentacle moving, as though it were reaching out at me. And I had a clear recollection that just as I had been sinking into that strange state of unconsciousness, I had been under the impression that the creature was writhing and twisting as though it had suddenly become instinct with life. Under the circumstances, these reflections were not pleasant. I wished Tress had not talked that nonsense about the thing being haunted. It was surely sufficient to know that it was drugged and poisonous, without anything else.

I replaced it in the sandalwood box. I locked the box in a cabinet. Quite apart from the question as to whether that pipe was or was not haunted, I know it haunted me. It was with me, in a figurative—which was worse than an actual—sense, all the day. Still worse, it was with me all the night. It was with me in my dreams. Such dreams! Possibly I had not yet wholly recovered from the effects of that insidious drug, but, whether or no, it was very wrong of Tress to set my thoughts into such a channel. He knows that I am of a highly imaginative temperament, and that

it is easier to get morbid thoughts into my mind than to get them out again. Before that night was through I wished very heartily that I had never seen the pipe! I woke from one nightmare to fall into another. One dreadful dream was with me all the time—of a hideous, green reptile which advanced towards me out of some awful darkness, slowly, inch by inch, until it clutched me round the neck, and, gluing its lips to mine, sucked the life's blood out of my veins as it embraced me with a slimy hiss. Such dreams are not restful. I woke anything but refreshed when the morning came. And when I got up and dressed I felt that, on the whole, it would perhaps have been better if I never had gone to bed. My nerves were unstrung, and I had that generally tremulous feeling which is, I believe, an inseparable companion of the more advanced stages of dipsomania. I ate no breakfast. I am no breakfast-eater as a rule, but that morning I ate absolutely nothing.

'If this sort of thing is to continue, I will let Tress have his pipe again. He may have the laugh of me, but anything is better than this.'

It was with almost funereal forebodings that I went to the cabinet in which I had placed the sandalwood box. But when I opened it my feelings of gloom partially vanished. Of what phantasies had I been guilty! It must have been an entire delusion on my part to have supposed that those tentacula had ever been twined about the bowl. The creature was in exactly the same position in which I had left it the day before—as, of course, I knew it would be!—poised, as if about to spring. I was telling myself how foolish I had been to allow myself to dwell for a moment on Tress' words, when Martin Brasher was shown in.

Brasher is an old friend of mine. We have a common ground—ghosts. Only we approach them from different points of view. He takes the scientific—psychological—inquiry side. He is always anxious to hear of a ghost, so that he may have an opportunity of 'showing it up.'

'I've something in your line here,' I observed, as he came in.

'In my line? How so? *I'm* not pipe mad.'

'No, but you're ghost mad. And this is a haunted pipe.'

'A haunted pipe! I think you're rather more mad about ghosts, my dear Pugh, than I am.'

Then I told him all about it. He was deeply interested,

especially when I told him that the pipe was drugged. But when I repeated Tress's words about its being haunted, and mentioned my own delusion about the creature moving, he took a more serious view of the case than I had expected he would do.

'I propose that we act on Tress's suggestion, and go and make inquiries of him.'

'But you don't really think that there is anything in it?'

'On these subjects I never allow myself to think at all. There are Tress's words, and there is your story. It is agreed on all hands that the pipe has peculiar properties. It seems to me that there is a sufficient case here to merit inquiry.'

He persuaded me. I went with him. The pipe, in the sandalwood box, went too. Tress received us with a grin—a grin which was accentuated when I placed the sandalwood box upon the table.

'You understand,' he said, 'that a gift is a gift. On no terms will I consent to receive that pipe back in my possession.'

I was rather nettled by his tone.

'You need be under no alarm. I have no intention of suggesting anything of the kind.'

'Our business here,' began Brasher—I must own that his manner is a little ponderous—'is of a scientific, I may say also, and at the same time, of a judicial nature. Our object is the Pursuit of Truth and the Advancement of Inquiry.'

'Have you been trying another smoke?' inquired Tress, nodding his head towards me.

Before I had time to answer, Brasher went droning on:—

'Our friend here tells me that you say this pipe is haunted.'

'I say it is haunted because it is haunted.'

I looked at Tress. I half suspected that he was poking fun at us. But he appeared to be serious enough.

'In these matters,' remarked Brasher, as though he were giving utterance to a new and important truth, 'there is a scientific and a non-scientific method of inquiry. The scientific method is to begin at the beginning. May I ask how this pipe came into your possession?'

Tress paused before he answered.

'You may ask.' He paused again. 'Oh, you certainly may ask. But it doesn't follow that I shall tell you.'

'Surely your object, like ours, can be but the Spreading About of the Truth?'

‘I don’t see it at all. It is possible to imagine a case in which the spreading about of the truth might make me look a little awkward.’

‘Indeed!’ Brasher pursed up his lips. ‘Your words would almost lead one to suppose that there was something about your method of acquiring the pipe which you have good and weighty reasons for concealing.’

‘I don’t know why I should conceal the thing from you. I don’t suppose either of you is any better than I am. I don’t mind telling you how I got the pipe. I stole it.’

‘Stole it!’

Brasher seemed both amazed and shocked. But I, who had had previous experience of Tress’s methods of adding to his collection, was not at all surprised. Some of the pipes which he calls his, if only the whole truth about them were publicly known, would send him to gaol.

‘That’s nothing!’ he continued. ‘All collectors steal! The eighth commandment was not intended to apply to them. Why, Pugh there has “conveyed” three-fourths of the pipes which he flatters himself are his.’

I was so dumbfounded by the charge that it took my breath away. I sat in astounded silence. Tress went raving on:—

‘I was so shy of this particular pipe when I had obtained it, that I put it away for quite three months. When I took it out to have a look at it something about the thing so tickled me that I resolved to smoke it. Owing to peculiar circumstances attending the manner in which the thing came into my possession, and on which I need not dwell—you don’t like to dwell on those sort of things, do you, Pugh?—I knew really nothing about the pipe. As was the case with Pugh, one peculiarity I learned from actual experience. It was also from actual experience that I learned that the thing was—well, I said haunted, but you may use any other word you like.’

‘Tell us, as briefly as possible, what it was you really did discover.’

‘Take the pipe out of the box!’ Brasher took the pipe out of the box, and held it in his hand. ‘You see that creature on it. Well, when I first had it it was underneath the pipe.’

‘How do you mean that it was underneath the pipe?’

‘It was bunched together underneath the stem, just at the end of the mouthpiece, in the same way in which a fly might be

suspended from the ceiling. When I began to smoke the pipe I saw the creature move.'

'But I thought that unconsciousness immediately followed.'

'It did follow, but not before I saw that the thing was moving. It was because I thought that I had been, in a way, a victim of delirium that I tried the second smoke. Suspecting that the thing was drugged I swallowed what I believed would prove a powerful antidote. It enabled me to resist the influence of the narcotic much longer than before, and while I still retained my senses I saw the creature crawl along under the stem, and over the bowl. It was that sight, I believe, as much as anything else, which sent me silly. When I came to again I then and there decided to present the pipe to Pugh. There is one more thing I would remark. When the pipe left me the creature's legs were twined about the bowl. Now they are withdrawn. Possibly you, Pugh, are able to cap my story with a little one which is all your own.'

'I certainly did imagine that I saw the creature move. But I supposed that while I was under the influence of the drug imagination had played me a trick.'

'Not a bit of it! Depend upon it, the beast is bewitched. Even to my eye it looks as though it were, and to a trained eye like yours, Pugh! You've been looking for the devil a long time, and you've got him at last.'

'I—I wish you wouldn't make those remarks, Tress. They jar on me.'

'I confess,' interpolated Brasher—I noticed that he had put the pipe down on the table as though he were tired of holding it—'that, to *my* thinking, such remarks are not appropriate. At the same time, what you have told us is, I am bound to allow, a little curious. But of course what I require is ocular demonstration. I haven't seen the movement myself.'

'No, but you very soon will do if you care to have a pull at the pipe on your own account. Do, Brasher, to oblige me! There's a dear!'

'It appears, then, that the movement is only observable when the pipe is smoked. We have at least arrived at step No. 1.'

'Here's a match, Brasher! Light up, and we shall have arrived at step No. 2.'

Tress lit a match, and held it out to Brasher. Brasher retreated from his neighbourhood.

‘Thank you, Mr. Tress, I am no smoker, as you are aware. And I have no desire to acquire the art of smoking by means of a poisoned pipe.’

Tress laughed. He blew out the match and threw it into the grate.

‘Then I tell you what I’ll do—I’ll have up Bob.’

‘Bob? Why Bob?’

‘Bob’—whose real name was Robert Haines, though I should think he must have forgotten the fact, so seldom was he addressed by it—was Tress’s servant. He had been an old soldier, and had accompanied his master when he left the service. He was as depraved a character as Tress himself. I am not sure even that he was not worse than his master. I shall never forget how he once behaved towards myself. He actually had the assurance to accuse me of attempting to steal the Wardour Street relic which Tress fondly deludes himself was once the property of Sir Walter Raleigh. The truth is that I had slipped it with my pocket-handkerchief into my pocket in a fit of absence of mind. A man who could accuse *me* of such a thing would be guilty of anything. I was therefore quite at one with Brasher when he asked what Bob could possibly be wanted for. Tress explained.

‘I’ll get him to smoke the pipe,’ he said.

Brasher and I exchanged glances, but we refrained from speech.

‘It won’t do him any harm,’ said Tress.

‘What—not a poisoned pipe?’ asked Brasher.

‘It’s not poisoned—it’s only drugged.’

‘*Only* drugged!’

‘Nothing hurts Bob. He is like an ostrich. He has digestive organs which are peculiarly his own. It will only serve him as it served me—and Pugh—it will knock him over. It is all done in the Pursuit of Truth and for the Advancement of Inquiry.’

I could see that Brasher did not altogether like the tone in which Tress repeated his words. As for me, it was not to be supposed that I should put myself out in a matter which in no way concerned me. If Tress chose to poison the man, it was his affair, not mine. He went to the door, and shouted:—

‘Bob! Come here, you scoundrel!’

That is the way in which he speaks to him. No really decent servant would stand it. I shouldn’t dare to address Nalder, my servant, in such a way. He would give me notice on the spot.

Bob came in. He is a great hulking fellow who is always on the grin. Tress had a decanter of brandy in his hand. He filled a tumbler with the neat spirit.

‘Bob, what would you say to a glassful of brandy—the real thing—my boy?’

‘Thank you, sir.’

‘And what would you say to a pull at a pipe when the brandy is drunk!’

‘A pipe?’ The fellow is sharp enough when he likes. I saw him look at the pipe upon the table, and then at us, and then a gleam of intelligence came into his eyes. ‘I’d do it for a dollar, sir.’

‘A dollar, you thief?’

‘I meant ten shillings, sir.’

‘Ten shillings, you brazen vagabond?’

‘I should have said a pound.’

‘A pound! Was ever the like of that! Do I understand you to ask a pound for taking a pull at your master’s pipe?’

‘I’m thinking that I’ll have to make it two.’

‘The deuce you are! Here, Pugh, lend me a pound.’

‘I’m afraid I’ve left my purse behind.’

‘Then lend me ten shillings—Ananias!’

‘I doubt if I have more than five.’

‘Then give me the five. And, Brasher, lend me the other fifteen.’

Brasher lent him the fifteen. I doubt if we shall either of us ever see our money again. He handed the pound to Bob.

‘Here’s the brandy—drink it up!’ Bob drank it without a word, draining the glass of every drop. ‘And here’s the pipe.’

‘Is it poisoned, sir?’

‘Poisoned, you villain! What do you mean?’

‘It isn’t the first time I’ve seen your tricks, sir—is it now? And you’re not the one to give a pound for nothing at all. If it kills me you’ll send my body to my mother—she’d like to know that I was dead.’

‘Send your body to your grandmother! You idiot, sit down and smoke!’

Bob sat down. Tress had filled the pipe, and handed it, with a lighted match, to Bob. The fellow declined the match. He handled the pipe very gingerly, turning it over and over, eyeing it with all his eyes.

‘Thank you, sir—I’ll light up myself if it’s the same to you. I carry matches of my own. It’s a beautiful pipe, entirely. I never see the like of it for ugliness. And what’s the slimy-looking varmint that looks as though it would like to have my life? Is it living, or is it dead?’

‘Come, we don’t want to sit here all day, my man!’

‘Well, sir, the look of this here pipe has quite upset my stomach. I’d like another drop of liquor, if it’s the same to you.’

‘Another drop! Why, you’ve had a tumblerful already! Here’s another tumblerful to put on top of that. You won’t want the pipe to kill you—you’ll be killed before you get to it.’

‘And isn’t it better to die a natural death?’

Bob emptied the second tumbler of brandy as though it were water. I believe he would empty a hogshead without turning a hair! Then he gave another look at the pipe. Then, taking a match from his waistcoat-pocket, he drew a long breath, as though he were resigning himself to fate. Striking the match on the seat of his trousers, while, shaded by his hand, the flame was gathering strength, he looked at each one of us in turn. When he looked at Tress I distinctly saw him wink his eye. What my feelings would have been if a servant of mine had winked his eye at me I am unable to imagine! The match was applied to the tobacco, a puff of smoke came through his lips—the pipe was alight!

During this process of lighting the pipe we had sat—I do not wish to use exaggerated language, but we had sat and watched that alcoholic scamp’s proceedings as though we were witnessing an action which would leave its mark upon the age. When we saw that the pipe was lighted we gave a simultaneous start. Brasher put his hands under his coat-tails and gave a kind of hop. I raised myself a good six inches from my chair, and Tress rubbed his palms together with a chuckle. Bob alone was calm.

‘Now,’ cried Tress, ‘you’ll see the devil moving.’

Bob took the pipe from between his lips.

‘See what?’ he said.

‘Bob, you rascal, put that pipe back into your mouth, and smoke it for your life!’

Bob was eyeing the pipe askance.

‘I dare say, but what I want to know is whether this here varmint’s dead or whether he isn’t. I don’t want to have him flying at my nose—and he looks vicious enough for anything.’

‘Give me back that pound, you thief, and get out of my house, and bundle.’

‘I ain’t going to give you back no pound.’

‘Then smoke that pipe!’

‘I am smoking it, ain’t I?’

With the utmost deliberation Bob returned the pipe to his mouth. He emitted another whiff or two of smoke.

‘Now—now!’ cried Tress, all excitement, and wagging his hand in the air.

We gathered round. As we did so Bob again withdrew the pipe.

‘What is the meaning of all this here? I ain’t going to have you playing none of your larks on me. I know there’s something up, but I ain’t going to throw my life away for twenty shillings—not quite I ain’t.’

Tress, whose temper is not at any time one of the best, was seized with quite a spasm of rage.

‘As I live, my lad, if you try to cheat me by taking that pipe from between your lips until I tell you, you leave this room that instant, never again to be a servant of mine.’

I presume the fellow knew from long experience when his master meant what he said, and when he didn’t. Without an attempt at remonstrance he replaced the pipe. He continued stolidly to puff away. Tress caught me by the arm.

‘What did I tell you? There—there! That tentacle is moving.’

The uplifted tentacle *was* moving. It was doing what I had seen it do, as I supposed, in my distorted imagination—it was reaching forward. Undoubtedly Bob saw what it was doing; but, whether in obedience to his master’s commands, or whether because the drug was already beginning to take effect, he made no movement to withdraw the pipe. He watched the slowly advancing tentacle, coming closer and closer towards his nose, with an expression of such intense horror on his countenance that it became quite shocking. Further and further the creature reached forward, until on a sudden, with a sort of jerk, the movement assumed a downward direction, and the tentacle was slowly lowered until the tip rested on the stem of the pipe. For a moment the creature remained motionless. I was quieting my nerves with the reflection that this thing was but some trick of the carver’s art, and that what we had seen we had seen in a

sort of nightmare, when the whole hideous reptile was seized with what seemed to be a fit of convulsive shuddering. It seemed to be in agony. It trembled so violently that I expected to see it loosen its hold of the stem and fall to the ground. I was sufficiently master of myself to steal a glance at Bob. We had had an inkling of what might happen. He was wholly unprepared. As he saw that dreadful, inhuman-looking creature, coming to life, as it seemed, within an inch or two of his nose, his eyes dilated to twice their usual size. I hoped, for his sake, that unconsciousness would supervene, through the action of the drug, before, through sheer fright, his senses left him. Perhaps mechanically, he puffed steadily on.

The creature's shuddering became more violent. It appeared to swell before our eyes. Then, just as suddenly as it began, the shuddering ceased. There was another instant of quiescence. Then—the creature began to crawl along the stem of the pipe! It moved with marvellous caution, the merest fraction of an inch at a time. But still it moved! Our eyes were riveted on it with a fascination which was absolutely nauseous. I am unpleasantly affected even as I think of it now. My dreams of the night before had been nothing to this.

Slowly, slowly, it went, nearer and nearer to the smoker's nose. Its mode of progression was in the highest degree unsightly. It glided, never, so far as I could see, removing its tentacles from the stem of the pipe. It slipped its hindmost feelers onward, until they came up to those which were in advance. Then, in their turn, it advanced those which were in front. It seemed, too, to move with the utmost labour, shuddering as though it were in pain.

We were all, for our parts, speechless. I was momentarily hoping that the drug would take effect on Bob. Either his constitution enabled him to offer a strong resistance to narcotics, or else the large quantity of neat spirit which he had drunk acted—as Tress had malevolently intended that it should do—as an antidote. It seemed to me that he would *never* succumb. On went the creature—on, and on, in its infinitesimal progression. I was spellbound. I would have given the world to scream, to have been able to utter a sound. I could do nothing else but watch.

The creature had reached the end of the stem. It had gained the amber mouthpiece. It was within an inch of the smoker's

nose. Still on it went. It seemed to move with greater freedom on the amber. It increased its rate of progress. It was actually touching the foremost feature on the smoker's countenance. I expected to see it grip the wretched Bob, when it began to oscillate from side to side. Its oscillations increased in violence. It fell to the floor. That same instant the narcotic prevailed. Bob slipped sideways from the chair, the pipe still held tightly between his rigid jaws.

We were silent. There lay Bob. Close beside him lay the creature. A few more inches to the left, and he would have fallen on and squashed it flat. It had fallen on its back. Its feelers were extended upwards. They were writhing and twisting and turning in the air.

Tress was the first to speak.

'I think a little brandy wouldn't be amiss.' Emptying the remainder of the brandy into a glass, he swallowed it at a draught. 'Now for a closer examination of our friend.' Taking a pair of tongs from the grate he nipped the creature between them. He deposited it upon the table. 'I rather fancy that this is a case for dissection.'

He took a penknife from his waistcoat-pocket. Opening the large blade, he thrust its point into the object on the table. Little or no resistance seemed to be offered to the passage of the blade, but as it was inserted, the tentacula simultaneously began to writhe and twist. Tress withdrew the knife.

'I thought so!' He held the blade out for our inspection. The point was covered with some viscid-looking matter. 'That's blood! The thing's alive!'

'Alive!'

'Alive! That's the secret of the whole performance!'

'But——'

'But me no buts, my Pugh! The mystery's exploded! One more ghost is lost to the world! The person from whom I *obtained* that pipe was an Indian juggler—up to many tricks of the trade. He, or someone for him, got hold of this sweet thing in reptiles—and a sweeter thing would, I imagine, be hard to find—and covered it with some preparation of, possibly, gum arabic. He allowed this to harden. Then he stuck the thing—still living, for those sort of gentry are hard to kill—to the pipe. The consequence was that when anyone lit up the warmth was communicated to the adhesive agent—again some preparation of

gum, no doubt—it moistened it, and the creature, with infinite difficulty, was able to move. But I am open to lay odds with any gentleman of sporting tastes that *this* time the creature's travelling days *are* done. It has given me rather a larger taste of the horrors than is good for my digestion.'

With the aid of the tongs he removed the creature from the table. He placed it on the hearth. Before Brasher or I had a notion of what it was he intended to do he covered it with a heavy marble paper-weight. Then he stood upon the weight, and between the marble and the hearth he ground the creature flat.

While the execution was still proceeding, Bob sat up upon the floor.

'Hollo!' he asked—'what's happened?'

'We've emptied the bottle, Bob,' said Tress. 'But there's another where that came from. Perhaps you could drink another tumblerful, my boy?'

Bob drank it!

BIBLICAL DRAMA IN SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE.

To those who know South Staffordshire, the word Gornal says a great deal. It conjures up a picture of irregular red-brick houses on somewhat elevated land, with a nether prospect of flaming chimneys and desolate pit-banks. The red-brick houses are tottering in parts ; their foundations have given way, and none but a very potent seer may foretell when they and their inhabitants shall of a sudden be shattered, and spilt upon the land with calamitous effect. The people are as uncommon as their dwellings and the landscape before their eyes. Of politeness, I suppose, they know a little more than they knew some years back, when they were a byword in the locality for their brutishness, their inhumanity, and their extremely coarse methods of speech. But they are still desperate Goths. I dare say in the parish divers heavy-limbed householders may yet be found to whom the bull-pup is dearer far than the sucking-child ; and the police records sufficiently testify that the fashion of wife-kicking and kindred forms of domestic crime are still held in vast respect in the place. In fact, an expert may distinguish a Gornal young man by his savage look when he is enraged, by his broad, unparliamentary language nearly always, and by the conspicuous imbecility of his countenance when his mind and body are in a state of inactivity.

It was in this unlikely mining village, four miles from the railway, that the other day I went to see the Biblical drama of 'Joseph and his Brethren' enacted in costume. I could not believe the placard when I saw it on the wall : 'The Grand Sacred Cantata,' it was called, 'to be given by the young men and other friends' of the Wesleyan Chapel ; admittance, one shilling front seats, sixpence back seats ; profits to be applied for the renovation of the chapel. The names of thirty or forty men appeared, with their sacred characters appended. For Gornal it seemed incredible. The temptation to be present was not to be resisted ; and so thither on the moonless evening, lit rather by the distant flames of the furnaces than by the stars, I made my way, in constant ascent, across a waste of abandoned mines, or mines once abandoned, and now being re-worked in a humble way by two or three associated miners. The November night was keen : more

than once I voted myself slightly insane to trouble myself about anything in Gornal.

The chapel was not easy to find; for though the road from Sedgley, an upland village with a beacon tower on its highest ridge, was a considerable thoroughfare, with a tram-line in its midst, lamps were very few, and at very long intervals. There was much mire under foot. Now and again I plunged into a pool of sludge or almost came to grief over a big stone. The wind piped icily across the watershed and wailed along the telegraph-wires. So dark was it, that collision with other pedestrians was not to be avoided. They were women as well as men; the former with shawls about their heads, and the latter with work-bags over their shoulders. The irate 'who bin yo?' from one or two of their voices, seemed to testify to the disturbed, or at least supersensitive, state of their minds.

I inquired for further directions at a minute beerhouse, a fried-fish shop, and a highly respectable haberdasher's in a small way. At the beerhouse, perhaps naturally, they took no interest in Biblical drama, and knew nothing about the performance. The keeper of the fried-fish shop held a colloquy with his wife. They were chapel-folk, and it transpired that they had had a notice of the affair given out either before or after the sermon on the Sunday night. It was the 'Methody' Connexion place of worship, a mile on. But most civil of all was the haberdasher, an aged lady with white ringlets. She knew all about it, and, to my astonishment, briskly pivoted herself over the counter like a boy in his teens, to give me more explicit aid.

Thus, at length, I was at the chapel-door, in the main street of Upper Gornal. There was now no mistaking the spot. A group of lads and lasses and demure older folk were asking for tickets from discreet men like deacons, and much general conversation was being carried on in the sweet local dialect. Instead of 'you,' a man was 'thou'; and the verb 'to be' was conjugated from a present indicative 'I' or 'thou' bin, 'thou' bist, &c., down to 'they bin'; and the monosyllable 'caw' was current for the usual dissyllable 'cannot.'

Descending some steep brick steps, I passed the barricade of 'pastor' and other deacons, and found myself in a moderate-sized, very low, whitewashed room under the chapel itself. In one corner was the heating-apparatus, furnace, &c., for the chapel; in the other, the near corner, was the stage. A piano in the midst of

a knot of damsels told of the musical interludes which the choir were to fill. The rest of the room was well packed with shock heads a-glisten with grease, Gornal maidens in assuming hats, mothers with eloquent babes whom they dared not leave untended at home, and here and there an old man who gaped unobtrusively behind his large horny hand.

The stage must be described. It was remarkable for its simplicity. The fact that it was not raised made it difficult for some of us to see anything. An arrangement of what seemed to be a clothes-line with green and white and crimson drapery, for the moment hid its mysteries from our eyes, but we could see burly shapes moving about in the restricted space behind. Never was there a less pretentious stage.

The pastor opened the proceedings with an address, in which he mentioned 'this interesting social occasion.' He was a man of the district, or his broad speech belied him. He cared nothing for aspirates and the niceties of Oxford pronunciation. Those of his flock who were in front gave him gentle and devout applause; those behind, out of his sight, began thus early the course of giggling and buffoonery which drew to a climax by the time Joseph was, in the fifth act or so, in high favour with Pharaoh. Then up went the curtain, and displayed the performers, in their Sunday black, for the singing of a hymn. *This* was the prologue.

Anon the drama began in earnest. Jacob was seen upon his knees in a black gown to his ankles, in a white wig, and a long, patriarchal white beard. Scenic effects there were none. A gas-jet hung within a yard of his head. The bare wall was behind him, and the white sheet, through which the various characters had to fight their way, bounded him upon the right hand. In this attitude, and amid these surroundings, he prayed and soliloquised for several minutes, now upraising his bearded face, and now bowing himself low towards the ground. The text he spoke was not wanting in force, if of a limited vocabulary. It was from the pen of a writer of West Bromwich, a neighbouring town—one Richard Jukes—and the copies in print showed that in the year 1884 it had reached the sixth edition. One soon knew how the rhymes would run. Such words as 'Oh! the weariness of my sorrow,' were the inevitable forerunners of a line with the word 'morrow' as an ultimate. 'Life' and 'strife,' 'joy' and 'boy,' 'death' and 'breath,' and the like, came up over and over again. Still, though restricted, the language had vigour, and Jacob did

his best with it. The curtain went down on him, as it had risen upon him—alone.

In the next act Joseph's brethren, exclusive of Benjamin, appeared, to the unmitigated interest of the audience. The stage just held them. They could not move without a previous arrangement. For costume they wore, one and all, a white gown to their shins, knotted at the waist with a scarlet cord; and on their heads were scarlet birettas, or, rather, cooks' caps. The apparition of British trousers of different colours beneath their Eastern garments had a farcical effect. To do them justice, the men kept their countenances, and maintained a sober though stilted conversation about their brother Joseph until one of them, with a melodramatic 'Behold he comes!' announced the arrival of the dreamer, in his coat of many colours. The historical garment was a triumph of patchwork—bits of velvet, silk, satin, and plush being ingeniously stitched together. How the brethren scowled at the lad! Indeed, that was the characteristic of the performers throughout. They would all have done well as stage villains of the old old school, in which the rule held of the more 'swagger and shriek,' the better. When they decided, all save Reuben, to slay their brother, they sprang upon him with a ferocity that might well have made a maiden (not a Gornal maiden) quake. But Reuben intervened with a dagger, and thus held his brothers at bay until he had shown them how impolitic the shedding of blood would be. And so at length, carefully, the coat of many colours was unbuttoned from Joseph, a rope was put about his body, and he was clumsily, and with smiles from his brethren, thrust behind the sheet. Down went the curtain upon another act.

Hitherto there had been no gross outrage of stage propriety. But in the next act it was amazing to see a youth in the common dress of Cheapside in 1890 A.D. enter to the brothers, and make a bargain with them for Joseph. He was the Ishmaelitic merchant, which was very sad. However, the transaction put an end to the original Joseph, who now came among the audience with his hair brushed up in cockatoo fashion, and who proved to be a good-looking youth, with no ribald estimate of his previous impersonation. When his contemporaries attempted to jest with him about being in the well, and the cheapness of his sale, he turned away, and left the laugh with them. The man in broadcloth ushered in another somewhat startling scene. The brethren were shown seated in a ring upon their hams, eating something indeterminate, and drink-

ing deep draughts of what had every appearance of being malt liquor from a jug of a common kind, which went freely from mouth to mouth. This excited the profane youths in the rear so enthusiastically that the pastor had to say 'hush!' once or twice. Again the curtain put an end to expectation, as a prelude to one of the most diverting of the many scenes.

We were now introduced to Pharaoh upon his throne. It was an ambitious business, carried through with heroic effort. Pharaoh sat before a light occasional table, upon which what seemed to be a Bible and a Prayer-book were arranged; and upon one side of the book was a decanter of water with a few flowers stuck in it, while upon the other was a simple glass goblet. The king was flanked by two guards, each with a drawn cutlass upon the shoulder; but oh, horror! the guards were in black broadcloth like you or me, and the tufts of white handkerchief from their breast-pockets told of the modern vanity in their souls. The monarch, however, was in crimson, and he wore upon his head a gold crown with red and green jewels in it. He spoke better than any of the other characters, had more regard for his 'aitches,' and a magnificent presence, including the moustache of a Hungarian.

Yet another anomaly sent an electric shock through me. The monarch when troubled about his dream summoned the magicians, whom anon he rated soundly for their incapacity. He rose with majestic movement from his throne for the purpose, and extended his sceptreless right hand towards them as if he himself meant to smite them to the ground. Needless to say how they cowered before him. The audience held it for comedy, and laughed. So, too, when the baker and butler were brought before the king, whom they told of their experience with young Joseph—a prisoner like themselves—when it was seen that they were in charge of a guard in the uniform of one of Her Majesty Queen Victoria's soldiers of the line, the audience repeated its laugh. It was not the laugh of a critic. They knew the soldier, and they could see the twitching of his lips, as he bowed himself before the King of Egypt. And what a delightful bow it was—a duck of the head, a jerk of the foot, and it was done!

Then Joseph, now a mature man, with much rude eloquence in him, was duly enveloped in a crimson robe of honour like a dressing-gown, and invested with ministerial powers and the royal signet. As for the butler, poor man—

Hanged was he
Upon a lofty tree.

It would be hypercriticism to mention in detail the misuse of words during the performance in this little room of Gornal. The rule of robbing an aspirate of its rights seemed very generally observed, except by the King of Egypt. Among the local peculiarities of accent, perhaps none had more effect than the curtailment of the power of the vowel 'o'; thus, 'joy' and 'boy' became 'jy' and 'by' invariably, and 'voice' was degraded into 'vice.' Most unpleasant of all was the uniform transformation of 'heavenly' into 'evingly.' The imagination may be left to seek and find at its leisure the other outrages which could not but follow in the train of the above.

The play continued more or less to the interest of the congregation. With certain of the lads in the distant parts of the room it had begun to pall. When the curtain dropped, they exclaimed 'half-time!' as if it had been the pause in a football match; and their jests upon the action and aspect of the performers grew in breadth and coarseness. To the damsels who sat with them they whispered arch confidences, which seemed almost too much for the self-control of the girls; and their mutual dalliances were of a demonstrative kind.

Enter now Joseph's brethren, in the same garb of scarlet and white, with a request for corn. Joseph temporises with them, and eventually calls in Her Majesty's private, who arrests them all as spies. They disappear smilingly, one by one, behind the curtain, the guard laying a hand upon the shoulder of each of them as he passes by. Even the pastor smiles genially at this incongruous exhibition. But amongst the others the guffaws are very loud.

In the next scene we have Jacob once more, with little Benjamin, and the brethren create excessive amusement by entering each with a ghostly white sack of something upon his back. This gives the Patriarch an opportunity for much sorrowful lamentation—of which our poet has made the most. If all the performers had known their parts as well as Jacob, the effect of the play would have been improved. But some were very shaky, and prompting was frequent with all save Jacob and the King of Egypt.

It grew tedious after a while. Nothing need be said in disparagement of the efforts of the villagers, or of the promoters of the play itself. Doubtless they did it all for the best, and it was not their fault if the sight of it was not, upon the whole, calculated to do what the minister at the outset signified the hope it would do—to wit, serve as an educative aid, perhaps even a stimulant, to their knowledge of the Scriptures.

With Joseph's death, about ten o'clock, the drama ended, and the people of Gornal dispersed, wiping their faces—for the room was hot and ill-ventilated—and so betook them to their beds. And I, too, made my way home in the dark, just ruddied in the distance by the glare of the furnaces. The wind piped more bitterly than ever across the great irregular stretch of country, which even under the merriest of June skies and in broad sunlight cannot be said to have any intelligible beauty, and which now was suggestive of grim things solely. I felt much as I have felt after being present at a somewhat similar performance in Naples, wherein the Devil plays to the gallery in an outrageous manner, and the jests are as profane as the setting of the play is sacred.

Really, however, it was not quite so bad as this at Gornal. There was nothing outrageous on the part of the performers: now and then they grinned when they ought to have been peculiarly solemn; now and then they forgot their parts, and had to be coached by their interlocutors, or trod on each other's toes somewhat forcibly. But as a rule they were evidently impressed by their high responsibility. Their pastor in his preparatory address held them up as unconscious examples for the rest of his congregation; and they tried their best to look as if they were such examples. It is with the audience that I have a bone to pick, and particularly the very young men and boys and maidens of Gornal. I cannot think what the pastor and his deacons were about that they did not come into the back part of the room, and see and hear what was there transpiring. The more dissolute of the youths wore their hats aslant on their heads, stuck clay pipes in their mouths, and took the maidens on their knees—these latter with their handkerchiefs stuffed into their mouths to keep them from exploding with unrighteous merriment.

It was, to a stranger, very unedifying. And this while Jacob was, in his fervent and eloquent manner, bewailing that the days of man upon earth are 'few and evil,' or lamenting his separation from Benjamin in his old age.

The good people of the chapel in Gornal may be given credit for excellent intentions in organising this Biblical drama; but the contrast between the simple villagers of Ober-Ammergau and the semi-barbarians of this South Staffordshire hamlet of miners is not sufficiently in our favour to induce us to recommend the people of Gornal to go a step further and inaugurate a Passion Play also.

BIRD AND BEAST POACHERS.

As compared with the doings of human 'mouchers,' there is a class of field poachers whose depredations are tenfold more destructive. These are Nature's poachers, and their vigils never cease. In season and out, by night and by day, they harry the things of the field and wood. Playing, as some say, a questionable part in the economy of Nature, they play a very certain part in the economy of our game, both winged and furred. Strange anomaly it is that, whilst our game-stock could not be preserved a year without their agency, the hand of everyone is against them. So long as Nature is founded on its present beneficent plan, so long will the swallow be speared by the shrike and every wood be the scene of plunder and prey. Nature is one with rapine, and the close observance of every woodland way only emphasises the fact. Every sylvan thing is but a unit in a possible chain of destruction. The bee-bird captures the butterfly, and is stricken down in the act by the hawk; the keeper kills the raptor, and the keeper's hobnobbing with Death is delayed but awhile.

The greatest and smallest murder but to live, and whilst the eagle kills the lordly stag, the merlin is lark-hawking on the down. Only those whose harvest is gleaned in the open, who have observed in all weathers and through every hour of the day and night, can form any adequate conception of how dependent is one form of life upon another. The way of an eagle in the air is one of those things concerning which Solomon professed himself ignorant to understand, and the scythelike sweep of wings of the majestic bird is one of the most glorious sights which Nature has to offer. Just as the eagle is the largest, so the merlin is the smallest British bird of prey, and to see this miniature falcon rush past on the breast of a mountain storm gives an idea of the almost marvellous velocity of flight. Within the whole range of animate nature, nowhere is the adaptation of means to ends more strikingly exhibited than among the raptors—the plunderers. The furred poachers are not less appropriately fitted with their weapons of destruction; and so perfectly adapted is the otter to its environment that its movements in the water are as the very poetry of motion.

Let us follow these poachers of the field and covert to their haunts, and there observe them in their wild home. So long as the gamekeeper can keep the young pheasants under his eye they are comparatively safe, but they are apt to wander, and when once they begin to do this there is no restraining them. Although fed daily with the daintiest food, the birds, singly or in pairs, may frequently be seen far from the home coverts. Both man and Nature's poachers know this, and are quick to use their knowledge. It by no means follows that the man who rears the pheasants will have the privilege of shooting them. At this season the birds take daily journeys in search of beech-mast, acorns, and blackberries, of which they consume great quantities. When wandered birds find themselves in outlying copses in the evening they are apt to roost there. And herein lies the danger. They perch in the low nut-bushes and underwood, and are here open to a whole host of enemies. The sparrowhawk, flying his beat in the late afternoon, makes a swoop into the scrub and strikes down his prey; and a little later, as twilight comes, the brown wood-owl does the same. For months it has been the keeper's chief concern to keep these birds under. And if they are destructive now, they were a dozen times more so then. After the hatching, and when the birds were transferred to the coops, the keeper and his assistant spent the long summer days in feeding and guarding them from the falcons. The men lay hidden in scrub of oak, and birch, and hazel, and watched the young pheasants in the green rides. Small woodland birds swarmed everywhere and fed among the pheasants; but at the warning cry of the blackbird all the feathered throng would drop down into the shelter of the leaves, and a dark shadow would glide over the sunny sward. Then from out the pines there was a rush of wings, and a sparrowhawk would dash from the bushes with something in its talons. This was repeated day after day, until one afternoon, as the hawk rounded the corner of the wood, it was seen by the old keeper. He lay close among the brush, but not so closely as to escape the sharp eye of the hawk. It doubled, but just as it did so the old man glanced along the barrels and his finger touched the trigger. There was a puff of white smoke, a cloud of feathers, and the marauder dropped with a dead thud to the sward. One of the assistants nailed up the bird in the larder as he had done many another. There was a sorry array of hawks, owls, weasels, stoats, polecats, jays, magpies and even squirrels. The sparrowhawk is a roving arab of the air, and the

most arrant of poachers. Ask the keeper to detail to you the character of this daring marauder, and he will record a black and bloody list of depredations against the poacher. He knows nothing, however, of the laws which govern the economy of nature, and if he did, or would, what are they compared with the shilling per head for those he can display on the barn-doors? To the sparrowhawk, the kestrel or windhover acts in quite a different fashion. It is persecuted less, and confidently approaches human habitations. And yet at certain seasons the kestrel is as destructive in the covert as its congener. When the pheasants represent little more than balls of down he clutches them from out the grass as he clutches a mouse or cockchafer. Coming from out the blue, one hears the pleasant cry of 'Kee, kee, keelie,' and there he hangs, rapidly vibrating his wings, yet as stationary as though suspended by a silken thread. Presently down he comes, plump as a stone, and without touching the ground sweeps a 'cheeper' from off it and soars high above the covert. The depredations are only committed, however, when the game is exceedingly small, and the benefit which the kestrel confers on the woods by its presence far outweighs any harm it may do. The artificial methods of game-rearing now in vogue are most conducive to disease. In extenuation of the thefts of our little marauders it may be pleaded that they invariably pick off the weak and ailing birds, and therefore tend to the survival of robust and healthy specimens.

The miniature poachers of the moors are the beautiful little Merlins. They work together, and quarter the heather like a brace of well-broken pointers. Not an object escapes them. However closely it may conform to its environment, or however motionless remain, it is detected by the sharp eye of the merlin and put away. And the miniature falconry in which the merlin indulges on the open moorlands, where nothing obstructs the view, is one of the most fascinating sights in nature. The 'red-hawk' is plucky beyond its size and strength, and will pull down a young partridge, as we have witnessed repeatedly. The cheepers and nestlings of moorfowl, larks, pipits, and summer-snipe constitute its food on the fells. It lays four bright red eggs in a depression in the heather, and strewn about this are the remains of the birds indicated. To be seen to advantage this smallest of British falcons ought to be observed in its haunts. It is little larger than a thrush, and in the days of falconry was flown by ladies—

its game being larks, pipits, pigeons, and occasionally partridges. On the moorlands it may be seen suddenly to shoot from a stone, encircle a tract of heather, and then return to its perch. A lark passes over its head, and its wings are raised and its neck outstretched; but it closes them as if unwilling to pursue the bird. Then it flies, skimming low over the furze and heather, and alights on a granite boulder similar to the one which it has just left. As we approach this the male and female flap unconcernedly off, and beneath the block are remains of golden plover, lingbirds, larks, and young grouse.

At night the waterside is productive of life, and here it is most varied. Turning a bend of the stream, a sentinel Heron, that had been standing watchful on one leg, rises, and flaps languidly away down the river reach. The consumptive figure of the gaunt fisher stands by the stream through all weathers. The heron knows not times nor seasons, and is a great poacher—a poacher of fish rather than of flesh or other fowl. Sometimes though, when his body is pinched and when the streams are frozen over, he becomes omnivorous in his diet, and will gulp down voles and rats and the smaller waterfowl. In the wind, when taking his lone stand, his loose fluttering feathers look like driftwood caught in the bushes. He reminds one of the consumptive, but, unlike him, has wonderful powers of digestion, and withal an immense capacity for fish. Woe to the luckless mort or trout, or attacking peregrine that he attempts to impale on his bill. The heron is essentially a wanderer, and, like Wordsworth's immortal leech-gatherer, he roams from pond to pond, from moor to moor. Like most poachers, the heron is a night fisher, and there is one equally destructive which carries on its nefarious trade under the full light of day. Over there is an overhanging leafless bough, and upon it has just alighted a kingfisher. At first its form is motionless, soon it assumes more animation, and anon is all eye and ear. Then it darts—hangs for a moment in the air like a kestrel, and returns to its perch. Again it flashes with unerring aim, and secures something. This is tossed, beaten, and broken with its formidable beak, and swallowed head foremost. The process is again and again repeated, and you find that the prey is small fish. From watching an hour one is entranced at the beauty of the fluttering, quivering thing, as the sun glints from its green and gold vibrations in mid-air. You gain some estimation, too, of the vast amount of immature fish

a pair of kingfishers and their young must destroy in a single season. Later in summer the young brood may be seen with quivering wings, constantly crying and calling as the parent birds fly to and fro poaching the trout streams. And the kingfisher is a poacher in another respect. It never constructs the hole in which its young are reared, but takes possession of that of some small burrowing rodent, or even that of the little sand-martin.

The Buzzard is another bird of the moorlands, but can hardly be convicted of poaching. When it takes moor-game these are invariably found to be diseased or late hatched birds, and it certainly has not speed to pull down a full-grown grouse. Many times during whole summer afternoons have we seen the buzzards wheeling about when the young grouse have been following the brooding birds, but never have we seen them swoop at one. And seeing that as many as sixty mice have been taken from the crop of a single bird, surely the buzzard ought to be protected. During times of severe frost the buzzard often performs deeds of daring to obtain a meal. When a lad, Wordsworth was in the habit of setting 'gins' for woodcocks, and one morning, on going to examine his snares, he discovered a buzzard near one which was struck. The bird of prey attempted to escape, but being held fast could not. A woodcock had been taken in one of the snares, which when fluttering had been seen and attacked by the buzzard. Not content, however, with the body of the woodcock, it had swallowed a leg also round which the noose was drawn, and the limb was so securely lodged in the latter's stomach that no force that the bird could exert could withdraw it.

In the glades and moorlands the garrulous blue Jay is a sad pilferer, to say nothing of its poaching propensities. In the spring it sucks innumerable eggs, and makes free right and warren of the peas and beans in the keeper's garden, and those sown in the glades for the pheasants; and so the old man's whole knowledge of woodcraft is directed against it. In addition to this, the jay does indirect harm, which multiplies the cunning engines devised for its destruction. For by pilfering the crops before mentioned, which are planted with the object of keeping the wandering pheasants on the land, a poor show of birds may be the result when October comes round, and the keeper's reputation suffers. Even the audacious Pies steal both pheasant and partridge chicks, and consequently each find a place in the larder.

It is probable that the number of grouse on the higher hill ranges is very much kept in check by the great number of Carrion-Crows which everywhere exist among the fells. They impale the eggs of the red grouse upon their bills and carry them away to eat at leisure. Under some wall or rock great numbers of eggshells may often be found, testifying to the havoc which the sable marauders commit. This bird is one of the great features of the northern fell fauna, and it is well known to the dalesmen, and shepherds, who give it a bad character. In spite of much persecution, however, it is still a common resident, keeping to the sheep-walks in search of food, and breeding among the mountains. Although a great carrion-feeder, it will kill weak and ailing lambs, picking out the eyes and tongue of these when they are reduced to a helpless condition. They are resident birds in the north, and only the snows of winter drive them to the lowlands in search of food. As the Hooded-Crow is only a seasonable visitant, it is but little felt as a poacher. After the great snows of 1886 the fell sheep on the higher runs of the Lake District mountains perished by hundreds, and the farms lying contiguous to Sca Fell alone lost 1,500 sheep out of a total of 6,000. The peregrines and ravens which find an asylum in the recesses of the mountains are the great gainers by the loss. The keeper has the Shrikes or Butcher-Birds in his black list, but these do little harm, as their shambles in the blackthorns abundantly prove.

Mention of the noble Peregrine marks a poacher of the first water. As the bird sits watching from the jag of a mountain crag it is the very emblem of passive speed and strength. Nowhere but in the birds' haunts can these attributes be seen to perfection. A trained falcon is slow of flight and uncertain of aim as compared with a wild bird. Its symmetry, its stretch of wing, its keen eyes and cruel talons—all speak to the same end. While some of the larger hawks are treated with indifference by the bird-world, not so the peregrine. A pair of buzzards pass over, but the cheep and chatter of field and hedgerow go on. A peregrine sails down dale and all is hushed! A strange experience this at noon in the heyday of summer—but the shadow of a peregrine stills all life. A terrified screech is heard, and bird-life seeks the thickest retreats. The depredations of the peregrine are greatest, of course, during the breeding season; and at this time it even carries off the just-born lambs of the small black-

faced mountain sheep. Now hardly anything comes amiss. Partridges, ducks, pheasants, hares, grouse, plover—each is taken in turn, and the birds forage over a wide area. A barndoor fowl sometimes supplies a meal, or a dead sheep (so long as the flesh is sweet); thrushes, pigeons, gulls, and a number of water and shore-haunting birds. Once, scrambling among boulders in search of Alpine plants, a large bird of prey was seen advancing on the wing. At a distance the underparts appeared white, but the bird, directly over, enabled us to recognise distinctly the dark bars across the feathers of the abdomen. Its flight—under these circumstances—was a sort of flapping motion, not unlike that of a ringdove; and its head turning rapidly in various ways, the eye peering into the rocks and crannies of the ghylls in search of any skulking prey. Soon this silent hunting was all changed. Above us was a ledge covered with blood, bones, and feathers. We were close to the nest. Just as we were discovered one of the falcons went ‘whizz’ past our face, almost touching it. Then it gives a wild yelp, as in one gyration it shoots upwards and screams round the crag. Again the bird dashes along the cliff, and is joined by the female, who from her nest has been quietly watching us. The peregrine’s outstretched wings measure three feet, and it makes a velocity of fifty-seven miles in an hour. One at the above rate flew 1,350 miles. So great is its power and speed of flight, that a bird belonging to Colonel Thornton was seen to cut a snipe in two in mid-air.

Falcons will occasionally search after their prey when it has been driven to seek shelter from the closeness of pursuit. The Goshawk, which falconers use mostly for taking hares and rabbits, frequently does this, and it will watch for hours when its game has taken to cover. As well as ground-game the goshawk poaches pheasants and partridges, numbers of these being killed by the bird in its wild state. Through a wooded country it pursues its quarry with great dexterity, and possesses great powers of abstinence. During the day it remains solitary in dark fir woods, coming out to feed at morning and evening. We advance over the heather; and there, skimming towards us, is a large hawk, a Harrier. As it flies near the ground, working as a pointer would do, the species cannot be doubted. Now it stops, glides, ascends, stoops again, and shoots off at right angles. Rounding a shoulder of the hill, it drops in a dark patch of ling. A covey of young grouse whirr heavily over the nearest brae—but the

marsh harrier remains. It has struck down a 'cheeper,' and is dragging its victim to the shelter of a furze-bush. A male and a female harrier invariably hunt in consort, and afford a pleasant sight as they 'harry' the game, driving it from one to the other, and hawking in a most systematic fashion. They thoroughly work the ground previously marked out, generally with success. In hawking the quiet mountain tarns their method is regulated according to circumstance. In such case they do not unfrequently sit and watch, capturing their prey by suddenly pouncing upon it. At one time the golden and white-tailed eagles bred not uncommonly in the mountainous environment of the English Lake District. Most majestic of the winged poachers, they held sway over a wide area and suffered no intrusion. The eyries were perched high upon the almost inaccessible mountain fastnesses. It is asserted by the shepherds of the district that the eagles during the breeding season destroyed a lamb per day, to say nothing of the carnage made on hares, partridges, pheasants, grouse, and the waterfowl that inhabit the lakes. The farmers and dalesmen were always careful to plunder the eyries, but not without considerable risk to life and limb. A man was lowered from the summit of the precipitous rocks by a rope of fifty fathoms, and was compelled to defend himself from attack during his descent. The poet Gray, in his *Journal*, graphically describes how the eyries were annually plundered, upon one of which occasions he was present. Wordsworth says that the eagles built in the precipices overlooking one of the tarns in the recesses of Helvellyn, and that the birds used to wheel and hover over his head as he fished in the silent tarn. Now the spot is occupied by a pair of patriarchal ravens—the sole remaining relics of the original 'Red Tarn Club.' Among the mountains an instance is related of an eagle which, having pounced upon a shepherd's dog, carried it to a considerable height; but the weight and action of the animal effected a partial liberation, and he left part of his flesh in the eagle's beak. The dog was not killed by the fall; he recovered of his wound, but was so intimidated that he would never go that way again. Subsequently the owner of the dog shot at and wounded one of the eagles. The bird, nearly exhausted, was found a week afterwards by a shepherd of Seatoller; its lower mandible was split, and its tongue wedged between the interstices. The bird was captured and kept in confinement; but it became so violent that, ultimately, it had to be shot. On the

eagles being frequently robbed of their young in Greenup they removed to the opposite side of the crag. At this place they built for two years, but left it for Raven Crag, within the Coom, where, after staying one year only, they returned to their ancient seat in Eagle Crag; here they built annually during their stay in Borrowdale. On the loss of its mate the remaining eagle left the district, but returned the following spring with another. This pair built during fourteen years in Borrowdale, but finally abandoned it for Eskdale. At the last-mentioned place they were also disturbed, and the female eagle being afterwards shot, the male flew off and returned no more. Eagle Crag is a grand towering rock, or collection of perpendicular rocks, connected by horizontal spaces of variously coloured vegetation. Its form is fine, and it is a majestic background to many pleasing foregrounds. On that part of Eagle Crag which is opposite to Greenup the eagles occasionally built their nests. But they were so destructive to the lambs, and consequently injurious to the interests of the shepherds, that their extermination became absolutely necessary. Their building-places being inaccessible by climbing, a dangerous experiment was ventured upon. A man was lowered by a rope down the face of the cliff for ninety feet. A piked staff such as is used by shepherds was the weapon with which the man defended himself against the attack of the parent birds while he robbed the nest of eggs or eaglets. If birds, their possession was to be his remuneration; but if eggs, every neighbouring sheep farmer gave for each egg five shillings. The nest of the eagles was formed of branches of trees, and lined with coarse grass and bents which grew upon the neighbouring rocks. The eagles sometimes flew off with lambs that were a month old, and in winter frequented the head of the Derwent, where they preyed upon waterfowl.

The white-tailed sea eagles bred upon the rocks of a towering limestone escarpment overlooking a recess of the sea, and fed upon gulls and terns. The vast peat mosses which stretched away for miles below them abounded with hares and grouse, and among these the birds made devastation. Year after year they carried off their young from the same cliffs, and now return only at rare intervals, when storm-driven. The peregrines have the eagles' eyrie, and are only eagles in miniature. The sea-fowl form their food in summer, so do wild ducks in winter. At this latter season the Osprey or 'Fish-Hawk' comes to the bay and

the still mountain tarns, adding wildness to the scenes which his congeners have left never now to return.

Those who have been recently advocating a close time for owls have, fortunately, been forestalled by legislation. The Act of 1881 affords protection to all wild birds during the breeding season; and, although exemption is allowed in favour of owners and occupiers of land, owls, being included in the schedule, may not be destroyed even by them or with their authority. It was a wise step that granted this double protection, for of all birds, from the farmers' standpoint, owls are the most useful. They hunt silently and in the night, and are nothing short of lynx-eyed cats with wings. The benefit they confer upon agriculturists is most incalculable, and is susceptible of proof. It is well known that owls hunt by night; but it may be less a matter of common knowledge that, like other birds of prey, they return by the mouth the hard indigestible parts of the food in the form of elongated pellets. These are found in considerable quantities about the birds' haunts, and an examination of them reveals the fact that owls prey upon a number of predaceous creatures the destruction of which is directly beneficial to man. Of course, the evidence gained in this way is infallible, and to show to what extent owls assist in preserving the balance of nature, it may be mentioned that 700 pellets examined yielded the remains of 6 bats, 13 rats, 237 mice, 693 voles, 1,590 shrews, and 22 birds. These truly remarkable results were obtained from the common barn owl, and the remains of the 22 birds were those of 19 sparrows, one greenfinch, and two swifts. The tawny and long-eared owls of our woodlands are also mighty hunters, and an examination of their pellets shows equally interesting evidence. It must be remembered in this connection that Britain is essentially an agricultural country, and that if its fauna is a diminutive one, it is not the less formidable. We have ten tiny field creatures, constituting an army in themselves, that if not kept under would quickly devastate our fields. These ten species consist of four mice, three voles, and three shrews. Individually, so tiny are these that any one species could comfortably curl itself up in the divided shell of a horse-chestnut. But farmers well know that if these things are small they are by no means to be despised. Now that the corn crops are cut, and the hay housed, the field-vole and the meadow-mouse are deprived of their summer shelter. Of this the barn-owl is perfectly aware, and at

evening he may be seen sweeping low over the meadows, seeking whom he may devour. And with what results we already know.

Much unnatural history has been written of the owls, and unfortunately most people have their ideas of them from the poets. The owl is not moping, nor mourning, nor melancholy, neither is he dolorous nor mournful. He is neither grave monk, nor anchorite, nor pillared saint. Poets write by day, and owls fly by night; and, doubtless, Mr. Gray and his school have their opinion of owls from staring at stuffed specimens in glass cases, or at the birds of wisdom surprised in the full light of day, when they will be seen blinking, ogling, nodding, and hissing at each other, very unlike representatives of Minerva. 'Christopher North' is the only author who has done justice to the owls, or justice to the poets, for the matter of that, by his denunciation of their epithets and false images. He knew well that the white owl never mopes, but holds its revels through the livelong night, when all else is hushed and still. Most birds are stoics compared to owls, and those who cultivate their acquaintance know that they have no time wherein to make their poetical complaints to the moon. Poets should not meddle with owls. Shakespeare and Wordsworth alone have understood them—by all others they have been scandalously libelled, from Virgil to Poet Close.

The barn-owl, when she has young, brings to her nest a mouse every twelve minutes, and, as she is actively employed both at evening and dawn, as both male and female hunt, forty mice a day is the lowest computation we can make. How soft is the plumage of the owl, how noiseless her flight! Watch her as she floats past the ivy tod, down by the ricks, and silently over the old wood. Then away over the meadows, through the open door and out of the loop-hole of the barn, round the lichened tower, and along the course of the brook. Presently she returns to her four downy young, with a mouse in one claw and a mole in the other, soon to be ripped up, torn, and eaten by the greedy, snapping imps. The young are produced from April to December, and not unfrequently both young and eggs are found in the same nest. If you would see the midday *siesta* of the owls, climb up into some hay-mow. There in an angle of the beam you will see their owlships, snoring and blinking wide their great round eyes. Their duet is the most unearthly, ridiculous, grave, like-nothing-else noise you ever heard. Here they will stay all day, digesting the mice with which they have largely gorged themselves, until

twilight, when they again issue forth upon their madeap revelings. This clever mouser, then, this winged cat, has a strong claim to our protection. So let not idle superstition further its destruction.

The keeper's indiscretions are fewer in fur than in feather. His larder abounds in long-bodied creatures of the weasel kind. There is the richly-coloured, dark-brown fur of the pine-marten; that of the polecat, loose and light at the base but almost black at the extremity; and there are many skins of weasels, reddish brown above, with the sides and under parts white. For each of these creatures he has quaint provincial names of his own. The pine-marten he calls the 'sweet-mart,' in contradistinction to the polecat, which is the 'foumart'—a name bestowed on the creature because it emits a secretion which has an abominable stench. Also, we have the stoat or ermine; which even with us is white in winter, brown in summer. But the tip of the tail is always black.

The beautiful martens take up their abode in the rockiest parts of the woods where the pines grow thickly. They are strictly arboreal in their habits; and, seen among the shaggy pine foliage, the rich yellow of their throats is sharply set off by the deep brown of the thick glossy fur. With us they do not make their nests and produce their young in the pine-trees, but among the loose craggy rocks. Martens rarely show themselves till evening. They prey on rabbits, hares, partridges, pheasants, and small birds; and when we say that, like the rest of the mustelidæ, they kill for a love of killing, it is not hard to understand why the keeper's hand is against them. Sometimes they do great harm in the coverts; and the old man shoots them, traps them, and does them to death with various subtle engines of his own machination. To-day the marten is rare; soon it will be extinct altogether. Weasels do much less harm. They are the smallest of our carnivorous animals, and will probably long survive. They often abound where they are least suspected, and in the cultivated as well as in the wildest parts of the district. They take up their abode near farmhouses, in decayed outbuildings, hayricks, and disused quarries; and may often be seen near old walls, or running along the top of them with a mouse or bird in their mouths. And these things form the staple of their food; although there is no denying that a weasel will occasionally run down the strongest hare, and that rabbits, from their habit of rushing into their

burrows, become an easy prey. But this does not happen often, I believe. To rats the weasel is a deadly enemy; no united number of them will attack it, and the largest singly has no chance against it. The weasel, like the polecat, hunts by scent. It climbs trees easily and takes birds by stealth. The keeper has seen a brooding partridge taken in this manner, and on winter evenings sparrows roosting in holes in a hayrick. Weasels also kill toads and frogs; and their mode of killing these, as well as of despatching birds, is by piercing the skull.

The polecat, or fitchet, keeps much to the woods, and feeds mostly on rabbits and game. But in the northern fell districts it often takes up a temporary abode on the moors, during the season that grouse are hatching. Then it not only kills the sitting birds, but sucks the eggs, and thus whole broods are destroyed. Many 'cheepers' of course fall victims. Knowing well the ferocity of the polecat, I believe the damage done to grouse moors where this bloodthirsty creature takes up its abode can hardly be estimated. Like others of its tribe, the polecat kills more prey than it needs. Sometimes it makes an epicurean repast from the brain alone. Fowl-houses suffer considerably from its visits; and it has been known to kill and afterwards leave untouched as many as sixteen large turkeys. In the nest of a 'fitchet,' which was observed to frequent the banks of a stream, no fewer than eleven fine trout were found. The gamekeeper persistently dogs this creature both summer and winter. In the latter season every time it ventures abroad it registers its progress through the snow. It is then that the old man is most active in his destruction, and most successful. He tracks the vermin to some stone fence, disused quarry or barn, cuts off the enemy's retreat, and then unearths him. Trapped he is at all times.

The stoat or ermine is as destructive to covert game as the animals just mentioned. Upon occasion it destroys great quantities of rats, though this is its only redeeming quality. Partridge, grouse, and pheasants all fall a prey to the stoat, and hares when pursued by it seem to become thoroughly demoralised. Water is no obstacle to the ermine, and it climbs trees in search of squirrels, birds, and eggs. A pair of stoats took up their abode in a well-stocked rabbit-warren. The legitimate inmates were killed off by wholesale, and many were taken from the burrows with their skull empty. The stoat progresses by a series of short quick leaps,

which enable it to cover the ground more quickly than could possibly be imagined by so small an animal.

Enough has been said to sketch the characters of these creatures, and to justify their presence in the larder. Interesting in themselves as wild denizens of the woods, they would be fatal to game-preserving. But yet, with what indignation did I lately see a gamekeeper put his heel into the nest of a merlin containing four bright rufous eggs!

Vulpicide is no great crime in the north. Foxes abound in the fastnesses of the fells, and the little wiry foxhounds that hunt the mountains in winter account for but few in a season; and so it devolves upon the shepherds and gamekeepers and farmers to deal with them. This they do irrespective of season; if allowed to live, the foxes would destroy abundance of lambs in spring. They are tracked through the snow in winter, shot in summer, and destroyed wholesale when they bring their young to the moors in autumn. It therefore happens that even the bright red fur of the fox may be seen in the keeper's gibbet.

Hedgehogs are taken in steel traps baited with a pheasant's or a hen's egg. At times squirrels are killed in hundreds, but they do not grace the larder, neither do the spiny hedgehogs. Squirrels bark young trees, especially ash-stoles and holly.

Occasionally a creature more rare than the rest adorns the larder. The old keepers remember a white-tailed eagle and a great snowy owl. Sometimes a peregrine is shot, and more rarely, in autumn, a hobby or a goshawk. A miscellaneous row on the vermin rails comprises moles, weasels, and cats. The mole is libelled by being placed there; he is a destroyer of many creatures which are injurious to land. Domestic cats soon revert to a semi-wild state when once they take to the woods, and are terribly destructive in the coverts. They destroy pheasants, partridges, leverets, and rabbits. The life of these wild tabbies is wild indeed. Every dormant instinct is aroused; each movement becomes characteristically feline; and when these creatures revert to life in the woods it is impossible to reclaim them. Climatic influences work remarkable changes upon the fur, causing it to grow longer and thicker; and the cats take up their abode in stony crevasse or hollow tree. In summer, when kittens are produced, the destruction of game is almost incredible. Under the dark slab by the river the otters breed; but it is impossible to dislodge them. Iron-sinewed, shaggy otter-hounds have tried, but never with

success. The fishermen complain of the quantity of fish which the otter destroys. Trout are found dead on the rocks ; salmon are there, bitten in the shoulder, but only partially eaten. The evolutions of the otter in its native element are such as no words can describe. We take our place by the stream side and breathlessly wait. A faint whistle, unlike that of any bird, comes up stream, and the dark water is moved. Trout cease to rise, the whistle comes nearer, and then a rustle is heard. The osier-beds are stirred, and some long dark object makes its way between the parted stems. A movement would dispel the dark shadow. The rustle among the withy wands is repeated again and again ; and now we know that the young otters have left their impregnable rocky bank, and are following their dam. She has reconnoitred and all is safe. Paddling down stream come two objects, and, arriving at the pool, stop, tumble, rolling over and over, and round and round, performing the most marvellous evolutions. They swing on a willow spray, and rush with lightning rapidity at a piece of floating bark—tumble with it, wrestle with it, and go through a hundred graceful movements ; then are motionless, then begin to play, and so continue for nearly an hour, when, as if suddenly alarmed, they rush down stream to their feeding-grounds. Fishing is continued through the darkness, until in the dewy meadow another sound comes up the wind, and the deep, sonorous voice of an otter-hound breaks into the fairylike dawn-scene.

EIGHT DAYS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE TOUCHSTONE OF PERIL.'

I will a round unvarnished tale deliver.—*Othello.*

CHAPTER XXV.

THE JUMOO GATE.

HAY hurries the party, Lilian in a daze of horror after the sudden sight of those ghastly upturned faces, away to his quarters. These officers' quarters had been built, for the sake of coolness, on the broad top of the outer battlement. They consisted of two small rooms, a bath-room, and a verandah which looked down on the enclosure below and on the city beyond. Hay hurriedly questions them about their escape; hurriedly arranges for their comfort, as best he may in that limited space and at that fiery time of the day; hurriedly orders refreshments for them. He himself has to hasten back. He orders his servants to attend to them. 'You must take possession of my bedroom, too. There are only two chairs in this room, and it is hardly big enough to hold you all. Here, Roshun, tell the man to pull the punkah in the bedroom also,' and then he hurries away. With what laughing interest would the two sisters have regarded this incursion into Hay's bedroom at any other time! With what eager interest would they have scanned its arrangements, so characteristic of him, even here, in their careful neatness. But now Lilian, the quick-eyed, the observant, the chatterer, only seats herself on the side of the bed and buries her face in her hands. The thoughts of Beatrice, too, are more without than within, more with Hay than with his belongings; but one thing her eye has noted, the Bible placed on the little table at the head of the bed. She softly lifts the book up. It is in moments of danger, such as these, that people's hearts turn towards a higher protecting Power. She opens it as she stands, and her eyes fall on the first words of the 57th Psalm:—

- 'Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me;
- 'For my soul taketh refuge in thee:
- 'Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge,
- 'Until these calamities be overpast.'

In the next room, the outer one, Mrs. Fane has quietly seated herself on a box. And then her attention is engaged by the childish mother and her mother-child. At that awful moment in the enclosure below, when Lilian had uncovered and laid bare the ghastly faces of the poor dead boys; when Hay had hurriedly told them of what had happened; when they had all turned their looks with fear and horror on the serried ranks of the sepoys, on the dark faces of the brethren of the men who had done this deed, Mrs. Lyster had plucked her daughter by the sleeve, and exclaimed, in tones of joyous eagerness, 'Oh, how delightful it is to see the sepoys again. I have not seen them drawn up like this for—for—for how many years, my dear?'

And now, when Hay's servant comes into this outer room and lays the table in order that he may supply these unexpected guests with such refreshments as he has on hand, the old lady says to her daughter:—

'I see, my dear, we have come to a luncheon-party here. Do you know the last time I came to these quarters it was also to a party, but it was to an evening party. That mad fellow, Lucius Smith, who was in the Khelat-i-Ghilzies—his sister married Mr. Smith, 'Cod's-head Smith' they used to call him, of the Civil Service—funny, two Smiths—gave it when he was on duty here. We had iced champagne—he did not care what he spent. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and we sat outside on the walls, in a bastion, where a carpet was spread and chairs and tables laid out, and sang songs. I had brought my guitar. Dear me! it seems a very long, long time ago. In what year could it have been—when the Khelat-i-Ghilzies were here? Mr. Maxwell was the Commissioner, and he had just got out a daughter who was at this party and who married Captain Torrens of that regiment—Captain Torrens who—— But you are not listening, Mary.'

Through how many weary hours of how many weary days of how many weary years had those words fallen on Mary Lyster's ears! 'But you are not listening, Mary!' In how many varied tones of querulousness! With what weary iteration! How had they been as regular a part of each day as the morning, the noon, and the night!

'Oh, yes, mother, I am,' says the daughter, quickly.

'Captain Torrens, who——' and then Mary Lyster is carried away from the living present into the dead past, as she has been

every day for so many years—back into the company of those long dead persons with whom she has had to live.

Mrs. Fane, having the mystery of Miss Lyster's life thus laid bare before her—how the history of a lifetime may be summed up in a few words, perhaps in a single one!—is carried out of herself by reflecting upon it. The old life has eaten the young life up. Everything that lives lives by devouring something else. But here the thing devoured was so costly—the bloom and beauty of a young life. Had a broken and unfulfilled unmarried life been the lot of Miss Lyster, as it is of so many women, had the chance of love and marriage never come to her, the sacrifice would not have been so great; but Mrs. Fane knew that they had, that she might have made her life full and complete, but she had voluntarily forgone the full knowledge and enjoyment of it; she might have filled the cup of her life to the brim, but she had chosen rather to pour it out on the altar of filial piety. Mrs. Fane wonders as much as she admires. She herself could not have done this. To lay down her life, if needed, once for all, that she could have done, but not thus to give it up piecemeal, bit by bit. There would have been no questioning on her part of the justice or injustice of the thing, whether it was right and fair that the young life should be sacrificed to the old one, whether the happiness of two lives should be sacrificed for that of one; she simply could not have done it, it was not in her temperament.

Now they sit down to the table to partake of the refreshments Hay's servant has prepared for them. And if they find it difficult to eat because of what they have seen, because of the position they are in, they force themselves to eat in order that they may forget them. And Mrs. Lyster's substitution of the past for the present is at this moment a great boon, a source of comfort and not of annoyance. Nor is all her talk mere foolish babblement. The distress to her daughter lay in the constant repetition, the incessant flow. Her mind was stronger at some times than at others. She and Mrs. Fane knew a great many of the same places and the same people, and have a great deal to talk about. And if Mrs. Lyster's garrulousness displays itself even now, if the mention of every fresh name is like the opening of a sluice, like the striking of the rock by Moses, it helps to pass away the time, so that when they rise from the table it is after two o'clock. And now they are left by themselves again, and there is no sound but the creaking of the punkah within and the moaning

of the fiery blast without, and Mrs. Lyster's talk, until the old lady, leaning up against her daughter, falls asleep in the middle of a sentence. The daughter tenderly supports her, and looks down on her as if she were a little child. It is a touching sight. And so the moments pass by, as they do whether they be joy-laden or sorrow-fraught.

Colonel Grey had been sent down to the Jumoo Gate with three companies of his men, the Grenadiers, and a couple of guns. He had found that the 66th had mutinied, and marched off to the city. He could do nothing more than hold the gateway, all he had orders to do. He had sent information of what had happened to the Brigadier. The bodies of the dead officers had been brought in from the road where they fell. Then came a period of waiting. And now in the wide enclosure of the Jumoo Gate are drawn up the men of the 76th who form the guard there, the company of the 66th, the three companies of the Grenadiers, and four guns, 6-pounders. Most of the officers sitting or standing still there, in the midst of the terrible heat, had fallen into a sort of dreamy unconsciousness, when they were aroused from it by the rattle of musketry. It comes from the city. What can it mean? Can it be the English troops from Abdoolapore? Colonel Grey sends a man out to discover. He returns to report that the mutineers are attacking the Arsenal. There is plenty of excitement now—among the Englishmen of one kind, among the natives of another.

Mrs. Fane has fallen to thinking of her husband. Of course he will have to remain on in the Arsenal. What is likely to happen there? The wind is moaning and sighing round the little building with a measured rise and fall. The distant rattle of musketry—what can it be? The English troops from Abdoolapore? Every one's thoughts ran in that direction. But surely that firing is near—within the town itself; no, it is far away, without it; no, it is near; and then, listening attentively, Mrs. Fane becomes convinced that it is stationary, and near, within the town, its apparent difference in position and varying intensity due to the rise and fall of the wind which is blowing toward it. Then as she listens a thought arises within her to which the sound of the firing of heavy guns seems to her to lend undoubted confirmation. She rises from her chair and goes out into the verandah—careless of the frightful heat there. Yes; it is even as she thought. The firing is at the Arsenal, she knows the position of it well. She hurries back into the room, and going up

to the door of the bedroom whither the girls have retired again, she calls out to them, 'They are attacking the magazine.' And the burning pavement beneath their feet, and the fiery, blinding, blistering sunlight, and the hot wind are forgotten as the mother and daughters stand with their eyes fixed on the spot where the husband and father is defending his post, and is at this moment, at this next moment, now, in deadly peril of his life.

Hay comes hurrying up to give them the information, but sees that they know it, and he stands there for a short time with his eyes too fixed on the spot from which the heavy clouds of smoke are drifting away, and where the rapid firing of the heavy guns, even more than the continued rattle of the musketry, tells how hot the fight is: and then he has to hurry down again. And the mother and daughters continue to gaze at those clouds of smoke, to listen to the terrible music of war, with fearful, absorbed, fixed attention. And then they feel a sudden shock, and the air is rent with a terrible noise, and the tall wall trembles under them. A sudden, deep, appalling silence succeeds. And now in the place of the drifting dun-coloured clouds stands one tall black solid column of smoke. 'The magazine has blown up!' says Mrs. Fane in a strange set voice, as if when standing on a rock and looking at the vessel which carries all you love struggling amid the seething waves, she suddenly disappears and you exclaim, 'She has sunk—the vessel has sunk!' And then, in a high voice, in which sorrow and exultation are strangely blended, she calls out, 'He has blown it up himself. Your father has blown up the magazine to prevent it from being taken. I know it.'

The two girls gaze at that black monumental column with an overpowering sensation of awe, which leaves no room for any other feeling: regret and sorrow and pride must come hereafter. Then Mrs. Fane can bear the sight no longer, and turns round and rushes into the house and into the inner room, and her daughters follow her. And in the enclosure below the sound of the explosion has caused a great commotion among the white-faced officers and their dark-faced men. The sepoy of the 66th break their ranks and huddle into a crowd, and it is only by pointing to the guns that the English officers can get their words of command obeyed; and when some men who have been near the magazine are admitted into the enclosure and make the exaggerated statement that the whole of their regiment has been blown away by the explosion, the men of this remaining company openly curse

those who have thus destroyed their brethren. Many European fugitives—men, women, and children—are now gathered together in the enclosure. The arrival of each party is the source of fresh excitement, for many have terrible tales to tell. Parents arrive without their children, children without their parents. Women rush in panting, breathless, mad with terror, covered with dust, with torn clothing and dishevelled hair, wounded and bleeding. Dying people are brought in and laid down to die. The work of murder and plunder is now very active in the English quarter. Then an order comes from the Brigadier to send back two of the guns to the cantonment, and they are despatched; and then they come back again, without the English officer: they had met a party of the Nuwâb's troops, who had treacherously shot him, and then the native artillerymen had retreated with the guns. And so the time passes by.

The sun is now far down on his declining course, and the wind which has risen with his rise is now falling with his fall. The western battlement is beginning to cast a broad shadow upon the level enclosure. And now comes an order from the Brigadier that Colonel Grey is to join him on the ridge with all the troops and guns now at the gateway here. Colonel Grey does not like this: he does not like to withdraw from the Jumoo Gate; he knows that it means the abandonment of the city. But the order is peremptory; the officer who brings it informs Grey that the Brigadier is apprehensive for the safety of the crowd of English women and children whose charge has weighed upon him so heavily all that day, as the sepoys with him have begun to show an open spirit of disaffection. Grey prepares, therefore, to march up to the ridge at once. He has, of course, to take all the English folk with him. As many of the English women and children, and wounded Englishmen, as can be accommodated that way are to be taken on the gun-carriages. Hay hurries up and brings down the party from his quarters. Colonel Grey's own Grenadiers being nearest the outer, or cantonment-ward gateway, he marches them out first. They have got through the gateway and across the drawbridge and a little way beyond it. The men of the 66th are to follow. But these seize and close the gates. And then a scene of indescribable confusion ensues within the enclosure. The sepoys there fire at their officers, rush on the guns. The guns are not ready for action: they have been limbered up preparatory to moving away; the artillerymen are taken unawares; the two English officers in

charge of the guns are both shot down: they had not been prepared for such an attack, had just given the order to march. And now the men of the 76th, Hay's men, join with those of the 66th who have executed this clever stroke, and the sepoy are masters of the gateway, and through the enclosure rings the cry of 'Slay the Feringhees! Slay the Feringhees!'

When they had descended from the officers' quarters Mrs. Lyster and her daughter and Mrs. Fane and Beatrice had been placed together on two gun-carriages, while Captain Tucker, who was arranging for the conveyance of the women from the place, had conducted Lilian to a third one, and placed her in one of its seats. The seat on the other side was occupied by a wounded commissariat sergeant. As Mrs. Fane takes her seat by the side of the gun her heavy burden of sorrow for the loss of her husband is lightened for the moment by the thought that her daughters are about to pass out of the horrid doomed circuit of the city walls. Then comes the sudden, confusing, dazing horror and surprise of this most unexpected outbreak of the sepoy. Their ears are filled with dreadful cries, their eyes see terrible sights. And then those four find themselves standing together again, they know not how—it seems as if they had come through some confused dream of horror, some horrible nightmare—in the open space at the foot of the ramp leading up to the officers' quarters which they have just descended. This corner of the enclosure is quite empty; the sepoy have all compacted themselves into the space between the two gateways on the opposite side. There the sepoy have thrown themselves upon the guns from which the ladies have just rushed away; there they are busy slaying the English 'dogs.' They all find themselves standing together again, William Hay as well as Mrs. Lyster and her daughter, and Mrs. Fane and Beatrice. The excellence of Hay's character had now stood him in good stead: he had always been just and kindly in his dealings with his men, never harsh, or cruel, or unjust, and now they had refrained from hurting him. But where is Lilian? They look with eager, fearful eyes towards the seething crowd from which come forth shrieks of agony and fear, shouts of hellish triumph, and Hay is just about to rush toward it to seek for her, when Lilian's slight, childish figure emerges from the edge of the mass of men, and she rushes towards them with her garments streaming far behind her.

She has gone through the most here. When the sepoy of the 66th had rushed at the gun on which she was seated, one of

them had raised his musket and put its muzzle to her temple preparatory to shooting her through the head: actually applied it to her temple—to the saving of her life; for the fearful touch of it sent her tumbling headlong off the seat, and she being now out of the way, the sepoy fired the bullet intended for her through the head of the poor wounded sergeant beyond. She had then scrambled up and rushed forward, and been thrown down again, either by a blow or a collision, and trampled upon—she the slender, delicate girl. She had jumped up again, half choked and blinded by the dust which was now rising thick under the scuffling feet. She had darted forward straight before her, and given a joyful cry when she saw Captain Tucker close in front of her, saw him looming high above the crowd: he was a very tall, thin man, and rode a very lean, tall horse—the combination was one of the jokes of the station. Lilian has often ridden by his side, as she has often danced with him, knows him very well. She was making her way toward him, when a sudden swaying of the crowd had opened out a clear space between them; she had been about to shout to him to attract his attention—she was behind the horse, the rider had his back to her—about to rush forward across the open space and get to his stirrup, when Captain Tucker threw up his arms and fell from the saddle, rolled along the ground right up to her feet, and stretched himself out there dead. She leaped mechanically over the body and rushed forward again. Then she saw her mother and sister, and Hay rushing forward had met her.

The white dresses of the ladies catch the eye, so they are soon joined by some other English people, among whom is Dr. Brodie, Lilian Fane's aged lover.

'Up to my quarters again,' cries Hay. 'We must get on to the wall. It is our only chance.'

They begin to move up the ramp, to run up it as fast as they can. The movement is observed. The sepoys send a volley after them, and many fall never to rise again. Hay falls, but he jumps up so quickly that Beatrice, by whose side he is running, thinks that he has only stumbled. But when they have reached the front of the little house and stopped she sees how pale he is, observes a curious look on his face, the look that is on the face of every man the first time he is wounded, and exclaims, 'What is the matter, William?'

'I am hit.'

‘Hit?’

‘Yes; in the arm,’ and as he lifts his left arm, she sees the blood come trickling from under the sleeve of his jacket and across the back of his hand.

‘Oh, William! Wounded! Oh, William! Oh!’ cries Beatrice, distractedly, wringing her hands. ‘Oh, mother!’

‘What is it, Beatrice?’ cries Mrs. Fane anxiously, as she comes hurrying up. ‘You are not hurt?’

‘No—no—but William. He is wounded.’

‘Dr. Brodie, come here! Mr. Hay is wounded,’ says Mrs. Fane, her usual commanding mode of speech rendered more abrupt by her distressed condition of mind.

‘Are ye hurt, mon? Where are ye hurt, mon? Come, tell us quick. The sepoy will be after us soon,’ cries old Brodie hurriedly.

‘The left arm,’ says Hay faintly, because he has not yet recovered from the shock of the blow, and also because he has a fear that he may lose his arm; a gunshot wound is apt to be staggering, especially the first time.

Brodie hastily removes the uniform jacket, and rolling up the bloody shirt-sleeve, at sight of which Beatrice shudders, looks at the wound.

‘A bad, a vera bad wound. But the bone is not broken. That is vera fortunate. We could na have stayed here setting a bone, when the sepoy may be up here any minute.’

That speech arouses Hay, and makes him forget his hurt.

‘Yes—we must not remain here—never mind me,’ he says.

‘Some water—quick!’ cries old Brodie aloud, and then as it were to himself, ‘It will na be vera long before the sepoy are up here.’

Beatrice flies into the room and comes back with a water-vessel.

‘Give me his handkerchief out of his pocket. I will apply a tourniquet.’

Beatrice, gazing with deep sorrow and pity at Hay’s face, sees from the expression of it what terrible pain he is suffering—it is curious how the face will display the emotions, even against the will—but still he keeps saying, ‘Quick, Brodie, quick—we must not remain here any longer.’

It is obvious that they are under observation of the sepoy below, for bullets continually strike the face of the building or go

pinging over their heads: and now they hear a curious singing noise among them, and a round shot strikes one of the pillars of the verandah with a terrible crash. They rush away from the house along the wall until they come to a large circular bastion, the same in which Mrs. Lyster had twanged her guitar on a moonlight night so many years before, and which she is now revisiting under such very different circumstances. Within the ample round of this they are withdrawn from the observation of the sepoy below and stop to hold a hurried consultation. They can run along the top of the wall, but if they are pursued they must be taken. And then they will be within the city still.

‘That is our only way of escape,’ cries a young officer who has joined them, pointing down the wall. ‘And I will jump over sooner than let those mutinous scoundrels kill me.’

‘It is certain death,’ says Hay, looking down the giddy height. ‘If we only had a rope. Why should we not get a rope—make a rope? I have some long pugarees and cummerbunds—there are the punkah ropes.’

‘We have na time for a’ that,’ cries old Brodie impatiently. ‘The sepoy—’

But Hay has rushed to his quarters, and soon comes rushing back. The punkah ropes are long: they and the cummerbunds and pugarees are soon knotted together. The improvised rope reaches well to the foot of the wall. But now arises a curious question. Who is to be let down first? It is a dubious privilege, for the person let down first would put the power of the knots to hold, of the rope to bear, to the test. If it gives way high up the fall will mean certain death, an immediate or a lingering death. It is a strange dilemma. It was not magnanimous, in the momentary expectation of the arrival of the sepoy, to wish to be the first to leave the place, and yet it was magnanimous to wish to be the first to test the rope.

Dr. Brodie was old and rich, and I do not think he cared to be the first to put the capability of the rope to trial: in fact his thought was that Mrs. Lyster should be put to use for the purpose. The young officer—his name was Hamilton—was ready enough to go down first: ‘But I should not be able to come up again,’ he says. He was stout and heavy. All the men were wanted above in order to lower the ladies, who could not slip down the rope as the men could. They would have to be slung on to it. The mothers would have liked their daughters, the daughters their mothers, to be the

first out of the place, but they did not wish them to be the first to make trial of the rope. Miss Lyster would have been ready enough to make the experiment, but she is haunted by the thought that her mother may refuse to descend at all : how terrible it would be for her to be at the foot of the wall unable to reascend, while her mother was at the top refusing to descend ! No one likes to propose anything with regard to anyone else. Hay had a difficulty similar to that of Hamilton. 'I used to be a good hand at this sort of thing, but I am afraid that I may not be able to come up again with this wounded arm.'

'Let me down first,' says Beatrice. 'I am the heaviest'—meaning of the women—'and if the rope bears me it will bear any one else.'

'No, no,' cries Hay. 'I used to be very good at going up or down a rope ; my arm shall not prevent me from coming up again.'

I would again remind the reader how much faster thoughts flow through the mind and words out of the mouth than they can be written or read. Hay has slipped over the edge of the wall—Beatrice turning her face away from the giddy height with a shudder—and then down the rope, and comes very quickly up the latter again, putting his feet against the wall, but his arm has given him terrible pain in doing so. 'It is all right,' he says. 'And now we will send Lilian down first. There is no time to be lost.' Lilian is lowered safely, and then Beatrice, and then Mrs. Fane. Now comes Mrs. Lyster's turn, and her daughter's heart stands still. An immovable obstinacy is part of the old lady's disease ; arguments only serve to weld her determination. If she says she will not descend the wall, nothing will make her ; if they speak harshly to her it may throw her into a fit. Great is the power of infirmity. What fancy may not enter into her poor weak brain at this moment. Luckily it is one that makes her ready and eager to be lowered. As they are putting the rope under her arms she laughs. 'This is very amusing,' she says. 'You remember that song, Mary, "When a lady elopes down a ladder of ropes,"' and they launch her into the air. Then the men slip down, Hay coming down last. How the hearts of the women beat with joy as they find themselves standing safe and sound at the foot of the wall : beat with a double joy at the thought of having got out of the city, and of having got safely down the wall ! The being launched into the air at that giddy height, the being lowered down with

the thought that the rope might give way any moment, had not been a pleasant experience. They shudder as they gaze up at the height of the wall, as they had shuddered when they had looked down it. They are out of the city: delightful and wonderful fact! They are not yet out of danger, they are within easy shot of any one on the top of the wall. But they have only the ditch to get across, and then the open land lies before them. They have soon slid down the escarp, the inner slope of the moat; they have soon run across the dry bottom; they have soon reached the foot of the outer slope, the counterscarp, and have only to get up it. They find they cannot manage this, try as hard as they may; and they try very hard, for the sepoy may at any moment appear on the top of the wall and fire down on them.

As already noted, the sides of the ditch had a very steep incline, and the fierce sunshine has baked them dry, and it and the fiery gales have reduced the herbage on the slope to a short dry stubble, which makes it very slippery. They can maintain no foothold on it, there is no softness in it, nothing to catch or grasp. They go up a little way and then slip down again. The men make furious rushes at it; they get a long way up; they get almost to the top; and then they come down again. Here was a most unexpected, a most maddening stoppage. And the sepoy may appear on the top of the wall, in the bastion, at any moment. Of those of the party who survived to look back on the events of this day there were many who thought the worst moments during it had been those in which they had tried ineffectually to climb the side of the ditch. But now Hay makes a desperate rush at the slope and manages to get almost to the top, then throwing himself forward, he gets his hand on the hard edge, and sustains himself, and then draws himself up. The improvised rope has of course been left dangling from the wall. But he lets down his sash, and Hamilton has dug a foothold in the declivity as high as he can reach with the point of his sword; and so, what between pushing and pulling—how they would have laughed at any other time! (but it was no laughing matter now, when they expected that at any moment a shot from the wall might lay them dead or wounded in the bottom of the ditch)—the ladies are got up the slope at last, and they hurry away from the horrid declivity as fast as they can. The sun has sunk, but the air is still full of the bright afterglow.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH.

THEY hurry across the open ground that lies between the edge of the ditch and a road which here runs almost parallel to the battlement from which they have just descended. If they follow this road in one direction, it will bring them to the cantonment by way of the Mall; if they follow it in the other, it will also conduct them to the cantonment, but by a more circuitous and unfrequented route. The unfrequentedness is a greater recommendation than the circuitousness is a drawback. So they turn their faces to the northward, and not to the southward, and hurry along. Strange to think that they should be hurrying fearfully along a road over which many of them had moved that morning, in lordly leisure, with as little thought of danger as if they had been in Rotten Row. But they meet no one on the road except a few boys and girls, who gaze curiously at them. And now the Gothic turrets of Melvil Hall, which lies upon this road, come in view above the tops of the trees. The women look eagerly towards the house as towards a place of refuge and safety. Mrs. Fane has been walking with Mrs. Lyster, and the latter has been prattling away, when she stops suddenly in the middle of a sentence, and Mrs. Fane, turning towards her, sees a strange look come over her face, hears a strange gurgle from her lips, and then the poor old lady drops down on the road in a fit.

Mrs. Fane calls out; Miss Lyster runs back to her mother. At this very moment a man comes out from the wicket of a little garden by the side of the road, and says:—

‘Look! You must run into my orchard. Many people are advancing up that lane’—pointing to one that entered the road just at the corner of the orchard—‘and if you fall into their hands they will kill you. They have killed some English people in this neighbourhood, and plundered their houses.’

‘Lift her up, Hay,’ says Dr. Brodie, who has been bending over the afflicted woman; and he and Hay lift her up and carry her a few yards easily enough, she is so light; but then comes a sudden fierce convulsion, and they cannot hold her, and have to lay her down again on the road.

‘You must leave her here,’ cries the native, the owner of the orchard.

But they cannot do that. Again they lift her up and carry her a few yards, and again comes the fierce unnatural exertion of strength, still in the East attributed to demoniacal agency, which they cannot cope with. She twists herself out of their hands. And now they can hear the shouts and cries of the approaching crowd of natives—hear their laughter. Its murdering and plundering have made it merry. (Laughter is said to be due to a sudden sense of superiority; certainly nothing arouses that sense of superiority so greatly as slaying a man and taking possession of his goods.) It is a terrible moment.

‘Grip her tight, mon,’ cries Dr. Brodie excitedly; and he and Hay lift her up, though with great difficulty, and with great difficulty have carried her a few yards further on, when the terrible struggling suddenly ceases, and she becomes quite still; an utter relaxation takes the place of the former rigidity; the fiercely thrown-about arms drop down straight; and the difficulty they have in carrying her now is not due to the over-activity of the frame, but to its utter inertness, to its sheer, dead, downward weight—the terrible weight of lifelessness.

‘She is dead,’ says Brodie. ‘They often die in a fit like this;’ and they lay her down at the foot of the tree they are passing under.

‘Oh, mother! mother!’ cries Miss Lyster, flinging herself down on her knees by the side of the body, and wringing her clasped hands. ‘Oh! she is not dead.’

‘As good as,’ says the doctor. ‘Get up, Miss Lyster, you can do her no good now.’ And he takes the kneeling woman by the arm, but she refuses to rise.

‘I cannot leave her! I cannot!’ she cries.

The loud ‘Hye, hye’s!’ and ‘Ha, ha’s!’ of the crowd now fall terribly on their ears.

‘You cannot remain here,’ says old Brodie roughly. ‘You are endangering your own life and ours’—and, seizing her by the arm, he pulls her up by main force; he was a tall, powerful Scotchman, with a gaunt, bony frame. After all, it is hard to be killed when you have made a large fortune, and are just about to return to your native land with it. And the orchard wicket is so close. ‘Take her other arm,’ he cries to young Hamilton, who is standing near, and he seizing her other arm,

they run her between them up to the wicket, and pass in through it.

And now they can hear the tramp of the advancing crowd as it comes nearer, along the lane. Everyone has passed in through the wicket, which is very narrow, and only admits one person at a time, and the gardener is about to close it when Miss Lyster slips by him and runs back to the place where her mother is lying.

Hay jumps forward to go after her, but the gardener has closed and bolted the wicket.

‘Open it!’ says Hay:

‘What for? What profit will it be your going after her? You cannot do her any good—not if all three of you gentlemen went after her. You would all three be killed. That is all.’

‘I must bring her back. Open the door!’ cries Hay passionately, and trying to move the man aside.

‘Speak low! Be silent!’ cries the native; and Lilian, with her nerves outworn by the terrible events, the terrible sights and sounds, the terrible apprehensions of that day, gives a jump, and even firm-hearted Mrs. Fane starts violently as there is a sudden roar from the crowd, evidently at sight of the two women in the road.

The hellish rushing crowd is now within a few yards of themselves—is separated from them only by a couple of rows of fruit-trees and the cactus hedge encompassing the orchard.

‘You could not get near them now: the crowd is round them.’ His listeners shudder. ‘You are only endangering the lives of these other women too,’ says the gardener, as Hay again puts his hand on his shoulder, as if to thrust him aside. ‘If you stand here any longer you will all be killed. They will be sure to come to the wicket, and there would be no difficulty in their bursting it open. Come behind me—quick!’

‘Give me your arm, William,’ cries Beatrice, claiming for his sake that help she would not have claimed for her own.

Then, as they run swiftly along the walk which runs down the middle of the orchard, the gardener says:—

‘You must get out of the garden as soon as you can. Those children of Satan will be sure to make search for you. They will be sure to think that those other two ladies would not have been by themselves.’ He leads them to the gate at the opposite end of the garden. They are in the lane the crowd has passed up.

‘Now run,’ says the friendly owner of the orchard, which has been of such use to them.

‘We will not forget what you have done for us,’ says Hay, as they move quickly away.

To their delight they find that the lane brings them to the wide-spread grounds of Melvil Hall, though on the opposite side to that to which the high road—that now terrible high road—would have conducted them.

‘If I find you can remain here safely, I will go back and see what has become of her,’ says Hay, as they pass in at the gateway. ‘I must go back, or I should never have a happy day in my life again.’

‘Oh! this is terrible,’ cries Beatrice, clinging to his arm.

They pass along under the beautiful avenue, some of the trees in which are casting a sweet fragrance into the air. How delightfully cool and fresh that air is now! They are walking up the slight acclivity on the crest of which the mansion stands, when the gardener enters the avenue from a side path, and seeing them, utters an exclamation, and stops them.

‘You must not go up to the front of the house,’ he says; ‘there are many people, people of all sorts, standing there. Follow me.’

He brings them to the line of lower rooms which had been built up from the front of the declivity in order to form a terrace in front of the side of the house which faced it, and one of which is used as a billiard-room. Into this he leads them. ‘I will go and fetch the khansaman-jee’ (the ‘Sir Butler’), he says.

When that venerable servitor, who has passed the whole of his life—all but the first fourteen years of it—in the service of the Melvil family, enters the room, he is in a state of terrible agitation.

‘What a twirl of the world is this!’ exclaims the old man, as he makes them the profound yet graceful and dignified salaam which has been one of his accomplishments. ‘My master, Melvil Sahib, the Commissioner Sahib, a prisoner!’

‘A prisoner!’ cries Hay.

‘Yes, my master, the Commissioner Sahib, Melvil Sahib, a prisoner! Who could have thought such a thing possible?’

‘Where?’

‘In the palace of the Nuwâb. And here are people coming to plunder this house—the Commissioner’s house—Mr. Melvil’s

house—the house in which I have lived for over forty years. They are coming now—a great crowd of people.’

‘It must be the same crowd,’ says Hay, looking round at the others.

‘And some of the servants are proving unfaithful to their salt. The coachman says that he will take the big carriage with the pair of horses belonging to it. He says it is his right.’

‘We want something to eat and drink,’ cries Hay, interrupting him.

‘But you cannot remain here, sir. They have been killing all the English people. What a turn of the world is this! And they will kill you too if they find you here.’

‘They have not arrived yet?’

‘No; but they are not very far off.’

‘Well, bring us down something to eat and drink at once. We must have something—the ladies are faint. Bring us plenty of cold water,’ says Hay.

‘And some beer,’ says Hamilton. ‘I suppose you have some cooled?’

‘Plenty.’

‘Quick, then—quick.’

After a while the old man returns, accompanied by a khid-mutgar (literally, ‘serving-man’), and they carry two big trays, on which are cold meat and bread and butter and biscuits, and other eatables, and they bring down several bottles of iced water and several bottles of iced beer. How delicious is the fragrance of the latter as the old man draws the corks! I have drunk many a tankard of cool ale in this our native land with a sensation of great delight, but the drinking of a glass of Bass’s pale ale, iced, in India in the hot weather, is an orgasm! How it diffuses itself through you! How it revives and re-invigorates you! It would produce a soul under the ribs of death. The clean, wholesome, hoppy perfume! What bouquet of what wine ever equalled it? And as you hold the glass lovingly up before you, what ruby or purple of what wine ever equalled that amber tint? The ‘beaded bubbles winking at the brim’ of a glass of champagne, what are they compared to that tender froth? Many of our poets have celebrated the praises of this our national drink; to what a height would their strains have risen had they ever enjoyed a glass of it at the end of a long hot day in India! Old Brodie insists that the ladies too shall

partake of the refreshing, strengthening, tonic draught. And they eat and drink very quickly, for they are very hungry and very thirsty; they eat and drink very quickly, for the old khansaman earnestly urges them to do so.

‘Very different meal this from the last one we had here,’ says Hamilton, speaking, as clearly as he can with his mouth so full, to Lilian. A very good meal in its way, but still very different. In place of the blaze of the innumerable candles, the flickering of a single common oil lamp; in place of the dainty and magnificent appointments of the table, nothing at all, their plates on their knees, their glasses on the billiard table; in place of the long row of guests with their bright, proud, happy, cheerful faces, their bright uniforms, their dainty fresh white evening dresses, *they*, with their dirty, grimy hands and faces, with their dust-filled hair and their bedraggled garments, which clung so clammy about them, with their sorrowful, anxious faces. The changed condition of their clothing they can see and feel; the changed condition of their faces they can see mirrored in the faces of those around them. But now the old khansaman is very urgent with them to be gone.

‘We had better take the advice of the immortal Captain Dalgetty, and lay in provender while we can,’ says Hay, and he takes another glass of beer, swallows it at a gulp, and puts some bread and cold meat into his pockets. They move with quick feet across the lawn, where so few nights before their footsteps had been hurried only by the music. They steal anxiously along the walks over which they had wandered in such perfect security and high delight, without any thought of danger, on that festive occasion which was so recent to them this morning, and seems so far away to them now. The night has come, and the long avenues, then so brightly lighted, are now dark to the eye as well as to the heart. But they welcome that darkness, for the yells and shouts proclaim that the marauders have reached the Hall and begun the work of plunder—have asserted their dominion over the place. They quicken their already by no means tardy footsteps.

‘They have begun to loot the house,’ cries the old khansaman, with quavering voice. ‘They will break all the things in it—the beautiful things—the china and glass, of which I have had charge for over thirty years now. It is for so long a period as that that I have been khansaman here.’ That eleventh of May

was a distressful day to many different people in many different ways.

They have arrived at the gateway on the west, or cantonment-ward, side of the grounds. This places them once more on the road they had parted from so short a time before; under circumstances on which none of them dare look back. The brief, bright afterglow has faded away and left the world quite dark. It is inky black under the avenues of umbrageous trees, with interlacing boughs, which border the road on either hand. As the fugitives move along in the soothing coolness and sheltering darkness of one of these avenues each one of them falls into a reverie. A dead silence reigns around them; they are not disturbed by the present, so they begin to recall the past, and to forecast the future, the future on which the immediate past must have so great an influence. (Strange that the mind should derive so much misery from the past which is dead and the future which has no existence! How lucky it is that the flesh does not remember or forbode—that our bodily pains are of to-day and not of yesterday or to-morrow; that the tooth does not ache in remembrance or by anticipation.) Old Dr. Brodie broods over the plunder of the bank, which may mean so great a loss to him. William Hay is reflecting with bitterness on the mutiny of his men. The tears run silently down her cheeks, flowing now for the first time, as Mrs. Fane mourns for her husband, notwithstanding the glorious manner of his death. What is she to do now? The thought is a perfectly legitimate one, and Mrs. Fane entertains it as much for the sake of her children as her own. But it is curious how much our concern for others, even those nearest and dearest to us, is connected rather with ourselves than with them. David did not mourn for the lost man Jonathan, but for his lost son Jonathan. And Beatrice is mourning for her father, the noble and the kindly, if also the affected, of whom she was so fond and proud. And she mourns for her wedding dress. There was no want of feeling, no defect of filial piety in this. The big things of the next world and the small things of this, the eternal verities and the small everyday verities, stand together in dramatic juxtaposition. You may mourn deeply for the father or mother, daughter or son, brother or sister, who died last night, but you must brush your hair this morning, see to its parting. Lilian, too, mourns for her father, whom she so greatly loved and admired, and the ghastly face of poor dead Tommy Walton rises up before her. They are startled

from their reveries by a voice crying out of the darkness, '*Koun log?*' ('What people?')

'Who are you?' Hay calls in return.

'That is enough—you are Feringhees. Do not go on to the cantonment.'

'Why not?'

'It is in possession of the sepoy. The English people have fled from it. The evil-livers of the city have all gone out to it to plunder it.'

'But who are you?'

'What does it matter? *Bunda Khoda*' ('Servant of God'—the usual signature to anonymous documents), 'do not go on to the cantonment if you wish to preserve your lives. You had better get down into the low lands of the Jumna. Turn into the first road leading to the right; that will take you down to it.'

'Come and let us see who you are. Come and show us the way.'

But there is no answer. They have seen no one; that is not to be wondered at, the darkness is so thick; they have heard no footsteps; the man might have been squatted down somewhere, might have sped away noiselessly on his naked feet. At all events, the voice came out of the darkness and has vanished away into the darkness. They hear it no more.

As they move onward they discuss what they have heard, almost determine not to go on to the cantonment, and keep a sharp look-out for the road to the right. And now they have arrived at the channel which relieves the main canal, from which the water-courses running into the town are supplied, of its surplus water and carries it off to the Jumna. They cannot forgo the chance of enjoying the delight of washing their hands and faces. Before crossing the bridge that spans the stream they move down the bank a little, and then descend to the water's edge. Fortunate that they did so. For now along the hard, metalled road ahead of them comes the sharp clang of horses' hoofs, the sharp, commingled clatter of many horses' hoofs, that sound, so difficult to describe in words, which arises from the movement of many horses together. It comes nearer and nearer, and now a hollower sound tells that the horsemen are upon the bridge, and those down below pause in the lavement of their hands, and looking up see the bridge crowded from end to end with horses and horsemen; they stand out clear

against the sky, now brightening with the rising moon. The hearts of the women leap into their mouths. Will they be seen? Surely they must be, with their white clothing and so large a group of them. But they are not. The thoughts, as well as the eyes, of the horsemen are turned upon the city toward which they are hastening, and above which they note a gleam instead of the usual glimmer, and know that the usual feeble illumination by means of lamps has this night been supplemented by the strong light from the burning bungalows of the English.

Their attention was the more strongly directed that way because hitherto the thickly-wooded banks of the escape channel had lain between them and the city; it was on crossing the bridge that they had a clear open view toward it. And though the moon was rising it was still very dark down below in the narrow deep channel, with its thickly-wooded banks. The body of horsemen has passed on with its confused clatter of hoofs and its confused sound of men's voices. The continually increasing silence affects the fugitives like a material thing, like a substantial pleasure, like a tangible gain: it is to them like food, like gold; what food would be to the starving man and gold to the beggar. When it has become complete and full they breathe freely once more. Hay offers up a silent prayer. Had they kept on straight across the bridge they must have met the horsemen face to face. That might have meant immediate death for some; it might have meant worse than death for others.

Crossing the bridge with a curious feeling they pursue their way. They have come now to the end of the fruitful, tree-covered tract, and a wide stretch of the open, barren, denuded land which borders the valley of the Jumna stretches far before them, and looking across this they see a red glow in the sky. That is the west, and so it is not the glow of the rising moon. It is the light of a conflagration, and that is the direction in which the cantonment lies; it is the glare of their burning bungalows. Old Brodie groans. He owns a great many of the bungalows in the cantonment, as he does in many other cantonments. This is a day of severe loss to him. And as they advance towards it the gleam becomes higher and brighter, higher and brighter to a degree which the short distance they have traversed cannot account for. The conflagration must be fast increasing. And when they come to the road that runs off to the right, that increasing brightness adds force to the advice of the voice from out the darkness, and they

finally determine to follow it, the advice, and the road. They soon arrive at the edge of the reticulation of ravines which lies between the margin of the valley of the river and the high lands above. The night sounds have begun : the weird, unearthly, demoniacal yelling of the jackals ; the baying of the dogs in the villages ; the harsh cry of the peafowl disturbed in their roosting places ; the hooting of owls and the scream of the night-jar. These ravines are very much the haunt of wild beasts, and they hear the horrible laugh of the hyæna not far off, and a couple of wolves go across the road in front of them, with long, smooth, lolling gallop, and a switching of tails.

And now they can see far around them, far over the treeless, broken, barren ground, and looking to the right they see the glow that marks the position of the city, the dwelling-place of the ancient ruling race ; and looking to the left they see the glare that marks the position of 'the cantonment,' the dwelling-place of the latest conquering race ; and behind them are dark masses of trees, and before them seems nothingness, they seem to be looking, that way, into infinite space. They are in fact looking over the wide shallow trough, or valley, of the river. By this time the moon has raised her huge red disc some distance above the horizon, and flooded the high land and the low land with her silvery light. The road begins to descend, and after winding for some time through the valleys of the ravines, brings them to the edge of the sacred stream, to the margin of the much-worshipped Jumna. They know that the water here can be of no great depth, for the main stream of the river runs, just now, under the opposite bank of the valley, more than a mile away. But still Hay thinks it better to try the stream before letting the ladies go in, and so he wades across it and back. It is nowhere more than knee-deep. But there is another danger connected with the sacred stream besides that of drowning : it abounds with alligators ; and only a few days before the talk of the station had been about the quantity of jewellery, anklets, and bangles, and finger-rings, and toe-rings, the jewellery of women and children, that had been found in the stomach of a monstrous specimen of the class shot by an officer. And so the girls splash across the water with no pleasant feelings.

This trough or valley of the Jumna, cut out by the stream and in which it oscillates, is a region of a peculiar character, a wild and uninhabited region, and is made up of the present and

past channels of the river, with their wide stretches of dry sand, and the quagmires and morasses, the occasional patches of cultivation, the long reaches covered with tall grass or the thick-growing tamarisk, which lie between those channels. The road they are on is simply an earthen track. After they have been walking for some time they find themselves at the edge of a morass, across which there is no sign of a road, where the track ceases to have any further existence. They must have got off the cart track, as was easy enough to do, for it was not everywhere very clearly defined, and there were many other tracks. In fact they find themselves in the midst of a labyrinth of tracks, cattle tracks, for the valley is a great grazing ground, especially at this season of the year. One of these tracks conducts them to the edge of a quagmire; so does another; and another: in fact, most of the tracks lead to the morasses in which the buffaloes love to wallow, to the pools of water which they work up into quagmires. Then they take a track which leads them through the midst of a long stretch of the bushy tamarisk, whose branches cut them like whips, and where they disturb a huge sounder of wild pigs, and send them scuttling away. Now they have to push their way through tall dry crackling reeds, now through thorny bushes, bushes armed with terrible thorns, thorns curved and straight, thorns like hooks and daggers. And now the track they have chosen leads them to the edge of a sullen, impassable ditch; now across a dry jheel, where the little clay ripples crackle under their feet. Then the track leads them across a rudely cultivated tract, where the clods are as large and hard as boulders, and where the poor women, having only their thin house shoes on, suffer very much. And so they keep wandering about, but cannot find the wheeled track again.

Their physical energy is now very low. Brodie and Hamilton have begun to quarrel. What they had all gone through that day was enough to strain the powers of any one to the utmost. With some, the exhaustion is complete; they have begun to trench on the capital stock of existence, on the vital principle; they have begun, as it were, to devour themselves. They are overpowered by an intense and irresistible desire for sleep. It is said that the most cruel of all forms of torture is that of preventing a man from sleeping, keeping him awake until he dies. They must sleep, they must lie down and sleep, come what may. All thought of the past, all care for the future, is lost in that

want of the present, that overpowering desire for sleep. Hamilton stumbles over a clod with a curse.

'I cannot walk any farther,' he says. 'I must have a sleep. I do not care to find the road—damn it.' And he yawns a loud and prolonged yawn.

The two brave girls have said never a word, but Hay has observed how often Beatrice stumbles and staggers, and how frequently Lilian lags behind.

'It would have been as well to have got to the other side of the khadir' (valley of the river), he says, 'though I do not suppose we could have got out of it before morning. We could not have crossed the river by night. We must have slept on the bank of the main channel *there*, and we may as well sleep here. We must have slept in the open and on the bare ground. It is probably safer that we should not sleep too near a public road.'

'Oh, yes; this place will do very well,' says Hamilton, with another huge yawn. He would probably have lain down on the trunk of a tree laid across a roaring torrent, at the edge of a precipice.

'But we need not sleep in this rough field. That would not do for you,' says Hay to Beatrice tenderly.

A little way off is a sand ridge; and the clean dry slope of that will do very well; and they have soon reached it; and they have soon cast themselves down upon it, and they are all soon fast asleep—even the wife who has lost her husband, even the children who have lost their father, even the old man who has lost his money; they have all soon obtained oblivion and rest—active, waking, sentient life had been carried to the verge of endurance—all but Hay, who determines to keep watch, and lifting himself up when he knows the others are asleep, seats himself cross-legged.

And in the dead silence that now reigns around, the sound of their own movements ended, there fall upon his ear the twelve vibrations from the great palace gong—he can only hear the first strong strokes—that proclaim the midnight hour. He would rather have been out of hearing of the strokes altogether.

And so that memorable 11th of May, 1857, has come to an end. The fourth day of our tale has passed—we have gone through half our time.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WITH THE CATTLE LIFTERS.

‘WAH! what is this?’ cries a voice in Hindostanee. Hay leaps to his feet and draws his sword—all three men have their swords—and touches young Hamilton with his foot. ‘The gun has not fired yet,’ says the young fellow sleepily, thinking it is his bearer waking him for early morning parade. They are not out of sound of the piece, but its roar will not this morning proclaim the dominion of the English: that for a time has ended in Khizrabad. It is only the earliest dawn, but still it is light enough for Hay to see who the natives, there are four or five of them, are. They are Goojurs, members of a lawless, turbulent, predatory tribe which inhabits this upper length of the Jumna. Apart from peculiarities of dress, the men are easily recognisable by their strength and stature, and the wild fierceness of their look. And now, aroused by the voices of the natives, who are eagerly discussing the appearance of the party which they have so suddenly come upon, which they have put up like a covey of partridges, Hamilton and the others are on their feet too.

‘You have run away from Khizrabad,’ says one of the men, addressing Hay.

The words ‘run away’ do not sound pleasant, especially in English ears. But the man does not mean them to be unpleasant. He does not mean to jeer at them, or scoff at them, or triumph over them. He has used the simplest words descriptive of the simple fact. If he had ever had occasion to run away himself, he would have said simply, ‘I ran away.’

‘We have come from Khizrabad,’ says Hay.

‘You could not have come from anywhere else,’ says the man.

‘*Ufsur log*’ (‘Officers’), the other natives say to one another.

‘Will you come with us to our huts?’ goes on the man who is addressing Hay.

‘Your village?’

‘No; our *tanda*’ (kraal). ‘We have come down into the khadir to feed our herds of cattle. There are some English people at the huts already.’

‘English people! Where?’

‘At our huts. Two Englishmen.’

‘Who are they? What are their names?’ asks Hay eagerly.

‘I do not know their names. How should I? But they are army men like yourselves, and one of them has a glass eye.’

‘A glass eye,’ exclaims Hay, ‘a glass eye; I do not remember anyone with a glass eye.’

‘Will you come with us and join those other two?’

Hamilton and old Brodie are now both standing by Hay’s side, they too with their drawn swords in their hands.

‘What do you think?’ says Hay, turning towards them.

‘They may be wishing to lead us into a trap,’ says old Brodie, as he glances towards the sisters. He thinks the object of the men may be to get them, the girls, into their power. He wishes the women were not with them; he has wished so already, several times. It would have been so much easier for the men to fight, or, if it came to that, to run away, without them.

‘They do not look unfriendly,’ says Hay.

‘Do not be afraid,’ says the huge giant of a man—he looks like a bronze statue of Hercules as he stands there leaning on his club, the greater part of his person exposed full to view—with the plainness of speech already commented on. ‘We have no desire to injure you, or those with you,’ glancing at the women. ‘If we had, you could not prevent us. There are only two of you—the old fellow does not count—and our *luths*’ (clubs) ‘are as good as your swords—better.’ The long piece of male bamboo, heavily shod with iron at the end, on which he is leaning, is indeed a very lethal-looking weapon; it forms a combination of the mace and the quarter-staff of the middle ages. ‘We could easily overpower you.’

He does not mean to be offensive or wound their feelings, only to state the fact.

‘We should not mind fighting you if we had not the women with us,’ is what Hay would like to say, very much, but he cannot. He speaks to his companions in English.

‘Two more fellows would be a great addition to our strength. We could then hold our own—present a better front. And we may be of help to them.’ And then in Hindostanee to the man: ‘You have said you do not mean to hurt or injure us?’

‘I have said it.’

‘How far are your huts?’

‘About a mile off.’

‘Very good. We will go with you.’

He has decided.

They move through the strange tract, with its ever-changing yet permanent features, with much more ease than during the night-time. They are not whipped or stung by the tamarisk branches, or stabbed and torn by the thorns; they do not go stumbling over the clods in the fields, or have their feet sink into the slush of quagmires. But to the two sisters it often seemed that they would rather have been forcing their way through the bushes than have had these men hold the branches aside with such excessive care. The more pleasurable the men look upon them the less pleasurable do they find it. But their thoughts are diverted from themselves by taking part in the discussion as to who the man with the glass eye may be. They know no one in the station with a glass eye. No one of the party has ever heard of anyone in the place who had one. They know the faces of all the English people in the station, no matter to what class they belong. And the men were quite sure that this was a European, not an East Indian. Who can it be? they wonder over and over again.

‘It may be someone who was passing through the station.’

The temporary quarters of the herdsmen now come in view. The tanda, or kraal, is formed by two long parallel fences, and the rough grass sheds which connect their ends, the pen being about three times as long as wide. As they are approaching directly towards the back of one of the sheds they cannot see into the enclosure. They have reached the shed and go round its corner, and along the side of the high hedge to the opening, closed by a rude hurdle, leading into the yard. Dr. Brodie passes in through this, the only opening, with great misgiving. He does not like the looks of the men. (And, taking them altogether, they certainly are a most villainous-looking lot.)

And the sisters share in his apprehensions. The men seem to them very savage and cruel looking, though some of them had helped them assiduously, much too assiduously, they think, and cast on them looks of kindness, looks that were a great deal too kind, they thought. And certainly the long tangled locks and brushed-up mustachios and brushed-back whiskers of the men give them a very wild, fierce look. This big giant of a man with the hair growing so thick on his chest and arms, along his fingers and on his shoulder-blades, might stand for Orson. This short, squat fellow with the extraordinarily ugly countenance is a living, moving Caliban. It

would be easier to take them for bandits than honest herdsmen. They were in fact all robbers in the honourable way of cattle-lifting.

Hay and Mrs. Fane, walking together, enter the enclosure a little way behind the others. As they enter they see a man in English attire, but with a black face, seated in front of one of the grass sheds.

'That is the man with the glass eye,' says the herdsman walking with them.

'Oh, it is a half-caste,' says Mrs. Fane, in a disappointed, indifferent tone of voice. She looked down on half-castes.

But now the man rises from the bedstead in a quiet, leisurely way, and Mrs. Fane gives a strange half-smothered cry.

'What is this?' she cries, in a voice whose fearfulness and trembling is quite new in Hay's ears. Mrs. Fane's most striking outward characteristic was her calm, quiet, dignified, self-possessed, and perhaps somewhat too stately bearing. This was in some part artificial and assumed, but in most part natural and inherent. The strength of the acquired habit, the force of the natural quality, were such that they had withstood all the trials of the day before, even that of hearing the sound, seeing the smoke, of the great explosion which had slain her husband, so that Hay had marvelled at her self-possession. Now, hearing that strange quaver in her voice, he turns towards her, and is more than ever astonished to see that she is trembling violently, and that her eyes seem starting out of her head; then, remembering her usual lofty calmness and recalling to mind Mrs. Lyster's seizure of the day before, he begins to be alarmed also.

'This——' he says.

'He,' she says, pointing to the man by the bedstead.

Then, as the man begins to advance towards them, Mrs. Fane gives a strange gurgling cry, and gasping out, 'It is he!' Hay sees her dart towards the dark-faced man and clasp him in her arms, and Hay himself gives a jump as the well-known exclamations of 'Oh! Ah! Hah!' fall upon his ear, and seem to come from this black-faced man—from this person of colour. He rushes after Mrs. Fane. It is indeed so: it is Major Fane, his face and hands all blackened with gunpowder.

'Your father was not killed in the explosion; he escaped alive; he is here—there,' shouts Hay, as he rushes towards the sisters. On entering the enclosure they and young Hamilton had seen an

Englishman advancing toward them, and when they had found that it was Major Coote, whom they all know so well, there was a prolonged hand-shaking, and an immediate outburst of inquiries.

‘Father! Alive! Here!’ exclaims Beatrice, looking at Hay with amazed, bewildered looks.

‘I know him by his walk,’ cries Lilian, as she flies away, and Beatrice rushes after her.

The others remain where they are for a while, not wishing to intrude on this reunion, and then go forward and join the family group.

Then comes a long hand-shaking and hearty congratulations; they are all delighted that Fane has survived to enjoy the knowledge of his own heroic deed and receive the applause of his countrymen.

‘Flannagan thought of it and did it; bwave fellow that,’ says the Major, quietly stroking one long whisker with a hand no longer lily-white.

Then come more eager questionings. There is a great deal to be asked about, and narrated and discussed. But the present and not the past is just now their immediate concern. What must they do now? Their object is to get to Abdoolapore. Where they stand they are thirty miles from it, seven miles from Khizrabad. It is desirable to increase the latter distance as soon as possible. Did the valley of the river run directly towards Abdoolapore the matter would be settled. They would move up along its secure length at once. But it does not. They must leave the safe basin of the river for the unsafe upland very soon. Shall they utilise the cool morning hours and try and get half way to Abdoolapore, and then seek shelter and concealment in a mango grove for the rest of the day, and push on again in the evening? Or shall they remain where they are during the day, and start for Abdoolapore in the evening, and try and get over the thirty miles in the course of the night—the cool, sheltering night? On the one hand is the fatigue of the long walk—it is of the women they have to think—on the other, the exposure during the daytime, the danger of being seen. They consult the herdsmen who seem so friendly towards them. They are all for the latter course. It has to be considered that the ladies will be more comfortable where they are than in any mango grove. But that is nothing. They would run a terrible risk by appearing on that village-crowded upland in the broad daylight. The news of what happened at Khizrabad.

yesterday has spread far and wide. The rule of the English is held to be over; with the lawless clans the wish is father to the thought.

The tract of country they will have to traverse is inhabited chiefly by Ranghurs, men of a rough, rude sort, who earn their living partly by honest means, but chiefly by dishonest ones; who do a little agriculture and a great deal of robbery; feed cattle largely, and lift them largely; a reaving, thieving clan. A reward has been offered for every English person carried into Khizrabad. They would be seized and taken back. The Ranghurs were quite capable of slaying them on their own account. They were safer here during the daytime than they would be on the plain above at twice the distance from Khizrabad.

They settle to remain where they are until evening.

‘We will do what we can to make you comfortable,’ says a ferocious-looking drover. They placed one shed at the disposal of the men (they always come first in the East), and another at the disposal of Mrs. Fane and her daughters. Orson brings them bedsteads to sit on. Caliban brings them water to wash with. They are not able to supply them with any of the requisites of the toilette. Each man’s own apparatus in that way consists wholly and solely—for they use no soap, and a piece of chewed stick serves them for tooth-brush—of a little round mirror, in which he is fond of regarding himself, and of a rough wooden tooth-comb. But they give them a clean sheet on which to dry their hands and faces. They bring them water to drink, and, from having been out all night in the porous earthen jars, it is deliciously cool. They bring them *ludoos* and *peras* (sweetmeats), with which to stay their appetites until the time for the cooking of the mid-day meal arrives. And then most of the villainous-looking crew depart to pursue their morning avocations.

And now with the fugitives comes a more detailed narration and discussion of the events of the day before.

‘I did not know you,’ says Hay to Major Fane, ‘because they said you were the man with the glass eye. I wonder what they meant by that?’

‘They were referring to my eye-glass, I suppose.’

‘We never thought of that.’

They are fiercely angry, as well as sorrowful, as they speak of the disaffection of their men, so injurious to their feelings, so injurious it may be to their interests. If the men mutiny the

officers must be somehow in fault, is, not unnaturally, though sometimes unjustly, the common opinion.

‘You are the only one likely to come out of this business with any credit,’ says Major Coote to Major Fane. ‘We others did nothing, and were not allowed to do anything.’

They mourn the loss of so many of their friends and companions, mourn the manner of their death. And so the moments slip by, and then the herdsmen return and begin to prepare the mid-day meal, and the fugitives watch the familiar process with a new and personal interest. That process is a very cleanly, if also a very simple one. First comes the cleansing and sprinkling with water of a little plot of ground, and the setting-up on it by means of half a dozen clods of earth of a simple fireplace. Then comes the preliminary bath, without which no man may sit down to cook or eat. Then each man steps into his prepared plot—now become sacred ground into which no one else may set foot—and kneads the flour in a wide brass dish (the *thalee* now seen so much in English drawing-rooms), kneads it well with his fists, for on that kneading greatly depends the lightness of the cakes, and when the dough is of a proper consistency he rolls it into balls between the palms of his hands, and then flattens them out into disks, and then by throwing them from palm to palm widens them out into great circles which he places on the iron plate or girdle which he has already set on one compartment of the fireplace in which the brushwood fire is now crackling; and then when the cake is done on both sides he whips it off the girdle and sets it up on end by the side of the fire, which not only prevents it from getting cold, but causes it to puff out and have a crust; and this is the way in which the unleavened cakes which are being cooked every day by millions of people over a large portion of India, and have been so cooked for thousands of years, are made. Some lentil porridge has been cooking in another little brass pot set on the other compartment of the fireplace, and when this is ready it is poured into the wide brass dish in which the cakes were kneaded, since washed out, and the men break off pieces of the cakes and dip them into the porridge and eat. This wide brass dish to eat from, and the famous brass drinking vessel called the *lotah*, form the only appurtenances of the table, not only of the common people, but even of the better classes of Hindoos, who all eat squatted on the ground, and with their fingers, like these herdsmen. But most of the men only cook cakes, and eat them with the *ghee*,

or rancid butter, which is so abundant with them. And each man has to-day cooked an additional quantity for the guests. Two of the most cut-throat looking villains of the lot go round and collect the food and distribute it to the English. They take it to them on platters made of leaves. The use of the brass vessels is entirely restricted to the owners; the touch of the Christians would pollute them. Four or five of the cakes being put on the leaf platter, the lentil porridge is put on the topmost one, which serves as dish until it comes to be eaten itself. The drink is water or milk, chiefly that of the buffalo. With us the primitive world has passed away; a sojourn in a place like this carries you back to it. Then you come into close contact with the animal world, and have your feelings violently aroused with regard to its members: come to love those which are gentle and tameable and minister to the comfort and support of man, which supply him with meat and drink and raiment; come to hate those which are fierce and wild, and inimical to man and hurtful to him; come to have a very strong preference for those you can eat and who cannot eat you, over those you cannot eat and who can eat you. Then you come to understand how the cow, 'the perpetual mother,' has come to be worshipped; how the gentle lamb, which affords man such excellent food and clothing, came to be a divine emblem, why the sheep are put on the right hand and the goats on the left.

Fane has had nothing to eat for twenty-four hours. He goes off to get some more cakes. To see him, a man with an intense pride of caste, stand at a careful distance from the little cooking-place, which even his shadow would defile, and hold out his hand while the humble herdsman, who will not in his whole lifetime earn so much as the Major receives in a single month, throws the cakes into his outheld hand—throws them, not from insolence, but because he has to avoid all chance of personal contact—was a sight to give rise to many reflections. In Europe the pride of caste is but a superfluous possession of the wealthy and well born. The caste system of the Hindoos gives strength to the weak, pride to the humble, self-respect to the lowly; it is a strong armour, a fence; it protects if it restricts.

Then the hot day leaps upon them like a lion, very fierce and terrible. They talk and talk to make the hours go by, but the heat is very terrible; it is that of the simoom, it is that of the burning fiery furnace. The sheds afford them some shelter from the rays of the sun, but none from the dust-laden, fiery, hot wind.

They experience a terrible feeling of oppression ; they know not whether to sit or stand. The mosquitoes, excited to frenzy by finding this richer blood protected by a thinner skin brought within their reach, attack them furiously. And the flies are in clouds, in shoals ; they are 'in grievous swarms,' as they were when the plague of them came to be numbered with the plague of the slaying of the first-born, and of the rivers of blood. And with many their bodily sufferings are aggravated by mental ones. The irritation of the nerves, due to the heat, is added to by the irritation of apprehension. These herdsmen are hereditary robbers ; they belong to a lawless, predatory class. The fugitives have no money about their persons, but they have their watches and gold chains, and Mrs. Fane and her daughters have valuable rings on their fingers. Notoriously addicted to 'robbery by violence,' whether they attack a party of travellers on the road or carry a house by assault, these drovers certainly look capable of any villainy. You would sooner take them for bloodthirsty bandits than for simple honest herdsmen. Certainly, so far, they have behaved with great kindness to the English fugitives. But how long will that last ? May not their bloodthirstiness, their cupidity, their lust, be aroused at any moment ? To Dr. Brodie these are hours of great torture, and even the other men take care to have their swords within reach. But the day is slipping by, and the time of their departure drawing nigh. The sun is declining in the west, and the evening is at hand.

(To be continued.)

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BY A. CONAN DOYLE,

AUTHOR OF 'MICAH CLARKE.'

CHAPTER X.

HOW HORDLE JOHN FOUND A MAN WHOM HE MIGHT FOLLOW.

If he might not return to Beaulieu within the year, and if his brother's dogs were to be set upon him if he showed face upon Minstead land, then indeed he was adrift upon earth. North, south, east and west—he might turn where he would, but all was equally chill and cheerless. The Abbot had rolled ten silver crowns in a lettuce-leaf and hid them away in the bottom of his scrip, but that would be a sorry support for twelve long months. In all the darkness there was but the one bright spot of the sturdy comrades whom he had left that morning; if he could find them again all would be well. The afternoon was not very advanced, for all that had befallen him. When a man is afoot at cock-crow much may be done in the day. If he walked fast he might yet overtake his friends ere they reached their destination. He pushed on, therefore, now walking and now running. As he journeyed he bit into a crust which remained from his Beaulieu bread, and he washed it down with a draught from a woodland stream.

It was no easy or light thing to journey through this great forest, which was some twenty miles from east to west and a good sixteen from Bramshaw Woods in the north to Lymington in the south. Alleyne, however, had the good fortune to fall in with a woodman, axe upon shoulder, trudging along in the very direction

that he wished to go. With his guidance he passed the fringe of Bolderwood Walk, famous for old ash and yew, through Mark Ash, with its giant beech-trees, and on through the Knightwood groves, where the giant oak was already a great tree, but only one of many comely brothers. They plodded along together, the woodman and Alleyne, with little talk on either side, for their thoughts were as far asunder as the poles. The peasant's gossip had been of the hunt, of the brocken, of the grey-headed kites that had nested in Wood Fidley, and of the great catch of herring brought back by the boats of Pitt's Deep. The clerk's mind was on his brother, on his future—above all on this strange, fierce, melting, beautiful woman who had broken so suddenly into his life, and as suddenly had passed out of it again. So *distract* was he, and so random his answers, that the woodman took to whistling, and soon branched off upon the track to Burley, leaving Alleyne upon the main Christchurch road.

Down this he pushed as fast as he might, hoping at every turn and rise to catch sight of his companions of the morning. From Vinney Ridge to Rhinefield Walk the woods grow thick and dense up to the very edges of the track, but beyond the country opens up into broad dun-coloured moors, flecked with clumps of trees, and topping each other in long low curves up to the dark lines of forest in the furthest distance. Clouds of insects danced and buzzed in the golden autumn light, and the air was full of the piping of the song-birds. Long glinting dragon-flies shot across the path, or hung tremulous with gauzy wings and gleaming bodies. Once a white-necked sea eagle soared screaming high over the traveller's head, and again a flock of brown bustards popped up from among the bracken, and blundered away in their clumsy fashion, half running, half flying, with strident cry and whirr of wings.

There were folk, too, to be met upon the road—beggars and couriers, chapmen and tinkers—cheery fellows for the most part, with a rough jest and homely greeting for each other and for Alleyne. Near Shotwood he came upon five seamen, on their way from Poole to Southampton—rude red-faced men, who shouted at him in a jargon which he could scarce understand, and held out to him a great pot from which they had been drinking—nor would they let him pass until he had dipped pannikin in and taken a mouthful, which set him coughing and choking, with the tears running down his cheeks. Further on he met a sturdy

black-bearded man, mounted on a brown horse, with a rosary in his right hand and a long two-handed sword jangling against his stirrup-iron. By his black robe and the eight-pointed cross upon his sleeve, Alleyne recognised him as one of the Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem, whose presbytery was at Baddesley. He held up two fingers as he passed, with a '*Benedice, filie meus!*' whereat Alleyne doffed hat and bent knee, looking with much reverence at one who had devoted his life to the overthrow of the infidel. Poor simple lad! he had not learned yet that what men are and what men profess to be are very wide asunder, and that the Knights of St. John, having come into large part of the riches of the ill-fated Templars, were very much too comfortable to think of exchanging their palace for a tent, or the cellars of England for the thirsty deserts of Syria. Yet ignorance may be more precious than wisdom, for Alleyne as he walked on braced himself to a higher life by the thought of this other's sacrifice, and strengthened himself by his example, which he could scarce have done had he known that the Hospitaller's mind ran more upon malmsey than on mamelukes, and on venison rather than victories.

As he pressed on the plain turned to woods once more in the region of Wilverley Walk, and a cloud swept up from the south, with the sun shining through the chinks of it. A few great drops came pattering loudly down, and then in a moment the steady swish of a brisk shower, with the dripping and dropping of the leaves. Alleyne, glancing round for shelter, saw a thick and lofty holly-bush, so hollowed out beneath that no house could have been drier. Under this canopy of green two men were already squatted, who waved their hands to Alleyne that he should join them. As he approached he saw that they had five dried herrings laid out in front of them, with a great hunch of wheaten bread and a leathern flask full of milk, but instead of setting to at their food they appeared to have forgotten all about it, and were disputing together with flushed faces and angry gestures. It was easy to see by their dress and manner that they were two of those wandering students who formed about this time so enormous a multitude in every country in Europe. The one was long and thin, with melancholy features, while the other was fat and sleek, with a loud voice and the air of a man who is not to be gainsaid.

'Come hither, good youth,' he cried, 'come hither! *Vultus*

ingenui puer. Heed not the face of my good coz here. *Foenum habet in cornu*, as Dan Horace has it; but I warrant him harmless for all that.'

'Stint your bull's bellowing!' exclaimed the other. 'If it come to Horace, I have a line in my mind: *Loquaces si sapiat*—How doth it run? The English o't being that a man of sense should ever avoid a great talker. That being so, if all were men of sense then thou wouldst be a lonesome man, coz.'

'Alas! Dicon, I fear that your logic is as bad as your philosophy or your divinity—and God wot it would be hard to say a worse word than that for it. For, hark ye: granting, *propter argumentum*, that I am a talker, then the true reasoning runs that since all men of sense should avoid me, and thou hast not avoided me, but art at the present moment eating herrings with me under a holly-bush, ergo you are no man of sense, which is exactly what I have been dinning into your long ears ever since I first clapped eyes on your sunken chops.'

'Tut, tut!' cried the other. 'Your tongue goes like the clapper of a mill-wheel. Sit down here, friend, and partake of this herring. Understand first, however, that there are certain conditions attached to it.'

'I had hoped,' said Alleyne, falling into the humour of the twain, 'that a tranchoir of bread and a draught of milk might be attached to it.'

'Hark to him, hark to him!' cried the little fat man. 'It is even thus, Dicon! Wit, lad, is a catching thing, like the itch or the sweating sickness. I exude it round me; it is an aura. I tell you, coz, that no man can come within seventeen feet of me without catching a spark. Look at your own case. A duller man never stepped, and yet within the week you have said three things which might pass, and one thing the day we left Fordingbridge which I should not have been ashamed of myself.'

'Enough, rattle pate, enough!' said the other. 'The milk you shall have and the bread also, friend, together with the herring, but you must hold the scales between us.'

'If he hold the herring he holds the scales, my sapient brother,' cried the fat man. 'But I pray you, good youth, to tell us whether you are a learned clerk, and, if so, whether you have studied at Oxenford or at Paris.'

'I have some small stock of learning,' Alleyne answered, picking at his herring, 'but I have been at neither of these

places. I was bred amongst the Cistercian monks at Beaulieu Abbey.'

'Pooh, pooh!' they cried both together. 'What sort of an upbringing is that?'

'*Non cuivis contingit adire Corinthum,*' quoth Alleyne.

'Come, brother Stephen, he hath some tincture of letters,' said the melancholy man more hopefully. 'He may be the better judge, since he hath no call to side with either of us. Now, attention, friend, and let your ears work as well as your nether jaw. *Judex damnatur*—you know the old saw. Here am I upholding the good fame of the learned Duns Scotus against the foolish quibblings and poor silly reasonings of Willie Ockham.'

'While I,' quoth the other loudly, 'do maintain the good sense and extraordinary wisdom of that most learned William against the crack-brained fantasies of the muddy Scotchman, who hath hid such little wit as he has under so vast a pile of words, that it is like one drop of Gascony in a firkin of ditch-water. Solomon his wisdom would not suffice to say what the rogue means.'

'Certes, Stephen Hapgood, his wisdom doth not suffice,' cried the other. 'It is as though a mole cried out against the morning star, because he could not see it. But our dispute, friend, is concerning the nature of that subtle essence which we call thought. For I hold with the learned Scotus that thought is in very truth a thing, even as vapour or fumes, or many other substances which our gross bodily eyes are blind to. For, look you, that which produces a thing must be itself a thing, and if a man's thought may produce a written book, then must thought itself be a material thing, even as the book is. Have I expressed it? Do I make it plain?'

'Whereas I hold,' shouted the other, 'with my revered preceptor, *doctor preclarus et excellentissimus*, that all things are but thought; for when thought is gone I prythee where are the things then? Here are trees about us, and I see them because I think I see them, but if I have swooned, or sleep, or am in wine, then my thought, having gone forth from me, lo the trees go forth also. How now, coz, have I touched thee on the raw?'

Alleyne sat between them munching his bread, while the twain disputed across his knees, leaning forward with flushed faces and darting hands, in all the heat of argument. Never had he heard such jargon of scholastic philosophy, such fine-drawn

distinctions, such cross-fire of major and minor, proposition, syllogism, attack and refutation. Question clattered upon answer like a sword on a buckler. The ancients, the fathers of the Church, the moderns, the Scriptures, the Arabians, were each sent hurtling against the other, while the rain still dripped and the dark holly-leaves glistened with the moisture. At last the fat man seemed to weary of it, for he set to work quietly upon his meal, while his opponent, as proud as the rooster who is left unchallenged upon the midden, crowed away in a last long burst of quotation and deduction. Suddenly, however, his eyes dropped upon his food, and he gave a howl of dismay.

‘You double thief!’ he cried, ‘you have eaten my herrings, and I without bite or sup since morning.’

‘That,’ quoth the other complacently, ‘was my final argument, my crowning effort, or *peroratio*, as the orators have it. For, coz, since all thoughts are things, you have but to think a pair of herrings, and then conjure up a pottle of milk wherewith to wash them down.’

‘A brave piece of reasoning,’ cried the other, ‘and I know of but one reply to it.’ On which, leaning forward, he caught his comrade a rousing smack across his rosy cheek. ‘Nay, take it not amiss,’ he said; ‘since all things are but thoughts, then that also is but a thought and may be disregarded.’

This last argument, however, by no means commended itself to the pupil of Ockham, who plucked a great stick from the ground and signified his dissent by smiting the realist over the pate with it. By good fortune, the wood was so light and rotten that it went to a thousand splinters, but Alleyne thought it best to leave the twain to settle the matter at their leisure, the more so as the sun was shining brightly once more. Looking back down the pool-strewn road, he saw the two excited philosophers waving their hands and shouting at each other, but their babble soon became a mere drone in the distance, and a turn in the road hid them from his sight.

And now, after passing Holmesley Walk and the Wooton Heath, the forest began to shred out into scattered belts of trees, with gleam of corn-field and stretch of pasture-land between. Here and there by the wayside stood little knots of wattle-and-daub huts with shock-haired labourers lounging by the doors and red-cheeked children sprawling in the roadway. Back among the groves he could see the high gable ends and thatched roofs of

the franklins' houses, on whose fields these men found employment, or more often a thick dark column of smoke marked their position and hinted at the coarse plenty within. By these signs Alleyne knew that he was on the very fringe of the forest, and therefore no great way from Christchurch. The sun was lying low in the west and shooting its level rays across the long sweep of rich green country, glinting on the white-fleeced sheep, and throwing long shadows from the red kine who waded knee-deep in the juicy clover. Right glad was the traveller to see the high tower of Christchurch Priory gleaming in the mellow evening light, and gladder still when, on rounding a corner, he came upon his comrades of the morning seated astraddle upon a fallen tree. They had a flat space before them, on which they alternately threw little square pieces of bone, and were so intent upon their occupation that they never raised eye as he approached them. He observed with astonishment, as he drew near, that the archer's bow was on John's back, the archer's sword by John's side, and the steel cap laid upon the tree-trunk between them.

'Mort de ma vie!' Aylward shouted, looking down at the dice. 'Never had I such cursed luck. A murrain on the bones! I have not thrown a good main since I left Navarre. A one and a three! En avant, camarade!'

'Four and three,' cried Hordle John, counting on his great fingers, 'that makes seven. Ho, archer, I have thy cap! Now have at thee for thy jerkin!'

'Mon Dieu!' he growled, 'I am like to reach Christchurch in my shirt.' Then suddenly glancing up; 'Holà, by the splendour of heaven, here is our cher petit! Now, by my ten finger bones! this is a rare sight to mine eyes.' He sprang up and threw his arms round Alleyne's neck, while John, no less pleased, but more backward and Saxon in his habits, stood grinning and bobbing by the wayside, with his newly-won steel cap stuck wrong side foremost upon his tangle of red hair.

'Hast come to stop!' cried the bowman, patting Alleyne all over in his delight. 'Shall not get away from us again!'

'I wish no better,' said he, with a pringling in the eyes at this hearty greeting.

'Well said, lad!' cried big John. 'We three shall to the wars together, and the devil may fly away with the Abbot of Beaulieu! But your feet and hosen are all besmudged. Hast been in the water, or I am the more mistaken.'

‘I have in good-sooth,’ Alleyne answered, and then as they journeyed on their way he told them the many things that had befallen him, his meeting with the villein, his sight of the king, his coming upon his brother, with all the tale of the black welcome and of the fair damsel. They strode on either side, each with an ear slanting towards him, but ere he had come to the end of his story the bowman had spun round upon his heel, and was hastening back the way they had come, breathing loudly through his nose.

‘What then?’ asked Alleyne, trotting after him and gripping at his jerkin.

‘I am back for Minstead, lad.’

‘And why, in the name of sense?’

‘To thrust a handful of steel into the Socman. What! hale a demoiselle against her will, and then loose dogs at his own brother! Let me go!’

‘Nenny, nenny!’ cried Alleyne, laughing. ‘There was no scath done. Come back, friend’—and so, by mingled pushing and entreaties, they got his head round for Christchurch once more. Yet he walked with his chin upon his shoulder, until, catching sight of a maiden by a wayside well, the smiles came back to his face and peace to his heart.

‘But you,’ said Alleyne, ‘there have been changes with you also. Why should not the workman carry his tools? Where are bow and sword and cap—and why so warlike, John?’

‘It is a game which friend Aylward hath been a-teaching of me.’

‘And I found him an over-apt pupil,’ grumbled the bowman. ‘He hath stripped me as though I had fallen into the hands of the tardvenus. But, by my hilt! you must render them back to me, camarade, lest you bring discredit upon my mission, and I will pay you for them at armourers’ prices.’

‘Take them back, man, and never heed the pay,’ said John. ‘I did but wish to learn the feel of them, since I am like to have such trinkets hung to my own girdle for some years to come.’

‘Ma foi, he was born for a free companion!’ cried Aylward. ‘He hath the very trick of speech and turn of thought. I take them back then, and indeed it gives me unease not to feel my yew-stave tapping against my leg bone. But see, mes garçons, on this side of the church rises the square and darkling tower of

Earl Salisbury's castle, and even from here I seem to see on yonder banner the red roebuck of the Montacutes.'

'Red upon white,' said Alleyne, shading his eyes; 'but whether roebuck or no is more than I could vouch. How black is the great tower, and how bright the gleam of arms upon the wall! See below the flag, how it twinkles like a star!'

'Aye, it is the steel head-piece of the watchman,' remarked the archer. 'But we must on, if we are to be there before the draw-bridge rises at the vespers bugle; for it is likely that Sir Nigel, being so renowned a soldier, may keep hard discipline within the walls, and let no man enter after sundown.' So saying, he quickened his pace, and the three comrades were soon close to the straggling and broad-spread town which centred round the noble church and the frowning castle.

It chanced on that very evening that Sir Nigel Loring, having supped before sunset, as was his custom, and having himself seen that Pommers and Cadsand, his two war-horses, with the thirteen hacks, the five jennets, my lady's three palfreys, and the great dapple-gray roussin, had all their needs supplied, had taken his dogs for an evening breather. Sixty or seventy of them, large and small, smooth and shaggy—deer-hound, boar-hound, blood-hound, wolf-hound, mastiff, alaun, talbot, lurcher, terrier, spaniel—snapping, yelling and whining, with score of lolling tongues and waving tails, came surging down the narrow lane which leads from the Twynham kennels to the bank of Avon. Two russet-clad varlets, with loud halloo and cracking whips, walked thigh-deep amid the swarm, guiding, controlling, and urging. Behind came Sir Nigel himself, with Lady Loring upon his arm, the pair walking slowly and sedately, as befitted both their age and their condition, while they watched with a smile in their eyes the scrambling crowd in front of them. They paused, however, at the bridge, and, leaning their elbows upon the stonework, they stood looking down at their own faces in the glassy stream, and at the swift flash of speckled trout against the tawny gravel.

Sir Nigel was a slight man of poor stature, with soft lisping voice and gentle ways. So short was he that his wife, who was no very tall woman, had the better of him by the breadth of three fingers. His sight having been injured in his early wars by a basketful of lime which had been emptied over him when he led the Earl of Derby's stormers up the breach at Bergerac, he had contracted something of a stoop, with a blinking, peering expression

of face. His age was six and forty, but the constant practice of arms, together with a cleanly life, had preserved his activity and endurance unimpaired, so that from a distance he seemed to have the slight limbs and swift grace of a boy. His face, however, was tanned of a dull yellow tint, with a leathery poreless look, which spoke of rough outdoor doings, and the little pointed beard which he wore, in deference to the prevailing fashion, was streaked and shot with grey. His features were small, delicate, and regular, with clear-cut curving nose, and eyes which jugged forward from the lids. His dress was simple and yet spruce. A Flandrish hat of beever, bearing in the band the token of Our Lady of Embrun, was drawn low upon the left side to hide that ear which had been partly shorn from his head by a Flemish man-at-arms in a camp broil before Tournay. His cote-hardie, or tunic, and trunk-hosen were of a purple plum colour, with long weepers which hung from either sleeve to below his knees. His shoes were of red leather, daintily pointed at the toes, but not yet prolonged to the extravagant lengths which the succeeding reign was to bring into fashion. A gold-embroidered belt of knighthood encircled his loins, with his arms, five roses gules on a field argent, cunningly worked upon the clasp. So stood Sir Nigel Loring upon the bridge of Avon, and talked lightly with his lady.

And, certes, had the two visages alone been seen, and the stranger been asked which were the more likely to belong to the bold warrior whose name was loved by the roughest soldiery of Europe, he had assuredly selected the lady's. Her face was large and square and red, with fierce thick brows, and the eyes of one who was accustomed to rule. Taller and broader than her husband, her flowing gown of sendall, and fur-lined tippet, could not conceal the gaunt and ungraceful outlines of her figure. It was the age of martial women. The deeds of Black Agnes of Dunbar, of Lady Salisbury and of the Countess of Montfort, were still fresh in the public mind. With such examples before them, the wives of the English captains had become as warlike as their mates, and ordered their castles in their absence with the prudence and discipline of veteran seneschals. Right easy were the Montacutes of their Castle of Twynham, and little had they to dread from roving galley or French squadron, while Lady Mary Loring had the ordering of it. Yet even in that age it was thought that, though a lady might have a soldier's heart, it was scarce as well that she should have a soldier's face: There were men who said that of

all the stern passages and daring deeds by which Sir Nigel Loring had proved the true temper of his courage, not the least was his wooing and winning of so forbidding a dame.

‘I tell you, my fair lord,’ she was saying, ‘that it is no fit training for a demoiselle: hawks and hounds, rotes and citoles, singing a French rondel, or reading the Gestes de Doon de Mayence, as I found her yesternight, pretending sleep, the artful, with the corner of the scroll thrusting forth from under her pillow. Lent her by Father Christopher of the Priory, forsooth—that is ever her answer. How shall all this help her when she has castle of her own to keep, with a hundred mouths all agape for beef and beer?’

‘True, my sweet bird, true,’ answered the knight, picking a comfit from his gold drageoir. ‘The maid is like the young filly, which kicks heels and plunges for very lust of life. Give her time, dame, give her time.’

‘Well, I know that my father would have given me, not time, but a good hazel-stick across my shoulders. Ma foi! I know not what the world is coming to, when young maids may flout their elders. I wonder that you do not correct her, my fair lord.’

‘Nay, my heart’s comfort, I never raised hand to woman yet, and it would be a passing strange thing if I began upon my own flesh and blood. It was a woman’s hand which cast this lime into mine eyes, and though I saw her stoop, and might well have stopped her ere she threw, I deemed it unworthy of my knight-hood to hinder or balk one of her sex.’

‘The hussy!’ cried Lady Loring, clenching her broad right hand. ‘I would I had been at the side of her!’

‘And so would I, since you would have been the nearer me, my own. But I doubt not that you are right, and that Maude’s wings need clipping, which I may leave in your hands when I am gone, for, in sooth, this peaceful life is not for me, and were it not for your gracious kindness and loving care I could not abide it a week. I hear that there is talk of warlike muster at Bordeaux once more, and by St. Paul! it would be a new thing if the lions of England and the red pile of Chandos were to be seen in the field, and the roses of Loring were not waving by their side.’

‘Now wo worth me but I feared it!’ cried she, with the colour all struck from her face. ‘I have noted your absent mind, your kindling eye, your trying and riveting of old harness. Consider, my sweet lord, that you have already won much honour, that we

have seen but little of each other, that you bear upon your body the scar of over twenty wounds received in I know not how many bloody encounters. Have you not done enough for honour and the public cause.'

'My lady, when our liege lord the king at threescore years, and my Lord Chandos at three score and ten, are blithe and ready to lay lance in rest for England's cause, it would ill beseem me to prate of service done. It is sooth that I have received seven and twenty wounds. There is the more reason that I should be thankful that I am still long of breath and sound in limb. I have also seen some bickering and scuffling. Six great land battles I count, with four upon the sea, and seven and fifty onfalls, skirmishes and bushments. I have held two and twenty towns, and I have been at the intaking of thirty-one. Surely then it would be bitter shame to me, and also to you, since my fame is yours, that I should now hold back if a man's work is to be done. Besides, bethink you how low is our purse, with bailiff and reeve ever croaking of empty farms and wasting lands. Were it not for this constableness which the Earl of Salisbury hath bestowed upon us we could scarce uphold the state which is fitting to our degree.' Therefore, my sweeting, there is the more need that I should turn to where there is good pay to be earned and brave ransoms to be won.'

'Ah, my dear lord,' quoth she, with sad, weary eyes. 'I thought that at last I had you to mine own self, even though your youth had been spent afar from my side. Yet my voice, as I know well, should speed you on to glory and renown, not hold you back when fame is to be won. Yet what can I say?—for all men know that your valour needs the curb and not the spur. It goes to my heart that you should ride forth now a mere knight bachelor, when there is no noble in the land who hath so good a claim to the square pennon, save only that you have not the money to uphold it.'

'And whose fault that, my sweet bird?' said he.

'No fault, my fair lord, but a virtue: for how many rich ransoms have you won, and yet have scattered the crowns among page and archer and varlet, until in a week you had not as much as would buy food and forage. It is a most knightly largesse, and yet withouten money how can man rise?'

'Dirt and dross!' cried he. 'What matter rise or fall, so that duty be done and honour gained. Banneret or bachelor, square

pennon or forked, I would not give a denier for the difference, and the less since Sir John Chandos, chosen flower of English chivalry, is himself but a humble knight. But meanwhile fret not thyself, my heart's dove, for it is like that there may be no war waged, and we must await the news. But here are three strangers, and one, as I take it, a soldier fresh from service. It is likely that he may give us word of what is stirring over the water.'

Lady Loring, glancing up, saw in the fading light three companions walking abreast down the road, all grey with dust, and stained with travel, yet chattering merrily between themselves. He in the midst was young and comely, with boyish open face and bright grey eyes, which glanced from right to left as though he found the world around him both new and pleasing. To his right walked a huge red-headed man, with broad smile and merry twinkle, whose clothes seemed to be bursting and splitting at every seam, as though he were some lusty chick who was breaking bravely from his shell. On the other side, with his knotted hand upon the young man's shoulder, came a stout and burly archer, brown and fierce eyed, with sword at belt and long yellow yew-stave peeping over his shoulder. Hard face, battered head-piece, dinted brigandine, with faded red lion of St. George ramping on a discoloured ground, all proclaimed as plainly as words that he was indeed from the land of war. He looked keenly at Sir Nigel as he approached, and then, plunging his hand under his breastplate, he stepped up to him with a rough uncouth bow to the lady.

'Your pardon, fair sir,' said he, 'but I know you the moment I clap eyes on you, though in sooth I have seen you oftener in steel than in velvet. I have drawn string beside you at La Roche-d'Errien, Romorantin, Maupertuis, Nogent, Auray, and other places.'

'Then, good archer, I am right glad to welcome you to Twynham Castle, and in the steward's room you will find provant for yourself and comrades. To me also your face is known, though mine eyes play such tricks with me that I can scarce be sure of my own squire. Rest awhile, and you shall come to the hall anon and tell us what is passing in France, for I have heard that it is likely that our pennons may flutter to the south of the great Spanish mountains ere another year be passed.'

'There was talk of it in Bordeaux,' answered the archer, 'and I saw myself that the armourers and smiths were as busy as rats in a wheat-rick. But I bring you this letter from the valiant

Gascon knight, Sir Claude Latour. And to you, lady,' he added after a pause, 'I bring from him this box of red sugar of Narbonne, with every courteous and knightly greeting which a gallant cavalier may make to a fair and noble dame.'

This little speech had cost the blunt Bowman much pains and planning; but he might have spared his breath, for the lady was quite as much absorbed as her lord in the letter, which they held between them, a hand on either corner, spelling it out very slowly, with drawn brows and muttering lips. As they read it, Alleyne, who stood with Hordle John a few paces back from their comrade, saw the lady catch her breath, while the knight laughed softly to himself.

'You see, dear heart,' said he, 'that they will not leave the old dog in his kennel when the game is afoot. And what of this White Company, archer?'

'Ah, sir, you speak of dogs,' cried Aylward; 'but there are a pack of lusty hounds who are ready for any quarry, if they have but a good huntsman to halloo them on. Sir, we have been in the wars together, and I have seen many a brave following, but never such a set of woodland boys as this. They do but want you at their head, and who will bar the way to them?'

'Pardieu!' said Sir Nigel, 'if they are all like their messenger, they are indeed men of whom a leader may be proud. Your name, good archer?'

'Sam Aylward, sir, of the Hundred of Easebourne and the Rape of Chichester.'

'And this giant behind you?'

'He is big John, of Hordle, a forest man, who hath now taken service in the Company.'

'A proper figure of a man-at-arms,' said the little knight. 'Why, man, you are no chicken, yet I warrant him the stronger man. See to that great stone from the coping which hath fallen upon the bridge. Four of my lazy varlets strove this day to carry it hence. I would that you two could put them to shame by budging it, though I fear that I overtask you, for it is of a grievous weight.'

He pointed as he spoke to a huge rough-hewn block which lay by the roadside, deep sunken from its own weight in the reddish earth. The archer approached it, rolling back the sleeves of his jerkin, but with no very hopeful countenance, for indeed it was a mighty rock. John, however, put him aside with his left hand,

and, stooping over the stone, he plucked it single-handed from its soft bed and swung it far into the stream. There it fell with mighty splash, one jagged end peaking out above the surface, while the waters bubbled and foamed with far-circling eddy.

‘Good lack!’ cried Sir Nigel, and ‘Good lack!’ cried his lady, while John stood laughing and wiping the caked dirt from his fingers.

‘I have felt his arms round my ribs,’ said the bowman, ‘and they crackle yet at the thought of it. This other comrade of mine is a right learned clerk, for all that he is so young, hight Alleyne, the son of Edric, brother to the Socman of Minstead.’

‘Young man,’ quoth Sir Nigel, sternly, ‘if you are of the same way of thought as your brother, you may not pass under portcullis of mine.’

‘Nay, fair sir,’ cried Aylward hastily, ‘I will be pledge for it that they have no thought in common; for this very day his brother hath set his dogs upon him, and driven him from his lands.’

‘And are you, too, of the White Company?’ asked Sir Nigel. ‘Hast had small experience of war, if I may judge by your looks and bearing.’

‘I would fain to France with my friends here,’ Alleyne answered; ‘but I am a man of peace—a reader, exorcist, acolyte, and clerk.’

‘That need not hinder,’ quoth Sir Nigel.

‘No, fair sir,’ cried the bowman joyously. ‘Why, I myself have served two terms with Arnold de Cervolles, he whom they called the archpriest. By my hilt! I have seen him ere now, with monk’s gown trussed to his knees, over his sandals in blood in the fore-front of the battle. Yet, ere the last string had twanged, he would be down on his four bones among the stricken, and have them all houseled and shriven, as quick as shelling peas. Ma foi! there were those who wished that he would have less care for their souls and a little more for their bodies!’

‘It is well to have a learned clerk in every troop,’ said Sir Nigel. ‘By St. Paul! there are men so caitiff that they think more of a scrivener’s pen than of their lady’s smile, and do their devoir in hopes that they may fill a line in a chronicle or make a tag to a jongleur’s romance. I remember well that, at the siege of Retters, there was a little, sleek, fat clerk of the name of Chaucer, who was so apt at rondel, sirvente, or tonson, that no

man dare give back a foot from the walls, lest he find it all set down in his rhymes and sung by every underling and varlet in the camp. But, my soul's bird, you hear me prate as though all were decided, when I have not yet taken counsel either with you or with my lady mother. Let us to the chamber, while these strangers find such fare as pantry and cellar may furnish.'

'The night air strikes chill,' said the lady, and turned down the road with her hand upon her lord's arm. The three comrades dropped behind and followed: Aylward much the lighter for having accomplished his mission, Alleyne full of wonderment at the humble bearing of so renowned a captain, and John loud with snorts and sneers, which spoke his disappointment and contempt.

'What ails the man?' asked Aylward in surprise.

'I have been cozened and bejaped,' quoth he gruffly.

'By whom, Sir Samson the strong?'

'By thee, Sir Balaam the false prophet.'

'By my hilt!' cried the archer, 'though I be not Balaam, yet I hold converse with the very creature that spake to him. What is amiss, then, and how have I played you false?'

'Why, marry, did you not say, and Alleyne here will be my witness, that, if I would hie to the wars with you, you would place me under a leader who was second to none in all England for valour? Yet here you bring me to a shred of a man, peaky and ill-nourished, with eyes like a moulting owl, who must needs, forsooth, take counsel with his mother ere he buckle sword to girdle.'

'Is that where the shoe galls?' cried the bowman, and laughed aloud. 'I will ask you what you think of him three months hence, if we be all alive; for sure I am that——'

Aylward's words were interrupted by an extraordinary hubbub which broke out that instant some little way down the street in the direction of the Priory. There was deep-mouthed shouting of men, frightened shrieks of women, howling and barking of curs, and over all a sullen thunderous rumble, indescribably menacing and terrible. Round the corner of the narrow street there came rushing a brace of whining dogs with tails tucked under their legs, and after them a white-faced burgher, with outstretched hands and wide-spread fingers, his hair all abristle and his eyes glinting back from one shoulder to the other, as though some great terror were at his very heels. 'Fly, my lady, fly!' he screeched, and whizzed past them like bolt from bow; while

close behind came lumbering a huge black bear, with red tongue lolling from his mouth, and a broken chain jangling behind him. To right and left the folk flew for arch and doorway. Hordle John caught up the Lady Loring as though she had been a feather, and sprang with her into an open porch; while Aylward, with a whirl of French oaths, plucked at his quiver and tried to unsling his bow. Alleyne, all unnerved at so strange and unwonted a sight, shrunk up against the wall with his eyes fixed upon the frenzied creature, which came bounding along with ungainly speed, looking the larger in the uncertain light, its huge jaws agape, with blood and slaver trickling to the ground. Sir Nigel alone, unconscious to all appearance of the universal panic, walked with unfaltering step up the centre of the road, a silken handkerchief in one hand and his gold comfit-box in the other. It sent the blood cold through Alleyne's veins to see that as they came together—the man and the beast—the creature reared up, with eyes ablaze with fear and hate, and whirled its great paws above the knight to smite him to the earth. He, however, blinking with puckered eyes, reached up his kerchief, and flicked the beast twice across the snout with it. 'Ah, saucy! saucy!' quoth he, with gentle chiding; on which the bear, uncertain and puzzled, dropped its fore legs to earth again, and, waddling back, was soon swathed in ropes by the bear-ward and a crowd of peasants who had been in close pursuit.

A scared man was the keeper; for, having chained the brute to a stake while he drank a stoup of ale at the inn, it had been baited by stray curs until, in wrath and madness, it had plucked loose the chain, and smitten or bitten all who came in its path. Most scared of all was he to find that the creature had come nigh to harm the Lord and Lady of the castle, who had power to place him in the stretch-neck or to have the skin scourged from his shoulders. Yet, when he came with bowed head and humble entreaty for forgiveness, he was met with a handful of small silver from Sir Nigel, whose dame, however, was less charitably disposed, being much ruffled in her dignity by the manner in which she had been hustled from her lord's side.

As they passed through the castle gate, John plucked at Aylward's sleeve, and the two fell behind.

'I must crave your pardon, comrade,' said he, bluntly. 'I was a fool not to know that a little rooster may be the gamest. I believe that this man is indeed a leader whom we may follow.'

CHAPTER XI.

HOW A YOUNG SHEPHERD HAD A PERILOUS FLOCK.

BLACK was the mouth of Twynham Castle, though a pair of torches burning at the further end of the gateway cast a red glare over the outer bailey, and sent a dim ruddy flicker through the rough-hewn arch, rising and falling with fitful brightness. Over the door the travellers could discern the escutcheon of the Montacutes, a roe-buck gules on a field argent, flanked on either side by smaller shields which bore the red roses of the veteran constable. As they passed over the drawbridge, Alleyne marked the gleam of arms in the embrasures to right and left, and they had scarce set foot upon the causeway ere a hoarse blare burst from a bugle, and, with screech of hinge and clank of chain, the ponderous bridge swung up into the air, drawn by unseen hands. At the same instant the huge portcullis came rattling down from above, and shut off the last fading light of day. Sir Nigel and his lady walked on in deep talk, while a fat under-steward took charge of the three comrades, and led them to the buttery, where beef, bread and beer were kept ever in readiness for the wayfarer. After a hearty meal and a dip in the trough to wash the dust from them, they strolled forth into the bailey, where the bowman peered about through the darkness at wall and at keep, with the carping eyes of one who has seen something of sieges, and is not lightly to be satisfied. To Alleyne and to John, however, it appeared to be as great and as stout a fortress as could be built by the hands of man.

Erected by Sir Baldwin de Redvers in the old fighting days of the twelfth century, when men thought much of war and little of comfort, Castle Twynham had been designed as a stronghold pure and simple, unlike those later and more magnificent structures where warlike strength had been combined with the magnificence of a palace. From the time of the Edwards such buildings as Conway or Caernarvon Castles, to say nothing of Royal Windsor, had shown that it was possible to secure luxury in peace as well as security in times of trouble. Sir Nigel's trust, however, still frowned above the smooth-flowing waters of the Avon, very much as the stern race of early Anglo-Normans had designed it. There were the broad outer and inner bailies, not paved, but sown with

grass to nourish the sheep and cattle which might be driven in on sign of danger. All round were high and turreted walls, with at the corner a bare square-faced keep, gaunt and windowless, rearing up from a lofty mound, which made it almost inaccessible to an assailant. Against the bailey-walls were rows of frail wooden houses and leaning sheds, which gave shelter to the archers and men-at-arms who formed the garrison. The doors of these humble dwellings were mostly open, and against the yellow glare from within Alleyne could see the bearded fellows cleaning their harness, while their wives would come out for a gossip, with their needlework in their hands, and their long black shadows streaming across the yard. The air was full of the clack of their voices and the merry prattling of children, in strange contrast to the flash of arms and constant warlike challenge from the walls above.

‘Methinks a company of school lads could hold this place against an army,’ quoth John

‘And so say I,’ said Alleyne.

‘Nay, there you are wide of the clout,’ the bowman said gravely. ‘By my hilt! I have seen a stronger fortalice carried in a summer evening. I remember such a one in Picardy, with a name as long as a Gascon’s pedigree. It was when I served under Sir Robert Knolles, before the days of the Company; and we came by good plunder at the sacking of it. I had myself a great silver bowl, with two goblets, and a plastron of Spanish steel. Pasques Dieu! there are some fine women over yonder! Mort de ma vie! see to that one in the doorway! I will go speak to her. But whom have we here?’

‘Is there an archer here hight Sam Aylward?’ asked a gaunt man-at-arms, clanking up to them across the courtyard.

‘My name, friend,’ quoth the bowman.

‘Then sure I have no need to tell thee mine,’ said the other.

‘By the rood! if it is not Black Simon of Norwich!’ cried Aylward. ‘À mon cœur, camarade, à mon cœur! Ah, but I am biithe to see thee!’ The two fell upon each other and hugged like bears.

‘And where from, old blood and bones?’ asked the bowman.

‘I am in service here. Tell me, comrade, is it sooth that we shall have another fling at these Frenchmen? It is so rumoured in the guard-room, and that Sir Nigel will take the field once more.’

‘It is like enough, mon gar., as things go.’

‘Now may the Lord be praised!’ cried the other. ‘This very night will I set apart a golden ouche to be offered on the shrine of my name-saint. I have pined for this, Aylward, as a young maid pines for her lover.’

‘Art so set on plunder then? Is the purse so light that there is not enough for a rouse? I have a bag at my belt, camarade, and you have but to put your fist into it for what you want. It was ever share and share between us.’

‘Nay, friend, it is not the Frenchman’s gold, but the Frenchman’s blood that I would have. I should not rest quiet in the grave, coz, if I had not another turn at them. For with us in France it has ever been fair and honest war—a shut fist for the man, but a bended knee for the woman. But how was it at Winchelsea when their galleys came down upon it some few years back? I had an old mother there, lad, who had come down thither from the Midlands to be the nearer her son. They found her afterwards by her own hearthstone, thrust through by a Frenchman’s bill. My second sister, my brother’s wife, and her two children, they were but ash-heaps in the smoking ruins of their house. I will not say that we have not wrought great scath upon France, but women and children have been safe from us. And so, old friend, my heart is hot within me, and I long to hear the old battle-cry again, and, by God’s truth! if Sir Nigel unfurls his pennon, here is one who will be right glad to feel the saddle-flaps under his knees.’

‘We have seen good work together, old war-dog,’ quoth Aylward; ‘and, by my hilt! we may hope to see more ere we die. But we are more like to hawk at the Spanish woodcock than at the French heron, though certes it is rumoured that Du Guesclin with all the best lances of France, have taken service under the lions and towers of Castile. But, comrade, it is in my mind that there is some small matter of dispute still open between us.’

‘Fore God, it is sooth,’ cried the other. ‘I had forgot it. The provost-marshal and his men tore us apart when last we met.’

‘On which, friend, we vowed that we should settle the point when next we came together. Hast thy sword, I see, and the moon throws glimmer enough for such old night-birds as we. On guard, mon gar.! I have not heard clink of steel this month or more.’

‘Out from the shadow then,’ said the other, drawing his sword. ‘A vow is a vow, and not lightly to be broken.’

‘A vow to the saints,’ cried Alleyne, ‘is indeed not to be set

aside; but this is a devil's vow, and, simple clerk as I am, I am yet the mouthpiece of the true Church when I say that it were mortal sin to fight on such a quarrel. What! shall two grown men carry malice for years, and fly like snarling curs at each other's throats?'

'No malice, my young clerk, no malice,' quoth Black Simon. 'I have not a bitter drop in my heart for mine old comrade; but the quarrel, as he hath told you, is still open and unsettled. Fall on, Aylward!'

'Not whilst I can stand between you,' cried Alleyne springing before the bowman. 'It is shame and sin to see two Christian Englishmen turn swords against each other like the frenzied bloodthirsty paynim.'

'And, what is more,' said Hordle John, suddenly appearing out of the buttery with the huge board upon which the pastry was rolled, 'if either raise sword I shall flatten him like Shrove-tide pancake. By the black rood! I shall drive him into the earth, like a nail into a door, rather than see you do scath to each other.'

'Fore God, this is a strange way of preaching peace,' cried Black Simon. 'You may find the scath yourself, my lusty friend, if you raise your great cudgel to me. I had as lief have the castle drawbridge drop upon my pate.'

'Tell me, Aylward,' said Alleyne earnestly, with hands outstretched to keep the pair asunder, 'what is the cause of quarrel, that we may see whether honourable settlement may not be arrived at?'

The bowman looked down at his feet and then up at the moon. 'Parbleu!' he cried, 'the cause of quarrel? Why, mon petit, it was years ago in Limousin, and how can I bear in mind what was the cause of it? Simon there hath it at the end of his tongue.'

'Not I, in troth,' replied the other; 'I have had other things to think of. There was some sort of bickering over dice, or wine, or was it a woman, coz?'

'Pasques Dieu! but you have nicked it,' cried Aylward. 'It was indeed about a woman; and the quarrel must go forward, for I am still of the same mind as before.'

'What of the woman, then?' asked Simon. 'May the murrain strike me if I can call to mind aught about her.'

'It was La Blanche Rose, maid at the sign of the "Trois Corbeaux" at Limoges. Bless her pretty heart! Why, mon gar., I loved her.'

‘So did a many,’ quoth Simon. ‘I call her to mind now. On the very day that we fought over the little hussy, she went off with Evan ap Price, a long-legged Welsh dagsman. They have a hostel of their own now, somewhere on the banks of Garonne, where the landlord drinks so much of the liquor that there is little left for the customers.’

‘So ends our quarrel, then,’ said Aylward, sheathing his sword. ‘A Welsh dagsman, i’ faith! C’était mauvais goût, camarade, and the more so when she had a jolly archer and a lusty man-at-arms to choose from.’

‘True, old lad. And it is as well that we can compose our differences honourably, for Sir Nigel had been out at the first clash of steel; and he hath sworn that if there be quarrelling in the garrison he would smite the right hand from the broilers. You know him of old, and that he is like to be as good as his word.’

‘Mort-Dieu! yes. But there are ale, mead, and wine in the buttry, and the steward a merry rogue, who will not haggle over a quart or two. Buvons, mon gar., for it is not every day that two old friends come together.’

The old soldiers and Hordle John strode off together in all good fellowship. Alleyne had turned to follow them, when he felt a touch upon his shoulder, and found a young page by his side.

‘The Lord Loring commands,’ said the boy, ‘that you will follow me to the great chamber, and await him there.’

‘But my comrades?’

‘His commands were for you alone.’

Alleyne followed the messenger to the east end of the courtyard, where a broad flight of steps led up to the doorway of the main hall, the outer wall of which is washed by the waters of the Avon. As designed at first, no dwelling had been allotted to the lord of the castle and his family but the dark and dismal basement storey of the keep. A more civilised or more effeminate generation, however, had refused to be pent up in such a cellar, and the hall with its neighbouring chambers had been added for their accommodation. Up the broad steps Alleyne went, still following his boyish guide, until at the folding oak doors the latter paused, and ushered him into the main hall of the castle.

On entering the room the clerk looked round; but, seeing no one, he continued to stand, his cap in his hand, examining with the greatest interest a chamber which was so different to any to which he was accustomed. The days had gone by when a nobleman’s

hall was but a barn-like rush-strewn enclosure, the common lounge and eating-room of every inmate of the castle. The Crusaders had brought back with them experiences of domestic luxuries, of Damascus carpets and rugs of Aleppo, which made them impatient of the hideous bareness and want of privacy which they found in their ancestral strongholds. Still stronger, however, had been the influence of the great French war; for, however well matched the nations might be in martial exercises, there could be no question but that our neighbours were infinitely superior to us in the arts of peace. A stream of returning knights, of wounded soldiers, and of unransomed French noblemen, had been for a quarter of a century continually pouring into England, every one of whom exerted an influence in the direction of greater domestic refinement; while shiploads of French furniture from Calais, Rouen, and other plundered towns, had supplied our own artisans with models on which to shape their work. Hence, in most English castles, and in Castle Twynham among the rest, chambers were to be found which would seem to be not wanting either in beauty or in comfort.

In the great stone fireplace a log fire was spurting and crackling, throwing out a ruddy glare which, with the four bracket-lamps which stood at each corner of the room, gave a bright and lightsome air to the whole apartment. Above was a wreath-work of blazonry, extending up to the carved and corniced oaken roof; while on either side stood the high canopied chairs placed for the master of the house and for his most honoured guest. The walls were hung all round with most elaborate and brightly-coloured tapestry, representing the achievements of Sir Bevis of Hampton, and behind this convenient screen were stored the tables dormant and benches which would be needed for banquet or high festivity. The floor was of polished tiles, with a square of red and black diapered Flemish carpet in the centre; and many settees, cushions, folding chairs, and carved bancals littered all over it. At the further end was a long black buffet or dresser, thickly covered with gold cups, silver salvers, and other such valuables. All this Alleyne examined with curious eyes; but most interesting of all to him was a small ebony table at his very side, on which, by the side of a chess-board and the scattered chessmen, there lay an open manuscript written in a right clerkly hand, and set forth with brave flourishes and devices along the margins. In vain Alleyne bethought him of where he was, and of those laws of good breeding and decorum which should restrain

him: those coloured capitals and black even lines drew his hand down to them, as the loadstone draws the needle, until, almost before he knew it, he was standing with the romance of Garin de Montglane before his eyes, so absorbed in its contents as to be completely oblivious both of where he was and why he had come there.

He was brought back to himself, however, by a sudden little ripple of quick feminine laughter. Aghast, he dropped the manuscript among the chessmen and stared in bewilderment round the room. It was as empty and as still as ever. Again he stretched his hand out to the romance, and again came that roguish burst of merriment. He looked up at the ceiling, back at the closed door, and round at the stiff folds of motionless tapestry. Of a sudden, however, he caught a quick shimmer from the corner of a high-backed bancal in front of him, and, shifting a pace or two to the side, saw a white slender hand, which held a mirror of polished silver in such a way that the concealed observer could see without being seen. He stood irresolute, uncertain whether to advance or to take no notice; but, even as he hesitated, the mirror was whipped in, and a tall and stately young lady swept out from behind the oaken screen, with a dancing light of mischief in her eyes. Alleyne started with astonishment as he recognised the very maiden who had suffered from his brother's violence in the forest. She no longer wore her gay riding-dress, however, but was attired in a long sweeping robe of black velvet of Bruges, with delicate tracery of white lace at neck and at wrist, scarce to be seen against her ivory skin. Beautiful as she had seemed to him before, the lithe charm of her figure and the proud, free grace of her bearing were enhanced now by the rich simplicity of her attire.

'Ah, you start,' said she, with the same sidelong look of mischief, 'and I cannot marvel at it. Didst not look to see the distressed damozel again. Oh that I were a minstrel, that I might put it into rhyme, with the whole romance—the luckless maid, the wicked socman, and the virtuous clerk! So might our fame have gone down together for all time, and you be numbered with Sir Percival or Sir Galahad, or all the other rescuers of oppressed ladies.'

'What I did,' said Alleyne, 'was too small a thing for thanks; and yet, if I may say it without offence, it was too grave and near a matter for mirth and raillery. I had counted on my brother's love, but God has willed that it should be otherwise. It is a joy

to me to see you again, lady, and to know that you have reached home in safety, if this be indeed your home.'

'Yes, in sooth, Castle Twynham is my home, and Sir Nigel Loring my father. I should have told you so this morning, but you said that you were coming hither, so I bethought me that I might hold it back as a surprise to you. Oh dear, but it was brave to see you!' she cried, bursting out a-laughing once more, and standing with her hand pressed to her side, and her half-closed eyes twinkling with amusement. 'You drew back and came forward with your eyes upon my book there, like the mouse who sniffs the cheese and yet dreads the trap.'

'I take shame,' said Alleyne, 'that I should have touched it.'

'Nay, it warmed my very heart to see it. So glad was I that I laughed for very pleasure. My fine preacher can himself be tempted then, thought I; he is not made of another clay to the rest of us.'

'God help me! I am the weakest of the weak,' groaned Alleyne. 'I pray that I may have more strength.'

'And to what end?' she asked sharply. 'If you are, as I understand, to shut yourself for ever in your cell within the four walls of an abbey, then of what use would it be were your prayer to be answered?'

'The use of my own salvation.'

She turned from him with a pretty shrug and wave. 'Is that all?' she said. 'Then you are no better than Father Christopher and the rest of them. Your own, your own, ever your own! My father is the king's man, and when he rides into the press of fight he is not thinking ever of the saving of his own poor body; he recks little enough if he leave it on the field. Why then should you, who are soldiers of the spirit, be ever moping and hiding in cell or in cave, with minds full of your own concerns, while the world, which you should be mending, is going on its way, and neither sees nor hears you? Were ye all as thoughtless of your own souls as the soldier is of his body, ye would be of more avail to the souls of others.'

'There is sooth in what you say, lady,' Alleyne answered; 'and yet I scarce can see what you would have the clergy and the church to do.'

'I would have them live as others, and do men's work in the world, preaching by their lives rather than their words. I would have them come forth from their lonely places, mix with the

borel folks, feel the pains and the pleasures, the cares and the rewards, the temptings and the stirrings of the common people. Let them toil, and swinken, and labour, and plough the land, and take wives to themselves——'

'Alas! alas!' cried Alleyne aghast, 'you have surely sucked this poison from the man Wicliffe, of whom I have heard such evil things.'

'Nay, I know him not. I have learned it by looking from mine own chamber window and marking these poor monks of the priory, their weary life, their profitless round. I have asked myself if the best which can be done with virtue is to shut it within high walls as though it were some savage creature. If the good will lock themselves up, and if the wicked will still wander free, then alas for the world!'

Alleyne looked at her in astonishment, for her cheek was flushed, her eyes gleaming, and her whole pose full of eloquence and conviction. Yet in an instant she had changed again to her old expression of merriment leavened with mischief.

'Wilt do what I ask?' said she.

'What is it, lady?'

'Oh, most ungallant clerk! A true knight would never have asked, but would have vowed upon the instant. 'Tis but to bear me out in what I say to my father.'

'In what?'

'In saying, if he ask, that it was south of the Christchurch road that I met you. I shall be shut up with the tire-women else, and have a week of spindle and bodkin, when I would fain be galloping Troubadour up Wilverley Walk, or loosing little Roland at the Vinney Ridge herons.'

'I shall not answer him if he ask.'

'Not answer! But he will have an answer. Nay, but you must not fail me, or it will go ill with me.'

'But, lady,' cried poor Alleyne in great distress, 'how can I say that it was to the south of the road when I know well that it was four miles to the north.'

'You will not say it?'

'Surely you will not, too, when you know that it is not so?'

'Oh, I weary of your preaching!' she cried, and swept away with a toss of her beautiful head, leaving Alleyne as cast down and ashamed as though he had himself proposed some infamous thing. She was back again in an instant, however, in another of her varying moods.

‘Look at that, my friend!’ said she. ‘If you had been shut up in abbey or in cell this day you could not have taught a wayward maiden to abide by the truth. Is it not so? What avail is the shepherd if he leave his sheep.’

‘A sorry shepherd!’ said Alleyne humbly. ‘But here is your noble father.’

‘And you shall see how worthy a pupil I am. Father, I am much beholden to this young clerk, who was of service to me and helped me this very morning in Minstead Woods, four miles to the north of the Christchurch road, where I had no call to be, you having ordered it otherwise.’ All this she reeled off in a loud voice, and then glanced with sidelong questioning eyes at Alleyne for his approval.

Sir Nigel, who had entered the room with a silvery-haired old lady upon his arm, stared aghast at this sudden burst of candour.

‘Maude, Maude!’ said he, shaking his head, ‘it is more hard for me to gain obedience from you than from the ten score drunken archers who followed me to Guienne. Yet, hush! little one, for your fair lady-mother will be here anon, and there is no need that she should know it. We will keep you from the provost-marshal this journey. Away to your chamber, sweeting, and keep a blithe face, for she who confesses is shriven. And now, fair mother,’ he continued when his daughter had gone, ‘sit you here by the fire, for your blood runs colder than it did. Alleyne Edricson, I would have a word with you, for I would fain that you should take service under me. And here in good time comes my lady, without whose counsel it is not my wont to decide aught of import; but, indeed, it was her own thought that you should come.’

‘For I have formed a good opinion of you, and can see that you are one who may be trusted,’ said the Lady Loring. ‘And in good sooth my dear lord hath need of such a one by his side, for he recks so little of himself that there should be one there to look to his needs and meet his wants. You have seen the cloisters; it were well that you should see the world too, ere you make choice for life between them.’

‘It was for that very reason that my father willed that I should come forth into the world at my twentieth year,’ said Alleyne.

‘Then your father was a man of good counsel,’ said she, ‘and you cannot carry out his will better than by going on this path, where all that is noble and gallant in England will be your companions.’

‘You can ride?’ asked Sir Nigel, looking at the youth with puckered eyes.

‘Yes, I have ridden much at the abbey.’

‘Yet there is a difference betwixt a friar’s hack and a warrior’s destrier. You can sing and play?’

‘On citole, flute, and rebeck.’

‘Good! You can read blazonry?’

‘Indifferent well.’

‘Then read this,’ quoth Sir Nigel, pointing upwards to one of the many quarterings which adorned the wall over the fireplace.

‘Argent,’ Alleyne answered, ‘a fess azure charged with three lozenges dividing three mullets sable. Over all, on an escutcheon of the first, a jambe gules.’

‘A jambe gules erased,’ said Sir Nigel, shaking his head solemnly. ‘Yet it is not amiss for a monk-bred man. I trust that you are lowly and serviceable?’

‘I have served all my life, my lord.’

‘Canst carve too?’

‘I have carved two days a week for the brethren.’

‘A model truly! Wilt make a squire of squires. But tell me, I pray, canst curl hair?’

‘No, my lord, but I could learn.’

‘It is of import,’ said he, ‘for I love to keep my hair well ordered, seeing that the weight of my helmet for thirty years hath in some degree frayed it upon the top.’ He pulled off his velvet cap of maintenance as he spoke, and displayed a pate which was as bald as an egg, and shone bravely in the firelight. ‘You see,’ said he, whisking round, and showing one little strip where a line of scattered hairs, like the last survivors in some fatal field, still barely held their own against the fate which had fallen upon their comrades; ‘these locks need some little oiling and curling, for I doubt not that if you look slantwise at my head, when the light is good, you will yourself perceive that there are places where the hair is sparse.’

‘It is for you also to bear the purse,’ said the lady; ‘for my sweet lord is of so free and gracious a temper that he would give it gaily to the first who asked alms of him. All these things, with some knowledge of venerie, and of the management of horse, hawk and hound, with the grace and hardihood and courtesy which are proper to your age, will make you a fit squire for Sir Nigel Loring.’

‘Alas! lady,’ Alleyne answered, ‘I know well the great

honour that you have done me in deeming me worthy to wait upon so renowned a knight, yet I am so conscious of my own weakness that I scarce dare incur duties which I might be so ill-fitted to fulfil.'

'Modesty and a humble mind,' said she, 'are the very first and rarest gifts in page or squire. Your words prove that you have these, and all the rest is but the work of use and of time. But there is no call for haste. Rest upon it for the night, and let your orisons ask for guidance in the matter. We knew your father well, and would fain help his son, though we have small cause to love your brother the Socman, who is for ever stirring up strife in the county.'

'We can scarce hope,' said Nigel, 'to have all ready for our start before the feast of Saint Luke, for there is much to be done in the time. You will have leisure therefore, if it please you to take service under me, in which to learn your devoir. Bertrand, my daughter's page, is hot to go; but in sooth he is over young for such rough work as may be before us.'

'And I have one favour to crave from you,' added the lady of the castle, as Alleyne turned to leave their presence. 'You have, as I understand, much learning which you have acquired at Beaulieu.'

'Little enough, lady, compared with those who were my teachers.'

'Yet enough for my purpose, I doubt not. For I would have you give an hour or two a day whilst you are with us in discoursing with my daughter, the Lady Maude; for she is somewhat backward, I fear, and hath no love for letters, save for these poor fond romances, which do but fill her empty head with dreams of enchanted maidens and of errant cavaliers. Father Christopher comes over after nones from the priory, but he is stricken with years and slow of speech, so that she gets small profit from his teaching. I would have you do what you can with her, and with Agatha my young tire-woman, and with Dorothy Pierpoint.'

And so Alleyne found himself not only chosen as squire to a knight but also as squire to three damozels, which was even further from the part which he had thought to play in the world. Yet he could but agree to do what he might, and so went forth from the castle hall with his face flushed and his head in a whirl at the thought of the strange and perilous paths which his feet were destined to tread.

(To be continued.)

ON THE WINGS OF THE WIND.

OF course you know my friend the squirting cucumber. If you don't, that can be only because you've never looked in the right place to find him. On all waste ground outside most southern cities—Nice, Cannes, Florence: Rome, Algiers, Granada: Athens, Palermo, Tunis, where you will—the soil is thickly covered by dark trailing vines which bear on their branches a queer hairy green fruit, much like a common cucumber at that early stage of its existence when we know it best in the commercial form of pickled gherkins. As long as you don't interfere with them, these hairy green fruits do nothing out of the common in the way of personal aggressiveness. Like the model young lady of the books on etiquette, they don't speak unless they're spoken to. But if peradventure you chance to brush up against the plant accidentally, or you irritate it of set purpose with your foot or your cane, then, as Mr. Rider Haggard would say, 'a strange thing happens': off jumps the little green fruit with a startling bounce, and scatters its juice and pulp and seeds explosively through a hole in the end where the stem joined on to it. The entire central part of the cucumber, in short (answering to the seeds and pulp of a ripe melon), squirt out elastically through the breach in the outer wall, leaving the hollow shell behind as a mere empty windbag.

Naturally, the squirting cucumber knows its own business best, and is not without sufficient reasons of its own for this strange and, to some extent, unmannerly behaviour. By its queer trick of squirting, it manages to kill at least two birds with one stone. For, in the first place, the sudden elastic jump of the fruit frightens away browsing animals, such as goats and cattle. Those meditative ruminants are little accustomed to finding shrubs or plants take the aggressive against them; and when they see a fruit that quite literally flies in their faces of its own accord, they hesitate to attack the uncanny vine which bristles with such magical and almost miraculous defences. Moreover, the juice of the squirting cucumber is bitter and nauseous, and if it gets into the eyes or nostrils of man or beast, it impresses itself on the memory by stinging like red pepper. So the trick of squirting serves in a

double way as a protection to the plant against the attacks of herbivorous animals and other enemies.

But that's not all. Even when no enemy is near, the ripe fruits at last drop off of themselves, and scatter their seeds elastically in every direction. This they do simply in order to disseminate their kind in new and unoccupied spots, where the seedlings will root and find an opening in life for themselves. Observe, indeed, that the very word 'disseminate' implies a general vague recognition of this principle of plant life on the part of humanity. It means, etymologically, to scatter seed; and it points to the fact that everywhere in nature seeds are scattered broadcast, infinite pains being taken by the mother plant for their general diffusion over wide areas of woodland, plain, or prairie.

Let us take as examples a single little set of instances, familiar to everybody, but far commoner in the world at large than the inhabitants of towns are at all aware of: I mean, the winged seeds, that fly about freely in the air by means of feathery hairs or gossamer, like thistledown and dandelion. Of these winged types we have many hundred varieties in England alone. All the willow-herbs, for example, have such feathery seeds (or rather fruits) to help them on their way through life; and one kind, the beautiful pink rose-bay, flies about so readily, and over such wide spaces of open country, that the plant is known to farmers in America as fireweed, because it always springs up at once over whole square miles of charred and smoking soil after every devastating forest fire. It travels fast, for it travels like Ariel. In much the same way, the coltsfoot grows on all new English railway banks, because its winged seeds are wafted everywhere in myriads on the winds of March. All the willows and poplars have also winged seeds: so have the whole vast tribe of hawkweeds, groundsels, ragworts, thistles, fleabanes, cat's ears, dandelions, and lettuces. Indeed, one may say roughly, there are very few plants of any size or importance in the economy of nature which don't deliberately provide, in one way or another, for the dispersal and dissemination of their fruits or seedlings.

Why is this? Why isn't the plant content just to let its grains or berries drop quietly on to the soil beneath, and there shift for themselves as best they may on their own resources?

The answer is a more profound one than you would at first imagine. Plants discovered the grand principle of the rotation of crops long before man did. The farmer now knows that if he

sows wheat or turnips too many years running on the same plot, he 'exhausts the soil,' as we say—deprives it of certain special mineral or animal constituents needful for that particular crop, and makes the growth of the plant, therefore, feeble or even impossible. To avoid this misfortune, he lets the land lie fallow, or varies his crops from year to year according to a regular and deliberate cycle. Well, natural selection forced the same discovery upon the plants themselves long before the farmer had dreamed of its existence. For plants, being, in the strictest sense, 'rooted to the spot,' absolutely require that all their needs should be supplied quite locally. Hence, from the very beginning, those plants which scattered their seeds widest throve the best; while those which merely dropped them on the ground under their own shadow, and on soil exhausted by their own previous demands upon it, fared ill in the struggle for life against their more discursive competitors. The result has been that in the long run few species have survived, except those which in one way or another arranged beforehand for the dispersal of their seeds and fruits over fresh and unoccupied areas of plain or hillside.

I don't, of course, by any means intend to assert that seeds always do it by the simple device of wings or feathery projections. Every variety of plan or dodge or expedient has been adopted in turn to secure the self-same end; and provided only it succeeds in securing it, any variety of them all is equally satisfactory. One might parallel it with the case of hatching birds' eggs. Most birds sit upon their eggs themselves, and supply the necessary warmth from their own bodies. But any alternative plan that attains the same end does just as well. The felonious cuckoo drops her foundlings unawares in another bird's nest: the ostrich trusts her unhatched offspring to the heat of the burning desert sand: and the Australian brush-turkeys, with vicarious maternal instinct, collect great mounds of decaying and fermenting leaves and rubbish, in which they deposit their eggs to be artificially incubated, as it were, by the slow heat generated in the process of putrefaction. Just in the same way, we shall see in the case of seeds that any method of dispersion will serve the plant's purpose equally well, provided only it succeeds in carrying a few of the young seedlings to a proper place in which they may start fair at last in the struggle for existence.

As in the case of the fertilisation of flowers, so in that of the dispersal of seeds, there are two main ways in which the work is

effected—by animals and by wind-power. I will not insult the intelligence of the reader at the present time of day by telling him that pollen is usually transferred from blossom to blossom in one or other of these two chief ways—it is carried on the heads or bodies of bees and other honey-seeking insects, or else it is wafted on the wings of the wind to the sensitive surface of a sister-flower. So, too, seeds are for the most part either dispersed by animals or blown about by the breezes of heaven to new situations. These are the two most obvious means of locomotion provided by nature; and it is curious to see that they have both been utilised almost equally by plants, alike for their pollen and their seeds, just as they have been utilised by man for his own purposes on sea or land, in ship, or windmill, or pack-horse, or carriage.

There are two ways in which animals may be employed to disperse seeds—voluntarily and involuntarily. They may be compelled to carry them against their wills: or they may be bribed and cajoled and flattered into doing the plant's work for it in return for some substantial advantage or benefit the plant confers upon them. The first plan is the one adopted by burrs and cleavers. These adhesive fruits are like the man who buttonholes you and won't be shaken off: they are provided with little curved hooks or bent and barbed hairs which catch upon the wool of sheep, the coat of cattle, or the nether integuments of wayfaring humanity, and can't be got rid of without some little difficulty. Most of them, you will find on examination, belong to confirmed hedgerow or woodside plants: they grow among bushes or low scrub, and thickets of gorse or bramble. Now, to such plants as these, it is obviously useful to have adhesive fruits or seeds: for when sheep or other animals get them caught in their coats, they carry them away to other bushy spots, and there, to get rid of the annoyance caused by the foreign body, scratch them off at once against some holly-bush or blackthorn. You may often find seeds of this type sticking on thorns as the nucleus of a little matted mass of wool, so left by the sheep in the very spots best adapted for the free growth of their vigorous seedlings.

Even among plants which trust to the involuntary services of animals in dispersing their seeds, a great many varieties of detail may be observed on close inspection. For example, in houndstongue and goose-grass, two of the best-known instances among our common English weeds, each little nut is covered with many small hooks, which make it catch on firmly by several points of

attachment to passing animals. These are the kinds we human beings of either sex oftenest find clinging to our skirts or trousers after a walk in a rabbit-warren. But in herb-bennet and avens each nut has a single long awn, crooked near the middle with a very peculiar S-shaped joint, which effectually catches on to the wool or hair, but drops at the elbow after a short period of withering. Sometimes, too, the whole fruit is provided with prehensile hooks, while sometimes it is rather the individual seeds themselves that are so accommodated. Oddest of all is the plan followed by the common burdock. Here, an involucre or common cup-shaped receptacle of hooked bracts surrounds an entire head of purple tubular flowers, and each of these flowers produces in time a distinct fruit; but the hooked involucre contains the whole compound mass, and, being pulled off bodily by a stray sheep or dog, effects the transference of the composite lot at once to some fitting place for their germination.

Those plants, on the other hand, which depend rather, like London hospitals, upon the voluntary system, produce that very familiar form of edible capsule which we commonly call in the restricted sense a fruit or berry. In such cases, the seed-vessel is usually swollen and pulpy: it is stored with sweet juices to attract the birds or other animal allies, and it is brightly coloured so as to advertise to their eyes the presence of the alluring sugary foodstuff. These instances, however, are now so familiar to everybody that I won't dwell upon them at any length. Even the degenerate schoolboy of the present day, much as he has declined from the high standard set forth by Macaulay, knows all about the way the actual seed itself is covered (as in the plum or the cherry) by a hard stony coat which 'resists the action of the gastric juice' (so physiologists put it, with their usual frankness), and thus passes undigested through the body of its swallower. All I will do here, therefore, is to note very briefly that some edible fruits, like the two just mentioned, as well as the apricot, the peach, the nectarine, and the mango, consist of a single seed with its outer covering; in others, as in the raspberry, the blackberry, the cloud-berry, and the dewberry, many seeds are massed together, each with a separate edible pulp; in yet others, as in the gooseberry, the currant, the grape, and the whortleberry, several seeds are embedded within the fruit in a common pulpy mass; and in others again, as in the apple, pear, quince, and medlar, they are surrounded by a quantity of spongy edible flesh. Indeed, the variety

that prevails among fruits in this respect almost defies classification: for sometimes, as in the mulberry, the separate little fruits of several distinct flowers grow together at last into a common berry: sometimes, as in the fig, the general flower-stalk of several tiny one-seeded blossoms forms the edible part: and sometimes, as in the strawberry, the true little nuts or fruits appear as mere specks or dots on the bloated surface of the swollen and overgrown stem, which forms the luscious morsel dear to the human palate.

Yet in every case it is interesting to observe that, while the seeds which depend for dispersion upon the breeze are easily detached from the parent plant and blown about by every wind of doctrine, the seeds or fruits which depend for their dispersion upon birds or animals always, on the contrary, hang on to their native boughs to the very last, till some unconscious friend pecks them off and devours them. Haws, rose-hips, and holly-berries will wither and wilt on the tree in mild winters, because they can't drop off of themselves without the aid of birds, while the birds are too well supplied with other food to care for them. One of the strangest cases of all, however, is that of the mistletoe, which, living parasitically upon forest-boughs and apple-trees, would of course be utterly lost if its berries dropped their seeds on to the ground beneath it. To avoid such a misfortune, the mistletoe-berries are filled with an exceedingly viscid and sticky pulp, surrounding the hard little nut-like seeds: and this pulp makes the seeds cling to the bills and feet of various birds which feed upon the fruit, but most particularly of the missel-thrush, who derives his common English name from his devotion to the mistletoe. The birds then carry them away unwittingly to some neighbouring tree, and rub them off, when they get uncomfortable, against a forked branch—the exact spot that best suits the young mistletoe for sprouting in. Man, in turn, makes use of the sticky pulp for the manufacture of bird-lime, and so employs against the birds the very qualities which the plant intended as a bribe for their kindly services.

Among seeds that trust for their dispersal to the wind, the commonest, simplest, and least evolved type is that of the ordinary capsule, as in the poppies and campions. At first sight, to be sure, a casual observer might suppose there existed in these cases no recognisable device at all for the dissemination of the seedlings. But you and I, most excellent and discreet reader, are emphatically *not*, of course, mere casual observers. We look close, and go to the very root of things. And when we do so, we see

for ourselves at once that almost all capsules open—where? why, at the top, so that the seeds can only be shaken out when there is a high enough wind blowing to sway the stems to and fro with some violence, and scatter the small black grains inside to a considerable distance. Furthermore, in many instances, of which the common poppy-head is an excellent example, the capsule opens by lateral pores at the top of a flat head—a further precaution which allows the seeds to get out only by a few at a time, after a distinct jerk, and so scatters them pretty evenly, with different winds, over a wide circular space around the mother-plant. Experiment will show how this simple dodge works. Try to shake out the poppy-seed from a ripe poppy-head on the plant as it grows, without breaking the stem or bending it unnaturally, and you will easily see how much force of wind is required in order to put this unobtrusive but very effective mechanism into working order.

The devices of this character employed by various plants for the dispersal of seeds even in ordinary dry capsules are far too numerous for me to describe in full detail, though they form a delightful subject for individual study in any small suburban garden. I will only give one more illustrative case, just to show the sort of point an amateur should always be on the look-out for. There is an extremely common, though inconspicuous, English weed, the mouse-ear chickweed, found everywhere in flower-beds or grass-plots, however small, and noticeable for its quaint little horn-shaped capsules. These have a very odd sort of twist or cock-up in the middle, just above the part where the seeds lie; and they open at the top by ten small teeth, pointed obliquely outward, for no apparent reason. Yet every point has a meaning of its own for all that. The plant is one that lies rather close upon the ground; and the effect of this twist in the capsule is that the seeds, which are relatively heavy, and well stored with nutriment, can never get out at all, unless a very strong wind is blowing, which sweeps over the herbage in long quick waves, and carries everything it shakes out for great distances before it. So much design have even the smallest weeds put into the mechanism for the dispersion of their precious seeds, the hope of their race and the earnest of their future!

Artillery marks a higher stage than the sling and the stone. Just so, in many plants, a step higher in the evolutionary scale as regards the method of dispersion, the capsule itself bursts open explosively, and scatters its contents to the four winds of heaven.

Such plants may be said to discharge their grains on the principle of the bow and arrow. The balsam is a familiar example of this startling mode of moving to fresh fields and pastures new: its capsule consists of five long straight valves, which break asunder elastically the moment they are touched, when fully ripe, and shed their seeds on all sides, like so many small bombshells. Our friend the squirting cucumber, which served as the prime text for this present discourse, falls into somewhat the same category, though in other ways it rather resembles the true succulent fruits, and belongs, indeed, to the same family as the melon, the gourd, the pumpkin, and the vegetable-marrow, almost all of which are edible and in every way fruit-like. Among English weeds, the little bittercress that grows on dry walls and hedge-banks forms an excellent example of the same device. Village children love to touch the long, ripe, brown capsules on the top with one timid finger, and then jump away, half laughing, half terrified, when the mild-looking little plant goes off suddenly with a small bang and shoots its grains like a catapult point-blank in their faces.

It is in the tropics, however, that these elastic fruits reach their highest development. There they have to fight, not merely against such small fry as robins, squirrels, and harvest-mice, but against the aggressive parrot, the hard-billed toucan, the persistent lemur, and the inquisitive monkey. Moreover, the elastic fruits of the tropics grow often on spreading forest-trees, and must therefore shed their seeds to immense distances if they are to reach comparatively virgin soil, unexhausted by the deep-set roots of the mother trunk. Under such exceptional circumstances, the tropical examples of these elastic capsules are by no means mere toys to be lightly played with by babes and sucklings. The sand-box tree of the West Indies has large round fruits, containing seeds about as big as an English horsebean; and the capsule explodes, when ripe, with a detonation like a pistol, scattering its contents with as much violence as a shot from an air-gun. It is dangerous to go too near these natural batteries during the shooting season. A blow in the eye from one would blind a man instantly. I well remember the very first night I spent in my own house in Jamaica, where I went to live shortly after the repression of 'Governor Eyre's rebellion,' as everybody calls it locally. All night long I heard somebody, as I thought, practising with a revolver in my own back garden: a sound which somewhat alarmed me under those very unstable social conditions. An earthquake about midnight, it is true, diverted my attention tem-

porarily from the recurring shots, but didn't produce the slightest effect upon the supposed rebel's devotion to the improvement of his marksmanship. When morning dawned, however, I found it was only a sand-box tree, and that the shots were nothing more than the explosions of the capsules. As to the wonderful tales told about the Brazilian cannon-ball tree, I cannot personally endorse them from original observation, and will not stain this veracious page with any second-hand quotations from the strange stories of modern scientific Munchausens.

Still higher in the evolutionary scale than the elastic fruits are those airy species which have taken to themselves wings like the eagle, and soar forth upon the free breeze in search of what the Americans describe as 'fresh locations.' Of this class, the simplest type may be seen in those forest-trees, like the maple and the sycamore, whose fruits are flattened out into long expansions or parachutes, technically known as 'keys,' by whose aid they flutter down obliquely to the ground at a considerable distance. The keys of the sycamore, to take a single instance, when detached from the tree in autumn, fall spirally through the air, owing to the twist of the winged arm, and are carried so far that, as every gardener knows, young sycamore-trees rank among the commonest weeds among our plots and flower-beds. A curious variant upon this type is presented by the lime, or linden, whose fruits are in themselves small wingless nuts; but they are borne in clusters upon a common stalk, which is winged on either side by a large membranous bract. When the nuts are ripe, the whole cluster detaches itself in a body from the branch, and flutters away before the breeze by means of the common parachute, to some spot a hundred yards off or more, where the wind chances to land it.

The topmost place of all in the hierarchy of seed life, it seems to me, is taken by the feathery fruits and seeds which float freely hither and thither wherever the wind may bear them. An immense number of the very highest plants—the aristocrats of the vegetable kingdom, such as the lordly composites, those ultimate products of plant evolution—possess such floating feathery seeds; though here, again, the varieties of detail are too infinite for rapid or popular classification. Indeed, among the composites alone—the thistle and dandelion tribe with downy fruits—I can reckon up more than a hundred and fifty distinct variations of plan among the winged seeds known to me in various parts of Europe. But if I am strong, I am merciful; I will let the public

off a hundred and forty-eight of them. My two exceptions shall be John-go-to-bed-at-noon and the hairy hawkweed, both of them common English meadow-plants. The first, and more quaintly named, of the two has little ribbed fruits that end in a long and narrow beak, supporting a radial rib-work of spokes like the frame of an umbrella; and from rib to rib of this frame-work stretch feathery cross-pieces, continuous all round, so as to make of the whole mechanism a perfect circular parachute, resembling somewhat the web of a geometrical spider. But the hairy hawkweed is still more cunning in its generation; for that clever and cautious weed produces its seeds or fruits in clustered heads, of which the central ones are winged, while the outer are heavy, squat, and wingless. Thus does the plant make the best of all chances that may happen to open before it: if one lot goes far and fares but ill, the other is pretty sure to score a bull's-eye.

These are only a few selected examples of the infinite dodges employed by enlightened herbs and shrubs to propagate their scions in foreign parts. Many more, equally interesting, must be left undescribed. Only for a single case more can I still find room—that of the subterranean clover, which has been driven by its numerous enemies to take refuge at last in a very remarkable and almost unique mode of protecting its offspring. This particular kind of clover affects smooth and close-cropped hillsides, where the sheep nibble down the grass and other herbage almost as fast as it springs up again. Now, clover seeds resemble their allies of the pea and bean tribe in being exceedingly rich in starch and other valuable foodstuffs. Hence, they are much sought after by the inquiring sheep, which eat them off wherever found, as exceptionally nutritious and dainty morsels. Under these circumstances, the subterranean clover has learnt to produce small heads of bloom, pressed close to the ground, in which only the outer flowers are perfect and fertile, while the inner ones are transformed into tiny wriggling corkscrews. As soon as the fertile flowers have begun to set their seed, by the kind aid of the bees, the whole stem bends downward, automatically, of its own accord; the little corkscrews then worm their way into the turf beneath; and the pods ripen and mature in the actual soil itself, where no prying ewe can poke an inquisitive nose to grub them up and devour them. Cases like this point in certain ways to the absolute high-water-mark of vegetable ingenuity: they go nearest of all in the plant-world to the similitude of conscious animal intelligence.

CARRARA.

CARRARA marble has become almost a household word, and yet how few of the many who flock yearly to Italy really know anything about the spot itself. They may have gazed at the white rifts glittering in the sunshine as they were whirled past in the train rushing Pisa way, or in the direction of Spezia; but those who have halted at Avenza and made an excursion expressly to Carrara are but few and far between.

Carrara itself as a town is hardly worth visiting, being nothing more than a few scores of houses, big and little, flung down pell-mell on the banks of a muddy torrent—the Carriona—at the very base of the mountains. These latter loom down over the place, and, looking up at them from the public garden, it seems as if you could almost touch their bold and rugged flanks. Yet the scramble to their summit is both long and fatiguing, though well repaying the outlay in breath and shoe-leather. There is but one building in Carrara worth visiting, viz. the Cathedral, and of this only the exterior is worth notice. The inside is as bare as a barn, save that it is decorated (?) with a series of twopenny German oleographs.

The inhabitants of the place partake, more or less, of the roughness of the commerce in which they are almost all exclusively engaged—that of marble; but they are kindly disposed and hospitable. Everybody here lives upon marble, thinks about marble, meditates over marble, dreams of marble, speaks of marble; and to such an extent that the very word becomes hateful to you. Marble dust gets into your eyes and makes them water, into your throat and makes you cough; marble mud bedabbles your garments, marble chips cut your boots, the glare of marble meets you at every turning and makes you blink: in short, you get such daily doses of marble in every possible shape that you at last begin to wonder how the word or the thing itself could ever have possessed any charm for you.

Thanks to this surfeit of marble, there is not the shadow of anything that can be called 'society' in Carrara. Commerce in marble exacts a daily visit to quarries, miles off, perhaps, and to saw-mills very possibly not much nearer. Consequently the

head of the family has to rise at dawn, and often returns only late in the afternoon, tired, and much more inclined for rest and a quiet evening at home than for anything his neighbours could offer him.

There are two clubs at Carrara, but they are little frequented. If man, however, provides at Carrara little for the amusement of his fellows, Nature presents scenery such as poets dream of and painters revel in. Immediately above the town rise peaks and crags innumerable, here towering up into the blue above in bold barrenness, there crowned by a fringe of feathery pine. Lower down, chestnut woods, whose broad boughs fling grateful shade over patches of strawberry and armies of orchises, snapdragons and campanulas flaunting forth from every rocky crevice, fairy grottos hung with delicate ferns, hart's-tongue spreading its broad fronds over the bed of some tinkling beck; springs gushing gladly forth with glimmer and gurgle, as if in haste to reach the low-lying sea; groves of arbutus alternating with thickets of myrtle—a wilderness of blossom and fruit and stream. Lower still, the blue olive groves, then the wreathing vineyards, the shady fig, and the dark-boughed orange. None but a painter or a poet can do justice to the scene. It is, indeed, a pity that Carrara is so little known, save as a marble quarry. It presents to the lover of Nature infinitely more than many of the spots upon which fashion has set her seal.

A quarry here is quite a different affair from most people's previous idea of the subject. There is neither gloom nor mystery about it (I wish I could say also that there is no danger); and, in place of craning your neck to gaze down into the bowels of the earth, you have but to stand erect and admire a long, irregular rift in the flank of the mountain—a rift that glitters in the sunlight till it makes you blink again, and which has been scratched upon the mighty breast of the living rock by the puny hand of man.

Many of these quarries—and they are almost innumerable—resemble nothing so much as cascades of water suddenly hardened into stone by some mystic art. Beautiful, strange, and fascinating to gaze at; but also the winding-sheet of many a husband and father. The percentage of men who meet with untimely and horrible death in the quarries of Carrara is appalling. Most of the accidents, however, are due to the carelessness of the victims themselves. The blocks are blasted—gunpowder is used, not

dynamite, the latter being too violent and uncontrollable in its effects—from the face of the steep. Once detached, they either roll down of themselves, or are lowered to the desired distance by human muscle and rope; no sort of machinery is employed, and all connected with the extraction of the stone is of the most primitive description. Where the blocks are lowered by ropes and underlying spars, the way, in certain spots, is well soaped to facilitate progress. It certainly renders the progress of the innocent visitor more swift than safe, for, on his unwarily setting his foot upon the treacherous surface, his legs fly from under him in a mode more energetic than pleasant. A blast is heralded by three long, lugubrious notes sounded upon a tin horn, that conjures up remembrances of Egyptian sculpture and Verdi's 'Aida.' But, be it from habit or from carelessness, little attention is in general paid to the signal. Hence the terrible accidents that are of but too constant occurrence.

The details of many of these are horrible in the extreme. Men have been taken from under the murderous mass crushed into a very pancake; others have had their limbs dispersed in every direction, and have had to be collected and put into a sack to be carried home for burial; often, too, not all the fragments have been found—nothing but a dab here and there of gore and fleshy paste remaining of what, but a few seconds before, was a living man.

The pay of the Carrara quarryman is wretched; some three to four francs per diem—and it has always been a mystery to me how men are to be found willing to risk life and limb for so scant a pittance.

A few years back, on an accident taking place, the cathedral bells were set tolling to give warning below in Carrara. Fancy the anguish of those poor families at home who had fathers and husbands, brothers and sons at the quarries, on hearing the gruesome herald! This custom has been wisely abolished; but it is still usual for all men to leave the quarries the moment a catastrophe takes place, and return to their home—the day's labour being reckoned to their favour, though they should quit work at an early morning hour.

It is impossible not to feel a certain degree of excitement on first witnessing the blasting of a block from the steep of which, since creation almost, it has formed a part. The bustle of the men, the long-drawn notes of the melancholy horn, the lighting of

the match, the hurry-skurry to a comparative place of safety, all cause the heart to beat quicker and the breath to be drawn with effort. Then one stands and watches in silent expectation. Time, too, seems to stand still. Will the spark never reach its goal? The sun overhead beats down upon you with all its ardour, but you do not feel its rays. The perspiration pearls down your face, but you do not attempt to wipe it off. You can do nothing but fix your eyes upon the doomed mass and wait. A deafening roar—the rock on which you stand seems to tremble beneath your feet—a cloud of dust shoots up into the azure sky, then comes a moment of suspense for all. Has the blast taken effect? Has it been a failure? A failure! No, for look! the mass quivers on its base, and you become aware that it has been detached from its parent bed. It hangs on the brink, totters, trembles, it seems to hesitate taking the fearful leap before it. It shivers, and you shiver with it, so wrapt do you become in the scene before you. Another shiver, more violent than the preceding—another tremulous jerk, and then, slowly turning upon itself, the mass sways forward, turns over yet more, loses balance, and, with a fearful bound, leaps forward into space; generally speaking, only to crash upon the rock a few yards lower. Then, however, commences a terrible course. Bounding, leaping, flying, rolling onward on its downward path like a lost soul upon its desperate road to hell, scattering, right and left, showers of deadly, glittering chips which flash like hail in the sunlight and carry death in their flight. On, on, ever downwards, waking the echoes around—causing the falcon from his perch high overhead to add his shrill scream to the chorus and wing his circling flight away to less turbulent regions. On, on; will it strike to the left? will it bound off to the right? will it——? With a sudden spurt it stops—its course cut short by some barrier, natural or artificial. Then you, too, descend and see lying there a glittering, gleaming mass, that may bear hidden within it a sculptor's dream that shall awaken the admiration of thousands, or a mass doomed to be sawn into slabs on which heavy Germans will clink their beer mugs, or dainty Parisians set down their coffee cups under the gas and amid the gaiety of the boulevards.

The trucks used in the transport of the blocks from the quarries to Carrara—or, nowadays, to the newly-constructed railway—are of wonderfully primitive construction. Half a dozen poles and four wheels, like enormous cheeses, such is the making-

up of the truck which in 1891 is used at Carrara for the transport of marble.

Could one of the old Roman quarrymen, whose bones are from time to time turned up all unexpectedly by his modern descendant, wake up in the flesh once more, his eyes, falling upon the said trucks, would show no astonishment, for he would only see exactly what his forefathers had ever been in the habit of using.

You meet these trucks daily, labouring along in the mud, or flinging along their track clouds of choking white dust, creaking and groaning beneath the weight of a huge block that sways right and left, and plays painfully with the nerves of the beholder. Each car drawn by, most likely, eighteen or twenty pairs of white, weary oxen, their black muzzles smeared with saliva, their big, soft, black eyes dim with dust, their poor flanks bleeding from the prod of the cruel goad which, used spear-like, drives them on to the very verge of their patient strength. Between the widely-curved horns of each panting animal, his face turned tailwards, a half-clad, dust-covered driver, stick in hand, his matted locks stiff with sweat, his eyes glittering with cruelty, his whole lithe form writhing with suppressed excitement—now pulling to the right with all his might, now straining to the left—shouting, swearing, and interchanging utterly untranslatable words and wishes with his companions. Half a dozen men, at least, also half-clad, but on foot, goad in hand, running alongside, now rushing forwards, now backwards, yelling, prodding, cursing and blaspheming as only Carrara ox-drivers know how to curse and blaspheme.

Such is the sight that you can see any day throughout the year; and when you have once seen it, you will quickly come to the conclusion that the Carrara ox-driver is about the cruellest individual on the face of God's earth, and that there is ample need for the 'Society for the Protection of Animals.'

A quarryman, not long ago, in one of his rambles stumbled upon an old deserted quarry, below which, half buried in grass and brambles, lay an enormous block of hoary marble. On examining it he discovered a number of letters rudely cut and half hidden under a crust of dirt. With some little difficulty he managed to spell out as follows: 'Blessed is he who shall turn me over.'

Now there are innumerable legends afloat around Carrara of the existence of hidden treasure, and, as can easily be conceived,

the poor man at once jumped to the conclusion that he had stumbled upon one, and that his fortune was made. He got home as quickly as he possibly could and collected some of his friends to aid him in the recovery of the hidden gold. After some very hard labour they succeeded in turning over the hoary giant. Another rude inscription met their eager eyes: 'Thanks, my friends; I was weary of reposing so long in one position.' No gold; nothing but sweat and the loss of a couple of days' work. The wicked wit of one who must have long mouldered in the tomb had survived to wake a torrent of execration such as those deserts had not heard for many a long day. It was lucky for him that the malicious offender was in his tomb, and not anywhere where the infuriated workmen could lay hands upon him.

Treasure has, however, often been turned up in the neighbourhood of Carrara, and, not long since, while digging to lay down water-pipes or something of the sort, a crock of gold coins was unearthed under one of the streets—a treasure-trove over which dozens of persons had been in the habit of passing for years.

A pleasant excursion in every sense of the word is one to the old Roman quarries. Here you have something more than the mere beauty of scenery to delight you, and the sight of modern industry to interest you. You are called upon to muse over the footsteps of those who for long centuries have been but dust, and yet whose traces over the wide world are as vivid as the marks of their tools upon the rock before you. How primitive was the mode of quarrying of those Masters of the World—of those men who had rifled Africa, as well as their own land, for marbles with which to build and beautify!

The block was first marked out upon the solid mass, and then actually cut forth by hand labour. In several places you may see blocks half detached from their couch, while others lie half imbedded in the rubbish accumulated around them by centuries. The Romans split their blocks into slabs by inserting wooden wedges and keeping these continually wetted till the swelling of the wood burst asunder the stone. A Roman altar was unearthed some years back in the neighbourhood of one of these quarries which is now to be seen at the Academy of Arts in Carrara. A relievo was also discovered cut in a quarry high overhead—four ill-designed figures. That, too, is in the Academy. The quarry

in which it was discovered now bears the name of the 'Fanti Scritti,' and the quarrymen of the present day have taken these effigies for their protectors, and, in consequence, a holiday has been duly instituted in their honour—a curious mixture of the Pagan and the Christian. A few, very few, rusty implements of bygone ages have also been found.

One of my favourite walks here is to Moneta. It takes about an hour and a half to get over, and the last hour is a continued and somewhat steep ascent; but when once the ruins of the old castle are reached, and you find yourself amid the houses of a literally 'Deserted Village,' you are more than repaid for your trouble.

The castle itself is of considerable extent, and commands the country all around. It is now little more than a heap of ruins, with crumbling towers, ragged walls, grass-grown courts, and hazardous stairs. The only tolerably perfect part of the place is to be found in the dungeons; these are grim as in days of yore, and, could the dripping walls speak, would doubtless tell tales of cruelty such as would harrow the listener. But, on further thought, they *have* a tongue—their darkness, their stony bed, and the traces of rings in the walls speak with sufficient eloquence. The least gloomy are now the haunt of toad and lizard, and the oozy walls are here and there hidden by a growth of hart's-tongue.

In one of the inner courts you may see a circular opening in the pavement, just large enough through which to squeeze the body of a man. You can crouch down and peer into the depth below, without however being able to distinguish anything distinctly. Into this living tomb those whose disappearance was desirable were flung, to linger on and die as best they might. A thoughtful examination of the place thoroughly cures one of any ravings for the 'Heroic Past.'

North and west the castle is encircled by pine-clad heights, but eastward you can gaze over into Tuscany, and to the south, on a clear day, descry the blue coast of Corsica and Sardinia rising from the azure sea. Perhaps some of the readers of this paper may remember to have visited, years and years ago, the then cemetery (if such it could be called) at Naples, consisting of a little walled-in courtyard, paved and provided with 365 well-like openings in the flagging, one of which was opened daily in the morning, the corpses of the unhappy dead flung down pell-mell

into the horrible depth, which at nightfall was closed and cemented, and which remained thus till another year had rolled round. You may delight in a somewhat similar curiosity at Moneta, if so it please you, only upon a smaller scale; for in the old roofless church there are three exactly similar wells closed by a circular stone with an iron ring in the centre. Down into the pits beneath were flung, not so very long ago either, the dead of the parish. There is one pit for the men, another for the women, and a third for the children. The separation of sex among the dead seems to have been most strictly insisted upon, perhaps for the reason of the corpses being thrown in with nothing more than a rag of a shirt to cover their nakedness. In the little side chapel, too, there is a similar well, into which all those who died of cholera in 1856, I think, were cast. It seems that here the disease banished delicacy, for men, women, and children were hurled in promiscuously.

The old man, one of the three actual inhabitants of Moneta, who on my first visit insisted on acting as my guide, would not rest until he had opened and made me look down into each of the holes in question. The sight to *me* was abominable; *he* appeared to enjoy it, and he put the climax to my horror by saying to me with a smile, while gazing down into the male receptacle, '*Ecco!* That one down to the left is my son. Ah, what a fine fellow he was!' The 'son' was a skeleton lying flat on its back, with its feet, high above its grinning skull, resting upon a heap of mortal remains such as I doubt the most skilful practitioner would ever have been able to disentangle. Italians are pleasant in most things that concern life, but in all that regards death they are repulsive. Even now the dead are buried with indecent and dangerous haste, and as soon as a death takes place in a family all its members forsake corpse and house, leaving both to the care of servants and hirelings.

Half an hour by rail from Carrara will bring you to the little station of 'Man di ferro,' on the Spezia road. Here you can get out, and, crossing some fields lying between you and the sea, find yourself in a few minutes on what was once the city of Luni, the powerful Etruscan city, the city where Hadrian lived and where his favourite died, the city once so famous for its cheeses, as big as the cart-wheels to be seen at Carrara at the present hour. The site is there, but little remains to speak of what the place once was. Part of an amphitheatre, remnants of walls cropping up

from amid wiry grass, or peeping out from ooze and rushes, a paradise for unclean reptiles of every species. The wild thyme now flourishes where once the sea used to lap, and the wharves which, in ages long gone by, were wont to groan beneath their burden of amphoræ filled with wine and oil, or glow with the produce of the brilliant East, are now far inland, and all but hidden by the encroaching mud carried thither by the rains, or deposited by the treacherous river Magra.

The learned are divided in opinion as to whether the arms of Luni—a crescent—were derived from one of her own cheeses, or from the planet dear to lovers. Hadrian added a star to these arms to commemorate the death of his favourite; but neither Hadrian nor anyone else could guard the city from the destruction that finally overtook it. It was several times sacked by the neighbouring Ligurians, rebuilt, resacked, till at last war and malaria drove out its last inhabitants, and the spot, little by little, put on its desolation of to-day. Let us hope for the sake of poesy that the queen of night, and not a cheese, gave its arms to the fallen city.

Excavation has been sparingly employed to bring to light what may be lying beneath its surface. The few weak efforts, however, have been tolerably well rewarded. By nothing of intrinsic value, though; for the last unhappy dwellers of the place had ample time to carry away with them all portable wealth. It was no wild, invading foe that put the finishing stroke, but the subtle and ever increasing stealthy step of the stagnant waters that filtered their poison into their blood, and drove them from the seat of their forefathers. English gold or German perseverance might do much in the way of bringing to light the buried records of the past. Very lately a peasant bought a field on the site of Luni, and, on ploughing it up, brought to light a number of leaden pipes; he had become the owner of the spot on which the baths formerly stood. He unearthed sufficient lead to repay him the price of the ground and leave a little over.

On the other side of the broad Magra rises a promontory, bold and beautiful—the ‘Punto del Corvo.’ Upon this promontory stands the now modernised ruin of the monastery in which Dante passed a short time of his wretched exile. Here he probably wrote a part of his great work, and from this height he certainly used to gaze over at the Carrara quarries glinting in the sunshine, or showing white and spectral-like under the pale moonlight. There is

but little remaining now of the old building, which has been incorporated in a modern house. The chapel, however, still stands as it formerly stood. Over the altar hangs the hideous, black, gigantic crucifix before which the immortal poet doubtless knelt time after time, seeking strength to battle with the tide of sorrow and woe that had risen around him.

The view from the Punto del Corvo is magnificent, and if you do not fear fatigue and a rough road you can continue your excursion on to Lerici, and there visit the house in which poor Shelley lived, gaze over the waters beneath which he sunk, scan the strip of sandy shore upon which his funeral pile has gleamed and glared, and if you choose to do so, walk with your heart strangely oppressed with mystic dread through the pine wood which Byron saw his deceased friend enter in the spirit. Or you can go on to Sarzana. It is a pleasant drive thither, and thence back to Carrara by rail. Another excursion is to Fosdinovo, where stands an old castle belonging to the Malaspina family. Here the marquis of that day welcomed Dante as his guest, and here part, at least, of the canto of the immortal poem dedicated to Corrado Malaspina was written.

The castle has been faithfully restored in late years, and the family has spent enormous sums in doing it. The general impression is good, but a careful examination soon shows that, among much that is really antique, there is also much that is spurious. After all, it is no great matter to any but the owners. Dante's room is there, and if the bed is not precisely the one he slept in, nor the four-inch square mirror the one he used, what does it signify? The windows from which he gazed, the halls in which he walked, the mountains, sky, and sea from which he drew inspiration are certainly there still. These are enough for the genuine thinker. The spirit of the mighty dead haunts the place, despising the trifling adjuncts of rickety tables and worm-eaten chairs.

Another day you can pay a visit to the site of the city of Porta, near the sea between Massa and Pietrasanta, which was one fine morning swallowed up without warning, and a cluster of small lakes and an oozy marsh substituted. But here you must have a guide, for it is dangerous to go without. Once in the labyrinth of pond, treacherous vegetation, and hidden slough you run the risk of finishing like Ravenswood, only with the difference of being smothered in unsavoury, black mud, instead

of in clean sea sand—to say nothing of the millions of leeches that infest the place, and which some time back nearly made a meal of an unfortunate sportsman looking for snipe amid the reeds. He was fortunately rescued in time by an accidental passer-by.

Four years ago a sudden fire burst forth from the weird spot, a very column of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night. It burned for over eight months, and then collapsed as suddenly and mysteriously as it had appeared.

Nor was Porta the only town that has been built upon the treacherous soil here around. Not a mile from Carrara stands Bedizzano, a place numbering perhaps 6,000 souls, erected over a series of grottos, through which you can wander all unconscious of a whole population being suspended at the distance of a few feet over your head. The church appears to have given the signal for a sudden descent to the lower regions; the pavement of it is cracking, and has sunk an inch or two in places. Yet the dwellers in Bedizzano eat and drink, marry and give in marriage, with as much indifference as if they rested upon solid granite instead of upon treacherous limestone.

The word 'limestone' brings to mind the chain of mountains close to Bedizzano, whose downfall is mentioned by Livy. The road to Colonata passes along, with an unbroken chain of heights on the left and the collapsed masses on the right. These latter are curious to see; the ruins of mountains are plainly traceable in the confusion of rounded hillocks, strangely shaped masses and tiltings, now all covered with grass and overshadowed by pleasant chestnut woods. You can force your way through bushes and climbing plants into all sorts of unexpected grottos, some eaten out of the rocks themselves, others formed by the tilting together of enormous masses of calcareous matter. Ferns of all kinds grow in the greatest luxuriance, and in early spring the ground is a very carpet of snowdrop and crocus, narcissus and daffodil, primrose, and blue and scarlet anemone. Had Leigh Hunt ever passed here he would not have written, as he somewhere wrote, that there were no wild flowers in Italy.

On the Torano road, at ten minutes' distance from Carrara, looking up to your left you can see a wooden door fixed in the rocky ridge which, rising from the bank of the Carriona along which you are passing, is at its extreme height crowned with

feathery pines. That door is the now carefully-guarded entrance to the 'Grotto del Tannone.' It runs for yet unexplored distances under the limestone hills; Spallanzani followed its deviations for nine hours without coming to anything that indicated a termination. There is nothing particularly interesting to the profane visitor; much desolation and darkness, dripping walls and stifling air, dirt and discomfort, the bewildering rush of water below your feet, an endless number of tortuous passages, opening now and again into gloomy halls, with often a black pool in the centre into which you stumble and splash, and on whose dark surface your light flings streaks of red, resembling gore. No; to the lover of warmth and sunshine the Tannone Grotto is not enticing. I went to see it as in duty bound. They say that all the hills around Carrara are honeycombed with caverns. I am willing to take the assertion upon trust.

WITHOUT THE WEDDING GARMENT.

ON one of Lady George Athol's 'first Thursdays' her rooms were filling to overflow. Barn Street was blocked with carriages. Lady George stood on the big square landing at the top of the stairs and gave her hand so often that after a time it seemed no longer her own. The people thronged up and up. The current appeared unending, and she felt almost as if the circle must be complete, and the string of guests must be revolving, as in a child's toy the figures that are gummed on to a tape and go up to the mill move in endless succession up and up and up.

Her tongue was tired too and so was her smile, but each was kept in active work. 'How do you do?' 'How do you do?' 'How do you do?' 'Your son not with you? No? I am sorry.' 'What lovely flowers!' 'How do you do?' 'How do you do?' 'No, almost cold.' 'How do you do?' 'Yes, stifling.' 'Ah, Mrs. Keith—I scarcely thought you would get away. Dull—was it? What, none of the right people? Didn't suppose for an instant there would be.'

'Let me stand here for one moment. I want so much to know who someone is who came in just before us. A beautiful woman. Quite too lovely.'

'Mrs. Venables probably. Not Mrs. Venables? Fair? Lady Fleet? No? Miss Adair? No? Then I can't tell you till I see her.'

'She is coming up now. There, with the fair hair. No—in front of the Brabazons.' Lady George had the mischance to drop her bouquet, and in the momentary confusion a name was lost.

The lady who advanced behind the unheard name was fair to whiteness almost. Her hair was of a peculiar shade of yellow like pale sulphur. Her eyes were of the lightest grey.

Lady George gave her hand and said, 'How do you do?' The Brabazons occupied her with some elaborate explanation about why they had been unable to dine in Barn Street, and in the meantime the lady, with a murmured word, had passed on. Lady George looked after her. She was bowing to someone. She was bowing again—and now again. Apparently she had many friends in the room.

Mr. Brabazon was talking to Mrs. Keith, who as soon as he had moved away turned to her hostess.

'She *is* handsome. I hope your flowers were not spoilt. I didn't catch the name.' The lady was lost in the smart crowd. 'Neither did I,' said Lady George blankly, 'and I don't know her from Adam. She must be some friend of the girls'. Joan or Maud must have sent her a card—my memory is so bad. I can't leave this; if you come across either of my daughters, will you send her to me, Mrs. Keith? Oh, here is my husband. George—George—go into the room and tell me who the striking-looking woman with the yellow hair is.'

'There are dozens of 'em. Which?'

'I'll show you,' said Mrs. Keith. She was interested.

The two moved away, but like the raven from the ark they did not return.

Lady George after ten minutes or so felt that she had done her duty and she left the top of the stairs. She forgot the unknown lady, and it was half-an-hour before she came across one of her daughters.

'Maud, I had something to ask you and I forget what. Oh, yes. Who is—I can't see her now—yes, there she is—that woman with the yellow hair standing by the mantelpiece.'

'In white?—I don't know.'

'But neither do I. I thought you would be able to tell me. Find Joan and send her to me.'

It was twenty minutes before Lady George's second daughter appeared before her. By that time the lady had moved her place.

'I know the one you mean,' said Joan, 'but I don't know who she is. She has very curious hair and she is in white.'

'Yes.'

'Well, I don't know.'

Mrs. Keith came up.

'Lord George doesn't know,' she said.

'I can easily find out,' said Joan. 'She has been talking to Charlie Vincent for the last ten minutes; I'll ask him.'

She moved away as she spoke.

Young Vincent was leaning against a pillar and laughing heartily. He was the butt for the moment of the chaff of two of his friends. Joan heard a few of their remarks.

'He didn't mind, don't you know—awfully pretty woman like that. Neither would you.'

'Said she met him at Nice, and dear old Charlie's never been out of the country in his life.'

Vincent caught Miss Athol's eye.

'You are going to let me take you down to supper?' he said to her.

'I will see later on,' said Joan. 'Just now I want you to tell me something. What is the name of the lady you were talking to a few minutes ago?'

He began to laugh.

'At what?' said Joan.

'Well, the whole thing. Those two chaps have been chaffing me like anything as it is. You mean the handsome woman with the fair hair?'

'Yes.'

'I was standing near her when she turned round and put out her hand. She said, "Mr. Vincent, isn't it?" And I said yes, and then she said that she hadn't seen me for ever so long, and I didn't like to pretend that I did not know her, so I said that it *was* rather a long time; and then we talked for a bit.'

'And you don't know who she is?'

'Never saw her before in my life. Who is she?'

'Where did she think she had met you?' said Joan, without answering his question.

'Well, you see, that didn't come out till quite the end. She said it must be two years since the days at Nice, and by that time I was so steeped in deception and I had allowed my reminiscences of our former acquaintance to go such lengths in order to coincide with hers, that I had not the face to tell her that I had never been at Nice in my life. She mistook me for someone else; I knew that after the first half dozen words; but you see I had woven such a tangled web that I couldn't get out of it, even if I had wanted to, and those two chaps say I didn't.'

Joan laughed.

'She is very handsome,' she said, 'but I am not quite sure that she is good style.'

'And you won't come down to supper?'

'Not now.'

'I would ask *her* if I knew her name,' said Vincent. 'I must get Lady George to tell me when I see her.'

'You won't do that,' said Joan, and she left him with a smile that he failed to interpret.

Miss Athol went back to her mother. On the way she passed the fair unknown talking to Mr. Brabazon.

'I watched that,' Mrs. Keith was saying; 'she dropped her fan. Well, Joan, what had Mr. Vincent to tell you!'

'Nothing,' said Miss Athol. 'The mystery remains a mystery. She mistook him for someone else.'

'She bowed to Lady Beckenham, I think. Here is Lady Beckenham. I will ask her.'

'Not to me,' said Lady Beckenham.

Lady George explained the situation.

'If I were in your case I should go to her myself,' said Lady Beckenham.

'I must, I think,' said Lady George, and she sought her unknown guest.

'You will pardon me,' she said; 'but I did not hear your name, and—my memory is bad. I do not recall your face.'

'I am Mrs. Darbishire,' said the lady. 'I was so sorry not to return your call on Monday. It was good of you to come and see me so soon.'

'Darbishire!—Call!'

Lady George looked at her vacantly. The lady caught something of her hostess's expression.

'Can there be any mistake?' she said. 'I don't know you, of course, because I did not see you when you called. You heard from my dear friends the Van Lindens, of New York, and you came to see me and asked me to your party?'

Lady George looked more vacant.

'You are Mrs. Sefton, surely,' said the lady.

'There is some mistake,' said Lady George. 'I am Lady George Athol.'

Mrs. Darbishire started to her feet.

'How can I sufficiently apologise?' she said. 'I am a stranger in London, and I only arrived from New York last week. I had an introduction to Mrs. Sefton. I do not know her personally, so I did not discover my mistake. I came in a hansom, and I suppose the driver mistook my directions.'

Lady George smiled graciously.

'The mistake is easily explained if Mrs.—Mrs. Sefton lives in Barn Square.'

'That is it, I think,' said Mrs. Darbishire.

'And this is Barn Street.'

‘I am so distressed this should have happened,’ said Mrs. Darbishire.

‘Not at all,’ said Lady George. ‘You found some friends here, I hope, and it has given us the pleasure of your company.’

The lady, with reiterated apologies, bowed and took her departure.

A man who passed her on the stairs looked at her fixedly and hurried up to his hostess.

‘Will you tell me that lady’s name?’ he said.

‘Five minutes ago I might have asked you, Colonel Weston. She is a Mrs. Darbishire, I believe. Her cabman mistook Barn Street for Barn Square.’

‘You know nothing about her?’

‘Nothing.’

‘Then excuse me.’

Colonel Weston hurried down to the hall. Mrs. Darbishire was coming from the cloak-room.

‘Mdlle. Lestocq will permit me to see her to her hotel?’ he said quietly.

The lady started, then smiled and bowed.

‘Monsieur est bien aimable,’ she said.

He followed her to the hansom and got in. He spoke up through the trap.

‘Drive slowly to the end of the street, and I will direct you.’

He turned then to his companion.

‘We meet again, Mademoiselle.’

‘Oui, Monsieur.’

‘Mademoiselle has, perhaps, few friends in London.’

‘Not many, Monsieur.’

‘Mademoiselle, however, starts well under such a wing as that of Lady George Athol.’

‘Without doubt, Monsieur.’

‘A more softly feathered wing than that of the law, Mademoiselle. You should know.’

‘Monsieur is facetious.’

‘I should like to see what you have in your pocket, Mademoiselle.’

‘My handkerchief, Monsieur.’

‘What else?’

‘A meagre purse.’

‘What else?’

‘That is all.’

‘That figure clad in dark blue is a policeman. What else, Mademoiselle?’

‘Only this,’ said Mrs. Darbishire. She handed him a small diamond brooch as she spoke.

‘Only that?’

‘That is all, Monsieur. I have had no luck.’

‘You are sure that is all. A word to my friend in blue——’

‘Save yourself the trouble, Monsieur. That is all.’

‘Good night, Mademoiselle. Good night for the old sake’s sake.’

‘Good-night,’ said Mrs. Darbishire.

Colonel Weston called another cab and drove back to Barn Street.

‘A chance likeness, perhaps, to someone I met in Paris,’ he said to Lady George. ‘One is easily mistaken. I have just picked this up,’ he added, putting the brooch into her hand; ‘do you know whose it is?’

‘Someone is sure to claim it,’ said Lady George.

A few days later it chanced that Lady George Athol and Mrs. Sefton met.

‘I suppose you heard from your friend Mrs. Darbishire of her coming to my crush in mistake for yours,’ said Lady George.

‘Mrs. Darbishire!’ said Mrs. Sefton; ‘but she came to *me* the night before last for you. Her cabman mistook——’

Lady George opened her eyes.

‘When did that happen?’

‘On Wednesday. I have good reason to remember the day, for I lost an emerald bracelet.’

THE DREAD TO-MORROW.

Quid sit futurum cras, fuge quaerere.

How often doth the march of coming ill
 No echo of its footfall fling before,
 But steals adown the corridor, until
 It pauses—at the door!

The eagle's shadow warns the huddled flock;
 The tempest sends chill breezes through the sky,
 Its harbingers: on man disaster's shock
 Swoops all too suddenly.

The bark, through rapids piloted with care,
 Sails a smooth course, forgetting dangers gone,
 But strikes the hidden reef-edge unaware—
 Sinks!—and the stream flows on.

Our world all praise, our rapture at the height,
 Songs on our lip and laughter in our eye,
 The thunderbolt of Trouble, fiercely bright,
 Falls from serenest sky.

No sign foretells the near approach of sorrow,
 No note, no breath of warning in the air;
 Still on each sweetest dream the dread To-morrow
 Hath broken unaware.

Haply 't was so ordained by wiser powers,
 Who in the draught of suffering man must drain
 Infused the memory of careless hours
 As anodyne to pain.

Willing that each, unmindful of the knell,
 Should pluck the flower, should hail the sun, and rest
 Locked a forgetful while in honeyed spell,
 Nor perish all unblest.

Accept the proffered boon with thankful heart,
 Nor listen for the tramp of troublous years;
 Remembered joy shall soothe when sorrow's smart
 Turns thy sweet past to tears.

ON QUIET RIVERS IN CEYLON.

PERHAPS the most fascinating feature of Ceylonese scenery is the number and the beauty of the rivers, ranging from picturesque mountain torrents (which form cascades and waterfalls as they hurry from their cradle among the rhododendrons) to stately streams flowing swiftly though silently to meet the thundering surf.

Their course is so short that their descent from the mountains is necessarily rapid; consequently very few of them are navigable, except within a few miles of the sea, where flat-bottomed boats and canoes ply. By far the longest river is the Maha-Welli-ganga, which, rising near Adam's Peak, wanders through the mountains till it reaches Kandy, the mountain capital, whence, descending to the plains, it travels northward a total distance of 134 miles, and finally enters the sea by several branches near Trincomalee.

Next to this ranks the Kelany-ganga, also called 'The Mutwal River,' which is eighty-four miles long, and which flows into the sea near Colombo. All the other rivers of Ceylon are from ten to twenty miles shorter.

As a natural result of so short and swift a descent from the mountains, these streams are laden with sand and soil, and a very remarkable geographical feature is due to the meeting of these surcharged waters with the strong sea currents, which in the north-east and south-west monsoons sweep along the coast and are likewise saturated with sand. These prevent the rivers from carrying their earth-freight further; consequently it is all deposited in sandy bars, which, likewise receiving the deposits of these gulf-streams, rapidly increase and form such effectual barriers as compel the rivers to flow north or south behind this embankment of their own creation.

Thus strangely indented lagoons, many miles in length, of still silent fresh water lie separated from the booming surf by only a narrow belt of sand, perhaps only partially carpeted with marine convolvuli, but generally clothed with quaint screw-pines, mangroves, palms, and other trees. The effect of the roar of the unseen surf, as heard while one's boat glides silently on these still rivers embowered in richest vegetation, is very impressive,

This peculiarity is most strikingly developed on the east side of the isle, as at Batticaloa, where the rivers have formed one labyrinthine lagoon fully fifty miles in length, divided from the ocean by an embankment of their own construction, nowhere exceeding a mile and a half in width, and all clothed with cocoa-palms. The same formation extends all the way from Trincomalee to the far north of the isle.

These very peculiar estuaries are known as 'gobbs,' and they were turned to good account by the Dutch, who cut canals to connect some of the most important, and thus formed a continuous calm water-way on each side of the isle, connecting sea-coast towns. Thus, on the west coast, you can travel by these canals and lagoons all the way from Caltura to Colombo, and thence right north up to Calpentyne. Such delightful house-boats as those in which foreign residents in China make their water excursions are here unknown luxuries; but, with a little contrivance, an ordinary flat-bottomed rice-boat may be made to do duty instead, and thus furnishes the means for a very enjoyable cruise.

Most fortunately for me, soon after my arrival in Ceylon, the Bishop¹ had occasion to visit various churches and schools along the coast to the north of Colombo, and resolved to travel by water. He had decided that his daughter should bear him company, and—greatly to my delight—I too was invited to join the expedition.

I confess that when I think of all the difficulties in arranging 'house-room' for guests in luxurious British homes, I often remember with amazement the unselfish kindness which contrives to make the smallest colonial houses so wondrously elastic (exemplifying the good old proverb that 'where there's heart-room there's hearth-room'); but never, in all my wanderings, have I met with so very practical a proof of such hospitality as that which assigned me an extemporised berth on board 'The Castle Jermyn,' as we dubbed our craft when commencing our voyage, though, long ere our return, the title 'Noah's Ark' better described the floating home in which were congregated so great a variety of curious living creatures—to say nothing of the skins of various birds of gay plumage and animals presented to us by many kind friends.

The live offerings included six or eight land-tortoises of various sizes and several large handsome turtles, which shared 'the hinder

¹ Bishop Jermyn, now Primus of the Episcopal Church in Scotland.

part of the ship' with the picturesque Singhalese crew and the Bishop's Singhalese major domo, and were turned out at night to swim in the shallow water, while our own quarters became the playground of a ubiquitous bull-dog puppy and a very young mungoose—so small as to earn from my companions the nickname of 'The Rat.' A more affectionate little pet never existed. It at once recognised me as its special mistress, never seeming so happy as when trotting along beside me, and at night curling itself—uninvited—into one of my slippers, whence the little soft hairy creature darted out to greet me with a gentle little murmurous cry the moment I stirred in the morning.

I am bound to add that, as it advanced in months and increased in stature to the size of a small cat, its hair, which was partly brown and partly silvery grey, became hard and wiry, and, though its devotion to me as its adopted mother continued to be most touching, it was occasionally inconvenient. I was therefore not altogether sorry that on my return to Colombo, after an absence of some months, I found that 'Goosie' had transferred its allegiance to the friend in whose care I had left it, and in whose garden it had done valiant combat with several cobras, the plucky little creature having developed all the abhorrence towards them for which its race is so remarkable.

Sad to say, it soon fell a victim to its valour; for though, by its marvellous agility, it contrived in several instances to elude the darts of the serpent, the first bite also proved the last—no wise old mungoose having instructed this poor young one in the healing properties of that herb which, it is said, the wild mungoose eats as an effectual antidote to cobra poison. So my poor 'Goosie' died; but what concerns us at present was only her place in our boat-house, where her infantile sporting instincts found scope in chasing the pretty little lizards which found refuge in the thatched roof.

As seen on our first visit, the said boat was not attractive, being dingy, dark, and airless; but a little ingenious carpentering soon worked wonders. In the first place, the thatched roof was raised bodily, so as to leave four inches all round admitting light and air to our sleeping quarters. Then the deck was matted, and the interior was lined with white calico,¹ and divided into compartments, so that we each had our special quarters, with our

¹ White hangings are used by the Singhalese to denote the deepest respect of an honoured guest.

beds, chairs, tables, hanging-trays and pockets, bags, books, sun-umbrellas, butterfly-nets, writing and sketching materials of all sorts. To these were soon added constantly-renewed baskets of fruit, great bunches of green or yellow bananas and plantains, oranges and mangoes, custard-apples, and ever-increasing stores of quaint seeds, shells, and divers curiosities.

The boatmen, who were all fishermen (which is almost equivalent to saying that they were all Roman Catholics) had their quarters astern, as had also the cook and his flock of ducks and hens; and how eight human beings could stow themselves away in so small a space and carry on their existence so silently was a marvel. When they had work to do 'forrard,' they ran lightly over the thatch without disturbing their unwonted passengers, for whom they were never weary of collecting lovely flowers and exquisite climbing ferns, with which we adorned our quarters, devoting one basin to the most gorgeous jungle blossoms (scarlet, white, and gold), and another to dainty water-lilies (white, pink, and blue), while all else found a resting-place on the foundation of ferns with which we fringed the edge of the roof, part of which was constructed to draw backwards or forwards, so that in case of rain our 'sitting-room' would have been protected. Happily we were favoured with lovely weather, and so enjoyed to the full the peaceful beauty of both days and nights.

A tiny canoe (just the trunk of a tree scooped out, and balanced by a log floating alongside of it, attached to it by a couple of bambos) floated astern, ready to land us at any point where the cool loveliness of the river-banks proved irresistibly tempting; and strangely fascinating indeed was the deep shadow of the beautiful forest-trees overhanging the clear sunlit waters, the intense silence broken only by the cry of some wild bird or the deep hooting of the large wanderoo monkeys, while at short regular intervals came the low roar as of distant thunder which told of mighty green waves breaking on the sand reef of their own creation.

It was in the middle of February that we embarked for the three weeks of water-gipsying, every hour of which proved so full of novelty and interest. A beautiful drive from St. Thomas's College, Colombo, brought us to the Mutwal River or Kelanyanga, where our boat-home awaited us.

Crossing that broad majestic stream, we entered one of the canals cut by the Dutch, parallel with the sea, and thereon glided

smoothly into the wide shallow Lake Negombo, where we anchored for the night at a picturesque village of the same name. All along the canal we passed a succession of winding streams and marshy places with special beauties of their own, and several small lagoons—lovely glassy pools covered with pure white water-lilies, and one variety with petals just tipped with lilac and the under side of the leaf purple. These lakelets are fringed with various species of graceful palms, with an undergrowth of luxuriant ferns and handsome shrubs, while the marshes are glorified by the rich glossy foliage of the mangrove, with clusters of white blossom and large green fruit resembling oranges, but very poisonous.

These eventually turn scarlet, as do also the pine-like fruit of the pandanus, or screw-pine (so called from the corkscrew pattern in which its leaves grow from the stem). The roots of this plant are among the oddest vagaries of the vegetable kingdom. Here and there a patch of the flame-blossom, called by the Singhalese *eribuddu*, glowed really like fire as the setting sun shone on its scarlet pea-shaped flowers, set in a crown of scarlet leaves. Then there was a sort of prickly acanthus with large blue flowers, also pea-shaped, and a sort of acacia with bright yellow star-shaped blossom.

Negombo Lake is about four miles in width, and all around us were picturesque canoes, whose owners were diligently fishing in its quiet waters. They have a curious method of frightening fish into the net, which is held by some of the men while others wave long fringes of torn plantain leaves or cocoa-palm, similar to those which are hung up as decorations at any festival. The fish thus alarmed are expected to jump netwards. At night the fishers carry a blazing torch downwards, so that the glare is all on the water. The torch consists of a faggot of sticks, and from its centre projects a long sharp knife with which to impale any large fish which is seen resting in the shallows.

This was our first night on the water, and to our dismay we found that we had neglected to bring our mosquito-nets, an omission which left us wholly at the mercy of those venomous little insects, who all night long hummed a chorus of delight, as they took it in turn to feast on us, their helpless victims. Of course their onslaughts involved a sleepless night and a feverish morning, but ere the next sunset we extemporised very efficient nets by hanging up muslin petticoats, which effectually protected our

heads, though an incautious foot occasionally revealed itself and suffered accordingly.

Before sunrise we were once more under weigh, and leaving the lake, turned into a most picturesque canal, running right through the native town of houses embowered in large-leaved tropical shrubs, overshadowed by tall palms, and the water covered with very varied boats and canoes.

Leaving the town, our quiet water-way still lay beneath over-arching palm-trees and between banks matted with the dark glossy foliage and large lilac blossoms of the goat's-foot ipomœa, a handsome marine convolvulus which forms a thick carpet, binding the arid sand-banks along the sea-board.

Presently we crossed the mouth of the Maha-Oya, or 'great stream'—a broad, majestic river gliding silently to join the ocean. It was a vision of wonderful peace to look along its calm waters to the equally calm ocean, whose margin was only defined by the periodical uprising of a great green rolling wave which broke in dazzling white surf with a deep booming roar.

That strange, solemn sound continued for hours to reach us from the unseen ocean, as turning into the Ging-Oya, another most lovely stream, we followed its windings almost parallel with the sea, which yet was effectually hidden by a narrow bank of luxuriant jungle and tall palms which cast their cool deep shade on the glassy waters. But for that ever-recurring reminder of

The league-long rollers thundering on the shore,

there was not a sound to break the silence, save only the rustle of dry reeds or the gentle ripple of our boat, sailing with a light breeze. Even the shy creatures which haunt these banks were undisturbed, and amongst others we observed several large iguanas (or, as the Singhalese call them, *kabra-goya*), huge lizards from five to six feet in length. Though very prettily marked, they are ungainly-looking creatures, and I confess to having felt somewhat qualmish the first time I came suddenly upon one in the forest; but they are quite harmless, though they can defend themselves by striking so sharp a blow with their strong tail as sometimes to break the leg of a rash assailant. They feed on ants and insects, and are amphibious, being equally at home on marshy ground or in the water.

Another lizard very nearly as large, called *taka-goya*, is so tame that it scarcely moves away from human beings, and even comes and lives in gardens, though it thereby courts its doom, its

flesh being considered as delicate as that of a rabbit, and its skin being in request for shoe-making. Certainly its appearance is not prepossessing.

We caught glimpses of various smaller lizards, especially a lovely bright-green one about a foot in length. Strange to say, when angry, these creatures turn pale yellow and the head becomes bright red. I believe they are akin to the ever-changing chameleon, which, however, prefers the dry districts further to the north of the isle.

Glorious large butterflies skimmed lightly over the water, some with wings like black velvet, and others of the most lustrous metallic blue, and kingfishers, golden orioles, and other birds of radiant plumage, flitted over the water. One bird, something like a plover, is known as the 'Did-he-do-it?' because of its quaint, inquisitive cry, which seems ceaselessly to reiterate this question.

As the evening drew on, we were treated to a concert of croaking frogs and jackals alternately barking and calling in eerie tones. Finally we anchored for the night beneath an overhanging tree which was evidently specially favoured by the fire-flies, for their tiny green lamps glittered in every corner of the dark foliage, ceaselessly flashing to and fro in such mazy dance that when we looked beyond them to the quiet stars it seemed to our bewildered eyes as if these too were in motion.

I use the word 'fire-flies' in deference to a common error. In reality these fairy light-bearers are tiny beetles which carry their dainty green lantern beneath the tail, and veil or unveil its light at pleasure, as a policeman does his bull's-eye lantern, hence the intermittent light which vanishes and reappears several times in a minute.

On the following morning a kind European heard of our arrival and brought us most welcome gifts of fruit and milk. Strange to say, the Singhalese have an invincible objection to milking their cows, even when they possess large herds of cattle and the calves might very well spare a certain amount. This prejudice has been in a measure conquered in the immediate neighbourhood of towns where foreigners require a regular supply; but, like the Chinese, no Singhalese man, woman, or child seems ever to drink cow's milk, though a little is occasionally used in the form of curds, and eaten with *ghee*, which is a sort of rancid butter.

From the Ging-Oya we passed by a short canal into the Luna-

Oya, another even more lovely river, but first we crossed a fascinating lagoon, literally covered with water-lilies of various sizes and colours—small white ones, larger ones like cups of creamy ivory with green calyx, exquisite pink lilies with brown calyx and the under side of the leaf a rich purple. Besides these, there were myriads of tiny white blossoms, no bigger than a silver penny, which, together with their flat floating leaves, were so like Lilliputian lilies that we could scarcely believe they were not, till we pulled up a cluster, and found that leaves and flowers all grew in a bunch from one little rootlet near the surface, instead of each having its own stem, three or four feet in length and smooth as a piece of indiarubber tubing, rising from the bed of the lake.

Necessity, they say, is the mother of invention, and great was my satisfaction when, having lost my black hair-ribbon, I found that one of these half-dried stems answered the purpose admirably, being rather elastic and perfectly flexible. But the water-gypsies soon discovered many such treasures in the jungle. The smooth tendrils and filaments of various climbing plants supplied us with excellent string several yards in length, and as to pins, we had only to select the length we required from the too abundant supply of needle-like thorns, which in truth were so marked a characteristic of the Ceylonese forest that one might almost accept it as a proof that here indeed was the original Paradise, for notwithstanding all its wonderful beauty, Ceylon assuredly bears a double share of the curse anent thorns and briars.

We soon discovered that most of the jungle flowers we saw and coveted were thus guarded—the jessamine-like stars of the crimson ixora, the fragrant blossoms of the wild lemon, and many another. There is even one sort of palm whose whole stem bristles with long sharp needles. And, besides these dangers, we soon discovered that almost every branch of every flowering shrub is the home of a colony of large red ants, which glue the leaves together, entirely concealing their nests, so that however carefully you may have looked for them, no sooner do you venture cautiously to gather the flower which tempts you, than in a moment a legion of vicious insects rush forth from their ambush, and, covering your unwary arm, swarm into the innermost recesses of your sleeve, all the time biting most painfully. What with ants biting, and mosquitoes and small sand-flies feasting on us, we certainly suffered a good deal, the irritation produced being such

that we had simply to take our hair-brushes and brush our poor arms and shoulders to try and counteract it!

But we were very fortunate in escaping more serious dangers. One evening, as we sat on deck in the bright starlight, I suddenly observed a gruesome centipede, fully seven inches long, coiled up in my lap. With sudden impulse, the Bishop flicked it with his handkerchief, when it fell to the deck and escaped, leaving us with a horribly all-overish sensation of centipedes in every corner. Happily, neither it nor any of its family favoured us with another visit. It is really wonderful, in a country where venomous creatures abound as they do in Ceylon, how very rarely one sees any of them, and how quickly one acquires the instinctive habit of beating the grass or withered leaves before one's steps, in order to warn possible snakes to wriggle out of the way, which they seem all ready to do if they have time. Indeed, the mere vibration of a booted footstep generally suffices to give them the alarm, the sufferers from snake-bite being almost invariably bare-footed natives, whose silent approach is unnoticed.

On the other hand, the land-leeches, which swarm in damp places and luxuriant grass, have no tendency to fly from man; on the contrary, the footfall of man or beast is as a welcome dinner-bell, at sound of which the hungry little creatures hurry from all sides; and, as each is furnished with five pairs of eyes, they can keep a sharp look-out for their prey, which they do by resting on the tip of the tail and raising themselves perpendicularly to look around. Then, arching their body head-foremost, and bringing up the tail, they rapidly, step by step, make for their victim, and being only about an inch long, and no thicker than a stout pin, they contrive to wriggle through stockings, and commence their attack so gently that a dozen or more may be feasting without attracting attention, till, being gorged and distended to about a couple of inches in length, and the size of a quill pen, they cease sucking; but blood sometimes continues to flow till checked by a squeeze of lemon-juice.

In this respect, also, we fortunately suffered little, thanks to constant watchfulness and precautions; but our bare-legged coolies were cruelly victimised, and we saw both cattle and dogs terribly worried by much larger leeches, which infest the banks and attack all animals coming to drink, attaching themselves to the muzzle and thence passing into the nostrils and throat. But on our river voyage we were free from these pests,

Just before leaving the canal which connects the Ging-Oya with the Lily Lake, we halted at a village where we saw a Singhalese wedding procession, the attentive bridegroom (whose knot of glossy black hair was of course fastened by a very large tortoiseshell comb, besides a circular comb on the forehead) holding a large umbrella over a very sedate-looking bride, who walked beside him dressed in brocade, with a wreath on the back of her head, and the hair fastened with golden pins and a golden comb. This bridal dress, however, was not becoming, and we awarded the palm of beauty to a young girl in white, shading herself with a large banana-leaf.

The people crowded to the banks to see the novel sight of European ladies travelling in a 'padda-boat.'¹ Most of the children were dressed with the elegant simplicity of our ancestors in the original Eden, except that some were adorned with one pearl tied round the arm, whilst others wore a tiny tin cylinder, containing some fetish, fastened to the waist. The little Roman Catholics are generally distinguished by a small crucifix or locket with dedication to some saint, but many wear tiny bits of embroidered rag, which are sold by priests as charms.

Nowhere have I seen more fascinating little children, with such soft brown eyes, coming so coaxingly to offer us gifts of flowers, and their mellifluous speech is as attractive as is their personal appearance. One handsome man brought his beautiful little girl and asked us to sketch her. She was quite naked, but a few minutes later he brought her back in all the magnificence of her green jacket and red skirt, with coral necklace and ear-rings. As the proud father brought her on board, his own long silky black hair got unfastened and fell in rich masses over his shoulders. The effect was most artistic, but unfortunately in Ceylon it is not considered respectful to wear the hair hanging down in presence of a superior, so it is always coiled up in a knot. (In China it is just the contrary—the man who, for convenience while working, twists his long black plait round his head, must always let it down in presence of any superior.)

In this island, where the two races, Tamil and Singhalese, meet one at every turn, one is sometimes struck by a curious point of difference in their symbols of respect. The Tamil must cover his head in presence of a superior, and an extra large turban

¹ Rice cargo-boat.

indicates extra reverence. The Singhalese, on the contrary, should appear bare-headed: so, when a person of any recognised rank approaches, the Tamils, who have been sitting bare-headed in the shade, quickly twist on the long strips of cloth which form their turbans; whereas the Singhalese, who, perhaps, have let down their hair and thrown a bright-coloured handkerchief over it, quickly pull off the handkerchief and twist up the hair as if they were going to bathe. In old days, under native rule, Singhalese of certain low castes were prohibited from wearing any covering above the waist, and anyone presuming to do so was liable to have his or her garment torn off by order of any person of higher station.

Our sail up the Luna-Oya was lovely as a fairy dream, the banks on either side being clothed with the richest jungle, great forest-trees overhanging the still waters and matted with festoons of luxuriant creepers, whose exquisite emerald green glorified the darker foliage of the trees. Especialy rich were the masses of a plant suggestive of Virginian creeper, and brightened here and there with a touch of scarlet, which, however, in Ceylon, tells not of autumn and approaching death, but of spring and fresh young foliage. There are some trees which on first bursting into young leaf are a blaze of glorious scarlet or crimson, and then gradually turn to gold or chocolate colour, one finally assuming the full bright green.

Here and there we came on clumps of cocoa-nut palms, and then we always looked out for picturesque huts well-nigh hidden by the long waving leaves of the banana, tall sugar-canes, and the very long fronds of young palms—for, according to Singhalese lore, this friendly palm can only flourish within sound of the human voice and near the sea. This pretty theory is not strictly borne out by facts, as there are flourishing cocoa-nut groves at various places (such as at Badulla, Matale, and Gampola), at elevations of from 1,400 to 2,200 feet above the sea-level and a hundred miles inland. Still, there are exceptions, and certainly all the finest plantations of cocoa-palm lie along the shore in a belt of less than fifteen miles in width.

We noted a curious method of marking boundaries, by planting two cocoa-nuts in one hole, so that they grow up twins. We also saw curiously-wedded Palmyra palms and banyan-trees; seeds of the latter contrive to niche themselves in the rough bark of the former, and their enfolding roots soon form a network encom-

passing the parent tree. Ere long these grow so powerful that the palm is killed, and the strange pillar of white roots and branches stands alone—a monument of ingratitude!

As we floated on through the deep jungly shade, we occasionally met picturesque fishing-boats and canoes, which formed most attractive foregrounds. Specially so was a large double canoe, namely, two canoes floating side by side, supporting one wide deck with heavy thatch, and laden with huge clusters of green plantains (which are a sort of large banana). The fine bronzed figures of the crew with blue-black shadows, the dark quilted sail and darker reflections, made an ideal study in browns; indeed, an artist might make his fortune in painting the groups which present themselves at every turn. No need for paid models here, where every careless attitude seems naturally graceful, and where tailors and broad-cloth are of no account, for a fisherman's full dress consists of either a large straw hat or a bright-coloured handkerchief thrown loosely over black flowing locks, a second handkerchief fastened round the loins, and a crucifix or medallion of some saint worn round the neck. Such figures as these, whether seen against the clear blue sky or the dark sail, are always harmonious. On gala days many wear a large handkerchief over one shoulder, with a picture of the Virgin and Child, or a full-face portrait of the Pope; others display pictures of the Derby, or some such exciting European scene.

This night we anchored beneath a blossoming surya-tree—a kind of hybiscus, covered with straw-coloured blossoms with a dark maroon heart. Vivid sheet-lightning illumined the sky and the forest, even waking up the old wandroos, who hooted their indignation. These are bearded baboons of the most venerable appearance, clothed in thick dark brown hair, with a rough shaggy white beard and a thick fringe of white hair on their head. Some species, however, are grey, with black beards. They are very easily tamed, and some have been taken to visit sacred monkey shrines in India, where they are held in special honour because of their grave demeanour. Their deep call, as we so often heard it resounding through the silent forest in the stillness of early dawn (albeit, I can only describe it as something like that of our common donkey, but much deeper in tone), was most eerie, blending with the shrill cries of all manner of birds, whose voices, for the most part, are as discordant as their plumage is radiant.

Again passing through a short connecting canal, we crossed

the mouth of the Dedroo-Oya, a fine wide stream, calm as the ocean into which it flowed, and contrasting strangely with the majestic green waves which ever and anon rose as if by magic, to fall with a thunderous roar in a cataract of dazzling surf.

We never missed any opportunity of landing to collect whatever treasures we might chance to find, of marsh or jungle, river or sea. So here we landed on the sands, and picked up, not shells, but a great variety of seeds, large and small, rough and smooth, dropped into the river by forest-trees and creeping plants (chiefly gigantic beans), and thus carried to the ocean, to be thence thrown back on the land far from their birthplace.

But the most curious objects in our collection of seeds were the large circular heads which contain those of the sea-pink or *Spinifex squarrosus*. These are light balls, often from ten to twelve inches in diameter, composed of long spines radiating from the seed-bearing centre. When these are mature they drop from the plant, and the wind blows them like wheels for miles along the shore, or, may be, across rivers and lagoons, dropping many seeds on their way, but retaining some to the last, and thus carrying the first promise of future fertility to the newest and most arid sand-banks, which it binds together much in the same way as does the abundant lilac convolvulus.

Leaving the Dedroo-Oya, we passed into a smaller stream, and thence into a succession of lagoons with sandy banks clothed with a plant resembling our own broom in the profusion of its yellow blossoms. For a while our water-way lay through very desolate country—no more luxuriant ferns or tall quivering reeds, but eerie-looking screw-pines with their scarlet fruit peeping from odd bunches of sword-like leaves, and their labyrinth of strangely contorted roots. These and cacti from fifteen to twenty-five feet in height, with yellow blossoms tipping their thorny arms, stood out black against the red sunset sky, a most uncanny-looking scene. Here, however, we anchored for the night and found compensation for the poverty of vegetation in a delightful absence of the bloodthirsty mosquitoes.

Emerging from the river Moondalani, we entered the long wide lake or 'gobb,' which eventually enters the sea above Kalpitia, and here we saw great flocks of white cranes and padda-birds. Unlike the graceful white birds so-called in India, the Ceylonese padda-bird has brown wings and back, only showing white when flying. Dark glossy lotus-leaves floated on the

shining waters, with blossoms silvery, golden, roseate and azure, and in those dainty cups bright dew-drops glistened like fairy gems.

For about five miles we sailed on this calm peaceful lake, then passed into the usual chain of bits of rivers connected by short canals. We landed in a lovely jungle, and brought back loads of flowers to decorate our boat-house, and bright scarlet and black seeds of the olinda, a jungle-creeper; but all these treasures were gathered at the cost of many sharp bites from ants and tears from cruel thorns, which pierced our thickest boots and tore our dresses, although mine was of good strong serge.

The boatmen (ever on the alert to find wayside treasures for us) brought us curious seeds of the *naga-darana* or 'snake's fangs,' so called from having sharp curved points like teeth. These, together with little bowls of milk, are offered to snakes by persons who wish to propitiate them, for although serpent worship no longer holds so prominent a place in Ceylon as it did of yore (as suggested by innumerable sculptures of five- and seven-headed snakes in ancient holy places) the old reverence is by no means extinct, and at least one temple remains, in which live cobras glide about and are devoutly tended by reverent priests and priestesses. This cobra temple is on Iranative ('the twin's isle'), off Jaffna; but the shrine is said to have been seriously damaged by the great cyclone in November 1884, which swept the whole coast with such appalling fury that on one small island (Nynadive) 2,500 palm-trees were uprooted, and about eight hundred head of cattle and sheep were killed.

I heard of another snake temple at Badulla, where so recently as 1850 my informant had seen live serpents gliding about at large, and reverently worshipped. At another temple in the same town there is a stone on which is sculptured a short thick serpent with a head at each end, which stone is said to possess magic virtue in healing broken bones.

A lingering belief in the supernatural power of the serpent doubtless accounts for the extreme aversion of the islanders, whether Singhalese or Tamil, to killing one of these creatures. In some cases they coax them into wicker baskets, and float them down some stream, trusting that they may land in safety elsewhere. One seemingly pleasant garden near the north of the Kelany River was pointed out to us as suffering seriously from this cause, the currents washing the frail arks with their unwelcome

inmates to a quiet haven among the overhanging bushes, whence they invaded the gardens at pleasure.

Saturday night found us on a swampy lake, bordered with thickets of great tree cacti of several sorts. Again the sun sank in fiery red, and the weird arms of the cacti seemed black as ebony against that scarlet glow, which rapidly gave place to the briefest twilight, during which flocks of wild-fowl rose from their feeding grounds on the quiet lake.

In this strange spot we spent a cheerful Sunday, and on the morrow a short sail brought us to the town of Puttalam, where we wandered for some hours on the shore and in the native bazaar, then again set sail and travelled all night down the long sea lake till we reached Kalpitia, also called Calpentyn, where a dreary old fort tells of the days when the Dutch ruled in the isle.

Though the Moormen are a very important body in Ceylon, Mahommedanism is not obtrusive, so we noted with interest lights burning on all the tombs near a hideous mosque, and learnt that the dead are thus honoured every Tuesday and Thursday night. Nature, however, supplied a far more poetic illumination, for not only were the stars gloriously clear, but the water was brilliantly phosphorescent, and every ripple that broke upon the shore or in the wake of boats or canoes, flashed in lovely light like gleaming steel. Of the many infinitesimal creatures to whom we were indebted for this soft radiance, one outshone all his fellows, namely, a water-gnat which skimmed lightly over the surface like a marine meteor, leaving a trail of fairy-like green light. This fascinating display was repeated night after night, the most vivid of all being on the lake at Negombo, where the phosphorescence took the form of little balls like white electric light, and when my bath was filled in the dark cabin I found I was sitting in luminous water. That night the air was full of electricity, forked and sheet lightning by turns illumined the dark heaven, and I wondered whether the sea could be affected by the same cause.

Yet another detail in the varied illumination was supplied by the blazing torches of many fishermen—torches of plaited palm-leaf, by the light of which they spear fish with a seven-pronged fork, or sometimes capture them by dropping a basket over them, as, bewildered by the glare, they lie still on the bed of the shallow lake.

Close to us, secured by a huge wooden anchor, lay a very pic-

turesque vessel laden with rice and salt. Her crew of Moormen spent most of the night monotonously chanting verses of the Koran, which did not soothe our slumbers!

On the morrow the Bishop held service, first in English and afterwards in Tamil, in a solid but exceedingly ugly old Dutch church, the English-speaking congregation consisting chiefly of the 'Burgher' descendants of those same Dutch colonists.

In the evening we landed on a small island clothed with dense jungle and masses of exquisite blue blossoms of the clitoria. On the beach natives were filling sacks with a gelatinous seaweed, which answers the purpose of isinglass, while others were collecting off the trees a lichen called orchilla, from which they obtain a warm brownish dye. We also watched with much interest the movements of a sea-snake putting up its head to breathe, but we were careful to keep at a safe distance, many sea-snakes being venomous; we were, however, assured that all those living in fresh water are harmless.

Kind people—Tamil, Singhalese, and Burgher—brought us miscellaneous gifts—the dear little baby mungoose aforesaid, both land and water turtle-shells, corals, fragrant limes strung together to form necklaces of honour, strangely fascinating blossoms of the cocoa-nut and the areca palm, which I can only describe as somewhat resembling bunches of the richest waxy wheat vastly magnified and carved in ivory. These are much used in Singhalese decoration, though involving a prodigal sacrifice of the precious nuts. Less wasteful, but also less graceful, were the plaited palm-leaves, wherewith our boat-home was further honourably adorned, while there seemed no end to the ingenious oddities in the form of miniature lanterns, parrots, birds-of-paradise, &c., all fashioned by plaiting strips of palm-leaf.

Amongst the gifts, which to me had all the charm of novelty, was a basket of cashew nuts—an excellent, kidney-shaped nut, which grows in the most eccentric fashion outside of a pear-shaped fruit. What with fruit, flowers, and living creatures, our limited space was being rapidly filled up.

Next morning we started early on the return voyage to Puttalam, but lost the morning breeze while halting at the Karative salt-pans, so the crew had a long day of hard work rowing in the sun. These salt-works, with those at Puttalam, Chilaw, and other points, are the special industry of the district, the salt being obtained from the great, calm lagoon, whose waters, owing to

ceaseless evaporation in the burning sun, are very much more salt than those of the ocean by which it is fed. The lagoon is nearly thirty miles in length, with a breadth of from four to eight miles.

As salt is deposited more rapidly by still water than by that which is subject to tidal movement, a large part of the lake is enclosed by a mud embankment where the waters are held captive for a given period, after which they are led by small ditches into shallow enclosures or pans, where evaporation goes on still more rapidly, and the brine is left till it becomes further condensed. This saturated solution is then again transferred to another series of shallow enclosures, where it is left till the salt is precipitated in snowy crystals, forming a glittering crust of from two to three inches in thickness.

As much as 500,000 cwts. is sometimes thus obtained in this neighbourhood in the course of a season, though at other times not one-tenth of this amount may be collected. The quantity eventually stored depends greatly on the sun, for the harvest is as precarious as that of kelp or of hay, or whatever else depends on fickle weather, and the most promising deposits vanish literally 'like snow-drifts in thaw,' should unseasonable rains chance to fall.

This work (which in this district gives employment to upwards of a thousand persons) is chiefly carried on by Moormen working under Government supervision, for the salt trade, here as in Hindostan, is a Government monopoly, and one which forms a very important item in the revenue¹ (i.e. about 80,000*l.*). The cost of manufacture being only about threepence per cwt., and the price paid to the salt contractors only about four rupees per ton, while retail dealers pay about forty-seven rupees for the same weight, it follows that Government profits to the extent of about 900 per cent.

Curiously enough, it is proved that whereas the annual consumption of salt in India is less than six pounds per head, that in Ceylon is just double, averaging twelve pounds per head. Whether this implies a peculiarly strong craving for salt in these islanders I know not, but its importance is so fully recognised that on various occasions both the Dutch and the Portuguese contrived to bring the King of Kandy (i.e. of the mountain province in the

¹ The rupee in India and Ceylon is equivalent to a florin.

heart of the isle) to terms by blockading every route by which salt could be carried from the sea-coast to the mountains.

The price of the article of course varies enormously with the distance to which it has to be carried. To fish-curers on the coast it is supplied almost gratis, with a view to its encouragement as an island industry, instead of as at present importing large quantities of salt fish from India. In the towns on the seaboard, to which salt is conveyed by boat, the addition of freight is not very serious, but in inland districts, which can only be supplied by toilsome bullock-cart and coolie transport, the price is enormously increased, and in the hill districts the difficulty and cost of transport are so great that the salt, which at the salt-pans sells for two cents per pound, may fetch from one to two rupees in the mountains. It is hoped that ere long a branch railway may greatly facilitate the traffic.

Besides these salt-works on the west coast, there are others at Hambantotte in the southern province, and smaller ones on the north and east sea-coast.

Sunday proved anything but a day of rest for the Bishop, who had come to Puttalam in order to consecrate the new church, and who in the course of the day held all possible services in English and in Tamil, beginning with a baptism in the early morning and ending with a confirmation in the evening. Amongst the candidates were several very smart Tamil ladies, who wore short-sleeved jackets of bright-coloured silk and muslin skirts which by no means veiled their bare brown feet and ankles. According to oriental custom, their large muslin veils duly concealed their faces till the moment of confirmation, when the veils were thrown back.

We were glad to end the evening by a stroll on the sea-beach, watching a lovely sunset; but we were assured that this would not be so pleasant at all seasons, as in one monsoon shoals of jelly-fish are washed ashore, and lie rotting in the sun, poisoning the whole atmosphere. A pleasanter gift of the sea is the oyster crop, which here is said to be excellent. We passed through the fish-market and saw a great variety of fishes—some odd, some beautiful; but both these we saw in larger numbers a few days later at Chilaw, a very pretty village lying between the sea and a river, only separated from one another by a very narrow belt of sand. The coast there is infested by sharks, and monstrous saw-fish, fully fifteen feet in length, are sometimes captured.

In that market we saw young sharks of three distinct species, saw-fish, dog-fish, and many more—some of the most vivid scarlet with sky-blue spots, some scarlet shaded with crimson, others mauve and silvery grey, like the doves of the sea. There was every shade of colour, in every conceivable combination and variety of marking, with odd scales and fins. In the fish world, as elsewhere, the gaudiest are by no means the best. Those most in favour for the table are the seir, soles, mullet, whiting, mackerel, dories, and good little sardines.

But for gorgeous colouring we turn to the family of parrot-fishes of lustrous green, gold, purple, or crimson, varied by bands of the richest scarlet, grey, and yellow, the whole being toned by cross-stripes of velvety black. Then there are great fire-fish of vivid flame-colour, and Red Sea perch of dazzling scarlet. One lovely fish, about eighteen inches long, is specially sacred to Buddha, being clothed in his colours of lovely gold barred with rich brown sienna. The red pahaya is also brilliant red, tinted with gold; it grows to about two feet in length, and is excellent to eat. The basket-parrot has a green back fading into yellow, with yellow fins; but the whole is covered with straight lines and cross-patches, giving the exact effect of wicker-work.

A very handsome parrot-fish about two feet in length has a dove-grey body with black spots, fins brown with rows of dainty little black spots; the ventral fin is edged with delicate green, while that on the back is edged with scarlet; the tail is scarlet with a white edge; the eye is bright gold, set in a golden head with blue-green stripes. Altogether, one almost fancies that a ray of prismatic light must rest upon it. Then there is the worm-parrot,¹ so called from a fancied resemblance to the worm which bores holes in palm-trees. Its body is of a dark claret colour, crossed by five bars of delicate yellow, while each separate scale is edged with green. Bands of yellow edged with pale blue meander over the head.

When one hears of a squirrel-parrot,² one naturally expects to see something grey or brown, but this is by no means the case. It is a gorgeous fish, about eighteen inches in length, of beautifully shaded green with longitudinal stripes and dots of crimson; its head is likewise green and crimson, and its tail fin striped scarlet and gold on a green ground. The pumpkin-parrot, which averages three feet in length, has a blue-green back and bright

¹ Panoo-Girawañ.

² Lena-Giraweh.

green tail, grey under-side and yellow head, with sienna fins; but it is covered all over with a honeycomb pattern of bright yellow.

A very lady-like looking member of this family is the balistes, robed in delicate silver; its eyes are bright golden with large black pupil. The green tulip-parrot is also a dainty little fish, only about six inches in length, apparelled in lovely shaded green, while the cocoa-nut sparrow¹ is a small creature with head, tail, fins and cross-bars of yellow on a claret-coloured ground.

Perhaps the most marvellously variegated of all these creatures is the flower-parrot, which chiefly frequents the coral-reefs off the south of the isle. Its lustrous robe has horizontal bands of silver, blue, crimson, bright green and dark green, covered by black bands and patches of yellow. The fins are straw-coloured, the head has crimson and bright green stripes radiating from the eye.

Even the excellent herring of Ceylon displays an oriental love of colour, for its silvery body is striped with red, and some of its fins are yellow, while the others are dark steel-grey. But the triumph of fish-millinery is reserved for a lovely, very rare perch, dressed in silvery grey, with tail, fins and crown of the head of vivid gold, just tipped with velvety black.

Another radiant butterfly of the deep is the malkotah, which is apparelled in green satin striped with scarlet, its fins and tail being also scarlet.

But for oddity nothing can excel the various members of the chetodon family or 'moon-stones,' as they are called by the Singhalese, because of their globular form. One is just a ball of bright golden-yellow, with glittering yellow eyes and enormous brown fins. Another has a yellow body with curved lines of purple, black and gold tail and fins, and a black band on the face. One little gem about four inches in diameter is silvery grey shaded with bands of darker grey and silvery eyes. Another equally tiny is of bright gold with a blue back and gold dorsal fin.

There are also crabs innumerable of all shapes and sizes, from the largest edible crabs down to little tiny hermits which scamper about the shore in thousands, hiding during the heat of the day under the cool shade of the marine convolvulus, each tenanting some empty shell which it has selected from the multitude which strew the beach. But I must not linger too long over the wonders of the fish-market and of the sea-shore, which so specially

¹ Pol-Kitchyah.

attracted us at Chilaw, from being so close to that of the river where our boat lay anchored.

Here we were taken to see some fine wood-carving in the Roman Catholic Church, where we were told the Sunday congregation averaged nine hundred persons, for here, as elsewhere in Ceylon, a large proportion of the fishers and many of the coast population are Roman Catholics—descendants of the Portuguese converts. Chapels are numerous, all built by the people themselves, and devout congregations attend Mass daily at 4 a.m. The fishers give their priest a tithe of their daily catch, and in stormy weather will never put to sea till he has sprinkled the boats with holy water. Not one boat puts to sea on Sunday—a deference for the day in honourable contrast with the enormous amount of Sunday labour exacted at the ports where foreign vessels call, and where the toil of shipping and unshipping cargo goes on without intermission.

Having been converted by the Portuguese, the Roman Catholics in Ceylon have ever continued subject to the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Goa, whence also their priests have been chiefly supplied. The French and Italian priests and vicars apostolic sent from Rome have found less favour with the people, who have shown themselves in no wise disposed to accept the dogma of 'Papal infallibility,' more especially since the Pope decreed that in September 1884 the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Goa should cease and the Goanese clergy be no longer competent to dispense the Holy Sacraments, unless they would submit themselves to the Pope's representative—a change of allegiance to which they very seriously objected.

The strife born of these disputes was most unedifying. Thus we were shown an island near Negombo (Dhuwa Island) to which some notion of special sanctity attaches, and there the different orders have had serious conflicts as to which should say Mass first. The year before our visit thousands had assembled, quite prepared for a free fight in support of their respective spiritual leaders; but the British authorities having got wind of their intentions, a body of police took possession of the chapel and ordered which should take precedence. Afterwards the others held their service, although greatly incensed at the preference shown to their rivals.

I heard much of the miracle-plays performed on Good Friday in a building adjoining the chapel. The room was chemically

darkened, leaving only sufficient light to distinguish three great crucifixes; all other figures were real. The Blessed Virgin was personated by a Singhalese woman. Afterwards an image representing the dead Christ was carried on a bier through the streets of the city, which were lined with thousands of kneeling women all dressed in black and wailing aloud. At Chilaw on Palm Sunday processions of large images of our Lord riding the ass, and of the twelve Apostles, are paraded on wheels, just as the Hindoos parade their gods. At Jaffna the processions might well be mistaken for those of Juggernaut's cars, and no heathen idol could be more repulsive than are the images of many of the Christian saints as here displayed.

Leaving pleasant Chilaw, we rowed back in glorious moonlight (oh! so beautiful as seen from beneath the dark over-arching fronds of tall cocoa-palms!) to the lovely Luna-Oya, and there anchored that we might get full enjoyment of the early morning light on its beautiful foliage and tangled creepers, and on the wealth of reeds, acanthus and innumerable water-plants on its sedgy shores. The men camped on shore, rigging up the brown sail as their tent and kindling a bright fire beneath the trees.

Again with the dawn we rejoiced in all the voices of the wakening jungle life: monkeys and jolly old wanderoos, parrots, kingfishers, barbets, jungle-fowl—notes of all sorts, harsh and liquid, the most attractive being those of a cheery black-and-white bird, which Europeans call a robin, because it has something of the friendly demeanour to human beings which endears our own little redbreast.

All day long we sailed or rowed, and at sunset neared the village of Maravilla, but catching sight of a crowd of natives preparing decorations in honour of the Bishop's visit, we pretended not to have arrived, and turning back, anchored for the night near a grand old banyan-tree, amid whose dark foliage flashed fire-flies innumerable.

Immediately after early coffee, Mr. de Soyza, the fine old village 'moodliar,' came to fetch us, and showed us over his splendidly kept cocoa-palm estate, watered by the aid of a steam-engine, an outlay well repaid by the luxuriant growth of the trees, young ones about eleven years of age having fronds of from twenty to twenty-five feet in length, while on an average each full-grown tree yields twenty nuts six times a year.

These fine fronds, torn into shreds and plaited, figured largely

in the decorations at the landing-place and at church, mingling with the large fan-shaped leaves and rich glossy brown fruit of the Palmyra palm, the scarlet screw-pine and curiously woven pendent bird's-nests, the general effect being very light and pretty.

The congregation being all Singhalese, the Bishop of course conducted the service in that language. The interest centred in the baptism of two adults, converts from Buddhism.

In the afternoon we resumed our voyage, sailing down stream between beautifully wooded banks where we saw several great ungainly kabra-goyas and numerous small lovely lizards. We attempted to capture a bright green tree-snake about four feet long, which was twined round a branch with a crested bird dead in its mouth, but at our approach it dropped into the water and swam to shore. Though not venomous, it is dreaded by the islanders because of its habit of darting at the eyes of man or bird.

A sunset in which every gorgeous colour blended was succeeded by an afterglow still more exquisite, and ere its brilliancy had faded the moon shone gloriously, its light blending with that of the sheet lightning, while the glaring torches of the men fishing cast long fiery reflections and showers of sparks, as the fishers passed in and out beneath the overhanging branches of the dark trees.

We anchored for the night where the placid waters of the Ging-Oya mingle with those of the Maha-Oya, and together flow silently into the ocean, the point of union being marked only by the upheaval every other minute of the majestic green wave, which curls and breaks in dazzling surf and with thunderous roar—a vision of lovely peace blended with resistless force.

Sailing in the early dawn, we passed from the calm river to a still calmer canal, and thence into the Lake Negombo, where we found a most picturesque native town and fishing village, with a great variety of boats, most fascinating to a sketcher. A hearty welcome awaited us in a pleasant bungalow between the sea and the lake, and close to an old Dutch fort and a magnificent banyan-tree with innumerable stems—one of the finest I have ever seen. Beneath its shadow sat groups of Singhalese, waiting their summons on business to the court-house within the old fort.

Long before sunrise we found our way to the palm-fringed shore, and enjoyed the rare luxury of a delicious bathe in the

warm sea—rare because there are so few places on these shores where we could feel safe from sharks; but here the water lies so clear above the firm yellow sand that sharks seem afraid to approach, so our enjoyment of the perfect morning was unalloyed.

But the subsequent delight of lying idly at rest in the verandah during the noonday heat was tempered by alarming stories of the terrible results of such indulgence should the breeze happen to be blowing from the north-west, in which case it is known as the 'land wind,' which, blowing over feverish Indian jungles, arrives here hot and dry, and shrivels up whatever it touches. Half an hour of this delicious but treacherous breeze blowing on a sleeper, or even on a person lying at rest, often proves worse than a sun-stroke, and is quite as permanent in its effects. Animals suffer from it as severely as human beings, horses and deer being often crippled with rheumatism or even blinded from this cause. Its effect on vegetation is also most baneful, and even furniture shrinks and splits under its drying influence.

One of the objects of interest near Negombo is a cocoa-nut palm with several heads, a growth so rare that we were taken up the lake to see it, but found it as hideous as are most other deformities. I saw a similar hydra-headed palm on one of the Fijian Isles, where it was equally prized by the natives on account of its singularity.

I found a more attractive object for pencil and brush in the majestic banyan-tree, which claimed all my available time at charming Negombo, to which we bade adieu with infinite regret, my companions returning to Colombo by land, while I preferred returning by water and sailing down the lake in clear moonlight. It was an evening much to be remembered on account of the wonderful phosphorescence of the water, the brilliancy of forked and sheet lightning, and the utter stillness, broken only by the deep growling of distant thunder. There was also something of novelty in finding myself alone with a crew of Singhalese, of whose language I scarcely knew six words!

We anchored at Tarracoolie, a very pretty spot with rich foliage and deep reflections, of which I secured an early sketch; then once more sailed by lovely river and canal, and ere the sun set the 'Castle Jermyn' was safe back at her old moorings, and all her passengers (bipeds and quadrupeds) were in comfortable quarters at St. Thomas's College under the Bishop's hospitable roof.

EIGHT DAYS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE TOUCHSTONE OF PERIL.'

I will a round unvarnished tale deliver.—*Othello*.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BY ROAD AND RIVER.

AT last! the day is done, the evening come.

They must now get over the main stream of the river before they can get out of its valley. There is a ferry where the road to Abdoolapore which they wish to reach crosses this channel, four or five miles higher up the valley. But they do not think it prudent to make for this public place, at which the mutineers may possibly have set a guard. They will make the passage at a nearer point, even though they must there ford the river.

The sun is near his setting when they leave the kraal, accompanied by six or seven of the herdsmen. How quiet the great ocean of air now lies after all those hours of constant movement; how still after all that fierce unrest! The air no longer dances to the fierce rod of the sun; that withdrawn, it stands still. That daily western gale always dies away completely in the evening. Very pleasant the stillness after all the past turmoil.

For some time they pass over many open grazing-grounds, over many long reaches covered with tamarisk, across many dry channels, along the side of many now dry jheels, and so on until they arrive at the edge of the huge stretch of pure sand which marks the limit to which the water extends in the rains in this present main channel of the river. Walking across this is most toilsome. When they first enter on the sands these are of a rosy hue: by the time they have got to the end of them the afterglow has quite faded away, and left them a ghostly grey. At length they reach the edge of the stream. Generally the sacred river runs as yellow as the Tiber, but there is just now a milky tinge upon it; this indicates the melting of the snow on its parent glacier.

'There is a flood coming down the river,' says Hay to one of the herdsmen.

‘Yes, sir. The river has risen a great deal since this morning. I waded across it the whole way then; I think I should have to swim now in the middle.’

This is an untoward circumstance. Neither Mrs. Fane nor her daughters can swim, as Hay knows.

‘Then how are we to get the ladies across?’ he says. ‘None of them can swim.’

‘The deep part is not very wide. If they will let themselves float we can get them across it. You gentlemen can all swim?’

‘Yes.’

Hay announces the fact to the others. To make for the ferry now would entail on them much additional fatigue and a great loss of time; every half-hour now is most valuable: the summer night is brief—they have thirty miles to walk.

‘Is there no other ford than this?’ asks Mrs. Fane—fearful, not for herself, but for her daughters.

‘Yes, but three miles lower down, and there would probably be the same difficulty there.’

‘We can easily take each lady across the deep part,’ says the herdsman, ‘one of us to each lady, if they will only not be afraid. If they will only not be frightened when they are off their feet, and let themselves float easily, and just let the right hand—the river flowed from left to right—rest on the shoulder of the man with them, there will be no danger.’

The Englishmen discuss the matter a little apart.

‘We think it would be best to cross here if we can, Theodosia,’ says Major Fane to his wife. ‘Do you think you and the girls could manage it? You must keep vewy cool. You must not stwuggle. Just let yourself float easily and let your hand rest lightly on the man’s shoulders.’

‘I could manage it,’ says Mrs. Fane, ‘but I do not know about the girls.’

Lilian glances fearfully across the broad expanse of the water, on which the darkness is now settling, but she answers bravely:

‘Oh, yes, we could manage it.’

‘I will take Miss Fane across myself,’ says Hay.

‘I am sure there will be no danger,’ cries Beatrice, now completely reassured. Her heart, too, had sunk within her as she had looked across the darkening width of water.

‘Let yourself float easily. Keep cool. Let your hand rest lightly on the shoulder of the man you are with’—directions

easier to give than follow. Keep cool ; do not fear, when there is the greatest reason to fear. Do not struggle, when the strongest, the most overpowering instincts of human nature, the love of life and the fear of death, impel you to struggle. Let your hand rest lightly on the shoulder ! That is all very well in the case of a partner with whom you are about to float over the smooth yet firm floor of a ball-room, but not so easy when you have to float across a depth of drowning water. But with Hay Beatrice can go anywhere.

‘Yes, we can take the ladies across ourselves,’ says Coote.

‘That is to say, if we can all swim.’

They all can.

‘I will take my wife across,’ says Fane.

‘Then I will take Miss Lilian,’ says Coote.

It is so settled.

They enter the water : two of the herdsmen lead the way, and the English people come after them in couples, the couples arranged above, and young Hamilton and old Brodie walk side by side and bring up the rear. They were enjoined to follow strictly behind the leaders, lest they should miss the ford, get into deep or dangerous water. A sudden plunge into that might prove fatal ; in the case of any of the women, if they were taken off their feet and carried away it might be impossible to rescue them, from the difficulty of seeing where they were in the fast increasing gloom. And so they move on in a long double file. They move forward with a great splashing, made the greater in order to keep off the alligators, who are not likely, however, to approach so large a party. And so they move on—splash—splash—splash—splash—splash—splash for a long way : for, as is usually the case on the winding Jumna, the shoal is a very wide one. For most part of its width it is very shallow. For a great distance the water is not much more than ankle-deep ; the ladies can easily keep their dresses above it. But now they have to abandon all thought of their dresses. Soon the water is knee-deep, soon waist-deep. The two leading herdsmen stop : they have reached the edge of the deep water. Hitherto they had been conscious only of the great splashing, but now in the sudden deep silence the gurgle and rush of the river is heard ; and it cannot but fall fearfully on the ears of the women. Now has come their time of trial. Amid the encircling gloom they can discern the top of the curved bank they have to make for, between which and them the deep stream

lies, for the bank is not very far off. But this deep stream is all the swifter because of the narrow channel in which it runs.

‘West your hand upon my shoulder lightly, and let yourself float quietly, and it will be all wight,’ says Fane to his wife; and now he has struck out across the darkening water. Think of the feelings of the two girls at this moment! How their hearts stand still! How they strain their eyes to see, their ears to hear! But soon a welcome shout announces that the first essaying of the passage has been successful, though the shout comes from a good way down the river. Now it is the turn of William Hay and Beatrice Fane, and they are off. Think of the feelings of the parents as they stood upon the bank and their children were in the stream—of whose force they have just had proof—running the risk of death! In the broad daylight, in the presence of so many men, so many strong swimmers, the danger might not have been so very great. But now a slip of the hand would mean almost certain death. Rest the hand lightly on the shoulder!—that was all very well, but a want of grasp of it might lose you your life. Hay has a badly wounded arm, but he swims like a fish, and in this case he is not likely to spare his powers of swimming. He puts them forth so effectually that he goes almost straight across the stream and strikes the bank much higher up than Fane had done. ‘Let her come safely across, too, O my God!’ prays Mrs. Fane in her heart. And now Major Coote and Lilian, too, have reached the bank, and Mrs. Fane is happy. And now the men come swimming across in a body. The light has faded away completely, and it is intensely dark. It is a black darkness here at the foot of the high bank forming the side of the valley.

‘This is the pathway,’ cries one of the herdsmen very loud. ‘This way. We must hurry on, for you have a long way to go.’

‘Yes,’ says Hay. ‘This way!’ he shouts in English. ‘Is that you, Hamilton?’

‘Yes.’

‘Is Brodie with you?’

‘No.’

‘I suppose he has landed lower down. Brodie! Brodie!’ he shouts; but there is no answer.

‘Brodie! Brodie!’ shouts young Hamilton; but there is no answer.

‘He was an old man, and perhaps the strength of the stream

was too great for him, and he is drowned,' says one of the herdsmen without any circumlocution. 'He started with us, I know, for I was next to him.'

Hay puts his hand to his mouth and shouts out, 'Brodie! Brodie!' until the welkin rings again.

'You need not wait for him, and you need not call to him, for he will not come or hear. He is gone dead for sure,' says the herdsman who had last spoken. 'He started with me, and as he has not reached the bank he must have gone down into the race below the cliff.'

'Is there a race?'

'A very swift one; at the end of the hollow.'

By the hollow he means the hollow in the high bank of the valley, which forms a sort of bay, in which they had landed, and by reason of which the ford had been established here.

'Let us go down to it,' cries Hay.

'You are only losing time needlessly; you will never see that gentleman again,' says the herdsman.

'We must make what search we can for him,' cries Hay.

He and Hamilton follow the river down to the end of the bay. It impinges directly on the clay cliff, which here presents a perpendicular face, and flows along it in many a swirl and eddy, and with excessive swiftness.

'It is a dangerous bit of water, and he was an old man, and he was swimming in his clothes,' says the herdsman, who holds so strongly to the belief that the absent man is dead and drowned for certain; and the sight of that rushing rapid causes the two young Englishmen to think that it must be so 'for certain' too. But they have a natural feeling against going away from the place too soon, against coming to that conclusion too hastily.

'Cannot we continue our way down the river? He may have got to shore lower down,' says Hay.

'It would take you a long time to mount the cliff, and you could not keep along the edge of it continuously, it is so cut up by ravines; and as you would have to go round each one of these it would take you one hour to get down half a mile,' say the herdsmen.

They turn sorrowfully back. And these swiftly passing moments are of the utmost value to them, and they have really spent a good deal of time—as was subsequently to appear, too much—in the search.

‘His body is now a mile from this, and his soul with God,’ says one of the herdsmen as they begin to retrace their steps.

‘He was not a bad chap after all,’ says young Hamilton. And that was the dirge or requiem of poor old Peter Brodie. Most of us will have as short a one.

‘Let us move on, let us move; we have no time to lose,’ cries Hay, after they have rejoined the others, and he has said briefly, ‘I am afraid poor Dr. Brodie is drowned’—anxious to prevent the ladies from dwelling on the event; and he hurries them away from the river-bank.

The sisters cast a horrified glance over the dim expanse of the river, guilty of many a death, as they turn away from it.

The pathway runs for a long way up a narrow ravine and then ascends to the level of the country above. Here the fierce-faced herdsmen are to leave them.

‘Follow this track, taking no other, neither to the right hand nor the left, and it will bring you to the metalled road. That goes straight to Abdoolapore. Or, if there are any twists and turnings in it, no other metalled road crosses it, so you cannot miss your way.’

‘Ver goot! Haw! To you we mosh oblige! Haw!’ is the way in which we might try to give some idea of the little Hindostanee sentence in which Major Fane endeavours to convey to the drovers, who have proved so much more kindly than their looks, his sense of the obligation he and the others lie under to them. Major Fane was a kind of man not likely to have much intercourse with the people of the country or to consider it worth his while to acquire a proper conversational command of their language. But Major Coote liked the natives, and his shooting excursions had brought him into close and constant intercourse with them.

He thanks the herdsmen in better terms.

‘We have nothing to pay you with just now,’ he is adding (in India you never carry money about the person), when one of them, the most predatory looking rascal of the lot, says:

‘We want nothing of you. We would not take anything from you.’

‘But we should like to make you some return for the great kindness we have received at your hands.’

‘Well, sir, we earn our living in various ways, as our forefathers did before us; and some of these ways are not approved of by your police officers and magistrates. If you would send us a certificate

stating that we had helped you, it might perhaps be of service to some of us in the day of trouble.'

'We will send you that and something else to remember us by,' says Coote. 'But to whom are we to address it? I know the name of your village.'

'Address it to me—to Dholuk Singh.' And then, after more thanks, leave is taken of these rough thieving herdsmen, from whom they had expected to receive so much injury and had met with so much kindness.

The moon has now risen, and the path runs clear before them. Many other pathways cross or leave it, but none of them confuse them—they differ so much in character from the one they have been enjoined to follow, or run so obviously out of their way. But now the pathway enters a dhâk jungle and winds about so much as to cause them to lose their direction. In the middle of an open space, ringed round with trees, beyond which they cannot see, the pathway suddenly divides into three, all three of the same size, and all going very much in the same direction. Which are they to take? 'The middle one,' says Hay, unhesitatingly; the herdsmen had told them to turn neither to the right hand nor to the left. While they are debating they are very much surprised to see two natives appear before them; they seem to have risen up out of the ground, which, in a certain sense, is indeed the case. For these were two thieves who were on their way to Khizrabad, which they thought would just now prove an admirable field for the exercise of their skill. They had been moving conspicuously across the middle of the open space, when they had seen a large party enter upon that little amphitheatre through its surrounding wall of trees. They had immediately squatted themselves down behind a little bush, not higher than an ordinary chair, but which afforded them all the concealment they needed. They had then brought their keen hearing to bear on finding out who these people might be. It soon informed them.

'*Feringhee log*' ('English people').

'Yes.'

'From Khizrabad.'

'So.'

'Making for Abdoolapore.'

'So.'

'Too many to rob.'

'So.'

They watch them until they come to the divergence of the pathways.

‘They do not know the way.’

‘No.’

‘We will lead them into Khizrabad and claim the reward offered for their apprehension.’

‘So.’

He is a fellow of few words, of monosyllables, not a man of glib tongue like his companion; he supplies in their confederacy the brute force, the other supplies the brains. As they get near the English people they make them a deep salaam.

‘Which of these pathways will take us to the road that runs towards Abdoolapore, crossing the Jumna by a ferry a little way from here?’ asks Hay.

‘That is the one,’ says the artful glib-tongued member of the thievish brotherhood, pointing to the glimmering line that runs away to the right.

‘That one!’ exclaims Hay, in a tone of astonishment. ‘Why, that one runs south, and Abdoolapore lies to the north of us!’

‘Oh, it winds about a good deal. It has many turns and twists in it. We ourselves are making for the road you want. Our village lies by the side of it. You have only to accompany us. We are in a hurry to reach our home; the night is advancing.’ And he and the other man move along the pathway he had indicated. The English folks follow, though Hay keeps looking up at the moon and exclaiming, ‘Extraordinary! most extraordinary! We keep facing the moon and she ought to be to the right of us.’

Then the glib-tongued thief places himself by Hay’s side and enters into conversation with him. His speech is fluent and polished to a degree that appears very surprising in a common villager, as he seems to be. This attracts Hay’s attention.

‘Your tongue is very clean. You speak well.’

‘I was servant to a very learned man for many years—ten years—from the age of fourteen to that of twenty-two. He taught me to read and write. I suppose you honorable gentlemen have been forced to leave Khizrabad owing to the unfortunate circumstances of yesterday?’ he goes on glibly.

‘Yes.’

‘How disgracefully and how foolishly these sepoys have

behaved by being unfaithful to their salt, and throwing away their means of livelihood.'

'Yes; most wickedly and foolishly. It seems to me that we are going due south.'

'A twist in the pathway. I suppose you do not hold, sir, that the rule of the English has been overturned, and that of the Nuwâb Sahib re-established for ever, as the people are saying?'

'No. I do not see that the pathway twists, and we are steadily going south.'

'We honest people prefer the rule of the English.'

'I should say we were going in the direction of Khizrabad.'

'There have been terrible doings there. All the Christian people have been killed and their houses plundered and burnt; even women and children have been slain. Oh, Lord! that there should be such wicked people in this world: thieves, and robbers, and murderers, deceivers, and betrayers, traffickers in human blood.'

'The moon is still full face to us.'

'But we are great lovers of the English.'

'You understand what road we want to get to? You are quite sure that this pathway leads to it?'

'Oh, yes. But the road lies a good way off, and the windings of the pathway make the distance longer.'

They move for some time in another and denser dhâk jungle, where it is impossible to take any note of the points of the compass. But at length they pass out from it on to a broad, open, barren plain. And now the smooth-tongued thief hastens to ply Hay with questions. Which was his regiment? How had he escaped from Khizrabad? Where had he passed the preceding night—and this day?

As they cross the open plain Hay catches sight of a great depression in the land to the right. He loses sight of it again as they pass across a freshly broken-up tract, where the poorly cultivated clod-laden fields, having around them thin miserable fences to keep out the antelope, alternate with patches of ancient scrub. Then the appearance of groves begins to indicate that they are entering on a more fertile, or longer cultivated, tract. And the glimmering lights and the barking of dogs begins to indicate the vicinity of villages. And Hay remarks that all the lights glimmer, and the barks sound to the left, and not to the right

of him ; a void space seems to lie in that direction, and now again he seems to be looking into it.

‘What is that?’ he asks of the talking thief, interrupting him in the midst of his glib discourse.

‘That! What?’

‘That hollow ; that lower ground to the right.’

‘It is some lower ground. Yes, to-day those villainous, evil-minded sepoys have been acting as if the whole place belonged to them ; they have been abusing the respectable inhabitants ; no respectable woman dare show herself in the streets ; they have been compelling the shop-keepers to sell to them at their own prices—sometimes they do not pay them at all. It is an evil state of things. The rogues and rascals have it all their own way. Honest people——’

‘Of what stream is that the valley? I see the glimmer of water.’

‘Oh, of the Hindun. Honest people go in fear of their lives.’

‘*The Hindun!*’ cries Hay. ‘Why, that is some eight miles from the Jumna. We could not have come that distance yet.’

The Hindun is the first great affluent of the Jumna after it leaves its parent mountains. It joins it just below Khizrabad, and so makes it navigable from that point downward.

‘Oh, the two rivers make a great bend and come together very near here ; the edges of their lowlands are only about three miles apart. You will see that the edge of the valley of the river will be near us only for a short way. The bend is a very sharp one.’

There must certainly be a very sharp bend in the course of the river, or in the run of the pathway, for they suddenly find themselves at the very edge of the depression or valley, with the shining stream flowing close beneath them, and then but a few paces further on and they have turned their faces away from it, and the high tree-covered table-land lies before them.

But the sight of the flowing water has been enough for Hay.

‘This is the Hindun itself—the river,’ he says to the nimble-tongued thief.

‘Yes, the river itself.’

‘How comes it then that we are looking down stream? If we were on the bank of the Hindun and had it on our right-hand side, we should have the stream flowing towards us and not away from us. We should be looking up stream.’

‘We were looking up stream just now.’

‘No, we were not. Are you sure this is not the valley of the Jumna? You villain! you know it is. You are conducting us back to Khizrabad,’ and he seizes the man by the shoulder; but the thief slips out of his grasp by a practised wriggle.

‘If we could only have got you round this corner it would have been all right. We should have got you to the first outpost where the Nuwâb’s troops are stationed. Good-bye!’ and he darts away, his heels as nimble as his tongue, and his confederate follows him.

‘The scoundrels!’ cries Hay. ‘They wanted to deliver us up to the Nuwâb for the sake of the reward. They would have made a good sum by us.’

There is nothing to be done now but retrace their steps. The smooth-tongued rascal had inflicted a very great injury on them; he had robbed them of some of the precious hours of the night, he had robbed them of much of their physical strength—and the ladies, unaccustomed to walking, more accustomed to riding in a carriage, needed the whole of their available stock of it for the work of the night. How wearisome, how profitless seems their journey back to the point from which they had been misled! That needless waste of time and strength depresses their spirits. Indeed, had it not been for this misleading they would probably have reached Abdoolapore the next morning, and this narrative been the shorter. This time they follow the middle one of the three divergent pathways, and it conducts them all right to the public highway. They move much more quickly along the smooth metalled high road, not only because of its smoothness, but because their hearts are lighter at the thought that they have now, as it were, got grasp of the line connecting them with the haven of safety. Hope will make even a rough road smooth. The only drawback is that they have now entered on a highly cultivated, and therefore densely populated tract. The villages and hamlets are everywhere around them, their positions indicated by the twinkling of lights, the barking of dogs. But luckily they come to none lying immediately on the road. And this is the time of the night when the villagers are all gathered together in their villages, and are smoking their hooqas and enjoying a little bit of friendly gossip before lying down on their carpets, or rude bedsteads, out in the open air.

But still Major Coote enjoins strict silence as they move along

in the shadow of the tall trees bordering the road. Then the cultivated tract comes to an end, and they launch from its sharp edge on to a barren plain, whose wide, level expanse, with the moonbeams glittering on the saline efflorescence with which it is covered, makes it look like a great lake or sea. And when they have advanced on to the plain they have nothing but its glimmering surface around them, and nature seems reduced to its elements of earth and sky. In the absence of everything else the moonlight seems to take solid form: the silvery lustre seems palpable. There is nothing for their eyes to rest on, unless, indeed, they look up and let them rest, awed and delighted, on the majestic orb speeding in solitary grandeur across the vault of the sky. There is no longer need for the fugitives to keep together in a compact body. They separate into couples. Some of them prefer to walk on the flat surface of the plain rather than on the road. William Hay and Beatrice are walking together, she asking him tenderly about his wound. The husband and wife are walking together, side by side, as they have not walked since that long ago when they were first engaged. The feeling of close relationship which in ordinary and commonplace times is apt to become ordinary and commonplace too is vivified in times of trial. The reviving and strengthening of such bonds is the gain of loss, the good of ill, the jewel in the head of the ugly toad adversity. And young Hamilton is walking by the side of Lilian, who finds the surface of the plain more pleasant to her stockinged feet—she had lost her shoes in the Jumna—than the hard, metallated surface of the road or its dusty sides. And Major Coote trudges along by himself, lamenting only that he has not a cigar to smoke.

And so they move on talking, or silent in unspoken communion. And so they toil slowly on one way, while the great orb is speeding the other. And now the shore, the edge of another fertile grove and hamlet-covered tract, looms up before them, and they have reached the end of the barren, sea-like plain. Once more is there a line of tall umbrageous trees on either side of the road; once more do the groves, and villages, and hamlets loom in dark masses. But the position of the latter is no longer indicated by the twinkling of lights and the barking of dogs, for the barren plain was a very wide one, and had taken them long to cross, and it was now the deadest time of the night, the **time of** deepest repose for nature and for man, the hours between midnight and morn. Now was not heard the voice of beast or bird,

of hyæna or of jackal, of nightjar or of owl. Save for the vivid moonlight the pulse of nature stood still. There is a chilliness in the air. They suffer from the cold of the night, as they have suffered from the heat of the day: feel it the more because of that heat, feel it the more because of their wet garments drenched through in the passage of the river. As they seat themselves on the masonry platform of a well by the side of the road to rest themselves, they lament that they have not brought with them something wherewith to draw the water, because they are suffering also a great deal from thirst. (When the cultivator goes to the well in order to water his fields he takes his own huge leathern bucket and long thick rope, just as he takes his own pair of bullocks, and each person coming to a well draws the water for himself by means of his own line and lotah, or brass drinking-vessel.) Looking at their watches, they see that it is a little after two o'clock. We have passed, therefore, from the fifth to the sixth day of our tale. But, in order to chronicle events in the due order of time, we must now go back to the fourth day, the memorable Monday, the day of the outbreak, instead of on with the sixth.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN THE PALACE.

WHEN Mr. Wynn was told by his servants of the disturbance in the city, he thought it a mere ordinary bazaar riot. Even when, in accord with their urgent appeals, he had determined to take May up to the cantonment, he supposed that it was probably only one of those fights between Hindoos and Mahommedans which were not uncommon in the town. Even when his progress had been interrupted and his course diverted, when the Nuwâb's troopers had ordered his coachman to drive to the palace, no sense of any especial personal danger, for May or himself, troubled him. In fact, he looked on the being conducted to the palace as being taken to a place of safety. The Nuwâb had always been on the most friendly terms with the English residents and with himself. May herself had been more disturbed. She had not witnessed one of those religious conflicts betwixt Mahommedans and Hindoos which had often attained large proportions and given the local autho-

rities so much trouble to subdue. But when, on stepping out of the carriage within the palace walls, she sees Philip Lennox ride in through the gateway, she too feels that all is safe. The vivid brightening of her face, as she turned it towards him, which made its beauty shine forth as does a fair landscape when a gleam of sunshine falls upon it—the vivid look of joy and welcome, loving welcome, in her eyes—caused Lennox to think himself amply repaid for having given up the chance of active military employment without the palace to-day. The officer commanding the Nuwâb's troops had started when he had seen Lennox ride in at the gateway; but he now walks quietly up to the group, and saying, 'You would like to join the other English people,' bids them follow him. The aspect of affairs does not seem disturbing to the new-comers. But when Lennox observes the dirty, neglected condition of the little courtyard into which they are conducted, observes how carefully the gate is closed behind them, and hears their conductor say in an off-hand way, and in a tone of voice very different indeed from the polite one in which he had addressed them as they came along, 'Here are some more of them,' he experiences a sudden misgiving, which, if it depresses him, also makes him glad that he had determined to come into the palace and be with May. Were she safe within it, he would rather be without; but if any danger threatens her within, he is glad to be within too, by her side, though there is no man on earth to whom inaction on a day like this could be more terrible. The narrow, dirty staircase, to the foot of which they are conducted, does not add to his misgivings, for he knows that these are common in the finest Eastern houses. Splendid inner domestic staircases belong to the chilly West; magnificent outer public flights of steps to the warm East. And when they have entered the apartment to which the staircase leads their first thoughts are occupied with the people they meet there. 'You here!' say Lennox and Mr. Wynn in one breath to Mr. Melvil.

'Yes, I am here,' says the head of their community, gloomily.

'You here!' says Maud Hilton to Lennox, as he happens to stand by her. 'I had hoped'—the colour rises into her face—'I mean understood, that you had left Khuzrabad.'

'I thought I would stay over to-day. I am very glad now I did.'

Maud Hilton feels a sinking of the heart such as she had not

experienced during the most terrible preceding moments of that day. She understood him. He was glad that he had remained to be with May Wynn this day.

After a quick exchange of experiences—‘How did you come here?’ ‘Who would have expected that we should meet together here when we parted at the parade-ground this morning?’—Mr. Melvil leads Lennox away to the end of the long apartment in order to obtain from him a more particular account of what is going on without.

They are men of opposite character. They belong to antagonistic official schools—the non-regulation and the regulation, the autocratic and the bureaucratic. While Lennox despised the red-tape system which Mr. Melvil worked so well, Mr. Melvil had a great horror of the lawless method of administration in which Lennox had distinguished himself. But each knew that the other was a strong man. They came together instinctively in the present crisis.

Lennox can only tell that matters have got worse. ‘The 66th has killed its officers and joined the mutineers, and so greatly added to their strength.’

‘But why did not Moss come down to the city with his whole force at once?’

‘He ought to have done so—got in touch with these scoundrels and never lost touch of them until he had smashed them up.’

‘It is a pity he is so old.’

‘Yes; that is the worst of our seniority system.’

‘And I cannot imagine why the pursuing force from Abdoolapore is not here. They must have sent one after the mutineers.’

‘If they had it would have been here by this. I am beginning to think they have not sent one. Old Heaviside is nothing but a mass of flesh now. We would not keep him in the Punjâb.’

‘The greater need for more energetic movements here. If I and you were only with the Brigadier, out of this place!’ And then the refrain which has been ringing through his brain for so many hours finds expression in words again,

‘To think of my being in confinement here when I should be without, ordering, encouraging, directing.’

‘Then we are in confinement?’

‘Yes.’

‘In the Nuwâb’s palace—his soldiers on guard below. Has

he joined these mutineers? That would give a new aspect to the affair. I have always thought there was more than we knew in the present mutinous condition of the sepoy; the new cartridge does not explain it.'

'I am certain that the Nuwâb himself has not gone against us. He is weak and indolent, but he is no fool, and he has a keen enough eye for his own interests. It is that intriguing Sikunder Begum. In fact, the man said that it was expressly by her orders that I was put into confinement here.' '*That does for her,*' he adds in an aside.

'Then we ought to try and see the Nuwâb.'

'Exactly, exactly,' says Mr. Melvil eagerly. 'That is what I want to do. I am sure that if I could only get to speak to him I should be able to direct things from here—even be able to get ourselves sent up to the cantonment. But I cannot get a message sent to him. I have been down twice to the men on guard, but they only laughed at me and abused me.' The colour rose dark and red into Melvil's face. That was a terrible experience for one accustomed to nothing from the natives but the utmost, not to say cringing, deference. '*They shall pay for that yet.*'

'And the ladies cannot possibly remain here all day long,' says Lennox, glancing down the long, bare, empty, dirty room. 'Let us go down to the fellows once more. Perhaps I may be able to induce them to take the message, or have it sent.'

Whether that commanding look and presence, that commanding tone of voice, which had awed furious men into obedience in situations which to Lennox himself had seemed far more critical and dangerous, would have the same effect here, was not to be put to the test. Footsteps are now heard on the stairs, and the chief eunuch, Jhundoo Khan, with a following of three or four armed men, enters the room, Jhundoo Khan hoped hereafter to be prime minister, commander of the forces—what not; but at present he held his own post as chief of the zenana, and he took a great pleasure and pride in his duties; he had also made them very profitable. When he had been informed that two English young women had been placed in the apartment as prisoners, he had determined to visit it as soon as he could; and when he hears of the arrival of a third one he immediately hastens to it. He must take the disposal of them in his own hands at once. Here was a rare chance. Here was favour to be won of the young princes, perhaps of the Nuwâb himself. Here was money to be

made. He must not let anyone else take advantage of the chance—interfere here. It was his business. The moment he enters the room he takes a professional look at the three girls, standing together.

‘I have come to arrange about quarters for you,’ he says in his thin, shrill voice. ‘These young ladies cannot remain in so poor a place as this.’ ‘The padre’s daughter is the best-looking of the three,’ he thinks to himself. He knows very well who the three are. He has often taken the trouble to look at them, though they have never before taken the trouble to look at him.

‘I must have an interview with the Nuwâb Sahib, and that at once,’ says Mr. Melvil.

‘The Nuwâb Sahib is ill. He cannot be disturbed.’

‘It will be better for him to be disturbed—it will be more profitable for him. You will go and inform him that I must have an interview with him and at once. It will be for his own benefit.’

‘The royal bed-chamber is closed,’ squeaks the eunuch; ‘no one dare even go near it now.’

‘I command you to take him my message at once,’ says Melvil, in a peremptory tone of voice.

‘Command me! I will slap you across the mouth.’ Those are the words the eunuch has on his lips to utter. But he glances at May Wynn: he has conceived a great admiration for her; he longs to make her over to somebody—sell her; he longs to get her into his power at once. So he answers Mr. Melvil quietly.

‘The Nuwâb Sahib cannot really be disturbed just now. His orders, the physician’s orders, are imperative. He has retired to his royal couch to sleep. He must have his sleep. When he has had his sleep he will be better. He will awaken in the afternoon—nay, sooner, for he has not had his mid-day meal. Your message shall be delivered to him then. And, in the meanwhile, if the ladies will come with me, I will take them to better apartments, properly furnished apartments, apartments cooled with tatees.’

‘And these gentlemen?’ asks Mrs. Hilton.

‘Arrangements will be made for them here.’

‘I will not go anywhere without my husband. I will not be parted from him,’ says Mrs. Hilton, decisively.

‘Nor I from my father,’ exclaims May Wynn.

‘The apartments are in the zenana, and you know the gentlemen could not go in there,’ says the eunuch.

‘That is true,’ says Mr. Melvil. He has no direct personal interest in the women. And he has no thought of any special danger threatening them. Their nationality will protect them. The terrible events of the Mutiny have not yet happened. As yet the white skin ensures its possessors honour and respect and security; does not as yet mark them out for humiliation and dishonour and destruction. None of the Englishmen suspect what is in the eunuch’s mind. Had Lennox done so most certainly it would not have gone well with Jhundoo Khan.

‘I remain here,’ exclaims Mrs. Hilton firmly.

‘You can do that if you like,’ says Jhundoo Khan, as he strokes his aged hairless chin with his long bony fingers; ‘and these tender, delicate young women,’ surveying the girls with his vicariously wanton eyes, ‘will come with me.’

‘Neither I nor my daughters will be parted from my husband,’ says Mrs. Hilton peremptorily, looking at the eunuch fiercely.

At this moment a man comes flying into the room, as he has come flying up the staircase, though his naked feet have made no noise upon it, and cries out to the eunuch :

‘I have found you at last. The Sikunder Begum has called you—has called you quickly. You must come to her at once. You must let nothing delay you—nothing.’

‘I will return as soon as I can,’ says Jhundoo Khan, looking at Mr. Melvil, ‘and it may be with an intimation from his Highness the Nuwâb that he will be able to see you. Perhaps I may be able to arrange for separate apartments for you, for each family separately.’ A new scheme for getting them into his power has come into his head.

‘You will send in something for the ladies to sit on at once,’ says Lennox.

‘Yes, and something nice for them to eat,’ says the eunuch. ‘But I hope soon to conduct them—you all—to better apartments.’

‘And water,’ says Mr. Hilton.

‘Yes—water,’ and the eunuch hurries away, for the Sikunder Begum rules to-day.

And now the suddenly made prisoners pass the time in more detailed narration of what has happened to them all. The Hiltons and Mr. Melvil have already interchanged experiences, but the last-comers have to hear their story and tell their own in complete

detail. The narratives of Mr. Melvil and the Hiltons are the most thrilling, Lennox passing lightly over his own encounters and narrow escapes on the way to the Wynns'. The singularity of *their* experience, Mr. Wynn points out, is that they had thought that nothing very extraordinary was happening.

'It was you who were in danger of your lives,' says May Wynn with a shudder, looking at Maud and Agnes Hilton. 'I should have fainted had I been in your place. I do not know how you had the courage to face that man, Mrs. Hilton; his mere look, his appearance, would have been too much for me.'

'I suppose a mother will do anything in defence of her children,' says Mrs. Hilton; 'and I was defending my own life too.'

But they all applaud her heroic action, none more loudly than Lennox. And Maud Hilton, standing by his side, a little apart from the others, hungers to hear from him some special word of delight at her own escape from such deadly peril, but it comes not. May Wynn drops her handkerchief, and he strides forward to lift it up for her, eager to be of the smallest service to her. Maud Hilton's heart is very bitter within her. The hottest hours of the day, those succeeding noon, are now upon them, and the myriads of flies are a great torment to them. Then a troop of men arrive with bedsteads and stools, and baskets containing cakes and sweetmeats, and, what is far more welcome than all, earthenware jars of water. Lie back in your chair and close your eyes, and see how soon twenty minutes go by: and so the time slips by with them. And the fulfilment of the eunuch's promise of sending them the bedsteads and food and drink, makes them hope for the fulfilment of his other promises, and hope helps the heaviest moments by. But now a very long time has elapsed since the eunuch's hasty departure. And Mr. Melvil, the chief civil functionary, the man in highest authority, stands in a very different relation to the events of the day than any of the other men in here with him. Mr. Wynn may lament deeply the probable loss of those carefully cherished memorials of his wife and his happy married life; Mr. Hilton may lament deeply the plunder of the Bank and of his own property; but while Mr. Melvil may also perhaps have to lament the destruction of a splendid house and valuable property, which possess the quality, rare in India, of having been in his family for two generations back, his confinement and withdrawal from action this day mean to him what they do not to any of the others—mean so much to him, the capable,

energetic, ambitious man, in supreme authority here. The day is passing by: is he to have no share in its extraordinary and important occurrences? He paces up and down the apartment. He cannot sit still. He cannot endure the delay any longer.

‘Will you come down with me to the guard? I must send a man to inquire what has become of the eunuch,’ he says to Lennox.

At this moment the girls jump up as they feel their seats tremble under them, and gaze at one another with terrified looks, as a low deep roar fills the apartment, notwithstanding all its closed doors.

‘It is an earthquake,’ says Maud Hilton.

‘An explosion,’ says Lennox; ‘it must be in the Arsenal.’

‘Can it be that our troops from Abdoolapore have arrived?’ says Mr. Hilton excitedly. ‘They may have sent a shell into the town and it may have dropped into the powder godowns in the Arsenal.’

That being the most agreeable surmise, they adopt it.

Mr. Melvil and Lennox go down to the guard. They have not heard where the explosion was. Yes, the chief eunuch said that he was coming back shortly to remove the Feringhees to another place; he had probably been delayed; there was a great turmoil in the palace to-day.

The two Englishmen go upstairs again; and as the outer air is now somewhat cooler, they open the doors, and all go out into the verandah overlooking the court. And they form groups and talk. The three girls are together, and they discuss what effect to-day’s occurrences are likely to have on that great coming event in which they are all so much interested and in which they are to play leading parts—Beatrice Fane’s wedding. And Mr. Hilton and his wife are together, and he is expressing his hope that if the Bank’s money is gone its books at all events may be safe—one of those books is more valuable than all the gold coins lost, even though there were so many of them—and he thinks that they must be safe. Why should they be taken away or destroyed? And Lennox and Mr. Wynn discuss the unexpected situation together. Mr. Wynn expresses his astonishment: ‘We in confinement! In Khizrabad! In the Nuwâb’s palace! Here! What does it mean?’

‘It means that this is not merely a mutiny in some of our sepoy regiments, but a great political convulsion,’ says Lennox

thoughtfully. And Mr. Melvil is pacing up and down the verandah by himself. Again has his impatience almost passed beyond the limits of endurance, when he gives a joyful cry as he sees the chief eunuch coming in at the gateway.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CHANGE OF QUARTERS.

THE eunuch had, as we know, told the truth when he said that the Nuwâb had shut himself up in his chamber and refused to see anyone. But there was one to whom neither the Nuwâb nor those about him dared to refuse admittance. This was the Sikunder Begum. The Nuwâb has enjoyed some hours of complete seclusion and rest, when the Begum is announced. The Delight of the Palace is desirous of ascertaining from the Sun of Wealth how his disposition is now. She makes the inquiry.

‘There is a great pain in my head,’ says the poor Nuwâb, as he rests his right elbow on his right knee, and then lays his right cheek on the palm of his right hand.

She soothes him and sympathises with him. Truly her voice is that of the bulbul: he has often said so in verse.

‘What her dearest one needs is rest.’

The Nuwâb nods his head.

‘What her beloved one requires is quiet.’

The Nuwâb nods his head.

‘A few hours’ more rest and quiet and the monarch of her heart will be able to hold the public durbar she has promised in his name.’

‘Oh, my poor head!’ groans the Nuwâb.

‘Nay, we need not hold the durbar if he does not feel equal to it. It is much desired by the leaders of the now victorious troops, but she can satisfy them. Would she not do anything to ensure her master rest?’

‘May every blessing rest upon you!’

‘But there is one document here that it is necessary for him to sign.’ And she lifts up from the side of the dais the Nuwâb’s highly ornamental pen-and-ink case which is lying there as usual.

‘What is it about?’ asks the Nuwâb.

‘His Mightiness needs rest. Why should he take the needless

trouble to ask. He has but to affix his august signature here.'

'If you hesitate to tell me, it is the more necessary for me to know,' says the Nuwâb sharply.

'It is the warrant for the execution of the English people now in imprisonment here.'

'English people—in imprisonment—here? Who are they?'

'Oh, only some half dozen men and women.'

'Women! women! You would not have women slain?'

'Why not?' says the Begum fiercely. 'Is it not the she-wolves that breed the he-wolves? When you slay wild beasts or noxious reptiles do you stay to inquire whether they are male or female? Do you not rather slay the female serpent? These English shall be rooted out of the land—man, woman, and child—the whole infidel brood of them. Does not the Koran, the exalted, the revelation of the will of God, enjoin us, in many places, to destroy the infidel, to slay them wherever we find them?'

'Not women.'

'There is no distinction of sexes.'

The Begum had learnt Persian and Arabic, because of the delight she took in the exercise of her strong mental faculties, to please the Nuwâb, and because she loved distinction. She had learnt a great many passages of the Koran by heart, because of the religious merit acquired thereby; because of the applause it brought her; and because of the power those authoritative utterances gave her. Most of all, because of her desire to grasp and wield their authoritative utterances, because of her strong personal pleasure in them, had she devoted herself to learning all those texts that commanded the slaying of the infidel.

'When ye encounter the unbelievers strike off their heads.'

'Kill the idolators wheresoever ye shall find them.'

These and many other like passages does she now quote. But the Nuwâb is immovable.

'This deed would not only be wrong but foolish,' he exclaims. 'It would be more in accord with good policy to treat these people well.'

'I would have them all slain, because it is commanded, and because I hate them, and above all because it is in accord with good policy. If we fail it will be better to have no one to bear witness against us. Dead people tell no tales.'

The Nuwâb then takes his stand on his complete inability,

at the present moment, even to write his name. 'I cannot do it.'

'Then that must serve,' says the Begum, and she traces on the paper an imitation of the pretty and curious convolution of characters which forms the Nuwâb's signature, and which she has often amused herself and him by copying. 'And that is your seal at all events,' and she takes his private seal from the writing-case and puts its impress on the paper. 'She has brought great trouble on the house, and now she will bring utter destruction on it,' groans the poor Nuwâb, when she has left the room. He has often said that her voice was to him as that of the bulbul; but though he had never said it, he had often thought, as he did now, that her voice had been also in his ear as that of the ominous screech-owl.

Returned to her apartment—the beautiful octagon chamber—the Begum sends an urgent message to the chief eunuch to wait upon her at once: that was the one delivered to him in the room where the English people were confined; they did not know how nearly it concerned them. She is now on her daïs, reclining against a heap of cushions, while the Soubahdar Rustum Khan and the chief eunuch are seated before her.

'But here is the Nuwâb's warrant for their execution,' the Begum is saying, as she holds up the paper.

'The slaying of women is to me forbidden,' the Soubahdar reiterates.

'But you have only to make the arrangements.'

'I will not have anything to do with their death.'

'Have you not often said that you would do anything for me?'

'Anything that may become me as a man and a soldier.'

'And are we not commanded to slay the infidel?' and she quotes him the texts.

'Well, I have disobeyed too many of the good precepts of the Koran, the exalted, to be troubled about disobeying some of the severe ones. To do this deed would be against my honour.'

'What is commanded by your religion cannot be against your honour.'

But all her arguments are in vain. Then she hints that the loss of her favour, of the Nuwâb's favour, may mean the frustration of his ambitious hopes. 'How can you hope to command our armies, if you do not carry out our wishes—if you disobey the Nuwâb's commands—if you are so squeamish?'

‘Not for the sake of anything to my personal advantage could I take part in a deed that would so shame my manhood. And it would be well if you would now give me permission to depart. I have many things to attend to.’

And she gives him permission to depart.

‘Then I will hand the warrant to you, Jhundoo Khan,’ says the Begum. ‘You dare not refuse to carry it out.’

‘I wonder at his Highness issuing it, or his signing it,’ says the eunuch, looking at the paper.

‘Is not that his own signature—his own seal?’

‘Yes,’ says the eunuch, looking at them.

‘But it is a pity, a great pity—they are such handsome young women,’ goes on the guardian and provider of the zenana reflectively. ‘Ha!’ says the Begum, ‘for that speech of yours too must they die. I will not have those white-faced women about here. You would like to gain favour and make money by them, I know. But remember, Jhundoo Khan, that if you would attain to wealth and power you can do so now only through me.’

They then discuss the matter quietly.

‘After I have conveyed them to their separate apartments they can be killed there. I can get plenty to do it. The men of Sheitanpara are abroad to-day. They are plying their trade in the open—are ready to do murder for hire. You will pay them well?’

‘Yes’—and then the Begum is silent for a while.

‘No; I must see that pig of a Milmil’ (Melvil) ‘Sahib die with my own eyes’—and then she is silent again for a few minutes; and then she gives the eunuch certain directions.

When Melvil saw the eunuch enter the courtyard the last rays of the setting sun were, not flooding the land—they do not do that at this season of the year—but illuminating the heavens, and the eastern horizon glows with as bright a light as the western. A clear white light shines within the enclosures and courtyards of the palace. Melvil and the others move into the long apartment, and Melvil hastens to the end of it to meet the chief eunuch, who, having left his armed retainers at the foot of the stairs, enters it alone.

‘I have come to conduct you to other apartments which I have had prepared for you.’ Though he does not employ the complimentary epithets, ‘Cherisher of the Poor,’ and ‘Sun of Wealth,’ and ‘High in Place,’ of which he would have been so profuse a day or two before, Melvil remarks that the tone of his voice and

his manner and bearing are more polite than they have been at any previous period of the day. 'We ought not to have been put into this apartment at all. We should not have been kept here all day without any comforts, without any tatees or punkahs,' says Mr. Melvil sharply. 'I hope our sleeping apartments will be better.'

'The best in the world—small, but you will sleep more soundly in them than you have ever slept before. Will you follow me?'

In front of the courtyard extends a wide open space which runs the whole length of the fortress, from one gateway to the other, and separates the private buildings of the palace proper, which run along the river-side or eastward battlement, from the more public buildings, which run along the westward or city-side battlement. They move across this towards the palace. They pass through a gateway and enter a pretty little garden, whose walks are paved with marble and in which I have often lingered—as I would fain linger now—and mused on the different sensations produced by this shut-in garden and those conveyed by a garden out in the open face of nature. What a contrast, here, between the tender flowers and the hard stone, between the waving boughs and tremulous leaves of the trees and the hard, straight, firmly fixed lines of the buildings! From the garden they enter a small inner courtyard, into which the watercourse irrigating the garden runs. The water, taken off from the Jumna so many miles higher up, dashes merrily along the masonry conduit that is now conducting it back to the Jumna again—rejoicing, an eastern writer would say, to rejoin its parent stream, as our souls ought to rejoice at the moment of death, at the moment of approaching refluence with the Divine original source—

Blest moment of release from bonds of clay,
The soul, rejoicing, heavenward wings its course,
And throwing off its vesture of decay,
The spark Divine flies upward to its source.

They move along the conduit, and, in doing so, advance toward a body of men who are standing by the side of it, at the point where it turns almost at right angles in its course. The conduit is a wide one, and has perpendicular masonry sides. They and these men are on the same side of the channel and within the angle formed by its change of direction. The eunuch, leading, passes a little way on in this new direction and then suddenly halts. The

English are within the very point of the angle : the men waiting there and the eunuch's followers, six in number, suddenly form a line behind them ; they are hemmed in between them and the conduit, in a small and triangular space. The manœuvre had been carried out as the Begum had directed.

The chief eunuch has wheeled round, and drawing his scimitar from its gorgeous scabbard, he says to Mr. Melvil, coming immediately behind him : 'The orders are that you are to be killed here.'

'What foolery is this ?' says Melvil sternly.

'No foolery, but the fact. You are to be killed here. These men attend to kill you. It is so ordered.'

Melvil glances towards the men. They are a most villainous-looking lot, men of the lowest class, as always have been those who have done the evil deeds in such times ; and each man has in his hand a sword, or spear, or long heavy butcher's or tanner's knife ; and one or two carry matchlocks, of which they now begin to blow up the cotton matches. That action gives Melvil a sudden spasm at the heart. Nothing could give stronger confirmation of the eunuch's words, nothing could show more clearly that their death had been determined upon and prepared for. But his voice is calm and steady and dignified as he says to the eunuch, 'Ordered ! The Nuwâb Sahib could never have ordered it. He would not be guilty of murder ; and he knows that our death would bring utter destruction on himself and his house.'

'The warrant for your death is under his own hand and seal.'

'He would never order you to slay tender women. I know the Nuwâb. He is a man of too good a disposition for that.'

'Well, it does seem a pity that such handsome young women should be killed ; but she would have it so.'

'She ?'

'The Sikunder Begum. It is she who has ordered you to be killed here, under her own eyes. She is up in that balcony—up there.'

Melvil glances up at the projecting balcony, which has such full command of the spot. So, then, it is she, the female devil, with whom he has had so many a struggle, who has done this thing. He understands the Begum's character, and knows that now for them there is no hope.

And must they die—they who had begun the day in such fulness of life ? Is death the terrible, the dreaded, now staring

them in the face? Death, not as a release from some horrible disease—not when his advent has become indifferent to the powers of sensation, worn out by some long sickness—but death in the plenitude of life and health and strength, of capacity for feeling. Death, not as a release from poverty and sorrow and anxiety and distress, but in the midst of affluence and wealth, with full command of all the enjoyments of life. Death—death the terrible!

Life must always have a shrinking from no life.

There falls upon them all, without any thinking, the natural horror of death. Philip Lennox had never felt fear, and he does not feel it now; but he experiences a sinking of the soul such as he has never known before. The sudden ending of his grand career—that he could have borne. He had often faced that contingency on the battle-field: to so face it had been necessary towards making it. The manner of his death—thus, and not on the battle-field—he could have borne that also. But to have the crowning boon of love, not to be won by force, given to him too, and not to be able to take it! To have the cup of the elixir of life dashed from his lips, when he had only just tasted of its Divine sweetness! It was heart-rending. He casts a look towards May. She, too—the gentle, the beautiful, the tender—she to die, in the bloom of her youth and beauty; she to be subjected to this fiery trial; she to be cast into this burning fiery furnace; she to undergo the terror of a sudden and violent death! The whirling brain brings up the thoughts which have most occupied it of late: God! there is no God! And then he casts upon the man nearest him a look which daunts and startles the ruffian, and makes him think that Lennox is about to rush upon him; and assuredly, had Lennox been by himself, or only with men like himself, he would have rushed upon the murderers and sold his life dearly; but these women cannot be killed running about—that would add to the terror of death; and so he folds his huge arms upon his massive chest—though that very action, as significant of the casting aside of his strength, has a great pang in it—and stands calm and still.

Agnes Hilton, the fearless, stands on her small feet fearless still; but she gazes pitifully upon her mother and her father and on Maud.

And Maud Hilton's first thoughts, too, are for those dear others; those others so near and dear to her. The beloved sister, whose existence has been intertwined with her own; the dear

kind mother, so beloved; the much-loved father. Then there darts through her mind a sudden thought: so Philip Lennox and May Wynn are not to be married to one another, after all; and she, Maud Hilton, and he, are to die together—oh, joy ineffable! And then she subdues that terrible feeling—rather it had vanished, as it came, of itself. No, she would far rather that he should live and enjoy his happiness, and her grief is greater for him than for herself: so great is the power of love.

So elastic was Mrs. Hilton's spirit, that the mere thought of the change to better apartments had made her face quite bright as they were walking along. But now a horror of great darkness falls upon her. What! death for them, her children! Death for them ere they have known of life—in the first sweet bloom of womanhood! Death for Maud, with all her noble qualities; death for her bright, fearless Agnes; death for these her children! She would have fallen to the ground, had she not seized her husband by the arm. 'Oh, John, the girls!' she cries to him.

'What can I do?' he mutters from between his teeth, his voice hoarse with grief and with rage. And then he remembers, as in a sort of dream—in such moments not only the thoughts with which it has recently been occupied, but even those most distant and incongruous, will come into the mind—that gain of a large sum of money a day or two before: what does it profit him now?

May Wynn had cast a wild look at Lennox, and then buried her face on her father's arm; and he, bending down, had whispered in her ear, 'Courage, my child! we go to meet your mother.' Wynn is the weakest in body of the four Englishmen here. Though he had maintained a quiet cheerfulness, and soothed and sustained the others, he, with his weak delicate frame, had suffered more from the terrible heat and discomfort of their place of confinement that day than any, even of the women. But not even Philip Lennox, with his enormous natural courage, confronted this terrible trial with so firm a front as did Cuthbert Wynn, supported by his high Christian faith. He addressed himself to the eunuch: 'You will give me time to say a prayer?'

His voice sounds in poor Mrs. Hilton's ears as if it came from a long way off. And, looking at the men gathered behind them, she sees, as if in a terrible nightmare, one of them grin at her and shake his heavy knife at her, and she knows him for the man whom she had borne back down the staircase that day.

‘Certainly,’ says the eunuch. Orientals have a great regard for religious observances: the eunuch himself prayed five times a day.

Then they all kneel down—all but Lennox—and Mr. Wynn commends their souls to God in a few earnest words. Then there is a sound of firearms—they had thought it best to shoot the big strong man—and the ruffians rush upon them, and they are hewn down to the ground. Ah me! Lennox exhibits the fierceness of his spirit even in his death—for he leaps upon the wretch who has slain his betrothed and bears him to the ground, and grips him by the throat; and it does not need that he should throw his whole remaining strength into it to make that grip fatal. And the bubbling watercourse ran crimson with their blood.

So ended the thoughts about bridesmaids’ dresses and other things. So ended that play of emotions which is so wonderful in man. So ended high ambition. So ended tender affection. So ended the delight of requited, the pangs of unrequited, love. So ended the beauty and grace of womanhood, the proud strength of man. So ended religious doubts and fears and firm religious faith. So ended hope and joy, and sorrow and disappointment.

The Sikunder Begum looked down on the bodies with satisfaction. And as she turned to re-enter her apartment she repeated her favourite maxim, ‘*Futteh ba Bundobust*’ (word for word—‘*Futteh*, victory; *ba*, with, i.e. from; *Bundobust*, arrangement): ‘Ends are attained by a proper adjustment of means’—‘Good planning gives success.’

(*To be continued.*)

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THE WHITE COMPANY.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE,
AUTHOR OF 'MICAH CLARKE.'

CHAPTER XII.

HOW ALLEYNE LEARNED MORE THAN HE COULD TEACH.

AND now there came a time of stir and bustle, of furbishing of arms and clang of hammer from all the southland counties. Fast spread the tidings from thorpe to thorpe and from castle to castle, that the old game was afoot once more, and the lions and lilies to be in the field with the early spring. Great news this for that fierce old country, whose trade for a generation had been war, her exports archers and her imports prisoners. For six years her sons had chafed under an unwonted peace. Now they flew to their arms as to their birthright. The old soldiers of Crécy, of Nogent, and of Poitiers were glad to think that they might hear the war-trumpet once more, and gladder still were the hot youth who had chafed for years under the martial tales of their sires. To pierce the great mountains of the south, to fight the tamers of the fiery Moors, to follow the greatest captain of the age, to find sunny cornfields and vineyards, when the marches of Picardy and Normandy were as bare and bleak as the Jedburgh forests—here was a golden prospect for a race of warriors. From sea to sea there was stringing of bows in the cottage and clang of steel in the castle.

Nor did it take long for every stronghold to pour forth its cavalry, and every hamlet its footmen. Through the late autumn

and the early winter every road and country lane resounded with nakir and trumpet, with the neigh of the war-horse and the clatter of marching men. From the Wrekin in the Welsh marches to the Cotswolds in the west or Butser in the south, there was no hill-top from which the peasant might not have seen the bright shimmer of arms, the toss and flutter of plume and of pensil. From bye-path, from woodland clearing, or from winding moor-side track these little rivulets of steel united in the larger roads to form a broader stream, growing ever fuller and larger as it approached the nearest or most commodious seaport. And there all day, and day after day, there was bustle and crowding and labour, while the great ships loaded up, and one after the other spread their white pinions and darted off to the open sea, amid the clash of cymbals and rolling of drums and lusty shouts of those who went and of those who waited. From Orwell to the Dart there was no port which did not send forth its little fleet, gay with streamer and bunting, as for a joyous festival. Thus in the season of the waning days the might of England put forth on to the waters.

In the ancient and populous county of Hampshire there was no lack of leaders or of soldiers for a service which promised either honour or profit. In the north the Saracen's head of the Brocas and the scarlet fish of the De Roches were waving over a strong body of archers from Holt, Woolmer, and Harewood forests. De Borhunte was up in the east, and Sir John de Montague in the west. Sir Luke de Ponynges, Sir Thomas West, Sir Maurice de Bruin, Sir Arthur Lipscombe, Sir Walter Ramsey, and stout Sir Oliver Buttethorn were all marching south with levies from Andover, Alresford, Odiham, and Winchester, while from Sussex came Sir John Clinton, Sir Thomas Cheyne, and Sir John Fallislee, with a troop of picked men-at-arms, making for their port at Southampton. Greatest of all the musters, however, was that at Twynham Castle, for the name and the fame of Sir Nigel Loring drew towards him the keenest and boldest spirits, all eager to serve under so valiant a leader. Archers from the New Forest and the Forest of Bere, billmen from the pleasant country which is watered by the Stour, the Avon, and the Itchen, young cavaliers from the ancient Hampshire houses, all were pushing for Christchurch to take service under the banner of the five scarlet roses.

And now, could Sir Nigel have shown the bachelles of land

which the laws of rank required, he might well have cut his forked pennon into a square banner, and taken such a following into the field as would have supported the dignity of a banneret. But poverty was heavy upon him, his land was scant, his coffers empty, and the very castle which covered him the holding of another. Sore was his heart when he saw rare bowmen and war-hardened spearmen turned away from his gates, for the lack of the money which might equip and pay them. Yet the letter which Aylward had brought him gave him powers which he was not slow to use. In it Sir Claude Latour, the Gascon lieutenant of the White Company, assured him that there remained in his keeping enough to fit out a hundred archers and twenty men-at-arms, which, joined to the three hundred veteran companions already in France, would make a force which any leader might be proud to command. Carefully and sagaciously the veteran knight chose out his men from the swarm of volunteers. Many an anxious consultation he held with Black Simon, Sam Aylward, and other of his more experienced followers, as to who should come and who should stay. By All Saints' day, however, ere the last leaves had fluttered to earth in the Wilverley and Holmesley glades, he had filled up his full numbers, and mustered under his banner as stout a following of Hampshire foresters as ever twanged their war-bows. Twenty men-at-arms, too, well mounted and equipped, formed the cavalry of the party, while young Peter Terlake of Fareham, and Walter Ford of Botley, the martial sons of martial sires, came at their own cost to wait upon Sir Nigel and to share with Alleyne Edricson the duties of his squireship.

Yet, even after the enrolment, there was much to be done ere the party could proceed upon its way. For armour, swords, and lances, there was no need to take much forethought, for they were to be had both better and cheaper in Bordeaux than in England. With the long-bow, however, it was different. Yew staves indeed might be got in Spain, but it was well to take enough and to spare with them. Then three spare cords should be carried for each bow, with a great store of arrow-heads, besides the brigandines of chain mail, the wadded steel caps, and the brassarts or arm-guards, which were the proper equipment of the archer. Above all, the women for miles round were hard at work cutting the white surcoats which were the badge of the Company, and adorning them with the red lion of St. George upon the centre of the breast. When all was completed and the muster

called in the castle yard, the oldest soldier of the French wars was fain to confess that he had never looked upon a better equipped or more warlike body of men, from the old knight with his silk jupon, sitting his great black war-horse in the front of them, to Hordle John, the giant recruit, who leaned carelessly upon a huge black bow-stave in the rear. Of the six score, fully half had seen service before, while a fair sprinkling were men who had followed the wars all their lives, and had a hand in those battles which had made the whole world ring with the fame and the wonder of the island infantry.

Six long weeks were taken in these preparations, and it was close on Martinmas ere all was ready for a start. Nigh two months had Alleyne Edricson been in Castle Twynham—months which were fated to turn the whole current of his life, to divert it from that dark and lonely bourne towards which it tended, and to guide it into freer and more sunlit channels. Already he had learned to bless his father for that wise provision which had made him seek to know the world ere he had ventured to renounce it.

For it was a different place from that which he had pictured—very different from that which he had heard described when the master of the novices held forth to his charges upon the ravening wolves who lurked for them beyond the peaceful folds of Beaulieu. There was cruelty in it, doubtless, and lust and sin and sorrow; but were there not virtues to atone, robust positive virtues, which did not shrink from temptation, which held their own in all the rough blasts of the work-a-day world? How colourless by contrast appeared the sinlessness which came from inability to sin, the conquest which was attained by flying from the enemy! Monk-bred as he was, Alleyne had native shrewdness and a mind which was young enough to form new conclusions and to outgrow old ones. He could not fail to see that the men with whom he was thrown in contact, rough-tongued, fierce and quarrelsome as they were, were yet of deeper nature and of more service in the world than the ox-eyed brethren who rose and ate and slept from year's end to year's end in their own narrow stagnant circle of existence. Abbot Berghersh was a good man, but how was he better than this kindly knight, who lived as simple a life, held as lofty and inflexible an ideal of duty, and did with all his fearless heart whatever came to his hand to do? In turning from the service of the one to that of the other, Alleyne could not feel that he was lowering his aims in life. True that his gentle and thoughtful

nature recoiled from the grim work of war, yet in those days of martial orders and militant brotherhoods there was no gulf fixed betwixt the priest and the soldier. The man of God and the man of the sword might without scandal be united in the same individual. Why then should he, a mere clerk, have scruples when so fair a chance lay in his way of carrying out the spirit as well as the letter of his father's provision? Much struggle it cost him, anxious spirit-questionings and midnight prayings, with many a doubt and a misgiving; but the issue was that ere he had been three days in Castle Twynham he had taken service under Sir Nigel, and had accepted horse and harness, the same to be paid for out of his share of the profits of the expedition. Henceforth for seven hours a day he strove in the tilt-yard to qualify himself to be a worthy squire to so worthy a knight. Young, supple, and active, with all the pent energies from years of pure and healthy living, it was not long before he could manage his horse and his weapon well enough to earn an approving nod from critical men-at-arms, or to hold his own against Terlake and Ford, his fellow-servitors.

But were there no other considerations which swayed him from the cloisters towards the world? So complex is the human spirit that it can itself scarce discern the deep springs which impel it to action. Yet to Alleyne had been opened now a side of life of which he had been as innocent as a child, but one which was of such deep import that it could not fail to influence him in choosing his path. A woman, in monkish precepts, had been the embodiment and concentration of what was dangerous and evil—a focus whence spread all that was to be dreaded and avoided. So defiling was their presence that a true Cistercian might not raise his eyes to their face or touch their finger-tips under ban of church and fear of deadly sin. Yet here, day after day for an hour after nones, and for an hour before vespers, he found himself in close communion with three maidens, all young, all fair, and all therefore doubly dangerous from the monkish stand-point. Yet he found that in their presence he was conscious of a quick sympathy, a pleasant ease, a ready response to all that was most gentle and best in himself, which filled his soul with a vague and new-found joy.

And yet the Lady Maude Loring was no easy pupil to handle. An older and more world-wise man might have been puzzled by her varying moods, her sudden prejudices, her quick resentment

at all constraint and authority. Did a subject interest her, was there space in it for either romance or imagination, she would fly through it with her subtle active mind, leaving her two fellow-students and even her teacher toiling behind her. On the other hand, were there dull patience needed with steady toil and strain of memory, no single fact could by any driving be fixed in her mind. Alleyne might talk to her of the stories of old gods and heroes, of gallant deeds and lofty aims, or he might hold forth upon moon and stars, and let his fancy wander over the hidden secrets of the universe, and he would have a rapt listener with flushed cheeks and eloquent eyes, who could repeat after him the very words which had fallen from his lips. But when it came to almagest and astrolabe, the counting of figures and reckoning of epicycles, away would go her thoughts to horse and hound, and a vacant eye and listless face would warn the teacher that he had lost his hold upon his scholar. Then he had but to bring out the old romance book from the priory, with befingered cover of sheepskin and gold letters upon a purple ground, to entice her wayward mind back to the paths of learning.

At times, too, when the wild fit was upon her, she would break into pertness and rebel openly against Alleyne's gentle firmness. Yet he would jog quietly on with his teachings, taking no heed to her mutiny, until suddenly she would be conquered by his patience, and break into self-revilings a hundred times stronger than her fault demanded. It chanced however that, on one of these mornings when the evil mood was upon her, Agatha the young tirewoman, thinking to please her mistress, began also to toss her head and make tart rejoinder to the teacher's questions. In an instant the Lady Maude had turned upon her two blazing eyes and a face which was blanched with anger.

'You would dare!' said she. 'You would dare!'

The frightened tirewoman tried to excuse herself. 'But, my fair lady,' she stammered, 'what have I done? I have said no more than I heard.'

'You would dare!' repeated the lady in a choking voice. 'You, a graceless baggage, a foolish lack-brain, with no thought above the hemming of shifts. And he so kindly and heny and long-suffering! You would—ha, you may well flee the room!'

She had spoken with a rising voice, and a clasping and opening of her long white fingers, so that it was no marvel that ere the speech was over the skirts of Agatha were whisking round the

door and the click of her sobs to be heard dying swiftly away down the corridor.

Alleyne stared open-eyed at this tigress who had sprung so suddenly to his rescue. 'There is no need for such anger,' he said mildly. 'The maid's words have done me no scath. It is you yourself who have erred.'

'I know it,' she cried; 'I am a most wicked woman. But it is bad enough that one should misuse you. *Ma foi!* I will see that there is not a second one.'

'Nay, nay, no one has misused me,' he answered. 'But the fault lies in your hot and bitter words. You have called her a baggage and a lack-brain, and I know not what.'

'And you are he who taught me to speak the truth,' she cried. 'Now I have spoken it, and yet I cannot please you. Lack-brain she is, and lack-brain I shall call her.'

Such was a sample of the sudden janglings which marred the peace of that little class. As the weeks passed, however, they became fewer and less violent, as Alleyne's firm and constant nature gained sway and influence over the Lady Maude. And yet, sooth to say, there were times when he had to ask himself whether it was not the Lady Maude who was gaining sway and influence over him. If she were changing, so was he. In drawing her up from the world, he was day by day being himself dragged down towards it. In vain he strove and reasoned with himself as to the madness of letting his mind rest upon Sir Nigel's daughter. What was he—a younger son, a penniless clerk, a squire unable to pay for his own harness—that he should dare to raise his eyes to the fairest maid in Hampshire? So spake reason; but, in spite of all, her voice was ever in his ears and her image in his heart. Stronger than reason, stronger than cloister teachings, stronger than all that might hold him back, was that old, old tyrant who will brook no rival in the kingdom of youth.

And yet it was a surprise and a shock to himself to find how deeply she had entered into his life; how completely those vague ambitions and yearnings which had filled his spiritual nature centred themselves now upon this thing of earth. He had scarce dared to face the change which had come upon him, when a few sudden chance words showed it all up hard and clear, like a lightning flash in the darkness.

He had ridden over to Poole, one November day, with his fellow-squire, Peter Terlake, in quest of certain yew-staves from

Wat Swathling, the Dorsetshire armourer. The day for their departure had almost come, and the two youths spurred it over the lonely downs at the top of their speed on their homeward course, for evening had fallen and there was much to be done. Peter was a hard, wiry, brown-faced, country-bred lad, who looked on the coming war as the schoolboy looks on his holidays. This day, however, he had been sombre and mute, with scarce a word a mile to bestow upon his comrade.

‘Tell me, Alleyne Edricson,’ he broke out, suddenly, as they clattered along the winding track which leads over the Bournemouth hills, ‘has it not seemed to you that of late the Lady Maude is paler and more silent than is her wont?’

‘It may be so,’ the other answered shortly.

‘And would rather sit distrait by her oriel than ride gaily to the chase as of old. Methinks, Alleyne, it is this learning which you have taught her that has taken all the life and sap from her. It is more than she can master, like a heavy spear to a light rider.’

‘Her lady-mother has so ordered it,’ said Alleyne.

‘By our Lady! and withouten disrespect,’ quoth Terlake, ‘it is in my mind that her lady-mother is more fitted to lead a company to a storming than to have the upbringing of this tender and milk-white maid. Hark ye, lad Alleyne, to what I never told man or woman yet. I love the fair Lady Maude, and would give the last drop of my heart’s blood to serve her.’ He spoke with a gasping voice, and his face flushed crimson in the moonlight.

Alleyne said nothing, but his heart seemed to turn to a lump of ice in his bosom.

‘My father has broad acres,’ the other continued, ‘from Fareham Creek to the slope of the Portsdown Hill. There is filling of granges, hewing of wood, malting of grain, and herding of sheep as much as heart could wish, and I the only son. Sure am I that Sir Nigel would be blithe at such a match.’

‘But how of the lady?’ asked Alleyne, with dry lips.

‘Ah, lad, there lies my trouble. It is a toss of the head and a droop of the eyes if I say one word of what is in my mind. ’Twere as easy to woo the snow-dame that we shaped last winter in our castle yard. I did but ask her yesternight for her green veil, that I might bear it as a token or lambrequin upon my helm; but she flashed out at me that she kept it for a better

man, and then all in a breath asked pardon for that she had spoke so rudely. Yet she would not take back the words either, nor would she grant the veil. Has it seemed to thee, Alleyne, that she loves anyone?’

‘Nay, I cannot say,’ said Alleyne, with a wild throb of sudden hope in his heart.

‘I have thought so, and yet I cannot name the man. Indeed, save myself, and Walter Ford, and you, who are half a clerk, and Father Christopher of the Priory, and Bertrand the page, who is there whom she sees?’

‘I cannot tell,’ quoth Alleyne shortly; and the two squires rode on again, each intent upon his own thoughts.

Next day at morning lesson the teacher observed that his pupil was indeed looking pale and jaded, with listless eyes and a weary manner. He was heavy-hearted to note the grievous change in her.

‘Your mistress, I fear, is ill, Agatha,’ he said to the tirewoman, when the Lady Maude had sought her chamber.

The maid looked aslant at him with laughing eyes. ‘It is not an illness that kills,’ quoth she.

‘Pray God not!’ he cried. ‘But tell me, Agatha, what it is that ails her.’

‘Methinks that I could lay my hand upon another who is smitten with the same trouble,’ said she, with the same sidelong look. ‘Canst not give a name to it, and thou so skilled in leechcraft?’

‘Nay, save that she seems aweary.’

‘Well, bethink you that it is but three days ere you will all be gone, and Castle Twynham be as dull as the Priory. Is there not enough there to cloud a lady’s brow?’

‘In sooth, yes,’ he answered; ‘I had forgot that she is about to lose her father.’

‘Her father!’ cried the tirewoman, with a little trill of laughter. ‘Oh simple, simple!’ And she was off down the passage like arrow from bow, while Alleyne stood gazing after her, betwixt hope and doubt, scarce daring to put faith in the meaning which seemed to underlie her words.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THE WHITE COMPANY SET FORTH TO THE WARS.

ST. LUKE'S day had come and had gone, and it was in the season of Martinmas, when the oxen are driven in to the slaughter, that the White Company was ready for its journey. Loud shrieked the brazen bugles from keep and from gateway, and merry was the rattle of the war-drum, as the men gathered in the outer bailey, with torches to light them, for the morn had not yet broken. Alleyne, from the window of the armoury, looked down upon the strange scene—the circles of yellow flickering light, the lines of stern and bearded faces, the quick shimmer of arms, and the lean heads of the horses. In front stood the bowmen, ten deep, with a fringe of under-officers, who paced hither and thither marshalling the ranks with curt precept or short rebuke. Behind were the little clump of steel-clad horsemen, their lances raised, with long pensils drooping down the oaken shafts. So silent and still were they, that they might have been metal-sheathed statues, were it not for the occasional quick impatient stamp of their chargers, or the rattle of chamfron against neck-plates as they tossed and strained. A spear's length in front of them sat the spare and long-limbed figure of Black Simon, the Norwich fighting man, his fierce, deep-lined face framed in steel, and the silk guidon marked with the five scarlet roses slanting over his right shoulder. All round, in the edge of the circle of the light, stood the castle servants, the soldiers who were to form the garrison, and little knots of women, who sobbed in their aprons and called shrilly to their name-saints to watch over the Wat, or Will, or Peterkin who had turned his hand to the work of war.

The young squire was leaning forward, gazing at the stirring and martial scene, when he heard a short quick gasp at his shoulder, and there was the Lady Maude, with her hand to her heart, leaning up against the wall, slender and fair, like a half-plucked lily. Her face was turned away from him, but he could see, by the sharp intake of her breath, that she was weeping bitterly.

'Alas! alas!' he cried, all unnerved at the sight, 'why is it that you are so sad, lady?'

‘It is the sight of these brave men,’ she answered; ‘and to think how many of them go and how few are like to find their way back. I have seen it before, when I was a little maid, in the year of the Prince’s great battle. I remember then how they mustered in the bailey, even as they do now, and my lady-mother holding me in her arms at this very window that I might see the show.’

‘Please God, you will see them all back ere another year be out,’ said he.

She shook her head, looking round at him with flushed cheeks and eyes which sparkled in the lamp-light. ‘Oh, but I hate myself for being a woman!’ she cried, with a stamp of her little foot. ‘What can I do that is good? Here I must bide, and talk and sew and spin, and spin and sew and talk. Ever the same dull round, with nothing at the end of it. And now you are going too, who could carry my thoughts out of these grey walls, and raise my mind above tapestry and distaffs. What can I do? I am of no more use or value than that broken bow-stave.’

‘You are of such value to me,’ he cried, in a whirl of hot, passionate words, ‘that all else has become nought. You are my heart, my life, my one and only thought. Oh, Maude, I cannot live without you, I cannot leave you without a word of love. All is changed to me since I have known you. I am poor and lowly and all unworthy of you; but if great love may weigh down such defects, then mine may do it. Give me but one word of hope to take to the wars with me—but one. Ah, you shrink, you shudder! My wild words have frightened you.’

Twice she opened her lips, and twice no sound came from them. At last she spoke in a hard and measured voice, as one who dare not trust herself to speak too freely.

‘This is over sudden,’ she said; ‘it is not so long since the world was nothing to you. You have changed once; perchance you may change again.’

‘Cruel!’ he cried, ‘who hath changed me?’

‘And then your brother,’ she continued with a little laugh, disregarding his question. ‘Methinks this hath become a family custom amongst the Edricsons. Nay, I am sorry; I did not mean a jibe. But indeed, Alleyne, this hath come suddenly upon me, and I scarce know what to say.’

‘Say some word of hope, however distant—some kind word that I may cherish in my heart.’

‘Nay, Alleyne, it were a cruel kindness, and you have been too good and true a friend to me that I should use you despitefully. There cannot be a closer link between us. It is madness to think of it. Were there no other reasons, it is enough that my father and your brother would both cry out against it.’

‘My brother, what has he to do with it? And your father——’

‘Come, Alleyne, was it not you who would have me act fairly to all men, and, certes, to my father amongst them?’

‘You say truly,’ he cried, ‘you say truly. But you do not reject me, Maude? You give me some ray of hope? I do not ask pledge or promise. Say only that I am not hateful to you—that on some happier day I may hear kinder words from you.’

Her eyes softened upon him, and a kind answer was on her lips, when a hoarse shout, with the clatter of arms and stamping of steeds, rose up from the bailey below. At the sound her face set, her eyes sparkled, and she stood with flushed cheek and head thrown back—a woman’s body but a soul of fire.

‘My father hath gone down,’ she cried. ‘Your place is by his side. Nay, look not at me, Alleyne. It is no time for dallying. Win my father’s love, and all may follow. It is when the brave soldier hath done his devoir that he hopes for his reward. Farewell, and may God be with you!’ She held out her white, slim hand to him, but as he bent his lips over it she whisked away and was gone, leaving in his outstretched hand the very green veil for which poor Peter Terlake had craved in vain. Again the hoarse cheering burst out from below, and he heard the clang of the rising portcullis. Pressing the veil to his lips, he thrust it into the bosom of his tunic, and rushed as fast as feet could bear him to arm himself and join the muster.

The raw morning had broken ere the hot spiced ale was served round and the last farewell spoken. A cold wind blew up from the sea and ragged clouds drifted swiftly across the sky. The Christchurch townfolk stood huddled about the Bridge of Avon, the women pulling tight their shawls and the men swathing themselves in their gaberdines, while down the winding path from the castle came the van of the little army, their feet clanging on the hard frozen road. First came Black Simon with his banner, bestriding a lean and powerful dapple-grey charger, as hard and wiry and warwise as himself. After him, riding three abreast, were nine men-at-arms, all picked soldiers, who had followed the French wars before, and knew the marches of Picardy as they knew the

downs of their native Hampshire. They were armed to the teeth with lance, sword, and mace, with square shields notched at the upper right-hand corner to serve as a spear-rest. For defence each man wore a coat of interlaced leathern thongs, strengthened at the shoulder, elbow, and upper arm with slips of steel. Greaves and knee-pieces were also of leather backed by steel, and their gauntlets and shoes were of iron plates, craftily jointed. So, with jingle of arms and clatter of hoofs, they rode across the Bridge of Avon, while the burghers shouted lustily for the flag of the five roses and its gallant guard.

Close at the heels of the horses came two score archers, bearded and burly, their round targets on their backs and their long yellow bows, the most deadly weapon that the wit of man had yet devised, thrusting forth from behind their shoulders. From each man's girdle hung sword or axe, according to his humour, and over the right hip there jutted out the leathern quiver with its bristle of goose, pigeon, and peacock feathers. Behind the bowmen strode two trumpeters blowing upon nakirs, and two drummers in parti-coloured clothes. After them came twenty-seven sumpter horses carrying tent-poles, cloth, spare arms, spurs, wedges, cooking kettles, horseshoes, bags of nails, and the hundred other things which experience had shown to be needful in a harried and hostile country. A white mule with red trappings, led by a varlet, carried Sir Nigel's own napery and table comforts. Then came two score more archers, ten more men-at-arms, and finally a rear-guard of twenty bowmen, with big John towering in the front rank and the veteran Aylward marching by the side, his battered harness and faded surcoat in strange contrast with the snow-white jupons and shining brigandines of his companions. A quick cross-fire of greetings and questions and rough West Saxon jests flew from rank to rank, or were bandied about betwixt the marching archers and the gazing crowd.

'Holà, Gaffer Higginson!' cried Aylward, as he spied the portly figure of the village innkeeper. 'No more of thy nut-brown, mon gar. We leave it behind us.'

'By St. Paul, no!' cried the other. 'You take it with you. Devil a drop have you left in the great kilderkin. It was time for you to go.'

'If your cask is leer, I warrant your purse is full, gaffer,' shouted Hordle John. 'See that you lay in good store of the best for our home-coming.'

‘See that you keep your throat whole for the drinking of it, archer,’ cried a voice, and the crowd laughed at the rough pleasantries.

‘If you will warrant the beer, I will warrant the throat,’ said John composedly.

‘Close up the ranks!’ cried Aylward. ‘En avant, mes enfants! Ah, by my finger bones, there is my sweet Mary from the Priory Mill! Ma foi, but she is beautiful! Adieu, Mary, ma chérie! Mon cœur est toujours à toi. Brace your belt, Watkin, man, and swing your shoulders as a free companion should. By my hilt! your jerkins will be as dirty as mine ere you clap eyes on Hengistbury Head again.’

The Company had marched to the turn of the road ere Sir Nigel Loring rode out from the gateway, mounted on Pommers, his great black war-horse, whose ponderous footfall on the wooden drawbridge echoed loudly from the gloomy arch which spanned it. Sir Nigel was still in his velvet dress of peace, with flat velvet cap of maintenance, and curling ostrich feather clasped in a golden brooch. To his three squires riding behind him it looked as though he bore the bird’s egg as well as its feather, for the back of his bald pate shone like a globe of ivory. He bore no arms save the long and heavy sword which hung at his saddle-bow; but Terlake carried in front of him the high wivern-crested bassinet, Ford the heavy ash spear with swallow-tail pennon, while Alleyne was entrusted with the emblazoned shield. The Lady Loring rode her palfrey at her lord’s bridle-arm, for she would see him as far as the edge of the forest, and ever and anon she turned her hard-lined face up wistfully to him and ran a questioning eye over his apparel and appointments.

‘I trust that there is nothing forgot,’ she said, beckoning to Alleyne to ride on her further side. ‘I trust him to you, Edricson. Hosen, shirts, cyclas, and under-jupons are in the brown basket on the left side of the mule. His wine he takes hot when the nights are cold, malvoisie or vernage, with as much spice as would cover the thumb-nail. See that he hath a change if he come back hot from the tilting. There is goose-grease in a box, if the old scars ache at the turn of the weather. Let his blankets be dry and——’

‘Nay, my heart’s life,’ the little knight interrupted, ‘trouble not now about such matters. Why so pale and wan, Edricson? Is it not enow to make a man’s heart dance to see this noble

Company, such valiant men-at-arms, such lusty archers? By St. Paul! I would be ill to please if I were not blithe to see the red roses flying at the head of so noble a following!

'The purse I have already given you, Edricson,' continued the lady. 'There are in it twenty-three marks, one noble, three shillings and fourpence, which is a great treasure for one man to carry. And I pray you to bear in mind, Edricson, that he hath two pair of shoes, those of red leather for common use, and the others with golden toe-chains, which he may wear should he chance to drink wine with the Prince or with Chandos.'

'My sweet bird,' said Sir Nigel, 'I am right loth to part from you, but we are now at the fringe of the forest, and it is not right that I should take the chatelaine too far from her trust.'

'But oh, my dear lord,' she cried with a trembling lip, 'let me bide with you for one furlong further—or one and a half perhaps. You may spare me this out of the weary miles that you will journey alone.'

'Come then, my heart's comfort,' he answered. 'But I must crave a gage from thee. It is my custom, dearling, and hath been since I have first known thee, to proclaim by herald in such camps, townships, or fortalices as I may chance to visit, that my lady-love, being beyond compare the fairest and sweetest in Christendom, I should deem it great honour and kindly condescension if any cavalier would run three courses against me with sharpened lances, should he chance to have a lady whose claim he was willing to advance. I pray you then, my fair dove, that you will vouchsafe to me one of those doeskin gloves, that I may wear it as the badge of her whose servant I shall ever be.'

'Alack and alas for the fairest and sweetest!' she cried. 'Fair and sweet I would fain be for your dear sake, my lord, but old I am and ugly, and the knights would laugh should you lay lance in rest in such a cause.'

'Edricson,' quoth Sir Nigel, 'you have young eyes, and mine are somewhat bedimmed. Should you chance to see a knight laugh, or smile, or even, look you, arch his brows, or purse his mouth, or in anyway show surprise that I should uphold the Lady Mary, you will take particular note of his name, his coat-armour, and his lodging. Your glove, my life's desire!'

The Lady Mary Loring slipped her hand from her yellow leather gauntlet, and he, lifting it with dainty reverence, bound it to the front of his velvet cap.

‘It is with mine other guardian angels,’ quoth he, pointing at the saints’ medals which hung beside it. ‘And now, my dearest, you have come far enow. May the Virgin guard and prosper thee! One kiss!’ He bent down from his saddle, and then, striking spurs into his horse’s sides, he galloped at top speed after his men, with his three squires at his heels. Half a mile further, where the road topped a hill, they looked back, and the Lady Mary on her white palfrey was still where they had left her. A moment later they were on the downward slope, and she had vanished from their view.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW SIR NIGEL SOUGHT FOR A WAYSIDE VENTURE.

FOR a time Sir Nigel was very moody and downcast, with bent brows and eyes upon the pommel of his saddle. Edricson and Terlake rode behind him in little better case, while Ford, a careless and light-hearted youth, grinned at the melancholy of his companions, and flourished his lord’s heavy spear, making a point to right and a point to left, as though he were a paladin contending against a host of assailants. Sir Nigel happened, however, to turn himself in his saddle—Ford instantly became as stiff and as rigid as though he had been struck with a palsy. The four rode alone, for the archers had passed a curve in the road, though Alleyne could still hear the heavy clump, clump of their marching, or catch a glimpse of the sparkle of steel through the tangle of leafless branches.

‘Ride by my side, friends, I entreat of you,’ said the knight, reining in his steed that they might come abreast of him. ‘For, since it hath pleased you to follow me to the wars, it were well that you should know how you may best serve me. I doubt not, Terlake, that you will show yourself a worthy son of a valiant father; and you, Ford, of yours; and you, Edricson, that you are mindful of the old-time house from which all men know that you are sprung. And first I would have you bear very steadfastly in mind that our setting forth is by no means for the purpose of gaining spoil or exacting ransom, though it may well happen that such may come to us also. We go to France, and from thence I trust to Spain, in humble search of a field in which we may win advancement and perchance some small share of glory. For this

purpose I would have you know that it is not my wont to let any occasion pass where it is in any way possible that honour may be gained. I would have you bear this in mind, and give great heed to it that you may bring me word of all cartels, challenges, wrongs, tyrannies, infamies, and wronging of damsels. Nor is any occasion too small to take note of, for I have known such trifles as the dropping of a gauntlet, or the flicking of a breadcrumb, when well and properly followed up, lead to a most noble spear-running. But, Edricson, do I not see a cavalier who rides down yonder road amongst the nether shaw? It would be well, perchance, that you should give him greeting from me, and, should he be of gentle blood, it may be that he would care to exchange thrusts with me.'

'Why, my lord,' quoth Ford, standing in his stirrups and shading his eyes, 'it is old Hob Davidson, the fat miller of Milton!'

'Ah, so it is, indeed,' said Sir Nigel, puckering his cheeks; 'but wayside ventures are not to be scorned, for I have seen no finer passages than are to be had from such chance meetings, when cavaliers are willing to advance themselves. I can well remember that two leagues from the town of Rheims I met a very valiant and courteous cavalier of France, with whom I had gentle and most honourable contention for upwards of an hour.' It hath ever grieved me that I had not his name, for he smote upon me with a mace and went upon his way ere I was in condition to have much speech with him; but his arms were an allurion in chief above a fess azure. I was also on such an occasion thrust through the shoulder by Lyon de Montcourt, whom I met on the high road betwixt Libourne and Bordeaux. I met him but the once, but I have never seen a man for whom I bear a greater love and esteem. And so also with the squire Le Bourg Capillet, who would have been a very valiant captain had he lived.'

'He is dead then?' asked Alleyne Edricson.

'Alas! it was my ill fate to slay him in a bickering which broke out in a field near the township of Tarbes. I cannot call to mind how the thing came about, for it was in the year of the Prince's ride through Languedoc, when there was much fine skirmishing to be had at barriers. By St. Paul! I do not think that any honourable cavalier could ask for better chance of advancement than might be had by spurring forth before the army and riding to the gateways of Narbonne, or Bergerac, or Mont Giscar,

where some courteous gentleman would ever be at wait to do what he might to meet your wish or ease you of your vow. Such a one at Ventadour ran three courses with me betwixt daybreak and sunrise, to the great exaltation of his lady.'

'And did you slay him also, my lord?' asked Ford with reverence.

'I could never learn, for he was carried within the barrier, and as I had chanced to break the bone of my leg it was a great unease to me to ride or even to stand. Yet, by the goodness of heaven and the pious intercession of the valiant St. George, I was able to sit my charger in the ruffle of Poitiers, which was no very long time afterwards. But what have we here? A very fair and courtly maiden, or I mistake.'

It was indeed a tall and buxom country lass, with a basket of spinach-leaves upon her head, and a great slab of bacon tucked under one arm. She bobbed a frightened curtsey as Sir Nigel swept his velvet hat from his head and reined up his great charger.

'God be with thee, fair maiden!' said he.

'God guard thee, my lord!' she answered, speaking in the broadest West Saxon speech, and balancing herself first on one foot and then on the other in her bashfulness.

'Fear not, my fair damsel,' said Sir Nigel, 'but tell me if perchance a poor and most unworthy knight can in any wise be of service to you. Should it chance that you have been used despitefully, it may be that I may obtain justice for you.'

'Lawk no, kind sir,' she answered, clutching her bacon the tighter, as though some design upon it might be hid under this knightly offer. 'I be the milking wench o' fairmer Arnold, and he be as kind a maister as heart could wish.'

'It is well,' said he, and with a shake of the bridle rode on down the woodland path. 'I would have you bear in mind,' he continued to his squires, 'that gentle courtesy is not, as is the base use of so many false knights, to be shown only to maidens of high degree, for there is no woman so humble that a true knight may not listen to her tale of wrong. But here comes a cavalier who is indeed in haste. Perchance it would be well that we should ask him whither he rides, for it may be that he is one who desires to advance himself in chivalry.'

The bleak, hard, wind-swept road dipped down in front of them into a little valley, and then, writhing up the heathy slope upon the other side, lost itself among the gaunt pine-trees. Far away

between the black lines of trunks the quick glitter of steel marked where the Company pursued its way. To the north stretched the tree country, but to the south, between two swelling downs, a glimpse might be caught of the cold grey shimmer of the sea, with the white fleck of a galley sail upon the distant sky-line. Just in front of the travellers a horseman was urging his steed up the slope, driving it on with whip and spur as one who rides for a set purpose. As he clattered up, Alleyne could see that the roan horse was grey with dust and flecked with foam, as though it had left many a mile behind it. The rider was a stern-faced man, hard of mouth and dry of eye, with a heavy sword clanking at his side, and a stiff white bundle swathed in linen balanced across the pommel of his saddle.

‘The king’s messenger!’ he bawled as he came up to them. ‘The messenger of the king! Clear the causeway for the king’s own man.’

‘Not so loudly, friend,’ quoth the little knight, reining his horse half round to bar the path. ‘I have myself been the king’s man for thirty years and more, but I have not been wont to halloo about it on a peaceful highway.’

‘I ride in his service,’ cried the other, ‘and I carry that which belongs to him. You bar my path at your peril.’

‘Yet I have known the king’s enemies claim to ride in his name,’ said Sir Nigel. ‘The foul fiend may lurk beneath a garment of light. We must have some sign or warrant of your mission.’

‘Then must I hew a passage,’ cried the stranger, with his shoulder braced round and his hand upon his hilt. ‘I am not to be stopped on the king’s service by every gadabout.’

‘Should you be a gentleman of quarterings and coat-armour,’ lisped Sir Nigel, ‘I shall be very blithe to go further into the matter with you. If not, I have three very worthy squires, any one of whom would take the thing upon himself, and debate it with you in a very honourable way.’

The man scowled from one to the other, and his hand stole away from his sword.

‘You ask me for a sign,’ he said. ‘Here is a sign for you, since you must have one.’ As he spoke he whirled the covering from the object in front of him and showed to their horror that it was a newly severed human leg. ‘By God’s tooth!’ he continued, with a brutal laugh, ‘you ask me if I am a man of

quarterings, and it is even so, for I am officer to the verderer's court at Lyndhurst. This thievish leg is to hang at Milton, and the other is already at Brockenhurst, as a sign to all men of what comes of being over fond of venison pasty.'

'Faugh!' cried Sir Nigel. 'Pass on the other side of the road, fellow, and let us have the wind of you. We shall trot our horses, my friends, across this pleasant valley, for, by Our Lady, a breath of God's fresh air is right welcome after such a sight.'

'We hoped to snare a falcon,' said he presently, 'but we netted a carrion-crow. Ma foi! but there are men whose hearts are tougher than a boar's hide. For me, I have played the old game of war since ever I had hair on my chin, and I have seen ten thousand brave men in one day with their faces to the sky, but I swear by Him who made me that I cannot abide the work of the butcher.'

'And yet, my fair lord,' said Edricson, 'there has, from what I hear, been much of such devil's work in France.'

'Too much, too much,' he answered. 'But I have ever observed that the foremost in the field are they who would scorn to mishandle a prisoner. By St. Paul! it is not they who carry the breach who are wont to sack the town, but the laggard knaves who come crowding in when a way has been cleared for them. But what is this among the trees?'

'It is a shrine of Our Lady,' said Terlake, 'and a blind beggar who lives by the alms of those who worship there.'

'A shrine!' cried the knight. 'Then let us put up an orison.' Pulling off his cap, and clasping his hands, he chaunted in a shrill voice: '*Benedictus dominus Deus meus, qui docet manus meas ad prælium, et digitos meos ad bellum.*' A strange figure he seemed to his three squires, perched on his huge horse, with his eyes upturned and the wintry sun shimmering upon his bald head. 'It is a noble prayer,' he remarked, putting on his hat again, 'and it was taught to me by the noble Chandos himself. But how fares it with you, father? Methinks that I should have ruth upon you, seeing that I am myself like one who looks through a horn window while his neighbours have the clear crystal. Yet, by St. Paul! there is a long stride between the man who hath a horn casement and him who is walled in on every hand.'

'Alas! fair sir,' cried the blind old man, 'I have not seen the blessed blue of heaven this two score years, since a levin flash burned the sight out of my head.'

'You have been blind to much that is goodly and fair,' quoth

Sir Nigel, 'but you have also been spared much that is sorry and foul. This very hour our eyes have been shocked with that which would have left you unmoved. But, by St. Paul! we must on, or our Company will think that they have lost their captain somewhat early in the venture. Throw the man my purse, Edricson, and let us go.'

Alleyne, lingering behind, bethought him of the Lady Loring's counsel, and reduced the noble gift which the knight had so freely bestowed to a single penny, which the beggar with many mumbled blessings thrust away into his wallet. Then, spurring his steed, the young squire rode at the top of his speed after his companions, and overtook them just at the spot where the trees fringe off into the moor and the straggling hamlet of Hordle lies scattered on either side of the winding and deeply rutted track. The Company was already well nigh through the village; but, as the knight and his squires closed up upon them, they heard the clamour of a strident voice, followed by a roar of deep-chested laughter from the ranks of the archers. Another minute brought them up with the rear-guard, where every man marched with his beard on his shoulder and a face which was agrin with merriment. By the side of the column walked a huge red-headed bowman, with his hands thrown out in argument and expostulation, while close at his heels followed a little wrinkled woman, who poured forth a shrill volley of abuse, varied by an occasional thwack from her stick, given with all the force of her body, though she might have been beating one of the forest trees for all the effect that she seemed likely to produce.

'I trust, Aylward,' said Sir Nigel gravely, as he rode up, 'that this doth not mean that any violence hath been offered to women. If such a thing happened, I tell you that the man shall hang, though he were the best archer that ever wore brassart

'Nay, my fair lord,' Aylward answered with a grin, 'it is violence which is offered to a man. He comes from Hordle, and this is his mother who hath come forth to welcome him.'

'You rammucky lurden,' she was howling, with a blow between each catch of her breath, 'you shammocking yaping over-long good-for-nought. I will teach thee! I will baste thee! Aye, by my faith!'

'Whist, mother,' said John, looking back at her from the tail of his eye, 'I go to France as an archer to give blows and to take them.'

‘To France, quotha?’ cried the old dame. ‘Bide here with me, and I shall warrant you more blows than you are like to get in France. If blows be what you seek, you need not go further than Hordle.’

‘By my hilt! the good dame speaks truth,’ said Aylward. ‘It seems to be the very home of them.’

‘What have you to say, you clean-shaved galley-bagger?’ cried the fiery dame, turning upon the archer. ‘Can I not speak with my own son but you must let your tongue clack? A soldier, quotha, and never a hair on his face. I have seen a better soldier with pap for food and swaddling clothes for harness.’

‘Stand to it, Aylward,’ cried the archers, amid a fresh burst of laughter.

‘Do not thwart her, comrade,’ said big John. ‘She hath a proper spirit for her years and cannot abide to be thwarted. It is kindly and homely to me to hear her voice and to feel that she is behind me. But I must leave you now, mother, for the way is over-rough for your feet; but I will bring you back a silken gown, if there be one in France or Spain, and I will bring Jinny a silver penny; so good-bye to you, and God have you in his keeping!’ Whipping up the little woman, he lifted her lightly to his lips, and then, taking his place in the ranks again, marched on with the laughing Company.

‘That was ever his way,’ she cried, appealing to Sir Nigel, who reined up his horse and listened with the gravest courtesy. ‘He would jog on his own road for all that I could do to change him. First he must be a monk forsooth, and all because a wench was wise enough to turn her back on him. Then he joins a rascally crew and must needs trapse off to the wars, and me with no one to bait the fire if I be out, or tend the cow if I be home. Yet I have been a good mother to him. Three hazel switches a day have I broke across his shoulders, and he takes no more notice than you have seen him to-day.’

‘Doubt not that he will come back to you both safe and prosperous, my fair dame,’ quoth Sir Nigel. ‘Meanwhile it grieves me that as I have already given my purse to a beggar up the road I——’

‘Nay, my lord,’ said Alleyne, ‘I still have some monies remaining.’

‘Then I pray you to give them to this very worthy woman.’ He cantered on as he spoke, while Alleyne, having dispensed two

more pence, left the old dame standing by the furthest cottage of Hordle with her shrill voice raised in blessings instead of revilings.

There were two cross-roads before they reached the Lymington ford, and at each of them Sir Nigel pulled up his horse, and waited with many a curvet and gambade, craning his neck this way and that to see if fortune would send him a venture. Cross-roads had, as he explained, been rare places for knightly spear-runnings, and in his youth it was no uncommon thing for a cavalier to abide for weeks at such a point, holding gentle debate with all comers, to his own advancement and the great honour of his lady. The times were changed, however, and the forest tracks wound away from them deserted and silent, with no trample of war-horse or clang of armour which might herald the approach of an adversary—so that Sir Nigel rode on his way disconsolate. At the Lymington river they splashed through the ford, and lay in the meadows on the further side to eat the bread and salt meat which they carried upon the sumpter horses. Then, ere the sun was on the slope of the heavens, they had deftly trussed up again, and were swinging merrily upon their way, two hundred feet moving like two.

There is a third cross-road where the track from Boldre runs down to the old fishing village of Pitt's Deep. Down this, as they came abreast of it, there walked two men, the one a pace or two behind the other. The cavaliers could not but pull up their horses to look at them, for a stranger pair were never seen journeying together. The first was a misshapen squalid man with cruel cunning eyes and a shock of tangled red hair, bearing in his hands a small unpainted cross, which he held high so that all men might see it. He seemed to be in the last extremity of fright, with a face the colour of clay and his limbs all ashake as one who hath an ague. Behind him, with his toe ever rasping upon the other's heels, there walked a very stern black-bearded man with a hard eye and a set mouth. He bore over his shoulder a great knotted stick with three jagged nails stuck in the head of it, and from time to time he whirled it up in the air with a quivering arm, as though he could scarce hold back from dashing his companion's brains out. So in silence they walked under the spread of the branches on the grass-grown path from Boldre.

'By St. Paul!' quoth the knight, 'but this is a passing strange sight, and perchance some very perilous and honourable venture

may arise from it. I pray you, Edricson, to ride up to them and to ask them the cause of it.'

There was no need, however, for him to move, for the twain came swiftly towards them until they were within a spear's length, when the man with the cross sat himself down sullenly upon a tussock of grass by the wayside, while the other stood beside him with his great cudgel still hanging over his head. So intent was he that he raised his eyes neither to knight nor squires, but kept them ever fixed with a savage glare upon his comrade.

'I pray you, friend,' said Sir Nigel, 'to tell us truthfully who you are, and why you follow this man with such bitter enmity.'

'So long as I am within the pale of the king's law,' the stranger answered, 'I cannot see why I should render account to every passing wayfarer.'

'You are no very shrewd reasoner, fellow,' quoth the knight; 'for if it be within the law for you to threaten him with your club, then it is also lawful for me to threaten you with my sword.'

The man with the cross was down in an instant on his knees upon the ground, with hands clasped above him and his face shining with hope. 'For dear Christ's sake, my fair lord,' he cried in a crackling voice, 'I have at my belt a bag with a hundred rose nobles, and I will give it to you freely if you will but pass your sword through this man's body.'

'How, you foul knave?' exclaimed Sir Nigel hotly. 'Do you think that a cavalier's arm is to be bought like a packman's ware? By St. Paul! I have little doubt that this fellow hath some very good cause to hold you in hatred.'

'Indeed, my fair sir, you speak sooth,' quoth he with the club, while the other seated himself once more by the wayside. 'For this man is Peter Peterson, a very noted rieve, draw-latch, and murtherer, who has wrought much evil for many years in the parts about Winchester. It was but the other day, upon the feast of the blessed Simon and Jude, that he slew my younger brother William in Bere Forest—for which, by the black thorn of Glastonbury! I shall have his heart's blood, though I walk behind him to the further end of earth.'

'But if this be indeed so,' asked Sir Nigel, 'why is it that you have come with him so far through the forest?'

'Because I am an honest Englishman, and will take no more than the law allows. For when the deed was done this foul and

base wretch fled to sanctuary at St. Cross, and I, as you may think, after him with all the posse. The prior, however, hath so ordered that while he holds this cross no man may lay hand upon him without the ban of church, which heaven forfend from me or mine. Yet, if for an instant he lay the cross aside, or if he fail to journey to Pitt's Deep, where it is ordered that he shall take ship to outland parts, or if he take not the first ship, or if until the ship be ready he walk not every day into the sea as far as his loins, then he becomes outlaw, and I shall forthwith dash out his brains.'

At this the man on the ground snarled up at him like a rat, while the other clenched his teeth, and shook his club, and looked down at him with murder in his eyes. Knight and squires gazed from rogue to avenger, but as it was a matter which none could mend they tarried no longer, but rode upon their way. Alleyne, looking back, saw that the murderer had drawn bread and cheese from his scrip, and was silently munching it, with the protecting cross still hugged to his breast, while the other, black and grim, stood in the sunlit road and threw his dark shadow athwart him.

(To be continued.)

CHAMONIX IN MAY.

'CHAMONIX,' said Mr. Ruskin many years ago, disdainfully, 'is rapidly being turned into a kind of Cremorne Gardens.' Mr. Ruskin's disgust is shared by many of those judicious travellers who go abroad in search of peaceful beauty, and do not care to find the society and tastes of a London suburb translated to an Alpine valley. Even thirty years ago complaints were rife of the spoiling of Chamonix, and many who knew the place in the old days are now afraid of revisiting it. The railway is supposed to have completed its destruction; and it is credibly reported that 'Apollo and all the Muses' have fled the valley before the advance of the railway-fiend from Geneva to Cluses. But, in the epilogue to the most recent edition of 'Modern Painters,' Mr. Ruskin records that he had been there again and found himself inspired as of old by its 'cloudless peace.' When he wrote about Chamonix-Cremorne, he must have been there in August. When he penned his epilogue two years ago, he must have been at Chamonix in the early spring or the late autumn.

The fact is, that everyone goes to the Alps too late or too early. The perfect months are May (running on into June) and October (counting in a little of September); and of the two May is the more perfect. True, the weather is then a little uncertain; but, in August also, the weather can be bad, and when it is bad it is very bad. True, also, the 'Alpine rose' is not yet in bloom. But, if there is none of its 'rubied fire,' neither is there any crowd of vulgarians to put it out. Mr. Ruskin describes somewhere how he was staying once at the Montanvert to paint Alpine roses, and had fixed upon a faultless bloom beneath a cirque of rock, high enough, as he hoped, to guard it from rude eyes and plucking hands. But he counted without the tourist horde. Down they swooped upon his chosen bed; 'threw themselves into it, rolled over and over in it, shrieked, hallooed, and fought in it, trampled it down, and tore it up by the roots; breathless at last, with rapture of ravage, they fixed the brightest of the remnant blossoms of it in their caps, and went on their way rejoicing.' That, of course, must have been in August. In May, the less flaunting Alpine flowers, the verdure, the clear atmosphere—all

are in perfection. Indeed, the valley of Chamonix is in May practically deserted. Those who only know it as thronged by the cosmopolitan crowds of August and September would then hardly recognise it, so quiet and peaceful is it. The hotels have just opened, and there are to be enjoyed all the advantages due to the tourist hordes with none of the drawbacks. You are not crowded out into a little back bedroom over the stables, but are given a spacious and parqueted apartment, with a splendid view on to Mont Blanc. You are not obliged to look at the fire from a respectful distance behind a surly, sleepy crowd in the 'salon,' but have a pile of logs set alight solely on your own behalf by an obsequious waiter. All your movements are not reconnoitred through a telescope, and you do not find the summit of every near hill covered with broken ginger-beer bottles and sandwich papers. The fat landlord stands smiling in the doorway to receive you, instead of bustling you aside to make way for some titled grandee, as would very probably happen later on. He welcomes you as we welcome the early spring birds, heralds of summer, and, taking you aside, informs you, rubbing his hands cheerily, that 'it is well Monsieur has come, for the *chef de cuisine* has just arrived yesterday from Turin for the season.' You realise this important fact when, half an hour later, you sit down to a triumph of the gastronomic art. Lucky mortal!—and all this grandeur is for you, and only you!

So it is worth while to go to Chamonix in May—if only for once in a lifetime—to feel 'monarch of all one surveys.' But there is another and stronger inducement. All nature is then at her best. The low-lying pastures are not burnt up by the sun's rays; the cascades are more abundant; the air is clearer; the freshly fallen snow gleams more brightly; while the flowers are innumerable, and the butterflies also. The droning hum of the grasshoppers makes a kind of sleepy song, to the accompaniment of 'the sound of many waters.' It must surely have been in May or early June that the poet wrote:—

In that thin air the birds are still,
 No ringdove murmurs on the hill
 Nor mating cushat calls;
 But gay cicalas singing sprang,
 And waters from the forests sang
 The song of waterfalls.

The poor victims of the public schools cannot, of course, get away so early; that is their one privation in exchange for many

greater benefits—their Polycrates's ring, forfeited to assuage Fate. But those who can do so should take their holiday early. It is true that the early-comers lose the pleasant society of their English friends. But it is pleasant, also, to be abroad at a time when there is a chance of meeting others than the friends whom you can see every day at home. Sometimes you meet no other travelers at all; but with the last week of May, two couples arrived at our Chamonix hotel—one American, the other French. The Americans were from Philadelphia, and were very typical of their kind. They were making 'the grand tour' for the sake of the husband's health. Poor fellow! he had been forty years at his business with never a holiday or even a 'day off,' and he had, in consequence, lost all his hair, so that he now wore a luxuriant black wig. His wife informed us in a cheerful manner that 'the medical men said he'd go silly if he stayed at his desk much longer, so they'd now come away for a year's holiday, and had left the son-in-law to manage the "business." They'd come out, bound to see everything; there was nothing they were going to shirk now that they were over in Eu-rope.' The husband was a bright, eager little man, with sharp, beady eyes. Except for the effect of his wig, he looked remarkably youthful. He was enraptured with Switzerland. They had just left Interlaken. 'We've seen the Jung-fraw,' he said. 'Mont Blank can hardly beat *that*.' They had only half a day to spare for Chamonix, and were going on by the Tête Noire in the afternoon. So, in the morning, they went out for a five minutes' walk. 'We've seen it,' said husband and wife, triumphantly, coming back. So Chamonix was ticked off from the list, and they wended their way further. 'For these good people,' we thought, 'even the grand new elevator railroad up the "Jung-fraw" will be superfluous.' The French couple were of a quite different type. The man was an almost exact copy of 'Tartarin,' and his wife was a little, fat woman, who dressed for mountaineering excursions in the extreme of Parisian fashion. These stayed only two days, and their most formidable excursion was on mules to the Glacier des Bossons. Their 'start' on this occasion was very comic. The husband wore an enormous Panama hat, exactly like his wife's, trimmed with a wreath of woollen roses; he got wildly excited, and whacked his poor little mule unmercifully. Two guides, with wild cries, ran after the couple, as their *montures* tore along with them up the road.

These were our only foreign friends at Chamonix in May.

But, foreigners being absent, you have a chance of making friends with the natives. We were fortunate once in finding a friend in our sole travelling companion on the diligence from Geneva. It was a drenching downpour, and 'the gates of the hills' were swathed in cruel grey rolls of mist. But a cheery voice soon came from a tall, somewhat bent, middle-aged man, wearing a peasant's blouse, who astonished us by greeting us in English, with a fine American twang. He was very communicative, and we soon discovered that he was a native of the valley who had just returned from fifteen years' work in San Francisco, having 'made his pile.' He was now prepared to seek a wife, buy a little homestead, and settle down for good in the old country. Accustomed to American go-ahead farming operations, he groaned terribly over the archaic methods in vogue in the valley. 'Ah!' he said regretfully, as we passed one humble homestead after another—each with its rough wooden balcony, its pile of manure heaped up against the house, and its poor garden plot—'ah! I could teach them a thing or two!' He was a knowing hand, this Savoyard-Yankee. Long residence in America had not dimmed his remembrance of his countrymen's ways. At Geneva, he told us with pride, he had purchased his cotton blouse, for otherwise they would have imposed upon him as on a stranger; 'and,' he added, 'I shall save the price of it many times before I get to Chamonix.' And so it proved; for, on comparing our respective diligence fares, we found that, though we all occupied precisely the same seats of that ramshackle old vehicle, he had paid only one-third of what we had. At Sallanches he avoided the table d'hôte and lunched on his own account in a separate room. 'Ah!' he said, on coming out, 'what did you pay? Four francs! Why, I had exactly the same food as you had, but I got it for half the price.' What a pity that we, too, had not invested in blue cotton blouses at Geneva! for, obviously, it is but the blouse that makes the peasant—and commands peasant prices. Our friend bore otherwise no resemblance to a rustic; he was a distinct fraud; his clothes were beyond reproach, he wore gold rings, his shirt was fine, and he fingered his napoleons with the ease of a millionaire. He was very fond of the hills: 'I loved them,' he said, 'when I was a boy, but I hardly dared to speak of them. "Damn the mountains!" my father would say; "they give us no food."'

We parted company with him at Les Ouches, and the rain increasing, our spirits gradually sank so low that not even the

free gift of one hundred days' indulgence each, from a snuffy old priest who had got in at Annemasse, could succeed in raising them. But at the inn a blazing fire, a good dinner, and Mr. King's engrossing book of travels, contented us for that night, and next day the fine weather set in and remained. And what a paradise we enjoyed! If there are days on which 'the heavens seem brought down to the earth,' it was surely those. We seldom made very long excursions; we often started walking without an idea in the world as to whither we were going; and yet we always in the end found ourselves at some foaming cascade, glacier, or point of view. Sometimes we spent whole days on the mountain, fragrant with aromatic scents, without meeting even a peasant in our wanderings. Only the scattered sheep and goats occasionally came up and rubbed their noses affectionately against us. Often close under the 'eternal silences' of the glaciers, we gazed up to where

For a great sign the icy stair doth go
Between the heights to heaven,

and it seemed almost sacrilege to break the stillness. Even the poets have not broken silence before Mont Blanc quite successfully. Coleridge has, perhaps, come nearest to the grandeur of his theme in the 'Hymn before Sunrise,' but he, too, is inadequate.

You can make no 'grand ascents,' of course, in May; but you will be unwise if you do not make friends with a guide or two—they are the pick of the peasants, and all the Savoyard peasants are worth knowing. They are much pleasanter than the Swiss of the Rhone valley; and, indeed, the first thing that strikes one on passing over the Tête Noire to Martigny is the curt grunt—or, oftener, stony glare—that takes the place of the pleasant '*Bon voyage*' on the French side of the pass. It is wonderful, too, how simple and unspoiled the Chamonix people still are, considering the demoralising tendency of the tourist crowd. In May, before the 'season' sets in, they all seem unaffectedly glad to see you, and have plenty of time to talk about themselves. Our chief friend was one Séraphin Simond, of the village of La Tour: he is considered a man of property, for he keeps three cows. As a gentleman of property should be, Simond is a decided Conservative. He would have driven our Savoyard-Yankee friend of the diligence to utter despair, for to Simond every custom of the country was 'as the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.' Walking one day up the valley, *en route* for the Flégère, we wondered why

every cow or goat pasturing in the meadows required a special attendant—either man, woman, or child—set apart for its own use; no animal being ever seen without its caretaker. We remarked to Simond that this seemed rather a waste of time and energy. ‘*C’est bien possible!*’ gravely replied the owner of three cows; ‘*mais*’—and this refrain constantly came—‘*c’est une habitude du pays.*’ Simond was never surprised by anything we said; he listened respectfully, but always remained of his own opinion. However, this particular instance of apparent waste of time is no doubt due to the communal system. The peasant pays so much per cow for the right of common pasturage; therefore his object is that his cow should get as much as possible from the common land and not feed on his own, nor, of course, trespass on his neighbour’s. And tending cows is not by any means such waste of time as would appear, for we discovered that you can do three things at a time—mend stockings, carry a load of wood, and tend a cow. Many women knitted beside their cow; one we saw reading a book. Often small children are told off to tend cows and goats, and a pretty handful they seem to find them. At Martigny once we saw a lame old man whose cow was just like a pet dog, turning round to be patted, and even sniffing at his coat-pockets for bread. Although we embarked on no very arduous excursions, Simond expressed great admiration of the powers of walking displayed by ‘*Madame.*’ One day, as we were crossing the Mer de Glace from Montanvert, he exclaimed approvingly, ‘*Madame grimpe comme un chamois.*’ Madame felt flattered at this till she remembered that all the guides always said as much, on principle, to everybody. Like the children of Heine’s ballad, they have probably

Made the very same speeches
To many an old cat since.

Simond and another guide, Bertrand, accompanied us to the Jardin one cloudless day. Bertrand, a tall, silent young fellow, also pretended to be lost in amazement at Madame’s walking. ‘Yes, Monsieur and Madame ought certainly to ascend Mont Blanc,’ said Simond. ‘Madame would do it capitally.’ This seemed to require confirmation. Bertrand was appealed to. He grinned, then spoke gravely, ‘Two good guides,’ he said, ‘can safely take anyone—any old gentleman or lady—up Mont Blanc.’ This was not so flattering. ‘It is a mere nothing of an expedition,’ added Simond. ‘It may affect Madame unpleasantly at first; she will

be a little sick—*le mal de montagne*—that is all; or she may turn a little black in the face. But we will get her up to the top nicely.’

‘*Certainement, car Madame a de bonnes jambes,*’ concluded Bertrand earnestly—and critically.

À propos of the ascent of Mont Blanc, Simond pointed out to us a fine house with green shutters, situated high up the valley, near Argentière. This, he said, was inhabited by the well-known English lady who had married her guide after an ascent of Mont Blanc in mid-winter. Jean Charlet, the husband, was ‘*un pauvre garçon,*’ added Simond, and she was ‘*très riche.*’ Jean had been her guide for fourteen years, and they were both middle-aged—nearly forty—when they married, and that was now about ten or twelve years ago. ‘Had they ever ascended Mont Blanc since?’ we asked. ‘*Non, jamais. Elle fait le ménage, elle élève ses deux garçons; c’est une personne très convenable.*’ ‘Are they happy?’ we inquired. ‘Yes, very,’ Simond asseverated. ‘She must have been very strong, to have gone up in winter.’ ‘*Oui, c’est une dame très forte, très robuste; elle a de bonnes jambes.*’ Bertrand no doubt imagined when he delivered the critical opinion above mentioned that all English ladies were built on the same pattern.

Our favourite halting-place on many excursions was a humble little auberge at the hamlet of Les Ouches, where they never had any kind of meat, but always excellent bread, milk, eggs, and red wine. The landlady and her husband were strong, bustling people, who had a good deal of ‘custom’ in a small way. We noticed once a little heap of something sitting on a high chair at the door. On looking closer we imagined it to be a sickly baby; but it was the couple’s only son, and it turned out that he was over twenty. It seemed that he had had a bad fever at nine years old, and in consequence of this he was all wizened and deformed, and sat all day at the door or in the chimney-corner, propped up on tiny crutches; it was a sad sight. The waiter at Chamonix, who was sympathetic and conversational, told us afterwards that the parents were ‘*gens de bien,*’ and that last year, when the ‘conscription’ came, the father was obliged, according to the regulations, to bring the boy up to be examined ‘*pour être soldat,*’ and that ‘*le père avait pleuré en l’amenant.*’

The story brought tears to our own eyes.

This little inn at Les Ouches was a real comfort, for the one draw-

back—if drawback must be confessed to Chamonix in May—was that when on many of our excursions, thirsty and tired, we longed for a refreshing drink, we were apt to find the Alpine inn on which our hopes had long been set all deserted and boarded up for the winter. Most of these high-lying inns do not open until at least the first of June, and only a disconsolate goat or two wandered about their inhospitable doors. But on one occasion, when returning sad and weary, cheated of a meal, from the deserted inn on the Col de Voza, we met an old peasant toiling up the steep hill slope to his poor little *châlet*, under a heavy crate filled with faggots, we told him how hungry we were, and begged him to direct us to the nearest inn. Instantly he led the way to his poor hut, brought out his rough wooden stools, placing them for us on the grassy Alp outside, and fetched all his provisions. Alas! they were only black bread, and an almost uneatable cheese made from goats' milk. No wine, no milk, did he possess. '*Je suis honteux,*' he said sadly, '*d'apporter cela pour une dame, mais je suis simple paysan.*' We could hardly manage to bite the black bread, but we did our best, so as not to hurt his feelings. He really seemed terribly ashamed to have nothing better to offer us. Poor '*simple paysan!*' alone in his solitary cabin on the far-away Alp with no wife, no child, only a few goats for his companions. Two or three of the common green glazed pots of the valley stood in the windows of his hut, gay with trailing plants. The old peasant was evidently a lover of flowers; perhaps they were the sole brighteners of his solitude.

But happy, after all, is he who can confess to so few wants! Our Savoyard-Yankee, with all his latest improvements in the way of civilisation, is probably the less happy man of the two. We met him again at Les Ouches, just before leaving. He was still loafing about in his blouse, and apparently teaching the rustics a thing or two, for he was followed about by a crowd of admiring little boys. He seemed less bent than before on coming back to settle in his native valley. He was so disgusted, he said, with the poor way in which they lived, and with the old-world style of agriculture. 'But you will wake them up a bit, as you proposed to do,' we remarked a little unkindly. 'Oh, no!' he replied gloomily; 'it's hopeless. I can't get them to pick up any new notion.' So they will remain '*simples paysans*' still. The chance of learning something of these simple peasants is not the least of the charms of Chamonix in May.

IN 'THE PACK.'

ABOUT fifteen years ago Lady Harriette Nicolls wrote to her sister, the governess of Assinololand, a letter, part of which I happen to know ran as follows: 'George Langley has, as usual, been making himself disagreeable, and has given us no end of annoyance. The last thing he has done is to begin building in the field close to our gate on the Maythorpe road. He has run up a row of four horrid, little, frightful houses with windows in the shape of hearts and diamonds, &c., and he is advertising them in the paper as "The Pack." We have quite a view of them from the Elm walk, since the big beech came down, and only last week our Rector was advising Robert to remonstrate with George Langley, as it is such a bad example, and certain to encourage drinking and gambling, and it is most unpleasant for us driving past them to church.'

The houses of which Lady Harriette speaks were indeed erected by Mr. Langley with some chuckling over the probable disapproval of the sanctimonious uncle by whom he considered himself to have been cheated in a business transaction; but they really are not such undesirable dwellings as her ladyship's epithets would lead the reader to suppose. On the contrary, they are, I should say, rather favourable specimens of their kind, that, namely, which is patronised by the numerous class whom fortune has provided with neither poverty nor riches. Situated on a quiet country road, nearly a mile from Densleigh village, The Pack is within a stone's-throw of the shady plantations which skirt the Nicolls's small park, and being surrounded by pleasant, lonely pasture lands, it surveys an unsophisticatedly green and rural prospect not often associated with villa residences. But the most distinctive features of The Pack are those from which it derives its name. This designates collectively four decidedly ornate stucco edifices, separated from one another by intervals of some ten feet, which allow them to rank as 'detached,' and called individually Heart Lodge, Diamond Mount, Spade Villa, and Club House, in appropriate allusion to their respective doors, windows, gates, and porches, which are quaintly fashioned into the characters of the Devil's books. Mr. Langley must have been

greatly smitten with his conceit, to judge from the elaborateness of the detail in which he has carried it out, extending it even to the pattern of the tiled garden-paths, and of the oilcloth in each diminutive hall, thereby much disgusting Mr. Hornidge, the builder, a man who, though far from adverse to jokes in general, being in fact accounted something of a humorist, was disposed to resent any pleasantry involving such serious subjects as bricks and mortar. 'Ten per cent., good, on to the expenses,' it was his habit to say, 'and as like as not as much more off the rent. Hows'ever, Mr. Langley can afford to pay for his vagaries as well as most others,' he would add, his ruffled professional feeling only partially soothed by a consciousness that a certain proportion of the fantastic outlay had found its way into his own pockets.

But though the name did not jump with Mr. Hornidge's humour, and was most severely frowned upon by Rectory and Hall, it was adopted quite enthusiastically by many of the Densleigh folk, and especially by the parties chiefly concerned. I suppose the main reason why we dwellers in The Pack have got on, as a rule, so well with one another and have become, for the most part, such permanent tenants, is that we happen to be a peaceable, steady, unenterprising set of people, fond neither of squabbles nor flittings; still, I always fancy that the eccentric nomenclature of our habitations has somehow acted as a bond of union among us, inspiring us with a species of *esprit de corps*, and causing us from the first to feel an interest in our immediate surroundings which we should not have possessed had we been obliged to describe them by such commonplaces as Prospect Villa or Willow Grove. Perhaps the strongest element in this bond is wit. No outsider could imagine how perennial a source of facetiæ those names afford. From the arrival of the morning letters—and is not an envelope addressed, 'Mr. Bell, Diamond Mount, The Pack,' a passable witticism in itself?—to the extinction of the cheerful lamplight globules in the four little drawing-rooms, when ten to one somebody will say something funny about 'following suit,' occasions for these displays of cleverness are continually turning up. The topic is a perfect godsend to those amongst us who have a reputation for brilliant conversational gifts to keep them unruined. For, given the presence in the company of anybody connected with The Pack, the slightest emphasising of such ordinary phrases as, for example, 'It's quite on

the cards,' or 'I'm not a good hand at it,' immediately converts the speech into an epigram which is sure to be applauded by members of the audience, who, foreseeing the likelihood of similar openings for distinguishing themselves, are all the readier to establish appreciative precedents. This applause is louder when the speaker achieves an appropriate personality with reference to its subject's abode: 'Ah! Mrs. Lyster's heart's in the right place;' 'We all know that Mr. Hewson's not afraid to call a spade a spade'—but *bons mots* of this calibre cannot be looked for every day. Indeed, many of the jocular remarks with which we neighbours are content to entertain ourselves wholly lack the attribute of novelty, and no doubt for that very reason we 'like them better than a better jest,' the fondness being a propensity easily explicable by the laws of association. We find them useful, moreover, as a means of restoring harmony, for if any coolness or unpleasantness has sprung up between two of us, there is no easier way of sliding back into the old friendly groove than through the interposition of such a joke, the perpetrating and recognising of which are always regarded as a tacit reconciliation, and often have I seen scared good humour lured back by recourse to this simple expedient.

It is true that a less kindly use has sometimes been made of these opportunities. Rumours have occasionally reached me from the village of bitter allusions to packs of fools, and other disparaging sarcasms; but these are very rare exceptions, and have never resulted in putting us out of conceit with the idea, which we rival one another in attempts to realise effectively. Thus the Hewsons' ten-of-spades flower-beds were much admired, and flattered by speedy imitation along the rest of the row, whilst our own device of filling our diamond-shaped casements with glowing scarlet blinds was considered extremely happy, and Tom Bridgford's note-paper stamped with tiny clubs seemed almost too subtle and recondite a flight of fancy. Then one spring the Miss Lysters came out in smart white dresses upon which they had sewed innumerable little hearts made of some thin pink stuff. But I believe that one of their Rochester cousins who soon afterwards came to stay with them must have condemned these costumes as vulgar, for they were presently discarded, and once, when Dora Hewson said something about them, I noticed that the girls looked discomfited, and seemed to avoid the subject.

The Lysters lived in Heart Lodge, which stands at the east end

of our row. Their family consisted of father, mother, and two daughters, for the only son, being generally at sea, did not count. They were our newest comers, having, at the time I am thinking of, been only about three years in residence, and they were also, not quite solely for this reason, the least esteemed inmates of The Pack. Not that we had any particularly serious fault to find with them. It was rather that the Lysters' family failings were of a kind calculated to wound their neighbours' sensibilities more than some ethically graver delinquencies would have done; these failings being chiefly manifested in a tendency to give themselves airs and think themselves better than other people, 'why, goodness only knows,' as we always said when discussing the matter. Perhaps the reason why partly lay in the circumstance that the Lysters were a little richer than the rest of us, and had been accustomed, before their father's retirement from business, to live upon a larger scale, so that *they* regarded The Pack as somewhat of a 'come down' in the world, whereas *we* were inclined to plume ourselves upon the gentility of our abodes. Again, the satisfactory proportion between the size of their income and of their domestic circle enabled them to do much more in what we, when censoriously mooded, called 'the gadding about' line than could be attempted by us, whose resources would not stand the rapid transmutation of shillings and pounds into hotel bills and railway tickets; and some of us did not enjoy being asked what our plans were for Easter, or Whitsun week, or the summer holidays, when we happened to have no plans at all. But perhaps the most important point about them was the fact that they were blessed with relations of the buoying-up air-bladder type, which forms so enviable a contrast to the depressing dead-weights whom many of us are fain to number among our kin. Their relatives seemed almost without exception to occupy that position in the social scale which renders it a pride and pleasure to make mention of their names with the prefix of 'my uncle' or 'my cousin;' and the Lysters frequently indulged themselves in this way. One family of cousins there was residing near Rochester whom they appeared to consider peculiarly distinguished, and it was upon the occasion of visits from these prized connections that we had observed a disposition to ignore customary intimacies, and to assume an attitude of temporary aloofness, which naturally outraged our proper pride and stiffened our manners for some weeks afterwards. Apart from those specially irritating circum-

stances, however, we really liked the Lysters well enough. The girls were bright and talkative, and Maud was rather pretty.

Next to Heart Lodge comes Diamond Mount, where I board and lodge, though, by virtue of a very distant cousinship and a very close friendship between myself and the house's mistress, my position in the establishment is never regarded from the hard, cold point of view which that phrase suggests. Mrs. Wyatt is a lady whom her friends wish otherwise in one respect alone, namely, the number of years by which her age exceeds fourscore; and even this drawback is easily forgotten in her company, so cheerful, alert, sensible, and sympathetic is she, so bright are her dark eyes under her white spun-glasslike hair, and so shrewd and kindly, and withal up to date, are her comments upon their long course of observations. Here also dwelt Mr. John Connor, her younger brother, and Miss Gertrude Banks, her niece, an old maid, middle-aged and poor.

Spade Villa adjoins Diamond Mount, and at this time was very densely populated by the Hewson family. Two grown-up daughters, two big boys at school, and five or six smaller fry served as ample explanatory notes to the not unfrequently harassed looks of Mr. Hewson, who had a not more than tolerably good solicitor's practice in Maythorpe, and accounted for the slightly dilapidated and shabby condition of their furniture and premises, where the locust-like ravages of the children outstripped the possibilities of replacement and repair. Under these circumstances, I was pleased to observe that the girls managed to keep themselves trimly and freshly attired, a result which was, I believe, principally due to the exertions of Miss Etta, the eldest sister, for Miss Dora had studious tastes, and was more indifferent to her toilet than behoves a young lady of eighteen, her mind being divided between her books and repinings over the restrictions which her sex imposed upon the utilisation of her learning. 'Miss Dora Hewson goes in for Latin and Euclid, doesn't she?' Hume Bridgford said to me one day; 'she looks as if she did, at any rate,' added the Oxonian superciliously, evincing that want of appreciation for female thirst after knowledge which is so often noticeable among his compeers. Etta Hewson had no such misplaced propensities. A pretty edition of her hard-featured sister, and constitutionally light-hearted and good-tempered, she generally seemed to be well contented with her lot in life, a little dull, perhaps, now and then, or a little worried by the children, but, upon the whole, fleeting

the time carelessly enough, untroubled by darker forward-looking thoughts than suit the golden age of twenty.

Westward The Pack terminated in Club House, the Bridgfords' abode. Old Mr. Bridgford had also retired from business, over the nature of which, however, he made no attempt to throw that glamour of vagueness diffused by the word 'merchant' wherewith the Lysters sought to invest their antecedents. All the world were welcome to know, so far as he was concerned, that he had been the senior partner in the firm of Bridgford and Peters, who had for many years carried on business as seedsmen in York; not over prosperously of late, so that he had been able to dispose of his share in the concern upon only moderately advantageous terms when he withdrew into private life. The Bridgfords, like the Hewsons and ourselves, were, so to speak, autochthons, having inhabited Club House ever since its walls were dry, though their numbers had been diminished by the marriage of both daughters and the departure of the eldest son to grow tea in Assam, whence he had before very long despatched a pair of small, fat, anything but exotic-looking children to be spoiled by his old mother at home. The only one of the young people, therefore, still permanently quartered at Club House was Tom, who had a good clerkship in Maythorpe, whither he repaired every morning, perched atop of a big intricately spoked wheel like a gigantic spider's web. His youngest brother, Hume, was for the most part absent, keeping his terms at Oxford, having attained to a university career through the aid of a scholarship and a maternal uncle. If a stranger had been called upon to point out which of the two brothers was the undergraduate of Christ Church, he would probably have guessed wrong, for Hume Bridgford was not only awkward and shy—qualities compatible enough with the *rôle* of a reading man—but had also, despite his unquestioned abilities, a dull and heavy countenance, joined to a generally bucolic aspect more suggestive of agricultural than of academic pursuits; whereas Tom, besides being a tall, good-looking young fellow, well set up, athletic, and slightly military in appearance, possessed the further advantages of easy, polished manners, and a certain high-bred air for which we found it difficult to account except by supposing him to have inherited it from his mother's family, who were rumoured to have regarded her marriage as a *mésalliance*. It was not, however, merely the possession of these superficial merits that had made Tom Bridgford so great a favourite with us of Diamond Mount, second only,

indeed, to Etta Hewson, who had been long installed in the position of the nicest girl we knew; for the lad was well-principled and far from unintelligent, being gifted with a sense of humour which saved him from either priggishness or cynicism.

At the time I think of our interest in these two young people was enhanced by the fact that, having watched them grow up together from mere children, seeing the frankness of ten and twelve supplanted by hobbledehoy seventeen's gawky indifference and the monosyllabic bashfulness of unformed fifteen, we had latterly noted signs which led us to augur the springing up of an attachment between our favourites. My cousin and I had never alluded to the subject, but I believe that each was quite aware of the other's surmise, and that we both agreed in looking on with approbation. It was true that the match would be a by no means wealthy one, but Tom's prospects were fairly good, as with all his athletic feats and soldierly bearing he was admitted to have a clear head for business, and to be as steady as old Time; whilst the portionless Etta was simple in her tastes, and had already manifested some talent for thrifty housekeeping. Altogether we deemed ourselves justified in feeling the satisfaction with which, in these days of multiplying old maids, a benevolent elder may see a young life timely quitting the path towards their forlorn precincts by the safe and honourable exit of a genuine love marriage.

This being so, it was with no small chagrin that in the course of the particular summer which I have in my mind we perceived a gradual clouding over of our hitherto sunny little romance. It is not improbable that several minor causes may have co-operated in bringing about this effect, but it is certain that the most potent, and to us the most patent one, was the prolonged sojourn at Heart Lodge of the Lysters' cousin, Miss Daisy Hancock. She was a young lady who, as a general rule, looked about five-and-twenty, though when she was tired or cross, certain fine lines showed themselves at the corners of her eyes and mouth, as old finger-marks reappear when you breathe upon glass, and wrote her down some years nearer thirty. Be this as it may, the only fact about her which much concerns us here was that she belonged to the class of women who find existence impracticable without some phantom, at least, of what housemaids naïvely term a follower, and for whose peace of mind it is well that the activity of their imaginations is but little impeded by the discouragingly passive demean-

nour of any individual whom they may elect to look upon in that light. Daisy Hancock, like all those of her clan who are meagrely endowed with personal charms, had gained considerable experience in the conduct of more or less lopsided flirtations, and accordingly, having once determined that Tom Bridgford was to be their object, she began her manœuvres with a veteran's composure and *aplomb*. Have we not all seen the like? She made Tom teach her chess; she requested him to button her gloves; she gave him commissions to execute for her in Maythorpe (which was really rather stupid of her, as small parcels are irritating companions upon a bicycle); she took short strolls along the Maythorpe road to meet him on his way back from his office—a thing Etta Hewson would not have done for her weight in gold—and caused him to walk home beside her trundling his tall 'express;' she painted a device of clubs, rather badly, upon the handle of his tennis-racket; she sang what she said were his favourite songs, and she asked his opinion and advice upon all manner of subjects.

It need not be assumed, however, that in all this she had any more serious purpose before her than to amuse herself for a while in a way which, she imagined, gave her some prestige, and her proceedings some *éclat*, in her neighbours' eyes; and Tom himself quite understood the situation, and was slightly bored thereby, as I judged from the increasing frequency with which he absented himself from The Pack on Saturday half-holidays. But it was otherwise with Etta. Her experience of society had been extremely limited, nor were there in her own character and tastes any elements calculated to give her an intuitive insight into the nature of the phenomena presented by Miss Hancock. All she saw was that Tom and the new-comer were constantly laughing and talking together in tones of easy familiarity upon which she, reasoning from very imperfect analogies, could only put one interpretation. She neither detected nor suspected the petty stratagems by which Miss Hancock achieved that monopoly of Tom's society, but their success was painfully apparent to her, and, if I am not much mistaken, caused her many a melancholy hour. As the weeks went on, she grew very pale and quiet. At the best of times she was rather subject to shy fits, the presence of a single stranger often sufficing to envelop her in a silent and sad-visaged primness; but she now seemed to have permanently retreated behind that effacing screen, and on more than one occasion I saw Tom look puzzled and disconcerted when his remarks

were responded to across an icy distance, the origin of which he was very far from divining. Matters, moreover, were presently further complicated by the arrival of Hume Bridgford to spend the long vacation. For it so happened that he, simply because she, as an old acquaintance, was less formidable to him than the Miss Lysters, whilst he suspected her sister Dora of desiring to engage him in learned discourse, attached himself to Etta with a marked exclusiveness which the casual observer might easily have attributed to other motives, and which she met with a frank friendliness surviving from the time when she used to pity the ungainly schoolboy for always looking so awkward and uncomfortable.

Under ordinary circumstances Tom would have thought nothing of this, the idea of Hume becoming his rival in any more practical matters than hendecasyllables or conjectural emendations being so entirely heterogeneous with all the growths of his previous experience that it could not easily take root in his mind. But now Etta's coldness had roused a sensitiveness in him which was, I fancy, heightened by jokes and insinuations upon the part of Daisy Hancock, whom I once overheard saying something to him about 'the Inseparables' which made him look positively ferocious. It was soon after this that he began to talk, quite seriously, as it seemed, about a promising opening for himself which he had heard of in an Australian house of business, and, upon the whole, affairs assumed an aspect which threatened to terminate in a case of 'shy she was, and I thought her proud, thought her cold, and fled over the sea.'

This unsatisfactory state of things weighed a good deal upon my mind, and quite spoiled my pleasure in watching the little groups upon the lawn-tennis ground in the field at the back of The Pack, whither it was the custom of our young people to resort of an afternoon; for the partners always 'sorted themselves' wrongly. Having a Promethean amount of leisure on hand, I could, and did, devote much time to observing the progress of the estrangement, until at last I became so well versed in the ins and outs of it, and could read so clearly between the lines of many trivial speeches and actions, that I occasionally felt half-guilty, as if I had obtained my knowledge by some surreptitious or otherwise unjustifiable means. This feeling was particularly strong upon me one day, when I heard Etta, who was paying us an early visit, say in a restless sort of way to my cousin, as they sat together

over their knitting: 'Mrs. Wyatt, don't you sometimes get horribly tired of always living in the same place?' And at the same time I so vividly realised the frame of mind which had prompted Etta's speech, that I was almost disposed to blame my cousin for want of sympathy in her calm reply: 'I sometimes did when I was your age, my dear.' That accusation, however, would have been an entirely unfounded one, as I have since seen reason to believe.

Etta had not left us long, when Mrs. Wyatt said: 'Do you know I've been thinking of writing and advising my grandnephew, Reginald Strong, to come here in Mr. Madden's place?' (Mr. Madden was the Densleigh curate, whose health this summer compelled him to take a long holiday.) 'I know that the Rector has not heard of anyone yet, and is in straits for a stop-gap. Reginald is not overburdened with brains, but he is not a bad kind of boy, and he has just left his last curacy. If he comes,' my cousin continued in a tone intended to convey the impression that she regarded this point as a mere matter of detail, which, to the best of my belief, was *not* the case, 'we could put him up here, and save him the expense of lodgings.'

And so it came about that the next week saw the Rev. Reginald De Burgh Strong established at Diamond Mount. He was, as his grandaunt had candidly owned, not endowed with any very brilliant intellectual gifts; but he was, what proved much more to her purpose, rather good-looking in the mediæval saint style, exceedingly Ritualistic, and remarkably fond of female society. It should in justice be observed that he possessed some other more intrinsically valuable qualities, though with these we have at present nothing to do. His advent occasioned quite a revolution in The Pack. If the whole bench of bishops had come among us, they could not have imported with them a more ecclesiastical atmosphere. Incense, candles, Gregorians, and vestments became the prevailing topics of conversations in which the Rev. Reginald's late rector, who had been convicted of holding highly unorthodox views upon these points, occupied the position of reigning bugbear. The Miss Lysters succumbed at once: before a week had passed they were working an altar-mat. Our Miss Banks took to fasting on Fridays, which, poor soul, was the only demonstration which her means allowed her to make. Even fat, jolly Mrs. Hewson was slightly infected, and having with some difficulty stirred up Dora—for Etta, who remained proof against the curate's charms, upon this occasion showed herself most unusually obdurate about falling

in with her mother's wishes—went off with her and some reluctant smaller children to early matins; whilst the tennis-ground was deserted on the very finest afternoons, owing to a sudden recollection of the long-ignored fact that evensong began at half-past five.

It need scarcely be said that this enthusiasm was not shared by the male portion of our community. On the contrary, a studiously apathetic and superciliously non-participant attitude was adopted by them, enlivened now and then with a sarcastic sally; as when, for instance, Hume Bridgford was once heard announcing to an audience of scandalised maidens that he had a great mind to ask Mr. Strong to new baptise our dwellings by the name of 'Lamb Lodge, Sheep Villa, Mutton House, Shepherd Mount, The Flock;' a reckless project which he, of course, had no intention of carrying out, though his enjoyment of the pleasantry had made him forget his shyness; and I saw the proud consciousness of it in his face all through Mr. Strong's sermon on the following Sunday. But as for my cousin and me, albeit nowise tempted to join the worshipping party, we watched its proceedings well content, for most prominent among the devotees was Daisy Hancock, the consequence being that the unflagging current of her attentions, which had lately flowed around Tom, suddenly slipped away into another channel, and that our pair of lovers, who had seemingly begun to drift apart upon a stream of trivialities, now drew together again, only dimly conscious of what the sundering influence had been. A conviction that all would go well was borne in upon me from the first moment when I saw Miss Hancock busied with crimson silk and gold thread, the ingredients of a pair of bookmarkers for the lectern at St. Luke's. But my apprehensions finally departed one soft late August afternoon, when I saw from my window Tom and Etta alone upon the tennis-ground, ostensibly engaged in a single match, though to a close observer the game appeared to be a curious one, its rules requiring the frequent presence of both players upon the same side of the net, over which the balls sent to and fro were very few and far between; whilst a little way down the road I descried a female group escorting a long black figure in the direction of a bell which was ting-tanging from behind a clump of trees hard by. And were this narrative carried much further, I should come upon a theme to which I cannot here do justice—a wedding in The Pack.

THE GREENWOOD TREE.

IT is a common, not to say a vulgar error, to believe that trees and plants grow out of the ground. And of course, having thus begun by calling it bad names, I will not for a moment insult the intelligence of my readers by supposing them to share so foolish a delusion. I beg to state from the outset that I write this article entirely for the benefit of Other People. You and I, O proverbially Candid and Intelligent One, it need hardly be said, are better informed. But Other People fall into such ridiculous blunders that it is just as well to put them on their guard beforehand against the insidious advance of false opinions. I have known otherwise good and estimable men, indeed, who for lack of sound early teaching on this point went to their graves with a confirmed belief in the terrestrial origin of all earthly vegetation. They were probably victims of what the Church in its succinct way describes and denounces as *Invincible Ignorance*.

Now the reason why these deluded creatures supposed trees to grow out of the ground, instead of out of the air, is probably only because they saw their roots there. Of course, when people see a wallflower rooted in the clefts of some old church tower, they don't jump at once to the inane conclusion that it is made of rock—that it derives its nourishment direct from the solid limestone; nor when they observe a barnacle hanging by its sucker to a ship's hull, do they imagine it to draw up its food incontinently from the copper bottom. But when they see that familiar pride of our country, a British oak, with its great underground buttresses spreading abroad through the soil in every direction, they infer at once that the buttresses are there, not—as is really the case—to support it and uphold it, but to drink in nutriment from the earth beneath, which is just about as capable of producing oak-wood as the copper plate on the ship's hull is capable of producing the flesh of a barnacle. Sundry familiar facts about manuring and watering, to which I will return later on, give a certain colour of reasonableness, it is true, to this mistaken inference. But how mistaken it really is for all that, a single and very familiar little experiment will easily show one.

Cut down that British oak with your Gladstonian axe; lop

him of his branches; divide him into logs; pile him up into a pyramid; put a match to his base; in short, make a bonfire of him; and what becomes of robust majesty? He is reduced to ashes, you say. Ah, yes, but what proportion of him? Conduct your experiment carefully on a small scale; dry your wood well, and weigh it before burning; weigh your ash afterwards, and what will you find? Why, that the solid matter which remains after the burning is a mere infinitesimal fraction of the total weight: the greater part has gone off into the air, from whence it came, as carbonic acid. Dust to dust, ashes to ashes; but air to air, too, is the rule of nature.

It may sound startling—to Other People, I mean—but the simple truth remains, that trees and plants grow out of the atmosphere, not out of the ground. They are, in fact, solidified air; or to be more strictly correct, solidified gas—carbonic acid.

Take an ordinary soda-water syphon, with or without a wine-glassful of brandy, and empty it till only a few drops remain in the bottom. Then the bottle is full of gas; and that gas, which will rush out with a spurt when you press the knob, is the stuff that plants eat—the raw material of life, both animal and vegetable. The tree grows and lives by taking in the carbonic acid from the air, and solidifying its carbon; the animal grows and lives by taking the solidified carbon from the plant, and converting it once more into carbonic acid. That, in its ideally simple form, is the Iliad in a nutshell, the core and kernel of biology. The whole cycle of life is one eternal see-saw. First the plant collects its carbon compounds from the air in the oxidised state; it deoxidises and rebuilds them: and then the animal proceeds to burn them up by slow combustion within his own body, and to turn them loose upon the air, once more oxidised. After which the plant starts again on the same round as before, and the animal also recommences *da capo*. And so on *ad infinitum*.

But the point which I want particularly to emphasise here is just this: that trees and plants don't grow out of the ground at all, as most people do vainly talk, but directly out of the air; and that when they die or get consumed, they return once more to the atmosphere from which they were taken. Trees undeniably eat carbon.

Of course, therefore, all the ordinary unscientific conceptions of how plants feed are absolutely erroneous. Vegetable physiology, indeed, got beyond those conceptions a good hundred years ago.

But it usually takes a hundred years for the world at large to make up its leeway. Trees don't suck up their nutriment by the roots, they don't derive their food from the soil, they don't need to be fed, like babies through a tube, with terrestrial solids. The solitary instance of an orchid hung up by a string in a conservatory on a piece of bark, ought to be sufficient at once to dispel for ever this strange illusion—if people ever thought; but of course they don't think—I mean Other People. The true mouths and stomachs of plants are not to be found in the roots, but in the green leaves; their true food is not sucked up from the soil, but is inhaled through tiny channels from the air; the mass of their material is carbon, as we can all see visibly to the naked eye when a log of wood is reduced to charcoal: and that carbon the leaves themselves drink in, by a thousand small green mouths, from the atmosphere around them.

But how about the juice, the sap, the qualities of the soil, the manure required? is the incredulous cry of Other People. What is the use of the roots, and especially of the rootlets, if they are not the mouths and supply-tubes of the plants? Well, I plainly perceive I can get 'no forrader,' like the farmer with his claret, till I've answered that question, provisionally at least; so I will say here at once, without further ado—the plant requires drink as well as food, and the roots are the mouths that supply it with water. They also suck up a few other things as well, which are necessary indeed, but far from forming the bulk of the nutriment. Many plants, however, don't need any roots at all, while none can get on without leaves as mouths and stomachs. That is to say, no true plantlike plants, for some parasitic plants are practically, to all intents and purposes, animals. To put it briefly, every plant has one set of aerial mouths to suck in carbon, and many plants have another set of subterranean mouths as well, to suck up water and mineral constituents.

Have you ever grown mustard and cress in the window on a piece of flannel? If so, that's a capital practical example of the comparative unimportance of soil, except as a means of supplying moisture. You put your flannel in a soup-plate by the dining-room window; you keep it well wet, and you lay the seeds of the cress on top of it. The young plants, being supplied with water by their roots, and with carbon by the air around, have all the little they need below, and grow and thrive in these conditions wonderfully. But if you were to cover them up with an air-tight glass case, so

as to exclude fresh air, they'd shrivel up at once for want of carbon, which is their solid food, as water is their liquid.

The way the plant really eats is little known to gardeners, but very interesting. All over the lower surface of the green leaf lie scattered dozens of tiny mouths or apertures, each of them guarded by two small pursed-up lips which have a ridiculously human appearance when seen through a simple microscope. When the conditions of air and moisture are favourable, these lips open visibly to admit gases; and then the tiny mouths suck in carbonic acid in abundance from the air around them. A series of pipes conveys the gaseous food thus supplied to the upper surface of the leaf, where the sunlight falls full upon it. Now, the cells of the leaf contain a peculiar green digestive material, which I regret to say has no simpler or more cheerful name than chlorophyll; and when the sunlight plays upon this mysterious chlorophyll, it severs the oxygen from the carbon in the carbonic acid, turns the free gas loose upon the atmosphere once more through the tiny mouths, and retains the severed carbon intact in its own tissues. That is the whole process of feeding in plants: they eat carbonic acid, digest it in their leaves, get rid of the oxygen with which it was formerly combined, and keep the carbon stored up for their own purposes.

Life as a whole depends entirely upon this property of chlorophyll; for every atom of organic matter in your body or mine was originally so manufactured by sunlight in the leaves of some plant from which, directly or indirectly, we derive it.

To be sure, in order to make up the various substances which compose their tissues—to build up their wood, their leaves, their fruits, their blossoms—plants require hydrogen, nitrogen, and even small quantities of oxygen as well; but these various materials are sufficiently supplied in the water which is taken up by the roots, and they really contribute very little indeed to the bulk of the tree, which consists for the most part of almost pure carbon. If you were to take a thoroughly dry piece of wood, and then drive off from it by heat these extraneous matters, you would find that the remainder, the pure charcoal, formed the bulk of the weight, the rest being for the most part very light and gaseous. Briefly put, plants are mostly carbon and water, and the carbon which forms their solid part is extracted direct from the air around them.

How does it come about then that a careless world in general,

and more especially the happy-go-lucky race of gardeners and farmers in particular, who have to deal so much with plants in their practical aspect, always attach so great importance to root, soil, manure, minerals, and so little to the real gaseous food stuff of which their crops are, in fact, composed? Why does Hodge, who is so strong on grain and guano, know so absolutely nothing about carbonic acid? That seems at first sight a difficult question to meet. But I think we can meet it with a simple analogy.

Oxygen is an absolute necessary of human life. Even food itself is hardly so important an element in our daily existence; for Succi, Dr. Tanner, the prophet Elijah, and other adventurous souls too numerous to mention, have abundantly shown us that a man can do without food altogether for forty days at a stretch, while he can't do without oxygen for a single minute. Cut off his supply of that life-supporting gas, choke him, or suffocate him, or place him in an atmosphere of pure carbonic acid, or hold his head in a bucket of water, and he dies at once. Yet, except in mines or submarine tunnels, nobody ever takes into account practically this most important factor in human and animal life. We toil for bread, but we ignore the supply of oxygen. And why? Simply because oxygen is universally diffused everywhere. It costs nothing. Only in the Black Hole of Calcutta or in a broken tunnel shaft do men ever begin to find themselves practically short of that life-sustaining gas, and then they know the want of it far sooner and far more sharply than they know the want of food on a shipwrecked raft, or the want of water in the thirsty desert. Yet antiquity never even heard of oxygen. A prime necessary of life passed unnoticed for ages in human history, only because there was abundance of it to be had everywhere.

Now it isn't quite the same, I admit, with the carbonaceous food of plants. Carbonic acid isn't quite so universally distributed as oxygen, nor can every plant always get as much as it wants of it. I shall show by-and-by that a real struggle for food takes place between plants, exactly as it takes place between animals; and that certain plants, like Oliver Twist in the workhouse, never practically get enough to eat. Still, carbonic acid is present in very large quantities in the air in most situations, and is freely brought by the wind to all the open spaces which alone man uses for his crops and his gardening. The most important element in the food of plants is thus in effect almost everywhere available, especially from the point of view of the mere practical everyday

human agriculturist. The wind that bloweth where it listeth brings fresh supplies of carbon on its wings with every breeze to the mouths and throats of the greedy and eager plants that long to absorb it.

It is quite otherwise, however, with the soil and its constituents. Land, we all know—or if we don't, it isn't the fault of Mr. George and Mr. A. R. Wallace—land is 'naturally limited in quantity.' Every plant therefore struggles for a foothold in the soil far more fiercely and far more tenaciously than it struggles for its share in the free air of heaven. Your plant is a land-grabber of Rob Roy proclivities; it believes in a fair fight and no favour. A sufficient supply of food it almost takes for granted, if only it can once gain a sufficient ground-space. But other plants are competing with it, tooth and nail (if plants may be permitted by courtesy those metaphorical adjuncts), for their share of the soil, like crofters or socialists; every spare inch of earth is permeated and pervaded with matted fibres; and each is striving to withdraw from each the small modicum of moisture, mineral matter, and manure for which all alike are eagerly battling.

Now, what the plant wants from the soil is three things. First and foremost it wants support; like all the rest of us it must have its *pou sto*, its *pied-à-terre*, its *locus standi*. It can't hang aloft, like Mahomet's coffin, miraculously suspended on an aerial perch between earth and heaven. Secondly, it wants water, and this it can take in, as a rule, only or mainly by means of the rootlets, though there are some peculiar plants which grow (not parasitically) on the branches of trees, and absorb all the moisture they need by pores on their surface. And thirdly, it wants small quantities of nitrogenous matter—in the simpler language of everyday life called manure—as well as of mineral matter—in the simpler language of everyday life called ashes. It is mainly the first of these three, support, that the farmer thinks of when he calculates crops and acreage; for the second, he depends upon rainfall or irrigation; but the third, manure, he can supply artificially; and as manure makes a great deal of incidental difference to some of his crops, especially corn—which requires abundant phosphates—he is apt to over-estimate vastly its importance from a theoretical point of view.

Besides, look at it in another light. Over large areas together, the conditions of air, climate, and rainfall are practically identical. But soil differs greatly from place to place. Here it's black;

there it's yellow; here it's rich loam; there it's boggy mould or sandy gravel. And some soils are better adapted to growing certain plants than others. Rich lowlands and oolites suit the cereals; red marl produces wonderful grazing grass; bare uplands are best for gorse and heather. Hence everything favours for the practical man the mistaken idea that plants and trees grow mainly out of the soil. His own eyes tell him so; he sees them growing, he sees the visible result undeniable before his face; while the real act of feeding off the carbon in the air is wholly unknown to him, being realisable only by the aid of the microscope, aided by the most delicate and difficult chemical analysis.

Nevertheless French chemists have amply proved by actual experiment that plants can grow and produce excellent results without any aid from the soil at all. You have only to suspend the seeds freely in the air by a string, and supply the rootlets of the sprouting seedlings with a little water, containing in solution small quantities of manure-stuffs, and the plants will grow as well as on their native heath, or even better. Indeed, nature has tried the same experiment on a larger scale in many cases, as with the cliff-side plants that root themselves in the naked clefts of granite rocks; the tropical orchids that fasten lightly on the bark of huge forest trees; and the mosses that spread even over the bare face of hard brick walls, with scarcely a chink or cranny in which to fasten their minute rootlets. The insect-eating plants are also interesting examples in their way of the curious means which nature takes for keeping up the manure supply under trying circumstances. These uncanny things are all denizens of loose, peaty soil, where they can root themselves sufficiently for purposes of foothold and drink, but where the water rapidly washes away all animal matter. Under such conditions the cunning sundews and the ruthless pitcher-plants set deceptive honey traps for unsuspecting insects, which they catch and kill, absorbing and using up the protoplasmic contents of their bodies, by way of manure to supply their quota of nitrogenous material.

It is the literal fact, then, that plants really eat and live off carbon, just as truly as sheep eat grass or lions eat antelopes; and that the green leaves are the mouths and stomachs with which they eat and digest it. From this it naturally results that the growth and spread of the leaves must largely depend upon the supply of carbon, as the growth and fatness of sheep depends upon the supply of pasturage. Under most circumstances, to be sure,

there is carbon enough and to spare lying about loose for every one of them; but conditions do now and again occur where we can clearly see the importance of the carbon supply. Water, for example, contains practically much less carbonic acid than atmospheric air, especially when the water is stagnant, and therefore not supplied fresh and fresh to the plant from moment to moment. As a consequence, almost all water-plants have submerged leaves very narrow and waving, while floating plants, like the water-lilies, have them large and round, owing to the absence of competition from other kinds about, which enables them to spread freely in every direction from the central stalk. Moreover, these leaves, lolling on the water as they do, have their mouths on the upper instead of the under surface. But the most remarkable fact of all is that many water plants have two entirely different types of leaves, one submerged and hair-like, the other floating and broad or circular. Our own English water-crowfoot, for example, has the leaves that spring from its stem, below the surface, divided into endless long waving filaments, which look about in the water for the stray particles of carbon; but the moment it reaches the top of its native pond the foliage expands at once into broad lily-like lobes, that recline on the water like oriental beauties, and absorb carbon from the air to their heart's content. The one type may be likened to gills, that similarly catch the dissolved oxygen diffused in water; the other type may be likened to lungs, that drink in the free and open air of heaven.

Equally important to the plant, however, with the supply of carbonic acid, is the supply of sunshine by whose aid to digest it. The carbon alone is no good to the tree if it can't get something which will separate it from the oxygen, locked in close embrace with it. That thing is sunshine. There is nothing, therefore, for which herbs, trees, and shrubs compete more eagerly than for their fair share of solar energy. In their anxiety for this they jostle one another down most mercilessly, in the native condition, grasses struggling up with their hollow stems above the prone low herbs, shrubs overtopping the grasses in turn, and trees once more killing out the overshadowed undershrubs. One must remember that wherever nature has free play, instead of being controlled by the hand of man, dense forest covers every acre of ground where the soil is deep enough; gorse, whins, and heather, or their equivalents grow wherever the forest fails; and herbs can only hold their own in the rare intervals where these domineering

lords of the vegetable creation can find no foothold. Meadows or prairies occur nowhere in nature, except in places where the liability to destructive fires over wide areas together crushes out forest trees, or else where goats, bison, deer, and other large herbivores browse them ceaselessly down in the stage of seedlings. Competition for sunlight is thus even keener perhaps than competition for foodstuffs. Alike on trees, shrubs, and herbs accordingly the arrangement of the leaves is always exactly calculated so as to allow the largest possible horizontal surface, and the greatest exposure of the blade to the open sunshine. In trees this arrangement can often be very well observed, all the leaves being placed at the extremities of the branches, and forming a great dome-shaped or umbrella-shaped mass, every part of which stands an even chance of catching its fair share of carbonic acid and solar energy.

The shapes of the leaves themselves are also largely due to the same cause, every leaf being so designed in form and outline as to interfere as little as possible with the other leaves on the same stem, as regards supply both of light and of carbonaceous foodstuffs. It is only in rare cases, like that of the water-lily, that perfectly round leaves occur, because the conditions are seldom equal all round, and the incidence of light and the supply of carbon are seldom unlimited. But wherever leaves rise free and solitary into the air, without mutual interference, they are always circular, as may be well seen in the common nasturtium and the English pennywort. On the other hand, among dense hedgerows and thickets, where the silent, invisible struggle for life is very fierce indeed, and where sunlight and carbonic acid are intercepted by a thousand competing mouths and arms, the prevailing types of leaf are extremely cut up and minutely subdivided into small lace-like fragments. The plant in such cases can't afford material to fill up the interstices between the veins and ribs which determine its underlying architectural structure. Often indeed species which grow under these hard conditions produce leaves which are, as it were, but skeleton representatives of their large and well filled-out compeers in the open meadows.

It is only by bearing vividly in mind this ceaseless and noiseless struggle between plants for their gaseous food and the sunshine which enables them to digest it, that we can ever fully understand the varying forms and habits of the vegetable kingdom. To most people, no doubt, it sounds like pure metaphor to talk of

an internecine struggle between rooted beings which cannot budge one inch from their places, nor fight with horns, hoofs, or teeth, nor devour one another bodily, nor tread one another down with ruthless footsteps. But that is only because we habitually forget that competition is just as really a struggle for life as open warfare. The men who try against one another for a clerkship in the City, or a post in a gang of builder's workmen, are just as surely taking away bread and butter out of their fellows' mouths for their own advantage, as if they fought for it openly with fists or six-shooters. The white man who encloses the hunting grounds of the Indian, and plants them with corn, is just as surely dooming that Indian to death as if he scalped or tomahawked him. And so too with the unconscious warfare of plants. The daisy or the plantain that spreads its rosette of leaves flat against the ground is just as truly monopolising a definite space of land as the noble owner of a Highland deer forest. No blade of grass can spring beneath the shadow of those tightly pressed little mats of foliage; no fragment of carbon, no ray of sunshine can ever penetrate below that close fence of living greenstuff.

Plants, in fact, compete with one another all round for everything they stand in need of. They compete for their food—carbonic acid. They compete for their energy—their fair share of sunlight. They compete for water, and their foothold in the soil. They compete for the favours of the insects that fertilise their flowers. They compete for the good services of the birds or mammals that disseminate their seeds in proper spots for germination. And how real this competition is we can see in a moment, if we think of the difficulties of human cultivation. There, weeds are always battling manfully with our crops or our flowers for mastery over the field or garden. We are obliged to root up with ceaseless toil these intrusive competitors, if we wish to enjoy the kindly fruits of the earth in due season. When we leave a garden to itself for a few short years, we realise at once what effect the competition of hardy natives has upon our carefully tended and unstable exotics. In a very brief time the dahlias and phloxes and lilies have all disappeared, and in their place the coarse-growing docks and nettles and thistles have raised their heads aloft to monopolise air and space and sunshine.

Exactly the same struggle is always taking place in the fields and woods and moors around us, and especially in the spots made over to pure nature. There, the greenwood tree raises its huge

umbrella of foliage to the skies, and allows hardly a ray of sunlight to struggle through to the low woodland vegetation of orchid or wintergreen underneath. Where the soil is not deep enough for trees to root securely, bushes and heathers overgrow the ground, and compete with their bell-shaped blossoms for the coveted favour of bees and butterflies. And in open glades, where for some reason or other the forest fails, tall grasses and other aspiring herbs run up apace towards the free air of heaven. Elsewhere, creepers struggle up to the sun over the stems and branches of stronger bushes or trees, which they often choke and starve by monopolising at last all the available carbon and sunlight. And so throughout; the struggle for life goes on just as ceaselessly and truly among these unconscious combatants as among the lions and tigers of the tropical jungle, or among the human serfs of the overstocked market.

An ounce of example, they say, is worth a pound of precept. So a single concrete case of a fierce vegetable campaign now actually in progress over all Northern Europe may help to make my meaning a trifle clearer. Till very lately the forests of the north were largely composed in places of the light and airy silver birches. But with the gradual amelioration of the climate of our continent, which has been going on for several centuries, the beech, a more southern type of tree, has begun to spread slowly though surely northward. Now, beeches are greedy trees, of very dense and compact foliage; nothing else can grow beneath their thick shade, where once they have gained a foothold; and the seedlings of the silver birch stand no chance at all in the struggle for life against the serried leaves of their formidable rivals. The beech literally eats them out of house and home; and the consequence is that the thick and ruthless southern tree is at this very moment gradually superseding over vast tracts of country its more graceful and beautiful, but far less voracious competitor.

GRASSE :

ITS PERFUMES AND PICTURES.

'GUEUSE PARFUMÉE,' or scented slut, is the nickname given to Grasse by the most eminent of its bishops. Two centuries have passed since then, and Grasse, though no longer a 'Gueuse,' has still an undisputed right to the title of the scented.

It is comforting in these days of chemical surprises, when bright colours and exquisite flavours are extracted from the most repulsive substances, to know that the wares of the perfumer do still come from the flowers whose name they bear. A visit to Grasse must remove all doubt from the mind of the most sceptical. Flowers are the chief produce of the soil and the mainstay of the population. They are grown on every available patch of ground. Violets carpet the terraces under the olive-trees, while on other terraces grows the orange-tree. That 'busy plant' keeps its owner as busy as the poet fancied it was itself, for the leaves have to be carefully syringed and wiped every now and again to keep it free from blight.

Out in the open country there are fields of jonquil, and of jessamine, and of the muscadine rose, that Rose of Provence, which excels all other roses in fragrance. But the rose and the jessamine lose much of their gracefulness in this field culture. No straggling sprays are allowed to wander at their own sweet will; they are all caught and pinned down, bent over in hoops close to the ground.

There is no scope left the flowers for wasting 'their sweetness on the desert air' in this region. Every whiff of scent has its money value, and all through the flowering season the stills of the seventy perfumers which the town can boast are busy extracting and bottling up this sweetness for the London and Paris markets. From earliest dawn picturesque figures, with huge discs of straw the size of cartwheels on their heads, and skirts whose roseate hue makes the roses themselves look dingy, are picking away for bare life in the flower fields. Of the violet gatherers nothing is to be seen save the hats. They look like a row of targets set up for archery practice. It is only on closer inspection that you find a figure crouching on all fours picking hard behind the shelter of her head-gear. As the flowers are

picked they are carried in baskets into the town. The violets refuse to give up their scent, like the other flowers, to distillation. Slabs of slate set in wooden frames are spread thick with hog's lard to receive them. On this bed they are scattered, and the slates are then stacked one above the other like the shelves of a cabinet. The flowers must be renewed three times a day, all through the flowering season. By that time the lard is permeated with the scent which can then be withdrawn from it into spirit. The orange blossom is the chief source of wealth in the district. The season lasts a month, and during that time flower-picking is the business of life on the farms. So strong is the scent that it sometimes overpowers the pickers, and brings on prolonged fainting fits. The famous Neroly is the concentrated essence of the orange flower. A kilogramme of blossom yields one gramme or a thousandth part of its weight in Neroly, which is the chief ingredient in eau-de-Cologne. Sixty thousand francs' worth of Neroly go to Cologne from Grasse yearly. To meet this demand two hundred thousand kilos of blossoms are used up. Much of the so-called attar of roses is made here also, and finds its way from Grasse to Paris *via* Constantinople, where it is transferred to the familiar gilt glass bottles that seem to certify its Eastern origin. The productions of Grasse are the *premières matières* or raw materials of perfume. They are much manipulated in Paris before they reach the public, and the favourite bouquets are really produced by a cunning mixture of the essences of many flowers. As the scent of flowers must be extracted where they grow, Grasse has a long lease of the monopoly of the perfume trade, which it has enjoyed ever since Catherine de' Medici brought the taste for perfumes and poisons from her native Italy. This taste reached its height under Louis Quinze, when Versailles was known as the 'Cour parfumée,' and etiquette required that everyone pretending to fashion must have a different scent every day. Scents were one of the great extravagances of the age, and it is stated that the Pompadour spent on perfumes five hundred thousand francs a year.

Grasse has other attractions to boast of besides the flowers and the scenery. In an old-fashioned house near the Cour there are some pictures which are well worth a pilgrimage to visit. These are some masterpieces of Fragonard, who was a native of Grasse. He went to Paris and studied under Chardin, Vauloo, and Boucher. With Boucher he soon became a favourite,

because he could work fifteen hours a day without fatigue. Fragonard gained the Prix de Rome and set out to study the great masters. 'If you take them seriously, you are done for,' was Boucher's parting warning, and Fragonard acted upon it. He said that Raphael and Michael Angelo frightened him. So he went about a great deal, and saw a great deal of Italian life, but studied not at all. Thus he returned to Paris with his style unaltered. He was a Frenchman to the backbone, and threw himself heart and soul into all the pleasures of a frivolous age, that made the joys of life the chief end of existence. He gained admission to the Academy by one serious effort, which called forth a ponderous *éloge* from Diderot. But he found a shorter cut to fame by becoming the favoured lover of the celebrated *danseuse* Guimard. This *Squelette des Graces*, so called because she was ugly, black, and thin, had all the *beau monde* of Paris sighing at her feet. From among them she singled out Fragonard. He painted her, as the dancing Muse, for her new theatre, which she called the Temple of Terpsichore. The portrait gave her great delight, and she invited friends to a private view. Meanwhile the lovers had had a quarrel, and Fragonard, out of pique, had effaced the smile of the Muse, and replaced it by the head of a Fury, with a striking likeness to the original. It was this startling caricature that Guimard found herself facing when the doors were thrown open and the work of Fragonard revealed. Rage at the mortifying surprise made the likeness more striking, and the friends who came to admire could not restrain a laugh. The breach thus made was too wide to be healed, and the painter was discarded. But it mattered little to him now, for he had become the fashion. No boudoir of the period was complete without some work from his brush. His pictures were eagerly competed for, and his prices were absurdly high. When he was at the zenith of his fame, the Dubarry commissioned from him the pictures now at Grasse, for the decoration of a salon in her château at Luciennes. Fragonard painted them when on a visit to his native town. There are four large canvases to cover the walls and smaller pieces to put over the doors. The theme, as usual, is love. They set forth the four stages of a romance, said to be taken from the life of Louis Quinze. The figures are set in a garden scene, with the picturesque adjuncts of fountains and balustrades. The colouring is bright, the figures very graceful, and the execution full of freedom and vigour. The storm of the

Revolution burst before the pictures were sent home, and they still hang in the house where they were painted, and from which they have never been removed. Thus the 'ill wind' that destroyed art-treasures all over France was the means of preserving those of Grasse.

Other pictures there are in the town too, which, though of small merit in point of art, are dear to all lovers of letters from having been painted under the very eyes of Goethe, when a boy, in his father's house at Frankfort. The French occupation of Frankfort made a great impression on the poet's mind. It was his first glimpse of the world outside his quiet German home, and the vivid picture he has drawn oft bears the stamp of truth in its sharply touched-in lines. The free imperial city was accustomed to the sight of soldiers passing through to the seat of war. But on New Year's day, 1759, it was surprised by the arrival of a French army, which did not pass through but coolly planted itself in the town by means of billeting itself on the citizens. Goethe's father had just finished his new and handsome house, and to his extreme disgust the French singled it out as the headquarters of the King's lieutenant. This dignitary had to keep the peace between the soldiers and the citizens, and decide all quarrels between them. Then began stirring times for the children of the house; the constant coming and going of both parties kept their home buzzing like a beehive. The relations between the master of the house and his distinguished guest were very strained. Their father, though he spoke French well, hated the nation, and he would hold no communication with the intruder except through an interpreter, and the whole household were kept on tenter-hooks to avert the flare-up which they felt would come from a personal encounter with the Count. Their mother took a different line. Her policy was one of conciliation. In mature middle age she learnt French, that she might talk to the Count in his own language. As for the children, they gathered a daily harvest of dainties from the Count's dessert. If they could escape their father's eye they devoured these in safety, all except the ices which the anxious mother intercepted. Such things had never been seen in simple Frankfort before, and she felt sure that no human stomach could digest them. The Count himself was an interesting study for young Goethe. He was a tall, dark, dignified man, more like a Spaniard than a Frenchman, giving a witty turn to his decisions in the quarrels daily brought before him, and yet

subject to fits of gloom during which he would see no one, and which gave occasion to endless surmises. A whisper ran that a dark deed done in a moment of passion had marred his whole life and prospects. This dark mysterious Count de Thoranne was a great lover of art. He found painting was cheap at Frankfort, and he resolved to have pictures painted for the walls of the family mansion at Grasse, sent home for the measurements of the walls, and then set the best artists in Frankfort to work upon the canvas. A room in the house was set aside for the artists. There they painted busily, and Goethe and the Count seemed to have passed most of their time there too in looking on. Each of these artists had his speciality. One excelled in Dutch work and could do fruit and flowers to perfection. The forte of another was sunny Rhine scenery. A third went in for Rembrandt effects, and gloried in Resurrection miracles and flaming villages and mills. Seekatz, the most eminent among them, shone in rural life. His old people and children were lifelike, because they were done from life, but his young men were far too thin, and his young women just as much too fat. The reason of this was that his wife, who was stout and middle-aged, insisted on sitting as his model. When the Count found out the special gift of each artist, the bright idea struck him that the pictures would be vastly improved if each one painted in them what he could do best. So he had cattle painted into a landscape finished by another hand. A third was employed to put in sheep, which he did so lavishly that the flock flowed over the edge. The figure-painter was then told to add some travellers and a few shepherds; thus the piece became so crowded with living objects that they seemed to be choking for want of air even in the open country. This led to deadly quarrels among the painters, as each one accused the others of spoiling his work. At length this strange patchwork was finished and sent home to Grasse, where it still decorates one of the large old-fashioned houses on the Place des Aires in the centre of the town.

Near this historic house there is another which contains a salon decorated and furnished in the best taste of the style of Louis Quinze. This was the boudoir of Louise, Marquise de Cabris, one of that strange family of Mirabeau who gave the world so much to talk about. In this satin-lined nest perhaps she was surprised by the sudden visit of her scapegrace brother Honoré. He found the dulness of Manosque, whither he had been consigned by *lettre de cachet*, so intolerable, that he came down to Grasse to seek a

little excitement. In a few days the whole town was in a ferment, and the brother and sister found themselves credited with an outrage on public decency of which, for once, they were guiltless. A libel on the ladies of Grasse placarded the walls. A gentleman of the neighbourhood, M. de Mouans, openly said what every one thought, that this was the work of the dare-devil Mirabeaus. In revenge for this Mirabeau fell upon him, when he met him unprotected on the road, and beat him nearly to death, with his sister looking on. A lawsuit followed in which many scandals came out; it was found that the Marquis de Cabris and not his wife was the author of the squibs which had raised this storm in a teacup, whose consequences were to be wider than any of those concerned in it could imagine. For it was for his share in this affair that the nobles turned their backs on Mirabeau when he tried to secure their votes at Aix. This drove him to open the clothshop which qualified him as a deputy of the Tiers État, and made him the mouthpiece of the Revolution. On the same Place des Aires there stood formerly the palace of a queen, who held a front place in the history of her time. Queen Jeanne of Naples came to Grasse to avoid the revengers of her first husband, of whose death she was openly accused. In Provence she made herself popular, scattering her bounties with a lavish hand, gave a water conduit to one commune and a charter to another, freed one district from the tyranny of bandits and another from the tyranny of bishops, and conferred on the peasants of the Esterel the freedom of their forest. A fragment of the kitchen-stair is all that is left to show that this fascinating woman for whom the troubadours sang and Giotto painted, the Queen who won the adoration of Petrarch, the pupil of Boccaccio, and the bugbear of St. Catherine of Siena, once held her court in Grasse.

We must not leave Grasse without recalling the memory of Antoine Godeau, the greatest of her bishops. Godeau was drawn from the depths of provincial life by Conrart, who brought him to Paris to that literary gathering in his house in the Rue St. Martin which was denounced to Richelieu as a secret society. The Cardinal took away its secrecy, and gave it importance by conferring on it the royal approval. He thus founded the Academy. Godeau was the darling of the Hôtel Rambouillet, where he was known as the 'nain de Mademoiselle Julie.' His prose was the model of style. The highest praise that could be given to literary work was to call it 'du Godeau.' He took orders at the mature age of

thirty-five, in hope of preferment, and the Cardinal gave him the see of Grasse. For a short time it was united with Vence, but this union was so unpopular that Godeau resigned Grasse, and ended his days at Vence. Here he died from a fit of apoplexy as he was singing the *Tenebræ* before the altar in Passion Week.

Apart from association, Grasse has natural charms that win every heart. The climate and the scenery are both superb. But for the bigotry of one of the natives, Grasse would long ago have held the place of Cannes as a winter resort. Lord Brougham would have settled here, but was refused the property he wished to buy on the grotesque ground that he was a Protestant. He went on to Cannes, and became a pillar of the Church in the colony which he there founded. The great variety of walks and drives round Grasse prevents life from being monotonous. Antibes, with Vauban's fort, Vence with its Roman remains, Gourdon perched high on its rocky pinnacle above the Loup where the caves and clefts still echo the groans of hunted Huguenots, Tourette the stronghold of the Saracens, its rocky platform literally covered with aloes, are all within easy range, and offer tempting subjects for canvas or camera; while the geologist and botanist may find at every step rare treasures to serve as mementos of their rambles in this sunny land of flowers.

A FLASH IN THE PAN.

It is not everybody who knows what a Minor Canon is, or what his duties are ; so, for the sake of the uninformed, let me say at once that his chief duty is to take his turn in reading, that is, in monotoning and singing the daily services in a Cathedral. Such is my duty. I am a Minor Canon of the Cathedral Church of Marchbury. I occupy a house within the Cathedral Close, and thus enjoy the privilege of passing my days 'far from the madding crowd.' The life is uneventful enough: little happens from year's end to year's end to vary the humdrum of existence ; in fact, nothing more exciting than a garden party at the Bishop's or a dinner at the Deanery, or tea at the Archdeacon's. Even these superior 'functions' cause but a slight and transient ruffle upon the calm flow of life's stream.

For many years, as a Minor Canon, I have breathed this serene and placid atmosphere of the Close. Often have I wondered if I should live all my life thus ; or whether, some day or other, something would startle me, like a bolt from the blue, and I should find myself plunged, on a sudden, into the midst of the most exciting events. For many years, year after year and month after month, I have regularly taken my 'turn' in singing the services, and nothing particularly remarkable has ever happened to me—until yesterday: and yesterday something did happen.

It was Monday, and in the afternoon, as I was walking along the High Street of Marchbury, I was met by a distinguished-looking person, whom I had observed at the services in the Cathedral on the previous day. Now it chanced, on that Sunday, that I was singing the service. Properly speaking, it was not my turn ; but, as my brother Minor Canons were either away from Marchbury, or ill in bed, I was the only one left to perform the necessary duty. The distinguished-looking person was a tall, big man, with a round fat face and small features. His eyes, his hair and moustache (his face was bare but for a small moustache) were quite black, and he had a very pleasant and genial expression. He wore a tall hat, set rather jauntily on his head, and he was dressed in black with a long frock coat, buttoned across the chest and fitting him close to the body. As he came, with a half saunter, half swagger, along the street, I knew him again at once by his

appearance; and, as he came nearer, I saw from his manner that he was intending to stop and speak to me. For he slightly raised his hat, and, in a soft, melodious voice, with a colonial 'twang,' which was far from being disagreeable, and which, indeed, to my ear gave a certain additional interest to his remarks, he saluted me with 'Good day, sir!'

'Good day,' I answered, with just a little reserve in my tone.

'I hope, sir,' he began, 'you will excuse my stopping you in the street, but I wish to tell you how very much I enjoyed the music at your Cathedral yesterday. I am an Australasian, sir, and we have no such music in my country.'

'I suppose not,' I said.

'No, sir,' he went on, 'nothing nearly so fine. I am very fond of music, and as my business brought me in this direction, I thought I would stop at your city and take the opportunity of paying a visit to your grand Cathedral. And I am delighted I came: so pleased, indeed, that I should like to leave some memorial of my visit behind me. I should like, sir, to do something for your choir.'

'I am sure it is very kind of you,' I replied.

'Yes, I should certainly be glad if you could suggest to me something I might do in this way. As regards money, I may say that I have plenty of it. I am the owner of a most valuable property. My business relations extend throughout the world, and if I am as fortunate in the projects of the future as I have been in the past, I shall probably one day achieve the proud position of being the richest man in the world.'

I did not like to undertake, myself, the responsibility of advising or suggesting, so I simply said:

'I cannot venture to say, offhand, what would be the most acceptable way of showing your great kindness and generosity: but I should certainly recommend you to put yourself in communication with the Dean.'

'Thank you, sir,' said my Australian friend, 'I will do so. And now, sir,' he continued, 'let me say how much I admire your voice. It is, without exception, the very finest and clearest voice I have ever heard.'

'Really,' I answered, quite overcome with such unqualified praise, 'really it is very good of you to say so.'

'Ah! but I feel it, my dear sir. I have been round the world; from Sydney to Frisco, across the continent of America (he called it Amercker) to New York city; then on to England, and

to-morrow I shall leave your city to continue my travels. But in all my experience I have never heard so grand a voice as your own.'

This and a great deal more he said in the same strain, which modesty forbids me to reproduce.

Now I am not without some knowledge of the world outside the Close of Marchbury Cathedral, and I could not listen to such a 'flattering tale' without having my suspicions aroused. Who and what is this man? thought I. I looked at him narrowly. At first the thought flashed across me that he might be a 'swell mobsman.' But no; his face was too good for that: besides, no man with that huge frame, that personality so marked and so easily recognisable, could be a swindler: he could not escape detection a single hour. I dismissed the ungenerous thought. Perhaps he is rich, as he says. We do hear of munificent donations by benevolent millionaires now and then. What if this Australian, attracted by the glories of the old Cathedral, should now appear, as a *deus ex machina*, to re-endow the choir, or to found a Musical Professoriate in connection with the choir, appointing me the first occupant of the professorial chair?

These thoughts flashed across my mind in the momentary pause of his fluent tongue.

'As for yourself, sir,' he began again, 'I have something to propose, which I trust may not prove unwelcome. But the public street is hardly a suitable place to discuss my proposal. May I call upon you this evening at your house in the Close? I know which it is, for I happened to see you go into it yesterday after the morning service.'

'I shall be very pleased to see you,' I replied. 'We are going out to dinner this evening; but I shall be at home and disengaged till about seven.'

'Thank you very much. Then I shall do myself the pleasure of calling upon you about six o'clock. Till then, farewell!' A graceful wave of the hand, and my unknown friend had disappeared round the corner of the street.

Now at last, I thought, something is going to happen in my uneventful life—something to break the monotony of existence. Coming events cast their shadows before. The shadow had been cast, and a very solid and substantial shadow, too—over six feet high, and proportionately broad and thick. I had succeeded, it was evident, in attracting the notice of some great Australian millionaire. Of course, he must have inquired my name; he could get that from any of the Cathedral vergers; and, as he said,

he had observed whereabouts in the Close I lived. But I was not to see him again till six o'clock, and there were three good hours to wait. I recalled all that happened on the Sunday. It seemed as if some special providence was acting in my favour. It was due to the illness and absence of my colleagues that I had had the good fortune to officiate. Surely this was providential, and I am ashamed to say that I was, in one way, realising the truth of the famous maxim of La Rochefoucauld, in deriving a secret satisfaction from the misfortunes of my friends. Still, it was remarkable that it should happen thus. And it was undoubtedly true that on that particular Sunday I was in excellent voice; and then the vanity, which is natural to all men, asserted itself in me, and I found myself only too ready to believe that my voice was the 'finest and clearest' ever heard. Somebody's must be the finest, and why not mine? My mysterious friend, whatever else he might be, was most certainly a man of good taste and judgment; that could not be denied. And then, as he had said, he was rich. 'Plenty of money' he said he had. What is he coming to see me for? I wondered. I spent the rest of the afternoon in making the wildest surmises. I was castle-building in Spain at a furious rate. At one time I imagined that this faithful son of the Church—as he appeared to me—was going to build and endow a grand Cathedral in Australia, on condition that I should be appointed Dean at a yearly stipend of—say ten thousand pounds. At another time, I imagined him asking me to become his private chaplain at about the same remuneration. Again I thought he might offer to educate my three boys at his own expense, provided that special attention should be given to the development of their natural musical genius. Or perhaps, I said to myself, he will beg me to accept a sum of money—I never thought of it as less than a thousand pounds—as a slight recognition of, and tribute to, my remarkable vocal ability. I confess I always came back to this last conjecture, as the most probable; the others seemed rather wild in their fancifulness. I felt there were many practical objections in the way of realising these, but it seemed so easy and natural that he should make me a present from his boundless wealth, that my imagination dwelt upon it with increasing satisfaction.

I took a long lonely walk into the country to correct these ridiculous fancies and to steady my mind; and when I reached home, and had refreshed myself with a quiet cup of afternoon tea, I felt I was morally and physically prepared for my interview with the opulent stranger.

Punctually as the Cathedral clock struck six, there was a ring at the visitors' bell; in a moment or two my unknown friend was shown into the drawing-room, which he entered with the easy air of a man of the world. I noticed he was carrying a small black bag.

'How do you do again, Mr. Dale?' he said as though we were old acquaintances; 'you see I have come sharp to my time.'

'Yes,' I answered, 'and I am pleased to see you; do sit down.' He sank into my best arm-chair, and placed his bag on the floor beside him.

'Since we met in the afternoon,' he said, 'I have written a letter to your Dean, expressing the great pleasure I felt in listening to your choir; and at the same time I enclosed a five-pound note, which I begged him to divide among the choir-boys and men, from Alexander Poulter, Esq., of Poulter's Pills. You have of course heard of the world-renowned Poulter's Pills. I am Poulter.'

Poulter of Poulter's Pills! My heart sank within me! A five-pound note! My airy castles were tottering!

'I also sent him a couple of hundred of my pamphlets which I said I trusted he would be so kind as to distribute in the Close.'

I was aghast!

'And now, with regard to the special object of my call, Mr. Dale. If you will allow me to say so, you are not making the most of that grand voice of yours; you are hidden under an ecclesiastical bushel here—lost to the world. You are wasting your vocal strength and sweetness on the desert air, so to speak. Why—if I may hazard a guess—I don't suppose you make five hundred a year here, at the outside?'

I could say nothing.

'Well, now, I can put you into the way of making at least three or four times as much as that. Listen! I am Alexander Poulter of Poulter's Pills. I have a proposal to make to you; the scheme is bound to succeed, but I want your help. Accept my proposal and your fortune's made. Did you ever hear Moody and Sankey?' he asked abruptly.

It seemed an eccentric query, and in its jerky disjointedness reminded me of Alice in Wonderland. I murmured that I had had that advantage.

'So much the better,' he said, with evident satisfaction; and he lifted his bag on to his knees.

I was beginning to get rather nervous. What if this man before me were an escaped lunatic! What if he carried some

deadly weapon in that bag! At any rate I would be careful not to contradict him, but agree with him in everything. I had always understood that this was the safest thing for anyone to do who might find himself *vis-à-vis* with a roving idiot.

‘So much the better,’ he repeated; ‘it will save me some risk of not making myself understood. You are now in a position to grasp my scheme. Moody and Sankey were, I believe, eminently successful in their line, and it seems to me not unreasonable to expect that a similar success will result from applying the same method in my business. We must advertise. Famous as Poulter’s Pills are, their fame depends upon keeping up a system of enterprising advertisement. We have tried for a time, as an experiment, the effect of not advertising, relying upon a well-established reputation; but we found out the mistake. Advertise we must.’

The man is an idiot, thought I; he is now fairly carried away with his particular mania. Will it last long? Shall I ring?

‘Novelty, my dear sir,’ he went on, ‘is the rule of the day; and there must be novelty in advertising, as in everything else, to catch the public interest. So I intend to go on a tour, lecturing on the merits of Poulter’s Pills, in all the principal halls of all the principal towns all over the world. But I have been delayed in carrying out my idea till I could associate myself with a gentleman, such as yourself. Will you join me? I should be the Moody of the tour; you would be its Sankey. I would speak my patter, and you would intersperse my orations with melodious ballads bearing upon the virtues of Poulter’s Pills. The ballads are all ready!’

So saying, he opened that bag and drew forth from its recesses nothing more alarming than a thick roll of manuscript music.

‘The verses are my own,’ he said, with a little touch of pride; ‘and as for the music, I thought it better to make use of popular melodies, so as to enable an audience to join in the chorus. See, here is one of the ballads: “Darling, I am better now;” it describes the woes of a fond lover, or rather his physical ailments, until he went through a course of Poulter. Here’s another: “I’m ninety-five! I’m ninety-five!” You catch the drift of that, of course—a healthy old age secured by taking Poulter’s Pills. Ah! what’s this? “Little sister’s last request.” I fancy the idea of that is to beg the family never to be without Poulter’s Pills. Here again: “Then you’ll remember me!” I’m afraid that title is not original; never mind, the song is. And here is——

but there are many more, and I won't detain you with them now.' He saw, perhaps, I was getting impatient. Thank Heaven, however, he was no escaped lunatic! I was safe!

'Well, now, my dear Mr. Dale, you see what my plan is. What do you say? Don't reject it because it appears ridiculous or extravagant: it is just what is ridiculous and extravagant which succeeds in advertising. And, my word for it, there's money in it, sir! I don't ask you to invest in the concern, I don't ask you to give security for any sum of money, if you join me; what I want you to do is, simply, to help me with your melodious voice, in the way I have explained. I can offer you thirty pounds a week to begin with, and then, if my project succeeds, as I am sure it will, you shall have forty pounds. We shall travel all over the country with a four-in-hand, with a brass band playing on the top, whilst you and I will be in front on the box. Imagine what a stir we shall make everywhere! Picture the huge crowds who will flock to our lectures! Come, what do you say?'

I could say nothing. Disappointment and disgust, rage and resentment, distracted my mind. This was the end of all my brilliant hopes! I saw myself in imagination being driven about the streets of provincial towns in the day, and sitting behind a harmonium singing abominable ballads to its lugubrious accompaniment at night. The thought was too much for me. By a great effort I managed to stammer a few words.

'Mr. Poulter,' said I, 'I took you this afternoon for a disinterested and philanthropic millionaire; you take me for—something different from what I am. We have both made mistakes. In a word, it is impossible for me to accept your offer!'

'Is that final?' asked Poulter.

'Certainly,' said I.

Poulter gathered his manuscripts together and replaced them in the bag, and got up to leave the room.

'Good evening, Mr. Dale,' he said mournfully, as I opened the door of the room. 'Good evening'—he kept on talking till he was fairly out of the house; 'mark my words, you'll be sorry—very sorry—one day that you did not fall in with my scheme. Offers like mine don't come every day, and you will one day regret having refused it.'

With these words he left the house.

I had little appetite for my dinner that evening.

ACROSS THE ATLANTIC, 'STEERAGE'

SOME nine months ago, after a lengthy yacht-cruise, I had to find my way home to London from the West Indies, and was told that it was both quicker and cheaper to go *viâ* New York than direct; moreover, having never been in the States, I was glad of the opportunity of passing a few days in their 'boss' city. It doesn't matter to you, my readers, whether I gambled, or how it happened, but the fact is, that I landed at Brooklyn with only two coins in my possession—excellent coins, however, as far as they went, being each a gold *plaque* of \$20 (known as the double-eagle, of the same value as the well-known 'cart-wheels' of Monte Carlo, *i.e.* 4*l.* apiece). Having sent off my baggage by express wagon to an hotel to which I had been recommended, where I could get a bedroom for a dollar a day, I started to walk across the famous bridge and ponder over my situation. Fares to England were—cabin 12*l.* 10*s.* (the lowest), intermediate 7*l.* 10*s.*, steerage 4*l.*; which last includes railway fare from Liverpool to London, while the others do not. It was Tuesday afternoon, and the steamer-days for England are Wednesday and Saturday; 8 A.M. was the hour fixed for the following morning, but all the boats advertised were inferior, and I had a fancy for a 'greyhound.' Still, if I were to sail the next morning, I should be able to revenge myself on those Americans who do London in three days, by doing New York in three hours. Suppose I were to go 'intermediate,' I should have just ten shillings to spend that night, and nothing at all for drinks and stewards, &c., on the passage, besides being landed at Liverpool penniless; and, after all, 'intermediate' was merely a verbal cloak for 'second class,' and if one does not travel first class, it is generally more amusing to travel third than second. Should I wire home for credit? It would be expensive, and I had lately been wasting more money than I could well afford. Well, *manet sors tertia*, 'steerage.'

By this time I was about halfway across the river, and in full view of the magnificent panorama of the city, and as I looked at it in the dusky glow of a wintry sunset, I felt it would be 'real mean' to do New York in three hours; I would be economical—I would go home 'steerage' by the big 'City of Rome' advertised to

sail on Saturday ; the food and accommodation would probably be as good as on the yacht 'Alerte,' and I was used to roughing it at sea. This would leave me 4*l.*, which would be ample for half a week, and I should not have to pay the fare from Liverpool to London. The momentous question being settled, I decided without any hesitation that the next thing I had to do was to get a square meal.

I don't know if it is that London has become very American of late, but I found New York far more English than I had been led to expect ; and one false impression of mine was very quickly corrected. I had always been given to understand that if you were to offer a gratuity to an American waiter, he would think you meant to insult him. On the contrary, I certainly thought my first waiter meant to insult me when he saw me pick up all the change of my twenty-dollar bit. So far from asking me to remember him, he looked as though he reckoned he didn't want to see me again anyhow ; my next waiter I interviewed on the subject, and found that in this respect, as in so many others, the New Yorker's custom was now English—quite English.

On Wednesday morning I found my way to a shipping-agent in the Bowery. He informed me that the 'City of Rome' would not be sailing on Saturday, as, owing to a Liverpool dock-strike, she had not yet left England. He calculated the Ocean boat was about the best vessel sailing that week-end, and guessed I had better take a passage by the well-known 'Foam ;' he also quoted the proud boast of the Ocean Company, that during the fifty years they had been running they had never lost a single passenger through accident. In return for my second *plaque* he gave me a ticket through to London, which I was to exchange at the quay. Printed on this I was startled to notice that steerage passengers had to provide themselves with bedding and all eating utensils, but was relieved when I read on that all these commodities were to be purchased from the Company's agent for \$2.50, or 10*s.* The boat was to sail at 5.30 on Saturday morning, and I concluded it would be a pleasant economy to sleep on board on Friday night. So on Friday (it was Good Friday) afternoon I paid my hotel bill, including that great American extravagance, a cab to take my things down to the boat ; but on arrival at the quay, I was shocked to discover that there was no ship to be seen. Inquiring at the office, they could only tell me that the 'Foam' was not in yet, and so it was impossible to say when she would sail out, but

certainly not before Tuesday. Meantime, they would look after my baggage for me, and I should find it in my cabin, if I would give them the number. It took a long time to persuade them that I was going in the steerage; one man, who had grown old in the service of the Company, reckoned he had never till that day seen a 'steerage' drive down in a cab. Had I booked my passage? If so, the Company would put me up at their hotel opposite until I sailed. This was good news, as my dollars were now few indeed; and a moment afterwards the message arrived that the 'Foam' had at last been signalled. The hotel people were very hospitable, and, I am sure, treated me much better than was necessary; here I discovered several people in a similar predicament to myself, but I found out that they were mostly intermediate passengers, and that the steerage folk had been that morning transferred to a vessel of another Line, which was sailing at the proper time. We did not get off until 3 P.M. on Tuesday, and but for another company giving us some of their steerage passengers in the same way, we should have had scarcely any; as it was, we had only 200, and the 'Foam' can carry four times that number; consequently, there was plenty of room for us in the fore-end of the ship, and the aft-steerage accommodation, which I was informed was the larger, but did not see, was not used.

When I first got on board, and went to see what was before me, I must own to having been somewhat repelled at the prospect. Imagine deep down in the very bottom (as it seemed) of the vessel a barn-like apartment, dimly lighted and badly ventilated, with a moist breath of carbolic acid, about 60 feet long, tapering to a point at one end, and perhaps 20 feet wide at the other. In each of the wooden side walls rough doors 15 feet apart. These lead into the sleeping-pens, each lit by a porthole, which is too near the water to be ever opened except in harbour, and which is completely submerged when the vessel lays over or rolls. The pens are about 15 feet by 12 feet; a passage 2 feet wide runs down the middle from the door to the port, on each side of which are two deep shelves, one 5 feet and the other a few inches from the floor; each of these shelves is divided out into four divisions by planks some 8 inches high, so that each pen contains sixteen bunks about 6 feet 6 inches by 2 feet 9 inches. These are the single men's quarters, and communicating with them is a somewhat similar but wider place, further aft, reserved for females and married men; this looked even a more detestable region than the other, as it lacked alto-

gether the modicum of air and light that came down the companion-ladder into the main portion.

The 'Foam' has no hurricane-deck, and, for the benefit of any readers who may not have been on board a Liner, I will describe her a little more fully. There are three decks, known as the upper, main, and lower. The upper deck is the deck one sees and walks on—what an unnautical person means when he speaks of *the* deck. The main deck, below this, is taken up with the saloon and cabins aft, with the intermediate cabins amidships, unpleasantly close to the engines, and forward with the sailors' quarters or fo'c's'le, and the various small cabins sacred to the quarter-masters, bosuns, carpenters, &c., and their respective messes. The only part of the main deck available to be walked on is a long passage at each side of the vessel, about 10 feet wide, extending the whole way from the saloon to the fo'c's'le. Further below, on the lower deck, live the steerage passengers, as already described, fore and aft, the centre being taken up with the engines and boilers, and cargo, if any.

By making friends with the steerage-steward, as there were so few passengers, I and one of my new acquaintances, who 'knew the ropes' better than I did, managed to secure a whole top shelf to ourselves—*i.e.* double the accommodation to which we were entitled—and so avoided too close quarters, and obtained ample room for our clothes and bags. Then I went ashore again to purchase my kit. This is what is sold for 10s., according to a printed list, and all perfectly new:—

One bed.	One tin plate.	One spoon.
One blanket.	One tin pint mug.	A piece of soap.
One rug.	One knife.	A towel.
One tin basin.	One fork.	

It sounds plenty for the money; but less than a minute after I had handed over my dollars, a steerage passenger who had made up her mind to go intermediate, and pay the difference, came to give back her lot, which she did not now require, and the utmost the vendor would allow her for them was one dollar; however, after waiting a few minutes she traded them to the next 'steerage' for six shillings.

Another of the Ocean fleet, the 'Wave,' had come in that morning, and I walked across the quay to inspect her, as she looked about twice as big as we were; I found, as I had begun to expect, that the 'Foam' was no greyhound, but one of the oldest

and slowest of the Company's fleet, while the 'Wave' was one of the newest and speediest. But it was too late to change; indeed, when I got back on board the 'Foam' she was already casting off her warps, and a few minutes later we were being towed out backwards into the river; then our screw began to thump, as no doubt did many a homeward-bound and outward-bound heart on board. Even to a casual spectator like myself, who knew no one either on the ship or on shore, there was something curiously affecting in watching the crowd on the quay, and on our deck, waving their handkerchiefs, and straining their eyes to catch the last glimpse of their friends, henceforth, perhaps in many cases for ever, to be separated from them by the broad Atlantic, that, like a type of the River of Death, lies between the Old World and the New; there is, perhaps, only one leave-taking more touching than that which I was witnessing.

But there was little time for sentiment, for all passengers were ordered below, in order that the vessel might be searched for stow-aways. This is done very thoroughly, and then the passengers are sent up again, one at a time, giving up their tickets, and are not allowed to return below until their quarters have been inspected in the same way. If any one is discovered, he is sent back by the pilot-boat, to be prosecuted for attempting to procure a passage without payment; but on this occasion our pilot had to return empty-handed. During the search I made friends with my shelf-mate, who turned out a very agreeable rattle: he was English, had been ten years in the States, and also in Australia; had been at showman-work most of the time, and was now on his way to 'fake,' as he called it, at the Edinburgh Exhibition with a stall for glass-engraving, of which he showed me some very clever and artistic specimens. 'But it isn't those that pay,' he told me; 'it's writing a fellow's or his girl's name on a tumbler (which I get at a half-dollar the gross), and selling at a shilling apiece. Get me a good holiday crowd, and that's the game all the time.' He had worked at most of the principal Dime-shows all through America, and was personally acquainted with all the 'Freaks,' and knew how far each was natural, and in what manner Nature had been assisted. On the shelf underneath were two decent lads, both cabin-boys off English merchant-vessels, who had left their ships because of illness. Opposite these were four atop and three below, mostly of the operative class; at least two of these lay in their bunks without going on deck during the whole voyage, whether sea-sick or not. The contiguity of these

filthy folk was by far the worst feature of the whole business. Smoking was strictly prohibited below, but it was difficult of detection, and when I turned in at night (the only time I put in an appearance in my pen after the first evening's experience) I found it necessary to regularly evade this regulation. It was, of course, far too cold at that time of year to sleep on deck, especially as I had just come up from the Tropics.

The food was very fair: fresh bread baked every day, fresh meat well cooked, tolerable butter, and sometimes marmalade; tea and coffee ready mixed out of urns, reminding one of the old days at one's preparatory school; and everything *ad lib.* Beer and stout could be purchased at sixpence a bottle, but no spirits or wine. The steerage steward, a German, was a very worthy fellow, and did all in his power to make us comfortable, even to lending us his little box of a store-room in which to consume our provisions. Meals concluded, each passenger was supposed to wash his utensils in large tubs provided for that purpose; but we of the upper shelf made an arrangement with the two cabin-boys below that they should do this for us.

Of these boys, one was convalescent from Russian influenza, and the other was ill with dropsy, and both were being sent home by the English Government, under the Distressed British Seamen Act. The Consulate, however, had not troubled to pay the extra ten shillings I have already mentioned for bedding and utensils, and these poor fellows consequently had neither. This is not as it should be, somehow; surely it would be better to increase the fare by a few shillings, and include these necessaries, more especially as so huge a profit is made on them by the Company's agent. There were several other steerage passengers who had not been able to afford the purchase, and their condition during the voyage must have been most miserable. However, in the case of these boys, the ship's doctor, when he made his rounds the first night, very properly ordered them bedding and blankets out of the hospital; and in the daytime they made friends with the sailors, and messed with them. Twice a day does the captain, accompanied by the doctor, visit the steerage, in order to see that it is reasonably clean, and to hear any complaints.

British and American subjects were about equally balanced in numbers, and endless discussions went on night and day as to the relative merits of the two countries; most of the arguments were very crude, and savoured strongly of the familiar clap-trap talked

by the uneducated Hyde Park Socialist. But now and again one heard very sensible opinions put forward, my shelf-mate, by reason of his wide experience, being listened to with especial attention, even by the most blatant of the whole lot, an individual who stated he was a delegate from some Irish-American brotherhood.

The men far outnumbered the women, and there were but few children; some of the husbands, while going 'steerage' themselves, brought their wives 'intermediate.' It must, indeed, be a pitiable ordeal for a decent woman to travel in the steerage: there is no one to wait on her when sea-sick, there is no stewardess, she has absolutely no accommodation below, except her quarter of a shelf; the washing-places are all on the main deck above, some little distance along the passages which I have described, and to make her way there she has also to scale the steep companion-ladder—no easy matter when the steamer is rolling scuppers under in the full Atlantic swell, and even the sailors have to use a man-line between decks. The washing-places are not crowded, even in calm weather; they contain a row of small fixed basins, reminding one of those in a cricket pavilion; there is no cold water, only the warm, oily-smelling, condensed water from the engines; no looking-glass, so that my habit of shaving myself caused great amazement. Here I used sometimes to meet a bright little Lancashire lad of about twelve years old, who had been taught to wash himself properly, and not in the fashionable way at sea, with his shirt on. His was a curious experience: his mother had died, and his father, who had some work in New York, had written for him to come out; on his arrival, his father was not to be found, so the authorities, after keeping him a close prisoner for six weeks at Castle Garden, were now sending him home again. Some of my readers may not know what Castle Garden means; it is an American notion, that we could very well endure in London. Every steerage passenger or emigrant who arrives in New York has to land at Castle Garden, and if he is not thought a desirable acquisition—*i.e.* unless he can clearly show he has means to support himself—he gets no further, but is promptly sent back whence he came. We had two or three of these unfortunate folk on board, who, like Moses, had only been allowed to view the promised land from a distance; but they were sufficiently indignant with America and its institutions to be quite reconciled to their lot. But however undesirable you are, you can swagger in gaily, without any questions being asked, if you can afford the few extra pounds for an intermediate passage.

The mighty Liner in one respect resembles the tiny excursion-boat—no steerage-passengers are allowed abaft the funnel; a cord is tied across, on each side of the upper deck, as a line of demarcation, and a very short distance astern of this another line shows the superior limits by which the well-named 'intermediate' is bound. At night these strings were removed, probably for fear of accident, and then the steerage gentlemen would make furtive visits to the other end of the deck, and even peer into the smoking-room to watch the poker-playing. The ladies of the steerage do not enjoy this privilege, for at nightfall ancient, Argus-eyed mariners sought them out, and drove them below, there to be closely guarded by a sleepless sentinel until daylight should again give them their liberty. The female 'intermediate' suffers the same fate; it is only the damsel, or, for that matter, the aged dame of the saloon who can be trusted to realise Mr. Clark Russell's pictures of the moonlit ocean, or to watch the gay fireworks with which passing steamers indicate to each other at night the Line to which they belong. During the day the saloon passengers sometimes returned these visits, and inspected us with well-bred curiosity.

Throughout the whole passage it was miserably cold, with a fine east wind dead against us—hence the few sheltered places on deck were in great demand; when these were all occupied there was nothing for it but to walk up and down, for below was unendurable. Fortunately for myself, who was well hardened to the sea, we had rather a rough passage, which kept many in their bunks for days together, and so I was able to make the time pass pretty well, especially as I had laid in a small library of the pirated 5-cent. editions of all the newest English books before leaving New York. But the voyage was a long and dreary business notwithstanding; in the morning one wished it were evening, and at night one's sleep was constantly disturbed. Owing to head-seas, and fog on the banks (during which the Ocean Company are content to err on the side of caution and go half-speed, which in the case of the 'Foam' was safety indeed), we were thirteen days in reaching Liverpool, with nothing to break the monotony except now and then a passing vessel. We sighted one solitary iceberg, or rather ice-floe, and this caused the greatest excitement, especially when we altered our course in order to have a look at it. We passed about a mile to leeward, and it was estimated at 40 feet high and 900 feet square; but it was very disappointing as a spectacle. 'Our special artist' of a London illustrated paper, whom we were

bringing back from doing the Louisville cyclone, tried all he could with it, but I fancy his sketches have not yet appeared. Also, another day, the weather was entered as half a gale, but after my recent Atlantic experiences in a small yacht I was not inclined to think very much of it. However, it had its revenge, for while I sat all alone under the lee of the wheel-house (where it seemed impossible for any water to come), quietly perusing my 5-cent. 'Master of Ballantrae,' Mr. Stevenson will be glad to hear that a sea came over amidships, clean over the bridge, and literally tons of green water fell on me, washing me against the rail, and of course soaking me to the skin. This same sea nearly carried away one of the boats on the *lee* side, shifting it several feet and bending the davits.

We had two Sundays, on which the passengers don't bother to put on their best clothes; but the sailors turn out very smart, all the Naval Reserve men—of whom we had a large number—appearing in their man-of-war uniforms; there is a service, read by the captain in the absence of a Church of England parson, at 11 A.M., in the saloon, when all are invited to attend, even the pariah 'steerage.' The 'Foam' appeared to me very fortunate in her crew: they all seemed cheery and contented—a great contrast to the dirty, idle, and mutinous seamen one finds on an ordinary merchant vessel. All the pulling and hauling is done by the men, the steam-power being only used for the anchor; to see the crew of the 'Foam' lay out on the yard to furl a topsail made one feel one might be on a training-ship. Generally, in mid-passage the saloon passengers manage to break the monotony by getting up a concert or some theatricals, a small charge being made for admission, which is given to some sailors' institution at Liverpool; but on this occasion they were not sufficiently numerous or energetic. They had, however, the advantage of a little music among themselves every evening, while we forward had to put up with the unmelodious strains of two accordions, which were not in tune with each other, or, indeed, with themselves; the owner of one knew as many as five airs, but the owner of the other only two, and one of those rather tentative, but clearly intended for 'Wait till the Clouds roll by.' These performers no doubt meant very well, and when one was playing a few feet off, the other would come and sit beside you, and begin right away with the utmost calmness.

I was much amused by the exaggerated interest which was

taken in a mild flirtation in which I indulged with the belle of the steerage. She was an Irish girl, but had been employed for some years, she told me, as sale-lady in a dry-goods store in New York (by which I fancy she meant that she worked in a milliner's shop), and was now off on a visit to her relations in Dublin. She was a good sailor, and shared my repugnance to 'below;' she was also very glad to share a large travelling-rug, which I was fortunate enough to have with me. My rivals, who were numerous, looked on with ill-concealed jealousy, the while I regarded them with equanimity, for I felt confident that, however great their other attractions might be, in that icy wind my rug would prevail. It was from her I gleaned scraps of information as to the mysterious portion of the steerage reserved for females: how there was no stewardess, and not even a looking-glass; and how the majority of the women, as well as the men, had decided to have nothing to do with the washing arrangements; and as discouragement to sleep when shut up below at night, how she had, among the company in her pen, an old lady with a secret rum-bottle and a tendency to delirium tremens (which caused her removal to the ship's hospital after a few days), and three mothers whose babies indulged periodically in squalling matches; these, apparently, were conducted on the same lines as those linnet competitions in which one bird sings against the others, all against all, until one only is left, who takes the prize for endurance. Many times a day did my fair friend assure me that, come what may, she was not going back to New York steerage; and I don't think she did.

In the early morning of the twelfth day out (it seemed like the fiftieth) the screw suddenly stopped, and everyone hurried on deck, to find we were in a thick drizzling fog, which gradually lifted, and showed the Irish coast. A few hours more, and the tender was alongside receiving our mails, and the passengers who were to disembark at Queenstown, among them the Irish girl, who had smartened herself up to a wonderful extent. Our farewell was very unromantic; the whole steerage was assembled to witness it, my rivals even indulging in a derisive cheer. But little did she mind, for was not her brother going to meet her now when she landed? and was there not an hotel at Queenstown, where, sure, she could get a bath?

The same night we sighted the lights off the coast of North Wales; and again, in the early dawn, the cessation of the screw, this time accompanied by the roar of the chain, brought us on

deck, to find we had arrived at Liverpool. The river at Liverpool is certainly not particularly beautiful; but in order not to disappoint American visitors, or perhaps to show them at once how we can lick the Yankee in one of his pet *spécialités*, both banks are adorned with the most hideous and gigantic advertisements to be seen anywhere in the world. We had some hours given us in which to contemplate these wonders, before the tender arrived; then came the Custom-house, which ordeal my little library managed somehow to survive; then a bath and breakfast, and then four hours in the train; but after the dreary thirteen days of steamer it seemed but a few minutes before I was on the platform at Euston, receiving that cheeriest of all greetings, the welcome home of the prodigal son.

The steerage is not a comfortable way of travelling, and no doubt the companies do not wish to make it so, or perchance everyone would go 'steerage,' just as everyone goes third class nowadays, owing to the vast improvement made during the last few years in third-class accommodation. But 'steerage' is not to be compared with third class, but rather with tramping and the casual-ward. Still, it must be remembered that the boat in which I learnt my experience is twenty-five years old, and no doubt in many respects old-fashioned. In the modern boats personal cleanliness is probably made more easy, and possibly insisted on when necessary; it is also conceivable that it is exceptional for there to be no stewardess for the female portion of the steerage.

Personally, I had a much better time, as Americans say, than I deserved. This is not the place to specify the many acts of personal kindness which I received from the various officers of the ship, who offered me far greater hospitality than that which I thought it becoming to accept; but I cannot conclude this paper without again expressing my thanks to these gentlemen for their many efforts to make my passage as agreeable as possible.

EIGHT DAYS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE TOUCHSTONE OF PERIL.'

 I will a round unvarnished tale deliver.—*Othello*.

CHAPTER XXXI.

TURNED OUT.

WE have now to return to the only two left alive of the English girls whom we saw assembled together, so full of youth and hope and happiness, in the shadow of the sacred banian-tree of the Hindoos, in the garden planted by a Mahomedan nobleman, on the first day of our tale. We left them resting with their party on the platform of a well by the side of the road to Abdoolapore. But they cannot rest here long; they must push on; they must try and get to Abdoolapore while the favouring night-time lasts, before the inimical daylight comes. They push on again as fast as they can—push on doggedly. The climate of India is an exhausting one, and this is an exhausting time of the year, and even the men of the party are beginning to feel the effects of this many hours' tramp; they are more accustomed to riding and driving than walking. But they all bear bravely on. The men help the flagging footsteps of the women. Lilian's shoeless feet are now beginning to be very painful. The metalled portion of the road is very hard, if very smooth, and the unmetalled sides are very dusty. But they push on as fast as they can, and bit by bit they are devouring the long straight lengths of road before them. But the friendly night is passing away. The moon is beginning to wane. They are heavy with want of sleep. They are devoured with thirst. Some of them begin to feel as if their whole stock of energy was leaving them, as if they could not walk any more. They must lie down and rest. Let them sink down in the road and sleep there. There is nothing so terrible as to continue the exertion of mind and body beyond the point of complete exhaustion; then it is that a mad irritability sets in; then the needed rest will be sought for regardless of all consequences, even at the expense of life itself—better death than this torture, this devouring of oneself. But what is that by the side of the road? A pool

of water. They rush down to it. At any other time they would not have cared even to dip their fingers into it. But now they dash their hands into it, and drink of it, and bathe their faces in it. They return to the road greatly refreshed, for the water is life. They hear the sharp clatter of hoofs, and against the now brightening eastern sky they see a couple of ponies coming quickly along the road towards them. The two *tatoos* are laden high with bales and bundles, on the top of which their riders sit sideways. There is a considerable interval between the animals, but that does not prevent the riders, accustomed to passing their lives in the open air, from talking to one another.

'*Ayeh! Bhowanee!*' says the foremost man, looking back.

'*Han, bhaee!*' ('Yes, brother!'), says the man behind, the '*bhaee*' being merely a term of friendship.

'It was in the village we have just left behind us that the three Englishmen were killed yesterday?'

The English people can see the village—a large one—standing close by the side of the road.

'Yes.'

'They were escaping from Khizrabad, were they not?'

'Yes, brother.'

'They were all three killed?'

'All three of them.'

Though the English people had seen the riders, the riders had not seen them, by reason of sitting sideways on their ponies and having their faces turned the other way. And so, when the foremost man is suddenly hailed and bid stand still in an unmistakable English voice, he starts so violently that he nearly tumbles off his pony; he had been sitting easily at the point of balance. Hay and Major Coote step up to the pony's head.

'Did you say that three Englishmen had been killed in that village?'—pointing to it.

'Yes,' says the man hesitatingly and unwillingly. He is trembling with fear. How strangely and suddenly had these English people appeared! And had he not inquired about the killing of their fellow-countrymen in a very offhand, unconcerned way?

'Do not be afraid. We do not suppose that you had anything to do with the killing of these gentlemen.'

'No, no,' cries the man. 'He knows we had not'—pointing to his companion, who had now come up also. 'We are travellers from a distance—honest pedlars.'

'We only wanted to know with reference to ourselves. Would it be safe for us to pass through the village?'

'No; you had better avoid it—better keep clear of all villages. The people about here are very evil-minded.'

'You do not know who these Englishmen were?'

'No.'

'Nor how they were slain?'

'No.'

'How far are we from Abdoolapore?'

'Eleven miles.'

'Then if we could get on six miles, get within five miles of Abdoolapore, we should be all right?'

'No; the villages immediately round Abdoolapore and near it are the worst of all. The English people there are in a state of siege.'

'Ha!'

'That way,' goes on the man, pointing northward, 'lies a heavy jungle. You had better get to it and lie concealed there during the daytime, and then move on in the evening and steal into Abdoolapore in the course of the night. You had better get to the jungle as soon as you can; the day is breaking and the people will soon be moving about.'

'How does this jungle lie?'

'That way. That big peepul-tree is not far from the edge of it. We must now move on. We have a long way to go before the heat of the day sets in,' and they rattle their heels on their ponies' flanks and move briskly off. The fugitives now leave the road and make for the peepul-tree, which lies almost at right angles to it, and about three-quarters of a mile off. The splendid sacred tree looms up large against the sky. Beyond it lies about half a mile more of the cultivated tract, and then comes the scrub or jungle. They pass into the tangled wilderness of trees with a great sensation of relief; they can now no longer be seen from half a mile off. They move on and on until they have got well away from the border, well into the heart of it. The morning is now breaking. They have reached a place where the trees stand very thickly together, and here they determine to rest. They cast themselves down on the hard bare ground, and so experience one of the most delicious sensations of their lives. What an active delight is there in the mere sensation of non-exertion! But they do not enjoy it for long. They are soon fast asleep. They

have soon passed into the vast refuge-hall of sleep. They have soon sunk beneath the renovating waters of oblivion. The sun has risen a good way above the horizon ; the rays which have fallen upon them warm from the beginning, are now beginning to be hot ; the west wind, which will soon increase to a fiery gale, is beginning to stir the dust about them, and still they continue to sleep. Then Coote awakens, and sits up with his back against a tree. Well, the early morning cup of tea would be very pleasant, certainly ; but he could do without that, would not be troubled at the thought of having nothing to eat, if he only had his cigar-case or pipe in his pocket. That is the want that troubles him. He has often lain out under a tree before, and his pipe has been to him as meat and drink and lodging. It is a great bore to have nothing to smoke. He yawns and rubs his eyes, and then a rustle catching his quick hunter's ear, he looks up expecting to see a blue cow or an antelope, or it may perchance be a pig or a wild boar ; but he sees instead a group of natives standing before him. He leaps up and draws his sword and arouses Hamilton, who has been sleeping next him, with a strong kick ; and then there is a great commotion, a calling and crying, and awakening of one another, and the four Englishmen are standing together in a group with their drawn swords in their hands, while the women shelter behind them. The coming months are to present many a group such as that on the face of the land. Beatrice, standing a little apart by herself, sees the foremost man of the group of natives—he carries a gun, which Coote notes with surprise is not the ordinary matchlock of the country, but an excellent English rifle—sees him looking at her with great kindness—a kindness she does not like.

‘We have no desire to do you any harm,’ says the man, with his eyes fixed on Beatrice. He is a stout man, and speaks in a soft muffled tone of voice.

‘I see you are officers,’ he goes on, now looking at the men. ‘I suppose you belonged to the regiments stationed at Khizrabad ?’

‘Yes ; I was in command of the 76th Regiment, in which this gentleman’—pointing to Hay—‘was also an officer.’

‘A very bad regiment,’ says the fat man bluntly. ‘And you are now on your way to Abdoolapore and are in hiding here during the day-time, I understand.’

They were in hiding, but it was not pleasant to be told so. There was a terrible humiliation in having to lurk about the land

through which they had hitherto made only lordly progress. That it was a superiority of race which enabled us to conquer and hold India and rule it well; that this superiority was intensely, delightfully felt by the English in India; that it was strongly, irksomely felt by the natives; that these feelings had a great influence in the stir of the passions of this Mutiny time; that they added to the fierce satisfaction of the overthrow and slaughter, to the fierce delight of the bloody reprisal: these, to me, at all events, are undoubted facts.

‘We are resting here,’ says Coote, quietly.

Except in the matter of colour, this big bluff man might have served as a good representative of our own King Hal: he had the same face and figure, the same big cheeks and pursed-up little mouth, the same look of strength and sensuality.

‘You cannot keep those delicate ladies’—fixing his large black eyes on Beatrice—‘out here in the sun and the hot wind all day long, and without anything to eat or drink. It is not safe for them, and you, to be out in the open. Three Englishmen were slain in a village not far from this yesterday. You had better come with me to my house. I live in a *poorwa* (out-lying hamlet) which I have recently established myself, and which is inhabited only by myself and my brethren. You will be quite safe there. The people in the villages about here are very treacherous and cruel. I see; you are thinking why should I not be the same. But I do not belong to these parts. I have only settled here. I am not a Goojur or a Ranghur’ (scornfully), ‘but a Rajpoot. You may trust me. If I wanted to do you any harm, why, I could easily shoot you men with my gun—shoot you down like deer.’

‘A man with a gun certainly has the advantage over us,’ says Major Coote, bitterly.

‘You had better come to our village and remain there during the day-time, and we will escort you into Abdoolapore at night.’

There seems nothing else to do. If so the man wishes it, so must they do.

‘You do not mean to deal deceitfully by us?’

‘No.’

‘Will you swear that you do not wish to injure us?’

‘*Bap ki kusm—Beta ki kusm*’ (‘I swear it by my father—I swear it by my son.’)

‘Very good—then we will go with you.’

It is with a strange sensation that they move away with him.

Again are they embarked on a new adventure. What will the end of this one be? The possibilities of strange adventures are about us all, continually, everywhere; but still most of us pass quietly through the various stages of life, glide quietly down the stream of existence, which for most of us has a very equable, calculable flow. Most especially was this the case in India with those in 'the service,' with its fixed and certain rates of pay and pension, its determined periods of leave and furlough and retirement. The passage of those in the civil or military service of the East India Company from Haileybury and Addiscombe to India and then back to Cheltenham and Bath, was like the passage of the East Indiamen from London to Calcutta and back: there might be shipwreck, but most people, most vessels, passed over the well-known portions of the route in the usual times, and accomplished it with the usual alternations of good and bad days safely. The Mutiny came as a terrible break. The lives of all those fugitives had hitherto moved on well-known roads, along well-known channels. Then, suddenly, during the last two days, they had found themselves launched upon unknown and dangerous streams and pathways. Whither would this new track, this new channel lead them? How should they fare upon it?

Major Coote thinks very well, when he finds that their new fat friend is a great sportsman, a 'devoted votary of the chase'—to use the older, more stately phraseology. He was now out after antelope. The two are soon deep in sporting talk. Sportsmanship forms a very strong common bond. The fat man is very proud of his rifle. That leads to a talk about guns; that to one about powder and shot, which lasts until they have reached the burly man's newly established settlement, a mile and a half away.

The settlement consists as yet of half a dozen houses only. There are some very fine trees, the remains of some primæval forest or ancient grove, about it; and it stands by the side of a little lake. Its shadiness, its quiet seclusion, and its smallness are all very agreeable to the fugitives. It was the admirable conjunction of the lake and the trees and the vicinity of the forest, the stout man points out in his friendly talk, which had led him to establish this hamlet here. The vicinity of the forest was agreeable to him, not only as a sportsman but as a cultivator, a householder. Manure for the land, fodder for the cattle, fuel for the house, are the chief wants throughout the country-side in India. The jungle afforded him an ample supply of fuel, so that

he need not use his cowdung in that way, but add it to his manure-heap; and also admirable grazing ground for his cattle.

‘You must remain a little while under these trees until I can arrange in what houses to place you. My house is not large enough to accommodate you all. We will distribute you two and two. These two young ladies shall go into my own house.’

Some of the men with him exchange amused glances.

The stout man is very much of a gay Lothario. He resembles our bluff King Hal in disposition and in character, as well as in face and person. He is notorious for his want of conjugal fidelity. This has cost him much, in domestic trouble as well as in money. However, just now he and his companions bustle about to make their new-found guests comfortable immediately and where they are. They bring out stools and bedsteads for them to sit upon. They bring them water and milk. They bring them sweetmeats. The fat man brings a large leaf full of *luddos* and *peras*, and presses them on Beatrice, looking at her the while with a tender solicitude—much too tender a solicitude. At any other time the English people would not have touched these bazaar-made sweetmeats; but just now they are very hungry, and they find them very welcome. And the milk is fresh and the water cool. And although the heat and the glare are beginning to be great, and the hot wind beginning to blow, the very thick umbrage of the trees affords them considerable shelter from them. And they have not yet recovered from the fatigue of the night before, and the sensation of merely sitting still is delightful. The remote and secluded situation of the little settlement affords them a delightful feeling of security. The trees under which they are seated stand immediately in front of the zemindar’s own dwelling-place, and though he had proposed only to accommodate the two girls in it, they see that it looks big enough to take them all in in case of need, and that, like all the better classes of houses in the East, it is built with a view to security and defence. They could hold their own in it against a mob. And so they drink their milk and eat their sweetmeats with great satisfaction. Those not disturbed by the stout man’s looks think their troubles at an end. That disturbance affects Beatrice alone, but unfortunately it increases with the satisfaction of her companions. Her face, relieved of the dust and grime of the night before, shines forth in all its glorious beauty. The hopeful looks and words of her companions make it shine forth all the more. And the brighter it becomes the more tender and

assiduous—and they are already tender and assiduous enough—do the stout man's attentions grow. 'See how her beauty has overpowered him! The fever of love is upon him, and he is losing his senses,' remarks one of the villagers to another, out of hearing of every one else. Alas for the beauty of woman and all the trouble it has produced! 'You must have some more sweetmeats. I will go and get you some more; some very excellent ones,' says the stout man to Beatrice, looking at her most tenderly; and he hurries away to the house.

Though the stout man was indeed, as he said, a Rajpoot, he was not one of the highest class, and though now a landed proprietor, the owner of one or two villages, he had begun life in a humble capacity, and had made his money by some Government contracts. His wife had not attained to the dignity of a zenana until he had been able to build this house. It was only then that she had given up the marketing without and the cooking at home. And now, because her hands and face had grown coarse in her husband's service, he must, forsooth, be always seeking for softer ones! Issuing out of the gateway, the fat man has still his back to the house, as he bends before Beatrice and holds out the big dry leaf piled with some luscious confection towards her, and says, in tender accents which make his voice sound more muffled than ever: 'Take one of these'—when 'Take that!' sounds upon his ear, and he receives a cuff on the back of the neck which sends him staggering forward, and all the sweetmeats are scattered in the dust.

'And out of this, you!' shouts a tall strong woman, who had flown out of the house and rushed towards them like a tornado.

'Out of this, you!' and she hoists up one end of the bedstead and tumbles Beatrice off it, and as Mrs. Fane runs forward to lift Beatrice up the virago pours upon them both a torrent of that filthy personal abuse for which the East is famous, but of which, luckily, mother and daughter do not comprehend a single word.

'Be off, you white-faced ——! Begone you old ——!' exclaims the furious woman; and then there is a great commotion. The Englishmen all jump up. Hay rushes forward and places himself by the side of Beatrice. But the turmoil is soon assuaged by her who had aroused it, as a magician allays the tumult of the waves with his wand. The enraged wife has obtained possession of a wand too, a most effective one. She has seized the solid bamboo club belonging to one of the men, and swings it round her head with her strong arm.

‘In with *you!*’ she cries to her husband, pointing towards their house with the club. ‘In with you at once!’ The stout man turns his face away from them all, and moves towards the house with abject footsteps, and disappears within the gateway.

‘And now you get out of this village, the whole pack of you—every one of you! Be off with you, be off!’

‘Be off with you at once!’ she cries, advancing towards the English people, who have now got together in a group, with a most menacing flourish of her club. ‘Away, you sons of swine!’ she cries, looking at the men. ‘Away, you breeders of swine!’ she cries, looking at the women.

‘Now that she has put aside the veil, and come out of the zenana, you will not be able to remain here any longer,’ says one of the men to Coote. ‘She is a terrible woman, and very strong, and she will fall upon you with the club if you try to oppose her. She might do the women with you an injury, perhaps a fatal one: she is very powerful.’

‘We must go,’ says Coote, and they move out from under the pleasant umbrage of the trees.

‘Begone! Out of this! Away with you! Begone!’ shouts and bellows this maddened wife. (An utter abandonment to the emotions is, I think, more common in the passionate East than with us; women drown themselves in India on very slight provocation.) As she follows them, flourishing the staff furiously, all the men of the hamlet hold back. ‘Aroynt! Be off! Begone!’ she shouts, as she follows them to the edge of the little settlement, which it does not take them long to reach. And she stands there until she has seen them well out of sight. And so ended that adventure—rather ignominiously.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TREACHERY.

THEY have nothing to do but pursue the pathway by which they have left the hamlet. At first it passes across a cultivated tract, where the earth is quite dry and hard and bare, but where there are trees for the eye to rest on. Then it brings them to the edge of a barren plain, which stretches away before them as far as the eye can reach. These great plains, quite bare or covered with

scrub : the cultivated tracts : and large shallow lakes, now almost dry, make up the face of the land.

When they have got on to the plain they seem to have entered a sea of fire. The flaming sunlight burns, and blisters, and blinds them. The waves of light, moving with such terrific force, pass in through the opening of the eyes and beat with maddening force in the dark caverns of the brain. The hot dust blinds them and chokes them. There is nothing for the eye to rest on : it wearies with gazing into nothingness. The level plain is ever the same, and still the same. They are moving onward, slowly but still moving onward, and yet they seem not to move onward at all—seem to be fixed at the centre of a huge wide circle, seem to be stationary, seem to be standing still beneath the apex of the vast unbroken vault of the sky. There is not a tree or a shrub upon the plain. Its smooth monotony is broken only by the clouds and pillars of dust. And so they move onward in great suffering. The heat is terrible, the glare terrible, the dust terrible. They endure still greater suffering, as the sun, having reached the zenith—at this season of the year he rides very nearly straight overhead in that latitude—begins to descend from it : for those three first hours of the afternoon constitute the worst time of the day. It is the period of accumulated heat : the earth and air are surcharged with it, and the sun continues to pour down his fiery shower with scarcely diminished violence. And so they move on beneath the flaming fiery sword of the sun, which has such power to slay, as many a poor Englishman or Englishwoman was to prove in the coming months. Some of them feel giddy, some sick ; to some the clods by the side of the road are of a bloody hue ; some have a buzzing in the ears ; and others, when they close their eyes against the glare, hear the distant chiming of bells. The skin is beginning to peel off their hands and faces, which are burnt and blistered to the point of agony. The soft arms and shoulders of the women are simply a mass of pulp. And still they strive to keep on as cheerily as they may, striving to talk and even to laugh, which the severe burning of the muscles round the mouth renders a very painful process.

No murmur escapes the lips of these worthy representatives of England's womanhood : brave and cheerful are the words that issue from the lips of these worthy representatives of England's manhood. William Hay is even gay. Now is the time to play the Christian hero. Now is the time to give proof of the sustaining

power of his principles. That they are officers, and gentlemen, and Englishmen, and have to bear themselves worthily as such, is common to them all; but each of the men has some distinctive quality that sustains him individually. With Hay, as has been said, it is his ideal of the Christian hero, his godliness. Fane is supported by his pride. Coote displays the endurance, the power of sustaining fatigue, the toughness of the huntsman, the tracker of big game. Hamilton's is youthful pluck. But they get over the ground, the burning ground, very slowly. Poor Lilian's thin stockings are worn away. She hobbles over the burning marl on bare and bleeding feet, unmurmuring—she, the child, not the least heroic of them all. Seeing the pain, the torture with which she moves, the difficulty with which she moves at all, two of the men ultimately make a 'cat's cradle' with their arms, and carry her so. They continue on that barren plain until late in the afternoon; it was a prolonged torture, but there has been one advantage in it, they have had the road all to themselves. Only very strong necessity would lead anyone, even a native of the land, to be out upon it during those terrible midday hours.

But now they have arrived at its end, and at the beginning of another closely cultivated, densely inhabited tract. They dare not show themselves on the latter. So large a party as theirs cannot hope to escape observation. Now is the time that the people will be moving about. It seems to them providential that just beyond its commencement lies a large dense mango-grove. They determine to take shelter in this until the evening time. As they pass into the coolness and darkness of the grove, comparative only though these be, they experience a most exquisite pleasure, a pleasure similar to that of the passing away of a horrible pain. As they make their way into its innermost depths, and throw themselves down on the ground at the foot of two trees, how exquisite the sensation of the relief from labour, how keen the delight of rest, rest to the overworked limbs, the overtried brain, the overwrought will! They have no longer to carry their wearied frames, to bear themselves upright. They are witting only of rest; mind, body, and soul, all three, seem to have passed away into it, been dissolved in it. It is difficult to describe the sensation, even though I have experienced it; difficult to describe it, because it is nothingness. They have seen with delight that the grove is an isolated one, has no village near it. And so they abandon themselves to that delightful rest.

But they do not enjoy it for long. They have soon not only entered upon but passed through a new adventure: they suddenly find themselves set upon and disarmed, and hustled, and roughly handled, and most effectually robbed. Their approach to the grove had been noticed by some Ranghurs, members of one of the most violent, and lawless, and predatory tribes of that quarter, who had themselves previously taken shelter from the heat in the grove, and were seated at its farther end. They send one of their body, a celebrated tracker—every Ranghur is a robber—to make closer observation of the fugitives. He creeps up to within a dozen yards of them entirely unsuspected.

‘What is the hour, Fane?’ says Major Coote, looking at his timepiece; ‘my watch has stopped.’ ‘It is a quarter to four,’ says Major Fane, drawing out his large gold watch and looking at it. The three-quarter naked native, lying quiet on his stomach behind a tree, notes the watch and chain—notes also that there is a very handsome ring on a finger of the hand that holds it. Fane was fond of rings. The epaulettes and sword-belts of the men are not difficult to see; but his keen eye has also caught the sparkle of gems. Mrs. Fane and Beatrice both have very handsome and valuable diamond guard-rings on their fingers; Mrs. Fane has also a gold chain about her neck. This party is decidedly worth the robbing. He then notes the position of the men, and of the trees around them, very carefully, and then glides away again, unseen, unheard. And not long afterwards he and another man, as lean and lithe and lissome, and almost as stealthy as himself, are lying behind the huge trunks of two of the trees. And now they have run forward on their bare noiseless feet, and Fane and Coote, reclining not far from each other, are under the surprise of their sudden appearance, when this head tracker of the gang, the man who had observed them and settled what he should do, has whipped up both their swords and leaped away with them. It was very cleverly done. The man had certainly carried out his part most dexterously and successfully: he had displayed great cleverness, boldness, and agility; he was notorious for these—very quick of head and hand and foot. His less gifted companion does not make the affair, the disarmament, as complete as it was meant to be: he gets hold of only one sword, that belonging to young Hamilton. Hay foils him in the attempt to seize his. But still enough has been done. The Englishmen have been rendered practically powerless. One man by himself

cannot fight as four men together would have fought. And the moment the chief tracker had dashed away with the swords the remaining members of the gang, who had moved up as near as they could, came running and leaping down the leafy aisles, and the Englishmen find themselves in rough strong hands, and being robbed by nimble fingers: and their watches are conveyed, and the epaulettes taken off their shoulders, and even the buttons cut off their coats, 'before they know where they are.' And now is Mrs. Fane's proud spirit wounded as she feels those rough hands about her person. She starts away from the ruffian who is striving to pull the chain from off her neck. 'I will give it to you,' she says. And then she has to take her rings off and hand them to him, otherwise she sees quite plainly that he would pull them off himself with his rough fingers: he will have every one of them, not only her engaged ring, that splendid and valuable half-hoop of diamonds, but even her wedding-ring, by her most valued of them all—she has to part even with that. 'Off with it!' cries the man, as she says that it is of no great value and begs that it may be spared her. 'Is it not of gold?' They are very thorough robbers, these. As has been said, they even cut the buttons off the men's uniform jackets. The girls too have to part with their trinkets: Beatrice with her-loved engagement ring, Lilian with her much-prized first watch. And then the fellows have disappeared, and the Englishmen find themselves standing there, deeply humiliated and deprived of their weapons, for the robbers have carried off their swords. There comes over them a feeling of helplessness such as they had not experienced before. With their swords they had felt that they could fight a mob, at all events overawe it. But now they would be no match for half a dozen men armed with clubs. And the women understand this too, and this helplessness of the men is added to their own natural load of helplessness.

They have toiled on all through the fierce heat of the day, all through the fierce dry gale, all through the clouds of choking dust, without having had a drop of water to drink. They are faint, ill, with thirst. 'Oh, for a drop of water to moisten the parched lips!'—that is the thought of every one, but the saying of none. They all maintain a proud silence. None of them will complain.

Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
I see the lords of human kind pass by,

was written of the English long before their conquest of India

but there is no doubt that the conquest and rule of that vast land have tended to enhance that feeling of race superiority, more especially in those immediately concerned in that rule. No doubt that feeling often displays itself in India in vulgar, odious forms; but if the feeling has its weak and detestable, it has also its strong and admirable side. To it, to the strength of body and of mind to which it is attributable, are due those strenuous labours in the office, the court of justice, and the field, such as were never paralleled in India before, and which the natives of the land themselves shrink from, do not hold worth the enduring, even if they could endure them; from it, from the sense of it, have come those noblest of our acquisitions in India, our name for uprightness and justice. Long may the English continue to hold an opinion which leads them to be upright and just! Long may they continue to consider any shrinking from danger and hardship as incompatible with that superiority of race! Long may they consider it due to themselves to display superior qualities, a superior honesty and a superior justice, a superior courage and a superior endurance of hardship, in India!

After the exchange of some few words they seat themselves quietly down again to await the coming of the solitude and safety of the night. They may now hope to escape molestation during the few remaining hours of daylight. Major Coote had gathered that the robbers had come from a distance. 'It was a good thing we thought of resting here for half an hour,' one of the fellows had said as they were moving away. There is no village within sight. The vast barren plain stretches on one side, a long reach of the flat open unfenced fields, just now barren too, extends on the other.

So they sit patiently resting for some time, when they are disturbed by the sound of a human voice. They may expect a stray traveller or two to pass into the grove, but they do not mind that. What attracts their attention now is that the man seems to be chanting or reading aloud. It is some one reading aloud. There is the nasal intonation, the continued rise and fall of the voice, with which orientals read, especially read poetry. They are surprised that any one should be reading aloud in such a place as this. They are still more surprised when, the voice getting nearer and nearer, the reader himself comes in view, passing slowly down the pillared aisle of shade parallel to the one in which they have seated themselves. He is a young man curiously dressed. Around his person are the flowing yellow garments of a Brahmin

priest; on his head is the biretta of a Catholic priest; on his feet a pair of patent-leather boots. Though they can now, of course, hear him quite plainly, they do not understand what he is reading. From the shape of the book, or rather collection of pages, he carries in his hand, Major Coote guesses, and guesses rightly, that he is reading the Hindoo Scriptures. The young man is, in fact, reciting a sloka of the Vedas; but the sonorous Sanscrit tongue is not known to any of the Englishmen present. The young native is entirely absorbed in the reading, the reciting, of the sacred verses, and he does not observe the seated fugitives until he is within a few yards of them: and so they have time to make minute observation of him. The colour of his skin is very fair; he has a long aquiline nose, and a long retreating forehead, and a long projecting chin. His face is much thrust forward, for he has a very strong forward bend or stoop in his tall thin narrow-shouldered frame. He is pacing slowly along. And now a sesquipedalian Sanscrit word is stopped in his mouth as he gazes at them with a look of astonishment. He has large projecting eyes. He pulls up short, and then advances towards them with a peculiar long gliding step. Having observed the patent-leather shoes much affected by the educated (*i.e.* English educated) native youth, they are not much surprised when the young man addresses them with, 'Goot evening, ladies!' 'Goot evening, gentlemen!' and they expect him to ask where they have come from; but they are astonished at the form of the questions which he now pours upon them in his rapid fluent voice: 'What you do here? In these deserts vast and antres wild? What you do here under the shadow of these melancholy boughs? What bring your wandering footsteps here? Where you come from? Where you go to? As Carlyle say, "Whence? and ah! whither?" As Shakespere say, "That is the question."'

'Who are you?' asks Hay, by way of counter question—and looking at the young man curiously.

'A servant of the Lord and a seeker after righteousness,' replies he.

'But what are you?'

'A student, and a searcher for the truth.'

'You are a Brahmin?'

'Yes,' says the young fellow proudly; 'but I not idolater. I educated in missionary school. I study every religion—Hindoo, Christian, Mahomedan. I read the Bible, the Koran, and the

Shasters,' and he lays his hand on the long narrow leaves he holds in his hand. 'Plenty good in all religions, plenty bad. Take the good of every religion and leave the bad, and make new religion. I make new religion.'

In India and the East new sects and religions are constantly springing up: some to take root and flourish, and grow up into wide-spread systems, most to wither and perish after a brief and narrow existence. But whether this young man will hereafter come to lie in a sacred shrine, a holy sepulchre, and be worshipped as a saint, a prophet, or a god, is of much less interest to the fugitives than whether at the present moment he is more likely to help them or hurt them; whether he might not get them some water to drink. Educated in an English school, and speaking the English language, he will most likely be friendly.

'Do you live near here?'

'Yes; my village is contiguous. I make supposition that you come from Khizrabad?'

'Yes; we have come from Khizrabad.'

'On shanks' mare?'

The natives of India who have learned English are fond of using such phrases, in order to redeem their conversation from pedantry and give it a light colloquial air.

'Yes; we have come on foot.'

'Many English people killed in Khizrabad—too much blood flow there. Very terrible, very bad. All men should love one another and not hate one another—that more proper. No man hurt another. That the true religion—that I teach. All men are brothers, members of same body: should love one another, help one another—that I teach. Whence?—from Khizrabad. Whither?—to Abdoolapore?'

'Yes; we are making for Abdoolapore. How far is it from here?'

'Eight mile as crow fly. Nine or ten mile by the road over Hindun bridge. You bring no attendants?'

'No.'

'Have to run away too fast?'

The young man's wandering glance has been turned curiously on each of them by turns, but it has rested longest on Major Fane; and now, as Fane puts his glass into his eye and scrutinises this would-be founder of a new religion, he exclaims:

''Tis strange, most strange, 'tis passing strange. I very much

bewilder and confuse. Is not this the gentleman in charge of Khizrabad magazine? Methinks I saw him when I went to see the arsenal.'

'Yes; I was in charge of the arsenal at Khizrabad,' says Fane.

'But I hear arsenal blown up, and everybody in it killed.'

'Yes; the arsenal was blown up, but this gentleman was not blown up with it,' says Hay; 'though it is most wonderful that he was not.'

'And I see you no weapons have; no swords by side, no guns, no pistols in pocket?'

'No; we are quite unarmed.'

'Helpless as babes?'

'Not quite that, I hope.'

'And you bring nothing to eat with you?'

'No.'

'Then you are very hungry. "Hunger in their rear, confusion in their van;" no—"confusion in their rear, hunger in their van." I forget. You very hungry?'

'Not so hungry as thirsty. We are very thirsty. We have been walking in the sun for many hours, and have not had a drop of water to drink.'

'Plenty wells.'

'We have nothing to draw the water with.'

'I compassionate you very much, very much indeed. Hunger and thirst—very bad thing, terrible thing. In all religions it say, "Give food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty." I teach that.'

'Have you got your *lotah* (drinking-vessel) with you?' says Major Coote.

The *lotah* is so made that, by tying a string round the neck, you can draw water with it from a well, as the natives always do. No native ever travels without his *lotah*.

'No,' says the young man, 'my village not far. I came here only for short time, in order to read holy book and meditate under these trees, in this vast continuity of shade.'

'D—n his jaw! I wish he had brought his *lotah*!' cries Coote, impatient, to young Hamilton.

'But you all very hungry? You all very thirsty?'

'Yes; very,' says Coote curtly.

'Then why you not come to my village? It not far. There we give you food and drink. Plenty good water there.'

‘We wish to avoid villages. We have heard that other English people have been ill-treated in some of the villages about here.’

‘Yes; they kill them three Englishmen. Very bad people those. Very wrong to kill anything, even insect. But those people evil-minded people, thieves and robbers. People in my village all Brahmins, like myself. They not hurt you, but help you. I take care of you. I educated in missionary school. I fond of English people.’

Fane and Coote and Hay confer together apart for a few minutes. They decide that it will be best to accept the offer of the young religious enthusiast. They are very hungry and terribly thirsty. They have no means of procuring water for themselves.

They accompany him across the fields, on which so rich and lush a harvest waves in the autumn and winter months, but which now lie so hard and dry, so barren and bare, devoid of all herbage; and on them hard and dry rests the hard dry evening light. The young Hindoo discourses continually, his flow of talk seems ceaseless, and everything seems to produce a quotation. He looks at Lilian hobbling along on her cut and bleeding feet, and he says, ‘She move as Goldsmith say, “with painful steps and slow.”’

‘That barren plain must be a very wide one,’ says Hay, as he glances back towards it on first leaving the grove.

‘Yes; it is “a wild immeasurably spread.”’

‘You have plenty of wells here,’ says Major Coote, as they advance farther into the fertile tract.

‘Yes; yet for you is “water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink!”’

‘Yes, certainly, without something to draw it with,’ says matter-of-fact Major Coote.

The young man discourses at large about his new religion, in which, as he informs them, ‘mercy and truth have met together, justice and peace have kissed together.’ ‘Peace upon earth and goodwill towards men,’ he quotes. ‘But to thyself be true, and thou canst not then be false to any man,’ he quotes.

And now the tree-encircled village comes in view, and now they have reached it. The *choupal*, or guest-house, generally placed in the precincts, stands on this side of the village, and it is the first house they come to. The young Brahmin leads them into it. Usually the *choupal* consists simply of a long open

shed without any furniture in it (the Indian traveller carries his bedding and cooking apparatus with him); with some trees and an open space for the travellers' carts and cattle, his riding horse or his driving bullocks, in front of it. But, as we have said, this tract of country was largely occupied by predatory tribes, with whom cattle-lifting was an hereditary and highly honoured occupation. The space in front of the choupal here had therefore been enclosed by a strong fence, with a gateway in it. The young Brahmin, the founder of the new religion, in which universal benevolence was to be the cardinal principle—"Quenchless desire of universal happiness," as Shelley say, to quote the young fellow's words—having led them through the gateway and up to the house, takes his departure, saying, 'I will now go and get you some things to sit upon and something to eat and drink.' Moving into the village, he encounters three or four men; the string over their shoulders—they have nothing on but their skull-caps and their loin-cloths—indicates that they are Brahmins.

'There are seven Christians in the choupal,' he says to them exultingly.

'Seven Christians?'

'Yes; three women and four men.'

'How did they get here?'

'I brought them!'—in a tone of great triumph. 'Is it not a great haul?' (Of course, he is now using, not English, but Hindostanee colloquialisms.)

'As how?'

'Has not the Nuwâb Sahib placed a reward of a hundred rupees on the head of every English person? It is a haul of seven hundred rupees for us, for the village; and I did it—I lured them hither.'

'But we have to get them into Khizrabad.'

'The men are not armed. But still, if we tried to take them into Khizrabad ourselves, they would resist and injure some of us. They are great fighters, these English; great fighters, even with their fists; and some of the men might escape by running away. I have thought of all this—I have brains. I will mount one of our mares and ride into Khizrabad at once. I will return early to-morrow morning, accompanied by a troop of the Nuwâb's cavalry, and we will make our prisoners over to them. You must keep charge of them during the night. Feed them well, and get them to sleep. Tell them what you like. Now that they are in

the choupal they are like birds in a trap, like fish in a net. They cannot struggle or escape as they would in the open. They can only get out at the gate; close it, and place a man at it with a sword—there are two swords in the village. It was *I* who lured them hither.' He has poured all this out with his usual rapidity of speech. And then he hurries away to get the mare. He will not send anyone else into Khizrabad. *He* must be the sole hero of this adventure. Vanity was a leading trait in this young man's character; and it was so far to his credit that, in his betrayal of the English, he was actuated more by the desire for *éclat* than for gain. He desired to obtain the reward as much for the sake of the community as his own. He was greedy of praise; and he should obtain it, not only from his village brethren, but from the Nuwâb. While he hurries in one direction, two of his Brahmin brethren hurry to the choupal, picking up clubs as they go, while the others proceed to get some charpoys for the entrapped fugitives to sit and sleep on, food for them to eat, water for them to drink. And those fugitives are soon busily engaged in the delightful occupation of washing their hands and faces, and drinking—how they do drink, and drink, and drink! And though the cold unleavened cakes are like leather, and the sweetmeats are stale, they find the occupation of eating a very pleasant one too, for they are very hungry. And so they munch away at the parched grain and suck away at the lumps of coarse sugar which are its usual accompaniment, and drink again of the cold water. The young Brahmin has certainly carried out his promise of providing them with food and drink. They wonder that he has not come himself to act the part of host. They enquire for him.

'He has been obliged to go to a neighbouring village on some business—he will be back in an hour or two,' says one of the ready-lying Brahmins. It is very pleasant to rest, and eat and drink, but the main desire with every one, most especially with Major Fane and his wife and Hay, is to find themselves within the safe precincts of Abdoolapore. So Coote says to one of the Brahmins: 'Now that we are refreshed, thanks to your kind hospitality, for which we shall not forget to make due acknowledgment, we must be proceeding on our way. How far is it to Abdoolapore?'

'About nine miles.'

'I suppose we should have to go along village tracks?'

'Yes; there is no highway near.'

‘You could send a man with us to guide us?’

‘Yes; but we could send no one with you to protect you. There are only five or six of us now in the village. It is not a large village, and most of our men are away on pilgrimage just now—so you must not think of moving for another hour or so. You must wait until all the people have retired to the villages. You know that these Ranghurs and Goojurs who inhabit the villages about here are great rascals—they would kill you simply because you are Feringhees—they killed three of your countrymen yesterday. You had better not venture out until later on.’

‘Nine miles—we could do that in three hours. We can wait until ten o’clock—that would be neither too early nor too late.’

And so they settle.

They pass the time in finding out from the Brahmins all they know about the recent occurrences at Khizrabad. What they have to tell is not pleasant for English ears to hear—makes them not the less anxious to be within the safe precincts of Abdoolapore. Surely it must be ten o’clock. They have no watches now, but they can judge by the position of the moon.

‘We must now be going,’ says Hay to the Brahmin who seems to be told off to deal with them. ‘Will you let us have a man to show us the way?’

‘Will you not wait until Nund Coomar’—that was the name of the young Brahmin who had brought them thither—‘has returned?’

‘We should like to see him again very much, but we cannot wait. We have not far to go, but these ladies are very tired and footsore and can walk but slowly.’

‘That is just it,’ says the lying-tongued Brahmin, the priestly agriculturist. ‘Nund Coomar has gone to the house of a friend who has a bhylee’ (kind of carriage), ‘and he will bring it back with him for the use of these ladies—he was much touched with their condition.’ (Nund Coomar’s new religion of universal benevolence affords much amusement to his brethren, to his fellow-priests and co-proprietors of the lands of the village.) ‘He will now be back very soon.’

They know that with Lilian walking is simply torture. And Mrs. Fane and Beatrice too are very footsore; their feet too are cut and blistered; to them, too, to-day, the walking over the burning ground at noon has been torture. The carriage would enable *them* to get on so much faster, that it seems worth their while

to wait for it; they would save time thereby. And the Brahmin engages their attention with the narration of some incident—real or invented—of the outbreak at Khizrabad. And then they say they must be off; and then he says that he will send a man to the border of the village to listen if the carriage is coming. But now the moon is nearing the zenith, and they insist that they can wait no longer.

‘Why should you undertake this troublesome and dangerous walk?’ says the smooth-tongued Brahmin. ‘These poor women are very weary, that poor child’s feet are very sore; your best plan will be to remain here where you are comfortable and safe, and we will send a man into Abdoolapore to inform your friends there of your condition, and they will send out soldiers and carriages who will take you all in safely and comfortably.’

‘We would rather walk in than wait,’ says Mrs. Fane decisively, in Hindostanee. Then in English to her husband and the others: ‘Do not agree to this on any account. Let us go on at once.’

‘We must now proceed on our journey,’ says Hay. ‘Which is the man who is to guide us?’

‘Nund Coomar brought you here and is responsible for your safety. You cannot go before he returns.’

‘But we must—we have now no more time to lose,’ says Hay.

‘The best thing you can all do now,’ says the Brahmin quietly, ‘is to go to sleep. If Nund Coomar returns with the bhylee in another hour or two, you can then go on. In any case I will at once send a man into Abdoolapore to give notice of your being here and an escort party will come to you here or meet you on the way. But proceed just now you cannot.’

‘Cannot!’ says Hay. ‘You would not prevent us, would you?’

‘I have placed a guard of four men, two armed with clubs and two with swords, at the gate, to guard and protect you; they also have orders not to allow you to leave this place until Nund Coomar returns.’

‘What! are we prisoners? Would you make prisoners of us—officers—*Sahib log*? Do you know that these’—pointing to Coote and Fane—‘are gentlemen of high position?’ says Hay.

‘You cannot say we have made you prisoners, when we are only taking care of you. The best thing for you all to do now is to go to sleep. I must retire to rest myself. Salaam!’ And he and the other Brahmins are gone.

What does all this mean? To those who think it forbodes the worst it is terrible. To be within so few miles of their destination and to be withheld from reaching it! This was to have one's bark founder and allow the inimical waves to overwhelm one at one's very door. Had they gone on from the grove, they would have been in Abdoolapore ere this. (They make quite sure of that—they ignore all possibility of failures and mischances that way, as one is apt to do in such thinking.) Why had they allowed that prating young scoundrel with his mouth full of fine sentiments and his heart full of deceit to beguile them from it?

'I distrusted the fellow from the beginning,' says Coote to Hamilton.

'You think their intentions towards us are not friendly?'

'I believe that young *soour* (pig) brought us in here purposely to secure us, and that he has now gone into Khizrabad to give notice of our being here.'

But the men keep their fears to themselves. They pretend to believe that the young Brahmin will be back soon, that the messenger will be despatched to Abdoolapore. And they are exhausted and sleepy. And the most of them, the two sisters and Coote and Hamilton, are soon asleep. But sleep cannot come to the father and mother, to the young man whose bride to be is placed in a position of such danger.

These hold anxious conference together. 'If they wish to deliver us up for the sake of the reward, we must offer them a larger reward to take us into Abdoolapore,' says Fane. 'We will give them anything they ask,' says Hay. And so they confer and discuss and lament — and lament and discuss and confer. And the moon, now riding high in the heavens, floods the enclosure with her silver light. That glorious splendour seems a mockery of their woe. And then Hay, thinking that the husband and wife would like to be by themselves, leaves them and begins pacing up and down the enclosure. He continues pacing up and down it, while the moon is speeding across the sky and the moments go rushing by. He has never passed such a vigil as this. His brain is racked, his heart is torn with sorrows and fears. His heart rises in wild rebellion.

Surely there are some things for which it is impossible to say unto the Lord, 'Thy will be done.' And then his heart rises in earnest prayer—'Deliver us, O Lord! O Lord! deliver them.' And then he hears the gate being stealthily opened, and

he pauses in his sad pacing, and he sees the man on watch coming up the enclosure, the naked sword he bears in his hand gleaming in the bright moonshine. What does this mean?—murder? Hay steps forward to confront the man. The Brahmin advances close up to him. Now is Hay's courage put to the utmost test. At no moment during the past three days has the strain on his nerves been so severe as at this. The man advances up to him until their faces almost touch. 'Awaken the others,' he whispers; 'and depart out of this as soon as you can.'

'Out of this—out of the village?'

'Yes. What is intended against you is not a good thing, and I will have no part in it. I will not have the guilt of your blood upon my soul, upon this village. Quick, awaken the others.'

They are all awakened. They have reached the gate. They pass with their lightest footsteps by the other men of the guard lying fast asleep on their quilts and carpets on the ground by the side of the gateway. They are moving away from the village. The girls might have thought that this was a dream-deliverance in their sleep, did not their painful feet so fully assure them that they were awake.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE BYRAGEE.

IF, as they are hurrying away from the Brahmin village, their deliverance would have seemed to Beatrice and Lilian Fane as a dream if it had not been for their paining feet, to their mother, to Hay, it seems like the awaking from some horrid nightmare. In proportion to the agony of a few minutes ago is now their relief. They stay not to find or follow the pathway. They make straight across the open fields until they have got well away from the village. Then they stop. They guess which way Abdoolapore may lie, and bend their steps in that direction. But they have to make constant deviations from it on account of the villages or hamlets. They find no road or pathway that they can follow for any length of time. It seems to them as if most of these pathways ran at right angles to the course they wished to follow: that is due to their condition of mind. They pass across fields in which the sharp-edged or knotty roots of the cut maize or cut sugar-cane wound and bruise their ankles and feet; or they stumble across

others in which the hard ridges or huge clods are almost as terrible for the quite, or almost, bare, the cut and blistered feet of poor Mrs. Fane and her daughters. For some time they are able to follow the bank of an artificial channel, the water running in which is very pleasant to the eye, and its soft, smooth, grass-covered pathway most delightful to the feet. But now it sweeps away in the wrong direction, and they have once more to move across the hard dry fields. They pass over the high-lying fields, from which the wheat harvest has recently been cut, across the low-lying ones, now white and dry, over which the water will be standing and the green mantle of the young rice spread in another month or two. They traverse pieces of waste land covered with wild caper and other thorny bushes. Then they find their progress arrested by a narrow but deep drainage line, which they find in furious flow—this water must come from the great canal, of which the small channel which had afforded them such agreeable walking was a distributary. They must find a crossing. Which way are they to go, up or down? Down is more in their direction. They must keep the moon behind them. They keep along the edge, but still they find no place to cross: and now the moon is to their right, and now in front of them. This will not do, so they retrace their steps. They follow the stream upward, and now to their joy it turns in the right direction, and there is the Pole star a little to the left, and the moon well behind them. They pass through a long stretch of babool or kikar trees—this is the *Acacia Arabica*—from the huge spike-like thorns of which many of them suffer greatly, and on emerging from it they find the moon straight in front of them and the Pole star behind them. This is maddening! The precious hours of the night are passing away; the early coming dawn with its sharp, clear light will soon be here. Are they never to get across this stream? ‘We can only go one way,’ says Major Coote, even he angered, ‘and we may as well keep going upward.’ And then the Pole star is in front and the moon behind again. In short, the stream has here a very tortuous course, runs in long loops. They have worked round a long stretch of the acacia jungle through which they could not have forced their way, and arrived again at the bank of the stream, when they miss the sound of the rushing water, and, looking down, find the channel quite dry. They have got above the point of junction of the escape channel of the canal. They scramble down one bank and up the other not without difficulty, both the banks being very steep; but those

tortuous windings of the stream have cost them much time, and they are anxious to hurry on, and could not delay to look for an easier crossing. They move over the stretch of waste which, as usual, marks the course of the drainage line. Again they find a deep, narrow channel across their path; it must be the same one come round with a wide sweep.

But now there is no perpendicular bank, or rushing water, or alas! dim light, to make it difficult for them to cross. Beyond is still the flat level barren plain, through which the stream meanders, and then they arrive at the edge of a heavy dhâk jungle standing upon it. It is a specially dense one, and as they pass in among the thick-standing, large-leaved trees, there is a delightful sweet coolness in the air, and they have actually green grass—a mere wash, but still green grass—beneath their feet, and it is covered with little white flowers, little white flowers like their own loved English daisy. But alas for the light that enables them to see them! The undesired and unwelcome morning is now breaking. The time for general movement has come, and they are once more conspicuous on the face of the land, in an alien country, and amid a now inimical people. What shall they do? Shall they press on at every risk, or shall they face the terrible ordeal of another day in the open, and remain where they are? This jungle seems to possess the merit of solitariness in a supreme degree. They must be very remote from the habitations of men, for they hear not a sound connected with them—not the bleating of flocks, nor the lowing of herds, nor the barking of dogs. They sit down to rest, and discuss the matter. While doing so, the deep silence around them is broken by a sudden rustle. Then, that is surely the sound of a human voice!

‘What was that?’

‘I thought it was someone calling “*Aao! Aao!*”’ (‘Come! Come!’)

They listen. Yes; those are the words, softly but clearly spoken. In England our ears are not attuned to angel voices now. But a native of the land who had passed that way, and not found out from whence the words came, would have told when he got home how in the dhâk jungle he had heard the voice of a spirit, the soft voice of a female spirit. (We must give sex to our supernatural beings, even to a ‘First Cause’). ‘*Aao! Aao!*’—soft words, but they fall harshly on their ears. For whom is the invitation meant? For them or someone else? ‘Come! Come!’ And now they hear

a whining and rustling in the bushes around them, a rustling and whining which seems to be now here, now there; now in this direction and now in that; and now around them. What can all this mean? Are there spirits about? Many of them are just in a condition of nerve to see them. But instead of something supernatural they see a surprising natural sight. Before them lies a long narrow open glade. From under a bush at one side of this appears a jackal, and from under another bush another jackal, and then a pair of jackals run on to it from this side, and a pair of jackals run on to it from the other; and the jackals all move down the alley to its further end, some at a gentle satisfied trot, others at an easy joyous gallop. And then, like men suddenly emerging from an ambush, jackals run on to the glade from every point of the surrounding belt of trees and bushes; and they all hurry down it to the further end, with various forms of movement, but all more or less quick, and various kinds of cries, not the howls and yells with which they usually make night hideous, but far softer whines and gentler barkings. And there they all pull up in a mass. And now there is a sudden commotion in the pack, a sudden accession of whining, a sudden jumping about and leaping over one another, a sudden cocking of ears and whisking of tails. And still greater is the commotion when a man appears and begins to throw something among them from a wallet which he carries slung over his shoulder. This continues for a little while, and then the man unslings the wallet and empties it over them, and then gives it a wave. This is evidently a recognised signal, for the animals immediately separate and run back and disappear under the bushes, and the glade is left empty as before. As the man moves up the alley, the astonished onlookers observe that he every now and then puts his fingers into a little bag he carries and deposits a little mound of something white upon the ground.

‘He is putting down flour for the ants,’ says Major Coote. This is a well-known form of beneficence in the East.

The man has now come quite near to them. He has not seen them, because his eyes were bent on the ground. But now he catches sight of them. He exhibits no sign of astonishment, but walks quietly up to them. He salutes them with a peculiarly soft and graceful movement of his hand and arm, and cries ‘*Râm ! Râm !*’ to them in a peculiarly soft and gentle tone of voice. The voice, the accent, and the gesture are those of a man of birth and breeding, though the stranger’s dress is that of a faquir. The fair-

ness and fineness of the skin, and the well-cut features, are also indicative of good birth, of a superior social class. He is a man of the middle height, and his figure is slender and graceful. He appears to be in the prime of life, though his dark hair and beard are beginning to be streaked with grey. He surveys them with a kind regard, with a mild and benign look.

‘Peace be with you, children of God,’ he says in his soft voice. ‘You have escaped, I suppose, from Khizrabad, where there has been such terrible shedding of blood. Oh that man should shed the blood of his brother man!’

‘We have,’ says Major Coote, curtly.

‘You are in danger of your lives if you are seen of any of the people about here,’ goes on the faquir. ‘They have slain many of your countrymen. You must come with me to my hut. That is the only place where you will be safe, where your precious lives will not be in danger of being lost.’

‘We met a man yesterday who spoke to us in the manner you do now, and then betrayed us. He too was a holy man, a Brahmin like yourself,’ says Hay, bitterly.

‘I am not a Brahmin now; and which of us is holy? I will not betray you. Now that I have come upon you it has become a sacred obligation with me to prevent you from losing your lives. You will know for certain that I could not betray you to death when I tell you that I am a Kabirpanthi, a Ramanandi.’

Each of us expands his own dunghill into the universe. Our own thoughts and feelings and opinions form the infinite and the eternal. There is a ring round the thinker in London as there is round the thinker in Mecca and Benares; but that ring is not so big, does not gird in the whole universe, the present and the future, all eternity, as each of them imagines. To this man standing here, the truth, the whole truth, the only truth, the eternal truth, lay in the teachings of one Ramanand, of whom these English people had never before even heard, as is most likely the case with the reader also.

‘You know not what a Kabirpanthi is! Strange! But you English people live entirely apart from us. We Ramanandis are the followers of the great *guru*’ (teacher), ‘Ramanand, with whom the sacredness of life was the leading tenet of his moral code. All life comes from God, and is a portion of his divine substance, is an effluence of that bright influence uncreate. All life is therefore most precious, that of the insect as much as that

of the elephant, and to be cherished and not destroyed. You English people hold the contrary. You slay too much. Therefore I like you not. But still I am bound to preserve your lives. We are careful to avoid all destruction of life even accidentally. We are careful how we walk, lest we tread on some insect; many of us go about with our mouths covered lest their breath should poison some form of life in the air.'

'I have seen that,' says Coote.

'I will tell you about myself, so that you may see that you can trust me. I am a man of substance, a zemindar' (landed proprietor). 'I have houses and lands, a wife and children, servants. But these are the things that clog the soul and prevent one from attaining to the perfect holy life. I determined to rid me of them and retire to some lonely place and dwell there by myself. I first resolved to depart into some forest wild, of which I should be the sole occupant, and there meditate, and feed the beasts and birds around me. The sheep, the oxen, the goats, the dogs and cats, and the domestic birds, are all taken care of in the habitations of men. But who is there to feed the birds and beasts in the wilderness? I should do this. But then I reflected that the highest form of life is the human. In the lonely forest I should not be able to minister to it. I must seek some solitary spot through which men passed, even if they did not abide there. I have found what I wanted here. Here is this lonely jungle in which the wild beasts and wild birds dwell, and around it stretches the great lonely uninhabited plain. Across that plain and by this forest runs a track leading from Rajpootana to Hurdwar. At the time of the Hurdwar fair this road is thronged with pilgrims. Thus, then, here I could be solitary for most part of the year, and yet be able to minister to thousands of people at one period of it. So here I have set up my resting-place. The pilgrims—the pious men and women—had to toil across this great plain, on which there is no village, no wells, during the hot months of the year; and think what their sufferings must have been from the want of water.'

'We can tell—we have recently experienced them,' says Coote.

'Poor people!' says the Byragee tenderly. 'And so here, in the middle of the plain, I have sunk a well by the side of the road, and built a little hut near it. I feed the birds and beasts in the jungle, and give water to the pilgrims from the well. You had better come with me, and I will give you shelter in my hut. You will be safe there.'

‘The man who betrayed us yesterday also said that all men should love one another, and not injure one another—that was to be the leading precept in his new religion.’

‘His new religion—a young man?’

‘Yes.’

‘With English shoes? Puh!’

‘Yes.’

‘I know him—a foolish young fellow. His head full of wind. But I did not think he would be guilty of treachery. If his feet have gone astray, it is because he has no settled path to walk on. But you need not fear any treachery from me.’

His sweet open countenance seems to give full assurance of that. They do not see that they can do better than follow him.

They accompany him down the glade, and then he turns into another one and stops in the middle of it and gives a peculiar whistle, and the birds come fluttering round him and he throws them grain. They have arrived at the edge of the jungle, and the barren plain runs away before them as far as the eye can reach. The track across it touches the forest here, and so it is here that the faquir has sunk his well and planted his lonely dwelling-place. The latter is a small hut with mud walls and a flat-terraced roof—truly a hermit’s cell. There is but one doorway leading into it: to this there is no door.

‘Why, you said we should be quite safe here,’ exclaims Hay. ‘You do not call this house secure?’

‘You are more safe within it than you would be in any fort or fortress. No one can enter it without first setting foot on the worshipping place without, and no one dare do that. The room is therefore a sanctuary.’

The hut was raised some three feet from the ground, and in front of it extended a square platform of beaten clay of the same height. Round the edges of this platform were twelve dwarf pillars, one at each of the four corners, the others between. The special incarnation of the Divine Being chosen by Ramanand for the worship of himself and his followers was Vishnu: therefore they worshipped also Vishnu’s wife, Sita; and his half brother Lukshman, and his faithful friend Hunoomān, the monkey-god. Then again Tulasee was the favourite mistress of Vishnu. Her jealous spouse changed her into a plant. Vishnu, in order to enjoy her company, transformed himself into the Sālarāma, an ammonite found in some of the Himalayan streams, and now

greatly valued as an object of worship. Our concern with all this mythology is this :—On the dwarf pillars round the raised platform were placed representations, in baked clay, of the monkey god ; of the various forms taken on himself by Vishnu ; images of Lukshmi and of Sita ; earthen pots containing the sacred tulsi plant ; while in the centre of it, in the position of honour, had been placed an ammonite of very unusual size ; and so on the platform and the hut beside it was conferred a sacred and inviolable character. It was to this that the eremite trusted for their safety.

‘No one knows that you are here—no one is likely to come here to molest you. If they did, you would be as safe within that hut as behind the walls of any of your forts, even the mighty ones of Allahabad or of Agra.’

The fugitives would all, most decidedly, have preferred to be within the forts, under the shadow of their walls. The ammonite, and the tulsi plant, and the monkey-god, were all very well, but they would much rather have trusted for their safety to the protecting powers of a few English bayonets. But here they are.

The seeker after spiritual perfection then busies himself in providing for the bodily wants of his guests. He draws water from the well for them to drink and wash with, he brings out the parched grain which is what he himself now chiefly lives on. He waits on them most assiduously, on the women with tender solicitude. He washes Lilian’s poor lacerated feet, and binds them up for her. He gives Hay’s wounded arm the cleaning and dressing which it needs so much. All this is evidently a labour of love to him : nothing can exceed his kindness. But with the fugitives the chief thought, of course, is how they are to get into Abdoolapore. They consult the Byragee.

‘I have some disciples in the neighbouring villages,’ says the holy man, ‘and two of them are coming to me to-day for religious instruction. They will be here very soon. These can guide you into Abdoolapore to-night, or one of them could take a letter in from you stating that you are here and asking for an escort to be sent out for you. I should advise the latter. The great danger to you is immediately round Abdoolapore, which is now as a beleaguered city. The man would reach Abdoolapore early in the afternoon and the escort ought to be out here by the evening.’ Yes—that is what they will do. The Byragee brings out some paper and the reed pen which he now employs, not on secular business, but only in the inditing of holy things. They write a few lines

—they have to write on a very small piece of paper, such as can easily be concealed about the person—stating that four officers and three ladies are in concealment here and asking for help. For the sake of greater safety they write them in French. The disciples now arrive, two decent-looking young country lads.

‘You can trust them?’ asks the anxious Hay.

‘To the death,’ says the Byragee. ‘Do you not know that to the disciple his master or instructor comes next after God: before his father even: for his father begot his body only, while the teacher is the father of his soul?’

As the young man chosen to carry the missive has to pass through his own village on the way, he is told to change the clean white garments in which he has come to visit his spiritual instructor and put on his ordinary work-a-day garb—he is a carpenter by trade.

We have now to accompany the bearer of the little piece of paper on which the lives of so many people hung.

(To be continued.)

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THE WHITE COMPANY.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE,
AUTHOR OF 'MICAH CLARKE.'

CHAPTER XV.

HOW THE YELLOW COG SAILED FORTH FROM LEPE.

THAT night the Company slept at St. Leonard's, in the great monastic barns and spicarium—ground well known both to Alleyne and to John, for they were almost within sight of the Abbey of Beaulieu. A strange thrill it gave to the young squire to see the well-remembered white dress once more, and to hear the measured tolling of the deep vespers bell. At early dawn they passed across the broad, sluggish, reed-girt stream—men, horses, and baggage in the flat ferry barges—and so journeyed on through the fresh morning air past Exbury to Lepe. Topping the heathy down, they came of a sudden full in sight of the old sea-port—a cluster of houses, a trail of blue smoke, and a bristle of masts. To right and left the long blue curve of the Solent lapped in a fringe of foam upon the yellow beach. Some way out from the town a line of pessoners, creyers, and other small craft were rolling lazily on the gentle swell. Further out still lay a great merchant-ship, high ended, deep waisted, painted of a canary yellow, and towering above the fishing boats like a swan among ducklings.

'By St. Paul!' said the knight, 'our good merchant of Southampton hath not played us false, for methinks I can see our ship down yonder. He said that she would be of great size and of a yellow shade.'

‘By my hilt, yes!’ muttered Aylward; ‘she is yellow as a kite’s claw, and would carry as many men as there are pips in a pomegranate.’

‘It is as well,’ remarked Terlake; ‘for methinks, my fair lord, that we are not the only ones who are waiting a passage to Gascony. Mine eye catches at times a flash and sparkle from among yonder houses which assuredly never came from shipman’s jacket or the gaberdine of a burgher.’

‘I can also see it,’ said Alleyne, shading his eyes with his hand. ‘And I can see men-at-arms in yonder boats which ply betwixt the vessel and the shore. But methinks that we are very welcome here, for already they come forth to meet us.’

A tumultuous crowd of fishermen, citizens, and women had indeed swarmed out from the northern gate, approached them up the side of the moor, waving their hands and dancing with joy, as though a great fear had been rolled back from their minds. At their head rode a very large and solemn man with a long chin and a drooping lip. He wore a fur tippet round his neck and a heavy gold chain over it, with a medallion which dangled in front of him.

‘Welcome, most puissant and noble lord,’ he cried, doffing his bonnet to Black Simon. ‘I have heard of your lordship’s valiant deeds, and in sooth they might be expected from your lordship’s face and bearing. Is there any small matter in which I may oblige you?’

‘Since you ask me,’ said the man-at-arms, ‘I would take it kindly if you could spare a link or two of the chain which hangs round your neck.’

‘What, the corporation chain!’ cried the other in horror. ‘The ancient chain of the township of Lepe! This is but a sorry jest, Sir Nigel.’

‘What the plague did you ask me for then?’ said Simon. ‘But if it is Sir Nigel Loring with whom you would speak, that is he upon the black horse.’

The Mayor of Lepe gazed with amazement on the mild face and slender frame of the famous warrior.

‘Your pardon, my very gracious lord,’ he cried. ‘You see in me the mayor and chief magistrate of the ancient and powerful town of Lepe. I bid you very heartily welcome, and the more so as you are come at a moment when we are sore put to it for means of defence.’

‘Ha!’ cried Sir Nigel, pricking up his ears.

‘Yes, my lord, for the town being very ancient and the walls as old as the town, it follows that they are very ancient too. But there is a certain villainous and bloodthirsty Norman pirate high Tête-noire, who, with a Genoan called Tito Caracci, commonly known as Spade-beard, hath been a mighty scourge upon these coasts. Indeed, my lord, they are very cruel and black-hearted men, graceless and ruthless, and if they should come to the ancient and powerful town of Lepe, then——’

‘Then good-bye to the ancient and powerful town of Lepe,’ quoth Ford, whose lightness of tongue could at times rise above his awe of Sir Nigel.

The knight, however, was too much intent upon the matter in hand to give heed to the flippancy of his squire. ‘Have you then cause,’ he asked, ‘to think that these men are about to venture an attempt upon you?’

‘They have come in two great galleys,’ answered the mayor, ‘with two bank of oars on either side, and great store of engines of war and of men-at-arms. At Weymouth and at Portland they have murdered and ravished. Yesterday morning they were at Cowes, and we saw the smoke from the burning crofts. To-day they lie at their ease near Freshwater, and we fear much lest they come upon us and do us a mischief.’

‘We cannot tarry,’ said Sir Nigel, riding towards the town, with the mayor upon his left side; ‘the Prince awaits us at Bordeaux, and we may not be behind the general muster. Yet I will promise you that on our way we shall find time to pass Freshwater and to prevail upon these rovers to leave you in peace.’

‘We are much beholden to you!’ cried the mayor. ‘But I cannot see, my lord, how, without a war-ship, you may venture against these men. With your archers, however, you might well hold the town and do them great scath if they attempt to land.’

‘There is a very proper cog out yonder,’ said Sir Nigel; ‘it would be a very strange thing if any ship were not a war-ship when it had such men as these upon her decks. Certes, we shall do as I say, and that no later than this very day.’

‘My lord,’ said a rough-haired, dark-faced man, who walked by the knight’s other stirrup, with his head sloped to catch all that he was saying. ‘By your leave, I have no doubt that you are skilled in land fighting and the marshalling of lances, but, by my soul! you will find it another thing upon the sea. I am the master-shipman of this yellow cog, and my name is Goodwin

Hawtayne. I have sailed since I was as high as this staff, and I have fought against these Normans and against the Genoese, as well as the Scotch, the Bretons, the Spanish, and the Moors. I tell you, sir, that my ship is over light and over frail for such work, and it will but end in our having our throats cut, or being sold as slaves to the Barbary heathen.'

'I also have experienced one or two gentle and honourable ventures upon the sea,' quoth Sir Nigel, 'and I am right blithe to have so fair a task before us. I think, good master-shipman, that you and I may win great honour in this matter, and I can see very readily that you are a brave and stout man.'

'I like it not,' said the other sturdily. 'In God's name, I like it not. And yet Goodwin Hawtayne is not the man to stand back when his fellows are for pressing forward. By my soul! be it sink or swim, I shall turn her beak into Freshwater Bay, and if good Master Witherton, of Southampton, like not my handling of his ship then he may find another master-shipman.'

They were close by the old north gate of the little town, and Alleyne, half turning in his saddle, looked back at the motley crowd who followed. The bowmen and men-at-arms had broken their ranks and were intermingled with the fishermen and citizens, whose laughing faces and hearty gestures bespoke the weight of care from which this welcome arrival had relieved them. Here and there among the moving throng of dark jerkins and of white surcoats were scattered dashes of scarlet or blue, the wimples or shawls of the women. Aylward, with a fishing lass on either arm, was vowing constancy alternately to her on the right and her on the left, while big John towered in the rear with a little chubby maiden enthroned upon his great shoulder, her soft white arm curled round his shining headpiece. So the throng moved on, until at the very gate it was brought to a stand by a wondrously fat man, who came darting forth from the town with rage in every feature of his rubicund face.

'How now, Sir Mayor?' he roared, in a voice like a bull. 'How now, Sir Mayor? How of the clams and the scallops?'

'By Our Lady, my sweet Sir Oliver,' cried the mayor, 'I have had so much to think of, with these wicked villains so close upon us, that it had quite gone out of my head.'

'Words, words!' shouted the other furiously. 'Am I to be put off with words? I say to you again, how of the clams and scallops?'

'My fair sir, you flutter me,' cried the mayor. 'I am a

peaceful trader, and I am not wont to be so shouted at upon so small a matter.'

'Small!' shrieked the other. 'Small! Clams and scallops! Ask me to your table to partake of the dainty of the town, and when I come a barren welcome and a bare board! Where is my spear-bearer?'

'Nay, Sir Oliver, Sir Oliver!' cried Sir Nigel, laughing. 'Let your anger be appeased, since instead of this dish you come upon an old friend and comrade.'

'By St. Martin of Tours!' shouted the fat knight, his wrath all changed in an instant to joy, 'if it is not my dear little game rooster of the Garonne. Ah, my sweet coz, I am right glad to see you. What days we have seen together!'

'Aye, by my faith,' cried Sir Nigel, with sparkling eyes, 'we have seen some valiant men, and we have shown our pennons in some noble skirmishes. By St. Paul! we have had great joys in France.'

'And sorrows also,' quoth the other. 'I have some sad memories of the land. Can you recall that which befell us at Libourne?'

'Nay, I cannot call to mind that we ever so much as drew sword at the place.'

'Man, man,' cried Sir Oliver, 'your mind still runs on nought but blades and bassinets. Hast no space in thy frame for the softer joys? Ah, even now I can scarce speak of it unmoved. So noble a pie, such tender pigeons, and sugar in the gravy instead of salt! You were by my side that day, as were Sir Claude Latour and the Lord of Pommers.'

'I remember it,' said Sir Nigel, laughing, 'and how you harried the cook down the street, and spoke of setting fire to the inn. By St. Paul! most worthy mayor, my old friend is a perilous man, and I rede you that you compose your difference with him on such terms as you may.'

'The clams and scallops shall be ready within the hour,' the mayor answered. 'I had asked Sir Oliver Buttethorn to do my humble board the honour to partake at it of the dainty upon which we take some little pride, but in sooth this alarm of pirates hath cast such a shadow on my wits that I am like one drait. But I trust, Sir Nigel, that you will also partake of none-meat with me?'

'I have overmuch to do,' Sir Nigel answered, 'for we must be

aboard, horse and man, as early as we may. How many do you muster, Sir Oliver?’

‘Three and forty. The forty are drunk, and the three are but indifferent sober. I have them all safe upon the ship.’

‘They had best find their wits again, for I shall have work for every man of them ere the sun set. It is my intention, if it seems good to you, to try a venture against these Norman and Genoese rovers.’

‘They carry caviare and certain very noble spices from the Levant aboard of ships from Genoa,’ quoth Sir Oliver. ‘We may come to great profit through the business. I pray you, master-shipman, that when you go on board you pour a helmetful of seawater over any of my rogues whom you may see there.’

Leaving the lusty knight and the Mayor of Lepe, Sir Nigel led the Company straight down to the water’s edge, where long lines of flat lighters swiftly bore them to their vessel. Horse after horse was slung by main force up from the barges, and after kicking and plunging in empty air was dropped into the deep waist of the yellow cog, where rows of stalls stood ready for their safe keeping. Englishmen in those days were skilled and prompt in such matters, for it was not so long before that Edward had embarked as many as fifty thousand men in the port of Orwell, with their horses and their baggage, all in the space of four-and-twenty hours. So urgent was Sir Nigel on the shore, and so prompt was Goodwin Hawtayne on the cog, that Sir Oliver Buttethorn had scarce swallowed his last scallop ere the peal of trumpet and clang of nakir announced that all was ready and the anchor drawn. In the last boat which left the shore the two commanders sat together in the sheets, a strange contrast to one another, while under the feet of the rowers was a litter of huge stones which Sir Nigel had ordered to be carried to the cog. These once aboard, the ship set her broad mainsail, purple in colour, with a golden St. Christopher bearing Christ upon his shoulder in the centre of it. The breeze blew, the sail bellied, overheeled the portly vessel, and away she plunged through the smooth blue rollers, amid the clang of the minstrels on her poop and the shouting of the black crowd who fringed the yellow beach. To the left lay the green Island of Wight, with its long low curving hills peeping over each other’s shoulders to the sky-line; to the right the wooded Hampshire coast as far as eye could reach; above a steel-blue heaven, with a wintry sun

shimmering down upon them, and enough of frost to set the breath a-smoking.

‘By St. Paul!’ said Sir Nigel gaily, as he stood upon the poop and looked on either side of him, ‘it is a land which is very well worth fighting for, and it were pity to go to France for what may be had at home. Did you not spy a crooked man upon the beach?’

‘Nay, I spied nothing,’ grumbled Sir Oliver, ‘for I was hurried down with a clam stuck in my gizzard and an untasted goblet of Cyprus on the board behind me.’

‘I saw him, my fair lord,’ said Terlake, ‘an old man with one shoulder higher than the other.’

‘’Tis a sign of good fortune,’ quoth Sir Nigel. ‘Our path was also crossed by a woman and by a priest, so all should be well with us. What say you, Edricson?’

‘I cannot tell, my fair lord. The Romans of old were a very wise people, yet, certes, they placed their faith in such matters. So, too, did the Greeks, and divers other ancient peoples who were famed for their learning. Yet of the moderns there are many who scoff at all omens.’

‘There can be no manner of doubt about it,’ said Sir Oliver Buttethorn. ‘I can well remember that in Navarre one day it thundered on the left out of a cloudless sky. We knew that ill would come of it, nor had we long to wait. Only thirteen days after, a haunch of prime venison was carried from my very tent door by the wolves, and on the same day two flasks of old vernage turned sour and muddy.’

‘You may bring my harness from below,’ said Sir Nigel to his squires, ‘and also, I pray you, bring up Sir Oliver’s, and we shall don it here. Ye may then see to your own gear; for this day you will, I hope, make a very honourable entrance into the field of chivalry, and prove yourselves to be very worthy and valiant squires. And now, Sir Oliver, as to our dispositions: would it please you that I should order them or will you?’

‘You, my cockerel, you. By Our Lady! I am no chicken, but I cannot claim to know as much of war as the squire of Sir Walter Manny. Settle the matter to your own liking.’

‘You shall fly your pennon upon the fore part, then, and I upon the poop. For foreguard I shall give you your own forty men, with two score archers. Two score men, with my own men-at-arms and squires, will serve as a poop-guard. Ten archers,

with thirty shipmen, under the master, may hold the waist while ten lie aloft with stones and arbalests. How like you that?’

‘Good, by my faith, good! But here comes my harness, and I must to work, for I cannot slip into it as I was wont when first I set my face to the wars.’

Meanwhile there had been bustle and preparation in all parts of the great vessel. The archers stood in groups about the decks, new-stringing their bows, and testing that they were firm at the nocks. Among them moved Aylward and other of the older soldiers, with a few whispered words of precept here and of warning there.

‘Stand to it, my hearts of gold,’ said the old bowman as he passed from knot to knot. ‘By my hilt! we are in luck this journey. Bear in mind the old saying of the Company.’

‘What is that, Aylward?’ cried several, leaning on their bows and laughing at him.

‘Tis the master-bowyer’s rede: “Every bow well bent. Every shaft well sent. Every stave well nocked. Every string well locked.” There, with that jingle in his head, a bracer on his left hand, a shooting glove on his right, and a farthing’s-worth of wax in his girdle, what more doth a bowman need?’

‘It would not be amiss,’ said Hordle John, ‘if under his girdle he had four farthings’-worth of wine.’

‘Work first, wine afterwards, mon camarade. But it is time that we took our order, for methinks that between the Needle rocks and the Alum cliffs yonder I can catch a glimpse of the topmasts of the galleys. Hewett, Cook, Johnson, Cunningham, your men are of the poop-guard. Thornbury, Walters, Hackett, Baddlesmere, you are with Sir Oliver on the forecastle. Simon, you bide with your lord’s banner; but ten men must go forward.’

Quietly and promptly the men took their places, lying flat upon their faces on the deck, for such was Sir Nigel’s order. Near the prow was planted Sir Oliver’s spear, with his arms—a boar’s head gules upon a field of gold. Close by the stern stood Black Simon with the pennon of the house of Loring. In the waist gathered the Southampton mariners, hairy and burly men, with their jerkins thrown off, their waists braced tight, swords, mallets, and pole-axes in their hands. Their leader, Goodwin Hawtayne, stood upon the poop and talked with Sir Nigel, casting his eye up sometimes at the swelling sail, and then glancing back at the two seamen who held the tiller.

‘Pass the word,’ said Sir Nigel, ‘that no man shall stand to arms or draw his bow-string until my trumpeter shall sound. It would be well that we should seem to be a merchant-ship from Southampton and appear to flee from them.’

‘We shall see them anon,’ said the master-shipman. ‘Ha! said I not so? There they lie, the water-snakes, in Freshwater Bay; and mark the reek of smoke from yonder point, where they have been at their devil’s work. See how their shallops pull from the land! They have seen us and called their men aboard. Now they draw upon the anchor. See them like ants upon the forecastle! They stoop and heave like handy shipmen. But, my fair lord, these are no niefs. I doubt but we have taken in hand more than we can do. Each of these ships is a galeasse, and of the largest and swiftest make.’

‘I would I had your eyes,’ said Sir Nigel, blinking at the pirate galleys. ‘They seem very gallant ships, and I trust that we shall have much pleasance from our meeting with them. It would be well to pass the word that we should neither give nor take quarter this day. Have you perchance a priest or friar aboard this ship, Master Hawtayne?’

‘No, my fair lord.’

‘Well, well, it is no great matter for my Company, for they were all houseled and shriven ere we left Twynham Castle; and Father Christopher of the Priory gave me his word that they were as fit to march to heaven as to Gascony. But my mind misdoubts me as to these Winchester men who have come with Sir Oliver, for they appear to be a very ungodly crew. Pass the word that the men kneel, and that the under-officers repeat to them the pater, the ave, and the credo.’

With a clank of arms, the rough archers and seamen took to their knees, with bent heads and crossed hands, listening to the hoarse mutter from the file-leaders. It was strange to mark the hush; so that the lapping of the water, the straining of the sail, and the creaking of the timbers grew louder of a sudden upon the ear. Many of the bowmen had drawn amulets and relics from their bosoms, while he who possessed some more than usually sanctified treasure, passed it down the line of his comrades, that all might kiss and reap the virtue.

The yellow cog had now shot out from the narrow waters of the Solent, and was plunging and rolling on the long heave of the open channel. The wind blew freshly from the east, with a very

keen edge to it; and the great sail bellied roundly out, laying the vessel over until the water hissed beneath her lee bulwarks. Broad and ungainly, she floundered from wave to wave, dipping her round bows deeply into the blue rollers, and sending the white flakes of foam in a spatter over her decks. On her larboard quarter lay the two dark galleys, which had already hoisted sail, and were shooting out from Freshwater Bay in swift pursuit, their double line of oars giving them a vantage which could not fail to bring them up with any vessel which trusted to sails alone. High and bluff the English cog; long, black and swift the pirate galleys, like two fierce lean wolves which have seen a lordly and unsuspecting stag walk past their forest lair.

‘Shall we turn, my fair lord, or shall we carry on?’ asked the master-shipman, looking behind him with anxious eyes.

‘Nay, we must carry on, and play the part of the helpless merchant.’

‘But your pennons? They will see that we have two knights with us.’

‘Yet it would not be to a knight’s honour or good name to lower his pennon. Let them be, and they will think that we are a wine-ship for Gascony, or that we bear the wool-bales of some mercer of the Staple. *Ma foi*, but they are very swift! They swoop upon us like two goshawks on a heron. Is there not some symbol or device upon their sails?’

‘That on the right,’ said Edricson, ‘appears to have the head of an Ethiopian upon it.’

‘’Tis the badge of *Tête-noire*, the Norman,’ cried a seaman-mariner. ‘I have seen it before, when he harried us at Winchelsea. He is a wondrous large and strong man, with no ruth for man, woman, or beast. They say that he hath the strength of six; and, certes, he hath the crimes of six upon his soul. See, now, to the poor souls who swing at either end of his yard-arm!’

At each end of the yard there did indeed hang the dark figure of a man, jolting and lurching with hideous jerkings of its limbs at every plunge and swoop of the galley.

‘By St. Paul!’ said Sir Nigel, ‘and by the help of St. George and Our Lady, it will be a very strange thing if our black-headed friend does not himself swing thence ere he be many hours older. But what is that upon the other galley?’

‘It is the red cross of Genoa. This Spade-beard is a very

noted captain, and it is his boast that there are no seamen and no archers in the world who can compare with those who serve the Doge Boccanegra.'

'That we shall prove,' said Goodwin Hawtayne; 'but it would be well, ere they close with us, to raise up the mantlets and pavises as a screen against their bolts.' He shouted a hoarse order, and his seamen worked swiftly and silently, heightening the bulwarks and strengthening them. The three ship's anchors were at Sir Nigel's command carried into the waist, and tied to the mast, with twenty feet of cable between, each under the care of four seamen. Eight others were stationed with leather water-bags to quench any fire-arrows which might come aboard, while others were sent up the mast, to lie along the yard and drop stones or shoot arrows as the occasion served.

'Let them be supplied with all that is heavy and weighty in the ship,' said Sir Nigel.

'Then we must send them up Sir Oliver Buttethorn,' quoth Ford.

The knight looked at him with a face which struck the smile from his lips. 'No squire of mine,' he said, 'shall ever make jest of a belted knight. And yet,' he added, his eyes softening, 'I know that it is but a boy's mirth, with no sting in it. Yet I should ill do my part towards your father if I did not teach you to curb your tongue-play.'

'They will lay us aboard on either quarter, my lord,' cried the master. 'See how they stretch out from each other! The Norman hath a mangonel or a trabuch upon the forecastle. See, they bend to the levers! They are about to loose it.'

'Aylward,' cried the knight, 'pick your three trustiest archers, and see if you cannot do something to hinder their aim. Methinks they are within long arrow flight.'

'Seventeen score paces,' said the archer, running his eye backwards and forwards. 'By my ten finger-bones! it would be a strange thing if we could not notch a mark at that distance. Here, Watkin of Sowley, Arnold, Long Williams, let us show the rogues that they have English bowmen to deal with.'

The three archers named stood at the further end of the poop, balancing themselves with feet widely spread and bows drawn, until the heads of the cloth-yard arrows were level with the centre of the stave. 'You are the surer, Watkin,' said Aylward, standing by them with shaft upon string. 'Do you take the rogue with

the red coif. You two bring down the man with the head-piece, and I will hold myself ready if you miss. *Ma foi!* they are about to loose her. Shoot, *mes garçons*, or you will be too late.'

The throng of pirates had cleared away from the great wooden catapult, leaving two of their number to discharge it. One in a scarlet cap bent over it, steadying the jagged rock which was balanced on the spoon-shaped end of the long wooden lever. The other held the loop of the rope which would release the catch and send the unwieldy missile hurtling through the air. So for an instant they stood, showing hard and clear against the white sail behind them. The next, redcap had fallen across the stone with an arrow between his ribs; and the other, struck in the leg and in the throat, was writhing and spluttering upon the ground. As he toppled backwards he had loosed the spring, and the huge beam of wood, swinging round with tremendous force, cast the corpse of his comrade so close to the English ship that its mangled and distorted limbs grazed their very stern. As to the stone, it glanced off obliquely and fell midway between the vessels. A roar of cheering and of laughter broke from the rough archers and seamen at the sight, answered by a yell of rage from their pursuers.

'Lie low, *mes enfants*,' cried Aylward, motioning with his left hand. They will learn wisdom. They are bringing forward shield and mantlet. We shall have some pebbles about our ears ere long.'

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW THE YELLOW COG FOUGHT THE TWO ROVER GALLEYS.

THE three vessels had been sweeping swiftly westwards, the cog still well to the front, although the galleys were slowly drawing in upon either quarter. To the left was a hard sky-line unbroken by a sail. The island already lay like a cloud behind them, while right in front was St. Alban's Head, with Portland looming mistily in the farthest distance. Alleyne stood by the tiller, looking backwards, the fresh wind full in his teeth, the crisp winter air tingling on his face and blowing his yellow curls from under his bassinet. His cheeks were flushed and his eyes shining, for the blood of a hundred fighting Saxon ancestors was beginning to stir in his veins.

‘What was that?’ he asked, as a hissing, sharp-drawn voice seemed to whisper in his ear. The steersman smiled, and pointed with his foot to where a short heavy cross-bow quarrel stuck quivering in the boards. At the same instant the man stumbled forward upon his knee, and lay lifeless upon the deck, a blood-stained feather jutting out from his back. As Alleyne stooped to raise him, the air seemed to be alive with the sharp zip-zip of the bolts, and he could hear them pattering on the deck like apples at a tree-shaking.

‘Raise two more mantlets by the poop lanthorn,’ said Sir Nigel quietly.

‘And another man to the tiller,’ cried the master-shipman.

‘Keep them in play, Aylward, with ten of your men,’ the knight continued. ‘And let ten of Sir Oliver’s bowmen do as much for the Genoese. I have no mind as yet to show them how much they have to fear from us.’

Ten picked shots under Aylward stood in line across the broad deck, and it was a lesson to the young squires who had seen nothing of war to note how orderly and how cool were these old soldiers, how quick the command, and how prompt the carrying out, ten moving like one. Their comrades crouched beneath the bulwarks, with many a rough jest and many a scrap of criticism or advice. ‘Higher, Wat, higher!’ ‘Put thy body into it, Will!’ ‘Forget not the wind, Hal!’ So ran the muttered chorus, while high above it rose the sharp twanging of the strings, the hiss of the shafts, and the short ‘Draw your arrow! Nick your arrow! Shoot wholly together!’ from the master-bowman.

And now both mangonels were at work from the galleys, but so covered and protected that, save at the moment of discharge, no glimpse could be caught of them. A huge brown rock from the Genoese sang over their heads, and plunged sullenly into the slope of a wave. Another from the Norman whizzed into the waist, broke the back of a horse, and crashed its way through the side of the vessel. Two others, flying together, tore a great gap in the St. Christopher upon the sail, and brushed three of Sir Oliver’s men-at-arms from the forecastle. The master-shipman looked at the knight with a troubled face.

‘They keep their distance from us,’ said he. ‘Our archery is over good, and they will not close. What defence can we make against the stones?’

‘I think I may trick them,’ the knight answered cheerfully,

and passed his order to the archers. Instantly five of them threw up their hands and fell prostrate upon the deck. One had already been slain by a bolt, so that there were but four upon their feet.

‘That should give them heart,’ said Sir Nigel, eyeing the galleys, which crept along on either side with a slow measured swing of their great oars, the water swirling and foaming under their sharp stems.

‘They still hold aloof,’ cried Hawtayne.

‘Then down with two more,’ shouted their leader. ‘That will do. Ma foi! but they come to our lure like chicks to the fowler. To your arms, men! The pennon behind me, and the squires round the pennon. Stand fast with the anchors in the waist, and be ready for a cast. Now blow out the trumpets, and may God’s benison be with the honest men!’

As he spoke a roar of voices and a roll of drums came from either galley, and the water was lashed into spray by the hurried beat of a hundred oars. Down they swooped, one on the right, one on the left, the sides and shrouds black with men and bristling with weapons. In heavy clusters they hung upon the forecastle all ready for a spring—faces white, faces brown, faces yellow, and faces black, fair Norsemen, swarthy Italians, fierce rovers from the Levant, and fiery Moors from the Barbary States, of all hues and countries, and marked solely by the common stamp of a wild-beast ferocity. Rasping up on either side, with oars trailing to save them from snapping, they poured in a living torrent with horrid yell and shrill whoop upon the defenceless merchantman.

But wilder yet was the cry, and shriller still the scream, when there rose up from the shadow of those silent bulwarks the long lines of the English bowmen, and the arrows whizzed in a deadly sleet among the unprepared masses upon the pirate decks. From the higher sides of the cog the bowmen could shoot straight down, at a range which was so short as to enable a cloth-yard shaft to pierce through mail-coats or to transfix a shield, though it were an inch thick of toughened wood. One moment Alleyne saw the galley’s poop crowded with rushing figures, waving arms, exultant faces; the next it was a blood-smear’d shambles, with bodies piled three deep upon each other, the living cowering behind the dead to shelter themselves from that sudden storm-blast of death. On either side the seamen whom Sir Nigel had chosen for the purpose had cast their anchors over the side of the galleys, so that the

three vessels, locked in an iron grip, lurched heavily forward upon the swell.

And now set in a fell and fierce fight, one of a thousand of which no chronicler has spoken and no poet sung. Through all the centuries and over all those southern waters nameless men have fought in nameless places, their sole monument a protected coast and an unravaged country-side.

Fore and aft the archers had cleared the galleys' decks, but from either side the rovers had poured down into the waist, where the seamen and bowmen were pushed back and so mingled with their foes that it was impossible for their comrades above to draw string to help them. It was a wild chaos where axe and sword rose and fell, while Englishman, Norman, and Italian staggered and reeled on a deck which was cumbered with bodies and slippery with blood. The clang of blows, the cries of the stricken, the short deep shout of the islanders, and the fierce whoops of the rovers, rose together in a deafening tumult, while the breath of the panting men went up in the wintry air like the smoke from a furnace. The giant Tête-noire, towering above his fellows and clad from head to foot in plate of proof, led on his boarders, waving a huge mace in the air, with which he struck to the deck every man who opposed him. On the other side, Spade-beard, a dwarf in height, but of great breadth of shoulder and length of arm, had cut a road almost to the mast, with three score Genoese men-at-arms close at his heels. Between these two formidable assailants the seamen were being slowly wedged more closely together, until they stood back to back under the mast with the rovers raging upon every side of them.

But help was close at hand. Sir Oliver Buttethorn with his men-at-arms had swarmed down from the forecastle, while Sir Nigel, with his three squires, Black Simon, Aylward, Hordle John, and a score more, threw themselves from the poop and hurled themselves into the thickest of the fight. Alleyne, as in duty bound, kept his eyes fixed ever on his lord and pressed forward close at his heels. Often had he heard of Sir Nigel's prowess and skill with all knightly weapons, but all the tales that had reached his ears fell far short of the real quickness and coolness of the man. It was as if the devil was in him, for he sprang here and sprang there, now thrusting and now cutting, catching blows on his shield, turning them with his blade, stooping under the swing of an axe, springing over the sweep of a sword, so swift and so

erratic that the man who braced himself for a blow at him might find him six paces off ere he could bring it down. Three pirates had fallen before him, and he had wounded Spade-beard in the neck, when the Norman giant sprang at him from the side with a slashing blow from his deadly mace. Sir Nigel stooped to avoid it, and at the same instant turned a thrust from the Genceze swordsman, but, his foot slipping in a pool of blood, he fell heavily to the ground. Alleyne sprang in front of the Norman, but his sword was shattered and he himself beaten to the ground by a second blow from the ponderous weapon. Ere the pirate chief could repeat it, however, John's iron grip fell upon his wrist, and he found that for once he was in the hands of a stronger man than himself. Fiercely he strove to disengage his weapon, but Hordle John bent his arm slowly back until, with a sharp crack, like a breaking stave, it turned limp in his grasp, and the mace dropped from the nerveless fingers. In vain he tried to pluck it up with the other hand. Back and back still his foeman bent him, until, with a roar of pain and of fury, the giant clanged his full length upon the boards, while the glimmer of a knife before the bars of his helmet warned him that short would be his shrift if he moved.

Cowed and disheartened by the loss of their leader, the Normans had given back and were now streaming over the bulwarks on to their own galley, dropping a dozen at a time on to her deck. But the anchor still held them in its crooked claw, and Sir Oliver with fifty men was hard upon their heels. Now, too, the archers had room to draw their bows once more, and great stones from the yard of the cog came thundering and crashing among the flying rovers. Here and there they rushed with wild screams and curses, diving under the sail, crouching behind booms, huddling into corners like rabbits when the ferrets are upon them, as helpless and as hopeless. They were stern days, and if the honest soldier, too poor for a ransom, had no prospect of mercy upon the battlefield, what ruth was there for sea robbers, the enemies of human kind, taken in the very deed, with proofs of their crimes still swinging upon their yard-arm.

But the fight had taken a new and a strange turn upon the other side. Spade-beard and his men had given slowly back, hard pressed by Sir Nigel, Aylward, Black Simon, and the poop-guard. Foot by foot the Italian had retreated, his armour running blood at every joint, his shield split, his crest shorn, his voice fallen

away to a mere gasping and croaking. Yet he faced his foemen with dauntless courage, dashing in, springing back, sure-footed, steady-handed, with a point which seemed to menace three at once. Beaten back on to the deck of his own vessel, and closely followed by a dozen Englishmen, he disengaged himself from them, ran swiftly down the deck, sprang back into the cog once more, cut the rope which held the anchor, and was back in an instant among his crossbow-men. At the same time the Genoese sailors thrust with their oars against the side of the cog, and a rapidly widening rift appeared between the two vessels.

‘By St. George!’ cried Ford, ‘we are cut off from Sir Nigel.’

‘He is lost,’ gasped Terlake. ‘Come, let us spring for it.’ The two youths jumped with all their strength to reach the departing galley. Ford’s feet reached the edge of the bulwarks, and his hand clutching a rope he swung himself on board. Terlake fell short, crashed in among the oars, and bounded off into the sea. Alleyne, staggering to the side, was about to hurl himself after him, but Hordle John dragged him back by the girdle.

‘You can scarce stand, lad, far less jump,’ said he. ‘See how the blood drips from your bassinet.’

‘My place is by the flag,’ cried Alleyne, vainly struggling to break from the other’s hold.

‘Bide here, man. You would need wings ere you could reach Sir Nigel’s side.’

The vessels were indeed so far apart now that the Genoese could use the full sweep of their oars, and draw away rapidly from the cog.

‘My God, but it is a noble fight!’ shouted big John, clapping his hands. ‘They have cleared the poop, and they spring into the waist. Well struck, my lord! Well struck, Aylward! See to Black Simon, how he storms among the shipmen! But this Spade-beard is a gallant warrior. He rallies his men upon the forecastle. He hath slain an archer. Ha! my lord is upon him. Look to it, Alleyne! See to the whirl and glitter of it!’

‘By heaven, Sir Nigel is down!’ cried the squire.

‘Up!’ roared John. ‘It was but a feint. He bears him back. He drives him to the side. Ah, by Our Lady, his sword is through him! They cry for mercy. Down goes the red cross, and up springs Simon with the scarlet roses!’

The death of the Genoese leader did indeed bring the resistance to an end. Amid a thunder of cheering from cog and from

galleys the forked pennon fluttered upon the forecastle, and the galley, sweeping round, came slowly back, as the slaves who rowed it learned the wishes of their new masters.

The two knights had come aboard the cog, and the grappings having been thrown off, the three vessels now moved abreast. Through all the storm and rush of the fight Alleyne had been aware of the voice of Goodwin Hawtayne, the master-shipman, with his constant 'Hale the bowline! Vere the sheet!' and strange it was to him to see how swiftly the blood-stained sailors turned from the strife to the ropes and back. Now the cog's head was turned Francewards, and the shipman walked the deck, a peaceful master-mariner once more.'

'There is sad scath done to the cog, Sir Nigel,' said he. 'Here is a hole in the side two ells across, the sail split through the centre, and the wood as bare as a friar's poll. In good sooth, I know not what I shall say to Master Witherton when I see the Itchen once more.'

'By St. Paul! it would be a very sorry thing if we suffered you to be the worse for this day's work,' said Sir Nigel. 'You shall take these galleys back with you, and Master Witherton may sell them. Then from the monies he shall take as much as may make good the damage, and the rest he shall keep until our home-coming, when every man shall have his share. An image of silver fifteen inches high I have vowed to the Virgin, to be placed in her chapel within the Priory, for that she was pleased to allow me to come upon this Spade-beard, who seemed to me from what I have seen of him to be a very sprightly and valiant gentleman. But how fares it with you, Edricson?'

'It is nothing, my fair lord,' said Alleyne, who had now loosened his bassinet, which was cracked across by the Norman's blow. Even as he spoke, however, his head swirled round, and he fell to the deck with the blood gushing from his nose and mouth.

'He will come to anon,' said the knight, stooping over him and passing his fingers through his hair. 'I have lost one very valiant and gentle squire this day. I can ill afford to lose another. How many men have fallen?'

'I have pricked off the tally,' said Aylward, who had come aboard with his lord. 'There are seven of the Winchester men, eleven seamen, your squire, young Master Terlake, and nine archers.'

'And of the others?'

‘They are all dead—save only the Norman knight who stands behind you. What would you that we should do with him?’

‘He must hang on his own yard,’ said Sir Nigel. ‘It was my vow and must be done.’

The pirate leader had stood by the bulwarks, a cord round his arms, and two stout archers on either side. At Sir Nigel’s words he started violently, and his swarthy features blanched to a livid grey.

‘How, Sir Knight?’ he cried in broken English. ‘Que dites-vous? To hang, la mort du chien! To hang!’

‘It is my vow,’ said Sir Nigel shortly. ‘From what I hear, you thought little enough of hanging others.’

‘Peasants, base roturiers,’ cried the other. ‘It is their fitting death. Mais Le Seigneur d’Andelys, avec le sang des rois dans ses veines! C’est incroyable!’

Sir Nigel turned upon his heel, while two seamen cast a noose over the pirate’s neck. At the touch of the cord he snapped the bonds which bound him, dashed one of the archers to the deck, and seizing the other round the waist sprang with him into the sea.

‘By my hilt, he is gone!’ cried Aylward, rushing to the side. ‘They have sunk together like a stone.’

‘I am right glad of it,’ answered Sir Nigel; ‘for though it was against my vow to loose him, I deem that he has carried himself like a very gentle and débonnaire cavalier.’

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW THE YELLOW COG CROSSED THE BAR OF GIRONDE.

For two days the yellow cog ran swiftly before a north-easterly wind, and on the dawn of the third the high land of Ushant lay like a mist upon the shimmering sky-line. There came a plump of rain towards mid-day and the breeze died down, but it freshened again before nightfall, and Goodwin Hawtayne veered his sheet and held her head for the south. Next morning they had passed Belle Isle, and ran through the midst of a fleet of transports returning from Guienne. Sir Nigel Loring and Sir Oliver Buttethorn at once hung their shields over the side, and displayed their pennons as was the custom, noting with the keenest interest the answering symbols which told the names of the cavaliers who

had been constrained by ill health or wounds to leave the prince at so critical a time.

That evening a great dun-coloured cloud banked up in the west, and an anxious man was Goodwin Hawtayne, for a third part of his crew had been slain and half of the remainder were aboard the galleys, so that, with an injured ship, he was little fit to meet such a storm as sweeps over those waters. All night it blew in short fitful puffs, heeling the great cog over until the water curled over her lee bulwarks. As the wind still freshened the yard was lowered halfway down the mast in the morning. Alleyne, wretchedly ill and weak, with his head still ringing from the blow which he had received, crawled up upon deck. Water-swept and aslant, it was preferable to the noisome rat-haunted dungeons which served as cabins. There, clinging to the stout halliards of the sheet, he gazed with amazement at the long lines of black waves, each with its curling ridge of foam, racing in endless succession from out the inexhaustible west. A huge sombre cloud, flecked with livid blotches, stretched over the whole seaward sky-line, with long ragged streamers whirled out in front of it. Far behind them the two galleys laboured heavily, now sinking between the rollers until their yards were level with the waves, and again shooting up with a reeling scooping motion until every spar and rope stood out hard against the sky. On the left the low-lying land stretched in a dim haze, rising here and there into a darker blur which marked the higher capes and headlands. The land of France! Alleyne's eyes shone as he gazed upon it. The land of France!—the very words sounded as the call of a bugle in the ears of the youth of England. The land where their fathers had bled, the home of chivalry and of knightly deeds, the country of gallant men, of courtly women, of princely buildings, of the wise, the polished and the sainted. There it lay, so still and grey beneath the drifting wrack—the home of things noble and of things shameful—the theatre where a new name might be made or an old one marred. From his bosom to his lips came the crumpled veil, and he breathed a vow that if valour and goodwill could raise him to his lady's side, then death alone should hold him back from her. His thoughts were still in the woods of Minstead and the old armoury of Twynham Castle, when the hoarse voice of the master-shipman brought them back once more to the Bay of Biscay.

‘By my troth, young sir,’ he said, ‘you are as long in the

face as the devil at a christening, and I cannot marvel at it, for I have sailed these waters since I was as high as this whinyard, and yet I never saw more sure promise of an evil night.'

'Nay, I had other things upon my mind,' the squire answered.

'And so has every man,' cried Hawtayne in an injured voice. 'Let the shipman see to it. It is the master-shipman's affair. Put it all upon good Master Hawtayne! Never had I so much care since first I blew trumpet and showed cartel at the west gate of Southampton.'

'What is amiss then?' asked Alleyne, for the man's words were as gusty as the weather.

'Amiss, quotha? Here am I with but half my mariners, and a hole in the ship where that twenty-devil stone struck us big enough to fit the fat widow of Northam through. It is well enough on this tack, but I would have you tell me what I am to do on the other. We are like to have salt water upon us until we be found pickled like the herrings in an Easterling's barrels.'

'What says Sir Nigel to it?'

'He is below pricking out the coat-armour of his mother's uncle. "Pester me not with such small matters!" was all that I could get from him. Then there is Sir Oliver. "Fry them in oil with a dressing of Gascony," quoth he, and then swore at me because I had not been the cook. "Walawa," thought I, "mad master, sober man—so away forward to the archers. Harrow and alas! but they were worse than the others."'

'Would they not help you then?'

'Nay, they sat tway and tway at a board, him that they call Aylward and the great red-headed man who snapped the Norman's arm-bone, and the black man from Norwich, and a score of others, rattling their dice in an archer's gauntlet for want of a box. "The ship can scarce last much longer, my masters," quoth I. "That is your business, old swine's-head," cried the black galliard. "Le diable t'emporte!" says Aylward. "A five, a four and the main," shouted the big man, with a voice like the flap of a sail. Hark to them now, young sir, and say if I speak not sooth.'

As he spoke, there sounded high above the shriek of the gale and the straining of the timbers a gust of oaths with a roar of deep-chested mirth from the gamblers in the fore-castle.

'Can I be of avail?' asked Alleyne. 'Say the word and the thing is done, if two hands may do it.'

‘Nay, nay, your head I can see is still totty, and i’ faith little head would you have, had your bassinet not stood your friend. All that may be done is already carried out, for we have stuffed the gape with sails and corded it without and within. Yet when we hale our bowline and veer the sheet our lives will hang upon the breach remaining blocked. See how yonder headland looms upon us through the mist! We must tack within three arrow flights, or we may find a rock through our timbers. Now, St. Christopher be praised! here is Sir Nigel, with whom I may confer.’

‘I prythee that you will pardon me,’ said the knight, clutching his way along the bulwark. ‘I would not show lack of courtesy toward a worthy man, but I was deep in a matter of some weight, concerning which, Alleyne, I should be glad of your rede. It touches the question of dimidiation or impalement in the coat of mine uncle, Sir John Leighton of Shropshire, who took unto wife the widow of Sir Henry Oglander of Nunwell. The case has been much debated by pursuivants and kings-of-arms. But how is it with you, master-shipman?’

‘Ill enough, my fair lord. The cog must go about anon, and I know not how we may keep the water out of her.’

‘Go call Sir Oliver!’ said Sir Nigel, and presently the portly knight made his way all astraddle down the slippery deck.

‘By my soul, master-shipman, this passes all patience!’ he cried wrathfully. ‘If this ship of yours must needs dance and skip like a clown at a kermesse, then I pray you that you will put me into one of these galeasses. I had but sat down to a flask of malvoisie and a mortress of brawn, as is my use about this hour, when there comes a cherking, and I find my wine over my legs and the flask in my lap, and then as I stoop to clip it there comes another cursed cherk, and there is a mortress of brawn stuck fast to the nape of my neck. At this moment I have two pages coursing after it from side to side, like hounds behind a leveret. Never did living pig gambol more lightly. But you have sent for me, Sir Nigel?’

‘I would fain have your rede, Sir Oliver, for Master Hawtayne hath fears that when we veer there may come danger from the hole in our side.’

‘Then do not veer,’ quoth Sir Oliver hastily. ‘And now, fair sir, I must hasten back to see how my rogues have fared with the brawn.’

‘Nay, but this will scarce suffice,’ cried the shipman. ‘If we do not vere we shall be upon the rocks within the hour.’

‘Then veer,’ said Sir Oliver. ‘There is my rede; and now, Sir Nigel, I must crave——’

At this instant, however, a startled shout rang out from two seamen upon the forecastle. ‘Rocks!’ they yelled, stabbing into the air with their forefingers, ‘rocks beneath our very bows!’ Through the belly of a great black wave, not one hundred paces to the front of them, there thrust forth a huge jagged mass of brown stone, which spouted spray as though it were some crouching monster, while a dull menacing boom and roar filled the air.

‘Yare! yare!’ screamed Goodwin Hawtayne, flinging himself upon the long pole which served as a tiller. ‘Cut the halliard! Haul her over! Lay her two courses to the wind!’

Over swung the great boom, and the cog trembled and quivered within five spear-lengths of the breakers.

‘She can scarce draw clear,’ cried Hawtayne, with his eyes from the sail to the seething line of foam. ‘May the holy Julian stand by us and the thrice-sainted Christopher!’

‘If there be such peril, Sir Oliver,’ quoth Sir Nigel, ‘it would be very knightly and fitting that we should show our pennons. I pray you, Edricson, that you will command my guidon-bearer to put forward my banner.’

‘And sound the trumpets!’ cried Sir Oliver. ‘In manus tuas, Domine! I am in the keeping of James of Compostella, to whose shrine I shall make pilgrimage, and in whose honour I vow that I will eat a carp each year upon his feast-day. Mon Dieu, but the waves roar! How is it with us now, master-shipman?’

‘We draw! We draw!’ cried Hawtayne, with his eyes still fixed upon the foam which hissed under the very bulge of the side. ‘Ah, Holy Mother, be with us now!’

As he spoke the cog rasped along the edge of the reef, and a long white curling sheet of wood was planed off from her side from waist to poop by a jutting horn of the rock. At the same instant she lay suddenly over, the sail drew full, and she plunged seawards amid the shoutings of the seamen and the archers.

‘The Virgin be praised!’ cried the shipman, wiping his brow. ‘For this shall bell swing and candle burn when I see Southampton Water once more. Cheerily, my hearts! Pull yarely on the bowline!’

‘By my soul! I would rather have a dry death,’ quoth Sir

Oliver. 'Though, Mort Dieu! I have eaten so many fish that it were but justice that the fish should eat me. Now I must back to the cabin, for I have matters there which crave my attention.'

'Nay, Sir Oliver, you had best bide with us, and still show your ensign,' Sir Nigel answered; 'for, if I understand the matter aright, we have but turned from one danger to the other.'

'Good Master Hawtayne,' cried the boatswain, rushing aft, 'the water comes in upon us apace. The waves have driven in the sail wherewith we strove to stop the hole.' As he spoke the seamen came swarming on to the poop and the forecastle to avoid the torrent which poured through the huge leak into the waist. High above the roar of the wind and the clash of the sea rose the shrill half-human cries of the horses, as they found the water rising rapidly around them.

'Stop it from without!' cried Hawtayne, seizing the end of the wet sail with which the gap had been plugged. 'Speedily, my hearts, or we are gone!' Swiftly they rove ropes to the corners, and then, rushing forward to the bows, they lowered them under the keel, and drew them tight in such a way that the sail should cover the outer face of the gap. The force of the rush of water was checked by this obstacle, but it still squirted plentifully from every side of it. At the sides the horses were above the belly, and in the centre a man from the poop could scarce touch the deck with a seven-foot spear. The cog lay lower in the water and the waves splashed freely over the weather bulwark.

'I fear that we can scarce bide upon this tack,' cried Hawtayne; 'and yet the other will drive us on the rocks.'

'Might we not haul down sail and wait for better times?' suggested Sir Nigel.

'Nay, we should drift upon the rocks. Thirty years have I been on the sea, and never yet in greater straits. Yet we are in the hands of the Saints.'

'Of whom,' cried Sir Oliver, 'I look more particularly to St. James of Compostella, who hath already befriended us this day, and on whose feast I hereby vow that I shall eat a second carp, if he will but interpose a second time.'

The wrack had thickened to seaward, and the coast was but a blurred line. Two vague shadows in the offing showed where the galeasses rolled and tossed upon the great Atlantic rollers. Hawtayne looked wistfully in their direction.

'If they would but lie closer we might find safety, even should

the cog founder. You will bear me out with good Master Witherton of Southampton that I have done all that a shipman might. It would be well that you should doff camail and greaves, Sir Nigel, for, by the black rood, it is like enough that we shall have to swim for it.'

'Nay,' said the little knight, 'it would be scarce fitting that a cavalier should throw off his harness for the fear of every puff of wind and puddle of water. I would rather that my Company should gather round me here on the poop, where we might abide together whatever God may be pleased to send. But, certes, Master Hawtayne, for all that my sight is none of the best, it is not the first time that I have seen that headland upon the left.'

The seaman shaded his eyes with his hand, and gazed earnestly through the haze and spray. Suddenly he threw up his arms, and shouted aloud in his joy.

'Tis the Point of La Tremblade!' he cried. 'I had not thought that we were as far as Oleron. The Gironde lies before us, and once over the bar, and under shelter of the Tour de Cordouan, all will be well with us. Vere again, my hearts, and bring her to try with the main course!'

The sail swung round once more, and the cog, battered and torn and well-nigh water-logged, staggered in for this haven of refuge. A bluff cape to the north and a long spit to the south, marked the mouth of the noble river, with a low-lying island of silted sand in the centre, all shrouded and curtained by the spume of the breakers. A line of broken water traced the dangerous bar, which in clear day and balmy weather has cracked the back of many a tall ship.

'There is a channel,' said Hawtayne, 'which was shown to me by the Prince's own pilot. Mark yonder tree upon the bank, and see the tower which rises behind it. If these two be held in a line, even as we hold them now, it may be done, though our ship draws two good ells more than when she put forth.'

'God speed you, Master Hawtayne!' cried Sir Oliver. 'Twice have we come scathless out of peril, and now for the third time I commend me to the blessed James of Compostella, to whom I vow——'

'Nay, nay, old friend,' whispered Sir Nigel. 'You are like to bring a judgment upon us with these vows, which no living man could accomplish. Have I not already heard you vow to eat two carp in one day, and now you would venture upon a third.'

‘I pray you that you will order the Company to lie down,’ cried Hawtayne, who had taken the tiller and was gazing ahead with a fixed eye. ‘In three minutes we shall either be lost or in safety.’

Archers and seamen lay flat upon the deck, waiting in stolid silence for whatever fate might come. Hawtayne bent his weight upon the tiller, and crouched to see under the bellying sail. Sir Oliver and Sir Nigel stood erect with hands crossed in front of the poop. Down swooped the great cog into the narrow channel which was the portal to safety. On either bow roared the shallow bar. Right ahead one small lane of black swirling water marked the pilot’s course. But true was the eye and firm the hand which guided. A dull scraping came from beneath, the vessel quivered and shook, at the waist, at the quarter, and behind sounded that grim roaring of the waters, and with a plunge the yellow cog was over the bar and speeding swiftly up the broad and tranquil estuary of the Gironde.

(To be continued.)

ON THE FRENCH-SWISS FRONTIER.

LES QUEUES—The Tails! A strange enough name, and one hardly suggestive of the pretty little group of houses, situated in rich meadow land on the edge of the fir-forests, that owns this fantastic title. Can four houses, placed at about fifteen yards from each other, separated by meadows and by the unending smooth highway, be called a group? And if they are not a group, what else can one call them? They belong to no other cluster of houses, for those near at hand, like those far away in the distance, bear each one a different name. Here we have Les Combes, there Le Chaux-Faux, now La Roche, now again Les Crozots, and so on *ad infinitum*; all groups, more or less large, of picturesque houses, rising out of greenest verdure and belted by the dark fir-forests. But Les Queues is, for its size, the most visited—perhaps we may even venture to call it the most fashionable, if a little nook so entirely dependent on nature for its charms can be associated with the giddy goddess Fashion; and therefore I will attempt to give my readers a short description of this corner of the world which has not yet—impossible as it seems—been visited by the English or American tourist.

Les Queues is near the frontier between the Canton de Neuchâtel and the French province of Franche-Comté. Twenty years ago, before the rectification of this frontier-line, then very irregular, was effected, Les Queues was on the extreme edge of the Swiss frontier; at the present day it lies about five minutes distant from France. At intervals, while walking about the country, one comes across grey stone *bornes*, or landmarks indicating the dividing line, and these are graven on one side with the Federal cross and on the other with the French fleur-de-lis. The undulating ranges of the Jura rise on all sides, and their distinguishing features are extensive and valuable fir-forests, broad pasture lands, yellow patches of wheat, and, farther down the sides of the mountains, in sheltered nooks and in the valleys, clusters of picturesque red or grey roofs, with sometimes a graceful church spire rising from amongst them, mark the spot where hamlets lie. To the right of Les Queues, at a distance of two miles, flows the Doubs, an important and beautiful river that serves in part as

a dividing line between France and Switzerland. The nearest town of importance is Locle, lying far below in the valley; it possesses 10,000 inhabitants, and is celebrated for its watch-making.

The inhabitants of Les Queues, who may be taken as a sample of the people living in the Jura range, are extremely thrifty, cheerful, healthy, and clean. They are inclined to regard strangers with suspicion for the reason that foreigners are rare, and those who do visit the country are not always very creditable specimens. I don't think it would be easy to impose upon them, but when any case of real suffering or want presents itself ungrudging help meets the poor fellow-creature who is in need; for this reason there is no misery in the district. These people have a keen sense of the ludicrous, and an honest contempt for all kinds of shams and snobbery which sometimes betrays them into roughness of speech as well as action. Class distinctions are slightly observed; everybody, even the poorest peasant, is addressed as *Monsieur* or *Madame*; a workman will often use the familiar *thou* in speaking to his *patron*, or employer, for in many instances they have been at school together. As a consequence of such republican habits, politeness of manner and the little refinements in use amongst larger communities are not much cultivated; indeed I fancy they are despised, even considered suspicious. There is no national costume worn: coarse cotton blouses are much used amongst the men, no matter what their employment may be; the elderly women sometimes wear a close-fitting crimped white cap of French origin. The long, rigorous cold and damp of the climate in these mountain regions is the reason why the people are rather addicted to drinking frequently, and in larger quantities than is good for them. The favourite beverages are a thin red wine and, alas! a very inferior kind of brandy extracted partly from potatoes, called vulgarly *la goutte*. *Boire la goutte*, which means imbibing a *petit verre*, or pennyworth, of this poison at all hours of the day or night, is a habit too often indulged in on the slightest provocation.

It is not surprising that at Les Queues, and generally in these tiny hamlets so near the French border, many French customs prevail, and that the predominating religion should be Roman Catholic. At ten minutes' walk from Les Queues one discovers amongst the surrounding trees the quaint little Roman Catholic church of La Chaux-Faux, the resort of the simple, devout

mountaineers for miles around. In the meadow land near the church is a large crucifix, serving as a landmark between France and Switzerland, and this is the favourite spot where the pretty processions that take place on important feast-days are held. The red frocks and tippets of the small chorister-boys surrounding M. le Curé; the white dresses and gay ribbons of the *Filles de Marie*, who carry proudly their small banners; the richly decked heavy candles with their gold ornaments—all stand out in a bright relief against the background of sloping vivid green meadow. The church itself is tastefully arranged with sweet-faced statues of the Virgin and Child, and many other ornaments appealing strongly to the emotional, imaginative side of human nature. M. le Curé, in his short white surplice trimmed with deep rich lace, and a grave, not to say sanctimonious expression on his young face, preaches a brief and practical homily to his attentive flock. After the sermon, while he and his attendant choristers are performing before the altar curious evolutions savouring slightly of the theatre—suddenly a woman's clear sweet voice fills the church—'Ave Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis'—in slow plaintive accents. Not a sound is heard but the soft notes of the organ and the voice of the unseen singer, who might be an angel from heaven, descended in the growing twilight to hallow the simple worship. The effect is beautiful, and perhaps more efficient than many a sermon, for the woman's rich notes and the quaint grandeur of the Latin words go straight to the heart, bringing tears to the eyes—a result sermons do not always produce.

The chief employments of the people are watchmaking for the large watch factories of Locle, farming, and, in the summer, taking care of cows and making dairy produce. Cows are sent up to the mountains, à l'alpage, from the villages lying down in the valleys. They are put out to board from May to September, and from twenty to thirty francs is paid for each animal. Here they enjoy the cool air and the sweet grass that makes the milk very good. Milk, warm from the cow, forms part of the mountain cure for invalids. A cow is expected to yield from fifteen to twenty quarts of milk a day. The cows enjoy entire liberty even at night; they rove about the forest, where the grass is particularly fragrant with herbs, also along the sides of the wide, long roads, and their progress is only stopped by low limestone walls, the stones of which are piled one on the top of the other without

cement. To prevent the possibility of the cows being lost, a bell is attached by a strap to the neck of each animal. The bells vary according to the size of the beast, but they, as well as the strap, seem very heavy—and yet the cows are supposed to be very proud of their ornaments; these are often shaped like ordinary hand-bells, but some are narrow and flattened at the sides, also rather longer than is usual with bells. But, whatever their form, they certainly make very pretty music. One hears their tinkle, tinkle, in a variety of different tones, resounding from out of the forest depths, and from the grassy slopes; this is often the only sound brought by the still, crisp mountain air. Cows are not allowed into the fir-plantations, because they are very fond of nibbling off the sprouts of the young trees, which not only spoils their beauty, but also injures them for useful purposes.

Watchmaking is carried on to a great extent, though it is not so lucrative an employment as it used to be, for the reason that foreign apprentices, who came to perfect themselves in the trade, have now established a business elsewhere; consequently the demand for manufactures coming from the Jura mountains, which were once impossible to rival, has considerably declined. A good worker was able to make from twenty-five to thirty francs a day; even now a skilled hand can earn in a day from ten to fifteen francs. The numerous commercial houses of Locle give out special employment to their different hands, male and female—for young ladies add a nice little sum to their stock of pocket-money and future *dot*, or marriage portion, by this means—who take it to their homes, where they work at the many delicate branches of a watch's machinery—the case, the hands, the polishing of the whole, &c. In nearly all the rustic cottages, as, indeed, in the more imposing village apartments, one sees, arranged before a good-sized window, a wide plank, on which is placed a little wheel and many other dainty tools. Here the watchmaker pursues his daily labours, except on Sundays, from early morning until far into the night. From the fact of the work being carried on before a window, the French in derision nickname watchmaking *travailler sur la fenêtre*. As the watchmakers are incessantly exposed to keen draughts of icy-cold air that penetrate even through double windows and all kinds of woollen or felt protections, the huge, ugly iron or white-tiled stoves are lighted early and late in the year; sometimes they have to be kept alight all the year round, for no good work can be done with benumbed fingers. Watch-

makers like their delicate, clean, and useful work, which only demands good sight, moderate intelligence, and light, dexterous fingers to become a lucrative employment. The work is not, as might be imagined, injurious to the eyes; indeed the constant strain is said to strengthen the sight, but of this fact one cannot be sure. I have heard of an old man, eighty years of age, who continues to work, which proves that watchmaking is not injurious to the health.

Amongst this busy people, mostly occupied during the week at a sedentary trade, the Sunday is naturally the day for long walks and amusements of all kinds that are sometimes prolonged over to the Monday. As, of the four houses composing Les Queues, two are *café-restaurants*, in spite of its seclusion, on fine Sundays the little spot is gay with merry-makers. The favourite amusements are ninepins, open-air dances, and the consumption of a large, round, flat cake called, rather appropriately, *la sèche*, accompanied by beer, wine, and *la goutte*, which creature-comforts are laid out on long wooden tables, placed with their several benches on the green sward at the verge of the forest. For the juvenile portion of the assembly, rarely small in Switzerland, there are swings, see-saws, merry-go-rounds, and the beautiful fir-forests that yield to their eager fingers a plentiful harvest of wild strawberries, raspberries, whortleberries, nuts, mushrooms, and sweet-scented nosegays of gaily tinted wild flowers.

The game of ninepins in use at Les Queues is most primitive. At about six yards from each other are placed two sheds with wooden floors—one protects the players from rain, the other shelters the heavy ninepins. Between the sheds there are two wide planks, sloping gently, and well wetted in order that the ball may slide easily to its goal. Sufficiently distant to be clear of the game, two young stems of fir-trees are fixed near together, and aslant, forming a kind of open tube, down which the balls are rolled back to the player by the man who arranges the pins after each throw. The balls are of wood and the size of a football; they are scooped out to the depth of two inches at the top under the circumference of the wood, forming a small arched handle. They are extremely clumsy, requiring to be swung backwards and forwards several times before the proper impetus is gained with which to slide them up the plank. The game must be most fatiguing; yet the continuous dull thud of the balls against the pins assures one that the amusement is being pursued with

untiring vigour during the whole day, for a stake seemingly inadequate compared with the amount of labour expended.

Open-air dancing is a great feature of these Sunday entertainments. In a field, on a raised wooden platform, is the bandstand, round which, in a boarded enclosure, the dancers disport themselves. The Terpsichorean delights may be procured at the moderate sum of one penny for every gentleman, the fair sex being gallantly exempted from all payment; even if two ladies dance together they are permitted to do so gratis. The music is good as far as the quality goes; but there is a certain amount of sameness about the selection, because a jiggling polka is the popular dance. The dancing, wonderfully select considering the admittance fee, is amusing, likewise the dancers, who betray much earnestness in trying to maintain an easy yet dignified deportment—a result they achieve with moderate success.

The larger of the two *cafés* at Les Queues is also a *pension*, much frequented during the summer holidays by ladies from Locle who desire the benefits of pure air and simple nourishing food for themselves and their children. The *pension* is extremely cheap, clean—very rustic of course; but for a summer's change of air, when one's time is spent out of doors, there are few places where the delights of country life can be more thoroughly enjoyed than at this unpretentious little *pension* with its obliging proprietors.

The winter lasts from October to April; it is very severe. Snow falls to the depth of one mètre, and when there are drifts one sometimes hears of people being lost in the white wilderness. To obviate this danger, posts are fixed in the snow along the side of the highway in order to mark the roads; these latter are cleared by means of a triangular wooden machine, to which from six to eight horses are attached. After a severe frost, when the snow is hard and the sun shines brightly on the glistening white hills and on the fir-trees bearing gracefully their soft-looking, yet heavy burden, winter wears no gloomy appearance. Snow is hailed with pleasure, for both the land and its people are the better for it: its warm covering preserves the pastures from frost, and the dry crisp cold it brings is infinitely healthier than a rainy winter with the attendant evils of rheumatism and bronchitis. During the summer rain is frequent, but when fine weather comes it comes in earnest. One revels in the soft warm sunshine that inundates the wide landscape and brings out the many beautiful shades of green on hill, vale, and forest. Three fine days following each

other is a rare event—generally there are heavy showers or else a thunderstorm in between. But showers, heavy storms even, do not damp one's enjoyment of this pleasant land; they are so soon over, the sun shines so brightly afterwards, and, as the sloping limestone soil allows the rain to run off as it falls, there are no inconvenient puddles with mud. When, however, rain sets in for the day, things in general do not wear a cheerful aspect; the fir-forests look very gloomy; dark sullen clouds trail low down, enviously hiding their slender heads in a mantle of grey mist; the regular fall of the rain is intensely irritating; there is far too much monotony about the green hills whose very beauty is owing to this odious damp. Everything is wet; the patient cows under the trees look wearily about for absent sunbeams, and the lonely figure of the little shepherdess, sitting upright on the low stone wall under her big umbrella, is a living refutation of the idea that pastoral life consists only in sunshine and pretty Watteau frocks. September is considered here as the finest month of the year, and with reason—the weather is generally bright and, though cold, not too cold; I have enjoyed a whole fortnight of perfect sunshine in September.

The picturesque little houses at Les Queues are built entirely with reference to the cold: their foundations are of limestone; also the walls up to the level of the roof, about five feet from the ground, and these are whitewashed; the upper part of the walls is of dark wood. The roofs slope very abruptly so that the snow may slip off easily whenever a thaw sets in, otherwise they might be forced down by its accumulated weight; their eaves project far beyond the house-wall. The roofs are made either of red or small wooden tiles that become grey by exposure; where these latter are used, big stones must be placed on the roof at intervals to render it more secure. Wooden roofs are more expensive, less serviceable, but infinitely prettier than the more modern tiles. Unfortunately, many ancient picturesque usages are more costly and less practical than our useful, but ugly, modern inventions.

All the houses dotted about the country are built very much alike. The *grange*, or barn, used as hayloft and lumber-room, is at the back of the house. Here the quaint furniture, &c., belonging to generations past is stored; curious-shaped, cumbersome cupboards hustle sacks of old rags, which in turn are pressed close by agricultural implements, piles of fire-

wood and of *tourbe*, a kind of peat used also for fuel. Many pretty things are mixed up with the heavy old furniture ; in one distant corner I found a dainty little wooden cradle, used for the great-grandmother of the house and many another round, rosy, well-loved babe ; now, alas ! it is put away for ever. A part of the *grange* is raised much higher than the rest ; the hay is stored here, and very green it looks ; close by it, from a beam in the rafters, carefully enveloped in cotton covers, hang the Sunday frocks of *Mademoiselle Zéphirine*, a daughter of the house. The *grange* is also used for hanging out washing in wet weather, and for storing dirty clothes ; as these latter are washed but twice a year, it may be imagined how desirable a large and airy storeroom must be.

By the door at the side of the house one enters immediately into the large, dark, low-ceilinged kitchen, paved with irregular stone flags. In the centre of the ceiling there is an opening about two square yards wide, the base of the huge black wooden chimney, rising sometimes to a great height, and getting narrower by degrees, till at the top it is only a square half-yard wide. The only means of lighting the kitchen are by a little window near the pump at the door, and the chimney-hole gleaming far away at the apex of the enormous cavern ; this hole is opened or closed at pleasure by pulling a rope attached to an adjustable board nailed on the chimney-top. The large *foyer*, or hearth, where the wood fire blazes, is directly under the chimney, and at hand stands a big wooden block and chopper for preparing the fuel. Close by is a great stone oven for making bread and pastry ; twenty large flat loaves can be easily baked in its large recesses at the same time—a convenience, as in some families bread is only baked once a month. This home-made bread has a most agreeable taste, but, as it is heavy, a little of it goes a long way. The iron cooking-pots are slung over the fire by means of hooked chains fixed to a pole fastened to the chimney-wall about four feet from the ground ; a larger pole is fixed higher up in the chimney and across the opening ; on it two wooden planks, with pegs in them, are steadied against the chimney-wall at about a yard's distance from each other. When a pig is killed, the joints of pork and the sausages are placed on these pegged planks and left there all the winter, in order that the meat may be well cured by the plentiful smoke from the wood fire. Hams cured in this manner are said to be excellent. But though the chimneys are very large,

it must not be inferred that all the smoke issues at once from the open fireplace by its proper channel ; the blackened kitchen ceiling, the dark-complexioned walls, and often, doubtless, the dirty faces of the inhabitants, attest that hams are not the only articles well smoked in these primitive dwellings.

The bedrooms are upstairs to the front of the house on the sunny side ; as a rule they are cheerful, small, and very low-ceilinged rooms, wainscoted with wood and arranged to form parlour and bedroom in one. The custom of covering beds with heavy curtains used to be very general ; nowadays it is dying out, though in the room I visited curtains were still in use. '*Ma fie!* they are no longer the fashion,' explained the obliging lady who showed me over her house ; 'but, as they were my mother's, we leave them.' The bedroom walls are always gay with coloured engravings of the Virgin and saints, pretty little stands for holy water, family photos ranged in a straight line, curious illustrations of ancient legends, and occasionally a case full of little graven images and relics of all sorts. The bedrooms communicate with the kitchen by a very steep, narrow, dark wooden staircase. Sometimes one finds in a little back room, sacred to dust and rats, a loom used for making a coarse, warm carpet, much in favour, as its fabrication necessitates the employment of all the old rags obtainable.

What seems most remarkable about these cottages is the lowness of their ceilings and the quantity of wood used in their structure—two consequences of a rigorous climate. House insurance is compulsory.

Flowers are greatly cultivated by the mountaineers, who feel a tenderer regard for nature's sweet children than might perhaps be the case were they less difficult to rear. The window-sills are filled with bright geraniums and nasturtiums, standing out in gay relief against the dark wooden house-wall. With the September frosts the pretty plants disappear indoors for eight long months.

There is a great deal of smuggling carried on at the frontier-line. The articles smuggled from Switzerland to France are chiefly tobacco, sugar, and coffee ; from France to Switzerland the trade is in cattle, gunpowder, and household goods. The smugglers usually pass the frontier by a dangerous passage across the river Doubs and the rocks in its vicinity called the Saut du Doubs. The perils of this romantically beautiful passage are increased by the darkness, the fear of custom-house officers, and by heavy

packages of contraband goods which impede the free use of the limbs. Each man is armed with an alpenstock and a pistol; he carries his bundle fastened to his back by a heavy strap, which can be detached and the bundle rolled down the adjacent precipice at the first signal of danger and pursuit. Naturally the men who are willing to face such risks both to life and pocket—for the loss of a bundle of goods is a serious affair—are much admired and aided by the peasants of both countries. They, as well as the smugglers, are convinced not only of the harmlessness of smuggling, but that they are actually conferring a boon on society by obtaining for it articles which can be sold at a much cheaper rate than if they paid duty fees. But goods are often conveyed across the frontier, in small quantities it is true, in a much more public manner. Waggoners, dogs, travellers, railway officials, and even the custom-house officers themselves, are all more or less engaged in smuggling. Late at night one sometimes hears the roll of heavy waggons passing through Les Queues. Wondering what could keep the hard-working peasants up to an hour so advanced beyond their usual bedtime, I once inquired the reason. 'Ce sont les contrabandiers,' was the reply, which brought with it a fine flavour of wild romance, suggesting midnight raids, hand-to-hand struggles in the depths of dark forests, and the groans of dying men. Needless to say, nobody volunteered to stop the course of the waggons. When smugglers are caught they are punished by severe imprisonment at Pontarlier and by heavy fines, but as yet I understand that defaulters are not inconveniently crowded in their French prisons.

The passion for smuggling possessed by people who, living near the frontier, profit largely by its advantages, gives rise sometimes to most amusing incidents. Ladies, ever alive to the delights of a bargain, are inveterate smugglers. I heard recently that a party of them, with their children, hired a waggonette ostensibly for the pleasure of a drive from Locle, Switzerland, to Morteaux, a little French village; in reality they were all intent on buying crockery, &c., to be brought back concealed about their persons. Arrived at Morteaux, they proceeded to make numerous purchases, which straightway disappeared by some means into the mysterious depths of the buyers' clothing. A sugar-basin was fitted into a bonnet, a saucepan served for a bustle, and one ingenious dame outdid her compeers by adjusting a set of plates in such wise as to imitate, very successfully, the form of a lady in an interesting

condition! Imagine the laughter, the broad jokes, the crowding together in the waggonette on their return, the fun of hoodwinking Messieurs les Douaniers, and the excitement caused by a possibility of detection. I am glad to say that in this instance 'fortune favoured the brave.' Such devotion to the family interests deserved success.

It is said that the best of everything should be kept for the last, and on this principle I have devoted the concluding paragraphs of my article to the fir-forests of Les Queues. These beautiful forests surround one at all points. In the distant valleys they appear as dark blue-black patches dividing the stretches of verdure; nearer at hand their growth is more extensive, and at last they crown every spot, peak after peak is hidden by the splendid trees, straight as darts, the pride of the Canton de Neuchâtel. But to enjoy the forests to perfection one must not be content to view them from afar—one must penetrate into their depths until on all sides nothing can be seen but the tall symmetrical trunks of the forest giants rising like sentinels thick and close around one, their heavy branches darkening the midday air, and their faultlessly shaped heads standing out against the clear blue sky. Then, while reposing on a soft, enticing carpet of moss and grass, scented sweetly by numerous aromatic herbs, bedecked by delicate harebells and a profusion of pretty wild strawberries, gleaming so red against the light green leaves that one cannot resist the desire to pick and eat plentifully of such charming food—then, with no more disturbing sounds around than the distant, never-ceasing tinkle of the cow-bells, the occasional fall of a pine-cone, and the sleep-inducing hum of busy insects, one is beguiled into believing that perfect happiness and peace have not yet deserted our tired world. The eye is delighted by long vistas of trees whose grey lichen-covered trunks the sun lightens up here and there with bright patches of silver; and the sun finds out exquisite golden-brown tints in the abundant moss that covers everything within its reach; the low stone walls dividing the forest into sections, the long roots of the trees, the grey limestone boulders, and the great stumps of ancient forest-kings that have been sent long since to the shipbuilding works of Marseilles—all are alike made lovely by this magnificent mantle. Amongst the firs there are many beech-trees whose lighter foliage waves, vivid green, in the pleasant breeze that is not strong enough to move the great trees. Suddenly another sound dis-

turbs the stillness, and one rises in haste to search for the rushing mountain stream that appears to be hurrying by behind the trees at no considerable distance. But the same sound, heard again and more distinctly, convinces one that there is no stream; it is only the wind moaning through the forest and bending the huge trees with its might. Here and there a trunk is marked with a deep lightning-scar; the forests attract storms, and in this way they serve as a protection to the surrounding hamlets. But the poor cows that take refuge under their branches do not find the same security; after a thunderstorm the unfortunate beasts are sometimes found struck dead at the foot of the trees.

The forest contains many useful plants used by good wives for their simple *tisanes* and lotions for sprains, bruises, &c. The odour of the firs which impregnates the air is very salubrious, especially for persons with delicate chests and lungs. The young fir-sprouts, also the aromatic forest-herbs, are used medicinally. When picked, boiling water is poured over them and they are left for some hours to infuse. This infusion is used as a strengthening bath for weakly, anæmic children. One finds many different kinds of mushrooms growing in the damp moss and grass, some good, some bad; I noted a kind called *la chevrette*, bearing a curious resemblance to a growth of white coral. In the moss one sees growing a strange kind of orchid, bell-shaped and waxen-coloured. Another feature of the forest is the number of peculiar anthills, made by a large species of black ant. These hills are formed of the dried fir-foliage, called *dard*, which falls to the ground in quantities, and is collected in great heaps by the industrious little creatures. While observing them at their unceasing labours, one is filled with admiration mingled with awe for the wonderful thrift Dame Nature shows in turning everything to account. In the meadows there are numerous little grassy hillocks formed by a small red ant that stings, whereas its friend of the forest is perfectly harmless. Some people even pretend that a quantity of these black ants, boiled in a strengthening infusion, is an efficacious remedy for rheumatism.

Moonlight nights at Les Queues are very beautiful. Coming as I did from Italy, where the moon is most exquisite, I supposed that there would be little to admire in the moonlight of this northern country. I was agreeably surprised; the beauty of one night especially remains in my memory. The moon, not yet full, was shining through a light veil of soft fleecy clouds, stretched

far away on all sides, that, instead of hiding her charms, rather revealed them by diffusing her rays in a silver radiance flooding earth and sky. Against moonlit clouds on all sides the gracefully pointed outlines of the fir-tops were sharply cut out. Over the gently undulating pasture-land the hazy light fell in mild loveliness. But in the forest itself all was dark, except where a green glade or mossy bank, not too closely protected by the guardian trees, offered free passage to a bright ray. A pity there was no Endymion asleep on the thyme-scented, harebell-adorned couch to be kissed and covered by the argentine light. I waited, but none appeared, and I heard no music beyond the sweet-toned, but very earthly, cow-bells. And so at last I had to go to bed with the regret that in our times there should be no Endymions.

A HOMILY.

THE humblest and frailest grassy blade
That ever the passing breezes swayed
Is of Beauty's palace a green arcade.

Akin to the uttermost stars that burn,
A story the wisest may never learn,
Is the tiny pebble thy footsteps spurn.

In each human heart potential dwell,
Hid from the world and itself as well,
Heights of heaven, abyssms of hell.

The core of the earth is fiery young!
No matter what may be said or sung
With a weary brain and a wailing tongue!

Soul! self-pent in a narrow plot,
Longing each morn for some fair lot,
Some bounteous grace which thou hast not,

Dull thou must be not to understand,
And blind thou art not to see at hand
Thy dreams by reality far outspanned;

For wonder lies at thy very door,
And magic thy fireside sits before,
And marvels through every window pour.

Woven the wings of the swift hours be
Of splendour and terror and mystery:
One thing is needful—the eyes to see!

THE KING'S LUCK.

DIVINE RIGHT is on its last legs. The Will of the People, that modern abstraction, has dealt it a hard blow. Before the new-fangled sovereignty of Demos, or his nominee, all other 'kings by the grace of God' are nowadays having a bad time of it. The success of the republic, in America and elsewhere, has served considerably to weaken the time-honoured idea that royalty, as such, is a divine institution. If whatever is, is right—if a living dog is better than a dead lion—then clearly a president *de facto*, with a court at the Élysée, however shabby, is at least as good as a king *de jure*, with nothing but a lodging *in partibus infidelium*. And when, as in modern France, nobody exactly knows who is the real Simon Pure—the true king of the white flag of the Bourbons; while emperors and Boulangers and other pretenders darken counsel in the background for the searcher after truth—why, the plain man is disposed to conclude in his rough-and-ready fashion that Providence after all is not quite so royalist as our ancestors thought it. Its vote seems to be cast impartially for a George Washington almost as often as for a George the Third; and it favours a Napoleon as against a Louis Dixhuit, so far as the casual observer can make out, in strict accordance with the relative size of their respective battalions.

In its own time, however, Divine Right played a far larger rôle in the world than even its seventeenth-century advocates ever dreamed of. We know now that the doctrine of the Stuarts and their legal or clerical advisers was but a miserable relic of that divinity which doth hedge a king among earlier and much less sophisticated races. Not only were kings once kings by divine right, but they were once indeed themselves divine, and in yet simpler stages they were actually incarnate gods. The power to touch for king's evil which still descended to the last of the Stuarts was but a final remnant of the miraculous powers over nature generally, possessed by the god-like kings of more native races or of earlier times. There are nations still among whom the king is a god: there were days when kings were equally gods among all humanity.

The beginnings of this claim to Divine Right go back ages beyond the 'Zeus-nurtured kings' of Homer, and spring almost

undoubtedly from the well-nigh universal custom of ancestor-worship. Modern anthropology has made it quite clear to us that all over the world, whatever great gods may be worshipped as well, the smaller gods of every tribe and every family are its own dead ancestors. The very same feeling of affection and regard which prompts Christian men and women in our own time to lay flowers and wreaths on the graves of their loved ones, and to mark their resting-place with sculptured stones or costly crosses, prompted primitive man to offer at the tomb his simple gifts of food and drink, and to perpetuate the memory of his lost friends by erecting over their bodies a rough-hewn boulder, or a rude stone monument. The ghosts of the dead were ever present by his side : to them he prayed for aid when he went forth to war ; at their shrines he made presents of the spoil when he returned from battle with the corn and wine of his enemies. Every nation has such household gods ; and in an immense majority of instances they can be shown almost beyond a doubt to be nothing more or less than the spirits of their ancestors.

But while each family thus sacrifices to its particular predecessors—the house-father offering up gifts on behalf of the household to his own father and remoter progenitors—the tribe as a whole sacrifices to the ghosts of its deceased kings ; and the living king, their descendant and representative, becomes accordingly the natural priest of this common tribal worship. Among many low races, almost the only gods recognised are such dead chiefs : and the existing chief, as their son and heir, presents to them the prayers and gifts of the people. Hence it naturally follows that these living chiefs themselves are descendants of the gods, and as such essentially partake of the divine nature. That they lie, and steal, and fight, and get drunk, and otherwise misconduct themselves does not militate, of course, against their divine claims : for even the gods and goddesses of Hellas, we may recollect, were by no means blameless on points of moral order. The ideal of godhead in such cases, I need hardly say, is a very low one ; but the ghosts or gods, such as they are, are at least conceived as capable of bestowing all temporal blessings or the contrary on their worshippers. Not only do they grant strength on the war-path and luck in the chase, but they also grant rain or sunshine, thunder or lightning, plenty or scarcity ; they are answerable alike for the fruits of the earth, and for drought or famine, for favourable weather, or for earthquake, flood, pestilence, and tempest. And what the gods can do, that their descendant, the king, can do

likewise. The king is thus a living god: the god is thus a dead or ghostly king.

Up to a much higher level of culture than one would at first imagine, this identification of kings and gods has been common in history. In civilised Egypt, for example, the earliest kings were a dynasty of gods, and the later kings were their sons and successors. There is even some reason for believing with Mr. Loftie that Osiris and Horus, themselves great mythical shades, were originally nothing more or less than local princes of Abydos, in Upper Egypt, and that the earliest historical dynasties of the Nile valley were their lineal descendants. At any rate, the king at Thebes or Memphis was treated as in fact 'a present god:' he is spoken of as the lord of heaven, lord of earth, the sun, the living Horus, the maker of mortals: his image on the monuments is sculptured of divine size and stature: and he is represented as receiving the symbols both of kingship and of divinity from the gods his ancestors who ruled in their own day over the self-same holy realm of Egypt. Temples were built to him, and priests endowed to carry on his worship: and so persistent were these endowments, that after thousands of years we find mention of sacrifices offered to the spirits of Cheops and Cephrenes, the antique kings of the early empire who built the two great pyramids.

Just in the same way, in native Peru, the Incas were the descendants of the gods, and were therefore naturally gods themselves: they were the children of the sun, and 'could do no wrong'—a peculiarity shared with them by the sovereigns of Great Britain to the present moment. The Mexican kings were no less divine, and were worshipped during their lifetime with prayer and sacrifice. When Alexander of Macedon claimed to be the son of Jupiter Ammon, he meant what he said: when the Roman senate proclaimed the godhead of the Divus Cæsar, every Roman understood it as a genuine apotheosis. 'Namque erit ille mihi semper deus,' says Virgil of the young Augustus. In our own day, the Mikado of Japan is a surviving example of such an incarnate god. He is an embodiment of the sun-goddess, the deity who rules over gods and men alike: and he is considered so great that for one month in the year all the other gods of heaven flock to his palace and pay him courtesy.

It is only by throwing ourselves in imagination into such a frame of mind as this that we can understand the common title of 'the God Euergetes,' or 'the Goddess Cleopatra,' habitually bestowed upon the Greek kings and queens of Egypt. It is only in the

same way, too, that we can dimly figure to ourselves the ideas of those distant provincials who saw in such creatures as Vitellius or Domitian a divine incarnation, a Divus Cæsar. For even in our own day, a temple still stands at Benares to Warren Hastings: and a sect of natives in the Punjaub worship a deity whom they call Nikkal Sen, but whom the Army List in his own day knew only as the redoubted General Nicholson. Nay, if we want the exact parallel to the altars erected to Tiberius and Nero in Syria or Britain, we shall find it in a new cult which has arisen in Orissa, and whose devotees worship our sovereign lady Victoria, queen and empress, as their principal deity.

For some time past, since Tylor and Spencer made clear to us the working of the savage or barbarous mind in such strange developments of faith and practice, this essential identity of god and king among early races has been generally recognised. But Mr. Frazer, of Cambridge, has quite recently pointed out in his interesting work on the Arician priesthood some quaint and curious, though personally disagreeable, side results of the godhead thus officiously thrust by his subjects upon the unhappy monarch. Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown in more than one of these primitive communities. For if the king is a god, then obviously he is a dispenser of good or bad times: he is answerable for the state of the weather and the crops; he is responsible for all and sundry misfortunes that afflict the tribe collectively, as well as for plague, pestilence, famine, and all other ills that individual flesh is heir to. Now it's very convenient to have your god, so to speak, on tap, and to be able to remonstrate with him from time to time as occasion arises. Hence, if things don't turn out well, many savages wait upon their king or chief 'to know the reason why;' and if the king fails to satisfy them of the excellence of his intentions, or the wisdom of his rule over the elements of nature, they proceed forthwith to kill him. As the Arcadians used to beat the images of their gods when they had ill-luck in hunting, so these guileless children of nature turn and rend their incarnate divinity whenever he shows himself unwilling or unable to produce the sort of weather they consider themselves entitled to. And even so the British farmer, it is rumoured, to this very day, turns out an administration because the rainfall has failed, or the foot-and-mouth disease has played havoc among his unfortunate South-downs.

Under such circumstances, it may readily be imagined, the post of king is by no means all beer and skittles. No wonder

'sleep leaves the kingly couch,' as the divine bard puts it, when the kingly couch so widely differs from a bed of roses. In West Africa, says Mr. Frazer, whenever drought occurs, and prayers and offerings presented to the chief have failed to produce the desired rain, the unsophisticated negro has resort to compulsion. He binds his chief with ropes, hales him away to the graves of his forefathers, and peremptorily orders him to obtain from them without delay refreshing showers. The Banjars, again, regard their king as a great weather-god. So long as things run on smoothly they load him with presents of grain and cattle: but when drought or rainfall spoils the crops, they beat him and insult him till the weather changes. In the self-same spirit, the ancient Scythians—good, practical souls—when food was scarce, imprisoned their king till things came right again. The use of a god is clearly to benefit his worshippers. No benefits, no worship. So, too, the people of Loango, when the surf on the coast spoils the fishing, accuse their king-god of 'a bad heart,' and depose him for his inefficient management of the forces of nature. The Burgundians got rid of their king if the crops failed: the ancient Swedes went further, like our Puritan ancestors, and actually killed their legitimate monarch if storm or pestilence attested his incapacity.

Sometimes, we may well believe, the king finds the place too hard for him. On Savage Island, in the South Pacific, a line of chieftains once reigned supreme over a dusky people. But as these chiefs were of divine nature, and were supposed to make the crops grow, their subjects got angry with them when the food-supplies fell short, and killed them off rapidly, in a spell of bad seasons, one after another. At last so many chiefs were killed in succession that nobody cared to accept the office. The title went begging, and the monarchy ceased for want of offers. Much the same sort of thing may happen some day in Russia, if the Nihilists have their way. After a few more Czars have been blown up, the Imperial Grand Dukes may not unnaturally decline to make themselves the scape-goats of the autocratic system. The crown may then be put up for public competition, the Russian people not binding itself, however, to accept the lowest or any other tender.

But if the god-king's life is sometimes a nuisance to himself owing to the anger and disgust of his subjects at his management of the universe, he has no less to fear, on the other hand, from their excessive reverence and respect in certain quarters. Instead of being harshly treated, he has sometimes to complain of being killed with kindness. Existence is made a burden to him by the extreme

solicitude and regard of his worshippers for his sacred person. He is taken so much care of that life itself ceases to be of interest to him.

Have you ever observed the queen-bee in a glass hive, attended by her constant bodyguard of workers, and narrowly watched, whichever way she moves, by a jealous band of insect courtiers? If you have, you will remember how the bees of the royal suite stand round their sovereign in a ring, with their heads all pointed towards her, and their eyes closely fixed on her every motion. Whenever she takes a single step in advance, the bees in front fall back, with their heads still turned towards the royal presence: the bees to right and left move sideways like crabs: the bees behind follow her up closely. No human monarch of civilised lands is ever so carefully and jealously guarded: to none is such assiduous deference paid, on none is such constant and willing care lavished.

Now why is this? Simply because a queen-bee is the one mother of the hive, the sole hope of the race, the visible embodiment of the collective future. It isn't loyalty in any modern human sense that makes her attendants watch over her so carefully: it's a just regard for the interests of the community, which she sums up in herself as their common rallying-point and general parent. If the queen dies, the hive and the race in so far die with her: everything is upset: affairs are at a standstill: the bees languish and grow listless for want of a proper outlet for their instinctive faculties. Hence, their great object in life is to secure that nothing untoward should happen to the sacred person of the queen. They take infinite pains that she shall not escape from the hive, and that within it nothing dangerous or doubtful shall ever come near her. Her life is far too precious to her kind for her to be allowed to play tricks with it at her own free-will in the fields or meadows. Who knows but a field mouse might eat her unawares, or a shower play havoc with her royal constitution? In effect, therefore, she is practically a prisoner in her own home, mewed up by guards like a sultana in her quarters, and prevented from enjoying the freedom and exercise which fall to the lot of the meanest among her worker subjects.

Well, what the queen-bee really *is* to the hive, that and more the savage imagines his king-god to be to the tribe or nation. The divine chief sums up in himself the luck and the life of the entire people. As he can sway and govern the winds, the rain, the fruits of the earth, the sunshine, his well-being becomes to them a matter of prime importance. Nay more, by a curious

association common to all human minds, a sort of sympathetic influence is supposed to extend from him to all and sundry the members of his tribe. Our own Teutonic name for his office—the name of king—means etymologically, not as Carlyle loved to feign, the canning man, but the kin-ing, the child of the race, the son of the divine ancestors, the man who tots up and condenses in himself the whole diffuse tribal personality. *L'état, c'est lui*. He *is* his people. When a mediæval monarch spoke of himself as 'France,' or 'Naples,' he was but carrying on into a newer and wider type of life the ideas implicitly yet directly derived from his barbaric ancestors.

But if the god-king is thus really so important—if he can procure for his people rain or sunshine, good harvests or bad, wealth or poverty—if he sums up mysteriously in his own person all the fortunes of his tribe, then surely, the prudent savage argues to himself, we must be very careful that nothing untoward in any way should happen to his sacred health or his divine body. He must be guarded from hoccusing like a Derby favourite: he must be preserved from the faintest sign of breakage like the Luck of Edenhall. The result of this feeling is the familiar and widespread system of *taboo*, by which the sacred person of the king is girt round with restrictions of the minutest kind, often ridiculous, and always irksome, but all tending to preserve him from real or imaginary misfortunes of every sort.

As the queen-bee mustn't go out of the hive, so in many cases the god-king mustn't go a step outside his own palace. Within, he is safe from attack, or from accident, or from the evil eye: without, there's no knowing what dangers on earth may surround and encompass him. Thus in old Japan, the Mikado lived largely secluded from all the world, and protected by a minute and tedious ceremonial. So, too, the kings of Persia were shut up in their palaces, and hardly any of their subjects were ever permitted to see them. The kings of Egypt were worshipped as gods; but the divinity that hedged them round must have been far more annoying than pleasing to its unhappy possessors; for, as Diodorus tells us, 'everything was arranged for them by law, not only their royal duties, but also the details of their daily life. The hours of day and night were measured out, at which the king had to do, not what he liked, but what custom prescribed for him.' His food and drink were all as accurately ordained as Sancho Panza's on the island of Barataria; for might not a passing fit of indigestion upset for ever the realm of Nile, or a headache produced by too much

wine overnight beget far-reaching effects through all the Upper and Lower Kingdoms?

The king, in short, as Mr. Andrew Lang has graphically put it, was 'tabooed an inch deep,' and dared never transgress the limits of these divine restrictions. Some of the taboos referred to his food and drink, which were always light and simple, in order that the sacred body might remain sound and wholesome. But more still were magical in their nature, and had reference rather to the vague misfortunes that might fall upon the king from the wicked wiles of black art or witchcraft. Dread of the evil eye, ever strong among savages, is one of the chief reasons for secluding the king: and as strangers are particularly liable to exercise this malign influence, barbaric majesty is seldom allowed even to show its divine face before the face of foreigners. This is one of the many reasons, indeed, for the aversion felt to strangers in barbarous countries: they may bring with them some evil power which will unfavourably affect the luck of the tribesmen. In many Polynesian islands now, as in the Crimea of old, strangers who come ashore are immediately massacred, out of sheer funk. The ancient Egyptians were almost equally inhospitable: and the Chinese by no means love the 'red-haired devils' who seek to charm them with a mixed diet of opium and moral pocket-handkerchiefs. Even in our own Britain, the unsophisticated islanders of St. Kilda believe to this day that a new-comer from the outer world always brings some mysterious disease along with him: and the aborigines of the Black Country preserve the same primitive idea in the well-known ceremony of spying a stranger and 'eaving 'arf a brick at 'im.

This horror of being seen, and especially of being seen abroad, above all by strangers, is very widespread. From the day of his coronation—so Mr. Frazer tells us—the King of Loango is not permitted to go outside his palace. His royal brother of Ibo may not step from his house unless a human sacrifice is offered in his stead to propitiate destiny. The kings of Æthiopia on the Upper Nile were treated as gods, but were never allowed for all that to leave their own precincts. If the kings of Sheba appeared in the streets, their scandalised subjects immediately stoned them. To this day, the sovereigns of Corea, who receive divine honours, are shut up hermetically in their own apartments, and never communicate directly with their people. In other cases, different precautions are taken to prevent the king being seen. At Mandalay, palings six feet high were erected in all the streets where the great

Theebaw of the moment was likely to pass ; and whenever he went abroad in his capital, all the people had to stay behind these wooden barriers. The Sultan of Wadai speaks from behind a curtain : the Sultan of Darfur wraps his face in a piece of white muslin. A last relic of these curious isolating customs may be seen in the taboo which prevents many Eastern monarchs from ever quitting their own dominions. Several Indian princes may not leave India ; and it was with great difficulty that the Persians reconciled themselves to the idea of their Shah visiting Europe.

One of the oddest taboos, however, to Western minds at least, is that which forbids the king to have his hair cut, or to pare his nails, or otherwise to get rid of any useless part of his sacred body. The Mikado, poor god-descended wretch, was never allowed to cut his hair, or even to wash himself. The Frankish kings wore their locks about their shoulders, because it would have been wicked to touch them with the shears : and endless other instances could easily be quoted. The reason is in part, no doubt, that the whole body is divine, and therefore to be respected ; but even more, in all probability, because of the evil use that an enemy might make of such hair or nail-parings, if they got into his power. For it is a well-known principle of magic, in all times and places, that if you want to make spells against anyone, you ought, if possible, to possess yourself of something that once belonged to him, or, above all, of an actual relic or part of his body. This you can then use as a fetish or charm for the destruction of the person to whom it originally belonged. For so intimate is the sympathy between all the parts of one and the same body, that if the hair is burnt, or hacked about or destroyed, the person himself will be destroyed also ; if it withers in the ground, he will wither away piecemeal ; and if a magician plays any ugly tricks with it, the original owner will be correspondingly affected. This makes it a very delicate question to decide what should be done with the king's hair or nails, in case you were to cut them. On the whole, the wisdom of our early ancestors concluded, it's safer to keep them on his own head and hands than to run any risks from the malice of magicians. So the edict of society went forth accordingly : the royal locks and the royal fingers are tabooed for ever.

Perhaps, however, the most interesting point about all these early notions as to the divinity of the king is the subtle way in which, under infinite disguises, they have trickled down to our own time, and still pervade the current thought of Europe. For the

sacro-sanctity of the royal person only died away by slow degrees ; and many modern forms of loyalty or of respect for rank must be traced back ultimately to such heathen beginnings. They are ideas, in other words, that could never have arisen spontaneously, but can only exist as mitigated forms of earlier and far more barbaric superstitions. One can trace a gradual modification in this respect from the earliest times to our own day : but there is no sudden break, no general emancipation. The godship of the king declined slowly into the divine nature of the king, and then into his divine right, which is now finally evaporating before our very eyes in the mitigated and attenuated form of mere 'legitimacy.' The shadowy claim of the Duke of Cumberland to the kingdom of Hanover, of the last of the Italian Bourbons to the kingdom of Naples, and of the late Duke of Parma to the British crown, though anachronisms in our own age, lead us back directly to the god-kings of the old Teutonic stock, and the divine origin of the house of Woden.

For even after the Christianisation of the North, every English prince in the petty Anglo-Saxon monarchies traced his descent without fail to the divine ancestor Woden, as every Norse chieftain did to his Scandinavian equivalent, Odin. No longer admitted as a god, the great Teutonic ancestral deity still retained his place in every royal pedigree, and was accepted on all hands as the prime progenitor of princely families. Some of the genealogies even combine all possible requirements by first tracing back the king to Woden, and then supplying Woden himself with a long line of still earlier ancestors who are finally affiliated on the patriarch Noah. In Christian times, to be sure, a Christian colour was given to the divinity of the king by ascribing it rather to the act of coronation and the sacred oil of consecration than to any inherent divine nature. But even so, it was felt that the monarch must be of royal stock, and that the blood of confessedly heathen gods must trickle in his veins. 'The kingly kin' and 'the kin of Woden' were interchangeable phrases : and though holy ampullas and papal blessings counted for much with priests and priestly-minded laymen, there can be little doubt that with the nobles and the people at large it was the divine descent, not the priestly assent, that really weighed most in their reverence for royalty.

Among the many little superstitions which marked this popular attitude towards kingship, none is more interesting than that of the Stones of Destiny, on which it was necessary that kings should be crowned in many countries. In Ireland they

were frequent, and the most famous of them stood on the great royal tumulus of Tara: it was, in short, in all probability, the tombstone of the ancient chiefs of that part of Ireland. When the true king put his foot on it, the stone cried aloud three times: in other words, the divine ancestors from their graves recognised their son, and proclaimed him as such before the assembled people. The royal stone of the West Saxon race stood in the Surrey town which we still call Kingston: it is preserved there to this day in an open space, with an inscription bearing the names of the early English princes who sat to be crowned upon it. But the most famous of all these tribal stones is that of the Scotch monarchy, which formerly stood near the palace at Scone, but was brought by Edward I. to England, and now forms part of the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey. The old legend that Scots will reign wherever that stone is found means, of course, that the stone will allow none but the true heir or representative of the ancient kings to take his seat as sovereign upon it. Its place in Westminster Abbey, and its use in the Christian ceremony of coronation, show the usual quaint mixture of heathendom with the younger faith to which archæological inquirers are now so well accustomed.

The belief in the quasi-divine nature of kings dies out very slowly. It is Christianised and transformed, but not destroyed. The King of Obbo, who calls his people together in times of drought, and demands goats and corn of them if they want him to mend the weather—'No goats, no rain: that's our compact,' says his majesty—the King of Obbo has his final counterpart in the Stuart belief that bad seasons fell upon the people as a punishment for their participation in the sin of rebellion. The magical power of early chieftains over demons and diseases survived late in modern England in the practice of touching for king's evil. The sacred person of the sovereign remains sacred to this day before the English law. And if the Egyptians and Peruvians held their Pharaohs or their Incas to be incarnate deities, it was in the age of Voltaire himself that Bossuet dared distinctly to say, 'Kings are gods, and share in a degree the divine independence.' These are not mere scraps and tags of courtly adulation, as one is at first tempted nowadays to believe: the closer one looks at them, the more clearly does one see that they are actually survivals of thought and feeling from the days when the king was in reality the living god, and the god was in reality the dead king.

THE LABOUR CANDIDATE.

THEY chose John Hammer for three chief reasons :—

First, because he was so honest and single-minded. They knew as well as they could know anything, that he would never play them false. They could strum upon his candour to their heart's content. They also had the wit to perceive that, if ever they disagreed with him, or he disagreed with them, this excellent quality of his would provide offhand the material for a dispute which should end in his resignation or supersession.

Next, he was poor. That was almost as convenient as his extreme honesty. Unquestionably, if their man was not poor, he might by-and-by kick over the traces, and enjoy himself until the next Dissolution without the least reference to the men who, to all public intents and purposes, had created him. John was, in fact, so poor, that if they had not provided him with an allowance of so much a week, with travelling expenses, second class, and a dress-suit, as extras, he would not have been able to pay his dinner-bill for a single week, let alone support his wife and family. He was as thoroughly dependent upon them as a marine pier upon the piles which support it.

In the third place, John Hammer was an out-and-out Red, with political views which quite accorded with their own. He had been educated at the National School of Wallsend until he was ten, when he entered the world of real life as a pit-bank boy. From that time forward, until he became foreman of a gang of colliers, he had continued to mature. And now he could sneer at the Queen and the Royal Family, bring down his right fist with a resounding whack into the hollow of his left hand when he mentioned the Civil or the Pension List, become frenzied in his contrast of the earnings of a pitman with the inherited income of a duke, and signify in very audible and expressive language his conviction that a time was coming when——: all this he could do as well as the most conscientious demagogue that Wallsend had ever had the good luck to listen to.

It was clear, therefore, that John Hammer was their man.

‘What wilt say, my woman, when thy John tacks M.P. to his name?’ quoth the candidate to his wife, a week before the

polling-day. 'An' it'll coom to pass, my lass, tek my word for it!'

'I shanna know what to say, John. It'll be so strange-loike; an' oime na sure it'll be good for ayther o' the pair of us.'

'Thee bist a fule!' said John; and in his displeasure he swung the latch of his little cottage at four-and-six a week, and strode into the high road.

Here he chanced to encounter Mr. Juggins, the master of the Amalgamated Association of Nutcracker-makers and Glass-blowers; and together they adjourned for the rest of the day to the 'Jolly Bacchus,' a snug public-house with a vast deal of polished brass about its fittings, and a sanded floor.

Mr. Juggins controlled a hundred and eighty-seven votes in the coming election. He and John were on the most friendly terms. It was mainly due to him that the six wirepullers of the district had chosen their present candidate. Mr. Juggins was immensely ambitious. He was small, and feverish of speech, with a tuft of grey beard, and a habit of winking his eyes for no apparent reason. He received three pounds a week from the nutcracker-makers and glass-blowers, for whom he kindly acted as corporate treasurer, as well as secretary, counsellor, and friend. But it did not content him. He had seraphic visions of State patronage in the hands of John Hammer, M.P., the best pickings of which would in the time to come fall to Barzillai Juggins. Hence the inspired fervour of his utterances to the glass-blowing and nutcracker-making electors, whose votes he held in the palm of his hand. 'John Hammer's your man, my dear friends. He'll put his foot down on the infamous abuses which crush the poor working-man out of the position which is his right by the laws of Heaven, and equity, and Nature, and common-sense. Down, therefore, with the pampered aristocrat and the Pension List, and up with the candidate of the A.A.N.G.!'

Messrs. Scarth, Perkins, Robinson, Abbott, and Banks, the other five wirepullers of Wallsend, were much like Barzillai Juggins. Each had the fingering of a number of votes of the local colliers and mechanics. Each in public professed principles the most unselfish and philanthropic, which all pointed to John Hammer as their eventual representative; and each, in the privacy of his heart, cared only for himself.

These five worthy gentlemen were married. Juggins, on the other hand, was a bachelor. The women of the district—a hard-tongued class—were wont to say in jest that Barzillai would

explode his wife out of doors two or three times a day, if he had such a tender helpmate ; and perhaps he would.

It was the twentieth of May—the month of flowers—and the election was to take place on the twenty-seventh.

There seemed so little doubt about the issue between John Hammer, the labour candidate, and the Honourable Ponsonby Vane Fitzroy, the Conservative nominee, that the result was held to be a foregone conclusion by the press. John Hammer, who could write a good text-hand, spent his time in answering letters of congratulation and inquiries about his political intentions from men whom he had never seen or heard of. He had resigned his situation as foreman in the Ten Acre Coal Company a month back, and existed penuriously upon his small savings. It seemed only reasonable that the committee of the labour candidate should make his allowance date from the day of his resignation ; but to this they demurred. Their funds, they said, would not admit of such lavishness. Besides, it would be a breach of common prudence.

Mrs. Hammer grumbled mightily about this, sighed in secret for the solid pound a week which John had been wont to give her for kitchen purposes, and put lard instead of butter upon the bread.

‘Thee bist a fule, woman!’ was all the comfort her husband gave her when she ventured to air her grievances.

On the twenty-first of May Mr. Juggins received a letter which made him wink a hundred and fifty times without a pause. It began, ‘My dear Mr. Juggins,’ and ended, ‘Believe me, your sincere friend, Wilhelmina Dashville.’

It was nothing less than an invitation to lunch in a quiet and friendly way at Dashville Castle with the Countess of Dashville.

The phraseology of the letter delighted Mr. Juggins beyond anything. This sentence, for example :—

‘I have heard from my husband and others quite sufficient about your disinterested love for the working-classes to feel no scruple in addressing you as a fellow-labourer in that grand cause ;’ &c. &c.

Moreover, it was so affable ; and her ladyship actually condescended to be poetic.

‘Come just as you are, my dear Mr. Juggins, for

If there’s a cause,
Beyond other, that draws
My utmost scorn and loathing,
’Tis the fuss fools make,
And the pains they take,
About their outward clothing.’

This was the more remarkable, seeing that the Countess was famous for her gowns.

Mr. Juggins put his chin in his hand, and reflected. The upshot was that he resolved to lunch with the Countess of Dashville. Why should he not? After all, was not a Countess a human being like himself? That she was the wife of a Conservative lord was an accident for which she could not be held accountable. And so Barzillai made a careful toilet in his Sabbath black, and departed in a cab. But he had the tact to dismiss the cabman a mile from the Castle. Thither he walked alone, on the ends of his toes, with his trousers turned up, looking askance at everyone he met in the lanes. Once inside the park gates, he dusted himself nicely from head to toe with his dark-blue silk pocket-handkerchief, took a sprig of red geranium from a paper bag, set it in his buttonhole, and approached the grandiose portico of the Castle.

That night there was a meeting of the labour candidate’s committee, but Mr. Juggins, for some unexplained reason, did not attend it.

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Mrs. Scarth, whose husband was the secretary of the Corporate Society of Wallsend Nailmakers, a powerful body, representing one hundred and twenty-four votes, was frightened almost out of her seven senses the next day by the sudden apparition of a stranger, leading by the hand her much-loved firstborn son, Reuben, howling furiously.

‘Are you Mrs. Scarth? This is the house, my dear little lad, is it not? Don’t cry so,’ said the stranger, all in a breath.

‘Please to step inside, sir,’ said the nailmakers’ secretary’s wife, when she had scanned her offspring with a mother’s regarding eye, and found him sound of limb.

‘It was in this way, Mrs. Scarth. I was walking into Wallsend to see my friend Mr. Parchment, the attorney, when I heard a horrible wail from among the pit-banks. Without an instant’s hesitation I left the road and clambered over the rubbish heaps in the direction of the cry. Now be composed, there’s a dear

woman, though I feel it will give you a shock. What did I see but a tall, dark man, with a forbidding countenance, stooping into an abandoned pit-shaft, and holding something over the abyss. The something proved to be this little boy, and it was his pair of little feet that I saw. Never mind how I rescued him. The man must have been deranged; at any rate, he has made himself scarce.'

Mrs. Scarth snatched her darling to her heart, and sobbed audibly. 'He was going to his school, the precious! like the other lads. God bless you, sir!'

The stranger stayed with the poor woman longer than seemed necessary. At parting she took his proffered hand in the most cordial manner.

'I shall never forget you, sir—never,' she said; 'and I will certainly do the best I can with him.'

'A thousand thanks. I am more than proud that I have been able to do you a service.'

That afternoon Mrs. Scarth and her husband had a strenuous palaver. At first Mr. Scarth was obdurate as marble. But his wife used certain discreet conjugal menaces, which at length had the desired effect, and in the end the nailmakers' representative gave way.

At the committee-meeting of the labour candidate that night neither Mr. Scarth nor Mr. Juggins appeared.

Mr. Robinson acted as the mouthpiece and mind of a number of colliers who were glad to be relieved of the trouble of thinking for themselves. He was an exemplary young man, who wore spectacles, read Mr. Smiles' 'Self Help' in bed, and thoroughly believed that it was the duty of every man to advance himself in the eyes of the world by any means whatever—of course, assuming that the means were lawful. He attended a variety of improving classes in the Free Library, and had written excellent examination papers on mathematics, English literature, French, Latin, chemistry, and modern philosophy. He also played the violin, and could recite his own poetry with beautiful effect. By some he was reckoned the most accomplished person in Wallsend; and it was said the rector himself feared him upon the platform. For all that, poor young Mr. Robinson did not flourish.

'Now come, Mr. Robinson,' said a certain stranger who had called upon the colliers' mouthpiece and mind upon the twenty-third of May. 'To-day is Saturday. I'll give you till Monday. A man with your studious and refined tastes ought not to hesitate, it seems to me. You will be in the best, and, to you, the most

congenial of society—that of the great minds of the illustrious dead, you know; and for my part, I needn't look at you twice to prognosticate that, with such literary facilities as the situation would give you, you could make a name for yourself as an author.'

'O—h,' gasped Mr. Robinson; 'do you really think so? It is one of the fondest ambitions—of—my existence; and yet——'

'And yet what?'

'I—I am not sure that it would be a right thing to do.'

'Think it over; that is all I ask. Here's my address. Send me a line, "Yes" or "No," and the matter may be considered finished. Good-bye, I must be off.'

Mr. Robinson grasped the stranger's hand, and was about to let it drop and return to his studies, when something impelled him to give it another little squeeze, and whisper with a sigh: 'Well, sir, so be it. I will do what you desire.'

That settled a hundred and fifty-six more votes.

The next day was Sunday, which brought Mr. Banks, the ironworkers' representative, divers duties of extreme importance. Mr. Banks was leading deacon of the Mount Carmel Chapel of the New Primitive Methodist Connexion. The ironworkers did not think much of John Hammer, especially as their works were the property of a relation of the Conservative candidate, who might be tempted to propose something disagreeable in the matter of wages. However, Mr. Banks was a potent force in the district, and he was to have his own way.

At the morning service the deacon's sharp eyes discerned a pleasant-faced stranger, and after service the stranger accosted Mr. Banks.

'Come into the pastor's room,' said the deacon—'he'll have changed his clothes and gone by now.'

'Thank you, Mr. Banks,' said the stranger, 'but I think our conversation will be better in the open air, and as the day is mild for the time of the year, if you have no objection——'

'Not a mite,' said Mr. Banks.

When they had walked up and down the pavement in front of the ugly little chapel for about half an hour, the angry looks and gesticulations with which the deacon had at first seemed to receive the stranger's communication wholly disappeared. It was dinner-time ere they parted, and at parting Mr. Banks smiled a beaming smile upon the stranger.

‘It’ll be an acceptable wurruk, sir, and do a power of good. One can’t hev a fold too large for the stray lambs that hev to be gathered into it.’

‘Good-bye,’ said the stranger. ‘You shall hear from me.’

‘I wish you good day, sir,’ said Mr. Banks; and as he walked to his home he sniffed the smell of roast meat which pervaded the thoroughfare, and held his head high, and looked everyone and everything full in the face, with an expression in which conscious uprightness and contentment were agreeably mingled.

The committee-meeting of the labour candidate on Monday evening was a melancholy farce. Only Mr. Perkins and Mr. Abbott attended it. Mr. Perkins represented the locksmiths, and Mr. Abbott the tinsmith-workers.

‘What I wornt to know is this,’ said Mr. Perkins to Mr. Abbott: ‘Who’s to pay for the vehicles to bring the men to the pole?’

‘I hev heerd that they’re all took by Fitzroy,’ remarked Mr. Abbott, with a mournful shake of the head.

‘And why ar’n’t the others here, eh? Robinson, I know, has bin called to his sick mother; but he ain’t all.’

‘Banks, I heerd, have had a kick-up at his chapel—something smart’s on, I’ve heerd.’

‘Well, Mr. Abbott, I don’t know as we’ve nowt to stay for, and I’ll be glad of my bellyful at supper. And so I wish you “good-night.”’

‘Good-night, Mr. Perkins, sir,’ said Mr. Abbott, who was a common mechanic, whereas Mr. Perkins employed fifteen hands in a factory of his own.

The next morning, which was Tuesday, the twenty-sixth of May, Mr. Perkins met Mr. Juggins in the street, and promptly stopped him.

‘Are we all of the same mind that we was a while ago?’ he asked; and then he tightened his mouth, and tried to look intelligent.

‘Hush!’ said Mr. Juggins, with a finger set vertically across his lips for one moment. ‘Come into the Temperance House, and have a cup of coffee.’

‘What’s the meaning of it all?’ continued Mr. Perkins, much excited.

‘Things be changed, Perkins,’ said Mr. Juggins, when they were seated in the far corner of the big room, and concealed from the outer world by the vapour that eddied from two elephantine mugs. ‘What do you think of Hammer taking to drink in this way?’

‘Drink!’ exclaimed Mr. Perkins, and his finger involuntarily grasped the bit of blue ribbon that patched his coat where he had frayed it against the desk.

‘It was only the other night I saw him in the “Jolly Bacchus” in a state—well, I won’t particularise. We all know what that means. The man ain’t strong enough in the head. If he thinks fit to elevate himself on account of two birds in the bush which he thinks are both his, what’ll it be when he becomes our master, so to speak, and free to play the gentleman at our expense?’

‘I’m main sorry,’ said Mr. Perkins, meditatively; ‘but, of course, there’s nowt more to be done. What shall you do?’

‘It doesn’t matter to anybody what. Fitzroy must come in, whether we back him or don’t. Better an aristocrat than a drunkard.’

‘Much better,’ sighed Mr. Perkins. ‘Then we needn’t trouble about hiring cars and all that?’

‘Of course not. Don’t you see, we ought to have done it weeks ago, really. It’s providential, and nothing else, that we held our hands.’

‘Well!’ said Mr. Perkins.

‘Well!’ said Mr. Juggins; and thus they parted.

To his extreme irritation, Mr. Abbott, the tinplate representative, found himself all alone in the committee-room of the labour candidate on the Tuesday evening. Having clumped up and down the chamber for half an hour, with his hands in his pockets, he departed, and called upon Mr. Juggins.

‘Mr. Juggins, sir,’ said he, as soon as he saw Barzillai, ‘I’ll be dommed if I hev anything more to do wi’ Jack Hammer. He’ve cost me, I reckon, fourteen hours this past fortnight, at a shilling and a ha’penny the hour, and I be tired of it. It’s different for you, mebbe, being, as you be, treasurer as well as Union deputy.’

‘Sit down, Ezra,’ said Mr. Juggins, kindly; and then, having brought forth a black bottle of Old Tom, he soothed Mr. Abbott’s wounded feelings, and informed him that it was all over with Hammer’s chances. ‘Everyone knows it except Hammer himself,’

‘Dash me!’ observed Ezra Abbott, when he had digested some of the Old Tom and this information, ‘it be the fust toime I’ve took up wi’ this bisness, and it’ll be the last. I baint a-goin’ messin’ after labour candidates any more.’

By the desertion of Mr. Perkins, John Hammer lost a hundred and eleven votes, and by that of Mr. Abbott ninety more. The six wirepullers could in all account for seven hundred and ninety-six votes, out of a constituency of thirteen hundred and fifty-one electors. The shopkeepers, professional men, and employers of labour, who comprised the bulk of the five hundred and fifty-five other votes, were, almost to a man, for the Conservative candidate.

One very odd feature about this election was the ignorance in which John Hammer was kept about the change of front of the men whom he had every reason to believe were his supporters. Up to the last he had no doubt about his success, and on the Tuesday night he spent an entire hour trying to explain to a lady-correspondent his views on the women’s suffrage question.

‘Females,’ he remarked in this letter, ‘differ but little from males, and have more trials to bear than men, and it would be a shame if we men were to deny them the compensations that are theirs by right; respect for female opinion is one of the strongest points in my programme.’

‘John, dear, won’t you come to your bed?’ entreated his anxious spouse while he was writing this.

‘Hould thy tongue, woman! Thou’rt cat and kittens all in one for talking,’ was his reply. It was surprising how different his written style had already become from his style colloquial.

But the good creature, his wife, was not deterred by this rebuff from trying her best to prepare her husband for the physical fatigues of the morrow.

‘There’ll be a bit bread, wi’ a sausage in it, in thy right tail-pocket, an’ a flat bottle in the other. Tak’ care how you sit; and do, John, if they want to cheer (chair) thee, see as it’s a strong un, for thee beest no light weight.’

‘Wilt stop thy gabbing or not?’ shouted the labour candidate, tempestuously; and then there was silence.

The Wallsend election will long be remembered for its sensational surprise. It was known that the Primrose Dames and

their Knights and Esquires had been extraordinarily active at the last moment in trying to undermine the Radical interest in the borough, but few indeed supposed that they had succeeded. Most people who saw the Countess of Dashville driving about the grimy streets thought it was lost labour on her part. John Hammer, who went to and fro in a mild one-horse shay, and attended by a single faithful henchman, would, it was generally believed, be returned by a large majority. John had been advised a fortnight previously to spend the day in this pleasant though somewhat monotonous public display of himself, and he faithfully acted upon the suggestion, at a cost of seventeen shillings and sixpence out of his own pocket. At times he marvelled that he saw little or nothing of the various committee-men who had been so enthusiastic about his candidature. But he consoled himself with the idea that they were fighting manfully on his behalf.

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The result of the poll was announced at eleven o'clock the same evening, and the Hon. Ponsonby Vane Fitzroy was declared duly elected by a majority of eleven hundred and nine.

Poor John Hammer received only forty-five votes.

Messrs. Juggins, Scarth, Robinson, Banks, Perkins, and Abbott had prevailed only too well with the free and independent electors, of whom they were the advisers. Hardly a dozen of them had acted upon their own instincts.

John Hammer returned to his cottage at four-and-six a week worn out, depressed, and so stupefied by the disappointment and the coldness of those he had believed his friends that he could not think he was in his right senses.

Mrs. Hammer, however, good soul, received him much as the father in the parable welcomed his prodigal son.

'Never thee mind, my man,' she said, cheerfully, as she bustled about a prime pork chop she was cooking for him; 'it be all for the best, I be sure. Thee an' me would ha' bin miserable in Lunnon; we ain't fit for 't. Thee'll soon get the old wurruck agin, and then we'll be happy, an' be able to buy ninepenny butter agin. John, my man, I canna help sayin' it, but I be right glad thee'st lost, an' I canna help it.'

'Because thee bist a fule!' blurted John, with a bent head, as he turned towards the pork chop, which had been thrust smoking under his nose.

A LAMENT.

I'm certain, in that hour of bliss

That saw us in this very street,

Cowslips came crowding round to kiss

Her feet.

And surely as that cab forlorn

Went rumbling off behind its hack

I marked a nascent wing adorn

His back.

And cabby, noting in a trice

So unmistakable a pair,

Forbore from asking more than twice

His fare.

And here on simple cakes and tea

We supped like demigods of old,

From plates and cups that seemed to me

Of gold.

Ah! Araminta, how you floored

The buttered roll, the Sally Lunn!

While, watching you, I half ignored

My bun.

Brief rapture: Rhadamanthine watch,

That points the fatal hour again,

And shows we've scarcely time to catch

The train.

Still branded on my aching sight

I see that station's mighty span,

That seemed to scorn a thing so slight

As man;

Hard and unpitying as the glare
 Of noonday sun, that daily flouts
 A thousand breaking hearts or there-
 Abouts.

Now of those halcyon joys bereft,
 A solitary man I range,
 With memories and some coppers left
 In change.

I've seen that cabman once, and he,
 Unlettered ruffian! only winked,
 And Pegasuses seem to be
 Extinct.

While as for cowslips, though I've stayed
 And searched that asphalt smooth as glass,
 I can't discern a single blade
 Of grass.

Under a universal ban
 All Nature hangs a sulky head,
 As if she'd lately heard that Pan
 Was dead.

The sparrows in their native square
 That stepped so lustily of late
 Have lost their old commanding air
 And gait,

Even the Muses, whom I knew
 Familiarly in happier times,
 Now spare me grudgingly my few
 Poor rhymes.

O Araminta, quench this pain!
 'Twere better you had kept away,
 But since you *have* come, come again,
 And stay.

OUR THRUSHES.

THREE species only of these are known to the general public ; we have six in this country. Three of them are regular migrants, visiting and leaving us again as the seasons come round. All coast dwellers who are anything of field naturalists are well aware of this fact. I have seen the sand-hills and the drier portion of the flats in the North Kent marshlands covered with birds about to migrate, waiting for a right wind to take them over the Channel.

‘ Ah, poor things ! ’ an old boatman would say, ‘ they be waitin’ for a right breeze, an’ then they’ll get out o’ harbor quick.’ After the breeze had come, hardly a bird would be visible until the next army of travellers arrived. My own intimate acquaintance with them has been made in the fertile and well-wooded counties of Southern England, where the whole family can be heard and studied to the best advantage.

On the hills, and about the moors in the season, you will find that shyest and most wary member of the whole family, the ring-ouzel, called by the rustics the ‘ white-throated blackbird.’

Great clouds sweep over the hills, casting, as they travel, moving shadows on the heather and bright green turf of the moor. It is green, for summer’s fierce heat has passed ; rain has fallen at times just enough to let us know that we may expect no more settled summer weather. We need not regret this, for autumn is clothing the hillside and the moor with the richest broken tones of crimson, olive, orange, grey, and buff. Rough gullies intersect the moor in many parts, flanked on either side by high banks ; although these can hardly be called roads, yet they are used for that purpose. They are, in reality, huge masses of stone, covered with a thin crust of peat soil. Changes in the weather have affected some parts, causing them to crumble, and laying bare a cliff of greystone covered here and there with the creeping vegetation of the moors.

Here the sparrow-hawk comes to perch, after one of his flights ; but he takes wing again with a scream of mingled rage and fear, as his eye catches sight of the roaming naturalist, who lies crouched in the stunted juniper and luxuriant heather. The sparrow-hawks come here at stated times through the day, and here, too,

they roost at night. The stunted form of juniper I allude to, you will find in certain parts of the moor; on the open hilly portions you will find splendid specimens of the juniper tree, whole thickets of them, such as would be considered priceless ornaments in a gentleman's grounds. They would not live there if they were transplanted; so much the better, they beautify the moorside, which is free to all. It is in such spots as these we have seen the ring-ouzel; he feeds, to a certain extent, on the juniper berries; but the richer crop of berries of the mountain ash, flashing out in crimson patches on the hills, have a far greater attraction for him. To this bill of fare is added vast quantities of other berries that are found all over the moor, together with insect life in profusion. The white-throated blackbird of the moors has a good table spread for him, that is why he stays here for a time before he returns to the lands which he left, to come up to higher ground. To the rustic dwellers of the moors and hillside he is a bird of great interest; I have never known one of them shoot or trap him; I believe it is 'the white strap round his neck,' as they term it, that saves him. It may not be that alone; his visits are irregular and mysterious; at least so they seem to the simple country folks who, although they are usually familiar with the habits of the creatures that live near them, do not understand the varying influences that at times affect the migrating movements of birds. In spite of the light that has been thrown on the subject by the keepers of lighthouses round the coast of Great Britain—who have, at the request of some of our zealous ornithologists, saved one wing of each species that, being attracted by the light, had struck against the glass or been captured fluttering round the lighthouse—this varying in the migrating habits of the birds remains a vexed question with the most earnest students in natural history. In spite, too, of the statement in Holy Scripture, that 'the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed time.' The most accepted theories are apt to break down, and so-called learned men have been found to be in error occasionally on simpler matters even than this. At the present time, 1890, it has been universally acknowledged by our greatest field-naturalists—men who have visited all parts of Great Britain, even the remote Shetlands as well as the Continent, in their earnest researches—that the breeding-place of a few of the small waders that crowd some of our shores in the fall of the year remains to this day unknown, although the young ones are seen with the

nest-down still among their feathers. Why the ring-ouzel comes and goes sometimes singly, sometimes in flock, is also a mystery.

The name of 'storm-cock' has been fitly given to the missel-thrush, which is the largest member of the thrush family. He is more a bird of the woods, except in breeding or nesting time, than any of the others. To a certain extent he is a more showy bird than his very near relative the song-thrush; his breast is more brightly coloured, and the spots on it are larger and darker. He is a bold bird, and he looks it; we hear him loudly singing in the storm, and when all other birds, the robin excepted, are silent.

The rain falls in torrents, the wind blows as early March winds do blow at times, bunching up the clouds in mountain-like heaps which sail slowly along, being far too heavy to move quickly. Hail rattles down also, but there is a short lull after a time, and a small piece of blue shows in the sky, about the size of a child's pinafore. It is enough to start our storm-cock. The wind is still blowing a gale; nature's own organ pealing through the woods. That suits our bird well; he dashes out from his cover and up on to the highest twig of that old ash; grasping it with his strong feet, he swings to and fro in the rushing wind, and sings as he sways. It stirs one's blood to hear his wild clarion notes, now high, now low, and again almost shrieking in wild glee as he tosses and swings. The road may be very wet and slushy, and the wind may send a drenching shower of drops over you as it stirs the twigs and branches of the trees under which you walk, but who cares for that when watching that brave bird and listening to his joyous, defiant song! When the missel-thrush is nesting, no bird is more pugnacious in defence of his home and what it contains. Whether it be hawk, owl, crow, cat, stoat, weasel, or rat that comes near with sinister intent, he and his mate will go for it with a will.

If it be a feathered enemy, they will make the feathers fly in a surprising fashion; if it be a four-footed one, they will dash down and buffet the creature. I have seen cats bound off at top speed, glad enough to get to cover out of reach of a pair of injured missel-thrushes. But the courage of the bird frequently causes it to lose its own life. For if a stoat comes on to the velvety lawn of a country house, and the bird, usually shy and wary, happens to have built in one of the trees there, a duel has been fought, which has ended in the death of the brave bird.

Some of our readers may not be familiar with stoats and weasels

in a state of nature. It is very certain that specimens in zoological collections, even the most artistically mounted specimens that our museums contain, will not give you the least idea of their beauty and extraordinary agility when free and at large. Stoats or weasels are not desirable visitors on a lawn; mice of various kinds, however, are more destructive to flower-beds than all the other pests put together; and the weasel family are the sworn foes and exterminators, if permitted, of mice and rats, so their visits may be fairly tolerated.

Some gentlemen that I know will not allow guns to be used near their dwellings; they are quite willing to allow nature's own police to keep order, and they are wise in this. To see a weasel with a short-tailed mouse or vole, almost as large as himself, carried retriever fashion in his mouth, is a very interesting sight. I have seen it, and bid him good luck in his hunting many a time. There are at the present time far too few of his kind about. He will dart from a flower-bed on to the lawn, a perfect model of strength and activity; his bright eyes glisten as he looks round about in all directions before he begins to play. The most skilful acrobat is a clumsy pretender compared with that little fellow; he rolls, vaults, and tumbles in all directions, enjoying himself to his heart's content. From one of the trees on the lawn two misselthrushes, with angry, grating screams, rush down at him. He is ready for the assault, with his head up and his forefeet well together; as he stands perfectly quiet, he might be photographed. In one instant the scene is changed, and you see a confused lot of wing and tail feathers, dashing now up, now down, and then sideways; some brown object mixed up with them, while the screams and shrieks from the birds are nearly deafening. The row will stop as quickly as it began; for one bird with a chattering note of fear flies off, leaving the cock-bird in the stoat's mouth. The creature stands as still as possible for a few moments, and then he takes his prey into one of the flower-beds to eat him.

Lately, in one of my rambles, I came on a brood of misselthrushes that had just left the nest. They were foraging for food in one of the upland meadows close to the woods, and I stood in the midst of them as they fed. It was a pretty sight; as one or the other got near me, they would look at me with their bright eyes, open their mouths, appear to chide me for my presence, and then go on searching for food. Both parents were close at hand, now and again sending out a ringing note of warning, as one or

other of their brood looked up. He seems to tell us when he sings that winter is past ; and so he is always welcome to us.

That universal favourite, the blackbird, with his jet-black plumage and orange-coloured bill, is well known to every little toddler that lives in the country. 'Blackey,' as they call him, is the favourite, as a rule, in preference to the thrush with the country people. Independently of his own rich song, he has a natural talent for mimicry, which dogs and cats find out to their cost. Rustic children think much of him ; they will tell you that he knows them all ; and indeed to credit the intelligence displayed by him you would need to live in some country house for a time, where one has been reared in a cage. All the sounds that he hears, especially if they are of a squeaking or whistling nature, he repeats to perfection ; if he sees the dog in the garden or about the house, he will whistle for him exactly as his master does, and in so vigorous a tone that he would lead the dog to suppose that his services are required in the most urgent manner. Away rushes the dog round the house, out into the meadow ; and back he comes with his tail and ears depressed, for he feels that he has been made a fool of. Then the youngsters will shout and clap their hands in glee, to think how clever their favourite 'Blackey' is. The blackbird cocks his head on one side, taps the bottom of his cage with his bill, spreads his tail out and dashes over his perches to and fro, at a most furious rate, quite pleased at his own performances. I have known large figures offered for a talented blackbird, belonging to a country lad, such as a brand new suit of clothes and five shillings as well, all to no purpose. His clothes were the worse for wear, his shoes were as bad as they could be ; but, for all that, 'he warn't agoin' to let Blackie go.'

The rain has ceased falling, and the wind that brought it has died away. All is quiet ; things are resting. A light vapour rises from the meadows by the river and floats away ; it is the steam from the hot, thirsty earth ; the sun is sinking, and the light in slanting rays shines on the wet young foliage, and illumines the rustic spire close at hand. The cattle are quiet ; they are enjoying the precious coolness to their hearts' content. Not a sound is heard save the 'chirrup' of the partridge as he calls to his mate in the furrow. Without one single preparatory note, some feathered creature has burst out into glorious song. It is the blackbird, and now from over the river another joins him. As we lean over a field-gate to listen to him, the scent of the fresh-

turned furrows comes to us, bringing a feeling of life and health with it. The bird's song rises and falls, to ring out again, if possible, sweeter than before; it brings back to us many memories of happy boyhood and childhood's careless days.

Pepys in his Diary has mentioned the blackbird. On May 22, 1663, he has this passage entered: 'Rendall, the house carpenter at Deptford, hath sent me a fine blackbird which I went to see. He tells me he was offered twenty shillings for him as he came along, he do so whistle.' On the 23rd there is another entry: 'Waked this morning between four and five by my blackbird, which whistled as well as ever I heard any; only it is the beginning of many tunes, very well; but then leaves them and goes no further.' He is best in his native thickets, that is his proper place and home, but to those who keep him and treat him well, he is as clever and amusing as any Indian mynah. I prefer him, for more reasons than one; it is impossible to teach a blackbird naughty things, such as a mynah acquires very easily.

The song-thrush, or mavis, is so well known that we need not enter into details to any great extent about him or his ways. As a destroyer of snails we place him in the first rank. He is a gentle bird, and his song is as well known as that of the lark. He, too, like the blackbird, sings after a shower; but his note is a very different one; besides this, he sings far more frequently than the blackbird, and there are more of the former birds about than of the latter. Taking the year all round, we have, at a rough computation, considered that you would see four thrushes to one blackbird. I do not state this as a fact: blackbirds are more hideling birds than thrushes, and far more wary in all their actions; it is only my impression in a general way, after years of observation. The blackbird likes fruit; the song-thrush will have it when there is any; strawberries, raspberries, currants, gooseberries, he will have at any risk if he dies in the attempt, which is frequently the case; cherries, too, he loves dearly.

It is no light task to look after fruit, even when it is all netted and pegged down; for the thrush will peck and scratch a hollow out and step underneath the bough; where one has gone others will follow, and work' sad mischief. If a blackbird is under the net, he yells out his frantic alarm as usual: the thrush only clucks. In some gardens from twenty to thirty thrushes are often captured during a day. As at this time they are first-rate eating, they atone for their sins by making a dinner now and then. It is only

natural that they should have fruit if they can get it, but one thing I must say, dear lover of birds though I am, if the fruit were not protected and well watched, the blackbirds, thrushes, and missel-thrushes would clear the lot. It is a wonder where they all come from, directly it is ripe, and some even before it is so; they turn up in numbers from all quarters. No more hunting about the meadows and hedgerows for such common things as worms and snails when there are these far more tempting dainties about. It would never do to fire into a tree or bush loaded with fruit; so the gun is not used, only netting. No doubt, poor things, they think if they get in they can get out, but that is another matter entirely; in nine cases out of ten they never do. Other birds will come to the fruit, but the three we have particularly mentioned are the chief culprits, and they suffer for it. There is not the least fear of their getting scarce; we receive hosts from the Continent each season; they fly to and fro across the Channel.

Thrushes are essentially the choristers of the woodlands, but they will desert their quiet retreat for a tempting gooseberry bush in a cottage garden.

The fieldfare, or felt, is the dandy of the tribe; for a member of the thrush family, he has a coat of many colours. He is a migrant, shy and wary to a degree, and the favourite game bird with all young sportsmen. At any rate he gives them opportunities of acquiring the cardinal virtue of patience. They must indeed wait for him unless the weather is very severe; and that alters matters considerably. I and my companions have tramped many a mile after him in our young days, and brought the gun home safely, without having come to grief, but also without fieldfares.

It is a well-known fact now, or it ought to be so, that there is a larger and smaller variety of the same species, in some of the bird tribes. I will state one instance, that of the common wheat-ear; this is well known to the dwellers in the downs that these birds frequent. In our young days we used to shoot, when we could, two varieties of fieldfares, the fieldfare common, and what we in our juvenile fashion called the pigeon fieldfare, or felt; the larger varieties are the rarest. I know opinions are divided on these points, and the matter has been set aside as doubtful, but the facts remain all the same; even now we hear of pigeon felts from some of our old rustic friends. One habit the fieldfare has, which is a very strange one for a thrush—he will roost on the

ground ; I know this, because I saw a lot once caught in a lark net.

For the gentle redwing, who in his native wilds is called the Norwegian nightingale, we have a tender regard. He is, we think, more dependent on a supply of insect food in some shape or other, than any other member of his family ; the consequence is that in the inclement seasons he suffers severely. I have seen him hunting for a bare subsistence round the edges of brooks in the low-lying water meadows, and pitied him many a time. He suffers silently, there is no rush and flutter with him, or any struggling to secure the scanty food ; he only flutters from one spot to another, gets what he can and makes the best of it. Sometimes he will stay long enough to sing ; this takes place very rarely, but he has done so, to my knowledge, in some water meadows. The bird was perching on the willow boughs when he sang. It was a wild sweet note, different in all respects to that of the others of his family ; it might not have been the full song of the bird ; he did not stay there, so no definite conclusion could be arrived at. In one or two instances he has bred in England ; this has been proved in the most practical manner, but these instances have been extremely rare. Some winters the redwings are far more numerous than others ; in mild winters we have seen, comparatively speaking, few. No doubt the food supply influences them to a great degree, for I think our favourite, the gentle redwing, is the most tender of the thrush family.

With White's thrush, the goldbreasted thrush, and the nightingale-thrush, we have nothing to do ; for they can barely be called visitors in our land. I have only given a short account of our British thrushes proper.

EIGHT DAYS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE TOUCHSTONE OF PERIL.'

I will a round unvarnished tale deliver.—*Othello*.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE LETTER REFUSED. IMPRISONED AGAIN.

THE young man, on whose movements so much depends, knows the whole country-side up to Abdoolapore very well, and so is able to make his way along the least frequented village pathways. He passes over the eight miles unmolested. Arrived, he leaves the 'native' city on one side and passes into the English station; he moves along the deserted roads and by the burnt-down bungalows of the cantonment. He inquires at a little bazaar for the residence of the Brigadier, to whom he has been charged to deliver the missive, and is told that he and the other English residents have left the cantonment and taken up their quarters in a fortified enclosure known as the 'Dum-duma.' This very road leads up to it. The young man is very well acquainted with the native, but not with the European portion of Abdoolapore; and so he gets quite close up to the fortified position, which is all that the Europeans at present occupy or hold, without knowing it. He is passing by a small house by the side of the road, in which there is an outlying picket of English soldiers, when he is challenged by the sentry, and not knowing the meaning or import of the words, he continues to press on; is challenged again, and then again, as he continues to hurry on, full of the importance of his mission, the saving of so many human lives—is he not too a Ramanandi? And then he gives a jump as he hears the report of a musket, and a bullet whistles by him within an inch of his nose. And then comes the sound of rapid footsteps, and he finds himself in the grasp of a couple of English soldiers, who hurry him rapidly off the road and into the temporary guard-house.

'Shure, he is a sapoy—ye can tell it by the cut of the whisker!' says an Irish soldier.

That special cut of whisker was to cost many an innocent native his life during the coming two years.

‘He is a bloody mutineer,’ says an English soldier.

The Hindostanee language is a *lingua franca* that had its rise in the camps and bazaars of the great river-side mart and *entrepôt* and metropolis of Delhi, where the different-tongued natives of Hindostan and Western Asia met. Now has come a large admixture of English. The young messenger spoke his own village dialect, and the soldiers spoke the barrack-room Hindostanee, in which English, and not Sanscrit, or Hindee, or Persian, forms the leading element. Consequently they did not understand one another. But still the captors could comprehend the reiterated ‘Brigadier Sahib, Brigadier Sahib,’ of the captive.

‘Shure he wants to see the Brigadier. He may have something to say to him. Let us take him to him. It’s but a step.’

The Brigadier has his temporary quarters just within the adjoining gateway of the enclosure. The captive spy, as the soldiers deem him, is conveyed thither. When the Brigadier’s servants announce to him, with a good deal of excitement, that the soldiers at the neighbouring picket have seized a spy, it becomes an accepted fact that the man is a spy.

‘But why have they brought him here?’ says the Brigadier irritably.

It is now within a few minutes of two o’clock, at which hour the Brigadier has his tiffin. All his meals are of the utmost importance to him; he lives only for them and his rubbers of whist; but he is specially fond of his tiffin, for that is the meal at which he has his first bottle of beer, and, his office work being over before then, after it comes the much loved afternoon sleep.

‘Why do they not take him on to Major Cox?’

‘The prisoner, the spy, says he is most anxious to speak to the Presence.’

‘He is not armed, he has no arms about him?’ says the Brigadier anxiously.

‘Oh, no.’

‘Then tell them to bring him in—to bring him in.’

The sergeant and the soldiers make their military salute. The sentry makes his report.

The man was trying to steal by the outpost, was trying to get stealthily—most stealthily—by it, and refused to halt when challenged, so he (Murphy) fired at him, and the other men—Private

Higgins, and Private Bell, and Private Doherty—ran out and caught him. Then he kept saying, ‘Brigadier,’ ‘Brigadier,’ and so they brought him here.

‘Why do you want to see me?’ demands the Brigadier, sharply.

The young neophyte is of a nervous temperament. He does not like his present position. He has always held these white men as a very terrible people. And he has heard that the wrath of the Englishmen in Abdoolapore burns just now strongly against his fellow-countrymen, several of whom have been disposed of very summarily by hanging or shooting, within the last few days. And so it is in a trembling, stuttering voice, obviously indicative of his guilt, that he utters the sentence:

‘I am a disciple of the Guru Toolsi Dass, the Ramanandi——’

‘Gurus, and Tulsis, and Ramnands,’ interrupts the Brigadier angrily. ‘What is he talking about? Probably pretending to be mad. A favourite dodge with the natives. I know them well. He was trying to steal by the picket, you say?’

‘Trying to steal quietly by it.’ Proud of his exploit, the young soldier has come to believe this sincerely. Alas for poor facts! And what a thing is human testimony! ‘He thought, sir, that I would be in the shadow of the house, on the other side.’

‘And if he had got into the enclosure we could not have known that he was not one of our own coolies. He could have done what he liked there, the scoundrel. Take him away—take him to Major Cox!’ cries the fat old Brigadier in his thick husky voice.

‘He is saying something about a *chit*’ (note, letter), ‘sir,’ says his good-natured young aide-de-camp, who is also in the room.

‘Let my hands be unloosed, in the name of God!’ cries the young messenger earnestly.

‘Very good, unloose his hands,’ says the Brigadier. ‘But keep an eye on him. He may mean mischief. He looks a scoundrel, a most thorough scoundrel.’ The lad had a face like that of Melanchthon.

His hands free, the captive gropes about amid his clothing, and produces a little bit of paper—he is in a violent perspiration, due not only to the heat of the day but to the perilous position in which he finds himself: the paper is consequently damp and discoloured—and he hands the minute missive to one of the soldiers.

‘Why, it is a dirty piece of common bazaar paper,’ says the Brigadier. ‘Phew! do not bring it near me. You can read, corporal?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Is my name on it?’

‘No, sir.’

‘Look inside—is my name there?’

‘No, sir.’

‘I thought it could not be for me—a piece of common bazaar paper.’

‘It is not English, sir.’

‘I thought the fellow was lying. Throw it into the waste-paper basket.’

The little bit of paper, laden with so many human lives, goes down into the midst of the pieces of torn paper meant to be cast away. And the khansman announces tiffin, and the old Brigadier says, peremptorily :

‘Take him away. Take him away to Major Cox. He shall be tried by court-martial to-morrow.’

Wretches hang that jurymen may dine.

So far as the young messenger knew, the basket might be the proper receptacle for letters ; and so far as he was aware the document had been read and his errand fulfilled. In any case, he makes no further remark as the soldiers hurry him away.

And those whose thoughts have followed him with so much of hope and fear have to beguile the hours succeeding his departure as best they may. They pair off. Major Fane and Mrs. Fane retire a little way into the wood and seat themselves at the foot of a tree in order to discuss the events of the last few days quietly together, as they have not been able to do before. And then their thoughts fly away from the present back into the past, that past which seems to come up so vividly before them in this time of trouble.

‘I do not believe we have been in a wood together since that last day we drove to Lyndhurst,’ says Mrs. Fane. That was shortly after they were married. And then they talk very tenderly together. A cold, calm, self-possessed ‘hee ! haw !’ drawling sort of man ; a proud, cold, haughty woman—that is the outside estimate of the two. But now they are gentle and tender and sentimental, as tender and sentimental as any pair of young lovers—as William Hay and their daughter seated together under another tree. For, as has been said before, it is in moments such as these that the strength of the relationship, which is apt to become weakened amid the commonplace of ordinary times, is

felt in its full force. Then a common atmosphere once more envelops the husband and wife, each of whom has brought into the life of the other the most important circumstance in it: then the strength of the tie which binds them to one another and separates them from the rest of the world is felt in all its fullness.

And Beatrice asks William Hay with tender solicitude about his wound, and he makes light of it, though at that very moment it is paining him greatly, and he has a private fear that he may have to lose his arm. And when Beatrice, worn out by the dangers and hardships, the fatigue and physical sufferings of the last three terrible days, cannot help breaking down for a moment—the tension of exertion gone—he sustains and cheers and comforts her, going for comfort to the source from which he has ever been accustomed to draw it. Are not God's everlasting arms under her, and is He not strong to save? And then he repeats some of the verses from the Psalms, which his constant perusal, and the effect of them upon his soul and spirit, and likewise upon his sensitive ear, have made so familiar to him.

‘The Lord is my rock, and my fortress and my deliverer.’

‘God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear.’

‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.’

And Lilian Fane and young Hamilton have seated themselves together; they are mere acquaintances, but they are drawn together now by their common youth and their common misfortunes.

‘It all seems like a terrible dream,’ says Lilian. ‘How terrible to have met people only a day or two before—and to be looking forward to meeting them again—and then to see them lying dead before you!’

‘Whom did you see lying dead before you?’ asks Hamilton, rather a matter-of-fact young man.

‘Oh, poor Captain Tucker, and—and Mr. Hill, and—and—and Mr. Walton.’

At last she has arrived at the name which has been foremost. And now the hot tears come rolling down her blistered, burning cheek, and she wipes her eyes with her rent and grimy sleeve: their garments are very much torn as well as very dirty.

And Major Coote passes an hour in hearing the Guru discourse. The Ramanandi could have had a full talk about his creed only with a Kant or a Spinoza. His present auditor is no metaphysician;

but he is a willing listener, and though he has to ask for explanation of some philosophical terms, he has a good colloquial knowledge of the language. And so the Guru launches out into a long discourse on the history and peculiar tenets of his sect.

He describes how the sect was founded by Ramanand and extended by Kabir, who attacked the idolatrous worship of the Brahminical system, and whose teaching greatly influenced Nanuk, the founder of the Sikh religion; how he taught the doctrine of the identity of God and man, God in us and we in Him: that old doctrine of the indwelling God, only so recognisable, 'in Whom we live and move and have our being'—as St. Paul, quoting from an early pantheistic writer, put it—from Whom all things are, Who produced and maintains and pervades all that is: the old Sufy doctrine of the Mahomedans, a doctrine asserted by Grotius and Archbishop Tillotson, and set forth by Pope in his 'Essay on Man'—

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is and God the soul;

how in the world and throughout the universe 'all the existing corpuscles of life derive the effluence of existence from the source of real unity;' how this applies to animals, to all living creatures, as well as to man; how all life is therefore sacred, to destroy it therefore most culpable, to cherish it therefore most meritorious.

It may, perhaps, interest some reader to know that Archbishop Tillotson has set forth this portion of the old doctrine—that the life of animals is divine, that they too have immortal souls—likewise in his writings. These are his words: 'Immortality imports that the soul remains after the body, and is not corrupted or dissolved with it. And there is no inconvenience in attributing this sort of immortality to the brute creation . . . whether they return into the soul and spirit of the world, if there be any such thing, as some fancy, or whether they pass into the bodies of other animals which succeed in their rooms, is not necessary to be particularly determined. It is sufficient that they are a sort of spirits. And as this was always the common philosophy of the world, so we find it to be a supposition of Scripture, which attributes souls to brutes as well as to man, though of a much inferior nature.'

And now the terrible heat and glare, and the fiery furious dust-laden gale, are upon them. Now the mother and daughters seek shelter within the hut, which has been devoted to their

exclusive use ; and soon they come out again to seek relief from its stifling atmosphere. But the heat and the glare without are terrible. The vast open plain before them seems like a sea of fire. Little whirlwinds fly about on it ; huge dusky dust-cones move slowly across it. The natives hold that each of these contains a devil ; that the smaller whirlwinds are due to the twirling about of the mad little demons, or imps ; the dust columns to the graver movements of the devils of a superior age and size and station. Certainly here is the burning marl, here the fiery cope of heaven, of Milton's Pandemonium ; and here may be Satan and Belial and Beelzebub, and the lesser evil spirits. Then the women retire again into the comparative darkness of the hut, which also prevents the hot wind from blowing directly upon them. Then they rush out again, unable to endure its choking heat. Fierce the heat, terrible the glare, dreadful the fiery dust-laden wind. But the fierce heat is also their friend ; the terrible glare is also their ally ; the fiery dust-laden wind is also their protector. They prevent people from being abroad at this hour. Not a soul comes near the hut. It is, however, like purchasing salvation at the stake. The warmth is considerable. But the centuries go by, and so do the hours. The sun is now dropping down towards the west. The hot wind has begun to lull. The glare which had been torturing becomes only painful ; then only disagreeable. But the mental sufferings of the poor women increase as their bodily sufferings diminish. Their fears rise as the sun goes down. The time for movement and traffic has come again. Now may travellers be expected to appear upon the lonely track. But still it is delightful that the fierce turmoil of the sunshine has ended, that the blustering of the wind has ceased. How soothing is the sense of quiet ! The flagellation is over. If they do not as yet enjoy the direct physical pleasures of these May nights ; if the darkness, soft and black as the eyes of the daughters of the land, is not yet upon them, to lull and soothe the tortured senses ; if the coolness has not yet passed into the air to refresh and revive them—still they enjoy all the pleasure of relief. If this evening glow is vivid, it is very different from the fierce incandescence of the midday hours, and this warmish evening air is very different from the fiery hot wind. The wide-spread solitary plain conveys a sense of peace and quiet. So they sit by the side of the well and enjoy the cool of the evening. The cool of the evening !—you must have passed through the heat of an Eastern

day to know what that means. Then you will understand how it was thought to be pleasant to the Almighty himself. And they watch, feel, the decrease in the warmth and brightness, the increase in the coolness and darkness, with a mental as well as a physical joy, with a delight of the soul as well as of the body. For the former meant danger as well as suffering, the latter means safety as well as pleasure. The day is their enemy, their betrayer; the night their protector, their friend.

What is that cloud of dust upon the track? Is it a herd of cattle? Is it the delivering escort, the escort sent to bring them in? How the hearts of the women beat! It is a troop of horsemen, there is soon no doubt of that. And it comes from the right direction, from the eastward. It comes nearer and nearer. And now the horsemen have left the dusty track and are riding along the harder surface of the plain, and stand out clear above it. What is this? Surely that is the bizarre uniform, so familiar in their eyes, of the Nuwâb of Khizrabad's cavalry? The officers have often laughed at it: they do not feel inclined to laugh at it now.

'Not your men! The Nuwâb's men!' cries the Guru. 'Into the hut at once, before they see you.'

But they have seen them, as is too surely testified by their shouting and yelling; and now they come dashing onward. There is a great commotion among the fugitives. The men hurry the women towards the hut, and hurry them in, and, humiliating as they may feel it, hurry in very fast themselves. They all scuttle in, like rabbits into a burrow. But there is nothing else to be done. And the galloping horsemen have soon reached the edge of the platform. 'Feringhee! Feringhee!' they shout. One man leaps off his horse, and, throwing his reins to another and waving his naked sword above his head, is about to leap on the platform, preparatory to rushing into the hut, when the Guru, who has also mounted on to the platform, confronts him.

'What! would you dare set foot in my place of worship?' he cries. 'Do you not see the images?' and he points to the pottery figures of the curly-tailed monkey-god.

Great is the power of superstition; nay, great is the power of sentiment—the sentiment of religion, of honour, or of good taste. The young man stands still.

'And the hut is part of the platform, and is therefore also sacred and holy, a sanctuary. No man dare set foot within it.'

'But you would not protect these Feringhees, these foreigners,

these oppressors, these slayers of kine?' says the leader of the troop of horsemen.

'They are slayers of kine. But they too have within them the spark divine. I must protect them, as I would protect any other living thing—wolf, or cat, or dog. Besides, they are now in sanctuary, and even a murderer, one who has slain his brother man, is safe in sanctuary.'

'But we have the Nuwâb's orders to seize these people.'

'*These people—why these people?*'

'Oh, we know these are the people—three women and four men, who were confined in the guest-house at Chundpore, and got out of it no one knows how—by the power of magic some say. A young Brahmin came to the Nuwâb's palace and gave information about them——'

'The strayer from the path of righteousness,' exclaims the recluse.

'And we were sent to bring them in. The Brahmin had boasted that they were like birds in a net, and lo! when we reach the village we find the birds flown. We rest and eat our bread, and then we ride about the country in search of them, and at last a shepherd-boy, who had been in this jungle, tells us he had seen a number of English people, six or seven, in it, near your *takia*' (resting-place; literally, pillow), 'and so we determine to come here, and here we find them.'

'And they are now in sanctuary.'

'But, Sir Guru, you are not aware, perhaps, that the reign of the Company is over and that of the Nuwâb re-established. By sheltering these people you will not now obtain the favour of the former, but only incur the displeasure of the latter.'

'What care I, who have left the world, for Company or Nuwâb? What care I for kings or princes? Ramanand is my only prince, Kabir my only king. Their commands alone do I obey, and their command upon me is to help in the sustaining of life, and not in the destroying of it.'

'Then you refuse to obey the orders of the Nuwâb?'

'Yes—and you may go back and tell him so.'

'That will not do, good father!' says the horseman, with a laugh. 'And return to find the birds flown again! No, no! If it is your business to protect these people, it is mine to try and capture them. Each man to his work. If you have to obey the commands of Kabir, I have to obey those of the Nuwâb.'

It may be imagined with what feelings those within the hut listen to this disputation—how they feel the presence of these men, whose hands are almost upon them. The horsemen have placed themselves all round the platform, and the heads of some of the horses are so near the door of the hut that those sitting within can feel their hot breath.

‘As you refuse to let us enter the hut, all I have to do now is to send word to the palace and take care that these people do not get away. We must bivouac here for the night,’ says the leader of the troopers. He then gives the orders to dismount; despatches a couple of men to Khizrabad, and then places a couple of men on sentry at each side of the hut—they are within some six feet of the doorway leading into it. The other men then off-saddle and tether their horses and prepare for the night. They make a huge bonfire, not of course for the sake of the warmth, or for the purpose of cooking—a handful of the parched grain they have brought with them and some water from the well will supply their simple wants—but partly to illumine the spot during the present darkness, and chiefly to give them lights for their hooqas, those hooqas which play so important a part in their lives, the giving or withholding of which is the mark of brotherhood or of social ostracism. The refusal of the hooqah and of water to drink, to a man, is a sign that he is outcast. A man will face death rather than the terrors of that *hooqa pani bund*—‘pipe and water forbidden’—as the sepoys were showing by refusing to use the new cartridge, which would have brought that terrible penalty upon them.

And now the moon is rising, and now mounting upward, and now at the zenith, and now beginning to decline. And her usually delightful presence is to-night marked with as much physical suffering to the fugitives as the flaming presence of the tyrant sun had been. Cool as it is without, it is terribly hot within the hut, more especially during the earlier hours of the night; and that heat is of course added to greatly by their being so many of them within its narrow limits, and the suffering from it enhanced by the tainting of the air to which that overcrowding leads. What their sufferings were like will be understood by those who have read the simple narrative, by one of the survivors, of that terrible night in the Black Hole of Calcutta, a true tale more awful than any feigned story of horror that any poet ever imagined or penned. It is only the open doorway that keeps them

alive. It is only at its open space that they can breathe a life-sustaining and not a life-destroying air. They take it by turns to be near it. They have only the snatches of sleep that utter exhaustion forces upon them. They have to sit on the earthen floor in constrained and irksome postures. No wonder that young Hamilton can hardly resist the temptation to dash out of the place and shift in the open for himself. And they cannot but entertain the dread that the sacred character of the hut and platform may suddenly fail to protect them. Some man, bolder or more bloodthirsty than the rest, may suddenly disregard that sacredness. The floors of sanctuaries, of mosques, and temples, as well as of churches and cathedrals, have often been stained with blood. But the moon mounts up the eastern curve of the heavenly vault and descends the western one, and the horror-laden hours go by. And then from their doorway, which looks east, they can see the sky begin to brighten; and then they watch the blazing morning-star lose its splendour and fade away in the light of the daffodil sky—as I have seen it often from the door of my tent. And, as the light quickens, the range of their vision, across the wide-spread barren plain increases. And now what is that upon it? A mass of some kind. And does the range of their vision still continue to increase, or is it that the mass is coming nearer? It must be the latter. It is drawing nearer fast. A herd of cattle? It moves too fast for that. What can it be? Horsemen? Yes! More of the Nuwâb's cavalry? They might come that way, but they would be more likely to come the other.

It has now become necessary for us to follow the movements of Colonel Grey, and so of the Campbells who escaped from Khizrabad with him. We have arrived at the last day of our tale; we must now go back to its fourth day, the day of the outbreak at Khizrabad.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE LETTER READ.

IN common with the other English families of the cantonment, the Campbells passed the greater part of that fatal day out in the open air, on the Ridge, by the side of the flagstaff-tower. Mrs. Campbell and the little girl pass them, seated in their little carriage; but Dr. Campbell passes them directly in the midst of the flaming

rays of the sun, which have such power to kill, and which were specially inimical to a man of Dr. Campbell's build. There is no little demand on his professional services, and he cannot help moving from carriage to carriage, helping and cheering the poor wives whose husbands are away with their regiments, and, alas! too soon, consoling those whose husbands have been killed. And the sufferings caused by the heat are enhanced by the continually increasing anxiety, by the shock of adverse circumstances. First comes the defection of the 66th and the slaying of the officers, whose wives, too soon widows, are sitting here upon the Ridge. Then comes the explosion of the magazine, which was both seen and heard: for many who had their eyes fixed on the city spread out before them saw the great mass of flame leap up into the air; and the roar was heard of all, and the dense black column of smoke was seen of all. Then comes the return of Colonel Grey, with the news of the closing of the Jumoo Gate behind him: which means the defection of the sepoys and the loss of the guns within it. The superiority of numbers is now entirely on the side of the mutineers, and so Brigadier Moss decides that there is nothing to be done but to get the women and children out of the place as quickly as may be. He determines to retire on Nurnal, a station about thirty miles off, on the Jumoo Road, the road that runs through the cantonment. The order is given. The Grenadiers lead the way: then comes the long array of carriages, and the six companies of the 76th bring up the rear. They descend from the Ridge on to the Jumoo Road, this length of which constitutes, as we know, the Mall. The concourse of vehicles, of many different kinds, on the Mall, the local Rotten Row, of an evening, was one of the sights of the place; but never before had the Mall witnessed such a concourse as this. And now the cavalcade has reached the head of the road leading to the lines of the 76th and trailed slowly by it; but when the leading files of the 76th arrive at the opening they suddenly, and without any word of command given, wheel into it; and now with loud yells and cries the men of the 76th are rushing towards their lines in a disorderly mass, and all the efforts of their officers to stop them are fruitless. This desertion does not arrest, but rather accelerates the progress of the cavalcade, whose rear is so left defenceless. And now it has almost reached the cantonment boundary. The great imperial highway passes very near to the lines of the Grenadiers, and that nearness proves too much for them. They cannot go away and leave all their little belongings,

their pots and pans, and bedding, and clothing, and little store of savings behind them. They follow the example of the 76th. They break their ranks and make a rush for the lines, and soon every individual man is inside his own separate hut. In vain does Colonel Grey, who has, of course, gone with them, cause the 'assembly' to sound. The native officers beg of him, and the other English officers, to go away: they cannot get each sepoy out of his hut, and if they attempt to do so mischief may befall some of them, the regiment might be stained with some further and more unforgivable crime: there are of course some evil characters in it.

There is indeed nothing further to be done. Most of the officers hasten after the retreating cavalcade in which are the wives and children of many of them. And the movements of the cavalcade had been still further accelerated by the defection of the Grenadiers. It has now no protectors at all, behind or before, in front or rear. The retreat has now become a flight. And in that flight took place many a curious, many a tragic, many a comic scene: in it was displayed many an act of heroic generosity, many an act of detestable selfishness. But with these we have nothing to do in the present narrative. None of those whose movements we have undertaken to follow went that way. For Colonel Grey does not mean to leave the station. If he cannot remain with his regiment he will remain near it. He determines to take up his quarters with his friend the Rajah Gunput Rao. But he must go first to the Campbells' bungalow. He has some documents and some cherished memorials there which he should like to take away with him. Just as he is approaching the Campbells' house he finds the Campbells themselves coming away from it. They had gone to it, intending to rejoin the retreating column afterwards, on an errand similar to his own, only to find it in the hands of a mob, which had almost taken their lives. It was only Campbells' good deeds that had saved them. Some of the crowd had stood forward in their defence. One of them, who had the gift of oratory so often to be found among the lower orders in India, and which finds exercise in the meetings of the Panchayuts, had exerted it in their behalf.

'You would not hurt the healer?' he had cried. 'You would not wound the curer of wounds? You would not deprive the saviour of life of life? You would not put to death one who has rescued so many of us from death?'

'No, never! That cannot be. We must do good to those who

have done good to us. Assuredly Jan Cammill Sahib and those belonging to him shall suffer no hurt at our hands.' And he led the carriage out of the compound.

'They are plundering the house, they will destroy everything in it,' says Dr. Campbell to Colonel Grey, in a strange, thick, husky voice.

The loss of one's house and furniture is not pleasant to anyone—least of all, perhaps, to a Scotchman. And in this case the house and furniture were very valuable, and from the Campbells' long residence here both had come to form a part and portion of their lives, to enter into the texture of it, to an extent not usual with the nomadic Anglo-Indian. But it is not these things that affect John Campbell. It is the loss of his books, of his large collection of notes and memoranda, of his large botanical, and entomological, and other collections. This terrible and unexpected event robs him not only of the past but of the future. He had meant to devote the leisure of his years of retirement to the writing of books, for which these were to furnish the material. And now all that labour of collection had been in vain, and all those visions of future delightful labour and usefulness, and perchance fame, have vanished.

'I shall not go on to Nurnal, but remain here with the Rajah Gunput Rao. You had better come there, too. Our troops from Abdoolapore are sure to be here to-night or to-morrow morning,' says Grey.

'Yes,' says Mrs. Campbell, looking apprehensively at her husband, who seems to be in a kind of daze.

They have reached the Ridge, and the emptiness of the road by the side of the flagstaff-tower, which had been so crowded during all the past midday hours, strikes strangely upon their senses—seems to have a palpable presence. And now they have entered the Ajmere Road, on which the Rajah Gunput Rao's palace stands, and to their surprise—the reader will remember that it passed through a populous suburb near by here—find it, too, empty; but the city has to-day drawn all the surrounding population into it, as a whirlpool sucks in the surrounding particles of water. They have reached the gateway of the Rajah's palace. Colonel Grey is not surprised to find the gate closed, but he is surprised to find that the men on guard refuse to open it to him.

'You know who I am?'

'Oh, yes!'—in an off-hand and not the usually deferential

manner. 'But we have orders not to let anyone in—more especially any Europeans.'

'But I am the Rajah Sahib's friend!'

'Our orders are imperative.'

'You will let him know that I am here.'

'Well, we will do that.'

Then Grey has to remain for a long time standing before the gate; and then to ask them to send up to the house again; and then again. And the evening light is fading away; the cawing crows are flying overhead in flocks, making their way from the city to their distant roosting-grounds; night is at hand. At last the Rajah appears. He is closely followed by two attendants, who not only have sword by side and buckler on back, but carry matchlocks in their hands, while the Rajah himself has a brace of pistols conspicuous in his belt.

'What do you want?' he says rudely, and not hastening eagerly to shake hands, as he would have done yesterday.

'We have come to ask you to put us up for the night.'

'I cannot put you up,' says the Rajah, in the same rude tone of voice.

'Why not?' asks Grey, much surprised.

'*Meree khushi*' ('My pleasure'), says the Rajah grandly.

'And is this your friendship?'

'Friendship! What friendship?' says Gunput Rao scornfully.

'Your friendship toward me.'

'I am a man of royal blood. I have friendship only with nobles and princes. But because of my favourable disposition toward you in past times—what you are pleased to term my friendship—I will give you some good advice. Get away from here as fast as you can, and get down to Calcutta as fast as you can, and then take ship for England as fast as you can.'

'Why for?' (Grey was speaking Hindustani.)

'Because your *raj*' (rule) 'is now over, and ours re-established.'

It would be impossible to convey any idea of the tone of intense satisfaction with which these words are spoken. It is perhaps best, after all, that one nation should not conquer another.

'And I will give you a bit of friendly advice, too,' says Colonel Grey: 'you had better get out of the Company's territory, and hide yourself somewhere as fast as you can.'

He mounts his horse and they move on.

'We may as well keep to this road, and then cross over to the

Jumoo Road by the Goorgaon cross-road,' says Grey. 'It will be almost as short as going back, and more safe.'

And now they arrive at the edge of the huge barren plain over which Colonel Grey and Gunput Rao had ridden in friendly rivalry only so few days before. (They are to meet hereafter in far less friendly rivalry on the plains of Bundelkhund.) And now they enter on the level expanse; and now it seems to spread illimitably around them; and now they have reached its further limit, and once more there are groves and hamlets around them. They are moving across a fertile tract where the lights still twinkle in the villages. And mile succeeds mile, and the road is even, straight and level, and the scenery of a precisely similar character. They have met very few people on the road, and now they meet none at all. It is the dead of night; the moon is riding straight overhead; she is speeding across the sky and they are moving slowly along the road; and so on across fertile tract and barren plain. Then the little mare who has brought them so far so gallantly breaks down suddenly, suddenly collapses altogether. The road is beautifully smooth and level; but the carriage is low, and Dr. Campbell heavy, and the mare slightly built, and she has been in harness for nearly seventeen hours, out all day in the sun, and has not had her usual food or drink. She has now exerted herself almost to the bursting of her heart; she has given them her last ounce of strength; she can proceed now only at a hobbling walk. Dr. Campbell and Mrs. Campbell dismount and walk, Campbell leading the mare, the groom having disappeared. As they can proceed now only at a foot's pace, Grey too dismounts from his horse; he has been nearly twenty hours in the saddle. They wonder that they do not come to the Goorgaon cross-road: they have, in reality, passed it by without knowing it. The moon which was so radiant in the zenith now hangs pallid and wan in the western sky. And now the grey unbroken vault of heaven stands out distinct and clear; now it begins to brighten. The vast level fallow and the groves and trees and villages stand out in hard distinctness. Then suddenly groves and trees and villages disappear, and cease and determine, and they are looking into vacancy. They have arrived at the edge of the great western desert, between which and the Himalayan wall lies the flat open tract between the Jumna and the Sutlej, which forms the portal of the rich Gangetic valley, and the proximity to which, on a rocky elevation, was one of the things that gave Delhi, and Khizrabad

with it, its importance. They move on into the sandy waste for a little way and then resolve to rest—they have nothing to fear in so lonely a spot. The men throw themselves on the ground and sleep there until the first rays of the sun come rushing over the land. Then they move on again. At last they have reached the cross-road, as they imagine, and turn into it. Their progress is now slower than ever, for the road is not a metalled one, but a mere earthen or rather sandy track. And the tyrant sun is bounding upward. The early morning rays of the sun are held to be very dangerous; they strike you under your hat, take you on an empty stomach. There are very empty stomachs here; they feel sick and dizzy, but still they go toiling on. They arrive at a long stretch of sand-hills. The sharp crests and the long, smooth, softly curving intervening hollows make it appear as if the flat sandy desert had been suddenly heaved up into billows. And the road, or track rather, goes straight up and down them, and at one of the rises the mare gives in altogether, and they have to unyoke her and abandon the carriage. The sun's rays grow more powerful every moment; the daily hot wind has begun to blow; the sand rises up in clouds to blind and choke them. The hot air now trembles and quivers and dances upon the surface of the earth as it does over the mouth of a furnace. The glare is awful. And what will the dust be when the wind has attained to greater strength? If the midday hours are terrible even in the midst of the cultivated, grove and tree covered tracts, what will they be here in the sandy desert? Then they rejoice as they see before them trees and a sheet of water; and press eagerly toward them: and find it a mirage. The little girl begins to flag and lag. Her father lifts her up and carries her, first on one shoulder and then on another, though he himself is moving with palpably uncertain, staggering steps.

'Put her down, John, you cannot carry her,' cries Mrs. Campbell. 'She is too heavy for you.'

But he still persists in carrying her: now in his arms and pressed against his breast. The child puts her cheek against his cheek, and he presses her closer to his breast. Then Mrs. Campbell calls out to Colonel Grey, who has been walking ahead:

'Here is John will carry Helen when he is not able to.'

'We'll put her on Musjid' (his charger); and they do so, and Dr. Campbell walks by the side of the good, noble Arab horse, with his arm behind the child, and he seems to rest a good deal of his weight on that arm. The heat increases even more, and the

simoon blows in even more furious blasts, and raises up even denser clouds of dust. At last they arrive at a long stretch of the thorny bushes which camels are brought to feed on, and they see the promontoried backs and small heads and long necks of some of those ungainly beasts looming up against the sky—and then they come on the men in charge of them. They find from them that they have gone astray altogether. This track leads to Powayn. Powayn is the name of the chief, in fact the only, town of a curious little oasis in the desert, a fertile island in the sea of sand, which forms an independent state, and is at present ruled over by the well-known Ranee of Powayn.

‘How far is Powayn?’

‘Five or six miles.’

‘Would the Ranee Sahib give us shelter?’

‘Most assuredly. Is not the fame of her beneficence spread throughout the universe?’ He sincerely thought it was. ‘We are about to return with our camels. We will conduct you to the palace.’ The big lumbering beasts are got together, and tied nose and tail, and then they set off. When they have passed out of the scrub they come to a stony track, where the heat is, if possible, still greater; and then the track winds between stony hillocks where the heat is even greater still. And then Colonel Grey and Mrs. Campbell utter a loud exclamation. Before them lies a shining lake, across the bottom of which extends the long buttressed wall or dam which holds the water up and gives the lake its existence; while at the top nestles a little stone-built city, and along either side are pretty temples, and bathing ghats, and rows of tall umbrageous trees. They feel as did the Israelites when coming out of the desert they first caught sight of the Promised Land.

‘Send a man for some water,’ says Campbell, in a thick muffled voice; ‘I cannot go any farther without some. I have such a pain in my back. I must sit down.’

And he seats himself in the ineffectual shadow of a neem-tree growing near.

‘What is the matter, John? You are not ill?’ says Mrs Campbell, seating herself by his side.

‘I have such a pain in my back. I must lie down.’

‘You cannot lie down on the ground, it is so hot. Put your head on my lap.’

‘The child! the child! Call her; bring her!’

Colonel Grey lifts the little girl off the horse, and she runs forward and seats herself by her father's side. He casts one long longing look at her; he lifts himself up and utters some uncomprehended words, and then lays himself down again—and is dead. And those three, whom we have seen so lively together, are now together stone still. A new and strange fear and awe has begun to arise within the child, but she has not as yet realised fully what has happened. And for the moment Mrs. Campbell is stricken dumb, petrified with grief and horror and surprise. She had seen that the exposure of the day before had affected her husband greatly, but she had never expected him to be thus struck down—he, the strong man. And then she gives way to her passionate grief; but, in her present weak condition, it is not so passionate as it will be hereafter. The aged, with their enfeebled powers, do not feel sorrow as do the young and strong; and, in the sick chamber, the pain and grief of those in full health by the side of the bed is greater than that of the exhausted sufferer passing away upon it."

Thus died John Campbell, the man of the strong brain and the gentle heart and the skilful hand; thus did his happy and useful and well-lived life come to an end.

The Ranee received and treated them with the utmost kindness. She expressed her deepest sympathy with Mrs. Campbell in her grief. Was she not herself a widow—a widow with an only child? though hers, thank heaven, was a boy, and not a girl. Mrs. Campbell could not have met with greater kindness in the house of her own mother than she met with here. She departed hence deeply impressed with the fact that hearts as gentle and kindly may beat under the simple linen pap-upholders as under the stiffer made and more elaborate corset; under brown skins as under white. And Colonel Grey reflects over the problem—so often presented to us in the history of India—of how women brought up in the confinement, physical and moral and mental, as it seems to us, of the zenana, should come to possess the qualities which enable them to rule the world around them, the world they have never seen. Here was a young woman who had passed from the seclusion of her father's house to the seclusion of her husband's, and who yet administered the affairs of her little kingdom with the utmost prudence and skill. The Ranee presses them to remain with her for a week—for a month; but Colonel Grey has now determined to go to Abdoolapore, the large military centre, and is anxious to get there at once. They bury John Campbell

under a mango-tree by the side of the lake; and, two or three years afterwards, a large block of granite came from his native land to mark the spot. And then on Thursday morning—that is to say, about two o'clock in the morning—they start for Abdoolapore in the Ranee's palanquins, and guarded by her cavalry; and, resting during the heat of the day in the house of a zemindar, a connection of the Ranee's, they reach Abdoolapore late in the afternoon. Colonel Grey proceeds at once to the house of the Brigadier, in order to make his arrival known to him; Mrs. Campbell and the little girl being carried off to the late empty barrack, in which so many of the ladies of the station have now found a temporary home. The fat old gentleman receives Grey in his office—the room is a very cool one. Grey is the first man who has arrived from Khizrabad to give an account of all that had happened there—to give an account of those sad and terrible and memorable and historical events. He cannot but be excited in narrating them: but he produces no excitement in his listener. The old man's indifference is so great that Grey's indignation and disgust are swallowed up in astonishment. When Grey tells of the blowing up of the arsenal, the old gentleman says it must have made a great noise!—that is all. The only time he shows a little excitement is when Grey dwells, all the more strongly because of the old fellow's apathy, on the fact of the events of that day at Khizrabad having been governed by the continual expectation of the arrival of the English troops from here—Abdoolapore.

'Nonsense!' says the old man. 'English troops cannot be sent out without tents and proper commissariat arrangements in such weather as this. They cannot be sent out under canvas at all. And I have to dress now, Grey; and you must send me an official report; and come and dine, and you can tell me more about it then.'

As Grey jumps up angrily from his seat, he knocks over the waste-paper basket. As he is picking up the bits of paper from the floor and putting them back, one of them catches his eye.

'Why, this is Fane's handwriting.'

'It is the bit of paper the spy had on him. He pretended it was English, and it is not.'

'No; it is French.'

'A filthy piece of Hindostanee paper. He must have thought me very green.'

'May I read it, sir?'

‘If you like—if you can. I must go now.’ And the old man, having risen from his chair with some difficulty, begins to toddle towards the door of the room.

‘It is stated in this piece of paper,’ says Grey, impressively, ‘that three English ladies and four English officers are in hiding not far from here, and ask for help.’

‘Nonsense, nonsense!’ cries the old man—he had had his afternoon sleep, and was impatient for his evening drive. ‘A filthy piece of Hindostanee paper—chuck it back into the basket. Will see you at dinner.’

‘What has become, sir, of the man who brought the paper?’

‘Is in confinement; is to be tried to-morrow by court-martial; will probably be hung. Most villainous-looking rascal.’

‘May I go and see him, sir?’

‘Certainly, if you like; go at once,’ says the old man, impatient to be rid of him.

Grey does go at once, and learns the particulars of the case from the young disciple, who has so nearly lost his life in carrying out his teacher’s commands. He gets back to the Brigadier’s house just as the old man has come back from his drive, and is having his usual glass of sherry and bitters, and states what he has heard; gives it as his opinion that the man is telling the truth, and that the paper has come from some fugitives from Khizrabad. He has no doubt that the handwriting is that of Fane, and the three ladies may be his wife and daughters.

‘Very good, the handwriting is that of Fane; and yet you said that you thought that he must have been blown up in the arsenal. Pooh-pooh! the fellow is lying; he looks a scoundrel. It is some dodge, some ruse.’

Grey’s proposition that a small body of troops should be sent out with the messenger to bring these English people in—at all events to see whether they are there or not—is met with a decided refusal. The Brigadier has not been able to send any troops out of the place, and is not able to do so now; for this unanswerable reason: if he sends out a force of such strength that it will satisfy him of its power to defend itself, then he will endanger the garrison here; and if he keeps a sufficient number of men in the garrison to make it secure, why then he cannot send out a force of such strength as will satisfy him of its power to defend itself. From that position nothing will move him. Grey’s arguments and remonstrances, carried far beyond the limits of military sub-

ordination, are all in vain ; and now dinner is announced. But Grey gets away immediately after it. He has heard that a number of the civilians of the place have formed themselves into a body of volunteer cavalry. He goes to the man in immediate command of it, and lays the case before him. Certainly, these English people must be at the faquir's hut, and an effort must be made to bring them in. 'His volunteers will go out fast enough, but he must obtain the permission of the 'magistrate and collector' under whose supreme command the volunteers are. Certainly ; the magistrate and collector is a man the very antipodes of the Brigadier, against whom he is furious ; his own authority is paralysed by the fat old man's supineness. Certainly ; the volunteer cavalry shall go out, and he himself will accompany it with some of his mounted policemen. But all this has taken time, and it is not until about four o'clock in the morning that the little troop of horsemen ride forth on their plucky mission.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE EIGHTH DAY. AND BEYOND.

THOSE on whose behalf the gallant little band had ridden forth had observed, in the early dawn of the morning, from the door of the hut, whose sacred character, which might or might not continue to be respected, formed their only protection, a mass of some kind appear on the level expanse of the open plain before them. What is it ? A herd of cattle ? No, it moves too high for that.

'It is a troop of horsemen,' says Major Coote. But their eager eyes do not discern the well-known uniform of the crack cavalry regiment at Abdoolapore. Surely it cannot be another band of the Nuwâb's troopers. For now there is a sudden commotion among the men of the band already here, a sudden calling to one another and awakening of one another, and the leader shouts out, 'Saddle, saddle !' and there is a quick saddling of the horses. Fane and Hay, looking out at the door of the hut, have to relate what is going on to the poor half-sick, half-stifled people within.

'Yes, they are horsemen, and coming from the direction of Abdoolapore.'

'The fellows here are saddling and mounting.'

In the East the horses of the sun gallop fast. The dim light over the plain has given place to a clear white brightness. The

changes from light to darkness and from darkness to light at the end and beginning of the day are very swift. If in the evening it is like the sudden dropping of a curtain, in the morning it is like the sudden raising of one. Or to go back to the original simile, which arose so naturally in the East, if the chariot goes rushing away from you very fast of an evening, it comes rushing toward you very fast of a morning. The light upon the plain is now vivid, quite sufficient for purposes of clearest vision: very soon it will be too much in excess for that.

‘Feringhees!’ shout the Nuwâb’s horsemen.

‘Oh! Ah! Haw!’ says Major Fane, at the door of the hut.

‘I thank Thee, O my God!’ Hay thinks that the fervent thanksgiving has risen up only in his heart; he does not know that he has uttered it aloud with his lips.

‘I can see solah-hats. They are Englishmen!’ yells young Hamilton.

Mrs. Fane’s thoughts and feelings have always been of a firm and clear and determinate character, but at this moment they are very much blurred and confused. For a very unmistakable English ‘hurrah!’ has penetrated into the innermost recesses of the hut, and there is the sound of the galloping of horses, of the discharge of firearms. And Hay rushes out of the hut, and leaps over the little monkey-gods, who protect the faquir’s hut as effectually as his tallest grenadiers guard the palace of the Czar, and Hamilton follows him. And what they see is the Nuwâb’s horsemen galloping away and the other body of horsemen pursuing them. And then they see the latter returning, and Fane and Coote have joined them, and now there is a great interchange of cheers and then a great shaking of hands.

‘You here, Grey!’ cries Coote. ‘Did your fellows mutiny too?’

‘Well, no—not quite. But we will talk about that another time. Why, we thought you were blown up with your arsenal, Fane.’

And then Mrs. Fane and her daughters are tenderly helped out. And the hearts of their rescuers are deeply moved within them, for they can see from their looks, from the condition of their arms and necks and shoulders and faces, how terribly they must have suffered—see and know fully what I have been able but inadequately to describe or convey. They can see that it is torture to poor Lilian to put her blistered feet to the ground.

She cannot now walk. They must get some means of conveyance for her. Some of them are thinking of riding back to a village they passed on the way to see if they can find a vehicle there, when a little cart is seen moving along the track. They take possession of this—requisition it. It is a miserable little springless cart, but still it must do. It certainly is torture sitting in it on the unmade track, but luckily they soon arrive at a smooth metalled road.

The rescued ones load the Byragee with thanks as they take leave of him, and they ask what they can do for him hereafter.

‘Nothing,’ says the holy man. ‘I have no desires—no wants.’

‘But you have laid us all under such great obligation to you,’ says Hay fervently, glancing toward Beatrice, ‘that we should like to be able to exhibit our gratitude in some way.’

‘Nay,’ said the Kabirpanthi, ‘the obligation is all on my side. You have afforded me the chance of saving seven most precious human lives. How can I repay you for that? I rejoice only to be able to assuage thirst. To save a human life—what honour, what glory, what joy!’

‘But it would be a great pleasure to us to know in what way we could give you any pleasure,’ says Hay, earnestly.

‘Well,’ says the self-made recluse, ‘I see that in the months to come there will be much shedding of human blood. Alas! alas! If you will let one man live in my name I shall be amply repaid for all I have done for you.’

It can easily be imagined what a reception the fugitives met with from their fellow-countrymen in Abdoolapore. They were overwhelmed with offers of assistance. They had arrived in the place clotheless, homeless, penniless. Money; house accommodation, such as there is; clothes, such as will fit them—are all soon at their command. It will be understood with what triumph and joy his fellow-countrymen welcomed Major Fane, who had done the great deed that was to stand out as one of the greatest deeds of the time. Congratulations and felicitations flow in upon him, so that his ‘oh! ah!’ and ‘hah!’ are in constant requisition. ‘Glad to see you, Fane,’ says the fat old Brigadier. ‘Could not spare any troops to send out for you, but glad to see you. Come and dine.’

It will be understood with what grateful hearts they lay down to sleep that night, how fervent was Hay’s thanksgiving ere he did so.

Our eighth day has ended. But we must go on a little

further. The terrible exposure to the sun, and the privations and fatigue and anxiety she had undergone, threw Mrs. Fane into a fever from which she did not recover for a long while; and Lilian suffered greatly from her torn and cut feet, and could not stand on them for many months; and Beatrice nursed them both. And many others. Many of the English soldiers suffered from various illnesses during the terrible summer and autumn months, and many were wounded in excursions. (The old Brigadier soon applied for sick leave to the hills, which was cheerfully granted him; and his successor was a very different kind of man.) And in every gathering of English women and children in Northern India then there was sure to be a daily increasing number of widows and orphans. And Beatrice Fane devoted herself to the assuagement of the bodily and mental sufferings of all. She tended the sick and wounded, she consoled the afflicted, the dying. With her slender, beautiful figure and her lovely face, her sweet voice, her tender, gentle ways, she seemed like some angelic being, and came to be called the 'ministering angel.' Taking up too crowded a field of incident, I have not been able to make the characters properly known to the reader by their own speech as I should like to have done. Most especially do I regret this lost opportunity in the case of Beatrice Fane, with her firm and strong, lofty and noble, and yet sweet and gentle character. Then Mrs. Fane and her daughters had to go through a long period of anxiety on their own account. Major Fane and Hay both went to Delhi to take part in its famous siege. (Hay's fears for the loss of his arm had not been unfounded. He had, in fact, run a close risk of losing his life; but medical help came in time, if only just in time, and his excellent unimpaired constitution enabled him soon to recover.) They both greatly distinguished themselves there. When the time came for the delivery of the final assault, and our batteries were being thrown up close under the walls, Fane especially distinguished himself by the coolness with which he, standing unconcerned in the midst of a storm of shell, directed the carrying on of the work in his battery, the furthest advanced and most important one—directed it with a bamboo stick, which was the successor of the Malacca cane, the loss of which represented the only personal damage he had sustained in the famous blowing up of the Khizrabad magazine. Hay threw himself heart and soul into the fight. He was actuated, no doubt, like anyone else, by a desire for personal distinction: he entertained, no doubt, as

was natural to one in his position, a strong resentment against the mutinous sepoys. But he threw himself with all his soul into the fight because he thought it was a righteous one. Each side, of course, thought its own cause a righteous one. But the sepoys had stained their cause with blood. The land rang with horrors. Their hands were red with the blood of women and children. He was fighting against the heathen: he was fighting on the side of the Cross. And so by next year Fane was Colonel Fane, V.C., C.B.; and Hay had made a still bigger jump, and was Colonel Hay, V.C., C.B., and had command of one of the new crack Sikh infantry regiments.

And Hay, who had declared that he could not have his marriage deferred to the December of this year, had to wait until the December of next year. And he and Beatrice Fane were married, as they would rather not have been, in the church at Khizrabad, for Colonel Fane was stationed there again. Perhaps elsewhere the marriage might have been a larger one. In the joy of her heart—the marriage satisfied her now in every way—Mrs. Fane might have insisted on its being a big, gay affair. But in a place so haunted by sad memories as this it could only be a very simple and quiet one. The ‘whole station’ cannot be present at it, as would have been the case had it taken place, as intended, in the July of the preceding year. Besides the members of the family and Hay’s friend, who acts as best man—poor Philip Lennox was to have filled the post—there are only four or five other people, chiefly relations, present. And Lilian is the only bridesmaid who follows Beatrice Fane to the altar.

After lying under its walls for many weary, anxious months, the English force had carried Khizrabad by storm, and then came a day of reckoning for its inhabitants, a day of retribution for the denizens of the Devil’s Quarter. The streets did not run with blood, as they had on the occasion of many a previous sack, for the little force had not been able to make any sort of investment of the great city; had taken a whole day to effect a lodgment in it; and while it was slowly winning its way in from the Jummoo Gate, the one assaulted, the inhabitants had been fleeing forth from the other gateways. When this force had passed on, leaving only a small garrison behind, it was strange to wander through the silent and deserted city—to pass from empty and silent squares, once so thronged and bustling, into empty and silent streets; into silent and empty alleys; into private courtyards,

now vacant, which seemed the very ultimate abode of silence; and where the sense of loneliness was most oppressive. It was strange to pass the long rows of deserted houses, in which no light now shone of an evening, and the sound of the grindstone was not heard of a morning. The dead bodies of men and animals lay about, and the cats who had fed on them had grown to a monstrous size.

How the members of the royal family fled from the palace-fortress and took refuge in a mausoleum without the town; how the Nuwâb delivered himself up with the whole of his family; how he was tried for life, are matters of history. There was no proof of the Nuwâb's connection with any of the deeds of butchery. The massacre in the palace was one of the crimes of which the fullest details had been obtained. Most of those concerned in it, including the ruffianly butcher, were captured—the search for them was very keen—and suffered the dreadful penalty of being blown away from guns. Some of them had said that they understood that the order for the massacre had come from the Nuwâb or the Sikunder Begum, but their testimony also went to show that it was the eunuch, Jhundoo Khan, who had actually hired them for the crime and paid them for it. And the eunuch had disappeared, and with him the forged warrant that might have cost the Nuwâb his life. The Sikunder Begum had been seen in her balcony, but her apartment overlooked the courtyard, and her presence there might have been accidental. The Nuwâb was stripped of all his titles and dignities, his income greatly reduced, and he and his family were transported from the banks of the Jumna, on which his ancestors had been seated for so many centuries, to the alien banks of the Irawaddy. The Sikunder Begum, of course, went with him. If the English officials, who felt a strong conviction that it was the Begum who had ordered the massacre in the palace, had obtained legal proof of her guilt, they could not have inflicted greater punishment upon her than this banishment did. They could not have ordered her solitary confinement for life and torture which that banishment entailed upon her. She had not undergone it for long, when she came to think that a violent, even an ignominious death at Khizrabad would have been preferable. She had been delivered into the hands of her deadliest enemies: she had embittered the lives of the senior wives of the Nuwâb, and it was now their turn to embitter hers. She had supplanted them.

She had wounded their pride, their vanity. She had wounded them in their affections. She had humiliated them. And now she was cast down beneath their feet. They had now the power to torture her, and they used it to the utmost. Was it not she who had brought about the downfall of the ancient house of Khizrabad, of one of the great powers of the Faith? Was she not to be execrated of every one connected with that household, of every good Mahomedan? It was right and proper for them to entertain the bitterest hatred of her. Had she not caused this terrible change in the fortunes of them all? Had she not wrought their woe? Was it not she who had brought them to this—hither? Every trouble and inconvenience which they experienced by reason of the change of clime and fortune was charged upon her, and she was made to pay a penalty for it. Did a child die, of course because of the alien clime, its mother came and raved at the Sikunder Begum, and cursed her and reviled her. The wretched woman was delivered over entirely into the hands of her enemies and persecutors. To an appeal to the Nuwâb the answer came, not only that he could not see her, but that, as complete peace of mind was absolutely essential to his bodily health, he had been obliged to issue stringent orders that no communication from her should ever be brought to him, nor any mention ever made of her name; at the same time he sent her some neatly turned verses, in which there was an enumeration of his misfortunes, which were all attributed to her, and an allusion to the danger of warming a viper in one's bosom was not forgotten.

And so reproach and execration, scorn and contumely, became the Begum's daily portion. There was now none so poor to do her reverence. The servants of the house could best show their regard for it by treating her with disrespect. The malignity of the whole place, of every person in it, found vent on her. No face was turned toward her with kindness. It was a terrible situation.

And the Begum felt her bodily discomforts and sufferings as keenly as the laceration of her feelings. Very different these two meanly furnished rooms allotted to her and her children from her splendid suite of apartments in the palace of Khizrabad; very different this close room, with its coarse and scanty appointments—she felt that coarseness keenly—from the beautiful and airy chamber that had looked down on the valley of the Jumna

and over many a league beyond ; she felt stifled in this one—her helpless confinement in it caused her as much physical as mental suffering. She had been fond of good food and of pleasant drinks : her food now was poor of quality, such as was disagreeable to her and disagreed with her, undaintily served, often scanty in quantity ; and if she complained of the water supplied her to drink she was told that it was she who had brought them here, to this terrible place, where the air and the water both were uncongenial and inimical to them all.

The Begum had loved luxury and ease. And now she had neither. The care of her children was left on her hands. The domestics rendered her, and hers, only grudging and insolent service. And the Begum was haunted by the memory, the torturing memory, not of any crime, but what to her was worse, of a failure. Most torturing must be the memory of some one single lapse or failure, moral or intellectual, or, as in her case, of some one unguarded-against event or circumstance, which renders nugatory the labour and forethought of years, and mars one's life. At Khizrabad she had thought that she made her own life unassailable. In her coffer lay a little packet, of a purposed littleness, which yet within its little compass contained that which gave her the command over fate and made her future secure. The gems within it would afford her the means of living in affluence, she and her children, wherever she went. She knew that, should that blow against the English fail, the Nuwâb's household would be no place for her. She would part from it and begin a new life elsewhere. On the day of the storm of Khizrabad she had urged on the defence, delayed the flight from the palace to the latest. But the moment of the flight came. There came an hour of wild disorder and confusion. First, the Begum arranged for the departure of her children : there was a rush and scramble for the means of conveyance. Then she returned from that end of her secluded suite of apartments to her own special chamber. At the door she had met Hiria, the slave-girl, rushing away. 'Stop! you black-faced witch!' she had cried out to her, but the girl had only turned and given her a mocking look—how that look came to haunt her—and had fled headlong down the staircase. 'The daughter of a pig!' the Begum had exclaimed. 'How frightened they all are!' she had added, contemptuously. Entering the beautiful chamber, she had passed round the daïs to her strong box. She had uttered a cry—those were moments never to be forgotten—when she saw that its lid stood open. She had dashed her hands down into the

chest, she had thrown out all that was in it, and then she had fallen back against the daïs with a shriek—the precious packet was gone! Her hoarded power, her garnered security was gone. The slave-girl had stolen the packet. Never should she see it again; and never did she see it again. Foiled!—foiled by her whom she had so often called Fool—Dolt—Addle-pate—Donkey—Owl—Idiot! The Idiot had taken ample revenge for all the sufferings the Begum had inflicted upon her. She had repaid torture with torture. When the Begum recalled that look, she could have yelled out in her rage and anguish.

The Begum lost her health and beauty. She became gaunt and haggard. Her cheeks became very hollow, and her fine aquiline nose stood out from her face like the beak of an eagle. She was tortured through that darling son whom she had hoped to place upon the throne of Khizrabad. He was still of an age that he had to pass most of his time within the limits of the zenana. It was made a hell to him. An English home is narrow enough for much misery. If within the closer confinement, the cloistered retirement, of the zenana domestic happiness may rise to a celestial height, it is there that domestic misery may become of an infernal character. Every kind of torment was heaped upon the lad unsparingly, unrelentingly. His young life was made a burden to him. At last he said to his mother, ‘I cannot be happy until you are dead.’ Then she would die. So, one day, when the female attendants of the zenana heard the most agonising shrieks and cries issuing from the Begum’s apartment, and rushed into it, they found her writhing in the torments of the virulent poison she had swallowed. That eve, upon the coarse blanket of the mean bedstead, terribly twisted and contorted, lay the once beautiful form which we had seen stretched in luxurious ease and abandonment upon the costly coverlet of the silver-legged daïs in the beautiful marble chamber of the palace of Khizrabad but a few years before.

The Nuwâb bewailed his lot in verses of many forms (and shapes)—surely the poets love to push the envenomed arrow home, to sip of the poisoned draught: they must find some satisfaction in the misfortunes which afford them the occasion for melodious mourning. But he grew fat and lived to an extreme old age.

We must go on a little further yet.

Thirty years have passed. The year 1887 dawns on British India even more gloriously than 1857. The January sun of 1857 had looked down on the dominions of the Honourable East

India Company. The January sun of 1887 looks down on the empire of Victoria, Queen of England and Empress of India. It looks down on a great empire greatly administered. It looks down on a changed and transformed India—on a new India. It looks down on great changes—great improvements, for great canals and railways now traverse the land; the railroad and telegraph have annulled its vast intervening distances. It looks down on fine new cities—on the old ones made sweeter and brighter. It looks down on innumerable schools and colleges—on a new generation of educated natives: the stream of human learning which for so many generations had flowed backward and forward between Europe and Western Asia has now reached further from west to east and is flowing in full tide into India. It looks down on a people among whom has been an enormous diffusion of wealth—an enormous increase in the comforts of life. It looks down on a land in which peace and security, order and quiet, law and justice prevail in an eminent degree.

In Khizrabad the change that has taken place all over the land is epitomised. Not only great roads, but railways now radiate from it. The place of the old bridge-of-boats has been taken by a fine iron-girder bridge, one of that splendid series of bridges which now span almost all the rivers in India—even the greatest, even the lower Indus, and even the Ganges at Benares. The foul back slums and fetid alleys have been opened out and cleansed. Improved sanitation has caused the complete disappearance of many loathsome and torturing diseases. Star Street glitters more brightly than ever—glitters with its own gay, bright, indigenous wares; for if once we inflicted injury on some of the handicraftsmen of India by the introduction of our own manufactures (which was greatly to the benefit of the rest of the community), we have long since recompensed it tenfold, for the handicraftsmen of that land have had such employment during the past twenty years as was never known there before.

The ancient splendour of the renowned castle or palace-fortress of Khizrabad has passed away with its ancient use: it is now occupied by a regiment of English soldiers. But be it remembered that it was solely owing to the English that the royal family of Khizrabad had been able to occupy the palace and retain it for its ancient use for the half-century preceding their final removal from it. Instead of the Nuwâbs, a municipal council, composed chiefly of natives, now governs Khizrabad. It holds its meetings in a splendid town hall, attached to which is a lofty clock-tower,

since the completion of which the old historical gong above the main gateway of the palace has ceased to ring forth the hours as it had done for so many hundred years before.

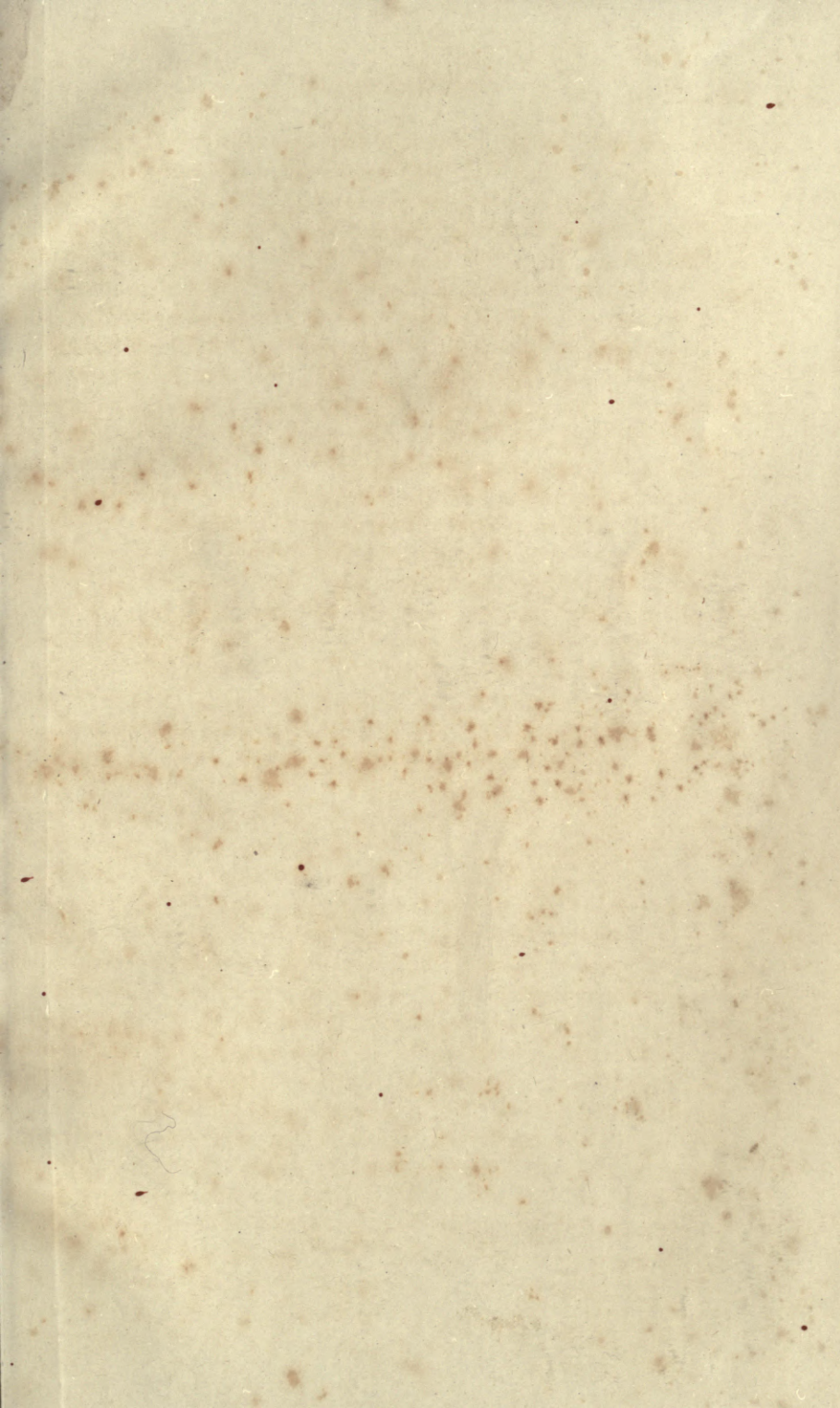
The Ghilâni Bagh has been greatly improved. You see natives strolling about in it as you did not do of yore, and in some of the finest equipages on the Mall you see natives sitting, though not yet with their wives.

And Khizrabad, as Delhi, has been affected by one great public change—a most important and historical change. We have said that the ancient importance of Khizrabad, as Delhi, was due to its standing at the highest point of the navigation of the Jumna, where a rocky ridge impinged on the river and allowed of a strong fortress being built; of its standing at one end of the flat open tract between the Sutlej and the Jumna, which was bounded by the stupendous wall of the Himalayas on one side and the wide wastes of the sandy desert on the other, and which formed the ancient portal or gateway into India. That portal has now been removed further westward; has been placed on the top of the great mountain chain that forms the western boundary of Hindostan.

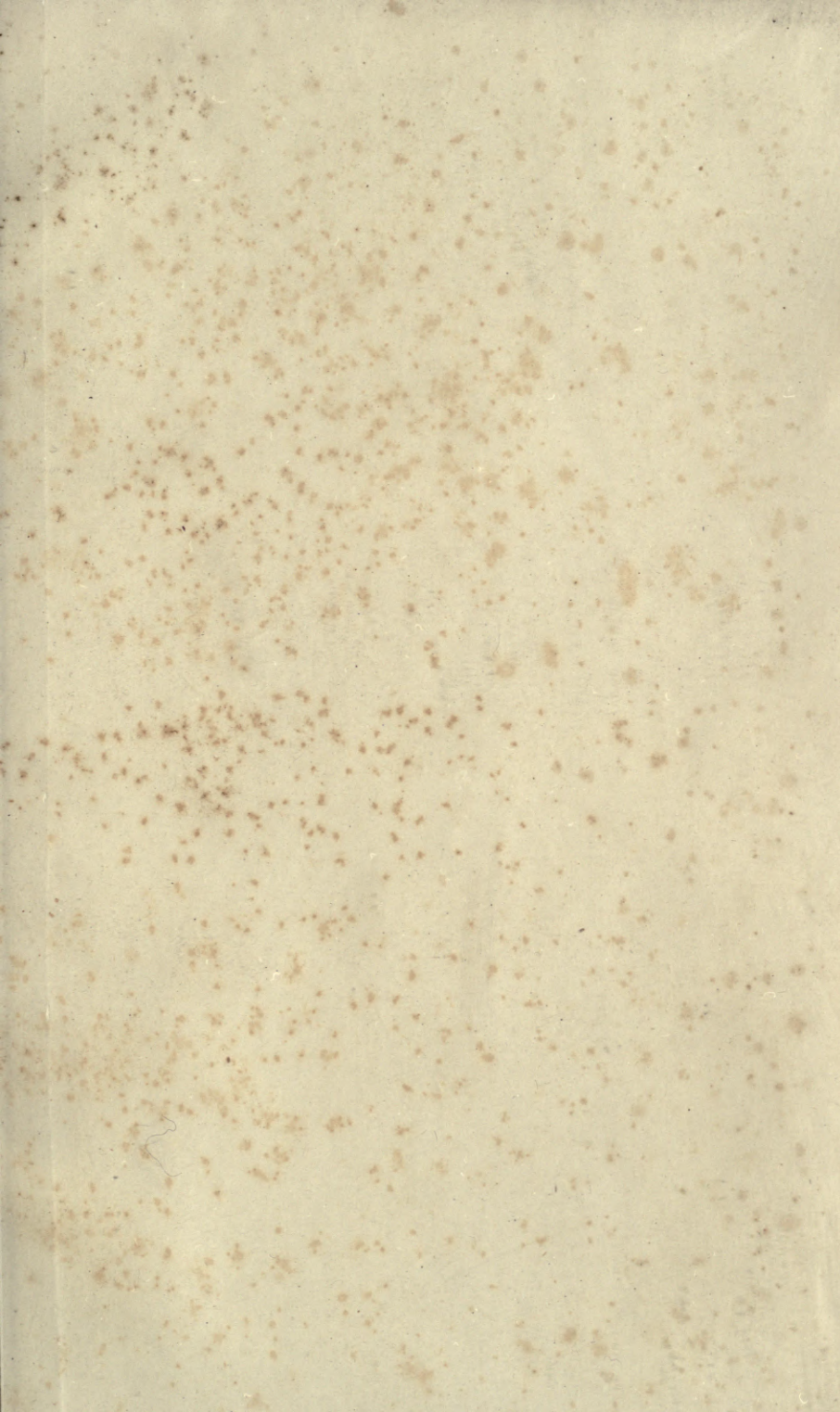
The gun by the side of the flagstaff-tower on the Ridge has sent forth its morning roar. The Hindoos of the town are flocking down to the river to bathe. The English people are on the move, driving about on business or pleasure. The doctor goes to visit his patients, the engineer his works. The commanding officers of the various regiments—there are Sikh ones here now—and the brigadier, and the commissioner, and the civil surgeon, and the chaplain, and the manager of the bank, and the other prominent residents of the place are to be seen in the Ghilani Bagh this morning, as we saw them on that morning in May thirty years ago. We pace the streets that others have paced before us and others will pace after us. Ghost follows ghost. And that corner of the gardens where the watercourse makes a beautiful sweep through the little wood of the ancestral banian-tree, and where we saw the English girls assembled together that morning, is still the place of favourite resort. We can note no change here except the typical one of an iron garden-seat having taken the place of the old wooden bench. There are two ladies on the seat. The young girl with the bright and blue-eyed face bears a strong resemblance to the Lilian Fane who formed one of that group of girls, as well she may, being indeed her daughter; and the pale but pretty middle-aged lady by her side is her mother, the Lilian Fane of old, but of course now

Lilian Fane no longer. Her husband, Colonel Leslie, is now the Commissioner here—Khizrabad, like Delhi, was placed under the Punjâb Government after the Mutiny—and Mrs. Leslie now lives in Melvil Hall. And the daughter who is now with her (she has several others, two of them married; she is, in fact, a grandmother) arrived from England only two days ago, and though she has, of course, heard the story of her mother's escape from Khizrabad, she has not heard it yet in fullest detail from her mother's lips. And Mrs. Leslie tells it to her now, seated here in the shadow of the banian-tree. She tells her how they were gathered together in this spot to settle the dresses they were to wear on the occasion of Aunt Beatrice's wedding, and how the cobra appeared and grandpapa killed it; and of the terrible day of the outbreak, and how they escaped to the Jummoo Gate, and how, seeing some of their own light summer dresses lying there on the ground, and, picking one up, she saw under it the dead body of a young officer she knew very well and liked very much ('Poor fellow! he was only a boy: everyone called him Tommy Walton: I can see his face now,' says Mrs. Leslie with a shudder); and how they were let down the wall, and the difficulty they had in crossing the ditch, and all that happened afterwards; and how they wandered about for three days and underwent terrible sufferings; told her own part of the tale that I have told to you.

The events of that time are graven very deeply on the minds of all who witnessed them. Reviewing my own work, I think they are graven too deeply for the purposes of fiction. You can manipulate fictitious events and characters as you will. You can make the events mould or bring out character, the character produce and bring about events. You can give the due proportion of space to the delineation of character or the narration of events. But in dealing with the real adventures of real people you are apt to forget that the characters of the actors are not as well known to the reader as to yourself, and every occurrence will insist upon being narrated exactly as it happened and at full length. You are apt to be overpowered with incident. The writer should dominate his events; but the events of the Indian Mutiny are sure to dominate the narrator. (We see this in every history of it as yet published.) But I have told the tale as best I could. Let the reader judge it leniently.







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