W W Campbell

THE GAGE OF HONOUR.

VOL. II.

THE GAGE OF HONOUR.

A Tale of the Great Mutiny.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF 'THE EASTERN HUNTERS,' &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18, CATHERINE ST., STRAND.
1869.

JOHN CHILDS AND SON, PRINTERS.

THE GAGE OF HONOUR.

CHAPTER I.

'Love sought is good, but given unsought is better.'

Twelfth Night.

THE monsoon season had passed into the cold weather, and the year 1856 rolled into that eventful one following, which was destined in its course so terribly to affect the English in India.

And with the progress of time came no amelioration in the terms subsisting between Mr Atherton and his wife. Indeed, passive dislike was fast developing

into active hate; and whether or no he wished her to commit some foolish act from which there could be no retreat, he certainly took the most effective means of rendering such possible.

Hand in hand with her passionate anger at her husband's treatment was growing a sense of reliance on another, unswerving faith in him, and a deep, unchecked feeling of gratitude and pity.

All the undisciplined forces at work within her had culminated in a passionate yearning to make amends for what she had thought and said.

A complete explanation had taken place between her and Douglas after the restoration of the ring, and it had been followed by an entire change in her demeanour. From being exacting, easily

dissatisfied, haughty, she had bowed her nature, and become gentle, almost submissive, in her intercourse with him. She believed that he would have sacrificed everything to defend her and her good name; that he had repaid her taunts with his devotion; and in the natural impulse of a not ungenerous nature, she exaggerated in her own mind both the cause and effect.

Such was the state of their domestic affairs when, one morning, Mr Atherton addressed his wife at breakfast—a meal usually passed by her in as silent a manner as she could make it:

'Let me see,' he said. 'This is the third of January. In another ten days we shall have been married two years. What a delightful retrospection!'

She made no observation, and he continued with a coarseness which was now very frequent:

'That was a black day in the calendar for me. I never made a greater mistake in my life, not even when I heavily backed Conqueror for the Derby of the year before. However, as we must give a dinner-party soon, we may as well mark the day by that formal recognition. I hate dinner-parties.'

'Thank you,' she calmly answered. 'But I rather wonder at your wishing to commemorate a mistake for which you have only yourself to blame.'

'It certainly would be more appropriate to spend it in sackcloth and ashes,' he retorted, 'but neither will exorcise regret.'

'Then you wish to banish regret?' she calmly inquired, and in a tone as if the answer were quite immaterial.

'I wish it, but it is impossible. And, remember, as I do not choose that any particular elements of pleasure should be introduced for yourself alone, you will be good enough to omit Mr Douglas' name in your list of invitations.'

'Certainly. Have you any farther commands or observations to make?' she asked, outwardly quite unmoved.

'Yes!' he returned coarsely, annoyed at her impassibility. 'I have to observe that much as I wish your relative'—and he spoke the word with a sneer—'had occupied my place on the day we intend to celebrate, I have objections to his now occupying it; at least,' he continued

with a harsh laugh, 'I would rather he did not.'

She bit her lips and clenched her hands tight; but beyond that and the flashing of her eyes, gave little outward display of her emotion, as she said, in the same calm, constrained voice,

'I would recommend you to apologize for that ungentlemanly language. Though I fear asking you to have any respect for either yourself or me is useless.'

'I certainly, at any rate, do not intend to apologize for anything I have said,' he replied, still more rudely, as he left the room. 'You must make the best of it.'

Would he have been contented thus to treat her could he have foreseen the effect of his coarse observations?—could he have seen her a few minutes later

down on her knees in her own room, pale and tearless, with clasped hands, invoking help in her hour of need ?—could he have heard the wild sighing sobs which escaped from her throbbing bosom unaccompanied by the relief of weeping ?—could he have read all the humiliation, the pain, and the passion which raged in her heart ? —could he have seen the vision which passed over her soul—a vision of Edith Dombey—but an Edith Dombey impelled and hurried on by strength of affection as well as by revenge ? Had he done so he might possibly have relented. But he saw nothing of all this as he walked to his office whistling a lively air, and congratulating himself on the pungency of his late remark, and absolute triumph over and power of wounding her.

What was the feeling which prompted Mrs Atherton to send for Norah Selby that morning? Was she so afraid of her own thoughts as to wish them turned into other channels by contact with the girl's pure and guileless spirit? It must have been some such impulse. She loved the child for her bright affectionate nature, and that love was a protection to her from herself in her present mood. The communion with one so innocent of evil could hardly fail to strengthen her in good, and act as an antidote to that poison of vengeful thought which, though strongly opposed, had forced its way in and infected her soul.

Miss Selby immediately responded to her friend's invitation by presenting herself; and the two, after the usual oscula-

tion, sat down to spend a comfortable day together.

In a large, well-appointed establishment like that of Mr Atherton's, the preparation for a large dinner-party involved the very smallest amount of personal trouble on the part of the lady of the house. To an excellent Portuguese cook and his assistants, and the old khansamah, were left the entire burden of arrangement. The number expected was announced, and the issue of a liberal supply of 'Europe goods' directed. These last included various articles hermetically sealed in tins, such as hams, soups, game, oysters, vegetables, and many other things. It is true the cook made excellent soup, the garden vegetables at that particular season were fresh and abund-

ant, and the duck, snipe, and quail unsurpassed in quality; but there exists an attraction in the very idea of eating English things which would induce the majority to disregard the fresh produce of the country for the staler though more costly products of their native land. It was not with the dinner itself that Mrs Atherton needed to trouble herself, but simply with the selection of those who were to eat it; and she now called on her young friend to assist her in this important proceeding previous to writing out the invitations.

Amid much canvassing of names, the list was altered, weeded, added to, and re-altered, until it began to assume a pretty complete form. But somehow a vacancy existed which neither seemed quite able to fill up satisfactorily.

'Of course you have reserved this place for Mr Douglas,' at last observed Miss Selby.

'What leads you to think so, Norah?' inquired the other sharply; 'if I had intended that he should be present, I should have put down his name.' This was spoken in a voice and manner indicating a sense of injury at having ascribed to her some unexplained motive. Her husband's taunts and the conflict in her own breast had rendered her foolishly susceptible and suspicious in everything connected with her friend's name.

Norah looked up quickly, a little astonished at the vehemence with which Mrs Atherton spoke, and then said, 'I didn't mean to say anything to hurt you, Helen dear; only I thought you would be sure to ask him, as he is so

great a friend of yours, and a relative also.'

'Yes, yes, child; forgive me for my petulance; I was thinking of something else. However, I am not going to ask Mr Douglas; so with whose name shall we fill up? Major Highton and Mr Percy are both down. Let's see! who else is at present on your flirting list? Is there any new favourite?'

'No, none,' replied the girl with a blush and laugh; 'I think I have exhausted all that are worth flirting with; and, besides, I'm tired of flirting.'

'Quite all?' asked Mrs Atherton. 'What say you, then, to including some one who doesn't flirt? Who can we have?'

'I don't know,' said Miss Selby, look-

ing down, while a little foot was beating the floor in anxious expectation.

'There's Captain Estcourt and Major Watson, and — yes, of course, there's Major St Clair. He doesn't flirt, does he? shall we put him down?'

'Yes, if you like,' was the reply.

Mrs Atherton looked narrowly at her young friend, whose eyes were still downcast, as she said, 'Yes; why not him? I have learnt a great deal of him lately from *my* friend, and what his society has done for that friend. I know that he is a true-hearted gentleman, whose stainless life, acknowledged courage, and high character render him worthy of any woman's love. The love of such a man is worth a million of those of the flash, selfish butterflies who range the world.

I would greatly rejoice to see any one I love that man's wife. And—and—Norah dear, I think he likes you.'

'Do you really?' said the girl eagerly, in the first impulse of the moment, looking up with blushing face and swimming eyes.

Mrs Atherton came over, and kissed the bright, ingenuous young face, whose whole expression denoted the pleasure with which she had listened to her friend's panegyric. This, added to the start of surprise and joy which came over it at her concluding words, revealed what had been partly suspected by the other for some little time past.

Again she kissed her, and put her arms round the slight, girlish waist; and as Norah hid her burning face on her

friend's bosom she knew that she had a secret no longer.

'Yes, little one, I think so,' at length said Mrs Atherton; 'but liking and love are different. Though a simple-minded man, he is very reserved, and it is not easy to discover the depth of his sentiments.'

'I don't think he cares for me in—in that way, you know, Helen dear,' Norah softly said, with a sigh. 'He talks to me sometimes about all sorts of things, and makes me think a great deal; but he never talks as others do. You know what I mean. His conversation is not—well—I suppose I must say flirty, for want of a better word. And I don't think he has ever mentioned anything about love in his life to me,' she added simply.

'A good symptom,' Mrs Atherton rejoined. '"All cry and little wool" is highly applicable in *les affaires de cœur*—at any rate, in the earlier stages. But now you must tell me all about it. When did it begin?' and Mrs Atherton made herself up for a comfortable sitting, so as to have the full enjoyment a woman always derives from the discussion of love affairs with her friend.

Poor little Norah had not much to tell. She only knew now—very recently—that she really cared for the great, plain, simple soldier, who had at last, in his undemonstrative way, shown some little interest in her. She could not tell when it commenced. She knew that she used to be angry and hurt at his opinions concerning her, most of which she had

imagined or exaggerated. She remembered that he never took the trouble to endeavour to attract her notice, as so many did; and she was greatly surprised to hear of his attempt—a dangerous one—to come to her succour when her horse ran away.

Her feelings on that occasion opened her eyes in the very slightest degree to the fact that he was not so detestable as she had supposed. At last the disguise produced by the child's purity of nature, and by that innate and maidenly feeling which insensibly prompts a girl to screen the facts from her own consciousness, had fallen aside, and her deep interest in Hugh St Clair stood fully revealed to her perceptions.

She had struggled with, denied them,

determined to permit no permanent lodgment. She would repudiate in her spirit what she would not outwardly acknowledge. He cared nothing for her, despised her, thought lightly of her. All her maidenly scruples were up in arms. But all bowed, as the reed to the wind, before the force of any displayed interest in her on his part. That past, again they resumed their firm, defiant attitude, but with less and less of vigour to sustain it. Till, at last, the wind swept over the prostrate reed, never, no more, able to raise its wavering protest; never again to rise in the pride of its strength, seemingly unconscious of the pressure it had undergone. She loved St Clair. He, in his grave and thoughtful maturity, and his large nature, had attracted her impetuous,

impulsive spirit, and become to her as the haven of her rest. He became her ever-present thought, the secret object of her devotion. She was of that type of women who, once loving, and satisfied of the worthiness of the object of their worship, merge their being in another's, and raise up on high the exaggerated conception of a perfect ideal.

She had, at last, avowed to herself, and inwardly given reins to, the passionate earnestness of her affection, so closely mingled with respect for his character and a sense of complete reliance. At the same time, however, she struggled, with all the power of which she was possessed, to conceal those feelings from him as from others. It may have been this motive which induced her involuntarily to give a

sort of tacit consent to the attentions of Major Highton.

She did not express so much in the long conversation which ensued between the friends; but Mrs Atherton gathered enough to know that the girl's affections were very firmly fixed.

Major St Clair was, therefore, included in the list of invitations, and with the others invited, made his appearance in Mrs Atherton's drawing-room on the evening of the dinner-party.

Just before the old khansamah announced with folded hands that dinner was served, and threw wide the doors, Mrs Atherton signalled to Major St Clair, and requested him to take in Miss Selby to dinner. Strictly speaking, according to those rules of precedence regarding

which people are so susceptible in India —and, as far as that goes, in England also—there were present several men who, being his seniors in the service, were possessed of higher claims. However, Miss Selby, timidly and almost hesitatingly, touched his great arm with the tips of her fingers as he lowered it to receive the honour, and he escorted her as directed.

'Very singulaw,' said Major Highton, twirling his mighty moustache, to his neighbour, Major Horsman of the artillery, both of whom were, indeed, St Clair's seniors in actual date of rank. 'Very singulaw that Mrs Atherton should pair two people who rather dislike each othaw. I flattaw myself—aw!—that my society would be much more congenial to the young lady.'

'Ah, Major. Who could doubt it?' smilingly remarked the ubiquitous Mr Percy, who seemed to be allured like a vulture to carrion, when his presence was as little expected as desired, wherever an opportunity for chaff occurred. 'No one can withstand that fascinating manner of yours. Why, bless you, Nora Creina expressed herself the other day in terms of the profoundest admiration. She said you always reminded her of "Punch's" swells. But I say, Major, what will poor Miss Frumper say? Ah, you are a gay dog!'

Major Highton turned slowly towards the youthful speaker, and deliberately wiping his eye-glass, slowly raised it to his eye, and then brought the latter to bear full on Mr Percy without vouchsafing a single word.

Utterly unabashed, Percy returned the stare, and then as deliberately winked three successive times in the pleasantest manner possible, as he said, 'Never you mind, Major, you'll have your opportunity soon. Only make strong running, cut down the rest of the field, and they are nowhere.'

'By Gawd!' said Major Highton to his companion, as they left the room, and marched along the passage to the dining-room, 'the service is going to the daivil. Did you hear that young jackanapes, aw! a mere subaltern in a marching regiment, presume to chaff me—Major Highton of the heavy cavalry?'

Mr Percy caught this observation, and it afforded him the most unqualified delight. For this young iconoclast, in his

youthful inexperience, had most presumptuously been pleased to include among the society shams with which he waged war, what he expressed as 'a cad-like affectation of superiority,' which one service, or one regiment, assumed itself to possess over another.

Being young, he had yet to learn that the wonderful distinctions which bodies of men have created for themselves, are not to be lightly impugned by an ignorant young ensign. Feeling as he did, however, he was particularly cheered in spirit to think that his little tilt at this assumption on the part of his *bête noire*, had been successful. In his own mind he felt persuaded that had Major Highton been acquainted with the fact of his being highly connected, and with the *entrée* to

first-rate society at home, the grievous inferiority of his being merely an ensign in a *marching* regiment would have become neutralized thereby.

Major Plumptree also overheard the above observations; and hearing them, chuckled, hugely delighted at the little skirmish between the swell cavalry field-officer and the incorrigible young ensign, who was a great favourite with him.

Major Highton was fortunate enough to secure the seat on the other side of Miss Selby, and, in that much-coveted place of honour, made heavy play in the good graces of his fair companion.

Miss Selby accepted these gallantries with, as he thought, becoming gratitude. But, in reality, the listless smile with which she received his platitudes, was due

rather to a polite acquiescence in what she barely heard than to any other feeling. She was considering why her other neighbour was so silent, and what she should say to make him talk, which she now well knew he could do, when so minded. Conversation, exchange of ideas, she wanted in her present frame of mind, not chatter and small talk. But, somehow, her usual vivacity seemed to have deserted her this evening. And the more angry she became with herself that such was the case, the more stupid and incapable of originating conversation she felt herself to be.

As for St Clair, he believed himself rather *de trop*, for the admiration of the well-endowed dragoon had been the frequent theme of mess remark. He therefore left her, as he thought, to the more

grateful task of receiving the attentions of her neighbour on the other side.

Ensign Percy was seated immediately opposite, and felt, as he mentally asserted it, 'fairly bamfoozled.' He somehow had come to fancy on one or two occasions that dear old Hugh had a sort of sneaking liking for the girl. But now he could make neither head nor tail of it. The only fact he distinctly recognized was that of Major Highton's evident admiration, and he had long ago determined to put as many spokes in his wheel as he conveniently could. The gallant dragoon's attention afflicted the young fellow, and he longed for an opportunity to suppress him. As for Miss Selby—after one or two abortive attempts to engage Major St Clair in conversation—she had pouted,

given up the attempt, and endeavoured to interest herself in the other's observations and commonplaces.

More than once Mr Percy had fixed the eye of his prey. The latter endeavoured to look over, beyond, anywhere but at him. Insensibly however his regard was attracted, till he fully met that of the young scapegrace, and on each occasion of so doing, was favoured with an unmistakeable wink.

This did not satisfy the youth's aspiring spirit; but like a cautious general he bided his time for an onslaught on the enemy. This opportunity he thought occurred about the middle of dinner, about which time, too, he felt an inward craving for a glass of beer. Champagne and hock, which alone had been going the rounds,

were, in his estimation, poor substitutes for good, genuine malt.

Bottled ale, the common dinner beverage of India, it should be remarked, is always at hand, and at mess is frequently drank by one man asking another to join him, so that the bottle may at once be emptied. This was a practice highly disapproved of by Major Highton.

It was during a pause in Major Highton's brilliant sallies, and at a time when one of those hushed checks in the general flow of conversation fell on the company, and which are sometimes so difficult to overcome, that Mr Percy selected as the most appropriate period to commence his attack. 'Major Highton,' he said in a light and airy voice, but rather conspicuously loud.

The Major looked with a frown towards his youthful tormentor, and naturally every eye turned towards the spot whence the sudden interruption had arisen.

Seeing the effect produced, Mr Percy continued as he held up a glass and nodded over it,—'Ah, ha! I see what you are looking out for. So am I. Suppose we join.' And then turning quickly to Mr Atherton, without giving the other time to reply, he said, 'Will you permit me to send for a glass of beer for Major Highton?'

'Certainly,' was the answer. 'Sheik Hussein, beer to Major Highton.'

'I never touch beaw—never drank it in my life, sir,' ejaculated Major Highton angrily, as soon as he had sufficiently

recovered himself from his astonishment at the audacious proposal.

'Don't you? great pity! I do,' observed the other coolly. 'Never too late to mend, Major. Take my advice and cultivate a taste for it. However, wrap yourself round a glass of champagne instead now.'

As Mr Percy thus expressed himself, he looked cheerfully round, smiled, and then nodding again to his opponent, took a long and apparently satisfactory pull at the tumbler of beer which Sheik Hussein had handed him.

There was general and, in some cases, but ill-concealed amusement as this brief dialogue took place. And, to Mr Percy's heartfelt satisfaction, he saw that Miss Selby actually put her handkerchief to her

face to conceal the laugh which she could not altogether repress. As for Major Plumptree, he nearly choked himself between his delight at the boy's impudence, the major's discomfiture, and a large portion of a truffled partridge he was at the time engaged in discussing. For it had been matter of general notoriety, and indeed of umbrage to many present, that Major Highton openly derided and sneered at as vulgar, the general practice of drinking so unaristocratic a beverage as beer. Mrs Playfair, who was also present, laughed outright, and sent for the remaining glass of that liquid.

Mr Percy had therefore achieved a threefold success. He had procured, what he wanted, a glass of beer for himself. He had chaffed his pet aversion in

a weak point, and also held him up to the ridicule of the company, and of 'Nora Creina.'

He went on with his dinner, however, as if nothing had occurred to interrupt the even tenor of his way, seemingly ignorant of the sensation he had created, but really quite alive to everything that was going on around him. And he felt a glow of honest satisfaction—the satisfaction of seeing a noble effort crowned with success—as he observed that Major Highton sank into silence, and 'Nora Creina' looked at him with eyes sparkling with fun and merriment. And although St Clair shook his head at him, he could easily perceive it was more in his capacity of the youngster's mentor than anything else. For there was a smile, too, on his face.

Perhaps Miss Selby only wanted something to rouse her spirits, or have a turn given to the conversation, for she and Major St Clair after this entered into an animated discussion. So much interested indeed did she become in a description he was giving her of some travels in Cashmere, that Mrs Atherton had risen, and most of the ladies had left the room, before she was aware that the flag of retreat to the drawing-room had been hoisted.

In his diffident, unassuming nature he made no attempt in the drawing-room to supplant Major Highton, who, on entering, had sought Miss Selby's side, and again engaged in the heavy gallantry which characterized his intercourse with her.

Mrs Atherton took advantage of this

to put in effect her design of endeavouring to ascertain what really were the sentiments of St Clair towards her friend.

Obeying a sign from his hostess, he approached and took a seat beside her, previously concealed, but which she had reserved for him by spreading over it the voluminous folds of her dress. Crinoline, be it remembered, was then in vogue.

She had placed herself with her back to a strong light, which fell full on the destined victim of her pumping operations. For she determined to derive whatever of information she could extract from looks as well as words; and doubted not that her feminine tact and skilful management would elicit something of a tangible nature.

But she deceived herself. A perfectly

simple character, shy and unselfish, and entirely free from vanity, like that of St Clair's, frequently baffles the most astute investigator from the very fact of its simplicity. True, she observed his eyes wander more than once towards the object of all her manœuvres, but she gathered little, either from speech or look, on which to found any reliable opinion. A woman's penetration, in such matters usually so irresistible, was for once at fault.

CHAPTER II.

'Yet even Medora might forgive the kiss
That asked from form so fair no more than this:
The first, the last that Frailty stole from Faith.'

The Corsair.

I FEAR that I have scarcely given sufficient prominence in my narrative to Norah's father—Mr Selby. As I am, however, about to describe the events of a pic-nic which he had determined to give, I may here mention that he was a little, gentle, elderly man, to whom his daughter was as the very apple of his eye. He had several sons, either provided for

in the services, or at school in England, whence his only daughter had lately arrived to preside over his Indian establishment. Her mother had died in India a couple of years before, and the girl had been brought up by a maiden aunt, who had superintended her education. This had been completed with—as many will think—the advantage to a girl of having never been at school.

Miss Selby had heard so much of 'pig-sticking,' and found it a sport so highly appreciated, and so creative of enthusiasm, among many of her most devoted adherents, that she had frequently expressed a wish to become personally acquainted with the mode of conducting it.

It so happened that soon after the party at the Athertons, Mr Selby was

obliged to make a tour of duty through the neighbouring districts. His daughter, of course, accompanied him, and thoroughly entered into the spirit of, and enjoyed, her camp life, so free, unconventional, and untrammelled.

Circumstances chanced to take him to the village of Shikarpore, a noted place for sport, and a favourite meet of the Hussunabad Hunt. It possessed, moreover, the attractions of a pretty situation, and of some fine old temples, many of them in ruins, but others in a tolerable state of preservation. The village, too, was only about a dozen miles from Hussunabad.

This was an opportunity not to be neglected; and Miss Norah easily prevailed on her father—who could deny her

nothing—to give a pic-nic on a grand scale.

The secretary of the hunt—Douglas—was accordingly communicated with; and, under his directions, a beat for pig was organized. This was to be the principal object of the pic-nic. But there was shooting for those who desired it. Other occupations, such as sketching, flirting, and various other modes of passing the time, were also easily attainable as amusements during the day. The beat for pig was to be in the early morning, and expected to be over by eleven o'clock, the late hour named for breakfast.

Fortunately one of the high roads of the district passed conveniently within a short distance of the encampment. This was situated among a group of temples,

and under the shade of trees growing on the edge and at one end of an extensive lake. Here a large dam, called a *bund*, had been constructed, which stretched right across the contracted outlet or gap of a valley, and imprisoned the waters of the lake thus artificially created.

Spring bullock-carts, and even carriages, were enabled to approach by the road, which, though unmetalled, was quite practicable for dog-carts and smaller horse vehicles.

Mr Selby had given his daughter a four-wheeled dog-cart especially built for, and adapted to, the cart-ruts of the country roads. And in this, she herself drove a pair of ponies, well broken-in to the nature of their duties. This had been put into requisition a day or two before,

and Miss Selby had driven in to Hussun-abad to bring out her friend, Mrs Atherton, who had promised to spend a few days with her, and also join her in witnessing the hunt on the morning of the pic-nic.

No pleasanter spot could have been selected for the object in view than that described. The large suite of tents which formed the encampment was supplemented by many of the temples, which were swept and garnished, and otherwise rendered habitable for the gentlemen of the expected party.

The grove and temples stood on an eminence at one end of the bund, and overlooked the lake and upper valley. Other and smaller groups of temples, mostly ruinous, dotted that side of the lake, advantage having been taken of its many

knolls and promontories on which to erect them. Several clumps of trees were interspersed amongst these; and one small hilly island, the only one in the whole expanse of water, was crowned by a lofty, umbrageous banyan tree, sheltering within its dependent limbs and recesses several ruins. The lake itself was covered with wild-fowl of various descriptions, and amidst the rushes of its sedgy margin, duck, waders, and snipe found a pleasant feeding-ground, and ran or dabbled in conscious security.

Where the water had receded were left, here and there, long tracts of grass-land intermingled in the upper parts with bushes. These formed the abode of numerous quail and partridges. And, at the distance of a few hundred yards on

the other side of the bund, this grass-land extended up a small lateral valley watered by a stream, and enclosed within two parallel ranges of low hills. At a short distance from the lake this expanded into an area of much greater breadth, being interspersed with bushes and clusters of date trees, and formed a capital cover for wild-pig.

On other portions of the lake's margin, especially at the upper end, the land had been reclaimed from nature, and the waste converted into fields. At this season they were vivid with the bright green of growing barley, and other crops of the spring time. Low hills for the most part embraced the basin of the lake and its surrounding land. At the upper end and farther side these became merged in

hills of higher altitude at the distance of two or three miles. It was over this intervening space that the hunt was to take place; for the pig, driven from their refuge in the grass-land, would be sure to make for the fastnesses in the more elevated region.

Arrangements had been made for the beat to commence at seven o'clock. Half an hour before that time, therefore, most of those intending to hunt had assembled in the principal tent, and were making the best of the short time remaining, in fortifying themselves after their gallop, or camel jolt, or drive out from cantonments, with the substantial ante-breakfast which was there prepared. And many might have been observed to lace the cup of tea or coffee with a *soupçon*

of something stronger from some long-necked bottles, which stood ready at hand on a side-table.

A motley group they were—booted, coated, and hatted in every variety of sporting costume.

The hunters were being walked up and down outside, each native groom in charge being laden with one or more spears of tough, tapering bamboo, armed with glittering, polished steel heads. Many of their masters were becoming impatient to be off, and stood examining their own or their friends' horses, eager for the fray. At last a message was sent to know if the ladies were ready, and this was immediately followed by their appearance from another tent, habited and gauntleted, and ready to mount.

No time was now lost. The ladies, four in number—for only two others had joined Mrs Atherton and Miss Selby in their wish to see the hunt—were mounted, and the cavalcade was shortly in progress, under the conduct of the head shikaree, towards the cover.

Arrived near the spot, where a large number of beaters had been already assembled by the native village functionaries, the last preparations were made, and the bundabust, or arrangement of the hunt, explained.

The ladies with their attendants, the non-hunters, including Mr Selby, Dr Cruickshanks, and one or two others, were directed to station themselves on the crest of a hill, which was pointed out to them. Thence, it was hoped, they might

view the proceedings without interfering with them or encountering any danger.

One or two natives were told off as guides to the party, which the worthy doctor, who was more of a pedestrian than a rider, announced his determination to accompany on foot. And with this object in view he had been pleased to array himself in one of the seediest pairs of trowsers in his wardrobe.

'It is cold and bracing,' said he, 'and much more adapted to a good walk than a quiet ride. "The air bites shrewdly," as Hamlet hath it.'

'Take care the pigs don't do the same, Doctor,' said Percy. 'Upon my word, I wouldn't guarantee your safety if they catch a sight of the attractive habiliments in which your lower limbs are encased.'

The ladies tittered as they rode away, and the men laughed, but the worthy object of their amusement prepared to follow his party quite unconcerned, saying as he did so,

'"Through tatter'd clothes *small* vices do appear,
Robes and furr'd gowns hide all."

Now, Master Ned, the inference is that your fine clothes—and you are famously got-up—hide great vices, while in me small ones only are to be found.'

'I certainly admit, Doctor, that you are holier than I am.'

'That joke is as old as the hills,' retorted the doctor, walking away.

'Much like your breeches, then,' shouted Mr Percy after the retreating figure.

'Ha, ha,' laughed the doctor in the

distance, not a whit disconcerted. 'Gad! the boy would have the last word with old Nick himself.'

But the occasion was one of too great importance to waste the time in useless persiflage. Douglas called attention to the distribution of the riders, and requested that each division, consisting of five or six horsemen, would take up its allotted station. They were thus divided, in order that the different points at which the pig might be expected to break, should be watched.

The cover was thick and extensive; so when all had reached their respective places, and concealed themselves as well as possible from any animal breaking, the large body, consisting of about two hundred beaters, was marshalled in line, and

put into the cover. Now commenced a yelling, blowing of cows' horns, beating of gongs and tom-toms, and general discordance, enough almost to rouse a dead, let alone a sleeping, pig.

A sounder or herd of well-grown pig, but not including any large boar, were the first to accept this notice to quit, and broke away near one section of the hunters, right up the little valley. After sufficient law had been given them to prevent their breaking back, the horsemen thundered away in pursuit.

The whole proceeding took place in full view of the spectators on the hill, who became greatly interested. And when both pig and riders had passed, most of them put their horses in movement, and galloped from one commanding

spot to another, eager to see the racing contest of the struggle for the first spear.

Even the doctor was excited; and, though he was unable to keep up with the mounted of his party, used his long legs to some advantage. As for the ladies, they went into it heart and soul, and, regardless of the admonitions of Mr Selby, galloped here and there in great confusion, quite oblivious of the fact that their movements might deter other pig from breaking in front of the remaining divisions. In the wild tumult of the blood, occasioned by rapid movement through the bracing morning air, all became more or less affected with the ardour of the chase. Separated one from the other, each rode to such commanding spot as he or she thought likely to secure

a good view of the run, till, ere long, the hunted, hunters, and spectators had all passed out of sight of those left at the jungle side. But this did not happen before their movements had greatly scandalized the members of one division, across whose front all this scampering had taken place.

'Why, what the dickens are they up to there!' exclaimed one of the aggrieved of a party posted behind a large tuft of date-trees. 'Just look! How on earth can a pig be expected to break, with all those petticoats fluttering in front?'

'Hush! You are as bad as the women, with your loud exclamations,' whispered Douglas, tartly. 'I saw a heavy boar just now pass that opening in the jungle. Keep a look-out along the edge and up the nullah.'

Thus admonished, the culprit, as well as the others, kept a keen look-out, and the objectionable petticoats shortly disappeared far in front.

'There he is!' whispered one, pointing with outstretched hand and eager face, as a dusky form was observed to trot through some bushes near the edge of the jungle, and then stand listening.

At this intimation all settled themselves more firmly in their seats. The hearts of both men and horses beat in unison with the excitement, common to both, as they remained ready to give chase whenever their leader should give the word.

After a few minutes of anxious suspense, the boar was seen again to move on, and again to stop and listen with head

protruding at the very edge of the cover. His white tusks glittered in the light, as his bristled head was poked out with ears erect, endeavouring to catch the slightest noise in front. For though he peered out of his savage-looking little eyes, he trusted more to sound than sight. Soon he seemed to satisfy himself that all a-head was clear. Just then a more sustained roar and noise arose from the advancing beaters, and he trotted sulkily into the open. There he stood a few seconds peering about, then dashed off along the nullah at a leisurely pace. He had fairly broken, but was allowed to proceed unmolested till he had attained such a distance as to render his breaking back unlikely.

The word was at last given, and the

party of five galloped off at speed in the wake of the boar. The latter soon became aware that his exit had not been undetected, and set off at a pace which, at first, prevented any closer approach on the part of his pursuers.

Wary and cunning, he knew how to take advantage of every well-known obstacle which lay in his line, whether watercourse or nullah, hill or patch of jungle. For some time he held on along the nullah, reaping all the benefit he could by leading his followers across its windings or along its rugged banks. But this soon diverged from his line to the hills, for whose shelter he was making. He, accordingly, struck up a branch watercourse; and, after being for some time lost to view, was observed far on the left

flank topping the stony ridge. A shout and spear held aloft by the first who saw him, proclaimed this to the rest, and the scattered party all rode converging on the point indicated.

From the top of the ridge the cunning old boar was discovered making his way over some difficult, broken ground, thickly covered with date patches and other jungle. Beyond this a deep ravine presented itself.

At this time Douglas, Percy, and another were struggling for the lead in the van, with the remaining two slightly in their rear. As they descended the hill the boar, then a couple of hundred yards in front, was seen to disappear in the nullah a-head.

On reaching the bottom of the slope

the hunters found the ground seamed with a number of small blind water-courses, now dry, but hidden from sight, until on the very brink, by tall grass. Douglas, who was most to the right, and in the very thick of them, had got his horse well over one or two, when some rotten ground gave way on the edge of a shallow one, and his horse came down, giving him an ugly fall. Both, however, were soon up, and Douglas got hold of his horse, but it was some time before he could mount, for the colt he was riding was new to the work and danced about with excitement. At last he managed to throw his leg over, and made play in the direction in which his friends had disappeared. He soon reached the neighbourhood of the nullah, and galloped to a

commanding spot somewhat farther on. Thence he saw the hunters still in movement far a-head; but by the uncertain way in which he could discern they were riding, neither struggling nor cramming, he at once concluded they had somewhere missed the boar.

Knowing how very often a pig is overridden, and sometimes how good a chance is thus given to the badly mounted or unlucky, he made for another elevated point which commanded a considerable extent of ground to the front and flanks. Thence for a brief space he watched, and shortly had the satisfaction of finding his vigilance rewarded by seeing a large black object appear from out a nullah, and lob away up a hill on the right.

Shouting as loud as he could, he

made tracks after it, and on crossing the hill again viewed the boar, much blown, cantering leisurely beyond.

It was now a case of hard cramming, and he rapidly gained on the pursued. The latter had been taking it very easy, doubtless imagining—if a pig can be said to imagine—that his cunning dodges had thrown off his pursuers; but the near approach of Douglas left him no longer deluded. With a surly grunt he again lay out at a pace which allowed him for a brief space to hold his own. But age and good feeding had produced weight and obesity. Succulent sugar-cane and nourishing roots had covered with fat those lank ribs and limbs which a few short years before would have still carried him merrily along in the race.

The froth was flying from his jaws as each yard told on his speed, and Douglas found that the old boar was fast being overhauled.

His own horse was a little pumped, as he was not in hunting condition; but he had now the command of speed, and Douglas sought to take immediate advantage of the tolerably level ground over which they were galloping, and spear the boar before he reached the next cluster of hills.

Pushing his horse, he closed. But the boar made a sharp turn, and just managed to avoid the intended thrust. With some little delay, Douglas brought his horse round, and once more closed with the pursued. As he shot past the steel flashed in the sun, and was then

driven deep into the boar's body. In the moment of receiving the thrust, the boar with a surly grunt attempted to turn on his assailant, but was too late. The latter passed. But in wheeling off, he was unable to withdraw his spear, and the movement of the pig snapped it off, leaving only the larger part of the bamboo in the hands of the hunter. The blade remained still buried in the body, while two or three feet of the spear were left sticking outside.

They had now reached the bottom of a cluster of steep, stony hillocks, separated from the plain by a nullah. They were partially covered with thick jungle, into which the enraged brute sulkily trotted, after enjoying a good roll in a pool of water below. All that Douglas could

now do was to keep the beast in sight, or mark it down, till some one or other of the horsemen should come to his assistance.

Looking up to select a good spot from which to keep watch and guard, he saw that one of the ladies, seated on horseback in the shade of a small tree, was eagerly looking in the opposite direction on something going on in the plain beyond.

It was Mrs Atherton, who, engaged in viewing a race for the spear by the other party in front, was quite unconscious of what was going on behind.

Douglas shouted to warn her of the danger from the wounded boar, and strove to push his sobbing horse up the steep ascent.

'Gallop away!' he almost screamed

as he saw the bristly back of the boar threading the jungle and advancing directly towards the spot occupied by the lady.

Mrs Atherton turned at the shout, but owing to the jungle did not perceive the presence of the enemy.

'The boar, the boar. For God's sake, ride off!' again shouted Douglas in terror, as he flung himself off his exhausted horse, and struggled up the steep and rocky hill-side.

But it was too late. Endeavouring to understand what her cousin was shouting about, Mrs Atherton had slightly advanced towards him. Before Douglas could gain the top, hard though he struggled to do so, there was a quick waving of the bushes, and the move-

ment of a heavy, dark body through them. Then came the onset, a savage double grunt, a lightning rush, a scream, a crash, and horse and rider were overthrown.

A few seconds more enabled Douglas to reach the top, and a single glance sufficed to show him the state of affairs. The horse was struggling to its feet, and Mrs Atherton was also rising from the ground. The boar, evidently a little confounded with the effects of its charge and the general confusion, was standing with champing tusks not as yet decided which of its two prostrate adversaries to attack.

Casting away his broken bamboo stick, Douglas drew a small pointed hunting-knife, of some six inches long, from his waist-belt, and rushed between the infuri-

ated boar and Mrs Atherton. And not a moment too soon. The boar had fixed its little blood-shot, glaring eyes on her, and was in the act of preparing for its rush, when the interposition of Douglas transferred the brute's attention to himself.

Its savage nature rendered doubly so by the pain of its wound and the irritation caused by pursuit, and perhaps elated by the ease of its recent victorious onslaught, the boar cast itself headlong against its old antagonist.

Fortunately he was so close that there was no space to gather impetus to assist its weight in the charge, or Douglas must have been surely overthrown. Knowing that on him, and him alone, now depended the lady's safety, Douglas made no effort to avoid the attack. Hastily ejaculating

'Get behind the tree, Helen!' he bent his body low, stooping well forward with left leg advanced, and left arm held well in front to receive the first collision. With his right he grasped the knife. Thus prepared, he met the shock in a firm position. He first received the blow of the boar's snout on his arm, and as this was quickly followed by the right and left strokes of the terrible tusks, the knife gleamed in the air, and was buried nearly to the hilt in the infuriated brute's thick, brawny neck. Quickly withdrawn, again it fell. The blows were severe, but not sufficient to prevent other strokes of the equally sharp-pointed tusks.

Seeing that some more vital place must be attacked, Douglas now grappled with his adversary. Seizing one foreleg

and holding on to it with all the strength of his wounded arm, he drew closer to the body of the animal. But in doing this he was almost dragged down in the effort of the boar to release itself. In the momentary struggle, however, the animal's side became fully exposed; and, taking advantage of his opportunity, Douglas aimed his blow just behind the shoulder at the part rubbed bare by the attrition of the elbow. It was successful. Either the heart or some connecting vessel was touched or severed; and as he withdrew the knife, the blood spurted out in a huge stream. At the same time the boar with a convulsive grunt—almost a scream—rolled over and fell dead.

The brief but deadly struggle ended, and the victor being satisfied that such

was indeed the case, he turned round to look after the woman he had rescued.

She was standing close behind, on the same spot whence she had arisen, and pale, speechless, and immovable, had watched the fight. She was brave at heart and of almost masculine nerve, but she quailed at the suddenness and imminence of the danger, and the desperate character of the scene being enacted so close.

As Douglas turned towards her, however, she saw that he was covered with blood, and appeared quite exhausted. She ran to him, and tenderly taking hold of his left arm, which was hanging by his side, rapidly ejaculated her fears for his hurt.

And indeed he was exhausted. His

rush up the hill-side was no trifling preliminary to a struggle for life and death. All his still remaining energies and strength, too, had been concentrated in the brief fight, and its close left him utterly powerless and breathless.

'I'll—just—rest against the tree for a minute,' he said faintly, as he sank down on to the ground.

In a moment she, too, was down on her knees by his side. Not knowing what was the extent of his wounds; dreading everything; almost desperate at feeling that he might, for aught she knew, be dying before her, she placed her arm round his neck to give him support, as she exclaimed,

'Tell me, are you much hurt? Oh, dearest, what shall I do? Frank, my love, look up.'

He had nearly fainted, for the boar's tusks had made some very awkward gashes on both arm and leg, and he had lost much blood. But her words aroused him — as he afterwards thought they would have done, had he been dying — and he managed to ejaculate in a low voice, 'Shall be right soon. Water, if you can.'

Laying his capless head back against the tree, and just touching his forehead with her lips, hardly aware of what she was doing, she ran down the declivity to the nullah at its base, as he had pointed in that direction. There she found a pool. She then tore off the muslin turban that bound her hat. The latter she filled, and next saturating the puggree, quickly returned to the wounded man with sufficient

water left to moisten his lips, and give him a few mouthfuls to swallow. With the muslin she tenderly wiped his forehead and face.

And somehow her disengaged hand met his unwounded one. And it was locked there, till, revived by the water and the rest, he raised his head and looked round.

His own horse was standing where he had left it. Hers had hobbled away on three legs with a deep gash across the near fore-arm, and was also standing at a little distance easing the wounded limb. All this he noticed. Then he looked earnestly into her face, still retaining her hand. For one brief space she returned his loving gaze, then turned away her eyes. And for the first time he knew and

felt, *for certain*, that she loved him, for her words had not fallen unheeded. He drew her face down towards his, and pressed his lips against hers, in one long loving kiss. It was only once. And how could she refuse it in that moment to her preserver?

Without one word on either part he released her, and with some little difficulty rose to his feet.

Looking round, he observed several horsemen gathered together in the valley beyond, and judged rightly that they were collected round a dead pig. They formed the party which Mrs Atherton had been watching, when he so unexpectedly made his appearance.

One or two ladies also were to be discerned on neighbouring knolls, and the

signals he now made soon attracted the attention of both parties.

Though still weak and faint, he had so far recovered as to be able to look after the horses, and in this employment was found when several others arrived on the scene of the late encounter.

He narrated how it had occurred, and affirmed his belief that his wounds were comparatively slight. With the assistance of the rest, however, they were bound with strips torn from Mrs Atherton's wet turban, and re-mounting, he, with the others, rode slowly back to the tents. Mrs Atherton was accommodated with the horse of one of the hunters, after an exchange of saddles had been effected, for her own little galloway had to be led gently back.

The hunt was over, so far as the beat was concerned, though several of the keenest sportsmen remained out to pug up or track some of those pig which had escaped, and endeavour to add to the list of the killed.

CHAPTER III.

'For Love himself took part against himself
To warn us off, and Duty loved of Love—
Oh this world's curse,—beloved but hated—came
Like Death betwixt thy dear embrace and mine,
And crying, 'Who is this? behold thy bride!'
She push'd me from thee.'—*Love and Duty.*

NUMEROUS, of course, were the congratulations on the escape of Mrs Atherton, and the expressions of sympathy with Mr Douglas.

Mr Selby and his daughter insisted that the latter should stay, and directed a sleeping-tent to be made ready for him. And as this proposal was sustained by the

opinion of Dr Cruickshanks, who prescribed rest and quiet, Douglas was at last persuaded to send into cantonments for his servants and clothes, and an application for a day or two's leave. Mrs Atherton had, on hearing this, announced her intention of returning home, and so leaving ample accommodation for the wounded man. She now almost dreaded being thrown so constantly into his society, as must be the case should they together remain Mr Selby's guests. As a plea for curtailing her visit she suggested giving up her tent to the invalid. But this proposal was quickly overruled, as there existed no valid excuse for departure on account of the insufficiency of accommodation.

Many more, both ladies and gentle-

men, had arrived during the time occupied by the hunt, and a large party sat down to the late breakfast. But St Clair was not among them. He had quietly, and as a matter of course, despite the objections of Douglas, assumed, for the time, the position of head nurse; and, in that capacity, assisted the doctor in his ministrations. And it was a curious study, and a matter of wonder, to watch how the large-limbed man performed his self-allotted functions with a gentleness and tenderness of touch almost womanly.

'No danger,' said the doctor, in reply to numerous inquiries, as he entered the breakfast-tent. 'Wounds a little stiff at present. Cooling applications, time, and rest set all to rights.'

'But who will now look after him?'

asked Miss Selby. 'I wonder if I might go!'

'No necessity, Miss Norah,' the doctor replied. 'I have left him in capital hands. Upon my word, some of you ladies even might take a lesson from that huge fellow, St Clair.'

The day passed as such days usually do. After breakfast, some of the gentlemen went to shoot around and in the neighbourhood of the lake. Others stayed to escort and flirt with the ladies. The latter sketched, or rambled about among the ruins, wherever shade was to be had, or sat talking in the shelter of some of the many trees which grew around.

Miss Selby was among the wanderers, and she had selected Mr Percy as her escort. Perhaps it would be more correct,

though, to say that Mr Percy had selected himself, for he had concluded that the present was a favourable opportunity to make some investigations into a subject which had been disquieting him of late.

Going somewhat suddenly into St Clair's quarters one day very recently, he had found that individual gazing abstractedly on something he held in his hand. In endeavouring hastily to replace it in the desk open before him, St Clair had upset the teapoy on which it stood, and the whole fell to the ground. Percy's quick eye immediately rested on the object in question, and he saw that it was a narrow ribbon, such as ladies wear round their throats. Marvelling much at the sight, but without at the time appear-

ing to have observed it, he pondered on the circumstance.

'Whose fair neck could the old man'—as he somewhat uncomplimentarily called his friend—'have robbed? or in whose pretty little bits of adornment could he find such interest?' This was the problem he was endeavouring to work out.

It could be no maiden left on English soil, for St Clair had not been home for years. A brilliant idea struck him. Who could it be but Nora Creina? 'Odd!' thought the lad, as he now called to mind many little circumstances hitherto unnoticed, or only heedlessly observed. 'Very odd, in fact, most particularly odd!' and Mr Percy was so moved with the extreme oddity of the whole affair, that he walked off whistling a funereal air with

an aspect of mingled perplexity and gravity.

'What a close old shaver!' was his next reflection. 'Don't believe any one in the least suspects it. Wonder what the baby herself thinks? It's a queer start, altogether.'

This for some time had been Mr Percy's state of mind on that particular subject, and he now sought to gain some clue to the state of the fair Norah's feelings. He had therefore induced Miss Selby to believe that he had made a great discovery among the ruins which he wished her first of all to inspect with him alone. It was on this mythical errand that they had slipped away from the others, and were now nimbly threading their way midst the *débris* of the ruined temples.

When the time came, he trusted to find some overturned stone or inscription whose singularity might serve as the ostensible object of his journey.

In the mean time, however, he decided that the most appropriate mode of commencing the attack which he meditated was by a little lively allusion to his own devotion.

So, after some remarks of an indifferent nature, he began,

'You know, Miss Selby, that I have always been an awful slave of yours, don't you?'

'Oh yes, of course,' was the reply. 'Though an *awful* slave must represent rather a formidable form of devotion. But don't let us chaff, as you call it, I'm not in a humour for it to-day; and mind,

directly I have seen this wonderful discovery of yours, I'm going back. Where is it, and how far?'

'Oh, it's only over there,' he said, waving his arm, indefinitely indicating any part of 'the near and heavenly horizons.' 'Well, since you won't have chaff, I will for once talk seriously and in earnest.'

'Are you sure you can?' she asked slyly. 'I don't want you to undertake impossibilities on my account.'

'"Me vill try, mon amie," as the Frenchman said to the huntsman. I want to speak to you in confidence. You won't be afraid, will you?'

'Not a bit,' was the prompt rejoinder. The readiness of the reply, indicating, as it did, anything but a very serious con-

ception of the importance likely to be attached to his confidences, for a single moment brought him to that state which he was wont to describe as 'staggered.' This, however, was a frame of mind to which he had never been known to be more than momentarily reduced, and his recovery was instantaneous.

'Well then—Let—me—see! I suppose you know there has been a great discussion going on lately concerning the respective merits of light and heavy cavalry.'

'I dare say there has been. I'm sure I don't know. What then?'

'Well, my opinion and advice, you know, have always been, "'Ware the plunger."'

'Oh, your advice has always been to

wear the plunger, has it?' she said, quite unconscious—and not for the first time by many—of what he meant. 'But what is a plunger, and how is it worn? If you advise it, why, it must be worth wearing.'

'Ah, I see you don't understand. Plunger, you know, is a dragoon—a dra—goon. And "ware" is to "Beware."'

'Now, Mr Percy,' replied Miss Selby with much dignity, 'I have told you before not to speak in that sort of way. I beg you will not do so.'

'Well, well, I won't. Only he *is* such an unadulterated muff. And then—pray have you lost a rose-coloured sort of neck-band affair lately?' he suddenly asked.

'A rose-coloured sort of neck-band affair!' she exclaimed. 'I suppose you

mean a ribbon. I don't know, I am sure. Why?'

'Because if you have, I think I know where it is to be found. The present owner is very tall pumpkins, I can assure you.'

'I don't know what "tall pumpkins" may be,' she said, half angry, half laughing at the nature of the conversation, and the strange way in which it was conducted. 'But I suppose it has some special complimentary reference to yourself. If you have my ribbon, I request you will restore it. I believe I did drop one, on one of the race days.'

'I haven't got it. Who was there with you at the time?'

'Who? How can I tell! But what nonsense are you talking about?' and

the girl spoke more gravely, and with a slight heightening of colour.

'It's not nonsense,' he replied, dropping the chaffing tone he had employed, and also speaking in a manner that, for him, might also be deemed grave, and now quite free from slang. 'It is because I feel deeply interested that I have entered on this subject. I do so wish you would give me some indication as to the real nature of your feelings. I happen, you see, to have become accidentally acquainted with the fact that some one has a neck-band. And now you admit having lost one. I cannot say who it is. But surely you might let me know if you really care for this—well, you see, I must have it out—this antipathy of mine, the dragoon! or if you like any-

body else. I promise to be a true friend.'

'Now, Mr Percy,' said the girl, sharply—and it showed the nature of their flirting friendship that it never entered into her head that he could be speaking on his own account—'I have already forbidden such subjects. You *must* know that, as a young lady, it is not right for me to discuss them with any gentleman. I insist that you will not presume to enter on such topics again.'

'Beg pardon,' said the young man, haughtily. 'Never meant to presume,' and he laid stress on the last word.

'No, no. I don't mean that,' said the girl more kindly. 'But you know, my own self-respect forbids these matters being discussed by us.' And then continued, as she observed the hurt and

angry flush on his face, 'There, there, I do believe you are a kind, good fellow, and mean well. Shake hands, and don't let us think any more of this stupid affair.'

He was easily pacified. 'She is a rattling good fellow!' he thought, 'and the baby can take very good care of herself, child though she be;' and then added aloud, as he took the offered hand and deferentially raised it to his lips, 'You are a true, good little girl, Miss Selby, and I am grateful to you for showing me so much to respect as well as like in a woman.'

She was pleased, genuinely pleased at this unwonted tribute on the part of the wild, slangy young fellow. For she felt that it was genuine.

He was a thorough gentleman at heart, and possessed the intuitive perception of what was really of the gentle life in another. He was very different from those to whom externals are everything. He judged not by the deceptive veneering which so often serves to disguise the real merits or demerits from those wanting in inner refinement of feeling. Whatever he might appear outwardly, he possessed delicacy of thought within, and that true touchstone by which to test the genuineness of the natures with which he was brought in contact. No coarse or plebeian soul, however fair or plausible its mere outward refinement and gilding, but quickly discovered to his perceptions the coarseness beneath.

Somehow the nominal object of their

errand seemed to have escaped the memory of both, for they turned and walked back to the camp in a more silent mood than they had left it.

She was pondering on what had occurred, and though gratified at the assertion of her maidenly dignity, and its enforcement, perhaps with this gratification reflection induced her to combine just the slightest tinge of regret. It was not unnatural that she should desire now to have some clue to the possessor of that neck-ribbon which had nearly proved so great a bone of contention. Curiosity will subsequently prevail, however checked by stronger feelings of the moment. And so it came to pass that she almost repented of having hurried the conversation to so abrupt a close.

Percy, on the other hand, was thinking that he had not gained much by his manœuvre — indeed, was considerably more in the dark than he had been before as to his companion's feelings. So, on reaching the camp, he sought to mature reflection and solace himself for his discomfiture in an attack on the wild-duck and snipe, after which accordingly he sallied, and smote hip and thigh. He returned with a considerable bag, and the conviction that if Miss Selby did not care for the dragoon—which from her petulance he was inclined to think she did—at any rate, she cared for nobody else. And the kindly young fellow grieved, because he was convinced that if 'old Hugh really cared for any woman it would take a deal of shaking to squeeze it out of

him,'—so his thought phrased itself. This made him feel quite angry with 'Nora Creina' for not perceiving the merits of the man who had won his love and respect.

At the late tiffin the party reassembled. By the time it was over, and the subsequent discussions ended, the hour had come for departure, and traps, camels, and horses were sent for, and the final adieux made.

Dr Cruickshanks was, as I have said, but an indifferent horseman, and was cautious of intrusting the safety of his precious person to other than 'Bob.' This was a favourite pony of about thirteen hands high, whose staring ribs and generally dilapidated-looking condition testified to the care taken that no accident should

happen from any playfulness owing to high feeding.

The noble quadruped was duly paraded, but the worthy doctor could not allow the opportunity to pass without a quotation. Before mounting, he exclaimed—

'"Come, let me take my horse,
Who is to bear me like a thunderbolt."

That's your namesake, Harry Hotspur, Ned.'

'Faith, Doctor,' was the reply, 'it need be. I think it would take a good many hot spurs to shove that apology for horseflesh along. But jump up. I'm eager to see you borne off by a thunderbolt.'

The doctor was just what Mr Percy called 'one sheet in the wind.' His

morning exercise had doubtless fostered a natural tendency to thirst, and on this occasion he was somewhat over-valiant. He threw his long leg over the pony, and gathering up the reins in a bunch, high in front, kicked the beast's resounding ribs. That sober animal, scarcely believing that his master really meant it, sprang forward, and the gallant rider, with his long legs dangling, put the pony at a small channel, about a foot wide, by the side of the road. This was cleared in style. Elated with this equestrian triumph, and the complimentary exclamations of Percy, who shouted, 'Hurrah! well done, doctor! go it again!' the worthy man went off at score—

'"By Heaven, methinks it were an easy leap,
To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon,"'

he cried. 'That's Hotspur again, Ned.'

'Perhaps she hasn't got any, doctor,' returned Mr Percy. 'At any rate, I'll show you a much easier way of acquiring it. There's a very pretty line of small hedges just off the road. Come along! Let's see how that thunderbolt will fly them, and win immortal renown.'

But the doctor would not be tempted. Not all the persuasive eloquence of Mr Percy, nor even the example he set in himself taking his horse over one of the jumps, was sufficient to beguile the owner of the thunderbolt from the more even tenor of the regular way.

The assemblage had broken up, and the little camp was again left to a comparative solitude.

And among those left behind were two,

at least, on whom the events of the day had made a deep impression. Both Douglas and Mrs Atherton had eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. All self-deception was at an end. No subtle or casuistical reasoning, no mental reservation, could now blind either to the fact that they loved each other. This they were both obliged to face.

The lady dreaded the possible proportions which their present position might give to their future intercourse. It could hardly return, she feared, exactly to its old groove, but must become closer, warmer, and more confidential, or colder and more reserved. Which? She dreaded either. How would he treat her?

She trusted in him, or she would not have loved him. She was a true woman,

of refined organization, naturally pure-minded, and she would have shrunk with horror from other than that unselfish love which she believed him to feel for her. This would ever have prevented her from returning the passion of such a man as Lawson. She craved something higher and nobler, something which exalted, not debased, her in her own self-respect. And in Douglas' affection she believed that the elements existed of that pure love which she coveted.

She recognized the danger commonly subsisting in the very nature of such relations. But that such might be, pure and stainless, she never doubted.

But yet she dreaded the greater affinity which must ensue from the tightening of the bonds which connected her

with Douglas. She felt that such would be destructive of her own self-respect; and, moreover, might produce, in a mind constituted like that of Douglas, an alteration in the nature of his affection, and insensibly a diminution of his respect for her.

And yet could she refuse to suffer, if he demanded it, a closer and more intimate blending of their lives—a blending which might prove limitless?

And then the alternative. A cold constraint, perhaps to develop into indifference, or, at best, a frigid and passionless regard. Such a course were wiser, better; but could it now—all at once—be adopted?

She remembered now with shame the words she had uttered in her anxiety and

distress, and with still greater regret her acquiescence in that one loving kiss.

Would he ever demand such familiarity again? And if so, could she refuse it? She regarded it as the mere sign and symbol of affectionate regard; but it might be otherwise with him.

Nor were Douglas' thoughts on the subject less active. In the tranquillity of his present retirement, he had full leisure to survey their position, and the dangerous nature of the rocks a-head towards which the tide of passion, if unstemmed, might drift them.

He never attempted to disguise from himself the elation with which he reflected on the possession of her love. Yet it was not unmingled with pain. In the contradictory spirit of man's nature,

he almost wished that she had refused him the kiss which yet he dwelt on with rapture. It seemed to detract from the value of that love of which it was the seal.

He, too, dreaded the change which it might produce in their intercourse. But while, woman-like, she was principally engaged in contemplating the extremes, his thoughts were mostly devoted to a consideration of the best means of preserving unaltered their previous intimacy.

His theory was that passion, as a mental emotion, consisted in the abnegation of self. That the spirituality of love in its noblest sense had its very existence in the renunciation of aught but the happiness of its object. That it lived

'to wean from self each sordid thought.'

He had led a wild life. A somewhat blunted moral tone led him to view with indifference many social sins and ties. He thought if a woman possessed no virtuous principle or purity of mind, it did not much matter about the rest. But in him was ever created an intense and pitying pain, when, from a deplorable combination of circumstances, in innocent reliance, ignorance of danger, or in some unhappy moment of weakness, a naturally pure woman unpremeditatedly falls.

'The road is dim, the current unperceived,
The weakness painful and most pitiful,
By which a virtuous woman, in pure youth,
May be deliver'd to distress and shame.'

So wrote the tender poet of the affections, and the mind of Douglas echoed the words.

Douglas had become acquainted a few

years before with a tale so sad, so miserable, as deeply to impress him in the thoughtless wantonness of his early manhood, when the very romance of sin veiled its unrealized penalties. He had seen unavailing remorse, a deathless regret, to end only in an early grave. Open shame there had not been. But what perhaps is worse, the deep humiliating consciousness of unworthiness, that shrinking from the virtuous, which concealed sin, acting on a sensitive nature, produces. There had come, too, that deep distress of the awakened spirit, when it dare not seek relief in appealing to its Maker,—that annihilation of all self-respect. Nothing but tears, tears—nowhere help, no more sunshine, all clouds, nothing but bitter travail of the soul, all the beauty of life

extinct, an eternal separation from all that is good and lovable.

In this world everlasting sorrow, and in the next——? Who dare determine?

He had seen this. And in his deep distress at the spectacle of much natural purity of mind and many high qualities thus neutralized by the perpetration of one false step, he had realized the extent of sin which rests on the man who, in his gross selfishness, thus delivers over to distress and shame, a weak but devoted and loving woman.

Of how much of sorrow might this world be lightened if all could realize that the very nature of the sin itself destroys whatever of real love has been combined with what led to it!

To the last he had remained the un-

happy woman's friend, seeking by such means as in him lay to wean her from wrong and alleviate her misery. She had passed away years before, and he only now remained of the actors in that most pitiful drama of life.

At that time Douglas had felt deeply. It was one of those rare occasions in life when the earthy crust of selfishness and worldliness is thoroughly penetrated. The frivolities and petty emulous contentions, the shams and self-deceits, of the social struggle had been cleared away, and he saw clearly. In that one instance in his life he had acted with motives the most unselfish, seeking earnestly to help and do good. And should he now do otherwise, now that he loved with the strong and vigorous love of maturer manhood?

Then he thought of home—of a loved young sister whose sweet promise had now budded into dawning womanhood. And next he called to mind the loyalty of true affection of which the pearl ring he had given was the pledge and token, as it was the gage, of his own honour. Should that be sullied? Because temptation had arrived, should he run the risk of staining his soul with a guilt which, to one in her position, was cowardly? Should all his most cherished conceptions vanish before opportunity, and the worse side of his dual nature prevail at a time when he felt the deepest?

The flow of passion is too often the ebb of virtue. But with all his might he withstood both. The struggle was severe; but for the present he gained that greatest

victory which the world affords to any man—the triumph over himself.

And in this, it may be that insensibly the influence of the character of his friend St Clair had not been without its effect.

He now determined that the little episode of the hunt should be as if it were obliterated from the past, and cause no ostensible change in their relations. But to effect this he felt that there must be a temporary separation, for he recognized his own weakness.

On the following evening he was seated on an easy-chair, with his wounded leg resting on a stool in front, just outside the principal tent.

The mildness of the air, and the brilliant moonlight, had tempted Mr Selby and his guests to migrate from the dinner-

table to the outside. The gentlemen were enjoying their cheroots, and all remarking on the beautiful effect produced on the scenery by the moonlight. The lake with its dancing ripples of silver, and the chastened light and shade of the ruined temples, trees, and hills, presented a quiet picture of tranquillity and peace. Apart from the noisy hum of men, the little camp lay with its glittering tents sheltered by the larger trees, which tranquilly slumbered, just breathing, and no more, with the gentle night wind faintly palpitating midst their boughs and leaves.

There were sounds of life on the waters and in the jungles; but these only tended to give that impression of solitude which the presence of man invariably destroys.

The neighbouring village was far removed, and the only disturbing sound arising thence was the occasional bark of some restless cur. But even this was mellowed by the distance.

All sat and gazed, and soon silence crept over the little party, as each became wrapt in his or her own reflections.

The silence was broken by Miss Selby, who, putting her arm in that of her father, asked him to escort her to a point of land whence a general comprehensive view of the temples might be had. He rose at her bidding, and asking Mrs Atherton to keep their invalid company, strolled off with his daughter.

This was the first time they had been alone together since the kiss which had so altered life to them both. And a

troubled shadow passed over her spirit. An undefined dread of what was to come made her tremble for his words.

Contrary to the usual practice in such cases, the gentleman was the first to speak.

'Helen,' he said, 'I have been thinking a good deal since that fight with the boar.' He would not refer to what ensued. 'And I should like very much to know that you approve of what I propose doing for the good of myself, and—and—you.'

She was somewhat re-assured by the calmness of his tone, for she had dreaded what the natural impetuosity of his nature might urge him to do or say. So she replied in a voice which, though somewhat tender, was firm. 'Yes, Frank. If

it is for your good, and mine,' I am sure I shall agree with you.'

'Well, then,' he continued, 'as our review is over, I propose applying for as much leave as I can get. They won't allow volunteers, but I dare say I could contrive to get a passage to Persia, and see what I can of the campaign. Perhaps, when once there, I may get employed. I have several friends in authority. What do you think of it?'

She did not reply. It was to her a most sad alternative. To be left alone—quite alone. No sympathy—no encouragement. Nothing to compensate for her unhappiness. And above all, danger, perhaps death, for him.

He was looking at her. He saw her troubled face, so very, very beautiful in

the moonlight. He saw the tear-drops which would force their way underneath the drooping eyelash. He saw the intensity of her pain at the thought of their separation; and he wavered. He passionately longed to clasp her to his heart and say that he was hers, hers for ever, only hers.

The devils of temptation, till now beaten down, arose in their strength, and were fast claiming their usual mastery. Thought crowded on thought. Evil was fast prevailing in the conflict with his better nature.

'Helen,' he said, in a voice so changed that it almost startled her, 'Helen, for your sake,'—he had taken her hand, and was about to add, 'I will stay,' when Nora's ringing, girlish laugh in the

distance broke on the evening stillness; and, at the same moment, his fingers rested on the pearl ring.

That laugh conjured before him, like an electric flash, the innocent form of his pure young sister. And the touch of the ring helped to recall his wavering resolution.

He dropped her hand, and then ejaculated vehemently, 'Helen, Helen. Help me—help us both.'

Her brief struggle was over. She never doubted the propriety of his proposal, only she was a little startled at first by its suddenness.

'Yes, Frank,' she faltered, 'you are right. I agree with you. Only—only—if you could go somewhere else than Persia. Would not that do as well?'

'I think the campaign will be best,' he replied; 'I shall like the excitement of it. Our friendship can be kept up exactly as it has hitherto been. We can correspond as very dear friends. You will write, will you not?'

'Yes,' she said, 'I will write regularly. May God bless and take care of you.'

Little was said after this till the other two returned, when Miss Selby, in glowing words, described the beauty of the temples standing in relief against the moon, and carried away her friend to view the spectacle.

Douglas obtained long leave, and procured a passage to Persia, where he managed to get appointed on the Quartermaster-General's staff, and joined in some of the events of that brief campaign.

CHAPTER IV.

'Auribus teneo lupum.'—TERENCE.

THE course of my narrative now brings it to that dark, eventful epoch when the mighty convulsion which passes by the name of the 'Indian mutiny' shook all India. For its throes, radiating from the centre of disaffection in the north-west provinces and Oude, were felt in the uttermost parts of the Empire.

Before proceeding, therefore, with my tale it may be as well that I should very briefly sketch our military position just

before and after the first outbreak in May, 1857.

Previous to that date, one or two instances of disaffection had shown themselves in the native army of the Bengal Presidency. They had been suppressed. But the snake was barely scotched, certainly not killed.

The quotation, indeed, which heads this chapter, not inaptly represents the position of government towards the native army before the spirit of insubordination had culminated in open mutiny. Afraid to advance or retreat from its position, 'it held the wolf by the ears.'

It was reserved for the month of May fully to discover, and awaken all to a sense of, the actual danger which, like the sword of Dionysius, had been so long

suspended overhead. But, unlike Damocles, society suffered before discovery. It only required the single hair to be broken; and that hair may have been represented by greased cartridges or anything else. However, I am not going to enter into the vexed question of the causes, or whether the elements of insurrection were principally of a civil or military origin. All that I have to do with are the effects.

Fortunate indeed was it that the small but well-appointed little force of some 12,000 men was released from its distant expedition by the treaty of peace with Persia. The news of this was first received with much chagrin by all engaged, anticipating, as they did, a speedy onward movement from the mud-flats of

Mohumra. There a division under Outram and Havelock had been for some time encamped inactive, after the capture of the forts on the Euphrates.

But had not peace been then proclaimed, where would have been the recapture of Cawnpore—a feat preceded by one of the most appalling and satanic deeds ever committed by man? Where would have been the first relief of Lucknow? The chivalrous self-abnegation of Outram, and the noble, gallant perseverance of the Christian soldier, Havelock? What would have been the result of that splendid defence, concerning which the calm, just, and able man at the head of affairs in India said that 'never has a tale been told which will so stir the hearts of Englishmen and Englishwomen'? But

for Outram, Havelock, and their gallant band—so largely composed of those who had taken part in the Persian campaign—the Residency at Lucknow might have been celebrated for its tragic fall, and all the horrors of another Cawnpore massacre.

In the end of May, Generals Outram and Havelock, with the 64th and 78th Regiments, reached Bombay, and were at once sent round to Calcutta, thence to advance on their most eventful march. As other regiments, European and native, arrived, they were quickly sent up to their stations, and eventually all the force—both from Madras and Bombay—which could be spared, was pushed on to help the sufferers in the Presidency of Bengal.

The Chinese expedition was arrested

on its way, and other English troops from the Cape, Mauritius, and finally from England, were poured into India. But long before they arrived, prompt measures were taken to collect before Delhi a sufficient proportion of British soldiers out of the small European force then quartered in India. And for this purpose, many stations were denuded of their English garrisons at a very critical period.

Who that was engaged in those events, or indeed then resident in India, but must for ever remember the horror and dismay with which the terrible news of the outbreak at Meerut, and at Delhi, was received? Men could not, would not, believe the first rumours. But, alas! they were too soon confirmed, with additional particulars of woman and child

massacre, to add to the devilish deeds which had been already described. Who can ever forget the feeling of intense horror as day after day fresh details appeared? Many, no doubt, were exaggerated; but there existed enough of a truth so horrible as to render them almost unparalleled in the long catalogue of human atrocities.

Men felt so helpless. But with their fierce denunciations, many a one swore to levy, if opportunity presented, a deep revenge on the incarnate fiends who had perpetrated such horrors. A revenge, in some cases, fully and fearfully exacted.

Day after day appeared some description of sickening perfidy and treachery. Increased anxiety naturally followed. None knew where the next blow might fall. It

might be that the readers themselves would furnish the materials for the next tragedy. Who could tell? Almost to the last, however, many of the officers of the native army placed a fatuous trust and reliance on the loyalty of their own men. I speak particularly of Bengal. The armies of the other Presidencies being organized on different systems, and further removed from the centre of contagion, were only very slightly and partially disaffected, and, in fact, subsequently took part against the mutineers.

The original Bengal native army may be said, generally, to have collapsed. But when it is considered how small a leaven of evil-designing and disaffected men will corrupt the mass, it may be that, to some

extent, the trust of the officers was not altogether undeserved.

Many proved instances there were of bodies being forced into revolt against the wishes of the majority. Even with their scruples and prejudices attacked in the most tender points, and distrust of them apparent, some did remain firm throughout. While others, moved by some sudden and inexplicable impulse—perhaps fear at being involved in a common retribution—after long withstanding all temptation, did, at the very last, when success was hopeless, throw off their allegiance to the British government.

Sooner or later, however, by whatever impulse moved, the Bengal army nearly extinguished itself; and the process of extinction kept the English in India in a

state of deep anxiety and suspense. This was more particularly the case at those stations whose garrisons were composed entirely of native troops. Any day or night might bring the dreaded signal; and, amid plunder, fire, and murder, the rebels assert their independence of masters who had treated them too well.

Nor were wanting the elements of civil insurrection to assist the military. Indeed, to the scourings of the bazaars must be attributed many of the worst crimes in which the Sepoys refused to join.

Where no European force existed to overawe the disaffected, become a rallying point or refuge in case of outbreak, or, as in many instances, take the initiative and disarm the native troops, the greatest uneasiness prevailed.

It is almost superfluous for me here to refer to the noble bearings exhibited by the officers, both military and civil, in that dire emergency. Probably nowhere in history is to be found so general a manifestation of self-sacrificing devotion and adherence to duty.

But if such may be said of Englishmen, what can be spoken of those Englishwomen who, unhappily, were associated with those dreadful scenes?

Where can be paralleled their heroic conduct? Danger, distress, privations of all sorts, were borne with an unmurmuring patience and fortitude never equalled.

It was one of those occasions which prominently develope the highest national qualities. And surely Englishmen have indeed reason to be proud of their

countrywomen, whose bearing, in those days of agony, cheered and sustained them in the unequal strife. 'Show me the women of a country, and I will tell you what the men are like.' If the judgment so formed be correct, we may safely rely that Britain's sons have not yet much deteriorated. What opinions may be formed of the next generation from the manners and customs of the present girl of the period is for the future to determine.

CHAPTER V.

'Coming events cast their shadows before.'

During the period which had elapsed since the events at Hussunabad last described, and the crisis of the mutiny, some changes had taken place among those connected with my story.

It yet wanted some months to that terrible one of May, when St Clair received sudden orders to march with his regiment to a neighbouring station where a native cavalry regiment had displayed some symptoms of disaffection. It was

considered desirable to brigade the latter with English troops. An exchange of stations, therefore, was directed between the two corps.

It was well known that St Clair's regiment was in fine order. He had a large proportion of Sikhs, and he was, moreover, a man who exercised a strong commanding influence over his men. They looked up to him as the veritable impersonation of their combined fathers and mothers—to use their mode of expressing themselves. His was that combination of gentleness with high personal courage; of temperate consideration with consistent firmness, both in reward and punishment; of calm justice with determined inflexibility of purpose, which marks a high capacity for military command.

Moreover, he entered into the sports and pastimes of his men, by all, or nearly all, of whom he was regarded literally as 'the father of the regiment.' To obtain such influence over Asiatics, a man must be possessed of something more than the mere ability to reward or punish. In a partisan service, like the Indian Irregular Cavalry, it is very desirable that those in command should be able to inspire their men with an absolute faith in them, and influence them to merge their very volition in that of their immediate superiors. But such control is only to be acquired by great independence of action and an elastic authority. Red-tapism, and cut-and-dried formality of rule, backed by regulations piled on regulations, may, possibly, be necessary for the proper maintenance of

discipline in regular forces; but they are out of place in a rough-and-ready service where so much very frequently depends on individual capacity and influence.

It is to be feared that theoretical soldiering and the increasing tendency to centralization, in this respect, may prove anything but beneficial to the spirit of this, among other institutions which have helped us to gain and hold India.

So St Clair departed, leaving Miss Selby with the impression that it was not in his nature to love any woman. Devotion to his regiment and the service was too predominating a passion for him to entertain any other. And he, in his shyness and diffident estimate of himself, never dreamed that the interest she had lately displayed in his society and con-

versation was attributable to any warmer feeling than that of friendship, especially as his adieux were received in the coldest manner.

It is sad for a man when he loves and believes his love unreturned. But how much sadder for a woman, who has to bear, in addition, the pain of that regret which a woman only can fully feel. That humiliating sense of self-discontent at loving, and loving in vain. To know that the treasures of her affection had been lavished, unasked and unclaimed.

St Clair was not aware of the fact that Major Highton had proposed to Miss Selby, and, to the dragoon's astonishment, been at once refused. The worthy officer could not understand it. 'Major Highton of the 8th Dragoon Guards, with £5000 a

year, for whom numbers of fair English damsels of distinction had languished in vain, to be refused by a little, countrified thing of no experience, no *ton*, quite unknown to the *beau monde* in which he had moved and had his being. To be refused by a little, unsophisticated girl, almost out of the world, whom it would be necessary to train before introducing to his people at home. (His people, it may be remarked *en passant*, composed the family of a man who had realized a large fortune by speculations in cotton.) Preposterous! the idea was really too absurd. She couldn't mean it. It was merely a piece of uneducated young ladyism. A maidenly assumption of disinclination or scruple which could only occur in one so untutored. So different from the well-

trained girls who move in Belgravian circles, and who would meet you half way, perhaps more. *Of course.*'

Reasoning thus, Major Highton determined to treat her refusal as the mere preliminary to acceptance. He did so; and was told in terms which, though kind, were unmistakeable, even by his self-conceit, that she had not the very slightest intention of reconsidering the matter, as she could, under no circumstances, consent to become his wife. Deeply chagrined, he retired from the field.

She was sorry, very sorry, because she could not quite exonerate herself. She had permitted his heavy gallantries in hopes of blinding others to the real state of her feelings. She was very far from being perfect. But she hardly expected

that he would ever get quite so far as an absolute proposal. And even now that he had done so, she somehow felt that there was not very much harm effected—that he thought too much of himself to have any very lively sense of pain beyond that of wounded vanity.

Now Mr Percy perceived that there was something wrong with the object of his dislike, and thereupon he desired satisfactorily to account for it. 'If the little trump has really refused the fellow, why, dear old Hugh may have a chance.' So thought the young man, who, for some inscrutable reason of his own, had taken it into his head that Hugh ought to marry, and that 'Nora Creina' was the only person in the world suitable. At Mr Percy's age, officers of the army are not

infrequently misogynists, or if not actually confirmed haters, entertain views decidedly inimical to that state which they consider anything but blessed. In this instance, however, such views were either void or in abeyance. He much desired to encourage and promote such an union, simply because he happened to feel much affection and respect for both.

So he determined to take an early opportunity once more to try and 'pump the fair Nora Creina,' but with some misgivings, as he remembered his former failure.

'Hum!' he commenced one evening at the band-stand as a means of feeling his way. 'Hum! the dragoon always looked to me like a man who has just had his hair cut. But now, lately, he looks more like it than ever.'

'Perhaps Major Highton has been under the hands of the barber,' she replied, unable to repress a smile. 'Not altogether unusual among men, is it?'

'Why, no, we sometimes undergo that unpleasant operation. But what I mean is that he looks stiffer, more—more chawed-up like, you know.'

'I am sure I know nothing of the sort. "Chawed-up," as you call it, is not a word with which I am acquainted.'

'Well, then, he looks mentally out at elbows. Is that clearer?'

'Not much,' she said. 'But suppose we change the subject. I hear Mr Douglas is coming back with the first batch of the troops from Persia. Is it so?'

'Yes! glad to say it is. Now that old Hugh has gone. By the way, I heard from him yesterday.'

'Heard from whom?' she asked, looking down, and feeling glad that it was getting too dusk for her burning cheeks to be seen. And then added, 'from Major St Clair?'

'Yes; the old man seems out of sorts, in the dumps altogether.'

'Something worried him in the regiment, I suppose,' she said, with a toss of the head. 'He doesn't seem to think of much else.'

'Doesn't he?' said Percy, a little nettled at the observation. 'I believe he thinks a great deal of many things besides, and many people, especially—of—somebody. Pity that somebody doesn't seem to care a farthing about him.'

There was no reply, and a long pause ensued. For Percy felt quite angry with

his fair companion, and in his heat had said somewhat more than he intended. But some one chancing to join them at the moment, a stop was put to the conversation.

Afterwards, however, when recounting the incident to her dear friend and sympathizer, Mrs Atherton, she sobbed a little as she ejaculated in reply to her encouraging words,—'I am sure he doesn't love me. I am sure he doesn't love me.' At the same time she felt, though she would not openly acknowledge it even to herself, that there had been an indefinable something in their intercourse which she neither tried to examine nor account for.

Mrs Atherton had, as promised, maintained a frequent and regular correspond-

ence with Douglas during his absence. On his return to Hussunabad, their intimacy dropped into the old footing of friendly interest. But she was now more confidential, and sometimes referred to the humiliating character of her domestic troubles, and the incessant struggle that they entailed.

Mr Atherton treated his wife with a decent show of formal civility in public. But in private, he made up for his abstinence by increasing virulence of language and taunting sarcasm of manner. While on her part, a sullen scorn and passive defiance served but to exaggerate the evils of his temper, and sometimes produce outbreaks of passion terrible in their violence.

Once indeed, in a moment of passion,

he had actually struck her. But he was not so lost to all sense of what was due from a man and, as he was in externals, a gentleman, as not to regret and humbly apologize the moment after. She had forgiven it, but it only increased her scorn and contempt.

At last their relations became so unbearable, that she threatened to separate from him, and indeed wrote home to her father on the subject. The only satisfaction she got, however, was to be told that it was entirely her own fault, and that he should in no way interfere, neither would her other relatives.

Douglas was now the only human creature whom she knew intimately in whom she dared confide, for she shrank from wounding the innocent young

spirit of her friend Norah, and making her unhappy by revealing the secret sorrows of her soul. Douglas assisted her as best he could with sympathy and advice, but he felt what a broken reed to trust to was dependence on him.

I must here also mention that Captain Vivian had been obliged to leave Hussunabad on medical certificate, and that Mr Percy had been appointed to act as aide-de-camp.

Soon after the outbreak of the mutiny, General Marston received orders to despatch nearly all his available English troops towards the central scene of operations.

It was dangerous to denude so important a station and district, but there was no help for it: so, retaining the sick and

weakly men, and a small detachment of the more able-bodied, he sent on the rest. With this reserve of English soldiers, together with an inconsiderable body of reliable natives, he formed a feeble garrison for the fort near the city. Some of the few heavy guns were mounted, and every preparation made to insure its safety in case of mutiny on the part of the large native force left in the cantonments.

At the same time General Marston's object was to show as little distrust as possible of his troops, and therefore he continued openly and professedly to have faith in them. All details of discipline or duty, or even of amusement, were conducted as heretofore. But, at the same time, a very wary and circumspect watch was secretly kept. Both the General and

Mr Atherton had their spies abroad in cantonments, city, and district, and felt much confidence in being able to receive information of, and anticipate, any projected rising.

Many of the rich natives of the city, too, men of wealth and position, who had thriven as merchants, bankers, or traders under the mild, beneficent rule of the British government, were personally interested in the cause of order. They had nothing to gain and everything to lose by change of masters. Their plethoric money-bags had every chance of being reduced to the extremest attenuation in case of outbreak. Such measures as hot pincers, powdered chillies, and other stimulants, resorted to as a means of extorting disclosure of concealed wealth,

may have presented themselves to their imaginations, and fear of such applications added their influence in urging them to maintain the *status quo*.

It was observable at this period that all ostentatious display of wealth became much modified, and professions of poverty —the result of unfortunate speculations and losses—most frequent.

Some, however, were really far-seeing men of education, who threw the whole weight of their influence into the scale on the side of government. Such a person was Heerachund, banker, a man of reputed wealth, almost fabulous. He was a little, elderly, wizened man, of the colour of his own gold, with a large family of grown-up sons, who, like himself, were extremely wealthy from their own pro-

fitable transactions. He was well known to the General, and frequently consulted by him. He had, indeed, undertaken at his own expense to victual the fort with grain, which undertaking he completed without loss of time.

But the Mussulman population were entirely uninfluenced by their Hindoo brother citizens, indeed they were greatly opposed to them. And in their numbers and fanaticism lay one great danger in the city. Over these, however, Mr Atherton, who was a really bold and able man, kept an unremitting watch, and in consequence earned their very decided hatred. Some of his restrictive regulations galled them greatly, and many were the secret vows of revenge.

All that vigorous and far-seeing mea-

sures could do were taken by General Marston, and, satisfied that such was the case, he tranquilly abided the march of events.

With the fort, garrisoned and supplied, to fall back on, he presented a firm unyielding front, determined to show to all a reliance on himself and his resources, and such vigour in his measures as to impress the wavering, give strength and stability to the well-affected, and overawe the evil-disposed.

So matters went on. The bands in turn played out as usual, and, save for a feeling of suppressed anxiety and restless, undefined apprehension underlying all, everything seemed fair and commonplace as in ordinary times.

But mutiny, mutiny, formed the bur-

den of the first greetings, whether at band-stand or elsewhere, when people met. Some dark, treacherous deed was alluded to and discussed, and then, by a sort of tacit consent, dropt, and the conversation led into livelier channels. But many had relatives and friends, either the victims of those atrocities, or presently engaged in the struggle for life at different points. In such, the wear and tear of mental distress and agonizing suspense produced a settled gloom, which was reflected in those who had not as yet similar causes for depression.

It was indeed a mournful and depressing time; but still few were entirely despondent. The bearing of the General and others in authority impressed all with a sense of reliance. And the high spirit

of which I have spoken actuated the greater number. It was felt that, come what might, all was done that man's prevision or energy could accomplish. For the rest, it remained under a higher control.

In case of sudden or unexpected danger, all were directed to make the best of their way to the protection of the fort, which, however, was but ill-adapted for the residence of any large number.

Government had promised to push on troops on arrival, or as soon as they could be spared, to the General's relief. He looked anxiously forward to that time, endeavouring, by all the means at his disposal, to tide over his difficulties and keep all quiet, till their arrival absolved him from further anxiety.

CHAPTER VI.

'SAR. Mouthpiece of mutiny!
Thou at the least shalt learn the penalty
Of treason, though its proxy only.'—*Sardanapalus.*

I HAVE mentioned that there was in the regiment to which Douglas belonged a Captain Goodall, who held a very high opinion of all native troops, and of his regiment in particular. On his own company, however, was concentrated the principal portion of his active interest. Never had there been such a company. He would back his men to follow him anywhere. Disaffection among such fine

specimens of Sepoys was impossible. He scouted the idea; as, indeed, did his subordinate, Maun Sing, subedar, or native captain of the company.

The subedar had always been noted for his predilection for the society of the English officers, and the interest he took in some of their sports, in which, indeed, he joined. He spoke English well, too,—a rare acquisition among the Sepoys. He had, in consequence, become a great favourite; and, being clever and a good soldier, was held up as a pattern native commissioned officer. So much was he trusted that he was now one of those secretly employed to ascertain and report on the temper of the men, and give intelligence of the occurrence of anything unusual. Being an orthodox Hindoo of

high caste, he entertained a natural aversion to Mussulmans; and this was considered another point in his favour at present.

But he was not the only person so employed; though, as each spy was kept in ignorance of there being others, he was not aware of this check on himself. Still it was not long before he discovered that facts had come to the knowledge of his superiors which must have reached them through channels with which he was unacquainted. Fancying he perceived some distrust of himself for not having reported these circumstances, he determined by some great *coup* entirely to recover their reliance on him.

He had discovered that many of the Sepoys were in the habit of resorting

clandestinely to a certain mosque between the city and cantonments; and he soon made himself master of the nature of the attraction.

It was there that a most learned and holy Hajee, a Mussulman priest and pilgrim, held forth nightly on the existing state of affairs, proclaiming the coming destruction of all the English Kaffirs in India, and the resuscitation of the former magnificence and empire of the royal Delhi family. In fact, he was an agent from Delhi, and preached the most violent sedition, supported by a whole tribe of fanatical devotees, who lived on the endowments of the mosque.

This was too favourable an opportunity for the subedar to regain the influence, which he supposed he had lost,

not to be taken advantage of. So he reported the circumstance.

About the same time Heerachund, the banker, became acquainted with the seditious preaching of the holy Hajee through his own sources of information. He, therefore, drove up to the band-stand in his English carriage one evening, to communicate the same to General Marston and Mr Atherton. This fully confirmed what the subedar had previously reported, and it was determined to take prompt measures to effect the capture of the Mussulman priest. The General considered that to do this by the agency of the Sepoys would create distrust and ill-feeling between the troops and people of the town. As this was highly desirable, so as to prevent any combined action be-

tween the two, he determined to effect it by those means.

Douglas, who had retained his appointment on the Quartermaster-General's staff, as head of the military intelligence department, was the officer selected to carry into effect the General's plans. His acquaintance with the native languages was considerable, and rendered him competent to understand the general tenor of the Hajee's discourse. It was deemed desirable that, before capture, its exact nature should be ascertained on reliable evidence, and the speaker taken, if possible, in the act of uttering seditious language and exciting to rebellion.

For this purpose it was necessary to be disguised as a native, and enter the building before the Sepoys were brought

on the scene. With Douglas was associated a trusty native, whose principal business it would be to ward off suspicion and take on himself the task of replying to any questions, the doing which might betray the Englishman by his accent and idiom. The two, it was arranged, should precede the picked body of Sepoys, under Captain Goodall, by about half an hour. On the arrival of the latter, a Sepoy in his native dress was to appear at the door of the mosque, as an indication that the party had reached the vicinity, and were ready for action. The sound of a dog-whistle, sharply blown by Douglas, was to be the signal for them to take possession of the entrance, rush in to help in the capture of the Hajee, and check any attempt at rescue.

All these measures were secretly conducted, and about eight o'clock Douglas, with his native companion, proceeded on their somewhat dangerous errand.

The former, after having his face, hands, and feet stained, moustache and whiskers trimmed in the Mussulman mode, and dressed in the native dress, made a very creditable representation of a powerful Mussulman of middle-class.

Well hidden within the folds of the shawl which was wound round his waist, he carried a loaded revolver. Expert, too, in the use of arms, having often contended with the Sepoys in their games of skill, he was fully able to employ most efficiently the sword and shield with which he was provided. In place, however, of the curved native scimitar, calculated only to

cut, and not to point—the latter the most deadly use to which the sword can be put—he preferred to rely on his own proved weapon of English manufacture, trusting that in the gloom of the outer aisles of the mosque, and amidst the crowd, its form would pass undetected. The native was similarly armed, except as regards the sword, which was of the sort he was accustomed to wield.

Thus prepared, both took their way and entered the mosque. Selecting a dark, secluded spot amidst the pillars of the aisle which, on three sides, girded the great central dome of the building, they established themselves, endeavouring to attract as little observation as possible. A look from his companion satisfied Douglas that the small, but handsome,

well-bred looking man, then holding forth to an attentive and interested audience, was he of whom they were in search. He had apparently been speaking for some time, and was now in the very heat of his harangue. Warmed with his argument, his deep sonorous voice rolled through every portion of the building, and his words were easily caught, even in the remotest part of the columned aisle. Screened by a pillar, Douglas listened with fixed attention, and was able to gather most of what fell from the Hajee's lips, spoken, as his words were, in a deliberate, impressive manner.

'It is requisite,' * he said, 'that all

* From this to the first pause at page 166, is the translation of a paper picked up on the ground, just hurriedly vacated by Tantia Topee on the approach of a pursuing column. The author makes no apology for presenting it in full, as it is illustrative of the views which the educated endeavoured to impress on the ignorant natives.

Mahometans should obey the precepts of their religion. In the same manner it is necessary for all Hindoos to stand by their religion.

'It is evident to all the inhabitants of Hindustan, both rich and poor, that the proud Christians have, for the last few months, concocted a plan for the annihilation of both the religions; and for their unclean and wicked design they adopted the following plan:—viz. In some of the villages, cities, and districts of the eastern side of the British territory, they mixed the bones of cows and hogs in flour and almost every other edible; and not only this, but even cartridges were made unclean.

'Although they had carefully kept this scheme secret, yet all at once this secret

became bared, both to the subjects and the army.

'The men of the army, who were steadfast and true to their religion, took a dislike to the use of the cartridges, and, having made a sure agreement one with another, determined to annihilate the Europeans. God the Great be praised for their pure intentions and bravery! Notwithstanding that all Hindustan was under the British sway, they feared not for their lives, but, wherever they found Christians, they sacrificed them with great valour.' Assembling in large bodies they arrived in Delhi, having killed every Christian they came across on the way. When they arrived, they demanded assistance from the king, and a single Christian was not even to be heard of.

'Their plan of destroying the infidels was, first to kill the family, even to a sucking child, and then set fire to their place of habitation. Although the throne of Delhi had become, as it were, drowned in oblivion for the last few years, yet, through the favour of God, the water of the river that had dried up of itself, returned again into its channel, and the tree of dominion became green. Words are too vague to express their unselfish bravery; for without having any motive or pecuniary interest, they gave up their lives, and thousands were ready to follow the example of numbers of Mussulmans and Hindoos who had sacrificed their lives. The former made up their minds that, if killed by the infidels, they should be martyrs of religion; and if killing

them, warriors for religion, thus reconciling both God and Mahomet. Hindoos had also in view the necessity of retaining their religion as it is written in the Shastrs, Vedhas, and Mahabharat—"that heaven is open to the martyrs of God himself in their servitude." Both these are in accordance with the Koran and the Shastrs, and are not merely fictitious. This is the moral of the whole—and let it be well understood amongst you — that every Hindoo and Mussulman, whether rich or poor, in whatever capacity serving, steadfast in his religion, and acting in accordance with it, will incur no blame, and no crime will rest on him, if he destroys the enemy of his religion. This precept must be obeyed according to the sacred books; and in the country of Hindustan thousands

of Hindoos and Mussulmans have sacrificed their lives on this account.

'This is certain, that, if all hold this determination, the country of Hindustan will be in our possession again, as of old, and the seed of Christians will be annihilated and swept from this country. And if some of the holy warriors should venture with their present unshaken intentions, they will, in a short time, be able to conquer England, according to the saying, "God helps them who help themselves." No man is to deem this matter difficult, for everything becomes easy through the favour of God.

'Europeans somehow brought Hindustan into subjection, but everything requires determination of mind. Verse—"In accomplishing whatsoever purpose,

determination is necessary. For should it be a thorn, it will then become a flower. Keeping the mind determined, relying on the pillow of patience, is the best virtue."

'Some learned men think that the sacrificers of Christians are as bad as their enemies. But this is highly improper in them. Whoever terms it a bad act is infamous himself. For, think for a moment, that men, who had been in the service of Europeans for a long time, and receiving pay according to their wishes, gave up every comfort for this matter of religion, in which they remained steadfast. The world with all its comforts can be had at any time, but the riches of religion (for which there is no substitute) cannot be purchased. Whoever has received the means of faith from God, and cherished

religion, then of him it is required that he should lose no time in extracting the root of the Christians as the bitterest of his bodily and spiritual enemies. Wherever the destroyers of Christians be found, they should reckon them as their most faithful friends, rendering every assistance in their power whensoever it be required of them. If thus united in the bond of mutual friendship, the infidels will have no opportunity to exert any power over the religious community.'

Here the gifted speaker paused, and seemed to be taking mental notes of the classes of people which composed his congregation. Satisfied, probably, that it contained a considerable number of Sepoys, he continued,—

'I have shown that it is right to de-

stroy all Feringhees; but to this there may be some exceptions. The brave Sepoys wish to preserve the women. It would be better that all Christians should be sacrificed; but the wishes of those who do the work, and give up their pay with the English, must be considered. The great emperor, therefore, has intimated his pleasure that the noble Sepoys should do as they like. When, therefore, the time comes, the women will be apportioned by lot, or sold by auction as shall be determined.' *

Douglas felt his cheeks burning and his hands clenching with shame and indignation as he listened to these words. He restrained his passion, for he knew his

* At one station an auction did take place in anticipation; most fortunately it was premature, as the attempted mutiny was suppressed.

life depended on it, but he could not at all times so compose his demeanour as altogether to conceal signs of what was raging within. As he thought of his fair countrywomen, and of one in particular, victims to all the evil lusts of their brutal captors, he was smitten with sore distress and a hatred of those about him, which partially revealed itself in his gestures.

Apparently this had not passed completely unobserved by others, for twice he encountered the searching black eyes of a truculent-looking man fixed upon him. He endeavoured to compose his features, and seem an unconcerned listener, but now looked anxiously towards the door for the appearance of the envoy whose presence was to announce the arrival of the party. No one was there, and he felt

the state of suspense almost unbearable, eager as he was in his anger for immediate action.

The man whose attention he had attracted, after whispering to two or three others, now moved towards him. Seeing this, Douglas prepared himself, while still trying to ward off suspicion, to act with vigour if it came to blows. The principal object was to secure the Hajee, under any circumstances. Once escaped, and hereafter warned, his capture would be most unlikely, assisted as he would be in the city itself, and throughout the district.

The Mussulman brave swaggered up to Douglas and his companion in that bullying fashion which your true Mahometan of low rank can so well assume.

Staring boldly and superciliously into Douglas' face, fortunately well sheltered from the scanty light in the shade of the pillar, he addressed him with the usual salutation, the 'Salaam aleikoom.'

As previously arranged, the native spy replied to this, endeavouring to fix the new-comer's attention on himself; and therefore accepted the salutation as addressed to him.

The bully turned towards him, and asked if he thought of becoming a purchaser of any of the soft, pale, English beauties, expatiating on the respective merits of Mrs Atherton and others, so well fitted for the harem of brave soldiers of fortune.

Some uncontrollable gesture or other symptom at the mention of the names

again attracted the man's attention to Douglas, and he addressed him directly and pointedly.

'Is my brother dumb?' he asked, on receiving no reply, nothing but a shake of the head. 'Cannot he exchange greetings with a true follower of the Prophet, and a hater of the accursed Feringhees? —May they die like dogs!'

The native here hastily interposed, and assured the bully that his friend was under a vow not to speak till the great emperor was securely seated on the Delhi throne.

'Then he will not long remain silent,' was the reply. But still he regarded Douglas suspiciously as he resumed,—'I hope our brother has come to give help to the faithful in the struggle here. You seem strangers. Whence come you?'

'Last from Bombay, after visiting the holy caaba at Mecca;' and the speaker made the usual gestures as he mentioned the sacred shrine.

'Pilgrims, holy pilgrims, are welcome as the rain in June. Proceed you onwards to Delhi, or tarry you here to strengthen the hands of our holy Hajee?' Then suddenly catching sight of Douglas' sword, his but half-quelled suspicions were again excited, as he exclaimed,—'Ha! Bismillah! a Feringhee sword! Who are you? What are you? In whose pay?'

Douglas had glanced towards the door and saw the Sepoy in undress calmly resting just within it. He was much relieved by the sight, for the time for action had come.

The bully in reply to a brief attempted explanation on the part of the other, again exclaimed, this time in loud tones, 'It is a lie! You are spies! Help here, we are betrayed;' and drawing his sword, he brandished it aloft.

But in the same moment that of Douglas also flashed in the dim light, as he placed his whistle to his mouth and blew shrilly.

The bully's blow descended, but Douglas caught it on the guard of his own sword, and then dashed the steel hilt of it right in the man's face, at the same moment rushing forward towards the Hajee.

Pushing aside several unarmed men who had sprang up at the noise of the conclusion of the brief altercation, he drew his revolver, and with that pointed

at any one who endeavoured to intercept his progress, rushed on. Most were unarmed, and all shrank before the levelled weapon. His companion, after indulging in a cut at the staggered bully, quickly followed him.

The Hajee was in the act of descending from his pulpit, and making off towards a small side-door, when Douglas reached and seized him, threatening at the same time to shoot him in case of resistance.

The Sepoys, with Captain Goodall at their head, were now pouring into the mosque amidst some shouting. One or two pistol-shots were fired by members of the congregation. But these proved harmless, being probably directed, without aim, into the air, with a native's dis-

position to burn powder and make a noise, however uselessly, in time of danger.

The presence of the Sepoys had a marked tranquillizing effect, however, and those of the audience who could not make their escape by another door, remained for the most part quiet.

Directly the Hajee saw that his chance of escape was cut off, and learnt from the few words which fell from Douglas that he was in the hands of an English officer, he calmly submitted. Unresistingly, and with dignified composure, he allowed himself to have his hands bound by the Sepoys when they reached him, intimating, at the same time, that such was unnecessary.

He spoke perfectly civilly and respectfully to his captors. There was no

cringing servility, or outward indications of humility or fear. Too dignified to be discourteous, his bearing was that of a man who was fully prepared to meet whatever came, and met it with firmness and composure. He saw that, for the present, his part was played, and he accepted the situation with the nonchalance of a confirmed fatalist.

However execrable many of the doctrines of his creed, and the exhortations he had that night made, he was too earnest not to believe himself in the right. 'But Khismut was against him. Others were masters now of his destiny. What will be, will be. He could do no more.' With a muttered prayer to Allah and his Prophet, he bowed his head and submitted to his fate.

In direct contrast was the conduct of the bully, whose lower nature prompted him to meet his fate very differently. He had struggled violently when arrested by the Sepoys under Captain Goodall's directions, and when bound, uttered fierce invectives, to be followed by a sullen scowling silence, seemingly regardless of the blood which flowed from his cut face, and a slight flesh-wound in the arm.

This was the only other arrest made. There was nothing wrong in the mere fact of the people resorting to the mosque to hear a celebrated preacher. But the officers noted some Sepoys in undress, whom they recognized amongst the audience, and these thenceforth became marked men.

Congratulating themselves on the success of their expedition, Captain Goodall

and Douglas now left the mosque. The party was soon marshalled, and, with the two prisoners in the centre, marched off towards the fort.

As they wound through the sandy lanes, and passed the huts and dwellings, which fakirs and other ascetic devotees had reared in the precincts of the mosque, voices in hurried interchange of intelligence were heard. And shortly from out the surrounding gloom, shouts of 'Allah' and 'Mahomet,' with prayers and curses in his name, came borne on the night wind, as it swept through the cactus hedges, and rustled in the tamarind trees overhead. While one fierce voice was heard to proclaim Jehad against the Feringhees; and a personal and undying revenge, should harm befall the holy and

gifted man now being conveyed to prison.

However, not all the hatred or all the invocations of these fanatics could prevent the safe bestowal in the fort, under a European guard, of the Hajee and his companion. This effected, the two officers hastened to report to their superiors the success attending their expedition.

Well pleased was General Marston to hear of the bloodless capture; and, in concert with Mr Atherton, he determined to make such an example as might strike terror into all, and show how determined were both military and civil to uphold their authority, and possessed of the power to do so.

The present time, too, was most fitting, for, as the General had foreseen, the fact of the arrest of their valued preacher, by

the agency of the Sepoys, had caused much animosity among the townspeople, and a wholesome feeling of estrangement and antagonism had sprung up between city and cantonments. It was therefore determined to take advantage of this state of feeling, and act decisively while it existed.

At that time summary power was, in many districts, vested in the authorities, with full permission to carry into immediate execution whatever might be deemed necessary for the public safety. Acting on this, Mr Atherton without delay brought the Hajee to trial. He was found guilty of sedition and exciting to rebellion, and sentenced to death. The execution of this sentence, it was arranged between the civil and military authorities, should be made as impressive as possible. To that

end, it was decided to effect it by blowing the culprit from a gun.

That system of execution, derived from the natives themselves, is terrible to the imagination as it is horrible in effect. It may, indeed, be regarded as barbarous in the extreme. But the object being to deter by example as well as to punish, few will accuse the authorities of unnecessary cruelty at a time when it was absolutely imperative to strike terror and awe into the native mind by as impressive a demonstration as possible of the horrors attending capital punishment.

The spot fixed on for the execution was some open ground under the walls of the fort on the banks of the river. This would admit of all the troops being there drawn up, and still leave a considerable space

for the assembly of a crowd. Moreover, it lay under the guns of the fort, and in their presence any attempt at rescue was little likely to be made; for natives are always strongly imbued with a sense of the destructive power of artillery.

The Hajee, when informed of the sentence of death, and its mode of execution, simply shrugged his shoulders.

'Death is death,' he said. 'It is my khismut. Allah's will be done.'

But the Mussulman brave shuddered, even wept, and prayed for forgiveness.

Before dawn the simple preparations were completed. Two field-pieces, manned by English soldiers, were drawn up pointing to the river, and the troops from cantonments, when they reached the place, were directed to form on the three sides

of a hollow square, the guns forming the fourth.

When all was ready, the General, attended by his staff and Mr Atherton, rode into the square, and the prisoners were marched to the centre under a strong guard. The finding and sentence were then read aloud, and the culprits asked if they wished to say anything.

The Hajee smiled as he answered respectfully and with dignified composure, that 'he had nothing particular to say. The Sahibs had it their own way at present; but the time was coming, indeed was close at hand, when they would be driven into the sea, and India once more pass under the sway of the Mussulman.'

'We shall be content to abide that time,' said Mr Atherton.

'Most probably, Sahib, *you* will not live to see it,' was the reply. 'There has been a voice in my ears, and the doom of an early and violent death has been pronounced on my judge and slayer. I shall be avenged.'

'Who pronounced it?' asked Mr Atherton, scornfully.

'Go ask the viewless winds, and listen to their reply! Interrogate the rushing streams! Demand of the deep waters. Consult earth, air, fire, ocean. The great British Government is yet powerful, but can it obtain control of the invisible? Enough. What I have heard I have heard. What is decreed must come to pass. I have said.'

Somewhat animated by the high, courageous bearing of the Hajee, and

encouraged by his exhortations not to flinch before the hated Kaffirs, the bully sullenly submitted to his fate, though occasional trembling evinced the fear but partly subdued by the shame of showing it.

They were now marched to the guns amidst a breathless silence, broken only by the orders necessary to be given and the muttering of the culprits as they murmured the formula of their faith: 'There is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet.'

Arrived opposite the field-pieces, the bully's strength gave way, and he completely broke down. But they were soon firmly lashed with their backs to the muzzles of the guns, which then reached to about the small of the back. The

Hajee still retained his firm, composed manner, and his small person its unquailing tranquillity; but the more powerful and bulky frame of the bully seemed to writhe and then almost to faint. But short space, however, was given. Those dread moments of fearful suspense and mental anguish to the victims were rendered as brief as possible.

The preparations completed, the word was pronounced, the matches applied, and through the smoke of the discharge, radiating from the guns, flew outwards in numberless fragments, some high in air, the heads, limbs, and mangled remnants of what had the moment before been two living men, leaving the lower parts of the bodies to fall below the muzzles of the guns.

Let us no longer dwell on the horror of the spectacle.

A humming murmur succeeded the roar of the guns and their reverberations from the fort walls. It was one combined of suppressed horror and relieved suspense, for the tension on the nerves of the spectators had been no light one. The positive effects of such a mode of execution could only previously be guessed. They exceeded what could have been imagined in their shocking details as a horrifying spectacle.

The troops, however, were soon formed for the march back to cantonments, and moved off to the lively strains of their respective bands, while the mangled remnants of the miserable wretches who had thus met their fate were collected and

swept into a common and polluted grave on the scene of the execution.

The crowd dispersed soon after the troops left, and only one or two remained, to fill in the grave or watch the process. Among the latter was a fakeer, who scowlingly regarded the scene. Previous to leaving the spot, he raised his clenched hand on high, and then, muttering some incoherent words, took his departure.

CHAPTER VII.

'—Here is a father now,
Will truck his daughter for a foreign venture,
Make her the stop-gap to some canker'd feud,
Or fling her o'er, like Jonah, to the fishes,
To appease the sea at highest.'

From the 'Bride of Lammermoor.'

THE rains had fallen, and still no intelligence was received of any meditated outbreak. Disaffection and a mutinous spirit were known to exist in no small degree, but no overt act of rebellion had been yet attempted or, as far as the authorities could learn, proposed.

Subedar Maun Sing had regained for

awhile the confidence of his superiors, a confidence which in the person of Captain Goodall had never wavered. The latter trusted him implicitly. He firmly believed that disloyalty among his own men was, if existing, limited to a few of the bad characters, who would willingly do anything for a change. Several of the other officers, including the adjutant of the regiment, were not now quite so sanguine, and some little coolness had, in consequence, arisen between the latter and Captain Goodall.

Whatever the nature, however, of the movement underlying the seeming tranquillity of the surface; whatever of disturbance might be latent or waiting development, until the right time arrived; social usages and habits continued as in

ordinary times. The shadow of a dark anxiety did indeed lay on society; but no storm had yet arisen, and all was apparently calm.

The annual races, and such-like public amusements, were suspended; but people met, and talked, and flirted, and laughed much as usual. And though no balls were held, private dinner-parties were given, and mess guest-nights continued.

At breakfast one day, shortly after the execution of the Hajee, Mr Atherton asked his wife to assist him in looking through his papers, destroying what were useless, and retaining those of any importance. He told her that he considered some such preparations should be made and the documents lodged in the fort, as the temper of the Sepoys was such that

there was no saying when they would be obliged to flit.

She had all the morning felt an uneasy sensation in her head, and a difficulty in concentrating her thoughts, which, resist them as she might, wandered into all sorts of undesired channels. Her face, too, was flushed, and she felt feverish and ill. But these symptoms entirely escaped the careless eye of her husband, and she would not have dreamt of complaining to him.

He had spoken to her, however, more kindly than common; and she determined to render him what assistance she could without giving any hint of her inability to transact business. Should she refuse, too, she was well aware it would provoke his anger, and lead perhaps to a painful

scene, which she did not feel well enough to undergo.

Under his directions, therefore, she languidly examined several packets as they presented themselves, taken from the large iron box in which he kept his papers.

Some she labelled; others, which were evidently of no importance, she destroyed. She had thus been for some time engaged, when she took up a small packet of notes contained in one large envelope, tied with the red office-tape. There was no label or anything written on the cover to show the nature of their contents; so she cut the tape, and proceeded listlessly to examine them.

Intent only on completing the task set her, the uncongenial occupation had

hitherto been performed in a mechanical manner, void of interest in it. The moment she opened the cover, her eye fell on the hand-writing of her father; and with an undefined feeling of apprehension, she hesitated to make herself acquainted with the contents. After a few seconds of doubt, however, she opened the uppermost note, and read it through. Her manner had now completely changed into one of intense and absorbing interest.

As she read her flushed face deepened in colour, and, with sparkling eyes and contracted brow, she laid the first note down, and, one by one, took up the others and read them through. Having completed the perusal, she put her hand to her head as if to collect her distracted thoughts, and then again examined more

minutely one of the notes she held.

Mr Atherton, immersed in his own investigations, had not observed his wife's unusual interest in the papers before her; and was only roused to a knowledge of it, by hearing his own name pronounced in a voice so strange as to cause him at once to look up at her.

She had risen, and was standing with one paper open in her right hand and turned towards him, so that he might see its nature at a glance. The others she held crumpled together in her left hand.

His eyes first sought her face, and there was something there which he had never seen before, deeply moved though he knew her to have sometimes been. He looked for a moment or two earnestly at her, and then his glance fell.

Directing his attention to the document in her right hand, she again spoke in a voice calm and clear in articulation.

'Is that document genuine?' she asked, 'and the writing and signature what they profess to be?'

As Mr Atherton's eyes fell on the paper held towards him, his face became clouded, and expressed some concern and disquietude. 'These were never intended for you to see,' he ejaculated hastily, as he unsuccessfully endeavoured to snatch the paper from her. 'I thought I had burnt them.'

'It is too late. I have read them all,' she observed, still in the same repressed and constrained but incisive manner. 'You admit, then, that they are genuine?'

'Read them all!' he somewhat anxiously repeated. Then after a brief pause continued in a changed tone, as he saw that it was indeed too late, and that his wife had already become fully acquainted with the little transaction the papers represented,—'Since you have seen them, there is no help for it. I am afraid I cannot venture quite so far as to deny that the papers are genuine.' This was said with a spice of the old sarcastic indifference to her feelings which habitually characterized his intercourse with her.

'You admit, then,' and she still spoke in the same collected manner. 'You cannot deny that I was bought and sold like a common slave-girl in the market. These documents and letters testify to the

fact that my father derived so much pecuniary advantage by the annulment of old debts, and a sum to be given him on the day you married me.'

'Well, my dear, you use strong language,' he replied. 'But since you put it in that form, I must admit you cost me a good deal, and that what you say is substantially true.'

'A price was put on me,' she continued, unheeding what he said; 'and that price you thought it worth while giving to make me your wife?' You admired me for what I had of beauty, and that alone. You can never have regarded me with any genuine feeling, not even with one so meagre as what such as you call love.' Here she paused, as if expecting him to say something,

perhaps protest that it was not so. Had he done this, even then, her passion might have been mollified by the admission. But a spell was on him, and he retorted angrily and coarsely,—

'You know very well that whatever I felt, or did not feel, it was not of a very romantic type. I thought you then worth paying so much for—and it was a good round sum, I can tell you—and I paid it, much to my subsequent regret. You also secured what you wanted, and so it was a fair bargain.'

'It was not,' she said. 'I could no more have conceived the nature of such a transaction, as it appeared to your mind, than I could ever now forget it. When, from various circumstances, I consented after much hesitation to marry you, I

fully intended to make you as true and good a wife as I possibly could. You best know how my efforts in that direction were met, when the novelty of my beauty had worn off. I thought you really cared for me at first, but in that I was soon undeceived. How, indeed, could it be otherwise, when I was the subject of a mere commercial transaction?'

'Well, well!' he interrupted. 'It's no good complaining now, whatever may have taken place. I never intended you to see those papers; in fact, had promised never to divulge the secret. Since, however, you have done so, why, we must make the best of it. You are my wife, and there's an end of it.'

'An end! Yes, you are right. I was bought for a slave. Freedom can be

purchased in all slave trades. The past is dead. I presume these papers are now useless, and that I may destroy them?'

'I have no objection to their destruction,' he said. 'I don't know how they escaped.'

She went deliberately to her writing-case, and lighting a match held the papers over the flame till they were burnt; and then, still retaining the same apparently calm demeanour, said the single word, 'Good-bye,' and quitted the room without another word. He drew a long breath as she left, for, in truth, though he had attempted to pass it off with a sneer, he did feel that it was a most undesirable *contretemps*. Her manner, too, had somewhat awed him, for he felt how strongly she was moved. Something like a gleam

of pity also shot across his cold and selfish breast, as he thought of her fair, young beauty sold to supply the pecuniary wants of her heartless and scoundrelly father, and of how much she had apparently taken it to heart.

In that moment of softening, he thought he would endeavour in the future to be kinder to her. No doubt, after a little she would feel less, and become more amenable to reason. Little as he cared for her, he felt some compunctious visitings, as he was obliged to admit, that what she had said was partly true. She had at first endeavoured to make him a true wife. As far as his unfeeling nature permitted, he did, for the moment, pity her. 'If it hadn't been for that precious scamp, her father,' he said to himself,

'she would never have come here. My infatuation would soon have passed away. Pity for both of us she ever came. However, I must see if we can't come to some sort of arrangement now.'

Saying thus, he collected his papers, and locking his escritoir, strolled off to the office, first ascertaining that his wife had gone to her own apartment.

'Too late, too late,' is the burden of many a sorrowful song, and has been uttered by most men and women, at some time or other of their lives, in their late repentance or dire necessity. Poor Guinivere but wept as many another stricken heart has wept too late to alter the effects of sin.

After leaving her husband, Mrs Atherton went direct to her room. There she

sat down endeavouring to think. But a dead oppressive weight, a constant throbbing in her brain, seemed to prevent any connected thought. She felt a leaden pain in head and heart; and all she could realize to herself was that, whatever happened, she *must* go away. Her bond was cancelled, and never, never more could she admit any right which her purchase gave. She was no party to the transaction. It was incomplete in consequence.

There were no tears, no violent expression of anger or excitement. All she felt was that she had a settled purpose, and that was, to leave her husband. She was now very pale, save for a bright red spot in either cheek, and her lips were parched.

Where was she to go to? Ah! where?

She had only two friends who really loved her. To Norah it was impossible to go. The pure child must be mixed up with no such transaction. Besides, she would be sought for and brought back from thence. She could never come back. To that other friend she must go. There was no help for it. There only could she escape.

Thus she thought in a confused sort of manner. Nothing was prominent but the fact that she must escape; and the only means offered her of so doing were by seeking that friend. She could never be brought back from him. As for the rest, she must trust to him and his honour. Whatever he advised she must do. He was thenceforward master of her destiny. Her brain was in a whirl, and

she could think of nothing more. She neither realized nor stopped to picture the various contingencies or the consequences attending the step she meditated. All was chaos in her mind.

The wildness of her passion, acting on a brain off its equilibrium, caused an almost complete forgetfulness of what, at any other time, would have been her first consideration. She momentarily forgot the wrong she was doing to Douglas. The unselfishness of her love had so far temporarily degenerated as to induce the concentration of her thoughts upon herself. Independently of other reasons, her very love for him would have deterred her, when calm, from taking such a step. Now it was otherwise.

After awhile she rose and took out her

jewel case. She then unfastened her earrings and bracelets and placed them in it. Then she took off all her rings—including her marriage ring—and put them also carefully away. The pearl, however, she replaced on her finger, reading and repeating the inscription over and over again to herself.

She did not even remember to collect or destroy any of her letters, or make any, even the slightest, arrangements of any kind. The prevailing idea was to separate herself entirely from her husband without one connecting link. Mechanically she changed such parts of her dress as were necessary for going out, and then ordered her carriage.

When it was announced, she descended the stairs without a single regretful look

round on the abode of her married life; and throwing herself into one corner directed the coachman to drive her towards cantonments.

Arrived at the point she had indicated, she got out; and desiring the astonished men to return home, as she should want them no longer, she performed the rest of the way to Douglas' bungalow on foot.

Equally astonished with her own servants at their lady's freak of walking in the noon-tide sun, were those of Douglas, when Mrs Atherton presented herself and inquired for their master. He was not at home, but she expressed her intention of entering and awaiting his return, and was in consequence conducted into the by no means luxuriously furn-

ished bachelor sitting-room of the bungalow.

There she sat in a state of half-conscious immobility. Her mind seemed as if benumbed and incapable of dwelling on the details of her situation. Her only hope and trust was in Frank. Nothing else was quite clear. She relied on his honour, and threw herself unreservedly on his protection. What that might involve she had but a dim, undefined idea. Her mind refused to grasp any absolute future beyond separation from her husband. An incessant thirst beset her, but she refused all the offers of the servants but that of water.

At last a horse galloped up to the door, and her heart beat quick with a vague apprehension, as she heard the

servants speaking to the new-comer. Perhaps, had it been then possible, she would have avoided the now inevitable meeting. A sudden fear of possibilities, a gleam of wrong to him, seemed, for the first time, clearly to seize her; and her situation stood more fully revealed as she heard Douglas approach.

She buried her burning face in a cushion—her own gift—of the sofa on which she half reclined as he burst into the room, exclaiming, as he saw her, in a voice of mingled pain and pity,—

'Good God! Helen. What are you doing here? When did you come?'

'I have separated from my husband,' she said faintly, without raising her head. 'And I have come to claim your protection, trusting to the gage of my ring.'

'My protection!' he ejaculated hastily. 'Are you aware of what you are doing? Don't you perceive all that is involved by seeking my house in this clandestine manner? You must know what will be said? What inferred of—of—everything that might happen?'

'I have separated from my husband,' she repeated—'I will never return to him, come what will. You, only you, in this world, can I come to. I trust to your honour. Be my friend and brother. I will do whatever you tell me to do. Only I *will* not return to my husband.'

'Helen!' he said gravely, as he sat down beside her, 'you know what I feel for you, and it is wicked to tempt me thus. I think you cannot comprehend the danger to both of us by this mad act.

You *must* return home now, at once. Do you understand?'

'Oh, Frank, I cannot. Don't say such harsh, bitter words. I have been as a slave, and have broken my bonds never again to wear them. I *will* not return.'

'Then,' he said, 'you wish to forfeit all that there is high, or noble, or pure in my love for you. It is all nonsense to talk of my being only a brother. The world would jeer at such a relation in our circumstances, however true it might be. There are only three courses open to you. Return home at once, seek some other refuge, or—no—I will *not* be a party to the alternative, because my love for you is true.'

'Then prove it. Why will you thrust me away from you? Oh, let me remain.

I have nowhere to go, and I am ill.'

'What is this, Helen? You seem wandering in your mind.' Saying this he took her hand in his, and raised her head, which sank on his shoulder. 'Why! my poor child,' he continued hurriedly, 'you are in a raging fever. Your hand is burning. What is the matter with you?'

'I am ill. Let me remain here. I shall die, and cause you no further trouble. We will meet in another world, where our love will be free from sin.'

'Hush! dear, hush!' he said tenderly, as he gently supported her. 'You know not what you are saying. Now rest here for awhile. You must obey me now. Lie down. I will make arrangements for you.' Thus saying, he persuaded her to lie at full length on the sofa, and then

turned to his writing-table and wrote a hasty note.

It was to Mrs De Silva, the half-caste widow, who lived in a modest little bungalow next door to his own.

In it he asked her to receive his guest, who had fallen ill. 'He would explain to her how she chanced to be there, and everything else afterwards; only, would she allow him to bring Mrs Atherton over at once?'

The reply soon came, and it was in the affirmative.

'Now, Helen,' said Douglas, as he glanced at the brief note, 'I am going to take you over to Mrs De Silva's. It must appear as if you had gone there to spend the day. Do you understand?' and he regarded her anxiously.

'I think so; yes. But I am quite confused. Please think for me. Do what you like.'

'Very well, then. That is right. Now lean on me. Can you walk?'

She rose with difficulty, but he supported her, and in a minute or two he had her safe in Mrs De Silva's house, fortunately without being observed by any casual passer-by.

The poor little dark woman received her guests kindly, but with her great black eyes expressing perplexity and astonishment. Briefly muttering, however, that he would shortly explain everything, Douglas requested her to take care of Mrs Atherton, who, he feared, was very ill.

The moment Mrs De Silva became aware of the state in which the lady really

was, her kind little heart was at once touched, and her womanly sympathy enlisted on her behalf. She saw directly that it was a sudden and violent attack of one of those Indian fevers which, though of brief duration, are so trying to sojourners in that land of the sun. She at once escorted her patient to her own bedroom, and having hastily adopted such measures as the nature of the case required, returned to Douglas, with the double object of arranging what was to be done, and also of learning how it had all happened, for Mrs Atherton was too unwell to be herself questioned.

Douglas had, during her brief absence, been debating with himself what it were best to do and say. And he found, in the short time he had for consideration,

that it was a matter of no small perplexity.

His first object was to screen Mrs Atherton. He felt certain that her flight was in consequence of some more than usually serious misunderstanding with her husband. He saw, too, that she was sufficiently collected in her mind to know what she was saying when she asserted her fixed determination not to return home. The first thing to do, for her sake, was to get her out of his house. That had been done; and he now felt that some explanation was due to the kind little hostess. After that, what was the next step? A doctor must be sent for and Mr Atherton communicated with. He saw no help for that, whatever the consequence might be. Her illness might

be dangerous, and he shuddered as he thought of this.

When Mrs De Silva entered he apologized for so inconveniencing her. But the little woman, in her broken English, declared that he had done quite right. The two were on very good terms, for Douglas had always treated her with consideration, if not with the real kindness which characterized the bearing towards her of St Clair or Norah. For her it was sufficient to know that he was an intimate friend of St Clair. This, in her simple faith, was clearly enough to establish a claim to the respect and good-will of anyone. To St Clair she looked up as to a being of a superior order, in perfect humility, never dreaming that he could ever bring himself down to her own level.

With these feelings towards him, she was disposed to regard with favourable eyes any who bore the stamp of his approval.

She therefore listened with credulous attention to his explanation.

He attributed Mrs Atherton's appearance at his house to some delusion of the brain, induced by the impending attack of fever; and he implored his listener to let it be generally understood that she had come over on a visit to herself. He represented and avowed his belief that her coming to him was owing to some mistake, and perfectly harmless in intention. The fever must account for it.

In short, he had little trouble in persuading the amiable little woman to throw the shield of her protecting kindness over her invalid guest. This was

soon settled, and it was then arranged that the doctor should at once be sent for, and Douglas ride to the civil lines and leave a note from her, announcing Mrs Atherton's illness to her husband.

He lost no time in acting on this decision, and was shortly on his way. Just as he reached the limits of cantonments, however, he met a young civilian, an assistant of Mr Atherton's, galloping in hot haste towards him. The former pulled up as he came alongside, and exclaimed with every indication of dismay, 'Have you heard of it? No! Mr Atherton has been murdered. I want to find Mrs Atherton. Do you know anything of her whereabouts?'

For a few seconds, Douglas was struck dumb with a combination of emotions

difficult to analyze. Recovering himself, however, as he recollected how necessary it was to act with caution in his endeavour to screen her, he informed his questioner that he was just on his way to Mr Atherton with a note from Mrs De Silva. She had sent over to him, he said, and asked him to take it in at once, as Mrs Atherton had fallen ill while paying her a visit.

CHAPTER VIII.

'Arouse the tiger of Hyrcanian deserts,
Strive with the half-starved lion for his prey;
Lesser the risk, than rouse the slumbering fire
Of wild Fanaticism.'—*From Ivanhoe.*

THE information was too true. Mr Atherton had been murdered.

After leaving his wife as narrated, he went to his office, distant a few hundred yards from the house. While seated in his own room there, a man had sought to enter, stating to the numerous belted attendants outside that he had a petition to present to the great Lord within. He

was told to give it into their hands, and it would be duly forwarded through the office people. This he refused to do, declaring that it was necessary it should be presented in person.

It was intimated to him that this was impossible, and if he did not choose to hand it over to them, he had better go about his business. Continuing to press the question of a personal interview, he was hustled away from the verandah of the building with scant ceremony by the myrmidons who usually throng the office of a high official. This was done with the less compunction, as the man was evidently in a state of strong excitement, was most villanously clothed, and was recognized as a half-mad devotee, who haunted the mosques, and had recently

been observed, on one or two occasions, loitering about the office.

After being thus rudely repelled, he left the place, muttering to himself, and was watched for some distance on the road to the town. Directly, however, he was screened from observation by the intervening trees and shrubs, he bent his tall, gaunt frame, and stealthily glided with feline caution towards a small clump of trees which abutted on the road leading from Mr Atherton's bungalow to his office.

There he concealed himself; and waited, like a tiger, till his unsuspecting prey approached, and with all that animal's unrelenting ferocity. Lying at length, he watched through an opening for the advent of the man he had sworn to slay.

As usual, between one and two o'clock, Mr Atherton prepared to leave office, to proceed to his own bungalow, there to take tiffin before returning for the couple more hours of work, which would release him from his mere office duties for the day.

Something, however, detained him, and he was on the point of sending to his house to have tiffin brought to the office, when it occurred to him that it would be as well to meet his wife and see how she had, on reflection, taken the events of the morning. Some half-formed intention, too, of showing her some kindness as a sort of peace-offering, suggested itself to him. So he changed his first resolve, and decided to seek his own house.

Followed obsequiously at a respectful

distance by a couple of the red-coated and belted underlings, he took his way, unconscious of danger, along the avenue. The spot which the fakir had selected was where the large, gnarled stem of a tree stood on the very margin of the road, being the outermost one of a small clump. Behind this he had dragged himself in a snake-like fashion directly he saw his enemy—hated with all the fanaticism of his creed—leave the office. Once there he was able, unperceived by any one approaching on that side, again to assume an erect position. Motionless, he stood clutching a long pointed dagger in his right hand, listening intently for the sound of the footfall which would announce the close approach of the doomed man. Only the restless glare in the mad-

man's eyes revealed the workings of the spirit within. Otherwise he might have been a statue, so fixed, immovable he seemed.

Closer and closer came the treadfall—as the murderer had calculated—on his side of the road. He had watched till he had ascertained the habits of his hated victim, and made his preparations so as to render certain the act he meditated. Aware of the chance of being foiled in his desire to kill him in—as he considered—the plenitude of his power in the dignity of his official throne, he had so matured his plans as to be prepared for that contingency.

Abreast with the tree the unconscious Mr Atherton arrived, and was now within armstroke of the concealed fanatic.

With a yell like a savage, he sprang forward, and shouting the name of 'Allah,' made a rapid downward blow at his victim before he could avoid it, or even interpose his arm to protect himself. Taken completely unawares, and fully exposed to the blow, the dagger found the place at which it was aimed, and sank deep between the neck and left shoulder. Without a word, but with a low groan, Mr Atherton fell forward on his face; and the fakir, withdrawing his weapon, again struck at the prostrate form. It was done to insure success, but it was needless. The first stroke had completed the deed of violence, and the strong frame, a moment before so full of life, lay dead on its cognate earth.

The horrified, terror-stricken attendant chuprassies, whose attention was attracted

by the first shout of the fakir, had seen the flash of the dagger and fall of their master, and now shouted vigorously for assistance. Not daring to approach the infuriated madman, who—after a brief examination had satisfied him of his victim's death—stood brandishing his dagger, they called loudly on the Sepoy guard at the office to turn out and come to secure the murderer.

Before long their shouts brought numbers of the office people to the spot, while servants from the house in the opposite direction, hearing the noise, also approached. But none dared go near; all waited for the Sepoy guard which was getting under arms.

There stood the raging fanatic between the two separate parties, brandishing his

dagger with the gestures of a demoniac.

'There is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet,' he shouted in wild exultation. 'Look! I have avenged the Hajee. His blood has called from his polluted grave, and I, even I, Ahmed-bin-Mooza, a humble pilgrim of Mecca, have killed the killer. May he suffer eternal punishment.'

The fakir made no effort to escape. Satisfied at having completed his vengeance, he seemed careless of consequences. But the dead man appeared to have some strange and fascinating attraction for him, for, as he walked swiftly up and down close beside the body, he looked earnestly at it each time in passing.

The Sepoys now approached, led by the Havildar, or native sergeant of the guard,

who called on the fakir to surrender himself.

'Surrender!' he shouted in triumph and with frantic vehemence. 'Who are you to call on me? Am I not the friend and avenger of the great Hajee? Ha! ha! Look here. This is what was your great lord. Never again will he order others to death or stripes. He took the life of a righteous man, and has paid the penalty. Who are you that I should deliver myself to you? Go, call for the mighty nobles, the hated Kaffirs you serve. Bring them to see what Ahmed-bin-Mooza has done.'

The Havildar now drew up his men at the distance of about twenty yards, and threatened the murderer to fire in case he would not give himself up peace-

ably. But this threat only extorted defiance.

'Fire!' shouted the man, baring his breast. 'Fire, you infidels. Do you think a Mussulman does not know how to die? The black-eyed houris in their robes of green are already beckoning. Ahmed-bin-Mooza will be welcome to their arms. His passage over the great gulf will be made easy, for has he not merited his reward by slaying the slayer? May such be the end of all Kaffirs!'

With so many people about, the Havildar did not like to fire, or perhaps assume the responsibility of doing so, and so he waited till some one of the civilians, who lived at no great distance, should arrive.

Some of the clerks had, in the first instance, sent to apprize them of the murder, and ere long Mr Selby and another gentleman galloped up to the spot.

By their directions a combined movement was made. The murderer was hemmed in, and still shouting something almost incoherent about the re-establishment of the Mussulman empire and his own future joy, was eventually secured and bound.

The murdered man was removed to his own house. And when it was ascertained from the replies of the servants—the vague and unsatisfactory nature of whose statements was attributed to their present fright and confusion—that Mrs Atherton was somewhere in cantonment,

the young civilian, who was met by Douglas, was despatched to find her. Her carriage subsequently was also sent with Miss Selby.

The doctor, however, prohibited not only the removal of Mrs Atherton, but any mention of her husband's terrible end, until the fever-fit had run its course and left her calm and capable of bearing the sudden shock.

Miss Selby remained with her sick friend, assisting the kind-hearted little hostess in her ministrations. But in a few hours the fever abated, and subsequently gave place to that coolness of the skin, which is such a delightful relief to the parched and wearied sufferer. Enfeebled she was, but comparatively composed.

Miss Selby was now permitted to break the news to Mrs Atherton, which she did with a gentle, tender sympathy natural to the girl.

Her communication was at first received with half-credulous horror, as if the patient's mind were still wandering, and she sensible that such was the case. But the terrible tragedy as a fact could not long remain disguised from her consciousness, even though she felt great difficulty in actually realizing it. 'Dead! dead! murdered! and she a fugitive and alien from her husband's house. When her heart was full of revenge, hate, and all the bitter animosities and passions which had urged her to separate herself for ever from him, come what might! It was dreadful.' The very pity generated

by his sad and sudden end raised in her conscience a crowd of self-accusing spectres. It made her act appear the more heinous, and, unshorn of its extenuating circumstances, stand revealed in all the real and ghastly nakedness of sin towards a man in the very shadow of death. 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.' These words seemed to be continually ringing in her ears, and sounding in the depths of her troubled spirit.

At first her thoughts refused to travel beyond this point. Pity for the dead man, and a bitter remorse, were the prevailing sentiments, checking for awhile the growth of all others. At length a passionate fit of weeping came to her relief. When Norah left her friend late that night to return home, she hoped that

her mind was more at ease, and that her sympathy and exhortations had induced more tranquillity. She never for a moment suspected the real nature of Mrs Atherton's feelings. She thought that the self-accusing regret, which she could not entirely conceal, was attributable to the pain felt for those many magnified sins of omission and commission towards the dead, which when they are no longer remediable, few are happy enough never to have experienced.

So she left her to endeavour to obtain some repose, and warmly kissing and thanking Mrs De Silva for all her kindness to her dear friend, who, she said, could not be in better or kinder hands, she got into her carriage, and was driven home.

Exhausted by the fever-fit, repose

came indeed to the body, but with it no tranquillity or peace to the mind. After the first ebullition of horror, contrition, and sorrow, Mrs Atherton's thoughts took freer range, and dwelt on all the circumstances preceding and accompanying her flight from home. In the calm hours of the night she lay thinking, and bitter were her thoughts.

Oh, would that it could be recalled! Would that her act, now so irrevocable, could be obliterated! In her wounded pride and anger, she had presumed to arrogate to herself the functions of retribution; and in the very hour of her vengeful effort to raise between her husband and herself such a barrier as must for ever keep them separate, that barrier was rendered needless.

Had she but postponed for a few hours the step she had taken, there had been no overt act of wrong to the dead; no such deep self-abasement and humiliation; and no such passionate dread of her depreciation in the esteem of the man she loved.

Doubtless her mind was at the time somewhat unhinged, and there existed a confused sense of trust and confidence in the honour of the man she sought; but she could not disguise from herself that, though permitted no permanent occupation, thoughts of the same bent and impulse had not then for the first time obtained entry.

What the effect might be on Douglas she feared endeavouring to realize. She knew that, though far from morally irre-

proachable with respect to women, he entertained strong views on the subject of any deviation from the strict line of virtuous reticence. 'If her act should estrange or even destroy all the better part of his love!' But whenever such thoughts intruded she endeavoured to banish them, feeling with remorseful shame, that all such were an injury to her dead husband, pity for whose end should be the most prominent feeling in her breast.

Hour after hour passed, and still the unhappy woman's bitter reflections kept sleep away. It was drawing on towards morning when the opening of the room door caused her to turn her head, and by the light of the night-lamp she saw her hostess enter and step cautiously and noiselessly towards her.

As she approached the bed-side, the new-comer saw that Mrs Atherton was awake, and said—

'Oh, I hope I not disturb. I come for to see if all right.'

'No, dear Mrs De Silva, you have not disturbed me,' was the reply. 'I have not yet been able to get a sleep.'

'Not sleep! What for that? Ah! It is de bad news, my poor dear. But you must try for to sleep. I will go and make nice cup of tea. That refresh, and then sleep come.'

'Thank you; you are very kind. I think I should like some.'

'Then why you no send?' inquired the little woman, as she hurried away to procure that feminine panacea for all ills. Beneath her dusky bosom beat a heart as

kind as if it had lain in one white as snow, and she went, blaming herself for not having divined that her guest was awake and desirous of tea. She soon, however, returned and administered the refreshing beverage, enjoying at the same time a social cup on her own account. For when is a woman not ready for one?

'Is that nice? Ah, it much refresh. Why you no call for me? It wrong to keep wake, and tink, and tink, of all de terrible tings.'

'How good and kind you are!' replied Mrs Atherton; and she really felt drawn towards the warm-hearted little widow, whose unaffected good-nature was so genially sympathetic. She felt impelled to talk to her of her situation, even

confide in her something of her troubled thoughts. She was

> 'By that strong emotion press'd,
> Which prompts us to unload our breast,
> Even when discovery 's pain.'

The relief afforded by confession is, indeed, sometimes very great. But yet, how often, with loving hearts at hand, the poor penitent or sorrow-stricken sufferer yearns, unavailingly, to 'unload the breast,' and pour into another ear the story of the thoughts. Mrs De Silva was, too, acquainted with the fact of her having come from Douglas' bungalow, and this must be, to some extent, explained. But it was with shame and a sense of deep humiliation that she commenced her disclosure.

'Your kindness encourages me to talk

to you openly, dear Mrs De Silva,' she said. 'I am very unhappy.'

'Ah, I see,' was the reply. 'De shocking death. But it de Good God's will. "He give and He take way." Is it not so in de Bible?'

'Yes! But it is not altogether that I mean. You know—you know—I had visited Mr Douglas, and that was very wrong.'

'It was de poor head. Mr Douglas say so. When de fever come, then head all jumble, jumble. Then do ting widout knowing. That not wrong. Only head wrong.'

'And the heart too, I fear,' was the response. 'You don't know how wrong I have been. I had left my husband's house'—and here she shuddered—'with

the intention of never returning. What might become of me I considered not. I had found out something in the morning, and I vowed not to spend another day under his roof. You know that my going to Mr Douglas' house in that way would lead to an entire separation.'

'Ah! But you no go for de bad purpose. Oh, say you no go for dat!' hastily and anxiously broke in Mrs De Silva.

'No. I hope not. But when once such a step was taken, my fate lay out of my own hands. It then entirely depended on Mr Douglas. But whatever might happen I was firmly resolved never to return to my husband. I was confused by the fever. But I knew that idea was prominent, and so I trusted to Mr Douglas.'

'Ah, you trust in his honour. Dat all right. He wild, I do know, like all oder young men. But he no got de black heart, and de bad, selfish feeling. He have pity on de poor forlorn, what come to him in trust and for de help. He no angel, but he no debel. What? Is he not grand friend of de good Major St Clair? If he dat, he no be very bad. Enough. I do know dat well.'

Ay! Poor little woman! She indeed knew well what the influence she referred to was. To her mind it must necessarily pervade all human creatures brought within its reach. But her devotion was, paradoxically, as humble as exalted. She never thought of her life in actual connection with his. She looked up to him as belonging to a superior order

of created things, whose happiness she would insure by any sacrifice on her part. And even now she had formed a purpose with regard to him. With the intuitive perception of a loving woman, she had discerned what had defied Mrs Atherton's penetration. She felt, more than she actually saw, that St Clair loved Norah with the vigorous, unselfish love such as a man of his nature could feel. When others had scorned or passed her by on the other side, Norah Selby had, like St Clair, treated the poor little despised widow with an unaffected, almost deferential, kindness, as devoid of mere ostentation as of constraint. And she loved the bright, sparkling child with a devotion only second to that she felt for St Clair. To bring the two together was her object

whenever the opportunity should present itself. But this is digressive.

Mrs Atherton wondered a little at the tone in which her companion spoke of St Clair, but her thoughts were too much occupied with her own troubles to give it more than passing consideration. In reply to her remarks, she said, 'You are so far right that had I not placed great trust in Mr Douglas' honour, I should very likely never have sought his house. But suppose I had been mistaken? What might I not have become? The sin is the same. The danger is past, but oh, it is dreadful to think of! At the very time my husband was being murdered! oh, it is horrible!' As she spoke, she turned her pale face on the pillows, and sobbed.

'Ah, my poor dear,' said the tender

little hostess, who was seated on the side of the bed, 'you must not make de sorrow, you make de sin seem too big, because de poor Mr Atherton be killed. We all die sometime. It de good God's will. You go to Mr Douglas in anger, no tink de wrong ting. When anger over, go back. God only give help now; pray to Him.' Feeling that she was helpless to say anything more consolatory, the speaker stooped down and kissed the pale and beautiful face; and then, laying her own beside it, wept in pure, womanly sympathy.

The dishevelled hair of both the women fell in confused masses over the pillow. The jet black locks of the one seemed blended with the fine and clustering chestnut of the other. The subdued and

flickering light fell alike on the woven tresses and the delicate fair face of the fine English lady, and the dusky brown colouring of the humble Indian-born. 'One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.' Which of the two had the best of it in that hour of kinship?

However, be that as it may, the two had a very satisfactory and highly refreshing cry together.

Mrs Atherton was so soothed, indeed, by the double feminine remedy of tea and tears, that she shortly after sank into a not unpeaceful sleep, while her new-made friend slumbered by her side.

CHAPTER IX.

'Yes—
These slaves whom I have nurtured, pamper'd, fed,
And swol'n with peace, and gorged with plenty, till
They reign themselves—all monarchs in their mansions—
Now swarm forth in rebellion.'—*Sardanapalus.*

Mr Atherton's murder naturally created a feeling of pain and horror among the English dwellers in Hussunabad. But events succeeded each other in that reign of terror with such rapidity, and massacre was of so wholesale a description, that any merely individual case was not dwelt on with the emotions which it would have excited in less

troublous times. Moreover, at Hussunabad itself, anxiety for the living usurped the place of any very lengthened mourning for the dead.

There could be no disguising from those in authority that matters were drawing to a crisis. Though nothing certain could be established, all the information received pointed to the probability of an early outbreak. Many of the regimental officers still thought it unlikely, and yet confided in the good faith and loyalty of their men. But General Marston, in his responsible position, had better means of learning the general temper.

The attitude of the Rajah of Sungumpore, too, was one which created much uneasiness.

One of the General's precautionary measures was to direct Major St Clair, with a wing of his regiment, to return to Hussunabad without delay, leaving the remainder to protect the small cantonment, at which he was stationed, from the inroads of the neighbouring villagers. Other troops there were none there. In obedience to these orders, St Clair had reached Hussunabad about a month after Mr Atherton's death, and camped on the open ground near the fort which had been the scene of the Hajee's execution.

From this a regular system of patrolling was established towards the cantonments.

Matters thus remained for another week, when General Marston received

information which induced him to give general warning that the time had come when all must be prepared for mutiny at any moment. The precise time it was impossible to prognosticate. In consequence of this, many of the ladies and families moved into the fort, or adopted such accommodation as tents afforded under the fort walls. The officers, of course, remained at their posts to the last, till it might please the mutinous crew under their nominal command to make open revolt, and betake themselves to Delhi or elsewhere.

It was a state of affairs somewhat trying to the nerves, especially of those of the regimental officers who placed no reliance on their men. Most longed for some decisive act which might destroy the

state of suspense in which they at present had their being, and obviate the necessity of any longer maintaining the unpleasant fiction that they commanded, instead of being commanded by their Sepoys.

Whether the outbreak would be preceded by the agreeable preliminary of cutting their officers' throats, or accompanied by those deeds which elsewhere had rendered infamous the name of 'Pandy,' could only be proved by the result. No indication could be gathered from the bearing of the men.

It was ascertained afterwards that a most holy man, a Gooroo or Hindoo priest, had delayed for some time the meditated outbreak. It was not from any holy scruples or aversion to the pastime of general slaughter, incendiarism, or plun-

der, but in consequence of the unpropitious character of the omens. The signs had not yet indicated to the eye of the experienced sage and diviner that the favourable moment had arrived. As to the augurs of old, certain combinations were necessary as indicative of the auspicious time in which to undertake the meditated action. But the time came.

The dinner was over in the mess-house of the regiment to which Captain Goodall and Douglas belonged, and the conversation bore impress of the feelings which actuated its members.

'It will be a grand thing if we pull through, after all,' said one of the subalterns. 'The Europeans will soon be marching up, and we shall only have to get over the next few weeks. I don't

believe our blackguards are quite so bad, after all.'

'I have had, and still have, great faith in the men,' observed Captain Goodall. 'My company has been my care for these fifteen years. I have always treated them well, and don't think they will now turn on their officers. Subedar Maun Sing assured me only this morning that the whole company were my children, and looked simply to me as their father. "How," he asked, "could they ever turn their hands against their benefactors, their own officers, and against the great government, whose salt they had eaten for so long?' I feel, at any rate, that my fellows are thoroughly to be relied on.'

'Yes,' observed Douglas, who usually dined with his old comrades. 'But some-

how they have done it elsewhere. Now, Jemadar Mohun Lall, too, was speaking to me the other day, and said much the same thing; and he stated his belief that the whole regiment would turn out any day to fight the mutineers. But I doubt him.'

'Arcades ambo—blackguards both,' said Macintosh the adjutant, a shrewd and clever Scotchman. 'I fear, from all I learn through our spies, that the regiment is very shaky, and the two native officers mentioned about the worst of the lot.'

'I beg to call your attention to the fact, Mr Macintosh,' said Captain Goodall austerely, 'that you have insulted Subedar Maun Sing by publicly designating him as a blackguard. I cannot permit the character of that worthy and most excel-

lent native officer to be thus openly traduced. I call on you, sir, to apologize for the use of such a term in connection with that deserving Subedar.'

'My dear Goodall,' replied Macintosh, 'Subedar Maun Sing may have been a most excellent officer hitherto. But I really must be permitted to hold my own opinions as to his present trustworthiness. He is, I firmly believe, now trading on your well-known favourable opinion of the Sepoys, and is deceiving you. I have every reason to believe him what I have called him.'

'I shall call upon you for your reasons, sir,' said the other angrily. 'I, at any rate, will not hear a worthy man calumniated without proof.'

'Calumniated!' retorted Macintosh,

in his turn getting angry. 'That is a strong term, Captain Goodall. I hope, on consideration, you will see fit to retract it.'

'I shall not retract it, sir,' was the reply, 'till you either prove the conduct of Subedar Maun Sing to be such as you describe it, or apologize for making use of those terms. I believe him to be an admirable specimen of the native officer, and quite incapable— Well, Lalla, what is it?'

The sudden check in Captain Goodall's flattering testimonial to the merits of his subordinate was caused by the appearance at the door opposite of a non-commissioned officer of his company, who, with unusual haste and disregard of the proprieties, burst into the room.

'Captain Sahib! Sahibs all!' he ejaculated, at the same time making a hasty salute; 'the regiment is rising. Subedar Maun Sing has drawn out No. 2 Company, and they are loading their muskets. They have called on the rest of the regiment, and Maun Sing and others are trying to persuade them to come here and shoot you all in the mess-room. Fly, Sahibs, fly for your lives!'

'Impossible!' shouted Captain Goodall, as the whole party sprang up, and seizing their arms, called for their horses and ponies, which for several days past all had had the precaution to keep in attendance. 'Let me question the man. There must be some mistake. I could stake my existence on the faithfulness of Maun Sing.'

But others quickly arrived who corroborated the intelligence. And when the Subedar-major—a fine old warrior, who had grown gray in the service, but was still stalwart and erect—rushed in and implored the English officers to fly, there was no room left for doubt. With the tears running down his cheeks, and his broad chest—adorned with the native order of merit and several war medals and clasps—heaving, he entreated his superiors not to run the risk of meeting the men.

'I have lost all authority over my children,' he cried. 'All the old regiment's deeds of glory are forgotten. The mutiny will soon be universal, and ere long the bungalows will be blazing, and the Sepoys changed to devils. Fly, Sahibs, while

you yet have time, for all is now up.'

'Does Maun Sing lead the mutiny?' asked Captain Goodall, still but half satisfied of the duplicity of his favourite.

'Captain Sahib, he does,' was the reply. 'No. 2 was the first to turn out under him. He has always been the proposer of the most violent measures, and has influenced others to be faithless to their salt.'

At this announcement, Captain Goodall could no longer doubt, and he fairly broke down, sobbing with shame and anguish of spirit. There was his company, in which he had ever taken such professional pride, and the very man whom most he delighted to honour, the head and front of the mutiny!

But there was no time to indulge in

such sad reflections. Action, prompt and decisive, must at once be taken. After a brief consultation it was determined to make one effort to persuade the men to return to their duty. It would never do—they generally agreed—that they should run without making one endeavour to control their men, or judge for themselves if the time were past for such. So they decided to act as many other brave, devoted men did in those days. Though Douglas had nothing at present to do with his regiment, being on the staff, he determined to join his old comrades in the effort. In the absence of any field-officer, Captain Goodall, being the senior, assumed command of the little band.

Turning to the adjutant, he said gravely and sadly, 'Before another hour

is over, Macintosh, we may both have to answer for our sins before a higher tribunal than the orderly-room. I beg to apologize to you for the warm words I uttered in defence of that man who, there can be no doubt, is a black-hearted and double-dyed traitor. I was wrong. Forgive me.'

'My dear Goodall,' replied Macintosh, as he took the offered hand, and wrung it with a friendly grip which each knew might be the last, 'I have nothing to forgive. Like you, I believed him trustworthy till very recently.'

Little was said among the officers as they galloped towards the parade-ground, save a few brief words of friendship, or farewell in case of coming death; and in one or two instances hurried messages

and instructions in the event of one surviving another.

The shouting of many voices, and the cries of men hurrying to the parade-ground, too surely indicated the state of affairs. As they approached all seemed in confusion, so different to the orderly gathering of the men for the legitimate purposes of muster or parade. No one now seemed in actual command; none, at least, had the power to enforce obedience. Many more thought of giving orders than obeying them.

To this, however, there was one exception. Maun Sing had succeeded by violent exhortation, and the influence of his able but unscrupulous character, in drawing out his company in comparative order, and was engaged, as the officers

approached, in consulting with some other native officers towards one flank of the men.

Cries of 'the Sahibs are coming, the Sahibs are coming!' greeted the approach of the Englishmen. And so strong were the habits of discipline, and the moral sway and influences of race, that, even now, several would have slunk away rather than meet the anger of their officers. But mutiny had been decided on by the majority, and any feeble opposition was quickly overpowered.

'What are you doing here, my men?' shouted Captain Goodall, as he galloped up with the rest. 'Disperse to your lines at once, and all shall be forgotten. I never thought to see this day, or that my children would turn mutinous.'

'The brave Sepoys are no longer the servants of the English Government, who have broken faith with them, and made them to eat cow's and pig's fat. They are now the soldiers of the Padshah,' shouted Maun Sing in reply. 'Take the Captain and the other Sahibs prisoners, men,' he continued, not, however, making any effort himself towards the proposed capture.

'Sepoys, I conjure you not to listen to that traitor, that faithless one. It will lead to your utter destruction. Think of your services. Think of what a good and kind master the great English Government has been.'

'And,' said Douglas, who was by Captain Goodall's side, 'think of the glorious victories the old regiment has joined

in. Think of the fight at Maharajpore, the charge at Ferozeshah, the entrenchments at Sobraon, the victory of Gujerat. Think of the honour of the old regiment. Let your sons point with pride to it, and say, "That was my father's regiment. It stood firm, and the great English Government was grateful." '

'Oh, be not infatuated,' here continued Captain Goodall, as Douglas paused. 'Do not destroy your good name for ever. Be sure the Government is powerful enough to retake Delhi, and put down the mutiny. You have no chance, the soldier troops are pouring into the country, and will soon be seen everywhere. Oh, my children! my children!' and the speaker's voice quite broke with his emotion, 'do not listen to bad advisers. Hear me,

who have always been your true friend.'

There had been a few interruptions during the address of these exhortations. But Captain Goodall was much liked and respected by the Sepoys as a just officer, and one well disposed towards themselves. Douglas, too, was not unpopular, so they were listened to with a patience hardly to have been expected at such a time.

At last an old non-commissioned stept forward, and punctiliously saluting, addressed Captain Goodall. 'It is too late, Sahib,' he said. 'We have determined to cast in our lot with the rest. There is no help for it. I pray you and the other Sahibs to leave before worse comes of it.' Even as the man spoke the station gun, used to mark the time of *réveillé*, midday, and retreat beating, now boomed forth a

signal. As the roar reverberated through the cantonments, the man resumed:

'There, Sahib, that is the signal-gun. You have no time to lose. Fly at once.'

He was right. The noise and confusion were increasing. Men were closing round, and all the Sepoys of the other regiments hastily assembling. A broad flame of light, too, lit up the scene as the first bungalow was set on fire.

'Shoot the dogs down,' shouted Maun Sing. 'What do they here? Fire, my men, and let us hurry off to loot the bungalows, or the other regiments will be before us.'

'No, no. Spare the good Captain,' answered several voices, including that of the old Havildar who had last spoken.

'Maun Sing,' shouted Captain Goodall,

in a voice which was heard above the noise and din of many excited voices, and all the confusion of words of mingled entreaty, warning, and threat. 'Maun Sing, faithless to your salt, you are a traitor to your officers, your regiment, and the great Government whose bread you have eaten. You have led my children astray. If this be my last act it is a just one.' The speaker had quietly ridden towards the Subedar while he spoke. As he finished he pulled up and raised his revolver, bringing it to bear steadily on the traitor.

The blazing bungalows gave light far more than sufficient to aim by. The sight covered the Subedar, the trigger was touched, and Maun Sing fell to the shot, and lay writhing on the ground. Spurring his horse forward, Captain Goodall

burst through the men who stood scattered around, and galloped away across the parade-ground, after the rest of the small party of officers, who, seeing further interference absolutely useless, had ridden off. The troopers of the cavalry regiment scurried here and there, and footmen of all arms were hurrying in every direction. Some in uniform, some in their native dress, but all armed; and frequent musket-shots testified that the will as well as ability existed to add murder to mutiny.

The outbreak was general, and extended to the bazaar people and officers' servants, and camp followers. All the officers were now endeavouring to save themselves. Some had been shot down by their own men, and the appearance of a white face was the signal for a dropping

irregular discharge of fire-arms. Many of the bazaar native merchants and shop-people, too, were hunted through the cantonment.

Loot, indeed, was the first and principal attraction. But the very act of destruction of the bungalows and their more bulky and useless contents, aroused other passions. Amid exulting yells and shouts, intermingled with screams, the work went on. License and excitement prevailed over the earlier restraining influences, and those who, at first, would have raised their voices in deprecation of useless slaughter, now thirsted for blood.

But far worse than the Sepoys—many of whom did in the hour of danger aid their officers to escape—were the scum and refuse of the bazaar and city. Scoun-

drels without one human sympathy or feeling beyond their own gratification hurried to and fro, mad with the lust of unrestrained fury, and every evil impulse which can actuate the most degraded natures.

The whole brood of hell were unchained. All the vilest and most debasing passions and instincts with which humanity is afflicted, were in that one and self-same hour loosed from the bounds of all control, and fed their fill.

END OF VOL. II.

JOHN CHILDS AND SON, PRINTERS.

The Gage of honour