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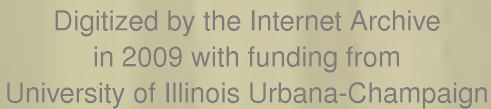
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OUT OF THE MESHES.

VOL. II.

OUT OF THE MESHES.

A STORY.

'Un fonte sorge in lei, che vaghe e monde
A l'acque si, che i riguardanti asseta
Ma dentro ai freddi suoi cristalli asconde
Di tosco estran malvagita secreta
* * * * * * *
Lunge la bocca disdegnosa e schiva
Torcete voi dall' acque.'—*Tasso.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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OUT OF THE MESHES.

CHAPTER I.

PENITENCE AND POISON.

If I might compare the present beautiful narrative to a ship, I should say that it has hitherto glided along in smooth sunny seas, amid luxuriant tropical scenery, but that life on board (as in most ships) has been rather wearisome and rather inane. Clouds enough will arise by-and-by, the mountain waves will froth, and perhaps a cyclone will whistle through her rigging; but recently we have had little to chronicle in the ship's log but calms and light breezes. To drop metaphor, our story, but for the tremendous political interests from time to time discussed, may

perhaps (to a superficial man!) have appeared a little superficial; in point of fact, Indian life seems sunshiny, stupid, and common-place, but apoplexy is in its sunbeams, and fever in its leafy shades. The mild Hindoo is a salaaming animal with a latent tendency to cut your throat. We have hitherto detailed nothing but small ambitions, small loves, small hopes, small pleasures. Life in India (and perhaps elsewhere) deals largely with such, but there are more serious matters, the pangs of exile, sickness, despair, and a thousand other real sorrows under the surface.

For observe Mr Simpkin's bungalow at Barrackpore. He thinks that all the pathos, all the agony, of the whole cantonment is contained under its roof, and an Ensign in love, like a woman in travail, hath sorrow, there is no doubt about it; but look into the bungalow to the right of him, and the bungalow to the left of him, and there is also real sorrow in each of these unsightly and somewhat absurd Indian edifices.

In the left bungalow a Captain Fiddler tip-

ples brandy, and shouts 'Yoicks' in a drunken voice in the middle watches of the night; whilst at the same hour Mrs Langton in the right bungalow is praying for her first-born, a pretty little boy with auburn hair who was buried at Torquay exactly a fortnight since, so she will continue in her ignorance to pray for him three weeks longer. Five mails ago there was brought to her the first news of his serious cough. Charley Simpkin likes Mrs Langton, she is so lady-like, so English. It is impossible to calculate the good that a refined lady-like woman can do to a young man. Charley Simpkin sometimes wonders whether the brilliant Sophy will ever be such a sensible companion and sterling wife. Mrs Langton knows of his passion, instinctively perhaps; she soothes the young man by a thousand delicate cares. He is never tired of calling at the bungalow next door. And when he returns comforted and elated he still fancies that all the feeling of Barrackpore is under his shell jacket. He knows not of the sick-bed at Torquay, and if he did would not even then

perhaps sympathize over-strongly with Mrs Langton. She perhaps can understand the love of a young man, but could he understand the love of a mother when her little one is fading away? She weeps, but it cannot hear; she calls, but the seas drown her voice.

Fiddler, a drunken contemptible sot in the Ensign's eyes, is a brother officer just returned from leave. Two years ago he was a temperate man. What made him take to drink? Some said love, some said debt. India is the land of heat, the land of *ennui*, the land of insatiable thirst and despair, and if you and I, my gentle reader, have abstained from the unblessed, inordinate cup, let us not praise ourselves the more, but blame Captain Fiddler the less. He was amongst the first stormers when the gate of Ghuznee was blown in, and received three sabre gashes. He is liked by his brother-officers, and Langton and Ashleigh and Curzon sit with him at night, and watch him with the tenderness of woman. The Ensign will soon attend the last march of this poor groggy

old campaigner, and amongst the Sepoys of his company who carry him along, or respectfully follow him with reversed arms, and fire over him a farewell volley, there will be wet eyes. Charley Simpkin, two days after this sad ceremony, had to put on his full-dress uniform once more, to take a farewell of his young friend, Mr Sharp of the 33rd, who died of cholera in four hours. Captain Ashleigh was the president of the committee appointed to take an inventory of the effects of this latter young officer; and Charley Simpkin a week afterwards, when they were put up to public auction, bought a copy of 'In Memoriam' for half a rupee. Gentle reader, if you think that life in India is all sunshine you make a terrible mistake.

India is a great many things. People can call it anything they like, as the fancy strikes them. It has been called the 'Englishman's grave!' It is a land of exile. Major Pulfington Belper, when perspiring at a Court of Requests or a brigade field-day, often humorously calls it 'transportation for life with hard la-

bour!' It is the Career of Talents, say some. The ark is said to have alighted on a high peak of the Himalayas, the first land uncovered by the subsiding waters; and the wild beasts were turned loose, but the patriarch did not stop in the land: whence some have concluded that India is a land for wild beasts, but not for man. I don't know if it has yet been called a sick-bed, but the phrase is as good as another.

For India is emphatically the land of fever, of cholera, of liver complaint, and a thousand other disorders, which make the white man pay tribute for his glorious conquest, however much we Britons may fondly imagine that we are acclimatized by nature for the express purpose of carrying constitutional government, bitter-beer, Anglican theology, railroads, telegraphs, cutlery, and the language of Shakespeare to the benighted inhabitants of the rest of the world. Ask any old general or civilian at Cheltenham or Tyburnia what is really his most vivid recollection of India, and you at once suggest visions of quinine and calomel, the

weary *charpoy*, and the long, sleepless hours, the bearer with the physic bottle, and the *Kitmutgar* with the chicken broth, the dreary old novel, the insatiable thirst, the prostration, the sense of utter loneliness, and the morbid hunger of the soul for green English fields and homely English faces. A friend of mine, a retired Anglo-Indian, thinks that that character ought to be the most contented man on earth. In moments of dejection and trouble he has only got to call to remembrance that Indian sick-bed, and it brings him incalculable comfort.

Miss Sophy Brabazon now lies dangerously ill at her uncle's house at Chowringhee. Good folks call every day and inquire of the Durwan. Dr Carver, the Surgeon-General, attends at least three times a day, and there is an expression of anxiety on his countenance of more than professional intensity. The sun, the chill, the danger, the mental excitement, were too much for the young lady. They brought on a *pucka* fever, and she is now delirious. Poor, kind Mr Liversege, whom we saw so excited in the day of the picnic, is ter-

ribly cut up, and his whole establishment feel the shock keenly. Little Motee is unremitting in her care and tenderness, the Ayahs clasp their hands, the Hindoos cry 'Ram! Ram!' Mrs Throgmorton is much moved, and takes the opportunity to make some appropriate grave reflections. Even Mrs Liversege is cut up, although her mind is very robust. Marrying early a reserved man, called upon to take the head of his house, and do battle with and rule a troop of black servants, left many hours a day entirely alone in an out-station, and at last plunged into the plots and counterplots of Calcutta State craft, Mrs Liversege, like many other Indian matrons, has become a very self-reliant, independent lady, by no means given to sentimental weaknesses. She loves her niece, she loves her husband. And she does what she conceives to be her duty to each in a business-like, indefatigable, laborious, and somewhat oppressive manner. The creed of this good woman may not be a high one, but such as it

is, she is most conscientious in following it out. The Indian worship of Mammon is not the simple Protestant worship so prevalent in London, the plain adoration of the money-bag. It is a more typical, formal ritual, like the present creed of Paris, whose symbol is the mushroom and the busy bee—it is the worship of officialism. Worthy Mrs Liversege, as she goes to church twice every Sunday, has not the slightest misgivings about her conduct in this mortal sphere. She feels that she is leaving no stone unturned to get her husband and her niece on in the world. She has persuaded, exhorted, flattered. She has driven about from house to house in the sun. She has sent off dozens and dozens of *chits* (notes). She has had all the trouble and annoyance of the picnic. And now that her niece is ill you cannot expect the worthy woman to weigh very accurately her own share in the calamity, especially at a moment when she herself has such severe trials of her own, for the absurd irresolution of the Governor-General in the

affair of Nawaubgunge has placed Mrs Liversege in much perplexity.

I think I need not say that Miss Sophy Brabazon did not die. She was got safely at last through the crisis of her disorder, which was a very severe one. Motee was indefatigable in attending her young friend. I think this young woman has received but scant consideration in these pages. She is more self-sacrificing than most people in this world, more noble, more affectionate, more generous. She is more useful likewise, for Mrs Liversege having discovered that she has rather a talent for house affairs, gets her to look after the native housekeeper and plan the arrangement of the dinner service. All these and similar offices the young lady performs with great good-nature, whilst the more favoured Sophy enjoys the repose and the triumph. I have mentioned the reasons why Motee has been in the background during the present portion of my narrative. You see we have had to tell of balls and other amusements which are not viewed with favour by

the Petticrook authorities to whom Mrs Throgmorton looks up for guidance. Also there is the circumstance of the dark skin. Major Throgmorton must have had a certain amount of native blood in his veins, at least such is the verdict in Calcutta upon the subject, and Brahmins are most particular on the subject of pure race. But, besides all this, the brilliant Miss Sophy has been made such a focus of interest, and so many and such important public interests have centred around her, that we have been obliged to neglect Motee a little. That young lady, however, has been working on steadily all this time, doing any odd job that may be required in the house, writing letters of invitation for her aunt, letters connected with missions and other grave subjects for her mother. She is always busy, and always has time to do some little service or other for Sophy, whom somehow she adores. She hems, she darns, she sews, and performs any amount of those ornamental articles which ladies call 'work.' Well, well, the poetic Mr

Simpkin was in search of an ideal, and has he not found one in Sophy?

But we are now obliged to tell of her attention at Sophy's sick-bed, for how could this little story have gone on without it? Dr Carver was of opinion that but for the gentleness and tenderness and vigilance of little Motee, poor Sophy might never have furnished any more material to a story-teller. Observe, Motee loves Sophy, which is a point in the latter young lady's favour. There must be a great deal of good in a person when so many people of opposite sexes become so attached to her. To tell you the truth, I have more than once half fancied that Miss Sophy was a little va— a little self— it may be, a little frivo—. But with all her faults the young lady is loved, therefore she has something loveable about her. For those faults cannot have escaped the notice of her lovers. The Indian sun photographs with a terrible minuteness, and Miss Sophy has not been in the habit of concealing her shortcomings. I think she rather glories in them,

and perhaps this frankness is one of her most fascinating points. As she gradually got better she used to have confidential communications with Motee.

The poor little maiden is very penitent and very sad.

'I suppose I'm getting better. I suppose I shall be back into the wicked world again before long. I never could have fancied that any one could become so utterly and irredeemably tired of one's bed-room.'

'Poor Sophy, you have had a long time of it.'

'Don't pity me! Whatever you do, don't pity me. Come, come, Motee, you are a dear little angel, and I ought not to be angry with you, ought I? But I can't bear pity. The tumble into the water—that was an accident.'

'Of course it was, and an unlucky one.'

'That was an accident—and what is to come must come. If you fall into the water you can't expect to come out dry, can you?'

Motee assented to this proposition. Poor Sophy was sitting up in her bed. Her face

is worn and dreadfully pale. Motee sits by her bed-side, and looks at her with her great wide sympathizing eyes. The latter young lady is executing a piece of work which goes, I think, by the technical name of 'crochet.'

'The tumble into the water, I repeat, was an accident!' resumed Miss Sophy after a pause, and then she went off at tangent. 'You are a kind, good girl, Motee, and the Fates seem determined that you shall remain a kind, good, noble creature. They are not always teasing you, always tempting you, they don't put giddy ambitions into your little head, giddy vanities, giddy insanities, and then mock you and laugh at you because you have been idiot enough to be deceived by them. They don't make you their butt, their plaything, their doll. They don't dress you in grey and sky-blue rags. Tut, so silly a little doll ought never to have been fished out at all!'

'On the contrary, my love, we will dress the little doll up again in a few days and make it look more beautiful than ever!'

'And more ridiculous. Tell me this, dear. Why don't they dress you up? Why don't they make you dance? Why don't they make you a flaunting silly little figure of fun too? You are a woman. You are as pretty as I am. Why is all the folly of our amiable sex visited in my humble person, tell me that?'

'My dear, Doctor Carver said you were to remain quite quiet. You must not excite yourself. You are exaggerating the past very much. I am sure nobody felt anything but sincere pity when they heard of your accident.'

'But I won't be pitied. Let them laugh if they like. That silly ape Captain Spink and the rest of them. I was ridiculous, I know that.'

'Nonsense, dear!'

'I was ridiculous, it is no use talking. And I made myself ridiculous. I have been blaming the Fates when you and I know it was all my own silly stupid fault. I have told you the whole story.'

'And I must repeat, dear, that you are hasty about every one of the facts. Mr Palmer Brown might really have been detained. You accepted the statement of his rival. If you really like him better than the rest of the world, ought you to condemn him unheard?'

'It was all my own ridiculous fault. Oh, why do they train us silly little dolls to set such store on tawdry silks and coloured glass? Are silly pomps and silly rank so vital that we must forget for them all love, all kindness, all pity? I don't think that I am so very much more ridiculous, so very much more sordid, so very much more heartless than the rest of the world. By heavens, I'll show them that I am not. I'll marry the first Ensign I meet when I get well, and then they can't tease me about rank and wealth any more.'

When Sophy got a little stronger the Doctor recommended a change of air, and after a little time it was settled that she should visit Mr Vesey at Barrackpore as soon

as she could bear the journey. Sophy was delighted at the prospect of the change. The very idea of it seemed to make her better at once. At Barrackpore were so many kind people, the Veseys, Langtons, Charley Simpkin, Pulfington Belper, Captain Ashleigh, to whom she was indebted for her life. The air at Barrackpore seemed purer and holier than in Calcutta. Sophy was quite happy the day that Mr Liversege drove her over there in the vehicle with two roofs, which is already celebrated in these humble pages. The change was of the greatest benefit to the young lady. Mr and Mrs Vesey received her with the greatest kindness, and in a few days she was able to come down to the drawing-room for a short time each day.

At Barrackpore were two individuals who had felt Miss Sophy's accident very deeply. The eccentric Major was nearly beside himself at the thought of his share in the catastrophe, and Charley Simpkin called day after day upon Mrs Vesey to get news of the young lady as she lay in Calcutta between life and

death. Earnest as he thought his love before, it is astonishing what a change this hard matter-of-fact danger made in it. You can judge that he rejoiced when he heard that she was coming to Barrackpore. And when one morning a week after her arrival he happened to meet Mrs Vesey on the main road of cantonments, and that lady kindly carried him off to pay a visit to the invalid who was sitting in the verandah, his excitement knew no bounds.

Sophy received him with a smile, and such a smile! The fanciful Ensign of Native Infantry thought he had never seen such a smile before, and compared it to that particular smile which once made Petrarch so happy, and suggested to him the manner in which spirits recognize each other again in Elysium.

'Oh, I am so very glad to see you. Wasn't I cross with you the other day? I was terribly rude. And you acted so bravely, so nobly, immediately afterwards. It was very generous of you!'

'Not at all. It was very vindictive. I

wanted to pay you out in the most savage manner!'

'And you have paid me out well. Are you satisfied, Monster? Will you forgive me?'

And the young lady smiled even more sweetly than before. They were alone. Her voice was a little weak. There she sat amid the scents of an Indian garden, propped up with pillows, languid, and pale as monumental alabaster. Judge whether Mr Simpkin was able to refuse her.

'I did not have my revenge, after all,' he said a short time afterwards.

'How do you mean?'

'I only saved the life of poor old Pulfington Belper!'

'Poor old Pulfington Belper!'

'Very poor old Pulfington Belper!'

'And how is the dear old creature?'

'The dear old creature is better. The crisis is past!'

'Crisis. What do you mean?'

'You have read in novels, and therefore can

have some idea of the horrible remorse, the terror, the sleepless nights, the phantom blood-stains that haunt and punish a man who has killed a woman. You have not read in novels and can have no idea of the still greater agony of a man who has spilt, say, a tipsy-cake on the favourite dress of his beloved. Mix up the two situations, and you have Major Pulfington Belper's state of mind. "I wonder if she will ever speak to me again, Simpkin?" Those were his last words.'

'Oh, pray tell him I know it was not his fault. Tell him, I want to tell him so myself, if he will honour me with a call. It was all his kindness!'

'I apologize. I misquoted his words. They were these: "I wonder if the Elegant Entangler will ever speak to me again, hey!"'

'Elegant Entangler!'

'Yes, that was the most favourable sign. Throughout your illness he called you always, "Miss Sophy Brabazon." Now he calls you the "Elegant Entangler" once more.'

'Elegant Entangler! what does he mean by that?'

'Elegant Entangler!' said Mr Simpkin in his most facetious manner. 'Let me see now, "Entangler!" One who entangles! "Elegant!" Graceful, beautiful, polished. What can he mean? An elegant entangler must be an entangler, who by the grace of her mind, or the beauty of her face, or the sweetness of her disposition, wittingly or unwittingly binds, ties up, and enmeshes within the chains of her sway, those dreamings and longings of mankind conventionally known as the emotions of the heart. An elegant entangler must necessarily be, I should say, pretty—very pretty!'

'Don't be saucy, sir.'

'I should say, also, that she ought to be a trifle wicked.'

'You're a goose!' said Miss Sophy Brabazon.

'Yes, but you're the last person in the world that ought to brag of it!'

'What nonsense are you two children talking?' said Mrs Vesey at this moment.

'Miss Sophy Brabazon was boasting of her former triumphs!'

'Boasting, was she?'

'There was little matter for boasting!' said the young lady.

Thus Miss Sophy Brabazon gradually recovered her health and spirits after her fall into the water, an immersion which I have by sly innuendo ventured to represent as of a moral as well as a physical nature. We see her at present in a very beautiful contrition of mind. I don't know that the young lady has sinned very deeply. She has been giddy, vain, perhaps a little silly. In any case to fall in love with such a puffy, unreal Calcutta official cannot be defended by any high system of ethics. But poor Sophy is penitent, humbled, abashed, and if I were constructing a work with a high moral purpose I think I should close my story at this particular point. Unfortunately the present tale aims at nothing higher than accurate narrative, and I shall soon have to show that this edifying state of the young lady's mind was not very lasting.

If I have done my work conscientiously to this point I think the gentle reader ought rather to like Miss Sophy. She is fickle, sentimental, weak, and a bit of a flirt. She has refinement, humour, and white shoulders, but so have many other young ladies without making half the sensation which she does. What is the secret of her popularity? Is it her quick feminine impulses for good and ill, and her absence of reticence, which enables you to see her at once in all her weakness, all her strength? Is it her pride, her courage, her sensitiveness, her jealousy, her love of show. Miss Sophy Brabazon is a true woman. She has all a woman's qualities,—in exaggeration, it is true, but on that account she makes all the men love her the more. And even the philosophic artist who dissects her has some of the sentimental feeling which Mr Ferguson might evince on plunging his knife into the marble flesh, which shrouds a heart whose beat two days before had made music to thousands. Sophy does make people fall in love with her, there is no doubt of that. Our Corydon is

now to be young and ardent, and the lady is in a pure, penitent, enthusiastic mood, highly favourable to pastoral sentiment. She determined to fall in love with the first Ensign she met, and here he is. After pursy Melibœus his heart seems so fresh, and buoyant. Mr Simpkin is certainly at the present moment a young gentleman not without good looks. His figure is neat and plump, and shows well in a shell jacket. He is good-humoured, frank, and cultivated beyond his years and station. Miss Sophy attended a brigade field-day when she got a little better, and when she recognized the young gentleman waving his sword in salute (the compliment was to Brigadier Dewsnap, and not Miss Sophy) she wondered that she had never thought him handsome before. The music, the glitter, the pomp of soldiery dazzled her. Line after line of stately tall swarthy soldiers marched past headed by their English officers, and then the different regiments formed up in order of battle, and fired volleys of musketry, and changed front, and executed a number of

pretty manœuvres. Sophy, whose likes and dislikes were rapid, suddenly became very enthusiastic about the military career. An officer might not be as prosperous as a Calcutta official, but Mrs Langton was an example of the fact that a lady could eke out existence by the side of a brave loyal gentleman not without comfort. She began to see a thousand new merits in the merry, gentlemanly, frank officers who called at Mrs Vesey's. It was something to find a state of society where other things were thought of besides money and rank, two matters which, it must be owned, were considered of quite disproportionate importance by Mrs Liversege and her set. You see that the arguments by which the young lady justifies a romantic passion for a young soldier are not without disingenuousness. But a rumour at this time reached her from Calcutta which greatly intensified her resolution. She would marry Ensign Simpkin. Was not his grade the very lowest of all? That would silence the jeers of Calcutta society. That would show Mr

Palmer Brown that he was mistaken in much. A rumour came from Calcutta that in the very teeth of the affair of the Opium *Gumashtas* of Budge Budge, Mr Wotherspoon was to be appointed Resident of Nawaubgunge, after all. Another rumour was not long in coming, to the effect that Mr Palmer Brown was making up to Miss Wotherspoon. That grotesque mar-plot Pulfington Belper communicated these two pieces of intelligence with garrulous inadvertency. Miss Sophy was furious, good Mrs Vesey was astonished. She had never seen her so cross before, and Charley Simpkin, never so amiable and kind.

Ensign Charles Simpkin of the 44th Nowgong Native Infantry was now in the seventh heaven of delight. I have hinted before that in the eyes of this young logician the behaviour of Miss Sophy Brabazon towards him was not reducible to any one uniform consistent principle of action. Sometimes he would amass a considerable number of smiles, hand pressures, significant words, and other small but immensely pregnant facts, and using the

most severe inductive process of reasoning would work out this conclusion, that there was no doubt Sophy was really in love with him. At other times he was obliged to confess that it was quite certain that she did not care for him at all. At the time of the picnic to the Botanical Gardens there had been much to drive home this latter conclusion with unusual force, and now how much does he regret that want of a crusader's trust! It is plain enough at last that she really loves him, and the excitable young man becomes more in love than ever. The ten days succeeding to the Brigade Field-day were the happiest ten days of his life. He saw Sophy at the band every evening, in the park almost every morning. He called at the house almost every day. He sat near her in church on Sunday, and sneaked away to watch Mrs Vesey's house in silence under the pale stars. Prosperity and joy overtop mortification and sorrow in the scaffolding, and the dream of a boy is at last built up into the complete love of a man. That is one reason why we devote more consider-

ation to it now than we have before, for the young gentleman has been in love ever since the '*Babelmandeb*' arrived in the Hooghly. Those ten honeyed days of courtship and elation, of quiet happiness and delirious hope, will do our young soldier incalculable good whatever their issue, for young love is amongst the holiest of the things of earth. On the ninth day he came to the resolution of declaring his love. On the tenth day there was a slight change in the manner of Sophy. On the night of the eleventh day, as he threw himself on his bed (after a customary visit to the stars and the exterior of Mr Vesey's bungalow), he debated whether he should propose marriage upon the morrow, and was rather perplexed in his mind. He tossed and turned in his bed and could not sleep. He had scarcely been to sleep for the four previous nights. A bright female form seen first in the young poet's dreams, had now come down from the clouds to tell him to dream no more.

At midnight the riddle which he was trying to guess seemed suddenly quite clear to

him, and the sudden change in the young lady's manner was easily accounted for. She had seemed to take up with Captain Ashleigh to pique the tardy Ensign. The fond young gentleman was more ecstatic than ever. There could be no doubt that she loved him. He remembered with how much feeling she had repeated this celebrated verse :

'Flow on, fatal river, chill, gloomy, and vast,
And bear on thy calmness that lamp's feeble glow,
Or bear the drown'd hope that seeks in thee at last,
With faith not all pagan, a rest from its woe.'

He remembered the little blush that appeared for a moment on her cheek as she praised them to him the other day. He remembered that she was not angry when he took the liberty to kiss her hand in the Barrackpore park, when they were walking together, and the band had finished, and gloom was under the broad boughs of the mangoes. What did her sudden enthusiasm for Captain Ashleigh signify in the face of all this ? She had taken his arm to-night, she had not returned the warm pressure of the Ensign's hand, but her pur-

pose was clear as noonday. Should he propose by letter or word of mouth? Talking was nervous work, and he was rather strong with his pen. He would write to her. The Ensign at once shouted and howled until he had not only awakened the 'Blinking Idolater,' but also Major Pulfington Belper, who was now the sharer of the young man's bungalow. Since the affair of the Brigadier's gates Charley had quarrelled with Captain Ashleigh.

When the grave native, who figures in these pages under the somewhat puerile title of the 'Blinking Idolater,' had lit a candle, Charley Simpkin got up. His writing materials are now before him, and he is in the vein. On small scraps of paper he made several rough drafts of various tender but very disjointed paragraphs. It was a long time before he could make them all cohere to his satisfaction, but when they were all moulded into a whole and copied down on a clean sheet of note-paper, the literary force of the composition took even the author of it by surprise. He determined to carry it to Mrs

Vesey's house on the morrow. At two in the morning a voice seemed to speak to his soul, and he became much less confident. He could not help recollecting again and again an ominous phrase of hers about the poet Keats. She thought that young genius a 'dreaming silly boy!' At three o'clock all that seemed clear to the Ensign was this, that if all women were like Miss Sophy Brabazon, there was much truth in a saying of Major Pulfington Belper (in one of his bitterest moments), that 'in the presence of crinoline the syllogism is a mockery, and the inductive and the deductive methods both delusions, begad! and snares.'

CHAPTER II.

'AND WHEN I WEEP SHE SAYS TEARS ARE BUT WATER.'*

Now that Miss Sophy Brabazon is gradually recovering health and strength, we, in company with the good people of Barrackpore, are able to think of other matters. It is announced that the celebrated actress, Miss Rosalind Vollaire, will arrive in a fortnight. This lady had been detained in Australia much longer than was expected, and people had almost given her up. But actual printed bills are now out announcing in the most positive manner that on Wednesday, January 2nd, she will make her *début* at Barrackpore as *Mabel Hawthorn* in the play of the *Ironside*, assisted by Captain Beverley as Cloudesley, and the other gentlemen amateurs.

* Spenser.

It can be imagined what a stir this intelligence has created amongst the Barrackpore public. Actors, who had tossed aside their half-learned parts and their half-completed costumes, now again test their memory and stimulate their fagged invention. The confident men are elated once more, and the nervous men are depressed. Amongst the former are Charley Simpkin and a Scotch gentleman, Mr Broomielaw (of Ballachulish), which latter has discovered that his Highland limbs look remarkably well in cavalier boots. Amongst the latter is a Mr Bingle of the 33rd, who now views the prospect of the play with the utmost detestation, and is sure that he will never remember a word of his part. He thinks that his allowing himself to be talked over by Captain Beverley was the most fatal mistake he has yet made in life.

And now ladies' wardrobes and all the bazars of Barrackpore and Calcutta are ransacked for coloured velvets for the cavalier doublets, and sombre broad-cloth for the garb of the Roundheads. The advices telegraphed

to England that month must have announced that tow and black paint were as 'firm' as the customary 'mule twist,' so great was the demand for the long black curls worn by the men of the day of the first Charles. With the female characters the difficulties of preparation were greater still. Charley Simpkin got in the books of Madame Bouffant, to an amount which would have done credit to a fashionable Calcutta beauty. He did this without consulting Mrs Vesey and Sophy, and was reproved by them in consequence. They told him that they could have dressed him up far more effectively, with the useless finery of their own wardrobes, and it was settled that he should be dressed up in Mrs Vesey's house, on the night of the performance, a step to which he consented with little reluctance. A head of hair which he had ordered from Mr Miffin, the fashionable Calcutta hairdresser, was to cost C. Rs. 60 (£6,) but then, as he slyly explained to Miss Sophy, it was to be as dark, as glossy, as copious, and almost as silky as her own, and if she doubted the

fact he was ready to lay a wager of six pair of lavender gloves. He would give her a specimen lock of his hair. She should give him a specimen lock of hers. They could each then consider the question at their leisure, and he would abide by her decision in the matter of the bet. You see that our story has gone back a few days, when the intercourse of Shepherd and Shepherdess was gay, prattling, nonsensical, and had not yet approached any of the tremendous issues which it is now rapidly nearing.

Thus the preparations went on. Sedate masters were seen by their calm, silent, dignified black servants strutting about their back verandahs, gesticulating, starting, clasping their hands, shouting and uttering sounds in strange and novel tones of voice, as phonetic imitations of popular actors, Mr Charles Mathews, Mr Charles Kean, and above all Mr Buckstone, executed with more or less imperfect success, were presented to the bewildered Asiatics for the first time. Then, again, parcels would arrive containing the most inex-

plicable articles, a pair of long loose gamboge boots, a droll hat and plumes, a pair of small-clothes. What was the consternation of the Blinking Idolater one morning to see his master unpack a crinoline, a chemise, and other articles equally feminine and unaccountable. Asiatics, said to be astonished at nothing, are indeed puzzled now, and find no way for accounting for these strange and novel sights, other than the hypothesis that a Christian *Hooly* is preparing, and Feringhys are delivering themselves over to the frenzy and intoxication of the wildest religious saturnalia.

Every exertion is now being made to get the company so well on, that at the last rehearsal on Tuesday night everybody may be quite perfect. But no one witnessing one of these early rehearsals could hope for a moment for such a result. All seemed confusion, the confident men quite ignorant of their parts, the nervous men quite unequal to them. Poor Mr Bingle made quite a pitiable exhibition of himself, he stammered, he stut-

tered, he could hardly articulate a word, whereas Mr Broomielaw (of Ballachulish) had only mastered the first two speeches of his part, but these he delivered without any nervousness, and with a fine broad Scotch accent. There were degrees however of backwardness and forwardness amongst our friends the amateurs. Captain Beverley was almost perfect. He gave the lighter scenes with a buoyant vivacity, modelled upon Mr Charles Matthews, and not quite in keeping with the character, whilst in the more clamorous passages he declaimed the blank verse with the energy of a well-known eminent tragedian. It was the tremendous force given to one of these speeches which brought poor Mr Bingle's nervousness to a climax. He felt that if he had to do anything of that sort, his shortcomings were even greater than he in his modesty took them to be.

Charley Simpkin also knew his part pretty well. He spoke with a soft subdued voice, and mimicked the manner of a refined, genteel, artificial woman of the world with some suc-

cess. He was especially perfect in the sordid speeches on the subject of matrimony (the making of which speeches, in the view of the dramatist, seemed to be Lady Hawthorn's principal business of life), whilst Mr Merryweather, in the part of *Doggery*, added so much audacious and original fun of his own to the humour of the playwright, that at each rehearsal his contributions were anxiously expected by his brother performers, and greeted with the most boisterous laughter. A week before the performance, Miss Rosalind Vollaire actually arrived, and the excitement approached to a climax. All that had any excuse crowded to the theatre to witness the first rehearsal at which that great artist attended. Even Mr Chiffney Chaffney was at his post that night. He was cast for the chief villain of the piece, but had not been very regular at rehearsals.

Miss Rosalind Vollaire was a lady who looked about forty-five years of age when off the stage, and about seventeen when on. She was tall, slim, and graceful, which advan-

tages served of course to prolong illusions. Your corpulent actress, however well she may perform the part, can never be a very satisfactory Rosalind, or Juliet, or Portia. Miss Rosalind Vollaire was accustomed to appear as the arch vivacious heroines of comedy, and was especially successful when such a character was also provided with a few strong pathetic situations. Those who expect to find people off the stage much the same as when on, would be rather disappointed on meeting Miss Rosalind Vollaire. They would scarcely recognize the merry romantic lady of the night before. Theatrical ladies are always 'Miss,' but she was married to a sot of a husband who ill-treated her, and she was the mother of three children, of which she was the sole support. Mrs Blogg (that was her name in private) was a hard-working, energetic, business-like person, and even with those qualities, she found the part she had to act in real life almost too much for her. On her arrival at Barrackpore she bustled about the arrangements of the performance, showing

an amount of common sense which extorted almost as much approval from the reflective Mr Simpkin as her attitudes and sweet tones of voice in the most striking situations of that romantic play, *The Ironside.* She was naturally of a cheerful disposition, but her life was a hard one. To feed so many mouths with the scanty and precarious daily bread of a strolling player in the tropics was no light undertaking, and I have some doubts about the wisdom of this her Indian venture, for India is not a very liberal patron of the arts. Churches are store-houses; pigments are only used to colour punkahs yellow ochre, and rafters pea-green; music is chiefly represented by the violin of Mr Cawdor, the senior member of council. What hope then for the highest of all the arts, which by a whimsical paradox is more depreciated by the countrymen of William Shakespeare than by those of any other civilized country in the world! But in prosperity or adversity, Miss Rosalind Vollaire, like every actress and every actor without exception, was passionately fond of

her profession, and when the cold light of matter-of-fact day was shut out, and she stood in rouge and white muslin before the beloved footlights, she experienced brief moments of delirious innocent joy which repaid her for all her trials. Don't pity her!

If all the recent rehearsals had been imperfect this new one was more imperfect than any. Nervous gentlemen like Mr Bingle, now that they were in the presence of a real live actress, became more abashed and awkward than ever. Charley Simpkin quite sympathized with Miss Vollaire under the terrible *fiasco* of the evening, but found that lady far less surprised and disappointed than he had expected. With great patience and great good-humour she gave hints, encouragement, and praise to all, great praise to none. Charley, who had been to Calcutta, and happened still to have his *Dumdummer* at the door, offered a seat to Miss Rosalind Vollaire after the rehearsal, and she accepted it with thanks, for this member of a maligned profession was as free from false modesty as she was from levity. The latter fact

had been discovered, to their cost, by one or two indiscreet subalterns. Whilst he was driving her to the Barrackpore Hotel, Charley attempted to find out her real opinion of the different actors.

'Oh, you are all very good; it will go off capitally, I know quite well. Amateurs always make a bungle at rehearsals. It will go off beautifully.'

'But don't you think some will make a mess of it? Mr Bingle, for instance.'

'Not when the night comes.'

'Captain Beverley is very good!'

'Capital! You are all very good.'

'And Mr Merryweather?'

'Very good. He has a great deal of comic talent.'

'But don't you think Captain Beverley much the best?'

'Well, I don't quite know that. He will be very good indeed. Mr Merryweather will make a good deal of his part, but it won't be quite *the* part. Perhaps Mr Chiffney Chaff-

ney will play his part most as it ought to be acted.'

'Of the men, of course!' said Mr Charles Simpkin, waggishly, 'the two graceful and well-favoured ladies who are to appear on the night of the performance are out of the discussion.'

'Oh, that!' said Miss Vollaire. 'Well, I have acted the part often, and I really think you have dramatic talent.' She was only arch and vivacious before the foot-lights.

'Do I work my hands, and walk properly, that is the great difficulty?'

'Oh, very well. Of course it is difficult. Tell me,—that officer on the bay-horse there! surely it must be,—can you tell me if that officer's name is not Ashleigh?'

'Yes, it is. Do you know him?'

'Yes, I have acted with him once, in India.'

'What, is he an actor?'

'Did you not know that?'

And they reached the Barrackpore Ho-

tel, and Mr Simpkin was rid of his charge.

'Fancy,' he said to Miss Sophy, a short time afterwards in the Barrackpore park, 'who do you think turns out a great actor?'

'Why, you, of course, sir!'

'Yes, of course, for "old women," I and the Brigade Officer in yonder carriage there—'

'Hush, don't be naughty, sir, or I shall tell him to keep you in order.'

'Talking of naughty people being kept in order, I have a good deal of sound matronly advice for you, young lady—Lady Hawthorn is a most superior woman.'

'But who's this great unknown actor?'

'Guess!'

'How can I? Major Pulfington Belper?'

'Yes, but his role is the *jeune premier*. An ardent swain who says constantly, "Dearest Angelina, as long as the pulses of this heart shall vibrate so long shall my true love beat but for thee!"' And as Mrs Vesey was now talking to the General of Division who had come up on the other side of the carriage,

the Ensign suddenly changed his manner and delivered the last part of the speech with a great deal of expression.

'Ah, I don't like you as a *jeune premier* so much,' said the young lady.

'So much as who?' said the young man quickly.

'Who! who! who said anything about a "who?"'

'Who's who? That is the question, Miss Sophy Brabazon!'

'Tut — stick to Lady Hawthorn, sir. You're a silly old creature, that's your line.'

A few minutes afterwards the conversation again reverted to the great unknown actor, and Charley Simpkin disclosed his name.

'Captain Ashleigh! Oh yes, I have seen him act,' said Mrs Vesey, who was now listening.

'In what play may I ask, Mrs Vesey?' said Mr Simpkin.

'Oddly enough, in the very play you are now getting up, *The Ironside*,' said that lady.

But whilst Miss Rosalind Vollaire was en-

gaged in drilling her raw recruits into something like order at Barrackpore, she was unconsciously the cause of a terrible rupture between two sisters in a neighbouring city. We will touch lightly upon that bitter feud. It is not the first time these sisters have parted in anger. But hitherto each quarrel has been luckily followed by a more or less tardy reconciliation. There were some singular circumstances attending this particular feud. There is no doubt that at first Mrs Liversege disapproved of Sophy's attending the dramatic performance at Barrackpore, and agreed that that young lady should be summoned back to Calcutta before it took place. Mrs Throgmorton spoke to her very earnestly upon the subject, and was not at all dissatisfied with her sister's views upon the general question. How was it then that the worthy wife of the Sudder judge suddenly changed right round and fixed that Sophy should attend the performance, carrying her point at all hazards, even at the risk of losing the friendship of her sister?

Some mystery hung round the matter. One day Mrs Liversege came in from a visit to Mrs Windus, and she appeared very excited and also very elated. Mrs Throgmorton inquired what had happened, but the political lady found it necessary to preserve a great deal of reticence, and in the course of the conversation announced that it was now quite necessary that Sophy should attend the Barrackpore *fête*. Poor Mrs Throgmorton was so taken by surprise at the announcement that it is to be owned she was scarcely able to treat the difficulty with all the energy it deserved.

'You cannot be really serious—a play!'

'Rest assured that I have important reasons, Hannah. It must be done!'

'But it's a play, Maria—a stage-play!'

'I know what I am about, dear!'

'I fear you have very little conception of the real nature of your act, dear, if you talk in that way. What does Mr Petticrook say in his eloquent work upon the subject? Taking a young lady to a play-house where the actors are merely gentlemen is a most serious thing.

It is running a terrible risk of sapping that spiritual life which is the safeguard of an immortal soul—but when, Maria, I find you encouraging—an actress—'

'Hannah, you don't know my motives, and are talking quite at random; oblige me by not being too hasty in your conclusions.'

'I am sorry you are angry, love, and I hope the cause of your anger is not in your own conscience, Maria. If what you find it necessary to conceal is altogether pure and just, I don't see why you should get angry.'

'I am afraid, love, the anger is on your side, because I do not, I cannot tell it to you.'

'My love, that remark is hardly worthy of you; a secret which causes you to encourage the enchantments of Belial, cannot be coveted by a person of spiritual mind; and though a poor soldier's widow is humble, Maria, I hope she may be spiritual.'

'Hannah, you may be humble, but I don't see why you should try to thwart me in things you have not been trained to form an opinion about. As to spirituality and piety,

I think I may boast of as much of that as you.'

'And you patronize actresses, Maria. I can stand many things, Maria, but I can't stand that. An actress, Maria—I am really quite thunderstruck at the idea.'

'You know, love, that I am not fond of actresses myself, and deny myself vain, frivolous pleasures, as much as most people.' This was true, but the merit of the denial would, of course, depend upon the keenness of the appreciation, which, in this case, made the merit very small indeed.

'Maria, I can't argue with you any more if you are determined to jeopardize an immortal soul in this world and in the next.'

'Tut, Hannah, it's all because I won't tell you my secret.' And whether this cruel insinuation was true or not, it is certain that Motee and Mrs Throgmorton started for Burhampore the next morning at eight o'clock on board the 'Flat' *Irawaddy* in tow of the up-country steamer 'General Littler.'

The time has now come to consider the

fate of the letter which Mr Charles Simpkin wrote in the dead of night, and which he determined to convey to Miss Sophy at an early hour on the following day. He thought the Parade never would be over; and Colonel Sandboy seemed to take an especial delight, on that particular morning, in observing the young man's shortcomings in drill, and pointing them out in a loud voice before very nearly a thousand brother soldiers. When twelve o'clock came our friend dressed very carefully, and started off to Mrs Vesey's house. He passed the *Durwan*, he rushed into the drawing-room, and found Mrs Vesey at one end of the room working a wonderful cushion, and Captain Ashleigh and Miss Sophy Brabazon quite at the other end of the room, looking at some large lithographic views of scenery in the *Jullundur Doab*. He cunningly shook hands with Mrs Vesey first, and then went to the spot where Sophy was, and took a chair. He found her manner not quite so cordial as he expected, and in a short time she told him that Mrs Vesey wanted very much to hear

those pretty verses of his, about the 'Holy River,' and unfortunately she (Miss Sophy) had left her copy of them in Calcutta. This sent him to the other end of the room in a huff, and whilst there he observed that her tone of voice in speaking to the Captain was pitched in so low a key that it quite made his brain reel. He soon hurried away from the house, and spent the whole afternoon in anathematizing Ashleigh, to whom he had taken a bitter dislike. In the evening, as he mounted 'Tippoo,' he put the letter under his waistcoat, but with a fixed determination not to deliver it, and he did not go near the band-stand until most of the carriages had left.

Suddenly in the dusk of the evening he found himself close to Mrs Vesey's carriage, and the young lady within two yards of him. He went up to it. What was his consternation at finding inside of it, not Mrs Vesey, but Mrs Liversege, who had come down that afternoon quite unexpectedly. In truth that lady, though well-principled and much respected, was a formidable person, and the Ensign was

rather in awe of her. He tore his love-letter in a thousand fragments, as he galloped recklessly away through the darkness of the Indian evening.

But late that night in bed he came to the conclusion that after all Miss Sophy had committed no real offence in driving out with her aunt in the park. The next morning he learned from Major Pulfington Belper (who knew everything that wasn't worth knowing in the station) that Mrs Liversege had returned to Calcutta, and also casually that Captain Ashleigh was on a court-martial that day at eleven o'clock.

'By Jove, I'll go again,' he muttered. 'The affair shall be settled one way or another this very day.'

This time Charley went in uniform, he ought to have attended the very court-martial his rival was conducting. This time he found the young lady quite alone. She seemed very embarrassed and troubled when she saw him.

'Oh, it's you!'

'Yes, Miss Brabazon, it is I. Did you think it was any one else?'

'Oh, don't tease with that sort of nonsense this morning—the moment is badly chosen.'

'Miss Sophy Brabazon, I am not going to tease you with any nonsense at all, but I am going to ask you for three minutes' serious conversation.'

'Oh, not this morning,' said Miss Sophy hurriedly—'not this morning.'

'Yes, this morning, if you please.'

'Oh, I'd rather you'd leave me just now, Mr Simpkin!' said the young lady kindly but in some confusion.

But Charley was resolute and inflexible. 'There is not much to be said, and I need not detain you very long, Miss Sophy Brabazon. I have a few words to say, and those words had better be said at once.'

Sophy now became much more calm. She was very pale and very beautiful. He

remembered that face for many a long day afterwards. He offered her a chair, she took it. He sat down beside her.

'Sophy,' he began. She was quite silent.

'I think you really liked me a few days ago.' She was still silent. 'At least, I think you tried to like me. It is no use my telling you that I like you. When a man gives a woman the greatest treasure he possesses, his first and purest love, it is all nonsense supposing that she is not aware of the fact. You know it well enough. You have known it any day these five months. Tell me that your recent kindness, your recent fondness, had a pure and holy aim. Tell me that you really did try to reward what merits a reward. And then when you tell me that the attempt was a failure, I will humbly bow my head and make the best of it; for a hardy soldier must be equal to his fortune.'

Sophy was silent still.

'Listen to this. You are a woman. You have a woman's faults. I see your faults, but I like you the more for them. Wealth, pros-

perity, distinction are not in themselves bad things. They exist to spur mankind to exertion. Whatever grumblers may say, India cannot get on without clever men. I have brains. I have a heart. You must not reprove my vanity, as this consciousness comes through you. Tell me your ideal, tell me what to aim at, and you perhaps may be astonished at the climb I may make in a few years, for the spring would be yours.'

Miss Sophy was still silent.

'Dearest, I don't ask much. To-day you say, "Go away!" and I go. Three days ago you said, "Come," and I came. I now ask you to tell me that you don't really love anybody else, to tell me what can win that inestimable treasure—your heart, sweet lady—to tell me that I may hope, work, love if I like,—and I will trouble you no more until one day I can come to you and say, All this I did for you.'

'No, it can't be, Mr Simpkin,' said the young lady after a rather long pause.

'Do you really love any one else?'

'That is a question you have no right to ask!' she said after another pause.

'Well, be kind; tell it me out of generosity,' he said smiling faintly.

'Yes!' she said at length in a very soft low voice. She was silent and very pale. He too was pale and silent, and stood swinging a chair with one knee on it. From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step, and even this small distance was now removed, and the latter moral abstraction entered the room personified by a pursy official with a bald head. He looked very sheepish as well as very absurd, but then it must be recollected that he too was in love.

Mr Palmer Brown congratulated Miss Sophy Brabazon on the appointment of her uncle to the Residency of Nawaubgunge.

Miss Sophy Brabazon congratulated Mr Palmer Brown on his appointment of Resident's First Assistant and Secretary.

'Damn Nawaubgunge!' said Mr Charles Simpkin—mentally.

CHAPTER III.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

At the theatre that night there was a rehearsal, but Mr Charles Simpkin did not attend it. Captain Beverley received a note to say that he was suffering from a bad headache, and could not come. Neither was he at the Mess. Major Pulfington Belper, the sharer of his house, did not see him for two days.

Charley had known that he was in love—for about five months. Also he had persuaded himself that he was aware that his love was without hope, during most of that time. Why then should the present be so very heavy? Was it that within the last few days his love from being shadowy had suddenly become real? Was it that his despair from being shadowy had also become real? He is ro-

mantic, he is young. He has a warm, simple heart, and he now suffers as only a warm, simple heart can suffer—in youth—and that but once.

The first effect was a deadening, dull sense of wretchedness. He could not grasp the whole situation. He remained not asleep yet hardly awake in his arm-chair all day; and not asleep yet hardly awake in his bed all night. The first sense of sorrow acted upon him rather as an opiate than a gnawing mineral. It seemed as if the first force of the blow had produced numbness.

The next day was Sunday, and he stirred not out. Sophy piped out the hymn in a low, timid, not unpleasant manner, but there is no enthusiast listening near her to-day, and comparing those notes to the prattling psalms of the birds, or the singing of Madame Lind-Goldschmidt, and allowing the comparison to bear unfavourably on the latter vocalist. On Monday morning he was obliged to go to the parade, and even the Serjeant-Major was struck with his appearance, and asked if he was ill. He

rode round the Guards in the evening, and that duty over, he took a canter in a retired portion of the Barrackpore park, and suddenly came across the Mimosa, under which he had furtively kissed the young maiden's hand a week ago, and now for the first time the full sense of his sorrow seemed to fall upon him. That night was the most bitter of all. It seemed as if the moral system was in a crisis, in the pains of throwing off its disease.

The next day anger took the place of grief. He remembered all the encouragement she had given him. He remembered every minute event of the last ten days, and then he remembered that all this time her heart, according to her own confession, was engaged to another man. Major Pulfington invaded his bed-room. The presence of that worthy officer somehow fanned and added a grotesque and bitter mirth to the rising anger.

'Ill, Major! Oh no! Of course I shall come to the "public night" this evening. Give up the theatricals! Of course not.'

Charley did go to the dinner, and he

drank a great deal of champagne. He was flushed, excited, witty; indeed his mirth was almost hysterical. At one moment he caught Captain Ashleigh's eye, and flashed at him a glance of defiance. This caused that officer to observe him more closely for the rest of the evening, and Charley once or twice caught a glance of concern in his face, which prevented even this incensed Ensign from feeling as angry as he could have wished.

As he was about to leave the Mess he met Ashleigh in the ante-room. The latter came up to him and said,

'You haven't been very well, Simpkin, lately, have you? I hope nothing has gone wrong?' There was a kindness in the tone of voice of the gruff soldier which Charley had not heard in it before.

'On the contrary, I'm remarkably jolly!'

'Something has gone wrong!' said the Captain.

'My dear fellow, what could go wrong? Are we not living under a most noted system of double government, with a marvellous

machinery of checks and counter-checks? You and I, are we not favoured in every possible way? As well might I suggest that something had gone wrong with you.' And the young man's laugh was a little unpleasant.

Captain Ashleigh regarded neither the anger nor the words, but only the idea concealed beneath them.

'You are angry with me. Very unjustly perhaps, but that is of no consequence. You are angry elsewhere, perhaps as unjustly. The subject is delicate, so you can understand that if I thought I could do no good, I would not have broached it.'

'I can't say exactly that I see what good you can do,' said Mr Simpkin, allowing a little curiosity to escape in spite of himself.

'Look here. It is too much at your years to expect everything, but a man really in love should not be angry at all in such a case. He should think only of the woman's happiness. Do you think that I would not rather see you have her than the man who, of

all others, we should both try and save her from, but into whose arms you may be at present driving her? You are a gentleman, and if you did yourself justice you might make her happy!'

'I don't affect to misunderstand you, Captain Ashleigh. You are alluding to Miss Sophy Brabazon. Whether I loved that young lady or not, all communication between me and her is henceforth impossible on this side of the grave!' this rather grandly.

'Tell me what has occurred to make it so!'

'I can't!'

'You are unwise. Don't you see that if one man makes love with a heart and not a head, and another with a head and without a heart, the game is quite unequal—the former plays into his rival's hands.'

'As to head, Ashleigh—I flatter myself'—

'You are not twenty, and I know the young lady.'

'You do for that matter, I know that.'

'I have spoken to her five times, but I know her, no matter how. You have received a rebuff, perhaps a refusal; the matter is plain enough. If a woman is worth the winning, ought you not to make an effort to sink a little personal vanity? Good God! you wear the uniform of a body of brave soldiers, and will you give up what you consider a great prize without a fight?'

Charley Simpkin was rather taken aback by the whole of this conversation. How did the Captain know so much about his most intimate affairs. What was his motive in taking this extraordinary interest in them. Far from being the commonplace dull man that Charley had hitherto taken him to be, he seemed to read all the young man's secrets and those of a young lady whom he had scarcely spoken to. The Ensign was very near unbending, but his old dislike of the Captain kept him silent, and the latter continued.

'It is an old fight. Youth and freshness against age and craft. The latter seem formidable, invulnerable, victorious, but perhaps

they will turn out shadowy hobgoblins if you march against them.'

'Ashleigh, you are not in the least aware of what has passed, and all you can say is utterly useless.'

'My dear fellow, are you not a little silly? I only come to offer you what you most want in this matter, experience. Fifteen dull years in India have at least given me that. It is easy to see with half an eye that the girl has a sneaking fondness for you. Will you without an effort give over a girl who loves you, to the tormentors?'

'If I once loved the lady you allude to, the feeling is now over,' said the young man grandly, and the conversation terminated.

For the next few days our friend was almost comfortable. He loved her no more. Of course it would be useless to waste a thought upon one so light. After all the idol was of his own making, and he must bear the disappointment of seeing it shivered. An exaltation as of fever made dull the sting of his heart. He really believed he loved her no more.

I think that the bustle of theatrical preparation did him some good. His own idea of the matter at first was that he was like the elder Kean in one of the days of his adversity, obliged to tumble as Harlequin with his child dying at home. But the young man persevered through pride, and I think the effort was salutary. Of these important theatrical matters I must speak directly. What I have further to say of the tender passages in the life of Mr Charles Simpkin must be brief.

In a few days he grew a little calmer, and his anger ceased. One day he was turning over the leaves of his blotting-book and he came upon a treasured letter. It was an invitation to dinner at Mrs Vesey's, and the diction, far from evincing any originality, was very nearly word for word the same as in the million and one other dinner invitations that were issued on that day. But the young man would then have prized that MS. more than the scene of Hamlet at the grave of Ophelia, in Shakespeare's own hand. He shut the blotting-book with a bitter pang. He

determined that tho' he loved her no more, he would now do her justice, and he repented him of his former angry mood. He rode in the park, at the hour of the golden Indian sunset; the feathery mimosas rustled gently, and the shade was calm and soothing, but he felt that he could never again enjoy anything without her. That night in coming home from mess, he could not help walking three times round the house where Miss Sophy was sleeping, (though that house was very much out of his way in going towards his bungalow,) and then he knew that he was more desolate, and more madly in love then ever. Friends, is not all this the hackneyed routine of the human heart? Depression, pain, anger, then fondness returning tenfold. It is good to be self-contained, robust, combative. It is wise to gain a swift victory in such battles. But if there is a strength of resistance, there is also a strength of tenacity, of fibre as stubborn; and in this bewildered, love-vexed world there are warm hearts that do not overcome their loves in a day, some not in a life.

Fond souls who take a pleasure mayhap in clinging to the gentle grief—to whom the gentle grief takes pleasure in clinging. Old men remain true to an ideal falsified perhaps half a century ago. And with women, who has not seen the lean grey hair wave gently over a face lit up with the same kindness and fresh affection, which in the far past were offered to one quite unworthy of them! It is not so purely sad to think that the soul has tried to cling to one being more bright than the ordinary denizens of the earth. And when such gentle spirit comes to yield up her account at the portals of paradise, who knows but the humble confident presentation of that desolate, despairing, undying love, may be the surest passport to the love within the gates.

I should like now to clear up a little of the mystery which has lately shrouded some of the events of our tale. The final decision of the Governor-General in the matter of Nawaubgunge was never quite understood, and unfortunately I have no sources of private information, or any access to official documents,

to make matters any clearer now. There was a tremendous newspaper controversy at the time, between the Prettijohn adherents and the Windus adherents, and the former great public functionary was so mortified at his defeat, that he had a serious fit of illness, 'spleen' according to some. I think Mrs Liversege's visit to Barrackpore must have been for the express purpose of paving the way for Mr Palmer Brown. That astute gentleman was somehow able to clear himself in her eyes from his tergiversation. More than that, he was fortunate enough to be the first to tell her of the good news, and also to make it appear that the appointment was entirely due to his influence, a statement which the gentle reader, who knows him better, will probably take the liberty to doubt. The news about Nawaubgunge was no doubt the secret which embittered the great ethical controversy between Mrs Liversege and Mrs Throgmorton. I think it was after the visit of Mr Palmer Brown to Barrackpore, that Mrs Liversege found it necessary to insist upon Sophy's at-

tendance at the theatrical ball. We have heard this gifted female diplomatist state, before, that a ball was a favourable opportunity for a declaration of love, and probably the non-success of the Barrackpore visit may have made our clever lady anxious to give him a fresh opportunity of declaring himself, whilst his appointment as Secretary to Nawaubgunge was still not quite settled.

The Acting Secretary to Government (Foolscap Department) has had a very difficult part to play ever since the picnic. This sentimentalist was of course very much shocked at the accident which occurred to Sophy, but as she got better he could not help admitting to himself that no cloud was quite without a silver lining, and but for the calamity, his game, always difficult in the extreme, would have been utterly impossible. As it was, the task of keeping Mrs Wotherspoon in good humour, Mrs Windus in good humour, and reconciling Mrs Liversege to the good humour of Mrs Windus, was an effort somewhat akin in dexterity to that of the young

lady who jumps through hoops and catches daggers and golden balls, at the same time that she is dancing a hornpipe and changing her costumes on three horses, all of which are being urged at the top of their speed. And when that silly report got abroad that the Prettijohn interest was triumphant, Mr Palmer Brown very nearly shipwrecked his cause by his marked attentions to Miss Wotherspoon. He has managed to persuade Mrs Windus that he wished to quench certain extravagant hopes of Mrs Liversege. He has managed to persuade Mrs Liversege that he wished to quench certain extravagant hopes on the part of Mrs Windus, but he feels the peril was imminent. How these three clever ladies allowed themselves to be hoodwinked I can't say. Is it always the most clever man who best takes in clever women? Dear madam, there is no question of *your* abilities, but is the Rev. Palaver, your favourite preacher, a genius, or a charlatan? And Mr Wurzel, your future son-in-law? Well, perhaps I am *too interested* in that question, to give an un-

biassed opinion about the talents of Mr Wurzel.

How Sophy was mollified I cannot say. Mr Palmer Brown had an eloquent advocate, and excuses could no doubt be coined for his non-appearance at the picnic, and for his flirtation. If a lady wishes to forgive a gentleman, I am told she can always find reasons for such a course, and can forgive him sometimes without taking that trouble, if she be so inclined. What passed between Miss Sophy and Mrs Liversege will never now be known, nor whether there was any definite conversation on the subject of marriage at all. It is certain that Sophy was in a better humour with Mr Palmer Brown after the visit. I can't say for certain that that gentleman and Mrs Liversege have ever yet spoken of marriage either. I am told that persons in the higher circles of diplomacy can speak volumes with a shrug, a platitude, a pinch of snuff. There is a free-masonry with the artificers who work with straws as well as with those who work with bricks and stone.

No undertaking seems so liable to misfortune as an amateur theatrical performance. In the smoothest sea and within sight of harbour it often splits on the sunken rock. First, Miss Rosalind Vollaire got ill, and that delayed the scheme a whole week; then three of the performers threw up their parts, but these were not very important ones. It is generally the least important parts that are thrown up in disgust. Captain Beverley worked hard; and now, in spite of every obstacle, the dresses, the stage, everything is prepared—when suddenly an unexpected blow is dealt to the scheme, and that from the hands of an Ex-Executive Engineer ('Double X ecutive' this was sometimes pronounced by Mr Simpkin when speaking in disparagement of the renowned brewer of sparkling Himalayan Burton).

The crabbed old Brigadier was again suffering from a fit of the gout, which perhaps put the idea into his head that he had been slighted in the affair of the theatre. Not a word had been spoken to him on the subject,

but it had been at once advertised as under the patronage of General Fermor, the General of Division. So there, amidst his hats and thermantidotes sat our irritable friend brooding over his wrongs and his twinges, and casting about as to how he could give the whole human race a kick with his gouty toe. The theatrical bill was before him, and he noticed the names of Mr Simpkin, Mr Chiffney Chaffney, and others who were supposed to be connected with the destruction of the Brigade gates. A flash of genius suddenly illuminated our morose friend. At the last hour he would knock the whole card-board fabric down. The engineer would hoist it with a petard. His foot might be gouty, but they should be astonished at the vigour of his kick; and suiting the physical action to the mental fancy, he unfortunately administered a tremendous kick to the straw stool on which his limb was reposing.

'*Qui hai! Qui hai! Qui hai! Qui hai!*' he moaned, he screamed, he complained in his agony, he thundered in command.

Several servants and orderlies came running in, and these were all likened to pigs, donkeys, owls, and people of illegitimate birth,—for several minutes—as long, in fact, as the agony remained in the Brigadier's toe.

'Run to the Brigade-Major's Sahib's house, and if he can't be found, get from his native clerk the Roster book of duty!' and he mentioned all the other books and documents he required.

The Brigade-Major was out, but the Roster book was brought, and the Brigadier immediately compared it with the play-bill. He had considered a patrol still necessary to secure the safety of cantonment gates, but had reduced the strength in Sepoys, and removed the Captain altogether. Sepoys and Captains had little to do with the gate-liftings; but of the innocence of the subalterns he was not so sure, so two officers of that grade were still employed upon the duty. He now looked to see if either of the subalterns, for next week's patrol, was an actor. He found, to his regret, that they were not.

He again pondered over the matter for some minutes. The fine inventive intellect, which had been brought to bed of so many bungalows, beer-barrels, mechanical coolers, barracks, and ventilating hats, was now again in the pains of labour—and the last child of his imagination proves the finest of all.

'There it is!' says the happy parent, with immense joy. He has found out that Captain Beverley is the Captain for the ensuing week. He remembers that Captain Beverley is the leading actor. He has found a pleasing duty for Captain Beverley. He calls his black servant once more and orders pen, ink, and paper.

Why this eccentric Feringhy soldier's manner should be at one moment that of Timour the Tartar, and the next that of the oiliest and most benevolent of devotees, ought to have astonished this black servant, but he remained calm, dignified, and silent, like the rest of his race, and brought the stationery with much grace.

Colonel Dewsnap now penned a Brigade

order. Of its contents he was so satisfied that, gouty as he was, he was even able to infuse into it a seasoning of grim humour.

'BRIGADE ORDERS.

'*December* 29*th*.

'The Brigadier commanding the station has been informed that, with a view to theatricals—likewise dancing—an unusually large party of ladies and gentlemen are invited to the Assembly Rooms on Wednesday next,—which the Brigadier does not in any way condemn as long as such pursuits are in no way subversive of military discipline.

'But as certain riotously disposed persons—he will not call them gentlemen, for by their conduct they forfeit such a claim—might take advantage of the confusion to destroy private property, including gates, the Brigadier commanding thinks it necessary to double the patrols for that night only, and to direct them to patrol under the Captain of the week, as long as the festivities may last.'

As this order was written on the 29th,

and was sent over immediately to the Brigade-Major, that well-meaning officer, not knowing what delicate plans he was disarranging, sent a note at once to Captain Beverley, to tell him of this duty, and to advise him to ask leave to have a substitute appointed without delay. Captain Beverley sent in the necessary application, which was sent on to the Brigadier by the Brigade-Major, who was kind enough to add a note explaining that Captain Beverley was a leading actor, quite necessary to the performance.

To the surprise of both the Brigade-Major and the Captain these remarks were appended to the application when it came back:—

'Refused.

'The Brigadier commanding knows nothing of theatrical matters, though he once did build a theatre, which was considered commodious and elegant. The Brigadier's knowledge is confined to military matters, and he will grant no indulgence to any one who, in an irregular and unofficer-like manner, comments upon the wisdom of the orders of

his superiors before they are issued, and wishes to alter arrangements that are not yet formally in existence.

'It is the prime duty of an officer in command of an important post to maintain the strictest discipline amongst his subordinates, in conformity with general orders, and to see that the tranquillity of the station, including the gates, remains undisturbed.'

This was the deadly engine which detonated in the face of a gallant captain and a brave company of fighting men, to their utter confusion and dismay. This was the petard of our cunning ex-engineer. He flattered himself that theatre, actors, rouge pots, and audience were now all blown into thin air. To Captain Beverley the blow was cruel. All the time and labour which he had bestowed upon the undertaking were utterly thrown away. Of course every idea of acting must be given up. Miss Rosalind Vollaire had delayed so long, that it was necessary for her to start for the upper provinces to fulfil her provincial engagements.

But at this juncture Charley Simpkin remembered what had been said of Captain Ashleigh, and started off to try and find that officer. Passing the Barrackpore hotel, he thought he would step in and let Miss Rosalind Vollaire know the tremendous news. She was not in the theatre when the Brigadier's shell reached that building.

'Which are Miss Vollaire's apartments?'

The black servant accosted was the private servant of a gentleman staying at the hotel. He did not know, did not understand.

Charley remembered that a theatre was called by the natives a house of entertainment, show, amusement. He asked for the lady of the house of amusement, and the black servant understood him at once.

'That is the room of the lady of the house of amusement,' said the black servant.

Charley hesitated about knocking. It might be a bed-room. As he stood for a moment undecided at the door, he heard the tones of a deep shaky voice.

'Yesh, you were too proud, begad—Yesh, you were too proud—that's what you were!'

'Nonsense, Bob. Let's talk about it to-morrow morning, not now.' This time the voice was that of the lady of the house of amusement.

'That meansh—t'shay—'ve been drinking!'

To this there was no answer.

'Meansh to shay—tox-shicate!'

Still no answer.

'A nische wife! Too proud to take hush-band amongst schwell friends, begad!'

'Pooh, what nonsense you're talking, Bob, I'm not at all proud. If you had been in a fit state to go amongst the officers, I would have much preferred your going. Don't be foolish, go to sleep, and let me learn my part.' And sweet tones were heard to declaim:

'And thou wilt make my home a home of joy,
A sunny bower rosy with flowers of peace;
'Tis well, for when within the portals stand
Two brave united hearts, love guards the door
And staves off woe and discord———'

'Shtop that d— gag. You'll be hisht if you don't—d'claim—more 'shpression!'

'Now, Bob, you shan't have any more brandy. Give me back the bottle,—and take care of that white muslin dress. It is the only one I have for *Mabel.*'

There was a pause, and then the male voice said sententiously,

'Virchush and loving wife ought not to deprive—hushband—shtimulants. Virchush and loving wife ought not to be proud.'

Then again came the sweet tones of the lady of the house of amusement.

'Sorrow! Nay that is a sour black Puritan that I know not. I love laughter and mirth. I laugh at sorrow, I laugh at sighs, I laugh at tears, I laugh at love, but above all, sir, I laugh at all dying, unhappy lovers!' And a clear, bright, merry laugh rang out like a bell. It came however to an abrupt conclusion.

'Oh, I declare, Bob, that's too bad, you have spilt your nasty brandy-and-water over my new dress. Here have I to work for our

bread amidst trouble and insult, and you go and do things which render even that impossible. Oh, it's too bad, too bad.' And Mr Charles Simpkin heard something which sounded very like sobs. He thought he recollected to have read somewhere of a bride chained to a loathsome corpse, and thought the fate of the arch *Lady Mabel* a hard one.

'After all,' said the woe-stricken Ensign, 'there are other sorrows in the world besides mine!'

Miss Rosalind Vollaire, on hearing the news, at once wrote off a note to Captain Ashleigh. Charley Simpkin undertook to be the bearer of it. He found him at last at the band-stand, near the carriage of Mrs Vesey. The young man would not follow him there, but handed over the letter to Major Pulfington Belper.

It contained a request that he would play the part of *Cloudesley*. Captain Ashleigh's private feelings were very strongly against any-

thing of the kind, but there were three ladies imploring him, and he was at last compelled to yield. Which of the three was most persuasive, I cannot say.

CHAPTER IV.

THE IRONSIDE.

And now all Barrackpore is at last assembled at the building which is to do duty for a theatre. A proscenium has been erected which has taxed the talents of every military artist in cantonments, and in the glare of oil lamps it shines out resplendent with tragic muses, comic masks, trumpets of fame, and surmounted by the Royal Arms, very loyally emblazoned and begilt, and very much out of drawing. The drop-scene is all blue sky, blue sea, blue mountains, representing some view in Italy, and the audience are allowed plenty of time to examine it minutely, and make guesses of its whereabouts, as the gentlemen amateurs are, as usual, very much behind their time.

General Fermor and Mr Vesey are amongst

the most distinguished of the guests. Calcutta (most chary of such patronage) being represented by Mrs Liversege, and Government House by Captains Lemesurier and Spink, and by the cook, Mons. Soubise. I must not omit a royal personage, the Rajah of Kedgeree, who knew no English, it is true, but whose jewels and brocades shone out even amongst the bright uniforms of the gentlemen and gay toilettes of the ladies.

The band of the 44th Nowgong Native Infantry (by the kind permission of Colonel Sandboy) was in attendance, and enlivened the company with the most popular and novel tunes, but was rather noisy in that confined space.

'Confound those snake-charmers!' said that keen dilettante Captain Lemesurier.

'*De la musique! Oh mon Dieu!*' said Mons. Soubise, on first hearing the Highland band of Captain Lemesurier's own regiment. Musical canons vary amongst nationalities. A Hebrew, Shylock by name, even objected to the bagpipes, but being a Venetian, his re-

mark must of course have been confined to the Roman pipers.

Behind the scenes all is in hopeless confusion. Shell jackets, gamboge boots, cavalier hats, trunk hose, Infantry trousers, wigs, rouge pots, and soda-water bottles are scattered about; whilst a dozen excited gentlemen are gradually changing from the era of Victoria to that of the first Charles. *Blackadder* (Mr Chiffney Chaffney) is searching in vain for his blue velvet slashed doublet; *Nancy, Lady Hawthorn's* maid, is swearing at the black servant who is lacing her stays, whilst her ladyship in person is smoking a cheroot, and allowing Mr Blogg, the acting stage-manager, to paint her august face. On the other hand, poor Mr Bindle, recently operated upon, is surveying his novel cast of countenance in a large cheval glass, and is rather alarmed at the tremendous appearance he makes in long black cavalier curls, crimson cheeks, and peach-coloured velvet. He glances down at his gamboge boots, and gets more and more nervous about the un-

covered portion of his legs. He has already swallowed two glasses of champagne and two 'pegs,' but finding his courage not yet quite screwed up to what Lady Macbeth calls the 'sticking place,' he orders his black servant to fetch him another 'peg' (brandy and soda water).

At length, by great exertion, the energetic Mr Blogg, who is sober to-night, contrives to get all ready for raising the curtain. It would be difficult to give a detailed account of that once popular five-act play, *The Ironside* (curtailed to three acts upon the present occasion). Those who remember that dramatic masterpiece, must recollect that the opening scene introduces us to a party of brilliant cavaliers who have come to *Hawthorn Grange* with *Sir Hugh Blackadder*, to whom the death of *Sir Giles Hawthorn* has given the estate. This scene was marred by an unfortunate accident. Mr Bindle represented *Wildoats*, the staunchest and most dissipated friend of the new landlord. He had not, it is true, been able to get his last 'peg,' but after the

first shock, so trying to an amateur, namely, the sudden appearance of a thousand staring eyes, he was gradually assuming a little confidence, and was spouting some of his rollicking speeches in only a semi-nervous manner, when suddenly his black servant, in thorough ignorance of theatrical usages, walked upon the stage with brandy bottle, soda-water bottle, glass and corkscrew—and caused the following new reading in the dialogue of *The Ironside:*

Wildoats.—" 'Ifackins, 'tis a pretty piece of flesh and blood that this rogue *Blackadder* has found down here. I wish St Cupid would send me another such cousin. [Enter a black servant, L.]

The black servant.—'*Peg lya Khodawund!*' (I have brought thee a 'peg,' O protector of slaves!)

Wildoats.—'*Jehannum ko jao.*' (Go to the regions of future punishment!) [Kicks black servant, who runs off, R.]

This little point was immensely applauded

by the audience, but the effrontery of the jovial cavalier was terribly put to the trial, indeed that reckless libertine seemed also to meditate running away.

But one of these cavaliers laboured under none of the nervous disadvantages of Mr Bindle. I allude to a Scotch gentleman with the national foible of calling himself by the name of a place and not of a man. Ballachulish felt no timidity about exposing his knees to the public gaze. Had not those sturdy limbs been exposed often and often before, on the bare hill-side, in the rushing salmon stream, in the giddy reel at the Highland gatherings? The northern gentleman was also confident that his bearing and manner were quite those of a courtier under Stuart kings (from whom he claimed descent). If blood relations do not preserve their ancestors' lofty regal bearing, who can retain it? But if Mr Broomielaw's way of pronouncing English words was an accurate reproduction of the method in use under those Scotch

monarchs, I am bound to say that it was very different from the English usage of the present times.

'’Sbluid, *Weeldoats* mee gay fro-licksome ac-complished re-probate,’ he cried; ‘thus bumpkin life is a plaiguey, clod-hoppy, turnip-toppy va-gitation, after all. None of the *de-bon-air* gaiety of Whitehall down here. Flowers and kail-, I mean, cauliflowers, that’s the contrast, strike me ugly if it isn’t!’

These and similar speeches gained immense applause, which this last of the cavaliers was far from being displeased with, but the mood of the spectators was changing very fast to that of an audience come to enjoy broad burlesque, and as *Doggery* and his bold fun were now introduced the merriment soon became fast and furious.

I cannot think that there is any sufficient reason why an aged servant in an old family should assume a constant one-sided, paralytic, crab-like shuffle in his walk, projecting one bent knee about two feet externally, and curving the other to a corresponding degree

inwards; but it must be admitted that when Lieut. Merryweather, in the character of *Doggery*, resorted to such expedients, he at once produced the wildest amusement. Then too, though no countryman of any county in England would pronounce the phrase, 'E'es maister alive, I comprehend that much!' with a piping nasal whine, this practice never failed to produce a great deal of merriment whenever the faithful old retainer pronounced this phrase, which he did, we must add, a great deal oftener than was warranted by the text of the play. In this first act there is a great deal of fun awarded to this character, who is roasted by the brilliant cavaliers, but turns the tables on them with a stupidity partly real and partly affected. But all this did not content Mr Merryweather, who introduced a great deal of comic 'business' of his own. Thus when *Wildoats* calls lustily for another cup of sack, *Doggery* carried away from the table cavalier *Tigermoth's* (Mr Broomielaw) cavalier hat instead of the wine, and stood stolidly offering it to thirsty *Wild-*

oats for some moments before he affected to find out his mistake. Then in bringing forward the real beverage, he tripped and spilt it over cavalier *Tigermoth's* silk-stockings, to that northern gentleman's great disgust. The mad wag then exhibited the most ludicrous horror at the accident, and having produced the most extraordinary blue-checked duster ever seen, and unfolded it deliberately to show its many holes to the audience, he commenced wiping the cavalier's legs with much care, pausing from time to time to contemplate those limbs with the greatest mock admiration, when at last he broke out, looking *Tigermoth* straight in the face,

'Lord, maister alive, I never seed so big a calf in all my life!'

But a far greater hit than any of these was made at his exit. *Blackadder* comes on the stage, and he is ordered away. *Blackadder* is the villain of the piece, but the dramatist at this point does not wish the audience to know this, but *Doggery*, who has prepared a new and original comic effect,

cannot any more than the great Mr Puff allow small matters to stand in the way of important ones. Instead of going out quietly according to the stage direction of the text book, he watches *Blackadder* for a moment or two, and then delivers an 'aside,'—

'I suspect he's a villain, and I'll find him out under whatever disguise he may shield his brazen face!'

This sally produced an outburst of the most uproarious laughter, which was heightened by the gentlemen sitting near Major Pulfington Belper, who offered that worthy much mock condolence, saying that such personalities were too bad. *Doggery* waited till the noise had finished, and then uttering a 'Hey!' so like the favourite interjection of Major Pulfington Belper that many thought it was the Major who spoke, he shuffled off with a far more severe attack of crab-like paralysis than he had been yet afflicted with, and as in the right slips he listened to another prolonged burst of applause, he congratulated himself on having made a decided hit.

'There, Mary,' said Mr Blogg in the left slips, speaking to his wife Rosalind, 'I told you how it would be, if you wouldn't have a professional low comedian. How will you act up against all that tomfoolery? You've heavy business and a patomime audience.'

It was quite true that the play of *The Ironside*, taken as a whole, was of a serious, nay, sombre cast. *Cloudesley*, the stout-hearted man-at-arms who gives it its name, wears a breast-plate against all the shocks of life as well as the cavalier swords, and has determined to die unconquered by them—although it must be confessed he has more than his full share of calamities before the play is played out. He is the legitimate heir of the deceased Baronet, his grandfather *Sir Hildebrand* having been secretly married to the woman from whom he (*Cloudesley*) is descended; but this, though known to the young man, is kept secret by him, partly because he has no proofs of the fact, but chiefly because his legitimacy would render illegitimate the branch of the family to which his

cousin *Mabel Hawthorn* belongs. Under his gruff, cold manner, his gloom, and his sarcasm, he cherishes a great passion for that young lady, to which she but ill responds. She is warm-hearted, merry, but a little spoilt, and perhaps pants for a gayer life than that of a dull country house in a midland county. Perhaps, also, she looks upon Cloudesley too much in the light of a poor dependent, in which character for her sake he is contented to appear, and takes his kindness and care of her (he had acted as tutor to her) too much as a matter of course. Perhaps, again, like most of her sex, she is apt to consider a grand stately lover a bit of a bore, and is rather weary of him; for *Cloudesley*, though a philosopher and free from the superstition of his party, has some of their narrowness and austerity; in any case, she consents to make use of him, coquet with him, coax and torment him, as the mood strikes her,—but as for rewarding his devotion, such a thought never enters her giddy little head.

But now that the distant kinsman, *Sir*

Hugh Blackadder, a disreputable courtier, has arrived at the Grange to take possession of the estate, matters approach to a crisis. Cloudesley can no longer remain there as soon as the Baronet's right is fairly established. And as the mother, *Lady Hawthorn*, wants to make up a marriage between *Mabel* and *Sir Hugh*, new complications arise; for the young lady, distracted between *Sir Hugh* and his brilliant companions on the one hand, and a sense of right and perhaps a sneaking fondness for *Cloudesley* on the other, teases that good gentleman so acutely, that but for his iron cuirass, his bosom would be completely overwhelmed.

When Captain Ashleigh walked on the stage in the character of *Cloudesley*, it was quite true, as the experienced Mr Blogg had said, that matters were against the performance of a pathetic part. The audience was now in so purely merry a mood, that one or two pathetic speeches made just before were received with almost as much laughter as Mr Merryweather's sallies, and actors with pa-

thetic parts looked very blank indeed. And after the Captain's first scene this want of confidence increased. Behind the scenes all were crowded at the slips to see how the new actor would acquit himself. But the result was a pretty general feeling of disappointment. He was easy in his manner, no doubt, and did not provoke any merriment by the one serious speech he had to deliver, but, accustomed as they were to the gifted Captain Beverley, there seemed a total want of acting in his rendering of the part. One or two pieces of stage business which Captain Beverley had introduced were omitted, and one or two ambiguous speeches where the intensity of feeling of the Iron soldier was allowed to peep out from under his great self-restraint, and which had been rendered very effective by Captain Beverley, and gained him applause even at the rehearsals, were almost slurred over by Captain Ashleigh, and gained no applause at all. He was calm and impassive under the brilliant rallying of the cavaliers. He was calm and impassive be-

neath the teasing of *Mabel.* And when Sir Hugh gets up the sham abduction of *Mabel,* who happens somehow to be walking at two in the morning in a retired part of the park, and *Cloudesley* spoils the sport, and *Sir Hugh's* proposed grand rescue, by cudgelling away the sham bravoes and conducting her back to the Grange, without revealing more than that he is one who is always repaid twenty-fold if he is able to do her the slightest service,—it must be admitted there was a great want of the tremendous melodramatic attitudes with which Captain Beverley had wielded the cudgel.

On the whole, however, the audience were now thoroughly interested. The vivacious *Mabel* and *Cloudesley* between them had effected that much. The sweet tones of voice and the grace of the young lady, whose make-up was lovely, soon gained over the audience, and her archness and vivacity completed the victory. Her scene with her mother passed off very well indeed. That aristocratic old lady also secured the favour of the audience

in spite of the very mercenary advice that she thought proper to give her daughter. Poor Charley Simpkin had of late been very puzzled about this part. When all was going on well with him, he had determined to act it with immense spirit, and had practised it day and night, and I think had added to it some mercenary speeches of his own composition. But when his love affairs came to such a disastrous finish, he felt there would be a want of dignity in his playing with too much *gusto* what reflected too nearly upon some of the actualities of his own experience. When in good humour with Sophy, he had found it almost impossible to help mimicking the tones of voice of her aunt. But now he felt an exertion of restraint was doubly necessary, he must under-act the part, and be guided solely by the most severe laws of art in his rendering of it.

But when the young man was dressed up and in the full glare of the foot-lights, and under the tremendous excitement which is felt on such an occasion (which excitement

had been also artificially increased by liberal champagne), he found that the player's art is not so easily controlled. Insensibly he found himself carried away by his part. Insensibly the tones of Mrs Liversege came to his tongue. Insensibly he found himself giving utterance with immense relish to the terrible sarcasms which he had intended to suppress.

I do not think that this speech is in the text of the play :—

Lady Hawthorn. 'Learning, fie, child! Good lack, learning is not fashionable now-a-days, and certainly not useful to a young lady, who need only study arithmetic that she may count up the fortunes of her suitors and select the richest. Gold for affection, and alloy in each! The husband must of course expect that!'

At any rate about the next speech there can be no manner of doubt. It offended Mrs Liversege very much, and made her characterize the whole performance as very coarse and vulgar. At the same time it was greatly

applauded by the red-coated portion of the audience :—

Lady Hawthorn. 'Ah, well a day, silly child, a girl must calculate not what shall I have in my husband's life, but what shall I gain by his death. Nay, I hear that certain sober matrons in the Indies say, "Daughter, good lack! Wed thee to such and such an underwriter in the India trade. Of verity he is worth three hundred pounds sterling a year, whether he be dead or whether he be alive!'

I think it was not until the first act came to a close, with the grand scene between *Mabel* and *Cloudesley*, that the audience had quite made up their minds about the acting of Captain Ashleigh. The spectators had been puzzled at first, and many Ensigns had expressed their disappointment at the want of acting, but as the play advanced their interest had gradually centred on the undemonstrative gentleman in black velvet (he appears as the *Ironside* later in the play). And when he

comes to tell her that he is leaving the Grange for good, and the young lady, teased by her mother and torn by conflicting emotions (having just heard, amongst other things, that *Blackadder* was her secret rescuer in the midnight), is more brilliant and reckless than ever, and *Cloudesley*, stung to the quick, in a sedate manner, made terribly impressive from its suppressed fire, pours forth the matter-of-fact history of his mighty love, upbraiding her for her selfishness and vanity, and renouncing her for ever, the audience was completely carried away, and the curtain descended amid immense enthusiasm, on poor *Mabel*, just as she utters the conscience-stricken remark,—

'I had won a man's heart, and now I have lost it!'

'Where did you pick up *him?*' said Mr Blogg to his wife. 'He's the most out-and-out *Cloudesley* I've seen, not barring Higgins of the Olympic.'

There was some one else in the body of the house who would have echoed Mr Blogg's

observation if she could have understood its technical significance. When Miss Sophy saw a pale cavalier walk on the stage with a plain but handsome black velvet dress upon his neat figure, she could scarcely believe that it was Captain Ashleigh. His whole face, his whole form seemed quite changed. Not only were fifteen years of India washed off his face by a few touches of that enchanter's wand, the theatrical hare's foot, but his thick whiskers and moustaches having given way to the trim little Vandyke beard of the epoch of the Stuarts, his mouth and the shape of his face were, for the first time, made apparent to her, and she quite wondered that she had never before thought him handsome. And then again for the first time in his life he looked so grand and graceful as he moved about amongst the awkward amateurs who seemed set as a foil around him. He seemed calm and cold, as was usual to him, and so far did not seem to be acting; but when from under the calm surface there came up so much fire and pathos and heroism and devoted love, the young

maiden was fairly puzzled. Could it be true, after all, that the real Captain Ashleigh bore any resemblance to the character on the stage? Had he forged a breastplate against the ills of life? Had he disciplined great thoughts, great ambitions, great passions, educing eminence from humiliation and dignity from disaster? Mrs Vesey had let fall hints that he was distinguished in several battles, so he must have valour, nerve, fire; and that he had earned a high post by his talents when yet very young, so he must have insight and talent. This post he had lost again through some mysterious affair. What was that affair, and had love anything to do with the story? Sophy did not confess to herself that that question, for the first time, became interesting now that he had shaved off his beard and looked so graceful and handsome; but for all that our butterfly maiden has the faculty of grappling a heroism. Thus she mused, as the band of the 44th Nowgong Native Infantry enlivened the interval between the acts with some very popular but very noisy music.

Had Mr Palmer Brown, who had just come in, and who was struggling to get near her, known how much she was engaged with the hero of the piece and how little with him, he might perhaps have resolved to postpone the offer of marriage which to-night he has determined to make.

'How do you like the play, Miss Brabazon? What is it called?' At last he had got to a vacant place, which Mrs Liversege had kindly kept for him. At this moment the curtain was rising on the second act.

'Hush!' said Sophy, quite absorbed, but recognizing the voice a moment afterwards, she turned to him.

'It is called *The Ironside!* How dy'e do, Mr Palmer Brown? Have you ever seen it before?'

Mr Palmer Brown was looking towards the stage as the curtain rose and disclosed a figure in the dress of one of Cromwell's renowned Ironsides. Mr Palmer Brown's face suddenly assumed a look which quite startled Sophy. It was deadly pale, but his eyes

flashed with an expression which, to say the least of it, was very unpleasant to behold—an expression of concentrated hate.

It would almost seem as if Mr Palmer Brown had seen *The Ironside* before.

Miss Sophy Brabazon was soon once more completely absorbed in the progress of the piece. *Doggery* joins this *Ironside*, who turns out, of course, to be *Cloudesley*, who has joined the popular side in the civil war now raging, and I think must have become an *Ironside* some considerable time before those firm warriors became known to history. *Doggery* has summoned him back to the castle, on a matter of great moment.

This, it turns out, is the discovery of the marriage certificate of old *Sir Hildebrand*. *Doggery* found it whilst rummaging a dusty old lumber-room. This makes the birth of *Cloudesley's* mother legitimate, and gives *Cloudesley* possession of the baronetcy and the property, if he chooses to claim them.

A fine scene now ensues between *Doggery* and *Cloudesley*, in which the romantic ideas

of the one and the matter-of-fact views of the other are of course made to clash very effectively. *Cloudesley* is determined to grandly revenge himself upon the proud beauty by keeping the matter a profound secret, a line of conduct which *Doggery* can by no means understand, nor why, when a young lady has been disdainful and harsh, that very harshness should be the chief reason for treating her with overdone generosity and kindness. And as his arguments against such an insane line of proceeding are given in the old paralytic posture, with frequent exclamations of 'Hey!' in the tones of voice of Major Pulfington Belper, *Doggery* makes almost as great a hit here as in the first scene.

Meantime the inmates of the Grange are divided between two excitements—the interest of the civil war now raging around them, and the daring exploits of a certain troop of Ironsides; and the attempts of *Lady Hawthorn* to induce *Mabel* to marry *Blackadder*. At first she steadily refuses, but the pressure becomes almost too much for her, and in gratitude for

the supposed rescue by *Blackadder*, she has almost yielded, when *Doggery* discloses who was her real rescuer, and she again strongly resists.

But another climax is preparing. Intelligence is brought to *Blackadder* that *Cloudesley*, of whose complicity with the rebels he has long had proof, is in the Grange, and in his power. *Cloudesley* and *Mabel* meet once more, and she is almost on the point of telling him that she loves him, when suddenly *Blackadder* breaks in upon them and denounces *Cloudesley* as a rebel. *Mabel*, an enthusiastic Royalist, is thunderstruck at the news, and calls upon him indignantly to contradict it.

'It is quite true,' says the Ironside calmly.

Mabel on this renounces him for ever, but the complication does not end here, for *Blackadder* uses the threat of *Cloudesley's* execution to extort a promise of marriage. *Cloudesley* is brought in person to plead his own cause, but, to the surprise of all, he calmly urges her to leave him to his fate.

'Truth is above all!' he says to her with

great solemnity as he is led away; and poor *Mabel*, quite distracted at last, consents to marry *Blackadder*.

In Act III. the married couple are by no means happy. *Blackadder* is jealous of the absent *Cloudesley*, and very unkind to his wife. Matters also are going wrong in the immediate neighbourhood. *The Ironside*, whom some believe to be the redoubted Colonel Cromwell in person, is not far off, and great preparations are made to dispose of him at once and for ever. The brave cavaliers, including *Wildoats*, *Tigermoth*, and the rest, are confident of success, and make immense military dispositions for the struggle, by singing cavalier ballads and drinking a great deal of sack. They march out, but return with great promptitude, having been considerably worsted by the rebel troop, and close upon them follows a flag of truce, and an Ironside enters the castle who proves to be *Cloudesley* in person, who has come to inform them that by order of Colonel Cromwell the Grange is at once to be occupied, so he urges

them to get the ladies into a place of safety. The treacherous *Blackadder* refuses to respect the flag of truce, and, against the entreaties of all the cavaliers, gives orders that a gallows be at once erected to hang *Cloudesley* upon. But the delay is fatal to his schemes, the Ironsides storm the place, and in a few minutes all the cavaliers are prisoners of war.

Meanwhile news of the treacherous purpose of *Blackadder* gets wind, and orders arrive from Colonel Cromwell that this particular 'malignant' shall be forthwith shot. Mabel seeks an interview with the renowned chief, *The Ironside*, and is introduced to no less a person than *Cloudesley* himself.

Pressed by a stern puritanic sense of duty on the one hand, and his love on the other, a great struggle here takes place, which terminates in favour of the love element, according to dramatic usage. He accompanies her to the room where *Blackadder* is confined, and shows them the entrance of a secret door by which they can escape. But the treacherous *Blackadder*, finding the coast clear, shoots *Cloudes-*

ley with his own pistol. He then rushes off to the entrance of the secret passage, to be confronted with *Doggery* and four Ironsides, as the curtain falls amidst what newspapers call a very hurricane of applause.

CHAPTER V.

THE PACHA'S HANDKERCHIEF.

'Are you engaged, Miss Brabazon, for the first waltz?'

'No, Mr Palmer Brown.'

'Then may I have the honour?'

When a man has anything on his mind, a proposal, a conspiracy, a wedding, a duel, it is best to get the disagreeable business over as soon as possible. But I don't think that Mr Palmer Brown is suffering from nervousness, at least from that nervousness which proceeds from a painful distrust of one's own merit, and diffidence about one's hopes and prospects in a crisis so momentous as this.

And yet it would be prudent in him to pause and consider if the present moment is the most favourable for pressing his suit, when the young lady is so taken up with the

characters of an ideal world, and is still so full of the exciting play which has so strongly moved her.

For Miss Sophy Brabazon has been excited and moved, there is no doubt of that fact. Has she completely misunderstood the character of the officer who played the part of *Cloudesley?* This is the question we heard her ask herself before; and which now she asks herself again and again. It seemed so strange that she should never before have thought him a grand, graceful gentleman. Oddly enough, these were the points which puzzled her most. And yet she seemed to remember, or rather to be struck with the fact for the first time, that in spite of a few strange speeches his manner towards her had always exhibited a chivalrous courtesy and a refined grace quite equal to that of the handsome cavalier in black velvet who made love to *Mabel Hawthorn.* Ashleigh and *Cloudesley* were one and the same man. And then she was struck with her ingratitude. What coolness, what courage, what judgment, what pa-

tience had he not shown on the day of her rescue, and yet her old irritation against him had prevented her from thanking him in a manner at all becoming to the occasion.

Another curious result had been produced by the play. Whilst she could not separate Captain Ashleigh from *Cloudesley*, she could not help associating in some mysterious manner *Blackadder* with no less a personage than Mr Palmer Brown. Again and again she smothered the rising fancy, and thought it quite culpable to harbour so ungenerous a thought, but still somehow it would return. The mincing manner, the neat but vapid compliments, the soft speech and upturned eye, reminded her irresistibly of Mr Palmer Brown making love; even the tones of voice were the same. This curious fancy on the part of Miss Sophy Brabazon is partly to be accounted for by the fact that Mr Chiffney Chaffney, who represented the character, had taken the liberty to make use of Mr Palmer Brown as a model on the occasion. He and the other young civilians had a grudge against

the Secretary, ever since that gentleman's officious hostility in the matter of the gates. Besides, if you remember, Mr Palmer Brown once delivered a neat and cutting reprimand which he flattered himself Mr Chiffney Chaffney would recollect. Mr Chiffney Chaffney does recollect it (though his effort of memory, if flattering, is most inopportune); and whilst Mr Merryweather on his part had determined to bring some reminiscences of Major Pulfington Belper on to the stage, Mr Chiffney Chaffney had determined to mimic Mr Palmer Brown. It must not be thought that this was an act of dull plagiarism on the part of the vivacious young civilian. As Mr Adams at Cambridge and M. Leverrier at Paris both simultaneously discovered the planet Neptune, by quite independent calculations, so Mr Merryweather and Mr Chiffney Chaffney both struck upon the same brilliant idea at the same moment. Mr Chiffney Chaffney made up his face as like as he could, and disguised himself with a pillow strapped round the abdomen. A good mimic, he made the Secretary for the Foolscap

Department his especial study for several days at the Club, and the result was very successful. Sophy was not aware of this little stroke of humour on the part of the pert young civilian, and once when Mr Palmer Brown, during the progress of the play, whispered some trivial compliment in her ear, she actually thought it was *Blackadder* talking upon the stage.

And so after the chairs had been cleared away, and the ball-room made ready for a dance, Mr Palmer Brown offered his arm to Miss Sophy Brabazon. Mrs Liversege is radiant upon the pair, and Charley Simpkin, who has managed to take off his feminine garments in a wonderfully short space of time, has to gulp down a good deal, as he bows to Sophy with what he flatters himself is a good-humoured and serene expression of countenance. He has not met her since the eventful morning. Major Pulfington Belper, something ruffled at having been so quizzed upon the stage (a stroke of satire which he would probably have failed to notice but for the offi-

ciousness of his friends), joins the young man just after he has made his gracious salutation. 'If any of you know any cause or just impediment.—Hey?' says the elder humourist, not knowing what corns he is treading on. Meanwhile the envied and much-esteemed Calcutta official struts along with his precious charge upon his arm, and from his manner you would not judge that he had the least diffidence as to whether the present moment was favourable or not for a declaration of love. The fact is, that at his morning visit to Barrackpore, Mr Palmer Brown was a little nervous, as we have before remarked. The great affair of the sky-blue neck-tie and the other business of Miss Wotherspoon invested that, his first meeting with Sophy since the picnic, with no little awkwardness. And now this is only the second time that he has met her, and his nervousness is quite gone. His reception by the wavering and uncertain young damsel must have given him a great deal of confidence. He remembers the real awkwardness of the position. He remembers the

maze of unexampled political difficulties, through which he has adroitly passed. No wonder, then, if he feels a little of the elation of a Hampton Court holiday-maker, who sees the bower of roses fairly in view at last. No wonder if our puffed-out official should feel a little of the full-blown elation of the Pacha who beholds every beauty of the slave-market smiling upon his path.

But you would make a great mistake did you suppose that Mr Palmer Brown allowed any undue confidence to be observed by the young lady. That popular gentleman adopts with all beauties a manner which they may interpret in any way they like, but which he finds very effective. Thus to-night, after two turns in the waltz, he carries Miss Sophy off to a seat in a quiet corner of the room. There is nothing unusual in this. Mr Palmer Brown always carries his partners off in this way, and converses with them in whispers in retired spots. There is something at once flattering and confidential, even though the conversation should be about nothing at all. Charley

Simpkin has been once or twice almost driven frantic at seeing the pair employed thus, but if he could have heard all they were saying, I think he would have been comforted. To-night, however, Mr Palmer Brown has something to say. His eyes are cast down, his demeanour is modest, his voice trembles with emotion. 'Tis thus, that on this particular night of amateur theatricals, our confident secretary declares his passion to Miss Sophy Brabazon.

He tells her that she must have observed for a long time that he was not insensible to her charms. That she is going to Nawaubgunge with her uncle, the new Resident; and that an image of loveliness must be clasped at once, or that he must let it fade from his sight for ever, for he cannot possibly go there and discharge the duties of secretary if his present hope is blasted, and he is forced to nourish a hopeless passion in his breast. That he feels that his aspirations are lofty, perhaps presumptuous, that no one can be worthy to win so much loveliness; but having found some suc-

cess in his profession, he can offer her a certain amount of wealth and comfort in her home, which his talents may perhaps one day be able to increase. At first he had resolved not to say anything, as he feels the prize is too high a one, but he has been carried away and forced to speak, in spite of himself. She must pardon these rapid, spontaneous, burning words ; he could only ask for the fairest hand in India, in the world.

Thus in whispering tones and dislocated sentences the Secretary to Government for the Foolscap Department delivered himself of a neat and warm oration which he had composed a fortnight beforehand, and, to his great surprise, found himself refused by Miss Sophy Brabazon.

I don't think that Mr Palmer Brown was so utterly and palpably taken aback before in all his life. He—Mr Palmer Brown—the clever Secretary, the admired *petit maître*, rejected! It was some moments before he could believe that the whole affair was not a

horrible dream. He was so confounded that, instead of retiring gracefully, he floundered further and further into the mud with whimsical stupidity.

'But, Miss Brabazon, look into the depths of your heart, and I'm sure—there—I mean are these really your views? Perhaps you ask for time to consider. The affair is too sudden?'

'No, Mr Palmer Brown,' said Sophy, 'I quite mean what I say. It would be wrong to excite any false hope. Once for all, I can never be your wife.' The young lady would have avoided the issue if she could, but when she found it was inevitable, she was quite composed. The presence of mind of the modern young lady on these occasions is much to be admired.

'But do you mean that these were always your sentiments? I thought at one time you liked me pretty—I mean, that your heart was not so cold, so cruel.' Mr Palmer Brown seemed to have forgotten his early

speech about his aspirations being presumptuous, and about no one being worthy to win so much loveliness, &c., &c.

'Well, Mr Palmer Brown, if you insist upon my being candid, I will tell you this much, but I pray you not to allow what I am going to say to raise up false hopes for the future. I shall always have a respect for you, an esteem, a kindly feeling, and I did once think that this might have become something more. I am sorry if it causes you any disappointment. I thought your feelings had also changed. Really, I have nothing more than friendship to offer you for the future.'

'Am I to understand then that another, a rival —' The memories of the recent dramatic entertainment were even affecting Mr Palmer Brown. But a ball-room is a bad place for long sentimental dialogues. Mr Chiffney Chaffney here claimed Miss Sophy's hand for a polka. The insight of the Secretary had been quite sufficient to show him that his young friend was quizzing him on the stage. The present interruption there-

fore did not tend to soften the feelings of asperity with which he regarded Mr Chiffney Chaffney. He quite scowled upon that young civilian. 'Miss Brabazon, what have you been saying to that poor gentleman there? One would think that you had given him his *juwaub!*'

Frankness and plain speaking even upon the most delicate topics were amongst the most sterling and most homely virtues of Mr Chiffney Chaffney.

Juwaub! Anglo-Indian *argot*, for 'refusal of an offer of marriage.' Yes, Miss Sophy Brabazon has indeed administered a *bonâ fide* juwaub to-night. And I think it would puzzle the young lady herself to explain her reasons for such a step; not that we feel ourselves called upon to argue out or settle a delicate question which is not usually amenable to the laws of reason at all. We heard her tell Mr Charles Simpkin a few days ago that her affections were engaged to somebody else. Who was that somebody else? Was it Mr Palmer Brown? If so, why does she now

give him what Mr Chiffney Chaffney calls a *juwaub?* Was it Captain Ashleigh? If so, how is it that she has only just discovered for the first time that he is good-looking, and perhaps capable of depths of feeling and passion? Was it nobody at all? Charley Simpkin in after-times sometimes fancied that it was a warrior of straw, which he undexterously gave her an opportunity of conjuring up, because she found the battle going against her. He flattered himself that if—but these are his fancies called up to soothe his vanity and screen the ideal of his heart. Perhaps her mind is unstable and wavering. Perhaps she is romantic, and has tried to conjure up an ideal of a brave, strong, true knight, and she suddenly sees her ideal like a shadowy phantasm flee away as the true knight unexpectedly appears. You may think I deal unfairly with you in not telling you everything, but how can even an omniscient novelist know all the ramifications of that puzzling maze, a female heart? I give you the facts as they arise. I cull all I can from the tittle-tattle of

the time to suggest motive. More than that I cannot do. Miss Sophy refused Mr Charles Simpkin, and now she has refused Mr Palmer Brown. No doubt the modesty, generosity, and courage of Captain Ashleigh had something to do with this latter result, but much, very much is also due to the appearance on the stage of the Barrackpore theatre of a graceful gentleman in a neat suit of black velvet.

As for Mr Palmer Brown, his fury that night was tremendous. You must remember that he has been a little spoilt by the ladies of Calcutta, and by the flatteries and sweets of Indian office. In different places, different ranks and orders of men taste the deteriorating influences of inordinate feminine esteem. In Dover it is a captain, in Mayfair a lord, in Cheltenham a parson, in Calcutta an official connected with the civil government of the country. Mr Palmer Brown is not an amiable man at any time, and he is certainly not amiable to-night. He is Jack and Tom with Ensigns at the buffet, but his noisy mirth is

most unpleasant, and at times he is dismal and dumb, and drinks a great deal of wine. He has determined not to go to Nawaubgunge now. Shall he marry Miss Emma Windus or Miss Wotherspoon? If either of those ladies had been at the ball that night, Mr Palmer Brown would have at once proposed to her, and spread abroad the report of his engagement forthwith, but, to his great regret, neither are ready in waiting for so distinguished an honour.

He considers himself most hardly used. Has she not drawn him on and then thrown him over? The affair of the picnic does not seem to enter at all into his calculations. All sorts of wild schemes of revenge come to him between his cups—with his cups, I might almost say. He even goes so far as to resolve to at once become a very powerful Calcutta magnate, and wreak his vengeance on all the young lady's relations by sending them to the most swampy and unhealthy of Indian stations. More champagne! More champagne!

But before the Secretary to Government

for the Foolscap Department could get this new demand supplied, and the Khitmutgars were very alert and active for that matter, his eye fell on Miss Sophy Brabazon, who was enjoying an ice at no great distance, and he noticed that her face was more bright and animated than he had yet seen it. She was talking to an officer in a rifle uniform, whose back was turned at the moment.

The officer now turned round and showed a breast covered with medals, and a face which made Mr Palmer Brown start.

'D—n! He! He'd like to play the same old play over again. D— it! He shall. I'll go to Nawaubgunge!'

And for the first time in this history Mr Palmer Brown appears in a character that is not contemptible. We forget for a moment the sham politician, the sham sentimentalist, the sham lover. We forget his sham sighs, his sham smiles, his sham state secrets, his sham importance. We have got to something real at last, a hate which has something respectable in its intensity. This flimsy official antic has

something about him which really belongs to the human family, though it is not the most pleasing of human dowries.

It is now quite certain that he and *The Ironside* have been face to face once before.

CHAPTER VI.

THE 'LIGHT OF THE PALACE.'

When Sultaun Mahmoud Sebuktegeen was dug up, one hundred years after death, this phenomenon was observed. The whole of his body had become dust, except his eyes, and these still gazed around from their sockets. Was the last Mogul Emperor, Aulumgeer II., as vigilant in his coffin? 'He is still looking about,' said a durveesh of the country of the former monarch, 'because his kingdom is possessed by others.'

A hundred years before the time of our story, the Mogul was seated on the Delhi *Musnud*. That throne, no doubt, was a little more ricketty than when the great Aurungzeeb sat there, but it was still the 'Peacock Throne.' Fifteen richly caparisoned steeds stood on each side of it with gemmed bridles and one great

jewel pendent from each neck. The pampered imperial elephants knelt before it, and made their *salams* to his Majesty. To-day perhaps is a grand *durbar*, and the great officers of state are in attendance, and the incense of their flattery is even more sweet than the scent of the *Atar-gul* and *bed-mushk*; whilst their diamonds and emeralds are only eclipsed by the other sparkling objects which slyly twinkle through yonder *purdahs* of the *Zenana.* Perhaps to-day some foreign ambassador, say he of Persia, has arrived at the capital, with a huge train of baggage-elephants, and richly-dressed horse and foot soldiers. Introduced into the presence, at the first rail (many rails hedge an Indian king), he performs three *tiselins* and *sizedas* (prostrations and head bumpings), and presents his complimentary offerings, three times nine Arabian and Persian horses; three times nine mules, carpets of silk, camels laden with rose-water, three times nine Persian scimeters with three times nine verses of the Koran inscribed upon them (three times nine is a complimentary number). But he

only brings five clocks and seven Venetian looking-glasses, whilst, on the other hand, his camel-loads of the wine of the grape amount to the unceremonious number of forty-two. The Commander of the World gives him in return a handsome turban, waist-band and body-coat, and the ambassador having executed some more *tiselins* and *sizedas*, retires to the seventh rail.

Or to-day perhaps it is the good pleasure of the Sun of the Universe to dispense a little justice, and accused people are brought before him. Of these some are pronounced innocent and rewarded with girdles and turbans, but by far the greater part will be condemned to be torn by dogs, or buried alive up to the chin, and left exposed to the sun, or to be decapitated, or destroyed by elephants who have been trained to trample to death, some with dispatch, others lingeringly. Or perhaps to-day is the birth-day of the Commander of the World, and he is weighed in state. The jewels, gold, silver, gold-stuffs, butter, rice, fruit, and other articles which are placed in the opposite

scale, of every sort a little, will afterwards be given to the Brahmins, the Omrahs will congratulate his Majesty, the fireworks sputter, and the city will rejoice, should the Commander of the World prove more heavy than last year; but suppose he should be weighed in the balance and found wanting, as to-day I fear he must be!

For we all know that poor Aulumgeer was rudely aroused from his day-dreams (figuratively aroused) by the sound of cannon at a small village not far from the great city of Moorshedabad. An English Colonel, against the decision of a council of war, has thrown his little force across the Hooghly, and his cannon roar out. They are not the guns of the Royal Artillery, because Col. Aldercron refused to allow such guns to accompany a mere local colonel, but they nevertheless articulate with no uncertain sound, proclaiming a new master over the richest and most extensive plains in the world; for the small village is called Plassey, and His Highness Surajah Dowlah the

Nawaub of Moorshedabad, with an army of fifty thousand men, is scampering away in great confusion.

Well, poor Aulumgeer quits the scene (where he had rather a time of it), and another Mogul, ponderous enough, receives the *tiselins* and *sizedas*, the great Company *Bahador*. A fat, turtle-loving, shrewd, money-making, aldermanic Mogul, he too shall send forth his *Soobahdars* and stately *Nawaubs*, shall fight great battles, make miraculous conquests, rule vast continents; a narrow and unscrupulous Mogul at times, but on the whole a strong, moderate, meritorious, able, merciful Mogul, a noted Bahawder, the greatest colonist and captain of mercenaries (and the most generous paymaster) that the world has seen. And then is it not written that after a hundred years he too shall be rudely aroused (from aldermanic nap) by the explosion of cartridges, and his famous palace of the Hall of Lead shall totter and crumble? And after one hundred years more perhaps he too will, like

the departed Sultaun Mahmoud Sebuktegeen, gaze around him in his coffin; and if so what will he see?

But less remote questions concern us now, for the Mogul is not dead yet. At the time we write he is still to all appearance fat and ponderous, and sends forth his powerful Nawaubs and officers of state, and of some of these it is now the business of our story to speak.

Mr Liversege is installed in the Residency of Nawaubgunge, and Mrs Liversege has also taken up her abode in that building. Mr Liversege is now without doubt a *bonâ fide* 'Political,' as the Indian term runs, and so is Mrs Liversege, and so is Mr Palmer Brown, and between them all they are determined that the new dynasty shall quickly make itself felt in the world. A much closer alliance has now been formed between Mrs Liversege and Mr Palmer Brown. When that astute 'Political' was appointed Secretary to the Resident of Nawaubgunge, he at once saw that in favour of any ulterior views

he might harbour—whether of love or hate—it would be advisable to gain over that lady, for as all the authority of the Indian Government was vested in the Resident, so all the authority of the Resident was vested in Mrs Liversege.

To effect this object, no project seemed more promising than that of making Mrs Liversege a confidante with regard to his refusal at the Barrackpore ball. However great a 'Political' a lady may be, such a confidence at once sends a sympathetic quiver through the female breast,—at least so argued Mr Palmer Brown,—and three weeks after his arrival at the station, the power which had recently been invested in the hands of the new Resident was completely transferred to Mrs Liversege and Mr Palmer Brown,—or perhaps into the hands of Mr Palmer Brown alone,—for provided the authority of the guide be sufficiently questionable, your domineering woman is always very easily led.

Towards the beauty who had refused him, for she had come up with her aunt, Mr

Palmer Brown observed a demeanour which he himself would have described as 'hauteur,' but which perhaps might more properly be termed sulkiness. To be refused by a young lady who has led you to understand that she likes you,—or whom you have so understood without being led, which amounts to the same thing,—and then to meet her a day or two afterwards with a bland smile on your countenance, and to talk to her about last night's shower of rain, or the present fine morning, requires a certain peculiarity of constitution. A man must either have no dignity or a rare excess of it, he must be either a fool or a philosopher, and to neither of those classes belonged Mr Palmer Brown.

He bowed in a graceful but distant manner when they met, but avoided talking to her when they were in the same room, labouring, however, to be as brilliant as a man without wit, and as cordial as a man without a heart, could be to every other member of the company. This is a very common impulse of gentlemen in his situation when in the

presence of the perverse fair one, but I think in almost all cases it is an entirely unwise one.

Indeed, Mrs Liversege very soon detected and pointed out to him the bad policy of this conduct. She thought his despair preposterous, as long as she was on his side. To think that a weak, voluble little creature could struggle for a moment with one of the most powerful female intellects of the age! A fickle school-girl, whose head was already turned with dress, and show, and microscopic female vanities,—of course she must marry a wealthy member of the Bengal Civil Service when such a husband was presented to her. Mrs Liversege was inconsequent when she thus curiously connected the Bengal Civil Service and microscopic female vanities, but logical enough when she estimated the power which her position gave her, if she wished to dispose of the hand of her niece. But we must now leave the delicate distresses of the love-sick *attaché*, and turn to the great public interests of Nawaubgunge.

Nawaubgunge, as all the world knows, is seated on the Muddinuddy (Golden River). Seen across that stream, the town looks gay, eastern, picturesque, and sunny. The gilded pinnacles of the minarets, mosques, tombs, and palaces glitter aloft, and their picturesque outlines shine out against the bright sky. It is true that on a near inspection, many of these mosques turn out to be built of stucco, and lath, and plaster; for one of the Nawaub's predecessors wanted, like *Shah Jehan*, to build a Delhi in a few years. Have we not seen another Mogul cart tons of Boulevards and official palaces from the various French stone-quarries, with a success hardly greater than that of the Nawaub of Nawaubgunge!

The palaces also, there were at least a dozen of them, when seen from too near were not imposing. They were built by military engineers ignorant of architecture. But candour compels me to admit that the palm on this count must rest with our old friend Brigadier Dewsnap. In his palace, for he built one of the largest, the Greek and the

Cremorne-Chinese, the Gothic and Imperial French, the Roman and the Scotch Swiss styles were blended with a completeness which almost savoured of genius.

Yet in spite of the bad taste of Indian Nabobs and of English officers, it had not been in their power to erase countless little vestiges of the former triumphs of Mussulman art. The bazars and streets were as crammed with thick dust and bad smells as all other Indian bazars, but even amid the frugal huts and kennels which did duty for shops some little Saracenic arch would arrest your attention, poised on its graceful pillars and glittering with delicate arabesques of scarlet and blue. Or a tomb or a palace standing apart amid tangled grass and ruined gardens, but proud in its decay. Or else some stately *Imam-Barra* would send aloft its graceful domes, and spires, and minarets, haughty in white marble and inlaid stones, and glittering with the matchless golden letters, in which the Koran was written down by the prophet. There as the *Muezzin* droningly bawled forth

his invitation to prayer, and the heavy clouds of the recent monsoon storm were rolled back, and luminous with pink and orange, and the air was heavy with the beaded flowers of the tube-rose and Indian jessamine, a graceless kafir, like you and me, might well desire to to follow the devout monotheist past the plashing fountains of the garden, and kneel on the well-worn alabaster floor under the bright chandeliers and golden roof, and there give reverend thanks to the Great Allah who had fringed the river with palms and plantains, and bathed it with the matchless glory of an Indian sunset. But to my story.

The monarch whom the wit of Mr Charles Simpkin has already nicknamed the 'Nabob of Nabobgunge' was a pursy, voluptuous, indolent Eastern gentleman, cruel, corrupt, frivolous to imbecility, but who could put on the grand, grave, gentlemanly manner of a Mogul upon state occasions. That vaunted European civilization, by which we hope eventually to transform and redeem India, had as yet only taught two lessons to

this august Eastern potentate. It had taught him how to play billiards with a creditable skill. It had also taught him to drink a palatable, exhilarating, effervescing beverage, known to the infidel by the name of *Simkin*. This last lesson was learnt quite in the teeth of the precepts of the Koran, but true believers admit that some of those precepts are now impracticable. No one, for instance, expects the devout now-a-days to pass most of their lives travelling to Mecca.

There is no need to perplex the English reader with technical explanations as to the exact political status of the Nawaub of Nawaubgunge. Of course, like all Eastern sovereigns within convenient reach of a certain Governor-General, he was undergoing a gradual process of digestion, but at what particular state of deglutition the fat monarch found himself at this particular period it would be a waste of Indian political technicalities to settle. Suffice it to say that he was basted in saliva, like a barn-door fowl in the presence of a boa constrictor, but he was not yet swallowed up.

And now for a word about the affairs of the Residency. The new cabinet on assuming office found one of the most stupendous public questions of the day waiting for immediate decision. This was nothing more nor less than the great question of the Jaghire of Jamnugger. This question had been left unsettled by Colonel Dowling. The Court party directly Mr Liversege arrived at Nawaubgunge were untiring in setting forth the claims of the Nawaub to the said Jaghire. That high nobleman, Salam Bux, Prime Minister, Director of the Harem, First Lord of the Treasury, Head Kitmutgar, Gold Stick in waiting, Chief Inspector of the Royal Jungles and Tanks, and Principal Billiard Marker to His Royal Highness, besieged the Residency daily; and so did a much abler intriguer, Fuzl Ali, the Nawaub's Head Vukeel. The new cabinet, or rather Mr Liversege, was very much puzzled by this knotty problem. Plunging deeper and deeper every day into the intricacies of Mussulman law, and into those most bewildering of all studies, volu-

minous Indian office Records, this most conscientious but most undecided Ex-Judge of the *Sudder Dewany Adawlut* soon became utterly bewildered. The most spicy curries ceased to tempt his appetite, the most gauzy of mosquito curtains and the most narcotic of Indian documents ceased to afford him rest and sleep. Like King Henry IV., he was beginning to discover too late that very high dignities and rosy slumbers are not to be had by one and the same man.

It is true that Mrs Liversege and Mr Palmer Brown relieved the Resident by managing some matters also of very grave import. Colonel Dowling, a man of very moderate political capacity, according to Mrs Liversege, had held some very unorthodox notions on some of the gravest political questions, especially on the effect of parade and pomp as a governing influence on the native mind: the heresies, in fact, of Sir Charles Napier, who thought that his old hill tent, his battered sabre, and his eagle eye, struck more terror into the native mind, from Cape Comorin

to Peshawur, than fifty Lieut.-Governors (Windus pattern) with ten thousand elephants and camels. Mrs Liversege discovered that the Colonel used to drive about in an old buggy without any escort, whereas it is a well-known tradition of all Indian policy that an Indian Resident should never appear in public except in a barouche and four with pea-green postilions, and a clattering escort of cavalry. You may be sure that the barouche, the four horses, the black postilions, the pea-green liveries, and the cavalry (a Duffadar and fourteen troopers of the 'Nawaubgunge Irregulars') were all in readiness the very first evening on which Mr Liversege, accompanied by Mrs Liversege, appeared in public on the 'Course' at Nawaubgunge.

She made other important reforms. Colonel Dowling seldom held Durbars. Colonel Dowling had let the furniture supplied by Government for the Residency fall shamefully out of repair. Colonel Dowling was content with a couple of sentries at the Residency. Mrs Liversege quickly remedied all these defects; in-

deed Colonel Sandboy was quite alarmed at the number of sentries Mrs Liversege required. It was a little dispute relating to one of these sentries which was the cause of that gallant officer being shortly removed to another command; but this matter, the 'Great Henhouse Difficulty,' shall be considered in another chapter.

Thus Mrs Liversege speedily restored the establishment of the Resident of Nawaubgunge to a proper scale of magnificence. In Calcutta we have seen this worthy lady, grand, stately, refined, a leader of fashion, with a very complete sense of the importance of her social position. And now, is not her Mogul seated upon a throne, and is she not a queen like Nurmahal, the 'Light of the Palace'? If then in Calcutta she was self-important and ceremonious, you can judge what she would become at Nawaubgunge, where she had everything pretty much her own way. The formality, the pomp, the etiquette which this merciless great lady inflicted on Nawaubgunge society, soon became oppressive to a degree.

It must not be lost sight of that all this was done by a lady of vast political capacity, and that chiefly in the interest of the British dominion in the East. And I admit that when the Resident held his durbars, and the various jewelled Indian princes, the nobles in their rich cashmeres and silks, the civilians of rank, and the military in their full dress, were led to the feet of this new 'Light of the Palace,' she acted her part with much grace and stateliness.

It is now early in March. The cool mornings and evenings of the 'cold weather' have quite disappeared. The sun is powerful immediately it shows its face above the horizon, and every one at once takes refuge in his well-cooled house. *Punkahs* have already been put up, and people are thinking about constructing those ingenious screens of the fragrant *kuskuss* grass, called *tatties,* for the first whiff of the 'hot winds' has already made itself felt. Summer clothes are already appearing; we want to but can't persuade our-

selves that the hot weather is not yet upon us. The 44th Nowgong Native Infantry, which had for some months been in the 'relief' for Nawaubgunge, completed their march and entered cantonments a week ago. Miss Sophy was in the carriage with her aunt, when they suddenly came across the head of the column played in by the band of the 23rd Regiment, the corps they relieved. It was not from choice that Mrs Liversege sat in her carriage and watched a humble native regiment march by. A very heavy *hackery* with a very stupid driver barred her coachman's passage in front, and behind her was the palanquin carriage of Mrs Peckham. Sophy recognized the comic Major. She recognized her little victim, Charley Simpkin.

'Bless me, aunty, look there, if he hasn't got a moustache, a very little one, it is true, and how sunburnt he is!'

'Who, my dear?'

'Why, Charley Simpkin!'

'Ensign Simpkin, you mean, dear,' said

Mrs Liversege, who was not altogether well pleased at being made to inspect the moustaches of ensigns of Native Infantry.

The rifle company brought up the rear (the right was in front). It was led by an officer in a dark green *mirzaie*. I don't know if Sophy observed him.

That same night there was a dinner and great rejoicings at the Mess of the 23rd. A great deal of rough wit, champagne, and good fellowship were uncorked. The revellers could be heard at a late hour even from the Residency. The next day the 23rd marched out. The marching season was nearly over, but luckily they had not very far to go. Agra, as all the world knows, is only 45 miles from Nawaubgunge. Charles Simpkin had been very sentimental all through the march. Also he had not been altogether so miserable as he tried to persuade himself that he was. The exercise, the fresh scenes, and the fresh air had exhilarated him. He had shared tents with Major Pulfington Belper, whose tabernacle was wonderfully old and wonder-

fully full of holes. Marching in Bengal formerly was the model of luxurious marching for soldiers. You rise out of a comfortable sleep such as is only to be felt in a tent or in the open air. You drink your warm tea or coffee in the cold night air whilst the *classy* is knocking down your frail house, and the *bearer* packing your traps upon a camel. The bugle sounds and you fall in. The band plays, and away you go, getting up the circulation by marching with the Sepoys. The greatest of all Indian luxurics is to feel cold, to be obliged to wear a couple of great coats, to be able to put on actual thick worsted stockings and shooting boots, and walk in them. As soon as the sun appears above the horizon you call your *syce* and up comes your horse. The faithful syce has a quart bottle of sherry and water, or better still, cold tea, slung round him in a leathern case. If you like to drink some of this, he flaps away the flies from your steed during the operation. You mount, and before it is unpleasantly warm, let us trust that you see the white tents of your new encampment

under a dense black grove of mango trees! Yes, there they are. The Mess tent has been sent on over night, and breakfast is ready. The spare tents of the officers have also been sent on and are pitched, and the *bheesty* is in waiting, with a large skin full of cold water for a bath. Then for something like a breakfast! Even the Scotch during the grouse season have no conception of that repast, nor of the amount of jam which bearded soldiers eat up like school-girls, at the end of the tons of rice, eggs, fish, chicken, chops, ham, the coffee, and the claret.

After breakfast you may bag a couple of tigers, or spear a wild hog, or hook a 40lb Maha Sir, or shoot quail, partridges, snipe, according to the season and locality. Charley Simpkin shot seventeen paddy birds and twenty-five Brahminy kites, and one day he saw Captain Ashleigh bring down a couple of bears, right and left barrels, in a cave some ten miles off the line of march. Another day he and Major Pulfington Belper had both the satisfaction of missing a fine 'Ravine deer,'

the gazelle of Africa and Mr Thomas Moore.

The scenery of the plains of Bengal is very uninteresting and monotonous, the land being devoted chiefly to the cultivation of rice, which in the winter presents the appearance of large square fields of banked-up mud; but occasionally the halting-place was in some more romantic spot, near some gigantic palace tomb —surrounded by gardens and tanks, fringed with innumerable palms and planted with groves of splendid trees peopled by the sacred dove;—erected by some Mussulman of distinction, who has lived perhaps in a hovel on earth that he may dwell in a palace when dead, and little perhaps anticipates that graceless Kafirs of subaltern rank will knock down his doves, and drink forbidden liquors over his remains. Alas! the whirligig of time brings queer revenges. What will one day be the fate of the tombs of the great English Emirs, who have died in these distant lands? Will Citizen-General Wipemoff of the United Russian Republic sip

Kummel over them, or His Grace the Duke of Kentucky, G. C. X., K. C. Y., Commander-in-chief of the Indian forces of the Holy Transatlantic Empire, expectorate thereon and puff his Havannah cigars?

The regiment was escorting treasure, and at night this had to be visited by the officer of the day, and Charles Simpkin, who had just escaped the trammels of the drill-sergeant, took immense delight in this his first real duty as an officer. To him there was something romantic in rising at midnight and putting on his sword and shell jacket, and wandering amid the dark trees and under the gentle moon; and thinking at that solemn hour of a love unattainable as one of the little luminaries that twinkled upon him between the open mango boughs.

And yet there is something very selfish in the love of young people—ladies as well as gentlemen. They demand the sympathies of the whole world and give none in return. They cry out in their agony that they are misunderstood, but do they try to understand others?

In that very camp there were many other admirers of Miss Sophy Brabazon, but Charley Simpkin thought not of them. Major Pulfington Belper raved about her day and night, and under his grotesque humour there was a feeling perhaps not much less deep than the mighty passion of Mr Charles Simpkin. Captains St Leger and Wrottesley admired her in silence. They were not ladies' men, and had never spoken to her. Ensign Hodges had lately come to the conclusion that she was a much finer girl than his Barrackpore favourite, Emma Blenkinsop (nicknamed 'Ju*ly*a' by some traditional stroke of wit, which requires that there shall always be a Ju*ly*a at Barrackpore), and he intimated in his simple phraseology that it would take very little to make him 'spoons' with Miss Sophy. Lieutenant Curzon loved her; and when you read in the regimental order book—'Officer for the ensuing day, Lieutenant Curzon,' you may be pretty sure that Lieutenant Curzon gazed at the stars through the mango leaves, on the midnight of Tuesday, quite as sentiment-

ally as Ensign Simpkin on the midnight of Monday. And so, perhaps, did St Leger and Wrottesley; and so, perhaps, did the disciplined, self-repressed officer, whose feelings were generally wrapped in a cloud as dense as the smoke of his cheroots, the celebrated Number Threes, which the Mess got direct from the island of Manilla.

Charley Simpkin thought that the poetry of the whole regiment was concentrated under his shell jacket, and yet the old Havildar, who called out '*Hookum dar?*' (who comes there?) and to the Ensign's reply, 'Visiting Round!' bawled out, 'Pass, Fidgeting Round!' converting the 'Visiting' into 'Fidgeting' by a stroke of unconscious satire—even that old Havildar was thinking of some tawny, large-eyed, round-faced beauty in Oude, to whom he had transmitted three-quarters of his last month's pay to enable her to buy bangles; and every one of the Sepoys who carried arms, as the Ensign came up, was a lover too. Do you think that snug old Colonel Sandboy, and Arabella his wife, snoring in rosy slumbers in

their capacious tabernacle yonder, have no sentiment and affection though they have been married thirty years? I think it is probable that they think very little of stars and of moon-light now, but their love, for all that, is as green as on the day when he proposed to her at the ball at Cawnpore.

And so the black bandsmen (lovers too!) blow out their cheeks and smite their drums, the colours flaunt, and the closed-up sections march bravely past the carriage which contains a queen more powerful than even Mrs Liversege, and the march is done.

Of all scenes in dreary Indian life a march or a campaign is looked back upon with most regret. Then you feel really alive, and your comrades shake off the reticence and buckram of modern English civilization, and become hearty, jovial, irritable sometimes, but thoroughly human. Where are all the brave souls who pitched their tents day by day with our young warrior friend, Mr Charles Simpkin? Alas, camps are amongst the transient things of this earth. The white tents, the huge Union Jack,

the little red bannerols, flaunt for a day, the picketed horses neigh, the lines of doolies and laden camels thread on, and the elephants carrying along the tents of a hundred soldiers with the big good nature of big things, and with a philosophical calmness which, if it be true that these animals live two hundred years, is easily accounted for. The smoke rises from countless little cooking fires, the kettles boil, the curries bubble, the *chupatties* bake, and the morrow knows them not. Where is the rough wit of the Mess? The Mess manager, bewildered by the unusually immense demand for Worcester sauce and 'Number Three' cheroots? Where is the calm, dignified, white-bearded *Abdar*, who passed those days in opening bottled beer? Where is the fat *Baboo* with his joke, his bad English, and the freshly written report with which he was constantly pursuing the officer of the day? Where are the Sepoys who joked, wrestled, chanted war-songs by their watchfires, and who shouted, 'May the Company live for ever!' 'May the Ganges live for ever!' as

the regiment moved off in a dense cloud of dust? Where are the gentle ladies who followed that march in their carriages, and where the tiny boy soldiers each bestriding his little tattoo, and commanding a small army of bearers, Kitmutgars, Syces, and Ayahs? Certain Ali Nuckee Khans, Nana Sahibs, and who knows what other ruffians, are already at work, and a mine is preparing which will consign these brave marchers to the abodes of the things that were.

Where is the blazing fire, and the good men and true, who heaped faggots upon it as they sat round it when the mess tent was struck? Where are the songs they used to sing, each man his particular song night after night? Where is Spankidillo, the prince of jolly fellows? Where is Simon the cellarer? and where the huge chest from which came musical wailings about the fate of Eulalie? Honours and crosses are upon some of these, and the monuments of the Lucknow residency, the Cawnpore well, the Delhi cemetery, can tell perchance of others, but all are scattered

to meet no more. Meantime they march past stately, saucy Miss Sophy Brabazon in her aunt's barouche, unconscious of the mine which is shortly to be sprung, and by which this gay regiment, and the army to which it belongs, are to perish in dense clouds, not unmixed with flashes of glory.

The day after the arrival of the regiment at Nawaubgunge all was bustle and excitement. In India you must not only find your house, but you must furnish it, and fit it up. Charley Simpkin was running about all day. It was settled that he and Major Pulfington Belper should chum together. Latterly the younger officer had got to like the half philosophic, half idiotic prattle of the elder humourist. At first the young boy's passion had been, like the violet, secret and shrinking from the outer world, but at length the unceasing grotesque confidences of the Major had much tickled and pleased the other element of the Ensign's secret passion, for love, like everything else in this world, has its comic as well as its serious side.

Major Pulfington Belper, though a campaigner of some five-and-twenty years' standing, was still as helpless and as inexperienced as a school-girl, so Simpkin had to take everything on his shoulders in choosing and furnishing the house. One bungalow, lately the residence of Captain Smart, 23rd Regiment, looked so much more comfortable than the others, and had such neat fittings, such gorgeous *punkahs* bound with showy red fringe, such fine *tatties*, such elegant *chicks* and *purdahs*, such refreshing white mats, and such a pretty garden and roomy stables, that the Ensign closed with its former occupant at once and took everything off his hands, not excepting a couple of engravings representing imperfectly dressed ladies of some beauty, which were set in very showy gilt frames.

Captain Smart observing the Ensign's eagerness took a very unfair advantage of it, and the sum our young friend agreed to give astonished even the inexperienced virgin mind of the stout old field-officer his partner; but

it is well known that in India it is as allowable to cheat a griffin in the matter of household furniture as it is to swindle him about a horse or a gun.

At the same time, Major Pulfington Belper and Ensign Charles Simpkin were the two officers of the 44th Nowgong Native Infantry who could least afford expensive luxuries at the present moment. I mentioned that the Major was so constantly victimized at billiards, that he made a vow to play for money no more, but Mr Chiffney Chaffney and his other young friends in the Bengal Civil Service soon persuaded him, that though he had forsworn playing for money, it was quite sound ethics to play for gloves and beer. The result was, that he had lost fourteen dozen of Bass, and several hundred pairs of the best French white kid gloves, before the regiment marched from Barrackpore, and he was now more in debt than ever. All through life he had lived as frugally as one of his own grass-cutters, a domestic whose monthly allowance is 3½ rupees (*7s.* board wages), and I believe that

the native had always most money in hand. The Major was rather astonished when he saw the novel elegance of his new abode, but it must be confessed that his portion of the house was soon as untidy as any of his former residences. Three bushels of carrots for 'Old Famish' and 'Oysters,' the Major's celebrated steeds, were thrown down upon Captain Smart's white mats, and all the old litter created. The world laughed at this weak old gambler, and attributed all his losses to his over-weening vanity. There was vanity no doubt, and that vanity was bitterly punished. But it is not so purely comic a spectacle, after all, to see a poor old fellow through a silly foible apportioned a life of embarrassment and poverty and shame. And perhaps there was something besides vanity, a kindliness, a generosity, which were not so deserving of laughter. However, he has a gun still, a billiard cue hung up to straighten, an old brown pith hat, his old brown shooting jacket, and a neck-tie (tied round the abdomen). He has his old club, his old humour,

his old kindliness, his old friends. Also he has his old great sentimental passion, harassing and migratory, but not unmitigated torture. He is not unhappy, and if he could read the news now flying to him by the Peninsular and Oriental Company's steam-ship 'Babelmandeb' (J. Stubbs, commander), he would find out that he is now a regimental Major, and more prosperous days are in store for him.

'You saw the "Elegant Entangler!" Eh?'

'Yes, Major!'

'She's prettier than ever, begad! Hey!'

'She is, Major!'

'Well, these are grand rooms, but really, Simpkin, I think you were done, you were indeed!'

'The same suspicion has already crossed me, Major—great wits jump together.'

'One would think,' said the field-officer,—he rested on his big club during these moralizings, like the melancholy Jacques on his

boar spear,—'one would think, begad! that either you or I were going to change our condition. Better or worse. Hey? Better or worse!'

'Such floating projects are said at times to visit all bachelors! Speak for yourself, Major.'

'Well, I wouldn't mind being entangled at all by the Elegant Entangler. Hey! But where's the money to come from? I don't know where we shall get enough to pay for these things. Much less the Entangler's millinery bills.'

'We might make a bargain, Major: you pay the millinery bills, and I'll keep house for the Elegant Entangler!'

'Come, come, young man, I like your impudence! Better or worse, indeed! That would be worse and not better. Hey! hey! Worse and not better!' And the joke was so bad that the Major repeated it to both sides of his imaginary congregation, according to his wont.

'By Jove,' he continued, 'life is a queer thing, and a man no sooner loves a young gazelle than he—'

'Misses it?—Major!'

'Now really, Simpkin,' said the Major, red at the nose, 'you must not spread abroad these reports. I tell you my lout of a classy struck the sight of my rifle against a stone—'

'Pardon the interruption! Proceed upon your first thesis. "Life is a queer thing." That was your statement.'

'Yes, life is a queer thing!' said the Major, who had said his idiotic say, and was now compelled by the logic of his queer nature to say something good. 'Directly a fellow really attains something it slips away. I think she really liked me; but did you see her yesterday? She's galloping a long way from you and me, my ingenuous youth, in that chaise and four. A *burra beebee* escorted by cavalry will hardly think even a field-officer good enough for a husband—'

'Thou valiant Mars!' interrupted Mr Simpkin, but whether he pointed this remark

at the brave soldier opposite him, or, with Shakespeare, thus apostrophized the 'sweet king killer,' and 'bright defiler of Hymen's purest bed,' remains uncertain.

'It is always the same story, begad, hey! Hope is like a balloon, the nearer you are to it the more chance you have of seeing it fly away. Down you come with a run like a parachute, and up goes the beautiful object into the skies, into the clouds. Balloons! Crinoline! Air bubbles! Hymen's car! Eh! eh! Gas! Hey!'

This last word was shouted when the Major was half way across the compound (garden). He rushed off to superintend the putting up of the billiard-table. Did the talented Dr Guillotin ever feel a tickling in the neck as he was 'perfectioning' his ingenious mechanism?

Simpkin was as careless as Major Belper about his debts, but they were also accumulating rapidly. The Indian system of unlimited credit and no cash payment tries severely a poor boy on his arrival in the

country. At Barrackpore our young friend lived as carelessly as his young companions. He had carriages to Calcutta, buggies at Calcutta, tiffins at Mr Wilson's colossal Emporium of all Nations, and General Tea and Fancy Goods, miscellaneous Warehouse, and Dining Establishment. He had friends to dine at Mess on public nights, and drunk his champagne, never calculating how far that limited allowance, the 'half batta' of an Ensign, really would go; and he quite alarmed Captain St Leger when that careful officer came to make up the Mess accounts. The Captain, dense as Simpkin thought him, saw far more clearly than his clever young friend the bitter experience which the latter was preparing for himself. Captain St Leger gave him a hint one day in a few well-meant words, but experience is one of those few things which are of much greater value when bought.

Thus the veteran campaigners of the 44th Nowgong Native Infantry migrated from Barrackpore and pitched their tents in their new halting-place. And it must be confessed they

soon made themselves very comfortable. It would have done your heart good to see how snug was the bungalow of Colonel Sandboy even in two days. The Colonel had drawn a prize in the lottery of life, and his wife was a good-humoured domestic angel of the brightest and plumpest kind. Bachelors like St Leger and Wrottesley were not of course so comfortable, but for bachelors they were not to be pitied. There was a grim old house within the boundaries of cantonments but removed from the other buildings. This house Sophy had more than once noticed in her drives with her aunt. The walls were very thick and solid, having been built by some Englishman in days when human life at Nawaubgunge was less taken account of than at present. The remains of iron stanchions might still be seen at every window. The garden showed evidences of former culture, but low copse and tangled creeper had long ago displaced the flowers, and the old house stood apart, in its ruined garden, strong, sombre, and proud.

Two nights after the arrival of the 44th,

Sophy happened again to pass near the old building.

'Oh, tell me all about that house, auntie. They say there is some romance attached to it, they say it is haunted.'

'Haunted, my dear; you must not talk upon such alarming topics; besides, you know now-a-days the belief in ghosts is exploded with all reasonable people. All I can tell you is, that when Mr Barlow was Resident, and le me tell you that Mr Barlow was one of the most profound Indian politicals that the Civil Service ever had—I say when he was Resident a jealous native, Row Bahador, killed one of his wives and a young Emir in that very building.'

'Splendid! A real story of love and jealousy; and she haunts the house. How very delightful!'

'My love, is it not too girlish to become pleased and enthusiastic about an event which, after all, was very horrible? But look, there! What is going on? There are a dozen carriages in the compound. They belong to the

native nobility, and the whole place is filled with troopers of Irregular Cavalry. One would think your uncle was holding a *Durbar*.'

Mrs Liversege immediately asked the native coachman what it all meant, but he could not tell.

At this moment Major Pulfington Belper appeared.

'Oh, Major Belper, can you tell us the meaning of all this?' said Mrs Liversege.

'I really cannot,' said the Major, riding by the side of the carriage, 'I will call the Duffadar of the Cavalry.'

The Duffadar thus summoned immediately rode up to the side of the carriage, the red and white pennon of his long bamboo-spear dancing bravely up and down to the movement of his trotting charger.

'It is Ashleigh Sahib come back. He raised our regiment. He is our papa and mamma.'

'In the very same house!' muttered the Major, involuntarily.

'The Emirs,' continued the trooper, 'have

also gone for a *mulakat* (visit of honour). He was a great Sahib here once.'

Mrs Liversege was silent. She felt rather irritated that the Emirs should have a respect for any one but Mr Liversege. This sentiment was certainly unworthy of a great lady riding in a barouche drawn by four horses, with two pea-green postilions, and escorted by Irregular Cavalry soldiers. Mrs Liversege will ride to church to-morrow with similar pomp. At the passage in the great English Litany, which speaks of envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness, she will pray for heavenly deliverance, with the other worshippers. But she will not then think of her feeling of the previous day, as a truly contrite person should, for it savoured certainly of uncharitableness, and I think a little of envy. Gentle reader, you and I, accustomed to a severer self-examination, would act differently. But we have the charity to make allowances for the lady's new-blown pride. For who knows but it might happen that you or I might not be such perfect patterns of

praise-worthy humility if we went to church every Sunday in a barouche drawn by four horses, if our ears were tickled by the clattering of an escort of cavalry, if our eyes were dazzled by pea-green postilions?

The other lady in the carriage was also thoughtful and abstracted during the drive home. But she did more justice to the man who, years after he had fallen from power, was remembered by even Asiatic courtiers. There must be something genuine in such a man, she thought to herself, as she watched the sun setting upon the desolate old ruin.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GREAT HEN-HOUSE DIFFICULTY.

With regard to the 'Great Hen-house Difficulty,' I think the public at the time was much in error, partly from incomplete information, and partly from an inability to grasp what public men call a complex political question. The general idea was that Colonel Sandboy was removed from his regiment for objecting to post a sentry over Mrs Liversege's hen-house. I think the partial truth and partial error of this view will come out, if I attempt to give the whole facts of the case shortly and clearly.

Six events occurred all about the same time.

Event No. 1.—Colonel Boshington of the Army Routine Department wrote to Mr Liversege, recommending to his notice a young

Scotch gentleman of good birth and connections, as well as of ability and excellent conduct, whose regiment had lately gone to Nawaubgunge.

Event No. 2.—The general orders of the army announced that Captain and Brevet-Major Pulfington Belper was promoted to the rank of Regimental Major, vice Colepepper of the Home Establishment, deceased.

Event No. 3.—Lieut.-Colonel Sandboy, commanding 44th Nowgong Native Infantry, wrote a public letter to Mr Palmer Brown, begging him to direct the attention of the Resident to the number of station guards told off to do duty at the Residency. He respectfully pointed out that he found it difficult to carry on the remaining duties of the regiment and of cantonments, without over-fatiguing his men. Any measure that would in the smallest way contribute to the convenience of the Resident should receive prompt attention, but if any reduction could be made in the present case the Colonel would be most thankful. It had been brought to

his notice that a *Naik* (Corporal) and four Sepoys had been told off to protect a hen-house.

Event No. 4.—Mrs Liversege wrote off a letter to her sister Mrs Throgmorton, inviting her to come to Nawaubgunge.

Event No. 5.—Mrs Liversege had at the same time come to the determination to marry that sister—she had not settled to whom.

Event No. 6.—Major Pulfington Belper, who in Calcutta had much teased Mr Palmer Brown to get him a staff appointment, had recently renewed the same application at Nawaubgunge.

Thus there were eight public characters all more or less interested in the removal of Colonel Sandboy to another command. In case the reader should fail to see this, I will briefly note them down.

1. Colonel Boshington, Army Routine Department, who desired that a young Scotch friend of ability and high connection should be provided for.

2. Major Pulfington Belper, who wanted to better his condition.

3. Mrs Liversege, who wanted to re-marry her sister, and pay off Colonel Sandboy.

4. Mr Palmer Brown, who wanted to show his great political influence to the world and to Major Pulfington Belper—and who perhaps had some other secret motive to be on good terms with that officer.

5. Mr Liversege, who desired above all things domestic peace and quiet—especially at a critical moment when every faculty of his mind was required to settle one of the greatest questions of the Indian political world. I allude to the affair of the Jaghire of Jamnugger.

6. The young Scotch gentleman of ability and high connection.

7. The Governor-General of India, who thought that much deference ought to be paid to the advice and wishes of so valuable an officer as Colonel Boshington.

8. The Commander-in-chief, who thought — ditto—ditto.

Thus, many influences and the thoughts of many people were tending more or less strongly all one way. Mr Palmer Brown was the agent who imparted volition to these many converging forces. When he saw the effect of Colonel Sandboy's letter upon Mrs Liversege, he judiciously allowed her to brood over her supposed wrongs for two days, contenting himself with fanning the flame lightly and dexterously, not that any excess of skill was required with an incensed old lady, whose vanity had now passed all bounds.

The third day he drove over at the hour of early breakfast and found the two ladies sipping their tea in the verandah. The fresh cool of the morning when the heart is elated by a gentle stimulant is evidently the best time for discussing a subject of a very delicate nature. So argued our professed diplomatist.

'Now we are alone, Mrs Liversege,' began Mr Palmer Brown, taking advantage of a

temporary absence of Miss Sophy, 'I wanted to say a word to you.'

'About Sophy? oh, that will all go well, don't fear. You men are so impatient. To wish and watch—that, according to a great French statesman, is the secret of everything.'

'You are very kind, Mrs Liversege, to interest yourself thus in my behalf, but I was going to talk to you this morning of something else. I have been thinking how difficult it will be for the affairs of the Residency to go on smoothly with an officer like Colonel Sandboy at the head of the military. He is, I hear, an officer not without merit, not without ability.'

'I must confess, Mr Palmer Brown, that I can neither see his merit nor his ability,' said Mrs Liversege with some asperity.

'Mind, I don't say that I do either,' said Mr Palmer Brown, laughing very knowingly here for some reason best known to himself. 'Observe, I am giving you Colonel Sandboy's character from purely hearsay evidence. He

is said to be a talented officer; he is said to be a worthy officer; but perhaps an overweening conceit of these qualities makes him headstrong to a degree.'

'Well.'

'Now to the point. If a political in a most important post finds it difficult to work with one of his subordinates, the question arises,—would it not be for the public interest if the subordinate officer were removed and all went smoothly again?'

'That is all very well, but I—I mean Mr Liversege is not the commander-in-chief—you know that very well.'

'I have been thinking of that letter sent to you by Colonel Boshington, you showed it me last night.'

'What about it?' said Mrs Liversege.

'Why, this! Suddenly a bright thought struck me—but not being a military man I thought it better to see on what grounds we civilians stood before I teased you with my suggestions. It appears to me that if you consented to do anything for Colonel Boshing-

ton's friend you might ask a favour from him in return. Reciprocity in these matters is, you know, *de rigueur* in India.'

'Yes,' said Mrs Liversege, 'but I can't go and ask Colonel Boshington to remove Colonel Sandboy and send us another officer, a clumsy and quite unofficial shuffling of the cards which might send us somebody ten times as bad as Colonel Sandboy.'

'No,' said Mr Palmer Brown, 'the thing must be managed, of course, more neatly than that, or I should not have suggested it. What do you think of Major Pulfington Belper as a commandant of the station?'

'Major Pulfington Belper!' said Mrs Liversege, looking at Mr Palmer Brown very suspiciously; but the wily diplomatist felt that he had effected an admirable stroke of policy in thus coming at once to the point without further beating about the bush.

'Mind, I only throw out a suggestion!' pursued the diplomatist with much confidence. 'Where all roads are bad you must take a rough one. The Major is very pro-

bably not a very able officer, but he would listen to reason, he would be very easily led.'

'He's quite a *poggle!*'

'Colonel Sandboy is very *muggra!*'

Mr Palmer Brown felt that this descent from the stilted official to the Anglo-Indian colloquial on both sides argued well.

'Major Pulfington Belper is out of the question!' said Mrs Liversege, in a tone of voice which seemed to imply that she was debating in her own mind whether he really was so or not.

'*Château qui parle et femme qui écoute,*' muttered the modern Talleyrand between his teeth, and he swiftly followed up his victory.

'If you think him unfit for the post, of course there is nothing more to be said. My view of the question is this. We only ask Colonel Boshington favour for favour. We promise to provide for his friend, we ask him to provide for ours, and get at the same time an officer of some consideration removed to a brigade, a regiment requiring a firm com-

mander, I know not what. We know whom we get in return for Colonel Sandboy; and although I know nothing about military matters, it does not seem to me that to inspect the jackets of a thousand Sepoys requires very much head after all. A man who can see if one jacket is clean or not can see if a thousand are clean. With Major Pulfington Belper as a commander, the Resident can at any rate manage the military matters as he likes.'

'Oh, you never can tell, fools are so obstinate.' Mr Palmer Brown here chuckled inwardly. It seemed to him that he had conducted a most delicate negotiation with conspicuous skill and success. The enemy had thrown away every cartridge, and his heaviest battery had not been brought into action at all.

'Also I must tell you a little discovery I have made. I have been making inquiries, with all due caution, as I know very little about military matters, and I have learnt one interesting fact connected with them.' Mr Palmer Brown spoke this much in the same

way that Captain Speke might have conversed about the customs of the newly discovered King of the Gaboon; and he thus continued: 'I learn, Mrs Liversege, that deserving Majors often get the command of their regiments, but they are at all times liable to lose that command by another Colonel being appointed. If Major Pulfington Belper knew what great interest had been used to get him the command, and what small interest would be required to deprive him of it, he would not, I imagine, be very obstinate.'

Having thus launched his tremendous reserves on the foe, Mr Palmer Brown closed the conference.

Breakfast that morning—you take a cup of tea about seven and a regular breakfast at half-past ten—was not a lively meal for Sophy. Mrs Liversege was as abstracted as her husband, and one might almost have fancied that she also was pondering upon the great question of the Jaghire of Jamnugger. Both were as silent as the grave Asiatics who handed about

the *Kedgeree*, the rice, the eggs, and the curry.

After breakfast, Mrs Liversege gave orders that the doors should be closed, an expression which meant that no visitors were to be admitted. She sat with Sophy in the great drawing-room, and was cross when the young lady made any attempt at conversation. Sophy was embroidering the most gorgeous footstool ever seen, but lazily, because, amongst other reasons, the morning was oppressively hot. Suddenly Mrs Liversege roused herself.

'Bless me!' said that lady, thinking aloud. 'How very silly and blind I have been!'

'What's that, dear aunty!' said the young lady, also starting as if from a reverie. I am told that in embroidery, a certain train of mathematical calculations is necessary, which must, of course, be very absorbing.

'Nothing, dear, nothing,' said the aunt, in great good-humour; 'your foolish old aunt has

been very blind to-day, but now she sees something more clearly.'

That evening, on the course Mrs Liversege happened to see Major Pulfington Belper. She bowed to him with a consideration she had never before shown him. It was not so much the respect as the absence of her wonted disrespect which made the salute remarkable.

The Major happened to be in one of his usual fits of reverie, and was contemplating his left leg according to custom. This prevented him from seeing Mrs Liversege's salute in time to return it before the carriage had passed. He noticed the marked change in Mrs Liversege's manner, but was so put out at being thus caught unawares, that he at once adopted an old trick of his, of galloping round the course, to try and flee from the sense of his unceremonious lethargy.

How much faster would he have galloped, and how much more excited would he have been, if he had known what was really passing in Mrs Liversege's mind.

She had firmly resolved that before six months were over his devoted head, he should be the lawful wedded husband of Mrs Throgmorton, and we know that when a lady forms such a resolution as this she is never contemptible.

The next day Mr Palmer Brown was informed that Major Pulfington Belper should have the appointment. He had called at the Residency at twelve o'clock, and found Mrs Liversege alone in her great glittering drawing-room. Mr Palmer Brown smiled.

That smile really meant this. 'My dear madam, I have anticipated your train of reflection. I have known beforehand every thought that could pass through your mind. I have anticipated the conclusion you would come to—and I own I feel all the satisfaction and flattery of a philosopher when events vindicate his prescience and insight.'

But in thus presuming to guess what would pass in Mrs Liversege's mind for two minutes together, Mr Palmer Brown, some will think, showed himself the very reverse

of a philosopher, for Mrs Liversege was a woman.

Mr Palmer Brown and Mrs Liversege now concerted together Mr Liversege's reply to Colonel Boshington's letter. Mr Palmer Brown seized a piece of paper out of a blotting-book on one of the marble tables. He did not write on that blotting-book, for of all things in the world that blotting-book was about the last thing a man would select to write upon. It was a *papier maché* ornament, and each side of it seemed to represent an oaken church-door, with very large brass bolts and bindings and ornaments, so that the surface, when placed with all its knobs and nails upon the table, had not anything like the flatness and steadiness pleasing to a secretary. Mr Palmer Brown seized the paper, and taking a dip of ink out of a huge inkstand (brass bound, and of oak to match the miniature church-door) he wrote off the draft of the letter which was to come from Mr Liversege in answer to Colonel Boshington. Mr Palmer Brown did not reflect that for tying up a little

thread of intrigue whether in politics or love the plastic feminine fingers of Mrs Liversege were perhaps more dexterous than those of his large, and fat, but much-admired hands. But we once before had occasion to remark that Mr Palmer Brown was prepared to give any instruction to anybody, even his grandmother. He would have taught her how to knit stockings, darn—flirt, I verily believe.

Mrs Liversege was in a capital humour. She listened to his draft of the letter with the greatest respect.

'It is so very kind of you, and will save poor Mr Liversege a deal of trouble. You know how teased he is just now with that horrid Jaghire of Jamnugger. I try all I can to help him in his official labours, but we ladies can't be expected to know the official style of you gentlemen. I think your letter is capital.' And in ten minutes she had quite altered the whole style and tone of the letter, by her suggestions, making Mr Palmer Brown still believe that the masterly composition was all his own. Perhaps there was more pleasure in

cajoling two men than only one—for after all, Colonel Boshington, though an officer much esteemed by Governor-Generals and Commanders-in-chief, was scarcely worth the very rare finesse of Mrs Liversege.

Colonel Boshington was informed that it would give Mr Liversege the greatest delight to be of any service to so esteemed a friend. But independently of the grounds of friendship to the Colonel, Mr Liversege would be happy to serve his young friend. Mr Liversege had not failed already to remark in Mr Broomielaw of Ballachulish many superior qualities, coupled with a great deal of talent and diligence. There was a vacant assistant commissioner-ship at Chuckergotty. There was the adjutancy of the Nawaubgunge Irregular Cavalry likely soon to be vacant. Which appointment would Colonel Boshington like to have kept open, as Mr Liversege understood that Mr Broomielaw had not yet passed in the native languages? How was Mrs Boshington, and how was the Colonel's left foot? Had the medical men yet settled

whether the pain was rheumatic or not? The letter went on to say that the commencement of the hot season was always very trying, and that punkahs were already put up at Nawaubgunge, and then it entered into a few discursive remarks relative to the more uninteresting of the affairs of the Residency.

The letter concluded with a postscript. All the efforts of Mr Palmer Brown could not vanquish Mrs Liversege's feminine instinct on this point. The postscript stated that Mr Liversege had taken much interest lately in an officer named Pulfington Belper. A man of excellent principles, he had served all his life with his regiment, and had never tasted any of the rewards of Indian service. Mr Liversege, in his ignorance of military usages, could not of course make any suggestion, but was there any chance of Major Pulfington Belper's ever getting command of his corps? He was now Regimental Major, and he, Mr Liversege, heard that Colonel Sandboy, another very worthy officer, would soon be entitled to his Brigade command.

Thus the letter was finished, and Mr Palmer Brown, when whisking home in his buggy, happened to overtake the man of excellent principles trudging along with his neck-tie round his waist and his club in his hand.

'Come in, Major,' shouted out Mr Palmer Brown, reining in so suddenly that his horse was half-choked—and then half-smothered by the impetus of the rapid buggy. And when Major Pulfington Belper had got up, Mr Palmer Brown told him of his good luck.

'I've managed your business for you, Major, at last. I've got you your corps. Colonel Sandboy will get his Brigade and you the regiment. I hope you are really a first-rate officer, because the amount of small fibs which, in my ignorance of military matters, I have been obliged to tell about you have been really excessive—positively excessive.'

Mr Palmer Brown since leaving Calcutta had changed his tactics, and now adopted at times a sort of frank overdone joviality, which he imaged as the correct style of bearing in an

up-country civilian. Impertinence in private life in Calcutta was, he had imagined, a matter of necessary routine. The only misfortune was that Mr Palmer Brown was still too much of a routinist to shake off his habit all at once.

'By-the-by, though,' pursued the diplomatist, 'I should advise you to keep well with Mr Liversege, and above all Mrs Liversege, as, *entre nous*—but don't let this go any further—Mrs Liversege has a great deal of influence over Mr Liversege. He has written to Calcutta, and I am sure Colonel Sandboy will at once get his Brigade. Keep this also quite secret for the present. I thought over the matter, and decided that it was better to let Liversege use his influence in Calcutta than use my own, and I think I was right. Local interest and ladies' interest, Major, that is the secret of getting on in India, and I believe everywhere. Won't you come in and have some tea? Must be off, must you? What, are you going to practise giving the word as a *Colonel* already! Ta, ta!'

And the Major rushed away big with his tremendous secret.

It is all very well to tell garrulous old gentlemen that such and such a thing must be kept a profound secret. But when in the confiding cool of an Indian morning, coffee and tea are spread out in the open air, Manilla cheroots are lit, and all your friends are thirsting for gossip and weak tea, and you have a piece of news which will raise you immensely in their estimation, what can weak human nature do? First one friend and then another were told in the strictest confidence that Mr Liversege had written to Calcutta, and that Colonel Sandboy was to get his Brigade. The Major only told his secret to a few friends—say half a dozen—but in three hours it was all over the station. Everybody knew it—almost everybody.

For there was one gentleman, and only one gentleman, who did not know into what immense excitement the station was plunged at the news of Mr Liversege's letter, nor the tremendous consequences anticipated from

that letter; there was one gentleman who did not even know that Mr Liversege had written any letter at all,—and that gentleman was Mr Liversege himself.

He was driving home from Kutcherry in his *Dumdummer* about ten o'clock, pondering on the difficulties that surrounded that most difficult of all cases, the Jaghire of Jamnugger, when suddenly he saw Major Pulfington Belper issue from a bungalow which belonged to one of his brother officers. The Major shouted out to the coachman and stopped the carriage, a proceeding which Mr Liversege as Resident of Nawaubgunge thought very remarkable, but the subsequent conduct of Major Pulfington Belper was more remarkable still.

'Oh, Mr Liversege, I—in fact, am so very impressed with a sense of your kindness and generosity—by-the-by, I ought to apologize for the liberty—you understand—in recognizing my claims—'

'Oh yes!' said Mr Liversege, completely bewildered. Indeed the word 'claims' strik-

ing upon his previous train of thought quite alarmed him, and he could not help somehow imagining the field-officer before him a fresh aspirant for the contested Jaghire—destined to make that complicated question more hopelessly complicated than ever.

'You'll excuse my making the remark, Mr Liversege, but when a public man like yourself goes out of his way to do such an act—and that unsolicited—I say such a public man—'

'Oh yes, of course!' said Mr Liversege, who could still less understand why he should be stopped by a military officer on the high road, and have to stay to hear his conduct as public man discussed to his face. 'Excuse me, Major Pulfington Belper, the sun is getting too powerful for me to detain you in it any longer, and I myself have a great deal of work on hand.'

'I shall endeavour to prove myself not unworthy,' bawled out the Major as the carriage drove off. Mr Liversege, who did not notice much in the outer world, noticed the

Major's parting salute, and that droll figure in a curious costume bowing with excess of gratitude, and with a red nose, seemed to Mr Liversege more extraordinary than the rest of the Major's extraordinary conduct.

Judge then of this worthy functionary's surprise, when Mrs Liversege, who was accustomed to assist him in his private correspondence, brought him a letter to sign, in which he found he had recommended this officer to the notice of Government.

His private opinion was that Major Pulfington Belper, far from being a man of excellent principles, was given to drink, and the hour, ten in the morning, had even forced upon Mr Liversege the conclusion that he was an habitual drunkard.

'Positively, Maria, I shall neither copy out that letter, nor sign it. It is very considerate of you to give me my choice. But the matter is quite disgraceful!'

The instincts of Mr Liversege were good. He tried to be a just man. He was an amiable man. Unfortunately he was a very

weak man. It is useless to narrate at length how this resolution of his was altered. It must have been altered, for in three weeks Colonel Sandboy received a letter from Government.

That letter begged the Colonel to take command of the Bundlecund Fencibles, a corps whose discipline had become so slack that the Government were obliged to look about for an officer of more than ordinary ability and intelligence to restore it. They remarked parenthetically that they hoped soon to see the Colonel in command of a Brigade.

Colonel Sandboy was an old soldier, and he knew that this, translated into plain—as distinguished from official—English, meant this,

'Go where we tell you, or look out about your Brigade command!' In three days the Colonel had started for Sherghotty to restore the discipline of the Bundlecund Fencibles.

This is the history of the 'Great Henhouse Difficulty.' It will be thus seen that

those people who thought at the time Colonel Sandboy hardly used, were quite unaware of the number of official interests to which the Colonel's private interests had of course to give way. I admit that travelling from Nawaubgunge to Sherghotty in a palanquin carriage in the middle of the hot winds is very unpleasant. To carry the wife of your bosom and all your household gods from one end of India to the other, and abruptly quit a regiment after you have gained the affections of officers and black Sepoys, is trying to the feelings. To feel yourself a jolly old gentleman with much kindliness, and a plentiful supply of good wine and beer, and English stores, to feel that you are in a comfortable bungalow, that you have got up your tatties, and that the hot winds may blow round you in vain, and then to get a new order to march—all this is hard; but life in India consists of marchings and counter-marchings, the building and furnishing of houses, and the breaking up of homes. The husband marches away from his wife to danger and to

battle, the sick wife marches from her husband to mountain climates and to England, the little *Missy* gets the route, and the tiny soldier buckles on his tin sword, and taps his little drum, his foreign service commencing rather early. The pale-faced Englishmen are in tents in those sunny plains, and India is one huge camp.

And after all, as I have explained, this good veteran did not make way for Major Pulfington Belper, but for a Scotch young gentleman of illustrious birth and high connection.

The state of mind into which Major Pulfington Belper was thrown when he found himself the actual commandant of the 44th Nowgong Native Infantry was such, that I prefer treating of it in another chapter, merely noticing at present one result, which came out in a short conversation with Charley Simpkin the very morning that Colonel Sandboy made over his command.

The Ensign had just returned from calling, and was in his bedroom seated on his bed.

'Idolater!' he had shouted out, and had repeated very sharply the word 'Idolater!'

'Yes, Sahib,' said the desired worshipper of idols, appearing hastily, and smiting alternately his bowed head and the ground, in the Indian manner.

'Take off my confounded boots!'

'Yes, Sahib.' And while the operation was being performed, the Major came into the bedroom, at the very moment, in fact, that the plastic native was coiled round a very tight patent-leather boot, which gave way at last to the leverage of the Ensign's right leg, with a shock that carried the boot and the idolater to a remote corner of the room. The field-officer was in uniform. Charley Simpkin had on a pair of neat cream-coloured trousers, and a cream-coloured waistcoat of light stuff. His tie was light violet, and so was a pair of kid gloves which he had just thrown off. These were lying on the bed, and so was a loose black alpaca coat, and a wideawake with a rich blue-and-white Delhi scarf twisted round it in the form of a *pugree.*

A fop in London, a fop in Timbuctoo, and a fop in Nawaubgunge have different fashions, and our young friend had got-up in the most approved summer costume of the latter city, for a motive that may hereafter appear.

'Been peacocking, young man? Eh!' began the Major.

'I have been making a visit or two, Major,' said Mr Simpkin not very graciously.

'Elegant Entangler? Eh!'

'I have called upon Mrs Liversege, and I had the pleasure of seeing Miss Brabazon.'

'I tell you what, Simpkin, seriously, the more I think over recent matters, the more I can't help being convinced of one thing.'

'What is that, Major?'

'Why, that I know all about it now.'

'About what, in Heaven's name?'

'What it all means. Eh! The secret ideas and wishes of those two ladies, in fact.'

'All the secrets! *Two* ladies! I'll bet you a hundred gold mohurs you don't.'

'Humbug! It means this, Simpkin my boy, that all your chance with the Elegant

Entangler is up now ! ' said the Major, revealing his idea, at least in part.

'Is that your wonderful secret, Major? '

'Don't you see! That row between her and Palmer Brown, whatever it was all about, can't be made up, and so Mrs Liversege, like a sensible woman, is looking about for someone else. Don't be angry, young man. It is always the way in India. After all, an Ensign's pay can't support a young lady accustomed to live in a Residency, begad! '

'No, Major, but a seductive Field-officer with a Regiment—' and the Ensign laughed, not pleasantly.

'Well, well. I don't say that,' said the Major, blushing very much both on the nose and cheek. 'At the same time, the command allowance of a Field-officer is not to be despised.'

'Lucky dog.'

'By-the-by, Simpkin, you know—a commanding officer—you really must not call him a "lucky dog," indeed you must not,' said the

Major, putting the matter forward in its mildest light.

The Ensign was now laughing more pleasantly.

'Look here, "Idolater!"'

'Yes, Sahib!'

'You're an Idolater, you know!'

'Yes, Sahib!'

'Suppose the idol you blindly worship were to become broken,—stolen by a villain, have the gilt rubbed off,—get a smashed nose —In such a case, O bower-down to stocks and performer of obeisances to stones, what would you do?'

'I do not understand the Sahib,' replied the native, who as a general rule took in the Ensign's humour very imperfectly.

'You would weep, would you not? you would cry "Ram, ram!"'

'Hindostanee man often cry "Ram, ram!"' said the native, not altogether answering the question.

'In that case get me out a clean pocket-handkerchief from that bullock-trunk, and,

Major, observe, I cry "Ram, ram!" for my idol is a stone!'

In this conversation it will be observed that the Major was much more communicative of his secret thought than his young friend. Charley Simpkin's visit to the Residency had in reality been anything but satisfactory, and he was in a great rage when the Major came in. He had received a very severe snub from the young lady that morning, and considered the measure neither called for by his recent behaviour nor indeed warranted by hers. The young lady had received him on his arrival at Nawaubgunge with frankness, with kindness. He on his side had determined to be always lively, amusing, good-humoured, indifferent. It formed part of a large and subtle scheme that he was to make no love, in his view of the meaning of the term. If then there had been any love-making (and he thought there had been!) it was decidedly on her side. Why, then, the wayward young beauty should have suddenly considered it necessary to administer a large

bucket of palpable cold water, puzzled our shrewd young friend; but observe, we have stated the matter quite from his point of view. I am told also by some intelligent ladies that a man when he has once bowed the knee is never thought entitled to the same consideration as other free-born Britons, and perhaps this is natural. I noticed at Spa last autumn that the demeanour of the lovely Pole, Princess Tawsky, was very different towards the Conte Badeau and towards Wippen-postikoff, her serf.

Charley Simpkin found Miss Sophy Brabazon alone in the drawing-room of the Residency, and thought her looking more lovely than she had ever done in her life. Her dress was blue and white, and of a material called, I think, 'book-muslin.' At any rate, it looked fresh, cool, airy, flouncy, delightful. Her wavy hair was more wavy than usual, her curved eyebrows more curved, her white forehead more white. As she sat in that grand drawing-room, Charley thought of the aunt's state, and was quite nervous in

the presence of the young lady. She seemed to him more unattainable than ever.

Miss Sophy rattled on, going over a number of topics in a very short time, and asking him a great many questions about himself in rather a patronizing manner. At length she said,

'And so Major Pulfington Belper commands you now. I hope he keeps all you young gentlemen in good order. And that Captain Ash—worth—Ashleigh, how is he? The gentleman who acted so well. By-the-by, my aunt was very angry with you that night. What did you say? Is he ill? He has not yet visited the ladies of the Residency, though I think I heard my aunt say that she got his card one day!'

'He! Does the "*he*" refer to me or your aunt?' said Mr Simpkin, gradually reviving.

'Don't be pert, sir!'

'Yes, but *he* always refers to the nearest "he" in the sentence.'

'Does it? Answer me quickly, I tell you.'

'Captain Ashleigh is well, at least he seems so. I know he enjoyed his cheroots on the march, and a very fair quantity of beer. Though that is no proof.'

'What do you mean?'

'Did you know Mr Hodges?'

'What, that vulgar-looking young man?'

'Yes; vulgar-looking young man, though he is my friend. Well, he too enjoyed a great deal of beer on the march, and all the time he was far from well. Mind diseased, and that sort of thing. You remember Miss Blenkinsop?'

'What, that rather pretty but very badly-dressed young lady?'

'Yes, very badly-dressed young lady, though she is my friend. Well, she was the cause of Mr Hodges' disorder. Very afflicting, is it not? Other men admired her too. He used to call her the *filly du* Regiment. Mr Hodges is very much better, in fact, quite cured.'

'Yes, of course,' said Miss Brabazon, though it will be seen the conversation did

not quite warrant the turn she suddenly gave it; 'Ensign Hodges would be a silly boy if he had not cured himself.'

'That the youth Hodges—who, by-the-by, is three years older than the gallant defender of his country who is now making you a low bow—that hobbledehoy Hodges acted wisely, I have been also maintaining. I am told that love has its bitters as well as its sweets; and the best way of taking bitters is in beer.'

'Oh, what a tiresome foolish boy you are!'

'The gallant defender of his country makes you another low bow!'

'Yes, you are. When you young gentlemen have a foolish idea that can do you no good, the shortest and wisest plan is of course to think no more of it. Well, now don't eat me up, Mr Orlando Furioso. If people talk more frankly to some people, perhaps they feel more kindness to those people. Granted that somebody, say Miss Blenkinsop, cannot love somebody else, say Mr Hodges, if she gives him due warning he can't complain. He may take advice, as Mr Hodges has done.'

'I don't think, Miss Brabazon, you are in any way justified in using this language to me.'

'Language! Hey-dey, Mr Simpkin; we were talking, I thought, of Miss Blenkinsop.'

'It was rather pointed talk, I think, Miss Brabazon. Well, let us say that some one, say Mr Hodges, is still in love with some one, say Miss Blenkinsop—say that her beauty, or her wit, or his foolish imagination, has created an ideal that cannot be in the instant destroyed even by her hauteur, her tyranny, her insults.'

'Stop, Charley Simpkin, you must not be so angry with me, you shall not! Do you hear? I order you to be good again. You will, won't you? We are old friends. And all have their trials. All is not gold that glitters. Perhaps my position is not a bit more enviable than yours. Take my hand *at once*, sir. Stop, I didn't tell you to do that to it.'

And before he took his leave, the volatile young maiden, whose emotions chased each other away like clouds in summer, was again in one of her merriest of moods.

'To show you that we are the best of friends again—friends, mind you—shall I tell you what I said of your moustache in my last letter to your cousin Dora Staidleigh?'

'Yes, do!'

'I said, "Mr Simpkin—"'

'*Mr* Simpkin?'

'Of course; what else? "Mr Simpkin—"'

'I'll ask her, it is as well to have complete accuracy in all things—Mr Simpkin—'

'Has grown a moustache, but it at present is far too like a camel's-hair pencil dipped in gum—'

'Would it might stamp the *timbre* of a sovereign on somebody's heart—say Miss Blenkinsop's!' said Mr Simpkin, whose wit at times was sharp as a point of Kuṣa grass.

'Good! very good!' And she gave him another very hearty shake of the hand, and he thought it almost impossible to be angry.

There was such a charming grace about her that you felt that next to her fondness her rudeness was the sweetest possible thing in creation.

CHAPTER VIII.

NAWAUBGUNGE IRREGULARS.

We have long lost sight of that excellent officer, Captain Spink, late acting second in command of the Governor-General's Body Guard. When we last saw him he was the pink of neatness and of self-possession. His hat was well brushed, his coat was without a wrinkle, his hair and whiskers were arranged with the most scrupulous care, his demeanour was genteel, decorous, frigid, impertinent. He reappears in a state of tremendous excitement, without a hat, without a coat, his hair trailing, his horse flying before the wind. Dust is on his whiskers, and dismay on his face, and thus he draws rein in the garden of the Residency at the moment that Mr and Mrs Liversege, Mr Palmer Brown and Miss Sophy Brabazon,

are enjoying their early tea in the verandah, in the cool of the morning.

'Good God, what has happened!' cries out Mr Liversege. Captain Spink takes him and Mr Palmer Brown aside. The ladies are, of course, very much frightened. Mr Liversege and Mr Palmer Brown are soon as pale as Captain Spink himself.

'My men have mutinied! They threatened to shoot me, and very nearly did. They are putting up barricades and preparing to defend the Dil Khoosha, their quarters. I'm afraid Jones is killed.'

I must explain, that Captain Redpath, for whom Captain Spink was acting in Calcutta, and who had left India so ill that no one ever thought he would return, did get better and did return. And Captain Spink had to resume his command of the Nawaubgunge Irregulars, a change not altogether to his complete satisfaction, for had he not to quit the gaieties and splendid dissipations of the capital of British India? Had he not also to renounce the friendship, the cordiality, the

delicate wit and genial mirth of the accomplished Captain Lemesurier?

For the last two months, then, Captain Spink has been commanding the Nawaubgunge Irregulars. He is only acting commandant, as Major Balfour, the real commandant, is in Europe. Captain Spink figures in the Army List as second in command. I think when the Governor-General selected this officer for that post, he acted hastily. The appointment at the moment seemed safe and humble enough, but in India none can tell on whose shoulders the weight of responsibility will next fall. There was a great deal of ill luck about the whole business. If Captain Spink could have only remained with the Body Guard in Calcutta, how many leading articles from the acrimonious Indian press might not his Lordship have been spared! When those rascals the Editors got hold of the fact, one of his lordship's *protégés* had driven a regiment into mutiny, you may depend upon it they did not let the matter drop. It was the dull season of the year, and

the topic was so refreshing to a thousand disappointed officers, that the newspapers knew their business too well to show any undue reticence in the affair. I never myself considered Captain Spink a very amiable man. I can imagine that when he was quite free from the reserve and reticence of the polite society which he so loved, his natural asperity of disposition might take forms more marked than mere impertinence. Fancy six squadrons of native troopers given over to his caprice and ill-will. Fancy him swearing at them, harassing them, bullying them for two whole months. The Eastern soldier has always required much more management than is usually supposed, and small mutinies have been plentiful all through Indian history. Small wonder, then, that one fine morning Captain Spink appeared in the Residency garden with dust on his whiskers and dismay on his face.

The result of the hurried conversation between this officer and Mr Liversege was that Captain Spink was told to gallop off to

cantonments, and make Major Pulfington Belper at once get the 44th Nowgong Native Infantry under arms. Poor Mr Liversege knew no more than the man in the moon what really ought to be done. Six hundred mounted soldiers might march away easily enough, and if they remained might successfully resist. He felt that old Sandboy would have been a better officer in the crisis than Major Pulfington Belper. He wished that Mrs Liversege was less imperious and more easy to manage. Mr Palmer Brown had gone off for his buggy, as he also intended to go off to cantonments to give his advice. As he passed in it Mr Liversege hailed him. He had an idea that he too ought to go to cantonments. He was already shaping a strong wish that he had remained in the ease and comfort of the Sudder Dewany Adawhit in Calcutta.

But if Mr Liversege was in a state of mind, what was that to the condition of Mrs Liversege, when she heard the news! A mutiny, her husband and Mr Palmer Brown both gone off, a regiment of infuriated soldiers

within half a mile of her. The great lady was divided between anger and terror, and Sophy, who did not want 'pluck,' was quite unable to soothe or quiet her.

Jolly Colonel Sandboy and Arabella his wife are rolling along the hot dusty roads in two palanquin carriages,—it would have been a roomy one to have held the jolly pair. The Colonel is lying full length, after the manner of Indian palanquin travellers; he is calculating that in two hours they will arrive at *Huzaree-Ka-Seraie*, the dawk bungalow, where he proposes to stop during the heat of the day. He is looking forward to that halt, and to the fine breakfast he will there enjoy. You see his left shirt-sleeve is very wet. He opened a bottle of soda-water just now, and a great part of it went over his sleeve. There seems also to be the faintest possible odour of cognac about that sleeve. At least a dozen and a half of bottles, some of soda-water, some of beer, are rattling at the foot of the carriage. His horse at this post is very obstinate, but that disturbs him not. At least twenty

villagers are shouting, swearing, beating with clubs, haling with ropes, chattering at, and piteously entreating the perverse animal, but Indian dawk horses are the most obstinate of created things. And when it does start off with a tremendous rush and nearly upsets the Colonel twenty times in the first two hundred yards as the carriage sways from side to side, and the soda-water bottles rattle, the Colonel is still quite calm and comfortable. You see he is smoking the pipe of peace—a calumet only for those who have a good digestion, a balance at their banker's, a comfortable wife, and a conscience void of offence.

But if Colonel Sandboy could only behold Mrs Liversege at the present moment he would be quite repaid for any inconveniences that lady has caused him. I say he would be quite repaid, but only on the supposition that the misfortunes of his oppressors could be grateful to so good a Colonel, but I think he is far too jolly for any feeling of the kind. The great lady, with her dress all in disorder,

was rushing swiftly amongst the marble tables and glittering furniture of the drawing-room, where we have seen her accustomed to preside with Asian ceremony and pomp. Her face is discomposed with tears, and furthermore (for a faithful historian is bound to be conscientious even in the presence of the most exalted personages), her chestnut 'front' is all awry. She is frightened, angry, over-bearing, humble, contrite, and peevish, all by turns. At one moment she is terribly incensed against poor Mr Liversege for having gone away without consulting her. At another, she bitterly regrets having sent away the good Colonel at a moment when his cool head would have been of so much use. Sophy, who was scared too, tries to quiet her, but all in vain. Suddenly a native, richly dressed, glides silently into the room, and Mrs Liversege flies into an agony of terror, imagining that the infuriated soldiers have already arrived at the Residency. But the native proves bland, comforting, insinuating. His schemes, if he has any, do not

lie in this direction at all. It is Fuzl Ali, Head Vukeel to His Highness the Nawaub of Nawaubgunge.

When Mr Liversege got into Mr Palmer Brown's buggy he could not help remarking the novel costume of that gentleman. For a really tremendous martial get-up there is no combatant on earth like a member of the Bengal Civil Service in a 'crisis.' Mr Palmer Brown had not been ten minutes away, and now he re-appeared in a green pig-sticking coat, corded trousers, and the most formidable antigropelous gaiters. He had three belts on, at which dangled two revolvers, and a very large curved sabre. His Arab was led after him, and a Chuprassy accompanied the Syce bearing a double-barrelled gun, a double rifle, and a hogspear. Whether he intended to accompany the column, should it make the attempt to storm the Dil Khoosha, I don't think Mr Palmer Brown had yet settled; but he judged that the military opinions of a man thus attired would carry more weight than those of a plainly-dressed civilian. It was

very much owing to a glimpse Mrs Liversege caught of him in this costume that her fears became so great, a fact that would tend to show that everything, even a fat man in pea-green, has his terrible as well as his comic side.

The doubts, which both Mr and Mrs Liversege had inwardly formed about Major Pulfington Belper being as good a man as Colonel Sandboy in a crisis like this, were fully vindicated. Major Pulfington Belper was a brave man. If Colonel Sandboy had ordered him to lead an assault on the Dil Khoosha, on a Seikh battery, on a nest of match-lock men perched on a high hill in the Khyber, he would have gone forward briskly, thinking of nothing, except perhaps his lady-love, the particular lady-love of the time being. But here the responsibility was on his shoulders, and the matters were too plainly before his nose to allow his judgment to act.

He was with Captain Spink when the two gentlemen arrived. Captain Ashleigh had also just come in to the bungalow. Mr

Palmer Brown did not greet Captain Ashleigh as an old acquaintance. On the contrary, he addressed a remark to Major Pulfington Belper, intimating that when persons high in office debated on a matter of so much importance, the presence of subordinates was not desirable.

'Hadn't we better take Captain Spink into another room and hear all he has to say? You know, Major, the affair is very serious indeed!'

This meant of course plainly enough that Mr Palmer Brown would rather be quit of Captain Ashleigh.

But Mr Liversege thought, on the other hand, that the presence of the said self-repressed officer would be of advantage rather than otherwise.

'This is Captain Ashleigh; don't you know him, Palmer Brown? He raised this regiment, and I am sure his advice will be of the greatest use to us.'

The two gentlemen bowed. They had not

been brought so closely together before since the arrival of Ashleigh's regiment. They are now fairly face to face. They had met before in this life, and are now to renew an old struggle, a battle to the death, it may be, for mighty contests rise from trivial things, from things, in short, as trivial as Mr Palmer Brown.

This gentleman began the ball. If there was a slight flavour of bluster in his speech perhaps this was because he was taken rather at a disadvantage, with the grey eye of his antagonist on his antigropelous gaiters.

'I think, Major, this is an affair which calls for the greatest promptitude and energy. Mutiny in India is a thing which can never be trifled with. There should be no terms with any subjects in arms against the lawful authority of the Company. You should march your regiment in column upon the mutineers without any delay. If they will not lay down their arms it is better that a little blood should flow than that this foul taint should spread

further in the Native army. Have you given orders that the regiment should at once get under arms, I think you call it?'

'Yes,' said Major Pulfington Belper, 'the Adjutant has got his orders.'

'And do you propose to start at once?'

'I don't know that I can get a large body of men together at so short a notice—what with station-guards and sick men.'

'Surely you could get together six hundred men, and with six hundred men in quarter-distance column—.'

'I don't think I could get together five hundred within four hours; could I, Ashleigh?'

'Not four hundred!'

'What then ought to be done, Ashleigh, eh?' said the bewildered field-officer to his Captain, in whom he had some trust.

'Yes, what do you think about it?' said Mr Liversege.

From this point Mr Palmer Brown ceased to be of any prominence in the little scene. He had given his military advice. If the

popular Indian idea be not incorrect there is this peculiarity about members of the Bengal Civil Service, that every one of them thinks himself perfectly qualified to execute any military manœuvre at a moment's notice. Even Mr Liversege, if he could have made up his mind that action was the right thing, would not perhaps have minded sitting on a horse and shouting sundry unintelligible words about échelons and sections to the 44th Regiment of the Nowgong Native Infantry. But from this point, I say, Captain Ashleigh seemed quite naturally to take the lead in the whole business, as the clearest and calmest head always does, when excitement prevents the generality of men from seeing very clearly. To Major Pulfington Belper and Mr Liversege Captain Ashleigh replied,—

'It will be a ticklish matter attacking the mutineers. The very first hint of the regiment coming will destroy all chance of their ever being made to listen to reason. They can ride quietly away if they like and do a great deal of mischief. They are brave men,

and one of them, Ressaldar Sheikh Khoda Bux, whom I know very well, would hold the Dil Khoosha against two regiments, I verily believe. If all other measures fail, force must be resorted to, and they could not of course hold the Dil Khoosha for ever, as reinforcements would reach us in a week. What, sir, do you consider to be the cause of their present excitement?' Captain Ashleigh here turned to Captain Spink.

And the latter officer, much to his astonishment, had to bear his part in the little scene, and to submit to be cross-examined sternly, skilfully. A frigid impertinent man, he suddenly found himself confessing his many errors with the greatest humility and frankness. In five minutes he was completely turned inside out, as the saying is, and all his mismanagement, his temper, his ignorance of native feeling and prejudice, all the ample causes of the excitement of the Nawaubgunge Irregulars, were made plain as noon-day.

'You see, sir,' said Captain Ashleigh to Mr Liversege, 'these men have some fancied

grounds of complaint and justification of their conduct, they are very excited, but it is not impossible that they may yet be induced to listen to reason. I raised the regiment, and I know their character. They are brave and simple-minded, and Ressaldar Sheikh Khoda Bux is an old comrade of mine. I once saved his life in Affghanistan. Major, if you like to send four companies up to the Residency, and have the remainder of the regiment all ready for a move, I might ride up alone to the cavalry, and if I can get them to listen to me perhaps all may yet be right. There is a chance. They used to like me formerly.'

And this was the plan that was at length decided upon. Mr Palmer Brown still made some faint show of resistance, and talked about the impropriety of parleying with men with arms in their hands, but nobody heeded him in the least now. Ten minutes after Captain Ashleigh had galloped away, four companies, under Captain St Leger, marched off to the Residency. Charley Simpkin, to his great delight, was one of the party. There

had been great bustle and warlike preparation, ever since the news had arrived. He wore his new revolver, and felt, for the first time in his life, that tremendous fever of excitement which soldiers feel when they are about to be brought face to face with an armed enemy. He sincerely hoped that the inhabitants of the Residency would be in the greatest possible peril, and that he by his skill and gallantry might rescue saucy Miss Sophy from several very formidable and very colossal foes. For what purpose had the regimental smith made the point of his regulation sword like the point of a needle, if it was not that the Ensign might plunge it into the huge frame of some Irregular Cavalry man, with the most ferocious of beards.?

Mrs Liversege and Miss Sophy Brabazon were in the verandah of the Residency conversing with Fuzl Ali. He had gradually reassured Mrs Liversege, and told her that it was only a passing excitement produced by the 'bad *bundobust* of I—Spink—I—Sahib.' It was thus the military measures of Captain

Spink were already characterized by the natives; but in the middle of the *Vukeel's* discourse a Chuprassy rushed up and announced that the Sepoys were marching into the Residency. Mrs Liversege again flew into an agony of terror. She called herself a wicked woman, and her contrition returned tenfold. In her confusion she called upon Fuzl Ali to spare her; but to her great relief she saw Captain St Leger ride into the compound, and recognized at the head of the column of Sepoys, who were now wheeling in at the gate, the well-known form of little Simpkin.

But when the ladies heard what step had been taken to bring the mutineers to reason, it was the turn of Miss Sophy Brabazon to be pale and alarmed.

'My dear, you must not give way to foolish terrors!' said Mrs Liversege, quite reassured at the sight of so many muskets and of English officers in uniform. 'The troopers will not dare to come near the Residency now.'

But concern was upon the face of Captain

St Leger likewise, and upon the face of little Simpkin, and upon the faces of most of the Sepoys—they were attentively straining their ears with ominous expectancy. Suddenly a musket-shot was heard at no very great distance.

Captain St Leger now formed up his men once more; they had been allowed to pile their arms when they first arrived.

The shot was repeated, and then more reports were heard, dropping shots, in all perhaps about five-and-twenty. The faces of both officers and Sepoys were more anxious and concerned than ever.

'If they have hurt a hair of his head, the Sepoys say they will not spare one of them. They ask to be allowed to go and look after their Captain at once, Sahib.' This was said by the Subahdar of the Rifle Company.

'Don't be alarmed, my dear, they are a long way off. There was a little firing, but it is all over! Help, help, the girl has fainted.'

When Miss Brabazon came to herself, she heard the clattering of a horse's hoofs. She

strained her eyes to see who was the rider, as he galloped into the Residency compound. She was very much disappointed that it was only Mr Jones, the adjutant. He pulled up close to the verandah, where Mrs Liversege had been engaged with cold water and sal volatile in restoring Miss Sophy Brabazon to consciousness.

'You come from the Cavalry lines!' said Captain St Leger, eagerly.

'Yes, and it's all right,' said the excited adjutant. Sepoys and officers had crowded round him. 'They got hold of me when Spink bolted, and advised me to remain in my bungalow, as some of the men might take a pot at me, if I tried to get away. They at last decided to ride away, and when I saw that they had saddled, and that the regiment was drawn up on parade, I got my horse and bolted away in the rear of the lines. On the road I met Ashleigh, and told him all that had happened. He said that it had been settled that he was to go up and speak to them and try and bring them to reason. I said

they'll put you to a moral, and advised him strongly not to try it. He said he must, and must ride up to the regiment from the front, and struck off by a side road in the bazar to get there. I said I would come with him, but he ordered me to do no such thing, and he can bounce a little when he likes. I said I must come, at least to the corner of the parade to see what was going on; but when he left me and I saw him trotting coolly up to the regiment as if it was an ordinary parade, I could not help galloping after him; and though he kicked up a row, I don't think he was really displeased. Well, some of them first shouted to us, and then some d— scoundrel, I beg your pardon, ladies,—some brute let off his carbine, and the ball came just between us. I ducked, I confess; the infernal is-s-s-st of a bullet when you first hear it is very disagreeable. Ashleigh trotted along just as slowly and just as coolly as ever, though several other shots were fired at us before we got up to the front of the regiment, where the

commanding officer usually stands. When we got there, he called out,

'"Regiment, attention! Ressaldar Sheikh Khoda Bux, come out to the front!"

'There were murmurs and a row in the ranks. Some of them called out, "It's Ashleigh, Sahib." There was no more firing.

'Presently out comes the old Ressaldar, who is a fine old swell, with a long white beard.

'"What's all this, Ressaldar," said Ashleigh; "do you all want to be hanged, or all want to be shot?" and before the old fellow could answer, he told him to go back and form the regiment in quarter-distance column. This the old fellow did, and there was an end of the mutiny. Ashleigh went up and made them a speech, but he put such a lot of Persian words into it, and spoke so fast that I only caught about one word in every five; but they made a tremendous row, and cheered him tremendously when all was over. He told me to gallop off and say that he had got the

regiment in hand, and all would be well if they took care not to bring a single Infantry Sepoy near them that day. He sounded stables, and made the men lodge arms, and they are all now quietly in barracks. He is a splendid trump, and it seems disgusting that a thundering ass like Spink should bring a fellow like that into such danger. I beg your pardon, Mrs Liversege, but if you only knew how awfully thirsty a fellow is when he's been fired at, you would not think me so cool, but may I ask you to let me order a glass of beer?'

Mrs Liversege had been very much interested in this story, and did not at first pay attention to the fact that it was sprinkled with profanity, not to say vulgar military slang. This shocked her more afterwards when certain circumstances occurred, which incensed her against the military profession generally. The request of Lieutenant Jones was certainly a little cavalier, but she granted it nevertheless.

The story was at once translated to the Sepoys, and they set up a cheer, or rather a

series of shouts, which shook the building and quite astonished Mr Liversege, who returned from cantonments with Mr Palmer Brown at this moment.

When, however, the Resident was made aware of what had taken place, he was quite as much pleased as any of the party.

'Ride back, Mr Jones, and tell Captain Ashleigh, that pending a reference to Government, I appoint him Acting-Commandant of the Nawaubgunge Irregulars. I will make out the order and send it to him immediately.'

Mr Jones galloped away, not without his beer, let us hope. What to a hero is the Victoria Cross, the smile of a beauty, the companionship of the Order of the Bath, when put into the scale with that first glass of beer poured through lips parched with gunpowder?

This is the history of the temporary disaffection of the Nawaubgunge Irregulars, with whom, I may mention, the Government dealt leniently enough. It brought Captain Ashleigh once more into public life, and has thus an influence upon my story. It indirectly

was the cause of Mr Liversege's coming to an important decision on the great question of the Jaghire of Jamnugger, for he found that Captain Ashleigh in former days had studied the subject. The Nawaubgunge Irregulars were soon brought into complete order, and Government confirmed the appointment of Captain Ashleigh to the Acting-Command of the corps. This surprised some of the old officers at the time. Why should they be surprised that a brave and able officer should be so chosen? Three weeks after the revolt the corps was reported favourably upon by an inspecting officer, who reviewed it in the presence of Mr Liversege. Mrs Liversege was present during this military display, and Miss Sophy Brabazon (not omitting the barouche and four, the pea-green postilions, and the Cavalry escort). Salam Bux was also present, and Fuzl Ali. It was on this occasion that the latter first heard the terrible news about Mr Liversege's intended decision in the great Jamnugger case. The 'Irregulars,' strong and stalwart, if a little impatient of rule, pranced

gaily about in their picturesque uniform. Some of the Indian Irregular Cavalry are the best-dressed soldiers in the world. Sophy glanced at their steel head-pieces, and the waving pennons on their long bamboo lances, at their handsome turbans and waistbands, their big boots, and handsome rich body-coats, their ferocious beards, and their prancing Arabs. She saw them trot and gallop all over the field, and then pick up tent pegs on the points of their lances, and sever pummelos with their keen sabres, when going at full gallop. She saw these and similar exercises, and watched the gorgeously dressed soldier who was directing them; it is to be admitted, the uniform of an officer of Irregular Cavalry is usually gorgeous in the extreme.

Another pair of eyes watched the same soldier quite as keenly, a pair of very piercing eyes indeed.

Fuzl Ali does not always wish to remain a mere Vukeel, he has other schemes, other ambitions, some of which are bound up with the successful issue of the question of the

Jaghire of Jamnugger. He is clever, he is ambitious, and not over-scrupulous, and Ashleigh Sahib and Salam Bux, the minister, stand in his way. Let those two good folks look well to themselves.

CHAPTER IX.

A BALL.

'Ball (Sax. *Bohl*), *n. s.* An assembling of persons for the purpose of dancing; a spherical object; a bullet.

The haughty beauty murders with a glance,
And at the *ball* she leads them all a-dance.—*Parnell.*

The *ball*, the ball; he hath it in his gizzard, I' fackins!—*Old Play.*'
—Johnson's Dictionary.

For four days after his hearing the rumour contained at the end of last chapter, Fuzl Ali is cast down. His face, usually of a shiny yellow, with a dash of brown in it, becomes pasty and of a greenish tinge. The rumour of his failure in the matter of the Jaghire of Jamnugger has reached the palace, and the dependents and servants exult over the man who has undertaken to do so much and failed. It is a characteristic of the degraded races of Asia that they are well pleased to see failure in those who set themselves up to be wiser

and cleverer than their neighbours. Genius in England meets with more consideration, but we are writing of Nawaubgunge.

We have said that the chief palace of the Nawaub of Nawaubgunge was built somewhat incongruously, in an architectural point of view. Part of it was constructed for the convenience and entertainment of the white men who had, in point of fact, already half-seated themselves on the Royal Musnud. Part of it was constructed for the convenience of the Nawaub himself; and the rest, about three-quarters, was built for the accommodation of the Nawaub's wives. He was a family man, and had about four dozen of them. The rooms in the two latter portions of the palace were small and almost without furniture. Carpets and hookahs, dirt and sleep, form the ideal of luxury both to Indian ladies and gentlemen. The portion of the palace set apart for the reception of Englishmen was richly but incongruously furnished. In the principal drawing-room, besides a large number of ill-matched sofas, ottomans, mirrors,

arm-chairs, &c., there was a clockwork singing nightingale from Geneva, a plain English 'Jack in the box,' a French toy-clock with the usual number of tossing-ships, striking church clocks, moving weathercocks, evanescent moons, and what not. Under one glass case were a dozen bonbon boxes. Under another a large painted and gilt statuette of the Virgin. The king had a childish mind, and his toys were oddly chosen for him.

His gardens were formal, like all Indian gardens, consisting of regular and well-kept paths, fringed with citrons and oranges, and of tanks with fountains and tame carp. Of flowers, the marigold seemed the most popular. There were some dens of wild beasts in one corner of the garden. In fact, there were tigers caged up in several parts of the city.

Perhaps of all the Court satellites, no one was thrown into greater ecstasies at the failure of Fuzl Ali in the matter of the Jaghire of Jamnugger than Salam Bux, the prime minister. His joy and his facetiousness knew no bounds. He knew that it was the wish of

Fuzl Ali to supplant him, and he favoured him with some specimens of what Mr Hodges would call 'chaff,' and there was a delicacy in his banter, as there is in that of many Asiatics, which would have astonished the British officer if he could have understood it.

'Allah is the Protector of Slaves! He rewardeth the diligence of the talented man, and maketh him of a joyous countenance. Doth his ray beam kindly on the generous, the talented, the noble Vukeel of the King of the World, the mighty Nawaub of Nawaubgunge? May Allah give to both their deserts!'

'Oh lord of humble slaves!' answered Fuzl Ali, 'it is good for the mighty to be kind to the humble. When the head of the slave is under the neck of the *Bahador*, is it meet that he should kick it? When the neck of the slave is under his sword he should restrain his mighty arm. If I have failed to obtain the Jaghire of Jamnugger for the Protector of the Universe, my disappointment is for him, not for myself.'

'Allah knows that,' said the other. 'And

the greater our love, the greater our grief for the disappointments of others. But what words are these of thine, oh great Vukeel? It is rather the head of the slave that is under thy foot. His neck is under thy sword, wilt thou not in mercy forbear to strike?'

Fuzl Ali made no reply. If he had uttered in two words the answer then uppermost in his mind, it would have made the prime minister jump, and I think it would have put an end to a great deal of his facetiousness for that morning. Fuzl Ali carried away his green face to the Residency. When he came back it was nearly as yellow and as lustrous as ever. And yet to a casual observer little had occurred there worthy of joy.

But Fuzl Ali was not a casual observer. In India we give natives credit for seeing and hearing nothing. They are, in fact, the keenest observers, and, within the scope of native comprehension, great judges of character. Fuzl Ali, well-bred, polite, dignified, and bland in the presence of the inmates of the Residency, had his eyes and wits about him

all the time. He had watched attentively the progress of the 'Great Hen-house difficulty.' He had watched the countenance of Sophy during the revolt of the Nawaubgunge Irregulars. He had cultivated the society of the Englishmen at Nawaubgunge. He had called on Ashleigh *Sahib*. He had called on Palmer Brown *Sahib*, and had asked the latter casually if the report in the palace was true that he was going to marry the *Missy Baba*, meaning Miss Sophy. You may be sure that the acute diplomatist gave him no information on this point, but the native went away quite as well satisfied as if he had.

Moreover it was his habit to pay court to the military. Having found out that Major Pulfington Belper was an enthusiast of sport, he dexterously threw out hopes of the Nawaub's elephants in future tiger expeditions, and gave the Major much information about a place called Banghy Baloo, where the Major proposed to go bear shooting. His carriage drove up constantly to the Mess Verandah of a morning at the hour of coffee, and whilst the

Ensigns and young civilians bantered him with rough fun, every word of which he completely understood, he sat as calm, as dignified, as smiling, and as bland as when in the presence of Mrs Liversege. He was well content, if amongst the fun and wit he could pick up a chance word which by-and-by he might put to account. To-day he is happy, and this is the only reason. Captain Ashleigh was with the ladies when they were taking their tea in the morning. He got up to go away, and shook hands with Mrs Liversege. He then shook hands with Miss Sophy Brabazon in a friendly rather than tender manner. But when her back was turned he glanced at her for a moment. That glance was the cause of the *Vukeel's* great joy.

As far as regarded the general question of Nawaubgunge and the Jaghire of Jamnugger he felt this, that whatever he intended to do must be done quickly. Mr Liversege might any day send in a report unfavourable to the Nawaub's claim, and then it would be difficult to make him stultify himself. He drove over

to Mr Palmer Brown's. This step was a part but by no means the whole of the scheme which the native gentleman had now matured.

'Oh exalted ruler of slaves,' he said, 'oh great Civil Service gentleman! Will you not intercede with Ashleigh *Sahib?* He has the ear of the great lord, the Resident, now. Salam Bux says that my friends are all women, and that the Resident Sahib no longer listens to a woman now!'

Apparently Fuzl Ali did not know that Ashleigh and Mr Palmer Brown were not warm friends.

Mr Palmer Brown replied with dignity that Mr Liversege was the only person to look to in the matter, that he was appointed Resident by the paramount Government, and that he must settle the question according to the strict justice of the matter, and could be influenced by no external consideration. And the Secretary was graciously pleased to explain to the native some of the principles of the Company's double government, the system of checks and counter-checks. He discoursed at

some length and in Hindostanee that was, on the whole, bad.

But when Fuzl Ali had ended his fruitless visit, and Mr Palmer Brown thought more attentively over the communication made to him, he came to the determination of putting it to some account. The native wanted clumsily to make use of him. Why should not he make use of the native? Instead of being played, let him, a 'political' of the very first force, play Fuzl Ali. Of course the influence of this Ashleigh must be thoroughly undermined, but as ladies are silly on the subject of men encountering danger, the diplomatist had determined to delay his measures until the enthusiasm caused by the affair of the Nawaubgunge Irregulars had a little subsided. But he now thought he had waited long enough, and that it was time to make use of the tittle-tattle of the palace to inflame Mrs Liversege's pride. What must be the feelings of an imperious woman riding about in a barouche and four (with pea-green postilions) when she hears that the Prime Minister, Salam Bux, is

chuckling over her lost influence in matters of state? Mr Palmer Brown prepared his operations with much caution and cleverness, and it is just to add they met with the most complete success. Perhaps he laid too much stress on the feminine enthusiasm likely to be excited by the hated Captain's daring. He forgot that Mrs Liversege was a person of vast political talents, and as such obliged to discipline her feelings and rely on her judgment.

Thus it came to pass that Fuzl Ali soon found himself with a very warm ally, a partisan who, in point of fact, knew no more about the rights and wrongs of the question of the Jaghire of Jamnugger than Colonel Boshington, or the Rev. Eli Petticrook, but whose alliance was not a whit the less valuable on that account.

I have not had opportunity to mention that some days before the great Jaghire question entered upon this new and most important phase, Mrs Throgmorton and Motee arrived at the Residency. They had had a very warm

journey up country. They had met Colonel and Mrs Sandboy at the staging bungalow at *Hazaree Ki Seraie*, and that jolly pair had been very kind to them, and had insisted on setting them up with a portion of their superfluous stores. Mrs Throgmorton as a rigid disciple of the Petticrook school had carried her contempt of the good things of this life even into the Indian palanquin carriage, but the Colonel, being of another sect, had soda-water and sherry and Albert biscuits enough for half a dozen people at the very least.

The redintegration of love between the two sisters was as warm as their quarrel, and was also intensified with a certain religious element.

'It is the kiss of peace, Maria,' said Mrs Throgmorton.

'We need not have quarrelled about such a person as that—and we must never quarrel again.'

'It was a principle, not a person—and you see you did no good.'

'Sisters should live together in unity, Hannah.'

'Well, for the future, love, let us both strive so to do.'

As for Sophy and Motee, imagine two warm-hearted young unmarried women who have been parted from each other for at least three months, and you can imagine their kissing, and raptures, and confidences, perhaps tears. I don't know what secret communications had passed between them latterly in Calcutta, but Sophy now found it necessary to say a word or two about Barrackpore and Mr Charles Simpkin. He had been very silly, and pushed matters to extremes. Even here, lately, she had found it advisable to set him down a little, and had even been quite rude to him. There was a good deal of truth in this as far as it went, and she also confessed that Mr Palmer Brown did not appear nearly so nice now as he did formerly. This was in substance the whole of the love confidences made by Miss Sophy Brabazon, in return perhaps for certain secrets of Motee's.

Give and take is a good motto in these matters as in all others.

Full Major Pulfington Belper (commanding 44th Nowgong Native Infantry) is now in the seventh heaven of delight. He is invited to the Residency constantly. We heard him let out that he thought he had discovered Mrs Liversege's plans, and now he is more confident and more elated than ever. The first dinner party he attended, he thought he would carry out certain views of the great lady on the subject of full-dress uniform. Charley Simpkin had also been asked. This was a little scheme of Sophy's in the interest of Motee.

'I say, Simpkin, I suppose you're going in full dress. Hey?' The Major and the subaltern were still living together, but the Field-officer was not quite certain if this arrangement was quite correct.

'Full dress! Good heavens, Major, we should both die of apoplexy with these abominable hot winds blowing like a furnace.'

'But Mrs Liversege threw out hints, you

know, unmistakable hints, that she liked the practice.'

'Yes, but she's not got to wear the uniform, Major.'

'But you know the powers that be—Hey—'Pon my word we must.'

'Major, the idea is not only preposterous, but utterly impossible,' said the Ensign.

'Come, come, Simpkin, you know I don't want to issue an order about these things. It is better that they should be done quietly, you know. You'll come, there's a good fellow—Hey!'

And Charley had to consume hot mullagatawny in a thick, full-dress coat, much padded and much begilt, and the hot winds were roaring outside with all the breath of a furnace. Richly-dressed slaves brought him delicious wines, and the interior of the palace was all luxury and pomp, but nothing pleased him.

'Go and talk to Motee, sir, you have to take her in—you young men are so neglectful. I want to flirt with the dear old Major!'

The dear old Major's chest was puffed out

with elation and medals. He slyly reflected that but for his firmness on the subject of full dress, he would not have had an opportunity of showing her the latter adornments.

Dear old Major Pulfington Belper. That grotesque Field-officer is now in great difficulties as well as transports. It is perfectly true, that he is in a post which does not in any way suit him. An English Colonel, Commanding Officer! What is there in our shambling, ungainly, whimsical friend to enable him to support so tremendous a *rôle* with due dignity and awe? He knows what is expected of him. He feels that he must wear a big wig. It is this figurative peruke which is the bane of his life. From a strict sense of public duty he thrusts it on his head, but he feels that it matches ill with his red nose, his shrimp's antennæ, his spectacles, and the necktie round his waist. He feels also that it is always coming off, or twisting itself up into comic situations, or turning round, or doing anything, in short, except inspire awe and suggest majesty. Since Colonel

Sandboy departed in haste to restore military discipline at Sherghotty, the poor Major has been almost driven distracted by this full-bottomed peruke. His officers are outwardly attentive and civil, but he feels that he has been their laughing-stock too long to allow them to fall down and worship him as a god, upon such a very hurried canonization.

And so this grotesque big-wig is hoisted up on to the Field-officer's charger, and parades about in melancholy and most uneasy state. The regimental guards turn out, the drums roll, the Sepoys present arms, the officers lower the points of their swords to it, out the wig is dissatisfied and nourishes a secret suspicion that it is slighted and treated with disrespect. Simpkin, Curzon, Hodges, are all in turn reproved for various acts of neglect in the matter of the wig, but they are all ready with their assurances that such acts of neglect are entirely illusory. At last the wearer of the wig can stand the situation no longer, and determines, like the late President of the United States, to 'put his foot down,' a

formidable foot armed with brass spurs, the sharp brass spurs of a commanding officer. Our old friend Mr Bromielaw (of Ballachulish) was astonished to receive one day a formal letter from the adjutant, directing him to attend at the commanding-officer's quarters the ensuing morning at 11 o'clock. He showed it to his friends, and they told him that he was in for a reprimand, and that he must put on his uniform and go and receive it.

Now to a sedate young gentleman whose great aim in life was to merit the approval of his superiors, and the rewards of industry and perseverance, it did seem at once bewildering and hard, that at the very outset of his career he should already have rendered himself liable to so emphatic a censure. The large, simple, good-natured young man as he sipped his coffee the next morning felt that the eyes of his brother officers were on him, and that they regarded him in the light of a culprit. And when at half-past ten o'clock he put on his shell-jacket, and buckled on the sword which he had hoped to preserve without a stain, he

could not help being painfully conscious of the fact that even his bearer must know that he was bearing this glittering weapon to disgrace (a piece of knowledge that might possibly be shared by the syce and the *tattoo*). All this was indeed a trial to an exemplary officer who was doing everything in his power to qualify himself for his profession, who was studying the native languages for twelve hours every day, who had already been 'ploughed' four times in his examinations, who shrunk from nothing, not even the 'General Orders,' and the drill book, for Mr Bromielaw of Ballachulish was also aware that the Adjutancy of the Nawaubgunge Irregulars was kept open for him, although he prattled less about the matter than Major Pulfington Belper.

A hardy clansman, who had stood upon precipitous mountain-peaks without blenching, and who would have led a forlorn hope just as coolly as he potted a stag upon Ben-na-Cockery, he actually felt a real sinking and terror as he passed through the reed-screens

of the Major's abode. Charley Simpkin, who caught a glimpse of him at this moment, declared afterwards that it was the first instance of a Broomielaw (of the Ballachulish branch of the family) ever experiencing the emotion of fear.

Major Pulfington Belper, commanding the 44th Nowgong Native Infantry, was without coat and waistcoat, but he wore a pair of long brass spurs, a neck-tie (round the waist), and, I need not add, a very large figurative big wig.

'Oh, Broomielaw,' said the commanding officer, 'I was obliged to send for you. There are some things which must be kept up—as you know—discipline—military discipline—and that sort of thing would go to the dogs, you know—Hey! I observed you did not salute me when you met me in the centre road of cantonments this morning!'

'H- what?' exclaimed the northern gentleman, pronouncing the interrogative pronoun in the Scotch way, and with an intensity of real horror which even the great Sir Pertinax

might have envied. 'H- what! not perforrum the meelitary salute! H- what! not sa-loot my *Co*-mandant!—I feere ye are under a vara gr-a-te delusion, Major Pulfington Belper. I did, I did, I assure you I did!'

'Did you? Why, really I never saw you!' said old Pulfington Belper, whose big wig had fallen quite off.

'But I did—I did not find it pair-fect-ly easy to catch your eyes,—and, to tell you the truth, I performed the salute three times, but you were just looking down, and, as it were, contemplating your leg. And perhaps that might have been the reason ye did not ken it—I mean, know it.'

'Oh, I'm very sorry, Mr Broomielaw,' said the Major, utterly vanquished, and quite humble. 'I'm sure I'd never have brought you out in the sun in this way, if I'd known all this. I'm very sorry, indeed.'

He felt as if the long brass spurs, instead of pricking forwards the regimental discipline, had gored their awkward wearer.

'Do you want any leave, Broomielaw?' said the Major, after a pause. 'I'd forward your application at once.'

The big wig was utterly thrust out of sight now, and this was the best way our whimsical old friend could see out of the embarrassment he had got into. The Scotch landed proprietor rode home a prouder man than when he had ridden there.

I think the poor Major's problem (that of wearing a big wig becomingly) would have been eventually mastered, had it not been complicated with two disturbing forces—the Major's sentimental passion, and the arrival at Nawaubgunge of that bold wit, Mr Chiffney Chaffney. The young civilian had finished his Calcutta probation, he had won eleven races, he had run into debt several thousand rupees, he had become tolerably clever at snipe shooting, brandy-and-water, losing hazards, and short whist; and at length in reward for his hard studies he was promoted to the appointment of Assistant Magistrate and Collector at Chuckergotty, a

civil station within an easy drive of Nawaub-gunge.

The Major's love for Miss Sophy Brabazon led him into a great many actions which were highly eccentric in a commanding officer. He determined to get up a ball in her honour, and make use of the military resources at his disposal to dazzle her in a thousand ways. Thus, when she rode near his parade-ground, and the regiment was at exercise, the grotesque hero flirted with a battalion, and saluted her with trombones and clarions, and waving flags; with a long line of soldiers with presented arms, and officers' swords lowered at the point. He at once prepared the most beautiful of all manœuvres, the advance in line to the general salute, and as this manœuvre always concludes a parade, the roguish subalterns used to urge the young lady to repeat these visits and thus save them a great deal of drill. At the same time all this was a little to the prejudice of the discipline of the 44th Nowgong Native Infantry, as the Major was the worst 'drill' in India; and one morning in

the presence of the young lady, he 'clubbed' the regiment whilst attempting to show off before her, tied up the various sections, companies, and subdivisions into a hopeless and inextricable tangle, and was obliged to call out Captain St Leger to get them right again. Thus we may see a clumsy angler with the top of his rod caught in a high bough, his line in a thorn-bush, and his flies stuck in his trousers, and all this time a beautiful trout is leaping and gamboling, and lazily swallowing one after another the red spinners that are floating by on the surface of the pool.

The ball got up by the Major was in many respects a failure, at least as far as he was concerned. He was not a dancer of round dances, and scarcely got an opportunity of speaking to her all through the evening.

Regarded however as an Indian up-country ball, it was thought in many points a great success. What with the married and single there were at least nine dancing ladies, of whom five danced round dances. The gentlemen, dancing and non-dancing, were about

fifty, as Ramgunge, Chuckergotty, and all the neighbouring indigo factories and civil stations came in for the occasion. The disproportion of the sexes is usually greater in an Indian up-country ball. And I really think when Miss Sophy Brabazon entered the ball-room, looking very lovely in her plain gauzy white dress and white shoulders, the whole fifty rushed madly forward in one great body to solicit her hand in the dance. For half-an-hour before her appearance Simpkin, Curzon, and several other officers and young civilians were seen moving silently and restlessly about amongst the columns of the Mess verandah, with pencils and cards in their hands, and in a terrible fever of excitement and expectation. Charley Simpkin was lucky enough to get the second waltz, whereas poor Major Pulfington Belper only got the 22nd quadrille, which, of course, never came off.

When the Liversege party fairly entered the room, a marvel was witnessed, which made every body open his eyes. First came Mrs Liversege escorted by the Major, who looked

unusually grand and grotesque, and whose nose was reddened to an unusual degree by the unusual honour. Then on Mr Liversege's arm came—people could hardly credit it—Mrs Throgmorton. The stanch disciple of the Rev. Eli Petticrook, was actually in a ball-room, and had allowed Motee to come likewise. You may be sure that it was not without fear and trembling that Mrs Throgmorton allowed herself to be persuaded into this grave step. Her sister had broached the subject of the marriage with Major Pulfington Belper, and the military lady had said on the spot that such and similar ideas were not to be thought of; that her affections were now beyond the tomb; and she dropt some more tears to the memory of the late Captain Throgmorton, whose life she had made unnecessarily gloomy and cheerless, but that is no reason why she should not weep for him.

But after this conversation Mrs Throgmorton seemed more human and more genial, than she had seemed for many a day. Perhaps Mrs Liversege had done good. Mrs

Throgmorton believed she was the same woman. She believed that she was striving just as earnestly to fix her mind upon what she called heavenly things, and to contemn and avoid what she called the world. But she was softer and less censorious. Also she was better pleased with everything now, and consequently more pleasant. She is a weak, narrow, crazy, middle-aged lady, not without a certain kindliness if she were given fair play. Reverend Petticrooks, teachers and preachers, gownsmen and bandsmen, ye are able, ye are energetic, ye are eloquent, ye open your mouths, and weak narrow ladies are bound hand and foot. Ye build up fantastic tea and muffin nunneries in Protestant England—sombre edifices of terror and fanatic gloom; from which ye would exclude triumph and sympathy and love and joy. Say that God's flowery world is contaminating, we are all of us in it; and can find plenty of ignorance and crime to do battle with, shams and pharisaisms, and a foul money-worship with its concomitant dislocation of home life. Cudgel

this grim giant, O Petticrooks! Assault it with preachment and homily; instead of crusading against art and science, and dealing fierce blows at all that is genial and healthy in human instinct.

It would be doing Mrs Throgmorton injustice to omit to mention that her final consent to go to the ball was extorted by a diplomatic *coup*. She would certainly never have given it if she had not been taken in hand by one of the most powerful female intellects of India. Mrs Liversege having determined upon the marriage, pursued the project with the same ardour with which she followed up all her other schemes, whether public or personal, and I think fixed upon the 'difficulty' of the ball quite as much because it furnished a nice study in diplomacy, as because it really forwarded her main plan. She represented the party as much less of a mere ball than a public *durbar*, at which the Nawaub of Nawaubgunge would meet the Honourable Company's Resident, and at which it behoved all Europeans to be present. She strained a

point a little, and made out that it was got up by Major Pulfington Belper, quite in Mrs Throgmorton's honour, and although her attendance meant nothing in the way of encouragement, her absence would gratuitously hurt the feelings of a kind-hearted man. She took advantage of Mrs Throgmorton's evident regret about her late hasty conduct in Calcutta, and at last by a bold and sudden attack surprised her sister into a consent that she should appear at the ball, with the option of leaving directly the dancing began. That consent given, the conscientious lady could not retract it, but it caused her many anxious moments both before and after. Thus it was that Mrs Throgmorton appeared in the ball-room of the 44th Nowgong Native Infantry, and thus it was that Major Pulfington Belper, to his immense horror, came upon a knot of young gentlemen, a moment or two afterwards, who were cracking their jokes at the expense of the inconsistent distributor of the celebrated tract 'Round and Round,' or the 'Moth and the Flame!'

'Gentlemen, gentlemen! For God's sake, don't talk like that, or you'll be heard. I assure you that Mrs Throgmorton is one of the most exemplary and worthy women in the world.'

'What, Major, are you and she "spoons" together!' The speaker could be no other than Mr Chiffney Chaffney, who had come over from Chuckergotty for the ball.

What with uniforms, colours (guarded by two colossal black sentries), and bayonet stars, the large, bare, white-washed ball-room presented a decidedly military, perhaps barracky appearance. Soon there was another stir outside, and amid ground kissings and the click of presented arms, the King of Nawaubgunge entered the room. His Majesty was dressed in very fine white muslin embroidered over with gold in the Indian manner, and on his head was a cap of the kind worked by young ladies under the vague idea that such caps are connected with smoking. With the Nawaub were Salam Bux, the Prime Minister, and Fuzl Ali, the head Vukeel. Major Pulfington

Belper, whose Hindustanee was fluent though peculiar, but whose knowledge of courtly Asiatic forms was a little hazy, rushed forward and received the king with a very low bow, paying him some high-flown compliments picked out of 'Forbes's Hindustanee Manual,' and calling him *Ap!* and *Nawaub Bahador!* four or five times in every sentence, but getting into great difficulties with the conjugation of his verbs in the inflected form which is required when speaking to royalty.

'Will not the Nawaub Bahador be pleased to come to the upper part of the room, where a seat is prepared for him by the Resident Sahib?' And the Major performed a sort of perambulating bow, quite new to state ceremonial, and thus conducted the King to his seat. The Major happily remembered that you should never turn your back upon royalty.

The Nawaub, the Resident, and the Resident's wife now entered into conversation, and the royal personage was pleased to assure the representative of the Indian Government

that the sun had shone more brightly since that representative's arrival, and that the mango blossoms were in gayer bloom; that the great Company Bahador were all prescient as well as all powerful, sending forth scholarly and benevolent *Civilian Sahibs* who provided the humble black slaves with electric telegraphs and justice, fiery carriages, and judges of the Sudder. He thought the palace of the noble General (Belper) was very splendid, and wanted to know if those were real bayonets on the walls, and how they were stuck on.

Mrs Liversege soon found an opportunity to strike in, and she asked the Protector of the Universe in what state of health he was pleased to find himself to-day.

The Protector of the Universe declared that he was not very well, that he had lately been suffering from boils,—Indians are often very frank upon such topics,—but he was glad to see Mrs Liversege so prosperous and fat and elated of heart, whilst the stomach of the valiant General Sahib (Belper) gave also grati-

fying evidence that the Provider of the Universe was pleased to shower down upon him the blessings of plenty and ease.

But the crash of a brass band here cut short the conversation, and the five dancing ladies began to spin round to that inspiring waltz, the 'Whisper of Spring.'

If there are five successful competitors amongst fifty, it stands to reason that there must be forty-five unsuccessful competitors, and these latter had to content themselves with looking enviously on, and drinking a great deal of soda-water, lemonade, claret-cup, and bottled beer, as a preliminary to the supper. And yet I very much doubt if the envied competitors had much the best of it. The evening was close and hot and oppressive to a degree only felt in India. The punkahs swayed to and fro, flapping lazily over the dancers, but beyond brushing the gentlemen's hair the wrong way, and making giddy people still more giddy by their irregular movements, they did not do much good, certainly they did not cool any one. If a gentle-

man, enjoying a Turkish bath, were to have a British uniform presented to him, and he were then called upon to waltz in the most heated chamber of all, the *sudararium*, he would have some idea of the pleasure of dancing in India in the middle of the hot winds, the period always selected for up-country balls, and I cannot say that half a dozen jaded couples waltzing in one very large room presents a very animated or cheerful spectacle.

His Majesty, the Nawaub, who was a strange compound of the baby and the wild beast, seemed at first to enjoy the pageant prepared for him.

'Wah, wah,' he said to his minister, when he had got quit of Mr Liversege and the region of compliments. 'This is a droll spectacle prepared for us by these pig-eating sons of owls. They spin like tops. Very good! Very funny! Shabash!'

'The sons of dancing girls,' said the prime minister, who added the functions of court-jester to his various other important official duties. 'The polytheistic, woman-worship-

ping, woman-serving, eaters of unclean things have prepared a fine *nautch*, O Protector of the World, but why do they show us their clumsy dancing? The women are not of ill form if they had not the paleness of leprosy.'

It is a mistake to suppose that natives prefer white faces to brown.

'Wah, wah! What atrocious music!' said the King; 'I hear that the *Simkin* of these regimental sons of drunkards is pleasant and good to the taste! Let us go and see them drink.'

'Whatever the Ruler of the World may ordain is just,' said Salam Bux, 'but will not the Feringhy dogs rail at the true believer if he breaks through the wise precepts of the Koran in public? Rather let thy slave buy some of their Simkin, and the Ruler of the World can enjoy it in his palace.'

It would have been good for Salam Bux if he had been more careful to keep the Ruler of the World from infringing the precepts of the Koran, and had kept close to him the whole evening. It was also thought

afterwards that it would have been well if he had not worn such splendid emeralds. His body-coat was one blaze of precious stones.

'Away!' said the King. 'Come, quick, here comes that person without understanding, (*bewukoof*);' and they hurried away from the official, whose arrival had had such an effect on the blossoms of the mangoes.

Later on in the evening, the King managed to get rid of his two attendants, and took advantage of the circumstance to peep into the supper-room. Mrs Liversege and the ladies had left it long ago, and Mrs Throgmorton had left the ball-room. She went away very early indeed.

'Hi, Nabob, Sahib!' cried out Mr Chiffney Chaffney, directly the head of the august monarch was detected. 'Come in and have some champagne!' A roar of boisterous friendliness greeted that lofty personage from the lips of the Ensigns and younger officers, who now occupied the supper-room. The King was immediately conducted to a chair, and a glass of champagne set before him.

His Majesty (who took the chair) now informed them with his stately company dignity, that Mussulmans were not permitted wine. At the same time he looked at the sparkling glass covetously. Did he silently wish that some Persian Colenso would find that particular passage of the Koran forbidding wine 'uncritical'?

'But it isn't wine. It's sherbet, Nabob Bahador!' said Mr Chiffney Chaffney, and he was so pressing that at last the Nawaub, after having looked well round to see that neither of his ministers were watching, was induced to toss off the glass. This he did with a great deal of aptitude for so inexperienced a toper.

It was filled again in a minute, and the monarch was so pleased with the sherbet of the sons of drunkards, that he drank that, and then a third, changing gradually during the process from an august monarch into a chattering school-boy. His young friends flattered this rising humour of his, and conversed with him in the frankest manner, and

Mr Chiffney Chaffney (who must have drunk a deal of sherbet) became at last so friendly, that he even went so far as to pat the Protector of the Universe on the back, at the very moment that Major Pulfington Belper, who had learned what was going on, came horror-stricken into the room.

'Would not your Royal Highness like to come into the next room and see the dancers?' said the Major in great perplexity, forgetting all about the inflected verbs.

'No, Bobbery Bob! I'll drink some more sherbet, old man!' (*Buda Sahib*).

A tremendous shout of laughter greeted this reply of the King, and the Major, after a feeble appeal to the guests, rushed off to find Fuzl Ali or Salam Bux. What would the Resident say to so scandalous a scene? Meanwhile the revelry proceeded, and in the midst of it was heard a distant pop, hardly louder than that of the champagne bottles. It was quite unheeded.

And yet anything but a funny scene had just been enacted.

CHAPTER X.

GOOSEBERRY FOOLS.

If the Rev. Eli Petticrook, author of 'Round and Round, or The Moth and the Flame!' had thoroughly known his trade, and had been present at Nawaubgunge on the morning after the orgies just narrated, he might have found far more convincing materials for showing the utter vanity of an Indian ball than a few abstract platitudes on the moral guilt of young ladies and young gentlemen revolving together until they are giddy and out of breath. Whether or not it be true that our pleasant vices are made whips to scourge us, it is certain that as far as regards the Nawaubgunge culprits, their punishment was quite proportionate to the magnitude of of their peccadilloes.

Indeed, I almost believe the rev. gentle-

man would adopt the same conclusion if he were ever to wake up the morning after a regimental ball in the middle of the hot winds. The utter prostration, fatigue, and languor, the splitting, throbbing head, the parched throat, and the thirst which warm soda-water only increases; the overpowering feebleness and disinclination to move, the heat which the languid punkah seems only to stir up, not diminish;—all this state of complete, hopeless, calvinistic, irredeemable wretchedness is far too severe a punishment for the error of slaking your thirst with counterfeit champagne, and for indulging in the glittering pleasure of waltzing in a *sudararium* and in a British uniform.

Never had a maker of homilies a finer opportunity of shaking a wicked and adulterous generation, than at half-past two o'clock when the dissipated subalterns, civilians, and indigo planters managed at last to get up and drag their exhausted frames and aching heads to the Mess-house, and there feebly call for soda-water and brandy, for mullagatawny and cayenne. But I am afraid our reverend

friend on this occasion, as on all others, would go utterly wrong. It is his custom to commit the grave oratorical fault of thinking much of his private theories, his rounded periods, his personal theology,—of himself, in fact,—and nothing at all of the people he intends to convince.

'Oh, my friends!' I take the liberty to fancy him saying,—'oh, my brethren, indeed, —for the most vicious subaltern, the most degraded indigo planter, the most abandoned civilian, is still a brother,—if there are periods, if there are solemn moments of life, when a man should begin to think, not how shall I please my perishable body, but how shall I save my immortal soul, is not this one of the most startling of them? You are now sober. The heating wine-cup no longer deadens the intellect which God has given you, and you can pause and reflect on the startling event which was happening to one of your guests at the moment you were indulging in all the orgies of the gluttonous and the winebibber. At that moment a report of fire-arms was heard,

and an immortal soul was hurried to his account. A friend of princes, he whom the King delighted to honour, a noble of the land, a man clothed in purple and fine linen, went forth from a feast, and in a moment he was cut down like a blade of grass, and his glittering jewels and admired rich vestments seemed at once as the flowers upon a grave, which mock and are mocked by the corruption they seek to adorn.'

I must interrupt the imaginary preacher for a moment, to mention that he has been permitted to be the first to inform the gentle reader of a fact. It was quite true that Salam Bux, the King's minister, was shot just after quitting the Mess-house last evening, but we have already made our imaginary friend, *more suo*, sacrifice accuracy to point. The deceased native's rich jewels were never allowed to adorn his corpse, but were at once taken from him.

And, on second thoughts, I do not think I shall continue the sermon, as I have no doubt that the reverend rhetorician, having

got so happy an antithesis as frivolous pleasure and tragedy, orgies and a murder, would have done it quite to death. His theme is striking and serious enough. The King's minister was a man with the same senses, organs, and dimensions as you and I, although this fact might be disputed in a Nawaubgunge congregation. If you wronged him he would probably revenge, if you tickled him he would laugh, if you fired a musket at him he would (and did) die. The minister has just solved the great enigma that puzzles us all, and the theme is the most solemn that a preacher and teacher can touch upon. But I must repeat the reverend orator would not have made much permanent effect on his congregation. Perhaps he would have battered at the wrong point of the enemy's line; for after all, a splitting headache is a more eloquent homily on a fault that was perhaps a mere servile bowing to convention, and attempting to transplant amusements quite unsuited to the season and conditions of an up-country station. But the reverend gentleman, whom we have some-

what gratuitously introduced into Indian cantonments this morning (to his great astonishment, no doubt), is of those who mistake the microscopic atom that blinds his own eye for the spectacle of the heavens which declare God's glory, and the firmament which shows His handiwork.

I do not say that when the news of the murder of Salam Bux was first heard by the tiffin party, it did not produce any excitement. Salam Bux was a 'nigger.' Salam Bux was no doubt a little too fond of ground-kissing, adulation, dorsal gymnastics, and the dust that adheres to the sandals of superiors. But with many there was now a compassionate feeling for the defunct prime minister, which might be said to be embodied in the words of Mr Chiffney Chaffney, that he was a 'poor old swell!' Another party supported a harsher view, and had for spokesman Mr Hodges.

'Confound it, a dash nigger sticking a big emerald and such whopping diamonds on his black carcase. Bedad, he deserves to be

potted! And did you see how the brute leered at the women?'

But even if the present assembly had been worked up by the tragedy to a feeling which would have satisfied the Rev. Eli Petticrook, that feeling could only have been transient. Towards the end of the tiffin Major Pulfington Belper entered the room, and with the Major and Mr Chiffney Chaffney in the same apartment, the most improving reflections could not last long.

'Hulloa, Major, how's your friend, the King?' asked the facetious civilian.

'I tell you what, Chiffney Chaffney,' said the Major, gravely, 'that affair of his Highness the Nawaub is much more serious than you imagine. When the Resident hears of such treatment towards the native monarch of one of the most extensive of native states, there'll be a row, there will indeed. You young men should be more careful in such matters!'

'But, Major, I thought we treated his Highness with the greatest respect. I'm sure

we gave him plenty of sherbet. You know, Major, that a Persian's heaven is easily made, 'tis but bright eyes and lemonade!'

'Come, come, none of your cheek to-day, Hey!' said the Major, in a sprightly manner.

'And I'm sure, Major, you received him, when he first came in, with a bow that was most polite, and, I may add, very elegant and graceful.'

'And then there's a native of very high rank murdered!' said the Major, changing the subject. 'That's grave enough, in all conscience!'

'To him, Major, he's gone where the good niggers go. And *apropos* of the latter subject, meaning niggers, what admirable Hindustanee was that you sported last night?'

'Come, come, I never saw anything like the sauce of you young men,' said the Major, 'Mr Girdlestone will blush, I am sure, for the honour of his service.' Mr Girdlestone was judge of Chuckergotty. 'Isn't he a forward, frisky, impudent young gentleman this, for his years, Mr Girdlestone. And

apropos of Hindustanee, if he has found an examiner to pass him, he's the luckiest young gentleman in India, and the spoon he found in his mouth when he was born ought to have been of quite another material, Hey! (right side), quite another material, Hey!' (left side).

'Yes, Major, but what was it that the King called you last night?'

Thus this unequal fencing of epigram went on. The Major was wrong in entering into any discussion at all, and doubly wrong in attempting to beat his adversary at his own weapons, encumbered as the good officer was with his unwieldy peruke. Mr Chiffney Chaffney may not have had all the wit, but he had something much better, the audience, on his side. Under such unequal circumstances, Sydney Smith would have been beaten by the 'wut' of his Presbyterian friend Sawney, and Sheridan might have succumbed to one of those sedate gentlemen who write what modern newspapers are pleased to call 'comedy.'

As the murder of Salam Bux bears only indirectly upon the progress of our story, I shall not dwell at any length upon the steps taken to discover the perpetrator of it. In two days the English Resident heard that Ressaldar Sheikh Khoda Bux had been arrested, and that a pistol belonging to the Nawaubgunge Irregulars, and a turban stained with blood and powder, the latter the property of the Ressaldar, had been found buried near the Cavalry lines. A court martial was called, and the trooper was tried before it, and a very formidable chain of circumstantial evidence was prepared against him. It was forged, in the first instance, not without skill by Mr Palmer Brown, assisted by the native Fuzl Ali, with whom the former was now on good terms. The question of motive was first dwelt on by the military prosecutor, and it was shown that the deceased had been foolishly induced to appear at the ball with some jewels of very great value indeed, including an emerald well known to every native at Nawaubgunge. All these

had been taken from him by his murderer. The deceased had left the Mess-house to return to the palace at a quarter to one in the morning. He had told Fuzl Ali that he did not feel very well, and had requested him to attend upon and look after the *Nawaub*, and as the minister had come in the carriage of the King, and had no vehicle of his own then present, the Vukeel had lent him his palanquin carriage, which, besides the coachman, had three black servants armed with swords, and bearing silver maces, who mounted up behind. When the carriage quitted cantonments and struck off into the road leading to the city, it had to pass by a very dense grove of mango trees, from which there issued shrieks at that moment, and a man called out that he was being murdered. It was more than probable that the prisoner Ressaldar Sheikh Khoda Bux had accomplices, but unfortunately justice had not as yet been able to overtake any one of them. Salam Bux, a kind-hearted man, immediately ordered the carriage to be stopped, and

directed the three armed servants to fly to the assistance of the man in distress, and would not even hear of one of their number remaining to protect his august person. A few minutes after the three natives had disappeared in the darkness of the grove, a voice shouted out 'Shoot the fat *bad-zat*, shoot the coachman too!' And a shot was fired followed by a shriek. The coachman, who supplied this latter evidence, here admitted that he decamped; as probably it was the intention of the murderers that he should. He did not know the number of his assailants. He thought that they had been sufficient to master the three armed men sent against them. In cross-examination he stated that the deceased was sitting up in the back of the carriage at the time the shot was fired.

The unfortunate minister was now left alone to the tender mercies of his assassins, who appeared to have dragged him out of the carriage, as there were evidences of a struggle; to have stabbed him, stripped him of his jewels, lashed the horses, and made them run

away, and then left the corpse on the side of the road.

At this point fresh evidence came in. The three armed servants having wandered about in the wood, and having been unable to find any one, were returning towards the road when they heard the shot. They at once hastened out of the wood and looked for the carriage without success, but on the road at last they met the prisoner walking *away from* and not far off from the spot where the body was afterwards found. The shot had not sufficiently excited their suspicions to induce them to think of arresting him. Lastly, the prosecution relied on the discovery of the prisoner's turban and the pistol, and on the manifest untruth of his statements when arrested. He had asserted that one Ramdeen Tewarry, a Sepoy of the 44th, on hearing the firing, had told him that murder was going on, that he had hastened in the direction of the sound, and, when he met the servants, was walking towards, not away from, the spot where the corpse was found. All which

assertions were proved to be false, the first on the evidence of Ramdeen Tewarry himself. There is this interest about the trial, that whilst the evidence of the prosecution was got together by Mr Palmer Brown, the materials for the defence were prepared by Captain Ashleigh: thus these two gentlemen were brought into accidental antagonism once more, covertly this time, it is true.

The imprisoned Ressaldar had sent for the Captain.

'Sahib!' he said, 'you saved my life in Affghanistan. For what purpose was it if I am now to be hanged? Protect, defend me!'

'If you are innocent,' said the Captain, 'it will be seen on the trial; if you are guilty, you deserve your fate!'

'Yes, *Sahib*, I am innocent; but for all that, Fuzl Ali, who had the minister killed, will have me killed also!' The Captain had heard before that amongst the troopers it was the universal conviction that the death of Salam Bux was compassed by the Vukeel.

'But what evidence have you?' asked Captain Ashleigh.

'I have four Sowars to swear that I was a quarter of a mile off when the shot was fired.'

'But I thought you were not near any other troopers at the moment?' And the Captain soon elicited a confidential confession that he was not near any other troopers.

'Then what is the use of this silly false evidence?'

'If Fuzl Ali brings false witnesses, Captain *Sahib*, why mayn't I?' What the 'alibi' was to Mr Weller, senior, this defence is to the Indian. A civilian listened once for three days to an array of conflicting witnesses, in a dispute about a well. The fourth day he rode out to the spot, and found the well was not in existence at all.

Mr Curzon, who, secretly helped by Captain Ashleigh, defended the prisoner before the court martial, relied chiefly upon the medical evidence. Surgeon Kirby of the 44th stated that the bullet entered on the left side of the head, and pursued a slanting down-

wards course, whereas the grove of trees was on the right side of the carriage. He stated also that it was his opinion that the stab was administered before the bullet wound, but upon being cross-examined he confessed that this was only an opinion. He confessed also that it was quite possible that a man after receiving a similar bullet wound might struggle for a short time. The defence had tried to show that the deceased had been pulled out first from the carriage and then stabbed, and afterwards shot, this being part of the conspiracy to bring the guilt home to an innocent man.

For Mr Curzon in the trial boldly stated that the deceased minister met his death through a conspiracy got up by some of his rivals amongst the native courtiers of the Nawaub. They had an interest in his death, whereas the Ressaldar had none. Where were the jewels he was supposed to have coveted? Why did they not arrest him after the suspicious circumstance of the shot? Because they knew that the jewels would not

be found on him. Because they wanted the jewels. Because they knew that the traces of the murder would then be still on their own clothes and persons. The chain of fictitious evidence was cleverly prepared, but the counterfeit nature of the material could be seen upon the least careful examination. They had been compelled to pull the minister out of the carriage and to stab him. In their hurry they had inflicted the pistol wound on the wrong side of the head, a blunder which at once dissolved the whole of their plot. They had procured a pistol from the armoury of the Nawaubgunge Irregulars, they had procured a turban of the Ressaldar's. They had an accomplice who led the prisoner apart from his fellow-soldiers at the hour of the murder, and hurried him to the scene of the fatal event. All was well arranged. All was too well arranged. If the coachman had not told his prepared story too soon, they might have altered the story to suit the accident of the pistol blunder. They might have left the method of his death in doubt. Everything

was too *apropos*, down to the prompt finding of the pistol and turban by the emissaries of Fuzl Ali. Those articles were the only real points of evidence against the prisoner, and they turned out the strongest points in favour of his innocence. This was the substance of Mr Curzon's written defence, and the Court found there was not sufficient evidence to convict the prisoner, and he was released from arrest.

Mrs Liversege was extremely dissatisfied with this verdict. Certainly, amongst the ladies of the Residency, the news of the death of Salam Bux made a much greater effect than it did at the tiffin-table of the 44th Nowgong Native Infantry. Poor Mrs Throgmorton was in a frightful state. She thought the occurrence a judgment from Heaven sent for the direct purpose of punishing her, in some confused way or another, for neglecting the precepts of the Rev. Eli Petticrook. Her self-reproaches the first day were very wearisome to listen to, and her strong-minded sister, though her appreciation of the offence

committed was more hazy, showed as much contrition as behoved a lady of such exalted Indian rank. But the next day the two sisters rather unfairly shifted their dissatisfaction from their own to the broad shoulders of Major Pulfington Belper. It was very true that he had been the chief agent in getting up the ball. But for all that, I don't see that this was any reason for behaving to him as if he were the midnight ruffian who fired the fatal shot. Yet this is certainly the way they treated him when he called to inquire after their health, and on his departure Mrs Throgmorton presented him with a copy of 'Round and Round, or The Moth and the Flame,' saying, in terrible tones,

'We ought all to study this good work upon the present solemn occasion. We now see what comes of the wickedness of dancing parties. I have written to Calcutta for a greater supply, and hope you will let me send you four dozen copies for distribution amongst your guests of the other evening.'

If Major Pulfington Belper had been in

the condemned cell at Newgate, the manner of the jail chaplain could not have been more solemn, but the brave soldier took his four dozen very heroically.

But when Mrs Liversege heard that the murderer was let off she was very angry indeed. 'It all comes of these miserable perversions of justice, called court martials,' she said. The good lady had taken up the cause of Fuzl Ali warmly, and thought the attempt to throw the blame upon him very infamous indeed. Her husband, an old judge, not without shrewdness, had tardily come to his conclusions upon the affair likewise, and when Mrs Liversege expatiated upon the matter, he shook his head.

'What do you mean, Mr Liversege, by shaking your head in that unmeaning, or, perhaps, I should say in that too significant manner? are you too in league against the worthy Fuzl Ali?'

'My dear, you are hasty,' said the old man, curtly.

'Let me remind you, my dear, that that

is no answer to my question. Do you consider that Fuzl Ali is a murderer, or do you not?'

'My love, in criminal cases we ought never to come to hasty decisions; but really, if you press me, I must admit that there is a *prima facie* case of suspicion against him.'

'If you have proofs why don't you have him tried?' said the lady, triumphantly.

Mr Liversege admitted that he had not sufficient proofs to order a trial of the Nawaub's Vukeel.

'It is all that Captain Ashleigh!' said the lady, tartly. 'You did not use to allow your judgment to be put into the leading-strings of an officer of Native Infantry, but you are getting old. You trust him in the affair of the Jaghire of Jamnugger, and now you echo the infamous defence of the Cavalry murderer. He prepared it, Mr Palmer Brown tells me so!'

Mrs Liversege had taken a great dislike to Captain Ashleigh, and it would be difficult

to say exactly why. He was supposed to have influenced her husband in spite of her. His bravery had excited her enthusiasm at first. Perhaps at her dinner parties his adulation had not been pitched in the right Oriental key, if he paid her any at all. And now he has attacked a native whom she has thought fit to patronize. Here were several reasons of dislike, if reasons are required by an imperious, vain, capricious woman, and with reason or no reason the dislike of Mrs Liversege now almost amounted to hatred. In a few days it was notified to Mr Liversege that the Nawaub had chosen Fuzl Ali to fill the vacant post of minister. The Resident, whose sanction was required, flatly refused. Mrs Liversege thought fit to lay this refusal also to the account of the obnoxious Captain, and determined to let her husband see that at last there should be a trial of strength between her and the Captain. The result of this real or imaginary conflict shall shortly be shown.

Two other female moralists discussed the improving event of the death of Salam Bux, on a memorable occasion.

'It is very terrible!' said Sophy.

'Very!' said Motee.

'I suppose dancing is very wrong!' said the former young lady musingly; 'but after all, one can't be praying and reading religious books all day long.' Sophy was of those facile young ladies, who seeing it stated in a printed book, on the authority of a clergyman, that such and such a thing is wrong, woman-like feels always bound to believe it.

'I don't know that, dear!' said Motee; 'of course, at present I am obliged to consult the feelings of others, and it would, under these circumstances, be wrong in me to wish to dance; but Mr Waters, who was also, you know, a clergyman, used formerly to tell me that dancing, theatres, novels, and laughter had nothing in them intrinsically wrong. He used to say that a craving for occasional pleasure and relaxation was as positive an instinct in man as his other craving for know-

ledge of the things unseen. The desire for relaxation and the desire of improvement both came from God, and both were to be respected as essential to humanity.'

'I sometimes think,' said the other philosopher, 'that sermons and psalms, and the showing one's new dresses in church, afford the same amusement and excitement to some very good people that balls and concerts and theatres do to us naughty ones.'

'Oh, that is very wicked to say that,' said Miss Motee.

'What do you think Charley Simpkin says? you know he is terribly stupid and tiresome at times, but at others he is rather droll.'

'What does he say?' asks Motee, neglecting to assure herself this time that the subject matter should be quite free from wickedness.

'He says that a person who abstains from pleasures not appreciated has very little merit. It is the nature of some to be only cheerful at a funeral, and Mrs—I mean some people are, like the seal, fondest of troubled waters, or like

the bird, the *Chataka,* which, according to Indian writers, feeds only on clouds.'

'Mrs—who did he say?' asks Motee, innocently.

'I am sure I hated that ball!' replies Miss Sophy, 'I don't care if I never go to a ball again.'

Here the answer of the second young lady will appear to male logicians quite as mal-apropos as the previous answer of the first. Motee puts one arm round her friend, gives her a great squeeze and a great kiss, and then says gently,—

'What was it?'

'Only that everything and everybody is tiresome, and if revolving like a teetotum is very wicked, I am sure it is also very stupid!' The young lady said this very pettishly, but she answered the great kiss and the great squeeze with a squeeze as great, and a kiss that was even more immense, and she added suddenly,—

'What a dear, kind, calm, heavenly, little comforting angel you are!'

'It can't be Mr Palmer Brown!' said the comforting angel, jumping at a conclusion, with a logic as hasty as that of the cynical member of the opposite sex, who on hearing of a quarrel or domestic misery used immediately to ask, 'Who is she?'

'No, it can't be Mr Palmer Brown!' pursued Motee after a pause. 'And do you know, Sophy—recollect, we were to have no secrets—do you know, I've had my suspicions all along—I've sometimes thought there was in it—more than you've liked to tell me.'

'More!' said Sophy, a little startled.

'Yes, don't be offended, dear, at my frankness. You see some people may like other people—we won't say how much—well, if they have no return, no hope of return, it is no one's fault, it is chance, the will of Heaven, there is nothing to be done'—(here Sophy again warmly kissed the speaker, for no apparent reason)—'but if one person likes without hope, and another likes and has hopes, of course it is the duty of the first person to think no more about it.'

'What do you mean, little comforter?' now asked Sophy, really puzzled; and tightening at the same time the pleasant little comforter round her neck.

'Well, dear! Charley Simpkin! That's what I mean!' Sophy here repeated the kissing, with an energy, I think, not entirely due to her admiration of her little friend's touching unselfishness.

'I think, dear, you like him better than you've confessed to me, confessed to yourself. If so, don't think of me—I've heard all about Barrackpore!'

The pretty stage business was repeated, and perhaps had some connection this time with what Motee had enigmatically styled Barrackpore.

'And do you love him still, so very much?' asked Sophy, and her cross-examination was so vigorous that she soon elicited the young maiden's tale of love and sorrow; how she had danced a quadrille with Ensign Simpkin, and had found it the happiest moment in her life, even though his whole talk and

thoughts seemed concentrated on Sophy. How handsome he had looked and how much more manly he was getting. How agreeable and amusing he could be in conversation, and how strongly, how sadly, how despairingly she loved him, &c., &c.

'Twas in this manner that two young persons, according to a solemn compact, detailed their mutual love confidences, on this particular morning.

CHAPTER XI.

A GRAVE AT NAWAUBGUNGE.

Sophy ever since she had been at Nawaubgunge had had a secret wish, which she had never yet been able to gratify. This was to see her cousin's grave. She had never liked to mention the subject to Mrs Liversege. And whenever she had passed the grim melancholy grave-yard, the gate was closed. One morning, however, when she was driving out with Mrs Throgmorton and Motee, as they passed the gate it was by accident wide open.

'Oh, do let us have a peep at the monuments in the cemetery there. I want to see it very much.'

'My dear, I think you had better not. It might be unwholesome, you know.' Oddly enough, Mrs Throgmorton did not relish the

visit. She was a gloomy person, but perhaps though she delighted in obtruding her gloomy reflections on others, she did not like to have such thrust upon her.

Motee, however, who liked to see her cousin pleased, and everybody else for that matter, warmly seconded the request, and Mrs Throgmorton at length gave way.

And melancholy enough did that enclosure appear when the three ladies entered it. No grave-yard is so grim as an Indian grave-yard, a fit emblem of India itself, which has been called the Englishman's grave. It was enclosed within high walls, as if the design had been to huddle it well out of sight; and one wondered that some of the unsightly urns and tops of Corinthian columns which peeped over the high walls had not been broken off, to keep the evidences of mortal decay more completely from human ken. As it seemed impossible that any one of his own free choice would visit such a confined, close, stuffy, unsightly spot, there were none of the usual attempts to plant beauty amid decay, and

console the bereaved who might there wander. Flowers upon a grave! Do they not seem sent back to us by a lost love from the very jaws of death? In a word, the Nawaubgunge grave-yard was as dismal, as business-like, and as hideous as the back yard of a monumental stone-cutter.

Thither, it is true, often and often during each succeeding year, did the whole male portion of the English community come, and as Handel's matchless death-notes wailed aloud high and shrill like the wailing of bereaved women, they passed through the lane formed by the black Sepoys near an open grave, and listened to the noble words of hope, to the falling clods, to the ringing ramrods, to the sharp rattle of the musketry. And then they listened to the merry quickstep which the band now played, as they hurried back again into weary Indian life.

There were so few pathways through the enclosure, and the place seemed so confused, the grass so tangled and high, the weeds so thick, that, but for the energy and impetuosity

of Sophy, Mrs Throgmorton would have retreated immediately. The task of finding her cousin's grave seemed to Sophy almost hopeless. But she and Motee continued assiduously to decipher the inscriptions around them.

There they all were, the numerous tombs —white marble and stucco, alike discoloured, mouldy, black, and grim. Patches of red brick-work here and there uncovered, as the hand of time stripped off a slab, or chipped away the plaster. Here reposed generations of Indian exiles. In that grand, heavy-looking mausoleum which the ladies are staring at, lies a foreign adventurer who had grown fat on the corruption of a native Court. His great wealth has long ago been piously deposited on Parisian gaming-tables by his heirs, but masses are still said for his soul in the quiet little church of St Laurence, at Antibes, in the department of the Var, according to his last will and testament. May they do some good to the soul of the wicked old plunderer! Near him, too near perhaps for

his perfect repose, lies a magistrate, who worked himself to death giving law to the lawless ; and a little further on, the ladies see an old defaced monument of a rapacious old English Nabob, who stood side by side with Clive at Plassey, and who quaked at the thunder of Sheridan. An heroic pilferer who fought well, and who robbed well, he has long ago gone where men fight and rob no more. Near him is a new white marble block placed over a boy soldier, whose mother's eyes are not yet dry.—There they all lie, side by side, and far from the land they all hoped once again to see.

Sophy passes, quite unnoticed, a sad little tomb in the corner, and yet it shelters and gives rest to a gentle heart, and a gentle love which could find no rest elsewhere ; and here on another tombstone is a long and quite illegible list of hard-fought battles 'which might show' that its owner was a brave soldier. Perhaps he carried also a disappointed love to his grave—who knows ? His name is quite effaced, and was perhaps for-

gotten almost as soon as the volleys of musketry had ceased to echo round the surrounding monuments, and whilst the black *coolies* were piling the earth upon him in his new and last halting-place. Well, well, is it not some consolation to know that in India there is one spot where life's weariness, and the pangs of exile and disappointed ambition and baffled hope, disturb no more? 'Heaven,' said the sailor, 'is as near to us here as in England!' In the agony of Lucknow, were not these words remembered by Polehampton, good priest, good oarsman, good fellow? He too rests in an Indian grave-yard, after having fought the good fight.

Sophy, in the diligence of her search, had parted from the other two ladies, when all at once she saw an old native watching her very attentively. She had not noticed him in the enclosure before, indeed the whole place had appeared deserted. He was a feeble old man, meanly clad, and had a long white beard, with a patch of yellow at the side of it. Soon he came up and addressed her in Hindustanee,

which she did not understand, and beckoned to her to follow him. She caught the words, 'Missy Baba Brabazon,' and thought she also caught the words, 'Palmer Brown Mem Sahib.' She followed the old man, and in a remote corner of the yard she came to a railing which looked bright and clean, and which surrounded a mound of earth, at the head of which was a very pretty marble cross, on which was engraved only one word,

ADA.

There was no surname, or mention of her age, or the date of her death. Within the railing around the little mound were some rose bushes, but they were not in bloom. Above rustled the light leaves of a large wide-spreading mimosa, which quite shaded that corner of the grave-yard, though its stem was on the other side of the wall. Sophy was convinced that she now beheld her cousin's tomb, but who could have taken such unusual care of it? Was it Mr Palmer Brown?

The time has now come for me to tell you

the story which lies buried under that simple mound of earth. Ten years ago, the lady now there lying calm and cold, was a very pretty, fresh, simple-hearted girl, who had just arrived from England, and had joined her father and mother at Dinapore, where the regiment, commanded by the former, was then cantoned. Her beauty and vivacity soon brought her many suitors, amongst others a young officer belonging to her father's regiment, and an old civilian from Patna, a civil station seven miles from Dinapore. Unfortunately the mother of the young lady was frivolous and worldly. She was more silly perhaps than sordid, but she had a mother's influence, and that influence was sufficiently strong in the end to bring about the catastrophe of a little drama,—for though its elements at present are common-place enough, a common-place old woman, a common-place old man, a vain girl, and a love-sick young gentleman, it is a drama, a tragic drama that may introduce in the fifth act the spades and the clowns. Seeing the liking the old civilian

had taken to her daughter, the mother schemed and schemed, clumsily but still eagerly, to obtain him as her daughter's husband. He was about three times the young lady's age, but he was a commissioner, stingy, and very rich. The blind old lady was not aware on what road she was really leading her daughter, and what startling object was at the end of it, far, far away in the little corner under the mimosa at Nawaubgunge.

The young girl soon fell in love with the young officer, but being impulsive and giddy, and quite intoxicated with the incense offered to her on every side, she grew capricious and imperious. The Indian sun dazzles the eye and fires the brain; and if she teased her lover more than his neighbours, it was the privilege at once and the tax of his love. Meanwhile the mother interposed between them with her prudent arithmetic and her old civilian. Day after day his carriage was to be seen at the Colonel's bungalow at the hour of dinner, or the Colonel's carriage was seen hurrying the mother and the young

lady away to the old civilian's lady-friends at Patna. The mother was doing her portion of the work of bringing about a lover's quarrel. This by-and-by took place.

Of the principal actors in this early stage of the drama perhaps the old civilian played the most insignificant part. Afterwards he had only two things to reproach himself with, —a senile infatuation, and with having spent twice as many rupees as he had ever done before in so short a time. The young officer, on his side, was hot-tempered, proud, and over-sensitive. He was soon madly in love. He was retired and studious, and it was the virgin passion of his heart. A man's first love is much more exacting than his second or his third.

Small need to dig up the ghosts of forgotten tiffs and jealousies. It is proper to shovel some things decently away. The young lady was becoming more and more heedless in her little flirtations, and the gentleman more jealous, more irritable, more proud. At length they had a quarrel which

was made up, and then another, and the young lady, also irritated, and suddenly aware of her new power, began to use it. She flirted with the old civilian and with others to annoy her lover, who became more proud, more dignified, more angry every day.

The crisis at last came at a ball given by the old civilian at Patna by the advice of the mother. The young lady teased her lover that night more than ever. She paraded the senile old civilian before him, and sat smiling and talking in whispers for at least half an hour with a vapid young waltzer of the Queen's regiment then quartered at Dinapore.

'What, are you going away so soon!' she said to her lover in the middle of the evening. There was a pointed tone of intentional indifference in her voice, which she afterwards bitterly regretted. 'Don't you find the ball wonderfully delightful? I do.'

'I have, unfortunately, a long way to go, and must start early!' said the officer, sorrowfully.

'What, Dinapore—a long way! What do you mean?'

'I set out to-night for Ferozepore. News has just been received that the Seikh army has crossed the Sutlej. Sir John Littler marched out of Ferozepore last Tuesday with a handful of men, and offered battle to thirty thousand of them. He has just offered me a place on his staff. Good-bye.'

He was gone. Had he stayed one moment longer and seen her face of agony, he would not have departed so abruptly. The mother had planned this ball. She was perfectly delighted with the result of the evening, and deemed the success of the civilian certain. She did not know that she had already, as it were, turned up one or two sods in the distant little corner under the mimosa.

Three or four months passed, during which the young lady yielded to anger, vanity, self-reproach, and also to grief, for hers was of those weak natures which do not value a prize till lost. Meanwhile rumours came day after day from the banks of the Sutlej. The great

battle of Moodkee was fought. Then came tidings of the terrible night at Ferozeshah. And with these war rumours, the name of the young officer sometimes reached her, for he was reckless, and sought that death which shuns the most unhappy. In its place he encountered fame, and was more than once mentioned for deeds of conspicuous daring.

At length there was a long lull in the news from the seat of war. Hardinge found himself compelled to gather together the whole sinews of the Indian Empire, before he again tried his strength with the formidable Khalsas. In this lull the mother used her influence so well that the young lady accepted the old civilian. Perhaps she was weary of the present, and blindly hoped that any change might be a relief. The mother was the happiest mother in the world and the old civilian its happiest dotard.

But this was not the particular melancholy fate in store for the young lady. A few days before the day fixed for the wedding, India was startled with the tidings of the great

victory of Sobraon. And when the details arrived the young lady learnt that her lover was dangerously wounded when waving the colours on the top of the intrenchments to rally a regiment which had been beaten back. In a poignant fit of re-awakened generosity, love, and remorse, she broke off the marriage with the old civilian. I may mention as an example of the terrible irony which underlies human weaknesses, that all his hoardings were lost in an Indian Bank a few months afterwards; money which the old miser would never have spent on his wife or anybody, as the mother well knew. He died of a broken heart.

Years passed, not without results, for nothing stands still in this world. To cantonment after cantonment the young lady was marched with the regiment, everywhere courted, admired, triumphant, and weary. For, after all, the routine of playing with human affections and deceiving men must fatigue at length, like any other labour in a tropical climate. The mother had hoped to

make her daughter the wife of an old man whom she could never respect. Instead of this she had rudely shaken her self-respect, sapped her faith in affection, and hardened her heart. Oh my brethren, to be for ever doomed to ladle up a love which you do not hope to taste; this may be a dream of poetical justice, but is it not a dreary destiny?

The young lady and the young officer again met. His conspicuous services had received what was considered a high reward. He had been appointed Secretary to Nawaubgunge. Thither her father's regiment was by accident ordered. She found her old lover bearded, tanned, much more manly-looking, and more grave than when she last saw him.

And he was still her old lover. His love had clung to him in the march, in the bivouac, in the battle. It had been by him when he lay ill of his wounds watching the eternal snow glowing pink in the evening amidst the matchless Himalayan ranges. It had gone forth with him to battle once more, when he again grew strong; a sad partner, but the

parent of many a high thought and noble deed. Finally, it had survived countless rumours of the unworthiness of its object, for it was the strong love of a strong man.

They met. They became engaged to be married. They again quarrelled,—the past had made the present volcanic.

It is useless now to rake up old heart-burnings and misunderstandings; or the old letters which some good folks talked about. They were written it was said to a sympathizing friend, who interposed between the lovers, and showed them to the gentleman with the best of purposes. But if there could be true love without irritability, without folly, what would become of half the misery in the world—and where would the poet then go for the materials of his art?

None lamented this rupture more than the mother, for the officer's position made her now approve of him as a husband. She was consoled when the interposing friend, a magistrate from a neighbouring civil station, took advantage of the quarrel, and became an

accepted suitor. As the mother drove along on the road shaded by the mimosa tree, she still had no idea of what there was on the other side of the wall.

The more thoughtful friends of the young lady looked more grave. They believed she was plunging into an abyss, the formidable purgatory of the coquette,—a marriage of pique. A confirmed flirt is so accustomed to inflict a merciless death-blow at the first hint of a slight to her vanity, that at last the avenging moment arrives, when in a clumsy effort to smite down the man she really loves, she buries the steel in her own breast. She brings hate to the altar of love, and repays a husband's affection with the mere vindictive caprice of a jaded beauty, and finds in marriage a mere phantasm of earth's holiest blessing—a counterfeit as unreal as her own sham smiles, sham blushes, sham sympathies, the artificial flowers with which for so many years she has been accustomed to attract and mock human affection.

The young lady married the civilian, and

his character was unfortunately not such as was likely to render such an union a happy one. He was vain, selfish, and ill-tempered; and his good breeding was confined to a social grimace which he could put off as easily as his evening dress-coat. Moreover, he had believed all along that the lady loved the officer, his rival, and had accepted him through pique. This did not tend to make matters more pleasant, when misunderstandings and disagreements arose. Given a spoilt young lady a selfish, ill-natured gentleman and no love, and such things will occur. And it is to be confessed the civilian began very soon to treat his wife very savagely. He justified this conduct with the reflection that his sense of self-importance had been cruelly insulted by her daring to prefer another to him. He forgot that the situation was, after all, of his own selection, and that he had stepped in between two people who loved each other, with his eyes wide open; but one cannot expect even a magistrate of Chuckergotty to bring a perfectly judicial impartiality

to the decision of the case—why or why not he should ill-treat a woman he was beginning to dislike. The bride's home was becoming anything but a happy one.

If she had met with a kind, unselfish husband, affairs might have been different. Of course her eyes must soon have been open as to the fatal mistake she had made, but with a kind husband she might have courageously set about to repair the error she had committed, and might have finished by becoming a kind loving wife. As it was, the poor creature contributed her full quota to the sum of domestic disquiet. She was sorely tempted, sorely tried, in her short but weary little pilgrimage, and her grave is now green and cool, and her sleep is calm.

One night the lady left her home.

There had been a quarrel more sharp and more fierce than usual, and the civilian struck his wife. Maddened, and tremendous in her hurt womanly feelings, she was blinded to all except personal revenge. In one hour after receiving the irreparable insult she was in the

house of her old lover. She had fled there on foot, alone, in the middle of the night.

In that house was now a man altogether changed from the exacting, proud, irritable young officer with whom she had quarrelled. He too had come to his senses, and reproached himself again and again with the unhappiness which he saw too plainly was now her lot. He loved her still, but all selfishness was now eliminated from his passion, and, moreover, he was suffering her pangs.

When therefore in the dead of night he saw the result of the sad drama, his action was immediate. He roused his friend in the house, and made him at once conduct the poor distracted lady to the house of a married civilian living near, for the Colonel and the lady's mother had left Nawaubgunge. The friend was named Pulfington Belper, and the wife of the civilian was Mrs Vesey. He was then hurrying off to the house where the outrage had been committed, when the author of it, the civilian, rushed into his house with a pistol and fired it at him, wounding him in the

arm. Scornfully and sternly he commanded the civilian to follow him, and the latter came after him like a spaniel. When they reached Mrs Vesey's house, he exacted from its assembled inmates a most solemn promise that the night's events should for ever be buried in the most profound secrecy. And even the reluctant civilian was unable to refuse the oath. The officer took him aside, and pointing to his bleeding arm, said with terrible significance,

'You shall do justice, sir, either to her or to me!'

But as far as regarded fixing shame upon the woman whom he had much ill-used, the civilian was not baulked so much as he expected, as in a very short time information was brought from an adjoining room that the poor lady was dying. Being about to become a mother, the night's excitement was too much for her. She died, and before the party separated the officer said very solemnly,

'Remember, gentlemen, your oath is now to one in heaven!'

But secrecy is not always the best policy,

and in spite of every precaution distorted stories gradually got abroad. It was said that the civilian had fought a duel with the officer, and various reasons were invented to account for it. At length the officer himself heard that Government were interesting themselves in the matter, and were about to order an inquiry. His action was again prompt but injudicious. He wrote to an influential friend in Calcutta to say that there were private matters which he would not like to have brought before the public, and rather than that, he would do anything, resign his appointment, throw up his commission. His desire to atone for imaginary faults by some marked act of self-sacrifice here quite blinded his judgment, which was usually very good.

The friend naturally put a false construction on all this, but acted otherwise with energy and judgment. It was arranged with the Government that in consideration of the officer's distinguished services he should be allowed to go to sea on sick certificate, and that when returned he should find his ap-

pointment filled up. He made a voyage of two years to Penang, to Singapore, to the Straits, and when he returned he was allowed to rejoin his regiment: that was the punishment in India for the short-comings of staff officers.

On rejoining her friends, Sophy was seized with the sudden desire of placing a few flowers on the supposed grave of her cousin, but where was she to find them? The three ladies got into the carriage and drove away, but they had not gone far before they happened to meet Charley Simpkin galloping back from parade on his celebrated *tattoo* 'Tippoo.' That gallant officer immediately drew up, and trotted along by the side of the carriage.

'Oh, Mr Simpkin, will you do me a favour?' said the young lady to him. She knew they were near the bungalow inhabited by the Ensign and Major Pulfington Belper.

'Anything in the world, Miss Brabazon.

I'll cut your greatest enemy's throat, I'll read five verses of your favourite poet, I'll——'

'You have got some roses in Major Pulfington Belper's garden, I hear. Gallop off at once and pick me some, sir—do you hear?'—and a tiny foot was stamped on the rich carpet of Mrs Liversege's Calcutta barouche.

'With the greatest pleasure in my life; Major Pulfington Belper is not the rose, but Major P. B. has lived near the rose, and so Major Pulfington Belper has become——'

'And then gallop back and meet us at the gate of the church-yard yonder.'

The smirk upon the face of Mr Charles Simpkin disappeared, and he galloped away. His bungalow was close at hand. In four minutes he was at the church-yard gate. The carriage had just arrived there.

These four minutes had been occupied by the inmates of that carriage in rather a warm discussion. Mrs Throgmorton thought it was time to return. The grave-yard was damp and unwholesome, and in her own

secret mind she thought that this whim of Sophy's was rather an objectionable one.

Motee supported Sophy's interest with tact, and the aunt at length gave way.

Sophy took the roses. She got out of the carriage, having her aunt's leave to go alone into the church-yard. She promised to be away only a minute. Mrs Throgmorton, Motee, and Charley Simpkin remained conversing at the gate, but the minute passed, then five minutes, and then a quarter of an hour, and Miss Sophy Brabazon did not return.

Mrs Throgmorton, to whom the first visit, the second visit, and the foolish sentimentality about the roses, were all equally unwelcome, now grew very impatient.

'We must go and fetch her. Mr Simpkin, would you kindly help us out of the carriage?'

The grave under the mimosa tree is not visible until you reach a certain turning in the left walk. Charley Simpkin and the ladies reached this point exactly at the same

moment, and all started. The Ensign was as pale as a ghost.

There under the shade of the tree they saw Captain Ashleigh with his arm round Sophy. He did not remove it on their approach.

On the little mound of earth within the railing was a handful of fresh roses.

END OF VOL. II.

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