


TROPICAL SKETCHES
OR
REMINISCENCES OF
AN INDIAN JOURNALIST

WILLIAM KNIGHTON



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WILLIAM KNIGHTON

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I



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BY

WILLIAM KNIGHTON, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "FOREST LIFE IN CEYLON."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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P R E F A C E.

THE increased facilities of intercourse with Europe are rapidly producing innovations in India, and in Anglo-Indian life. Railways and the electric telegraph, a Civil Service no longer to be appointed on account of its family connections, and a public opinion in England bearing upon Indian Government, must, sooner or later, produce a complete revolution in the ordinary routine of Indian existence. These *Tropical Sketches*, therefore, will be, in a very few years,—nay, to a great extent, are now probably,—rather views of what has been than of what is; particularly in all that relates to newspapers and their offices.

Many of the following chapters were originally written in India, amid the scenes and

circumstances which they describe. They have all been carefully revised, however, and, in fact, rewritten for the present work.

No man can have been the editor of a newspaper anywhere, without making many personal enemies. This is particularly the case in small communities, such as those of Colonial towns and the capitals of the Indian Presidencies. To such enemies a work issuing from the pen of the obnoxious editor will afford the long-sought opportunity of paying off old scores, of discharging the vials of that wrath which has long been pent up within the breast, uncomfortably and inconveniently.

I am perfectly aware, also, that whoever ventures to find fault with any portion of the system of Indian administration, will find many ready to assail him. Some, writing from honest conviction in honest defence of the government they admire or serve; others, to obtain the favour of the authorities, and thereby secure their own promotion or advantage. To the former I would simply observe, that, in the following pages, I confine my condemnation of Indian administration to that department in which I served—the Educational.

If I have written strongly on the subject, it is because I feel strongly. Mental philosophy and pure mathematics have been the subjects chiefly taught in the Government Colleges of India. The religion in which the students have been nurtured in infancy, Brahmanism, has been uprooted by the study of geography and astronomy, and no other religion has Government given them the opportunity of inquiring into or embracing. It was but a few months ago that the leading and oldest daily journal in Calcutta—the *Bengal Hurkaru*—wrote as follows:—

“ It is a lamentable fact, that in no civilized country on earth has so little been done in the way of public instruction as in India, and even that little is more owing to private enterprise than to any endeavours on the part of Government to place education within the reach of the poor; moreover, the little that has been done—little, considering the hundred millions of the British subjects—has chiefly been done by Missionaries, almost entirely unaided by government.”

The results of the system pursued in the Government Colleges have been such as might

have been anticipated from the studies most patronised—great intellectual acuteness and a total want of moral principle, utter infidelity in religion, combined with an enthusiastic worship of reason and money.

Indeed, the members of the reformed Council of Education of Bengal seem to have partially discovered its defects. “Whilst we have trained scholars—” say they in a recent report ; “whilst we have trained scholars in scores, who will integrate a difficult problem, no one has ever left our schools whom an officer making a road would employ as an overseer in preference to an English serjeant who can just read and write.” Let the leading magazines and reviews in England which have said so much in favour of Government Education in India, particularly *Blackwood* and the *Dublin University*, ponder that confession—that and the following, both taken from the same report :—“The want of everything of a practical character in the educational course at present, appears to the Council to be its greatest defect. Everything that strikes the senses, one half of the whole circle of knowledge is, as it were, ignored in our present system of education.” All honour

to the Council of Education of Bengal for acknowledging its former deficiencies and shortcomings so candidly! Let it not be forgotten, too, that the system must have been a very bad one indeed, which could call down such a censure from the present Council upon the labours of its predecessors. My readers must not suppose, however, that the chief objection has therefore been removed. Far from it. The youth of India are still brought up without faith, without a religion, as in times past.

I am perfectly aware that all this will not prevent my being virulently attacked by certain Indian journals and Anglo-Indian patriots—"Venomous falsehoods," "Ignorant and malicious calumnies," "Ridiculous drivellings," "Absurd rhodomontade," "Vile aspersions," are some of the amenities of literature culled from Indian journals (such as the *Friend of India*) relative to what I have previously written; and similarly gentle remonstrances will doubtless be issued with reference to the present work. My justification is not for such as use those terms—for such as will not see, nay, possibly cannot see—but for that portion of the press and public of Eng-

land which can and will see. Let but that press and that public receive these *Tropical Sketches* with as much favour as *Forest Life in Ceylon* was received, and I shall care little for the pop-gun salutes of anonymous correspondents in Indian journals, or the more formidable broadsides of their editorial columns.*

* For misrepresentation in Ceylon and India, I was prepared, but I confess I was not prepared for misrepresentation in New York. In Mr. Mitchell's paper, *The Citizen*, an account was given, early in the present year, of my description of Indian Coolies and their treatment on the coffee-estates, which was as far from the truth in its inferences, as it was from being a just representation of my views in its statements.

CHELSEA, *October*, 1854.

TROPICAL SKETCHES;

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CHAPTER I.

THE COLONIAL NEWSPAPER.

“NOTHING, sir, can be more foolish,” said my uncle. We were at the moment seated in his office in the Fort of Colombo, the thermometer at ninety degrees in the shade. He was one of those bald, apparently irascible but really benevolent, men, who wax red at the least provocation, and who constantly rub their shining phrenological developments, guiltless of hair, with their handkerchiefs, when excited.

He had just given me a long dissertation on the evils of that desire for change, which young men so often exhibit, and was now winding up his discourse. "Nothing, sir, can be more foolish. You give up a flourishing estate, bright prospects—" "The leeches and solitude, the coolies and the lonely bungalow," I added. "Pshaw! what are these?" was the reply; "trifles not worth naming. You give up, I say, the prospect of a fortune, and for what? to edit a miserable newspaper that nobody reads." "It has four hundred and eighty-seven subscribers," said I, interrupting him,—for, where the honour of the *Ceylon Herald* was at stake, I thought myself bound to take up arms. "Four hundred fiddlesticks!" quoth my uncle, waxing wroth, as he tried to puff his cigar again; but the light had long been extinguished, and the attempt was vain. "Four hundred fiddlesticks! it's easy to make out a case." "And then, with management, I see no reason why we should not have seven hundred subscribers in a short time. They say the *Observer* has more," I added. "With *your* management and with *your* pen," said he, "it must be a thou-

sand soon ;” and there he paused. I puffed my cigar, sipped a little more brandy and water, smiled, and said nothing.

I had but just completed my nineteenth year, when I first landed in Ceylon. Two years of jungle life, spent in the management of a coffee-estate, had made me melancholy, moping, dull, a bookworm, and a man of reverie. I determined I would stand it no longer. I had before me an offer to undertake the editorship of the *Ceylon Herald*, at a small salary, it is true, but then the salary was to increase with the circulation. I was in all the budding glory of twenty-one, and I had made up my mind to try my hand at leading articles for the future, leaving coffee estates and coolies, bugs and bungalows, to the poor denizens of the forest.

My letters from the jungle had always appeared in conspicuous positions in the Colombo papers—the italics, the notes of admiration and exclamation, the dashes and the Greek and Latin quotations, always carefully attended to. My contributions were evidently valuable, why then should not my leading articles succeed? I knew a great deal about

coffee, much about horseflesh, more about elephants, and most of all about cigars, and I saw no reason why I should not succeed. When I had altered the ode* of Horace to suit the colonial secretary and Ceylon, asking him, in elegant Latinity, why he hastened to destroy the island, by loving it too well, had not the joke called forth an angry correspondence between Philos and Milos, as to the authorship? Why, then, should I not succeed?

Such were the reflections that passed through my mind—such the questions I asked myself, when my uncle observed, “With *your* management and with *your* pen, the number of subscribers will soon be a thousand.” “I do not see why it should not,” I answered inwardly, but a smile was the only external evidence of the thought. “Dr. Tweezer,” said I, “assures me that the coffee-mania cannot last much longer—that the days of its success will soon be ended—and that it would be folly to trust to it alone.” “Dr Tweezer

* The eighth ode of the first book, commencing—

“Lydia, dic, per omnes

Te Deos oro, Sybarin cur properas amando

Perdere?” &c.

has his money largely embarked in sugar-planting," was my uncle's reply, "no wonder he distrusts coffee." "Well, but, my dear uncle," I observed, determined to put an end to this unpleasant scene by soothing him, "Mr. Pinto, the Portuguese agent, looked after the estate very well before I came; he can return to it now, and I will run up often, to see how he gets on." "Well, well, you are determined on it, I see," said the old man kindly, "and must have your way as usual. I wish you every success with the paper, my boy; and, between us, we must see that Pinto minds what he's about—he will be honest as long as he's well looked after." So saying, my uncle gave a final polish to his head with his handkerchief, and threw the end of his cigar into the fire.

The office of the *Ceylon Herald* was situated in one of the narrow streets of the Fort of Colombo, a street principally occupied by Portuguese shoemakers and tailors, and the junior officers of Her Majesty's hundred and forty-fourth, then quartered in Colombo. The floor and the roof were both constructed of red tiles; those beneath our feet flat for walking-

on, those above us curved, in order to lap over each other and exclude the rain. A small verandah formed a kind of vestibule to the office, the roof being supported by rude wooden pillars, once painted, although what colour they *had* been painted it would not be easy to discover by examining them. Of the large room which formed the front of the house, opening out on the verandah, a portion near the window was screened off to form the sacred chamber of the editor, whilst the part near the door, which was always open, was allotted to the solitary clerk who received the advertisements, watched their insertion, computed their cost, and made out the bills. In the adjoining chamber stood the type-cases of the compositors, so that the editor had but to pass from his little screened-off chamber into the adjoining room to discover his editorials cut up into convenient lengths, and being "done into" print by the swarthy fingers of Portuguese and Singhalese compositors. Over these reigned the head printer, Don Gonzalez Antonio de Perez, a Portuguese descendant, as black and ugly as the swarthiest borderer on Lake Tschad, in the centre of Africa.

I never knew the real name of Mr. Perez, as we called him, until he laid a note on my table one day, asking whether he, "Mr. Don Gonzalez Antonio De Perez," might have "the supreme felicity and honour" of seeing me, "when he consummated his nuptials with Miss Felicia Maria St. Anna Hernandez," as he expressed it.

Mr. Perez, I say, was the presiding genius of the dining-room ; that is, of what had been the dining-room, but was now the composers' office. In shirt-sleeves rolled up to the shoulder, revealing two slender black arms, and in pantaloons once white, did Mr. Perez administer rebuke and commendation as he listed to those beneath him. He prided himself on his knowledge of English, which, however, he spoke after the Portuguese fashion—he had been reading and misunderstanding Carlyle, and prided himself on being one of those intensely earnest, practical men, who cannot understand a joke, and who talk of their "mission." Of voluble tongue, fluent in English, in Portuguese, in Singhalese, he talked and worked incessantly, never for a moment idle, never for a moment at rest. An invaluable man under the circumstances, but obstinate as a donkey.

The compositors' office opened into a paved yard behind, in the centre of which stood a melancholy-looking jack-fruit tree, with a few dark, scanty leaves adorning its branches; so little green, so much black, about its trunk and limbs, that one might almost conclude at a glance it had been nourished with ink instead of water. In an apartment of the back premises, which had once been a kitchen, stood the printing-press, doubtless of a similar form to that which William Caxton, of venerable memory, had used when he set up his marvellous engine in Westminster, "hard by the cathedral," so clumsy, so awkward in its wooden massiveness, did it appear.

Brushes and buckets; piles of paper and of papers; dark, ink-bespattered boys, looking forward to a future intimately connected with the composing-stick, and two or three lazy, lounging Singhalese messengers, completed the furniture, animate and inanimate, of the *Ceylon Herald* office.

Totally ignorant of the mysteries of printing—innovent of the difference between a composing-stick and a galley, between Great Primer type and Diamond—I seated myself at

the little table in the mysterious office, sole manager and director, editor, corrector of the press, accountant, cashier, treasurer, and letter-writer, of the newspaper and of the printing office.

When men take upon themselves employments and responsibilities, of the very nature of which they are ignorant, says some cynical critic (determined to put down this loose system of writing, these random sketches without statistics), they may expect to fail—no other result can be anticipated. Quite correct, O critic!—but, as applied to the present instance, altogether wrong; for, though I made many blunders—ridiculous blunders some of them—displayed much ignorance, and endured much sarcasm from the better-appointed *Observer*, I did *not* fail. The exception proves the rule, argues the critic, and thus we are both satisfied.

Fortunately, the paper was published but twice a-week, so that I had ample time to write leaders and correct the proof-sheets, to write letters to myself and answer them in the editorial columns, to note down answers to imaginary correspondents in my liveliest vein,

and to go through all the other business of the editor of a "pushing" colonial newspaper. I have still, however, the liveliest recollection of the arduous labour involved in the correction of the press, of the way in which I was interrupted, in the midst of my profoundest articles, by the incessant talking of Mr. Perez, and the loud tones in which he reproved the habitual laziness of "black men," as he was fond of calling the Singhalese. The Portuguese descendants fared better at his hands — his heart, which opened to a pair of pantaloons, was cold as ice to the camboy.*

"Mr. Perez," said I, calling him one day, when I had been elaborating a would-be brilliant article on some local triviality, illustrated by quotations from Cicero and Bacon—"Mr. Perez, I really cannot get on, with the noise from the compositors' room. I have been obliged to lay down my pen twice," I continued—suiting the action to the word, and throwing the pen on the paper (I had cleaned it beforehand for the purpose)—"I have been obliged to lay down my pen twice in the course of this single

* The cloth wrapped round the legs of the Singhalese, like a scanty petticoat, is so called.

article, in consequence of the incessant loud talking."

"I shall see to him, saar," said Mr. Perez, showing his white teeth, in a condescending smile. "That new compositor, the Singhalese man, Hathacatarr, he's a plenty loud talker; he's a talker enough for twenty men. He doesn't understand when I go tell him, that's no way—work, I say, well first, talk after—but he's all the same as one lunatic, he hears, but does not see or comprehend."

And so saying, Mr. Perez returned to create more noise than ever. First, he attacked Hathacatarr in Singhalese, asking why he (Mr. Perez) and *his* office should be disgraced by a black jabberer who did not understand his work? A Portuguese compositor offered his opinion on the subject in choice Portuguese. Hathacatarr replied in Singhalese, and a countryman of his spoke in his defence; two new combatants joined in the war of words incontinently, and louder than ever rose the din and the confusion; whilst above all rang clearly the commanding voice of Mr. Perez, shouting, "Silence, saar!" to each in turn, without reference to distinction of race. Not only was

my work put an end to, and an eloquent peroration nipped in the bud, in which "Justice and Truth, twin goddesses," were feelingly appealed to, but I felt convinced too that all work in the adjoining office was suspended for the time being. I, therefore, rose from my chair, coughed leisurely, walked slowly into the composers' apartment, asked Mr. Perez whether the advertisement relative to the recent samples of coffee from Ruminacadde had been "set up" in fancy type, and walked about, when the question had been answered, looking particularly at nothing. The tumult was stilled, and did not break out again for a time; but I took care, for the future, to write my principal leading articles at home, and not to call Mr. Perez in, when I wanted to put an end to the noise in the composers' room.

"What is this, Mr. Perez?" said I, as I made my way hurriedly into the office one day, shortly after my installation, and seated myself at my editorial desk. A "proof," or first copy in print, of an article written the preceding evening lay before me, and there was something really distressing in seeing my well-turned sentences (as I considered them) upset and

made nonsense of, by ignorant and unskilful compositors. It is true the *Observer* had pointed out, the evening before, some unfortunate mistake I had made in writing about something I did not understand; my temper was slightly ruffled—but there was really enough in the document on the desk to make any man, however equable his temper, annoyed and irritable. Hence my question. I had commenced a leading article thus:—

“When Æsop described the countryman praying to Jove to help him out of his difficulty—a difficulty which the suppliant easily extricated himself from subsequently, by putting his shoulder to the wheel—the fabulist was but suggesting a truth of universal application; a great and important truth, too often lost sight of. The coffee-planters, who hold such angry meetings at Kandy, who memorialize a Parliament that cares nothing for them, and are then angry at not being heard, forget, it is to be feared, this old fable, with its wise, practical application. Sympathizing, as we do, with the feelings produced by the injustice which has been done them,” &c., &c.

Such were the sentences which I wrote: the printer's version of them was as follows:—

“Vihen 8soqs desunvid the cum!vqum ?va-
 qung !o Foue !o helh hun ont of tus biffun!q
 —x diffunlhq mhiel the xupp/uoanh uxily in!vu-
 aled humulf fum xubseynmtly, ly puttiny tus
 s?onlde* to the mlul. He †alm?xt mus lmt
 xuqqextmq, a tmnth of mnusal app!ica?nm—x
 qme! nud im&or!ant tunth tu of!m lunt xqht
 of. &e coffee-planters mho hotb xzcb auqnj
 mutinys of Kandy, mho numoria!ze a Pavlia-
 muit thot cums mtbinj fm them, &, me thum
 auqrj at mt bmy heanl, forje!. I is to lu jeareb,
 thm ild juble wit& iti mixe prac!icab appzcalim.
 9ympattuzmj us me do mit2 !he fulmjs prob-
 mud by the mjustme whic† &ax bun dun
 thun,” &c., &c.

“What is this, Mr. Perez?” I naturally asked, as I perused the above unintelligible document. Mr. Perez showed his teeth, according to his wont—as fine a set of white teeth, I will venture to assert, as any to be found out of Africa—and peering at the proof, shook his head reprovingly.

“Plenty bad work this,” said he, at length; “that Hathacatarr doesn't know he's business

—idle man, too, plenty idle—pah! Singhalese; what you expect, saar? These black men have no mission, and so they don't fulfil none."

"Well, but," I replied, with all the quiet composure I could summon, "if Hathacatarr composes in this style, the sooner his place is better filled the better for all of us. Let him put up the large type advertisements, not my editorials, for the future."

"I am in the look-out for a good, earnest man, saar," was Mr. Perez' reply; "a Portuguese man that knows he's mission. I will let you know plenty soon, when I have catched him. That Mr. Fonseca" (the clerk) "hire Hathacatarr; but what he can know? Mr. Fonseca don't understand a galley from a printing-press." The concluding sentence was uttered in a low voice, for Mr. Fonseca was within hearing of loud conversation; Mr. Perez concluded with a subdued laugh, smothered in his throat, which showed the brilliant teeth more alarmingly than ever. "Send Hathacatarr to me," said I to him, as he retired, whilst I retained the proof.

Hathacatarr, a mild-looking Singhalese, of small size, with spectacles on nose, and a comb,

of larger dimensions than usual, projecting four inches above his head, soon made his appearance, ready to enter upon a voluble explanation. "Is that your proof, Hathacatarr?" I asked, in Singhalese.

"Yees, zurr," he commenced, in reply, for he disdained the vernacular, and *would* speak English, though he could not understand all that was said to him in that language; "yees, zurr; him is mine. I tell every thing to you, zurr. Mr. Perez, zurr, he hate me all the same as one big snake. Why? because I tell him truth, I no tell lies. He make de boy Rickawille 'tribute (distribute*) all my type when I go home plenty early yesterday, with Mr. Fonseca's leave. Every body know, zurr, Rickawille not know him business yet. Him put *d*'s in the hole for *b*'s and *g*'s for *q*'s, and he make all tubsy-turby—I not know where get one letter when I want him. I put my finger in for one *a*, and I get one *x*; I want *t*, I get the note for tara-tara-mation (admiration). How I do well, zurr? You tell Mr. Perez let me 'tribute my

* To *distribute* the type, is to put each letter back into its own compartment in the compositor's tray, or "case," after it has been used.

type, no let de boy Rickawille touch my box, and I do plenty good.”

Such were the difficulties of newspaper editing in Colombo at the time of which I write; every line had to be inspected by myself—advertisements, domestic occurrences, local reports, editorials, all—before the broad sheet was issued to the public eye. I had to see that the ship which indicated a shipping advertisement, (and served besides to fill up the advertisement columns)—the horse which pranced before the notice of a sale of Arabs, mules, or donkeys—the house which smoked, European like, above the few lines that indicated that a bungalow was to be let or sold, were all in their proper places, not turned upside down, or put in wrong places, a horse substituted, for instance, for a ship, or a house for a horse. Everything demanded the editor's eye—he was responsible for all—and it, therefore, may be easily conceived that his situation was by no means a sinecure.

The arrival and departure of the English mails were, like picking time on the coffee estates, the great seasons of bustle and activity in our little office.

The getting of the English papers on the arrival of the mail was by no means an easy matter. The clerks from the respective offices were first dispatched to the little post-office window, behind which the Post-Master-General himself laboured, like a little Hercules, at unwieldy bags of newspapers and letters ; whilst his assistants, Europeans, native Portuguese and Singhalese, broke open boxes with praiseworthy diligence, and scattered their contents about the floor. Great was the commotion within, copious the perspiration, numerous the ejaculations—but far greater was the excitement, the commotion, the pushing and the crushing, the exclamation and the heat, without.

“ I really cannot do more than I am doing, gentlemen,” urged the post-master, his countenance burning in a fiery glow, that illumined his fine Roman nose like a coat of scarlet. “ I really cannot do more than I am doing, gentlemen. Every one will get what he wants ultimately, if you have but a little patience, but things must take their ordinary course ” —that ordinary course apparently being that all the letters and papers, as soon as they ar-

rived, should be strewn about the floor and on the tables of the post-office in much-abused confusion. Outside the little window, anxious faces, with and without spectacles, peer eagerly into the *sanctum*, as if desirous of recognizing their property amid a thousand others. The aide-de-camp of the governor swears terribly because he is kept waiting for his own and the governor's letters and newspapers—the clerks from the various offices more mildly discuss the chances of a speedy departure in English, in Portuguese, and in Singhalese—the two newspaper editors, having hastened to the assistance of their clerks, drawn to the post-office by the delay, stand, most eager and most anxious, side by side, the *Observer* and the *Herald*, the *Herald* and the *Observer* in friendly rivalry, polite and affable to each other, strange though it may appear, yet each intensely desirous of receiving his papers and having his *Extraordinary* first out—joking the while, notwithstanding, at the scene and at the actors in it.

“Hot work,” observes the *Observer*, as he casts an anxious glance into the mysterious chamber, vainly essaying to catch the post-

master's eye, and with a glance assure him that old animosities, for the time being, are ended. "The newspapers certainly ought to be supplied first," replies the *Herald*, "because they are supplied *pro bono publico*."

"I really cannot do more than I am doing, gentlemen," replies the post-master, groaning. He is a public functionary peculiarly assailable by the press, and the *Herald* has been regarded for years as the government paper, on the strength of having once, in times gone by, borrowed a printing press from the government establishment. "The governor is waiting for his dispatches," growls the aide-de-camp, as he flattens his nose against the wooden frame of the open window, the words booming distinctly into the busy chamber. "No one is more anxious that the governor should have his dispatches at the earliest moment than I am, Mr. Tallboys," is the post-master's reply.

At length the desired newspapers are found; *Observér* and *Herald* are supplied simultaneously, that there may be no imputation of unfair play or of favouritism. With Chinese umbrellas (made of paper, and flat on the top,

as figured on tea-chests) over their heads, the editors march through the sun to their respective offices, and then great is the excitement, and the activity of every individual in those offices. Mr. Perez has been ten times outside the verandah to see if Mr. Fonseca or myself be visible with the important papers. The *Monthly Times*—a summary of the European intelligence brought by the mail, and published in London for Indian subscribers—is at once opened. The “general summary” is cut up into convenient lengths for the compositors, and, in three minutes, Hathacatarr and his fellow-workmen are busily employed in putting the letters into words, the words into sentences, the sentences into columns, and the columns into the printing-press, whilst the editor runs hurriedly over another copy of the *Monthly Times*, to collect, as he calls it, the “cream” of the intelligence, and to give it, as a summary of his own, at the head of his *Extraordinary*, aware that in a few minutes long strips of almost unintelligible English will be crowding his desk awaiting correction, for he must examine every letter, inspect every figure, watch every comma, ere the hungry

public can have this monthly feed of English news.

Mr. Perez, in his domain, exhorts his men to activity with many words, working the while himself without intermission. The honour of the *Herald* office is at stake, and Mr. Perez hates the *Observer* with a deadly hatred, so that he spares neither entreaty nor commendation, that the work may be done speedily and well. Even the Singhalese are praised by him for the nonce, and he is ready to declare that, so far as he can judge, Hathacattarr actually *has* discovered his mission, and is fulfilling it. Nor is Mr. Fonseca idle—the covers of the newspapers to be posted are his charge, and he has them before him directed and pasted, ready for lapping around the expected *Extraordinary*—he is even ready to condescend to the working of the printing-press, rather than the sheet should be delayed, for he too has been for years in the *Herald* office, and its honour is dear to him.

Column after column is taken corrected, from the editor's desk to the compositor's room, to have the errors removed, and so the work grows under our hands into a goodly

little sheet of six columns ; we *have* aspired to eight, but it was under *very* favourable circumstances—these six columns containing the intelligence most desired in Ceylon, a brief summary of political news, a fuller digest of colonial matters or deliberations affecting the colonial interest generally, commercial items, particularly the prices of coffee, sugar, and cinnamon in the home market, and the extent of the sales effected, together with a list of the ships which had arrived in England from the island and those which had sailed for Ceylon. These, with an odd scrap of Indian news here and there, put in to fill up a corner or complete a column, and intended originally for our next regular issue of the *Herald*, complete the *Extraordinary*, which Mr. Fonseca distributes by messengers over Colombo, and by the post throughout the island. “Run over to the *Observer* office,” shouts out Mr. Perez to one of his devils, “and see whether his *Extraordinary* is out, and what time he got done, if he is out.” Away goes the boy, his ink-bespattered appearance telling of the printing-office in unmistakeable terms, and gets the desired information readily and truly,

for courtesy prevails in both offices, and an emissary from either is well received in the camp of the enemy. The subordinates know that the editors shake hands when they meet—nay, that they dine with each other sometimes—and they, therefore, regard it as their duty to emulate this fraternal feeling.

The extra duty imposed upon the editor, however, by the arrival of the English mail did not end here. Leading articles were to be written on colonial topics of interest—speculations were to be indulged in of good or evil fortune, and hopes raised or warnings reiterated in consequence. Files of papers were to be searched for articles referred to in the *Monthly Times*, which merely gleaned the chief items of news for us, and directed us to the rest. Columns of the London daily papers were to be run carefully over with the fingers, pencil in hand, to extract a few lines from some debate, relative to Ceylon—how Mr. Stick had laid a petition from the coffee-planters upon the table of the house, and had then resumed his seat—how Mr. Stick had said nothing, or, if he did, how, what he said was inaudible in the reporters' gallery. Such

a notice served for the foundation of an indignant comment, as to the way in which colonial affairs were neglected by the British parliament—a comment palatable to men, with irritated feelings, who had lost their fortunes in an artificial undertaking, fostered by one set of legal enactments, and overthrown by another.

Nor was the period of the departure of the English mail less bustling and noisy in our little office; we, too, had our *Overland Summary* to dispatch to subscribers in England, containing the editorials which we most prized—the local items considered of most importance—the commercial, the domestic, and the shipping news. A busy and a bustling time that in which this *Summary* was “got out;” for whilst, on the one hand, we did not wish “to go to press” a moment too soon, we must not, on the other, run a risk of losing the mail. This *Summary* was, for the most part, ordered by English residents in the island to be sent to their European friends—some minute-typed domestic occurrence or shipping announcement, intended to catch the eye of friends and relations left behind in the loved

“home”—a few lines, to the rest of the world nothing, to the little circle for which they were intended of the utmost interest and importance. Not a paper published anywhere but contains many such notices, brief records of the joys and sorrows of a few, unheeded or unread by the many!

CHAPTER II.

THE EDITOR'S HOLIDAY.

MY previous residence in the jungle had made me passionately fond of jungle sports. The chase of the elephant, the leopard, the elk, and the deer, were physical excitements craved earnestly for, amidst the mental wear and tear of editorial life ; nor was I altogether excluded from such.

At the time of which I write, Captain Lister, of the Ceylon Rifles, was one of the finest sportsmen in the island ; and having made acquaintance, nay, contracted a friendship with him, during my residence in the forest, I maintained that acquaintanceship and friendship uninterrupted during the period of my

editorial labours. When a friend, whose discretion might be relied upon, could be procured for the purpose, and induced to look after the details of the office ; when no English mail was expected to arrive or depart for some time—no stirring news anticipated ; I would leave the requisite amount of leading articles in the hands of the aforesaid convenient friend, and start for the jungle, to enjoy a few days' sport with Captain Lister. The *Herald* was published on Tuesdays and Fridays, so that, starting early on a fine moonlight Tuesday night from Colombo on my own steed, with two fresh horses, hired or borrowed, at convenient stages on the road, and a pony awaiting me from the estate in Kandy, I could reach Ruminacudde by midday on Wednesday—not without laborious exertion, not without having undertaken and accomplished a long and harassing ride ; but my apprenticeship in the jungle had fitted me for such work.

Casting, then, proofs and broadsheets, editorial squabbles, and complaining correspondents, to the winds on such occasions, I gave Uncle Toby (my black Arab) the rein, rode merrily through the intricate covered-ways

and over the drawbridges of the German-looking old fort, leaving its frowning battlements behind me ; and, ere the town subscribers of the *Herald* had received their copies of the paper, all steaming from the press and redolent of the office, its editor was miles away on the road to Kandy. Uncle Toby snorted approvingly as he felt that he might stretch out at his own convenient pace, a cloud of dust rising behind him at every foot-fall, to be silvered over by the moon's rays ere it fell to the earth again ; and every native that we met, hurrying home to his palm-leaf hut, looking upon the horse as mad, and his rider still more so, as we scampered past them. The bounding elasticity of such exercise, when one was in light convenient jungle costume, the joyous animation of the tramping canter, the beautiful scenes that burst continually on the view—were all elements in one's condition at the moment that rendered it enviable. It is doubtful, I think, whether the most thrilling triumphs of civilized life yield more pure and unsullied enjoyment to the triumpher than such a ride to the active energetic youth, known to his horse and his

horse to him, as he goes “tramp, tramp, along the ground.”

Nor must the rest at the half-way inn be forgotten ; the throwing one's self from the smoking steed ; the stiff scrambling to the door ; the answer of the expectant servant ; the neat supper, appetizingly laid out in a room opening on the verandah, from which the moon's rays rush in like a flood of silver ; the contemplative cigar, and much-relished glass of brandy and water, cold and refreshing, —with which the repast is ended—are all elements of joy, under such circumstances, which the memory in subsequent years will not let fade. But the fresh horse is already at the door, his trappings gleaming in the moonbeams, as the servant walks him up and down—he champing the bit the while, impatient to be off. An hour has already glided away since the inn was reached—an hour of the purest physical enjoyment, and leaping from the chair, the foot is in the stirrup in a moment, the saddle obtained ; a kindly word, and to him of more value, a kindly rupee, thrown to the groom, and with firm hand and knee, the traveller is already wending his

way in bounding semicircles up the hill's side, now lost in the shade of the overhanging trees, now glistening in the moonbeams, until, a bend in the road attained, the comfortable inn is lost to sight.

But is there no danger in such a moonlight ride—a ride at the very dead of night, through such wild districts?—asks some fair and interested reader. None to the bold rider, believe me, fair lady. The elephants will get out of the way the moment they hear you coming; they have no affection for horses. The hoofs of your steed talk roundly to the stones, waking the distant echoes; the serpents hear the sound, and will be gone. The wild leopard will seek no encounter with a brave horse and fearless rider, armed though they be with hard hoofs and a riding whip only. But there must be no hesitation, no brooding fears, no halting to look hither or thither, no seeing of eyes ahead glistening under a dark bush. Such eyes there may be, but you must dash on, never heeding. Their cowardly owner will slink, as befits him, into darkness, as you approach, leaving the field to light and you. Your horse may be timid; he must be urged

on. He may refuse to advance—it is but a moment of doubt—the whip and the spur are cogent counsellors, and he must on. There is something fearful before him, to judge by his cocked ears, and elevated head, and snorting nose, but there are the whip and the spurs behind, which he dreads more, and there is a cheerful voice around him that encourages him, with its “Heigh, Toby! well, Robin! what’s the matter now? On, boy, on!” He knows the sound well, and has confidence in it; his ears are already placed flat upon his neck; he *will* have a charge at it, snake or leopard, and the resolution is no sooner formed than the danger has vanished.

But the natives. Pooh! I had forgotten them. No Englishman anticipates harm from *them* for a moment. No Englishman above five feet high, who has an Englishman’s heart between his ribs, and is not to be frightened at shadows!

I have ridden over this wild mountain’s road repeatedly by moonlight—ridden continually, without a stoppage of more than an hour’s duration,—sometimes from five in the evening till seven or eight o’clock the next morning,

and never met with the slightest accident. "Tempting Providence" it may be, as you say, good old lady, and as more than one old woman, of either sex, has said before you; but, believe me, Providence aids those who thus tempt it, or rather boldly and honestly confide in the powers with which a man and a horse have been endowed doubtless for their mutual protection and advantage. I never met with an accident, I have said,—scarcely even with an approach to such. The nearest approach to an accident was the following:—

I had been riding by moonlight, as usual. I loved to feel the fresh cool air of a tropical night fanning my cheek and whispering of temperate climates. I loved to see the varied rays of the moon glancing on the thick foliage, and on the jutting rocks, throwing the dark shadows into the form of huge caverns and unearthly monsters. Indeed, it is only under such circumstances that the full beauty of the road from Colombo to Kandy can be realized, and its infinite variety of aspect discovered.

I had reached a rest-house, or government inn, near Kadduganava, being more than ordinarily weary on the occasion, for my

horse from Ambepusse—the half-way house—had been a difficult one to manage; timid and fond of shying, he required the firmest management, the most determined exercise of authority, to prevent his turning round and retracing his steps. I threw myself into a chair to rest, delighted that I had got rid of my unpleasant steed, and that a fresh one was ready to carry me into Kandy. A bed stood in the room right in front of me—a large four-posted bed, without curtains or mosquito net, without ornament or elegance of any kind—altogether as uncomfortable a looking object as one could well discover anywhere. It was nothing, in fact, but a large bedstead in the middle of the room, with a hard mattress on it, over which was thrown a sheet that covered both mattress and pillow. Tired and almost worn out as I was, however, I looked upon the bed as a luxury, and rising from my chair conveyed myself stiffly into the inner room, and threw myself into a horizontal attitude on the mattress—my head resting, as usual, on the pillow, my spurs projecting below the mattress, and my cigar, as usual also with coffee-planters, between my lips.

I had not been so lying for more than a minute, when I thought I felt the pillow particularly uncomfortable. Hard it was, of course—for that I was prepared ; but for an uneasy oscillating motion which I thought I felt in it, I was not prepared. Deep in the midst of a thundering reply which I was contemplating to some article of the *Observer*, however, I did not heed the strange movement at first, merely pushing my head back more imperiously, and knocking the pillow impatiently, as it were, into its place.

The uneasy oscillating motion continued, however, nay, became still more perceptible. Strange, thought I, as I sat up and tossed the pillow over on the bed beside me, to discover the cause. The cause was apparent in a moment. Feeble as the light given by the oil lamp standing in the corner of the room was, I could plainly discern a dark lengthened object, curled up for the most part, but just beginning to untwist itself and raise its head—altogether as disgusting and slimy-looking a detestable reptile as one could well see anywhere, and if out of place anywhere, certainly out of place when under one's pillow ! It

was a snake, with a small deadly-looking head, two cold glassy eyes shining in vivid contrast to the dun brown body—a snake, gradually increasing in thickness from the head towards the centre of its body, and tapering off again towards its tail.

The forked tongue played incessantly, like the feelers of an insect, over the nose and upper jaw—the head was being elevated rapidly—not a moment was to be lost, for the first glance assured me it was a tic-polonga—one of the deadliest of serpents.

To leap from the bed with one bound into the middle of the room was the work of an instant. The stiffness I had felt on jumping from my horse had marvellously disappeared—I felt it no longer. The disturbed reptile, annoyed first at the unwonted pressure of my head, and afterwards still more annoyed at the removal of its warm and convenient covering, stood erect at the bed's head, half its length perpendicularly elevated, whilst the rest remained coiled upon the mattress—the forked tongue playing more rapidly than ever—the diminutive, sharp-pointed head, oscillating gently backwards and forwards as if

undecided as to what should be attacked—the cold glassy eyes peering after me, as I grasped a bar of wood with which the door was usually fastened within, calling loudly for my servant the while as I did so. But Nogo was busily engaged at the moment discussing a delicious meal of rice and curry, and found it convenient not to hear me.

I brought the bar down with all my force upon the venomous reptile, still standing in the attitude of attack as it had been. I brought the bar down, and left it there to see the effect of the blow, for to have elevated it again, without due caution, might have been dangerous, inasmuch as the snake might possibly have been raised with it, and have dropped upon my head—anything but a comfortable position for either of us.

The blow had inflicted much injury on the enemy, but he was not dead. His head now made its appearance between the wooden bars of the bed which served as a rail to support the pillows—the body, bruised and injured, was rapidly following. I seized the wooden bar again, and elevated it aloft ready to strike another blow, but found no opportunity.

Twisting and twining its body about between the rails, the reptile, bent on retreat, not on attack, made its way in a moment under the mattress.

With the wooden bar still elevated, I meditated what was next to be done, standing near the door, and being ready to make my exit, in case the adversary charged. I stooped to have a look under the bed for him, but he was not to be seen. The big round drops were coursing each other down my cheeks with the excitement and the exercise.

“Let them kill their own snakes,” said I, indignantly, throwing down the bar and shutting the door as I left the room—“why should I give myself any trouble about it? It’s a Quixotic idea to suppose I am to kill all the snakes I see;” and so saying, I threw myself into the uneasy chair I had left to occupy the bed, and diligently proceeded to mop up the big round drops which were making their way down my neck.

“Mahathma,” (Sir) said Nogo, coming in a few minutes after.

“Well?” said I, inquiringly.

“Did not Mahathma call?” asked the lazy

inquisitive fellow, his mouth still redolent of rice and fish curry, as he drew his once white sleeve across it.

“Did not Mahathma call?”

“I did,” said I, “but that was some time ago, Nogo. I don’t want you now.”

The fellow’s curiosity prompted his question, and I was determined to disappoint it, for, like all indolent do-nothings, Nogo was a very prey to petty curiosity. Having taken a survey of the room, and seeing that I had shut the bed-room door, Nogo retired, baffled, and, I have no doubt, annoyed at my incommunicativeness.

I rested an hour at the inn, as usual, sipping a little brandy and water, and enjoying a contemplative cigar, whilst I kept a sharp look-out in the neighbourhood of the closed door, lest my adversary should steal a march on me by making his way beneath it. The article intended to demolish the *Observer* was forgotten, or left half-finished, and to this day it probably floats in the limbo of half-developed schemes and unfinished projects, wherever that may be. If there be such a limbo, it must be a well-filled one, supposing that there be any

bounds to it at all. There, doubtless, floats that half-concocted article, with those delicious air-castles, and châteaux en Espagne, which the dreamy and the imaginative love to build, and which are wafted off as soon as built to the aforesaid limbo.

Before I left the rest-house at Kadduganava, I opened the door of the bed-room cautiously. My adversary was still invisible. I called Nogo—this time he came at once, for the rice and curry had long been finished. He went boldly into the chamber—the tossed-over pillow and the disarranged bed and the wooden bar all arresting his attention at once, making him open both eyes and mouth to their utmost extent, anxious to hear the cause.

“Nogo,” said I, “there is a tic-polonga in that bed.”

“A tic-polonga!” cried Nogo, jumping rapidly back towards the door, and rubbing his leg as if he already felt the reptile winding round it. “A tic-polonga, Mahathma,—dead?”

“No, not dead,” said I; “you had better tell the rest-house keeper, before we go.”

So saying, I resumed my gloves, put my pith hat upon my head, and, making my way

to the door, was, in a few minutes, on the road to Kandy, the tic-polonga forgotten, the beauty of the scene around alone thought of, as valley after valley opened up to view, until the river—the Mahavelle—was visible, winding, silvered with the moonbeams, round the mountain's base; its beautiful suspension-bridge of satin-wood* forming a picturesque object in the scene.

* Satin-wood, not sandal-wood, as I accidentally wrote it in "Forest Life."

CHAPTER III.

JUNGLE ACCIDENTS.

ARRIVED on one of these holiday trips at the estate near Ruminacadde, of which I was still part proprietor, I expected to find Captain Lister awaiting me. He had promised to be at the bungalow on Monday night or Tuesday morning at furthest, and this was Wednesday—mid-day on Wednesday, and he had not made his appearance, nor had Mr. Pinto heard anything of him. I was astonished at this, for Lister generally kept his sporting and dinner appointments, whatever others he might have neglected. I was too tired, however, to give myself much concern about the matter, and having enjoyed a substantial repast, I threw myself on a bed, and was soon fast asleep.

In the evening, Marandhan, a native chief

who had been an intimate friend of mine when I resided in the jungle, rode over to spend a few hours with me. Our friendship had continued unabated from the time that I first arrived in Ruminacadde. I felt more and more respect for my Kandian friend, the more intimately I had become acquainted with him, and few pleasures enjoyed in Ceylon were more pure and unalloyed than those happy conversations in which I listened eagerly to his impressions of men and things; impressions received from a point of view so different from that whence I regarded the same objects. He would point out the hollowness of much that appeared outwardly honest and upright, but only so appeared because conventionalism had clothed it in its own robes, hiding the inward deformity with an external coating of proprieties that concealed, but could not remove, the heart-rottenness within.

He was a faithful counsellor too! that rarest and most invaluable of acquisitions. When other "friends" approved of all I had said, and assured me the *Observer* was quite wrong, Marandhan would often convince me that ignorance alone prevented my seeing the

object in its true light ; that the *Observer* was but denouncing abuses actually existing ; that the remarks of the *Herald*, however right and true, abstractedly considered, were not quite applicable to the circumstances of the case ; that, in fact, the government required rough handling to prevent excessive supineness and superciliousness ; that a case must necessarily be overstated by those who feel an injury or endure an injustice, and that they are not to be blamed for the strength of their language under such circumstances, as long as facts are not distorted or misstated.

True, at the time, I regarded such lectures as the result of a radical bias, but I felt that they were valuable notwithstanding, as showing the impressions made upon an honest, truthful, ardent soul, who desired only the welfare of his country in all candid sincerity.

Next morning, Thursday, I strolled over the estate with Mr. Pinto, our superintendent, combining business and pleasure by inspecting the premises and popping at the birds which presented themselves as we proceeded, wondering all the while where Lister was, and why

I had neither heard nor seen anything of him. When the dinner hour drew near, however, whilst I was sitting in the verandah that overlooked the road to the bungalow, inspecting some accounts, I saw, to my great satisfaction, the portly figure of the mighty hunter making its way on his good steed *Robin* up the hill, both horse and rider travel-stained and weary-looking. "If you have a spark of friendship for me, my friend," said he, as he drew near, "let not dinner be delayed a moment. It's near the time, is it not?"

It was some time since I had seen Captain Lister, but it was evident he was still the same—dinner and elephants his prevailing tastes, the great objects of his attention. The shining glow which suffused his countenance was with him but an everyday affair: a glow to be seen there, whether he was scouring the forests for the haunts of its wild denizens, or reposing in quiet at home experimentalizing in sauces. He lived in a perpetual thaw—the oiliest of men. His light thin hair hung as of old, in a straight lock over either ear, giving, with the almost imperceptible whisker, the appearance of extreme juvenility to a frame

which in other respects spoke roundly of man's prime, and of a rapid advance towards "the sere and yellow leaf" of age.

In the course of the twenty years he had lived in Ceylon, he had brought down more than five hundred elephants,* and was fond of declaring that, owing to the tough beef and scraggy mutton of the island, he had not enjoyed in twenty years half that number of good dinners. Were it not for the sauces he had invented, his impression was, that his life would be unendurable.

When dinner had been concluded, and cool claret had warmed his heart a little, bringing forth its better feelings, and driving annoyance and chagrin into the back-ground, he set himself to give me an account of his adventures, with his usual honest vivacity and truthfulness:—

"I had been down to Giggagigge looking after some stores the general had ordered into

* To the uninitiated this may appear like exaggeration. It is not so. Major Rogers, of the Ceylon Rifles, in the course of his residence in the island, shot upwards of twelve hundred; he was the prince of elephant-hunters.

the interior," he began, "when I determined to meet you here for a week's shooting, as I could easily have a few days to myself in riding about the country. I ought to have been here on Monday; and this, if I do not mistake, is Thursday; the Tuesday and Wednesday have been spent as civilized man never spent a Tuesday and Wednesday before, and, as I humbly pray, I never may again. Thinking I should certainly be here on Monday night at furthest, and knowing you had sent word to Pinto to prepare for me, I laid in no great stock of anything for the journey, but merely put up half-a-dozen of beer, a bottle of claret, and a cold tongue for the day's provision. I never could take to that brandy and water some men are so fond of; it wants the soothing, fruity flavour of claret altogether; but then, as you know, I was never an epicure, so that my simplicity of taste need not astonish you, though you smile at it. Besides, water is a dangerous beverage in Ceylon, where so much that is unwholesome is to be met with; no man ought to tempt his fate by drinking it in any shape. Were I commander-in-chief, I should order a supply of beer to

be provided for all marching regiments and every officer on detachment duty. I speak of the tropics only, of course—in cold and temperate climates, in Canada and the Cape, the water is excellent. If you newspaper editors would but leave squabbling with each other, and take up measures of social and political importance, some good might be done; but it's no use talking to you about it, I know; anything is considered good enough, now-a-days, for the soldier; the time was, when he had the best of everything.

“With a couple of coolies, my groom and faithful old Tom carrying a brace of rifles, I set out from Giggagigge, intending to take a snack in the middle of the day, when Robin was being rubbed down, and an occasional bottle of beer when I felt thirsty. Tom—don't you know Tom?—my Singhalese valet, that knows the ‘sign’ of an elephant as well as I do, and will tell you his height, age, and sex from a few yards’ trace. His name was Tomalitiwagamahe; but I found that rather long, and he now answers to Tom, and likes it.

“I rode leisurely on, skirting the Knuckles,*

* A chain of hills in the neighbourhood of Kandy,

that Tom might keep up with me, expecting to meet with something on the way, and intending, if possible, to greet you with a haunch of venison on your arrival. But we must all submit to fate. By nine o'clock the sun was getting troublesome; and as we were in a nice shady place, I thought a little breakfast would be refreshing. Collins had brought up some fresh prawns the day before, from Colombo, and as I knew his cook would spoil them, and as he had overslept himself as usual, I took them with me, telling Tom to get the curry and rice ready, and to cool a bottle of beer, while I strolled into the jungle to look for something worthy of a shot. No jungle-cock, however, was to be met with, and not caring for anything else, I pocketed my disappointment, and returned to look for breakfast. On a nice little green mound, under a mangoe-tree, I sat down to await the curry and rice, a slice of tongue, and a bottle of beer.

“You know the long faces these horrid niggers put on them when they have made

so called by the planters of the neighbourhood. “A Knuckles brick” is Anglo-Ceylonese for a first-rate planter of the “fast” school.

you particularly uncomfortable by their stupidity. I saw at once, when Tom put the rice and curry appetizingly before me, that there was something wrong.

“ ‘What’s the matter?’ I asked.

“ ‘Master tell the butler at Giggagigge, to put up some spoons?’ he asked, in reply.

“ ‘I told him to put up all that was necessary. Any kind of one will do,’ said I, benevolently extending my hand towards him, as the grateful flavour of the fresh prawn curry was borne full into my face by the morning breeze.

“ ‘One spoon not got, sir,’ was the reply.

“ ‘Then what the ——’ I was going to swear at him, but checking myself, and remembering that at best we are all but vanity, as somebody says, I merely asked him quietly how I was to eat the curry and rice!

“ ‘Master not know?’ he asked, scratching his woolly head, as the best of these savages will do when at a loss for an idea.

“ ‘Give me a fork,’ said I.

“ He had but one, a two-pronged fork, unfortunately. I tried it in desperation; but to eat my rice and curry with that was to lose

the finest part of the dish—the rich sauce and gravy which the prawns flavoured so well. Tom saw that I was gradually getting angry, for it was really enough to disturb the patience of a saint; and, jumping up as if a bright idea had just struck him, he returned, a moment or two afterwards, with the brass lid of my shaving-box, bright and clean. Men talk of there being few trials now-a-days in living in a tropical country like Ceylon. Fancy eating prawn curry with the lid of a shaving-box. Is that no trial? The very remembrance makes me almost sick. I must wash the thoughts of it down with the claret, if you'll get another bottle open, for this is empty. It has been too long at your end of the table to allow of its being otherwise.

“Breakfast done, Tom told me by way of consolation, after the mishaps of the meal, that a herd of elephants had passed the adjoining cottage, where he had cooked the curry, the night previously; and further, that they could not be far off, as they had evidently been going very slowly. I was delighted at the idea of a little sport after my misfortunes: I sent him and the coolies and the groom off before me

as beaters, whilst Robin enjoyed a quiet graze near the cottage. The jungle grass was high and wiry, the bushes thick, and the pathway not very well defined—scarcely a path at all, indeed; so that I cannot say the tramp was a comfortable one. The hope of knocking a tusker over, however, will make a man go through much in the way of fatigue, so I trudged patiently on, keeping a sharp look-out and my gun ready. From the top of the tree into which one of the coolies had climbed, he sang out that he saw the herd, about twelve in number, a short distance to our left, so I turned that way, leaving the path, and making in the direction indicated. The short distance proved a difficult one to get over, such was the thick undergrowth of the forest. It was getting towards mid-day, I was astonished to find, before the vanguard informed us that they saw the herd in the jungle.

“I now prepared for operations. Taking Tom with me, I advanced near the herd, careful to keep the wind blowing from them to me, and sending off the groom and coolies to some distance in the opposite direction, so that by shouting, yelling, roaring, screaming, and all

the other noises usual on the occasion, as well as by waving their long white wands, they might prevent the herd breaking off that way when I had succeeded in bringing one or two down. These arrangements hastily completed I crept stealthily round, in the fullest expectation of excellent sport. But what's that somebody says about disappointments? something about somebody baulking the best-laid plans, 'rough hew them how we may;' that's all I remember of it, but it's very apt, if I could only recollect the whole of it.

“The elephants, when I got near them, were playing in a sort of muddy pool in the jungle, the effluvium from which was by no means of the pleasantest. Not one of them had his head turned straight towards me, and as they were playing I could not get a fair chance, so I was obliged to creep further round; Tom and I still keeping behind the thick bushes and shrubs. Whether they heard us or not I cannot tell, but certain it is, the leader of them, a black-looking tusker, took a trunkful of the half-water, half mud, that was round him and discharged it right upon us with a mathematical accuracy that would have made him a lion in

Cambridge. We were bespattered amazingly, notwithstanding the thick bushes in front of us, and of all the horrible complications of vile smells that the most lively imagination ever conjured up, that which then covered us all over like a cloak, as Sancho said about sleep, was the most horrible and the most vile; I wanted to be revenged, but after this little *jeu-d'esprit*, the black fellow's trunk went incessantly for a few minutes, over his forehead, plastering it with mud and filth, and *into* the trunk I had no desire to fire.

“ At length he put his proboscis down again to take up a fresh supply of the filthy lotion, and whilst he was doing so, I sent a ball into his forehead; an ounce of zinc was never sent more truly into an elephant's brain I felt convinced; yet, half imbedded as he was in the filthy marsh, it did not produce its ordinary effect, and I was deceived. He made a plunge to the right—a convulsive plunge—whilst the rest of the herd dispersed right and left, as if a mine had sprung up in their midst. Too impetuous, and afraid the ball had not told, I made a leap after the black monster, and sank knee-deep in as vile and disgusting a thick

slough as could be found in or out of Ceylon ; whilst, just as I got there, imbedded firm and fast, and sinking with accelerated velocity amid half-rotten creepers, and slimy black mud, down went the huge monster of an elephant within ten yards of me, down with a tremendous splash head foremost into a still softer place. Faugh ! The recollection is horrible, it will take a tumbler of claret to clear my throat.

“ Eyes, mouth, nose, and ears were drenched with the abominable slush, whilst I stood transfixed, imbedded, bemired, half dead, the gigantic monster in his dying struggles so bespattering and befouling me, that one might almost suppose his object was to make me a mountain of mud. To fire at him again with his tail towards me would have been wanton unmeaning cruelty, no fatal discharge was to be sent into him in that direction, whilst Tom had disappeared at the first rush of the herd, to look for the other coolies, and aid them in beating back the runaways.

“ It’s very easy to ask me why I did not get out, but it wasn’t so easily done. Had I been a spare man like you, I should have sunk for ever in that ocean of abominations ; my obesity,

as you were once pleased to call it, was my salvation. At length my adversary, every whisk of whose tail sent a drop or two into my face, sank over on his side, motionless, dead; my whole thoughts were now occupied in considering how I should get out. Fortunately a fallen tree, extending from the firm bank into the middle of the slough, lay at no great distance; indeed, it was to jump upon it, in the hope of getting another shot at my foe, that I had made the *faux pas* which imbedded me. By herculean exertions I dragged myself to the fallen trunk, each leg sinking to the knee, and further, as the other was raised; and so half-floundering, half-wading through the mud and slime, I seized the stem, was upon it in a moment, and the next instant stood upon the firm bank beneath a *suria* tree. Nothing could be pleasanter than the feeling that I had found secure footing at last—I stamped and stamped again, delighted to find that I *could* stamp without sinking.

“ My attention was then naturally drawn to the fallen foe who lay on his left side in the very middle of the quagmire, his tusks more than half imbedded, and the ample rotundity

of his huge body standing prominently out of the slough like an old hut black with age. I had not the slightest intention of attempting to get out to him. I had had enough of the marsh, and my condition, as I then stood looking at him, hands, face, breast, body and legs coated with slimy filth, feelingly reminded me what the consequences of a second immersion would probably be ; not even the thirty pounds at which I roughly valued his tusks, supposing them to be sound and good, could have induced me to tempt the slough of despond again ‘ You cheat me once, more fool you,’ said the Highlander, ‘ you cheat me twice, more fool me ;’ and in my mind, there was much practical wisdom in Sawney’s observation.

“ There was nothing for it but to wait till I could get the aid of the coolies, and as I began to seek for them, I thought it strange that neither their cries nor the loud vociferations of Tom were at all audible. As to the herd, it had long been gone in various directions, nothing more to be heard or seen of it from where I stood. I resolved therefore to make my way to the cottage near which I had taken my breakfast, and in the neighbourhood of

which Robin was still doubtless enjoying a quiet graze ; but to find my way through the pathless forest was no joke. I searched for our trail of the morning, but soon lost it, in consequence of the elephant tracks which passed and repassed it. I stood still, quite at fault at length, and shouted as loudly as I could,—a few birds, terrified by the unwonted sounds, rose heavily from the trees, flapped their wings lazily, screamed, and disappeared ; the echoes of the forest took up my shouts and repeated them again and again, more and more faintly, until at length they died away in the distance, and all was still again.

“I went on, determined to find some tree which would afford me a view of the country around ; for, much as I hate climbing, I have often been obliged to have recourse to it. But no such tree was to be seen, none that afforded the slightest chance of an extensive prospect, so thick and burly was the foliage, so little open space was anywhere to be discovered.

“That forest appeared to me interminable as I trudged ever on and on in it, hour after hour, and monotonous as interminable. Not an animal was to be met with ; my shouts, loud and

long drawn, scared them from my path, save a few birds that screamed from the trees above as I drew near; vast stems, hollowed by time, threw out gigantic branches here and there, not far from the ground, causing me to stoop constantly as I made my way on, I knew not where; younger trees, with stout, well-knit trunks, telling of strength and durability, rose straight as pillars on every side, before and behind; no difference anywhere—trees, trees, trees, on the right hand and on the left, in the front and in the rear, and all so like each other, it was marvellous. It was as if magic were acting around me; and although I was constantly pushing on, it was only apparently to find myself at the end of each half-hour exactly in the place I had started from at its commencement.

“ Yet it was not the huge hollowed trunks, nor the straight stems of the younger giants, nor the branches of either, that formed the greatest impediments to my advance. It was the thick brushwood, the interlacing creepers twining and intertwining themselves round everything, and stretching their long thin arms on every side looking for support; it was the long wiry grass too, with its saw-like edges,

hurting the hands and the face as it touched them, that formed the chief difficulties of my progress. What hours those were! what hours of weary exertion, almost hopeless; of exhaustion, of gloomy anticipation, of real misery, and above all, and worse than all, of burning thirst! Externally I was a moving cake of mud and hardened slime, whilst through my clothes my body steamed like a dish of hot soup—internally dry, parched, thirst-consumed, altogether as miserable a specimen of humanity enjoying itself, as any race-course in England ever presented. The idea of passing the night in the jungle, was in itself sufficiently unpleasant; but the idea of passing a day and night without food, was infinitely more gloomy. I had brought but one bottle of beer with me from the morning's bivouac, and that had been finished before I reached the elephants, so that the prospect which was gradually opening before me,—however dense the jungle,—as I made my way on, hour after hour, was a dinner of fowl water, and a bed on a branch of a tree, with a serpent or a leopard, perhaps, next door, that is, in the next tree.

“It is a long lane that has no end—a remark

strictly applicable to my then condition. As I walked on, keeping my gun under my arm, and a bright look out on every side, I came at length upon a path, a human path; I had met elephant tracks enough before, and you may fancy the delight with which I saw evidences of human feet on the dried leaves, and brown grass beneath me. It was not the path we had travelled in the morning, *that* I saw at a glance; but still it was a human path, and must therefore, as I concluded, lead somewhere. I followed it joyfully, and at length a little cottage opened to my view, coyly peeping through the palm trees that surrounded it, and which formed, as it were, land-marks of humanity.

“A few children were the first to recognize me; and having never seen a civilized man, bemired or unbemired, before, they screamed and shouted at the utmost pitch of their voices, immediately on perceiving me. Had my face retained its usual colour, I should have said, judging from the fright they exhibited, that they took me for one of those unnatural spirits of the nether world which their priests delineate on the walls of their temples, which ought to be black, but which by some strange mistake they always paint white.

“ One does not like to be screamed and shouted at by children, and run away from, as though he were a wild beast ; and although I was approaching the house in an excellent humour, delighted at finding a house at all, I felt my temper a little ruffled at the dismay exhibited by the children. The father advanced however, and with many salaams, expressed his willingness to be of any service he could to me. His professions and his civility chased away the chagrin which the conduct of his children had roused, and I spoke kindly to him in my best Singhalese.

“ I went into the cottage and they brought me a native bed to sit upon, one of those execrable machines with coir-rope tied from side to side of the frame, and supported on four sticks at the corners. I sat down with pleasure, but the coir-rope on which I was seated—and which, hard and open-spaced as it was, was a delightful seat after the fatigues of my journey—gave way shortly after I had placed myself comfortably upon it, so that I was obliged to perch, bird fashion, upon the round stick which formed one of the sides—a stick about as thick as the round part of the stock of a gun.

There was nothing else to sit upon, so I was e'en obliged to be content ; but I groaned as I thought of the tongue and beer that Tom had at the other cottage for me, and the remains of that delicious prawn curry too. I got some water, however, and there, in the presence of my host, his wife, his two grown-up daughters, and a host of naked little savages, I made my toilette in the best way I could. It was not my fault if they were lost to every sense of decency, and chose to inspect the process, nodding and grinning the while to each other without intermission.

“ After my exertions and fatigue, it was but natural that I should feel hungry, and I consequently looked for something to eat ; my inquiries on this head elicited the fact that rice and plantain-curry,* coffee and plantains, comprised the entire list of edibles in the house. Of the rice and curry my host assured me he had some already cooked of an exquisite flavour ; and that it would take but a moment to heat it. I asked to see it. He produced a dirty brown earthenware pot, in which the appetizing

* The plantain of the East, is the banana of the West, Indies.

banquet, as he seemed to consider it, was contained. His thumb was stuck into the midst of the rice, as he held the pot for my inspection. I shook my head, muttering a faint 'na, na;' he was astonished, his eye-brows gradually threatened the precincts of his hair, his mouth distended, it was evidently inexplicable to him that any man should be hungry and not eat what he had to present, so grateful and savoury a meal.

“ At length, to render it more inviting, he thrust his left hand into the pot, opening his fingers, and so stirring up the mess, as one might run his fingers through his hair, exclaiming as he did so, ‘ Look, how nice it is, only cooked this morning—hungry, and can’t eat *that!*’ The means he took to render the dish more enticing but completed my disgust. It was some time before I succeeded in convincing him that it was no use to tempt me further. I then requested him to go out and look for my horse and servants, making him understand, after infinite talking, that I had a horse and servants near a cottage somewhere in the jungle, and telling him at the same time to let his wife or daughters prepare a little coffee for me, I intending to eat plantains with it.

“ The man went out as I desired, but evening was already drawing near, and he did not feel disposed to wander far from his own abode, so that he soon returned, stating that neither horse nor servant, neither the cottage nor Tom was to be found. In the mean time I was enjoying my primitive meal of cold plaintains, and hot coffee ; the plaintains were good enough, just ripe, rich, luscious, and sweet, and after dinner would have done admirably well to flavour a glass of claret ; but the coffee ! such coffee ! ground into coarse lumps, blackened and burnt in the roasting, it had been boiled with the water as it was, no straining used, all the black abominations floating about in the thick, dark soup-like mess ; floating about, and adhering too to the sides of the dish —and then the dish itself ! it is wonderful how I ever got through that meal ; the dish was of the common brown mud-like earthenware, its rim more than half an inch thick, without glazing of any kind, or even smoothness. From *such* a dish I had to drink *such* coffee ! may I never have again to endure such a misfortune ; may I never again have to live so like a savage as I did that night.

“The native bed, on which I had been first seated, had given way, as I told you, in the middle; that is, the coir ropes which formed its top, had broken as I sat on them. To remedy this, as I saw I must pass the night where I was, I tied a rope firmly backwards and forwards from side to side, from end to end, and on this rope so extended I had to lie all night. Sitting upon it was far from pleasant, lying was perfect torture, but I could not make up my mind to repose on the earthen floor as the family around me did, not knowing what insects and reptiles I might be plagued with during the night; misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows, for even as it was, I did not wholly escape the attacks of ants, bugs, fleas, ticks and spiders; all these I discovered—how many more there were, invisible in the gloom of the flickering lamp, which I insisted should burn all night, I do not know.

“I spent that night in turning from side to side, from back to front,—at one time gazing at the palm-leaf ceiling above, black with soot and dirt, on which lizards and spiders were crawling about, at another inspecting the other inmates of the house. It was impossible to tell

the moment at which one of the reptiles above might drop upon me, so I took care to keep my mouth shut. The man and his wife slept on my right, their mat stretched simply on the earthen floor, and there they snored in concert. The two grown-up daughters were similarly stretched on my left, on a mat almost worn out, their scanty drapery just covering their knees, whilst as delicately shaped feet and ankles reposed, unconscious of covering, upon the floor, as ever ascended the great staircase of Buckingham Palace, or the Tuileries. The little ones were crowded into a corner not far off, lying like so many young pigs, one with his hand on the breast of another, the other with his feet across the body of a third, mutually giving and receiving warmth, for they had no clothing or covering of any kind; nature, Sir, pure, simple, unadulterated, unsophisticated nature interesting to behold! A few simple cooking utensils reposed here and there upon the cottage floor in the most admired confusion. A heap of cocoa-nuts enveloped in their coir-husks was piled in one of the corners, whilst numerous branches of plain-tains, hung from the roof above.

“ Such was the scene around me that miserably long gloomy night ! I had plenty of time to survey it; there is no fear of my forgetting it for years. The combined torture of the heat and the hard ropes on which I lay prevented sleep. Had I been as spare a man as you, I verily believe I should have been cut in two that night, or rather in four, for whilst one rope was insinuating itself into my shoulder and upper arm, as I turned, another was equally galling on my loins ; a third threatened my thighs with amputation before morning, and a fourth alternately cut into the calf of my leg and my ankle as I changed my position, extending or drawing up my foot. It is a fine thing, however, to be able to bear the slings or arrows of outrageous fortune well, as somebody says somewhere. I have much to be grateful for in not being a grumbler.

“ Next morning, as soon as day-light dawned, I sent off my host to make a fresh search in the jungle, whilst I tried to fortify myself against further troubles and misfortunes by a second edition of the execrable coffee and plantains. I was hungry, of course, but I thought it my

duty to sustain my strength, in order that I might be the better able to endure ; and, therefore, I ate and drank on principle—for is not man ‘born to trouble as the sparks fly upward?’ as the Apostle says ; and why should we repine ?

“ I determined, in case Tom and the coolies should not be found before mid-day, to start for Giggagigge on foot—my host informing me it was about twelve miles off—for I concluded that Tom would lead my escort back there if he could not find me, and I hoped we might meet upon the road. Hour after hour passed away in almost intolerable anxiety. I sent out every one likely to be of the slightest use, not venturing forth myself, however, lest I should lose my way again in the jungle. At length, as I was making up my mind to try the road to Giggagigge, under the escort of my host’s eldest daughter, I heard Tom’s welcome voice in the jungle, approaching the house, led by the head of the reputable family with whom I had bivouacked the previous night.

“ ‘Hallo!’ I shouted, gladly.

“ ‘Here, saar,’ was Tom’s reply, still invisible.

“ ‘Have you got the tongue, and the claret, and the beer?’ I asked, listening eagerly for the answer.

“ ‘One bottle beer got, saar,’ was Tom’s reply.

“ Even that was better than nothing; so, seizing it as Tom approached, I knocked off the neck, and drank it all foaming from the bottle. It was almost luke-warm, but how delicious it was, notwithstanding! And there stood my brave old Robin, glad to see his master again—it was truly a joyous *réunion*.

“ I was astonished to find that I was now six miles from the little cottage near which I had taken breakfast the previous morning, and six miles, too, in the wrong direction, that is, lying far out of my route to Ruminacadde. When I got back to my previous morning’s quarters, I found Tom had made comfortable arrangements for me to pass the night there. Sending off the coolies and groom for the tusks of the elephant I had shot, I made a delicious meal of the tongue, the remainder of the famous curry, the claret, and two bottles of beer—consuming, indeed, all the remainder of my provisions, for I intended to reach this early next day (yesterday).

“I had had no sleep the night before, so that, in my new quarters, I slept like a top, never opening my eyes till it was past seven o'clock—an hour one would consider early enough in England, but for a man travelling in a tropical forest, two hours too late at least. I had scarcely made my dispositions for the morning, determining to make one clean sweep of it without delay or interruption, regardless of sun or heat—determined, I say, to reach Ruminacadde without turning to the right hand or to the left—without delaying unnecessarily a moment; but you remember the old proverb about man supposing and God disposing. My evil star was still in the ascendant, and I was destined to more trials. They, doubtless, have their use, these trials; but, like many other useful medicines, are nauseous and unpleasant exceedingly.

“I set off with the intention of diligently eschewing elephants, deer, jungle-fowl, everything that could divert me from the road, impelled the rather thereto by the hunger and thirst which began to assail me, and which, bad anywhere, are doubly so in the tropics. About eleven, the thirst was unbearable, so I

dismounted to get a draught of clear water at a spring on the hill's side, over which I was riding. Constitutionally, I dislike water as a drink, regarding it—I mean such as one gets in Ceylon—as being far from wholesome. There was still a glass or two of claret left in the bottle, so I filled it, to give the water a flavour, and then drank the contents. That finished, I strolled up to the top of the hill, trying to persuade myself that I did so to inspect the scenery, but really because I heard some elephant-calls coming from that quarter. We are such frail creatures at best! I only intended to have a look at them, but, when I saw them, I asked myself why my misfortunes of the previous day should not be revenged? How did I know but it was the very same herd that had been playing in the slough of abominations, of which my clothes still retained the odour.

“Thus it was that I reasoned myself into taking advantage of a favourable wind, making a detour round the hill's-side, loading my rifles with zinc, and telling Tom to keep up, whilst I made my way towards the herd. The road led us further round than I anticipated, and the herd seemed still at a distance, when one of

them made his appearance suddenly on our right. I was not prepared for this ; for, knowing that Robin was not to be depended upon, I had intended dismounting before I came up with them. Never had a horse a greater dread of elephants than he has—a fact scarcely to be wondered at, indeed, for he was, on more than one occasion, very near losing his life from them. No sooner, therefore, did he see the huge beast making his way towards us, and suddenly appearing in a sort of clearing to our right, than he threw up his heels briskly into the air, turned sharply round, and left me sitting on the ground. With the exception of a bruise a little—ahem—to the side of my hip, I was not hurt. Tom was near me. I jumped up at once. The elephant had apparently been as much scared by our apparition as Robin by his, and turning tail, was off in a moment, trumpeting forth his fears loudly to the others. Tom and I pursued, for our blood was up ; and we thought neither of horse nor of coolies. I could not get a fair forehead aim at the monster, so I fired as he was abreast of me, hoping to penetrate to the heart behind the shoulder-blade as he stepped out ; but it is not an easy

shot that ; and the want of breakfast, I suppose, had made my hand unsteady. I failed to bring him down, or even badly to disable him ; and the rest of the herd, alarmed by his loud trumpeting and the report, were flying in all directions through the jungle.

“ We pursued them, our blood roused with the sport, for a considerable time, but without success. I fired another long shot, which did not tell, and then gave up the chase as a bad job. Now, for the first time, I began to think of Robin. Tom knew as little of his whereabouts as I did. I hate walking in the jungle, as you know, and I had no intention whatever of losing my horse. When we had rejoined the coolies, one of them, who had been deputed to climb the hill and look after us, informed me that he had seen Robin scampering back in the direction we had come. I felt tired, hungry, thirsty, vexed, annoyed, and dispirited. There was nothing to be done, however, but to send the groom and a coolie back after Robin, when we had established ourselves in a native hut hard by.

“ From one o'clock on that luckless day to five, did I sit in that miserable hut drawing

figures on the floor with my ramrod. At five Tom brought me some rice and a vegetable curry he had succeeded, after infinite trouble, in cooking. It was palatable, but there was no beer, no claret, no brandy—nothing but that eternal water to wash it down. By way of supper, he prepared some rice-cakes and coffee for me, and I partook of the meal gratefully, remembering that we are but dust and ashes after all. It was not till it was dark that the groom returned with Robin.

“To have pursued my journey at that hour through the forest would have been madness. Tom made me as comfortable as possible during the night, and next morning I set off for Ruminacadde, after a breakfast of rice cakes, and coffee. What a breakfast for a man of my dimensions, and accustomed to the exercise I take. Rice cakes and coffee! and *such* coffee; Well, well, I know it is not for nothing that trials are sent, so I try to be grateful,” concluded Lister, as he tossed off a final glass of claret.

We soon after separated for the night, I to

indulge in visions of sport to be enjoyed with my portly friend, before duty called me back to Colombo, he to refresh himself after his persecutions by a sound and protracted sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

NO PARAPET.

THE centre of Ceylon is occupied by a rugged mountain steep, surrounded by a low-belt of sandy coast that slopes evenly down to the sea. On the east and south this rugged knot of high land, with its picturesque valleys and forests, table-lands and pointed hills, approaches nearer to the ocean than on the north and west. The south-eastern portion of the elevated district is occupied by the most extensive table-land in the island, immediately by the side of which rises the highest mountain in Ceylon, between eight and nine thousand feet in elevation.

During the long centuries of native rule, when Ceylon was independent, this south-eastern district was the fertile source of in-

surrections and revolutions ; every disappointed minister fled to Rohona, as it was then called, and there he was sure to find congenial spirits, ready and able to help him in opposing constituted authority. Newera Ellia, or the city of Ellia, is the name which, in later years, has been given to the extensive table-land that occupies a large portion of this south-eastern district—a plain between five and six thousand feet above the level of the sea, and from ten to twelve miles in circumference. It forms at present the sanitarium of Ceylon. The Anglo-Indian or the Anglo-Ceylonese, worn out and debilitated by long residence amid the heat of the low-lands, finds a refuge from that heat at Newera Ellia ; finds a bracing atmosphere that reminds him of his home in the far-off north-west so long forsaken. In the middle of the day, during a large portion of the year, even at this altitude, the sun shines in tropical majesty, rendering it unpleasant, if not dangerous, for the invalid to brave his beams, by walking ; but the mornings, and evenings, and nights, are deliciously cool, the air often dry and frosty, with that clear, bracing purity so enjoyable on a frosty

morning, during clear weather, in England. At night, sometimes, during the winter, actual frost *does* cover the ground, and is to be seen from bed-room windows in the morning, and a thin coating of ice is to be found in the pools and ponds of the large plains.

The untravelled can scarcely fancy the delight with which the worn-out Anglo-Indian sees such things. He peeps forth from his cozy bed-room, and sees the grass white with hoar frost, and he thinks of England, of boyhood, of home, of father, mother, sister, brother, of ties and affections long since severed, rent asunder by time or death, but the remembrance of which is very dear to him. The white coverings of the fields, the crisp tread of the road as he walks along it, the thin, crackling ice, as he tries its strength with his stick, all remind him of far other scenes and of a far distant land, scenes that never can again recur, a land that never can be again to him what it has been.

Memory hallows the recollection, however, and wreck though he be of what he was, debilitated, worn out, enfeebled, with diseased liver and a more diseased mind, he drops a

tear upon the crackling ice as he touches it with his walking-stick, a tear consecrated by love, hallowed by fond memories, sufficient to prove he is not all changed, sufficient to prove an English heart still animates and warms his bosom ; an English heart, capable of high and holy feelings, that may not have been awakened for years, and which he himself has fancied, perhaps, have been long since dead.

To attain to this temperate table-land of Newera Ellia, is by no means an easy matter. The journey to it leads through a rugged mountain pass, in which a beautiful waterfall gladdens the landscape and endangers the journey—the pass of Rambodde. At the foot of the hill, where the waterfall raves and foams perpetually, stands a rest house or inn, in which the traveller may refresh himself before he commences the ascent of the mountain. He then crosses the brawling, boiling stream fresh from its precipitous descent, by means of a bridge, that, to nervous eyes, is by no means safe. No parapet serves as a protection to the traveller, should his horse prove restive, for the timid animal cocks his ears at the scathing flood that rages beneath him, that whirls its white masses

of foam from eddy to eddy, and dashes them against rocks and into ugly crevices, to remain there till wanted to be played with again.

Nor is the danger only imaginary. During my residence in Ceylon, Lieutenant Barry, of the Rifles, when crossing this bridge, on his way to Newera Ellia, rode a spirited Arab he had brought up from Colombo—by no means a horse for jungle travelling, too fiery, too timid, too skittish, and too mercurial. Doubtless thinking of pleasant things, fearing no danger, Barry was carried jauntily along by his steed, the rider firm in his seat, having a quick eye, a steady hand, and a muscular leg; the horse fresh and playful, disposed to show himself off, and to have as much fun as possible.

They stood upon the unparapeted wooden bridge—the huge mountain on the left, with its black and white boiling stream in its recesses—a frightful chasm on the right full of raging waters and projecting rocks, with here and there a stunted shrub, all deep, deep below, fearful to look at. They stood upon the bridge, and the jaunty Arab caught a glimpse of a huge white mass of foam, perhaps, whirling rapidly round on the stream to his left, and coming towards

him—caught a glimpse of *something* that terrified him unquestionably and started—started with a thrill of terror. Barry pressed the spur gently to his side, and spoke an encouraging word; the horse felt the spur, and heeded not the word—he reared, trying to turn from what had affrighted him—his hind foot trembled for a moment on the edge of the unparapeted bridge, and but for a moment.

Barry saw inevitable fate staring him in the face, and tried to throw himself off, on the near side, but it was too late. One wild semicircle in the air, one snort of terror from the horse, one cry of despair from the rider, and both were lost in the fearful chasm below. There was a faint splash, and a hard succession of thumps borne by the air from the boiling abyss, as the two were hurled from rock to rock, and then all was as usual again; the stream boiling as before; the echoes of the valley sounding with its commotion; the bridge quivering; the rocks bleak, black, stern, and immovable; the vegetation as of old; and a dead man and a dead horse lying far away in some deep recesses below. Barry's groom was a short distance

behind him, and had seen the whole catastrophe.

The perils of a journey to Newera Ellia were then by no means imaginary—far other than imaginary truly.

Nor even when the fatal bridge has been passed, and the ascent commenced, does the traveller feel sure that he has left all danger behind. By no means. The road runs zig-zag up the mountain's side, steep, precipitous, angular, with the sharpest cuttings and the most sudden transitions from left to right, and from right to left. Views constantly present themselves of the sublimest character, views of wide valleys, and encircling mountains in the distance, as well as of deep and dangerous declivities on every side, looking down into awful chasms, black and fearful, in which the eye seeks vainly for some object on which to rest, tree, or shrub, or rock, or rivulet, for all is a dim, indistinct haze, fearful to contemplate in its magnitude and depth—fearful, as one thinks of the probable consequences of a fall, and shudders at the thought.

So monotonous is the angular z-like ascent of the mountain at Rambodde, so numerous

are the turns, the sharp angles, at which the road runs in straight lines, first to one side and then to another, the traveller gaining a little upon the hill at each turn, that more than one tourist has fancied there was no end at all to the ascent, and that he must have long passed the diverging point where the road runs off on the hill's summits to Newera Ellia. The despairing looks thrown upwards by such voyagers, as turn after turn is passed, are ludicrous amazingly—despairing looks at ever the same mass of jungle vegetation, laurels, myrtles, and other evergreens, which abound at these heights, mingled with stunted tropical bushes, and half-green plants of more temperate regions. The traveller, however, innocent of botanical information, sees no difference at all in the vegetation as he casts his despairing glances upwards—to him it is ever the same, whether round the base, in the middle, or at the summit—and he begins to doubt whether he is at all in the right way, or whether so interminable a road can lead anywhere but to the clouds.

Pleasure and business combined, not ill-health, took me to Newera Ellia. I enjoyed

its delightful temperature and strength-inspiring breezes all the more keenly because I was in perfect health, and therefore able more perfectly to enjoy both. Its English-looking cottages, with their chimneys smoking à la Londres, were sufficient in themselves to rouse a thousand hallowed associations.

I met here, unexpectedly, at the little inn which hospitably receives forlorn travellers, a Colombo friend of the name of Katchit. Mr. Katchit was a politician of that old school so beautifully described by Addison in one of the Spectators: "He looked extremely thin in a dearth of news." Newspapers were the only literature he indulged in. Politics were the perpetual fount whence he drew mental draughts of nectar to cheer his soul—the ambrosia on which he silently fed—as he wandered through the groves of cocoa-nut trees by the sea-shore, or amidst the mightier vegetation of the forests in the interior.

Of all quidnuncs I knew, Katchit was one of the most insatiable; ever on the alert for what was novel, and regarding all other gratifications as infinitely inferior to the hearing and telling of some new thing. My acquaintance

with him hitherto had been limited to an occasional conversation in the Colombo Library, or a chat upon the steps of his office in the fort. He had been a successful merchant in Colombo for years, and, if report spoke truly, had amassed a large fortune. He had left the island a short time before, intending to return and settle permanently in England; but finding himself a mere nobody there, and a little great man in Colombo, he preferred returning to his old haunts and resuming his old ways. On the evils of free trade he was eloquent. Seeing the evil it had produced in Ceylon, he could not persuade himself it could anywhere else be advantageous, and he was fond of prophesying ruin and the decadence of the British Empire as its result.

Having thus assumed a decided attitude in the field of English politics, every mail afforded precisely such food as he desired, wherewith to feed his mind. He pored over the columns of the *Morning Herald* in fond admiration, and lost no opportunity of having a hard rap—the harder the better—at the mighty thunderer. I never heard, however, that the one paper was a whit the better, or the other

a whit the worse, for his adulation or contempt.

We were, of course, all Protectionists in Ceylon, naturally and inevitably so. Katchit, therefore, had no great quarrel to maintain with either of the local papers, although as to the particular means by which the Ceylon planters might, ultimately, succeed in reversing the policy of the British Parliament (!) and in obtaining what they believed to be only justice, he might occasionally differ from either of the editors.

Some article on the subject, more fiery than usual in the *Ceylon Herald*, had opened his heart to me, and he had lately contributed several letters and leaders for its columns, so that, when we met at Newera Ellia, it was with the cordiality of old friends accidentally thrown together in a crowd of strangers. There was so much that was original about the man, that I felt pleased at becoming more intimate with him, particularly as no one gave better dinners, or was more careful as to the quality of the champagne he put upon his table.

“Do you want to make your fortune?” he asked me abruptly one day, when we were

seated together by a blazing wood fire in Newera Ellia, discussing at the same time, some excellent claret he had brought up from Colombo, and the last speech of Sir Robert Peel brought out by the Overland Mail. "Do you want to make your fortune?" was his question.

"Does an Alderman love turtle?" was my reply.

"You do then," said he; "I am glad of it. Now listen to me. The only way to bring the British public to its senses anent the matter of Protection and Free Trade, is to publish a popular work—a novel, suppose—in favour of the former and against the latter."

"An excellent project," said I, "there is but one thing wanting, and that is the work itself. Its publication in a proper form to attract public attention may be a difficulty, but until the work itself is forthcoming, it would be folly to discuss that point."

"Quite true," was his reply, as he drew his chair nearer; "I am glad to see you taking up the matter in so business-like a way. The work is written,—nearly ready, sir, at this moment for publication."

“Indeed!” said I, seeing how the wind lay; “indeed!”

“My intention was to have offered it to the *Observer*, but as I see you are taking up the matter of Free Trade roundly now, and not merely nibbling at it, I have determined on letting it appear in the *Herald*.”

The mystery is out, thought I, scarcely able to suppress a smile at the idea. “Do you think then,” I asked, “that its publication in the *Ceylon Herald* will excite so much attention as to bring the British public to its senses?”

“Listen to me,” said he, dogmatically, clasping his right knee, after his custom, in both his hands; “When it has been published in the *Herald*, chapter by chapter—it contains eighty-nine chapters, and you publish one hundred and four *Heralds* a year, so that it may easily be completed within the year—it will excite *some* attention, I flatter myself. People in India will talk about it, and write about it. Distance lends enchantment to the view, and when the public in England first hear of it, as coming from Ceylon, their curiosity will be excited, and I shall have an edition of eight or ten thousand copies ready

for sale at a mere trifle each ; no three-volumed affair, at a guinea and a half, but a well-printed book of six or seven hundred pages all for half-a-crown, or less. I want no profit—none, sir, none, not a farthing. My supposition is based on the work exciting attention in India, but that is a certainty, for I have contributed to more papers than the *Herald*, I assure you, so that you see the whole matter is in a nutshell.”

“ Which you can open when you please,” I added.

“ Which I can open when I please, to continue the figure, as you say—ha ! ha ! ”

The project did not appear a very feasible one to me at the moment, and the more I reflected on it afterwards, the more I became convinced of its utter absurdity ; but Katchit had set his heart upon it, and an evening was appointed when I was to dine with him and hear a portion of the great work read which was to change the destiny of Britain.

CHAPTER V.

THE REVOLUTIONARY NOVEL.

“Now, what shall it be?” said he, when every thing had been prepared for the lecture, and he was opening a huge pile of MS., formidably tied up with red tape. “I have been working to-day at the conclusion, in which, of course, everybody gets killed or married. Shall I read you the opening chapter?”

“By no means,” was my reply. “I have an insuperable dislike to opening chapters. But you forget I don’t know the title of the book yet.”

“It’s only a name,” said he—“‘*Horatio Clomstock, or the Soldier of Fortune*’—the great art of the thing is, you see, that, being the autobiography of a soldier, no one will expect to find anything about politics in it; and then,

my hero being in a regiment of the line, I am able to take him all over the world, and to describe the Cape, Canton, Ceylon, Calcutta, Canada. The work contains, sir, ludicrous, pathetic, sentimental, philosophical, sporting, and political chapters."

"Excellent!" said I. "Then you conduct him to Ceylon?"

"Yes; and he becomes acquainted with coffee-planters, merchants, and a host of people, all which permits the introduction of commercial topics beautifully; that's the great art of the work," continued Katchit, rubbing his head with his handkerchief, for he was gradually working himself up to excitement.

"And you have sporting scenes, too?" I asked.

"Certainly," said he, with enthusiasm; "admirable sporting scenes. I had Major Roger dining with me half-a-dozen times, just to get elephant stories out of him for *Horatio Clomstock*. Little did he know what I was pumping him for—ha! ha!"—and, so saying, Katchit mopped his forehead and bald head again.

"I love sport," said I; "let us have a sporting chapter."

“Very well, sir; a sporting scene let it be,” replied my host, turning over the masses of manuscript — “Chapter forty-fifth — *The Elephant Hunt*—listen—

“ ‘Midst the monotony of garrison life in a distant colony, such as Ceylon, it may be fancied with what ardour we heard of the elephant hunts, the pig-sticking, the deer-stalking, and the bear-shooting of the interior. With the exception of an occasional ball at Government House, and a dull, formal dinner-party at the house of some Civil Servant or merchant, there was little at Colombo to reconcile a man of active habits to the vegetation of the Fort. A ride in the morning, billiards before lunch, a stroll into the library after it, and a ride again in the evening, formed the usual routine of the day, enlivened once a-year by an exceedingly poor attempt at races, and occasionally by a row between the Governor and some of the big-wigs of civilians, invariably ending in the discomfiture of the latter. The little that I had already seen of the interior rendered my curiosity but the greater to plunge into the excitement of its sports, accompanied by some

of those connoisseurs in hunting who abound in that favoured island.”

“A connoisseur in hunting,” said I, “is a strange phrase.”

“A perfectly legitimate one, sir. Don’t interrupt me,” replied Katchit, rubbing his head again, and proceeding hastily—

“ ‘ An opportunity to see some of the wildest districts, and engage in some of the wildest sports the country afforded, at length presented itself, in an invitation which I got to join a party, to be headed by Mr. Boyd, a coffee-planter, and a veteran sportsman. Major Stretton of our corps, Captain Growler of the Ceylon Rifles, Mr. Sturt of the Civil Service, and myself, were to join Boyd in the neighbourhood of Kandy ; and he engaged to take us through his own estate to a district in the south-east, where game was abundant, and had been for some time undisturbed. I accepted the invitation with alacrity, and never did I prepare for a journey in which I promised myself more unalloyed enjoyment than on this occasion.

“ ‘ Boyd was, what every Englishman ought to be, a model of a man—tall, broad-chested,

athletic, and powerful, with a fine open countenance and intelligent expression, that bespoke the man of honour and probity, of independence and resolution—in fact, the English gentleman.’”

“Do you think that won’t tell?” asked the reader, when he had got so far, and then, without waiting for a reply, continued:—

“ ‘ Major Stretton had been but once in the field before, but had, on that occasion, proved himself fitted for an elephant hunter, by his calm intrepidity and quick resolution when in danger; without the great physical advantages of Boyd he had strength enough for all ordinary purposes, and was a first-rate horseman. The remaining two of our party are now no more, and are not likely to be recognized under the assumed names I have given them, save by their most intimate friends.

“ ‘ Growler was the impersonation of *bonhomie*; joyous, mirthful and witty in no ordinary degree. He was not the man, however, that could vegetate for years without change or excitement, upon his dinner and his wine, contented with the dull routine of garrison duty and garrison pleasure. Action was ne-

cessary to *him* as excitement to the gambler, and it was only when worn out by action or satisfied by danger and escape, that he could resign himself with real zest to the pleasures of the table. He had now been fifteen years in the island, and his appearance spoke well for the *cuisine* of the Rifle mess, and the staples of the Ceylon market.

““I was astonished when I first saw him, and was informed he was one of the most successful hunters in the island; astonished, not that he was altogether unwieldy in form, but that he should form such a contrast with Sturt and the other noted sportsmen. They were spare and sinewy, with the bloodless countenance and quick eye that denote the nervous temperament. He, on the contrary, rotund and happy, had a merry laugh and a gay appearance, that banished gravity almost immediately on his entrance. Yet when aiming at an elephant, I have seen that man of fun and drollery stand with rifle presented, a very statue in his immobility; with feet nearly closed, body perfectly erect, head slightly advanced, and eye of singular lustre, he would stand, covering his victim as he approached, and to

the eye of the spectator appearing not even to breathe until the deadly rifle had rung forth, and, confident in his own powers, he dropped the but-end of the weapon on the ground to contemplate the effect of his fire.' ”

“ Why, that’s a description of my friend Lister,” said I.

“ Ha! you recognize it at once—good,” replied Katchit.

“ ‘ Sturt had been——’ ”

“ But why do you call him Growler, and say he is dead now ?” I asked.

“ Growler, sir, is a good name,” was his reply, “ for a man that’s always grumbling ; and I say he’s dead, of course, because he’s alive. It would never do to let people suppose I was painting living characters.”

“ Then all the people you say are dead are still alive,” I urged ; “ and those you say nothing about are dead, I suppose, or imaginary.”

“ Precisely so,” replied my host, impatiently, and giving a testy rub to his forehead, “ precisely so. Let me go on.”

“ ‘ Sturt had been Growler’s pupil, was still young, and presented in every respect phy-

sically an extraordinary contrast to his former *protégé*. He was a man of infinite jest and fun, of that dry, sarcastic kind, which makes one wince while he laughs. The total want of *vraisemblance* between Growler and Sturt had drawn them only the more closely together—”

“Why do you put in so many French words?” I asked. “You have used half-a-dozen already, and *vraisemblance* does not mean—”

“Every body uses French words in novels,” he remarked interrupting me, “I know what I’m about. Don’t interrupt me this way.”

“‘Had drawn them only the more closely together, each enjoying with the greatest possible good humour the sallies and stories of the other.

“‘Being well supplied with horses, we determined on riding leisurely to Kandy, and resting there for a few days preparatory to starting with Boyd. That ride was one of the happiest of my life. On an excellent Arab, and traveling over a very well-kept road, surrounded with the most lovely of nature’s scenes, all the more lovely from their variety, and accompanied by the gayest of companions, what could earth give more? Some may fancy that a scamper over a country with a fair lady by one’s side

to make love to, is decidedly more interesting and more joyous than such a ride as I then enjoyed. They will talk of the deep feeling, the admiration excited by a fine form in the most graceful of attitudes, the love perhaps, and sweet converse, which beguiles the roads. Good! I do not deny the happiness of such a position, but I maintain that to the man of action, the rude mountain road, the bounding steed, the boon companions, and the rough refreshment, after a life of monotonous luxury or ease, are infinitely more grateful than even the blandishments of the fair sex, winning, captivating, soul-stirring though they be. The man of sentiment views the matter in a different light perhaps. I speak of what I think the man of action most esteems.' ”

“ Why, Horatio Clomstock is quite a misogynist,” said I, half aloud.

“ O don't be bothering me,” was Katchit's reply,—“ O don't be bothering me. Misogolist! What's *that* ?”

And then, without waiting for an answer, he continued to read :—

“ ‘ The transition from the low sandy belt which encircles the mountain-zone of Ceylon,

to the rugged and precipitous interior is one of the most pleasing characteristics of a scenery, ever more varied and delightful as the traveller recedes further from the shore. At first, for thirty miles from Colombo, the road runs through a low level district, enriched indeed with the luxuriant vegetation of the tropics, but tame and monotonous when compared with the scenery of the mountains.

“ ‘The first aspect of these mountains as the traveller approaches them, is exhilarating in the extreme. Fatigued with the heat and monotony of the low lands, he gazes upon the rugged cliffs, the high-soaring foliage, and the cloud-capt summits that rise before him into the heavens, feeling in anticipation the elasticity of spirits, the bounding sprightliness with which the cool, delightful breezes of these altitudes will inspire him as he ascends. The spur applied more peremptorily than before, infuses something of his own kindling energy into his horse, and he dashes onwards along the road hewn through the solid granite in the side of the hill which rises precipitously on his left, whilst on his right the descending rock stretches far down to the regions he has left ; the mighty

pillar of that mighty temple of nature's rearing, destined to last for countless ages, called into existence long ere man made his appearance upon his present stage of existence, and doubtless intended long to outlast him and his puny works.' ”

“Do you know that the last remark is scarcely orthodox?” I observed.

Katchit turned his eyes impatiently on me for a moment, looking over his spectacles, and then continued :—

“ ‘ Here the wooden bridge thrown over the mountain torrent, shakes beneath the sturdy tread of the small but noble Arab, whilst the rushing stream dashes down from rock to rock beneath it precipitously, seeking the quiet and luxury of the plain below, just as the sinewy youth spends his energy and strength in constant conflict with the world to reach the haven of peace and comfort in old age. There the path rushes in between lofty trees, that appear to grow from the solid rock on either side as strong, and sturdy, and immovable as that rock itself, the growth of ages, the proud monuments of what unassisted vegetation can accomplish, likely to remain there till the puny destroyer,

man, comes with his hankering after gold, and cuts, and hews, and fells, the noble trees, and burns them at last, to make way for his paltry but more useful coffee shrub.

“ ‘Deeper and deeper into the forest on either side runs the mountain path upon the summit of the hill, until the dark foliage meeting above the head of the wanderer, shuts out, except in broken glimpses, the brightness of the sky, and throws a dark, black shade, even in tropical noonday, upon the road beneath. On, still further upon the various way, and we meet a vast sturdy mass of rock rising right in the path of the engineer who formed the road; there was no going above, below, or round it; it could not be removed. Yes, it must be so; he dives right into it, and the perforated rock yields, in an ample tunnel, hanging strangely over the almost perpendicular side of the mountain. a passage by which man can make his way through the eternal hills.’ ”

“ Bravo, Clomstock ! ” I exclaimed; but Katchit heeded me not, proceeding uninterruptedly and hurriedly with his reading.

“ ‘It was on such a ride as this,’ said Growler, as we proceeded, ‘that I first found out that

Sturt had the materials of a good sportsman in him. He came out here some seven years ago, the greenest of all green griffs—knew nothing, positively nothing of the world, and fancied himself perfect in everything; he had a letter for me from an old friend; and to keep him from the gaming-table at Colombo, I asked him to accompany me in a ride to Rambodde, some forty miles south-east of Kandy, where I promised he should see, if not enjoy, some good sporting, for R—— and B—— (noted names amongst the Anglo-Singhalese) were to meet me.

“ ‘ During our ride to Rambodde, I saw that, however Sturt’s education had been hitherto neglected, he was quite capable of becoming almost anything he liked, and was evidently never intended by nature to vegetate through life as a bookworm. Chilled at first by the cold sarcasm with which he spoke of everything he did not understand, I soon found that his eye kindled and cheek brightened, in the true English style, at the narrative of danger and excitement, and that there was all that relish of the mountain and of the jungle which bespeaks the true mountaineer sportsman. He

had assiduously practised with the rifle ever since his arrival, and during the voyage, and was not a bad shot (at a target) when I first took him up the country.

“ ‘ I did not much count upon this latter accomplishment, being perfectly aware how often the excellent shot at the target becomes the most wandering on the field, more dangerous often to the companions than to the adversary of the young sportsman.’ ”

“ But where are the sporting scenes, and the jokes, you promised ? ” I asked.

“ My God, sir ! ” replied Katchit ; “ am I not coming to them ? ”

“ ‘ We had a noble gathering,’ continued Growler, ‘ and some excellent sport at Rambodde, although our happiness on the occasion was somewhat marred by the death of a griff whom B—— had brought with him, and who, insisting on taking care of himself and following his own views, went out one morning before we were ready, rode off in the direction of a herd, of whose position we had intelligence on the previous evening, was charged by their leader on his wounding one of them, and having fired upon him unsuccessfully, was

caught by the enraged tusker, as he stumbled over some parasitic plant that was creeping to an adjoining tree, tossed into the air, trampled, and left a corpse.

“ ‘ Such, at least, was the story of his servant, who, I suspect, saw nothing of the encounter ; certain it is, however, that we found the poor lad, for he was not quite twenty, mangled and dead when we reached the spot. A melancholy catastrophe, indeed, but such accidents *will* happen under the most favourable circumstances, and no man who values his life much, that is, extravagantly, ought to risk elephant-shooting. However, that circumstance took place after the initiation of Sturt into the mysteries of the hunt, not before, so that at the time of which I was about to tell you we were all in the best possible spirits, and quite prepared to appreciate a joke.’ ”

“ Rather a stiff joke that,” I ventured to observe.

“ *That* wasn’t the joke,” said Katchit, contemptuously ; “ *that* was’n’t the joke ; we’re coming to it.”

“ Oh, I see,” said I, apologetically, and Katchit continued—

“ ‘ To the east of Rambodde there is a gentle elevation that rises from the valley, lying behind one of the mountains which forms the pass, at a distance of four or five miles, by the bridle path, from the station. This path is of the most rugged description, even for a mountainous district, and one who ventures to ride over it, must be sure of his own seat and his horse’s steadiness, ere he trusts himself upon the verge of a ravine, into the far depths of which a body of water precipitates itself from the adjoining hill, plunging, foaming, boiling in its mad course from rock to rock, and scattering the spray far over the path to which I allude, in its onward course, with nothing between him and the yawning chasm beneath, but the three feet of projecting rock or soil on which his horse with difficulty finds a footing.

“ ‘ By this path we wended our way early one fine morning in the direction stated, having heard the previous day that a herd of deer which had been grazing there a short time before, had given place to the lordlier elephant, of which there could not be less than from thirty to fifty scattered over the hill. It was

then with a very lively anticipation of excellent sport, that we journeyed over the dangerous road by the side of the ravine, each one, doubtless, planning in his own breast the means by which he could contrive to bring down more than his neighbour. Some three or four miles beyond the hill upon which we understood the elephants to be, a surveyor and a party, belonging to the superintendent-of-roads' department, were engaged in constructing a road through the valley leading, I believe, to Allbagge. Elephants had been numerous in the district, and had greatly impeded the operations of the surveyor, so that B—— informed us we should be aiding government, and improving the country by knocking as many of them on the head as possible.

“ ‘ On emerging from the narrow valley into which the ravine I have described led us,’ continued Growler, ‘ we saw a wide extended amphitheatre, stretching far away for miles on all sides surrounded by lofty mountains. In the centre, with a gentle swell, rose the hill upon which the herd had rested and were then resting. ‘ Take it for all in all,’ it was one

of the finest spots I have ever seen for an elephant-hunt.' ”

“ ‘Take it for all and all,’ ” I exclaimed, “excuse me, but is that intended for a quotation ?”

“Of course it is—it’s from Shakspeare ; is it possible you don’t remember where ? I forget who, is describing somebody,” answered Katchit, impatiently.

“Hamlet, describing his father,” I replied, “says, ‘Take him for all in all, we shall not look upon his like again.’ ”

“Ay, that’s it, to be sure,” said Katchit, composing himself to continue his reading.

“But you have it—‘Take *it* for all in all ;’ *that’s* not what Shakspeare wrote,” I urged.

“Well, it’s very easy to take out the inverted commas,” testily answered my host ; “nothing can be easier. I’ll proceed with Growler’s story now, if you’ll let me.”

I said not a word more, and the reading continued as before.

“ ‘Our dispositions were soon made,—long ere our arrival the beaters (men who drive the elephants in the desired direction) had been despatched to the other side of the hill, to

drive the herd towards us, whilst, on the two flanks, strong parties had been posted to prevent escape that way. By the shrill trumpeting of our huge foes, we perceived that they had been already disturbed and were coming towards us, their forms hid in the tall grass and taller trees with which the hill, nearly to its summit, was clothed. We speedily dismounted, and were soon ready for the fray.

“ ‘ I had, as usual, my single-barrelled rifle, carefully loaded, in my hand, and my trusty old servant with a double-barrel (not a fowling-piece, a rifle,—I never trust a fowling-piece amongst elephants) close behind me. I told Sturt to keep near me, whilst the rest separated to convenient distances, and we commenced slowly ascending the hill. It was some time before I heard the leader of the enemy loudly indicating his whereabouts to the others, but, unfortunately, he was too far to my left for me to hope that I should meet him.

“ ‘ In his progress towards us, I distinctly perceived, from his movements, that he was making towards *my* side of the hill, and waited with breathless impatience, but he turned

again, and, in a few minutes, I heard R——'s rifle (I could distinguish it from a hundred) popping at him, and down he went with a tremendous crash amongst the dried grass and dead wood beneath the trees. R—— has such a combination of luck and skill in his composition, that he invariably bears off the most honours, although many men shoot better.

“ ‘ Keeping together, Sturt and I made our way with difficulty up the hill, the shouts of the beaters far in advance informing us that the death of the leader had momentarily turned the herd. On they came again, and here and there through the forest could be heard the crushing of brambles, the trumpeting of the elephant, and an occasional roar, as some lusty young monster tried his strength against a tree. The distinctness with which we heard the tread of the advancing animals, made me fancy we were in the direct line of the thickest of the squadron, and I anticipated glorious sport. Nearer and nearer came the rushing, crushing sound of the foe, and at length a huge female, accompanied by her two young ones, filled up the gap in front of us, a gap

formed by a tree that had been overthrown in some recent gale.

“ ‘ Now for it,’ said I to Sturt, ‘ leave me the mother, you take the young one on the right—wait—not yet—now—fire !’

“ ‘ I had fired just as the mother, apparently aware of her danger, had made a headlong rush forward, with curled trunk and elevated tail. She fell just as she had cleared half the distance between us, and I was obliged to leap to the side, to prevent being entangled in a sapling which she had brought down in her fall. Sturt had fired at the same time at the largest of the youngsters, but found a second edition of the dose necessary to quiet him. The other had rushed on with his mother, and now stood beside me with his trunk leaning over her, apparently disposed to fondle her, and evidently disturbed by her sudden fall.

“ ‘ I could not muster up cruelty enough to put an end to the life of the little monster, it seemed so innocent and so quiet. It offered no resistance, no opposition, but, as it stood over its dead mother, I could fancy that I heard a groan rushing from its young heart,

as it turned its eyes first upon Sturt and then upon myself. An exclamation from our attendants drew our attention, both at the same instant, to an enormous male and a tusker, that now rushed wildly towards our little group.

“ ‘ I had scarcely time to seize my double-barrelled rifle from my Singhalese attendant, ere he, with Singhalese agility, had disappeared in a tree, not having yet finished the loading of my discharged weapon. Before I could get it to my shoulder, Sturt had fired, but again unsuccessfully, nor could I get such a fair aim at the monster’s forehead as I wished. However, he was now very near me, and fire I must, and did, shouting out to Sturt to get behind the large tree on his right. My fire did not bring down the animal at once, and I had only time to slip behind a tree to the left, when he stood where I had stood the moment before.

“ ‘ His attention was for an instant directed towards the mother, and his advance impeded by the young one, who wished to fondle him, when he turned with a loud snort of rage upon myself. I was waiting for

him, and as he wheeled his unwieldy carcass round, the end of my rifle was within reach of his trunk. Its contents were soon lodged in his brain. Sturt had fired at the same moment, apparently looking upon my position as a dangerous one, and as the animal received both balls he fell, hurting the young one in his fall, who uttered a shrill cry of pain as he descended.

“ ‘ It was now, when Sturt believed all danger over, that we were really most in danger, for I heard the advancing cries of the beaters again, and the loud shots and shouts in the jungle around, and knew not the moment at which another might be upon us. My servant, with my trusty single barrel, was with me in an instant, and I felt relieved, telling Sturt to look to himself, and lose no time in getting his weapons reloaded.

“ ‘ That done, I felt easy, and contemplated leisurely the strange scene, strange not so much to me as to my companions around me. The male and female had fallen within six feet of each other, and lay motionless side by side, their huge rotundities as high as the top of my little hunting cap. Some paces in advance lay

the muscular youngster who, had he lived, would doubtless have emulated his more bulky parents in size. Around us stretched the dark forest, with its lights and shadows in strong contrast to each other, our swarthy attendants fit actors in such a scene.

“ ‘ In giving directions about marking the spot so that our prey might be subsequently found with ease, I suddenly missed Sturt from my side. He had gone off to the left, apparently discontented with his own bad luck and my success (for I was a superior shot *then* to him). I was sorry for this, and feared the consequences ; but, after shouting lustily, gave up the search, certain that if he did not wish to return, my search would be unavailing. I continued my progress up the hill, fell in with R—— later in the day, and had excellent sport, having laid seven or nine dead (I forget which) before I made my way to the *rendezvous* where we were to regale ourselves with lunch. It was not for some days subsequently that I heard a connected recital of Sturt’s adventures and their *dénouement*.’ ”

“ More French words,” I exclaimed ; “ why, you have got on admirably well without them

so far. That spirited encounter with the herd is told all in English."

"You like that tale of Growler's," said he, calming down, for the reading made him amazingly excited. "I thought you would; but you must hear what became of Sturt; it's very ludicrous;" and so he proceeded with that apparently interminable chapter.

Whether it was the claret, however, or the unaccustomed blaze of the fire in front of me, or "Horatio Clomstock," I know not, but I soon found myself vigorously nodding at the fire-place. I had been up to the summit of one of the loftiest peaks in the neighbourhood of Newera Ellia that day, so that the fatigue, too, may have had much to do with it. Certain it is, however, that I retained no distinct idea of how Growler's story ended, nor did I ever arrive at the sporting adventures of Horatio Clomstock himself. Katchit saw me nodding, and became indignant. He put down the manuscript, and, looking at me over his spectacles with a severe look, ceased reading. The interruption roused me, and I started up.

"Ha! ha! admirably described, and very

ludicrous," said I, anxious to soothe his ruffled feelings.

"It was, without exception, the most pathetic description in the whole book," he replied severely.

"But I thought you said Sturt's adventures ended ludicrously," I explained.

"So they do, further on, but I have not come to that yet," was Katchit's reply.

A coaxing word or two induced him to continue his fruitless labour. I tried to listen and to keep awake; I rubbed my eyes, crossed my legs, pulled my fingers, but all to no purpose. The blaze of the fire was too powerful for eyes long unaccustomed to contemplate a fire at all. I was soon fast asleep, and before I awoke again, Katchit had tied up his manuscript and put it away, nor could any subsequent entreaties of mine, in which, indeed, I was not very earnest, induce him to reproduce it.

He still occasionally wrote a letter for the *Herald* after this; still occasionally urged some topic in an article intended for a leader; still occasionally conversed with me in the library or on the steps of his office; but our intimacy

was at an end from that day forth, and of "Horatio Clomstock" I neither heard nor saw more—*requiescat in pace*.

I left Ceylon for Calcutta soon afterwards, and, for all I know, "Horatio Clomstock" may be now appearing in the *Colombo Observer*

CHAPTER VI.

THE ABODE OF DEATH.

CALCUTTA cannot fail to strike the European or American traveller as a city most remarkable and unique in its appearance. It is built upon the level bank of the Hooghly, on the alluvial deposits brought down from the hills by the Ganges and its tributaries—these deposits now forming an extensive region of many hundred square miles in extent, and of the most astonishing fertility, from the richness and depth of the vegetable mould. As the traveller steams or sails from the low, marshy banks of the mouth of the Hooghly, the “Sand-heads,” as they are appropriately called, he is astonished to see ever the same monotonous level plain, stretching out on either hand without a hill or

a distant chain of mountains anywhere visible to give variety to the prospect.

Near the mouth of the river, the accumulations of mud and sand brought down by it are, of course, the most recent—a vast work-shop of nature, where dry land is being formed by the mighty river, for the future abode of man. Low-lying, marshy districts are there, of great extent, called the *Sunderbunds*, and covered with a dense tropical jungle, in which death lurks, in many shapes, waiting for his prey. The vast tropical plants, with their rank odour and noisome exhalations, but decay to form manure for others, equally rank, equally noisome, equally huge and thick. To penetrate some of these recesses—to make one's way through the dense aquatic plants and creepers, over the marshy land—would be certain death, from the foul gases generated by the decaying vegetables. *Miasma* lurks under every creeper, and broods in every bush—*miasma* of the most fatal character.

These *Sunderbunds* have a melancholy interest of their own, as the birth-place of cholera. Amidst their slimy soil and rank jungle that fatal scourge was born, which has swept, like a

destroying angel, round and round the world since. Numerous as have been the victims of cholera—manifold his conquests—he is not yet much more than thirty years of age. Verily he casts a Cæsar and a Napoleon far into the shade—thousands died that they might be great; millions have probably died that cholera might be feared. People will, doubtless, by-and-by, begin to prepare for his visits, for cholera, like other conquerors, lives and grows great on the vices and evil habits, the passions and bad blood, of nations.

The traveller, as he coasts those death-brooding shores, shudders at the impenetrable jungle—dank, dark, slimy, and foul in its horrible recesses—he shudders to think of being cast into its midst, as he pictures to himself the horrible creepers twining round him, the deadly smell overpowering him, the large, damp leaves of the semi-aquatic plants brushing against his face—he shudders when he remembers that he is in the very abode of cholera, whence the mighty scourge was begotten and brought forth, and where it is still, doubtless, lurking, unseen, greedy of corpses. But he shudders at far more than this—horrible as all this is. In

such places the tiger and the serpent find congenial abodes—minor ministers of death—the humble, visible, and grosser auxiliaries of the great invisible pestilence that sits throned in the jungle.

There is, perhaps, no district upon earth on which a greater variety of deadly and poisonous snakes is to be found—none, certainly, where larger and more ferocious tigers may be met with than in these *Sunderbunds*. The Ganges makes its way to the sea through them by a hundred winding channels, offshoots from the great main stream. By these channels the river steamers of Bengal are obliged sometimes to navigate in getting to or from the Ganges—sometimes, nay, generally, in the dry season, when the Hooghly does not afford water enough in some parts of its wide, sandy bed, for their passage.

At night, these river steamers are obliged to moor, wherever they may be, as the navigation is fraught with too many dangers to admit of their proceeding in the darkness. If possible, they will not moor in some of these narrow but deep gullies, with the thick jungle waving forebodingly on either side of them—if pos-

sible, they will not ; but this cannot always be avoided ; and if fate brings them into the middle of one of these long channels as the sun goes down, there they must remain till he rises again, unless the friendly moon is almost at the full.

Let the passengers then beware of deadly *miasma*. Fever and ague lurk in every whiff of the night air, as it is borne to them from the jungle around. Let them shut their cabins close, to keep the death-dealing vapour out—close as they can—and if the occupant rejoices in a pair of whiskers—I must not say in a beard, for Englishmen have no beards—let him smoke a cigar within the narrow confines of his cabin. He cannot do better, believe me, madam ; and should you ever be in a like position, I should advise you to get your husband to smoke two or three cigars before he and you go to bed that night—tobacco smoke is better than malaria—innocuous nausea than deadly jungle fever. But I spoke of your husband, did I, madam ? I beg your pardon. I forgot you had none. You still rejoice in the euphonious appellation of Miss : well, then, if you can't get any one to smoke

in your cabin before you go to bed—in India, people are not particular, you know—do it yourself.

But it was not of the deadly dews and foul exhalations of these districts I intended to speak, in getting the steamer to an anchor, in the centre of one of these narrow water-courses. The jungle is on either side—thick, dark, and dank—almost touching the paddle-boxes as the steamer stands still in the black stream, which rushes on blubberingly from stem to stern. The anchor has been dropped—the engine fires extinguished—lights gradually put out—the officers and the passengers in their cabins are vigorously smoking, with closed doors and windows, notwithstanding the heat. Peep in, and you see Lieutenant Soosty of the B. N. I., reclining on his couch, with the preserving weed in his mouth—one leg thrown over the side of the berth, the toes dangling within an inch of the floor, the other elevated aloft, as he plants it against the bulk-head or partition at his feet; two feet higher, and it would touch the ceiling. A glass of brandy and water is on the box by his side, within easy reach,

and a book in his hand, over which he yawns amazingly.

Of his dress the less said the better; it must be remembered that it is excessively hot, and he therefore may be excused. He is lucky indeed that he does not require a mosquito-net, which would but increase the heat; but it is a common joke in Soosty's corps, the "Kuzits-ze-kinkas," that no mosquito had ever yet succeeded in piercing the fatty envelope in which Soosty is encased.

"What, you would peep in at another cabin? would you? Why, that's a married couple's—come away, sir, at once—do you suppose this villanous heat attacks the male sex only?" Away! away! Ah! here's the Captain Sahib's. Yes, I permit you, take a peep. See how the swarthy sailor is almost lost in the cloud he blows from that dingy pipe. Believe me, sir, that fellow knows what he is about; he is evidently preparing for his night's repose. In two minutes more he will be under that mosquito-net fast asleep, with no more clothing on him than Adam had in Paradise. He will not lose his time like Soosty, for he must be up with the

first faint dawn of day." Such is the little comedy enacting below—on deck, a tragedy.

A solitary native seaman, the watch, stands at the helm, for the current is strong, and the helm must be attended to, though the vessel is at anchor. See, he is lashing it with a rope, and now sits down, crouching on the quarter-deck, to enjoy his hubble-bubble, or native pipe. The jungle is on his left, thick and threatening, whilst the steamer's stern floats merrily towards it. The bank is nearly on a level with the steamer's deck, and two fierce eyes are glaring through the darkness on the unconscious native sailor as he inhales and expires the grateful smoke, not merely taking it into his mouth as occidentals do, but into his lungs. Two fierce eyes glaring on him ferociously, and not six feet distant. Crouched on the bank under the thick jungle is a tiger, crouched cat-like, the eyes alone showing life, even the tail uneasily quiet. That tiger has marked his prey, and will have it. The vessel's stern floats near the bank; the man still smokes heedless of danger; the tiger still crouches greedy, anxious, and determined. There is a cry—a loud, piercing cry—of anguish and despair on

that steamer's deck—a rustling in the thick jungle by the side—cries fainter and fainter heard through the rustling, and all is quiet again on the shore.

On the steamer, however, all is commotion; the watch is gone, he has disappeared; a gout of blood, near the rudder, alone shows where he was. The truth flashes upon them at once. “Baug! baug!” shout the natives; “A tiger!” whisper the Europeans. This is no imaginary case; such things have happened more than once on the river steamers going through these narrow streams of the *Sunderbunds*. Such things, and even, indeed, more horrible—

An indigo planter, in an unwieldy boat, was moving slowly and laboriously along. The thick vegetation overhung the stream, the banks gradually narrowed, approaching each other, leaving but room for the broad unsightly vessel to make its way through. There was but the faintest possible breath of wind, and that breath altogether favourable. The few men who guided the craft and acted as sailors in this nondescript ship, were seated in the fore part, eating their usual daily meal.

A servant of the planter's was seated at the rudder, crouching down on his heels, after the manner of Bengalese. The indigo planter himself was being fanned below in his cabin, sheltered from the burning heat above, languid and slumbering.

He was awoke from his slumbers by the noise of bare feet on the quarter-deck over his head ; he thought he heard a strange gurgling sound, preceded by a half-expressed cry of alarm, and interrupted by a hideous crunching that made him shudder. He started from his couch, and went cautiously forth, merely putting his head above, and that slowly and warily, to see what was the matter. A tiger had leaped from the bank upon the servant, had caught him at once by the throat, and was now drinking the life-blood of him, as it welled from the severed arteries and veins of the neck.

Starvation had evidently impelled the beast to this bold measure, for his gaunt frame was angular from want. He saw the planter's head and the forms moving about in the fore part of the vessel roused by the unwonted event, and he growled fiercely as he saw them ;

growled as a cat would do threateningly when disturbed in enjoying a feast of a rat.

The planter's gun was unloaded; he had been shooting at birds that morning, and overcome by the heat, had thrown it from him empty as he entered his cabin. He proceeded forthwith to load it, but before he again reached the deck, the tiger and his prey had gone. Doubtless scared by the human forms and by the cries of the men in the bows, the hungry beast had grasped the man in his ample jaws and leaped on the bank again, there, in the midst of the jungle, to devour at his leisure the choice morsel. Such are the stories with which the captain of your steamer will enliven the voyage through these jungle wilds, and there is ample testimony in India to confirm many such.

It is not only the *Sunderbunds*, however, that present the extraordinarily level appearance already noticed, as the visitor enters the Hooghly, and steams or sails to Calcutta. When *they* have been passed, the same flat surface continues to present itself on either side, until the picturesque villas of Garden Reach and the old-looking gothic pile of the

Bishop's College on the opposite bank, inform the traveller of his approach to the city of palaces. And truly the specimens of Anglo-Bengalese houses which he sees on his right, make him already suspect that Calcutta is not called a city of palaces wrongfully, for the villas that line Garden Reach are, for the most part, if not beautiful, at least imposing, their white walls and pillars forming an agreeable contrast with the green lawns and shrubberies that stretch from them down to the river's bank.

So far all is elegant, nay, picturesque. But India is a land of contrasts, and although so far all is well, it will not do to look deeper into the adjuncts of these merchant-princes' houses. On the bank of the stream, by the very side of the well-kept lawn, all is filth and slime, as the river retires from it with the ebbing tide, worse than filth and slime but too often. From the deck of the vessel may be discerned a bleached corpse perhaps lying on the bank, the crows or the vultures making their morning meal on it, the air giving unmistakable warning of its condition.

Dwellers on the banks of the Hooghly are obliged to keep a watch for such nuisances,

and a gardener goes down daily to see if any corpse rests within his master's boundaries, and if so, to push it off the bank again into the river. If it be on the bank of the next garden, although only a few feet from his master's paling, that matters not to him, he has nothing to do with such an "unmannerly corpse," and leaves it to be pushed off by some one else—it is not *his* business.

CHAPTER VII.

CALCUTTA AND ITS VEHICLES.

THE view of Calcutta itself, as the traveller rounds the reach, and sweeps past Fort William towards the dense mass of houses, is not very imposing, from the level character of the surface, and the distance from the shore of the principal buildings. Past Fort William, I say, but the reader must not, therefore, picture to himself a building like the Tower of London, of stone or brick and mortar, with turrets, embattlements, archways, and gloomy courts. Fort William was built in far other times than the Tower of London—in times when men had discovered that wide ditches and broad earth-mounds were stronger de-

fences than stone walls. All that the visitor sees from the river is the green glacis and a few frowning cannon at the embrasures—a broad dry ditch, generally coated richly with green—a draw-bridge, a gate-way, and a sentinel. Within the broad earth-works, which are encased in walls, are numerous barracks and officers' quarters—a picturesque church and green esplanades.

The various *ghauts* or landing-places on the river's bank, attract the observer's notice as he approaches the town, becoming more numerous as he advances. They consist, for the most part, of steps leading down to the water's edge, and terminating above in a paved platform, over which a roof, supported on many pillars, is sometimes reared. On *many* pillars, I say, for in some they are so numerous that as the visitor stands amid them, he naturally asks himself whether it is not a pillar-nursery that surrounds him, the stone plants waiting transplantation to their allotted stations.

In these, as in every foreign station where John Bull reigns, the traveller is made painfully conscious that *taste* is by no means that quality of the mind which the aforesaid John

most strikingly displays. Instead of picturesque cupolas, and strange Hindu columns, which would have well become these landing-places, and made them points of attraction for the eye in the surrounding scenery, we have orthodox Grecian pillars, supporting orthodox Grecian entablatures. John Bull has evidently heard and believes that Grecian art is beautiful and refined—that its proportions are exquisite, and its structures architectural models. All which is true enough. But it does not hence follow, as honest John evidently supposes, that every other species of art must be necessarily grotesque and ugly, or that Grecian buildings are suited for all places and all periods. A Gothic cathedral impresses the visitor with an awe-stricken reverence that a St. Peter's or a St. Paul's, with all its vastness and outward sublimity, altogether fails to produce. And so of other places and other purposes. The best type of Hindu column—and there *are* Hindu columns by no means contemptible—supporting the peculiar dome or a series of domes, in which Hindu architecture delights, would have been the appropriate margin to the sacred waters of the

Ganges—the appropriate portal, to the traveller, of the wonderful city behind. A Grecian column by his side, as he steps ashore from the native boat—a Grecian roof above, are equally out of place and incongruous.

But, alas ! it is not in this instance alone that John Bull displays his dogged stolidity, and imperturbable blindness to the fit and the appropriate. When he gets hold of an idea he does not easily let it go, and it takes a long time before he will resign it. He turns it over and ruminates upon it, he catches it, at one side and at another, inspecting it from every point of view ; he thrusts it in every body's way, and in every man's face, and will not be content till he has thoroughly wearied out himself and all the world with it. A hungry dog, with an unmanageable bone, is but a feeble emblem of the way in which honest John twists and turns around his idea—now catching it at one end and shaking it heartily thence, now grasping it at the other, straining the while to the utmost to make the most of it, and growling if any one else but looks at his idea for the time being. Let him alone, he will strip it bare, I warrant you, be-

fore he has done. It *was* architecture, it *is* drawing, it *will be* music. See if he does not astonish humanity before he concludes !

Crouched down by the feet of the pillars supporting these severe Grecian roofs over the landing-places, not lounging against them as Europeans would do, may be seen crowds of palanquin-carriers—some seated on their heels, a favourite attitude, smoking a noisy pipe with water gurgling in it, as the smoke is drawn through ; others extended at full length in the shade, dozing. A single cloth round the loins constitutes their entire bodily clothing, whilst another, of ampler dimensions, is perhaps tied round their heads. The palanquin, a huge box with sliding doors at the sides, and a pole projecting from either end, stands on the ground, at some distance, also in the shade. The men are waiting for hire, for numerous boats are constantly plying backwards and forwards between the shore and the shipping, and men of business, or ship officers, or even English sailors, may like to be carried into the town.

The weight of the palanquin is by no means inconsiderable, and with a man of more than ordinary dimensions within, the four slight Hindus

have enough to do to stagger along, groaning the while vehemently, as the strange conveyance rises and falls with their half-trotting step. Hard work truly, beneath such a sun as that of Calcutta, and the streams which glisten on their backs, making their way between the shoulder-blades, attest that it *is* truly hard work—the guttural “hee-haw! hee-haw!” which bursts almost involuntarily from their throats, and the oily exudation which covers them soon after this labour has commenced, attesting its severity. They do not live long, these men—seldom attaining to forty years of age—but no class can be more jovial and less care-worn. The lazzaroni of Naples are grave in comparison. Their lives are spent in laughing, sleeping, and eating, and when they have laughed, slept, and eaten, they are ready to laugh, to sleep, to eat again.

Even in the midst of their severe labour, when steaming like London horses in a severe frost, or after a heavy fall of snow making the roads slippery—even when so steaming, with the thermometer at 150 degrees as they stand or progress full in the mid-day sun's beams, even then they will chat and joke

—joke on the weight of the passenger within, and on the probable quantity of rice and curry it takes to satisfy *him*. Careless, happy wretches! to whom civilization would add much misery and many wants, to whom education would be a doubtful blessing, if not altogether an evil.

They like the sailors, for Jack is liberal, and has no objection to “shy them a copper,” as he passes to and fro, when in a good humour—their dark countenance beaming with delight, and their white teeth exhibited (whilst they seize the money) to great advantage by a broad grin. In Calcutta, however, Jack often exhibits himself in new characters—driving up and down the Strand, amid the fashionables of the town, in a hired buggy, which he “steers” through the crowd of carriages as best he may—finding, for the most part, little difficulty in so “steering,” for native coachmen and gentlemen, anxious to avoid an entire break-up of their vehicles, give Jack a wide berth.

Jack is laughed at, of course, for the blunders he makes in trying to accommodate himself to the new world of the east,—and the

mistakes he makes, and the new methods he adopts, render it far from wonderful that he should be laughed at.

“Palkee, sahib, palkee,” shouts a native, offering a palanquin to a sailor who is mounting the steps of the ghaut with his box on his shoulder.

Jack has been paid off, and has plenty of money in his pocket. He looks doubtingly at the palanquin. In a moment it is hoisted on the shoulders of the bearers awaiting Jack's arrival. The embarrassed sailor comes up to the side ; an officious native—one of the carriers—puts his hand on the trunk. Jack has carried it easily enough on his shoulder from the boat up, but the slighter Hindoo would find it beyond his powers.

“ Ah !” says Jack, “ is that it ? Very good ! Put the traps into the box, and I'll walk on by the side.”

And so he does : the trunk is placed carefully within the palanquin, by Jack's assistance, the doors shut on either side, and, grinning at the novel burden, the bearers trot on with their usual “ Hee-haw ! hee-haw !” — whilst

Jack walks briskly by the side to keep up with them.

It is not very far—half a mile at the utmost—to the Bow Bazar, where sailors “most do congregate,” in Calcutta, and there Jack finds himself, as he says, brought to an anchor, in one of the lodging-houses for sailors, with which the Bow Bazar abounds. The trunk is taken from its hiding-place, and Jack marches in with it, after paying the bearers liberally, mopping his face the while, for they have gone rapidly over the ground.

“I’d as soon have had a man to carry the traps, and have walked on quietly by his side,” says Jack to his new landlord, “an it wasn’t for the honour of the thing.”

The palkee-bearers, as the carriers of the palanquin are usually called by Europeans, form a very strange class of the lower orders of native society in Calcutta. They congregate in stations allotted to them, with their odd vehicles, or where they consider themselves most likely to be speedily hired. The palanquins are placed, the one behind the other, in a long line, like cabs on a stand in London, whilst, of the four men attached to each, three are inva-

riably smoking, or sleeping, or eating—one being on the alert for a fare.

“Palkee-ee-ee!” shouts a servant from some house in the neighbourhood; the sleepers are aroused—the smokers alert. All is bustle, and hurry, and excitement to be the first.

Two men seize the nearest conveyance, and stagger on with it towards the door, their long cloths hanging from their heads in great confusion. Half-a-dozen palanquins are being so carried towards the door, when only one is wanting: but see!—one has its full complement of four men, and comes bounding along. It passes its competitors—reaches the door first—is deposited on the threshold, and great is the laughter, vehement the gesticulation of the successful bearers as they take up their station in anticipation of their fare, anxiously looking into the house or court-yard, however, to see the size of the intended passenger, for the laugh will be against them if they get a robust lady or gentleman of fifteen stone weight. A lady or gentleman!—for even in Calcutta there are *both* ladies and gentlemen of fifteen stone.

Where a man or woman of preposterous dimensions is known to reside in a certain

house, and is in the habit of going out in palanquins, there is by no means a race to *that* house, when the well-known shout of “Palkee-ee-ee!” issues from the gate—the race is rather the other way, in truth. Should the formidable passengers however, issue boldly from the house, and walk towards the standing, the commotion is great. In hot haste the palanquins are borne round the corner, or along the road, or into the first gateway—anywhere, in fact, but towards the mountain of flesh that wishes to be quietly reclining within; and great indeed is the laughter if one be caught, and forced to receive the enormous freight. Great the laughter amongst the others who have escaped, for, to the unfortunate bearers of that particular palanquin, it is far other than a laughing matter.

But the palanquin is but one form of the various vehicles in which the citizens of Calcutta make their way under a tropical sun hither and thither, and a form that has long been becoming quite unfashionable. There are modes of conveyance both above and below it, however, in the social scale. It is not fashionable, it is true; rather the reverse in these

days, indeed. But there is the *karanchee*—a vehicle as ugly and uncouth as its name—which ranks far lower. The *karanchee* is to be found in all places where natives abound. Its low fares suit the pockets of those who are too well off to walk, but too poor to afford themselves the luxury of a palanquin.

It consists of a large, old-fashioned carriage, badly balanced on springs, which lift it high above the wheels. The wheels themselves are high too, so that one would almost be disposed to fancy that ladders would be requisite to ascend. The *karanchee* is generally hired by a party who club their *pice** for the purpose—four inside, perhaps, and two or four seated on the top—all chatting and laughing vehemently. It is an airy vehicle: there are no glasses, no venetians, so that elbows, arms, and heads may be observed stuck out on every side as it advances; the elbows, arms, and heads, for the most part bare, of native clerks in the government and mercantile offices.

In front of this vehicle, attached to the long pole by which it is pulled along, are two animals, entitled, by courtesy, to the name of

* Small coins like farthings.

ponies—ponies, innocent of the curry-comb or the scrubbing-brush, in all the unsightliness of untrimmed hair and matted filth; too often, also, in all the repulsiveness of unhealed sores. A more than half-naked savage seated at their tails—not on any coachman's seat, or in a comfortable "box" prepared for the purpose, but simply anywhere as he may find convenient—is the steersman of this strange vehicle. Uttering unearthly shouts, he flourishes a long cane or slender bamboo, which he brings into feeling contact continually with the hind quarters and sides of the "ponies." Their tails are twitched uneasily hither and thither, the pole moves convulsively from side to side, the wheels squeak, the springs creak, the panels clatter, the natives shout, and they are off—ponies, pole, karanchee, Jehu, outsiders and insiders, all off—rushing along at no mean pace, the long cane still flourishing, the Jehu still shouting in an unearthly manner, the pole still jerking from side to side, the wheels still squeaking, the springs creaking, the panels clattering, and the natives laughing—noises which continue without abatement till the goal has been attained, and the freight deposited.

Whether Karanchees ever walk, I cannot of myself undertake decisively to say. I only lived a few years in Calcutta, not sufficient to decide that point ; but, as far as my experience went, I should say they do not. They seem to be always dashing about in a wild, half-savage kind of way, man or boy and “ponies,” equally excited and untamed-looking, whilst the combination of noises they emit in rolling along is really wonderful. I have often stood still to analyze these noises, but never succeeded. It was impossible to distinguish the creaking of the springs from the squeaking of the wheels—impossible to separate the sharp, angular clatter of the panels from the no less sharp and angular vociferations of the driver, as the half-naked individual perched on the end of the pole must, I suppose, be called.

But these are but two of the vehicles that abound in such numbers and in such amazing variety in Calcutta—only two, the palanquin and the karanchee ; why, if I go over the others at the same length, my chapter on Calcutta and its vehicles will be swelled into a volume, and *de re vehiculari*, which means good madam “of the karanchee,” &c., become a very portly chapter

in itself of that volume. No, no, I must cut it shorter than that. Even in the karanchee we have not got to the lowest degree of the social scale of Calcutta vehicles. I cannot stop to describe them, but the ekka and the bullock hackery are decidedly lower; whilst the reader's patience would be worn out, did I do more than enumerate the palanquin carriage, the office jaun, the brownberry, the American spider, the brougham, and the barouche, in which Europeans and the more wealthy natives make their way from place to place.

CHAPTER VIII.

MEN AND MANNERS IN THE CITY OF PALACES.

CALCUTTA, like most other oriental towns, contains two quarters—the well-built, cleanly-kept, broad-streeted European quarter, and the ill-built, filthy, narrow-passaged native town. Even the palaces of the native princes, many of them magnificent in outward show, and built, of course, for the most part, in imitation of the Parthenon, or, at all events, with Grecian porticos, must be approached through long filthy streets, so narrow, that between the ditches on both sides, it is only by assiduous care and watchful edging that two carriages can be induced to pass each other, without one or both finding their way into the open drains on either side.

In these native palaces we see the effect of John Bull's one idea on art, thrust everywhere but where it ought to be. He has assiduously taught his Hindoo fellow-subjects that Grecian art is sublime and perfect, and therefore, argues logical John, for he does not stick at consequences, every other kind of art must be ridiculous and imperfect. Anxious to be in the *mode*, and to accommodate himself to circumstances, the native prince orders a front to his house, something like one of the wings of the British Museum, and when he has paid his ten or twelve thousand pounds for it, hates it and praises it amazingly. There may be a high wall within thirty yards of it right in front, or thousands of miserable mud huts, thatched with leaves, in its immediate vicinity, but it is Grecian, and that suffices; John Bull says it is all right, and that is enough.

The Governor-General's palace is Grecian too; the Town-Hall, the churches, the bank, all Grecian. He is certainly in the *mode*, and if not contented, he will pretend to be so. A Hindoo structure, sobered by the withdrawal of a few extravagancies, would have been far more picturesque, and to him infi-

nately more convenient, but John Bull would not have it so. Amid the narrow streets of the native quarter of Calcutta, are situated the principal bazars. Like many other Eastern words, the word bazar has been adopted into our language, to mean, however, a very different object from the original. A genuine Eastern bazar differs even more from its European imitation than the turban which Dowager Lady Littlewit wore at the rout the other night from the turban of an orthodox Mussulman.

In Calcutta, a bazar is simply a collection of shops, generally in a narrow street, and for the most part of shops containing similar articles, the one to the other. Thus, in one bazar, the prudent housewife, who shuns the exorbitant prices of the European shopkeepers, will purchase linen, silk, woollen cloth; in another, her supplies of tea, sugar, spices; in a third, her furniture or ornaments for her rooms, and so on. A lane full of small shops, with open fronts, where the shopmen sit extolling their wares and inviting the passers-by to make a trial of them, is, in fact, a native bazar.

The shops appear small, from the confined frontage, but enter one of them, and you dis-

cover, as in some of the dingy shops of Wardour Street, in London, room after room behind, filled with goods. You go up stairs and down stairs, to the right hand and to the left, goods, goods, goods, still goods, and a native sycophant your mentor, who is ready to take his oath on the "Gunga-pawnee" (Ganges water),* that the worst article in his shop is the best of its kind. To get you in is the sole object of the man seated in the shop window. His eloquence is made use of as a decoy. "You not go that man's shop, sare," he shouts, when he sees you irresolute as to which you will enter, calculating by your flushed cheek that you are a new-comer, and therefore to be addressed in English; "you not go that man's shop, sare; that man plenty bad man; him d—— cheat! You go that shop, you get plenty cheat. Ebery ting plenty good this shop, sare; you come in here, sare. Me show you what you want, ma'am; silk, satins, ribbons, ebery ting got you want."

When he has succeeded in enticing you to

* The Hindoos are sworn by the water of the Ganges, as the Christians on the Bible, and the Muhammadans on the Koran.

enter, he coolly hands over you and the lady to other men within, whilst he takes his place at the door to laugh and chat with the "plenty bad man" opposite, the "d—— cheat," whom he abused so roundly a minute before. The compliments were returned, of course, for every one of the six shopmen in your vicinity were vociferating exactly the same words, making altogether a Babel from which you were glad to escape by rushing into any shop.

Of native articles, the best may be obtained in these native bazars, but of European by no means the best; rather, indeed, as a general rule, the inferior goods, made, not to give satisfaction or be economical to the purchaser, but to sell at a cheap rate. In the shops of the Europeans, generally speaking, really good articles are sold, but at enormous prices. Take tea as a sample; in Calcutta there is no duty on that import, the freight from China is by no means a matter of importance, yet tea in an European shop in Calcutta is absolutely dearer than in the first London-houses.

The European confectioners' coffee-houses are the great resorts of the idle Anglo-Indians during the heat of the day. They are situated

in the neighbourhood of Government House, as the Governor-General's palace is called, and are kept as cool as possible; within, marble floors and tables, and perpetual breezes, caused by constantly swinging fans, forming a delightful contrast to the red-brick dust, the painful glow and intense heat without. Ices and sherry-cobblers are the articles most in demand in the day-time in these establishments; all kinds of American drinks are to be had at all times, and the quantity of ice used in the concoction of the majority of such drinks, renders them great favourites in India.

The familiar faces of the principal London periodicals meet our eyes upon every table and in every recess, mingled with Indian newspapers of various names and as various type and appearance. *Punch*, here as elsewhere, an universal favourite, the best thumbed, coffee-bespattered paper of the whole, known as well to the Hindoo servants as to the Anglo-Indian visitors. "Punch, Saheb," mutters the obsequious Bengallee, as he puts the well-known paper under the visitor's eyes—"Two sherry cobblers—dota—atcha, Saheb," two sherry-cobblers,—two—very well, sir; and whilst the

visitors divide *Punch* or the *Hurkaru*, the *Times* or the *Purnochundodroy* between them, the waiter flies off to supply their wants.

Even in the busiest thoroughfares of Calcutta, where bullock-hackeries, and karanchees and office jauns most do creak, there is an air of languor and of subdued indifference about the scene—a total want of that earnestness which characterizes the busy scenes of the west. Time is little valued in the east generally, and not more in Calcutta than elsewhere. A London policeman, traversing a quiet street when on his beat, saunters along imperturbably enough, but a Calcutta policeman creeps through the busiest thoroughfares still more slowly, and with far less appearance of energy. The labourers carrying a heavy parcel or a bale of merchandize—the drivers urging on some contumacious bullock—the mechanics plying their vocation, all do so in Calcutta with the smallest possible amount of energy and exertion necessary to ensure the desired result. If they cannot succeed, the resource is easily procurable—a seat upon their heels, and a pipe. They have no idea of putting themselves out about the matter, or allowing

themselves to be annoyed—not they. They sit quietly down by the road-side and produce the never-failing hubble-bubble, with which they beguile the time till fate relents, till assistance is procured, till the bullock becomes less obdurate, or till it becomes too late to prosecute the task for *that* day, trusting to the chapter of accidents for the morrow.

In cases in which the Englishman would be striving, steaming, struggling, perspiring at every pore, and rapidly losing his temper, perhaps, the Bengallee is perfectly composed. *He* sees no reason why he should at all annoy himself, and, as to struggling out of the difficulty, he would as soon think of placing himself voluntarily in a lunatic asylum.

“What does it matter, Saheb, as long as we’re happy?” he will ask you, if you want to know why he does not make a strenuous effort to arouse himself.

“They are going a great deal too fast,” said the complacent Bengallee, when they first saw railway carriages flying over the road—“a great deal too fast—all the people will be killed.”

That was the only idea the novel scene

aroused in *their* minds, with all its astonishing display of force and power.

This air of languor, of indisposition to exertion, pervades the entire community, and is, doubtless, to a great extent, the product of the climate in which they have been born and reared. Sharp enough in business details, full of intellectual vigour, when their minds have been trained by cultivation, fond of physical or mental stimuli according to their tastes or dispositions, and eager in the pursuit of physical gratification, there is yet this air of indescribable languor about all alike—the rajah and his slave, the student and his servant, the merchant and his clerk, the mechanic and his family—the spirit of the tropics has put his hand heavily upon them, and marked them as his own.

Few cities present a more heterogeneous mass of inhabitants than Calcutta. To say nothing of the pale-faced Anglo-Indian, who reclines, in a state of incipient liquefaction, in his carriage, and his congeners, the small sprinkling of Germans, French, and Americans, that become like him, liver-diseased and irritable as years roll round—to say nothing of the Por-

tuguese descendants, or the vast variety of mixed descent, Eurasians as they are sometimes called, a word intended to combine their European and Asiatic descent in one appellation—

To say nothing of these, who may be looked upon as exotics, there is a vast variety of Orientals to whom the climate is congenial, who suffer little inconvenience, comparatively speaking, from the heat, and who are as various in their dress and appearance as in their origin. Turks, with their massive turbans and wide trousers, move majestically along, the most self-satisfied of men. Arabs, with loose drapery floating about them, their unaccustomed walk telling of the well-used saddle, and of their better acquaintance with the horses' legs than with their own. They, too, partake of the self-satisfied character of the proud Turk, despising the infidels as heartily, feeling quite as conscious of their favoured origin, and of the inferior descent of the rest of mankind.

The Persian, with his high conical cap and slit sleeves, his loose robe fluttering in the air as he stalks along, is no less proud, no less

conceited inwardly, but hides the feeling, confines it to himself, knows, indeed, that a Paradise is awaiting him, to which neither the pale-faced Englishman, nor the yellow Chinese; neither the inelegant Hindu, nor the revengeful Burmese can at all aspire—he *knows* this, to him it is a conviction which could only be plucked out of him by dragging out his heart itself; but he sees, therefore, no reason why he should exhibit the feeling *now*, or, sure of his advantage hereafter, assume an earthly superiority at present. His high conical cap makes him tower above the crowd, as he passes along somewhat majestically. He pities the Englishman, despises the Hindu, hates the Turk, hates, because they are of rival creeds, or, rather, of two rival branches of the same creed, and he does not, therefore, feel so strong an antipathy to the miserable infidel, who has no chance of salvation, as he does to the degenerate heretic, who will not seek it exactly in *his* way—precisely as the bigoted Protestant, who is full of the controversial mania, feels more toleration for the Jew, the Turk, or the Infidel, than for the Roman Catholic, and,—for things must be

squared—precisely as the bigoted Roman Catholic would rather embrace a Buddhist or an African fetish-worshipper, than a heretic.

The Muhammadan of India is a totally different being from his co-religionists of Turkey, Arabia, and Persia. With him the contest is between infidelity and Muhammadism, not between rival sects of the latter alone. He cares little for that particular party of his faith to which he may belong, whether a Sheeah or a Soonie—little, comparatively speaking only—but is as eager in the maintenance of his faith as a whole, as any Mussulman in Europe or Asia. In outward appearance, he presents but a slight contrast to the native Hindu. The large turban of the Turk or the Arab he is altogether without, wearing a small white scull-cap instead, on his shaven crown, an article of dress too closely resembling a clipped night-cap to look either picturesque or imposing.

He is generally distinguished by his ample girdle—a vast mass of cloth, in fact, wrapped round and round his waist, containing his accounts, his writing utensils, his sweetmeat-box, and often his stock-in-trade, too, if that stock consist of jewellery, or small ornaments.

He is an indefatigable trader, going about from house to house, with hired servants of his own carrying trunks, in which a miscellaneous assemblage of cottons, linens and silks, tapes, bobbins and pins, shawls, laces and muslins will be extricated from each other in a moment, and displayed, in tempting novelty, before the languid *Mem-sahab*, as he calls the European lady. She is too indolent to go to the bazar or to the European shops for what she wants, or she finds it inconvenient to go, for her shopping involves the preparation of a carriage, dressing, the attendance of servants, and a large amount of trouble. She need not stir. She will not go to the shop—the shop will come to her. The box-man, once squatted on the floor of the apartment, in the midst of his wares, his wily porters, generally Africans, dismissed to sleep in the verandah, exhibits novelty after novelty in tempting succession—a dress-piece, or a new lace, or a handsome shawl, or a brooch, or a ring. She must be hard indeed to please, if he has not something to please her—his boxes once deposited on the threshold, his goods once spread in

most admired confusion about the floor, and he is sure of a sale.

Some "charming pattern" attracts the eye of the fair dame herself, some "love of a dress" enchants her slim daughter, who looks at the goods with "most hungry eyes," and after an hour spent in a strange conversation, half English, half Hindostanne, the Mussulman pockets his rupees, packs up his boxes, and prepares for departure, well-satisfied with the result of his morning's work. The ebony porters—brawny fellows, the very *caryatides* of male African humanity—place the huge trunks upon their heads, and slowly depart in Indian file; the Mussulman salesman, with many salaams to the fair purchasers, bringing up the rear, as he counts his gains mentally.

The extent to which this method of traffic is carried on in Calcutta is amazing, and not by any means patronized by Europeans alone. There are probably from fifteen to twenty thousand men so employed in the City of Palaces in fine weather; during the rainy season the traffic is, of course, nearly suspended.

The Parsees form another and a most interesting class of the native community. The

descendants of the fire-worshippers of Persia, who were driven from their native land by ruthless Moslemism, they retain pertinaciously to this hour the faith of their forefathers. An enlightened, interesting race notwithstanding—enlightened, inasmuch as they seek with avidity the illumination of the west ; interesting, like the Jew, as a persecuted race. As much attached to their prophet, Zoroaster, as the Jew to Moses—money-making their employment—an employment in which they are wonderfully successful. “As rich as a Parsee,” is almost proverbial in the East. Their mercantile houses are spread over the Indian Ocean in all its hives of commerce—from Australia to Arabia—from China to the Mauritius—their headquarters at Bombay, however, where they abound in the greatest numbers.

In Calcutta we shall find the richer Parsees, as elsewhere, at the head of great mercantile firms, known honourably for good faith and honesty ; their homes perfect palaces in luxury and magnificence, combining, not ungracefully, the superior taste and elegance of western ornament with the sensual comforts of the east. The poorer classes amongst them—for even

amongst the Parsees there are *some* poor—work in ivory, in fancy woods, in metals, manufacturing elegant boxes, beautifully inlaid with all manner of ornaments too, and costly drinking-cups.

The appearance of the Parsee in the street indicates his success in the world; his self-reliance, his consciousness of being not of the crowd, but of a peculiar sacred class, very far removed from that crowd. The peculiar hat, covered with brown or purple figured silk, slopes back in a graceful semicircle from the forehead to the back of the head; his white tunic, neatly buttoned over his breast, fits tightly to the figure, and reaches nearly to the knees; his wide pantaloons, and shoes with curled toes, all combine to give him a strange appearance, even amid the groups of strangely-dressed Orientals in the street. His elevated head and large beaming eyes—his erect figure and portly person—all combine to impress the beholder favourably.

The Parsee passes the poor uneducated Hindoo, or drudging Indian Mussulman, with a somewhat supercilious smile. For *them* he has no respect. Both have persecuted him

and his race cruelly in times past, and he has his revenge by pitying them now. They had their day, when he could but look forward to the future—to the future Paradise of the true believer, feeling sure that the time would come when *they* would be miserably damned, and when *he* would be for ever happy—but now things are changed. He still looks forward to that bright future, whether as confidently as before, I cannot decide; but the present has its bright side—illumination, cultivation, prosperity and ease for *him*; ignorance, want, drudgery for *them*—“revenge complete.”

The inelegant figure of the yellow Chinese, with his ungraceful, loose shirt, and wide, ill-fitting pantaloons, is seen frequently, too, gliding about in these streets. A totally different being from the Muhammadan or the Parsee—different many ways. Business is the sole absorbing thought of *his* mind; and truly to look at him, with his odd, conical cap, and his ugly blouse, one feels certain that he has not sacrificed to the Graces, whatever may be the chief moving springs of his existence. A persevering, plodding, active workman, however, proving by his industry and his skill that if

he is not so sure as the Mussulman or the Parsee of Paradise hereafter, he is surer of the necessity of attending to his business in this world. His expertness is proved by the fact, that if a Chinese carpenter, or a Chinese shoemaker, or a Chinese porter can be obtained, no Hindoo or Mussulman has a chance of employment. So that, with all his want of grace externally, there is a something hidden in the uncouth frame which makes the Chinaman take his place easily at the head of Orientals for dexterity and skill. The Parsee may perhaps compete with him, but, if so, the Parsee alone.

Having thus introduced the reader to the chief varieties of the genus *homo* to be found in Calcutta, it is but right that I should now allow him a little breathing time. As to buildings, there is not much that is necessary to be said here of *them*. Take *one* European house, and multiply it indefinitely, and you have the European quarter of Calcutta: take a sample or two of native hovels and native palaces, and multiply them indefinitely, and you have the native quarter. One bazar is a picture of all the bazars: one square, with

its Grecian lines of architecture, broken by green venetians, a picture of all the squares : one tank, with its green margin and encircling rails, with its dusky watermen filling their pigskins called "mussucks," to carry the water to the houses, a picture of every tank. The varieties of the human animal are the true curiosities of the town, and of these I have endeavoured to give you, good reader, a picture, however imperfect it may be.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW IT STRIKES A STRANGER.

“You will come to church with us to-day?” said the fair Miss Ducklet to me, one Sunday in May, a week or two after my arrival in Calcutta. We were literally melting on two opposite sofas at the time, looking out upon the wide level plain surrounding Fort - William — the *maidan*, as it is called there. A Hindoo was vigorously pulling to and fro the large fan suspended from the ceiling, in the vain attempt to keep the air of the room in an endurable condition. The heat was astonishing—“*bohuth gurm*”—very hot—were the words upon every one’s lips.

“*Bohuth gurm,*” said the servant, as he mopped himself with his scanty habiliments, untying the corner of his turban for that purpose.

“*Bohuth gurm,*” responded the Saheb, as he looked ferociously at the dusky automaton-looking native that was pulling the fan, and desired him to pull harder. Even Miss Ducklet, who was an iron-nerved young lady of the tragic order, that allowed nothing to ruffle or inconvenience her, and would never confess herself disconcerted or put out; even *she* did once deign to admit that it was “a remarkably hot season;” adding, however, by way of corollary, that she “had known many hotter.”

But, in fact, there never was a May yet in Calcutta, since the black-hole business, that was not solemnly denounced by plethoric, apoplectic-looking gentlemen, in short jackets and tight whites, as *the hottest—the very hottest*—season they had known. The oldest inhabitant—that respectable individual so invariably appealed to on all points of meteorological science—positively did not remember a hotter season; so the newspapers said, and, of course, they know everything, and, equally of course, all they say must be true.

We were reclining, I said, on two couches, both commanding a view of the level plain without, stretching away to the Fort, I in a

condition of incipient liquefaction, and finding it utterly impossible to do anything but mop, and mop, and mop again, as stream after stream kept coursing down my neck, Miss Ducklet enjoying the soothing influence of the breeze created by the punkah, as it gracefully waved her black curls about, and agitated pleasingly her muslin drapery.

Without, on the road that separated us from the brown grass on the maidaun, a native cart, drawn by two diminutive bullocks, occasionally creaked along, its driver sitting carelessly on the pole to which the bullocks were attached, using their tails, as the rudder of a ship is used, to guide the machine in the required direction. But it was only now and then that even he could muster up energy, amid the sweltering heat, to grasp the tails and shout out maledictions upon the mothers, sisters, grandmothers, and female relationship generally, of the innocent bullocks. For the most part, he resigned himself to an agreeable doze, out of which the bullocks would by no means have taken him by any violence of theirs, did not a deeper rut than usual start him now and then from his propriety, and

make him grasp violently the rudder-like tails anew. On the dried-up, brown, crisp grass beyond, an occasional Muhammadan was to be seen at devotion, his little carpet spread out neatly before him, and his mouth constantly brought into contact with it as he stooped to kiss.

To the Anglo-Indian the sight is too common to cause a single turn of an eye, but to the reflective man of any race or clime, it is suggestive of many things. Faith is to be seen in its highest exercise in that man's unflinching eye and steady gaze; faith of the most exalted character, and hundreds of thousands of his co-religionists in India and elsewhere have similar faith, a faith that nothing can shake, which can make them endure anything, practise any amount of self-denial, do anything for their religion. Ludicrous, you say; yes, to us, the position is ludicrous; we are not accustomed to see the portion of our frame on which we sit elevated high into the air, whilst the face and feet are both upon the ground. It *has* its ludicrous aspect, too, like most other things, but it has also its deep sig

nificancy, its high and holy meaning notwithstanding.

Blind, infatuated, bigoted, ignorant, unenlightened, superstitious that man may be, and probably is,—his whole duty, perhaps, consisting in shouldering a palanquin day by day, and carrying his fellow mortals in that vehicle for four pence a day or less,—but he has within him, too, a living principle that makes him see a far-off paradise to which *he* can aspire; a living principle, not a dead effete one, infecting the whole mind with its own corruption, but one that would make him dare and endure anything, rather than yield it up. You might tear his heart all bleeding from his body, but you could not make him give up that sturdy faith of his. Is it not, then, a living faith? and does not the man who is capable of retaining such, demand your sympathy and admiration?

A young officer in Bengal, not very long ago, saw only the ludicrous side of this exhibition, and as he passed a Mussulman sepoy who was praying to God and to Muhammad after his own fashion, he struck him a smart blow with his cane on the protruded portion of his person. The insult was not for him but for his religion,

doubtless thought the sepoy, and grasping his bayonet, which lay beside him, he plunged it into the grinning Englishman—plunged it a foot deep into his body, and the young officer died. And the Mussulman? Why, the Mussulman, of course, was condemned to death by the *lex talionis* of Christian judges—could you doubt it?—He was hung by the neck until he died; “and the Lord have mercy on your soul,” said the judge to him, as he passed the sentence.

But I am wandering from the plain, and the window, and the two couches, and the fair occupant of one of them.

“You will come to church with us to-day?” she asked.

“I will,” said I.

I had never yet been in a Calcutta church, and I was anxious to see whether the listlessness of Anglo-Indian existence pervaded their worship as well as their daily life. No one who goes to India can help noting the religious enthusiasm of the Hindoos or Muhammadans; no one who has been in Ceylon, the want of religious enthusiasm amongst the Budhistic and Christian community. To thou-

sands, I doubt not, in these days, it makes little difference whether the Almighty is worshipped by those around after the manner of the Roman Catholic, of the Lutheran, of the Presbyterian, of the Methodist, or of the Churchman, so that he *is* worshipped; and indeed it is a noble thing to see enthusiasm in worship of any kind. You go into a Roman Catholic chapel on the continent, and you see a man acting on a raised platform, and little boys waving censers, and men and women—four-fifths women and one-fifth men,—kneeling at the backs of the high chairs, and crossing, and sprinkling a little holy water on, themselves as they come in and go out, but there is no heart in it all—it is all form, vain, ostentatious, theatrical display. Not quite all, perhaps, but very nearly all.

You see a church full of people in England, and a popular preacher is to perform. Some are dozing, others admiring and being admired, others yawning, the majority apparently looking upon all preliminary to the sermon as a bore. The popular preacher never reads the prayers, he reserves himself for the pulpit, and when he gets up there, there is a

little display of enthusiasm, but not much. These are not sights that can refresh the heart of man, or make him feel that religion is a want and a necessity, a great living eternal truth. Enthusiastic Puseyism has its noble aspects as well as enthusiastic Methodism ; but better, a thousand times better, this earnest conviction of any kind, than the apathetic indifference and want of all faith too common now-a-days.

The Hindoo and the Mussulman seem for the most part at the present day, the most earnest worshippers, the Budhist and the Christian are alike indifferent. The one goes into his church or chapel to yawn and doze, the other into his temple to chew betel and expectorate, whilst they both equally pretend to be listening to what they will languidly assert to be the words of life. The Hindoo, however, who devotes his arm to a deity of his or others' imagination, and keeps that arm aloft hour after hour, and day after day, and week after week, until it can no longer be taken down, until it remains ever aloft, stiff, wasting, useless, and withering, that man must see far other things in his religion than mere

senseless forms, and unmeaning acts of worship. To him religion must be a living reality, an active, yeast-like principle pervading the dull, inert mass of humanity. And to the Muhammedans, likewise. Think of the endurance necessary in India to keep intact the fast of the Ramazan ; think of the poor labouring wretches that have been broiling all day long under a tropical sun, every particle of moisture in them exuding with heat and labour, and yet from sunrise to sunset they refrain from drinking a single drop of water. Yes, and rather than break that rigid fast, worn out with exhaustion, with thirst, with direst feverish, parching thirst,—they will lie down under a tree or in a verandah, and *die*—yes, die, rather than break the fast.

Such things happen every year in India, nay, hundreds of cases of such every year ; and surely the faith that can make a man yield up his body to a lingering, torturing death, rather than break one of its commands, must be a living, working faith, and by no means a dead principle.

“ This heat is almost unendurable,” said I, as I got into the carriage into which I had

already handed Mrs. and Miss Ducklet, in order to accompany them to church.

“What’s that you said?” said Mr. Ducklet, a short, testy, round, puffing specimen of the Anglo-Indian species.

“I said this heat was almost unendurable,” said I, raising my voice, for Mr. Ducklet was slightly deaf.

“A fine dry heat,” he growled out in reply, “do nobody any harm—very healthy weather—pooh! pooh! griffins are always complaining.”

“Griffin or no griffin,” said I, “the thermometer at ninety-four degrees in the coolest room in the house is no joke; and besides, the newspapers, *Englishman*, *Hurkaru*, and *Star*, have all declared that it is one of the hottest seasons known for a long time.”

“What’s that you say?” asked my amiable companion again.

I repeated my observation in a louder key.

“The newspapers say so, do they?” asked Mr. Ducklet; “then that’s the very reason why I would not believe it to be the case.”

“Not even when the thermometer confirms their observation?” I screamed.

“What’s that?—no, not even the thermometer,” replied Mr. Ducklet; “there’s not a thermometer in all Calcutta that tells the truth.”

“Then, perhaps, you think that this is cool, agreeable, pleasant weather?” said I, as I endeavoured to stanch one tide that was pouring down between my whiskers and my ears, and another that went drop, drop, drop, from chin to breast.

“What’s that you—a fine dry heat, very healthy weather,” muttered Ducklet, as he lay back, exhausted, in the carriage, and fanned himself gently.

There was an end of the colloquy, and I did not rouse the ire of the rabid Anglo-Indian by saying another word about the heat.

“You have never yet been to a church in India?” said Miss Ducklet.

“No!” said I, “you are aware I only stopped in Madras three days, and last Sunday I was driven off by Mr. Sutra, to see his country-house up the river.”

“True,” said she, “you will be delighted with Mr. Lollipops, such a dear, sweet, nice

man he is, and his sermons I assure you are powerful, although as simple as the language of a babe."

"Indeed," said I. I could not well say much more.

"Yes," she continued, "he is foolishly blamed by many for being so simple, but surely without cause. It is exquisite to hear the sublimest truths in his mouth becoming food for the tenderest believers—the faintest-hearted beginners."

"Is it possible?" I asked, not knowing very well indeed what to reply under such circumstances.

"O, Julia is quite enthusiastic in Mr. Lollipop's praise," said the mamma; "she thinks that there never was such a man before."

"Mr. Lollipops is to be envied," said I, solemnly.

Miss Ducklet smiled, her mamma looked grave, and old Ducklet starting out of a doze into which he had been just gliding off, cried out, "What's that you say?"

Following in the wake of many other similar vehicles, we at length entered the enclosure round the church, and in due time were de-

posited upon the steps leading into the sacred edifice. Before I had time to offer my arm to Miss Ducklet, her mamma had taken it, and conducted me majestically up the aisle, Mr. Ducklet following with the fair Julia. It was evident that Mrs. D. had no idea of allowing her daughter to be walked off with by a man whose lacs of rupees were yet to be made, and whose monthly income was of an extremely attenuated character. She was too prudent for that!

Now the Ducklets were people of consideration in Calcutta. By the exercise of a vigorous constitution Ducklet *père* had lived up to a high position in the service, that is, had outlived numerous competitors, and was in a fair way, if he survived, to become, in a few years more, a Member of Council. As we brushed up the body of the church therefore, Mrs. Ducklet held her head higher as we occasionally heard a whisper from admiring lips of—"The Ducklets!" This felicity was denied to the old gentleman himself, but mother and daughter equally enjoyed it, and as they swept up to their pew in the best position the church afforded, and, like a box at the Opera,

therefore all the more expensive, their forms became more and more erect, until it was impossible for the human frame to attain greater rigidity. A few nods of recognition were exchanged with the people in the vicinity, and at length we found ourselves seated on the coolest soft cushions that could be invented. How it had come to pass I could not discover, but I found myself in a corner by the side of Mrs. Ducklet, who had her husband next to her, and beyond him, at the extreme end of the seat, was situated the enchanting Julia.

There was a moment of repose, during which we endeavoured to recover our breath after the exertion of making our way on foot up the church, and of tumbling over hassocks and footstools to get into our places, and then mother and daughter simultaneously precipitated themselves upon two hassocks in front of them—the movement was rapid but graceful, and nothing could be more elegant than the ribands and the white muslin of the young lady fluttering beneath the punkah, as she bowed her head easily over the velvet-covered prayer-book she had first deposited on the ledge in front of

her. Mr. Ducklet retained his seat, and, as I was rapidly melting, I followed his example.

The scene presented by the interior of the church was a strange one. In all directions the large fans, called punkahs, were hanging by ropes from the lofty roof, and were pulled vigorously to and fro by natives who attended church for that purpose. With the turbans on, and bare feet—*their* symbols of respect—they moved noiselessly over the vacant spaces by the sides of the rows of pews, each holding the end of a rope in his hand, and as the large canvas fan fixed on a wooden frame swung from him he followed it a few steps, and then, with a vigorous tug and a few steps backward, brought it back again to the side. A long line of natives so employed stretched down either side of the sacred edifice, whilst similar functionaries lined the galleries above, all busily and noiselessly plying their vocation, their ordinary every-day vocation on this day of rest, in the very House of God. It looked strange, but, as Mr. Lollipop assured me subsequently at dinner one day, it was absolutely necessary; the heat would be otherwise intolerable, and people would not go to church;

and besides, they were heathens, those punkah-pullers, and might possibly be improved by some word in season by their attendance—which, as I found they were ignorant of English, did not subsequently appear to me to be very probable, although at the time I had nothing to say against it.

Leaving the morality of the question aside, however, for the present, let me describe what was actually the case. Backwards and forwards swung the heavy-looking punkahs, backwards and forwards walked the noiseless natives pulling them, without intermission and without variation. A similar fan moved over the head of the junior chaplain in the reading desk, as he read the prayers, another over the venerable Mr. Lollipop at the communion table, who was wisely reserving himself there, in the coolest portion of the church, for the pulpit. For a moment the heads of the junior chaplain and his clerk were apparent as they made their way monotonously through the appointed prayers, and then they were lost to view in the broad fan that came sweeping along with its fresh current of air, hiding clergyman and clerk, reading-desk and pulpit, at once from

the view. The congregation was accustomed to it, the ministers were accustomed to it, and to them it was the usual aspect of the church in the hot season—nothing new or strange about it.

To me it was altogether novel, and what with watching the sudden appearances and disappearances of the chaplain's head, and the angry looks cast by indignant elderly gentlemen, yes, even by Ducklet himself, at the unfortunate punkah-pullers when they relaxed in the slightest degree from the orthodox strength and vigour with which the punkah *should* be pulled, I found it utterly impossible to give my usual attention to the service.

The circumstances were so novel, I might well be excused. Immediately in front of me sat the celebrated Dr. Mouthit, a medical man of small dimensions and large pretensions, and well known from Puttledangah to Cassiabegaun. His shining black hair just appeared above the rail in front of me, as he maintained his seat of imperturbable gravity, a gravity suited to the place, but caused by his own sense of his own vast importance, notwithstanding his personal insignificance. Some

one has said that the true ruler is the man of a great idea. Dr. Mouthit was then a venerable ruler, for he had, as *Punch* said long ago of Disraeli, a great idea of himself. It was amusing to see even this man roused to irate displays by the overpowering heat. When the dingy air-disturber's movements became slower and more feeble, until the heat seemed to descend, and, like Sancho's sleep, cover a man all over like a cloak, then would Dr. Mouthit wax wroth, and with the sternest possible expression of countenance turn slowly round upon the culprit.

The moment their eyes met the effect was electric—the punkah jerked back or was pulled forward with an energy that sent the leaves of the prayer-book fluttering hither and thither at any but the right places, and lifted up the heavy load of caloric that was gradually settling down upon one's head and shoulders. The worthy doctor's head, however, was not immediately restored to its wonted calm dignity and attitude of repose. For a full minute the awful gaze that had worked such wonders was continued, and then, as on a pivot, the face revolved into its usual position, and the

look of supreme self-satisfaction and conscious dignity was resumed.

I could not help thinking sometimes, and the thought added to the ludicrous aspect of the entire scene, that "darky" was playing tricks upon the magnificent doctor, tricks of which I by no means approved, for two reasons; the first was that they were unsuitable to the place and the occasion; the second, that I was a victim of these experiments as well as the supreme Mouthit. It struck me that "darky" was a quiz, and that to excite and arouse the little doctor's wrath he voluntarily relaxed his efforts occasionally, and permitted the punkah to subside into easy-going monotonous vibrations; if so, he really deserved the awful frowns with which the usually imperturbable face of the doctor reproved his ill-timed trickery.

It was too hot to kneel I found,—judging by what I saw around me, in the hot season,—and, indeed, at all seasons in Calcutta, people dispense with kneeling altogether in churches. Standing is a relief after a long interval of listless sitting repose, and stand they will accordingly, but, with the exception of a few

enthusiastic ladies like Mrs. and Miss Ducklet, who like to obtain a reputation for sanctity, and to keep it when obtained, none knelt.

I could not help observing everything that went on around me; the circumstances were so strange, every-thing about the church wore so entirely new an aspect, that it would have been impossible for the most fervent piety at once to have settled down into its wonted spirit of devotion.

CHAPTER X.

THE FASHIONABLE CHURCH IN CALCUTTA.

ON looking round the church I was astonished to find that the men who were labouring at the punkahs were the only natives in it! After the glowing accounts I had read in England and Ceylon of the success of missionary exertions in India, I was naturally astonished at this, and looked and looked again, in the vain hope of discovering some quarter of the church set apart for neophytes and proselytes. No, there was no such thing. I was in a fashionable church, and were native converts encouraged to attend it, it would no longer be a fashionable one.

I found on enquiry that there *were* churches which the native converts attended, but they

were those which the European community did *not* attend. There might be a community of feeling between English and Indian Christians, but there was no community of seats and sittings and churches. Even those who were warmest in praise of missionary exertions were sometimes also warmest in deprecating the idea of mixing Europeans and Hindoos in places of worship—"It would be putting the natives on a footing of equality with us at once," observed one fair enthusiast; "And Christianity does not do so," I remarked. "Yes, in religious privileges, it does, but not in material matters," was the reply; "there must be due subordination and proper distinctions made on earth."

It is the very principle which has driven the poor so much from the Church of England in its native home. The well-dressed "respectability" of England can find pews and seats ready for them, where they may meet other well-dressed respectabilities like themselves, but the poor man finds no such welcome; his worn or torn coat is a sufficient reason for thrusting him into remote corners and inconvenient seats where he can probably hear

nothing, or else is made a gazing-stock for his well-dressed neighbours; and finding that the House of God is no home for him, he turns on his way, determined that he shall intrude no more. The very poor, at the present day, too often have *not* the gospel preached to them by the Church at least in England—let the Church look to it ere it be too late.

At length, Mr. Lollipop mounted the pulpit stairs, and, with a bland, benignant aspect, surveyed the congregation beneath him in all the meekness of clerical inspection. He would have been a well-looking man had he allowed nature to make him so, but he would not, and the large cheeks and chin which she would have covered with black shining curls were left in as naked ugliness as the razor could accomplish. He was one of those extraordinary products of this extraordinary age who united the ideas of sanctity and shaven faces, of wickedness and beards, forgetting that the Divine master whom he professed to follow, and the early fathers whom he professed to imitate, shaved off neither beard nor

moustache. Plastered down carefully on either side of his face were black locks, which nature had intended to be waving and beautiful in form, not stiff in ugly rigidity and waxy immobility. But these well-combed ornaments, these shining plastered black hairs that exhibited so well the phrenological development of the saint-like Lollipops, were other symbols of piety and meekness, or, at least, were intended as such, and by numerous ladies of his congregation were so regarded. Such men would leave soldiers alone the attributes of humanity, sinking themselves and others into a state of mawkish insipidity and affected sentimentalism, which would have all the characteristics of female weakness without its charms.

Miss Ducklet was quite right in saying that the sentiments of Mr. Lollipops were like those of a babe in simplicity. He was one of those men who, without being fluent, insist on preaching extempore. He explained to us that light and darkness were opposed to each other, that the one was considered the contrary to the other—that “the glorious light of

the sun illumined the earth in the day time," and that "in its absence the darkness of night brooded over the face of nature;" that "these phenomena were constant and incessant, unvarying and invariable, whatever might be the wishes or desires of men." He was proceeding to enforce, elaborately, the novel truth, that darkness was symbolical of evil, light of good, when my attention was diverted from him by a low smothered sound,—like bare wet feet pattering over a slippery pavement,—which was evidently in my immediate vicinity.

I looked round, but could see no signs of animation save in the indefatigable punkah-pullers, who still plied unremittingly their monotonous labour. The congregation was reclining easily in the pews, the majority of the eyes closed in order to shut out that very light the preacher was describing and illustrating "so simply and so powerfully," as Miss Ducklet afterwards described it, when a repetition of the sound caused me to turn my head once more in search of it. I found out the cause at once.

A rustling of stiff muslins and ribands in

my immediate vicinity convinced me that Mrs Ducklet's elbow was making its way forcibly into her husband's side to prevent another similar explosion ; audibly had Ducklet snored twice, the second time louder than the first, and the cavernous rattlings and rumblings which preceded a third ebullition were already commencing, when Mrs. Ducklet's elbow was thus brought into rapid collision with the old gentleman's ribs. Not before it was time, however, for other heads as well as mine had turned to find out the cause, their owners discovering it readily, however, as if they were not altogether unaccustomed to it. Even Mr. Lollipops himself had looked down at the noisy delinquent reproachfully and yet mildly—reproachfully, as his meek eyes reposed for a moment on the offending nose of the innocent Ducklet, which was elevated higher than any other portion of his head ; mildly, as they met those of the still more innocent Julia, who was drinking in his words with all the fervour of female devotion, and who had left the correction of the culprit to her mamma.

Mrs. Ducklet's elbow, I said, came rapidly

into collision with the old gentleman's ribs—I had no doubt of it—I felt it plainly, seated as I was at the other side of her. The rumblings and rattlings of the offending nasal organ ceased at once, and, turning towards his better-half abruptly, Mr. Ducklet sharply asked, “What are you about?”

“Hush!” said the lady, fixing her eyes on the preacher—“you have been snoring.”

“What's that you say?” asked Ducklet, louder than was consistent with the place and time.

“You were snoring—snoring,” said Mrs. Ducklet, tartly, in his ear, and shaking herself testily into an attitude of attention again.

“I wasn't snoring,” said Ducklet, pertinaciously—“I wasn't snoring—you shouldn't poke a man in that sort of style.”

“You *were* snoring,” repeated the fair dame, still keeping her eyes fixed on the reverend orator.

“What's that you say?” asked her husband again.

“You *were* snoring—snoring awfully,” reiterated Mrs. Ducklet; “you disturbed everybody.”

“What’s that? I wasn’t snoring, and if I do snore, I’ll thank you not to poke me that way again,” said the offended husband, wiping his spectacles at the same time, and putting them on, to look angrily at Mr. Lollipop.

But Mr. Lollipop was a meek man, and would by no means return such a stare, or indeed notice it at all, acting in this matter as prudence and common sense dictated, for Ducklet every one expected would one day be a Member of Council, and it was useless to stand on bad terms with him. Indignantly kicking over a hassock that lay in front of him, pushing a little from side to side, thereby disturbing both his neighbours, and twitching his spectacles testily upon his nose, Ducklet settled down again into an attitude of attention, satisfied apparently at length with the annoyance he had given his wife and daughter for the rude assault he had endured.

“Yes, my friends,” continued Mr. Lollipop, “the Christian should be a burning and a shining light, particularly in a pagan land. He should illuminate the darkness around, as a lighted candle introduced into a dark cham-

ber sheds a flood of light into the remotest corners. Let us ask ourselves the question, Do we indeed shine? you ask yourselves the question each one, Does he shine? and I will similarly interrogate myself, Do I shine? There must not only be the appearance of shining, there must be the reality; without that reality we are not what we ought to be."

In this strain the reverend gentleman was proceeding in his shining discourse, and I have endeavoured in both instances to give as nearly as possible the very words he used, for they are engraven on my memory, when another rumbling foreboded a determined snore on Ducklet's part, and brought Mrs. Ducklet's elbow and foot both into play, to prevent it. Poor woman! she was to be pitied, and the consciousness that she was to be so pitied, sat upon her countenance and illuminated it. 'Look at me, martyr-like, enduring all these sufferings from a bear of a husband, uncomplainingly, unrepiningly, losing the discourse of the good Mr. Lollipops, and having my temper tried so severely, yet without a murmur!' Such was the translation of her pursed-up mouth, her

quickly-moving eye, and her air of would-be stoical endurance.

“ You’re beginning to snore again,” said she in her husband’s ear.

I could not tell whether the sentiment of disturbed devotion or pleasure at being enabled to punish the delinquent prevailed in the words, but certainly both were to be found there.

“ Bah ! nonsense !” replied the offending Ducklet, “ there must be some mistake about it ; but it appears to me that Lollipops will never be done to day.”

Miss Ducklet and her mamma simultaneously turned a look of horror on the culprit, and then resumed their attitude of attention.

“ He ! he !” quietly laughed Ducklet to himself, as he observed it, and, taking his spectacles off his nose, he looked hard at the punkah puller, who noticed the glance, pulling all the harder in consequence ; and then, replacing his glasses, the great man once more prepared to turn his attention to the preacher and listen to the discourse.

It was certainly a long sermon, there could be no doubt of that ; and, as far as I could discover, the greater part of it consisted in

a constant reiteration of the figurative meanings of light and darkness, which he had so fully explained at the beginning, and of the exhortation to put the question searchingly home each one to himself, Do I shine? One would almost fancy the reverend orator was conjugating the verb "shine" interrogatively? Do I shine? Dost thou shine? Does he shine? Do we shine? Do ye shine? Do they shine?

Some years have rolled away since that discourse was delivered, but the portions which were at the moment impressed upon my memory have never left it. If Mr. Lollipops had condescended to write his sermons, they would doubtless have been very different; as it was, they consisted solely of repetitions and truisms of the tritest possible character. Before the conclusion of the sermon, the church reminded me of Hogarth's picture of the Sleeping Congregation; one striking difference, however, there was—in Hogarth's picture the clerk, at least, is wide awake; in the fashionable Calcutta Church the clerk was fast asleep. All around were to be seen closed eyes and heads leaning back as softly as hard rails and wooden ledges would permit; here and there an energetic snorer,

who had threatened to disturb the slumberers in his vicinity, had been rudely called to order and awaked, but those whose nasal organs did not similarly offend, were allowed to sleep on and take their rest.

It was truly a lamentable, and, at the same time, a strange sight. The vast majority of those for whom the sermon was intended, and who could have understood all of it that was at all intelligible, were fast asleep; whilst those who knew nothing of the language, and who could not therefore profit by it in the least, were actively and wakefully employed in adding to the comfort of the sleepers. As the clergyman closed the large Bible and squared it before him, a signal that his remarks were at length coming to a conclusion, there was a general rustling amongst the congregation, that indicated preparation for the *finále*.

Altogether, a more truly melancholy spectacle than this outrageous burlesque of devotion, it would not have been easy to parallel elsewhere. To judge by the fashionable Calcutta Church, religion was a mere ceremonial mockery—an ingenious contrivance for pass-

ing away one day in the week in strange contrast with the others. There were doubtless there, as elsewhere, pious men and pious women, but they were singularly the exception. Drowsy discourses, ill-prepared, or not prepared at all, and drowsy congregations who listened to little of them, the rule—neither an energetic preacher, nor a wakeful audience, was to be found in the fashionable church in the City of Palaces at that time.

It is in no spirit of hostility to individuals that I make these assertions, and, if I have described what many would have concealed, it is rather with the object of drawing attention to the fact amongst those who have it in their power to remedy this lamentable state of things than merely to point a moral, or adorn a tale. There is not much to boast of, it is true, in the fashionable churches of London, with regard to energy and earnestness; but the earnestness displayed there, little as it is, is absolute enthusiasm when compared with the total want of heart in the best finished and most comfortable churches in the City of Palaces.

To proceed, however, with my description.

Mr. Lollipops' Bible was closed—a general buzz of preparation for departure pervaded the congregation—active ladies who had slept comfortably with one eye partially open, proceeded to urge their children and spouses to wakefulness and alertness by kicks, pushes and nudges—oily gentlemen, who had been dreaming of inflicting summary vengeance on offending punkah-pullers, rubbed their heads energetically with their handkerchiefs, and then slightly fanned themselves in the hope of aiding the punkah—little boys and girls screwed their knuckles into their eyes and rubbed them until they peeped out red, bleared and angry-looking at the treatment—while fast young men, who had come to church to please their uncles or their innamorátas, seized their hats, and brushed from them imaginary particles of dust; thereby displaying at one and the same time, their new hats or staff caps, their elegant handkerchiefs and their “superb” rings. So great a sensation did the closing of the clergyman's Bible cause in that fashionable church.

“I never could discover,” remarked a facetious friend to me, subsequently, “why Mr. Lollipops ever left off talking, there being

neither beginning, middle, nor end to his discourses, properly speaking."

"When one has preached a congregation asleep, the only way to awake them is by stopping," I replied.

"Yes," said he, "that accounts for it in the hot weather, but leaves the mystery unsolved as far as the cold season is concerned."

In the verandah without the church, where the carriages were awaited and called for with much noise, reminding one forcibly of the large staircase at the Italian Opera in London, some of the ladies praised the simplicity and beauty of Mr. Lollipop's sermon, whilst the gentlemen speculated on the arrival of the next mail, and conjectured the condition of European politics, which it would disclose. At length we found ourselves boxed up as before in Ducklet's luxurious carriage, every one in excellent spirits—Ducklet himself evidently refreshed by his nap, and anticipating joyously the delicacies of the luncheon, which in Calcutta has grown into a normal meal of the most formidable dimensions and length. Towards evening we rode out upon the Strand by the river's bank

—a drive and promenade where the European population of Calcutta endeavour to get a little fresh air in the short interval which elapses between the intense heat of the day and the approach of darkness.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EVENING DRIVE.

THE display of carriages and saddle-horses which nightly traverse the Strand and the Course in Calcutta in fine weather, would surprise even the cockney fresh from the glories of Hyde Park and Rotten Row. The expense of keeping a vehicle in Calcutta being comparatively insignificant, every family, in even middling circumstances, has its carriage, with either one or two horses, the proportion of really elegant vehicles being greater than elsewhere. In too many cases, I believe, the anxiety to make a proper display upon the Strand is carried to a ridiculous extent. Parsimony is equally practised at home, for instance, by Mr. and Mrs. Smudge, who came

out lately from England, and by Mr. and Mrs. De Souza, whose swarthy little ones proclaim their country, to enable them to drive their elegant barouches with a coachman and two livery servants behind.

To this foolish display the small cost of keeping servants tends to lead many who would otherwise avoid it. For each horse a *syce* or groom is employed, at the rate of eight or ten shillings a month, wages on which he feeds himself and his family, smokes constantly, and is all day lounging about his master's stables, if not actually employed in working. A few more shillings provides for him a neat white or red cotton dress, with a sash and turban displaying the colours of his master's livery; and it is really astonishing to see how much show can thus be made at a very trifling outlay. Hence it is, that behind Mr. and Mrs. Smudge's, and Mr. and Mrs. De Souza's barouches, we see two idle *loons* with blackish brown faces, arrayed in clean apparel, and displaying the red and yellow of their liveries to the best advantage; hence the uniformity apparent between the coachman on the box and the servants behind, which gives

a stranger the idea of a really well appointed and elegant establishment.

But the horses?—ah, we must not be too critical upon the horses in these cases. The barouche glitters, it is true, in all the glory of newly-applied varnish, laid on, indeed, by Messrs. Smudge and De Souza themselves, or by their servants under their special supervision and direction; but, on the horses, we really must not be too critical. The chestnut one on the off-side, which conveys Mr. Smudge or Mr. De Souza to office every morning, is rather thin, it is true, and does not look particularly likely to run away either now or at any future time; his companion, a black-a-moor, with a shaggy coat, is a vicious specimen of horse-flesh, that obstinately refuses to go in single harness, and can only be coaxed along by having the chestnut Rozinante to play with and attempt to bite as he proceeds, the said unfortunate Rozinante pulling him and the barouche, and the five Smudges or six De Souzas with three servants along—no wonder he is not fat.

Did you but see the knowing cuts that ferocious-looking coachman, with his wiry mous-

tache, gives the pair as he gets to the end of the drive and is about turning—did you but see how he takes care to avoid thrashing them when really good equipages are in the neighbourhood, and how *brawly* he lays it on when they have passed—upon the black-a-moor for impeding the chestnut—upon the chestnut for not drawing on the black-a-moor faster—you would say the man had a discretion and a carefulness of his master's reputation which were highly commendable.

The horsemen and horsewomen, too, present contrasts as striking as the carriages. The noblest Arabs and the swiftest Australians may—or rather, might *then*—be seen bestrode and managed by some of the best horsemen in the world; I say “might then,” for in the altered condition of affairs, it will probably be some time before Australian horses are again brought to the Calcutta market. Accustomed continually to horse exercise, sometimes of the most violent and dangerous description, as in pig-sticking, the Anglo-Indian is probably one of the best horsemen in the world—the true Anglo-Indian—he who has spent fifteen or twenty years in the country, and who, instead

of sinking down into a debauchery that unfits him for all manly exercise, or gross gluttony, has retained some of his English energy amidst the suffocating heats of the tropics.

Not by any means that all the horsemen whom one sees on the Calcutta Course or Strand are of this character, far from it. Mr. Grildam, for instance, who has lately arrived to be an assistant (there are no "clerks" in the mercantile houses in Calcutta) in the house of Mota, Soostey, and Co., and who regularly takes his vespernal ride upon the Strand, has not yet arrived at such perfection in horsemanship as to feel at all easy or secure in his new seat, notwithstanding the experience of horse-flesh he acquired in the Battersea Fields on Sundays. He is tortured by those unsteady ears of the animal, which no soothing on his part can keep quiet; he watches them with all the diligence of an aural anatomical student as they now bend forwards, and Grildam prepares for an agonizing shy by grasping the mane with his fingers and the saddle with his knees, smiling the while, or attempting to smile.

Cruel horse!—it was a false alarm, and the

indignant Grildam is trying to forgive and forget, when the ruthless ears are pricked up at the clattering rumbling of an old vehicle coming up behind. Grildam throws his head anxiously round, wishing devoutly that these very old carriages were consigned to the kitchen fires, and bestowing anything but a blessing, in concise but emphatic English, on their occupants. His steed trots a few paces as the vehicle comes nearer, sending Grildam thereby up and down, much after the manner of the shuttlecock that children knock into the air and hit falling to "keep it up;" it is precisely thus that Grildam is kept up, constantly coming down on exactly the same spot as that from which he ascended, and pulling hard, but not *too* hard—he knows better than that—upon the reins.

The big, round drops that course after each other down Grildam's cheeks, are evidence at once of the sufferings he endures, and of the heat of the climate. But the lumbering carriage, with its rattling, disjointed roll, has passed by, and for a moment Grildam feels what it is to be a horseman; feels, indeed, an honest pride at his success, firmly convinced

that he has just emerged from a frightful contest with the animal, and has completely conquered him. He has no doubt that others are admiring him as well as himself, and throwing himself jauntily forwards, he proceeds to get his handkerchief from his pocket to wipe his face withal after the conflict.

He does not give up his inspection of the ears, however—such carelessness would be dangerous ; and just as he has succeeded in abstracting his handkerchief from his pocket, he sees them laid almost flat down upon the animal's neck, pointing ominously towards him, as if to tell of kicking, rearing, plunging, and curvetting to come. There is not an instant to be lost ; and thrusting the handkerchief anywhere, Grildam devotedly prepares for another encounter, thinking to himself what an abominable horse, whilst he soothingly mutters, “ poor fellow ! poor fellow ! ” He would pat his neck if he dared, but the experiment might be perilous ; he therefore contents himself with the “ poor fellow ! poor fellow ! ”

His horse has an antipathy to flies, and one of them having settled on his side, he has thrown back his ears, and lashed it off with

his tail ; but how was Grildam to know that was all? He had often heard that a horse's ears were the index to his mind, and every change of them brought some corresponding fear into his own imagination. It is no wonder, therefore, that he should be constantly alarmed, particularly after having had two tumbles from the "eminently quiet animal" his friend Sukchilly had sold him. He has been recommended horse-exercise, however, and with John Bull pertinacity, he *will* persevere until he succeeds in sitting a horse with tolerable comfort, although why he should learn to ride, or rather to walk his horse on the Strand or Course, instead of going to a less frequented part of the large plain round the Fort, is a matter of taste which Grildam alone can decide.

At present it is quite evident the horse is the master, and knows it well, with all a horse's instinctive sagacity ; but "the time *will* come," as Grildam has been known grimly to declare, "when he will smart for it." The reckless, break-neck way in which men will ride up behind him and pass him at a hand gallop, has often called forth Grildam's mute but not less hearty

condemnation. From afar he hears the horrid sound, and has two or three times mustered up courage enough to take a glimpse at the dare-devil who is about to torture him, but he finds that the glance round is useless, so keeping a tight grip with hand, and knee, and foot, he watches the ears intently, and prepares for disaster.

Like an avalanche crashing down upon the doomed village at the base of the mountain, on comes the clattering trooper at a pace that makes Grildam feel as if just pulled from the bath, the horse's hoofs madly plunging over the well-kept road or grass, and, as Grildam too well knows, steering directly for *him*. His impression is, indeed, that any wild horseman in Calcutta would willingly go out of his way a mile or two to have the pleasure of madly cantering up and passing him at the least possible distance, and at this conclusion he believes he has arrived, by the soundest principles of inductive reasoning.

On, like a hurricane, rushes the furious equestrian, and Grildam's horse, anxious to be off too, pulls hard at the rein, and tries to break into the mildest possible canter, but his

master is firm, and will not yield an inch, so after a useless bobbing up and down of some minutes' duration, during which Grildam feels as if his head and his body were playing at "hide and go seek" with each other, the contest ends, and our hero breathes freely once more, that is, as freely as a man under such circumstances can be expected to breathe.

Here, again, I recognized the great Mouthit, enjoying himself in all the glories of a military coat and staff cap. In the church he had been the personification of all that assumed dignity and pompous importance, which are ridiculous in any one, but particularly so in the hero of five feet nothing. On the Strand he was the personification of affected, foolish, and middle-aged foppery. The livery of the servants proclaims his barouche to be one hired from the first livery stables of the town, and therefore known to be expensive. He likes that; his own barouche is *nominally* constantly under repair, and so he is obliged to send to "Gorah, Wallah, and Co." for "one of their machines;" but as his official duties necessitate the frequent hiring of vehicles from

them at John Company's expense, he doubtless has an account with them.

Mouthit, as I have intimated, is a true Calcutta star—a great little man there of the first importance. He does not see himself how Calcutta could get on without him. He, Frederick Mouthit, is secretary to at least half-a-dozen committees; the Baboo Goluck Chunder Testimonial Committee; the Sir Smith Pelham Fund; the Consumption Hospital Committee; the Pharmaceutical College Board; the Council of Sanitary Improvement, and a host of others, besides holding *six* staff appointments, all, as the play-bills say, “too numerous to mention.”

He is a useful man, then, somebody suggests; notoriety, sir, is what he wants, and he gets it. He lives up to his own small ideal, and realizes it. Not that he does the work of any one of these committees; he will attend them as long as Members of Council, and Judges, and Governors attend, but no longer; the work is done by European or native assistants, not by him. Indeed, it would be impossible for him to do it, for has he not in the press the great Bengali anatomical work,

which is to immortalize him, and of which "Fasciculus Fifteen" has just appeared? Not that he understands a word of Bengali, he has no time for that. Government pays him for the work, and he pays others for the Bengali and the plates, and the work is issued with *his* name and titles in full on the title-page. *That* is what he wants—the title-page is his object. Notoriety honestly if you can, but notoriety at any price, is his motto. He has the tact to sail with the wind, and he is a successful man, as charlatans and humbugs often are. He can lick the hand of the man high in office whose patronage he wants, and he can stamp and swear indignantly at the quiet remonstrance of the drudge for whom he has no further use, and so, trimming his sails to the wind, he gets swimmingly along, a wonderful man, as hundreds are ready to affirm.

There is scarcely a colony in which some Mouthit or other is not to be found upon a larger or smaller scale. Calcutta, however, is an extensive place, and the inlet to a continent, so there is room in it for a more gigantic specimen of the genus humbug than elsewhere. He is seen through, of course, by

hundreds ; but amid the constant whirl of Calcutta life, the coming and going which form the bulk of Anglo-Indian society, a man who has wormed himself, corkscrew fashion or otherwise, into half-a-dozen good berths, is sure to find support.

The men at the head of society have no time to investigate character or merits : they find a man regarded by their predecessors as active and able, quite willing to do their faintest bidding quietly, and it is enough. They will find no opposition in that quarter, let their measures be never so absurd—no hint of any such thing—but, on the contrary, all servility, all obedience, and it is enough for them—they ask no more.

These convictions as to Mouthit's real character were, of course, the growth of some years' subsequent experience. On the Sunday of which I write, I knew nothing of him, for, celebrated as he was from one end of Calcutta to the other, his fame had not reached beyond it.

“That is surely the little gentleman that sat in front of us in church to-day,” said I to Miss Ducklet, as she bowed to him.

“Yes,” said she, “the same; a very remarkable man, Dr. Mouthit.”

“Remarkable!” I echoed; “how? in what way?—for his attention to dress?”

“O dear no,” replied my companion; “but remarkable generally—I don’t know exactly how—but his name is always in the newspapers, and every one has a very high opinion of him.”

“He speaks and writes well, perhaps,” I suggested.

“I never heard him speak,” was the reply, “nor did I ever read anything he wrote, but he’s very clever. He is secretary to everything, and agent for everything else.”

“Ah, I see,” said I; “a sort of universal genius, that can turn his attention to anything.”

“And then he does so much to enlighten the natives,” said Miss Ducklet, “by publishing Bengali books and such like.”

“He is a good Oriental scholar then,” said I.

“Well, it’s really very extraordinary,” was the reply; “but Major Subjanta, the great linguist, says Dr. Mouthit doesn’t know a

word of Bengali; but I suppose the natives write the books, and he revises and corrects them.”

I did not consider this very probable, if he did not understand the language; but, anxious not to press the point too far, I made no objection, and in a minute or two we found some other theme of conversation. All this time, Mr. Ducklet had been riding beside us, too much absorbed in the consciousness of his own dignity, as vehicle after vehicle swept by us, to notice our conversation—indeed, his deafness would have prevented his catching it, had he so wished.

At length we turned our horses' heads homewards towards Chowringhee, the west end of Calcutta, the well-built, clean, regular, and European portion of the city; the filthy, irregular, narrow streets of the rest of the town being occupied almost exclusively by natives. As we walked our horses quietly towards Ducklet's house—a palace in this City of Palaces—a young officer joined us, who was apparently going in the same direction. The darkness of night was fast falling over the city, and, as the new arrival and Miss Ducklet

kept up an animated conversation in too low a tone to be heard by us, Ducklet and I were soon left in advance, walking our horses side by side—not intentionally so, on our parts, as I perceived at once. A vehicle with the dark liveries of Gorah, Wallah and Co. dashed by us.

“That’s Dr. Mouthit, is it not?” I screamed into Ducklet’s ear.

“What’s that you — yes, Dr. Mouthit, Dr. Mouthit, it is,” replied my companion.

“A remarkable man, Miss Ducklet informs me.”

“Eh? what’s that? Yes, a remarkable man, a very remarkable man, a man I have a great esteem for,” said Ducklet.

Effect and cause I thought—the esteem the cause, the remarkable character the effect.

“He has distinguished himself, I suppose,” said I.

“What’s that you say?” asked the old gentleman.

“He has distinguished himself, I suppose,” I screamed out louder than ever, to the amusement of Layjow, the young officer behind me, whom I could almost hear audibly

grinning at my endeavours to maintain a conversation.

“Distinguished himself?” replied Ducklet, “O, yes, of course, very much, in every thing. When anything is to be done, Mouthit’s the man to do it.”

And here our conversation ended, for I had no disposition to minister further to the amusement of the parties behind us. Before we reached the gate, Layjow had taken leave of the fair Julia, and, cantering gracefully past us as he waved his hand, disappeared in the darkness.

A heavy Calcutta dinner of fifteen courses closed the day’s entertainment, at which Mrs. Ducklet was sullen, Miss Ducklet in a reverie, and her papa at the *acme* of enjoyment. The servants stood behind us with folded arms like breathing statues, noiselessly gliding about the room, as they changed the plates or removed the dishes; the punkah vigorously pulled, sent the steam of the viands and the fragrance of the rich sauces and *entrées* into our faces, in order to make the contrast greater when the fruit made its appearance, and the cool breeze, wafting the pleasant

favour of mangoes, pine-apples, mangosteens, and peaches about, imparted life and enjoyment to all of us.

The former part of the entertainment had been stupid and dull, notwithstanding the perfection of the arrangements, the appetizing character of the dishes, the glare of the costly chandeliers, and the excellence of the wines ; but, with the fruit, the heart seemed to be opened—nature made us natural, and as servants disappeared, and when the made dishes of the kitchen had given place to the products of the orchard, all was light and joy.

Mrs. Ducklet's sullenness evaporated, and she quaffed her iced claret with enjoyment, whilst she delicately sipped a mangosteen. Miss Ducklet's reverie was at an end, and she dilated with eloquence on the relative merits of the fruits, whilst her slightly flushed cheek told of pleasing excitement and roused imagination ; it was fortunate for me that I had seen on what intimate terms Layjow was with her, or the grace and eloquence of her figure and movements would have gone far at that happy moment to make an impression on my heart. Ducklet had enjoyed the good things

of the table abundantly, and as he played with his fruit, his hearing wonderfully improved, and he had a gracious "he! he!" ready for every attempt at a joke.

To me the former part of the dinner, with its tedious removals, had been dull and monotonous, notwithstanding the excellence of the dishes and the sparkling brilliancy of the champagne, but when others became willing to enjoy, my capacity for enjoyment similarly expanded, and I found myself, ere the ladies left the table, cracking jokes, and making abominable puns, and telling Joe Millers, with a freedom and an hilarity that astonished myself. Mrs. Ducklet, however, and her elegant daughter gone, the scene was completely changed.

All was grossness and sensuality on the departure of the ladies—the fruit, and the wines, and the enjoyed dishes, or worse, the only pleasing themes of conversation with the voluptuous old Anglo-Indian. I was glad, therefore, when he moved an adjournment to the drawing-room, where we found Mrs. Ducklet dozing over a volume of sermons, and the fascinating Julia performing sacred pieces on the piano. It

was now half-past ten o'clock, and we had sat down to dinner at half-past seven! such was Ducklet's usual habit, such the ordinary routine of his life—dinner occupied with him exactly one-eighth of his life-time when private and domestic, but a much greater proportion when he entertained friends or went to the entertainments of others.

Such was fashionable life in the City of Palaces! I had seen enough of it. Life more absolutely sterile or trivial, more monotonously dull and pretentious, is not probably to be found elsewhere. Good eating and drinking, much show and little comfort, its prevailing material characteristics; a supreme contempt for those whose darker skin proclaims their relationship with the children of the East, its grand ruling dogma. An existence combining all the vulgarity and prejudice of American life, with the languor and vegetating inertness of the tropics, but without that energy and vigour which renders the rudest Americans remarkable, to whatever class they may belong. I had lived a week in this atmosphere of fashionable vulgarity, and

had had enough of it. The following day I removed to quarters of my own.

A fortnight later, I read in the *Bengal Hurkaru* the following mysterious announcement :—“ We understand that yesterday, about mid-day, Mr. L., of the Bengal Horse Artillery, eloped with the daughter of a gentleman high in the Civil Service in Calcutta. The youthful pair are said to have crossed the river, to have been united in the bonds of matrimony at Howrah, and to have started express to join Mr. L.'s station up the country. This affair has caused a great excitement amongst the fashionable circles of Calcutta, the young lady's papa and mamma having been known to be decidedly opposed to the marriage.”

I had little difficulty in convincing myself that Mr. Layjow and Miss Ducklet were the parties alluded to, and on calling a few days afterwards on the parents of the young lady, Mrs. Ducklet herself, with many wailings, confirmed the truth of my conjecture.

CHAPTER XII.

NEWSPAPER-EDITING IN THE FAR EAST.

A MAN who has once been editor of a newspaper can scarcely cease to write afterwards. A holiday of a week, a month, or even a year, may be acceptable. He throws down the pen, and pushes away his desk, with the air of a man that has had enough of it, and is determined, for the future, to eschew perorating, puffing, and criticizing. For a time, his release from the daily routine of the office is delightful, and he luxuriates in the bliss of being entirely his own master. He no longer finds a heap of effusions, and a pile of newspapers, before him daily, which *must* be looked over, however cursorily; letters from anxious correspondents about manuscripts of which he has no recollection; queries from inquirers

who expect him to be a walking encyclopædia—an epitome of all knowledge, bound in broad-cloth and linen; lines, verses, sonnets, and poems from unfortunate poetasters, who *will* not be persuaded that he does not wish for such; diatribes against unknown offenders from unknown assailants, all anxious to see their attacks in the columns of his paper; together with cautious puffs of friends and their productions from knowing ones, who do not wish to pay for them as advertisements.

All these the editor in the far East has, with his own eyes, to glance at or wade through. In some instances the most superficial glance is sufficient; in others, he reads through two or three pages of crabbed manuscript, only to find in the end that the production is of no use or value. All these he flies from and avoids, when a holiday season gives him an opportunity of forgetting the cares and fatigues of editing, to indulge in the luxury of doing just *what* he likes *when* he likes.

But the *cacoëthes scribendi*, the itch of writing, has been acquired. In time, he sits down to indite some article more than usually piquant, which has been troubling his brain

for a day or two, and *will* be born, *will* struggle into existence, let him determine, never so resolutely, that it shall not. Some happy simile, some telling period, some brilliant allusion, some irrefutable argument, some stinging retort, that he thinks it would be a pity to strangle in its birth, is issued into the world by the quondam editor, and raises a storm of debate, indignation, or abuse. The whilom silent voice is recognized by some, and a reply appears. The holiday-maker smiles as he contemplates the hubbub from the quiet of his retreat; an answer to the reply is necessary, and he buckles himself again into the old business, but "only for an article or two," as he sagely whispers to himself—"only for an article or two, and then I shall have done."

Vain resolution! The answer to the reply calls forth an attack, and a rejoinder to that attack is absolutely necessary. He is fairly in for a storm, and he must weather it as best he can. He composes himself at his desk as of old, seizes the damp papers with the avidity of former days to see what his rejoinder has called forth, and, having read, ruminates over the line of argument to be

adopted in his reply. Thus is he almost insensibly led into the vortex of newspaper-discussion, the arena of literary combatants, in which drops of ink, not of blood, are lavishly shed daily all over the civilized world—a perfect hurricane of words, sweeping ever faster and faster over the cities and towns of Christendom, repressed here, only to thunder in louder and more long-protracted gusts there; ever blowing, ever whirling, in constant, dustiest commotion.

Poor man!—he feels the tumult, and is well-nigh blinded by the dust. Who shall tell the anxious inquirer where the diamond truth in all this sea of dust is to be found? Nay, is it not the very province of some writers, just as it is of many most respectably be-wigged lawyers, to throw this same dust vigorously into the mental eyes of all who will regard them, that the said diamond truth may *not* be discovered at all, but hid rather from the sight of every man, if possible?

When I arrived in Calcutta, it was with the intention of eschewing broadsheets and leading articles. I had to lecture on History and Logic to a fine, intelligent body of young men,

who crowded the upper classes of the Hindoo College—as acute and as intelligent a body, for the most part, as could be found in any similar institution elsewhere, and, as long as the inquirer searched into their intellectual developments and progress only, satisfactory too. As for morals and morality, that was another matter. I say nothing about that here; when I come to talk about the creeds and want of creeds in Calcutta, it will be time enough to touch upon that subject. The duty then was agreeable; that is, it was as agreeable as any duty to be performed in the midst of an extempore and never-ending bath could be. With the thermometer at 90°, I lectured and perspired, for about a year, incessantly.

But the *cacoëthes scribendi* was on me, and I must be dabbling with the newspapers, and other periodicals. I wrote for the *Calcutta Review*, about Confucius and Lord Wellesley; for the *India Sporting Review*, about the bagging of alligators and elephants; and for one of the daily papers, about politics and the Sikh war. At length, it was announced by a publishing firm of great respectability, in the City of Palaces, that they were importing a steam-

press from London—the first steam-press that had ever rounded the Cape—and that they were about to establish a cheap daily paper, that was, of course, to be as far superior to any other ever established in Calcutta as the steam-press was to the paltry hand-presses of the other offices. It was, on the whole, as pretty a piece of puffery as even this age of puffs could produce.

To my surprise, I was asked to undertake the editorship of this mighty organ, that was to drown the paltry pipes of all the other organs in Calcutta—nay, in India. I had a considerable portion of my time unoccupied, it is true. I wrote an article daily for another paper; but I had never edited anything but the *Ceylon Herald*—that small twice a-week folio of four pages—that was, to a Calcutta daily paper, what the barn-house Macbeth of some strolling company is to the Macbeth of Drury Lane or the Princess'. I represented to the proprietor that the editor of a daily paper ought to be able to devote all his time to the work, and that the terms he offered were not sufficiently liberal to enable me to do that.

“Never mind,” said he; “we have a military

officer to undertake the war, and all about that. You'll only have the local politics of Calcutta to attend to. We can manage the rest."

The Sikh war was then the principal event in progress, and, as they had a military officer to undertake *that*, the duty was comparatively light. I agreed.

Let me remind the reader, however, that a daily paper in London is a very different thing from the daily paper of Calcutta. In London, all is upon so grand and large a scale, that no comparison can be instituted between the two. A circulation of a thousand copies daily is a large circulation for the Calcutta paper—a circulation of only a thousand daily would be regarded as a very paltry affair in London. Nor do they differ more in circulation than in size. An ordinary copy of the *Times* contains about ten times as much printing as an ordinary copy of a leading Calcutta paper, such as the *Englishman* or the *Hurkaru*.

Such was the arrangement, then, under which I was installed as editor of this wonderful periodical, that was to shine like the moon amidst the lesser lights of the Calcutta literary armament—its steam-press particularly making

it at once all that could be desired. I read the announcements over again, and sighed as I recollected that it fell partially to my lot to fulfil all these magniloquent promises about "literary articles of the first class, to be combined with the fullest discussion of all subjects of political interest," and such-like. I sighed, and thought of what the world would expect from the steam-press.

At length, the first issue of the new paper was sown broad-cast over Calcutta.

"They shall have plenty of copies," muttered the proprietor and publisher; "there shall be no lack of copies, seeing that our steam-press is in full working order now."

"I must see this same steam-press that is making such a noise in the world," said I.

"Certainly," he exclaimed, proudly, "certainly. Come along; this way, sir, this way. I'll show it to you myself."

We descended into the lower regions, through narrow staircases and dark passages, such as, from time immemorial, have invariably belonged to all printing-offices everywhere. At length, we emerged into a damp, vaulted apartment, the smell from which was by no means of

the pleasantest, where I saw the printing-press—the great steam-press—in active operation.

To my extreme surprise, however, I heard no sounds of an engine working, no clanking, and fizzing, and whirling, to indicate the proximity of a steam-engine—nay, on further and more minute inspection, I discovered a man turning a wheel, and thereby setting the celebrated steam-press in motion! I was astounded. There was nothing to distinguish this mighty engine from the ordinary press that I could discover.

“It is worked by hand?” I enquiringly suggested to the proprietor.

“It is,” said he, pointing to the words *Napier’s Steam Press*, on a part of the machinery.

“This arrangement is but a temporary one, then, I suppose,” said I; “you have not got the engine ready yet. Perhaps it has not arrived?”

“Why, the fact is,” said he, taking me a little aside, “the fact is, we don’t intend to have an engine to work it—at least, not at present.”

He then proceeded to point out its peculiar

excellences and advantages, not forgetting to mention the large sum it had cost ; but to all this I was by no means attentive. My mind was taken up with the onslaught, which would soon be made most justly upon the new comer, by all the other papers. It *was* a “steam-press” it was true—the words were plainly visible upon a conspicuous portion of the machinery ; but it was not worked by steam, nevertheless, and when this fact became known, I foresaw that a great storm would be raised.

It came at length. From Madras and Bombay flattering notices of the new paper poured in, but particularly of the enterprize of the publishers who had introduced printing by steam into India. Up to this moment the other Calcutta dailies had been silently watching the progress of events, and the course steered by the new paper that was to cut them all out with its cheap price and its magnificent *steam-press*. But now the moment came for the premeditated onslaught, and right vigorously were we belaboured—right vigorously, and most justly, from all sides.

“The Madras *Athenæum*,” indignantly wrote the *Hurkaru* (one of the Calcutta daily papers)—“The Madras *Athenæum* congratulates the proprietors of the new cheap daily on the enterprize they have displayed in introducing printing by steam into Asia. It was natural enough that our Madras and Bombay contemporaries should have been misled by the puffing announcements about the steam-press, &c., &c. What will they think when we assure them that the new paper is no more printed by steam than their own, or than the *Hurkaru*? Yet such is actually the case. There is neither steam-engine nor any place for a steam-engine in the new daily’s office, any more than in our own!! Here we leave the matter with our contemporaries and the public. Let them judge whether such a paper is worthy of support, whether the false pretences on which it seeks to secure public favour, are not in themselves sufficient to make all honest men eschew it.”

This was severe, and yet, perhaps, on the whole, not too much so. It was necessary, however, that my part in the transaction should

be explained ; so, slipping into the grand editorial *we*, I perorated after this fashion :

“ Our contemporaries seem to think that, because this paper is not printed by steam, a promise, implied in our prospectus, has not been kept. It is a matter, we dare say, respecting which the public is profoundly indifferent, but we feel it due to ourselves to afford a little explanation. The prospectus, which had been drawn up and issued before we joined the paper, stated that the new daily should be printed with one of Napier’s steam-presses, imported for the purpose ! This promise *has* been kept. One of Napier’s steam-presses has been imported, and with that the present sheet, like its predecessors, has been printed. It was never intended, however, as our contemporaries seem to have expected, that the press should be worked by steam. The ‘ steam-press ’ is a new and improved printing-press, which may be driven either by steam or by hand, at option—at present it is not the intention of the proprietors to have it driven by steam. Whether at some future period it may be so, is another question. To all who are curious on the subject, how-

ever, we give this general invitation to come and witness the performance of the press for themselves. A practical man will point out to them its superiority to the ordinary hand-presses, and they will not require spectacles to discover the words *Napier's steam-press* boldly raised upon a prominent portion of the machinery."

Such was the defence—a lame enough one I admit, but what more could be said upon the subject? If people chose to fancy that a steam-press must necessarily be worked by steam, that was not my fault. I should have most probably fallen into the same error myself, had my eyes not been opened to the nice distinction between a steam-press and a press worked by steam, at an early age of the discussion. To this day the question is an open one in my mind, and there are hundreds of lawyers who, if asked their opinion of the merits of the case, would probably reply like the late Lord Plunket in a similar case—"I should be very glad to have £100 for arguing the question upon either side."

Notwithstanding this little difficulty, and numerous others with which the infant paper

had to contend, its subscription list increased steadily, and when I finally resigned the editorial pen of the cheap daily, its prospects seemed bright and cheering enough. Even at a later period, when I left Calcutta, it was still flourishing apace in all the vigour of early youth.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANGLO-INDIAN COMFORTS.

DURING that period of the year which is, by a pleasant fiction, called the "cold season" in Calcutta—extending from December to February—the temperature is bearable. The European can then walk out in the mornings and evenings with comfort, walk out and enjoy the exercise, or ride briskly and not feel himself gradually sinking into a state of liquefaction. He must not, even then, however, tempt the sun's rays during the heat of the day; if he do, medical men "will not be answerable for the consequences." It is the "cold season," to be sure, but it is the Calcutta cold season, and, in such a climate, we must expect to exist only, not to enjoy.

The musquitos, too, during this cold season, swarm by thousands into the houses; they are driven in by the *cold*, any old yellow-faced, liver-diseased Anglo-Indian will gravely tell you; nay, not only gravely tell you so, but positively appear aggrieved if you do not appear at least to believe it. Those only who know what the delights of being a favourite with the musquitos are, can fancy the incessant state of activity in which the devoted object of their attentions is kept during a long evening.

The large fan which, for three-fourths of the year, swings heavily backwards and forwards in the room, suspended from the ceiling, is now at rest, and the little plagues have it all their own way. They persist in settling on your hands, or tapping your forehead, with a perseverance which, if you be an entomologist, will considerably enlighten you as to the nature of insects generally. You find that a flourish of your handkerchief is one of the best means of preventing their settling—they cannot endure a breeze, and they dislike being caught in the folds of even a cambric or silk

trap—so you flourish your handkerchief, innocently, often.

If you have the misfortune to wear shoes, they will soon discover the fact, and settle accordingly upon the instep and by the side of the foot—they prefer the fleshy portion. By skilfully manœuvring your feet, however, you easily detach them or prevent their settling effectually, that is, by gliding one foot over the other softly and leisurely, as if you meant nothing particular. Acute smarts you must expect, for, to be a favourite with the musquitos, is an honour involving much that is disagreeable, like many other honours—acute smarts, followed by intense itching; but you see old Anglo-Indians making light of musquitos, and you do not like to be considered a grumbler, so you say nothing about your own sufferings, feeling none the less, however.

One cannot be always flourishing his handkerchief about, gracefully or ungracefully; one cannot be always sliding the right foot over the left, and the left over the right, quickly or slowly. There is a limit beyond which the most determined mosquito-hater

cannot carry these resources, but there is no limit to the ravages of the little blood-sucker. When you take your stockings off at night, you will be able to trace the outline of the shoe upon your foot, by the bites, the little red spots forming the centres of small circles of inflammation ; the neat way in which these bites will be found crossing your instep and running round by the side of the foot to the heel, will enable you to decide at once as to whether your shoe is properly and evenly cut.

Nor is it during the "cold season" only that the musquitos thus abound in the houses. During the months of August and September, that is, after the rains, they are to be encountered in swarms. You have then, however, the resource of the large fan swinging over your head, and by sitting beneath it, the upper portion of your figure is safe from their attacks, as long as a sufficient current of air is kept up to drive them off, which will be as long as the fan-puller is awake. As to your nether limbs, if you wear shoes after the first few days of Calcutta life, you must then be one whom experience will *not* teach, and if

you do not have a pad at the knee, beneath your tightly-drawn nether garments, to prevent the little monsters from assailing you there, it is your own fault.

Nor will you heedlessly sit on an open-worked cane-bottomed chair any longer than is necessary to convince you that you have made a mistake. However large the company, and however stiff, be not afraid to convey your person at once to a softer horse-hair or leather-covered seat. True, every one is well aware why you have moved—never mind that,—the old Anglo-Indians may smile a little internally or externally, but all those who have not become yellow with “liver” (as the disease of that organ is curtly called in Calcutta), will sympathize with you—ladies as well as gentlemen — for musquitos know no distinction of sex, and would as soon commit their depredations on the shapely ankle of the belle of the season, as on the nose of the moustachoed and bewhiskered officer who solicits her hand for a dance.

The heat in May is intense, but, as Ducklet said, and as all the old Anglo-Indians will tell

you when you complain of it, "it is a fine dry heat, without anything disagreeable in it."

"But the thermometer is at ninety-four degrees," you argue, "in the coolest part of the house."

"Is it?" asks the yellow-faced consoler, imperturbably; "is it, indeed: ah, well, at ninety-four degrees it *is* hot, certainly, but it will do nobody any harm—a fine dry heat, I assure you—it is not by any means disagreeable."

"Not by any means disagreeable!" you repeat; "why, I'm melting, even, under the fan."

"O, but you mustn't mind that," urges yellow-face, "you'll soon get accustomed to it: why, if you complain so much now, what will you do in August and September?"

"But they say this is the hottest period of the year," knowingly remarks the new-comer, determined not to be taken in.

"Well, so it is, so it is; but wait till August and September," soothingly observes imperturbable yellow-face, "and then you'll find that this is not so bad, after all, because it's such a nice dry heat; but then the thermometer, perhaps, is a degree or two lower, and

yet the heat is infinitely more disagreeable—unbearable, you would call it—but it's not unbearable by any means,—only disagreeable, because every thing is steaming after the rains—the ground is steaming, and the vegetation is steaming, and the houses are steaming, and you're steaming, so that the air is loaded with moisture, and the perspiration is not carried off imperceptibly, as it is now."

"Imperceptibly as it is now!" groans the griffin, wiping his forehead, to contemplate his misery.

He only gets laughed at, however, for the old Anglo-Indian is right. In May, the heat is excessive, but the air is dry; in August and September, the heat is perhaps not quite so great, but it is infinitely more felt, because the air is already saturated with moisture, and cannot relieve the oppressed sufferer of the load of liquefaction which threatens to drown him.

The Englishman likes to contemplate the misery he endures, and so he always has a thermometer in his house, and by no means in the coolest part of it, either, which he always looks at during the hot season. When the

temperature is agreeable, when he can exist without inconvenience, he forgets utterly that there is a thermometer in the house at all. I have already shown how he gets on *in* the house, let us now watch him abroad during one of those grilling days in May, when yellow-face has assured him that things are by no means so bad as the griffins are anxious to make out.

Making his way to the door, in unexceptionable white from his black neck-tie to his boots, he takes a peep at the thermometer as he seizes his hat, and sighs as he perceives the mercury above ninety degrees. His hat is the ordinary black European one, of all others the most unsuited to the climate; but, let him boast as he will, John Bull is the very slave of custom, and wears the ugly black hat in all climates with pertinacious discomfort. His buggy stands at the door, the slim Arab or more muscular Australian champing the bit, and anxious to be off.

All without is one fierce glow of heat and glare—a glare to which that of the fiercest dog-day in England bears no comparison what-

ever. The houses are all white, and, as the sun shines upon them, they reflect his beams with dazzling lustre. The road has been formed of half-burnt bricks, and if not watered, is covered with a whity-brown dust almost blinding in its fiery glare; if watered shortly before, then, from every nook and crevice, gleams shoot forth of reflected rays, whilst the whole shines brightly in the sun. The probability is, however, that the road is *not* watered, or that if it has been, all trace of the watering has disappeared, for two hours of a vertical sun will dry up a road that has been deluged.

The glare, then, is almost blinding, but a breeze is blowing that one fondly hopes will be agreeable as it makes its way into the buggy and drives off the stifling heat; but the breeze is most probably loaded with dust; is so loaded in the hot season, five times out of six; and as the melting charioteer, with half-shut eyes, takes off his hat to enjoy the luxury of the pleasant breath of air, he is covered with a thousand minute particles of brick-dust. His face and head are by no means dry; and, once wafted on him, these

particles remain there. He takes out an unspotted handkerchief, and as he wipes his face, he finds it is clammy and whity-brown, whilst his hand assures him that he has but drawn figures on the dust-besprinkled oily exudation that covers him.

It is nonsense endeavouring to maintain the pleasant state of cleanliness in which he left the bath that morning, and soon the attempt is given up in despair. He resigns himself to his fate, and with eyes half closed and clenched teeth, he faces the wind and the dust grimly, but with John Bull pertinacity. Nor is the breeze only to be deplored for the quantity of dust which it bears upon the unfortunate buggy-occupant—if it have swept over the ground before it reaches his face, it arrives like a blast from a furnace, heated, suffocating, stifling—John mutters no blessing on the climate of Calcutta as he drives along—no blessing at all.

He resolves, however, that he shall use a buggy no more in the middle of the day. Next time he encloses himself in a carriage in which he is shut up from the glare and dust.

This is better, certainly. The coachman is left to battle with the external inconveniences, whilst John, within, engages in a vigorous search for coolness, and makes violent efforts to obtain it. Lounging back in the neatly-cushioned brougham will not do: one might as well step for comfort into a heated oven, or repose in the middle of a very hot day between two feather beds, German fashion. No; he sits up, allowing his clothes to touch him as little as possible—he sits up, and taking a small hand-fan, provided for the purpose, proceeds to cool his face with it. In this he partially succeeds—cooling his face, whilst he makes all the rest of his frame hotter and more uncomfortable than it was.

If this be the case in May, when the air is dry, and capable of evaporating moisture as fast as it forms, it may be conceived how uncomfortable the state of things is in August and September, when the ground, and the houses, and the trees, and the people are all soaking; the latter steaming with the oppressive heat, the former after the recent rains. August and September are the most unhealthy months in that most unhealthy of cities—the

City of Palaces. There are not many portions of the earth's surface that can boast more discomfort for humanity than Calcutta ; and there is no period of the year, even in Calcutta, that can rival August and September in the amount of unwholesome misery to be then endured.

It was with feelings of gratitude that I found myself, on one occasion, able to escape the misery of these unwholesome months. Business took me to Delhi, and I made arrangements for travelling, at least a part of the distance, by the river. One of the Ganges steamers was to bear me more than half-way.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GANGES STEAMER AND ITS PASSENGERS.

AN Indian river steamer, and particularly a Ganges steamer, is totally unlike all other vessels. It is formed on the American model. Every one has seen drawings of the huge floating towns, with the houses built on deck, which navigate the Ohio and the Mississippi, the Hudson and the Potomac. But the Indian steamers, being fitted for passing shallow sand-banks and half-dry rivers, are built with flat bottoms, and are intended to draw as little water as possible. They do not, therefore, admit of the high superstructures which ornament their American prototypes, nor, of course, of the splendid saloons and commodious cabins of which Jonathan is justly so proud.

Little worlds they are, of a character quite unique—the passengers consisting, for the most

part, of Anglo-Indians of all classes and types—the most crotchety of mortals. Every class of Anglo-Indian society differs from every other class; the civil servant from the military man, the military man from the merchant, the merchant from the planter. Each differs much from the other, agreeing only in one thing. They all grumble,—not occasionally, however, as in England, but constantly, in every variety of key and tone.

The civil servants, for instance, who stand at the head of Anglo-Indian society, and are determined that the fact of their so standing shall not be forgotten—the civil servants, I say, have a method of grumbling of their own. Theirs is of the pompous order. They are proud of their order, and well they may be, for it has produced a larger proportion of eminent political men than any similar service in the world. They are proud, too, for the most part, of themselves. The man who, at twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, sees himself at the head of a district double as large as Yorkshire, as its magistrate—who sees European subordinates anxious to stand well with him, and natives of all ranks cringing, with servile adulation, before him—such a man must have

a strong head if he is not affected with the homage. If he estimates himself by his deserts only, and not by the factitious importance which a defective political system has given him, he must be a clear-sighted man, not likely to be turned or deceived by any circumstances.

Pomposity, therefore, is to be expected in the civil servant of the Honourable East India Company—it is to be expected, and, truly, those who look for it in India, will not have far to go to find it. On the deck of the river steamer it displays itself in the proud walk, the self-satisfied air, the *odi-profanum-vulgus* look which the great man assumes. If empty-headed—and in such a body there must necessarily be many empty-headed men—the affectation becomes ridiculous and absurd, as it was in the case of one of our passengers, when we steamed up the Ganges in the “Irrawaddy”—a youthful magistrate, of the name of Paugul. The grumbling of the civil servants, then, is of the pompous kind.

The military grumble too, but not so much; theirs may be called the candid, off-hand kind of grumbling—as fine and gentlemanly a set of fellows, these military men, as any army in

the world can boast of. As a general rule, they may be said to bear no good-will towards the Civil Service ; they do not see why the latter should hold their heads so much higher in the social scale, merely because their monthly income is, for the most part, so much larger than theirs. The military are not more manly and gentlemanly than they are luxurious. No men know the smack of good champagne or superior hock better than your Honourable Company's soldier ; nor is there any class in India, not even excepting the planters, who know more thoroughly how to make the nearest approaches to comfort that an Indian climate will admit of. They grumble, as I said, in a plain, off-hand manner, and by no means with that abundance of profane swearing that distinguishes the rougher and more unpolished planters.

The merchants and planters of Bengal are as various in their grumbling characteristics as the same classes in any other part of the world. The latter may generally be known by their diligent eschewing of the black European hat, and the extraordinary substitutes which they use for it. Of these substitutes, some resemble copper boilers in shape, with broad brims,

and innumerable air holes ; others have a peak in front, and an apron behind, just (as far as shape is concerned) as if a child's pinafore had been tied upon a dragoon's helmet to cover the back of the neck ; others rise in the most outrageous manner—cauldron-fashion—as if the unfortunate individual's head had been introduced by mistake into a wooden washing-basin, and had become fixed there ; whilst not a few recal to one's mind the helmet of Mambrino, in Don Quixote.

The men who wear these head-dresses are as various as the head-dresses themselves. The majority of them, however, particularly the younger planters, have a rollicking, devil-may-care gait, as if, for their parts, they thought quite as little of the world as the world does of them. They are distinguished moreover by an insatiable propensity to draw the long bow. They will spin more tough yarns in the course of an evening, than a man-of-war's man of thirty years' standing in a week. The most surprising part of the matter is that they seem to think people ought to believe these extraordinary tales, and either naturally look, or try to look, astonished, when people express doubt or incredulity.

The *Irrawaddy* (our steamer) was fortunately not a favourite on the river with passengers, and was, consequently, chiefly employed for the carriage of merchandize, and for the towing of flat-bottomed receptacles for goods, called flats. These are attached, sometimes three of them at once, to the steamer, and are so lugged by the bows up and down the river, just as the tail is attached to a boy's kite, following it in all its movements. Only those passengers, therefore, who were anxious to get up the river as soon as possible availed themselves of the *Irrawaddy*, the majority waiting for the next boat, the "Sir Howard Jenkins," which was a great favourite, from the fact of the cabins being built upon deck, and the accommodation for passengers being in every respect superior.

The masters or "Captains" of these steamers are a peculiar race, just as the steamers themselves are. They have generally been sailors connected with Eastern vessels, accustomed to Indian crews, and, of course, to giving orders in the Hindostannee language. Excellent seamen, I believe, the majority of them, and it may therefore be easily conceived that they feel, when commanding one of these

river-boats, like fish out of water. Their passengers are often of the most punctilious description, and hard set is the honest captain to please them. He generally wishes to follow the latest existing usages of society, and his anxiety to please and make his passengers comfortable ought to cause them to overlook any little breaches of etiquette. But, unfortunately, when people are stewing as if in an oven, their tempers are not of the most equable, and are difficult of control.

Captain Lumba, of the Irrawaddy, was extremely anxious to please everybody, but he was unfortunately endued with such a length by nature that nothing could exceed his awkwardness, and the constant habit of endeavouring to squeeze himself into small spaces had made natural ungainliness still more ungainly. He was thoroughly convinced that the drinking of healths was no longer fashionable, and, consequently, eschewed it as a vice, whilst he could not resist the temptation to apply the corner of the table-cloth to his mouth instead of the napkin, although the latter piece of luxury was duly deposited on his knees.

Our little party consisted of six passengers only, of whom the principal were Mr. Paugul, of the Civil Service, and Colonel Bunder, of the Company's army. Mr. Paugul affected the exquisite, and expressed the most supreme disgust for the Irrawaddy, and for its captain, and, although the esteem was, doubtless, mutual between Lumba and him, poor Lumba could not venture to exhibit it.

Mr. Paugul seemed particularly surprised, not that he should have taken his passage upon such a steamer, but that Government allowed such a steamer to take passengers at all, for the cabins being below, and not built upon deck, were insufferably hot, and unless one had a servant to fan him all night, the heat was really unendurable.

Over and over again did Lumba assure him that the inconveniencies of the steamer were not *his* fault, modestly insinuating at the same time that the next steamer would be much more comfortable, and that any passenger who pleased might be left at the first station we stopped at, to be taken up by it. Colonel Bunder, although he detested Lumba, because he was tall, would here come to his rescue

(for he hated the Civil Service with an intense hatred), and say that, for his part, he thought it was not so bad, that one would soon become accustomed to it, and as none of us were going the entire distance of the Irrawaddy's voyage, the passage would not last so long.

Bunder was very little—he had never forgiven nature for making him so; and as he endeavoured to make up for his deficiency in size by the growth of hair upon his face, which gave him a remarkably fierce expression of countenance, he contrived to render himself ridiculous. “His figure-head,” as Lumba confidentially informed me, “was for all the world like a hairy baboon's.” Furthermore, he was fond of monkeys—anxious, I suppose, to see something resembling humanity smaller than himself, he constantly travelled with a pet; whilst he kept a ménagerie of them at his quarters. It was impossible not to be struck with the resemblance between the two countenances, when he caressed his favourite “Sukchilly.” The comparison, however, was unquestionably in his favour, and when Bunder and Sukchilly played together, there could

not be a doubt that the man was the better-looking of the two.

Yet Colonel Bunder had a good heart, which Paugul apparently wanted, and had Lumba been a small man, or even a man of any ordinary length, I have no doubt Bunder's sympathies would have been immediately enlisted in his favour, and he would have become his staunch protector.

Mr. Paugul had installed himself as the chaperon of a lady, the wife of a magistrate in the Upper Provinces, a Mrs. Nutkut, who was proceeding to join her husband and family; having been obliged to come down to Calcutta in consequence of the alarming illness of a relative. Mrs. Nutkut was agreeable and unaffected. Nothing could exceed the ease and grace with which she accommodated herself to the numerous inconveniences of the steamer, making as light of them as possible, and turning many of them into sources of amusement, whilst her self-constituted protector made things but more uncomfortable by his incessant growling. It is astonishing with what apparent ease an agreeable, sensible woman becomes accustomed to circumstances which, in any other position,

she would find almost unendurable ; and it is, surely, only those who are lost to good sense and propriety who cannot take an example from her conduct, and make the best of what cannot be obviated, and must be endured.

Such were the passengers the *Irrawaddy* bore in its grilling cabins and on its well-scrubbed decks, as we steamed northwards, towards the mighty flood of the Ganges—for the Hooghly, which flows past Calcutta, is but one of the numerous streams by which the sacred river discharges its waters into the ocean.

CHAPTER XV.

STEAMING UP THE GANGES.

THE number of native servants, the European engineers, and the native sailors, all crowded together in that floating hive, a Ganges steamer, form as strange a medley perhaps as one can witness anywhere, whilst the various languages employed on board—English, Hindostanee, Bengallee, Oordoo, and, perhaps, Persian and Arabic too, tend to make the moving mass a veritable Babel.

“Coaling a steamer” in England is anything but an interesting sight—huge men, and huge cranes deposit sack after sack, or bucket after bucket of the black diamond under hatches in a very methodical and matter-of-fact way. But “coaling” the Irrawaddy was

a different matter altogether. The steamer was obliged to anchor at night, the river being too dangerous to admit of proceeding in the darkness. Our captain, therefore, endeavoured to arrive at the coaling station just as night was setting in, in order that the coals might be taken on board whilst the steamer was compelled to remain inactive.

We had arrived at Cutwa, a coaling station half-way between Calcutta and the Ganges. The stars gave as much light as they could reasonably be expected to give. We could just perceive objects on the bank beside us dimly and faintly. Suddenly a dark troop of figures made their appearance, near what we could discover, with a little difficulty, to be a small mountain of coal. The individuals composing the mass of humanity that thus suddenly attracted our observation, appeared to be in constant motion; they were chattering incessantly; each had a small basket in his hand, and it appeared to me that some dreadful quarrel was raging.

“They must be boys,” said I to Lumba, who was standing beside me. “They must be boys, judging by their size.”

He was intently watching the movements of the chief mate on shore, who came and went, appearing and disappearing with extraordinary celerity, amongst the dark masses, as if in search of some particular individual in the crowd,—which, considering the number, the noise, and the confusion, would apparently be a fruitless search.

I repeated my observation to Lumba.

“Those,” said he, smiling, “are all Hindoo girls and women. They carry the coals on board here.”

“That accounts then,” I replied, “for the incessant talking, the shrill voices, and the size; but what are they quarrelling about?”

“Nothing,” said he; “they are not quarrelling, but they are all eager to be employed—there is no keeping their tongues quiet.”

“It’s all right, sir,” shouted the chief mate from the shore.

“Very well, let them begin,” replied Lumba, as he walked aft* to give the necessary orders.

* In the river steamers the *fore* part is that occupied by the passengers.

Women and girls! thought I, how strange that they should be employed in such work, and yet how much better that they should be thus occupied, than excluded, as in England, from all out-of-doors employment. Besides, as I speedily perceived, the work was not altogether unsuitable to them. They carried small baskets of coals upon their heads, and came in troops, laughing and chatting incessantly. In fact, from the moment the work began, there seemed to be still more noise than before, made with their tongues. It was altogether a strange scene. Our vessel was a blaze of light.

The chief mate stood at the gangway, to count the baskets that came on board, each containing an Indian measure about equal to half a hundred weight. One by one the erect figures, with the baskets on their heads, emerged from the gloom on shore, and plunged into the illumination of the steamer. Naked for the most part to the waist, they seemed of every shade of colour, from the lightest brown, the hue of coffee with an extra allowance of milk in it, to a deep black—some indeed shining with a jetty lustre that

would have eclipsed one of Hoby's patent leather boots.

Talking to each other, some laughing, they came on regularly and without intermission. The coals were discharged into the hold, and still laughing and chatting, and, perhaps, replying to some badinage of the passengers or crew, they made their way in single file on shore again, by another plank. Many of them had fine forms—forms that would have served as models to the sculptor, and the erect posture which they were obliged to maintain in carrying the baskets on their heads exhibited such figures in the best possible way. The quivering of the flesh, caused by the motion and the load, showed off the firmness and elasticity of the frame, as well as its delicately rounded muscular character.

Some, I say—nay, many of them—were thus distinguished, but there were others also, old and withered, whose flattened, elongated breasts hung down to their waists, flapping against their bodies as they advanced, whilst their wrinkled skin proclaimed their age, or

the wear and tear to which they had been subjected.

It was altogether a strange, and, to me, unprecedented sight, and yet that which surprised me most was not the contrast between the gloom on shore, and the blaze of the steamer, nor the moving line of figures, nor the fine forms, nor the wrinkled skins—wrinkled although some of them were, from the toes upon their feet to the crown of their heads. All these formed strange items in a very strange scene, yet it was not any one of these that surprised me most. As each threw down her basket to have it filled, she talked to her who filled it, and she who filled it talked to her who threw it down. As each placed the basket on her head, she talked to her who assisted her, and she who assisted her, talked to her whom she assisted. As each walked along, she talked to her before and to her behind, whilst the one before and the one behind talked too. When the basket was empty, and she was returning, she talked more rapidly than ever.

All were talking—all were *always* talking—where the listeners were, I could not by dili-

gent examination discover. It seemed to me that all were speaking, and all were listening at one and the same time. A stranger, a wilder, a more unique scene could not well be conceived.

Leaving Cutwa, we were soon steaming over a portion of the river rich in religious and historic associations. It is here called the Bhagirattee, and is held peculiarly sacred by the Hindoos. On our right we had passed a place formerly famous for the burning of widows, and other human sacrifices. Even as late as 1832, a Hindoo sent for a Mussulman barber to shave him ; he asked him afterwards to hold a goat, whilst he cut off its head as an offering to Kali, a bloody goddess of renown. The barber did so, and by an intentional mistake, the too zealous Hindoo cut off the head of the Mussulman instead of that of the goat.

This is not a solitary instance of human sacrifice. A number of Brahmins, not long since, whilst assembled for "religious" purposes in the neighbourhood, began, as Hindoo saints sometimes will do, to drink and carouse. A sacrifice to Kali was proposed and boisterously agreed to by the riotous party.

“Where is the goat?” asked one, a little soberer than the others.

“I will be the goat!” shouted an incipient, though drunken, martyr, from the midst of them.

The offer was accepted with proper devotion and respect—the devotee knelt, one of the party, more zealous or more intrepid than the rest, seized the sacrificial knife, and, in a moment, the head of the drunken saint was severed from his body, and devoutly offered to the bloody Kali. The carousal was continued, and, on the morrow, the survivors found, on awaking from their stupor, that the dead body of their sacrificed companion was still in their midst. The corpse was burned according to custom, and a report circulated that the deceased had died of cholera, but the secret transpired, and English justice seized upon the offenders.*

A little further on, we sailed past the scene of the battle of Plassy, in which Clive, with three thousand two hundred British troops and sepoy, defeated seventy thousand Bengallees,

* These are facts, Vide *Calcutta Review*, No. XII., Vol. 6.

and decided the fate of the most populous and the wealthiest portion of India. The river is constantly changing its course here, and it now rolls over the scene of that extraordinary conflict. Suraj-ud-Dowlah, the reigning nabob, was dethroned in consequence, and the whole of Bengal lay, as the result of that action, at the mercy of the conqueror. On Clive's return to England, he was asked by an East India Director whether Sir Roger Dowlar (Suraj-ud-Dowlah), whom he had treated so cavalierly, was a knight or a baronet!

The scene which bursts upon the view on reaching the river Ganges—which the Bhagirattee, an insignificant branch, leaves almost at a right angle—is one of extraordinary beauty. The mighty stream is spread out before the observer like a vast panorama, clear, placid, and shining, yet flowing ever on to the ocean with wonderful celerity; constantly bearing too, as if in contrast with the natural beauty of the scene, its freight of dead bodies, in every stage of corruption, upon its bosom. Those who are too poor to burn their dead, conceive the shortest road to Paradise to lie through the Ganges, and look upon themselves as having

done the greatest service to the deceased, by pushing the body into the stream.

It is a frightful sight to see several of these human carcasses, bleached by exposure to the sun and water, and sometimes half burnt, floating past—the eye sockets generally deprived of their contents by ravenous birds, and every ripple of the stream giving the appearance of life and voluntary motion to the corpse. If the face be turned towards one, the impression cannot be removed for a month after—it is as if death and you had stood face to face, and spoken to each other—as if for the first time you had discovered what your lot would be, fearfully and shudderingly. Strange to say, it is in the male corpses only, that the faces are thus turned upwards—the female float with the face down, and the weight of the long hair appears to drag the head far beneath the surface.

The heat had been gradually increasing as we advanced. Every succeeding day, we felt it more intolerable, and before we had reached the Ganges, Colonel Bunder was the only one who maintained his position at night in his cabin. He was already so dried, so shrivelled-

up, that an atmosphere at blood-heat around him incommoded him but little, whilst he took care in the mornings, during his dressing, to have a servant constantly fanning him.

We were proceeding quietly up the Ganges, occasionally beating, with great difficulty, round some corner where the current was stronger than usual, but always keeping as much as possible in shallow water, in order to avoid the strongest currents. The passengers had gradually become acquainted with each other, the captain felt himself a little more at his ease, and even ventured to lean comfortably back upon his chair after dinner. In the morning the steam was got up before daylight, and as soon as that dawned—which it did here without any long-continued preparations, but decidedly, all at once, as if there were no hesitation about the matter to overcome—we proceeded. Our breakfast hour was half-past eight, and by half-past seven the passengers were all occupied in going through the laborious operations of washing, shaving, and dressing.

To gentlemen accustomed to a temperature of from fifty to seventy or eighty de-

grees all the year round, these operations are matters of little difficulty; but where one is steaming in a vapoury atmosphere between ninety and one hundred degrees, these necessary preparations to yawning or smoking through the day, are regarded with horror and detestation. Bunder took it very easily and quietly, like all old Anglo-Indians. He sat patiently, martyr-like, whilst one servant shaved and another fanned him (for although there was very little shaving to do, he was the more particular about having it well done on that very account), unencumbered the while with any other dress than a pair of the shortest of drawers. He continued seated whilst the servant put on his stockings, an operation he informed me he had never once performed for himself during the last twenty years, the fan still diligently going without cessation. He then sat quietly for the space of about a quarter of an hour, to regain his strength, after the labour of being washed, being shaved, and having his stockings put on.

He was sitting thus in the saloon, right in front of one of the port-holes in the bows, to get what breeze could be got from the river

during the progress of the steamer ; for I need scarcely say, that in the river steamers of India they do not put the cabins aft, in the hinder part of the vessel, to collect all the heat and smell from the engines, but forward in the bows, that the melting passengers may obtain as much fresh air and breeze as a hot Bengallee sun will allow.

And here let me remark, how different the air in England is from that in India. The passenger who adventures a voyage on the Thames from Vauxhall to London Bridge, or from London Bridge to Margate, will find, on a cold, raw day, that the quantity of breeze caused by the advance of the steamer is really surprising. Like so many fine needles does it attack the face and every crevice of the neck which the carefully-folded muffler leaves exposed to its insidious attacks. The colder the air the more indubitably strong and sharp is the current caused by the vessel ; but how different on the Ganges ! The steamer advances, perhaps, just as rapidly ; there is unquestionably as much air for it to cut its way through, and yet the breeze caused by the motion is only perceptible by the most delicate straining of the nerves and of the chin to discover it.

Here is a meteorological fact, which I leave to the learned to account for.

On the morning to which I have referred, the river was calm and placid as a prime minister's face, when something very important is expected from him. The sun had got up furiously, as if roused inconveniently from slumber, hot, red, fiery; we were to have another scalding day. Far and wide spread the water upon every side like a great sea, for the country was inundated by the rains. The banks, where banks still remained, were crumbling and falling into the stream, sometimes gently and imperceptibly, sometimes in mighty masses, with a report like the discharge of a piece of ordnance. The river was coquetting with the rays of the sun, as if rejoiced to see them again, and ashamed to own it; bright glances were exchanged between the two as the slanting beams shot down variously upon the water—rendering our awning of little use as a protection. My dressing was fortunately over; the deck had been washed by the Lascars, and dried by the sun.

I had nothing particular to do, and for want of something better, I went to the skylight,

which rose above the saloon, and looked down. We took our meals on deck, the saloon was so intolerably warm; and it was consequently never used but for dressing in the morning. The cabins below opened into it, and as there was but one lady on board, and she had a cabin on deck, we generally made use of the saloon in the morning, as being a little, and it was only a very little, cooler than the cabins.

Bunder in particular sat here longer than any one else, naked to the waist, sipping a cup of coffee, and dozing at intervals, whilst he was fanned without intermission. I have before mentioned, that on such occasions the only article of dress which he wore, was a pair of the shortest drawers. He was now in his arm-chair, evidently asleep; his wiry, grey moustaches, beard, and whiskers formed a strange contrast with the dried-up yellow skin of the rest of his body, whilst a remarkably hairy chest heightened the contrast.

His *bearer*, or *valet*, had perceived that his master was fast asleep, and being tired of fanning him, had crept into the cabin to smoke a little, returning at intervals to brush off the musquitos, which were fast settling upon the ex-

posed limbs. At length the *bearer*, too, began to feel drowsy, and, remaining longer than usual in the cabin on one occasion, fell asleep there.

Dried up as Bunder was by thirty years' residence in India, the heat was too much even for his frame; the big, round drops coursed each other down his body—he was steaming. The musquitos, too, left in undisturbed possession of the field, began, in an epicurean manner, to inquire whether there were not some portions of his body more dainty than the face and hands, which years ago they had given up as useless to them. Delicate draughts of blood were discovered here and there, and they settled down in such places in multitudes.

Bunder began to sleep uneasily—the excessive heat, the stinging, itching pain caused by the musquitos, and the want of the cool current of air kept up formerly by the fan, all combined to render him uncomfortable. He moved uneasily in his easy chair. He grunted and half growled as he started more and more violently. Paugul was in an adjoining cabin, and looked out to enjoy the fun. He had just finished dressing, was arrayed in

spotless white, and had carefully perfumed his handkerchief, previous to making his appearance on deck. He saw me looking down at the colonel, and stopped to observe him. Bunder made a more violent plunge, and growled louder than before. He was wide awake in a moment.

“ Hang it ! ” was his first exclamation.

Paugul jumped stealthily into a neighbouring cabin, to avoid the imputation of having unmercifully enjoyed his torment. Bunder got a glimpse of the white figure vanishing into the cabin, of which the door was still open to his left. A bright copper basin in which he had been washing was at his side, and the water remained in it unchanged. To seize it and launch it after the culprit, dirty water, basin and all, (for Bunder conceived it was his own *bearer* he had caught a glimpse of,) was but the work of a moment.

“ Ha ! you scoundrel ! ” shouted he, at the same time in choice Hindostannee. “ Are you leaving me to be eaten up by musquitos, and to soak in perspiration ? ”

The exclamation was hardly out of his mouth, when Paugul made his appearance—

“Even such a man, so faint, so spiritless,
So dull, so dead in look, so woe-begone,
Drew Priam’s curtain at the dead of night.”

He had received the entire contents of the basin upon his back—the soapy cataract was trickling over his shoulders and down his cheeks, whilst his thin white clothes stuck to his figure with a closeness and a regularity which fully revealed its outlines.

“Paugul!” exclaimed the colonel—whilst his *bearer*, who had crept stealthily out of the cabin, commenced fanning as usual, as if he had never left off. “Paugul, is that you? what, in the name of wonder, made you slip so stealthily into that empty cabin just as I awoke, almost eaten up with musquitos, and melting with heat?”

“O, it’s no matter now,” said Paugul with melancholy mildness, “but upon my honour, colonel, you ought to be more careful in throwing such articles about; as a magistrate, I really would not advise your allowing your temper to get so far the better of you—the copper basin might have injured me seriously.”

“So it might, but it was intended for this

scoundrel," said the colonel, turning fiercely to the *bearer*, who kept fanning harder than ever, but maintained a position carefully out of the reach of Bunder's arm. Indeed, to look at the servant's face, one would fancy that he knew nothing of the occurrence at all, but had been fanning there without intermission from the night before.

"Go and call the gentleman's servant, you fool," said the colonel, endeavouring to repress a laugh as he contemplated Paugul's forlorn condition. Many servants were about, however, and the unfortunate sufferer quickly received assistance in divesting himself of his wet garments, which, by the way, is no such easy matter when they are light and thin.

At breakfast that morning, Mrs. Nutkut was, of course, fully informed of the circumstance—the colonel representing his own conduct in the most favourable light, and impressing upon us the fact that he was not kinder to his dear "Sukchilly" (the monkey) than he was to his servants, and that a considerable portion of his ire arose from indignation that one generally so kind and attentive, should have been so badly treated by

them. His table-servant was behind him at the time, heard and understood every word his master was saying, was painfully conscious that scarcely a week passed without some dreadful thrashing being inflicted by the little colonel upon himself or some of his fellow-servants, and yet did not by a look, not so much as by the lifting of an eyebrow, betray his consciousness of either the one fact or the other.

In this respect Hindoo servants certainly surpass all others. Their powers of simulation and of dissimulation are equally extraordinary. Paugul did not make his appearance till breakfast was half over; his dressing occupied an hour exactly by the clock, no very extraordinary length of time, all things considered; and as he had to go through precisely the same routine twice on this particular morning, we were not astonished at his late appearance.

Mrs. Nutkut asked him particularly for his version of the story, and it was amusing to see, that, whilst Bunder's account was intended principally to exculpate himself, Paugul's abounded in abuse of the Colonel's servant, and was elaborate only upon the motives which induced him to enter the cabin. How

different the points of view from which different people survey the same scene or the same object! To us at the breakfast-table the motives of Bunder or of Paugul were of little moment, whilst we dilated upon the ridiculous figure made by Paugul on his exit from the empty cabin, and admired amazingly the apparent collectedness and *sang-froid* of the *bearer*, for whom the libation was intended.

Mrs. Nutkut did not fail to rally Paugul upon his taste for the ludicrous and its consequences; and indeed the incident, simple and natural as it was, was a source of much merriment in so monotonous a journey.

CHAPTER XVI.

RIVER HAPS AND MISHAPS.

IN the evening the captain and the pilot seemed to differ in opinion with respect to the place where the vessel should stop for the night. In so ever-varying a stream as the Ganges; the steamers, in their voyages up and down, are obliged to take various pilots as they proceed, who, by constantly going over the same ground, or rather the same water, backwards and forwards, are aware of the changes in the river, and where the steamer can most safely and swiftly progress. On this particular evening we had "carried on," as the sailors say, later than usual.

It was already dark before Lumba was thinking of dropping the anchor. The native

pilot thought the position we were then in a favourable one, whilst Lumba conceived that we should be safer further inland, where the country was inundated, but where there was quite sufficient water to float a vessel drawing so little as the Irrawaddy. The pilot, however, prevailed, and the anchor was dropped about half a mile from the shore, in rather a deep portion of the stream ; a sand-island lay three or four hundred yards behind us, and to our left a deep inundation, like a gulf, stretched into the land.

No sooner was the anchor dropped, than we became aware of the amazing strength of the current of the river. It rushed as through a sluice past the bows of our steamer, curving at each side into graceful arches, as if we were proceeding at the rate of ten or twelve knots an hour. I have said that the steamers on the Ganges tow up barges called flats after them, laden with merchandize, of which the vessel cannot take much, from its peculiar construction. Sometimes, indeed, there are two, or even three, of these monstrous tails appended to the unfortunate steamer, which puffs, and groans, and labours,

and strains under the infliction, having to overcome the current, drag up its own weight, and two or three other bodies nearly as heavy as itself, and all this without the slightest assistance from any quarter.

Fortunately, the Irrawaddy had only one of these ungainly appendages on this occasion. Had there been more, they would probably have been lost.

No sooner was the anchor down and the fires partially extinguished, than Lumba commenced running first to the bows and afterwards to the stern, in such a way as caused some alarm amongst the passengers. He had been just promising to rig a tent with sails for Mrs. Nutkut on the fore-castle (which here answers the purpose of a quarter-deck), such was the intensity of the heat in the cabins. Her couch-cot was to be conveyed there from her cabin, and she was thus to pass the night in the open air, as we did, encircled only by a wall of canvas.

We were quietly discussing these arrangements over our cigars and brandy-pawnee,* when Lumba's agitation and his abuse of the

* Brandy and water.

pilot caused us to ask what was the matter. The roar of the water as it swept past the steamer soon convinced us that our anchor had been dropped in one of those rapid currents which abound in the neighbourhood of the sand-islands.

“Get up the steam again!” shouted Lumba to the engineer; “lash the flat with the chain-cable!” roared he to the chief officer.

“Ay, ay, sir!” were the ready replies; and corresponding orders were immediately given in Hindostanee to the crew.

“The flat’s gone, sir!” screamed the chief officer from the stern, as we heard a crash and a jerk that almost upset us; the noise of the stream and the high wind caused the loud tone in which the orders were given, and proportionately alarmed the passengers, of course.

Lumba ran to the stern; the flat had broken from its moorings, and the stream was, to our astonishment, carrying it away to our right, instead of down the river in our stern.

“I thought so,” growled Lumba; “it’s a blessed whirlpool we’re in;” and he seized hold of the pilot (a native, of course,) to inflict summary chastisement.

“ Shall I let go the other anchor, sir ?” asked the chief officer.

“ The steamer will hold, now the flat’s gone, and we must be off as soon as we can, for the flat will be down upon us in five minutes,” was Lumba’s reply, as the pilot glided away from his grasp. I returned to the fore-castle, where Mrs. Nutkut had been left in great alarm, fancying that we were speedily going to the bottom. It was a strange scene. The stars were shining brightly, but fleecy clouds flitted over them with wonderful rapidity. The river was running like a mountain torrent, black and raging, past us, and forming a large circle to our right was the flat (which we could distinguish distinctly by its two lights), borne rapidly along by the current. I heard the engineer telling the captain that it would be fifteen minutes before the vessel could be in motion. The lascars, or native seamen, were running to and fro, apparently more alarmed than we, the landsmen, were, and yet, perhaps, I wrong them ; at all events, they talked more, and Lumba, the chief officer, and their serang,* were all obliged to use their canes

* A native officer.

pretty freely, before the incessant jabbering could be put an end to.

The flat had been gradually forming a wide circle far in towards the shore, whilst we were gyrating round our anchor. I saw now what Lumba was preparing for—the flat was evidently approaching us, and there would probably be a collision. Hence it was that swabs and coils of rope were slung so plentifully over the sides, as completely to fence the steamer. As soon as it came within hailing distance, Lumba shouted to the only European on board, asking if they had got their swabs and coils out. They had not done so, but hastened to repair their error.

“Stand by, Mr. Mota,” said Lumba to the chief officer, “and jump into the flat when it comes up; that fool Chatters does not seem to know what he’s about.”

“Ay, ay, sir!” sung out Mota, and he had scarcely said so, when bang! bang! bang! came the flat heavily against the side of the steamer. There was a loud crashing of timbers, as if both vessels were breaking up, and it was gone again.

No material injury had been done to the Irra-

waddy, however ; the crashing having been entirely confined to the wooden frame on which the awning was stretched above us. We were standing looking intently at the flat during this collision, and watching it as it departed again on its wild whirl, every one of us in breathless expectation of something dreadful, when the rattling of a chain, and the heavy bounding of some soft substance against our legs, caused us to start once more. Mrs. Nutkut screamed and fainted, Colonel Bunder swore, and the other passengers uttered such ejaculations as suited their taste or temper. It was the unfortunate "Sukchilly," Bunder's favourite monkey, who had been quite forgotten in the emergency, and who inhabited the flat. He had jumped on board during the collision, and had just then succeeded in discovering his beloved master. Bunder caressed his favourite, and took him aft to tie him up somewhere ; Paugul had dived down into the cabins immediately after the collision had occurred ; the other passengers were variously engaged in different parts of the steamer, the majority following Lumba, and I was left to succour Mrs. Nutkut, who had indubitably fainted.

I knew it was a very interesting situation to be placed in, but felt that the pleasure, or rather the interest of it, would have been very much heightened had it occurred at any other time. The lady's *ayah*, or native female servant, was found after some little search, but it took only a moment to convince me that she was useless, being herself in so great a fright; so leaving the fair lady upon the skylight, I dived into the cabin to get the salts and *eau de cologne*. These restored animation after a little, and to my great delight, she sat up and conversed as before.

The steamer, however, was not yet under weigh; our enemy, the flat, which had saluted us so warmly before, was again going its rounds, and I saw that another collision was inevitable. I endeavoured to prepare Mrs. Nutkut for it; and, pale and alarmed as she was, not so much afraid of death as of the horrid alligators, and of the still more horrid Bengallee corpses in the river, she endeavoured to resign herself to her fate, knowing, as she declared, that we should never survive that dreadful night.

I felt rather anxious myself, too, more so

than I allowed her to perceive, for it appeared to me that every thing depended upon the position in which the flat struck us, and that that must depend, to a great extent, on fortuitous circumstances. On it came, its two lights,—which, before we knew there was any danger, looked so interestingly bright, and which we admired as they were wafted gracefully along by the stream,—these same two lights, now glaring upon us like the fire-eyes of a demon, advanced swiftly and yet smoothly and calmly upon us.

And here what a temptation there is to rhapsodize! Every thing, it is evident, depends for its effect upon the aspect in which it is regarded; what is hideous in one point of view, is beautiful in another. “Burn the dead bodies of our parents!” said a tribe of the wildest Scythians to the Roman ambassadors; “we could not think of such profanity. We honour their remains, and we eat them.”

Never did two simple lanterns, the one containing a red and the other a white light, appear so utterly hideous to gazing mortals, as the two lights of that flat did to us as it came towards us, swiftly, surely, calmly, as if by its own will

and power to destroy us. But the chief officer had got on board of it, and the collision was much less formidable than we had anticipated. There was the same bump, bump, bump, which had so alarmed us before, but unaccompanied by the crash which had formed so alarming a feature of the first collision.

“Are you going to stop here to be bumped in that fashion all night?” roared out the Colonel to Lumba.

“We shall be off in three minutes now, and the flat will not come round any more, even if we were obliged to stay,” was Lumba’s reply.

The danger was over. The steam was almost immediately up, and we proceeded. As the flat approached the outer edge of the circular current in which it had been whirled round so widely, its anchor was dropped and held it. A boat was sent afterwards to the steamer with a stout rope, and we speedily towed it out of its unpleasant position.

Lumba now adopted the course which, from the first, he thought would have been the wiser one. He steamed away towards the side of the stream into a gulf-like portion of it a-head,

where it had overflowed the fields. The tops of the long reeds which grew on the banks, and far inland, were just peeping above the river, and when we had gone a considerable distance in this way, the anchor was again dropped in six feet of water, where the current was, of course, of no very formidable character. Our steamer drew nominally but three feet at the utmost power, and so Lumba, when he had got "all snug," set about rigging the extempore tent for the lady.

This was no very difficult matter for one to accomplish who was skilled in all kinds of capricious contrivances by use, for it seldom happened that he had not more than one lady to please. Sails were placed so as to form three sides of a square, hanging from the poles which supported the awning, and attached, in some cases, to the awning itself. The fourth side was open towards the water on the side of the vessel, whence it was not likely that any molestation could proceed. The lady's couch-cot, with its comfortable-looking mosquito curtain, was conveyed into this sanctum, where she and her native ayah hoped to enjoy a

sound sleep, untormented by the excessive heat of the cabin.

The captain and I took up our position behind this sacred enclosed space, upon the skylight over the saloon, and the other passengers, with the solitary exception of Bander, were soon stretched in various positions upon the deck, where each had his own space for his mattress, or mat, or cot, marked out. The fires had been extinguished, and, in a few minutes, every thing was perfectly still.

The steamer and her flat lay like two great logs upon the stream, which rippled past us with a sweet, though rather melancholy, sound. Every thing around was black and dark as a midnight without a moon could make it. The snoring of Mrs. Nutkut's ayah, and the occasional growl of the colonel from below, alone disturbed the silence on board, whilst far away to our right might be heard the hum of insects and the distant roar of the wild beasts from the jungles. Pondering on the late encounter between the flat and its steamer, and thinking how dangerous it might have been, I fell asleep.

How long I had been asleep I know not,

but I was instantaneously awaked by a wild shriek from the lady, who was only separated from us by the intervening sail. Lumba started up too, but the snoring of the ayah continued as regular as ever, without the slightest intermission.

“What’s the matter, ma’am?” asked Lumba, “can we assist you in any way?” and he went close up to the tent.

Now be it known unto all whom it may concern, that in the East, where covering is not required on one’s bed, the gentlemen sleep decently in wide loose muslin or silk trousers, called “pyjamahs,” very similar to those Mrs. Bloomer would have introduced for female use in America, so that there was here no delay to put one leg into a pair of pantaloons, and to tear the said pantaloons with the other, because they would not go on quickly enough, as would have been the case in England. Whether the ladies wear a similar night-dress I am not, of course, able to say, but I presume not, for Lumba prevented our intrusion into the lady’s cloth chamber until we heard whether there was an answer.

There *was* an answer almost immediately,

although the lady was evidently very much frightened; the snoring of the ayah continuing as before.

“O, thank you, Captain Lumba, but he’s gone now,” was the sobbed-forth reply, as she endeavoured to wake her drowsy duenna.

“Who’s gone now? who was it, ma’am?” asked Lumba.

“I could not see very distinctly,” said Mrs. Nutkut, after a pause, “but I think it was—it was—the Colonel.

“What!” shouted Bunder from the companion-ladder, for he, too, had come from his berth below on hearing the shriek, and had advanced so far when he stopped to listen to the conversation.

“What, Mrs. Nutkut, do you mean to say I intruded into your cabin, or whatever else you call that ridiculous bundle of sails you have got into? I beg to inform you, madam, that my servant has only just ceased fanning me, and gone to sleep, the rascal! and that I put my foot on him in jumping out of bed the moment I heard you cry out.”

“Then,” said Mrs. Nutkut from within, gradually regaining her confidence, “if it was

not you, it must have been that horrid monkey again."

"O, thank you," said Bunder, making his way to his berth as speedily as possible.

It *was* the monkey. The "lovely Sukchilly," as Bunder called him, had again made his escape, and seeing the enclosure on the fore-castle, with the characteristic curiosity of his race, had been anxious to penetrate its mysteries. He had crept stealthily over the ayah's body to the side of the couch-cot, which he had slightly shaken, sufficiently, however, to awake its inmate, and when Mrs. Nutkut turned her head round, she saw, to her horror, an ugly, hairy face staring at her through the curtains. Hence the scream. With some difficulty Sukchilly was again secured and made fast, and in a few minutes every thing had relapsed into quietness on board, the occasional loud snore of some noisy sleeper being the only sound that broke the stillness of the vessel.

Next morning, as usual, the steam was got up before daylight, and about half-past five we were under weigh, Mrs. Nutkut having, of course, previously retreated to her cabin, and every vestige of the tent having been speedily re-

moved to make way for the men weighing the anchor. We had not been going on more than a quarter of an hour, when I saw plainly, from my position on the skylight, that something was again wrong. What it was I could not make out for some time. On looking carefully at the water, however, as the light increased, I perceived that the reeds were now considerably above the surface of the stream, and that we were making very little way, although the engines appeared to be going with full power. Lumba was again abrupt and sharp in his orders, whilst, when things were going on well, as they had been for the week previous to the late unlucky evening; he was the personification of coolness and dryness.

It was evident that the river had been falling during the night, and that on advancing this morning, the vessel had got aground upon some bank, but so gently, that no one on board felt it. This was an alarming prospect; the rains were now apparently over, and the river was not likely to rise again till next year. We were far inland, and if the water still continued to decrease, and we remained where we

were, there was every chance of the Irrawaddy and her flat being left till next inundation, high and dry upon the shore, in the midst of a fine open country, a quarter of a mile at the least from the river, when confined to its ordinary channel. Such things *had* happened before, and poor Lumba was to be pitied. In escaping one evil, he had fallen into another.

As for us, some other boat belonging to the same company, the Great Bengal and Bahar General Inland River Steam Navigation Company, (generally written the G. B. B. G. I. R. S. N. Co.), there was no doubt, I say, that some other boat of the same formidable company would take us to our destinations, but there was still a loss of time to be dreaded, which the commercial and military passengers could ill spare. An anchor was sent off in a boat in the direction of deeper water, and it was hoped, by the aid of the steam and the windlass, to draw the steamer off the bank and float her again, by "kedging," as it is technically called. The flat was sent adrift, and was speedily wafted into deeper water by the current, where it awaited the steamer.

All that morning did the Lascars unceasingly ply the windlass, in the vain hope of drawing the steamer from its immovable position. We were all impatient of the delay, and yet, impatient as we were, we could not but feel more for Lumba than for ourselves. To us it was a delay of a few days at most; to him it was probably ruin. The "kedging" was of no use; the river was evidently falling, and the steamer every hour became less likely to be dragged off. It was then attempted to lighten it sufficiently to make it again float, and boat-load after boat-load of merchandize was despatched to the flat, which was now two miles away to the south-east.

All that day the most strenuous efforts were made, in a variety of ways, to prevent the evil which appeared almost inevitable, but without success. Towards evening, fortunately, another steamer made its appearance; we could not tell at once to what company it belonged, but as it ultimately proved to be one of the G. B. B. G. I. R. S. N. Co.'s fleet, we were considerably relieved. Had it belonged to the rival company, the Great Ganges and Brahmahpootra River Steam Navigation Company

of India, there was very little chance of any effectual assistance being offered.

The "Sir John Pelham Smith," which now so opportunely made its appearance, was proceeding down the river to Calcutta; this did not prevent it being of essential service to us, however. A rope was speedily passed from the Irrawaddy to the Sir John Pelham Smith, and at that rope Sir John tugged and tugged again with right good will. The Irrawaddy trembled as if it really was thinking of leaving its comfortable nook—it trembled again—Sir John tugged harder than ever, leaping out of the water almost, in his violent straining, and—at length—the rope broke. Two additional ones were speedily procured, the same process was repeated—round went the paddle wheels of both vessels, madly, furiously, impetuously, and yet neither stirred an inch.

"She's yielding!" shouted Lumba, at the top of his voice—"harder, my boys! harder!" cried he wildly to the Lascars, who were straining at the windlass, still kedging as they had been all day.

She *did* yield—there was a tremor, a shivering, a gentle shaking, a long-drawn sigh as it

were, and she was off. Sir John steamed merrily away down the river, as if conscious of having performed a meritorious action. The Irrawaddy captured her unfortunate flat once more—things were speedily set to rights in every way, and, on the following day, I was landed. During the remainder of that voyage Lumba did not anchor either in a whirlpool or in six feet of water, nor, I am sorry to add, did Colonel Bunder, as I was subsequently informed, say a word, except of the most formal and complimentary character, to Mrs. Nutkut. The remainder of my journey to Delhi, which was my ultimate destination, was performed by land in a palanquin.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PRIEST'S HAREM AT DELHI.

THE stranger, arriving for the first time in Delhi, is at once impressed, by the aspect of the town, with the conviction that he is in a city once great and mighty, but great and mighty no more. The remains of past magnificence are strewn around on every side, some mouldering under the heavy hand of time, into their primeval dust, others beautiful in their proportions, and in an excellent state of preservation, but still telling only of what *has been*, not of what *is*. The great palace of Shah Jehan, a thousand yards long, and six hundred broad, is still inhabited by the descendant of the great Moguls, the lingering representative of a dynasty that wrote their names largely on the world's his-

tory, and then vanished, to give place to foreign rulers.

In solemn mockery of royal splendour, their surviving descendant, an emperor in form and a slave in fact, maintains the empty state of sovereignty. He has his throne and his sceptre, his palace and his servants, his ministers and his grand officers—the English have his kingdom. He receives like a king his foreign visitors, and decorates them with a valueless collar of tawdry tinsel; he wears jewels and royal robes, and has about him all the paraphernalia of majesty; but the substance has fled, the shadow only has been retained.

The palace, built by Shah Jehan, is a magnificent pile—its gateway is what the entrance to a royal domain should be, grand, imposing, and magnificent. Its gardens, a mile in circumference, are still maintained as in the times when the Moguls wielded the sceptre of India, really as well as nominally, from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas.

But whilst the palace itself betrays little of the fall of Delhi, its immediate vicinity is full of monuments that speak unmistakeably of a city whose glory has departed. Long

ranges of buildings, once the palaces of the Mogul nobility, with gilded mosques, richly ornamented pavilions and magnificent tombs, are scattered about in wide confusion, forming a vast scene of ruin and desolation. Two of its streets may still be considered elegant and spacious if not grand, and the others, although narrow, contain many good houses, partly of brick and partly of stone; but every where the wanderer may meet the ruins of past magnificence, in immediate contact with the abodes of present mediocrity—a palace and a cottage in juxtaposition may be met, it is true, anywhere in the East, from Constantinople to Canton, but a palace in ruins and a well-kept cottage together, such as may be frequently seen in Delhi, is but symbolical of the decay of the princes, and the rise of the people, which we may probably regard as the inevitable results of the British conquest.

The Muhammadan quarter of Delhi is far finer than that inhabited by the Hindoos—the very houses show which were the masters—and in this Muhammadan quarter the mosque called the *Jumna Musjeed* is certainly the finest building. It was built by the daugh-

ter of Aurungzebe, the greatest monarch the Mogul line produced, and is of red stone, inlaid with marble. Four graceful minarets, each two hundred feet high, rise at the corners, pointing ever to the skies, the fittest possible ornaments of religious buildings. Three great domes rise from the interior, of which the central one is by far the loftiest, domes that curve beautifully upwards, ending in a slender point like that of the minaret, and suggestive, too, of thoughts raised far above the earth, to the place where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

The central doorway, of lofty and imposing dimensions, is flanked by five arches on either side, that stretch off to the minarets, and above these arches is that elaborate and intricate decoration which the orientals love so well, and which astonishes the European in the Alhambra not so much by its intrinsic beauty, as by the immense quantity of labour which must have been expended upon it.

The neighbourhood of the *Jumna Musjeed* is all that the vicinity of such a temple should be. An extensive square court-yard affords

an admirable view of it in front, whilst the sides are flanked with lower buildings, that harmonize well with the magnificent proportions of the mosque. No narrow dirty streets run right and left from the very precincts of the great temple, as in more civilized countries is too often the case — all is repose, quiet, solemnity, and harmonious combination.

But it was not to describe Delhi or its temple that I brought the reader to the *Jumna Musjeed*. We have had descriptions enough of walls and houses, of forts, cities, and harbours, of windows, doors, and pillars. Still life is better portrayed by the pencil of the artist than by the pen of the traveller. It was that we might find subjects of strictly human interest amid the ruins and the mosques of Delhi—that we might see how men and women think and act who profess the creed of Muhammad, and live amid the glare and dust of a tropical city—that I brought the reader up the Ganges to the ancient capital of the Mogul empire. Nay, more, that we might obtain a peep into that mystery of mysteries, a priest's harem.

I became acquainted in this strange city with a Persian—a young man of three or

four and twenty—who interested me much by his intelligence and freedom from prejudice. An extensive acquaintance with the world had given Cossim Ali an agreeable manner and a winning address, which made him a favourite with every one, but particularly with the fair sex. In his picturesque conical hat, loose dressing-gown-like coat with slashed open sleeves, and oriental sandals, he might have been chosen by an artist, as a specimen and sample of his race and country. He was tall, well-made, and active, and there was that air of mystery about him which is so attractive, particularly to the fair. Some said he was a Persian agent, appointed by the Shah to reside at the court of Delhi as a mark of honour to the nominal “Emperor,” others that he filled some profound diplomatic position in connection with Affghanistan and its interests in the Seikh war; whilst not a few declared that he was merely a Persian gentleman of fortune, travelling for his amusement, who had taken up his abode at Delhi for a time, to inspect its lions.

Cossim Ali cared little what they thought or what they said about him. He sauntered

about the streets or into the mosques, rode his fine Affghan horse in the suburbs, and attended European parties, with equal indifference and unconcern. His stock of English was of the smallest, but he spoke Hindostannee fluently, and, as all Anglo-Indians must speak that more or less, he contrived to make himself interesting and amusing to all parties. To the old yellow-faced, liver-diseased English grumbler, who had been shrivelling up into a parchment bale for twenty or thirty years, he spoke of the wines of Shiraz and the cookery of Ispahan, until the old gentleman licked his lips again at the savoury description, his mouth watering the while.

To the English lady he spoke of the beauties of Lauristan, with their fair blue eyes and black hair, and how they were put up to sale in Ispahan and Teheran, as well as of the fabulous prices which they commanded. He described the Georgian vessels, making their way over the waters of the Caspian to the north of Persia, to dispose of their cargo of beauties to the deserving faithful. The ladies were deeply interested, and asked much of Persian harems and wedded life amongst the

Sheahs, to all which Cossim answered glibly, knowing or unknowing, describing or inventing as he found most convenient, whilst his black eyes, sparkling with animation, were telling deeply upon his fair listeners.

To the military man, Cossim discoursed of the horses of Kurdistan and the light cavalry of the Persians, the modern representations of the Parthian troops who had so often driven back the Roman invaders.

Cossim, in fact, was a sort of lion in Delhi; and as he did not like to talk about himself, the little air of mystery which hung around him, rather captivated than repelled. He lived in the Muhammadan quarter of the town, not far from the *Jumna Musjeed*, and, whilst he often attended European parties, spent by far the greatest portion of his time in his own neighbourhood. I had met Cossim two or three times before I had an opportunity of conversing with him. At length, however, we talked together over a game of chess for an hour or so—talked uninterruptedly, he telling me wonderful stories of Persia, which I endeavoured to equal by tales of Europe, and particularly by describing the wonders of

London life. “*Barekillah!*” would Cossim exclaim at every fresh recital, “*Barekillah!*” (praise be to God!) “but the fire-drinkers of London must be strange men—*Inshallah!* (please God!) I’ll see them before I die.”

“Will you come over and spend an hour with me to-morrow?” I asked, seeing that Cossim and I had really become excellent friends, for I longed to penetrate the mystery that hung over him.

“*Bechushm!* (by my eyes!) but I will,” rejoined Cossim, “at the eleventh hour, if it suits your excellency, and hear more of these same fire-drinkers.”

“Your servant’s chamber will be honoured in your presence,” said I, not to be behind him in politeness, and so we separated for the evening.

And here, lest I should unwittingly defraud the reader of his valuable time, let me confess at once that I never *did* penetrate the mystery that hung over Cossim Ali; that, although he gave me an insight into a priest’s harem, I never discovered whether he was an accredited agent of the Khan sent to the court of Delhi, or a profound diplomatist deeply interested

in the Affghan interests of the Seikh war, or only a Persian gentleman travelling for pleasure, or, as was more probable, a Persian merchant watching the market of Delhi to find profitable fields for investment. It is but right that I should at once confess to the reader that I never discovered which of these he was, so let no one read this chapter to the end in the vain hope of discovering the precise character and employment of Cossim Ali.

Having thus satisfied my conscience, and duly warned the reader, to prevent future disappointment, I now proceed with my story. We shall soon come to the priest's harem. Cossim called as he had promised. I had seen him duly and religiously abstaining from wine at parties, but I was aware that it made a vast difference with many Mussulmans whether there was only one witness or several. I had, of course, no wish to tempt him to break any ordinance of his faith, far from it; but, regarding it as no sin myself to take a glass of wine, I was aware that many excellent Moslems, whether Sheahs or Soonnies, thought likewise, and that, although they might not be disposed to display their dis-

obedience before a multitude and before Mus-
sulman servants, yet that in private they in-
dulged in a moderate allowance.

The wine was on the table—there were two
glasses — the servants were not visible. I
poured out a glass for myself, and pushed the
bottle over to Cossim. He looked at the rich
red hue of the claret for a moment—muttered
something of the grapes of Shiraz—filled and
emptied his glass without ceremony, and
threw himself back upon his easy chair, ex-
claiming, “Barekillah! but it’s not bad, al-
though not so good as cherry-brandy.”

We talked of different things—of politics,
of the war, of the Affghans, of the English,
of London, and a host of other topics pleasant
and engrossing out of Europe, but stale and
unprofitable within its precincts. At length,
our conversation turned upon Delhi,—the
Jumna Musjeed, the palace, the Muhammadan
quarter generally. I asked information respect-
ing an old mosque, that had evidently once been
handsome and of importance, which had at-
tracted my observation, but was now fallen much
to decay. I asked, too, about an old Moollah or
Muhammadan priest, whom I had seen entering

it, and whose venerable white beard and forbidding countenance had equally interested me.

“ I know the mosque well,” said Cossim, who was gradually becoming more communicative as the wine flowed more freely, “ I know it well. The old Moollah occasionally reads a chapter or two of the Koran there on Fridays, and I have visited one of the minarets before now. *Yah Hyder! yah Ali!** but if it weren't for that minaret, I should have been far enough from Delhi now.”

“ How was that, my friend ?” I asked.

“ Well, it's a secret as yet,” said Cossim ; “ but you're my friend, and I will tell you all about it. The Moollahs don't generally like any one to go up to the top of the minarets, you know, except the guardians and themselves.”

“ Do they not ?” said I ; “ I was not aware of that.”

“ No,” said Cossim, “ because they overlook the houses and the harems. But I made acquaintance with the guardian a month ago,

* An exclamation, like an address to a patron saint (similar to the “ Holy Virgin !” of the Continent), ever in the mouths of the Persians. Scarcely a sentence do they utter, without some such expletive.

and got up. Delhi, however, is not like our Persian cities, and the people do not in the mornings lie upon the roofs of their houses, so that I was disappointed.

“The neighbourhood of the Mosque is crowded with houses of great size, some inhabited and some ruinous and empty, each containing a considerable number of courts. One of these houses was in the immediate vicinity of the temple; and looking down from the minaret, I could see into its courts and verandahs as plainly as into this empty glass now. The entrance to it, which I traced out after a time, was low, intricate, and confined, leading to a *divan-khaneh* (a public hall), of no great size, but from all that I could see, elegant and admirably embellished. Two large windows, with elaborately carved frames, the remains of better days, opened upon the court; and, *Mashallah!** but who do you think I saw sitting in the corner of this hall more than once?”

“Nay,” said I, “how can I tell?”

“None other, by my name! than the old Moollah. Here I saw him sitting more than

* An exclamation of surprise or admiration; literally, “by the hand of God.”

once, evidently enjoying himself, and beyond this outer or public apartment, I discovered that there was a splendid suite of rooms surrounding a court admirably kept, with a nice fountain and the prettiest flowers, all belonging to the old Moollah! *Mashallah!* thought I, but the venerable priest knows how to take care of himself, and if that wasn't cherry-brandy he was drinking one day, as he lay in the court near the fountain, watching some dancers, I'm sure it wasn't water.

“That these were the female apartments I saw at a glance—it doesn't take long to open the eyes of the fox when the poultry are near—ha! ha!—the handsome hall at one end, with its stained glass windows, that let in only the mellowest light; the small apartments surrounding the pleasant court; the female attire hung up here and there in the verandah—there was no doubt of it. I watched long and earnestly, for there was an evidence of luxury about the whole affair that riveted my attention, particularly when I remembered that the old priest was the possessor of all these treasures.

“The forms of females were not long in

being discovered flitting about in the court or passing through the verandah from one room to another, and it was easy to distinguish the horrid ungraceful air of the slaves, from the more dignified gait of the mistresses of the mansion."

"Slaves!" said I, interrupting him, "you forget we have no slaves in Delhi."

"No, no," said he, "you don't call them slaves, I know; attendants or servants, if you will; but the harem is sacred, and slaves they are, nevertheless. Well, there was something very interesting about the place—I was never tired of watching it. I went so often up the minaret, that its guardian began to grow suspicious, and followed me up more than once, on which occasions I took out a volume of poems, and read him a sonnet or two of Farduzi, telling him this was the place to enjoy poetry. But when he was gone I gazed again. It was quite useless, however, not a face could I make out, so carefully were they all veiled.

"At length, as the lucky stars of Cossim Ali would have it, I discovered an old house adjoining the east of the harem that had nothing in it, and was all falling to ruins. If I can

get on the roof of that, thought I, I'll be able to look right into the hall, and on the beauties of the priest's harem without their veils. *Ma-shallah!* I lost no time in exploring the eastern side of the court. Yah! but it was a filthy grope I had, through old houses, ugly insects, muddy lanes, and filthy puddles. There were tumbling down walls every where about, quite deserted, with passages that twisted and twined every where, and led no where; rugged excavations, that I thought I should never find my way out of again, and dark holes looking into awful cellars, that made one shiver to contemplate.

“There was one narrow passage, however, that I explored, for Cossim was not to be easily daunted, that led between mud-walls of some height under ground, amid rubbish and fallen plaster, and half-decayed, half-burnt bricks. I followed it until it opened into a cellar under the empty, ruinous houses above, and as I made my way further and further up and on, in the dark, I heard the sounds of a guitar in the distance. I was on the east of the court; there was at last but a wall between me and the Moollah's harem. I distinctly heard the hum

of voices within ; the wall was thin, but still it *was* a wall, and I might as well be on the minaret, thought I, as here, if I can't get any nearer, or gain any insight into the court. I groped my way forwards, passed a well-closed door, and at length saw light issuing nearly from the top of the wall, coming evidently from the very court I so much wished to inspect.

“Yah Hyder! yah Ali! but I worked then like a dozen men. I piled up the bricks and hardened mud firmly and securely. In the saying of a long prayer I was up on the top inspecting the court-yard within. It was a busy scene and a strange one. Some of the slaves—O no, not the slaves, the attendants—were as ugly as those in any harem between Delhi and Mecca, frowsy wretches, all wrinkles and age. One was cleaning a hookah, another teasing cotton, a third preparing pillow. In the verandah that ran round it, ladies' trousers, handkerchiefs, and shawls hung here and there to air.

“The slaves were all unveiled, their ugliness had no need of any disguise. But as I was gazing, I saw such a vision—yah, Frank! but

it was a vision to turn a wiser man's head than Cossim's. She was magnificently dressed in a close-fitting vest of green velvet, for it was cold then,—a vest embroidered with silver and edged with fur,—whilst an orange-coloured shawl was tied round her waist, and hung down over her white satin trousers. A veil was half on and half off her face, but I could see her eyes were large and black, that her cheek was like the pomegranate, and that her mouth and chin were in shape like one of those statues that you Franks sometimes bring from Europe. I thought it was a Houri the old Moollah had enticed from Paradise.

“She was majestic in her gait, and stood a moment watching the inferior women, her guitar in her hand, then giving a direction or two in the most musical of voices, she turned and walked into one of the side apartments. I had hardly drawn a breath when she was in the court, so eagerly did I gaze, but as she retired into the apartment, I pushed my head against the wall at the side of the crevice through which I was looking, to obtain a longer view.

“I pushed the old wall so hard in my eager-

ness that a little plaster fell on the inside, and all eyes were turned up at once to the spot—the fair lady's amongst the rest, for she had looked round at the exclamation of the others. But I was secure from observation—the crevice was not wide enough for them to discover me through it—and none but the beautiful houri herself looked twice, whilst the slaves cursed the tumble-down old place roundly.

“But, although the slaves never looked more at the crevice, never thought more, probably, about the circumstance; yet, the lady, the favourite wife, evidently remembered the circumstance, and looked often. Frequently, when I was stationed at my post as usual, did I see her large lustrous black eyes fixed upon the spot—fixed, unavailingly, of course, suspicious of something doubtless, and not displeased, perhaps, to think that she had an admirer, who watched her actions from that dark nook.

“Fatima, for I soon discovered her name, is not the only wife of the old Moollah. I have seen four about at least, but she was evidently the favourite, and no wonder, for, *wallah*, (by Allah), Frank! but I never could take my eyes

off her, or look at any other when she was by. I have seen her singing to the old priest whilst he lay in the court at her feet, his grey beard resting on a soft cushion on the grass as she sat by him, his eyes fixed upon her countenance, and her voice uttering notes that would shame the bulbul and make the loory jealous. *Bismillah!* but it was enough to rouse a man.

“ Yesterday I witnessed an entertainment given by Fatima to her friends, and never shall I forget it. When the shadows had fallen upon the court, she took her place in the seat of honour, just opposite my hiding-place, the Moollah’s three other wives occupying couches near her. Laughing voices and the noise of attendants announced the approach of the visitors, who were ushered into the court. They removed their blue checked veils, and exhibited themselves as well-dressed ladies, as soon as they had reached the inclosure. Some of them were passably fair, others more than ugly, but, beautiful or hideous, I regarded them with indifference. I had no eyes for any one but Fatima, and I thought that she gloried in exhibiting her un-

veiled charms to the suspicious chink, at which she occasionally glanced.

“ Pillaws and curries were handed round—the conversation was general and free—the ladies discussed the character of their household, spoke of their jewels, the numbers of children they wished for, and their hopes of having them—all were merry and cheerful. Sherbet and milk-soup succeeded the substantial viands, and lastly, tea and coffee were handed round. Whilst they sipped at these, the dancing girls were introduced, and as they glided about in graceful measures, or sang plaintive ditties, accompanied by melancholy gestures, the ladies reclined upon their couches and watched them, languidly amused.

“ The scene fascinated me. I quite forgot that I was a profane gazer at mysteries that the eye of man should never behold. With my incessant climbing, a large brick had gradually become loosened, just opposite to my face, and, perceiving that I could easily remove it, I gently took it from its place; the plaster adhered to it on the inside, and slowly and cautiously I slid it down by my side. The aperture was now wide enough fully to satisfy

my curiosity, but I was much more exposed to the observation of those within than before. As I rejoiced in this discovery and enjoyed the extended view, I saw Fatima's eyes turned upwards to my hiding-place. They were fixed for a moment on my countenance, in a full, brilliant stare, and then, as though she had not seen me, she continued to watch the dancers.

“ Emboldened by my success, I pushed still further into the court, my head was fully exposed to view—some pieces of plaster fell upon the flowers beneath, and all eyes were turned upon the delinquent. Yah Hyder! yah Ali! but how they screamed—the ugliest ever the loudest.

“ ‘ Treachery! treachery; a man! a man!’ sounded on all sides, as if it had not been a man but a wild beast.

“ ‘ Fatima, I adore thee,’ I shouted out, seeing that my delicious vision was put an end to at last.

“ Other attendants came rushing into the court, ‘ What means all this? What news is this? What is the matter?’ they kept scream-

ing, whilst those within, drawing on their veils, rushed about, exclaiming :

“ ‘ A’ man ! a man !—O ! Muḥammad, a man !—Yah, Ali ! what will become of us ?’

“ The confusion was little less agreeable to contemplate than the pleasant party had been before. Intoxicated with Fatima’s beauty I was even contemplating forcing my way into the court and defying consequences. But the coming in of two or three male attendants, now that the ladies were veiled, rendered such an idea ridiculous ; the old Moollah himself was advancing with a scimitar in his hand. It was a joke no longer. I heard them opening the door that communicated with the dark cellar below the chamber in which I was—there was no time to lose.

“ Fortunately the door had not been opened for years, and was half blocked up by rubbish. I was far away among the ruins before they forced their way into the darkness, and, when they had done so, they, doubtless, waited to get lights to explore the place. At all events I saw nothing of them, I was soon safe at home preparing to join the party, at

which I met you, yesterday evening. I had the satisfaction of hearing the old Moollah mention the circumstance early this morning to an aged friend, whom I accompanied to the mosque betimes. Was it not enough to make one die with laughter?"

"And the beautiful Fatima?" I asked.

"Is still the wife of the Moollah, O Frank! and likely to continue so."

I never heard more of my friend Cossim after leaving Delhi to return to Calcutta, which I did a few days after he had made these revelations to me. He had promised to write, but I never received any letters from him.

