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*NINTH EDITION.*

**The Honour of Savelli.**

**BY S. LEVETT YEATS.**

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**D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK.**

**A GALAHAD OF THE CREEKS**

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**THE WIDOW LAMPORT.**

**BY**

# S. LEVETT-YEATS

AUTHOR OF THE HONOUR OF SAVELLI

NEW YORK  
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY  
1897

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## [A GALAHAD OF THE CREEKS.](#)

### CHAPTER I.

#### [THE COMING OF THE WOON.](#)

The good ship steered toward the East,  
To the East, o'er the salt sea foam;  
And years rolled by, and time grew old,  
But she nevermore came home.

*Voyage of the Tobias.*

When a man has taken a first-class degree, when he has won his blue, and has passed high into the Indian Civil Service without the wet-nursing of a crammer, it might be hazarded that he is worth something. One might go further and picture out his future career--how he would be a prop of Israel; how, step by step, he would rise until the Honourable Council enshrouded him; and how, after a life of useful work, he would, like Oliver, desire more, and drop into being the bore of "the House," or into the warmest corner of the "Oriental," and dream over the fire of the time when he was his Honour the Lieutenant Governor; but the lion is very old now--let him doze.

Peregrine Jackson had taken the first steps to qualify for this part in the tragedy of life, for this forging of the links of that mysterious chain of which we know not the beginning and may never know the end until, as to Longinus, the gates of immortality are opened unto us. But the tall, straight, broad-shouldered young Englishman was thinking of none of these things at present. He had elected to serve in Burma, and he was now posted as assistant commissioner, practically Governor of Pazobin, which is in lower Burma, and lies near the sea on a slimy creek of the Irawadi. He leaned over the gunwale of the river steamer that was bearing him to his destination, and the skipper, the sleeves of his gray-flannel shirt rolled up to his elbows, stood beside him and pointed out Pazobin, which lay about two miles off, clinging like a limpet to the river bank. Now,

a Burman river steamer can walk, and at twelve knots an hour two miles would not take long to cover--in fact, the Woon had already whistled shrilly to announce her coming--a whistle that found a hundred echoes in the forest which fringed the banks, until it died away in fitful cadences in some unknown swamp. And let it be remembered that this is the country of the creeks. Here the Irawadi, whose source no man knoweth, comes down from its cradle of snow, past the tremendous defiles of Bhamo, through the whole length of that strange land from which the veil has only just been lifted, past cities and temples, until at last the mystery of waters spread out with a hundred thirsty throats toward the sea, and puddles its blue field with a muddy yellow far out, even to where the breakers hiss around Cape Negrais. Between the wide necks that stretch out to the sea the water has made for itself countless cuttings, through which it ebbs and flows sluggishly beneath the shadows of a primeval forest. The whistle of the steamer was answered by the dull boom of a signal gun, and the broad bosom of the creek was almost immediately dotted over with a vast number of small craft making their way toward the incoming mail boat. "There's the pagoda," and the Mudlark, as captains of Burman river steamers are irreverently called, pointed to the gilded cupola which rose high above the feathers of the bamboos that surrounded it. "There's the jetty," he added, "and there's the courthouse. You'll know more about that presently. Wonder how you'll like sitting there ten hours a day? And, by George, there's the *nga-pe!*" "The what?" But as Jackson spoke, a puff of wind brought a decomposed odour to the steamer. It was overpowering, an all-pervading essence, and for a moment Peregrine forgot everything in a vain effort to beat off the evil with his pocket-handkerchief. "It's all right when you're used to it," mocked the captain, "and you mustn't turn up your nose at it, for that delicate condiment is the main source of revenue of your district. Wait till I take you up some day with a shipload on board! And now, your humble, I must be off."

He vanished to attend to his duties, which to the non-professional onlooker appeared to consist principally of swinging his arms round like the sails of a windmill and using frightful language toward a person whom he called the *serang*. The fitful wind, changing at this time, relieved Jackson from the terrible odour, and allowed him to look with a somewhat despairing curiosity at his new home. Before him lay a fleet of small fishing craft and a single row of bathing machines on stilts. The latter were the houses of the inhabitants, and they were all built on piles. They were of the roughest possible description, but here and there a plutocrat had got some corrugated iron to make a roof with and to excite thereby the envy, malice, and hatred of his fellows. There was but one street, from the end of which the jetty projected into the river. Beyond this rose some larger buildings, the largest of which had been pointed out by the skipper as the courthouse. A little way inland towered the gilded spire of the pagoda, with its umbrella crest that swung slowly round in the breeze. The one street of the township was thoroughly alive. It seemed as if a swarm of butterflies was on the move in the bright sunshine. Everywhere there was the sheen of brilliant colour--red, yellow, electric blue, and that strange tint which is known to milliners as *sang de bœuf*. The small boats surrounded the steamer, and, regardless of the danger of being swamped, recklessly jammed up against her. With few exceptions their occupants were either women or Chinamen. These latter exchanged joyous greetings with their compatriots on board, and, swarming up the ship's side, set vigorously to work preparing to land their consignments as soon as ever the steamer drifted alongside the jetty. The ladies followed almost as rapidly, and their agility and the skill which they displayed in preventing the too great exposure of shapely limbs was beyond all praise. The women had brought with them their peddling wares, and a brisk market was opened--sharks' teeth, an invaluable love philter, silks and fruits, and the nameless little wants of semicivilized life. One held high above her head a row of mutton chops impaled upon a bamboo skewer. "Excellent they are," she cried; "they have come from the fat sheep the mail brought for me all the way from Calcutta."

Everybody was smoking, except the Chinamen and the man at the wheel, who were too busy. The Burman man was, however, so absorbed in the contemplation of his own dignity that he did nothing but smoke; the Burman woman, on the other hand, simply coaled herself with each whiff of the long green cheroot she sucked, and every puff inspired her with fresh energy for the driving of a bargain. Through all the maze of business, however, madam remained a very woman, and many an astute deal was lost as the joints of her armour were pierced by Ah-Sin's oily tongue or the open admiration in Loo-ga-lay's little eyes. They were now so close to the shore that Jackson could distinctly see the faces of the people and the medals on the breasts of the half company of Sikh police that were formed up on the jetty--a tribute of honour to him, as he found out subsequently. Two Europeans stood amid the crowd; in one, dressed in a police uniform, Peregrine recognised Hawkshawe, the district police officer, who, while nominally his second in command, was really to be Jackson's dry nurse in controlling his charge until he was fit to fly alone. This period of probation would be, of course, just as long or as short as Peregrine chose to make it, for a member of the Indian Civil Service is ordinarily hatched full-fledged--a diplomat, a magistrate, anything you will. In the other, who stood beside the police officer, Jackson, although new to the country, recognised the missionary. His unkempt beard and hair, his long clerical coat of raw silk, and the dejected appearance of his lean face, hall-marked him as such distinctly.

The steamer had now come almost opposite the jetty. A light line, one end of which was attached to the hawser, was cleverly thrown out and as cleverly caught by a blue-bloused Lascar. The hawser was dragged to the shore to the accompaniment of a "hillee-haulee" chorus, and it surged through the water like an unwilling water boa being pulled to land. At length the end of the huge rope touched the bank, somebody jumped into the ooze and lifted it with both arms, somebody else twisted it deftly round a short stumpy pillar, and then, with a drumming of the donkey engine and an insistent hiss-hiss of the paddles, the steamer sidled slowly alongside the jetty

until she almost touched it. In an instant the bridge was placed in position and a crowd that seemed all elbows met an invading army bent upon forcing its way on board, and there was a little trouble. With the aid of a fierce-looking sergeant, who used his cane freely, Hawkshawe made his way on deck, and after a brief greeting with the skipper came up to Peregrine.

"You're Jackson, I suppose? I'm Hawkshawe."

The two men shook hands and looked each other straight in the face. Each saw the other's strength. It was later on they noticed the loose rivets in each other's mail. After a few moments spent in desultory conversation, during which Jackson heard and replied to the usual question of how he liked the country, the two prepared to leave the ship, and Peregrine sought the skipper to say adieu.

"Good-bye, captain."

"Good-bye. The next time you come with me I'll have the *nga-pe* all ready for you."

They were over the bridge, the guard of honour had presented arms, and the Reverend Doctor Habakkuk Smalley, American missionary, was introduced. Dr. Smalley performed the feat of shaking hands, of mopping his face with a red handkerchief, and of asking Jackson if he had "got it" all at once.

"Got it!" was the reply; "I should think we all did--got it nearly a mile up. It was most horrible!"

Dr. Smalley groaned aloud, and stretched forth both hands in protest. "Sir," he began, but Hawkshawe interposed.

"Excuse me for a moment, doctor, but I must introduce these people to the new king," and he led up the portly native treasury officer to the bewildered Jackson, who found himself compelled to make and to answer civil speeches, while he was wondering how he could have given offence. The presentations were rapidly brought to an end, and Hawkshawe urged a move toward breakfast, turning to include Dr. Smalley in the invitation; but the reverend gentleman was nowhere to be seen. He had stalked off in high dudgeon.

"I've done something to offend Dr. Smalley; let me go after him and explain, if I can, though what it can be I can't guess," said Jackson.

"I should think you have!" was the answer. "Fancy Smalley asking you his usual question about your certainty of your salvation, and only think of your reply!"

"But I meant that fearful-smelling compound!"

Hawkshawe's laugh pealed out loudly. "Well, if a man will speak of religion like the measles, he must expect to be misunderstood. But there is no use in saying anything now. I will square matters for you. Smalley is a very good fellow really, and you will get to like him and---- But you must be very hungry. My men will take your traps over to your own place, and you have to breakfast with me, and can then go on, if you like. Here is the trap. Jump in."

After the cramped life of the river steamer, however, the traveller wished to stretch his limbs a little, and begged to be permitted to walk. To this Hawkshawe agreed with an inward curse, for walking exercise is hateful to the Anglo-Burmese. He will ride or drive anywhere, but the climate does not contemplate walking. It is not in the programme. An officious peon opened a huge umbrella over Jackson's head notwithstanding his protests, and a small procession was formed. This was increased to a very respectable size by the time they reached their destination, for most of the inhabitants of the place, having nothing better to do, attached themselves in a semiofficial manner to the party, and there was quite a crowd when, after a final leave-taking, Jackson and his host entered the house. It was a great pleasure to find that there were houses far back from the dreary little town on the river bank. It was disheartening to think that one had to live amid the malodorous mud and slime, and it was equally cheering to find instead of this a trim garden and a fantastically pretty little house, with a breakfast table set out in a shady veranda, which overlooked a lawn as green as emerald, upon which two little fox terriers were chasing each other in joyous play, to the detriment of the turf but to their own great good.

"You may consider yourself fairly installed now," said Hawkshawe, "and after breakfast we will take a run down to the courts. Drage, your predecessor, left only three days ago, but his house, which you have taken, will suit you admirably. You will find yourself very comfortable there, for Drage did himself well."

After breakfast Hawkshawe's fast-trotting pony took them the one mile to the courthouse "in less than no time," as the policeman said, and, the trifling business of the first day concluded, they drove to the house Jackson was to occupy. He had taken it over as it stood from his predecessor, who had gone home on long furlough, and he was much pleased to find it comfortable beyond his expectations. All his heavy baggage had come on before, and Ah-Geelong, the Chinese servant, whom he had engaged as head man, was evidently a treasure. His books were neatly stacked in their shelves, and not with the titles upside down, for Ah-Geelong was skilled in the English tongue after his kind. Everything was spotlessly clean, from the half-dozen servants, who greeted him respectfully as he arrived, to the shining floor of the rooms, on the dark wood of which a

mirrorlike polish had been scrubbed. After a few minutes Hawkshawe drove off, having made Jackson promise to dine with him that evening, and Peregrine was left to himself. He spent about an hour in arranging photographs and a few paintings, and then made a tour of the house and grounds. His ponies--two strong cobby little Shans--had come, and were looking sleek and comfortable in their stalls. He came back and made for the room which Ah-Geelong had arranged as his master's study. The Chinaman had selected this with a natural taste that could not be surpassed. The wide windows of the room opened into a veranda, from which there was an outlook over the river. There was a perfect north light, and the soft sea breeze that had travelled so many miles came in cool puffs past the *quis-qualis* blossoms that twined and thrust themselves through the trellis work of the veranda. He wheeled out a small table and sat down to write home, for the steamer left early the next morning and the mails went with her. The letter was to his father, and, after describing the events of his journey, he went on to explain the feelings which moved him on his entry into the task of governing his fellow-creatures. He was aware that he ought to have first learned to govern himself; but practical work mostly leaves out that little detail upon which the moralist insists. Beyond a certain amount of book knowledge, he knew little or nothing of the people upon whom he was pitchforked by a gazette notification. He had been told that the Burman was incapable of progress, a sluggard, and a fop, and that the Chinaman was the future of Burma. His work was to collect the revenue, to preserve order, and to administer the law. But Jackson was not satisfied with accepting as an axiom the definition of the Burman given to him, nor did he feel that to carry out the mere routine of his work was sufficient. He had read much of the civilization of the East; but, after all, what is the civilization of the East to that of the West! Jackson was bringing all the active, vigorous West with him to this sleepy hollow in the creeks, and his coming would be as a breath of strong air to an invalid. He mapped out his programme. He would be to the benighted creatures--for of course they were benighted--over whom he was placed what his father had been and was to him, and so on for many pages of what a high-souled boy always dreams when he enters upon the battle of the East. With few exceptions, he comes out of the struggle dispirited and broken, feeling that the strong years of his life have been wasted in trying to affix the impression of a seal upon water. He folded his letter, and, ringing the little bell which stood near him, gave it to the servant who came to carry to the post. He then rose and, leaning over the railings of the veranda, looked out before him. It was almost sunset, and a veil of shimmering gold was over the land. The yellow light fell softly on the sleepy forest and trembled over the dreaming river. Out on the west stretched a long, thin line of purple clouds, and his heart went forth there, for beyond was home--home, which he should see again when his task was done--when he had struck the dead Budh once more into life--when the East had heard the message he bore it from the West.

## CHAPTER II.

### A DINNER À DEUX.

Ho! A flowing bowl and a merry lass,  
And a fig for monk or friar!  
And the clean white light  
Of a sword in fight,  
And gold to my heart's desire.

*The Buccaneer.*

Eight o'clock! There was just time to dress and reach Hawkshawe's house, unless Jackson wanted to be late for dinner. He was unromantic enough to have an extremely good appetite, and a man must dine even if he is going to make the old East new. He got through his dressing as quickly as possible, and found his pony waiting for him under the portico that protected the front door of the house. Ah-Geelong followed close at his heels with an enormous hand lantern, which threw a blaze of light many yards around them. Peregrine protested.

"There is a bright moon, Ah-Geelong; you surely do not want a lamp! You might as well bring an umbrella!"

"Plentee snakee, master," and the Chinaman pointed generally all around him with a long knotted bamboo staff. The argument was unanswerable. Out of deference, therefore, to the cobra the lantern was permitted to assist the moonlight, and the procession moved off. Peregrine determined that, snake or no snake, he would come back without the lantern, and as he rode took little mental bearings, in order to guide himself home again. On arrival, he sent back the pony with his groom, and Ah-Geelong disappeared into the servants' quarters with his cosmos burner.

Hawkshawe came forward with cordial greeting, and it might have been fancy, but as they entered the drawing-room Peregrine thought he saw the curtain that guarded the entrance to a side door falling swiftly, and the flicker of a silken *tamein* as it vanished from sight.

"Take that long chair," said Hawkshawe, "and have a sherry and bitters; it will give you a fillip up!"

Jackson did not want the fillip up, but he took the sherry and bitters. He did not do so, however, in his host's scientific way. Hawkshawe first sprinkled the bitters in, and holding the glass before him bent it on one side, slowly turning it until there was a streak of burnt sienna winding round the inside; then he poured in the sherry and drank sip by sip with deep satisfaction. "It's the only way to get the true flavour of the bitters," he remarked. This was, of course, utter nonsense; but Hawkshawe fully believed it, and said the words so positively that his listener bowed to his superior knowledge and also believed. When Hawkshawe had absorbed some of the flavour of the bitters, he asked, "How have you been amusing yourself since I left you--office files?"

"No, a lot came in, but I have reserved them for later on. I've been writing letters. The mail goes out to-morrow, and I took the opportunity to write home."

"Of course you did. I never write home now. The fact is I haven't seen Old England for many a long year now, and one loses touch. Besides, I never was a good hand at writing letters, and I don't suppose anything I have to say would be particularly interesting."

"I should have thought it was quite the other way, Hawkshawe."

As Jackson spoke dinner was announced, and they moved to the dining-room. It was dinner *à deux*, and for a few moments the conversation was general, Hawkshawe asking about friends at the capital, most of whom Jackson had met, notwithstanding his short stay there; but in this respect the East is a very small place. Finally Hawkshawe got on to the subject of his work, and gave a most interesting account of the robber gangs, or dacoits, that infested the district, concluding by expressing his firm belief that the chief malefactor was a well-known priest, who to all appearance had abandoned the world, but who, Hawkshawe was convinced, although he had apparently nothing to support his statement, acted as a fence, and was at the bottom of all the mischief.

"And you really think," inquired Jackson, "that this man is a sort of head centre? It seems improbable, if what I have read and heard of the Buddhist priesthood is true; but I suppose there are exceptions."

Hawkshawe slowly raised his glass to the light and watched the little beads in the Ayala. "Nothing is improbable in this country, as you will find after a few years' experience," he answered, half in mockery and half in earnest. "For instance, I believe it is really true that the bad characters of the adjoining district of Myobin were all driven here by the mosquitoes. They grow a special kind in Myobin--big gray ones about half an inch long, and striped like a tiger. They were more effective than the police; the dacoit couldn't stand them and came here, worse luck!"

"The obvious course, then, would be to import some of your tiger-striped friends," laughed Jackson.

Hawkshawe sighed. "We have done that, but it was of no use; there is something in the air here which does not agree with that particular brand of insect life. But, joking apart, the dacoits are a very serious evil here, and I have made little or no headway against them. Now and then I score a success, but I put down all my failures to the priest Bah Hmoay--old Father Fragrance."

"I suppose there is no way of clearing the fragrant old gentleman out?"

"None; but if one could be devised, you would end all our troubles and earn Smalley's undying gratitude as well. But Bah Hmoay is a power in the land in more ways than one, as you will find before many weeks, or rather days, have passed."

"Why Smalley's gratitude in particular?"

"Because two of a trade never agree, I fancy. I don't mean by this that Smalley is a dacoit in disguise, but that they are both bigoted representatives of religion, and each believes the other to be the fiend himself. By the way, the mention of Smalley reminds me that I have explained your little mistake of this morning to the reverend Habakkuk, and he is quite prepared to smoke the pipe of peace with you; and this is well, as he is the only doctor within a hundred miles, and no one knows what may happen. Of course, he will bother you a good deal; but I should think you would know how to meet him when he opens fire on the mission side."

"It was very good of you to explain. I think also that I know what Smalley wants, and I must say I don't see why Government should help the mission on purely religious grounds--and he won't take help on any other. As an educationalist, Smalley should of course be helped, and the same argument would apply to the pagoda schools, over which I suppose Bah Hmoay presides. I don't think we should bring in religion into grants in aid, and it doesn't seem as if Christianity suits the Eastern. What do you think?"



"Don't know; all that's beyond me. I do know, however, that the native Christian is generally a d-d scoundrel. Try these cigars--they are specially made, and you must be patriotic and adopt your new country properly. If you won't face them, there are some Havanas--made of cabbage leaves probably."

"Thanks," said Jackson, "but I am afraid I am not yet blooded sufficiently for a Burman cheroot. I shall move up to the height by easy stages, and, if you will permit me, will stick to the Havanas, which I am sure you libel."

"They are better for the nerves, at any rate," replied Hawkshawe, and Jackson noted how the flaring, sputtering vesta he lighted trembled in the policeman's hand as he held it to the cheroot. For the true enjoyment of tobacco there must be silence and repose. Although Jackson was utterly unable to attack a yard of poison, such as Hawkshawe was smoking, he knew how to enjoy a cigar, and the Havana was very good. The little incident of the curtain and the silken robe came into his mind again, and he caught himself getting curious about it. Hawkshawe was smoking nervously with quick, short puffs; he continually took the cheroot out of his mouth and rolled it between his fingers, apparently to make the rank leaf draw easier, and assisted his tobacco with short nips of old brandy--a thing which was not good to see. Jackson made no attempt to speak, and they smoked without a word being exchanged until the silence was apparently too much for the policeman, and he suddenly asked, "I suppose you like your new house?"

"Very much indeed. You were right in saying that Drage did himself well. It is very nearly perfect."

"Do you know what became of his impedimenta?"

Jackson understood the question, and flushed with anger. He controlled himself, however, and answered shortly: "No; those are matters about which I am not in the least concerned, nor do I think any one else should be."

"Don't you?" said Hawkshawe--his potations had evidently loosened his tongue--"don't you? Well, it will force itself on you some day. You shy at it now. We all did--I did--Thomson, Perkins, Drage did--and yet you see we are as we are. We have found that the cycle of Cathay is better than the fifty years of Europe."

"And you call yourselves rulers of men! Why should you go down to the level of the brute if you happen to live near him?"

"Don't know, my dear fellow, except that one gets to like, or like the brute after a time. Why, man," and Hawkshawe rose and began to pace the room, "what have we got to live for in this infernal country? You rot here--*rot*, I say--and your mind and your body both go to ooze and slime. Books! One can't read in this climate. The blue mould covers them up, as it has covered me, and as it will cover you and many a better man yet, and you will be as I am." Hawkshawe filled his glass and drank to the dregs. It seemed as if he were toasting the success of his hideous prophecy. "*And you will be as I am!*" The words hit Jackson like a life sentence. He looked at the man before him, at the promise in the high aquiline features and still, clear eyes, and then he saw the little crowsfeet round the eyelids, the puffy cheeks and trembling hands, and shuddered. No! It would never come to that with him. But a dread rose in his heart. What, after all, if he was wrong in his thoughts of his strength? Hawkshawe looked to him with a strange light in his eyes. "Come," he said, "let me show you what it is like."

It was evident that Hawkshawe was determined, with a half-drunken persistence, to continue a subject that was more than unpleasant to his guest, and there was only one course open to Jackson, and that was to get away as quietly as possible. "I don't think I will venture," he replied, "and, at the risk of offending you, I must ask you to excuse me for to-night. One always has a lot to do on first coming to a place, and I am no exception to the rule. No, not any more, thank you, to-night; but I will have another of those cheroots, if I may."

"I suppose if wilful will, then wilful must, but you are losing a new experience," said Hawkshawe, as he accompanied his guest to the door. He there found that Peregrine was going to walk home. "Let me order my trap for you, or a pony, if you prefer to ride?" he asked.

"No, thanks, Hawkshawe; there is a bright moon, and I know my way perfectly. I go to plan the suppression of Bah Hmoay. Goodnight!"

The hard gravel crunched under his firm footsteps as he walked down the drive. Hawkshawe stood looking after him. "He knows his way, he says. I wish I knew mine. Mr. Peregrine Jackson strikes me as rather a cold-blooded prig. I never could stand that sort of fellow--no," and, as if to keep his heart up, he sang:

"Pass the bowl, the merry, merry bowl,  
Let it brim with good red wine.  
I have pledged my soul  
To the merry, merry bowl,  
And the ruby light of wine."

He trolled out the verse in a rich baritone as he walked upstairs and entered his drawing-room. Taking up a book, he flung himself into the same long chair he had so hospitably pressed on Jackson earlier in the evening. He glanced over the leaves for a few moments; but the effort to read was beyond him, and putting down the volume he stared moodily into space. He had done this for years. Every evening, except when he was on active service--and he was keen enough then--he had drunk more than was good for him, and sat drearily through an hour or so before going to sleep. Ordinarily he did not think at all on such occasions; but somehow Jackson's attitude had impressed itself on him, and he was feeling nervous and depressed. There was that also which brought a hot flush of shame to his forehead, for he had lied to his guest when he had expressed his inability to bring Bah Hmoay, the dacoit priest, to justice. It would all come out some day, and then he, Hawkshawe, would be cast adrift on the river of shame. "D--n!" he hissed between his teeth, and buried his hot face between his hands.

The curtain before a door that led to an inner room was lifted, and a figure entered the room. It was that of a woman dressed in the national costume of Burma, which is so adapted to conceal as well as reveal the figure. Taller than ordinary, she had a face and form of imperial beauty, and as she stood there, looking at the bowed head before her, it was possible to understand Hawkshawe when he said that for himself he had chosen the cycle of Cathay. She crossed the room with light steps, and, laying her hand on his shoulder, asked in Burmese, "What is the matter? Are you ill?"

Jackson had touched a lost chord in Hawkshawe's memory, and the murmurs of the white past were sighing in his ears. He raised his head wearily, and drooped it again. "No, Ma Mie, not ill in body but sick at heart."

She looked at him, and, untutored savage as she was, she understood, and, stooping suddenly, kissed him with a fierce little pressure. "Hawkshawe," she said, "I have news for you--good news. Look up, my husband!"

## CHAPTER III.

### FATHER FRAGRANCE LIMES A TWIG.

*Ruys.*--I care for naught but gold. Gold holds  
the keys of this strong earth, and I Am  
earthy, of its mould. That unseen thing, The  
crown of glory, lies beyond the stars; I know  
it not.... Give me my gold.

*Maraffa, a Tragedy.*

A broad streak of yellow water is drowsing toward the sea, and lies hedged in to the right and to the left by the most luxuriant vegetation. Here teak and mango, palm and bamboo grow side by side, and are laced together by the octopus arms of the cobweb of creepers that spreads over the forest and tries in vain to bind down its splendid growth. There is hardly any sign of animal life, although the forests teem with it. Occasionally the great woodpecker or a flight of green paroquets flash like emeralds through the patches of sunshine between the leaves, or the melancholy cry of a mule pheasant echoes dismally through the woods. Yet although no beast and hardly a bird may be seen, this void is filled by the ever-present abundance of insects, for here is their paradise. It is true that those grotesque specimens of creation which, like the sons of Belial, wander forth at night, are reserving themselves in a million cracks and crannies for the pleasures of the evening; but the gnat and mosquito are on the alert, and the fly is here on his path of annoyance. Through the dense masses of foliage glide, like the snakes which infest them, the creeks that cut the delta of the Irawadi into numberless channels, and while thus dividing it serve as a means of communication from one part of the country to the other; for who, unless an Englishman, would scramble through the bramble and thorn of the jungle? Who would do so, when it is so easy to sit in a canoe and ship silently along the ooze of the creeks?

Some little way back from the main stream a canoe lies hidden in a small backwater. There are two occupants, and, being Burmans, they are of course both smoking, for smoke to the Burman is what beer is to the Saxon, a Derringer to the gentlemen of Arkansas, or opium to the Celestial. One of the two, in whose powerful hand is grasped a long-bladed paddle, is apparently a man of the people. He wears his hair long, and the golden brown of his limbs is covered with tattoo marks in strange devices. The other is a man of God; his yellow robe, his shaven crown, mark the priest of Budh. There is no asceticism, however, in the fat cheeks, or in the beadlike eyes which glint out from above the high cheek bones. The mouth is like a sword cut, long and cruel-looking,

and the sensual aspect of the face is only matched by its cunning and treacherous look.

"Payah," said the man with the paddle, using a Burmese title of the highest respect, "we have now waited for two hours; the steamer will not come to-day."

The priest went on smoking as if he had not heard the remark, and his companion relapsed into silence. After a few minutes, however, the clerical gentleman found voice.

"Moung Sen," said he, "your name means red diamond, but it ought to have meant a clod. Did I not tell you that the steamer will come to-day? and I tell you again she will come. The wire has brought me the news. Two hours! What are two hours to me? I gain two hundred years of eternal bliss by meditating during two hours on holy matters of which you laymen know nothing---- Hark! there is the whistle that was to be our signal."

And even as he spoke the shrill whistle of the Woon announced her coming, and the dull boom of the answering gun from Pazobin rang out in response.

Moung Sen bent his back to the paddle, and the boat shot out of the backwater to the very edge of the creek. There, concealed by the drooping foliage, they could see without being seen, and watch without any risk of discovery.

"Payah Bah Hmoay, the steamer approaches near," and, parting the screen of leaves with his hands, Moung Sen peered out.

"Yes, and with it Jackson, the new ruler of the land. I heard him say in Rangoon that he would stamp out all evildoers, so you, Moung Sen, had better be careful."

The boatman showed a row of teeth that would have driven a tiger mad with envy, and chuckled to himself. As the steamer came near they could hear the hissing of the paddles, and the wash rocked the canoe up and down to the no small danger of its upsetting.

Moung Sen was longing for a race. He would have dearly liked to have pulled against the steamer for the jetty. His slanting eyes twinkled with excitement, and he turned an imploring look on Bah Hmoay.

"Ho!" grunted Father Fragrance, "be still. What with racing and gambling and women, you will come to a bad end some day--hang to a string and dance upon nothing. Is this a time to think of racing, when that young fool on the steamer yonder is come here with his new-fangled notions? Back, I say! Our friends have heard the steamer's whistle and will have assembled. Here! give me a paddle too." He seized the spare paddle that was handed to him, and, loosening his robe to give his arm free play, rowed with a most unclerical skill. Guided by their powerful strokes the canoe sped back, and, taking a narrow cutting at the head of the backwater, they rowed steadily on for ten minutes and then stopped.

Moung Sen put his hands to his mouth and hooted twice like an owl. A cock crowed twice in reply. "They are there," he said, and, running the canoe on to the bank, the two men secured it firmly with a creeper, then, taking an almost invisible path, they trotted along it like sleuthhounds. After a short distance was travelled in this manner Moung Sen hooted again, and again the cock answered as it were out of the hollow of a huge silk-cotton tree a few yards away. Then the tree began to give up its fruit. One by one four men came out of the hollow, and half a dozen others dropped lightly from the branches where they had lain concealed. Each as he approached the priest bowed lowly before him. They took their places in a semicircle whose ends were to the right and left of Bah Hmoay. He gazed on them for a moment; they were a strong and likely looking set of men, fit for any devil's work. The chequered light fell on the bronze of their bodies, for they were naked to the waist, lit up the hideous blue and red of the tattoo marks with which they were covered, and ran in a line of fire on the long straight blades of the *dahs* they held in their hands. Then Bah Hmoay spoke, taking the men before him into his confidence, choosing his language simply, and appealing to all their weaknesses.

"And now, my companions," he concluded, "I have told you all that I learned during my visit to Rangoon, and how the plans are progressing. At Wuntho the chief is ready to take up arms; the Shan States are on fire--on fire, I say--and every creek and jungle holds gallant men only waiting for the signal to rise. Our whole difficulty is money--for when was a Burman rich? I propose, however, to meet this, and to find funds by a bold stroke. You all know the treasury at Yeo. It is thirty miles from here, and there are a hundred rupees there, all with the White Queen's head on them. Half shall be yours; the other half goes to the cause. Are you ready?"

There was a murmur of assent.

"Thank you. There is but one word more: in a week from to-day--the day of the guinea pig--you must be at Yeo. And now for the water of the oath." He loosened a small pocketbook from his waist cloth as he said these words, and, writing a few lines on a page, tore it out. One held an earthen vessel full of water before him, and another lit a sulphur match. The Boh put the match to the paper and held it over the water, into which as it burned away the cinders fell; but when the flame got too close to his fingers to be pleasant the chief dropped the little unburned tag of paper into the water, and it went out with a splutter. Then taking the vessel in his hands, he swore to be faithful to the men before him, and, drinking a little, handed it to Moung Sen. That

worthy pledged his soul on his good faith to the assembly, and, taking his sip, passed on the bowl. It went the round of every man there until it reached the last, who, when he too had sworn and drunken, dropped the vessel to the ground, where it broke into pieces.

This closed the chapter of the order, and the knights proceeded to disperse, each man with his long green cheroot burning in his mouth and his *dah* tucked away over his shoulder, a grotesque amalgam of devil and the child, the like of which is not equalled anywhere in the world.

Bah Hmoay and his Little John were once more alone, and the Boh or chief turned to his subaltern with a somewhat anxious look in his eyes, and asked:

"Do you think they will be true?"

"My name means red diamond, but it ought to mean a clod," laughed Moun Sen. "Yes, I think they will be true, and will all be hanged for their faith, while you will end as a great man. But there is something else to do to-day."

"Hawkshawe--true--I have not forgotten; however, we ought to be getting back," and making for the canoe they rowed out into the open stream and then drifted down toward the town. As the priest stepped from the canoe his face assumed the severe expression of sanctity suitable to his calling; an obsequious disciple met him and opened an umbrella over his head, and he walked toward the pagoda or temple meeting with respectful greetings from all. He entered the gates of the pagoda, on either side of which grinned two colossal griffins, and, making his way through a courtyard thronged with worshippers, passed into the great hall, where a huge image of Gautama looked down upon him with calm, inquiring eyes. A tall, graceful woman stood at the foot of the idol, and as the priest approached she looked at him with something of impatience in her glance, and said, "I have been waiting here for nearly an hour."

"My daughter, it is patience and resignation which, united with thought, leads us to holy Nirvana."

"Pish! I haven't come here to bandy words about Nirvana. Was it for this you sent Loo-ga-lay for me?"

Bah Hmoay dropped his voice to a whisper as he said, "You are too hasty; women are always so. Follow me," and, passing behind the idol, he touched a door which seemed to open of its own accord, disclosing a small passage dimly lighted by a single lamp. At the end of the passage was a small archway, so low that it was necessary for both to stoop as they entered it, and beyond was a large hall, along whose sides a row of Gautamas or images of the Budh was arranged with military precision. The images were alternately of white and black marble, and at the extreme end lay a huge recumbent casting of the Messiah of the East. Small lozenge-shaped cuttings in the wall above let in bars of light, which fell on the dim statues and made the polished brass of the recumbent image glow as if it were red-hot. The girl leaned lightly against the arm of the huge figure, and something flashed in her hand as she did so. Bah Hmoay observed it as he pointed to the dagger, and said with a smile, "You are very careful, Ma Mie; too careful for one so beautiful."

There was enough in the speaker's voice to make his listener turn on him like a panther, and Father Fragrance stepped back with a hasty apology. Then he spoke in a low tone for some time, the woman all the while keeping her guarded attitude. "There," he said at last, "this is a good offer. Will it do?"

"I am selling my husband's honour," she replied. "No, it is worth a larger price."

The priest uttered an exclamation of impatience, and moving off a few feet stooped near the foot of an idol, and picking up something from a recess there returned bearing it in his hands. He held it to the light as he approached, and Ma Mie saw that it was a bracelet of rubies, which flashed and glowed with a hundred colours. She almost gasped as she looked at it.

"Oh, how lovely!"

"Let me put it on your arm." Bah Hmoay, suiting his action to his words, stepped back with an admiring look. "There is nothing like this in all Pazobin," he said. "I will add it to my offer."

The woman hesitated and was lost. "It is a bargain," she said, and the face of Father Fragrance glowed with joy. "The new Englishman comes to dine with him to-night," she added. "When he is gone, I will settle all. And now I must go; I have been away too long."

"You can go this way," said the priest as he turned the key in a carved door toward the right, and opening it showed Ma Mie a back path that led out of the pagoda gardens. "And remember, the police guard must be very weak at Yeo next Friday."

She nodded and passed out, and Bah Hmoay watched her down the pathway and saw her raise her arm and look at the bracelet upon it. "Selling her husband's honour!" he laughed to himself. "When had Hawkshawe any to sell? Those ideas of hers are, however, very expensive, and I had to take away my peace offering from this old gentleman here." He patted the face of the idol from under whose foot he had removed the jewels. "However, he won't miss it, and Friday evening will

see me repaid and ready to buy another rag of Mr. Hawkshawe's honour."

## CHAPTER IV.

### RUYS SMALLEY.

He rode toward the Dragon Gate, And blew  
a ringing call, A virgin knight, in armour  
bright, 'Twere sad to see him fall. Ah, saints  
of heaven, steel his heart, And nerve his arm  
withal!

*Sir Amory.*

Jackson walked out into the moonlight with a feeling of relief at having escaped from Hawkshawe. His disgust at his host's code of morality was only equalled by his pity for him. Perhaps, after all, the man did not mean what he said; and it was possible that an appeal to Philip sober would result in the expression of sentiments widely different from those which bubbled forth from Philip charged with a quart of Ayala, sundry short brandies, and a multitude of "baby pegs," as three fingers of mountain dew tempered with a split soda are called in the country of the creeks. Peregrine hesitated a moment whether he should go straight home or walk on a little. A great mass of official papers had come to the house as he left it that evening, and his work was cut out for him; but after what had happened he was in no mood to begin at once. He pulled out his watch, and seeing by the bright moon that it was barely half-past ten, decided to adopt the latter course. He walked slowly toward the river face, and then across the soft sand to the deserted jetty, where he paced up and down its full length. In front of the dark outline of the forest a few twinkling lights marked the sleeping town, for Pazobin went to roost early. The fishing craft were all huddled together like sheep in a pen, and the outgoing tide lapped angrily at the wooden piles below. The wind bore to him the soft tinkle of the bells that swung from the golden umbrella on the spire of the pagoda. Their dreamy monotone fitted exactly with the scene, and seemed to call all good Buddhists to that Nirvana which to them is the end of all things. Everything was calm except the mind of the man who paced the teak planking of the jetty. Jackson was in that temper which would have been horrible doubt to an older man, but which to him in his youthful confidence in his own power was absolute certainty. He had shaken off the momentary terror of Hawkshawe's prophecy, "And you will be as I am!" That would never be; his young heart swelled with pride as he drew himself up in the consciousness of his strength. He did not seek aid in prayer. He had never sought it, except in dim infancy. Since his mother's death, in his childhood, he had known no care but that of his father, and the older man had brought up his son in his own creed, which was, to summarize it, man. And Peregrine drunk it all in eagerly and was an apt pupil. He held himself apart from all beliefs--Calvary, Mecca, the groves of Gya, were all one to him in that they all aimed at the good of mankind, in that they had all accomplished untold good. He was aware of the rewards offered to the faithful--the harp and crown of the Christian, the sensual paradise of the Moslem, the merging into the deity of the Buddhist--and none of these tempted. He had looked with scorn on the professor of a faith who calculated on the advantages that would accrue to him from his fidelity; he despised the human being who sold good works for a price and speculated in futurity like a stock broker making a time bargain. He was young and very cocksure. The solitary up-and-down tramp, combined with the cheroot and his naturally calm temper, began to quiet Peregrine's excitement, and he finally put aside all thoughts of Hawkshawe and stopped for a moment near the huge crane which stretched out its long arm over the river as if begging for something. The Havana had burned low by this time, and he flung it from him, watching the little arc of fire die away with an angry hiss into the water below. Then he turned to go. He recrossed the sand, once more passed Hawkshawe's house, from an upper window of which the light was burning brightly, and, turning to the right, took, as he imagined, the road home. He had said that he thought he knew his way perfectly, but now it seemed as if the bearings he had taken were all wrong. One tree was like another, one bend of the road was like every other he had passed. The few houses were all built on the same plan, and he could scarcely discern them in the mass of foliage with which they were surrounded. It flashed upon him that he had lost his way, when he was so sure of it. What if he had miscalculated his strength as he had done the road? He stopped for a moment near a wooden gate to try and see if he could find a landmark, and as he did so a sudden blaze of light streamed out of one of the windows of a long building that lay within the gateway. A moment after the droning tones of an American organ stole into the night, and above them rang out a woman's voice clear and distinct:

My God, I love thee; not because  
I hope for heaven thereby,  
Nor yet because who love thee not  
Are lost eternally.

He listened in a manner spellbound not only by the voice, which was of the rarest order, but also by the words, which poured forth from the heart, the genuine unselfishness of the Christian's belief. That pure flood of melody floating into the night seemed to give all his convictions the lie as it passed out on its way beyond the stars to God's throne. Cheap and jingling as the verses were, the simple words sung by such a voice carried with them a revelation he had never imagined. He wondered to himself what manner of woman this was whose voice affected him so powerfully. He determined to see this beautiful saint--for of course she was beautiful--and stepping cautiously down the road approached the open window through which the song poured. Standing back amid the yellow and purple leaves of a croton, he peered in, and saw a long narrow hall filled with rows of empty benches. At the head of the room, and close to the window, was a low dais, and upon this the organ was placed. The singer was seated with her back turned toward him; but the light from a shaded lamp lit up the sunny gold of her hair and fell on the outlines of an exquisite figure. She was alone, singing to the night. Overcome with curiosity, Peregrine stole softly to the window and raised himself slightly with his hands to look in. As he did so the sudden snapping bark of a dog, hitherto lying concealed near its mistress's dress, rang out, and the singer turned round so sharply that it was impossible for Peregrine to withdraw unobserved; but as she turned he saw that the perfect beauty of her face more than realized the picture he had drawn in his imagination.

"Who are you? What do you want?" she gasped, with an alarmed light in her eyes.

"I am very sorry," explained Peregrine humbly. "I have lost my way, and seeing a light and hearing music thought I--I----" and he stammered and broke down for a moment; but picking himself up, went on, "I have only arrived here to-day. My name is Jackson, and the house I want to find is the one that was occupied by Mr. Drage; perhaps you know it, and if you can give me a rough idea how to find it I shall be very grateful, and I hope you will accept my sincere apologies for having frightened you."

As he spoke, the look of fear on his listener's face passed away. "Be quiet, Flirt!" she said to the little dog, who kept alternately growling and yapping to herself, and then, turning to Jackson: "Yes, you did startle me at first. So you are Mr. Jackson. My husband--that is, Dr. Smalley--said he met you to-day," and she smiled as if she was thinking of something that amused her. "This," she continued with a little wave of the hand, "is the school, and we live next door. If you will kindly come in by that door to your left you can help me to shut the musical box, and then I will take you right away to my husband, and he will see you through the wilderness to your home." The slight American accent in her voice lent her words a piquant charm, and it was with a true American's ready resourcefulness that she carried on the conversation with Jackson and attempted to take stock of him at the same time as he stood outside, half in shadow and half in light.

"It is very kind of you," said Peregrine gratefully, and he made toward the door, delighted with the lucky accident that had brought him this adventure. Nevertheless, the words "my husband" did not please him. So this beautiful creature was Smalley's wife! "I wonder," he muttered to himself, "if marriages are really made in heaven, why they don't assort people better." There was, however, no more time for regretful reflection, for the door was opened by his involuntary hostess, and they walked up to the dais together. As Jackson closed the organ Mrs. Smalley looked at him from under her long lashes, and a faint colour stole into her cheeks. She stood by placidly, however, holding a large hymn book in her hand and saying nothing. When he had finished, she spoke: "Now you can carry the light and come along--tchick, Flirtie!"

And they went into the garden, Peregrine full of pleasure at being ordered about in this unceremonious manner, and his companion walking demurely beside him.

A few steps brought them to the parsonage; the Reverend Habakkuk was summoned from the interior and matters explained to him. He hospitably pressed Jackson to stay and have some refreshment, but Peregrine noticed an impatient look in his hostess's face and declined. Smalley determined to lead Peregrine back himself, notwithstanding his protestations that all he wanted was a few simple directions, and, putting on a wide felt hat, turned to his wife, "I shall be back soon, Ruys; do not wait for me."

"Good-night, Mrs. Smalley." For the life of him Peregrine could not help throwing a shade of regret into the last words, and an odd light came into his listener's eyes.

"Good-night, Mr. Jackson. I am--we both are--*so* glad you *lost* your way here. I trust you will in future be able to find it often." She made a demure little courtesy as she said this in an even voice, and Jackson and his host passed out of the house.

She listened till the sound of their footsteps died away, and then turning round to her dog picked it up and sat in a chair with the little animal in her lap. "Flirt," she said, "I guess he's perfectly luv-ly. There, you can go down now. I want to think." And she sat leaning back in her easy-chair with a pleased expression on her face until Habakkuk returned, and said, as he put down his hat:

"A most excellent young man that, Ruys; I am afraid I misjudged him sadly to-day," and the missionary, pulling a chair near his wife, rubbed the palms of his hands together softly. "Remarkably good-looking, too, don't you think?"

She turned and looked him full in the face. "I don't think I've given Mr. Jackson's looks a thought."

"Of course not, of course not," said Habakkuk timidly, and began to repeat the nervous rubbing of his hands together.

"Why of course not?"

The calm tone in which this question was asked entirely upset Smalley; he stopped his hand exercise, and, crossing one leg over his knee, began to nurse it and sway slightly backward and forward. He did not answer his wife's question, and she watched him for a moment, and in her heart began to wonder how it was she had ever consented to marry this lanky, shuffling creature before her. She knew his moral character was irreproachable; if only his personal appearance were more prepossessing. She had truly and honestly tried to do her duty as his wife, but the chains of her bondage were beginning to gall. Mentally she was far Smalley's inferior. She could not live in the clear ether, in the pure air of his thoughts, and she was always unconsciously dragging him down while making many an honest effort to rise to his level. She had lived so quietly for so long a time that the sudden and unconventional manner of her meeting with Jackson had affected her powerfully. There was no denying that he was good-looking, and she had drifted into a flirtation with him at sight as naturally as a duck takes to the water. Oh, if life were only different for her! she thought as she watched Smalley swinging himself in his chair. The slow motion exasperated her; her nerves were at a tension, and she said sharply:

"Habakkuk, I wish you wouldn't fidget so! Can't you sit still anyhow, like any other mortal? Do read, or do something. I want to think, and my head is aching."

"Of course, of course," assented the missionary, and a furious light gleamed in his wife's eyes, which, fortunately for him, Habakkuk did not observe. He was a man slow of thought, and it was only after a little time that he began to realize that his wife had said she was in pain. He looked at her softly from his calm blue eyes, and then, putting forth his hand, laid it gently on hers. Ruys received the caress passively. Then Habakkuk was emboldened, and he tried to draw her toward him. She evaded him, however, by a deft turn of the shoulder, and, rising, walked to a table in the room, and picking up a heavy Bible placed it before her husband, as she said primly:

"It is getting very late. I think you had better read a chapter before going to bed."

## CHAPTER V.

### "FURIIS AGITATUS AMOR."

Belike for her, a royal crown  
I'd wager to a penny piece.

*Old Play.*

As Jackson and his guide left the gates of the parsonage Peregrine struggled with a temptation to look back over his shoulder. Finally he gave in with a sense of shame at his weakness, and then was unreasonably irritated to find that no shadowy figure behind the tinkling bead screen before the open window watched their passage down the moonlit road. The result was that for the first few hundred yards of their walk there was very little talk, for Peregrine's silence discouraged all the missionary's attempts at conversation. Suddenly the whole countryside seemed to be filled with the flashing light of gems. A blaze of jewelled glory came and vanished in a moment, and then appeared again in all its fairy beauty to slip away as swiftly as before.

"What on earth is that?" asked Peregrine, moved out of his reserve at the sight.

"Bugs," replied Habakkuk, "fire-bugs. They're pretty lively to-night, anyhow. Each one with the little lantern God has given him. They don't make a real show, however, because of the moon."

"Of course," said Peregrine, "I might have known they were fireflies, but it all came so suddenly, and I had no idea the sight was so perfectly beautiful," and he pointed to the millions of little

lights twinkling through the night.

"I guess so, Mr. Jackson; just as if all the little stars had come down to earth and hung themselves out on the trees to dry." The constraint with which the walk began now vanished, and Smalley took the opportunity to read Jackson a lecture on the subject of health, summing up with these words, "I am speaking as a medical man now, Mr. Jackson; you must remember to take care of No. 1--that is, of yourself. This is a most treacherous climate, and I have known many men stronger even than you look fall before it like withered leaves. Take a quinine pill daily, and always wear flannel next to your skin. I don't do it myself, but then I'm a seasoned vessel. Ah! here we are at your gate."

"Do come in, Dr. Smalley?" and Jackson held the wicket invitingly open.

"No, no, thanks," replied Habakkuk. "Pooh, man! Don't thank me for showing you the way a few yards. Good-night! I must get back, for my wife is sure to be waiting for me."

The last words jarred on Jackson, and he felt all his old feelings returning as he shook hands with his guide, who turned and shuffled off into the moonlight. When Jackson had got about a third of the way down to his own door, however, he heard his name shouted out by Habakkuk.

"What is it?" he called out as he hastened back.

"Only this--don't forget about the flannel and the quinine. Good-night!"

"Confound him!" and the angry young man turned on his heel and entered the house. It was very fairly late now, and Jackson had worked himself again into a thoroughly excited frame of mind. Ah-Geelong devoted himself to making his master comfortable for the night, and as the slippered Galahad sat in an easy-chair trying to collect himself and gather together the fragments of resolve to attack the pile of papers he saw on the table in his study, he heard the angry fizz of a soda-water bottle and the hissing of its contents as it was poured into a long tumbler and placed beside him.

"What *are* you doing, Ah-Geelong?"

"Allee masters dlinkee peg--peg him keep off fever. Dlinkee peg and go sleep," and Ah-Geelong almost lit up the room with the shining row of teeth he displayed. It was impossible to be angry, but Jackson told the man to go, and he went, wondering, perhaps, wherein he had done wrong.

Peregrine rose from his seat and went to his study. But over the file before him flitted the outlines of the face he had seen. "Ruys," he murmured to himself, repeating the name by which he had heard her called, and it almost seemed to him that she replied, and that he heard the melody of her voice again. The far-off shadows of the room gathered to themselves form and substance, and as he leaned back idly there rose before him the vision of the dimly lighted school hall and that golden head bending slightly over the music. He had never been in love, and he gave himself up for the moment to the fascination of dreaming over the face he had seen. This was what inspired the knights of old. He stretched out his strong right arm and almost felt that he held a lance in rest. What would he not give to know that this peerless woman was his own? How he would work and labour! But a few short hours ago he was bowing at the shrine of a lofty ideal that was to carry him through life, at that invisible glory which strengthened his shrinking heart and nerved him to the highest for duty's sake. And all this was gone. The old god was dethroned in a moment, and the soft notes of a woman's voice, the touch of her hand, a glance from her eyes, and the past was rolled up like a scroll.

"My God," he said, "can this be love?" It never struck him that he had unconsciously appealed to that Godhead in whom he thought he had no belief. He was not able to think of that then--of how in a moment of trial the doubting soul turns instinctively to cling for support to that ethereal essence we call the Creator, and endows it with a living faculty to hear and to answer. Surely this spontaneous appealing to a higher power is something more than the mere force of habit. It springs from the heart pure as the snows of Everest, genuine and true. And this is the instinct which is not taken into account in the mathematical reasoning of the atheist; the touch of fire that would enlighten him out of his darkness is wanting. He will allow the instinct which tells an animal of his danger, which signals to him a friend; but to man, the highest of all animals, will he deny the instinct of the soul which shouts aloud to him the existence of God.

And the answer to Peregrine's question came unspoken, but he felt it ringing within him. Yes, and a hot flush of shame went over him as he thought of another man's wife. "It will not be! it shall not be!" he said, and he fought with himself as a strong man can fight. He fought with the devil that tempted until he saw the light of the morning star pale in the east and a pink flush steal into the sky; and then, being utterly wearied, he lay down and slept a dreamful sleep. It seemed to him that he was standing beside his own body and watching a dark stream trickle slowly, slowly from his heart. Around him were misty figures whom he could not recognise, and he lay there very still and silent. Suddenly there was a flash of golden hair, and a woman robed in white stooped and kissed him on the forehead, and as she rose he knew the glorious beauty of her face, and then he awoke.



## CHAPTER VI.

### ANTHONY POZENDINE SPEAKS UP.

Hark unto me! Myself will weave the plot  
Close as the spider's web, with threads as fine.

*Old Play.*

Anthony Pozendine, the half-caste head clerk of the district office of Pazobin, had evidently something on his mind. He sat at his desk amid a heap of files, over which his head just appeared, and every now and again his squeaky voice rose in petulant complaint or censure of one of his subordinates.

"Here, Mr. Pillay, can't you add, eh? You make out four hundred cases tried last quarter, and seven hundred convictions! Sshoo!" And he flung a file across the room at the unfortunate Mr. Pillay, who stooped and, picking it up humbly, went on with his work.

Through the half-open door of the office the buzz of voices from the court room came in, and occasionally a peon would enter with a request for Pozendine to see either Hawkshawe or Jackson. When it was to see Jackson, Anthony obeyed with a resigned air and a certain amount of pleasure, because he knew he was being sent for to remove some difficulty of routine which the new chief felt, and this would raise him in the eyes of his subordinate clerks, and make them think the power of Pozendine was great in the land. When it was to see Hawkshawe, Anthony's thin legs trembled under him, and he went with an outside assumption of dignity but a great fear in his heart, and when he returned there was generally an explosion of some kind. Hawkshawe had already sent for him four times to-day, and Anthony's temper was in shreds. He had just taken a fair sheet of foolscap, folded it lengthwise, and written in a clerkly hand across the half margin near the top "Memo. for orders," when again the messenger entered with a request from Hawkshawe, that was practically an order, to see him at once. "Damn!" said Anthony so loudly that the ten busy heads in the room bobbed up from among the heaps of papers in which they were buried, and ten scared faces looked at Anthony in alarm. Ten pairs of eyes were fixed upon him with anxious inquiry in their gaze, and the magnetic effect of this made the head clerk cough nervously and very nearly upset the inkstand.

"Are you coming?" said the messenger in an insolent tone, as he stood in an easy attitude before Anthony and inserted a piece of betel between his teeth.

Anthony glared at him. "I'm coming," he said. "Go 'way," and then he turned on his assistants.

"Wot are you all looking at, eh? Wasting time this way and that way. Think gov'ment pays you to sit in your chairs and look about! Here you, Mr. Rozario, you joined office a last-grade clerk two years ago, you're a last-grade clerk now, you'll leave it a last grade, I think. G'long and work--plentee of work--if not, I will reduce establishment."

Ten heads sank back into their papers, and the little man, seizing a file in his hand, walked slowly out with becoming dignity, his heart, however, full of combined fear and anger.

He was absent for fully half an hour, and the clerks once or twice distinctly heard the strident tones of Hawkshawe's voice echoing along the long passage, through the court where Jackson sat, and into the room where they worked.

"Big row on," remarked Mr. Rozario to no one in particular. "Pozendine ketching it warm, warm."

Finally the head clerk reappeared, but he came back with hasty steps and a face in which green predominated over its habitually yellow tinge. There were two blue lines to mark his lips, and his hands shivered over his papers as he stood at his desk in an irresolute sort of way. Finally he could contain himself no longer, and turned to his chief assistant.

"Mr. Iyer," said he, "am I head clerk of the district office or head clerk of the police office, eh? Answer me, eh?"

The stout Madrassee clerk looked at a fellow, who looked at another, and then, as if by one impulse, the whole room arose and crowded around Pozendine.

"Am I," repeated Anthony, "head clerk of the district office or of the police office?"

"You're chief clerk," hazarded Mr. Rozario.

"Yes," assented Anthony, "I am the chief clerk. I have served gov'ment twentee-four years, and now Mr. Hawkshawe he sends for me and tells me before a menial servant that I know nothing. Why, I taught four deputy commissioners their work! Who writes revenue report? Who writes notes on crops? Who makes tabular statements? Who drafts to commissioner and revises administration report? Who attends to district roads? Who sees to cess collections, budget work, record and despatch, stamps and stationery, office routine and discipline, eh? Who? Who? Who? And now Mr. Hawkshawe he sends for me to look over Mr. Drage's report on police. 'Pozendine,' he says, 'you're a damfool'--call me, Anthony Pozendine, head clerk of the district, *damfool!* 'Sir,' I said, 'that's Mr. Drage's order,' and he say, 'You ought to have been able to tell Mr. Drage what to write.' 'See,' he say, 'now that Mr. Drage has gone on leave nothing can be done about this, and it will give beastly trouble--and now be off with you, infernal idiot!' *Damfool and infernal idiot!* I will report to commissioner at once by wire through assistant commissioner and resign. Now you go on with your work." He flung himself down into his seat and began to scribble a long complaint to Jackson about the treatment he had received from Hawkshawe. There was much irrelevant matter in it, and his pen fairly hissed along the paper. While he was thus engaged the Madrassee clerk Iyer rose softly and, stealing toward Pozendine, whispered in his ear. It was like one devil tempting another, and Anthony's face was perfectly satanic in its expression of glee as he listened.

"Plenty witness--Ma Mie's sister my wife," murmured Iyer, and his yellow eyes twinkled like two evil stars. Pozendine nodded his head. "Ah, ha! Mr. Hawkshawe, you call me damfool--I will brand you dam' blaggard!" he hissed out aloud as his busy fingers travelled over the paper and Iyer went back to his seat.

The Madrassee watched his superior keenly from his chair, and a wicked smile stole over his features as he half expressed his thoughts. "Pozendine will get sack, and I will become chief clerk." He then placidly put up a memo. for orders on the subject of the wasteful extravagance in blue pencil indulged in by the district engineer.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I can not stand that beast of a head clerk, Jackson," and Hawkshawe, flinging himself into a chair, pulled out a long brown-leather cheroot case and extracted a gigantic cheroot therefrom.

Peregrine looked up as he said slowly: "Why not? He seems a decent sort of fellow--all nerves, though, I expect, but most men of his class are. But what has he been doing to upset you?"

"Oh, nothing in particular, only I don't like him; can't help it, perhaps, but I hate him like poison. Why don't you get rid of the brute? He's been too long here. Is a sort of power in the place, and owns property. That's the sort of man who gets his palm greased, you know."

"It's a very serious matter to punish a man for a fault you think he's going to commit. Still, as you say, he has too much power; but that can be remedied without resorting to anything like the measures you suggest."

Hawkshawe shrugged his broad shoulders. "As you please; but if the crash comes, don't say I didn't warn you. However, I didn't come to talk to you about this, but to ask you if you think it wise to have so much money at Yeo. There's close on a hundred thousand there, and the engineer on the famine works a native, too."

"What can be done? There is a strong guard, I believe?"

"Yes, twenty men, and old Serferez Ali, my inspector, commands them. He's the best man in the service. Still, I think you had better bring in the money."

"You think there is any danger?"

"Absolutely none that I know of at present; but old Bah Hmoay has been so quiet of late that I'm afraid mischief is brewing, and one never knows what may happen."

"We have, then, two alternatives before us--either to bring in the money or the greater part of it here, and send it out as it is wanted, exposing it to the danger of being stuck up, to use a slang phrase, on its passage, or to increase the police guard. Have we the men?"

"Yes," he said, "I can spare thirty men on Saturday, and will send them up then. With fifty men Serferez Ali could hold out against ten thousand dacoits."

"Very well, so be it."

"That's settled, then. Hola! what have we here, a *billet-doux?*" and Hawkshawe held between his finger and thumb the gray envelope he had taken from the messenger who brought it into the room and handed it to Peregrine. "Is the fair Ruys asking you to dinner?"

For the life of him Jackson could not help the hot blood rushing to his face, and there was something inexpressibly galling in Hawkshawe's tone. "Excuse me," and he tore open the

envelope. It was an invitation to dine, and as he put it down Hawkshawe made a further remark that stung him to the quick. He turned round upon his visitor and said shortly, "Supposing we drop the subject or drop each other."

Hawkshawe stared at him, and then, pulling his cheroot slowly from his mouth, apologized awkwardly. "Didn't mean to offend you, old chap--beg pardon and all that--will come in and see if you can go out for a ride later on."

He clanked out of the room and left Jackson to himself. Peregrine picked up the note and read it again, and there was again a struggle within him. Should he face or flee the temptation? He felt that the latter alternative was hardly possible, and then it would be cowardly. No, he was going to deliberately try his strength against himself; the battle should be fought out to the end. He would face the trouble and he would conquer. He felt that the love that had sprung into being, like Pallas, full armed, could only be conquered by grappling it by the throat. He could not run from himself, and he would not if he could. So he wrote a few lines accepting the invitation, and then, deliberately tearing Ruys's letter up into the smallest fragments, turned to his files and plodded on steadily. He must have worked in this way for at least a couple of hours when an unaccountable feeling told him there was some one in the room. He looked up, but saw no one, and was just about to turn to his work again when something was thrust over his shoulder, and, turning round, he saw Anthony Pozendine.

"What is it, Mr. Pozendine?"

Anthony could hardly speak. He stammered out something about Mr. Hawkshawe--abuse--damfool--and, placing his complaint on the table before his chief, stood bolt upright at attention, for he was a volunteer.

Jackson patiently read every line of the four pages of foolscap, and then turned gravely on Anthony.

"Mr. Pozendine, you are on very dangerous ground. If your story about the abuse is true, you have perhaps a little cause of complaint; but as for the rest, it is absurd. Do you know what you are saying about Mr. Hawkshawe?"

"Yes, sir. It is true. I will go into court and swear; so also will Mr. Iyer."

Peregrine touched a bell. "Send Mr. Iyer here," he said to the messenger.

A minute after Mr. Iyer came. He stepped into the room briskly, seemed a trifle surprised to see Anthony, but said nothing. "Mr. Iyer," said Jackson, "Mr. Pozendine here says you are prepared to bear him out in certain statements he makes. Perhaps, Mr. Pozendine, you had better explain."

"Yes, sir," said Anthony, while the Madrassee's face assumed an expression of the utmost concern.

"You know what I have written here?" said Anthony.

"No," replied Iyer, holding up a deprecating hand, "I know nothing."

"Didn't Mr. Hawkshawe call me a damfool?"

"Every one say so, but I didn't hear. I know nothing."

"The man is frightened, sir," said Anthony to Jackson.

"There is no necessity to be frightened, Mr. Iyer; you can speak freely."

"Frightened!" said Mr. Iyer. "Why should I be frightened? I am an honest man, of a large family, and will speak the truth."

Anthony's face brightened up as he asked, "Didn't Mr. Hawkshawe take money?"

"Iyoo!" exclaimed the Madrassee, flinging up his arms; "I never heard these things. Sir, this man Pozendine is trying to get me into trouble. He is my enemy since long time. He one big liar," and the Madrassee shook a finger at Pozendine. "Mr. Hawkshawe take bribe! No, not Mr. Hawkshawe, but Mr. Pozendine. He take bribe from Bah Hmoay and Moung Sen over Dorian fruit--witness--all bazaar knows it. I will bring four--five--one hundred witness. Sir, this one big scoundrel!"

It was too much for Pozendine; his nerves had given way, and with a scream he flung himself at Jackson's feet and grovelled there.

"Pity!" he yelled; "I have twenty-four years' service--pardon!"

\* \* \* \* \*

An hour later, when Hawkshawe came according to his word to see if Jackson would go for a ride, he found Peregrine apparently idling before his table.

"Ha! I see you've found nothing to do; come along."

"I can't," said Peregrine; "I want to think out something."

"Oh, don't let that little affair of Pozendine's bother you. It didn't happen in your time, you know. You'll get all the credit of finding out about the bribery and corruption."

"Do you know what has happened?"

"Ain't I your Fouché? Are you coming?"

"No, thanks. I must think this out."

Hawkshawe turned and went, whistling gaily. Mounting his horse, he galloped down a long embankment along the river face, and then, reining in, stood apparently watching Pazobin robed in the glories of a wondrous sunset. "By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I very nearly made an ass of myself over that police guard. Anyhow, if this comes off, no more of it; but Ma Mie is getting dangerous. My nerve is not what it used to be, but--I must get rid of her at all risks. Damn that straight-laced fool Jackson! He's always bringing back recollections to me, and I, Alban Hawkshawe, can not afford to remember--to think that my honour was once as clean as the palm of my hand, and now--"

He put spurs to his waler, and galloped into the gray mist that surrounded the forest.

\* \* \* \* \*

A week after, the big native rice boat that slowly made its way up the river to Rangoon bore with it two passengers. One, seated among a heap of brass pots and pans, surrounded by eatables, principally fruit, could be recognised as Mr. Iyer; the other, who crouched on a coil of rope, was Anthony Pozendine. Neither spoke to the other, but in their eyes was a sullen hatred which showed what their thoughts were, and if either had the courage there would have been murder on the big boat that worked its sluggish way upstream. One morning, however, the Madrassee spoke to his companion.

"We are both ruined, Pozendine," he said. "What will you do?" Anthony made no answer, and Iyer went on. "There is only one chance--let us join together in Rangoon and tell all about Hawkshawe. We know true things, and government will give us back our posts. I swear by Krishna that I will be true; give me your hand."

Pozendine stretched out his sticky fingers, and the hands of the two men met. Then they sat together and talked all day as if there never had been any enmity between them, planning the coup which was to get them back their post, with a mental reservation that when this was accomplished there was yet another account to settle.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE RUBY BRACELET.

Once was my shield as white as driven snow,  
Once was mine honour clean, and I, a man,  
Could gaze upon my fellows, meet their eyes  
With eyes as honest--but all that is past.

*Old Play.*

"See," said Ma Mie, holding her arm to the light and displaying the splendour of the bracelet, "is it not beautiful, Hawkshawe?" The pale amber of her silken robe fell partially on the jewels as she said this, and flinging it back with a graceful gesture Ma Mie again raised the soft outline of her arm, and with lips half parted gazed upon the red glow of the rubies with a childish delight. They were standing near a window of Hawkshawe's house, at the very window from which the light streamed out, a long banner of brightness, when Jackson went back from his solitary ramble on the jetty. The glare that dazzled outside fell softly through the bamboo *jalousie*, and warmed the scarlet of the rubies on Ma Mie's arm to a thousand different tints.

A curious steely blaze came into Hawkshawe's eyes, and the wrinkles around them gathered into deeper folds as he bent over the gems. For the time the look of avarice in his features gave them

a wondrously Jewish cast. His aquiline nose seemed to fall over his lips, and the lips themselves tightened into a long, hard outline. He gently unclasped the bracelet and held it in his hand, then he tossed it lightly in the air, and as it fell back like a star he caught it deftly. "The stones are of the purest water, Ma Mie, but I alone have the right to clasp them on you. Let me do so now." He fastened the jewel once more on her. "Now," he said, "they look perfect--now that I have put them on you myself, and you can feel that they have come from me. Is it not so?" He drew her toward himself, while all the time his eyes remained fixed on the gems with a terrible greed in their expression. She remained as he had placed her, her head leaning against his shoulder and her eyes half closed. "Shall I break it to her?" muttered Hawkshawe. "It has to be done very soon, and might be done now." They remained for a moment silent. "Ma Mie," said Hawkshawe, "would you be very sorry if I were to go away for a short time?"

She looked up at him with a startled air and drew back. "You go away; you are not ill, are you? Yes, I think you are ill. You were ill that night when that man Jackson came to dine here and cast his spell on you. You have never been well since. At night I have heard you call out strange things. Yes, if you like, we will go away--you and I, to Ava; it is cool and pleasant there, and you will get well. You want rest, and you are tired. Is it not so? You said so that night." The woman seemed to know of the evil that hung over her, and was making a desperate fight. All the pleasure that had brightened her face left it, and left it in a moment haggard and wan. She had expected this crisis a hundred times, and a hundred times nothing had come. Still, the feeling that she was on the brink of a precipice never left her. She knew that some day would come to her, as it came to all women of her class, that parting which left the man free as air and the woman in reality still in an abyss. This spectre was always in shadow before her, unseen but felt, and now--she knew that it was coming--she gave a quick gasp after her speech and waited.

"No, Ma Mie," said Hawkshawe, and he threw a very tender inflection in his voice. "No, we can not go together this time. I want to go home to my own country. I have not seen it for many years. I will come back again, and in the meantime you must wait for me at your home. You have money. This"--he touched the bracelet on the shuddering arm--"and other things. Besides, I will see that you have more. I intend to go in about a month, and it would be well if you were to start for Ava in, say, a fortnight. Bah Hmoay will take you--or shall I send for some of your people? There, don't cry!" He tried to draw her again toward him, but she broke from his arms with an angry sob.

"You! you! you! To do this!" she gasped. "You, the father of my dead child! You, who vowed and swore--you, who came with humble entreaty to me! Oh, I was a fool, a fool! All women are fools, and all men liars! Do you think my heart is a stone? Have I not been faithful? Ah, Hawkshawe, do not send me away! See, I will follow you as a slave to the uttermost parts of the earth. Don't go; I know you are not coming back--don't," and she sank on her knees with a cry that came from the soul. It would have melted any heart but Alban Hawkshawe's.

"Confound it!" he said, pulling savagely at his mustache, "I must end this somehow.--Look here, Ma Mie, look at the matter sensibly; don't be a fool."

"Fool!" and she sprang up--"fool! Yes, I am a fool to have trusted you--trust a liar to lie!" and she laughed bitterly. "See, I have given you my all, I have given my soul for you, worthless as you are, and you are mine. You say you are going for a short time and that you will come back to me. You lie, and you know it! You never mean to come back. To think that you should perjure yourself at such a moment! You are mine, I say; I have paid too great a price for you. Where you go, I am; where you live, there shall I be. We shall never part--never--until that which we call death comes between us!"

"Be sensible! I will give you plenty."

"Ah, heart of stone! It is nothing but gold with you. Yes, I will buy you. Here, take this. Is it a fair price?" and, unclasping the bracelet, she tossed it to him with an imperial gesture, and it fell with a tinkling crash on the polished wood of the floor. Hawkshawe paled to an ashy gray. He raised his hand as if to strike the proud face before him, but his eyes sank as he met Ma Mie's fearless gaze, and his hand slowly drooped again. Then he stooped and picked up the bracelet. "It is worth ten thousand," he murmured to himself, and the elvish light in his eyes answered the wicked sparkle of rubies in his hand.

Gathering up her robe, Ma Mie stepped out of the room with a breaking heart and head held erect and defiant, and when Hawkshawe looked up he was alone. He slipped the jewel into his pocket, and, going to a side-table, poured himself out a glass of brandy, and then another and another, and while he stood near the table drinking feverishly Ma Mie watched him through the curtain from the door of her room, her hand clasping the jade hilt of the stiletto she wore at her girdle.

"Ah!" she thought aloud, "I could kill him now as he soddens himself with drink. But he is mine, and---- Oh, the shame of it! I love him! He is mine, and will remain mine if I have to drag his soul to hell!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE SIRKAR'S SALT.

Have I not eaten the Sirkar's salt?  
Wherefore then shall I tell a lie?  
Wherefore lie? Nay, mine oath is true,  
True as above us spreads the sky.  
We lost, but a traitor hand was there,  
And the soldier fell in the liar's snare.

*Lays of the Punjab.*

Loo-ga-lay said it was only a mistake, but the childlike innocence of his face, his oaths and protestations, the twenty hired witnesses he brought to prove him guiltless availed him not, and the richly deserved three months' "rigorous" was duly awarded. With the giving of this sentence, the details of which are of no account, the official programme of the day was over, and Peregrine free from office routine until Monday morning. He was to see Ruys this afternoon, and her face appeared to flit before him and his heart bowed down to the vision; but he set his teeth and put away the thoughts that came whether he would or not. Was he not measuring the strength of his soul or will, as he would have called it, against the strength of his passion? He was going to pit the ideal against the real, and to his strong young heart the struggle could have but one issue. He knew--none better--that he was running a desperate risk, but there was no doubt in his mind that the danger had to be faced, and there was a curious pleasure in facing the danger. And all this war, which was to make or mar him, was to be silently fought out in the drawing-room of a very pretty woman. He found her there, looking the picture of repose, her little dog coiled snugly at her feet, and a yellow-backed novel before her. She put the book down with a smile as he came in, and held out her hand.

"I am so glad to see you, Mr. Jackson. You must be horrified to see me, a parson's wife, reading a yellow-back; but it is Armorel of Lyonesse, and books like that make one feel good, do they not? One seems to want so much support to keep on the straight path through life."

He picked up the volume from the table.

"Yes," he said, "Armorel was a woman who would have made any man great. She was one to die for."

"Or to live for, don't you think? I should certainly not like the man I loved to die for me."

A subtle inflection of the voice made him almost start as he looked up, but the gray deep of her eyes was pure and unruffled. "I would rather," she continued, "die for the man I loved. I think women were made for sacrifice."

"Don't you think that men are capable of it?"

"Of sacrificing women--yes. Is it not done daily? Look at that man in this book--what do they call him? Ah, yes, Roland--Roland Lee. What a worthless wretch he was, to what an abyss he sank! Did not Armorel fling herself away on him? Is it not a terrible thing for a man to bind a pure woman to him, knowing that she must find out things that tell her her idol has feet of clay? Oh, yes! the woman builds herself such castles in the air, and how they crumble and fade!"

"And does this never happen to man?"

"I don't think so. I don't think that a man ever loves in the sense that a woman wishes to be loved." She bent forward and took the book from his hand as she spoke.

The touch of her fingers almost made his limbs tremble as he put down with a mighty effort the rush of words that came to his lips. He said quietly enough, however, "I do not think you judge us fairly, and you, at any rate, have nothing to complain of." Not a muscle of her face moved as she folded the book, held half open in her hand, and placed it in a small wickerwork basket that stood on a table near her. Over this she cast a piece of embroidery work, and a moment after her husband entered the room. He greeted Peregrine cordially, and then, disjuncting himself, sank into a chair with a weary look in his eyes.

"Are you feeling very tired?"

How the worn look passed from the man's face at his wife's question! "No, Ruys; tired--not a bit of it." Peregrine cut in here and asked if it was not an off day with the mission schools. "Yes, and that's the worst of it. It means that on Monday one has to start fresh again. Satan takes a long pull on Saturday and Sunday, and these Burmans seem to have a natural affinity for him."

"I suppose I should hardly say it to you, but it seems to me we are beginning at the wrong end. We are giving these people the Gospel before they have been put in a state to understand it. How can they understand the greatest of all mysteries, which even we--I say it with all deference--do not understand?"

"Knock, and it shall be opened," quoted Habakkuk. "Mr. Jackson, I was once as you are, searching for a light, groping about in darkness and----"

The flutelike voice of Mrs. Smalley intervened. "Come, and finish your speech in the garden. I have had my tea-table set out there, and it looks as if it were expecting us. Come along, Mr. Jackson, and come, husband."

She put her hand slightly on Habakkuk's shoulder as she said these words, and the face of the priest shone with a great joy; but underneath the long lashes of her eyes she glanced softly on Peregrine. Jackson's honest heart rebelled against this; he felt that there was a double game being played, felt it indistinctly, but still that perception gave him a little extra strength, as if there was a flaw in the chain that bound him. Yet the thought was horribly disloyal to this peerless woman, to impute to her the motives of a common flirt, and it was with a conflict within a conflict in his heart that he took his seat on the rustic bench near the tea-table and watched the white hands of his hostess as she busied herself over the delicate teacups. Habakkuk declined to sit down. He helped himself to a huge slice of cake, and, holding this in one hand and his tea in the other, paced up and down ready to carry on the discussion. He cut a half-moon out of the cake with an enormous bite, and, waving the remnants in the air, resumed his speech. "Wal, as I was saying, I was searching for a light. I had not then received my call to the ministry, and while hunting for food for the soul was compelled to shift round considerable for food for the body. I had taken my medical degrees, but the Lord was good to the folk of Derringerville, and they flourished and were strong. Hence I concluded to betake me down south, and near the Sierra Blanca found an ideal spot for a doctor. There were thousands of typhoid microbes in every square inch of air--in fact, it was where typhoid had its office--but the inhabitants were spry. At first they died rather than call me in, but Elder Bullin, a real smart man he was, convoked the estates one day, and then a deputation waited on me--there was Calvin Snipe, Dacotah Dick, and the elder himself. They drank the half bottle of whisky I had left, and then put the matter squarely to me. I was to be paid a thumping good salary as doctor to the town. If any one was ill, however, the salary should cease until he was well again or died; the committee was to decide in the latter event if I had done my best, and, if the decision was favourable, arrears would be paid me on the first clean bill of health. I was, however, bound down for five years, and, seeing I was on the hard pan, they offered to pay down an advance. I rose to the situation, papers were signed then and there, and Dacotah Dick paid me my advance on the nail. Next day the whole place was down with fever, and I went to work--had to take off my coat to it. There was, of course, no pay for me, but I had the advance, and rubbed along on that. By-and-bye the money dwindled away, and I was once more stranded. I applied for more, but was sternly refused. I then suggested resigning, and Calvin Snipe pulled out his six-shooter and asked if I could read the maker's name on it for him. Wal, things were looking very blue, so one fine night I----"

"Good gracious! Here is Mr. Hawkshawe, and half a dozen men with him. I wonder what the matter can be? He is coming straight up to us." And, sure enough, there was Hawkshawe riding into the gate with a tail of policemen behind him. He halted the men with a quick order, and, dismounting, walked rapidly across the lawn toward the tea drinkers, accompanied by one who appeared from his dress to be a subaltern police officer. The man was travel-stained and bespattered with mud, and he held one arm tightly to his side as he leaned heavily on a long curved sword as if to support himself.

"How are you, Mrs. Smalley? Very sorry to interrupt your tea party, but this is pressing business.--Good afternoon, doctor.--Look here, Jackson, they've looted the treasury at Yeo. Here is Serferez Ali, my inspector, who will tell you all about it--and great news, too, with the bad. I think we have that scoundrel Bah Hmoay redhanded at last. I heard you were here, and stopped on my way to tell you. I have, of course, made an official report; you will find that the garrison was weakened on the strength of a forged order from me--the order is with my report."

Jackson was struck dumb for a moment by the enormity of the disaster; he found voice, however, to ask if the whole of the money had been stolen, and if Bah Hmoay had been arrested.

"The money's all gone," said Hawkshawe, "and Bah Hmoay isn't arrested, but he will be, I hope, in twenty-four hours. In the meantime I've placed a watch on the pagoda, and now there is not a moment to lose. Stay"--he bent and whispered a few words in Jackson's ear, and then with a hasty good-bye turned and went off. When Hawkshawe had gone Jackson turned to the inspector and asked him to briefly detail what had happened. Dr. Smalley's knowledge of the language was of great help at this moment, and Serferez Ali, presenting the hilt of his sword for Jackson to touch, began:

"I beg to represent that I was placed in charge of the money at the sub-treasury at Yeo with a guard of twenty men. Night and day the proper watch was kept. I have served the Sirkar for thirty years, and was I going to neglect this? On the night before last Moug Sen, the letter carrier, brought me a letter from Hawkshawe Sahib. That letter has been sent to you with the Sahib's report. It was a forgery, as Hawkshawe Sahib's letter will show; but I am a man little skilled in writing, and I obeyed. Ten of our men were ordered back next morning to Pazobin, as a



disturbance was expected there, according to the letter. In the morning I sent back the ten men and told the engineer Babu what had happened, and said that until the guard came back payments should not be made, as there were not enough men to attend to these duties. The Babu sat down to write to you about it, and I determined with the few men I had to double my precautions. There was a bright moon that night, and during the day I had the trees near the treasury gate cut down, so that men might not steal upon us unawares. At eleven that night, after going my rounds, I sat down to my meal with Hashim Khan, a fellow-countryman of mine from the Punjab. As we sat down before the fire a shot was fired, and Hashim fell forward on his face a dead man. Then I heard the sentries coming back, and I knew the dacoits had attacked the treasury. There were nine men besides myself, and we answered the fire of the dacoits; but presently the woodwork of the building blazed up, and we, being choked with the smoke, had to come forth, having Beni Sing and Jowahir dead, and another, a man from Amritsur, was burned in the flames. Then we seven who were left formed in a ring, and the dacoits closed in upon us. With mine own eyes I saw Bah Hmoay, the priest, leading them on, and struck at him twice, but God preserves him to die at the end of a halter, and Mounq Sen was there too, leading the robbers on. I will swear that I saw them, for the light of the burning building was as day. And we fought until all died, one by one, except myself, and I too had died but that fate preserves me to see Bah Hmoay pass to hell, and, making a dash into the darkness, I escaped. I travelled all the rest of the night and all day, only meeting Hawkshawe Sahib an hour ago----"

He swayed gently backward as he said this, and Smalley caught him as he was falling. "He is wounded, I fear, and must be seen to at once."

## CHAPTER IX.

### HIS LADY'S GAGE.

Belle Mabel gathered a blood-red rose,  
To give to her own true knight.

*The Ballade of the Rose.*

There was a price on Bah Hmoay's head, and if Mounq Sen had come within the pale of the law it would have gone hard with him. Their stronghold in Pazobin was now a thing, of the past, for the pagoda was watched night and day, and every little township and village was placarded with a minute description of the robber priest and his lieutenant. When Hawkshawe dashed out in pursuit, after the first news of the robbery, he meant death to Father Fragrance. He was well aware of the truth of the proverb that dead men tell no tales, and assuredly Bah Hmoay would have found Nirvana if Hawkshawe had met him. The policeman made a forced march all that night, and in the early gray of the morning was at Yeo. He scoured the country for miles, and one by one the dacoits fell into his hands. And when, three weeks later, he was recalled to headquarters by an urgent letter from Jackson, there were but two left of the Knights of the Silk Cotton Tree--two of the ten who had taken the water of the oath--namely, the reverend priest and the Red Diamond. It is true that there were a number of others who had joined in the assault on the sub-treasury, and who, if caught, would have paid for their crime with their lives; but these ten formed the regular gang, and now eight of them were taken alive and two were hunted men. Old Serferez Ali recovered from his wound, which was after all but slight, took Hawkshawe's place on the track, and vowed by the prophet's head that Hashim's death should be revenged tenfold, for was not Hashim of Gugar Khan his father's nephew's cousin on the sister's side? Moreover, he was a friend, and it was not the law that would avenge his death, but Serferez Ali himself, who had learned many ways of doing this. Serferez swore that they should not hang until he had satisfied himself; the law could then work its will on what remained of them, and the grim old man, hollow-eyed and gaunt, was relentless in his pursuit. Information came to him somehow, and it was only the impassable jungles that saved the criminals from his vengeance. Hawkshawe was puzzled and annoyed at Jackson's letter recalling him to headquarters. He had been working splendidly when this sudden stoppage came. It will be remembered, however, that it was no ordinary interest that spurred him on. The priest knew too much, and Hawkshawe's one hope was to seal his lips forever, for now that he was hunted in this way there was no knowing to what the dacoit might turn and cling for safety, and it was in his power to do incalculable harm to, if not to ruin, Hawkshawe. And therefore it was galling to think that, after all, his prey had escaped him. As he rode back he pulled out and read the official letter he had received and thrust angrily into his breast pocket. There was nothing in it but an urgent request to come back at once. "Confound him!" said Hawkshawe, "he might have written a line to tell me what it was about." And it was with rage in his heart that he rode into his house and, flinging the reins to his groom, went



upstairs. A big envelope marked "Urgent" was on the table, and Ma Mie was there, with a troubled look on her face. As he came in she could contain herself no longer, and with a cry flung herself on his breast and called out:

"They have found out! they have found out! Fly, Hawkshawe!"

"What the devil does this all mean?" said Hawkshawe angrily, and yet with a sickening foreboding in his heart. He snatched up the great brown envelope and read with whitening lips. It was, in brief, an order from government suspending him pending certain inquiries that were to be made, and adding as a rider that he was not to leave Pazobin until the final orders of the governor had been communicated to him. He did not notice a small note that dropped out from the official inclosure, but Ma Mie stooped and, picking it up, handed it to him. It contained a few lines from Peregrine telling him to keep up heart; that he, Jackson, was sure the charges were trumped up and would fall to the ground. The letter closed with an earnest assurance of sympathy and a brief intimation that his successor, Phipson, had already arrived, and was of necessity staying with Jackson, there being no other house available for him. The blow had fallen at last, and fallen just as Hawkshawe had almost completed his most brilliant departmental achievement. He guessed instinctively whose hands had struck it--the wretched half-caste Pozendine and his former enemy Iyer were leagued together in this. Perhaps they had no proofs, but that was, after all, a straw to clutch at. He knew he was guilty, and for the moment he was overcome. He sank back into a chair with an oath, and his hand slid of its own accord to the butt of his revolver; but Ma Mie was quick.

"Not that way! not that way!" she cried as she clung to his wrist and wrenched the weapon away from his after all not unwilling hand.

But a still more terrible trial awaited Hawkshawe, and that was the formal delivering over of his office to Phipson. He was treated with the greatest consideration, but this sympathetic treatment only added to the agony, though it was difficult to say who felt it most, honest young Phipson, with his soft heart, or the proud and guilty man whose place he had taken. When it was all over, Hawkshawe went back to his house and shut himself up, going nowhere--not even to his garden gate--doing nothing, but morosely sitting in his long cane chair smoking and drinking.

"It is too cruel of them not to let the poor man go away," said Mrs. Smalley; and Habakkuk thought that if he were to go and see him Hawkshawe might be cheered up a bit.

"There is no use, doctor," said Jackson. "I went myself, but could gain no admittance; perhaps it would be wiser to leave him alone. He will come out of this trial all right, I hope----"

"If ever he lives through it," said Phipson, and they all understood, though no one spoke another word.

Smalley now turned the conversation by speaking of a mission school he had founded at Dagon, which had flourished in so remarkable a manner that he almost thought it advisable to go and live there himself.

"And leave Pazobin?" said Jackson. "Why, we couldn't do without you, doctor."

Habakkuk was flattered at the compliment, and explained that after all it was only an idea that might never come to anything, and he and Phipson strolled off together to look at some plants, for Phipson was an amateur gardener and Smalley an enthusiast.

Ruys and Jackson were, alone. "You surely do not think that Dr. Smalley will move to Dagon?" he asked.

"Why not?" was the reply. "If his work takes him there, and he feels a call, he must go--and of course I."

"I know," interrupted Jackson, "of course you will go also to aid and help him." Their eyes met, and his fell before the limpid light in hers.

"Of course," she said slowly, "there is no other thing for me to do, unless I were to stay here and look after what is left. There is much to do, you know. And now take me to the garden. I want to see what those two are looking at."

It was a wilderness of a garden for all Smalley's care, and one might easily have been lost in it. Side by side they walked down a pathway, and in the far distance they caught a glimpse of Phipson and his host poring over a row of flower pots. Jackson was about to keep straight on, when Mrs. Smalley deliberately turned into a bypath, and he followed her, admiring the perfect outline of her figure and the easy grace of her walk. "Isn't this an odd place?" she said, as on taking a turn they came upon what was evidently the ruin of an old temple. All that remained, however, was the plinth and a single griffin of monstrous size, that stood up above the shrubbery around it and glared down upon the intruders. "Fancy if such things really lived," and she dug the silver-mounted cane she carried into the plaster.

"They did, I think, in the old days," replied Jackson. "It must have been just such a monster who guarded Castle Dolorous and carried away the White Lady to keep her a close prisoner."

"And of course a youthful knight came and blew on a silver bugle, and then there was a fight."

"Yes, and the knight won, and the fair lady gave him a gage to wear, and perhaps----"

"Oh, never mind the perhaps--she gave him her gage, did she? What did she give?" and as Ruys said this she loosened with her hand a bunch of mignonette that was pinned to her dress.

"Oh, a ribbon or a kerchief, or maybe a flower, and the knight wore it as a charm against all evil, and a light to guide him on his quest."

"Yes," she said dreamily, "the good old days--I would we were now in them. I can not picture a knight in a tweed suit--can you? How would a gage look on that?" and with a sudden movement of her hand she placed the flowers against Peregrine's breast and held them there.

"Will you let it rest there?" His voice sounded strange and hollow to himself. Ruys bent forward and fastened the flowers in his coat slowly and deliberately, standing close to him as she did this, and a mad longing came over the man to clasp her to him, to ask her to put her white arms round his neck and say she loved him, to tell her she was loved with a love that could only end with his death. But he held out somehow, God alone knows how, and when Ruys had pinned the flowers over his heart she said softly:

"There, that is my gage; remember, it is to be an amulet to guide you to the right."

The sweet scent of the mignonette floated around him, there was a dreaming look in Ruys's face as she met his look, and now her eyes fell before him, and she half turned her face away to hide the pink flush that came into her cheek. There was a moment of breathless anxiety to the man when he felt that he must yield, but he righted himself with a mighty effort as he said:

"I will keep the gage forever, Mrs. Smalley, although I am afraid I am but an unworthy knight."

Neither spoke a word after that, but, as it were, instinctively turned to leave a place which was so dangerous to both. They walked back together until they once more reached the broad road, and then Ruys turned abruptly.

"I have got a headache, Mr. Jackson, and I think I will go in. Don't tell my husband; it is a mere trifle. See, there are Mr. Phipson and he talking; go and join them. I--I--want to be alone."

She turned and walked slowly down toward the house, and Jackson stood still, staring after her with an uncomfortable feeling that her last words suggested an understanding between them that did not exactly exist. He bent his head down till his lips touched the flowers she gave him, and then he went forward to meet his host and Phipson. In the meantime Ruys reached her room, and, having carefully shut the door, deliberately proceeded to have a good cry. It was a sheer case of nerves with her, and the nerves had given way. She had played with edged tools and now found that they could cut, and began to realize that she was almost if not quite in love with this impassive youth. The woman was a curious mixture of good and bad. She laid herself out to do a wrong thing, and took a keen pleasure in so doing, then would come the reaction and bitter regret. She went down on her knees in an impulsive manner and prayed to God to forgive her sin, and she vowed then and there to dedicate her life to his service. Then she got up, washed off the traces of her tears, and came down to her husband. The mail had come in, and Habakkuk was seated reading his paper. "Have they gone?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Habakkuk, "left about twenty minutes ago."

She sat down on a rug near her husband's feet and rested her head on his knee. Habakkuk put down the paper he was reading and stroked the soft curls on her head with a gentle hand. She looked up after a while.

"Did you mean what you said about going to Dagon?"

"Why?"

"Because, if you did, I want you to go at once, and take me with you."

"Why, little woman, what is the matter?"

She got up impatiently. "Oh, you men--you men! Will you never understand?"

## CHAPTER X.

## AN ATONEMENT.

*Ruys.*--Can I give back? Well, then I will restore.  
Death pays all debts.

*Maraffa: A Tragedy.*

In a solitary room of his house, shut out from the light of day, Hawkshawe was drinking himself to madness and to death. The weary weeks dragged themselves on, one after the other, in connection with his case, and yet nothing was done beyond the order which kept him under judgment. The government had not as yet even decided what steps they were to take in the matter. Called upon for an explanation, Hawkshawe had sent up a long memorial, full, as memorials always are, of points that did not bear on the question. He clutched at any straw to save himself, and there was without doubt a good record of good work done by him. Practically, however, he was already condemned, and the governor had made up his mind almost as soon as he heard of the case. He was a man whose muscular morality could endure no backsliding, and the taint of the old days still hung around Burma. He had sworn to purify it, and he meant to keep his word. "These are the men," he said, referring to Hawkshawe, "that we want to get rid of, and any excuse should be seized upon, for they have dragged the name of Englishmen in the mud; of course, however, Mr. Hawkshawe must have every opportunity of defending himself."

The head of the police, to whom these words were spoken, went away with misgivings in his heart about Hawkshawe. "He'll get over the bribery and corruption part of the affair," he said to a confidential friend--in other words, to his wife. "There's no real proof except the statements of those dismissed scoundrels and half a dozen other blackguards; but the other thing will smash him, and, with all his faults, he is very nearly my best man."

"And he ought to be turned out," said the lady. "I have no pity for men like Mr. Hawkshawe."

The chief remained silent, knowing that here argument was unavailing, but nevertheless he still regretted Hawkshawe's fate. And from this it will be inferred that a long connection with the seamy side of mankind had more or less blunted the fine edge of his susceptibilities, and that he was prepared to use any tools if they served his business, which was the suppression and detection of crime; and perhaps he was right.

In the meantime Alban Hawkshawe slipped down with frightful rapidity. He was like a man sliding down a snowy slope beneath which yawned a precipice, and he was reaching the abyss at a frightful pace. He would have killed himself had he dared; once he had almost done so, but the little hole in the muzzle of the revolver he held to his mouth looked so pitiless that he drew it back shrinking. His nerves were weakened, and there was a terrible bodily fear of that death which he felt could alone be his release. It was open to him to have left Pazobin and run the chance of arrest; but the very attempt at flight would establish his guilt, and he was quick-witted enough to see that his only chance was to fight, and, although the waters were over him, yet his arm was stretched out to grasp the one little straw in which there might be safety. Strange as it may seem, he began to feel an injured man. There was the shame and indignity of being kept a prisoner at large, to feel that every one around him knew of his fall, to know that they knew him guilty, to know that they who crouched before him formerly were laughing over their opium pipes at his downfall. The very servants knew it. He saw this in their faces. These thoughts drove him faster and faster on his course, and he vainly tried to flee from himself in the stupor of drink. And then the time came when drink did not produce forgetfulness. But Ma Mie clung to him with the affection of a dog. She endured his abuse and his blows, for Hawkshawe had reached a stage when he was no longer restrained from violence because the object was a woman. The poor creature tried to keep him from his besetting vice; she brought out all her little arts which were once wont to please and to beguile, but to no purpose. Hawkshawe insisted on having her about him, but it was not to console; it was because he wanted some one upon whom to work off the fits of semi-madness that came on him. His servants fled in terror, and after a time he began to feel that he could not bear to be alone. His excited brain conjured up strange images about him, and finally the wild beast within the man awoke in its full strength, and he was no longer a human being, but had gone back to that early time when man was as savage as a tiger is now. It seemed as if the soul had flitted from him while he still lived. He had now got out of hand entirely, and Ma Mie dared not approach him, but she hung around trying to anticipate his wants and watching his progress with a sickening heart. Finally the time came when she went mad also, for one night Hawkshawe put a fearful insult on her. She drew her dagger to kill him, but he had strength to wrench it from her grasp and flung her to the corner of the room, where she lay stunned and bleeding. After a time she picked herself up and stepped out of the room without a look at the wretched Hawkshawe and his still more vile companion.

"Order her to come back," said the woman who was with Hawkshawe; "I want her to attend on me."

"So she shall," was the brutal reply. "Here, Ma Mie!" he shouted, but there was no answer. He got up and staggered to her room. It was empty, but from the open window he saw her figure as it flitted down the road, and a wailing sob reached his ears. "By God, she shall come back!" he

yelled, and, bareheaded as he was, reeled out of the house, followed by the mocking laughter of the she-devil within.

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They had just dined, and Peregrine, leaning back in his chair, was listening to a plaintive little melody played by Phipson on his fiddle. Phipson fiddled; he did not play the violin, but his fiddling was very sweet and good to hear. He finished his little air with a flourish, and, resting the instrument lightly on the table before him, said, "I wonder you don't play something or other; it is a great distraction!"

Jackson had no time to answer; almost as the words left Phipson they heard footsteps rushing up the stairs, and Ah-Geelong's voice raised in expostulation. The next moment Ma Mie burst into the room. She held in her hand a bundle of papers, which she flung before Jackson. "There," she half screamed, "I give him up; he is a double traitor! O Hawkshawe, Hawkshawe!"

"Yes, Hawkshawe, Hawkshawe!" answered a mocking voice, and Hawkshawe stepped in, holding Ah-Geelong out at arm's length before him with a grip of iron. He shook the Chinaman like a rat, and, flinging him behind him, sprang straight at Ma Mie and struck a terrible blow at her. It was well that Phipson saw what was coming and hit up Hawkshawe's arm. The next moment the madman had flung himself on him, and the two rolled over together. "He's choking me, Jackson!" and Peregrine woke up as from a dream. With the assistance of Ah-Geelong he managed to free Phipson, but it took the united efforts of all three to hold the maniac down. Hawkshawe, when he found that he was overpowered, lay perfectly still for a moment, a white foam round his lips and his eyes shifting nervously about in their deep sockets like those of an ape. He then said quite quietly, "Let me up; the game is played out. I can do no more." Ah-Geelong gave a warning glance, and whispered to Jackson, "Plenty dlunk." But both Peregrine and Phipson felt that he would attempt no more violence, and, ordering the Chinaman to stand back, helped him to rise, which he did slowly, and then glared round him with his restless, fiery eyes. "Where is my wife?" he asked, and then they saw for the first time that Ma Mie had gone. The thought that she had escaped him seemed to rouse him to fury again. "Devil!" he shrieked, and made a dash for the door. Peregrine and Phipson were before him, however. "For God's sake, sit still and pull yourself together, Hawkshawe!" said Phipson. He looked at them and, throwing his head back, laughed, and his voice was as the howl of a beast. "Sit still! How can I sit still? There is something broken in my head; there are the fires of hell in my heart. A devil is ever leaning over my shoulder, and--- Ma Mie, you traitress, where are you? Let me pass," he shouted, "or I will--- Ugh! there it is!" He turned and, glancing over his shoulder, saw Ah-Geelong moving softly toward him, and then with a bitter curse sprang backward out into the veranda, and the next moment there was a dull thud below, and all was very still. They picked him up gently and bore him to Jackson's own room. Phipson ran for Smalley, and when Habakkuk came he looked at the man carefully. "I will do what I can," he said, "but no human art can save him; he is most fearfully injured. I doubt if he will live through until the morning." But when the morning came Hawkshawe was still alive, and when the sun sank he was not dead. There was one who came and took her place by the sick-bed as if it was her right, and neither of the three men had the heart to forbid Ma Mie. All through the long hours she never left him, and they were her hands that lifted his head as the last breath came and Alban Hawkshawe passed away. He never once regained consciousness, and it was only his extraordinary muscular vitality that kept him living for so long a time.

When it was all over and Smalley had gone, promising to come again with the morning, Phipson and Peregrine went back downstairs to the dining-room and there sat up together. Sleep was impossible, and to both of them death like this was a new and terrible thing. It was then that Ah-Geelong came in softly and brought a message from Ma Mie to say that she wished to see them. "Ask her to come in," said Peregrine, and she came. She held in her hands a small inlaid casket, which she placed on the shining woodwork of the table. Her eyes were tearless, but her voice trembled as she spoke. "See," she said, "what was my husband is lying dead above, and dead in dishonour. I have come to make his memory clean and to restore----" With a quick movement of her hands she opened the casket and scattered its contents on the table. It was full of precious stones, and above them all coiled the ruby bracelet, and the evil light of the gems seemed to blaze and sputter through the night. "I restore, as he would have restored if God did not make him mad; here they are, jewels for which he sold his honour and I my soul. And now good-bye. You were good to him, and you saved my life. Ma Mie will never forget."

They let her go without a word, and she passed out into the darkness forever from their sight.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE PATIENCE OF HABAKKUK SMALLEY.

To-night I pass the narrow straits  
Which lead unto the Unknown Sea.  
God, who knoweth the hearts of man,  
Make Thou my pathway clear to me!

*Voyage of the Tobias.*

Ruys's repentant fit soon began to pass away, and there seemed every prospect of an aftermath of backsliding. She had honestly and soulfully tried to mend, and for a few weeks everything went smoothly--at least outwardly--for there was a hard struggle going on within. Then she began to think the air was getting too pure for her to live in, and then in her desperation she again opened up the subject of the removal to Dagon, and to her surprise and joy found her husband met her more than halfway in this. She had no very definite object in urging the move beyond that it would enable her to flee an ever-present temptation. It would have been well for Smalley if he had seen what was going on, but Habakkuk had never gauged that wayward heart. With all his love for her, he had never been able to understand his wife. It was a mystery to him how she had ever come to marry him, how he had ever come to ask her to share his lot. She had accepted the offer in one of those capricious moods in which women of her nature do absolutely anything, and she was, in fact, nothing more or less than a refined and educated Ma Mie, without, perhaps, the rugged nobleness of the Burman woman. When she first knew Habakkuk he had just thrown aside a lucrative practice as a physician to enter the ministry with a view to going on the Eastern mission. This in itself was sufficient to attract an emotional woman, and there was something also in the innate nobleness of soul within his ungainly frame that drew her toward him. She had one of her "good" fits on. Here was something so very different from the smart young men of her set who worshipped the almighty dollar, and dreamed of the almighty dollar, whose one idea was to amass a fortune, and to whom a business operation which successfully brought a friend perhaps to ruin was a creditable thing. She felt that marriage with such an one was a moral abasement, and so she signalled, in that silent way that women know, to the strong and loving nature that was hovering near her, and he came at her call. Something within him, he knew not what, prompted him to speak, and he simply told her of his love, and turned to go. It never for one moment crossed him that he would meet anything but a refusal, and when she softly called him back and put her hand in his, he was unable at first to realize that his apparently absurd ambition had been crowned with success. They were married, and almost immediately left for the East, and almost as immediately Ruys began to repent of the step she had taken and wished herself back again. Those smart young men who worshipped the almighty dollar--after all, they were not so bad. She began to contrast them with her husband, and then she began to be miserable. Habakkuk saw this much, that she was miserable, and put it down to seasickness. By the time he reached Burma he reflected that his wife had about fifty different characters, and could slip on one as easily as she slipped on a dress. He was a sensible man and resigned himself to his fate, and then she trampled upon him because he yielded, and he bore it all with a silent misery eating at his heart. Then after a time his love seemed to sleep into a kind of intimate friendship; but Ruys saw this, and would fan it all up again, and, as soon as she succeeded, relapse into an icy dullness that made life almost unendurable. It was their last evening at Pazobin; the parsonage had been practically dismantled of its ornaments, and Ruys, with a straw hat in her hand, stood in what was once her very pretty drawing-room. Habakkuk stepped in with his slouching gait.

"I wish," said she, "you wouldn't stoop so. Why don't you hold yourself up? There!" and she straightened him; "if you always carry yourself like that it would be so different."

"I'll try," said Habakkuk. "I must enroll myself as chaplain to the Pazobin Volunteers. There are six men in the regiment, but I'll get drilled. Will that suit?"

She was in a gay mood, and laughed blithely. "Yes, it will do very well, and I shall have to work some colours and give it to the gallant regiment. But you are not to go with them when they go fighting dacoits," and she came close up to him. Habakkuk for once plucked up courage, and, putting his arm round his wife's waist, kissed her, and to his surprise the caress was returned. He could hardly believe it, but she disengaged herself from his arm and said, "I want you to go down to the boats and see that everything is ready, like a dear; then you can come back for me, and take me on board."

Habakkuk felt that he could have gone to the end of the world. He was off in a moment, and went away holding himself very erect.

His wife looked after him with a strange smile on her face. "I have got him away for a good hour, at any rate," she said to herself, and stepping out into the garden walked slowly down to the ruined temple, and when she reached there she looked around as if expecting some one. "I wonder if he will come?" she said, and almost as the words escaped her Peregrine walked quickly across the side and came straight up to her. "I only got your note this minute, Mrs. Smalley," he said; "of course I was coming to see you off. It will be a great disappointment to Phipson. There was news which took him out this afternoon. Our friends the dacoits are to the fore again."

"I thought you would come this way," she said, "and walked up here to meet you. Dr. Smalley will be back soon; he has gone down to the boats to see after things."

"I wish I could have persuaded you not to go," said Peregrine. "You don't know what a loss you will be to us." The young man had won a great victory as he thought. Within the last few weeks Ruys's own attempts at escape had helped him. He had seen the struggle, and as he now stood over her his eyes were fearless with the strong light of power and resolve. Her knight--he had sworn to be her knight, and was wearing her token next to his heart. His hand should be the last to drag her down, and therefore his voice was kind and courteous, but nothing more, as he expressed his civil regrets at her departure.

With Ruys it was different. She had taken a hasty resolve to have one more interview with Jackson, and then to say good-bye forever. She had determined to meet him here and ask him never to see her again, and now that the opportunity which she herself had foolishly made had come she was unable to speak, and her lips whitened as she stood still before him; and then he saw that she was crying, and took her gently by the hand.

"Mrs. Smalley--Ruys," he said, "be brave. See, you are my sister; I will look to you for help and counsel, and will be as a brother to you. Be brave."

And even as she spoke the floodgates were opened, and all the passionate woman spoke: "I love you! I love you! How can I be your sister? Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?" And she burst into hysterical sobs, and the next moment was in Peregrine's arms, with her soft cheek resting against his shoulder and her heart to his.

For one wild moment Peregrine forgot all. "My queen! my queen!" he said, and kissed her unresisting lips and held her to him.

He put her from him, and as she stood with downcast eyes and trembling limbs before him, he spoke: "Good-bye; it must be good-bye forever now."

She made no answer, but looked after his retreating figure with sad, dreamy eyes, and then with a white face and aching heart turned and walked backward to the house.

\* \* \* \* \*

"*My God, thou hast forsaken me!*" Never did cry more bitter come from the soul of the prophet than came from the heart of Habakkuk Smalley from the spot where he had watched the whole meeting and seen the parting of the two. He had been a witness to it all from start to finish, and only perhaps a priest could have restrained himself as well as he had done up to now. It seemed as if his life had crumbled away. He now knew what he had never expected, and like an inspiration the motives of his wife in forcing him to leave the place flashed upon him. After all, the temptation had been resisted, and who was he to judge. He thought of the lesson his Master had taught in a case of terrible reality, and was he, a priest of the Gospel, to stop at less than this? He knelt down on the turf, and, holding up his arms to heaven, prayed. "God," he cried, "thou hast hunted me like a deer on the mountain side, and I am sorely wounded----" He could say no more, but gasped out "Strength! strength!" and then after a while a peace came upon him and he arose and followed the footsteps of his wife. He found her sitting in their now cheerless room, and her features seemed pinched and drawn. Never a word did Habakkuk speak of what he knew, but his voice was as kind and gentle as ever. "Everything is ready," he said; "shall we go?"

Now Ruys made no answer, but simply rose, and they went forth together.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE EPISODE OF LI FONG.

"By the Prophet's head,  
He shall die," he said,  
"By the knife of the Khyberree!"

*Civil and Military Gazette.*

Li Fong, contractor and general shopkeeper, was wearied of Dorian fruit, of *nga-pe*, and of Pazobin. Li was no "eleven o'clock chink"--that is, a Chinaman born and bred out of the Celestial Empire--but was a pure Hankow man, and had migrated to Burma with the philanthropic motive of spreading enlightenment among the outer barbarians, and to extract as much as he could out of the country he was honouring with his presence. But he was tired of Pazobin. Pazobin had no

more to give, and for him the orange was sucked dry. His real business did not lie among the lead-foil packets of bad tea, with the cubes of China sugar, that crumbled to dust at the touch, with the inferior writing paper, the preserved ginger, and the pickled bamboo, with which his little shop was stocked. No, it had other and more paying ramifications, or Li could not have looked so sleek and comfortable as he sat in his cane chair beneath a green and yellow paper lantern and inhaled a long cigarette, the *soupcou* of opium in the tobacco imparting a dreamy flavour to his smoke. But Li was not in his usual spirits. "Allee pidgin gone," his thoughts ran on; "Li he go too." Yes, this was true, too true. All business, really paying business, had gone since Pozendine and Iyer were swept away with other refuse, and there was nothing to be done with Mr. Pillay, who reigned in their place. Profits had come down to zero, for Mr. Pillay was that *rara avis* of his class--an honest man. Li Fong's approaches toward him had resulted in Li's being treated with indignity, and, what was worse, in attracting the particular attention of Jackson toward the Chinaman. And when the special attention of a district officer is drawn to a person like Li, it is better for him or her to move on, and our sleek friend, fully aware of this, was on the eve of his departure. But he was going heavily laden. He had sold his shop, and was for this night a care-taker only. Honest Yen Chow, of Myobin, was the purchaser. Yen would come to-morrow, and then Li was free as air. He smoked his cigarette comfortably through, and dozed off slowly. When he awoke he found that the township was going to bed. It was not a bad idea, thought Li. He would do the same. He turned down the burner of the little kerosene lamp that was placed within the gaudy lantern, locked his shop door, and went inside. Here, in a little back room, in heat and stuffiness so great that only a Chinaman could endure it, Li Fong lived his celibate life. He lit a small lamp carefully and placed it in a corner of the room; then he kneeled down, but not to pray. He merely fumbled under a heap of bedding and pulled out a small box. His eyes sparkled with delight as he opened the casket, and he gazed at the contents with a smile of deep satisfaction. When he had gladdened his eyes he shut the lid slowly with a regretful snap, and put aside the treasure. There was one more delight before sleep came, and that was contained in his opium pipe. He lit this with a luxurious slowness, and then, stretched out on his pallet, smoked himself into paradise. What rosy dreams were Li's! He would be a mandarin of the green button, his ancestors would be ennobled, he might become an Amban! "To-morrow," he murmured to himself; but to-morrow never came to Li on earth. Li dreamed on, sunk in lethargy, and finally fell into profound sleep, and the lamp burned low.

When he awoke again it was with the consciousness of physical pain, and behold! the lamp was burning brightly in the room.

Two men were seated beside the light, and spread out on the floor were the jewels the little box contained. The men were arranging them in little heaps, counting them carefully. Li made a frantic effort to call out, but he was gagged. Then he rolled over toward the men, and the light of despair was in his eyes. "Keep him quiet, Moug Sen," said one of the two, and the taller man held his sharp *dah* over Li, who crouched still, making no effort to move. The other finished his counting, and then swept the jewels into a bag. Then he turned savagely on the Chinaman. "Beast!" he said, "and you were going away with the earnings of honest men!" Then, changing his voice: "What! and you wouldn't even come and say good-bye to an old friend--to poor old Father Fragrance! It was very wrong of you, Li Fong, very wrong." Moug Sen here pricked Li with the *dah*, and a shiver went over the limbs of the bound man. Bah Hmoay then spoke again. "To think that you can't even speak, Li Fong, that your wicked mouth is gagged, and that all my money--*our* money," and he pointed to Moug Sen, "has come back to its rightful owners, and some more besides! Li Fong, you were going a far journey with all that wealth. You will now go a farther journey, where wealth will no longer avail you--where the gems of the world are useless. Li Fong, you are going to die!" If eyes could have spoken there would have been a piteous appeal for mercy, but being merely eyes they could only look words, not speak them.

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"I never knew a more atrocious thing in my life," said Phipson to his chief. "We found the poor devil with his throat slit from ear to ear, and on the wall of the room, scratched in charcoal, the respectful compliments of Bah Hmoay to you. Confound the brute! I'd give ten years of my life to see him swinging at the end of a rope!"

Jackson rose from his chair and slowly paced the room. After six months of absolute quiet he had begun to think that the dacoit had disappeared with the destruction of his gang, when here came a fresh atrocity--an atrocity out-Heroding the others. It was too bad, and yet, after all, in his heart Jackson could not help admiring the daring of the man.

"By Jove!" he said, "that fellow should be bottled and kept as a curiosity. Had he lived a hundred years ago, he would have died a prince."

"He'll die very high up," grunted Phipson.

"The inspector sahib has come on urgent business," announced an orderly.

"Tell him to come in," said Phipson, and Serferez Ali entered the room.

He explained briefly that he had at last a clew to the hiding place of the dacoits, and begged permission to start off at once.



It is needless to say that this permission was readily granted, and Phipson himself expressed his intention of accompanying the party. He noticed, however, the shade of disappointment that passed over Serferez Ali's face as he said he would come, and, being a generous young fellow, guessed its meaning. It was as if the old man had said, "Do not rob me of the honour," and the mute appeal won its way. "No, on second thoughts, I don't think I shall come, Serferez."

"May you end as a lord sahib!" said the inspector. "By sunset the heads of the base born will be in your veranda."

"Take a strong body of men with you, inspector," said Jackson, and Serferez said, "Huzoor!" saluted, and went out. He passed down the drive with rapid strides, and regained the police barracks with all speed. Here he picked out half a dozen men, and in a few minutes they were in a long snake boat rowing steadily and swiftly toward the great silk-cotton tree.

"One thousand rupees for Bah Hmoay dead or alive, and five hundred for MOUNG SEN, my children," said Serferez from the tiller, "and I will give up my share. You can all cut your names after this and go back to the grants the Sirkar is giving on the Chenab without fear of that jackal's spawn, Shankar the bunnia. Ahi! for the five rivers, but Serferez must die here--die in the swamps of this ill-begotten land."

"Aho!" grunted the bearded Sikhs, and the boat fairly hissed along the water. It was a long row and a stiff row against the main stream, but presently they entered the backwater, and the boat slid like a huge saurian on the ooze. They passed deeper and deeper into the jungle, which hung so thickly about the creek that the men had to stoop below the gunwale to prevent the branches from stopping their progress and the terrible thorns from doing them injury. Finally they could proceed no farther; so tangled was the maze of forest, so thickly did it overhang the water, that it seemed as if the creek ran into the bowels of the earth with a sudden abruptness. Very softly did Serferez ground the boat, and one by one they all stepped out. "Stay you here and look after the boat," whispered Serferez to the youngest of the men. "And, fool! don't sit in the boat, but hide *here--here* in the bushes, and keep your eyes and ears open. Shoot the first Burman who comes near it dead. Don't waste time in asking questions. Remember this, or you will never see the white hills again, I swear by the Prophet's head!" and he tapped his sword hilt significantly. After this no word was spoken, but the five men with Serferez at their head made their way in Indian file through the forest. Sometimes they were able to walk, but most frequently they had to resort to the tedious process of crawling through the jungle on all fours. They dared not use their *dahs* to cut the underwood, for the slightest sound might alarm their quarry, and many a detour had to be made to find a passage. Serferez himself acted as guide, and he made no mistakes. Finally they came to the little clearing, and halted on its borders. A little to the left the huge silk-cotton tree reared its white trunk and spread out its huge ghostly arms like a forest giant struck with white leprosy. It was in full bloom, and the magnificent scarlet and orange of the bombax flowers starred its foliage, and ever and anon dropped with soft heaviness on the turf below. But it was not this, nor the hummingbirds that dipped their long beaks into the red cups of the flowers, that made the eyes of the men watching from the jungle lighten and Serferez's lips to draw back with a tigerish snarl.

There, under the tree, not forty yards away, seated, smoking comfortably, were the two men whom they had sought for so long. Two of the police put up their rifles, but at a glance from their chief put them down again. "Alive," he whispered; "you two go round and then rush them; they will come straight at us, and then----" The two men sidled off like snakes noiselessly through the damp undergrowth. MOUNG SEN now began to sing in a droning voice:

"Mah Se hath a dower of roses,  
Mah Kit hath a dower of pelf;  
And I sigh for the scent of the roses,  
But die for the gleam of the pelf."

"But die for the gleam of the pelf," echoed the priest sonorously.

"Mah Se hath the grace of an angel,  
Mah Kit she is crooked and old."

Crack! went the sharp report of a police carbine, and a bullet whistled harmlessly over the singer's head.

"May hell burn those fools!" shouted Serferez. "Come on!" and almost before the words had left him he was on the dacoits. The Boh sprang straight at him, and aimed a terrible cut at Serferez. He parried this, but it shivered his sword to splinters, and would have killed him on the spot but for the folds of his turban. It bore him on his knees, however, and had Bah Hmoay been allowed a moment's more time Serferez would have slept in paradise. But the opportunity was not to be lost; without a second's hesitation the dacoit chief sprang off, and, cutting down another man with a back-handed sweep of his long dah, dashed into the jungle and was lost. Not so MOUNG SEN. The minstrel was overpowered at the outset, and was now sitting like a trussed fowl securely bound with the long coils of a couple of turbans. Serferez had regained his feet, and



shouted out, "Who fired that shot?" One of the men explained that his rifle had gone off by accident--caught in a twig.

"You are a liar, Bullen, son of Bishen!" said the inspector; "and that shot of yours has cost us a thousand rupees. Still, one remains in the net.--Ho, MOUNG SEN! Red Diamond! Do you remember me? I have come to pay back the debt I owe you."

MOUNG SEN made no answer, but strained at the bandages that bound him until the muscles of his arms swelled out like knotted ropes.

"He will be very heavy to carry to the boat, will he not, my children?" said Serferez. "And the law is uncertain--he may not hang."

"And nine men from the Doab died that day at Yeo," said one.

"We get no more for his head than for the rest of him," added another.

"And he attempts to escape," said a third, pointing to the man, who strained desperately to free himself.

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In the dusk of the evening seven men of the Sikh police rolled out something from a cloth at the feet of Phipson.

"May it please the Feeder of the Poor," said Serferez, "the base born attempted to escape as the other did, and there was no way but this," and he held the grinning head of MOUNG SEN out at arm's length before him.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AN OVERREACH.

Saddle me straight the red roan mare,  
She of the Waziri breed;  
The wings of death are beating the air,  
Hola! the Waziri steed!  
The wings of death are fleet and strong,  
But we win the race, though the race be  
long.

*Lays of the Punjab.*

"Ruys, would you like to go home?"

"Home! This is my home, is it not?"

"You know what I mean," said Habakkuk. "This is getting too much for you," and he stopped in a hesitating sort of way. A sad little smile lit up his wife's face--a face that had grown stronger and braver with the soul struggle of the past year. It was changed, too; the old brightness, the old vivacity had gone, but there was a serious light in the eyes that told of battle fought and victory won. And Habakkuk missed that old brightness and saw not the struggle. He was always dull, even if he knew how to suffer and be strong. But he thought that his wife was dying for freedom, and he vowed in his heart that, in so far as he could give her freedom, she should be free. Home--yes, home was the best place for her. He would never see it again, but she would be uncaged. He was not rich in the world's goods, and what he had he gave freely to the cause for which he laboured; but he held his hand back now, and during the past year the cause had suffered in this respect. But this little wrong was necessary to lighten a stricken heart. And while he thus laboured his wife saw it all with a woman's quickness, and inch by inch he was gaining ground, unknown at first to herself and through all utterly unguessed by him. At last the summer madness of the past drifted away, at last she began to realize, and just as she had done so this blundering fool asked her to go. It was too bad! After all, she had her woman's rights. Why did he not try to win her back with soft words? A new softness, a new mistrust of herself had come over her, and she could not speak. And then she dissembled and evaded the question. "I am very well," she said; "there is nothing the matter with me."

Smalley made no answer, and his wife, rising, went to the door and then stopped. For a moment the thought flashed upon her that she would ask him to come with her as far as the schoolhouse of Dagon. But he saw nothing in her hesitation. Finally she left him and went to her daily duties; but as she walked down the grassy lane that led to the school she thought to herself that if he had made any advance, ever so little a one, that she would have spoken. After all, this was part of her punishment, and she should bear it, her thoughts ran on.

"Alms, in the name of the Buddh!" An old man, shaking with palsy, held out a gourd to her, and Ruys gave to him and walked on. The beggar picked out the coin from the calabash and poised it lightly on his finger. The palsy had all gone now, and his hand was as firm as a rock.

"Three times," he muttered to himself--"three times has my hand been crossed with silver to-day. By God! I have him now. Thanks to the chattering tongue of that servant girl, I know her secret and his. I will strike *there-there!*"--and he pointed to the retreating figure--"and this will make him live with a heart wound. For a whole year have I waited and worked and planned, and now the time has come. Oh, that this were the day! But I will not disregard a single omen. Thrice crossed with silver, therefore the third day from this. Courage, Bah Hmoay!"

Once more palsy stricken, his feeble steps tottered along the lane and led him toward the pagoda. There at the feet of one of the two great griffins that guarded the gate he crouched, swinging himself backward and forward, and ever and anon calling out, "Alms, in the name of the Buddh!" So he sat until about the hour of sunset, when the womanfolk of the place gathered to the temple, and then he saw one whose stately step and carriage were unmistakable. It was Ma Mie, and as she passed by he called out her name softly, and she turned with a start. At a glance she recognised him. "*You here!*" she said with a little gasp that choked the word "devil!" which she hissed under the breath.

"Yes, but not alone. Where can we speak?"

"Come to my house; my mother is there, and there is no harm in listening to the advice of a holy bonze."

"Ever ready with your tongue as usual," said the dacoit as he rose, flung his saffron robe loosely around him and followed her with feeble steps.

And as she led him toward the house Ma Mie was thirsting for revenge. Here, here was the man who had led her into disaster, and he, above all others, with a price on his head, was walking beside her, going to her own house. The old fox was noosed at last, and it was with a beating heart that she led him into her house, where her mother, old, wrinkled, and hideous beyond measure, mumbled out a greeting.

"See, mother, this is a friend, a holy man, whom I have brought to rest here a while. I knew him in the old days, and he has something to say to me."

The hag chuckled out: "He is too old for a lover; let him speak, I will not be in hearing," and she went out of the door and sat hard by on a rude seat at the foot of a large palm tree.

"Now, what is it you want here?" said Ma Mie; "you with a price on your head!"

"You, at any rate, will not give me away."

"And why not?"

"First, because your brother is one of us, and lies sick in a place I know of; if I am lost, so is he--I have but to speak a word; and, secondly, because you want revenge, and I offer it to you."

Ma Mie dropped her eyes for a moment to hide the fierce light that came into them, and pretended to adjust the rich folds of her *tamein*.

"Yes," she said slowly, "I want revenge," and she looked at Bah Hmoay straight in the face.

"Then listen; I want your help. I am not alone, as I said. Away in the swamp lie twenty good men who would raze this place to the ground if anything were to happen to me. I, too, want revenge, and upon Jackson--he who ruined your husband, he who has hunted me until I live a beast of the field. I could kill him at any time, but that is not enough. I want him to live with a wound on his heart from which he will never recover. I will kill him afterward if it suits me, and now--stoop--see here," and the dacoit rapidly whispered to Ma Mie words that made her start back and say, "No! no!" "But I say yes--think of it--it is a vengeance worthy of a Burman. We will sack the place on the third night from this, and but one shall be spared. I shall take her to my swamp, and she shall live as my slave; but these white women are delicate, and I do not want her to die *yet*. I want your help, therefore--a woman needs a woman. Soh! You understand? You can name your price."

"Vengeance has no price," said Ma Mie, "and I agree."

"So be it," said the dacoit. "Then you will be ready?"

"Yes," she replied; "and now go."

"My blessing," and the dacoit rose and tottered out of the room.

"Ho, mother!" he said as he passed the old Mah Kit, "the night air is chilly for old bones; you had better go in."

"Old bones," the hag mumbled--"old bones, but eyes young yet, young yet. There is devilment abroad. What is it, daughter?" she asked as she entered the room.

"It would have been death, mother, had he stayed another five minutes. I would have put my dagger in his heart. But let me be; I will tell you all. I must think."

And she sat moodily slowly drawing the point of her stiletto in little crosses on the wood flooring. An hour or two passed in this way, and then Ma Mie looked up.

"Mother," she said, "I am going on a journey. I shall be back on the third day from this. If *he* comes, make some excuse. Listen, it will be worth a thousand to us."

"Clever girl! clever girl!" said the hag; "leave it to Ma Kit. I know now. Oh, yes, I know many things that nobody else knows. He! he! When are you going, child?"

"Now," said Ma Mie. "The little steamer touches here at ten to-night, and it now wants but a half hour to the time."

Her packing arrangements were of the simplest character, and an hour later she was leaning over the side of the small steamer that plied between Dagon and Pazobin, with burning revenge in her heart and a long cheroot in her mouth--bathos and tragedy hand in hand. The morning brought her to Pazobin, and she went straight to Jackson's house. To her dismay, she found he was not there--he had gone to the district the night before, and Phipson with him. Then she bethought her of the native deputy magistrate; but he was a Burman, and she doubted him. Finally she thought of old Serferez Ali, and, seeking him out, poured the information into the old man's ears. It was not the reward she wanted, it was revenge; but not revenge upon Jackson, but upon the fiend who had tempted and was now tempting again to drag her to the lowest deep. "Is all this true, girl?" said the inspector, and Ma Mie merely looked at him in reply. He was satisfied. "Go back at once," he said; "the dispatch boat leaves this afternoon; you will be there by the early morning; and stay--not a word of this to a soul. You have money?"

Ma Mie laughed. "Yes," she said. "And see, I will add five hundred rupees to the government reward if you have him this time." She turned and was gone.

"Light of my eyes! thou art gone," said Serferez to himself. "Fool that I was not to recognise her! But, Allah! this is no time for words. Bullen! Bullen! thief from the Boab, saddle me the roan mare--and listen, on your head! Bear this telegram, and let it be despatched at once. I want the police steamer at Myo to-night; and you, sergeant, be ready with twenty picked men at the quay to-morrow morning at seven. Soh! Is the mare ready? On your heads, see that my orders are carried out to the letter." He swung himself into the saddle, and five minutes later was Dehte riding at a breakneck pace to Jackson's camp.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### PALLIDA MORS.

Ah! woe is me! They brought him home,  
My winsome knight of Dee:  
On lances four my knight they bore,  
Who died for love and me.

*Old Ballad.*

Three men ride through the shivering moonlight--ride with teeth set hard and eyes that looked straight before them. Neck and neck they race across the open, and then the man on the left mutters a curse as they come to a stretch of rice fields. The long rice stalks seem planted in plate glass, but it is only water. Under the water lies three feet of mud, and beyond, like a huge dismasted hulk, rises the solid outline of the forest. The fields are divided by narrow embankments, and, as it is impossible to gallop through the quagmire, they resign themselves to circumstances, and pick their way slowly in Indian file across the narrow ridges that separate the

sloppy water-logged fields. Yet they speak no word. After a time, short in itself, but which seems endless to the leader, they reached the end of the rice ground, and then the foremost horseman spoke.

"Good God! must we crawl through this as well?"

"By your favour, sahib, the road is to the right. Let me lead."

There is a scatter of dead leaves, and Serferez, galloping forward, plunged into the dark archway of foliage. Through its deep gloom they race, and the hoofs of the horses fall with a dead sound on the damp bed of leaves below them.

Shurr-r-r-sh! A sound of wild boar plunges into the thickets, with much grunting and hubbub over the strange sight that flashes past them. The old boar peers after the horsemen with his bloodshot eyes, the white foam hissing round his tusches, then with a peculiar long-drawn moan of anger he turns and shambles slowly after his tribe.

Light at last!--the fires of a native hamlet and the indescribable odours that always hang around it. They dash past. There is a yell of rage from the napless yellow pariah dog, roused from his sleep in the middle of the road. He was nearly killed, and he protests vigorously against such reckless riding. A chorus of his fellows take up his complaint, and the riders push on amid a storm of howls.

"Don't think this beast will hold out," said Phipson suddenly. The horse was almost staggering in its stride under him, and he knew by the ominous way in which the poor animal seized the bit between his teeth at intervals and flung forward his head that it could not keep up the pace for long.

No one answered, for at that time the loud, deep whistle of a steamer reached their ears, ringing through the woods with echo upon echo.

"Allah ho Akbar! 'Tis the steamer!" shouted Serferez.

"Thank God!" came in deeper tones from the very hearts of the two Englishmen. The horses themselves seemed to know it. Brave hearts! They had won a race for life, and ten minutes later kind hands were rubbing them down on the deck of the little Beeloo, and the old Panjabi was purring over the neck of his roan.

"There is none like thee in the land, my pearl," he said softly as he stroked her silver mane--  
"there is none like thee in the land. By the Prophet's head, I swear that for this night's work I will never forget thee--never!"

"What's the time, Phipson?"

"Two thirty," said Phipson, holding his watch out to the broad moonlight. "We reach Pazobin at seven to-morrow, pick up the men, and go straight on."

Peregrine made no answer, but his white face as it shone out of the moonlight almost scared Phipson, so fixed and rigid was its look.

"I say, Jackson!"

"What is it?"

"That was a devil of a ride. Think I'll turn in and take a nap, and you'd better do the same." This was the policeman's way of telling his friend he looked worn to death.

"No, thanks, Phipson, I can't sleep; I must see this thing through."

Phipson stretched himself out in a long cane chair and watched his friend as he paced slowly up and down the small quarterdeck. "He must be devilish keen," he murmured to himself, "or devilish hard hit."

And then all the starlight seemed to dim, and he was asleep. In the white mists of the morning they reached Pazobin, and, taking on board their men, started on at once. Phipson had persuaded Peregrine to rest. "Look here," he said, "this is all Tommy rot! You've got to rest. Have some grub first, throw away that infernal cheroot, and go and lie down. You've *fighting* to do this evening, and will want your head and your nerves in first-rate order."

There was no gainsaying this, and after lunch Jackson fell into a deep sleep. He was aroused by a scrunching noise, and woke with a start.

"What's the matter?"

"The matter is that it's half-past six, and that damned idiot of a *serang* has stuck us fast into a sandbank, and we can only get off with the next tide. There's only one thing to be done. Get the boats from Thomadine village and row for it."

Thomadine village was half a mile below, but a small boat had raced them as far as the scene of the disaster. Matters were rapidly explained to the occupants of the boat, the explanation was made clear by the line of shining barrels that was pointed toward them, and they pulled up alongside the Beeloo. Some of the crew were temporarily transferred to the steamer, three or four policemen took their places, and the long canoe danced back to the village. It was fully an hour before it returned, bringing with it two other canoes, and, leaving the police tug with strict orders to come on with the next tide, Jackson and his men embarked in the boats, and, hugging the bank, rowed for their lives. It was no time for words, no time for anything but to strain every muscle to reach their goal. Suddenly a broad sheet of flame lit the sky, and the reports of half a dozen matchlocks rang out in quick succession; then came the short, sharp crack of a Winchester, then another and another.

"By God, they've begun!" shouted Phipson. "Row on, you devils!"

"There's a short cut by the creek, sahib!" called out Serferez, and the snake head of the leading boat, steered by Jackson, turned promptly round, and with a little white sparkle of foam fizzing over her bows she shot into the creek, followed in quick succession by her fellows.

The sky was one sheet of light, for the village had been fired in several places, and the houses blazed up like touchwood. Long forks of flame from the mission school sprang up to the sky, and a dense cloud of smoke rolled westward with the breeze. Still the Winchester kept speaking, and every shot gave the rescue party hope, for they knew that Smalley was selling his life dearly.

"We divide here into two parties," said Phipson as they landed. "You, inspector, take six men with you, and make for the boats. We will drive on to you. By God," he added, pulling his revolver out, "I rather think we're only just in time!"

Serferez needed no second bidding, but was already off, and Jackson and his companion marched rapidly forward.

"We'll give them a volley from here," said Phipson as they reached the skirts of the clearing round the little mission school, about which the firing was concentrated. "By Jove! they're going to batter down the door. Steady, men! Fire!" The crackling of the volley was followed by a cheer, and in a moment the police had rushed forward and were engaged hand to hand with the dacoits. Some one sprang straight at Jackson, but his hand seemed to lift itself up of its own accord, and a second after a huddled mass lay before the smoking barrel of his revolver. The issue was not one moment in doubt, and in a few seconds the dacoits were heading straight for their boats. Here they were intercepted by Serferez and his party, who gave them a warm reception. Three or four of the dacoits, however, among whom was the Boh, secured a boat and rowed off for their lives.

"Follow them!" shouted Jackson, springing into the snake boat; "not a man must escape!" Phipson and a few others took another boat, and there was a hot pursuit. The dacoits realized, however, that it was no use, and, evidently resolving to die fighting, ran their boat ashore on a small island near the middle of the river and took to the thickets, from which they began a smart fire.

"Go behind, and take them on the rear," called out Jackson to his companion. Almost as the words were spoken Phipson's boat turned to the left and was round the head of the little island.

"Sit down, sahib; don't stand up--we are quite close to them now," said the *naick* of police, who was in Jackson's boat. Peregrine laughed, and the next moment the *naick* uttered a cry of horror, for a red tongue of flame shot out of the covert, and Jackson, flinging his hands up, fell forward on his face with a gasping sob.

With a yell of rage the police grounded their boat and rushed into the jungle. There was but half an acre of ground, and Bullen, son of Bishen, Sikh from the Doab, had gone Berseker.

As the men landed the dacoits made for the opposite side of the little island, but to their dismay found Phipson there. With a curse Bah Hmoay darted back into the cover, followed in hot haste by Phipson. And here in the uncertain light, where the jungle was so tangled that there was barely room to use a sword, there was a short but desperate fight. "Come on, Jackson, we have the lot here! Where on earth are you?" shouted Phipson as his revolver barked out like a snapping pup, and one of the dacoits fell dead, and another, staggering backward, was finished by a policeman with his *dah*. "Where are you, Jackson?" called out Phipson again.

"Jackson is in hell--where you will follow him!" and the Boh sprang at Phipson like a panther. A projecting branch saved him from the downward sweep of the long *dah*, the revolver snapped out again, and the next moment they had grappled each other by the throat.

"I'm afraid it's no use, Bah Hmoay," said Phipson as he shook off his assailant like a rat, and, throwing him heavily, placed the barrel of his revolver against his temple.

Click! click! The handcuffs were on him like a flash of lightning, and the Boh was surrounded by a group of men.

"This is Bah Hmoay himself," said one of the policemen as he held a rudely improvised torch at the face of the captive.

"There isn't another of them alive on the island," said Bishen. "Two were killed by your honour, two I have accounted for, and this is the last."

"Where is the sahib?"

"He awaits you in the boat," said Bishen, and a chill went through Phipson's heart.

"Why--what is the matter? Speak, can't you?"

"The doctor sahib will tell. Some one from the island fired, and the sahib, he was standing, fell back in the boat; but the doctor sahib's knowledge is great. He will live."

Bah Hmoay was subjected to the indignity of being frog-marched to the boat. He was flung in without much ceremony, and a loaded carbine held at his head. When Phipson reached his friend he found him unconscious, and sadly the two boats rowed back to the village. As they approached Phipson saw by the still burning town the tall figure of Serferez Ali talking to Smalley, and close by the white fluttering of a woman's dress.

"By God!" he groaned, "I don't think it was worth it, even for this. Jackson, old man, can't you speak?"

But there was no answer, and almost at this moment they reached the landing place. A cheer went up from those on shore, and Smalley came forward with outstretched hand. "I can't thank you enough. Come, let my wife thank you, too. Where is Jackson?"

Phipson shook hands with them both.

"Where is Mr. Jackson?" asked Ruys.

There was no help for it but to speak out at once before her. As the words left Phipson's lips Smalley was beside the boat, and they tenderly lifted out the wounded man and placed him on an improvised couch of greatcoats. They stood round him in a sad group while Smalley with gentle hands examined the wound, and the silence was only once broken when a great sob burst from honest Serferez Ali, and the old man turned away with his head hanging down. Ruys held a lantern for her husband, and Phipson noticed that there was not a quiver in her hand, although her lips were blue.

After a time Smalley rose to his feet and shook his head. "He can not even be moved from here," he whispered, "and all my appliances are under that blazing roof. God works very hardly sometimes." The dying man moaned feebly, and Ruys was on her knees beside him.

"What is it? Can't you speak? Oh, husband, can not you save him?"

"God knows that I would!" said Habakkuk sadly, and then his wife bent low to hide the tears that fell fast down her cheeks.

That strange power of hearing, that supreme strength which comes to persons at the last, came to Peregrine now.

"Die!" he said; "who says I am going to die? I am young yet; my work is not done. Mother," he cried, "I am coming!"

Ruys bent down and kissed the hot forehead softly. There was a shivering of the limbs, and the strong young spirit had passed.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE PASSING OF THE WOON.

Pick up the threads, the web is spun;  
For weal or woe, the task is done.

*Maraffa.*

"Good-bye, Phipson. We can never forget what we owe you--you and the poor boy who lies there. Come to us when you can. We will give you a warm welcome. It's a big country, and there's

room for a young man with hands and feet. Good-bye again!"

Habakkuk shook hands cordially with Phipson, and passed up the gangway of the Woon to join his wife, who had already said farewell. The siren whistle screamed shrilly, and with much laughter and good-humoured hustling the crowd on board left the decks, the paddles drummed, and the Woon sidled back from the quay, and then, turning gracefully round, steamed down the river, followed by a multitude of boats whose gaily dressed occupants formed bright groups of gorgeous colour on the gleaming water. Phipson stood and watched, and answered the wave of the white handkerchief from the stern; stood and watched until the convoy of boats became but little black specks, and the Woon entered a curve of golden water that reflected back the glories of the sunset and was lost to view. In the fore part of the ship, beside his belongings, sat Serferez Ali, who had cut his name, and was going back to enjoy his well-earned pension in his home in the Salt Range of the Punjab. He was rich with this and the rewards he had gained, and if at times he had done things which our civilization does not approve of, that did not the less make him a gallant old specimen of his class. Occasionally he would rise, and, walking to the inclosed space reserved for horses, caress the soft muzzle of his roan, a round, black muzzle that thrust itself confidingly forward toward him.

"We are going back, Motee, my heart--going back out of this accursed land of swamps. Didst thou think, thou of the Waziri, that I would leave thee to die here? Nay, nay! We are going back to the land where women bring forth men. But we saw the assassin hang before we went--hang-like the dog he was; and Bullen, son of Bishen, thy old comrade, brave, but a fool, is now inspector in *my* place. But comfort thee, my pearl, we are going *home!*"

The mare whinnied back to her master, and the old man sought his seat again, keeping one eye on a heavy brass-bound box and the other on his favourite.

At intervals he watched the broad fan of the electric light throw its white radiance across the river, and murmured to himself as he inhaled the grateful fumes of the hubble-bubble:

"Prophet of God! But these English are a wonderful race! Nevertheless, except for their cursed engines, the *khalsa* would still have been. *Ahi!* those were the battles of giants!"

On the quarter deck Ruys, very pale and white, leaned back in a lounge chair, and Habakkuk stood beside her with a new light in his eyes. They watched the thin scimitar of the new moon gleam out of the sky, and the gray mists creep up the river and enfold the dim and now distant outlines of the forest. They were leaving the country, leaving the East for good. One felt that to other and stronger hands must be left the work so well begun by him; and as for the other, she had gone through the furnace and had come out pure gold. From his post by the man at the wheel Skipper Jack watched the pair. He was a man whom the ordinary cares of the world troubled not, but on the present occasion serious misfortune had assailed him, and he was out of temper. His tobacco had run out, and he had sunk to the degradation of filling his pipe with the half-burned stump of a cheroot. Skipper Jack stood, therefore, hard by the man at the wheel, and, while his keen eyes evermore watched the ship's course, his tongue murmured strange oaths under his beard. But what was that, seen through the gloom, that crinkled up the gnarled features of the skipper into a sour smile of amusement? He saw it again, and in his astonishment almost dropped his favourite clay.

"Bust me foolish!" he muttered to himself. "Blowed if the parson ain't a-spooning the missis! Gr-r-r! the old pipe is out!"

## THE WIDOW LAMPORT

But I laye a-wakyngge, and loe! ye dawne was breakyngge,  
And rarelye pyped a larke for ye promyse of ye daye:

"Uppe and sette yr lance in reste!  
Uppe and followe on ye queste!  
Leave ye issue to bee guessed  
At ye endynge of ye waye "--

As I laye a-wakyng, 'twas soe she seemed to say--  
"Whatte and if it alle bee feynynge?  
There be better thynges than gaynyng,  
Better pryzes than attaynyng."  
And 'twas truthe she seemed to saye.  
Whyles the dawne was breakynge, I rode upon my waye.

Q. (*Oxford Magazine.*)

# THE WIDOW LAMPORT.

## CHAPTER I.

### AT THE DOOR OF THE TABERNACLE.

When Mrs. Lamport, the pretty widow, was observed standing outside the door of the Methodist meeting-house in Rigaum one Sabbath morning after service, the congregation began to wonder and cast little inquiring looks at each other.

They were serious folk, and it was clear to them that the proper course to pursue, after attending divine worship, was to make one's way soberly home, looking neither to the right nor to the left, lest the enemy of mankind should seize his opportunity to the ruin of a soul. Her presence excited curiosity the more as none of the worshippers had seen her in church that day. This absence disappointed the womankind, who were wont to take surreptitious notes of Halsa Lamport's dress, between their fingers, as they knelt apparently absorbed in prayer. Mrs. Lamport stood on the steps of the chapel entrance, leaning lightly on the end of her parasol, a neat figure dressed in white, with a coquettish knot of red ribbons in her high straw hat. The flash of these ribbons in the sunlight caught the eye of Elder Bullin as he stepped forth, smug and clean shaven, his two daughters following demurely in his footsteps. A scowl passed over the old man's features, and he muttered something under his breath about Rahab and the city wall. As the people filed out of church they stared at Mrs. Lamport. Most of the young men lifted their hats, but the greater portion of the women pursed up their lips and sniffed at the figure before them. There were two crimson spots on the widow's cheeks now; she had a temper, and it was evident that it was being put to trial. She rattled the plated end of her parasol on the stone steps, and made an impatient movement.

Let it be at once understood that, as far as the good people of the Rigaum tabernacle knew, there was no record against Mrs. Lamport, except the fact that she was a pure European, and they, for the most part, were of mixed descent. She had come suddenly into their midst about a year ago, and all that they knew of her was that she boarded with the Bunnys, and was supposed to be a distant connection of theirs. Her living with the Bunnys ensured her toleration, for Mr. Bunny was the registrar of a government office, and not a man to be offended with impunity.

Nevertheless the word was passed that friendly relations with the pretty widow were not to be cultivated. It was not to be denied that she was diligent in her attendance at chapel, that no word of hers had given offence--yet the women took alarm, the husbands yielded to their wives, and Mr. Bunny's influence alone preserved an armed neutrality.

As Mr. Bunny and his wife came out of church they stopped and looked inquiringly at the widow, for she had pleaded a headache as an excuse for not attending service with them.



"Come to meet us?" asked Mrs. Bunny with a smile.

"No," was the reply; "I have come to meet Mr. Galbraith."

Almost as the words were spoken the pastor appeared, and after a few moments' conversation he and Mrs. Lamport moved off slowly together, under the shadow of the palm trees, in the direction of Mr. Bunny's house. Mrs. Bunny discreetly induced her husband to take a longer road, and as for those of the congregation who overheard the words spoken, they remained almost struck dumb with astonishment. Mr. Sarkies, however, a semi-Armenian, and a member of the congregation, who was himself looked upon with suspicion as not having yet found Christ, made a little mistake at this moment.

"Well, I'm damned!" said he to himself as he struck his gray pantaloons with a thin cane smartly and looked after the retreating pair. Sarkies prided himself somewhat on being a lady-killer, and it had been his intention, as soon as he had straightened his collar sufficiently, to give the widow the pleasure of his company home.

It was unfortunate for him, however, that the bad word caught Elder Bullin's ear. The old man had stopped for a moment, much against his will, to reply to a remark made by a friend. He was about to rebuke the speaker for having his thoughts on earthly matters on the Lord's Day when the oath, softly spoken though it was, reached him. He turned sharply. "Young man," said he, "swear not at all. Behold!" he added, pointing with his stick at the shrinking figure before him, "here is one whose paths are in the Valley of Sin, and whose ways lead him to hell fire."

"Oh, paw!" exclaimed his eldest daughter deprecatingly.

"I--I beg pardon, Mr. Bullin," stammered Sarkies; "it slipped out."

"Never you come to my house again," continued the elder. "I will bring your scandalous conduct before the next meeting."

Sarkies tried vainly to smile and carry it off with a high hand, but the elder's words attracted a crowd, and their united attention was too much for him. He made an effort, however, to retreat with dignity.

"I don't want--come to y'r'ouse," he said with a sickly smile as he pushed his hat slightly on one side of his head and moved off with an air of apparent unconcern.

At this junction Miss Bullin burst into tears.

"Shame! shame! Lizzie!" exclaimed her sister Laura; but Lizzie was not to be appeased. She wore her heart upon her sleeve, after the manner of some women.

"Oh, my Jimmy!" she cried, and the elder was moved to uncontrollable wrath.

"G'home at once," he shouted, "or I'll Jimmy you--Jimmy, indeed. G'home, you----"

He checked himself, and followed his trembling daughters to his brownberry, for he was a "carriage man."

This unexpected scene withdrew all attention from the widow and her companion, and when, the principal actors in it had gone, all thought of Halsa Lamport, for the present, vanished from the minds of the church-goers, whose ways home were full of prophecies on the consequences of Mr. Sarkies's folly.

## **CHAPTER II.**

### **A CUP OF TEA.**

The Rigaum Methodist Tabernacle was in a suburb of Bombay called by that name. It was a small oblong building, washed a pale blue, and embedded in a nest of cocoa palms. To the right a Jain temple raised its gold-tipped cupola, and the chimes of the bell which called together the Christian worshippers of the chapel were often drowned in the discordant shriek of the conch horn, the shrill blast of trumpets, and the incessant beating of drums.

This had resulted in a lawsuit, which ended in leaving the parties much as they were before, except that it was a virtual triumph for the heathen, and his uncanny rejoicings on the Sabbath

became more intolerable than ever.

So strong indeed was the feeling on the point that Elder Bullin concluded an extempore prayer one day with the words, "*And we pray Thee, O Merciful Father! to teach us to forgive our enemies; but to send down the lightning of thy wrath on the heathen, that they, the revilers and mockers of thy worship, may burn in torment without end--Amen.*"

With the exception of the pastor, John Galbraith, and Halsa Lamport, the congregation consisted of Anglo-Indians and Eurasians of the middle and lower classes, the hereditary office hands of the Indian government. The church and the congregation were the remains of a wave of religious enthusiasm that had passed over Bombay some years ago. This originated with an American evangelist, who sought the East to carry, as he said, "the glad tidings to the heathen white."

The revivalist met for a time with a success beyond his hopes, and established at least a dozen churches which were filled with devout worshippers. When the "Bishop," as they loved to call him, left to return home, matters were apparently on a firm basis; but in a few years the zeal he inspired died away, and the light burned but in a few places, one of which was in the chapel at Rigaum. Here, at any rate, it seemed to burn almost as brightly as in the palmy days of the Bishop, and there was no doubt that this was due to the pastor.

By no means a learned man, yet with a sympathetic manner and a fund of quiet humour that attracted all who came under its influence, Galbraith was enabled to hold his flock together when their naturally flighty nature and mutual jealousies would have driven them to dissolve with curses.

The pastor lived in a small house adjoining the church, from which it was separated by a brick wall. A narrow gate allowed a passage from the chapel enclosure to the "Manse," as it was called. In the little plot of ground before the house Galbraith had tried to cultivate a garden, but his efforts were not particularly successful. Nothing would grow here except cocoa palms. There was an everlasting haze of soft dust in the air. The people were accustomed to it, but on a stranger the effect was suffocating. One felt choked in this spot where no pure air ever penetrated the wall of palms. It was never really cool, but a damp pall of dust hung over everything. On the morning we speak of Galbraith rose at an early hour, and, sitting in the small portico of his house, called for a cup of tea. After a little time his Goanese servant appeared, bearing a tray in his hands, on which was a tea-pot, a cup and saucer, with an electro-plated spoon lying beside it; there was a toast also, set in a drunken fashion in a rack.

Manuel's appearance was not attractive, as he shuffled along with his burden, the ends of his toes stuck into a pair of slippers which clicked under his feet. He placed the tea things down on the small table beside Galbraith with a sulky slam that set the spoon twittering in the saucer, and said--

"Master's tea ready."

The pastor poured himself out a cup, and looked for the milk and sugar. There was none. "Boy," said he, "where is the milk and the sugar?"

"Yessar," and Manuel disappeared into the house. "It's very odd," mused Galbraith; "Manuel has been with me nearly two years now, and he persists in not bringing milk and sugar with my morning tea. I must really speak to him--perhaps it is a judgment on me for employing a follower of the Scarlet Woman." He stirred the tea he had poured out, and tasted it, but set it down with a wry face. "The old Adam is still strong within me," he said with a half-smile. "I can not bear tea alone."

In the meantime Manuel reached the back of the house and looked round for the goat he had forgotten to milk. The goat was there, in the veranda, and at sight of him she fled toward the temple, the Goanese in hot pursuit.

"Jesu Maria!" he exclaimed as he seized her at last. "But thou art accursed among beasts--stand still, pig, and be milked."

He squeezed a certain amount of milk into a jug, and, giving the goat a parting kick, ran back into the house, the jug held at arm's-length in front of him.

On a sideboard was a small glass bowl, in which there were a few lumps of sugar. Manuel transferred one to his mouth, and then taking up the basin in his disengaged hand hastened into the portico. He placed the milk and sugar on the table, and silently took up a position behind his master's back.

"Manuel," began Galbraith.

"Yessar."

"Why is it that I have always to ask you about the milk and sugar. Negligent in these little matters, I fear that you neglect also your higher duties."

Manuel ran his fingers uneasily through his oily locks, and burst out, "Nosar--confess, sar--

reglar."

"Confess!" exclaimed Galbraith, roused at having his servant's religious belief thrust before him; "confess to an idol."

"Nosar--confess to Father St. Francis."

"Pish!" and Galbraith helped himself to a fresh cup of tea, but said no more.

When he had finished, the Goanese removed the tea things, and the pastor remained sitting in his easy-chair. He would have liked to smoke; in fact, an almost intolerable longing seized him, but he thrust it down.

"I will not desecrate the Sabbath," he said. He would not even look at his flowers; but after staring for a few minutes at the cheerless walls of the meeting-house, rose and went in.

## CHAPTER III.

### A BILLET-DOUX.

As Galbraith went into the house he noticed the dreary aspect of the rooms. He laid his hand for a moment on a small side-table, and when he lifted his fingers off their impression was distinctly visible on the dusty surface. A picture on the wall before him had slipped from its moorings, and hung in a helpless sort of way from a brass-headed nail. The pastor mounted a chair, and set the picture straight, wiping the glass carefully with his pocket-handkerchief. As he stepped down he called to mind a remark made by good-natured Mrs. Bunny.

"You want a wife," she said to him one day, when he complained of some domestic trouble, in which Manuel had played a principal part. Her eyes rested, as she said this, on Halsa Lamport, who was standing in the veranda attending to a canary. Galbraith followed the glance, and although he smiled a little, and parried the speech, Mrs. Bunny's words set him thinking seriously. And now the little episode of the milk and sugar and the untidy room brought Mrs. Bunny's words back again. It struck him that Mrs. Lamport was very kind and gracious to him. The recollection of their last meeting, and the slight yet warm pressure of her hand which had sent the blood dancing through his veins, came vividly before him.

He reached his dressing-room, and looked at the glass. The few gray hairs were not unbecoming, and he was a well set up man--not bad looking too, he thought, and then--he blushed like a girl at his own folly, and proceeded to dress. Service was at eleven. It was now only eight, so that Galbraith had three hours at his disposal. There was, of course, a Sunday-school class, but this was under the special care of Elder Bullin. It was on such mornings that the elder was in his element. He insisted on a verbatim repetition by heart of a chapter of the Bible by every member of his small class, and in case of failure--three mistakes only were allowed--he painted in glowing colours the horrors of eternal torment that awaited the culprit, when his earthly life closed. He would go so far as to definitely state that the shadowy wings of Death were at that moment hovering over the class, and it often happened that a small member was so overcome with terror that he had to retire bellowing lustily. Fortnightly the elder gave the class an extempore lecture of vast length, and on the following day his two daughters were required to write this out from memory, a labour watered with their tears.

Galbraith completed his toilet, and went into his study to touch up his sermon. The text he had chosen was, "And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power." They were strong, healthful words, but the pastor was not quite certain that he realized their meaning. He was of those who judge of great things by comparing them with little things. He had found that small vices were extremely hard, sometimes impossible, to get rid of, notwithstanding the most assiduous application to the Deity. He almost despaired at times of one of the primal doctrines of his sect--the direct intervention of Providence in the affairs of this world. He was by turns full of certainty and full of doubt. He was willing to concede that the all-seeing eye marked the sparrow falling, but for the life of him he could not help asking himself why the sparrow was allowed to come to disaster.

His profession and education taught him that such a question was almost a deadly sin, and then would come a long fight between the man's religion and his reasoning powers.

He ran his eyes over the text at the head of his sermon with a look of doubt in them, and while doing so his hand unconsciously stole to the corner of his table, where a brown cherry-wood pipe

lay snugly on a fur tobacco-bag. The touch of his fingers against the satin surface of the wood aroused him in a moment to a sense of what he was about to do. He looked at his outstretched hand, the pipe held between his fingers, and then burst out laughing. A moment after his face became grave. "The sparrow was not allowed to fall this time, at any rate," he said, as he put down the pipe and lifted up a small Bible. He turned to the chapter whence he had taken his text, and read it attentively to the end. He went on to the next chapter. It was that in which St. Paul lectures the Corinthians on their conjugal duties. John Galbraith read this slowly, his eyebrows now and then contracting into a slight frown. While he read the face of Halsa Lamport seemed to come between him and the pages, and unseen lips to murmur her name in his ears. There was no use in resisting any longer. In fact, he had never made any resistance, but from the time of Mrs. Bunny's speech mentally associated the widow in all his actions; perhaps, too, the defects in his domestic arrangements had their effect, although he may not have been conscious of the full extent of the power.

"I'll risk it," he said, with sudden resolution, as he pulled a piece of writing paper toward himself and seized a pen. But it was easier said than done, and John ran through a good dozen sheets before he decided on what to say. What he did say was this. He wrote to Halsa Lamport asking for an interview that day as he had that to tell her which was of the greatest importance to himself. The note was very brief, and contained nothing more. He folded and addressed the letter as Manuel came in to announce breakfast. Manuel had smartened himself up. He had on a clean white linen jacket. His hair was more resplendent than ever.

Galbraith felt that breakfast was out of the question. He was feverishly eager now for the time to come when he should see Halsa, and hear from her "ay" or "nay."

"I don't think I'll have any breakfast to-day; and look here, Manuel, take this note to Mr. Bunny's house, and give it to Mrs. Lamport. Bring the answer back before I go to church."

Now the Bunnys lived some little distance away from the Manse, and Manuel was not fond of walking. He tried to put off the evil hour by an affectation of concern. He took the note from Galbraith, and said--

"Yessar--master not ill?"

"No--no," replied Galbraith; "take the note at once, please."

"Fry pomflit for breakfas, sar," said Manuel, "and prong curry--all spile."

"Never mind, Manuel--we'll have some another day. Take that letter and--run."

Manuel did as he was bidden, and Galbraith watched him shuffling along the road until he reached the corner where Pedro Pinto's liquor stall stood. Manuel hesitated a moment here. A glass of toddy, a liquor made out of the fermented sap of the palmyra, would be very grateful; but--he glanced round only to find the pastor standing at the gate and watching him. With a sigh the Goanese turned and went on; but, now that he had passed the curve of the street, slackened his pace to a leisurely walk. He remained away for more than an hour, during which time Galbraith paced the little veranda impatiently, wondering whether there would be any reply to his note. It was impossible to think of anything else, and each moment seemed to him an age. At intervals he walked to the gate, and looked down the road, but there was no sign of Manuel. At last he saw him turn the corner; whereupon, filled with a sudden terror, John hastily retreated into his study, and began to turn over the leaves of his sermon. He tried to persuade himself that he had retired because it was undignified to watch his servant in this manner, but the thick beating of his heart told him he lied to himself. At last there was a shuffle at the door, and Manuel, coming in, stood before his master silently.

Galbraith looked at him. "Did you give the letter? Was there any answer?"

"Yessar." Manuel produced a little gray square envelope from his breast pocket and handed it to Galbraith.

"Very well," said the pastor as he stretched forth his hand to receive the letter, "you can go now."

"Master have tiffin?" inquired Manuel, but Galbraith peremptorily ordered him out of the room. When he had gone John tore the note open. It was written on that abominable pattern of paper which folds like an envelope, and as a consequence, Galbraith in his excitement tore the whole letter in two. With hands that trembled with eagerness he placed the pieces together, and resting them on the table, read the reply--

*"I will meet you after church, and we can walk home together."*

There was no signature, but Galbraith knew the handwriting. He looked furtively around, and then kissing the precious scraps of paper, locked them carefully away.

## CHAPTER IV.

### YES.

On leaving the church, Galbraith and his companion walked slowly down the road. The street was hedged in between two low walls, gray with age, and partly coated with a short, thick moss, whose original colour was hidden by the dust lying heavy upon it. The tops of the walls were covered with bits of broken glass, fragments of bottles stuck upright into the masonry as a defence against trespassers.

Behind these barriers, on either side, the date and cocoa palms grew in thick profusion, hiding from view the dwelling-houses which lay among them. At short intervals a disreputable-looking gate was passed, the paint peeling off in patches from the wood-work. With the exception of the one or two couples returning from service, and a few native Christians at Pinto's liquor stall, lounging with the flies among the long-necked glass bottles, there were no people in the street. The middle of the road was six inches deep in fine dust, but on the side where the pavement should have been, was a small pathway, beaten hard, with just sufficient room for two, provided they walked somewhat closely to each other. John went in the dust, leaving his companion the whole of the sidewalk. His boots were covered with the clinging gray powder, and a portion of it had sprinkled itself on his clothes.

"It's very dusty there, Mr. Galbraith; don't you think you had better come on to the sidewalk?"

"Thank you," said John humbly, as he joined the widow. As he came up, the folds of her dress brushed against him, and her shoulder grazed his. The touch sent a thrill through Galbraith's veins.

"I--I beg pardon," said he nervously, "I am very awkward."

The widow smiled slightly, and shot a glance at him from under her dark eye-lashes. "I don't see that you have anything to beg pardon for."

Galbraith was about to say that all life should be one appeal for pardon, but he checked himself, and, glancing at the walls on either side of them, remarked--

"I wonder how many thousands of bottles were used to make that defence work on the walls here!"

"I really couldn't tell, Mr. Galbraith," replied the widow a little sharply.

John remained silent and abashed for a few moments, and at last she spoke.

"I got your letter, of course, this morning. What was it you were going to tell me? Not about the glass bottles, I hope?" and she showed an even row of pearly teeth between her red lips.

A cold sweat burst out on Galbraith's forehead, and his tongue seemed paralysed. "I--I," he stammered, and then he clutched at a straw. "But what a number of people are on the road to-day."

"There is the short cut, and I think we had better take that." The widow lifted her skirts slightly, and daintily tripped across. John caught a glimpse of an exquisite foot and ankle as he followed.

"Lord," he cried in his heart, "deliver me from temptation!"

Arrived at the opposite side of the road, Halsa turned to her companion, and putting out her foot, looked ruefully at it.

"I have made my boots so dusty--what a horrid road this is!"

John glanced round him nervously, then he pulled out his handkerchief.

"May I?" he asked in a hesitating manner as he waved the folds in the air.

"If you would be so kind;" and John, stooping down, brushed away the dust from one dainty foot, and then the other. He could not help lingering over the task.

The widow, looking down on him, smiled to herself. "He's getting on," she murmured, and then--

"I think that will do--thank you so much. I'm afraid you have ruined that handkerchief--I'm so sorry."

John gave a last brush at the boot before him and rose. He was a little red in the face, but--he was getting on.

"I shall always keep this handkerchief sacredly, Mrs. Lamport," said he, putting it into his pocket carefully.

"How ridiculous!" And the widow gave a little toss to her head, her colour rising slightly.

They walked down the lane until they reached a small gateway. "This," said Halsa as she passed through it, "takes us into the custard apple garden, immediately behind the palm tree, and my favourite seat is there--near the well."

Galbraith followed her under the shade of the palms to the orchard. Their feet crackled over the dry leaves. A rough wooden seat was placed near a banyan tree which spread its shade over the well. Behind the seat was a thick lentena hedge in full bloom, and the butterflies were playing in a small cloud over the blossoms. Close to them a few mynas squabbled over some fallen fruit, and a gray squirrel scuttled past their feet up the trunk of the banyan, and chattered shrilly at them from its branches.

The widow sank into the seat with a comfortable purr, and began tracing imaginary diagrams with the end of her parasol among the fallen leaves at her feet. Galbraith remained standing. "Won't you sit down, Mr. Galbraith?" and Halsa pointed to the vacant space at her side. "There's room for two."

"It is not very warm to-day," he said, as he accepted the invitation.

"No; I think it is quite cool. Look at the clouds. I shouldn't be surprised if there was rain;" and the widow looked up at the fleecy masses which had floated between the sunlight and the earth, hiding the glare and cooling the day.

"Yes, I think we want some rain. This is about the time it usually comes."

"Does it?" Halsa turned her eyes straight upon Galbraith as she said this and looked at him. They were very pretty eyes, very honest and true.

Galbraith had thought over what he meant to say, but could remember nothing. All at once a desperate courage seemed to possess him. "Halsa," he said--his voice was very low and tender--"will you give me this?" He took her hand as he spoke. It lay in his unresistingly. It seemed to return his warm pressure.

The widow's eyes were lowered now, and her cheeks like flame. "My dear," he said, and Halsa, lifting up her face, answered, "I will."

Galbraith could hardly believe himself. He could almost hear the beating of his own heart as he sat with Halsa Lamport's hand in his.

After a while she drew her hand gently away. "Was it this that you meant to tell me?" she asked, and John smiled back "Yes."

There was another silence of a few minutes. Galbraith breathed a silent prayer for the blessing which he believed had been vouchsafed to him. "Lord," he murmured to himself, "I see thy work in this."

"It's getting late," said Halsa suddenly. "They must be back from church now, and will miss us." She rose and stood near Galbraith, her dress touching him. John stood up meekly, and as he stood the widow started back with a little cry, "Don't!"

"Don't--what?"

"I--I thought----" She did not finish her sentence, for the next moment Galbraith's arm was round her waist, and he drew her toward him. Except his mother, he had never touched lip of woman. He kissed her gently with the tenderest possible pressure, and then he kissed her again and again, until at last Halsa drew herself from his arm.

"There," she said, "I think that's enough for you to-day."

John wondered to himself if he could ever have enough of the nectar he had tasted.

"We must really go in now," said Halsa decisively.

"One kiss more," he pleaded. His arm was round her waist; her lips were once more raised to his, when there was a crash in the lentena hedge, a rush of scampering feet, and a shrill voice called out:

"Oh my! how nice! I'm going to tell mummy."

The lovers shot back from each other, and the widow bit her lips with anger.

"It's that horrid little Eddy Bunny. He must have been watching us the whole time. I should like to shake him," and she stamped her foot.

John recovered himself. "Never mind, darling," he said. "Eddy will only break the news for us."

It was wonderful how easy it all seemed now.

## CHAPTER V.

### MRS. BUNNY DOUBTS.

On Sundays the carved blackwood furniture in the Bunny's drawing-room emerged from its weekly suit of holland and shone resplendent in red satin upholstery. Mr. Bunny had exchanged his boots for a pair of list slippers, and was seated in a straight-backed chair, his spectacles pushed on to his forehead. He was a little ill-tempered at having had to take that long road home, and regretted that he had not taken out his brownberry. It was just this point, however, that he was unwilling to concede to Elder Bullin. In a recent argument Bunny maintained that it was flying in the face of divine law to work a horse on a Sunday. The elder held more practical opinions on the subject, and there had almost been an open rupture. Since that time, however, Bunny walked to church on the Sabbath, but was beginning to regret his line of action. He was not a young man, and adipose tissue had increased with his years. It irritated him to see the elder pass him with his pair of katty-war horses. Bunny had only one. The irritation he felt, however, was equalled by the sense of satisfaction that stole over the elder as he passed his opponent engaged in carrying out his convictions. There was a rustle, and Mrs. Bunny came into the room in her black silk dress. She was nearly fifteen years younger than her husband, a somewhat uncommon thing in the class of life to which they belonged, where husband and wife are mostly of the same age, or very near it. Her active habits had, moreover, prevented her from running into flesh as most Eurasian women do. She came into the room briskly, stopped, set some grass in a vase straight, and picking up *The Evangelical Record*, the organ of the Methodist community, settled herself in a chair opposite Bunny, after giving a satisfied glance round the room.

"Halsa and Mr. Galbraith haven't come in yet?" said Bunny, a tone of inquiry in his voice.

"They'll be in just now," replied his wife, unfolding the sheets of the paper and smiling to herself. She was a cunning little woman, and had long read Galbraith's feelings in his eyes.

"Where's Eddy?" asked the father. Eddy was their only child, a boy about twelve years of age. "I think I'll hear him his chapter," he added.

"Yes--where's the boy? Ed-dee!--Ed-dee!" and Mrs. Bunny cried aloud for her offspring.

There was a patter of footsteps in the hall, a rush up the passage, and Eddy burst into the room.

"Oh, maw!" he exclaimed, "Mr. Galbraith is kissing Aunty Halsa in the garden!"

"What!" shouted Bunny, fairly jumping to his feet.

Mrs. Bunny burst out laughing. "You old goose, wait till they come in, and you'll hear more."

"On the Lord's day, too!" said Bunny, holding up his hands. "And what were you doing in the garden? Have you learned your chapter?"

Eddy shuffled from one leg to the other. "It was very long," he protested with a whimper.

"I'll long you--come with me," and Bunny took Eddy's right ear between the thumb and forefinger of his left hand.

Eddy set up a dolorous howling, and Mrs. Bunny interposed. "Remember it's Sunday, Tom," she said.

"Oh--here you are," she added, as Galbraith and Halsa came into the room. Eddy seized his opportunity, and made a run for it.

Galbraith came forward at once, leading Halsa by the hand.

"Mr. Bunny," he said, "I have asked Halsa to be my wife, and she has said----"

"Yes--I knew she would," and Mrs. Bunny kissed Halsa, who blushed and trembled very much.

Mr. Bunny shook hands alternately with Halsa and Galbraith.

"I am very glad," he said. "I didn't think of this; but I am very glad."

After a while Galbraith left. It was agreed that the engagement should be given out at the next meeting of the Council of the Tabernacle, which was to be held in a few days.

"But Eddy knows all about it," said Mrs. Bunny, and Halsa blushed furiously, while Galbraith looked helplessly around.

"I don't think Eddy will say much after I have spoken to him," said Bunny; "and, Galbraith, don't forget that you dine here to-night."

They all walked home after the evening service, and dined quietly and happily together. When the time came for Galbraith to go, Halsa walked with him to the gate. They lingered for a moment there together.

"Good-night, John." She raised her face to his, and he kissed her softly.

"You do not regret?" asked Galbraith, and for answer Halsa kissed him of her own accord. He turned at last, and vanished into the gloom.

That night when they retired to rest, and Bunny and his wife had read a chapter of the big leather-covered Bible, which lay on a small table in their bedroom, Mrs. Bunny turned to her husband.

"Tom," she said, "what if all this should end badly? I am frightened now."

"Why should it end badly?" and Bunny wiped his spectacles carefully and folded them into their case.

"I am afraid now--I don't know why. Why don't you tell me all about Halsa? You never have."

"There's not much to tell. You knew Stephen Lamport, my cousin, when he married Halsa six years ago, and we went on board the Petrel and met them. You know what a scoundrel Stephen was. He led her an awful life for six years, and then deserted her before that last voyage of his to the Mauritius, when the Mahi went down with all on board. Lamport was a big blackguard, but he is dead now."

"What if Stephen is not dead?"

"Not dead--that's nonsense. But it's half-past ten, and I'm going to bed."

Nevertheless Maggie Bunny lay awake late that night. What if Stephen Lamport should not be dead? she kept ever thinking to herself.

At last she stole out of bed and prayed in the dim light for Halsa and Galbraith. When she rose she felt comforted and refreshed. She stole back slowly; Bunny was asleep, and she looked at his face.

"He is a good man," she murmured; "but----"

## **CHAPTER VI.**

### **MASTER EDWARD BUNNY.**

Mr. Sarkies lived with his widowed mother and an unmarried aunt, an elderly spinster, in a small house behind that occupied by the Bunnys. The family were of Armenian descent, although they were unwilling to own the fact. Wherever they went, however, they bore the cachet of their origin with them in their noses, the insignia of race bestowed upon them by Providence. When the wave of religious enthusiasm swept over Bombay it caught up among other flotsam the Sarkies family. The head of the house died shortly after this event, making a most edifying end. He left a little money, and his son was educated as well as it was possible for a man of his class, and was now an assistant accountant in the great firm of Apcoon Brothers, and in receipt of a salary of about two hundred pounds a year. Of a light, volatile character by nature, the strain of



having to live under the restraints of the sect to which he belonged was sometimes too much for Sarkies, and he often broke out occasionally, as on the memorable Sunday when the elder fell foul of him, with disastrous results to himself. He was idolized by his mother and his aunt, and was a contributor to the Poet's Corner of the Bombay Bouncer. He had been much touched by the emotion displayed by Lizzie Bullin when the elder attacked him. He sat up half the night pouring his feelings into verse. He rose early, and copied the verses out neatly on a piece of bright pink Baskeville paper, with a blue J. S. in rustic letters on the top. This he folded carefully in an envelope, but did not address it. "Don't want rows," he said emphatically to himself. His excitement was so great that he contented himself with about one-third of his usual quantity of curry for breakfast, and, entering his buggy, a legacy from his father, in which an old flea-bitten Arab worked loyally, he drove toward his place of business.

"Mind and come back earlee, Jimmee!" screamed his aunt after him.

"Yes, auntee," and the buggy rattled out of the gate on to the road, a cloud of dust rising behind it.

He had not gone far when he saw Eddy Bunny before him, walking to school, a satchel full of books swinging in his hand. A happy thought struck Sarkies; Eddy Bunny attended the High School, where both boys and girls were taught, in different classes, however. Now Sarkies knew that a small sister of Lizzie's was also a pupil at the school. If he could only induce Eddy to give the verses to Florry they would be sure to reach safely. He pulled up, therefore.

"Hallo, Eddy!"

"Hallo!" shouted back the boy, making a shambling sort of salute.

"Want a lift?--drive you to school."

"Orright," and Eddy climbed in.

"When I grow up I'm going to get a buggy better than this."

Sarkies felt a little nettled, but made no reply. He hit the horse smartly, and the beast kicked up its heels, and then went on.

"I say, give me the whip."

"Here you are; and look here, Eddy, I want you to do something for me."

"Aw!"

"Do you know Florry Bullin?"

"She's my sweetheart," replied Eddy; "I'm going to marry her when I grow up."

Better and better, thought Sarkies. "Well, look here, Eddy: Lizzie is *my* sweetheart, and I want to marry her."

"Then you are not going to marry Aunty Halsa? But she wouldn't marry you; she is going to marry Mr. Galbraith."

"What!" Sarkies pulled the reins in and stopped the horse.

"Yes. What'er you stopping for?"--chick, slish--and Eddy used the whip with all his little might.

"Are you sure of this?" asked Sarkies, as they moved on.

"Yes; paw said he'd lick me if I spoke about it."

"Well, look here, Eddy; I want you to give a letter I have to Lizzie; give it to Florry, and tell her to give it. I will give you a ru--no, eight annas, if you do this, and mind and keep quiet about it, or I'll tell that you spoke about Aunty Halsa."

"Give me the eight annas," said Eddy, stretching out his disengaged hand.

They had reached the school gate by this time.

"All right; get down first."

Eddy descended, and held out a small paw, into which Sarkies dropped the coin.

"Quick!" said Eddy, "the bell is ringing. Give me the letter."

Sarkies handed him the note. "Be careful," he said, and Eddy, nodding, turned back in the direction of the school. He had not gone ten yards, however, when he stopped suddenly.

"Mr. Sarkies!" he shouted.

"What is it?"

"Oh! I heard paw tell maw that you are to be turned out of church--wot fun!" He turned again and ran down the road toward the school.

Sarkies was taken aback. He had no idea that the elder meant to carry his threat out.

"Damfool!" he burst out savagely and loudly, for there was no danger of being overheard. Having relieved his feelings in this manner, he urged the old Arab forward, and the buggy once more joggled down the road.

It was not until the half-hour's recess that Eddy obtained an opportunity to deliver the note. He pulled out of his satchel, which hung on a peg in the veranda of the school, a brown paper parcel containing his lunch--egg sandwiches. Clutching this in one hand, he made his way to the back garden of the school, and found Flora Bullin there. It was their trysting place.

"Have a sweet?" she asked, handing him a lozenge which had become rather damp and limp in her hand.

"Lozengers--eh!" said Eddy, and transferred the delicate morsel to his mouth.

"I say," he said, "that's nice." He took a huge bite out of one of his egg sandwiches and began to speak again, with his mouth full.

"I say, Florry, Jim Sarkies is sweet on Lizzie."

"Lizzie is a horrid cat," replied Florry, as she soberly chose a sweet for herself out of a glass bottle. "She pinched me--awfool, last night, as I lay awake and listened. See there," and Florry bared a small arm showing the blue marks of a finger and thumb.

Eddy examined it gravely. "How did you get caught?" he inquired--"laff?"

"Yes."

"Well, you are a muff. I never get caught that way."

"Oh, but you're a boy!"

"Yes; when I'm a man I'm going to marry you--do you hear that?"

Florry nodded. "All right," she said. "What did Jimmee say about Lizzie?"

"Oh! he gave me--a--hm--no--he gave me a letter for Lizzie, and I promised to give it to you to give to her, y'know."

"Where's the letter?--give it to me."

Eddy pulled out of his pocket the envelope, now soiled and grimy from contact with a peg-top, a bit of native sweetmeat, and the leather pouch of his catapult.

"Here 'tis," he said; "you'll give it to Lizzie?"

Florry took the letter carefully. "It's very dirty," she said, as she slipped it into her pocket. There was a silence of about a minute, during which time Eddy finished the remainder of his sandwiches.

"Well," he said, "I'm off to bowl a little; you girls are no use--can't do anything."

"Stop a minute, Eddy. Lizzie *is* a cat. She don't like you neither. Wouldn't it be fun to give this letter to paw?"

"Urn," reflected Eddy, "Lizzie pinched you. I won't have anybody pinching you, y'know. I'm going to marry you when I grow up. Serve Jimmy Sarkies right, too," he added, suddenly brightening up--"awful sneak. Yes, leave it on your paw's table, and say nothing. I'm off now, only ten minutes left."

"Look here, Eddy."

"Oh, bother! what's it now?"

"Only this. I might like to marry some one else, you know, when I grow up. Ta--ta." She blew a kiss at him, and was gone.

Eddy thrust his hands into his pockets and looked moodily after her. Suddenly an idea seemed to strike him. "It's Billy Bunder," he said, striking his clenched fist into his open palm--"only wait till I catch him----"

Clang, clang, went the school bell. The recess was over.

## CHAPTER VII.

### DUNGAREE'S BELT.

Digby Street, so named after a former governor of the presidency, is not more than three miles from the tabernacle. Probably in no part of the world does vice cover itself with so hideous a garb as here. An atmosphere of evil hangs over the dingy houses, packed closely to each other, whose inhabitants follow nameless occupations. When the night comes the street lamps shine on strange scenes. In the day all is silent as the grave. At the corner of the street is a small house. A faded sign-board, with the words "Hotel Metropole" in yellow letters on a blue field, explains its character. The landlord is a Parsee, or fire-worshipper, who has added an English word to his Eastern name, and is known to his customers, and to the police, as Kavasji Pain-killer. Mine host stands at the open entrance to his house. A misshapen figure, with dull eyes and bloated features, he reminds one of the strange bird-eating spiders of the forests of the East and West Indies.

As this man gazes aimlessly down the road, he sees a few dim figures flitting in front of him. They move on rapidly for a few yards and stop. Suddenly there is a flash of light above them, and as each street lamp is lit, a small halo is formed in the evil night haze now beginning to envelop the street. It is not yet time, however, for the inhabitants to awaken from their drunken slumbers. It is later on that the lost legion rises.

As the figures disappeared from view the landlord turned slowly and moved into the bar-room, where there was a thick odour of stale liquor and staler tobacco. The room was empty, save for the figure of a man lying asleep at a small marble-topped table, his head resting on his arms. From a smaller room beyond, the door of which was closed, came the sound of voices, and now and then an oath, or a hoarse laugh. Kavasji made a movement as if to approach the door, but changing his mind passed behind the bar, and settling himself into a cane chair, dozed off comfortably.

In the meantime the conversation in the next room grew louder, and apparently more mirthful. There were two men there, sitting at a table, over which a well-thumbed pack of cards was scattered in some confusion. The room was littered with the *débris* from empty pipes and the remains of half-burnt matches. A reflecting lamp, glaring from the wall, exactly opposite the door, threw out the figures in strong relief.

"And so, messmate, I scooped in the dust--every dollar of it."

And the speaker, a tall, powerful man, whose shirt-sleeves, pulled up to the elbow, showed the tattoo marks on his arms, brought his fists on the table with a crash that made the glasses clink.

"It was hellish cute," said his companion, as he leaned back and laughed heartily, showing an even row of strong white teeth through the masses of red hair with which the lower portion of his face was covered. "I don't know a man, Dungaree," he added, "who could have done it save yourself."

The giant grinned in response to the compliment, and, pulling out a jack-knife, began to pare some tobacco from a twist lying on the table beside him.

"That," said he, nodding his head at the knife as he finished the operation, "was the tickler."

"Rayther light for the work," said the red-haired man, as he picked the knife up and poised it in his hand.

"There's the weight behind it," answered Dungaree Bill, puffing away at his short pipe.

"True, but I prefer a brace and bit. I did something like that myself, 'bout--let me see--six years ago, I think; but it don't matter. Whole shipload went down. No time to lower boats, except captain's gig. Lord, how I did laugh! You know the old trick--*sabe?*"

"And blowed the oof after," laughed his companion.

"Not much," was the reply. "Some shad-belly of a lawyer began to ask questions--curse him!--and the work--well done, too--went for nothing."

"And you?"

"Went under."

"And serve you right for a chowder-headed clam. I was wise enough to take my share in advance--and stick to it, too." The giant tapped his hand over his waist as he spoke, and reaching for the bottle began to pour out another drink for himself.

"God's curse," said he, "there's nothing in here."

The red-haired man's small eyes were twinkling under the skull-cap pulled well over his brows.

"I'll play you for another," he said.

"Done with you; but let us have the drink first."

"All right; what shall it be?"

"Monkeys," replied Dungaree, "and let their tails be curled. After this I'm off--we sail with the tide."

The red-haired man rose from his chair, and, opening the door, passed into the bar-room. A hanging lamp was burning in the centre, and Kavasji slept peacefully. Walking with a slightly unsteady gait he reached the bar, and, leaning with both hands on it, shouted out:

"Two monkeys; and mind you, Kavasji, lift up your elbow."

Kavasji scrambled from his chair, and, placing two tumblers on the table, half filled them with rum. He then turned to a rack where there were a number of bottles of aerated water. As his back was turned the man at the bar pulled out a small phial containing a colourless liquid, and emptied it into one of the tumblers. He had just time to replace the phial in his pocket when Kavasji turned and filled the glasses with what he called tonic water.

"That'll do, sonny," said the red-haired man, placing some silver coins with a smart click on the bar. "This settles the shot," and seizing a glass in each hand he lurched forward to rejoin his friend. Kavasji tested the coins carefully with his teeth and rang them on a table. Then opening a drawer, he shut them up with sundry companions.

The man sleeping at the table rose, and, after staring vacantly about him for a moment, walked out slowly into the street. As his friend entered the room Dungaree Bill took one of the "monkeys" from his outstretched hand. They, clinked the glasses together above and below.

"Here's luck," said Bill. The other nodded, and they drained the glasses.

"Tails curly enough?" asked the red-haired man.

"I guess so," said Dungaree, wiping his mouth with the back of his hairy hand.

"And now," said he, "for the game."

They arranged the cards; Dungaree cut, and the red-haired man dealt.

After a few rounds the effect of the drug began to tell. The giant's head sank upon his breast, and the little man's eyes twinkled with a vicious glee.

"Wake up, Dungaree," he said; "you're asleep, man."

"By God," said the other, "you've----"

His head dropped once more, and the long, powerful arms hung listlessly by his side.

The red-haired man had started from his seat at Dungaree's words, and in his hand held an open knife, which he had drawn like lightning.

He heaved a sigh of relief as he saw Dungaree's head sink back.

Then rapidly approaching him, he rifled him with a practised hand. He undid the canvas belt from his waist, and felt it heavy as he raised it and transferred it to his own person.

He then moved toward the door, but a sudden thought struck him, and he returned. He took up Dungaree's knife from the table.

"Might as well ease him of this," he said; "he will do somebody a hurt when he awakens."

Opening the door, he stepped into the barroom, and, reeling up to a table near the door, called for another drink. Kavasji once more turned his back, and with the noiseless rapidity of a cat the robber vanished into the street, which was already beginning to awaken.

He dashed down a small alley, and only stopped after he had run for about half an hour. "I guess," said he, "Steve Lamport, you are born again." Then turning down a broad street, he walked slowly forward in the direction of the nearest railway station.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CAST OUT FROM THE FOLD.

A council, of which Galbraith was *ex-officio* president, controlled the affairs of the tabernacle, and adjudicated on all offences committed by members of the congregation against the rules of the body.

As far as he was able the pastor tempered the decrees of the council with mercy, and there was yet another thing which made this body weak in comparison with similar institutions in the West. This was the natural shallowness of the East Indian, and his inability to feel or think deeply. In this manner the gloomy tenets of a religious sect, which called themselves the elect of heaven, and condemned all others to eternal torment, were softened.

The instances were rare in which those terrible mental struggles so often described in the annals of Methodism took place. At the same time the belief in the direct interposition of the Creator in the smallest matters was intensified almost beyond imagination, and meanings were often assigned to the most ordinary actions of everyday life which, if they were not sad, would be laughable to contemplate.

Galbraith was an unconscious doubter, and he was perhaps the only man there whose faith, unknown to himself, was tottering on its foundations. In a dim sort of way he was conscious that there was something wrong with himself, and the impulse to throw off the chains of the cheerless belief to which he was bound was at times almost greater than he could endure. It was his hourly duty to exhort his flock to find Christ. Many of them asserted that they had made the discovery, and looked with complacent satisfaction on the certainty of future salvation.

But while John Galbraith was raising his voice and preaching to his people, there was that within him that told him that he himself was unable to find the haven of rest, and a longing for a warmer belief, one full of love and charity, would come upon him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Elder Bullin, arrayed in a solemn suit of black, stood, hat in hand, at his doorstep. His brownberry was ready, the lamps flashing brightly in the darkness of the evening.

It was the date of the monthly meeting of the tabernacle, and the elder was determined to put Mr. Sarkies out of the fold, that "tainted wether," whose further touch was contamination. His daughters stood beside him to see him off, and the elder, rapping his stick on the fibre matting, impressed upon the girls the necessity for holding godly communion among themselves during his absence.

His speech was interrupted by the fact that in slipping his hand into his waistcoat pocket, he suddenly remembered that he had forgotten his spectacles.

Hastily stopping his discourse, he walked back to his room, and found the brown leather case lying on a square envelope on his writing-table. He picked up the case, and, pulling out the glasses, fixed them carefully over his eyes. He then picked up the envelope. It was not addressed, but carefully sealed. He rubbed it between his finger and thumb. There was evidently something inside it. The bright pink colour aroused his suspicions.

"The livery of the scarlet woman," he said, as he tore it open. As he read, the expression of his countenance changed from profound astonishment to anger, and then to utter contempt.

"Verses--poetry--Satan hath lain in wait for this unhappy young man, and his portion shall be of the wrath to come--verses--and to me--pah!"

He recognised the writing and the monogram, and was self-complacent enough to imagine that the verses were addressed to him.

When he returned to the hall his daughters were still dutifully waiting there. He said no word to them, however, but, entering his carriage, closed the door after him with a bang, and was rapidly driven off. The meeting was to be held in the church, and all the members of the council were already expecting the elder. On his arrival there was a solemn scene of handshaking all round, and then the pastor opened the meeting with a short but fervent prayer. At the conclusion of this, a decorous time was allowed for the members to recover a sitting posture, and Mr. Bunny, rising, begged permission to address the assembly. In a few words he explained that it was above all things desirable that their pastor should be a married man, and went on to say that the Lord had

worked this out in his own manner, so that the spirit had moved Galbraith to seek the hand of their beloved sister, Halsa Lamport, in marriage, and that it was proposed to celebrate the ceremony with all the speed consistent with good taste. Mr. Bunny trusted that the assemblage would rejoice with their beloved guide in his choice.

It was scarcely possible to do otherwise than congratulate Galbraith, and the council did so, but in a half-hearted fashion that showed they doubted his wisdom. Elder Bullin alone raised his voice in protest. "She walks forth decked in gay colours that are not of the Lord's," he said, "and has not found the perfect peace. Far be it for me to interfere in this matter, but my conscience"--here he smote his breast with his hand--"tells me that it would have been wiser----" Mr. Bunny started up, but Galbraith laid a restraining hand on his shoulder.

"Gently, brother," he said; "let the elder say his say."

But the murmur of discontent that arose told the elder he had gone far enough. "I will say no more on this point," he said; "but as I am now addressing the meeting, desire to bring to its notice the scandalous conduct of our brother, James Sarkies, who, on the Sabbath before last, profaned the Lord's day by cursing within the precincts of the temple. Of what avail is it that such should be of our fold--better is it that we cast out the offending member. Does not the Scripture say, 'If thine eye offend thee, cast it out'?"

"The Scripture also says, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged,'" replied Galbraith. Elder Bullin lifted his eyes in smug satisfaction to the ceiling.

"I," he said, somewhat irrelevantly, "am sure of my salvation; are you of yours? Do you know where your footsteps lead you? Mine lead me to the golden gates."

At that moment the desire to say that he was walking blindly, and needed light more than any there, swept over Galbraith. He controlled himself with an effort, however, and sat still, leaning lightly on the table with his elbow.

"And furthermore," went on the elder, "the misguided youth has so far lost his respect for age that he has addressed me for forgiveness in poetry, and mocked me before my face." He laid the offending verses on the table as he spoke. "This is his writing," he said; "those who wish may read it."

Mr. Bunny stretched forth his hand and handed the paper to the pastor. Galbraith read it with an amusement he could not conceal.

"I think, elder," he said, "this was not meant for you."

Bullin fairly gurgled with rage. "I will read it aloud," he said, "and let the council judge." The paper trembled in his hand as he spoke, and it was with a voice quivering with anger that he read the unfortunate Sarkies's production.

Almost as the first verse was begun, however, a smile appeared on the faces of the members in assembly, and as the elder went on they burst out into uncontrollable mirth.

Bullin dashed the paper on the table, and made as if he were about to leave the meeting. "I will depart," said he; "the devil has possessed you that you laugh at the mockery to my gray hairs."

He had reached the door before restraining hands seized him, and he was brought back with many apologies.

Notwithstanding their amusement, the council were resolved to make an example of Sarkies. Galbraith, however, made an effort in his defence. He hoped, he said, to bring the erring youth back to better ways. But notwithstanding all his persuasions, he was outvoted in this instance, even Bunny taking the elder's side, and the expulsion of Sarkies was decided on.

Bullin was not inclined to let the grass grow under his feet. The formal letter was then and there written, signed by all the members, and handed to the clerk for despatch.

It was now deemed advisable to bring the sitting to a close, and this was done with the same formal ceremony of prayer which opened it.

The members now dispersed, the elder showing his gratitude for Bunny's support by insisting on driving him home.

## CHAPTER IX.

## AT THE DIVAN EXCHANGE.

When the news that Sarkies was cast out of the bosom of the church reached the family, there was at first consternation and despair. But pride came to their rescue. "I don't care," said Jimmy; and the mother and the aunt, tossing their heads, echoed his sentiments. Mrs. Sarkies returned a small box full of woolwork, the shop of the Dorcas Society, with a stinging note to Mrs. Bunny, in which she accused that innocent woman of having conspired to bring about the annoyance to which they were subjected. Mrs. Sarkies was convinced that it was solely through Mrs. Bunny's desire to have charge of the work of the Dorcas Society that all this had happened.

The next Sunday the whole Sarkies family drove slowly past the tabernacle in a hired phaeton just as the congregation were coming out after service, and cut every member dead. It was glorious. They came back to their midday meal feeling a calm satisfaction at having revenged a great wrong.

There was much discussion as to whether the family should join the congregation of the established church, or take the bolder step of going over to Rome--the latter for preference, as it would fairly spite their enemies. The question, however, was for the present left in abeyance, and until it was settled they decided not to go to any church at all. Mr. Sarkies himself felt a load lifted from his mind at this decision. He determined not to let his love affair rest, and, notwithstanding every precaution, managed to obtain an interview with Lizzie, by the simple process of clambering up the trunk of a cocoanut palm which leaned against the high wall surrounding the elder's garden. Mr. Sarkies climbed up sufficiently high to overlook the wall, and Lizzie stood on the ground below him. The glass-covered wall was, however, between them. The position was not dignified, nor was it exactly comfortable, and Mr. Sarkies dreaded the general publicity of the whole scene. Still, however, he came to a satisfactory understanding with Lizzie. When she finally turned and vanished amid the trees, her white dress flitting through the open spaces in a ghostly manner, Sarkies came down with a sigh of relief, and, arranging his somewhat disordered dress, walked slowly toward a cab-stand. Hailing a buggy, and jingling some coin in his pocket, he jumped in and drove rapidly toward the Fort. He had mentally determined to celebrate his success by having an evening at the Divan Exchange, a saloon kept by an enterprising American, who concocted wondrous drinks, where the billiard-table was good, and the ice-creams marvellous. There was quite a crowd of cabs collected at the door, and the place was full when Sarkies entered it. Over the bar was a huge transparency representing the face of a clock, with the legend "No Tick Here" inscribed in large capitals on its face--a motto often full of sore disappointment to the customers. Immediately below this stood Colonel William P. Tamblyn, the proprietor, watching the practised hand of his tapsters as they poured forth monkeys, dogs' noses, eye openers, maiden's blushes, and other drinks whose name is legion. From the rooms above came the click of billiard balls, and the monotonous call of the marker--"Fiftee--fiftee-two--good game, sar!" Little marble-topped tables were scattered about, and from a dais in the corner half a dozen musicians regaled the company with a choice selection of airs, from the "Blue Danube" to "Yankee Doodle." The music was almost drowned in the buzz of voices. All nationalities except China were represented here. Colonel Tamblyn announced that he drew the line there, and a flaring poster both outside and inside announced that "Chinamen and Soldiers in uniform are not admitted."

Sarkies obtained a suitable drink; he chose that pink compound of rum, mint, crushed ice, and peach brandy which rejoices in the name of maiden's blush, and bore it away with him to the billiard-room upstairs. The tables were full, and Sarkies, making himself comfortable on a bench, waited for his turn to come.

Beside him sat a neat-looking man, clean-shaven, with red hair and small black bead eyes. His blue coat with brass anchor buttons explained his calling. His ducks were spotlessly white, and the pipe-clay on his canvas shoes evidently just dry.

"May I trouble you for a light?" said the man.

"Certainly;" and Sarkies handed him a small plated box containing wax vestas.

The stranger lit a cheroot, and, returning the box, inquired, "Come here often?"

"Ya'as--sometimes," and Sarkies took a pull at his drink.

"This is about the first time I've been here; my ship has only just come in. Pleasant place this." And the stranger watched the end of his cheroot keenly to see that it was burning properly.

"Have a game after this?" asked Sarkies, and the stranger agreed.

They were able to get a table, and a small bet was made on the game, which Sarkies, much to his delight, won. The stranger paid up, and as he did so he remarked:

"You play a very good game--may I ask your name?"

"Oh, Sarkies--I'm in Apcoon Brothers."

"The great shipping agents--delighted to meet you--allow me to present my card to you," and Mr. Sarkies's new acquaintance drew a card from a new leather case and handed it to him.

Sarkies regretted within himself that he had not brought a card-case with him, and determined in future never to be without one. He bowed politely over the outstretched hand of his companion, and took the card between his fingers; as he glanced at it an expression of surprise came over his face.

"Captain S. Lamport, Merchant Marine," he said aloud. "This is strange."

A shadow passed over his companion's face.

"I don't see anything strange in my name," he said a little sternly.

Sarkies looked at him; there was an ugly scowl on his face, and the Armenian felt a little alarmed. "Not that, captain," he said; "only I know a person named Lamport--and she is--I mean she is a widow, and is going to be married."

The stranger's brow cleared. "Let us sit down for a bit," he said. "I am much interested--and, sir, may I ask are you the happy man?"

"Oh, no--the padre of our--I mean the Methodist church--a Mr. Galbraith."

"Um! I see," mused Captain Lamport; "lots of money--eh!"

"I expect so." And then with a knowing smile Sarkies added, "The padre has the church funds, y'know."

"He! he!" laughed the captain, and poked Sarkies in the ribs; "sly dog--you're a deep one, you are."

Mr. Sarkies, much flattered by the compliment, proposed a drink, and the captain assented. In answer to his host's request to "name the poison," the captain suggested monkeys, and the monkeys were brought. Then there was more billiards and more betting, then a little rest and more monkeys, then monkeys, billiards, and betting combined, and finally Mr. Sarkies knew no more.

When he awoke again the stars were shining palely above him, and there was a faint flush in the east. His hands were resting on something damp on each side of him; he looked, and realized that he was on the open plain in front of the Fort. Instinctively he felt for his watch chain. It was gone. Mr. Sarkies rose to his feet, and the horizon swam before him. He placed his hand to his burning head, and staggered rather than walked toward the road. A late cab passed. Into this he entered and drove home.

## CHAPTER X.

### EXIT MANUEL.

During the last few days there had been great changes in the interior of the manse. The worn-out matting was renewed, and the squatter spider expelled from the corner where he had long revelled in security. The tumble-down sofa was condemned, and a comfortable lounge took its place. Everywhere there was a look of freshness. All day long there was the sound of hammering and cleaning up. Hals and Mrs. Bunny personally superintended the reformation. Galbraith was willing enough to help, but he had no "hands," and was therefore relegated to his study. But with Manuel it was different. For the first time in his life Manuel realized what work was, and he was profoundly convinced that he and true labour would never agree. It was not enough that he had been called upon to clean and scrub, to hew wood and draw water, but insult was added to injury by Mrs. Bunny inquiring into the arrangements of the *menage*.

"Two bags of sugar a month!" said that excellent woman, holding up her hands in despair; "why, if it were all used, the man must be a lollipop shop inside."

"Who keeps the keys?" asked Hals. She was halfway up a ladder, a small hammer in her hand. Manuel stood at the foot of the ladder holding it firmly with one hand, so that it should not slip, while with the other he held out at arm's length a plate full of tin tacks. The position was strained and unpleasant. "Who keeps the keys? Oh!" she shrieked, "how sharp those nails are!" and she drew back her fingers smartly and began to examine their tips. To one of them a tack was



clinging. Halsa hastily descended, and Mrs. Bunny removed the offending tack. It left a small blue mark on the finger tip. In the meanwhile Manuel remained silent. He had no intention of replying to the question, and his yellow eyes glistened with pleasure at the little accident, which had apparently called away attention from an embarrassing inquiry. But Manuel was mistaken, for when Halsa had examined the mark for a moment, and was satisfied that it was only a prick, she returned again to the charge and repeated her question.

"I keep keys," replied Manuel sulkily.

"I told you so, Halsa," said Mrs. Bunny, waving a damp duster in the air. Mrs. Bunny had not mentioned the fact, but it was a little weakness of hers to refer to former prophecies after a thing had happened.

"Never mind," Halsa said, "you couldn't expect John to look after these things." There was a sense of proprietorship in her tone that was delightful to Galbraith, who had come in to see how things were going on, and had been an unobserved witness of the scene. Halsa was looking very pretty. Her arms were bare up to the elbows, and there was a bright flush on her cheeks. The brown hair, usually neatly braided, had become a little disarranged, and curled in an unruly manner over her forehead. Mrs. Bunny suddenly remembered that there was something to do in the study, and Manuel, ever watchful for an opportunity to escape, laid down the plate of tacks and vanished noiselessly. Galbraith glanced round him, and then his arm stole forth. Halsa avoided the caress by stepping back, and asked him how he thought the room looked.

"I never thought it could look so well," he replied, and he spoke truly. The magic of feminine hands had changed the cheerless-looking room into a bright, cosy chamber. It was not that the things were valuable; fifty pounds might have covered the cost of everything, except the American harmonium, which stood where the fireplace ought to have been. All the effect lay in the nameless power of arrangement which only a woman possesses--a touch here--a touch there--and the thing is done.

"I am glad you like it," said Halsa, as she stepped nearer to Galbraith. "See how I've hurt my finger;" and she held the wounded member up for inspection.

John took the small hand in his, and looked at the blue mark on her finger tip. It was hardly perceptible. The shadow of a smile flickered across his face as he kissed the little fingers tenderly, and then, drawing Halsa closer to him, kissed her once more on the lips--she nothing resisting now.

Mrs. Bunny's discreet cough in the next room warned them of her impending return, and when the good lady came in Halsa had once more mounted the ladder. When she had finished her work she came down, and they all took a final survey of their labour, and were pleased by it. Then Manuel was recalled from the back of the house, where he was employed in solacing his feelings with a native cigarette, and cursing his existence in the *patois* of Goa.

A few orders were given to him with regard to clearing up some *débris*, and then the party, including Galbraith, went into the hall, where the ladies put on their hats, and, escorted by the pastor, returned home. The whole home party of the Bunnys, except Eddy, were to dine at the manse that night with Galbraith, and he was nervously anxious about the success of the entertainment.

Manuel watched them as they went down the road. He shook his fist after the retreating figures.

"Oh, yes!" he said, "Manuel this and Manuel that--Manuel light fire--light lamps--clean house--make fuss-class dinner--Sancta Maria! what Manuel not do!--Iyoo!" He crossed himself fervently, and went on--"Missus come--missus want keep keys--Manuel not a dog--Jesu!" he exclaimed, "there is that accursed goat among the new flowers." He hastened out of the door, drove the milch goat to the back of the house, and fastened her up securely.

Then, coming back, he conscientiously carried out the final instructions given him--picking up the litter of cotton and tags of hangings which lay on the floor, and when this was over made his way to the kitchen, where he exercised all his skill in superintending the preparation of a "fuss-class dinner."

Two things were a matter of regret to him: one that he was not sufficiently skilled to write out a *menu* card, but this he hoped to arrange with the assistance of Pedro Pinto's son, who attended the school attached to the monastery of St. Vincent de Paul; the other was that there were to be no wines, for both host and guests were teetotallers, and the drinking of wine or spirits in any form, unless medicinally prescribed, was regarded as a deadly sin.

Galbraith came out of his study a little before dinner-time to see how things were. Manuel was not there, and it seemed as if some unseen hand had set the table, had arranged that oddly pretty pattern of leaves on the snowy table-cloth, and placed that bouquet of fresh fuchsias beside the plate where Halsa was to sit.

Galbraith himself looked years younger. He glanced about him with a satisfied air, and then going back into his study, waited impatiently for the sound of wheels to tell him that his guests had come. Punctual to the moment Mr. Bunny's brownberry came up. Galbraith stepped up to the

door of the carriage, and helped out Mrs. Bunny and Halsa, the latter giving his hand a little squeeze. Mr. Bunny emerged last of all, a pile of wraps on his arm, and, after directing the coachman to return at precisely ten o'clock, followed his wife and Halsa Lamport into the house. They all assembled in the cosy little parlour, and in a few minutes Manuel came in. He whispered something to Galbraith, and then slipped out again. He had conveyed thus mysteriously the announcement that dinner was ready. They all went in without any ceremony; the ladies first, the men behind. Grace was, of course, said, but Galbraith took care that it should not be unnecessarily long. The dinner was excellent, and full justice was done to the meal. Manuel attempted to make up for the want of a written *menu*, that picaroon boy of Pinto's not having come to write it as arranged, by calling out the names of the dishes.

"Krab cutlit, sar," he said, as he thrust the delicacy before Mr. Bunny. "Prong curry, madam--berry good," and he held the dish for Mrs. Bunny. Galbraith, however, interfered, much to Manuel's disappointment. He made up, however, for this by the air with which he filled the tumblers with water--the grand butler serving Louis Quatorze could not have done it with a better manner. At last it was all over; Mr. Bunny ate his last walnut, and washed it with a better manner. At last it was all and played patience; then there was a little talking, and precisely at ten the carriage came. Mr. Bunny could not be induced to stay a moment later. There was much hand-shaking, and a kiss for Halsa, soberly given in the Bunnys' presence by Galbraith, and received by the widow with becoming modesty. When they had gone Galbraith lit a pipe, and, opening an old volume of Ingram, set himself out for an hour's read. He was interrupted by a cough, and, looking up, saw Manuel in front of him.

Manuel shifted a clean white napkin from one hand to another, and asked, "Dinner good, sar---yverything praper?"

"Yes, indeed, Manuel; I am very much pleased with you."

"Thank you, sar," and Manuel bowed; "but, sar, I come for leave."

"Leave, Manuel?--do you mean to say you want to go?"

"Yessar--missus come, and yverything spile--missus keep keys--missus take account--missus measure out sugar--tea--work too much. My mother also dead in Goa, and I want leave."

Galbraith looked at him. "But I will increase your pay."

"No, sar; all pay same like to Manuel when in service, but when missus come--I no stay. My mother berry ill."

Galbraith smiled. "I thought your mother was dead," he said; "but it does not matter, you can go."

Manuel bowed again, and retired.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE HAPPY PAIR.

The combined news that Sarkies was expelled from the fold and that their pastor was, almost at once, to marry the pretty widow, became the property of the congregation the day after the meeting. In family conclaves Sarkies was regarded as doomed to eternal perdition, and heads were gravely shaken over Galbraith's choice. Still, he commanded their respect, and his influence was strong--so strong that Elder Bullin found he was unable to get supporters to move a resolution condemning the pastor's choice, and calling upon him to give up the care of his flock. Mr. Bullin urged that this was vitally necessary for the well-being of the community, but the severity of his action against Sarkies frightened some, Mr. Bunny's influence prevailed over others, and the general liking for Galbraith was so great that his flock began in a few days to extend a portion of their regard for him to his intended wife. The elder therefore failed, but his voice did not remain unheard both in public and in private. This, however, unconsciously helped to assist Galbraith's cause, as the elder was more feared than loved, and the people he was dealing with wanted real courage of purpose. Even if their objections had taken head, the agitation would have been confined to private whisperings and perhaps a solemnly worded letter to the Bombay Bouncer.

At length the day came for the marriage, and the ceremony was performed in the tabernacle by the pastor of another congregation, an out-station resident, who came in specially for the

purpose. The elder refused to attend, and forbade his daughters going; but this was a sight not to be missed, and both Lizzie and Laura were there. It is some consolation to know that their father did not discover this. With the exception of Mr. Bullin, however, every member of the congregation was present. Even Mr. Sarkies waited patiently at the chapel entrance, and as he stood he saw a neatly-dressed man step out of a hired buggy and pass into the church. When the bride came Sarkies slipped into the church unobserved and witnessed the whole ceremony. He was able also to recognise in the neatly-dressed man the affable stranger of the Divan Exchange. The bride, however, claimed his attention, and his friend was forgotten as he looked at her. Very pretty looked Halsal in her dark-gray dress, with hat to match, and when the words were spoken which made her John Galbraith's wife, the whole party adjourned to Mr. Bunny's, all but Sarkies the outcast and the neat-looking stranger, who passed him unobserved, and, getting into his buggy, drove away rapidly. At Mr. Bunny's all was very gay. As a special occasion glasses of ginger wine were served round with the cake, and the bride's health drunk amid much applause. With hearts warmed by the cordial, these emotional people felt that Halsal Galbraith was now one of them, and they one and all shook hands with her heartily. As the time approached for the happy couple to depart on their short honeymoon, order was called, and the guests, having arranged themselves soberly, listened to an exhortation from the Rev. Samuel Boase, the clergyman who officiated at the marriage. The worthy man discoursed at some length on the holiness of the institution, and it was only the sound of carriage wheels, as they grated away from the portico, that aroused him to the fact that the newly-wedded pair had slipped away unobserved. Hastily concluding his speech, the reverend gentleman included his amen in a rush for the bag of rice, and, seizing a handful, attempted to pursue the carriage, followed by all the guests. They were too late, however, and all came in hot, breathless, and a little disappointed. Eddy Bunny alone was satisfied. Armed with an old shoe, he had concealed himself in the shrubbery, and as the carriage drove by he aimed this at Galbraith with a precision acquired by long practice with the catapult. It was some little time before the victim recovered from the shock, and when he did the carriage was well on its way toward the railway station.

The honeymoon lasted barely a fortnight, for two reasons, one being that the Rev. Samuel Boase was unable to take Galbraith's work for more than that period, and the other the important factor of expense. Back they came, then, from a short trip to the hills near Bombay. It was the first real holiday Galbraith had ever enjoyed. The long day's dream under the trees, the gathering of ferns in some secluded glen, the rest, and, above all, the dear companionship he had, combined to make it very sweet. Galbraith told his wife of the mental struggle he was perpetually undergoing, and received much help from her clear common sense and healthful sympathy. She in her turn gave him no half-confidence, but told him honestly the story of her life. She touched as lightly as possible on her former husband's ill-treatment of her, on his cruelty and neglect, for the man was dead. She told him how, two years back, the Mahi sailed from Cochin for the Mauritius, and from that time was heard of no more, until a solitary survivor came back with a dreadful tale of the sea. He told how the ship had been scuttled, how all the boats were rendered useless except one, into which the captain and two others escaped. Clinging to a spar himself, he had seen a great green wave swamp the boat, and then for him came three days of hideous agony, and at last rescue. Of the death of her husband no doubt ever crossed Halsal's mind. She had seen the newspaper reports of the inquiry into the disaster, and had interviewed the rescued man. She opened a school at Cochin, and was enabled to keep her head above water with this, and with the proceeds of flower-painting, in which she had some proficiency. Then came a fortunate legacy of some four hundred pounds, and she consulted Mr. Bunny, a cousin of her husband, on business matters connected with this. The Bunnys had repeatedly asked her before to make her home with them, and they renewed this invitation now in so kind a manner that Halsal accepted. It was an invitation to stay until she could obtain some suitable employment; but a year passed--"And you found the employment," said Galbraith; "you have to take care of me now." And Halsal smiled at him from under her dark eye-lashes in reply.

Back they came, then, and even Elder Bullin was there to receive them. "Let bygones be bygones, elder," said the pastor, as he shook the stiff fingers the old man held out. Bullin mumbled something which no one heard, but all believed that a reconciliation had taken place.

Halsal entered heartily into her husband's work. She discarded the high straw hats, the red ribbons, and fluttering white raiment, and the only trace of her former somewhat coquettish taste in dress was now in the exceeding neatness of her sober-coloured garments. She was quick and clever at figures, and Galbraith willingly relinquished to her the charge of keeping the accounts of the tabernacle funds. She wore the key of the cash-box in a chain suspended round her neck; and at the monthly audit Elder Bullin confessed that never had the cash-book been so neat or so well kept.

"I do believe the old man is getting fond of me," said Halsal, as she stood by her husband and watched the elder as he slowly walked up the garden toward the gate, his big umbrella spread over him. And Galbraith, being in love, did what was expected of him.

Now all this time a nameless horror was approaching nearer and nearer.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE DEVIL AT WORK.

A dull, miserable evening, gray clouds, drizzling rain, and a damp heat. The loud blast of the conch horn from the Jain temple echoed in the heavy air. The sound made the window panes in the study of the manse rattle, and roused Halsa from her book. John had gone that day some miles away to attend a meeting of pastors, and was not to be home until late. His wife dined alone, and sat up in the study waiting for him. As the prolonged notes of the horn reached her, Halsa put down her book and held her hands to her ears. When the sound died away she felt that, for the present, further reading was impossible, and glanced at the clock which ticked in a dreary manner from the wall. It was nearly nine. She rose from her seat, and, after pacing the room for a few moments, stood before the window listening to the soft patter of the rain. The sudden crunching of the gravel outside under a firm tread roused her from the half-dreamy state into which she had fallen. The footsteps were strangely familiar--yet not Galbraith's--still, it could be no one else. In a moment she was in the passage and at the front door. She opened this with a little cry of welcome. "I am so glad you have come," and then she started back with a faint shriek, for the man who stepped into the passage and removed his dripping hat, diffusing a stale odour of damp clothes and liquor as he came in, was not John Galbraith, but Stephen Lamport. There was no mistaking him as he stood there, leaning somewhat unsteadily on a stout cane, the light from a wall lamp shining full on his face, the face she knew so well, and whose memory brought up days of horror before her. There he was, his small beadlike eyes shining brightly, and his red hair glistening.

"Well," he said shortly, "so you're glad to see me--sure there is no mistake?"

Halsa made no reply. She leaned against the wall, one hand held tightly over her heart; her face was white as death, and her lips moved tremulously as if trying to frame a sentence.

"Well, Mrs. Lamport," continued her husband, "I happened to find out that he"--he jerked his thumb over his shoulder, and Halsa shuddered--"is on the preach, and I thought I should come and look you up for old sake's sake, more especially as I have some business with you, and I should like to settle this at once." He stretched out his hand and touched her lightly on the shoulder. The touch seemed to rouse her to fury. She sprang forward and seized the collar of his coat with both hands.

"Yes," she said, "you have business with me. Well, then, come here--quick!" She pushed rather than led him into the study, and, closing the door, stood before him with clenched hands. "Now," she said in a breath, "what do you want? I suppose that story of your death was one of your trumped-up *lies*?"

Lamport laughed a little. "One question at a time. The story was not a trumped-up lie, though I suppose you are sorry it was not the truth. I ought to have died, but I was spared for you, don't you see? I haven't got time to waste telling you all about it; here I am, and what I want is--money."

"Of course," replied Halsa; "did you ever want anything else?"

"Not much, except to be even with you--and I have been even with you and your psalm-singing parson. I found out some time ago that you were here, and about to change your weeds, and I gave myself the pleasure of attending your wedding as an uninvited guest."

"Oh, God, have you no mercy?" moaned his victim.

"You'd better ask God to give you the dollars--you'll want them badly, if I mistake not," said Lamport as he seated himself in a chair.

"How much do you want?" asked Halsa in a faint voice. What she desired was to gain a little time. All this had happened with such awful suddenness. If she could persuade this man to go away with all she had, even for a day, she could decide on some course of action. At present, beyond the one idea of getting rid of Lamport, nothing else crossed her mind.

"Oh, a thousand will see me!" said Lamport. "I suppose you can give me a hundred now--take it out of the poor-box--and the rest I must have in three days, or I blow the whole gaff. I will tell you where to send it."

Halsa stood before him lacing and interlacing her fingers. While Lamport was speaking she was thinking: money--there was no use in giving this man money, even if she could lay her hands on the impossible sum he named. She had never deceived John; she would not do so now, come what may. She was a brave woman, and rose to her trouble.

"Stephen Lamport," she said slowly, "listen to me: you shall not have one penny from me--you can

do your worst. God will help me."

Lampport looked at her in amazement. "You damned fool!" he said; "do you know what the consequences of this will be?"

"Go!" said his wife, pointing to the door; "I shall tell John Galbraith all myself--he is a good man--he will know. Ah!" and she sprang past Lampport, "John, you have come back--save me." She looked at Galbraith's face, and the glance showed that he knew all. She slid down and knelt at his feet. "Forgive me," she said; "God knows that I was innocent."

As Galbraith entered the room Lampport retreated toward the corner, and, laying his hand on the back of the chair, waited for what he fully expected would happen. He was no coward, and was quite prepared for a physical struggle. Galbraith had heard all. In their excitement neither Halsa nor Lampport were aware that he had been in the passage almost as soon as they entered the study. The first few words that reached him rooted him to the spot, and he heard everything that followed. For the first time in his life he felt the wild beast within him awake. His breath came thick and fast, and then through it all a voice seemed to shout in his ears that he had no claim--that they who were before him were husband and wife, and he the outsider. The man lived a lifetime standing there. At last he could bear it no longer, and stepped into the room. Gently, very gently, he lifted the woman whom he loved, and supported her with his arm.

"I believe every word you have said; as for that man----" his voice failed him. He stood before Lampport with an ashy face that quivered with anguish.

But Lampport was not going to give up the struggle. He had wandered here in a half-drunken state, bent on extorting money; if this could not be done he was in the humour for any mischief. He was almost sobered by what had happened, and his malice was ready to suggest the means of inflicting further misery. There seemed no chance of the physical struggle he expected. Well, he could wound in other ways than with the blade of Bill's knife, over the haft of which he had gently slipped his hand.

"Look here," he said; "that woman there is my wife--she dare not deny it--I claim her."

Galbraith's hold tightened round Halsa's waist, but she drew herself from him.

"It is true; every word he has spoken is true; but he has forgotten the whole story--the ill-treatment, the wilful desertion, the devilish malignity of his last action. Oh, God is very merciful, is he not?" she cried hysterically; "and yet you," and she pointed to Lampport, "are my husband, and I suppose the law gives you the right to claim me. I am ready to go."

Galbraith walked to the table and sank into a chair. He buried his face in his arms, and sat there silently. While Halsa spoke there had been a short but mighty struggle in his heart between the man and the priest, and as her voice ceased the priest had triumphed. The woman looked at him as he sat there, motionless and silent. "Come," she said to Lampport, "let us go--but first this----" She suddenly knelt at Galbraith's side, and, taking his hand in both of hers, kissed it passionately, and then rising walked out of the room into the night, her companion following closely behind.

How long Galbraith stayed thus he never knew, but the gray light of the morning was streaming into the room when he lifted his head and looked around him. With a shudder he covered his face again with his hands. A wild thought struck him that after all it might have been a hideous dream, and he rose from his chair, but only to sink down again in despair as the horrible reality of it all forced itself upon him. He remembered it was Sunday, that in a few hours it would be time for him to be in church. Of course this was impossible. He felt that he could endure being in the house no longer, and, taking his soft felt hat, walked out into the garden. Which way had she gone? A sob rose to his throat as he thought of this--was he right? He began to doubt, and then it struck him that he would see Bunny. He would tell Bunny all, and act upon his advice; but as for the church, he felt he could never enter one again. What had he done that this awful misfortune should have come upon him? He bent his steps toward the road leading to Bunny's house. Although the sun was barely up, he found the old man in his garden, and he came forward cheerily to meet Galbraith. One look at his face, however, told him that something dreadful had occurred.

"Come into my office," he said, and led John to the back of the house.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### HUSBAND AND WIFE.

On leaving the house Halsa and her companion walked toward the gate. She had snatched up a hat from the stand in the passage as she passed through, but had not thought of taking a cloak, and even by the time they reached the gate the steady drizzle had drenched her light dress. She stopped here for a moment, and, turning, looked back at the house. Through the mist of rain she saw the windows of the study and the lamp burning brightly. Within the study was--as she thought of him, an uncontrollable sob burst from her.

"Are you going to stay here all night?" asked Lamport roughly.

"Which way are we going?" she replied.

"Any way I choose; go straight ahead. Keep alongside of me if you can; if not, follow. I want to get out of the rain."

And Lamport, plunging his hands deep into his pockets, stepped forward at a pace so rapid that his wife was only barely able to keep up with him. They spoke no word to each other, but at intervals Lamport swore aloud to himself, and cursed Halsa. He was bitterly disappointed at the failure of his plans; he was furious with Halsa for following him as she had. He had not quite expected this. The drink was working in his brain, rousing him to madness.

Halsa felt that every step was taking her away from the best part of her life, and yet with all the sorrow was mingled a proud sense of the sacrifice she had made. Then a great doubt came upon her. Had she acted rightly? Was this man--this fiend who had deliberately allowed her to commit a crime--worth the sacrifice? No, a thousand times no. She had it almost in her heart to turn back and throw herself at Galbraith's feet, to be his slave, to be anything, rather than parted from him. Then the horror and shame of it all made the hot blood rush in madness to her face. And so, on they went through the dark street, where lamps shone only at long intervals amid the ghostly gloom of the cocoa palms, and the rain now pouring fast. Her clothes were drenched through, and Halsa felt that her strength would not enable her to keep up with her companion much longer. At last she could endure no more, and slackened her pace. Lamport walked on for a little, and then, apparently suddenly missing her from his side, turned sharply.

"Did I not tell you to keep up with me?" he said.

Halsa made no reply, but the strain was too great for her, and she burst into a passion of tears. Lamport looked on her for a moment, and then, raising his clenched fist, he struck her down.

"Damn you!" he said, "you can die there if you like." He had longed for this opportunity ever since they had left the house. He looked at the motionless body before him. "I have a mind to finish the job," said he aloud, and his knife seemed to slip into his fingers of its own accord. He glanced round him for a moment, and as he did so he heard the rumble of carriage wheels and saw the flash of lights as they turned the corner of the dark street, not fifty yards ahead. Quick as lightning Lamport dashed down a narrow side road between two walls, and disappeared in the darkness. Almost as he did this the carriage came up. The horses shied backward on their haunches, and then stopped dead. There was the alarmed cry of feminine voices, and an anxious inquiry made in deeper tones. The groom, descending from the seat behind, went forward.

"'Tis some one lying on the road dead or drunk, Padre."

"Most likely the latter," was the reply as the Padre stepped out of the carriage and went forward. "Here, Pedro, hand me that light. Good God!" he exclaimed as he bent over the prostrate figure, "it is a woman--a European, too; there has been some devil's work here. Hold the light up, Pedro, while I lift her--thanks--Mother," said he to another figure, that of a woman clad in a long dark gown, who had followed him out of the carriage, "this is work for you; help me with her to the carriage."

He raised the body in his arms, and with the assistance of the nun and two others, her companions, who had come out of the carriage, put Halsa in.

"Is she dead?" asked one, evidently a young woman from her voice.

"No," said the nun whom the Padre had addressed as mother, "she breathes yet. Pedro, drive on quickly."

Pedro needed no further bidding; he waited but for a moment until the Padre climbed on to the box seat beside him, and then urged the horses on almost at a gallop through the endless avenues of palms. Finally they stopped before a large gate, and after much shouting it was opened, and the carriage drove in. They were met at the door by two nuns, and with their assistance the unconscious body of Halsa was carried in. The Padre examined the wound; there was a deep cut on the forehead, but nothing else. "There is no necessity for a doctor," he said, "but I shall tell D'Almeida to come to-morrow. This is a case of----" He touched his hand to his heart, and, giving the nuns his blessing, entered his carriage and drove off.

\* \* \* \* \*

Very tenderly the nuns cared for Halsa. She regained consciousness in the morning, but when the white-haired Doctor D'Almeida came he pronounced her in high fever. Then came a long illness, and after that convalescence. When she was better at last, she called the superior, Mother St. Catherine, to her side and told her her story. "And now," she said with a faint voice, "I am better and must go." Then the good nun spoke to her long and earnestly, and Father St. Francis came. He bore her news that made her cheek flush and then grow pale. "Take time to consider," said the priest as he left her. A week after Halsa saw the lady superior once more. "I have considered," she said. The superior looked into her eyes: "It is well," she said, as she stooped and kissed her.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### JOHN GALBRAITH GOES.

About half an hour before the time fixed for morning service, Mr. Bunny, his face very grave and set, stepped out of the portico of the manse. He passed through the narrow wicket-gate and entered the church enclosure. The Sunday-school class was over, and a few children were loitering at the main entrance. Others were making their way home in little groups, a feeling of relief in their hearts, and with the consciousness of an unpleasant duty done. Bunny entered the tabernacle by a side door. The clerk was already there, and with him the elder, who had just dismissed his class. They were talking in low tones, and looked up quickly as their ears caught the sound of Bunny's footsteps, which rang with a harsh clang on the stone floor. A whisper had gone forth from the servants' quarters at the manse that something terrible had happened during the night. The attendant who cleaned the church, and who during the service pulled the huge fans which swung in a monotonous manner over the heads of the worshippers, echoed this whisper to the clerk. It is the way news is carried in the East, and it is very rapid. It is impossible to tell how, but the mysterious thing called bazaar gossip travels from ear to ear, from mouth to mouth, telling strange tales which afterward unfold themselves in the press as news, or are discovered in a government resolution. And so the clerk heard a story from the puller of fans, news of the last night, thick with strange scandal, and he was dropping this into the elder's attentive ears. They stopped their conversation as Bunny approached, and somewhat awkwardly wished him good-morning. Bunny merely nodded in reply, and, turning to the clerk, begged him to excuse him as he had something of importance to tell the elder.

"If it is about Mrs. Galbraith, sir," replied the clerk, "I have just been telling the elder of it."

Bunny looked at him sharply from under his gray eyebrows, and the clerk, who was also his official subordinate, quailed under the glance.

"If so, you have been speaking of what you had no right to mention; but, as you appear to know something, stay and hear what I have to say, and you will hear what is the truth." Bunny then turned his back upon the clerk, and in as short a manner as possible described what had happened to the elder. He was no waster of words. He put what he had to say clearly before his listener, but his voice shook as he went on.

The elder, for the first time in his life, showed that he was moved. He had opposed Galbraith, quarrelled with him, and had spoken bitterly against his wife. He had thought that if some terrible sorrow overtook them it would be a righteous judgment, although he had never been able to explain to himself why this judgment should fall on them. And now that it had come, that it was staring him in all its hideous reality in the face, the elder was stirred to the deepest pity and compassion. "God help them!" he exclaimed, passing his handkerchief over his face to hide his emotion--"God help them!" When he had said this he remained silent, digging the end of his stout stick into a hassock which lay near his feet. The clerk interrupted the silence.

"Will there be service to-day?" he asked.

"Let everything go on as usual," replied the elder. "Mr. Bunny and myself will settle this when the time comes--and now, Bunny, a word with you."

The clerk took the hint and stepped back, and the two men, whose mutual jealousies had for some years past threatened to dissolve the community, walked arm-in-arm down the aisle between the grim rows of empty benches soon to be filled with Sabbath worshippers.

"Will he go?" asked the elder.

"Yes," replied Bunny, "and at once. I have advised this course. In his present state of mind there



is nothing else for him to do."

"Very well," replied Bullin; "we had better see him to-day; there are a few things that must be done--we, as members of the council, can arrange this."

Bunny thanked him. "It is what I was going to propose myself," he said; "we will see him after the congregation has been dismissed--perhaps you had better do this--he wishes to go to-night."

Bullin agreed. "I suppose," he asked, "you have no news of his unfortunate wi----?" He stopped and looked somewhat awkwardly at Bunny.

"No," was the reply, "there has not been time; but I shall arrange about that if it can be done. In the meantime Galbraith must go."

As they spoke the church began to fill, and people entered in groups of twos and threes, or singly. Some, on entering, flung themselves devoutly on their knees and remained absorbed in prayer. Others made a pretence of kneeling. A few, a very few, young men put their faces into their hats, and probably examined the maker's name therein.

The clerk, who also officiated at the American harmonium, played the first bars of an old hymn; and, to the astonishment of the worshippers, Elder Bullin rose from his seat, and, ascending the pulpit, gave out the hymn to be sung. He led it off himself with a fairly good voice, and was accompanied by the whole congregation. At its conclusion, and when the long-drawn *Amen* died away with the notes of the organ, the elder, in a few brief words, informed the people that, owing to a domestic affliction, their beloved brother and pastor was unable to attend that day, that the trouble was of so serious a nature that it was impossible that the regular service should be held that morning, and he begged that the congregation would disperse after a short prayer and the singing of another hymn. The prayer was then offered up by the elder, and the hymn sung. One by one the people arose, after a little decorous silence, and it was not until they had passed out into the church enclosure that the full tide of their curiosity burst. Lizzie and Laura were besieged with questions, but they knew nothing, and the dread of the elder's wrath hurried them away. It became necessary for Mr. Bunny himself to go out and beg the congregation to disperse. He informed them that Galbraith was very ill, and that the kindest thing they could do was to go home. This they did after some little time. After a last instruction to the clerk to hold his tongue for the present, Bunny and the elder passed through the wicket-gate, and, walking slowly up the gravel path, entered the manse. The door of the study was slightly open, and Bunny knocked; there was no answer, and both he and the elder stepped in. Galbraith was there, sitting at his table, his white drawn face showing all the signs of the terrible time he had passed through. There was a hunted look in his eyes, which shifted their glance from side to side. Bullin held out his hand without a word. Galbraith rose and shook it silently, and then, turning, walked to the window.

Bunny approached him and whispered in his ear, while the elder employed himself in smoothing the nap of his hat with his coat-sleeve.

"Very well," said Galbraith; "you are right--the sooner the better." What was wanted were some papers relating to the church. Galbraith opened a drawer of his writing-table. They were all there, tied in neat piles, with labels showing what they were. He shuddered as he saw the handwriting on these labels, and his hand shook like a leaf in the wind as he picked out the bundles one by one and handed them to the elder.

At last the necessary business was concluded, and Bullin rose. He attempted to speak, but was unable to do so; and gathering up the papers in his hands, stood for a moment as if irresolute.

"God help you!" he said suddenly, and turning went out of the room. Bunny remained a few moments longer. "I will come back again," he said, "in an hour. It is not good for you to be left alone." He shook Galbraith by the hand, and followed the elder out.

When they had gone, Galbraith rose and wandered round the house. Breakfast was ready. He had not touched it, and at the sight of his face the servant who was waiting stepped silently out of the room. The act was in itself sympathetic, and touched Galbraith. He had packed a bag with a few things, and it was lying half open on his bed. On the wall was a photograph of Halsa. He took it down, and, placing it in the bag, closed it and turned the key. He then went back into his room and waited. He knew what Bunny's absence meant, and he was burning with impatience for his return. On the table before him was a manuscript of his sermons. He seized it with a laugh, and began to turn over its pages. He had poured his heart into them. How had he not laboured? His was the voice that breathed consolation into many a stricken heart, and now that the time had come for him to need help, there was none there to give it. The Book of Books--it was lying there before him, leather bound, with gold-edged leaves--he knew it by heart; there was nothing in that that could help a sorrow like his. Bit by bit he tore the manuscript into shreds, and strewed it about the floor; and when the last scrap of paper had fluttered on to the carpet beside him, he felt that he had broken with the past forever. Faith--had he not faith? But what faith could stand against the cruelty of his trial? And then the remains of his religion burned up within him, and he strove to pray, but the words he uttered with his lips were unmeaning, and he rose from his knees in despair.



It was somewhat late in the afternoon when Bunny returned. Galbraith was ready for him as he came into the house.

"Did you get a passage?" he asked.

"Yes," said Bunny; "you sail with the tide to-night."

They entered a hired conveyance, and Bunny gave directions to drive to the quay. There was not much spoken as they drove through the streets. At length they reached the quay, and Bunny would have entered the boat with Galbraith, but he denied him. "No," he said, "let me go alone."

Bunny regretfully agreed. "You will find a letter from me awaiting you at the Cape," he said as Galbraith shook him warmly by the hand.

"You will not fail to let me know if there is any news of her?"

"No," replied Bunny, "I will not."

Galbraith sprang into the boat, and Bunny watched it as it was rowed toward the great ship lying in the harbour, the blue-peter flying at her mast-head. Slowly the boat moved forward until it entered the broad band-of dazzling light on the waters, where the sun's rays were reflected back in a myriad of flashing colours. Shading his eyes with his hands, Bunny watched the boat until it was absorbed into that marvellous blaze of gold, and passed from his sight.

At last he turned and drove back home. But from that day nothing was heard of John Galbraith.

## **CHAPTER XV.**

### **THE GLORY DEPARTS.**

All attempts to secure a suitable successor to Galbraith failed. The scandal caused by the disaster, which had befallen the pastor, his mysterious disappearance, and that of Mrs. Lamport, deterred some; others were unwilling to leave their present posts; and of the one or two who would have taken charge of the flock, the sheep would have none of them. The law-suit with the Jain temple had, moreover, so impoverished the funds of the tabernacle that it was out of the question to send over the seas for a new spiritual guide. In the meantime the feelings of the community began to find vent in the columns of the Bombay Bouncer. Attacks were made against both Bullin and Bunny, and each attributed the attacks on themselves to the other. Bullin, in his headstrong way, openly charged Bunny with the offence of attacking him through the press. The latter denied it hotly, and replied with a countercharge. The result was a division of the community into two parties, and the beginning of the end as far as the existence of the tabernacle was concerned. About this time Sarkies begged for readmission into the fold. He was supported by Bunny; but Bullin, regarding this as a personal affront, strained every nerve, and secured at a general meeting a verdict confirming the former sentence of excommunication. It was at this meeting that the elder, amid much confusion, charged Bunny with having got Halsa Lamport out of the way to avoid inquiry. It was with the greatest difficulty that Bunny's friends prevented a physical struggle between the two leaders. Bunny and his following, however, left the church, where the meeting was held, leaving Bullin in possession of the field. It was thought at first that the matter would have gone before the law-courts; but this was somehow prevented, and the Bunny party, throwing off all allegiance to their former church, sought food for the soul from the Rev. Mr. MacGoggin, of the Free Kirk, and sat at his feet for evermore. Bullin, now left with undisputed power, conducted the services himself, and so great was his influence with the new council, practically creatures of his own, that he absolutely prevented any fresh nomination to the pastorship. In a brief period, however, his intolerance and bigotry outraged his own followers. In a few weeks his sermons, or rather lectures, were given to benches where the only audience consisted of his unfortunate daughters. At this time, too, an incident happened which fairly broke down the old man, and the congregation, at a great general meeting, finally dissolved themselves. The church was sold by auction. The worshippers scattered themselves elsewhere, and the history of the tabernacle was ended. Great was the rejoicing in the Jain temple. In honour of the occasion the eremite Mahendra, the terrible Swami, whose history will some day be written, swung himself for a whole afternoon by the simple process of fixing two iron hooks under his shoulder-blades, gaining thereby much credit and renown. An enterprising Parsee purchased the property. He called the manse "The Retreat," and lived there himself. He imported lime and orange trees in green tubs, and set them in rows about the garden. He may be seen among his plants any morning, clad in the whitest of coats and sheeniest of silken nether garments. Over the main entrance of the whilom chapel swings his signboard. It informs the public that

Muncherjee Cheesecake is a general merchant. The flaring poster of an American cigarette manufacturer is pasted on each of the pillars of the gates. The cigarettes may be had from Muncherjee. They are very good.

What happened was this. Sarkies, smarting under the indignity of the second expulsion from the church, held a family council with his mother and aunt. It was about this time that an epidemic of going over to Rome had set in, and the accounts of the perversion or conversion of several very great people in the British Isles filled the newspapers. Sarkies determined to be in the fashion, and in a few days the whole family were received into the broad bosom of the eternal church. They placed themselves under the guidance of an Irish priest, and, after the first plunge was over, Sarkies began to consider the confessional as a most excellent institution. *Presto!* a wave of the hand, a benediction, and the sins of the past had joined the past. He got it all out about Lizzie, and was confident that he could bring her over to the church. The Rev. Father Faly was not unwilling to help him. Life was very dull under the cocoa palms. He informed Sarkies that the Roman Catholic ritual permitted a priest to unite a minor in marriage without the guardian's consent, and watched Sarkies go away with resolve on his face.

Under ordinary circumstances nothing would have induced Lizzie to listen to Sarkies's proposals of flight, but circumstances favoured the Armenian. The girl had some spirit in her, and the eternal bullying of the elder was beginning to tell. Besides, notwithstanding the undignified, not to say uncomfortable, position from which Sarkies was compelled to plead his cause, the young man had a somewhat silken tongue, and then he had got to love Lizzie, and love always finds words. So the old, old story was repeated; and Lizzie, flinging over a few of her belongings in a bundle, was assisted by Sarkies over the wall, and, entering the buggy, drove off with her lover. This was done in the middle of the day. Sarkies knew that it was the occasion of the great and final meeting at the chapel, and that the coast would be clear. He did not reckon, however, on its being a half-holiday, and that he should meet Master Edward Bunny on his way back from school. The old Arab was urged to his fastest pace; but Eddy took in the situation at a glance.

"My!" he exclaimed, "there's Jimmie Sarkies bolting with Lizzie--*youps!*"

He had a shot at the buggy with his catapult; and it is worthy of record that on this occasion he missed his mark, and found that in his excitement he had used as a pellet his favourite marble, well known by the title of "Aunty." This in itself was a terrible disaster, and Eddy boiled with wrath. An opportunity for vengeance was at hand, however, for he had hardly gone a quarter of a mile when he met the elder returning home. The meeting had ended. The little community had ceased to exist, and with it the best part of the old man's life. He was walking under the shadow of the palms, his carriage following him slowly. His heavy eyebrows were bent in a frown, and his lips were twitching nervously.

"Morning, Mr. Bullin!" exclaimed Eddy as he approached. The elder looked at him without making any answer, and passed on. But Eddy was not to be put off in this manner. He followed the old man, and, catching him up, remarked, "You'll be sorry when you hear it. I fired my catapult after them."

"Go away, boy!" exclaimed Bullin.

"Go away--oh, yes! I'm going--and so's Lizzie and Jim Sarkies. I saw them going off in the bug--oh!--hoo!--boo--ooh!"

It was too much for Bullin. He darted forward at Eddy's speech and seized him by the arm. The next moment there was a cuffing and a ringing of ears that Eddy remembers to this day, notwithstanding that he is in a fair way to succeed to his father's appointment, and has a small Eddy of his own. When he had finished with the boy and flung him from him, the elder jumped into his carriage and bade the coachman drive home. Laura's scared face as she met him at the door, confirmed his worst fears.

"Are they gone?" he asked. "Answer me, woman! Don't stand staring there."

Laura burst into tears, and the elder with a hissing cry of rage re-entered his carriage and drove to the Sarkies's house. There was no one there. A sudden thought struck him. "To the Catholic Church," he shouted; and the coachman needed no bidding to drive fast. He arrived in time to meet Faly stepping out of the door. "Where's my daughter?" inquired Bullin, furiously shaking his fist in the priest's face.

"I presume you are Mr. Bullin?" asked Faly in reply.

"Yes--I'm Mr. Bullin; and I want to know what you've done with my daughter--you and that blackguard Sarkies?"

"Gently, sir," was the reply. "Your daughter, I believe, is now on the way to the railway station with her husband. If I mistake not, her mother-in-law and another relative accompany the bride on the honeymoon trip. I presume even you will think that sufficient punishment?"

Bullin attempted to speak, but in vain. His face was purple with rage, and his hands moved convulsively up and down.

Faly was a little touched. "I don't think you need take on so, Mr. Bullin," he said. "Mr. Sarkies will make a most excellent husband."

But here the elder found tongue. "Damn you!" he shrieked with a half-articulate voice, "I shall have the law on you and your brood of snakes. May God's curse follow----"

Faly laid his hand upon the old man's arm. "Halt, sir!" he said; "you have said enough. Go to the law. If redress is your due, you will get it there. Go to the law, I say; but also go from here. This is no place for you."

The elder stared at him for a moment, and then turning entered his carriage, and bade the coachman drive home.

A week later he flung a letter across the table to Laura. They were at breakfast.

"Send that woman her belongings," he said; "and mind you--forget from this day that she was ever your sister."

And Laura bowed her head meekly to hide the tears that filled her eyes.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### AN ACCOUNT BALANCED.

When Lamport left Halsa unconscious on the roadside and escaped into darkness, he ran on without stopping for nearly half an hour. At last he pulled up, fairly exhausted, and leaned against the wall on the roadside to rest and regain his breath. The run and the excitement had sobered him, and as he rested he began to think over his next move. Bill's knife was still in his hand. He closed the blade carefully.

"If only they had been a minute later!" he said to himself as he put it away.

Yes, if only they had been a minute later Stephen Lamport would have added another item to his long list of crimes. Not that the record troubled him in any way. His only regret was that he had been foiled. He had begun to hate his wife with the savage hatred that was born of the knowledge that he had done her terrible wrong.

After a while Lamport began to walk on again as fast as he was able to escape the rain. It was now very late, almost in the small hours of the morning, and a longing seized upon him for more drink. He had reached Digby Street by this time, and, with that strange fatality which seems to haunt criminals, the fatality which brings them back to the scenes of former crime, he entered the Hotel Metropole. It was still full, and Lamport's entrance excited no particular attention. In the glare of the lamps, however, he was enabled to see that he was splashed and covered with mud, and his clothes, where they were not protected by his rough pea-jacket, were dripping wet. He glanced at his face in the oval mirror which gleamed from the wall. It was deathly pale, and he felt a cold shivering down his limbs. He moved into the crowd at the bar, and called out for "three fingers hot." At the sound of his voice Kavasji looked up at him. Lamport was, however, certain that the shaving of his beard had so altered his appearance that he was, comparatively speaking, unrecognisable; besides, as he was spattered with mud, and with his cap pulled well over his brows, he felt perfectly secure. He was mistaken, however. Kavasji was one of those men who have a born genius for remembering faces, and he recognised Lamport at once. He said no word at first, but silently mixed his tumbler of liquor and handed it to him. Lamport stood a little on one side at the end of the bar, and began to drink. When he had finished he called for another tumbler, and as the Parsee handed this to him he said in a low voice, "Bill is here; he is looking for you." Lamport started at the warning, but said nothing. He drank his second tumbler quietly, and, after paying his score, slipped out into the street once more. Kavasji had not given this warning with any friendly feeling toward Lamport, but simply for the reason that he wished to get rid of him. It was perfectly true that Bill had been there that evening. He might be back at any moment, and then, if there was recognition, there would perhaps be murder. Kavasji had not forgotten the scene when Bill woke from his drugged sleep and found that he had missed his ship and had been robbed. In order that the matter might be kept quiet, the Parsee had placed Dungaree in funds, knowing that it would mostly come back to him over the counter, and what little loss he might suffer would be well repaid by the absence of a police visitation. Kavasji had suffered much from such inroads. Bill had, however, shown no inclination to get another ship. As long as Kavasji's advance lasted he determined to wait, in the hopes of meeting Lamport, of recovering his lost property and of exacting vengeance. He was perfectly convinced that it was

Lampport who had stolen the money. He had done similar things himself, and therefore knew. Moreover, the thought that he, Dungaree Bill, the old and hardened campaigner, should have been taken in in so transparent a manner was gall and wormwood to him, and therefore he swore to himself that he would have vengeance, even to the death of Lampport. So Bill husbanded his resources and waited, and at last the time came when Lampport was to reap what he had sown. This was Bill's last day. He was unable to get any further funds from Kavasji, and had with regret in his heart shipped on an American cargo-boat that was to sail the next day. He had stipulated for a last day on shore, and, as he had asked for no advance of pay, this was readily granted to him. Besides, he was known to the master of the vessel as a good sailor, and one whom he could rely on for good as well as evil. Lampport had hardly been gone half an hour when Bill re-entered the bar and feverishly looked round him. It was his last chance, and he had to go back to his ship. There was a look of disappointment on his face as he saw that the man he wanted was not there, and that after all he should miss him. A light of eagerness came into his eyes as Kavasji beckoned to him, and whispered a few words in his ear. "Where? Which way did he go?" said Bill. Kavasji pointed to the street, and Bill, turning, rushed out of the door. Once in the street, however, he looked blankly around. There was no knowing what direction Lampport had taken, and with a curse on his ill-luck Bill squared his broad shoulders and strode through the mud toward the quay. He could have--in fact, to keep up the tradition of his kind, he ought to have--hailed a cab and been driven toward the harbour roaring a wild song. But Bill did not fancy this to-night. It was enough for him that his prey had escaped for the present. If they should meet! Dungaree swore under his bushy black beard that no mortal should part them until he had exacted his tithe of vengeance to the uttermost farthing.

In the meantime what had become of Lampport? When he entered the street again he found that it had practically given over raining, and the moon was shining brightly behind the dark masses of clouds that glided slowly after each other. Lampport looked up with an expression of relief, and his first thoughts were to make his way back to his lodgings as fast as possible, change his wet things, and sleep, if he could, over the events of the past few hours. He changed his mind, however, and, hailing a cab, told the man to drive him to the quay. Why he did this it is impossible to explain. It was the working of that fatality which was leading him to the reaping of the harvest. Perhaps the knowledge that Dungaree was on his track induced him to do this. He wanted to think. Perhaps an indefinite idea of escaping, the forlorn hope of being able to get to sea somehow, moved him. And so he went. When he reached the quay he dismissed his cab, and, walking to the end of the pier, leaned over the chains and listened to the *lap, lap, lap* of the waters against the stone walls. Under the lee of the pier was a small fleet of boats securely fastened one to the other, and heaving in unison with the motion of the sea. The myriad stars of the street lamps twinkled behind him, and the signal lights from the tall masts of the shipping in the harbour shone like beacons overhead. A high wind had arisen, an augury of fair weather, and the now rapidly moving clouds alternately obscured and unveiled the moonlight. From the far distance came the dull boom of the breakers as they beat against the head of the island, and occasionally there was a jarring sound as the sides of the boats grated against each other. Lampport, leaning over the chains of the pier, noticed not one of these things. If he saw, or heard, they had no more effect on him than the flickering of one's fingers before the eyes of a blind horse. Yet Lampport unconsciously began to think of the past. Possibly the danger he had escaped and the hour were not without their influence on him. After all, he had nothing to fear, he repeated to himself. There was not the remotest possibility of Bill meeting him. Anyway he would make that possibility as small as it could be by shipping himself off this very day. And while he was thinking Bill came up the pier, walking rapidly with that rolling lurch peculiar to sailors. Lampport was unconscious of this. He never heard the footfalls behind him, and, if he did, paid no attention to them. When Bill was scarce ten yards off, Lampport lighted a fusee and held it to his pipe. The sudden hiss of the match and the flare of light stopped Dungaree at once, and, as the blaze lit up Lampport's face, Bill saw from the gesture, the poise of the head, the cunning glitter of the eye, that he had found his man. He drew back for a moment, and waited till Lampport had lit his pipe and flung the end of his fusee away. Bill felt the veins on his forehead stand out like knotted ropes. For a moment he stood, his sinewy hands working convulsively, and then, walking up to Lampport, he gripped him on the shoulder and swung him round.

There was no word spoken. Quick as thought Lampport's knife was in his hand. It flashed a moment in the air, and Bill staggered back with an oath. He had been only just in time to escape the stroke, which nevertheless inflicted a slight flesh wound. The next moment the knife was dashed from Lampport's hand, and Bill's fingers were round his throat. He made an effort to struggle, he tried to shout, but, active and powerful as he was, he was like a child in the hands of the giant.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was ended very soon, that noiseless struggle, and Bill stood over the dead man. He felt for his belt, and regained it with a feeling of intense satisfaction. It was light, but the lost weight was balanced now.

Bill was not of those who hesitated at a critical moment. "Over he goes," said he, and, lifting the body, he flung it over the chains, where it fell with a splash into the water. "And now to follow suit." He ran down the stone steps of the quay, and, carefully removing his boots, held them together in his teeth. He then pulled off his coat, and for the first time realized that he was wounded.

"Better this way than any other," muttered he to himself as he made a bold plunge and struck out for his ship.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### FROM THE CHOIR OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

Some one has said that there is a consolation in being well dressed that even religion can not afford. It was with the consciousness of this feeling that Lizzie Sarkies knelt by her husband's side at midnight mass in the Church of the Holy Innocents.

It was New Year's Eve, and the young year was being welcomed in with all the pomp and ceremony of the Roman Catholic ritual. The old year was dying. It had covered its face with its mantle of broken hopes, of resolves unkept, of withered lives. With the New Year would come fresh hope and high resolve. The pages of the past were to be turned down, the fair white sheets of a new record opened, the Most High would lend an attentive ear to the voice of His people calling from the deep. The church was full. Of those who were spared from the dangers of the past some were here to thank the Godhead for his mercy, and to pray as humble creatures should for the light that never comes. There were others with dead hearts, hearts that had gotten the "dry-rot" into them. These came because the others came, because their ears were tickled by the music. Their lips murmured prayers that found no echoes in their souls, and as they looked upon the Host they gave no thought to the past. As for the future, with such as these the future has no lesson to learn. Sufficient for them was it that they lived, and sinned, and died.

Lizzie, and many others beside her, occupied a place midway between these two classes. They had not as yet chosen their seats finally. As the solemn notes of the organ joined the silver voices of the choir Lizzie felt the full magnetic power of the music, and prayed with her heart of hearts. When from behind the high altar the low murmur of the prayers trickled down the aisles and buzzed in her ears, Lizzie's bright eyes wandered round the church up to the gallery, where the choir of dark-robed nuns sat; away into the dim colonnades, over the ghostly sea of heads; to the right, where close-cropped, straight-backed, and stalwart of limb, were ranged a contingent of the Royal Irish, then in garrison at Bombay; in front, where sat Madame Eglantine, the celebrated *modiste*, with a creation of forget-me-nots on her head. At all these Lizzie stared, and was comforted.

How pleasant this was after the deadly monotony of the tabernacle! Here all the rough edges were smoothed off, the corners rounded neatly; there all was granite of the hardest.

The banners swayed their silken folds. From her niche in the wall the Blessed Virgin, done in wax, gazed down upon her with lustreless eyes. The tinsel looked like gold. The incense breathed its subtle and intoxicating perfume into her brain.

And now the priests walked in solemn procession up the aisle, the organ pealed forth, and the joyous voices of the choir joined in the hymn of adoration.

At a bound Lizzie's heart went back from earth to heaven. She thrilled with a holy fervour as the music filled the church. Her eyes were full of tears.

Suddenly the voices of the choir died away. The priests had bowed before the altar, and were praying in secret. The organ wailed tremulously. Lizzie stood leaning on the seat in front of her, almost breathless with excitement.

All at once from the gallery a single voice took up the anthem--full, clear, and sweet. It seemed as if it were the answer of heaven to the prayers of the Faithful.

*"Christe cum sit hinc exire  
Du per matron me venire  
Ad palmam victoriae."*

Lizzie turned her eyes toward the spot whence the voice came. The light shone full on the dark-robed figure, on the upturned face, thin and pale, and on the sad gray eyes of the singer.

*"Ad palmam victoriae."*

As the words reached her, Lizzie felt the light of a sudden recognition. She turned to her husband and pulled him by the coat-sleeve.

"Jim," she said, "look up! See who is singing!"

## THE END.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A GALAHAD OF THE CREEKS; THE WIDOW LAMPORT \*\*\*

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