

LANG JOHN

WANDERINGS IN INDIA,
AND OTHER SKETCHES
OF LIFE IN HINDOSTAN

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PREFACE

The greater part of the Papers which form this Volume have appeared in "Household Words;" and the Author has to acknowledge his thanks to Mr. Dickens for sanctioning a reprint of them.

London, *July 15th, 1859.*

THE HIMALAYA CLUB

It is some eighteen years since this institution was founded, at Mussoorie, one of the chief sanatoria in the Himalaya mountains. Here all those who can obtain leave, and who can afford the additional expense, repair to escape the hot weather of the plains. The season begins about the end of April, and ends about the first week in October. The club is open to the members of the civil and military services, to the members of the bar, the clergy, and to such other private gentlemen as are on the Government House list, which signifies, "in society." The club-house is neither an expensive nor an elegant edifice, but it answers the purposes required of it. It has two large rooms, one on the ground-floor, and the other on the upper story. The lower room, which is some sixty feet long by twenty-five wide, is the dining-room, breakfast-room, and reception-room. The upper room is the reading and the ball-room. The club has also its billiard-room, which is built on the ledge of a precipice; and its stables, which would astonish most persons in Europe. No horses except those educated in India, would crawl into these holes cut out of the earth and rock.

Facing the side-door is a platform about forty yards long by fifteen feet wide; and from it, on a clear day, the eye commands one of the grandest scenes in the known world. In the distance are plainly visible the eternal snows; at your feet are a number of hills, covered with trees of luxuriant foliage. Amongst them is

the rhododendron, which grows to an immense height and size, and is, when in bloom, literally covered with flowers. On every hill, on a level with the club, and within a mile of it, a house is to be seen, to which access would seem impossible. These houses are, for the most part, whitened without as well as within; and nothing can exceed in prettiness their aspect as they shine in the sun.

From the back of the club-house, from your bed-room windows (there are twenty-three sets of apartments) you have a view of Deyrah Dhoon. It appears about a mile off. It is seven miles distant. The plains that lie outstretched below the Simplon bear, in point of extent and beauty, to the Indian scene, nothing like the proportion which the comparatively pigmy Mont Blanc bears to the Dewalgiri. From an elevation of about seven thousand feet the eye embraces a plain containing millions of acres, intersected by broad streams to the left, and inclosed by a low belt of hills, called the Pass. The Dhoon, in various parts, is dotted with clumps of jungle, abounding with tigers, pheasants, and every species of game. In the broad tributaries to the Ganges and the Jumna, may be caught (with a fly) the mâhseer, the leviathan salmon. Beyond the Pass of which I have spoken, you see the plains of Hindoostan. While you are wrapped in a great coat, and are shivering with the cold, you may see the heat, and the steam it occasions. With us on the hills, the thermometer is at forty-five; with those poor fellows over there, it is at ninety-two degrees. We can scarcely keep ourselves warm,

for the wind comes from the snowy range; they cannot breathe, except beneath a punkah. That steam is, as the crow flies, not more than forty miles from us.

We are all idlers at Mussoorie. We are all sick, or supposed to be so; or we have leave on private affairs. Some of us are up here for a month between musters. We are in the good graces of our colonel and our general – the general of our division, a very good old gentleman.

Let us go into the public room, and have breakfast; for it is half-past nine o'clock, and the bell has rung. There are not more than half a dozen at the table. These are the early risers who walk or ride round the Camel's Back every morning: the Camel's Back being a huge mountain, encircled about its middle by a good road. The majority of the club's members are asleep, and will defer breakfast until tiffin time – half-past two. At that hour the gathering will be great. How these early risers eat, to be sure! There is the major, who, if you believe him, has every complaint mentioned in "Graham's Domestic Medicine," has just devoured two thighs (grilled) of a turkey, and is now asking Captain Blossom's opinion of the Irish stew, while he is cutting into a pigeon-pie.

Let us now while away the morning. Let us call on some of the grass widows. There are lots of them here, civil and military. Let us go first to Mrs. Merrydale, the wife of our old friend Charley, of the two hundredth and tenth regiment. Poor fellow! He could not get leave, and the doctors said another hot

summer in the plains would be the death of his wife. They are seven hundred pounds in debt to the Agra bank, and are hard put to it to live and pay the monthly instalments of interest. Charley is only a lieutenant. What terrible infants are these little Merrydales! There is Lieutenant Maxwell's pony under the trees, and if these children had not shouted out, "Mamma! Mamma! here is Captain Wall, Sahib!" I should have been informed that Mrs. Merrydale was not at home, or was poorly, which I should have believed implicitly. (Maxwell, when a young ensign, was once engaged to be married to Julia Dacey, now Mrs. Merrydale, but her parents would not hear of it, for some reason or other.) As it is, we must be admitted. We will not stay long. Mrs. Merrydale is writing to her husband. Grass widows in the hills are always writing to their husbands, when you drop in upon them, and your presence is not actually delighted in. How beautiful she looks! now that the mountain breezes have chased from her cheeks the pallor which lately clung to them in the plains; and the fresh air has imparted to her spirits an elasticity, in lieu of that languor by which she was oppressed a fortnight ago.

Let us now go to Mrs. Hastings. She is the wife of a civilian, who has a salary of fifteen hundred rupees (one hundred and fifty pounds) per mensem, and who is a man of fortune independent of his pay. Mrs. Hastings has the best house in Mussoorie. She is surrounded by servants. She has no less than three Arab horses to ride. She is a great prude, is Mrs. Hastings. She has no patience with married women who flirt. She thinks that the dogma —

When lovely women go astray,
Their stars are more in fault than they —

is all nonsense. Mrs. Hastings has been a remarkably fine woman; she is now five-and-thirty, and still good looking, though disposed to *embonpoint*. She wearies one with her discourses on the duties of a wife. That simpering cornet, Stammersleigh, is announced, and we may bid her good morning.

The average rent for a furnished house is about five hundred rupees (fifty pounds) for the six months. Every house has its name. Yonder are Cocky Hall, Belvidere, Phoenix Lodge, the Cliffs, the Crag, the Vale, the Eagle's Nest, &c. The value of these properties ranges from five hundred to fifteen hundred pounds. The furniture is of the very plainest description, with one or two exceptions, and is manufactured chiefly at Bareilly, and carried here on men's shoulders the entire distance — ninety miles.

Where shall we go now, for it wants an hour to tiffin time? Oh! here comes a janpan! (a sort of sedan-chair carried by four hill men, dressed in loose black clothes, turned up with red, yellow, blue, green, or whatever colour the proprietor likes best). And in the janpan sits a lady — Mrs. Apsley, a very pretty, good-tempered, and well-bred little woman. She is the granddaughter of an English peer, and is very fond of quoting her aunts and her uncles. "My aunt Lady Mary Culnerson," "my aunt the

Countess of Tweedleford," "my uncle, Lord Charles Banbury Cross," &c. But that is her only weakness, I believe; and, perhaps, it is ungenerous to allude to it. Her husband is in the Dragoons.

"Well, Mrs. Apsley, whither art thou going? To pay visits?"

"No. I am going to Mrs. Ludlam's to buy a new bonnet, and not before I want one, you will say."

"May I accompany you?"

"Yes, and assist me in making a choice."

There is not a cloud to be seen. The air is soft and balmy. The wild flowers are in full bloom, and the butterfly is on the wing. The grasshopper is singing his ceaseless song, and the bees are humming a chorus thereto.

We are now at Mrs. Ludlam's. The janpan is placed upon the ground, and I assist Mrs. Apsley to step from it.

Mrs. Ludlam is the milliner and dressmaker of Upper India, and imports all her wares direct from London and Paris. Everybody in this part of the world knows Mrs. Ludlam, and everybody likes her. She has by industry, honesty of purpose, and economy, amassed a little fortune; and has brought up a large family in the most respectable and unpretending style. Some people say that she sometimes can afford to sell a poor ensign's wife a bonnet, or a silk dress, at a price which hardly pays. What I have always admired in Mrs. Ludlam is that she never importunes her customers to buy her goods; nor does she puff their quality.

The bonnet is bought; likewise a neck-scarf for Jack. And we are now returning: Mrs. Apsley to her home, and I to the club.

Mrs. Apsley invites me to dine with them; but that is impossible. It is public night, and I have two guests. One of them is Jack, who does not belong to the club, because Mary does not wish it.

Mrs. Apsley says she wants some pickles, and we must go into Ford's shop to purchase them. Ford sells everything; and he is a wine, beer, and spirit merchant. You may get anything at Ford's – guns, pistols, swords, whips, hats, clothes, tea, sugar, tobacco. What is this which Ford puts into my hand? A raffle paper! "To be raffled for, a single-barrelled rifle, by Purdey. The property of a gentleman hard-up for money, and in great difficulties. Twenty-five chances at one gold mohur (one pound twelve shillings) each."

"Yes, put my name down for a chance, Ford."

"And Captain Apsley's, please," says the lady.

After promising Mrs. Apsley most faithfully that I will not keep Jack later than half-past twelve, and taking another look into those sweet eyes of hers, I gallop away as fast as the pony can carry me. I am late; there is scarcely a vacant place at the long table. We have no private tables. The same board shelters the nether limbs of all of us. We are all intimate friends, and know exactly each other's circumstances. What a clatter of knives and forks! And what a lively conversation! It alludes chiefly to the doings of the past night. Almost every other man has a nickname. To account for many of them would indeed be a difficult, if not a hopeless task.

"Dickey Brown! Glass of beer?"

"I am your man," responds Major George, N. I. Fencibles.

At the other end of the table you hear the word "Shiney" shouted out, and responded to by Lieutenant Fenwick of the Horse Artillery.

"Billy! Sherry?"

Adolphus Bruce of the Lancers lifts his glass with immense alacrity.

It is a curious characteristic of Indian society that very little outward respect is in private shown to seniority. I once heard an ensign of twenty years of age address a civilian of sixty in the following terms: "Now then, old moonsiff, pass that claret, please."

The tiffin over, a gool, or lighted ball of charcoal, is passed round the table in a silver augdan (fire-holder). Every man present lights a cigar, and in a few minutes there is a general move. Some retire to the billiard-room, others cluster round the fireplace; others pace the platform; and two sets go up-stairs into the reading-room to have a quiet rubber – from three till five. Those four men seated at the table near the window have the reputation of being the best players in India. The four at the other table know very little of the game of whist. Mark the difference! The one set never speak, except when the cards are being dealt. The other set are finding fault with one another during the progress of the hand. The good players are playing high. Gold mohur points – five gold mohurs on the rub – give and take five to two after the first game. And sometimes, at game and

game, they bet an extra five. Tellwell and Long, who are playing against Bean and Fickle, have just lost a bumper – twenty-seven gold mohurs – a matter of forty-three pounds four shillings.

In the billiard-room, there is a match going on between four officers who are famed for their skill, judgment, and execution. Heavy bets are pending. How cautiously and how well they play! No wonder, when we consider the number of hours they practise, and that they play every day of their lives. That tall man, now about to strike, makes a revenue out of billiards. I shall be greatly mistaken if that man does not come to grief some day. He preys upon every youngster in every station he goes to with his regiment. He is a captain in the Native Infantry. His name is Tom Locke. He has scored forty-seven off the red ball. His confederate, Bunyan, knows full well that luck has little to do with his success. He, too, will come to grief before long. Your clever villains are invariably tripped up sooner or later, and ignominiously stripped of their commissions and positions in society.

It is five o'clock. Some thirty horses and as many ponies are saddled and bridled, and led up and down in the vicinity of the club. Everybody will be on the mall presently. The mall is a part of the road round the Camel's Back. It is a level of about half a mile long and twelve feet broad. A slight fence stands between the riders and a deep khud (precipice). To gallop along this road is nothing when you are accustomed to it; but at first it makes one very nervous even to witness it. Serious and fatal accidents have

happened; but, considering all things, they have been far fewer than might have been expected.

The mall is crowded. Ladies and gentlemen on horseback, and ladies in janpans – the janpaneese dressed in every variety of livery. Men in the French grey coats, trimmed with white serge, are carrying Mrs. Hastings. Men in the brown clothes, trimmed with yellow serge, are carrying Mrs. Merrydale. Jack Apsley's wife is mounted on her husband's second charger. "Come along, Captain Wall," she calls out to me, and goes off at a canter, which soon becomes a hard gallop. I follow her of course. Jack remains behind, to have a quiet chat with Mrs. Flower, of his regiment; who thinks – and Jack agrees with her – that hard riding on the mall is a nuisance, and ought to be put a stop to. But, as we come back, we meet the hypocrite galloping with a Miss Pinkerton, a new importation, with whom – much to the amusement of his wife – he affects to be desperately in love. The mall, by the way, is a great place for flirtations.

Most steady-going people, like Mrs. Flower, not only think hard riding on the mall a nuisance, but make it the theme of letters to the editors of the papers; and sometimes the editors will take the matter up, and write leading articles thereon, and pointedly allude to the fact – as did the late Sir C. J. Napier in a general order – that beggars on horseback usually ride in the opposite direction to heaven. But these letters and leaders rarely have the desired effect; for what can a man do when a pretty woman like Mrs. Apsley says, "Come along; let us have a gallop."

Why are there so very many people on the mall this evening? A few evenings ago it was proposed at the club that a band should play twice a week. A paper was sent round at once, and every one subscribed a sum in accordance with his means. Next morning the required number of musicians was hunted up and engaged. Two cornets, two flutes, two violins, a clarionet, a fife, and several drums. It is the twenty-ninth of May – a day always celebrated in "this great military camp," as Lord Ellenborough described British India. At a given signal, the band strikes up "God save the Queen." We all flock round the band, which has taken up a position on a rock beetling over the road. The male portion of us raise our hats, and remain uncovered while the anthem is played. We are thousands of miles distant from our fatherland and our Queen, but our hearts are as true and as loyal as though she were in the midst of us.

This is the first time that the Himalaya mountains have listened to the joyous sound of music. We have danced to music within doors; but never, until this day, have we heard a band in the open air in the Himalaya mountains. How wonderful is the effect! From valley to valley echo carries the sound, until at last it seems as though

Every mountain now had found a band.

Long after the strain has ceased with us, we can hear it penetrating into and reverberating amidst regions which the foot

of man has never yet trodden, and probably will never tread. The sun has gone down, but his light is still with us.

Back to the club! Dinner is served. We sit down, seventy-five of us. The fare is excellent, and the champagne has been iced in the hail which fell the other night, during a storm. Jack Apsley is on my right, and I have thrice begged of him to remember that he must not stay later than half-past twelve; and he has thrice responded that Mary has given him an extension of leave until daylight. Jack and I were midshipmen together, some years ago, in a line-of-battle ship that went by the name of the House of Correction. And there is Wywell sitting opposite to us – Wywell who was in the frigate which belonged to our squadron – the squadron that went round the world, and buried the commodore, poor old Sir James! in Sydney churchyard. Fancy we three meeting again in the Himalaya mountains!

The cloth is removed, for the dinner is over. The president of the club – the gentleman who founded it – rises. He is a very little man of seventy years of age – fifty-three of which have been spent in India. He is far from feeble, and is in full possession of all his faculties. His voice is not loud, but it is very distinct, and pierces the ear.

They do not sit long after dinner at the club. It is only nine, and the members are already diminishing. Some are off to the billiard-room, to smoke, drink brandy-and-water, and look on at the play. The whist parties are now at work, and seven men are engaged at brag. A few remain; and, drawing their chairs to the

fireplace, form a ring and chat cosily.

Halloa! what is this? The club-house is heaving and pitching like a ship at anchor in a gale of wind. Some of us feel qualmish. It is a shock of an earthquake; and a very violent shock. It is now midnight. A thunderstorm is about to sweep over Mussoorie. Only look at that lurid forked lightning striking yonder hill, and listen to that thunder! While the storm lasts, the thunder will never for a second cease roaring; for, long before the sound of one peal has died away, it will be succeeded by another more awful. And now, look at the Dhoon! Those millions of acres are illuminated by incessant sheet lightning. How plainly we discern the trees and the streams in the Dhoon, and the outline of the pass which divides the Dhoon from the plains. What a glorious panorama! We can see the black clouds descending rapidly towards the Dhoon, and it is not until they near that level land that they discharge the heavy showers with which they are laden. What a luxury would this storm be to the inhabitants of the plains; but it does not extend beyond the Dhoon. We shall hear the day after to-morrow that not a single drop of rain has fallen at Umballah, Meerut, or Saharunpore.

The party from the billiard-room has come up to have supper, now that the storm is over. They are rather noisy; but the card-players take no heed of them. They are too intent upon their play to be disturbed. Two or three of the brag party call for oyster-toast to be taken to the table, and they devour it savagely while the cards are dealt round, placing their lighted cheroots meanwhile

on the edge of the table.

And now there is singing – comic and sentimental. "Isle of Beauty" is followed by the "Steam Leg," the "Steam Leg" by the "Queen of the May," the "Queen of the May" by the facetious version of "George Barnwell," and so on. Jack Apsley – who has ascertained that dear Mary is quite safe, and not at all alarmed – is still here, and is now singing "Rule, Britannia," with an energy and enthusiasm which are at once both pleasing and ridiculous to behold. He has been a soldier for upwards of sixteen years; but the sailor still predominates in his nature; while his similes have invariably reference to matters connected with ships and the sea. He told me just now, that when he first joined his regiment, he felt as much out of his element as a live dolphin in a sentry-box, and he has just described his present colonel as a man who is as touchy as a boatswain's kitten. Apsley's Christian name is Francis, but he has always been called Jack, and always will be.

It is now broad daylight, and high time for a man on sick-leave to be in bed. How seedy and disreputable we all look, in our evening dresses and patent-leather boots. And observe this carnation in my button-hole – the gift of Mrs. Apsley; she gave it to me on the mall. The glare of the lights, and the atmosphere of smoke in which I have been sitting part of the night, have robbed it of its freshness, its bloom, and perfume. I am sorry to say it is an emblem of most of us.

Go home, Apsley! Go home, reeking of tobacco-smoke and brandy-and-water – with your eyes like boiled gooseberries, your

hair in frightful disorder – go home! You will probably meet upon the mall your three beautiful children, with their rosy faces all bloom, and their breath, when they press their glowing lips to those feverish cheeks of yours, will smell as incense, and make you ashamed of yourself. Go home, Jack. I will tiff with you to-day at half-past two.

Two young gentlemen were victimized last night at the brag party. The one, a lieutenant of the N. I. Buffs, lost six thousand rupees; the other, a lieutenant of the Foot Artillery, four thousand. The day after to-morrow, the first of the month, will be settling day. How are they to meet these debts of honour? They have nothing but their pay, and must borrow from the banks. That is easily managed. The money will be advanced to them on their own personal security, and that of two other officers in the service. They must also insure their lives. The premium and the interest together will make them forfeit fourteen per cent. per annum on the sum advanced. The loan will be paid off in three years, by monthly instalments. The paymaster will receive an order from the bank secretary to deduct for the bank so much per mensem from their pay. For the next three years they will have to live very mildly indeed.

There were also two victims (both youngsters) to billiards. One lost three thousand rupees in bets, another two thousand five hundred by bad play. They too, will have to fly for assistance to the banks. Captains Locke and Bunyan won, between them, last night, one thousand four hundred pounds. There was but

little execution done at whist. Not more than one hundred and fifty pounds changed hands. Those four men who play regularly together, and who never exceed their usual bets, have very little difference between them at the end of each month – not thirty pounds either way. This will not hurt them; for they have all good appointments, and have private property besides.

I find, on going to tiffin at Jack Apsley's, that Mrs. Jack has heard all about the winnings and losings at the club. Some man went home and told his wife, and she has told everybody whom she has seen. In a short time the news will travel to head-quarters at Simlah, and out will come a general order on gambling, which general order will be read aloud at the Himalaya Club, with comments by the whole company – comments which will be received with shouts of laughter. Some youngsters will put the general order into verse, and send it to a newspaper. This done, the general order will be converted into pipe-lights. This is no doubt very sad; but I have no time to moralize. My duty is simply to paint the picture.

Mrs. Apsley is not angry with her husband for staying up till daylight. She thinks a little dissipation does him good; and it is but a very little that Jack indulges in, for he is a good husband and a good father. Jack has a severe headache, but he won't confess it. He says he never touched the champagne, and only drank two glasses of brandy and water. But who ever did touch the champagne, and who ever did drink any more than two glasses of brandy and water? Jack came home with his pockets filled with

almonds, raisins, prunes, nutcrackers, and two liqueur glasses; but how they got there he has not the slightest idea – but I have. Wywell, from a sideboard, was filling his pockets all the while he was singing "Rule, Britannia."

"Mrs. Apsley, I have some news for you."

"What is it, Captain Wall?"

"The club gives a ball on the 7th of June."

"You don't say so."

"And what is more, a fancy ball."

The tiffin is brought in. Mulligatawny soup and rice, cold lamb and mint sauce, sherry and beer. The Apsleys are very hospitable people; but Mary, who rules the household, never exceeds her means for the sake of making a display.

The soup and a glass of wine set Jack up; and he becomes quite chirpy. He proposes that he and I and Wywell shall go to the fancy ball as middies, and that Mary shall appear as Black-eyed Susan. Then, darting off at a tangent, he asks me if I remember when we were lying off Mount Edgecombe, just before sailing for South America? But he requires a little more stimulant, for the tears are glistening in his soft blue eyes when he alludes to the death of poor Noel, a middy whom we buried in the ocean a few days before we got to Rio. In a very maudlin way he narrates to his wife the many excellent qualities of poor Noel. She listens with great attention; but, observing that his spontaneous emotion is the result of the two over-night glasses of brandy – plus what he cannot remember drinking over-night – she suggests that Jack

shall make some sherry cobbler. What a jewel of a woman art thou, Mrs. Apsley! Several of the men who returned home, as Jack did, none the better for their potations, have been driven by their wives' reproaches to the club, where they are now drinking brandy and soda-water to excess; while here is your spouse as comfortable as a cricket on a hearth; and now that he confesses he was slightly screwed, you, with quiet tact, contradict his assertion.

For the next week the forthcoming fancy ball to be given by the club will be the chief topic of conversation amongst the visitors at Mussoorie. Mrs. Ludlam is in immense demand. She knows the character that each lady will appear in; but it is useless to attempt to extract from her the slightest particle of information on that head. This ball will be worth seven hundred and fifty rupees to Mrs. Ludlam.

Let us keep away from the club for a few days; for, after several officers have been victimized at play, their friends are apt to talk about the matter in an unpleasant manner. This frequently leads to a quarrel, which I dislike to witness.

Where shall we go? To the Dhoon. It is very hot there; but never mind. No great-coat, no fires, an hour hence; but the very lightest of garments and a punkah. The thermometer is at eighty-five degrees there. The Dhoon is not a healthy place in the summer. It must have been the bed of an enormous lake, or small inland sea. Its soil being alluvial, will produce anything: every kind of fruit, European and tropical. You may gather a peach and a plantain out of the same garden. Some of the hedges in this

part of the world are singularly beautiful, composed of white and red cluster roses and sweetbriers. There is an excellent hotel in the Dhoon, where we are sure to meet people whom we know.

Sure enough, I find a Party of five at the hotel; all club men, and intimate friends of mine. They, too, have come down to avoid being present on the first settling day; for if there should be any duelling, it is just possible that some of us might be asked to act as second.

We must dine off sucking-pig in the Dhoon. The residents at Mussoorie used to form their pig-parties in the Dhoon, just as the residents of London form their whitebait banquets at Greenwich. I once took a French gentleman, who was travelling in India, to one of these pig-parties, and he made a very humorous note of it in his book of travel, which he showed to me. Unlike most foreigners who travel in English dominions, he did not pick out and note down all the bad traits in our character; but gave us credit for all those excellent points which his experience of mankind in general enabled him to observe.

The Governor-General's body-guard is quartered just now in the Dhoon, and there is a Goorkha regiment here. The Dhoon will send some twenty couples to the fancy ball on the 7th. Every lady in the place has at this moment a Durzee (man tailor) employed in her back verandah dress-making. We are admitted to the confidence of Mrs. Plowville, who is going as Norma. And a very handsome Norma she will make; she being rather like Madame Grisi – and she knows it.

We return to the club on the 2nd of June. There has been a serious dispute, and a duel has been fought; but happily, no blood shed. The intelligence of the gambling at the club has reached the Commander-in-Chief at Simlah; and he has ordered that the remainder of the leave granted to Captains Locke and Bunyan be cancelled, and that those officers forthwith join their respective regiments. The victims also have been similarly treated; yet every one of these remanded officers came up here on medical certificate.

It is the morning of the 7th of June. The stewards of the ball are here, there, and everywhere, making arrangements. Several old hands, who hate and detest balls, and who voted against this ball, are walking about the public room, protesting that it is the greatest folly they ever heard of. And in their disgust they blackball two candidates for admission who are to be balloted for on the 10th instant. They complain that they can get no tiffin, no dinner, no anything. But the stewards only laugh at them.

The supper has been supplied by Monsieur Emille, the French restaurateur, and a very splendid supper it is. It is laid out in the dining-room. Emille is a great artist. He is not perhaps equal to Brazier – that great man whom Louis Philippe gave to his friend, Lord William Bentinck, when Lord William was going out to govern India – but Emille, nevertheless, would rank high even amongst the most skilful of cuisiniers in Europe.

It is a quarter past nine, and we of the club are ready to receive our guests. The ladies come in janpans; their husbands following

them on horseback or on foot. It is a beautiful moonlight night. We are always obliged to wait upon the moon when we give a ball in Mussoorie. Before ten o'clock the room is crowded. There are present one hundred and thirty-six gentlemen, and seventy-five ladies. Of the former nine-tenths are soldiers, the remainder are civilians. Of the latter, seventy are married; the remaining five are spinsters.

Here we all are in every variety of costume – Turks, Greeks, Romans, Bavarian broom-girls, Medoras, Corsairs, Hamlets, Othellos, Tells, Charles the Seconds, and Quakers. Many have not come in fancy costume, but in their respective uniforms; and where do you see such a variety of uniforms as in an Indian ball-room? Where will you meet with so great a number of distinguished men? There is the old general: that empty sleeve tells a tale of the battle of Waterloo. Beside him is a general in the Company's service, one who has recently received the thanks of his country. He has seen seventy, but there is no man in the room who could at this very time endure so great an amount of mental or bodily fatigue. That youngster to the right of the general is to be made a brevet-major and a C.B. as soon as he gets his company. He is a hero, though a mere boy. That pale-faced civilian is a man of great ability, and possesses administrative talents of the very highest order. Seated on an ottoman, talking to Mrs. Hastings, is the famous Hawkins, of the Third Dragoons. Laughing in the side doorway is the renowned William Mumble. He is the *beau ideal* of a dashing soldier.

Yonder is Major Starcross, whose gallantry in Affghanistan was the theme of admiration in Europe. And there is Colonel Bolt, of the Duke's Own. All of these men have been under very hot fire – the hottest that even Lord Hardinge could remember. All of them are decorated with medals and ribbons. Where will you see handsomer women than you frequently meet in a ball-room at Mussoorie or Simlah? Amongst those now assembled there are three who, at any court in Europe, would be conspicuous for their personal attractions – Mrs. Merrydale, Mrs. Plowville, and Mrs. Banks. Mrs. Apsley is a pretty little woman; but the three to whom I have alluded are beautiful.

The dancing has commenced, and will continue until four o'clock, with an interval of half-an-hour at supper-time. The second supper – the ladies being gone – will then commence, and a very noisy party it will be. Unrestrained by the presence of the fair sex, the majority of those who remain will drink and smoke in earnest, and the chances are, there will be several rows. Ensign Jenks, when the brandy and water inflames him, will ask young Blackstone, of the Civil Service, what he meant by coming up and talking to his partner during the last set of quadrilles. Blackstone will say, the lady beckoned to him. Jenks will say, "It is a lie!" Blackstone will rise to assault Jenks. Two men will hold Blackstone down on his chair. The general will hear of this, for Captain Lovelass (who is himself almost inarticulate) has said to Jenks, "Cossider self unarrest!" Jenks will have to join his regiment at Meerut, after receiving from the general a very severe

reprimand.

While talking over the past ball, an archery meeting or a pic-nic is sure to be suggested. It must originate at the club; without the countenance of the club, which is very jealous of its prerogative, no amusement can possibly be successful. A lady, the wife of a civilian, who prided herself on her husband's lofty position, had once the temerity to try the experiment, and actually sent round a proposal-paper in her own handwriting, and by one of her own servants. She failed of course. All the club people wrote the word "seen" opposite to their names; but withheld the important word "approved." Even the tradespeople at Mussoorie acknowledge the supremacy of the Himalaya Club.

The season is over. The cold weather has commenced in the plains. It is the 5th of October, and everybody at Mussoorie is on the move – going down the hill, as it is called. Every house which was lately full is now empty, and will remain so till the coming April. The only exceptions will be the schools for young ladies and for little boys; the convent, the branch of the North-West Bank, and the Post-Office. Invalided officers who reside at the sanatorium during the summer will go down the hill, and winter in Deyrah Dhoon. In another month the mountains will be covered with snow, and it would be dangerous to walk out on these narrow roads, few of which are railed in.

Let us sum up the events of the season. Four young men were victimized – two at cards and two at billiards. Two duels were fought on the day after the ball. In one of these duels an officer

fell dead. In another the offending party grievously wounded his antagonist. Four commissions were sacrificed in consequence of these encounters. There were two elopements. Mrs. Merrydale went off with Lieutenant Maxwell, leaving her children under the care of the servants, until her husband came to take them away. Mrs. Hastings, who used to bore us about the duties of a wife, carried off that silly boy Stammersleigh. These elopements led to two actions in H.M. Supreme Court of Calcutta, and seven of us (four in one case and three in the other) had to leave our regiments or appointments, and repair to the Supreme Court to give evidence. Some of us had to travel fourteen hundred miles in the month of May, the hottest month in India.

There was another very awkward circumstance connected with that season at Mussoorie. The reader knows that Captains Locke and Bunyan were ordered to join their regiments, the unexpired portion of their leave having been cancelled by order of his Excellency the Commander-in-Chief. In the hurry of his departure from the hills, Locke had left in the drawer of a table a letter from Bunyan, containing a proposal to victimize a certain officer – then in Mussoorie – in the same manner that they had victimized one Lord George Straw; namely, to get him to their rooms, and play at brag. Lord George Straw had lost to these worthies eighteen hundred pounds on one eventful night. The general opinion was, touching a very extraordinary fact connected with the play, that Lord George had been cheated. This letter from Bunyan to Locke was found by the servant of

the officer who now occupied the apartments recently vacated by Locke. The servant handed it to his master, who, fancying that it was one of his own letters, began abstractedly to read it. Very soon, however, he discovered his mistake. But he had read sufficient to warrant his reading the whole, and he did so. A meeting of gentlemen at the club was called; and, before long, Locke and Bunyan left the army by sentence of a general court-martial. I have since heard that Locke lost his ill-gotten gains in Ireland, and became eventually a marker at a billiard-room; and that Bunyan, who also came to poverty, was seen driving a cab for hire in Oxford-street.

It behoves me, however, to inform the reader that, recently, the tone of Anglo-Indian society during the hot seasons is very much improved. Six or seven years ago there never was a season that did not end as unhappily as that which I have attempted to describe; but it is now four years since I heard of a duel in the Upper Provinces – upwards of four years since I heard of a victim to gambling, and nearly three since there was an elopement. It is true that the records of courts-martial still occasionally exhibit painful cases; but, if we compare the past with the present, we must admit that the change is very satisfactory. I do not attribute this altered state of things to the vigilance of commanding officers, or the determination of the commanders-in-chief to punish severely those who offend. It is due chiefly to the improved tone of society in England, from which country we get our habits and manners. The improvement in the tone

of Indian society has been very gradual. Twenty years ago India was famous for its infamy. Ten years ago it was very bad. It is now tolerable. In ten years from this date, if not in less time, Indian society will be purged entirely of those evils which now prey upon it, and trials for drunkenness and other improper conduct will happen as rarely as in England. Year by year this communication between our fatherland and the upper part of India will become more speedy and less expensive; and thus will a greater number of officers be enabled to come home on furlough for a year or two. Nothing does an Indian officer so much good as a visit to Europe. When a man has once contracted bad habits in India, he cannot reform in India. To be cured he must be taken away for a while from the country. There have been instances of officers who have had strength of mind to alter their course of life without leaving the East; but those instances are very few.

The East India Company should do all in its power to encourage young officers to spend a certain time every seven years in Europe. Instead of six months' leave to the hills – which six months are spent in utter idleness, and too frequently in dissipation – give them nine months' leave to Europe. This would admit of their spending six months in England, or on the Continent, where they would improve their minds and mend their morals, as well as their constitutions.

The East India Company should also bring the Peninsular and Oriental Company to reasonable terms for the passage of officers to and from India. A lieutenant who wishes to come home, cannot

at present get a passage from Calcutta to Southampton under one hundred and twenty pounds. So that he gives up more than four months' pay for being "kept" thirty-six days on board of a steamer. Three pounds ten shillings per diem for food and transit!

THE MAHOMMEDAN MOTHER

Mussoorie and Landour, situated in the lower range of the Himalaya mountains, form the favourite sanitarium of the upper part of India. The scenery is more beautiful than that of Simlah; for Mussoorie and Landour command a view of Dehra Dhoon, which resembles (except that the Dhoon is grander and more extensive) the plains of Italy as seen from the ascent of the Simplon. The mall of Mussoorie is crowded every evening with visitors; some on horseback, some on hill ponies, some on foot, and some in the janpan (something like a sedan-chair carried by four hill men). A gayer scene it would be impossible to conceive. Every one knows his neighbour; and, in passing along the narrow road, stoppages are frequent. Compliments must be exchanged, and the news or scandal of the day gossiped about. Every now and then you hear a cry of "What a shame!" from a terrified lady in a janpan, while a couple of lovers gallop past on spirited Arabs at full speed. Sometimes a shriek from a nervous mamma reverberates through the valleys, when she beholds her children in the way of the heedless pair.

Accidents sometimes occur. A few years ago, a lady and a gentleman were riding round a place called the Camel's Back; the road gave way, and they fell down a precipice several hundred feet. The horses were killed, but the riders miraculously escaped with only a few severe bruises. On another occasion, a gentleman

of the civil service was taking his evening walk, when one of his dogs ran between his legs, and precipitated him. He was killed on the spot.

On the mall every evening was to be seen a native woman standing by the side of the road, near a large rock, watching those who passed by. She was well dressed, and her face was concealed, according to the custom of persons of her apparent station in life. There she stood, attracting general attention. She was a woman of slight, but graceful figure, and rather tall. Many persons were curious to know who she was, and to see her face; but she took care that in this respect none should be gratified. Sometimes she would go away early; at other times she would remain until it was quite dark. Some suspected – and I was amongst the number – that she was the native wife of some European officer who had divorced himself, and visited the "Hills," whither the woman, to annoy, had followed him; and there was no small amount of speculation as to whose wife she could be. Some of the guesses, if they were seriously made, were extremely ungenerous, for they included several elderly officials, who could not by any possibility have been married to this mysterious lady. I was determined to know who she was; and one night, when most people were thronged around the band, I approached her, and inquired if I could be of any service to her. She replied (her face closely covered), "Yes; by going away." She had a very sweet voice, and its sorrowful tones inspired me with pity, when she added, "I am a poor woman; my heart is crushed; do

not add to my misery by remaining near me." I obeyed her, after apologizing for having intruded. Several other persons had attempted to extract some particulars from the lady, and had received the same sort of reply as that she had given to me.

The rains were about to commence, and storms were not unfrequent. The mall was less frequented; only a few – those who cared little about hearing "heaven's artillery thunder in the skies," or being pelted by hailstones as large as marbles – ventured out; but amongst that few was the native lady, who, punctual as the light of day, visited that huge, dismal-looking rock, and gazed upon the road.

I have seen a storm on the heights of Jura – such a storm as Lord Byron describes. I have seen lightning and heard thunder in Australia; I have, off Terra del Fuego, the Cape of Good Hope, and the coast of Java, kept watch in thunderstorms which have drowned in their roaring the human voice, and made every one deaf and stupified; but these storms are not to be compared with a thunderstorm at Mussoorie or Landour.

In one of these storms of thunder, lightning, wind, and hail, at about five o'clock in the afternoon, I laid a wager with a friend that the native lady would be found as usual standing near the rock. Something secretly assured me that she was there at that moment, looking on unmoved, except by the passions which had prompted her pilgrimage. How were we to decide it? "By going to the spot," I suggested. My friend declined; but declared that, as far as the bet was concerned, he would be perfectly satisfied

with my word, either one way or the other; namely, whether I had won or lost.

I set off upon my journey. The rock was at least three-quarters of a mile distant from my abode. My curiosity was so much aroused – albeit I felt certain the woman was there – that I walked through the storm without heeding it. Every now and then I saw the electric fluid descend into a valley; then heard that strange noise which huge pieces of rock make when they bound from one precipice to another, tearing up trees, and carrying large stones and the earth along with them in their headlong career; but still my mind was intent on the woman, and nothing else.

Was she there?

Yes; there she sat, drenched to the skin; but I could not pity her wet and cold condition, for I could see that she cared no more about it than I cared about my own. She drew her garment so closely over her face, that the outline of her features was plainly discernible. It was decidedly handsome; but still I longed to see her eyes, to confirm my impression. I sat beside her. The storm still raged, and presently the lady said, "The heaven is speaking, Sahib." I answered, "Truly; but the lightning, the parent of that sound which I now hear, I cannot see." She understood me, and gave me a glimpse of her eyes. They were not like the eyes of a native; they were of a bluish hue, almost grey. I said to her, in Hindoostanee, "You are not a native; what do you do here in a native dress?"

"I would I were an European," she answered me. "My feelings,

perhaps, would be less acute, and I should be sitting over a bright fire. Oh, how loudly the heaven is speaking! Go home, Sahib, you will catch cold!"

"Why do *you* not go home?" I asked. "You will see no one to-day. No – not even your beloved. I am the only being who will venture out in a storm like this; and I do so only for your sake."

"My heart is as hard as this rock," she said, flipping her finger against the granite, "to all except one being – a child. Oh, how the heaven is speaking, Sahib!"

"Do you not fear the lightning and the hail?" I asked her.

"I did once," she replied. "I trembled whenever it came near; but now, what does it signify? *Bidglee* (lightning), come to me," she cried, beckoning to a streak of fluid which entered the ground within a hundred yards of us. "*Bidglee*, come here, and make a turquoise of my heart."

What pretty feet! She had kicked off her shoes, which were saturated and spoiled.

"Go home, Sahib" (such was the refrain of her conversation); "you will catch cold!"

By degrees I had an opportunity of seeing all her features. She was most beautiful, but had evidently passed the meridian of her charms. She could not have been less than twenty-four years of age. On the forefinger of her left hand she wore a ring of English manufacture, in which was set a red cornelian, whereon was engraved a crest – a stag's head.

I took her hand in mine, and said, "Where did you get this?"

pointing to the ring.

She smiled and sighed, and then answered, "Jee (sir), it belonged to an Ameer (a great man)."

"Where is he?"

"Never mind."

"Do you expect to see him soon?"

"No; never."

"Is he old?"

"No; not older than yourself. How the heaven is speaking!"

"Let me see you to your home."

"No. I will go alone."

"When do you intend to go?"

"When you have left me."

"You are very unkind thus to repulse my civility."

"It may be so; but my heart's blood is curdled."

I bade her farewell; and through the storm, which still raged, I went home and won my wager.

I could not rest that night. The beautiful face of the native woman haunted me. In vain I tried to sleep, and at last I arose from my bed, and joined a card-party, in the hope that the excitement of gambling would banish her from my brain. But to no purpose. I knew not what I was playing, and ere long I left off in disgust.

Almost every one who visits the Hills keeps a servant called a *tindal*. His duty is to look after the men who carry your janpan, to go errands, to keep up the fire, and to accompany you with

a lantern when you go out after dark. These tindals, like the couriers on the Continent, are a peculiar race; and, generally speaking, are a very sharp, active, and courageous people. I summoned my tindal, and interrogated him about the native lady who had caused so much sensation in Mussoorie. The only information he could afford me was, that she had come from a village near Hurdwar; that she was rich, possessed of the most costly jewels, kept a number of servants, moved about in great state on the plains, and, for all he knew, she might be the wife or slave of some Rajah.

Could she, I wondered, be the famous Ranee Chunda, the mother of Dulleep Singh, and the wife of Runjeet? – the woman who, disguised as a soldier, had escaped from the fort of Chunar, where she had been imprisoned for disturbing, by her plots, the imagination of Sir Frederick Currie, when he was Resident at Lahore? The woman I had seen and spoken to "answered to the description" of the Ranee in every respect, excepting the eyes. Dulleep Singh was living at Mussoorie, and he not unfrequently rode upon the mall. Ranee Chunda had a satirical tongue, and a peculiarly sweet-toned, but shrill voice, and she had remarkably beautiful feet, and so had this woman. Ranee Chunda had courage which was superhuman; so had this woman. Ranee Chunda had a child – an only child; so had this woman.

I asked the tindal where the lady lived. He replied, that she occupied a small house near the bazaar, not very far from my own abode. "She is in great grief," the tindal yawned, "about

something or other."

"Endeavour to find out the cause of her misfortunes," said I, "and you shall be rewarded according to your success."

Next day the tindal reported to me that I was not the only Sahib who was deeply interested in the native lady's affairs; that many wished to make her acquaintance, and had sent their tindals to talk to her; but that she had firmly and laconically dismissed them all, just as she had dismissed him – "Tell your master that the sufferings of an object of pity, such as I am, ought not to be aggravated by the insulting persecution of gay and light-hearted men."

The day after the storm brought forth the loveliest afternoon that can be imagined. The sun shone out brightly, the clouds were lifted from the Dhoon, and the vast panorama resembled what we read of in some fairy tale. All Mussoorie and Landour turned out. The mall was so crowded, that it was difficult to thread one's way through the throng.

Was the lady at the rock? Yes; there she stood, as usual, watching those who passed. The Maharajah with his suite appeared. I was convinced that the woman was the Maharajah's mother; but I did not breathe my suspicions, lest I might cause her to be arrested. When it became dusk, and the visitors were taking their departure, I again approached the lady, and made my "salaam," in that respectful phrase which is always adopted when addressing a native woman of rank. She at once recognised me as the person who had spoken to her during the storm on the

previous afternoon, for she alluded to its fury, and said she had taken a wrong road, had lost her way after I had left her, and did not reach home till nearly midnight. She concluded her little speech with a hope that I had been more fortunate.

"You should have allowed me to escort you," said I. "I would have helped to carry your load of sorrow."

She looked at me, and suddenly and abruptly said, "Your name is Longford."

"You are right," said I.

"About three or four years ago you stayed for several days with a friend in a tent near Deobund? You were on your way to these mountains?"

"I did."

"You had a little dog with you, and you lost it at Deobund?"

"I did lose my dog, and made a great noise about it. But how do you know all this?"

She smiled and sighed.

I was bewildered. My belief that she was the Ranee Chunda was almost confirmed. It was close to the encampment of the Ranee, when she was on her way to Chunar, that my dog was lost, and my servants and the officers of police declared that it must have been some of the Ranee's people who had stolen the favourite.

"The dog is still alive," said the lady; "and if you will come to-morrow, at twelve o'clock, to my house, you shall see him; but you will promise not to take him from me?"

"Of course I will not take him from you. But let me see him to-night, and tell me how he came into your possession. I will see you to your home."

"No, Sahib; be patient. I will tell you all to-morrow; and, when you have heard my story, you will perhaps do me a kindness. It is in your power to assist me. Tell me where you live, and I will send my brother to you at eleven o'clock. He will conduct you to my house. Salaam, Sahib."

I returned her salaam, and left her.

I did not go to bed till two o'clock the next morning, and when my tindal aroused me at eleven, and informed me that a young man wished to see me, I was disposed to believe that my engagement at twelve had been made in my dreams.

I ordered the young man to be admitted. He came to my bedside, and said in a confidential tone of voice: "The lady has sent me to wait your commands." I got up, made a hasty toilet, drank a cup of very hot tea, and followed the young man, who led me to the little house near the theatre, at the top of the Bazaar. I entered the abode, and found the lady sitting, native fashion, on a carpet on which was strewed marigold and rose leaves. Her silver kulean (small hookah) was beside her; and, sure enough, there was my long-lost terrier, Duke, looking as sleek, fat, lazy, and useless as a native lady's dog could be. After expressing my thanks to the lady for her condescension in granting me the interview, I spoke to my former favourite, Duke, but he only stretched himself, and yawned in reply.

"And you have still that ring with the blue stone in it," said the lady, taking my hand, and smiling while she looked at the ring. "I remember observing this when I saw you asleep, one morning, on a couch in the tent at Deobund. Had I noticed it when you addressed me during the storm, I would not have spoken so rudely to you."

"I do not remember having seen you previous to the other evening," said I; "and if I had, I should never have forgotten it. Where have we met?" I repeated.

"Where I had opportunities of seeing you, but where you could not see me."

There was an old serving woman, whom she called mother, attending upon her, and the young man whom she called brother, a soldier-like looking youth, was still standing in the room to which he had conducted me. The lady desired them both to withdraw, and then begged me to bring the *mora* (or stool) upon which I was sitting close to her side. I obeyed her. She placed her finely-formed head in the palms of her hands, and gave vent to a violent flood of tears. I suffered her to weep without interruption. Grief appeared to relieve her rather than to increase her pain. At length she dried her eyes, and said: —

"My father was a *Moolvee* (Mahommedan law officer), attached to the Sudder Court, in Agra. I am his only daughter. He was absent from home all day. Why should he not be? He was paid for it; he ate the Company's salt. Well, when I was about fifteen years of age I was enticed away from my home by the

Kotwall (native police officer). He sent an old woman, who had silver on her tongue and gold in her hand. She told me long stories about love; and promised me that if I left my home I should marry the *Kotwall's* son, who was young and handsome. I was but a child and very foolish. The servants who had charge of me were all bribed heavily. One received three hundred rupees, another two hundred, a third one hundred. These people encouraged me in the idea that to marry the *Kotwall's* son would be the most prudent thing in the world; and, one day, when my father had gone to the Court at about ten o'clock, I eloped with the old woman whom the *Kotwall* had sent to talk me over.

"We travelled all day in a *bylee* (native carriage), guarded by two sowars. I asked the old woman several times where she was taking me, but her only reply was, 'Set your heart at rest, child, and eat some sweetmeats.' The *pawn* which she gave me must have been drugged, for shortly after eating it I fell asleep. How long I slept I cannot say, but when I awoke I found myself in the house of a Sahib. The old woman was there also. I became alarmed, but my fears were quieted by the old woman's tongue. She told me I was close to Agra, but the truth was, I was one hundred koss (two hundred miles) distant. Nautch girls were sent for, and they danced before me. I had this hookah given to me, and these bangles. A boy very handsomely dressed waited upon me, and brought my food. Parrots, minahs, and doves were purchased for me to play with. Whatever my childish fancy dictated the old woman instantly procured.

"I was so constantly amused, I had no time or inclination to think of my home. My father was a bad-tempered man, and I was only too glad to be out of hearing of the quarrels in which he constantly engaged with his servants and dependents. One evening the old woman said to me, '*Baba* (child), order a Nautch this evening, and let me, in your name, invite the Sahib to witness it.' I had never seen an Englishman – an European – except at a distance. The idea of being in the room with one inspired me with terror. I had been taught to despise the Kafir, whom my father said he was compelled to serve. I objected; but the old woman's eloquence again prevailed.

"The night came; I was seated on my *fureesh* (carpet) just as I am now, and dressed in clothes of the gayest description. I was like a little queen, and felt as proud as was Noor Jehan. I was then very handsome. If I had not been, much trouble would have been spared; and my flesh was firm – not as it is now. At about ten o'clock the Sahib made his appearance. When he came into the room I was ready to faint with alarm, and, turning my head away, I clung to the old woman, and trembled from head to foot. '*Dhuro mut*' (do not fear), said the Sahib; and then he reproved, but in a gentle voice, the Nautch girls who were laughing loudly at me. The old woman, too, bade me banish my fears. After a while, I ventured to steal a look at the Sahib; and again averted my face, and clung to the old woman. The Sahib, after remaining a brief while, during which he praised my beauty, retired, and I was once more happy. 'There,' said the old woman, when he was

gone; 'you see the Sahib is not a wild beast out of the jungles, but as gentle as one of your own doves.'

"On the following day I heard the Sahib talking in the next room; I peeped through the keyhole of the door, and saw him seated at a table. The *nazir* (head clerk) was standing beside him, reading. There was a man in chains surrounded by *burkandâzes* (guards) at the other end of the room, and a woman was there giving her evidence. The Court-house was undergoing some repairs, and the Sahib was carrying on his magisterial duties in his dining-room. The man in chains began to speak, and deny his guilt. The Sahib called out, '*Choop!*' (Silence!) in a voice so loud, that I involuntarily started back and shuddered. The prisoner again addressed the Sahib, and one of the *burkandâzes* dealt him a severe blow on the head, accompanied by the words, '*Suer! Chor!*' (Pig! Thief!) The case was deferred until the following day, and the court closed at about four o'clock in the afternoon, when the Sahib again paid me a visit.

"I was now afraid to show my fears, lest the Sahib should order me to be killed; and I therefore put on a cheerful countenance, while my heart was quivering in my breast. The Sahib spoke to me very kindly, and I began to dread him less.

"In this way I spent a fortnight; and, at the end of that time, I ventured to talk to the Sahib as though I were his equal. It afforded me great amusement to watch the administration of justice through the keyhole; and, young as I was, I imbibed a desire to have a share in the arbitrary power which was daily

exercised.

"One day, when the Sahib came into my room, I began to talk to him about a case of which he had just disposed. He laughed, and listened to my views with great patience. I told him that the evidence upon which the prisoner had been convicted was false from beginning to end. He promised me that he would reverse the sentence of imprisonment; and, in the ecstasy of my joy at finding that I really had some power, I was intoxicated and unconscious of what I was doing. I suffered the Sahib's lips to touch mine. No sooner had I done so than I felt a degraded outcast, and I cried more bitterly than I have words to describe. The Sahib consoled me, and said that his God and his Prophet should be mine; and that in this world and the next our destinies should be the same.

"From that day I was a wife unto him. I ruled his household, and I shared his pleasures and his sorrows. He was in debt; but, by reducing his expenses, I soon freed him, for his pay was fifteen hundred rupees a month. I suffered no one to rob him, and caused the old woman, who was a great thief and cheat, to be turned away. I loved him with all my soul. I would rather have begged with him than have shared the throne of Ackbar Shah. When he was tired, I lulled him to sleep; when he was ill, I nursed him; when he was angry, I soon restored him to good-humour; and, when I saw him about to be deceived by subordinates, I put him on his guard. That he loved me I never had any reason to doubt. He gave me his confidence, and I never abused his trust."

"Who was the man?" I inquired; for I was in doubt, although I suspected.

"Be patient, Sahib," she replied, and then resumed. "At the end of two years I became a mother."

Here she gave vent to another flood of tears.

"The Sahib was pleased. The child seemed to bind us more closely together. I loved the child; I believe it was because it bore such a strong likeness to its father. When the Sahib was away from me on duty in the district, he seemed still by my side, when I looked at the boy, who was as white as you are."

"Is the child dead?" I asked.

"Be patient, Sahib. When you passed through Deobund, and stayed in the tent with your friend, my child was two years old. I was the mistress of that encampment at Deobund, and the wine you drank was given out with this hand."

"How little do men know of each other!" I exclaimed; "even those who are the most intimate! I had not the least idea there was a lady in the camp, I assure you."

"How angry with you was I," said she, "for keeping the Sahib up so late. You talked together the whole night long. Therefore I had no remorse when I took your dog. Well, as you are aware, soon after that the Sahib was seized with fever, from which he recovered; but he was so shattered by the attack that he was compelled to visit Europe, where you know – " She paused.

A native woman will never, if she can avoid it, speak of the death of a person whom she has loved. I was aware of this, and

bowed my head, touching my forehead with both hands. The father of her child had died on his passage to England.

"Before he left me," she continued, "he gave me all that he possessed; his house and furniture; his horses, carriage, plate; his shares in the bank; his watch, his dressing-case, his rings; – everything was given to me, and I own all to this hour. When I heard the sad news I was heartbroken. Had it not been for the child I would have starved myself to death; as it was, I took to opium and smoking *bhung* (hemp). While I was in this state, my Sahib's brother – the Captain Sahib – came, and took away the boy; not by violence. I gave it to him. What was the child to me then? I did not care. But the old woman whom you heard me call my mother, who now attends me, gradually weaned me from the desperation in which I was indulging; and, by degrees, my senses returned to me. I then began to ask about my child, and a longing to see him came over me. At first they told me he was dead; but when they found I was resolved to destroy myself by intemperance, they told me the truth; that the child was living, and at school in these hills. I have come hither to be near my child. I see him almost every day, but it is at a distance. Sometimes he passes close to where I stand, and I long to spring upon him and to hug him to my breast, whereon in infancy his head reposed. I pray that I could speak to him, give him a kiss, and bless him; but he is never alone. He is always playing with, or talking to, the other little boys at the same school. It seems hard that he should be so joyous while his own mother is so wretched.

Of what use to me is the property I have, when I cannot touch or be recognised by my own flesh and blood. You know the master of the school?"

"Yes."

"Could you not ask him to allow my child to visit you? I could then see him once more, and speak to him. You were a friend of his father, and the request would not seem strange."

I felt myself placed in a very awkward position, and would make no promise; but I told the woman I would consider the matter, and let her know on the following day, provided she would stay at home, and not visit that rock upon the road any more. She strove hard to extract from me a pledge that I would yield to her request; but, difficult as it was to deny her anything – she was still so beautiful and so interesting – I would not commit myself, and held to what I had in the first instance stated.

I paid a visit to the school at which my friend's child had been placed by his uncle, a captain in the East India Company's service. I saw some thirty scholars, of all colours, on the playground; but I soon recognised the boy whom I was so curious to see. He was indeed very like his father, not only in face and figure, but in manner, gait, and bearing. I called to the little fellow, and he came and took my hand with a frankness which charmed me. The schoolmaster told me that the boy was very clever, and that, although only six years old, there were but few of his playmates whom he did not excel. "His father was an old friend of mine," I said. "Indeed our acquaintance began when we

were not older than this child. Would you have any objection to allow the boy to spend a day with me?"

"I promised his uncle," was the schoolmaster's reply, "that he should not go out, and that I would watch him closely; but of course he will be quite safe with you. Any day that you please to send for him he shall be ready."

"Does he know anything of his mother?" I inquired.

"Nothing," said the schoolmaster. "He was very young when he came to me. I have no idea who, or what, or where the mother is, for his uncle did not enter into the particulars of his parentage. The mother must have been very fair, if she were a native, the boy is so very slightly touched with the tar-brush."

I went home, and sent for the mother. She came; and I entreated her to forego her request, for the child's sake. I represented to her that it might unsettle him, and cause him to be discontented. I assured her that he was now as happy and as well taken care of as any mother could desire her offspring to be. On hearing this the poor woman became frantic. She knelt at my feet and supplicated me to listen to her entreaty – a sight of her child, a few words with him, and a kiss from his lips. She said she did not wish him to know that she was his mother; that if I would have him brought into my house, she would dress in the garb of a servant woman, or *syce's* (groom's) wife, and talk to the boy without his being aware that she was the person who had brought him into the world.

"And you will not play me false?" said I, moved by her tears.

"You will not, when you have once got hold of the boy, decline to relinquish that hold, and defy his friends – as mothers *have* done – to take him from you, except by an order of Court? Remember, Dooneea (that was her name), that I am running a great risk; and am, moreover, deceiving the schoolmaster, and behaving badly to the boy's uncle, by allowing myself to be swayed by your tears and my own feelings. Consider what disgrace you will bring upon me, if you fail to keep your word in this matter." She bound herself by an oath that she would do all I required, if I would only give her the longed-for interview.

"To-morrow, at twelve," said I, "you may come here. At that hour, in this room, the child shall be with me. Come in the dress of a poor woman, and bring an infant with you. Let your excuse be that you have come to complain of the ill-treatment you have received from your husband, who is in my service. This will give me an opportunity of bidding you remain until justice be done, and meanwhile you will see the boy; and when I go out of the room, which will be only for a short time, you can talk to him. Do you know your part, Dooneea?"

"Yes, Sahib."

"To-morrow, at twelve. Salaam, Dooneea!"

"Salaam, Sahib." She went away with a cheerful countenance.

There are no such actors in the world as the people of Hindostan. The boy came to me a little before twelve, and was reading to me, when Dooneea, with a child in her arms, and dressed in the shabbiest apparel, rushed into the room,

and commenced an harangue. She said she had been beaten unmercifully by her husband, for no cause whatever; that he had broken one of her fingers, and had attempted to stab her; but she had saved her life by flight. All this she accompanied with gesticulations and tears, according to the custom of complainants in the East. I feigned to be very angry with the husband, and hastily left the room, as if to make inquiry and to send for him.

I ran round to an outer door, and peeped in upon Dooneea and her boy. She was repeating the same tale to the child, and the child was imploring her not to cry. It was a strange scene. The tears she was now shedding were not mock tears. The boy asked her how her husband came to beat her? She began thus: – "I was sitting near the fire talking to my eldest boy, and had my arm round his waist – there, just as I put my arm round your waist – and I said to the boy, 'It is getting very late and you must go to sleep,' and I pulled him to my breast – like this – and gave him a kiss on his forehead, then on his eyes – there – just as gently as that, yes, just like that. Well, the boy began to cry – "

"Why did he cry? Because you told him to go to bed?"

"Yes," said Dooneea; "but his father came in, and thought I was teasing the child. He abused me and then he beat me."

The woman gazed at her child; and, having a good excuse for weeping in her alleged wrongs, she did not scruple to avail herself of it. From behind the screen which concealed me from her sight, and that of the boy, I, too, shed tears of pity.

I returned to the room, and said, "Dooneea, since you are

afraid of your life, do not leave this house until I tell you to do so; but give your infant to the sweeper's wife to take care of. I do not like your children in my house."

How thankful she was! She placed her head upon my feet, and cracked her knuckles over my knees.

Charles Lamb says that the children of the poor are adults from infancy. The same may be said of the children of the rich in India. Dooneea's little boy discussed the conduct of the cruel husband, and sympathised with the ill-used wife, as though he had been called upon to adjudicate the affair in a court of justice. He even went so far as to say, "What a wicked man to beat such a dear looking woman!" and he gave Dooneea the rupee which I had given to him on the day previous when I saw him at the school. With what delight did Dooneea tie up that piece of coin, from the child's hand, in the corner of her garment. It seemed far more precious to her than all the jewels which his dead father had presented to her in days gone by. It was a gift from her own child, who was living, but to her, dead. Dooneea spoke Persian – a language the boy did not understand. His father had taught Dooneea that language in order that their servants might not know the tenor of their discourse. In that language Dooneea now spoke to me, in the boy's presence.

"Is he not very like his father?" she said.

"Very," I replied.

"Will he be as clever?"

"He is too young for any one to judge of that."

"But he will be as generous" (she pointed to the coin), "and he will be as tall, as good-looking, as passionate, as gentle, and as kind."

The boy's boots were muddy. Dooneea observed this, and with her own little hands cleaned them; and smiling, she asked him for a present, in that tone and manner which the poorest menial in Hindostan adopts when addressing the most haughty superior.

The boy blushed, and looked at me.

"Have you nothing to give her?" said I.

"Nothing," said he; "I gave her my rupee."

"Give her that pretty blue ribbon which is round your neck, and I will give you one like it," said I.

He took the ribbon from his neck and gave it to Dooneea.

Dooneea twisted the ribbon in her hair, and began to weep afresh.

"Do not cry, you silly woman," said I; "I will see that your husband does not beat you again."

She understood me, and dried her tears.

Dooneea again spoke to me in Persian. "Sahib," said she, "they do not wash the children properly at that school. Order me to do this."

"Charley, why did you come to me in this state, with your neck unwashed?" I asked the boy.

"We only wash in warm water once a week; on Saturdays," he replied. "This is Thursday."

"But I cannot allow you to dine with me in this state," said I,

in Hindostanee. "You must be well washed, my boy. Dooneea, give the child a bath."

With reluctant steps, the child followed his mother to my bathing-room. I peeped through the purdah; for I began to fear that I should have some trouble in parting the mother from her child, and half repented that I had ever brought them together. While Dooneea was brushing the child's hair, she said, "*Toomara mama kahan hai?*— Where is your mother?"

The boy answered, "I do not know."

I began to cough, to inform Dooneea that I was within hearing, and that I objected to that strain of examination. She ceased immediately.

I had an engagement to ride with a lady on the Mall. My horse was brought to the door; but I was afraid to leave Dooneea alone with the boy, notwithstanding her solemn promise that she would not run off with him. Yet I did not like to hurry that eternal separation on earth which, for the boy's sake, I was determined their separation should be.

I walked up and down my verandah for some time, meditating how I could part them. At last it occurred to me that I would send the boy away to his school by stratagem, and trust to chance how I might best explain to Dooneea that he would not return. I ordered a *syce* (groom) to saddle a little pony that I possessed, and told Dooneea that I wished the boy to take a ride with me, and that while we were absent, she ought to take some food. It stung me to the soul to witness how innocent she was of my intentions; for she

seemed pleased that I should show her child so much attention as to be seen in public with him.

As soon as we were out of sight of my house, I took the road for Landour, delivered the boy over to his schoolmaster, told my groom to keep the pony out till after dark, cantered to the Mall, kept my engagement, and returned to my home at about half-past seven o'clock. There was Dooneea waiting for us in the verandah.

"Where is the boy?" she inquired, on finding me return alone.

I gave her no reply; but dismounted and approached her. Taking hold of her wrists, I said, in the gentlest voice, "Dooneea, I have fulfilled my promise. You have seen your child, you have spoken to him, you have kissed him. Enough. He has now gone back to school. You must not see him again, if you really love him."

She trembled in my grasp, looked piteously in my face, gasped several times for breath, as though she longed to speak, and swooned at my feet. I lifted her, carried her into the house, and laid her upon my bed; then sent for servants, and for a doctor, who lived near my bungalow. The doctor came. While he felt her pulse, and placed his hand over her heart, I briefly explained to him what had taken place. He still kept his finger on the vein, and gazed on Dooneea's beautiful face. Blood began to trickle from her nostrils, and from her ears, staining the bed linen and the squalid garments in which she had attired herself. In a few minutes the doctor released his hold of her wrist. "Poor thing!" he ejaculated. "Her troubles are over! She is at rest!"

– Never more on her
Shall sorrow light, or shame.

She was dead.

The old woman whom Dooneea called "mother," and the soldier-like looking youth whom she called "brother," decamped with her jewels and moveables, including my dog, "Duke;" but the house near Hurdwar, and the bank shares – property to the value of about four thousand pounds – remain invested in the names of trustees for the benefit of the boy; who will, I trust, make good use of his little fortune, when he becomes of age.

BLACK AND BLUE

Forty years ago there went out to India, in the good ship *Globe*, Ensign the Honourable Francis Gay, a younger son of the Right Honourable the Earl of Millflower. The ensign was in his nineteenth year, and was proceeding to join his regiment, which was stationed at Chinsurah.

Lord Millflower, in his heart, hoped that his son would never return: he was so great a disgrace to his family. There was no vice with which this youth was unfamiliar. He had been expelled from no fewer than seven schools. In two instances his offence was theft. His conduct had so preyed upon the mind of Lady Millflower that she lost her reason. At seventeen, he committed several forgeries of his eldest brother's, Lord Larkspeare's name; and he took a similar liberty with the name of his father's steward. But these offences were hushed up. He was also guilty of a deed of violence, for which his life would have been forfeited had the case been tried, instead of compromised; for in those days such a deed of violence was a capital offence. His family were in constant fear lest he should be transported as a felon, or hanged at Newgate. It was, therefore, some satisfaction to them when the Honourable Francis consented to hold a commission and join his regiment in India. Lord Millflower's other sons, four in number, were all steady, well-conducted, and rather dull beings, while Francis was remarkably gifted, as well as

remarkably vicious. He had both talent and genius, humour and wit; and, much as he had neglected his education, he was well read and well informed for his time of life. In personal appearance, also, the reprobate had the advantage over his brethren. None of them were even good-looking except Francis, who was really very handsome, well proportioned, and tall. His manners also, always frank, were, when he pleased, dignified and courteous, and his bearing peculiarly graceful. What he wanted was feeling, to regulate his passions. Of feeling, he was in his youth, wholly destitute.

Lord Millflower had taken the precaution of writing to the colonel of the regiment his son was about to join, and of at the same time enclosing a sum of money for the purpose of freeing Francis from any pecuniary difficulty. Colonel Role himself had the misfortune to have a very bad boy, and he, therefore, sympathized deeply with the worthy nobleman, and resolved to do all in his power to reform the Honourable Francis.

After a passage of four months, the *Globe* arrived at Calcutta, and the Honourable Francis Gay proceeded to Chinsurah and joined. For several weeks he conducted himself with (for him) wonderful propriety. It is true, that he drank and played at billiards and cards, and sometimes an oath would escape his lips, but he indulged in no excesses. The officers of the regiment, indeed, thought the ensign a great acquisition, for he was not only a very pleasant but an entertaining companion.

But, by degrees, the Honourable Francis fell off; and ere long,

so far from having a friend in the regiment, there was no one who would speak to him. Even the colonel was compelled to forbid him his house. Many, very many acts, unbecoming the character of an officer and a gentleman, had been looked over by his seniors; but it was resolved that, on the very next occasion of his transgressing, the Honourable Ensign should be brought to a court-martial and dismissed the service. This resolve was communicated to the ensign by the colonel, who had become tired of lecturing him.

"The next time you are intoxicated on the parade ground, or the next time you use bad language in the mess-room, or the next time you publicly insult a brother officer, provoking him to quarrel with you, you will forfeit your commission." Being the son of an earl, he was entitled – many colonels think – to every possible chance of redemption. Had he been the son of a commoner, he would, most probably, have been court-martialled and cashiered for the very first offence.

"Thank you, sir," replied the ensign, with a low bow; "I will be more cautious in future."

He kept his word. From this time he did his duty extremely well; and, to all outward appearance, was a reformed character. The officers observing this, generously made advances with a view to resuming their former relations with him. But the Honourable Francis repulsed their advances. The whole regiment had thought proper to cut him; and he now thought proper to cut the whole regiment.

Several months passed, and during that period the ensign applied himself to Hindostanee and Persian. He encouraged the natives to come to his bungalow, to talk with him, and by night and by day pursued his studies. The result was, that he soon conversed with perfect ease and accuracy. He now began to live like a native – a Mahommedan; and, except when he had to attend to his regimental duties, he wore the native costume, and abstained from drink entirely. With truth, he might have said with Conrad, —

The grape's gay juice my bosom never cheers;
I'm more than Moslem when the cup appears.

His food was rice, milk, vegetables, and fruit; the bed upon which he slept was hard and mean; such as the natives use. The whole of his European furniture he sold by auction.

His desire – the desire of a doubtfully reformed reprobate – to convert to Christianity a young Mahommedan girl, astonished all those who became acquainted with this desire. The girl was the daughter of a water-carrier (Bheestie). She was not like the natives of India, but more like those of Africa. She was coal black, and had thick lips and wavy hair. She was short for her age – fourteen years – but thickset, with powerful limbs. The girl's father told the servants belonging to other officers of the regiment, and the curious whim of Gay's became a topic of conversation.

Jehan, the bheestie's daughter, was a virtuous girl, and Francis Gay had never approached her with a view to undermining her virtue. It was no easy matter to persuade her to change her religion; but, strange to say, he at length succeeded, and Noor Jehan was baptized as Ellen by a missionary who journeyed to Chinsurah for the purpose of performing the ceremony. The sanity or otherwise of the ensign was now very generally discussed in the regiment, and the prevalent opinion was that he was a lunatic. But the good colonel was a little angry at the surmise. "Surely," he said, "you do not accuse a man of being a maniac because he has converted an infidel."

The regiment was ordered to march to Cawnpore, whither Ellen and her father also proceeded. Cawnpore was then the chief station in the upper provinces of India. Five thousand troops were quartered there. A regiment of dragoons, a regiment of native cavalry, a regiment of British infantry, and two of native infantry. Besides horse and foot there were companies of artillery, and sappers and miners.

Very shortly after the regiment was settled in Cawnpore, the Honourable Francis Gay paid a visit to the chaplain, and intimated a desire to be married. The chaplain of course replied that he should be most happy, and there and then a day and hour was appointed for the performance of the rite; but, when the reverend gentleman came to hear who was to be the Honourable Ensign's bride – the black daughter of a native water-carrier – he could not help remarking:

"I am sorry, Mr. Gay, that I cannot with sincerity offer you my congratulations."

To which the ensign responded:

"My good sir, I did not ask them." And retired with a bow.

The chaplain drove to the house of Colonel Role, and told him of the interview which had just taken place between himself and Ensign the Honourable Francis Gay. The colonel called upon the young man, and entreated him to reflect. "I *have* reflected, sir," was the ensign's reply. The colonel then went to the general, and the general sent for Mr. Gay to attend at his bungalow. Mr. Gay obeyed the summons, and listened with attention and much calmness to a long and violent speech. When it was ended, however, Mr. Gay, with extreme courtesy, and in the quietest of tones, spoke thus:

"General, you had a right to command my attendance here upon any military matter, but not upon any civil matter. However, I waive that, because I believe your intention to be a good one. You, general, have arrived at the years of discretion – perhaps at something beyond those years. You have, at all events, arrived at a time of life when the tumultuous passion of youth can no longer be pleaded in extenuation of certain follies. Now tell me, general, which of us, think you, sins the most, and sets the worst example to the men, European and native, in this station? – I, who wish to marry this good Christian girl; or you, who have in your house – " Mr. Gay then made mention of two very discreditable members of the general's establishment. "This is a question which I shall

put to the commander-in-chief, if you abide by your threat to report me to his excellency."

That night the general and Colonel Role held a consultation. The colonel still doubted the ensign's insanity. It had become a fixed idea in the regiment that Gay was insane. The general caught at this, and a committee of doctors was appointed to examine the ensign. They reported that Ensign the Honourable Francis Gay was not only of sound mind, but one of the most intellectual young men in the station; and that he had explained to their entire satisfaction certain conversations which he had frequently held with himself in Chinsurah, at the mess-table.

The wedding-day had been put off in consequence of these proceedings; but the parties now met in the church, which was crowded with officers, including nearly the entire medical staff, who were curious to witness the spectacle. There stood the tall and handsome English aristocrat, and beside him his coal-black bride, dressed in garments of red silk, trimmed with yellow and gold tinsel. The ensign acted as the interpreter, and explained to Ellen in Hindoostanee the vows she was required to take. This made the ceremony a very long one. When it was concluded, the bride got into her palanquin and was carried home. The bridegroom mounted his pony, and rode by her side.

Ellen – now the Honourable Mrs. Gay – was a girl of great natural ability, of an excellent disposition, and was blessed with an excellent temper. She had, moreover, a very sweet voice. After her marriage she was never seen by any European in Cawnpore,

except her husband. It was believed that the ensign saved more than two-thirds of his pay, which Ellen, who had an excellent idea of business, used to lend out in small sums to people in the bazaar at the rate of fifty per cent. per mensem. If she lent a rupee (two shillings), she would get back at the end of the month a rupee and eight annas (three shillings) by way of interest.

A year passed away, and a son and heir was born to the Honourable Francis Gay. The child had light blue eyes, exactly like those of his father; but his complexion was quite as black as his mother's. When the child was three months old, it was brought to the church, and publicly christened, Mr. Gay and the pay-sergeant of the company he belonged to being the godfathers, and Ellen the godmother. The names given to the infant were Ernest Augustus George Francis Frederick – such being the names respectively of Lord Millflower's sons. Ernest was the eldest, Augustus the second, George the third, Francis the fourth, and Frederick the fifth and youngest. Not long after the birth of his son, Ensign Gay obtained his promotion to the rank of lieutenant, and received, of course, an increase of pay.

Fever became prevalent, and cholera. Several of the captains and senior lieutenants fell victims; and, in less than three years, Lieutenant Gay got his company (the regiment was now at Meerut), and retired from the army by the sale of his captain's commission. It was supposed that he was worth a great deal of money – a lac of rupees (ten thousand pounds) at the very least. Whither he went no one knew, and no one cared. One of the

servants, whom he discharged previous to leaving the station of Meerut, said he believed that his master had gone either to Affghanistan or to Lahore.

Let us now return to Europe. A few years after Captain Gay had sold out of the army, his eldest brother, Lord Larkspeare, was killed while grouse-shooting, by the accidental discharge of his gun; his second brother, Augustus, a captain in the army, was lost in a vessel which was bringing him home from Canada; his third brother, George, died of small-pox three days after he had taken his father's second title. Of his son Francis's marriage, Lord Millflower had been informed, and also of the birth of the black child, the Honourable Ernest Augustus George Francis Frederick Gay. Colonel Role had deemed it his duty not to withhold these facts, albeit they were disagreeable to communicate to the noble earl. Lord Millflower begged of Colonel Role to institute an inquiry into the fate of his Francis, and the Colonel did so, but without success. No clue to his whereabouts could be discovered, nor could any one say what had become of him. Under these circumstances it was taken for granted that he was dead. Another five years passed away, and the Earl of Millflower departed this life. He was, of course, succeeded in his titles and estates by his son Frederick.

Now let us return to Francis. He became a dealer in precious stones, and travelled over the whole of India, under the name of Mustapha Khan, visiting the various native courts. Every tour that he made occupied him three years. Constantly moving about

in the sun had tanned his once fair face; and neither from his appearance – for he was dressed as a native – nor from his speech, could the natives themselves detect that he was an European. He gave out that his birthplace was Nepaul, where the natives are sometimes born with blue eyes. He bought and sold, and was apparently very happy in his occupation. His wife and son invariably accompanied him in his travels. He had never written to his family since his arrival in India, and had not received letters from any member thereof. India he loved, England he detested, and would not have taken up his father's title if it had been a dukedom. He never approached the abode of an European, and never saw a newspaper. He was not likely, therefore, to hear of the changes that had taken place at home. In the bazaar at Delhi Captain Gay had a small house, in which were deposited his effects, a few boxes filled with clothes, books, &c., his sword, and the uniform he used formerly to wear. These were under the care of a man-servant, a sweeper. The bulk of his worldly wealth he invariably carried about his person, as many natives of India do.

Ernest Gay was now twelve years of age. He was usually called by his parents Chandee, a word signifying silver. Chandee was clever and cunning, and had a wonderful talent for calculating numbers. In less than a minute, by counting on his fingers, he would tell you the interest due on such sums as three rupees, five annas, and seven pic, for twenty-one days, at forty-one three-fourth per cent. English he had never heard spoken; and as he had

never been taught that language, he did not understand a single word of it. Nor could he read or write Hindoostanee, although he spoke it in all its purity and elegance.

There was about to take place a marriage in the family of the Rajah of Pulbecala. Mustapha Khan (Francis Gay) journeyed from Delhi to the Rajah's court, to exhibit his jewels. He had diamonds, rubies, and emeralds of great price, and some of these he hoped to dispose of to advantage. The Rajah, however, had already provided himself with these matters, and therefore confined his purchases to a large cat's-eye ring, for which he paid Mustapha fifty gold mohurs (eighty pounds). On his way back to Delhi, at a place called Kunda Ka Serai, a band of robbers attacked the jewel-merchant. They hacked him to pieces with their swords, but they spared his wife and the boy. The whole of their treasures were stolen; even the rings from Ellen's ears and fingers, and the gold bangles which Chandee wore upon his arms.

When her senses were restored to her, Ellen, with the assistance of her son, dug a grave in the sand, and buried her butchered husband. The bearers who carried the palanquins ran away as soon as the robbers attacked the party, and were no more seen. Most probably they had some small share of the booty, the value of which the Sirdar estimated at four lacs of rupees (forty thousand pounds). Whatever had been Francis Gay's vices when a youth – and they were great enough in all conscience – he had been a kind and affectionate husband to Ellen, and she most bitterly deplored his loss; violent was the grief of Chandee,

who was devotedly fond of his father.

They heaped stones over the grave of the dead man, to mark the spot where he was laid, and, after their own fashion, offered up prayers for the repose of his soul.

The murder having been committed within the dominions of an independent prince, Ellen knew that her wrongs were not likely to be redressed if she complained; and that the British Government would not interfere, unless she made known that her husband was an Englishman. This she felt would be contrary to the wishes of the dead. Hopeless and helpless, she and her son made the best of their way to Delhi, where, having collected a few debts that were due to them, they established a small shop for the sale of native sweetmeats. They carried on this business for three or four years, when Chandee grew weary of it, and set up in the world as a box-waller, or pedler. His box contained pens, ink, and paper, needles, pins, knives, scissors, soap, eau de Cologne, tooth-brushes, matches, and so forth. His customers were the European officers, who gave him the name of Black and Blue, from the colour of his eyes and skin. A box-waller is always a great cheat – as great a rascal as was Autolycus himself; Black and Blue, if the truth must be told, was not an exception to the rule or race. But no one could grudge him his profits when the cuffs and kicks which were playfully administered to him by the young lieutenants and ensigns are taken into consideration. Black and Blue always took the rough usage of his customers in excellent part; and would generally make some such appeal

as this (he had picked up a little English by this time): "Ah, well! I know! You rich white gentlemen – I poor black devil. I pray all day all night that ensign be made leeft'nunt; leeft'nunt, capitaine; capitaine, capitain-meejor; meejor, kunnnull; kunnnull, meejor-jinneral; and then God bless your father and mother, and brother and sister; and then, for all that pray, I get so much kick and so many bad words. God make us all – black and white; all equal right up above. You want blacking? Here you are. Very good blacking – quite genuine; only one rupee a bottle. I suppose you not got ready money! Very well, I wait till pay-day come. I very poor man. You my master. Khuda Lord Kuren." The meaning of this expression, with which most natives wind up a speech to an European, signifies, May God make you a lord!

When Black and Blue was no more than five years old, he was playing one morning in his father's compound (enclosure – the land around the bungalow), when a pariah dog rushed in and mangled him very severely. The dog was rabid. Captain Gay called in the doctor of a native cavalry regiment, who lived in the next bungalow, who cauterized the wounds. The child was bitten on the arms, legs, and chest, and was under the doctor's treatment for upwards of five weeks. On several occasions when he visited his patient, the doctor saw and conversed with Ellen, who was naturally very anxious touching the child's safety. This doctor was one of the number who witnessed the marriage of Ensign Gay at Cawnpore, and was also present when his offspring was christened.

Shortly after the recovery of the little boy, the doctor had been appointed a presidency surgeon, and had charge of one of the hospitals in Calcutta, where he remained for upwards of twenty years. He was then appointed superintending surgeon of the Meerut division. He had a son at Delhi, a lieutenant in the foot artillery, and occasionally went over (the distance is only forty miles from Meerut) to pay him a visit.

On one of these occasions, Black and Blue, who had been sent for, made his appearance with his box, sat down on the carpet cross-legged, and opened out his treasures. There were several young officers in the bungalow, chums of the lieutenant; and, while the bargaining was going on, they began to tease Black and Blue. One removed his turban with the point of a stick; another sprinkled him with his eau de Cologne; a third touched the tip of his great toe (he had left his shoes, out of respect, in the verandah) with the lighted end of a cheroot. Black and Blue howled with pain, whereupon the two roared with laughter. The doctor, who was reading a paper, begged the young men to desist, and, somewhat angrily, expostulated with his son for treating a native so cruelly; for he was touched with poor Black and Blue's appeal – "God make us all. When fire burns black man, black man feels as much pain as white man. In hell, you rich gentlemen sing out just as much as poor box-waller."

"Black and Blue is used to it, governor," said the lieutenant.

"Stuff, Robert!" said the doctor; "I address myself to you, and not to these gentlemen, when I say that I have no patience with

such flippant cruelty."

"Sahib," said Black and Blue, looking up at the doctor, "you are very good gentlemen – very kind man, and very handsome. May God make you a lord; may your throne be perpetual, and may your end be peace; but do not be angry with these gentlemen. They play tricks with Black and Blue; but they are no enemies. If enemies, what for send to buy Black and Blue's property? Sir, you greatly oblige Black and Blue if you smile once more on these gentlemen. Sir, do you want any violent (violet) powder, or one small patent corkiscrew (corkscrew)? All men born equal; God's rain wet black man and white man all the same. Devil's fire burn, too, both the same." Here he laughed at the lieutenant. "Take one packet of violent-powder. Every one rupee a packet. Well, then, take two for one, twelve. That can't hurt anybody. Less than prime cost, I give you my solemn word. Handsome sir, don't be angry."

The doctor, his attention attracted by those light blue eyes, set in that very black skin, stared at Black and Blue for several minutes after he had finished the speech above quoted. He had never before seen such a peculiar expression as that on the face of the box-waller. Suddenly he recollected an instance of black skin and light blue eyes; but in that case the boy was half-European, the child of the Honourable Francis Gay.

Black and Blue had occasion to change his position; and, in doing so, exposed the calves of his legs. On one of them was a scar, quite round, and about the size of a shilling.

"Good God!" exclaimed the doctor, who became both surprised and agitated, and allowed the newspaper to fall from his hand.

"What is the matter, governor?" asked the lieutenant.

"Nothing – nothing!" said the doctor, still staring at Black and Blue, whose countenance was no longer strange to him. "How did you come by that mark?" he at length asked, pointing to the scar.

"I don't know, Sahib."

"But did not your parents ever tell you?"

"No, Sahib. Parents used to say that it come of itself."

This was no doubt true.

"Have you another mark like that on your right arm – just here?"

The doctor placed his finger on the sleeve of the man's dress.

"Yes. But bigger mark than that one. How you know that, Sahib?" He pulled up his sleeve and exhibited a scar the size of half-a-crown.

"And another here – on your hip – and another here, on your ribs?"

"Yes. All them marks got, sir. How you know that, Sahib?"

The doctor was quite satisfied that Black and Blue was no other than his little patient of former years, and consequently the heir to the Earldom of Millflower. Could it be possible, he thought, that Captain Gay eventually abandoned his black wife and child! If not, how came it that the boy (now a man of two or three and twenty) should be a miserable pedler, living in the

Bazaar at Delhi? When Black and Blue had sold all that the young officers wanted to buy – when no amount of coaxing and flattering would induce them to take anything more – he was about to take his departure; but the doctor desired him to stay, and intimated to his son that he wished to have some conversation in private with Black and Blue.

"Where is your father?" the doctor asked.

"He dead, Sahib."

"When did he die?"

"Long time ago – ten or twelve year ago."

"Where did he die?"

"Mans – robber mans – kill him with sword."

"And your mother?"

Black and Blue told the doctor the whole of their history since the death of Captain Gay, and his statements were substantially true. Black and Blue, however, declared most positively that his father was a native, and no European.

"Do you think," the doctor inquired, "that your mother would see me, if I went down to her home?"

"O yes – why not? Come along, Sahib. I will show where she live. You call for palanquin and get on. I run alongside."

The doctor's curiosity was very strong, and he could not resist the desire to satisfy it at once. He accepted Black and Blue's invitation, and went to the house occupied by Ellen. Habited as a native, she was sitting on a coarse mat, smoking, and at the same time mending an old garment of her son's.

The doctor recognised Ellen immediately, albeit she was now aged. But at first she did not recognise him. He was altered very much in appearance. His hair and whiskers had become very grey, and he no longer wore a moustache.

Ellen parried all the questions that were put to her, and affected to be as much surprised by them as by the doctor's visit. The statement of her son she supported, that her husband was a native of India.

"O, but surely," said the doctor, "this was the boy whom I attended at Meerut, many years ago, when you and your Sahib were living near the Begum's bridge?"

The poor woman looked at him for a moment, then repeated his name, and burst into tears. Her recollections crowded before her too thickly to admit of her dissembling any further with her visitor; and she admitted that she was the widow of Captain Gay, of her Majesty's – Regiment of Foot.

The doctor was under no promise to Ellen to keep his discovery secret; and feeling at liberty to speak of it, did so publicly as well as in private. The peerages were looked into, and Black and Blue's pedigree examined. There were the names of all the late lord's sons, and sure enough there was Francis's name above that of Frederick's, the present earl; opposite to the name of Francis were the letters signifying, "died unmarried." Black and Blue of course became an object of great curiosity. His right to a title did not induce him to alter his prices in any way, and hence he was kicked and cuffed, and abused as much as ever,

by the young lieutenants and ensigns, who, by-the-bye, always addressed him as "my lord," and "your lordship."

"Pomatum, my lord! Pomatum, did you say? Yes! But let me smell it. O! your lordship calls this pomatum! I call it hog's lard washed in sandalwood water. How much? One rupee! O, you villanous peer of the realm! are you not ashamed of yourself?"

Another would thus address him:

"Look here, Lord Black and Blue. Why don't you go home and upset your uncle? Turn him out of his title and estates – eh? You would be sure to marry some beautiful girl."

To this Black and Blue would respond:

"What do I want with title and beautiful gal! This is my home, and I got good business, good many friends, and two or three very beautiful gal."

"Where, Black and Blue?"

"Ah! that is my business."

"Well, what will you sell your title for?"

"Well, what you offer?"

"One hundred rupees" (10l.)

"Say one hundred and twenty-five."

"No."

"Well, take it – there. Give money, and I give receipt. You write it out; I sign it. Sold one title to Ensign Matheson for a hundred rupees."

"But there are two titles, you ass; one an earldom, and the other a viscounty."

"Well, you take the two; give two hundred rupees for both."

"No. The one I have already bought is the biggest and of the best quality; the other is the small one, and of inferior quality."

"Well, I make reduction in price; take one with the other, and give me one hundred and seventy-five rupees. That can't hurt anybody that wants a title."

Would any of these lads, who had nothing in the world beyond their pay, have consented to an union between Black and Blue and one of their sisters, after he had come into what were his rights? No! Would the poorest and most unprincipled officers – civil and military – in the whole of India? No! Would any European girl of respectability who had lived in India, to say nothing of the daughters of gentlemen and ladies, have wedded the black heir to the title and estates of the Earl of Millflower? No. Not in India could his sable lordship have found a virtuous white woman to accept his hand!

In due course the story of Black and Blue's birth crept into the columns of one of the Calcutta newspapers, and ere long an attorney of the Supreme Court paid a visit to the imperial city, and had an interview with Black and Blue. He proposed to the box-waller to take him to England, and establish his claim to the estates, which he truthfully represented as worth more than half a million sterling – fifty lacs of rupees. He, the attorney, would pay all expenses of the suit, and in the event of success, which was certain, would receive only five per cent. or fifty thousand pounds, leaving Black and Blue a balance of forty-five lacs.

Black and Blue, who loved and adored money, on hearing such a sum spoken of, rolled his blue eyes and red tongue, and almost fainted. But then, to cross the black water! – as the natives call the ocean – that thought made him shudder and shake his head.

The attorney represented to him that he should live in great comfort during the voyage; that the best cabin in the ship should be taken for him; that he should have servants about him; and drawing forth a number of prints of English beauties, he exhibited them to the gaze of Black and Blue.

Black and Blue said he would consult his European friends. He did so, and many of those friends dissuaded him from going to England. Not that they had any doubt as to the issue of his claim, if it should be disputed; but upon the reasonable ground that he was very happy where he was. Others advised him to go by all means, and take up his title and the wealth that pertained to it. His mother entreated him not to leave her. But in the end the voice of the attorney prevailed, and Black and Blue declared himself ready to accompany him.

Ten thousand rupees (one thousand pounds) were given to Ellen for her support during the temporary absence of her son, who was to return as soon as he had realized his forty-five lacs (four hundred and fifty thousand pounds). It was said that a mercantile firm in Calcutta, in which an illustrious native gentleman was a partner, advanced the means required for the purpose of establishing the black man's right to the earldom.

The attorney possessed himself of the proofs. He had the

papers of the Honourable Francis Gay, amongst which were letters from the late Lord Millflower to his eldest brother, Lord Larkspeare. He also, in the presence of credible witnesses, received from the hands of Ellen the dead man's uniform; secondly, he had the deposition on oath of the superintending surgeon, and of several other officers who were cognizant of every particular. Many gave these depositions with reluctance, but felt bound to speak the truth when interrogated. In a word, the attorney got his case up remarkably well.

Black and Blue and the attorney left Calcutta in one of the large passenger ships, and in the month of April landed at Gravesend, whence they journeyed to London. Here Black and Blue was prevailed upon to wear Christian clothes. In his snow-white muslin dress, his pink turban, and his red slippers covered with gold embroidery, Black and Blue had looked an aristocratic native, notwithstanding he was so very black. [Colour is no criterion of high caste or rank in India. The late Maharajah Rooder Singh, of Darbunghah, whose family – to borrow a phrase from "Burke's Peerage" – is one of stupendous antiquity, had the complexion of an African; while his younger brother, Basdeo, who now sits on the throne, is far fairer than his Highness the Maharajah Dulleep Singh.] But in his black trousers, black waistcoat, black surtout coat, white neckcloth, black beaver hat, and Wellington boots, poor Black and Blue looked truly hideous; while his slouching Indian gait would have led most people to conclude that he was intoxicated. Poor Black and Blue had never

tasted anything stronger than water in the whole course of his life.

The attorney had an interview with Frederick Earl of Millflower. He wrote to the firm in Calcutta to that effect, and he further stated that the Earl had set him at defiance, and that he was about to institute a suit in the proper court.

This was the last that was ever heard in India of Black and Blue, or of the attorney. Inquiries were instituted, but with no avail. There were many conjectures; the one most generally entertained was, that poor Black and Blue and his undoubted claim were disposed of by the attorney for a sum which satisfied him, and that Black and Blue was secretly led into indulgences in some foreign country and died of their effects. But his mother, who is still living, will not believe that he is dead, and feels convinced that some day or other he will turn up and be restored to her.

"What on earth became of that black earl?" is a question very often put by many who were acquainted with his strange history.

THE RANEE OF JHANSI

About a month after the order had gone forth for the annexation of the little province of Jhansi (in 1854), and previous to a wing of the 13th Native Infantry occupying the country, I received a letter in Persian, written upon "gold paper," from the Ranee, begging me to pay her a visit. The letter was brought to me by two natives of rank. One had been the financial minister of the late Rajah. The other was the head vakeel (attorney) of the Ranee.

The revenues of Jhansi were some six lacs (60,000*l.*) a year, and after disbursing the expenses of government, and paying the troops in the late Rajah's service, the balance was some two lacs and a half (25,000*l.*) profit. The "troops" were not numerous, under 1000 in all, and they were chiefly horsemen. The arrangement, when the country was annexed, was simply this: that the Ranee should receive a pension of 6000*l.* a year, to be paid monthly.

The Ranee's object in asking me to visit her at Jhansi was to consult me as to the possibility of getting the order for annexation annulled, or reversed. I should mention that the Ranee had applied to me at the instance of a gentleman of the Civil Service, who had once been the Resident, or Governor-General's agent, at a native court in the upper provinces; a gentleman who, in common with many other officials of rank in India, regarded the

annexation of Jhansi – "a trumpery state after all" – not only as impolitic, but unjust and without excuse. The facts were briefly these: – The late Rajah had no issue by his only wife (the woman who caused our countrymen and countrywomen and children to be put to death in the fort, and who, according to late advices, has been killed), and some weeks previous to his death, being "sound of mind, though infirm in body," he publicly adopted an heir, and gave notice to the Government of having done so through the proper channel – namely, the Governor-General's representative then stationed at Jhansi. In short, all the forms required by the Government to prevent fraud in such cases, had been complied with. The child was taken into the Rajah's lap, in the presence of his assembled people, and in the presence of the Governor-General's representative, and he, moreover, signed a document, duly attested, reciting his act and deed. The Rajah was a Brahmin; the adopted boy was a near relative of his.

The Jhansi Rajah had been particularly faithful to the British Government, and Lord William Bentinck had presented the brother of the late Rajah with a British ensign, and a letter giving him the title of "Rajah," and assuring him that that title, and the independence attached to it, would be guaranteed by the British Government to him, the Rajah, and his heirs and *successors* (by adoption). That that treaty (for such it purported to be) of Lord William Bentinck was violated, without the slightest shadow of a pretence, there cannot be any sort of doubt. In the time of the Peishwah, the late Rajah of Jhansi was simply a large

zemindar (landholder), and had he remained untitled there can be no question that his last wishes, so far as the disposition of his property was concerned, would have been attended to. It was the acceptance of the "Rajahship" which led to the confiscation of his estates, and the exchange of 6000*l.* a year for 25,000*l.* a year. Strange as that assertion may seem to the reader, it is nevertheless true.

I was at Agra when I received the Ranee's letter, and Agra is two days' journey. Even as I travelled from Jhansi, I sympathized with the woman. The boy whom the Rajah had adopted was only six years old, and during his minority, that is to say, until he had attained his eighteenth year, the Ranee – so the Rajah willed – was to have been the Regent, and the boy's guardian; and it is no small matter for a woman – a native woman of rank, too – to give up such a position and become a pensioner, even on 6000*l.* a year. Let me detail the particulars of my journey to the residence of the Ranee of Jhansi. I got into my palanquin at dusk, and on the following morning, at daylight, arrived at Gwalior. The Rajah of Jhansi had a small house about a mile and a half from the cantonment, which was used as a halting-place, and thither I was taken by the minister and the vakeel who accompanied me. At ten o'clock, after I had breakfasted and smoked my hookah, it was proposed that we "go on at once." The day was very warm, but the Ranee had sent a large and comfortable palanquin carriage; in short, it was more like a small room than a carriage, fitted up as it was with every convenience, including even a punkah,

which was pulled from the outside by a servant, who sat upon a foot-board. In the carriage, beside myself and the minister and vakeel, was a khansamah, or butler, who, with the apparatus between his knees, kept on cooling water, and wine, and beer, in order that, whenever I felt thirsty, I might be supplied at a moment's notice. This enormous carriage was drawn by a pair of horses of immense strength and swiftness. Each stood about seventeen hands high. The late Rajah had imported them from France at a cost of 1500*l*. The road was rather rough in many places, but, on the average, we got over it at the rate of about nine miles an hour. At about two o'clock in the day we entered the Jhansi territory, having changed horses twice, and we had now some nine miles to drive. Hitherto we had been escorted only by four sowars (horsemen), but now our escort amounted to about fifty, each horseman carrying an immense spear, and dressed much in the same way as the Irregular Cavalry in the pay of the East India Company. And along the road, at intervals of a few hundred yards, were horsemen drawn up, and as we passed, they joined the cavalcade; so that by the time we came in sight of the fortress – if those old weak walls, surmounted by some nine pieces of old ordnance of inferior calibre, deserved the name – the whole strength of the Jhansi cavalry was in attendance. The carriage was driven to a place called "the Rajah's garden," where I alighted, and was conducted by the financial minister and the vakeel and other servants of state, to a large tent, which was pitched beneath a clump of gigantic mango trees. The tent,

which was that in which the late Rajah used to receive the civil and military officers of the British Government, was elegantly fitted up, and carpeted; and at least a dozen domestic servants were ready to do my bidding. I must not omit to mention that the companions of my journey – the minister and the vakeel – were both men of good ability and pleasing manners. They were, moreover, men of learning, so that my time upon the road had been beguiled very agreeably.

The Ranee had consulted one of the many Brahmins who were supported by her as to the most propitious hour for me to come to the purdah behind which she sat; and the Brahmins had told her that it must be between the setting of the sun and the rising of the moon, which was then near her full; in other words, between half-past five and half-past six o'clock.

This important matter having been communicated to me, I expressed myself perfectly satisfied with the time of the appointment, and ordered dinner accordingly. This done, the financial minister, after betraying some embarrassment, intimated that he wished to speak to me on a rather delicate subject, and that, with my permission, he would order all the menial servants in attendance on me, including my own sirdar-bearer (valet), to leave the tent and stand at a distance. I complied, of course, and presently found myself alone with only the "officials" (eight or nine in number) of the little native state of Jhansi. What the finance minister wished to ask me was this – Would I consent to leave my shoes at the door when I entered the

Ranee's apartment? I inquired if the Governor-General's agent did so. He replied that the Governor-General's agent had never had an interview with the Ranee; and that the late Rajah had never received any European gentleman in the private apartments of the palace, but in a room set apart for the purpose, or in the tent in which we were conversing. I was in some difficulty, and scarcely knew what to say, for I had a few years previously declined to be presented to the King of Delhi, who insisted on Europeans taking off their shoes when they entered his presence. The idea was repugnant to my mind, and I said as much to the minister of the late Rajah of Jhansi; and I asked him whether he would attend a levée at the palace of the Queen of England, if informed that he must enter her Majesty's presence with his head uncovered, as did all her subjects, from the lowest to the highest. To this question he would not give me a direct answer, but remarked, "You may wear your hat, Sahib; the Ranee will not mind that. On the contrary, she will regard it as an additional mark of respect towards her." Now this was what I did not want. My desire was, that she should consider the wearing of my hat, supposing I consented to take off my shoes, as a species of compromise on her part as well as on my part. But I was so amused with this bargaining, as it were, that I consented; giving them distinctly to understand, however, that it was to be considered not as a compliment to her rank and dignity, but to her sex, and her sex alone. That great point settled, I partook of a very sumptuous repast that was prepared for me, and awaited patiently

the setting of the sun or the rising of the moon, determined, however, that I would wear my hat – a black "wide-awake," covered with a white turban.

The hour came, and the white elephant (an Albino, one of the very few in all India), bearing on his immense back a silver houdah, trimmed with red velvet, was brought to the tent. I ascended the steps, which were also covered with red velvet, and took my place. The mahoot, or elephant-driver, was attired in the most gorgeous manner. The ministers of state, mounted on white Arabs, rode on either side of the elephant; the Jhansi cavalry lining the road to the palace, and thus forming an avenue. The palace was about half a mile distant from my encampment ground.

Ere long we arrived at the gates, at which the attendants on foot began to knock violently. A wicket was opened, and closed hastily. Information was then sent to the Ranee; and, after a delay of about ten minutes, the "hookum" (order) came to open the gates. I entered on the elephant, and alighted in a court-yard. The evening was very warm, and I fancied that I should be suffocated by the crowd of natives (retainers) who flocked around me. Observing my discomfiture, the minister imperiously commanded them to "stand back!" After another brief delay, I was asked to ascend a very narrow stone staircase, and on the landing was met by a native gentleman, who was some relative to the Ranee. He showed me first into one room and then into another. These rooms (six or seven), like all rooms of

the kind, were unfurnished, save and except that the floors were carpeted; but from the ceiling punkahs and chandeliers were suspended, and on the walls were native pictures of Hindoo gods and goddesses, with here and there a large mirror. At length I was led to the door of a room, at which the native gentleman knocked. A female voice from within inquired, "Who is there?"

"Sahib," was the reply. After another brief delay, the door was opened by some unseen hand, and the native gentleman asked me to enter, informing me, at the same time, that he was about to leave me. A brief delay now occurred upon my part. It was with great difficulty that I could bring myself to take off my shoes. At length, however, I accomplished it, and entered the apartment in "stocking feet." In the centre of the room, which was richly carpeted, was an arm-chair of European manufacture, and around it were strewn garlands of flowers (Jhansi is famous for its beautiful and sweet-smelling flowers). At the end of the room was a purdah or curtain, and behind it people were talking. I sat myself down in the arm-chair, and instinctively took off my hat; but recollecting my resolve, I replaced it, and rather firmly – pulling it well down, so as completely to conceal my forehead. It was a foolish resolve, perhaps, on my part, for the hat kept the breeze of the punkah from cooling my temples.

I could hear female voices prevailing upon a child to "go to the Sahib," and could hear the child objecting to do so. Eventually, he was "launched" into the room; and upon my speaking kindly to the child, he approached me – but very timidly. His dress and the

jewels on his person, satisfied me that the child was the adopted son of the late Rajah, and the rejected heir to the little throne of Jhansi. He was rather a pretty child, but very short for his years, and broad-shouldered – like most of the Mahratta children that I have seen.

Whilst I was speaking to the child, a shrill and discordant voice issued from behind the purdah, and I was informed that the boy was the Maharajah, who had just been despoiled of his rights by the Governor-General of India. I fancied that the voice was that of some very old woman – some slave or enthusiastic retainer, perhaps; but the child having imagined that he was spoken to, replied, "Maharanee!" and thus I was told the error of my conclusion.

And now the Ranee, having invited me to come closer to the purdah, began to pour forth her grievances; and, whenever she paused, the women by whom she was surrounded, set up a sort of chorus – a series of melancholy ejaculations – such as "Woe is me!" "What oppression!" It reminded me somewhat of a scene in a Greek tragedy – comical as was the situation.

I had heard from the vakeel that the Ranee was a very handsome woman, of about six or seven and twenty years of age, and I was very curious indeed to get a glimpse of her; and whether it was by accident, or by design on the Ranee's part, I know not, my curiosity was gratified. The curtain was drawn aside by the little boy, and I had a good view of the lady. It was only for a moment, it is true; still I saw her sufficiently to be

able to describe her. She was a woman of about the middle size – rather stout, but not too stout. Her face must have been very handsome when she was younger, and even now it had many charms – though, according to my idea of beauty, it was too round. The expression also was very good, and very intelligent. The eyes were particularly fine, and the nose very delicately shaped. She was not very fair, though she was far from black. She had no ornaments, strange to say, upon her person, except a pair of gold ear-rings. Her dress was a plain white muslin, so fine in texture, and drawn about her in such a way, and so tightly, that the outline of her figure was plainly discernible – and a remarkably fine figure she had. What spoilt her was her voice, which was something between a whine and a croak. When the purdah was drawn aside, she was, or affected to be, very much annoyed; but presently she laughed, and good-humouredly expressed a hope that a sight of her had not lessened my sympathy with her sufferings nor prejudiced her cause.

"On the contrary," I replied, "if the Governor-General could only be as fortunate as I have been, and for even so brief a while, I feel quite sure that he would at once give Jhansi back again to be ruled over by its beautiful Queen."

She repaid this compliment, and the next ten minutes were devoted to an interchange of such matters. I told her that the whole world resounded with the praises of her beauty and the greatness of her intellect; and she told me that there was not a corner of the earth in which prayers for my welfare remained

unsaid.

We then returned to the point – her "case." I informed her that the Governor-General had no power to restore the country, and recognise the claim of the adopted son, without a reference to England, and that the most prudent course for her to adopt would be to petition the throne, and meanwhile draw the pension of 6000*l.* a year, under protest that it was not to prejudice the right of the adopted son. At first she refused to do this, and rather energetically exclaimed: "Mera Jhansi nahin dengee" (I will not give up my Jhansi). I then pointed out to her, as delicately as possible, how futile would be any opposition; and told her, what was the truth, that a wing of a native regiment and some artillery were within three marches of the palace; and I further impressed upon her that the slightest opposition to its advance would destroy her every hope, and, in short, jeopardize her liberty. I did this because she gave me to understand – and so did her attorney (and my impression is that they spoke the truth) – that the *people* of Jhansi did not wish to be handed over to the East India Company's rule.

It was past two o'clock that night before I left the palace; and ere I took my departure, I had talked the lady into my way of thinking, except that she would not consent to draw any pension from the British Government.

On the following day I returned to Gwalior, *en route* to Agra. The Ranee presented me with an elephant, a camel, an Arab, a pair of greyhounds of great swiftness, a quantity of silks and

stuffs (the production of Jhansi), and a pair of Indian shawls. I accepted these things with great reluctance, but the financial minister entreated me to take them, insomuch as it would wound the Ranee's feelings if I refused. The Ranee also presented me with a portrait of herself, taken by a native, a Hindoo.

The state of Jhansi was not restored to the rule of the Ranee, and we know that she afterwards rivalled that fiend Nena Sahib, whose "grievance" was identical with her own. The Government would not recognise Nena Sahib as the adopted son and heir of the Peishwah; the Ranee of Jhansi sought to be recognised as the Regent during the minority of the late Rajah's adopted son and heir.

TIRHOOT, LUCKNOW, BHITOOR, ETC

It is some years since I first landed in Calcutta. I was in no way connected with the Government, and was consequently an "interloper" or "adventurer." These were the terms applied by certain officials to European merchants, indigo-planters, shopkeepers, artisans, barristers, attorneys, and others.

It was not long before I made up my mind to become a wanderer in the East. I had no occupation, was my own master, and had a large tract of country to roam about in. My first step was to acquire a knowledge of Hindostanee and of Persian. By dint of hard study, at the end of six months I found myself capable, not only of holding a conversation, but of arguing a point in either of these languages: and with a light heart I took my departure from the City of Palaces, and proceeded to Monghyr, on the Ganges.

The chief civilian of that district had invited me to spend a month with him. Every day I accompanied my friend to his court, and thereby got some insight into the administration of justice in India, both civil and criminal. Here, too, I first made acquaintance with Thugs. Several most notorious characters of that tribe were at Monghyr – not imprisoned, but permitted to move about. They had been pardoned on condition that they

would become informers, and, to a certain extent, detectives, in the suppression of Thuggee in the British dominions. It was a curious feeling to be in conversation with men who had each committed his ninety or a hundred murders – to see the fingers that had strangled so many victims – to watch the process, for they were good-natured enough to act it. There was the unsuspecting traveller with his bundle; the decoy Thug, who engaged him in conversation; the two men, who, at the given signal, were to seize; the executioner, standing behind with the handkerchief, ready to strangle the victim. They even went through the operation of searching the "deceased," upon whom they found nothing in this case; but they assured me this frequently happened in reality. The reader is of course aware that it is a part of the Thug's religion not to rob a live body. The crime of murder must precede that of theft. The play – the tragedy – over (to these domesticated demons it was a mere farce), they laughed at the solemn expression which, I doubt not, was stamped upon my features.

These Thugs were permitted to have their families at Monghyr; and one morning when I strolled down to their camp, an old man made five children, the eldest boy not more than eight years old, go through the business of strangling and robbing a victim. In one respect these urchins outdid their progenitors in the acting. They not only went through the ceremony of searching the dead body, but, that done, they dragged it by the legs to a well, and, in dumb show, threw it down, and then uttered a prayer

to Heaven.

"Was that good?" said one of the children, running up to me for applause and a reward. I scarcely knew what to reply. Before I had time to give any answer, the child's father said, "No; it was not good. You used the handkerchief before the signal was given. Go through it again, and remember, this time, that you must have patience." The boys began again, much in the same spirit that an actor and actress would go through the strangling scene in "Othello," to please a fastidious manager.

Approaching a very interesting-looking woman, of about two-and-twenty years of age, I said to her, "What do you think of this?"

She replied in a proverb: "The mango always falls beneath the shade of the parent tree."

"But the crime?" said I. "What think you of that?"

She looked up with as lovely a pair of eyes as ever saw the light, smiled, and responded:

"Heaven will hold us all, Sahib!"

I was about to reason with her, but her husband, with an expression of pride, interfered, and informed me that she had taken eighteen lives.

"Twenty-one!" she exclaimed.

"Eighteen only!" said he.

"Twenty-one!" she persisted, and ran them over counting on her fingers the places and the dates when the murders were committed. Her husband then admitted that she was in the right,

and, turning to me, remarked:

"She is a very clever woman, Sahib."

"Were your victims men or women?" I said to her.

"All women," she answered me. "Some old and some young."

I was tempted to ask her to show me how it was done; and after considerable coaxing she complied with my wishes. To my surprise she was the only actor in the scene, except the victim, with whom she went through the process of strangling with a piece of cord. The victim, another Thuggess, was supposed to be sleeping when the operation was performed, and I could not help admiring – horrible as the sight was – the accuracy with which she performed the throes and agony of death. To borrow an idea from Junius, "None but those who had frequently witnessed such awful moments could describe them so well."

At the house of my Monghyr friend I met a French gentleman, an indigo-planter of Tirhoot, in Behar. He invited me to pay him a visit, and to accompany him in his boat. He was about to sail on the following day. I say "sail," for at that time (the month of August), the country was inundated, and it would have been impossible to travel by land. I accepted the invitation, and we sailed from Monghyr to Hajeepore without going near the Ganges for several days.

Monsieur Bardon, the French planter, was one of the most accomplished and agreeable men I had ever met, and in truth one of the greatest characters. The hospitality of the Tirhoot planters is proverbial in India, and I believe I might have lived

in that Garden of the East, as it is called, from that day to this, as a welcome guest of the various planters, if I had chosen still to be their guest. As it was, I was eight months in the district, and then had very great difficulty in getting away. A now celebrated officer, at that time commanding the Irregular Cavalry at Segowlie, induced me to visit him; and after leaving his abode, I went to the Bettiah Rajah, who initiated me into the mysteries of tiger-shooting. It was in the dominions of this small chief that my hands and face were so browned that I became far less fair than many natives of the country. Before leaving Tirhoot, however, I paid a visit to Rooder Singh, the Rajah of Durbungah, the richest native perhaps in all India. He has two hundred thousand pounds a year net revenue; and in a tank in his palace there is lying, in gold and silver, upwards of a million and a half sterling. Chutter Singh, the father of the Rajah of Durbungah, was a firm friend of the British Government during the Nepal war. He raised a regiment of horse and provisioned it. When asked by the authorities for his bill, he replied that the Government owed him nothing.

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