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an inconvenient habit these functions have of clashing in this inopportune, unnecessary way once in about fifty years. If they can manage to do for all that time without clashing, one can't see why they want to clash at all. It must either be to give the opposing creeds an extra chance for a "spoil" or else to teach them self-restraint and charity. The betting is a hundred to five on the former rather than the latter. It's no use talking about our policy of allowing all parties to perform their several ceremonies according to their own tenets. Policy is one thing, talk is another, but the meeting of a Mahomedan party and a noisy Ramlila crowd in the same street is a very different thing. There is lots of talk then, talk not fit for publication, and the only policy is one of broken heads. Their one object is for each party to perform its religious ceremony by interrupting the other as far as in its power lies.

My camp was pitched about five miles from Baragaon. It was this centre of Hindu and Mahomedan discord that had made me turn my paternal steps in the direction of the Naipal border. I had two strings to my bow, one the welfare of Baragaon, the other a holiday in a *maichan* in the depths of the adjoining forest.

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I had hopes the joint festivals might pass off without any disturbance; if so, I should have leisure to disturb the cheetal and neilghai, and dreamt of bagging a leopard. But the Fates decided otherwise. Early the previous day the Superintendent of police and I had ridden over the different routes laid down for the processions to pass along the streets of Baragaon, had fixed the time for each procession to start, and heard all that the people on both sides cared to urge. Much to our satisfaction, each side had elected certain leading, influential representatives, and on a mud dais under a pipul tree an agreement had been drawn up and duly signed. We were assured "that under a benevolent Government Hindus and Mahomedans were brothers," "the agreement was sacred," "was there ever a better or nobler solution for race quarrels than 'arbitration'?" Accordingly as the sun was setting I left for my camp, hoping all might go off quietly, but willing to lay five to four against this countrified "arbitration" as likely to stay the distance. My fears were realized. When the time came for carrying out the arbitration award, Baragaon was not behindhand—it repudiated it. In the present instance the Hindus were the actual

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sinners ; and the consequence ? Well, the Mahomedans turned out in their numbers to oppose this breach of faith. They drove back the Hindus, destroying their images, and both parties, Hindus and Mahomedans, pressed the small force of blue-coated, yellow-legged police into the police post, which was kept in a state of siege, in anticipation of an attack which never came. Still, the police were out of the way while the fray lasted, and the red envelope was to tell me that several of the rioters had been injured, two men had been killed, and the siege of the police chowki wanted raising ! So instead of having to describe a day after a bear, sambur, and cheetal, my record is one of a different sort, and " a day off " after shikar must keep for some future time.

Before long I was in the saddle and on the scene of the late disturbance. On arrival, I found my Hindu friends somewhat cowed by the handling they had received, and the Mahomedans not a little perturbed at the execution they had meted out in attempting to make the Hindus fulfil the agreement of the previous day. The police post had not been attacked ; but owing to the preservers of the

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peace having been locked up, the rioters had evidently been making a merry time of it. There had been a very pretty fight among themselves, but no attempt was made to resist the officials. The police post was relieved, and the dusky myrmidons of the law set to work to arrest the breakers of the law. The original agreement was enforced, and the Mahomedans protected while burying their *tazziaks*.

Doubtless the Mahomedans were the aggressors ; but the riot was in a great measure forced upon them by the intriguing Hindus, and if the antecedent circumstances of a riot can ever palliate the guilt of those engaged in it, it is difficult to conceive a combination of circumstances more calculated to compel men into a course of violence than those which in this case beset the Mahomedans. But these were points for the judicial, and not the executive, authorities to settle ; and in carrying out our duties in making arrests I could not help hoping, for the sake of those implicated, that a fair consideration of the circumstances might tend to palliate the guilt of the Mahomedan party. The Hindus had already had a pretty fair example made of them for their breach of faith. The aggressors, as I have said, were the Mahomedans, and



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for obvious reasons the chief evidence against them was that of the Hindus. No reliable evidence at all was procurable for the prosecution, because no man could say he saw the rioters at work without admitting he was present with them ; and, as a matter of fact, every one but those implicated had shut themselves up in their houses. The Hindu witnesses laboured under a similar disadvantage, for the Hindus' mouths were sealed as to any violence which they might have shown to the Mahomedans who attacked them. There was no doubt that there were injured persons on both sides, for the Hindus had not taken the obstruction of their festival "lying down" ; but no wounded Mahomedans were forthcoming, and the Hindus, while exaggerating the violence of the Mahomedans, concealed any resistance which they may have made.

It was a pretty little tangle to unravel, and no mistake, out of lies that, to one who does not know the native's playful way of exaggerating, would be enough to turn his hair grey. The riot could not be denied, nor could it be gainsaid that it was attended with serious personal injuries, but this was about all that could be proved. Ultimately some forty persons were arrested and indicted for various offences. No

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difficulty about this, for the Indian penal code allows one a liberal margin, and lends itself to bringing charges against your neighbour. Imagine what a boon this must be in a country where the all-knowing Kipling tells us a murder case and the witnesses can be procured for about fifty rupees, and the corpse thrown in! I doubt if the universal provider Whiteley could do better than this, even with the aid of the penal code. In India one never can tell when one is keeping outside the five hundred odd sections of the penal code, so we were all right about those forty arrests, *under some head or another*.

I didn't envy the youthful judge who had to try the case. Fancy having to record pages of evidence three-fourths of which is false, and then having to estimate justly the degree of guilt attaching to each of these forty accused, with a native clerk of the court at one's elbow retained by the defence to mislay important papers, omit "telling points" in the police diaries, and to interject Delphic utterances on police procedure in general! Fancy the difficulty in coming to a decision as to the value of the evidence of those Hindus who testified in this case!—all past masters in

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guile, falsehood, and deception before the boy judge was born. It is a sight for sore eyes to see a Christian judge groping his way through floods of perjury in his attempt to do justice.

Of course the inevitable cow was trotted out. It had, we were seriously informed, been decorated by the Mahomedans for the purpose of slaughter. This, I think, must have been a mendacious afterthought. Anyhow, no proof confirmatory of such an act was forthcoming.

When the trial came off, it was astonishing how many of the witnesses remembered the minutest details as to the dress worn by the assailants, the direction they came from, how many steps they took to the right or the left. One man could speak with certainty of a particular date three months previous by the Hindu calendar who couldn't for the life of him tell the month in which he was giving his evidence by any calendar at all, and wasn't at all sure what day of the week it was! The fact is, in India the ordinary villager is in about the same state of legal development as a French court-martial, he is about as guiltless of anything approaching to logical inference as the court which recently sat at Rennes. The mental attitude of the ordinary native is so utterly

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different from that of reflecting beings as to make it futile to attempt to explain it to those not acquainted with native ways of thought. He thinks that a crooked path is always preferable when the direct road is safe, and that an evasion, or pack of evasions, is useful when the truth can do no harm. The native knows that magistrates and judges, however zealous, are overworked, and have not the time to worry over the prosecution of liars. He understands how different are the opinions of different courts on the subject of what constitutes perjury, so the fear of imprisonment has no influence whatever on a native. The probability of his being found out is small, and if found out, of being prosecuted still less, and if prosecuted, the chance of his getting off is more likely than that of his being convicted. The only constant guide to the tongue of a native is self-interest. Other tests of credibility of testimony may fail, this never. Failing as he does to recognise the obligation imposed to speak the truth by any of our solemn affirmations (you cannot make him put his hand on his son's head and declare that the youth may die if the witness speaks not the truth—which is about the only way to save him from lying), and con-

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scious that whatever course he may adopt, he will not lose the respect of his fellows, and careless, from experience, of the chances of legal punishment, the mind of the ordinary witness is almost *in equilibrio* till the weight of his interest thrown into the scale decides the question. In ordinary life amongst themselves, the natives decide matters of guilt and innocence by "ordeal." They have different kinds of ordeals, and success or failure in passing through this test establishes innocence or guilt. In fact, in this matter the ordinary natives are now about where we were in the reign of Edward the Confessor. Moreover with them it is not only that details get more grotesquely absurd in the process of repetition, their minds are the forcing beds of many inventions, they appear to have an inveterate weakness of telling the tale *not* according to fact. Medical evidence, in the present case, proved the manner of the death, or the cause of it, as regards those killed in the fray; but it must have been a difficult acrostic for the court to say who struck the fatal blows. I doubt if even Ellaline Terriss's "boy" could have "guessed right the very first time," probably not "until the little pigs began to fly."

The town had been in a state of riot some

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hours during the early part of the day; the police had been shut up in the police post; the whole case, bar that there had been a riot, that two men had been killed and several injured, will ever remain a matter for speculation. It goes without saying that the defence in every case was an *alibi*.

"Is he taken red-handed at his head-breaking sport,  
He has clansmen a score who'll attend him to court  
And swear he lay sleeping the hour of the fray  
At his wife's-cousin's-grandmother's — ten leagues  
away."

## Chapter XI

### A DAY OFF

"Is toil so sweet? Has life no other song  
Than the dull croon of the official mill?  
What grist is ground of all thy labours long,  
Or place, or fame? Lie still, poor fool, lie still."  
*Pekin.*

ONE November day some years ago I was encamped at Kakadari, on the banks of the Rapti, almost on the very spot where only a few years before the Nana and his remnant of mutineers had been chased into the wilds of Naipal. Before me were the purple-clad hills that had swallowed up that fugitive band in the distance, beyond this low range of hills rose in silent grandeur the snowy range, stretching far away to my right and left were belts of primeval forest, below me the Rapti, as it merges out of the hills and speeds its way through well-wooded, highly-cultivated plains, to empty itself into the Ganges, coursing by villages, "drowsing through the sunny day, as

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they had drowded through many a century of sunny yesterdays," and all around me the best "shikar" "to be had at the present day in India. For had not our little community at Bahraich, during 1885, 1886, and 1887, bagged a yearly average of fifteen tigers along the Naipal border, and in the adjoining forests; not to mention sambur, gond, cheetal, hog-deer, black buck, and such small game. There are bear too in these forests; but the bear-shooting in these parts isn't a patch on some I had in 1863 near Hazaribagh, in Chota Nagpur, with Crosse and Henley of the 52nd. In the afternoon, taking my rifle, I strolled into the forest: something very different from anything in England. No bird melody here, but a silence almost oppressive; a hornbill darted overhead from one tree to another; I caught the "tap, tap" of the woodpecker on some hollow tree not far distant, heard the rustle of leaves as the breeze sighed faintly through the tangled boughs; these and the drowsy hum of insect life were the only sounds I heard—otherwise, I was shrouded in stillness. A solemn stillness settled down on me, enwrapped me, and became almost oppressive. To be alone in the middle of an Indian forest, far away from



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the turmoil of men, listening to the lore of forests in the wild heart of Nature, is an experience.

I wandered for an hour or so, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, only feeling that this was something very different to the tumult of the outer world. The next day I marched along the Naipal boundary, through some Sal forests to the Chakkia forest, near the banks of the Surjoo, where my friends were to meet for a "day's shoot."

Between the Surjoo and the Gogra there are immense tracts of uncultivated land, covered with tall elephant grass, in which are found nurkool swamps, where hog-deer abound, where the gond or swamp deer has his home, and where, with luck, one may come on a tiger, or quaint old rude forest shrine, daubed with vermilion and festooned with jasmine flowers, dedicated to one or other of the two million gods India always keeps on tap. The Rajahs of Nanpara and Bingha had kindly placed their shikarees and fourteen elephants at my disposal. The next day saw the slow march of the elephants, in single file, winding their way through forest glades, across rugged ravines and sandy nullahs, over grassy plains, to the

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nurkool swamps, where we were assured that there was "a sure find." We beat down a sandy watercourse to the Surjoo, to what appeared a fordable passage, but no sooner had the elephants begun to cross it than the whole surface commenced oscillating with a tremulous-like motion; the elephants trumpeted, the mahouts shouted "Wah-fassun," and with a sinking and a struggling we extricated ourselves, and had to hark back and seek some safer ford. Having at last reached the swamp we were in search of, we ranged up in line—a short, easily worked line of twelve elephants, two having been sent on to the other end of the swamp as "stops," and began work in earnest. On negotiating the nurkool, as the elephants forced their ponderous carcasses through the reeds, as they rose and sank in deep pools up to their girths, as the oozy slime bubbled and slushed and the nurkool stalks crackled and bent, our howdahs rocked like a mail-boat crossing the Channel in a choppy sea; so we beat one piece of nurkool after another until, joyful sound, one or two of the elephants trumpeted, and as we reached the end of the nurkool, and came upon some high grass, they all showed by unmistakable signs that something was

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afoot. We could plainly see the grass moving a short distance ahead of us. Was it a pig, or was it a tiger? It could not be a gond, or we should have been able to see his antlers; the swaying of the grass was too gently wavy for a boar's hurried rush. We slightly quickened our pace, an open space gave us the opportunity of the first glimpse of the tawny hide, five double-barrel smooth bores sent forth a volley, the woods sent back the echo, and the drifting smoke hung on the air that still, cold winter morning. A moment's silence, and then with a roar the wounded tigress was on the trunk of the elephant on the extreme left of the line, with her forepaws unpleasantly close to the mahout's legs. But a ball through her neck by the occupant of that howdah sent her back, and there she lay 'mid trampled grass and trodden mire growling and lashing her tail. Forming a semicircle, we closed in on her, a .500 express bullet put an end to her career, "and dead in her tracks the tigress lay." She had been wounded far back in the left side in the first volley fired at the moving grass. This was the cause of her rage and fury which made her charge; for, as a rule, a tiger avoids an encounter if he possibly can, and is shot as he

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tries to get away, and only takes the initiative either when wounded, or when in a tight corner from which there is no escape, or in defence of its young.

I remember an instance of my old friend Maynard. He had fixed himself up a *maichan* on four uprights in a grassy swamp, near the Motipur forest, into which a tiger had been tracked, and was having the swamp driven by elephants and beaters towards him. His moving about on the *maichan* had loosened the foundations. Just as the tiger was approaching, the fabric on which he was perched began to sway, and toppled over with a crash. Both he and the tiger were out of the swamp like lamplighters, but the tiger was the faster of the two, and was never seen again; and all that was seen of Maynard was a piece of hatless, muddy humanity, somewhat blown, but apparently proud of his experience. Subsequently his "topi," guns, rifles, cartridge belt, and other paraphernalia were worried out of the slime and slush by the "shikari."

But this is a digression. While we partook of lunch under some trees on the edge of the swamp, the shikari padded the tigress on a pad elephant. After which we commenced our

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journey homewards across the plain to the Murtiha block of forest, beating for small game, and shot on our way home two hogdeer, a cheetal, and a gond-stag.

The delight of our camp was unbounded, as there was some fine feeding for the Mahomedans in the "hulled" deer; the Hindus stood near the tigress calling out "Bagh, bagh, Ram, Ram, Sitaram," and the villagers crowded round (for "my ladyship" had been a scourge to the neighbourhood for some time past) pleading for her whiskers and teeth, as charms against "the evil eye," and for portions of her carcase, as a cure for all the ills of the body; for in their eyes neither "Elliman" or "Jacob's Oil" is a patch on tiger's fat. Two local chamars skinned her before us, then and there, and pegged out the skin behind where our horses were picketed, and a chowkydar was put on duty at the spot for the night. The evening found us sitting on easy camp-chairs, before a blazing log-fire, discussing the day's proceedings, fighting over again our battle of the "nurkool swamp," and pointing out to our own satisfaction that either the mahout, or the elephant, or gun or rifle, anything but ourselves, were to blame for missing this neilghai,

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or shooting too soon at that parah, or too late at that gond; suggestions received by the rest of the party with a silence that suggested doubt.

In December, 1884, my camp was at Sohelwa, about a mile from the forest. We had come out for a "Christmas shoot." E——, of the Bengal and N. W. Railway; R——, the District Superintendent of police, and S——, of the Royal Canadians from Fyzabad, were my guests. We had invited the forest officer to join our party the next day, but work prevented his putting in an appearance; he had however promised to help us with the turkey and plum-pudding that evening. That Christmas dinner, as events will show, was destined not to come off. After breakfast that Christmas morning we mounted our pad elephants and started for the forest. Having reached our rendezvous about noon, the coolies and beaters were sent on some two miles ahead, to beat the jungle towards us; in the meantime we took up our positions on the maichans that had been duly prepared for us the night before. It seemed ages, that silent waiting in the depths of the forest, before the distant cry of the beaters, the rattle of the tom-toms, and the

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beating of the drums fell on our ears. The first sign of animal life was a troop of chattering monkeys—again silence—and a jackal slouched past, then some peafowl and jungle fowl ran across the fire zone. Soon after there fell on my ear the lightest pit-a-pat on the fallen leaves, and I saw, standing motionless with his head on one side, a fine old sambur stag, about forty yards to the right; his horns, neck and shoulders just visible above the tangled brushwood. I covered him, fired, saw him fall, and heard him struggling on the ground. Immediately afterwards there was a shot on my left, and a “bang-bang” further on, showing that most of the corps had got to work. Then “the band began to play” in earnest. Some neilghai, a herd of pig, and numbers of cheetal came by, helter-skelter, and the forest, some few minutes back so silent, reverberated with rifle volleys, beating of drums and tom-toms, the letting off of matchlocks, and the shouting of some three or four hundred beaters. Our bag, for this beat, consisted of one sambar, two cheetal, a neilghai, and a large boar. The coolies were sent down to the stream to slake their thirst and eat their handfuls of parched grain while we partook of tiffin and a smoke, after which we mounted our

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elephants and went on to the next station prepared for us, and so on working our way homewards. About four o'clock, we reached the "home forest," sent the elephants back to camp, took up our position on foot along a forest road, and started the coolies on our final beat. E—— was on the extreme left, about 400 yards from the forest bungalow; I was next to him, some 200 yards lower down; S—— and R—— were equidistant on my right. The forest officer, who had returned home about three o'clock, hearing the beaters, came down the road in the hopes of getting a shot—a most unsportsmanlike thing to do, for he didn't know where we were placed. Some deer crossed the road; he saw something moving in the forest in the direction they had taken, aimed and fired, heard his quarry fall, and ran up to see—what? E—— lying in a pool of blood. It was not long before we were all on the scene. A .500 express bullet had passed through the poor fellow's neck. We lifted him up, and carried him on a country cot to the forest bungalow, and did what we could to staunch the wound and stop the flow of blood. Night was setting in, and we were forty miles away from any medical aid. We found that E—— was



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paralyzed from shoulders to feet, his chest had sunk, and he was breathing in short gasps from his diaphragm, like a dog after a long run. All that night he raved in high fever, with a temperature of 105°, and next evening when the doctor arrived, and we anxiously clustered round for his opinion, he said: "Well, it's Lombard Street to a China orange his getting over this." We carried E—— on his bed, into Bahraich, by slow marches. Everything was done that medical aid and nursing could do. He existed rather than lived for fourteen months. We got him home to England, where he finally succumbed to pneumonia. The bullet had evidently impinged a small piece of bone on to the spinal cord, cutting off all connection from the head downwards; the wound of exit, just above the right shoulder-blade, was fearful to behold. A young and useful life sacrificed—all the result of a gruesome, a criminal mistake. Poor old chap! It was to be. The Fates had ordained it. So it is with all flesh. "Soon as our lot is drawn from the urn, go we must—there is no return."

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"Though we pass from mouth to mouth the word  
that is easily said,  
Though we noise it north and south, or whisper it  
near with dread,  
How shall a man conceive that his friend is dead?

"Dead is easily spoken; but how shall he so understand  
That the soul its bonds has broken, as a bird flies  
from the hand?  
Or that the spirit has lost its fatherland?

"Shall he be glad or sorry? If sorry, for what shall  
he grieve?  
For the flight which killed the quarry, or wounds  
that death will leave?  
For the rust of self in weeds, which grief doth  
weave?

"All that he can learn is this, though he beat on his  
breast for hours,  
That a mystic loss is his, that a mystic loss is ours,  
And the heedless heart of earth will still be flowers!"

## Chapter XII

### THUGGEE

“For pleasure and profit together, allow us the hunting of man.”

THE origin of this crime is lost in the mists of fable. There are, I understand, no records of its prevalence in any of the histories of India prior to the time of Akbur. Marvellous to relate, it was carried on at one's very doors for over a century without its prevalence ever being suspected. Was this crime of Hindu or Mahomedan origin? Probably the former, for, though practised by both Hindus and Mahomedans, it was carried on with the observance of strictly Hindu ceremonies, such as the offering of vows by both Hindus and Mahomedans to the goddess “Bhawancee”; and the Hindu festival of the Dassehra was esteemed as particularly propitious by all Thugs. They hunted down men for gain, and looked upon it as sport, and called it “shikar.” Their ideal was: “For pleasure and profit together, allow us the hunting of man.” This brotherhood of crime

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was by no means devoid of organization, and as with gypsies, so with Thugs from distant parts of India, who had never come across each other before, and whose creed and language differed, recognition was possible by signs known only to the initiated, and a slang of their own. These gangs, made up of inveiglers of the unwary, garotters, and gravediggers, insinuated themselves into the society of travellers, journeying with them until an opportunity was afforded them of strangling their victim with a handkerchief; and, before even the signal had been given for the final despatch of the traveller, his grave had been duly prepared to receive his corpse. On the signal being given by the leader of the gang, as quick as lightning the executioner had thrown his handkerchief from behind round the victim's neck—a sudden twist of the knuckles, a sharp wrench, and all was over. The whole business was speedily accomplished, the corpse carried off and buried, and the members of the gang hurried off as fast as they could go in the opposite direction. The holy emblems of this profession were a pick-axe and a handkerchief. They were a superstitious lot, these Thugs, and never started on their nefarious outings without consulting the

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omens. And what were these omens in which they placed such implicit faith? The bray of a donkey, the shriek of a peacock, almost any cry of bird or beast, after their incantations to "Bhawanee" for light and leading had been pronounced, were sufficient for them. Only follow Ramsunran on his journey, and you will be able the more easily to understand the ways of these murderers. One case was much the same as another, and Ramsunran's will suffice to explain the wiles of these assassins. The following facts were furnished me by a relative of the unfortunate victim :—

"The latter rains had ceased, the final 'hatni,' the last of 'Nakadts,' had come down in torrents, the sky was cloudless, October had commenced, the Dassehra had just been kept, the days were bright, and the mornings and evenings had the crisp feeling in them, foretastes of the approach of the cold weather. Ramsunran, a small landowner in the south of the Purtabgurh district in Oudh, had everything in readiness to start with his women-folk, and one or two servants, for a journey to Sohelwa, a village in the Bahraich district in the north of the Province of Oudh, at the foot of the Naipal hills,

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to attend a family gathering. At early dawn, Ramsunran, riding on a small country pony, his women-folk in a two-bullock country cart, with a cloth thrown over the vehicle to hide them from the gaze of the outer world—for Ramsunran approved not of his women-kind looking out into the world—the servants walking by the side of the cart with iron-bound clubs in their hands, and their shoes stuck over the top of the same—started for their first march of ten miles on the road towards Sultanpur. About noon a halt was made, the mid-day meal, ablutions, and a short nap taken, then a pull at the huqqa all round, and another eight miles accomplished before sundown, when shelter was taken for the night in a ‘serai’ on the main road, near the police station, where a number of native constables looked after the peace of the district and their own interests. The next morning’s dawn saw them on the road again; and so they journeyed until Fyzabad was reached. At holy Ajodhia, founded according to tradition by Manu, the father of the human race—where a thousand

‘shrines stand open, and ever the censer swings,  
As they bow to a mystic symbol, or the figures of  
ancient kings;  
And the incense rises ever’—

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the whole party purged their sins by a dip in the Gogra, and later on crossed the sea of snow-fed waters on a large wooden boat crowded with other travellers. As the river was broad, owing to the recent rains, and the stream swift, it took the bawling, naked boatmen some time to reach the other side and tow the boat back again some mile or so that the stream had carried them past their landing-stage. Ramsunran got into conversation with a pleasant-spoken fellow-traveller, who had that morning arrived from the Jaunpur district, and was going north on business.

“As the shades of night closed in, they found Ramsunran, and his belongings, and his new acquaintance, and his servants encamped together under some mango trees on the north side of the river. After the sun had set, and camp fires been lighted, the evening meal was partaken of, and then the men-kind sat round the embers of an old sal log, chatting, and smoking their huqqas. Ramsunran was new to these parts, but his friend was well acquainted with the Trans-Gogra Gandhārb ban tracts, and enlarged on the robber gangs that frequented the Gonda forests, the dacoits that lurked in the Utraola villages, the ill-fame of

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the Barwar colony at Mankapur, through which they would have to pass the next morning; of post-runners and cattle that had been carried off by wild beasts in the Ikhona forests, the difficulties likely to be met with in negotiating the Pyagpur swamps and jheels, where flocks of snipe come in with the cold-weather new moon, and where in the daytime the buffaloes wallow in the mud and slime. So it was arranged, before they turned in for the night, that the two parties should associate themselves together for mutual security and companionship, as they were travelling in the same direction. Thus day by day, through the Gonda and Bahraich districts, through swamp and forest, over wide, uncultivated tracts, past the ruins of Sahet-Mahet, once the capital of a Buddhist dynasty, the joint camps made their way, and each day more and more did Ramsunran's friend ingratiate himself, and earn the former's thanks and gain his confidence.

"One afternoon, after the Dargah of Syad Salar had been left a few miles behind, and when about fifteen miles from Bhinga, where the friends were to part, the stranger suggested that, as the Rapti would have to be crossed, and a bad piece of the forest traversed before reach-



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ing Bhinga, it would be wiser to start somewhat earlier than usual—that was, some time before daylight—as they could by this means get clear of the forest and reach Bhinga before dark. This was agreed upon. The camp was roused from sleep about 2 a.m., the bullocks yoked, all the chattels packed and loaded in the bullock cart, and after a whiff at the friendly huqqa over the smouldering ashes of the overnight fire, the party set off. Little did the unwary Ramsunran dream that he was marching into the heart of the Thugs' stronghold, and that even the Rapti boatmen were Thugs hereabout. The new moon was half-way across the heavens, the stars shining clear overhead, and some little time before daybreak the scrub jungle, intersected with ravines on the approach to the Rapti, was reached, where the soft mists of a northern cold-weather morning hung over the river, the chilliest time before dawn. Ramsunran's three servants and the stranger's servants were sent on ahead in single file, Ramsunran, his friend, and two of the latter's associates, who had come out to meet him the day before, and the bullock cart with the females in it, taking a slightly circuitous route, the more passable for wheel traffic. At a given signal, Ramsun-

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ran's party were set upon, strangled to death, and buried away in the grave prepared for them the night before. As the morning star grew pale in the sky before the gathering flush of dawn, all that was left of Ramsunran's party was a newly-made grave in the lone brushwood, near the banks of the Rapti, where the river issues from the Naipal hills, flowing south-eastward into Oudh; and a few hours later, as the sun rose, showing in the foreground the pine-clad hills of Naipal, and in the far distance the peaks of the snowy range, its rays fell on Ramsunran's so-called friends dividing their spoils in a belt of primeval forest, near the ruined fane of some old Hindu deity, with the vultures soaring overhead and monkeys chattering among the sal trees."

The old "Thuggee by strangulation" has been entirely suppressed. For centuries the Thugs plied their trade all over India; they only recognised a "close time" of four months in the year—June to September—they claimed thousands of victims yearly, without the prevalence of their atrocities ever being suspected. About 1840 the Government got wind of this abomination, took the matter in hand, and hunted the Thugs from one end of

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India to the other, until it utterly destroyed them.

It is stated that "Thuggee by poison" has taken the place of the old "Thuggee by strangulation." Doubtless we often hear of cases of "theft by drugging," but it is a misnomer to apply the term "Thuggee" to such cases. This vocation is not hereditary, has not immemorial custom to fall back on, is not attended with religious rites and ceremonies, the perpetrators do not own any private graveyards. I doubt if there is any extensive confederacy among road poisoners. Such evidence as there is tends to the conclusion that this is rather the work of criminals acting independently on their own account. India is a country that lends itself to such crime, and as some of the deadliest poisons are easily procurable, growing along one's very path, it is not surprising to find such handy means taken advantage of by criminals in the furtherance of their designs. The poison chiefly used is *dhatūra*, a plant which grows wild in many parts of India. The seeds of this plant are pounded up fine and mixed with rice, or coarse flour, or sweetmeats. Here is a case in point.

One Dhatta was on his way from his home

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to a bathing fair at Dalmao, in the Rai Bareli district. At sunset he sat down under the trees of a wayside grove to his frugal meal of a bowl of rice and some *chupatties*, or baked cakes of coarse flour; not far from him was a stranger naked to his waist, and with only a loin-cloth on, bent on similar operations. Both were going to the bathing fair; they got into friendly conversation on the prospects of the harvest and the exactions of the village banniah. The stranger, at Dhatta's request, partook of some of his food, and in return helped Dhatta to some of his clarified butter, or *ghee*, of which the former had none of his own. After his meal the stranger packed up as if to proceed on his journey. Before long Dhatta was seized with giddiness and dryness of the throat, and was generously tended by his friend, who put off starting on his journey, until, having helped himself to all he could find in the way of cash, departed, leaving the unfortunate Dhatta to roam about the country like one demented, until, foaming at the mouth, he fell down in a kind of apoplectic fit. Next morning some villagers, going at early dawn to their fields, find a man lying dead under a pipul tree. The police are informed, the corpse is

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carried to the district dispensary, a post-mortem reveals the cause of death; but as the unfortunate victim had in his madness roamed far afield from where he supped the night before, and where the dhatura had been surreptitiously inserted into the friendly gift of *ghee*, the police tear their hair as to any clue, and after filling many a suspect with pounded red pepper, arrest the wrong man, who, after the application of chillies to his eyes and being made to sit on a hot plate, is persuaded to confess to the crime; but confessions to the police are not considered as evidence under the Indian Procedure Code and Evidence Act—I suppose, because native policemen and native magistrates are too great adepts at hearing a confession when the accused is quite ignorant of making one. The police are well aware that their explanations of mysteries do not always hold water, hence a confession of any kind is “nuts” to them. I have come across a good many confessions, and my experience has been, that the accused invariably withdraws before the judge his confession to the police or the native magistrate. It is impossible to draw any conclusions from this fact. There are two sides to every question. The

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above is one side of it, but there is another. The culprit may have thought, when first arrested, that the game was up, and really confessed the truth, or he may have made an involuntary kind of confession under blandishments known only to the police. One thing is certain: as soon as he finds himself in the "lock-up," with time to reflect and fellow-prisoners to instil into him the folly of which he has been guilty, and the advantage of denying everything, his confession included, he readily follows out the advice tendered him, and oftener than not, to turn the tables on their persecutors, the jail-birds set their heads together to concoct a very pretty little story of the tortures employed by the police to extract the original confession. This thirst for obtaining confessions is in no small measure due to the peremptory demand for numerical results. If the official reports, bristling with percentages served up to the Secretary of State and the public, would only let us more into the secret of what goes on *below the surface*; if these reports would take us behind the scenes, and let us watch the working of an ordinary constable in village outposts; or see for ourselves the by-play of embryo self-government, we should

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find a vast deal more to interest and enlighten the public than the present ordinary yearly tables of figures, which are, fortunately, unintelligible, as otherwise they would be misleading. There are such acres of these statistics, that even if trustworthy they are wholly un-instructive, and Local Governments themselves have been known to pour ridicule on these "arithmetical curiosities." It has been publicly admitted "that these statistical results are quite imperfect as a guide to the actual value of work done, and that they are a better index to bad than to good work; that they fail altogether to take count of the work which should be most highly valued—the work which prevents the commission of crime."

## Chapter XIII

### FEMALE INFANTICIDE

"Death, spoke Hope in my ear, is the daughter of Mercy."

*Robinson, "Under the Punkah."*

**I**T is more than a century ago now since it was discovered that infanticide was systematically carried on over the greater portion of India. It was most prevalent among the Rajputs, a fine warlike race, with glorious traditions for courage and gallantry for the defence of their country against Mahratta invasion: of all the warlike races in India the least ambitious and the most loyal. Colonel Sleeman tells us, during his tour in Oudh, in 1850, that this practice was prevalent amongst the old Rajput families. Old Baktawar Singh told him that hardly any of the Rajput landed aristocracy were the legitimate sons of their predecessors—they were all adopted, or born of women of inferior grade. It has been said that in some parts of the country this crime



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was common among the Mahomedans, and that the Jhats and Bhurtpore chiefs were tainted with it, and that it could be traced back in Arabia to before Mahomet's birth. But coming down to our own times, after the annexation of the Province of Oudh, we found that infanticide was not only occasionally practised there, but uniformly, universally, and unblushingly acknowledged. Sir C. Wingfield, with the cordial help of the talukdars, set on foot measures to suppress this evil. Matters have decidedly improved since then, but the practice is not yet obsolete. The causes of this crime appear to be pride, poverty, avarice, and superstition. The root of the evil lies in the expense incurred in marriage pageantries and festivities, and the feasting of numberless hangers-on—a motley rabble of *mendici mimæ balatrones et hoc genus omne*; hence the Hindu looks upon the birth of a daughter as a tax and direful misfortune, a presage of poverty now in this world and may be shame hereafter. The chief means of causing the infant's death are suffocation, withholding nourishment, exposure, and administering opium.

The effects of the practice are productive of other evil practices; for instance, the kid-

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napping of female children of other castes for the purpose of selling them to Rajputs, the latter being unable, from the paucity of female children among themselves, to obtain wives of their own caste. To supply this demand, children are enticed away or stolen by professional child-stealers, or made a trade of by being sold by the very poor. The organized system above alluded to is carried out as follows : A girl of any age from three to thirteen is purchased ; the purchaser, a Thakoor, belongs to a gang of five or six others, including women, and they have accomplices in other districts. The girl is then brought by the purchaser and a female accomplice, and placed for safe keeping in the house of a friend, which is used as a sort of depôt for such girls, where three or four are often housed together. The girls are carefully taught to reply to all questioners that their owners are their parents, or brothers, or other relatives, as agreed ; and while this is being taught them, the owners look out for some family where a wife is wanted. Then formal arrangements for marriage are made. The dealer demands a certain sum, varying from 50 to 100 rupees. This settled, the proposed purchaser sends a Brahmin or a friend

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to ascertain if the girl is really the dealer's daughter or niece, as stated by him; and these being easily deceived, the marriage is arranged. On the day of the ceremony the accomplices appear with the dealer, and a regular false family is fabricated. The girl, with the pleasant prospect before her of a new life, and the fascination of the idea of a bridal thumb ring, with a little round mirror in the centre of it, acts her part to perfection; and in this manner girls of every caste—of Mussulman parents even—are palmed off, we are told, on Thakoor families, as *bonâ-fide* Thakoor and Hindu children.

Personally, I do not believe that in most of such cases the Rajput is gulled as to whom he marries. I doubt the fact of our knowing more about these depôts for girls than the Rajpoots themselves. There being a demand, the supply is accepted without many questions being asked, and the practice is winked at. There is no doubt that the practice exists, and is likely to do so as long as there is a demand for women amongst Rajput families. I know of an instance where the police seized five girls who had been kidnapped from a distant district and sold to Thakoor families in Oudh; and from

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information obtained from these girls, and the parties who were convicted of having sold them, a rigorous inquiry was set on foot, which resulted in fifty more cases being brought to light. On information thus obtained, one night, after the sun had set, and the hot wind that had been howling all day abated, we started for a small hamlet situated on the banks of the Gumti, some twelve miles distant. This was reached by about ten o'clock. On arriving at our destination, police sentries were placed round the enclosure to prevent any attempt at escape; and, led by our guide, we entered the enclosure through a fence of thick bamboos. The young moon was well up in the heavens, and a stream of light fell on the weedy, uneven path, that led to the outer entrance of an irregular nondescript building, partly thatched and partly tiled. Under a creeper-covered trellis of gourds, in a small mud-thatched lean-to, clinging to the windowless wall built of flat Nawabi bricks, set in a mortar of mud, between some sleeping cattle and a dirty well, its sides all green with slime, we came on some straw, on which was lying a wizened old hag, with nothing on but a tattered sheet and a goitre. Having roused her up, we made her,

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by the light of a flickering wick in a flat earthen saucer of oil (the familiar *chirag*), show us the way into the house, through a rough wooden door studded with nails. In the outer room—more a verandah than a room—the arches of which were enclosed for about five feet with mud-screen walls, between grindstones and some dozen brass and earthen pots, we came on three girls, between five and ten years of age, lying asleep on fibre mats, more dirty and bedraggled than the mats they lay on; but they appeared well nourished, and by no means miserable or disheartened. The younger girls were too young to understand much; but the eldest, who, though little more than a child, was a widow, fully appreciated the change from the home with her mother-in-law, where “her bread was sorrow and her drink tears.” The owners of this establishment were evidently away on matrimonial business, and it took some time to trace them out and bring them to justice. It was quite evident that, owing to the deficiency which existed of female children in Thakoor families, this kind of traffic was extensive.

Other depôts were unearthed, where girls were collected, after they had been kidnapped,

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or brought, previous to the families being fixed upon into which they were to be drafted by sale. Different explanations are given as to the origin of this crime. One class ascribes it to a prophecy delivered by a Brahmin to a Rajput king, that his race should lose the sovereignty through one of his female posterity. To guard himself against the fulfilment of this prophecy, the monarch ordered the destruction of all female infants. Another tradition is that once a Chowhan prince, being pressed by his son-in-law, and writhing under the feeling of disgrace that his position of merely father-in-law placed him in, bound his sons by an oath to save his family from future contempt, by destroying their daughters. Another tradition is that a rajah, having a very beautiful daughter, being unable to find a fitting husband for her, put her to death at the advice of his priest, and enjoined the duty on all his clan. The probability is that these, and many other traditions of a similar nature, are mere phantasies of the brain; for, mixed up with the Rajputs' gallantry and courage, we know they have a most vivid imagination, which is easily led astray by rumour, to which the most trivial accidents may give rise.

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These so-called traditions are merely put forward as lame excuses, with the view to hide the real motive of a crime they are ashamed to acknowledge. Anyhow, any inquiry now as to whether this or that explanation be genuine or not, is mere waste of words and waste of time. Herbert Edwards put the matter in a nutshell when he said: "The question is one between the father's means and the daughter's life; and the life is taken and the wealth retained." The crime of kidnapping is fed by the more horrible one of infanticide. Much has been and is being done to put down female infanticide. Sir John Strachey went for it some thirty years ago; and, when bringing in his measure for the prevention of female infanticide, said that "the British Government had borne too long with the abomination, and the time had come for them to show the world that these things must cease." But something more than a merely coercive system, supported by penal enactments, is needed to give permanency to any measure for the suppression of this crime. The method chiefly resorted to must be addressed to the reduction of marriage expenses, and by education and enlightenment aiding the Rajputs to brave the public opinion

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of their associates, and impress upon them that, when the alternative lies between the transcendental law of immemorial custom or humanity, the former must go to the wall. In the past we have simply cauterized sores that have broken out here and there, instead of going to the root of the matter to infuse a healthy tone into the whole system. To ensure success, the efforts should be universal, for spasmodic local efforts are of use only temporarily and locally. If the crime is to be eradicated, the motives from which it springs must be attacked. The only excuse urged for the crime is hereditary obligation, obeyed solely because of a want of moral courage. As the chief motive for the destruction of female infants originates partly in false pride and partly in exorbitant marriage expenses, to permanently remove these motives, we must seek to impart counter-motives, and try to create an interest in the girls being allowed to live for their own sakes, and gain over the co-operation of the chiefs of the clan. For if the peasantry were satisfied that their hereditary chiefs were against them in regard to these silly, fabulous traditions that tend to keep alive this practice, the effects would be excellent. This is being



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done ; and the latest published reports show that the practice of female infanticide, if not obsolete, has been materially checked.

Mention is made of the increasing popularity of a system of marriage, termed "dola," under which daughters are a source of profit and not expense to their parents. Unfortunately, no details are given, nor is any mention made of the form of this marriage, and the manner in which it is accepted. Full details should be published for the information of the public, so as to allow us to judge for ourselves. If, as is alleged, the natives, or the authorities, or both together, have "struck ile," and invented a system under which daughters are a source of profit and not expense to their parents, they ought not to copyright it, but to give the world a chance of acting on such a happy idea. One can only hope the Inspector-General's optimistic opinion that "premeditated female infanticide no longer exists," may be true. Apparently the Government thinks this statement "is too comprehensive." Still, it looks as though this abominable crime had been nearly put an end to. As far back as 1864, that noble philanthropist, Munshi Pyaree Lal, understood the marriage expenses evil, and travelled far and wide

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convening public meetings, and by his honest endeavours and earnest eloquence did what he could to prescribe a certain limit to expenditure at weddings. I was at one of his meetings in Lucknow, and only wished more such honest, self-sacrificing, earnest workers might be raised up in so good a cause. True, the difficulties that surround the question are by no means few or small; all the more reason for putting forth every effort to overcome such an exceptionally barbarous practice. A practice admitted among themselves to be criminal, one in no way mixed up with caste, or the religious habits of the people, nay, rather against their religion, for their Vedas and Puranas sufficiently condemn this unnatural crime, laying down "that he who takes pleasure in sin and commits infanticide falls into the great hell called 'Simirsa'"; that "he who, standing in water, repeats regularly the 'gayater' may be freed from all sins but of infanticide"; and again, "by repeating ten crores of 'gayaters' a man may be freed from the guilt of killing a Brahmin, but never from that of infanticide." So much for one side of the question; but there are always two sides to every question. To those who have watched, year in and year out, the state of degraded

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slavery that the one-sided and inequitable Manu legislation of centuries has doomed native women to, it looks as though the female infant's early death were a merciful relief from her torture in life under such a system. According to the Hindu religion, the Hindu wife has no separate independent existence apart from her husband, and the bond uniting her to her husband is indissoluble even in death. There is marriage in their hereafter, which in itself must be a nightmare. The Hindu marriage system is based on force, and the wife is looked on as but a chattel; and the pity of it is that under our humane laws the barbarity is still permitted of enforcing conjugal rights by imprisonment, where husband and wife were married in infancy before they had set eyes on each other. This is bad enough where marriage is between mutually consenting parties of mature age; it is indefensible where there has been no consent, and the parties to the travesty termed marriage are little children. Riding through the cornfields, you see a village wedding procession; the youthful bridegroom is about three summers, and he goes to wed a still younger girl: the thought passes through your brain, a few more years shall roll, and the boy grown to

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manhood, be his life what it may, our laws will enable him to compel the innocent victim of a wife thus entrapped, to give up, under penalty of imprisonment, her body, to that from which her soul shrinks and her nature revolts.

The results of the Hindu marriage system, so far as its victims are concerned, are worse than suttee, causing untold misery to thousands of innocent, helpless women and children, and wholesale demoralization by letting loose on the public a low set of marriage brokers and women destitute of principle, who gain a livelihood by deceit and pandering to the frailties of human nature. On the grounds of humanity, morality, and public policy, infant marriage is intolerable, and deserves to be put down just as much as suttee and female infanticide. If we insist on the girls living, we are bound to protect them in after-life, whereas by countenancing infant marriage we do a bitter injustice to millions of helpless women and children who were better dead. Is it not our aim and object to make all free, men *and* women? If so, surely social customs inconsistent with freedom ought to be grappled with. Would it be so very heinous to enact that no marriage is legally valid *in the sight of our Courts* that does not fulfil the fol-

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lowing conditions: (1) That the parties should be capable of standing in the relation of husband and wife to each other; (2) that they should be willing to stand in that relation; and (3) that they should have contracted with one another so to stand? Surely such a ceremony as that which "Rukhmibai" went through with "Dadaji" should no longer be held to convey marriage rights and obligations "at all, at all." We have been moving along slowly, but still moving; the sanguinary Juggernath Car, the flames of Suttee, the abominations of Thuggee, are past history, and we may hope that ere long the nightmare of female infanticide and the barbarities of infant marriage may pass away—

"Like the smoke of the guns on a wind-swept hill,  
Like the sounds and colours of yesterday."

## Chapter XIV

### AN ALLEGED POLICE TORTURE CASE

“Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein.”—*Proverbs*.

WE had sweltered through a hot May, June had commenced, I had tossed about the whole long, still sultry night, where a punkah was a fraud, and sleep an impossibility for all save the punkah coolie. Before the sun rose I was sitting in *déshabille*, with a wet towel round my head, in an armchair out in the compound, sipping my morning cup of tea, almost wishing it was office time, so as to take one's thoughts off the numbing effect of the oppressive heat, when I heard the clattering of a horse's hoofs, and up rode the District Superintendent of police. “There has been another big burglary at Saraya,” he called out, “the third within three weeks; no clue to the former two, and precious little clue to this last one at present. I'm off to the spot to put a little *jaldi* into that sleepy old thannadar. If this kind of thing goes on, where will our ‘averages’