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RECOLLECTIONS

OF AN

EX-DETECTIVE

OF THE

MADRAS POLICE FORCE.

EDITED BY D. S. WHITE.

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Under the Patronage

OF

HIS GRACE

THE DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM & CHANDOS.

PREFACE.

THE writing of these Recollections was undertaken to assist a man who was, and who is still, down. The facts, or outlines, were furnished by the prostrated individual, and the editor, being responsible for the dishing up, has made use, where he could do so legitimately, of all the sauces, relishes and condiments, to his hand. Now that excitement is over, the editor is uncomfortably impressed with the idea that he has occasionally thrust the prostrated speaker aside and substituted himself. He trusts, however, that the fault will be excused, inasmuch as his desire was not to reach the artistic, but to simply write a book which would entertain. Where the language of the original narrator seemed quaint and worth preserving, it was carefully transferred; but it is indeed to be regretted that the manner of the man, with his rapid illustrative dashes into vernacular prose and poetry, could not also be photographed. It only remains to be said that, if encouragement is given, another little book will follow this little one.

15*th March* 1876

P.S.—It is with regret the Editor has to announce that since the above was written the Ex-Detective has passed for ever from the scene of his exploits. He however has left those behind him who are deserving of sympathy.

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BURGLARY TWENTY FEET HIGH.

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CONGRATULATING myself on the fact that nothing had turned-up to particularly disturb my slumbers of the previous night, and having before me a prospect of a comparatively quiet day, I was preparing leisurely to go, according to rule, to the Central Station of my Division to carry out the routine work of the morning. My occupation, however, was abruptly interfered with by a message from the Commissioner of Police directing me to come to him immediately at the office. As my residence was not far away, and as the urgency of the message led me to put on considerable steam, it may be concluded that not many minutes elapsed before I stood before the Chief ready to execute any orders he might give me. As I entered the room in which the Commissioner sat, I saw that he was engaged with a Native Gentleman, who, though in undress, appeared to be a person of some consideration; and as at a glance I perceived that the countenance of the latter betrayed both grief and irritation, I could not help mentally laying a wager that the sudden summons which had altered my line of march for the morning, had its origin in the presence of the gentleman in question. Nor was I deceived. Almost at the very moment of my entry, the Commissioner, addressing me, said :— "Here ——— this gentleman, Mr. ——— Pillai has been complaining most bitterly of the Police. He charges them with great negligence, and says they are no protection whatever against depredations on the property of the public. He lives in a two-storied house, in the upper part of which a most daring robbery was committed last night by a couple of rogues who escaped with their booty; and no attempt whatever was made by the Police to apprehend them." I was certainly mystified for a moment, for I was

as innocent as the babe unborn of a knowledge of the robbery, and it puzzled me to discover how Mr. ———— Pillai managed to connect Police negligence with an isolated robbery which he, himself, living in the house, was unable or not wakeful enough to prevent. Like many other worthy citizens, Mr. ———— Pillai, no doubt, had a vague idea that, at *night*, the eyes of the Police ought to concentrate themselves, simultaneously, on every crime and villainy being perpetrated in every house and street of Madras, and as his conception was not realized in the case of the robbery of his own property, he naturally at once drew the inference that the Police were to blame. But what a pretty "kettle-of fish" there would be in Madras, and, in fact, in every great city, if the Police were really *Argus-eyed!* I have not the slightest doubt that the moment such an accomplishment was attained, the cry of the public would be to enlist none but blind men in the Force. The above however are but reflections on the way. My answer was due to the Commissioner and I replied:—"Why, sir, this is the first intimation I have had of the affair; and I am certain information has not been given in regard to it at any of the Stations of the Division, for if it had been, I should have had a report made to me before my coming here, and steps would already have been taken towards detection." Mr. ———— Pillai made no observation, and the Commissioner seeing exactly how the case stood, terminated the interview by saying to me:—"Well! Well! accompany this gentleman and do all you can to help him."

I may permit myself to observe here that an impression seems to be abroad, especially among people of influential position in Madras, that a report of a "Case" to the Commissioner of Police, and not to a Subordinate, is likely to ensure the latter active and successful investigation. I cannot but observe that such an impression is without foundation,

except where the Commissioner might himself enter upon detective duty; for while no amount of superior influence could tend to sharpen the wits or movements of the indifferent, the genuine Police officer wants no stimulation beyond the stimulation of pursuit. Speaking for myself only, I may say that I never required encouragement beyond the success that led me step-by-step towards the goal I had determined upon reaching; and I may add that, frequently, the duty I happened to be engaged in created in me an interest and excitement felt perhaps only by the gambler. When I met with difficulties, therefore, my only thought was:—"How shall I overcome them?"

To return. As directed, I accompanied Mr. ——— Pillai to his house in ———, where he pointed out to me the sleeping apartments upstairs. One was usually occupied by the family, while he slept in the other. On the night in question, his wife, with but a little child, was in the first room, and he was in the second. Between 11 and 12 o'clock, while he his wife and child were in a deep sleep, some persons entered both the rooms. They secured his gold-laced headcloth, an upper garment, and a couple of half-jackets, the last of which he had thrown carelessly on the clothes' stand; and they further clipped off the wedding-string, with its numerous golden ornaments, from his wife's neck. They took possession also of the bunch of false hair worn by her in common with all Hindu women, and cleverly divested the child of one of its gold bangles. They were apparently busy removing the second bangle from the child's wrist, when the child cried. This awoke the mother, who, seeing two strange men in her room, by the aid of the light which was in it, screamed in such a manner as to effectually arouse Mr. ——— Pillai. The burglars finding that their game was up so far, beat a very hasty retreat through the door by which they had doubtless entered; not

however without taking with them the booty they had seized and which they had already made into a bundle. They jumped on to the roof of the next house, scrambled over a wall, and then leaping down into a large paddyfield, made good their escape before any alarm could be given even to the neighbours.

That was the case, and bare and hopeless enough it no doubt appears. Seeing that Mr. ——— Pillai's wife (leaving the child aside) was the first to awake, and moreover that the thieves were in her room when she did awake, I directed my questions, in as insinuating and confidential a manner as I could assume, to her. Considering the circumstances, I found her communicative and very clear; and her statement was to the following effect. Having the advantage of the light, she had had a pretty distinct view of one of the thieves, the one that had quitted the room last. He appeared to be a young man of black complexion, and to be sturdy of build and short of stature. This however did not help me, for, as may be seen, the description would apply to thousands of men taken at random in any part of Madras. But the clue, the first link in the chain of inexorable circumstances, which often coils, snakelike, round the criminal, however shrouded in mystery may be his crime, was soon to appear.

With every sense on the alert, I continued my questioning, when, at last, I obtained the statement that the same man, the second of the thieves, had struck his shoulder against the door in passing out. Almost instinctively I seized upon the fact and soon made it the centre of a minute investigation. I discovered that half the door had been closed and bolted, though not fully, and that the collision had been so severe as to have forced the bolt. I thereupon ascertained satisfactorily, by making the wife of Pillai close and open the particular half-

door, that it was the left and not the right half which had momentarily impeded the man. I said nothing more on the point, but I mentally remarked :—"That will do I think. It is something to start from, and it seems a capital clue ; but the nature of it is such that if it is to be acted upon so as to secure the particular thief, and perhaps his companion, 'sharp ! very sharp !' must be my motto."

Before leaving the rooms, however, I thought it necessary to examine the trail of the thieves so that I should not miss the chance of discovering any additional clue. I therefore asked Mr. ——— Pillai to point out exactly how they had left. He did so taking me over the diminutive terrace which terminated at the roof of the neighbouring house. As we stepped on, my eyes alighted on a piece of silk cord, about a couple of spans in length, which I picked up. On enquiry of Mr. ——— Pillai, he stated that it did not belong to himself or any member of his family. Drawing my own conclusion, I was pocketing the cord, when Mr. ——— Pillai, rather surprised at my taking such special care of such a useless bit of string, asked me why I seemed to think it worth preserving. " I cannot say just now," I answered, " what its value is. I suspect strongly that it belonged to one of the thieves, and that he dropped it in his hurry to get away. You see it is a part of a man's waist-string. It may lead to detection, and may even procure conviction." The curiosity of Mr. ——— Pillai having been aroused, he pressed me further with questions, and as I saw no reason for affecting the mysterious, I said :—" You notice that the bangle remaining on your child's wrist is a mere bar of gold with its two ends brought together. You cannot slip the bangle over the child's palm, and it is only by drawing the two ends of the bangle apart, with some force, that you can take it off. Now, if the thieves in stealing the other bangle had

gone to work with bare fingers, they would certainly have awakened the child. I have no doubt, therefore, that one of them removed his waist-string, broke it into two, and fixing each part to one side of the bangle, drew the latter, with ease, sufficiently open to remove it. Some bungling doubtless put the child to pain and awoke it when the operation was being repeated." I leave the reader to imagine how much I must have risen in the estimation of Mr. ——— Pillai, and the others present, when I had treated them to the above information. The "wish being father to the thought," in such cases, I feel certain that a strong belief must have instantly prevailed to the effect that, in the hands of so acute an officer as myself, the thieves had no chance whatever of escape.

For various reasons I naturally did not share in such a belief. I had all my work before me, and very up-hill work I considered it to be. No travelling in a Coach-and-four over a Bowling-alley of a road, but a persevering trudge on Shanks' mare, a halt being made at every few yards, so that no stone should remain unturned. Withdrawing therefore from Mr. ——— Pillai's residence, I proceeded, on foot, to the Central Station, my companion being one of my Head Constables who had gone with me when I had accompanied Mr. ——— Pillai to ———. He was a man of much acuteness, and what was better had a knack of obeying orders, a quality frequently not peculiar to agents. I of course took the opportunity of comparing notes, making observations, and giving instructions. The gist of what I said was this :—"You see the men concerned in this robbery can be none but Old Offenders. Their daring, the cool manner in which they went to work, the readiness of resource they showed, and the systematic way in which they had prepared for their sudden retreat, prove conclusively that they were no tyros

at their work. I wish you further to remember that one of the men struck violently against the door as he left; and I cannot help concluding that the contact must have caused some injury to his left shoulder. Now, what I want you to do is this. Attach to yourself two deputies of the nearer stations of Chintadripettah and keep a sharp look out anywhere, and everywhere—scrutinise every passer-by—visit the haunts of all the Old Offenders on our list. Watch the various Toddy-Shops in our Division, and look out particularly for a man about 24 or 25 years of age, about 5 feet in height, robust of build, and black as to his color. Above all, when you meet a man bearing the above description, notice, most carefully, whether he is suffering from pain in the left shoulder. If so, he is almost certain to have it plastered with turmeric, or tamarind leaves, or any of the other simple domestic remedies in use for sprains and so forth. Should you happen to be successful in your search, neither say, nor do, anything to the man. Only watch him carefully and send to me the moment you have an opportunity."

I arrived at the Central Station, did the work provided for me there, and then proceeded to my other duties; and it may be inferred that that day, and until light reached me, every black, short, stout, young man I met, received a scrutiny none the less keen because it was furtive. The last report the same night was "no success," and the best part of the next day was consumed without my receiving the intelligence I so anxiously awaited. About 4 o'clock, however, a Police messenger came to me in hot haste from the Head Constable, who was at the Central Station, and stated that two Pariah women, mother and daughter, had lodged a complaint of abuse and assault against a man of the same caste—if I may say so;—that the man had been brought to the Central Station; and that he seemed to bear, in every particular, the description

given of one of the thieves. *He was, besides, suffering from pain in the left shoulder.* It is some years since all the above occurred, but I shall ever remember my feeling of joy and uncertainty, and the alacrity with which I saddled my pony and rode to the Central Station. I alighted and walked in, and a single, rapid, glance assured me my man was before me. But was my work over? Far from it. I might have been prepared to state, on oath, my belief that the man was none other than one of the thieves, and the wife of Mr. ——— Pillai might also swear that he was the "Real Simon Pure," but what then? What Magistrate would convict on evidence of such a scanty, and even unreliable, character? I saw it was a case in which I had to bring almost all my resources into action, and I never hesitated a moment in the matter. Assuming an air of utter indifference, I took the chair at the Station table, and had the whole three parties placed before me. The man I scarcely looked at, observing only that his shoulder was covered with some medicinal paste, and that as his cloth was round his loins, I could not tell whether his waist-string was a new one, or whether he wore one at all. I could, of course, have had his cloth removed, but that would have created suspicion and spoiled the deep game I had resolved to play. The women I studied rather carefully. The younger one was a comely girl, poorly clad, but with no air of discontent, or sourness, about her. She wore the wedding-string. The elder I saw, at once, was a vixen, one who, under other circumstances, would, no doubt, stand up, bravely, for "women's rights." *Neither of the women had her hair done in a knot with false hair.* The charge was repeated, and the man was stated to be the lawful husband of the girl. When the Constable had ceased speaking, I asked the women what more they had to say, but they, with one accord, declared that they desired to withdraw the charge. *The man, in fact,*

had talked them over before my arrival. It was no part of my plan, however, to let them depart in so profitless a manner. Ordering the man and the old woman therefore out of the room for a moment or two, I laughingly asked the girl why her husband had struck her; but she was true to her affection for him and replied:— "It was for nothing, sir; we had some common family quarrel, and being provoked he struck me very slightly. Irritated thereby, I complained to the Police, but we have made friends, and I have nothing now to say against him." I saw my case with the girl was hopeless, and my experience told me that even if she knew anything of the burglary, she would do all she could to screen the man who still had much influence over her. Recognizing the expediency, and even absolute necessity, of having no further conversation with her, I told her, with a friendly word, to stand outside, and called the old woman in. With her I knew I must go upon a different tack, and that was to tease her into some revelation. She could not have the same feeling of affection for the man, and it is notorious, that, among the natives, as with all other peoples, a man and his mother-in-law are always held to be at daggers-drawn. Taking the necessary cue, I, in a good-humoured way, charged her with being the cause of the quarrelling between husband and wife, and added that I did not wonder at her receiving abuse from the man. The taunt was quite enough, and it sent the woman's tongue wagging at a pace most delightful to me. "I the cause of quarrelling, sir," she said, "no, it is all through that concubine (mentioning her name, of which I mentally made a note) he keeps in the Parcherry adjacent to Davidson Street Chapel in Black Town. He spends most of his time with her and gives her the larger portion of his earnings, while he almost utterly neglects my daughter who is his lawful wife; and it is because my daughter spoke to him this morning about his conduct, that he struck her, and,

on my interference, abused me." Cooling down naturally at the close of her burst of oratory, she went on :—" but that is all over now, sir, he has sworn to alter his ways, and we have forgiven him, and we withdraw our complaint." Very well," I replied, " I am glad to hear it, for family quarrels are always unfortunate." I next called the man in and spoke to him in as mild and friendly a tone as I could command, for I knew that if his suspicions were aroused, in the least, he would take the earliest opportunity of making away with every vestige of evidence against him, and perhaps of removing himself to some other locality, thereby, eluding the utmost vigilance of the Police. " My good fellow," I said, " your own good sense must tell you that you are not acting properly towards your wife and mother-in-law. You strike the one and abuse the other, all on account of a worthless concubine. I am told that leaving your wife alone, you are almost always with a woman who, I am sure, cares nothing for you. Your earnings too are small, but the greater part even of that your wife is deprived of. Take my advice, go home and live peaceably with your family. You will find it best in the end." Saying the above, and in the act of dismissing the parties, there being no case for the Police, I got up and gave the man a slight and familiar tap on his left shoulder, as if to enforce my advice and induce him to believe that I was much interested in the happiness of himself, his wife, and his mother-in-law. The man winced, and on my asking what was the matter, replied that he had got drunk a night or two ago, and had fallen down and hurt his shoulder. " That should teach you not to get drunk in future," I said, and then I sent the whole three away.

As soon as they had left, I called the Head Constable before referred to, and instructed him as to the steps to be next taken. " It is evident, I said, that jealousy is at the bottom of the disagreement between these people, and that

the women, in all probability, know nothing of the man's connexion with the burglary. He seems to care more for his concubine than for his wife, and it is clear to my mind that, if he still has the stolen property, it is concealed in the house of the woman in Black Town. Here is her name, writing on a piece of paper, and the Parcherry where she resides. Go by 4 o'clock in the morning and search her hut. Should you find any of the stolen property in it, put her and the property, at once, into a Jutka and drive over here and send for me. If her paramour is in the hut, seize him and do not allow him to have any communication with her. If, as I feel sure, some of the property will be found, bring the man too in another Jutka. I cannot help thinking that the false hair, at least, has been given to the woman in Town, and if nothing else is found that will be. You know the difference between the false hair worn by the higher and richer classes of Hindu females, and that worn by the lower sort. The one cannot but smell of Jessamine and Benzoin, while the other is certain to reek with the odours of rancid cocoanut-oil, or, what is still more repulsive, of lamp-oil. You cannot therefore make a mistake. Be sure to arrive at the Parcherry by 4 o'clock, and in the meanwhile have the man most carefully watched.

According to instructions, the Head Constable started for the Parcherry indicated, accompanied by a couple of the men of the Force, and by another Old Offender who knew the house of the woman and pointed it out, but who, of course, was not informed of the nature of the Head Constable's errand. The hut was entered and the woman was alone and asleep. Awaking her, the Head Constable commenced a search, and the first thing on which he laid his hand was a coil of false hair which was found on the top of a small box near the woman's mat. There was no question as to the identity of the article with that which had been stolen, and

when the Head Constable, holding it up, asked :—"Where did you get this?" the terrified woman replied:—"The man who keeps me, gave it to me." "When ?" proceeded the constable. "The day before yesterday morning"—was the answer. Having succeeded so far, the Head Constable opened the box, and there, in it, were the gold-laced cloth and the other articles of apparel; but the golden bangle and ornaments were nowhere to be found. Nor could it be expected that, even if found, they would have remained in their original shapes; for in about three hours they would certainly have gone their way into the melting-pot.

The woman was of course taken into custody and driven, as I ordered, in a Jutka, to the Central Station, long before half Madras had made up its mind to roll up its mats and pillows, or leave its punkah-cooled beds, or the bare earth which frequently is a substitute. Word was conveyed to me and sending off at once for Mr. ———— Pillai to meet me, I went as quickly as possible to witness the yet partial success of my endeavors. Arriving at the Station, I ordered the arrest of the man without delay, and then gave myself up to questioning the woman. There was no difficulty in obtaining a statement from her, and what she said bore the appearance of truth. She affirmed that the man who kept her had brought her the clothing and the false hair two mornings before, but at the same time solemnly assured me that she had not even seen any golden ornaments with him.

After the lapse of a little time, Mr. ———— Pillai arrived, and he, without difficulty, identified the false hair and garments. Finding the time for the confirmation of my supposition had arrived, I drew out the waist-string, still carefully preserved in my pocket, and exhibiting it to the woman, asked whose it was. She at once identified it as her paramour's, adding, without examining it, that it was

made of silk. The astonishment and admiration expressed by Mr. ———— Pillai, I leave to the conception of the reader.

* Presently, however, the scene became vastly more interesting. A Constable came running in and said the man was being brought; and on looking out myself, I found that he was coming willingly on. He no doubt imagined, or was told, he had been sent for with reference to the matter of his quarrel of the previous day. His astonishment and alarm, however, were well worth witnessing when suddenly saw before him not only his concubine but the stolen property he had given her, and the man he had robbed. I must do him the credit though of saying that he soon recovered his equanimity, and that he shewed the qualities of a brave and cool rogue. Addressing him I said;— "This gentleman states these are some of the articles of which he was robbed, and that woman, your concubine, states that they were left by you, the day-before-yesterday, at her house. Moreover, this waist-string, used by you for the purpose of stretching the child's bangles, and dropped by you accidentally, has been proved to be yours. You see the evidence is clear, and that your denial will be of no use. Will you, therefore, tell me who was your accomplice for you had a companion, and to whom you sold the bangle and other ornaments." The reply was characteristic of the man and rascal. With sturdy indifference he said:—"I had no accomplice in stealing the cloths, and as for the golden ornaments, I never touched any." He felt that his case was beyond hope as regards the wearing apparel and false hair:—"but why," he must have argued, "should I unnecessarily betray a brave companion, one who has shared many of my dangers, and who may yet be of great assistance to me; and why should I cause loss to the purchaser of the gold." *He had, however, to further admit the rob-*

bing of the ornaments and bangle. On making enquiry among the Shroffs of the place, one of them at once acknowledged he had the day previous bought an ingot of gold from a Pariah man, but who was a stranger to him. On confronting him, however, with the prisoner, the latter was identified and finding the evidence unimpeachable, he made his admission. But on the subject of his accomplice he preserved profound secrecy. The gold was weighed and found to correspond with the weight of the bangle and ornaments.

The Magistrate before whom the case was put up, finding the bruised shoulder, the waist-string, the statements of the concubine and shroff and the identification of the property, clear and conclusive evidence, sent the prisoner the way all such birds of prey should travel, and that is the one which terminates in the great gate-way of the Penitentiary.

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THE MODEL AYAH,

OR

THE QUEEN OF THE PARCHERRY.

AYAHS—*pucka* native ayahs I mean—are, as is almost invariably known, of master's, or rather mistress' caste; a beef-and-pork-eating and slop-bowl coffee swilling set they are. As a class, when young, they are fine-featured, slim-waisted, straight-spined, well-rounded, and, in short, neat-figured specimens of the human species, of the feminine gender of course. They are cleanly in appearance and reality; careful in their toilette; neat and spruce in their graceful garments, which often approach the showy; tremendous patronizers of gold and silver-smiths; intelligent, keen-sighted, and quick-witted, especially where self is concerned; sedate in their manners, at least in the presence of their employers; chaste as vestals according to themselves; sparing of speech and smiles (when not encouraged), except to the butler and maties on the back-stairs; attentive to their duties, but more so to their own interests; and, alas! it must be said, addicted to toddy and arrack, and even cheroots, on the sly. Is it to be wondered at that, with their personal advantages and their good qualities prominent, and bad ones and weaknesses carefully concealed, they should frequently insinuate themselves into the confidence and affection of their mistresses, and even obtain a certain amount of influence over them, to the annoyance of their masters and the torment of their fellow-servants?

Such are the characteristics of ayahs, and I have had opportunities of studying them for nigh upon half a century. But the Ayah I refer to not only possessed the characteristics in question, or most of them, but she brought wonder-

ful and concealed resources into play with the object of securing the position she had acquired. Nature had endowed her handsomely, and she knew it. Ordinary art and fashion afforded her their assistance, but she had a trick, or a great many tricks, beyond them. To simply say she was a fine-looking woman would be positively doing her injury. She was handsome, physically, in every sense of the word. She was young, and her proportions were faultless so far as they could be. Neither too slim nor too stout, neither too tall nor too short, and most graceful in her gait, she seemed symmetry personified. She was a brunette, though only a Pariah. But she was a *Telugu*-speaking Pariah, which made all the difference.

It is a matter patent to the most ordinary observation that the Hindus are a small and well-featured race; but it is indeed surprising that even among Pariahs, more especially those living away from towns, who must be regarded as coarsely fed and used, how frequently extreme delicacy of feature is to be met with. With white skins, they, no doubt, would be regarded as strikingly handsome. Taking Tamil Hindu women collectively, and comparing them with Telugu Hindu women, it is probable that, as regards features alone, they might be considered little, if at all, inferior; but if individual and representative specimens were chosen, I have no doubt that the Telugu would be awarded the most decided verdict of superiority. But the Telugu woman has a single charm in which she excels her sister to a remarkable extent, individual against individual, or class against class, and that is the charm of figure. I have had experience in various parts of the Presidency, and while remarking, and wondering at, the symmetrical waist and hips of Telugu women (I include Canarese women), I did not fail to try and discover how they came about. It was nature of course, but nature amended. The really beautiful shape is brought about by the tight strapping of

the cloth round the loins, which is commenced almost from infancy; and it is possible that now, through the lapse of ages, unconscious physical development has become the valuable supplement of art. As a rule too, Telugu women have fairer skins than Tamil women.

Bearing the above in mind, it will be easy to conceive how the Ayah *par excellence* I have been depicting, happened to be so highly favored. But I must go on to the trick or tricks she practised. Though unknown to her, she was a person of whose qualifications, practices, and influence over her mistress, I had, through the medium of conversation with servants, with an eye to professional information, an intimate knowledge. Beauty, under any circumstances, it is well known, carries with it dominion; but beauty, aided by arts so managed as to appear the most natural things in the world, is simply overwhelming. It may seem that a common Pariah woman would not be capable of doing what I am about to relate; but I declare, on the most satisfactory testimony, that she was. Servants are not always the ignorant, primitive, persons one would suppose. Some of them I have met, with minds far in advance of their surroundings, and who had the genuine ambitions and ideas of the civilized products of Europe. To attribute such a state of things to anything but extreme, though unimproved, mental activity, would, I think, be incorrect, though I do not dogmatically hold such an opinion; but whatever the case might be, it was clear that the faculty of perception was my model Ayah's strong point. Had she been indigenous to European soil, such as that of France or England, who can say that she might not have blossomed into something killing, with a perfect appreciation of the Grecian bend, or what must be regarded with a feeling of terror, a veritable "*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*"? But as it was not so, and as her destiny was just what it was, she apparently laid herself out to make the most of the circumstances

surrounding her. She knew she was a favorite in virtue of the mere charm of her presence, but she heightened the feeling by showing herself always to the best advantage; and in order never to be caught tripping, she put herself through a course of persevering study. Frequently during the day, and in the evenings too, by sunlight and candle-light, in the absence of her mistress, she would exhibit herself before the full-length mirrors in the house, scan herself from head to foot, arrange and smoothen her hair, adjust her cloth so as to show off to the greatest advantage both its broad gold border and her figure, and then commence practising all the airs of a pretty woman and a coquette, though she strove, and strove successfully, not to appear to be the latter. She would turn on one side and then on the other, with a small glass in her hand, to mark and admire her profile; she would try to span her delicate waist with the thumb and middle-finger of each hand, and congratulate herself on its being so round and slender; she would smile, and look languishingly; she would pout, frown, and look repellingly, and turn away; and then she would walk, or rather slide gracefully along: the last piece of acting being intended to complete the impression which might have been made by her other devices, aided of course by her natural gifts.

I have said that my model Ayah had considerable influence over her mistress, but she used it with judgment. To speak from the mistress' point of view, she was a pattern of pleasantness, submission, and simplicity; but it was in connexion with the other servants that her affected manners, her overweening behaviour and pride, and her tyrannical disposition, displayed themselves in all their nakedness. From the butler down to the cook and horsekeepers, she was detested; and in proportion to the detestation was the fear induced by the knowledge of her influence with her mistress. Had but the power of the other servants borne

some relation to the feelings they cherished against her, I have no doubt they would have sent her, by a short cut, to *Yamalokam*, the Hindu Plutonian regions; but as it was, they were obliged to cave-in, never even uttering a whisper against her, or attempting a remonstrance when her overbearing conduct exhibited itself towards them. It was my experience to witness an instance of her influence over her mistress; and judging from that, I have no reason to disbelieve the statement that she was treated more as a friend and companion than a menial. Her mistress, it was stated, averred with pleasure and pride that she was the model of what a good, faithful, trustworthy, ayah ought to be. Was she? Alas! for human nature, trusting and trusted, this beautiful gem, this perfection of an ayah, had, as an ayah, one fatal defect, a defect which all her good qualities could not counterbalance,—she was dishonest, as the following unvarnished statement will show.

At 2 P. M. on a Sunday, a constable of the Reserve Force brought a verbal order from the Commissioner of Police, requiring my immediate attendance. "Ah!" I soliloquized, meanwhile putting myself into my uniform as rapidly as possible, "this is Sunday, a day acknowledged to be one of rest, and it is hard that I should not have peace for one day at least out of the seven. But," I went on, "there must perhaps be exceptions to every rule. For instance, there is the sentry on duty, the medico at the bed-side of his patient, the clergyman in his pulpit. These are all deprived, and rightly deprived of their desire to rest; for the fort gates must be guarded, the sick man must be attended to, and congregations must have their sermons. Similarly, I suppose, the humble inspector must be considered as having his charge, and the public the right to demand from him the preservation of its life and property. So," I said, addressing myself, "do your duty, Inspector——— like a man, and, above all, no grumbling."

Having completed my dressing operations, I ordered my horsekeeper to follow me with my phaeton and pony, and started for the Commissioner's office, where I arrived in a few minutes. As the Commissioner was waiting for me, I went in to him without announcement, and immediately on seeing me he said, "I have just received a note from Sir Thomas ——— (then the Hon. Mr. ——) stating that about a month before Lady, or Mrs. —— had purchased two red velvet cloaks from Madame Lorenz for their little son; that one of the cloaks had disappeared in a most unaccountable manner a fortnight ago; and that yesterday evening the other cloak also disappeared most mysteriously. Sir Thomas adds that both on the former occasion and this morning, he made the strictest enquiries of his servants, but he has not been able to discover the slightest trace of the cloaks. He therefore wishes me to send a smart detective over. Now, you go immediately, and remember, *do your best.*" I obeyed the order with alacrity. I was proud that my detective ability should be so freely recognized by the Chief; and besides taking delight in the case through my instincts as a detective, I must admit I felt disposed to show off before so great a personage as the Honorable Sir Thomas———————. By the time I got to the distant gate of his mansion at Nungumbakum, I was in a most agreeable state of cheerfulness and impatience. I was positively joyful that Sir Thomas had lost the cloaks; and if they had been recovered before I arrived, I feel sure my disgust would have been unmitigated.

But I was in luck. The cloaks had not been found, and when I entered the house, it was satisfactory to find that the scene before me was one of almost universal excitement and confusion. Even the little gentleman for whom the cloaks had been made, showed his interest in the proceedings about to be enacted. As soon as he

caught sight of me, he rushed off to his father, and doubtless told him I had come, for he returned with a message which brought me without a moment's delay face to face with Sir Thomas ———— in his private room. On entering, I told Sir Thomas that he having written to the Commissioner of Police for a detective to investigate the circumstances of the theft, I had been sent, and that I was ready to do any thing he wished, and to do my best to recover the lost property. A shade of disappointment came over Sir Thomas' countenance; and from the circumstance that it did not pass until I had informed him, on his putting a question, that I had brought two constables with me, I could not but conjecture that he was disposed to depreciate my detective ability. Perhaps he thought native policemen were the only persons employed, or capable of acting, as detectives in Madras. I bear no malice however; for I think, supposing my conjecture correct, I made Sir Thomas alter his opinion to a very considerable extent before all was over.

Following my answer as to the presence of the constables, Sir Thomas told me that not having been able by his own efforts to recover the cloaks, he had come to the determination of making a police affair of his losses; and he went on to give me a full statement, at my request, of the way in which the cloaks had disappeared. The singularity of the case—it was one which had an immediate effect upon me—consisted in the fact *that the two cloaks had vanished in precisely the same manner.* They had been placed, each on a particular evening, on the clothes-horse in her Ladyship's dressing room upstairs, and they had vanished. One cloak was locked in a wardrobe while the other was in use. The latter having vanished, the former was taken out and put into use, and that fled also. Worked out by suggestive questioning from me, the following was Sir Thomas' narrative as regards the loss

of the second cloak, and it may be taken as applying strictly also to the previous case. The evening before, Sir Thomas and Lady ———— went as usual to the South Beach. They were accompanied by the little boy in his red cloak, and were attended by a bearer and the Ayah. Arrived at the Band Stand, the little man was put down as customary, and he trotted off, attended by the Ayah and bearer, to play on the sands. While there, his cloak, also according to custom, was taken off. When it was time to return home, the bearer and the Ayah brought back the child and placed him in the carriage; but neither Sir Thomas nor her Ladyship could assert that the cloak was on him, or that it was put into the carriage. When the cloak was missed, the bearer stated to Sir Thomas that the child had worn the cloak coming home; but the Ayah contradicted him flatly, and expressed her belief that the cloak had been forgetfully left on the sands at the beach. "Come" said I to myself, "get your mental note-book ready, there is the shadow of a clue, but do not rush to any conclusion. Go steadily on and examine all the probabilities, and then see whether the idea in your mind is the right one."

With Sir Thomas' permission, I went over to the stables and the coach-house. A careful examination of the horse-keepers only brought out their innocence, and I gave them up with a perfectly satisfied mind. I examined the carriage used the evening before, as well as the other carriages, in every nook and corner, but not a thread of either cloak was forthcoming. The coachman was a European, with a wife and children on the premises, but it was not difficult to decide that the garment had not had sufficient attraction for him or those belonging to him. Finishing my examination, I returned to the house, and put the other servants under the ordeal. Some one of them, I felt sure, was either the thief or privy to the theft. It was nonsensical to suppose that an outsider could have done the deed, for he would

never have run the risk of coming all the way upstairs, after the arrival of the family, merely to carry off a paltry garment. If he had made a mere scramble in the dark downstairs he would have been rewarded with many an article of far greater value. But above all, there was the singular circumstance of the theft, in precisely the same way, of the first cloak. It would have been simply idiotic to imagine with *that* before me, that I was to look beyond the range of the compound for my man or woman. In fact, a series of coincidences would have been required, which could find accommodation in no brain outside of Locock's. Even the punkah-pullers who were present, I saw no reason to suspect. Their work was below, and the ropes they pulled led by a long and circuitous route to the chamber from which the cloak had been taken. For my purpose, I held them to be outsiders, and did not question them. The butler, the Ayah, the bearer, and the two maties remained. The butler and one of the maties proved that they had gone home immediately after dinner, which had been served as soon as the family had returned from their drive. The other maty admitted he had been upstairs, but only once, and that was before his master and mistress had arrived. Hearing the rumble of the carriage, he had taken up the candles and come down again, and that was all. The bearer unflinchingly adhered to his original statement, and swore by his father and his household god that he had brought back the cloak from the beach, and that he had taken it upstairs and hung it on the clothes-horse, from which it had been removed. The Ayah alone was left, and she, as before remarked, contradicted the bearer; and her mistress, who was present at her examination, pronounced her to be a most immaculate person, and even expressed herself warmly on the subject of my absurdity and presumption in questioning her. "For all that, my Lady," I said to myself, "I feel she knows more about the cloak

than any of us,—the suspicion circles around her especially;—and what is most suggestive is that of the statements made by the bearer and herself, the only two in familiar contact with the lost article, his is consistent with innocence, her's with guilt. He is willing to admit that the cloak has been stolen and to run the risk of all the inconvenient proceedings arising therefrom; whereas, if he corroborates her, he might be fined and no more. Her conduct, on the contrary, leads to the inference that she avoids investigation." The only point in the Ayah's favor was that she had never left the house. On her return from the drive she had gone upstairs and had never come down again, as she slept in one of her mistress' rooms. The idea that she, a wealthy woman, would not stoop to steal the cloak, was to me of no force whatever. My police experience was quite enough to guide me on that head. She was just the woman to act according to her own sense of wisdom, and to pass for honest in small things by being severely so in matters of greater weight.

I must admit, however, that I was in a nice dilemma. I knew I had the outworks of a good case, but the difficulty was to bridge the stream which still divided me from the actual stolen property; and the obstacle which had suddenly risen before me was one of no ordinary character. It was clearly impossible, with her Ladyship ready to bristle up, to question the Ayah further, and every moment I felt more helpless and hopeless. It even struck me to communicate with Sir Thomas and drop the case. But in the very instant of my last thought, my instinct as a Police officer came to my rescue, and being unable to resist the impulse, I determined, *coute que coute*, to run the matter to earth. Having made up my mind, I felt it necessary to gain time for forming my plan of action. I therefore expressed concurrence in her Ladyship's opinion about the Ayah, and asked permission to inspect the room upstairs.

This was given me, and I marched up the grand staircase. It was carpeted and beautifully polished. "No dirty, strange feet have been up here," I said to myself, being still intent on discovering something to bear out the conclusion I had come to. I entered the room and those adjoining it, but could find nothing likely to be a receptacle, supposing the cloak still in one of them. Finishing my tour of the *suite* of rooms, I came upon another staircase—a long, winding one—evidently for the use of the servants. As in duty bound, I descended it, and when off the last step, I found myself in the maty's room. There I found a very large quantity of silver spread out on a side-board, enough to make the fortune of any dexterous fellow with courage enough to make a dash at it and skill enough to get away. But it only still further showed me the preposterousness of imagining that any one outside the house itself could have committed the theft. Yet this private staircase presented to me a new feature in the case, and as I reckoned, a very important feature. It showed that the cloak could have been secretly conveyed away, and therefore prompted a fresh series of questions. One of the maties was present, and he was the same who had taken up the candles. "Who sleeps here?" I asked. "Myself and the other maty" was the reply, "we take it in turn." "Who slept here last night?" I continued. "I did, sir," returned the man, "it was my turn." "And did you not see any one go up or come down that staircase?" "No, no one." "What"! I persisted, assuming an air of severity in order to reduce presence of mind in the man to the smallest compass, though I did not suspect him, "what, do you mean to say that you in charge of this valuable property, are so careless as not to know who comes in and goes out here? I begin to suspect you now—so speak the truth." "No, Sir! Believe me, Sir! I saw no one," he protested and pleaded, his mind evidently occupied solely by

the idea of a genuine outside thief. Presently, however, a ray of light seemed to break in upon him, and he added innocently, as if the matter was not of the slightest importance, the occurrence being a usual one, "no, Sir! no one but the Ayah's daughter (he meant her niece), she went up last night and came down this morning;—no one else." I leave the reader to imagine the pleasure which the statement gave me. It was just what I wanted, and I knew its import in an instant. The stream was bridged! Here was the missing link I had been seeking for and worrying my brain about. Concealing my delight, I continued my questions. "What brought her here?" I said. "She brings her mother's supper every night, and carries it upstairs, where the Ayah eats it in one of her mistress' rooms. She sleeps with the Ayah, and goes away early in the morning." "How old is she?" I again asked. "About ten or eleven years" was the answer. "How does she bring the food?" "In a basket covered with a cloth." The last statement lifted the veil entirely, and I almost saw the cloak dangling before me, for I well knew that the cloth-covered food-basket is almost the invariable medium through which petty stolen property is carried away by servants and their relatives from the houses in which the former serve.

But what was the next step to be taken? Take the Ayah into custody? Nay! nay! that would never do, especially under the peculiar circumstances of her impeccability in her mistress' estimation. I soon however came to a decision. Getting outside the building and to the back of the house, so that I should not be overheard talking, I beckoned to the butler and he came immediately. The man had been in a continual fidget ever since my arrival. No doubt he had a vague fear that his house would be searched, and what queer revelations might not that bring about? Innocent he knew himself to be in the matter of the cloak, but how about his master's brandy and wine and provisions?

And, perhaps, something more might be brought to light, all which would prove awkward witnesses of the character of his stewardship. It was therefore with the face of a man about to be hanged that he joined me. Scarcely had I whispered a few words, however, when a remarkable change came over him. The cloud was lifted from his face, for he knew he was safe, and his eyes gleamed with satisfaction. He was not only joyful, but he was tasting the sweets of revenge. I had only asked him where the Ayah's house was, and he had comprehended my object in a moment. Well, it must have been rare pleasure to him. Not only had he escaped, but that detestable overbearing woman had fallen under suspicion; and now, whether guilty or not of the theft of the cloak, she would be subjected to the disgrace of having her house searched. Yes, searched and rummaged in the sight of all the people of the parcherry, of which, from the position she held in one of the first households in Madras, the extraordinary influence she had over her mistress, the advantages of her personal appearance, the proud nature of her disposition, and the wealth she displayed on her person, she was the undisputed queen. Yes, she was a queen—the *Queen of the Parcherry*, as I have designated her.

To return, however; the butler only too readily gave me the information I wanted, and without seeing or saying another word to any one, not even to Sir Thomas, I went rapidly to my phaeton and drove off. I was obliged to be very cautious. The butler alone knew the game I had in hand, but I was sure he was wise enough and interested enough to hold his tongue. Had the other servants known that the Ayah was suspected, they no doubt would have fallen under that peculiar feeling known as joy and terror mixed together, and jabbered away at a great pace. But had the information made itself known to her Ladyship, I am as certain as I can be, that I should have been turned

off the premises as a lunatic. As it was, I was tearing away to the old tannah station at the Munro Bridge in Chetput. Arrived there, I jumped out of my conveyance, and ordering three constables to follow me, darted into the parcherry opposite. The description the butler gave me of the house sufficed to identify it, and when I had arrived before the door, I found an old woman, the Ayah's mother, seated at it quite comfortably, and leisurely chewing betel and nut, and plastering some more betel leaves with the inevitable lime paste. "Where is your grand-daughter?" I asked, without in the slightest degree alarming her. "Gone to the river for water," she answered. Turning to one of the constables, I said "go rapidly and seize her, and take her straight to the tannah. Allow no one to have communication with her." To the other two constables I said "search the house throughout," and searched it was effectually. But the cloaks were not there. "What! after all," I thought, "have I missed the mark? Have I made a mistake? It would indeed be an egregious blunder. And the result? What, indeed, with the powerful influence of Sir Thomas and her Ladyship against me!" I began to feel uncomfortable. "Still," I thought, "could the chain of circumstances be so complete, and yet result in error? No! Impossible!" I concluded, and my confidence returned.

I should state here, that at the very commencement of the search, the old woman had despatched a messenger to inform her daughter of the unspeakable disgrace I was heaping upon the latter by searching her house in the presence of the whole of the inhabitants of the parcherry, who had naturally assembled to witness the fun; but on this point more hereafter.

After the search had been concluded, I went, without a moment's delay, to the tannah, and there I found the girl in a state of tears and consternation, with no parcherry friend to give her the slightest support. I attacked her at

once with :—"now speak the truth, where is the red cloak you were seen to bring away this morning in the basket in which you carried your mother's rice last night? A corner of it was hanging out of the basket when you came into the maty's room down the staircase, and the maty having seen it, has reported the matter to me." "Iyah! Iyah! Iyah!" she went on, "I never took it; I know nothing about it." But a loud address in Hindustani gibberish to the constables had a wonderful effect. She burst into a wild fit of sobbing and crying. She looked round, but there was no friendly eye or hand to give her the slightest encouragement or help. In the extremity of her terror therefore she burst out:—"I gave it to the woman who lives in the house opposite to ours." "Come, instantly, and show me the woman," I rejoined, and I had her brought out into the road;—when, by a most happy coincidence, the very woman was returning, coming towards us with a pot of water on her head, from the river. "That is the woman," the girl said, pointing to her; and before the woman could even draw breath for a scream, she was, water-pot and all, with the girl in the tannah. It was, a splendidly dramatic scene. The constables keeping away the crowd outside and unconsciously assisting in persuading the woman and girl inside. The woman bewildered, and in mortal terror. I pressing her with :—"where is the cloak? Come, be quick, tell me where it is," and the girl crying, sobbing, and yelling out, "Ukkadi! Ukkadi! (Sister dear! Sister dear!) Kudthudu! Kudthudu! (Give it up! Give it up!) What could the unfortunate woman do? *She* looked round, and *she* could find no one to support *her*. Entirely overcome, she said, though reluctantly, that she had mortgaged it to a bazaarman over the way for eight annas.

At this juncture who should come up but the butler, mounted on his master's pony, and profusely perspiring over the hard gallop he had had. He brought a message

from Sir Thomas, ordering me to instantly desist from searching the Ayah's house, or meddling with her people. "Go and tell your master I shall do no such thing" I sent back. "I am a Police officer entrusted with a case, and neither your master nor any one else can interfere with me." The butler galloped off, not sorry, I imagine, to take such a message in return. As for me —I merely muttered, "give up the case now! The idea is too good!" and I felt inclined to laugh heartily. It afterwards appeared that the Ayah, on hearing that her house was about to be searched, ran to her mistress, and throwing herself at her feet, as if she were bereft of her senses, cried out, "Iyoh! Iyoh! Ma'am! Ma'am! that Inspector is disgracing me most shamefully—he is searching my house as if I were a thief, and I shall become an object for every one to spit at." This was too much for her Ladyship. Still believing unquestioningly in the immaculate qualities of her favorite, and glowing with indignation at sight of her tears, she proceeded at once to Sir Thomas, and interfering considerably with his serenity, got him to send the message I had received through the butler. But scarcely had the butler left the house on his errand to me, when another frantic denizen of the parcherry reached the Ayah with the alarming intelligence that her daughter, or niece, had been arrested and taken to the tannah. There was another wild appeal; and on this occasion, the palankeen carriage was ordered, and the European coachman put on the box and told to drive the Ayah to the scene of my proceedings. He, as more authoritative than the butler, was to convey Sir Thomas and her Ladyship's pleasure to me.

Having dismissed the butler, I turned to the woman again, and insisted on her accompanying me to the boutique of the bazaarman. Arrived there:—"give me the cloak," I said to the man, "which this woman mortgaged to you this morning," and he, without demur, seeing who

I was, took it out of a box and handed it to me. Having succeeded so far so well, I brought the woman back to the tannah where the girl was still detained, for I did not feel that I had done my duty completely, the first cloak stolen not having been recovered; and I knew that the best opportunity of discovering its whereabouts was before me. I was just about interrogating the woman a third time, when the carriage arrived, and the Ayah came flying towards me, her hair dishevelled, and her cloth in dire disorder;—and furious as a tigress, she screamed out:—"how dare you, Sir—how dare you seize my daughter and ill-treat her? What have you to do with her? Release her immediately!" But I was on the sure side now, and as courageous and as unembarrassed as a lion. I was perhaps also imbued with a desire for revenge for the way in which I had been obstrueted in the early part of the case. With severe dignity and studied indifference therefore, I raised the cloak in my hand and said:—"Begone!" and addressing the constables, added, "turn that woman away!" Confounded at her unexpected reception—abashed at sight of the cloak and the circumstances surrounding her—and no doubt also conscious of her own and her daughter's folly and guilt, she withdrew. But alas! how? Limp and draggled, and humbled to the very dust, the QUEEN OF THE PARCHERRY showed not one queenly quality; and what must have been mortifying to her almost beyond endurance, was that she had to run the gauntlet of the eyes and observations of a gaping crowd consisting chiefly of the ragamuffins of the parcherry.

The Ayah having left the tannah, I said to the woman:—"now tell me quickly where the other cloak is," and she, with not even momentary hesitation, answered "I sold it to a person in John Pereira's for two rupees." I immediately came out of the tannah with her, and having shouted to Sir Thomas' European coachman, holding up the cloak in

the meanwhile, "go and tell your master I have got the cloak," I put the woman on the seat at the back of my phaeton with a peon, jumped in myself, and drove to John Pereira's. The individual who had purchased the first stolen cloak gave it up without saying a word even on the subject of the loss of his two rupees.

Elated beyond measure with my success, I returned in haste to Nungumbakum, and halting my phaeton, as before, at the gate, I went on foot to the house with the cloaks on my left arm. As I neared it, I could see the carriage under the portico ready to take the family to the Cathedral, and when I got within a few yards, I saw Sir Thomas, her Ladyship, and the young gentleman on the steps. The last, as soon as he saw the cloaks on my arm, clapped his hands, skipped about in high glee, and crying out:—"Papa! Papa! my cloak! my cloak!" had one of them, as soon as I got close by, put on himself. Sir Thomas looked pleased and thanked me, but one could see that grief and anger were strongly stamped on her Ladyship's countenance. Not being desirous of heightening the state of her feelings, I at once delivered the remaining cloak, made my salute, and withdrew. That night, while conducting the arrangement of carriages at the Cathedral, I saw Sir Thomas, her Ladyship, the little gentleman, and the Commissioner of Police in the broad western verandah, and partly overheard their conversation. It was of course pleasant to hear praise of me chanted by Sir Thomas, and I shall never forget the little man, who eagerly following the conversation, kept calling the Commissioner familiarly by his surname, and drawing his attention to the cloak on himself, which he exhibited to advantage with considerable pride.

The Ayah not having been inculpated by her daughter's statement, did not make the acquaintance of the magistrate at Vepery; but the girl was tried, convicted and sentenced

to a month's imprisonment. A private communication from Sir Thomas, however, made a wonderful transformation in the girl's destiny. The month's imprisonment was passed in a Mission institution to which she was sent by the Magistrate, in order that she might be taught morality; in other words, to "keep her hands from picking and stealing." Her mother's master considered it injudicious to have her put in the penitentiary, where, it was feared, being of tender age, she would learn evil rather than good. It is a thousand pities that so true a judgment, formed in an individual case, based though it was on interest, does not give itself wider application.

A few reflections suggest themselves to me in conclusion. It might seem improbable that a woman in the Ayah's position, with her wealth, should commit so paltry a theft: that, in fact, she should stoop so low. I can only say that the idea of stooping must be given up altogether. Except in individual cases, which are very rare, Indian domestics are entirely inappreciative on the subject of *meum* and *tuum* so far at least as their employers' property is concerned; and what is regarded as honesty, is but a quality induced by fear, especially of legal consequences. The sense of honor and dishonor is one which has never been awakened in them. Acquisitiveness is developed in infancy by example, and frequently also by precept, and it hardens into an instinct, and very often identifies itself with duty.

Again, to show upon what a slight foundation my success rested, I must point to the accident of the absence of the girl on her trip to the river, as the hinge on which the question turned. Had the cloak, or cloaks, been in the house, the matter would have been different. But they were not; and if the girl had been with her grandmother and had had her support and that of the neighbours, I have no doubt I should have failed in getting the truth out of her.

If I had failed after my high-handed proceedings, legitimate with premises and sequence in order, what would have been my fate, especially with the powerful influence and displeasure of Sir Thomas and her Ladyship against me? Perhaps a severe reprimand or a fine—perhaps something worse; and all for bringing disgrace upon a MODEL AYAH, or the *Queen of the Parcherry!*

A RAID AMONG THE TURKEYS.

AFTER a two months' leave, necessitated by a violent and extremely dangerous fall from my horse, which resulted in a long confinement to hospital, I returned to duty, and found, for my especial consolation, a number of undetected theft cases on the crime list which, under my instructions, had been kept in the Division of which I had charge. During my absence a substitute had held my appointment; but as he was new to the Division, and as he felt that his tenure of office was limited, there was no reason to blame him for a want of activity, and, consequently, of success. But even allowing that he had been posted permanently to the Division, and that he was boiling over with enthusiasm, I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that, in the space of two months, with other work to do, he would not only not have made any progress, but would have fallen into that curious and crab-like method of locomotion entitled "walking backwards"; for his first steps in acquiring information would necessarily have involved his unlearning a great deal taught him elsewhere. I have said he was new to the Division, as accounting partly for his failure in detective work, and I cannot but proceed to state that, in my opinion, it is absolutely necessary for every detective officer in Madras not only to know native character, manners, and customs thoroughly, but the native languages; and what is of equal importance, he should know, or rather endeavour to know, every human being in his Division, the persons whose various names, history, occupations, and personal appearance he should untiringly seek to make himself perfectly at home with, being those ubiquitous and slippery individuals styled, in police *parlance*, "Old Offenders." A

detective officer, moreover, should have an eye to his profession, under any circumstances in which he may be situated, picking up stray words and information; and his imagination and observation should be lively, so as to seize facts and turn them to his advantage. He should invariably be good tempered and ready to talk to any one, and make himself as popular as he can. It is within my experience that a clue to a theft has been obtained very often by the merest accident, and the following case, to a great extent, is an illustration of my statement: though in order to bring the clue to the surface it was necessary not to neglect certain items of the wise observations I have indulged in above.

There was a most irritating mystery about the thefts referred to; and there was also a ludicrous side to them; for in almost every case the entire property stolen was TURKEYS. Ducks and fowls were quite secondary matters. They were sometimes stolen if they were in company with turkeys, enjoying their nightly slumber; but otherwise they would not be touched, except as a matter of special punishment, so that owners of poultry should distinctly understand that it was their duty to provide turkeys for the express purpose of having them stolen. In one instance, so exasperated were the marauders because the turkeys they had marked down had been secured elsewhere, that on entering the fowl-house where they had expected to find them, they decapitated a dozen cocks and hens, leaving *the heads alone*, to teach the owner his stupid presumption and folly. The rogues certainly deserved credit for the masterly manner in which they executed their work. In all the depredations they committed, not a gobble or a cackle was heard. They seemed perfect adepts in the art of seizing and temporarily smothering their victims. In short, they well merited, on account of their high proficiency, a great many marks (on their backs of course), but they were too modest to claim them.

At the time of my return to duty, the stealing of turkeys had actually reached the dignity of an epidemic; and there was no abatement. The distress of turkey-loving and turkey-breeding citizens rose higher each morning as their fowl-houses disclosed their emptiness. The familiar red-noses, and gobble! gobble! were sought and listened for in vain. The silence of Goswell street, in fact, pervaded the majority of poultry yards. Of course, cocks crew, and ducks quacked, and hens and geese cackled, but their voices afforded no comfort, and remained unnoticed. The unfortunate owners were helpless in the matter of themselves finding a trace of the rascals who had despoiled them, and they naturally did what they could not but do: they recounted their woes to each other—they deluged the Commissioner of Police with written statements—they called upon him and the worthy Deputy, with indignation, grief, and despair, stamped upon their countenances, until the officials in question alternated between positive terror and extreme irascibility—and still, not satisfied, they took to writing to the papers, and thus inflicted perhaps the whole population of Madras with turkey "on the brain." Of course those who *had never had* turkeys laughed most heartily at those who *had had* them, and the latter not relishing the laughter, numerous quarrels arose. The worst of it was, Christmas was approaching, and those who had been breeding and feeding for sale, were in a fix just equal to those who had been breeding and feeding with anticipations of a very different character, now, Alas! never to be realized. One gentleman in particular was fast driving himself into apoplexy over his losses, and he certainly caused us policemen considerable discomfort. His way to and from his business, unfortunately, was by Police Commissioner's Road, and he swore he would call daily, both in going and returning, until we found his turkeys for him, a determination which, I must say, he reverently kept. As he was a person of posi-

tion, of stalwart build, and apparently of a very quick temper, he made the Commissioner's Office very lively every time he drove in. The Deputy Commissioner however was more than worried: he was mystified. As a Brahman and a Vegetarian, it was impossible for him to conceive how the loss of Turkeys could create such wild excitement.

Strangely enough it was through the gentleman I speak of, that I got the first idea which eventually crowned my efforts with success. He was, or rather had been, the happy possessor of perhaps the largest number and the finest specimens of turkeys in Madras. Any body driving up the Nungumbakum High Road could not but be at once convinced of the fact. Almost all day the turkey cocks, with their hens beside them, could be seen in the full glory of their plumage, and with their distended, drum-like, breasts, moving in and about his hedge, and gobbling and strutting without the slightest idea of the fate in store for them. Of course in my official rambles I had seen the turkeys, and as their owner was a particularly hearty-looking individual, showing all the signs of good feeding, a curious fancy came into my head, and it was, that if I also dieted on turkey I should attain the same extensively rounded proportions. Thenceforward turkey and well-fed looking men constantly associated themselves in my mind, and in fact became a fixed idea. I need scarcely say that when *his* turkeys were lost, and the gentleman showed such extraordinary concern about them, the belief seized me more strongly than ever that he was a desperate devourer of turkeys.

But where were the turkeys? I could not but be a witness of the scenes daily acted at the Commissioner's Office. Indeed my attention was specially called to the thefts, and their first occurrence was attributed partly to my absence. I really began to feel the disgrace keenly, but I found nothing tangible on which to go. The worst of it was the

thefts had been going on for some time; and as all previous efforts had failed, and as there was not a vestige of a trace, the case seemed a regular stumper. Enquiry I found to be useless. I determined therefore to think the question out for myself. I reviewed the whole of the circumstances, missing none, and made my notes accordingly. I divided the possibilities, as regards the destination of the turkeys, into two groups. On one side I looked upon the turkeys as dead: on the other I regarded them as living. Then I took to seeing which sub-division of possibilities worked itself into not only the probable, but the more probable stage. I came to the conclusion that it was more probable that the TURKEYS, MANY OF THEM AT LEAST, WERE LIVING. The arguments in favor of the turkeys being dead, that is, killed by the stealers of them, had no attraction for me after very little thought. I became sensible too that if the turkeys had been eaten, there was an end of the case; for where would be the *corpus delicti* for the purposes of identification, and for eventually driving the charge home? Necessity almost therefore led me to cross to the other side, and when I took up the thread there, I was startled myself at the rapidity and precision with which I went along. Circumstance after circumstance unfolded itself to me, and reflected, as in a mirror, the course along which the rascals were running. It became more and more clear to me that the turkeys were being stolen with the view of being sold. My experience was enough to lead me to the conclusion that a very few hands were engaged in the raid, for the secret of it was well kept. *Informers could not be had.* If, then, only a few hands were implicated, they could not consume the whole of the turkeys, for even *they* would soon suffer from surfeit, however enamoured they might be of the delicate flesh of the king of the poultry yard; or they would most certainly

have betrayed themselves to their neighbours. Again, if the robberies were being committed with the sole object of obtaining something to eat, ducks and fowls would have done equally well. The question then suggested itself,—why should not ducks and fowls be stolen with the object of being sold? But the immediate answer to this was, they would not sell so readily, or so well, as turkeys. The inference thus, in every direction, was—the turkeys are being sold. But where? They were apparently being taken up rapidly, like the shares of a flourishing bank. But where? Now, the public excitement in Madras, which I had carefully noted, came to my help. It was clear to me that Madras itself was not the market; for, through the medium of conversation and the newspapers, the whole turkey-eating and turkey-purchasing population could not but be in a highly suspicious and timid frame of mind. Visions of being charged with receiving stolen property would naturally flash across their minds, and they would not only look askance at turkey vendors, but talk about them, and even hand them over to the Police. Besides, so far as I could gather, purchases were not being made. That turkeys would be carried out by railway was not worth thinking over, for the publicity of the measure would, in a moment, under the circumstances of existing excitement, lead to detection. Cudgelling my brain therefore without stint, and taking into account the largely European character of the residents, with whose proclivities in the shape of poultry loving and breeding I was not unacquainted, I came to the conclusion that, if sold, the turkeys were finding a market in Poonamallee, St. Thomas' Mount, and Palaveram.

Having thus made what I thought was a decided point in the case, I resolved upon obtaining leave the next day to proceed to the Mount and Palaveram. Early the next morning, however, I met with one of those coincidences which

occasionally occur, and which create the utmost amazement in the minds of people; and to me, as will presently appear, it turned out to be of an exceptionally delightful character. I was standing at my gate with my mind engrossed by turkey, when a man named Iyasami, a person who got his living by trimming the manes and tails of horses, suddenly made his appearance before me. Being a great lover of horses, and a dealer in them occasionally, I had frequently employed the man, and knew him and his residence well. He lived in the parcherry at the back of Narasingapuram. I looked at him more carefully than usual, and the idea of the gentleman in Nungumbakum, who had lost his turkeys, flashed before me like lightning. Iyasami was as plump as he could be, and was evidently living on the fat of something. "Why should it not be the fat of turkey"? I said to myself. He had free access to the stables of gentlemen in my Division, and might have at night assumed the *rôle* of turkey purloiner. I gave him the manes and tails of my horses to operate upon, and as he was clipping and drawing away, my thoughts gathered strength, and I determined to make a random shot. "I say, Iyasami," I said, without giving him the slightest warning, "you know a large number of turkeys have been stolen lately. It is suspected, and even said (nobody ever said so, of course), that you are a party concerned in the thefts. It is believed that, on the pretence of going into gentlemen's gardens on your business, you take particular notice if there are turkeys on the premises, and finding out where the fowl-house is, you give information to your thieving friends, who do what is necessary, and reward you with a share of their booty. I think it must be true, for to look at you, you must have been feasting on turkey lately; you have grown so fat." So suddenly did I take the man, that he seemed perfectly bewildered; and scarcely had I stopped speaking when he

burst out with :—"What, sir, I steal the Turkeys! what lying Badava told you such a thing? I have nothing to do with them! It is those Badavas who live on the other side of the parcherry who rob the turkeys, absent themselves for two and three days at a time, and carrying them in cavady baskets, sell them at the Mount and Palaveram." Here was a piece of intelligence as unexpected as it was welcome, and it gave me the most unmitigated satisfaction, because it accorded with my preconceived view: because it made what I considered only probable almost certain.

But who were the Badavas over the way? The turkeys might be recovered, but the case would not be complete—"Ship-shape and Bristol fashion"—unless the rogues were caught in turn; and for several reasons, it did not answer my purpose to question Iyasami more closely then. I merely told him I was joking, and that from my long knowledge of him I felt sure he had nothing to do with the thefts. This was to quiet his mind and prevent him talking, if only for a few hours. After dismissing Iyasami, I felt that the time for action had arrived. The first thing was to ascertain that turkeys had been purchased at the Mount and Palaveram. I therefore at once called upon a young man who had suffered in the raid, and after giving him minute instructions, sent him to the Mount and Palaveram: with my Head Constable and a man of the Force in undress. The three were, to represent themselves on the look-out for turkeys for sale, the owner identifying his property if possible, to make cautious enquiries as to the history of the turkeys found, and to return to me. My expectations were fully realized. Three turkeys, belonging to the young man, were found with a soldier's wife at Palaveram, who stated she had purchased them for Rupees 2 each from a man who had represented himself as having come from Pondicherry, and who was accompanied by a cooly carrying a cavady basket.

Immediately on the return of my agents, I started off in company with two constables in search of Iyasami, and found him at his house. I gravely repeated my former remarks to him, and added that unless he could clear himself I would be compelled to take him into custody, the Badavas over the way having stated (a pure invention on my part), when questioned, that he, and not they, was the thief and feeder on turkeys. This made Iyasami exceedingly angry, and he returned:—"what, sir, do the Badavas say that I steal and eat the turkeys? Go now to their house, and see if they are not plucking one." I was off like a shot, directing the constables and Iyasami to go with me to the particular part of the parcherry indicated by the last. The lanes were intricate, consisting frequently of but the space between huts. This however was an advantage, for I could not be seen in approaching any particular hut. As I was marching along rapidly, I saw a woman come out of a hut with a chatty in her hand. There was water in it, which she threw away. From my knowledge of the practices of native cookery I knew at once that something had been washed in the chatty. Catching sight of me, the woman hastily retreated into the hut, and a man, who was seated outside, got up and briskly took himself off. Coupling what I saw with what had fallen from Iyasami, I did not need to be told what particular hut I was to spot. In I went, and found another man seated in it. I looked back and found the constables behind me. "Seize that man and woman," I said, and I was obeyed in a moment. Looking round I saw a large heap of turkey-feathers in a corner. "Where did you get these feathers?" I said to the woman. "We got them to make pillows," she replied. "Where is the flesh you washed just now in the chatty"? I continued; and without waiting for a reply, I raked up the fire-place, and there, underneath a quantity of ashes,

I discovered an entire turkey, *minus* feathers, &c. of course, capitally cut up for the purpose of being cooked.

On coming out, Iyasami was not to be seen, but without searching or waiting for him, I marched the man and woman, husband and wife, to the Central Station, where, being unable to rebut the irresistible evidence of having been found in possession of the disjointed turkey, they confessed to having stolen it; the woman, however, previously, in the vain hope of screening her husband, having charged the man who had sneaked off from before the hut with being the only guilty party. Through information received from her, the other man also was in custody in a couple of hours. I then had Iyasami, the original and unconscious informer, who had obtained his knowledge accidentally, brought over, and he identified the men as those he had seen in possession of turkeys. "You see," I said to the men, "here is more evidence against you, and it is impossible that you can escape, so make a clean breast of it and tell me where the turkeys are to be found." "We sold some in Palaveram, but most of them to the Officers' Mess at the Mount," was the reluctant answer. The men having broken the ice, I obtained from them that they alone, with the aid of the woman, who was appointed sometimes to bring a single turkey home, were the rascals who had proved themselves so ubiquitous, and had put the whole of Madras into the state of uneasiness, rage, grief, consternation, and laughter, before described. I got from them too that they went on their expeditions prepared with cavady baskets, and that on seizing their prey, they dodged about unfrequented streets till they got to Nungumbakum. They then struck off through Codumbakum and the bed of the Long Tank, to the Mount, which, of course, they invariably safely reached. Having got there the first time and found that their speculation was one which was safe and profitable, and with a quick return, they

repeated it over and over again. The reason why they were never caught was that long before people discovered their losses and made reports to the police, they were out of the limits of Madras and near their destination. They left not a trace which could be caught up as a clue.

It may be imagined that I did not rest a moment after I had got the case into such capital trim. I sent off immediate notices to all those who had lost turkeys, requesting them to meet me, or send their servants, as I meant to go the next morning to the Mount and Palaveram to recover the birds; and a grand procession it was that left the Central Station early the next day. Owners and servants (to identify), and constables were represented; and the turkey robbers, it may be concluded, formed the interesting centre of the group. In full uniform I led the motley assembly, my manly police bosom swelling with delight and my own undoubted celebrity. In due time we arrived at the Mount and before the Mess House. The Sergeant in charge however refused to permit me to inspect certain turkeys which he admitted he had in his possession, taking ground on the circumstance that the Mount was a Military Cantonment. But I insisted on my right as a Police Officer to enter any premises where I knew stolen property was to be found, and I compelled him to give way to me and those with me. On reaching the yard in which the turkeys were allowed to disport themselves, no less than twenty-one were identified as having been stolen from their various owners in Madras. The two men too were recognized by the Sergeant and other persons at the Mount as the parties who had brought and sold the birds. As the Sergeant would not deliver the identified turkeys, I was forced to apply to the Major, to whom, in order to pay the Sergeant off for his dishonesty and incivility, I represented that if the latter had not encouraged the thieves by readily easing them

of their burdens at absurdly small prices, for his own benefit, the thefts, in all probability, would not have gone on so extravagantly. The Major, evidently not over-pleased with the idea that he had eaten, though unwittingly, of stolen turkey, at once admitted the justness of my demand, and ordered the birds to be delivered to me. From the Mount I went on to Palaveram, and I took possession not only of the three turkeys identified the day previous, but of several others in the yards of two other soldiers' wives. Altogether the number of turkeys recovered was thirty-four.

Well pleased with my success, I returned to Madras and put the case up before the Deputy Commissioner. The attendance of the Sergeant, for certain reasons, was not required; but armed with subpœnas I went again to Palaveram and brought down the soldiers' wives referred to. The fire of imprecation let off at the heads of the turkey-stealers, as the exasperated ladies travelled to Madras to give evidence, was most amusing. "Bad 'cess to them" said one, "for givin' us all this throuble for nothin' at all!" "Yes," returned another, "bad luck to the villains, we have not only lost the turkeys, which we fairly bought, but here *we have to pay carriage hire.*" It was also worth while seeing the fearful contortions of the Deputy Commissioner's face, and the manner in which he clapped his fingers to his nose when the disjointed turkey found in the hut was put before him in the chatty. Ordering the chatty out instantaneously, he remarked in genuine astonishment:—"is this the turkey which Europeans make so much of." Before the Magistrate, the woman got her deserts as an accomplice, and the men were prevented from stealing turkeys for an additional period, in consequence of their being unable to repudiate the acquaintanceship formerly existing between themselves and the Police.

The stolen turkeys having been nearly all recovered, it may be imagined there was no lack of home-fed roast turkey on the Christmas dinner-table, but whether my health was drunk on the occasion it passeth me to say.

A MIDNIGHT SKIRMISH.

YES, a skirmish it was, though of a most harmless and ludicrous character. There were no shots fired, though a sword was most manfully drawn. Very Light Infantry was out in skirmishing order, but ready to retreat with all the precipitation of a Bulls'-Run and without the slightest reference to the sound of a bugle; because, in the first place, there was no bugle. In the commanding officer, tricked out in full war-paint, I beheld my valorous self, though entirely denuded of subalterns, non-commissioned officers, and other lieutenants. The words of command were improvised for the occasion. Nature's uniform bedecked my battalion, but in the matter of discipline it was as innocent as it was of clothes.

Having, as I trust, reduced the reader's mind, by the above, to a most desirable state of imbecility, I proceed to lay bare the mystery.

It was midnight—not the conventional midnight of uneasy ghosts, solemn bells, screeching owls, yelping jackals, and howling dogs, but one of a most pleasant aspect. Referring to my note-book, I find it was the 16th of April 1862, and it was in the last expiring hour of that day that I started in my modest gharrie on my usual rounds. I was then attached to the St. Thomé Division, and my first visits on the occasion I projected towards the Adyar stations. Passing the limits of St. Thomé and emerging from the only genuine bit of avenue in Madras, that which some friendly (not Municipal) hands have planted at the commencement of the Adyar road, I found myself, in Arabian-Nights' style, transported into the midst of all the delicious associations of a cool,

tropical, moonlit, night. The dense shadow and confinement of the avenue no doubt tended to heighten the effect, but still the night was "lovely," as gushing young couples would no doubt have remarked if they had been out (though not like me) for a spoon. There was not a scrap of cloud in the bright-blue sky—the moon was out like a shield of highly polished gold, the stars few and far between, and minimized by the prevailing glory, emitted light like brilliants, and the sea breeze caressed my cheek with all the softness of a woman's hand. Police Officer as I was, with all sentiment and romance rasped out of me, I could not but yield to the spell; and for a few brief moments, oblivious of thought, I tasted perfect happiness—that feeling impossible in any other way, and which, like the beauty of the butterfly's wing, vanishes the instant it is touched or analysed in the least. I reduced my pony's pace to a walk, and throwing myself back, saw, heard, and thought of, nothing. Looking back now, how different my experience was to what it frequently had been. Always bound to perform the night-duty of visiting the stations, neither wind, nor rain, nor mud, nor darkness, could form an excuse, and when I returned to my domestic hearth it was with a shower of blessings from my lips, which kept company with a soaking skin, wet feet, and a cold in the nose. Ha! ha! a Policeman's life is the most delightful thing in the world under such circumstances, and I recommend it as a specific to those irrepressible individuals who perpetually vilify the sedentary lives they are compelled to lead. Policeman's work is not all galloping on horseback, and that too when one is only so disposed.

My faithful ghorawallah accompanied me, and so did a constable; and after crawling along for some time, I arrived at the Brodie-Castle tannah station. The Bobby on duty, who was awake, came forward at once, and I made the usual enquiry. His reply was unexpected and even startling; but before giving it, I must say there was a second

Bobby on duty, or rather just off duty at the station, who was asleep. The man awake was a Telugu, the man asleep, a Mahomedan. They did not know each other's languages, nor a common language, and their knowledge of English was rather less. As the Genius of Discord would have it, four strangers, who knew nothing but English, or perhaps Scotch or Irish, happened to come to the tannah a little before, for information. But I anticipate. The story of the constable who was awake was to the following effect. About ten minutes before, while he was vigilantly (of course) keeping his watch, four "dhorays," or "gentlemen," came to the tannah and spoke to him in what he considered to be English. They were noisy, and seemed to have been drinking. He spoke to them in Telugu, which they did not understand. They grew excited, and spoke again one after another and all together. The only words he could catch, because they were so often uttered, were "Rottu Pancher"! "Rottu Pancher"? the visitors asked with all the pertinacity attending the "linding of the loan of a gridiron," and as the enquiry eventually reached the emphasis of a combined yell, the constable bolted, but only inside, to take counsel with his brother there. That worthy, with enormous nose power, was snoring away in spite of the racket, and when he was roused and had "Rottu Pancher" propounded to him, sleepily replied: "Jaray jao! pani manktha!" and snored again. Baffled, constable No. I returned. He knew at least that "Pani" meant water, and combining "Pancher," what the dhorays said, therewith, he took a tin-pot, filled it with water, and offered it to the four enquirers. The reception he met with was astounding, and he had not quite got over accounting for it when I had arrived. One of the dhorays took the tin-pot from him, and instead of drinking the water, as the constable fondly imagined, he dashed it in his face, exclaiming "Domnig," and flung the tin-pot far into the road. This accomplished, the whole

four "dhorays," laughing and talking all at the same time, marched off.

Here was room for speculation with a vengeance. That something was wrong I had not the slightest doubt. But what was it? The facts I took into consideration were—four Europeans, partly intoxicated, roaming about at such an unusal hour as midnight in a locality inhabited by none but the "upper-ten" of Madras, not one of them having the slightest acquaintance with the Black Classics,—making some enquiry at a Police-station, behaving like genuine "Roughs," and D—d-niggering the constable for his politeness, or humanity. The term "dhorays" I did not interpret as "gentlemen," for I knew it applied indiscriminately to Europeans. But what on earth did "Rottu Pancher" mean? Those were the words most frequently repeated, and undoubtedly they were the mystery which called for explanation. "Rottu Pancher," I repeated, "Rottu Pancher," and rapidly ticked off the extraordinary *patois* which ignorant natives construct in their attempts to imitate the sounds of English words. Taking all the circumstances of the case into view, it came upon me, like a flash, that "Rottu Pancher" was nothing more nor less than "ROAD TO PONDICHERRY"! The moment I solved the difficulty, the matter became serious. Who and what were these four Europeans, bound, under such extraordinary circumstances, to Pondicherry? Bound on foot too, and entirely ignorant of the way! That I should pursue and question them was clear, and there was no time to spare. Finding out from the constable therefore that they had gone by "Pugh's Road," I jumped into my gharrie, ordered the policeman who had come with me to get up behind, and whipping up my pony started off at a brisk pace.

Before long I saw my game before me, the bright moonlight helping me to do so. Pulling up about twenty yards

away, I jumped out, and having directed the ghorawallah and constable to stay where they were, I walked smartly forward, examining the "dhorays" carefully in the meanwhile. They were seamen by their costume, but the measured tramp, tramp, tramp, of their boots betrayed that they belonged to the rank and file of Her Majesty's army. I observed them strictly, but there was no room whatever for doubt. There went their legs, "left! right!—left! right!—left! right! with all the regularity of a pendulum. Yes, they were soldiers, and *deserters* to a certainty. Presently I was up with them, and saw that they were strapping young fellows, a little more than boys. Addressing them, I said: "Well, comrades, where are you bound to"? "We are bound to Pondicherry," said one, very gruffly. "Indeed," I returned, "this is not the road to Pondicherry: it leads to St. Thomas' Mount. Come along with me, and I shall show you the proper road." "No! we sha'n't" said the one who seemed to be the spokesman of the party, "we know what we are about a ——sight better than you do, so sheer off." "But if you will not go with me, you must tell me who and what you are," I remarked; "I cannot let you go unquestioned. I am an Inspector of Police." "Oh! you need not tell us that," was the rejoinder, "we know that well enough;" and so they must have from my uniform. "Well, then, if you know who I am, before I allow you to go on, tell me who you are, for I must know," I said. "We are discharged seamen," answered the same speaker. "If so, to what ship did you belong?" I asked. "I say, Jack," returned the man, addressing one of his companions, "what's the name of the barque?" "Why, Bill, don't you know, it is Captain Hutchinson's vessel," replied the person addressed. "If you are discharged seamen," I pursued, "show me your discharge certificates." "That be —— for a yarn," replied Bill, "they are all right in our boxes at the Sailors' Home, and we are going to Pondicherry

for a spree." "Spree, or no spree," I said, "you must have your discharge certificates with you, and even if I did not stop you, the first policeman meeting you on the way would require them; and if you could not produce them, he would take you into custody. It is of no use, therefore. If you cannot produce your papers you must go along with me;" and stepping out, I turned about and placed myself right before the group. By this time we had arrived before the gate of the house that "Jack Built," and by this familiar cognomen I mean, not No. 1, Popham's Broadway, or the hospitable palace on the Cooum inhabited by, I shall say, penitents, but the house erected by Mr. John Bruce Norton on the Adyar. The sudden step I took brought the group to a halt; but presently the man named Bill called out: "That be ——— ! come along! Jack, Joe, Pat, come along! I'll be blow'd if any b———p'leecman stops me." Excited in turn, I shouted out:—"I'll be —— if I'm going to let you go. You are my prisoners in the Queen's name, and go with me you must and shall; come quietly, or it will be the worse for you:" saying which, I made a grab at the grog bottle which Bill had under his arm. He held on firmly as a matter of course, and while we were engaged in the slight struggle which ensued, Master Jack put himself into boxing attitude and danced up to me. Joe and Pat taking the cue, squared out also. Finding myself the point of what I might call a triangular attack, and as near a good pummelling as I ever was in my life, I quitted my hold of the bottle, leaped back a few feet, and drawing my sword, put myself on the defensive. It was not what I might call a Regulation sword, but I invariably, in my rounds, carried a sword-stick, and it was the blade of this which I drew out. The weapon was not only a very serviceable, but a most dangerous one, and it must have looked formidable with the polished steel glittering in the moonlight. Drawing out the blade, as I said, I assumed as scientific and

blood-thirsty an attitude as I could remember, held myself in readiness to "do or die," and called out to the men in the strongest language I could use (bluster being good physic in such emergencies) that the first who approached would have it in him to the hilt. The suddenness of my manœuvre, and the unexpected reception which they met, rather staggered Messrs. Jack, Joe, and Pat, and even Mr. Bill; and taking advantage of their indecision, I communicated to them the pleasing, but entirely untrue, intelligence that I had the most formidable assistance with me. To give color to my statement, I put my whistle to my mouth and let off a most vigorous screech. This completed what was already, as near as possible, a panic, and the four brave defenders of Her Majesty's Oriental Empire fled like the wind into the grounds of the house referred to. All they seemed to think about was to get as far away as possible; and if they had been running a race for a gold cup, or what is better, a bottle of brandy, they could not have used more expedition, or tried so zealously to outstrip each other.

I could not help laughing at the absurdity of the whole thing, "but still, the men clearly," I said to myself, "must be arrested." But what was I to do without assistance? The whistle had brought up the constable, but he was of no use, except, as I again thought, to get me what I wanted. I therefore sent him, as fast as his legs could carry him, to the Brodie Castle tannah for the two men there, and for any others who might have arrived in the meanwhile. The duty I assigned to myself was, in the interval, to see that Jack, Joe, Pat, and Bill, did not leave the grounds. I walked on therefore myself, and from the direction the runaways had taken, I was satisfied they were in a dense clump of trees a little distance off. Presently however the conviction grew on my mind that there was not a moment to spare in attempting to arrest the men;

for if they had time to recover from their panic, and saw that I was alone, it was impossible to foresee what they might or might not do. The circumstances were desperate, but I was equal to the occasion, and resorted to a stratagem which, for boldness and originality, for skill in manipulation, for the gallantry with which it was executed, and the success with which it terminated, I venture to state, with modesty, cannot but be regarded as excelling the most brilliant, and complete achievements of all the wars in all the histories of ancient and modern times. Talk about Sennacherib, and Xenophon, and Alexander, and Julius Cæsar, and Hannibal, and Napoleon Buonaparte—Charles Martel, Wellington, Bundoolah, Von Moltke, Nana Saib, Tantia Topee, Urjuna, Bhima, and Chengelroy Naik—Garibaldi, and Major Gahagan; What did they do? I should just like to be informed. Yes, they fought and won battles and took cities, but they had guns and ready-made armies to back them. But what did I do? Who raised an army in one instant of time? I. Who armed that army? I. Who drilled it? I. Who led it to the charge? I. Who conquered with it and took prisoners? I. But why go on with such interminable questioning? I. I. I. I. I. I. I. There! that, I trust will satisfy the most extravagant curiosity. Yes, I admit that Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte and the remainder of the above-mentioned gentlemen performed some astonishing feats, and Mr. Von Moltke, he did the job pretty well at Sedan; but as I said before, they had artillery and infantry and cavalry at their backs, whereas I.—I!—well I consent to have myself made into Bengal Chutney if I did not outshine them. I put it mildly. Did they ever go into action at the head of a regiment of Madras Dhobies? I repeat it, a REGIMENT of MADRAS DHOBIES! I did.

This was how it happened. Being sorely in need of assistance, and driven into as neat a corner as one could be in,

I remembered that a Dhobies' washing-ground stood close by, and that the dhobies, to save themselves the trouble of walking to and from their huts, slept on the ground, with their bundles, tubs, and clothes-lines. To rush thereupon to the ground was the work of an instant; and with the luck which invariably follows the conceptions of indisputable genius, I found the dhobies there. They were fast asleep of course, snoring off both the fatigue of their work and the effects of the toddy they had drunk, and I roughly shook the one nearest to me. He opened his eyes, and in his half-sleepy, half-drunken condition, either believing I was a ghost or the devil, or seeing the naked sword, still in my hand, gave such a yell as awakened all the other dhobies. A chorus of sounds immediately rent the air, but one man, less startled than the rest, shouted:—"be quiet, it is only the Inspector." This acted like a charm, and I rapidly explained the service I required. In the undefined condition of mind prevalent, the dhobies consented to accompany me, and taking them as they were, about a score of them, almost as naked as newly-born infants, I armed them with the long bamboos which supported their clothes-lines, and led them to the onset. To terrify the runaways, and equally to keep up the courage of my Falstaffian recruits, I told the latter to talk and make as much noise as they could, and under the cover of such preparation, I approached the clump of trees. When near enough, I told my lancers to spread themselves out and surround the spot; and this I considered to be the most ticklish piece of the business. Marching individually, I knew the courage of the dhobies, like that of Bob Acres, would ooze away; and I feel certain that if Messrs. Jack, Joe, Pat, and Bill had but the presence of mind to rush out with a yell, my battalion would dissolve like its own soap-suds. But they were in an equal state of discomfort, and had no thought but to lie as close as hares. Taking advantage of

the situation, and of the ignorance of Tamil on the part of my quarry, I shouted out what might have appeared words of command, but which in reality were nothing more than taunts, threats, abuse, and words of encouragement, in the most approved style, intermixed of course with directions. Omitting the true Vernacular style, in which I am an adept, what passed was something like this: "Take care!—don't be afraid!—they are four, we are more than twenty!—they have nothing, you have bamboos and I a sword and pistol!—if you let them go I shall have you taken to the Police and flogged!—if you catch them, five rupees and six bottles of brandy!—where are they?—cannot say!—do you see them?—not yet!—get near!—come round the bush"!. At last one of the dhobies roared "there they are"! as he saw one of the soldiers run from one tree to another. My brave battalion was nearly off at this, but I managed to steady it. "Do not be afraid" I called out, "they have been very quiet and will not now do anything to you. They think you are the Police, and will submit. Get closer to each other and as near the trees as possible." By this time the soldiers were clearly visible. Each man had evidently hidden himself singly behind a tree, but now they were in a group; and as they felt they were being surrounded, they made for the open ground and ran across it as hard as they could. They were soon obliged to stop however, for the Adyar river, swollen perhaps by some recent freshes, effectually barred their way. I rapidly collected my lancers and followed, and came to a halt about thirty yards from them. I then advanced alone, the sword, still unsheathed, in my hand, and addressed the runaways as follows:—"You are British soldiers, and as such you ought to be the first in loyalty to your Queen and country, instead of which I find you here, deserting your colors and bringing disgrace upon yourselves. You should be foremost in obeying the laws of the land, whereas you are not only dis-

obeying them, but also attempting to prevent the Police from carrying them out. I am indeed surprised and sorry that you should misconduct yourselves as you have done. Take my advice. It is not too late to return to your duty. Go with me, and I will take you back to the Fort, where, by swimming the trench and climbing the ramparts, you can get in, and no one will know what you have done. Refuse, or offer the slightest resistance, and I must do my duty. You see my men are waiting impatiently (they were quaking with fear as I could see by the agitation of the bamboos); and while they are enough to overpower you, the more trouble you give, the greater will be your punishment." Finding that the soldiers listened to my long harangue without the slightest demonstration, I knew they were completely chop-fallen. I finished my victory therefore by shouting:—"Attention!" They came to it at once. "Quick march! Forward!" I continued, and like lambs they stepped out in obedience to the discipline which had become second nature to them. I fell in as they joined me, and cautiously avoiding the dhobies, whom I nevertheless ordered to bring up the rear, I came back, chatting in a friendly manner, to the gate and on to the road. There I found my gharrie, a naik, my own constable, and the two men from the tannah. I gave directions to dismiss the dhobies, and told my prisoners to get into the conveyance. They jumped in readily, raising the lively chorus of

"We'll jump into the waggon,
And all take a ride."

I took my stand on the hind seat with the drawn sword still in my hand, my men formed themselves on the right and left, and my ghorawallah led the pony. In this order—the prisoners, laughing, talking, roaring out songs, and taking an occasional swig at the grog-bottle—we arrived at the Commissioner's Office. At the unusual disturbance the Commissioner came downstairs; and stepping in, I gave him

a brief account of the matter, and obtained from him the assistance of two European officers, to enable to me take the prisoners to the Penitentiary. On arriving there, and becoming aware of the trick which had been played off upon them, they cursed and swore and fought hard, but all to no purpose. In they were to go for the night, and in they were forced. In the morning, on a memorandum sent by Major Evans Bell, the Provost Sergeant with a guard came down and marched my quondam friends to the Fort.

At the Court Martial which was held upon them, I was of course called upon to give evidence, and in doing so I could not help describing graphically how four British soldiers fled before my valiant self, and at the first flash of my formidable sword. This almost maddened the other soldiers, who stood guard over the prisoners, and who felt the disgrace keenly; but they could neither move nor speak. As it was, one of the Officers present, unable to control himself, jumped up and said to me:—"What! do you dare to say you made four British soldiers fly before you?" "With all deference to you, sir," I returned, "it is a fact, and if you doubt me, ask the men there." This brought the Officer to himself, and, after pausing a moment, he said: "Yes, guilty men are always cowards": a remark which had my full concurrence.

I heard afterwards that the four prisoners had been chums when they were boys, and that three of them had enlisted together. Master Bill became a sailor; but on his return, also enlisted into the same regiment. Shortly after coming to India, he got tired of drill and discipline, and prevailed upon his chums to desert with him. Having put together some money, they went to the Evening, or Thieving, Bazaar, exchanged their uniforms for sailors' clothes, laid in a stock of grog, and started on their mad expedition, still under the pilotage of Master Bill. It is needless to

repeat how Master Bill lost his bearings and led them into the mess which shipwrecked their hopes.

I feel that in the above narrative I have made free with the courage of the British soldier, but I intend no imputation whatever. As I said, the deserters were little more than boys, and theirs was a genuine exhibition of the silliness of boys. They went out more for a lark than anything else, and when challenged unexpectedly by a policeman, they apparently became suddenly aware of the serious nature of the scrape they had got themselves into, and were glad enough, on any terms, to get out of it. That was the cause of their running away, and that also the reason why they so easily submitted to authority. But on the other hand, I have known no disturbers of the public peace so open to the influence of the law as those brought up under English rule. They will fight desperately, and behave in the most uncontrollable manner when surrounded by native mobs and even Native policemen, but let a European officer come up to them, and they will put their hands into his and march off with all the confidence of children. So it was with the Ghost of Errabaloo Chetty Street. Poor Ghost! I never could find out what became of him; but as he has nothing to do with this narrative, I complete here my history of "A MIDNIGHT SKIRMISH."

A DISLOYAL VALET.

In a former paper I endeavoured to sketch the. NATIVE AYAH. I shall preface the following veracious narrative with a slight, and necessary, sketch of that other ornament of the Anglo-Indian domestic establishment, the DRESSING BOY. A distressing puzzle is the Indo-European term "Boy:" only one degree less puzzling than that other original term "Paddy." Without qualification to contribute to that exceedingly learned, but rather dry, periodical the "INDIAN ANTIQUARY," I might venture upon the astounding statement that "Boy" is not "Boy." It is perhaps a corruption of "Boyi," bearer, or what is more likely, of "Bhai," the Hindustani for brother. If the last, it may be pointed to as a triumphant, but unconscious, vindication of the idea that Aryan brotherhood is not all a myth. But enough.

Every one no doubt is aware that the Indian dressing boy is a tolerably fair, and yet not fair, representative of the Valet of the West; and a mighty swell he is at his master's expense. Not with his clean white "chokka," or coat, and his carefully starched and folded white turban, and his utter abnegation of selfishness and everything in the way of amusement, but when he is away from his master's premises—when his foot is on his native heath (the parcherry), and his name is Macgregor (Thoppai, or Pot-belly, as his familiars designate him from his having had such a protuberance when a child). Yes, it is under such circumstances, or at a Wedding, or a Christian church, or a Hindu temple, or a Native dramatic entertainment, or, particularly, at the Mount Feast, that the dressing-boy is to be seen in his polychromatic and bejewelled splendour—in his appreciation of the music of the fiddle—in his partiality

for strong drink and tobacco, and—in his devotion to the sex. See him then, and if you can do so, trace in him the meek and sorrowful individual who, in informing you that morning of the death of his mother, eased you of five rupees for funeral expenses. See him with a jacket of the brightest of bright-colored flannel, or one of your own coats—borrowed-never-to-be-returned, and slightly altered to suit native taste;—with your best waistcoat, which however he will return. See him with his gorgeous gold turban puffed out to ten times the size of his head; not with your hat, for he will do anything but wear that hideous invention, relegating it without compunction to the coachman. See him with your studs and sleeve-links, and even your watch which he will draw out and consult in exact imitation of yourself. See him with one of your choicest "Trichies" between his lips, and with your brandy-flask, which he will frequently fill and drain. See him, arm-in-arm, with his tar-brush Venus, and listen to him singing to the music of the "fittle," songs which would put to the blush even those of Anacreon. Later on he may be drunk and riotous, or drunk and incapable, and the next day you will perhaps be trying to recollect where you could have left that brandy-flask or those sleeve-links of yours, and your innocent domestic will assist your memory with:—"whereall master going yesterday I donno. I thinking master leave it there sometime." Yes, the dressing-boy is a consummate hypocrite, even if he is honest enough not to touch his master's cash. He is proud of his master's rank and extravagance, and will boast of both; but as for genuine attachment or honesty, I fear that can be said of only one in ten-thousand. He is generally efficient, and when he is pronounced "good" it may be that self-interest, absence of temptation, and a horrible, because vague, fear of the Penitentiary are constantly present to his mind; or he is nothing more than a smooth-tongued, ready-witted, rascal,

most successful at imposture. Under the latter circumstances especially, he will deftly insinuate himself into his master's favor, and by an apparently steady and upright course of conduct worm himself into his confidence: the while laughing in his sleeve, and making away with such goods as he knows from experience will not be missed, or if missed, not cared for to such an extent as to result in Police investigation. He can hoodwink his master too and diddle him under his very nose, like the specimen who, having been told to hand a party of jugglers ten rupees, took *nine* for himself and gave them *one*, and who, when the leader held up the rupee with an appeal, told his master the man complained it was a bad one: on which his master, infuriated, took the rupee away and horsewhipped the band out of his compound. I have known dressing-boys long, very long, with both their good and bad qualities, and on the whole, I cannot but give the advice "trust them not, they are fooling thee." And what else is open to me to say? See the variety of masters they serve, and the way in which they themselves have been born and bred: in the latter case with a most elastic idea of the meaning of "perquisites." Look too at the vast difference between the master and the man, who represent two distinct and opposing social systems, and whose lines of thought almost invariably strike off at right angles. How then is the former to secure the end he desires—the appreciation of his honor and goodness? Again, what does the master know of the previous character of his gom of a domestic. The Penitentiary unvisited is a terror, but familiarity with it breeds contempt; and while domestics are sometimes jail-birds, with the marks of stripes under their coats, I know one at least who escaped by the skin of his teeth a conviction for murder. My view is that the dressing-boy is best at a distance. The theory of winning affection is flattering—an investment of others with good qualities one possesses or desires to pos-

seas—and therefore pleasant, but it is nevertheless mistaken. The relation between master and servant is a business one, and it is best that it should remain so, for one man is never entirely superior to another and cannot help exhibiting the points of his inferiority. Besides, it is not compatible with nature that two human beings should form a mere friendship capable of standing the test of daily communication, because the matter would necessitate an identity and the possession of a power of knowledge utterly impossible. Self-interest is generally the strongest tie, and weakness of character on one side very often makes itself a substitute. Even in the case of husband and wife, happiness is perhaps nothing but a complete overwhelming of the weak mind by the strong, giving rise at times to the saying that the "grey mare is the better horse." Children, like young birds, are susceptible of affection and of government, but in time even they rebel. The nearest approach to a consummation constantly hankered after (a desire to tyrannize, mildly it may be) is to be seen in the history of Feudalism; and Scotch domestic establishments are still perhaps able to produce types of the genuine servant. But servants to be faithful must be born in families; and Caleb Balderstone loving his master as he does, is nevertheless concerned much for the honor of the family.

Having, it is possible, dealt rather more prosily with the dressing-boy than I intended, I proceed to relate a case which will I am sure support to some extent what I have stated.

Brigadier-General F———k had gone on foreign service. Brigadier-General F———k had taken a Madras dressing boy with him. He had lived for some years in the Tenasserim Provinces. He had returned *per steamer* "as the sayin' is." He had brought back his faithful servant. He was staying temporarily with Col. C———— in the latter's

house on the Pantheon Road, and something in the way of the Egyptians, he had been spoiled. The facts of the case, as stated to me afterwards, were as follow. While in Burmah the General had had several silver articles manufactured, all according to Burmese designs, and as they were intended to be taken to England as curiosities, it may be concluded that the General's affection for them was unbounded. They were worth, weight for weight, from three hundred to four hundred rupees, but of course their relative value was considerably higher. The General had lodged them carefully in an English dealwood box with an ordinary English lock, and right through his stay in Burmah he had managed to prevent the dacoits of the country from having a finger in his particular pie. His boy too was deserving of the greatest possible credit for the way in which he had supplemented the General's exertions. When the General was away from home, the boy was in sole charge, and right faithfully did he discharge his trust. There was thus most substantial reason for the General's belief that his boy was a perfect phenomenon in the way of attachment and honesty. The idea had taken root, deep root, and it was not singular therefore when, merely as a matter of enquiry, I asked the General when getting the facts from him, if his boy was likely to be guilty, that he treated what I said with undisguised contempt; and even with some regret at my unworthy suspicion. The General's conviction however was by no means calculated to impress me in the same direction. My mind was unprejudiced either way, the General's was not in one direction. While it was therefore in my power to diverge to all points of the compass, the General could look straight towards the north and nowhere else. It is indeed most desirable, where theft has taken place in a house, that a fresh mind should be brought on the scene; but at the same time it should be a mind of wide experience. To detect a servant especially a great deal more

than his drawing-room accomplishments must be taken into consideration.

To return. The General and his box had come safely to Madras, and the General had shown off his big gooseberry, I mean the contents of the box, to his host and hostess, and the troop of admiring friends who had come to see him. Novelty had passed away, and the cups and the dishes were put to bed again in tissue paper. One fine day, however, the boy, with distraction in his countenance, rushed to his master and gave him the disagreeable intelligence that the box was unlocked and empty—empty as when it came to the General from Fisher's in the Strand. What was the General to think? His boy! Oh dear no, that well-tried individual could never have done it! The General would stake his reputation upon the certainty of that! A vague, and most uncomfortable, impression came upon him that one of Col. C——'s servants had done the trick, which it may be remarked was also a most mischievous one. But delicacy forbade his even whispering the suggestion that had come unbidden to him. In the meantime information of the robbery had reached his host and hostess, and they were thrown into a most unenviable condition at the thought that the General should have been cleaned out as he was in their house. Ten thousand times rather would they have had their own goods and chattels in the place where the General's now were. The General was routed as he had never been in his life; and he was utterly incapable of thought or action. Presently, however, Col. C———— came to him, and without, for obvious reasons (he was too uncomfortable and the General was so too), attempting to speculate on the circumstance of the robbery, recommended that the Police should be applied to, a piece of advice which was instantly adopted.

It was at three o'clock p. m. (I am intentionally particu-

lar as to time) on a certain day in June 1868, that the Commissioner sent for me, and giving me a note, despatched me to the General at Col. C———'s house. I was there sharp with my Head Constable, and before long had possession of all the facts I have laid before the reader. I was really sorry for the poor General; and as I fully appreciated the embarrassment pervading the entire affair, I went to work *con amore*, and without the loss of a fraction of time.

The General's apartments were on the ground floor, but the box had not been kept in them. It had been left, for greater security, next to Col. C———'s plate chest, which had always had a room to itself, also on the ground floor. As might be expected, I first examined the last mentioned room carefully, but there was not the faintest trace of its having been broken into; and the practice was to lock it every night. The plate-chest also underwent careful examination, but it was clear that it had not been operated upon even experimentally. I lastly went to the box and found that also uninjured and it was quite empty. I examined the lock, and without knowing it, made my first point by noticing that the latter was anything but a Chubb. Turning to the butler who was present, I asked:—"who is in the habit of coming into this room"? "Most of the in-door servants," he returned. "Then there is no prohibition in regard to it?" "None," was the answer. "Call up the in-door servants," I continued, and the butler had in the ayahs, two maties, and the General's dressing-boy. I at once sent the ayahs about their business. They were ancient and unattractive bodies, most unlikely to have male relations visiting them, and the robbery was essentially what I considered a male robbery. The butler I took away first, and by a series of artful questions, I elicited from him not only his innocence, but his genuine concern that the property robbed belonged to his master's guest. There could be no doubt that the man was

utterly ashamed of what had been done. Having satisfied myself so far, I made full enquiry of him (knowing the freemasonry which exists between servants) into the character of the maties. "Are they married men"? "Yes". "Given to extravagance or concubine keeping"? "No." "Toddy-drinkers?" "Not particularly," "With children, and attached to them?" "Yes." "Ever caught stealing"? "Just a little with the object of giving their brats a treat." "They are good men then according to what you think, and you are satisfied to have them in the same house as yourself," I continued. "Yes," was the reply. "I suppose they are not related to you?" "No, I have known them only since they came into service here about a couple of years ago." "How long have you known the General's dressing-boy"? I next asked. "Only since the General came," the man replied. "Where does he live"? "In Chintadripettah." "Is he given to bad habits"? "Not to my knowledge." "Does he think very much of himself"? "Yes, the General makes too much of a favorite of him." "Has he many friends, or relations"? "About friends I don't know, because he goes out much, but his relations come here pretty often, and he seems to have a good number of them. "Send the maties and the dressing-boy," I concluded, "one after the other." They came in order, and passed their examination satisfactorily. They of course denied all knowledge of the robbery, and the only perceptible difference in their manner was that while the maties were humble and somewhat stupid, the dressing-boy was cheeky, and very naturally too. I had not the faintest suspicion of any one at the time, but I necessarily put a few extra questions to the dressing-boy. He said the box had been in his charge for years, that he had himself discovered the theft that day, and had given immediate notice to the General. He seemed disposed too to make out that he was on the most confidential terms with his master; and I could see, altogether, that he resented my

interference as something like impertinence. I candidly confess that I was in a maze. The blank look on the maties' faces interpreted seemed to say:—"we know as much about the robbery as you do just now," and I felt the interpretation to be correct at least so far as I was concerned The manner of the dressing-boy also was embarrassing; and scarcely knowing what more to say, I asked him, perfectly aimlessly, where he took his meals. "In that room," he replied, pointing to one in the range of out-offices. "Who cooks for you?" I continued. "My aunt, who has been staying with me since my arrival." There was a pause, and the boy, telling me he had some business to transact in Town for his master, marched off with the utmost nonchalance.

Thus far I had virtually done nothing. The case was indeed a staggerer. There was nothing to make a handle of. All I had obtained was a jumble of information. It was like studying geography without a map. There was nothing, however, to prevent me from constructing a map, and I set to work, getting away for the purpose into the compound for a stroll.

"This case," said I to myself, stopping and drawing strokes on the ground, "is different from most others which you are called upon to investigate. There is no clue, and you must therefore think it out step-by-step. Yes, it divides itself into three parts, No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3. Now, what is No. 1? Professional gentry of course. Could it be those ever active and mischievous individuals? No! But why not? Well, there are no broken doors and no broken locks, no attempts at prising open; and professionals do not go about with bunches of keys like sharp housewifes. Besides, if pick-locks had been inserted, why should one box alone, and that the smaller one, have been subjected to such inquisitiveness? Again, if everything

which seems so improbable were in some unaccountable way to become probable, it is too ridiculous to suppose that the rogues, doubtless in a hurry to get away, would still have stopped to carefully re-lock the door of the room. No ! No ! Inspector————get closer home, and to No. 2. The deed has been done by some rascal inside. He has watched his opportunity and taken the articles away between the hours of opening in the morning and locking-up at night.

It will be seen by the foregoing that I had covered one clear step of ground Looking upon Col. C———'s servant as No. 2, I proceeded :—" you have got rid of the fat old ayahs and the butler, but how about the maties ? Could their stupidity have been assumed ? Possibly. But remember the character the butler has given them. They have been working here too for some time, and yet all the thefts committed by them have been prompted by excellent motives. Are they likely then to burst out suddenly into full blown rascals ? Where is the motive for that ? the men have wives and children, and from your own observation they are not extravagant creatures. Besides, if disposed to cross the Rubicon and put themselves on the side of the criminal class, they might, long ago, have made free with the Colonel's spoons and forks, which they have not done. You see, running over the scale, there is perfect harmony, The suggestion of guilty does not crop up here and there to break the dead level. Depend upon it, the maties have had nothing to do with the theft."

I next turned over the possibility of the out-door servants having done the deed, but I could come to no definite conclusion. It was clear that they could not have acted in the fashion of professional gentry, but it was possible, though not probable, that they could have stolen into the room during the day, and whipped the articles away before

anybody came in to disturb them. Yet they must have furnished themselves with a key, and the brief period which had elapsed since the General's arrival, scarcely allowed of their having gone into a critical examination of the lock; and without doing that, they must have been armed with a bunch: a most unlikely circumstance. Still, there was the possibility unremoved, and I made a note of it for future use, supposing necessity should arise through my failure as regards No. 3.

The question had narrowed itself very considerably indeed, and the General's dressing-boy alone, with a slight reservation, was left; but there was nothing on the surface to show that he was guilty. Indeed circumstances at first sight were all the other way; for had he not been one of the chief instruments in preserving the property since it had been fashioned, and had he not been a good and faithful servant on the General's own showing! "What," said I, "is it possible that he is the thief? Why, he is the most unlikely person of any on whom suspicion should rest; and it was he who, with perfect candour, made a report, and an immediate one, to the General. He hid nothing because he had nothing to hide, and there can be no doubt that he must have, to some extent at least, shared in the General's pride, and looked upon himself as part proprietor of the collection."

Strangely enough, however, while in the very act of running over the above points in favor of the dressing-boy, a dim perception seemed to steal over me of the real facts of the case. The idea might have lurked in my mind from the beginning, but it was only now, after my having been driven into a corner, that it stole into relief. The moment it did so, a fresh series of mental questions knocked for answers. "You," I went on addressing myself, "you know all about Madras dressing-boys, why then should you

accept the General's estimate? Where is the attachment, the identity with his own feelings, which the General reckons upon, and which the boy himself has made a parade of? Was it really present? No! decidedly not. The boy's words were but words, and see the carelessness with which he took himself off. Could that have been the action of a faithful domestic with a real concern for his master's loss? Note too the difference between his manner and that of the butler. In the latter case, there were grief and shame, but in the former nothing but swaggering and impertinence. No, the dressing-boy, thief, or no thief, reciprocates nothing of the General's soft-heartedness. But if he is heartless, would it follow that he is the thief? Heartlessness is certainly the characteristic of professionals, but he is no professional. What then, supposing him to have taken away the articles, could have brought his courage to the sticking place? In other words, what is the motive? Here, the boy seems to be exactly in the position of the maties. The butler knows of no bad habits, and there has scarcely been time to contract illegitimate alliances resulting in the dissipation of cash. Besides, the boy has his aunt on the premises which puts him forward as a domesticated being. No, there is nothing to make *him* either start off at a tangent from his previous career. But, Ha! there is. Even if he has not friends and a concubine, he has relations and greedy ones perhaps. He thinks a great deal of himself too, and has no doubt drawn the "long bow" at a tremendous rate in his particular social circle. What too is the practice when a servant comes back from foreign service? What does your experience say? Why, that all his relations, driven chiefly by poverty, flock around him and make demands for presents, demands with which he must comply, on pain of the most violent abuse, and of thorough degradation. Money, therefore, for he has many relations, he

must have 'by hook and by crook!' You see, that, after all, *there is a motive.*"

There was no doubt that I had arrived at the most critical stage of the case, and I felt it at once. It is difficult to convey to the uninitiated an idea of the fine shading which distinguishes innocence from guilt in a detective investigation. How a single track almost imperceptibly divides itself off, and how, while on one side traces become more and more faint until they end in nothing, they on the other become more and more deeply impressed as the route is pursued. I have already spoken of the dead level (a sort of Palaveram plain), present in the case of Col. C———'s maties, but as regards the dressing-boy, two very suggestive points had already been evolved—one being absence of sympathy with the General, and the next, a very important point, the highly probable existence of a motive. These irregularities in the surface were the more remarkable, because, taking into consideration the boy's previous undeniable honesty and otherwise excellent behaviour, the travelling was over what I would describe, in comparison, as a well rolled croquet-ground. I began to feel encouraged, and with a chance of success before me, I was stimulated to a determined effort. "Come!" I said, "pull yourself together. Put yourself in the boy's place Inspector———. Cast aside your own mind, and assume that of the boy's. Think with his thoughts and not your own. Imagine that you are the long-employed dressing-boy of a kind and confiding master. That you were born and bred in a parcherry, with all its poverty-stricken, degrading, and dishonest associations. That you had never committed an absolute crime, and that, by a turn of luck, you obtained a very good place and went away, without any relative as a companion, on foreign service. That you had returned and had been made very much of by your people, who nevertheless looked upon you as a sort of Crœsus among dressing boys, and

tried to sponge upon you to an extent quite compatible with your vanity, but far in excess of your means. That furthermore, after your long absence, the society of your home and friends had an attraction for you quite sufficient to more than counterbalance your gratitude and affection, if you had any, for your master. Imagine, I say, what you would do."

Putting myself accordingly in the boy's place, this was the picture which I saw of myself. With great pride and the most honest intentions I started for Burmah. I found myself very pleasantly situated, but still without friends, excepting the General, who was everything to me, and on whom I was consequently entirely dependent. He also was alone and looked to me for a great deal, and a bond of union sprung up, which, under the same circumstances, would have lasted indefinitely. Returning to Madras however, I saw scarcely anything of the General, he being occupied with his friends. I too met my own people, and it thus came about that the bond became considerably weakened, and I felt inclined to give up the General's service and remain where the greatest pleasure, and it was very great under the circumstances, fell to my share. But with the pleasure I enjoyed came the penalty. I had little or no money; but having tasted the sweets of distinction, I was ashamed to own to my comparative poverty. I could not borrow, for I had no gold or silver articles to pawn or sell, and I had become a stranger to Madras; and besides, as the General would leave in a few days, no money lender would put faith in my simple promise to pay. In a state of utter distraction, with the silver constantly beckoning to me, and relying upon the General's confidence in me, and on the belief that Col. C————'s servants would be suspected, I stole the articles, knowing they could be readily converted into what I wanted. But a long course of practical honesty had rendered me very sensitive. The

money had gone, the articles could not be replaced, and my conscience was tender, and I had never been an habitual criminal. I became alarmed, and what I had done haunted me awake or asleep. For some days, like a murderer cleaving to the scene of his crime, I watched in the vain hope that somebody else would open the box and discover the theft, that the General himself would call for the articles, but there was no relief. Unable to bear the strain any longer, and thinking to avert suspicion thereby, I went to the General and told him what I had apparently discovered. When the Inspector came, in spite of my discomfort, I concluded that Col. C————'s servants would be suspected, but when I also was questioned, I sought to do so, and got out of the way as rapidly as possible. * * *

I stopped, threw off the character I had assumed, and stood amazed at my own previous stupidity. I had been staggered, but here the mystery resolved itself into one of the most clumsy contrivances of which I had ever sought to find the depth. The whole plan was the work of a novice and was characterised by all the crude conceptions of a child's deceit. I was disgusted, and with absolute carelessness said to myself:—"there are but two things more to do. The first is to find the key, true or false, which opened the lock, and the next is to discover the property. I went to the General and asked him where the key of the box was. "Here," was the answer of the General, who took the key out of his office box which was open before him. "Are you in the habit, General," I continued, "of letting your boy have that key?" "Yes, when I have directed him to bring the silver articles for inspection." "Can you recollect whether or not you asked for the articles within the last three days?" "Certainly. I have not called for them within that time." "Then your boy has not had the key?" "No, not to the best of my knowledge."

Telling the General I would come back after speaking to the butler, I left the room. Calling the butler I asked :— "when does the General leave? "To-morrow" was the answer. "Does he take the boy with him ?" "Yes." "Does the boy mean to leave service and return ?" "Yes, he says he will go with the General to the latter's destination, and then come back."

I took the liberty of not calling on the General again, but went straight to the godown where the boy said he usually had his food. His aunt was there, engaged in that invariable occupation of native women, making up a betel-and-nut bolus. Entering, I looked around me and saw mats and pillows, a brass drinking vessel and a dish, a few earthen pots and chatties, and two boxes. The pots and chatties could contain nothing, and as a mere form I thought I had better examine the boxes. The woman very readily unlocked them. I tumbled over the contents and told her to close the boxes, which she did. "You have *two* boxes and *three* keys," I said, for I had noted the latter point; "pray what is the *third* key for ?" The woman was dumb, and guilt was stamped on her countenance. Calling the Head Constable I told him to watch her, and taking the keys I went to the box which had contained the silver articles. I found that the third key fitted the lock as if it had been made for it. It was fortunate that the dressing boy was not present: why, I need not explain. I took the woman into custody and marched her off at once to the Central Station without saying a word even to the General. Arriving, I sent the Head Constable round to the better class of money-lenders in Chintadripettah, all of whom he knew. "Put this simple question," I said, "to them." What is the amount of the loan you gave on certain silver articles brought by the servant of a gentleman recently arrived from Rangoon ? If there is any demur, insinuate that it is suspected the ser-

vant has appropriated a portion of the loan for his own benefit." I took this precaution because I thought there might be denial on the part of the money-lenders if they found they had taken in stolen property. As regards the articles themselves, I felt sure that there had been neither time nor opportunity for putting them through the melting process ; and, besides, the boy not being a professional, and requiring money urgently and for temporary purposes only, was much more likely to mortgage than to sell them. He would be back before long, and by that time, all suspicion having blown over, he could sell the articles for their full value at leisure.

I had not long to wait for the Head Constable. He had hit upon the right party sooner than he had expected. The individual who had taken the property into pawn also, fortunately, was a wealthy and respectable dealer, one who would not under any circumstances mix himself up in a nefarious transaction. Without the slightest hesitation he had stated that the articles had been pledged to him for 40 Rs., and that he had made the loan in the full belief that the boy was, as he had represented himself to be, the sole and undoubted proprietor of them.

On receiving the information, I lost no time in having the boy arrested—he having in the mean time, returned from Black Town—and brought to the Central Station. Before he was brought however I asked the woman if she had not received money from the money-lender, giving his name, on the mortgage of silver articles belonging to her nephew's master. Finding that I was so well up in the case as to know even the Chetty's name, she answered in her fright:—"not I, sir! not I, sir! It was my son" (meaning, according to native practice, her nephew). When the boy arrived I confronted him with his aunt, and repeated what she had said, but he gave a flat

denial to everything, and strove hard to shift the crime on to the shoulders of some unknown and nameless individual. I had nothing to do but to take aunt and nephew to the money-lender, who identified them as the persons who had brought the articles and had received the money. He produced his account-book too, and pointing to certain entries in it, said :—" here, both their names are posted. This man brought a portion of the articles first, and this woman afterwards fetched the remainder."

Telling the Chetty that the articles had been stolen, I took possession of them (not one was missing), and by six o'clock the same evening, having been at work but for three hours, I had the proud satisfaction of laying them before the General on his office table. The General complimented me highly, but seemed grieved that his favorite should have so disappointed him. On the contrary, Col. C——, who had come in, was delighted to find that his domestics had not rendered themselves fit for free board, clothing, and residence, in the Penitentiary.

The General considered it due, and gave me the following

" I was very much pleased by the able way Inspector ———— recovered for me some silver plate stolen by my Boy. He appears to me a *first-rate Police Officer*, and very sharp at his work.

(Signed) W. F. . . . . k,

Brigadier-General commanding Centre Division."

OFFICIAL DESPATCH BOXES.

"SAHEB! SAHEB!" roared some frantic individual, in Stentorian tones, one Sunday night at my gate, just as I was about tumbling into bed. "Holloa! who's there"? I shouted in an equally tremendous voice; and without waiting for an answer, I made for the gate to see who the disturber of my peace was, and what he wanted at such an unseasonable time, and on so misappropriate a day, if I may be allowed to designate what was undoubtedly night by such a term. As it was a bright moonlit night, I soon made out a horse, and then a man mounted thereon, and on closer inspection, I discovered the man to be a trooper in the uniform of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief's Escort. As soon as the man saw me, he continued rapidly:—"Come sir, come quickly sir; The General Saheb wants you immediately." "Why? what's up?" I returned. "Do you know why I am wanted"? "All I know is" answered the trooper, "that a theft of some sort has been committed, and that the General and his Staff are very angry. Something of value apparently has been stolen, but of what it consists I was not told. I was ordered to gallop as hard as I could and bring you, and here I am."

Rushing indoors, I speedily donned my uniform, and getting into my gharrie, which I had ordered in the meanwhile, I drove within a short time into the compound of Doveton House, Nungumbakum, which at the time accommodated no Ex-Guicowar of Baroda, but was the residence of the Commanders-in-Chief, and particularly of General Sir W——— A——— McC———y.

Of course on my journey I punished my brain with the most ridiculous hopelessness as to the nature of the theft; and interspersed with my vain imaginings was considerable wonderment at the audacity of the rascal committing the latter. Robbing a Commander-in-Chief was in itself something exceedingly startling; but robbing in a house so swarming with satellites could not but betray an amount of pluck not over frequently characteristic of the Madras rogue. "Can it be articles of household property," thought I, "that have gone to furnish some less dignified domestic establishment? Or is it silver? Or is it the jewel-box or the cash-chest? Or, horrible to think, is it His Excellency's sword, or his epaulettes: which last, melted down, would be bullion? Before however I had the smallest chance of deciding these interminable problems, I found myself in the verandah of His Excellency's excellent mansion. It was momentarily amusing to me to find how the customary ceremony of keeping one waiting for an audience was completely waived on the occasion I refer to. In fact, before I had time to say a word, or even to breathe, I was ushered into what I suppose was His Excellency's office-room. His Excellency was there and evidently in a state of the utmost discomfort and annoyance; and to show how far he was affected, I may say that he had not even taken off his full-dress after his return from church. The moment I entered the room, I made my salute, and His Excellency, without any preliminaries, addressed me to the following effect:—"Inspector——— two tin boxes containing important official papers have been stolen from this room this evening while I was at church. I feel very much troubled about the matter as the papers have to be placed on the Council table on Tuesday. I want you to do your best to recover the boxes. They must be found." Whew! I thought to myself, so it is neither plate nor jewels, neither bank-notes nor epaulettes,

nor the sword, nor anything else likely to prove too much of a temptation to the light-fingered gentry of Madras, but only two tin boxes, the worse for wear, and full of papers of no earthly value except to the members of Government. The information afforded me some comfort, not because I was treasonable enough to undervalue the papers, but because it reduced the surface of enquiry to more manageable dimensions. Still I had all my nuts to crack, and the special nut was—*the motive for the stealing of the boxes.* Papers ! who would steal official papers from a Commander-in-Chief's private room ? They might be stolen from offices for sale to newspapers, or somebody might have a surreptitious look into them for information conducive to his own or a friend's interest, but that a man should come, like a thief at night, and carry away two boxes merely because he wanted to read some papers in them, was preposterous. No ! there must have been a motive, and the idea gathered strength every instant. All that I wanted was a little time for self-communication, and the company I was in was not favorable to it. Pretending, therefore, to His Excellency that I wished to make a survey of the premises, I begged permission to leave the room for a few minutes ; and on this being accorded to me, I stepped into the compound and walked round the house, using my eyes along with my thoughts, as may be imagined, to the best advantage. The Commander-in-Chief's domestic establishment was necessarily a very large one ; but of the many servants and people I saw, there was scarcely one who was likely to be employed any where near the room in which His Excellency sat. That room, or rather the *suite* to which it belonged, seemed isolated, and I could not help feeling that if people went there at all, they would go for some specific purpose. The room moreover would have its secrets, and anything passing in it would be generally unknown to the great portion of the people about, and neces-

sarily offer no temptation to their cupidity. But yet that the thief was an in-door thief seemed almost conclusive. With this semi-conviction, and bearing still in my mind the importance of tracing the motive, I returned to His Excellency. With his permission again, I looked through the adjoining rooms, and then came back again. Looking over the room itself, I perceived that it was well lighted, and that the furniture in it consisted of but a book-stand, an almirah, a few chairs, and the table at which His Excellency sat. There was no cover for any person coming into the room on an unholy expedition: especially unholy because it was Sunday night. The room had two doors, one being the door through which I first entered it, and the other leading to the remainder of the *suite*. But the room had besides a very large window; and looking through the latter, I saw by the moonlight a sentry with his musket and glittering bayonet continually moving across it, and giving his attention on every occasion he passed to the interior of what he was guarding. "Well," said I to myself, "if that sentry has not prevented strangers from coming into this room, I might as well, like Mrs. Jarley, turn Atheist, and give up my vocation as a detective. The probability too is that lights always burn here, and nobody could move in and out without being observed. Why then has the sentry not interfered with the person who removed the boxes? It is clear that he did not. But why not? Perhaps he did not see the boxes removed. But he must have seen a person coming in and going out. Yes, but if it was a person who had a right to visit the room, he would not interfere, or at all events would not watch him narrowly." This last mental answer to a mental question brought me to a stand-still, and I felt the time had arrived for some definite step to be taken. The sentry must be questioned no doubt; but before that the person to be put under examination was His Excellency himself. It was a delicate

matter, very liable to misconstruction, and made me most uncomfortable; but I had my duty to do. While I was momentarily hesitating, one of His Excellency's *Aides-de-camp* swaggered in, booted and spurred, and bedizened with lace, and evidently eaten up with a tremendous idea of his own importance, while holding the most exaggerated and contracted views of everybody and every thing. He gave me no recognition beyond a contemptuous stare. Case-hardened as regards such points, and feeling that my business was not with him, I addressed His Excellency and said :—" may I be permitted to put your Excellency a few questions in this case ?" My language, I submit, was precisely what it ought to have been, and I was doing nothing more than my duty; but I seemed to give the young officer mortal offence. He looked at me like a thundercloud, and seemed to regard my conduct as nothing but intensified impertinence. In an exceedingly angry tone, he told me to mind what I was about, and continued :— " how dare you, sir, address His Excellency in such a manner ? Do you know to whom you are speaking ? What questions can you have to put to His Excellency ? It is sufficient that you have been informed that two tin boxes have been stolen, and it is your duty to find out who stole them." A weaker mind would have sunk under the unconscious compliment betrayed in the last few words, but I was able to gauge the absurdity in them as well. Without the slightest irritation therefore, I replied :—" true, sir, it certainly is my province to discover the person who has committed the theft, and if possible to recover the boxes which have been stolen; but allow me, respectfully, to state that I do not possess the spirit of divination, nor have I the instinctive faculty which would enable me to single out the thief among so many servants and people on this establishment. I work, like all other detectives, by the most ordinary means. I must be guided simply by the circumstances and facts of the case. They

might seem unimportant to you, but to me they might furnish most valuable assistance. They might give me the clue which hitherto I have not been able to take up; and if I am not to obtain the information I want, I do not see how I am to do anything in this matter." What I said seemed to make an impression on one mind at least; for as I concluded His Excellency said :—" B———, the Inspector is right, let him ask me what questions he likes." This resolution, however, instead of pacifying the young officer, made him almost frantic. He could say no more, but he nevertheless seemed to think and look a great deal. I interpreted him somewhat as follows :—" you, blank, blank, blank, of a Policeman, if I had but the will of you for a few seconds would I not kick you down the steps and break your blank neck into the bargain." Happily however for me circumstances prevented these kind intentions from being carried out, and I was thankful that my bones were not just then to be broken. Of course the indignation so strongly, though mutely, expressed, called for no verbal notice from me; but I was presently delighted to find that the young officer, determined not to witness the degradation of the Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army, marched impetuously out of the room, probably to establish his verdancy and let off his carbonic acid gas in some other quarter. I was alone with His Excellency again; and having had much encouragement from the considerate way in which the right to examine on my part had been acknowledged, I proceeded to my work without delay. The following are some of the questions which were put and the answers which were given.

Myself.—You have said, your Excellency, that the boxes were on this table; will you kindly tell me when they were brought, and if it is the practice to bring them to this room and no other ?

H. E.—This morning at eight o'clock they were brought and left on this table. Such boxes are never taken to any other part of the house.

Myself—Who brings them in here ?

H. E.—The Head Butler, or the Head Bearer.

Myself.—Who takes them out again ?

H. E.—One of the two servants I have just described.

Myself.—Is your Excellency's practice strict in such respect ?

H. E.—As far as it can be. The Bearer, or the Butler, is always in attendance, and I do not remember any occasion on which another servant was employed.

Myself.—Do any of the other servants attend on your Excellency here ?

H. E.—Seldom or never. It is understood that this is my office-room, and that I require none of the servants here but the Butler and the Bearer.

Myself.—How long have they been in your service, and are they to be trusted ?

H. E.—For some years. I consider both most trustworthy men. As far as I can judge, they have never deceived me, and their fidelity has been proved on numerous occasions.

Myself.—When did your Excellency last see the boxes ?

H. E.—This evening, before going to church.

Myself.—Did your Excellency use the boxes during the day ?

H. E.—Certainly. Many of the papers in them were of an emergent character, and I was obliged to deal with them, as I would not have had sufficient time to-morrow.

Myself.—Up to what time was your Excellency busy with the boxes ?

H. E.—Within half or three-quarters of an hour of my leaving for church.

Myself.—Will your Excellency kindly state whether you saw the boxes when you were in the act of leaving for church ?

H. E.—I am positive about having seen them.

Thus far nothing apparently of moment had been elicited, but to me two distinct points had been made out. One was that the boxes, beyond all question, were on the table before His Excellency had left—the other, that, before impeaching any one else, the Butler and the Bearer must be turned "inside-out." Continuing my examination therefore, I put my crucial questions to His Excellency. *The motive had not been discovered,* and to its discovery I now directed myself. Addressing His Excellency again, after a short pause, I said :—

Myself.—Are the boxes used for any other purpose but that of conveying papers ?

H. E.—No, certainly not. They come from the Government office, and are used for official purposes alone.

Myself.—But is nothing valuable ever conveyed in such boxes ?

H. E.—Yes, sometimes, but there was certainly nothing of that character in the boxes which came this morning.

Myself.—Are you quite sure your Excellency ?

H. E.—Quite.

Myself.—Nothing but papers.

H. E.—Nothing but papers.

Myself.—Your Excellency had all the papers out ?

H. E.—Every one of them.

Myself.—So far that is satisfactory. But will your Excellency recollect if the boxes contained anything valuable

subsequent to their having come to you. For instance, was it necessary for your Excellency to return any thing valuable to the Government office ?

H. E.—No ! But now that you speak of it, one of the boxes did contain something of value, though only for a short time.

Myself.—Will your Excellency kindly tell me how that was ?

H. E.—Willingly. While I was writing, the Butler brought me my gold pencil-case which I had left in the drawing-room, and a bag containing fifty rupees in silver. Being very busy, I told the Butler to drop both in one of the boxes, which he did.

Myself.—Is your Excellency certain that he did ?

H. E.—Yes, for I saw both the bag and the pencil-case afterwards.

Myself.—Is it usual your Excellency to put money into the boxes in that way ?

H. E.—Not at all. It was done because I was very busy at the time.

Myself.—Was any one present when the bag and pencil-case were put into the box ?

H. E.—Yes, the Bearer.

Myself.—Your Excellency said that the bag and pencil-case were in one of the boxes only for a short time. Will your Excellency explain how that came to be the case ?

H. E.—The bag and pencil-case were untouched until I had finished writing. I then put back the papers into the boxes, and in doing so, took out both bag and pencil-case, which, after locking the boxes, I secured in the almirah you see standing there. They are safe enough, for I saw them a little while ago. (To convince me, however, His Excellency

unlocked the almirah and showed me the bag and the pencil-case.)

Myself.—I shall trouble your Excellency very little more. Was anybody present when you removed the bag and pencil-case and locked them up afresh ?

H. E.—Yes, the Butler.

Myself—Not the Bearer ?

H. E.—No, not the Bearer. He may have been about, but not in this room.

It was enough. The murder was out. The case was as clear as daylight. The chain of circumstances was complete, and I saw the far end of it secure to the hand-cuffs in my pocket, and which, in my imagination, the Bearer already wore. He saw the money put in. His motive was to steal it. He never saw it taken out, and he had been completely sold. Being one of the servants attached to the room, his presence in or near it would necessarily not have attracted attention even from the sentry.

Making no observation whatever, I asked His Excellency's permission to see the Butler and the Bearer. They were called, and came in one at a time. The Butler confirmed his master's statement in every particular, and I saw no reason whatever to connect him with the robbery. "Was the Bearer here all yesterday" ? I asked. "No, not all day," was the answer, "he took leave from me in the *afternoon*, promising to come back before His Excellency returned from church, and he did so."

As said before, the Bearer also was called, and came in. He was as fine a specimen of the North countryman as one could wish to see. With his tall, muscular, form, his clean white robe and red sash, his neatly-folded turban, his fine countenance, his quiet demeanor, and his well-established honesty, it seemed almost a sin to think that he was a thief;

and yet he undoubtedly was one. The Bearers of Madras, as a rule, have gained the confidence of their employers, and have been faithful to their trusts. Their voiceless habits, their smileless and attentive faces, their industry, and their attachment to children, combined with a great many other good qualities, have deservedly won them an honorable place in domestic establishments ; but like all human beings, they cannot universally and continually be immaculate, and the representative before me of the class was evidently a fallen angel. But why ? The man was well off. He was the head of his tribe in all but the first household of Madras. He had a most kind master. He was in that master's confidence. Why then did he steal ? Was it his organization, which, being interpreted, is "acquisitiveness", which drove him to commit himself ? Or did he suffer under that cerebral irritation which manifests itself in what is termed kleptomania ? Or was he the victim of that all-powerful association which is as tyrannical as organization itself ? It could not be the last, for he was a man of industry ; and poverty, the tap-root of crime, was unknown to him. As a Police Officer, acquainted more with the worse side of human nature, I had my suspicions, but the time before me was not appropriate to an effort at confirming them. What was required at the moment was an additional circumstance or two to connect the Bearer more closely with the disappearance of the boxes; but in the extraction of which it was necessary to carefully guard him against imbibing the idea that he was suspected. The plan was, the *truth* being known from the statements of His Excellency and the Butler, to let him tell as many lies as possible, to go into the wildest improbabilities, which he would be sure to do in the hope of turning suspicion from himself. Dropping the idea of catechetical minuteness, the following may be given as fairly representing what the Bearer said. He knew nothing about the stealing of the boxes, *having been out since the morning* to a funeral at

Tondiarpett, and having returned just a minute before His Excellency. He never saw any money put into the boxes, nor did he see any taken out. How could he when *he was away all day* ? All this was told to me alone by the Bearer in his own language; and he of course had not the slightest idea of what had already passed between His Excellency and the Butler on one side, and myself on the other. His Excellency was present when the Bearer was under examination, but being entirely unacquainted with Telugu, and misled perhaps by my unexcited manner, there was no interference whatever on his part. Had His Excellency, however, but known how the Bearer was contradicting no less a personage than his august self, it is difficult to imagine what might have been the consequences. Perhaps innumerable G. O. C. Cs. might have been fired off, ordering the 355th Madras Infantry to proceed instantaneously, in heavy marching order, at the double, from Cape Comorin to Goomsoor. Or, all unmarried officers might have been directed to part with their eyebrows, or to shave off their beards. Or perhaps, the whole of the troops in garrison might have been compelled to assemble at a midnight parade in the Codampaukum Tank. Who can tell ? As the case stood, however, all the calamities enumerated, and various others too, were averted simply because His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief did not know Telugu. On what trifles do not the destinies of the world depend !

Coming back to the Bearer, however, I listened to him with the most profound attention, and with an air which did not betray the slightest incredulity; and when his examination was concluded, I dismissed him with, I trust, the same amount of satisfaction in his mind as I felt myself. When he had fairly left the room, I turned to His Excellency, and giving him the several points of the case, expressed my conviction that the man who had taken the boxes was no other than the Bearer, and begged that I might be

allowed to take him into custody. "Hush!" returned His Excellency, "not a word on that point. The Bearer is a particularly honest man I assure you. He has been in my service for the past eight years, and I have never had the slightest reason to doubt his fidelity. You must be mistaken. He is really a good respectable man, and I should be very sorry to see him wrongly accused and disgraced." Here was an unexpected difficulty, and in deference to His Excellency's opinion and wishes, what was I to do? I had no mind whatever to let the Bearer go "Scot-free;" and under the influence of the feeling, I rapidly matured a plan which would not only give the fullest satisfaction to His Excellency, but meet my own ideas of duty as a Police officer towards the public. Addressing His Excellency again, therefore, I said:—"as it seems to be your Excellency's wish that the step I propose should not be taken, I shall endeavour to have the boxes restored without the crimination of any one; and as the papers must be valueless to the person who has taken them, I have little doubt, with some management, that we may be enabled to get them back. I shall not therefore prosecute my enquiry further, but leave after talking to the Butler and the Bearer." After getting permission to depart, I left the room, and calling the Butler and the Bearer, took them into my confidence, the last apparently as much as the other. I expatiated to them on the utter uselessness of the robbery, the trouble and annoyance caused to His Excellency, the advantage of the return of the boxes and papers, the certainty that the thief, sooner or later, would be discovered, and the much more serious notice which would then be taken of his crime. "Call all the servants together," I concluded, "and advise them that the best thing is to bring back the boxes and place them in such a conspicuous place as will lead to their being seen in the morning."

My work being over for the time, I got into my gharrie

and drove at once to the Central Station at Chintadrípettah, and calling up my favorite Head Constable, I gave him a full history of the case. "Go to-morrow," I continued, "to the Commander-in-Chief's, discover where the Bearer lives, and making your way to the locality, find out from the neighbours what his character is, and, above all, whether he has a concubine." I got home after this, but sleep was out of the question, and about 3 o'clock I was up and again in my gharrie, while for the second time that night I travelled to the Commander-in-Chief's house. I left the gharrie at the gate and stole into the compound. Stepping from tree to tree, I concealed myself in their dense shadows, and while gradually approaching the house I looked about me either for a man, or anything like a box! Suddenly, something very white by the moonlight, attracted my attention, and going up to it I was jubilant over finding that it was a packet of official papers. A tin box was near it with its lid wrenched off, and on looking into the box, I found other papers. I left the box and papers as they were, and after killing time by driving slowly up-and-down the roads of Nungumbakum, I returned as soon as it was daylight. Rousing the Butler and the Havildar of the guard, I led them to the box, which was taken possession of; but still dissatisfied, I commenced a search for the other. I am glad to say that it also was discovered not far off. It too had been broken open, and the papers emptied out of it close by. Directing a report to be made to His Excellency, I left, but I afterwards heard that not a single paper was missing.

The case was necessarily over so far as His Excellency's view was concerned, but as a Police Officer was I to permit a proved thief to carry on his work uninterruptedly in a house where there was so much valuable property practically unwatched ?. Was I to permit the Commander-in-Chief to continue to be the victim of his own mistaken confidence ?

Was I to allow crime to go unpunished? "No, Inspector ——," I said sternly to myself, "it must not be, human nature is such that if it once becomes callous to the distinctions evolved out of what is known as property, if it once crosses the border and commits an act of deliberate theft, the fetters of conscience file themselves very fine, and gradually cease to hold, especially if the swift retribution of the Law does not follow. Criminals on solitary occasions unpunished, almost always become habitual criminals; and in the majority of instances, even the unwilling criminal persists because there is no slackening of the power which drives him onward. No, the Bearer having begun, will go on, but it remains to be seen why he committed this particular crime, and also if this is his first offence. In any case something must be done to deter him for the future, especially as it is clear that His Excellency seems rather disposed than otherwise to encourage him in his career; and if His Excellency's eyes could be effectually opened, your work would be complete but not otherwise." Thus thinking, I patiently awaited the report of my Head Constable. It came, and it confirmed what my mind had already pictured. A woman was in the case. The Bearer at His Excellency's was "Philip sober." In his own circle he was "Philip drunk," decidedly as drunk as infatuation could make him. He "kept a woman," and finding that he could not minister to her maintenance or extravagance in a legitimate way, was obliged to resort to illegitmate means to do so. Like all mistresses, her perpetual cry was for cloths and jewels, and the Bearer furnished them: how was pretty well known to her associates and confidants, but not within His Excellency's premises. Acting upon the information which had reached me, I searched her house, and from the pair of scissors, the silver butter-knife, and the various other articles, all the property of His Excellency, which I was able to lay my hands upon, it

became clear that the Bearer had for a long time carried his "Pitcher to the Well," and that he had done it once too often. The Magistrate differed from the Bearer's views in regard to community of goods, and prevented him for some time from again looking into the inside of "Official Despatch Boxes." His Excellency agreeing with the Magistrate, gave the decision of the latter everlasting effect.

ANOTHER DISLOYAL VALET.

HISTORY repeats itself! Misfortunes never come singly! Dreams go by contraries! Coincidences are curious! Speak of the Devil and he will appear! The foregoing are phrases which without doubt have established themselves in the English language; and it is just as certain that they represent the occasional experience of almost every human being of mature age. They embody but a single idea, and the occurrences which produce them are harmless, unless they lead to the construction of theories charged with the spiritual or supernatural, and which terminate in superstition, frequently mischievous. The human mind however can escape from the domination of belief in coincidences by a very simple contrivance: which is by observing that for the one case in which there is a coincidence, there are millions in which coincidences do not occur. The only difference is that attention is forcibly fixed where there is an instance of the remarkable. The fifth of November is just the same as the other days of the year, but it is very much better remembered; or it used to be when I was a boy.

My second adventure with a Madras dressing-boy was a very curious coincidence indeed, inasmuch as it took place within a week of the one I have before related. My head too being full of dressing-boys, my mind, in fact, being

NOTE.—The Editor may be permitted to give here on his own account a most remarkable coincidence. The ——— Office was located in Coonoor in 18—, and the Editor moved by a morbid curiosity, because the trip was then considered dangerous, made up his mind and rode off to the Hullicul Droog. Knowing he would be away for several hours, he took a sandwich with him, wrapped up in a half sheet of foolscap drawn out without premeditation from his waste-paper basket. The paper was headed "Transactions of the Minister for ———," and contained an unfinished draft on the subject of the ——— rules. The Editor reached the Droog, discussed his sandwich, dropped the paper, rolled stones down the precipices, and rode back to Coonoor. The Christmas holidays arrived, and the Editor went to the Lowlands, and came back again. "I see you have been to the Hullicul Droog," said the august Minister. "Yes,"

fresh from training in a certain kind of investigation, it took up the clue with a rapidity, and pursued it with a certainty, which required very little thought indeed from me. I was obliged to put in force certain rules, and to display some of the readiness of true wit, but that was all. There was no mental fatigue, and I have none to record in this particular Recollection.

Dr. R. C. E————t, Inspector-General of Hospitals British Medical Service, as he termed himself, had a peculiar idiosyncracy. He was very fond of rings—rings set with the most precious of precious stones. He seldom or never wore them, but he still liked to have them; and it thus happened that he possessed some splendid and of course highly valuable specimens. He kept them in a genuine Despatch-box, with a genuine Chubb's lock. Unlike most gentlemen in India, he was particularly careful in securing the property of which he was immoderately fond. He had very great faith in his dressing-boy, but he still had wisdom enough not to entrust that individual with the key. The Despatch-box was always on the writing-table, and the key attached to a silk cord continually hung from the Doctor's neck. The Doctor ate with it, drank with it, and even slept with it. He attended consultations, and performed operations with it; and in all his travels the key reposed calmly on his bosom. If the Doctor's biography had to be written,

the Editor returned, "but how did it become known to you?" "Why because I found a copy of my Transactions there." The Minister then went on to say that Mr. B——— C———, Mr. R——— A——— and himself went to the Droog during the Christmas holidays—that on arriving there, he (the Minister) related how he had framed the ——————— rules on the Droog with the assistance of Col. P——— and Mr. F———, Inspectors of ———, when they had visited the place together in 18— or 18—; that on finishing his account he, Mr. C——— and Mr. R. A——— strolled off in different directions. Hardly a minute after, however, Mr. C——— shouted out to the Minister:—"We have been talking about the——————— rules, and here I have found a copy of your Transactions *on the very same subject.*" The Editor need not say what paper had been found, but it was very strange that the *subject of the paper* and the conversation should have been so linked together. The Hullicul Droog too, when human feet did not tread it for years together, was certainly one of the last places on earth to produce a coincidence and that of so unique a character.

how well the key would have done it. How many locks far more intricate than Chubb's it would have mastered with the ulterior object it would have in view. However, the key was only a key; and when the Doctor found that some of his rings had disappeared, it was true to its character and observed profound silence.

The moment the Doctor had become aware of his loss, he acted with sense and decision. He wrote to the Commissioner, and the Commissioner sent me with a note to the BRANCH ELPHINSTONE HOTEL, where the Doctor was staying. When I arrived and had made my way into the Doctor's room, there was the box in its usual place on the table, and there was the key, as the Doctor showed me, with the silk cord round his own neck. The box was uninjured. It had of course been unlocked and locked again, and the key could not but have been the legitimate one; but by what legerdemain, by what dexterous or genuine piece of spiritualism, had the key been charmed from the body of one human being into the hands of another, and what was more marvellous, charmed back again? I could of course only go through a series of conjectures, and these I was busy with right through the time the Doctor was making his statement.

Briefly, what the Doctor stated (irrespectively of the episode of taking care of the key), was—that on opening the box an hour or two before, he had missed two diamond rings—that as he had every confidence in Chubb, he was in the habit of throwing into the box, carelessly, all his loose cash and his currency-notes—that the disappearance of the rings had made him suspicious, and he found that two currency-notes of rupees ten each and about rupees twenty in silver, which he was positive he had thrown in the night before, had also vanished. Finally, having been convinced that liberties had in reality been taken with his box, his memory went back and began to account for the disappear-

ance from time to time, of various other sums of money, all which he had been in the habit of considering had been forgetfully expended by himself in his ordinary business transactions.

It was clear to me that the dressing-boy was the thief. He alone, naturally, was always in the Doctor's rooms. The box had been secretly opened not once, but many times. The thief was doubtless the same, and, by a very common process, theft followed by impunity had led the thief on and on until he had done something which had revealed his systematic depredation. The circle had but a single centre, and that centre could be spotted with mathematical certainty. It only remained to get at the mystery of the spiriting to and fro of the key. I tried the Doctor first in every imaginable way, but it was of no use. He was positive, indeed obstinate, in his assertions. The key was attached to the cord and the cord was round his neck. His mind could not be got to travel beyond that. Every thing else was a blank. The key might have been removed and replaced when he was asleep, which was almost impossible, but under no other circumstances. There was nothing to do but to put the boy into the confessional, and I asked the Doctor's permission to do so. In spite of all I said, the Doctor would not give me what I wanted. "Hush!" he said, in most calm and decided terms and in a very significant undertone, "I cannot allow you to do it—he has been with me for years, and has proved himself to be as good a servant as I could wish to have, and as honest as it is possible for him to be—don't even let him know that you suspect him." What could I say or do under such infatuation? This puzzle is however only for the reader. I thought of a trick with professional celerity, but for the present it must remain a secret as it was to the Doctor at the time. "As you will not allow me, Sir," I said, "to take

the boy into custody, I can do nothing more. If I hear anything further, however, I shall let you know." Simultaneously, I made my salute and quietly took my departure.

From that day I made it a point, evening after evening, to ride into the hotel compound, and without being seen by the Doctor I would sit down with the proprietor outside his private room near the out-offices. The proprietor was an old friend and thought nothing of my persistent visits; and he was only too glad to have a chat. Now and then the servants would come for orders and with requests, and among them the dressing-boy. The proprietor would go away for a few minutes and come back; and during the intervals I would call such servants as passed and talk to them. I thus got many an accidental and private interview with the dressing-boy. I am almost ashamed now to bring back all the lies I told him in view to gaining his confidence, or rather to make him firmly believe that the last person I suspected in regard to the theft was himself. How I did stigmatize the hotel servants. What a parcel of rogues and liars I described them to be. What a "Jolly-Good-Fellow" and simple-natured official I transformed myself into. Time was wearing away, and so was my patience. A whole week had passed, but that which my mind had foreshadowed had not taken place. I wormed myself like a corkscrew into all the tortuous windings of the boy's mind, and kept saying to myself:—"it must be this evening, or to-morrow," but the fulfilment of my predictions did not come. It was disheartening, but by a sort of unconscious tenacity, I held on. One evening however with an expiration of the most profound relief, I was able to say, "AT LAST!" *The boy had put in an appearance with a new turban of superior jaconet.* Watching my opportunity and complimenting him, in most jocular fashion, on his handsome appearance, I felt the jaconet and told him it was of very superior description, which was strictly true. "How much did you pay for it?" I asked, speaking as na-

turally as I could, though the conversation was of a most momentous character. I saw the faintest shade of uneasiness passing over the countenance before me, but my previous insinuative communications had done their work effectually. *The idea that I was a Police Officer had been erased from the boy's mind.* His answer to me therefore had but a tinge, and a tinge only, of suspicion; and the latter could not but have been involuntary from what followed. The boy answered, but just like an Irishman, by putting another question:—"why, sir—why do you wish to know?" The least want of nerve, the least hesitation would have "spoilt all;" but critical as the situation was, I was not wanting. In less than an instant, without previous thinking, I drew out my handkerchief which I am glad to say was in a most ragged condition, and exhibiting it before the boy, I said to him:—"the whole of my handkerchiefs are in this disgraceful state. I was thinking of buying a fresh dozen, but seeing the jaconet you have, I think it will be cheaper if I were to buy a piece like it and cut it up into handkerchiefs." My apparent ingenuousness finished the job nicely, and the boy with, to me, the most delicious candour, gave me the information—that his jaconet was only half a piece —that he had purchased it the day before, and—that he had given two rupees and a half for it. "Where did you purchase it?" I continued. "At the third stall, on the right-hand side as you go from here, in the Triplicane Goojelly Bazaar Street," was the answer. "Will you come and show me the place," I rejoined, "there is time for it." "Not this evening, I have business to attend to and cannot leave, but to-morrow, any time after eleven, I shall go with you," was the innocent reply. Speaking of his business seemingly brought to the boy's mind the idea that he had immediate work to do, for without saying anything more, he marched off towards the kitchen.

There was not a moment to lose. Twenty-four hours had elapsed, and the Triplicane Goojelly Bazaar Street was an exceedingly active one for trade: as active, in fact, as the little spot of ground which accommodates the famous Evening or Thieving Bazaar of Madras. Controlling myself, however, I went up to the proprietor who was coming towards me from the main building, and walked with him to my pony. Wishing him "good evening," I mounted, rode very leisurely until I was outside the gate, and then choosing the soft side road, dug the spurs in as if I was riding for life. Thanks to the kindness of the boy who had given me such capital instruction I was able to go at once to the particular bazaarman. He was a comfortable-looking Chetty, and fortunately was the only salesman of the Boutique. "Have you any jaconet for sale?" I asked. "Yes," was the reply. "Let me see the remnant of the jaconet you sold yesterday to a gentleman's dressing-boy," I continued, "it is of very fine quality, and I want some yards from the same piece." The man got up, went to the nicely-arranged heap at the further end of the bazaar, pulled out a half-piece of jaconet, and brought it to me. I felt the cloth and said:—"yes, this is the same. What did the boy give for his half-piece?" "Two-rupees-and-a-half," was the answer. "How did he pay you?" I enquired, "in money or with a bank-note?" "He gave me a bank-note for ten rupees, and I gave him the balance." "Will you let me see the note?" I went on. "Yes," said the man, and unlocking the drawer of his Gollah-box, he produced the note. Before this of course the man knew that there was something fishy about the transaction; but he was a legitimate tradesman, and he knew I was a Police Officer. Concealment, therefore, was out of the question, though some fear naturally overtook him. Seeing the discomfort of the man, I said:—"don't be alarmed. This note is a stolen one, but you have received it in the ordinary course of your busi-

ness. The servant who gave it to you is in custody and will be tried very soon, so do not part with it, nor with the half-piece of jaconet." Saying which, I returned the note after putting my initials on it and making a memorandum of its number. I also put my initials on the jaconet and then mounted my pony and rode away.

As may be easily imagined, I was running over with virtuous joyfulness. There was little or nothing more to do· I had to communicate with the Doctor, for the present without the boy's knowledge—to arrest the boy before the slightest suspicion could enter his mind and lead to his secreting of the other property in a place more difficult to be got at, or to his disposal of it beyond recovery, and—on making the arrest, to discover not only where the other property was, but *the impenetrable mystery of the key.*

It was not yet seven o'clock. I therefore came to the Mount Road, wrote a note to the Doctor, superscribing it "emergent," and sent it by a sure hand. It conveyed the information that I had made an unexpected and important discovery, and asked the Doctor to favor me immediately with an interview in the compound of the Madras Club. I necessarily, without saying why, requested that the boy should know nothing of the contents of the note. I called on a friend or two on the Mount Road, and within an hour was in the Club compound, where the Doctor soon joined me. I little knew the blank disappointment which awaited me, and for which, so sure was I, I had not prepared myself. The Doctor was delighted at my success, but, alas! as regards the number of the note, he was as innocent as a baby. How my castle of cards did come tumbling down! The boy was as secure as if he was in an iron-clad fort, or under a protection order of the High Court in a case of insolvency. Merely observing to the Doctor, with a sigh, that I would have to begin my work again, and begging him not to allow the boy to feel that he was even under suspicion, I went home perfectly crest-fallen.

With the next day however my spirits revived, and my brain commenced its scheming again. Without going to the hotel, I cautiously elicited the fact that the boy was not a married man, but that he kept a woman who lived in one of the huts facing the Chintadripettah or St. Andrew's bridge. A miserable, poverty-stricken, East-Indian whom I had known in his better days also lived somewhere about the same spot. I sent him a note and he came to my house without delay. "Do you know the kept-woman of Dr. E —— t's dressing-boy?" I asked. "Yes, very well," he replied, "she lives in a hut close to my house." "Was she at home when you left?" "Yes," again was the answer, and "yes," also to the enquiry whether she was usually at home all day. "At what time does the boy visit her during the day?" I continued. "He comes about eleven or twelve o'clock for an hour or two, apparently for his midday meal." "Go now," I concluded, "and look out for me precisely at four o'clock. As I pass your house, indicate to me only by a motion of your eyes, who the woman is, or which is her particular hut." The man went away, and at four o'clock, I passed his house in company with two Constables. He was seated outside, in the shade, and gave me very satisfactorily to understand that a woman in a new, and very gay, cloth, seated at the door of a hut only a few yards off, was the Delilah who had charmed her sable Samson so completely out of his loyalty to his master. She was indeed capable of working miracles of a most extraordinary kind. She did nothing but sit in her miserable shanty, and yet the magical influence which she emitted was sufficient not only to bind over a man body and soul to her, but to make property perform the mysterious journeys it did; not the least in obedience being the key which with the most astounding intelligence, actually opened the box to set free the "Blackbirds in the Pie," and then quietly slipped back into its confidential position in the Doctor's bosom.

It was by the same or some other miraculous power that the woman scented danger when she saw me; for scarcely had I received the tip, when she jumped up and skedaddled as fast as she could. As she had no wings, and was not quite made nor dressed for running, the result was inevitable. Before she had gone many yards she was obliged to halt and to immediately surrender to me her betel-bag. Looking into that convenient and miscellaneous receptacle, I was almost galvanized into performing the QUACKERWODGER hornpipe, for I had discovered in it, amidst betel, and nuts, and tobacco, and chunam, the Doctor's two satin-and-velvet cherished diamond rings. Compelling the rather tumbled and disconcerted *fille de joie* to avail herself of my most welcome escort, I took her to the BRANCH ELPHINSTONE HOTEL; and I there paid my respects to the dressing-boy, who was of course delighted to see me, especially in the company I was. A few minutes after I had the pleasure of speeding the happy couple over the first stage of the way they would have to travel for the next six months at least. The Doctor identified his rings; and his notes and his cash too had not altogether gone for ever. The following is the written testimony which the Doctor subsequently handed me on a nice sheet of note-paper:—

"Sir,—Major * * * * * *, the Acting Commissioner of Police, having detailed you to discover the person or persons who had robbed me of Rupee Notes, Rupees, and Gold Rings, I have now sincerely to thank you for the skilful manner in which you performed the duty, so that nearly all the property was discovered, and my boy convicted of the theft which was so convincingly brought home to him *by your zeal and ability*.

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) R. C. E——t,

Inspector-General of Hospitals,

British Medical Service.

To

Mr.————, Inspector of Police, Madras.

"But holloa! how about the key? You don't get out of that little matter so easily Mr. Inspector," I fancy I hear the reader say, "The key! The key! Apply yourself to the solution of that riddle, please, as quickly as you can." I admit the impeachment and hasten to supply the information. Having the boy well in hand, I explained to him the utter hopelessness of his situation, and eaten up with as much curiosity as I imagine is now pervading the minds of those who have followed me, I asked him how he had managed to possess himself of an article guarded with such remarkable consistency. "Yes, my master was right," was the answer, "he did wear the key as he described, but he forgot one trifling circumstance. I did get possession of the key, for there were times when he was in the habit of removing the string from his neck, and those were the only occasions on which his vigilance failed. When he went to bathe of a morning, he invariably took off the cord and hung the key on a chair which stood just outside the bath-room door; that is in the room to which the bath-room was attached. I seized my opportunity, helped myself, and replacing the key, took my departure before my master came out." There was nothing more simple and yet nothing could be more perplexing. The Doctor himself was paralysed when I told him how the trick had been done.

It is not difficult to account for the blankness of the Doctor's mind on the point. In the first place the all-absorbing idea with him was not the absence of the key, but the presence of it on his person, and he was thus the slave of a fixed idea. In other words, he was so taken up with the notion of managing so beautifully with his key, that his isolated carelessness never presented itself to him: certainly not with the slightest prominence. When he was in the bath-room, busily, as must be presumed, soaping and tossing water over

himself, time fled with him with inconceivable swiftness, and thus, when he came out and found the key in exactly the same position, and not even the ghost of his boy or of any one else present, his brain spanned the interval, and left the line of his thought, which was independent of the key, unbroken. It was to him just like putting down the key and taking it up the next instant, or taking it up after an interval without moving from where he sat or stood. The incident happened and vanished like the thousands which pass daily before a mind pre-occupied, and which escape wholly unobserved.

THE PRANKS OF CUPID IN A HINDU FAMILY.

WHAT can an Inspector of Police have to do with Love in a Hindu family ? is a reasonable question after the sensational heading which has been adopted for the following not-in-the-slightest-degree-fictitious narrative. "Love! Love in a Hindu family, mixed up especially with the experience of a Police Inspector," the European reader might be imagined as soliloquizing; "what can there be to relate but the story of a faithless wife beginning an amour with a smitten stranger at a well, or in her own house with a domestic: throat-cutting, mutilation, and suicide. Or, a widow maddened into rebellion against her enforced celibacy, exposing to death the pledge of her shame. A coroner's inquest. A Police investigation. A brief record in the newspapers. A trial at the sessions. A verdict of guilty. Sentence of death. A gaping, morbidly-curious, crowd. Hanging!"

"Right, quite right, my masters!" says I, "but attend to the evidence—attend to the evidence. My tale partakes not of tragedy. It professes to portray nought but a genuine diversion of Cupid, such as POLLAKY might have been employed to insert his "Private Enquiry" picklock into, through all its romantic ramifications. It was no police case at all, but the police was resorted to as containing the most inquisitive natures, professionally and privately, in Madras—a body eager and likely to know everybody else's business, and of course having the greatest possible objection to the shadow of an investigation into its own private pursuits.

"Put me down then, I say, for the nonce, not as the Police Inspector preparing cases for the special behoof of Commissioners of Police and Worshipful Magistrates,—not as the Detective, that mysterious individual who worms himself

with many contortions into the secrets of hidden crime, so that outraged society should have its satisfaction even if the penalty be one of blood. Consider me only a private enquirer, one charged with the simple duty of spoiling the progress of a love-affair, well-planned and successfully carried out in its first and second stages. Why I was charged with my special and novel commission is not a matter difficult of explanation. In the first and least important place, the mischief was committed in my division. Under the only remaining and vital consideration, I was the fittest man for the job. The success which had attended me in the unravelling of many a tangled cord, and my well-established knowledge of the native languages and of native life, pointed to me and no other as the 'Man for Galway.'

In beginning my narrative, it is necessary for me to premise that for many reasons I shall draw a veil over the names of the chief actors in it; and I shall also take the same liberty with the localities in which the various transactions I have to record took place. My tale dates back many years, and those who were young and full of life, may, if not dead, be grey-haired men and women; but so long as there is the shade of necessity for doing so, it is incumbent on me to obliterate all traces so that identification of places and persons may become an impossibility.

In one of the streets, then, of the native quarter of Vepery, was situated the residence of a Hindu gentleman of considerable position. He was very high up in the public service, in what capacity I of course should not tell. His services had been valuable, and had gained for him special distinction at the hands of Government, in virtue of which he ranked as a native nobleman. He was wealthy; and from long and intimate association with Europeans, especially of the higher military service, his opinions and views were liberal. He had three sons, whom he had had educated in the

usual way, and who showed themselves to be Hindus of the new school, but not like the outrageous specimens now as thick as small-pox eruption in almost every hole and corner of Madras. They lived independently of the absurdities of Hindu society, but only of its absurdities; for, otherwise, they were domesticated and perfectly loyal to the institutions under which they were born and bred. In course of time the father married his eldest son to a girl who was likely to make her husband a most suitable companion. Father and son being possessed of taste, the choice necessarily fell on not an ignorant kitchen wench, with a soul engrossed entirely by pots and pans, but a delicately brought-up maiden, who, according to the popular view, had been very fairly educated, and who was able to take her place in a family where the females were not regarded as traitresses and slaves. About eighteen months however after the marriage, the girl was unfortunate enough to lose her husband, and she became that most odious of all things in Hindu society, a widow. But she was preserved from the intolerable oppression which, under other circumstances, would thereupon have overtaken her. She still lived with her husband's family; and as their thoughts were not the thoughts of Hindu bigots, her position was similar to that she would have occupied in a European household, except, of course, in the important particular of re-marriage. She was allowed to decorate herself and wear her jewels; she had no degraded occupations devolving upon her, and in all respects she enjoyed the position of an equal. Further misfortunes occurred in the family. The wife of the old man followed the eldest son, and after some months, the old man himself resigned his interests in the service and the world at the same time, and his ashes were mingled with those of his forefathers.

Behold now the family reduced but to three members: the two younger brothers and the girl. The old man had

left them in affluent circumstances. It was unnecessary therefore for the young men to seek what are ordinarily termed situations. They were not horse-riding-and-driving, and gold-cap-and-patent-leather-boot-wearing individuals, but they had their own enjoyments, which consisted in having friends at their house, indulging in music, tea and coffee (something stronger too, perhaps, occasionally), and in playing innocent games with cards and other devices. The chief friends of the young men were males of course. The girl continued to live with the brothers, and was a sister to them in every respect. The death of her father-in-law and mother-in-law made not the slightest difference in her position. Indeed, if there was a change, it was for the better, for she was now in uncontrolled charge of the household. That there was much affection between her and the brothers was certain, and I had proof of it; but more on this point hereafter.

On one occasion the brothers went into Black Town on business and did not return till past nine o'clock in the evening. When they came back, the girl was gone. "Gone?" Yes, gone like yesterday with not a trace behind. Gone, with her jewels to the tune of some thousands of rupees upon her. Gone! but where and with whom, the most careful and distracted enquiry could not elicit. The servants knew nothing, the neighbours knew nothing, and the friends looked as blank as the enquirers themselves. The brothers were filled with grief and consternation. It was not only the loss of the sister they loved, and of the jewels which were a small fortune; but unless she were dead, the disgrace was terrible. She, a widow, leaving her home, and publicly doing that which in domestic seclusion is sometimes condoned, would lose caste and involve the other members of the family in the same fate. Yes, every nerve must be strained to recover her. But in what direction? The suspicion of the brothers alighted, with reason, on one

who had been a companion and friend of theirs, but the least complicity could not be traced to him. He, like the servants and neighbours, knew nothing, and circumstances supported his statements.

Baffled in their own unaided efforts, the brothers, in desperation, appealed to the police. They laid no criminal information. If a lover was in the case they did not thirst for revenge upon him. All that they longed for was the recovery of the girl, and, naturally, of the valuable property which had disappeared with her.

As I said before, I was entrusted with the case, if I may use the word most familiar to me. If permitted to express my own private, not police, feelings, I would say that my sympathies were more with the girl and her lover, if she had one, than with the brothers. Happiness is a matter of relation and degree, and if a grown mortal under certain circumstances flies from, say, happiness of a certain strength to happiness which is stronger, accepting all the consequences of the latter, I do not see what right other grown mortals have to say "nay"! But as I was under the governance of my police feelings, by which must-be understood no feelings at all, I entered with the deepest interest into every plot and plan for carrying out the desire of the two young men. I had some acquaintance before with them, but now I was their most intimate friend, and of course a frequent visitor of theirs. All they could tell me was that which follows.

Their sister-in-law was nearly eighteen years of age, and had never been a mother. She was considered to be a very beautiful girl. She could read and write Telugu fluently, and was the mistress of various other accomplishments. They allowed her considerable freedom: and it thus happened, that when even male guests were in the house, she would come out and join in conversation, or serve them with tea or coffee personally. One of the guests, whose name was

Bactavatsulu Naidu, and who was a man of means, lived not far away, and was a frequent guest. In fact he had been their daily companion either in their amusements or otherwise, and as a matter of course had seen much of their sister-in-law. Their relations with Bactavâtsulu continued undisturbed until to their surprise and anger they found him carrying on a love-correspondence with her. A letter was intercepted accidentally, and this led to exposure, a scene, and the prevention of Bactavatsulu's visits. The sister-in-law promised not to do so again, and to the best of their belief and knowledge, she kept her word. Her disappearance therefore had completely startled them. Very naturally suspecting Bactavatsulu, they had proceeded to his house and questioned him, but he had denied his complicity with emphasis and even strong language and threats ; and although they had watched him carefully, they had discovered nothing against him. Having done all they could, they had applied to the police.

It was clear to me, as it would have been clear to any rational being, that, in spite of appearances, Mr. Bactavatsulu was the prime mover in the spiriting away of the girl. Love, and above all illegitimate love, like stolen fruit, is sweetest of all ; and as must be universally admitted, *la grand passion*, when it has fairly seized two human beings, not only does not subside at command of those who do not realize it, but waxes perfectly furious at every obstacle which presents itself. It is childish too to suppose that Hindu human nature, girt about as it is with preventive checks, is different from other human nature. In truth the fire burns all the more fiercely for its previous smotherment; and it is characterised by an abandonment frequently not observable in cases where the ordinary relations between the sexes are unrestrained.

I took my cue therefore, and put Mr. Bactavatsulu and his house under special supervision, but all to no purpose,

Women visited the females of his family, and men dogged his heels and watched his doors from the early morning to late at night, but he satisfactorily showed himself to be blameless. Not a stray word fell from the females, because their ignorance was complete; and as for Mr. Bactavatsulu himself, he turned out as usual every morning, went about in the most ordinary fashion, and turned-in in a most praiseworthy manner every night. Such at least was my information, for I could not attend him myself. I was obliged to admit that I was baffled by him entirely; and what was worse, I was baffled in every other direction in which I pursued my enquiries. Nearly a month slipped away; and to the anxious questions of the brothers, I was obliged to repeat the same blank replies. To solicitude succeeded alarm. What if the girl had been murdered for the sake of her jewels; and with that thought came the suggestion for genuine police action. But how was it to be initiated? There was nothing, absolutely nothing, to go upon; and yet my superior did not fail to stimulate my endeavors, pressed as he was by the distress exhibited by the brothers. I was as game as ever, but the fight was a hard one. There was never a scrap of hope to give me courage in sustaining the weight ready to roll downwards and reach the plain.

I must turn now to entirely different circumstances. In the same suburb of Madras, a notoriously self-assertive Hindu woman resided. Her name was Gangamma; and as she was eternally in hot-water with the police, I was particularly well-acquainted with her. She was none of your crushed out, bald-headed, widows, but a widow of substance in body and property, and with a command of perfectly Demosthenic eloquence. She wanted no lawyer to plead her cases, but undertook them herself. No liberties with her if you please. She was the proud and happy proprietress of half-a-dozen cows and buffaloes, and of three jutka bandies. She drove a roaring trade in milk and

butter and curds and butter-milk, and her bandies were in constant requisition, as the roads of Madras would be able to testify if they could but speak through the cavernous irregularities which sorely afflict them.

I think Gangamma used to be brought before me by the police on an average twice a week. The charge was always "kicking up a row and obstructing a thoroughfare, by causing a crowd to assemble." Under such circumstances, Gangamma would give herself readily into custody. Gangamma would, with equal readiness, take the necessary trip to the Inspector; and when there, Gangamma would show, to complete satisfaction, that the punctilious regard for duty on the part of the Constables was due, not to fear of a breach of the peace, but to an antecedent refusal on her part to ladle out to them a draught of butter-milk, "free, gratis, and all for nothing." Gangamma was a Scold, and nothing more. There was too much phosphorus in her composition, and that was all. She was as good and generous-hearted a body as one could meet any where, and would pour out copious libations of butter-milk to any one asking her; but when her blood was up, woe to the unlucky individual who applied to her, Bobby, or no Bobby. Knowing exactly how things stood, I invariably let Gangamma off with a caution, and in this way I rather think Gangamma came to have a sneaking regard for me. At all events when passing her house, she would be all smiles and even come down the steps and have a chat.

On one occasion when Gangamma had been brought to my house on the usual charge, and while I was making the usual nominal investigation (my mind running on the mystery which still enveloped the flight of the girl), I thought there could be no harm in questioning her. I did not suspect her in the least of complicity, but she was the proprietress of jutka bandies, and it was possible that though one of her traps did not convey the Run-a-way, a

point on which the police had long ago satisfied themselves, one of them might, since, have borne a freight calculated to give me a clue. I therefore after finishing the farce of cautioning her, sent the Constables away, telling her I wished her to remain. When the men had gone, knowing the soft heart of the woman in spite of her terrible tongue and temper, I appealed to her in her own language, to tell me if she knew anything about the elopement. I drew a most graphic picture of the grief into which the brothers were plunged. I pointed to the shame and scandal which had been caused, and I implored her by all she held dear and sacred, by the kindnesses I had done her, not to refuse me the least information which it was in her power to give. I saw a change stealing over the countenance of the woman, and as I watched it, my heart fluttered with all the palpitation of dyspeptic dreaming. Was I on the brink of a revelation? Was all the torture and disappointment of the month to be terminated, and that successfully? Eureka! I had made the right shot at last! Gangamma merely asked me to come to the back of the house, and I knew, as if it had been told me by a thousand tongues, that the mystery was to be a mystery no more.

I followed Gangamma, and when we were secure from interruption and inquisitive eyes, she said:—"I shall tell you what I know, but swear by your father and mother, by the God you worship, and by the salvation of your soul, that you will never reveal that I was your informant. The man implicated is wealthy and dangerous. He may ruin and bring shame on and even poison me. Do whatever you may therefore: only do not bring me forward." I gave the requisite pledge, fully explaining to her that it was no police case, and that if recovered, the girl would be sent away from Madras, and the whole scandal hushed up. Fully assured therefore she proceeded:—"for the past few weeks,

and on alternate days, my fastest pony and one of my jutka bandies have been hired under very suspicious circumstances. The driver has instructions to be at ten o'clock at night near the sweetmeat bazaar opposite the Friend-in-Need Society's buildings, and by the gate of the People's Park; and by three o'clock in the morning, the bandy and pony come back. I have questioned the driver, but I suppose he is well paid and instructed, for he tells me he knows nothing beyond the fact that a man who is a stranger to him comes up, gets into the bandy, and orders him to drive to various parts of Madras. On returning to the sweetmeat bazaar, he gets out, pays the hire, and marches away after simply telling him to be on the spot again the second (strictly the next) night at the same hour. I of course believed my man, and so long as I got my hire punctually, it was no business of mine to ask further questions. One morning, however, when the jutka returned I was awake, and hearing voices my curiosity was aroused. I was determined to see who this excellent customer of mine was. Stealing out carefully therefore I observed the man who had just got out of the jutka. *It was Bactavatsulu Naidu.* "Will the jutka go to-night?" I asked. "Yes," was the brief reply.

It was enough and I was exultant, for I was quite free of the *Straits of Ballambangjang. The drudgery of labor was over, and I was to reap the reward of it. The case had reached its turning point, that singular stage when every door fast locked before, seems to fly open as it is approached. The point at which the scales seem to drop from the eyes: where every circumstance blocking the way, drops quietly into the rear, and contributes help in the onward march. I was out of the mire in which I was groping

*Note.—The Straits of Ballambangjang, though unnoticed by geographers, are frequently mentioned in sailors' yarns as being so narrow, and the rocks on each side so crowded with trees inhabited by monkeys, that the ship's yards cannot be squared, on account of the monkeys' tails getting jammed into, and choaking up, the brace-blocks.—*Slang Dictionary.*

and stumbling, and I had nothing now to do but to pull on my boots and step out with a firm and full stride.

Dismissing Gangamma with expressions of eternal gratitude, and, it must be said, with a glass of brandy, neat, received and quaffed with delighted shame-facedness and dubious protestations, I sat down to think. "So it *is* Mr. Bactavatsulu after all," I soliloquized. "I must give him the credit of considerable astuteness. He planned and executed his scheme well, and the secrecy which he has managed to preserve right through, including his departure and entry into his own house, entitles him to my respect; but he has left a joint in his armour for all that which must bring him to grief. Yes, Mr. Bactavatsulu, I respect and even admire you very much, but it wanted a wiser head than even yours to carry success so far as to yield you all the satisfaction you wanted. Gangamma, it is true, took unfair advantage of you; but a General to be finally victorious must make no mistakes. He must besides leave undone nothing which ought to have been done. You ought never to have come to Gangamma's house on your return, but I can excuse you on the ground of the impunity you enjoyed, and that is the devil which spoils games like yours. You did well too to employ the same man; but while you ought to have provided for his making himself scarce when suspicion was aroused and he was questioned, a contingency however which did not arise, you committed an irreparable blunder by the regularity of your journeys, and more so by fixing the locality undeviatingly whence you started. You have turned the faces of your cards towards me, and now you must yield the game willing or not willing."

My plan was already formed. The brief statement of Gangamma was ample for all the action needed on my part; and what was better, I could proceed with almost profound secrecy. I was not even put to the necessity of questioning or dogging the driver, who would doubtless have proved

slippery. His account of going to several places was, on the face of it, untrue; for Mr. Bactavatsulu could not be making the girl flit, from cover to cover each day. The mysterious journeys could but have one direction and one termination. I got up, went to my stables, and studied my Ghorawallah carefully. He was a fine sturdy fellow with splendid lungs, and, as I knew, plenty of running in him. I had had him in my service for some time and was able to keep his wife and child in pawn. He was just the man for my purpose, the men of the Police force being, for such a case, what I would describe as *half-baked.* "Cholay," I said, "I want you to do a particular piece of business for me to-night. If you carry it out successfully, you shall have one rupee and a glass of brandy." The man's eyes brightened, and he replied: "I am ready, only try me. Won't I do anything for the master who gives me conjee"? "All right," I returned, "I will speak to you by-and-by."

About half past eight o'clock I called and carefully instructed Cholay to go and seat himself by the sweetmeat bazaar referred to. "An empty jutka will come and halt there at ten o'clock at night," I continued; "watch it like a cat watches a mouse. A native will come and get into it, and it will drive off. Follow it without being noticed as far as you can, and then come back and let me know." Cholay started off; but if it is supposed I had not generalship enough to watch the success of my manœuvre, I give the reader the blandest permission to "write me down an ass." Waiting therefore some little time, I quietly saddled my pony, rode to the Central Station, got a Constable to follow me, and made my way to the New Town gate of the Park, where I dismounted. Getting into the Park and the nearest corner, I saw Mr. Cholay walking about in a most unconcerned manner, now and then stopping to watch the customers at the bazaar. The passers-by grew fewer and fewer, and Mr. Cholay, with more intelligence than I gave him credit for,

withdrew himself from the glare of the bazaar lamps. Presently the jutka appeared with all its windows closed, and the pony walking leisurely. It stopped for a few minutes, turned and went along the General Hospital road, and, after a little time, came back. It stopped again, went up to Law's bridge, and returned; and on this occasion, a figure with a dark shawl or garment thrown over its head, came briskly up to the jutka, and opening the door, vanished inside. The driver whipped his pony and started off in the direction of POONAMALLEE, and as he did so, another figure rose up like magic in the jutka's place. It looked steadily forward for a few instants, and then darted off at a run in the same direction.

With easy mind I vaulted over the Park railings, walked to my pony and rode home. Whether Cholay got back that night or not I can't say, for I turned in at once. In the morning, however, he greeted me as soon as I came out. "Have you told your wife"? was the first question I put him. "Not a word," he returned. "You are a wise man," I rejoined, "for the proverb says;—'Luck surely cometh to the man who hath not a blabbing tongue.' I see you have earned your rupee and the glass of brandy. Now tell me what you did." With much superfluous verbiage, he described to me how the jutka went steadily along the Poonamallee Road, and how he ran after it till he could run no more. How he got past the toll-gate, even to AMAJAKARAI, and how the jutka still sped on like an arrow. "Enough," said I, "here is your rupee," and taking him in, "here is your glass of brandy. Only be careful, and even if you get drunk to-day, not a word to your wife or any one else."

That day passed and the next, and at nightfall I called up Cholay again. Putting two rupees into his hand, I said; "Go, hire a jutka for Poonamallee, get into it at half past nine o'clock, and go slowly up the Poonamallee Road. When the jutka you followed last night passes you, follow

it and keep it in sight. Mark where it stops, go on to Poonamallee, to avoid suspicion, and return to-morrow morning. I was obeyed to the letter, Cholay telling me that the hunted jutka had turned off into VELAPPAN CHAVADI, a village at about the seventh mile-stone. "Very well," I said, "you have earned another rupee and another glass of brandy, and," taking him inside, "here they are."

That day passed and the next. In the evening, calling up Cholay for the third time, I said:—'go now on foot, like a country-bumpkin, to Velappan Chavadi, stand on the Poonamallee Road, follow the jutka when it turns off, mark the house at which it stops, and into which the man getting out enters, and come back as soon as you like." Cholay returned and gave me such a description of the house as made me feel sure I would not mistake it. Poor Bactavatsulu! Little did he know that a bloodhound had been tracking him so ruthlessly. Every thing to him was the same, but, in reality, with what a difference! So it is we mount our horses, or step into our carriages, or go unknowingly into pestilential neighbourhoods, blindly ignorant of the catastrophes which fate may have in store for us: of the precipices at the very verge of which we might have to stand. Ignorance! Verily ignorance is bliss indeed!

There was no doubt that the girl was secreted in the house in Velappan Chavadi, but how was she to be got away. No warrant could be obtained because she was not a criminal in any shape, and being of age she was her own mistress. The jewels were hers. Besides, how could the house be forcibly entered? It was also beyond local jurisdiction. The girl could be waylaid and seized, but that would be an extreme measure; and it would take time, trouble, and many agents, to decoy her to a safe place. Lastly, there was necessity for the utmost secrecy and rapidity of action, for if Bactavatsulu got the slightest wind of

anything, he would most certainly remove the girl to another and perhaps more inaccessible asylum.

I turned the matter over in every possible way, and at last I determined to put in force a ruse which would get me sight of the girl, and perhaps enable me to seize her. Once with the brothers again, I trusted that they would influence her sufficiently to remain with them, and that I would not be put over the coals, like a chop, for any unjustifiable steps I might take. I did not quite like my scheme because there was too much reliance upon chance in it, too much dependence upon circumstances, but it seemed the only one to my hand, and I accepted it.

My first step was to press into service a Pundarum, a man well known in the streets of Madras, with his tall, conical, red cap, the enormous caste-mark on his forehead, his ashes-besmeared face, his slippers, and his guitar. Him I had over at my house secretly; and plying him with brandy, I got him to sing in Telugu. When he had finished, I brought in my tambourine, and naming another song, which he said he knew, I told him I would join him in singing it. He was amazed, but I soon gave him proof that if necessity drove me to it, I also could live by being a Pundarum songster. Behold us now, the gate and doors being closed, trolling out lay after lay as sweet to indigenous ears as the ballad-singing of Europe is to ears attuned thereto.

Completing the rehearsal I broke the ice, and told the Pundarum I had laid a wager with a friend, which he was to pay if I came to his house openly and was not discovered by himself or his family. "What I want you to do therefore is to go with me to-morrow. I shall dress myself as a Pundarum and have a drum, and if we succeed, I shall give you the money I get, for I don't want it, being more interested in tricking my friend." The Pundarum, his cupidity

excited, fell into the trap easily, and I told him to be with me by noon the next day.

In the meantime I went to the brothers and told them I had obtained some clue to the whereabouts of the girl, and got from them a little boy who knew and could identify her, for I had never seen her. Of course I was flooded with questions of a most impatient character; but by a whole string of lies I managed to leave the brothers perfectly in the dark both as to the present and the future.

I wended my way next to the Central Station, and calling up my favorite Head Constable, gave him a commission. "Take three men of the force," I said, "and go without your uniforms up the Poonamallee Road to-morrow at ten o'clock. Stop when you get to the turn which leads to Velappan Chavadi, and remain there. I shall come disguised as a Pundarum. Do not recognize but follow me after a little while. I shall be engaged singing with another Pundarum before a certain house, and when a crowd gathers draw up and join it. You will know when I want your assistance: give it to me without hesitation. Be careful not to tell your brother Constables the business on which they are to go; select them just as you are about to start, and above all, remember, nothing to them as to who is the sham Pundarum."

At ten o'clock the next morning I started my Ghora-wallah with my pony, and a bundle containing my uniform. I gave him the same instructions as I gave the Head Constable. "Go slowly," I said, "for there is no need for haste."

As arranged, the old Pundarum arrived at noon, and I flatter myself I rather flabberghasted him with my get-up. I also had the red cap, the face besmeared with ashes, the enormous caste-mark on the forehead, and the slippers. In fact I was a perfect copy of himself, the only difference being that

I had no white beard, and in place of a guitar, I carried a small drum. But beside me, no doubt also to his astonishment, stood a little Pundarum. A jutka stood at the gate; and any body watching the operation would have seen nothing more than three Pundarums getting into it about one o'clock, and driving off towards the Poonamallee Road. How different however were the circumstances. The reader knows what I was after, and the young Pundarum was mad, according to his instructions, to see the girl and draw my attention to her by a tug at my garments; but the poor old Pundarum! little did he know the novel and extraordinary adventure in which he had embarked. What he would have done if he had been enlightened, it passes me to say. What he did when the interest culminated, the reader will soon know.

Very leisurely we went along, and it was getting on to three o'clock when we approached Velappan Chavadi. About a quarter of a mile away I stopped the jutka, and we got out. Telling the driver to remain where he was, I gave the Pundarum a heavy dose of brandy, and we pursued our further way on foot. The pony was grazing and Cholay sleepily watching it; and the Head Constable and his three companions, with bare heads, small bundles, and their bamboos, were apparently taking a short rest under a tree. Turning off and following the direction indicated previously by Cholay, I arrived with my companions before the house in which the bird was undoubtedly accommodated. "Stop," I said to the Pundarum, "let us begin here;" and forthwith we tuned up and commenced a favorite Telugu ballad. Scarcely had we completed a couple of bars, when out, bounding, came a Telugu girl. Tug! went my upper garment; and looking at my little companion, by a most expressive motion of the eye, he conveyed to me the delightful information that the long-sought SITAMMA was before us. She was indeed a pleasant little sinner to look upon.

Such eyes—such a clear soft skin—such perfection of development—such a figure—such unstudied delight in her countenance : she was a girl to raise one's benevolence to the most extravagant pitch, and Bactavatsulu's dementia, instead of being any thing extraordinary, was traceable to the most reasonable of causes. What of it if he spent his money lavishly—if he lost his alternate nightly rest—if he went through all the torture of a love intrigue—if he submitted to a fourteen miles' shaking in a jutka every forty-eight hours. There was the balm which consoled him for everything, and a very delicious animated kind of balm it was too. However, Balm did not at the time wait for more than an additional bar or two, for she turned and rushed into the house again, calling out, in a very pleasant voice, with all the innocent joyousness of a child (a proceeding which made her still more charming) :—" Sister ! sister ! come and listen to the beautiful song the Pundarums are singing." And there was I like a brute of an Ogre, ready to swallow Sitamma, innocent joyousness, sin, and all. Presently, poor unconscious thing, out she came again, accompanied by several women both old and young, but how different she was from them. She was the child of breeding and delicate care: they, the ordinary specimens of Hindu working women. We proceeded with our song. Out of their houses came the neighbours. The children in the street dropped their play and came and stared at us with their great, black, beady, eyes. Men passing stopped, seated themselves on the pials, and listened. The shepherd-boys left their cattle and joined the throng. We ceased, tuned up, and commenced again. The crowd was entranced and lost all sense of shyness. A side-glance revealed to me my Head Constable and his companions. The time was approaching fast. Closer, close up, like school boys standing in class, came the women and children; and in the front rank of the former was Sitamma. Who so enrap-

tured as she, for it was of Love we sang. There! at last! she was within reach! Down went the drum, and in the next instant I had Sitamma by the wrists. She screamed—how she did scream—and oh! the uproar which reigned. The women in indignation and terror abused and shrieked in the same breath; the children fled crying, the shepherd-boys thought of and ran to their cattle, and the men, the first shock of astonishment and fear over, loudly threatened. As for the poor old Pundarum, when I looked to where he had stood, all that was to be seen of him was his guitar and slippers, and they were being trampled mercilessly and with the utmost impartiality, in the dire disorder which prevailed. I turned a hasty, backward, glance to see if my pony was up. It was, but I also saw the Pundarum flying for his life. His cap was turned the wrong way, and his garment streamed in the wind like the Union Jack at the top of the Fort flagstaff. Poor fellow! who could fail to appreciate his agonizing terror? He knew I was no Pundarum; but in spite of his knowledge of me as a police officer, being but acquainted with the worst side of foreign character, he thought I was bent on ravishing the girl. It was cruel to trick him as I did, but what was I to do?

It takes long to narrate all that occurred, but the whole drama was compressed into instants. "Hold her," I shouted to the Head Constable, making the girl over to him, and addressing his myrmidons, I said, "I am Inspector————, use your bamboos if necessary to prevent a rescue." Courageous enough in having none but natives and villagers to deal with, they formed themselves quickly and drove back the crowd. This gave me time to call up my Ghorawallah. "Quick, my uniform" I said as he arrived. He untied the bundle rapidly and handed me my coat. "You see," I said addressing the crowd, "I am a Police officer, and I have come here to arrest this girl. She has run away from her family with a lot of stolen jewels. No interference

therefore, for if you do not let me pass, I shall have the whole of you put in jail." The crowd was thunderstruck, and allowed me to lead Sitamma away with never a word or sign of opposition. I brought my poor victim to the jutka and put her in, entering it myself with the Head Constable after putting on my uniform. The other men I sent to Madras on foot with the young Pundarum in their charge.

When fairly on our way, "Sitamma" I said, taking her hand in a paternal way, "do not cry. I am not taking you to jail: look upon me as your friend. I have come from your brothers-in-law, who have not ceased to grieve from the day you came away, and who are most anxiously waiting to receive you again. You acted very foolishly in leaving a home where you were happy, to go with a man of whom you knew nothing, and who, before many days were over, would have left you in the street. Be a good girl for the future, and nothing will be said, I promise you, of all that has occurred." The hysterical condition she was in rendered her perfectly inconsolable for a time; but with the snatches of Telugu songs I sang—the proverbs I quoted—the side-conversation I carried on with the Head Constable—the humbugging statements I made as to her now doing (as if by her own free will) what was an act of unparalleled virtue—the flattery of her beauty, and—a magnification of the useless sacrifice she had made of herself, she came round much more quickly than I thought she would. She positively began to hate Bactavatsulu, and seemed disposed to accept me, instead, as a lover. There however was the "to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow!" in store for her. The next day, or perhaps the next, I knew reaction would set in—the horrible blankness of life—the cruel pain—the deadly faintness of the heart—none of which would vanish or subside till physical power reasserted itself; but what had I to do therewith? She

must suffer as myriads have done before, and as myriads must do hereafter, victims of social systems either stricken to death; or who live to laugh heartily at their folly though with the remnant of a sting all the same.

Taking advantage of the lively, confiding, and inquisitive mood in which Sitamma was, I questioned her as to the occurrences of the past month; and like the heroine of a perfectly legitimate adventure, she told me how, in spite of prohibition and promise, she had continued correspondence with Bactavatsulu through an outside servant—how she gave notice of the absence of the brothers—and how Bactavatsulu arranged for, and carried out, the elopement. "The evening I left," she continued, "we went to a Dancing girl's house in Black Town, Bactavatsulu merely dropping me and returning to his house. I stayed there that night and the next day, and at midnight the Naidu came again and brought me straight to VELAPPAN CHAVADI, from where I did not stir until you, a thief (thonga) and not a Pundarum, stole me as you did." She insisted on knowing too how I had found her out, and without the slightest demur I gave her an account of my adventures, falsifying nothing but the Gangamma episode, including the following of the jutka from the sweetmeat bazaar. "But Sitamma" I went on, "where are the jewels you wore? You have nothing on you now." "Oh! they are with the dancing girl" she replied, "they were taken off at once to be kept in safety for me." "Can you tell me what they were?" I asked. "Yes" she returned, and gave me a list of them." "Where is the dancing girl's house?" She gave me the street. "What is her name?" I continued. She mentioned it. I knew the woman.

The shades of night had fallen when we reached Madras, and I ordered the jutka driver to the house of the brothers. Arriving there, I went in at once, and told the anxiously-waiting young men that I had brought the girl. Out they sprang and brought her in; and in the midst of the general

embracing and crying, which brought the tears even into my eyes, I stole out, for my work was not over.

Into the jutka I jumped once more, and in an instant was rolling to Black Town at the top of the pony's speed. I drew up at the dancing girl's house, and without the slightest ceremony, entered it. "Kanakamma," I said to the woman who was present, "you know me. I have come for the jewels left here by the girl whom Bactavatsulu Naidu brought and took away again. You have done a bad business, and, unless you hand over every thing which was left with you, I shall have to take you away to prison with me. I shall let you off only on the condition that nothing is missing. The woman was terrified into submission and produced the jewels, intact, in a bundle from her box. I drove home in high spirits, as may be imagined, not feeling the slightest fatigue even after the tremendous exertions of the day; and I must confess I was mischievously, revengefully, delighted at the idea that it was Bactavatsulu's night, and that he no doubt was speeding to Velappan Chavadi. For what?

At ten o'clock the next morning I went again to the brothers. The house was as silent as if there was a death in it. Taking the elder brother with me, I went to the Commissioner's Office, and there delivered to him the jewels I had recovered, which he pronounced to be all that had been taken away.

Of the subsequent life of the family I know nothing, and I never saw Bactavatsulu, Sitamma, and the brothers again, nor even did I enquire after them. They were mere passing phenomena in my experience as an Inspector of Police, and so they remained to the end. The Pundarum however I often saw and still see. Soon after his misadventure, I presented him with another guitar and with a *douceur*, which I trust compensated him for the losses he had sustained. Also for the desperate fright he had suffered in lending his valuable, though unconscious, assistance towards putting a stop to the "PRANKS OF CUPID IN A HINDU FAMILY."