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By THE AUTHOR OF "INDIA IN 1983"

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CHAPTER I.

THE small Indian station of Muddeenuggur is not usually regarded as a very attractive place of residence. It is thus described in the local gazetteer :—"Muddeenuggur, situated in such and such degrees of latitude and longitude ; population, 10,000, about, is headquarters of a collectorate; civil court; and dispensary; district jail; trade with the neighbouring towns, barley, linseed, cotton, ghee; post office and telegraph line under construction." This interesting and voluminous description may possibly fail to convey any very vivid or picturesque idea to the mind, and so we may add that

Muddeenuggur is a grey mud-built town in the middle of a grey plain which stretches far around, broken only by dark green clumps of neem and mango trees, and bounded on one side by a low range of red and yellow hills. The town is not conspicuous, being flat as to the roofs like the plain on which it is built; and the only obvious features are melancholy little wind-catches, shaped like prompters' boxes, which are fondly intended to intercept any passing breeze. It is a slightly depressing landscape. Beneath the fierce rays of the May sun the thirsty soil gapes in multitudinous cracks, and in the summer rains the fields become mere quagmires of soft mud.

Such are the outward characteristics which meet the eye of the visitor to Muddeenuggur, or, rather, would meet the eye were there any visitors to this remote spot. But the only travellers who ever come to Muddeenuggur are Hindu traders on donkeys or ponies, or long lines of desponding pilgrims intent on depositing their humble offerings at the foot of the shrine under the great banyan tree in the

middle of the bazaar. The former are too intent on their nefarious schemes to recover money due, or not due, to them, and too absorbed in the fraudulent calculation of infinitesimal fractions of interest on imaginary sums to feel much interest in the natural scenery of the place; and the latter are too fully occupied in observing the conduct of the heavily-laden women and animals who march in front, and too absorbed in the never-ceasing speculation as to how much or how little will satisfy the greedy Brahmins and propitiate the gods, to bestow much thought on the colouring and features of the familiar landscape. Besides which to them it *is* familiar; and other or European travellers there are none. It is not on the beat of the ubiquitous globe-trotter and intelligent member of parliament bent on acquiring personal experience of Indian facts in order to "floor" some inexperienced Under-secretary in the House of Commons. These are fain to amass their extraordinary acquaintance with the systems of land-tenure in the streets of Calcutta and Bombay, and to gain

that intimate knowledge of the wishes and aspirations of the Hindu population, which always distinguishes the travelled M.P., from a contemplation of the native as he appears in the Simla bazaars.

And yet the place has its charm to those who know and love the country life of India. In the freshness of early dawn, that tabernacle of the rising sun in which the Indian peasant is a constant worshipper, the colouring of these far-stretching plains with their patches of green cultivation and oases of umbrageous foliage, the creaking of the well wheels, the rush of water along the channels, and the cries of the ryot, as he urges his patient oxen, have an indescribable fascination which is all their own. Then the hush of the hot noon, broken only by the rustling of the crops and the chirp of the cicalas; then the warm, soft evening, the lowing of the incoming cattle, the plaintive songs with which the poor labourer enlivens the brief hours of domestic peace after the work of the day; and then the silence of the night when the sky is

brilliant with the solemn procession of gleaming stars or the clear white light of the calm-shining moon, when the very mud huts seem idealised and touched with a soft splendour which is hardly of this world,—all these things—if one has eyes to see, and a soul to understand the pathos of a continuous human existence through long centuries of mornings and evenings, sun and darkness, rain and sunshine—speak with a divine voice and touch the brooding hearts of mortal men. "*O fortunati nimium, sua si bona nôrint,*" one is apt to think when one contemplates these simple peasants. What to them are Ilbert Bills, Home Rule aspirations, or the sympathy of the Radical party? If the Government (represented by the collector) be but kind; if the gods send good rain and the crops come up abundantly; if the Brahmin is not more than usually grasping; and if the village policeman does not extort more than his normal amount of backshish, and there is enough over to provide a small dowry for the little daughter of the house, and a simple marriage feast after satisfying the wants of "Master

Gaster," that shameless member, what care they for aught else? "*Du pain, pas de si longs discours!*" shouted the starving women in the galleries during the French Revolution, so insensible, says Carlyle, were these poor creatures to parliamentary eloquence. And if Lal Mohun Ghose were to address his fellow countrymen on politics here, they would simply regard him as a strange variety of "Sahib," more than usually unintelligible, and go their way as though he were not. They have not—and this lamentable deficiency is, sad to say, shared by about two hundred millions of their fellow subjects—ever even heard of him whom men fondly conceive of as their idol—that most bewildered ποίμην λαῶν, Lord Ripon, the Great and Good, and Friend of the People.

However, to unideaed Anglo-Indians the place presented few attractions save for the shooting, and indeed it had been regarded during many years as a kind of penal settlement to which officers who had failed socially at the Governmental centres, or whose absence

was deemed desirable on other grounds, were sent to meditate over their shortcomings. Not a few had had leisure to expiate amid the heat of Muddeenuggur, "the sombre close of some voluptuous day," when they rashly engaged in a flirtation with the reigning favourite of some Governor or Member of council. It was hard to get a Collector to stay in the place. Some got ill and had to go forthwith; others got their wives and families ill and worried the authorities till, on account of their importunity, the Government arose and transferred them whithersoever they needed. But at last an officer was appointed, who, to the great satisfaction of the ruling powers, announced his intention of staying there if possible for the rest of his service, an amiable resolution with which no one felt disposed to quarrel. He was a civilian of the old school, whose great object was to get away as far as possible from the Secretariate, and to be allowed to administer his district without government interference. "The heads of the government are almost almost always d—d fools," he blandly ex-

plained to account for his desire of distant independence, "and it is those pert young under-secretaries that I can't stand." They certainly did deride his work though he was a thoroughly efficient district officer in his way. "I like my people, and they like me," he was wont to allege over a peg and a cheroot, "and d—n all your tabulated statements, and reports, and local boards, and sanitation, and God knows what." So the attitude of the secretariate towards this unsatisfactory official was one of unceasing depreciation and contumely. Government "regretted" to observe the slow progress of sanitation, the absence of interest in the newly-constituted boards was also "deplored," and indeed local self-government this experienced officer regarded much as the unregenerate nigger regarded the sacred rite of total immersion, simply as "derned foolishness." The figures in his reports when added up, compared, and percentages taken of them presented results so remarkable as to justify a belief that they were put in haphazard, and the absence of large inclosed tracts

of barren land, which the Government were pleased to denominate reserved forests, was also the subject of continual stricture. "Of course, I know," the collector would remark to his friends when these missiles of government resolutions reached him, "that the figures are all bosh, so are all the figures from every collectorate, only I say so, and the other collectors don't, and as for forests, a d—d young fellow came down here and wanted to take up the whole district, which is as bare as the palm of my hand, as a reserved forest. Of course the people howled, so I had him out of that pretty sharp. As to local boards, the fellows won't come, or if they do, they only say, 'Jo hukum' and 'Sahib ki khushi,' except on one occasion when they wanted to pass a resolution asking the government to let them off all assessment for a year or two; I had to explain that this was going slightly beyond their sphere of action. And as for sanitation, good God, what the devil good have all these sanitary inspectors, from the Sanitary Commissioners downwards ever done! They

travel about and suggest, and I write back and say I have no funds for the purpose, and so things go on. I think I shall get a printed form expressly for them. Give me a few millions and I'll sanitate fast enough; you can't make bricks without straw. Let the people alone I say, and don't worry them. You can't change an ancient population in a day by writing trash in voluminous reports." Such being the benighted views which the old gentleman held on administration, it was not to be wondered at that brilliant young secretaries selected old Johnson (for such was his name) as a good object on which to vent their smartest sarcasm, but these slings and arrows of an outraged Secretariate moved the old collector but slightly. "I don't care what that d—d fool, Smithers, (his especial *bête noir* with the government) writes," he was wont to say; "they can't cut my pay, and they could not replace me here. But at the same time I'll back my district for absence of crime and general good feeling against any district in the Presidency." And so the worthy man consoled himself with a

whisky and soda, and went on his way, wisely ruling his charge like some benevolent despot of old. At all events the people loved and trusted "Jansin Sahib," and knew that they could come to him for anything, and it is perhaps open to question whether his way was not the best after all.

He had successfully resisted the introduction of the telegraph; "they (meaning the government) only want to expedite their infernal reports with it," he said; and he had even suggested that if the post were to come only once a week it would be an improvement. This suggestion was indeed treated with dignified contempt, but as long as the snipe and the quail and the wild pig were fairly plentiful, and they generally were, and as long as the Revenue Survey Department was kept in proper check, he felt that he had not much cause for complaint. There was only one subject on which he really had a chronic grievance with the government. He was an enthusiastic votary of the noble game of whist, and as the European popula-

tion of Muddeenuggur only consisted of a judge, a police officer, a civil surgeon, and an assistant collector, his rubber on the departure of any officer was always in danger. With the judge, who was apt to interfere legally with his occasionally high-handed acts of administration, he was in a condition of intermittent hostility. Besides, the present judge was married, and did not care to go out and sit up to all hours of the night every evening, and so, practically, Johnson was, as a rule, reduced to the other officials. Now civil surgeons always had a knack of getting transferred from Muddeenuggur. There was no private practice, as the government officers had their medical attendance free, and the jail work was slightly monotonous. Whenever one went away a long and anxious time ensued before another was appointed, as volunteers for the post did not eagerly present themselves, and most doctors, when appointed, began forthwith to make excuse. This was the state of affairs now, till at last the collector, stirred beyond his wont, had written

to say that no important measure of sanitation could be carried out unless a European officer was at once appointed. "That ought to fetch them," he said, "and then we will leave off this cursed single-dummy;" but one morning, shortly after this, the assistant-collector Symonds, entering the office, found his chief purple and almost speechless with indignation, holding an open government resolution in his hand. "Just read that, Symonds," he said. "D——n that fellow, Smithers; he only does it to spite me, I know, but I'll be even with him some day." Symonds took the government resolution and read:—

"APPOINTMENTS.

"No. 365, G. D. of 188—.

"Read letter from the collector and magistrate of Muddeenuggur reporting that the services of a European medical officer are urgently required at that station to carry out important sanitary reforms.

"Transferred to the medical department.

"Retransferred to the general department.

"Resolution—Government regret that no officer is available at present, but sub-assistant surgeon Cæsar de Souza has been directed to proceed forthwith to Muddeenuggur and report himself to the collector at that station.

"J. SMITHERS,
"*Secretary to Government.*"

"Did you ever see anything like that?" demanded the furious collector. "I'm shot if I'll stand it; I'll resign, I'm blowed if I don't; it's too bad. Smithers knows I want a fourth for whist, and he sends me a native —Cæsar de Souza, too! Gad! what a name! some d——d Portugoose, I take it, as black as my hat. Oh, here's Tompkins," he continued as Major Tompkins, superintendent of police, entered the office. "Look here, Tompkins, how do you like this? A blasted Portuguese coming here as civil surgeon; it's a shame. Praise God I am never ill, but I would not trust my life to a scoundrel like that; how would you like him to attend your wife, eh, Tompkins, my boy? However, that won't worry you much," which indeed was true, for pretty little Mrs. Tompkins did not trouble Muddeenuggur much with her society, her gay existence being spent mainly on the hills. "Thank heaven I am not married, to have an infernal black fellow fussing round your house; it's all that d——d Smithers," he resumed, "because I pointed out what a

fool he made of himself in his remarks on my administration report. I proved that he did not know the meaning of the commonest revenue terms, confound him!" and Johnson went on for some half hour blowing off indignant steam, while a patient munshi sat cross-legged, only evincing his presence by an occasional subdued cough, awaiting such time as the enraged sahib would condescend to sign an enormous mass of vernacular orders which lay by his side. "Well," he concluded, "this means single dummy, or rather double dummy, if Tompkins takes his leave all this hot weather, nice prospect, by Jove! However, black doctor or no black doctor, we'll go after the quail this afternoon. Here, bring me a peg and a cheroot, and let's have all these papers to sign;" and, having blown off his indignation, the old gentleman proceeded to wrestle with more or less illegible vernacular documents for an hour or so, leaving off every now and then to ejaculate, "Cæsar de Souza! Gad! what a name! D——n that Smithers!"

His worst fears were more than realised when about a week afterwards a humble card bearing the name "Cæsar de Souza" printed on it, not quite straight, was handed to him in his office, and Cæsar de Souza himself made his appearance. He was not a prepossessing object; he was short, of a dusky complexion, with a hanging, heavy under-jaw, and a large and sensual mouth, which a scanty and straggling black beard and moustache set off, if they did not adorn. The only thing that was striking about him, and which alone redeemed his face from sheer bestial vulgarity, was a broad and roomy forehead, massively set over a pair of remarkably luminous and thoughtful eyes, the expression of which it was not very easy to define. But to old Johnson, looking at him as a whole, with no very penetrating analysis, he appeared simply repulsive, and the utter impossibility of such a man making a fourth at whist stirred again his furious wrath against Smithers.

However, Johnson was always a gentleman, and kind to his subordinates, and the humility

of de Souza's address quite disarmed him; for there was nothing the old collector hated so much as your pushing, familiar, educated native, and had once nearly had a fit consequent on his being addressed as "Johnson" by a Bengali B.A. His explosion of language on that occasion saved his life, but nearly blew the roof off the house where the incident occurred. However, Cæsar de Souza was the personification of awkward modesty, and after a few words of greeting and a few remarks from the collector as to the dispensary and jail, he sidled out of the room. Johnson went at first pretty frequently to see how he was getting on at his work, but finding that the dispensary and hospital were always clean and well looked after, and that the people spoke in high terms of the care and attention of the new sub-assistant surgeon, he left him alone to go his own way, and did not trouble his head very much about him.

"All right this morning?" he would say, as he cantered up to the dispensary, "*sub utcha*,

eh?" and without getting off his horse he would sign the book.

"Everything satisfactory, no complaints," was his exhaustive entry, and then he would gallop off promptly to his bungalow for breakfast. He had had a lesson; an unfortunate observation he had once made in a dispensary book had involved him in a correspondence which filled two files, and lasted about four months with the medical department, and nothing came of it at the end. No one could found a correspondence on "Everything satisfactory" to which he always, unless there was some glaring mismanagement, wisely confined himself. Besides, the man evidently knew his work, and did it, so why should he interfere at all? Johnson liked men to do their own work and not worry. So Cæsar de Souza lived and worked on quietly at the dispensary, and the life of Muddeenuggur went on much as usual.

CHAPTER II.

"DO you know," said Symonds one evening to his chief, "that I have begun to think that we have got hold of rather an extraordinary man in Cæsar de Souza!"

"How extraordinary?" asked old Johnson. "I mark the king, that makes me game." The rubber had collapsed that evening, the judge could not come, and the collector was reduced to playing *écarté* in the verandah with his assistant, greatly to his discontent. "How extraordinary? He seems to me a good doctor, but a commonplace kind of Portugoose of the period;" and the old gentleman took up the cards and placed them on one side, the game being finished, preparatory to having a farewell peg.

"Well, I think sometimes he is a genius,"

answered Symonds. "A kind of Faraday or Pasteur; and sometimes I think he is a fool."

"I'll take odds he is the latter of the two," said Johnson, "if you ask me."

"No, but he is not," said Symonds. "I have seen a good deal of him lately; he has got a splendid microscope, which he bought out of his savings, and he reads immensely —all medical works, you know, and physiological works, and he'll make some wonderful discoveries some day. He was talking to-day about the proper principles of research, and how scientific men were, as he thought, on the wrong track in their speculation as to disease, and he spoke really with eloquence; he does not believe much in the germ theory."

"Doesn't he? Well, I'm with him there," said old Johnson. "I don't believe in the germ theory either. Germ theory be blowed! My rules of health are, get up early in the morning, take lots of exercise, don't do too much office work, and drink good whisky, and you needn't worry about your germs." It is but justice to this excellent official to

state that he carried out all his four rules very completely.

"Ah, but still," said Symonds, "that isn't everything; I think these speculations on disease are awfully interesting; I am thinking of writing in about him and getting government to take him up somehow."

"Don't you do anything of the kind," said old Johnson; "if a man has really got something in him, you may take your oath that an appreciative government will be the last people to encourage him; they only like men who write trash. Now, look here," resumed the collector, "you're a smart young man beginning life, and I'll give you a wrinkle free of charge. Never answer an official letter—except mine, by Jove, but then I don't write trash—but never you answer any government official letter till they've called for it three times, and you'll get rid of fifty per cent. of your correspondence. I've tried it, and know. Some fool of an understrapper forgets to send you a third expediter, and really in ninety cases out of a hundred it does not matter a

straw as far as the government of this great country is concerned whether the thing is answered or not."

"Um," said Symonds, "this is very valuable advice, but it seems to me that if I acted on it wiggings from government would descend on me. But, really," he continued, "you should go and see De Souza, and see his discoveries, and how he conducts his investigations—it's worth a visit. He goes in for cholera a good deal."

"I'll see him blowed first," returned old Johnson. "*Ne sutor ultra crepidam*, which I take to mean, let the sub-assistant surgeon stick to his dispensary, and I'll stick to my work. I don't mind your going, anyhow, if you like. Government will think you're a zealous officer, but don't you neglect your other work, or I'll be down upon you. They'll never find out anything about cholera. That old fool Deputy-Surgeon-General Smith was down here last cold weather and talked to me about it till I was sick, and he knew no more about it than I did. Smoke good baccy, that's

my simple preventative, and he didn't know a better one. Just you remember that, young man, and also don't lead trumps as you did the other evening when you've only got three, and no strong suit to bring in, or you'll infallibly come to grief in your course through life.

"Well, I'll be off to bed now, I think," continued the worthy old gentleman. "Five o'clock to-morrow sharp, and we'll secure the wily snipe. I suppose you don't want to go to the dispensary every morning, do you?" And after finishing their whiskies and sodas, the two administrators of the district separated for the night.

Symonds was not the first who had thought Cæsar de Souza to be a man of by no means an ordinary type. At college his professors and teachers had also wavered between the opinions, either that he was a fool, or that he might possibly turn out a man of genius. At lectures he sat, as a rule, in heavy and apparently uninterested silence, but, at times, if a new theory was broached, or a doctrine, not absolutely established, propounded, he had the knack of

asking some question which showed that he had gone to the very root of the matter, and had placed his finger on the one assailable point in the argument. In fact, his questions, though rare, generally "floored" the professors when they did come, and a sort of panic ensued; and the lecturer's mind was usually divided within his shaggy breast whether to abruptly close the lecture or to rapidly turn to some other subject, when he saw Cæsar de Souza slowly preparing to ask him something. However, he took no remarkable degree, but passed out in the usual way, and since his departure from college he had not been much heard of except as a painstaking medical subordinate.

But the fact was that, under that heavy and unprepossessing exterior, lay what, for want of a better term, we must describe as a real genius for scientific research. He had that infinite capacity for taking pains, that inexhaustible patience which will allow no doubtful stage to be passed over or neglected, and that keenness of vision for the really important phenomena which have distinguished all great scientific

thinkers from Aristotle to Pasteur. He had also a wonderful capacity for pure thinking. For days he would brood over some apparently unimportant trifle which had attracted his notice in the course of some investigation, till his luminous intellect had grasped what it really portended and all its bearings on other and cognate matters. It was this capacity for brooding over a problem which marked him off from his fellows, had any one had the insight to perceive it, but his general uncouthness repelled the interest which his professors might otherwise have felt in him, and only one had the vision to discern and the intelligence to assert that Cæsar de Souza would go far. But how far he could go, none looking at his face, of which heavy stolidity was the main apparent characteristic, could possibly have guessed.

The genesis of disease, especially cholera, which seemed to have a strange fascination for him, had, of course, from his very earliest years in college, attracted his enthusiastic attention, and he eagerly read everything that had been written on the subject. The vague theories

usually propounded excited his contempt, and hardly less so the so-called discoveries of Professor Koch. He was, of course, aware that this so-named cholera bacillus was a phenomenon attending nearly all diseases, and that it was no more the cause of cholera than it was the cause of the saliva of the mouth, of which also it is a constant attribute. Indeed, as in the process of digestion, the comma-shaped bacillus appeared at times to exercise a positively beneficial influence. Obviously the *causa causans* lay much deeper, and at first the problem seemed to him, as it has always seemed to all medical investigators, perfectly insoluble. The capriciousness of the disease, the extraordinary vagaries of its appearance, the uncertainty of its effects, the immense number of theories which appeared to be established by one set of observations and completely disproved by another—all these seemed almost to make its operations as incalculable as the actions of a human being. But these difficulties only stimulated his ardour, and, born thinker as he was, and firmly impressed with

the scientific view of life, he was convinced that by persistent thought, aided by the imagination and by constant investigation, the intricate problem would at last disclose itself to the human mind. The theory that cholera was only a disease of the nervous system fascinated him for some time, it fitted in with many of the observed phenomena, the great activity of the spinal cord and the sympathetic nervous centres which always attended the disease, if it did not produce it; the probability that such nervous excitement might be produced by cosmical and atmospheric conditions which would account for the capricious and eccentric nature of its appearances, such as the broad band of cholera which was known to have travelled through an English camp on one occasion in India—these and many other phenomena seemed to support the nervous theory, and, indeed, he became convinced, though he rejected the theory as an exhaustive account of the genesis of cholera, that this, no doubt, was one of the ultimate factors in producing the choleraic symptoms.

The theory of a germ introduced into the body by contagion he rejected; in the first place, all attempts at creating artificial cholera by transferring a microbe from a diseased to a healthy body had failed, and the non-contagiousness of cholera had been borne in upon him by his almost every-day experience. But a physiological fact which he had observed, and which, no doubt, will be the starting-point in tracing the development of diseases, set his thoughts on a new track. He had become aware that certain albuminous substances in the human body which serve useful purposes, or, at all events, are innocuous where they naturally exist, are a rank poison when introduced into the blood, and produce that most mysterious phenomenon which has never yet been really explained—that of coagulation, and consequent death. In fact, each man carries about in himself enough poison to kill himself ten times over, were nature's operations interfered with, without any external substance being introduced at all. De Souza had, of course, observed the extraordinary fluidity of

the blood during cholera, and it occurred to him that there might be some proteid substance in the body which, when introduced into the blood, might cause this fluidity, as other proteid substances did, unquestionably, cause the coagulating tendency.

Going a point further, he conceived that cosmical and especially electrical conditions might affect the nerves, and that the blood might be apt to take into itself such foreign substances as might cause this fluidity in addition to, or in consequence of, the great development of nervous activity, so that cholera might be the ultimate result both of atmospheric conditions and also of blood-poisoning, thus combining the two rival theories.

On these lines he worked with a tenacious patience and indomitable energy, baffled at one time by some seemingly contradictory result, then finding himself able to turn the flank, as it were, of this new difficulty, and so in unwearied thinking "*cherchant en gémissant*," as Pascal said all men should do—he had spent a joyless youth and bid fair to spend a still

more pleasureless old age, haunted by the problems of nature which seemed to recede as he advanced, and to conceal all the more jealously their inexhaustible secrets the further he penetrated into their mysteries.

He was seated one evening when the day's work was over, with his microscope before him, brooding over certain facts he had observed during his investigations, when his reverie was abruptly broken in upon by the village postman, who came with a letter on which postage had to be paid. De Souza looked at it, and found that it had been sent after him from Bombay, having been addressed to the college, and when he opened it he could hardly decipher the contents. It was written in that peculiar dialect which the inhabitants of Goa fondly imagine to be the Portuguese language, and it was in a faint, trembling, and almost illegible hand. However, he made out that it was from his mother, whom he had not seen since he left college, and that she implored him to come to her as she felt that she was dying. De Souza had no particular affection

for his mother who, indeed, had not exhibited any towards him, and he had not seen her for some years. With the absorbing passion of genius he felt at first impatient that his researches should be interrupted by commonplace family duties; however, with a sigh, he resolved that he must go, and on the next morning went humbly to the collector to ask a week's leave of absence. That good-natured official granted it at once—"the fellow sticks to his work and deserves it," he said to himself—"All right," he observed, "be back within a week, I suppose the hospital assistant can carry on for that time; a pleasant holiday to you. Good morning," and he never even inquired the reason for this request, which was somewhat an unusual one for De Souza to make.

De Souza left the same afternoon, and proceeded by cart and railway to the small town on the sea-coast near Bombay which his mother had indicated. He had been told by her, rather to his surprise, to ask for "Merton Madam Sahib," and the next day, after

wandering fruitlessly through the whole village, he at last discovered her in a small mud hut in the outskirts of the town where the wind blew fresh from the sea through the cocoa-nut trees, and where he could hear the roar of the surf on the white sandy beach. He entered the hut and looked about him. As soon as his eyes had got accustomed to the semi-darkness he could see the emaciated form of an old woman lying on a charpoy in the middle of the mud floor, while an old hag sat on the ground by her side with her saree drawn over her head rocking backwards and forwards with a low crooning sound. She held up her hand in warning as De Souza entered. "She's asleep," she said, in the Goanese dialect.

"No, I am not," said a feeble querulous voice from the charpoy in the same language. "Who is that? Cæsar, is it you?"

"Yes," said De Souza, advancing to the bed, and his mother half raised herself and looked at him. She was worn and pinched with poverty and disease, but her eyes were

still brilliant, and though in the wrinkled face, half covered by straggling grey hair, it was difficult to discern any traces of former beauty, the features were not bad, and there was a look of "abandon" which might once in her youth have implied a voluptuous softness.

"Ugh," she said, letting herself fall back on the hard, dirty pillow, as if disappointed, after surveying her son for a few seconds, and then she was silent.

"Are you ill?" said De Souza.

"Am I ill?" she returned; "I am dying, I shall die to-night, I think; I should have died last night only I wanted to see you. She wants me to die," she continued, nodding at her companion. "She is a thief."

"Holy Maria," said the other old woman, "hush, hush, now lie quiet," and she squeezed with her skinny fingers some drops from a lemon into her mouth.

"Now go away," said De Souza's mother; "I want to talk to him alone."

The old woman affected to move, and after bustling about a little time, finally seated

herself again on her haunches in the corner of the hut. "Go away," screamed the withered form on the bed, and Cæsar de Souza rising at the same time, the old woman hobbled out after casting a vindictive look towards her companions.

Then Mrs. de Souza began to speak, interrupted by a husky cough. "So you are my son! How short and small! Pooh! not like your father—he could drink beer, and two bottles of brandy a day—wah, wah! He was fine with his sword and his horse—you are small. Can you drink two bottles of brandy a day?"

De Souza was fain to admit that he had never tried. This about his father was new to him; he had never inquired or cared to inquire about his father. He supposed he was some Portuguese or other, and he had dimly realised, even when quite young, that his mother did not lead a very correct life. So he had asked nothing more about it.

"Yes, he could drink," repeated the old woman, on whom this one trait of her late husband seemed to have made the greatest

impression, "and he had a fine coat and helmet—'boy, beer lao!'" she repeated, with a kind of cackling laugh, "that's what he said always when he came from parade—'brandy lao, juldi'"—and she sniggered in a ghastly fashion over the reminiscence.

She kept silence so long with closed eyes after this outburst that De Souza began to wonder if she would ever speak again. "Give me some arrack," she said suddenly. Her son could see that she had been killing herself with drink as it was.

"Lemon would be better," he said.

"Give me some arrack," screamed his mother furiously, "you and that old woman, Catherina, are all the same, you want all the arrack yourselves, and you steal it and give me none—give me some," she repeated in a whining voice, "give me some."

De Souza reluctantly handed her some in a wine-glass, the stem of which was broken. She drained it at a draught and threw the glass over her head and laughed again.

"He used to do that when he was drunk

she said. The spirit seemed to have revived her, and she went on: "So you're his son, are you? You can't drink beer like him. They thought I was a bad woman, but the padre married us, it was all right. He said afterwards he was drunk when he did it. He was a fine man, though he beat me, and drank plenty of brandy. There are some papers," she added, "you may have them now I am dying, look under the stone in the corner of the hut. I hid them there from Catherina, she is so thievish."

De Souza went to the place she pointed out, and, after raising a heavy stone and clearing away some ashes and dust (it was evidently a deserted cooking-place), he came across a packet of papers.

"Bring them here," said his mother, "and open them."

De Souza brought them. The first thing he found was a hundred rupee note.

"Put it in your pocket, quick," said his mother. "It is for masses for the priest; quick, or Catherina will see it. Ah! now she

won't get it," she added with great satisfaction. as she saw her son put the note in his pocket.

Then he came across a marriage certificate, two marriage certificates, one signed by a Roman Catholic priest, and the other by a Protestant missionary, to the effect that a marriage had been contracted between Philip Merton, of the 25th Hussars, commonly called the Honourable Philip Merton, son of the Earl of Wakefield, and Louisa de Souza, daughter of Miguel de Souza.

"Yes, that's it," said the old woman, "that's my husband, Merton Sahib—we were married; all the Christies (meaning the Portuguese) said we were not, but I kept these papers. He didn't want people to know, so I said I had destroyed them, but I had not; there they are. You may have them now I am dying. I don't know who he was, he was an officer sahib—he said his father was a Lord Sahib in Europe. Perhaps he will give you some money. You can show him those papers—I wrote once, but I got no answer. Give me some more arrack."

The old woman seized the bottle from De Souza's hands and drank off a considerable amount before he could get it from her. The strong spirit revived her again, and she went on with increased animation.

"Ah, yes, it's many years ago! How beautiful he was, all in gold and plumes. I used to watch him when he came home from parade—looking out of the cook-room door, my father was his cook—and one day he saw me too, and spoke to me. That evening he sent for me to come to the bungalow, but my father wouldn't let me go. At last he came himself and swore, he was so drunk, he would kill my father—but we shut the door and he could not get in. I wanted to go, he was so rich and fine, but they would not let me. My father said he would tell the priest and I should be turned out of the church and perhaps whipped. So I was afraid, and then he kept always coming; and once he went on his knees and cried and begged my father to let him have me; but my father said he would go away; if he wanted me he must marry me,

and he swore and cursed. But at last one evening he came, I think he was drunk, he said, 'D—n it,' he always said d—n it, 'bring beer' (the old woman said these words in English with a chuckle), and he said, 'D—n it, I'll marry your daughter, what does it matter?' And so my father consulted a vakil, for he did not trust the sahib, and we were married, first by the padre and then by a missionary padre—and my father came and the vakil to see that all was right. And then he wanted to tear up the certificate, and my father said, 'It does not matter, it is registered,' but I kept it, though I told him I had torn it. And then at first he was kind and gave me new clothes, and used to take me out for a drive sometimes when it was quite dark. But he drank and used to beat me afterwards, and then you were born, and he went away and left me, and sent me no money; but I lived on and then he died, so I heard; he was quite mad, and had some other woman, so I heard afterwards. I do not know anything about that, but I saved

some money and you went to college. Are you a good doctor?" she asked suddenly, breaking off in her rambling talk.

De Souza had been sitting on the edge of the bed brooding, as his wont was, in sombre silence. He hardly understood as yet what effect all this had upon him, but he saw clearly that the papers had better be substantiated. He rose abruptly, recalled to himself by his mother's question.

"I shall go and get the huzur deputy sahib to take your statement," he said; and in spite of his mother's intreaties not to be left alone lest Catherina should kill her, he went out for the purpose.

Catherina met him at the door.

"Has she any money?" she said as he passed; "if not, give me some. I nurse her, and she pays me nothing."

De Souza gave her a few rupees.

"Look after her," he said, "I am coming back directly."

But the old woman, as soon as his back was turned, left her charge and went off into

the bazaar to get her favourite drink. In about an hour De Souza returned with the huzur deputy collector, a Portuguese whom he knew, and also a European magistrate, and before them he made his mother identify him, and he got a declaration signed to that effect. The papers were inspected, and also handed over to him countersigned, and then De Souza wanted to go out into the cool evening air and think. But his mother begged so pitifully not to be left alone that he had not the heart to leave her, and so he sat on the bed listening to her rambling talk, and occasionally giving her small doses of arrack mixed with water half through the night. He could see that she was sinking fast. Dissipation of all kinds had worked havoc with her frame, which was never a strong one, and it was hopeless to think of moving her. He heard things from the abandoned old woman's lips which made him shudder—him, so unknowing in the ways of the world, so unconscious as yet of his own brutality of passion, which he inherited from his parents on both sides. She

had led an evil life, this old woman, after her husband had left her, and she seemed to have no more idea of remorse or repentance than a dying animal.

De Souza suggested once to send for a priest, but his mother said, "No, not now, when I am dead say masses, you have the money—what good now?"

As the night wore on her breathing grew feebler, and her talk fainter and more incoherent. Just as the first faint pink light was appearing in the east she died; and De Souza gazed at her dead body for some minutes with a feeling which he could not analyse, but which was unlike anything he had felt before. Science! what seemed science in face of realities of life and death? He gazed at her as though he had never seen a human being die before. Her face was calm, and showed now some traces of former beauty; and the grey straggling hair and pinched features revealed a pathetic tale of suffering such as they had not shown while the old woman, with all her evil nature, was alive

De Souza could, even in his dull soul, imagine how she had looked years ago peeping timidly out of a low-tiled cook-house, while the gallant young officer rode in brilliant on his charger. He had seen officers ride back after parade gorgeous with scarlet and waving plumes, and such was his father, the father he had never known. He went out into the cool morning air as in a trance.

The air revived him, and he came back in about a quarter of an hour alive once more to the impressions of everyday life. The night had passed like a dream; only the papers remained as tangible evidence that the whole thing was not a dream. He arranged for his mother's burial in the little Portuguese cemetery, near the chapel by the sea, and went to the funeral, the one mourner there. He left the place as soon as he could get the business over, and went to the headquarters of government to get his name altered in the list. At all events he must take his father's name. If his uncle was a great Lord Sahib perhaps he might do something for

him; get him an appointment, or put him on his staff, who knows?

He found to his surprise that he had been entered in the college books originally under the name of Merton, which had gradually dropped off, and his Christian names had become his sole appellation. He showed the register of his birth and baptism to the compiler of the government official list, and got his real name entered, and then returned to Muddeenuggur, having been absent only five days. He wanted to talk over the matter, of which he only dimly apprehended the consequences, with his friend Symonds, the assistant collector.

CHAPTER III.

"DE SOUZA was telling me a curious thing this morning," said Symonds one day shortly after this, as he sat at breakfast with his chief.

"What was it?" said old Johnson, "some interesting fact in the natural history of a germ perhaps?"

"No, it wasn't."

"Well, then, a brief account of the love affairs of a microbe, eh? as viewed under the microscope. Fancy, if some gigantic being took it into his head to examine our love affairs under a lens! I shouldn't like it."

"No, nor that either," said Symonds, "it was the history of his own birth and parentage."

"That must have been of thrilling interest," said Johnson; "you needn't tell me the circumstances, I know all about it, his father was a cook, and his mother was an ayah, and they met,—'twas not in a crowd, but in the cook-house while master and missus were out."

"Nothing of the kind," said Symonds. "Do you know that the uncle of your sub-assistant surgeon is no less a personage than the Earl of Wakefield, of whom, perhaps, you may have heard?"

"Who was his father, then?" said Johnson.

"One Captain Philip Merton of the 25th Hussars."

"What! Merton of the 25th," said Johnson; "I knew him, of course, years ago, at Ramporenuggur, and a more drunken scoundrel never disgraced Her Majesty's uniform. So he's his son, is he? Well, I congratulate him on his father. I was a youngster at the time, but I remember that regiment out here well, and a more debauched set of men I trust I

may never have the pleasure of meeting. Why, old Beaumont, the colonel, he used to ——" And here the worthy collector launched out into a sea of anecdotes as to the iniquities of the men of that epoch, anecdotes of doings which were by no means edifying at the time, and which may very well be left in the obscurity of unauthenticated legend. "They were a fast lot," he concluded, "and Merton was the most immoral, and certainly the most drunken villain of them all; he died afterwards—what the sergeant's widow called 'a soldier's death'—of delirium tremens."

"Yes, that's his father," said Symonds.

"Well, I can't say that my opinion of the medical officer of Muddeenuggur is much raised by the revelation," said Johnson; "like father like son; perhaps he'll take to drink too, and indiscriminate immorality. I think you had better keep a sharp look out on your friend, and then, perhaps, if he comes to grief we'll get a white man to make a fourth at whist."

"A man needn't take after his father," remarked Symonds.

"He need not, but the chances are he will," answered Johnson; "he hasn't, by the way, taken after him much in his complexion, but that is often the case with these half-castes; but, Lord bless you, I don't suppose he is Merton's only son; I expect the noble Earl of Wakefield has got many a nephew scattered over this Presidency, and most of them the colour of your friend—black, my boy, very black."

"But he is a legitimate son," said Symonds.

"Eh! no, no, that won't do," said Johnson, I expect our Cæsar has been what is vulgarly called pulling your leg, young man."

"No, he showed me the certificate of marriage, the register of his birth, and everything; he's all right, he is a pucka nephew, no doubt about it."

"Well, that's curious," said Johnson, after a moment's pause, "I remember now that Merton had some woman he would never show to any one, but no one supposed he was mar-

ried to her. He used to drive out after dark with her in a closed bullock-cart,—lively kind of amusement that, I should say; and they said that he used to thrash her with a dog-whip, so, perhaps, she may have been his wife. He showed you the papers, eh?"

"Yes, they were all regular, all authenticated."

"Well, fellows do rum things out in this country sometimes," said the old collector reflectively, "who would have thought of Merton, of all men in the world, marrying a black woman! However, I do not know that it makes much odds to De Souza, for old Lord Wakefield—I knew him, too, and a more purse-proud, arrogant, stingy snob I have hardly ever had the pleasure of meeting—has got two sons, if not more, and, besides that, a younger brother older than De Souza's father. So I don't think he'll get much out of that; if he went to England and stood at the door he might get a sovereign to go away, but devil another penny will his lordship bestow on his oriental nephew."

"He's a rich man, too, isn't he?" said Symonds.

"Rich! he stinks of money, wallows in it; he's got coal mines, property in London, God knows what, about three hundred thousand a year I should say! I wish I had a tenth of his income, I should not slave out in this infernal climate, I can tell you. But what's the good to our friend with all these children that Lord Wakefield has got! You haven't got such a thing as a Peerage about you, have you? we might just see how he stands?"

"No, but I know where there is one, in old Gungadhur's shop."

"How the devil did one get there?"

"I don't know," said Symonds, "but I saw one in his shop one day as I was riding through the bazaar."

"I'll send and get it, then," said the collector, and he despatched a peon for the purpose. In half an hour the man re-appeared with Debrett's great work, sure enough. Its history was a curious one. It had been the property of a former civil surgeon, who,

though entirely unconnected with the peerage, had, from some inscrutable reason, derived immense satisfaction from the perusal of its thrilling pages. When he died, his butler, who had observed his master's affection for the book, sold it to a wealthy and superstitious Hindu merchant, assuring him that it was a book of potent incantation to which his master had done unceasing poojah, and by means of which he had worked some marvellous cures. The bunya took the book, but as, while he was in possession of it, three of his debtors absconded, two of his cows died, and a house of his was burned to the ground, he concluded that the book had an opposite influence to that which it had been alleged to possess by the imaginative butler; and so he sold it cheap to a friend, a competing money-lender in the bazaar, trusting that the same calamities which had befallen him would also be the portion of his rival. In this he was disappointed; but the book remained exposed on his friend's stall in the hope that some one might come round

and buy a "Europe" book, inspired with the vainglorious desire of being considered capable of reading it.

However, the first purchaser was the collector's chuprassie, who, after a long wrangle, got it for what Montague Tigg would have termed the ridiculously inadequate sum of four annas, and who then reported to his master that he had expended two rupees for the purpose. The chuprassie was not a grasping man, he was quite content with the little commission of eight hundred per cent. on his transactions.

"Well, here we are," said Johnson, "Earl of Wakefield—never mind about his crest and when he was born—he has got three sons and one younger brother, and here's our friend Philip, died unmarried. Married Maria, daughter of De Souza, cook, wouldn't have looked so well, would it? That is our Cæsar's father; so you see he might just as well have been illegitimate at once while he was about it; five strong men of various ages don't die in a week. As I say, his only chance of

making anything out of it is to hang about the house loudly announcing himself to be his lordship's nephew, and decline to go away under a fiver; then, perhaps, after some discussion, he might get thirty shillings."

Symonds reported the state of affairs to his friend at the dispensary. "You see," he said, "I really cannot hold out much hope that this discovery will affect you in any way. Your uncle is enormously rich, but he is not a generous man, and he probably will not give you a single anna."

"How rich is he?" said De Souza.

"Well, he has got about thirty lacs a year, perhaps more," said Symonds.

Thirty lacs a year! The sum seemed incredible to the humble assistant-surgeon. He had no idea that any man in the world, except a king, had so much wealth.

"But if he is a lord sahib he might put me on his staff as doctor," suggested De Souza, and Symonds had to explain to him that lord sahibs in Europe were not like governors, and had no staff, and that if they got ill they

sent for the man round the corner, all of which struck De Souza as very wonderful.

"You see, there's very little chance of your succeeding to the title and the property, for Lord Wakefield has three sons and a younger brother, and all these five fellows would have to die before you came in, which is not probable."

"Succeeding to the title?" said De Souza doubtfully.

"I mean that if all these five fellows died you would get the property, and be called Earl of Wakefield," said Symonds.

"What is the use of being called Earl of Wakefield?" said De Souza.

"Well, I don't know that there is much use, if you think of it," said Symonds, "but there are not a few people in the world who would, strange to say, like to become earls; then they are not all in your refreshing state of ignorance. But still if all these five fellows died, you would get thirty lacs a year."

They went on to talk of other things, but this last sentence remained in De Souza's

retentive brain—"*If these five fellows died you would get thirty lacs a year.*" It haunted him. Perhaps they might all die. De Souza had seen whole families die of starvation, swept away by floods, drowned. Who knows? He could not settle to his old work; he found himself dreaming as he sat at his microscope. "If all these five fellows died you would get thirty lacs a year," he kept on repeating to himself. He half expected every post that came in to get a letter to say that these five had died and that he had thirty lacs a year. What would he do? He would buy a magnificent microscope; what could he not do? He began to feel strange desires stirring in him. His mother's talk in her delirium had made him think; there was something else in the world besides the dull routine of medical science and hospital work. Pleasure! what pleasure had he ever known? At college he had worked hard, and had hardly cared to go out in the evening, but he had seen at the band-stand beautiful English women, radiant with smiles and splendid in dress.

They seemed to belong to a different sphere from his, and did not even notice him as he passed; but if he had thirty lacs he might buy some; he might have people to ride before him in uniform like a governor; a delicious house with gardens, running rills, and trees. He looked round the bare, white-washed walls of the dispensary room, and outside at the blinding glare on the grey soil with a sigh.

But the days rolled on; no letter came to announce the death of these five men, and the impression grew fainter and fainter. The old yearnings took possession of him again; he found himself brooding over the old problems. He turned to his microscope, to his experiments, with renewed energy, and almost forgot the history of his birth and all that it might entail. He wrote by Symond's advice to the Earl of Wakefield, stating that he was his nephew, and asking vaguely that his lordship might be pleased to interest himself in his welfare, but, as Symonds expected, no answer came. Men with three hundred

thousand a year get all manner of queer letters, and Lord Wakefield probably thought that it was merely an impudent attempt at a swindle, and deposited the letter in his waste-paper basket and thought no more of the matter.

In the meanwhile De Souza relapsed into his old course of life, and with his usual tenacity and patience was conducting a series of experiments on cholera. Every day some new phenomenon, sometimes expected, sometimes unexpected, rose up before his attention, and he would sit and brood over them till the sequence and causation of the appearances assumed a definite order in his mind, and then he would go on to the next step. He was necessarily led in his analysis to the consideration of the problem of producing artificial cholera. He was certain that it was some chemical alteration in the blood which produced the fluidity and consequent bacilli and he exhausted the resources of chemistry in endeavouring to produce this alteration artificially with any of the known solvents. Then he tried electricity with the view of

operating on the nerve-centres so as to produce that activity of the glandular cells of the alimentary canal which he expected would produce the phenomenon of the abundant cell-formation of the true choleraic discharge, but failure, sometimes a gleam of success, and then failure again rewarded his investigations. In all directions he pushed his researches, experimenting as he went on every sort of animal, and brooding incessantly over the results. He grew pale from constant study, and dark rings formed round his eyes.

"Don't work so hard," said Symonds to him one day; "you're looking wretchedly ill."

De Souza shook his head; what was advice to a man possessed and driven by an idea, by an insatiable thirst for knowledge? He could no more help working and thinking than the liver could help secreting bile, it was instinct with him, the passionate instinct of a born genius for scientific research. At last by accident a thing occurred which turned the whole current of his speculations. A monkey

on which he had been experimenting to produce artificial paralysis by introducing foreign matter into the brain accompanied with electrical conditions, suddenly exhibited all the phenomena of Asiatic cholera, and this unexpected result threw De Souza back to trace the sequence of causes which had led to it.

He had had extensive dealings with an old woman of the neighbourhood, reputed to be a witch, who spent most of her time in collecting herbs, and did indeed practice as a doctor among the simple country people. But her ministrations in this line were not regarded as of much value, the people preferred the "Europe" doctor, but she was greatly esteemed as the creator of charms, and the possible possessor of an evil eye. De Souza, who had a vein of country superstition in him, derived from his mother, in spite of the scientific bent of his mind, was on intimate terms with this old woman. He always held, and justly held, that there were many remedies unknown to the pharmacopœia

which the simple experience of unlettered human animals knew to be valuable, and he always liked to search among the old woman's treasures for something he might possibly light upon of which he could estimate the value.

"This I call the cholera plant," the old woman had said to him one day, showing him a herb with the nature of which as a sedative De Souza was not unacquainted.

"Why?" he said.

"It grows over the graves where men slain by the goddess lie," said the old woman oracularly.

De Souza did not think much of this remark at the time, but his retentive memory always stored up everything, and he had the rare faculty of remembering these multitudinous facts at the moment when each was wanted. At the time he merely made an oil out of the plant, which he had kept in a bottle, intending to try it some day. He stood watching the monkey, who had begun to exhibit all the signs of cholera morbus, and

he was pondering what connection his operations could have had with cholera, when his eye fell on the bottle which contained the oil, and he half-idly, out of mere curiosity, thought that he would try what it would do. He took it and injected some into the monkey's forearm, and watched him with eagerness. He kept him warm with wraps, the symptoms gradually subsided, and in a couple of hours he appeared much as usual, and ate and drank with his usual appetite.

De Souza sat down stunned with the discovery. He could not see the process as yet. What had caused the cholera? How was the oil a remedy? Was it also a prophylactic? The foreign substance he had introduced into the monkey's brain must have affected the blood, and produced that fluidity which he had begun to think was the immediate cause of cholera. What substance was it? It was a proteid substance he remembered, but what? However, that he could easily discover. But then the oil, what had that done? Was it merely a substance calming, like an ice appli-

cation, the excitement of the nervous centres, or was it a counter-irritant, diminishing and counteracting the fluidity and abnormal state of the blood?

He sat and brooded, forming in his own mind all the experiments which he would have to make in order to secure the placing of the results on a scientific basis beyond the shadow of a doubt. That he was on the track now he did not hesitate to think. He went out and walked about the garden, his mind still intently occupied. The task before him seemed to increase, he knew how complicated the problem was; he was not a man to rush hastily to any conclusions, he knew—and this gave him his great mental grasp on a subject—how phenomena had to be attacked as it were on all sides, tried under every possible conditions; his mind ran rapidly over the tests, the almost countless tests, he would have to apply before he could satisfy his own intellect that the result was genuine. But what was this to him? It was his life, his one craving, to form, and gradually verify, his

hypotheses through countless modifications. He knew what it was; he had all the passionate patience, the inexhaustible craving for real knowledge which are the gifts of the gods to all great scientific thinkers.

He asked Symonds the next day if he might build a wall round the end of the dispensary where he lived to gain further space for his experiments. Symonds had no objection, and he asked the collector.

"Vivisects, does he?" said the old gentleman; "well, as long as he does not vivisect my dogs or my horses I don't care. It's only those d——d fools in England who object to vivisection for scientific purposes, I don't. I don't see why murderers shouldn't be vivisected under anæsthetics; but I expect the government would drop on me if I tried on that little game. Tell him to put the poor devils under chloroform, that's all. Oh, yes, let him build his wall, and raise Cain inside if he likes, but I won't have cruelty."

"He doesn't want to cut animals up," explained Symonds, "it is only for the in-

oculation of diseases, and things of that kind."

"All right," said Johnson, "let him worry along, he'll find out devilish little, I expect; he doesn't look like a Newton."

And so Cæsar de Souza built his wall, and for about two months was rarely, if ever, seen outside his house. He went to the dispensary in the morning and attended his patients, went round the hospital, and then returned to his own room till the next morning's work came round. Even Symonds rarely saw him, and when he did see him De Souza appeared so distracted and so deep in thought that he was not an amusing companion. "He's muddling his brains, I expect," said that young man, and thought no more of the matter; as long as the patients did not complain and did not die more than usual it was no business of his.

CHAPTER IV.

BUT De Souza was not muddling his brains. Never had his mind been clearer, and his wonderful scientific intelligence working more smoothly and accurately than it was during these memorable two months. He had his failures at times, and at times his unexpected results, but his extraordinary memory, which never forgot a fact, however trifling, and which could produce the representation of it just when it was needed to fit in with, or exemplify, some other range of facts, enabled him to classify failure after failure, modify theory after theory, till at last he felt himself working on firm ground; and his indomitable enthusiasm, and wonderful insight into the causes of the most complicated results enabled

him to advance with rapid strides as the work went on. At last, one evening he fell back in his chair, feeling that the victory was won. He could produce, by artificial means—by a stimulating poison—that nervous excitement attended by that chemical change of the blood which produced the true cholera morbus with all its phenomena. The poison could be introduced into the system either by taking it as food, or by its being injected into the veins, and death usually ensued in a few hours, such was the virulence of its action. And he had also discovered the true antidote, the subtle oil which he had got from the plant which the old witch had called the cholera plant, and which was, at its basis, strangely enough, of much the same chemical combination as the poison. The action of this oil arrested the growth of the microbes, corrected the fluidity of the blood, acted as a sedative to the nervous system, and enabled the cholera-stricken patient to recover in what seemed a miraculously short space of time. It was true—and here he knew was the one rift within the lute

—that he had tried it only on monkeys, rabbits, and other animals, and not on men. It might not succeed with human beings, and he felt sick and dizzy when he thought of the possibility of failure. He got up, and walked out into the evening air. It was almost the first time he had been out, except to the hospital, for two months, and the night air seemed peculiarly refreshing. It was a lovely night; a full moon made every object as distinct as in the day-time, but softened with a strange, white splendour. The wide plains around lay ghostly and grey under the gleaming light, and beyond the low range of hills the last tinge of the pale light of the vanished sun could be faintly seen. The air was absolutely still, and De Souza could hear the tom-toms and occasional shrill fifes in the distant bazaar, and the tinkling of the bells on the necks of the oxen, as they slowly strayed towards the homesteads. The grasshoppers' ceaseless chirp did not seem to break the hush, and the far-off barking of the dogs round the town hardly disturbed the stillness of the

evening. He could hear the collector's loud, cheery voice saying, "Well, good-night, old fellow," and the tramp of a horse along the road which led past the jail; De Souza looked and listened as if in a dream. The stress of hard thought during the last few weeks had exhausted him, and yet the time seemed to have passed like a couple of days.

But still there was this one more thing to be done! And as his eye fell on the jail, he remembered that there was a murderer under sentence of death within the cells. Why should he not ask the collector to allow him to experiment on him? His life was forfeited already. But—no; he shrank from exposing his secret—it was his possession, he had worked to get it. How could he explain it to the unsympathetic magistrate, and perhaps have it referred to government? No, he could not give it up, it must remain in his own brain. What might it not lead to? He had all the secretiveness of the oriental character; that profound disinclination to admit any one into his confidence on the subject of his labours

which distinguishes the eastern nature; and, besides, it might not be true. He must know that first. Then he thought of an old woman who came daily to the dispensary. She was hopelessly diseased and infirm; what was the use of her life? She was a beggar; he could do nothing for her except give her soothing medicines; why should he not experiment on her? The idea seized him; detection was impossible, and why should she not die? Who would miss her in the world, and what might she not prove by her death? He brooded over the idea, arguing with himself it was childish to hesitate. What! Let this stupendous problem remain unsolved for a mere qualm of conscience? He could not do that; he must prove it or disprove it, if it should cost a hundred lives. Only men possessed by an idea know how everything has to give way to the prevailing current of thought; and before De Souza went to bed that night, he had resolved that on the next morning he would try his first experiment on the unfortunate old woman when she paid her daily

visit to the dispensary. He slept that night the deep sleep of a tired brain. No remorse kept him awake; no haunting visions of a coming murder. He hardly realised what he was going to do. It did not seem to be a murder: only a great experiment in the cause of truth.

The next morning, when the dispensary opened, the old woman presented herself as usual. De Souza looked at her and listened to her oft-told tale of woe in silence. She somehow reminded him of his mother. Perhaps she, too, had once been beautiful and sought after.

"Have you any children?" he asked suddenly.

"No, they are all dead," said the forlorn old creature.

De Souza kept on looking at her, as one looks at a person who one knows is shortly to die. He did not feel that he was going to kill her, merely that she was going to die to prove a great scientific theory.

"Give me some medicine, then," said the

old woman impatiently, as Cæsar de Souza stood silently regarding her.

His hand did not tremble; he gave her the dose in which he had placed his subtle cholera poison. The old woman took it, went out of the room, and sat herself down in the sun, as her habit was, on the chance of getting some stray charity from a passer-by.

De Souza went on with his work inside as usual, compounding medicines and giving them to the throng of patients. He had resolved the evening before that his experiments must be two in number. He proposed to poison a strong man, and afterwards cure him, or attempt to cure him, with the oil; and to test the actual virulence and reality of the poison by killing the old woman outright.

An opportunity for the other experiment soon presented itself. The gardener of the jail, who lived close by, and whom De Souza could easily get to when he became ill, came with some trifling ailment to the dispensary, and the fatal draught was equally given to him.

About two hours the assistant surgeon stayed inside, dispensing medicines, and then the throng ceased, the place was closed, and De Souza, locking the door, went out into the sun. He found the old woman groaning and evidently in great pain, and he saw at a glance that she had the true Asiatic cholera. He resolved to try the ordinary remedies to see if they could counteract the poison. He gave her brandy and chlorodyne, applied hot water, ice, everything. It was in vain, as he expected, and at noon he saw her die in a state of collapse. He ordered the corpse and all the old woman's possessions—though he himself did not much believe in the value of these precautions—to be carefully placed apart and put out in the special mortuary built for the purpose of deaths from infectious diseases.

He had hardly finished doing this, when he got a message to say that the jail gardener was ill. He went at once and found him in an early stage of cholera, suffering from cramps and vomiting. He injected the oil, and watched the patient. The symptoms gradu-

ally ceased, and in two or three hours he could get up and take food. By this time Cæsar de Souza was in a state of nervous exaltation impossible to describe. The death of the old woman, the strain of attending her and marking her symptoms, and then the intense interest of watching the recovery of the gardener, and the complete realisation of all his theories, produced in him a state of physical and moral excitement such as he had never experienced before. His eyes gleamed, and his whole frame trembled, he had lost all idea of right and wrong; he felt above the common feelings of humanity; men's standards of the morality of actions seemed to be nothing to him; the old woman's death had not affected him as a first crime would have affected an ordinary soul; he seemed merely the instrument of a blind, superior force. He must try one more experiment; on a child; it must be complete; he opened the dispensary again for the afternoon, and before long a woman came in with a child of two years old clinging to her hip.

The child was crying, and the mother said he was cutting his teeth. De Souza offered to give the child a soothing draught, an offer gratefully accepted, the fatal medicine was once more given, and the woman went out.

He now had to go to the collector to report these cholera cases, which he did still with the same strange light burning in his eyes, and trembling with emotional excitement.

"Your friend Cæsar," said Johnson, to Symonds, "looked perfectly distraught this afternoon, I believe he's in a funk of the cholera himself, these Portuguese have got as much pluck as hares. What's a case or two of cholera? It won't spread this time of the year, just at the beginning of the cold weather; see that the woman's things are burnt with her, and tell that old inspector to look after the smells in the town. Also," he added, as an afterthought, "trust in Providence, and smoke good baccy," and the old gentleman returned to the perusal of his English papers with a quite undisturbed mind. That evening De Souza, looking out, saw a small melancholy

procession with a few dim lights going towards the Hindu burning-ground, from the place where he had found out the woman lived, who had come to the dispensary that afternoon with her child, and he knew that his third experiment had been successful.

In the ordinary course of events, or if it had been the hot weather or the rains, these two deaths by cholera—for the child's death was next day reported by the police—would have passed unnoticed, or have been left to derive what fame they could from a brief statement in the weekly weather report, to the effect that one or two cases of cholera had occurred in one taluka of Muddeenuggur. But as it was the cold weather, as Johnson was known to be a notoriously hospitable collector, and as the snipe-shooting of the district was undeniable, the Sanitary Commissioner suggested that a commission, consisting of himself, as president, two deputy-sanitary commissioners, three other doctors of sorts, and a couple of engineers, should be appointed to investigate the causes of this outbreak. He

further, having talked the matter over with the heads of government and got their assent beforehand, suggested that the president should get ten rupees a day, and the other members five rupees a day, in addition to their pay, while engaged on this special duty; also, that a temporary establishment of four clerks, four munshis, and ten peons, should be entertained. This the government sanctioned in a special resolution which was sent round to all officers in the presidency, who would, of course, naturally take a keen interest in the matter, for their information. Johnson grinned when he got this government resolution: "What d——d rot," he said, but reflecting that he would have two tables at whist going for about two months refrained from making any objection.

So the commission came, and the result of their two months' labours, during which time they visited all the good shooting-grounds in the district, was that some thousands of snipe met with a premature end, and that a voluminous report was sent in for the edification of the Secretariate. The report certainly

was not open to objection on the ground of the timid nature of its proposals. The commission blandly suggested that Muddeenuggur should be moved bodily to the low range of hills some five miles distant from the present site, all the existing houses being destroyed and rebuilt; that a large marsh, about sixteen miles off, should be drained and filled in, and the river diverted to a considerable distance to the eastward. The cost of these modest proposals, as estimated by old Johnson, with a chuckle, would have been about two millions sterling. The Government read this valuable production in its General Department, it consulted itself in its Revenue Department, and, after a few passing remarks from the Public Works Department and a criticism or two from the Educational Department, the scheme finally came to grief, as might have been expected, in the Financial Department, in which sphere of its usefulness, Government discovered that it had no funds available for the purpose of carrying out the recommendations of the commission.

The touching confidence of the Government in its various departments that some other answer than the stereotyped one will be issued by itself in the Financial Department always rouses in the thinking mind thoughts that lie too deep for either laughter or tears. It is like a man, conscious of an empty purse, directing his feet to try on pairs of boots, and finally after choosing one, directing his hands to go into his pockets, when the hands discover that there is no money there. A man who acted in this way in private life would be looked as rather an irritating kind of idiot; but it is regarded as quite high statesmanship in India. But this was not the end. The report was printed *in extenso* with the government resolution, and sent round to every official in the Presidency. A copy was also sent to the Government of India. That great government, after, of course, taking counsel with its various departments, announced that the report was most valuable and instructive, regretted that the local government had not a spare couple of millions to spend on such insane

projects, and declared also with regret that they were unable to come to the assistance of the local government with funds. They also ordered the report to be printed with their resolution, and sent to every official in India, including such officials, for instance, as the superintendent of marine. For pilots (say) on the Irrawaddy, or for captains of government steamers, it was probably thought that this production would be of priceless value. Nor did the matter end here. It was sent home to the Secretary of State, when it fell into the hands of an India office clerk, who with unblushing effrontery penned the entirely unfounded statement that the valuable report had been perused with much interest by his Lordship in Council, who also regretted that no funds were available for the purpose of carrying out these useful recommendations, and this was sent back in a despatch to the Government of India. The Government of India had this precious despatch printed, and sent round to all officers to whom the report had been sent for information and guidance, though what guidance they

were to get from it it was somewhat difficult to discover. It also sent a copy of the despatch to the local Government. That Government read it (at least they *said* they had in their resolution), and ordered that copies should be sent also to all officials, so that it was some six months, after some thousands of rupees had been spent in postage, paper, cost of printing, and officers' wasted time—to say nothing of the original cost of the commission, which was considerable—before the correspondence with the report sank to rest on the dusty book-shelves of each record room in India, where it was destined, until consumed by white ants, to repose peacefully among some hundreds of similar instructive publications.

The old collector ordered his to be shovelled away into the recesses of his office with a grin.

"Seems to me," he said, "to say nothing of the absurdity of having a commission at all, for all the good that's been done, that the original report in manuscript might just as well have been filed in my office at first and left there; but, Lord bless you, if all this rot was done away with,

what would the Smitherses of this great empire do?" and lost, like the elder Mr. Weller, in the immense field of conjecture opened up by this reflection, the worthy old officer went on signing vernacular orders for about half-an-hour without having the faintest idea of their contents. Such were the results of Cæsar de Souza's three little experiments.

In the meanwhile, the sub-assistant surgeon was going on to all appearances with his usual routine of work much as usual. The cholera cases were of course isolated ones, as the collector with some pride announced that he had always expected they would be, and De Souza gradually recovered from the excitement into which his triumphant success had thrown him, and began to consider how his great discovery might affect his position and future. He might, of course give it out to the world, and gain perhaps some trifling reward, and the thanks of government. But he shrank from this publicity; his secret was his own, and he would not share it with any one. He was musing a day or two after the old woman's death in a kind

of restful way, relieved from the stress of thought he had been under for the last two months, when suddenly there came into his head as if it were some old-remembered lines of poetry,—"*if these five fellows were to die you would get thirty lacs a year.*" He got up suddenly.

In the strain of the last few weeks he had almost forgotten about his birth and parentage, but now it all came back on him like a flood. If they were to die! Why, he could kill them without a chance of detection. Why should he not? Thirty lacs a year! He walked about the dispensary in a renewed fever of excitement. He would do it; it would be absurd to hesitate; what right had they to all that money while he had none? He was of their flesh and blood; at all events he would get some; he would go to Europe and see his uncle; if he gave him three or four lacs a year he might spare him, but why not get the whole? Thirty lacs! The number haunted him; he would get it; he felt his desires quicken within him. The old demons of desire which the hard work

he had had the last few weeks had almost exorcised—luxury, women, splendour—all might be his. Thirty lacs! He might make new discoveries with all that money. He felt himself lord of cholera; and what might not thinking reveal to him? He had come across some indications in his researches that he had longed to follow up, but the expense—always the expense. With thirty lacs he might have a laboratory the finest in the world. When he was wearied with work he could pass at once into a fairy-land peopled with houris, European women, lovely shapes such as he had dreamed of! Alas! he knew not that science demands a single-hearted devotion, and will not yield her secrets to men who seek her in the intervals of deadening pleasures.

Yes; he would go to Europe at all events and see; but how to go! With thirty lacs a year in prospect, how could he raise the money? He obviously could not announce that he intended to murder his uncles and three cousins, and raise money on a post-obit accordingly. He took out and counted his

scanty store which he had saved up to buy some medical books. Two hundred and twenty rupees; a man could not go to Europe for that sum. How to get more? Symonds might lend him some perhaps. And in the course of the next day, when the assistant collector came to the dispensary to see how things were going on, he asked him, almost wondering at his own boldness.

"A thousand rupees, my dear fellow!" said Symonds, "I haven't got a thousand annas in the world. Do you think an assistant collector is a millionaire in these hard times with the rupee at one and sixpence? Why, I owe money in the bazaar as it is. What do you want it for?"

Cæsar de Souza was fain to admit that he was meditating a trip to Europe to see his relations.

"I would not if I were you," said Symonds, "your noble uncle would probably kick you out of the house. If you went to him as a rich man he would respect you and embrace you, but you don't know what it would be as it is;

I know, and I tell you you wouldn't like it. Better stay here, and work away and make discoveries, and we'll make you Surgeon General some day."

But De Souza was not to be put off, he said he must go; he had made up his mind to go, even if he worked his way as a sailor.

"Why, go as a doctor, then, of course," said Symonds as a sudden thought struck him; "lots of these canal boats advertise 'An experienced surgeon,' and will take any one at the last moment. You've got your degree. I'll manage that for you. You send in your application for furlough and I'll get you a berth." And he did; the leave was sanctioned, and the good-natured Symonds, finding that the poor assistant surgeon had only two hundred and twenty rupees, pressed another hundred on him as a loan, and arranged with the agents of a canal-wallah, who had been advertising that an experienced surgeon would sail on board their ship, without having the faintest idea where he was to come from, to take De Souza home for nothing and pay him five

pounds as wages. So in the month of April the well known ss. *Rhadamanthus* left Bombay bound for Liverpool, conveying Cæsar and his fortunes.

CHAPTER V.

CÆSAR DE SOUZA was glad in five weeks time to get on shore again. The voyage had been long and monotonous; he had been terribly sea-sick at first; the accommodation was wretched; and the captain and officers treated him with scant courtesy. However, he bore it all, he had his two precious bottles of oil, and a future, as the French say, "confused and immense," but it was a relief when the steamer entered the long grey Liverpool docks, and he found himself once more on firm land. And Liverpool, how wonderful that was! All sahibs in the streets! Even the little ragged boys were white! And the roar of the carriages, the wealth, the glitter—and all this might be his; he might buy

shops, horses; what might he not buy with thirty lacs a year? People passed him in the street neglectfully, if not contemptuously, but the time would come when he would be a king and a rajah among these haughty Europeans.

He had not much difficulty in finding out the whereabouts of Lord Wakefield. His lordship being an extensive coal shipper had his agency at Liverpool, and from that office Cæsar De Souza found out that he was residing at present at his place in Staffordshire, Melhurst Castle. He went there third class, for he had to husband his scanty store of money; and three days after his arrival in England he found himself standing outside lofty park-gates, where an apparently interminable jungle, as he thought, lay inside. He had left his humble baggage at the village inn. If he had been awed at the Liverpool office by the size of the house and the importance of the sahib, he was still more impressed here, as he timidly entered by the gate at the side and started to go up the main road. The

gatekeeper, a buxom-looking woman, called after him, "Here, what do you want?"

"I want to see the Earl of Wakefield," said De Souza, and the woman, after looking at him doubtfully for a little time, allowed him to proceed. He walked on through magnificent trees and park-like glades, till at last he came to a vast pile of buildings, larger than the Medical College, he thought, and he went up to the great porch where there was a lofty flight of steps. At the top of the steps stood a grand sahib, dressed, as Cæsar De Souza thought in his ignorance, in a splendid uniform, who gazed contemptuously, with his arms folded, at the unexpected visitor. Poor De Souza was certainly not an impressive figure. His clothes, never very good and of an antiquated bazaar cut, were soiled and dirty after his voyage; and he himself, with his short stature, unprepossessing face, and sickly hue, did not impart an air of dignity to them. So he gazed at the footman, and the footman gazed at him for some seconds.

"No tramps allowed in the park, out you

go!" that august being condescended to observe after a few moments' pause.

"I want to see the Earl of Wakefield," said De Souza.

"And what might you be wanting to see the Earl of Wakefield for?" said the footman, mimicking him with a grin. "'Ave yer come on business, or are yer in for a droring-room call?"

He was a wag in his way, and in the servants' hall was considered quite a wit. De Souza appeared to be a safe object on which to vent his little jokes, as he certainly did not look as though he had come on a social visit.

"I want to see the Earl of Wakefield," said De Souza.

"So you said afore, young man, and I says, 'What for'?"

"Who are you?" said De Souza rather timidly, he was not sure, it might be the earl himself for all he knew.

"Who am I?" said the footman; "I wants to know who you are: wot's your bloomin' name?"

"De Souza—Merton, I mean."

"De Souza Merton, or Merton De Souza?" said the footman, who had read his *Pickwick*.

"De Souza Merton," returned poor Cæsar.

"Well, then, Mr. De Souza Merton, if I were you, I wouldn't see his lordship."

"Why?" asked De Souza.

"'Cos why? 'cos his lordship is a very harbitrary gent."

Cæsar looked puzzled.

"'Cos if yer does anythink he don't like, out yer goes, and no character," continued the footman, pleased to see the impression he was making.

Cæsar de Souza looked still more puzzled; this badinage was quite unintelligible to him.

"D'yer want to know any more?" continued the footman with easy familiarity; "'cos there's plenty more where that came from."

At this moment a stern voice interrupted him from behind in his easy flow of genial pleasantry.

"What are you chattering about, John? go inside." And Cæsar de Souza saw an old man dressed rather like the other gorgeous being, but evidently of superior authority, as the footman went inside without a word.

"What do you want?" said the old man not unkindly.

"I want to see the Earl of Wakefield," said De Souza again.

"Do you want to see him on business?" said the old butler; "for, perhaps, if so you had better see his agent first."

"No, I want to see him," said De Souza. "Here is my card;" and he produced a card on which "Cæsar de Souza Merton, Medical Department," was neatly printed.

The old man looked at it rather perplexed.

"I am Lord Wakefield's nephew," said De Souza at last.

"Who was your father then, sir?" said the old servant.

"Captain Philip Merton."

"What, poor Master Philip's son! Why, how dark you are! But I suppose Master

Philip got like that in India. Well, come in, and I'll see if his lordship can see you." And he ushered De Souza into a small antechamber while he went with the card to make inquiries. In about ten minutes he returned. "His lordship will see you, sir," he said; and he conducted De Souza along splendid passages and through magnificent halls, till at last they came to a small room at the end of the house, into which he bade De Souza enter.

Here an old man was sitting at a writing table; there were maps on the walls and bookshelves all round, and the old man had books and maps on the table before him. He was a stern, hard-looking old man of about sixty, with a look of great practical power in his face. The intellectual strength of the family, which had shown itself strongly in his father, who was a noted man of science in his time, had appeared in the present Earl of Wakefield in the form of keen business aptitudes. It was this same persistent hereditary force which had obtained so remarkable a development, though Lord Wakefield knew it not, in

the queer little figure before him; but in him strangely mixed and overlaid with other discordant characteristics. Lord Wakefield had white whiskers, and a double pair of eye-glasses on his nose, over which he glared at De Souza as he entered the room, and took the chair which the old butler handed him.

"Well, what do you want?" he said abruptly, after a somewhat contemptuous look at De Souza's insignificant appearance.

"I wanted to see you," began Cæsar.

"What do you want?" said the Earl of Wakefield.

"I am your nephew, my lord," said De Souza.

"So the butler told me. My brother Philip was a scoundrel. I dare say I have lots of nephews out there. What do you want?"

"I wanted to see you," began De Souza again.

"You said that before. I say what do you want?" and the old man's voice grew harsh.

Really, as he was put to it in this way, Cæsar de Souza could hardly say what it was

he wanted. He could scarcely explain that his intention was to reside in the house, and gradually to propose to his uncle that he should hand over to him a considerable amount of his fortune, or otherwise he would cause him to die of cholera. A matter of such delicacy cannot be stated in these crude terms. So De Souza felt rather uncomfortable. He was a most insolent, imperious old man. De Souza had never seen such a lord sahib before, though he had once spoken with a governor, and more than once with a deputy surgeon general, his idea of earthly grandeur. He paused; and at last said, with an effort, "Nothing."

"Very well, then, good morning," said the earl, and he touched a bell on the table. "Richard, show him out," he said; and he bent over his maps again.

"Look at these papers," said De Souza suddenly, with spasmodic energy. They were his mother's certificate of marriage, and his own register of birth.

Lord Wakefield looked at them cursorily.

"Well?" he said.

"I'm your legitimate nephew," said De Souza.

"Well?" repeated his lordship; and then suddenly he asked, "Did you not write to me some time ago?"

"Yes, my lord," said De Souza.

"What do you want? You want money, I suppose?"

"No;" said De Souza.

"What do you want, then? I have plenty to do; I can't stay talking with you all day."

"I want," said De Souza hesitatingly, "to stay here."

"What!" said his lordship staring at him, "to stay here! Now listen. I don't know whether these papers of yours are genuine or not, or whether you are an impostor or not. I dare say my brother married lots of prostitutes out there, but it does not matter one way or the other; a man is not bound to provide for his nephews. You have no claim on me, so you may go. Good morning."

"Then I may not stay here?" gasped De Souza.

The old earl favoured him with an insolent stare, but deigned no answer. "Richard, show him out," he said.

"But"—— began De Souza.

"Will you go," shouted the old man half rising, and De Souza had nothing for it but to slink out of the room.

"Ah!" said the butler shaking his head, "I thought it would be so. It is his lordship's account day, and he is always short in the temper. So you are poor Master Philip's son. Well, he was a noble, open-handed gentleman. Dear me! how dark you are, to be sure. Do you want any money, sir," went on the kind old butler hesitatingly, as he put his hand into his pocket. De Souza shook his head. "Well, then, good-bye, sir," continued the old servant. "John," he said, as the gorgeous flunkey appeared in the passage, "show this gentleman to the front door."

John walked on demurely till he was sure

he was out of the butler's hearing. "Got the sack, eh?" he said; "told you so, young man, but you would come a poking up his lordship. Now, take my advice, don't come here again, or he'll set the dogs at you. Now, then, out you go," and, with a pantomimic gesture of ejecting the unfortunate De Souza, he shoved him out of the door, and slammed it after him.

Cæsar de Souza walked away stunned, like a man in a dream. He had a choking sensation that he could only dimly feel would be anger as soon as he could begin to think clearly. His slow, smouldering, tropical nature was not one given to sudden bursts of rage, and the direct violence of others always cowed him; but he was capable of hate, never ceasing, dusky, persistent hate. He had never been openly insulted before. It was like an unaccustomed lash slowly making itself felt, while he brooded over the late interview as he walked along. But he would kill them all. He felt for the phials in his pocket: there they were; all hesitation was now removed; he would kill

them all—father, and sons, and servants. He would possess all this—the house, the jungle, all would be his. That insolent old man, with his sneer and his stare, dared to turn *him* out of the house, him, who could waste England if he chose, much less destroy a family. Point after point in the interview came back to his memory, and he ground his teeth together. Oh! it would be sweet now to think of that old man writhing in the deadly agony of cholera. The nausea, the collapse—it would be something to think of. He gloated in thought over the details of cholera-deaths, and pictured to himself that haughty lord sahib in each stage, with no hope—no hope, till death ended it.

He went back to the small inn, and passed up stairs to his room. It was a lovely early-summer afternoon; the fresh scent of the flowers and shrubs blew softly through his window; and below he could hear the sounds of tap-room revelry, the clinking of glasses, and the tramp of heavy boots. He sat down on his bed, as his way was, to brood; and now,

for the first time, he began to see how far removed he was from his vengeance. How could he get at this proud lord sahib or his family? He could not go to the house again and ask to be allowed to place something in their food, it was impossible. He had never contemplated this abrupt termination to his chances of seeing the family. He became painfully convinced of the clumsy nature of his existing means of destruction. It would be as simple to administer ordinary poison as this subtle and fatal oil. He sat long on his bed, feeling grimly that his plans had failed, and failed in a way that he had not expected. He had not understood the conditions of what he had set himself to do. Symonds had warned him, but he thought he knew better, and this was the result: failure—absolute failure. There was no getting over it. Then he fell to thinking over his great discovery: it must be simplified, rendered more promptly available, before he could use it with the deadly effect he proposed. If he only could have killed that old man as he sat there with his

insulting stare at the table; and this he might have done by a vapour injected into the room. Then his thoughts ran on scientific lines: how could this essential oil be transformed into a vapour? It might be possible. He sat long into the night, after having had his frugal meal, while the problem and its difficulties rose up before him, one by one, and he fancied that none were insoluble.

But, in the meantime, he must return to India, and work at his laboratory again; but where was the money to come from? He might get a passage in another ship as a doctor, but this he shrank from, his last voyage was too miserable. He counted over his hoard, he had only fifteen pounds, he must get back, and that soon, or he would be left a beggar in this strange land where men were rude and insolent to poor strangers, and where his complexion made people stare at him. After much thought, he finally decided to write to the Earl of Wakefield, and ask him for money to take him home. He wrote as follows, in his awk-

ward schoolboy hand, what he considered to be an admirable English letter:—

"HONOURED LORD,

"I have the honour to inform you, with reference to our conversation of to-day's date, that I shall go back to India, but that I have not the money necessary for this purpose. If your honour will give me fifty pounds I will at once go, and will not return to trouble your honour; and I shall, as in duty bound, be ever grateful.

"I have the honour to be,

"Honoured Lord,

"Your most obedient servant,

"CÆSAR DE SOUZA MERTON."

He read this letter over to himself with much satisfaction, it was based on the most approved models of Indian official correspondence, and he delivered it at the lodge the next morning to be sent up to the house.

Lord Wakefield, when he received this stately missive, pondered a little. He had already slightly repented of his violence the

day before. The fellow's tale seemed to be true, and even if it were not, he might make a scandal and a fuss with those papers of his, and go about declaring his wrongs. Some of these Radical fellows, thought his lordship apprehensively, might get hold of him and make things unpleasant with their stories, it was as well not to wash one's dirty linen in public, and it might be the safest way to get him quietly back to India. So, after consulting with his agent, Lord Wakefield sent De Souza fifty pounds and took his receipt. It was delivered to him on the express understanding that he was to sail at once. Cæsar De Souza readily gave the required understanding, surprised at his having got all the money he asked for. Like a true oriental, he had calculated that twenty-five pounds would be enough, and so had asked for double the amount, expecting that the earl would beat him down by at least one half. However, he got it all, which was so much the better. He started at once for Liverpool, accompanied—though he was not aware of the

fact—by a confidential servant of his lordship's, who had orders to see him actually embark, for Lord Wakefield, on principle, trusted no one.

The man returned in two days to Melhurst Castle and reported that De Souza Merton had taken his passage, and had departed in a Liverpool steamer to Bombay, and that he had, with his own eyes, seen this doubtful member of the family satisfactorily clear out of the country.

CHAPTER VI.

"CÆSAR DE SOUZA has come back again," said Symonds to his chief one morning, about a month after the events recorded in the last chapter.

"Has he?" said old Johnson. "He has come back, as the *Government Gazette* says, 'within the period of his leave,' very much within the period of his leave; why, it's only three months since he left, and he took six, did he not?"

"Yes," said Symonds, "but I never thought that he would stay at home all that time."

"Nor did I," said Johnson, "I expect the noble earl did not greet his dusky nephew, with the open arms of the affectionate uncle but rather, I take it, with the projected fist of the professional chucker-out."

"I suppose he can take over charge?" said Symonds. "He says the government ordered him back here."

"Oh, yes! just go round and see that it's all right." And the next morning Symonds, going to the dispensary, found De Souza, as usual, dispensing medicines, and treating the throng of patients as though he had not been away at all.

"Well," he said, "so the visit to the ancestral home was a failure, eh?" and De Souza was forced to admit that his noble uncle had not received him with any considerable cordiality or profuse offers of hospitality. He told Symonds the story of his reception.

"Well, for downright insolence, commend me to the British aristocratic snob," said Symonds, when the recital was finished. "However, we appreciate you here, so work away and make some startling discoveries. I suppose you won't try his lordship again?"

Cæsar De Souza thought in his heart that

he would *try* his lordship again, but he merely smiled and shook his head.

He needed no exhortation to work; he shut himself up as before, and laboured to perfect his discovery. He was not long in doing it; he was spurred on now by hate, as well as by his natural bent for research, and it was not many weeks before he discovered how to etherealise the oil into a subtle vapour which, as far as he could tell, by experiments on animals, was as deadly as the oil itself. But it must be tried again on human beings, and this time he felt no hesitation in applying the test to some hapless patient. He was constitutionally free from any idea of sin; indeed, his conceptions of right and wrong, never very vivid, had now become completely non-existent. The treatment he had received seemed to excuse any hostility towards the human race, and the destruction of a man appeared to him hardly more terrible than the asphyxiation of a rabbit.

He selected a strong man as the first victim, the servant of a merchant in the town, and a

boy of eighteen as the second. He placed both of them in a private room in the dispensary, asking them to wait till the crowd of patients had dispersed before he investigated their cases, and with a small india-rubber syringe he impregnated the room with the deadly vapour. He kept them there half-an-hour, and awaited the result after they went away with profound impatience. He was summoned to attend on both of them the same day at noon, and both died in the course of the afternoon. As it was the rainy season their deaths attracted no particular attention, and the Sanitary Commissioner did *not* think it necessary to form a commission of inquiry. Besides, had not the work been done thoroughly before? "Slight cholera in one taluka," was the sole epitaph that these two poor victims of science obtained at the hands of a benevolent government. That evening Cæsar de Souza walked out to breathe the cool evening air. The day had been wet, but the clouds had lifted towards the evening, and there was a glorious sunset. He looked out towards the west, over there

was Europe, with its lights, its theatres, its bustling streets, its busy life, its brilliant vice. India lay dark to the eastward. It was all his, his inheritance, he had now but to enter in. What a position his was. He felt like a god having control over the forces of nature. What could he not do? He could destroy empires, slay kings, ruin cities. He hardly seemed to belong to this earth; he was responsible to no one for the way he exercised his power. But these were but fleeting dreams, for Cæsar de Souza—and it was fortunate perhaps for the world that it was so—had no continuous ambition; his intelligence, except in the domain of physical research, was *borné* and stunted; and it was only during these brief moments of exaltation that he at all realised his position and felt his power, or cared to form visions as to how it might be exercised.

His mind went back at once to the old channel of desire—*thirty lacs a year!* It might be his now; he would kill them all—that proud old lord sahib and all his family;

he felt no more compunction than a man might feel who intended to go out shooting on the morrow. And then what a life would be his. He had been to a theatre at Liverpool and had seen a ballet, and he pictured to himself how he would surround himself with these lovely white dancing houris, and crown them with diamonds, while fountains ran wine, and the electric light shone over gleaming mirrors —a kind of idealised *café* which was his conception of earthly splendour. Dreams of tawdry oriental magnificence alternated with bestial picturings of unbridled sensuality. His head swam. Well, had he not earned it? Had he not lived laborious days? He would still make other great discoveries some day, and fancies of science, heated visions of luxury, tropical imaginings of reckless abandonment to passionate pleasure, reeled through his teeming brain. He must get leave again and go; but the money—how was he to get to Europe? He would not travel again as a doctor on a canal steamer; that dreary voyage still haunted him. Well, he would consider and

make money somehow. Chance declared itself in his favour the very next day. The Hindu merchant, whose servant he had ruthlessly killed the day before to substantiate his experiments, was seized with cholera the following afternoon, and De Souza was at once sent for. He knew the man to be rich, and he found him in a state of abject terror of death.

"Will you give me five thousand rupees if I save your life?" he asked when he got to the sick man's bedside, where the patient was writhing in convulsions.

It was promised him after some little wrangling, and he was to get nothing if he failed. He injected his oil into the patient's arm, and applied some of the ordinary remedies, so as to throw any one who might hear of the case off the scent, and in three hours the sick man was sitting up and out of danger. The facility with which he had got these five thousand rupees struck De Souza; the way to fortune was open to him by this means had he chosen, but what was all he

could earn compared with thirty lacs a year? However, at all events, he had got the sinews of war, and before very long he announced that he wished to take leave again, though it would have to be without pay.

"Going to try the obdurate uncle once more?" said Symonds.

But De Souza shook his head and murmured something about some experiments that he wished to make with the help of European investigators. He would not, however, say what these experiments consisted in, though he remained firm in his determination to go; and after some difficulty and correspondence his leave was granted.

It was barely six months since he last landed at Liverpool before, and he well remembered how to get to the Staffordshire mansion. But when he arrived there he found the place shut up, and was informed that the Earl of Wakefield was in London with his family. He went up to London accordingly, took rooms in a good hotel, as he had now plenty of money, and spent a day or two in buying better

clothes and walking dazed amid the roar and turmoil of the vast metropolis. He had learnt something on his last visit to England, and had deeply considered how to proceed on the present occasion. He had sufficient cunning to discern that he saw a much better chance of being received if he came as a rich man; and it was of the utmost importance that the way should be prepared for him, and that he should not be liable to be turned back by some insolent footman from the door. So he wrote a note to the Earl of Wakefield, in which he inclosed a cheque for fifty pounds, thanking his lordship for the loan—this was really a master-stroke of policy—and adding that he was on his way from India to America, where he had good prospects of advancement. But at the same time, he said that he would much like to see his lordship and his family once before he finally left England, and he begged to be informed when he could wait upon them.

An unexpectedly gracious reply came back. "The fellow's got some money at all events," said Lord Wakefield. This was his one

criterion of human excellence; and he was the more pleased, as he had long looked on that fifty pounds as gone beyond recall. "Seeing him for ten minutes won't hurt us," he added. So De Souza was told that if he presented himself at four o'clock on the following day at Lord Wakefield's house in Belgrave Square, he would be granted an audience. He dressed himself in his best clothes on the following afternoon and went. People who met him, and glanced contemptuously at him, little imagined the terrible potentialities of destruction carried in the pocket of that insignificant little black figure: that by a mere motion of his hand he could have devastated London and plunged England into mourning. A gang of dynamitards would have been less formidable denizens of the streets that day. He had a small indiarubber syringe with the deadly vapour in one pocket, and in the other, in case of accident, a bottle of the curative oil.

The same insolent footman let him in, but this time ushered him in without a word into a plainly furnished study, where Lord Wake-

field was sitting alone. That nobleman greeted De Souza with what he intended to be condescending cordiality, but which was still tinged with his native insolence and brusqueness.

"So you are going to America?" he said, after a few casual observations had been exchanged.

"Yes;" said De Souza, and then stopped. He had no story ready, and did not feel inclined to speak. He kept gazing at his uncle with the same silent, fascinated curiosity with which he had regarded his first victim—the old woman at Muddeenuggur. Lord Wakefield thought his manner odd, and relapsed into his usual imperious tone.

"What are you going to do there?" he said.

De Souza did not appear to hear him; he still looked at him with a curious expression, and moistened his lips with his tongue. "May I see my cousins, your sons?" he said at last. He must get the whole family in the room if possible.

Lord Wakefield mastered his temper with an effort; he was evidently resolved to be gracious. "Yes;" he said; and ringing the bell he desired the footman to send for Lord Horbury, his eldest son, and the other two younger sons to the study. They were all at home, having indeed waited in to see this curious black cousin, wild Uncle Philip's son, and they shortly afterwards entered the room. They gazed at De Souza and De Souza at them. The eldest was a cynical-looking man with an eyeglass, through which he surveyed De Souza with a kind of astonished scorn; and the second son, a young gentleman of great fashion, after looking at him a moment with interest, turned away apparently to conceal a smile. De Souza hated them both at once and instinctively. But the third son, a curly-haired boy of seventeen, came forward frankly with a pleasant smile and held out his hand. "How do you do, Cousin Cæsar," he said, and De Souza felt a sudden pang at the idea of this cheerful young life being abruptly cut short. But he must die, they must all die.

He looked at them with his large black eyes in silence.

The knowledge that a human being is about to die always invests him with some mysterious pathos, and the doom of all those that stood in the room then was as irrevocable as the doom of fate. Cæsar de Souza began to think how that light-haired boy would look struggling in the agony of cholera; about the others he did not care, but the boy reminded him somehow of Symonds, he had the same pleasant speech and open manner, yet he must die; even had he wished it, his heavy determination was not versatile enough to change at the last moment. But he did not wish it; this was the moment he had longed for and thought of through so many weary months. He gazed at them quite unable to speak. "Well, your cousin has come to say good-bye," said Lord Wakefield at last, after some commonplaces which De Souza had hardly answered. Lord Wakefield thought he seemed half-witted, and wanted to get the interview over. "As I have an engagement now," he continued, as De Souza did not offer

to move, "I am afraid I must ask you to excuse me," and he rose from his chair. The time had come. De Souza felt in his pocket for the little indiarubber syringe, and moistened his lips again with his tongue.

"Good-bye," said Lord Wakefield, holding out his hand, "I wish you success."

De Souza hastily took out the syringe behind his back—it was in his coat-tail pocket—and he emptied the whole fatal contents into the room. He shook hands with his uncle and all his cousins and went hurriedly out, closing the door behind him. Outside he drew a long breath, and waited for a second or two. He heard one of the sons laugh an unpleasant laugh, and say, "He's not a brilliant specimen, certainly; I expect the whole thing is a fraud." Then the boy said something he could not catch. Then a bell was rung, and he heard the footman's steps coming towards the room. He hastily left the door and advanced along the passage to meet him. "You can find your way out," said the footman with a familiar nod, and Cæsar de Souza saw him knock at the

study door and enter. Well, he might die, too, the insolent scoundrel, he had not much compunction in slaying him. His anxiety was over. They had all been long enough in the room for the poison to work. He went out by the front door and walked slowly back to his hotel deep in thought. It was done but he felt no elation at present, only a profound anxiety and curiosity to see what the result would be. He bought an evening paper, but it contained nothing of interest. It could not, of course. They would not die before the night. He passed a restless night. The fitful clatter of cabs disturbed him. He got up frequently and looked out over the roofs of London, with its multitudinous lights—the roofs that cover all the griefs and joys and passions of millions of human beings—and he wondered what was going on in one particular house far away to the west in Belgrave Square, how the place would be astir with lights, doctors coming and going, and the master of all that wealth rolling in agony in the grasp of the terrible cholera demon.

At last the grey dawn broke, and he went down early, and seized the first morning paper that came to hand. It contained a paragraph to the effect that a case of cholera had been reported in Lord Wakefield's house, and that his lordship was dangerously ill—that was all, but as the day wore on and the afternoon papers appeared, he read the whole story, which was hawked about the streets as the event of the day: "Awful outbreak of cholera in the West-end"—and was published by the papers in the largest of leaded type. Then he read that Lord Wakefield had been seized the evening before at a dinner party with sudden illness, and on being transported home the doctors announced that it was virulent Asiatic cholera;—that shortly after all his three sons were seized, and a footman who was in the house; and that in spite of all the efforts of the best medical men in London, all had died except the second son, who had survived the attack, but who was so weak and exhausted that he was not expected to live many hours more. Various speculations were hazarded by

various journalists as to the cause of this outbreak. One son had been in Italy, he might have brought it back from there; the drains of Belgrave Square were held up to popular odium; fears were expressed lest it might spread; wild sanitary reforms were demanded as urgently needed. "By this event," said the papers, "many noble families would be plunged in mourning. The late earl was"—and so on, and so on, in the approved newspaper biographical style. They gave his life: how he had served with the militia, had sat in the House of Commons as Lord Horbury, and all the ordinary details of the career of the commonplace British peer. The papers came out strong; it was a fine theme for moralising the sudden death of almost the richest peer in England, with all his family—for the second son had died that same afternoon. And for days after there was no lack of matter for sensational articles, and letters of thrilling interest. Of course every one rushed into print with wild theories as to cholera. Every doctor who had been in India wrote and

upheld a different remedy. Advertising chemists seized the opportunity to puff their infallible medicines, The London drains were held up to public scorn, and frantic plans for taking up every sewer in the place, and watering London with disinfectants were confidently broached—in fact all the crude mass of futile nonsense which the newspapers invariably evolve when the foolish public is stirred to its depths. Cholera belts were extensively sold in the shops; cholera socks; cholera neckties—heaven knows what! The enterprising Pears discovered that his soap was an antiseptic to cholera germs, as well as being matchless for the hands and complexion, while a patent brace man announced that his peculiar system of suspenders checked the initiatory stages of cholera even more effectually than the most drastic of patented pills, though the latter were said to be worth a guinea a box. The lowest depth was perhaps reached by one old gentleman who wrote up to the papers to say that he rather thought that a small quantity of water with a slight admixture of

brandy taken every morning would not be a bad preventative of cholera. He signed himself (quite irrelevantly) "*Fiat justitia, ruat cælum.*" This letter was, of course, put in, the columns of the leading daily papers are always open to valuable productions of this nature. But all this interested De Souza but little, he was more concerned in the following paragraph :—"His lordship's title and vast estates will now descend to his younger brother, the Honourable Henry Merton, who is on a tour in the east, but who has been communicated with by telegraph. As the new earl is unmarried, the title will on his death become extinct, and the property will descend to distant relatives." De Souza thought it desirable on reading this that he should at once secure his position as the heir-apparent, which he now unquestionably was, so he went to see Lord Wakefield's solicitors.

CHAPTER VII.

HE showed the papers he had brought with him from India, and requested that he might now be regarded as the heir. The solicitors looked perplexed, and after examining the papers long and carefully, had a lengthy consultation in their private room. "It seems correct," they said at last. "Of course we must have evidence of your identity, and we must show these papers to his lordship. You had better leave them here."

De Souza looked suspiciously at them. His oriental distrust made him hesitate to give up his documents, but after all, he reflected, they were only copies. "You will give me a receipt," he said, and with a smile the head partner gave him a paper acknowledging that

they had them in their possession. He learned from them that the new earl was expected in Paris the evening of the following day, and that he would sleep a night there, at the Occidental Hotel, where he always stayed, and they had sent letters there to meet him. He would come over to England the day after, and with this information De Souza went his way. It had occurred to him that if he could meet Henry Merton on the way, and cause his death before he got to England, it would be safer—if his hand was not traced in the matter—than killing him in London. If cholera on two occasions were to follow immediately on his visits it might rouse people's suspicions, and though the matter was absolutely beyond human experience, and therefore incapable of proof, still it was as well not to voluntarily incur any risk that might be avoided. So on returning to his hotel, he packed up a bag, leaving his other baggage there, and informing the porter that he was going down into the country for one or two nights, started at once for Paris, and put up on his arrival at an hotel near the Occi-

dental. He had not been quite sure how to proceed, as he was not well acquainted with the characteristics of these large Parisian hotels. He was afraid that he might have to call on his uncle regularly, if he wanted to see him, and this he did not wish to do; it would attract attention, and there might be others with him, and he felt it necessary to be entirely unconnected with this death. Then it might easily be set down to the fact that his uncle had been travelling through Italy, where cholera was in its usual smouldering condition.

So after taking up his quarters he went out and passed by the Occidental. He saw a large courtyard inside the building, connected with the street by a covered way; inside were people coming and going. The place was full of life, full of carriages and luggage, and he walked in. He found that no one noticed him or asked his business. In these vast caravanserais, where travellers are merely numbers, not individuals, and where many outsiders resort for their meals, one little man more or less,

even though he was dark, loafing about the courtyard, excited no remark whatever. However, he must find out whether his uncle was here or not. He went to the office, where a busy official was hard at work with a row of keys and bills in front of him.

"Has Mr. Merton come?" asked De Souza.

"Yes;" said the clerk, deep in his figures.

"What is the number of his room?"

"No. 95, first floor," said the clerk without even looking up, and De Souza went out again, and cautiously reconnoitred the passages round the courtyard. He found that no one stopped him, or took any notice, and that he could walk up stairs without attracting any one's attention. His idea was now to go to his uncle's room at night, as though by mistake, and if the door were but open, two seconds would be sufficient to finish the work. The peculiar characteristics of these vast hotels favoured the scheme. But it was too early, so he walked out into the streets again. At other times the glitter and attractions of the place would have fascinated him, but now he walked about un-

conscious of his surroundings, bent on this last crime—this crime that would crown all his efforts, and all his labours.

The evening seemed interminable as he wandered vaguely about. Would it never be late? But the time passed at last, and at eleven he returned. The courtyard was still animated—people coming and going, the *café* on the ground floor full of lights; gaily dressed women and men speaking all languages under heaven, of which the American language was perhaps the most obvious. He walked across the courtyard, and boldly went up stairs. Arrows painted over numbers directed him. He ascended two flights of stairs, then went along a passage, meeting no one but a chambermaid, who hardly looked at him, thinking he was one of the six hundred creatures of passage in the hotel, then up a few stairs more, then along another passage, till at last he came to the numbers 98, 97, 96, 95. His heart beat faster; a pair of boots was outside the door; his uncle, then, was inside. If he had locked the door! His heart

stood still at the thought—perhaps the key-hole might serve. He waited a moment outside, all was still; he could just hear the clatter of horses' hoofs and the rumble of carriages in the courtyard below. He turned the handle noiselessly—the door was unlocked—and opened it, but the hinges made a creaking noise.

"Who's there," said a voice from the bed, apparently half muffled under the bed-clothes.

De Souza emptied the deadly vapour into the room. "Pardon," he said, in as French an accent as he could assume, and closed the door again. He heard the occupant of the room get out of bed, and turn the key sharply in the lock with an exclamation. He had evidently forgotten to do so before. De Souza went down stairs, meeting no one but a few sojourners in the hotel going to bed, who barely noticed him—the passages were not brilliantly lighted—then walked straight out through the courtyard, gained the street, and his own hotel. It was done, and more easily

and completely than he ever could have anticipated. He went back to London early the next morning, and, having gone to his hotel, awaited the course of events.

The sensation caused by the death of the new Lord Wakefield, though he was a man not widely known, was almost as great as that caused by the tragic end of the late earl and his family. The fatality and coincidence were so extraordinary. "His lordship," said the papers, "was on his way to England to assume charge of the property and to take his seat in the House of Lords, and had arrived in Paris from Italy. He spent one night at the Occidental Hotel, intending to cross over to London by the mail on the following day. In the morning he complained of not feeling well, and it was not long before acute symptoms of Asiatic cholera declared themselves, and, in spite of all that medical skill and attention could do, his lordship gradually sank, and died about one o'clock in the afternoon. It is supposed that he must have contracted the disease during his journey

through Italy, where we are assured that cholera, though the fact is not publicly admitted, is still raging. He was"——and then followed *his* biography—biographies of members of the Wakefield family had been rather numerous lately—and an allusion to the fate of his brothers and nephews. "The title," it was added, "is now extinct." Some little interest was imparted to the narrative by the strong objection to the whole story made by the proprietor of the Occidental Hotel. He vehemently contested the statement that the earl had died from cholera. It was, he said, only choleraic dysentery, and he got doctors to prove the truth of this assertion. This fine distinction, however, did not avail him much, for in spite of all his assurances of clothes burnt and disinfectants scattered broadcast, his hotel was nearly emptied, and remained so for some time. There is no such timid creature as the tourist.

And now the papers had hardly finished discussing Lord Wakefield's death when another

sensational report was started, which stirred all London to its very depths—that is to say, all London except the couple of millions or so who live in the East End, and who do not care whether an earl dies or not, and to whom it is a matter of perfect indifference who succeeds him. But what a minister once vaguely denominated the "classes" and their "dependents"—a fairly large number of souls—were deeply moved to hear that a claimant had arisen with a most romantic history and most dubious antecedents; moreover, a black man, and therefore a man and a brother, and of great interest to evangelical old ladies, who fondly hoped that he might be one of the attractions of the season at the May Meetings at Exeter Hall.

The society papers revelled in the subject. The *Tittle-Tattle*—a most original journal, one half of which was devoted to minute descriptions of the sayings and doings of dukes and marquises, and the other half to proving that they were an incubus and an obstruction, and urging the people to rise in their millions

under some grand old man or other, and exterminate them—this paper came out strong on the subject.

"No, Alfred," it said, addressing thus festively a rival purveyor of society news, "the new earl's father was Bob Merton, of the 30th Lancers, 'Bobsie,' as we used to call him. I remember him well when he was with his regiment in China, where he met his wife, who was never acknowledged by the Wakefield family. She was an Indian princess, related to some of the most noble families of India, and she was travelling there for her health. All old Indians will remember the hospitable and gracious charm with which she presided over her husband's table at Calcutta and Bombay."

To him, then, answering, as Homer says, up and spake the editor of the *Backstairs Journal*—the man acquainted with many dukes: "The ever blundering *Tittle-Tattle* is at sea, as usual, over the Wakefield peerage. The new earl's father was named Thomas, not Bob, and he never served in China at all. He

was in the 27th Hussars, not the 30th Lancers. Poor Tom! I well remember meeting him many years ago in the street (this was pretty safe), and a bolder man never rode over hounds. His wife was not an Indian princess, but a Portuguese lady of one of the most noble families of Lisbon, which had settled in India in the days of Vasco da Gama. The De Souza family is well known in the west of India. We congratulate the new earl heartily on his accession to the title, and we feel sure that, with his knowledge of Indian affairs, he will be a most useful member of the House of Lords."

A third society journal, which the other two affected to despise, because it was owned by a man who had been a draper, contradicted both; and the controversy, to the great edification and instruction of the British public, went on for some weeks.

However, whatever may have been their discordant views as to De Souza's exact parentage, they all bore testimony to the fact that he had ascended the throne of his

ancestors; and so, indeed, after some delay, he had. The lawyers, after inspecting the papers and obtaining complete evidence as to his identity, pronounced his case to be so impregnably strong, that any litigation on the part of distant cousins, who, otherwise, would have got the property, could only end in one way. So it was not long before the humble sub-assistant surgeon found himself formally invested with the gigantic property, and inducted into the high position of the Earl of Wakefield. Of course he became at once the centre of attraction in London, but the difficulty was to get at him, for he could rarely be found. This sudden publicity, the multitudinous people he had to see, frightened him, accustomed as he was to the uneventful life of an Indian country station; and he led in London a dark and mysterious existence, constantly disappearing for days at a time, and driving his agents and men of business wild by his utter inattention to his affairs. All he wanted was money, and of that they could never supply him with enough, though

they never clearly understood how he spent it. Of course the *Pall Mall Gazette* had its eye upon him at once; and the energetic young man of that enterprising journal, after an exciting hunt of three or four days, ran him down, and insisted on interviewing him. He depicted De Souza, with his usual lively imagination, as a good-looking youth, with a most intelligent and winning expression, dark indeed, but not darker than a southern Frenchman; and, although De Souza had, during the whole interview, which lasted about three minutes, said nothing beyond a sullen "Yes" or "No," put into his mouth the most cheering sentiments of trust in providence to direct him aright; gratitude to his early Indian friends; praise of the Indian administration; and a warm tribute to the present viceroy; also, of course, an enthusiastic commendation of the vast influence exercised by the *Pall Mall Gazette* in checking vice even in India. In fact, the sentiments were such as, in a Sunday book, a good little Indian boy who had got rich might be expected to

utter, if brought before an appreciative audience of Christian friends, with additions and modifications to suit the taste of the readers of this remarkable journal. But the *Pall Mall* is nothing if not imaginative. However, De Souza's gratitude was really not an imaginary quality, he always did gratefully remember past kindnesses, and the first thing he did with his fortune was to send thirty thousand rupees to Muddeenuggur to build a new hospital, which he asked might be called the "Johnson and Symond's Hospital," in memory of the kindness he had received from these two officers. Symonds, who was still at Muddeenuggur, where, as need hardly be said, De Souza's career had been watched with much interest, showed the letter to his collector.

"It's nicely expressed, isn't it," he said; "though he did not write the letter himself. I know his old scrawling hand; he really was not a bad fellow."

"No," said Johnson, "there must have been something good in him; but doesn't it strike

you, young man, that there is something peculiarly fishy about our friend's career? We know that he had studied cholera out here; he goes home, and by an extraordinary coincidence every man who stood between him and his property dies of cholera in a week. It's a curious phenomenon, ain't it, to say the least of it."

"Perhaps it is," said Symonds, "but a man can't carry cholera about with him in a pill box."

"Well, we don't know that he can, certainly," said Johnson; "but still, he was a rum devil, and this looks d—d fishy. If I was collector and magistrate of London, I think I would make an inquiry. However, it's no business of ours, so we'll take the price of the innocent blood and buy a potters field —I mean, build the Johnson and Symonds hospital. The money *non olet*, but I dare say the hospital will get on all the same; just write and thank him."

It need hardly be said that many people in London were saying very much what old

Johnson and Symonds were saying at Muddee-nuggur. It certainly was a most extraordinary coincidence, but what possibility was there of its being a crime? No medical man would admit for a moment that cholera could be rendered intentionally portable. No, it was merely a coincidence, that was all; but the evil rumours revived when men learnt of the obscure and mysterious life led by the new Earl of Wakefield. However, he did not stay in London long, it was not the season, so there were not many people to be affected by his conduct in town. He himself announced that he disliked the fog and gloom of autumn in Belgrave Square, and prepared to go down to Melhurst Castle. He was also stimulated by the desire to enter as its master that magnificent place which he had once seen as a forlorn and destitute stranger. So he departed one day, suddenly, taking down, to his agent's surprise, a most remarkable collection of people with him.

CHAPTER VIII.

STRANGE stories of his doings soon reached London. He had assembled round him a most disreputable set of acquaintances, male and female, especially the latter, and the orgies which were reported to be going on at the castle had checked any desire on the part of the families of the neighbourhood to see more of their extraordinary neighbour, and had nearly driven the vicar of the parish, who lived just outside the park gates, wild with horror and amazement. The new earl was soon spoken of in the county with bated breath. This wonderful Oriental, with his eastern ideas of splendour and sensuality, was a different kind of earl from any that had ever lived there before; so the simple country

people gazed in awed wonder at the castle which nightly blazed with lights, and listened with horror for the sounds of turmoil and debauchery which were reported to be going on inside. Men and women turned away off the roads when they met his lordship's carriage, in which De Souza was sitting with haggard eyes and green complexion—the pallor of the dark-skinned Indian races. The old butler, who had felt a kindness for him at first, as he was Master Philip's son, gave him up in despair, and left the castle, liberally pensioned—for Cæsar was as recklessly generous on some occasions as he was meanly stingy on others—and lived in a cottage on the estate. His place was taken by a nondescript Levantine of sorts, named Salvador, without whom the Earl of Wakefield was rarely to be seen.

However, when the season in town came on, these strange rumours as to his life had only had the effect of heightening the desire in London society to see this new addition to the English peerage. After all, he *was* an earl with three hundred thousand a year, and

people, especially ladies, and among ladies, especially mothers with daughters, snatched a fearful joy in talking of him, and forming plans how to redeem him from his evil ways when he arrived to make his debut in London. In May he came rather reluctantly, for he liked the freedom of his country place, but his one respectable friend, a man named Herbert, a *flâneur*, a man about town, who had met him on his first visit to London, and who felt that curious interest in him which Symonds and others had felt, doubtful whether he was genius or fool, whether compounded of intellectuality or pure bestiality, had told him that it was absolutely necessary for him to make his appearance. It was, he said, his bounden duty as a British peer to come to town at all events his first season, to take his seat, be presented, and go through the ordinary routine of what are called the "duties" of the upper classes. So Cæsar came, and the house in Belgrave Square shone with brilliant illumination.

His first appearance in London society was

to be at a ball given by a great leader of fashion—a Mrs. Crawley; and when it was known that the Earl of Wakefield was to be there, the competition for invitations was immense. It was a crowded affair. A royal prince, a Russian grand duke, and an eastern potentate, a celebrated poet, and a crowd of "smart" people were there; but not one excited so much attention as the insignificant-looking little black man when he shambled awkwardly into the room—ἀχρειογέλως, stupidly smiling, as Cratinus described the Athenians—and made his bow to the hostess. He certainly was not a very commanding figure. His clothes, though made by the best tailors in London, never seemed to fit him; his hands hung helplessly down in front of him, and he appeared painfully conscious of immense feet. He had shaved off his straggling beard in deference to his friends' wishes, but this only exposed still more his coarse and sensual mouth. His complexion was of a dirty greenish-black hue, the result of nights of reckless dissipation; and his brilliant eyes,

which were his best feature, had from the same reason become dulled and heavy. He had evidently been drinking that evening in order to keep up his courage for this social ordeal, and his utterance was slightly dubious and husky. He could not dance, of course, and stood helplessly by the side of various partners, answering them in moody monosyllables, with only an occasional odious gleam in his eyes when his gaze lighted on some woman of more than ordinary beauty, or more than usually *décolletée.*

Herbert piloted him about the room as well as he could, and endeavoured to make him feel at home, but the eyes of the whole room, which were constantly directed on him, had not exactly an encouraging effect.

"Who is that woman? I want her;" said Cæsar at last, pointing out a fresh-looking, handsome English girl, who had a frank smile

"That is Lady Alice Winborne, daughter of the Duke of Chiswick. I'll get you introduced if you like," said Herbert; and five minutes afterwards Cæsar was standing sullenly by his

new partner, who was in vain endeavouring to make conversation.

"How hot it is!" said the young lady not very originally.

"Yes;" said De Souza.

"One doesn't feel it somehow when one is dancing, but only when one is standing still. You don't dance, do you?"

"No;" said De Souza.

"But you come from India, don't you; so I suppose this heat is nothing to you?"

To this remark, which certainly *had* been made before to many generations of despairing Anglo-Indians, Cæsar returned no answer.

"Were you sorry to leave India?" pursued his companion.

"No;" said De Souza.

"I should have thought you would have been. I suppose you had all your friends there? and you don't know many people here, do you?"

"No;" said De Souza.

This, as the French say, was "not gay," nor was the conversation certainly of a brilliant or enlivening description; and as Lord Wakefield

kept on looking at his partner with a kind of maudlin, licentious stare, poor Lady Alice, with the eyes of the whole room upon her, felt her position to be rather a trying one.

"Well, if you don't dance, let us go into the conservatory, it is so hot here," and they passed out. "There is something to remind you of India," said Lady Alice, pointing out a plantain, with its gigantic leaves, which stood at the entrance, and they went inside. The Duchess of Chiswick was sitting near the entrance to the conservatory. She had seen that her unfortunate daughter was being victimised, and she kept near so as to be able to relieve her of her charge at a moment's notice. Her son, Lord Ronald Winborne, was leaning over his partner, the dance being just finished, a short distance off. Suddenly a stifled shriek was heard from the conservatory, and the duchess started to her feet and went in hurriedly. Lord Ronald recognised his sister's voice, and hastily muttering an excuse to his partner, went in after her.

He saw his sister on the sofa half fainting,

with her hand on the bosom of her dress, while Lord Wakefield stood sullenly by her with his arms hanging down, and a most hang-dog look on his countenance. He rushed up to her "That man," she whispered faintly, "that man has insulted me." Lord Ronald blazed up at once—while the duchess took her daughter in her arms— and turned to De Souza

"What have you done?" he said, in a loud fierce whisper. De Souza forgot where he was; all he was conscious of was that an angry sahib was standing in front of him, and he sank at once into the humble native apothecary. "*Kuch nai kya,*" he said confusedly in Hindustani, hardly knowing what he was saying; "*mut maro, mut maro,*" he whined, as he saw Lord Ronald raise his arm; but the blow descended full on his face as he uttered the last words, and he reeled backwards and fell.

By this time people attracted by the *fracas* had begun to come into the conservatory, Herbert among the first. The duchess saw him enter, and went hurriedly to him. "Get

Lord Wakefield away," she said, and went back to her daughter. And then she proved herself the able tactician she had so long enjoyed the credit of being even in the opinion of her enemies. Announcing so that all might hear that her daughter had fainted—"these hot rooms were too much for her, poor dear"—she managed to attract the attention of all to her, while Herbert hastily got De Souza on to his legs and hurried him down the first staircase that he came to out of the house. She then told her son to get her carriage, and herself supporting her daughter, got her away after a word of apology to her hostess. She told her son, who was still fuming, to get into the carriage with her, and then drove off. The whole thing had passed so rapidly that hardly any one knew exactly what had occurred. But there was a kind of uncomfortable feeling abroad that something unpleasant had happened, and gradually a version of the matter approaching the truth began to be whispered about. No one wished to seem to be talking about the affair, and yet every one was talking

about it, and the evening was, as the unfortunate hostess sadly felt, irretrievably ruined. People went away early to other parties in order to be able to talk more at large, and the much discussed ball ended in something like a fiasco.

In the meanwhile, Herbert took his friend back to his house in Belgrave Square. Lord Wakefield did not say a word the whole way home; and Herbert, when he had safely deposited him in the charge of the ever-watchful Salvador, strolled away with a cigar in his mouth towards his club. "I believe the man is a wild beast," he said to himself, "and certainly a most wonderful specimen of a wild beast. I wonder what he'll do, and what he is thinking about now?"

But De Souza's thoughts that night, when his friend imagined he must have been brooding over his conduct during the evening, and meditating vengeance for the blow he had received, were in reality not concerned with the events of the ball at all. The blow inflicted on him had exercised a sudden sobering effect, and

had roused all his dormant intellectual energy. Any shock to his external nature had the effect in him of driving his thoughts along the old familiar channels, and, curious as it may seem, even while he was actually on the ground, somewhat in the attitude of Mr. Pecksniff when felled by old Martin's stick, an idea struck him, the natural corollary of his previous researches, of which he began at once to conceive the bearings, and meditate over the difficulties. His born genius for scientific thought, though at times clouded over by the sensual bestiality of the nature which he inherited from both his parents, only needed some external stimulus to set the intellectual machine in full working order, and to drive the blood back into the speculative fibres of the brain. The idea he had conceived was no less an idea than that of possible immortality. Why should not the chemical changes introduced into the blood by old age be capable of a similar counter-action as the chemical changes of the blood effected by cholera? Why should not the pure waste of tissue be

prevented by some chemical modification of the blood which would prevent the wearing out of the human substance? He was thinking over this problem the whole way home in the carriage with Herbert, and, after dismissing Salvador, who looked curiously at his master's disorderly appearance, he was haunted the whole night by the same current of speculation, picturing to himself the changes that took place in old age, and considering how they might possibly be neutralised. Ah, yes! that was his true career; Muddeenuggur with a microscope was after all better than this glittering London life. It was pleasant to see these fair European beauties with their low dresses, white shoulders, and soft palpitating bosoms, but he agreed with Apollodorus as to what they were created for—ἡδόνης ἕνεκα ἐχόμεν said that simple philosopher, and of what use were they if they screamed when one touched them? They might as well be in some Eastern harem behind high walls, and guarded by armed eunuchs. There was a barrier, a something which kept him off, and made these seductive

beings unapproachable, and as far from his reach as though they were surrounded by triple brass. Then his thoughts went back to this new problem, viewing it on all sides, picturing to himself what experiments would be necessary, and how what he had already acquired would come in. So he slept hardly at all that night, and the next morning, when Herbert came to see how he was getting on, his thoughts were still busy, and the affair of the evening before seemed removed to an infinite distance. It was only the pain in his head from the blow that at all made it a present reality. So he received his friend absently, and without much interest. Herbert stared at him with a feeling almost of disgust. He certainly did not look attractive as he lay in bed with his head on his hand, his dusky, greenish complexion, with a black mark round one bloodshot eye, and generally dilapidated appearance.

"Well," said Herbert, "how are you this morning?"

"All right, thank you," said De Souza.

"What on earth made you go and act like that last night?" demanded his friend.

"How?" said De Souza, vaguely.

"How! Why your *début* in London society was the most extraordinary that has been witnessed for years."

"Yes?" said Lord Wakefield interrogatively.

"Well," said Herbert, looking at him with a mixture of disgust and astonishment, "I do suppose you are the most remarkable specimen of an earl that has dawned upon the London horizon for some years past. You're unique, my friend, quite unique."

"Yes?" said Lord Wakefield still vaguely. He hardly heard what Herbert was saying, his thoughts were wandering elsewhere.

"My dear fellow," returned the other, "I admire you for some things. You have grasped with marvellous accuracy some of the great principles of the British constitution of society. You have evidently learnt that an earl with three hundred thousand a year may do things that others, especially poor humble commoners, may not do. For instance, if you

committed yourself with a married lady, I have no doubt that some judge could be found to pronounce that although she had been guilty of criminal conduct with you, you had not been guilty of criminal conduct with her: and if you took to stealing your friends' spoons and forks, the British people, including the magistrates, would no doubt regard you with sympathy as an unfortunate victim of kleptomania. But there are some things that even an earl with three hundred thousand a year may not do, and one is—you may not try to ravish a duke's daughter in the middle of a London ball-room."

"It was in the conservatory," said De Souza, whose attention had been caught by the last words.

"I admit the correction, it *was* in the conservatory; but I apprehend that the same grand moral principle holds good with regard to conservatories."

"What did she go there for?" said De Souza.

"My good man, you don't suppose that every young lady at a ball who goes into a

conservatory with her partner, goes there to —— I declare it is impossible to express in the English language any adequate conception of the crudeness of your social ideas."

"I didn't try to ravish her," said De Souza, after a pause.

"Well," said his friend blandly, "that's unfortunate, for the popular impression abroad is that you *did*."

De Souza was silent and evidently thinking of something else. The matter seemed to have no particular interest for him.

"What are you going to do about Lord Ronald?" said Herbert.

"Who is Lord Ronald?"

"Who is he! Well, you are the most extraordinary creature. He is the man who had the honour of knocking you down last night."

A vindictive gleam suddenly shot into Lord Wakefield's eyes. "He will die," he said.

"My dear fellow, you can't fight duels now, and it would be a pity to murder him, and so have your promising career cut short by the British hangman. What do you mean?"

"Nothing," said De Souza, who had recovered his caution; "I shall do nothing; I shall go abroad; I am tired of England, and I want to see Paris."

"I think you had better. I think a little change of air and a short absence on the continent wouldn't be a bad thing for you after last night," said his friend, and after some further talk he departed and went away thinking over the curiously-constituted nature of this extraordinary acquaintance of his. He remembered his absolutely murderous look as he said, "He will die," and he began to regard Lord Wakefield with something like horror.

This impression was certainly not diminished when he heard, about a week after, that Lord Ronald had met the Earl of Wakefield in order to patch up a kind of reconciliation, to prevent people talking, and that the former had on the following day, to the great perplexity of the doctors, who could not understand these occasional sporadic cases—died of cholera. Herbert shuddered with a terrible, nameless horror as he thought of how the Wakefield family had all

perished; and as the sinister vision of the baleful figure of De Souza, as he lay in bed that morning, rose up before him. "The fellow is a demon," he said to himself, "the demon of cholera;" and the remembrance of that little, black ape-like form with its apparently terrible attributes haunted him for some time. However, he did not see his friend again, for the papers, which had had vague innuendoes as to the curious affair at Mrs. Crawley's ball—an affair certainly calculated as the *réclames* of forthcoming French society novels say, *soulever des vives discussions*—shortly afterwards announced that the Earl of Wakefield had gone abroad, and the shutters were put up in the Belgrave Square mansion.

CHAPTER IX.

OF the Earl of Wakefield's life abroad but very few rumours reached the ears of Herbert, who was almost the only man who continued to take an interest in his welfare—and those few were certainly not to his credit. The rest of society had given him up. After his conduct during his very brief and meteoric career in England, it was felt that, in spite of his position and wealth, he was too irreclaimable a savage for any one to have anything to do with him; all manner of queer stories circulated about him besides his crowning misconduct at Mrs. Crawley's ball, and with a very short-lived sigh of regret, the London world abandoned him as hopeless. A sensational abduction case, by a city banker, which happened soon after, occupied public attention,

vice Cæzar de Souza, resigned; and he had begun to vanish out of the minds of men. But Herbert was still interested in hearing about him, and certainly the things he heard at times from people, returned from abroad, were enough, had they been generally published, to make the hair of British respectability stand on end. He was reported to be living in great splendour in various cities of pleasure on the continent; to have had a magnificent palace, and a perfect harem of dancers, and people of no reputation, both at Venice and Naples; then he blossomed out in a kiosque on the Bosphorus, where he gave an entertainment, before which the Sultan's most magnificent *fêtes* paled, and to which all the ministers and most of the European colony had gone. His unbounded profligacy there, however, caused all decent people, before long, to fight shy of him, and though he secured plenty of society in a place to which, as it has been remarked, all the scum of Europe naturally goes, this apparently palled on him, and he had vanished as suddenly as he came.

Then Herbert heard vaguely of some terrible misconduct of his at Bucharest, where his stupendous and unnatural immorality had involved him with the police, who had treated him somewhat roughly, and it was only by the direct intervention of the English minister that he had been able to get out of the country a free man.

"Fancy being objected to, on the score of depravity, at Bucharest!" said knowing old gentlemen to each other, with a grin, at their clubs. "He must be a regular bad 'un;" and, indeed, there seemed very little doubt that the iniquities of the Earl of Wakefield were at this time of an unprecedented character. It was singular that an outbreak of cholera followed his stay in Bucharest, which, when Herbert heard, he felt his old haunting terrors, of this demoniac little monster revive. Then nothing was heard of him for some time, except that his agents and men of business in London were, it was reported, constantly put to it to send out enough money to him. They compared sadly this frantic and enormous

expenditure with the methodical, frugal habits of the late earl, and the recklessness of his suggestions filled them with horror. He even proposed that Melhurst Castle should be sold, and all the trees cut down—anything, in fact, so long as his present demands for money were complied with. No estate could stand his profuse extravagance.

"If a man cannot live on three hundred thousand a year," said his chief agent, in a tone of deep grievance, "he ought to be put into a lunatic asylum." But nothing stopped him; no remonstrances or prophecies of ruin.

Herbert had heard nothing of him for some months, when, one fine spring morning, walking in the park, in the middle of the day, he discovered, to his surprise, the Earl of Wakefield sitting in a chair, gazing at the passers-by with dull, lack-lustre eyes, and the faithful Salvador standing behind his chair. Lord Wakefield looked haggard and worn, his appearance betokened, as Catullus said of Flavius, "*non viduas jacuisse noctes,*" and his

complexion was greener than ever. Herbert went up to him and asked him how he was. Lord Wakefield, who seemed to be in a sort of low fever of excitement, hardly seemed to recognise him, but shook hands with him and said he was quite well.

"I have not seen you for an age," said Herbert, "you've been abroad haven't you?"

"Yes;" said De Souza.

"Did you have a good time?" asked Herbert.

"Yes."

"Where have you been?"

Lord Wakefield, at that moment, started, and looked with suddenly-awakened eyes at the entrance to the park, but sank back an instant after in his chair, apparently disappointed.

"What?" he said.

"Where have you been?"

"To Paris;" said De Souza.

"Was the weather good there?" asked Herbert.

"Yes;" said De Souza.

"Do you think you'll stay long in England?"

"I don't know."

This conversation was not of a deeply interesting character, and it was difficult to keep it up, Lord Wakefield seemed so utterly unresponsive. Herbert thought perhaps he was offended at something, so he got up.

"Well, good-bye;" he said.

"Good-bye;" said De Souza, without even looking at him, and Herbert went on. He had not gone twenty paces before he heard footsteps behind him, and "Mr. 'Erbert" uttered in a plaintive tone. He looked round and saw Salvador.

"Oh! Mr. 'Erbert," said this worthy domestic, who dropped his "h's" like a Frenchman, not like a cockney, "do talk to my master."

"He does not seem to want to see me particularly," said Herbert.

"That is only 'is way," said Salvador, "he do not mean it, I think he is going

mad, oh what a life we 'ave led, it 'ave almost ruined me and worn me out."

Salvador certainly did not appear either worn out or ruined. He looked fat and flourishing, and bore evidence of wealth in numerous chains and rings of a gorgeous description. He had not apparently suffered much in any way in his master's service.

"We 'ave travelled," said Salvador, "and now milor is come here, and he is mad for a woman."

"What woman?" said Herbert.

"I don't know who she is; we meet her at Cöln; we go from Milan to Brussels, and of course we come to Cöln; there we see in the Warte-saal a woman, not much: we 'ave seen plenty more bootiful women," added the rascal with a grin, "but his lordship start and stare, and say, 'where is she going to?' so I find out, of course. She take ticket for England. 'We go to England too,' says milor, and so we come in the same train all the way, and then when we come to London we lose her, but I see her here one day, and so milor come her-

every day to find her. Do speak to him, Mr. 'Erbert, or he go mad. Never mind what he say," and Herbert, partly from curiosity, and partly to gratify Salvador's evident desire, went back and took his seat by Lord Wakefield again, who seemed as unconscious of his return as he had been of his departure. However, they talked a little on ordinary topics, and Herbert was pleased to see that Lord Wakefield was beginning to wake up, when suddenly he saw him tremble from head to foot, while his eyes shone with a curious black glitter.

"There she is," he said. "Salvador, there she is; now find out."

Herbert, looking with some curiosity in the direction Lord Wakefield was indicating, saw a medium-sized, somewhat slender woman, very plainly dressed, sauntering slowly along the path towards them. She was not handsome, but there was something distinguished in her air, and there was a curious, indefinable expression of latent power about her face. Her hair was short and curly, and her mouth and jaw

were as determined as those of a strong man. Her peculiar, steel-grey eyes had something of the look one would expect to see in a great soldier, keen, determined, and vivid. She walked by, casting a rapid look at Lord Wakefield as she passed. De Souza sat as if spell-bound, gazing at her as a bird would gaze when fascinated (which birds never are, by the way) by a snake. When she had passed, he drew a long breath, and said:—

"Did you see her?"

"Of course I saw her," said Herbert, "but I failed to remark anything extraordinary about her."

Lord Wakefield made no reply, but sat staring after her.

"Follow her, Salvador," he said, "and see where she lives, and then fetch her for me."

"My dear fellow," said Herbert, "you don't seem to have learnt very much of European manners and customs during your stay abroad. You can't send a servant to fetch every lady you see in the park. I never heard such an

idea. If you *fetch* them yourself," he added, "it would be different."

This feeble little joke was quite lost on De Souza, who kept looking after the woman who had attracted him so much.

"Go quick, Salvador," he said, and Salvador, with a shrug of his shoulders, as if this was quite a novel and unpleasant duty for him to perform, started on his errand. She did not pass again, nor did Salvador return, and De Souza, after waiting in silence for about a quarter of an hour, finally said it was cold, and that he was going home.

"I'll come and look you up soon," said Herbert.

"Very well," said Lord Wakefield mechanically, and they separated.

The next morning Herbert went to Belgrave Square. He had some difficulty in getting in, as Lord Wakefield lived only in one room, the rest of the house being dismantled, and there was only a deaf old charwoman below. He found his queer friend walking about the room in a state of great excitement. He started

when Herbert came in, but his face fell when he saw who it was.

"I thought you were Salvador," he said, which was not exactly a cheerful mode of greeting for a friend, but Lord Wakefield was always like a child in stating exactly what was uppermost in his mind at the moment. However, Herbert sat down and talked awhile, but could not help noticing the evident preoccupation and restlessness of his companion.

At last Salvador entered, and De Souza looked eagerly at him. That respectable servant, however, wore an air of grievance, and took no notice of his master, but went to the sideboard and began diligently polishing some spoons and forks.

"Well?" said his master, impatiently.

"Well?" returned Salvador—he always treated his master with scant ceremony.

"What have you done?" said Lord Wakefield with redoubled impatience.

Salvador paused with a spoon in his hand.

"I think," he said, "that I not go near that woman any more," and he turned round and

resumed his silver-cleaning with renewed energy.

"Did you see her?" said Lord Wakefield.

"Oh, yes, I *see* her," said Salvador with a fine irony; "look at this 'ere," and he showed on one side of his face a long red mark, where the skin had been raised, apparently by a passing bullet.

"Did she shoot you?" said Herbert, who was surveying this scene with great amusement.

"Oh, yes, she shoot me," said Salvador in a matter-of-fact way, as if that was an event that might quite have been expected. "I think," he added with deliberation, "I do not go near her any more;" but after some pressing and objurgations from his master, he at last condescended to tell his tale at length.

"Well," he said, "I know the house in Soho, for I see it yesterday, and to-day I go. On the way I buy a bouquet of flowers. Ladies like flowers," he explained. ("Good heavens," thought Herbert, "this transformed the fool

into a vulgar emissary of love at once.") "So I go with my bouquet, and I knock at the door. A man open with long boots, a pretty shirt outside his trousers, and a belt and a fur cap. 'What you want?' he says in French. So I say, 'I want to see the lady who lives here.' He look at me very suspicious. 'Who are you?' 'I'm Lord Wakefield's butler,' I says, 'come with a message from milor to the lady who lives here.' So he goes in to ask and shuts the door; and there I stand, of course, on the doorstep with my flowers, and some little boys laugh at me. Soon he opens, and he says, 'Come in.' So I go in and up stairs, and I see the lady sitting at a table with papers, and an old man, the same we see at Cöln, reading by the fire. So I make a good bow and say, 'I am the servant of the Lord of Wakefield.' 'Well?' says the lady in English. Then I bow again, and say, 'Milor do very much admire the booty of your bootiful sex.'"

"Gracious heavens!" groaned Herbert, "what an exordium!"

"She say 'Well?' again. 'Milor has sent

the flowers,' I says. She looks rather angry and takes them, and throws them on the floor. 'Well?' she said. 'His Lordship want to see your gracious ladyship, and he live in Belgrave Square. When will your ladyship come to him?' '*What!*' she say, and she look strange. The old man by the fire say something to her in Russian, and she say something to him. I understand a little. It was something like, 'Let me alone, I will do it.' I say, 'If your ladyship can come now I will get carriage, and we will go at once. Milor is very rich and very kind.' Then she look fierce. 'He has sent you to fetch *me?*' she said; saying 'me' very loud. I make another bow, for I was afraid, and I say, 'His lordship hopes you will come.' And she take up a little pistol and fire it straight at me, and say, 'Let Lord Wakefield come himself.' It just missed me, and I run to the door and tumble down stairs, and fall against the servant; and then I get outside the house, and a policeman come up and take me. 'What are you doing firing pistols in houses and running away?' he says.

I say, 'I done nothing; I'm Lord Wakefield's servant.' And he look at me and then at the house, and the lady come to the window and she say, 'You can let him go, policeman, he has done nothing.' So he let me go, and I come back here." And Salvador put his hand to his head as though he was in intense pain. "That's all," he said after a pause, and began scrubbing the spoons again.

Lord Wakefield had listened to this recital with keen eagerness, and when it was finished he got up and began to put on his coat. "What is the number of the house?" he said.

"She shoot you too," said Salvador sullenly.

"My dear fellow," said Herbert, "I would not go if I were you. She is evidently a dangerous woman."

"She said I was to come myself, I must go," said Lord Wakefield hurriedly. And he put on his coat and hat in spite of Herbert's remonstrances—Salvador did not say another word except to give the address—and hastily left the room without saying good-bye to his friend. Herbert went out after him after a

pessimistic remark or two from Salvador, but Lord Wakefield had disappeared by the time he got outside the door.

Herbert shrugged his shoulders and went his way; but called again the next day, fully expecting to find Salvador watching over the corpse of his master. However, that useful servant opened the door quite unconcernedly.

"Milor is not here," he said; "he go there" —with a jerk of his thumb in the direction of Soho—"for the whole day"; and Herbert departed in a state of mystification. He called about three days later, and found Salvador packing up.

"We are going abroad directly," he said, "with that lady," he added with a grin. "Oh it's quite proper. We stay at different places; and she has her father and her servant; but we go because she tells us, that's all." And the enigmatical Salvador winked a wink of profound significance.

Calling again the next day, Herbert found that his friend really had gone. He had learnt the mysterious lady's address from

Salvador; and walking round by the house discovered that it too was empty and "Apartments to let" put up in English and French. He walked home perplexed. "It's no business of mine," he thought, "but I wonder if I shall ever see him again. However, I make no doubt he can look after himself." As he remembered, what he had almost forgotten during the last few days of ordinary intercourse, the strange and (to others) fatal career of the Earl of Wakefield.

CHAPTER X.

THE composition of the party which had left the shores of England the evening before was certainly calculated to *intriguer* the people they met in hotels or railway carriages. A half-caste earl, travelling with a Russian lady and her father, could hardly be looked upon as forming a group of ordinary tourists, and the two servants, the Cossack and the Levantine, did not tend materially to diminish the discrepancy of the materials. For they were all travelling together, apparently on the most friendly terms, and Cæsar de Souza was exerting himself to the utmost to be socially agreeable. When, after Salvador's disastrous rout, he went to call on the woman who had so excited his curiosity he found himself

ushered into the room which had witnessed Salvador's flight, and found the pair, father and daughter, engaged much as his faithful servant had depicted them. He had sent in his card, and on his entry was introduced to the old man, who was presented to him by the name of Feodor Vasilivitch Simonoff. The daughter, whose name he subsequently discovered to be Olga Feodorovna, at first greeted him with a half-hostile, half-defiant hauteur, which added to the peculiar charm this woman exercised over all who came in contact with her.

"Why did you send your servant to insult me?" she said after the first banalities of conversation were over. Lord Wakefield looked foolish, and proceeded to throw the whole blame on the stupidity of Salvador, to which Olga Feodorovna listened with a somewhat scornful curl of the lip. But by degrees the conversation became more animated, and finally De Souza found himself, almost to his own surprise, talking to this charming woman as though she had been an

acquaintance of long standing. He was, in truth, slightly puzzled at the cordiality with which he had been received, when indeed, after Salvador's experiences, he hardly expected to be received at all; and he was still more surprised when he discovered how intimately acquainted Olga Feodorovna was with all the details of his life, even with things that he thought were known to no one but himself.

"I heard you were a great student in chemistry," said Olga frankly when he hinted at the surprise he felt, "and I am a great student too, and so I took an interest, I suppose, in you. I have always been fascinated more than by anything else by the study of the genesis of diseases," and she looked at him in a way that he could not exactly define, but which filled him with a vague sense of fear, which was somehow, at the same time, not wholly disagreeable. Could this wonderful woman have guessed his great secret? This suspicion made him sullen and silent for a little time, but he soon yielded again to her matchless charm of

manner, and became really eloquent, as he could be when he chose, in describing the process of discovery—how failure through failure led to success—how patient thought explained things that at first seemed inexplicable; to which Olga Feodorovna listened half fascinated, for indeed, as Alkinous said of Odysseus, he told his experiences like a bard. Lord Wakefield was on his best behaviour; the remembrance of how Salvador's overtures had been received and the presence of the father checked his usual coarse brutality; and he went away at last, after obtaining permission to come again on the next day, feeling a better man than he had felt for a year past. He had a truly Oriental idea of women—that they were created primarily and simply to gratify men's passions. He had never met before with a woman with whom he could talk and who understood him. What a face she had! how vivid, how sympathetic! He thought, with her help, that he might devote himself again to science—might study—make new researches—

if she were only by to aid him. Even his passion, the craving he had felt when he first saw her to possess her, yielded to this new charm of intellectual companionship, and then when his intellect was satisfied, when they could share their strivings after knowledge together — then to possess her, ah! — that would be something — of which hitherto he had formed no conception. He dimly began to perceive what love was, not the mere animal passion—something higher, something sublimated — Ἔρως οὐράνιος, as Pausanias calls it in the *Symposium*, not πάνδημος. He walked home in a kind of ecstasy.

The next day he called again, and again spent nearly the whole day in talk. The old man by the fire was a cipher; besides, he did not understand much English, while Olga Feodorovna spoke English, as she did almost all European languages with perfect fluency, though with a slight foreign accent. "Ah! he has finished his life, and done his work," she said of her father; "as for me, my work is all to come;"

and De Souza did not inquire, nor care to inquire, what her work was. She mentioned casually that she and her father were going abroad again soon. Lord Wakefield said that he was going abroad too, and ventured at last to ask if he might go with them. Olga assented frankly. "Why not?" she said, "my father will be with us. I am free; come with us if you wish." De Souza stupidly blundered out something about his being rich, and wishing to pay for the party. Olga merely laughed—she was not offended. "No, no," she said, "we will be independent; come with us as a *bon camarade;*" and so it came to pass that a few days afterwards, to Herbert's surprise, and Salvador's mingled amusement and disgust, the whole party quitted England together. They travelled about for some time through Belgium, then down the Rhine, journeying leisurely. Lord Wakefield was more and more fascinated by his charming companion, which was hardly matter for surprise, for she was indeed one of the most delightful women in Europe. She was always fresh, never the same; he felt

inspired in her presence, and his old cravings after physical knowledge revived within him. He bought a magnificent microscope, and they carried about a large library of books on physiology, chemistry, and toxicology. They approached intellectually and morally nearer to each other when absorbed in their studies than at any other time—till at last De Souza could not work alone, indeed, could hardly exist apart from his companion; if she went out he was restless and distracted during her absence, and only when she was in the room could he settle to study, or could he even think. Before, solitude had been essential to him, now still more essential was the society of Olga Feodorovna. The demons of his sensual nature awoke in him at times. Once, when he was alone with her in the room, he felt his head swim, his mouth seemed to dry up; and Olga, bent over her books, was startled to see him leaning over her, trembling and silent, with the fixed and horrible gaze of a satyr. Her eyes flashed fire, and she made as though she would have struck him, and De Souza cowered

as if to receive a blow, but she contented herself with a look—a look of such scathing scorn and bitter contempt that he sank back—when the entrance of her father put an end to the scene. In five minutes she had recovered herself, and they were talking with their usual interest on some observed phenomenon.

Olga Feodorovna's feelings towards De Souza were indeed hard to analyze. With her perfect contempt for the man was mingled a respect—almost a veneration—for his subtle intellectual power, his grasp of a subject as a whole, and his deep-browed patience in working out the details. Besides, she looked up to him as the possessor—as she was well aware, though De Souza when the subject was approached always changed the conversation—of the most terribly destructive power known to men. She knew his history, was certain that he had killed the whole Wakefield family to come into the property, and that he could wield the same terrible force now, if he chose to exert it. So in her eyes he was the very incarnation of the destroying forces of Nature—a god of ruin and

desolation—and as such she looked up to him with almost mystical veneration.

But he was so *borné*, so stupid at times she had tried him, had tried to kindle in his dull soul something like enthusiasm for liberty, and hatred for tyranny, something of deep brooding pity for the poor and enslaved. Hopeless! hopeless! De Souza could understand nothing, feel nothing, and indeed cared nothing. He listened with but tepid interest to her passionate diatribes against the existing framework of society, the selfishness of capitalists, the miseries of toilers; and her visions of political liberty in Russia, on which she occasionally, though rather guardedly, touched, stirred him still less. "Do you mean to say that you, an Indian born, would not wish to rid India of her tyrannical English oppressors, and raise the enslaved Hindus to political freedom?" she asked one day. De Souza thought of Muddeenuggur, and whether he would wish to kill off Johnson and Symonds in order to make the bunya in the bazar "free." The idea somehow seemed to have no significance for

him. "No," he said, helplessly, "they get along very well," and Olga Feodorovna stamped her little foot impatiently on the ground, and looked at his heavy countenance and hanging lower jaw with a feeling which almost amounted to aversion. Especially did he show a painful torpidity with regard to the v s of Russia. Their acquaintance had lasted some time before Olga Feodorovna let him understand at all that she was interested in the cause of the Russian Revolution. She had been in the habit of receiving visits in various places from many mysterious people; and when De Souza had questioned her about them, she had said vaguely that they were all her helpers in her work. But she would not allow them to speak with him. He was her property, and she would not permit any proselytising attempts to be made on him by others. At last, one evening —they were then at Geneva—she burst out and told him all that was in her heart. She described how Russia was groaning under the tyranny of the Czars—how her own brother, who had been a Nihilist, had perished at the

hands of the executioner—how her sister had been sent to Siberia and had died on the way owing to the brutality of the guards—how she herself was under sentence of death for participation in various conspiracies if she returned to Russia—and how she had devoted her whole life to the destruction of the Romanoffs—that mad, hateful family, as she called them—and how she could die happy if, like Samson, she could pull down on her head the whole structure of Russian bureaucracy, and involve all—the generals, the Ministers, the Tchinovniks—all, in one common ruin. De Souza listened to this outburst with quite unsympathetic amazement. "You must help me, my friend. You will help me, will you not?" she turned her shining eyes, those keen eyes, now blurred with passionate tears, upon him.

"I will give you money to help your friends, if you like," he said, awkwardly.

"Money! yes, we want money," she said wildly. "But *you*, I must have you—I love you," and with a sudden movement she threw

her arms round his neck and kissed him passionately.

All the long-repressed desires in Lord Wakefield awoke. He seized her in his arms, but she shook herself free with a look of melancholy determination.

"No," she said, "you must deserve me. Will you deserve me?"

"I will do anything," said De Souza, breathlessly, and panting like a man in a nightmare.

"Anything?" she said, with a piercing glance.

De Souza was trembling with passion. "Try me," he said.

Olga Feodorovna paused. "I know you," she said. "You have studied the subject. You killed Lord Wakefield and his sons. You can kill anyone you choose."

De Souza attempted some faint disclaimer.

"I know it," she said. "Do I love you the less for it? You can kill people with this hand"—she kissed it—"and no one knows. They say it is a judgment of God. Oh! you can do it. Does not the cholera obey you?"

"But," really— began De Souza. She silenced him with a gesture.

"I know it," she said. "Oh! if I had your power — some day you will tell me, perhaps—but now you must kill *him* for me."

"Him? Whom do you mean?" said Lord Wakefield.

"Who but the Emperor?"

"The Emperor?" said De Souza, bewildered.

"The Emperor of Russia, of course," she said, in some impatience at his thick-headedness. "You must kill him, and we shall be avenged. Will I not give myself to you then?"

De Souza looked perplexed. "Why, should I kill him?" he said, "he has done no harm to me. Oh, Olga," he continued, eagerly, "why should we mind about these things? The world is large, come with me, give yourself to me. We can leave the Emperor of Russia alone! He has done nothing to us." After this most unusual flight of eloquence—unusual for him on a matter not connected with his passion for science—he paused, and looked at Olga

Feodorovna rather anxiously, alarmed at the expression on her countenance.

"Done nothing to us?" she repeated with a vehement scorn. "He has killed my sister, and killed my brother; he would kill my father and kill me. He strangles Russia and all the noble souls in Russia. Done nothing to us! Oh, my God! will you never understand?"

De Souza *did* understand—that she was angry; and he hastened to soothe her. "Well," he said, "we will see about it, but we are so happy here. Why not go on?"

"Go on!" she said, with redoubled contempt. "Go on! while the heavens and earth are crying aloud for vengeance."

De Souza was silent. "I will marry you, if you like," he said at last, rather timidly. "I can make you Countess of Wakefield."

Olga sneered at him. "Countess of Wakefield!" she repeated, "what do I care for that? You do not know me." She got up and walked, as her custom was, like a man, up and down the room with her hands clasped behind her.

She stopped suddenly before Lord Wakefield. "Do you love me?" she said.

"You know I do."

"Well, then, I ask you this. I swear you shall never possess me till you do this thing. If you do it, will I not give myself to you body and soul?" She changed suddenly from the tigress into the soft wheedling woman, and threw herself into his arms. "My love, my king, my god," she sobbed, as she kissed him passionately, "you can kill him; no other man in Europe can. You can; you are as a god. Oh, if I were in your place!" And she laid her head on his shoulder. In her fierce revolutionary enthusiasm she almost thought she loved him—this man who, in her hands, might be so potent an instrument of the Revolution. She forgot everything—everything that she despised in his nature—in her wild worship of his terrible power, and how could De Souza's weak will resist the woman he loved with an absorbing passion? Besides, had he not killed many others?—he would kill one more, what would it matter? there was no fear of detec-

tion. He felt exalted by her enthusiasm, by her worship. He rose, and his mean, vulgar figure and sensual face had an air of sudden dignity. "I will do it," he said; and Olga fell at his knees, and kissed his hands with the passionate fervour of a pilgrim at a shrine.

CHAPTER XI.

ABOUT a month after the events recorded in the last chapter, in a gorgeous room belonging to a suite of apartments on the first floor of the Hotel de France, at St. Petersburg, the Earl of Wakefield and Olga Feodorovna were seated alone together. It was the early winter, the streets were already deep in snow, and the sledges, with their netting-covered horses, were skimming over the snow in all directions, the shouts of the drivers at the corners, and the tinkling bells, adding to the stir and bustle of the scene. It was the beginning of the season, and each day witnessed a new turn-out, which the idlers in the street loved to gaze at. Cæsar De Souza was sitting near the stove in the gaily-painted

drawing-room, and Olga had just got up, as her wont was, and was pacing restlessly up and down the room. But how changed! With a grey wig and spectacles she looked the veritable Miss Fook of New York, whose passport, indeed, she carried, and under whose respectable name she was at present living in one of the chief hotels of the place, right under the very noses of the intelligent police. She occasionally visited the great English milor in his magnificent apartments on matters connected with the education of one of his children, whom indeed (a child borrowed for the occasion) she had with her at her hotel. She had just put on her disguise again as De Souza had rung the bell for tea. An hotel servant entered, together with Lord Wakefield's own servant—not Salvador, who, much to his disgust, had been sent back before the journey to Russia, ostensibly to look after the house in London. He had, in fact—to use a once celebrated phrase—been directed "to repair to the metropolis" in order to get him out of the way, and his place had been taken

by a Russian servant whom Olga knew she could trust. Her father, who was too well known to the Russian police had been left behind at Geneva. The *samovar* and tea and lemons were brought in. They drank their tea in silence, and then smoked cigarettes, while Lord Wakefield looked sullenly, as his wont was, at the opposite wall. He had been very silent of late, hardly to be roused, even by Olga. This afternoon he had been bringing forward objections as to how he could be received by the Emperor, and he began again on the same topic when he had finished his tea. He had never been presented at his own Court, he said, and the ambassador might object.

"Good God! you are a great English nobleman," said Olga, impatiently; "simply say that you want to see His Majesty—but no—listen to me. You know—or perhaps you *don't* know, but I *do*—that there is no such imbecile in Christendom as a Russian diplomatist or a Russian official, and the Emperor is a bigger fool than any of his Ministers, which is saying a good deal. What they like is some small, dirty, wretched, underhand

intrigue, that leads nowhere, and can lead nowhere; this they follow up; that is their idea of statesmanship, and that is the subtle policy that all Europe dreads and admires so much. So, just you see some Minister, it does not matter whom, and give him to understand —you need not say so in so many words— that you are still conscious of being Indian-born, though the richest peer in England, and that you, at the bottom of your heart, hate the oppressors of your native land, and that you long to see their yoke shaken off by the help of the great Czar. Just you give one of them to understand this, and you will see that the Emperor himself will express to your ambassador the most urgent wish to see you. Then intimate that you wish to see all the noble family of the great White Czar, whom you look to as your deliverers. They are as vain as peacocks, and quite as brainless. They will all be there to impress you with their united magnificence, and then—kill them all."

De Souza still gazed at the stove in obstinate silence.

"I don't quite like it," he said at last.

"You don't like it!" said Olga Feodorovna, her grey eyes flashing with passion; then, remembering herself, as she looked at his lowering, heavy expression, she changed her mood. She was as great an actress in her way as Rachel, and she purred round Lord Wakefield, caressed him—pictured the life they would lead after the deed was done, when she would be his, all his—kissed him passionately, which made his eyes light up, and his frame tremble. Nor was this all acting; and it was the reality in it which gave her action its irresistible power. She did revere him in a way. Was he not the possessor of an implacable power of destruction? To think that she could lead him, and that he might under her guidance become the very genius of ruin to Europe. Her woman's pride, her lust for power, were both flattered by his absolute subjection; for he gave way, as what weak passionate man has not given way since the days of Samson and Delilah! This was not the first time he had turned sullenly restive, but she knew that he could not live without her; the hope of possessing her was with him

the main motive of all his actions. So it was not long before "they two were brought to full accord," and he promised faithfully to carry out her behests.

He was quite as successful as Olga had anticipated. He got an introduction to the Minister of Police, and artfully primed him on the lines Olga had suggested, so that while the English ambassador was hesitating whether he could introduce a man who had not been presented at his own Court, the Emperor himself solved the difficulty by expressing his distinct desire to make the acquaintance of the wealthy Earl of Wakefield. So the English ambassador was to present him on the following day at half-past three in the afternoon. This was to be on a Wednesday, and on the Tuesday afternoon, after receiving this satisfactory intelligence, Olga was again with Lord Wakefield, and he told her the result of his action. Her frequent visits to him had caused no remark—it was natural that the guardianship of his child should necessitate frequent interviews between them. It was about four in the afternoon, and the servants had already

lighted the lamps, brought in the tea, and closed the curtains. The short Russian winter day had drawn to a close, and Cæsar De Souza was sitting in his usual attitude gazing at the stove, while Olga, who had laid aside her wig and spectacles, paced restlessly up and down the room with her hands behind her, as was her custom when under any strong mental emotion.

"Four o'clock," she said; "in twenty-four hours it will all be over"—her eyes gleamed—"my vengeance! my vengeance! In thirty hours *he* will be writhing in agony—no one to cure him. There is no cure but yours, is there?" she said, suddenly stopping.

"No," said De Souza.

Olga resumed her pacing up and down; she seemed like a caged tigress thirsting for blood.

"Thirty hours more," she murmured. "Oh, my God!—then my sister will be avenged The Minister of Police will be there too, General Mednikoff—he will die too——" She stopped, and looked at Lord Wakefield. "Oh, if I had his power!" she thought. He was crouching in his chair in gloomy silence. "How do you make it?" she asked abruptly.

This was the one thing that Cæsar De Souza never would reveal to her; he clung to his secret with Oriental tenacity and reserve.

"You could not understand," he said; "you could not do it yourself."

Olga looked at him half vindictively.

"I'll have it out of him afterwards," she thought; "but let nothing stop my vengeance now. Thirty hours," she kept on repeating to herself; "then twenty-nine hours, and so on till at last he feels the crushing pain. When will he die, do you think?" she asked, again stopping opposite De Souza.

He seemed annoyed by her questions.

"I don't know," he said; "he is a strong man. About five or six hours afterwards, perhaps."

Olga went on walking; then sat down on a chair and tried to read; then rose again and went to the window, drew the curtain aside, and looked out. "It will be all mourning to-morrow night," she thought. She could not rest. She began her aimless pacing up and down again.

"I'm stifling," she said, throwing her arms

back. "I must do something, or I shall die—so many hours to wait." A sudden thought struck her. "Cæsar," she said, "give me the poison; I should like to feel just how it is, how *he* will be tortured, at the beginning."

"No, no," said Lord Wakefield, peevishly. "What is the use?"

"You can cure me with the oil. I do want to feel what it is like to have the cholera on one; he will feel it to-morrow, with no hope."

"What is the use?" said De Souza again; then he added with simple cunning, "You might get ill, and miss your vengeance to-morrow."

This quieted her a little, and she went on silently pacing up and down for some time.

"The time is endless," she burst out again, "it is an eternity, I must do something."

She went up to the window again and looked out, then turned restlessly away, went to the table, and took up a paper. It was the *Vedomosti*, and it contained the usual meagre details of uninteresting intelligence which the Russian Government, in its wisdom, graciously allows "able editors" to publish.

"No news," she said, impatiently, and threw it down. Ah! there would be news the day after to-morrow—news flashed all over Asia and Europe—of the whole Imperial family stricken down by the judgment of God;—and there was the instrument of the Divine punishment—she looked at De Souza half contemptuously, half reverentially. He sat quite still. The silence maddened her.

"I must have it," she broke out at last; "I must! let me feel it, I shall get well at once with the oil; do let us try it together—we have tried all things together; let us suffer together a little—let us—let us!" and she went up to him, and put her face near his.

Cæsar De Souza was still reluctant.

"Of what good is it?" he said.

Olga stamped her foot impatiently.

"I want to feel what *he* will feel to-morrow, give it to me."

She took the small syringe from him suddenly—she knew where he kept it—and emptied half of it into the room.

"There," she said, "is it not a curious

feeling to feel that one is doomed—doomed to death? and he will have this feeling to-morrow when he begins to feel this pain, and for him no hope—no hope."

De Souza was annoyed at what she had done.

"Well," he said, "in about an hour we must take the oil; that is terribly strong," and they sat down, and talked a dropping, intermittent talk on indifferent matters.

In about an hour Olga began to feel a strange dizziness in the head and general feeling of languor.

"Get me the oil," she said; "I do not feel well."

De Souza rose. He also was slightly affected by the oppression of the coming disease, and went into the next room. He rushed back before he had been gone many seconds, with the bottle in his hand.

"The oil—the oil!" he gasped, and turned the bottle on its side. It was empty.

Olga looked up.

"Is that the bottle?" she said, in a calm, despairing voice.

"Yes, yes! Gone, it's gone!"

"Can you get more?" said Olga, still with the same suppressed voice.

"More!" screamed De Souza; "who can make it but myself?"

Olga took the bottle.

"There is still a little," she said.

Lord Wakefield rushed at her.

"Give it me," he said, brutally, and tried to snatch the bottle from her hand.

In the struggle the last few drops were spilt on the floor. De Souza turned furiously upon her.

"You've murdered me, you she-devil!" he said, and he advanced threateningly upon her; "you threw away the oil before."

"Fool!" she said, in a low voice, but with so terrible a look that he shrank back.

In fact, it was the stupid Russian servant, who had packed up the bottle upside down, and when the oil escaped, simply replaced the stopper, and said nothing about it.

"Your cursed whim of taking this has killed us," whined De Souza; then he suddenly started up, and rushed at the bell. A servant entered, and looked amazed at the wild

state Lord Wakefield was in, and the fixed and gloomy appearance of Olga Feodorovna.

"Brandy, brandy, quick!" roared De Souza, and the man brought a bottle and glasses, and went out of the room as rapidly as possible. He thought his master was going mad.

De Souza took a tumbler, filled it with brandy, and drank it off as if it had been water. Olga looked up at him.

"Is that any use?" she said.

"Use! what use?" said Lord Wakefield, wildly, "nothing is of any use."

"Then it is all over," said Olga, sitting down calmly, with a fixed look in her eyes and her teeth clenched.

Well, she was not afraid of death; she knew that it would have to come some day, either by her own hand or at the hand of an executioner; but to come now—it was cruel—her revenge and hate unsatisfied.

"My vengeance," she moaned; "failed! failed! only twenty-four hours more—and my sister unrevenged. Oh God! and now *I* die, and not *he*, the Czar, that murderer!"

She covered her face with her hands, and

her whole frame shook. She was aroused by a brutal grasp laid on her shoulder, and, looking up, saw Lord Wakefield with his hair wild and whole appearance disordered, his lips trembling, and his eyes aflame with drunken passion. He seized her with coarse violence.

"Go!" she said; and she struck him on the face.

He staggered back, but rushed at her again with a low howl like a madman. She was still stronger than he was in spite of the deadly agony she was in, and the sickening feeling of nausea that had come over her. "*Dúrak*," she hissed between her teeth, and struck him again violently on the face, and hurled him backwards.

Then she fell back on to the sofa herself, and felt helplessly about her girdle for something. She found it—it was a small flask. With a violent effort she raised it to her lips, took out the stopper with her teeth, and drank off the contents. She rose again with a stifled shriek, reeled backwards, then forwards, and fell prone on the floor with her white arms outstretched—dead—stone dead. Thus died

Olga Feodorovna, revolutionist, by her own hand—friend of Russia, a woman manlike in her courage.

Lord Wakefield saw her fall, and thought she had fainted, and threw himself on her in his drunken passion. He recoiled as suddenly; his medical instinct told him that she was dead, and the deadly fumes of the poison she had taken mounted to his head and made his brain reel, so that he rolled helplessly over. He staggered to his feet again, and made for the table where the brandy stood, but fell before he could reach it. His head came against the sharp edge of the table, and stunned by the blow, drunk with brandy, and half unconscious from the strong narcotic of the poison, there he lay, motionless, with only an occasional involuntary shudder, for two hours, while the cholera did its deadly work. For two hours in that gorgeous room, heated with the glowing stove, heavy with poisonous fumes and the sickening odours of all the nameless horrors of cholera, nothing was heard but a low moaning, and at last the sound of a deadly convulsive struggle. Then

all was still. Outside, the stars shone with brilliancy in the clear northern winter sky, the street was alive with lights, and gay with the tinkling of bells and the muffled rush of sledges over the snow; inside, a ghastly silence, and the dimly burning lamps. At last, about midnight, the servants, whose curiosity had been aroused by the noises in Lord Wakefield's room, followed by the unusual silence, but who knew their place too well to disturb their master without strong reasons, ventured to burst open the door—a temerity which afterwards cost two of them their lives.

They found Olga Feodorovna lying on her face on the floor; her face was calm, but her clenched hands and set teeth showed how keen had been the agony of her last moments; and near the table they recoiled with horror from a hideous dark mass—a confused wreck of humanity huddled together in the midst of unspeakable abominations, which was all that remained of Cæsar De Souza, Earl of Wakefield. The room was closed, medical assistance summoned, and the police communicated with.

On the events of that night in St. Petersburg profound silence was observed. The police had, of course, recognised Olga Fëodorovna as a noted Nihilist; and her association with Lord Wakefield, who was to have had an interview with the Emperor on the following day, was certainly extraordinary. The causes of death, too, were mysterious — cholera and poison. Cholera at St. Petersburg in winter—it was incredible! It seemed like some wild Nihilist plot miscarried, and yet no bombs were found, no weapons. The whole affair was wrapped in mystery. The English ambassador was informed of the extremely suspicious circumstances of the case; and as the Government had no wish to spread abroad the alarm of cholera, and no desire to startle men's minds with the idea of a Nihilist plot, and as the English ambassador naturally did not wish the association of a British peer, whom he was about to present at Court, with a noted Nihilist agent to be widely known, the whole thing was hushed up, and absolute silence on the subject enjoined on all concerned. It was doubtful even whether the

Czar himself had any idea of the narrow escape he had had. It was announced that the Earl of Wakefield had died of dysentery suddenly, and at dead of night his body and that of his companion, in two poor but hermetically sealed coffins, were secretly carried to their last resting-place, and hurriedly placed under the snow-covered earth in some unvisited and desolate burying-ground.

So perished Cæsar De Souza, last Earl of Wakefield, and his terrible secret perished with him.

θνάσκομεν γὰρ ὁμῶς ἅπαντες, δείμων δ' ἄϊσος· . . .
. . . . τὸ δὲ πὰρ δίκαν
γλυκὺ πικροτάτα μένει τελευτά.

THE END.

RICHARD CLAY AND SONS, LONDON AND BUNGAY.