Cosmopolitan Hinduani

Depicting Muhammedan

and

Hindu Life and Thought

In Story Form,

BY

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COSMOPOLITAN HINDUÁNI.

YUSUF'S ROSE-LADDER.

I.

FROM a lofty and graceful tree overhanging the banks of a smiling Lake, a nightingale sweetly warbled; "Wake, O rose of rare sweetness! Thy thorn has pierced my heart. Wounded I pine, but exquisite is the pain, and glad am I to suffer, for love is sweet, ever sweeter, the sweetest."

Blushing, the rose raised her beautiful face to her lover; and entranced for a moment revelled in the ravishing melody of her best beloved. Then smiling she opened her glowing lips and said, "Dear heart! love, sweetest of all things is love, making life grow wise and perfect!"

Beneath, the Lake of Zínatábád beauteously glimmered in the moonbeams, while a boat calmly glided on its rippling waters. As evening advanced, the brilliant carriages of Sáhibs and Mems; Nawábs and Rájas rolled away one after another from the *bund*, the famous Champs Élysées of Zínatábád, whose banks are rich and green with their hot discussions, and the eager pursuits of politicians; its crevices secrete passions and official hatreds, while the balmy air is redolent with dynamite and explosion. Regardless of the fleeting of time; forgetful of the world itself, as the Prophet Mohammed forgot the Korán in his Ayeshá's eyes, his disciple Diláwar Jung finds his haven and heaven in the frail bark gleaming in the moonlight. The entrancing evening, the passionate wooing of the nightingale, the love-lit face of his companion, whose heart responds to the tumult in his breast, and the tender, silent speeches shot from her shy, furtive glances, intoxicate him with such

ecstasy that his tremulous tongue falters, "My Rose—" but being too excited, he leaves his imperfect speech to reveal the depth of his love. The maiden with an "Ah!" hastily withdraws her hand from her lover's ardent but crushing clasp.

"Nay, nay! I cannot have thee near enough," cries Diláwar Jung, seizing and raising it to his lips. "Shukr-ul-hamd-lillá—praise be to God! that the sweet Rose should have bloomed for me. Yes, the Rose that as a bud has nestled close to my bosom, should at last be mine—only mine to cherish and to brighten my lonely garden with its fragrant blossoms. In childhood—"

"Ah—ha! thou wast the faithful slave, spoiling Miss-bává with rose-drops," gleefully breaks in Rose Green in the purest Persian accent. "Alas! alas! for those innocent days of frolic and gladness shared by my fond father," and a deep sigh escapes the maiden of eighteen summers.

"And now—now?"

"My guardian and—and—" but blushing and averting her face, the deep blue eyes begin to study the laughing ripples.

"Thy lover—thy husband. Say, sweet Bulbul—say when? I pant like the papiá-bird for the autumnal rain-drops," pleads he earnestly. Tears bedim the eyes; sadness sweeps across her brow, and sighing her hand fingers the dark sash of mourning around her waist. Like troubles girding her pure, young life the black ruching encircles her swan-like neck, and a deeper one edges the simple, white muslin dress, betokening the late demise of her father. "Ján-i-man—my love! my life! take comfort, and let thy slave be all-in-all to thee now," and thus consoling, as he draws her closer, her lily-face, crowned with a wealth of glossy black ringlets, trustingly nestles on his brave and honest breast. But hurriedly she disentangles herself, as on the still evening comes echoing, "Rosy-bává, Missy Sáhib," and notices an impatient flag fluttering on the *bund* to recall the loiterers. "Hark! That's Áftáb Ján calling. Come. Let's be off—it's late."

"Blessed Lake! Limpid and sweet as Rukuábád! How happy we two have been on thy tranquil shore. I loathe—dread to enter the cold, calculating world," remarks Diláwar sighing and languidly plying the oars. "Would Alláh! wafted us to unknown regions, where not a pulse, but our own should beat; where we may live without hindrance, with love to make our heaven." When the boat moored at the *bund*, he caught the lithesome figure in his arms, and as they entered the shadowy arches, Rose sprang forward affrighted, crying, "Mercy! I hear the rustling of a snake."

"What! in this moon-lit garden of Eden," said Diláwar laughing. "Thou tormentor of the heart! But thou'lt not escape thy toll so easily," and straining her to his breast covered her with kisses.

"Mubárakbád—may Alláh bless and prosper you!" exclaimed a man stealthily creeping from behind them. "Fresh volleys to welcome the Resident—eh?" asked Yusuf-ud-dín with a sardonic laugh, as he gravely salaamed low, over and again, with all the grace and finish of a Zínatábádi, who even in crowd is remarkable for his elegance and high breeding. Like quicksilver the startled lovers moved asunder. Abashed and bewildered at the unexpected intrusion, Rose failed to acknowledge the salutation, and fled to join the impatient Áftáb Ján.

Yusuf-ud-dín was a man of five and thirty, ten years senior to his young friend, with remarkable shifting eyes, that seldom had the courage to look up honestly, and invariably seemed to be studying his flowing beard, which weighted him with dignity. He was neatly attired in the Zínatábádi costume—the nether garments almost lost in the folds of a long elegant coat, belted with a strap woven in gold threads from which a short sword dangled, while his cropped head was mounted with a close-fitting felt turban. "Ay—yar—ho, beloved friend! The sight of you has allayed my anxiety. I could not account for your absence, and daily turned away disappointed from your

threshold," bitterly complained Yusuf-ud-dín as linking his arm in that of his friend, they paced the broad terrace of the Lake. "Subhán Alláh! beautiful! grand! You are a sly fox, and I need not have rent my heart in twain, for naturally the partridge-bird delights in nothing but the dewy beams of the moon! Closely have you confined the bird of paradise, and not allowed others to charm her with their melody." While listening, Diláwar attentively scanned his friend, as one would read the weather in the face of the sky, to know how the wind blew, and what interest he felt towards Rose; but his pale, pock-marked face, remaining composed revealed nothing of what his mind was planning for her future advancement. As the subject was distasteful to him, he coldly remarked, "Janáb-i-Yusuf—noble friend! The green Rose-garden was not barred, nor you debarred, especially as you had been a constant visitor during Major Green's lifetime."

"Tauba—tauba! God forbid! I play the amorous lover when silver threads have begun to steal through this esteemed beard," exclaimed Yusuf in great indignation. "Young man, it is a poor compliment to age; especially to a Mulláh—priest, the son of a Mulláh, who having renounced the frail beauties of nature only meditates on the Picture Maker by night and by day. Indeed, it is for youth—hot blood like yours—to drink love's wine, and like the brilliant moth to become enamoured of love's kindled torch." Then suddenly changing the conversation, he exclaimed in surprise, "Hallo! there is Begum Áftáb Ján;" as if his eyes had but that instant alighted on her, while but a few moments before he had held a close conversation with her when the young couple were out rowing. "Mizáj-sharíf—how are you?" asked he advancing with sweeping bows. "Shukr—praise be to God! I am well through your kindness," replied she with a knowing smile.

"Ah! Miss Sáhib! How my heart delights to see you happy!" remarked he turning towards Rose, and silently watching her with admiring eyes, kept low and under

control. "May your garden luxuriate in rose-buds! Walláh! Diláwar's star is in the zenith. We old folks—is it not so Áftáb Begum?—are withered trunks. Our May-day is over to woo celestial kisses and live on eyes' desire. By my silence you must not consider that I had forgotten the beautiful daughter of my late esteemed friend, the Major. As a Bulbul had whispered to me of the coming happy event I—I—" and with a "bismilláh—in the name of God," he handed her a velvet case in which nestled a sparkling ring.

"Ah! how lovely!" exclaimed Rose rapturously, while Diláwar frowned with displeasure. At her touch it accidentally rolled away, and as Rose sped after the brilliant it seemed as if an evil genius had appeared in the shape of a ring to cloud the clear sky of that summer day, and lure her to destruction. In the meantime Begum Áftáb Ján was improving the shining hour by relating to Yusuf of a strange occurrence that had happened that very day. Actually a sparrow had hovered around her making a glorious halo, and eventually fluttered on her head—verily a bald head, but expert in manœuvring. As luck would have it, in came a fortune-teller, who interpreted the gyrations of the sparrow to indicate a present from a friend. "How strange that it should have even affected Rose who was in the next room," remarked Áftáb Begum laughing into his down-cast eyes. "Of course, you understand, what is mine is Rose's," but the obliging friend giving her an intelligent masonic sign calmed her jealous heart by intimating that she had not been forgotten. As Rose returned with the truant brilliant, Diláwar pressed her to return the valuable present which he would make good when better circumstanced. She was desirous to please her lover, at the same time it seemed disagreeable to disoblige an old friend of her father; besides, the luminous opal studded with diamonds was so lovely, and beyond all her trifling presents that it had taken possession of her heart. "Oh! you are too good," said Rose holding the ring towards Yusuf. I really, truly cannot accept

it. But how beautiful! As if a cluster of stars were imbedded in gold," and as she began to twirl it on the tip of her finger, with a heightened colour and sparkling eyes, Yusuf whispered to Áftáb Ján, "Áfrín! how lovely! more entrancing than the húrís of paradise! That face could win a crown," and with covetous eyes he gazed on the fair form with deep harmonies of line and limb and as fresh as a new blown bud.

"Yes, do oblige me," continued Rose pressingly as Yusuf absently shook his head. "Indeed, I'll take no refusal. It would be too bad—a great shame to deprive you of it," but the ring reluctant to leave its mistress slipped and coiled round her finger, appealing to her desire for grandeur. Disappointed, Diláwar sighed with lowering brows, and, alas! the seed of dissension sprang up from that moment between two loving hearts. But Yusuf elated at the happy termination whispered to Áftáb Ján, whose eyes twinkled with approbation and connivance, "Shábásh! excellent! Alláh be praised! A rose-ladder to my ambition! The harvest will be rich," then added aloud, "I have been advising Diláwar to leave the Irregulars, and to get a billet at head-quarters."

"That would, indeed, be delightful," broke in Rose.

"But he seems despondent of success," continued Yusuf, "and recalls to mind my days of childhood when in indolent moods I was in the habit of refusing to undertake work, remarking 'No, I cannot do this, or am too busy,' or make some excuse or other when asked to do anything. My Moulvie, blessed be his memory! remarked this evil trait with great concern. Once when at his request I had put my hand to something, but as usual with ill-concealed reluctance and a sullen face he snatched the slate out of my hand, and smashed it on my worthy pate, leaving a rosy rivulet running. 'You, young Shaitán—devil!'—he thundered forth. 'Never set your hand to anything having first refused or showed an unwillingness to do it, as it deprives one of emulation and courage; while a 'yes' or a willing, amiable mind

adds zest, and even overcomes insurmountable obstacles in his path!' I said 'tauba, tauba,—mercy, never again!' at the same time wringing my ears and rubbing my nose in repentance. The pain was severe," and he rubbed the top of his head, as if its smart still existed; "but the lesson was wise and has yielded fruit, while the wound has developed into a political bump. My stern mistress, Politics, leads me through dark, winding alleys to green hills of eminence and power. But surely, you are not going to walk," remonstrated he with Rose as she linked her arm into Áftáb Ján's and was ready to start. "My carriage is at your disposal." Diláwar coldly but politely handed her in, while Yusuf remarked in an undertone to Áftáb Ján, "The soil is ready. Sow and reap. You can by your witchery blend together fire and water. Are not you and I one?" added he in a soft tone; then turning, gravely saluted Rose murmuring, "Khudá-háfiz—may God protect you." As the carriage started, Rose smiling waved to Diláwar. Like sunbeams chasing away darkness, his tender heart melted, and forgetting the disastrous opal, rushed up to her. Taking a warmer farewell, and begging Áftáb Ján to take care of his treasure, he parted with a lighter heart.

About twenty years before the opening of the present story, Major Green, then a Captain in the Madras Infantry, was stationed at Nasímábád, a distance of four miles from Zínatábád, with the famous *bund* stretching its friendly arms, and uniting the Europeans and Indians to a mutual display of kindliness and fellowship. The relations between these were most cordial and sociable, and he thus frequently came in contact with Nawábs and Rájas at the Residency and at H. H. the Pádsháh's Parties. In these pleasant gatherings he became acquainted with young Morád bin Sayad, the son of an Arab Chief, who promised him a couple of good pointers. On a pleasant morning, he galloped across the *bund*, as the Lake, calm and serene, shimmered in the rising day, while on its clear, cool waters pleasure-boats were moored, the flags of steam launches sported

in the breeze, with beautiful lotuses opening at the kiss of sunlight; onward and onward he sped, passing the white-washed bungalows, interspersed with gardens, palaces and *kothís* of Nawábs on to the Residency and did not slacken speed until he reached the majestic portals of the City. At the sound of the horse's hoofs, a couple of Mohammedan ladies, veiled from head to foot, and accompanied by a maid-servant carrying offerings for the Mosque, timidly drew aside. The young Captain was a great admirer of beauty, and the delightful ride in the fresh air had added hilarity to his jovial disposition. As he came within ear-shot of them, he turned to his faithful Tilangi Syce and jocosely remarked in broken Hindustáni, "Ho Channu! these be hags who hide their ugliness in that confounded *burqá!*" As if pierced by a shot, one trembled and turning her back on man and beast, crouched on the road-side praying mother-earth to open and clasp her to her bosom; while like angry clouds drifting away, up flew the heavy *burqá* of the other, revealing grace and charm of form and face, that looked all the lovelier flushed with indignant wrath, and lightning flashing from her dark orbs. Had it been possible the strokes would have felled the bold Sáhib that very instant to the ground; but instead the illumined eyes cast a spell on his susceptible heart, and he stood rooted to the spot, lost in admiration of the lovely apparition. Abashed at his rudeness, the repentant gallant dismounted to apologise to the Persian beauties. But his vocabulary in Hindustání being meagre, no other expletives of admiration could he recall at that momentous instant except "Shaitán, the devil!" "Alláh, O Lord!" and "Wah! well done!" Fortunately the "Bágh-o-Báhár," which he was preparing for an examination came to his assistance. Bending low, he began to recite a medley of passages to the wind, for when he raised his eyes, he found to his dismay that they had disappeared like meteors, leaving him in darkness. Forgetful of his errand to see the pointers, he hastened

to the Mosque and stammering confusedly enquired of a man standing at the entrance for Chánd—Tárá—Moon and Star—and he pointed upwards. Yusaf-ud-dín, the Mulláh of the sacred precincts, taking him to be somewhat off the line, and interpreting the Sáhib's speech that he saw the moon and stars by daylight, rudely turned his back upon him. But upon the ardent lover progressing in his research and asking for Bibi Chánd Tárá, who was a famous singer, Yusuf swore and looked around to guard the precincts frequented by the zenáná. Happily just at that juncture appeared the syce with the horse, and explained to the angry Mulláh the adventure of the morning, and that Chánd Tárá referred to the Persian beauties. The Sáhib warming his hand with a ten rupee note, with promises to line his purse further, Yusuf agreed to aid him in the pleasant affair. After a great deal of worry and trouble, the Captain married Goláb, whose father, Haider Jung, though not affluent, was of noble birth. He possessed three graces—Áftáb Ján, who was now a widow and had her home with Rose; Gulzár, the mother of Diláwar Jung, and, lastly, Goláb, whose flashing eyes had made the merry Captain bend his knees in obeisance and love.

The beautiful ferns and flowers with which the verandah was formerly decorated made way for heavy *kanáts* and chicks, giving his bungalow an appearance of being smothered and dressed in swaddles. It soon leaked out that the Captain Sáhib had 'gone into the zenáná,' and this led to 'bahut, bahut salaam—compliments' from the General. To the delinquent the private interview seemed like toasting in a furnace, ignited by the fumes of his Superior, who swore at the young fool's impudent indiscretion. Like a school-boy having indulged in forbidden fruit, he hung down his head guiltily, but his cheeks burned with indignation, and he furiously tugged at his collar as if he were choking. Clearing his throat he ventured a conciliatory solo to mitigate his indiscretion. "It was Fate!"

"Damn it!" echoed the blasting base.

"Spell of black eyes!"
"Remember, British prestige!"
"Love!"
"Confound you!" thundered the General, and thus the duet subsided.

Heart-sore the Captain rushed from the stormy atmosphere to his tranquil home, fragrant with the sunny smiles of his Floweret, whose sweet breath soothed his ruffled spirit, and tender kisses healed the wound. Lulled in loving arms, as he passed into dreamland, he consolingly whispered to his heart, "Oh, if there is bliss; 'if there be an Elysium on earth; it is this, it is this.'" The repose having calmed him down, he arose in good humour and attended the Mess. After dinner when he got among his particular set, he ordered champagne and with glasses sparkling and merrily clinking; amidst mirth and laughter breaking in between Whist, he sang with great gusto, "Two Black Eyes," while his comrades returned the compliment that Green was a "Jolly Good Fellow." A year after when with great pride he showed them his Rose-bud, a pearl of a baby, the hearts of his brother Officers melted, and they forgave merry Green, 'the spell of the eyes,' and his indiscretion. But before Rose could toddle the mother passed away to bloom in another Sphere, and hence she was nurtured by her widowed aunt, Gulzár, whose husband had met with an untimely death at a shooting party, when he had been severely mauled by a tiger. Until Diláwar's marriage had been solemnized and he had joined a Battalion of the Irregulars stationed at Shahpur, he was the constant companion of his pretty cousin; and the young knight, notwithstanding his mother having pledged him to another, constantly declared she was his rose-bud bride. The loss of the young wife was irreparable to the gay, humorous Captain Green. It seemed as if sunshine had departed from his home, and he never recovered his spirits, but gradually became gloomy and morose. When he retired from service, he settled down at Nasímábád, and on his death-bed

entrusted his darling child to Diláwar and his mother. Unfortunately at this critical moment, the latter was away on a pilgrimage to Mecca, and the former replied Rose's telegram in person, arriving in time to soothe the dying hours of his much admired and indulgent uncle.

When after seven years Diláwar met Rose, he found that the bud had bloomed into womanhood. He thanked heaven that such a rich treasure was entrusted to him, and that as he had become a widower, he was free to win her as his bride. But man proposes and God disposes, and, alas! how many a hope crumbles into dust.

II.

THE cold season had set in, tinging Rose's ivory cheeks with a soft glow; and wreathing her small garden with lovely white chrysanthemums, that appear like radiant snow-flakes, nestling among emerald sheaths. The sun shines brightly; but off and on a sharp gust of wind wantonly tosses them about, then rushing in-doors gambols recklessly with billows of soft mulls, white silks and ribbons. Notwithstanding the short, chilly, wintry days, to Rose it is Spring-time, and the voice of the breeze an Æolian harp that accompanies the snatches of songs she gaily sings.

"O the days of the Kerry dancing,
O the ring of the piper's tune
O for one of those hours of gladness,
Gone alas! like our youth, too soon."

Followed by a whir-r-r, as she deftly works the sewing machine. The tailor whose turbanned head rises aloft from waves of soft textures, with which he is surrounded, shivers as the sharp wind mockingly passes through and through his marrow-bones. Wiping his moist eyes, he adjusts his spectacles, sharpens the needle on his nose, and tucking the bodice, which he is basting between his serviceable toes, he resumes his work, when a fresh gust makes him run after the feathery ribbons. Bolting the door, he turns toward Rose, who pre-occupied and indifferent to the frolics of the breeze, is plaintively humming.

"Oh, love for a year, a week, a day
But alas! for the love that loves alway."

"Ah! Miss Sáhib," interrupts the sage, with an intelligent shake of his grey head, "You are seated here but your spirit is far away." Blushing, she raises her blue eyes glowing with warmth and gladness, and confusedly exclaims, "Good, old Hussain, jaldi—hurry

up! Another day has slipped away. The time approaches nearer and nearer—plenty bukhshís—presents." The withered face smiling, acknowledges her kind intention with salaams and gratefully adding, "I have eaten your salt for many years. May Alláh keep you and yours bágh-bágh—happy and resplendent as a beautiful garden." As birds cooing and wooing; chirping and hopping flit from twig to twig, then become intent on the building of fresh nests, so Rose is busy preparing her *trousseau* to join her mate next Spring. Her alert ear catching the faint sounds of approaching footsteps, she suddenly raises her eyes towards the timepiece. "Yes, it is he—most welcome friend," murmurs she tossing aside her work. Becoming restless, she steps into the verandah, when a man dressed in a crimson livery, a heavy leathern bag across his shoulder, and 'Postman' inscribed on the brass-plate of his sash, salaams and hands her a letter. Pressing it to her lips, she buoyantly steps into the garden, where hidden from all eyes by a honeysuckle bower, Rose eagerly peruses the tender lines, which fill her with unspeakable joy.

"Thou breeze of Spring.

Winter seems to be standing still" complains Diláwar Jung writing from Shahpur, "or lagging and dragging in such an insufferable manner, as to step back to Autumn and turn me into a seared leaf. I pine for Spring, when it will restore my bride to these longing arms. Thinking, thinking intensely of thee in my lonesome hours, I cry out in agony to my love, when thy spirit answers my call. I see thee, feel thee, and as the ambrosial beams of the moon restores the bloom to the drooping night-lily, so thy sweet breath infuses peace and calmness to my heated brain. Thou hast become to me my own life, Ján-i-man, beloved. Where thou art I am, and thou ever livest in my breast. True, distance separates us; but it cannot divide our souls, for love has made us one."

With the sacred letter, that breathes of fervent love and constancy, clasped between her hands, Rose

recalls the happy days they have spent together. As she silently muses, fair images of the past float before her eyes. Two months have passed since Diláwar's leave came to a close and he left for Shahpur. Nevertheless, she imagines him beside her in that lovely woodbine bower, looking pale and disconsolate, and reluctant to leave her unprotected. "Oh, don't let your imagination run wild and make a fuss," remarked Rose petulantly, for with endearing words and assurances, she had been trying in vain to assuage his fears, and to calm his disquieted mind. "There is aunty Áftáb Ján to drive away the hobgoblins you conjecture."

"What if she be one herself," suggested Diláwar. "We have had ample experience of her fine doings, and she is one of those who can by her vile tongue make the hard stone melt like wax."

"This is, indeed, wicked of you! Downright ungrateful to say so—she loves me dearly."

"As much as she dislikes me, and it would be playing off a kind of 'tit for tat.'"

"What do you mean?" asked Rose, her curiosity being aroused to the highest pitch. "You speak in enigmas, please explain."

"Has my mother never told you?" enquired Diláwar. "Well, it's an old story and short, though it did not end sweetly for her. Aunty being the eldest was engaged to my father, at least there was some understanding on this subject between the respective parents. Once when the two sisters were on a visit to my father's mother, they left their embroidered slippers in the courtyard. My poetic father happening to pass that way picked up the tiny one and treasured it. Afterwards he declared to his mother, and nothing would move him from his determination, "No other, but the owner of this dainty foot shall be my bride." His persistency carried the day, and thus he won my mother, to whom the slipper belonged. When the wedding was over he triumphantly bore away the fragile form in his arms, with aunty's congratula-

tions in dark frowns, and eyes that sparkling like beaten flint, shot forth poisoned barbs to pin them down. The slight rankles in her breast, particularly as her married life turned out as miserable as my mother's was bright like a summer's day. Often has she tried the Black Art on us to mar the peace, hence you cannot wonder that I dread her influence over you. Would to Alláh my mother were here to relieve my anxiety. Yet remember Shírín, sweet-one, shouldst thou change."

"Thanks! so you consider me weak and fickle—this is, indeed, complimentary;" exclaimed Rose with an indignant toss of her petty head. "Ah! no matter what happens," continued Diláwar earnestly, "my love shall be steadfast—become deeper and stronger and rise higher, as the flame of the fire ever goes upwards," and pressing her to name the happy day he placed a ring on her third finger, But he was difficult to please murmuring, "My lonely existence is too dreary—this is too long by half." At last, fair Spring, when his mother would have returned from her pilgrimage, was fixed for the wedding to take place. But before his departure he photographed Rose, with the bower forming a pretty background. When all was ready he told his servant to remove the cap from off the lens, whilst he protectingly stood beside his promised bride. There was merry laughter when the proofs arrived, for Rose's curls almost nestled on Diláwar's shoulders, while his handsome face drooping low was lost in admiration of her. Repeatedly taking the last farewell he with trembling hands tenderly caressed the silken locks. Inhaling the perfume he pressed them to his lips murmuring, "Ah, the fragrance of thy tresses intoxicates me," then with a throbbing heart and faltering voice, continued "Shirín, I am your Farhád. This image, thy photo shall ever encircle my breast as a táwíz—amulet."

"And I will never love another, but thee," whispered Rose with streaming eyes. Strengthened by the endearing words, he wildly caught her to his heaving breast and tore himself away. As the carriage sped

further and further Rose waved her handkerchief, until he was lost to sight; to which Diláwar responded by many a lingering kiss, and the winds re-echoed his "Khudá háfiz—Alláh protect thee."

The sun had sunk when Rose awoke from her reverie. She hastened indoors, and as she stepped into the drawing-room surprise arrested her steps. Sitting close beside her aunt was Yusuf-ud-dín, the same Yusuf whose soul was absorbed in the Great Creator, and whispering in an excited but earnest voice, "By my beard! rest assured, you will be the first—whether waking or sleeping, you'll be my first thought!" Rose stayed to hear no more and withdrawing muttered, "How jolly! What news for Diláwar! How surprised he will be!" Hearing footsteps Áftáb Ján guiltily started and parting the curtains, she caught sight of the retreating figure. Reassured that they were undisturbed she thoughtfully remarked to Yusuf, "One stung of a serpent recoils at a rope," and she heaved a deep sigh as the spectre of her unhappy life presented itself before her mind's eye. "Khudá knows that I do not distrust you, but disappointment has made me sip bitter draughts of poison."

"Why toss in the whirlpool of sorrow?" exclaimed Yusuf trying to cheer her. "Wipe it clean off your memory, and let your slave strew your path with blossoms of joy, to rest on cushions of ease."

"So you are bent on advancement. Yet stay—promise—promise," and Áftáb Ján faltered. The very thought of her bold request made her turn pale, and her tongue cleaved to her mouth, then forcibly she hissed through her set teeth "PROMISE NOT TO WED—then—then I'll work the matter round."

Gazing into the malicious eyes and the compressed lips, he read her desire for revenge, and knew nothing would tempt her to forego the shrewd bargain she was striking. Mean spirited as he was he shuddered; but deliberating that all obstacles perforce must be swept away to lead him on to renown he slowly remarked,

"Nothing can be hid from your sagacious mind. Rightly have you read the aim of my life. Where you are, can another hold a candle?" added he in a soft, caressing voice. "There is no doubt she is lovely, but to me an invaluable prize, resembling the philosopher's stone, which has the power of changing rude stone into ores of gold. I am solely actuated by ambition to marry her. Yes, yes, I see her bewitching smiles carrying off the ball of elevation from the palm of my envious compatriots. 'Tis certain her charms will crown me with power to wield the State. Your compact is—" "NEVER TO WED and as iron is made to bend so will I mould—"

"Inshá-alláh—so be it, please God," and the pious Yusuf clasped her hand to cement her compact to the dishonour of another. For years Yusuf-ud-dín's passionate spirit had been kept under control by the gentle hand of his father who was a respectable Mulláh of the Zínatábád Mosque. When he was struck down by paralysis, Yusuf very reluctantly stepped into his peaceful profession. Though the work was distasteful to him, and his turbulent nature craved for the bustle and intrigues of civil life, yet he would on no account cause his father a moment's sorrow by thwarting his wishes. Indeed, so deep was his love and devotion towards his parent that like a bright ray of sunlight, it concealed a disposition that was intensely selfish and base at heart. During his prolonged and trying illness Yusuf tended him as carefully and gently as a woman. "O son! would Alláh send Azráil to relieve me from living death, and thee from irksome trouble."

Dashing away the gathering tears Yusuf would remark in a husky voice, "Revered father! stay—stay, withdraw not thy love—thy light of countenance, and leave me to battle—to grope in the dark." Punctually to the minute his knees bent in prayers five times a day. Moreover, both morning and noon the lofty dome resounded with his mellow voice, as sitting cross-legged, with hands placidly folded, eyes bent low, and the body swaying,

like a reed backward and forward, he intoned the Korán; or when an eager crowd had gathered about him, he would explain in earnest tones and expressive gestures, the mystic Ishq—that Love that adores the Painter in the pictures; how the soul by sacrifice of self for another tastes heavenly bliss, and draws nearer unto God whose Law is, "Who seeketh union with Me, severeth himself from himself."

"Áfrín! What wisdom and how young! What a noble nature is his adorned with the beauty of virtue!" exclaimed the admiring crowd as they took their departure. When all had become silent Yusuf fell into a trance—not to meditate on the mystic lores of Sádi or Háfiz—but to feed his mind on fantasy. His imagination converting the empty hall into a court, he peopled it with a thousand heads. In this throng his soul delightedly roved, while the people with bowed heads and folded hands trembling hung on the moods and mandates of one, all-powerful, who proudly seated in the centre ruled them sternly. "Wah! this is existence!" exclaimed Yusuf rubbing his hands exultingly and recognising his own features in that of the arrogant ruler. "This, indeed, makes the blood course lustily—adds zest to life." And of an evening as he stood on the steps of the Mosque, he enviously watched a stream of brilliant carriages, four-in hands and tongas that owing to the crush moved slowly to the Pádsháh's Palace to join at an Entertainment. "Yá Rabb! why am I not one of the stars in this heavenly circle?" cried the ambitious heart. "Alas! must this heart stagnate among the moans and groans of the Bostán!" As off and on the carriages halted, his eyes hovering about the lovely shades of silk, satin and gauze, admiringly rested on the beautiful fair shoulders resplendent in their alabaster whiteness. His bold gaze causing attraction he lowered his eyes; but the fairy scene was so alluring that veiling his face with his hands, he peeped from between his fingers and transferred the galaxy of beauties to his imaginary gallery, where the rose-bud Rose with her

relatives stood out in bold relief. As his agitated mind was revelling in the fair spectacle, a barouche with prancing horses drew up, and catching sight of the comic attitude, a voice cheerily cried out, "Ají Sáhib! O worthy Yusuf! what are you about—catching flies?" At the well-known voice of his class-mate, he hastily started back, as if a venemous barb had pierced his breast. Crushing down the hot anger that had lept to his face, he remarked with the blandest smile, "Whence has this glorious sun risen? Ah, its rays raise my drooping spirits!"

"What can your humble servant do?" asked the magnate.

"Do!" jerked Yusuf bitterly and eyeing his royal equipage enviously. "To be sure beloved, if I asked, you'd get fever."

"Confess, dear friend, what fish are you netting these days?" questioned Morád bin Sayad, who had not only heard of his aspirations, but when they had been class-fellows together Yusuf had pretty freely given vent to his views. Of the same age the two lads agreed best when disputing. Yusuf being soft-skinned, attacked his class-mate by stealth, and when he least expected, while Morád repaid his opponent with blows and sticks. When fortune raised Morád to be one of the powerful pillars of the State, Yusuf almost died of chagrin to see his friend's star shining in the zenith, while he remained transfixed below. "So, Nawáb Sáhib, you have also caught the flying bird, rumour," said Yusuf sadly. "Ah! beloved, I am so ill-fated that my aims evaporate like camphor." As the carriage passed on, he clenched his fist menacingly and grinding his teeth with exasperation, transferred Morád bin Sayad to his court vowing, "Wait, young one, I'll make chutney of you—rub and rub you to death, as I would a flea! yá Iláhi! when will the shackles be removed?" groaned Yusuf. The relief came all too soon, for by the blood-red light of dawn the Angel of Death called away the gentle spirit of his father. As sighing it mingled with the

winds, Azázíl slyly watched in a corner. Advancing, he clasped the bereaved young man to his bosom and gently healed the wound. Becoming his guardian he not only inflamed his passions, but supplied him with wings. Year after year Yusuf soared higher and higher, when losing his senses in the giddy maze, he fell into an abyss to the cruel laugh of Azázíl, whose slave he became hereafter.

Yusuf immediately resigned his post, and before the forty days of mourning were over, he hung about the Palace of Sir Asmad Khan, a young man of great abilities, and chief Minister of Zínatábád. Having been a Mulláh, he attained an easy access to all quarters. Determined to succeed, and to make up for lost time, he proudly stepped within, with long strides and firm steps. As he advanced the first to encounter was the illustrious Morád bin Sayad. He mused a moment, and as he stood gazing on the open countenance on which goodness and loyalty were clearly stamped, he measured his length for the ensuing combat. Their eyes met and Yusuf's fell. Bending low with great humility, he threw himself at his class-mate's feet murmuring, "Nothing but the dust of thy shoes—my eyes cannot face the dazzling sun." Raising and embracing him Morád introduced him to the Minister who hardly gave him a passing thought. But Yusuf had come with a purpose, and he at once set about to attract attention by conducting himself according to the whims and moods of the young Minister, whom he was anxious to please. If the spittoon was required, he made himself conspicuous by rushing for it; the huqqa demanded, lo! it could not be ready without his blowing the embers, and the smoking tea, vying with something stronger, must necessarily be cooled by his hands. The Súfic lores that added to his popularity came into great acquisition, and Yusuf no longer regarded them as "moans." His mellow voice chanting the Bostán would suddenly break forth into a tender gazal; or his humour turning towards buffoonery

he would cleverly play the fool, making the hall ring with laughter and acclamations of "Wáh-ji-wáh! Shábásh—Well done, excellent!" By his smooth tongue and astonishing skill he soon fascinated the Minister, who not content with giving him a desirable post, ordered him to spend his evenings at the Palace amidst music and mirth. Day by day he rose in favour, and so rapid was his elevation that Morád becoming concerned warningly remarked to his master, "Your Excellency, I crave your pardon. To cherish a base character is like fostering a serpent in the house. At an unexpected moment it will turn on the hand that has poured it milk." "Good Morád, be not over-anxious," replied the Minister lightly. "He amuses me. When the buzzing becomes trying, shake him off like a bee."

As the ball of advancement was set rolling, the eyes of the antagonists again met, but neither faltering they angrily flashed like uplifted sabres in the sunlight. Proud and exultant at his smiling prospects, Yusuf haughtily returned glance for glance that plainly spoke, "My palmy days have begun! Wait, young one, see how my arrows fly," whilst Morád's unflinching eyes boldly responded, "Beware! I have a shield to protect me!"

When the lamps were brought into the drawing-room Yusuf departed. Hearing the carriage wheels roll away, Rose eagerly entered, and placing her arms about Áftáb Ján was about to remark something pleasant, when abashed she turned away with a smile. As Yusuf came and went, making each visit longer, Rose waltzed about dying of curiosity, with beseeching glances shot towards her aunt to be let into the secret and verify her surmise. Being doubtful she refrained from mentioning the subject to Diláwar, though arousing his curiosity to the highest pitch by her remark, "Expect to hear some startling news soon." One day finding her aunt pensive and pre-occupied she could contain herself no longer, and at last ventured to break the ice, jocosely remarking, "Ah! ha! instead of one there will be two weddings. Hurrah! The Mainá-bird whispered it to me."

"Two!" exclaimed Áftáb Ján in surprise, and eyeing her to ascertain what she had seen or overheard. "Alláh grant one—yes, one at least may turn out well," said she heaving deep sighs. Startled at the mysterious words, she threw herself at her aunt's feet, and with her hands resting on her lap anxiously enquired, "Why, has anything happened?"

"Happened! May the holy Prophet protect!" sighed she gulping a sob, and two tears trickling down her cheeks, fell on the upturned face of Rose. Aghast and bewildered, she became speechless, though not aware of the cause of her anguish; but as the moan of alas! alas! increased, and Áftáb Ján moaned in a paroxysm of grief, her young heart melted and tears began to flow in sympathy. For some days Áftáb Ján kept confined to her room, with a handkerchief wound round her aching head, sandle paste on the throbbing temples, and subsisting on spoonfuls of dál and rice. Notwithstanding her indisposition Yusuf's visits had suddenly ceased, and he showed marked indifference by not even enquiring after her welfare. "What glad tidings I had intended telegraphing to Diláwar," ran Rose's thoughts, "and now, but I feel certain that that wretch," meaning Yusuf, "is the cause of dear aunty's grief." As she softly moved about ministering to the invalid, or with closed door gently worked the machine, Áftáb Ján would suddenly throw aside the bandage, jump out of bed, and peering at Rose's concerned face remark, "Le-re! it works! Mine be the victory Alláh!" Without a word early one morning she drove away in a hired conveyance and returned at dusk. In silence she set out, and silently she came, but looking paler and more worried than before. Moodily she sat down, with her head resting on the palm of her hand, lips compressed, and meditatively digging the earth with her big toe. "Ah, aunty, I expected to find—"

"Child! expect nothing but faithlessness," hissed she exasperately. "Man changes like the wind most when he is swearing, 'thou art life of my life—the very

light of my existence!' then—then rest assured he has found his heaven in other arms, and love is on the wane."

"Say, dear aunt why are you so sad—so bitter—do let me share your burden," pleaded Rose imagining that she had been ill-treated by Yusuf.

"My burden!" exclaimed Áftáb Ján, with a low laugh, "Yá Iláhí, if it were but mine, I should not feel so harassed. But when I see thy heavenly eyes, thy fresh face like the virgin moon, tears of blood gush from my eyes. Ah! the pain is as if a hundred fangs darted their venom into my breast. Yá Iláhí! would I were a man to avenge thy wrong," cried she working herself into a frenzy. As she folded the terrified Rose to her heaving bosom she cried, "I'll shield thee. Yes, it must never be said Áftáb Ján forgot her duty by her orphaned niece." Tearing herself away, she bounded to her feet like a wounded deer and with pale, trembling lips asked, "Aunt in mercy tell me the worst. Surely you do not mean—doubt Diláwar. He is so noble—so honourable—"

"That he basely conceals his life from the girl he desires to wed," exclaimed Áftáb Ján, her voice rising in hot indignation. "The wretch! Let him but stand before me. I'll cut out his soft tongue—throw it piece by piece to the crows. Put salt and chillies in his alluring eyes. Not content with one wife—"

"But his wife died two years ago," interrupted Rose, glad to find her aunt mistaken.

"Re child! What dost thou know of the world? Women are like old shoes, thrown away and forgotten the next moment! Unknown to his mother, Diláwar soon consoled himself with another—one whom he passionately adored; yes, a case of Lailí-Majnú. Now, of course, she has become faded, and a fairer face tempts him to cast her aside. But as he is too poor to give her the marriage settlement and administer Taláq—divorce, she hangs around him like a mill-stone." Each word was a stab to the lacerated heart. It was so

unexpected that she turned icy cold, and a sigh of despair escaped her parched lips. Buried in thought she remained motionless and her features became contracted by pain. At length, she stammered forth in great anguish, "Say—say, dear aunt, it's untrue. Ah, I am sure there is some mistake. What! another reigns? —impossible. He told me—assured me—I was his all-in-all."

"Ah, my child! Would that I could lay the healing balm to staunch thy wound," replied Áftáb Ján in tones ringing with sorrow. "Thou knowest how I have suffered, with no care for food or water, and passing sleepless nights in thoughts of thy welfare. Not until I had ascertained and made myself sure, would I broach this unpleasant subject to thee, and Alláh knows what it has cost me! Diláwar's wife's sister has arrived, and I called on her to-day—have but just returned from there—to ascertain the facts. I will send for her, and thou mayest satisfy thyself. This anxiety is solely on thy account, and thy happiness is mine.

Rose realised that all her hopes were blighted and murmuring, "Ah, how miserable life is," she drained the bitter cup of mortification to the very dregs. But the suffering was so intense that unable to control herself, her bosom heaved with sobs, and tears streamed down her wan face. The more she dwelt on her forlorn situation, the darker seemed the gloom that encompassed her. At times despairing moans, "alas! darkness has crept into my life! Hereafter there is no joy for me," escaped her and in anguish she rocked herself. Trembling like an aspen leaf, and uttering a cry of agony, she fell back in a swoon. Throwing back the ringlets, Áftáb Ján cooled the burning brow. A pang of pity stole into her cold heart, as Rose lying pale as death, looked like a fresh lily torn down by a storm. But the humiliation, which she had suffered in the past was so galling to her mind, that she gazed at the motionless figure with fiendish delight. To stab Rose was as good as wounding that sister, for whose beauty she had been ignominiously slighted. Yes, it was some

consolation to shatter in one blow the happiness of her rival's son. On becoming conscious Rose found her head resting on her aunt's lap, who between sobs moaned, "Ah, my fragile flower! Oh! my pretty bird!" And she pressed her tenderly. "How good you are!" muttered Rose, with a fresh burst of tears. She wept bitterly which tended to soften the pain gnawing at her heart. Determining to master her feeling, and pride coming to her aid, she dashed away the fast falling tears. For a moment she sat in deep thought, then drawing her writing-case she dashed off a letter to Diláwar, as well as telegraphed, "Heard all—explain." Both the letter and the telegram, she entrusted to her aunt to be sent to the office. As nothing could be done until the reply came, Rose lay mute and still, and Áftáb Ján incessantly tended on her with mournful eyes, that sorrowed for her unhappy state. Sometimes, the tailor came round for advice. Shivering, she would suddenly awaken from her lethargy and cry, "Oh, how cold it is!" notwithstanding the air had become balmy, and the sun streamed into the room. Seeing remnants of her *trousseau* in the tailor's hand, she would bury her face and break into stormy sobs, much to the wonder of old Hussain. In the silence Diláwar's face lived before her, and remembering the nobility of his character, Rose would regain her spirits; or as she repeatedly read his letter, breathing of love and constancy, she would blame herself for having cast even the shadow of a doubt upon him. Once when his warning words against Áftáb Ján had taken possession of her, she began to tremble with fear. Imagining that some strategem had been laid to sever the two, she telegraphed to Diláwar, "Come, immediately." Handing the telegram to her aunt she remarked, "One cannot say much by letters. It is better to settle the matter face to face." The bearer walked out with the urgent telegram, but instead of taking it to the office, he consigned it safely in Áftáb Ján's trunk, as he had been instructed to do. Before the week was out the longed-for reply from Shahpur arrived. With a throbbing heart and her colour coming and going,

She softly glanced at Yusuf, who well pleased paced the room excitedly. "The Begums have invited us, and we are going to the Palace. Come. I have not forgotten thee, and have a dress ready for the occasion." Glad to have some change, Rose consented to accompany them. In a few minutes she appeared looking heavenly, with her lily face veiled by gossamer folds; the round arms encased in an eau-de-nil embroidered bodice, while the embossed rose-coloured divided-skirt crisply rustled at her languid movements. Too excited to give speech to his thoughts Yusuf gazed admiringly on the dazzling beauty, and rubbed his palms hopefully. The three drove away in a closed carriage. Entering the Palace, Yusuf uttered, "Alláh Akbar—God is most gracious. May fortune attend us," and he conducted his companions as one who is familiar with every passage. Lingering behind, they admired the spacious rooms, richly furnished after the English style. In an ante-room the Minister lounged in an arm-chair examining papers. He was dressed for Tennis, and had been detained by Morád bin Sayad on urgent business. At the rustling of silks the Minister raised his head, and as his eyes fell on the radiant beauty, it seemed as if young Spring had lent enchantment to the place, and flooded it with fragrance and radiancy. Nearer and nearer as they approached, Áftáb Ján and Yusuf made low obeisances. With a pleasant smile of welcome the Minister shook Rose's extended hand, as Yusuf introducing her 'my wife,' made another profound salaam. At this bold liberty Rose blanched, and trembling fell into the nearest chair. Becoming speechless from fear and surprise, she was unable to give the lie to the strange introduction, while Áftáb Ján pressing her hand warningly whispered, "Don't make a fuss. It will be alright as soon as we are out." The next instant she was painfully listening to the Minister congratulating Yusuf, "Shábásh, well-done! Thou art lucky to secure in thy old age such a fair prize. I have met many foreigners but thy bride bears the plam," and glancing at the blushing Rose, he softly repeated :

"O Cypress! treading gracefully, O young rose newly blown.
Eyes, stature, cheek to match with them, not even in sleep I've known."

Morád bin Sayad added his congratulations, though he marvelled at Rose's choice, and particularly as whispers had been afloat of her engagement with Diláwar Jung. Suddenly a dark frown over-shadowed his brows, and his crisp moustache angrily stood out prepared for conflict. The interruption did not cause him so much annoyance as the Minister's marked admiration filled him with alarm. He conjectured that Yusuf had made this move, of introducing Rose, in order to plant a firmer footing in the Palace, he was prepared for a deadly strife with his antagonist, but to contend with a flowery battalion was running a serious risk. To ensure his ground and the Minister from temptation, he determined to transfer Yusuf to some far off station.

"Order tea," said the Minister as he continued to write. "What do you say," enquired he of Morád. "Your Excellency has signed in the wrong place."

"Good—yes, cakes and fruits as well," remarked he as the khánsáman brought in tea, and to Morád's annoyance he accidentally blotted the valuable paper. "In the meantime try these scented páns—beetle leaves with spices," said the Minister offering them to the ladies.

Rose had a delicately transparent skin, and the spiced leaf crimsoned her lips and throat with a rich colour. "Áfrín! kyá báhár! How exquisite!" cried the Minister excitedly, and throwing down his pen, exclaimed, "Remove the papers. I cannot work now." Reckoning a point gained, Yusuf exultingly smiled, while Morád's cheeks burned with two indignant spots, and he angrily bit his lips. But masking their feelings, they fell to chatting, as if they were bosom friends. Meanwhile the Minister had carried off the ladies to his eldest sister, who was his special favourite.

In the centre of a spacious hall, and free from all decoration and furniture, Hafíza Begum reclined on a

In this trying moment Rose longed to fly to Dilá-war for protection, but the thought of his sudden silence and ignoring her very existence steeled her heart. Determined to gain his object Yusuf eagerly pressed the point, as they drew nearer to home. "Give me life—answer." Rose felt like an enmeshed fly with no escape from the intricate webs of the spider. Besides, her desolate position terrified her, and to live alone and forsaken seemed impossible. Raising her blanched face towards Yusuf, she huskily replied, "As you please." He longed to clasp her to his heart with words of comfort, but seeing her intense suffering his lips touched her forehead as a sign of possession. No sooner the carriage had stopped, she flew out to hide the fast falling tears. Throwing herself on her bed she sobbed, "O Love! Save, Save!" but the winds carried not the plaintive cry. Áftáb Ján arrived accompanied by two men, one of whom she addressed as Qází—a priest who ratifies marriages among Mohammedans. Rose, whose face had changed to the hue of death, felt she was among executioners, and murmuring with stifled moans, "A shadow accompanies my once happy life," she consigned herself to another with solemn vows. During the ceremony, old Hussain, whose eyes were riveted in astonishment on the Qází, frequently muttered, "impossible—my old eyes are playing me tricks!" Wiping his glasses, he looked searchingly at the face, and marked the voice that seemed familiar to him. His suspicions becoming stronger, he ejaculated perplexedly, "Yá Khudá! there is something black in the dál!" At the end of the ceremony two witnesses, one of whom was Hussain, declaring "Hukm Alláh ká—it is thus ordained by Alláh," signed the Marriage Contract; but the old tailor trembled so fearfully that the signature appeared as if a fly had trailed through a drop of ink. Heaving a sigh of anguish Rose fell into Yusuf's covetous arms in a dead faint, while Áftáb Ján glancing whispered, "Victory! Victory! Revenge is sweet!"

III.

YUSUF and his colleague had so stealthily spread their artful net to ensnare Rose, that not a whisper had reached Diláwar's ears to arouse his suspicions towards the treachery brewing to sever them, and of the sufferings of his best-beloved. Constantly receiving letters from her, he lived in a delightful paradise, counting the approach of the long Summer days in store for them; and never doubted but that the missives were genuine, nor dreamed that his promised bride had passed into the hands of his enemies. Rose had become Diláwar's absorbing thought, and besides planning to give her a comfortable home after the English style, he was also desirous to introduce her into the Residency 'set.' On his return to Shahpur he applied to his friend, Morád bin Sayad, for an appointment at Zínatábád

After a long silence, and Diláwar was beginning to despair of success, he received a favourable answer that he had been gazetted junior A. D. C. to H. H. the Pádhsháh. He was in a ferment to telegraph the pleasant news to his lady-love; but on consideration it seemed pleasanter to give her a happy surprise by conveying it in person. He pictured her astonishment at his sudden appearance, and the joyful exclamations and warm greetings with which he would be welcomed. Before many days, he set out for Zínatábád to take his future bride by surprise. Alighting from the train, he engaged a carriage, and giving the coachman Rose's address shouted, "Jaldi—jaldi—drive sharp." Now that a few miles separated them, the distance seemed great, and his heart, trembling with a confused delight, he was in a fever to join her. The man whipped up the ponies at a quick trot, but they had not advanced far when the sound of drums and pipes startling them, they were ready to

bolt. Like an inauspicious omen, foreboding ill, slowly loomed a grand funeral procession, followed by a large concourse of people walking in mournful, measured steps. As the music died away in the distance, the air resounded with sacred chants, broken in by doleful cries of "háe, háe—alas! alas!" and marked by the passionate beating of the breast that indicated their intense grief; off and on, men seated on elephants and horses showered handfuls of silver-pieces and sweets amidst the following rabble; and as the mourners bearing the richly-covered bier advanced Diláwar Jung, who had jumped out of his carriage when the ponies had become restless, respectfully stood on the pavement. "I can hardly realize it," remarked he to Morád bin Sayad, who accompanying the procession had been informing him of the late Privy Councillor's sudden death. "He was hale and hearty the last time I dined with him. His loss will be deeply felt."

"Yes, an excellent man, and it will be difficult to find a worthy successor," replied Morád sadly. "But life is like the fleeting clouds of Autumn, and the Bird being tired of its bone-cage has escaped and soared aloft. Peace be unto his soul."

Depressed and pensive Diláwar cut his way through the loitering crowd. As the carriage rolled across the *bund*, with its embankments richly fringed by budding shrubs, fair visions of moon-lit scenes, with the song of the nightingale floating through the scented breezes, rose before him in their entrancing beauty. Hoping for a renewal of the delightful pleasures with the would-be partner of his life, a sweet tremor stole over him which made his dejected spirits revive; and as the carriage sharply turned into Rose's compound his heart swelled rapturously. Trembling with joyous excitement, Diláwar jumped out before it had fairly stopped under the porch. As he bounded into the verandah, a miserable terrier raised a piteous howl, and whining intercepted his steps, as if it would withhold him from discovering his miserable fate. But in his eagerness to meet his beloved, he kicked it aside, and as he hastily pushed open the

door, instead of outstretched arms, rosy lips and a warm clasp welcoming him, the damp air of confined rooms rushed out upon him, and bathed him with a cold perspiration of fear. He staggered as a creepy chill seized him. Terrified and sharply crying out the name dearly prized he ran through the empty, closed rooms that echoed no reply, except the whine of the forlorn animal which Rose had left behind. With a throbbing heart, and heaving breast he rushed out into the garden wearing a deserted and neglected appearance. "Rose! Rose!" cried he in anguish, as the idea of being forsaken flashed across his mind. Stifling the rising sobs, he vainly searched every corner and fell tottering by the fragrant woodbine bower. Madly he tore the budding tendrils, then thrust his fingers into his ears to deaden the joyous song of the koil, that heralds the approach of the vernal season, and seemed to mock him in his desolation. "Ah Shírín! Sweet love! with thee Spring has fled from my life," moaned he rocking himself agitatedly, and wildly kissing the earth trod by her sacred feet. As he raised his head his eyes fell on Rose's Bearer, Kásim, who had been quietly watching Diláwar with a satisfied grin similar to that of a monkey who, having mischievously torn the wings of a bird, complacently looks at his cruel work. Instantly changing his demeanour he respectfully salaamed. As peacocks hail with wild cries the dark clouds and become invigorated by a shower at the beginning of the rains, so Diláwar rejoiced and was buoyed with hope on encountering Kásim. Overjoyed he rushed forward and almost embracing him exclaimed, "where is Miss Sáhib?"

"Begum—."

"No, not Begum Áftáb Ján, but Rose Miss Sáhib," interrupted Diláwar shortly.

"Your honour means Begum Yusuf-ud-dín."

"Yusuf-u-ud-dín!" drawled Diláwar trying to realize to whom he referred. "Who is Begum Yusuf-ud-dín?"

"Rose Miss Sáhib," was the curt rejoinder.

"You fool!" exclaimed Diláwar with rising indignation.

"Walláh—faith. Miss Sáhib has married Nawáb Yusaf-ud-dín," came the news like a piercing shot. "Liar—liar—liar," cried Diláwar in hot anger and making his chubby cheeks smart with a shower of slaps. As Kásim persisted in "'tis true—'tis true," he was knocked down and bruised with kicks for the bitter information. Begging for mercy he screamed, "Duhái Pádhshah Salámat ki! duhái Resident Sáhib ki! Save! Help!" But as he would not retract that Rose was married to Yusuf-ud-dín, Diláwar losing all control over himself unsheathed his sword to slay him. Hearing piteous cries, Morád bin Sayad who was returning from the funeral stopped his carriage and rushing into the compound found Diláwar distorted with rage and about to commit the darkest deed. Creeping behind he snatched the flashing sword from the uplifted hand and pushed the Bearer aside, who fled as if he had escaped from the noose of Death. Blinded by passion and becoming incensed at the escape of his victim, Diláwar furiously turned on his friend and superior and dealt him a blow. Morád though his senior by many years, was an Arab of firm limb and well knitted. He flushed with wrath and laid his hand on the hilt of his sword, but noticing that Diláwar was almost unconscious of his presence and in a state hardly accountable for his actions, he sternly shouted, "Hast thou gone mad?" and gave him a sound shake to awaken him to his senses. "Tauba—tauba! disgraceful shameful!" and dragging him along pushed him into his carriage. The long drive having calmed his agitated feelings Diláwar remarked, "Would you believe Nawáb Sáhib that that servant—that idiot actually wanted me to believe that Rose—Miss Green is married to —" but he could not finish the sentence, the idea seemed too preposterous and terrible to him. "You know, at least I ought to have told you, she is my promised bride We are to be married shortly—as soon as my mother returns from Mecca, and daily I am expecting a telegram from her. Of course,

you'll come to our wedding. In the meantime I must find out where Rose and her aunt have removed." Morád listened quietly, and when he found that the incensed lover had become subdued he remarked, "My young friend, my heart is one with thee and I wish thee well. But drive away these fancies and set to work. Look upon Miss Green as dead and in a disappointment apply my healing maxim, that either thou art not good enough, or the object is unworthy of thee. It is difficult to swallow, but once set working, it soon eases the mind, and puts one on his legs trim and sound. Believe me, Miss Green is married."

"To Nawáb Yusuf-ud-dín," interrupted the disconsolate lover with a wild laugh.

"Well, thou knowest it already, so there is nothing more to be told."

"But, I'll kill him—kill him," shrieked Diláwar gnawing his lips so passionately that drops of blood oozed from them. "Ah! I remember that fatal ring! She would have the gold and now he has her in return. Yá Khudá! he has blighted my fresh hopes. Yes, I'll slay the vile enticer"

Diláwar had turned so fierce and unreasonable that Morád was obliged to set a watch over him to prevent him from working harm. Once to the dismay of the servants he was missing, and was at last found in the woodbine bower, with the terrier by his side and licking him sympathetically. But there was no sign of Kásim, who had been left behind to receive Rose's letters coming from Shahpur, and in return to post false ones to Diláwar. The day the Bearer was ill-treated he took the first train to Aftáb Ján who consoling him, healed his bruises with a handsome tip, and to keep his tongue silent, kept him in Yusuf's service with an increase of pay.

"It was in this bower that we plighted our vow, and she promised to love none other but—but—" and Diláwar's unsteady voice broke down as Morád was trying to comfort him. "I had placed my life in the

palm of her hand, and with her sunshine has fled. Now night reigns in my heart, making existence as dark—as dark and desolate as when a serpent losing its gem becomes surrounded by gloom and dies of despair."

"Nonsense! give not thy heart to grief. Is a mother of less consequence than the jewel which thou hast lost?" remarked Morád reprovingly. "Here is news of her," and he gave him a telegram.

"What matters now whether she arrives a day earlier or a day later," said Diláwar disconsolately and without glancing at the urgent cable.

"But perhaps thy mother has need of thee at Aden, where she is lying ill—"

"Ill!" exclaimed Diláwar distressed and rising excitedly. My sweet, indulgent mother ill and alone. Oh, my friend, in mercy give me wings to fly to her."

Morád glad to find his thoughts drawn away in a different channel to the constant brooding over Rose, sent him on to Bombay. Engaging a passage by the P. and O., Diláwar arrived at Aden to find his mother reduced to a skeleton from a severe attack of dysentery and fever. As he entered the room joy lent her strength to rise and greet him, but the next minute she fell back almost fainting. Diláwar ran forward and caught her in his arms.

"Ah, my son, I had given up all hopes of thee," whispered Gulzár." I tried to hurry back from Mecca; but sickness seizing me I was obliged to halt here. Shukr—thanks be to Alláh! seeing thy face I feel better—restored," and caressing his face she fell into a calm sleep in his arms. Diláwar was an affectionate son and under his tender care she recovered rapidly. By the end of a fortnight they were planning to leave the place. Though Gulzár was yet too weak for any exertion, but Aden being a dreary waste, they preferred to exchange the limited space of cabins to extending their stay any longer. As they sat chatting, the mother for the first time observed Diláwar's wan, melancholy

face, parched lips and sunken eyes, darkly marked by lines.

"Why, my son, what has come over thee?" enquired she anxiously, as she clasped his dry, hot hand into her own. "Thou art quite yellow and haggard. Oh, I am a cruel mother to let thee kill thyself in nursing me. Oh, my parrot! Thou apple of my eyes, what will thy bride say?" "Hush mother. Rose is—is dead" gasped he with a great tightening at the throat and scalding tears flowing down his cheeks.

"Dead!" echoed Gulzár in a faint and stifled voice.

"Yes, dead and lost," and Diláwar in a broken voice told her of his shattered life.

"I can hardly believe it," exclaimed Gulzár surprised and mingling her tears with his. "These arms have nursed her as a babe. These hands have washed and tended her, but I never found her deceitful. I was afraid that when she was sent to the Agra Convent, she would change and look down on her relatives contemptuously; but bless the pretty lips, it was always 'dear aunty this' or 'dear aunty that' with sincerity shining in those heavenly eyes. Come, my child. This is enveloped in mystery. Rise, we'll start at once to unravel the entangled skein of thy life. See I am quite strong now," and as she attempted to walk a few steps tottered and fell exhausted.

That night Diláwar tossed in a raging fever, and in his delirium the name of Yusuf incessantly rose to his lips. Calling to him with mad rage and with gnashing teeth and clenched hand he desired to strike and slay him. The next moment he lay penitent at Rose's feet craving for pardon and crying, "Shine—Shine on this sunless life!" Forgetting her own ailments like a fond, anxious mother Gulzár watched at the sick bed day and night, with bursts of tears and exclamations, "Thou light of my life! what will life be without thee? O mother Maryam take me and save my lad." For weeks Diláwar lay

unconscious and hanging between life and death. In her despair she wrote to Morád bin Sayad stating her troubles; asking for an extension of leave and concluding the letter with remarks and enquiries after Rose. Almost by return of mail she received a sympathetic reply in which Morád advised her to spend the Summer in Ceylon to retrieve their health, and to consider Rose as good as dead.

By the end of the rainy season, Diláwar, accompanied by his mother, returned to Zínatábád. The six months touring among fresh scenes and faces had considerably subdued his fierce mood. But the wound being too deep had not healed and was ready to burst open at the least provocation. They had barely settled down, when Áftáb Ján came amidst them like a portent to flash for a moment and disappear. As if she were overjoyed to see them, she pressed her younger sister and nephew to her heart, and passing her hand over their bowed heads blessed them, "Alláh grant thee long life. May peace and joy ever attend thy steps." Unveiling and giving her sister a comfortable seat, Gulzár murmured, "Thy presence has blessed my eye-sight. But, dear sister how have you fared? Your cheeks are quite yellow." Áftáb Ján responded with a bright smile for Fortune had been most gracious to her since Rose's marriage, and she was looking the picture of health and happiness. But among the Orientals it is the etiquette to say one looks 'ill' than 'well' lest the party complimented imagines one is casting 'evil eyes' and coveting the good looks. For hours they chatted on every subject except what was uppermost in their minds. One sister looked at the other to break the ice, while Diláwar impatiently came in and out, and taking a partial interest in their conversation moved about like a restless spirit. "Say sister where is Rose" Gulzár at last ventured to enquire.

"Le—bus—bus—that will do" ejaculated Áftáb Ján sternly. "If thou namest that wicked girl in my presence I'll leave the room" and to shew that she

desired the conversation to drop clapped her hands to her ears.

"I cannot believe it. She was never so" said Gulzár pulling away the hands, while Dilawar sat down eager for news. But uprose Áftáb Ján, and veiling herself walked to the door, then excitedly pacing the rooms exclaimed in a sorrowful tone. "What can I say, dear sister. The mere thought of Rose curdles my blood. Yá Alláh! such deceit from a young girl—giving hopes to one, at the same time manœuvring for another. Wonderful art thou, O Age of Sin! I cannot say how or when it all took shape, but one morning she suddenly announced to me, 'aunty wish me joy. I have accepted Nawáb Yusuf-ud-dín.' But child—Diláwar! stammered I aghast and indignant.

'Oh my cousin!' remarked she indifferently. 'Pooh—pooh! Too poor—far too poor. He will hardly keep me in pán supárí—pin money, and I must live like the Memlogs.'"

"There mother!" exclaimed Diláwar, "Did I not tell you it was for gold she jilted me."

"Oh my brave lad! what Alláh inscribes on the forehead can never be effaced. Then why fret?" said Áftáb Ján concernedly, and trying to comfort him added in a sweet voice, "I'll wed thee to a moon-faced lily, whose beauty will chase away thy gloom, as the hoar-frost disappears, when the sun rises."

"Ah aunt mercy—mercy. Pour not salt on my wound" replied Diláwar. She lives in my soul, and having tasted the poison of love it will last me for life."

"Nonsense, nonsense! A handsome young man like you to hang about the skirts of a vain cold-hearted minx," exclaimed Áftáb Ján indignantly. "But listen. The following evening an old Qázi came and married them. Áfrín! Splendid! Grand," and she gave such a cruel, hollow laugh that a shudder ran through their bodies. "Well," continued she, "a few days after Rose remarked, 'Of course you are always welcome to us;

but just now you understand dear aunt—two is company, three is not.' Lo sister, with this pert dismissal they removed to Bírpur, where she is the lady of the station and living most luxuriously."

Diláwar heaved deep sighs; his mother shaking her head perplexedly murmured, "it's inexplicable;" while the mischief-maker having satisfactorily sown the seed of distrust in their minds, and palmed all the blame on Rose's innocent shoulders, departed rejoicing.

Yusuf-ud-din's 'honey-moon' was by no means joyous, but overshadowed by clouds and showers of tears. Rose having been drawn into a marriage that was furthest from her thought gloomily settled down with feelings of grief in the new home, a two-storied, handsome Bárádarí, surrounded by a fine garden with shady avenues, and which was always reserved for the Súbas of Bírpur. The heavy furniture with which it was furnished, was too oppressive for the fastidious taste of Yusuf. Besides being desirous to divert her melancholy with unexpected surprises, he gave orders to Messrs. Badham Pile to renovate the rooms. As if touched by a magic wand the luxuriously furnished house was finished in no time, and vied with the kothís of the great Nawábs of Zínatábád. Rose supervised the arrangement listlessly, and with an occasional "Yes, these colours blend well together" or "that picture is uncommonly pretty." But the rich, sweet tones of the grand piano soothed her distressed mind. At its sympathetic voice her frozen heart melted and she burst forth into rapturous exclamations of enjoyment. As Yusuf stood watching her delight, she for the first time acknowledged her thanks by a kiss, and entwining her arm into his gratefully added, "You are too good—you spoil me" then sighing at the recollection of another's perfidy she sorrowfully turned away her head. "Shukr—thanks be to Alláh!" muttered her husband. "Old pictures will give place to new ones, and she will eventually reciprocate my affection." From henceforth Rose was not allowed to relapse into moody fits, for no sooner the Bárádarí

was ready than the receiving and returning of 'calls' began, followed by a succession of dinner parties to welcome the pretty bride. Though she launched into a round of gaieties with an oppressed heart, yet being young, and of a happy disposition, she could not long remain callous and miserable to the joys of life. Moreover, the luxurious surroundings, an amiable circle of friends, and above all a tender, considerate husband helping to make her life agreeable and pleasant gradually softened the sting of blighted hopes. True, she could not return Yusuf's ardent affection, but her heart filled with deep gratitude for his devoted attention, and as she in her innocence considered, for having mercifully rescued her from a miserable and lonely life. Rose's heart overflowing with thankfulness, she gratefully remembered Áftáb Ján, who had been the one solace in her grief. Now that she possessed an elegant establishment, with a long purse at her command, she was desirous that her aunt should share her comfortable home to the close of her life. She had often broached the subject to her husband, but as he generally gave evasive replies, she could not find out her whereabouts. One day when she was least in her thoughts, and as she was busy arranging for a Dinner-party, to be followed by an 'At Home,' Áftáb Ján arrived quite unexpectedly. Rose with sleeves tucked high and flowers in her hands ran out to receive her with genuine affection, while Áftáb Ján embracing her warmly, folded her in her arms, murmuring, "Ah! child! The sight of thee revives my torn heart," and brushing away a stray tear added, "Not having seen thee for so long, I have been quite anxious."

"My good Aunt, ever regard me with a tender eye," said Rose gaily in Persian. "I am glad you have at last found your way here. Your visit is, indeed, a source of great joy to me. Come, make yourself comfortable, while I give the finishing touch to the table," and she led her into the dining-room, sweet with the scent of fresh flowers, with which she had tastefully

decorated the dining-table. Seeing an elderly lady in the room Áftáb Ján hesitated, but Rose taking her by the hand introduced her to Mrs. Egerton, adding, "This lady is my good angel, and I have benefited much from her experience of society. Yusuf being determined to have the Bárádarí full of mirth and music, I'd be quite bewildered but for the timely help of this kind, patient friend."

"Stay, not so fast," cried Mrs. Egerton. "You are too modest to blow your own trumpet, but let me inform Áftáb Begum," and turning towards her remarked, "Yes, you may well be proud of your niece. Even with her ignorance of the art of entertaining, she is a hostess in herself. She is so pretty and naïve that old and young flock around her. Of course this leads to jealousies—" "Cease—spare my blushes!" interrupted Rose laughing, and preventing her friend from continuing.

Mrs. Egerton was a mother of seven children, whom she lovingly termed her 'battalion of old age.' Being of a gentle, sympathetic nature, she crept into one's heart unintrusively, and though ever ready to fulfil the demands of society, she was happiest and shone best among her family. She was one of the earliest 'to call' upon Rose, and remarking her depression and absent-mindedness she wondered, "Ah! no happy bride. There is something amiss." Very soon her genial conversation and sweetness of dispositon melted the cold barrier, and when they stood up to part, they were no longer strangers. Embracing Rose with a kiss she murmured, "Dear, regard me as a mother," while Rose melting at the tender words responded with equal warmth. Thus their acquaintance became cemented with love and friendship. As the children were away in school, Mrs. Egerton spent the greater portion of her time with her young friend. But these were no idle days for Rose. Having been educated for a few years in the Agra Convent, she was hastily withdrawn to attend upon her invalided father, and this retired life entirely excluded her from the outer world. After her marriage she realized her

ignorance of the duties which her position demanded to fulfil. However, she soon set about to gain the knowledge from a friend so well-disposed towards her.

While Rose had retired to dress, Áftáb Ján sauntered from room to room with Yusuf following like a timid spaniel. Vexed at the large sum outlayed for furnishing the Bárádarí, she unmercifully criticised the genius of Messrs. Badham Pile. "How ugly these chindis, bits of rags, look," remarked she, angrily shaking the draperies of soft China silks, gracefully entwined about pictures. "And this," pointing in horror to a lovely statue of Venus in white marble. "Tauba! Tauba! shame, disgraceful, and at your age!" Whereupon she hastily covered the renowned beauty with her large, gaudy handkerchief. "To think so much money has been thrown away over these trifles," exclaimed Áftáb Ján, sighing and falling into an easy chair. "Why, one word from my lips would make a delightful bonfire of the fabrics. Eh?" questioned she, with an unpleasant laugh and eyeing Yusuf mysteriously.

"You are too gracious," complimented her companion, with folded hands, that was a mute appeal for indulgence, and that he was enslaved to her will. Understanding her nature to be a store-house of meanness, he usually brought into force delicate flatteries that captivating her senses allayed the sparks of jealousy or the desire that at times seized her to revolt. "Besides, Rose loves you," he added, "and is desirous to share her home with you."

"Her home! thú"—exclaimed she scornfully and spitting at the idea in disgust, "and I to be under her thumb! Do you think my nose has turned into wax to be twisted up and down and be brought to the ground? Moreover—"

"Oh, aunty, pardon, pardon. Have I kept you waiting?" interrupted Rose joining them in a charming dress that set off her beauty. Áftáb Ján eyed her jealously and envied her youth, while Yusuf not having the courage to admire and compliment his wife in her presence, had to be

content with a stealthy glance. "I was just telling your husband," maliciously remarked Áftáb Ján in a soft voice, "What a narrow escape you have had! That Diláwar—"

"Diláwar!" cried Rose with a beating heart, and flushing scarlet to the roots of her hair. Pretending to adjust the flowers of a vase, she turned aside embarrassed. It was the first time since her marriage that his name had been broached, and coming so suddenly it quite upset her. As she returned Áftáb Ján continued, "With his new appointment Diláwar has developed fresh tastes and become quite gay."

"Indeed, you surprise me. He was a steady young man," remarked Yusuf, while Rose turned pale.

"But money makes the mare go," responded Áftáb Ján, "and he is carrying out the principles of Islám to the letter. Poor Zyna has been supplanted by others, while she keeps pining at her father's, and will not see them."

"How disgraceful! How cruel!" exclaimed Rose angrily.

"Indeed, you may well be thankful for the escape."

"Yes, my Yusuf is a good, indulgent hubby," said Rose with a sigh, but tenderly raising his bowed head as he sat studying the carpet. Thrilling at her touch, deep joy pervaded his heart, but he sat on like a statue, motionless and without speech. Happily the painful conversation was brought to a close by the entrance of Mr. Egerton, a senior officer in the Public Works Department. He was a tall, fair-haired man approaching fifty, but by the help of Badham Pile's cosmetic, and elegant suits well-padded, he could vie with any young man. It was evident from his flushed face that he had walked too rapidly for Summer weather. "And how are you, dear Mrs. Yusuf-ud-din?" enquired Mr. Egerton holding her small jewelled hand longer than was necessary, and bowing so low that his long, wavy moustache swept across her imprisoned hand on which he would have preferred to imprint a kiss. Rapidly exchanging greetings with Yusuf he continued addressing Rose, "By Jove! it is steam-

ing. But I required a—a constitutional, so walked across, leaving Mrs. Egerton to follow in the trap."

"What a shame!" said Rose standing up for her friend, "when you know she hates to drive herself." "But—but, the fact is you are always so surrounded that one cannot get at you, and I thought I may have just a second alone."

"So—so" exclaimed Rose cheerily. "The cat is out of the bag. Anything more?"

"Yes, let's try our duet," and by this means he engaged her attention until the arrival of fresh guests. Rose usually received Mr. Egerton's raptures very good-humouredly, and the more she laughed at him, the greater his infatuation became of the lovely creature. As Mrs. Egerton was her confidante, and when two sympathetic friends sit together, generally the heart expands, Rose had remarked, "That husband of yours is a terrible flirt. I invariably fall asleep at his droning."

"Stale news," replied her friend smiling, as if she had become quite accustomed to his shortcoming and understood him thoroughly. "My dear, he would flirt with a stick dressed in a skirt. But, what can the poor fellow do. He seems to be made like that," added she trying to tone down his weakness. The Dinner-party consisted of a few chosen friends, while the 'At Home' was largely attended and enlivened by music in which Rose, accompanied by Mr. Egerton on the violin, took a prominent part. "My dear Arthur," said Mrs. Egerton taking her husband to task, as they drove home. "You must be more circumspect, and not court Rose in this ridiculous manner. She is an inexperienced, young woman just launched into the world, besides my favourite, and I'll not have her head stuffed with your sweet nothings." "By Jove! it is from sheer vexation," replied her lord in extenuation. "What made that lovely creature throw herself away, particularly as Yusuf like a true Moslem keeps another establishment, I cannot understand."

"What nonsense you talk!"

"True, a former wife or some one. Have you not noticed that on some plea or other, he spends his Sundays out? And if it was for money, then sure enough there will be a smash at the rate they are whirling. Yet, he cannot be such a fool as not to put by for a rainy day. But, I suppose those rumours, that he takes bribes, have some foundation. Anyhow he is an overbearing, oppressive officer, and very unpopular with the people"

"I hope the little woman will not have many crosses in her path," said Mrs. Egerton anxiously. "She has lately brightened up, and they have been married two years."

"We shall not have them long with us," remarked her husband sadly, "if he becomes the Privy Councillor for which he has been turning heaven and earth to gain. By Jove! he has such quiet, sneaky ways that he can wriggle himself into any blessed hole."

At the demise of the late Privy Councillor Yusuf's great ambition was to become his successor, but having gained the Súbaship, he could hardly apply for it, and considered it better policy to be patient. Nawáb Ali Khan was officiating, and as he was an able man there was every likelihood of his being confirmed eventually. In the meantime Yusuf was not idle, but trying to destroy one for whom he professed the warmest friendship; nevertheless, coveted his position. By bribes and promises of emolument, he was cleverly undermining the minds of the weak subordinates of Nawáb Ali Khan to work carelessly, so that the Privy Councillor should be held blameable, and considered unfit for the arduous duties. Two years had passed since their last visit to the Palace, and Yusuf was persuading Rose and Áftáb Ján to call again on the Begum. While chatting, they suddenly heard a great disturbance in the verandah. Yusuf rushed out and found a dolí—litter—with mounted followers. At sight of him the A. D. C. jumped off his horse and whispered, "While shooting, hazrat the Minister was mauled by a cheetah."

"Khudá! The young Wazír mauled—hazrat at my very door. Impossible!" cried Yusuf doubtfully and

bustling about. In a few seconds His Excellency was comfortably installed within, and the best suite of rooms placed at his disposal. Seeing Áftáb Ján peeping behind a chick, he exultingly remarked, "Thanks be to Alláh! Our star is rising. His doings are inconceivable, and even the mountain deigns to come to Mohammed! Now there is no necessity of our going to the Begum," he added meaningly. The European Surgeon with a nurse arrived by an express from Zínatábád, and the left arm which had received a flesh wound was bandaged up. With careful attendance, and not permitting a crowd to chatter around the patient as is common in Indian homes, His Excellency recovered rapidly. In a fortnight he was almost himself, and he remarked to the Nurse, "Ah, how sweet the White Rose is, and sometimes I get whiffs of the Violet. What fairy indulges in these?" Rose seated in a corner unseen, signed not to be betrayed, but the Nurse smiling replied, "the real Rose, Mrs. Yusuf-ud-dín, leaves a portion of her sweetness and perfumes the room." Upon this Rose came forward and bowed to the Minister, who sitting up held out his hand to greet her. Gazing at her he exclaimed, "why, you have become lovelier than ever! But, where is that sweet handkerchief." As Rose produced it, he insisted on its being bound round his wounded arm, whilst he brightly repeated in a soft voice,

"Ah! how this perfume makes my pulses throb,
And fills my weakened body with new life,
And yet, I wish not for such health and strength
If thou, Physician, come no more to me."

Seeing him in a merry mood, the Nurse laughingly said, "I see my services will no longer be required," and thus another week slipped away pleasantly. A few hours before starting for Zínatábád, the Minister repeatedly thanked Rose for her cordial hospitality, and while conversing he remarked, "Bírpur is a desert. I'll have you transferred to the capital."

"Your Excellency is kinder than Hátim," replied Yusuf gratefully and bowing low. "But here, notwith-

standing many disadvantages, my wife is the bará-mem—leading lady. Unfortunately there is no suitable vacancy."

"Ali Khan's!" said the Minister meditatively.

"He is an able man," suggested Yusuf with his heart fluttering between fear and expectation. "Judging from his careless work, he does not seem up to much," remarked the Minister. "How you'd answer I—"

"I crave Your Excellency's pardon," interrupted Rose. "I do not understand the nature of the work, but my husband has a considerable amount of intelligence and prudence; moreover he is kind and just. He had compassion upon me, when I was left an orphan and—and deserted."

"You, a sweet blossom, deserted!" cried the Minister indignantly. "Who is there with a head to spare, and so enamoured of death? Give me his name, and within twenty-four hours he will quit this territory."

"I desire ill to no one," answered Rose sighing; "but Your Excellency can judge from this act my husband's temper and disposition."

"Well, well, who can gainsay such pleading. Yusuf, you are the future Privy Councillor," and turning to his wife he added, "Allow me to congratulate you. The blooming Rose will shine in our circle and rank next to the Resident's Mem."

Yusuf becoming speechless from joy, acknowledged his gratitude with low bows; while Rose rejoicing that she had been serviceable, a happy light illumined her countenance, and Áftáb Ján peeping through the curtains murmured, "He was right. She is a useful ladder to his ambition." When the Minister had departed Yusuf agitated, and tears of repentance coursing down his face threw himself at Rose's feet crying, "I owe you all—all, even my better self. Dear, I am not what I seem, but most worthless, and not fit to touch the hem of your garment," and sobbing he grovelled at her feet.

"Hush—hush!" exclaimed Rose raising his head gently and placing it on her lap, "You certainly overrate

the part I have taken. But, dear, how much do I not owe you?"

"Mercy—mercy!" beseeched Yusuf. "Pierce me no more; but help me to confess. That—that Qází—yá Iláhí! forgive! forgive!" and as he tried to sob out his sinful deed and redeem himself, the dark figure of Kásim shadowed the door and tied his tongue down. A moment after Áftáb Ján suddenly emerged from behind; and swept past him like a hurricane. Madly tearing her hair, and the dilated eyes shooting sparks of fire, she stood before them ready to strike. Rose marked not her demeanour, but becoming abashed at their strange position, fled from the room. "Thou wretch!" hissed she between her chattering teeth and menacingly shaking her fist over the bowed head. "Dost thou dare betray me? I'll tear thee in piece-meal," and in her fury she trembled so violently, that the earth seemed to oscillate, as from the shock of an earthquake. In agony Yusuf lay prone on his face murmuring, "Forgive! forgive!" and at the blast of Áftáb Ján's wrath, he seemed to wither, and to shrink most abjectly.

IV.

THE unexpected transfer of Nawáb Ali Khan gave rise to spiteful remarks and ill-feeling amongst the officials. But when Yusuf entered upon his duties as Privy Councillor, he not only worked with the utmost assiduity, but showing that he had the interest of the public at heart, skillfully cleared the atmosphere of Zínatábád laden with disaffection and murmuring. However, this exemplary conduct was but temporary, for no sooner had he won the confidence of the people and got them under his control than he threw aside the mask and showed his imperious nature. Secure in the possession of the Minister's favour, he began to treat his rivals with arrogance and the people with oppression. Moreover, there arose a great clamour when he replenished his Office with a new staff of men, and transferred those whom he had promised preferments to bring about the disgrace of Nawáb Ali Khan.

Rose returning from the Hills joined her husband as the cold weather set in. Her heart fluttered nervously at the thought of paying her first 'call' at the Residency, about which she had heard a great deal from her father, and thereby drawn the marvellous conclusion that the Residency set should be approached as gingerly as the Pope in Rome. "Now just tell me must I bow to Miss Stuart so," and she made a sweeping courtesy as if she were at a Drawing Room in Buckingham Palace. "Nonsense," replied Mrs. Egerton, who had followed in the wake of Rose, and at whose intercession Mr. Egerton, having received promotion, had joined Zínatábád in high spirits. "Shake hands naturally."

"Thus?" asked Rose heartily shaking her friend's hand. "This expresses too much warmth and is

good for intimate folks like ourselves," said her friend.

"Well then thus?" and she touched her with the tips of her fingers. "Oh, this is too cold and stand-offish," cried Mrs. Egerton. "My dear, the 'golden mean' will carry you through."

Rose, attired in an elaborate 'creation' of Badham Pile, which was more suited for a fête than an afternoon 'call,' sent in her card at the Residency. At the word, 'salaam, kindly enter,' she tripped up a flight of steps, and nervously fingering her laces and ribbons, wondered if she would 'do.' As she entered a handsome hall, she found herself face to face with a demure, young lady of six and twenty in a plain grey dress, the only daughter of Sir Roland Stuart, the Resident. On receiving Rose's card, Miss Stuart was awaiting some one more in the Mohammedan style, and on perceiving a fashionable sylph, who seemed to have dropped from 'Au bon Marché,' she uttered a suppressed. "Oh!" whilst poor Rose overcome by astonishment at the simple figure, instead of some awe inspiring personage, as her fancy had conjectured, sank down in the nearest chair. Hastily rising with confused murmurings of "Pardon—excuse," she heartily shook Miss Stuart's extended hand, not with one, but with both of her hands, whilst continuing to apologise, "I am,—I am so sorry." The hostess introduced her to Miss Amar Devi, and to put her at her ease began to show her views of Eastbourne that lay on the teapoy, and opened the conversation with, "This time when I went Home I spent the Summer at Eastbourne, and enjoyed the sea-baths immensely. I suppose you know the place?" Rose, still bewildered, instead of replying that she had never been out of India, spoke at random, "It is, indeed, a charming place," and muddling the second-hand information gained from Mrs. Egerton of the sea-side places, boldly continued, "but very gay and noisy, quite a minature of London." Surprised at her ignorance, Miss Stuart wondered if

Nawáb Yusuf-ud-dín had married a barmaid or the daughter of his landlady. But her mind became disabused, as her eyes fell on Rose's delicate hands and the dainty foot encased in Pinet's shoes. Amar Devi, who had visited England, smiled at Rose mixing up Brighton with Eastbourne, and thought it high time to depart. Dreading a solitary tête-à-tête, Rose tremulously cried, "Wait, please wait." Hastily bidding, 'good-bye,' she overtook her and linking her arm exclaimed, "Feel—feel my heart going pit-a-pat—pit-a-pat. I am sure I'll faint."

"Why? Have you seen a spirit?" enquired Amar Devi with a ripple and chafing her icy hands. "I expected—expected," but she was too agitated to be able to express her ideas and broke off, "I intended calling on you, but this Residency duty put everything out of my head." Having descended the broad flight of steps, she burst into a bright, natural laugh, exclaiming, "I feel myself again—was never so sold before. But what a handsome 'turn-out,'" said she, admiringly, as a barouche drawn by a fine pair of chestnut Walers pulled up by the steps. "Yes, the livery of dark green is in keeping with the carriage. Charming—very neat indeed."

"But here comes your gorgeous landau," remarked Amar Devi.

"Mine is showy, but yours is unique. I should like a drive."

"Come, by all means," and as they seated themselves the horses skimmed through the air. "How delightful I must have my Nawáb to get me a pair like this," remarked Rose. "You say Rai Gyán Chand secured them from His Highness the Pádhsháh's stables, and payed Rs. 3,000 for the 'turn-out.' Why! that's a large sum of money!"

"But a handful for you," replied Amar Devi with a smile.

"Certainly, my carriage is grand, but yours is trim and the animals so sleek."

"Ah, that's due to father's gentle care," remarked Amar Devi. "He is very fond of horses, and these are his special care. He believes in clean stables, pure water and good grooming as necessary to keep them trim. It's fortunate we found Miss Stuart here, otherwise one has to drive ten miles and more to her Summer residence. People usually lay a dâk, but these go quite easily in three-quarters of an hour." "Look, look, they are certainly standing at ease," said Rose, as the pair suddenly paused and stood transformed into stone.

The coachman bewildered gazed around to find the cause of their fright and hesitatingly replied to Amar Devi's questions, "Huzúr, it's not my fault. I was merely tickling their ears with the whip, when they came to a dead stop." The syces tried to drag the horses on by their bits; the coachman patted and coaxed them, but finding them rooted to the ground he began to lash out their stubborness. While in this dilemma a tandem came sweeping by and a man jumping off angrily cried, "Thunders! lightning! Hout you hass—beg parden ladies," and taking off his hat he bowed to them, while he sternly snatched the whip from the coachman's hand. "Good-afternoon," exclaimed Amar Devi delightedly. "How fortunate to have met you Mr. Cox," and she whispered to Rose, "he is the Pádhsháh's English coachman. A crack whip, so we are safe."

"You hupstart! you brute!" vociferated Mr. Cox shaking his fist at the coachman and mesmerising the Walers by his gentle, soothing touches. "Hanimals are like children—some led by kindness, others by the rod. Ain't it so?" asked he of the intelligent creatures who recognising the voice of their old master looked at him with big, moist eyes and began to paw delightedly. "Ha! ha! you already feel in better umour. Mind, never use the whip again," remarked he leading the coachman before the horses. "These be very touchy and will surely rebel. So my boys, this wicked

man hill-treated you. See! I strike—strike," and he sharply cracked the whip about the terrified coachman who with folded hands penitently bowed to the Sáhib and the refractory pair. Suddenly he snapped the whip in two and throwing it at the man signed to him to mount above. Taking the reins in his hands he whistled with exclamations, "Hup! hup my lads! So—so! Capital!" and the horses snorting gaily flew along. "Good-hafternoon young ladies," exclaimed Mr. Cox throwing the reins to the coachman and jumping off the box.

"I am much obliged to you," responded Amar Devi.

"Your umble servant," and the tandem vanished from sight.

"It has, indeed, been most enjoyable," remarked Rose laughing as the carriage pulled up under her porch. "By-bye. We'll meet at the Minister's Dinner."

About fifteen years ago on the death of his wife, Rai Gyán Chand's dreams of visiting England at last began to shape themselves into reality, and he seized the first opportunity to sail for foreign shores. He had intended going alone and had arranged to leave his young daughter in charge of her maternal uncle, an elderly Hindu bachelor and orthodox to the marrow bones; but as the final bell of the Steamer began to warn visitors to bid their last adieu, Amar Devi clung round her father's neck weeping and insisting on sharing his lot. As time and tide wait for no man, the fastidious Mohan Dás found to his horror, that owing to his niece's tender appeals the soft heart of Gyán Chand had melted, and he was forced to undertake a voyage that seemed to him as if he were crossing the Styx instead of the beautiful Mediterranean. Arriving in England, Amar Devi with her guardian comfortably settled down in London to receive a liberal education, while Rai Gyán Chand joined St. John's, Cambridge, and at the same time kept his Terms at the Inner Temple. During his seven years' sojourn, he had been called to the Bar, and having taken his M. A. degree

he was fired with ambition to attempt the L. L. B. for which he eventually joined Trinity College, Dublin. Unlike most Indians, who form their ideas of English home-life, as well as, find their "all-in-all" in that peculiar mixture to be met with in Boarding Houses, Rai Gyán Chand was more fastidious and derived much advantage by associating with a select set. Though distant and reserved at first, once the ice is broken and confidence established, the seeming coldness evaporates under genial rays, and the Englishman divesting himself of his stiffness turns into a warm and true friend. It is wonderful how one good Introduction magically opens the doors to many worthy homes, where one is warmly welcomed, and introduced from the rosy baby to grand-ma nodding by the warm hearth.

And thus it happened that Rai Gyán Chand with the accomplished Amar Devi, crowned with the charms of youth and innocence, were not only sought in Society, but frequently became the inmates of interesting and well-known families. Though he had arranged his plans and was intent on his studies yet Fate had other prospects in store for him which suddenly assumed a definite shape in the course of an evening, when attending an "At Home" given by the late Earl of Shaftesbury. Rai Gyán Chand being a tall, handsome man, with well-proportioned limbs, and the carriage of a prince, he usually attracted much attention in Society, and this evening no one was more impressed with his high bearing and qualifications than the Minister of Zínatábád, who happened to be on a short visit to London. On being introduced to each other both the parties seemed to be drawn to each other, and as the Minister liked to surround himself with a body of efficient officials, he offered Gyán Chand a handsome appointment of a thousand rupees a month. The arrangement closing satisfactorily, the trio in a few weeks found themselves bound for India, with Gyán Chand regretting his unfinished studies; Amar Devi and her lily-friends repeatedly bidding their last farewell with tear-stained

faces; whilst Mohan Dás who had thoroughly enjoyed the trip in every respect, except that his orthodox mind would not bend to break bread with a Mlechh, in high spirits, that his kalá-páni, banishment across the black-waters, had come to a close, to bask again in the glorious sun of the East.

For three years Gyán Chand worked steadily at Zínatábád, with Amar Devi to brighten his home and by her amiability and warm hospitality to bring together the English, the Hindu and the Mohammedan in pleasant and festive gatherings. The relinquished studies still dwelling in his mind, he applied for a year's furlough and before long the trio were installed in Dublin. But a couple of months had barely passed when Gyán Chand was thrown into great anxiety at the unexpected changes that the State was undergoing. At times he considered it safer to rejoin his appointment, but having lately renewed his studies, he felt reluctant to forsake them a second time. At last he decided on running the risk of being absent at such a time. However, he placed the matter before the authorities of the University and asked them to permit him to compete for the L L. B. and the L L. D. together. There were hardly six months left for the Examinations to take place, so Gyán Chand with a pot of black tea to sweeten the hours, and to break the monotony of the laborious task, spent the nights in studying; whilst Amar Devi under the wing of some kind Professor's lady passed the evenings among the warm-hearted Irish. At length the day of ordeal which was full of excitement arrived. According to his quiet disposition, Gyán Chand was calm and collected, nevertheless anxious about the result; but, Amar Devi was flurried and restless, so much so, that the day the names of the successful candidates were issued, she accompanied her father to Trinity College. As they approached the board, Amar Devi trembling from hope and fear closed her eyes, and as Gyán Chand hesitatingly exclaimed "failed," they became bedimmed from dis-

appointment; but on his reassuring her that he had "passed" in both the Examinations and friendly voices crying, "Allow me to congratulate you, Dr. Gyán Chand, on your double success," a rapturous smile illumined her countenance, and tears of joy streamed down. As Gyán Chand was popular with the officials, and of too placid a temper to burn his fingers with political intrigues, he found no difficulty in regaining his post. Nearly two years had passed since they joined Zínatábád, when Amar Devi for the first time became acquainted with Rose at the Residency.

The Society of Zínatábád is singularly fascinating; inasmuch as it is composed of the three nationalities, without that pernicious demarcation which in other parts of India fosters pride and causes misunderstanding between the East and the West, instead of drawing them together by the bond of sympathy. And none entertained more royally than the Minister. As if touched by a magic wand his Palace became converted into a fairy-land, with the fountains sparkling in the mellow rays of the Bengal-light, with which the luxurious garden was bespangled. The Winter season opened with a sumptuous Dinner to the Resident, when excluding the orthodox Hindus, who joined in after the repast, not less than two hundred Europeans and Mohammedans agreeably dined together.

As Rose in all the splendour of her beauty approached the Minister, he received her with marked courtesy and friendliness, whilst a subdued buzz rose through the elegant assemblage, as they admiringly gazed at her and whispered, "Who is she?" "How beautiful!" "How fresh!" But as Sir Asmad Khan introducing her to the Resident remarked, "The daughter of the late Major Green and wife of Nawáb Yusuf-ud-dín," the admiration changed to astonishment and disapproval. "Good gracious, how dreadful! The wife of a Moslem?" questioned the General's lady. "Surely not that fogy's?" enquired another pointing towards Yusuf. "Oh, just mark her marvellous diamond

up, the khánsámáns whisk up so quickly that there will be nothing left if we linger longer," and the loiterers hastily joined the others.

When Diláwar saw Rose's arrival announced in the *Zínatábád Herald*, he experienced a kind of bitter pleasure mingled with irritation, for he knew that it would be impossible to avoid her in society. His pride appealed to him, "Be a man and shake off the miserable infatuation," whereupon he determined to face the danger, and to show by his indifference that she had played no conspicuous part in his life, or that her conduct had left him wounded. As he restlessly paced his room, he in his reverie pictured his first encounter and at sight of the fair vision his heart began to beat tumultuously. But, quickly drawing himself to his full height, he courageously opened fire. As she drew nearer and nearer towards him, he made a freezing bow and treated her with such icy coldness that her cheeks crimsoned with humiliation, whilst conscious guilt made her shrink from him. Thus day after day he rehearsed the "crushing scene" to cow down his faithless cousin with disdain. Strengthened by this resolution, he proceeded to the Dinner. Seated some yards behind Rose, Diláwar felt quite heroic and having mastered his disturbed feelings he made himself unusually agreeable at table Yet, at times he would abruptly break off in the course of conversation, when turning absent-minded his roving eyes would magnetically fasten on Rose's warm lips and glowing cheeks. "How fresh and fair!" ran his silent observation as he irritably marked the blooming countenance, without the shadow of care, "while, alás! from weeping my eyes have become diseased like Yákúb's" and sighing he stifled his yearnings with deep draughts of champagne. Nevertheless, as the singed moth amorously circles the flame, so his gaze would eagerly steal towards the fair moon whose beams enkindling him would set his heart burning with anguish. "Admiring the diamonds!" chaffed Mrs. Foster finding Diláwar inattentive and gaz-

ing across. "Splendid! But, you seem to find her eyes more brilliant! Take care you don't lose your depth, though to be sure you are better matched than—"

"Come. Let's conclude the Dinner with a cracker," interrupted her companion tremulously and handing her a bon-bon. At this instant there being a general move some friend claimed Mrs. Foster, while Diláwar preoccupied sauntered listlessly. But not alone. He pictured a Rose treading on either side of him—one, whom he intends to crush by contempt; the other, abashed and penitent, then raising her tear-stained face upwards, the downcast eyes silently plead to be forgiven. The next instant he holds her to his heaving breast, and passionately kisses away the tears of repentance. As he feels her heart throbbing in unison, he becomes filled with excess of bliss, and the sweet irresistable influence of Summer twilight that he once enjoyed, serenely steals, as sleep on wearied lids upon his distracted heart. Absorbed in reveries, he suddenly found himself in the presence of the fair object that engrossed his mind.

Radiant as the slumbering moonbeams, Rose enveloped in sheeny folds reclined among the palms while her companion had gone in-doors for a cigar. The Dinner having terminated pleasantly and delighted with the cordial reception accorded to her by those whom she feared, a smile of triumph flitted about her, and she was inclined to be at peace with all around. So much so, that as Diláwar approached towards her, she amicably, but with a certain temerity, intermingled with blushes extended her hand to him. He started and was tempted to fly ,but felt spell-bound and had not power to move. To shut out her overpowering radiancy he closed his eyes, but opened them the next moment to drink in her loveliness, when beginning to tremble like an aspen leaf, he supported himself against the waving palms. Stammering he took a step forward. The warm fragrant perfume of her person intoxicated him and becoming maddened he longed to throw himself at her feet and enclose her in his embrace. But subduing his weak-

ness and the "crushing scene" coming to his aid, he clumsily bowed, then with a stiffening expression he kept nodding and perking, as if his body oscillated on wires. At the sight of the droll attitudes Diláwar was cutting, Rose raised her handkerchief to her lips to repress a smile. At the same time, she frowned with displeasure as she noticed his flushed face and unsteady gait which she blindly attributed to graver causes than nervousness born of conscious guilt for having abandoned her. Heaving deep sighs, he gazed into the lovely eyes, with mute devotion, as if to pierce her very soul and inspire her with pity. Recovering but unable to restrain himself, he passionately broke into soft upbraidings, "Ah, source of my happiness—fountain of my grief! Thou sweet, false Floweret in whom my existence was centred! Cruel Rose, to be insensible of my anguish. Thou deserter—tormentor of my heart! Yá Rabb! How frail, yet how much sweeter art thou!" and as he tried to seize her hand and cover them with kisses, Rose stung by his cruel words and false reproaches, darted to her feet, and confronted her cousin with flashing eyes and stern looks. Exasperated and her heart filling with bitterness, a torrent of rebukes rose to her lips, and as they parted to lash him fiercely her eye steadfastly surveyed him. Marking his sallow countenance, with eyes that had grown hollow and encircled with dark lines, the scathing words died away; while her lips began to quiver with pain and becoming saddened heaved a mournful sigh murmuring, "Yes, indeed, my—my Diláwar is dead. This one—alas! Aunt was right. His life is one course of dissipation, which has worn out his health." Fearing to be contaminated by his touch, she proudly gathered the gleaming folds of her dress, and with scornful shots and haughty steps swept by him.

"Pity! pity!" cried Diláwar, his heart becoming convulsed with painful emotions and tears starting to his eyes. But heedless of his despair, she glanced not back to mark his sufferings, and as she angrily hurried away, Mr. Egerton with his arms held wide apart barricaded her

path. "Caught at last," exclaimed he delightedly, yet chiding her in the same breath. "You might spare a glance to a lonely fellow. Now that my wife has gone Home, it is no more 'Home, Sweet Home,' unless to bask in your smiles."

"My good friend has quite spoiled you," remarked Rose shaking her finger reprovingly at him. "This evening we had a delightful canter together, nevertheless, you complain of being neglected," and accepting his proffered arm secured a comfortable seat.

"What wonder!" said he sighing tenderly, "for I never meet you without experiencing heartfelt pleasure."

Dilâwar cut to the heart at Rose's cold indifference wandered gloomily and as he espied the pair on the sofa, with Mr. Egerton's gaze sparkling with joy and admiration which he could ill-conceal, his countenance darkened with rage. Being inflamed with passion, he turned a deaf ear to the voice of reason and good-breeding that prompted him to leave the spot; and with suppressed rage consuming him, he distractedly paced to and fro. Though he suffered great anguish from his jealousy, he was unable to tear himself away, and lose sight of the would-be lovers as he supposed. Rose was about to withdraw her hand off her companion's arm, but noticing Dilâwar scowling and darting fierce glances, she spitefully allowed it to linger and archly smiling began to speak with great vivacity. "Ah, what did you say was customary on the Continent after dinner?"

"To kiss the hand of your partner—thus," remarked Mr. Egerton, rapturously raising the lily-hand to his lips, which expressed the tumultuous emotions of his heart, but which he dare not embody in words. Blushing and hastily withdrawing the imprisoned hand, Rose mischievously glanced at Dilâwar and marked his misery with satisfied delight. Becoming transported with wrath, he turned deadly pale, and a thick mist like the shades of death fell upon his eyes, when his whole frame quivering with anguish, he tottered and fell into

the nearest seat. But as he caught Rose's malicious smile he hurled the chair away, and with a hasty and disordered pace quitted the place murmuring, "At last, at last, the glamour has fallen off my eyes. Adamant—heartless! Yá Rabb, she has no soul!" and as he in his distraction almost knocked against a group standing chatting, Amar Devi exclaimed in surprise, "Dear me, what dreadful theory are you propounding?"

"True—too true!" stammered Diláwar grinding his teeth savagely. "Woman, alas! woman has no soul!"

"Have a care, young man," remarked Rai Gyán Chand smiling, "We poor beings sit in judgment here, but on that Final Day fair lips will mete out justice, so be advised and court their favour."

"Poor Diláwar is infatuated," exclaimed Morád bin Sayad regarding him compassionately. "Like many a piqued-distracted youth he cynically draws his inference from shattered hopes." As he saw Rose in the distance, he encouragingly patted his young friend on the back. "Subhán Alláh! Well done! You have bravely stood the fire; the wound will heal."

"Cruel! False—false to the core," cried Diláwar bitterly and hurriedly retreating; while the others hurried to receive the Resident as he advanced towards them.

"So Nawáb Sáhib, your colour is to triumph again," remarked Sir Roland pleasantly, "and your pony trim for the Zínatábád Races?"

"Inshá Alláh—Alláh granting, luck will shine, even to win the Pádhsháh's Cup," replied Morád bin Sayad, "where the Resident Sáhib smiles."

"And you have been busy with Panditá Rámábai," said Sir Roland turning to Rai Gyán Chand. "Yes, she has been stirring you to better the condition of Hindu widows. Enforced widowhood is, indeed, a dark blot on your nationality. Men should be more chivalrous and allow the miserable maidens, widowed in childhood, the option to remarry."

"I heartily concur with you, Sir Roland," replied Gyán Chand, "and the sooner this is done the better; but, to the orthodox Hindu this innovation is so repulsive that it will take years to ingraft into his conservative mind that the marriage of widows would raise the moral tone of the nation. So long as the poor widow is regarded like a dining-leaf, that at one moment is serviceable and rendered useless by use, even the most advanced and powerful section of the Hindu community is not likely to choose his partner from widows, but remain insensible to their welfare and advancement."

"Yet," observed Morád bin Sayad, "some pessimists consider, that this freedom would revolutionize the peace-loving families to such an extent, that not only would the miserable sufferers muster wholesale to remarry, but the permission would even demoralize unhappy wives! Happily, our ladies enjoy the same privilege as man; nevertheless, how many remain indifferent to their advantage—some, from having suffered once do not care to hazard a second master; but more, from love and reverence to the memory of the dead."

"And young lady what do you desire for your country-women?" asked Sir Roland of Amar Devi. Thus directly addressed she blushed confusedly, but receiving an encouraging glance from her father remarked, "Even in the orthodox camp there is a difference of opinion—some, being for, and others against the concession. The objection seems to exist not so much in our Shástras opposing the Remarriage of Widows, but in men considering it a disgrace that another should become the master of what has been once dear to them; hence they desire to jealously guard their household goddess, many of whom sacrificing self on the altar of love and duty, illumine their hearths with vestal light; while others become, like the Dead Sea apple, fair without and full of ashes within. If I were a man"—but feeling diffident to give her views so freely hesitated.

"Well, what would be your mandate?" asked Sir Roland smiling at her earnestness.

"I'd—I'd be too proud," continued Amar Devi with much warmth, "to enforce an allegiance—to reserve an affection, that was not spontaneous and actuated by free-desire. True love needs no fetters, whilst enforced fidelity easily finds means to out-wit the strictest vigilance. As it is impossible to curb and enchain an unwilling mind the option of Remarriage seems the wisest course. And this privilege would prove a blessing by suppressing deceit and enkindling the breast with genuine sincerity and fortitude. At the same time it would be more harmful and injudicious to instil into the ignorant minds that the 'be-all and end-all' for them is Remarriage. Enjoying the same privilege as man, they should foster the ancient doctrine that happiness lies in a life of usefulness, with forbearance and abnegation to ennoble and lead them in the path of virtue."

"This is, indeed, a reasonable and liberal view of the question," remarked Sir Roland, "and you should be able to overcome the most obdurate of your compatriot."

The Band striking up the National Anthem, a stream of carriages came gliding through a fine, shady avenue, gemmed with lights; while Miss Stuart accompanied by the Minister joined the Resident. With the parting 'good-night,' each one was garlanded and presented with the sweet otto that impregnated their dreams with ambrosial odour. But ungarlanded and with no sweet repose to relieve his anguish, Diláwar fumed with rage. He had rushed from the brilliant assembly to the carriage-stand and impatiently shouting, "Abdul! Abdul!" to his syce, as he picked his way through the confused mass of carriages, animals and servants that were chatting, smoking, and dozing, he spied his trap tied to another for security; while his worthy servant was enjoying a hubble-bubble elsewhere. Without waiting for the delinquent, he untied the horse and drove home as furiously as a raging storm. The wild clatter on the gravel broke Gulzár's slumbers and as Diláwar with impulsive, rapid strides entered her apartment, she arose from her bed.

"Mother! mother!" he excitedly urged. "Arrange for my marriage. One—two—three—nay let there be four brides as our blessed Korán permits. Besides, you have complained of loneliness. Poor mother, I have been remiss, now you'll have a handful with home ringing with mirth and laughter. Aha—ha! up hasten," and laughing and sobbing he buried his face in her lap. As if he were an infant she protectingly gathered him to her breast and with gentle caresses softly admonished, "Ah, my parrot! thou art under the influence of a fatal passion and hast given thy life into the hand of grief. Why? why? war with the decree of Fate and persist in laying hold of a scorching flame? My poor, deluded pigeon! fly, fly from being singed to death. Hush—hush!" and she wiped her moist eyes as well. Away with tears—may thy enemies shed them. I possess Allá-ud-dín's wonderful lamp," added Gulzár encouragingly, "and with a clap will create a paradise with gazelle-eyes to cherish thee."

"Yes, yes mother, let it be at once—next week," exclaimed Diláwar bitterly. "Like a fascinated bird Rose has held me in bondage, I'll crush—root out the viper from my breast." But as a fair vision rose before his mind's eye he thrilled and softly added, "Ah, if I could once, but once hold her to this aching heart," but remembering her heartlessness he cried, "Yá Allah, restore peace. She has no soul—no soul! yes, mother hasten. Let the wedding be on the morrow," and with suppressed sighs his burning lids closed into a fitful sleep.

Sitting with Diláwar's head resting on her lap Gulzár's hiná-painted fingers tenderly worked in and out of his dark web of hair and mesmerised him to calmness. But the uncomfortable posture caused her acute suffering. As the advanced night changed to dawn, her breathing became spasmodic and she convulsively pressed the aching back tortured by sharp stitches in her sides; while the legs doubled under her painfully tingled, as if pierced by pins and needles. But heedless of her pain and glad to find her unfortunate son calm, she patiently continued

to weave her fingers in and out. As the horizon became irradiated with a roseate light and its beams entered the chamber Diláwar awoke murmuring, "Alláh hú—God exists," and gazing on the palms of his hands to bring him luck through the day. When he raised his eyes, he beheld a soft, delicate countenance smiling upon him and the pale lips whispering, "Shukr—heaven be praised! thou hast rested, my child." "Why! you have not slept" exclaimed Diláwar, realizing his position and starting up hastily to relieve his wearied mother. No sooner had he raised his head than Gulzár, moaning as if the fangs of the thousand-headed snake pierced her, fell back in a swoon. But where her son's happiness was concerned she brooked no hindrance, and no sooner had she recovered than she set to work. There was no preparation for a dinner-party or an entertainment, in order that the gallant may make a selection from a bevy of veiled young ladies invited for the occasion. As it is customary the choice of Diláwar's future bride was entrusted to experienced old dames versed in match-making; and no matter how dexterously the bridegroom elect may manœuvre to catch a glimpse of his spouse, but his patience is awarded after the marriage ceremony, and that by a hurried glance of the fair one through the medium of a looking-glass. While Gulzár was intent on picking the fairest of the fair to chase away Diláwar's gloom, his mind was in a tumultuous state, and a thousand different desires held a perpetual conflict in his breast. Sometimes he was in a fever to supplant the image that haunted him by another, when his mother catching his excitement was ready to close in with the first flower that came to hand; sometimes, he would neither eat nor drink nor sleep, and to fill the void of his heart would moth-like flutter round the flame, and take a glimpse at his haughty mistress to satisfy his craving. Soon, all was in readiness—the bride chosen and the Qází had appointed a propitious day for the Engagement Ceremony. But, as Gulzár bustled about,

preparing for the happy occasion, Diláwar received the joyous tidings with deep sighs. Seeing him wavering the gentle mother grew vexed, and urged the matter in mingled tones of love and resentment. "Be reasonable, my son. This is the only course to efface the dust of grief from the page of thy heart."

"When love comes, speak not of reason," cried he pacing the room with hasty strides and his countenance convulsed painfully. "As well say to the scorpion-bitten, 'lament not.' Yá Rabb! waking or sleeping she fills my soul. Rather—rather expect the deadly poison to become nectar—the fire to give out cold than—than for my love to change. Gracious heaven! it were better I lay dead!"

"Nay, nay, my son," sobbed Gulzár distractedly, and tenderly drawing him to her bosom bathed him with tears of affection. "Thou art the lustre of my eyes—the light of the house. May Alláh keep thee." But he wildly tore himself away from the gentle clasp and crying, "Away—away with marriage and mirth," madly rushed out of the room, followed by the faithful terrier that he had found in the deserted bungalow of Rose. Ordering his trap to await him on the *bund* he walked rapidly to the Lake. Engaging a boat, he rowed across to his old haunt impregnant with reminiscences, but which added to his pain. Nevertheless, he aimlessly wandered unmindful of the thorny briars lacerating him; while as the charm of life had fled, the smiling nature, resonant with the warbling of birds, seemed to jeer him at every step, and the soft, fragrant breeze to hiss like the breath of a serpent. Sighing he at length threw himself on the tangled creepers, and thus lay until the noon advanced, when feeling exhausted from not having broken fast that day, he remembered that he was engaged to lunch at Amar Devi's. Reluctant to stir, he rose but sank down despondingly, then pulling himself together murmured, "I'll go. She, meaning Amar Devi, is all gentleness and soothes like the rays of the moon."

As Diláwar was traversing the embankment, he suddenly stopped in bewilderment, and his limbs began to quiver with emotions mingled with joy and pain, as he beheld Rose on a verdant couch canopied by the drooping branches of a shady tree. He rubbed his eyes to reassure himself that it was no delusion. No, no, he seemed to behold the Garden of Eden before him, and as no cherubim kept sentinel at its portals, he bounded inside radiant with joy. No sooner was he within a few paces of the sacred precincts than he stood stock-still, with his gaze intently fixed upon the beloved form, and as one prostrates himself before a deity, he fell at her feet in an ecstasy; whilst Rose slumbered all unconscious of the adoration of which she was the object. Having returned the previous evening from a late dinner, she arose with a severe headache. To shake off the heaviness, she came for a quiet ramble, and whilst reading under a sunny tree, fell into a pleasant doze. As her head rested against the trunk, the shady hat had become displaced, and the gentle gales softly gambolled with her curls, while a black bee amorously gyrated around to sip the ambrosial mouth. Diláwar angrily brushed away his rival, when unable to restrain his wild longing, his face agitatedly found its level nearer and nearer to the rose-bud lips, until their very breath mingled in one. As he was about to steal a kiss a thunder-clap resounded in the bark of the terrier, who recognizing its mistress began to skip and to joyously lick her hand. Suddenly awakening, Rose flashed up like a meteor as she beheld Diláwar crouching beside her and the rebuff, "How dare you—you coward," sped forth like a bullet from her angry lips. Abashed at his conduct he penitently craved pardon and grasping her hand piteously cried, "I am sinking in the ocean of grief. Ah quench—" words failed him and his eyes swam with tears. But not a fibre of her heart throbbed for the lover that had forsaken her, and wrenching away her hand, she disdainfully spurned him. Flushing with anger, flames left from Diláwar's dilated eyes and fuming nostrils. The

next instant he calmed down and collecting his thoughts, towered haughtily before her with a determined air to vanquish. "Madam, before we part," cried he with compressed lips, "I will know how I have merited your scorn, as if—as if I were of no more account than this blade of grass," and he savagely plucked a handful. Surprised at his audacity to seek an explanation she was struck dumb. Recovering self-possession she retorted with a withering smile, "I admire your—your impudence. You imagine you can drop me at your pleasure and pick me up when convenient."

"Yá Rabb! How like a woman," fiercely rejoined Diláwar glaring at her, and making the place ring with a bitter laugh, "to deal a blow—to cruelly trifle with a heart like mine, then complain of forgetfulness—of injured dignity."

Irritated beyond measure at her cousin trying to screen himself by palming the blame on her shoulder, she haughtily exclaimed, "Have done with this nonsense. I trifle? I deal a blow?" and trembling with agitation her voice died away, but raising her pure, limpid eyes, shining with truth she gave him a look mingled with reproof and grief. Astonished at the revelation that Rose had been true to him Diláwar's grief vanished, and his face beamed radiantly. Though unable to utter a syllable in his defence, his honest eyes unflinchingly answered the searching gaze, that tried to read his inmost secret and testified to his fidelity. Recovering self-possession a cry of joy escaped him, and in an unsteady voice remarked, "You have ever been my first and last thought. Oh how could you for a moment harbour that I could change—could deal such a blow as to forsake one whom I have loved from infancy?" asked he reproachfully, and looking steadfastly at her "Rather—rather this sword," and he unsheathed the gleaming weapon "laid me at your lotus-feet. Since your desertion—at least it turns out both of us have been labouring under a mistake—your departure, I have known no peace, but carried a life-long hunger in my heart; while the

world had become a fearful void," and burying his face he burst into convulsive sobs. As Diláwar proceeded to assure Rose of his loyalty, she became sorely disquieted. One moment his fidelity drowned her in joy; the next, as she agitatedly paced the sward, wrung her hand in despair incoherently murmuring, "My God! ..betrayed —deceived!" Hearing a cry of anguish it touched a cord in her bosom, and her heart, as soft as the petal of a leaf, was melted to tenderness. Falling upon her knees, she raised the bowed head and as of old, tenderly passed her hand over his furrowed face that had become harrowed by grief. "Hush, hush!" exclaimed she in accents that seemed as soothing as the sandal-wood on the burning brow. "There has been a fearful mistake. Heavens! I see, I understand," added she in a broken voice as she followed the train of her tumultuous thoughts. "We have been deceived by aunty and—and—" but her voice died away in sobs as her husband's selfishness and base conduct became revealed. As an obstructed stream regaining a passage precipitately rushes onward, so the two with senses bewildered, fingers interlaced and the warm cheeks almost touching lost sight of everything, except that their hearts throbbed in unison and they were united. Their glistening eloquent eyes, rather than the trembling lips unfolded their sad separation; while out-bursts of surprise interrupted their narration.

"Oh, the cowards!" exclaimed Diláwar savagely grinding his teeth. "But I warned you sweet Bulbul. I married! How aunty entangled you in her meshes! Mohammed is witness that I have never loved but thee—only."

"And I—" interrupted Rose, but blushing her confusion revealed the secret of her bosom.

"These are ambrosial words," cried he passionately, "and my heart is ready to burst with joy. Ah, nightingale sing! Now I feel the leaven of my existence arise, and pervading my whole being tranquillize my soul." As Diláwar bent to strain Rose to his bosom and cover her lips with passionate kisses, she tore herself away

and crying, "Good-bye! Good-bye! for ever," fled with faltering steps, but constantly glancing behind her. Seeing Diláwar seated disconsolately, Rose waved her hand encouragingly. He bounded to his feet and ran towards her. With intentions warring with one another, and the forlorn terrier pressed to her bosom she stood gazing meditatively; but as Diláwar confusedly sprang forward to close her in his outstretched arms, she, vanished, and the next instant he heard the splash of oars bearing her out of sight.

Diláwar unfastened his boat, but not to follow Rose. His bosom burned with unwonted fire at the idea that his cup of happiness had been dashed from his lips by the treachery of Yusuf, and he longed to give vent to his rage. Landing he drove straight to him, unmindful of the long fast and his engagement with Amar Devi. He felt possessed as he stepped into the verandah, and was too pre-occupied to recognise Kásim in the garb of a full-blown Munshi. The miscreant marking Diláwar's excited state, shook his intelligent head muttering, "Looks threatening—important news for Begum Áftáb Ján," and conducted him towards Yusuf's Study, but hearing merry ripples flowing from within and not being in the humour for company, Diláwar turned into the drawing-room instead. As Rose was not at home Nawáb Yusuf-ud-dín had asked the visitors to share his lunch in the Study.

"Sea voyage is splendid for gout," Dr. Young was suggesting to the Nawáb who, pillowed among soft cushions, reclined on a long rocking-chair nursing his toe. "You should go Home for six months."

"And I'd chaperone you to the great 'sights'," remarked pretty Mrs. Foster nibbling at a chocolate. "Just take you here, there and every where and feed you on oysters and champagne like Jumbo."

"Capital!" replied the gouty Yusuf sipping champagne, and gallantly added, "But Alláh! I'd forget rare London itself under those bright eyes."

Smiling Mrs. Foster continued, "Provided, of course, a free passage and expenses paid. Is it not so, dearie?" asked she turning to her husband.

"The Nawáb Sáhib can do anything," chimed in Mrs. Young as if Yusuf was omnipotent. "I shall place my eldest lad under his wing."

"To be sure—yes—yes," responded the obliging Yusuf, grimacing and scratching his head uncomfortably. "Ah, do you find the glare trying to your eyes?" asked she softly and lowering the blind.

"Capital!"

"Perhaps this is better," raising it a bit.

"Splendid—anything—but do sit down," begged Yusuf.

"Oh those terrible flies," cried Mrs. Foster. "There is one actually gyrating about your face," and blowing 'phu-phu' away she flew round the room whisking them out. "Thanks—thanks," broke in Yusuf with a confused laugh, wondering where these attentions would lead to, and trying to remember the vacancies reserved for 'unprovided lads.'

Diláwar impatiently paced up and down the drawing-room; but on hearing carriages departing he stepped into the Study, where he found Yusuf on his knees devoutly repeating his afternoon prayers. He started on perceiving his gloomy guest, and as from under his fringed lids he marked his lowering brow and flushed face, Yusuf felt that a storm was brewing, and misfortune itself had crossed his threshold to cause unhappiness. A cold sensation of fear swept through his body, but mustering courage he calmly continued his prayers, which ending he lept up with open arms to embrace his rival.

"Enough of this double-dealing," cried Diláwar livid with rage and sternly repelling him. "I held you as a friend—verily a bosom friend. But your honeyed words mingled with poison were too deep and crafty for me to fathom. Ah! I know to my sorrow that to cherish a base character is to give one's honour to the

wind. Yes, yes, I fostered a serpent in my bosom and at an unguarded moment you stung me."

"Ho, beloved friend!" exclaimed Yusuf, unmoved by the stinging words. "You were ever of an excitable nature. What is done cannot be undone. Why fret over the past. Enjoy and live in the present. The matter is pure and simple. We were running a race together, with this difference that whilst you wore your love on your sleeves, mine—mine was a burning volcano within; and—"

"But honour—the sacred ties of friendship—should have restrained you from your evil design," interrupted Diláwar with flashing eyes that blinded Yusuf and made him lower his head in shame.

"Honour! Honour!" laughed the Privy Councillor reviving. "All is fair in love and war. Másha Alláh! I am but a humble pupil of the great Aurungzebe—peace be unto him, who, when he was murdering and persecuting his brothers and their families, he was building a magnificent Mosque at Delhi as an offering to Alláh!"

"Straightforward conduct never proceeds from a crooked nature," cried Diláwar blazing up like a fire on which butter has been poured, and lashing him with scathing words. "But remember every one's mischief recoils on himself." Higher and higher rose his voice in stern rebuke and just condemnation. While he thus raved, "I'll disgrace you before H. H. the Pádhsháh—bring you to the Minister's feet. Yes, I'll proclaim your perfidy on the house-top," ineffable sweet music came floating into the room, and as the genial shower calms the raging storm Diláwar became enrapt and listening stored each word.

Still flows the river where we stand,
Still gleam the far hills blue and clear,
In happy light still lies the land,
As in the days of yester-year.

But what is life for you and me ?
A maze wherein our paths may be,
But where our paths must never meet.
Was it for this we lov'd sweetheart ?
Was it for this—to say good-bye ?
The tale is old, we stand apart,
For ever, for ever, you and I.

Weep if you will, as I shall weep,
But let us meet no more again ;
Lest love should waken, wild and deep,
And all our farewell words be vain.
The earth is parted from the skies,
The ocean severs shore from shore,
But wider is the gulf that lies
Between our souls for ever more."

As Diláwar drank in the pathetic strain, which like refreshing dew fell from Rose's lips, his body quivered with emotions, and clouds of tears rained down his face. "It's my dismissal," ran his thoughts. "Love lies in obedience. Good-bye—good-bye," and without a word or look at his successful rival, he calmly quitted the Study, with his soul full of joy that he was beloved. As he was driving out of the compound, he saw a lace handkerchief fluttering on the terrace. "Alláh, she is mine, mine," he exulted, and whistling an old song that Rose formerly sang "Some day, some day, some day I shall meet you," he entered his mother's presence crying, "I am dying of hunger." Gulzár who had spent the greater portion of the day in tears of disappointment, brightened on beholding the beaming face, and felt as if a stream of sunshine had radiated the chamber. "He has turned over the matter and repented of his folly," thought the gentle mother as she helped the servant to spread a white cloth on the carpet upon which the meal was placed. Washing his hands and leaving his shoes behind, Diláwar sat down cross-legged and repeating, "Bismilláh—in the name of God," attacked the savoury dishes with his fingers. Gulzár's smiles broadened, and she cracked her knuckles joyously to see him enjoying his meal after many wearisome days, whilst Diláwar rapturously

broke forth at times, "she is mine—mine. Destiny may yet unite whom it has severed," which greatly disquieted Gulzár, and evaporated her day-dreams.

Having enjoyed a hearty meal, besides being worn out by fatigue, he threw himself upon a bed, and between the chewing of the scented betel-leaf and puffs of the huqqa, he related the day's adventure to his mother. "Yá Rabb! Can it be true! Such treachery from Áfták Ján! But what did I say all along?" exclaimed Gulzár joyously. "I knew, the babe that I had suckled was not deceitful. Well—well—the riddle is solved; nevertheless, Rose remains bound hand and foot to Yusuf, so—so thou'lt marry now?"

"Hush!" and murmuring, "I am happy—so happy," he passed into dreamland, overthrowing the fairy castle of marriage and mirth, which his fond mother had so joyously built. Soon the room was filled with staccato music, and the louder Diláwar snored, the more did his mother's heart dance with joy that her lad had at last gained peace.

After Diláwar's departure Yusuf drove out, allowing Rose ample time for reflection and hysterical showers to mitigate the sting of her grief, before he ventured into her presence. He returned with a handsome case containing choice scents, and as he entered her chamber, began to sprinkle some on Rose as peace-offering, at the same time remarking in as cool a manner as if nothing unusual had happened. "Hullo! All in darkness! The N. I. Dance is on to-night."

"In future our path in life will lie apart," replied Rose in a quivering voice that shook with violent emotion, and suppressing the tears that had started afresh in her inflamed eyes. Crushed and colourless like a broken flower, she lay stretched on the sofa in abandonment of grief. "You won me by deception and—"

"My heart's delight," interrupted Yusuf in hurried accents, "it was for love of you. My eyes ever turned to your face as the patridge to the moon," and as if the were to blame for his infatuation, he added with

vehemence, "I lay under a spell, that bereft me of my senses. My happiness—my failure—all depended on winning you, and I'd have staked my life—Yá Rabb! anything," and he shuddered at the recollection of his deed. Rose listening with her hand tightly wound round her knees and head bowed with grief, incoherently moaned, "Have lost all confidence—all faith in him." Her mind was in a tumultuous state for the cruel awakening that the husband, whom she had considered the soul of honour, should be ignoble, filled her with horror and loathing. "To what depth of moral turpitude must you have fallen to have had recourse to such an artifice," sobbed she half rising with clenched hands and a wild look in her eyes. "I can never forget the callousness of your heart," cried she, repulsing his hand as Yusuf tried to pacify her, "but some day you'll gather the fruits of your selfishness. These past years I have held the innocent in vile contempt; while morning and evening thanked God for the kind benefactor into whose hands he had entrusted me. Ah heavens! of what clay?" and a bitter sigh of disappointment escaped her trembling lips. "You should be the last to complain," remarked Yusuf in an aggrieved voice, "for I have cherished you as the apple of my eye. Night and day have I not slaved for you? You who came penniless to me! indeed, you have much to be grateful for. By Alláh's grace you have become a bara-mem; yes, placed you in a sphere far beyond your dreams, with diamonds, dresses and all the fineries of a fashionable lady to vie with the best in the land."

"The gems of truth I prize more," exclaimed Rose, scornfully casting away the opal ring which Yusuf had given her, when she was engaged to Diláwar. "Gratitude united our hearts, but distrust has snapped the bond, and a wide gulf separates us for ever," and she burst into sobs. "Foolish, demented creature to make a fuss over nothing," cried Yusuf shortly, and not at all troubled by her grief. "It is in vain to argue with a whimpering woman," and stamping angrily he drove

away alone to the Dance. Distraught with anguish, Rose gave way to her grief without restraint. In her gloom she kept herself in such close confinement that she realized not that Time has wings and days had turned into weeks. Her pretty face was missed at the gay gatherings, and people were beginning to notice her seclusion. From tender enquiries Society began to nod suspiciously, and when her absence became mysteriously prolonged considerable tittle-tattle was indulged in. Yusuf now and again peeped in, and once angrily hazarded, "Through your thoughtlessness you'll be the cause of my ruin." Shaking off the lethargy she arose to the occasion, and to suppress the gossip that was set afloat threw open her home to various parties, and appeared as bright as the Summer that had set in. With a smiling face that concealed the anguish of her heart, Rose plunged into a series of festivities and gaieties that considerably reduced Yusuf's income. But she believed that he possessed the prophet's never failing cruise of oil, and recklessly led a gay, noisy life that brought some respite from painful reflections, but left her utterly worn out. Since the rapture Yusuf had frequently absented himself from home to find solace in the company of Áftáb Ján, who lived some little distance from Zínatábád. "So Rose has at last discovered our by-play," laughed she at her niece having been hoodwinked so long a while. "I felt trouble was at hand, for of late my right eye has been throbbing and my sleep disturbed by ill-dreams. But cheer up, Alláh is gracious, I'll have prayers read and lamps lit at the saint's tomb to avert evil." Thus her oily tongue consoling him, she invariably ended by pouring poison into his ears. "Some day thou'lt find the bird flown".

"Nonsense!" cried Yusuf incredulously. "The stupid creature is nursing her grief within confined walls."

"Tauba! how like a child thou speakest," remarked the mischief-maker. "The ways of a woman are incomprehensible!" Burning with jealousy, Yusuf would rush back, and taking the malevolent Kásim into his

confidence mounted him supreme guard over his wife's movements. What with his absence and Rose having visitors constantly staying with her he became almost a stranger in his own home. Once contriving to spend a quiet hour with her he remarked dolefully, "Returning home, I find nothing but solitude and sadness now. You have had full revenge. Surely you can afford to be indulgent and make friends." Becoming frigid at his overtures, she would treat him with haughty indifference, and turn the conversation into other channels. But when Yusuf's gout became as troublesome as his uneasy mind, he tried to entice Rose with the marvels of London life. Alláh! if thou art a bara mem here, there thou'lt be presented to the great Queen and shine in Court Circles. Come. Let's pack and be off." But Rose turning a deaf ear to his entreaties to accompany him to London, annoyed him beyond measure. "Is it possible?" cried he bewildered. "Another would have rejoiced at the idea. Yes—yes, I scent a motive," and eyeing her suspiciously murmured, "When the cat is out the mice will play. Excellent! but have a care!" and vociferating with a threatening face left her in anger. Soon his intended visit was noised abroad, and amongst the inquisitive visitors Diláwar was foremost to come and ascertain the facts of their departure. Rose had never encouraged him to her parties, but Diláwar, like an invalid requiring fresh air, would often refresh himself at the public Entertainments. As he gently glided towards the magnet, Rose laughing and chatting with others would suddenly turn silent; whilst a deep blush would mantle her brow. Drooping her fawn-like eyes with abashment, she would give him a soft, lingering glance that would send him home as happy as a bee drunk with sweets. "How jolly!" Mr. Egerton was remarking effusively to Rose. "The Winter season will soon be on, and we'll make it lively. I am sure Mrs Jenkins will take you under her wing."

"Will be most delighted!" exclaimed the old lady who was a General's widow, residing in Zínatábád and

whom the young people found most obliging to chaperone about. But Diláwar like a true knight was bravely suggesting, "The change will do you good;" while his eyes pleaded, "stay, stay," so Rose decided to become a grass-widow for a few months. Soon the house became cast into great confusion, and more so by Yusuf being in a towering rage at Rose's stubbornness. In the midst of the packing and bustle Mr. Egerton rushed in with a telegram. "Ah! such terrible news," exclaimed he agitatedly. "My poor wife is ill—troubled with a cancer."

"Good heavens! My friend ill—dangerously ill" said Rose sorrowfully as she stood deliberating, "What I gaily flit about while she lies, perhaps—perhaps is dying! No, no! I am better—safer by her dear side," and rushing out locked herself in her room with the faithful Hussain to help her to pack. As the time for departure drew near, Yusuf furiously knocked at her door for admission. What with Rose bustling from trunk to trunk and Yusuf vociferating madly, he could catch nothing more than "Go—go." Imagining that Rose did not even care to bid him 'good-bye,' he swore wildly and exclaiming, "Sooner may a man catch his shadow in the glass than grasp the ways of a woman," hurried away to the Railway Station, which was crowded with officials to bid the Privy Councillor 'bon voyage.'

Just as the train was steaming up to start Rose with breathless steps, but giving hundred and one injunctions to her servants in one breath, rushed into the carriage followed by Hussain with the band-boxes. Yusuf's face beamed radiantly; while Diláwar shrinking trembled under an eclipse, and became speechless from disappointment. At the last whistle, as hand clasped hand, and Diláwar whispered in a broken voice, "May Alláh protect thee as closely as the lids guard thy eyes," a sweet bunch of violets fell at his feet. Pressing the parting souvenir to his tremulous lips he felt comforted, as the withered lily becomes cheered by the ambrosial beams of the moon.

V

THE Star of the Palace has set, and the once happy home become the abode of affliction, for the plague has made terrible havoc in Zínatábád, and ruthlessly prostrated Sir Asmad Khan in the dust. Eighteen months have passed since the sad event occurred, nevertheless a gloom overshadows its walls, and the household is smitten with grief. But like a beautiful swan joyously skimming the lake, the small bejewelled feet fill the courtyard with music, and as the heir of the late Minister climbs up to Hafíza Begum's lap, the aunt rapturously clasps him in her arms. His warm embrace enkindles hope in her breast, and like an ivy she clings to the young oak, that in maturity will become their succour and pillar of renown. The gladsome light of her countenance revives the drooping hearts of the young, and as Aurora breaks into golden day, they smile happily for a happier morrow. But to the aged, the soothing prospect of hope is denied, and at sight of her great-grandson, the venerable Khurshaid Begum, making low lamentations bursts into passionate exclamations. "Yá Rabb! Fate is ever strong and most cruel! Alas! in the very flower of his youth the Sháhzáda has been cut down, while the old, wasted trunk stands to be battered by stormy winds. Thou light of my eyes, where hast thou fled?" and she supplicatingly invokes heaven, "Welcome, welcome Sleep. Let thy lenient hand cover these aching lids with the veil of eternal darkness," and giving a prolonged wail falls to the ground, writhing in a frenzy of grief. Setting the child down Hafíza Begum approaches and tenderly soothes and expostulates with her grandmother, who answers by relapsing into mournful silence, and sadly beating her breast gasps "Alas! alas!" But as dying embers suddenly blaze up,

the esteemed lady starts from her despondency on hearing voices crying, "Oh, the news-bearers have arrived." With telegraphic speed a trustworthy dame approaches the entrance door of the Zanána Palace, and standing behind a heavy curtain attentively listens to news brought by the men from various parts of Zinatábád. The ladies seldom care to wade through newspapers, nevertheless by the help of news-bearers, whose sole duty is to gather the current matter from all quarters, they not only keep themselves well-informed, but often hear subjects before they appear in print. The dame hurriedly returns, when the ladies in one voice eagerly ply her with questions. Creeping up nearer to the enfeebled lady she salaams low, and gently awakening her speaks in a raised voice, "Lo Mubárak! Congratulations. Your Excellency's prayer at the Saint's tomb has been answered. The Resident Sáhib returned yesterday from Ootycamund. Now sweeten your slave's mouth."

"Alláh be praised," responds Khurshaid Begum, and as if she felt the British arms girding the defenceless Palace, she thankfully raises her withered hands and dimmed eyes to heaven. "Ah, yes, he'll hearken to our woe, and deliver the innocent from oppression."

"But—but that evil one," and all understanding to whom the dame refers shudder and mutter a prayer, for so much is Yusuf-ud-dín feared, that his name alone carries terror, and seems to stick in her throat, "was locked for seven hours in consultation with the new Minister."

"What more is he weaving for our ruin?" asks Hafíza Begum. "In the presence of our beloved prince, Yusuf-ud-dín was harmless as a dove; now—now his talons clutch at the quail. Yá Iláhí! what can these tender arms do?"

"Open—open out the coffers," exclaims the venerable dame in bitter accents. "Satisfy his greed. Yea, take the jewels, and leave our family honour unsullied. But—but the prosperity of the perfidious is short. Ah!

my prince hear our cry!" and she bursts into convulsive sobs.

Yusuf's trip to Europe had been shortened by the untimely death of Sir Asmad Khan. Leaving Rose in London, he hastened back to Zínatábád to find a rival of the late Minister appointed Wazír. Always aspiring to climb the social ladder higher and higher, besides being a servile sycophant who could easily accommodate himself to every-one's taste, it was the work of a moment to discard the side on which Fortune frowned, and to ingratiate himself in the good graces of the risen power. Bold and designing Yusuf made a great show of advancing the interest of the Minister, whose pliant nature swaying like a reed, could not withstand the delicate flatteries, whereupon he fell an easy prey within the meshes of crafty hands. Intent on his interest the sycophant worked with such assiduity, that he relieved him in every perplexity, for the Nawáb being inexperienced, frequently became involved in dilemmas. Finding Yusuf so zealous, the prince was only too glad to entrust the heavy responsibilities implicitly to his management. Intoxicated with the pride of power, one of his first acts of benevolence was to attack with inveterate malice, the gentle Begums. Basely forgetting the hand that had raised him to eminence, he only remembered that the Palace was a rich orchard for loot, and on some pretext or other manœuvred to pluck the forbidden fruits, that should have been conserved sacredly.

"The good Morád bin Sayad," continues the dame informing the ladies, "came to enquire after your Excellencies' health."

"Goes it well with him?" ask they.

"He has received promotion."

"Shukr—excellent!" exclaim they pleased at his success.

"Certainly, his pay has been increased, otherwise he suffers like a bird clipped of its wings, for the appointment carries no weight."

"Tauba! What a shame! May his face be blackened! May judgment day overtake him," cry the ladies showering imprecations upon Yusuf, who considering his rival a thorn in his side and whose very looks were a silent reproach, divested him of all powers by transferring him to an insignificant department.

"Morád bin Sayad spent the evening with the Pádhsháh salámat," adds the informant.

"May his reign be long," exclaims Khurshaid Begum. "Is his Highness aware of our existence?"

"Too well," replies the dame. "He desires the Begums not to be over anxious. The Pádhsháh salámat will be a father to the orphan, and a shield to the widows."

"Who so compassionate as he?" exclaim the Begums extolling their sovereign, and relying on the royal assurance become strengthened with fortitude.

While the discussion continues among the Begums, Morád bin Sayad over Afternoon-Tea is remarking to Dr. Gyán Chand. "It is essential, especially at this crisis, that the same cordiality should be continued between the Residency and the inmates of the Palace. Since that calamity," and at the recollection of the Minister's death, his eyes become suffused with tears, "the gates have been closed against visitors."

"You were much attached to the late Nawáb Sáhib," remarks Gyán Chand gently.

"Alláh be praised! Twice my father shielded his honoured parent at the risk of his life," rejoins Morád bin Sayad proudly. "Why! if a blind dog from the Palace came to me, I'd share my last morsel with it. Yes, it's a good plan," adds he reverting to the subject uppermost in his mind. "The Residency ladies should be invited to Luncheon. Their presence and their interest in the welfare of the timid Begums would not only cheer them up, but show the rivals that they are not bereft of friends. and thus stem their imperious hand. You can be of great service to the Begums," remarks he to Amar Devi.

"I? How so?"

"You are acquainted with the ins and outs of English and Indian manners," adds Morád. "Issue the Invitations and be the hostess, for the poor Begums would be at a loss how to act. Formerly, the late Minister—may he rest in peace—was the right hand at their entertainments."

"I'll be delighted!" exclaims Amar Devi, little dreaming how it would involve her. "What do you say, father?"

"By all means," replies Gyán Chand. "The Begums are quite welcome to the little service, for with nothing but gratitude and admiration can I recall the Nawáb Sáhib."

"Inshá Alláh—God-willing, I'll arrange for your visit to the Palace," remarks Morád bin Sayad and glad at the matter having terminated satisfactorily.

A few days after Amar Devi drove within the Palace precincts which was guarded by a body of stalwart sentry well-armed. Entering the courtyard, where a number of slave-girls were being instructed in singing, an elderly dame courteously received her, and as they advanced into the interior, there was no man, not even a lad visible, except young and grey-haired slave women moving to and fro, or sitting by a limpid sheet of water, surrounded by lovely ferns and flowers. Stepping above, they entered a spacious hall, simple and clean, where, surrounded by her maids, Hafíza Begum reclined on cushions, with the tube of a handsome huqqa in her mouth. She returned Amar Devi's 'ádáb—good-afternoon,' very gravely with her eyes rather than the bend of her proud head, and signed for a chair. But on Amar Devi refusing it unless the Begum occupied one, a pretty Indian stool was placed that put her on a level with the recumbent figure. Complimentary greetings and enquiries after health having been exchanged, the Begum inquisitively examined the upper and lower garments of Amar Devi, whereupon she had to satisfy her curiosity about

English life and their dress. During the course of the conversation the three arches of the hall became darkened by heavy sheets, in one of which was cut a round hole. As Amar Devi looking around with questioning eyes wondered if they were preparing to be photographed cries of, "The Dáktar – the Dáktar Sáhib" dispersed her thoughts. Although the hall was closely curtained; nevertheless, all drew their veils deeper. Hafiza Begum, who was suffering from a severe sore-throat, veiled herself tightly up to the tip of her nose, and advancing stood before the hole, that had set Amar Devi conjecturing. The next instant she heard the Doctor exclaiming, "Open—wider, wider," while the delicate Begum palpitating with her tongue protruding through that hole, began to have her throat cauterised. The maids, probably accustomed to ludicrous scenes, kept very still, but it was too much for Amar Devi, who with her handkerchief thrust into her mouth, choked with suppressed laughter, and when she could contain herself no longer, ran up the terrace, and gave vent to such an outburst that it set the crows cawing in amazement. On the Doctor leaving Amar Devi descended, and being sobered down remarked, "It is, indeed, fortunate that Lady Dufferin has taken so deep an interest to have medical women prepared for the Zanána."

"Oh, yes!" rejoins the Begum, "A Dáktarni visits us and charges a thousand rupees for accouchement." For other treatment, I have more faith in a Dáktar. But come, you understand the English weights better than we do. Weigh this Fátima," and a girl of fifteen, of a flabby, yellowish appearance waddled up. "I am at my wit's end," complains the Begum, "for she is to be shortly married. Alláh! I pity the bridegroom. She'll crush him to *chutney*, when after the marriage ceremony he bears her away in his arms."

"Nine stones," breaks in Amar Devi, "no ten—twelve—"

"Yá Rabb!" remarks the Begum despondently, "and daily she is dosed with anti-fat."

"At last—thirteen stone two," exclaims Amar Devi in surprise, when the slave-girls tittering implore, "Yá Iláhi! preserve us, save us from superfluity and anti-fat!" and the Begum disappointedly chimes in, "after all, not reduced a fraction." As the poor girl abashed at her size rolls off the stand, the Begum quickly divesting herself of her heavy jewels and all excess, even to the veil, mounts trembling in a gossamer bodice, and a tight-fitting pair of silk trousers. "Ah, Begum Sáhib," exclaims Amar Devi smiling, "you should borrow some of poor Fátima's superfluity, for you are barely seven stones!"

As they laughed and chatted dinner was announced when adjourning to another hall about forty of them squatted down on the floor. It was noticeable that the children and bonds-women present were served before the Begum, who casting a sharp glance around marked that everything was in keeping, and all conducted themselves becomingly. The fiery dishes, spiced with long green chillies were terrible, though appetising and savoury as the Mohammedan cookery usually is. It made Amar Devi more uncomfortable than when Rebecca Sharp suffered tortures with the Cayenne pepper in her mouth. Nevertheless, between spasms and tears streaming down her face she had an enjoyable dinner. According to appointment, Amar Devi called on the morrow to arrange about the Luncheon-party The Begum occupied a small hall, with its roof spangled by parti-coloured glasses, but like the other entirely unfurnished. She found the slave-girls going through the morning drill. By turns they entered the hall and gracefully salaamed, when the Begum made sundry remarks and enquiries as to their health or examined their dresses, and commended or scolded they passed on. "The French are considered the politest nation," remarks Amar Devi as they thread their way through narrow alleys on to Khurshaid Begum's Palace, "but they hardly hold the upper hand over the Mohammedans in grace and the cuisine."

"From a tender age," replies the Begum, "we teach the young the Korán Sharíf, as well as instil refined manners that give them such elegance. But come, turn in here," and as they entered the slave-girls arose, while the Begum bending low was clasped in venerable arms. "Blessing, my child," murmurs Khurshaid Begum, gently patting her on the back. She was tall and stately, while her skin resembled her soft locks and white raiments that she wore since her widowhood. "Have you thought of the Luncheon-party?" enquires the grand-daughter of Khurshaid Begum, who being the eldest took precedence over the other Begums, and ruled the whole Palace. "The idea is good," replies the venerable lady, "who can say? The Resident's Mem's feet may turn the wheel of Fortune, and bring us luck. But—but it will recall our Sháhzáda, and who will manage for us simpletons. Yá Rabb! I see his figure—his face before my eyes," and she bursts into tears. "Hush, hush," soothes the grand-daughter, and stifling her grief. "With Miss Amar Devi's help we will go through it well enough. Now you issue the Invitations," remarks she turning to Amar Devi. "As in my brother's time I'll inform my mother when the time draws near, and bring all the Begums to the party. But mind, not a syllable to our enemies."

"Make your mind easy, Begum Sáhiba," replies Amar Devi re-assuringly, "besides I have also promised Morád bin Sayad, and especially not to reveal his name should anything unforeseen transpire." Choosing an auspicious day for the party, the Invitations were issued to the Residency ladies as well as those of the Military Officers. When Amar Devi returned home she found her father in Evening Dress. "Oh, am I late?" exclaimed she. "I'll be ready in a moment," and as she was hurrying away, Rai Gyán Chand explained, "Morád bin Sayad was over, and pressed me to dine with him, so we'll divide ourselves this evening. You join Mrs. Jenkins, while I'll go on to Morád's. Make my

excuses to Mrs. Yusuf-ud-din, but later on I'll drop in for the dance."

Rose remained over a year in England, chiefly to cheer Mrs. Egerton who was fast sinking under the trying malady. The terrible suffering of her friend overshadowed her own grief, and learning to bear her cross more calmly, she installed herself by the sick bed, when tender hands, and a bounteous heart spared nothing to sooth her last moments. "My poor, poor husband," moaned the sick anxiously. "The children are well under mother's care; but he—he so kind, affectionate, but, alas! how weak! who—who will steer his course?" and her brow became contracted with anxiety. "My friend—dear friend," cried Mrs. Egerton agitatedly a few days later, and much reduced, "you are by—near. Into your hands I trust—trust him," and as Rose choking with tears clasped the wasted hand to fulfil the dying wish, the fragile body drooped, and the deep Sleep overshadowing her, she calmly slept. For a few months after the death of her friend, Rose lingered on the Continent accompanied by Eva Blair, a cousin of Mrs. Egerton, and whom she brought out to India as her companion. Nevertheless, time and absence had not tended to obliterate from her memory the artifice by which she had been entrapped, and her attitude towards her husband remained cold, though courteous. She had forgiven him, but to forget seemed beyond her power, besides his present conduct towards the helpless Begums did not add to his lustre and raise him in her esteem. Though she joined in the gaieties, yet it was with great reluctance that she consented to give a dinner-party on her Birthday, and at Miss Blair's pleading a 'hop' had been added to enliven the occasion

"Your jewels are paltry and old-fashioned," exclaimed Yusuf, stealing behind Rose who attired in a simple, but flowing mull dress reclined on the sofa chatting with her companion and awaiting the guests. "Forget the by-gones, dear. Let this—this mark a new era in our life," and with trembling hands he

clasped a marvellous set of diamonds round the elegant throat.

"Oh, how lovely;" exclaimed Eva Blair, who becoming engrossed in the brilliants marked not Rose's confusion. She thrilled with a secret terror, and a deep blush of shame crimsoned her countenance, which like a mirror reflected the oppressed thoughts, "Heavens, 'tis true—too true! Ah, princely diamonds," but the next moment she turned white and speechless from fear, wondering, "Will this make me his accomplice!" At this idea her heart began to beat as rapidly as the painful thoughts that kept recurring and torturing her mind. No word of thanks escaped her lips, but she gave her husband a severe look of rebuke that checked his imaginative flow, as he tried to satisfy Miss Blair's curiosity regarding the diamonds. Suddenly ceasing in his idle explanation, Yusuf vexatiously muttered between his teeth, "Failed! Yá Alláh! she has caught me tripping!" then heaving a deep sigh, as if his feelings were deeply injured by her ingratitude, he exclaimed, "One may risk one's life to pluck an apple from paradise, but woman—Yá Rabb! some women at least are difficult to please," and he glanced disappointedly at his wife. Flushing, a sullen fire gleamed from Rose's moist eyes, and murmuring in anguish, "He will drag me down to perdition," she helplessly buried her face in the soft cushion. Before many minutes Mr. Egerton perfumed and dressed with studied neatness, broke in upon her silence, and dispersed the unpleasant conjectures that began to trouble her mind. "Ah, ha!" exclaimed he admiringly, "the mines of Golcanda in the very drawing-room of the great Yusuf," and he longingly gazed more at the graceful figure than the scintillating brilliants. Nearer and nearer he stooped, and would have liked to press the glossy locks that were tied in a knot with graceful negligence to his lips, when Rose recognising his voice raised her head and wearily remarked, "Come, be the rose between two thorns," and to be saved from his flattering prattle

placed him between Miss Blair and herself. But with a simple, "How do Eva?" to the blushing young lady he bestowed his attention chiefly on Rose. Even when talking to others, his eyes followed her as she welcomed the guests; or at table listened to the melody of her voice. Rose catching his gaze smiled and nodded as much as to say, "Wait my precious ward, I have something good in store for you," and she mysteriously glanced at Miss Blair, who unconscious that her destiny was being woven with another, was betting a pair of gloves over Philippine with Dr. Young. Since her trip to England Rose seemed no longer the same, and even the gorgeous dresses had made way for simpler ones that enhanced the delicacy of her beauty. Moreover, as gold when passed through fire loses its dross and becomes lustrous with purity, so the fiery trial which she was undergoing chastened and added an indescribable charm. Her eyes gleamed with the steadfast light of forbearance, that made her appear grave; and the distant, imposing look impressed some, while others considered that the London air had turned her cold and haughty.

The dinner was sumptuous, brightened by the dulcet strains of the band that made Dr. Young whisper "You'll open the dance with me."

"My feet are itching to begin," replied Mrs. Foster, smiling sweetly.

Rose had been toasted with an outburst of good-wishes, and just as champagne was being raised to the lips to drink Yusuf's health, the exclamation uttered in a hollow voice, "Hollo! *Thirteen* at table!" fell like a thunderbolt amidst the merry company. On hearing the words, they were filled with dismay, and like a ship tossed on the ocean crash fell the glasses from trembling hands; Mrs. Young grasping Mr. Egerton's coat-sleeves gasped, "Save! save!," the feet of Mrs. Foster fidgetted no longer, for with hands locked she sat petrified; while Rose agitatedly exclaimed, "For God's sake Eva, how many invitations did you issue?" But poor Eva Blair, with a

Brazilian nut stuck in her mouth, and her eyes starting from their sockets had become voiceless from terror. Gasping, "Is it possible *thirteen* at table!" all lost their wits, and the remarkable part at this instant was, that none could reckon *thirteen* correctly. Regaining their breath they furiously attacked the one who had given the evil information, for some declared there were a dozen, and others fourteen. At last Amar Devi to whom the scene was a novelty chimed in, "It's all father's fault. He is the truant, and would have made the fourteenth. I shall, therefore, rise first," and as she began to push her chair back Mrs. Jenkins exclaimed, "Nonsense! a young girl like you. My dear, sit you still—old bones first." Some were filled with astonishment, others admiringly gazed as she valiantly wound a shawl about her shoulders, and prepared for the fray. Encased in this armour, she peered right and left, and down went her spectacled nose under the table to ease her mind that nothing startling lurked below. Fully satisfied, she at last arose, but had barely advanced an inch high when her shawl caught in her chair. Imagining that grim death was seizing her, the General's lady turned pale and fell back almost fainting. Champagne restored the terror-stricken to life; but they sat speechless and glued to their seats, while guests were arriving and "Sweet Dreamland Faces" inviting them to waltz. While in this dilemma Yusuf grandly exclaimed, "What nonsense! come Miss Amar Devi, you and I don't believe in this rubbish, and we'll rise together; but mind should either of us die before the year runs out, you 'll give me a tablet, and I'll supply the sandal-wood for your cremation"

"Good," responded Amar Devi by no means awed by the Christian superstition ascribed to the number *thirteen* at table. To the joy and relief of all, they rose together, when an earthly sneeze like Azráfil's trumpet blanched the countenance of the young lady, while Yusuf trembling, with drops of cold sweat coursing down his brow, pointed to the door from whence the

sound had proceeded, and lank fingers seemed to beckon to him. All scrambled from the room, while Rose having pacified and fortified her husband with champagne, peered round the door and caught Kásim inquisitively peeping. "You evil-faced one!" exclaimed she angrily. "How dare you come disturbing us!" The delinquent responded with a dark scowl and a malicious grin. Times had changed for being hand in glove with Yusuf, Kásim was now drawing two hundered rupees a month in an office. In rapacity he not only kept pace with his master, but having the upper hand, he held Damocles' sword over him. Moodily retreating he muttered threateningly, "Yá, Khudá! nothing I do pleases her. Wait—wait—in the twinkling of an eye, I'll lay the pretty Mem Sáhib low in the dust. She has become high and mighty! Aha—ha—ha!" and he gave a satirical laugh which was hardly drowned by the sweet strains, and was not lost to the ears of Mr. Egerton, who happened to be finishing his cigar in the verandah. "What does the fellow mean?" exclaimed he in surprise and following him. "Terrible threat! I must worm it out of him." But within all was bright and merry. Forgetting the unpleasant occurence, gaily they kept time to the music, and Rai Gyán Chand heartily laughing apologised that his absence had incurred so much disturbance. But Yusuf had been unable to shake off the gloom, and as he with placid features chatted here and there, his heart palpitated from distressing thoughts; while a voice incessantly kept ringing in his ears and worrying him, "Beware! Beware! the day of reckoning is at hand!"

To the great joy of the Begums, their Invitation had been accepted, and all was in readiness to receive their guests. There were but two days left, and Amar Devi while chatting with her father rejoiced that all had passed off without any hindrance, when a rider urging his camel, as it lazily jingled its bells, rode into the compound. She recognised the gorgeous livery of the Residency, and thinking it was some invitation, calmly

received the letter from the bearer. But the next instant it dropped from her hands, and she excitedly cried, "Would you believe, father, the Resident desires the luncheon to be postponed."

"Indeed," exclaimed he thoughtfully. "Be sure there is some thing in the wind. Let Morád bin Sayad know." She despatched a few hurried lines to him, and the chaprási returned with the information that the Nawáb Sáhib had left the previous evening for Bombay to get a new set of teeth.

"A new set of teeth!" cried both, and unable to refrain from laughing. "But what a shame to leave me in a predicament at this juncture! What on earth shall I do?" exclaimed Amar Devi irritably. "Call on the Resident," suggested Rai Gyán Chand, "and finish with the business."

"What! A drive of ten miles."

"Take the pair. You'll be back within three hours." While Amar Devi was away, her father patiently counted the hours, and when five had flown and there was no sign of her, he became anxious. As he prepared to go after her, the pair drove in and relieved his anxiety. "Why, my dear child, I gave you up as lost," said he handing her out. "I had tea with Miss Stuart, then halted at the Zínatábád Club for books," said she.

"Well, what has happened?" asked Rai Gyán Chand eagerly. "The matter has come to Yusuf's ears," replied Amar Devi, "and as usual he has put his finger in the pie, and made a mountain of a mole-hill. The Resident asked me to his study with Miss Stuart, and wrote down my statement in a formidable looking book. Of course, I told him every thing except that Morád bin Sayad had suggested the Luncheon. But that is where the Resident tried to catch me with cross-questions. Having given my word to the Nawáb, I could say nothing except hang down my head confusedly."

"And thus reveal him by your tell-tale face," said Rai Gyán Chand laughing. "You'd never do for a diplomat."

"It's not in my line," rejoined Amar Devi. "I like to go straight ahead instead of turning and twisting. Well, the Resident was not pleased at my not having consulted the other Begums on the matter; besides, it seems Khurshaid Begum, though commanding the Palace, is not entitled to the title as the Invitation had been worded."

"Yes, to be sure, her son and not her husband had been Knighted."

"I did not know," said Amar Devi. "However, the Resident was very kind, and when leaving gave me wholesome advice, 'Don't meddle with intrigues. The authorities can say nothing to you, but come down pretty sharp upon your father.'"

"And so, thanks to Yusuf, the Luncheon-party has ended in smoke," exclaimed Rai Gyán Chand. "I am so sorry for the poor Begums; they'll feel it keenly. However, 'All's well that ends well,' and you are back safe."

A few days later as they sat at chhotá-házri in walked Morád bin Sayad smirking and with low bows exclaiming, "Taslím—taslím! obeisance—your slave is at your service."

"Come, fortify yourself with a cup of tea before we open fire upon you," greeted Rai Gyán Chand and placing the Nawáb beside him. "Provided, it will not hurt his new set of teeth," remarked Amar Devi mischievously, and pouring out a hot cup. The Nawáb replied with a sagacious grin, adding, "At times, it's convenient to have a hollow tooth, particularly when it is stuffed at the expense of another," and the recollection produced a hearty laugh. "I appeared before the dentist," continued he, "as simple Morád bin Sayad minus my title. As I have no attractive powers, except sinews for a passage of arms, instead of quibbling with words," and his eyes gleamed like a flashing rapier ready for combat, "the sensible man charged me Rs. 5. I had barely finished when in walks my friend Rájá Govind Rai, flashing with sword and belt, and

profusely salaaming hailed, 'Glad to meet you Nawáb Sáhib!' The Dentist at once pricked up his ears, and mumbling in astonishment, 'What! a Nawáb—a Zínatábádi and only five rupees! Fool! fool!—like five shells. However, clap it on to the other. Come. Rájá Sáhib,' said he graciously, and like a miser grasped the magnate in his clutches. 'Twenty rupees is the fee,' continues he working away. 'Ten upon your worthy self—ten for the Nawáb Sáhib, while—while the extra five for my stupid mistake in not recognising a Zínatábádi.' Lo ádáb—my compliments to you, said I and left my friend to settle the bill." They merrily laughed, but Rai Gyán Chand gazed abstractedly, and catching their eyes hastily pushed aside the *Zínatábád Herald* that he was glancing at. "Why, what's the matter, father?" cried Amar Devi anxiously placing her arm about him. "You look scared."

"Nothing, nothing," replied Rai Gyán Chand confusedly, "only—only a longer tour this time."

But as her eye hurriedly scanned the newspaper, her countenance faded to a deadly pale, and falteringly exclaiming, "That dreadful creature has actually transferred poor father to Dowlatpur," she burst into tears. "This trouble is all—all through my stupidity," sobbed she, as she clung round her father, and the more he pacified her with tender words, the faster fell her tears until the servants fearing some mishap rushed in. But all moved away as Mohan Dás, with a silk scarf wound round his loins and a portion thrown over his shoulders, came clattering on his sandals. "Ráma! Ráma! such tears," cried he sharply and his grey topknot bobbing agitatedly. "Why, Gyán Chand, what have you done to my child? Come here my pet," and stroking her tenderly besmeared her head with the sandal-paste, which he had been using at his worship, "now dare anyone say a word," and like a tower he protectingly stood beside her, "but why these tears—a very rivulet?" Afraid of her uncle's displeasure, Amar Devi sobbed more with an occasional outburst, "poor—poor father. It's all my doing," and sighing regretfully

for having taken part in the luncheon. As neither would enlighten him, and he was becoming impatient Morád bin Sayad broke in "Gyán Chand's legs are too long and Zianátábád too limited for his strides. He requires to stretch them a bit, therefore, Yusuf salámat has considerately transferred him to Dowlatpur." Rai Gyán Chand burst out laughing; a smile gleamed on Amar Devi's lips, but fearing her uncle's anger, she crouched by her father; while with a brow contracted into frowns and eyes emitting indignant flashes, down came Mohan Dás's mighty hand upon the broad back of his brother-in-law. "Hé, Shankar! What did I say from the very commencement," exclaimed he in the voice of a prophet, "meddle not with the Begums and remain neutral. But your head was wool-gathering, and an old man's word was cast to the winds. You insisted to annoy—to interfere. Shiv! With what result? The serpent has turned and settled you with a sting." Seeing that Amar Devi had fled from him and taken shelter beside her indulgent father he veered like the wind and began his attack. "But what business had this girl to meddle?"

"Nonsense! Dry up those tears. It's merely a stroll," consoled Morád bin Sayad, as Amar Devi listening to the stern voice began to weep afresh; while her father gently added, "My child, imagine this my tour—I'll be in and out frequently." "Of course, of course," remarked Morád encouragingly, as Mohan Dás began to open his lips. "Don't break up home. God willing, you'll see Gyán Chand returning an inch taller raised by honours. How long can a paper-boat keep afloat, and Alláh be praised! Yusuf's reign is over! Birds when fledged fly, but Yusuf's wings like those of ants betoken the approach of death." "I say," continued Mohan Dás by no means appeased, and as he listened to Morád's assurances had gathered steam to spend upon them. "I say, what business had this girl to put her meddlesome fingers, and cause this trouble. Shiv! Shiv! It is painful to me, and would have broken her mother's heart

to see the way you have stuffed her head with the airy nonsense of High Education, accomplishments and liberty, until she has completely lost her senses. What is a woman's sphere but to be a wife—a mother and to minister to family wants, instead of—" "Quite so, my worthy brother-in-law," replied Gyán Chand rising. "You are the master of our home, and we your slaves, but—but spare us the oft-repeated platform rhetoric. I must hurry away." "One moment," eagerly cried Amar Devi starting up, as if struck by some inspiration, and detaining him. "If you'd but consent, I'd give Mrs. Yusuf-ud-dín the first refusal—you know how much she admires the pair. What will I do with the 'turn-out' when you are away. Do—do." "What! sacrifice my pair to please the great magnate," interrupted Gyán Chand, "Nonsense!" "Do—do let me," pleaded Amar Devi. "Well, well," replied the gentle father desirous to please her. "But first let me run up the ascent to Nawáb Fazl-ud-dín."

"Amír Ali Sáhib," announced the bearer. At the same time two penetrating eyes of a lawyer glanced over the shoulder, and marking their distress added in a concerned voice, "I saw the announcement and hastened to offer my sympathies." Morád bin Sayad knowing the visitor to be a strong partisan of Yusuf coughed warningly. But it was quite lost on Amar Devi, who ignorant of his purpose, gratefully acknowledged his kindness, and like a torrent vehemently rushed on. "It's a great shame that—that horrid—wicked—" in her excitement she would thoughtlessly have spoken many unpleasant truths that would doubtless have been carried back to Yusuf, when Mohan Dás wisely interposed, "It's for the best." "But no joke to break up home," cried Amar Devi indignantly. "Anyhow I intend to stay here with uncle," added she determinedly. "Indeed!" exclaimed Amír Ali in surprise. "Do you think it advisable—safe?'

"Safe! Are there burglars about?"

"Allah forefend!" exclaimed he clasping his hands,

"but having your welfare at heart, I feel anxious. Times are out of joint, and you may be worried—harassed with spies—Alláh knows what not." As Amìr Ali like an interested friend first frightened then advised that she should leave Zínatábád, and Amar Devi as rashly asserted that she was determined to stay to have her father recalled, the carriage returned in a pitiable condition, with the harness broken, and all encrusted with thick dust. On beholding the state they rushed out; while Amar Devi excitedly put half a dozen questions in one breath. But Gyán Chand unheeding them concernedly examined the panting horses flecked with foam and between affectionate pats exclaiming, "Well done! you have not eaten my salt for nothing. My brave comrades! I owe you my life," then turning round remarked, "had a narrow escape." "Shiv! Shiv! troubles do not come singly," consoled Mohan Dás and telling his rosary to avert further mischief; while Amar Devi brushing away the dust anxiously felt that he was unharmed. When returning from Nawáb Fazl-ud-dín a rowdy party obstructed the road. As they rushed from side to side, and the coachman dodged in and out of them, one unfortunately came beneath the carriage. Terrified Gyán Chand was about to jump out to try and rescue the man, when the coachman shouting, "Sit still huzúr," and encouraging the Walers made them take a marvellous leap, and to the surprise and joy of all, left the man wallowing in the dust uninjured. But the drunken rabble infuriated to see their comrade in danger vociferated angrily, and one actually raised his stick to lay it upon the animals, when the wide-awake coachman again urged them, and the aim fell on the top of the barouche. The next moment the pair obedient to his touch coursed down the steep, and cut their way through volumes of dust gathered like heavy clouds, with the men furiously brandishing and running after them. Like bronze statues, wildly staring, the syces clung on by the strap to the oscillating carriage, which by the slightest mismanagement would

have been hurled over the precipice of the hill; while Rai Gyán Chand with pale, compressed lips closed his eyes, and at each sharp turn murmured, "Hé Raghubír! have mercy!" then extolled the driver and the animals. Not until the voices had died away in the distance did the coachman slacken speed and drive them gently home. But the dexterous driver was not forgotten by his master, and he acknowledged his thanks by making the other Telangi servants merry with spirits, through 'khushí—joy,' as he explained; while offerings were sent to the Temple for the narrow escape. But when Amar Devi pleaded for the pair to be given to Yusuf, her father curtly replied, "I'd rather put a bullet through them than hand the noble animals into such vile hands."

A month has passed since Gyán Chand's departure to Dowlatpur, but as he has left the whole establishment unaltered, it seems to the inmates as if he has gone on his usual tour rather than been transferred. Nevertheless, a bitterness rankles in Amar Devi's heart against Yusuf, hence she keeps her distance from Rose, who, however, sympathising tries to cement the breach by hopes of the recall of her father. Hearing of the disarrangement Mrs. Jenkins at once came to the fore. Her warm heart expanded, and she spread her maternal wings of protection by frequently sharing the quiet days and brightening the solitary home with her cheerfulness. But Yusuf envying the repose, and vexed at Amar Devi's daring to brave his mandate, determined to have merriment at the expense of others. One night phantoms taking advantage of the loneliness startled the inmates from their sleep, with a clap as terrible as a stroke of thunder that made the doors shake on their hinges. Petrified Mrs. Jenkins jumped up and holding fast to the bed-pole gasped, "The earthquake! the earthquake!" Up leaped Amar Devi to rush out-of-doors, when the confused and dreadful rattling of chains set the terror-stricken Ayahs crying, "Ghosts! Devils!" and fear arresting

her steps, she crouched under the bed. As if infuriated spirits had escaped from the lower regions, they swept past the verandah, with the clanging resounding in the air. On, on like a mighty whirlwind they rushed above the terrace, and as the sound died away an unearthly wail between a cry and a laugh, "Hu—hu—hu—u! Hu—hu—hu—u!" that momentarily became intensified came down the skylight of the bedroom. Helter-skelter the trembling occupants escaped into the drawing-room shouting, "Bearer! chaukídár!" when suddenly all became silent. "It's the Pír's—saint's anniversary," exclaimed Nasíban Ayah "and the servants have gone across the road to see the tamasha—the wretches!" "How unfortunate that uncle should just be away," remarked Amar Devi under her breath, "but he is sure to be in before long. Listen. It's just striking ten." Becoming emboldened by the early hour Mrs. Jenkins pooh-poohed the whole thing. "It must have been nightmare—imagination," suggested she lightly. "Come—let's to bed," and as she stepped forward to lead the way, the piercing wail recommencing curdled their blood. Almost fainting, they closed their eyes, as amidst the maddening clanging, spectres white and airy-looking fluttered in the verandah. "It's—it's the Pír, followed by his train," cried Nasiban in a hollow voice. "But have no fear," added she reassuringly. Nevertheless, her teeth chattered, as with folded hands she mumbled the 'Kalma' to drive away the spirits. But nearer and nearer they crept, and the unhooked door vibrating went ajar. Quickly the maid-servant, Gungá, snapped up the hurricane-lantern to have a better view, when spying a beard she cried, "Thieves! thieves" followed by maledictions. With a terrific crash, the panes of the door lay glittering on the floor, intermixed with the jewelry that Amar Devi for safety had torn off her person and flung aside. "Hush! hush!" vex not the Pír Sáhib," warned Nasíban as Gungá madly heaped imprecations upon the saint. But horror thrilled their hearts and cold sweat ran

down their limbs as the spectres grew taller and taller, and nothing was visbile except faint shadows. Speechless and rooted to the spot Amar Devi gazed with a stony stare, with Gunga hysterically rolling on the floor, while Mrs. Jenkins with her face buried among cushions, and her short hair standing erect gave spasmodic moans, that became drowned in the prayers of Nasíban, as with promises of sweets and to kindle lights at his tomb, she tried to cajole the saint to desist from his frolics. In the midst of the confusion arose the sing-song droning of the palki-bearers, and as a palanquin attended by torch-runners entered the compound, the inmates felt new courage spring up and began to breathe with greater freedom. "Help, uncle, help!" broke forth from the tremulous lips of Amar Devi, while the maids emboldened ran out shrieking. "Thieves! Ghosts." Hearing distressing cries Mohan Dás jumped out of the palanquin, and the men giving chase to the night-prowlers, they vanished like the shades of night before the first beams of the morning. With flaming torches every corner of the compound was searched, and as scales betoken the approximity of snakes, so stilts, sheets and chains manifested the presence of Yusuf's spirits.

The sport of the phantoms had more than unnerved the inmates, and it is probable that they would have kept nursing their shattered nerves for many a day, but that the Fancy Dress Ball, given by the Minister, drew off their attention. "It will never do to be absent," exclaimed Amar Devi swallowing a cordial, "and give our well-wishers a chance to smile."

"Certainly—certainly; never say die!" rejoined the General's lady encouragingly.

Fancifully attired they appeared at the Ball, where they were soon joined by Morád bin Sayad who after a hearty laugh, mingled with sympathy, informed them that the 'deeply-concerned Amír Ali' had invented the play of the spirits, and won a gold medal. As they chatted the Resident frequently glanced towards them

and noted the Russian military dress, in which Badham Pile had elaborately encased Morád bin Sayad, then his eyes travelling marked Amar Devi attired in the gorgeous L. L. D. Cap and Gown of Dublin. Whether he sniffed dynamite or the colours did not blend, but they magnetically attracted him, and the next moment as he crossed the length of the Ball-room to join them, inquisitive eyes became fastened upon the trio. "Well, Nawàb, your tooth better?" asked he cheerily. Morád bin Sayad sobered down and was about to reply, when the Resident continued, "Ah, Mrs. Jenkins, you have had vast experience, and should suggest a soothing cordial," and at last veering towards Amar Devi who expecting to be questioned, fidgeted, he exclaimed in a surprised tone, "So, Dr. Portia, you are still here!"

"It's great trouble to break up home," replied the lawyer lady.

"Or—or perhaps you expect Rai Gyán Chand back."

"I should like nothing better," replied she smiling.

"But, how is it you are moping, when you are so fond of dancing?" questioned he. "Resigned it for politics—eh? Well, well, Dr. Portia, don't burn your fingers again." As with this parting shot and an intelligent glance at the would-be Russian, the Resident joined the dancers, Yusuf-ud-dín who had narrowly watched the movement advanced, with out-stretched hands, and the two rivals the next moment were almost locked in each other's embrace, with the lips warmly greeting, but the hearts burning with the fire of strife. "Yá Akbar! these insane, peaceful times," ran Morád bin Sayad's thoughts regretfully. "If I could but call him out he'd be a dead shot;" while his antagonist meditated, "By my beard! He must be uprooted. Yes, yes, when a tree is destroyed from its very root there is no fear of its flowering or bearing fruit." But as Amar Devi received Yusuf's joyous exclamation, "So delighted to see you," with a cold bow, Morád bin Sayad was shocked at her want of dissimulation. Despairingly sighing, he whispered, "Kachchá—kachchá—

green—inexperienced! Your face looks thunders and reveals wonders!"

The brilliant assembly seemed a thousand stars spangling the decorated hall, with its beauty enhanced by the lambent radiancy irradiating from Rose's lustrous folds. The dancing was at its height, and as she, moon-like, glided in the giddy maze, many an admiring look was directed towards her. Remembering no more the intolerable sorrow of separation, Diláwar watched with his whole soul absorbed in the floating vision, and occasionally starting up to count the dances. At last, at last his turn arrived. Eagerly advancing, he claimed his partner, and as dancing was not in his line, they retired to a quiet spot. Surveying her with love's eyes, he falteringly remarked in a voice flowing with ecstasy, "The full moon appears in her beauty to give joy to the world, but to torment—to increase my pain." "Glad you admire my 'moonlight costume,'" interrupted Rose, softly blushing and embarrassed, keeping her eyes averted, for according to her determination to keep him far, they had met at gatherings, where with a glance or a few casual words had parted. "Yes, Badham has made it very effective indeed," said the beauty as shaking the rich folds with both of her hands, she turned from side to side to display the pearly robe, spangled with stars, and lilies girding the swan-like neck, with no jewel except a Pádhsháhi star and crescent sparkling in the glossy curls of her forehead. "But first tell me of your welfare."

"Sweet Bulbul! the physician being by, now all is well with me," rejoined the ardent lover. At the same time his heart misgave him, imagining that Rose was probably a vision that appeared in his dreams, or a stream of moonlight that would float away in the breeze. To reassure himself of her bodily presence, he caught the silvery folds of the trailing skirt, and pressing them to his lips joyously murmured, "Alláh, thou merciful! It's not a dream—a flood of moonlight to play the will-o'-the-wasp." Now that he held her so

close to him, the fear of parting filled his heart with heaviness, and bewailing his loneliness complained, "When two or three months, with each hour an age, pass by without a word, life becomes bereft of all joy and it drives me—sinks me in the deep waters of despair. Yá Rabb! 'what is to the nightingale where the sweet breath of his beloved rose is not?'" Like arrows the words pierced her soul. Raising her mournful eyes, she replied with a look of the softest pity, and for a moment remembered nothing except that as the cord of love united them his sorrow was as much hers. As Diláwar drew nearer, she pityingly stretched forth her hand to comfort him; while her head almost drooped upon his arm to pour out the burden of her oppressed heart, when a voice maliciously crying, "Very comfortable, indeed!" and vanishing, made them fly apart. Her trembling hand fell, and the interruption driving away the mist that had crept over the senses, she turned away agitatedly, with a firmer resolution to place a wider barrier between themselves. Heaving a deep sigh, she impetuously remarked, "Though I mix with the gay, I am so sick—so tired of this life; while a secret foreboding torments me with unknown fears. Ah! never—never more shall I know gladness. Often the peaceful days among the gentle Sisters at Agra fill my thoughts, and draw me towards them to become a nun. Ah, yes, for peace, tranquillity we must not often meet," and a torrent of tears gave relief to her bursting heart.

"My love! my guiding star!" cried Diláwar in great distress of mind, and consolingly grasping her hand. "Thou art the sun that enables me to sustain the gloom of night; I am but an insignificant mote. In mercy discard me not; but grant—continue thy fostering rays." A thousand protestations of love rose to his burning lips; but an inexpressible sensation that weighed upon his heart impeded his speech. His moving lips softly breathed, "Ah! leave me not; in mercy desert me not," inter-

mingled with Rose's sad refrain, "It's for the best, for peace—for tranquillity." He sighed, and frequently attempted to speak; but his voice faltering, he left the sentence unfinished. As they sat with locked hands and hearts sympathetically speaking, Mr. Egerton ever hovering around, like a bee thirsting for sweets, peeped in again. As he silently surveyed them with lowering brows his heart stood still. Burning with jealousy he entered exasperately exclaiming, "Tableau vivant! The moon with her satellite!"

"And here shoots forth the disturbing comet to claim his partner," replied Diláwar rising very slowly and reluctantly.

"Yes, a meteor to guide—to light," rejoined Mr. Egerton, accepting the vacated seat. Taking his leave with a lingering look Diláwar retired, followed by Rose's half-closed eyes as she indifferent to her engagement wearily reclined. Neither did Mr. Egerton urge the dance, as gazing into her eyes to draw attention, he seated himself beside her. But his agitation was so great that he started up the next moment and restlessly began to pace about. Suddenly stopping before her his pale lips broke forth into a passionate declaration of his infatuation. "Alas!" exclaimed he in a voice tremulous with passion, "from the first moment your face captivated—held me in bondage. Then—then the daily intercourse—the constant brooding changed cold friendship into deep, earnest love that stamped not only your image upon my heart, but the enkindled flame permeated my whole being As I could say nothing it has all the more smouldered like a furnace. Indeed, believe me, sweet love, whether waking or sleeping you absorb my whole soul." A wild look swept across his brow, and he abruptly ceased, for Rose sat motionless, with an abstracted, far off gaze. She was so accustomed to Mr. Egerton's soft nothings, that she barely heeded the passionate theme or realized its importance. The discovery that she was inattentive and preoccupied added fresh violence to his frenzy. Throwing himself into the

seat beside her, he picked up the fan off her lap, and began to flutter it vigorously. When brought to consciousness she became troubled on hearing the impetuous words, "At last, at last, one final thought has taken possession of me. Come love, fly—fly with me." The wild utterance spread a deep blush of shame over her sorrowful face, and her heart began to beat audibly. But remembering it was no other than Mr. Egerton, and he the husband of her sweet friend, whose course she had promised by the death-bed to steer, she exclaimed with a sort of ill-concealed confusion, and at the same time treating the matter lightly, "You are like a wayward child, requiring to be reprimanded—to be pulled up constantly. Cease this vapid nonsense."

"Fill me not with greater anguish," cried he vehemently. "Can I forget your gentleness—tenderness. Of late none but the eyes of love could have shown me greater consideration—forethought. Was not this sufficient encouragement to hope? Ah, try not to evade. With me you will enjoy greater felicity. Come—come. Yes, I know—feel your love."

Rose struck dumb with dismay sat silent for a moment, as Mr. Egerton proceeded, and realizing for the first time that he was in earnest, she abruptly stopped him. "Silence!" cried she in a stern voice quivering with disappointment and disapprobation. Excitedly pressing her clasped hand against her oppressed heart, she raised her sad, mild eyes to heaven and earnestly invoked the dead, "Sweet spirit, dost thou hear? Thou art witness to my innocence and his injustice," and turning towards the unfortunate man gently added, "for her—for your wife's sake I have tried to alleviate your burden—yes, for her and pity."

"Pity is akin to love," rejoined the unhappy lover.

"Love you!" said Rose in astonishment, but her nerves were so upset that she was inclined to laugh and cry at the same time. Wiping away a tear that was gliding down her cheek she sadly shook her head murmuring, "Love you—I love none."

"Except that forward stripling Diláwar," broke in Mr. Egerton grown more fierce, as pierced with new pangs of disappointment every word seemed the thrust of a dagger. "Curse the Moslems!" cried he grinding his teeth, and waxing wrath. "You do not understand how lightly they regard woman. With their enslavement of the gentle sex, their heartless, vulgar pluralities what honour can they pay woman? What regard, but the toy of the moment to please their fancy —their ambition? Here is a chance. Haste, from this infamous place. You are standing on a valcano that may any day—"

"And you are gracious enough to hold out the hand of salvation," interrupted Rose in a cutting tone, and not knowing the motive of his entreaties. "Yes, you'd like to take me from the frying pan to hurl me into the fire—an unfathomable abyss—an irrevocable step. I thank you for your forethought," cried she in an injured voice, and deeply wounded at his suggestion. "Alas! What is life without virtue! Perhaps, you have heard," and her voice sank leaving her face flushed, "that—that my husband won me by subterfuge, which coming to my knowledge has created a certain coolness between us; nevertheless—" and she raised her head proudly, "I am his honoured wife."

"Heaven help!" incoherently murmured Mr. Egerton with a cold, bitter laugh that chilled her with astonishment. "Come, dear heart," continued he pressingly and taking no refusal, "you have kindled this fire, and you alone can still the tumult of my breast." Being blinded by a violent frenzy he marked not that his conduct was inspiring her with aversion and disgust. "Come let us take the first steamer for England—anywhere with you is paradise." As with his frame convulsed with intense passion he bent close to her, his scorching breath like the sorocco made her start. Proudly drawing herself erect, she with a threatened look and in the firm voice of virtue repelled him, "Begone, thou dotard."

"Ah! my love, my love!" entreated he in great distress of mind. "The anguish of my heart is beyond words. You so tender, restore peace. Be thou henceforth my life."

But as Rose with lowering brows and repellent glance arose to depart, and finding that his hopes were at an end, his countenance became black with rage, and sparks of fire whirled in the dilated eyes. His heart burning with wrath, he lost all power of control and, biting his lips in vexation wildly threatened, "What! you will not—will not. Beware! beware!" cried he trembling with excitement. "Besotted! I'll bend you—strike you to the heart. You heed not my anguish? Yes, Madam, your misery shall be my delight!" and he cruelly laughed, that tortured Rose, and trembling with foreboding fears, cold sweat stood upon her brow. As Mr. Egerton muttering wildly between his clenched teeth retreated, he knocked against Kásim lounging in the passage. "From your gloomy countenance you don't seem to have been over-successful," he remarked.

"Yá Rabb! I am of no consequence now to the Nawáb Sáhib," complained Kásim. "Fool—fool—blinded by fortune. He thinks to captivate me like a child with a rattle! Yes, the appointment I coveted he has given to another. Well, two can play at the same game; but I hold the trump card."

"What do you mean to do?" asked Mr. Egerton.

"Of course, secure a new master," rejoined Kásim. "It is no more than—than taking up a new garment and discarding the useless As for the Mem Sáhib, her proud demeanour is such that in her eyes I am still the butler. Yá Alláh! I'll bend her wax nose—smite them—dethrone the tyrant. Come, lead me to my new master."

As Mr. Egerton moodily complied with the request, his better self prompted him not to stain his hands in the disclosure of the secret which Kásim was anxious to reveal, and to make peace with Rose whom he dearly prized. To Kásim's annoyance he turned round on his heels to retrace his steps and sue for peace, when Rose

under the protection of Diláwar proudly passed by, ignoring his very existence. The blow dazed him, and fuming with mad jealousy he tottered; but his evil genius with assurances, "They will speedily reap their due reward—courage," led him on to victory and revenge. Arriving, Kásim with an obsequious bow to the rival of Nawáb Yusuf-ud-dín exclaimed, "Henceforth your slave is at your command," and they fell into close conversation. With the birds carolling, the National Anthem was bidding farewell to the gay revellers and dancers, and while the smiling Dawn growing brighter and more bright streamed upon Morád bin Sayad and lighted his path to success, the chastened darkness began to gather heavily over his rival. As Yusuf-ud-dín attired in the white, flowing robes of a Qází blinked and tottered from the pangs of gout, his rival with a proud look of triumph defiantly turned away his head, that made Amar Devi exclaim in surprise, "Dear me! What is the move—the matter now?"

"Your good father will be re-called," rejoined Morád bin Sayad, as he handed her into the barouche. "Whoever dug a pit for his brother assuredly fell into it himself. Khudá háfiz—Alláh keep thee protected."

VI

Rose utterly dispirited paced restlessly from room to room; sometimes throwing herself into a cosy seat, but soon wearied jumped up the next moment or stood still full of thought, then as she raised her steps to proceed lingered by favourite objects, with glances that seemed to be taking farewell of them. The day was lowering, and like the dark, swelling clouds restlessly rolling across the heavens, Rose's wearied heart throbbed with great unrest Nothing seemed agreeable or could soothe her disquietude. She at last opened her piano, and as at her touch the deep chords of the Dead March from Saul began to reverberate with the warring clouds, an awful peal of thunder, like the blast of Judgment Day summoning her to render an account of her life startled her. Terrified she thrust her fingers in her ears to deaden the tumultuous discord, and when like sabres the lightning gleaming and curving amidst the dense masses of cloud illumined the room with blinding flashes, her eyelids closed in fear. All in a tremor, the next instant Rose rushed into the Study for protection, and trustingly laid her hand on her husband's shoulders. Shuddering at her touch, he impatiently shook it off, and crouching with his head buried among cushions as if her presence pained him he inaudibly moaned, "Man fell by woman. Fool! Fool! to have been snared by woman's compact. Alas! the hand which I had coveted and gained even at the sacrifice of my honour, has brought what?—blighted hopes and curses. Yá Allah! to come to such a pass!" and tears, not of remorse, but the result of shattered hopes and frustrated plans, rushed like a torrent down his care-worn face.

Shortly after the Ball, Rose comfortably settled down with Miss Blair at Ootycamund to add fresh roses

to her cheeks, as well as to allow time to soften and efface the unpleasant occurrence that had estranged Mr. Egerton from her. She had divulged the secret to no one, not even to her constant companion, and when thinking over the matter had often reproached herself for imprudence remarking, "I ought to have checked his levity from the outset, instead of giving him ground to build his hopes on false surmises. But who could have imagined that that dear old man would be so weak and foolish over it." One moment she rejoiced that distance separated them, and in the next breath sighed at the cruel separation from one who held her heart captive, when an urgent telegram recalled her to her husband's side. Arriving at Zínatábád the first person Rose encountered in the verandah was Begum Áftáb Ján, who, since the discovery of the fraud she had practised to sever her from Diláwar Jung, had not ventured near her. Wondering what ill-wind had wafted her, and not over-pleased at the unexpected pleasure, a deep blush mantled her brow, and she vexatiously bit her lips. Remarking the angry flash as Rose stammering essayed to speak, Áftáb Ján ominously held up her first finger to her mouth from which a soft "hush" issued that intimated not only to tread softly, but there should be truce between them. Suddenly the ice was broken, and out flew the words, "Why, is any one ill?" from Rose's anxious lips. "Your husband," said she, and smiling stammered, "at least—at least Nawáb Sáhib has been out of health since a month." "A month!" exclaimed Rose in surprise, "why was I not told?" but without waiting for an answer she passed into the Study, where she found Yusuf, the very picture of anxiety. With a troubled countenance and brooding he sat motionless as a statue, and while his bandaged head drooped on the right hand, his gouty leg was bolstered up on a low chair. Entering she anxiously enquired after his health, and at the same time complained at having been left in ignorance; but his marble stare gave no sign of recognition. When she

gently raised his head a deep sigh greeted her, and the pale lips murmured, "I wished you to enjoy the sunshine while it lasts—"

"That was good of you; but—"

"Squalls," he interrupted, and trembling his pinched face became gloomier, but mastering his irritable thoughts added, "Yes, the tiresome monsoons following on our heels will soon drift us into deep waters. But more torturing than the gout is my head all a-buzz with a tumultuous roaring."

"I am so sorry, but you ought to have written—have sent for me at once," expostulated the wife as she anxiously placed her arm about his neck.

"Indeed, so considerate—would sacrifice!" and Yusuf with a smile as cutting as the east wind broke off. "Why, have I ever been wanting?" exclaimed Rose in an injured voice and heightened colour. Nettled by his unkind remark tears sprang to her eyes, while a portentous shadow appeared that made her catch her breath in boding fear and dread. Grim and austere it seemed to stand between their life, and as it began to stretch out its arms, the breach became wider and wider, until, even the link united by good-will and duty, if not by love, appeared to be fast severing. Sighing disappointedly, she withdrew her arms, and as she turned towards Áftáb Ján she was cut to the quick, and so sorely grieved that the roses she had brought from the Hills, faded from her cheeks by her husband's irritable sharp thrusts, "You seem to have a convenient memory and to forget your former state and position. Look at the establishment with unlimited fineries. My dear, only one in a thousand can have seen and enjoyed what you have—and all through me; for another might have clipped your wings and confined you within limits equal to the Black Hole. Yes, the least you can do in return is to show some gratitude, but that in the children of the present generation has clean dried up, and to look after my home and give me a passing thought. Ah, well! your negligence will not break my heart."

"Nonsense! How you run on like an old woman that was dying from neglect," broke in Áftáb Ján. "Must not the child like the bara-mems go to the Hills to drive away the fatigues of the season and prepare for the next?" added she cynically. Having stopped Yusuf's grumbling she began to relate with a bland smile his sudden attack. "Hale and hearty he had obeyed H. H. the Pádhsháh's summons, but on his return was quite limp and crest-fallen; and when a few days later he attended on the Resident Sáhib, he came back writhing in agony as if he had been stung by a scorpion. Khudá alone knows why. I fear, his nerves are unstrung by hard work."

"He ought to have a change," remarked Rose distressed at his sufferings. "Ooty would work wonders."

"There is no doubt we shall soon see wonders," broke in Yusuf peevishly, "and change! Why, more than is desirable." Not heeding the old grumbler, Áftáb Ján remarked, "The Hills, why that is the mem-logs' playground. They are accountable to no one, and may play 'Hide and Seek' to their heart's content; while the Sáhib cools his brains on the Plains, and breaks his back to supply for their bat and ball."

"Spare us," beseeched Rose. "It will be the last time I'll venture there for—"

"There is no doubt about it," interrupted Yusuf.

"For it does seem hard, inconsiderate of us," continued Rose, "to flit away our time in enjoyment, while our bread-winners are drudging in the heat."

"Ah, child it's more a question of might than right with nerves combined," exclaimed Áftáb Ján. "Among the white people, the wives cannot stand the glare and require refrigerative air to temper their *ennui*; while we, poor women, may be gasping our last within confined walls, and the stench of filthy streets, but it is man alone who can safely indulge in fresh air!"

Day by day Yusuf's incomprehensible disease grew worse. But strange, it seemed severest in his wife's

presence, until it became so unbearable that no sooner did she step into the Study than trembling she longed to fly away from his sharp attacks. If she stayed away, Yusuf complained of neglect, while, on the other hand, she seemed to have been turned into a target for his venomous barbs, and he took a delight in annoying her with sarcastic remarks. "Can you really spare the time? Perhaps you'd be happier elsewhere. Oh, how sweet! Are you sure it does not worry you, my good wife?" Almost driven mad by his biting words she once retorted "I'd almost you shot me than kept snapping in this fashion," to which he replied with a bitter gurgle. Once thinking it would please him, she brought in a cup of soup, and talking pleasantly began to cool it. Sighing he stretched forth his arm, and instead of returning thanks his pale lips hissed the word "poison." The next instant the cup fell from his nervous fingers to the enjoyment of the terrier that at once lapped it up. But from that day Yusuf doggedly refused everything except what was prepared by the 'old lady,' as he termed Áftáb Begum, who had without a 'may I' installed herself mistress of the premises much to the discomfort of her niece. Pushed to the wall, Rose bore it patiently; in fact, she was glad to have the undesirable company as the old lady was the only one who could manage the gouty Nawáb Sáhib. She wondered at the sudden change, but to enquire would cause a storm, and poor Áftáb Begum seemed as much in the dark as herself, with this difference that while the old lady had the charm to sooth him with her presence, her attentions sorely irritated him. An oppressive air hung around, that unnerved all except Áftáb Ján, who under the trying circumstance appeared blithe and hearty. But all the happiness of hearth and home seemed to be shattered, and as if momentarily expecting an explosion, like spectres the inmates moved about on tiptoe; while no benign visitor, not even the evil-faced Kásim, called to break the monotony of wearisome days.

The storm had come and gone; clearing the atmosphere, as well as refreshing the earth. The warring winds having dispersed the clouds, are lulled to gentle gales; while through the brilliant sprays, with which the soft breeze is sporting, the genial sun looms brightly, and smiling far and wide the sunshine warms the heart. With parted lips inhaling the balmy freshness, Rose cantered around the race-course. Heartily enjoying the bright afternoon, her weariness vanishes, and as her eyes rest on the peaceful Messenger, radiantly arched in the blue vault, it is like balm to her distressed mind, for it seems to whisper, "Every cloud has a silver lining." Treasuring the cheerful message, an indescribable gladness causes her cheeks to glow, which makes Mrs. Hart, as she, with a frigid stare, whips up her mare, cry out warningly to her husband, as if he were about to land on a quicksand, "Beware! Beware! Take no heed of the minx!" The obedient partner may as well try to close his eyes from the laughing sunbeams, as keep his glance from stealing towards the radiant figure, and as he passes her, courteously raises his hat and pityingly murmurs, "Poor thing—so fair—so young."

"James!" cries his better half sternly.

"Well, well. Perhaps, women understand each other better, yet some allowance should be made for the inexperienced."

"Indeed! How green you are, and 'All's not gold that glitters!'" remarks his wife sententiously. "You are greatly deceived by outward appearances, and soft eyes and dimples are so many pitfalls to ensnare even the wise. Good heavens! To think we should have been so imposed upon. Her shameful conduct beats every thing one reads of even in *Modern Society*."

Entering the Club another envenomed tongue is added to the group stirring the scandal that has spread like wild fire from Khotis to Bungalows, and from the Residency to the Head-quarters of the General. Fanned by the heated breath of slander every moment it becomes thicker and blacker until each one looks with a

thousand eyes to detect the faults of the victim, and with freer tongues to expose her pretty doings. "Good afternoon, ladies; good afternoon," exclaims Mrs Hart joining a group that is better engaged in censuring than in criticising the Illustrated Papers. "You are fresh from the Hills, and the room is full of roses. Dear me, what it is to have a bag full of money!" adds she sighing. "And where have you been these ages. Mahábleshwar?" enquires Miss Carter simpering, though she is well aware that the lady with her large family cannot afford the much coveted Hills every season. But too well understanding her little by-ways, Mrs. Hart is equal to her and remarks, "You know, dear James cannot do without me. My dear, wait until you are married. When? When? Anything on afresh?" Abashed the Old Maid takes refuge in Vanity Fair; for she belongs to that unfortunate class that always has an 'affair' in hand; one, who pleases many, but captivates none, and when hopes are highest and dreams the brightest, she awakens one fine morning to find her faithful Jack telegraphed for, and she left behind to pine until the next 'affair' comes on. Having settled the pert maid, Mrs. Hart nods around with innocent, questioning eyes, "What is the hubbub about?" Then dropping her voice whispers to her neighbour something startling ending in, "My dear, such airs—such inconceivable impudence! Still waters run deep. But she is utterly undone now." The grave listener replies with a mysterious shake of the head and piously folds her hands together, implying, "Thank heaven! I am glad I kept my distance from that miracle of prudence—the hypocrite!" As her busy tongue takes a circuit ferreting the ins and outs of the 'affair' that has turned Zínatábád wild, she pins Mrs. Young, saying, "Just the right person to unravel the mystery. You were so thick with her." Pretending not to understand the drift of her remark, the lady raises her eyebrows in astonishment. Nevertheless, a second after, she considers it necessary to disabuse her mind, "Tut, tut! Just dropped in occasionally to keep

the Doctor in countenance. Capital patients, especially Yusuf-ud-dín with his everlasting gout; paid handsomely and cash down. But friends!—bosh. Nothing in common between us; Mrs. Yusuf loud and vulgar; none could come up to her; she made herself so unapproachable."

"Yet not irreproachable!" echoes Mrs. Hart. "Heavens!" Zínatábád talks of nothing else but of her marriage. That old man ought to be boycotted for passing off his 'fancy' on us. I bet she was wide-awake, when she came to terms with the rich Nawáb. Yes, yes, I can see gold melting the scruples of the fine beauty." "Beauty! indeed," exclaims Mrs. Young indignantly, and surveying herself in the mirror opposite her. "What the silly men see in her to admire beats me hollow. She is vain enough without their puffing and trumpeting her about. Just mark how, on the slightest occasion, she unfurls her feathers and struts about like a wild peacock. Oh, I have often felt it, sniffed it in the air, and often drawn my Doctor's eyes, 'Beware, the bloom of the rose is all on the surface, but cankerous within.'"

"By Jove!" breaks in the Doctor volubly, "I find Mrs. Yusuf's eyes devilishly pretty. She is as pure as—why, as innocent as a Saint—as yourself, my dear," concludes he complimenting his wife. The ladies titter at his vehemence; but sighing exchange significant glances with comments, "Oh the sly thing—another of her victims." "I had it off-hand from Morád bin Sayad" continues the Doctor reassuringly. "It seems Yusuf-ud-dín has made himself so obnoxious that severe charges have been brought against him, by the very men who helped him to eminence. Indeed, the revelation of his achievements are marvellous, and unfortunately the pretty creature has been dragged in. But she is perfectly innocent and has not the remotest idea that that scoundrel Yusuf has hoodwinked her to suit his purpose. She was sailing under fair wind, when the rascally Kásim, who acted the Qází and married them growing dissatified with his hush-reward turned the

tables upon them. Yes, there will be a tremendous smash one of these days."

"You astonish us! Wonders never cease!" exclaim the listeners, while the wide-open eyes express doubt, and soon the cold fingers of slander begin clawing the victim to pieces. "Innocent! Cast that to the winds!" exclaims Mrs. Foster no sooner the Doctor's back is turned, and beginning to sum up her verdict. "You can see in the woman's watery, babyish eyes that she has no stamina—not a grain of virtue, and it's more likely she entrapped the rich Nawáb than he led her on—on—you know?" "Quite so," agrees several voices and adding, "she is no chicken and can put two and two together." "Moreover, I hear," continues Mrs. Foster, "that that handsome Diláwar Jung has come to grief over her. But he is a brick. Notwithstanding the authorities fumed and threatened, nothing would make him tell tales out of school to her discredit; although he has little cause to prove faithful to her, for she played fast and loose, and deserted him for her musty spouse and his wealth."

"And she poses to be amiability itself," adds Miss Carter sorely, "and has actually had the audacity to offer me her partners. Me! Me!" cried she indignantly, "as if I'd pick up her leavings." Laughing the ladies accept the version as gospel truth. Nevertheless, they have a faint idea that when decorating the hall like a neglected wall-flower, the young lady has been only too glad to accept the spare partners whom Rose had good-naturedly introduced to her. She was not only envious of her popularity among the men, but a deep hatred rankled in her breast against Rose, who spying the net Miss Carter had spread to entangle Mr. Egerton kept him under her protection to unite him to a better partner in life. "She is that deep," continues the young lady excitedly, and allowing her imagination to take flight "there is no fathoming her. That poor, poor Mrs. Egerton knew it to her cost. In the guise of friendship she cleverly drew away her husband. The heart-broken wife unable to bear it any longer left

India and actually died in want; while he—he—you know?" "True he has a penchant for her," cried several voices "and we must snatch him away from her clutches," at which Miss Carter's eyes sparkle with happy prospects, and she begins picturing the said gentleman on his knees begging her to name the happy day, with the organ pealing out, "The Voice that breathed o'er Eden." But suddenly the voices sink to a whisper, "Hush! speak of the—the angel and lo! it appears." Shuddering at sight of the angel, the ladies begin studying the Illustrated Papers; but stealthily noting the figure remark, "Did you ever see such a brazen face? Why! I do believe she is fattening over it." As Rose approaches nearer and nearer, the voices die away, and a pulseless silence prevails. Not even the flutter of a paper breaks the sudden stifled lull. It is so marked and oppressive that as Rose blithely greets, "How do you do ladies? So pleased to see you again," and there is no response, except an airy, ghost-like bend of the hats, she starts at her fresh voice. But the next instant, as the air begins to resound with ominous coughs, and Mrs. Young with a suppressed, "How do?" distantly holds out two of her gloved fingers to greet, she changes colour. Mortified and faintness seizing her, she sinks into a chair, when the ladies fearing contagion from one who seems to be plague-stricken, gingerly draw away their disinfected skirts; while those nearest her dreading the foul breath turn away their heads in loathing. Deeply mortified at their contemptuous attitude and looks, her head begins to whirl and she is ready to faint, when two indignant spots burning on her pale cheeks recall her to her senses, and waxing wroth she proudly faces them ready for battle. "Come Eva," exclaims she haughtily. "We are one too many," and bidding them farewell with angry flashes, she is again sauntering in the fresh air.

Preoccupied by disagreeable conjectures, and her heart fluttering ill at ease, she barely heeds Dilâwar, with the ignoble Kâsim shoot by like a meteor. But as a

a woman's cloak, nobly remarked, "The woman! believe me, not mine the fault—would not hurt a hair of thy head, but thy aunt tempted and planned." With fiery eyes and knitted brow, Diláwar agitatedly paced the room murmuring, "Yá Alláh! she is like a leech which must always move crookedly!" but at Yusuf's mean excuse trying to palm all the blame on Aftáb Begum, he cast a glance as fierce as a lion watching to spring on its prey. When the miscreant's parched lips would disclose no further, and Diláwar himself was tongue-tied, he signed to Kásim.

Flushed with the heat of victory, up sprang the betrayer to settle the last act of vengeance, with the deadliest blow that ever was plunged into a woman's breast. Fixing his steady eyes upon his victim his lips gradually fell apart, through which gleamed the fang-like teeth ready to tear its prey. As Rose shuddered he lowered his savage eyes, and bowed his head in compliance. "I have eaten Mem-Miss Sáhib's salt, and wish her well," said he with folded hands, then rubbing them rapidly as if he were whetting his razor on the hone, to pass it round her tender throat, he continued, "Yes, nothing, but well, and will disclose the truth. It will be an act of charity to rescue her from an ignoble life." He paused as if to gather strength to deal the blow more forcibly; while the silence occasionally became broken by the sighs of Yusuf, the oppressed breathing of Diláwar Jung as he stood with averted face, and Rose, though her heart throbbed and beat like a hammer, yet eager to hear the worst, questioningly gazed at the speaker. Unnerved and excited to the highest pitch all breathlessly awaited. In the death-like stillness, like a knell fell Kásim's slow, measured words, and each stroke seemed as sharp as the thrust of fine steel that made her bosom heave with convulsive spasms. But brave and undaunted not a groan or a cry escaped her lips. More like an echo than one who has fully realized the meaning, she flung back the words in his face. "Nawáb Yusuf-ud-dín

married Begum Áftáb Ján!" cried she doubtingly. Nevertheless murmuring to herself, "Now I understand. After all I was not wrong in my surmise." Then like a moan came the words from a hollow voice, "that my marriage was false, and you—my—my old Bearer, was the Qází who performed the ceremony!"

With the smiling lips of triumph Kásim boldly confirmed the dread news. As the air rang with the intelligence, "Yes" Yusuf grovelling assured her between his chattering teeth, "not mine—not mine the guilt—thy aunt's; while Diláwar agitated beyond control, and unable to say a word for the choking in his throat stretched out his manly arms to comfort and protect her. But Rose stared aghast, gazing at the seducer and unable to speak or move a limb. As the bitter news, that kept vibrating in her ears, began to permeate like slow poison through her body, she writhed with the sharpest tortures that ever agonised the human frame, and uttering a shrill, bitter cry from her breaking heart sank as dead upon the ground.

It was too true that Kásim's betrayal, combined with other charges, had hurled Nawáb Yusuf-ud-dín from the pinnacle of his glory, at a time when he was all-powerful and least expected his downfall. Puffed with the pride of being the right hand of the inexperienced Minister, and that his assistance was most necessary to him, his conceit had become as great as the sand-piper, when it goes to sleep with its legs in the air, and thinks they help to support the sky. Being all-supreme he freely mixed with the élite of Zínatábád, but at the same time in his arrogance he made the people feel his sway and tremble at his very name. Thus securely hedged in, and with his sovereignty firmly established, Yusuf gave no thought to so low a worm as Kásim, although he possessed his secret. Unfortunately the worm desired to crawl by the heel of his master as he rose to renown, and what was still more disagreeable that it stretched out its claws, more than was desirable for advancement and hush-money. Yusuf was not inclined

to be too open-handed, and day by day the situation was growing intolerable. At length when he became powerful, and found himself secure in the favour of the Minister, his temper changed, and he began to regard the menial as of no more consequence than the dust of his shoes. The cold barrier of indifference separating them, Yusuf cast him aside like a broken reed, forgetting that sometimes even the insignificant reed when handled roughly makes the hand bleed, and that an enemy should never be accounted a trifle. But in the hour of triumph who remembers a reed until it makes tears of blood flow as Yusuf afterwards found to his regret? Deeply mortified, Kásim thirsted for revenge, which was greatly aggravated by Rose's intense disdain. She could not bear him to hang about her drawing-room and try to impose an equal footing of acquaintanceship. He dreamed of revenge, and it is quite probable the vengeance would have vanished in dreams, but that when relating his woes to Mr. Egerton, he accidently learned to his delight the potency of the secret; and that it was as valuable as the gem in the snake's head. It was the work of a moment to relieve himself of the burden and with a rapturous face return home light of heart, but his pockets richly lined with ashrafies. When Yusuf discovered his treachery, that he had offered the secret as a nazr to his rivals, he almost sank beneath the agonies of despair, and longed for relief in death. Coming to his senses, he flew for consolation to the Minister who had already received sensible hints from better advisers, and was the first to discard his favourite in time of trouble. In a paroxysm of grief, he frantically threw himself at the Minister's feet, but when he raised his streaming eyes for sympathy and was greeted with a cold shrug of the shoulders, he shuddered and felt that his sunny days had passed away, and winter nights closed in.

Being supposed to have had a hand in the disposal of his cousin, Diláwar Jang found himself unpleasantly implicated, and what was more galling to his proud nature, hardly anyone credited him with being innocent.

When summoned before a Council by the order of the Minister, and being questioned, he was struck dumb with consternation at Yusuf's enormity, and began to shake with an agonising terror that made him appear a culprit. "He has been taken unawares, and his tongue cannot invent a lie on the spur of the moment," said one of the group sitting to unravel the mystery. "Notice his confusion; his embarrassment is enough to prove his guilt. Yá Alláh! this degenerate age!" sighed another. But the cutting words fell meaningless on Diláwar's ears, for his heart bled for Rose, and a hundred and one ideas were flashing across his mind, planning for her safety and the punishment of the miscreant. Without giving a thought that he was standing in the presence of his superiors to be judged, he stepped out to rush to the rescue of his cousin, when an official detaining him remarked, "Not so fast young man. We are aware of your weakness for the pretty lady; but His Excellency would like a word or two why you cast her adrift and had a hand in—in."

"Cease!" cried Diláwar breathing hard and stopping his ears with his hand. "I—I—" stammered he. "Sooner the moon rained fire; yea, sooner oil came out of sand than treachery from my heart. Yá Rabb! I'd die to save her from the slightest shame."

"Then it was Yusuf's gold that made Laili discard her Majnun," remarked another with a smirk. "Such words are false—slanderous," retorted the gallant irritably. "To throw dust at the moon is to blacken one's own face. By ill-fate she fell into evil hands that have wrought her harm; nevertheless like the gem in the serpent's head, she retains her purity and is virtuous." The words had hardly fallen from the lips when some jest at her expense was whispered around, that caused laughter among them, while Diláwar Jung flushing angrily disdainfully muttered between his grinding teeth, "The buzz of mosquitoes cannot blow away a mountain much less taint her with blemish." "Alláh! he is mad like Majnun and has faith in woman, that incarnation

of vanity!" exclaimed one, and being in a merry mood, as well as, desirous to regale the others with mirth, began to scrutinize the distressed but bold lover, as if he were a curio. Spying an attractive piece of ribbon hanging out of his coat tail pocket, and feeling inclined for a game of 'Jack in the box,' he gave it a jirk, when out fell to his surprise a handsome amulet mounted in silver. Diláwar turned. Seeing his precious talisman containing Rose's photo that he had always worn next to his heart in another's hand, his heart was set on fire. But as it flashed across his mind that it may involve Rose more in the prejudiced mind of the public, he swept down like a falcon to secure his prized possession which in the hurry he had thrust into his pocket. It fell from the stranger's hand, and the next instant the táwíz lay on the palm of the Chief Justice. The more Diláwar entreated for it, the greater waxed the curiosity of the old and the young, until the hall began to buzz with exciting suggestions and remarks, "How close Majnun is! Yá Khudá! he'd like to throw dust in the eyes of the old. What a fuss he is making over a woman—a mine of all unhappiness! Sure it must contain his lady's photo. Certainly, this will reveal much." As at the order of the Chief Justice the Munshí began to open the amulet with his penknife, Diláwar distractedly beseeched, "Spare, spare. Here is your slave ready to serve you with his life; to obey in all, except—except—pity expose not the helpless innocent to the derision of the public." His passionate appeal was greeted with an outburst, some extolling the crazy Majnun; others, as they eagerly watched the opening of the amulet, derided him with hearty claps and cheers, "What a fool to raise such a dust! chhi—woman is the ruin of body and soul," and great was their disappointment and disgust when out fell a bunch of dry violets; while Diláwar restlessly stirred from side to side murmuring, "A curse on my manhood—my strength, if I cannot protect her." But as the Munshí began to scrape out a paper from within the

amulet, his eyes became fastened on the photo gliding out, when suddenly he made a sweep and captured his prize. Instantly strong hands fell on him as Diláwar convulsively tore it with his teeth, and though choking to death, with blood oozing from his lacerated mouth, he frantically munched the photo and stowed it away in the most secretive trunk created.

"Begone! away from my sight," exclaimed the enraged Chief Justice, as he saw the precious photo disappear. "Thou wilt yet taste the fruits of disobedience. Away." There was a hushed silence while he spoke, but the instant the assembly had stepped out of the hall, the people cheered the daring Majnun of the Nineteenth Century.

VII.

When Rose recovered from her death-like swoon, her eyes fell on Diláwar anxiously bending over her. With a stifled moan she shrank shame-facedly, and buried her pale face in her lap. Writhing in frenzy she incoherently murmured, "Ah! will this miserable life never end. Bereft of honour I yet can live. Father of heaven! have mercy upon me," and as his presence irritated her, she waved her hand to be left alone. Pressing her aching heart, and stilling the bosom heaving with anguish she rose to her feet. But at her desolation she became distracted; the head seemed to rend asunder, and the earth to whirl so swiftly that she tottered and would have fallen, but for the helping hand that Áftáb Ján held out. At her touch Rose started back, as if she had come in contact with a slimy adder. Though having been basely degraded, but abounding in virtue, she became imbued with fortitude, and as she stood like a rock to endure the buffeting and abuse of the wicked, her quivering lips mournfully reproached, "What! You a woman, and to dye your hands with such a base act—no pity for an orphan who injured you neither by word nor deed."

"Every one for himself!" was the egotistical retort, and like a stern moralist the aunt added, "Life is a battle, with injustice the law of humanity. Look around. One lives at the expense of another. Others had made me suffer, and I was as innocent as yourself—then why should I be soft-hearted—considerate, except to secure my own happiness, even at the sacrifice of the innocent?"

Shuddering at the cruel, selfish words that fell unhesitatingly from a withered, embittered heart, Rose remarked, "I did not stand in your path. You could have married without dragging me to the dust."

"What has happened was decreed by Fate," answered Áftáb Begum in extenuation. "Our stars clashed, and the stronger swayed the other. Besides, my—the Nawáb Sáhib—coveted not one but a pair of apples. Alláh knows how much I reasoned with him, but he hungered for both the mellow and the ripening fruit! You were the ladder—Yá Iláhí! How it has slided down and trodden us—to his ambition; while I—I was the chosen of his heart. Moreover, bitter experience had opened my eyes, and certainly I was not going to have dâl ground on my chest a second time, to make my life miserable. Tell me can two swords rest in a scabbard without clashing? Indeed, you have little to complain of. I—not like jealous wives—I, at least, left you undisturbed—sole mistress of all."

"Yes, yes, little to complain of," whined Yusuf. "Such an establishment! Such jewels!"

"Enough!" cried Rose furiously. "Take your jewels and be happy. Can position, money, yea, even the mines of Golconda repay dishonour. Ah, cruel monster. Why—why" sobbed she, "it's worse than a thousand deaths; yea, the sun seems to disappear from sight, and life to become overshadowed by the darkest gloom. Ah, God! what a mock you have made of me! Alas, this heart is harder than a thunderbolt that it does not crack. But rest in peace; my lips are sealed," moaned she creeping away to her room. "Yes, yes, there is justice above, and merciful heaven never turns a deaf ear to the cry of an orphan." Overwhelmed with despair she burst into a paroxysm of tears, and like a lotus broken from its stem fell to the ground crushed and colourless. Rough old arms gently helped her to rest on a sofa. Seeing her sad condition, Hussain regretfully wrung his hands moaning, "Yá Rabb! Mine, mine, the fault."

"What!" cried Rose springing up and distractedly holding her aching head "not one faithful. Your hand also against me!"

"May I die rotting! May vultures peck my eyes out," exclaimed the old tailor. "Think not so meanly of me; but—but the day the Qází came to marry you I thought I recognised Kásim through his disguise. Yá, Alláh! How I shook through fear, and my tongue cleaved to the roof of my mouth. Besides, who could meddle with big folks, except—except to have his grey-beard humbled. Now, now order thy slave," and sobbing he fell at the feet of his young mistress. Assured of his faithfulness Rose pacified him, and when she remarked that she would put his fidelity to further trial, he cheered up exclaiming, "The old bones are at your service. I have eaten your salt, you are my má-báp. May Khudá grant that my coffin-cloth be blessed by your hands."

Determining not to be beholden for either food or water, much less for money to base hands, the old tailor became her banker, as well as a general servant for the time being. At the same time collecting her disturbed thoughts together, Rose that very night wrote to the sisters begging of them to remove her from an ignominious life. A prey to grief, she faded away like a jasmine garland that has been worn and cast aside. Day by day the burden of her misery became intolerable, and as she distractedly paced her verandah anxiously waiting for a reply to her letter, the dark days seemed like centuries. Though she was left undisturbed, except for the gentle consolation of Eva Blair, who sympathetically mingling her tears had laid her little saving at her disposal, she longed to fly away, and break off all connection with her evil companions. As she sat deep in thought, voices of friends startled her. A deep blush mantled her brows, and left her death-like the next instant. When she turned Diláwar was by her side, and the love and anxiety that filled his soul became manifest in every part of his quivering body. As speechless, but with clasped hands, they stood united, Rose felt an unspeakable calmness steal through her veins, and sooth the lacerated heart. Recovering, he remarked in a husky voice, "Dear, you know my inmost thoughts, and

to say my life lies at your feet is needless. But I have come to say, 'good-bye' for I have been dismissed from service and ordered to leave Zínatábád at once. In—in that affair" and his trembling voice choked with anguish, "I was most to blame for having left you unprotected. This time, before parting I'd see you safe, otherwise stay beside you, even at the risk—"

"My brave, noble cousin!" interrupted Rose wringing her hands sadly. "Alas! alas! how much you have suffered through me. But heaven will award you. Go—go; obey your Pádhsháh, as I will do what seemeth best to my Lord; yes, yes—as He directs me. Good-bye," and her voice dying away in a sob words failed her, while the eyes were flooded with scalding tears. With his parting words Diláwar pleaded for one, whose infatuation for a moment had darkened his chivalrous nature. Listening her heart was stirred with mingled pity and sorrow, and as she bowed her head in acquiescence to his request, Mr. Egerton at a sign from Diláwar agitatedly entered. But he stood speechless with his gaze fixed on the lily-like form which having weathered the storm shone with lustrous purity. As she extended her hand to cement the severed friendship by forgiveness, he excitedly fell at her feet crying, "Pardon, pardon. My conduct has been most cruel—ungrateful. But from that evil moment I have endured the fiery torments of hell. A burning pain has consumed my breast, and the gnawings of remorse have well nigh killed me by inches. Believe me, it was thoughtlessness and not ill-will that prompted me to speak so freely to Kásim. Eventually—when I heard you were free—alas! alas! love, jealousy, revenge, all combining came upon me, like a turbid torrent, and swept me beyond my depth. I went mad—utterly lost my senses, and, and—" but tears streaming down his haggard countenance speech failed him. Pityingly as she gazed on his colourless face, harrowed by anxiety, Rose raised him from the ground. "Bury the past" said she in a broken

voice, "those sad days that marred our friendship. I trust—believe you, my friend."

"How like your generous self!" exclaimed Mr. Egerton, "and you my noble friend," remarked he turning to Diláwar Jung. "Your rock-like nature has resisted all—ready to die—to suffer than yield. Yes, yes, you have nobly proved that love lies not in words but in deeds. Alas! alas! for me," murmured he in a choked voice; and painfully agitated they stood silent. Rose was the first to recover her composure and she remarked to Mr. Egerton, "In the next room you will find Eva. Cherish her. She is loving and true. Now good-bye, my friend." With tears streaming down her face she turned towards her cousin and extended her trembling hand to him. Clasping it in his own he held it a moment. Then hesitatingly departed; but stopped and turned back.

Seeing Rose gliding away he mournfully withdrew. As Rose entered her room she was greatly startled at the confusion of voices about the bungalow; and it was a relief to her mind, which of late easily grew terrified, that simply the furniture was being removed to be auctioned. But on Hussain adding that orders had come for Nawáb Yusuf-ud-dín to quit Zínatábád within a week a great trembling seized her, and as the biting frost nips the lotus, her lily-face withered from anxiety. Quivering with emotion she cried in despair, "Ah God! help me to bear this heavy load."

When the news of Yusuf's dismissal from office was rumoured in the City, the delight of the officials was beyond description; while the unexpected change of events quite prostrated the venerable Khurshaid Begum. Day by day the confusion, increased by the shouts and hurrahing of idle-mongers loitering about the bungalow, grew disagreeable; whilst the more inquisitive actually pried into his movements, and planned to escort the pious Yusuf right royally to the Railway Station. Unshaken by the events, Áftáb Ján was equal to the occasion, and determined to outwit them. Whilst she

bustled about dismantling the house, and lining her trunk with precious jewels that had once graced Rose, Yusuf lay smarting under the fiery anguish of shattered hopes. To show a brave front, his moans and sighs were not permitted to escape beyond the heavy chicks, with which the bungalow was veiled; whilst in the evening mellow lights illumined the place as for a feast. Notwithstanding this semblance, ill-omened dreams made even the stout-hearted Áftáb Ján tremble in alarm, and recounting them to Yusuf, she concernedly remarked, "The hand of heaven seems against us; Yá Alláh! what more hast thou in store for us Cursed be the evil-eyed: like a pestilence she came in our midst." As if Rose had invited the ruin she became so abhorrent to Yusuf, that the slightest reference to her made him gasp uncomfortably, "Yes, yes, she is the fire-brand that has caused our destruction," and as if he felt his hour had drawn near, with Azazíl beckoning him homeward, he would frantically tear his hair, and beating his head in dismay shriek, "Alas! Alas! Fate has us in his toils" But Rose was thrown into the deepest anxiety on hearing of the illness of the Lady Superior, and that her case had been deferred until her recovery. So great was the disappointment at the delay that a despairing scream half-way passed her lips, and she distractedly sobbed, "Sad are the days. An outcast! Where, where can I go? How to meet the malignant eye of the world? Alas! the cold fingers of scorn pierce my breast like envenomed arrows. Oh, Father of heaven! have mercy—mercy," and darkness spreading over her senses she swooned away.

Among the Inter-marriages of the East and the West, exceptional, indeed, are the happy unions that harmonise and glide along serenely in the calm stream of contentment. How often it happens that after a short enjoyment of sunny days, clouds begin to gather, and the happy bride suddenly awakens from the charmed life to the stern reality of her terrible situation, that another has a prior and a greater claim to her husband's

care, or what is even a harder blow that she is not entitled to bear his name. Robbed of honour the joys of love turn into worm-wood and gall. At her wrecked life cries of anguish pierce the heavens, and branded with disgrace, shattered in health and mad with grief, the forlorn woman shrinkingly faces the uncharitable world.

In England there are few who do not regard a brown face as a Rájá or a Nawáb, and the poor Indian student not only becomes encircled in mystery, but shines with unwonted brilliancy in the fogs of London. Notwithstanding her High Education, very hazy are the ideas about India of the rosy-cheeked damsel who is furtively glancing at the dark-eyed Álam Jung of the Middle Temple. Her heart begins to flutter as marvellous visions, gathered from ancient works, disclose the dazzling wealth of the gorgeous East. In the Age of plenteousness, and when Death cherishing the young, summoned the aged first, jewelled pagodas rise before her mind's eye, with the Manikanká Bathing Ghat of burnished gold floating amidst the lustral waves of the Ganges. Enraptured, as she walks through the narrow streets, cooled by perfumes, she strolls into a lovely Garden of Eden, and beneath the feathery palms spies a happy pair, reclining on a verdant couch. Recognising them she starts; while her face becomes suffused with blushes, as she reads her fate in Álam Jung's glowing cheeks. Thrilling with delight a melody, as sweet as the carolling of the birds overhead, agitates her breast. "How blessed am I to have his love!" softly she murmurs. "Yes, amidst the luxuriance of a perpetual Spring, like a queen decked with pearls and rubies, my days will pass in unending felicity, while life overflows with bliss!" Since her acquaintance with Álam Jung, she treats her old admirer, Willie Turner, with marked coolness, and as she accidentally meets him, turns away her head. But the Medical Student is determined not only to be seen, but to be heard as well.

"For God's sake Emily be guided," cries he agitatedly. "You are labouring under an error—a fearful mistake, and give up this insane infatuation, that will blight your young life." But Emily perfectly ignorant of the impoverished state of India, and the grievous demarcation of the Castes answers in dark frowns of distrust, while her guiding angel continues, "I was born and bred in India—am a pakká Anglo-Indian, and know there can be no intercourse between the East and the West. Indeed, our meeting is something like the Spanish Bull and the crimson flags—terribly irritating—and we are hardly on bowing terms with the Natives."

"More shame on you," cries the British maid hotly.

"As for marriage," exclaims Willie Turner vehemently, "no one would stand it; and India is no more the land 'flowing with milk and honey!' but terribly poor, with the recurring Famine, that mows down the wretched by thousands, ever looming in the horizon. Why, it has engrossed all the attention of our benign Viceroy. He has been sympathetically moving amidst the distressed, and with great zeal trying to alleviate their misery. Just look at the cartoons with Lord Curzon amidst the appalling scenes of the Famine-stricken Districts. The sight is enough to give one the nightmare."

"Nonsense! it's all exaggerated!" remarks Emily curtly, and determining to hasten on the happy day. When the event occurs and Willie Turner hears that his pretty friend has sailed for India, it does not surprise him in the least, but he savagely bites his moustache murmuring, "Better—better the ship foundered, for sure enough when the terrible awakening comes, she—my poor, infatuated Emily will—will sink!" On landing at Bombay Emily is in raptures over the novel sights of the East, and more so at the rare jewels that sparkle in her lap. Seeing her in good humour, Álam Jung seizes the opportunity, and falteringly remarks, "There are many among us who have more than one wife. Our holy Prophet permits it. I was mar—r—"

"Good heavens! Then I am not—not your wife," exclaims Emily with a catch in her throat, and tears starting to her eyes.

"You surely do not take me for a demon—as if I'd hurt a hair," murmurs the ardent lover, and softly kissing the silken coils. "You are my very breath. My wife is here, but she can be easily disposed of." Being versed in Equity he intends to distribute Justice with even scales. But what matters if he is lax in his home, and cruel to his nearest, so long as he keeps his eye open to Public Reform, and to stem its grievances. "But come," he coaxes, "here is the carriage to carry us to my parents. Later on I'll explain everything, and all will be well." Re-assured Emily is looking her fairest, and at the fresh face the heart of Álam's father opens in a generous gift of twenty thousand rupees at the Mukh-dikhái ceremony—(seeing the bride's face for the first time). The next day Álam Jung, accompanied by the Qázi visits his wife, who hearing of her husband's arrival is merry-making with her female friends, and the home resounds with mirth and music. Adorned brightly, the colour flies to her cheeks at the merry chaff of her kind friends, and she joyously trembles and starts at every footstep coming in. Quicker and quicker her heart flutters, and she screens herself behind the parda as with drooping eyes she marks Álam Jung advancing towards her when she softly greets, "Lo mubárak—congratulations—on your success and safe arrival." There is no response as he silently hangs down his head in guilt and shame; while the priest returns the warm greeting by the news of a lily-bride. Agitated Álam Jung confirms it by repeating, "taláq, I divorce thee," three times, and with the marriage dowry, he dispenses with her as he would a servant to seek a master elsewhere. A heart-rending wail interrupts the festive song, as the wife totters back sobbing; then wildly gazing around searches for the evil face that has bewitched her husband. "Yá Alláh! if she were but here; I'd scratch out her eyes—flay her white face," exclaims she writhing

with grief and desolation. The friendly voices and the beloved faces appearing hateful to her sight, she madly rushes out. But mirth and music end with a dirge of "háe! háe!—alas! alas!" intermingled with curses on the bride, and intensified by the thud—thud—beating of the chest, as by the setting sun, the deserted wife drowns her sorrow in the nearst well.

Before the year of the 'honeymoon' runs out, the luxurious home begins to pall on the gay-spirited Emily. As it gradually creeps upon her, that neither her own countrymen, nor that of her husband's will hold out a friendly hand to welcome her, the terrible ostracism almost makes her frantic. "Poor Willie Turner was right," sighs she, "I ought to have taken his advice and —and—" but it ends in tears of regret. To drive away the *ennui* and the depression she regularly attends the Fairy Opera. When the Company leaves Emily is nowhere to be found, and the learned Barrister is left sole master of the bungalow minus the twenty thousand and the jewels. Heart-broken Ālam Jung steps across to Pundit Indrajit for consolation. "You stupid," consoles the wide-awake Pundit. "You ought to have caged the nightingale. My Violet flourishes in the Zenána, and both she and my wife live peaceably together." There is a deep stifled moan, and some one stirs behind the parda, that screens the inner portion of the inhabitants. The next instant Ālam Jung's eyes rest on a white-washed, pinched face, with eyes full of melancholy, and a sad history that can bear No Name.

Bewildered, Rose awakened to the touch of a cold nose upon her cheek, and as she met the anxious gaze of the terrier, it showed its delight in a joyous bark. As the forlorn situation loomed before her with greater desolation, she wildly rushed out without any settled plan. On, on she fled attended by her faithful dumb companion. Within a few days the world seemed so changed that in despair she wrung her hands, and sobbing staggered like a reed blown by harsh winds. But as carriages rolled by, Rose like a culprit that cannot face

the eye of the world, concealed herself beneath the shady trees. Panting she thrust her feverish head amongst the cool leaves. But hearing footsteps, she was ready to faint, and as the figure almost overtook her, she turned into Amar Devi's compound crying, "Courage, courage poor heart. My God! have mercy—mercy." But the blaze of the lights and voices chatting unnerved her to enter within, and she crouched among the gleaming chrysanthemums.

"No, I will not shake hands with you," spoke Amar Devi agitatedly, as Morád bin Sayad arose to take his departure. "You extol chivalry, and yet could expose—bring ruin upon an innocent creature."

"Pray be calm—be reasonable," expostulated the accused. "Verily, I honour chivalry as much as my sword. My conscience is clear, and my tongue never—never swerves, except in politics, and—and to—Yá Alláh! fifty—nay a hundred cuts from a sabre than a glance—a lightning-flash from the eyes of the fair, and escape lies in—in subterfuge and not by my sword" At the bold assertion Mrs. Jenkins laughs, remarking, "The same all over the world," while Amar Devi's eyes gleam angrily in defence of the ill-used Rose. "Believe me," continues Morád, "Yusuf-ud-dín had made too many enemies for me to soil my hands to bring about his downfall. As for the poor wife among other charges, her name was unfortunately dragged in. But Alláh is great. Sometimes good comes from evil, and notwithstanding the jarred-life her future is lined with peace and happiness."

"What do you mean?" questioned the ladies interested in Rose's welfare.

"If I taught my lore in one day, I'd soon be left without disciples," replied Morád moving with bows and "Khudá háfiz—Alláh protect thee."

The carriage wheels had barely died away, when Rose shrunk with shame tottered into their presence crying in great anguish, "You have a woman's heart; surely you'll not deny me shelter." They were dis-

mayed at her haggard countenance, and with moist eyes Amar Devi glanced at her uncle, whose eyes gave a cauticus reply, "You'll burn your fingers again," but Mrs. Jenkins hastily rising tenderly took Rose by the hand anxiously remarking, "Why, she is burning with fever; she ought to be in bed."

The day of Nawáb Yusuf-ud-dín's departure from Zínatábád, seemed like the Mohammedan Festival, Shab-i-barát, and the people moving to and fro with smiling faces. Some hours before the departure of the train, the road to the Railway Station was lined with a motley crowd, making the place ring with shouts and hurrahing. Towards evening the city-folks elbowing and forcing their way into the crowd poured along; while a procession accompanied by music enhanced the liveliness. Soon the air became filled with music of every description. At times the place resounded with the fierce braying of the trumpet; while the shrill clarion burst forth into the ever-admired Gazal of Táza-ba-táza, Nau-ba-nau." Suddenly the crushing chords and sweeping flourishes of the Toridor Waltz drowned its strains, and as the music died away the last notes became intermingled with,

"After the ball was over; many a heart was aching
Many a hope that were shattered, after the ball."

With the steaming of the engine, the bandsmen waxed livelier, and carriages entering were greeted with,

"See-saw! see-saw! Now we're up then down.
What fun! Ha, ha, ha, ha—"

As the ill-used officials anxiously awaiting Yusuf's arrival inquisitively peered into every carriage that drove in, the Chief Justice, who was going out for the Christmas Holidays, thundered at them, "Are you not ashamed to make this display at another's fall. Sure you have received many a favour from him, yet like your meanness, you are ready to hack the branch that gave you support. Begone, you miscreants!" At the stern rebuke away they scampered, but hearing a voice telling another to bring Nawáb Yusuf-ud-dín's

luggage carefully, they eagerly ran back and besieged the man with questions. At the reply they tottered from disappointment. "What!" exclaimed the surprised voices, "Nawáb Yusuf-ud-dín actually left Zínatábád last night. Yá Alláh! the bird has escaped us." Some disbelieving the informant rushed about the platform seeking in vain for the ex-Nawáb, while others crying, "Alas! we have been sold! Our ears have been clipped!" dismissed the bandsmen."

As Rai Gyán Chand steamed into the Station great was his surprise to see the clamorous gathering and with joyous greeting questioned, "Is this tamásha to welcome me?"

"Lo mubárak—congratulations!" exclaimed Morád bin Sayad. "The roads of Zínatábád have been widened for your strides. Remain and flourish," and carrying him away Amar Devi was left to take charge of Gulzár Begum, who had arrived by the same train to nurse her niece.

Finding Rose prostrated with fever, a telegram had been despatched to Diláwar Jung, and this his mother replied in person. With tears streaming down her face and her heart trembling with forebodings Gulzár gazed at the pitiable condition of her much-loved niece. The terrible disclosures, combined with grief, had strained her nerves so forcibly that malignant fever had set in. For days she hung between life and death, with a flushed face, and the lips blistered by the intensity of the fever. Brushing away the fast falling tears, Gulzár installed herself at the bedside. Night and day she tended her with a gentle hand, while Rose tossing in pain was entirely unconscious of her presence. "Weary! weary!" moaned the sufferer in her delirium. "Pity! Ah! help—help me—ah! the pain—" and contracting her brow in agony, she would hold the throbbing temples. At times when the present faded away her eyes searched for a loved form. Fancying him to be standing beside her she grew calm; and his words fell like the refreshing dew, as tenderly gazing

into her eyes he whispered, "Joy and sorrow increase and decrease like the ever-waning moon. Courage, sweetheart! The rose of joy does not grow without the thorn!" Enraptured she lay with her flushed face lit with a happy smile. When the fever had subsided, Rose was surprised to find the mother of her childhood beside her bed. Imagining her to be a vision, she closed her eyes; but on opening them and still finding the loving face bending over her, she was unable to restrain herself, and the next moment aunt and niece were locked in each other's embrace and united again. With tears of joy streaming from their eyes, Rose dozed off with her head nestling in her aunt's lap.

"You seem scared; what's the matter?" whispered Gulzár Begum as Amar Devi agitatedly entered on tip-toe. Believing the invalid to be asleep she sorrowfully replied, "Ah, that superstition—that belief in number *thirteen* is too -too true," and shuddering she continued, "the year is dying out, but that unfortunate Nawáb Yusaf-ud-dín has gone before."

"What! my hus—Nawáb Yusuf-ud-dín dead?" enquired Rose suddenly starting up. The news not being intended for her ears they kept silent; but as her head drooped lower and lower from weakness and sleep she murmured in a sad voice, "Peace, peace unto his soul! Heaven have mercy upon him." At a sign from Gulzár to continue Amar Devi remarked, "To avoid detection, the Nawáb left Zínatábád disguised in a burqá. There was a terrible accident to the Passenger Train near Bombay, when the poor man was found mangled to death; while Áftáb Begum was removed to the Hospital for the amputation of her fractured leg."

"Háe! My poor, misguided sister!" moaned Gulzár, and beating her head in sorrow. "Yá Rabb! in my old age whom have I but this—this." Forgetting for the moment Rose's weak condition, she strained her to her bosom with a shower of kisses and soft murmurings, "and—and my lad."

"Yes, my lad!" muttered Rose dozing away.

Though Zínatábád is famous for summary dismissals within twenty-four hours, nevertheless, when it reinstates the delinquent, the Official has little to complain of, except in having had a change of air. The Pádhsháh salámat ever ready to recompense merit and faithful service, none was more considerately treated than Dilawar Jung, who is with great delight informing Amar Devi that not only his arrears during his banishment have been settled, but that he has received promotion as well. As troubles seldom come singly, so Fortune sometimes lavishes with open hands, and his face beams with happiness as he in a subdued voice speaks of his future prospects and plans. Amar Devi delightedly nerves him with hope, and as he takes his departure adds, "May success attend you, and your cup overflow with bliss." With a happy light in her eyes she strolls about the room, and stopping whispers to Mrs. Jenkins, "Morád bin Sayad was right in his conjecture. Certainly, Rose's cloud is lined with a bright gleam of sunshine," then as she peeps into the sick-room, she compresses her lips tightly together, lest the secret should slip out before the invalid. Strolling back she suddenly starts and becomes agitated on hearing a familiar voice remarking, "Your pardon, lady, I intrude on you; but allow me to take it." Mrs Jenkins fairly startled at the sudden apparition demanding her empty cup, nervously drops it with spasmodic gasps, "Dear me, how you frightened me! What a mess!—I am so sorry."

"It's alright," consoles Dr. Gyán Chand, and warmly welcoming the visitor introduces him to the alarmed lady, "My young friend, Mr. Ugarsen Sarmá, who being a disciple of the great seers in Thibet, usually drops in noiselessly, and without any intimation."

"Exactly so," responds the visitor as his deep-set eyes eagerly rove round the room in quest of some particular face. "When in a happy mood my astral body skims through space, and gliding through these

thick walls gently slides out as just now," adds he merrily, "but my things—"

"Have to be conveyed like those of sensible folks," interrupts Gyán Chand laughing as a ghari drives in with the Mahátma's luggage. Being unperceived Amar Devi tries to make a stealthy escape to her room. Nevertheless, she off and on shyly glances back, when unexpectedly she encounters the twinkling eyes which light up with joy, and Ugarsen softly repeating, "Turn, oh turn in this direction," advances with outstretched hands. Flushing she timidly returns the greeting, and to hide her embarrasment bends over a revolving book-stand. Becoming engrossed in the interesting volumes, she makes the stand rotate so rapidly that the visitor blithely remarks to Mrs. Jenkins, "Behold the speed of the girls of the period, whose minds are so æsthetic and tastes so pure. Ah, how I despise female clay! They think the world cannot go round without their aid!" Smiling Amar Devi takes shelter behind the tea-tray, and handing him a cup observes, "Mahátmas who arrive unannounced must be content with cold tea." "And lukewarm reception," adds the visitor ruefully. "Alack-a-day! The knight has been overthrown, and I shall have to be content with a tulip or a lily." "Ráma, Ráma! Welcome!" greets Mohan Dás entering. "My gay blossoms at war as usual." As the young man rising makes his obeisance with folded hands and bowed head, he paternally strokes him with, "Blessings, blessings, my son. I hope a longer visit this time." "Uncle has invited Amar Devi," replies the visitor. "Lest she should meet with any mishap on the rough road, her knight has come to escort her to Núrpur. The young lady in question pouts, muttering, "As if can't take care of myself," then as the novel style of their acquaintance in the streets of London flashes across her memory her lips break into a broad smile.

Once as Amar Devi was hurrying to the Kensington School of Music for her lesson, a man rolling from

side to side came tottering towards her. Alarmed she jumped off the pavement, and gave him a wide margin to pass by. Being more sober than she thought he faced her exclaiming, "Go—go Miss. I'll not 'urt ye." But imagining he was about to seize her she fled, dropping her scroll of music on the road. Regaining her breath, she tremblingly retraced her steps, when to her horror she found the man still there, and eagerly questioning an Indian gentleman who happened to be passing just at that moment, "Yer sister? Yer sweet-art?" As the beady-eyes scanned the address on the scroll, there was no answer, except a nod of the head, when entrusting the music to the stranger the man tottered away. Looking around Ugarsen spied a pair of brown eyes furtively glancing at him from behind a corner of the street Hastily advancing he politely remarked, "Pardon, this is yours, Miss Amar Devi," and he handed over the music.

"Why, you know me! How strange!" said she eagerly securing her possession. Determined to make the most of the acquaintance, the young man ventured, "Rai Gyán Chand belongs to the Inner Temple."

"Oh, you know father too! That's well. Now I have no fear," said the young lady drawing a deep breath. As her nervousness subsided, and the two began chatting together, the wise instruction that had been taught her by the lady in charge of her began to rise before her mind's eye in dazzling letters, "I must always carry my purse and umbrella. Must not stand gazing into shop-windows. Must on no account speak or answer a strange lady or gentleman in the streets, and when landed in a dilemma to enquire at a shop or of a policeman." At the thought of having broken an imperative injunction she turned silent, and quickened her pace to a smart walk, but, as the Kensington School of Music began to loom before them, she skipped away exclaiming, "Thanks, thanks. I must not—must not speak to a gentleman." The next morning Ugarsen woke to find that South Kensington had developed fresh charms since the

adventure, and arrayed in his best attire he day after day paced the fashionable quarter in hopes of encountering his interesting friend. Happily the following week his expectations were realized, and as he advanced with kindling eyes and lips greeting, "Hey to you! Good-day to you." Amar Devi smiled, but with a distant bow passed on. His face fell; nevertheless, thankful for small mercies, he departed gaily humming, "I can, with cultured taste, distinguish gem from paste." After this Ugarsen's health began to fail and it became imperative for him to take regular constitutionals; but by a strange coincidence it usually occurred just when Amar Devi happened to be passing down the street. At the frequent encounters, she flushed nervously and frowning the downcast eyes intently studied the pattern of the pavement. But as she went by, and the distance grew wider, her head became erect and timidly glancing back, the sun-fringed eyes gleamed with smiles, that set Úgarsen's heart bounding with joy. With his thoughts engrossed in her, he began to show marked attention to Rai Gyán Chand who belonged to the same Inn as himself. Being of a bright, buoyant nature he easily crept into his good graces, and when Amar Devi was introduced into society he installed himself her protecting knight.

Ugarsen Sarmá was the only son of Pundit Gangádhar, an able Barrister, who well satisfied with his independent profession did not hesitate to send his son to England to qualify himself for the Bar. Though intelligent and gifted with a genial disposition that acquired knowledge in a happy, haphazard fashion, he lacked that steady application, so essential to cram in book-knowledge for the Examinations. To the regret of his learned father his undertaking was marked by failures, and the law course of three years became extended to six. But Ugarsen's letters ever bright with merry quotations from the Comic Opera Patience, consoled and filled him with hope, "Better luck next time. Failed in order to gain a deeper knowledge of the subject." He, how-

ever, awakened from his indolence, when Rai Gyán Chand unexpectedly received the appointment at Zínatábád and hastily left England. Downcast Ugarsen found consolation in his neglected studies, and persevering was called to the Bar shortly after. He was welcomed back to India with great rejoicing. But as time passed on and he showed no remarkable aptitude for the legal profession, his father expressed his regret in deep sighs, as frequent as of those parents, who disappointed in a golden harvest, bemoan the outlay of a fortune over a profession that has become alarmingly precarious and over-crowded.

Concerned about the future of his son, who at the rate he was progressing would barely be able to keep up his position, unless provided by private means, the Pundit passed many a sleepless night, particularly as the bulk of his money had been invested in the establishment of a cotton mill. Seeing his father's anxiety and as he had no taste for law, he gladly competed for the Statutory Service.

There being little intercourse between the rulers and the ruled, Ugarsen since his return to India lived in a distant world from the Anglo-Indians, and at times regarded his sojourn in England, where cordiality had united the English and the child of the sun by an affectionate bond, as some pleasant dream that had entirely passed away from his existence. As he drove round to call on the Collector, he ruefully ruminated over these strained relations, and was perplexed whether to send in one or two of his visiting cards. "The bara mem will surely never receive a 'je ne sais quoi' young man," echoed the despondent voice within him; while another encouraging him with, "thou art a pushing young particle," the die was cast, and as the trap pulled up under the porch and the Bearer appeared with the salver two cards were handed in. He had no reason to regret them, and returning home elated, lauded the Mem Sahib of his superior officer to the skies. While he is singing the lady's praise to his

friends, Mrs. Abbott is remarking to the Collector, "That bright moon-faced Indian has remarkably good manners. Why, he is a perfect gentleman. I had no idea the people were so polished."

"How could you!" interrupts her spouse, "when they are not admitted within our circle."

"I shall, certainly, invite him," rejoins the lady, and thanks to her interest in Ugarsen Sarmá, he was not only introduced to the privileged class, but even elected a member of the club. The sympathetic confidence of his officer, combined with the genial reception of his lady, tended to infuse into his life the vigour that was wanting, and the indolent student determining to be worthy of their favour worked with such zeal that he developed into an efficient official. Though transferred from station to station, Mr. Abbott kept a watchful eye over his career, and being satisfied with his diligence he was awarded with rapid promotion that brought tears of joy to the bedimmed eyes of his father whose health was fast declining. Being in possession of a comfortable income his mind began to expand and sigh for an ivy-cottage with a nightingale trilling in the moon-beams. Filled with ecstasy his joy burst forth in snatches of, "In aid—in aid of a deserving charity, I'll put myself to be raffled for! Oh fortune to my aching heart be kind." But Saturn, his evil star, was shining in the zenith, and as he restlessly paced his solitary chambers building a Fairy Castle, it was suddenly demolished by an urgent summons to the sick bed of his father. He arrived to find the Pundit in the throes of death; and disquietedly moaning, "Failed—failed Ah! the debts—my honour."

"Rest—rest revered father. I'll refund every cowri," said Ugarsen proudly, and brushing away his tears tenderly laid his hand on his burning brow.

"Blessings—blessings," and the spirit calmed flitted away, leaving the face smiling placidly. Shortly after the funeral Ugarsen disposed of the valuables belonging to his father; and had the money deposited to defray the

debts on the cotton mill that had failed with great loss, whilst every month the greater portion of his pay was also forwarded towards its liquidation. Thus burdened he began to despair of his day dreams being realized, and suddenly one day he appeared at Zínatábád. While discussing his troubles with Rai Gyán Chand he dolefully remarked, "This debt has quite shackled me down. Ah! it hangs over me like a shroud. I have no hope left to secure the gem that my heart was set upon."

"My son, your conduct is exemplary," replied the elder in soothing tones, "and you are all the dearer to me." Nevertheless he felt despondent, and when taking his departure he falteringly whispered to Amar Devi, "The earth seemed fair once, but now—now it's shrouded by night."

"But fair Dawn gleams behind the darkest night," replied she encouragingly and returning his warm pressure of farewell. Comforted he treasured the cheering words that often revived his drooping spirits, and sure of being welcomed by them he occasionally sauntered in at his will. Owing to Rose's ill-health Ugarsen's visit has been lengthened to a week, and Amar Devi offended at his pert chaff, complains to Mrs. Jenkins, "Father encourages him. I don't know what he sees in him to admire."

"My dear," replies the experienced lady, "You two are enigmas wrangling one moment and the best of friends the next. My child, I shall miss you and don't you forget me among your friends at Núrpur. Yes, mind you send me your wedding cake."

"Nonsense," cries Amar Devi indignantly, "I am too happy to sacrifice myself to another's whim. I marry —never."

The conversation is not lost on Ugarsen, who is chatting with Doctor Gyán Chand, and turning towards the ladies mockingly adds, "Sad is the woman's lot, who year by year sees, one by one, her beauties disappear. Ah, miserie! There'll be little left of her in the coming bye and bye."

"He is too incorrigible—terrible," exclaims Amar Devi exasperately, yet unable to repress a smile; while Mrs. Jenkins with a merry outburst remarks, "Young man, you, indeed, look like the love-sick swain. Be sure you send me your wedding cake—or is it puris?"

"I—I," cries Ugarsen gasping with astonishment. "I cannot tell what this love may be, that cometh to all but not to me; for I am blithe and I am gay while she—she," and he mischievously glances at Amar Devi, "sits sighing—sighing night and day."

Rose's convalescence proved a long one, but with the appearance of Spring she regained her strength rapidly. But more than the sunshine, the geniality of her deserted friends, combined with the establishment of their confidence in her, considerably helped the recovery. Ever sympathetic, Mrs. Jenkins who since Amar Devi's departure to Núrpur had taken Rose under her care, unfurled the banner of Charity, and like a brave general overcame the scruples of those who were inclined to shun the wronged. Peace having been restored the ladies became very amiable and attentive to the invalid. Some day Mrs. Foster cheered her with her prattle; another time Mrs. Young gave her a pleasant drive. When it came to Diláwar Jung's turn it ended in a row on the Lake, and they lingered in the moonlight, where they had once plighted their vow. Thoughtfully listening to Rose's intention of joining the Convent Diláwar agitatedly remarked, "Surely you will not leave me in grief again. Let—let these arms," and he tenderly encircled her in his, "be henceforth your sanctuary."

"No! No!" exclaimed she disengaging herself, with her heart fluttering with mingled joy and sorrow. "You have already suffered—borne too—"

"Sweet Bulbul!" interrupted the brave lover. "True love is equal to bear anything."

"But—but the terrible past," cried she shuddwring and bursting into tears. "My God! the darkened life over-

shadows me like an eclipse. Ah! nothing can wipe that away."

"You have been sinned against than have sinned," said Diláwar Jung re-assuringly. "With my love the past will fade away like a bad dream. Yes, yes, let love lighten—be the sun of our life," entreated he clasping the wavering but willing hand fervently. Dear heart! Alláh is great and justifies whom so He wills!"

THE GOLDEN MEAN

"Hé Naráyan! O God! How grand! Like the royal mark on the brow she appears among them," exclaims the elder sister-in-law admiringly. "Haste, Moti, look!" and from a pair two pairs of inquisitive eyes peer into the drawing-room partially furnished after the English style, where Amar Devi on a visit to Dr. Ravi Sarmá is conversing with his relations, who have been invited to meet her. "Of course," sighs Moti, "birds of a feather flock together and Amar—báp-re, O father! How quickly I forget the modern etiquette," and she gently slaps the erring mouth, "Mi-is Amar Devi is not likely to victimise herself for us ignorant folks."

"Yes, indeed," rejoins Champá frowning as some unpleasant scene recurs to her mind. "Having been to England her highness will be more airy fairy than our deluded B. A. Kusum. Did you mark when she came in with Ugarsen to be introduced to us, with what a puckered nose of disgust she watched us cutting vegetables, then gingerly gathering her sári-dress walked away with scarcely two words thrown to us. Hé Ráma! Poor Kusum's ethereal look drives every sensible idea from my wool-gathering head, but the other's airs will surely set me gazing—gaping wide-mouthed." Hearing soft whispers and unaware that she was being criticised Amar Devi turned. Seeing her young friends she smilingly beckoned to them to enter, but they replied by hastily dropping the slightly raised curtain, whilst the merry chhum-chhum of their anklets dying away in the distance, manifested their departure. During the criticism of the two ladies, Pundit Nandkumár, a pleader, had been freely descanting, and pourtraying in rich colours the powerful growth of Young India. "Indeed those pessimists who consider that we have degenerated

celebrated Táj Mahal majestically stands in the blue vault of heaven, even so, Keshav be praised! shall a powerful race of men spring up whose renown will be emblazoned in a golden dome that—"

"Which is to be hoped that it will be founded on as a firm basis," interrupts Dr. Ravi Sarmá, and throwing cold water on his enthusiasm. "Where would the far-famed Táj be but for its solid foundation. But alas! what is the basis of our society?—BABY-BRIDES AND BABY-HUSBANDS, COMMINGLED WITH THE TEARS of VIRGIN-WIDOWS!"

"Our philanthrophic Doctor" exclaims Nandkumár bristling up, "is ever ready with the lancet to probe a wound to its very core."

"Pray, pray, pause," suggests the Doctor. "Allow yourself breathing time to consider, and when you have moderated the telegraphic speed to a slower but surer pace, then—yes, indeed, when Love enlarges, purifies the mind, leading Young India from selfishness to tenderness, when Truth becomes the foundation and balances Justice by the Golden Mean, then—then these anthropological curiosities, as baby-brides and virgin-widows, will gradually die out. They not only obstruct the healthy development of mental vigour, and bodily health, but reveal our terrible downfall, and are a disgrace to a civilised race that has the noble Ashram-system to guide it from infancy to old age. How practical is our progressive neighbour the Jap. He seizes what is beneficial to his country, even from foreign hands; whilst the Hindu—alas! turns a deaf ear to his own Sages. Manu offers Amrit to transmit supremacy. But he in his wisdom prefers—what?—Poison—poison, that like the timber-destroying worm reduces the frame to a skeleton—to the mere shadow of the noble man!"

"A dreamer—heedless of the Times," mutters Nandkumár. "Infant marriage is nothing but a precaution for youth in this Kali Yug—Dark Age."

"Ah, ha! You have too soon forgotten the sad days of your honeymoon," chaffs the Doctor, "when

to your disgust your parents presented you with a baby-bride." Well! Well! It entirely lies in us to establish the Age of Truth or one of hollowness—of gilding. As blood circulates in the body, so Goodness, Darkness and Passion revolve in the mind. Therefore, it is not a limited period that forms the age, but thoughts and deeds." "Pooh! Pooh! You have little to grumble at," exclaims Nandkumár, glorying in the Times, and who is better acquainted with law than his Shástras. "Have not our countrymen beaten the English at Competitive Examinations? And what can be more encouraging than the honours of Mr. Paranjpe, the Senior Wrangler, gleaming like the Koh-i-nur in the coronation crown. Ten chances to one he is an offspring of the much-condemned baby-bride and her mate. Nevertheless he has exhibited no small amount of pluck and backbone."

"Exceptions do not prove the soundness of the present custom," observes the Doctor, and these unwholesome growths contrast most unfavourably with the other civilised people. Patience, noble enthusiast, and proceed step by step. Rear up a brave and noble nation by constructing your golden dome of renown on the purer institutions of old times. Being of genuine solidity, they will stand without tottering, the strain and weight of Young India—yea, the 'leaps and bounds of a Hanumán.'"

"True, wise sage, true," breaks in Rai Kishen Chand who abashed at having expressed his sentiments too rapturously, and overlooked actual facts, veers on the Doctor's side. "The Hindu is like a child that doting on its ugly old doll hugs it about in preference to a better one; likewise he clings to harmful practices that are destroying the vitality of the nation. With our boasted attainments we should open the third eye—the eye of wisdom and discernment to use and not misuse the Times—renovating our homes on just and nobler principles—yea, indeed, inhaling an atmosphere that invigorates the mind."

"Beware you do not introduce bitter for sweet, leading to disastrous results," cautions his conservative brother-in-law, Pundit Sundar Nath who, regarding

every innovation with dark suspicion, shrinks from change. "The lotus smiles at the sun's rays, whilst the night lily fades away under its scorching beams. However, there is this comfort that the 'boneless weaklings of very doubtful intellectual merit,' are at least harmless."

"Injurious—rotten—a very cancer in the heart of society" exclaims Mohan Dás bitterly, and sighing at his solitary life for his parents slender means obliged them to postpone his marriage to rather late in life. But on his becoming better circumstanced, he was unable to satisfy the demands of his caste-folks, who taking advantage of his matured age desired a fanciful price in exchange for their daughter. Disgusted at their greed, he vowed celebacy, and spent his little savings on a young brother, who dying shortly after the marriage left a helpless child-widow on his hands to be a thorn in his side. They are, indeed, a cankerous disease," sighs he, "that is essential to uproot, to secure national progress—yea, to hold one's head evenly with others."

"Alas! alas!" grumbles the conservative Pundit. "Man's mind becomes unhinged—the holy Shástras evaporate from his memory, when he crosses the Black Waters. What! change our customs, our family-life that is based on the principles of religion? Terrible—death better." "Long life to the fossilised Pundit," shouts Kishen Chand, "but death—death to the dangerous elements. Rubbish! Custom is a pure social organization. Hé shankár! when it suits caste-folks it becomes unassailable and encrusted with sanctity; otherwise, with a placid smile, they close their eyes to the capers of the 'advanced set,' so long as one does not tread on their mighty toes; and, when in good humour, the good souls make the so-called religious custom what? elastic—more elastic than the india-rubber that lengthening snaps and disappears like a bubble."

"Much learning has warped your mind," exclaims Nandkumár curtly, "and there is no bending it in the straight course."

"Unfortunately," rejoins the Doctor, "the Hindus have drifted away from the path of Truth—the foundation of all merit and virtue. There seems little hope of success unless we retrace our steps, and follow that Light which will restore the soul of the eternal, life-giving Faith again."

"Shiv! Shiv! The restlessness of the present generation—this terrible fermentation will land you on a quicksand, with your fate no better than the fly in the milk-bowl," exclaims Nandkumár exasperately. "Yes, go ahead and revolutionize the whole system with a little of *this* to a little of *that*—the buffalo's horn clapped on to the cow, and the cow's on to the buffalo's head. Behold the Nineteenth Century progress!"

"Nay, brother," remarks the Doctor gently. "We must rise to power step by step, allowing Time to develop and strengthen it. In fact no fantastic revolution, but a steady evolution, with Young India foregoing individual rights and interests for the common weal! Thus blended in a harmonious whole to work consonantly and move onward with measured—certain steps."

"Oh these discordant Times," exclaims Ugarsen fretfully. "So cramped—no breathing space, and I am all length and breadth. Dear, dear, India is utterly ruined—in a narrowed condition. Why, I'd change the whole fabric with a stroke of my pen and begin afresh!"

"There are orthodox fossils," remarks the Doctor smiling, "who are a dead weight on society, whilst others with their stormy changes would demolish poor India from the face of the globe. Fortunately, my volatile nephew, you have a steady hand to check your blasting 'stroke,' and he nods at Amar Devi, who confusedly murmurs, "I'd never undertake the charge of such a boisterous spirit."

"Ah miserie!" sighs Ugarsen. "Yet still my love lives! Your maiden heart, ah! do—do not steel—a tear—tear."

"What nonsense!" interrupts Amar Devi laughing.

"A tear-drop dews my manly eye," and passing his handkerchief across his face, he remarks to Kishen Chand, "my worthy cousin, every one to his taste, and

you are welcome to the Lady Graduate of the period. I—I—well I wish to wound no one's tender heart—but heavens! I could not stand her airy academical robes," at which Gopi Chand, giving silent claps, shoots killing glances at his sister-in-law. "Yes, to be sure," adds Ugarsen, "a learned lady—well, a sweet partner in particular—is a private nuisance, while an ignorant one a public annoyance—a dead weight on advancement," and glancing at Amar Devi he dolefully repeats, "Ah, miserie! I have been thrown over—thrown over," then lustily breaks out, "but don't care—don't care. There's fish in the sea no doubt as good as ever came out of it. Halloo!" exclaims he suddenly stopping. "I smell—I smell," and sniffing about remarks, "Why, aunt, have you cooked some dainty for me—me?" Kusum indignantly tosses her head murmuring—"Leave that to my inferiors," and as the servant announces "breakfast," they adjourn into another room.

Doctor Ravi Sarmá belonged to a stiff, orthodox family, and the hope of fair prospects alone tended to overcome the scruples of his parents, who regarded Medicine as something too loathsome, something beyond the very touch and thought of a Bráhman. Being the first-born and the fairest flower of his mother's garden, he laid seige to her tender heart. Distasteful as the subject seemed, nevertheless to gratify her idol, Revati boldly declared to the learned Pundit, "Ravi is a devoted lad. Why deny him his whim? I have consulted the astrologers, and they declare he'll become famous, be a bara sáhib!" Sickening at the idea of his son touching a corpse, the husband fumed at her encouraging him in his mad career. She calmly listened and kept silent. But at the first favourable opportunity, Revati renewed the subject with batteries of tears and soft entreaties that melting his obduracy the Pundit consented in silence, whilst she consoled him with soothing words, "Cheer up! One learned and well-behaved son makes the whole family happy, as one moon beautifies the night." When his hopes became realized, Ravi Sarmá was struck dumb with

delight, and the day he joined the Medical College his joy knew no bounds. Unable to control his feelings, he fell in an ecstasy at his mother's feet crying, "Rámа be praised! I am a Medico. Thanks—thanks to my mother. Ah-ha-ha! There is no god greater than mother!" Shuddering from the contaminating touch of her son, up started Revati, and as he continued to rave, "My life may go—but not my word—indeed, you'll never regret this day," she saturated him with the purifying Ganges water, whilst dipping herself in a bath changed the polluted garments. For the sake of his favourite study, Ravi Sarmá amiably endured the daily purification after his return from College, and like an unclean animal sat apart from the home-circle to enjoy his meals in a brass salver specially reserved for him. Human nature is never content, and as his ideas and aims expanded, his ambition soared sky-high. Whether waking or sleeping marvellous visions began to torment his imaginative mind, stimulated by the encouraging remarks of his learned Professor, "Ravi is our hopeful, promising pupil. Excellent thing if he went Home." From henceforth a burning desire seized him to be wafted to this wonderful region, and to return to India crowned with honours. But fear of having the liberty he enjoyed forfeited, tied his tongue down, and he dared not divulge his aspirations even to his indulgent mother. Unexpectedly his smouldering longings became inflamed by his brother-in-law, the father of Ugarsen, determining to join the Inns of Court. Whilst Ravi remained speechless, with hope gleaming in his eyes, the peaceful home as if struck by calamity was thrown into confusion. In a body they were up in arms, and despairingly wringing their hands they swore and fumed at his folly. That a Bráhman should cross the ocean, and break bread with the Mlechh, was beyond endurance; and the caste-folks, wrathfully mustering together spat at the idea with threats to excommunicate the delinquent. Pundit Gangádhar gracefully acquiesced in their views. But putting on a bold front showed them that he was master of his action, and amidst fumes of

discontent, and torrents of tears, hazarded the voyage to England. Neverthless, at times his heart misgave him that something unforeseen might occur at the last moment to upset his plans. With the Steamer sailing out of the Harbour, he began to breathe more freely, but when the land became lost in the horizon, and his eyes rested on a blue expanse gleaming with billows, he jumped up joyously exclaiming, "Hé, Prabhu! Thank God, now all's well." Relieved from the oppressive thought he lightly paced the deck, when he was attracted by two luminous orbs fastened on him. His heart stood still and agitated by fear, he could not utter a word. But as a turbanned-head rose higher and higher from coils of entangled rope, and a trembling figure stood before him, he exclaimed jovially, "What! hast thy sister sent thee to keep watch over me?"

"Hé Gíjá! Ho, beloved brother-in-law!" cried Ravi Sarmá seizing his hand, "You are my sanctuary—protect. I'll work—slave, do anything, but take me to England to study."

"Thou art not a rabbit, a pigeon," rejoined Pundit Gangádhar, laughing, "that I can stow thee in my pocket. They stormed like furies, floods of tears flowed at the son-in-law crossing the Black Water, but for the son, the first-born to take French leave, Hé Rámá, alas! alas! thy parents must be dead from grief. Away—get ready and be off with the pilot."

"Return! never—never!" rejoined Ravi determinedly. "Does an escaped bird pine to fly back to its cage? And day after day have I prayed, longed for this freedom. Oh, I'll kill myself—jump into the ocean," cried he in a frenzy, with tears streaming down his face, "otherwise, take me—take me. I want to be learned like you," and his face became enkindled with fervour. "This is cheering—exhilarating," exclaimed the Pundit softening, and becoming impressed by his earnestness, "for the caste-folks have painted me blacker than a crow. Eh? Learned like me? But, my lad, how didst thou follow me?"

"As thy servant—at least I introduced myself thus at the Hotel, though precious little work I did, but now—oh, beloved Gíjá, take pity I am your slave—command."

"Thou art a brave lad," replied Pundit Gangádhar admiringly, "and thy heart is in thy work. Come, whatever betides I have a broad back to bear, even thy folly. But the path to renown is not strewn with roses. However, thou art welcome to the last pice in my pocket."

When the father received the telegram announcing Ravi Sarmá's departure to England his heart grew faint with grief at the loss of his jewel, and like a tree that is suddenly struck down by lightning he fell to the ground utterly overpowered. Finding the Pundit insensible, the home was filled with dismay. In great agitation Revati rushed to her husband's side, and at sight of his misery intolerable pangs pierced her heart. Frantically tearing her hair and beating her head, she bemoaned the loss of her child, "Ah, my darling! Gone! Alas! the light has fled, darkness set in. Hé Ráma thy doings are mysterious," and as she bent over the Pundit her fast-falling tears bedewed his pale face. He started heaving deep sighs, with disconsolate gasps, "Woe, woe, is me! I am undone!" But as his eyes rested on his wife, they became inflamed, and he raged with irrepressible fury, shouting, "Thou hast wrought this calamity; desolated—set fire to thine own home. Alas! alas! for having trusted a woman—followed thy counsel. Away, demented wretch! Begone from my sight!" The biting taunts of her husband seemed like poison torturing her sore heart, and overwhelmed with grief she was struck dumb. Summoning up courage, she rushed from the stormy atmosphere with the stinging words ringing in her ears. As she passed the sacred precincts containing a figure of the diety Ráma, his benign glance seemed to say, "All will end well," and comforted she poured out the burden of her heart. "Thou fountain of mercy! Immortal Ráma! Comfort," supplicated she with folded hands. "Help me to bear this intolerable anguish—this separation. Enfold my child

in thy loving arms and restore him—him in whom my life is centred—to this distressed heart." As if death had taken up its quarter there an oppressive stillness, broken by deep-drawn sighs, reigned in the quiet home. Overpowered by grief Revati restlessly tossed from side to side in a semi-unconscious state. As Kusum silently weeping for her truant husband fanned, and Gopi Chand's wife, Champá, shampooed their mother-in-law, she revived, and her first thought was for her son's welfare, and how to befriend him. Anxiously murmuring, "My darling, with no money—no clothes—Ah! in the land of snow," she fondly handled small bags containing her savings to send to him. But when a few days later Gopi Chand, having consulted the good Professor of the Medical College, informed her of the expensive English living, she was at her wit's end to procure more money. To apply to the Pundit no one dared, for like a fierce lion he paced the rooms with the fixed idea that his son's departure had been previously planned between Revati and the head-strong son-in-law. Whilst in this dilemma a happy thought struck her and she instantly carried it out. Taking a heavy box, she laid her jewels at the feet of the family spiritual Teacher remarking, "Hé Maharáj! What are these jewels to me when my lad remains cold and hungered? The very thought withers my heart. Go, quick, convert them into money. I dare not trouble my husband until the wound heals, and he forgives him—us." "Mother!" exclaimed Pundit Bansi Lál, "your unselfishness will not pass unrewarded—indeed, our lad will return a bara sáhib."

No sooner Ravi Sarmá had joined the Royal College of Surgeons in London, than he wrote a most penitent letter to his father concluding with, "Do not make your mind uneasy. Time flies. By your grace I'll return with honours to embrace your lotus-feet," whilst in another letter he begged of his spiritual Teacher to continue teaching Kusum, "for" remarked he, "husband and wife are like the two wheels of a carriage that to run smoothly must move in unison. But if one

be oiled and the other left clogged what hope is there, except of retrogression? But Maharáj, you are all-wise and pardon my suggestion."

Like the majority of Hindu girls, Kusum was steeped in ignorance and could neither read nor write when she came as a bride. She belonged to that happy orthodox family that was perfectly callous about the education of girls. Indeed, her father regarded education as causing harm rather than proving a blessing to a woman, and no books, no pens and pencils, neither school fees nor the petty demands of a tutor ever ruined his purse. As Ravi Sarmá became better acquainted with his wife he not only inspired her with the laudable ambition to improve her mind, but instructed her in English. Being intelligent she made rapid progress, but when his studies increased and he could ill spare his time, Kusum with the consent of his mother joined Gopi Chand who, of the same age as herself, was studying under Pundit Bansi Lál. As Ravi Sarmá successfully advanced in his career, the sighs and tears of the household became transformed into hopeful smiles. Even the old father, who unhappily did not survive his first-born's return, proudly spoke of him as the "Doctor Sáhib," and at times sadly shaking his head would add, "Ráma forgive! it's a Sudra's—a low calling—yet, all considered, my head-strong lad has chosen well;" whilst Kusum out of compliment was raised to the dignity of the Dáktarni, minus the knowledge of medicine. Nevertheless, she was not deficient in attainments, and with the return of the liberal-minded Pundit Gangádhar, to India, the portals of the Zenána were thrown open when like a bird set at liberty to roam at large, she became Gopi Chand's colleague for the Entrance Examination. Elated with joy her feet barely touched the ground, whilst her hands withdrew from the household duties. As it is usual among the Hindus, Kusum's first-born was more her mother-in-law's infant than her own; and since ambition had fired her to become a shining light among her ignorant sisters, she had

considerately assigned her second child to Champá's care, whilst her young brother-in-law kept her pencils trim. Thus relieved of home responsibilities she diligently pursued her studies. Yet at times the task seemed arduous, and when her spirits drooped, the light-hearted Gopi Chand braced her with cheering words, and regardless of his own success, he helped her through the labyrinth with the profoundness of a professor.

But when Kusum's name shone among the successful candidates and Gopi Chand's was not discernable even by a magnifying glass, the excitement of the family is indescribable. Every one was dumbfounded. That the neglected Flower should have eclipsed the intelligent man seemed like the seven wonders of the world! As if a tom-tom had proclaimed the unique feat in the vicinity, inquisitive visitors frequently arrived with wondrous exclamations and congratulations; whilst the astonished Revati, as she besought the household deity to strengthen Gopi Chand to stand on his legs, and distributed sweets in honour of Kusum's remarkable achievement, never tired remarking to her friends, "Sure—sure the Vidháta—the Creator when fashioning her must have made a mistake—been ill-pleased and turned her into a woman for punishment. Oh, sisters! she is that learned—can read two or four books pat off," and in awe she would gaze at her distinguished daughter-in-law. For weeks the discomfited Gopi Chand was wrapped in a brown study. Recovering his spirits, he determined to mend his indolent habits and "to stand on his legs," as his mother termed it. With a brazen face he snapped his fingers at the chaff flying around him, and boldly declared in defence of his failure, "Gave her a chance to revive her spirits—to lift 'the woman's fallen divinity upon an even pedestal with man'—will catch her up—shoot by like an eagle." At his impertinence, Kusum's ears tingled with indignation and she hotly retorted, "Simply dying of envy. But wait—wait Pundit Pert. I'll show

you that a woman, notwithstanding she has been subjected to years of wrong—indeed, kept in gross ignorance, can yet compete with the selfishly 'perfect man.'"

"He who talks high and mighty," chaffed the brother-in-law, "has sometimes to bend his head low—low. Go, mind thy pots and pans—thy babies," and raising her children on his shoulders merrily danced them about. Thus with continual sparring the two students successfully obtained the B. A. degree. All commended and admired the Lady Graduate's remarkable aptitude and abilities. Transported with the sweets of adulation, Kusum floated away like a sunbeam into higher spheres to weave fair thoughts Awakening, she felt of a superior clay to her surrounding sisters, and as she paced about with an ethereal look Gopi Chand aimed a laconic shot, "Little learning is a dangerous thing," and disappeared. Startled from her reverie she turned and saw Revati hastening towards her in great excitement. Her eyes glistened with joy as placing a letter in Kusum's hand she falteringly said, "Ráma, Ráma be praised! The sun begins to shine! My lad—thy husband will soon be among us." Over and again she bade her read the glad tidings sent by Ravi Sarmá, whose course at Netley was drawing to a close. Overjoyed the dreary days of separation vanished like a sad dream, and accompanied by fifes and drums their grateful hearts made offerings at Ráma's shrine. As amidst jokes and laughter they prepared for the reception of the Doctor Sáhib, the lonesome home grew animated; whilst Kusum made to relinquish her studies was treated more like a newly-made bride than a stern lady with academical robes. Narrowly eyeing her, Revati remarked in consternation, "Thou hast, indeed, worked hard—grown lean, hollow-eyed!"

"As if she had been fed on the leavings!" hints the loquacious Gopi, and as Kusum answers with looks of daggers he adds fuel to fire, "She wants to blacken your face, mother!"

"Shiv! Shiv!—Alas! alas! How shall I face my Ravi!" exclaims the mother-in-law concernedly. "Away with thy books. No more reading—blinding thy eyes."

"What good is this Professorship?" questions the brother-in-law.

"Alas! alas! that Ravi alone knows," rejoins Revati, "my grey head cannot fathom. But certainly it cannot make her deft like the busy-bee Champá. Where would I be? She is my right hand—my very eyes."

Enjoying a calm holiday, and drowned in joy of shortly being united to her husband, Kusum expanded like the lotus under genial rays. Nevertheless, Revati being anxious that she should appear her fairest, the Lady Graduate was braced up with dainties of milk and cream; and as the barber's wife embellished her with cosmetics, Gopi's eyes glowed with admiration, whilst his lips cited—

"Her falser self slips from her like a robe
And leaves her woman."

Full of love and joy, gaily he escorted his relatives and friends to the Railway Station. But as his elder brother hurriedly jumped out of the train and caught him in a warm embrace, his loquacity vanished and he remained speechless from delight. At the sound of music, the inmates of the zenána rushed on the terrace; as the arrivals entered the courtyard, they peeped from within; but when Doctor Ravi Sarmá ascended the staircase, Revati, quivering with emotion, advanced, whilst Kusum and Champá flew into an inner apartment. But woman-like they turned and peeping gazed at mother and son. Revati glad at heart clasped him to her bosom, with tears of joy streaming down her face. "Blessed am I to see thy moon-like face again," she fondly murmured. "Now may Rámaji receive my soul." But at the thought of her late husband she burst into a flood of tears crying, "Ah! if he were but here to bless thee—see thee a bara sáhib—my cup of joy would be full to overflow. Indeed, in thee I behold the Punditji again. Now thou

art the head—the father of these orphaned lads and the staff of my widowed life." Tenderly soothing her, he turned to his brothers and drew the gaping children into his arms. But his eyes furtively roved round the room, and hearing an impatient tinkle of the anklets behind the parda, he grew excited. Notwithstanding his long sojourn in England, orthdox customs clung to him, and abashed he had not courage to enquire after his wife. Marking his impatience Revati smiled, and raising the curtain they entered the apartment, when the Lady Graduate veered and turned her face to the wall. Drawing the veil over her drooping head, she silently stood with her back towards her husband, for it would be the height of impropriety to unveil her face or even to speak to her long-absented spouse in the presence of her mother-in-law. As Gopi tugging at Kusum's deep-drawn veil whispered, "Eh! on the stool of repentance?" Ravi Sarmá's eyes became fastened on a row of school-books prominently shelved, which marked the attainments of the New Woman of the Nineteenth Century. His eyes glowed with delight, and when all had departed and greetings exchanged he admiringly remarked, "My deligent wife, you have nobly distinguished yourself. More precious than rubies is your crown of knowledge to me."

Fleeter than the wind the happy days sped by, and amidst showers of blessings, "May your prosperity be as enduring as the Ganges!" Ravi Sarmá joined his Regiment at Hirabád. Knowing that a sense of pre-eminence combined with cold indifference separated the rulers from the ruled, the frigid reception of his brother officers did not in the least disconcert him. Besides, fair images of the noble-minded Englishmen and women lay fresh on his memory, and these intermingling with his life, softened the angularities of their compatriots. But Ravi Sarmá was a man of high personal character, with every action of his life influenced by the pure sentiments of the Ramáyana. Whether he fraternised with the Europeans or the Indians, his courtesy of speech and manner commanded admiration and respect. Moreover, Kusum being

a novelty among them, their frigidity changed to amiability, and thus the intercourse became more genial. Astonished at her aptitude, praise was generally accorded to her, and to their kindly interest she demurely replied "I am an alumnus of the University, and mathematics was my forte." Raised to the high sphere of life, Kusum remained in a perpetual state of excitement, elaborating subjects for conversation. Imagining that the society fed on deep thoughts and the talk should be high flown, she was ever culling for their edification phrases from great authors. They politely listened with a suppressed smile, and when stirred by ambition, she excitedly remarked, "Yes, our liberty is limited, and alas! men are apt to throw cold water on our attainments. Nevertheless, we must not lose heart, but go on ascending the steps of the Temple of Knowledge; indeed, the day is not far distant when a Newnham or a Girton will be established in our midst," there was no encouraging response except yawns. But as the conversation grew animated and they went into ecstasies over the latest fashionable dress, with jokes on Miss Tomkin's flirtations; whilst others deplored the vile champagne at Lady R.'s 'At Home,' or complained of the Khansáman's exorbitant charges, Kusum's eyes opened at the commonplace chat. Astonished she turned to her husband who remarking, "Life is made up of trifles," advised her to be natural, and to reserve the rare bits as an occasional morsel. Nevertheless, his admiration for his learned spouse was unbounded; and extolling her, boasted among his Hindu friends that the two wheels of his home worked admirably together.

With the chief aim to come before the notice of the public, Kusum unfortunately found little work of interest in her domestic life. Entrusting its management to a Governess, she courted men of 'light and leading;' contributed articles on Social Reform, and with vivid sketches of Lilávati and other Hindu ladies bombarded the apathetic Hindus to throw open their Zenána and to encourage the University Edu-

cation. In the midst of an excited career and meteoric glory, her schemes were spoiled by the marriage of the Governess, who left her graver duties to manage than even the laudable aim to disseminate knowledge among her country women. But the work was distasteful, and turned Kusum sour. Moreover, being of an inconsistent nature her acts fell far short of her words. It was pleasanter to weave fair thoughts in exhorting her audience to regulate the moral nature of the children, and to implant on their young hearts virtuous impressions; earnestly she discoursed that by repeated acts habits are formed either of virtue or of vice; and her pen advocating cleanliness and order drew bright pictures of home. But this chimerical rhetoric floated on the surface of her mind. Being passively impressed, it seemed of little consequence to adhere to the principles she so warmly inculcated. Since the departure of the Governess, the well-regulated establishment fell into utter confusion; whilst the children, indulged one day, and neglected the next, ran wild like colts. The change was so perceptible that Ravi Sarmá was perfectly bewildered. He had always advocated Higher Education for women, and for his help-meet, with her advantages and attainments to lack the essential qualities of a housekeeper, was a terrible awakening. With one wheel moving spasmodically, his peace of mind fled. Disappointed, he startled the friends on whom he had frequently pressed the necessity of Higher Education for women, "Degrees are simply high sounding titles, necessary for man—a delusive gilding for woman—yea, unsuited to the exigencies of the Times."

"It's A one, fitting woman for a higher sphere of usefulness," remarked an enthusiast.

"But gives her little backbone to uphold what is essentially her sphere and duty," rejoined the Doctor curtly. "And pray, who, if not our help-meet is to control the domestic life on which the happiness and future of India depends? Ah, yes, I went off the right track—

lept at a bound and missed the Golden Mean in my delusion."

"True! true!" exclaimed they breaking into praise of him, whilst smiling whispered, "the good Doctor is suffering from indigestion—a bad dinner, with Curtain Lectures!"

Unwilling to wound Kusum's feelings, Ravi Sarmá chaffingly remarked "I had better sail for England and take a degree in house-management as well."

"Ah! yes, even to the high-minded, woman is but a chattel!" grumbled the inconsistent wife, "you wish to turn me into a domestic drudge, simply to minister to the wants of the superior sex."

"Shiv! Shiv! Never! Never!" expostulated the Doctor softly. "You have a staff of servants at your command, but you must supervise—direct; and it's a mother's duty to tend and watch over her children. Why, order and cleanliness crown woman with more grace than jewels, and in you and by you, my Devi, I look for the joys and comforts of home!" But his advice and suggestions proved futile, and murmuring, "Of what use is a mirror to him who is destitute of sight," pottered from room to room arranging and directing the servants as best he could.

In the course of my travels from Haiderábad, Deccan, on to my own home in the N.-W. Provinces and thence to Punjab, many Hindu ladies have become endeared to me by warm ties of friendship. Having received a liberal education some are poets and essayists, others journalists, editors and lecturers, appearing year after year at the Social and Political Gatherings; whilst some having crossed the baneful ocean have had better advantages and wider experience of life in general. Bright and intelligent the Hindu woman has attained remarkable proficiency. Nevertheless, with the fair advantages and intellectual attainments, the present Education is so unsuited to her requirements that I have not met a single lady well able to tend her children, or to manage her home with any laudable system. On entering a

Hindu dwelling, whether in the city or the outskirts, the startling feature is that the portion occupied by the male members is usually presentable; whilst SUPREME CHAOS reigns within the mistress's quarter, and as a Hindu gentleman remarked to me the other day, when calling on a magnate, "It's gilded without and hollow within!" And what is still more remarkable that instead of the educated wife, free from the trammels of parda, or the antiquated mother taking an interest in the establishment, the men who desire to keep up their position are obliged to engage a Governess, or to live at the mercy of the Bearer trained under an English hand. And lively are the scenes between Master Bearer and Mistress Indolent, for each one covetously guards his or her things, as if the house belonged to two different parties. Softly she begs for a cup, a knife or an easy-chair of him. "Nothing of the kind," retorts the supreme Master. "I'll not permit my things into the Zenána. They get lost or soiled and Master breaks my head. Besides, yesterday I asked your woman-servant for a towel and she flatly refused it—go!" Angered the good-wife appeals to her husband and meets with a rebuff, "Dismiss him? Indeed, he is my right hand and I'd be at sixes and sevens without him. But if you fulfilled your duty, why should either of us have to put up with the man's impertinence?" Having won the victory Master Bearer's turban rises an inch higher and whilst with folded hands he addresses his Master, "Maharáj—your lordship!" he turns to his mistress with the respectable 'tu and tum—thou and you!' Remonstrate with a lady-lecturer, "You are neglecting the children. Teach them refined manners."

"Oh! they will pick up as they grow older," replies she indifferently. "I am too old!" Nevertheless, the mail is carrying away an essay from her worthy pen to instruct others. Turn to another remarking, "This scandalous talk before children is wicked!" "What matters?" replies the judicious mother. My ten-year-

old daughter is married and will be a mother in a few years. For weeks lovely embroidered silk skirts and tinselled tunics lie piled on a rope thick with dust and you suggest, "put them away." "Oh, anything is good enough for us ignorant folks," is the reply. "We are not mems to dust them."

Though showing such indifference to their surroundings, yet personally they are exceptionally clean. In fact, no nation can compete with the ablutions of the Hindus, the washing of their hands at every sip; the constant lathing of the kitchen, with the burnished brass-pots and pans, and above all the superstitious 'touch-me-not' system. From the highest to the lowest this has become so ingrained in their system, that it has developed into second nature, and having narrowed their ideas on general cleanliness and order, the happy confusion around them does not irritate their eyes. If with the intellectual education, girls were methodically trained, there is no doubt they would gradually imbibe the qualities they so sadly lack.

The year 1894 I spent in Munich, and though breathing the same air as the great professors and renowned artists, yet I met with no Lady Graduate among the cultured set, and I believe to this day the Munich University has not opened its doors to the fair sex. Nevertheless, apart from the superior education of the German ladies, the thrift and industry of those accomplished girls would shame my advanced Hindu sisters to perform the duties which they regard with such indifference and shamefully neglect. Certainly, it is not a little that I owe to the companionship of the German ladies.

The esteemed Babu P. C. Mozoomdar eulogising the progress of the Indian woman remarks, "Female education is a first duty with us. It is no exaggeration to say that at least a hundred thousand Hindu girls attend public schools. We have about three dozen Lady Graduates of Calcutta University alone."

There is education and education, and when the source of the depressed condition of the Hindus is fathomed and considered, it would be a blessing if some of these enlightened ladies studied the excellent Nursery-system of the English. By its importation into their homes they will have reintroduced the much-neglected Studentship Ashram, and on the vigour of which the other Ashrams are pendant. It would not only invigorate them, but each home could nobly boast of a Guru-kul, with the mother as its 'light and guide.' The pure air of the Nursery founded on the principles of the Ancient Religion, with Truth and Self-control for its bulwark is likely to impart greater vitality and base Young India more firmly than if the whole population flaunted in academical robes. Observing beneath the surface, it is evident that in this Transitional Period more practical action, particularly of those minor duties which like the insignificant tack in a setting keeps the brilliants intact, is requisite than intellectual culture. Fortunately the educated Hindus are awakening and demand something more substantial than logic and philosophy. Sad, indeed, is their condition and just are their complaints. Whilst they are sighing for a help-meet to control their household, my untrained sisters have soared to the heights of the Himálaya, dolefully singing, "Alas! we are the envy of malignant minds!" It is laudable of the intelligent ladies to uphold the fair picture of the Mathematician Lílávati to direct our path. But it is to be presumed that before the ideal lady crossed the *pons asinorum* she had acquired the *point*. Let us follow her and a woman's point is the kitchen, not only to peal potatoes but to ascend upwards, as the sacred fire does to heaven. Though India cannot boast of *worthy housekeepers*, yet, last year I met an expert man *housekeeper*. Except for the constant jarring of the partners, the sight was ludicrous, recalling the wise words of Shri Krishna, "One's own duty though defective is better than another's duty well-perform-

ed—is dangerous!" With streaming eyes the distressed wife muttered between her teeth, "Would that I could put a match to the whole fabric," whilst the husband fussing about remarked, "Whether awake or asleep; well or ill, it has become my 'Gita!'" Baby-brides with child-widows are, indeed, sad growths, and it is to be hoped the gracious ladies will not permit another unwholesome fungus to take root in their midst. Fortunately the marriage of his young brother, Rupchand, engrossed his mind and prevented the amiable Doctor from developing into a qualified housekeeper. Though sadly shaking his head at Kusum's mismanagement, he did not again indulge her with a governess; whilst Gopi Chand bubbling with animation encouragingly added, "Up, now is the time to show the University grit." Becoming desolate without her best-beloved son and his children, the anxious Revati shed silent tears; whilst each letter contained the burden, "Like the chakwi-bird, I keenly feel the separation. Night and morn I supplicate Rámaji that I may breathe the last in thy arms." Indescribable is her joy, when resigning his appointment Ravi Sarmá returned to Núrpur. Confident of success in his profession, he commenced private practice, and being popular had no reason to regret the sacrifice he had made to gratify his mother. Being a man of strong character, with liberal views, he adhered to a high standard of duty, and besides interested in public affairs, he desired to remodel the domestic life of his family. With the co-operation of his spiritual Teacher and supported by the Shástras, he cautiously set about to fight the cause of Reform from within. Notwithstanding the deep-rooted evil customs, he gradually re-established older usages, and the darkness of superstition vanished before the rays of the sacred text. Having faith in education enlarging and influencing public opinion, he published pamphlets, and stirred the inert people to think and better their condition. Exhorting that where there is a will much can be done to crush the evil practices, he encouraged the disheartened to sow

the seed of reform; that notwithstanding the obstacles to make straight for the goal of duty, for nothing in the world is beyond the reach of man to whom God is propitious; and if the attempt was not crowned with immediate success, it was pleasant to think the good cause would be continued by the children; yea, even children's children with Truth triumphing in the end.

But the wedding of Rúpchand caused a diversion, for Dr. Ravi Sarmá had frequently assailed Early Marriage. Like a porcupine they bristled up levelling many a spike in pleasantry. "Ho! little brides and little bridegrooms," exclaimed one quoting the Doctor, "are, indeed, unwholesome growths! But why this difference between word and deed?" "Ah—ha,—ha! the good surgeon desires to operate on Society's cancer and has introduced it within his touch as a by-play," broke in another charitable critic. "Indeed, it is the same old game—many to advise and few to follow!" came a chorus; whilst Pundit Nandkumár surprised at his relative's changed sentiments, sententiously added, "Success lies on adherence to principles—you have gone off the mark." As rain drops battering a mountain produce no ill effect, the Doctor smiled at their remarks and mildly responded, "Certainly Early Marriage is iniquitous, and I would retard the marriage of my daughter. Nevertheless, gladly would I take another's to reform her."

"Hé Shankar!" laughed they. "Your exception is as deep as Paníni's aphorism." Curiosity brought many guests to welcome the eleven-year-old bride, and after the repast Pundit Bansi Lál remarked, "How glorious it was in the palmy days of India, when young men and women not only married by choice, but the Marriage Service proves that they must have been old enough to make vows themselves, instead of the respective priests of the couple mumbling the promises for them. Reason tells Early Marriage is sinful, whilst our Shástras show it is a later corruption." Like rumbling clouds there was a subdued murmur. "Our ancestors

were wiser than we." But when Ravi Sarmá added, "Rámaji is witness that the Consummation Ceremony will take place four years hence," they were startled, and deep groans of alas! alas! followed, intermingled with laughter, "Has the Doctor forgotten his youthful days?" Whilst an astonished dame remarked, "Why at thirteen I was a mother! Has the Dáktar Sáhib lost his senses!"

"Who can tell his greatness!" rejoined Revati in an ecstasy of admiration. "Ah—ha! he is wise like the swan that takes up the milk of truth from the water of error, and is zealous for the good of others."

"Under the mother-in-law's watchful eye," continued the Doctor unfolding his plan, "the bride will lead a student's life. Is it not so planned?" asked he of the fifteen-year-old bridegroom. Greatly abashed Rúpchand's head drooped lower and lower and Gopi Chand marking his brother's confusion smartly cried to the amusement of the company, "Why! he is actually weeping at being deprived of his doll, besides being made to continue his studies."

"Eh, Gopi! 'the doll' is too often thrust on one before the wisdom tooth is cut!" rejoined the Doctor sighing. "Custom having selfishly destroyed the shield of self-command makes the youthful progenitor blush at being called *father*. Alas! it has robbed youth of its youth!"

"Shiv! Shiv! Elder brother takes life so seriously, whilst all is Spring," murmured the light-hearted Gopi, and continuing to chaff the bridegroom, "Eh! turned tutor to your wife? Chiranjív—long may you reign; but, Punditji, begin with the verb 'to love,'" kept the friends in laughter. But the wise dames considering the plan most injudicious held up their fingers warningly. In fact, it seemed nothing short of a miracle that husband and wife brought up together at that dangerous age should not come to grief. Gravely shaking their heads, they clamoured round the Doctor with wild exclamations, "Do you expect wonders in this

Age of Sin? Can butter be near fire and yet not melt?"

"I believe in their better self, and no anxiety disturbs my calculations—'trust begets trustworthiness,'" was Ravi Sarmá's confident reply that suppressed the smouldering fire of doubt in moral incompetence. In course of time little Moti began to enjoy the Vernacular studies, with lectures from various Sanskrit authors, and instead of her eyes being inflamed by bitter tears of separation from old associates, she found her husband's home brighter than that of her parents, where she usually spent a couple of months in the year. But to be freed from the trammels of conventional modesty, sitting cramped and speechless for hours together, with the veiled head kissing the ground, was the greatest boon of all. On her companions chaffing her of immodesty, at being unveiled before her husband and the elders, she modestly replied, "Oh, sisters, our precious Ramáyana teaches, that a pure mind is a safer veil than one curtained between walls and doors!" Cherished like a delicate blossom, with wholesome surroundings and healthy education of the mind and the body, Moti's flower-like innocence was tainted neither by precocious development nor premature maturity, and when Amar Devi paid them a visit, the Consummation Ceremony had been performed.

Since Dr. Ravi Sarmá's resignation his circle of English acquaintances had greatly diminished. Failing them Kusum found herself more at home among the Eurasians than her own people. She had to prepare no deep thoughts to beguile them; but it was pleasant indeed, to prattle and recount the wonders of the Upper stratum to the eager ears of Mrs. Blake, who debarred from the celestial sphere found some grace to breathe the atmosphere of one who had alighted from there. Whilst the Doctor was busy visiting, his listless spouse, suffering from nerves, usually held a levee, with the nondescript set coming and going at all horse of the day. In amazement Amar Devi gazed at the peculiar mixture, and as the

hostess remarks in an undertone, "I have invited no Hindu ladies to meet you—they are so dull, stupid," she flushes up hotly. "Stupid!" exclaims she indignantly. "Rather remarkably intelligent. But Fortune has certainly favoured you. Well, associate to ennoble by your life the less fortunate. The subtle influence of example is magnetic, eradicating rooted sentiments." Though nurtured and educated in a different atmosphere to her narrow-minded sisters, nevertheless, Amar Devi invariably found something in common to evoke sympathy. Besides being a Cosmopolitan and catholic in her views she moved freely among them, and instead of ferreting and unpleasantly harping on their fossilised prejudices, that would have severed them as far as the Poles, her warm, genial nature tended to draw them closely together. Indeed, it was remarkable that at times, the stringent caste-rules relaxed most radically, and toning the differences, blended the divergencies into a pleasant bond of friendship. "Oh, they are logs of wood," continues Kusum criticising her unenlightened sisters severely. "Nothing better than domestic drudges—child-bearing machines! Shiv! how I have laboured for them, writing essays, delivering lectures to patronise the University Education, but to no purpose."

"So, young India is awakening to discern," rejoins Amar Devi. "Then there is hope of success, and Lady Graduates should take the cue from their experienced brothers. In imitating the New Woman, why merely ape the Cap and Gown and not dive deeper to the foundation of her education, which alas! how different. Moreover, remembering that Hindu women are just awakening from the Sleep of Ignorance in which they have been steeped for generations, wisely adopt the Golden Mean of our judicious Doctor, and establish a simpler education on national lines, with Moral and Religious culture and a most careful training in household duties. Yes, indeed, forward Progress by an education that will benefit society at large instead of the favoured few."

"Capital!" cries Gopi Chand. "Having these views, you may teach my wife the English alphabets even backward, and I'll not murmur," whilst Kusum irritated at Amar Devi's narrow-mindedness whispers to Mrs. Blake, "How mean-spirited! Envious of my attainments! She desires us to know enough chemistry to keep the pot boiling, and geography enough to know the different rooms in the house. Yes, to be sure, no better than accomplished cooks and play-things of man!"

"O Lord!" consoles the confidante in deep tones of the *chhi chhi* accent. "Though she has been to England, she cannot hold the candle before you. Pooh! nothing to compare!"

"Well, every one to his taste. Some like radish, some rich cream!" responds Kusum with a contemptuous toss of her head, "and certainly the University training ennobles—purifies the taste. What! take the cue from the experienced brothers who desire their palates indulged and throw cold water on our logic and philosophy? Indeed!" and she indignantly snaps her fingers at them. "But mark Miss Temple Orme," continues she with an ecstatic glow on her countenance, "the first LL. D. the Orion of the London University. Here is a picture for imitation and to agitate—to fight manfully to have the legal profession thrown open to women. Ah!" sighs she disappointedly, "I am sure I was meant for a lawyer!"

"You are led astray by Quixotic dreams," remarks Amar Devi shaking with suppressed laughter. "As it is the profession is at a discount, except for the fortunate few, and if women overrun their field, they'll also collapse."

"My poor, deluded sister-in-law!" cries Gopi compassionately. "Even now men cannot keep their pots boiling, and like gnats the Land Alienation Act has driven the lawyers from the Frontier."

"Men are selfish—desiring the sweets for themselves and dregs for the weaker sex—and no arguments will convince me," exclaims she excitedly. "I say again and again—shall proclaim it from the heights

of the Himálaya that the University Education is A 1. Come one come all and join this, for it tends to better equip a wife as a help-meet; indeed, elevates her to share the noble sentiments of her husband, and to further his lofty aspirations." As strange, incongruous couples float before her mind's eye, Amar Devi bursts into a merry peal remarking, "Nature is fond of freaks; or perhaps Fate (karma) sometimes forms remarkable unions like the 'Beauty and the Beast.'"

"It happens in other climes besides India," observes Gopi, and opening Tennyson's Locksley Hall, in which the squire rails at his shallow-hearted Amy, who has jilted him for a wealthier man, but of a coarse texture, pompously reads out the passage for the benefit of the deluded Kusum,

"Yet it shall be: thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathise with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is: thou art mated with a clown,
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent his novel force
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse."

"'Better than his dog!' 'dearer than his horse!'—noble sentiments! lofty aspirations!" adds he with an ironical smile.

"Mind your business," retorts Kusum curtly. "Dogs may bark but the wise elephant moves at his measured pace," whilst chaffing Amar Devi she remarks, "Ah—ha! we'll soon see you drudging like Cinderella, when your father arrives."

Desiring rest with some light work, Dr. Gyán Chand had taken eighteen months' furlough, and to the joy of his friends, had joined the Bar at Núrpur. Shortly after Amar Devi was settled down in her new home, one morning when at her studies, she was taken unawares by her young friends. "Nice way to mind your pots and pans!" cries Kusum entering and as she glances at the work Amar Devi was reading

with her uncle, she utters an hysterical shriek, "Heavens! Yoga Vasishtha above all!"

"Shame! shame! young girls should not indulge in naughty books!" reproves Mrs. Blake imagining that it contained some wild intrigues. Unheeding her friend, Kusum continues in a bantering voice, "Alas! all are sleepers in a night of delusion, with this delusive world as evanescent as dreams! Yet behold this showy establishment! What hypocrisy! And life how fickle; enjoyments most transient, with the body subject to decay! Nevertheless, my friend, you are not wrapped in sackcloth and ashes, but evidently in silken folds, and enjoying the cream of this earth. Alas! alas! what humbug—counselling others to be 'drudges,' whilst you are feeding on celestial food!"

"Shame! shame! is it so bad as that" enquires the confidante concernedly.

"Leads one astray," adds Gopi seriously. "Straight to—"

"Where? oh where?" cries the alarmed lady.

"To—to the jungles!"

"Good Lord preserve us!—so wild—so boorish!"

As amidst much laughter Amar Devi leads them through the handsome suite of rooms in perfect order and sweet with the scent of flowers, she reveals the mystery of her housekeeping. "With a staff of servants," remarks the housekeeper, "there remains little for me except to supervise. This is all important for 'As the king so the subject,' and it requires a sharp eye to make each one fulfil his duty methodically and at the proper time; nevertheless in an emergency I can put my hand to anything." "Trash!" murmurs Kusum disappointed at not finding her picking the grit from grains, or cutting vegetables as it is customary in Hindu homes to the neglect of graver duties. "Meddle less with philosophy and learn that those who live in glass-houses should not throw stones at others;" whilst the busy-bee Champá enjoying the neatness falteringly whispers to the hostess, "How do you manage? I wish a fairy would teach me."

"With pleasure."

"Can it be possible?" exclaims the astonished Champá. "Little Moti and I thought you lived up in the clouds!" To undeceive her mind that she was not unapproachable, Amar Devi that very day overhauled Champá's remarkable almirah, the contents of which no European can guess. Betwixt laughter and wild exclamations of "fie! fie!" packets of sugar, sweetmeats, almonds, raisins and a medley of things came tumbling from the folds of soft mulls and silken textures, that had been carelessly thrust in. Every day a room was taken in hand, and Kusum determined not to be outshone by her inferiors, forgot her nerves, and made such a smart clearance that it quite delighted the amiable Doctor. Besides, the approaching Diwáli Festival had trimmed the Hindu homes with as clean a coating as the fashionable Bungalows at Christmas time. Day by day the place grew more animated with festive preparations in rich cakes, and rolling hundreds of wicks for the earthen lamps soaking in water to be trim for the illumination, whilst amidst laughter and repartee exciting games of cards and stakes on 'odd and even' engaged the leisure hours. Glorious was the night of the Diwáli, and like a star attended by satellites, the house gleamed amidst myriads of soft lights. Shimmering in gold and tinsels the inmates flitted like gloworms, with torch in hand to relight the extinguished lamps. As the soft breeze wafted the tempting odour of the rich cakes, it drew the restless Gopi towards the dexterous confectioners. Spying Kusum busy, he cosily nestled beside her, eulogising the delicacies, and coaxing to be fed by her lotus hands. As the cakes marvellously disappeared his satisfaction increased the rapturous exclamations, "Thus, indeed is life worth living." But when in his eagerness he snapped at her fingers up rose Kusum, and chased him with the hot ladle. Dodging in and out he was caught under the arm of Mohan Dás, and as he was led away, the delinquent sent a parting shot of thanks at the sister-in-law he enjoyed chaffing.

Bhúlgaye rág rang, bhúlgaye phakarí,
Tín chíz yád rahí, *non, tel, lakarí !*
All mirth and dance, the lightness of the heart,
Are of the past, the saucy tongue moves slow,
And now from morn till eve three needful things,
Salt, Oil and *Wood*, are ever in my mind.

"Come. Shiv be praised! I'll show thee a sight or two to-night, that will set thee to a livelier tune," broke in Mohan Dás, deep in thought over the mystic science of the Tantras. "This is the day for witchcraft. Say dost thou wish a spell to subdue hearts or check refractory spirits? No! Nevertheless follow me, and watch the fun."

He led him up the terrace, where in the solitude Dr. Ravi Sarmá, having performed the worship to the goddess of wealth, was intoning the Gopál Sahásra Náma, which is supposed to have the efficacy of showering manifold blessings through the ensuing year. Notwithstanding his curiosity as merry shouts from the gay revellers came floating above, it was too much for the restless Gopi to sit cross-legged in the attitude of a devotee, and mumble mystic verses. Seized with cramps and impatience, he sprang up, like jack in the box to be pulled down by a firm hand and set to order. The games being denied, he fell to dozing, when at midnight a sudden crimson flame startled him with a shuddering horror that set his heart throbbing. Awed, he gazed at an inflamed earthen vessel, rolling like a ball of fire in the vault of heaven. As propelled by magic, it sped onward to its destination. Mohan Dás, who had a firm grip of his agitated friend, remarked, "Behold! the Messenger of Death! some miscreant has plotted to destroy his enemy by witchcraft, and the instant that enchanted vessel falls on that unfortunate's home, he will expire! But by Shiv's grace, I'll cast it adrift and save the victim. As the Tántrik, softly murmuring incantations, began to cast handfuls of coloured rice, intermixed with mustard seed, the vessel, like a loose flame, came floating

downwards. Nearer and nearer as it approached them, a creepy sensation seized the loquacious Gopi. Struck dumb with fear, he lay crouching on the ground in a pool of cold sweat. Suddenly, at the command of Mohan Dás the enchanted vessel stood within half a yard of them. Being assured that no ill would befall him Gopi spasmodically opened his eyes, to close them the next moment. But curiosity overcoming his temerity, he gazed into the enchanted vessel, and beheld to his astonishment a figure of dough, not clothed, but pierced by countless needles, and nestling among shrimps, a phial containing liquor, and a lamp with four wicks. Determined to checkmate the evil-doer, Mohan Dás recommenced the incantations, when up soared the vessel into the heavens. But as he began to cast handfuls of the charmed ingredients towards a tree hard by, it began to revolve like a whirlwind, and eager to fasten on its victim made a rush downwards.

Nearer and nearer as the enchanted vessel descended, the heavens suddenly crimsoned with a brilliant flash that seemed like the light of the dying spirit at its last gasp. But whirling as it came in contact with the branches, the tree was cleft in two, and fell with an agonising crash. Dr. Ravi Sarmá's meditation was ruined, whilst Gopi imagining that he had obtained a new spell of life rushed downstairs, with cries of terror, "Save! Save! I come from the realms of Death!" As he recounted the night's adventure to the terrified card-players, their hearts stood still, expecting every moment the Messenger of Death to stand amidst them.

But the zealous Revati with her faith firm in Lord Ráma's power and grace was able to confront any supernatural spirit. Arising she drenched her son with the holy water of the Ganges. Purified, his eyes longingly turned towards the flavoured delicacies, and as he whispered to Kusum, "The sight of those brings me comfort and strength," she indulged her wild brother-in-law again. Soon Gopi's spirits began to rise; yea,

soared higher than even the enchanted vessel of destruction, and to the merriment of all, he lustily broke into—

Bhúlgaye rág rang, bhúlgaye phakarí,
Tín chiz yád rahí, *nun, tel, lakarí* !
All mirth and dance, the lightness of the heart,
Are of the past, the saucy tongue moves slow,
And now from morn till eve three needful things.
Salt, Oil and *Wood*, are ever in my mind.

LOVE CONQUERS PRIDE.

"Ráma! Ráma! Good-day to you," exclaimed a ferryman resting on his haunches and straightening his back in the midst of unloaded goods.

"Blessings—blessings," replied Pundit Mának Chand joining him. As his eye glanced at the bags of grain scattered on the embankment, he added, "The wind blows fair for thee, and business seems brisk. But, son, keep a thought for me as well. My lad is—is —" and heaving a deep sigh ceased. "Yes, the thought that my Nandkumár is twenty-five and yet unmarried," cried he mournfully "sits like a nightmare on my mind. Yea, even the spittle in my mouth seems to choke me. Thy boat is ever plying to and fro. Good son, have thy ears open and seek me a daughter-in-law. Sure the goddess of wealth will smile on thee ten-fold more."

Promising to keep a vigilant eye, the request was not forgotten, particularly as a Hindu considers it meritorious to convert "two hands into four," and happily settle a pair in life. Soon after the conversation, when sailing through Anantpur the ferryman slackened his barge on catching sight of his venerable acquaintance, whom fortune had enriched for his piety, waist-deep in water, and his lips moving in devotion. Being aware that Pundit Sital Parsád possessed a marriageable daughter, he carefully broached the subject with a flattering account of pleader Nandkumár, and virtues too numerous to recount; whilst he lauded his brilliant career at the Bar, to the radiant Star, Dhruv, which guided his ferry.

"Oh, it's an excellent match," urged the ferryman warmly. "Indeed, it would be an honour to establish relationship with one so respectable, and a pedigree as pure as milk."

"Ah! I cannot soar so high as Pundit Mának Chand," replied Pundit Sital Parsád modestly. "Nevertheless, no more than a hair-breadth's difference lies between ourselves; but wealth is a potent factor as well, and many a one sues for my Hirá, who is nine, sweet of speech and tender as the lily. However, I'll remember thy words and consult her mother then—"

"Nay, Nay, Maharáj!" interrupted the ferryman determined to have the matter settled forthwith. "A woman's advice is full of 'buts' and 'ifs,' to be put off for the morrow. Pray, pray, don't lose this opportunity. But promise, yea, by the sacred stream in which you stand that should their horoscopes agree, you will sanction the alliance. Gladdened I'll depart beseeching Mother Parvati to be propitious to the pair, whom your unworthy slave has helped to unite." Duly the horoscopes underwent a careful examination by the respective parents, and on finding the stars entwining the destiny of pleader Nandkumár with Hirá, Pundit Mának Chand became radiant with joy. With buoyant strides and muttering, "God is great! my prayers are answered," he entered the zenána to spread the happy news. But Yamani seeing the withered face of her husband beaming with gladness, snatched the tidings from his lips crying elatedly, "Praise be to God! You bring me a bride to wipe the disgrace that overshadows our ancient lineage. Ah—ha—ha! My home that is so sad and still, will soon echo with mirth and music. Is it not so?" exclaimed she slapping her son on the back.

But pleader Nandkumár, whose voice ominously rolled from the Bar to the platform of the Congress, silently smiled and bashfully lowered his head. Indeed, though hero of the event, he was voiceless in the choice of his partner for life, for Custom has enacted that one's marriage is best in the hands of the Elders. From them it rests on the good faith of their priests and the barbers, whose important function is to arrange matches, as well as conduct the attendant ceremonies. Confiding in them

the respective parents are often lax to personally interview the parties immediately concerned, and should the discovery afterwards prove fatal, that either is blind or dumb or worse, then not even the Courts can repeal the 'sacred steps round the fire.'

Choosing an auspicious day, the functionaries of Sital Parsád arrived at Núrpur to perform the Engagement Ceremony. Elated Yamani issued Invitations far and wide, converting her lonely terrace into a garden of Spring, as her guests shimmering in silks of crimson and gold carolled like birds betwixt laughter and jokes. When the priest after an oration streaked pleader Nandkumár's forehead with the sacred vermillion, the lady guests drawing their veils deeper furtively glanced at the assembly of men gathered below. But as the priest continuing the ceremony, poured a rich harvest of fruit and sweetmeat into the lap of the Bridegroom-elect, crimsoned his mouth with the betel-leaf, and with a flourish, displaying the glittering coin to the assembly, placed five gold-mohars in his hand, they softly joined in the joyous chorus, "May happiness attend thee—good fortune be thine." At sight of the gold-mohars, Pundit Mának Chand's face glowed, but hearing low whispers, "What a god-send! Verily, a rich connection—from rupees five, he has lavished five gold-mohars," his eyes glittered with an evil look; whilst the proud lips disdainfully murmured, "So, my new relative desires to eclipse me—me with the peerless lineage. Shankar! I'll lower his nose—have him under my feet—but before the public."

Unhappily fortune had never smiled benignly upon the arrogant Pundit, and having to dispose of his children in marriage his finances ever remained low. Nandkumár could safely wait a while without coming to grief! But girls being dangerous like a 'bundle of snakes' must necessarily be united in wedlock before attaining the remarkable age of twelve. He scraped and saved, that fortunately helped him to save his ancestors from entering the purgatory Raurav, and himself from being put

out of the pale of respectable society. Nevertheless, the sacred duty towards his son lay heavily on his mind, and by dint the Pundit made the annas turn into rupees, that he safely counted into a brass goblet. As the rupees increased to hundreds, he deposited the money with the help of his wife into his Savings Bank—a cold but safe nest, presided by the household deity. But when a mate had been found for Nandkumár, and the Pundit came to draw upon his Bank to prepare for the happy event, the wavy top-knot of his head stood erect from fear. With wild exclamations of despair, as deeper and deeper he dug into the earth, the further he strayed from the scent of the goblet containing his treasure. Disappointed he threw down his spade, and furiously flashed upon his trembling wife, "Say, wretch, where?—where is the money?" Terror-stricken she gasped and beating her head answered in moans. Terrific he grew and made the earth quake with his thundering voice, as Yamani up-turning handfuls of the earth, searched with bleared eyes. "Sure—sure, it's not a needle to become intermixed. Indeed, nothing more nor less, it's—yes, the money is lying in thy mother's lap," added he with a bitter taunt. In the midst of the jarring duet Nandkumár calmly broke in, "As none knew your secret, it is quite possible the treasure has changed position."

Hope reviving, the Pundit recommenced the search with greater vigour, whilst Yamani between sobs placed her sharp ear against the ground; but unable to detect the timbre of the goblet taking a circuit round the world, the pursuit had to be abandoned with sighs of resignation, "Ah! who can fight against the decrees of Fate. We must reap as we have sown." However, years afterwards and when the ashes of the Pundit calmly slept in the Ganges, the goblet was accidentally unearthed in an adjoining house that belonged to the good Doctor Ravi Sarmá. Thus it happened that the marriage of the unfortunate Nandkumár was again postponed. But when he was in a position to marry, discreet mothers coldly

shrugging their shoulders, passed him over with murmurs, "Be sure there is something radically wrong that he is unmarried—others are fathers by this;" whilst the grasping fathers asked fanciful prices in exchange for their girls. So after much anxiety and patience not only the gold-mohurs but little Hírá herself was a god-send to calm his turbulent life.

The merry-making of a wedding generally lasts from three days to an unlimited period, and Pundit Mának Chand determining to appear not only imposing, but to make his weight felt on the purse of his rich connection mustered a retinue of his caste-folks with the illustrious pedigree. They were warmly welcomed; the Bridegroom-elect gazed at approvingly, whilst the Pundit's affability sprinkled with wild discourse enslaved the tender-hearted Pundit Sital Parsád who, when next at his ablutions, stood longer in the stream thanking heaven for the unexpected blessings. Indeed, the courtesy of Mának Chand was inimitable, for though a shade more important in the scale of Bráhmanhood, he had actually consented and condescended to partake of the 'rice-breakfast' (kachchi rasoi) following the marriage ceremony from one who was a hair-breadth lower in the Brahm strata. His complaisance was surpassing, and the feet of the guileless Sital Parsád touched neither heaven nor earth, but lightly bounded in the air. The Bride being his only daughter, and favourite of the family, the wedding presents were unusual, and the glitter sorely tried not only Mának Chand's eyes but his temper as well. Silent and with compressed lips he noted all, and on his caste-folks loudly praising the brilliants, his countenance glowed with the chaste light of purity (satogun) that is said to be inherent in a Bráhman; whilst abounding in charity and tenderness to others' feelings viewed all impartially (sam-drishti). But with the approach of dawn when the 'sacred steps round the fire' had secured unto him his prize, Mának Chand changed like the chameleon to a sickly green that should never be in the composition of a Bráhman, and showed his true colour. Puffed with

pride he became inflated like a toad, and as he sat cross-legged at the 'rice-breakfast' the essence of Bráhmanism oozed through the pores of his body in wild perspiration; whilst his dark, hollow mind became filled with the foulness of a low-born churl (rajogun). As with folded hands Pundit Sital Parsád begged of the illustrious relative to begin the breakfast, he graciously smiled towards his caste-folks murmuring, "A good appetite, brothers." Ill at ease they wriggled uncomfortably, and an ominous silence fell. On the soft voice of the host renewing the request, Mának Chand's face became distorted with rage and stammering blustered, "Dare—dare you ask me—me to the 'rice-breakfast.' Shankar! I'd not spit on it. You have wealth, I have pedigree!" If the most destructive cannon had fallen in their midst, it would not have caused greater injury and heart-burn, than Pundit Mának Chand's heartless conduct. As if the germs of the plague had begun to float in the fuming platters, all, but one, moved away in terror from the sumptuous repast; whilst the sensitive Sital Parsád stunned from the blow gently chided, "Brother you may have well-dispensed with the 'rice-breakfast,' and not thrown dust at me in public. Besides," added he proudly, "I did not seek your patronage—my daughter had many offers."

"Then—then you are welcome to keep her," insolently snarled Mának Chand with a bitter laugh. "I'll marry my son to another!"

Wounded and with scalding tears coursing down his face he tried to overcome his son-in-law's scruples. But the stern look of his father betraying his thoughts, "Mind, no nonsense. Until my death you are in leading strings," made the Bridegroom quake and silently hold aloof. But Dr. Ravi Sarmá's eyes filled with moisture, and moved by pity he pacified the host. Seeing the unfitness of the times, he remained silent, for his liberal views would have no more impressed the orthodox company than if he had tried to dent the Himálaya with his head. Applying his Golden Mean principle, he soothed

the distressed man and cheerily remarked, "Come, Maharáj, order your 'baked cakes' (pakki rasoi). They are infinitely better than the wrangling 'rice-breakfast.'" But grinding his teeth, as if he would like to see Mának Chand pounded to powder he sternly rebuked him, "Disgraceful! Fie! Live not by dead bones. But let thy own worth revive the dead!"

The wind carried away the wise words for Mának Chand had been working himself to a fearful passion, and having levelled his blow, fell down in a fit. But neither his relatives' shameful conduct, nor his well-merited indisposition affected the volatile Gopi Chand. Indeed, if the lord of day had taken a wrong course, and set the whole world into confusion it would have hardly scared him from his light pace. Seeing the company moodily sitting with their heads pillowed on their palms, he sneezed and sneezed most dolefully, until the air that seemed heavy with sniffling sighs turned to light laughter. The absurd hilarity, spreading from one to the other, the unpleasantness was forgotten in a good 'baked-cake breakfast.'

When the drums began to muster the bridal-party homeward, and the pipes fluted the farewell, up started Gopi and his privileged relationship permitting him to instal himself beside the timorous Bride, he joined in the loving benedictions, "May your wedded joy increase daily and long live a happy wife." But uncomforted Hirá shrieked hysterically as the Nurse tried to tear her away from the arms of her mother who wept, for her pain at parting was equal to the joy of having a son-in-law. With promises and tender words Gauri soothed the distressed daughter, whilst she whispered to Nandkumár, "She is but a child; guard her as the eye-lids guard the eyes. Yes, indeed, on her welfare rests my happiness." But as the Nurse carried the disconsolate Bride to the palanquin impatiently waiting outside, the house became filled with bitter cries, "Oh! Oh! Mother. Why must I go from home? Do—do send for me at once."

"Hush! hush! my parrot," cried Gauri running and clasping her once more and again. "Don't fret—I have packed thy favourite dolls. Amuse thyself and be obedient to thy mother-in-law. Go—go birdie," yet straining her more closely to her heaving bosom. But as the Nurse wiping her tear-stained face grumbled, "You are a greater baby than the child," she wrenched herself away sobbing, "Yes, my maina-bird, in a week, just a week, thy Nurse will bring thee home."

When the procession reached Núrpur louder and louder rose the music of the pipes and drums; fairy-like balloons floated in the air; rockets soared sky-high and fell like a shower of stars in the streets, that made the lads join the bridal-party with merry shouts, "Long life to pleader Nandkumár;" whilst a dazzling host of eyes peeped from windows and terraces. As they stopped at the threshold, Yamani assisted with her fair party to welcome the young couple, delightedly waved the lustral lamp above their heads, and with warm greeting scattered silver amidst the scrambling crowd. But as the Bride sobbing entered the new home, and prostrated herself at her future mistress' feet, Yamani took her in her lap, and consoled her with many soothing words, "Fear not, I'll cherish thee as the apple of my eye." Notwithstanding the comforting words, the week of 'honey-moon' was a trying ordeal, and the tears constantly gushed from her smarting eyes. From perfect freedom in her own home to laugh and talk at her desire, modesty and high-breeding kept her lips sealed, except to answer in whispers girls of her own age; whilst enveloped in her veil, she sat doubled with her chin almost touching the ground. However, for the benefit of each guest the Nurse raised it for a moment, and though the interviews were trying, the air was refreshing. "What a winsome face!" remarked one criticising at the Bride, who closing her eye-lids had bent her head lower, for to encountor the eyes of the people would be brazen-faced immodesty. "May you soon be the mother of sons."

But ére she departed in arrived another exclaiming, "Oh! how small and thin. But, sister, when she puts on more flesh she'll be a beauty. May you remain a wife all your life."

Between benedictions and criticisms of the lovely jewels, the day passed swiftly, and as the evening advanced, the spirits of the congregated females overflowed in humourous songs and sharp jokes passed at the expense of the bridal-party. But the homesick maid wearied and glad to have their attention withdrawn from her nodded behind the veil. However, she was soon relieved from her stiff posture, and no sooner the necessary ceremony was over than she was placed on the bridal-bed, handsomely mounted in silver, and interlaced with garlands for the happy occasion. But as she lay among the roses, no strange emotion stirred within her heart to fill it with sweet thoughts; nay, not even did curiosity awaken her to glance round the decorated room festooned in jasmine and shimmering beneath the soft beams of the coloured chandeliers. Wearied the Bride fell into a calm sleep in the arms of the Nurse lying beside her. As merrier and merrier the company became, the place resounded with wild laughter and strange jokes, when a couple of dames seizing the bashful Bridegroom thrust him into the bridal-chamber. But before the door closed the Nurse had crept out like a thief, leaving Nandkumár master of all he surveyed. As his eyes fell on the fragile Blossom slumbering among the roses, he did not hasten to the nuptial bed to be locked in the loving embrace of his wife; nor, quivering with emotion open his arms to clasp her to his heaving bosom, but irritated paced the room, stopping now and then to darken the place to prevent inquisitive eyes prying into his disturbed thoughts and the sanctum. Lingering he gazed, and the more he became absorbed in the fair vision, the higher rose the temperature of his temper increased by the perfume of the roses and the slumbering moonbeams.

"What a fool's paradise they have sent me to," grumbled the thankless Bridegroom, and averting his

eyes from the fair sight; nevertheless, the fragrant scent of the roses seemed to allure him towards the floral-bed. "I'd have been far—far happier below with the youngsters than—than this tempting farce. Well, well, if heaven has nothing more in store for me, I can at least indulge in a sound sleep," and he threw himself beside the child-wife. The pleader was no light feather. The bed shaking beneath his weight, the Floweret started from her sleep and their eyes met. He sighed But no "blissful sighs," nor did they sit and gaze into each other's eyes,

"Silent and happy—as if God had given
Nothing else worth looking at on this side of heaven."

for Hirá terrified at the beard beside her hurriedly covered herself from head to foot, and lay like an Egyptian mummy; whilst the spasmodic sobs revealed that she was breathing.

"Hush! hush! Don't worry me—nor I thee," said the Bridegroom curtly and stretching himself among the roses. "Why dost thou still weep? Well—well, for peace sake let it be back to back," added he impatiently turning away his face. "That's a dead wall, and thou art safe and snug." Uncomforted and feeling insecure Hirá put out her hand to gain strength from her devoted Nurse. But finding her faithless, she gently edged further and further from the beard beside her, and forgetting in her excitement that a bed is not of unlimited breadth rolled off. A piercing cry made the Bridegroom jump up as if he had been pricked by the thorns of the roses and rush to her assistance. But hearing merry tittering from some unknown crevice, through which the outsiders were peeping in, he threw his precious burden among the roses and concealed himself. "Shankar! It's too bad of the noble Malabari to leave us in the lurch," grumbled the distressed Bridegroom. "He might have pushed the Question further and raised the age of girls to something sensible. Yes, a sage is warned not to look at a wooden doll even, lest it should ignite and consume him as fire does straw. Shankar! I make no

pretence to saintship, and yet—yet. Certainly the room is close. I am bound hand and foot—yet Malabari might have helped me out of the Infernal Region," and he pushed open the festooned casement. The fragrant air cooled his brow, and the room becoming flooded with a stream of soft light he murmured,

"Hail to thee, hail to thee, kindling power,
Spirit of Love, spirit of Bliss
Thy holiest time is the moonlight hour,
And there never was moonlight so sweet as this."

"Sweet!" muttered he bitterly and wandering back to the fair vision. "Cruel—consuming—shedding sparks of fire, with the floral-bed sharp with the sting of thorns." The timid Brids imagining that he was raging at her, wriggled in her bed and began a staccato music. Gently raising her, he placed her head on his lap, that increased her suffering, and the more he coaxed, the higher rose the tune. Finding a plateful of sweets beside the bed, he grabbed a handful to comfort her. But Hirá had so wound herself up, that the face was undiscernible, and not finding her mouth, put it into his own with, "Now hush—am I biting thee—strangling thee—that thou wishest to disgrace me? What! Thou'lt not mind," cried he sharply as the strain broke into a crescendo. "Then, come witches. Take—take this weeping girl. Run—run devils bite her. Well, well hush," adds he softly patting her. If she feared a strange beard before, now goblins and witches dance before her mind's eye eager to seize her. Trembling with fear, she awakened the house with her uproar. Suddenly the door opened, when the Bridegroom rushed below, and as his headache increased he cursed Early Marriage, with sighs at Mr. Malabari's want of zeal; whilst the Nurse pacifying the terrified Bride, passed the remainder of the night by her side.

After rain comes sunshine and the 'honey-moon' passed in discomfort and copious showers, the Nurse laid the bride in her mother's arms laughing and merry to be back to her loved home again. For two years she

enjoyed unalloyed happiness, with everyone making a fuss over her and adorned in the brightest of jewels, that she loved to display to her playmates. Thus she was content, and had no desire to fly to one whom she was taught to revere as her god, and in whose well-being her life-long happiness was centered; or to the mother-in-law to whom she must ever render implicit obedience. But on the death of Pundit Mának Chand, Yamani finding the house lonesome, hurried on the Second Marriage (Gowna). With exuberant affection she clasped the Bride to her heart, as brushing away the fast-falling tears she cried, "No more—no more will I grieve over my sorrows. In thee and thy offspring my life will be blessed."

With her thoughts occupied in the welfare of her children, her bereavement grew less poignant; whilst her attention became chiefly engrossed in her son's girl-wife. To see one in the prime of life and the other a fragile blossom of tender years, turned her eyes sore, and many a sleepless night she passed in rumination. But wonderful are the means and remedies that grey heads practise to defy nature and enforce maturity. Daily the barber's wife embellished her with cosmetics, cracked the joints of her supple body, and like india-rubber stretched it at all angles to add length and breadth. Enforced silence being considered a sign of modesty and virtue, the child-bride endured it without a murmur; but the rich dainties of crystallized sugar mixed with butter in the morning; almond paste beaten up in cream at mid-day, and clotted milk with rice of an evening made her shudder. In no wise could she escape them, for the anxious mother-in-law would trust them to no one; and gently holding her neck by the left hand she would day after day force the delicacies into her mouth, as if she were fattening an unfledged pigeon.

Speechless but tears streaming down her face, she patiently underwent the process of springing up early to respectable womanhood. Not trusting her dimmed

eyes month after month, Yamani spanned the child-wife's chest and waist, or measured her length and finding her expanding she would express her happiness in distributing sweets among her intimate friends whose vote of thanks, "May you soon have a grandson," made her heart flutter hopefully. Notwithstanding the unpleasantness, it was some diversion in the monotonous life for not being of the same degree of Bráhmanhood as Nandkumár, she was not permitted in the kitchen during the preparation of the 'rice-meal,' which Yamani always managed. Having finished her allotted work of cutting vegetables and picking grit from the grains, or answered her mother-in-law by nods and signs she would spend the day in yawns and silence; or becoming homesick give vent to tears behind her veil. But her mother-in-law was more indulgent than most mothers-in-law; and as it is deemed indelicate for husband and wife to sit, or talk, or eat together before their elders, Yamani would on some pretext or other send her for a while to the Bridegroom. Having made her charming in silks, glittering with ornaments, dressed her hair with a little trace of the vermilion in the parting, and dyed her finger nails and feet in hiná, she would casually remark, "Daughter-in-law! hand this betel-leaf and cooling drink in the next room." The mere mention of 'the next room,' made the Bride bashfully draw her veil deeper and retreat into a corner. "What!" cried Yamani sharply, "am I sending thee to another man that—that—is he not thy husband? Come my pretty one," adds she coaxingly, "I'll stand behind the door, whilst thou runnest in." With faltering steps and spilling half the cooling drink in her temerity, she entered the lion's den, and stood motionless beside him. "I am too busy," remarked Nandkumár dryly, and pretending to scan the newspaper. Nevertheless, having taken her in from head to foot, he blessed his dear mother for her tender care of his girl-wife. "Halo!" exclaimed he looking at the half empty tumbler, "thou hast finished off the sherbet before I have had a sip." As she shook

her head in self-defence, and showed him her wet dress on which it had spilt, the exacting master made her give it to him sip by sip, which he enjoyed with many smacks and exclamations, "It's—it's sweeter than honey. Now throw in the betel-leaf," and he opened his mouth that made the Bride smile and draw her veil deeper. But being lord and master he raised the floweret-hand with the betel-leaf to his mouth. "Shankar! it's—it's—eh! what dost thou deserve?" and for thanks pinched her cheeks. Whilst he chaffed her, the door gently opened, and in entered the Nurse. Startled, the tumbler fell from nervous hands, and the next moment she was enfolded in loving arms. As the old dame blessed and cracked her knuckles in joy, she gazed at her in happy surprise murmuring, "How thou hast sprung up!—as bright as the Autumn moon!" But Hirá desirous to be with her playmates rather than hear herself lauded, whispered, "Take me, good Nurse, take me home."

"Yes, yes, carry away the crabbed, homesick creature," exclaimed the dissatisfied husband, "Na kám kí, na káj kí, dushman anáj kí—a great nuisance, and of no earthly use to me or to any one."

"Eh, my young master! twelve months hence you'll sing another song!" rejoined the privileged Nurse, as she disappeared with her treasure. Thus another two years passed away between Hirá springing up into enforced maturity and going backwards and forwards to her mother's home. Since her marriage she had never spoken to her husband, nor replied to his queries, except in nods and signs. Although he had often tried to make friends with his wife, but her terrible sobs kept him at arm's length. Nettled, he kept his distance as well. But one night she rose to have a drink of water. The goblet was near the window, where he slept. Having satisfied herself, curiosity tempted her to see her husband's face on the quiet. With nervous hands, she gently drew aside the coverlet, and marked his features by the moon flooding the room with a soft light. The pleader who was wide-awake gazed

into her eyes, and as she started back, and was on the point of running away, strong arms encircled her. From henceforth he became very attentive to his Bride; but when the household was wrapped in mid-day siesta. It being considered the height of impropriety to be seen together by broad daylight, the greeting and meetings of the young couple became like those of two thieves. With a beating heart they slyly met to converse in whispers, and at every footfall fled apart to avoid detection. Day after day Hirá met with pleasant surprises in her room. Once she found a wax doll with the blooming cheek white-washed by the heat, occupying her bed, and often fruit and sweet cakes were left on the window-sill. But the pack of cards which Nandkumár brought united husband and wife together. It recalled her parents' home and Hirá played game after game unreservedly. They were so engrossed that neither of them saw the Nurse, who had just then arrived to take her mistress home. The game was at its height, the forfeit being a kiss. Hirá threw her hand down in despair, declaring that her husband had cheated from beginning to end. He like all tyrants claimed his forfeit and more, "Now say—"

"What?" asked she struggling in his arms.

"That—" with another kiss.

"I—I love thee," repeated she after him, and trying to disengage herself.

"Ráma! Three kisses for such sweet words."

There was a deliberate cough, followed by a chaffing ripple. Both started abashed and recognising the Nurse, Nandkumár pleaded with folded hands, "Don't—don't say a word to my mother. I ran away from the Courts just for a moment."

"Fie, Maharáj! Do you think me so green," exclaimed the Nurse, "Rest in peace and long—long be your bliss," and as she tenderly stroked Hirá who clung to her bashfully she playfully added, "Ah—ha! pleasantly the wind blows! when birds become fledged they leave their parents' nest to build their own; and lightly

may the cares of life fall on thee. The palanquin had better return home empty," and without waiting for a reply she walked out of the room, leaving the happy couple to themselves.

Barely fifteen years had passed over Hirá, when she became the mother of twin-girls. Though disappointed that the first-born was not a male child Yamani nursed them most tenderly, and considered herself living in her grand-children. But Hirá's joy was unbounded, and seeing her husband's affection increase day by day, she was as happy as the cuckoo. As etiquette prescribes they met with marked reserve and indifference in the presence of Yamani. But finding the night time short for their whispered conversation, they took the law into their own hands, and arranged a room where hay was stacked for their mid-day rendezvous. Shared with her beloved, the close unventilated place seemed to Hirá more delightful than Cupid's own couch, and though dark, his presence brightened it with sunshine. But as daylight is followed by darkness, so no joy is unalloyed, and when the babies began to toddle her troubles commenced. Notwithstanding her watchfulness they escaped her in the twinkling of an eye and crept into the kitchen to prattle with their grand-mother. Yamani dearly prized her grand-daughters, and indulged them to an excess. But her pride was as high-flown as that of poor Pundit Mának Chand's and she could never eradicate from her mind that their mother was an hundredth part less in Bráhmanhood than herself, whereas the infants in their wisdom regarding father, mother and the grand-mother all alike, they joyously crawled into the chouka—the space in which Yamani cooked the 'rice-meal,' and thus by their presence made the dishes unfit for her use. "Dur—dur! Begone! Away" cried Yamani one day driving away the miscreants with a long stick ere they had planted their angelic feet into the sacred precincts. Having often been reprimanded for the seeming negligence, Hirá rushed to rescue the troublesome twins, when the

mother-in-law broke into a profusion of unpleasant taunts, "Verily day by day thou art getting puffed and spoiled by affection. Nothing else but to eat and sleep, and thou canst not rise to mind the urchins even. Have a care, else I'll throw this burning pot at thy head," and she continued to rail at her parentage. Silence is golden, and Hirá had before meekly listened to abuse showered on her parents, but to-day indiscretion overcame her good nature, and her answer added fuel to fire. "True, no one calls his buttermilk sour. As for my lineage, that kindled fire is a witness, that we can trace it back to the seventh generation and more," said she with a heightened colour. "I did not come as a slave, but laden with wealth to your house," and as with streaming eyes she proudly bore away the precious burden, Yamani angrily flashed upon her, "Stay—stay I'll flay thee alive. There was a time thou wert dumb—then speech fell like sweet flowers. Now—now—since thou hast borne children thy words bear the sting of a scorpion. But fruits of ambrosia do not grow from a poisonous stock—thy pedigree!" cried she disdainfully.

Nandkumár entering Hirá's negligence and pertness, magnified into a hideous story, were poured into his ears with comments, "Thou must put a curb on her temper from now." Feeling uncomfortable and his conscience upbraiding him that he was leading a double life, he tried to swallow his 'rice-breakfast' quickly and depart. At the same time to sooth his mother he remarked, "You have always been so good and indulgent. She is still young. Bear with her a little." "Yes, yes, two have become one," cried Yamani jealously on finding that her son was trying to extenuate Hirá's conduct. "You are good and she is good—just a pair of paragons. I am nobody, now that my Pundit is in heaven," and she burst into a flood of tears.

"Put away this cruel thought," begged Nandkumár humbly clasping her by the feet. "You are the sole mistress—she your bond-woman, to be at your beck and call.

But hearken, good mother, the urchins you drive away from the kitchen—throw away the 'rice-breakfast' at their touch are—are, well, of my seed. Why not cast me aside as well?"

"Alas! alas!" exclaimed Yamani terrified at the idea that the wife was getting the upper-hand, and her son would slip from her control. "Love has made a puppet of thee. An enamoured man loses all sense and discretion. Why! thou art of my pure blood; whilst the babes of her flesh—a difference of heaven and earth."

Excusing himself that he was in a hurry to return to the Court he departed. But instead of going to attend to his cases, he softly threw a stone at Hirá's window, and she joining him both of them stealthily crept into the barn. But it was not the meeting of lovers, for coldly she sat apart, and stung by her mother-in-law's words she proudly spurned the hand of peace that her husband extended. "It cuts me to the heart," exclaimed Hirá between sobs, "that do what I may—even sacrifice my life serving you and mother-in-law, yet I can never rise to your level. Yes, I am good enough to bear you children, but not to hand the family a 'rice-meal.'" Burning with indignation she recounted the insults that she had borne since her marriage from his caste-relations, who at a 'rice-meal' Gathering drew their sari-skirts away, lest her touch should pollute them, and thrust her platter of food aside as if to a dog. "All this happens before my eyes," murmured Hirá, "yet alas! wretch that I am, with a heart harder than adamant—my life does not leave this body," and she fell sobbing on the ground.

"Sweet love, dispel this care from thy heart," pleaded Nandkumár drawing her to his breast, and consoling her with many soothing words. As he tenderly passed his hand over her brow, she thrilled beneath his loving caress, that seemed like balm healing the wound which rude words had caused. Comforted she whispered to him through smiling tears, "How cheerful

you make life; whilst the infants' smiles fill home with sunshine. Dear heart! at dawn when I lay the fragrant jasmine-wreath at Lord Ráma's lotus-feet I pray and pray, that whilst your image lives enshrined in the temple of my heart, I may ever shine in your grace. How sweet! yes, life would be full of bliss if—if this—"

"Thou lustre of my eyes," exclaimed the enamoured husband, pressing her more closely as if the strong arm would shelter her from all ill, "don't worry over this Knotty Question, but bear it with proud indifference. Oh, these terrible caste-restrictions! I am enmeshed and helpless. But some day a Manu will rise to give us more Light and Space. As for objecting to take a 'rice-meal' from thy rose-leaf hand—Nonsense! why I'd eat—" and fumbling about his pocket produced some tempting guavas that he had plucked from the garden. As bite by bite they began enjoying them together, the caste-restrictions evaporated, and they became united more closely. So absorbed were they in solving the Knotty Question that they kept no count of time, nor did they heed the Munshi, who had come in haste to recall his tardy master to his duty, coughing exasperately outside to attract his attention. Moreover, the twins had risen from the mid-day siesta and were restlessly crying for their mother. From room to room Yamani searched for Hirá but all in vain, and her heart began to throb with fear, imagining that she had fled to her parents'. As she moved about her eye fell on the Munshi idly pacing the garden. "Nice way to attend to your work," rebuked she sternly. "No wonder since some time the income of Punditji has become reduced."

"One cannot serve two masters at once," replied the Munshi philosophically, "and since Maharáj has taken to mid-day prayers and pújá, the wheel of Fortune has also turned!"

Before Yamani could inquire into his enigmatic speech, she had to go after the mischievous urchins, who

having been before in the barn with their parents ran and pushed open its door. At sight of Hirá reclining in the arms of her husband and enjoying a *bonne-bouche* her pulpy flesh shook like a pipal-leaf; the face turning yellow became inflamed with rage, whilst the lustrous eyes emitting fork-lightning her form eclipsed the happy pair with forebodings. She could not speak, but stood and stared aghast. Abashed at the presence of her mother-in-law, Hirá shrank within her trembling frame, and her anguish was as great as when an elephant quakes at the roar of a tiger.

"So this is your mid-day púját—worship!" muttered Yamani acridly, as Nandkumár overwhelmed with shame sprang up with a bound, and with bowed-head walked away in silence. Nevertheless, the *tableau* vividly moving before her mind's eye burned her with mad jealousy. At the idea that the youthful wife had gained influence over her husband, and reigning supreme she had become second in her son's affection, her mind became dark with bitter thoughts. The more she pondered, the more she soured, and her kindly nature turned as hard as the stone-insects; whilst the fountain of her affection for her daughter-in-law dried up in an instant. "Alas! this is the Age of Sin, with girls of this bold stamp," she moralised with deep sighs. "Had I been as cunning as the fox, I'd not have cherished a venomous reptile on my bosom. My delusion is dispelled and—and—" biting her lips turned to her daughter-in-law. Hearing the chilly words Hirá withered, but catching her furious glance, she fainted away in terror. When she regained consciousness, nothing unpleasant occurred. The couple had expected a stormy outburst, but Yamani's stern lips remained glued together and an ominous silence fell upon the happy home.

But when Nandkumár came in for his meal she affably remarked, "Son, it's good no other eyes but mine saw the tamáshá—*tableau vivant.* Ah well! Young men will be foolish. But from excess in

attachment disgrace is incurred. Be more circumspect—stain not thy lineage," and sprinkling him with the Ganges' water made him drink the lustral draught to cleanse away his impurity. Day by day Hirá attentively waited upon her mother-in-law, but her cold demeanour and watchful eye made her burn with anxiety; whilst for days no word passed between husband and wife. Thanking heaven that the storm had passed over without any disaster, he sent a covert message asking Hirá to meet him at night. There was no response, but sorrowfully hanging down her head, tears ran down her face. Night after night Nandkumár impatiently paced his room awaiting his tardy lady. One day as the hours turned into midnight, he crept to her door and gave a meaning cough. There was a gentle response, and when on tiptoe he entered her chamber, she started up in sweet surprise and sudden joy of deliverance. He beckoned to her to rise, but when she pointed below, and his eyes fell on her feet being bound to the bed, his face grew dark with rage, and he would have roared but that Hirá folding her hands besought him to be patient. Determined that the couple should see as little as possible of each other, Yamani had bound Hirá to the bed for security, and that she might not escape away by stealth, had attached the string to her own leg. Calming himself Nandkumár quietly unfastened Hirá and securing the rope to the bed, they disappeared.

"Alas! alas! For what offence has heaven put me to such intolerable distress," bewailed the young wife. "Ah! it is the result of my sins in a previous Birth."

"Hush—hush! 'Pleasure and pain are not permanent; they are ever coming and going,'" consoled the husband. "Some day thou wilt be the queen."

Finding the bird flown, Yamani blazed up like a fire on which butter has fallen. It was barely dawn when she started for the river-side, and between her ablutions complained to her friends that the daughter-in-law she had nourished and nurtured with her own hands was *this* and *that*; indeed, everything but what she should be.

"But, mother," remarked a young dame in extenuation, "Hirá seems so quiet and gentle."

"Ah! daughter, you do not know how double-faced she is," replied she sighing, "just a viper—worse than a weevil."

On returning home she sullenly sat on the terrace, cursing her fate and showering maledictions all round. In a second she was surrounded by the inquisitive neighbours, who listening to her woes lifted up their hands in stern rebuke against the young wife, and as one who should be shunned lest other homes become ruined by her shameful conduct "Yes, sisters, it is better for me to die," exclaimed Yamani weeping. "In this Dark Age a son kicks his mother and cherishes his wife. Alas! alas! she is a fire-brand. God created her to disgrace my family."

Owing to the confusion the kitchen-fire had not been lit, and as Hirá was beyond the pale to dish a 'rice-meal' for her husband, the servants rushed about seeking for an eligible caste-man to cook. Unable to secure one in the hurry, Nandkumár puffing and fuming had to make a light meal for himself. The stars began to glimmer, but neither Hirá nor her mother-in-law had tasted food. On the latter threatening that she would starve herself to death, the young wife placed her head at Yamani's feet, and besought her forgiveness; whilst Nandkumár terrified, begged her not to curse his home with her fasts; and apologising promised that in future his wife should not enter his room without her consent. Unbending, the causelessly-injured mother shook her head against peace; but when the twins entwining themselves nestled into her lap, the hatred towards her daughter-in-law was forgotten in the love of her grand-children and peace restored. It lasted but a short time, for the suspicion of the stealthy meetings of the young couple rankling in her breast, incited her to discharge a volley of verbal sallies. However much Hirá tried, there was no pleasing the envious mother-in-law. From being fondled she was treated like an underling, and found

fault with everything she did. In this uncomfortable state the position of pleader Nandkumár day by day grew most pitiable. He had strength to grapple with intricate cases, and contest them with great boldness; but to settle the senseless disputes of the two beings he dearly prized was beyond his power, and wore him out. No son and heir having been born to Hirá, Yamani heartlessly taunted and threatened her with a co-wife. Bursting with grief she tartly rejoined, "Thank heaven! I am no orphan, to be beholden to your crumbs. With my twins I'll go home."

"Do at once" urged Yamani. "May my son live long! Brahm preserving him, hundreds of wives could be secured, as one shoe wearing out another takes the place of the discarded!"

Pierced by the cruel words her eyes filled with tears, and as she turned away, encountered her husband remarking, "Here is a young lady who will teach you to knit baby-socks," and he introduced her to Amar Devi.

Among the Indians conversation does not open with the state of the weather. The strangers, as if they were bosom friends of long standing, at once launch into private enquiries regarding the husband, his children and his income! Being unmarried Amar Devi escaped this delicate cross-questioning and with, "How strange you are not yet married—must be very cold-hearted," Hirá poured out her joys and sorrows; headaches and heartaches to her sympathetic confidante. When they rose to part the distressed wife begged, "Do—do give me some charm to soften my mother-in-law. You have been to England and must know all!" Smiling at her earnestness, she promised her a philtre from her uncle, who was well-versed in the Tántrik mysteries; and pitying her narrow, lonesome life, frequently dropped in to cheer her. One day she found her in great distress, with her face buried in the pillow, sobbing her heart out; whilst the twins terrified at the confusion kept up a loud chorus with tearless eyes. Amar Devi having quieted

them, Hirá exclaimed between spasmodic sighs, "Yes, yes, cast them into the well—but first throw me in. They are the bane of my life—will be my death," and bemoaning broke out into a long wail, with comments on the ebullition of her mother-in-law's fiery temper. Angered at the presence of the incorrigible twins in the kitchen, Yamani had thrown the tongs at her with such force, that they had left two deep gashes on her arm. Whilst she poured out her grievances, Nandkumár entered looking fierce and stormy. Trembling that she was going to be scolded Hirá drew her veil deeper and shrank into a corner; but Amar Devi remarked, "Good morning! I thought you had left for Santpur."

Would you believe—actually—" stammered the pleader in explanation. "I was getting into the Train, when an Englishman positively banged the door in my face. Would not let me put my foot into the compartment."

"That was too bad," rejoined the young lady, "for I know too well how polite they can be. In Europe they not only move up for one, but should there be no room, a gentleman will politely give his seat to a lady, and reach his destination standing. But *might* is *right*, and whom has power not puffed?"

"Indeed! the English never conquered us—"

"Well, our ancestors were hardly so generous as to hand over the country," interrupted Amar Devi, "but whilst they were wrangling like the Kanouji Bráhmans—*three* members in a family with *thirteen kitchens*—over 'touch-me-not,' the English being sensibly welded into *one whole* made themselves cosy in *one kitchen*, and 'Britannia rules the wave.' Yes, the treatment must have made you quite sore—."

"Sore!" broke in Nandkumár grinding his teeth. "Cuts me to the heart. Actually abused and thrust me out as if I were the lowest of the low. Why, I do believe you are enjoying a laugh at my expense," exclaimed he shortly, as he caught Amar Devi smiling. "Shankar! English life and living

hardens—freezes the warm spring of sympathy. Certainly, I'd be more compassionate to another's woe—to the injuries of my countrymen."

"There is no doubt, you mean what you say," replied Amar Devi in a serious voice. "Moreover, I am glad you feel the insult so keenly for pain makes one sensible to another's suffering," and drawing the trembling Hirá to her side showed the bruised arm remarking, "if you feel incensed at the unfriendly conduct of our 'Aryan Cousin' what must be the anguish of this unprotected wife to be daily insulted, and for what?—there being a hair-breadth's difference in the lineage of you two! 'Where women are honoured, there dwell the gods,' so teach our Shástras. If you, the husband, do not esteem her—allow her the privileged dignity that should be of the wife—of the mother of your children, then who else is likely to respect her?" Seeing the deep cuts his eyes darkened with anger, and piteously crying, "Ráma! Ráma!—How sad—How terrible!" disconsolately murmured, "I am heartily sick of the two—ever and for ever wrangling. My situation is just like the tongue in the mouth. At every move I am in terror of being nipped."

"Why! whose nose has been clipped?" questioned Dr. Ravi Sarmá entering, but seeing Hira's bruises stopped jesting. "This is too bad, Nandkumár," exclaimed he in a sad but stern voice. "That unpleasant scene at your wedding did not presage that the little Bride was going to lie on a bed of roses; but, certainly I did not expect such cruelty during your rule. Shame! shame on you, who form an exemplary Pillar of Society—strive to realize national unity at the Congress, and seek to set right the affairs of the country, yet permit this pernicious disunion (phút) to be rife in your midst. Charity begins at home."

"Believe me it is not my fault," muttered the pleader beating his head despairingly, and crying out against Time, Fate and Heaven. "I'd have them live peaceably—happily, but woman is the root of all evil.

Alas! Caste has me in its meshes, and I have not your strength to step beyond its limit."

"True, man fears the world, but braves the Divine Eye," remarked the Doctor. "Despite the exalted principle that teaches the Brotherhood of man (samdrishti) yea, inspires one with tenderness not only towards man, but even the dumb brutes and the flowers, we day after day violate the doctrines of our Shástras. Well, 'good must come of good and ill of evil.' How glorious was that Period when the Bráhman's word was law—to bless or to curse! But since, selfishness and pride have uprooted the sovereign Truth, he has sunk—indeed more than the other castes—to a depth that is indescribable!"

"Nevertheless, the elevation of India rests on the enlightenment of the Bráhmans," remarked Amar Devi hopefully, "when united in one fellowship of joys and pains they will work in noble Brotherhood. I have no doubt that some day Pundit Nandkumár will fulfil the sentiment he expressed a moment before, and he will do unto others as he would that they should do unto him."

The disagreement breaking up the happy home, each nursed his grievance in a sullen fit. Being a holiday Nandkumár sat in his Study, listlessly turning over the leaves of his book and brooding over his troubles. Hearing a piercing cry, he started to his feet and as enquiring rushed within to Hirá, Yamani acridly murmured to the barber's wife braiding her hair, "She," meaning Hirá, "is always making a fuss to call her husband to her side. May heaven protect me from such a daughter-in-law. She is just a thorn in my side."

But pale and paralysed the pleader gazed at a large snake gliding away; whilst Hirá clasping the terrified twins to her heaving breast, and rubbing the back of her head, moaned, "O Mother Párvati! Save—save—I am dying—am bitten." The next instant the whole house was in a commotion with the neighbours

crowding the place; whilst Dr. Ravi Sarmá attended on the patient. Bewildered, Nandkumár anxiously watched with blood-shot eyes, as they marched Hira backward and forward to keep her awake by constant motion. Seeing her droop, his head fell low in grief and he wept in silence. "Alas! this is the result of my sins, and punishment has fallen upon me as a bolt from heaven," exclaimed he tortured with cruel pangs, and in anguish his lips moved in prayer, "Mercy—Mercy immortal Shiv! Hear my petition and remove this distress."

"Take courage my son," comforted Yamani who stood looking on with a hard-set face, and a stony heart. "No one can war with the decrees of Fate. Show more fortitude."

"Ah! yes, take courage," said Hirá gently. "Cease to sorrow on my account. Heaven bless you" added she trembling with emotion. "And you, my guide forgive," remarked she to her mother-in-law. "Pardon my heedless—childish offences, and—and testy temper." Melting at the soft, winning accents, and seeing all eyes swimming in tears, Yamani broke out into loud lamentation, and tearing her hair wildly cried, "Live—live my pretty bird. Alas! was it to see thee perish before my dimmed eyes—to pass away in the morning of life that I nourished thee on my breast." Seeing her husband suffering intolerable anguish, Hirá tenderly laid her hand on him with words of comfort. "Be not distressed. Heaven grant you peace, for you had made this earth a paradise, and it seemed so sweet to dwell with you. Now I go—nay, weep not—to await you in that blest Sphere that holds faithful wives."

"Hush—hush—torment me not," said Nandkumár shaken by grief. "In the twinkling of an eye young Spring has passed into frosty Winter. I have done with life."

Flurried and hardly able to take a step steadily, Gauri entered and bathed the fast-sinking daughter with a flood of tears. "Yes, mother, enfold me in your

arms," said Hirá nestling, "and let me Rest." Dashing the fast falling tears, she revived her with encouraging words, whilst setting aside the English treatment she sent for a snake-charmer who cures the bite of a snake. In the midst of the confusion Amar Devi arrived with her uncle.

Knowing him to be a Tántrik, Nandkumár ran and clasped him like a drowning man happy to have caught hold of some support and begged, "Good friend, remove—remove the shadow that has crossed my path."

"While there is life there is hope," comforted Mohan Dás looking at Hirá lying with the senses heavy and livid at the lips. Having sent for the necessary ingredients, Mohan Dás hastily bathed, and directed Hirá to be laid in exactly the same posture with the twins beside her, as when the snake stung her. In excited expectation the people gazed, when repeating incantations the Tántrik began to scatter handfuls of coloured-rice mixed with mustard seed. But their eyes opened in wonderment, when to each Point he flung a large shell to capture the serpent. Soon the room became filled with a surprised hum of smothered articulation as three of them returned flying through the air. For more than an hour, the people sat in wild suspense, starting up at the least noise and glancing around in fear. Hoping against hope, Gauri watched her daughter lying motionless, and her body discolouring to a dark hue. Unable to suppress her grief she broke out into wild lamentations; whilst Nandkumár maddening waned with despair.

"Since the fourth shell has not yet returned there is hope," remarked Mohan Dás calming them. "Be patient. It will come with its captive—all will be well," and he impatiently began to mutter, "Come—come, thou royal king. Shiv is witness! May I and mine perish, if a scale of thy head be harmed. But if thou mighty foe dost not obey, cursed—cursed be thou and thy seed." Deeper and deeper the incantations became, when a

peculiar hissing sound, like that of a ghost rustling about the place, filled the room. Affrighted a tremor passed through the crowd and the roots of their hair became stirred. But as the snake, with his expanded crest on which gleamed the large shell that grasped him in its power, entered with quick, lightning-like motions, a scream passed their lips and terrified they fell one upon the other. But up rose Mohan Dás and with folded hands bowed and welcomed him, "Jai! Jai! Maharáj—victory to thee our benefactor." Angered at being disturbed from his corner, he frantically glided round and round Hirá's bed. But becoming distracted at not finding his object, the serpent hissed with a horrible sound, and furiously lashed his tail against the legs of the bed. Seeing his dilemma Mohan Dás whispered to Nandkumár that there was something amiss which prevented the snake from venturing above. Remembering that Hirá's hair was loose when he found her moaning, the long plait was unfastened, and no sooner it swept the ground than the snake entwining himself climbed up the pillow. Trembling with fear that the twins might be injured as well, Gauri gave a piercing shriek; whilst the pleader stretched out his hands to snatch them from danger. But the instant the snake had sucked the poison from the wound, the shell shot away from the hood, and he fell insensible on the floor; whilst Hirá bewildered at the crowd around her rose from the bed and was clasped in the anxious arms of her mother. Overjoyed at her deliverance their eyes rained torrents, and the cruel pangs became replaced with unutterable happiness and delight; whilst in loud praise they bowed their heads at the feet of their deliverer.

But Mohan Dás' attention became engrossed in the restoration of his royal guest. Quickly raising the writhing snake, he dashed him into a bowl of milk which turned black from the poison ejected from his mouth. When after two hours he began to blink, the snake was given a fresh bowl of milk which he greedily

drank. Strengthened he viewed the spectators, and proudly sallied forth, when the people madly screaming and shouting, "kill—kill" ran with sticks to lay him dead. Infuriated he spurted venomously and showed his glittering fangs.

"Peace—peace. My life, but not my guests," interposed Mohan Dás calming the excited people. "He came into the enemy's camp on trust, Ho friends! shall we be less generous than the noble Boers who set their prisoners free. Depart, brother, in peace," and he gently stroked his enraged friend who stood listening with expanded hood and ready to strike. Appeased the snake glided away, but stopping looked backward with many nods and smiles.

In the midst of the uproar Nandkumár's voice rose high, remarking, "My relations and friends, forgive my weakness—my shortcoming. Our Shástras teach that the Lord Brahma divided himself into two parts, forming the male and the female; hence a wife is the man's Ardhanganí—better-half. Since the Pauránic Custom does not permit me to raise my 'better-half' to my caste, I, therefore, cast my lot with her. Go," said he turning to Hirá, "and cook the 'rice-meal.' Since I am in her and she in me, the 'rice-meal' will no longer divide us!"

Overjoyed Hirá's parents welcomed the generous son-in-law to their fold, whilst Amar Devi patting her young friend remarked, "Eh! my uncle has bestowed a wonderful charm—indeed, not only to subdue thy mother-in-law's temper, but to make thy husband one with thee."

But Yamani distorted with rage wildly gazed at Nandkumár crying, "A son obeys his parents so long as he does not see a woman's face. But as soon as he takes a fancy to his wife's kinsfolk, he looks upon his own family as his enemy. Go—go! Thou art no son of mine. In thy madness thou hast tarnished the spotless blood," and spitting 'thú—thú' in disgust left her home to pass her days on the banks of the Ganges.

Repeatedly the son and the daughter-in-law went there and besought her to return home, but to no purpose. Nevertheless, when a son was born to lead them to Swerga—heaven, his tender hands united the 'rice-wrangling' family—but Yamani kept a separate kitchen.

FRIENDSHIP.

I.

"Brahm be praised! the wedding is over and she has not arrived," exclaimed Chandi, and the circumstance seemed to remove a great weight from her mind. "Ho sister-in-law! It is scarcely wise that we simple, domesticated folks should let in our midst an unmarried woman. Indeed, you may cherish her in your bosom, yet she is never thoroughly mastered, and is as dangerous as the spark of the forged metal that flies around scorching unexpectedly."

"True, it is the nature of woman to cause confusion," puts in her husband, who has little faith in the purity and moral strength of woman unless backed by the walls of the zenána, and her inquisitive eyes rove no further than the circumference of her husband. "Shankar! woman's affection is not confined to one. She talks with one; makes eyes at another, and thinks of the third with the same breath. So, sings the Sage Chánikyá, and he knew what is what."

"Cease, brother Sundar, cease," remarks the gentle Sumitrá trembling with anxiety, and cutting the betel-nuts with great vehemence. "Thou fillest my heart with misgivings. I would keep her at arm's length, but that she is the bride-elect of cousin Ugarsen. Besides, Dr. Gyán Chand has arrived, that princely looking personage who was talking to him (meaning Rai Kishan Chand, her spouse, as it is against Hindu etiquette for a wife even by chance to mention the name of her husband). You remember Chandi. I pointed out the visitor to you. Oh, he presented such a handsome ring to the bride," and taking her daughter's ring off her finger passes it for inspection.

The friendship between Rai Kishen Chand and Dr. Gyán Chand dated from the time that the former

was preparing for the Indian Civil Service in London. On their return to India their paths diverged far apart; nevertheless, each retained a pleasant reminiscence of the other, and when unexpectedly brought togther, it was always, "Well met, brother. Come sup. Old days have returned." As Gyán Chand had taken a long furlough, the Deputy Commissioner insisted that the trio should not only be present at his daughter's marriage, but that they should spend some time with him at Santpur, before returning to Zínatábád. All the guests had assembled on the happy occasion, except Amar Devi who had been detained at Núrpur, owing to the ill-health of her uncle.

"Heaven protect us," exclaimed Chandi harping on the subject, and allowing her tongue to run freely with bold invention, and dark colouring. "I saw—yes, these very eyes witnessed poor Jánki ruined—brought to the dust through Miss Isbela—an orphan who knitted socks for her. Pitying her forlorn condition she actually clothed her, fed her day after day. But like a serpent Miss Isbela stung the hand that poured her milk—robbed the jewel of her husband, and before one could cry, 'Thief! thief! help,' she had installed herself mistress, with Jánki as her maid. Beware—beware, Sumitrá! You should insist on Ugarsen marrying her at once. *Can butter be near fire and not melt?*"

"Alas! alas!" moaned Sumitrá rocking herself, whilst Pundit Sundar Náth angrily exclaimed, "You are such a simpleton, a soft word melts you. Why! in the twinkling of an eye 'affairs' flash across like a comet leaving home and heart charred—"

"Think of that, sister-in-law!" interrupted Chandi. "Take care of your garden and hedge it about, for should—God forbid—our Dipty Sáhib become netted, where would you be?"

"Hush—hush!" cried Sumitrá choking with emotion. "I feel as if I were standing on a quicksand and my heart goes pit-a-pat—pit-a-pat with fear."

"These are fair warnings to open your eyes, and, sharpen your wits," exclaimed Sundar Náth. "Why! the other day a friend—well, not exactly a friend, but a friend's friend, with two wives and any number of children came to grief. And how? There was a passage of arms at Tennis, and the glance of beauty piercing my friend's friend, he lay bleeding at Miss Koil's feet. Some of her kinsfolk patted her—said 'shabásh—well done!' for bridegrooms are scarce in these days of famine; others held up their hands jealously at the heathen. But as easily as white can be turned to black, her father on the morrow washed the heathenism out in a dip as efficacious as the lustral Ganges. Nevertheless, when the pair stood at the altar, the white-washed heathen trembled like a peepal-leaf, and ere his breath could promise, 'I will,' an impediment to the marriage was noticed which cancelled the sinful match, for the miscreant fell writhing in a fit." As Rai Kishan Chand entered the zenána, he caught the closing words of the scandalous conversation, and sharply reproved his brother-in law, "Thou art worse than an old woman in spreading scandal. Good and evil are joint companions. But it suits thy taste to observe the conduct of the depraved, and close thy eyes to the honest folks. With thy nonsense thou hast turned thy sister crazy, until I cannot turn a step, but she watches me suspiciously from corners, lest I should take wings. Well—well, the fire-brand that is so dreaded has at last arrived. Examine well the metal she is made of. But dear me! brush up a bit," said he shuddering at the swarms of flies buzzing about them, as they sat in the midst of the pealings of fruit and vegetables, that they had been preparing for dinner. "Yes, have things look bright and clean."

No sooner Rai Kishen Chand had departed than Chandi broke into murmurs, and with dark insinuations began to ignite the smouldering flame of jealousy, "Ho sister-in-law! didst thou mark how buoyantly thy husband stepped, as if he were floating on the breeze of Spring.

Yes, yes her presence makes his eyes glow with happiness." But the soft hearted Sumitrá having drawn her veil deeper silently wept, conjecturing unending woes, and praying for the world to come to an end. The sun would have set in gloomy thoughts, but that hearing the sound of carriage-wheels she hurriedly bathed her eyes with rose-water, donned her prettiest sári-dress, and laying her trembling hand in that of Chandi, sat down on a bed to await the guest that caused so much disquietude. With a warm welcome Rai Kishen Chand received Amar Devi and her father in the drawing-room that was handsomely furnished. But as usual it wore the neglected appearance that is remarkable in Indian homes, and where no gentle hand touches it with her magic wand to brighten it with womanly grace and charm. Leaving Dr. Gyán Chand with Rai Ugarsen, the Deputy Commissioner introduced his guest to the inmates of his sanctum. Having heard that his zenána-folks were orthodox to the tips of their fingers, it was with some trepidation that Amar Devi held out her hand as Chandi with a show of warmth excitedly exclaimed, "Ah—ha! my eyes have longed to see you—every one sings your praise;" whilst Sumitrá softly chimed in, "Your worthy feet have sanctified my home this day." Nevertheless, instead of accepting the extended hand, they drew back fearing contamination from the touch of one who being too Cosmopolitan to cherish their exclusiveness and conform to their prejudices dined with all castes. With a short laugh Rai Kishen Chand withdrew; but Amar Devi, who had experienced a variety of cold receptions, but which usually ended in warmth and good-will, heeded not the frigidity, and broke into pleasant conversation. Having examined and praised the children assembled around, she felt confused on finding the dark eyes riveted on her, with constant nudging and whispering passing between the sisters-in-law. Just as an unpleasant lull was about to fall around, Chandi bluntly remarked, "You have money and jewels in abundance.

Why do you not marry? Does not your heart desire a companion? Shiv! Shiv! You have turned cold and strong-minded like the mem-logs to live on so calmly."

"Báp-re—O father! We dare not keep our girls unwedded longer than the tenth year," remarked Sumitrá trembling at the grave sin Amar Devi was committing and casting her ancestors into hell-fire.

"Two things cannot be accomplished at one and the same time" replied the guest, "and one must either study until a reasonable time, or bear puny babes at an immature age. Now what is to be will be."

"The lives of our zenána are passed in giving and reckoning births, deaths, and marriages," exclaimed Pundit Sundar Náth. "They hold the family registrarship, and have no other duty but to cook and to multiply. Shankar! what else does woman need?"

"Sweetmeat! Ah—ha!" exclaimed little Munnie jumping off Amar Devi's lap and eyeing the tray of delicacies that was being brought in. But the servant had hardly put his foot into the room, when Chandi rushed and turned up the matting, and made as much fuss as if a snake lay coiled beneath it. The next moment a Hindu servant in nature's garb, except that a muddy looking strip of cloth covered his loins, picked his way in. As if he were treading on hot coals, he started at every step, lest his foot should accidentally fall on the matting, and owing to the august presence of the visitor shimmering in silks and jewels, it should become unhallowed for the use of the orthodox folks. Notwithstanding the suspicious forebodings, Sumitrá felt drawn towards the guest, and but for the presence of her stern sister-in-law she would have opened her gentle heart and found peace in unity. Forgetting her fears a sunny smile broke upon her lips, and chatting agreeably she helped Amar Devi to a quantity of sweets in leafy bowls. As holding her silk-dress between her legs to prevent it from touching the chair of her guest, she gingerly threw them into her lap, a roar like that of a lion made her sink down trembling. "What nonsense!"

cried Rai Kishen Chand entering. "My dear, young lady, how can you stand it?" Whilst Amar Devi was getting over her suppressed laughter at the ludicrous scene, Pundit Sundar Náth whispered to his sister, "Shankar! did you hear, 'My dear!' Eh! under your very nose 'My dear!'" In Hindi the expression or exclamation *My dear*—Merí piyárí—sounds not only formidable, but most tender, and to the suspicious wife it seemed as if a bullet had lodged itself in her heart. Pained her eyes filled with tears and heaving a despairing sigh Sumitrá silently shrank behind the broad back of Chandi, beseeching Mother Párvati to deliver her husband from the fascinating toils. But Rai Kishen Chand angrily pacing the empty room which could boast of nothing more than the matting and beds on which the inmates were squatted, ordered fresh refreshment from his quarter of the house. The next instant the host and guest sat down at a neat teapoy with the silver dishes laden with delicacies, and waited on by a liveried servant as bright as the 'flame of the forest.' The room was close, and the inmates seemed heavy to allow conversation to flow smoothly. With a sigh of relief Amar Devi rose to join the more genial company of her father, when Chandi profusely begged, "Come, do come soon. Your visit is a source of great joy to us." But Sumitrá sullenly muttering, "Ráma—Ráma, goodbye," frowned and if angry flashes could have proved fatal, the guest would have immediately turned into a mound of ashes; whilst Pundit Sundar Náth consoling his distressed sister remarked, "She seems a simpleton. Have no fear. We shall be your body-guard and give stab for stab." But before they parted the lynx-eyed Chandi jestingly said to her spouse, "Have a care that you don't wound yourself in the fray."

"I am not a bee to become enamoured of the lotus," rejoined Sundar Náth loftily.

As the eye wanders from the heights of the profound Vedas down to the Puránas, there is no virtue more commended and inculcated than the virtue of

truthfulness. Therein are pourtrayed the most inspiring pictures on truth, and like beacons, the pages gleam with sublime luminaries to guard the wanderer. The inspired Válmiki sings,

"Holy truth is root and spring
Of justice and each holy thing.
Truth, only truth, protects the land;
By truth unharmed our houses stand."

Though the sage instils that Truth alone can create true manliness, yet the wise precept has been supplanted by a pernicious custom of *mistrust*. Like weeds it has taken root into the Hindu homes, and the evil has fallen heavily on woman by fettering her life, not only within a narrowed compass, but by warping her mind to ungracious thoughts and dark surmises. Moreover, for the character to bloom into a glorious flower, the sage would have the budding rose of childhood nurtured on wholesome morality. But the modern sage being wiser has soiled the children's blood by rearing them on the unsound *principles* of *distrust*, which engenders such corrupt thoughts that oriental jealousy can place no faith in the purity and moral virtue of woman. It is declared that to sit in a sequestered place with even his nearest female relation, would involve man in a variety of mischievous results, and having no stability he would like a ball roll downhill. Owing to this evil custom great uneasiness is felt as regards an unmarried girl of even thirteen or fourteen years; and as if the parents were cherishing a serpent in their bosom their days pass in sighs and uneasiness. Hence as a safeguard Infant Marriage is commended, and evidently bars and bolts, rather than moral rectitude, have greater strength to secure the maiden's purity and fair fame.

But Chandí's education went further towards tainting her precocious mind. Being the only child she was the idol of her father, and quaintly dressed in the garb of a boy, she constantly flitted about him. As her mother dwelling within the folds of parda, which is the highest mark of oriental respectability, could not venture

out, she used her daughter as a spy to pry on the movements of her prodigal husband. There is little, indeed, that a parda woman cannot scent though she may be hemmed in by tiers of walls. Being bribed by toys and sweets, Chandi mimicked her father's boon companions so quaintly that her mother almost died laughing. But the laughter soon changed to frowns when she prettily lisped out that one said this, and another added something more terrific. Then as a variety when her father returned from his drive Chandi's little feet stealthily crept up to the coachman, and she soon exchanged the shining silver for the latest Intelligence which she gleefully retailed to the anxious mother. Vexed a volcano burned within her breast and when the weak Pundit ventured into his sanctum, the spurting lava and flames of her wrath made his hair stand on end; whilst day by day the child's mind and actions grew as tortuous as the movements of a snake. What seemed amusement in childhood became a serious matter when Chandi married and gained maturity. Putting two and two together she lost confidence in both man and woman. Declaring that as a safeguard it were wiser for man to take to the folds of the parda as well, and that it was woman's spirituality alone that preserved the home intact, she kept a vigilant eye on Pundit Sundar Náth. Nevertheless, he met craft with craft, and enjoyed his liberty to his heart's content.

But from the jar exudes what is within it, and his gentle sister shone like the wild lotus, with her disposition unsullied by the unwholesome education, even as the lotus-leaf remains untainted by water. Timid as a fawn she was easily frightened, but on finding herself mistaken, her warm heart expanded to make amends for the error. Pleasantly her days passed in her home, with her happiness centred in the grace of her husband and the smiles of her children. But when Amar Devi's visit was broached, Chandi and her husband commenced a duet on the dangers of Propinquity. Speechless and her face full of anxiety Sumitra wistfully gazed at

her husband, who, grinding his teeth at their narrow-mindedness arranged a separate guest-house for the trio. From henceforth Pundit Sundar Náth dogged his brother-in-law's steps, and when least expected came gliding in their midst, with soft, cat-like steps. Shuddering at the dark shadow, Amar Devi turned away from him in scornful silence. Nevertheless, she gently made her way among the inmates of the zenána. Chandi's startling questions and inquisitive mind could not be easily satisfied; whilst the children levied a tax on her in the shape of a fairy tale, but Sumitrá was unfathomable. Sometimes she was quite affable and at others, when her brother had harassed her with comments and insinuations, she would turn sullen and sit far apart from the family. "Look at me with thy fawn-like eyes," said Amar Devi jestingly as one day she tried to shun her.

"Go—go. Pour not salt on my torn heart," exclaimed Sumitrá heaving deep sighs and her eyes brimming with tears. "Sweet words fall from thy lips; whilst thou stabbest behind my back. Thou art learned and I am ignorant; yet, this much I know that two and two makes four, and that when my husband calls thee 'merí piyárí' there is something black in the dál."

"Never—never!" cried Amar Devi startled at the accusation, and for the first time getting some idea of poor Sumitrá's disordered state of mind which accounted for her strange moods. "Called me beloved—nonsense!"

"Bus—bus, that will do," cut short the jealous wife with flashing eyes, and her bosom heaving with doubled rage at the supposed denial. "Don't attempt to throw dust in my eyes. Day after day have I remained silent and uncomplainingly sipped the choking gall; yet, even the forged iron turning will turn some day."

"True—true," chimed in Chandi, as Amar Devi mute from indignation listened, "Go and clip others' ears; we are but simple folks. But he who meddles with hornets surely gets stung in the end. If dullards we are

neither deaf nor blind. Why! in your very presence Dipty Sáhib sweetly said, 'me—me dear.'"

"Why! that's a trifle," said Amar Devi smiling and feeling relieved in her mind. "You have made a mountain of a molehill. But there is a difference between like and like, and you should scale your likes. One cannot bestow the affection of a husband, nor that of a wife on every acquaintance that the eye falls upon," and as she tried to explain the term, 'My dear,' Sumitrá still doubting continued to complain of the odds and ends she had gathered from her brother's gossip, ending with, "Are there not enough servants that my husband—a Dipty Commissioner Sáhib—should actually turn butler and hand you tea, or pick up balls at Tennis."

"Why, if you were not shackled," remarked Amar Devi, "my father would pay you the same attention, without considering his dignity impaired. It's simply courtesy."

"Indeed!" remarked Chandi curtly, and like a crow suspicious in everything. "We simple folks would rather dispense with this politeness as you term it. Something indescribable—something savouring of tenderness seems to lurk behind it. Yes, from a distance I fold my hands to such doubtful affability! Then that out-landish custom of shaking hands. Shiv! it gives me spasmodic shocks. I always feel there is some telegraphic message being conveyed in the clasped pressure; and, verily, the sage Manu strictly prohibits such familiarity, wisely remarking, 'Woman is fire and man like butter. Coming in contact the fire consumes the latter; therefore, a man when making obeisance should not touch even his spiritual teacher's wife's feet with his hands."

"If danger lies in hand-shaking, then mankind had better walk the world blindfolded," suggested Amar Devi shuddering in disgust at their mean surmises. "Fair Chandi! Look up Kálidás. Therein you'll find that a world of knowledge lies in those sparkling orbs, and

messages are conveyed backward and forward with more significance and rapidity, than even the motions of the elements."

"You speak like my Dipty Sáhib," remarked Sumitrá, and as her doubts and fears began to calm down she became more natural. "He also tells me that the purest friendship can exist between man and woman, but I am foolish—ignorant and know no more than that it is impossible for *butter to be near fire and not melt.* But tell me. See the deity, Sun, stands as witness," and the glistening eyes gazing into the brown orbs of Amar Devi searched the very core of her heart. "Say, how much do you like my Dipty?"

"Run, Munnie, run," broke in Chandi addressing the child sarcastically. "Haste! Bring weights and measures. We'll measure the depth of her affection."

"Which amounts to no more nor less than that of a true friend," replied Amar Devi.

"A friend—a dost!" exclaimed the suspicious wife drawing back, and her heart withering with doubts, for to her mind the word *friend* conveyed no other degree of regard except the affection of a lover. Seeing her downcast Amar Devi added, "If you would but be your sweet, natural self, instead of making yourself unhappy with ill-imaginings, I'd be as true a friend to you."

"What! show the same—the very, very same regard—affection to me—to my children?" cried Sumitrá joyously, and the dark cloud of distrust vanishing from her mind.

"Certainly!" replied Amar Devi returning glance for glance.

"Sister, I trust you," said Sumitrá, confidingly placing her hand in that of her supposed rival. "For days doubt like a serpent has crushed me; but your words have brought me peace—restored me to life."

But like the bitter neem which can never acquire sweetness, even though its roots be watered with milk, Amar Devi, who had been disciplined on the golden principles of trust, found it impossible to modify the corrupt

mind of Chandi which by nature was too little to expand towards excellence. Jealously eyeing their union she tried to sever them by dark hints, "Beware—beware! The friend that thou cherishe-t will become a thorn in thy side;" whilst Sumitrá free from all misgivings contentedly replied, "Not to distinguish between the false and the true is like mistaking a rope for a snake. I know now that my friend's heart is of sovereign gold." And thus their love ripened into a warm and deep friendship, and when darker days drifted over their lives they lived on unchanged through all the ills. Whereas at first the orthodox Sumitrá would gingerly raise her sári-dress from fear of its coming in contact with the chair occupied by Amar Devi, now the 'touch-me-not' contamination was buried in oblivion, and the pair not only sat together but lay pillowed on the same pillow. At sight of the loving pair the ill-eyed Chandi hysterically shrieked, "Ah—ha! they are such friends as two kernels in one husk. But mind," whispered she turning to her husband, "have nothing to say to her. Your foot may slip, and she is deep - has your sister in her meshes, like the fly in the spider's web." Nevertheless, the platters remained conserved sacredly, and Sumitrá would suddenly shoot off ten yards from her friend to drink a glass of water. But when Amar Devi chaffed her for having broken the rigid caste injunctions she would philosophically shake her head and smiling remark, "Jahán prem, tahán nem nahín—love has no caste. When hearts become united the petty differences vanish; and it seems we were sisters in our previous Birth."

Thus chatting as the pair paced the garden they noticed Pundit Sundar Náth timidly advancing towards them. He nervously glanced back and spying his wife peeping from her window suddenly stopped and pretended to gather flowers. Mischievously inclined, they joined him beneath the jealous gaze of Chandi, who could not bear her husband to pay the slightest attention to the guest. From praising the roses which he divided between them, Amar Devi began to admire his dainty

ring, when an excruciating fit of coughing came echoing from the window. But the warning passed unheeded, for Sundar Náth finding the guest more affable towards him, it set his heart bounding with delight. Suddenly he turned palmister and seizing the tempting hand beside him began to expound what the Line of Fortune had in store for her. Having captured him, they triumphantly bore him away ; whilst he was so fascinated with the agreeable company, that not only the caution "beware," slipped from his memory, but in the bewilderment his ears turned deaf to the cannon-like bang-bang of the window, which his wife angrily closed with a tremendous noise. Leaving Amar Devi with her father, he joined his boon companions, and returned home unusually late. After the pleasant evening as he gaily stepped up to his sanctum, he felt the air grow hotter and hotter. When he pushed the door, and found it locked from within, it seemed as if he stood on the brink of a furnace. He hastily knocked, but there being no response, except a hard, spasmodic breathing through the slit in the door, and where two angry orbs flashed like red lightning, his hazy senses cleared. As the proposition "beware" which had escaped him in pleasant company, fleetly came back to his memory, he penitently cried, "O priyá, beloved! pardon—pardon. Here stands thy slave."

"Why standest thou in the dark?" hissed Chandi between her set teeth. "Go—go where the light shines and moth-like circle round the flame!"

"Can there be light where thou art not?" whispered the Pundit placing his lips close to the slit and trying to appease her wrath with a soft kiss.

"Nay—nay! cast that to the winds," cried she haughtily drawing back, but murmuring lashed him with words as sharp as the edge of the sword. Determined to punish her husband she calmly began to pace the terrace, off and on, sending forth a volley through the slit, "Thy too-oft-repeated soft nothings will not melt my heart. Yes, stand there repeating the rosary

to thy—thy goddess to unbar the door," added she sarcastically. The entrance door having been locked from outside there was no escape for the truant Pundit except through his sister's room. But to awaken her and be chaffed seemed as much out of the question as to stand sentinel on the staircase. When an hour had passed in sighs of repentance, and finding that his expostulations and entreaties increased her obduracy rather than softened her he hotly cried, "What! thou'lt not open!"

"Hark! the cock crows," remarked Chandi consolingly. "The servant will be in to make the Dipty Sáhib's tea and thou'lt be free to roam at large."

"Shankar! then he'll not find me doing morning pújá—worship to thee," rejoined he angrily, and turning on his heels leapt down with bounds.

Seeing that she had tried his temper and patience a little too far, the door suddenly flew open and Chandi rushed below entreating her husband to enter the sanctum. Hearing the chham-chham tinkling of anklets, Sumitrá ran into the courtyard, and to her surprise and amusement found her brother seated on the garden wall and Chandi trying to drag him down. At sight of his sister Pundit Sundar Náth hastily snatched away his hand and disappeared into the garden; whilst Chandi in the excitement losing her balance fell plump into a stagnant pool. For days she kept confined to her sanctum heaping maledictions on the guest and praying for her departure, whilst Amar Devi having had a hearty laugh over her unpleasant discomfiture gave her husband wide space to study palmistry in silence and undisturbed.

Left to themselves the two friends usually spent the evening in the garden. As humming a light air Amar Devi made Munnie dance on the green, the girl suddenly stopped and bashfully thrust her head in her lap; whilst Sumitrá drawing her veil deeper hastily concealed herself among the vines whispering, "O father! to be seen by him—the aristocratic Pundit

Chiranjiv." Turning, she found an elderly man of striking mien standing in the attitude of devotion with his dark eyes riveted on the group. He was so absorbed in the picture that he failed to mark that he had been observed trespassing and to withdraw. But when Amar Devi retreated among the vines, his reverie broke and a flush of joy passed over his countenance as he agitatedly murmured, "It is she and no vision—yes, the same figure, all harmony, elegance and grace. Ah! Ishvar creates a form, a face to cast a spell on man's heart and rob him of peace. Surely, my sight cannot be leading me astray; the recollection of Zínatábád lies too deeply impressed on my memory. But how is she here?" When a few minutes later he was joined by Rai Kishen Chand his curiosity was amply satisfied. Pleased as he was to form an acquaintance that he had heartily desired when travelling through Zínatábád, yet on being introduced to Amar Devi his conversation was marked by monosyllabic answers, and withdrawing to a corner his eyes studied her in silence. From henceforth scarcely an evening passed that Pundit Charanjiv did not join the Deputy Commissioner's dinner or come in afterwards. But his frigidity and muteness was so oppressive that Amar Devi was glad to pass him to another, who, if he happened to be of his aristocratic set, then his distant manner and cold silence changed to gracious amiability which magically made the conversation flow pleasantly.

"So—so! Fine conduct on the part of a true friend," cried Sumitrá mysteriously, and taking Amar Devi to task as one evening she joined her. "Secrets from me! Well, you may try to hide, but though I live within four walls, yet my eyes and ears are open to the outer world, and nothing escapes me."

"Well, the latest intelligence is that father has left for Bombay," replied the accused, and unable to fathom her mystery. "Sad that the best of friends must part, so uncle and I shall soon be leaving for Núrpur to join him at Zínatábád."

"Yes, yes, but say, how fares Pundit Chiranjív?" chaffed Sumitrá. "Indeed, I feel quite jealous that he should have supplanted me; and when such a magnate becomes your friend, then a glowworm can hardly vie with the sunbeam, and I must fall in the shade."

"Sweet friend! you have entwined yourself round my heart and there snugly abide without displacement," rejoined Amar Devi. "As for the magnate of the rueful countenance he is too lofty—"

"Ráma! that he is," interrupted Sumitrá. "His nose reaches the seventh heaven, and none dare measure its length, nor a fly brush by it."

"So you see, he is not likely to bend and give me a passing thought. Why! we have hardly exchanged half a dozen sentences. Oh! he is too stiff, icy hearted."

"Nevertheless, like the sun-stone he melts at sight of the sun," asserted Sumitrá. "Ah, yes, he cannot contain himself, and his conversation bubbles in praise of you, until his folks have begun to nod and whisper. My barber's wife attends on his zenána, and to-day whilst braiding my hair remarked airy trifles in many variations, and which you'd like to conceal from your bosom friend. Fie!"

"As I am quite in the dark," replied Amar Devi surprised at the news, "I'll take this formidable magnate to task and—"

"O Father!" interrupted Sumitrá excitedly. "Do you want my head broken? He is an old friend of my Dipty, and I unlettered and living in a shell can hardly criticise big folks. So mind sew up your lips."

But they were not inclined to remain glued together, and Amar Devi gaily chatted with a magnate intellectually as great as the one with the rueful countenance. Being of the Mercantile Caste he was unfortunately permitted on sufferance among the aristocratic set. As he faced the worthy pillar of sanctity on whose ample forehead and lineament the superiority

of birth was significantly marked, the Vaishya magnate fidgeted uncomfortably in his chair. But when he made himself agreeable to Amar Devi, Pundit Chiranjiv glared at him and with a supercilious sneer remarked to his neighbour, "Hari! in this Age the low born vies with the Elect crying, 'I am your equal.' Having forgotten his weights and measures he is dubbed Rai Bahadur Battá!" Flushing angrily Amar Devi consoled him in an undertone, "Certainly, by position you are his equal, and the greater credit to you for your attainments. Why do you permit him to crush you?"

"Hush, hush," stammered the Mercantile magnate humbly. "He is a Bráhman—our preceptor and guide. I am unworthy to sit—to eat in his presence," and but for the company would have laid his head at his sacred feet in adoration and in apology for his presumption. Belonging to a hardy and pushing race that can manage to exist under the most trying circumstances, and not being ashamed to put its hand to any kind of labour, the Vaishya magnate had risen to distinction by his ability. Though educated chiefly in English and like most advanced Hindus he constantly violated caste restrictions, nevertheless, in his religious observances, he closely followed the steps of his ancestors by beginning his daily duties with the Vishnu Sahasranáma or the Gita; and was open-handed in almsgiving as well as preserved the profoundest reverence for the Bráhman. In this Transitional Period when the sway of the priest caste is fast declining, the Vaishyas of all Castes, not only provide Chetras (almshouse, where food is daily distributed to the indigent, chiefly Bráhmans and students whom it is considered meritorious to support) or outlay large sums in various charitable purposes, but venerating his divine assumptions deem him worthy of worship. Marking their devotion and charity whilst visiting the sacred city of Benares, I often questioned the Vaishya dames, "Would you not like your son to gain the M. A. degree or your husband to be adorned with the Rai Bahádurship?"

"Certainly, certainly!" cried one in eager tones and eyes glistening with delight. "I'd spend the day in making a rich offering to the goddess of wealth."

"Well then," continued I, "as the Bráhman caste is the most aristocratic of all castes would you not aspire to it if, like the degrees or the Rai Bahádurship, it were open to all?"

"Shiv! Shiv!" exclaimed a young dame indignantly. "Do you wish to reduce me to an abject acceptor of gifts. Why!" cried she proudly, "I am of the great Agarwála seed and my offspring can never stoop to hold out his hand for alms. The proud Bráhman has learned lallá (*i.e*, lená, to accept) whilst daddá, (or dená, to give) has conveniently escaped his memory. As in his own house a master is superior so each one is a prince in his caste. Yes, I am of the proud Agarwála seed and no Bráhmanhood for me or my offspring."

"Hush! May God strike thee dumb," broke in a religious dame whose declining years were chiefly passed in pilgrimages and sanctifying herself with the pedal-dust of priests. "The Bráhman is a god; we are but lowly born and can never aspire to his reverence. Ráma! can the head and feet be ever placed on an equality!"

As the proud Twice-born sat scowling, similar thoughts kept running through his mind, and he bubbled over with sharp criticisms. Rising from dinner Pundit Chiranjiv glided towards Mohan Dás, and effusively praising Zínatábád he hoped to visit it again. But no sooner the Vaishya magnate had departed than he glided into the vacated seat beside Amar Devi. With a swift glance taking her in from head to foot he remained meditating that made her feel most uncomfortable, and she was inclined to run away. But remembering his rude conduct towards the Vaishya magnate, she curtly remarked, "Brave men should attack their equals, and not sneer at the humble whom they consider beneath their glance."

"Even your censure is sweet to me," rejoined the proud magnate humbly, and his voice falling to the softest accent, "for you never give me a word."

Though vexed at his conduct Amar Devi could hardly repress a smile at the accusation, and as her eyes questioned his striking amiability, he mysteriously remarked, "Cannot you understand? Sometimes silence is speech. Often my heart holds converse from a distance and in silence. Yes, it has spoken to you since that day, when walking on the Zinatábád *bund* with Morád bin Sayad, an elegant pair came sweeping by. I stood bewildered murmuring, 'Lílá! Lílá!' as a figure gleaming in the glory of youth and grace stopped and spoke to my friend. With my whole soul absorbed in your voice, air and manner, I felt we were no strangers. And as thoughts came crowding upon thoughts my buried life flashed across me, and I perceived that we had met in other Climes and other Births."

"A mist hangs over my eye and I cannot soar to such heights," replied Amar Devi modestly. The ice having been broken and explanation rendered, Pundit Chiranjiv's cold demeanour warmed into cordiality, and being a man of vast experience, he had the gift to make time pass agreeably. But when wrapped in visions and Amar Devi would chaffingly awaken him, "I had better not disturb you. Your heart is holding sweet converse," his expressive features would break into smiles, murmuring, "Ah! silence is speech. Words destroy thoughts, in fact do not express them in full."

The Bráhman being intellectually in advance of the rest of the Hindu race, Pundit Chiranjiv was by nature mentally strong and quick in the acquisition of knowledge. He snapped his fingers at the England-returned men, and chaffing them would proudly remark, "Ho brothers! if the mighty sirkar allowed the same privileges in India, even at my advanced age, I'd run a race and leave you behind." But he rose to eminence chiefly by his quick, methodical ways of working, which he forcibly stamped on his Department. Being punctual

and observing well-regulated habits in business, he exacted the same from others, and was so much feared that even the door-chick deferentially raised itself at his approach; whilst his active movements electrifying the subordinates, they stopped sneezing and diligently applied themselves to work. Liberal and magnanimous even to forget the selfish exclusiveness of Caste, he fraternized with a select set, irrespective of Caste and of Creed, and the mutual intercourse ripening into warm friendship, he was highly esteemed by his friends. But when the foolish pride of Birth filled him with arrogance, his wholesome heart changed to gall and he appeared to others in his unnatural self—most stern and repellant; whilst to keep up his prestige among the caste-folks he transformed himself into the purest of the pure Twice-born. As once at a Gathering he sauntered among them with his massive brow gleaming with the Rámpatáká, consisting of two white streaks emblazoned with the flaming red in the centre, and garlanded with chains of the Ghotormálá, an envious caste man nudged his companion, "Look!" cried priest Chhalyánand "behold the bagula-bhagat, the hypocrite. Outwardly as fair as the swan, but alas! his doings are no better than the crane. I do believe he nets fish with that striking rosary of his."

"Sou din chor ká, ek din sad ká—a thief may escape a hundred times, but he is sure to be caught in the end," rejoined his companion prophetically. "How long can this 'hide and seek' continue. Suddenly some day the bud will open and his doings become full blown."

"Hush brother! close your eyes and cork your ears to all scandal," exclaimed another bowing reverently to the great magnate. "With his dignity as great as Indra, in riches no less than Kuver and wise as Vrihaspati, he is beyond our sphere to call him to account."

"Ho brother Timorous! place these ideas on the roof," retorted priest Chhalyánand nothing daunted at the greatness. "I know that puffed with power he floats in the air, and we are no more than radish and

carrot in his eyes. But wait till his brother returns from England. I'll plague him with a blister to cool his breast with. Ráma! he'll soon come rubbing his nose to be purified or be damned."

But fairer than the fair swan, Pundit Chiranjív shone best in his home—a home that seemed to be formed of india-rubber, for it expanded marvelously to shelter a horde of hungry connections. Open-handed to his nearest and dearest, he generously supported, as is not uncommon among orthodox Hindus, the most distant relations. "Welcome! welcome brother!" he would exclaim cheerfully. "I am no kalpvriksh," a fabulous tree that yields whatever may be desired, "but make yourself comfortable by my hearth and home," and if necessary he would even have passed his platter of food to his poor kinsman.

Whilst busy preparing to leave for Núrpur Mohan Dás received an urgent telegram from Dr. Gyán Chand to join him at Bombay. Some days after, instead of her uncle returning, Amar Devi was surprised to find Rai Ugarsen unexpectedly come in from his tour. As if overtaken by a calamity his light-heartedness had disappeared. On being questioned about his dejected mood he replied in sighs. Nevertheless he treated his bride-elect with great tenderness and with an assumed cheerfulness would reply, "Joys and sorrows are not eternal; they are ever coming and going." Deep in though he gravely moved about; sometimes, holding long consultations with the Deputy Commissioner and his wife. Silent but thoughtful of her friend Sumitrá's heart overflowed with love and tenderness. In her eagerness to please she forgot the caste restrictions, and would bring in the dinner herself, when picking out tit-bits would coax her to many more mouthfuls than she was inclined to take. Overwhelmed with kindness, Amar Devi laughingly remarked, "You are determined not to be forgotten when we part."

"Ah! but I shall accompany you now that your uncle is away."

"Oh, you sweet creature!" exclaimed Amar Devi almost embracing her in her joy. "Conserve your platters sacredly, but ever keep your heart kindled with generosity. Yes, you'll be a great help to me to pack for Zínatábád."

"A sincere friend is ever ready to assist," remarked Sumitrá, "and in time of—of," but she heaved such deep sighs that the latter part of the sentence, "misfortune to be a hundred times more affectionate than ever," was lost to the ears; whilst Chandi who had recovered her spirits sarcastically breaking in, "Ah! how can the shadow dwell away from the substance!" made them break into a merry laugh.

Latterly Pundit Chiranjív had absented himself and to Amar Devi's great surprise she found him awaiting them at the Railway Station. As the train was steaming out and hand clasped hand he excitedly remarked, "Shall we be friends though parted?"

"Until Death and Beyond," replied Amar Devi fervently returning his warm pressure of farewell.

II.

"Heaven help! Now what's amiss," exclaimed Amar Devi anxiously, and rising restlessly, moved about in the train as it whirled her on to Núrpur. "Strange! that my right eye keeps throbbing, and my sleep has been disturbed by ill dreams." Sumitrá nervously glanced at her cousin, and the exchanged glances begged, "You break the news."

But both shrinking from being the bearer of ill-tidings Ugarsen muttered assuringly, "Dreams are but idle fancies." Nevertheless, as they drove out of the Railway Station and were met with evil omens, her heart throbbed from fear of coming ill. But when the carriage rolled into the compound tears sprang in her eyes on hearing the agonising neighs of the prized Walers. Terrified at the mournful cries, she ran to the assistance of the distressed animals. Recognising her gentle touch they stopped whining, and began to paw the ground; whilst she gazed in amazement at the fresh grass lying untasted, and, as if fretting for the loss of a loved one, burning tears coursed down their faces. Bewildered she questioningly looked at the sorrowing servants, but as echoes of the solemn chanting of the Garur Purán that is read during the days of mourning, came floating through the desolate home, she fled indoors wildly crying, "Alas! my uncle—my uncle is no more." Speechless from terror and grief she stood by the priests intoning the mournful dirge, and as her eyes wandering fell on the pale lamp of death burning in the room that had been occupied by Dr. Gyán Chand, she smote her breast in anguish, and the air was rent with a heart-rending wail, "Ah God! it's—it's my beloved father." Sinking under the affliction Sumitrá bore away the senseless form in her tender arms.

Hail and hearty Dr. Gyán Chand had set out to join his appointment at Zínatábád. He broke his journey at Bombay where he was suddenly attacked by the plague that was ravaging the place. Unwilling to terrify his daughter, he telegraphed for his brother-in-law who arrived in time to receive his dying words, "Be a father to the orphan. Save the gallant pair of horses from suffering. Better—better they followed me—shoot them." Mohan Dás telegraphed the sad news to Rai Ugarsen who immediately joined Amar Devi, and though he could not bring himself to inform her of her bereavement, he surrounded her with the tenderest protection. On the fourth day of the cremation the 'phúl' consisting of the sacred remains of Dr. Gyán Chand, was safely secured in a strong bag. Returning to Núrpur Mohan Dás arranged all that was necessary for the days of mourning; whilst a priest conveying the sacred 'phúl' to Hurdwár, it was consigned to the lustral waves of the Ganges.

When Amar Devi had partially recovered from her despair, and was able to collect her thoughts to realize her affliction, she repeatedly made her uncle go over the last hours of her fond parent. As she listened she mournfully beat her breast moaning, "Ah! if I had but been near to soothe his last moments, that—that would have brought me some comfort." Bursting into stormy sobs she regretfully repined, "Alas! alas! I shall see him no more. Woe is me! Henceforth day and night shall seem alike," and becoming exhausted from grief and fasting fainted away. Sore troubled at heart Mohan Dás remained speechless. But mastering his sorrow he clasped the orphan with infinite tenderness of protection, and soothed her with the healing words of wisdom. "Cheer up my child," exclaimed he brushing away the tears as she regained consciousness. "Pleasure and pain are ever coming and going. You have youth and sunshine before you, so why this lamentation? Besides, as the wheel of Time revolves all things change. But whilst the mortal

frame dissolves into the elements out of which it was originally produced, the Soul is eternal. It drops the body and goes to others, like a man who puts off his old clothes and takes to new ones. For to one that is born death is inevitable and to one that dies birth is certain. Then why weep or regret ?"

"Alas ! alas ! God gave us a treasure to be robbed all too soon. Ah ! I shall see the loved face no more," bemoaned the orphan sinking into a sea of desolation.

"Indeed, under every possible change we shall meet in other Births," exclaimed he hopefully, "and the affection that united us here will magnetically draw us together even in other forms. Yet—yet I would," and his eyes becoming glazed with scalding tears his voice grew faint and thick. Turning to Rai Ugarsen he huskily remarked, "Yes, indeed, he was fair within as fair without—a prince among men. But as transitory as the flower that blooms in the morning and lies withered by evening. Wherefore ? Ye Messengers of Yamráj, Death," mourned he mingling his tears with those of the orphan, "did ye not bear away this withered trunk in thy noose and let the good and gentle flourish ? "

The thirteen days of mourning being over, Bráhmans were feasted and the house purified with the Ganges water. But all unconscious of her home, Amar Devi lay sick with her heart torn by sorrow ; whilst like a ministering angel Sumitrá tended her night and day. Softly she moved to and fro shedding happiness around. Her very presence softened the pain, and her tenderness was like the genial balm to the distracted mind. But unreconciled the unhappy pair continued to fret and whine for their departed master. Mohan Dás had kept silent regarding their fate, but no sooner the days of mourning were over than he arranged to fulfil the dying request of his brother-in-law. As the animals bathed and garlanded, with the brow gleaming with the mark of the crimson pigment, proudly stepped out to meet death, Amar Devi, seeing them from her window,

remarked in surprise, "Why! it's not Desera (a festival when animals such as the cow, the horse and artisan's tools are worshipped) that the pair is adorned?" Reluctantly Mohan Dás broke to her her father's desire, when as if struck by a thunderbolt she sent forth a piercing cry. Mustering up strength, she ran and wound her arms about their necks, and with streaming eyes silently kissed them farewell. When she was carried indoors, she broke into loud lamentation, and rocking herself agitatedly closed her ears as if she heard the whizzing sound of the bullet felling them to the ground, and releasing them from this body; whilst during her delirium she frequently started up imagining a terrific boom-boom to suddenly begin resounding in her ears. Recovering from a severe attack of fever she remarked, "Uncle! I am sure a close sympathy bound the pair to father for them to have felt his loss so keenly."

"Yes, my child," replied Mohan Dás thoughtfully, "It is something more than 'Elective Affinity' that peculiarly attracts two souls to each other. Sure it must be the connexion of a previous Birth that magnetically draws them together, even when inhabiting different kinds of bodies."

"It must be so," joined in Sumitrá. "I have an innate feeling that Amar Devi and I were sisters or something very dear in our previous Birth, otherwise—"

"Otherwise you could hardly break the caste-restrictions so recklessly," added the invalid with a grateful look as she accepted a cup of soup from her hand. "Yes, ever bright and gracious. Ah, dear friend, never—never shall I be able to settle your account, nor thank you sufficiently for your affectionate care. But, say, how many baths must this cup of soup entail?" for like most Hindu women Sumitrá was a strict vegetarian, and for her to touch flesh in any shape meant pollution and necessitated a bath as well as a change of apparel.

"Be yourself again," exclaimed the good friend encouragingly, "and then I'll help you to add up the debt of gratitude;" but Amar Devi's mind reverting to the

sad events she excitedly observed, " Oh uncle ! I would have a marble dome built over the remains of the pair, with the ashes of their kind master preserved in an urn." Mohan Dás questioningly looked at Dr. Ravi Sarmá, who since the sad event, and her illness had been most attentive. Desiring to humour her he seconded the request, and moreover when Rai Ugarsen was obliged to join his appointment he expostulated, " I am under a deep obligation to your father, my generous uncle. Let me help you to clear his debt of honour and you comfortably settle down now." But Amar Devi negatived the proposal, and even when entreated by friends to make her home with them until her marriage, she mournfully shook her head saying, " I am entirely out of tune, and no fit companion for anyone. Besides, there is no place like one's own 'Home, sweet Home,' gloomy though it will be without—without—" and her voice died away in a sob. When all the friends had paid their visit of condolence, and she was about starting for Hurdwár to spend the year of mourning in a secluded spot, Pundit Chiranjiv arrived quivering with emotion. With a look of the deepest sympathy and of the softest pity he gazed at the withered countenance blighted by grief. Compassionately clasping her hands, he sympathetically pressed them to his moist eyes. With tears streaming down their cheeks they silently sat together, when in a husky voice he broke the silence remarking, " I did not come, for my heart must have spoken to you in your desolation. Would—would that I could take your trouble on my shoulders. But, alas ! grief is not a load that can be divided."

" Good friend ! " exclaimed Amar Devi touched at his kindness. " You are sensible of my sufferings, and your sorrowing in my sorrow, as well as desiring my welfare has considerably lightened my burden."

" So simple, yet such understanding," exclaimed he admiringly, and murmuring " Bloom thou, sweet Flower, in peaceful shade, and may fair thoughts ever tend thee," the sympathetic friend departed.

On the declivity of the Chandi Pahár a cottage nestled in a sequestered grove commanding a fine prospect of the Ganges, sometimes peaceful and limpid, at others swelling mountainous high, and breaking wildly against the Hill. All around there was inexpressible beauty of nature, pleasant with the hum of the bees, whilst birds of all kinds, sweet of note and graceful of flight, fluttered in and out of the dark-leaved branches, with eagles circulating the blue vault of heaven and peacocks dancing in high glee at the sight of their shadow. It was a reposeful haven with its loveliness pleasing to the eyes; whilst the wonderful serenity tranquillised the distracted mind of Amar Devi. The Summer heat being tempered by the freshness of the breeze, she sat spinning on the verdant carpet which nature had spread around the cottage, and adorned with fragrant flowers. Day by day, as she drank in health in the warmth of the sunshine, and the melody of the birds, she gained strength. But as it became delightfully cool and fragrant towards the afternoon, uncle and niece sauntered down the glen. Being the anniversary of the birth of the Ganges, the place resounded with the song of a tinselled danseuse, keeping time to the fiddlers with the clink of her anklets, advancing, retiring, uplifting her jewelled arms in graceful movements and feigned love. Singing merrily she tripped to a grotto, where a young recluse sat in a meditative attitude with eyes bent low. His well-preserved limbs showed no sign of having lived on woodland fruits and roots as the Vedas prescribe for a hermit. Indeed his bowls were always replete with milk and rich viands. "Bereft of joy I roam heart-broken," trilled the danseuse approaching him with low salutations and tender looks. "Night to glorious morning turns when my beloved saint I see." The pilgrims on a visit to the sacred Hurdwár to commemorate the festival made way for the singer, and seeing a crowd gathered at the cave, Mohan Dás enquired of an old resident of the place, "Who is this hermit besieged by the pilgrims?" "Report says he is a pacca B. A."

replied the priest. "Fate denying him a Sarkári appointment, he renounced his family and the world for a spiritual life. Wise head indeed! Here without labour he reigns supreme, and is fed sumptuously by the women." Before the refrain of the song had died away, the singer was interrupted by an angry female voice vociferating within the grotto, "Away! way, thou bold enticer." The recluse slightly opening his lids recognised in the danseuse his favourite woodland songster and smiled. "Depart, dear sister," exclaimed he putting a pinch of ashes, in which a silver piece was hidden, upon her open palm. "Long life to the young bábá—hermit," carolled the girl kissing his feet. "Behold his greatness! What he touches turns to silver," and she held the two-anna piece to the admiring gaze of the people who lauded him still more.

But as the pair wended their way towards the Town they laid offerings before a man well-stricken in years, and almost reduced to a shadow, by the severe austerities which he practised. Day by day he sat absorbed in thought on a jutting rock washed by the foams of the Ganges, and as the Seasons came round he lived on unchanged—naked, with the river for his bed and the canopy of heaven for a roof. The smiles and laughter of a child brightened his mild retreat frequented by barren women, who craved for the blessing of the mighty sage. Six winters past a young widow, of a proud family, came from distant lands to cast her burden upon Mother Gangá who reveals no secrets, and is bounteous to all. At a silent hour she consigned her daughter to the stream. Sobbing and beating her breast in agony, she watched the current carry her far away, but the lustral waves bearing back the infant upon their bosom laid it at the feet of the hermit. "God is merciful," cried the mother departing, and her heart set at rest. Being regarded the child of Mother Gangá she was tenderly nurtured by the Hurdwár people. Prattling with Amar Devi the child ran on ahead, and brought the necessary offerings of flower and tiny lamps made of flour, and prettily arranged in a leafy bowl for

With the appearance of Spring crowds of pilgrims arrived to commemorate the delightful season. No sooner they had set their foot outside the Hurdwár station, than they were pounced upon by those human sharks who professing to be their family priests, never leave them till they have sucked them dry. They pester and worry them as they wend their way towards the Town, and their importunities only cease when one of them has succeeded in appropriating each pilgrim or each family party as his special victim. "Mother," says one of these harpies to a young woman, "whence come you, what caste, what name?" "From Meerut, Gour Bráhman," and hesitating to proceed further, she pulls her veil deeper, for to mention her husband's name would be indelicate. Those accompanying her had, therefore, to fill up the gap. "No, I do not keep the record of this family," says the priest turning aside. "Brother!" asks he of another, "what caste?" "Kshatri, son of Punni Rám, Atma Rám," is the reply. "Welcome, welcome" cries the priest escorting the pilgrim to comfortable apartments.

Leaving Rai Ugarsen to attend to her luggage, Sumitrá eagerly threaded her way in and out of the crowd, and like a joyous bird, heralding the vernal season, entered the secluded cottage, and enlivened it with light laughter; whilst Amar Devi's eyes shone with unspeakable joy as she clasped her friend, and protectingly nestled in her lap. Early the next morning they repaired to the bathing Ghaut sanctified by the foot-print of Lord Harí. Except that a great buzz resounded around, nothing at first was visible. But as the morning rays flushed the Shiválik range on this cold but joyous day of Spring, pilgrims were seen struggling to plunge into the immortal Pool. As they touched its ripples, with suppliant hands and heads bowed low, every heart swelled with transport and delight. "Obeisance to thee, Mother Gangá, our hope and trust," exclaimed the reverent crowd. "Hail ye waves that bless and purge all sinners." "By mere water the soul is not purified," muttered a devotee, waist-deep in the stream. "But by true contrition and swaying

each sense with firm control." Notwithstanding the cutting breeze some pilgrims in dripping garments ascended and descended the sacred steps backward and forward with low bows; others with reverential steps paced round the ancient temples skirting the river and laid flowers, sweets and coins at the feet of the various deities personating the Supreme Being. A palanquin was with difficulty brought to the water's edge. Its doors were slightly drawn apart, and a lady, evidently belonging to some high family, performed her ablutions within; whilst silver and copper was lavishly showered on the hungry priests gathered around, and the fishes that fearlessly danced in and out of the palanquin were fed in abundance. Suddenly a cry was heard from one of the female attendants, "My purse! My purse! Oh Ráma where is my silk bag gone?" Each one turned and looked at the other wondering who was the culprit. "Why do you stand gaping?" exclaimed the attendant pushing the Kahár-servant standing beside her to awaken him to action. "See! see! some one greater than man has robbed me. Oh Hanumánji! have pity on thy slave," and folding her hands she humbly bowed to him. "Give back my purse. I shall feed thee with sweets of cream," and accompanied by others she ran along the iron bridge offering tempting morsels to the monkey. Hurdwár is infested with the progeny of the monkey-warrior, Hanumán, and travellers have to keep a wary watch over their belongings. The nearer the maid-servant approached, the higher climbed the cunning animal. No endearment nor reproach; no cake nor sweet tempted it to drop the stolen property. At last it perched itself on the peepal tree overhanging the stream, and leisurely began to examine the contents of the bag. The cardimum it sniffed and threw below, but the snuff bag set it a-sneezing-which caused much merriment to the on-lookers. Fairly upset, it skipped from bough to bough, grinning and shaking its head; whilst the maid earnestly prayed that her treasure might slip from its clasp. But the monkey held it fast, and again

dived its paws into the capacious bag bringing out a large nose-ring, studded with brilliants and pearls. "Oh brethren!" sobbed the girl frantically, "save it from harm. It belongs to the Ráni Sáhiba. She'll whip me to death." The monkey safely clasping the jewel round its neck, began to examine a fifty rupee note upside down with a judicial air which was ludicrous to behold. Becoming enraged at the approach of a stick, it tore the valuable paper to shreds and swallowed it. Pelting pice here and there, the rupees it stowed in its hanging cheeks. But its spirits knew no bounds as it saw its reflection in the mirror of the thumb ring. Having tied fresh cakes to a stick a pilgrim allured the animal with it. The savoury smell was irresistible and it skipped on to the bridge. The maid forgetting fear in the joy of recovering her valuables approached it with cakes. The monkey dropped the bag, and disgorging the rupees from its mouth began to eat eagerly. "Brave daughter of Hanumán!" exclaimed the maid stroking it softly. "My honour is in thy hands and she gently unclasped the nose-ring. But when she tried to regain the thumb-ring, it retreated grinning and peering into the mirror. The maid followed. It stopped and accepted another cake, then suddenly administering a sharp slap on the girl's cheek, it joined its companions.

Enjoying the gay scene Sumitrá with her party lounged beneath the shady boughs along the riverside; whilst on plates of leaves the confectioner helped them to fragrant cakes, and the bounteous stream supplied them with many a cool draught. In an unusual excitement Rai Ugarsen paced the embankment murmuring, "Go—mad-cap heart, go and win." Its constant repetition seemed to nerve him, and sitting on a low branch he hung over Amar Devi whispering, "Brahm be praised! I am free—free at last. My father's debt has been settled."

"I am so glad," replied she with downcast eyes and a flushed face. "It must be a great weight off your mind."

"But, alas!" added the happy lover in an ecstasy of bliss. "I am to be fettered all too soon!" Indignantly turning away, she moved towards Sumitrá, but, finding her enjoying a siesta, she joined little Munnie sailing paper-boats on the stream. "Turn, oh turn, in this direction," exclaimed Rai Ugarsen pursuing his lady-love, and throwing himself beside her. "You'll have enough of me in the coming by-and-by." As she played with the soft ripples kissing their feet, they sat conversing in sweet low tones, when he tenderly pleaded for the marriage day to be fixed. Sweetly blushing her moist eyes sparkled with joy. But sighing at the recent events, she tried to disengage her hand from his ardent clasp; whilst her lips shyly murmured, "No—no."

"Two negatives make an affirmative," cried the happy lover joyously, and finding his cup of happiness full to overflow, he waxed bolder complaining—

See, the mountains kiss high heaven,
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth,
And the moonbeams kiss the sea;—
What are all these kissings worth,
If thou kiss not—

and his face coming nearer and nearer until their very breath mingled in one he excitedly whispered "me?"

"Say, sister, *can butter be near fire and not melt?*" exclaimed Sumitrá standing behind them and enjoying a laugh at their confusion.

Startled Amar Devi confusedly hid her face and wept tears of joy, mingled with sorrow, on the bosom of her trusty friend. But Ugarsen nothing abashed lustly rejoined "For many and many a week she has loved me fondly, and has feared to speak. But Nature being too mighty for restraint has burst the bounds of Art and revealed her secret. So your blessing, cousin mine, and haste to Santpur for the wedding."

UNITY IS STRENGTH.

"Ráma! Ráma! It's inconceivable how you can so intermingle with *this* caste and *that*," exclaimed Sumitrá in disgust as Amar Devi returned from a dinner-party given by an old friend of her father who was not of the superlative degree. "Now that you are about to be married you should hedge in and drop this evil practice."

"My good friend," rejoined the young lady, "even if I were inclined for the exclusive-system, I'd hardly be allowed to abide by it, for my future lord and master seems to enjoy sharing meals with *this* and *that* caste more than keeping his platter sacred. Look, to what length the men of the period go; some, boldly following out just convictions; others, covertly gratifying their tastes, with the caste-folks winking and smiling."

"A man is a man and may please his mood," remarked Sumitrá in extenuation. "But a woman cannot measure his length. Indeed, it is for her to guard the home, and by her spirituality to make amends for his shortcomings."

"Moreover," explained Pundit Sundar Náth sententiously, "this prohibition against interdining is based on a scientific system. I say 'beware! beware!' as a Doctor would warn you against infectious patients. Likewise, Manu prohibits social intercourse with the low-born, lest the germs of his base disposition obscure the mind of the noble Twice-born. Indeed, so rigid is the mandate that even his shadow makes the dish of food unwholesome and unfit for the use of the Elect. Yes, young lady, wash your hands of such friendship."

"Do foul germs emanate from the lowly alone and not from the Twice-born?" questioned the Cosmopolitan Hinduáni, and as the evil-minded Chandi met her gaze

she confusedly lowered her eyes; whilst Amar Devi shuddering determined to give her a wide berth and avoid the infection of her dark speech. "Indeed, it's remarkable," added she, "that one often knocks against a repulsive Sudra in circles credited to be composed of the Sattvá, pure quality; and a virtuous Bráhman in humble life. Perhaps, it was to crush this jaundiced imagination—this self-righteousness and cruel mandate that the Ramáyana is replete with striking illustrations of humanity. What can be more instructive than King Bharat's tenderness towards the low-born Nishád, the contact of whose shadow was enough to require ablutions? Nevertheless, arm in arm the brave warrior proceeded on his journey, appearing 'As if embodied Humility and Love had met together.' Then when about to part Lord Ráma, the Divine Teacher, addressed the unassuming Outcast, 'You, my companion, are as much my brother as Bharat. You must always be backwards and forwards.' Say, learned Pundit, how is it that the foul germs of the humble did not affect the Twice-born at that Period? Rather a happy union united them together, with the Outcast coming 'backwards and forwards!'"

"These exalted actions," replied Sundar Náth "are for a developed being, whose love becoming universal, he wisely looks upon 'a Bráhman, on a cow, an elephant and a Svápaka as alike.'"

"Well, well, we are hardly a nation of Dhruvs to bloom into a sage in infancy," remarked Amar Devi, "nor does it require a prophet to predict, that unless the seed of Charity is sown from tender years to develop the heart to generous thoughts and deeds, grievous distinctions must necessarily exist with the selfish pretensions of the favoured-few predominating."

Love effects miracles; and it had wonderfully expanded the heart of the orthodox Sumitrá. Sighing, "men will be men," she had not only closed her eyes against her husband violating caste restrictions, but was ever ready to palliate the conduct of her friend. Latterly, however, she began to realize the enormity of the

abetment, and to calm her conscience, she daily placed garlands of jasmine before the Deity for the extenuation of her Dipty's folly; while the 'outlandish vagaries,' which she had attributed to Amar Devi's long sojourn in foreign lands, became as troublesome as glare is to sore eyes. But her irritability broke out into angry retorts by the unseemly behaviour of Pundit Chiranjív, who had one day repulsed the platter of food as if it was pregnant with evil germs. "Times have changed," he calmly murmured. "No other food except what is dished by my caste men can pass my sacred lips. Nevertheless, our friendship continues, even as brothers." There was a titter round the table with the Deputy Commissioner good-humouredly remarking, "Worthy friend, please your palate. This reversion is a sure sign that the soul is ascending the higher planes." But when the fact was retailed to Sumitrá, she stood gasping and hot words fell from her trembling lips, "What! refused—refused to break bread with my Dipty. We, we are Sárasvats, the priests of the Warrior-caste, and he but a Gaur. Calls himself Adí Gaur, indeed, as if he could hold the candle before us when his caste men are but cooks and priests of the Merchant class." Notwithstanding her ebullition, she inwardly admired the Pundit for having reverted to orthodox ways. Zealous for the honour of her family she earnestly supplicated that her Dipty may also see the right path and retaliate with greater vehemence. The prayer was answered; but it brought tears to her eyes, for to her chagrin, she heard a few days after that her husband had actually dined at the proud man's table, with the Pundit coldly sitting at arm's length from his guests, as if he belonged neither to the sphere of God nor to that of man. Ever since hardly a week passed that the barber's wife did not recount some new phase of the fervent Penitent to the eager ears of Sumitrá, and she sarcastically remarked to Amar Devi, "Hearken! my friend, your friend, Chiranjív, is doing penance on one leg. You should make a match and settle the Battle of Caste-infringement by a game of hopskotch!"

Indeed, a marvellous change had crept over Pundit Chiranjiv since his brother's return from England. Rám Saran being warmly welcomed by his relations and kinsmen, his spirits overflowed with delight and genial fancies. In his hilarity as humbly bowing, with folded hands to the elders, he beamed all round, with much questioning and many drawing him out in all directions, he felt that he was in the London drawing-room among independent people. The higher rose his spirits, the more breezy became his speech, savouring of heresy, and with the time-honoured, intricate customs of the East being graciously pronounced as 'fudge.' As he unreservedly uttered the radical views imbibed from a free country, a cold shudder ran down the orthodox backs that made Pundit Chiranjiv quake. Ominously shaking their wise heads, the caste-folks closed their lids to deliberate. Awakening from their reverie their dread eyes fastened on the illustrious Pundit, whose magnanimous spirit had little regard for the caste principles; nevertheless, to be at one with his community he outwardly respected them. Flushing guiltily, he began to shrivel up beneath the withering gaze. However, mustering up courage his parched lips parted for a bold defence; but finding himself voiceless a cold tremor seized him. Terror-stricken at the thought of being branded and shunned, the earth began to oscillate as from the shock of an earthquake. Feeling as if it was rooting up the very foundation from under his feet and hurling him to destruction he tottered. Up rose the cunning Chhalyánand with a triumphant smile and nudging his companion, "Now for a game and to line my pockets," he revived the faint-hearted magnate with the ambrosial drops of the Ganges. As he came to his senses the priest whispered the potent Mantra gathered from experience rather than the Vedas, "Jaise bahai bayár pít taisehi kijai—brother, go with the stream. You are safe!" while the proud aristocrat who at one time considered it beneath his dignity to favour him with even a glance gratefully touched his feet murmuring, "By your grace—ever keep me under your guidance."

Having set the timid Pundit on his feet, he buoyantly stepped across and with a show of admiration jocosely slapped the Radical on his back exclaiming, "Shábásh! Well done! Nothing like going ahead at telegraphic speed and—and," but the words, "going down the precipice," died away in his throat; while he whispered to his companion, "By his wild speech Rám Saran has raised hornets about him. Chiranjív is in such mortal fear of excommunication that he will no more net with that remarkable rosary even behind screens. Yes, brother, we'll have some tamásha at their expense. I'll widen the breach, and he'll give his brother the cold shoulder."

Absorbed in thoughts for his own safety, Pundit Chiranjív made no exertion to restrain or guide his rash brother against his advanced views, which, however commendable, seemed profane to an orthodox society shackled by superstition. In fact afraid of being marked together, he pleaded indisposition, and withdrew himself to contemplate in retirement on the mystic Mantra, 'flow with the tide.' Moreover, following the promptings of the wily Chhalyánand to appear in the chastest orthodox garb and to have his home and actions transparent to the world, so as to allay the suspicion and smouldering wrath of the community against his jovial deceptions, his life changed in the twinkling of an eye. "Honoured brother, you are an illustrious Pillar of Society and must not have *this* and *that* thrown in your teeth," advised the diplomat. The conservative Bráhman is most obliging, even ready to overlook the commission of the greatest sin; provided, well you understand, not exactly a question of base silver, but if he is kept in good humour—his eyes are not inflamed by an irritable display of un-Hindu practices. Yes, brother, retrieve—mend," urged the priest deftly clearing the room of the foreign imports which the Pundit cherished, and transferring them to his own quarters. "You must, henceforth, stand as a shining example to wanderers. 'Whatever a great man doeth that other men also do.'"

"True, Maharáj, I cannot have my honoured name bespattered," said Chiranjív donning on the daintiest forest-garb and clumsily curling his stiff limbs into the first posture for meditation, "nor sacrifice my position in society even to rescue a drowning man. Well—well, you must bring that reckless brother of mine to his senses."

"That I will with an effective blister," muttered the obliging priest between his teeth.

"Ah, but how can I thank you for your timely help," continued the Pundit effusively, and thrusting some bank notes in the grasping hand, which, however, he accepted with a show of reluctance, "In your benignity you have saved me from a living death."

Giving his disciple a scornful look, Chhalyánand took the first train to Rám Saran who had been stationed at Núrpur, and was unconscious of the metamorphosis his venerable brother was going through under ingenious hand. Nor did the crafty priest reveal the facts, or even warn him of the unpleasant impression his untimely comments had created upon the community. Rather, keeping a vigilant eye on the two homes, he stimulated his arduous nature as Rám Saran in his conversation revealed to him his lofty sentiments and aspirations to raise the tone of the Hindu society. "Excellent! Lash Orthodoxy to shreds," incited Chhalyánand, laughing at him in his sleeve. "Yes, brother, speak your thoughts fearlessly. Talking without doing is like a tree without leaves and fruit; and whatever seed you cast expect to gather its fruit. Indeed, hundreds will follow in your wake." But no sooner the priest had shaken the dust of Rám Saran's threshold than the lofty aspirations, which he had so warmly commended, but in which he had no heart whatever, began to appear in a wondrously dark aspect, and when closeted with Pundit Chiranjív he concernedly remarked, "Ráma! Ráma! Dreadful! Sea voyage overbalances the brains. Even the Sudra—the Mlechh respects caste, but an England-returned Hindu becomes seasoned with 'Agar-magar—

trashy confusion of the heavy sea. Alas! Rám Saran is riding the high horse, and there is no curbing him in." The Penitent regretfully sighed. Nevertheless, he stretched out no hand of protection, but hedging himself in, fell into deeper contemplation of, "Go with the stream"

Whilst Rám Saran was advocating his advanced views before the public, and the illustrious magnate dissolving from spasmodic sighs of repentence, Chhalyánand mysteriously stepped from home to home exciting the inmates to white heat by the enigmatic words, "Kyá kahen, kuchh púchho mat—alas! it's too dreadful. Pray, pray do not ask!" Naturally as flies cluster around honey, the caste-folks burning with curiosity clamoured about him plying him with questions and handling him roughly. Afraid of being torn to pieces the song of "Pray, pray do not ask," ceased and giving a fiery sketch of the man with independent views added, "Yes, my clansmen, Rám Saran's lungs are inflated with—"

"Eggs and cutlets," interrupted some; whilst the vegetarians grimacing in disgust spat, "thú—thú."

"Inflaten with dynamite," continued he emphasizing each word. "He has come to discriminate the brightness of truth from the shadows of falsehood, and will shatter Orthodoxy."

"Pump the heretic with sea-water, and rubbing his nose let him do práschit—penance for treason and sea-voyage," cried the crowd in a determined voice.

Up flew the restless Chhalyánand to Núrpur. But not with the olive-branch, save to sow the seed of dissension. Whilst chewing the fragrant betel-nut, he delicately broached the subject of the caste men insisting on his performing práschit. Burning with indignation Rám Saran blazed up and scornfully retorted, "Bosh! Do penance for going to foreign lands to better my condition, to gain my dál-roti—a living. Shiv! my stay-at-home brethren who do marvellous things admittedly un-Hindu, and have no excuse, except that of

enjoyment will have to set me the example of a Penitent before I bend my head to that farce."

"Certainly, just snap your fingers at the community," prompted the inspiring priest. "You are a Cantab, and not a chicken-hearted Graduate to comply with their idiotic request and lead a double life." But when wafted back to Santpur, he gloomily stepped into the sanctum of Pundit Chiranjiv. Gravely inserting his first finger between his teeth, he muttered in a woe-begone voice, "Alas! when Fate comes, the senses become blinded. The friendly deities have fled and the evil Sanichar (Saturn) has taken up his abode in his home. Rám Saran is a doomed man." Chilling to the marrow-bones, the Pundit drew his heart into a nut-shell, even as a tortoise draws in its limbs on all sides. The dark cloud that had been gathering at last broke into a terrific storm, and like thunder-bolts came the missives from the caste men calling for práschit—immediate penance for sea-voyage, or excommunication. With proud disdain Rám Saran listened to their threats. But when they spitefully oppressed him, and he found that one by one his servants began to discard him as if he had changed into an infectious corpse, he jumped into the first train for Santpur. "Sheltered behind the broad back of my illustrious brother," happily ran his thoughts as he was being whirled onward, "the miscreants will soon stop their insane nonsense. By Jove! The first taste I had of flesh was seeing my worthy brother battling with a fowl. If I am to undergo práschit for sea-voyage, surely—surely," and he burst into a hearty laugh. But arriving he turned grave, while his sanguine reflections were checked by a trying sight that agitated him to no small extent, and filled him with foreboding of greater distress awaiting him. In painful amazement his eyes opened wider and wider as driving into the compound, he found the pretty garden disfigured by a variety of matted-hair mendicants, who had suddenly sprung up like wild fungus. In the

midst of this startling scene, the Penitent robed in a rich scarf, but bare-headed, bare-footed, and not content to have his home, and his actions alone transparent, but himself dwindled down to a mouldy shadow, slowly paced from faqír to faqír. Having laved their feet in expiation for his sins, he departed strengthened and purified by their blessing. But at the sight of his brother a great tremor seized him, and fearing that even the semblance of sympathy would entangle him disastrously, he nervously glanced round that no dangerous eyes witnessed their meeting. The more Rám Saran argued his point and vehemently exclaimed, "What! lead a double life! Resort to shamming—lying," the further the illustrious Pundit edged into his sanctum, with his tremulous lips repeating the sound doctrine, "Go with the stream." At length when he could no longer endure the expostulations, the doors impatiently closed, and becoming enwrapped in contemplation, he grew dead to the troubles of his brother.

In bitterness of heart, Rám Saran sank down at the threshold. As with bowed head painful thoughts rushed in, a gentle hand assuaged his grief, and begged of him to enter within. But he refused with a proud shake of the head, and determinedly declared, "By my life! I'll not undergo práschit." The aged mother burst into tears and between sobs moaned, "Ah son, foreign travel hardens the heart to the nearest and the dearest. Alas! Must we be strangers, henceforth, with no bread; yea, not even a drop to pass my parched lips when touched by thy patit, fallen-hand. And this is the hand," repined she clasping it in her own, "that chased the gloom of widowhood, when Yamráj called away thy blessed father. But ah! how ill-fated I am, that in my declining years it should deal me the death-blow!"

"Hush, mother," murmured Rám Saran with streaming eyes.

"Nay, son, say," continued she, "what Viláyati thing wishest thou to eat, to drink, and Ráma is

witness that orthodox as I am—repulsive as it may be, yet in love I'll turn thy slave. But for our honour do práschit, and be not estranged from us. Else the caste-folks will stand a-grinning—point their venomous fingers at us and until now no blot has stained our venerable lineage." As she lovingly folded her son in her arms his heart melted at her tenderness. But on his wife, who sat in the background with the veil deep-drawn adding, "Yes, hearken to the voice of the aged," Rám Saran shortly retorted, "What! Thou also desirest to desert me?—Well, hence to thy parents' and never show me thy face again. I can stand a—alone," stammered he haughtily; yet, at the idea of an isolated life his throat tightened from grief.

"Indeed, be guided by thy elder brother—follow him," urged an old aunt. At the words "elder brother," blood rushed to his eyes and starting to his feet he angrily retorted, "He—he was the first to turn his back upon me. Go," cried he facing his wife, "pack thy bundles and come at once. 'Having devoured nine hundred rats away roams the cat pilgriming.' But I'll not resort to tricks and deceptions. What is to be will be. But shake the dust of—of—" and hardening his heart he set his face against his birthplace. Terrified at his father's command Gáyá Rám, who crouched beside his mother, flew to the sanctum, and fell at the Penitent's feet bewailing, "Oh uncle, you'll not desert us—me, as dear as your son. Shelter me as of yore, and, do not let *bhaiyá, brother,* snatch me away from you." To the piteous appeal of one whom he cherished like a son, Pundit Chiranjív gave no answer; but his mouth twitched in pain, and a great lump almost choked him to death. As is customary, Rám Saran had been married at an early age. But the boy-husband being ashamed to be called *father* before he had cut his wisdom tooth, he was addressed as *bhaiyá, brother,* by his children. Moreover, as it is not considered quite proper for a youth to be caught fondling his first-born, hence Gáyá Rám was a stranger to his

father, and becoming the favourite of his uncle, he gave him the allegiance of a son. As the carriage became piled with the things of the Outcast, the aged mother wildly tore her hair imploring, "Oh son, if thou hast lost faith in our ancient customs, at least—at least consider what the world will say. Alas! thou'lt blacken thy face and mine as well." But her pleading was drowned by Rám Saran urgently calling to his truant son, who in a paroxysm of grief rolled at the feet of his beloved uncle and prayed not to be outcasted. As he was about to raise the lad and press him to his heaving breast, the father dragged him away and pushed him into the carriage. When it slowly moved away with the Outcasts, the aged mother ran crying, "Eh—eh my lad! Thy birth did not pierce me with such pangs, as this unnatural snapping of ties. Alas! for sea-voyage which extinguishes the prem ká diá—Flame of Love!" and as they led away the disconsolate mother, Chhalyánand sarcastically remarked, "This is the Nineteenth Century Progress in right earnest." But her anguish increased ten-fold, and she tottered on beholding her first-born lying in a dead faint. When Puudit Chiranjiv opened his eyes, he sighed for the young lad that had brightened his old age; and as days passed by, he would often send away his platter of food untasted, for the fair form was not there to share it with him.

Thicker and thicker grew the cloud over the life of the excommunicants, until not even with the offer of double wages could eligible servants be enticed to serve them. Like a drudge from morning until night, the wife attended to the household duties, whilst for a mile round no Hindu-shop would provide them with provisions and it was by stealth they were able to procure drinking water from the sacred wells. In the midst of these trials, they were cast into greater gloom by the caste man to whose daughter the fifteen-year-old Gáyá Rám was betrothed, withdrawing the Engagement. The wife almost died of despondency, and to cheer her

drooping spirits the dexterous Chhalyánand came to the fore and offered to seek them another bride. Hearing of their trying situation, the good Dr. Ravi Sarmá fearlessly assisted them and not only procured them servants from a distance, but frequently dined with the Outcasts to allay the fear of the timid menials. Finding Rám Saran in better spirits, the Doctor remarked, "You, certainly, have had a pleasant taste of purgatory and dragged others into the bargain. I admire your courage, but is it not time to bend to the dictates of society, whose fossilised mind cannot grasp your advanced views? Mark, that it predominates with the illiterate, so that one should not even hesitate to put the heel foremost in place of the toe to humour them. Come, do práschit and live peaceably. As other restrictions have relaxed so will sea-voyage in time lose its guilt and require no expiation."

"The demand is preposterous," replied the Outcast, "particularly as society knowingly shields the most fragrant caste-breakers. No, I'll not bend to its tyranny; indeed, my liberal mind scorns the practices with the selfish pretensions which sanction divine honours to the favoured-few, and sink the greater portion of the nation in the mire. Yes, apart I can work with less hindrance."

"Unity is Strength," remarked the experienced Doctor. "Believe me, brother, you'll better be able to disseminate your principles, and bring about reform, when living amicably among the caste-folks than when at daggers drawn. It is sad that this fair India is not only overspread with the indigestible *melon—phút*, but that *discord-phút* prevails in each caste. The evils which this dissevered-state has wrought upon the nation are, indeed, inconceivable; and how can prosperity flourish, when the root is thick with the rancorous weed of dissension? Therefore the first essential reform necessary to progress is to co-operate even under trying circumstances and variance of opinion. I grant, that when my next door neighbour is without any

let or hindrance infringing Hindu canons, the demand for práschit is absurd. But seeing in what state the society lies, you should take that step which is likely to create the least harm."

"Práschit is a meaningless ceremony," replied Rám Saran shortly, and determined to stand his ground against encouraging a life of hypocrisy. "Oh, it's degrading—sinful."

"Well, which is the greater sin," questioned the Doctor, "to undergo práschit, even if one does not believe in its efficacy, and is likely to infringe the orthodox restrictions afterwards or to break family ties? Besides, one unhappily involves others, and drags them through the hell-fire of excommunication. Each time we meet, your aged mother sadly remarks, 'Eh Dáktar Sáhib! is it possible that my lad has become hardened, while my heart is bursting from the pangs of severance? Alas! sea-voyage extinguishes the 'prem ká díá—love'? Indeed, my friend, to break ties is a grievous sin, so avoid the worst evil."

At the thought of his sorrowing mother his heart melted and Rám Saran stammered, "What—whatever you advise I'll—" But a dark figure loomed and interrupted the conversation. Bowing obsequiously to the Doctor, Chhalyánand encouragingly patted the Outcast remarking, "Brother, have everything in readiness. The Bride for Gáyá Rám is secured; but at a cost of Rs. 2,000. At the favourable termination of events Rám Saran's face glowed with joy, and his spirits reviving he loftily rejoined, "Now, I'll go straight ahead, and show my timid caste men that even an Outcast can procure alliances."

"Certainly, you are the favoured of the gods," flattered the priest." With wealth and wisdom you can comfortably exist without their charmed company. They are but thorns in your side." The Doctor angrily eyed the flatterer and muttering, "Mischief-maker" he abruptly left them. Finding Rám Saran delirious over the thought of cowing down his caste-

folks by his independence, he did not again resume the irritating subject. But a couple of months later when happening to be at Santpur, and the Outcast had again fallen into difficulties he renewed the subject, "Your brother is hard pressed by the Bride's father. Noble friend, you have pluck and daring, except that this absurd mystic abstraction and self-mortification has unhinged you. But balance yourself, and bring that enthusiast to his senses as well. He is cut up rough at your coldness, and is measuring his honourable nose with yours. Rise, hence to his rescue."

"Little fishes living in the same stream with the alligator should not be at enmity with him," quoted Pundit Chiranjiv in self-defence. "I cannot sacrifice my domestic happiness and position for a fantastic whim of my brother. He should go with the stream."

"Oh, do not think of self-aggrandisement," rejoined the Doctor, "but manfully stand shoulder to shoulder. What a great man does others follow; and the welcome greeting of the near relatives to the England-returned Hindu should be 'Brother, let us patiently bear with each other's angularities and live unitedly,' instead of coldly edging away, and leaving him as if he were an infected body."

What with the home being filled with the sighs of his aged mother, and his own heart yearning for the innocent lad, the Penitent's contemplation became disturbed by conflicting thoughts. Moreover, the good Doctor determining to nerve him up, and to help him through the trial vehemently urged him to fulfil the duty of a brother. At night as perplexed with gloomy apprehensions, he restlessly tossed in his bed, he felt inclined to rush to his assistance. But when the morning sun streamed into the room, it seemed to gibe him with the chilly stare of the caste men, and excommunication looming behind. Suddenly, his risen spirits subsided, and falling into coma he contemplated, "Go with the stream." Once when the two friends were out strolling, they sauntered into Rai Kishen Chand's garden. Since

Pundit Chiranjív had taken to meditation the world had become a blank, and his visit to his friends had ceased. But at sight of Amar Devi his withered countenance became lit with a happy smile, and as she greeted him, "Eh? A case of 'out of sight out of mind'—alas! for true Friendship," he blithely rejoined in Persian, "He is not far, though at a distance, who is in the heart; but he is not near, though hard by, who is not in the heart." The Doctor cheered remarking, "Good! The ascetic is creeping out from his shell-life. Now there is hope of retrieval," and as he resumed his attack Amar Devi gently chided him, "Repentance does not lie in conserving the platter sacred, or in unkempt hair and nails! It brings no satisfaction except that the people are most amiable to your face, and grimace behind your back with ugly comments! My noble friend! break from this mildewed life, and maintain your fair name by fulfilling your duty as a brother."

"Indeed, in an emergency a brother is used as a shield," added the Doctor. "Yes, here is an advantage to show your nobleness, instead of condemning him by standing aloof."

"Certainly, if Rám Saran should do práschit," rejoined Amar Devi, and her eyes flashed with indignation at the unjust condemnation, "you and your 'back-door set' should be made to undergo double penance for caste-infringement. But what's more terrible is that that innocent lad is made to suffer for your shortcomings. The Bride's father declines to give his daughter in marriage unless your illustrious self will partake of the 'rice-breakfast' served by him. Yes, you may well groan," exclaimed she, as Pundit Chiranjív cut to the heart despairingly wrung his hand and stammered, "In your simple way you teach words of wisdom; but, I am an ocean of faultiness and—and weakness."

"My good friend! you have many imperfections," spoke she with artless grace and irresistible persuasion, "nevertheless, you can perform most noble and virtuous actions. Remain faithful to yourself and obey the voice

of conscience, instead of being intimidated by the buzzing of the caste men."

"Thou, noble creature!" exclaimed the Pundit agitatedly. "In your presence I seem to be more than I really am. Say what—"

"Close your eyes and ears and go straight to the rescue of your brother;" and as the Doctor joyfully led him away, she encouragingly added, "Have no fear. All will end well."

When Gáyá Rám's Engagement had been satisfactorily settled, bulletins flew around telling of the marvellous preparations to welcome the poor village Bride. As the bridal-procession left Núrpur, pipes and drums proclaimed far and wide the joyous tidings; and star-like rockets bursting before the very nose of the prejudiced caste men startled them with the success of the condemned Rám Saran. Elated, he spared no expense to make the wedding imposing and quite captivated the maid's relatives. But when the profound greetings had been exchanged between the would-be fathers-in-law, Pundit Hukm Chand's eyes roved around seeking in vain for Pundit Chiranjiv whose illustrious name had won the hand of the ten-year-old maid. Being a village, away from the Railway, the world moved slowly in that part, and news had not warned the dwellers of the rupture between the two brothers, nor that the England-returned had been branded with excommunication. As the Bride's father imperatively questioned, an uncomfortable silence fell that made Rám Saran's heart beat like a hammer and nearly ruptured his blood-vessel; whilst Chhalyánand who had gained the girl by subterfuge groaning gasped, "Just—just at the last moment heard, 'huqqá páni bund—the maid's would-be father-in-law had been outcasted.'" Frowning and his head proudly rising sky-high, Hukm Chand's terrific voice thundered forth, "I may cut her to pieces; throw her into a well; yea, keep her unmarried, even if the deed cast my ancestors into hell-fire; but give my girl in marriage to—to an Outcast—never.

When Pundit Chiranjív joins in the 'rice-breakfast' then—then; otherwise, no daughter of mine shall wed Gáyá Ram. Go, get thee gone" and he amiably turned his back upon the brilliant procession. Finding himself in a painful dilemma Rám Saran became stunned, and for a moment stood petrified. But imagining his caste men leering and having a merry laugh at his discomfiture his blood began to bubble, and hot words shot from his trembling lips, "'Go,' sayest thou. My life may go; but I'll not budge an inch without the Bride. Thou didst not offer her to me like a gentleman, but sold her. Do you hear brothers," and he looked round the assemblage who loudly cried, "Shame—shame!" whilst the indignant Outcast continued, "Yes, sold his daughter for bags of shining silver. Indeed, she is mine—body and soul. Yes, proud villager! if I don't get my lad married then—then my moustache," and like a banner he proudly unfurled it lengthways, "is not a moustache, but—but the beard of a goat!"

A broad smile passed over the awed faces, whilst Chhalyánand enjoying the scene, and watching it with as keen an interest is if he were the umpire added, "Lo! thus Oxford and Cambridge discuss!" But Hukm Chand livid with rage sent a volley athwart, "Pooh! what weight has thy moustache, when thy own brother is ashamed to acknowledge it and thee into the bargain!" Too excited to continue, his priest raised his turbanned-head and glaring at the bridal-party exclaimed, "In taking thy money we did not sell our souls to thee. What dependence can there be on a voyager. He is capable of anything and everything. Brahm alone knows what little thou hast left undone. No, no jujmán, don't have your nose cut by this alliance," remarked he leading him away. "Look elsewhere" and contemptuously spitting as if Rám Saran had turned into a loathsome animal, they left him drowned in unpleasant thoughts. For days the two parties snarled and growled, until the quarrel developed into a raging strife and they were ready to tear each other to shreds. Terrified, the unfortunate Bridegroom crouched in a corner and wept like a girl

with despairing moans, "Alas! what is life worth, when my more than father has cast me aside? I am the cause of this discord; yes, 'When the instrument is destroyed the music will cease;'" whilst Rám Saran almost sick unto death, yet determined to take the Bride, exhorted; yea, with folded hands pleaded with Chhalyánand, "To unite 'two hands into four' is a meritorious act. If I had not fallen into a ditch, why—why would I sacrifice my worthy son to a village beggar. Nevertheless, I'll not stoop to my brother," added he haughtily, "nor will I return to Núrpur empty-handed. Yes, good friend, my honour lies in your hand. Work the matter round and get that surly priest of Hukm Chand under your thumb. Rest assured I'll make it worth your while," and taking off a valuable ring thrust it into the covetous hands.

"Drive away all care," exclaimad Chhalyánand starting to his feet, "With money even the milk of the lioness is obtainable." Entering the enemy's camp he cleverly swept away the cobweb of prejudice with a golden broom, and soon subdued the village priest to his temper. Armed with the soothing words of wisdom, he confronted Hukm Chand with deep sighs, "To see you harassed, Maharáj, has drowned me in a sea of sorrow, and for days neither bread nor water has passed my parched throat. But who can wipe away what is inscribed on the forehead? Indeed, the deeds of the previous Birth are too powerful to be averted, and no matter which way I twist and turn the horoscopes, the stars foretell the union of your daughter with Gáyá Rám. Stay, stay," urged he as Hukm Chand loftily turned away muttering, "Never—never." "Listen to sound advice and fulfil the betrothal; otherwise the world will turn you to ridicule; yes, indeed, pierce you with the most cutting remarks. And what more common than that the Bridegroom refused to accept the girl for blemishes too deep to blot out. Oh Maharáj!" intimidated Chhalyánand, "another man would by this have slipped the Missing Link between his legs and taken to his heels. But the England-returned lion is verily the grandfather of the Chándals, and a village lamb like you

will hardly be a mouthful in his jaws. Beware! Rám Saran will tear you to shreds; yes, Maharáj, card you like cotton—dhun-dhun; and dragging you by the nose introduce you to Justice Sáhib for—" but his face fell a yard long, as if the calamity had overtaken him, and he hissed between his set teeth, " for the recovery of the two thousand rupees."

Hukm Chand turned yellow as the money had been spent. Moreover, nothing fills the villager with greater dread than to face the Law Courts. As he despairingly gazed around, his priest nerved him, " Hé jujmán! bind the holy Knot. It seems the wisest course." Hardly had Hukm Chand consented, when Chhalyánand joyously waved his hand to the bridal-party and the bandsmen proclaimed the happy termination with a brilliant flourish; whilst the would-be fathers-in-law cemented the union by an affectionate greeting. But when they searched for the Bridgeroom, he was found almost unconscious, and his purpled lips moaning, " When the instrument is destroyed, its music will cease." On finding that his son had taken an overdose of opium to end the quarrel, Rám Saran rushed about like a madman for emetics. But being determined to die, the Bridegroom would not open his clenched teeth. In the midst of the confusion and mournful cries appeared Dr. Ravi Sarmá with his illustrious friend. At the sight of the pitiable condition of the lad whom he had nurtured from infancy, Pundit Chiranjív tottered in an agony of grief. Clasping him to his heart floods of tears streamed down his face, and filled with remorse moaned, " Alas! I have been to blame—have destroyed my treasure." Recognising the loved voice Gayá Rám rapturously smiled murmuring, " Uncle—uncle!" and nestling into his lap, swallowed the emetic from his hands; whilst Rám Saran overcome by his brother's magnanimity, and ashamed of his headstrong attitude stood with folded hands stammering, " I—I was wrong to disobey." With the help of the Doctor and the presence of his fond uncle, Gayá Rám was soon moving about, and he not

only 'paced round the sacred fire' and had the Gordion knot tied, but was strong enough to join in the práschit ceremony as well. Headed by the venerable Pundit Chiranjív, the family underwent the peuance for sea-voyage and caste-infringement; whilst at its termination there was a sumptuous feast that laid the greedy Bráhmans on their backs for many a day. Nevertheless, hurrahing, "Chiranjív! Long life to Chiranjív!" they desired to catch the illustrious magnate tripping, in order to be luxuriously fêted again.

As the bridal-procession set out homeward, Rám Saran blithely remarked, "Say, Samdhi, my moustache is not—well, has some weight!" and he merrily twirled it about. Abashed, Hukm Chand hung down his head and with folded hands confusedly said, "Forget and forgive; we are your slaves." But when they arrived at Santpur unbounded was the joy of the aged mother. She ran and clasped her Radical son to her heart, and rejoiced like a blind man who has recovered his sight. As the brothers sauntered into the Deputy Commissioner's, Rai Ugarsen warmly welcomed them, "Ah—ha! a very magnetic Fancy, indeed, must have made you take a turn. Yes, your conduct is brilliant as gold;" whilst Amar Devi whispered, "Nobly have you borne yourself. Now you are an exemplary Pillar of Society!"

"Good friend!" cried Pundit Chiranjív eagerly clasping her hand in his and the light of victory illumining his fair face. "You have out of your own goodness made me good."

Soft and low the evening fell, with the fragrant zephyrs pausing and dying in sweet whispers of the united happiness; whilst the earth, lying purpled with the roseate beams of the fast declining sun, smiled in ha contentment. As it imprinted its farewell stars gleamed above, when the United linger gloaming. But as the moon radiated the hea its effulgence, they listened enraptured to melody of the nightingale, "Dear heart! lo of all things is love, making life grow wise and

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