RUJUB, THE JUGGLER

By G. A. Henty.

CONTENTS

PUBLISHERS' INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPTER IX.

CHAPTER X.

CHAPTER XI.

CHAPTER XII.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHAPTER XV.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHAPTER XX.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PUBLISHERS' INTRODUCTION.

"Rujub, the Juggler," is mainly an historical tale for young and old, dealing with the Sepoy Mutiny, in India, during the years 1857 to 1859.

This famous mutiny occurred while the reins of British rule in India were in the hands of Lord Canning. Chupattees (cakes of flour and water) were circulated among the natives, placards protesting against British rule were posted at Delhi, and when the Enfield rifle with its greased cartridges was introduced among the Sepoy soldiers serving the Queen it was rumored that the cartridges were smeared with the forbidden pig's fat, so that the power of the Sepoys might forever be destroyed.

Fanatical to the last degree, the Sepoys were not long in bringing the mutiny to a head. The first outbreak occurred at Meerut, where were stationed about two thousand English soldiers and three thousand native troops. The native troops refused to use the cartridges supplied to them and eighty-two were placed under arrest. On the day following the native troops rebelled in a body, broke open the guardhouse and released the prisoners, and a severe battle followed, and Meerut was given over to the flames. The mutineers then marched upon Delhi, thirty-two miles away, and took possession. At Bithoor the Rajah had always professed a strong friendship for the English, but he secretly plotted against them, and, later on, General Wheeler was compelled to surrender to the Rajah at Cawnpore, and did so with the understanding that the lives of all in the place should be spared. Shortly after the surrender the English officers and soldiers were shot down, and all of the women and children butchered.

The mutiny was now at its height, and for a while it was feared that British rule in India must cease. The Europeans at Lucknow were besieged for about three months and were on the point of giving up, when they were relieved through the heroic march of General Havelock. Sir Colin Campbell followed, and soon the city was once more in the complete possession of the British. Oude was speedily reduced to submission, many of the rebel leaders were either shot or hanged, and gradually the mutiny, which had cost the lives of thousands, was brought to an end.

The tale, however, is not all of war. In its pages are given many true to life pictures of life in India, in the barracks of the soldiers and elsewhere. A most important part is played by Rujub, the juggler, who is a warm friend to the hero of the narrative. Rujub is no common conjuror, but one of the higher men of mystery, who perform partly as a religious duty and who accept no pay for such performances. The acts of these persons are but little understood, even at this late day, and it is possible that many of their arts will sooner or later be utterly lost to the world at large. That they can do some wonderful things in juggling, mind reading, and in second sight, is testified to by thousands of people who have witnessed their performances in India; how they do these things has never yet been explained.

Strange as it may seem, the hero of the tale is a natural born coward, who cannot stand the noise of gunfire. He realizes his shortcomings, and they are frequently

brought home to him through the taunts of his fellow soldiers. A doctor proves that the dread of noise is hereditary, but this only adds to the young soldier's misery. To make himself brave he rushes to the front in a most desperate fight, and engages in scout work which means almost certain death. In the end he masters his fear, and gives a practical lesson of what stern and unbending will power can accomplish.

In many respects “Rujub, the Juggler,” will be found one of the strongest of Mr. Henty's works, and this is saying much when one considers all of the many stories this well known author has already penned for the entertainment of young and old. As a picture of life in the English Army in India it is unexcelled.

CHAPTER I.

It would be difficult to find a fairer scene. Throughout the gardens lanterns of many shapes and devices threw their light down upon the paths, which were marked out by lines of little lamps suspended on wires a foot above the ground. In a treble row they encircled a large tank or pond and studded a little island in its center. Along the terraces were festoons and arches of innumerable lamps, while behind was the Palace or Castle, for it was called either; the Oriental doors and windows and the tracery of its walls lit up below by the soft light, while the outline of the upper part could scarce be made out. Eastern as the scene was, the actors were for the most part English. Although the crowd that promenaded the terrace was composed principally of men, of whom the majority were in uniform of one sort or another, the rest in evening dress, there were many ladies among them.

At the end of one of the terraces a band of the 103d Bengal Infantry was playing, and when they ceased a band of native musicians, at the opposite end of the terrace, took up the strains. Within, the palace was brilliantly lighted, and at the tables in one of the large apartments a few couples were still seated at supper. Among his guests moved the Rajah, chatting in fluent English, laughing with the men, paying compliments to the ladies, a thoroughly good fellow all round, as his guests agreed. The affair had been a great success. There had first been a banquet to the officers and civilians at the neighboring station. When this was over, the ladies began to arrive, and for their amusement there had been a native nautch upon a grand scale, followed by a fine display of fireworks, and then by supper, at which the Rajah had made a speech expressive of his deep admiration and affection for the British. This he had followed up by proposing the health of the ladies in flowery terms. Never was there a better fellow than the Rajah. He had English tastes, and often dined at one or other of the officers' messes. He was a good shot, and could fairly hold his own at billiards. He had first rate English horses in his stables, and his turnout was perfect in all respects. He kept a few horses for the races, and was present at every ball and entertainment. At Bithoor he kept almost open house. There was a billiard room and racquet courts, and once or twice a week there were luncheon parties, at which from twelve to twenty officers were generally present. In all India there was no Rajah with more pronounced English tastes or greater affection for English people. The one regret of his life, he often declared, was that his color and his religion prevented his entertaining the hope of obtaining an English wife. All this, as everyone said, was the more remarkable and praiseworthy, inasmuch as he had good grounds of complaint against the British Government.

With the ladies he was an especial favorite; he was always ready to show them courtesy. His carriages were at their service. He was ready to give his aid and assistance to every gathering. His private band played frequently on the promenade, and handsome presents of shawls and jewelry were often made to those whom he held in highest favor. At present he was talking to General Wheeler and some other officers.

"I warn you that I mean to win the cup at the races," he said; "I have just bought the horse that swept the board on the Bombay side; I have set my heart on winning the cup, and so secured this horse. I am ready to back it if any of you gentlemen are disposed to wager against it."

"All in good time, Rajah," one of the officers laughed; "we don't know what will be entered against it yet, and we must wait to see what the betting is, but I doubt whether we have anything that will beat the Bombay crack on this side; I fancy you will have to lay odds on."

"We shall see," the Rajah said; "I have always been unlucky, but I mean to win this time."

"I don't think you take your losses much to heart, Rajah," General Wheeler said; "yet there is no doubt that your bets are generally somewhat rash ones."

"I mean to make a coup this time. That is your word for a big thing, I think. The Government has treated me so badly I must try to take something out of the pockets of its officers."

"You do pretty well still," the General laughed; "after this splendid entertainment you have given us this evening you can hardly call yourself a poor man."

"I know I am rich. I have enough for my little pleasures—I do not know that I could wish for more—still no one is ever quite content."

By this time the party was breaking up, and for the next half hour the Rajah was occupied in bidding goodby to his guests. When the last had gone he turned and entered the palace, passed through the great halls, and, pushing aside a curtain, entered a small room. The walls and the columns were of white marble, inlaid with arabesque work of colored stones. Four golden lamps hung from the ceiling, the floor was covered with costly carpets, and at one end ran a raised platform a foot in height, piled with soft cushions. He took a turn or two up and down the room, and then struck a silver bell. An attendant entered.

"Send Khoosheal and Imambux here."

Two minutes later the men entered. Imambux commanded the Rajah's troops, while Khoosheal was the master of his household.

"All has gone off well," the Rajah said; "I am pleased with you, Khoosheal. One more at most, and we shall have done with them. Little do they think what their good friend Nana Sahib is preparing for them. What a poor spirited creature they think me to kiss the hand that robbed me, to be friends with those who have deprived me of my rights! But the day of reckoning is not far off, and then woe to them all! Have any of your messengers returned, Imambux?"

"Several have come in this evening, my lord; would you see them now, or wait till morning?"

"I will see them now; I will get the memory of these chattering men and these women with their bare shoulders out of my mind. Send the men in one by one. I have no further occasion for you tonight; two are better than three when men talk of matters upon which an empire depends."

The two officers bowed and retired, and shortly afterwards the attendant drew back the curtain again, and a native, in the rags of a mendicant, entered, and bowed till his forehead touched the carpet. Then he remained kneeling, with his arms crossed over his chest, and his head inclined in the attitude of the deepest humility.

"Where have you been?" the Rajah asked.

"My lord's slave has been for three weeks at Meerut. I have obeyed orders. I have distributed chupaties among the native regiments, with the words, 'Watch, the time is coming,' and have then gone before I could be questioned. Then, in another disguise, I have gone through the bazaar, and said in talk with many that the Sepoys were unclean and outcast, for that they had bitten cartridges anointed with pig's fat, and that the Government had purposely greased the cartridges with this fat in order that the caste of all the Sepoys should be destroyed. When I had set men talking about this I left; it will be sure to come to the Sepoys' ears."

The Rajah nodded. "Come again tomorrow at noon; you will have your reward then and further orders; but see that you keep silence; a single word, and though you hid in the farthest corner of India you would not escape my vengeance."

Man after man entered. Some of them, like the first, were in mendicant's attire, one or two were fakirs, one looked like a well to do merchant. With the exception of the last, all had a similar tale to tell; they had been visiting the various cantonments of the native army, everywhere distributing chupaties and whispering tales of the intention of the Government to destroy the caste of the Sepoys by greasing the cartridges with pig's fat. The man dressed like a trader was the last to enter.

"How goes it, Mukdoomee?"

"It is well, my lord; I have traversed all the districts where we dwelt of old, before the Feringhee stamped us out and sent scores to death and hundreds to prison. Most of the latter whom death has spared are free now, and with many of them have I talked. They are most of them old, and few would take the road again, but scarce one but has trained up his son or grandson to the work; not to practice it,—the hand of the whites was too heavy before, and the gains are not large enough to tempt men to run the risk —but they teach them for the love of the art. To a worshiper of the goddess there is a joy in a cleverly contrived plan and in casting the roomal round the neck of the victim, that can never die. Often in my young days, when perhaps twelve of us were on the road in a party, we made less than we could have done by labor, but none minded.

"We were sworn brothers; we were working for Kali, and so that we sent her victims we cared little; and even after fifteen or twenty years spent in the Feringhee's prisons, we love it still; none hate the white man as we do; has he not destroyed our profession? We have two things to work for; first, for vengeance; second, for the certainty that if the white man's Raj were at an end, once again would the brotherhood follow their profession, and reap booty for ourselves and victims for Kali; for, assuredly, no native prince would dare to meddle with us. Therefore, upon every man who was once a Thug, and upon his sons and grandsons, you may depend. I do not say that they would be useful for fighting, for we have never been fighters, but the stranglers will be of use. You can trust them with missions, and send them where you choose. From their fathers' lips they have learnt all about places and roads; they can

decoy Feringhee travelers, the Company's servants or soldiers, into quiet places, and slay them. They can creep into compounds and into houses, and choose their victims from the sleepers. You can trust them, Rajah, for they have learned to hate, and each in his way will, when the times comes, aid to stir up men to rise. The past had almost become a dream, but I have roused it into life again, and upon the descendants of the stranglers throughout India you can count surely."

"You have not mentioned my name?" the Rajah said suddenly, looking closely at the man as he put the question.

"Assuredly not, your highness; I have simply said deliverance is at hand; the hour foretold for the end of the Raj of the men from beyond the sea will soon strike, and they will disappear from the land like fallen leaves; then will the glory of Kali return, then again will the brotherhood take to the road and gather in victims. I can promise that every one of those whose fathers or grandfathers or other kin died by the hand of the Feringhee, or suffered in his prisons, will do his share of the good work, and be ready to obey to the death the orders which will reach him."

"It is good," the Rajah said; "you and your brethren will have a rich harvest of victims, and the sacred cord need never be idle. Go; it is well nigh morning, and I would sleep."

But not for some time did the Rajah close his eyes; his brain was busy with the schemes which he had long been maturing, but was only now beginning to put into action.

"It must succeed," he said to himself; "all through India the people will take up arms when the Sepoys give the signal by rising against their officers. The whites are wholly unsuspicious; they even believe that I, I whom they have robbed, am their friend. Fools! I hold them in the hollow of my hand; they shall trust me to the last, and then I will crush them. Not one shall escape me! Would I were as certain of all the other stations in India as I am of this. Oude, I know, will rise as one man; the Princes of Delhi I have sounded; they will be the leaders, though the old King will be the nominal head; but I shall pull the strings, and as Peishwa, shall be an independent sovereign, and next in dignity to the Emperor. Only nothing must be done until all is ready; not a movement must be made until I feel sure that every native regiment from Calcutta to the North is ready to rise."

And so, until the day had fully broken, the Rajah of Bithoor thought over his plans —the man who had a few hours before so sumptuously entertained the military and civilians of Cawnpore, and the man who was universally regarded as the firm friend of the British and one of the best fellows going.

The days and weeks passed on, messengers came and went, the storm was slowing brewing; and yet to all men it seemed that India was never more contented nor the outlook more tranquil and assured.

CHAPTER II.

A young man in a suit of brown karkee, with a white puggaree wound round his pith helmet, was just mounting in front of his bungalow at Deennugghur, some forty miles from Cawnpore, when two others came up.

"Which way are you going to ride, Bathurst?"

"I am going out to Narkeet; there is a dispute between the villagers and a Talookdar as to their limits. I have got to look into the case. Why do you ask, Mr. Hunter?"

"I thought that you might be going that way. You know we have had several reports of ravages by a man eater whose headquarters seem to be that big jungle you pass through on your way to Narkeet. He has been paying visits to several villages in its neighborhood, and has carried off two mail runners. I should advise you to keep a sharp lookout."

"Yes, I have heard plenty about him; it is unfortunate we have no one at this station who goes in for tiger hunting. Young Bloxam was speaking to me last night; he is very hot about it; but as he knows nothing about shooting, and has never fired off a rifle in his life, except at the military target, I told him that it was madness to think of it by himself, and that he had better ride down to the regiment at Cawnpore, and get them to form a party to come up to hunt the beast. I told him they need not bring elephants with them; I could get as many as were necessary from some of the Talookdars, and there will be no want of beaters. He said he would write at once, but he doubted whether any of them would be able to get away at present; the general inspection is just coming on. However, no doubt they will be able to do so before long."

"Well, if I were you I would put a pair of pistols into my holster, Bathurst; it would be awfully awkward if you came across the beast."

"I never carry firearms," the young man said shortly; and then more lightly, "I am a peaceful man by profession, as you are, Mr. Hunter, and I leave firearms to those whose profession it is to use them. I have hitherto never met with an occasion when I needed them, and am not likely to do so. I always carry this heavy hunting whip, which I find useful sometimes, when the village dogs rush out and pretend that they are going to attack me; and I fancy that even an Oude swordsman would think twice before attacking me when I had it in my hand. But, of course, there is no fear about the tiger. I generally ride pretty fast; and even if he were lying by the roadside waiting for a meal, I don't think he would be likely to interfere with me."

So saying, he lightly touched the horse's flanks with his spurs and cantered off.

"He's a fine young fellow, Garnet," Mr. Hunter said to his companion; "full of energy, and, they say, the very best linguist in Oude."

"Yes, he is all that," the other agreed; "but he is a sort of fellow one does not quite understand. I like a man who is like other fellows; Bathurst isn't. He doesn't shoot, he doesn't ride—I mean he don't care for pig sticking; he never goes in for any fun there

may be on hand; he just works—nothing else; he does not seem to mix with other people; he is the sort of fellow one would say had got some sort of secret connected with him."

"If he has, I am certain it is nothing to his personal disadvantage," Mr. Hunter said warmly. "I have known him for the last six years—I won't say very well, for I don't think anyone does that, except, perhaps, Doctor Wade. When there was a wing of the regiment up here three years ago he and Bathurst took to each other very much—perhaps because they were both different from other people. But, anyhow, from what I know of Bathurst I believe him to be a very fine character, though there is certainly an amount of reserve about him altogether unusual. At any rate, the service is a gainer by it. I never knew a fellow work so indefatigably. He will take a very high place in the service before he has done."

"I am not so sure of that," the other said. "He is a man with opinions of his own, and all sorts of crotchets and fads. He has been in hot water with the Chief Commissioner more than once. When I was over at Lucknow last I was chatting with two or three men, and his name happened to crop up, and one of them said, 'Bathurst is a sort of knight errant, an official Don Quixote. Perhaps the best officer in the province in some respects, but hopelessly impracticable.'"

"Yes, that I can quite understand, Garnet. That sort of man is never popular with the higher official, whose likings go to the man who does neither too much nor too little, who does his work without questioning, and never thinks of making suggestions, and is a mere official machine. Men of Bathurst's type, who go to the bottom of things, protest against what they consider unfair decisions, and send in memorandums showing that their superiors are hopelessly ignorant and idiotically wrong, are always cordially disliked. Still, they generally work their way to the front in the long run. Well, I must be off."

Bathurst rode to Narkeet without drawing rein. His horse at times slackened its pace on its own accord, but an almost mechanical motion from its rider's heel soon started it off again at the rapid pace at which its rider ordinarily traveled. From the time he left Deennugghur to his arrival at Narkeet no thought of the dreaded man eater entered Bathurst's mind. He was deeply meditating on a memorandum he was about to draw up, respecting a decision that had been arrived at in a case between a Talookdar in his district and the Government, and in which, as it appeared to him, a wholly erroneous and unjust view had been taken as to the merits of the case; and he only roused himself when the horse broke into a walk as it entered the village. Two or three of the head men, with many bows and salutations of respect, came out to receive him.

"My lord sahib has seen nothing of the tiger?" the head man said; "our hearts were melted with fear, for the evil beast was heard roaring in the jungle not far from the road early this morning."

"I never gave it a thought, one way or the other," Bathurst said, as he dismounted. "I fancy the horse would have let me know if the brute had been anywhere near. See that he is tied up in the shed, and has food and water, and put a boy to keep the flies from worrying him. And now let us get to business. First of all, I must go through the village records and documents; after that I will question four or five of the oldest

inhabitants, and then we must go over the ground. The whole question turns, you know, upon whether the irrigation ditch mentioned in the Talookdar's grant is the one that runs across at the foot of the rising ground on his side, or whether it is the one that sweeps round on this side of the grove with the little temple in it. Unfortunately most of the best land lies between those ditches."

For hours Bathurst listened to the statements of the old people of the village, cross questioning them closely, and sparing no efforts to sift the truth from their confused and often contradictory evidence. Then he spent two hours going over the ground and endeavoring to satisfy himself which of the two ditches was the one named in the village records. He had two days before taken equal pains in sifting the evidence on the other side.

"I trust that my lord sees there can be no doubt as to the justice of our claim," the head man said humbly, as he prepared to mount again.

"According to your point of view, there is no doubt about it, Childee; but then there is equally no doubt the other way, according to the statements they put forward. But that is generally the way in all these land disputes. For good hard swearing your Hindoo cultivator can be matched against the world. Unfortunately there is nothing either in your grant or in your neighbors' that specifies unmistakably which of these ancient ditches is the one referred to. My present impression is that it is essentially a case for a compromise, but you know the final decision does not rest on me. I shall be out here again next week, and I shall write to the Talookdar to meet me here, and we will go over the ground together again, and see if we cannot arrange some line that will be fair to both parties. If we can do that, the matter would be settled without expense and trouble; whereas, if it goes up to Lucknow it may all have to be gone into again; and if the decision is given against you, and as far as I can see it is just as likely to be one way as another, it will be a serious thing for the village."

"We are in my lord's hands," the native said; "he is the protector of the poor, and will do us justice."

"I will do you justice, Childee, but I must do justice to the other side too. Of course, neither of you will be satisfied, but that cannot be helped."

His perfect knowledge of their language, the pains he took to sift all matters brought before him to the bottom, had rendered the young officer very popular among the natives. They knew they could get justice from him direct. There was no necessity to bribe underlings: he had the knack of extracting the truth from the mass of lying evidence always forthcoming in native cases; and even the defeated party admired the manner in which the fabric of falsehood was pulled to pieces. But the main reason of his popularity was his sympathy, the real interest which he showed in their cases, and the patience with which he listened to their stories.

Bathurst himself, as he rode homewards, was still thinking of the case. Of course there had been lying on both sides; but to that he was accustomed. It was a question of importance—of greater importance, no doubt, to the villagers than to their opponent, but still important to him—for this tract of land was a valuable one, and of considerable extent, and there was really nothing in the documents produced on either side to show which ditch was intended by the original grants. Evidently, at the time they were made, very many years before, one ditch or the other was not in existence;

but there was no proof as to which was the more recent, although both sides professed that all traditions handed down to them asserted the ditch on their side to be the more recent.

He was riding along the road through the great jungle, at his horse's own pace, which happened for the moment to be a gentle trot, when a piercing cry rang through the air a hundred yards ahead. Bathurst started from his reverie, and spurred his horse sharply; the animal dashed forward at a gallop. At a turn in the road he saw, twenty yards ahead of him, a tiger, standing with a foot upon a prostrate figure, while a man in front of it was gesticulating wildly. The tiger stood as if hesitating whether to strike down the figure in front or to content itself with that already in its power.

The wild shouts of the man had apparently drowned the sound of the horse's feet upon the soft road, for the animal drew back half a pace as it suddenly came into view.

The horse swerved at the sight, and reared high in the air as Bathurst drove his spurs into it. As its feet touched the ground again, Bathurst sprang off and rushed at the tiger, and brought down the heavy lash of his whip with all his force across its head. With a fierce snarl it sprang back two paces, but again and again the whip descended upon it, and bewildered and amazed at the attack it turned swiftly and sprang through the bushes.

Bathurst, knowing that there was no fear of its returning, turned at once to the figure on the road. It was, as in even the momentary glance he had noticed, a woman, or rather a girl of some fourteen or fifteen years of age—the man had dropped on his knees beside her, moaning and muttering incoherent words.

"I see no blood," Bathurst said, and stooping, lifted the light figure. "Her heart beats, man; I think she has only fainted. The tiger must have knocked her down in its spring without striking her. So far as I can see she is unhurt."

He carried her to the horse, which stood trembling a few yards away, took a flask from the holster, and poured a little brandy and water between her lips.

Presently there was a faint sigh. "She is coming round," he said to the man, who was still kneeling, looking on with vacant eyes, as though he had neither heard nor comprehended what Bathurst was doing. Presently the girl moved slightly and opened her eyes. At first there was no expression in them; then a vague wonder stole into them at the white face looking down upon her.

She closed them again, and then reopened them, and then there was a slight struggle to free herself. He allowed her to slip through his arms until her feet touched the ground; then her eyes fell on the kneeling figure.

"Father!" she exclaimed. With a cry the man leaped to his feet, sprang to her and seized her in his arms, and poured out words of endearment. Then suddenly he released her and threw himself on the ground before Bathurst, with ejaculations of gratitude and thankfulness.

"Get up, man, get up," the latter said; "your daughter can scarce stand alone, and the sooner we get away from this place the better; that savage beast is not likely to return, but he may do so; let us be off."

He mounted his horse again, brought it up to the side of the girl, and then, leaning over, took her and swung her into the saddle in front of him. The man took up a large box that was lying in the road and hoisted it onto his shoulders, and then, at a foot's pace, they proceeded on their way—Bathurst keeping a close watch on the jungle at the side on which the tiger had entered it.

"How came you to travel along this road alone?" he asked the man. "The natives only venture through in large parties, because of this tiger."

"I am a stranger," the man answered; "I heard at the village where we slept last night that there was a tiger in this jungle, but I thought we should be through it before nightfall, and therefore there was no danger. If one heeded all they say about tigers one would never travel at all. I am a juggler, and we are on our way down the country through Cawnpore and Allahabad. Had it not been for the valor of my lord sahib, we should never have got there; for had I lost my Rabda, the light of my heart, I should have gone no further, but should have waited for the tiger to take me also."

"There was no particular valor about it," Bathurst said shortly. "I saw the beast with its foot on your daughter, and dismounted to beat it off just as if it had been a dog, without thinking whether there was any danger in it or not. Men do it with savage beasts in menageries every day. They are cowardly brutes after all, and can't stand the lash. He was taken altogether by surprise, too."

"My lord has saved my daughter's life, and mine is at his service henceforth," the man said. "The mouse is a small beast, but he may warn the lion. The white sahibs are brave and strong. Would one of my countrymen have ventured his life to attack a tiger, armed only with a whip, for the sake of the life of a poor wayfarer?"

"Yes, I think there are many who would have done so," Bathurst replied. "You do your countrymen injustice. There are plenty of brave men among them, and I have heard before now of villagers, armed only with sticks, attacking a tiger who has carried off a victim from among them. You yourself were standing boldly before it when I came up."

"My child was under its feet—besides, I never thought of myself. If I had had a weapon I should not have drawn it. I had no thought of the tiger; I only thought that my child was dead. She works with me, sahib; since her mother died, five years ago, we have traveled together over the country; she plays while I conjure. She takes round the saucer for the money, and she acts with me in the tricks that require two persons; it is she who disappears from the basket. We are everything to each other, sahib. But what is my lord's name? Will he tell his servant, that he and Rabda may think of him and talk of him as they tramp the roads together?"

"My name is Ralph Bathurst. I am District Officer at Deennugghur. How far are you going this evening?"

"We shall sleep at the first village we come to, sahib; we have walked many hours today, and this box, though its contents are not weighty, is heavy to bear. We thought of going down tomorrow to Deennugghur, and showing our performances to the sahib logue there."

"Very well; but there is one thing—what is your name?"

"Rujub."

"Well, Rujub, if you go on to Deennugghur tomorrow say nothing to anyone there about this affair with the tiger; it is nothing to talk about. I am not a shikari, but a hard working official, and I don't want to be talked about."

"The sahib's wish shall be obeyed," the man said.

"You can come round to my bungalow and ask for me; I shall be glad to hear whether your daughter is any the worse for her scare. How do you feel, Rabda?"

"I feel as one in a dream, sahib. I saw a great yellow beast springing through the air, and I cried out, and knew nothing more till I saw the sahib's face; and now I have heard him and my father talking, but their voices sound to me as if far away, though I know that you are holding me."

"You will be all the better after a night's rest, child; no wonder you feel strange and shaken. Another quarter of an hour and we shall be at the village. I suppose, Rujub, you were born a conjurer."

"Yes, sahib, it is always so; it goes down from father to son. As soon as I was able to walk, I began to work with my father, and as I grew up he initiated me in the secrets of our craft, which we may never divulge."

"No, I know they are a mystery. Many of your tricks can be done by our conjurers at home, but there are some that have never been solved."

"I have been offered, more than once, large sums by English sahibs to tell them how some of the feats were done, but I could not; we are bound by terrible oaths, and; in no case has a juggler proved false to them. Were one to do so he would be slain without mercy, and his fate in the next world would be terrible; forever and forever his soul would pass through the bodies of the foulest and lowest creatures, and there would be no forgiveness for him. I would give my life for the sahib, but even to him I would not divulge our mysteries."

In a few minutes they came to the first village beyond the jungle. As they approached it Bathurst checked his horse and lifted the girl down. She took his hand and pressed her forehead to it.

"I shall see you tomorrow, then, Rujub," he said, and shaking the reins, went on at a canter.

"That is a new character for me to come out in," he said bitterly; "I do not know myself—I, of all men. But there was no bravery in it; it never occurred to me to be afraid; I just thrashed him off as I should beat off a dog who was killing a lamb; there was no noise, and it is noise that frightens me; if the brute had roared I should assuredly have run; I know it would have been so; I could not have helped it to have saved my life. It is an awful curse that I am not as other men, and that I tremble and shake like a girl at the sound of firearms. It would have been better if I had been killed by the first shot fired in the Punjaub eight years ago, or if I had blown my brains out at the end of the day. Good Heavens! what have I suffered since. But I will not think of it. Thank God, I have got my work; and as long as I keep my thoughts on that there is no room for that other;" and then, by a great effort of will, Ralph Bathurst put the past behind him, and concentrated his thoughts on the work on which he had been that day engaged.

The juggler did not arrive on the following evening as he had expected, but late in the afternoon a native boy brought in a message from him, saying that his daughter was too shaken and ill to travel, but that they would come when she recovered.

A week later, on returning from a long day's work, Bathurst was told that a juggler was in the veranda waiting to see him.

"I told him, sahib," the servant said, "that you cared not for such entertainments, and that he had better go elsewhere; but he insisted that you yourself had told him to come, and so I let him wait."

"Has he a girl with him, Jafur?"

"Yes, sahib."

Bathurst strolled round to the other side of the bungalow, where Rujub was sitting patiently, with Rabda wrapped in her blue cloth beside him. They rose to their feet.

"I am glad to see your daughter is better again, Rujub."

"She is better, sahib; she has had fever, but is restored."

"I cannot see your juggling tonight, Rujub. I have had a heavy day's work, and am worn out, and have still much to do. You had better go round to some of the other bungalows; though I don't think you will do much this evening, for there is a dinner party at the Collector's, and almost everyone will be there. My servants will give you food, and I shall be off at seven o'clock in the morning, but shall be glad to see you before I start. Are you in want of money?" and he put his hand in his pocket.

"No, sahib," the juggler said. "We have money sufficient for all our wants; we are not thinking of performing tonight, for Rabda is not equal to it. Before sunrise we shall be on our way again; I must be at Cawnpore, and we have delayed too long already. Could you give us but half an hour tonight, sahib; we will come at any hour you like. I would show you things that few Englishmen have seen. Not mere common tricks, sahib, but mysteries such as are known to few even of us. Do not say no, sahib."

"Well, if you wish it, Rujub, I will give you half an hour," and Bathurst looked at his watch. "It is seven now, and I have to dine. I have work to do that will take me three hours at least, but at eleven I shall have finished. You will see a light in my room; come straight to the open window."

"We will be there, sahib;" and with a salaam the juggler walked off, followed by his daughter.

A few minutes before the appointed time Bathurst threw down his pen with a little sigh of satisfaction.

The memo he had just finished was a most conclusive one; it seemed to him unanswerable, and that the Department would have trouble in disputing his facts and figures. He had not since he sat down to his work given another thought to the juggler, and he almost started as a figure appeared in the veranda at the open window.

"Ah, Rujub, is it you? I have just finished my work. Come in; is Rabda with you?"

"She will remain outside until I want her," the juggler said as he entered and squatted himself on the floor. "I am not going to juggle, sahib. With us there are two sorts of feats; there are those that are performed by sleight of hand or by means of

assistance. These are the juggler's tricks we show in the verandas and compounds of the white sahibs, and in the streets of the cities. There are others that are known only to the higher order among us, that we show only on rare occasions. They have come to us from the oldest times, and it is said they were brought by wise men from Egypt; but that I know not."

"I have always been interested in juggling, and have seen many things that I cannot understand," Bathurst said. "I have seen the basket trick done on the road in front of the veranda, as well as in other places, and I cannot in any way account for it."

The juggler took from his basket a piece of wood about two feet in length and some four inches in diameter.

"You see this?" he said.

Bathurst took it in his hand. "It looks like a bit sawn off a telegraph pole," he said.

"Will you come outside, sahib?"

The night was very dark, but the lamp on the table threw its light through the window onto the drive in front of the veranda. Rujub took with him a piece of wood about nine inches square, with a soft pad on the top. He went out in the drive and placed the piece of pole upright, and laid the wood with the cushion on the top.

"Now will you stand in the veranda a while?"

Bathurst stood back by the side of the window so as not to interfere with the passage of the light. Rabda stole forward and sat down upon the cushion.

"Now watch, sahib."

Bathurst looked, and saw the block of wood apparently growing. Gradually it rose until Rabda passed up beyond the light in the room.

"You may come out," the juggler said, "but do not touch the pole. If you do, it will cause a fall, which would be fatal to my child."

Bathurst stepped out and looked up. He could but just make out the figure of Rabda, seemingly already higher than the top of the bungalow. Gradually it became more and more indistinct.

"You are there, Rabda?" her father said.

"I am here, father!" and the voice seemed to come from a considerable distance.

Again and again the question was asked, and the answer became fainter and fainter, although it sounded as if it was a distant cry in response to Rujub's shout rather than spoken in an ordinary voice.

At last no response was heard.

"Now it shall descend," the juggler said.

Two or three minutes passed, and then Bathurst, who was staring up into the darkness, could make out the end of the pole with the seat upon it, but Rabda was no longer there. Rapidly it sank, until it stood its original height on the ground.

"Where is Rabda?" Bathurst exclaimed.

"She is here, my lord," and as he spoke Rabda rose from a sitting position on the balcony close to Bathurst.

“It is marvelous!” the latter exclaimed. “I have heard of that feat before, but have never seen it. May I take up that piece of wood?”

“Assuredly, sahib.”

Bathurst took it up and carried it to the light. It was undoubtedly, as he had before supposed, a piece of solid wood. The juggler had not touched it, or he would have supposed he might have substituted for the piece he first examined a sort of telescope of thin sheets of steel, but even that would not have accounted for Rabda's disappearance.

“I will show you one other feat, my lord.”

He took a brass dish, placed a few pieces of wood and charcoal in it, struck a match, and set the wood on fire, and then fanned it until the wood had burned out, and the charcoal was in a glow; then he sprinkled some powder upon it, and a dense white smoke rose.

“Now turn out the lamp, sahib.”

Bathurst did so. The glow of the charcoal enabled him still to see the light smoke; this seemed to him to become clearer and clearer.

“Now for the past!” Rujub said. The smoke grew brighter and brighter, and mixed with flashes of color; presently Bathurst saw clearly an Indian scene. A village stood on a crest, jets of smoke darted up from between the houses, and then a line of troops in scarlet uniform advanced against the village, firing as they went. They paused for a moment, and then with a rush went at the village and disappeared in the smoke over the crest.

“Good Heavens,” Bathurst muttered, “it is the battle of Chillianwalla!”

“The future!” Rujub said, and the colors on the smoke changed. Bathurst saw a wall surrounding a courtyard. On one side was a house. It had evidently been besieged, for in the upper part were many ragged holes, and two of the windows were knocked into one. On the roof were men firing, and there were one or two women among them. He could see their faces and features distinctly. In the courtyard wall there was a gap, and through this a crowd of Sepoys were making their way, while a handful of whites were defending a breastwork. Among them he recognized his own figure. He saw himself club his rifle and leap down into the middle of the Sepoys, fighting furiously there. The colors faded away, and the room was in darkness again. There was the crack of a match, and then Rujub said quietly, “If you will lift off the globe again, I will light the lamp, sahib.”

Bathurst almost mechanically did as he was told.

“Well, sahib, what do you think of the pictures?”

“The first was true,” Bathurst said quietly, “though, how you knew I was with the regiment that stormed the village at Chillianwalla I know not. The second is certainly not true.”

“You can never know what the future will be, sahib,” the juggler said gravely.

“That is so,” Bathurst said; “but I know enough of myself to say that it cannot be true. I do not say that the Sepoys can never be fighting against whites, improbable as it seems, but that I was doing what that figure did is, I know, impossible.”

“Time will show, sahib,” the juggler said; “the pictures never lie. Shall I show you other things?”

“No, Rujub, you have shown me enough; you have astounded me. I want to see no more tonight.”

“Then farewell, sahib; we shall meet again, I doubt not, and mayhap I may be able to repay the debt I owe you;” and Rujub, lifting his basket, went out through the window without another word.

CHAPTER III.

Some seven or eight officers were sitting round the table in the messroom of the 103d Bengal Infantry at Cawnpore. It had been a guest night, but the strangers had left, the lights had been turned out in the billiard room overhead, the whist party had broken up, and the players had rejoined three officers who had remained at table smoking and talking quietly.

Outside, through the open French windows, the ground looked as if sprinkled with snow beneath the white light of the full moon. Two or three of the mess servants were squatting in the veranda, talking in low voices. A sentry walked backwards and forwards by the gate leading into the mess house compound; beyond, the maidan stretched away flat and level to the low huts of the native lines on the other side.

"So the Doctor comes back tomorrow, Major," the Adjutant, who had been one of the whist party, said. "I shall be very glad to have him back. In the first place, he is a capital fellow, and keeps us all alive; secondly, he is a good deal better doctor than the station surgeon who has been looking after the men since we have been here; and lastly, if I had got anything the matter with me myself, I would rather be in his hands than those of anyone else I know."

"Yes, I agree with you, Prothero; the Doctor is as good a fellow as ever stepped. There is no doubt about his talent in his profession; and there are a good many of us who owed our lives to him when we were down with cholera, in that bad attack three years ago. He is good all round; he is just as keen a shikari as he was when he joined the regiment, twenty years ago; he is a good billiard player, and one of the best storytellers I ever came across; but his best point is that he is such a thoroughly good fellow—always ready to do a good turn to anyone, and to help a lame dog over a stile. I could name a dozen men in India who owe their commissions to him. I don't know what the regiment would do without him."

"He went home on leave just after I joined," one of the subalterns said. "Of course, I know, from all I have heard of him, that he is an awfully good fellow, but from the little I saw of him myself, he seemed always growling and snapping."

There was a general laugh from the others.

"Yes, that is his way, Thompson," the Major said; "he believes himself to be one of the most cynical and morose of men."

"He was married, wasn't he, Major?"

"Yes, it was a sad business. It was only just after I joined. He is three years senior to me in the regiment. He was appointed to it a month or two after the Colonel joined. Well, as I say, a month or two after I came to it, he went away on leave down to Calcutta, where he was to meet a young lady who had been engaged to him before he left home. They were married, and he brought her up country. Before she had been with us a month we had one of those outbreaks of cholera. It wasn't a very severe one. I think we only lost eight or ten men, and no officer; but the Doctor's young wife was attacked, and in three or four hours she was carried off. It regularly broke him down.

However, he got over it, as we all do, I suppose; and now I think he is married to the regiment. He could have had staff appointments a score of times, but he has always refused them. His time is up next year, and he could go home on full pay, but I don't suppose he will."

"And your niece arrives with him tomorrow, Major," the Adjutant said.

"Yes, I am going to try petticoat government, Prothero. I don't know how the experiment will succeed, but I am tired of an empty bungalow, and I have been looking forward for some years to her being old enough to come out and take charge. It is ten years since I was home, and she was a little chit of eight years old at that time."

"I think a vote of thanks ought to be passed to you, Major. We have only married ladies in the regiment, and it will wake us up and do us good to have Miss Hannay among us."

"There are the Colonel's daughters," the Major said, with a smile.

"Yes, there are, Major, but they hardly count; they are scarcely conscious of the existence of poor creatures like us; nothing short of a Resident or, at any rate, of a full blown Collector, will find favor in their eyes."

"Well, I warn you all fairly," the Major said, "that I shall set my face against all sorts of philandering and love making. I am bringing my niece out here as my housekeeper and companion, and not as a prospective wife for any of you youngsters. I hope she will turn out to be as plain as a pikestaff, and then I may have some hopes of keeping her with me for a time. The Doctor, in his letter from Calcutta, says nothing as to what she is like, though he was good enough to remark that she seemed to have a fair share of common sense, and has given him no more trouble on the voyage than was to be expected under the circumstances. And now, lads, it is nearly two o'clock, and as there is early parade tomorrow, it is high time for you to be all in your beds. What a blessing it would be if the sun would forget to shine for a bit on this portion of the world, and we could have an Arctic night of seven or eight months with a full moon the whole time!"

A few minutes later the messroom was empty, the lights turned out, and the servants wrapped up in their blankets had disposed themselves for sleep in the veranda.

As soon as morning parade was over Major Hannay went back to his bungalow, looked round to see that his bachelor quarters were as bright and tidy as possible, then got into a light suit and went down to the post house. A quarter of an hour later a cloud of dust along the road betokened the approach of the Dak Gharry, and two or three minutes later it dashed up at full gallop amid a loud and continuous cracking of the driver's whip. The wiry little horses were drawn up with a sudden jerk.

The Major opened the door. A little man sprang out and grasped him by the hand.

"Glad to see you, Major—thoroughly glad to be back again. Here is your niece; I deliver her safe and sound into your hands." And between them they helped a girl to alight from the vehicle.

"I am heartily glad to see you, my dear," the Major said, as he kissed her; "though I don't think I should have known you again."

“I should think not, uncle,” the girl said. “In the first place, I was a little girl in short frocks when I saw you last; and in the second place, I am so covered with the dust that you can hardly see what I am like. I think I should have known you; your visit made a great impression upon us, though I can remember now how disappointed we were when you first arrived that you hadn't a red coat and a sword, as we had expected.”

“Well, we may as well be off at once, Isobel; it is only five minutes' walk to the bungalow. My man will see to your luggage being brought up. Come along, Doctor. Of course you will put up with me until you can look round and fix upon quarters. I told Rumzan to bring your things round with my niece's. You have had a very pleasant voyage out, I hope, Isobel?” he went on, as they started.

“Very pleasant, uncle, though I got rather tired of it at last.”

“That is generally the way—everyone is pleasant and agreeable at first, but before they get to the end they take to quarreling like cats and dogs.”

“We were not quite as bad as that,” the girl laughed, “but we certainly weren't as amiable the last month or so as we were during the first part of the voyage. Still, it was very pleasant all along, and nobody quarreled with me.”

“Present company are always excepted,” the Doctor said. “I stood in loco parentis, Major, and the result has been that I shall feel in future more charitable towards mothers of marriageable daughters. Still, I am bound to say that Miss Hannay has given me as little trouble as could be expected.”

“You frighten me, Doctor; if you found her so onerous only for a voyage, what have I to look forward to?”

“Well, you can't say that I didn't warn you, Major; when you wrote home and asked me to take charge of your niece on the way out, I told you frankly that my opinion of your good sense was shaken.”

“Yes, you did express yourself with some strength,” the Major laughed; “but then one is so accustomed to that, that I did not take it to heart as I might otherwise have done.”

“That was before you knew me, Dr. Wade, otherwise I should feel very hurt,” the girl put in.

“Yes, it was,” the Doctor said dryly.

“Don't mind him, my dear,” her uncle said; “we all know the Doctor of old. This is my bungalow.”

“It is pretty, with all these flowers and shrubs round it,” she said admiringly.

“Yes, we have been doing a good deal of watering the last few weeks, so as to get it to look its best. This is your special attendant; she will take you up to your room. By the time you have had a bath, your boxes will be here. I told them to have a cup of tea ready for you upstairs. Breakfast will be on the table by the time you are ready.”

“Well, old friend,” he said to the Doctor, when the girl had gone upstairs, “no complications, I hope, on the voyage?”

“No, I think not,” the Doctor said. “Of course, there were lots of young puppies on board, and as she was out and out the best looking girl in the ship half of them were

dancing attendance upon her all the voyage, but I am bound to say that she acted like a sensible young woman; and though she was pleasant with them all, she didn't get into any flirtation with one more than another. I did my best to look after her, but, of course, that would have been of no good if she had been disposed to go her own way. I fancy about half of them proposed to her—not that she ever said as much to me—but whenever I observed one looking sulky and giving himself airs I could guess pretty well what had happened. These young puppies are all alike, and we are not without experience of the species out here.

"Seriously, Major, I think you are to be congratulated. I consider that you ran a tremendous risk in asking a young woman, of whom you knew nothing, to come out to you; still it has turned out well. If she had been a frivolous, giggling thing, like most of them, I had made up my mind to do you a good turn by helping to get her engaged on the voyage, and should have seen her married offhand at Calcutta, and have come up and told you that you were well out of the scrape. As, contrary to my expectations, she turned out to be a sensible young woman, I did my best the other way. It is likely enough you may have her on your hands some little time, for I don't think she is likely to be caught by the first comer. Well, I must go and have my bath; the dust has been awful coming up from Allahabad. That is one advantage, and the only one as far as I can see, that they have got in England. They don't know what dust is there."

When the bell for breakfast rang, and Isobel made her appearance, looking fresh and cool, in a light dress, the Major said, "You must take the head of the table, my dear, and assume the reins of government forthwith."

"Then I should say, uncle, that if any guidance is required, there will be an upset in a very short time. No, that won't do at all. You must go on just as you were before, and I shall look on and learn. As far as I can see, everything is perfect just as it is. This is a charming room, and I am sure there is no fault to be found with the arrangement of these flowers on the table. As for the cooking, everything looks very nice, and anyhow, if you have not been able to get them to cook to your taste, it is of no use my attempting anything in that way. Besides, I suppose I must learn something of the language before I can attempt to do anything. No, uncle, I will sit in this chair if you like, and make tea and pour it out, but that is the beginning and the end of my assumption of the head of the establishment at present."

"Well, Isobel, I hardly expected that you were going to run the establishment just at first; indeed, as far as that goes, one's butler, if he is a good man, has pretty well a free hand. He is generally responsible, and is in fact what we should call at home housekeeper—he and the cook between them arrange everything. I say to him, 'Three gentlemen are coming to tiffen.' He nods and says 'Atcha, sahib,' which means 'All right, sir,' and then I know it will be all right. If I have a fancy for any special thing, of course I say so. Otherwise, I leave it to them, and if the result is not satisfactory, I blow up. Nothing can be more simple."

"But how about bills, uncle?"

"Well, my dear, the butler gives them to me, and I pay them. He has been with me a good many years, and will not let the others—that is to say, the cook and the syce, the washerman, and so on, cheat me beyond a reasonable amount. Do you, Rumzan?"

Rumzan, who was standing behind the Major's chair, in a white turban and dress, with a red and white sash round his waist, smiled.

"Rumzan not let anyone rob his master."

"Not to any great extent, you know, Rumzan. One doesn't expect more than that."

"It is just the same here, Miss Hannay, as it is everywhere else," said the Doctor; "only in big establishments in England they rob you of pounds, while here they rob you of annas, which, as I have explained to you, are two pence halfpennies. The person who undertakes to put down little peculations enters upon a war in which he is sure to get the worst of it. He wastes his time, spoils his temper, makes himself and everyone around him uncomfortable, and after all he is robbed. Life is too short for it, especially in a climate like this. Of course, in time you get to understand the language; if you see anything in the bills that strikes you as showing waste you can go into the thing, but as a rule you trust entirely to your butler; if you cannot trust him, get another one. Rumzan has been with your uncle ten years, so you are fortunate. If the Major had gone home instead of me, and if you had had an entirely fresh establishment of servants to look after, the case would have been different; as it is, you will have no trouble that way."

"Then what are my duties to be, uncle?"

"Your chief duties, my dear, are to look pleasant, which will evidently be no trouble to you; to amuse me and keep me in a good temper as far as possible; to keep on as good terms as may be with the other ladies of the station; and, what will perhaps be the most difficult part of your work, to snub and keep in order the young officers of our own and other corps."

Isobel laughed. "That doesn't sound a very difficult programme, uncle, except the last item; I have already had a little experience that way, haven't I, Doctor? I hope I shall have the benefit of your assistance in the future, as I had aboard the ship."

"I will do my best," the Doctor said grimly; "but the British subaltern is pretty well impervious to snubs; he belongs to the pachydermatous family of animals; his armor of self conceit renders him invulnerable against the milder forms of raillery. However, I think you can be trusted to hold your own with him, Miss Hannay, without much assistance from the Major or myself. Your real difficulty will lie rather in your struggle against the united female forces of the station."

"But why shall I have to struggle with them?" Isobel asked, in surprise, while her uncle broke into a laugh.

"Don't frighten her, Doctor."

"She is not so easily frightened, Major; it is just as well that she should be prepared. Well, my dear Miss Hannay, Indian society has this peculiarity, that the women never grow old. At least," he continued, in reply to the girl's look of surprise, "they are never conscious of growing old. At home a woman's family grows up about her, and are constant reminders that she is becoming a matron. Here the children are sent away when they get four or five years old, and do not appear on the scene again until they are grown up. Then, too, ladies are greatly in the minority, and they are accustomed to be made vastly more of than they are at home, and the consequence is that the amount of envy, hatred, jealousy, and all uncharitableness is appalling."

"No, no, Doctor, not as bad as that," the Major remonstrated.

"Every bit as bad as that," the Doctor said stoutly. "I am not a woman hater, far from it; but I have felt sometimes that if John Company, in its beneficence, would pass a decree absolutely excluding the importation of white women into India it would be an unmixed blessing."

"For shame, Doctor," Isobel Hannay said; "and to think that I should have such a high opinion of you up to now."

"I can't help it, my dear; my experience is that for ninety-nine out of every hundred unpleasantnesses that take place out here, women are in one way or another responsible. They get up sets and cliques, and break up what might be otherwise pleasant society into sections. Talk about caste amongst natives; it is nothing to the caste among women out here. The wife of a civilian of high rank looks down upon the wives of military men, the general's wife looks down upon a captain's, and so right through from the top to the bottom.

"It is not so among the men, or at any rate to a very much smaller extent. Of course, some men are pompous fools, but, as a rule, if two men meet, and both are gentlemen, they care nothing as to what their respective ranks may be. A man may be a lord or a doctor, a millionaire or a struggling barrister, but they meet on equal terms in society; but out here it is certainly not so among the women—they stand upon their husband's dignity in a way that would be pitiable if it were not exasperating. Of course, there are plenty of good women among them, as there are everywhere—women whom even India can't spoil; but what with exclusiveness, and with the amount of admiration and adulation they get, and what with the want of occupation for their thoughts and minds, it is very hard for them to avoid getting spoilt."

"Well, I hope I shan't get spoilt, Doctor; and I hope, if you see that I am getting spoilt, you will make a point of telling me so at once."

The Doctor grunted. "Theoretically, people are always ready to receive good advice, Miss Hannay; practically they are always offended by it. However, in your case I will risk it, and I am bound to say that hitherto you have proved yourself more amenable in that way than most young women I have come across."

"And now, if we have done, we will go out on the veranda," the Major said. "I am sure the Doctor must be dying for a cheroot."

"The Doctor has smoked pretty continuously since we left Allahabad," Isobel said. "He wanted to sit up with the driver, but, of course, I would not have that. I had got pretty well accustomed to smoke coming out, and even if I had not been I would much rather have been almost suffocated than have been in there by myself. I thought a dozen times the vehicle was going to upset, and what with the bumping and the shouting and the cracking of the whip—especially when the horses wouldn't start, which was generally the case at first—I should have been frightened out of my life had I been alone. It seemed to me that something dreadful was always going to happen."

"You can take it easy this morning, Isobel," the Major said, when they were comfortably seated in the bamboo lounges in the veranda. "You want have any callers

today, as it will be known you traveled all night. People will imagine that you want a quiet day before you are on show."

"What a horrid expression, uncle!"

"Well, my dear, it represents the truth. The arrival of a fresh lady from England, especially of a 'spin,' which is short for spinster or unmarried woman, is an event of some importance in an Indian station. Not, of course, so much in a place like this, because this is the center of a large district, but in a small station it is an event of the first importance. The men are anxious to see what a newcomer is like for herself; the women, to look at her dresses and see the latest fashions from home, and also to ascertain whether she is likely to turn out a formidable rival. However, today you can enjoy quiet; tomorrow you must attire yourself in your most becoming costume, and I will trot you round."

"Trot me round, uncle?"

"Yes, my dear. In India the order of procedure is reversed, and newcomers call in the first place upon residents."

"What a very unpleasant custom, uncle; especially as some of the residents may not want to know them."

"Well, everyone must know everyone else in a station, my dear, though they may not wish to be intimate. So, about half past one tomorrow we will start."

"What, in the heat of the day, uncle?"

"Yes, my dear. That is another of the inscrutable freaks of Indian fashion. The hours for calling are from about half past twelve to half past two, just in the hottest hours. I don't pretend to account for it."

"How many ladies are there in the regiment?"

"There is the Colonel's wife, Mrs. Cromarty. She has two grown up red headed girls," replied the Doctor. "She is a distant relation—a second cousin—of some Scotch lord or other, and, on the strength of that and her husband's colonelcy, gives herself prodigious airs. Three of the captains are married. Mrs. Doolan is a merry little Irish woman. You will like her. She has two or three children. She is a general favorite in the regiment.

"Mrs. Rintoul—I suppose she is here still, Major, and unchanged? Ah, I thought so. She is a washed-out woman, without a spark of energy in her composition.-' She believes that she is a chronic invalid, and sends for me on an average once a week. But there is nothing really the matter with her, if she would but only believe it. Mrs. Roberts—"

"Don't be ill natured, Doctor," the Major broke in. "Mrs. Roberts, my dear, is a good-looking woman, and a general flirt. I don't think there is any harm in her whatever. Mrs. Prothero, the Adjutant's wife, has only been out here eighteen months, and is a pretty little woman, and in all respects nice.-There is only one other, Mrs. Scarsdale; she came out six months ago. She is a quiet young woman, with, I should say, plenty of common sense: I should think you will like her. That completes the regimental list."

“Well, that is not so very formidable. Anyhow, it is a. comfort that we shall have no one here today.”

“You will have the whole regiment here in a few minutes, Isobel, but they will be coming to see the Doctor, not you; if it hadn't been that they knew you were under his charge everyone would have come down to meet him when he arrived. But if you feel tired, as I am sure you must be after your journey, there is no reason why you shouldn't go and lie down quietly for a few hours.”

“I will stop here, uncle; it will be much less embarrassing to see them all for the first time when they come to see Dr. Wade and I am quite a secondary consideration, than if they had to come specially to call on me.”

“Well, I agree with you there, my dear. Ah! here come Doolan and Prothero.”

A light trap drove into the inclosure and drew up in front of the veranda, and two officers jumped down,-whilst the syce, who had been standing on a step behind, ran to the horse's head. They hailed the Doctor, as he stepped out from the veranda, with a shout.

“Glad to see you back, Doctor. The regiment has not seemed like itself without you.”

“We have been just pining without you, Doctor,” Captain Doolan said; “and the ladies would have got up a deputation to meet you on your arrival, only I told them that it would be too much for your modesty.”

“Well, it is a good thing that someone has a little of that quality in the regiment, Doolan,” the Doctor said, as he shook hands heartily with them both. “It is very little of it that fell to the share of Ireland when it was served out.”

As they dropped the Doctor's hand the Major said, “Now, gentlemen, let me introduce you to my niece.” The introductions were made, and the whole party took chairs on the veranda.

“Do you object to smoking, Miss Hannay; perhaps you have not got accustomed to it yet? I see the Doctor is-smoking; but then he is a privileged person, altogether beyond rule.”

“I rather like it in the open air,” Isobel said. “No doubt I shall get accustomed to it indoors before long.”

In a few minutes four or five more of the officers arrived, and Isobel sat an amused listener to the talk; taking but little part in it herself, but gathering a good deal of information as to the people at the station from the answers given to the Doctor's inquiries. It was very much like the conversation on board ship, except that the topics of conversation were wider and more numerous, and there was a community of interest wanting on board a ship. In half an hour, however, the increasing warmth and her sleepless night began to tell upon her, and her uncle, seeing that she was beginning to look fagged, said, “The best thing that you can do, Isobel, is to go indoors for a bit, and have a good nap. At five o'clock I will take you round for a drive, and show you the sights of Cawnpore.”

“I do feel sleepy,” she said, “though it sounds rude to say so.”

“Not at all,” the Doctor put in; “if any of these young fellows had made the journey out from Allahabad in that wretched gharry, they would have turned into bed as soon as they arrived, and would not have got up till the first mess bugle sounded, and very likely would have slept on until next morning.

“Now,” he went on, when Isobel had disappeared, “we will adjourn with you to the mess-house. That young lady would have very small chance of getting to sleep with all this racket here. Doolan's voice alone would banish sleep anywhere within a distance of a hundred yards.”

“I will join you there later, Doctor,” the Major said. “I have got a couple of hours' work in the orderly-room. Rumzan, don't let my niece be disturbed, but if she wakes and rings the bell send up a message by the woman that I-shall not be back until four.”

The Major walked across to the orderly room, while the rest, mounting their buggies, drove to the mess-house, which was a quarter of a mile away.

“I should think Miss Hannay will prove a valuable addition to our circle, Doctor,” the Adjutant said. “I don't know why, but I gathered from what the Major said that his niece was very young. He spoke of her as if she were quite a child.”

“She is a very nice, sensible young woman,” the Doctor said; “clever and bright, and, as you can see for your-selves, pretty, and yet no nonsense about her. I only hope that she won't get spoilt here; nineteen out of twenty young women do get spoilt within six months of their arrival in India, but I think she will be one of the exceptions.”

“I should have liked to have seen the Doctor doing chaperon,” Captain Doolan laughed; “he would have been a brave man who would have attempted even the faintest flirtation with anyone under his charge.”

“That is your opinion, is it, Doolan?” the Doctor said sharply. “I should have thought that even your common sense would have told you that anyone who has had the misfortune to see as much of womankind as I have would have been aware that any endeavor to check a flirtation for which they are inclined would be of all others the way to induce them to go in for it headlong. You are a married man yourself, and ought to know that. A woman is a good deal like a spirited horse; let her have her head, and, though she may for a time make the pace pretty fast, she will go straight, and settle down to her collar in time, whereas if you keep a tight curb she will fret and fidget, and as likely as not make a bolt for it. I can assure you that my duties were of The most nominal description. There were the usual number of hollow pated lads on board, who buzzed in their usual feeble way round Miss Hannay, and were one after another duly snubbed. Miss Hannay has plenty of spirits, and a considerable sense of humor, and I think that she enjoyed the voyage thoroughly. And now let us talk of something else.”

After an hour's chat the Doctor started on his round of calls upon the ladies; the Major had not come in from the orderly room, and, after the Doctor left, Isobel Hannay was again the topic of conversation.

“She is out and out the prettiest girl in the station,” the Adjutant said to some of the officers who had not seen her. “She will make quite a sensation; and there are five or six ladies in the station, whose names I need hardly mention, who will not be very

pleased at her coming. She is thoroughly in good form, too; nothing in the slightest degree fast or noisy about her. She is quiet and self-possessed. I fancy she will be able to hold her own against any of them. Clever? I should say 'certainly'; but, of course, that is from her face rather than from anything she said. I expect half the unmarried men in the station will be going wild over her. You need not look so interested, Wilson; the matter is of no more personal interest to you than if I were describing a new comet. Nothing less than a big civilian is likely to carry off such a prize, so I warn you beforehand you had better not be losing your heart to her."

"Well, you know, Prothero, subalterns do manage to get wives sometimes."

There was a laugh.

"That is true enough, Wilson; but then, you see, I married at home; besides, I am adjutant, which sounds a lot better than subaltern."

"That may go for a good deal in the regiment," Wilson retorted, "but I doubt if there are many women that know the difference between an adjutant and a quartermaster. They know about colonels, majors, captains, and even subalterns; but if you were to say that you were an adjutant they would be simply mystified, though they might understand if you said bandmaster. But I fancy sergeant major would sound ever so much more imposing."

"Wilson, if you are disrespectful, I shall discover tomorrow, on parade, that No. 3 Company wants a couple of hours' extra drill badly, and then you will feel how grievous a mistake it is to cheek an adjutant."

The report of those who had called at the Major's was so favorable that curiosity was quite roused as to the new-comer, and when the Major drove round with her the next day everyone was at home, and the verdict on the part of the ladies was generally favorable, but was by no means so unqualified as that of the gentlemen.

Mrs. Cromarty admitted that she was nice looking; but was critical as to her carriage and manner. She would be admired by young officers, no doubt, but there was too much life and animation about her, and although she would not exactly say that she stooped, she was likely to do so in time.

"She will be nothing remarkable when her freshness has worn off a little."

In this opinion the Misses Cromarty thoroughly assented. They had never been accused of stooping, and, indeed, were almost painfully upright, and were certainly not particularly admired by subalterns.

Mrs. Doolan was charmed with her, and told her she hoped that they would be great friends.

"This is a very pleasant life out here, my dear," she said, "if one does but take it in the right way. There is a great deal of tittle tattle in the Indian stations, and some quarreling; but, you know, it takes two to make a quarrel, and I make it a point never to quarrel with anyone. It is too hot for it. Then, you see, I have the advantage of being Irish, and, for some reason or other that I don't understand we can say pretty nearly what we like. People don't take us seriously, you know; so I keep in with them all."

Mrs. Rintoul received her visitors on the sofa. “It is quite refreshing to see a face straight from England, Miss Hannay. I only hope that you may keep your bright color and healthy looks. Some people do. Not their color, but their health. Unfortunately I am not one of them. I do not know what it is to have a day's health. The climate completely oppresses me, and I am fit for nothing. You would hardly believe that I was as strong and healthy as you are when I first came out. You came out with Dr. Wade—a clever man—I have a very high opinion of his talent, but my case is beyond him. It is a sad annoyance to him that it is so, and he is continually trying to make me believe that there is nothing the matter with me, as if my looks did not speak for themselves.”

Mrs. Rintoul afterwards told her husband she could hardly say that she liked Miss Hannay.

“She is distressingly brisk and healthy, and I should say, my dear, not of a sympathetic nature, which is always a pity in a young woman.”

After this somewhat depressing visit, the call upon Mrs. Roberts was a refreshing one. She received her very cordially.

“I like you, Miss Hannay,” she said, when, after a quarter of an hour's lively talk, the Major and his niece got up to go. “I always say what I think, and it is very good natured of me to say so, for I don't disguise from myself that you will put my nose out of joint.”

“I don't want to put anyone's nose out of joint,” Isobel laughed.

“You will do it, whether you want to or not,” Mrs. Roberts said; “my husband as much as told me so last night, and I was prepared not to like you, but I see that I shall not be able to help doing so. Major Hannay, you have dealt me a heavy blow, but I forgive you.”

When the round of visits was finished the Major said, “Well, Isobel, what do you think of the ladies of the regiment?”

“I think they are all very nice, uncle. I fancy I shall like Mrs. Doolan and Mrs. Scarsdale best; I won't give any opinion yet about Mrs. Cromarty.”

CHAPTER IV.

The life of Isobel Hannay had not, up to the time when she left England to join her uncle, been a very bright one. At the death of her father, her mother had been left with an income that enabled her to live, as she said, genteelly, at Brighton. She had three children: the eldest a girl of twelve; Isobel, who was eight; and a boy of five, who was sadly deformed, the result of a fall from the arms of a careless nurse when he was an infant. It was at that time that Major Hannay had come home on leave, having been left trustee and executor, and seen to all the money arrangements, and had established his brother's widow at Brighton. The work had not been altogether pleasant, for Mrs. Hannay was a selfish and querulous woman, very difficult to satisfy even in little matters, and with a chronic suspicion that everyone with whom she came in contact was trying to get the best of her. Her eldest girl was likely, Captain Hannay thought, to take after her mother, whose pet she was, while Isobel took after her father. He had suggested that both should be sent to school, but Mrs. Hannay would not hear of parting from Helena, but was willing enough that Isobel should be sent to a boarding school at her uncle's expense.

As the years went by, Helena grew up, as Mrs. Hannay proudly said, the image of what she herself had been at her age—tall and fair, indolent and selfish, fond of dress and gayety, discontented because their means would not permit them to indulge in either to the fullest extent. There was nothing in common between her and her sister, who, when at home for the holidays, spent her time almost entirely with her brother, who received but slight attention from anyone else, his deformity being considered as a personal injury and affliction by his mother and elder sister.

"You could not care less for him," Isobel once said, in a fit of passion, "if he were a dog. I don't think you notice him more, not one bit. He wanders about the house without anybody to give a thought to him. I call it cruel, downright cruel."

"You are a wicked girl, Isobel," her mother said angrily, "a wicked, violent girl, and I don't know what will become of you. It is abominable of you to talk so, even if you are wicked enough to get into a passion. What can we do for him that we don't do? What is the use of talking to him when he never pays attention to what we say, and is always moping. I am sure we get everything that we think will please him, and he goes out for a walk with us every day; what could possibly be done more for him?"

"A great deal more might be done for him," Isobel burst out. "You might love him, and that would be everything to him. I don't believe you and Helena love him, not one bit, not one tiny scrap."

"Go up to your room, Isobel, and remain there for the rest of the day. You are a very bad girl. I shall write to Miss Virtue about you; there must be something very wrong in her management of you, or you would never be so passionate and insolent as you are."

But Isobel had not stopped to hear the last part of the sentence, the door had slammed behind her. She was not many minutes alone upstairs, for Robert soon

followed her up, for when she was at home he rarely left her side, watching her every look and gesture with eyes as loving as those of a dog, and happy to sit on the ground beside her, with his head leaning against her, for hours together.

Mrs. Hannay kept her word and wrote to Miss Virtue, and the evening after she returned to school Isobel was summoned to her room.

"I am sorry to say, I have a very bad account of you from your mother. She says you are a passionate and wicked girl. How is it, dear; you are not passionate here, and I certainly do not think you are wicked?"

"I can't help it when I am at home, Miss Virtue. I am sure I try to be good, but they won't let me. They don't like me because I can't be always tidy and what they call prettily behaved, and because I hate walking on the parade and being stuck up and unnatural, and they don't like me because I am not pretty, and because I am thin and don't look, as mamma says, a credit to her; but it is not that so much as because of Robert. You know he is deformed, Miss Virtue, and they don't care for him, and he has no one to love him but me, and it makes me mad to see him treated so. That is what it was she wrote about. I told her they treated him like a dog and so they do," and she burst into tears.

"But that was very naughty, Isobel," Miss Virtue said gravely. "You are only eleven years old, and too young to be a judge of these matters, and even if it were as you say, it is not for a child to speak so to her mother."

"I know that, Miss Virtue, but how can I help it? I could cry out with pain when I see Robert looking from one to the other just for a kind word, which he never gets. It is no use, Miss Virtue; if it was not for him I would much rather never go home at all, but stop here through the holidays, only what would he do if I didn't go home? I am the only pleasure he has. When I am there he will sit for hours on my knee, and lay his head on my shoulder, and stroke my face. It makes me feel as if my heart would break."

"Well, my dear," Miss Virtue said, somewhat puzzled, "it is sad, if it is as you say, but that does not excuse your being disrespectful to your mother. It is not for you to judge her."

"But cannot something be done for Robert, Miss Virtue? Surely they must do something for children like him."

"There are people, my dear, who take a few afflicted children and give them special training. Children of that kind have sometimes shown a great deal of unusual talent, and, if so, it is cultivated, and they are put in a way of earning a livelihood."

"Are there?" Isobel exclaimed, with eager eyes. "Then I know what I will do, Miss Virtue; I will write off at once to Uncle Tom—he is our guardian. I know if I were to speak to mamma about Robert going to school it would be of no use; but if uncle writes I dare say it would be done. I am sure she and Helena would be glad enough. I don't suppose she ever thought of it. It would be a relief to them to get him out of their sight."

Miss Virtue shook her head. "You must not talk so, Isobel. It is not right or dutiful, and you are a great deal too young to judge your elders, even if they were not related

to you; and, pray, if you write to your uncle do not write in that spirit—it would shock him greatly, and he would form a very bad opinion of you."

And so Isobel wrote. She was in the habit of writing once every half year to her uncle, who had told her that he wished her to do so, and that people out abroad had great pleasure in letters from England. Hitherto she had only written about her school life, and this letter caused her a great deal of trouble.

It answered its purpose. Captain Hannay had no liking either for his sister in law or his eldest niece, and had, when he was with them, been struck with the neglect with which the little boy was treated. Isobel had taken great pains not to say anything that would show she considered that Robert was harshly treated; but had simply said that she heard there were schools where little boys like him could be taught, and that it would be such a great thing for him, as it was very dull for him having nothing to do all day. But Captain Hannay read through the lines, and felt that it was a protest against her brother's treatment, and that she would not have written to him had she not felt that so only would anything be done for him. Accordingly he wrote home to his sister in law, saying he thought it was quite time now that the boy should be placed with some gentleman who took a few lads unfitted for the rough life of an ordinary school. He should take the charges upon himself, and had written to his agent in London to find out such an establishment, to make arrangements for Robert to go there, and to send down one of his clerks to take charge of him on the journey. He also wrote to Isobel, telling her what he had done, and blaming himself for not having thought of it before, winding up by saying: "I have not mentioned to your mother that I heard from you about it—that is a little secret just as well to keep to ourselves."

The next five years were much happier to Isobel, for the thought of her brother at home without her had before been constantly on her mind. It was a delight to her now to go home and to see the steady improvement that took place in Robert. He was brighter in every respect, and expressed himself as most happy where he was.

As years went on he grew into a bright and intelligent boy, though his health was by no means good, and he looked frail and delicate. He was as passionately attached to her as ever, and during the holidays they were never separated; they stood quite alone, their mother and sister interesting themselves but little in their doings, and they were allowed to take long walks together, and to sit in a room by themselves, where they talked, drew, painted, and read.

Mrs. Hannay disapproved of Isobel as much as ever. "She is a most headstrong girl," she would lament to her friends, "and is really quite beyond my control. I do not at all approve of the school she is at, but unfortunately my brother in law, who is her guardian, has, under the will of my poor husband, absolute control in the matter. I am sure poor John never intended that he should be able to override my wishes; but though I have written to him several times about it, he says that he sees no valid reason for any change, and that from Isobel's letters to him she seems very happy there, and to be getting on well. She is so very unlike dear Helena, and even when at home I see but little of her; she is completely wrapped up in her unfortunate brother. Of course I don't blame her for that, but it is not natural that a girl her age should care nothing for pleasures or going out or the things natural to young people. Yes, she is

certainly improving in appearance, and if she would but take some little pains about her dress would be really very presentable."

But her mother's indifference disturbed Isobel but little. She was perfectly happy with her brother when at home, and very happy at school, where she was a general favorite. She was impulsive, high spirited, and occasionally gave Miss Virtue some trouble, but her disposition was frank and generous, there was not a tinge of selfishness in her disposition, and while she was greatly liked by girls of her own age, she was quite adored by little ones. The future that she always pictured to herself was a little cottage with a bright garden in the suburbs of London, where she and Robert could live together—she would go out as a daily governess; Robert, who was learning to play the organ, would, she hoped, get a post as organist. Not, of course, for the sake of the salary, for her earnings, and the interest of the thousand pounds that would be hers when she came of age, would be sufficient for them both, but as an amusement for him, and to give him a sense of independence.

But when she was just seventeen, and was looking forward to the time when she would begin to carry her plan into effect, a terrible blow came. She heard from her mother that Robert was dead.

"It is a sad blow for us all," Mrs. Hannay wrote, "but, as you know, he has never been strong; still, we had no idea that anything serious ailed him until we heard a fortnight since he was suffering from a violent cough and had lost strength rapidly. A week later we heard that the doctors were of opinion it was a case of sudden consumption, and that the end was rapidly approaching. I went up to town to see him, and found him even worse than I expected, and was in no way surprised when this morning I received a letter saying that he had gone. Great as is the blow, one cannot but feel that, terribly afflicted as he was, his death is, as far as he is concerned, a happy release. I trust you will now abandon your wild scheme of teaching and come home."

But home was less home than ever to Isobel now, and she remained another six months at school, when she received an important letter from her uncle.

"My Dear Isobel: When you first wrote to me and told me that what you were most looking forward to was to make a home for your brother, I own that it was a blow to me, for I had long had plans of my own about you; however, I thought your desire to help your brother was so natural, and would give you such happiness in carrying it into effect, that I at once fell in with it and put aside my own plan. But the case is altered now, and I can see no reason why I cannot have my own way. When I was in England I made up my mind that unless I married, which was a most improbable contingency, I would, when you were old enough, have you out to keep house for me. I foresaw, even then, that your brother might prove an obstacle to this plan. Even in the short time I was with you it was easy enough to see that the charge of him would fall on your shoulders, and that it would be a labor of love to you.

"If he lived, then, I felt you would not leave him, and that you would be right in not doing so, but even then it seemed likely to me that he would not grow up to manhood. From time to time I have been in correspondence with the clergyman he was with, and learned that the doctor who attended them thought but poorly of him. I had him taken to two first class physicians in London; they pronounced him to be constitutionally

weak, and said that beyond strengthening medicines and that sort of thing they could do nothing for him.

"Therefore, dear, it was no surprise to me when I received first your mother's letter with the news, and then your own written a few days later. When I answered that letter I thought it as well not to say anything of my plan, but by the time you receive this, it will be six months since your great loss, and you will be able to look at it in a fairer light than you could have done then, and I do hope you will agree to come out to me. Life here has its advantages and disadvantages, but I think that, especially for young people, it is a pleasant one.

"I am getting very tired of a bachelor's establishment, and it will be a very great pleasure indeed to have you here. Ever since I was in England I made up my mind to adopt you as my own child. You are very like my brother John, and your letters and all I have heard of you show that you have grown up just as he would have wished you to do. Your sister Helena is your mother's child, and, without wishing to hurt your feelings, your mother and I have nothing in common. I regard you as the only relation I have in the world, and whether you come out or whether you do not, whatever I leave behind me will be yours. I do hope that you will at any rate come out for a time. Later on, if you don't like the life here, you can fall back upon your own plan.

"If you decide to come, write to my agent. I inclose envelope addressed to him. Tell him when you can be ready. He will put you in the way of the people you had better go to for your outfit, will pay all bills, take your passage, and so on.

"Whatever you do, do not stint yourself. The people you go to will know a great deal better than you can do what is necessary for a lady out here. All you will have to do will be to get measured and to give them an idea of your likes and fancies as to colors and so on. They will have instructions from my agent to furnish you with a complete outfit, and will know exactly how many dozens of everything are required.

"I can see no reason why you should not start within a month after the receipt of this letter, and I shall look most anxiously for a letter from you saying that you will come, and that you will start by a sailing ship in a month at latest from the date of your writing."

Isobel did not hesitate, as her faith in her uncle was unbounded. Next to her meetings with her brother, his letters had been her greatest pleasures. He had always taken her part; it was he who, at her request, had Robert placed at school, and he had kept her at Miss Virtue's in spite of her mother's complaints. At home she had never felt comfortable; it had always seemed to her that she was in the way; her mother disapproved of her; while from Helena she had never had a sisterly word. To go out to India to see the wonders she had read of, and to be her uncle's companion, seemed a perfectly delightful prospect. Her answer to her uncle was sent off the day after she received his letter, and that day month she stepped on board an Indiaman in the London Docks.

The intervening time had not been a pleasant one. Mrs. Hannay had heard from the Major of his wishes and intentions regarding Isobel, and she was greatly displeased thereat.

“Why should he have chosen you instead of Helena?” she said angrily to Isobel, on the first day of her arrival home.

“I suppose because he thought I should suit him better, mamma. I really don't see why you should be upset about it; I don't suppose Helena would have liked to go, and I am sure you would not have liked to have had me with you instead of her. I should have thought you would have been pleased I was off your hands altogether. It doesn't seem to me that you have ever been really glad to have me about you.”

“That has been entirely your own fault,” Mrs. Hannay said. “You have always been headstrong and determined to go your own way, you have never been fit to be seen when anyone came, you have thwarted me in every way.”

“I am very sorry, mamma. I think I might have been better if you had had a little more patience with me, but even now if you really wish me to stay at home I will do so. I can write again to uncle and tell him that I have changed my mind.”

“Certainly not,” Mrs. Hannay said. “Naturally I should wish to have my children with me, but I doubt whether your being here would be for the happiness of any of us, and besides, I do not wish your uncle's money to go out of the family; he might take it into his head to leave it to a hospital for black women. Still, it would have been only right and proper that he should at any rate have given Helena the first choice. As for your instant acceptance of his offer, without even consulting me, nothing can surprise me in that way after your general conduct towards me.”

However, although Mrs. Hannay declined to take any interest in Isobel's preparations, and continued to behave as an injured person, neither she nor Helena were sorry at heart for the arrangement that had been made. They objected very strongly to Isobel's plan of going out as a governess; but upon the other hand, her presence at home would in many ways have been an inconvenience. Two can make a better appearance on a fixed income than three can, and her presence at home would have necessitated many small economies. She was, too, a disturbing element; the others understood each other perfectly, and both felt that they in no way understood Isobel. Altogether, it was much better that she should go.

As to the heirship, Captain Hannay had spoken freely as to his monetary affairs when he had been in England after his brother's death.

“My pay is amply sufficient for all my wants,” he said; “but everything is expensive out there, and I have had no occasion to save. I have a few hundred pounds laid by, so that if I break down, and am ordered to Europe at any time on sick leave, I can live comfortably for that time; but, beyond that, there has been no reason why I should lay by. I am not likely ever to marry, and when I have served my full time my pension will be ample for my wants in England; but I shall do my best to help if help is necessary. Fortunately the interest of the thousand apiece the girls were left by my aunt will help your income. When it is necessary to do anything for Robert, poor lad, I will take that expense on myself.”

“I thought all Indians came home with lots of money,” Mrs. Hannay said complainingly.

“Not the military. We do the fighting, and get fairly paid for it. The civilians get five times as highly paid, and run no risks whatever. Why it should be so no one has ever

attempted to explain; but there it is, sister."

Mrs. Hannay, therefore, although she complained of the partiality shown to Isobel, was well aware that the Major's savings could amount to no very great sum; although, in nine years, with higher rank and better pay, he might have added a good bit to the little store of which he had spoken to her.

When, a week before the vessel sailed, Dr. Wade appeared with a letter he had received from the Major, asking him to take charge of Isobel on the voyage, Mrs. Hannay conceived a violent objection to him. He had, in fact, been by no means pleased with the commission, and had arrived in an unusually aggressive and snappish humor. He cut short Mrs. Hannay's well turned sentences ruthlessly, and aggrieved her by remarking on Helena's want of color, and recommending plenty of walking exercise taken at a brisk pace, and more ease and comfort in the matter of dress.

"Your daughter's lungs have no room to play, madam," he said; "her heart is compressed. No one can expect to be healthy under such circumstances."

"I have my own medical attendant, Dr. Wade," Mrs. Hannay said decidedly.

"No doubt, madam, no doubt. All I can say is, if his recommendations are not the same as mine, he must be a downright fool. Very well, Miss Hannay, I think we understand each other; I shall be on board by eleven o'clock, and shall keep a sharp lookout for you. Don't be later than twelve; she will warp out of the dock by one at latest, and if you miss that your only plan will be to take the train down to Tilbury, and hire a boat there."

"I shall be in time, sir," Isobel said.

"Well, I hope you will, but my experience of women is pretty extensive, and I have scarcely met one who could be relied upon to keep an appointment punctually. Don't laden yourself more than you can help with little bags, and parcels, and bundles of all kinds; I expect you will be three or four in a cabin, and you will find that there is no room for litter. Take the things you will require at first in one or two flat trunks which will stow under your berth; once a week or so, if the weather is fine, you will be able to get at your things in the hold. Do try if possible to pack all the things that you are likely to want to get at during the voyage in one trunk, and have a star or any mark you like painted on that trunk with your name, then there will be no occasion for the sailors to haul twenty boxes upon deck. Be sure you send all your trunks on board, except those you want in your cabin, two days before she sails. Do you think you can remember all that?"

"I think so, Dr. Wade."

"Very well then, I'm off," and the Doctor shook hands with Isobel, nodded to Mrs. Hannay and Helena, and hurried away.

"What a perfectly detestable little man!" Mrs. Hannay exclaimed, as the door closed over him. "Your uncle must have been out of his senses to select such an odious person to look after you on the voyage. I really pity you, Isobel."

"I have no doubt he is very much nicer than he seems, mamma. Uncle said, you know, in his letter last week, that he had written to Dr. Wade to look after me, if, as he thought probable, he might be coming out in the same ship. He said that he was a little

brusque in his manner, but that he was a general favorite, and one of the kindest hearted of men."

"A little brusque," Mrs. Hannay repeated scornfully. "If he is only considered a little brusque in India, all I can say is society must be in a lamentable state out there."

"Uncle says he is a great shikari, and has probably killed more tigers than any man in India."

"I really don't see that that is any recommendation whatever, Isobel, although it might be if you were likely to encounter tigers on board ship. However, I am not surprised that your opinion differs from mine; we very seldom see matters in the same light. I only hope you may be right and I may be wrong, for otherwise the journey is not likely to be a very pleasant one for you; personally, I would almost as soon have a Bengal tiger loose about the ship than such a very rude, unmannerly person as Dr. Wade."

Mrs. Hannay and Helena accompanied Isobel to the docks, and went on board ship with her.

The Doctor received them at the gangway. He was in a better temper, for the fact that he was on the point of starting for India again had put him in high spirits. He escorted the party below and saw that they got lunch, showed Isobel which was her cabin, introduced her to two or three ladies of his acquaintance, and made himself so generally pleasant that even Mrs. Hannay was mollified.

As soon as luncheon was over the bell was rung, and the partings were hurriedly got through, as the pilot announced that the tide was slackening nearly half an hour before its time, and that it was necessary to get the ship out of dock at once.

"Now, Miss Hannay, if you will take my advice," the Doctor said, as soon as the ship was fairly in the stream, "you will go below, get out all the things you will want from your boxes, and get matters tidy and comfortable. In the first place, it will do you good to be busy; and in the second place, there is nothing like getting everything shipshape in the cabin the very first thing after starting, then you are ready for rough weather or anything else that may occur. I have got you a chair. I thought that very likely you would not think of it, and a passenger without a chair of her own is a most forlorn creature, I can tell you. When you have done down below you will find me somewhere aft; if you should not do so, look out for a chair with your own name on it and take possession of it, but I think you are sure to see me."

Before they had been a fortnight at sea Isobel came to like the Doctor thoroughly. He knew many of the passengers on board the Byculla, and she had soon many acquaintances. She was amused at the description that the Doctor gave her of some of the people to whom he introduced her.

"I am going to introduce you to that woman in the severely plain cloak and ugly bonnet. She is the wife of the Resident of Rajputana. I knew her when her husband was a Collector."

"A Collector, Dr. Wade; what did he collect?"

"Well, my dear, he didn't collect taxes or water rates or anything of that sort. A Collector is a civil functionary, and frequently an important one. I used to attend her at one time when we were in cantonments at Bhurtpore, where her husband was

stationed at that time. I pulled a tooth out for her once, and she halloaed louder than any woman I ever heard. I don't mean to say, my dear, that woman holloa any louder than men; on the contrary, they bear pain a good deal better, but she was an exception. She was twelve years younger then, and used to dress a good deal more than she does now. That cloak and bonnet are meant to convey to the rest of the passengers the fact that there is no occasion whatever for a person of her importance to attend to such petty matters as dress.

"She never mentions her husband's name without saying, 'My husband, the Resident,' but for all that she is a kind hearted woman—a very kind hearted woman. I pulled a child of hers through who was down with fever at Bhurtpore; he had a very close shave of it, and she has never forgotten it. She greeted me when she came on board almost with tears in her eyes at the thought of that time. I told her I had a young lady under my charge, and she said that she would be very pleased to do anything she could for you. She is a stanch friend is Mrs. Resident, and you will find her useful before you get to the end of the voyage."

The lady received Isobel with genuine kindness, and took her very much under her wing during the voyage, and Isobel received no small advantage from her advice and protection.

Her own good sense, however, and the earnest life she had led at school and with her brother at home, would have sufficed her even without this guardianship and that of the Doctor. There was a straightforward frankness about her that kept men from talking nonsense to her. A compliment she simply laughed at, an attempt at flattery made her angry, and the Doctor afterwards declared to her uncle he would not have believed that the guardianship of a girl upon the long Indian voyage could possibly have caused him so little trouble and annoyance.

"When I read your letter, Major, my hair stood on end, and if my leave had not been up I should have canceled my passage and come by the next ship; and indeed when I went down to see her I had still by no means made up my mind as to whether I would not take my chance of getting out in time by the next vessel. However, I liked her appearance, and, as I have said, it turned out excellently, and I should not mind making another voyage in charge of her."

CHAPTER V.

Two days after his arrival at Cawnpore Dr. Wade moved into quarters of his own.

"I like Dr. Wade very much indeed, you know, uncle, still I am glad to have you all to myself and to settle down into regular ways."

"Yes, we have got to learn to know each other, Isobel."

"Do you think so, uncle? Why, it seems to me that I know all about you, just the same as if we had always been together, and I am sure I always told you all about myself, even when I was bad at school and got into scrapes, because you said particularly that you liked me to tell you everything, and did not want to know only the good side of me."

"Yes, that is so, my dear, and no doubt I have a fair idea as to what are your strong points and what are your weak ones, but neither one or the other affect greatly a person's ordinary everyday character. It is the little things, the trifles, the way of talking, the way of listening, the amount of sympathy shown, and so on, that make a man or woman popular. People do not ask whether he or she may be morally sleeping volcanoes, who, if fairly roused, might slay a rival or burn a city; they simply look at the surface—is a man or a woman pleasant, agreeable, easily pleased, ready to take a share in making things go, to show a certain amount of sympathy in other people's pleasures or troubles—in fact, to form a pleasant unit of the society of a station?

"So in the house you might be the most angelic temper in the world, but if you wore creaky boots, had a habit of slamming doors, little tricks of giggling or fidgeting with your hands or feet, you would be an unpleasant companion, for you would be constantly irritating one in small matters. Of course, it is just the same thing with your opinion of me. You have an idea that I am a good enough sort of fellow, because I have done my best to enable you to carry out your plans and wishes, but that has nothing to do at all with my character as a man to live with. Till we saw each other, when you got out of the gharry, we really knew nothing whatever of each other."

Isobel shook her head decidedly.

"Nothing will persuade me that I didn't know everything about you, uncle. You are just exactly what I knew you would be in look, and voice, in manner and ways and everything. Of course, it is partly from what I remember, but I really did not see a great deal of you in those days; it is from your letters, I think, entirely that I knew all about you, and exactly what you were. Do you mean to say that I am not just what you thought I should be?"

"Well, not so clearly as all that, Isobel. Of course you were only a little child when I saw you, and except that you had big brown eyes, and long eyelashes, I confess that it struck me that you were rather a plain little thing, and I do not think that your mother's letters since conveyed to my mind the fact that there had been any material change since. Therefore I own that you are personally quite different from what I had expected to find you. I had expected to find you, I think, rather stumpy in figure, and square in build, with a very determined and businesslike manner."

"Nonsense, uncle, you could not have expected that."

"Well, my dear, I did, and you see I find I was utterly wrong."

"But you are not discontented, uncle?" Isobel asked, with a smile.

"No, my dear, but perhaps not quite so contented as you may think I ought to be."

"Why is that, uncle?"

"Well, my dear, if you had been what I had pictured you, I might have had you four or five years to myself. Possibly you might even have gone home with me, to keep house for me in England, when I retire. As it is now, I give myself six months at the outside."

"What nonsense, uncle! You don't suppose I am going to fall in love with the first man who presents himself? Why, everyone says the sea voyage is a most trying time, and, you see, I came through that quite scathless.

"Besides, uncle," and she laughed, "there is safety in multitude, and I think that a girl would be far more likely to fall in love in some country place, where she only saw one or two men, than where there are numbers of them. Besides, it seems to me that in India a girl cannot feel that she is chosen, as it were, from among other girls, as she would do at home. There are so few girls, and so many men here, there must be a sort of feeling that you are only appreciated because there is nothing better to be had.

"But, of course, uncle, you can understand that the idea of love making and marrying never entered my head at all until I went on board a ship. As you know, I always used to think that Robert and I would live together, and I am quite sure that I should never have left him if he had lived. If I had stopped in England I should have done the work I had trained myself to do, and it might have been years and years, and perhaps never, before anyone might have taken a fancy to me, or I to him. It seems strange, and I really don't think pleasant, uncle, for everyone to take it for granted that because a girl comes out to India she is a candidate for marriage. I think it is degrading, uncle."

"The Doctor was telling me yesterday that you had some idea of that sort," the Major said, with a slight smile, "and I think girls often start with that sort of idea. But it is like looking on at a game. You don't feel interested in it until you begin to play at it. Well, the longer you entertain those ideas the better I shall be pleased, Isobel. I only hope that you may long remain of the same mind, and that when your time does come your choice will be a wise one."

There could be no doubt that the Major's niece was a great success in the regiment. Richards and Wilson, two lads who had joined six months before, succumbed at once, and mutual animosity succeeded the close friendship they had hitherto entertained for each other. Travers, the Senior Captain, a man who had hitherto been noted for his indifference to the charms of female society, went so far as to admit that Miss Hannay was a very nice, unaffected girl. Mrs. Doolan was quite enthusiastic about her.

"It is very lucky, Jim," she said to her husband, "that you were a sober and respected married man before she came out, and that I am installed here as your lawful and wedded wife instead of being at Ballycrogin with only an engagement ring on my finger. I know your susceptible nature; you would have fallen in love with her, and she would not have had you, and we should both of us have been miserable."

"How do you know she wouldn't have had me, Norah?"

"Because, my dear, she will be able to pick and choose just where she likes; and though no one recognizes your virtues more than I do, a company in an Indian regiment is hardly as attractive as a Residency or Lieutenant Governorship. But seriously, she is a dear girl, and as yet does not seem to have the least idea how pretty she is. How cordially some of them will hate her! I anticipate great fun in looking on. I am out of all that sort of thing myself."

"That is news to me, Norah; I think you are just as fond of a quiet flirtation as you used to be."

"Just of a very little one, Jim; fortunately not more. So I can look on complacently; but even I have suffered. Why, for weeks not a day has passed without young Richards dropping in for a chat, and when he came in yesterday he could talk about nothing but Miss Hannay, until I shut him up by telling him it was extremely bad form to talk to one lady about another. The boy colored up till I almost laughed in his face; in fact, I believe I did laugh."

"That I will warrant you did, Norah."

"I could not help it, especially when he assured me he was perfectly serious about Miss Hannay."

"You did not encourage him, I hope, Norah."

"No; I told him the Colonel set his face against married subalterns, and that he would injure himself seriously in his profession if he were to think of such a thing, and as I knew he had nothing but his pay, that would be fatal to him."

Captain Doolan went off into a burst of laughter.

"And he took it all in, Norah? He did not see that you were humbugging him altogether?"

"Not a bit of it. They are very amusing, these boys, Jim. I was really quite sorry for Richards, but I told him he would get over it in time, for as far as I could learn you had been just as bad thirty-three times before I finally took pity on you, and that I only did it then because you were wearing away with your troubles. I advised him to put the best face he could on it, for that Miss Hannay would be the last person to be pleased, if he were to be going about with a face as long as if he had just come from his aunt's funeral."

The race meeting came off three weeks after Miss Hannay arrived at Cawnpore. She had been to several dinners and parties by this time, and began to know most of the regular residents.

The races served as an excuse for people to come in from all the stations round. Men came over from Lucknow, Agra, and Allahabad, and from many a little outlying station; every bungalow in the cantonment was filled with guests, and tents were erected for the accommodation of the overflow.

Several of the officers of the 103d had horses and ponies entered in the various races. There was to be a dance at the club on the evening of the second day of the races, and a garden party at the General's on that of the first. Richards and Wilson had

both ponies entered for the race confined to country tats which had never won a race, and both had endeavored to find without success what was Isobel's favorite color.

"But you must have some favorite color?" Wilson urged.

"Why must I, Mr. Wilson? One thing is suitable for one thing and one another, and I always like a color that is suitable for the occasion."

"But what color are you going to wear at the races, Miss Hannay?"

"Well, you see, I have several dresses," Isobel said gravely, "and I cannot say until the morning arrives which I may wear; it will depend a good deal how I feel. Besides, I might object to your wearing the same color as I do. You remember in the old times, knights, when they entered the lists, wore the favors that ladies had given them. Now I have no idea of giving you a favor. You have done nothing worthy of it. When you have won the Victoria Cross, and distinguished yourself by some extraordinarily gallant action, it will be quite time to think about it."

"You see one has to send one's color in four days beforehand, in time for them to print it on the card," the lad said; "and besides, one has to get a jacket and cap made."

"But you don't reflect that it is quite possible your pony won't win after all, and supposing that I had colors, I certainly should not like to see them come in last in the race. Mr. Richards has been asking me just the same thing, and, of course, I gave him the same answer. I can only give you the advice I gave him."

"What was that, Miss Hannay?" Wilson asked eagerly.

"Well, you see, it is not very long since either of you left school, so I should think the best thing for you to wear are your school colors, whatever they were."

And with a merry laugh at his look of discomfiture, Isobel turned away and joined Mrs. Doolan and two or three other ladies who were sitting with her.

"There is one comfort," Mrs. Doolan was just saying, "in this country, when there is anything coming off, there is no occasion to be anxious as to the weather; one knows that it will be hot, fine, and dusty. One can wear one's gayest dress without fear. In Ireland one never knew whether one wanted muslin or waterproof until the morning came, and even then one could not calculate with any certainty how it would be by twelve o'clock. This will be your first Indian festivity, Miss Hannay."

"Do the natives come much?"

"I should think so! All Cawnpore will turn out, and we shall have the Lord of Bithoor and any number of Talookdars and Zemindars with their suites. A good many of them will have horses entered, and they have some good ones if they could but ride them. The Rajah of Bithoor is a most important personage. He talks English very well, and gives splendid entertainments. He is a most polite gentleman, and is always over here if there is anything going on. The general idea is that he has set his mind on having an English wife, the only difficulty being our objection to polygamy. He has every other advantage, and his wife would have jewels that a queen might envy."

Isobel laughed. "I don't think jewels would count for much in my ideas of happiness."

"It is not so much the jewels, my dear, in themselves, but the envy they would excite in every other woman."

"I don't think I can understand that feeling, Mrs. Doolan. I can understand that there might be a satisfaction in being envied for being the happiest woman, or the most tastefully dressed woman, or even the prettiest woman, though that after all is a mere accident, but not for having the greatest number of bright stones, however valuable. I don't think the most lovely set of diamonds ever seen would give me as much satisfaction as a few choice flowers."

"Ah, but that is because you are quite young," Mrs. Doolan said. "Eve was tempted by an apple, but Eve had not lived long. You see, an apple will tempt a child, and flowers a young girl. Diamonds are the bait of a woman."

"You would not care for diamonds yourself, Mrs. Doolan?"

"I don't know, my dear; the experiment was never tried—bog oak and Irish diamonds have been more in my line. Jim's pay has never run to diamonds, worse luck, but he has promised me that if he ever gets a chance of looting the palace of a native prince he will keep a special lookout for them for me. So far he has never had the chance. When he was an ensign there was some hard fighting with the Sikhs, but nothing of that sort fell to his share. I often tell him that he took me under false pretenses altogether. I had visions of returning some day and astonishing Ballycrogin, as a sort of begum covered with diamonds; but as far as I can see the children are the only jewels that I am likely to take back."

"And very nice jewels too," Isobel said heartily; "they are dear little things, Mrs. Doolan, and worth all the diamonds in the world. I hear, Mrs. Prothero, that your husband has a good chance of winning the race for Arabs; I intend to wager several pairs of gloves on his horse."

"Yes, Seila is very fast. She won last year. But Nana Sahib has had the horse that won the cup at Poona last year, and is considered one of the fastest in India, brought across from Bombay. Our only hope is that he will put a native up, and in that case we ought to have a fair chance, for the natives have no idea of riding a waiting race, but go off at full speed, and take it all out of their horse before the end of the race."

"Well, we must hope he will, Mrs. Prothero; that seems, from what I hear, the only chance there is of the regiment winning a prize. So all our sympathies will be with you."

"Hunter and his wife and their two girls are coming," the Major said, the next morning, as he opened his letters.

"Very well, uncle, then we will do as we arranged. The Miss Hunters shall have my room, and I will take the little passage room."

"I am afraid it will put you out, Isobel; but they have been here for the last two years at the race times and I did not like not asking them again."

"Of course, uncle. It will make no difference to me, and I don't require any very great space to apparel myself."

"We must have dinners for twelve at least, the day before the races, and on the three days of the meeting."

Isobel looked alarmed. "I hope you don't rely on me for the arrangements, uncle. At each of the four dinners we have been to I have done nothing but wonder how it was

all done, and have been trembling over the thought that it would be our turn presently. It seemed a fearful responsibility; and four, one after the other, is an appalling prospect."

"Rumzan will see to it all, my dear. He has always managed very well before. I will talk it over with him; besides, these will not be like regular set dinner parties. At race meetings everyone keeps pretty nearly open house. One does not ask any of the people at the station; they have all their own visitors. One trusts to chance to fill up the table, and one never finds any difficulty about it. It is lucky I got up a regular stock of china, and so on, in anticipation of your coming. Of course, as a bachelor, I have not been a dinner giver, except on occasions like this, when nobody expects anything like state, and things are conducted to a certain extent in picnic fashion. I have paid off my dinner obligations by having men to mess or the club. However, I will consult Rumzan, and we will have a regular parade of our materials, and you shall inspect our resources. If there is anything in the way of flower vases or center dishes, or anything of that sort, you think requisite, we must get them. Jestonjee has got a good stock of all that sort of thing. As to tablecloths and napkins and so on, I had a supply with the china, so you will find that all right. Of course you will get plenty of flowers; they are the principal things, after all, towards making the table look well. You have had no experience in arranging them, I suppose?"

"None at all, uncle; I never arranged a vase of flowers in my life."

"Then I tell you what you had better do, Isobel. You coax the Doctor into coming in and undertaking it. He is famous in that way. He always has the decoration of the mess table on grand occasions; and when we give a dance the flowers and decorations are left to him as a matter of course."

"I will ask him, uncle; but he is the last man in the world I should have thought of in connection with flowers and decorations."

"He is a many sided man, my dear; he paints excellently, and has wonderful taste in the way of dress. I can assure you that no lady in the regiment is quite satisfied with a new costume until it has received the stamp of the Doctor's approval. When we were stationed at Delhi four years ago there was a fancy ball, and people who were judges of that sort of thing said that they had never seen so pretty a collection of dresses, and I should think fully half of them were manufactured from the Doctor's sketches."

"I remember now," Isobel laughed, "that he was very sarcastic on board ship as to the dresses of some of the people, but I thought it was only his way of grumbling at things in general, though certainly I generally agreed with him. He told me one day that my taste evidently inclined to the dowdy, but you see I wore half mourning until I arrived out here."

The Doctor himself dropped in an hour later.

"I shall be glad, Doctor, if you will dine with us as often as you can during the four days of the races," Major Hannay said. "Of course, I shall be doing the hospitable to people who come in from out stations, and as Isobel won't know any of them, it will be a little trying to her, acting for the first time in the capacity of hostess. As you know everybody, you will be able to make things go. I have got Hunter and his wife and their two girls coming in to stay. I calculate the table will hold fourteen

comfortably enough. At any rate, come first night, even if you can't come on the others."

"Certainly I will, Major, if you will let me bring Bathurst in with me; he is going to stay with me for the races."

"By all means, Doctor; I like what I have seen of him very much."

"Yes, he has got a lot in him," the Doctor said, "only he is always head over heels in work. He will make a big mark before he has done. He is one of the few men out here who has thoroughly mastered the language; he can talk to the natives like one of themselves, and understands them so thoroughly that they are absolutely afraid to lie to him, which is the highest compliment a native can pay to an Indian official. It is very seldom he comes in to this sort of thing, but I seized him the other day and told him that I could see he would break down if he didn't give himself a holiday, and I fairly worried him into saying he would come over and stay for the races. I believe then he would not have come if I had not written to him that all the native swells would be here, and it would be an excellent opportunity for him to talk to them about the establishment of a school for the daughters of the upper class of natives; that is one of his fads at present."

"But it would be a good thing surely, Doctor," Isobel said.

"No doubt, my dear, no doubt; and so would scores of other things, if you could but persuade the natives so. But this is really one of the most impracticable schemes possible, simply because the whole of these unfortunate children get betrothed when they are two or three years old, and are married at twelve. Even if all parties were agreed, the husband's relations and the wife's relations and everyone else, what are you going to teach a child worth knowing before she gets to the age of twelve? Just enough to make her discontented with her lot. Once get the natives to alter their customs and to marry their women at the age of eighteen, and you may do something for them; but as long as they stick to this idiotic custom of marrying them off when they are still children, the case is hopeless."

"There is something I wanted to ask you, Doctor," Isobel said. "You know this is the first time I have had anything to do with entertaining, and I know nothing about decorating a table. Uncle says that you are a great hand at the arrangement of flowers. Would you mind seeing to it for me?"

The Doctor nodded. "With pleasure, Miss Hannay. It is a thing I enjoy. There is nothing more lamentable than to see the ignorant, and I may almost say brutal, way in which people bunch flowers up into great masses and call that decoration. They might just as well bunch up so many masses of bright colored rags. The shape of the flower, its manner of growth, and its individuality are altogether lost, and the sole effect produced is that of a confused mass of color. I will undertake that part of the business, and you had better leave the buying of the flowers to me."

"Certainly, Doctor," the Major said; "I will give you carte blanche."

"Well, I must see your dinner service, Major, so that I may know about its color, and what you have got to put the flowers into."

"I will have a regular parade tomorrow morning after breakfast, if it would be convenient for you to look in then, and at the same time I will get you to have a talk

with Rumzan and the cook. I am almost as new to giving dinner parties as Isobel is. When one has half a dozen men to dine with one at the club, one gives the butler notice and chooses the wine, and one knows that it will be all right; but it is a very different thing when you have to go into the details yourself. Ordinarily I leave it entirely to Rumzan and the cook, and I am bound to say they do very well, but this is a different matter."

"We will talk it over with them together, Major. You can seem to consult me, but it must come from you to them, or else you will be getting their backs up. Thank goodness, Indian servants don't give themselves the airs English ones do; but human nature is a good deal the same everywhere, and the first great rule, if you want any domestic arrangements to go off well, is to keep the servants in good temper."

"We none of us like to be interfered with, Doctor."

"A wise man is always ready to be taught," the Doctor said sententiously.

"Well, there are exceptions, Doctor. I remember, soon after I joined, a man blew off two of his fingers. A young surgeon who was here wanted to amputate the hand; he was just going to set about it when a staff surgeon came in and said that it had better not be done, for that natives could not stand amputations. The young surgeon was very much annoyed. The staff surgeon went away next day. There was a good deal of inflammation, and the young surgeon decided to amputate. The man never rallied from the operation, and died next day."

"I said, Major, that a wise man was always ready to listen to good advice. I was not a wise man in those days—I was a pig headed young fool. I thought I knew all about it, and I was quite right according to my experience in London hospitals. In the case of an Englishman, the hand would have been amputated, and the man would have been all right three weeks afterwards. But I knew nothing about these soft hearted Hindoos, and never dreamt that an operation which would be a trifle to an Englishman would be fatal to one of them, and that simply because, although they are plucky enough in some respects, they have no more heart than a mouse when anything is the matter with them. Yes, if it hadn't been for the old Colonel, who gave me a private hint to say nothing about the affair, but merely to put down in my report, 'Died from the effect of a gunshot wound,' I should have got into a deuce of a scrape over that affair. As it was, it only cost me a hundred rupees to satisfy the man's family and send them back to their native village. That was for years a standing joke against me, Miss Hannay; except your uncle and the Colonel, there is no one left in the regiment who was there, but it was a sore subject for a long time. Still, no doubt, it was a useful lesson, and my rule has been ever since, never amputate except as a forlorn hope, and even then don't amputate, for if you do the relatives of the man, as far as his fourth cousins, will inevitably regard you as his murderer. Well, I must be off; I will look in tomorrow morning, Major, and make an inspection of your resources."

"I am glad to see the Hunters are going to bring over their carriage," the Major said, two days later, as he looked through a letter. "I am very glad of that, for I put it off till too late. I have been trying everywhere for the last two days to hire one, but they are all engaged, and have been so for weeks, I hear. I was wondering what I should do, for my buggy will only hold two. I was thinking of asking Mrs. Doolan if she could take one of the Miss Hunters, and should have tried to find a place for the

other. But this settles it all comfortably. They are going to send on their own horses halfway the day before, and hire native ponies for the first half. They have a good large family vehicle; I hoped that they would bring it, but, of course, I could not trust to it."

The Doctor presently dropped in with Captain Doolan. After chatting for some time the former said, "I have had the satisfaction this morning, Miss Hannay, of relieving Mrs. Cromarty's mind of a great burden."

"How was that, Doctor?"

"It was in relation to you, my dear."

"Me, Doctor! how could I have been a weight on Mrs. Cromarty's mind?"

"She sent for me under the pretense of being feverish; said she had a headache, and so on. Her pulse was all right, and I told her at once I did not think there was much the matter with her; but I recommended her to keep out of the sun for two days. Then she begun a chat about the station. She knows that, somehow or other, I generally hear all that is going on. I wondered what was coming, till she said casually, 'Do you know what arrangement Major Hannay has made as to his niece for the races?' I said, of course, that the Hunters were coming over to stay. I could see at once that her spirit was instantly relieved of a heavy burden, but she only said, 'Of course, then, that settles the question. I had intended to send across to her this morning, to ask if she would like a seat in my carriage; having no lady with her, she could not very well have gone to the races alone. Naturally, I should have been very pleased to have had her with us. However, as Mrs. Hunter will be staying at the Major's, and will act as her chaperon, the matter is settled.'"

"Well, I think it was very kind of her thinking of it," Isobel said, "and I don't think it is nice of you, Doctor, to say that it was an evident relief to her when she found I had someone else to take care of me. Why should it have been a relief?"

"I have no doubt it has weighed on her mind for the last fortnight," the Doctor said; "she must have seen that as you were freshly joined, and the only unmarried girl in the regiment, except her own daughters, it was only the proper thing she should offer you a seat in her carriage. No doubt she decided to put it off as late as possible, in hopes that you might make some other arrangement. Had you not done so, she might have done the heroic thing and invited you, though I am by no means sure of it. Of course, now she will say the first time she meets you that she was quite disappointed at having heard from me that Mrs. Hunter would be with you, as she had hoped to have the pleasure of having you in her carriage with her."

"But why shouldn't she like it?" Isobel said indignantly. "Surely I am not as disagreeable as all that! Come, Doctor!"

Captain Doolan laughed, while the Doctor said, "It is just the contrary, my dear; I am quite sure that if you were in Mrs. Cromarty's place, and had two tall, washed out looking daughters, you would not feel the slightest desire to place Miss Hannay in the same carriage with them."

"I call that very disagreeable of you, Doctor," Isobel said, flushing, "and I shall not like you at all if you take such unkind and malicious views of people. I don't suppose such an idea ever entered into Mrs. Cromarty's head, and even if it did, it makes it all

the kinder that she should think of offering me a seat. I do think most men seem to consider that women think of nothing but looks, and that girls are always trying to attract men, and mothers always thinking of getting their daughters married. It is not at all nice, Doctor, to have such ideas, and I shall thank Mrs. Cromarty warmly, when I see her, for her kindness in thinking about me."

Accordingly, that afternoon, when they met at the usual hour, when the band was playing, Isobel went up to the Colonel's wife.

"I want to thank you, Mrs. Cromarty. Dr. Wade has told me that you had intended to offer me a seat in your carriage to the races. It was very kind and nice of you to think of me, and I am very much obliged to you. I should have enjoyed it very much if it hadn't been that Mrs. Hunter is coming to stay with us, and, of course, I shall be under her wing. Still, I am just as much obliged to you for having thought of it."

Mrs. Cromarty was pleased with the girl's warmth and manner, and afterwards mentioned to several of her friends that she thought that Miss Hannay seemed a very nice young woman.

"I was not quite favorably impressed at first," she admitted. "She has the misfortune of being a little brusque in her manner, but, of course, her position is a difficult one, being alone out here, without any lady with her, and no doubt she feels it so. She was quite touchingly grateful, only because I offered her a seat in our carriage for the races, though she was unable to accept it, as the Major will have the Hunters staying with him."

CHAPTER VI.

The clubhouse at Cawnpore was crowded on the evening before the races. Up to eleven o'clock it had been comparatively deserted, for there was scarcely a bungalow in the station at which dinner parties were not going on; but, after eleven, the gentlemen for the most part adjourned to the club for a smoke, a rubber, or a game of billiards, or to chat over the racing events of the next day.

Loud greetings were exchanged as each fresh contingent arrived, for many newcomers had come into the station only that afternoon. Every table in the whist room was occupied, black pool was being played in the billiard room upstairs, where most of the younger men were gathered, while the elders smoked and talked in the rooms below.

"What will you do, Bathurst?" the Doctor asked his guest, after the party from the Major's had been chatting for some little time downstairs. "Would you like to cut in at a rubber or take a ball at pool?"

"Neither, Doctor; they are both accomplishments beyond me; I have not patience for whist, and I can't play billiards in the least. I have tried over and over again, but I am too nervous, I fancy; I break down over the easiest stroke—in fact, an easy stroke is harder for me than a difficult one. I know I ought to make it, and just for that reason, I suppose, I don't."

"You don't give one the idea of a nervous man, either, Bathurst."

"Well, I am, Doctor, constitutionally, indeed terribly so."

"Not in business matters, anyhow," the Doctor said, with a smile. "You have the reputation of not minding in the slightest what responsibility you take upon yourself, and of carrying out what you undertake in the most resolute, I won't say high handed, manner."

"No, it doesn't come in there," Bathurst laughed. "Morally I am not nervous so far as I know, physically I am. I would give a great deal if I could get over it, but, as I have said, it is constitutional."

"Not on your father's side, Bathurst. I knew him well, and he was a very gallant officer."

"No, it was the other side," Bathurst said; "I will tell you about it some day."

At this moment another friend of Bathurst's came up and entered into conversation with him.

"Well, I will go upstairs to the billiard room," the Doctor said; "and you will find me there, Bathurst, whenever you feel disposed to go."

A pool had just finished when the Doctor entered the billiard room.

"That is right, Doctor, you are just in time," Prothero said, as he entered. "Sinclair has given up his cue; he is going to ride tomorrow, and is afraid of shaking his nerves;

you must come and play for the honor of the corps. I am being ruined altogether, and Doolan has retired discomfited."

"I have not touched a cue since I went away," the Doctor said, "but I don't mind adding to the list of victims. Who are the winners?"

"Messenger and Jarvis have been carrying all before them; there is a report they have just sent off two club waiters, with loads of rupees, to their quarters. Scarsdale has been pretty well holding his own, but the rest of us are nowhere."

A year's want of practice, however, told, and the Doctor was added to the list of victims: he had no difficulty in getting someone else to take his cue after playing for half an hour.

"It shows that practice is required for everything," he said; "before I went away I could have given each of those men a life, now they could give me two; I must devote half an hour a day to it till I get it back again."

"And you shall give me a lesson, Doctor," Captain Doolan, who had also retired, said.

"It would be time thrown away by both of us, Doolan. You would never make a pool player if you were to practice all your life. It is not the eye that is wrong, but the temperament. You can make a very good shot now and then, but you are too harum scarum and slap dash altogether. The art of playing pool is the art of placing yourself; while, when you strike, you have not the faintest idea where your ball is going to, and you are just as likely to run in yourself as you are to pot your adversary. I should abjure it if I were you, Doolan; it is too expensive a luxury for you to indulge in."

"You are right there, Doctor; only what is a man to do when fellows say, 'We want you to make up a pool, Doolan'?"

"I should say the reply would be quite simple. I should answer, 'I am ready enough to play if any of you are ready to pay my losses and take my winnings; I am tired of being as good as an annuity to you all,' for that is what you have been for the last ten years. Why, it would be cheaper for you to send home to England for skittles, and get a ground up here."

"But I don't play so very badly, Doctor."

"If you play badly enough always to lose, it doesn't matter as to the precise degree of badness," the Doctor retorted. "It is not surprising. When you came out here, fourteen or fifteen years ago, boys did not take to playing billiards, but they do now. Look at that little villain, Richards. He has just cleared the table, and done it with all the coolness of a professional marker. The young scoundrel ought to have been in bed two hours ago, for I hear that tat of his is really a good one. Not that it will make any difference to him. That sort of boy would play billiards till the first bugle sounds in the morning, and have a wash and turn out as fresh as paint, but it won't last, Doolan, not in this climate; his cheeks will have fallen in and he will have crow's feet at the corners of his eyes before another year has gone over. I like that other boy, Wilson, better. Of course he is a cub as yet, but I should say there is good in him. Just at present I can see he is beginning to fancy himself in love with Miss Hannay. That will do him good; it is always an advantage to a lad like that to have a good honest liking for a nice girl. Of course it comes to nothing, and for a time he imagines himself the

most unhappy of mortals, but it does him good for all that; fellows are far less likely to get into mischief and go to the bad after an affair of that sort. It gives him a high ideal, and if he is worth anything he will try to make himself worthy of her, and the good it does him will continue even after the charm is broken."

"What a fellow you are, Doctor," Captain Doolan said, looking down upon his companion, "talking away like that in the middle of this racket, which would be enough to bother Saint Patrick himself!"

"Well, come along downstairs, Doolan; we will have a final peg and then be off; I expect Bathurst is beginning to fidget before now."

"It will do him good," Captain Doolan said disdainfully. "I have no patience with a man who is forever working himself to death, riding about the country as if Old Nick were behind him, and never giving himself a minute for diversion of any kind. Faith, I would rather throw myself down a well and have done with it, than work ten times as hard as a black nigger."

"Well, I don't think, Doolan," the Doctor said dryly, "you are ever likely to be driven to suicide by any such cause."

"You are right there, Doctor," the other said contentedly. "No man can throw it in my teeth that I ever worked when I had no occasion to work. If there were a campaign, I expect I could do my share with the best of them, but in quiet times I just do what I have to do, and if anyone has an anxiety to take my place in the rota for duty, he is as welcome to it as the flowers of May. I had my share of it when I was a subaltern; there is no better fellow living than the Major, but when he was Captain of my company he used to keep me on the run by the hour together, till I wished myself back in Connaught, and anyone who liked it might have had the whole of India for anything I cared; he was one of the most uneasy creatures I ever came across."

"The Major is a good officer, Doolan, and you were as lazy a youngster, and as hard a bargain, as the Company ever got. You ought to thank your stars that you had the good luck in having a Captain who knew his business, and made you learn yours. Why, if you had had a man like Rintoul as your Captain, you would never have been worth your salt."

"You are not complimentary, Doctor; but then nobody looks for compliments from you."

"I can pay compliments if I have a chance," the Doctor retorted, "but it is very seldom I get one of doing so—at least, without lying. Well, Bathurst, are you ready to turn in?"

"Quite ready, Doctor; that is one of the advantages of not caring for races; the merits and demerits of the horses that run tomorrow do not in the slightest degree affect me, and even the news that all the favorites had gone wrong would not deprive me of an hour's sleep."

"I think it a good thing to take an interest in racing, Bathurst. Take men as a whole: out here they work hard—some of them work tremendously hard—and unless they get some change to their thoughts, some sort of recreation, nineteen out of twenty will break down sooner or later. If they don't they become mere machines. Every man ought to have some sort of hobby; he need not ride it to death, but he wants to take

some sort of interest in it. I don't care whether he takes to pig sticking, or racing, or shooting, or whether he goes in for what I may call the milder kinds of relaxation, such as dining out, billiards, whist, or even general philandering. Anything is better than nothing—anything that will take his mind off his work. As far as I can see, you don't do anything."

"Therefore I shall either break down or become a machine, Doctor?"

"One or the other certainly, Bathurst. You may smile, but I mean what I say. I have seen other young fellows just as full of work and enthusiasm as you are, but I have never seen an exception to the rule, unless, of course, they took up something so as to give their minds a rest."

"The Doctor has just been scolding me because I am not fond enough of work," Captain Doolan laughed.

"You are differently placed, Doolan," the Doctor said. "You have got plenty of enthusiasm in your nature—most Irishmen have—but you have had nothing to stir it. Life in a native regiment in India is an easy one. Your duties are over in two or three hours out of the twenty-four, whereas the work of a civilian in a large district literally never ends, unless he puts a resolute stop to it. What with seeing people from morning until night, and riding about and listening to complaints, every hour of the day is occupied, and then at night there are reports to write and documents of all sorts to go through. It is a great pity that there cannot be a better division of work, though I own I don't see how it is to be managed."

By this time they were walking towards the lines.

"I should not mind taking a share of the civil work at the station," Captain Doolan said, "if they would make our pay a little more like that of the civilians."

"There is something in that, Doolan," the Doctor agreed; "it is just as hard work having nothing to do as it is having too much; and I have always been of opinion that the tremendous disproportion between the pay of a military man and of a civilian of the same age is simply monstrous. Well, goodnight, Doolan; I hope you will tell Mrs. Doolan that the credit is entirely due to me that you are home at the reasonable hour of one o'clock, instead of dropping in just in time to change for parade."

"A good fellow," the Doctor said, as he walked on with Bathurst; "he would never set the Thames on fire; but he is an honest, kindly fellow. He would make a capital officer if he were on service. His marriage has been an excellent thing for him. He had nothing to do before but to pass away his time in the club or mess house, and drink more than was good for him. But he has pulled himself round altogether since he married. His wife is a bright, clever little woman, and knows how to make the house happy for him; if he had married a lackadaisical sort of a woman, the betting is he would have gone to the bad altogether."

"I only met him once or twice before," Bathurst said. "You see I am not here very often, and when I am it is only on business, so I know a very few people here except those I have to deal with, and by the time I have got through my business I am generally so thoroughly out of temper with the pig headed stupidity and obstinacy of people in general, that I get into my buggy and drive straight away."

"I fancy you irritate them as much as they irritate you, Bathurst. Well, here we are; now we will have a quiet cheroot and a peg, to quiet our nerves after all that din, before we turn in. Let us get off our coats and collars, and make ourselves comfortable; it is a proof of the bestial stupidity of mankind that they should wear such abominations as dress clothes in a climate like this. Here, boy, light the candles and bring two sodas and brandies."

"Well, Bathurst," he went on, when they had made themselves comfortable in two lounging chairs, "what do you thing of Miss Hannay?"

"I was prepared to admire her, Doctor, from what you said; it is not very often that you overpraise things; but she is a charming girl, very pretty and bright, frank and natural."

"She is all that," the Doctor said. "We were four months on the voyage out, and I saw enough of her in that time to know her pretty thoroughly."

"What puzzles me about her," Bathurst said, "is that I seemed to know her face. Where I saw her, and under what circumstances, I have been puzzling myself half the evening to recall, but I have the strongest conviction that I have met her."

"You are dreaming, man. You have been out here eight years; she was a child of ten when you left England! You certainly have not seen her, and as I know pretty well every woman who has been in this station for the last five or six years, I can answer for it that you have not seen anyone in the slightest degree resembling her."

"That is what I have been saying to myself, Doctor, but that does not in the slightest degree shake my conviction about it."

"Then you must have dreamt it," the Doctor said decidedly. "Some fool of a poet has said, 'Visions of love cast their shadows before,' or something of that sort, which of course is a lie; still, that is the only way that I can account for it."

Bathurst smiled faintly. "I don't think the quotation is quite right, Doctor; anyhow, I am convinced that the impression is far too vivid to have been the result of a dream."

"By the way, Bathurst," the Doctor said, suddenly changing his conversation, "what do you think of this talk we hear about chupaties being sent round among the native troops, and the talk about greased cartridges. You see more of the natives than anyone I know; do you think there is anything brewing in the air?"

"If there is, Doctor, I am certain it is not known to the natives in general. I see no change whatever in their manner, and I am sure I know them well enough to notice any change if it existed. I know nothing about the Sepoys, but Garnet tells me that the Company at Deennugghur give him nothing to complain of, though they don't obey orders as smartly as usual, and they have a. sullen air as they go about their work."

"I don't like it, Bathurst. I do not understand what the chupaties mean, but I know that there is a sort of tradition that the sending of them round has always preceded trouble. The Sepoys have no reason for discontent, but there has been no active service lately, and idleness is always bad for men. I can't believe there is any widespread dissatisfaction among them, but there is no doubt whatever that if there is, and it breaks out, the position will be a very serious one. There are not half enough white troops in India, and the Sepoys may well think that they are masters of the

situation. It would be a terrible time for everyone in India if they did take it into their heads to rise."

"I can't believe they would be mad enough to do that, Doctor; they have everything to lose by it, and nothing to gain, that is, individually; and we should be sure to win in the long run, even if we had to conquer back India foot by foot."

"That is all very well, Bathurst; we may know that we could do it, but they don't know it. They are ignorant altogether of the forces we could put into the field were there a necessity to make the effort. They naturally suppose that we can have but a few soldiers, for in all the battles we have fought there have always been two or three Sepoy regiments to one English. Besides, they consider themselves fully a match for us. They have fought by us side by side in every battlefield in India, and have done as well as we have. I don't see what they should rise for. I don't even see whose interest it is to bring a rising about, but I do know that if they rise we shall have a terrible time of it. Now I think we may as well turn in. You won't take another peg? Well, I shall see you in the morning. I shall be at the hospital by half past six, and shall be in at half past eight to breakfast. You have only got to shout for my man, and tell him whether you will have tea, coffee, or chocolate, any time you wake."

"I shall be about by six, Doctor; five is my general hour, but as it is past one now I dare say I shall be able to sleep on for an hour later, especially as there is nothing to do."

"You can go round the hospital with me, if you like," the Doctor said, "if you will promise not to make a dozen suggestions for the improvement of things in general."

Isobel Hannay came down to breakfast in high spirits upon the morning of the races. The dinner had gone off excellently. The dinner table, with its softly shaded lamps, and the Doctor's arrangements of the flowers, had been, she thought, perfection, and everything had passed off without a hitch. Her duties as a hostess had been much lighter than she had anticipated. Mrs. Hunter was a very pleasant, motherly woman, and the girls, who had only come out from England four months before, were fresh and unaffected, and the other people had all been pleasant and chatty.

Altogether, she felt that her first dinner party had been a great success.

She was looking forward now with pleasant anticipation to the day. She had seen but little of the natives so far, and she was now to see them at their best. Then she had never been present at a race, and everything would be new and exciting.

"Well, uncle, what time did you get in?" she asked, as she stepped out into the veranda to meet him on his return from early parade. "It was too bad of you and Mr. Hunter running off instead of waiting to chat things over."

"I have no doubt you ladies did plenty of that, my dear."

"Indeed, we didn't, uncle; you see they had had a very long drive, and Mrs. Hunter insisted on the girls going to bed directly you all went out, and as I could not sit up by myself, I had to go too."

"We were in at half past twelve," the Major said. "I can stand a good deal of smoke, but the club atmosphere was too thick for me."

"Everything went off very well yesterday, didn't it?" she asked.

"Very well, I thought, my dear, thanks to you and the Doctor and Rumzan."

"I had very little to do with it," she laughed.

"Well, I don't think you had much to do with the absolute arrangements, Isobel, but I thought you did very well as hostess; it seemed to me that there was a good deal of laughing and fun at your end of the table."

"Yes; you see we had the two Miss Hunters and the Doctor there, and Mr. Gregson, who took me in, turned out a very merry old gentleman."

"He would not be pleased if he heard you call him old, Isobel."

"Well, of course he is not absolutely old, but being a commissioner, and all that sort of thing, gives one the idea of being old; but there are the others."

And they went into the breakfast room.

The first race was set for two o'clock, and at half past one Mrs. Hunter's carriage, with the four ladies, arrived at the inclosure. The horses were taken out, and the carriage wheeled into its place, and then Isobel and the two Miss Hunters prepared to enjoy the scene.

It was a very gay one. The course was at present covered with a throng of natives in their bright colored garments, and mixed with them were the scarlet uniforms of the Sepoys of the 103d and other regiments. On the opposite side were a number of native vehicles of various descriptions, and some elephants with painted faces and gorgeous trappings, and with howdahs shaded by pavilions glittering with gilt and silver.

On either side of their vehicle a long line of carriages was soon formed up, and among these were several occupied by gayly dressed natives, whose rank gave them an entrance to the privileged inclosure. The carriages were placed three or four yards back from the rail, and the intervening space was filled with civilian and military officers, in white or light attire, and with pith helmet or puggaree; many others were on horseback behind the carriages.

"It is a bright scene, Miss Hannay," the Doctor said, coming up to the carriage.

"Wonderfully pretty, Doctor!"

"An English race course doesn't do after this, I can tell you. I went down to the Derby when I was at home, and such an assembly of riff raff I never saw before and never wish to see again."

"These people are more picturesque, Dr. Wade," Mrs. Hunter said, "but that is merely a question of garment; these people perhaps are no more trustworthy than those you met on the racecourse at home."

"I was speaking of them purely as a spectacle; individually I have no doubt one would be safer among the English roughs and betting men than among these placid looking natives. The one would pick your pockets of every penny you have got if they had the chance, the other would cut your throat with just as little compunction."

"You don't really mean that, Dr. Wade?" Isobel said.

"I do indeed, Miss Hannay; the Oude men are notorious brawlers and fighters, and I should say that the roughs of Cawnpore and Lucknow could give long odds to those

of any European city, and three out of four of those men you see walking about there would not only cut the throat of a European to obtain what money he had about him, but would do so without that incentive, upon the simple ground that he hated us."

"But why should he hate us, Doctor? he is none the worse off now than he was before we annexed the country."

"Well, yes, that class of man is worse off. In the old days every noble and Zemindar kept up a little army for the purpose of fighting his neighbors, just as our Barons used to do in the happy olden times people talk of. We have put down private fighting, and the consequence is these men's occupations are gone, and they flock to great towns and there live as best they can, ready to commit any crime whatever for the sum of a few rupees.

"There is Nana Sahib."

Isobel looked round and saw a carriage with a magnificent pair of horses, in harness almost covered with silver ornaments, drive up to a place that had been kept vacant for it. Four natives were sitting in it.

"That is the Rajah," the Doctor said, "the farther man, with that aigrette of diamonds in his turban. He is Oriental today, but sometimes he affects English fashions. He is a very cheery fellow, he keeps pretty well open house at Bithoor, has a billiard table, and a first rate cellar of wine, carriages for the use of guests—in fact, he does the thing really handsomely."

"Here is my opera glass," Mrs. Hunter said. Isobel looked long and fixedly at the Rajah.

"Well, what do you think of him?" the Doctor asked as she lowered it.

"I do not know what to think of him," she said; "his face does not tell me anything, it is like looking at a mask; but you see I am not accustomed to read brown men's characters, they are so different from Europeans, their faces all seem so impassive. I suppose it is the way in which they are brought up and trained."

"Ages of tyranny have made them supple and deceitful," the Doctor said, "but of course less so here than among the Bengallies, who, being naturally unwarlike and cowardly, have always been the slaves of some master or other.

"You evidently don't like the Nana, Miss Hannay. I am rather glad you don't, for he is no great favorite of mine, though he is so generally popular in the station here. I don't like him because it is not natural that he should be so friendly with us. We undoubtedly, according to native notions, robbed him of one of the finest positions in India by refusing to acknowledge his adoption. We have given him a princely revenue, but that, after all, is a mere trifle to what he would have had as Peishwa. Whatever virtues the natives of this country possess, the forgiving of injuries is not among them, and therefore I consider it to be altogether unnatural that he, having been, as he at any rate and everyone round him must consider, foully wronged, should go out of his way to affect our society and declare the warmest friendship for us."

The Rajah was laughing and talking with General Wheeler and the group of officers round his carriage.

Again Isobel raised the glasses. “You are right, Doctor,” she said, “I don't like him.”

“Well, there is one comfort, it doesn't matter whether he is sincere or not, he is powerless to hurt us. I don't see any motive for his pretending to be friendly if he is not, but I own that I should like him better if he sulked and would have nothing to say to us, as would be the natural course.”

The bell now began to ring, and the native police cleared the course. Major Hannay and Mr. Hunter, who had driven over in the buggy, came up and took their places on the box of the carriage.

“Here are cards of the races,” he said. “Now is the time, young ladies, to make your bets.”

“I don't know even the name of anyone in this first race,” Isobel said, looking at the card.

“That doesn't matter in the least, Miss Hannay,” Wilson, who had just come up to the side of the carriage, said. “There are six horses in; you pick out any one you like, and I will lay you five pairs of gloves to one against him.”

“But how am I to pick out when I don't know anything about them, Mr. Wilson? I might pick out one that had no chance at all.”

“Yes; but you might pick out the favorite, Miss Hannay, so that it is quite fair.”

“Don't you bet, Isobel,” her uncle said. “Let us have a sweepstake instead.”

“What is a sweepstake, uncle?”

There was a general laugh.

“Well, my dear, we each put in a rupee. There are six of us, and there are Wilson and the Doctor. You will go in, Doctor, won't you?”

“Yes; I don't mind throwing away a rupee, Major.”

“Very well, that makes eight. We put eight pieces of paper in the hat. Six of them have got the names of the horses on, the other two are blank. Then we each pull out one. Whoever draws the name of the horse that wins takes five rupees, the holder of the second two, and the third saves his stake. You shall hold the stakes, Mrs. Hunter. We have all confidence in you.”

The slips were drawn.

“My horse is Bruce,” Isobel said.

“There he is, Miss Hannay,” Wilson, who had drawn a blank, said, as a horse whose rider had a straw colored jacket and cap came cantering along the course. “This is a race for country horses—owners up. That means ridden by their owners. That is Pearson of the 13th Native Cavalry. He brought the horse over from Lucknow.”

“What chance has he?”

“I have not the least idea, Miss Hannay. I did not hear any betting on this race at all.”

“That is a nice horse, uncle,” Isobel said, as one with a rider in black jacket, with red cap, came past.

“That is Delhi. Yes, it has good action.”

“That is mine,” the eldest Miss Hunter said.

“The rider is a good looking young fellow,” the Doctor said, “and is perfectly conscious of it himself. Who is he, Wilson? I don't know him.”

“He is a civilian. Belongs to the public works, I think.”

The other horses now came along, and after short preliminary canters the start was made. To Isobel's disappointment her horse was never in the race, which Delhi looked like winning until near the post, when a rather common looking horse, which had been lying a short distance behind him, came up with a rush and won by a length.

“I don't call that fair,” Miss Hunter said, “when the other was first all along. I call that a mean way of winning, don't you, father?”

“Well, no, my dear. It was easy to see for the last quarter of a mile that the other was making what is called 'a waiting race' of it, and was only biding his time. There is nothing unfair in that, I fancy Delhi might have won if he had had a better jockey. His rider never really called upon him till it was too late. He was so thoroughly satisfied with himself and his position in the race that he was taken completely by surprise when Moonshee came suddenly up to him.”

“Well, I think it is very hard upon Delhi, father, after keeping ahead all the way and going so nicely. I think everyone ought to do their best from the first.”

“I fancy you are thinking, Miss Hunter,” the Doctor said, “quite as much that it is hard on you being beaten after your hopes had been raised, as it is upon the horse.”

“Perhaps I am, Doctor,” she admitted.

“I think it is much harder on me,” Isobel said. “You have had the satisfaction of thinking all along that your horse was going to win, while mine never gave me the least bit of hope.”

“The proper expression, Miss Hannay, is, your horse never flattered you.”

“Then I think it is a very silly expression, Mr. Wilson, because I don't see that flattery has anything to do with it.”

“Ah, here is Bathurst,” the Doctor said. “Where have you been, Bathurst? You slipped away from me just now.”

“I've just been talking to the Commissioner, Doctor. I have been trying to get him to see—”

“Why, you don't mean to say,” the Doctor broke in, “that you have been trying to cram your theories down his throat on a racecourse?”

“It was before the race began,” Bathurst said, “and I don't think the Commissioner has any more interest in racing than I have.”

“Not in racing,” the Doctor agreed, “but I expect he has an interest in enjoying himself generally, which is a thing you don't seem to have the most remote idea of. Here we are just getting up a sweepstake for the next race; hand over a rupee and try to get up an interest in it. Do try and forget your work till the race is over. I have brought you here to do you good. I regard you as my patient, and I give you my medical orders that you are to enjoy yourself.”

Bathurst laughed.

"I am enjoying myself in my way, Doctor."

"Who is that very pretty woman standing up in the next carriage but one?" Isobel asked.

"She comes from an out station," the Doctor repeated; "she is the wife of the Collector there, but I think she likes Cawnpore better than Boorgum; her name is Rose."

"Is that her husband talking to her?"

"No; that is a man in the Artillery here, I think."

"Yes," the Major said, "that is Harrowby, a good looking fellow, and quite a ladies' man."

"Do you mean a man ladies like, uncle, or who likes the society of ladies?"

"Both in his case, I should fancy," the Major said; "I believe he is considered one of the best looking men in the service."

"I don't see why he should be liked for that," Isobel said. "As far as I have seen, good looking men are not so pleasant as others. I suppose it is because they are conscious of their own good looks, and therefore do not take the trouble of being amusing. We had one very good looking man on board ship, and he was the dullest man to talk to on board. No, Doctor, I won't have any names mentioned, but I am right, am I not?"

"He was a dull specimen, certainly," the Doctor said, "but I think you are a little too sweeping."

"I don't mean all good looking men, of course, but men who what I call go in for being good looking. I don't know whether you know what I mean. What are you smiling at, Mr. Wilson?"

"I was thinking of two or three men I know to whom your description applies, Miss Hannay; but I must be going—they are just going to start the next race, and mine is the one after, so I must go and get ready. You wish me success, don't you?"

"I wish you all the success you deserve. I can't say more than that, can I?"

"I am afraid that is saying very little," he laughed. "I don't expect to win, but I do hope I shall beat Richards, because he is so cock sure he will beat me."

This wish was not gratified. The first and second horses made a close race of it; behind them by ten or twelve lengths came the other horses in a clump, Wilson and Richards singling themselves out in the last hundred yards and making a desperate race for the third place, for which they made a dead heat, amid great laughter from their comrades.

"That is excellent," Major Hannay said; "you won't see anything more amusing than that today, girls. The third horse simply saved his stake, so that as they will of course divide, they will have paid twenty-five rupees each for the pleasure of riding, and the point which of their tats is the fastest remains unsettled."

"Well, they beat a good many of them, Major Hannay," Miss Hunter said; "so they did not do so badly after all."

“Oh, no, they did not do so badly; but it will be a long time before they get over the chaff about their desperate struggle for the third place.”

The next two races attracted but slight attention from the occupants of the carriage. Most of their acquaintances in the station came up one after the other for a chat. There were many fresh introductions, and there was so much conversation and laughter that the girls had little time to attend to what was going on around them. Wilson and Richards both sauntered up after changing, and were the subject of much chaff as to their brilliant riding at the finish. Both were firm in the belief that the judge's finding was wrong, and each maintained stoutly he had beaten the other by a good head.

The race for Arabs turned out a very exciting one; the Rajah of Bithoor's horse was the favorite, on the strength of its performances elsewhere; but Prothero's horse was also well supported, especially in the regiment, for the Adjutant was a first class rider, and was in great request at all the principal meetings in Oude and the Northwest Provinces, while it was known that the Rajah's horse would be ridden by a native. The latter was dressed in strict racing costume, and had at the last races at Cawnpore won two or three cups for the Rajah.

But the general opinion among the officers of the station was that Prothero's coolness and nerve would tell. His Arab was certainly a fast one, and had won the previous year, both at Cawnpore and Lucknow; but the Rajah's new purchase had gained so high a reputation in the Western Presidency as fully to justify the odds of two to one laid on it, while four to one were offered against Prothero, and from eight to twenty to one against any other competitor.

Prothero had stopped to have a chat at the Hunters' carriage as he walked towards the dressing tent.

“Our hopes are all centered in you, Mr. Prothero,” Mr. Hunter said. “Miss Hannay has been wagering gloves in a frightfully reckless way.”

“I should advise you to hedge if you can, Miss Hannay,” he said. “I think there is no doubt that Mameluke is a good deal faster than Seila. I fancy he is pounds better. I only beat Vincent's horse by a head last year, and Mameluke gave him seven pounds, and beat him by three lengths at Poona. So I should strongly advise you to hedge your bets if you can.”

“What does he mean by hedge, uncle?”

“To hedge is to bet the other way, so that one bet cancels the other.”

“Oh, I shan't do that,” she said; “I have enough money to pay my bets if I lose.”

“Do you mean to say you mean to pay your bets if you lose, Miss Hannay?” the Doctor asked incredulously.

“Of course I do,” she said indignantly. “You don't suppose I intend to take the gloves if I win, and not to pay if I lose?”

“It is not altogether an uncommon practice among ladies,” the Doctor said, “when they bet against gentlemen. I believe that when they wager against each other, which they do not often do, they are strictly honest, but that otherwise their memories are apt to fail them altogether.”

“That is a libel, Mrs. Hunter, is it not?”

"Not altogether, I think. Of course many ladies do pay their bets when they lose, but others certainly do not."

"Then I call it very mean," Isobel said earnestly. "Why, it is as bad as asking anyone to make you a present of so many pairs of gloves in case a certain horse wins."

"It comes a good deal to the same thing," Mrs. Hunter admitted, "but to a certain extent it is a recognized custom; it is a sort of tribute that is exacted at race time, just as in France every lady expects a present from every gentleman of her acquaintance on New Year's Day."

"I wouldn't bet if I didn't mean to pay honestly," Isobel said. "And if Mr. Prothero doesn't win, my debts will all be honorably discharged."

There was a hush of expectation in the crowd when the ten horses whose numbers were up went down to the starting point, a quarter of a mile from the stand. They were to pass it, make the circuit, and finish there, the race being two miles. The interest of the natives was enlisted by the fact that Nana Sahib was running a horse, while the hopes of the occupants of the inclosure rested principally on Seila.

The flag fell to a good start; but when the horses came along Isobel saw with surprise that the dark blue of the Rajah and the Adjutant's scarlet and white were both in the rear of the group. Soon afterwards the scarlet seemed to be making its way through the horses, and was speedily leading them.

"Prothero is making the running with a vengeance," the Major said. "That is not like his usual tactics, Doctor."

"I fancy he knows what he is doing," the Doctor replied. "He saw that Mameluke's rider was going to make a waiting race of it, and as the horse has certainly the turn of speed on him, he is trying other tactics. They are passing the mile post now, and Prothero is twelve or fourteen lengths ahead. There, Mameluke is going through his horses; his rider is beginning to get nervous at the lead Prothero has got, and he can't stand it any longer. He ought to have waited for another half mile. You will see, Prothero will win after all. Seila can stay, there is no doubt about that."

A roar of satisfaction rose from the mass of natives on the other side of the inclosure as Mameluke was seen to leave the group of horses and gradually to gain upon Seila.

"Oh, he will catch him, uncle!" Isobel said, tearing her handkerchief in her excitement.

The Major was watching the horses through his field glass.

"Never mind his catching him," he said; "Prothero is riding quietly and steadily. Seila is doing nearly her best, but he is not hurrying her, while the fool on Mameluke is bustling the horse as if he had only a hundred yards further to go."

The horses were nearing the point at which they had started, when a shout from the crowd proclaimed that the blue jacket had come up to and passed the scarlet. Slowly it forged ahead until it was two lengths in advance, for a few strides their relative positions remained unaltered, then there was a shout from the carriages; scarlet was coming up again. Mameluke's rider glanced over his shoulder, and began to use the

whip. For a few strides the horse widened the gap again, but Prothero still sat quiet and unmoved. Just as they reached the end of the line of carriages, Seila again began to close up.

"Seila wins! Seila wins!" the officers shouted.

But it seemed to Isobel that this was well nigh impossible, but foot by foot the mare came up, and as they passed the Hunters' carriage her head was in advance.

In spite of the desperate efforts of the rider of Mameluke, another hundred yards and they passed the winning post, Seila a length ahead.

CHAPTER VII.

The exultation of the officers of the 103d over Seila's victory was great. They had all backed her, relying upon Prothero's riding, but although his success was generally popular among the Europeans at the station, many had lost considerable sums by their confidence in Mameluke's speed.

Isobel sat down feeling quite faint from the excitement.

"I did not think I could have been so excited over a race between two horses," she said to Mrs. Hunter; "it was not the bets, I never even thought about them—it was just because I wanted to see Mr. Prothero's horse win. I never understood before why people should take such an interest in horse racing, but I quite understand now."

"What is your size, Miss Hannay?" Wilson asked.

"Oh, I don't care anything about the gloves, Mr. Wilson; I am sorry I bet now."

"You needn't feel any compunction in taking them from me or from any of us, Miss Hannay; we have all won over Seila; the regiment will have to give a ball on the strength of it. I only put on a hundred rupees, and so have won four hundred, but most of them have won ever so much more than that; and all I have lost is four pair of gloves to you, and four to Mrs. Doolan, and four to Mrs. Prothero—a dozen in all. Which do you take, white or cream, and what is your size?"

"Six and a half, cream."

"All right, Miss Hannay. The Nana must have lost a good lot of money; he has been backing his horse with everyone who would lay against it. However, it won't make any difference to him, and it is always a satisfaction when the loss comes on someone to whom it doesn't matter a bit. I think the regiment ought to give a dinner to Prothero, Major; it was entirely his riding that did it; he hustled that nigger on Mameluke splendidly. If the fellow had waited till within half a mile of home he would have won to a certainty; I never saw anything better."

"Well, Miss Hannay, what do you think of a horse race?" Bathurst, who had only remained a few minutes at the carriage, asked, as he strolled up again. "You said yesterday that you had never seen one."

"I am a little ashamed to say I was very much excited over it, Mr. Bathurst. You have not lost, I hope? You are looking" and she stopped.

"Shaky?" he said. "Yes; I feel shaky. I had not a penny on the race, for though the Doctor made me put into a sweep last night at the club, I drew a blank; but the shouting and excitement at the finish seemed to take my breath away, and I felt quite faint."

"That is just how I felt; I did not know men felt like that. They don't generally seem to know what nerves are."

"I wish I didn't; it is a great nuisance. The Doctor tries to persuade me that it is the effect of overwork, but I have always been so from a child, and I can't get over it."

"You don't look nervous, Mr. Bathurst."

"No; when a man is a fair size, and looks bronzed and healthy, no one will give him credit for being nervous. I would give a very great deal if I could get over it."

"I don't see that it matters much one way or the other, Mr. Bathurst."

"I can assure you that it does. I regard it as being a most serious misfortune."

Isobel was a little surprised at the earnestness with which he spoke.

"I should not have thought that," she said quietly; "but I can understand that it is disagreeable for a man to feel nervous, simply, I suppose, because it is regarded as a feminine quality; but I think a good many men are nervous. We had several entertainments on board the ship coming out, and it was funny to see how many great strong men broke down, especially those who had to make speeches."

"I am not nervous in that way," Bathurst said, with a laugh. "My pet horror is noise; thunder prostrates me completely, and in fact all noises, especially any sharp, sudden sound, affect me. I really find it a great nuisance. I fancy a woman with nerves considers herself as a martyr, and deserving of all pity and sympathy. It is almost a fashionable complaint, and she is a little proud of it; but a man ought to have his nerves in good order, and as much as that is expected of him unless he is a feeble little body. There is the bell for the next race."

"Are you going to bet on this race again, Miss Hannay?" Wilson said, coming up.

"No, Mr. Wilson. I have done my first and last bit of gambling. I don't think it is nice, ladies betting, after all, and if there were a hospital here I should order you to send the money the gloves will cost you to it as conscience money, and then perhaps you might follow my example with your winnings."

"My conscience is not moved in any way," he laughed; "when it is I will look out for a deserving charity. Well, if you won't bet I must see if I can make a small investment somewhere else."

"I shall see you at the ball, of course?" Isobel said, turning to Mr. Bathurst, as Wilson left the carriage.

"No, I think not. Balls are altogether out of my line, and as there is always a superabundance of men at such affairs here, there is no sense of duty about it."

"What is your line, Mr. Bathurst?"

"I am afraid I have none, Miss Hannay. The fact is, there is really more work to be done than one can get through. When you get to know the natives well you cannot help liking them and longing to do them some good if they would but let you, but it is so difficult to get them to take up new ideas. Their religion, with all its customs and ceremonies, seems designed expressly to bar out all improvements. Except in the case of abolishing Suttee, we have scarcely weaned them from one of their observances; and even now, in spite of our efforts, widows occasionally immolate themselves, and that with the general approval.

"I wish I had an army of ten thousand English ladies all speaking the language well to go about among the women and make friends with them; there would be more good done in that way than by all the officials in India. They might not be able to emancipate themselves from all their restrictions, but they might influence their

children, and in time pave the way for a moral revolution. But it is ridiculous," he said, breaking off suddenly, "my talking like this here, but you see it is what you call my line, my hobby, if you like; but when one sees this hard working, patient, gentle people making their lot so much harder than it need be by their customs and observances one longs to force them even against their own will to burst their bonds."

Dr. Wade came up at this moment and caught the last word or two.

"You are incorrigible, Bathurst. Miss Hannay, I warn you that this man is a monomaniac. I drag him away from his work, and here he is discoursing with you on reform just as a race is going to start. You may imagine, my dear, what a thorn he is in the side of the bigwigs. You have heard of Talleyrand's advice to a young official, 'Above all things, no zeal.' Go away, Bathurst; Miss Hannay wants to see the race, and even if she doesn't she is powerless to assist you in your crusade."

Bathurst laughed and drew off.

"That is too bad, Doctor. I was very interested. I like to talk to people who can think of something besides races and balls and the gossip of the station."

"Yes, in reason, in reason, my dear; but there is a medium in all things. I have no doubt Bathurst will be quite happy some time or other to give you his full views on child marriages, and the remarriages of widows, and female education, and the land settlement, and a score of other questions, but for this a few weeks of perfect leisure will be required. Seriously, you know that I think Bathurst one of the finest young fellows in the service, but his very earnestness injures both his prospects and his utility. The officials have a horror of enthusiasm; they like the cut and dried subordinate who does his duty conscientiously, and does not trouble his head about anything but carrying out the regulations laid down for him.

"Theoretically I agree with most of Bathurst's views, practically I see that a score of officials like him would excite a revolution throughout a whole province. In India, of all places in the world, the maxim festina lente—go slow—is applicable. You have the prejudices of a couple of thousand years against change. The people of all things are jealous of the slightest appearance of interference with their customs. The change will no doubt come in time, but it must come gradually, and must be the work of the natives themselves and not of us. To try to hasten that time would be but to defer it. Now, child, there is the bell; now just attend to the business in hand."

"Very well, Doctor, I will obey your orders, but it is only fair to say that Mr. Bathurst's remarks are only in answer to something I said," and Isobel turned to watch the race, but with an interest less ardent than she had before felt.

Isobel's character was an essentially earnest one, and her life up to the day of her departure to India had been one of few pleasures. She had enjoyed the change and had entered heartily into it, and she was as yet by no means tired of it, but she had upon her arrival at Cawnpore been a little disappointed that there was no definite work for her to perform, and had already begun to feel that a time would come when she would want something more than gossip and amusements and the light talk of the officers of her acquaintance to fill her life.

She had as yet no distinct interest of her own, and Bathurst's earnestness had struck a cord in her own nature and seemed to open a wide area for thought. She put it aside

now and chatted gayly with the Hunters and those who came up to the carriage, but it came back to her as she sat in her room before going to bed.

Up till now she had not heard a remark since she had been in Cawnpore that might not have been spoken had the cantonments there been the whole of India, except that persons at other stations were mentioned. The vast, seething native population were no more alluded to than if they were a world apart. Bathurst's words had for the first time brought home to her the reality of their existence, and that around this little group of English men and women lay a vast population, with their joys and sorrows and sufferings.

At breakfast she surprised Mrs. Hunter by asking a variety of questions as to native customs. "I suppose you have often been in the Zenanas, Mrs. Hunter?"

"Not often, my dear. I have been in some of them, and very depressing it is to see how childish and ignorant the women are."

"Can nothing be done for them, Mrs. Hunter?"

"Very little. In time I suppose there will be schools for girls, but you see they marry so young that it is difficult to get at them."

"How young do they marry?"

"They are betrothed, although it has all the force of a marriage, as infants, and a girl can be a widow at two or three years old; and so, poor little thing, she remains to the end of her life in a position little better than that of a servant in her husband's family. Really they are married at ten or eleven."

Isobel looked amazed at this her first insight into native life. Mrs. Hunter smiled.

"I heard Mr. Bathurst saying something to you about it yesterday, Miss Hannay. He is an enthusiast; we like him very much, but we don't see much of him."

"You must beware of him, Miss Hannay," Mr. Hunter said, "or he will inoculate you with some of his fads. I do not say that he is not right, but he sees the immensity of the need for change, but does not see fully the immensity of the difficulty in bringing it about."

"There is no fear of his inoculating me; that is to say of setting me to work, for what could one woman do?"

"Nothing, my dear," her uncle said; "if all the white women in India threw themselves into the work, they could do little. The natives are too jealous of what they consider intruders; the Parsees are about the only progressive people. While ladies are welcome enough when they pay a visit of ceremony to the Zenana of a native, if they were to try to teach their wives to be discontented with their lots—for that is what it would be—they would be no longer welcome. Schools are being established, but at present these are but a drop in the ocean. Still, the work does go on, and in time something will be done. It is of no use bothering yourself about it, Isobel; it is best to take matters as you find them."

Isobel made no answer, but she was much disappointed when Dr. Wade, dropping in to tiffin, said his guest had started two hours before for Deennugghur. He had a batch of letters and reports from his native clerk, and there was something or other that he said he must see to at once.

"He begged me to say, Major, that he was very sorry to go off without saying goodby, but he hoped to be in Cawnpore before long. I own that that part of the message astonished me, knowing as I do what difficulty there is in getting him out of his shell. He and I became great chums when I was over at Deennugghur two years ago, and the young fellow is not given to making friends. However, as he is not the man to say a thing without meaning it, I suppose he intends to come over again. He knows there is always a bed for him in my place."

"We see very little of him," Mary Hunter said; "he is always away on horseback all day. Sometimes he comes in the evening when we are quite alone, but he will never stay long. He always excuses himself on the ground that he has a report to write or something of that sort. Amy and I call him 'Timon of Athens.'"

"There is nothing of Timon about him," the Doctor remarked dogmatically. "That is the way with you young ladies—you think that a man's first business in life is to be dancing attendance on you. Bathurst looks at life seriously, and no wonder, going about as he does among the natives and listening to their stories and complaints. He puts his hand to the plow, and does not turn to the right or left."

"Still, Doctor, you must allow," Mrs. Hunter said gravely, "that Mr. Bathurst is not like most other men."

"Certainly not," the Doctor remarked. "He takes no interest in sport of any kind; he does not care for society; he very rarely goes to the club, and never touches a card when he does; and yet he is the sort of man one would think would throw himself into what is going on. He is a strong, active, healthy man, whom one would expect to excel in all sorts of sports; he is certainly good looking; he talks extremely well, and is, I should say, very well read and intelligent."

"He can be very amusing when he likes, Doctor. Once or twice when he has been with us he has seemed to forget himself, as it were, and was full of fun and life. You must allow that it is a little singular that a man like this should altogether avoid society, and night and day be absorbed in his work."

"I have thought sometimes," Mr. Hunter said, "that Bathurst must have had some great trouble in his life. Of what nature I can, of course, form no idea. He was little more than twenty when he came out here, so I should say that it was hardly a love affair."

"That is always the way, Hunter. If a man goes his own way, and that way does not happen to be the way of the mess, it is supposed that he must have had trouble of some sort. As Bathurst is the son of a distinguished soldier, and is now the owner of a fine property at home, I don't see what trouble he can have had. He may possibly, for anything I know, have had some boyish love affairs, but I don't think he is the sort of man to allow his whole life to be affected by any foolery of that sort. He is simply an enthusiast.

"It is good for mankind that there should be some enthusiasts. I grant that it would be an unpleasant world if we were all enthusiasts, but the sight of a man like him throwing his whole life and energy into his work, and wearing himself out trying to lessen the evils he sees around him, ought to do good to us all. Look at these boys," and he apostrophized Wilson and Richards, as they appeared together at the door.

“What do they think of but amusing themselves and shirking their duties as far as possible?”

“Oh, I say, Doctor,” Wilson exclaimed, astonished at this sudden attack, “what are you pitching into us like that for? That is not fair, is it, Major? We amuse ourselves, of course, when there is nothing else to do, but I am sure we don't shirk our work. You don't want us to spend our spare time in reading Greek, I suppose?”

“No; but you might spend some of it very profitably in learning some of these native languages,” the Doctor said. “I don't believe that you know above a dozen native words now. You can shout for brandy and water, and for a light for your cigars, but I fancy that that is about the extent of it.”

“We are going to have a moonshee next week, Doctor,” Wilson said, a little crestfallen, “and a horrid nuisance it will be.”

“That is only because you are obliged to pass in the vernacular, Wilson. So you need not take any credit to yourself on that account.”

“Doctor, you are in one of your worst possible tempers this morning,” Isobel said. “You snap at us all round. You are quite intolerable this morning.”

“I am rather put out by Bathurst running away in this fashion, Miss Hannay. I had made up my mind that he would stop three or four days longer, and it is pleasant to have someone who can talk and think about something besides horses and balls. But I will go away; I don't want to be the disturbing element; and I have no doubt that Richards is burning to tell you the odds on some of the horses today.”

“Shall we see you on the racecourse, Doctor?” the Major asked, as the Doctor moved towards the door.

“You will not, Major; one day is enough for me. If they would get up a donkey race confined strictly to the subalterns of the station, I might take the trouble to go and look at it.”

“The Doctor is in great form today,” Wilson said good temperedly, after the laugh which followed the Doctor's exit had subsided; “and I am sure we did nothing to provoke him.”

“You got into his line of fire, Wilson,” the Major said; “he is explosive this morning, and has been giving it to us all round. However, nobody minds what the Doctor says; his bark is very bad, but he has no bite. Wait till you are down with the fever, and you will find him devote himself to you as if he were your father.”

“He is one of the kindest men in the world,” Isobel agreed warmly, thereby effectually silencing Richards, who had just pulled up his shirt collar preparatory to a sarcastic utterance respecting him.

Isobel, indeed, was in full sympathy with the Doctor, for she, too, was disappointed at Bathurst's sudden departure. She had looked forward to learning a good deal from him about the native customs and ways, and had intended to have a long talk with him. She was perhaps, too, more interested generally in the man himself than she would have been willing to admit.

That evening the party went to an entertainment at Bithoor. Isobel and the girls were delighted with the illuminations of the gardens and with the palace itself, with its

mixture of Eastern splendor and European luxury. But Isobel did not altogether enjoy the evening.

"I suppose I ought to congratulate you on your success last night, Isobel," Dr. Wade said, when he dropped in after breakfast. "Everyone has been telling me that the Rajah paid you the greatest attention, and that there is the fiercest gnashing of teeth among what must now be called the ex-queens of the station."

"I don't know who told you such nonsense, Doctor," Isobel replied hotly. "The Rajah quite spoilt the evening for me. I have been telling Mrs. Hunter so. If we had not been in his own house, I should have told him that I should enjoy the evening very much more if he would leave me alone and let me go about and look quietly at the place and the gardens, which are really beautiful. No doubt he is pleasant enough, and I suppose I ought to have felt flattered at his walking about with me and so on, but I am sure I did not. What pleasure does he suppose an English girl can have in listening to elaborate compliments from a man as yellow as a guinea?"

"Think of his wealth, my dear."

"What difference does his wealth make?" Isobel said. "As far as I have seen, I do not think that rich Englishmen are more amusing than others, and if he had all the wealth of India, that would not improve Nana Sahib in my eyes. There are women, of course, who do think a great deal about money, and who will even marry men for it, but even women who would do that could not, I should think, care anything about the wealth of a Hindoo they cannot marry."

"Not directly, my dear," Mrs. Hunter said; "but people may be flattered with the notice and admiration of a person of importance and great wealth, even if he is a Hindoo."

"Besides," the Doctor put in, "the Rajah is considered to be a great connoisseur of English beauty, and has frequently expressed his deep regret that his religion prevented his marrying an English lady."

"I should be very sorry for the English girl who would marry him, religion or not."

"I think you are rather hard upon the Nana, Isobel," the Major said. "He is a general favorite; he is open handed and liberal; very fond of entertaining; a great admirer of us as a nation. He is a wonderfully well read man for a Hindoo, can talk upon almost every subject, and is really a pleasant fellow."

"I don't like him; I don't like him at all," Isobel said positively.

"Ah, that is only because you thought he made you a little more conspicuous than you liked by his attentions to you, Isobel."

"No, indeed, uncle; that was very silly and ridiculous, but I did not like the man himself, putting that aside altogether. It was like talking to a man with a mask on: it gave me a creepy feeling. It did not seem to me that one single word he said was sincere, but that he was acting; and over and over again as he was talking I said to myself, 'What is this man really like? I know he is not the least bit in the world what he pretends to be. But what is the reality?' I felt just the same as I should if I had one of those great snakes they bring to our veranda coiling round me. The creature might look quiet enough, but I should know that if it were to tighten it would crush me in a moment."

The Major and Mrs. Hunter both laughed at her earnestness, but the Doctor said gravely, “Is that really how you felt about him when he was talking to you, Miss Hannay? I am sorry to hear you say that. I own that my opinion has been that of everyone here, that the Rajah is a good fellow and a firm friend of the Europeans, and my only doubt has arisen from the fact that it was unnatural he should like us when he has considerable grounds for grievance against us. We have always relied upon his influence, which is great among his countrymen, being thrown entirely into the scale on our side if any trouble should ever arise; but I own that what you say makes me doubt him. I would always take the opinion of a dog or a child about anyone in preference to my own.”

“You are not very complimentary, Doctor,” Isobel laughed.

“Well, my dear, a young girl who has not mixed much in the world and had her instincts blunted is in that respect very much like a child. She may be deceived, and constantly is deceived where her heart is concerned, and is liable to be taken in by any plausible scoundrel; but where her heart is not concerned her instincts are true. When I see children and dogs stick to a man I am convinced that he is all right, though I may not personally have taken to him. When I see a dog put his tail between his legs and decline to accept the advances of a man, and when I see children slip away from him as soon as they can, I distrust him at once, however pleasant a fellow he may be. As the Rajah, from all I heard, certainly laid himself out to be agreeable to you last night, and yet in spite of that you felt as you say you did about him, I am bound to say that without at once admitting that my impressions about him were wrong, I consider that there is good ground for thinking the matter over again.”

“What nonsense, Doctor,” the Major laughed. “Everyone here has known the Rajah for years. He is a most popular man, everyone likes him, among the ladies especially he is a great favorite. It is ridiculous to suggest that everyone should have been wrong about him, merely because Isobel takes a prejudice against him, and that as far as I can see is simply because his admiration for her was somewhat marked.”

Isobel gave a little shudder. “Don't talk about admiration, uncle; that is not the word for it; I don't know what it was like. They say snakes fascinate birds before they eat them by fixing their eyes upon them. I should say it was something of that sort of look.”

“Well, my dear, he is not going to eat you, that is certain,” the Major said; “and I can assure you that his approbation goes for a great deal here, and that after this you will go up several pegs in Cawnpore society.”

Isobel tossed her head. “Then I am sorry for Cawnpore society; it is a matter of entire indifference to me whether I go up or down in its opinion.”

A fortnight later the Nana gave another entertainment. A good deal to her uncle's vexation, Isobel refused to go when the time came.

“But what am I to say, my dear?” he asked in some perplexity.

“You can say anything you like, uncle; you can say that I am feeling the heat and have got a bad headache, which is true; or you can say that I don't care for gayety, which is also true. I shall be very much more comfortable and happy at home by myself.”

The Hunters had by this time returned to Deennugghur, and the Major drove over to Bithoor accompanied only by Dr. Wade. He was rather surprised when the Doctor said he would go, as it was very seldom that he went out to such entertainments.

"I am not going to amuse myself, Major; I want to have a good look at the Nana again; I am not comfortable since Isobel gave us her opinion of him. He is an important personage, and if there is any truth in these rumors about disaffection among the Sepoys his friendship may be of the greatest assistance to us."

So the Doctor was with Major Hannay when the latter made his excuses for Isobel's absence on the ground that she was not feeling very well.

The Nana expressed great regret at the news, and said that with the Major's permission he would call in the morning to inquire after Miss Hannay's health.

"He did not like it," the Doctor said, when they had strolled away together. "He was very civil and polite, but I could see that he was savage. I fancy he got up this fete principally in her honor. It is not often he has two so close together."

"Oh, that is nonsense, Doctor."

"I don't think so. He has done the same sort of thing several times before, when he has been specially taken by some fresh face from England."

Others besides the Doctor remarked that the Rajah was not quite himself that evening. He was courteous and polite to his guests, but he was irritable with his own people, and something had evidently gone wrong with him.

The next day he called at the Major's. The latter had not told Isobel of his intention, for he guessed that had he done so she would have gone across to Mrs. Doolan or one of her lady friends, and she was sitting in the veranda with him and young Wilson when the carriage drove up.

"I was so sorry to hear that you were unwell, Miss Hannay," the Nana said courteously. "It was a great disappointment to me that you were unable to accompany your uncle last night."

"I have been feeling the heat the last few days," Isobel said quietly, "and, indeed, I do not care much about going out in such hot weather as this. I have not been accustomed to much society in England, and the crowd and the heat and the lights make my head ache."

"You look the picture of health, Miss Hannay, but I know that it is trying for Englishwomen when they first come into our climate; it is always a great pleasure to me to receive English ladies at Bithoor. I hope upon the next occasion you will be able to come."

"I am much obliged to your highness," she said, "but it would be a truer kindness to let me stay quietly at home."

"But that is selfish of you, Miss Hannay. You should think a little of the pleasure of others as well as your own."

"I am not conceited enough to suppose that it could make any difference to other people's pleasure whether I am at a party or not," Isobel said. "I suppose you mean that as a compliment, Rajah, but I am not accustomed to compliments, and don't like them."

“You will have to learn to become accustomed to compliments, Miss Hannay,” the Rajah said, with a smile; and then turning to the Doctor, began to tell him of a tiger that had been doing a great deal of harm at a village some thirty miles away, and offered to send some elephants over to organize a hunt for him if he liked, an invitation that the Doctor promptly accepted.

The visit was but a short one. The Rajah soon took his leave.

“You are wrong altogether, Isobel,” the Doctor said. “I have returned to my conviction that the Rajah is a first rate fellow.”

“That is just because he offered you some shooting, Doctor,” Isobel said indignantly. “I thought better of you than to suppose that you could be bought over so easily as that.”

“She had you there, Doctor,” the Major laughed. “However, I am glad that you will no longer be backing her in her fancies.”

“Why did you accept his invitation for us to go over and lunch there, uncle?” Isobel asked, in a tone of annoyance.

“Because there was no reason in the world why we should refuse, my dear. He very often has luncheon parties, and after that he will show you over the place, and exhibit his jewels and curiosities. He said there would be other ladies there, and I have no doubt we shall have a very pleasant day.”

Even Isobel was obliged to confess that the visit was a pleasant one. The Nana had asked Mrs. Cromarty, her daughters, and most of the other ladies of the regiment, with their husbands. The lunch was a banquet, and after it was over the parties were taken round the place, paid a visit to the Zenana, inspected the gardens and stables, and were driven through the park. The Nana saw that Isobel objected to be particularly noticed, and had the tact to make his attentions so general that even she could find no fault with him.

On the drive back she admitted to her uncle that she had enjoyed her visit very much, and that the Rajah's manners were those of a perfect gentleman.

“But mind, uncle,” she said, “I do not retract my opinion. What the Rajah really is I don't pretend to know, but I am quite sure that the character of a smiling host is not his real one, and that for some reason or other he is simply playing a part.”

“I had no idea that you were such a prejudiced little woman,” the Major said, somewhat vexed; “but as it is no use arguing with you we had better drop the subject.”

For the next month Cawnpore suffered a little from the reaction after the gayety of the races, but there was no lack of topics of conversation, for the rumors of disaffection among the troops gained in strength, and although nothing positive was known, and everyone scoffed at the notion of any serious trouble, the subject was so important a one that little else was talked of whenever parties of the ladies got together.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I have some bad news, Isobel. At least I suppose you will consider it bad news," the Major said one morning, when he returned from the orderly room. "You heard me say that four companies were going to relieve those at Deennugghur. Well, I am going with them. It seems that the General is of opinion that in the present unsettled state of affairs there ought to be a field officer in command there, so I have to go. For myself I don't mind, but you will find it dull in a small station like that, after the gayeties of Cawnpore."

"I don't mind a bit, uncle, in that respect. I don't think I care much for gayeties, but of course the move will be a trouble. We have everything so nice here, it will be horrid having to leave it all. How long will it be for?"

"Six months, in the ordinary state of things, though of course something may occur to bring us in before that. Still, the change won't be as much trouble as you fancy. When we get there you can stay for two or three days with the Hunters till we have got the things to rights. There is one thing that you will be pleased about. Wade is going with us, at any rate for the present; you are a favorite of his, you know, and I think that is the principal reason for his going. At any rate, when he heard I was in orders, he told the Colonel that, as there was no illness in the regiment, he thought, if he did not object, he would change places for a bit with M'Alaster, the assistant surgeon, who has been with the detachment at Deennugghur for the last year, so as to give him a turn of duty at Cawnpore, and do a little shikaring himself. There is more jungle and better shooting round Deennugghur than there is here, and you know the Doctor is an enthusiast that way. Of course, the Colonel agreed at once."

"I am very glad of that, uncle; it won't seem like going to a strange place if we have him with us, and the Hunters there, and I suppose three or four officers of the regiment. Who are going?"

"Both your boys," the Major laughed, "and Doolan and Rintoul."

"When do we go, uncle?"

"Next Monday. I shall get somebody to put us up from Friday, and that morning we will get everything dismantled here, and send them off by bullock carts with the servants to Deennugghur, so that they will be there by Monday morning. I will write to Hunter to pick us out the best of the empty bungalows, and see that our fellows get to work to clean the place up as soon as they arrive. We shall be two days on the march, and things will be pretty forward by the time we get there."

"And where shall we sleep on the march?"

"In tents, my dear, and very comfortable you will find them. Rumzan will go with us, and you will find everything go on as smoothly as if you were here. Tent life in India is very pleasant. Next year, in the cool season, we will do an excursion somewhere, and I am sure you will find it delightful: they don't know anything about the capabilities of tents at home."

"Then do I quite understand, uncle, that all I have got to do is to make a round of calls to say goodby to everyone?"

"That is all. You will find a lot of my cards in one of those pigeon holes; you may as well drop one wherever you go. Shall I order a carriage from Framjee's for today?"

"No, I think not, uncle; I will go round to our own bungalows first, and hear what Mrs. Doolan and the others think about it."

At Mrs. Doolan's Isobel found quite an assembly. Mrs. Rintoul had come in almost in tears, and the two young lieutenants had dropped in with Captain Doolan, while one or two other officers had come round to commiserate with Mrs. Doolan.

"Another victim," the latter said, as Isobel entered.

"You look too cheerful, Miss Hannay. I find that we are expected to wear sad countenances at our approaching banishment."

"Are we, Mrs. Doolan? It seems to me that it won't make very much difference to us."

"Not make any difference, Miss Hannay!" Captain Doolan said. "Why, Deennugghur is one of the dullest little stations on this side of India!"

"What do you mean by dull, Captain Doolan?"

"Why, there are only about six white residents there besides the troops. Of course, as four companies are going instead of one, it will make a difference; but there will be no gayety, no excitement, and really nothing to do."

"As for the gayety, I am sure I shall not regret it, Captain Doolan; besides, our gayeties are pretty well over, except, of course, dinner parties, and it is getting very hot for them. We shall get off having to go out in the heat of the day to make calls, which seem to me terrible afflictions, and I think with a small party it ought to be very sociable and pleasant. As for excitement, I hear that there is much better shooting there than there is here. Mrs. Hunter was telling me that they have had some tigers that have been very troublesome round there, and you will all have an opportunity of showing your skill and bravery. I know that Mr. Richards and Mr. Wilson are burning to distinguish themselves."

"It would be great fun to shoot a tiger," Richards said. "When I came out to India I thought there was going to be lots of tiger shooting, and I bought a rifle on purpose, but I have never had a chance yet. Yes, we will certainly get up a tiger hunt, won't we, Wilson? You will tell us how to set about it, won't you, Doolan?"

"I don't shoot," Captain Doolan said; "and if I wanted to, I am not sure that my wife would give me leave."

"Certainly I would not," Mrs. Doolan said promptly. "Married men have no right to run into unnecessary danger."

"Dr. Wade will be able to put you in the way, Mr. Richards," Isobel said.

"Dr. Wade!" Mrs. Rintoul exclaimed. "You don't mean to say, Miss Hannay, that he is going with us?"

"Yes, he is going for a time, Mrs. Rintoul. My uncle told me that he had applied to go with the detachment, and that the surgeon there would come back to the regiment while he is away."

“I do call that hard,” Mrs. Rintoul said. “The only thing I was glad we were going for was that we should be under Mr. M'Alaster, who is very pleasant, and quite understands my case, while Dr. Wade does not seem to understand it at all, and is always so very brusque and unsympathetic.”

There was a general smile.

“Wade is worth a hundred of M'Alaster,” Captain Roberts said. “There is not a man out here I would rather trust myself to if I were ill. He is an awfully good fellow, too, all round, though he may be, as you say, a little brusque in manner.”

“I call him a downright bear,” Mrs. Rintoul said angrily. “Why, only last week he told me that if I would get up two hours earlier and go for a brisk walk just after sunrise, and give up eating meat at tiffin, and confine myself to two or three dishes at dinner, I should be perfectly well in the course of a month; just as if I was in the habit of overeating myself, when I have scarcely the appetite of a sparrow. I told Captain Rintoul afterwards that I must consult someone else, for that really I could not bear such rudeness.”

“I am afraid we are all against you, Mrs. Rintoul,” Mrs. Doolan said, with a little shake of her head at Isobel, who was, she saw, going to speak out strongly. “No one could possibly be kinder than he is when anyone is really ill. I mean seriously ill,” she added, as Mrs. Rintoul drew herself up indignantly. “I shall never forget how attentive he was to the children when they were down with fever just before he went to England. He missed his ship and lost a month of his leave because he would not go away till they were out of danger, and there are very few men who would have done that. I shall never forget his kindness. And now let us talk of something else. You will have to establish a little mess on your own account, Mr. Wilson, as both the Captains are married men, and the Major has also an incumbrance.”

“Yes, it will be horribly dull, Mrs. Doolan. Richards and I have quarters together here, and, of course, it will be the same there, and I am sure I don't know what we shall find to talk about when we come to have to mess together. Of course, here, there are the messroom and the club, and so we get on very well, but to be together always will be awful.”

“You will really have to take to reading or something of that sort, Mr. Wilson,” Isobel laughed.

“I always do read the Field, Miss Hannay, but that won't last for a whole week, you know; and there is no billiard table, and no racquet court, or anything else at Deennugghur, and one cannot always be riding about the country.”

“We shall all have to take pity on you as much as we can,” Mrs. Doolan said. “I must say that, like Miss Hannay, I shall not object to the change.”

“I think it is all very well for you, Mrs. Doolan; you have children.”

“Well, Mr. Richards, I will let you both, as a great treat, take them out for a walk sometimes of a morning instead of their going with the ayah. That will make a change for you.”

There was a general laugh, but Wilson said manfully, “Very well, Mrs. Doolan; I am very fond of youngsters, and I should like to take, anyhow, the two eldest out sometimes. I don't think I should make much hand with the other two, but perhaps

Richards would like to come in and amuse them while we are out; he is just the fellow for young ones."

There was another laugh, in which Richards joined. "I could carry them about on my back, and pretend to be a horse," he said; "but I don't know that I could amuse them in any other way."

"You would find that very hot work, Mr. Richards," Mrs. Doolan said; "but I don't think we shall require such a sacrifice of you. Well, I don't think we shall find it so bad, after all, and I don't suppose it will be for very long; I do not believe in all this talk about chupaties, and disaffection, and that sort of thing; I expect in three months we shall most of us be back again."

Ten days later the detachment was settled down in Deennugghur. The troops were for the most part under canvas, for there was only accommodation for a single company at the station. The two subalterns occupied a large square tent, while the other three officers took possession of the only three bungalows that were vacant at the station, the Doctor having a tent to himself. The Major and Isobel had stayed for the first three days with the Hunters, at the end of which time the bungalow had been put in perfect order. It was far less commodious than that at Cawnpore, but Isobel was well satisfied with it when all their belongings had been arranged, and she soon declared that she greatly preferred Deennugghur to Cawnpore.

Those at the station heartily welcomed the accession to their numbers, and there was an entire absence of the stiffness and formality of a large cantonment like Cawnpore, and Isobel was free to run in as she chose to spend the morning chatting and working with the Hunters, or Mrs. Doolan, or with the other ladies, of whom there were three at the station.

A few days after their arrival news came in that the famous man eater, which had for a time ceased his ravages and moved off to a different part of the country, principally because the natives of the village near the jungle had ceased altogether to go out after nightfall, had returned, and had carried off herdsmen on two consecutive days.

The Doctor at once prepared for action, and agreed to allow Wilson and Richards to accompany him, and the next day the three rode off together to Narkeet, to which village the two herdsmen had belonged. Both had been killed near the same spot, and the natives had traced the return of the tiger to its lair in the jungle with its victims.

The Doctor soon found that the ordinary methods of destroying the tiger had been tried again and again without success. Cattle and goats had been tied up, and the native shikaris had taken their posts in trees close by, and had watched all night; but in vain. Spring traps and deadfalls had also been tried, but the tiger seemed absolutely indifferent to the attractions of their baits, and always on the lookout for snares. The attempts made at a dozen villages near the jungle had all been equally unsuccessful.

"It is evident," the Doctor said, "that the brute cares for nothing but human victims. No doubt, if he were very hungry he would take a cow or a goat, but we might wait a very long time for that; so the only thing that I can see is to act as a bait myself."

"How will you do that, Doctor?"

"I shall build a sort of cage near the point where the tiger has twice entered the jungle. I will take with me in the cage a woman or girl from the village. From time to time she shall cry out as if in pain, and as the tiger is evidently somewhere in this neighborhood it is likely enough he will come out to see about it.

"We must have the cage pretty strong, or I shall never get anyone to sit with me; besides, on a dark night, there is no calculating on killing to a certainty with the first shot, and it is just as well to be on the safe side. In daylight it would be a different matter altogether. I can rely upon my weapon when I can see, but on a dark night it is pretty well guesswork."

The villagers were at once engaged to erect a stout cage eight feet square and four high, of beams driven into the ground six inches apart, and roofed in with strong bars. There was a considerable difficulty in getting anyone to consent to sit by the Doctor, but at last the widow of one of the men who had been killed agreed for the sum of twenty-five rupees to pass the night there, accompanied by her child four years old.

The Doctor's skill with his rifle was notorious, and it was rather the desire of seeing her husband's death avenged than for the sake of the money that she consented to keep watch. There was but one tree suitable for the watchers; it stood some forty yards to the right of the cage, and it was arranged that both the subalterns should take their station in it.

"Now look here, lads," the Doctor said, "before we start on this business, it must be quite settled that you do not fire till you hear my rifle. That is the first thing; the second is that you only fire when the brute is a fair distance from the cage. If you get excited and blaze away anyhow, you are quite as likely to hit me as you are the tiger. Now, I object to take any risk whatever on that score. You will have a native shikari in the tree with you to point out the tiger, for it is twenty to one against your making him out for yourselves. It will be quite indistinct, and you have no chance of making out its head or anything of that sort, and you have to take a shot at it as best you may.

"Remember there must not be a word spoken. If the brute does come, it will probably make two or three turns round the cage before it approaches it, and may likely enough pass close to you, but in no case fire. You can't make sure of killing it, and if it were only wounded it would make off into the jungle, and all our trouble would be thrown away. Also remember you must not smoke; the tiger would smell it half a mile away, and, besides, the sound of a match striking would be quite sufficient to set him on his guard."

"There is no objection, I hope, Doctor, to our taking up our flasks; we shall want something to keep us from going to sleep."

"No, there is no objection to that," the Doctor said; "but mind you don't go to sleep, for if you did you might fall off your bough and break your neck, to say nothing of the chance of the tiger happening to be close at hand at the time."

Late in the afternoon the Doctor went down to inspect the cage, and pronounced it sufficiently strong. Half an hour before nightfall he and the woman and child took their places in it, and the two beams in the roof that had been left unfastened to allow of their entry were securely lashed in their places by the villagers. Wilson and Richards were helped up into the tree, and took their places upon two boughs which

sprang from the trunk close to each other at a height of some twelve feet from the ground. The shikari who was to wait with them crawled out, and with a hatchet chopped off some of the small boughs and foliage so as to give them a clear view of the ground for some distance round the cage, which was erected in the center of a patch of brushwood, the lower portion of which had been cleared out so that the Doctor should have an uninterrupted view round. The boughs and leaves were gathered up by the villagers, and carried away by them, and the watch began.

"Confound it," Richards whispered to his companion after night fell, "it is getting as dark as pitch; I can scarcely make out the clump where the cage is. I should hardly see an elephant if it were to come, much less a brute like a tiger."

"We shall get accustomed to it presently," Wilson replied; "at any rate make quite sure of the direction in which the cage is in; it is better to let twenty tigers go than to run the risk of hitting the Doctor."

In another hour their eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, and they could not only see the clump in which the cage was clearly, but could make out the outline of the bush all round the open space in which it stood. Both started as a loud and dismal wail rose suddenly in the air, followed by a violent crying.

"By Jove, how that woman made me jump!" Wilson said; "it sounded quite awful, and she must have pinched that poor little beggar of hers pretty sharply to make him yell like that."

A low "hush!" from the shikari at his elbow warned Wilson that he was speaking too loudly. Hours passed by, the cries being raised at intervals.

"It is enough to give one the jumps, Richards; each time she yells I nearly fall off my branch."

"Keep on listening, then it won't startle you."

"A fellow can't keep on listening," Wilson grumbled; "I listen each time until my ears begin to sing, and I feel stupid and sleepy, and then she goes off again like a steam whistle; that child will be black and blue all over in the morning."

A warning hiss from the shikari again induced Wilson to silence.

"I don't believe the brute is coming," he whispered, an hour later. "If it wasn't for this bough being so hard I should drop off to sleep; my eyes ache with staring at those bushes."

As he spoke the shikari touched him on the shoulder and pointed. "Tiger," he whispered; and then did the same to Richards. Grasping their rifles, they gazed in the direction in which he pointed, but could for some time make out nothing. Then they saw a dim gray mass in front of the bushes, directly on the opposite side of the open space; then from the cage, lying almost in a direct line between it and them, rose the cry of the child. They were neither of them at all certain that the object at which they were gazing was the tiger. It seemed shapeless, the outline fading away in the bush; but they felt sure that they had noticed nothing like it in that direction before.

For two or three minutes they remained in uncertainty, then the outline seemed to broaden, and it moved noiselessly. There could be no mistake now; the tiger had been attracted by the cries, and as it moved along they could see that it was making a

circuit of the spot from whence the sounds proceeded, to reconnoiter before advancing towards its prey. It kept close to the line of bushes, and sometimes passed behind some of them. The shikari pressed their shoulders, and a low hiss enforced the necessity for absolute silence. The two young fellows almost held their breath; they had lost sight of the tiger now, but knew it must be approaching them.

For two or three minutes they heard and saw nothing, then the shikari pointed beyond them, and they almost started as they saw the tiger retreating, and knew that it must have passed almost under them without their noticing it. At last it reached the spot at which they had first seen it. The child's cry, but this time low and querulous, again rose. With quicker steps than before it moved on, but still not directly towards the center, to the great relief of the two subalterns, who had feared that it might attack from such a direction that they would not dare to fire for fear of hitting the cage. Fortunately it passed that point, and, crouching, moved towards the bushes.

Wilson and Richards had their rifles now at their shoulders, but, in the feeble and uncertain light, felt by no means sure of hitting their mark, though it was but some thirty yards away. Almost breathlessly they listened for the Doctor's rifle, but both started when the flash and sharp crack broke on the stillness. There was a sudden snarl of pain, the tiger gave a spring in the air, and then fell, rolling over and over.

"It is not killed!" the shikari exclaimed. "Fire when it gets up."

Suddenly it rose to its feet, and with a loud roar sprang towards the thicket. The two subalterns fired, but the movements of the dimly seen creature were so swift that they felt by no means sure that they had hit it. Then came, almost simultaneously, a loud shriek from the woman, of a very different character to the long wails she had before uttered, followed by a sound of rending and tearing.

"He is breaking down the cage!" Richards exclaimed excitedly, as he and Wilson hastened to ram another cartridge down their rifles. "Come, we must go and help the Doctor."

But a moment later came another report of a rifle, and then all was silent. Then the Doctor's voice was heard.

"Don't get down from the tree yet, lads; I think he is dead, but it is best to make sure first."

There was a pause, and then another rifle shot, followed by the shout "All right; he is as dead as a door nail now. Mind your rifles as you climb down."

"Fancy thinking of that," Wilson said, "when you have just killed a tiger! I haven't capped mine yet; have you, Richards?"

"I have just put it on, but will take it off again. Here, old man, you get down first, and we will hand the guns to you."—this to the shikari.

With some difficulty they scrambled down from the tree.

"Now we may as well cap our rifles," Richards said; "the brute may not be dead after all."

They approached the bush cautiously.

"You are quite sure he is dead, Doctor?"

"Quite sure; do you think I don't know when a tiger is dead?"

Still holding their guns in readiness to fire, they approached the bushes.

"You can do no good until the villagers come with torches," the Doctor said; "the tiger is dead enough, but it is always as well to be prudent."

The shikari had uttered a loud cry as he sprang down from the tree, and this had been answered by shouts from the distance. In a few minutes lights were seen through the trees, and a score of men with torches and lanterns ran up with shouts of satisfaction.

As soon as they arrived the two young officers advanced to the cage. On the top a tiger was lying stretched out as if in sleep; with some caution they approached it and flashed a torch in its eyes. There was no doubt that it was dead. The body was quickly rolled off the cage, and then a dozen hands cut the lashing and lifted the top bars, which was deeply scored by the tiger's claws, and the Doctor emerged.

"I am glad to be out of that," he said; "six hours in a cage with a woman and a crying brat is no joke."

As soon as the Doctor had got out, the subalterns eagerly examined the tiger, upon which the natives were heaping curses and execrations.

"How many wounds has it got?" they asked the Doctor, who repeated the question to the shikari in his own language.

"Three, sahib. One full in the chest—it would have been mortal—two others in the ribs by the heart."

"No others?" the subalterns exclaimed in disgust, as the answer was translated to them. The Doctor himself examined the tiger.

"No; you both missed, lads, but you need not be ashamed of that; it is no easy matter to hit a tiger even at a short distance on a dark night like this, when you can scarce make him out, and can't see the barrel of your rifle. I ought to have told you to rub a little phosphorus off the head of a match onto the sight. I am so accustomed to do it myself as a matter of course that I did not think of telling you. Well, I am heartily glad we have killed it, for by all accounts it has done an immense deal of damage."

"It has been a fine tiger in its time, although its skin doesn't look much," Wilson said; "there are patches of fur off."

"That is generally the case with man eaters. They are mostly old tigers who take, when they get past their strength, to killing men. I don't know whether the flesh doesn't agree with them, but they are almost always mangy."

"We were afraid for a moment," Richards said, "that the tiger was going to break into your cage; we heard him clawing away at the timber, and as you didn't fire again we were afraid something was the matter."

"The mother was," the Doctor said testily. "The moment the tiger sprang, the woman threw herself down at full length right on the top of my second rifle, and when I went to push her off I think she fancied the tiger had got hold of her, for she gave a yell that fairly made me jump. I had to push her off by main force, and then lie down on my back, so as to get the rifle up to fire. I was sure the first shot was fatal, for I knew just where his heart would be, but I dropped a second cartridge in, and gave him another bullet so as to make sure. Well, if either of you want his head or his claws,

you had better say so at once, for the natives will be singeing his whiskers off directly; the practice is a superstition of theirs."

"No, I don't want them," Wilson said. "If I had put a bullet into the brute, so that I could have said I helped to kill him, I should have liked the head to get it preserved and sent home to my people, but as it is the natives are welcome to it as far as I am concerned."

Richards was of the same opinion, and so without further delay they started back for the village, where, upon their arrival, they were greeted with cries of joy by the women, the news having already been carried back by a boy.

"Poor beggars!" the Doctor said. "They have been living a life of terror for weeks. They must feel as if they had woke from a nightmare. Now, lads, we will have some supper. I dare say you are ready for it, and I am sure I am."

"Is there any chance for supper, Doctor?—why, it must be two o'clock in the morning."

"Of course there is," the Doctor replied. "I gave orders to my man to begin to warm up the food as soon as he heard a gun fired, and I will guarantee he has got everything ready by this time."

After a hearty meal and a cigar they lay down for a few hours' sleep, and at daybreak rode back to Deennugghur, the two subalterns rather crestfallen at their failure to have taken any active part in killing the tiger that had so long been a terror to the district.

"It was an awful sell missing him, Miss Hannay; I wanted to have had the claws mounted as a necklace; I thought you would have liked it."

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Wilson, but I would much rather not have had them. If the tiger hadn't been a man eater I should not have minded, but I should never have worn as an ornament claws that had killed lots of people—women and children too."

"No, I never thought of that, Miss Hannay; it wouldn't have been pleasant, now one thinks of it; still, I wish I had put a bullet into him."

"No doubt you will do better next time, Mr. Wilson. The Doctor has been telling me that it is extremely difficult to hit an animal in the dark when you are not accustomed to that sort of shooting. He says he was in a great fright all the time he was lying in the cage, and that it was an immense relief to him when he heard your rifles go off, and found that he wasn't hit."

"That is too bad of him, Miss Hannay," Wilson laughed; "we were not such duffers as all that. I don't believe he really did think so."

"I am sure he was in earnest, Mr. Wilson. He said he should have felt quite safe if it had been daylight, but that in the dark people really can't see which way the rifles are pointed, and that he remembered he had not told you to put phosphorus on the sights."

"It was too bad of him," Wilson grumbled; "it would have served him right if one of the bullets had hit a timber of the cage and given him a start; I should like to have seen the Doctor struggling in the dark to get his second rifle from under the woman, with the tiger clawing and growling two feet above him."

"The Doctor didn't tell me about that," Isobel laughed; "though he said he had a woman and child with him to attract the tiger."

"It would have frightened any decent minded tiger, Miss Hannay, instead of attracting it; for such dismal yells as that woman made I never listened to. I nearly tumbled off the tree at the first of them, it made me jump so, and it gave me a feeling of cold water running down my back. As to the child, I don't know whether she pinched it or the doctor stuck pins into it, but the poor little brute howled in the most frightful way. I don't think I shall ever want to go tiger shooting in the dark again; I ache all over today as if I had been playing in the first football match of the season, from sitting balancing myself on that branch; I was almost over half a dozen times."

"I expect you nearly went off to sleep, Mr. Wilson."

"I think I should have gone to sleep if it hadn't been for that woman, Miss Hannay. I should not have minded if I could have smoked, but to sit there hour after hour and not be able to smoke, and not allowed to speak, and staring all the time into the darkness till your eyes ached, was trying, I can tell you; and after all that, not to hit the brute was too bad."

The days passed quietly at Deennugghur. They were seldom alone at Major Hannay's bungalow in the evening, for Wilson and Richards generally came in to smoke a cigar in the veranda; the Doctor was a regular visitor, when he was not away in pursuit of game, and Bathurst was also often one of the party.

"Mr. Bathurst is coming out wonderfully, Miss Hannay," Mrs. Hunter said one day, as Isobel sat working with her, while the two girls were practicing duets on a piano in the next room. "We used to call him the hermit, he was so difficult to get out of his cell. We were quite surprised when he accepted our invitation to dinner yesterday."

"I think Dr. Wade has stirred him up," Isobel said calmly; "he is a great favorite of the Doctor's."

Mrs. Hunter smiled over her work. "Perhaps so, my dear; anyhow, I am glad he has come out, and I hope he won't retire into his cell again after you have all gone."

"I suppose it depends a good deal upon his work," Isobel said.

"My experience of men is that they can always make time if they like, my dear. When a man says he is too busy to do this, that, or the other, you may always safely put it down that he doesn't want to do it. Of course, it is just the same thing with ourselves. You often hear women say they are too busy to attend to all sorts of things that they ought to attend to, but the same women can find plenty of time to go to every pleasure gathering that comes off. There is no doubt that Mr. Bathurst is really fond of work, and that he is an indefatigable civil servant of the Company, but that would not prevent him making an hour or two's time of an evening, occasionally, if he wanted to. However, he seems to have turned over a new leaf, and I hope it will last. In a small station like this, even one man is of importance, especially when he is as pleasant as Mr. Bathurst can be when he likes. He was in the army at one time, you know."

"Was he, Mrs. Hunter?"

"Yes. I never heard him say so himself, but I have heard so from several people. I think he was only in it for a year or so. I suppose he did not care for it, and can quite

imagine he would not, so he sold out, and a short time afterwards obtained a civil appointment. He has very good interest; his father was General Bathurst, who was, you know, a very distinguished officer. So he had no difficulty in getting into our service, where he is entirely in his element. His father died two years ago, and I believe he came into a good property at home. Everyone expected he would have thrown up his appointment, but it made no difference to him, and he just went on as before, working as if he had to depend entirely on the service."

"I can quite understand that," Isobel said, "to a really earnest man a life of usefulness here must be vastly preferable to living at home without anything to do or any object in life."

"Well, perhaps so, my dear, and in theory that is, no doubt, the case; but practically, I fancy you would find nineteen men out of twenty, even if they are what you call earnest men, retire from the ranks of hard workers if they come into a nice property. By the way, you must come in here this evening. There is a juggler in the station, and Mr. Hunter has told him to come round. The servants say the man is a very celebrated juggler, one of the best in India, and as the girls have never seen anything better than the ordinary itinerant conjurers, my husband has arranged for him to come in here, and we have been sending notes round asking everyone to come in. We have sent one round to your place, but you must have come out before the chit arrived."

"Oh, I should like that very much!" Isobel said. "Two or three men came to our bungalow at Cawnpore and did some conjuring, but it was nothing particular; but uncle says some of them do wonderful things—things that he cannot account for at all. That was one of the things I read about at school, and thought I should like to see, more than anything in India. When I was at school we went in a body, two or three times, to see conjurers when they came to Cheltenham. Of course I did not understand the things they did, and they seemed wonderful to me, but I know there are people who can explain them, and that they are only tricks; but I have read accounts of things done by jugglers in India that seemed utterly impossible to explain—really a sort of magic."

"I have heard a good many arguments about it," Mrs. Hunter said; "and a good many people, especially those who have seen most of them, are of opinion that many of the feats of the Indian jugglers cannot be explained by any natural laws we know of. I have seen some very curious things myself, but the very fact that I did not understand how they were done was no proof they could not be explained; certainly two of their commonest tricks, the basket trick and the mango, have never been explained. Our conjurers at home can do something like them, but then that is on a stage, where they can have trapdoors and all sorts of things, while these are done anywhere—in a garden, on a road—where there could be no possible preparation, and with a crowd of lookers on all round; it makes me quite uncomfortable to look at it."

"Well, I must be off now, Mrs. Hunter; it is nearly time for uncle to be back, and he likes me to be in when he returns."

CHAPTER IX.

Dr. Wade was sitting in the veranda smoking and reading an English paper that had arrived by that morning's mail, when Isobel returned.

"Good morning, Doctor. Is uncle back?"

"Not yet. He told me he might be half an hour late, and that I was to come round and amuse you until he came back."

"So in my absence you have been amusing yourself, Doctor. I have been round at Mrs. Hunter's; she is going to have a juggler there this evening, and we are all to go."

"Yes, I got a chit from her this morning. I have seen scores of them, but I make a point of never missing an exhibition when I get the chance. I hate anything I don't understand, and I go with the faint hope of being able to find things out, though I know perfectly well that I shall not do so."

"Then you think it is not all quite natural, Doctor?"

"I don't say it is not natural, because we don't know what all the natural laws are, but I say that some of the things I have seen certainly are not to be accounted for by anything we do know. It is not often that the jugglers show their best tricks to the whites—they know that, as a rule, we are altogether skeptical; but I have seen at native courts more than once the most astounding things—things absolutely incomprehensible and inexplicable. I don't suppose we are going to see anything of that sort tonight, though Mrs. Hunter said in her note that they had heard from the native servant that this man was a famous one.

"There is a sect of people in India, I don't mean a caste, but a sort of secret society, who, I believe, claim to be able by some sort of influence to suspend altogether the laws of nature. I do not say that I believe them—as a scientific man, it is my duty not to believe them; but I have seen such things done by some of the higher class of jugglers, and that under circumstances that did not seem to admit of the possibility of deception, that I am obliged to suspend my judgment, which, as you may imagine, my dear, is exceedingly annoying to me; but some of them do possess to a considerable extent what the Scotch call second sight, that is to say, the power of foreseeing events in the future. Of that I am morally certain; I have seen proofs of it over and over again. For example, once an old fakir, whom I had cured of a badly ulcerated limb, came up just as I was starting on a shooting expedition.

"'Do not go out today,' he said. 'I foresee evil for you. I saw you last night brought back badly wounded.'

"'But if I don't go your dream will come wrong,' I said.

"He shook his head.

"'You will go in spite of what I say,' he said; 'and you will suffer, and others too;' and he looked at a group of shikaris, who were standing together, ready to make a start.

"'How many men are there?' he said.

"'Why, six of course,' I replied.

"'I see only three,' he said, 'and three dull spots. One of those I see is holding his matchlock on his shoulder, another is examining his priming, the third is sitting down by the tire. Those three will come back at the end of the day; the other three will not return alive.'

"I felt rather uncomfortable, but I wasn't, as I said to myself—I was a good deal younger then, my dear—such a fool as to be deterred from what promised to be a good day's sport by such nonsense as this; and I went.

"We were going after a rogue elephant that had been doing a lot of damage among the natives' plantations. We found him, and a savage brute he turned out to be. He moved just as I fired, and though I hit him, it was not on the fatal spot, and he charged right down among us. He caught the very three men the fakir said were doomed, and dashed the life out of them; then he came at me. The bearer had run off with my second gun, and he seized me and flung me up in the air.

"I fell in a tree, but broke three of my ribs and one of my arms; fortunately, though the beast tried to get at me, I was out of his reach, and the tree was too strong for him to knock down. Then another man who was with me came up and killed him, and they got me down and carried me back, and I was weeks before I was about again. That was something more than a coincidence, I think. There were some twenty men out with us, and just the four he had pointed out were hurt, and no others.

"I have seen scores of other cases in which these predictions have come true, especially in cases of disease; though I grant that here the predictions often bring about their own fulfilment. If a native is told by a fakir, or holy man, that he is going to die, he makes no struggle to live. In several cases I have seen natives, whose deaths have been predicted, die, without, as far as my science could tell me, any disease or ailment whatever that should have been fatal to them. They simply sank—died, I should say, from pure fright. But putting aside this class, I have seen enough to convince me that some at least among these fanatics do possess the power of second sight."

"That is very extraordinary, Doctor. Of course I have heard of second sight among certain old people in Scotland, but I did not believe in it."

"I should not have believed in it if I had not seen the same thing here in India. I naturally have been interested in it, and have read pretty well everything that has been written about second sight among the Highlanders; and some of the incidents are so well authenticated that I scarcely see how they can be denied. Of course, there is no accounting for it, but it is possible that among what we may call primitive people there are certain intuitions or instincts, call them what you like, that have been lost by civilized people.

"The power of scent in a dog is something so vastly beyond anything we can even imagine possible, that though we put it down to instinct, it is really almost inexplicable. Take the case that dogs have been known to be taken by railway journeys of many hundred miles and to have found their way home again on foot. There is clearly the possession of a power which is to us absolutely unaccountable.

“But here comes your uncle; he will think I have been preaching a sermon to you if you look so grave.”

But Major Hannay was too occupied with his own thoughts to notice Isobel.

“Has anything gone wrong, Major?” the Doctor asked, as he saw his face.

“I have just learnt,” the Major said, “that some more chupaties were brought last night. It is most annoying. I have questioned several of the native officers, and they profess to have no idea whence they came or what is the meaning of them. I wish we could get to the bottom of this thing; it keeps the troops in a ferment. If I could get hold of one of these messengers, I would get out of him all he knew, even if I had to roast him to make him tell.”

“My dear uncle,” Isobel said reprovingly, “I am sure you don't mean what you say.”

“I don't know,” he said, half laughing; “I should certainly consider myself perfectly justified in taking uncommonly strong steps to try to get to the bottom of this business. The thing is going on all over India, and it must mean something, and it is all the worse if taken in connection with this absurd idea about the greased cartridges. I grant that it was an act of folly greasing them at all, when we know the idiotic prejudices the natives have; still, it could hardly have been foreseen that this stir would have been made. The issue of the cartridges has been stopped, but when the natives once get an idea into their minds it is next to impossible to disabuse them of it. It is a tiresome business altogether.”

“Tiffin ready, sahib,” Rumzan interrupted, coming out onto the veranda.

“That is right, Rumzan. Now, Isobel, let us think of more pleasant subjects.”

“We are to go into the Hunters' this evening, uncle,” Isobel said, as she sat down. “There is going to be a famous juggler there. There is a note for you from Mrs. Hunter on the side table.”

“Very well, my dear; some of these fellows are well worth seeing. Bathurst is coming in to dinner. I saw him as he was starting this morning, just as he was going down to the lines, and he accepted. He said he should be able to get back in time. However, I don't suppose he will mind going round with us. I hope you will come, Doctor, to make up the table. I have asked the two boys to come in.”

“I shall have to become a permanent boarder at your establishment, Major. It is really useless my keeping a cook when I am in here nearly half my time. But I will come. I am off for three days tomorrow. A villager came in this morning to beg me to go out to rid them of a tiger that has established himself in their neighborhood, and that is an invitation I never refuse, if I can possibly manage to make time for it. Fortunately everyone is so healthy here at present that I can be very well spared.”

At dinner the subject of juggling came up again, and the two subalterns expressed their opinion strongly that it was all humbug.

“Dr. Wade believes in it, Mr. Wilson,” Isobel said.

“You don't say so, Doctor; I should have thought you were the last sort of man who would have believed in conjurers.”

“It requires a wise man to believe, Wilson,” the Doctor said; “any fool can scoff; the wise man questions. When you have been here as long as I have, and if you ever

get as much sense as I have, which is doubtful, you may be less positive in your ideas, if you can call them ideas."

"That is one for me," Wilson said good humoredly, while the others laughed.

"Well, I have never seen them, Doctor, except those fellows who come around to the veranda, and I have seen conjurers at home do ever so much better tricks than they."

"What do you think of them, Mr. Bathurst?" Isobel asked. "I suppose you have seen some of the better sort?"

"I do not know what to think of them, Miss Hannay. I used to be rather of Wilson's opinion, but I have seen things since that I could not account for at all. There was a man here two or three months back who astounded me."

"Mrs. Hunter said that the girls had had no opportunity of seeing a good conjurer since they came out, Mr. Bathurst. I suppose they did know this man you are speaking of being here?"

"He was only here for a few hours, Miss Hannay. I had happened to meet him before, and he gave me a private performance, which was quite different to anything I have ever seen, though I had often heard of the feats he had performed. I was so impressed with them that I can assure you that for a few days I had great difficulty in keeping my mind upon my work."

"What did he do, Mr. Bathurst?"

Bathurst related the feat of the disappearing girl.

"She must have jumped down when you were not looking," Richards said, with an air or conviction.

"Possibly," Bathurst replied quietly; "but as I was within three or four yards of the pole, and it was perfectly distinct in the light of my lamp, and as I certainly saw her till she was some thirty or forty feet up in the air I don't see how she can have managed it. For, even supposing she could have sprung down that distance without being hurt, she would not have come down so noiselessly that I should not have heard her."

"Still, if she did not come down that way, how could she have come?" Wilson said.

"That is exactly what I can't make out," Bathurst replied. "If it should happen to be the same man, and he will do the same thing again, I fancy you will be as much puzzled as I was."

After dinner was over the party walked across to Mr. Hunter's bungalow, where, in a short time, the other officers, their wives, and all the other residents at the station were assembled. Chairs were placed in the veranda for the ladies, and a number of lamps hung on the wall, so that a strong light was thrown upon the ground in front of it. In addition, four posts had been driven into the ground some twenty feet from the veranda, and lamps had been fastened upon them.

"I don't know whether the juggler will like that," Mr. Hunter said, "and I shan't light them if he objects. I don't think myself it is quite fair having a light behind him; still, if he agrees, it will be hardly possible for him to make the slightest movement without being seen."

The juggler, who was sitting round at the other side of the house, was now called up. He and the girl, who followed him, salaamed deeply, and made an even deeper bow to Bathurst, who was standing behind Isobel's chair.

"You must have paid them well, Bathurst," Major Hannay said. "They have evidently a lively remembrance of past favors. I suppose they are the same you were talking about?"

"Yes, they are the same people, Major." Then he said in the native dialect to the juggler, "Mr. Hunter has put some posts with lamps behind you, Rujub, but he hasn't lit them because he did not know whether you would object."

"They can be lighted, sahib. My feats do not depend on darkness. Any of the sahibs who like to stand behind us can do so if they do not come within the line of those posts."

"Let us go out there," Wilson said to Richards, when the answer was translated; "we will light the lamps, and we shall see better there than we shall see here."

The two went round to the other side and lit the lamps, and the servants stood a short distance off on either side.

The first trick shown was the well known mango tree. The juggler placed a seed in the ground, poured some water upon it from a lota, and covered it with a cloth. In two or three minutes he lifted this, and a plant four or five inches high was seen. He covered this with a tall basket, which he first handed round for inspection. On removing this a mango tree some three feet high, in full bloom, was seen. It was again covered, and when the basket was removed it was seen to be covered with ripe fruit, eliciting exclamations of astonishment from those among the spectators who had not before seen the trick performed.

"Now, Wilson," the Doctor said, "perhaps you will be kind enough to explain to us all how this was done?"

"I have no more idea than Adam, Doctor."

"Then we will leave it to Richards. He promised us at dinner to keep his eyes well open."

Richards made no reply.

"How was it done, Mr. Bathurst? It seems almost like a miracle."

"I am as ignorant as Wilson is, Miss Hannay. I can't account for it in any way, and I have seen it done a score of times. Ah! now he is going to do the basket trick. Don't be alarmed when you hear the girl cry out. You may be quite sure that she is not hurt. The father is deeply attached to her, and would not hurt a hair of her head."

Again the usual methods were adopted. The basket was placed on the ground and the girl stepped into it, without the pretense of fear usually exhibited by the performers.

Before the trick began Major Hannay said to Captain Doolan, "Come round with me to the side of those boys. I know the first time I saw it done I was nearly throwing myself on the juggler, and Wilson is a hot headed boy, and is likely as not to do so. If he did, the man would probably go off in a huff and show us nothing more. From what Bathurst said, we are likely to see something unusual."

As soon as the lid was put down, an apparently angry colloquy took place between the juggler and the girl inside. Presently the man appeared to become enraged, and snatching up a long, straight sword from the ground, ran it three or four times through the basket.

A loud shriek followed the first thrust, and then all was silent.

Some of the ladies rose to their feet with a cry of horror, Isobel among them. Wilson and Richards both started to rush forward, but were seized by the collars by the Major and Captain Doolan.

"Will you open the basket?" the juggler said quietly to Mrs. Hunter. As she had seen the trick before she stepped forward without hesitation, opened the lid of the basket and said, "It is empty." The juggler took it up, and held it up, bottom upwards.

"What on earth has become of the girl?" Wilson exclaimed.

As he spoke she passed between him and Richards back to her father's side.

"Well, I am dashed," Wilson murmured. "I would not have believed it if fifty people had sworn to me they had seen it." He was too much confounded even to reply, when the Doctor sarcastically said: "We are waiting for your explanation, gentlemen."

"Will you ask him, Major," Richards said, as he wiped his forehead with his pocket handkerchief, "to make sure that she is solid?"

The Major translated the request, and the girl at once came across, and Richards touched her with evident doubt as to whether on not she were really flesh and blood.

There was much curiosity among those who had seen jugglers before as to what would be the next feat, for generally those just seen were the closing ones of a performance, but as these were the first it seemed that those to follow must be extraordinary indeed.

The next feat was the one shown to Bathurst, and was performed exactly as upon that occasion, except that as the girl rose beyond the circle of light she remained distinctly visible, a sort of phosphoric light playing around her. Those in the veranda had come out now, the juggler warning them not to approach within six feet of the pole.

Higher and higher the girl went, until those below judged her to be at least a hundred and fifty feet from the ground. Then the light died out, and she disappeared from their sight. There was silence for a minute or two, and then the end of the pole could be seen descending without her. Another minute, and it was reduced to the length it had been at starting.

The spectators were silent now; the whole thing was so strange and mysterious that they had no words to express their feeling.

The juggler said something which Mr. Hunter translated to be a request for all to resume their places.

"That is a wonderful trick," the Doctor said to Bathurst. "I have never seen it done that way before, but I once saw a juggler throw up a rope into the air; how high it went I don't know, for, like this, it was done at night, but it stood up perfectly stiff, and the juggler's attendant climbed up. He went higher and higher, and we could hear

his voice coming down to us. At last it stopped, and then suddenly the rope fell in coils on the ground, and the boy walked quietly in, just as that girl has done now."

The girl now placed herself in the center of the open space.

"You will please not to speak while this trick is being performed," the juggler said; "harm might come of it. Watch the ground near her feet."

A minute later a dark object made its appearance from the ground. It rose higher and higher with an undulating movement.

"By Jove, it is a python!" the Doctor whispered in Bathurst's ear. A similar exclamation broke from several of the others, but the juggler waved his hand with an authoritative hush. The snake rose until its head towered above that of the girl, and then began to twine itself round her, continuously rising from the ground until it enveloped her with five coils, each thicker than a man's arm. It raised its head above hers and hissed loudly and angrily; then its tail began to descend, gradually the coils unwound themselves; lower and lower it descended until it disappeared altogether.

It was some time before anyone spoke, so great was the feeling of wonder. The Doctor was the first to break the silence.

"I have never seen that before," he said, "though I have heard of it from a native Rajah."

"Would the sahibs like to see more?" the juggler asked.

The two Miss Hunters, Mrs. Rintoul, and several of the others said they had seen enough, but among the men there was expressed a general wish to see another feat.

"I would not have missed this for anything," the Doctor said. "It would be simple madness to throw away such a chance."

The ladies, therefore, with the exception of Mrs. Hunter, Mrs. Doolan, and Isobel, retired into the house.

"You must all go on one side now," the juggler said, "for it is only on one side what I am now going to do can be seen."

He then proceeded to light a fire of charcoal. When he had done this, he said, "The lights must now be extinguished and the curtains drawn, so that the light will not stream out from the house."

As soon as this was done he poured a powder over the fire, and by its faint light the cloud of white smoke could be seen.

"Now I will show you the past," he said. "Who speaks?"

There was silence, and then Dr. Wade said, "Show me my past."

A faint light stole up over the smoke—it grew brighter and brighter; and then a picture was clearly seen upon it.

It was the sea, a house standing by itself in a garden, and separated from the water only by a road. Presently the figure of a girl appeared at the gate, and, stepping out, looked down the road as if waiting for someone. They could make out all the details of her dress and see her features distinctly. A low exclamation broke from the Doctor, then the picture gradually faded away.

"The future!" the juggler said, and gradually an Indian scene appeared on the smoke. It was a long, straight road, bordered by a jungle. A native was seen approaching; he paused in the foreground.

"That is you, Doctor!" Mr. Hunter exclaimed; "you are got up as a native, but it's you."

Almost at the same moment two figures came out from the jungle. They were also in native dress.

"You and Miss Hannay," the Doctor said in a low tone to Bathurst, "dressed like a native and dyed." But no one else detected the disguise, and the picture again faded away.

"That is enough, Rujub," Bathurst said, for he felt Isobel lean back heavily against the hand which he held at the back of her chair, and felt sure that she had fainted.

"Draw back the curtains, someone; I fancy this has been too much for Miss Hannay."

The curtains were thrown back, and Mrs. Hunter, running in, brought out a lamp. The Doctor had already taken his place by Isobel's side.

"Yes, she has fainted," he said to Bathurst; "carry her in her chair as she is, so that she may be in the room when she comes to."

This was done.

"Now, gentlemen," the Doctor said, "you had better light the lamps again out here, and leave the ladies and me to get Miss Hannay round."

When the lamps were lit it was evident that the whole of the men were a good deal shaken by what they had seen.

"Well," Mr. Hunter said, "they told me he was a famous juggler, but that beat anything I have seen before. I have heard of such things frequently from natives, but it is very seldom that Europeans get a chance of seeing them."

"I don't want to see anything of the sort again," Major Hannay said; "it shakes one's notions of things in general. I fancy, Hunter, that we shall want a strong peg all round to steady our nerves. I own that I feel as shaky as a boy who thinks he sees a ghost on his way through a churchyard."

There was a general murmur of agreement and the materials were quickly brought.

"Well, Wilson, what do you and Richards think of it?" the Major went on, after he had braced himself up with a strong glass of brandy and water. "I should imagine you both feel a little less skeptical than you did two hours ago."

"I don't know what Richards feels, Major, but I know I feel like a fool. I am sorry, Bathurst, for what I said at dinner; but it really didn't seem to me to be possible what you told us about the girl going up into the air and not coming down again. Well, after I have seen what I have seen this evening, I won't disbelieve anything I hear in future about these natives."

"It was natural enough that you should be incredulous," Bathurst said. "I should have been just as skeptical as you were when I first came out, and I have been astonished now, though I have seen some good jugglers before."

At this moment the Doctor came out again.

"Miss Hannay is all right again now, Major. I am not surprised at her fainting; old hand as I am at these matters, and I think that I have seen as much or more juggling than any man in India. I felt very queer myself, specially at the snake business. As I said, I have seen that ascension trick before, but how it is done I have no more idea than a child. Those smoke scenes, too, are astonishing. Of course they could be accounted for as thrown upon a column of white smoke by a magic lantern, but there was certainly no magic lantern here. The juggler was standing close to me, and the girl was sitting at his feet. I watched them both closely, and certainly they had no apparatus about them by which such views could be thrown on the smoke."

"You recognized the first scene, I suppose, Doctor?" Bathurst asked.

"Perfectly. It took me back twenty-five years. It was a cottage near Sidmouth, and was correct in every minute detail. The figure was that of the young lady I married four years afterwards. Many a time have I seen her standing just like that, as I went along the road to meet her from the little inn at which I was stopping; the very pattern of her dress, which I need hardly say has never been in my mind all these years, was recalled to me.

"Had I been thinking of the scene at the time I could have accounted for it somehow, upon the theory that in some way or other the juggler was conscious of my thought and reflected it upon the smoke—how, I don't at all mean to say; but undoubtedly there exists, to some extent, the power of thought reading. It is a mysterious subject, and one of which we know absolutely nothing at present, but maybe in upwards of a hundred years mankind will have discovered many secrets of nature in that direction. But I certainly was not thinking of that scene when I spoke and said the 'past.' I had no doubt that he would show me something of the past, but certainly no particular incident passed through my mind before that picture appeared on the smoke."

"The other was almost as curious, Doctor," Captain Doolan said, "for it was certainly you masquerading as a native. I believe the other was Bathurst; it struck me so; and he seemed to be running off with some native girl. What on earth could that all mean?"

"It is no use puzzling ourselves about it," the Doctor said. "It may or may not come true. I have no inclination to go about dressed out as a native at present, but there is no saying what I may come to. There is quite enough for us to wonder at in the other things. The mango and basket tricks I have seen a dozen times, and am no nearer now than I was at first to understanding them. That ascension trick beats me altogether, and there was something horribly uncanny about the snake."

"Do you think it was a real snake, Doctor?"

"That I cannot tell you, Richards. Every movement was perfectly natural. I could see the working of the ribs as it wound itself round the girl, and the quivering of its tongue as it raised its head above her. At any other time I should be ready to take my affidavit that it was a python of unusual size, but at the present moment I should not like to give a decided opinion about anything connected with the performance."

“I suppose it is no use asking the juggler any questions, Hunter?” one of the other men said.

“Not in the least; they never do answer questions. The higher class of jugglers treat their art as a sort of religious mystery, and there is no instance known of their opening their lips, although large sums have frequently been offered them. In the present case you will certainly ask no questions, for the man and girl have both disappeared with the box and apparatus and everything connected with them. They must have slipped off directly the last trick was over, and before we had the lamp lighted. I sent after him at once, but the servant could find no signs of him. I am annoyed because I have not paid them.”

“I am not surprised at that,” Dr. Wade said. “It is quite in accordance with what I have heard of them. They live by exhibiting what you may call their ordinary tricks; but I have heard from natives that when they show any what I may call supernatural feats, they do not take money. It is done to oblige some powerful Rajah, and as I have said, it is only on a very few occasions that Europeans have ever seen them. Well, we may as well go in to the ladies. I don't fancy any of them would be inclined to come out onto the veranda again this evening.”

No one was indeed inclined even for talk, and in a very short time the party broke up and returned home.

“Come and smoke a pipe with me, Bathurst, before you turn in,” the Doctor said, as they went out. “I don't think either of us will be likely to go to sleep for some time. What is your impression of all this?”

“My impression, certainly, is that it is entirely unaccountable by any laws with which we are acquainted, Doctor.”

“That is just my idea, and always has been since I first saw any really good juggling out here. I don't believe in the least in anything supernatural, but I can quite believe that there are many natural laws of which at present we are entirely ignorant. I believe the knowledge of them at one time existed, but has been entirely lost, at any rate among Western peoples. The belief in magic is as old as anything we have knowledge of. The magicians at the court of Pharaoh threw down their rods and turned them into serpents. The Witch of Endor called up the spirit of Samuel. The Greeks, by no means a nation of fools, believed implicitly in the Oracles. Coming down to comparatively later times, the workers of magic burnt their books before St. Paul. It doesn't say, mind you, that those who pretended to work magic did so; but those who worked magic.

“Early travelers in Persia and India have reported things they saw far surpassing any we have witnessed this evening, and there is certainly a sect in India at present, or rather a body of men, and those, as far as I have been able to learn, of an exceptionally intelligent class, who believe that they possess an almost absolute mastery over the powers of nature. You see, fifty years back, if anyone had talked about traveling at fifty miles an hour, or sending a message five thousand miles in a minute, he would have been regarded as a madman. There may yet be other discoveries as startling to be made.

"When I was in England I heard something of a set of people in America who called themselves Spiritualists, some of whom—notably a young man named Home—claimed to have the power of raising themselves through the air. I am far from saying that such a power exists; it is of course contrary to what we know of the laws of nature, but should such a power exist it would account for the disappearance of the girl from the top of the pole. Highland second sight, carried somewhat farther, and united with the power of conveying the impressions to others, would account for the pictures on the smoke, that is, supposing them to be true, and personally I own that I expect they will prove to be true—unlikely as it may seem that you, I, and Miss Hannay will ever be going about in native attire."

By this time they had reached the Doctor's bungalow, and had comfortably seated themselves.

"There is one thing that flashed across me this evening," Bathurst said. "I told you, that first evening I met Miss Hannay, that I had a distinct knowledge of her face. You laughed at me at the time, and it certainly seemed absurd, but I was convinced I was not wrong. Now I know how it was; I told you at dinner today about the feat of the girl going up and not coming down again; but I did not tell you—for you can understand it is a thing that I should not care to talk much about—that he showed me a picture like those we saw tonight.

"It was a house standing in a courtyard, with a high wall round it. I did not particularly observe the house. It was of the ordinary native type, and might, for anything I know, be the house in the middle of this station used as a courthouse by Hunter, and for keeping stores, and so on. I don't say it was that; I did not notice it much. There was a breach in the outside wall, and round it there was a fierce fight going on. A party of officers and civilians were repelling the assault of a body of Sepoys. On the terraced roof of the house others were standing firing and looking on, and I think engaged in loading rifles were two or three women. One of them I particularly noticed; and, now I recall it, her face was that of Miss Hannay; of that I am absolutely certain."

"It is curious, lad," the Doctor said, after a pause; "and the picture, you see, has so far come true that you have made the acquaintance with one of the actors whom you did not previously know."

"I did not believe in the truth of it, Doctor, and I do not believe in it now. There was one feature in the fight which was, as I regret to know, impossible."

"And what was that, Bathurst?"

Bathurst was silent for a time.

"You are an old friend, Doctor, and you will understand my case, and make more allowances for it than most people would. When I first came out here I dare say you heard some sort of reports as to why I had left the army and had afterwards entered the Civil Service."

"There were some stupid rumors," the Doctor said, "that you had gone home on sick leave just after the battle of Chillianwalla, and had then sold out, because you had shown the white feather. I need not say that I did not give any credit to it; there is always gossip flying about as to the reasons a man leaves the army."

"It was quite true, Doctor. It is a hideous thing to say, but constitutionally I am a coward."

"I cannot believe it," the Doctor said warmly. "Now that I know you, you are the last man of whom I would credit such a thing."

"It is the bane of my life," Bathurst went on. "It is my misfortune, for I will not allow it is my fault. In many things I am not a coward. I think I could face any danger if the danger were a silent one, but I cannot stand noise. The report of a gun makes me tremble all over, even when it is a blank cartridge that is fired. When I was born my father was in India. A short time before I came into the world my mother had a great fright. Her house in the country was broken into by burglars, who entered the room and threatened to blow out her brains if she moved; but the alarm was given, the men servants came down armed, there was a struggle in her room, pistol shots were fired, and the burglars were overpowered and captured. My mother fainted and was ill for weeks afterwards—in fact, until the time I was born; and she died a few days later, never having, the doctor said, recovered from the shock she had suffered that night.

"I grew up a weakly, timid boy—the sort of boy that is always bullied at school. My father, as you know, was a general officer, and did not return home until I was ten years old. He was naturally much disappointed in me, and I think that added to my timidity, for it grew upon me rather than otherwise. Morally, I was not a coward. At school I can say that I never told a lie to avoid punishment, and my readiness to speak the truth did not add to my popularity among the other boys, and I used to be called a sneak, which was even more hateful than being called a coward.

"As I grew up I shook off my delicacy, and grew, as you see, into a strong man. I then fought several battles at school; I learnt to ride, and came to have confidence in myself, and though I had no particular fancy for the army my father's heart was so set on it that I offered no objection. That the sound of a gun was abhorrent to me I knew, for the first time my father put a gun in my hand and I fired it, I fainted, and nothing would persuade me to try again. Still I thought that this was the result of nervousness as to firing it myself, and that I should get over it in time.

"A month or two after I was gazetted I went out to India with the regiment, and arrived just in time to get up by forced marches to take part in the battle of Chillianwalla. The consequence was that up to that time I literally had heard no musketry practice.

"Of the events of that battle I have no remembrance whatever; from the moment the first gun was fired to the end of the day I was as one paralyzed. I saw nothing, I heard nothing, I moved mechanically; but happily my will or my instinct kept me in my place in the regiment. When all was over, and silence followed the din, I fell to the ground insensible. Happily for me the doctors declared I was in a state of high fever, and I so remained for a fortnight. As soon as I got better I was sent down the country, and I at once sent in my papers and went home. No doubt the affair was talked of, and there were whispers as to the real cause of my illness. My father was terribly angry when I returned home and told him the truth of the matter. That his son should be a coward was naturally an awful blow to him. Home was too unhappy to be endured, and when an uncle of mine, who was a director on the Company's Board, offered me a

berth in the Civil Service, I thankfully accepted it, believing that in that capacity I need never hear a gun fired again.

"You will understand, then, the anxiety I am feeling owing to these rumors of disaffection among the Sepoys, and the possibility of anything like a general mutiny.

"It is not of being killed that I have any fear; upon the contrary, I have suffered so much in the last eight years from the consciousness that the reason why I left the army was widely known, that I should welcome death, if it came to me noiselessly; but the thought that if there is trouble I shall assuredly not be able to play my part like a man fills me with absolute horror, and now more than ever.

"So you will understand now why the picture I saw, in which I was fighting in the middle of the Sepoys, is to me not only improbable, but simply impossible. It is a horrible story to have to tell. This is the first time I have opened my lips on the subject since I spoke to my father, but I know that you, both as a friend and a doctor, will pity rather than blame me."

CHAPTER X.

As Bathurst brought his story to its conclusion the Doctor rose and placed his hand kindly on his shoulder.

"I certainly should not think of blaming you, Bathurst. What you tell me is indeed a terrible misfortune, situated as we may be soon, though I trust and believe that all this talk about the Sepoys is moonshine. I own that I am surprised at your story, for I should have said from my knowledge of you that though, as I could perceive, of a nervous temperament, you were likely to be cool and collected in danger. But certainly your failing is no fault of your own."

"That is but a small consolation to me, Doctor. Men do not ask why and wherefore—they simply point the finger of scorn at a coward. The misfortune is that I am here. I might have lived a hundred lives in England and never once had occasion to face danger, and I thought that I should have been equally secure as an Indian civilian. Now this trouble is coming upon us."

"Why don't you take your leave, lad? You have been out seven years now without a day's relaxation, except indeed, the three days you were over with me at Cawnpore. Why not apply for a year's leave? You have a good excuse, too; you did not go home at the death of your father, two years ago, and could very well plead urgent family affairs requiring your presence in England."

"No, I will not do that, Doctor; I will not run away from danger again. You understand me, I have not the least fear of the danger; I in no way hold to my life; I do not think I am afraid of physical pain. It seems to me that I could undertake any desperate service; I dread it simply because I know that when the din of battle begins my body will overmaster my mind, and that I shall be as I was at Chillianwalla, completely paralyzed. You wondered tonight why that juggler should have exhibited feats seldom, almost never, shown to Europeans? He did it to please me. I saved his daughter's life—this is between ourselves, Doctor, and is not to go farther. But, riding in from Narkeet, I heard a cry, and, hurrying on, came upon that man eater you shot the other day, standing over the girl, with her father half beside himself, gesticulating in front of him. I jumped off and attacked the brute with my heavy hunting whip, and he was so completely astonished that he turned tail and bolted."

"The deuce he did," the Doctor exclaimed; "and yet you talk of being a coward!"

"No, I do not say that I am a coward generally; as long as I have to confront danger without noise I believe I could do as well as most men."

"But why didn't you mention this business with the tiger, Bathurst?"

"Because, in the first place, it was the work of a mere passing impulse; and in the second, because I should have gained credit for being what I am not—a brave man. It will be bad enough when the truth becomes known, but it would be all the worse if I had been trading on a false reputation; therefore I particularly charged Rujub to say nothing about the affair to anyone."

"Well, putting this for a time aside, Bathurst, what do you think of that curious scene, you and I and Miss Hannay disguised as natives?"

"Taking it with the one I saw of the attack of Sepoys upon a house, it looks to me, Doctor, as if there would be a mutiny, and that that mutiny would be attended with partial success, that a portion of the garrison, at any rate, will escape, and that Miss Hannay will be traveling down the country, perhaps to Cawnpore, in your charge, while I in some way shall be with you, perhaps acting as guide."

"It may possibly be so," the Doctor agreed. "It is at any rate very curious. I wonder whether Miss Hannay recognized herself in the disguise."

"I should hope not, Doctor; if it all comes true there will be enough for her to bear without looking forward to that. I should be glad if the detachment were ordered back to Cawnpore."

"Well, I should not have thought that, Bathurst."

"I know what you mean, Doctor, but it is for that reason I wish they were gone. I believe now that you insisted on my coming down to spend those three days with you at Cawnpore specially that I might meet her."

"That is so, Bathurst. I like her so much that I should be very sorry to see her throw herself away upon some empty headed fool. I like her greatly, and I was convinced that you were just the man to make her happy, and as I knew that you had good prospects in England, I thought it would be a capital match for her, although you are but a young civilian; and I own that of late I have thought things were going on very well."

"Perhaps it might have been so, Doctor, had it not been for this coming trouble, which, if our fears are realized, will entirely put an end even to the possibility of what you are talking about. I shall be shown to be a coward, and I shall do my best to put myself in the way of being killed. I should not like to blow my brains out, but if the worst comes to the worst I will do that rather than go on living after I have again disgraced myself."

"You look at it too seriously, Bathurst."

"Not a bit of it, Doctor, and you know it."

"But if the Sepoys rise, Bathurst, why should they harm their officers? They may be discontented, they may have a grievance against the Government, they may refuse to obey orders and may disband; but why on earth should they attack men who have always been kind to them, whom they have followed in battle, and against whom they have not as much as a shadow of complaint?"

"I hope it may be so most sincerely," Bathurst said; "but one never can say. I can hardly bring myself to believe that they will attack the officers, much less injure women and children. Still, I have a most uneasy foreboding of evil."

"You have heard nothing from the natives as to any coming trouble?"

"Nothing at all, Doctor, and I am convinced that nothing is known among them, or at any rate by the great bulk of them. Only one person has ever said a word to me that could indicate a knowledge of coming trouble, and that was this juggler we saw tonight. I thought nothing of his words at the time. That picture he showed me of the

attack by Sepoys first gave me an idea that his words might mean something. Since then we have heard much more of this discontent, and I am convinced now that the words had a meaning. They were simple enough. It was merely his assurance, two or three times repeated, that he would be ready to repay the service I had rendered him with his life. It might have been a mere phrase, and so I thought at the time. But I think now he had before him the possibility of some event occurring in which he might be able to repay the service I had rendered him."

"There may have been something in it and there may not," the Doctor said; "but, at any rate, Bathurst, he ought to be a potent ally. There doesn't seem any limit to his powers, and he might, for aught one knows, be able to convey you away as he did his daughter."

The Doctor spoke lightly, and then added, "But seriously, the man might be of service. These jugglers go among people of all classes. They are like the troubadours of the Middle Ages, welcomed everywhere; and they no doubt have every opportunity of learning what is going on, and it may be that he will be able to give you timely warning should there be any trouble at hand."

"That is possible enough," Bathurst agreed. "Well, Doctor, I shall be on horseback at six, so it is time for me to turn in," and taking his hat, walked across to his own bungalow.

The Doctor sat for some time smoking before he turned into bed. He had as he had said, heard rumors, when Bathurst first came out, that he had shown the white feather, but he had paid little attention to it at the time. They had been together at the first station to which Bathurst was appointed when he came out, and he had come to like him greatly; but his evident disinclination to join in any society, his absorption in his work, and a certain air of gravity unnatural in a young man of twenty, had puzzled him. He had at the time come to the conclusion that he must have had some unfortunate love affair, or have got into some very serious trouble at home. In time that impression had worn off. A young man speedily recovers from such a blow, however heavy, but no change had taken place in Bathurst, and the Doctor had in time become so accustomed to his manner that he had ceased to wonder over it. Now it was all explained. He sat thinking over it deeply for an hour, and then laid down his pipe.

"It is a terrible pity he came out here," he said. "Of course it is not his fault in the slightest degree. One might as well blame a man for being born a hunchback; but if there should be a row out here it will be terrible for him. I can quite understand his feeling about it. If I were placed as he is, and were called upon to fight, I should take a dose of prussic acid at once. Men talk: about their civilization, but we are little better than savages in our instincts. Courage is an almost useless virtue in a civilized community, but if it is called for, we despise a man in whom it is wanting, just as heartily as our tattooed ancestors did. Of course, in him it is a purely constitutional failing, and I have no doubt he would be as brave as a lion in any other circumstances —in fact, the incident of his attacking the tiger with that dog whip of his shows that he is so; and yet, if he should fail when the lives of women are at stake it would be a kindness to give him that dose of prussic acid, especially as Isobel Hannay will be here. That is the hardest part of it to him, I can see."

Three days later the force at Deennugghur was increased by the arrival of a troop of native cavalry, under a Captain Forster, who had just returned from leave in England.

"Do you know Captain Forster, Doctor?" Isobel Hannay asked, on the afternoon of his arrival. "Uncle tells me he is coming to dinner."

"Then you must look after your heart, my dear. He is one of the best looking fellows out here, a dashing soldier, and a devoted servant of the fair sex."

"You don't like him, Doctor," Isobel said quietly.

"I have not said so, my dear—far from it. I think I said a good deal for him."

"Yes, but you don't like him, Doctor. Why is that?"

"I suppose because he is not my sort of man," the Doctor said. "I have not seen him since his regiment and ours were at Delhi together, and we did not see much of each other then. Our tastes did not lie in the same direction."

"Well, I know what your tastes are, Doctor; what are his?"

"I will leave you to find out, my dear. He is all I told you—a very handsome man, with, as is perhaps natural, a very good opinion of himself, and he distinguished himself more than once in the Punjaub by acts of personal gallantry. I have no doubt he thinks it an awful nuisance coming to a quiet little station like this, and he will probably try to while away his time by making himself very agreeable to you. But I don't think you need quite believe all that he says."

"I have long ago got over the weakness of believing people's flattery, Doctor. However, now you have forewarned me I am forearmed."

The Doctor hesitated, and then said gravely, "It is not my habit to speak ill of people, my dear. You do me the justice to believe that?"

"I am sure it is not, Doctor."

"Well, child, in a station like this you must see a good deal of this man. He is a man who has won many hearts, and thrown them away. Don't let him win yours. He is not a good man; he has been mixed up in several grave scandals; he has been the ruin of more than one young man at cards and billiards; he is in all respects a dangerous man. Anatomically I suppose he has a heart, morally he has not a vestige of one. Whatever you do, child, don't let him make you like him."

"I don't think there is much fear of that, Doctor, after what you have said," she replied, with a quiet smile; "and I am obliged to you indeed for warning me."

"I know I am an old fool for meddling, but you know, my dear, I feel a sort of personal relationship to you, after your having been in my charge for six months. I don't know a single man in all India whom I would not rather see you fall in love with than with Captain Forster."

"I thought uncle did not seem particularly pleased: when he came in to tiffin, and said there was a new arrival."

"I should think not," the Doctor said; "the man in notoriously a dangerous fellow; and yet, as he has never actually outstepped what are considered the bounds which constitute an officer and a gentleman, he has retained his commission, but it has been a pretty close shave once or twice. Your uncle must know all about him, everyone does; but I don't suppose the Major will open his mouth to you on the subject—he is

one of those chivalrous sort of men who never thinks evil of anyone unless he is absolutely obliged to; but in a case like this I think he is wrong. At any rate, I have done what I consider to be my duty in the matter. Now I leave it in your hands. I am glad to see that you are looking quite yourself again, and have got over your fainting fit of the other night. I quite expected to be sent for professionally the next morning."

"Oh, yes, I have quite got over it, Doctor; I can't make out how I was so silly as to faint. I never did such a thing before, but it was so strange and mysterious that I felt quite bewildered, and the picture quite frightened me, but I don't know why. This is the first chance I have had since of speaking to you alone. What do you think of it, and why should you be dressed up as a native? and why should?" She stopped with a heightened color on her cheeks.

"You and Bathurst be dressed up, too? So you noticed your own likeness; nobody else but Bathurst and myself recognized the two figures that came out of the wood."

"Oh, you saw it too, Doctor. I thought I might have been mistaken, for, besides being stained, the face was all obscured somehow. Neither uncle, nor Mrs. Hunter, nor the girls, nor anyone else I have spoken to seem to have had an idea it was me, though they all recognized you.. What could it mean?"

"I. have not the slightest idea in the world," the Doctor said; "very likely it meant nothing. I certainly should not think any more about it. These jugglers' tricks are curious and unaccountable; but it is no use our worrying ourselves about them. Maybe we are all going to get up private theatricals some day, and perform an Indian drama. I have never taken any part in tomfooleries of that sort so far, but there is no saying what I may come to."

"Are you going to dine here, Doctor?"

"No, my dear; the Major asked me to come in, but I declined. I told him frankly that I did not like Forster, and that the less I saw of him the better I should be pleased."

The other guests turned out to be Captain and Mrs. Doolan and Mr. Congreave, one of the civilians at the station. The Doolans arrived first.

"You have not seen Captain Forster yet, Isobel," Mrs. Doolan said, as they sat down for a chat together. "I met him at Delhi soon after I came out. He is quite my beau ideal of a soldier in appearance, but I don't think he is nice, Isobel. I have heard all sorts of stories about him."

"Is that meant as a warning for me, Mrs. Doolan?" Isobel asked, smiling.

"Well, yes, I think it is, if you don't mind my giving you one. There are some men one can flirt with as much as one likes, and there are some men one can't; he is one of that sort. Privately, my dear, I don't mind telling you that at one time I did flirt with him—I had been accustomed to flirt in Ireland; we all flirt there, and mean nothing by it; but I had to give it up very suddenly. It wouldn't do, my dear, at all; his ideas of flirtation differed utterly from mine. I found I was playing with fire, and was fortunate in getting off without singeing my wings, which is more than a good many others would have done."

"He must be a horrid sort of man," Isobel said indignantly.

Mrs. Doolan laughed. “I don't think you will find him so; certainly that is not the general opinion of women. However, you will see him for yourself in a very few minutes.”

Isobel looked up with some curiosity when Captain Forster was announced, and at once admitted to herself that the Doctor's report as to his personal appearance was fully justified. He stood over six feet high, with a powerful frame, and an easy careless bearing; his hair was cut rather close, he wore a long tawny mustache, his eyes were dark, his teeth very white and perfect. A momentary look of surprise came across his face as his eyes fell on Isobel.

“I had hardly expected,” he said, as the Major introduced him to her, “to find no less than three unmarried ladies at Deennugghur. I had the pleasure of being introduced to the Miss Hunters this afternoon. How do you do, Mrs. Doolan? I think it is four years since I had the pleasure of knowing you in Delhi.”

“I believe that is the number, Captain Forster.”

“It seems a very long time to me,” he said.

“I thought you would say that,” she laughed. “It was quite the proper thing to say, Captain Forster; but I have no doubt it does seem longer to you than it does to me as you have been home since.”

“We are all here,” the Major broke in. “Captain Forster, will you take my niece in?”

“I suppose you find this very dull after Cawnpore, Miss Hannay?” Captain Forster asked.

“Indeed I do not,” Isobel said. “I like it better here; everything is sociable and pleasant, while at Cawnpore there was much more formality. Of course, there were lots of dinner parties, but I don't care for large dinner parties at all; it is so hot, and they last such a time. I think six is quite large enough. Then there is a general talk, and everyone can join in just as much as they like, while at a large dinner you have to rely entirely upon one person, and I think it is very hard work having to talk for an hour and a half to a stranger of whom you know nothing. Don't you agree with me?”

“Entirely, Miss Hannay; I am a pretty good hand at talking, but at times I have found it very hard work, I can assure you, especially when you take down a stranger to the station, so that you have no mutual acquaintance to pull to pieces.”

The dinner was bright and pleasant, and when the evening was over Isobel said to her uncle, “I think Captain Forster is very amusing, uncle.”

“Yes,” the Major agreed, “he is a good talker, a regular society man; he is no great favorite of mine; I think he will be a little too much for us in a small station like this.”

“How do you mean too much, uncle?”

The Major hesitated.

“Well, he won't have much to do with his troop of horse, and time will hang heavy on his hands.”

“Well, there is shooting, uncle.”

“Yes, there is shooting, but I don't think that is much in his line. Tiffins and calls, and society generally occupy most of his time, I fancy, and I think he is fonder of billiards and cards than is good for him or others. Of course, being here by himself, as

he is, we must do our best to be civil to him, and that sort of thing, but if we were at Cawnpore he is a man I should not care about being intimate in the house."

"I understand, uncle; but certainly he is pleasant."

"Oh, yes, he is very pleasant," the Major said dryly, in a tone that seemed to express that Forster's power of making himself pleasant was by no means a recommendation in his eyes.

But Captain Forster had apparently no idea whatever that his society could be anything but welcome, and called the next day after luncheon.

"I have been leaving my pasteboard at all the residents," he said; "not a very large circle. Of course, I knew Mrs. Rintoul at Delhi, as well as Mrs. Doolan. I did not know any of the others. They seem pleasant people."

"They are very pleasant," Isobel said.

"I left one for a man named Bathurst. He was out. Is that the Bathurst, Major Hannay, who was in a line regiment—I forget its number—and left very suddenly in the middle of the fighting in the Punjaub?"

"Yes; I believe Bathurst was in the army about that time," the Major said; "but I don't know anything about the circumstances of his leaving."

Had Captain Forster known the Major better he would have been aware that what he meant to say was that he did not wish to know, but he did not detect the inflection of his voice, and went on—"They say he showed the white feather. If it is the same man, I was at school with him, and unless he has improved since then, I am sure I have no wish to renew his acquaintance."

"I like him very much," the Major said shortly; "he is great friends with Dr. Wade, who has the very highest opinion of him, and I believe he is generally considered to be one of the most rising young officers of his grade."

"Oh, I have nothing to say against him," Captain Forster said; "but he was a poor creature at school, and I do not think that there was any love lost between us. Did you know him before you came here?"

"I only met him at the last races in Cawnpore," the Major said; "he was stopping with the Doctor."

"Quite a character, Wade."

Isobel's tongue was untied now.

"I think he is one of the kindest and best gentlemen I ever met," the girl said hotly; "he took care of me coming out here, and no one could have been kinder than he was."

"I have no doubt he is all that," Captain Forster said gently; "still he is a character, Miss Hannay, taking the term character to mean a person who differs widely from other people. I believe he is very skillful in his profession, but I take it he is a sort of Abernethy, and tells the most startling truths to his patients."

"That I can quite imagine," Isobel said; "the Doctor hates humbug of all sorts, and I don't think I should like to call him in myself for an imaginary ailment."

“I rather put my foot in it there,” Captain Forster said to himself, as he sauntered back to his tent. “The Major didn't like my saying anything against Bathurst, and the girl did not like my remark about the Doctor. I wonder whether she objected also to what I said about that fellow Bathurst—a sneaking little hound he was, and there is no doubt about his showing the white feather in the Punjaub. However, I don't think that young lady is of the sort to care about a coward, and if she asks any questions, as I dare say she will, after what I have said, she will find that the story is a true one. What a pretty little thing she is! I did not see a prettier face all the time I was at home. What with her and Mrs. Doolan, time is not likely to hang so heavily here as I had expected.”

The Major, afraid that Isobel might ask him some questions about this story of Bathurst leaving the army, went off hastily as soon as Captain Forster had left. Isobel sat impatiently tapping the floor with her foot, awaiting the Doctor, who usually came for half an hour's chat in the afternoon.

“Well, child, how did your dinner go off yesterday, and what did you think of your new visitor? I saw him come away from here half an hour ago. I suppose he has been calling.”

“I don't like him at all,” Isobel said decidedly.

“No? Well, then, you are an exception to the general rule.”

“I thought him pleasant enough last night,” Isobel said frankly. “He has a deferential sort of way about him when he speaks to one that one can hardly help liking. But he made me angry today. In the first place, Doctor, he said you were a character.”

The Doctor chuckled. “Well, that is true enough, my dear. There was no harm in that.”

“And then he said”—and she broke off—“he said what I feel sure cannot be true. He said that Mr. Bathurst left the army because he showed the white feather. It is not true, is it? I am sure it can't be true.”

The Doctor did not reply immediately.

“It is an old story,” he said presently, “and ought not to have been brought up again. I don't suppose Forster or anyone else knows the rights of the case. When a man leaves his regiment and retires when it is upon active service, there are sure to be spiteful stories getting about, often without the slightest foundation. But even if it had been true, it would hardly be to Bathurst's disadvantage now he is no longer in the army, and courage is not a vital necessity on the part of a civilian.”

“You can't mean that, Doctor; surely every man ought to be brave. Could anyone possibly respect a man who is a coward? I don't believe it, Doctor, for a moment.”

“Courage, my dear, is not a universal endowment—it is a physical as much as a moral virtue. Some people are physically brave and morally cowards; others are exactly the reverse. Some people are constitutionally cowards all round, while in others cowardice shows itself only partially. I have known a man who is as brave as a lion in battle, but is terrified by a rat. I have known a man brave in other respects lose his nerve altogether in a thunderstorm. In neither of these cases was it the man's own fault; it was constitutional, and by no effort could he conquer it. I consider Bathurst to

be an exceptionally noble character. I am sure that he is capable of acts of great bravery in some directions, but it is possible that he is, like the man I have spoken of, constitutionally weak in others."

"But the great thing is to be brave in battle, Doctor! You would not call a man a coward simply because he was afraid of a rat, but you would call a man a coward who was afraid in battle. To be a coward there seems to me to be a coward all round. I have always thought the one virtue in man I really envied was bravery, and that a coward was the most despicable creature living. It might not be his actual fault, but one can't help that. It is not anyone's fault if he is fearfully ugly or born an idiot, for example. But cowardice seems somehow different. Not to be brave when he is strong seems to put a man below the level of a woman. I feel sure, Doctor, there must be some mistake, and that this story cannot be true. I have seen a good deal of Mr. Bathurst since we have been here, and you have always spoken so well of him, he is the last man I should have thought would be—would be like that."

"I know the circumstances of the case, child. You can trust me when I say that there is nothing in Bathurst's conduct that diminishes my respect for him in the slightest degree, and that in some respects he is as brave a man as any I know."

"Yes, Doctor, all that may be; but you do not answer my question. Did Mr. Bathurst leave the army because he showed cowardice? If he did, and you know it, why did you invite him here? why did you always praise him? why did you not say, 'In other respects this man may be good and estimable, but he is that most despicable thing, a coward'?"

There was such a passion of pain in her voice and face that the Doctor only said quietly, "I did not know it, my dear, or I should have told you at first that in this one point he was wanting. It is, I consider, the duty of those who know things to speak out. But he is certainly not what you say."

Isobel tossed her head impatiently. "We need not discuss it, Doctor. It is nothing to me whether Mr. Bathurst is brave or not, only it is not quite pleasant to learn that you have been getting on friendly terms with a man who—"

"Don't say any more," the Doctor broke in. "You might at least remember he is a friend of mine. There is no occasion for us to quarrel, my dear, and to prevent the possibility of such a thing I will be off at once."

After he had left Isobel sat down to think over what had been said. He had not directly answered her questions, but he had not denied that the rumor that Bathurst had retired from the army because he was wanting in courage was well founded. Everything he had said, in fact, was an excuse rather than a denial. The Doctor was as stanch a friend as he was bitter an opponent. Could he have denied it he would have done so strongly and indignantly.

It was clear that, much as he liked Bathurst, he believed him wanting in physical courage. He had said, indeed, that he believed he was brave in some respects, and had asserted that he knew of one exceptional act of courage that he had performed; but what was that if a man had had to leave the army because he was a coward? To Isobel it seemed that of all things it was most dreadful that a man should be wanting in courage. Tales of daring and bravery had always been her special delight, and, being

full of life and spirit herself, it had not seemed even possible to her that a gentleman could be a coward, and that Bathurst could be so was to her well nigh incredible.

It might, as the Doctor had urged, be in no way his fault, but this did not affect the fact. He might be more to be pitied than to be blamed; but pity of that kind, so far from being akin to love, was destructive of it.

Unconsciously she had raised Bathurst on a lofty pinnacle. The Doctor had spoken very highly of him. She had admired the energy with which, instead of caring, as others did, for pleasure, he devoted himself to his work. Older men than himself listened to his opinions. His quiet and somewhat restrained manner was in contrast to the careless fun and good humor of most of those with whom she came in contact. It had seemed to her that he was a strong man, one who could be relied upon implicitly at all times, and she had come in the few weeks she had been at Deennugghur to rely upon his opinion, and to look forward to his visits, and even to acknowledge to herself that he approached her ideal of what a man should be more than anyone else she had met.

And now this was all shattered at a blow. He was wanting in man's first attribute. He had left the army, if not in disgrace, at least under a cloud and even his warm friend, the Doctor, could not deny that the accusation of cowardice was well founded. The pain of the discovery opened her eyes to the fact which she had not before, even remotely, admitted to herself, that she was beginning to love him, and the discovery was a bitter one.

"I may thank Captain Forster for that, at least," she said to herself, as she angrily wiped a tear from her cheek; "he has opened my eyes in time. What should I have felt if I had found too late that I had come to love a man who was a coward—who had left the army because he was afraid? I should have despised myself as much as I should despise him. Well, that is my first lesson. I shall not trust in appearances again. Why, I would rather marry a man like Captain Forster, even if everything they say about him is true, than a man who is a coward. At least he is brave, and has shown himself so."

The Doctor had gone away in a state of extreme irritation.

"Confound the meddling scoundrel!" he said to himself, as he surprised the horse with a sharp cut of the whip. "Just when things were going on as I wished. I had quite set my mind on it, and though I am sure Bathurst would never have spoken to her till he had told her himself about that unfortunate failing of his, it would have been altogether different coming from his own lips just as he told it to me. Of course, my lips were sealed and I could not put the case in the right light. I would give three months' pay for the satisfaction of horsewhipping that fellow Forster. Still, I can't say he did it maliciously, for he could not have known Bathurst was intimate there, or that there was anything between them. The question is, am I to tell Bathurst that she has heard about it? I suppose I had better. Ah, here is the Major," and he drew up his horse.

"Anything new, Major? You look put out."

"Yes, there is very bad news, Doctor. A Sowar has just brought a letter to me from the Colonel saying that the General has got a telegram that the 19th Native Infantry at Berhampore have refused to use the cartridges served out to them, and that yesterday

a Sepoy of the 34th at Barrackpore raised seditious cries in front of the lines, and when Baugh, the adjutant, and the sergeant major attempted to seize him he wounded them both, while the regiment stood by and refused to aid them. The 19th are to be disbanded, and no doubt the 34th will be, too."

"That is bad news indeed, Major, and looks as if this talk about general disaffection were true. Had there been trouble but at one station it might have been the effect of some local grievance, but happening at two places, it looks as if it were part of a general plot. Well, we must hope it will go no farther."

"It is very bad," said the Major, "but at any rate we may hope we shall have no troubles here; the regiment has always behaved well, and I am sure they have no reason to complain of their treatment. If the Colonel has a fault, it is that of over leniency with the men."

"That is so," the Doctor agreed; "but the fact is, Major, we know really very little about the Hindoo mind. We can say with some sort of certainty what Europeans will do under given circumstances, but though I know the natives, I think, pretty nearly as well as most men, I feel that I really know nothing about them. They appear mild and submissive, and have certainly proved faithful on a hundred battlefields, but we don't know whether that is their real character. Their own history, before we stepped in and altered its current, shows them as faithless, bloodthirsty and cruel; whether they have changed their nature under our rule, or simply disguised it, Heaven only knows."

"At any rate," the Major said, "they have always shown themselves attached to their English officers. There are numberless instances where they have displayed the utmost devotion for them, and although some scheming intriguers may have sown the seeds of discontent among them, and these lies about the cartridges may have excited their religious prejudices, and may even lead them to mutiny, I cannot believe for an instant that the Sepoys will lift their hands against their officers."

"I hope not," the Doctor said gravely. "A tiger's cub, when tamed, is one of the prettiest of playthings, but when it once tastes blood it is as savage a beast as its mother was before it. Of course, I hope for the best, but if the Sepoys once break loose I would not answer for anything they might do. They have been pretty well spoilt, Major, till they have come to believe that it is they who conquered India and not we."

CHAPTER XI.

That evening, after dining alone, the Doctor went in to Bathurst's. The latter had already heard the news, and they talked it over for some time. Then the Doctor said, "Have you seen Forster, Bathurst, since he arrived?"

"No, I was out when he left his card. I was at school with him.. I heard when I was in England that he was out here in the native cavalry, but I have never run across him before, and I own I had no wish to do so. He was about two years older than I was, and was considered the cock of the school. He was one of my chief tormentors. I don't know that he was a bully generally—fellows who are really plucky seldom are; but he disliked me heartily, and I hated him.

"I had the habit of telling the truth when questioned, and he narrowly escaped expulsion owing to my refusing to tell a lie about his being quietly in bed when, in fact, he and two or three other fellows had been out at a public house. He never forgave me for it, for he himself would have told a lie without hesitation to screen himself, or, to do him justice, to screen anyone else; and the mere fact that I myself had been involved in the matter, having been sent out by one of the bigger fellows, and, therefore, having got myself a flogging by my admission, was no mitigation in his eyes of my offense of what he called sneaking.

"So you may imagine I have no particular desire to meet him again. Unless he has greatly changed, he would do me a bad turn if he had the chance."

"I don't think he has greatly changed," the Doctor said. "That was really what I came in here for this evening rather than to talk about this Sepoy business. I am sorry to say, Bathurst, that when he was in at the Major's today your name happened to be mentioned, and he said at once, 'Is that the Bathurst who they say showed the white feather at Chillianwalla and left the army in consequence?'"

Bathurst's face grew pale and his fingers closed. He remained silent a minute, and then said, "It does not matter; she would have been sure to hear it sooner or later, and I should have told her myself if he had not done so; besides, if, as I am afraid, this Berhampore business is the beginning of trouble, and of such trouble as we have never had since we set foot in India, it is likely that everyone will know what she knows now. Has she spoken to you about it? I suppose she has, or you would not have known that he mentioned it."

"Yes, she was most indignant about it, and did not believe it."

"And what did you say, Doctor?" he asked indifferently.

"Well, I was sorry I could not tell her exactly what you told me. It would have been better if I could have done so. I simply said there were many sorts of courage, and that I was sure that you possessed many sorts in a very high degree, but I could not, of course, deny; although I did not admit, the truth of the report he had mentioned."

"I don't think it makes much difference one way or the other," Bathurst said wearily. "I have known all along that Isobel Hannay would not marry a coward, only I

have gone on living in a fool's paradise. However, it is over now—the sooner it is all over the better."

"My dear fellow," the Doctor said earnestly, "don't take this thing too much to heart. I don't wish to try and persuade you that it is not a grave misfortune, but even suppose this trouble takes the very worst form possible, I do not think you will come so very badly out of it as you anticipate. Even assuming that you are unable to do your part in absolute fighting, there may be other opportunities, and most likely will, in which you may be able to show that although unable to control your nerves in the din of battle, you possess in other respects coolness and courage. That feat of yours of attacking the tiger with the dog whip shows conclusively that under many circumstances you are capable of most daring deeds."

Bathurst sat looking down for some minutes. "God grant that it may be so," he said at last; "but it is no use talking about it any more, Doctor. I suppose Major Hannay will keep a sharp lookout over the men?"

"Yes; there was a meeting of the officers this afternoon. It was agreed to make no outward change, and to give the troops no cause whatever to believe that they are suspected. They all feel confident of the goodwill of the men; at the same time they will watch them closely, and if the news comes of further trouble, they will prepare the courthouse as a place of refuge."

"That is a very good plan; but of course everything depends upon whether, if the troops do rise in mutiny, the people of Oude should join them. They are a fighting race, and if they should throw in their lot against us the position would be a desperate one."

"Well, there is no doubt," the Doctor said, "that the Rajah of Bithoor would be with us; that will make Cawnpore safe, and will largely influence all the great Zemindars, though there is no doubt that a good many of them have been sulky ever since the disarmament order was issued. I believe there are few of them who have not got cannon hidden away or buried, and as for the people, the number of arms given up was as nothing to what we know they possessed. In other parts of India I believe the bulk of the people will be with us; but here in Oude, our last annexation, I fear that they will side against us, unless all the great landowners range themselves on our side."

"As far as I can see," Bathurst said, "the people are contented with the change. I don't say what I may call the professional fighting class, the crowd of retainers kept by the great landowners, who were constantly fighting against each other. Annexation has put a stop to all that, and the towns are crowded with these fighting men, who hate us bitterly; but the peasants, the tillers of the soil, have benefited greatly. They are no longer exposed to raids by their powerful neighbors, and can cultivate their fields in peace and quiet. Unfortunately their friendship, such as it is, will not weigh in the slightest degree in the event of a struggle. At any rate, I am sure they are not behind the scenes, and know nothing whatever of any coming trouble. Going as I do among them, and talking to them as one of themselves, I should have noticed it had there been any change in them; and of late naturally I have paid special notice to their manner. Well, if it is to come I hope it will come soon, for anything is better than suspense."

Two days later Major Hannay read out to the men on parade an official document, assuring them that there was no truth whatever in the statements that had been made that the cartridges served out to them had been greased with pigs' fat. They were precisely the same as those that they had used for years, and the men were warned against listening to seditious persons who might try to poison their minds and shake their loyalty to the Government. He then told them that he was sorry to say that at one or two stations the men had been foolish enough to listen to disloyal counsels, and that in consequence the regiments had been disbanded and the men had forfeited all the advantages in the way of pay and pension they had earned by many years of good conduct. He said that he had no fear whatever of any such trouble arising with them, as they knew that they had been well treated, that any legitimate complaint they might make had always been attended to, and that their officers had their welfare thoroughly at heart.

When he had finished, the senior native officer stepped forward, and in the name of the detachment assured the Major that the men were perfectly contented, and would in all cases follow their officers, even if they ordered them to march against their countrymen. At the conclusion of his speech he called upon the troops to give three cheers for the Major and officers, and this was responded to with a show of great enthusiasm.

This demonstration was deemed very satisfactory, and the uneasiness among the residents abated considerably, while the Major and his officers felt convinced that, whatever happened at other stations, there would at least be no trouble at Deennugghur.

“Well, even you are satisfied, Doctor, I suppose?” the Major said, as a party of them who had been dining with Dr. Wade were smoking in the veranda.

“I was hopeful before, Major, and I am hopeful now; but I can't say that today's parade has influenced me in the slightest. Whatever virtues the Hindoo may have, he has certainly that of knowing how to wait. I believe, from what took place, that they have no intention of breaking out at present; whether they are waiting to see what is done at other stations, or until they receive a signal, is more than I can say; but their assurances do not weigh with me to the slightest extent. Their history is full of cases of perfidious massacre. I should say, 'Trust them as long as you can, but don't relax your watch.'”

“You are a confirmed croaker,” Captain Rintoul said.

“I do not think so, Rintoul. I know the men I am talking about, and I know the Hindoos generally. They are mere children, and can be molded like clay. As long as we had the molding, all went well; but if they fall into the hands of designing men they can be led in another direction just as easily as we have led them in ours. I own that I don't see who can be sufficiently interested in the matter to conceive and carry out a great conspiracy of this kind. The King of Oude is a captive in our hands, the King of Delhi is too old to play such a part. Scindia and Holkar may possibly long for the powers their fathers possessed, but they are not likely to act together, and may be regarded as rivals rather than friends, and yet if it is not one of these who has been brewing this storm. I own I don't see who can be at the bottom of it, unless it has really originated from some ambitious spirits among the Sepoys, who look in the

event of success to being masters of the destinies of India. It is a pity we did not get a few more views from that juggler; we might have known a little more of it then."

"Don't talk about him, Doctor," Wilson said; "it gives me the cold shivers to think of that fellow and what he did; I have hardly slept since then. It was the most creepy thing I ever saw. Richards and I have talked it over every evening we have been alone together, and we can't make head or tail of the affair. Richards thinks it wasn't the girl at all who went up on that pole, but a sort of balloon in her shape. But then, as I say, there was the girl standing among us before she took her place on the pole. We saw her sit down and settle herself on the cushion so that she was balanced right. So it could not have been a balloon then, and if it were a balloon afterwards, when did she change? At any rate the light below was sufficient to see well until she was forty or fifty feet up, and after that she shone out, and we never lost sight of her until she was ever so high. I can understand the pictures, because there might have been a magic lantern somewhere, but that girl trick, and the basket trick, and that great snake are altogether beyond me."

"So I should imagine, Wilson," the Doctor said dryly; "and if I were you I would not bother my head about it.. Nobody has succeeded in finding out any of them yet, and all the wondering in the world is not likely to get you any nearer to it."

"That is what I feel, Doctor, but it is very riling to see things that you can't account for anyhow. I wish he had sent up Richards on the pole instead of the girl. I would not have minded going up myself if he had asked me, though I expect I should have jumped off before it got up very far, even at the risk of breaking my neck."

"I should not mind risking that," the Doctor said, "though I doubt whether I should have known any more about it when I came down; but these jugglers always bring a girl or a boy with them instead of calling somebody out from the audience, as they do at home. Well, if things are quiet we will organize another hunt, Wilson. I have heard of a tiger fifteen miles away from where we killed our last, and you and Richards shall go with me if you like."

"I should like it of all things, Doctor, provided it comes off by day. I don't think I care about sitting through another night on a tree, and then not getting anything like a fair shot at the beast after all."

"We will go by day," the Doctor said. "Bathurst has promised to get some elephants from one of the Zemindars; we will have a regular party this time. I have half promised Miss Hannay she shall have a seat in a howdah with me if the Major will give her leave, and in that case we will send out tents and make a regular party of it. What do you say, Major?"

"I am perfectly willing, Doctor, and have certainly no objection to trusting Isobel to your care. I know you are not likely to miss."

"No, I am not likely to miss, certainly; and besides, there will be Wilson and Richards to give him the coup de grace if I don't finish him."

There was a general laugh, for the two subalterns had been chaffed a good deal at both missing the tiger on the previous occasion.

"Well, when shall it be, Major?"

"Not just at present, at any rate," the Major said. "We must see how things are going on. I certainly should not think of going outside the station now, nor could I give leave to any officer to do so; but if things settle down, and we hear no more of this cartridge business for the next ten days or a fortnight, we will see about it."

But although no news of any outbreak similar to that at Barrackpore was received for some days, the report that came showed a widespread restlessness. At various stations, all over India, fires, believed to be the work of incendiaries, took place, and there was little abatement of the uneasiness. It become known, too, that a native officer had before the rising of Berhampore given warning of the mutiny, and had stated that there was a widespread plot throughout the native regiments to rise, kill their officers, and then march to Delhi, where they were all to gather.

The story was generally disbelieved, although the actual rising had shown that, to some extent, the report was well founded; still men could not bring themselves to believe that the troops among whom they had lived so long, and who had fought so well for us, could meditate such gross treachery, without having, as far as could be seen, any real cause for complaint.

The conduct of the troops at Deennugghur was excellent, and the Colonel wrote that at Cawnpore there were no signs whatever of disaffection, and that the Rajah of Bithoor had offered to come down at the head of his own troops should there be any symptoms of mutiny among the Sepoys. Altogether things looked better, and a feeling of confidence that there would be no serious trouble spread through the station.

The weather had set in very hot, and there was no stirring out now for the ladies between eleven o'clock and five or six in the afternoon. Isobel, however, generally went in for a chat, the first thing after early breakfast, with Mrs. Doolan, whose children were fractious with prickly heat.

"I only wish we had some big, high mountain, my dear, somewhere within reach, where we could establish the children through the summer and run away ourselves occasionally to look after them. We are very badly off here in Oude for that. You are looking very pale yourself the last few days."

"I suppose I feel it a little," Isobel said, "and of course this anxiety everyone has been feeling worries one. Everyone seems to agree that there is no fear of trouble with the Sepoys here; still, as nothing else is talked about, one cannot help feeling nervous about it. However, as things seem settling down now, I hope we shall soon get something else to talk about."

"I have not seen Mr. Bathurst lately," Mrs. Doolan said presently.

"Nor have we," Isobel said quietly; "it is quite ten days since we saw him last."

"I suppose he is falling back into his hermit ways," Mrs. Doolan said carelessly, shooting a keen glance at Isobel, who was leaning over one of the children.

"He quite emerged from his shell for a bit. Mrs. Hunter was saying she never saw such a change in a man, but I suppose he has got tired of it. Captain Forster arrived just in time to fill up the gap. How do you like him, Isobel?"

"He is amusing," the girl said quietly; "I have never seen anyone quite like him before; he talks in an easy, pleasant sort of way, and tells most amusing stories. Then, when he sits down by one he has the knack of dropping his voice and talking in a

confidential sort of way, even when it is only about the weather. I am always asking myself how much of it is real, and what there is under the surface."

Mrs. Doolan nodded approval.

"I don't think there is much under the surface, dear, and what there is is just as well left alone; but there is no doubt he can be delightful when he chooses, and very few women would not feel flattered by the attentions of a man who is said to be the handsomest officer in the Indian army, and who has besides distinguished himself several times as a particularly dashing officer."

"I don't think handsomeness goes for much in a man," Isobel said shortly.

Mrs. Doolan laughed.

"Why should it not go for as much as prettiness in a woman? It is no use being cynical, Isobel; it is part of our nature to admire pretty things, and as far as I can see an exceptionally handsome man is as legitimate an object of admiration as a lovely woman."

"Yes, to admire, Mrs. Doolan, but not to like."

"Well, my dear, I don't want to be hurrying you away, but I think you had better get back before the sun gets any higher. You may say you don't feel the heat much, but you are looking pale and fagged, and the less you are out in the sun the better."

Isobel had indeed been having a hard time during those ten days. At first she had thought of little but what she should do when Bathurst called. It seemed impossible that she could be exactly the same with him as she had been before, that was quite out of the question, and yet how was she to be different?

Ten days had passed without his coming. This was so unusual that an idea came into her mind which terrified her, and the first time when the Doctor came in and found her alone she said, "Of course, Dr. Wade, you have not mentioned to Mr. Bathurst the conversation we had, but it is curious his not having been here since."

"Certainly I mentioned it," the Doctor said calmly; "how could I do otherwise? It was evident to me that he would not be welcomed here as he was before, and I could not do otherwise than warn him of the change he might expect to find, and to give him the reason for it."

Isobel stood the picture of dismay. "I don't think you had any right to do so, Doctor," she said. "You have placed me in a most painful position."

"In not so painful a one as it would have been, my dear, if he had noticed the change himself, as he must have done, and asked for the cause of it."

Isobel stood twisting her fingers over each other before her nervously.

"But what am I to do?" she asked.

"I do not see that there is anything more for you to do," the Doctor said. "Mr. Bathurst may not be perfect in all respects, but he is certainly too much of a gentleman to force his visits where they are not wanted. I do not say he will not come here at all, for not to do so after being here so much would create comment and talk in the station, which would be as painful to you as to him, but he certainly will not come here more often than is necessary to keep up appearances."

"I don't think you ought to have told him," Isobel repeated, much distressed.

"I could not help it, my dear. You would force me to admit there was some truth in the story Captain Forster told you, and I was, therefore, obliged to acquaint him with the fact or he would have had just cause to reproach me. Besides, you spoke of despising a man who was not physically brave."

"You never told him that, Doctor; surely you never told him that?"

"I only told what it was necessary he should know, my dear, namely, that you had heard the story, that you had questioned me, and that I, knowing the facts from his lips, admitted that there was some foundation for the story, while asserting that I was convinced that he was morally a brave man. He did not ask how you took the news, nor did I volunteer any information whatever on the subject, but he understood, I think, perfectly the light in which you would view a coward."

"But what am I to do when we meet, Doctor?" she asked piteously.

"I should say that you will meet just as ordinary acquaintances do meet, Miss Hannay. People are civil to others they are thrown with, however much they may distrust them at heart. You may be sure that Mr. Bathurst will make no allusion whatever to the matter. I think I can answer for it that you will see no shade of difference in his manner. This has always been a heavy burden for him, as even the most careless observer may see in his manner. I do not say that this is not a large addition to it, but I dare say he will pull through; and now I must be off."

"You are very unkind, Doctor, and I never knew you unkind before."

"Unkind!" the Doctor repeated, with an air of surprise. "In what way? I love this young fellow. I had cherished hopes for him that he hardly perhaps ventured to cherish for himself. I quite agree with you that what has passed has annihilated those hopes. You despise a man who is a coward. I am not surprised at that. Bathurst is the last man in the world who would force himself upon a woman who despised him. I have done my best to save you from being obliged to make a personal declaration of your sentiments. I repudiate altogether the accusation as being unkind. I don't blame you in the slightest. I think that your view is the one that a young woman of spirit would naturally take. I acquiesce in it entirely. I will go farther, I consider it a most fortunate occurrence for you both that you found it out in time."

Isobel's cheeks had flushed and paled several times while he was speaking; then she pressed her lips tightly together, and as he finished she said, "I think, Doctor, it will be just as well not to discuss the matter further."

"I am quite of your opinion," he said. "We will agree not to allude to it again. Goodby."

And then Isobel had retired to her room and cried passionately, while the Doctor had gone off chuckling to himself as if he were perfectly satisfied with the state of affairs.

During the week that had since elapsed the Major had wondered and grumbled several times at Bathurst's absence.

"I expect," he said one day, when a note of refusal had come from him, "that he doesn't care about meeting Forster. You remember Forster said they had been at school together, and from the tone in which he spoke it is evident that they disliked each other there. No doubt he has heard from the Doctor that Forster is frequently in

here," and the Major spoke rather irritably, for it seemed to him that Isobel showed more pleasure in the Captain's society than she should have done after what he had said to her about him; indeed, Isobel, especially when the Doctor was present, appeared by no means to object to Captain Forster's attentions.

Upon the evening, however, of the day when Isobel had spoken to Mrs. Doolan, Bathurst came in, rather late in the evening.

"How are you, Bathurst?" the Major said cordially. "Why, you have become quite a stranger. We haven't seen you for over a fortnight. Do you know Captain Forster?"

"We were at school together formerly, I believe," Bathurst said quietly. "We have not met since, and I fancy we are both changed beyond recognition."

Captain Forster looked with surprise at the strong, well knit figure. He had not before seen Bathurst, and had pictured him to himself as a weak, puny man.

"I certainly should not have known Mr. Bathurst," he said. "I have changed a great deal, no doubt, but he has certainly changed more."

There was no attempt on the part of either to shake hands. As they moved apart Isobel came into the room.

A quick flash of color spread over her face when, upon entering, she saw Bathurst talking to her uncle. Then she advanced, shook hands with him as usual, and said, "It is quite a time since you were here, Mr. Bathurst. If everyone was as full of business as you are, we should get on badly."

Then she moved on without waiting for a reply and sat down, and was soon engaged in a lively conversation with. Captain Forster, whilst Bathurst, a few minutes later, pleading that as he had been in the saddle all day he must go and make up for lost time, took his leave.

Captain Forster had noticed the flush on Isobel's cheeks when she saw Bathurst, and had drawn his own conclusions.

"There has been a flirtation between them," he said to himself; "but I fancy I have put a spoke in his wheel. She gave him the cold shoulder unmistakably."

April passed, and as matters seemed to be quieting down, there being no fresh trouble at any of the stations, the Major told Dr. Wade that he really saw no reason why the projected tiger hunt should not take place. The Doctor at once took the matter in hand, and drove out the next morning to the village from which he had received news about the tiger, had a long talk with the shikaris of the place, took a general view of the country, settled the line in which the beat should take place, and arranged for a large body of beaters to be on the spot at the time agreed on.

Bathurst undertook to obtain the elephants from two Zemindars in the neighborhood, who promised to furnish six, all of which were more or less accustomed to the sport; while the Major and Mr. Hunter, who had been a keen sportsman, although he had of late given up the pursuit of large game, arranged for a number of bullock carts for the transport of tents and stores.

Bathurst himself declined to be one of the party, which was to consist of Mr. Hunter and his eldest daughter, the Major and Isobel, the Doctor, the two subalterns, and Captain Forster. Captain Doolan said frankly that he was no shot, and more likely to

hit one of the party than the tiger. Captain Rintoul at first accepted, but his wife shed such floods of tears at the idea of his leaving her and going into danger, that for the sake of peace he agreed to remain at home.

Wilson and Richards were greatly excited over the prospect, and talked of nothing else; they were burning to wipe out the disgrace of having missed on the previous occasion. Each of them interviewed the Doctor privately, and implored him to put them in a position where they were likely to have the first shot. Both used the same arguments, namely, that the Doctor had killed so many tigers that one more or less could make no difference to him, and if they missed, which they modestly admitted was possible, he could still bring the animal down.

As the Doctor was always in a good temper when there was a prospect of sport, he promised each of them to do all that he could for them, at the same time pointing out that it was always quite a lottery which way the tiger might break out.

Isobel was less excited than she would have thought possible over the prospect of taking part in a tiger hunt. She had many consultations to hold with Mrs. Hunter, the Doctor, and Rumzan as to the food to be taken, and the things that would be absolutely necessary for camping out; for, as it was possible that the first day's beat would be unsuccessful, they were to be prepared for at least two days' absence from home. Two tents were to be taken, one for the gentlemen, the other for Isobel and Mary Hunter. These, with bedding and camp furniture, cooking utensils and provisions, were to be sent off at daybreak, while the party were to start as soon as the heat of the day was over.

"I wish Bathurst had been coming," Major Hannay said, as, with Isobel by his side, he drove out of the cantonment. "He seems to have slipped away from us altogether; he has only been in once for the last three or four weeks. You haven't had a tiff with him about anything, have you, Isobel? It seems strange his ceasing so suddenly to come after our seeing so much of him."

"No, uncle, I have not seen him except when you have. What put such an idea into your mind?"

"I don't know, my dear; young people do have tiffs sometimes about all sorts of trifles, though I should not have thought that Bathurst was the sort of man to do anything of that sort. I don't think that he likes Forster, and does not care to meet him. I fancy that is at the bottom of it."

"Very likely," Isobel said innocently, and changed the subject.

It was dark when they reached the appointed spot, and indeed from the point where they left the road a native with a torch had run ahead to show them the way. The tents looked bright; two or three large fires were burning round them, and the lamps had already been lighted within.

"These tents do look cozy," Mary Hunter said, as she and Isobel entered the one prepared for them. "I do wish one always lived under canvas during the hot weather."

"They look cool," Isobel said, "but I don't suppose they are really as cool as the bungalows; but they do make them comfortable. Here is the bathroom all ready, and I am sure we want it after that dusty drive. Will you have one first, or shall I? We must

make haste, for Rumzan said dinner would be ready in half an hour. Fortunately we shan't be expected to do much in the way of dressing."

The dinner was a cheerful meal, and everyone was in high spirits.

The tiger had killed a cow the day before, and the villagers were certain that he had retired to a deep nullah round which a careful watch had been kept all day. Probably he would steal out by night to make a meal from the carcass of the cow, but it had been arranged that he was to do this undisturbed, and that the hunt was to take place by daylight.

"It is wonderful how the servants manage everything," Isobel said. "The table is just as well arranged as it is at home. People would hardly believe in England, if they could see us sitting here, that we were only out on a two days' picnic. They would be quite content there to rough it and take their meals sitting on the ground, or anyway they could get them. It really seems ridiculous having everything like this."

"There is nothing like making yourself comfortable," the Doctor said; "and as the servants have an easy time of it generally, it does them good to bestir themselves now and then. The expense of one or two extra bullock carts is nothing, and it makes all the difference in comfort."

"How far is the nullah from here, Doctor?" Wilson, who could think of nothing else but the tiger, asked.

"About two miles. It is just as well not to go any nearer. Not that he would be likely to pay us a visit, but he might take the alarm and shift his quarters. No, no more wine, Major; we shall want our blood cool in the morning. Now we will go out to look at the elephants and have a talk with the mahouts, and find out which of the animals can be most trusted to stand steady. It is astonishing what a dread most elephants have of tigers. I was on one once that I was assured would face anything, and the brute bolted and went through some trees, and I was swept off the pad and was half an hour before I opened my eyes. It was a mercy I had not every rib broken. Fortunately I was a lightweight, or I might have been killed. And I have seen the same sort of thing happen a dozen times, so we must choose a couple of steady ones, anyhow, for the ladies."

For the next hour they strolled about outside. The Doctor cross questioned the mahouts and told off the elephants for the party; then there was a talk with the native shikaris and arrangements made for the beat, and at an early hour all retired to rest. The morning was just breaking when they were called. Twenty minutes later they assembled to take a cup of coffee before starting. The elephants were arranged in front of the tents, and they were just about to mount when a horse was heard coming at a gallop.

"Wait a moment," the Major said; "it may be a message of some sort from the station." A minute later Bathurst rode in and reined up his horse in front of the tent.

"Why, Bathurst, what brings you here? Changed your mind at the last moment, and found you could get away? That's right; you shall come on the pad with me."

"No, I have not come for that, Major; I have brought a dispatch that arrived at two o'clock this morning. Doolan opened it and came to me, and asked me to bring it on to you, as I knew the way and where your camp was to be pitched."

“Nothing serious, I hope, Bathurst,” the Major said, struck with the gravity with which Bathurst spoke. “It must be something important, or Doolan would never have routed you off like that.”

“It is very serious, Major,” Bathurst said, in a low voice. “May I suggest you had better go into the tent to read it? Some of the servants understand English.”

“Come in with me,” the Major said, and led the way into the tent, where the lamps were still burning on the breakfast table, although the light had broadened out over the sky outside. It was with grave anticipation of evil that the Major took the paper from its envelope, but his worst fears were more than verified by the contents.

“My Dear Major: The General has just received a telegram with terrible news from Meerut. 'Native troops mutinied, murdered officers, women, and children, opened jails and burned cantonments, and marched to Delhi.' It is reported that there has been a general rising there and the massacre of all Europeans. Although this is not confirmed, the news is considered probable. We hear also that the native cavalry at Lucknow have mutinied. Lawrence telegraphs that he has suppressed it with the European troops there, and has disarmed the mutineers. I believe that our regiment will be faithful, but none can be trusted now. I should recommend your preparing some fortified house to which all Europeans in station can retreat in case of trouble. Now that they have taken to massacre as well as mutiny, God knows how it will all end.”

“Good Heavens! who could have dreamt of this?” the Major groaned. “Massacred their officers, women, and children. All Europeans at Delhi supposed to have been massacred, and there must be hundreds of them. Can it be true?”

“The telegram as to Meerut is clearly an official one,” Bathurst said. “Delhi is as yet but a rumor, but it is too probable that if these mutineers and jail birds, flushed with success, reached Delhi before the whites were warned, they would have their own way in the place, as, with the exception of a few artillerymen at the arsenal, there is not a white soldier in the place.”

“But there were white troops at Meerut,” the Major said. “What could they have been doing? However, that is not the question now. We must, of course, return instantly. Ask the others to come in here, Bathurst. Don't tell the girls what has taken place; it will be time enough for that afterwards. All that is necessary to say is that you have brought news of troubles at some stations unaffected before, and that I think it best to return at once.”

The men were standing in a group, wondering what the news could be which was deemed of such importance that Bathurst should carry it out in the middle of the night.

“The Major will be glad if you will all go in, gentlemen,” Bathurst said, as he joined them.

“Are we to go in, Mr. Bathurst?” Miss Hunter asked.

“No, I think not, Miss Hunter; the fact is there have been some troubles at two or three other places, and the Major is going to hold a sort of council of war as to whether the hunt had not better be given up. I rather fancy that they will decide to go back at once. News flies very fast in India. I think the Major would like that he and

his officers should be back before it is whispered among the Sepoys that the discontent has not, as we hoped, everywhere ceased."

"It must be very serious," Isobel said, "or uncle would never decide to go back, when all the preparations are made."

"It would never do, you see, Miss Hannay, for the Commandant and four of the officers to be away, if the Sepoys should take it into their heads to refuse to receive cartridges or anything of that sort."

"You can't give us any particulars, then, Mr. Bathurst?"

"The note was a very short one, and was partly made up of unconfirmed rumors. As I only saw it in my capacity of a messenger, I don't think I am at liberty to say more than that."

"What a trouble the Sepoys are," Mary Hunter said pettishly; "it is too bad our losing a tiger hunt when we may never have another chance to see one!"

"That is a very minor trouble, Mary."

"I don't think so," the girl said; "just at present it seems to me to be very serious."

At this moment the Doctor put his head out of the tent.

"Will you come in, Bathurst?"

"We have settled, Bathurst," the Major said, when he entered, "that we must, of course, go back at once. The Doctor, however, is of opinion that if, after all the preparations were made, we were to put the tiger hunt off altogether, it would set the natives talking, and the report would go through the country like wildfire that some great disaster had happened. We must go back at once, and Mr. Hunter, having a wife and daughter there, is anxious to get back, too; but the Doctor urges that he should go out and kill this tiger. As it is known that you have just arrived, he says that if you are willing to go with him, it will be thought that you had come here to join the hunt, and if that comes off, and the tiger is killed, it does not matter whether two or sixty of us went out."

"I shall be quite willing to do so," said Bathurst, "and I really think that the Doctor's advice is good. If, now that you have all arrived upon the ground, the preparations were canceled, there can be no doubt that the natives would come to the conclusion that something very serious had taken place, and it would be all over the place in no time."

"Thank you, Bathurst. Then we will consider that arranged. Now we will get the horses in as soon as possible, and be off at once."

Ten minutes later the buggies were brought round, and the whole party, with the exception of the Doctor and Bathurst, started for Deennugghur.

CHAPTER XII.

"Let us be off at once," Dr. Wade said to his companion; "we can talk as we go along. I have got two rifles with me; I can lend you one."

"I shall take no rifle," Bathurst said decidedly, "or rather I will take one of the shikaris' guns for the sake of appearance, and for use I will borrow one of their spears."

"Very well; I will do the shooting, then," the Doctor agreed.

The two men then took their places on the elephants most used to the work, and told the mahouts of the others to follow in case the elephants should be required for driving the tiger out of the thick jungle, and they then started side by side for the scene of action.

"This is awful news, Bathurst. I could not have believed it possible that these fellows who have eaten our salt for years, fought our battles, and have seemed the most docile and obedient of soldiers, should have done this. That they should have been goaded into mutiny by lies about their religion being in danger I could have imagined well enough, but that they should go in for wholesale massacre, not only of their officers, but of women and children, seems well nigh incredible. You and I have always agreed that if they were once roused there was no saying what they would do, but I don't think either of us dreamt of anything as bad as this."

"I don't know," Bathurst said quietly; "one has watched this cloud gathering, and felt that if it did break it would be something terrible. No one can foresee now what it will be. The news that Delhi is in the hands of the mutineers, and that these have massacred all Europeans, and so placed themselves beyond all hope of pardon, will fly though India like a flash of lightning, and there is no guessing how far the matter will spread. There is no use disguising it from ourselves, Doctor, before a week is over there may not be a white man left alive in India, save the garrisons of strong places like Agra, and perhaps the presidential towns, where there is always a strong European force."

"I can't deny that it is possible, Bathurst. If this revolt spreads though the three Presidencies the work of conquering India will have to be begun again, and worse than that, for we should have opposed to us a vast army drilled and armed by ourselves, and led by the native officers we have trained. It seems stupefying that an empire won piecemeal, and after as hard fighting as the world has ever seen, should be lost in a week."

The Doctor spoke as if the question was a purely impersonal one.

"Ugly, isn't it?" he went on; "and to think I have been doctoring up these fellows for the last thirty years—saving their lives, sir, by wholesale. If I had known what had been coming I would have dosed them with arsenic with as little remorse as I should feel in shooting a tiger's whelp. Well, there is one satisfaction, the Major has already done something towards turning the courthouse into a fortress, and I fancy a good many of the scoundrels will go down before they take it, that is, if they don't fall on us

unawares. I have been a noncombatant all my life, but if I can shoot a tiger on the spring I fancy I can hit a Sepoy. By Jove, Bathurst, that juggler's picture you told me of is likely to come true after all!"

"I wish to Heaven it was!" Bathurst said gloomily; "I could look without dread at whatever is coming as far as I am concerned, if I could believe it possible that I should be fighting as I saw myself there."

"Pooh, nonsense, lad!" the Doctor said. "Knowing what I know of you, I have no doubt that, though you may feel nervous at first, you will get over it in time."

Bathurst shook his head. "I know myself too well, Doctor, to indulge in any such hopes. Now you see we are going out tiger hunting. At present, now, as far as I am concerned, I should feel much less nervous if I knew I was going to enter the jungle on foot with only this spear, than I do at the thought that you are going to fire that rifle a few paces from me."

"You will scarcely notice it in the excitement," the Doctor said. "In cold blood I admit you might feel it, but I don't think you will when you see the tiger spring out from the jungle at us. But here we are. That is the nullah in which they say the tiger retires at night. I expect the beaters are lying all round in readiness, and as soon as we have taken up our station at its mouth they will begin."

A shikari came up as they approached the spot.

"The tiger went out last night, sahib, and finished the cow; he came back before daylight, and the beaters are all in readiness to begin."

The elephants were soon in position at the mouth of the ravine, which was some thirty yards across. At about the same distance in front of them the jungle of high, coarse grass and thick bush began.

"If you were going to shoot, Bathurst, we would take post one each side, but as you are not going to I will place myself nearly in the center, and if you are between me and the rocks the tiger is pretty certain to go on the other side, as it will seem the most open to him. Now we are ready," he said to the shikari.

The latter waved a white rag on the top of a long stick, and at the signal a tremendous hubbub of gongs and tom toms, mingled with the shouts of numbers of the men, arose. The Doctor looked across at his companion. His face was white and set, his muscles twitched convulsively; he was looking straight in front of him, his teeth set hard.

"An interesting case," the Doctor muttered to himself, "if it had been anyone else than Bathurst. I expect the tiger will be some little time before it is down. Bathurst," he said, in a quiet voice. Three times he repeated the observation, each time raising his voice higher, before Bathurst heard him.

"The sooner it comes the better," Bathurst said, between his teeth. "I would rather face a hundred tigers than this infernal din."

A quarter of an hour passed, and the Doctor, rifle in hand, was watching the bushes in front when he saw a slight movement among the leaves on his right, the side on which Bathurst was stationed.

"That's him, Bathurst; he has headed back; he caught sight of either your elephant or mine; he will make a bolt in another minute now unless he turns back on the beaters."

A minute later there was a gleam of tawny yellow among the long grass, and quick as thought the Doctor fired. With a sharp snarl the tiger leaped out, and with two short bounds sprang onto the head of the elephant ridden by Bathurst. The mahout gave a cry of pain, for the talons of one of the forepaws were fixed in his leg. Bathurst leaned forward and thrust the spear he held deep into the animal's neck. At the same moment the Doctor fired again, and the tiger, shot through the head, fell dead, while, with a start, Bathurst lost his balance and fell over the elephant's head onto the body of the tiger.

It was fortunate indeed for him that the ball had passed through the tiger's skull from ear to ear, and that life was extinct before it touched the ground. Bathurst sprang to his feet, shaken and bewildered, but otherwise unhurt.

"He is as dead as a door nail!" the Doctor shouted, "and lucky for you he was so; if he had had a kick left in him you would have been badly torn."

"I should never have fallen off," Bathurst said angrily, "if you had not fired. I could have finished him with the spear."

"You might or you might not; I could not wait to think about that; the tiger had struck its claws into the mahout's leg, and would have had him off the elephant in another moment. That is a first rate animal you were riding on, or he would have turned and bolted; if he had done so you and the mahout would have both been off to a certainty."

By this time the shouts of some natives, who had taken their posts in trees near at hand, told the beaters that the shots they had heard had been successful, and with shouts of satisfaction they came rushing down. The Doctor at once dispatched one of them to bring up his trap and Bathurst's horse, and then examined the tiger.

It was a very large one, and the skin was in good condition, which showed that he had not taken to man eating long. The Doctor bound up the wound on the mahout's leg, and then superintended the skinning of the animal while waiting for the arrival of the trap.

When it came up he said, "You might as well take a seat by my side, Bathurst; the syce will sit behind and lead your horse."

Having distributed money among the beaters, the Doctor took his place in his trap, the tiger skin was rolled up and placed under the seat, Bathurst mounted beside him, and they started.

"There, you see, Doctor," Bathurst, who had not opened his lips from the time he had remonstrated with the Doctor for firing, said; "you see it is of no use. I was not afraid of the tiger, for I knew that you were not likely to miss, and that in any case it could not reach me on the elephant. I can declare that I had not a shadow of fear of the beast, and yet, directly that row began, my nerves gave way altogether. It was hideous, and yet, the moment the tiger charged, I felt perfectly cool again, for the row ceased as you fired your first shot. I struck it full in the chest, and was about to thrust

the spear right down, and should, I believe, have killed it, if you had not fired again and startled me so that I fell from the elephant."

"I saw that the shouting and noise unnerved you, Bathurst, but I saw too that you were perfectly cool and steady when you planted your spear into him. If it had not got hold of the mahout's leg I should not have fired."

"Is there nothing to be done, Doctor? You know now what it is likely we shall have to face with the Sepoys and what it will be with me if they rise. Is there nothing you can do for me?"

The Doctor shook his head. "I don't believe in Dutch courage in any case, Bathurst; certainly not in yours. There is no saying what the effect of spirits might be. I should not recommend them, lad. Of course, I can understand your feelings, but I still believe that, even if you do badly to begin with, you will pull round in the end. I have no doubt you will get a chance to show that it is only nerve and not courage in which you are deficient."

Bathurst was silent, and scarce another word was spoken during the drive back to Deennugghur.

The place had its accustomed appearance when they drove up. The Doctor, as he drew up before his bungalow, said, "Thank God, they have not begun yet! I was half afraid we might have found they had taken advantage of most of us being away, and have broken out before we got back."

"So was I," Bathurst said. "I have been thinking of nothing else since we started."

"Well, I will go to the Major at once and see what arrangements have been made, and whether there is any further news."

"I shall go off on my rounds," Bathurst said. "I had arranged yesterday to be at Nilpore this morning, and there will be time for me to get there now. It is only eleven o'clock yet. I shall go about my work as usual until matters come to a head."

The Doctor found that the Major was over at the tent which served as the orderly office, and at once followed him there.

"Nothing fresh, Major?"

"No; we found everything going on as usual. It has been decided to put the courthouse as far as we can in a state of defense. I shall have the spare ammunition quietly taken over there, with stores of provisions. The ladies have undertaken to sew up sacking and make gunny bags for holding earth, and, of course, we shall get a store of water there. Everything will be done quietly at present, and things will be sent in there after dark by such servants as we can thoroughly rely upon. At the first signs of trouble the residents will make straight for that point. Of course we must be guided by circumstances. If the trouble begins in the daytime—that is, if it does begin, for the native officers assure us that we can trust implicitly in the loyalty of the men—there will probably be time for everyone to gain the courthouse; if it is at night, and without warning, as it was at Meerut, I can only say, Doctor, may God help us all, for I fear that few, if any, of us would get there alive. Certainly not enough to make any efficient defense."

"I do not see that there is anything else to do, Major. I trust with you that the men will prove faithful; if not, it is a black lookout whichever way we take it."

"Did you kill the tiger, Doctor?"

"Yes; at least Bathurst and I did it between us. I wounded him first. It then sprang upon Bathurst's elephant, and he speared it, and I finished it with a shot through the head."

"Speared it!" the Major repeated; "why didn't he shoot it. What was he doing with his spear?"

"He was born, Major, with a constitutional horror of firearms, inherited from his mother. I will tell you about it some day. In fact, he cannot stand noise of any sort. It has been a source of great trouble to the young fellow, who in all other respects has more than a fair share of courage. However, we will talk about that when we have more time on our hands. There is no special duty you can give me at present?"

"Yes, there is. You are in some respects the most disengaged man in the station, and can come and go without attracting any attention. I propose, therefore, that you shall take charge of the arrangement of matters in the courthouse. I think that it will be an advantage if you move from your tent in there at once. There is plenty of room for us all: No one can say at what time there may be trouble with the Sepoys, and it would be a great advantage to have someone in the courthouse who could take the lead if the women, with the servants and so on, come flocking in while we were still absent on the parade ground. Besides, with your rifle, you could drive any small party off who attempted to seize it by surprise. If you were there we would call it the hospital, which would be an excuse for sending in stores, bedding, and so on.

"You might mention in the orderly room that it is getting so hot now that you think it would be as well to have a room or two fitted up under a roof, instead of having the sick in tents, in case there should be an outbreak of cholera or anything of that sort this year. I will say that I think the idea is a very good one, and that as the courthouse is very little used, you had better establish yourself there. The native officers who hear what we say will spread the news. I don't say it will be believed, but at least it will serve as an explanation."

"Yes, I think that that will be a very good plan, Major. Two of the men who act as hospital orderlies I can certainly depend upon, and they will help to receive the things sent in from the bungalows, and will hold their tongues as to what is being done; I shall leave my tent standing, and use it occasionally as before, but will make the courthouse my headquarters. How are we off for arms?"

"There are five cases of muskets and a considerable stock of ammunition in that small magazine in the lines; one of the first things will be to get them removed to the courthouse. We have already arranged to do that tonight; it will give us four or five muskets apiece."

"Good, Major; I will load them all myself and keep them locked up in a room upstairs facing the gateway, and should there be any trouble I fancy I could give a good account of any small body of men who might attempt to make an entrance. I am very well content with my position as Commandant of the Hospital, as we may call it; the house has not been much good to us hitherto, but I suppose when it was bought it

was intended to make this a more important station; it is fortunate they did buy it now, for we can certainly turn it into a small fortress. Still, of course, I cannot disguise from myself that though we might get on successfully for a time against your Sepoys, there is no hope of holding it long if the whole country rises."

"I quite see that, Doctor," the Major said gravely; "but I have really no fear of that. With the assistance of the Rajah of Bithoor, Cawnpore is safe. His example is almost certain to be followed by almost all the other great landowners. No; it is quite bad enough that we have to face a Sepoy mutiny; I cannot believe that we are likely to have a general rising on our hands. If we do—" and he stopped.

"If we do it is all up with us, Major; there is no disguising that. However, we need not look at the worst side of things. Well, I will go with you to the orderly room, and will talk with you about the hospital scheme, mention that there is a rumor of cholera, and so on, and ask if I can't have a part of the courthouse; then we can walk across there together, and see what arrangement had best be made."

The following day brought another dispatch from the Colonel, saying that the rumors as to Delhi were confirmed. The regiments there had joined the Meerut mutineers, had shot down their officers, and murdered every European they could lay hands on; that three officers and six noncommissioned officers, who were in charge of the arsenal, had defended it desperately, and had finally blown up the magazine with hundreds of its assailants. Three of the defenders had reached Meerut with the news.

Day by day the gloom thickened. The native regiments in the Punjaub rose as soon as the news from Meerut and Delhi reached them, but there were white troops there, and they were used energetically and promptly. In some places the mutineers were disarmed before they broke out into open violence; in other cases mutinous regiments were promptly attacked and scattered. Several of the leading chiefs had hastened to assure the Government of their fidelity, and had placed their troops and resources at its disposal.

But in the Punjaub alone the lookout appeared favorable. In the Daob a mutiny had taken place at four of the stations, and the Sepoys had marched away to Delhi, but without injuring the Europeans.

After this for a week there was quiet, and then at places widely apart—at Hansid and Hissar, to the northwest of Delhi; at Nusserabad, in the center of Rajpootana, at Bareilly, and other stations in Rohilcund—the Sepoys rose, and in most places massacre was added to mutiny. Then three regiments of the Gwalior contingent at Neemuch revolted. Then two regiments broke out at Jhansi, and the whole of the Europeans, after desperately defending themselves for four days, surrendered on promise of their lives, but were instantly murdered.

But before the news of the Jhansi massacre reached Deennugghur they heard of other risings nearer to them. On the 30th of May the three native regiments at Lucknow rose, but were sharply repulsed by the 300 European troops under Sir Henry Lawrence. At Seetapoor the Sepoys rose on the 3d of June and massacred all the Europeans. On the 4th the Sepoys at Mohundee imitated the example of those at Seetapoor, while on the 8th two regiments rose at Fyzabad, in the southeastern division of the province, and massacred all the Europeans.

Up to this time the news from Cawnpore had still been good. The Rajah of Bithoor had offered Sir Hugh Wheeler a reinforcement of two guns and 300 men, and it was believed that, seeing this powerful and influential chief had thrown his weight into the scale on the side of the British, the four regiments of native troops would remain quiet.

Sir Hugh had but a handful of Europeans with him, but had just received a reinforcement of fifty men of the 32d regiment from Lucknow, and he had formed an intrenchment within which the Europeans of the station, and the fugitives who had come in from the districts around, could take refuge.

Several communications passed between Sir Hugh Wheeler and Major Hannay. The latter had been offered the choice of moving into Cawnpore with his wing of the regiment, or remaining at Deennugghur. He had chosen the latter alternative, pointing out that he still believed in the fidelity of the troops with him; but that if they went to Cawnpore they would doubtless be carried away with other regiments, and would only swell the force of mutineers there. He was assured, at any rate, they would not rise unless their comrades at Cawnpore did so, but that it was best to manifest confidence in them, as not improbably, did they hear that they were ordered back to Cawnpore, they might take it as a slur on their fidelity, and mutiny at once.

The month had been one of intense anxiety. Gradually stores of provisions had been conveyed into the hospital, as it was now called; the well inside the yard had been put into working order, and the residents had sent in stores of bedding and such portable valuables as could be removed.

In but few cases had the outbreaks taken place at night, the mutineers almost always breaking out either upon being ordered to parade or upon actually falling in; still, it was by no means certain when a crisis might come, and the Europeans all lay down to rest in their clothes, one person in each house remaining up all night on watch, so that at the first alarm all might hurry to the shelter of the hospital.

Its position was a strong one—a lofty wall inclosing a courtyard and garden surrounding it. This completely sheltered the lower floor from fire; the windows of the upper floor were above the level of the wall, and commanded a view over the country, while round the flat terraced roof ran a parapet some two feet high.

During the day the ladies of the station generally gathered at Mr. Hunter's, which was the bungalow nearest to the hospital. Here they worked at the bags intended to hold earth, and kept up each other's spirits as well as they could. Although all looked pale and worn from anxiety and watching, there were, after the first few days, no manifestations of fear. Occasionally a tear would drop over their work, especially in the case of two of the wives of civilians, whose children were in England; but as a whole their conversation was cheerful, each trying her best to keep up the spirits of the others. Generally, as soon as the meeting was complete, Mrs. Hunter read aloud one of the psalms suited to their position and the prayers for those in danger, then the work was got out and the needles applied briskly. Even Mrs. Rintoul showed a fortitude and courage that would not have been expected from her.

“One never knows people,” Mrs. Doolan said to Isobel, as they walked back from one of these meetings, “as long as one only sees them under ordinary circumstances. I have never had any patience with Mrs. Rintoul, with her constant complaining and

imaginary ailments. Now that there is really something to complain about, she is positively one of the calmest and most cheerful among us. It is curious, is it not, how our talk always turns upon home? India is hardly ever mentioned. We might be a party of intimate friends, sitting in some quiet country place, talking of our girlhood. Why, we have learnt more of each other and each other's history in the last fortnight than we should have done if we had lived here together for twenty years under ordinary circumstances. Except as to your little brother, I think you are the only one, Isobel, who has not talked much of home."

"I suppose it is because my home was not a very happy one," Isobel said.

"I notice that all the talk is about happy scenes, nothing is ever said about disagreeables. I suppose, my dear, it is just as I have heard, that starving people talk about the feasts they have eaten, so we talk of the pleasant times we have had. It is the contrast that makes them dearer. It is funny, too, if anything can be funny in these days, how different we are in the evening, when we have the men with us, to what we are when we are together alone in the day. Another curious thing is that our trouble seems to make us more like each other. Of course we are not more like, but we all somehow take the same tone, and seem to have given up our own particular ways and fancies.

"Now the men don't seem like that. Mr. Hunter, for example, whom I used to think an even tempered and easygoing sort of man, has become fidgety and querulous. The Major is even more genial and kind than usual. The Doctor snaps and snarls at everyone and everything. Anyone listening to my husband would say that he was in the wildest spirits. Rintoul is quieter than usual, and the two lads have grown older and nicer; I don't say they are less full of fun than they were, especially Wilson, but they are less boyish in their fun, and they are nice with everyone, instead of devoting themselves to two or three of us, you principally. Perhaps Richards is the most changed; he thinks less of his collars and ties and the polish of his boots than he used to do, and one sees that he has some ideas in his head besides those about horses. Captain Forster is, perhaps, least changed, but of that you can judge better than I can, for you see more of him. As to Mr. Bathurst, I can say nothing, for we never see him now. I think he is the only man in the station who goes about his work as usual; he starts away the first thing in the morning, and comes back late in the evening, and I suppose spends the night in writing reports, though what is the use of writing reports at the present time I don't know. Mr. Hunter was saying last night it was very foolish of him. What with disbanded soldiers, and what with parties of mutineers, it is most dangerous for any European to stir outside the station."

"Uncle was saying the same," Isobel said quietly.

"Well, here we separate. Of course you will be in as usual this evening?" for the Major's house was the general rendezvous after dinner.

Isobel had her private troubles, although, as she often said angrily to herself, when she thought of them, what did it matter now? She was discontented with herself for having spoken as strongly as she did as to the man's cowardice. She was very discontented with the Doctor for having repeated it. She was angry with Bathurst for staying away altogether, although willing to admit that, after he knew what she had said, it was impossible that he should meet her as before. Most of all, perhaps, she

was angry because, at a time when their lives were all in deadly peril, she should allow the matter to dwell in her mind a single moment.

Late one afternoon Bathurst walked into the Major's bungalow just as he was about to sit down to dinner.

"Major, I want to speak to you for a moment," he said.

"Sit down and have some dinner, Bathurst. You have become altogether a stranger."

"Thank you, Major, but I have a great deal to do. Can you spare me five minutes now? It is of importance."

Isobel rose to leave the room.

"There is no reason you should not hear, Miss Hannay, but it would be better that none of the servants should be present. That is why I wish to speak before your uncle goes in to dinner."

Isobel sat down with an air of indifference.

"For the last week, Major, I have ridden every day five and twenty to thirty miles in the direction of Cawnpore; my official work has been practically at an end since we heard the news from Meerut. I could be of no use here, and thought that I could do no better service than trying to obtain the earliest news from Cawnpore; I am sorry to say that this afternoon I distinctly heard firing in that direction. What the result is, of course, I do not know, but I feel that there is little doubt that troubles have begun there. But this is not all. On my return home, ten minutes ago, I found this letter on my dressing table. It had no direction and is, as you see, in Hindustanee," and he handed it to the Major, who read:

"To the Sahib Bathurst,—Rising at Cawnpore today. Nana Sahib and his troops will join the Sepoys. Whites will be destroyed. Rising at Deennugghur at daylight tomorrow. Troops, after killing whites, will join those at Cawnpore. Be warned in time—this tiger is not to be beaten off with a whip."

"Good Heavens!" the Major exclaimed; "can this be true? Can it be possible that the Rajah of Bithoor is going to join the mutineers? It is impossible; he could never be such a scoundrel."

"What is it, uncle?" Isobel asked, leaving her seat and coming up to him.

The Major translated the letter.

"It must be a hoax," he went on; "I cannot believe it. What does this stuff about beating a tiger with a whip mean?"

"I am sorry to say, Major Hannay, that part of the letter convinces me that the contents can be implicitly relied upon. The writer did not dare sign his name, but those words are sufficient to show me, and were no doubt intended to show me, who the warning comes from. It is from that juggler who performed here some six weeks ago. Traveling about as he does, and putting aside altogether those strange powers of his, he has no doubt the means of knowing what is going on. As I told you that night, I had done him some slight service, and he promised at the time that, if the occasion should ever arise, he would risk his life to save mine. The fact that he showed, I have no doubt, especially to please me, feats that few Europeans have seen before, is, to my mind, a proof of his goodwill and that he meant what he said."

"But how do you know that it is from him. Bathurst? You will excuse my pressing the question, but of course everything depends on my being assured that this communication is trustworthy."

"This allusion to the tiger shows me that, Major. It alludes to an incident that I believe to be known only to him and his daughter and to Dr. Wade, to whom alone I mentioned it."

As the Major still looked inquiringly, Bathurst went on reluctantly. "It was a trifling affair, Major, the result of a passing impulse. I was riding home from Narkeet, and while coming along the road through the jungle, which was at that time almost deserted by the natives on account of the ravages of the man eater whom the Doctor afterwards shot, I heard a scream. Galloping forward, I came upon the brute, standing with one paw upon a prostrate girl, while a man, the juggler, was standing frantically waving his arms. On the impulse of the moment I sprang from my horse and lashed the tiger across the head with that heavy dog whip I carry, and the brute was so astonished that it bolted in the jungle.

"That was the beginning and end of affairs, except that, although fortunately the girl was practically unhurt, she was so unnerved that we had to carry her to the next village, where she lay for some time ill from the shock and fright. After that they came round here and performed, for my amusement, the feats I told you of. So you see I have every reason to believe in the good faith of the writer of this letter."

"By Jove, I should think you had!" the Major said. "Why, my dear Bathurst, I had no idea that you could do such a thing!"

"We have all our strong points and our weak ones, Major. That was one of my strong ones, I suppose. And now what had best be done, sir? That is the important question at present."

This was so evident, that Major Hannay at once dismissed all other thoughts from his mind.

"Of course I and the other officers must remain at our posts until the Sepoys actually arrive. The question is as to the others. Now that we know the worst, or believe we know it, ought we to send the women and children away?"

"That is the question, sir. But where can they be sent? Lucknow is besieged; the whites at Cawnpore must have been surrounded by this time; the bands of mutineers are ranging the whole country, and at the news that Nana Sahib has joined the rebels it is probable that all will rise. I should say that it was a matter in which Mr. Hunter and other civilians had better be consulted."

"Yes, we will hold a council," the Major said.

"I think, Major, it should be done quietly. It is probable that many of the servants may know of the intentions of the Sepoys, and if they see that anything like a council of the Europeans was being held they may take the news to the Sepoys, and the latter, thinking that their intention is known, may rise at once."

"That is quite true. Yes, we must do nothing to arouse suspicion. What do you propose, Mr. Bathurst?"

“I will go and have a talk with the Doctor; he can go round to the other officers one by one. I will tell Mr. Hunter, and he will tell the other residents, so that when they meet here in the evening no explanations will be needed, and a very few words as we sit out on the veranda will be sufficient.”

“That will be a very good plan. We will sit down to dinner as if nothing had happened; if they are watching at all, they will be keeping their eyes on us then.”

“Very well; I will be in by nine o'clock, Major;” and with a slight bow to Isobel, Bathurst stepped out through the open window, and made his way to the Doctor's.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Doctor had just sat down to dinner when Bathurst came in. The two subalterns were dining with him.

"That's good, Bathurst," the Doctor said, as he entered. "Boy, put a chair for Mr. Bathurst. I had begun to think that you had deserted me as well as everybody else."

"I was not thinking of dining," Bathurst said, as he sat down, "but I will do so with pleasure, though I told my man I should be back in half an hour;" and as the servant left the room he added, "I have much to say, Doctor; get through dinner as quickly as you can, and get the servants out of the tent."

The conversation was at once turned by the Doctor upon shooting and hunting, and no allusion was made to passing events until coffee was put on the table and the servant retired. The talk, which had been lively during dinner, then ceased.

"Well, Bathurst," the Doctor asked, "I suppose you have something serious to tell me?"

"Very serious, Doctor;" and he repeated the news he had given the Major.

"It could not be worse, Bathurst," the Doctor said quietly, after the first shock of the news had passed. "You know I never had any faith in the Sepoys since I saw how this madness was spreading from station to station. This sort of thing is contagious. It becomes a sort of epidemic, and in spite of the assurances of the men I felt sure they would go. But this scoundrel of Bithoor turning against us is more than I bargained for. There is no disguising the fact that it means a general rising through Oude, and in that case God help the women and children. As for us, it all comes in the line of business. What does the Major say?"

"The only question that seemed to him to be open was whether the women and children could be got away."

"But there does not seem any possible place for them to go to. One or two might travel down the country in disguise, but that is out of the question for a large party. There is no refuge nearer than Allahabad. With every man's hand against them, I see not the slightest chance of a party making their way down."

"You or I might do it easily enough, Doctor, but for women it seems to me out of the question; still, that is a matter for each married man to decide for himself. The prospect is dark enough anyway, but, as before, it seems to me that everything really depends upon the Zemindars. If we hold the courthouse it is possible the Sepoys may be beaten off in their first attack, and in their impatience to join the mutineers, who are all apparently marching for Delhi, they may go off without throwing away their lives by attacking us, for they must see they will not be able to take the place without cannon. But if the Zemindars join them with cannon, we may defend ourselves till the last, but there can be but one end to it."

The Doctor nodded. "That is the situation exactly, Bathurst."

“I am glad we know the danger, and shall be able to face it openly,” Wilson said. “For the last month Richards and I have been keeping watch alternately, and it has been beastly funky work sitting with one's pistols on the table before one, listening, and knowing any moment there might be a yell, and these brown devils come pouring in. Now, at least, we are likely to have a fight for it, and to know that some of them will go down before we do.”

Richards cordially agreed with his companion.

“Well, now, what are the orders, Bathurst?” said the Doctor.

“There are no orders as yet, Doctor. The Major says you will go round to the others, Doolan, Rintoul, and Forster, and tell them. I am to go round to Hunter and the other civilians. Then, this evening we are to meet at nine o'clock, as usual, at the Major's. If the others decide that the only plan is for all to stop here and fight it out, there will be no occasion for anything like a council; it will only have to be arranged at what time we all move into the fort, and the best means for keeping the news from spreading to the Sepoys. Not that it will make much difference after they have once fairly turned in. If there is one thing a Hindoo hates more than another, it is getting from under his blankets when he has once got himself warm at night. Even if they heard at one or two o'clock in the morning that we were moving into the fort I don't think they would turn out till morning.”

“No, I am sure they would not,” the Doctor agreed.

“If there were a few more of us,” Richards said, “I should vote for our beginning it. If we were to fall suddenly upon them we might kill a lot and scare the rest off.”

“We are too few for that,” the Doctor said. “Besides, although Bathurst answers for the good faith of the sender of the warning, there has as yet been no act of mutiny that would justify our taking such a step as that. It would come to the same thing. We might kill a good many, but in the long run three hundred men would be more than a match for a dozen, and then the women would be at their mercy. Well, we had better be moving, or we shall not have time to go round to the bungalows before the people set out for the Major's.”

It was a painful mission that Bathurst had to perform, for he had to tell those he called upon that almost certain death was at hand, but the news was everywhere received calmly. The strain had of late been so great, that the news that the crisis was at hand was almost welcome. He did not stay long anywhere, but, after setting the alternative before them, left husband and wife to discuss whether to try to make down to Allahabad or to take refuge in the fort.

Soon after nine o'clock all were at Major Hannay's. There were pale faces among them, but no stranger would have supposed that the whole party had just received news which was virtually a death warrant. The ladies talked together as usual, while the men moved in and out of the room, sometimes talking with the Major, sometimes sitting down for a few minutes in the veranda outside, or talking there in low tones together.

The Major moved about among them, and soon learned that all had resolved to stay and meet together whatever came, preferring that to the hardships and unknown dangers of flight.

"I am glad you have all decided so," he said quietly. "In the state the country is, the chances of getting to Allahabad are next to nothing. Here we may hold out till Lawrence restores order at Lucknow, and then he may be able to send a party to bring us in. Or the mutineers may draw off and march to Delhi. I certainly think the chances are best here; besides, every rifle we have is of importance, and though if any of you had made up your minds to try and escape I should have made no objection, I am glad that we shall all stand together here."

The arrangements were then briefly made for the removal to the courthouse. All were to go back and apparently to retire to bed as usual. At twelve o'clock the men, armed, were to call up their servants, load them up with such things as were most required, and proceed with them, the women, and children, at once to the courthouse. Half the men were to remain there on guard, while the others would continue with the servants to make journeys backwards and forwards to the bungalows, bringing in as much as could be carried, the guard to be changed every hour. In the morning the servants were all to have the choice given them of remaining with their masters or leaving.

Captain Forster was the only dissentient. He was in favor of the whole party mounting, placing the women and children in carriages, and making off in a body, fighting their way if necessary down to Allahabad. He admitted that, in addition to the hundred troopers of his own squadron, they might be cut off by the mutinous cavalry from Cawnpore, fall in with bodies of rebels or be attacked by villagers, but he maintained that there was at least some chance of cutting their way through, while, once shut up in the courthouse, escape would be well nigh impossible.

"But you all along agreed to our holding the courthouse, Forster," the Major said.

"Yes; but then I reckoned upon Cawnpore holding out with the assistance of Nana Sahib, and upon the country remaining quiet. Now the whole thing is changed. I am quite ready to fight in the open, and to take my chance of being killed there, but I protest against being shut up like a rat in a hole."

To the rest, however, the proposal appeared desperate. There would be no withstanding a single charge of the well trained troopers, especially as it would be necessary to guard the vehicles. Had it not been for that, the small body of men might possibly have cut their way through the cavalry; but even then they would be so hotly pursued that the most of them would assuredly be hunted down. But encumbered by the women such an enterprise seemed utterly hopeless, and the whole of the others were unanimously against it.

The party broke up very early. The strain of maintaining their ordinary demeanor was too great to be long endured, and the ladies with children were anxious to return as soon as possible to them, lest at the last moment the Sepoys should have made some change in their arrangements. By ten o'clock the whole party had left.

The two subalterns had no preparations to make; they had already sent most of their things into the hospital; and, lighting their pipes, they sat down and talked quietly till midnight; then, placing their pistols in their belts and wrapping themselves in their cloaks, they went into the Doctor's tent, which was next to theirs.

The Doctor at once roused his servant, who was sleeping in a shelter tent pitched by the side of his. The man came in looking surprised at being called. “Roshun,” the Doctor said, “you have been with me ten years, and I believe you to be faithful.”

“I would lay down my life for the sahib,” the man said quietly.

“You have heard nothing of any trouble with the Sepoys?”

“No, sahib; they know that Roshun is faithful to his master.”

“We have news that they are going to rise in the morning and kill all Europeans, so we are going to move at once into the hospital.”

“Good, sahib; what will you take with you?”

“My books and papers have all gone in,” the Doctor said; “that portmanteau may as well go. I will carry these two rifles myself; the ammunition is all there except that bag in the corner, which I will sling round my shoulder.”

“What are in those two cases, Doctor?” Wilson asked.

“Brandy, lad.”

“We may as well each carry one of those, Doctor, if your boy takes the portmanteau. It would be a pity to leave good liquor to be wasted by those brutes.”

“I agree with you, Wilson; besides, the less liquor they get hold of the better for us. Now, if you are all ready, we will start; but we must move quietly, or the sentry at the quarter guard may hear us.”

Ten minutes later they reached the hospital, being the last of the party to arrive there.

“Now, Major,” the Doctor said cheerily, as soon as he entered, “as this place is supposed to be under my special charge I will take command for the present. Wilson and Richards will act as my lieutenants. We have nothing to do outside, and can devote ourselves to getting things a little straight here. The first thing to do is to light lamps in all the lower rooms; then we can see what we are doing, and the ladies will be able to give us their help, while the men go out with the servants to bring things in; and remember the first thing to do is to bring in the horses. They may be useful to us. There is a good store of forage piled in the corner of the yard, but the syces had best bring in as much more as they can carry. Now, ladies, if you will all bring your bundles inside the house we will set about arranging things, and at any rate get the children into bed as quickly as possible.”

As it had been already settled as to the rooms to be occupied, the ladies and their ayahs set to work at once, glad to have something to employ them. One of the rooms which had been fitted up with beds had been devoted to the purposes of a nursery, and the children, most of whom were still asleep, were soon settled there. Two other rooms had been fitted up for the use of the ladies, while the men were occupying two others, the courtroom being turned into a general meeting and dining room.

At first there was not much to do; but as the servants, closely watched by their masters, went backwards and forwards bringing in goods of all kinds, there was plenty of employment in carrying them down to a large underground room, where they were left to be sorted later on.

The Doctor had appointed Isobel Hannay and the two Miss Hunters to the work of lighting a fire and getting boiling water ready, and a plentiful supply of coffee was presently made, Wilson and Richards drawing the water, carrying the heavier loads downstairs, and making themselves generally useful.

Captain Forster had not come in. He had undertaken to remain in his tent in the lines, where he had quietly saddled and unpicketed his horse, tying it up to the tent ropes so that he could mount in an instant. He still believed that his own men would stand firm, and declared he would at their head charge the mutinous infantry, while if they joined the mutineers he would ride into the fort. It was also arranged that he should bring in word should the Sepoys obtain news of what was going on and rise before morning.

All felt better and more cheerful after having taken some coffee.

"It is difficult to believe, Miss Hannay," Richards said, "that this is all real, and not a sort of picnic, or an early start on a hunting expedition."

"It is indeed, Mr. Richards. I can hardly believe even now that it is all true, and have pinched myself two or three times to make sure that I am awake."

"If the villains venture to attack us," Wilson said, "I feel sure we shall beat them off handsomely."

"I have no doubt we shall, Mr. Wilson, especially as it will be in daylight. You know you and Mr. Richards are not famous for night shooting."

The young men both laughed.

"We shall never hear the last of that tiger story, Miss Hannay. I can tell you it is no joke shooting when you have been sitting cramped up on a tree for about six hours. We are really both pretty good shots. Of course, I don't mean like the Doctor; but we always make good scores with the targets. Come, Richards, here is another lot of things; if they go on at this rate the Sepoys won't find much to loot in the bungalows tomorrow."

Just as daylight was breaking the servants were all called together, and given the choice of staying or leaving. Only some eight or ten, all of whom belonged to the neighborhood, chose to go off to their villages. The rest declared they would stay with their masters.

Two of the party by turns had been on watch all night on the terrace to listen for any sound of tumult in the lines, but all had gone on quietly. Bathurst had been working with the others all night, and after seeing that all his papers were carried to the courthouse, he had troubled but little about his own belongings, but had assisted the others in bringing in their goods.

At daylight the Major and his officers mounted and rode quietly down towards the parade ground. Bathurst and Mr. Hunter, with several of the servants, took their places at the gates, in readiness to open and close them quickly, while the Doctor and the other Europeans went up to the roof, where they placed in readiness six muskets for each man, from the store in the courthouse. Isobel Hannay and the wives of the two Captains were too anxious to remain below, and went up to the roof also. The Doctor took his place by them, examining the lines with a field glass.

The officers halted when they reached the parade ground, and sat on their horses in a group, waiting for the men to turn out as usual.

"There goes the assembly," the Doctor said, as the notes of the bugle came to their ears. "The men are turning out of their tents. There, I can make out Forster; he has just mounted; a plucky fellow that."

Instead of straggling out onto the parade ground as usual, the Sepoys seemed to hang about their tents. The cavalry mounted and formed up in their lines. Suddenly a gun was fired, and as if at the signal the whole of the infantry rushed forward towards the officers, yelling and firing, and the latter at once turned their horses and rode towards the courthouse.

"Don't be alarmed, my dear," the Doctor said to Isobel; "I don't suppose anyone is hit. The Sepoys are not good shots at the best of times, and firing running they would not be able to hit a haystack at a hundred yards. The cavalry stand firm, you see," he said, turning his glass in that direction. "Forster is haranguing them. There, three of the native officers are riding up to him. Ah! one has fired at him! Missed! Ah! that is a better shot," as the man fell from his horse, from a shot from his Captain's pistol.

The other two rushed at him. One he cut down, and the other shot. Then he could be seen again, shouting and waving his sword to the men, but their yells could be heard as they rode forward at him.

"Ride, man, ride!" the Doctor shouted, although his voice could not have been heard at a quarter of the distance.

But instead of turning Forster rode right at them. There was a confused melee for a moment, and then his figure appeared beyond the line, through which he had broken. With yells of fury the troopers reined in their horses and tried to turn them, but before they could do so the officer was upon them again. His revolver cracked in his left hand, and his sword flashed in his right. Two or three horses and men were seen to roll over, and in a moment he was through them again and riding at full speed for the courthouse, under a scattered fire from the infantry, while the horsemen, now in a confused mass, galloped behind him.

"Now then," the Doctor shouted, picking up his rifle; "let them know we are within range, but mind you don't hit Forster. Fire two or three shots, and then run down to the gate. He is well mounted, and has a good fifty yards' start of them."

Then taking deliberate aim he fired. The others followed his example. Three of the troopers dropped from their horses. Four times those on the terrace fired, and then ran down, each, at the Doctor's order, taking two guns with him. One of these was placed in the hands of each of the officers who had just ridden in, and they then gathered round the gate. In two minutes Forster rode in at full speed, then fifteen muskets flashed out, and several of the pursuers fell from their horses. A minute later the gate was closed and barred, and the men all ran up to the roof, from which three muskets were fired simultaneously.

"Well done!" the Doctor exclaimed. "That is a good beginning."

A minute later a brisk fire was opened from the terrace upon the cavalry, who at once turned and rode rapidly back to their lines.

Captain Forster had not come scathless through the fray; his cheek had been laid open by a sabre cut, and a musket ball had gone through the fleshy part of his arm as he rode back.

"This comes of fighting when there is no occasion," the Doctor growled, when he dressed his wounds. "Here you are charging a host like a paladin of old, forgetful that we want every man who can lift an arm in defense of this place."

"I think, Doctor, there is someone else wants your services more than I do."

"Yes; is anyone else hit?"

"No, I don't know that anyone else is hit, Doctor; but as I turned to come into the house after the gates were shut, there was that fellow Bathurst leaning against the wall as white as a sheet, and shaking all over like a leaf. I should say a strong dose of Dutch courage would be the best medicine there."

"You do not do justice to Bathurst, Captain Forster," the Doctor said gravely. "He is a man I esteem most highly. In some respects he is the bravest man I know, but he is constitutionally unable to stand noise, and the sound of a gun is torture to him. It is an unfortunate idiosyncrasy for which he is in no way accountable."

"Exceedingly unfortunate, I should say," Forster said, with a dry laugh; "especially at times like this. It is rather unlucky for him that fighting is generally accompanied by noise. If I had such an idiosyncrasy, as you call it, I would blow out my brains."

"Perhaps Bathurst would do so, too, Captain Forster, if he had not more brains to blow out than some people have."

"That is sharp, Doctor," Forster laughed good temperedly. "I don't mind a fair hit."

"Well, I must go," the Doctor said, somewhat mollified; "there is plenty to do, and I expect, after these fellows have held a council of war, they will be trying an attack."

When the Doctor went out he found the whole of the garrison busy. The Major had placed four men on the roof, and had ordered everyone else to fill the bags that had been prepared for the purpose with earth from the garden. It was only an order to the men and male servants, but the ladies had all gone out to render their assistance. As fast as the natives filled the bags with earth the ladies sewed up the mouths of the bags, and the men carried them away and piled them against the gate.

The garrison consisted of the six military officers, the Doctor, seven civilians, ten ladies, eight children, thirty-eight male servants, and six females. The work, therefore, went on rapidly, and in the course of two hours so large a pile of bags was built up against the gate that there was no probability whatever of its being forced.

"Now," the Major said, "we want four dozen bags at least for the parapet of the terrace. We need not raise it all, but we must build up a breastwork two bags high at each of the angles."

There was only just time to accomplish this when one of the watch on the roof reported that the Sepoys were firing the bungalows. As soon as they saw that the Europeans had gained the shelter of the courthouse the Sepoys, with yells of triumph, had made for the houses of the Europeans, and their disappointment at finding that not only had all the whites taken refuge in the courthouse, but that they had removed most of their property, vented itself in setting fire to the buildings, after stripping them of

everything, and then amused themselves by keeping up a straggling fire against the courthouse.

As soon as the bags were taken onto the roof, the defenders, keeping as much as possible under the shelter of the parapet, carried them to the corners of the terrace and piled them two deep, thus forming a breastwork four feet high. Eight of the best shots were then chosen, and two of them took post at each corner.

"Now," the Doctor said cheerfully, as he sat behind a small loophole that had been left between the bags, "it is our turn, and I don't fancy we shall waste as much lead as they have been doing."

The fire from the defenders was slow, but it was deadly, and in a very short time the Sepoys no longer dared to show themselves in the open, but took refuge behind trees, whence they endeavored to reply to the fire on the roof; but even this proved so dangerous that it was not long before the fire ceased altogether, and they drew off under cover of the smoke from the burning bungalows.

Isobel Hannay had met Bathurst as he was carrying a sack of earth to the roof.

"I have been wanting to speak to you, Mr. Bathurst, ever since yesterday evening, but you have never given me an opportunity. Will you step into the storeroom for a few minutes as you come down?"

As he came down he went to the door of the room in which Isobel was standing awaiting him.

"I am not coming in, Miss Hannay; I believe I know what you are going to say. I saw it in your face last night when I had to tell that tiger story. You want to say that you are sorry you said that you despised cowards. Do not say it; you were perfectly right; you cannot despise me one tenth as much as I despise myself. While you were looking at the mutineers from the roof I was leaning against the wall below well nigh fainting. What do you think my feelings must be that here, where every man is brave, where there are women and children to be defended, I alone cannot bear my part. Look at my face; I know there is not a vestige of color in it. Look at my hands; they are not steady yet. It is useless for you to speak; you may pity me, but you cannot but despise me. Believe me, that death when it comes will be to me a happy release indeed from the shame and misery I feel."

Then, turning, he left the girl without another word, and went about his work. The Doctor had, just before going up to take his place on the roof, come across him.

"Come in here, my dear Bathurst," he said, seizing his arm and dragging him into the room which had been given up to him for his drugs and surgical appliances.

"Let me give you a strong dose of ammonia and ginger; you want a pickup I can see by your face."

"I want it, Doctor, but I will not take it," Bathurst said. "That is one thing I have made up my mind to. I will take no spirits to create a courage that I do not possess."

"It is not courage; it has nothing to do with courage," the Doctor said angrily. "It is a simple question of nerves, as I have told you over and over again."

"Call it what you like, Doctor, the result is precisely the same. I do not mind taking a strong dose of quinine if you will give it me, for I feel as weak as a child, but no

spirits."

With an impatient shrug of the shoulders the Doctor mixed a strong dose of quinine and gave it to him.

An hour later a sudden outburst of musketry took place. Not a native showed himself on the side of the house facing the maidan, but from the gardens on the other three sides a heavy fire was opened.

"Every man to the roof," the Major said; "four men to each of the rear corners, three to the others. Do you think you are fit to fire, Forster? Had you not better keep quiet for today; you will have opportunities enough."

"I am all right, Major," he said carelessly. "I can put my rifle through a loophole and fire, though I have one arm in a sling. By Jove!" he broke off suddenly; "look at that fellow Bathurst—he looks like a ghost."

The roll of musketry was unabated, and the defenders were already beginning to answer it; the bullets sung thickly overhead, and above the din could be heard the shouts of the natives. Bathurst's face was rigid and ghastly pale. The Major hurried to him.

"My dear Bathurst," he said, "I think you had better go below. You will find plenty of work to do there."

"My work is here," Bathurst said, as if speaking to himself: "it must be done."

The Major could not at the moment pay further attention to him, for a roar of fire broke out round the inclosure, as from the ruined bungalows and from every bush the Sepoys, who had crept up, now commenced the attack in earnest, while the defenders lying behind their parapet replied slowly and steadily, aiming at the puffs of smoke as they darted out. His attention was suddenly called by a shout from the Doctor.

"Are you mad, Bathurst? Lie down, man; you a throwing away your life."

Turning round, the Major saw Bathurst standing up—right by the parapet, facing the point where the enemy fire was hottest. He held a rifle in his hand but did not attempt to fire; his figure swayed slightly to and fro.

"Lie down," the Major shouted, "lie down, sir;" and then as Bathurst still stood unmoved he was about to run forward, when the Doctor from one side and Captain Forster from the other rushed towards him through a storm of bullets, seized him in their arms, and dragged him back to the center of the terrace.

"Nobly done, gentlemen," the Major said, as they laid Bathurst down; "it was almost miraculous your not being hit."

Bathurst had struggled fiercely for a moment, and then his resistance had suddenly ceased, and he had been dragged back like a wooden figure. His eyes were closed now.

"Has he been hit, Doctor?" the Major asked. "It seems impossible he can have escaped. What madness possessed him to put himself there as a target?"

"No, I don't think he is hit," the Doctor said, as he examined him. "I think he has fainted. We had better carry him down to my room. Shake hands, Forster; I know you and Bathurst were not good friends, and you risked your life to save him."

"I did not think who it was," Forster said, with a careless laugh. "I saw a man behaving like a madman, and naturally went to pull him down. However, I shall think better of him in future, though I doubt whether he was in his right senses."

"He wanted to be killed," the Doctor said quietly; "and the effort that he made to place himself in the way of death must have been greater than either you or I can well understand, Forster. I know the circumstances of the case. Morally I believe there is no braver man living than he is; physically he has the constitution of a timid woman; it is mind against body."

"The distinction is too fine for me, Doctor," Forster said, as he turned to go off to his post by the parapet. "I understand pluck and I understand cowardice, but this mysterious mixture you speak of is beyond me altogether."

The Major and Dr. Wade lifted Bathurst and carried him below. Mrs. Hunter, who had been appointed chief nurse, met them.

"Is he badly wounded, Doctor?"

"No; he is not wounded at all, Mrs. Hunter. He stood up at the edge of the parapet and exposed himself so rashly to the Sepoys' fire that we had to drag him away, and then the reaction, acting on a nervous temperament, was too much for him, and he fainted. We shall soon bring him round. You can come in with me, but keep the others away."

The Major at once returned to the terrace.

In spite of the restoratives the Doctor poured through his lips, and cold water dashed in his face, Bathurst was some time before he opened his eyes. Seeing Mrs. Hunter and the Doctor beside him, he made an effort to rise.

"You must lie still, Bathurst," the Doctor said, pressing his hand on his shoulder. "You have done a very foolish thing, a very wrong thing. You have tried to throw away your life."

"No, I did not. I had no thought of throwing away my life," Bathurst said, after a pause. "I was trying to make myself stand fire. I did not think whether I should be hit or not. I am not afraid of bullets, Doctor; it's the horrible, fiendish noise that I cannot stand."

"I know, my boy," the Doctor said kindly; "but it comes to the same thing. You did put yourself in the way of bullets when your doing so was of no possible advantage, and it is almost a miracle that you escaped unhurt. You must remain here quiet for the present. II shall leave you in charge of Mrs. Hunter. There is nothing for you to do on the roof at present. This attack is a mere outbreak of rage on the part of the Sepoys that we have all escaped them. They know well enough they can't take this house by merely firing away at the roof. When they attack in earnest it will be quite time for you to take part in the affair again. Now, Mrs. Hunter, my orders are absolute that he is not to be allowed to get up."

On the Doctor leaving the room he found several of the ladies outside; the news that Mr. Bathurst had been carried down had spread among them.

"Is he badly hurt, Doctor?"

"No, ladies. Mr. Bathurst is, unfortunately for himself, an extremely nervous man, and the noise of firearms has an effect upon him that he cannot by any effort of his own overcome. In order, as he says, to try and accustom himself to it, he went and stood at the edge of the parapet in full sight of the Sepoys, and let them blaze away at him. He must have been killed if Forster and I had not dragged him away by main force. Then came the natural reaction, and he fainted. That is all there is about it. Poor fellow, he is extremely sensitive on the ground of personal courage. In other respects I have known him do things requiring an amount of pluck that not one man in a hundred possesses, and I wish you all to remember that his nervousness at the effect of the noise of firearms is a purely constitutional weakness, for which he is in no way to be blamed. He has just risked his life in the most reckless manner in order to overcome what he considers, and what he knows that some persons consider, is cowardice, and it would be as cruel, and I may say as contemptible, to despise him for a constitutional failing as it would be to despise a person for being born a humpback or a cripple. But I cannot stand talking any longer. I shall be of more use on the roof than I am here."

Isobel Hannay was not among those who had gathered near the door of the room in which Bathurst was lying, but the Doctor had raised his voice, and she heard what he said, and bent over her work of sewing strips of linen together for bandages with a paler face than had been caused by the outbreak of musketry. Gradually the firing ceased. The Sepoys had suffered heavily from the steady fire of the invisible defenders and gradually drew off, and in an hour from the commencement of the attack all was silent round the building.

"So far so good, ladies," the Major said cheerily, as the garrison, leaving one man on watch, descended from the roof. "We have had no casualties, and I think we must have inflicted a good many, and the mutineers are not likely to try that game on again, for they must see that they are wasting ammunition, and are doing us no harm. Now I hope the servants have got tiffin ready for us, for I am sure we have all excellent appetites."

"Tiffin is quite ready, Major," Mrs. Doolan, who had been appointed chief of the commissariat department, said cheerfully. "The servants were a little disorganized when the firing began, but they soon became accustomed to it, and I think you will find everything in order in the hall."

The meal was really a cheerful one. The fact that the first attack had passed over without anyone being hit raised the spirits of the women, and all were disposed to look at matters in a cheerful light. The two young subalterns were in high spirits, and the party were more lively than they had been since the first outbreak of the mutiny. All had felt severely the strain of waiting, and the reality of danger was a positive relief after the continuous suspense. It was much to them to know that the crisis had come at last, that they were still all together and the foe were without.

"It is difficult to believe," Mrs. Doolan said, "that it was only yesterday evening we were all gathered at the Major's. It seems an age since then."

"Yes, indeed," Mrs. Rintoul agreed; "the night seemed endless. The worst time was the waiting till we were to begin to move over. After that I did not so much mind,

though it seemed more like a week than a night while the things were being brought in here."

"I think the worse time was while we were waiting watching from the roof to see whether the troops would come out on parade as usual," Isobel said. "When my uncle and the others were all in, and Captain Forster, and the gates were shut, it seemed that our anxieties were over."

"That was a mad charge of yours, Forster," the Major said. "It was like the Balaclava business—magnificent; but it wasn't war."

"I did not think of it one way or the other," Captain Forster laughed. "I was so furious at the insolence off those dogs attacking me, that I thought of nothing else, and just went at them; but of course it was foolish."

"It did good," the Doctor said. "It showed the Sepoys how little we thought of them, and how a single white officer was ready to match himself against a squadron. It will render them a good deal more careful in their attack than they otherwise would have been. It brought them under our fire, too, and they suffered pretty heavily; and I am sure the infantry must have lost a good many men from our fire just now. I hope they will come to the conclusion that the wisest thing they can do is to march away to Delhi and leave us severely alone. Now what are your orders, Major, for after breakfast?"

"I think the best thing is for everyone to lie down for a few hours," the Major said. "No one had a wink of sleep last night, and most of us have not slept much for some nights past. We must always keep two men on the roof, to be relieved every two hours. I will draw up a regular rota for duty; but except those two, the rest had better take a good sleep. We may be all called upon to be under arms at night."

"I will go on the first relief, Major," the Doctor said. "I feel particularly wide awake. It is nothing new to me to be up all night. Put Bathurst down with me," he said, in a low tone, as the Major rose from the table. "He knows that I understand him, and it will be less painful for him to be with me than with anyone else. I will go up at once, and send young Harper down to his breakfast. There will be no occasion to have Bathurst up this time. The Sepoys are not likely to be trying any pranks at present. No doubt they have gone back to their lines to get a meal."

The Doctor had not been long at his post when Isobel Hannay came up onto the terrace. They had seen each other alone comparatively little of late, as the Doctor had given up his habit of dropping in for a chat in the morning since their conversation about Bathurst.

"Well, my dear, what is it?" he asked. "This is no place for you, for there are a few fellows still lurking among the trees, and they send a shot over the house occasionally."

"I came up to say that I am sorry, Doctor."

"That is right, Isobel. Always say you are sorry when you are so, although in nine cases out of ten, and this is one of them, the saying so is too late to do much good."

"I think you are rather hard upon me, Doctor. I know you were speaking at me today when you were talking to the others, especially in what you said at the end."

"Perhaps I was; but I think you quite deserved it."

"Yes, I know I did; but it was hard to tell me it was as contemptible to despise a man for a physical weakness he could not help, as to despise one for being born humpbacked or a cripple, when you know that my brother was so."

"I wanted you to feel that your conduct had been contemptible, Isobel, and I put it in the way that was most likely to come home to you. I have been disappointed in you. I thought you were more sensible than the run of young women, and I found out that you were not. I thought you had some confidence in my judgment, but it turned out that you had not. If Bathurst had been killed when he was standing up, a target for the Sepoys, I should have held you morally responsible for his death."

"You would have shared the responsibility, anyhow, Doctor, for it was you who repeated my words to him."

"We will not go over that ground again," said the Doctor quietly. "I gave you my reasons for doing so, and those reasons are to my mind convincing. Now I will tell you how this constitutional nervousness on his part arose. He told me the story; but as at that time there had been no occasion for him to show whether he was brave or otherwise, I considered my lips sealed. Now that his weakness has been exhibited, I consider myself more than justified in explaining its origin."

And he then repeated the story Bathurst had told him.

"You see," he said, when he had finished, "it is a constitutional matter beyond his control; it is a sort of antipathy. I have known a case of a woman courageous in all other respects, who, at the sight of even a dead cockroach, would faint away. I have seen one of the most gallant officers of my acquaintance turn pale at the sight of a spider. Certainly no one would think of calling either one or the other coward; and assuredly such a name should not be applied to a man who would face a tiger armed only with a whip in defense of a native woman, because his nerves go all to pieces at the sound of firearms."

"If you had told me all this before I should never have spoken as I did," Isobel pleaded.

"I did not go into the full details, but I told you that he was not responsible for his want of firmness under fire, and that I knew him in other respects to be a brave man," the Doctor said uncompromisingly. "Since then you have by your manner driven him away from you. You have flirted—well, you may not call it flirting," he broke off in answer to a gesture of denial, "but it was the same thing—with a man who is undoubtedly a gallant soldier—a very paladin, if you like—but who, in spite of his handsome face and pleasant manner, is no more to be compared with Bathurst in point of moral qualities or mental ability than light to dark, and this after I had like an old fool gone out of my way to warn you. You have disappointed me altogether, Isobel Hannay."

Isobel stood motionless before him, with downcast eyes.

"Well, there, my dear," the Doctor went on hurriedly, as he saw a tear glisten in her eyelashes; "don't let us say anything more about it. In the first place, it is no affair of mine; and in the second place, your point of view was that most women would take at a time like this; only, you know, I expected you would not have done just as other

women would. We cannot afford to quarrel now, for there is no doubt that, although we may put a good face on the matter, our position is one of grave peril, and it is of no use troubling over trifles. Now run away, and get a few hours' sleep if you can. You will want all your strength before we are through with this business."

While the Doctor had been talking to Isobel, the men had gathered below in a sort of informal council, the subject being Bathurst's conduct on the roof.

"I would not have believed it if I had not seen it," Captain Rintoul said. "The man was absolutely helpless with fright; I never saw such an exhibition; and then his fainting afterwards and having to be carried away was disgusting; in fact, it is worse than that."

There was a general murmur of assent.

"It is disgraceful," one of the civilians said; "I am ashamed that the man should belong to our service; the idea of a fellow being helpless by fright when there are women and children to be defended—it is downright revolting."

"Well, he did go and stick himself up in front," Wilson said; "you should remember that. He may have been in a blue funk, I don't say he wasn't; still, you know, he didn't go away and try to hide himself, but he stuck himself up in front for them to fire at. I think we ought to take that into consideration."

"Dr. Wade says Bathurst put himself there to try and accustom himself to fire," Captain Forster said. "Mind, I don't pretend to like the man. We were at school together, and he was a coward then and a sneak, but for all that one should look at it fairly. The Doctor asserts that Bathurst is morally brave, but that somehow or other his nerves are too much for him. I don't pretend to understand it myself, but there is no doubt about the Doctor's pluck, and I don't think he would stand up for Bathurst as he does unless he really thought he was not altogether accountable for showing the white feather. I think, too, from what he let drop, that the Major is to some extent of the same opinion. What do you think, Doolan?"

"I like Bathurst," Captain Doolan said; "I have always thought him a first rate fellow; but one can't stick up, you know, for a fellow who can't behave as a gentleman ought to, especially when there are women and children in danger."

"It. is quite impossible that we should associate with him," Captain Rintoul said. "I don't propose that we should tell him what we think of him, but I think we ought to leave him severely alone."

"I should say that he ought to be sent to Coventry," Richards said.

"I should not put it in that way," Mr. Hunter said gravely. "I have always esteemed Bathurst. I look upon it as a terribly sad case; but I agree with Captain Rintoul that, in the position in which we are now placed, a man who proves himself to be a coward must be made to feel that he stands apart from us. I should not call it sending him to Coventry, or anything of that sort, but I do think that we should express by our manner that we don't wish to have any communication with him."

There was a general expression of assent to this opinion, Wilson alone protesting against it.

"You can do as you like," he said; "but certainly I shall speak to Bathurst, and I am sure the Doctor and Major Hannay will do so. I don't want to stand up for a coward, but I believe what the Doctor says. I have seen a good deal of Bathurst, and I like him; besides, haven't you heard the story the Doctor has been telling about his attacking a tiger with a whip to save a native woman? I don't care what anyone says, a fellow who is a downright coward couldn't do a thing like that."

"Who told the Doctor about it?" Farquharson asked. "If he got it from Bathurst, I don't think it goes for much after what we have seen."

Wilson would have replied angrily, but Captain Doolan put his hand on his shoulder.

"Shut up, Wilson," he said; "this is no time for disputes; we are all in one boat here, and must row together like brothers. You go your own way about Bathurst, I don't blame you for it; he is a man everyone has liked, a first rate official, and a good fellow all round, except he is not one of the sociable kind. At any other time one would not think so much of this, but at present for a man to lack courage is for him to lack everything. I hope he will come better out of it than it looks at present. He will have plenty of chances here, and no one will be more glad than I shall to see him pull himself together."

The Doctor, however, would have quarreled with everyone all round when he heard what had been decided upon, had not Major Hannay taken him aside and talked to him strongly.

"It will never do, Doctor, to have quarrels here, and as commandant I must beg of you not to make this a personal matter. I am very sorry for this poor fellow; I accept entirely your view of the matter; but at the same time I really can't blame the others for looking at it from a matter of fact point of view. Want of courage is at all times regarded by men as the most unpardonable of failings, and at a time like the present this feeling is naturally far stronger even than usual. I hope with you that Bathurst will retrieve himself yet, but we shall certainly do him no good by trying to fight his battle until he does. You and I, thinking as we do, will of course make no alteration in our manner towards him. I am glad to hear that young Wilson also stands as his friend. Let matters go on quietly. I believe they will come right in the end."

The Doctor was obliged to acknowledge that the Major's counsel was wise, and to refrain from either argument or sarcasm; but the effort required to check his natural tendency to wordy conflict was almost too great for him, and when not engaged in his own special duties he spent hours in one of the angles of the terrace keenly watching every tree and bush within range, and firing vengefully whenever he caught sight of a lurking native. So accurate was his aim that the Sepoys soon learned to know and dread the crack of his rifle; and whenever it spoke out the ground within its range was speedily clear of foes.

The matter, however, caused a deep if temporary estrangement between Wilson and Richards. Although constantly chaffing each other, and engaged in verbal strife, they had hitherto been firm friends. Their rivalry in the matter of horseflesh had not aroused angry feelings, even their mutual adoration of Isobel Hannay had not affected a breach in their friendship; but upon the subject of sending Bathurst to Coventry they quarreled so hotly, that for a time they broke off all communication with each other,

and both in their hearts regretted that their schoolboy days had passed, and that they could not settle the matter in good schoolboy fashion.

CHAPTER XIV.

But though obliged to defer to Major Hannay's wishes, and to abstain from arguing with the men the question of Bathurst being given the cold shoulder, Dr. Wade had already organized the ladies in his favor. During the afternoon he had told them the tiger story, and had confidentially informed them how it was that Bathurst from his birth had been the victim of something like nervous paralysis at all loud sounds, especially those of the discharge of firearms.

"His conduct today," he said, "and his courage in rescuing that native girl from the tiger, illustrate his character. He is cool, brave, and determined, as might be expected from a man of so well balanced a mind as his; and even when his nerves utterly broke down under the din of musketry, his will was so far dominant that he forced himself to go forward and stand there under fire, an act which was, under the circumstances, simply heroic."

There is little difficulty in persuading women as to the merits of a man they like, and Bathurst had, since the troubles began, been much more appreciated than before by the ladies of Deennugghur. They had felt there was something strengthening and cheering in his presence, for while not attempting to minimize the danger, there was a calm confidence in his manner that comforted and reassured those he talked to.

In the last twenty-four hours, too, he had unobtrusively performed many little kindnesses; had aided in the removals, carried the children, looked after the servants, and had been foremost in the arrangement of everything that could add to the comfort of the ladies.

"I am glad you have told us all about it, Doctor," Mrs. Doolan said; "and, of course, no one would dream of blaming him. I had heard that story about his leaving the army years ago; but although I had only seen him once or twice, I did not believe it for a minute. What you tell us now, Doctor, explains the whole matter. I pity him sincerely. It must be something awful for a man at a time like this not to be able to take his part in the defense, especially when there are us women here. Why, it would pain me less to see Jim brought in dead, than for him to show the white feather. What can we do for the poor fellow?"

"Treat him just as usual. There is nothing else you can do, Mrs. Doolan. Any tone of sympathy, still less of pity, would be the worst thing possible. He is in the lowest depths at present; but if he finds by your tone and manner that you regard him on the same footing as before, he will gradually come round, and I hope that before the end of the siege he will have opportunities of retrieving himself. Not under fire—that is hopeless; but in other ways."

"You may be sure we will do all we can, Doctor," Mrs. Doolan said warmly; "and there are plenty of ways he will be able to make himself most useful. There is somebody wanted to look after all those syces and servants, and it would be a comfort to us to have someone to talk to occasionally; besides, all the children are fond of him."

This sentiment was warmly echoed; and thus, when the determination at which the men had arrived to cut Bathurst became known, there was something like a feminine revolution.

"You may do as you like," Mrs. Doolan said indignantly; "but if you think that we are going to do anything so cruel and unjust, you are entirely mistaken, I can tell you."

Mrs. Rintoul was equally emphatic, and Mrs. Hunter quietly, but with as much decision, protested. "I have always regarded Mr. Bathurst as a friend," she said, "and I shall continue to do so. It is very sad for him that he cannot take part in the defense, but it is no more fair to blame him than it would be to blame us, because we, too, are noncombatants."

Isobel Hannay had taken no part in the first discussion among the ladies, nor did she say anything now.

"It is cruel and unjust," she said to herself, "but they only think as I did. I was more cruel and unjust than they, for there was no talk of danger then. I expressed my contempt of him because there was a suspicion that he had showed cowardice ten years ago, while they have seen it shown now when there is fearful peril. If they are cruel and unjust, what was I?"

Later on the men gathered together at one end of the room, and talked over the situation.

"Dr. Wade," the Major said quietly, "I shall be obliged if you will go and ask Mr. Bathurst to join us. He knows the people round here better than any of us, and his opinion will be valuable."

The Doctor, who had several times been in to see Bathurst, went to his room.

"The Major wants you to join us, Bathurst; we are having a talk over things, and he wishes to have your opinion. I had better tell you that as to yourself the camp is divided into two parties. On one side are the Major, Wilson, and myself, and all the ladies, who take, I need not say, a common sense view of the matter, and recognize that you have done all a man could do to overcome your constitutional nervousness, and that there is no discredit whatever attached to you personally. The rest of the men, I am sorry to say, at present take another view of the case, and are disposed to show you the cold shoulder."

"That, of course," Bathurst said quietly; "as to the ladies' view of it, I know that it is only the result of your good offices, Doctor."

"Then you will come," the Doctor said, pleased that Bathurst seemed less depressed than he had expected.

"Certainly I will come, Doctor," Bathurst said, rising; "the worst is over now—everyone knows that I am a coward—that is what I have dreaded. There is nothing else for me to be afraid of, and it is of no use hiding myself."

"We look quite at home here, Mr. Bathurst, don't we?" Mrs. Doolan said cheerfully, as he passed her; "and I think we all feel a great deal more comfortable than we did when you gave us your warning last night; the anticipation is always worse than the reality."

"Not always, I think, Mrs. Doolan," he said quietly; "but you have certainly made yourselves wonderfully at home, though your sewing is of a more practical kind than that upon which you are ordinarily engaged."

Then he passed on with the Doctor to the other end of the room. The Major nodded as he came up.

"All right again now, Bathurst, I hope? We want your opinion, for you know, I think, more of the Zemindars in this part of the country than any of us. Of course, the question is, will they take part against us?"

"I am afraid they will, Major. I had hoped otherwise; but if it be true that the Nana has gone—and as the other part of the message was correct, I have no doubt this is so also—I am afraid they will be carried away with the stream."

"And you think they have guns?"

"I have not the least doubt of it; the number given up was a mere fraction of those they were said to have possessed."

"I had hoped the troops would have marched away after the lesson we gave them this morning, but, so far as we can make out, there is no sign of movement in their lines. However, they may start at daybreak tomorrow."

"I will go out to see if you like, Major," Bathurst said quietly. "I can get native clothes from the servants, and I speak the language well enough to pass as a native; so if you give me permission I will go out to the lines and learn what their intentions are."

"It would be a very dangerous undertaking," the Major said gravely.

"I have no fear whatever of danger of that kind, Major; my nerves are steady enough, except when there is a noise of firearms, and then, as you all saw this morning, I cannot control them, do what I will. Risks of any other kind I am quite prepared to undertake, but in this matter I think the danger is very slight, the only difficulty being to get through the line of sentries they have no doubt posted round the house. Once past them, I think there is practically no risk whatever of their recognizing me when made up as a native. The Doctor has, no doubt, got some iodine in his surgery, and a coat of that will bring me to the right color."

"Well, if you are ready to undertake it, I will not refuse," the Major said. "How would you propose to get out?"

"I noticed yesterday that the branches of one of the trees in the garden extended beyond the top of the wall. I will climb up that and lower myself on the other side by a rope; that is a very simple matter. The spot is close to the edge of Mr. Hunter's compound, and I shall work my way through the shrubbery till I feel sure I am beyond any sentries who may be posted there; the chances are that they will not be thick anywhere, except opposite the gate. By the way, Captain Forster, before I go I must thank you for having risked your life to save mine this morning. I heard from Mrs. Hunter that it was you and the Doctor who rushed forward and drew me back."

"It is not worth talking about," Captain Forster said carelessly. "You seemed bent on making a target of yourself; and as the Major's orders were that everyone was to lie down, there was nothing for it but to remove you."

Bathurst turned to Dr. Wade. “Will you superintend my get up, Doctor?”

“Certainly,” the Doctor said, with alacrity. “I will guarantee that, with the aid of my boy, I will turn you out so that no one would know you even in broad daylight, to say nothing of the dark.”

A quarter of an hour sufficed to metamorphose Bathurst into an Oude peasant. He did not return to the room, but, accompanied by the Doctor, made his way to the tree he had spoken of.

“By the way, you have taken no arms,” the Doctor said suddenly.

“They would be useless, Doctor; if I am recognized I shall be killed; if I am not discovered, and the chances are very slight of my being so, I shall get back safely. By the way, we will tie some knots on that rope before I let myself down. I used to be able to climb a rope without them, but I doubt whether I could do so now.”

“Well, God bless you, lad, and bring you back safely! You may make as light of it as you will, but it is a dangerous expedition. However, I am glad you have undertaken it, come what may, for it has given you the opportunity of showing you are not afraid of danger when it takes any other form than that of firearms. There are plenty of men who would stand up bravely enough in a fight, who would not like to undertake this task of going out alone in the dark into the middle of these bloodthirsty scoundrels. How long do you think you will be?”

“A couple of hours at the outside.”

“Well, at the end of an hour I shall be back here again. Don't be longer than you can help, lad, for I shall be very anxious until you return.”

When the Doctor re-entered the house there was a chorus of questions:

“Has Mr. Bathurst started?”

“Why did you not bring him in here before he left? We should all have liked to have said goodby to him.”

“Yes, he has gone. I have seen him over the wall; and it was much better that he should go without any fuss. He went off just as quietly and unconcernedly as if he had been going out for an ordinary evening's walk. Now I am going up onto the roof. I don't say we should hear any hubbub down at the lines if he were discovered there, but we should certainly hear a shout if he came across any of the sentries round the house.”

“Has he taken any arms, Doctor?” the Major asked.

“None whatever, Major. I asked him if he would not take pistols, but he refused.”

“Well, I don't understand that,” Captain Forster remarked. “If I had gone on such a business I would have taken a couple of revolvers. I am quite ready to take my chance of being killed fighting, but I should not like to be seized and hacked to pieces in cold blood. My theory is a man should sell his life as dearly as he can.”

“That is the animal instinct, Forster,” the Doctor said sharply; “though I don't say that I should not feel the same myself; but I question whether Bathurst's is not a higher type of courage.”

“Well, I don't aspire to Bathurst's type of courage, Doctor,” Forster said, with a short laugh.

But the Doctor did not answer. He had already turned away, and was making for the stairs.

"May I go with you, Doctor?" Isobel Hannay said, following him. "It is very hot down here."

"Yes; come along, child; but there is no time to lose, for Bathurst must be near where they are likely to have posted their sentries by this time."

"Everything quiet, Wilson?" he asked the young subaltern, who, with another, was on guard on the roof.

"Yes; we have heard nothing except a few distant shouts and noises out at the lines. Round here there has been nothing moving, except that we heard someone go out into the garden just now."

"I went out with Bathurst," the Doctor said. "He has gone in the disguise of a native to the Sepoy lines, to find out what are their intentions."

"I heard the talk over it, Doctor. I only came up on watch a few minutes since. I thought it was most likely him when I heard the steps."

"I hope he is beyond the sentries," the Doctor said. "I have come up here to listen."

"I expect he is through them before this," Wilson said confidently. "I wish I could have gone with him; but of course it would not have been any good. It is a beautiful night—isn't it, Miss Hannay?—and there is scarcely any dew falling."

"Now, you go off to your post in the corner, Wilson. Your instructions are to listen for the slightest sound, and to assure us against the Sepoys creeping up to the walls. We did not come up here to distract you from your duties, or to gossip."

"There are Richards and another posted somewhere in the garden," Wilson said. "Still, I suppose you are right, Doctor; but if you, Miss Hannay, have come up to listen, come and sit in my corner; it is the one nearest to the lines."

"You may as well go and sit down, Isobel," the Doctor said; "that is, if you intend to stay up here long;" and they went across with Wilson to his post.

"Shall I put one of these sandbags for you to sit on?"

"I would rather stand, thank you;" and they stood for some time silently watching the fires in the lines.

"They are drawing pretty heavily on the wood stores," the Doctor growled; "there is a good deal more than the regulation allowance blazing in those fires. I can make out a lot of figures moving about round them; no doubt numbers of the peasants have come in."

"Do you think Mr. Bathurst has got beyond the line of sentries?" Isobel said, after standing perfectly quiet for some time.

"Oh, yes, a long way; probably he was through by the time we came up here. They are not likely to post them more than fifty or sixty yards from the wall; and, indeed, it is, as Bathurst pointed out to me, probable that they are only thick near the gate. All they want to do is to prevent us slipping away. I should think that Bathurst must be out near the lines by this time."

Isobel moved a few paces away from the others, and again stood listening.

"I suppose you do not think that there is any chance of an attack tonight, Doctor?" Wilson asked, in low tones.

"Not in the least; the natives are not fond of night work. I expect they are dividing the spoil and quarreling over it; anyhow, they have had enough of it for today. They may intend to march away in the morning, or they may have sent to Cawnpore to ask for orders, or they may have heard from some of the Zemindars that they are coming in to join them—that is what Bathurst has gone out to learn; but anyhow I do not think they will attack us again with their present force."

"I wish there were a few more of us," Wilson said, "so that we could venture on a sortie."

"So do I, lad; but it is no use thinking about it as it is. We have to wait; our fate is not in our own hands."

"And you think matters look bad, Doctor?"

"I think they could hardly look worse. Unless the mutineers take it into their heads to march away, there is, humanly speaking, but one chance for us, and that is that Lawrence may thrash the Sepoys so completely at Lucknow that he may be able to send out a force to bring us in. The chances of that are next to nothing; for in addition to a very large Sepoy force he has the population of Lucknow—one of the most turbulent in India—on his hands. Ah, what is that?"

Two musket shots in quick succession from the Sepoy lines broke the silence of the evening, and a startled exclamation burst from the girl standing near them.

The Doctor went over to her.

"Do you think—do you think," she said in a low, strained voice, "that it was Bathurst?"

"Not at all. If they detected him, and I really do not see that there is a chance of their doing so, disguised as he was, they would have seized him and probably killed him, but there would be no firing. He has gone unarmed, you know, and would offer no resistance. Those shots you heard were doubtless the result of some drunken quarrel over the loot."

"Do you really think so, Doctor?"

"I feel quite sure of it. If it had been Forster who had gone out, and he had been detected, it would have been natural enough that we should hear the sound of something like a battle. In the first place, he would have defended himself desperately, and, in the next, he might have made his way through them and escaped; but, as I said, with Bathurst there would be no occasion for their firing."

"Why didn't he come in to say goodby before he went? that is what I wanted to ask you, Doctor, and why I came up here. I wanted to have spoken to him, if only for a moment, before he started. I tried to catch his eye as he went out of the room with you, but he did not even look at me. It will be so hard if he never comes back, to know that he went away without my having spoken to him again. I did try this morning to tell him that I was sorry for what I said, but he would not listen to me."

"You will have an opportunity of telling him when he comes back, if you want to, or of showing him so by your manner, which would be, perhaps, less painful to both

of you."

"I don't care about pain to myself," the girl said. "I have been unjust, and deserve it."

"I don't think he considers you unjust. I did, and told you so. He feels what he considers the disgrace so much that it seems to him perfectly natural he should be despised."

"Yes, but I want him to see that he is not despised," she said quickly. "You don't understand, Doctor."

"I do understand perfectly, my dear; at least, I think—I think I do; I see that you want to put yourself straight with him, which is very right and proper, especially placed as we all are; but I would not do or say anything hastily. You have spoken hastily once, you see, and made a mess of it. I should be careful how I did it again, unless, of course," and he stopped.

"Unless what, Doctor?" Isobel asked shyly, after a long pause. But there was no reply; and looking round she saw that her companion had moved quietly away and had joined Wilson at his post. She stood for a few minutes in the same attitude, and then moved quietly across the staircase in the center of the terrace, and went down to the party below. A short time later the Doctor followed her, and, taking his rifle, went out into the garden with Captain Doolan, who assisted him in climbing the tree, and handed his gun up to him. The Doctor made his way out on the branch to the spot where it extended beyond the wall, and there sat, straining his eyes into the darkness. Half an hour passed, and then he heard a light footfall on the sandy soil.

"Is that you, Bathurst?" he whispered.

"All right, Doctor;" and a minute later Bathurst sat on the branch beside him.

"Well, what's your news?"

"Very bad, Doctor; they expect the Rajah Por Sing, who, it seems, is the leader of the party in this district, and several other Zemindars, to be here with guns tomorrow or next day. The news from Cawnpore was true.. The native troops mutinied and marched away, but were joined by Nana Sahib and his force, and he persuaded them to return and attack the whites in their intrenchments at Cawnpore, as they would not be well received at Delhi unless they had properly accomplished their share of the work of rooting out the Feringhees."

"The infernal scoundrel!" the Doctor exclaimed; "after pretending for years to be our best friend. I'm disgusted to think that I have drunk his champagne a dozen times. However, that makes little difference to us now, your other news is the most important. We could have resisted the Sepoys for a month; but if they bring up guns there can be but one ending to it."

"That is so, Doctor. The only hope I can see is that they may find our resistance so obstinate as to be glad to grant us terms of surrender."

"Yes, there is that chance," the Doctor agreed; "but history shows there is but little reliance to be placed upon native oaths."

Bathurst was silent; his own experience of the natives had taught him the same lesson.

"It is a poor hope," he said, after a while; "but it is the only one, so far as I can see."

Not another word was spoken as they descended the tree and walked across to the house.

"Never mind about changing your things, come straight in."

"Our scout has returned," the Doctor said, as he entered the room. There was a general exclamation of gladness on the part of the ladies who had not retired.

"I am very glad to see you safe back, Mr. Bathurst," Mrs. Hunter said, going up to him and taking his hand. "We have all been very anxious since you left."

"The danger was very slight, Mrs. Hunter. I only wish I had brought you back the news that the native lines were deserted and the mutineers in full march for Delhi and Lucknow."

"I was afraid you would hardly bring that news, Mr. Bathurst; it was almost too good to hope for. However, we are all glad that you are back. Are we not, Isobel?"

"We are indeed, Mr. Bathurst, though as yet I can hardly persuade myself that it is you in that get up."

"I think there is no doubt of my identity. Can you tell me where you uncle is, Miss Hannay? I have to make my report to him."

"He is on the roof. There is a sort of general gathering of our defenders there."

Two lamps had been placed in the center of the terrace, and round these the little garrison were grouped, some sitting on boxes, others lying on mats, almost all smoking. Bathurst was greeted heartily by the Major and Wilson as soon as he was recognized.

"I am awfully glad to see you back," Wilson said, shaking him warmly by the hand. "I wish I could have gone with you. Two together does not seem so bad, but I should not like to start out by myself as you did."

There was a hearty cordiality in the young fellow's voice that was very pleasant to Bathurst.

"We have all our gifts, as Hawkeye used to say, as I have no doubt you remember, Wilson. Such gifts as I have lay in the way of solitary work, I fancy."

"Now, light a cheroot, Bathurst," the Major said, "and drink off this tumbler of brandy and soda, and then let us hear your story."

"The story is simple enough, Major. I got through without difficulty. The sentries are some distance apart round the garden wall. As soon as I discovered by the sound of their footsteps where they were, it was easy enough to get through them. Then I made a longish detour, and came down on the lines from the other side. There was no occasion for concealment then. Numbers of the country people had come in, and were gathered round the Sepoys' fires, and I was able to move about amongst them, and listen to the conversation without the smallest hindrance.

"The Sepoys were loudly expressing their dissatisfaction at their officers leading them against the house today, when they had no means of either battering down the walls or scaling them. Then there was a general opinion that treachery was at work; for how else should the Europeans have known they were going to rise that morning,

and so moved during the night into the house? There was much angry recrimination and quarreling, and many expressed their regret they had not marched straight to Cawnpore after burning the bungalows.

"All this was satisfactory; but I learned that Por Sing and several other Zemindars had already sent in assurances that they were wholly with them, and would be here, with guns to batter down the walls, some time tomorrow."

"That is bad news, indeed," the Major said gravely, when he had finished. "Of course, when we heard that Nana Sahib had thrown in his lot with the mutineers, it was probable that many of the landowners would go the same way; but if the Sepoys had marched off they might not have attacked us on their own account. Now we know that the Sepoys are going to stay, and that they will have guns, it alters our position altogether."

There was a murmur of assent.

"I should tell you before you talk the matter over further," Bathurst went on, "that during the last hour some hundreds of peasants have taken up their posts round the house in addition to the Sepoy sentries. I came back with one party about a hundred strong. They are posted a couple of hundred yards or so in front of the gate. I slipped away from them in the dark and made my way here."

"Well, gentlemen, what do you think we had better do?" the Major said; "we are all in the same boat, and I should like to have your opinions. We may defend this house successfully for days—possibly we may even tire them out—but on the other hand they may prove too strong for us. If the wall were breached we could hardly hope to defend it, and, indeed, if they constructed plenty of ladders they could scale it at night in a score of places. We must, therefore, regard the house as our citadel, close up the lower windows and doors with sandbags, and defend it to the last. Still, if they are determined, the lookout is not a very bright one."

"I am in favor of our cutting our way out, Major," Captain Forster said; "if we are cooped up here, we must, as you say, in the long run be beaten."

"That would be all very well, Captain Forster, if we were all men," Mr. Hunter said. "There are sixteen of us and there are in all eighteen horses, for I and Farquharson have two each; but there are eight women and fourteen children; so all the horses would have to carry double. We certainly could not hope to escape from them with our horses so laden; and if they came up with us, what fighting could we do with women behind our saddles? Moreover, we certainly could not leave the servants, who have been true to us, to the mercy of the Sepoys."

"Besides, where could we go?" the Doctor asked. "The garrison at Cawnpore, we know, are besieged by overwhelming numbers. We do not know much as to the position at Lucknow, but certainly the Europeans are immensely outnumbered there, and I think we may assume that they are also besieged. It is a very long distance either to Agra or to Allahabad; and with the whole country up in arms against us, and the cavalry here at our heels, the prospect seems absolutely hopeless. What do you think, Doolan? You and Rintoul have your wives here, and you have children. I consider that the question concerns you married men more than us."

“It is a case of the frying pan and the fire, as far as I can see, Doctor. At any rate, here we have got walls to light behind, and food for weeks, and plenty of ammunition. I am for selling our lives as dearly as we can here rather than go outside to be chased like jackals.”

“I agree with you, Doolan,” Captain Rintoul said. “Here we may be able to make terms with them, but once outside the walls we should be at the scoundrels' mercy. If it were not for the women and children I should agree entirely with Forster that our best plan would be to throw open our gates and make a dash for it, keeping together as long as we could, and then, if necessary, separating and trying to make our way down to Agra or Allahabad as best we could; but with ladies that does not seem to be possible.”

The opinion of the married civilians was entirely in accord with that of Mr. Hunter.

“But what hope is there of defending this place in the long run?” Captain Forster said. “If I saw any chance at all I should be quite willing to wait; but I would infinitely rather sally out at once and go for them and be killed than wait here day after day and perhaps week after week, seeing one's fate drawing nearer inch by inch. What do you say, Bathurst? We haven't had your opinion yet.”

“I do not think that the defense is so hopeless as you suppose, although I admit that the chances are greatly against us,” Bathurst said quietly. “I think there is a hope of tiring the natives out. The Sepoys know well enough there can be no great amount of loot here, while they think that were they at Cawnpore, at Lucknow, or still more at Delhi, their chances of plunder would be much greater. Moreover, I think that men in their position, having offended, as it were, without hope of pardon, would naturally desire to flock together. There is comfort and encouragement in numbers. Therefore, I am sure they will very speedily become impatient if they do not meet with success, and would be inclined to grant terms rather than waste time here.

“It is the same thing with the native gentry. They will want to be off to Lucknow or Delhi, where they will know more how things are going, and where, no doubt, they reckon upon obtaining posts of importance and increased possessions under the new order of things. Therefore, I think, they, as well as the Sepoys, are likely, if they find the task longer and more difficult than they expect, to be ready to grant terms. I have no great faith in native oaths. Still they might be kept.

“Captain Forster's proposal I regard as altogether impracticable. We are something like two hundred and fifty miles from the nearest British post where we could hope to find refuge, and with the horses carrying double, the troopers at our heels directly we start, and the country hostile, I see no chance whatever, not a vestige of one, of our getting safely away.

“But there is a third alternative by which some might escape; it is, that we should make our way out on foot, break up into parties of twos and threes; steal or fight our way through the sentries, and then for each party to shift for itself, making its way as best it can, traveling by night and lying up in woods or plantations by day; getting food at times from friendly natives, and subsisting, for the most part, upon what might be gathered in the fields. In that way some might escape, but the suffering and hardships of the women and children would be terrible.”

"I agree with you," Mr. Hunter said; "such a journey would be frightful to contemplate, and I don't think, in our case, that my wife could possibly perform such a journey; still, some might do so. At any rate, I think the chances are better than they would be were we to ride out in a body. I should suggest, Major, when the crisis seems to be approaching—that is, when it is clear that we can't defend ourselves much longer—it would be fair that each should be at liberty to try to get out and make down the country."

"Certainly," the Major agreed; "we are in a position of men on board a sinking ship with the boats gone; we should try to the end to save the ship, but when all hope of doing that is over, each may try to get to shore as he best can. As long as the house can be defended, all must remain and bear their share in the struggle, but when we decide that it is but a question of hours, all who choose will be at liberty to try to escape."

"It will be vastly more difficult then than now," Captain Forster said; "Bathurst made his way out tonight without difficulty, but they will be a great deal more vigilant when they know we cannot hold out much longer. I don't see how it would be possible for women and children to get through them."

"We might then adopt your scheme, to a certain extent, Forster," Major Hannay said. "We could mount, sally out suddenly, break through their pickets, and as soon as we are beyond them scatter; those who like can try to make their way down on horseback, those who prefer it try to do so on foot. That would at least give us an alternative should the siege be pushed on to the last, and we find ourselves unable to make terms."

There was general assent to the Major's proposal, which seemed to offer better chances than any. There was the hope that the mutineers might tire of the siege and march away; that if they pressed it, terms might be at last obtained from them, and that, failing everything else, the garrison might yet make their way down country.

"As there is evidently no chance of an attack during the night," the Major said, "we will divide into two watches and relieve each other every four hours; that will give two as lookouts on the roof and six in the inclosure. As you are senior officer next to myself, Doolan, you will take charge of one watch; I shall myself take charge of the other. Forster and Wilson be with me, Rintoul and Richards with you. Mr. Hardy, will you and the other gentlemen divide your numbers into two watches? Dr. Wade counts as a combatant until his hospital begins to fill."

"I fancy he may be counted as a combatant all through," the Doctor muttered.

"Tomorrow morning," the Major went on, "we will continue the work of filling sandbags. There are still a large number of empty bags on hand. We shall want them for all the lower windows and doors, and the more there are of them the better; and we must also keep a supply in readiness to make a retrenchment if they should breach the wall. Now, Mr. Hunter, as soon as you have made out your list my watch can go on duty, and I should advise the others to turn in without delay."

When the ladies were informed that half the men were going on watch, Mrs. Doolan said, "I have an amendment to propose, Major. Women's ears are just as keen

as men's, and I propose that we supply the sentries on the roof. I will volunteer for one."

The whole of the ladies at once volunteered.

"There is no occasion for so many," Mrs. Doolan said; "and I propose that tonight, at any rate, I should take the first watch with one of the Miss Hunters, and that Miss Hannay and the other should take the second. That will leave all the gentlemen available for the watch in the inclosure."

The proposal was agreed to, and in a short time the first watch had taken their station, and the rest of the garrison lay down to rest.

The night passed off quietly. The first work at which the Major set the garrison in the morning was to form six wooden stages against the wall. One by the gate, one against the wall at the other end, and two at each of the long sides of the inclosure. They were twelve feet in height, which enabled those upon them to stand head and shoulders above the level of the wall.

When these were completed the whole of the garrison, including the ladies and native servants, again set to work filling sandbags with earth. As fast as they were finished they were carried in and piled two deep against the lower windows, and three deep against the doors, only one small door being left undefended, so as to allow a passage in and out of the house. Bags were piled in readiness for closing this also in case of necessity.

Mrs. Rintoul and another lady had volunteered for a third watch on the roof, so that each watch would go on duty once every twelve hours. The whole of the men, therefore, were available for work below.

A scattered fire was opened at the house soon after daybreak, and was kept up without intermission from bushes and other cover; but the watchers on the roof, seated behind the sandbags at opposite angles, were well under shelter, peering out occasionally through the crevices between the bags to see that no general movement was taking place among the enemy.

About midday there was a desultory discharge of firearms from the native lines; and the Major, on ascending to the roof, saw a procession of elephants and men approaching the camp.

"I expect there are guns there," he muttered, "and they are going to begin in earnest. Ladies, you are relieved of duty at present. I expect we shall be hearing from those fellows soon, and we must have someone up here who can talk back to them."

Accordingly the Doctor and Mr. Farquharson, who was the best shot among the civilians, took the places of the ladies on the roof. Half an hour later the Major went up again.

"They have four cannon," the Doctor said. "There they are, on that slight rise to the left of the lines. I should fancy they are about eight hundred yards away. Do you see, there is a crowd gathering behind them? Our rifles will carry that distance easily enough, I think. You might as well let us have three or four more up here.. The two lads are both fair shots, and Hunter was considered a good shikari some years ago. We can drive their cannon off that rise; the farther we make them take up their post the better, but even at that distance their shooting will be wild. The guns are no doubt old

ones, and, as likely as not, the shot won't fit. At any rate, though they may trouble us, they will do no serious harm till they establish a battery at pretty close quarters."

The Major went down, and the two subalterns and Mr. Hunter joined the Doctor on the roof.

Ten minutes later the boom of four guns in quick succession was heard, and the party below stopped for a moment at their work as they heard the sound of shot rushing through the air overhead; then came five shots in answer from the parapet. Again and again the rifles spoke out, and then the Doctor shouted down to those in the courtyard, "They have had enough of it already, and are bringing up the elephants to move the cannon back. Now, boys," he said to the subalterns, "an elephant is an easier mark than a tiger; aim carefully, and blaze away as quickly as you like."

For five minutes a rapid fire was kept up; then Wilson went below.

"The Doctor asked me to tell you, sir," he said to the Major, "that the guns have been removed. There has been great confusion among the natives, and we can see with our glasses eight or ten bodies left on the ground. One of the elephants turned and went off at full speed among the crowd, and we fancy some of the others were hit. There was great trouble in getting them to come up to the guns. The Doctor says it is all over for the present."

Two other large parties with elephants were seen to come up to the native lines in the course of the afternoon. The defenders of the roof had now turned their attention to their foes in the gardens around, and the fire thence was gradually suppressed, until by evening everything was quiet.

By this time the work of filling the sandbags was completed; the doors and windows had been barricaded, and a large pile of bags lay in the inclosure ready for erection at any threatened point.

CHAPTER XV.

When the party met at dinner they were for a time somewhat silent, for all were exhausted by their hard work under a blazing sun, but their spirits rose under their surroundings.

The native servants had laid the table with as scrupulous care as usual; and, except that there was no display of flowers, no change was observable.

All had dressed after the work was over, and the men were in white drill, and the ladies had, from custom, put on light evening gowns.

The cook had prepared an excellent dinner, and as the champagne went round no stranger would have supposed that the party had met under unusual circumstances. The Doctor and the two subalterns were unaffectedly gay, and as the rest all made an effort to be cheerful, the languor that had marked the commencement of the dinner soon wore off.

"Wilson and Richards are becoming quite sportsmen," the Doctor said. "They have tried their hands at tigers but could hardly have expected to take part in elephant shooting. They can't quite settle between themselves as to which it was who sent the Rajah's elephant flying among the crowd. Both declare they aimed at that special beast. So, as there is no deciding the point, we must consider the honor as divided."

"It was rather hard on us," Isobel said, "to be kept working below instead of being up there seeing what was going on. But I consider we quite did our full share towards the defense today. My hands are quite sore with sewing up the mouths of those rough bags. I think the chief honors that way lie with Mrs. Rintoul. I am sure she sewed more bags than any of us. I had no idea that you were such a worker, Mrs. Rintoul."

"I used to be a quick worker, Miss Hannay, till lately. I have not touched a needle since I came out to India."

"I should recommend you to keep it up. Mrs. Rintoul," the Doctor said. "It has done you more good than all my medicines. I don't believe I have prescribed for you for the last month, and I haven't seen you looking so well since you came out."

"I suppose I have not had time to feel ill, Doctor," Mrs. Rintoul said, with a slight smile; "all this has been a sort of tonic."

"And a very useful one, Mrs. Rintoul. We are all of us the better for a little stirring up sometimes."

Captain Forster had, as usual, secured a place next to Isobel Hannay. He had been near her all day, carrying the bags as he filled them to her to sew up. Bathurst was sitting at the other end of the table, joining but little in the conversation.

"I thought Bathurst was going to faint again when the firing began, Miss Hannay," Captain Forster said, in a low voice. "It was quite funny to see him give a little start each shot that was fired, and his face was as white as my jacket. I never saw such a nervous fellow."

"You know he cannot help it, Captain Forster," Isobel said indignantly. "I don't think it is right to make fun of him for what is a great misfortune."

"I am not making fun of him, Miss Hannay. I am pitying him."

"It did not sound like it," Isobel said. "I don't think you can understand it, Captain Forster; it must be terrible to be like that."

"I quite agree with you there. I know I should drown myself or put a bullet through my head if I could not show ordinary courage with a lot of ladies going on working quietly round me."

"You must remember that Mr. Bathurst showed plenty of courage in going out among the mutineers last night."

"Yes, he did that very well; but you see, he talks the language so thoroughly that, as he said himself, there was very little risk in it."

"I don't like you to talk so, Captain Forster," Isobel said quietly. "I do not see much of Mr. Bathurst. I have not spoken to him half a dozen times in the last month; but both my uncle and Dr. Wade have a high opinion of him, and do not consider that he should be personally blamed for being nervous under fire. I feel very sorry for him, and would much rather that you did not make remarks like that about him. We have all our weak points, and, no doubt, many of them are a good deal worse than a mere want of nerve."

"Your commands shall be obeyed, Miss Hannay. I did not know that Bathurst was a protege of the Major's as well as of the estimable Doctor, or I would have said nothing against him."

"I don't think Mr. Bathurst is the sort of man to be anyone's protege, Captain Forster," Isobel said coldly. "However, I think we had better change the subject."

This Captain Forster did easily and adroitly. He had no special feeling against Bathurst save a contempt for his weakness; and as he had met him but once or twice at the Major's since he came to the station, he had not thought of him in the light of a rival.

Just as dinner was over Richards and one of the civilians came down from the terrace.

"I think that there is something up, Major. I can hear noises somewhere near where Mr. Hunter's bungalow was."

"What sort of noises, Richards?"

"There is a sort of murmur, as if there were a good many men there."

"Well, gentlemen, we had better go to our posts," the Major said. "Doolan, please place your watch on the platforms by the wall. I will take my party up onto the terrace. Doctor, will you bring up some of those rockets you made the other day? We must try and find out what they are doing."

As soon as he gained the terrace with his party, the Major requested everyone to remain perfectly still, and going forward to the parapet listened intently. In three or four minutes he returned to the others.

"There is a considerable body of men at work there," he said. "I can hear muffled sounds like digging, and once or twice a sharp click, as if a spade struck a stone. I am

very much afraid they are throwing up a battery there. I was in hopes they would have begun in the open, because we could have commanded the approaches; but if they begin among the trees, they can come in and out without our seeing them, and bring up their guns by the road without our being able to interfere with them. Mr. Bathurst, will you take down word to Captain Doolan to put his men on the platforms on that side. Tell him that I am going to throw up a rocket, as I believe they are erecting a battery near Hunter's bungalow, and that his men are to be ready to give them a volley if they can make them out. Tell them not to expose themselves too much; for if they really are at work there no doubt they have numbers of men posted in the shrubs all about to keep down our fire. Now, gentlemen, we will all lie down by the parapet. Take those spare rifles, and fire as quickly as you can while the light of the rocket lasts. Now, Mr. Wilson, we will get you to send them up. The rest of you had better get in the corner and stoop down behind the sandbags; you can lay your rifles on them, so as to be able to fire as soon as you have lit the second rocket."

The Doctor soon came up with the rockets; he had made three dozen the week before, and a number of blue lights, for the special purpose of detecting any movement that the enemy might make at night.

"I will fire them myself," he said, as Wilson offered to take them. "I have had charge of the fireworks in a score of fetes and that sort of thing, and am a pretty good hand at it. There, we will lean them against the sandbags. That is about it. Now, are you all ready, Major?"

"All ready!" replied the Major.

The Doctor placed the end of his lighted cheroot against the touch paper, there was a momentary pause, then a rushing sound, and the rocket soared high in the air, and then burst, throwing out four or five white fireballs, which lit up clearly the spot they were watching.

"There they are!" the Major exclaimed; "just to the right of the bungalow; there are scores of them."

The rifles, both from the terrace and the platforms below, cracked out in rapid succession, and another rocket flew up into the air and burst. Before its light had faded out, each of the defenders had fired his four shots. Shouts and cries from the direction in which they fired showed that many of the bullets had told, whilst almost immediately a sharp fire broke out from the bushes round them.

"Don't mind the fellows in the shrubs," the Major said, "but keep up your fire on the battery. We know its exact position now, though we cannot actually make them out."

"Let them wait while I go down and get a bit of phosphorus," the Doctor said. "I have some in the surgery. They will only throw away their fire in the dark without it."

He soon returned, and when all the fore and back sights had been rubbed by the phosphorus the firing recommenced, and the Doctor sent Wilson down with the phosphorus to the men on the platforms facing the threatened point.

Bathurst was returning, after having given the message to Captain Doolan, when Mrs. Hunter met him in the passage. She put her hand kindly on his shoulder.

"Now, Mr. Bathurst, if you will take my advice you will remain quietly here. The Doctor tells me they are going to open fire, and it is not the least use your going there exposing yourself to be shot when you know that you will be of no use. You showed us yesterday that you could be of use in other ways, and I have no doubt you will have opportunities of doing so again. I can assure you none of us will think any the worse of you for not being able to struggle against a nervous affliction that gives you infinite pain. If they were attacking it would be different; I know you would be wanting to take your share then."

"Thank you, Mrs. Hunter," he said, "but I must go up. I grant that I shall be of no use, but at least I will take any chance that the others run of being shot. A man does not flinch from a painful operation, and, whatever the pain, it has to be faced. I may get used to it in time; but whether I do or not I must go through it, though I do not say it doesn't hurt."

At this moment the rattle of musketry broke out above. Bathurst gave a violent start, and a low cry as of pain; then he rushed past Mrs. Hunter and up the staircase to the terrace, when he staggered rather than walked forward to the parapet, and threw himself down beside two figures who were in the act of firing.

"Is that you, Bathurst?" the Major's voice asked. "Mind, man, don't lift your head above the sandbags in that way. There, you had best lie quiet; the natives have no idea of attacking, and it is of no use throwing away valuable ammunition by firing unless your hand is steady."

But Bathurst did not hear, and remained with his head above the line of sandbags until the Major put his hand on his shoulder and forced him down. He might have put his hands over his ears to deaden the sound—for in the darkness no one would have seen the action—but he would not do so, but with clenched teeth and quivering nerves lay there until the Major said, "I fancy we have stopped them working. Now, Doctor, do you, Hunter, Bathurst, and Farquharson go and lie down for four hours, when I will send for you to take our places. Before you lie down will you tell Doolan to send half his party in? Of course you will lie down in your clothes, ready to fall in at your posts at a moment's notice."

"Let me send another rocket up first, Major, to see what they are doing. We can sleep tomorrow in the daytime; they won't dare to work under our fire then. Now, get ready, gentlemen, and don't throw away a shot, if they are still working there."

The light of the rocket showed that there were now no natives at the spot where they had been seen at work.

"I thought it would be too hot for them, Major, at such close quarters as these. We must have played the mischief with them."

"All the better, Doctor; we will send a few shots there occasionally to show them we have not forgotten them. But the principal thing will be to keep our ears open to see that they don't bring up ladders and try a rush."

"I think there is no fear of that tonight, Major. They would not have set to work at the battery if they had any idea of trying to scale the wall with ladders. That will come later on; but I don't think you will be troubled any more tonight, except by these fellows firing away from the bushes, and I should think they would get tired of

wasting their ammunition soon. It is fortunate we brought all the spare ammunition in here."

"Yes, they only had ten rounds of ball cartridge, and that must be nearly used up by this time. They will have to make up their cartridges in future, and cast their bullets, unless they can get a supply from some of the other mutineers."

"Well, you will send for us in four hours, Major?"

"You need not be afraid of my forgetting."

Dawn was just breaking when the relief were called up; the firing had died away, and all was quiet.

"You will take command here, Rintoul," the Major said. "I should keep Farquharson up here, if I were you, and leave the Doctor and Bathurst to look after things in general. I think, Doctor, it would be as well if we appointed Bathurst in charge of the general arrangements of the house. We have a good amount of stores, but the servants will waste them if they are not looked after. I should put them on rations, Bathurst; and there might be regular rations of things served out for us too; then it would fall in your province to see that the syces water and feed the horses. You will examine the well regularly, and note whether there is any change in the look of the water. I think you will find plenty to do."

"Thank you, Major," Bathurst said. "I appreciate your kindness, and for the present, at any rate, will gladly undertake the work of looking after the stores and servants; but there is one thing I have been thinking of, and which I should like to speak to you about at once, if you could spare a minute or two before you turn in."

"What is that, Bathurst?"

"I think that we are agreed, Major, that though we may hold this place for a time, sooner or later we must either surrender or the place be carried by storm."

Major Hannay nodded.

"That is what it must come to, Bathurst. If they will at last grant us terms, well and good; if not, we must either try to escape or die fighting."

"It is about the escape I have been thinking, Major; as our position grows more and more desperate they will close round us, and although we might have possibly got through last night, our chances of doing so when they have once broken into the inclosure and begin to attack the house itself are very slight. A few of us who can speak the language well might possibly in disguise get away, but it would be impossible for the bulk of us to do so."

"I quite see that, Bathurst."

"My proposal is, Major, that we should begin at once to mine; that is, to drive a gallery from the cellar, and to carry it on steadily as far as we can. I should say that we have ten days or a fortnight before us before matters get to an extremity, and in that time we ought to be able to get, working night and day, from fifty to a hundred yards beyond the wall, aiming at a clump of bushes. There is a large one in Farquharson's compound, about a hundred yards off. Then, when things get to the worst, we can work upwards, and come out on a dark night. We might leave a long fuse burning in the magazine, so that there should be an explosion an hour or two

after we had left. There is enough powder there to bring the house down, and the Sepoys might suppose that we had all been buried in the ruins."

"I think the idea is a very good one, Bathurst. What do you think, Doctor?"

"Capital," the Doctor said. "It is a light sandy soil, and we should be able to get through it at a pretty good rate. How many can work together, do you think, Bathurst?"

"I should say two of us in each shift, to drive, and, if necessary, prop the roof, with some of the natives to carry out the earth. If we have three shifts, each shift would go on twice in the twenty-four hours; that would be four hours on and eight hours off."

"Will you take charge of the operation, Bathurst?"

"With pleasure, Major."

"Very well then. You shall have with you Wilson and Richards and the three youngest of the civilians, Saunderson, Austin, and Herbert. You six will be relieved from other duty except when the enemy threaten an attack. I will put down Saunderson and Austin together. Which of the others would you like to have with you?"

"I will take Wilson, sir."

"Very well, then, Richards and Herbert will make the third party. After breakfast we can pick out the twelve strongest of the natives. I will tell them that they have to work, but that they will be each paid half a rupee a day in addition to their ordinary wages. Then you will give a general supervision to the work, Bathurst, in addition to your own share in it?"

"Certainly, Major, I will take general charge of it."

So at breakfast the Major explained the plan agreed upon. The five men chosen at once expressed their willingness to undertake the work, and the offer of half a rupee extra a day was sufficient to induce twelve of the servants to volunteer for it. The Major went down to the cellars and fixed upon the spot at which the work should begin; and Bathurst and Wilson, taking some of the intrenching tools from the storeroom, began to break through the wall without delay.

"I like this," Wilson said. "It is a thousand times better than sitting up there waiting till they choose to make an attack. How wide shall we make it?"

"As narrow as we can for one to pass along at a time," Bathurst said. "The narrower it is, the less trouble we shall have with the roof."

"But only one will be able to work at a time in that case."

"That will be quite enough,". Bathurst said. "It will be hot work and hard. We will relieve each other every five minutes or so."

A very short time sufficed to break through the wall.

"Thank goodness, it is earth," Wilson said, thrusting a crowbar through the opening as soon as it was made.

"I had no fear of its being rock, Wilson. If it had been, they would not have taken the trouble to have walled the sides of the cellar. The soil is very deep all over here. The natives have to line their wells thirty or forty feet down."

The enemy were quiet all day, but the garrison thought it likely that, warned by the lesson of the night before, they were erecting a battery some distance farther back, masked by the trees, and that until it was ready to open fire they would know nothing about it.

"So you have turned miner, Mr. Wilson?" Isobel Hannay said to him as, after a change and a bath, he came in to get his lunch.

"I calculate I have lost half a stone in weight, Miss Hannay. If I were to go on at this for a month or two there would be nothing left of me."

"And how far did you drive the hole?"

"Gallery, Miss Hannay; please call it a gallery, it sounds so much better. We got in five yards. I should hardly have believed it possible, but Bathurst is a tremendous fellow to work. He uses a pick as if he had been a sapper all his life. We kept the men pretty hard at work, I can tell you, carrying up the earth. Richards is at work now, and I bet him five rupees that he and Herbert don't drive as far as we did."

"There is not much use in betting now, Mr. Wilson," Isobel said sadly.

"No, I suppose not, Miss Hannay; but it gives a sort of interest to one's work. I have blistered my hands horribly, but I suppose they will get hard in a day or two."

"I wish we could work at something," Isobel said. "Now that we have finished with the bags and bandages, the time seems very long; the only thing there is to do is to play with the children and try to keep them good; it is fortunate there is a bit of garden for them to play in."

"It is not much of a garden, Miss Hannay. We had something like a garden when I was a boy at home; the governor's is a jolly old rectory, with a splendid garden. What fun we used to have there when I was a young one! I wonder what the dear old governor and mater would say if they knew the fix we were in here. You know, sometimes I think that Forster's plan was the best, and that it would be better to try and make a dash through them."

"We are in your way, Mr. Wilson; you wouldn't be able to do much fighting if you had one of us clinging to you."

"I don't know, Miss Hannay," Wilson said quietly, "what my fighting powers are, but I fancy if you were clinging to me I could cut my way through a good deal."

"I am sure you would do anything that anyone could do," the girl said kindly; "but whatever you might feel, having another person behind you could not but hamper you awfully. I would infinitely rather try to escape on foot, for then I should be relying on myself, while if I was riding behind anyone, and we were pursued or attacked, I should feel all the time I was destroying his chances, and that if it were not for me he would get away. That would be terrible. I don't know whether we were wise to stay here instead of trying to escape at once; but as uncle and Mr. Hunter and the others all thought it wiser to stay, I have no doubt it was; but I am quite sure that it could not have been a good plan to go off like that on horseback."

Another day passed quietly, and then during the night the watch heard the sounds of blows with axes, and of falling trees.

"They are clearing the ground in front of their battery," the Major, who was on the watch with his party, said; "it will begin in earnest tomorrow morning. The sound came from just where we expected. It is about in the same line as where they made their first attempt, but a hundred yards or so further back."

At daylight they saw that the trees and bushes had been leveled, and a battery, with embrazures for six guns, erected at a distance of about four hundred yards from the house. More sandbags were at once brought up from below, and the parapet, on the side facing the battery, raised two feet and doubled in thickness. The garrison were not disturbed while so engaged.

"Why the deuce don't the fellows begin?" Captain Forster said impatiently, as he stood looking over the parapet when the work was finished.

"I expect they are waiting for the Rajah and some of the principal Zemindars to come down," replied the Major; "the guns are theirs, you see, and will most likely be worked by their own followers. No doubt they think they will knock the place to pieces in a few minutes.

"Listen! there is music; they are coming in grand state. Rintoul, will you tell the workers in the mine to come up. By the way, who are at work now?"

"Bathurst and Wilson, sir."

"Then tell Wilson to come up, and request Bathurst to go on with the gallery. Tell him I want that pushed forward as fast as possible, and that one gun will not make much difference here. Request the ladies and children to go down into the storeroom for the present. I don't think the balls will go through the wall, but it is as well to be on the safe side."

Captain Rintoul delivered his message to the ladies. They had already heard that the battery had been unmasked and was ready to open fire, and lamps had been placed in the storeroom in readiness for them. There were pale faces among them, but their thoughts were of those on the roof rather than of themselves.

Mrs. Hunter took up the Bible she had been reading, and said, "Tell them, Captain Rintoul, we shall be praying for them." The ladies went into the room that served as a nursery, and with the ayahs and other female servants carried the children down into the storeroom.

"I would much rather be up there," Isobel said to Mrs. Doolan; "we could load the muskets for them, and I don't think it would be anything like so bad if we could see what was going on as being cooped up below fancying the worst all the time."

"I quite agree with you, but men never will get to understand women. Perhaps before we are done they will recognize the fact that we are no more afraid than they are."

The music was heard approaching along the road where the bungalows had stood. Presently a number of flags were raised in the battery amid a great beating of drums. On the previous day a flagstaff had been erected on the roof, and a Union Jack was run up in answer to the enemy's demonstration.

"A cheer for the old flag, lads," the Major said; and a hearty cheer broke from the little party on the roof, where, with the exception of Bathurst, all the garrison were

assembled. The cheer was answered by a yell from the natives not only in the battery, but from the gardens and inclosures round the house.

"Pay no attention to the fellows in the gardens," the Major said; "fire at their guns —they must expose themselves to load."

The men were kneeling behind the parapet, where the sandbags had been so arranged that they could see through between those on the upper line, and thus fire without raising their heads above it.

"Shall we wait for them or fire first, Major?" the Doctor asked.

"I expect the guns are loaded and laid, Doctor; but if you see a head looking along them, by all means take a shot at it. I wish we could see down into the battery itself, but it is too high for that."

The Doctor lay looking along his rifle. Presently he fired, and as if it had been the signal five cannon boomed out almost at the same moment, the other being fired a quarter of a minute later. Three of the shot struck the house below the parapet, the others went overhead.

"I hit my man," the Doctor said, as he thrust another rifle through the loophole. "Now, we will see if we can keep them from loading."

Simultaneously with the roar of the cannon a rattle of musketry broke out on three sides of the house, and a hail of bullets whistled over the heads of the defenders, who opened a steady fire at the embrasures of the guns. These had been run in, and the natives could be seen loading them. The Major examined the work through a pair of field glasses.

"You are doing well," he said presently; "I have seen several of them fall, and there is a lot of confusion among them; they will soon get tired of that game."

Slowly and irregularly the guns were run out again, and the fire of the defenders was redoubled to prevent them from taking aim. Only one shot hit the house this time, the others all going overhead. The fire of the enemy became slower and more irregular, and at the end of an hour ceased almost entirely.

"Doctor," the Major said, "I will get you and Farquharson to turn your attention to some fellows there are in that high tree over there. They command us completely, and many of their bullets have struck on the terrace behind us. It would not be safe to move across to the stairs now. I think we have pretty well silenced the battery for the present. Here are my glasses. With them you can easily make out the fellows among the leaves."

"I see them," the Doctor said, handing the glasses to Farquharson; "we will soon get them out of that. Now, Farquharson, you take that fellow out on the lower branch to the right; I will take the one close to the trunk on the same branch."

Laying their rifles on the upper row of sandbags, the two men took a steady aim. They fired almost together, and two bodies were seen to fall from the tree.

"Well shot!" the Major exclaimed. "There are something like a dozen of them up there; but they will soon clear out if you keep that up."

"They are not more than two hundred yards away," the Doctor said, "and firing from a rest we certainly ought not to miss them at that distance. Give me the glasses

again."

A similar success attended the next two shots, and then a number of figures were seen hastily climbing down.

"Give them a volley, gentlemen," the Major said.

A dozen guns were fired, and three more men dropped, and an angry yell from the natives answered the shout of triumph from the garrison.

"Will you go down, Mr. Hunter, and tell the ladies that we have silenced the guns for the present, and that no one has received a scratch? Now, let us see what damage their balls have effected."

This was found to be trifling. The stonework of the house was strong, and the guns were light. The stonework of one of the windows was broken, and two or three stones in the wall cracked. One ball had entered a window, torn its way through two inner walls, and lay against the back wall.

"It is a four pound ball," the Major said, taking it up. "I fancy the guns are seven pounders. They have evidently no balls to fit, which accounts for the badness of their firing and the little damage they did; with so much windage the balls can have had but small velocity. Well, that is a satisfactory beginning, gentlemen; they will take a long time to knock the place about our ears at this rate. Now we will see if we cannot clear them out of the gardens. Captain Doolan, will you take the glasses and watch the battery; if you see any movement about the guns, the fire will be reopened at once; until then all will devote their attention to those fellows among the bushes; it is important to teach them that they are not safe there, for a chance ball might come in between the sandbags. Each of you pick out a particular bush, and watch it till you see the exact position in which anyone firing from it must be in, and then try to silence him. Don't throw away a shot if you can help it. We have a good stock of ammunition, but it is as well not to waste it. I will leave you in command at present, Doolan."

Major Hannay then went down to the storeroom.

"I have come to relieve you from your confinement, ladies," he said. "I am glad to say that we find their balls will not penetrate the walls of the house alone, and there is therefore no fear whatever of their passing through them and the garden wall together; therefore, as long as the wall is intact, there is no reason whatever why you should not remain on the floor above."

There was a general exclamation of pleasure.

"That will be vastly better, uncle," Isobel said; "it is hateful being hidden away down here when we have nothing to do but to listen to the firing; we don't see why some of us should not go up on the terrace to load the rifles for you."

"Not at present, Isobel; we are not pressed yet. When it comes to a real attack it will be time to consider about that. I don't think any of us would shoot straighter if there were women right up among us in danger."

"I don't at all see why it should be worse our being in danger than for you men, Major," Mrs. Doolan said; "we have just as much at stake, and more; and I warn you I shall organize a female mutiny if we are not allowed to help."

The Major laughed.

"Well, Mrs. Doolan, I shall have to convert this storeroom into a prison, and all who defy my authority will be immured here, so now you know the consequence of disobedience."

"And has no one been hurt with all that firing, Major Hannay?" Mary Hunter asked.

"A good many people have been hurt, Miss Hunter, but no one on our side. I fancy we must have made it very hot for those at the guns, and the Doctor and Mr. Farquharson have been teaching them not to climb trees. At present that firing you hear is against those who are hiding in the gardens."

An hour later the firing ceased altogether, the natives finding the fire of the defenders so deadly that they no longer dared, by discharging a rifle, to show where they were hiding. They had drawn off from the more distant clumps and bushes, but dared not try and crawl from those nearer the house until after nightfall.

The next morning it was found that during the night the enemy had closed up their embrasures, leaving only openings sufficiently large for the muzzles of the guns to be thrust through, and soon after daybreak they renewed their fire. The Doctor and Mr. Farquharson alone remained on the roof, and throughout the day they kept up a steady fire at these openings whenever the guns were withdrawn. Several of the sandbags were knocked off the parapet during the course of the day, and a few shot found their way through the walls of the upper story, but beyond this no damage was done. The mining was kept up with great vigor, and the gallery advanced rapidly, the servants finding it very hard work to remove the earth as fast as the miners brought it down.

Captain Forster offered to go out with three others at night to try and get into the battery and spike the guns, but Major Hannay would not permit the attempt to be made.

"We know they have several other guns," he said, "and the risk would be altogether too great, for there would be practically no chance of your getting back and being drawn up over the wall before you were overtaken, even if you succeeded in spiking the guns. There are probably a hundred men sleeping in the battery, and it is likely they would have sentries out in front of it. The loss of four men would seriously weaken the garrison."

The next morning another battery to the left was unmasked, and on the following day three guns were planted, under cover, so as to play against the gate. The first battery now concentrated its fire upon the outer wall, the new battery played upon the upper part of the house, and the three guns kept up a steady fire at the gate.

There was little rest for the besieged now. It was a constant duel between their rifles and the guns, varied by their occasionally turning their attention to men who climbed trees, or who, from the roofs of some buildings still standing, endeavored to keep down their fire.

Wilson had been released from his labors in the gallery, Bathurst undertaking to get down the earth single handed as fast as the servants could remove it.

"I never saw such a fellow to work, Miss Hannay," Wilson said one day, when he was off duty, and happened to find her working alone at some bandages. "I know you don't like him, but he is a first rate fellow if there ever was one. It is unlucky for him being so nervous at the guns; but that is no fault of his, after all, and I am sure in other

things he is as cool as possible. Yesterday I was standing close to him, shoving the earth back to the men as he got it down. Suddenly he shouted, 'Run, Wilson, the roof is coming down!' I could not help bolting a few yards, for the earth came pattering down as he spoke; then I looked round and saw him standing there, by the light of the lamp, like those figures you see holding up pillars; I forget what they call them—catydigs, or something of that sort."

"Caryatides," Isobel put in.

"Yes, that is the name. Some timber had given way above him, and he was holding it up with his arms. I should say that there must have been half a ton of it, and he said, as quietly as possible, 'Get two of those short poles, Wilson, and put up one on each side of me. I can hold it a bit, but don't be longer than you can help about it.' I managed to shove up the timber, so that he could slip out before it came down. It would have crushed us both to a certainty if he had not held it up."

"Why do you say you know I don't like Mr. Bathurst?"

"I don't exactly know, Miss Hannay, but I have noticed you are the only lady who does not chat with him. I don't think I have seen you speak to him since we have come in here. I am sorry, because I like him very much, and I don't care for Forster at all."

"What has Captain Forster to do with it?" Isobel asked, somewhat indignantly.

"Oh, nothing at all, Miss Hannay, only, you know, Bathurst used to be a good deal at the Major's before Forster came, and then after that I never met him there except on that evening before he came in here. Now you know, Miss Hannay," he went on earnestly, "what I think about you. I have not been such an ass as to suppose I ever had a chance, though you know I would lay down my life for you willingly; but I did not seem to mind Bathurst. I know he is an awfully good fellow, and would have made you very happy; but I don't feel like that with Forster. There is nothing in the world that I should like better than to punch his head; and when I see that a fellow like that has cut Bathurst out altogether it makes me so savage sometimes that I have to go and smoke a pipe outside so as not to break out and have a row with him."

"You ought not to talk so, Mr. Wilson. It is very wrong. You have no right to say that anyone has cut anyone else out as far as I am concerned. I know you are all fond of me in a brotherly sort of way, and I like you very much; but that gives you no right to say such things about other people. Mr. Bathurst ceased his visits not because of Captain Forster but from another reason altogether; and certainly I have neither said nor done anything that would justify your saying that Captain Forster had cut Mr. Bathurst out. Even if I had, you ought not to have alluded to such a thing. I am not angry with you," she said, seeing how downcast he looked; "but you must not talk like that any more; it would be wrong at any time; it is specially so now, when we are all shut up here together, and none can say what will happen to us."

"It seemed to me that was just the reason why I could speak about it, Miss Hannay. We may none of us get out of this fix we are in, and I do think we ought all to be friends together now. Richards and I both agreed that as it was certain neither of us had a chance of winning you, the next best thing was to see you and Bathurst come together. Well, now all that's over, of course, but is it wrong for me to ask, how is it you have come to dislike him?"

“But I don't dislike him, Mr. Wilson.”

“Well, then, why do you go on as if you didn't like him?”

Isobel hesitated. From most men she would have considered the question impertinent, and would have resented it, but this frank faced boy meant no impertinence; he loved her in his honest way, and only wanted to see her happy.

“I can't speak to him if he doesn't speak to me,” she said desperately.

“No, of course not,” he agreed; “but why shouldn't he speak to you? You can't have done anything to offend him except taking up with Forster.”

“It is nothing to do with Captain Forster at all, Mr. Wilson; I—” and she hesitated. “I said something at which he had the right to feel hurt and offended, and he has never given me any opportunity since of saying that I was sorry.”

“I am sure you would not have said anything that he should have been offended about, Miss Hannay; it is not your nature, and I would not believe it whoever told me, not even yourself; so he must be in fault, and, of course, I have nothing more to say about it.”

“He wasn't in fault at all, Mr. Wilson. I can't tell you what I said, but it was very wrong and thoughtless on my part, and I have been sorry for it ever since; and he has a perfect right to be hurt and not to come near me, especially as”—and she hesitated —“as I have acted badly since, and he has no reason for supposing that I am sorry. And now you must not ask me any more about it; I don't know why I have said as much to you as I have, only I know I can trust you, and I like you very much, though I could never like you in the sort of way you would want me to. I wish you didn't like me like that.”

“Oh, never mind me,” he said earnestly. “I am all right, Miss Hannay; I never expected anything, you know, so I am not disappointed, and it has been awfully good of you talking to me as you have, and not getting mad with me for interfering. But I can hear them coming down from the terrace, and I must be off. I am on duty there, you know, now. Bathurst has undertaken double work in that hole. I didn't like it, really; it seemed mean to be getting out of the work and letting him do it all, but he said that he liked work, and I really think he does. I am sure he is always worrying himself because he can't take his share in the firing on the roof; and when he is working he hasn't time to think about it. When he told me that in future he would drive the tunnel our shift himself, he said, 'That will enable you to take your place on the roof, Wilson, and you must remember you are firing for both of us, so don't throw away a shot.' It is awfully rough on him, isn't it? Well, goodby, Miss Hannay,” and Wilson hurried off to the roof.

CHAPTER XVI.

The next four days made a great alteration in the position of the defenders in the fortified house.

The upper story was now riddled by balls, the parapet round the terrace had been knocked away in several places, the gate was in splinters; but as the earth from the tunnel had been all emptied against the sandbags, it had grown to such a thickness that the defense was still good here. But in the wall, against which one of the new batteries had steadily directed its fire, there was a yawning gap, which was hourly increasing in size, and would ere long be practicable for assault. Many of the shots passing through this had struck the house itself. Some of these had penetrated, and the room in the line of fire could no longer be used.

There had been several casualties. The young civilian Herbert had been killed by a shot that struck the parapet just where he was lying. Captain Rintoul had been seriously wounded, two of the natives had been killed by the first shot which penetrated the lower room. Mr. Hunter was prostrate with fever, the result of exposure to the sun, and several others had received wounds more or less severe from fragments of stone; but the fire of the defenders was as steady as at first, and the loss of the natives working the guns was severe, and they no longer ventured to fire from the gardens and shrubberies round the walls.

Fatigue, watching, still more the heat on the terrace, was telling heavily upon the strength of the garrison. The ladies went about their work quietly and almost silently. The constant anxiety and the confinement in the darkened rooms were telling upon them too. Several of the children were ill; and when not employed in other things, there were fresh sandbags to be made by the women, to take the place of those damaged by the enemy's shot.

When, of an evening, a portion of the defenders came off duty, there was more talk and conversation, as all endeavored to keep up a good face and assume a confidence they were far from feeling. The Doctor was perhaps the most cheery of the party. During the daytime he was always on the roof, and his rifle seldom cracked in vain. In the evening he attended to his patients, talked cheerily to the ladies, and laughed and joked over the events of the day.

None among the ladies showed greater calmness and courage than Mrs. Rintoul, and not a word was ever heard from the time the siege began of her ailments or inconveniences. She was Mrs. Hunter's best assistant with the sick children. Even after her husband was wounded, and her attention night and day was given to him, she still kept on patiently and firmly.

“I don't know how to admire Mrs. Rintoul enough,” Mrs. Hunter said to Isobel Hannay one day; “formerly I had no patience with her, she was always querulous and grumbling; now she has turned out a really noble woman. One never knows people, my dear, till one sees them in trouble.”

“Everyone is nice,” Isobel said. “I have hardly heard a word of complaint about anything since we came here, and everyone seems to help others and do little kindnesses.”

The enemy's fire had been very heavy all that day, and the breach in the wall had been widened, and the garrison felt certain that the enemy would attack on the following morning.

“You and Farquharson, Doctor, must stop on the roof,” the Major said. “In the first place, it is possible they may try to attack by ladders at some other point, and we shall want two good shots up there to keep them back; and in the second, if they do force the breach, we shall want you to cover our retreat into the house. I will get a dozen rifles for each of you loaded and in readiness. Isobel and Mary Hunter, who have both volunteered over and over again, shall go up to load; they have both practiced, and can load quickly. Of course if you see that the enemy are not attacking at any other point, you will help us at the breach by keeping up a steady fire on them, but always keep six guns each in reserve. I shall blow my whistle as a signal for us to retire to the house if I find we can hold the breach no longer, so when you hear that blaze away at them as fast as you can. Your twelve shots will check them long enough to give us time to get in and fasten the door. We shall be round the corner of the house before they can get fairly over the breastwork. We will set to work to raise that as soon as it gets dark.”

A breastwork of sandbags had already been erected behind the breach, in case the enemy should make a sudden rush, and a couple of hours' labor transformed this into a strong work; for the bags were already filled, and only needed placing in position. When completed, it extended in a horseshoe shape, some fifteen feet across, behind the gap in the wall. For nine feet from the ground it was composed of sandbags three deep, and a single line was then laid along the edge to serve as a parapet.

“I don't think they will get over that,” the Major said, when the work was finished. “I doubt if they will be disposed even to try when they reach the breach.”

Before beginning their work they had cleared away all the fallen brickwork from behind the breach, and a number of bricks were laid on the top of the sandbags to be used as missiles.

“A brick is as good as a musket ball at this distance,” the Major said; “and when our guns are empty we can take to them; there are enough spare rifles for us to have five each, and, with those and our revolvers and the bricks, we ought to be able to account for an army. There are some of the servants and syces who can be trusted to load. They can stand down behind us, and we can pass our guns down to them as we empty them.”

Each man had his place on the work assigned to him. Bathurst, who had before told the Major that when the time came for an assault to be delivered he was determined to take his place in the breach, was placed at one end of the horseshoe where it touched the wall.

“I don't promise to be of much use, Major,” he said quietly. “I know myself too well; but at least I can run my chance of being killed.”

The Major had put Wilson next to him.

“I don't think there is much chance of their storming the work, Wilson; but if they do, you catch hold of Bathurst's arm, and drag him away when you hear me whistle; the chances are a hundred to one against his hearing it, or remembering what it means if he does hear it.”

“All right, Major, I will look to him.”

Four men remained on guard at the breach all night, and at the first gleam of daylight the garrison took up their posts.

“Now mind, my dears,” the Doctor said, as he and Farquharson went up on the terrace with Isobel and Mary Hunter; “you must do exactly as you are told, or you will be doing more harm than good, for Farquharson and I would not be able to pay attention to our shooting. You must lie down and remain perfectly quiet till we begin to fire, then keep behind us just so far that you can reach the guns as we hand them back to you after firing; and you must load them either kneeling or sitting down, so that you don't expose your heads above the thickest part of the breastwork. When you have loaded, push the guns back well to the right of us, but so that we can reach them. Then, if one of them goes off, there won't be any chance of our being hit. The garrison can't afford to throw away a life at present. You will, of course, only half cock them; still, it is as well to provide against accidents.”

Both the girls were pale, but they were quiet and steady. The Doctor saw they were not likely to break down.

“That is a rum looking weapon you have got there, Bathurst,” Wilson said, as, after carrying down the spare guns and placing them ready for firing, they lay down in their positions on the sandbags. The weapon was a native one, and was a short mace, composed of a bar of iron about fifteen inches long, with a knob of the same metal, studded with spikes. The bar was covered with leather to break the jar, and had a loop to put the hand through at the end.

“Yes,” Bathurst said quietly; “I picked it up at one of the native shops in Cawnpore the last time I was there. I had no idea then that I might ever have to use it, and bought it rather as a curiosity; but I have kept it within reach of my bedside since these troubles began, and I don't think one could want a better weapon at close quarters.”

“No, it is a tremendous thing; and after the way I have seen you using that pick I should not like to be within reach of your arm with that mace in it. I don't think there is much chance of your wanting that. I have no fear of the natives getting over here this time.”

“I have no fear of the natives at all,” Bathurst said.

“I am only afraid of myself. At present I am just as cool as if there was not a native within a thousand miles, and I am sure that my pulse is not going a beat faster than usual. I can think of the whole thing and calculate the chances as calmly as if it were an affair in which I was in no way concerned. It is not danger that I fear in the slightest, it is that horrible noise. I know well enough that the moment the firing begins I shall be paralyzed. My only hope is that at the last moment, if it comes to hand to hand fighting, I shall get my nerve.”

"I have no doubt you will," Wilson said warmly; "and when you do I would back you at long odds against any of us. Ah, they are beginning."

As he spoke there was a salvo of all the guns on the three Sepoy batteries. Then a roar of musketry broke out round the house, and above it could be heard loud shouts.

"They are coming, Major," the Doctor shouted down from the roof; "the Sepoys are leading, and there is a crowd of natives behind them."

Those lying in the middle of the curve of the horseshoe soon caught sight of the enemy advancing tumultuously towards the breach. The Major had ordered that not a shot was to be fired until they reached it, and it was evident that the silence of the besieged awed the assailants with a sense of unknown danger, for their pace slackened, and when they got to within fifty yards of the breach they paused and opened fire. Then, urged forward by their officers and encouraged by their own noise, they again rushed forward. Two of their officers led the way; and as these mounted the little heap of rubbish at the foot of the breach, two rifles cracked out from the terrace, and both fell dead.

There was a yell of fury from the Sepoys, and then they poured in through the breach. Those in front tried to stop as they saw the trap into which they were entering, but pressed on by those behind they were forced forward.

And now a crackling fire of musketry broke out from the rifles projecting between the sandbags into the crowded mass. Every shot told. Wild shrieks, yells, and curses rose from the assailants. Some tried madly to climb up the sandbags, some to force their way back through the crowd behind; some threw themselves down; others discharged their muskets at their invisible foe. From the roof the Doctor and his companion kept up a rapid fire upon the crowd struggling to enter the breach. As fast as the defenders' muskets were discharged they handed them down to the servants behind to be reloaded, and when each had fired his spare muskets he betook himself to his revolver.

Wilson, while discharging his rifle, kept his eyes upon Bathurst. The latter had not fired a shot, but lay rigid and still, save for a sort of convulsive shuddering. Presently there was a little lull in the firing as the weapons were emptied, and the defenders seizing the bricks hurled them down into the mass.

"Look out!" the Major shouted; "keep your heads low—I am going to throw the canisters."

A number of these had been prepared, filled to the mouth with powder and bullets, and with a short fuse attached, ropes being fastened round them to enable them to be slung some distance. The Major half rose to throw one of these missiles when his attention was called by a shout from Wilson.

The latter was so occupied that he had not noticed Bathurst, who had suddenly risen to his feet, and just as Wilson was about to grasp him and pull him down, leaped over the sandbag in front of him down among the mutineers. The Major gave a swing to the canister, of which the fuse was already lighted, and hurled it through the breach among the crowd, who, ignorant of what was going on inside, were still struggling to enter.

“Look out,” he shouted to the others; “mind how you throw. Bathurst is down in the middle of them. Hand up all the muskets you have loaded,” he cried to the servants.

As he spoke he swung another canister through the breach, and almost immediately two heavy explosions followed, one close upon the other.

“Give them a volley at the breach,” he shouted; “never mind those below.”

The muskets were fired as soon as received.

“Now to your feet,” the Major cried, “and give them the brickbats,” and as he stood up he hurled two more canisters among the crowd behind the breach. The others sprang up with a cheer. The inclosure below them was shallower now from the number that had fallen, and was filled with a confused mass of struggling men. In their midst was Bathurst fighting desperately with his short weapon, and bringing down a man at every blow, the mutineers being too crowded together to use their unfixed bayonets against him. In a moment Captain Forster leaped down, sword in hand, and joined Bathurst in the fight.

“Stand steady,” the Major shouted; “don't let another man move.”

But the missiles still rained down with an occasional shot, as the rifles were handed up by the natives, while the Doctor and Farquharson kept up an almost continuous fire from the terrace. Then the two last canisters thrown by the Major exploded. The first two had carried havoc among the crowd behind the breach, these completed their confusion, and they turned and fled; while those in the retrenchment, relieved of the pressure from behind, at once turned, and flying through the breach, followed their companions.

A loud cheer broke from the garrison, and the Major looking round saw the Doctor standing by the parapet waving his hat, while Isobel stood beside him looking down at the scene of conflict.

“Lie down, Isobel,” he shouted; “they will be opening fire again directly.”

The girl disappeared, and almost at the same moment the batteries spoke out again, and a crackle of the musketry began from the gardens. The Major turned round. Bathurst was leaning against the wall breathing heavily after his exertions, Forster was coolly wiping his sword on the tunic of one of the fallen Sepoys.

“Are either of you hurt?” he asked.

“I am not hurt to speak of,” Forster said; “I got a rip with a bayonet as I jumped down, but I don't think it is of any consequence.”

“How are you, Bathurst?” the Major repeated. “What on earth possessed you to jump down like that?”

“I don't know, Major; I had to do something, and when you stopped firing I felt it was time for me to do my share.”

“You have done more than your share, I should say,” the Major said; “for they went down like ninepins before you. Now, Wilson, you take one of his hands, and I will take the other, and help him up.”

It needed considerable exertion to get him up, for the reaction had now come, and he was scarce able to stand.

"You had better go up to the house and get a glass of wine," the Major said. "Now, is anyone else hurt?"

"I am hit, Major," Richards said quietly; "a ball came in between the sandbags just as I fired my first shot, and smashed my right shoulder. I think I have not been much good since, though I have been firing from my left as well as I could. I think I will go up and get the Doctor to look at it."

But almost as he spoke the young fellow tottered, and would have fallen, had not the Major caught him.

"Lend me a hand, Doolan," the latter said; "we will carry him in; I am afraid he is very hard hit."

The ladies gathered round the Major and Captain Doolan as they entered with their burden. Mary Hunter had already run down and told them that the attack had been repulsed and the enemy had retreated.

"Nobody else is hit," the Major said, as he entered; "at least, not seriously. The enemy have been handsomely beaten with such loss that they won't be in a hurry to try again. Will one of you run up and bring the Doctor down?"

Richards was carried into the hospital room, where he was left to the care of the Doctor, Mrs. Hunter, and Mrs. Rintoul. The Major returned to the general room.

"Boy, bring half a dozen bottles of champagne and open them as quickly as you can," he said; "we have got enough to last us for weeks, and this is an occasion to celebrate, and I think we have all earned it."

The others were by this time coming in, for there was no chance of the enemy renewing the attack at present. Farquharson was on the roof on the lookout. Quiet greetings were exchanged between wives and husbands.

"It didn't last long," Wilson said; "not above five minutes, I should say, from the time when we opened fire."

"It seemed to us an age," Amy Hunter replied; "it was dreadful not to be able to see what was going on; it seemed to me everyone must be killed with all that firing."

"It was sharp while it lasted," the Major said; "but we were all snug enough except against a stray bullet, such as that which hit poor young Richards. He behaved very gallantly, and none of us knew he was hit till it was all over."

"But how did Captain Forster get his bayonet wound?" Mrs. Doolan asked. "I saw him go in just now into the surgery; it seemed to me he had a very serious wound, for his jacket was cut from the breast up to the shoulder, and he was bleeding terribly, though he made light of it."

"He jumped down into the middle of them," the Major said. "Bathurst jumped down first, and was fighting like a madman with a mace he has got. We could do nothing, for we were afraid of hitting him, and Forster jumped down to help him, and, as he did so, got that rip with the bayonet; it is a nasty cut, no doubt, but it is only a flesh wound."

"Where is Mr. Bathurst?" Mrs. Doolan asked; "is he hurt, too? Why did he jump down? I should not have thought," and she stopped.

“I fancy a sort of fury seized him,” the Major said; “but whatever it was, he fought like a giant. He is a powerful man, and that iron mace is just the thing for such work. The natives went down like ninepins before him. No, I don't think he is hurt.”

“I will go out and see,” Mrs. Doolan said; and taking a mug half full of champagne from the table, she went out.

Bathurst was sitting on the ground leaning against the wall of the house.

“You are not hurt, Mr. Bathurst, I hope,” Mrs. Doolan said, as she came up. “No, don't try to get up, drink a little of this; we are celebrating our victory by opening a case of champagne. The Major tells us you have been distinguishing yourself greatly.”

Bathurst drank some of the wine before he replied.

“In a way, Mrs. Doolan, I scarcely know what I did do. I wanted to do something, even if it was only to get killed.”

“You must not talk like that,” she said kindly; “your life is as valuable as any here, and you know that we all like and esteem you; and, at any rate, you have shown today that you have plenty of courage.”

“The courage of a Malay running amuck, Mrs. Doolan; that is not courage, it is madness. You cannot tell—no one can tell—what I have suffered since the siege began. The humiliation of knowing that I alone of the men here am unable to take my part in the defense, and that while others are fighting I am useful only to work as a miner.”

“But you are as useful in that way as you would be in the other,” she said. “I don't feel humiliated because I can only help in nursing the sick while the others are fighting for us. We have all of us our gifts. Few men have more than you. You have courage and coolness in other ways, and you are wrong to care nothing for your life because of the failing, for which you are not accountable, of your nerves to stand the sound of firearms.. I can understand your feelings and sympathize with you, but it is of no use to exaggerate the importance of such a matter. You might live a thousand lives without being again in a position when such a failing would be of the slightest importance, one way or the other. Now come in with me. Certainly this is not the moment for you to give way about it; for whatever your feelings may have been, or whatever may have impelled you to the act, you have on this occasion fought nobly.”

“Not nobly, Mrs. Doolan,” he said, rising to his feet; “desperately, or madly, if you like.”

At this moment Wilson came out. “Halloa, Bathurst, what are doing here? Breakfast is just ready, and everyone is asking for you. I am sure you must want something after your exertions. You should have seen him laying about him with that iron mace, Mrs. Doolan.. I have seen him using the pick, and knew how strong he was, but I was astonished, I can tell you. It was a sort of Coeur de Lion business. He used to use a mace, you know, and once rode through the Saracens and smashed them up, till at last, when he had done, he couldn't open his hand. Bring him in, Mrs. Doolan. If he won't come, I will go in and send the Doctor out to him. Bad business, poor Richards being hurt, isn't it? Awfully good fellow, Richards. Can't think why he was the one to be hit.”

So keeping up a string of talk, the young subaltern led Bathurst into the house.

After breakfast a white flag was waved from the roof, and in a short time two Sepoy officers came up with a similar flag. The Major and Captain Doolan went out to meet them, and it was agreed that hostilities should be suspended until noon, in order that the wounded and dead might be carried off.

While this was being done the garrison remained under arms behind their work at the breach lest any treacherous attempt should be made. The mutineers, however, who were evidently much depressed by the failure, carried the bodies off quietly, and at twelve o'clock firing recommenced.

That evening, after it was dark, the men gathered on the terrace.

"Well, gentlemen," the Major said, "we have beaten them off today, and we may do it again, but there is no doubt how it must all end. You see, this afternoon their guns have all been firing at a fresh place in the wall; and if they make another breach or two, and attack at them all together, it will be hopeless to try to defend them. You see, now that we have several sick and wounded, the notion of making our escape is almost knocked on the head. At the last moment each may try to save his life, but there must be no desertion of the sick and wounded as long as there is a cartridge to be fired. Our best hope is in getting assistance from somewhere, but we know nothing of what is going on outside. I think the best plan will be for one of our number to try to make his way out, and go either to Lucknow, Agra, or Allahabad, and try and get help. If they could spare a troop of cavalry it might be sufficient; the mutineers have suffered very heavily; there were over a hundred and fifty bodies carried out today, and if attacked suddenly I don't think they would make any great resistance. We may hold out for a week or ten days, but I think that is the outside; and if rescue does not arrive by that time we must either surrender or try to escape by that passage."

There was a general assent.

"Bathurst would be the man to do it," the Doctor said. "Once through their lines he could pass without exciting the slightest suspicion; he could buy a horse then, and could be at any of the stations in two days."

"Yes, there is no doubt that he is the man to do it," the Major said. "Where is he now?"

"At work as usual, Major; shall I go and speak to him? But I tell you fairly I don't think he will undertake it."

"Why not, Doctor? It is a dangerous mission, but no more dangerous than remaining here."

"Well, we shall see," the Doctor said, as he left the group.

Nothing was said for a few minutes, the men sitting or lying about smoking. Presently the Doctor returned.

"Bathurst refuses absolutely," he said. "He admits that he does not think there would be much difficulty for him to get through, but he is convinced that the mission would be a useless one, and that could help have been spared it would have come to us before now."

"But in that case he would have made his escape," the Major said.

"That is just why he won't go, Major; he says that come what will he will share the fate of the rest, and that he will not live to be pointed to as the one man who made his escape of the garrison of Deennugghur."

"Whom can we send?" the Major said. "You are the only other man who speaks the language well enough to pass as a native, Doctor."

"I speak it fairly, but not well enough for that; besides, I am too old to bear the fatigue of riding night and day; and, moreover, my services are wanted here both as a doctor and as a rifle shot."

"I will go, if you will send me, Major," Captain Forster said suddenly; "not in disguise, but in uniform, and on my horse's back. Of course I should run the gauntlet of their sentries. Once through, I doubt if they have a horse that could overtake mine."

There was a general silence of surprise. Forster's reckless courage was notorious, and he had been conspicuous for the manner in which he had chosen the most dangerous points during the siege; and this offer to undertake what, although a dangerous enterprise in itself, still offered a far better chance of life than that of remaining behind, surprised everyone. It had been noticed that, since the rejection of his plan to sally out in a body and cut their way through the enemy, he had been moody and silent, except only when the fire was heavy and the danger considerable; then he laughed and joked and seemed absolutely to enjoy the excitement; but he was the last man whom any of them would have expected to volunteer for a service that, dangerous as it might be, had just been refused by Bathurst on the ground that it offered a chance of escape from the common lot.

The Major was the first to speak.

"Well, Captain Forster, as we have just agreed that our only chance is to obtain aid from one of the stations, and as you are the only volunteer for the service, I do not see that I can decline to accept your offer. At which station do you think you would be most likely to find a force that could help us?"

"I should say Lucknow, Major. If help is to be obtained anywhere, I should say it was there."

"Yes, I think that is the most hopeful. You will start at once; I suppose the sooner the better."

"As soon as they are fairly asleep; say twelve o'clock."

"Very well. I will go and write a dispatch for you to carry, giving an account of the fix we are in here. How will you sally out?"

"I should think the easiest plan would be to make a gap in the sandbags in the breach, lead the horse till fairly outside, and then mount."

"I think you had better take a spare horse with you," the Doctor said; "it will make a difference if you are chased, if you can change from one to the other. Bathurst told me to say whoever went could have his horse, which is a long way the best in the station. I should fancy as good as your own."

"I don't know," Forster said; "led horses are a nuisance; still, as you say, it might come in useful, if it is only to loose and turn down a side road, and so puzzle anyone who may be after you in the dark."

The Major and Forster left the roof together.

"Well, that is a rum go," Wilson said. "If it had been anyone but Forster I should have said that he funked and was taking the opportunity to get out of it, but everyone knows that he has any amount of pluck; look how he charged those Sepoys single handed."

"There are two sorts of pluck, Wilson," the Doctor said dryly. "There is the pluck that will carry a man through a desperate action and lead him to do deeds that are the talk of an army. Forster possesses that kind of pluck in an unusual degree. He is almost an ideal cavalryman—dashing, reckless; riding with a smile on his lips into the thickest of the fray, absolutely careless of life when his blood is up.

"There is another sort of courage, that which supports men under long continued strain, and enables them, patiently and steadfastly, to face death when they see it approaching step by step. I doubt whether Forster possesses that passive sort of courage. He would ride up to a cannon's mouth, but would grow impatient in a. square of infantry condemned to remain inactive under a heavy artillery fire.

"No one has changed more since this siege began than he has. Except when engaged under a heavy fire he has been either silent, or impatient and short tempered, shirking conversation even with women when his turn of duty was over. Mind, I don't say for a moment that I suspect him of being afraid of death; when the end came he would fight as bravely as ever, and no one could fight more bravely. But he cannot stand the waiting; he is always pulling his mustache moodily and muttering to himself; he is good to do but not to suffer; he would make a shockingly bad patient in a long illness.

"Well, if any of you have letters you want to write to friends in England I should advise you to take the opportunity; mind, I don't think they will ever get them. Forster may get through, but I consider the chances strongly against it. For a ride of ten miles through a country swarming with foes I could choose no messenger I would rather trust, but for a ride like this, that requires patience and caution and resource, he is not the man I should select. Bathurst would have succeeded almost certainly if he had once got out. The two men are as different as light to dark; one possesses just the points the other fails in. I have no one at home I want to write to, so I will undertake the watch here."

CHAPTER XVII.

The men on descending from the roof found all the ladies engaged in writing, the Major having told them that there was a chance of their letters being taken out. Scarce one looked up as they entered; their thoughts at the moment were at home with those to whom they were writing what might well be their last farewells. Stifled sobs were heard in the quiet room; mournful letters were blurred with tears even from eyes that had not before been dimmed since the siege began.

Isobel Hannay was the first to finish, for her letter to her mother was but a short one. As she closed it she looked up. Captain Forster was standing at the other side of the table with his eyes fixed on her, and he made a slight gesture to her that he wished to speak to her. She hesitated a moment, and then rose and quietly left the room. A moment later he joined her outside.

"Come outside," he said, "I must speak to you;" and together they went out through the passage into the courtyard.

"Isobel," he began, "I need not tell you that I love you; till lately I have not known how much, but I feel now that I could not live without you."

"Why are you going away then, Captain Forster?" she asked quietly.

"I don't want to go alone," he said; "I cannot go alone—I want you to go with me. Your uncle would surely consent; it is the only chance of saving your life. We all know that it is next to hopeless that a force sufficient to rescue us can be sent; there is just a chance, but that is all that can be said. We could be married at Allahabad. I would make for that town instead of Lucknow if you will go with me, and I could leave you there in safety till these troubles are over; I am going to take another horse as well as my own, and two would be as likely to escape as one."

"Thank you for the offer, Captain Forster," she said coldly, "but I decline it. My place is here with my uncle and the others."

"Why is it?" he asked passionately. "If you love me, your place is surely with me; and you do love me, Isobel, do you not? Surely I have not been mistaken."

Isobel was silent for a moment.

"You were mistaken, Captain Forster," she said, after a pause. "You paid me attentions such as I had heard you paid to many others, and it was pleasant. That you were serious I did not think. I believed you were simply flirting with me; that you meant no more by it than you had meant before; and being forewarned, and therefore having no fear that I should hurt myself more than you would, I entered into it in the same spirit. Where there was so much to be anxious about, it was a pleasure and relief. Had I met you elsewhere, and under different circumstances, I think I should have come to love you. A girl almost without experience and new to the world, as I am, could hardly have helped doing so, I think. Had I thought you were in earnest I should have acted differently; and if I have deceived you by my manner I am sorry; but even had I loved you I would not have consented to do the thing you ask me. You

are going on duty. You are going in the hope of obtaining aid for us. I should be simply escaping while others stay, and I should despise myself for the action. Besides; I do not think that even in that case my uncle would have consented to my going with you."

"I am sure that he would," Forster broke in. "He would never be mad enough to refuse you the chance of escape from such a fate as may now await you."

"We need not discuss the question," she said. "Even if I loved you, I would not go with you; and I do not love you."

"They have prejudiced you against me," he said angrily.

"They warned me, and they were right in doing so. Ask yourself if they were not. Would you see a sister of yours running the risk of breaking her heart without warning her? Do not be angry," she went on, putting her hand on his arm. "We have been good friends, Captain Forster, and I like you very much. We may never meet again; it is most likely we never shall do so. I am grateful to you for the many pleasant hours you have given me. Let us part thus."

"Can you not give some hope that in the distance, when these troubles are over, should we both be spared, you may—"

"No, Captain Forster, I am sure it could never be so; if we ever meet again, we will meet as we part now—as friends. And now I can stay no longer; they will be missing me," and, turning, she entered the house before he could speak again.

It was some minutes before he followed her. He had not really thought that she would go with him; perhaps he had hardly wished it, for on such an expedition a woman would necessarily add to the difficulty and danger; but he had thought that she would have told him that his love was returned, and for perhaps the first time in his life he was serious in his protestation of it.

"What does it matter?" he said at last, as he turned; "'tis ten thousand to one against our meeting again; if we do, I can take it up where it breaks off now. She has acknowledged that she would have liked me if she had been sure that I was in earnest. Next time I shall be so. She was right. I was but amusing myself with her at first, and had no more thought of marrying her than I had of flying. But there, it is no use talking about the future; the thing now is to get out of this trap. I have felt like a rat in a cage with a terrier watching me for the last month, and long to be on horseback again, with the chance of making a fight for my life. What a fool Bathurst was to throw away the chance!"

Bathurst, his work done, had looked into the hall where the others were gathered, and hearing that the Doctor was alone on watch had gone up to him.

"I was just thinking, Bathurst," the Doctor said, as he joined him, "about that fight today. It seems to me that whatever comes of this business, you and I are not likely to be among those who go down when the place is taken."

"How is that, Doctor? Why is our chance better than the rest? I have no hope myself that any will be spared."

"I put my faith in the juggler, Bathurst. Has it not struck you that the first picture you saw has come true?"

"I have never given it a thought for weeks," Bathurst said; "certainly I have not thought of it today. Yes, now you speak of it, it has come true. How strange! I put it aside as a clever trick—one that I could not understand any more than I did the others, but, knowing myself, it seemed beyond the bounds of possibility that it could come true. Anything but that I would have believed, but, as I told you, whatever might happen in the future, I should not be found fighting desperately as I saw myself doing there. It is true that I did so, but it was only a sort of a frenzy. I did not fire a shot, as Wilson may have told you. I strove like a man in a nightmare to break the spell that seemed to render me powerless to move, but when, for a moment, the firing ceased, a weight seemed to fall off me, and I was seized with a sort of passion to kill. I have no distinct remembrance of anything until it was all over. It was still the nightmare, but one of a different kind, and I was no more myself then than I was when I was lying helpless on the sandbags. Still, as you say, the picture was complete; at least, if Miss Hannay was standing up here."

"Yes, she rose to her feet in the excitement of the fight. I believe we all did so. The picture was true in all its details as you described it to me. And that being so, I believe that other picture, the one we saw together, you and I and Isobel Hannay in native disguises, will also come true."

Bathurst was silent for two or three minutes.

"It may be so, Doctor—Heaven only knows. I trust for your sake and hers it may be so, though I care but little about myself; but that picture wasn't a final one, and we don't know what may follow it."

"That is so, Bathurst. But I think that you and I, once fairly away in disguise, might be trusted to make our way down the country. You see, we have a complete confirmation of that juggler's powers. He showed me a scene in the past—a scene which had not been in my mind for years, and was certainly not in my thoughts at the time. He showed you a scene in the future, which, unlikely as it appeared, has actually taken place. I believe he will be equally right in this other picture. You have heard that Forster is going?"

"Yes; Wilson came down and told me while I was at work. Wilson seemed rather disgusted at his volunteering. I don't know that I am surprised myself, for, as I told you, I knew him at school, and he had no moral courage, though plenty of physical. Still, under the circumstances, I should not have thought he would have gone."

"You mean because of Miss Hannay, Bathurst?"

"Yes, that is what I mean."

"That sort of thing might weigh with you or me, Bathurst, but not with him. He has loved and ridden away many times before this, but in this case, fortunately, I don't think he will leave an aching heart behind him."

"You don't mean to say, Doctor, that you don't think she cares for him?"

"I have not asked her the question," the Doctor said dryly. "I dare say she likes him; in fact, I am ready to admit that there has been what you may call a strong case of flirtation; but when a young woman is thrown with an uncommonly good looking man, who lays himself out to be agreeable to her, my experience is that a flirtation generally comes of it, especially when the young woman has no one else to make

herself agreeable to, and is, moreover, a little sore with the world in general. I own that at one time I was rather inclined to think that out of sheer perverseness the girl was going to make a fool of herself with that good looking scamp, but since we have been shut up here I have felt easy in my mind about it. And now, if you will take my rifle for ten minutes, I will go down and get a cup of tea; I volunteered to take sentry work, but I didn't bargain for keeping it all night without relief. By the way, I told Forster of your offer of your horse, and I think he is going to take it."

"He is welcome to it," Bathurst said carelessly; "it will be of no use to me."

"Now, look here," the Doctor said shortly; "just put Miss Hannay out of your head for the present, and attend to the business on hand. I do not think there is much chance of their trying it on again tonight, but they may do so, so please to keep a sharp lookout while I am below."

"I will be careful, Doctor," Bathurst said, with a laugh; but the Doctor had so little faith in his watchfulness that as soon as he went below he sent up Wilson to share his guard.

At twelve o'clock the sandbags were removed sufficiently to allow a horse to pass through, and Forster's and Bathurst's animals were led out through the breach, their feet having been muffled with blankets to prevent their striking a stone and arousing the attention of the enemy's sentinels. Once fairly out the mufflings were removed and Forster sprang into his saddle.

"Goodby, Major," he said; "I hope I may be back again in eight or nine days with a squadron of cavalry."

"Goodby, Forster; I hope it may be so. May God protect you!"

The gap in the defenses was closed the instant the horses passed through, and the men stood in the breach of the wall listening as Forster rode off. He went at a walk, but before he had gone fifty paces there was a sharp challenge, followed almost instantly by a rifle shot, then came the crack of a revolver and the rapid beat of galloping hoofs. Loud shouts were heard, and musket shots fired in rapid succession.

"They are not likely to have hit him in the dark," the Major said, as he climbed back over the sandbags; "but they may hit his horses, which would be just as fatal."

Leaving two sentries—the one just outside the breach near the wall, the other on the sandbags—the rest of the party hurried up on the roof. Shots were still being fired, and there was a confused sound of shouting; then a cavalry trumpet rang out sharply, and presently three shots fired in quick succession came upon the air.

"That is the signal agreed on," the Major said: "he is safely beyond their lines. Now it is a question of riding; some of the cavalry will be in pursuit of him before many minutes are over."

Forster's adieus had been brief. He had busied himself up to the last moment in looking to the saddling of the two horses, and had only gone into the house and said goodby to the ladies just when it was time to start. He had said a few hopeful words as to the success of the mission, but it had evidently needed an effort for him to do so. He had no opportunity of speaking a word apart with Isobel, and he shook her hand silently when it came to her turn.

“I should not have given him credit for so much feeling,” Mrs. Doolan whispered to Isobel, as he went out; “he was really sorry to leave us, and I didn't think he was a man to be sorry for anything that didn't affect himself. I think he had absolutely the grace to feel a little ashamed of leaving us.”

“I don't think that is fair,” Isobel said warmly, “when he is going away to fetch assistance for us.”

“He is deserting us as rats desert a sinking ship,” Mrs. Doolan said positively; “and I am only surprised that he has the grace to feel a little ashamed of the action. As for caring, there is only one person in the world he cares for—himself. I was reading 'David Copperfield' just before we came in here, and Steerforth's character might have been sketched from Forster. He is a man without either heart or conscience; a man who would sacrifice everything to his own pleasures; and yet even when one knows him to be what he is, one can hardly help liking him. I wonder how it is, my dear, that scamps are generally more pleasant than good men?”

“I never thought about it, Mrs. Doolan,” Isobel said, roused to a smile by the earnestness with which Mrs. Doolan propounded the problem; “and can give no reason except that we are attracted by natures the reverse of our own.”

Mrs. Doolan laughed.

“So you think we are better than men, Isobel? I don't—not one bit. We are cramped in our opportunities; but given equal opportunities I don't think there would be anything to choose between us. But we mustn't stay talking here any longer; we both go on duty in the sick ward at four o'clock.”

The enemy's batteries opened on the following morning more violently than before. More guns had been placed in position during the night, and a rain of missiles was poured upon the house. For the next six days the position of the besieged became hourly worse. Several breaches had been made in the wall, and the shots now struck the house, and the inmates passed the greater part of their time in the basement.

The heat was terrible, and, as the firing was kept up night and day, sleep was almost impossible. The number of the besiegers had considerably increased, large numbers of the country people taking part in the siege, while a regiment of Sepoys from Cawnpore had taken the place of the detachment of the 103d Bengal Infantry, of whom, indeed, but few now remained.

The garrison no longer held the courtyard. Several times masses of the enemy had surged up and poured through the breaches, but a large number of hand grenades of various sizes had been constructed by the defenders, and the effects of these thrown down from the roof among the crowded masses were so terrible that the natives each time fell back. The horses had all been turned out through the breach on the day after Captain Forster's departure, in order to save their lives. A plague of flies was not the least of the defenders' troubles. After the repulse of the assaults the defenders went out at night and carried the bodies of the natives who had fallen in the courtyard beyond the wall. Nevertheless, the odor of blood attracted such countless swarms of flies that the ground was black with them, and they pervaded the house in legions.

The number of the defenders decreased daily. Six only were able now to carry arms. Mr. Hunter, Captain Rintoul, and Richards had died of fever. Farquharson had

been killed by a cannon ball; two civilians had been badly wounded; several of the children had succumbed; Amy Hunter had been killed by a shell that passed through the sandbag protection of the grating that gave light to the room in the basement used as a sick ward. The other ladies were all utterly worn out with exhaustion, sleeplessness, and anxiety. Still there had been no word spoken of surrender. Had the men been alone they would have sallied out and died fighting, but this would have left the women at the mercy of the assailants.

The work at the gallery had been discontinued for some time. It had been carried upwards until a number of roots in the earth showed that they were near the surface, and, as they believed, under a clump of bushes growing a hundred and fifty yards beyond the walls; but of late there had been no talk of using this. Flight, which even at first had seemed almost hopeless, was wholly beyond them in their present weakened condition.

On the last of these six days Major Hannay was severely wounded. At night the enemy's fire relaxed a little, and the ladies took advantage of it to go up onto the terrace for air, while the men gathered for a council round the Major's bed.

"Well, Doctor, the end is pretty near," he said; "it is clear we cannot hold out many hours longer. We must look the matter in the face now. We have agreed all along that when we could no longer resist we would offer to surrender on the terms that our lives should be spared, and that we should be given safe conduct down the country, and that if those terms were refused we were to resist to the end, and then blow up the house and all in it. I think the time has come for raising the white flag."

"I think so," the Doctor said: "we have done everything men could do. I have little hope that they will grant us terms of surrender; for from the native servants who have deserted us they must have a fair idea of our condition. What do you think, Bathurst?"

"I think it probable there are divisions among them," he replied; "the Talookdars may have risen against us, but I do not think they can have the same deadly enmity the Sepoys have shown. They must be heartily sick of this prolonged siege, and they have lost large numbers of their men. I should say they would be willing enough to give terms, but probably they are overruled by the Sepoys, and perhaps by orders from Nana Sahib. I know several of them personally, and I think I could influence Por Sing, who is certainly the most powerful of the Zemindars of this neighborhood, and is probably looked upon as their natural leader; if you approve of it, Major, I will go out in disguise, and endeavor to obtain an interview with him. He is an honorable man; and if he will give his guarantee for our safety, I would trust him. At any rate, I can but try. If I do not return, you will know that I am dead, and that no terms can be obtained, and can then decide when to end it all."

"It is worth the attempt anyhow," the Major said. "I say nothing about the danger you will run, for no danger can be greater than that which hangs over us all now."

"Very well, Major, then I will do it at once, but you must not expect me back until tomorrow night. I can hardly hope to obtain an interview with Por Sing tonight."

"How will you go out, Bathurst?"

"I will go down at once and break in the roof of the gallery," he said; "we know they are close round the wall, and I could not hope to get out through any of the

breaches."

"I suppose you are quite convinced that there is no hope of relief from Lucknow?"

"Quite convinced. I never had any real hope of it; but had there been a force disposable, it would have started at once if Forster arrived there with his message, and might have been here by this time."

"At any rate, we can wait no longer."

"Then we will begin at once," Bathurst said, and, taking a crowbar and pick from the place where the tools were kept, he lighted the lamp and went along the gallery, accompanied by the Doctor, who carried two light bamboo ladders.

"Do you think you will succeed, Bathurst?"

"I am pretty sure of it," he said confidently. "I believe I have a friend there."

"A friend!" the Doctor repeated in surprise.

"Yes; I am convinced that the juggler is there. Not once, but half a dozen times during the last two nights when I have been on watch on the terrace, I have distinctly heard the words whispered in my ear, 'Meet me at your bungalow.' You may think I dozed off and was dreaming, but I was as wide awake then as I am now. I cannot say that I recognized the voice, but the words were in the dialect he speaks. At any rate, as soon as I am out I shall make my way there, and shall wait there all night on the chance of his coming. After what we know of the man's strange powers, there seems nothing unreasonable to me in his being able to impress upon my mind the fact that he wants to see me."

"I quite agree with you there, and his aid might be invaluable. You are not the sort of man to have delusions, Bathurst, and I quite believe what you say. I feel more hopeful now than I have done for some time."

An hour's hard work, and a hole was made through the soil, which was but three feet thick. Bathurst climbed up the ladder and looked out.

"It is as we thought, Doctor; we are in the middle of that thicket. Now I will go and dress if you will keep guard here with your rifle."

At the end of the gallery a figure was standing; it was Isobel Hannay.

"I have heard you are going out again, Mr. Bathurst."

"Yes, I am going to see what I can do in the way of making terms for us."

"You may not come back again," she said nervously.

"That is, of course, possible, Miss Hannay, but I do not think the risk is greater than that run by those who stay here."

"I want to speak to you before you go," she said; "I have wanted to speak so long, but you have never given me an opportunity. We may never meet again, and I must tell you how sorry I am—how sorry I have been ever since for what I said. I spoke as a foolish girl, but I know better now. Have I not seen how calm you have been through all our troubles, how you have devoted yourself to us and the children, how you have kept up all our spirits, how cheerfully you have worked, and as our trouble increased we have all come to look up to you and lean upon you. Do say, Mr.

Bathurst, that you forgive me, and that if you return we can be friends as we were before."

"Certainly I forgive you if there is anything to forgive, Miss Hannay," he said gravely. "Nothing that you or anyone can say can relieve me of the pain of knowing that I have been unable to take any active part in your defense, that I have been forced to play the part of a woman rather than a man; but assuredly, if I return, I shall be glad to be again your friend, which, indeed. I have never ceased to be at heart."

Perhaps she expected something more, but it did not come. He spoke cordially, but yet as one who felt that there was an impassible barrier between them. She stood irresolute for a moment, and then held out her hand. "Goodby, then," she said.

He held it a moment. "Goodby, Miss Hannay. May God keep you and guard you."

Then gently he led her to the door, and they passed out together. A quarter of an hour later he rejoined the Doctor, having brought with him a few short lengths of bamboo.

"I will put these across the hole when I get out," he said, "lay some sods over them, and cover them up with leaves, in case anyone should enter the bushes tomorrow. It is not likely, but it is as well to take the precaution. One of you had better stay on guard until I come back. It would not do to trust any of the natives; those that remain are all utterly disheartened and broken down, and might take the opportunity of purchasing their lives by going out and informing the enemy of the opening into the gallery. They must already know of its existence from the men who have deserted. But, fortunately, I don't think any of them are aware of its exact direction; if they had been, we should have had them countermining before this."

Having carefully closed up the opening, Bathurst went to the edge of the bushes and listened. He could hear voices between him and the house, but all was quiet near at hand, and he began to move noiselessly along through the garden. He had no great fear of meeting with anyone here. The natives had formed a cordon round the wall, and behind that there would be no one on watch, and as the batteries were silent, all were doubtless asleep there. In ten minutes he stood before the charred stumps that marked the site of his bungalow. As he did so, a figure advanced to meet him.

"It is you, sahib. I was expecting you. I knew that you would come this evening."

"I don't know how you knew it but I am heartily glad to see you."

"You want to see Por Sing? Come along with me and I will take you to him; but there is no time to lose;" and without another word he walked rapidly away, followed by Bathurst.

When they got into the open the latter could see that his companion was dressed in an altogether different garb to that in which he had before seen him, being attired as a person of some rank and importance. He stopped presently for Bathurst to come up with him.

"I have done what I could to prepare the way for you," he said. "Openly I could for certain reasons do nothing, but I have said enough to make him feel uncomfortable about the future, and to render him anxious to find a way of escape for himself if your people should ever again get the mastery."

"How are things going, Rujub? We have heard nothing for three weeks. How is it at Cawnpore?"

"Cawnpore has been taken by the Nana. They surrendered on his solemn oath that all should be allowed to depart in safety. He broke his oath, and there are not ten of its defenders alive. The women are all in captivity."

Bathurst groaned. He had hardly hoped that the handful of defenders could have maintained themselves against such overpowering numbers, but the certainty as to their fate was a heavy blow.

"And Lucknow?" he asked.

"The Residency holds out at present, but men say that it must soon fall."

"And what do you say?"

"I say nothing," the man said; "we cannot use our art in matters which concern ourselves."

"And Delhi?"

"There is a little force of whites in front of Delhi; there are tens of thousands of Sepoys in the town, but as yet the whites have maintained themselves. The chiefs of the Punjaub have proved faithless to their country, and there the British rule is maintained."

"Thank God for that!" Bathurst exclaimed; "as long as the Punjaub holds out the tables may be turned. And the other Presidencies?"

"Nothing as yet," Rujub said, in a tone of discontent.

"Then you are against us, Rujub?"

The man stopped.

"Sahib, I know not what I wish now. I have been brought up to hate the whites. Two of my father's brothers were hung as Thugs, and my father taught me to hate the men who did it. For years I have worked quietly against you, as have most of those of my craft. We have reason to hate you. In the old times we were honored in the land—honored and feared; for even the great ones knew that we had powers such as no other men have. But the whites treat us as if we were mere buffoons, who play for their amusement; they make no distinction between the wandering conjurer, with his tricks of dexterity, and the masters, who have powers that have been handed down from father to son for thousands of years, who can communicate with each other though separated by the length of India; who can, as you have seen, make men invisible; who can read the past and the future. They see these things, and though they cannot explain them, they persist in treating us all as if we were mere jugglers.

"They prefer to deny the evidence of their own senses rather than admit that we have powers such as they have not; and so, even in the eyes of our own countrymen, we have lost our old standing and position, while the whites would bribe us with money to divulge the secrets in which they profess to disbelieve. No wonder that we hate you, and that we long for the return of the old days, when even princes were glad to ask favors at our hands. It is seldom that we show our powers now. Those who aid us, and whose servants we are, are not to be insulted by the powers they bestow upon us being used for the amusement of men who believe in nothing.

"The Europeans who first came to India have left records of the strange things they saw at the courts of the native princes. But such things are no longer done for the amusement of our white masters. Thus, then, for years I have worked against you; and just as I saw that our work was successful, just as all was prepared for the blow that was to sweep the white men out of India, you saved my daughter; then my work seemed to come to an end. Would any of my countrymen, armed only with a whip, have thrown themselves in the way of a tiger to save a woman—a stranger—one altogether beneath him in rank—one, as it were, dust beneath his feet? That I should be ready to give my life for yours was a matter of course; I should have been an ungrateful wretch otherwise. But this was not enough. At one blow the work I had devoted myself to for years was brought to nothing. Everything seemed to me new; and as I sat by my daughter's bedside, when she lay sick with the fever, I had to think it all out again. Then I saw things in another light. I saw that, though the white men were masterful and often hard, though they had little regard for our customs, and viewed our beliefs as superstitious, and scoffed at the notion of there being powers of which they had no knowledge, yet that they were a great people. Other conquerors, many of them, India has had, but none who have made it their first object to care for the welfare of the people at large. The Feringhees have wrung nothing from the poor to be spent in pomp and display; they permit no tyranny or ill doing; under them the poorest peasant tills his fields in peace.

"I have been obliged to see all this, and I feel now that their destruction would be a frightful misfortune. We should be ruled by our native lords; but as soon as the white man was gone the old quarrels would break out, and the country would be red with blood. I did not see this before, because I had only looked at it with the eyes of my own caste; now I see it with the eyes of one whose daughter has been saved from a tiger by a white man. I cannot love those I have been taught to hate, but I can see the benefit their rule has given to India.

"But what can I do now? I am in the stream, and I must go with it. I know not what I wish or what I would do. Six months ago I felt certain. Now I doubt. It seemed to me that in a day the English Raj would be swept away. How could it be otherwise when the whole army that had conquered India for them were against them? I knew they were brave, but we have never lacked bravery. How could I tell that they would fight one against a hundred?

"But come, let us go on. Por Sing is expecting you. I told him that I knew that one from the garrison would come out to treat with him privately tonight, and he is expecting you, though he does not know who may come."

Ten minutes walking, and they approached a large tent surrounded by several smaller ones. A sentry challenged when they approached, but on Rujub giving his name, he at once resumed his walk up and down, and Rujub, followed by Bathurst, advanced and entered the tent. The Zemindar was seated on a divan smoking a hookah. Rujub bowed, but not with the deep reverence of one approaching his superior.

"He is here," he said.

"Then you were not mistaken, Rujub?"

“How could I be when I knew?” Rujub said. “I have done what I said, and have brought him straight to you. That was all I had to do with it; the rest is for your highness.”

“I would rather that you should be present,” Por Sing said, as Rujub turned to withdraw.

“No,” the latter replied; “in this matter it is for you to decide. I know not the Nana's wishes, and your highness must take the responsibility. I have brought him to you rather than to the commander of the Sepoys, because your authority should be the greater; it is you and the other Oude chiefs who have borne the weight of this siege, and it is only right that it is you who should decide the conditions of surrender. The Sepoys are not our masters, and it is well they are not so; the Nana and the Oude chiefs have not taken up arms to free themselves from the English Raj to be ruled over by the men who have been the servants of the English.”

“That is so,” the Zemindar said, stroking his beard; “well, I will talk with this person.”

Rujub left the tent. “You do not know me, Por Sing?” Bathurst said, stepping forward from the entrance where he had hitherto stood; “I am the Sahib Bathurst.”

“Is it so?” the Zemindar said, laying aside his pipe and rising to his feet; “none could come to me whom I would rather see. You have always proved yourself a just officer, and I have no complaint against you. We have often broken bread together, and it has grieved me to know that you were in yonder house. Do you come to me on your own account, or from the sahib who commands?”

“I come on my own account,” Bathurst said; “when I come as a messenger from him, I must come openly. I. know you to be an honorable man, and that I could say what I have to say to you and depart in safety. I regard you as one who has been misled, and regret for your sake that you should have been induced to take part with these mutineers against us. Believe me, chief, you have been terribly misled. You have been told that it needed but an effort to overthrow the British Raj. Those who told you so lied. It might have seemed easy to destroy the handful of Europeans scattered throughout India, but you have not succeeded in doing it. Even had you done so, you would not have so much as begun the work. There are but few white soldiers here. Why? Because England trusted in the fidelity of her native troops, and thought it necessary to keep only a handful of soldiers in India, but if need be, for every soldier now here she could send a hundred, and she will send a hundred if required to reconquer India. Already you may be sure that ships are on the sea laden with troops; and if you find it so hard to overcome the few soldiers now here, what would you do against the great armies that will pour in ere long? Why, all the efforts of the Sepoys gathered at Delhi are insufficient to defeat the four or five thousand British troops who hold their posts outside the town, waiting only till the succor arrives from England to take a terrible vengeance. Woe be then to those who have taken part against us; still more to those whose hands are stained with British blood.”

“It is too late now,” the native said gloomily, “the die is cast; but since I have seen how a score of men could defend that shattered house against thousands, do you think I have not seen that I have been wrong? Who would have thought that men could do such a thing? But it is too late now.”

"It is not too late," Bathurst said; "it is too late, indeed, to undo the mischief that has been done, but not too late for you to secure yourself against some of the consequences. The English are just; and when they shall have stamped out this mutiny, as assuredly they will do, they will draw a distinction between mutinous soldiers who were false to their salt, and native chiefs who fought, as they believed, for the independence of their country. But one thing they will not forgive, whether in Sepoy or in prince, the murder of man, woman, or child in cold blood: for that there will be no pardon.

"But it is not upon that ground that I came to appeal to you, but as a noble of Oude —a man who is a brave enemy, but who could never be a butcher. We have fought against each other fairly and evenly; the time has come when we can fight no longer, and I demand of you, confidently, that, if we surrender, the lives of all within those walls shall be respected, and a safe conduct be granted them down the country. I know that such conditions were granted to the garrison at Cawnpore, and that they were shamelessly violated; for that act Nana Sahib will never be forgiven. He will be hunted down like a dog and hung when he is caught, just as if he had been the poorest peasant. But I have not so bad an opinion of the people of India as to believe them base enough to follow such an example, and I am confident that if you grant us those terms, you will see that the conditions are observed."

"I have received orders from Nana Sahib to send all prisoners down to him," Por Sing said, in a hesitating voice.

"You will never send down prisoners from here," Bathurst replied firmly. "You may attack us again, and after the loss of the lives of scores more of your followers you may be successful, but you will take no prisoners, for at the last moment we will blow the house and all in it into the air. Besides, who made Nana Sahib your master? He is not the lord of Oude; and though doubtless he dreams of sovereignty, it is a rope, not a throne, that awaits him. Why should you nobles of Oude obey the orders of this peasant boy, though he was adopted by the Peishwa? The Peishwa himself was never your lord, and why should you obey this traitor, this butcher, this disgrace to India, when he orders you to hand over to him the prisoners your sword has made?"

"That is true," Por Sing said gloomily; "but the Sepoys will not agree to the terms."

"The Sepoys are not your masters," Bathurst said; "we do not surrender to them, but to you. We place no confidence in their word, but we have every faith in the honor of the nobles of Oude. If you and your friends grant us the terms we ask, the Sepoys may clamor, but they will not venture to do more. Neither they nor Nana Sahib dare at this moment affront the people of Oude.

"There are Sepoys round Lucknow, but it is the men of Oude who are really pressing the siege. If you are firm, they will not dare to break with you on such a question as the lives of a score of Europeans. If you will give me your word and your honor that all shall be spared, I will come out in the morning with a flag of truce to treat with you. If not, we will defend ourselves to the last, and then blow ourselves into the air."

"And you think," Por Sing said doubtfully, "that if I agreed to this, it would be taken into consideration should the British Raj be restored."

“I can promise you that it will,” Bathurst said. “It will be properly represented that it is to you that the defenders of Deennugghur, and the women and children with them, owe their lives, and you may be sure that this will go a very long way towards wiping out the part you have taken in the attack on the station. When the day of reckoning comes, the British Government will know as well how to reward those who rendered them service in these days, as to punish those who have been our foes.”

“I will do it,” Por Sing said firmly. “Do not come out until the afternoon. In the morning I will talk with the other Zemindars, and bring them over to agree that there shall be no more bloodshed. There is not one of us but is heartily sick of this business, and eager to put an end to it. Rujub may report what he likes to the Nana, I will do what is right.”

After a hearty expression of thanks, Bathurst left the tent. Rujub was awaiting him outside.

“You have succeeded?” he asked.

“Yes; he will guarantee the lives of all the garrison, but he seemed to be afraid of what you might report to Nana Sahib.”

“I am the Nana's agent here,” Rujub said; “I have been working with him for months. I would I could undo it all now. I was away when they surrendered at Cawnpore. Had I not been, that massacre would never have taken place, for I am one of the few who have influence with him. He is fully cognizant of my power, and fears it.”

They made their way back without interruption to the clump of bushes near the house.

“When shall I see you again?” Bathurst asked.

“I do not know,” replied Rujub, “but be sure that I shall be at hand to aid you if possible should danger arise.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

As soon as Bathurst began to remove the covering of the hole, a voice came from below.

"Is that you, Bathurst?"

"All right, Doctor."

"Heaven be praised! You are back sooner than I expected, by a long way. I heard voices talking, so I doubted whether it was you."

"The ladder is still there, I suppose, Doctor?"

"Yes; it is just as you got off it. What are you going to do about the hole?"

"Rujub is here; he will cover it up after me."

"Then you were right," the Doctor said, as Bathurst stepped down beside him; "and you found the juggler really waiting for you?"

"At the bungalow, Doctor, as I expected."

"And what have you done? You can hardly have seen Por Sing; it is not much over an hour since you left."

"I have seen him, Doctor; and what is more, he has pledged his word for our safety."

"Thank God for that, lad; it is more than I expected. This will be news indeed for the poor women. And do you think he will be strong enough to keep his pledge?"

"I think so; he asked me to wait until tomorrow afternoon before going out with a flag of truce, and said that by that time he would get the other Zemindars to stand by him, and would make terms whether the Sepoys liked it or not."

"Well, you shall tell us all about it afterwards, Bathurst; let us take the news in to them at once; it is long since they had good tidings of any kind; it would be cruel to keep them in suspense, even for five minutes."

There was no noisy outburst of joy when the news was told. Three weeks before it would have been received with the liveliest satisfaction, but now the bitterness of death was well nigh past; half the children lay in their graves in the garden, scarce one of the ladies but had lost husband or child, and while women murmured "Thank God!" as they clasped their children to them, the tears ran down as they thought how different it would have been had the news come sooner. The men, although equally quiet, yet showed more outward satisfaction than the women. Warm grasps of the hands were exchanged by those who had fought side by side during these terrible days, and a load seemed lifted at once off their shoulders.

Bathurst stayed but a moment in the room after this news was told, but went in with Dr. Wade to the Major, and reported to him in full the conversation that had taken place between himself and Por Sing.

"I think you are right, Bathurst; if the Oude men hold together, the Sepoys will scarcely risk a breach with them. Whether he will be able to secure our safety

afterwards is another thing."

"I quite see that, Major; but it seems to me that we have no option but to accept his offer and hope for the best."

"That is it," the Doctor agreed. "It is certain death if we don't surrender; there is a chance that he will be able to protect us if we do. At any rate, we can be no worse off than we are here."

Isobel had been in with Mrs. Doolan nursing the sick children when Bathurst arrived, but they presently came out. Isobel shook hands with him without speaking.

"We are all heavily indebted to you, Mr. Bathurst," Mrs. Doolan said. "If we escape from this, it will be to you that we humanly owe our lives."

She spoke in a voice that all in the room could hear.

"Your are right, Mrs. Doolan," the Doctor said; "and I think that there are some who must regret now the manner in which they have behaved to Bathurst since this siege began."

"I do for one," Captain Doolan said, coming forward.

"I have regretted it for some time, though I have not had the manliness to say so. I am heartily sorry. I have done you a great and cruel injustice. I ought to have known that the Doctor, who knew you vastly better than I did, was not likely to be mistaken. Putting that aside, I ought to have seen, and I did see, though I would not acknowledge it even to myself, that no man has borne himself more calmly and steadfastly through this siege than you have, and that by twice venturing out among the enemy you gave proof that you possessed as much courage as any of us. I do hope that you will give me your hand."

All the others who had held aloof from Bathurst came forward and expressed their deep regret for what had occurred.

Bathurst heard them in silence.

"I do not feel that there is anything to forgive," he said quietly. "I am glad to hear what you say, and I know you mean it, and I accept the hands you offer, but what you felt towards me has affected me but little, for your contempt for me was as nothing to my contempt of myself. Nothing can alter the fact that here, where every man's hand was wanted to defend the ladies and children, my hand was paralyzed; that whatever I may be at other times, in the hour of battle I fail hopelessly; nothing that I can do can wipe out, from my own consciousness, that disgrace."

"You exaggerate it altogether, Bathurst," Wilson broke in hotly. "It is nonsense your talking like that, after the way you jumped down into the middle of them with that mace of yours. It was splendid."

"More than that, Mr. Bathurst," Mrs. Doolan said, "I think we women know what true courage is; and there is not one of us but has, since this siege began, been helped and strengthened by your calmness—not one but has reason to be grateful for your kindness to our children during this terrible time. I won't hear even you speak against yourself."

"Then I will not do so, Mrs. Doolan," he said, with a grave smile. "And now I will go and sit with the Major for a time. Things are quieter tonight than they have been

for some time past, and I trust he will get some sleep."

So saying, he quietly left the room.

"I don't believe he has slept two hours at a time since the siege began," Mrs. Doolan said, with tears in her eyes. "We have all suffered—God only knows what we have suffered!—but I am sure that he has suffered more than any of us. As for you men, you may well say you are sorry and ashamed of your treatment of him. Coward, indeed! Mr. Bathurst may be nervous, but I am sure he has as much courage as anyone here. Come, Isobel, you were up all last night, and it's past two o'clock now. We must try to get a little sleep before morning, and I should advise everyone else off duty to do the same."

At daybreak firing commenced, and was kept up energetically all the morning. At two o'clock a white flag was hoisted from the terrace, and its appearance was greeted with shouts of triumph by the assailants. The firing at once ceased, and in a few minutes a native officer carrying a white flag advanced towards the walls.

"We wish to see the Zemindar Por Sing," Bathurst said, "to treat with him upon the subject of our surrender."

The officer withdrew, and returned in half an hour saying that he would conduct the officer in command to the presence of the chief of the besieging force. Captain Doolan, therefore, accompanied by Bathurst and Dr. Wade, went out. They were conducted to the great tent where all the Zemindars and the principal officers of the Sepoys were assembled. Bathurst acted as spokesman.

"Por Sing," he said, "and you Zemindars of Oude, Major Hannay being disabled, Captain Doolan, who is now in command of the garrison, has come to represent him and to offer to surrender to you under the condition that the lives of all British and natives within the walls be respected, and that you pledge us your faith and honor that we shall be permitted to go down the country without molestation. It is to you, Por Sing, and you nobles of Oude, that we surrender, and not to those who, being sworn soldiers, have mutinied against their officers, and have in many cases treacherously murdered them. With such men Major Hannay will have no dealings, and it is to you that we surrender. Major Hannay bids me say that if this offer is refused, we can for a long time prolong our resistance. We are amply supplied with provisions and munitions of war, and many as are the numbers of our assailants who have fallen already, yet more will die before you obtain possession of the house. More than that, in no case will we be taken prisoners, for one and all have firmly resolved to fire the magazine when resistance is no longer possible, and to bury ourselves and our assailants in the ruins."

When Bathurst ceased, a hubbub of voices arose, the Sepoy officers protesting that the surrender should be made to them. It was some minutes before anything like quietness was restored, and then one of the officers said, "Here is Rujub; he speaks in the name of Nana. What does he say to this?"

Rujub, who was handsomely attired, stepped forward.

"I have no orders from his highness on this subject," he said. "He certainly said that the prisoners were to be sent to him, but at present there are no prisoners, nor, if the siege continues, and the English carry out their threat, will there be any prisoners. I

cannot think that Nana Sahib would wish to see some hundreds more of his countrymen slain or blown up, only that he may have these few men and women in his power."

"We have come here to take them and kill them," one of the officers said defiantly; "and we will do so."

Por Sing, who had been speaking with the Talookdars round him, rose from his seat.

"It seems to me that it is for us to decide this matter," he said. "It is upon us that the losses of this siege have fallen. At the order of Nana Sahib we collected our retainers, abandoned our homes, and have for three weeks supported the dangers of this siege. We follow the Nana, but we are not his vassals, nor do we even know what his wishes are in this matter, but it seems to us that we have done enough and more than enough. Numbers of our retainers and kinsmen have fallen, and to prolong the siege would cause greater loss, and what should we gain by it? The possession of a heap of stones. Therefore, we are all of opinion that this offer of surrender should be accepted. We war for the freedom of our country, and have no thirst for the blood of these English sahibs, still less for that of their wives and children."

Some of the officers angrily protested, but Por Sing stood firm, and the other chiefs were equally determined. Seeing this, the officers consulted together, and the highest in rank then said to the Talookdars, "We protest against these conditions being given, but since you are resolved, we stand aside, and are ready to agree for ourselves and our men to what you may decide."

"What pledges do you require?" Por Sing asked Bathurst.

"We are content, Rajah, with your personal oath that the lives of all within the house shall be respected, and your undertaking that they shall be allowed to go unharmed down the country. We have absolute faith in the honor of the nobles of Oude, and can desire no better guarantee."

"I will give it," Por Sing said, "and all my friends will join me in it. Tonight I will have boats collected on the river; I will furnish you with an escort of my troops, and will myself accompany you and see you safely on board. I will then not only give you a safe conduct, praying all to let you pass unharmed, but my son with ten men shall accompany you in the boats to inform all that my honor is concerned in your safety, and that I have given my personal pledge that no molestation shall be offered to you. I will take my oath, and my friends will do the same, and I doubt not that the commander of the Sepoy troops will join me in it."

Bathurst translated what had been said to Captain Doolan.

"It is impossible for him to do more than that," he concluded; "I do not think there is the least question as to his good faith."

"He is a fine old heathen," Captain Doolan said; "tell him that we accept his terms."

Bathurst at once signified this, and the Rajah then took a solemn oath to fulfill the conditions of the agreement, the other Talookdars doing the same, and the commander of the Sepoys also doing so without hesitation. Por Sing then promised that some carts should be collected before morning, to carry the ladies, the sick and wounded, down to the river, which was eight miles distant.

“You can sleep in quiet tonight,” he added; “I will place a guard of my own men round the house, and see that none trouble you in any way.”

A few other points were settled, and then the party returned to the house, to which they were followed a few minutes later by the son of Por Sing and three lads, sons of other Zemindars. Bathurst went down to meet them when their approach was noticed by the lookout on the roof.

“We have come to place ourselves in your hands as hostages, sahib,” Por Sing's son said. “My father thought it likely that the Sepoys or others might make trouble, and he said that if we were in your hands as hostages, all our people would see that the agreement must be kept, and would oppose themselves more vigorously to the Sepoys.”

“It was thoughtful and kind of your father,” Bathurst said. “As far as accommodation is concerned, we can do little to make you comfortable, but in other respects we are not badly provided.”

Some of the native servants were at once told off to erect an awning over a portion of the terrace. Tables and couches were placed here, and Bathurst undertook the work of entertaining the visitors.

He was glad of the precaution that had been taken in sending them, for with the glass he could make out that there was much disturbance in the Sepoy lines, men gathering in large groups, with much shouting and noise. Muskets were discharged in the direction of the house, and it was evident that the mutineers were very discontented with the decision that had been arrived at.

In a short time, however, a body, several hundred strong, of the Oude fighting men moved down and surrounded the house; and when a number of the Sepoys approached with excited and menacing gestures, one of the Zemindars went out to meet them, and Bathurst, watching the conference, could see by his pointing to the roof of the house that he was informing them that hostages had been given to the Europeans for the due observance of the treaty, and doubted not he was telling them that their lives would be endangered by any movement. Then he pointed to the batteries, as if threatening that if any attack was made the guns would be turned upon them. At any rate, after a time they moved away, and gradually the Sepoys could be seen returning to their lines.

There were but few preparations to be made by the garrison for their journey. It had been settled that they might take their personal effects with them, but it was at once agreed to take as little as possible, as there would probably be but little room in the boats, and the fewer things they carried the less there would be to tempt the cupidity of the natives.

“Well, Bathurst, what do you think of the outlook?” the Doctor asked, as late in the evening they sat together on some sandbags in a corner of the terrace.

“I think that if we get past Cawnpore in safety there is not much to fear. There is no other large place on the river, and the lower we get down the less likely the natives are to disturb us, knowing, as they are almost sure to do, that a force is gathering at Allahabad.”

"After what you heard of the massacre of the prisoners at Cawnpore, whom the Nana and his officers had all sworn to allow to depart in safety, there is little hope that this scoundrel will respect the arrangements made here."

"We must pass the place at night, and trust to drifting down unobserved—the river is wide there—and keeping near the opposite shore, we may get past in the darkness without being perceived; and even if they do make us out, the chances are they will not hit us. There are so few of us that there is no reason why they should trouble greatly about us."

"I am sorry to say, Bathurst, that I don't like the appearance of the Major's wound. Everything has been against him; the heat, the close air, and his anxiety of mind have all told on him, he seems very low, and I have great doubts whether he will ever see Allahabad."

"I hope you are wrong, Doctor, but I thought myself there was a change for the worse when I saw him an hour ago; there was a drawn look about his face I did not like. He is a splendid fellow; nothing could have been kinder than he has been to me. I wish I could change places with him."

The Doctor grunted. "Well, as none of us may see Allahabad, Bathurst, you need not trouble yourself on that score. I wonder what has become of your friend the conjurer. I thought he might have been in to see you this afternoon."

"I did not expect him," Bathurst said; "I expect he went as far as he dared in what he said at the Durbar today. Probably he is doing all he can to keep matters quiet. Of course he may have gone down to Cawnpore to see Nana Sahib, but I should think it more probable that he would remain here until he knows we are safe on board the boats."

"Ah, here is Wilson," said the Doctor; "he is a fine young fellow, and I am very glad he has gone through it safely."

"So am I," Bathurst said warmly; "here we are, Wilson."

"I thought I would find you both smoking here," Wilson said, as he seated himself; "it is awfully hot below, and the ladies are all at work picking out the things they are going to take with them and packing them, and as I could not be of any use at that, I thought I would come up for a little fresh air, if one can call it fresh; but, in fact, I would rather sit over an open drain, for the stench is horrible. How quiet everything seems tonight! After crouching here for the last three weeks listening to the boom of their cannon and the rush of their balls overhead, or the crash as they hit something, it seems quite unnatural; one can't help thinking that something is going to happen. I don't believe I shall be able to sleep a wink tonight; while generally, in spite of the row, it has been as much as I could do to keep my eyes open. I suppose I shall get accustomed to it in time. At present it seems too unnatural to enjoy it."

"You had better get a good night's sleep, if you can, Wilson," the Doctor said. "There won't be much sleep for us in the boats till we see the walls of Allahabad."

"I suppose not, Doctor. I expect we shall be horribly cramped up. I long to be there. I hope to get attached to one of the regiments coming up, so as to help in giving the thrashing to these scoundrels that they deserve. I would give a year's pay to get that villain, Nana Sahib, within reach of my sword. It is awful to think of the news you

brought in, Bathurst, and that there are hundreds of women and children in his power now. What a day it will be when we march into Cawnpore!"

"Don't count your chickens too soon, Wilson," the Doctor said, "The time I am looking forward to is when we shall have safely passed Cawnpore on our way down; that is quite enough for me to hope for at present."

"Yes, I was thinking of that myself," Wilson replied. "If the Nana could not be bound by the oath he had taken himself, he is not likely to respect the agreement made here."

"We must pass the place at night," Bathurst said, "and trust to not being seen. Even if they do make us out, we shan't be under fire long unless they follow us down the bank; but if the night is dark, they may not make us out at all. Fortunately there is no moon, and boats are not very large marks even by daylight, and at night it would only be a chance shot that would hit us."

"Yes, we should be as difficult to hit as a tiger," the Doctor put in.

Wilson laughed.

"I have gained a lot of experience since then, Doctor. What ages that seems back! Years almost."

"It does indeed," the Doctor agreed; "we count time by incidents and not by days. Well, I think I shall turn in.. Are you coming, Bathurst?"

"No, I could not sleep," Bathurst said; "I shall watch till morning. I feel sure it is all safe, but the mutineers might attempt something."

The night, however, passed off quietly, and soon after daybreak eight bullock carts were seen approaching, with a strong body of Oude men. Half an hour later the luggage was packed, and the sick and wounded laid on straw in the wagons. Several of the ladies took their places with them, but Mrs. Doolan, Isobel, and Mary Hunter said they would walk for a while. It had been arranged that the men might carry out their arms with them, and each of the ten able to walk took their rifles, while all, even the women, had pistols about them. Just as they were ready, Por Sing and several of the Zemindars rode up on horseback.

"We shall see you to the boats," he said. "Have you taken provisions for your voyage? It would be better not to stop to buy anything on the way."

This precaution had been taken, and as soon as all was ready they set out, guarded by four hundred Oude matchlock men. The Sepoys had gathered near the house, and as soon as they left it there was a rush made to secure the plunder.

"I should have liked to have emptied the contents of some of my bottles into the wine," the Doctor growled; "it would not have been strictly professional, perhaps, but it would have been a good action."

"I am sure you would not have given them poison, Doctor," Wilson laughed; "but a reasonable dose of ipecacuanha might hardly have gone against your conscience."

"My conscience has nothing to do with it," the Doctor said. "These fellows came from Cawnpore, and I have no doubt took part in the massacre there. My conscience wouldn't have troubled me if I could have poisoned the whole of the scoundrels, or put a slow match in the magazine and blown them all into the air, but under the

present conditions it would hardly have been politic, as one couldn't be sure of annihilating the whole of them. Well, Miss Hannay, what are you thinking of?"

"I am thinking that my uncle looks worse this morning, Doctor; does it not strike you so too?"

"We must hope that the fresh air will do him good. One could not expect anyone to get better in that place; it was enough to kill a healthy man, to say nothing of a sick one."

Isobel was walking by the side of the cart in which her uncle was lying, and it was not long before she took her place beside him.

The Doctor shook his head.

"Can you do nothing, Doctor?" Bathurst said, in a low tone.

"Nothing; he is weaker this morning, still the change of air may help him, and he may have strength to fight through; the wound itself is a serious one, but he would under other circumstances have got over it. As it is, I think his chance a very poor one, though I would not say as much to her."

After three hours' travel they reached the river. Here two large native boats were lying by the bank. The baggage and sick were soon placed on board, and the Europeans with the native servants were then divided between them, and the Rajah's son and six of the retainers took their places in one of the boats. The Doctor and Captain Doolan had settled how the party should be divided. The Major and the other sick men were all placed in one boat, and in this were the Doctor, Bathurst, and four civilians, with Isobel Hannay, Mrs. Hunter, and her daughter. Captain Doolan, his wife, Mrs. Rintoul, and the other three ladies, with the six children who had alone survived, and the rest of the party, were in the other boat.

Por Sing and his companions were thanked heartily for the protection they had given, and Bathurst handed them a document which had been signed by all the party, testifying to the service they had rendered.

"If we don't get down to Allahabad," Bathurst said, as he handed it to him, "this will insure you good treatment when the British troops come up. If we get there, we will represent your conduct in such a light that I think I can promise you that the part you took in the siege will be forgiven."

Then the boats pushed off and started on their way down the stream.

The distance by water to Cawnpore was over forty miles. It was already eleven o'clock, and slow progress only could be made with the heavy boats, but it was thought that they would be able to pass the town before daylight began to break next morning, and they therefore pushed on as rapidly as they could, the boatmen being encouraged to use their utmost efforts by the promise of a large reward upon their arrival at Allahabad.

There was but little talk in the boats. Now that the strain was over, all felt its effects severely. The Doctor attended to his patients; Isobel sat by the side of her uncle, giving him some broth that they had brought with them, from time to time, or moistening his lips with weak brandy and water. He spoke only occasionally.

"I don't much think I shall get down to Allahabad, Isobel," he said. "If I don't, go down to Calcutta, and go straight to Jamieson and Son; they are my agents, and they will supply you with money to take you home; they have a copy of my will; my agents in London have another copy. I had two made in case of accident."

"Oh, uncle, you will get better now you are out of that terrible place."

"I am afraid it is too late, my dear, though I should like to live for your sake. But I think I see happiness before you, if you choose to take it; he is a noble fellow, Isobel, in spite of that unfortunate weakness."

Isobel made no answer, but a slight pressure of the hand she was holding showed that she understood what he meant. It was no use to tell her uncle that she felt that what might have been was over now. Bathurst had chatted with her several times the evening before and during the march that morning, but she felt the difference between his tone and that in which he had addressed her in the old times before the troubles began. It was a subtle difference that she could hardly have explained even to herself, but she knew that it was as a friend, and as a friend only, that he would treat her in the future, and that the past was a closed book, which he was determined not to reopen.

Bathurst talked to Mrs. Hunter and her daughter, both of whom were mere shadows, worn out with grief, anxiety, and watching. At times he went forward to talk to the young noble, who had taken his seat there. Both boats had been arched in with a canopy of boughs to serve alike as a protection from the sun and to screen those within from the sight of natives in boats or on the banks.

"You don't look yourself, Bathurst," the Doctor said to him late in the afternoon. "Everything seems going on well. No boats have passed us, and the boatmen all say that we shall pass Cawnpore about one o'clock, at the rate at which we are going."

"I feel nervous, Doctor; more anxious than I have been ever since this began. There is an apprehension of danger weighing over me that I can't account for. As you say, everything seems going on well, and yet I feel that it is not so. I am afraid I am getting superstitious, but I feel as if Rujub knows of some danger impending, and that he is somehow conveying that impression to me. I know that there is nothing to be done, and that we are doing the only thing that we can do, unless we were to land and try and make our way down on foot, which would be sheer madness. That the man can in some way impress my mind at a distance is evident from that summons he gave me to meet him at the ruins of my bungalow, but I do not feel the same clear distinct perception of his wishes now as I did then. Perhaps he himself is not aware of the particulars of the danger that threatens, or, knowing them, he can see no way of escape out of them. It may be that at night, when everything is quiet, one's mind is more open to such impressions than it is when we are surrounded by other people and have other things to think of, but I feel an actual consciousness of danger."

"I don't think there can be any danger until we get down near Cawnpore. They may possibly be on the lookout for us there, and may even have boats out on the stream. It is possible that the Sepoys may have sent down word yesterday afternoon to Nana Sahib that we had surrendered, and should be starting by boat this morning, but I don't think there can be any danger till we get there. Should we meet native boats and be stopped, Por Sing's son will be able to induce them to let us pass. Certainly none of the villagers about here would be likely to disobey him. Once beyond Cawnpore, I

believe that he would have sufficient influence, speaking, as he does, in the name, not only of his father, but of other powerful landowners, to induce any of these Oude people to let us pass. No, I regard Cawnpore as our one danger, and I believe it to be a very real one. I have been thinking, indeed, that it would be a good thing when we get within a couple of miles of the place for all who are able to walk, to land on the opposite bank, and make their way along past Cawnpore, and take to the boats again a mile below the town."

"That would be an excellent plan, Doctor; but if the boats were stopped and they found the sick, they would kill them to a certainty. I don't think we could leave them. I am quite sure Miss Hannay would not leave her uncle."

"I think we might get over even that, Bathurst. There are only the Major and the other two men, and Mrs. Forsyth and three children, too ill to walk. There are eight of the native servants, ourselves, and the young Rajah's retainers. We ought to have no difficulty in carrying the wounded. As to the luggage, that must be sacrificed, so that the boatmen can go down with empty benches. It must be pitched overboard. The loss would be of no real consequence; everyone could manage with what they have on until we get to Allahabad. There would be no difficulty in getting what we require there."

"I think the plan is an excellent one, Doctor. I will ask the young chief if his men will help us to carry the sick. If he says yes, we will go alongside the other boat and explain our plan to Doolan."

The young Rajah at once assented, and the boat being rowed up to the other, the plan was explained and approved of. No objection was raised by anyone, even to the proposal for getting rid of all the luggage; and as soon as the matter was arranged, a general disposition towards cheerfulness was manifested. Everyone had felt that the danger of passing Cawnpore would be immense, and this plan for avoiding it seemed to lift a load from their minds.

It was settled they should land at some spot where the river was bordered by bushes and young trees; that stout poles should be cut, and blankets fastened between them, so as to form stretchers on which the sick could be carried.

As far as possible the boats were kept on the left side of the river, but at times shallows rendered it necessary to keep over by the right bank. Whenever they were near the shore, silence was observed, lest the foreign tongue should be noticed by anyone near the bank.

Night fell, and they still continued their course. An hour after sunset they were rowing near the right bank—the Major had fallen into a sort of doze, and Isobel was sitting next to Bathurst, and they were talking in low tones together—when suddenly there was a hail from the shore, not fifty yards away.

"What boats are those?"

"Fishing boats going down the river," one of the boatmen answered.

"Row alongside, we must examine you."

There was a moment's pause, and then the Doctor said in the native language, "Row on, men," and the oars of both boats again dipped into the water.

“We are pressed for time,” the young Zemindar shouted, and then, dropping his voice, urged the men to row at the top of their speed.

“Stop, or we fire,” came from the shore.

No answer was returned from the boats; they were now nearly opposite the speaker. Then came the word—“Fire.” Six cannon loaded with grape were discharged, and a crackle of musketry at the same moment broke out. The shot tore through the boats, killing and disabling many, and bringing down the arbor of boughs upon them.

A terrible cry arose, and all was confusion. Most of the rowers were killed, and the boats drifted helplessly amid the storm of rifle bullets.

As the cannon flashed out and the grape swept the boats Bathurst, with a sharp cry, sprang to his feet, and leaped overboard, as did several others from both boats. Diving, he kept under water for some distance, and then swam desperately till he reached shallow water on the other side of the river, and then fell head foremost on the sand. Eight or ten others also gained the shore in a body, and were running towards the bank, when the guns were again fired, and all but three were swept away by the iron hail. A few straggling musket shots were fired, then orders were shouted, and the splashing of an oar was heard, as one of the native boatmen rowed one of the two boats toward the shore. Bathurst rose to his feet and ran, stumbling like a drunken man, towards the bushes, and just as he reached them, fell heavily forward, and lay there insensible. Three men came out from the jungle and dragged him in. As they did so loud screams arose from the other bank, then half a dozen muskets were fired, and all was quiet.

It was not for a quarter of an hour that Bathurst was conscious of what was going on around him. Someone was rubbing his chest and hands.

“Who is it?” he asked.

“Oh, it is you, Bathurst!” he heard Wilson's voice exclaim. “I thought it was you, but it is so dark now we are off that white sand that I could not see. Where are you hit?”

“I don't know,” Bathurst said. “I felt a sort of shock as I got out of the water, but I don't know that I am hurt at all.”

“Oh, you must be hit somewhere. Try and move your arms and legs.”

Bathurst moved.

“No, I don't think I am hit; if I am, it is on the head. I feel something warm round the back of my neck.”

“By Jove, yes!” Wilson said; “here is where it is; there is a cut all along the top of your head; the bullet seems to have hit you at the back, and gone right along over the top. It can't have gone in, or else you would not be able to talk.”

“Help me up,” Bathurst said, and he was soon on his feet. He felt giddy and confused. “Who have you with you?” he asked.

“Two natives. I think one is the young chief, and the other is one of his followers.”

Bathurst spoke to them in their native language, and found that Wilson was not mistaken. As soon as he found that he was understood, the young chief poured out a volley of curses upon those who had attacked them.

Bathurst stopped him. “We shall have time for that afterwards, Murad,” he said; “the first thing is to see what had best be done. What has happened since I landed, Wilson?”

“Our boat was pretty nearly cut in two,” Wilson said, “and was sinking when I jumped over; the other boat has been rowed ashore.”

“What did you hear, Wilson?”

“I heard the women scream,” Wilson said reluctantly, “and five or six shots were fired. There has been no sound since then.”

Bathurst stood silent for a minute.

“I do not think they will have killed the women,” he said; “they did not do so at Cawnpore. They will take them there. No doubt they killed the men. Let me think for a moment. Now,” he said after a long pause, “we must be doing. Murad, your father and friends have given their word for the safety of those you took prisoners; that they have been massacred is no fault of your father or of you. This gentleman and myself are the only ones saved, as far as we know. Are you sure that none others came ashore?”

“The others were all killed, we alone remaining,” Murad said. “I will go back to my father, and he will go to Cawnpore and demand vengeance.”

“You can do that afterwards, Murad; the first thing is to fulfill your promise, and I charge you to take this sahib in safety down to Allahabad. You must push on at once, for they may be sending out from Cawnpore at daylight to search the bushes here to see if any have escaped. You must go on with him tonight as far as you can, and in the morning enter some village, buy native clothes, and disguise him, and then journey on to Allahabad.”

“I will do that,” the young Rajah said; “but what about yourself?”

“I shall go into Cawnpore and try to rescue any they may have taken. I have a native cloth round me under my other clothes, as I thought it might be necessary for me to land before we got to Cawnpore to see if danger threatened us. So I have everything I want for a disguise about me.”

“What are you saying, Bathurst?” Wilson asked.

“I am arranging for Murad and his follower to take you down to Allahabad, Wilson. I shall stop at Cawnpore.”

“Stop at Cawnpore! Are you mad, Bathurst?”

“No, I am not mad. I shall stop to see if any of the ladies have been taken prisoners, and if so, try to rescue them. Rujub, the juggler, is there, and I am confident he will help me.”

“But if you can stay, I can, Bathurst. If Miss Hannay has been made prisoner, I would willingly be killed to rescue her.”

“I know you would, Wilson, but you would be killed without being able to rescue her; and as I should share your fate, you would render her rescue impossible. I can speak the native language perfectly, and know native ways. I can move about among them without fear of exciting their suspicion. If you were with me this would be impossible; the first time you were addressed by a native you would be detected; your

presence would add to my difficulties a hundredfold. It is not now a question of fighting. Were it only that, I should be delighted to have you with me. As it is, the thing is impossible. If anything is done, I must do it alone. If I ever reach Miss Hannay, she shall know that you were ready to run all risks to save her. No, no, you must go on to Allahabad, and if you cannot save her now, you will be with the force that will save her, if I should fail to do so, and which will avenge us both if it should arrive too late to rescue her. Now I must get you to bandage my head, for I feel faint with loss of blood. I will take off my shirt and tear it in strips. I have got a native disguise next to the skin. We may as well leave my clothes behind me here."

As soon as Wilson, with the assistance of Murad, had bandaged the wound, the party struck off from the river, and after four hours' walking came down upon it again two miles below Cawnpore. Here Bathurst said he would stop, stain his skin, and complete his disguise.

"I hate leaving you," Wilson said, in a broken voice. "There are only you and I left of all our party at Deennugghur. It is awful to think they have all gone—the good old chief, the Doctor, and Richards, and the ladies. There are only we two left. It does seem such a dirty, cowardly thing for me to be making off and leaving you here alone."

"It is not cowardly, Wilson, for I know you would willingly stay if you could be of the slightest use; but, as, on the contrary, you would only add to the danger, it must be as I have arranged. Goodby, lad; don't stay; it has to be done. God bless you! Goodby, Murad. Tell your father when you see him that I know no shadow of broken faith rests on him."

So saying, he turned and went into a clump of bushes, while Wilson, too overpowered to speak, started on his way down country with the two natives.

CHAPTER XIX.

Now alone, Bathurst threw himself down among the bushes in an attitude of utter depression.

"Why wasn't I killed with the others?" he groaned. "Why was I not killed when I sat there by her side?"

So he lay for an hour, and then slowly rose and looked round. There was a faint light in the sky.

"It will be light in another hour," he said to himself, and he again sat down. Suddenly he started. Had someone spoken, or had he fancied it?

"Wait till I come."

He seemed to hear the words plainly, just as he had heard Rujub's summons before.

"That's it; it is Rujub. How is it that he can make me hear in this way? I am sure it was his voice. Anyhow, I will wait. It shows he is thinking of me, and I am sure he will help me. I know well enough I could do nothing by myself."

Bathurst assumed with unquestioning faith that Isobel Hannay was alive. He had no reason for his confidence. That first shower of grape might have killed her as it killed others, but he would not admit the doubt in his mind. Wilson's description of what had happened while he was insensible was one of the grounds of this confidence.

He had heard women scream. Mrs. Hunter and her daughter were the only other women in the boat. Isobel would not have screamed had those muskets been pointed at her, nor did he think the others would have done so. They screamed when they saw the natives about to murder those who were with them. The three women were sitting together, and if one had fallen by the grape shot all would probably have been killed. He felt confident, therefore, that she had escaped; he believed he would have known it had she been killed.

"If I can be influenced by this juggler, surely I should have felt it had Isobel died," he argued, and was satisfied that she was still alive.

What, however, more than anything else gave him hope was the picture on the smoke. "Everything else has come true," he said to himself; "why should not that? Wilson spoke of the Doctor as dead. I will not believe it; for if he is dead, the picture is false. Why should that thing of all others have been shown to me unless it had been true? What seemed impossible to me—that I should be fighting like a brave man—has been verified. Why should not this? I should have laughed at such superstition six months ago; now I cling to it as my one ground for hope. Well, I will wait if I have to stay here until tomorrow night."

Noiselessly he moved about in the little wood, going to the edge and looking out, pacing to and fro with quick steps, his face set in a frown, occasionally muttering to himself. He was in a fever of impatience. He longed to be doing something, even if that something led to his detention and death. He said to himself that he should not care so that Isobel Hannay did but know that he had died in trying to rescue her.

The sun rose, and he saw the peasants in the fields, and caught the note of a bugle sounding from the lines at Cawnpore. At last—it had seemed to him an age, but the sun had been up only an hour—he saw a figure coming along the river bank. As it approached he told himself that it was the juggler; if so, he had laid aside the garments in which he last saw him, and was now attired as when they first met. When he saw him turn off from the river bank and advance straight towards the wood, he had no doubt that it was the man he expected.

"Thanks be to the holy ones that you have escaped, sahib," Rujub said, as soon as he came within speaking distance of Bathurst. "I was in an agony last night. I was with you in thought, and saw the boats approaching the ambuscade. I saw you leap over and swim to shore. I saw you fall, and I cried out. For a moment I thought you were killed. Then I saw you go on and fall again, and saw your friends carry you in. I watched you recover and come on here, and then I willed it that you should wait here till I came for you. I have brought you a disguise, for I did not know that you had one with you. But, first of all, sit down and let me dress your wound afresh. I have brought all that is necessary for it."

"You are a true fried, Rujub. I relied upon you for aid; do you know why I waited here instead of going down with the others?"

"I know, sahib. I can tell your thoughts as easily when you are away from me as I can when we are together."

"Can you do this with all people?"

"No, my lord; to be able to read another's thoughts it is necessary there should be a mystic relation established between them. As I walked beside your horse when you carried my daughter before you after saving her life, I felt that this relation had commenced, and that henceforward our fates were connected. It was necessary that you should have confidence in me, and it was for that reason that I showed you some of the feats that we rarely exhibit, and proved to you that I possessed powers with which you were unacquainted. But in thought reading my daughter has greater powers than I have, and it was she who last night followed you on your journey, sitting with her hand in mine, so that my mind followed hers."

"Do you know all that happened last night, Rujub?" Bathurst said, summoning up courage to ask the question that had been on his lips from the first.

"I only know, my lord, that the party was destroyed, save three white women, who were brought in just as the sun rose this morning. One was the lady behind whose chair you stood the night I performed at Deennugghur, the lady about whom you are thinking. I do not know the other two; one was getting on in life, the other was a young one."

The relief was so great that Bathurst turned away, unable for a while to continue the conversation. When he resumed the talk, he asked, "Did you see them yourself, Rujub?"

"I saw them, sahib; they were brought in on a gun carriage."

"How did they look, Rujub?"

"The old one looked calm and sad. She did not seem to hear the shouts of the budmashes as they passed along. She held the young one close to her. That one

seemed worn out with grief and terror. Your memsahib sat upright; she was very pale and changed from the time I saw her that evening, but she held her head high, and looked almost scornfully at the men who shook their fists and cried at her."

"And they put them with the other women that they have taken prisoners?"

Rujub hesitated.

"They have put the other two there, sahib, but her they took to Bithoor."

Bathurst started, and an exclamation of horror and rage burst from him.

"To the Rajah's!" he exclaimed. "To that scoundrel! Come, let us go. Why are we staying here?"

"We can do nothing for the moment. Before I started I sent off my daughter to Bithoor; she knows many there, and will find out what is being done and bring us word, for I dare not show myself there. The Rajah is furious with me because I did not support the Sepoys, and suffered conditions to be made with your people, but now that all has turned out as he wished, I will in a short time present myself before him again, but for the moment it was better that my daughter should go, as I had to come to you. But first you had better put on the disguise I have brought you. You are too big and strong to pass without notice in that peasant's dress. The one I have brought you is such as is worn by the rough people; the budmashes of Cawnpore. I can procure others afterwards when we see what had best be done. It will be easy enough to enter Bithoor, for all is confusion there, and men come and go as they choose, but it will be well nigh impossible for you to penetrate where the memsahib will be placed. Even for me, known as I am to all the Rajah's officers, it would be impossible to do so; it is my daughter in whom we shall have to trust."

Bathurst rapidly put on the clothes that Rujub had brought with him, and thrust a sword, two daggers, and a brace of long barreled pistols into the sash round his waist.

"Your color is not dark enough, sahib. I have brought dye with me; but first I must dress the wound on your head, and bandage it more neatly, so that the blood stained swathings will not show below the folds of your turban."

Bathurst submitted himself impatiently to Rujub's hands. The latter cut off all the hair that would show under the turban, dyed the skin the same color as the other parts, and finally, after darkening his eyebrows, eyelashes, and mustache, pronounced that he would pass anywhere without attracting attention. Then they started at a quick walk along the river, crossed by the ferryboat to Cawnpore, and made their way to a quiet street in the native town.

"This is my house for the present," Rujub said, producing a key and unlocking a door. He shouted as he closed the door behind him, and an old woman appeared.

"Is the meal prepared?" he asked.

"It is ready," she said.

"That is right. Tell Rhuman to put the pony into the cart."

He then led the way into a comfortably furnished apartment where a meal was laid.

"Eat, my lord," he said; "you need it, and will require your strength."

Bathurst, who, during his walk, had felt the effects of the loss of blood and anxiety, at once seated himself at the table and ate, at first languidly, but as appetite came,

more heartily, and felt still more benefited by a bottle of excellent wine Rujub had placed beside him. The latter returned to the room just as he had finished. He was now attired as he had been when Bathurst last met him at Deennugghur.

"I feel another man, Rujub, and fit for anything."

"The cart is ready," Rujub said. "I have already taken my meal; we do not eat meat, and live entirely on vegetables. Meat clouds the senses, and simple food, and little of it, is necessary for those who would enter the inner brotherhood."

At the door a small native cart was standing with a pony in the shafts.

"You will go with us, Rhuman," Rujub said, as he and Bathurst took their seats in the cart.

The boy squatted down at Rujub's feet, taking the reins and whip, and the pony started off at a brisk pace. Upon the way Rujub talked of various matters, of the reports of the force that was gathering at Allahabad, and the madness of the British in supposing that two or three thousand men could withstand the forces of the Nana.

"They would be eaten up," he said; "the troops will go out to meet them; they will never arrive within sight of Cawnpore."

As Bathurst saw that he was talking for the boy to hear, rather than to himself, he agreed loudly with all that he said, and boasted that even without the Nana's troops and the Sepoys, the people of Cawnpore could cut the English dogs to pieces.

The drive was not a long one, and the road was full of parties going to or returning from Bithoor—groups of Sepoy officers, parties of budmashes from Cawnpore, mounted messengers, landowners with their retainers, and others. Arriving within a quarter of a mile of the palace, Rujub ordered the boy to draw aside.

"Take the horse down that road," he said, "and wait there until we return. We may be some time. If we are not back by the time the sun sets, you will return home."

As they approached the palace Bathurst scanned every window, as if he hoped to see Isobel's face at one of them. Entering the garden, they avoided the terrace in front of the house, and sauntering through the groups of people who had gathered discussing the latest news, they took their seat in a secluded corner.

Bathurst thought of the last time he had been there, when there had been a fete given by the Rajah to the residents of Cawnpore, and contrasted the present with the past. Then the gardens were lighted up, and a crowd of officers and civilians with ladies in white dresses had strolled along the terrace to the sound of gay music, while their host moved about among them, courteous, pleasant, and smiling. Now the greater portion of the men were dead, the women were prisoners in the hands of the native who had professed such friendship for them.

"Tell me, Rujub," he said presently, "more about this force at Allahabad. What is its strength likely to be?"

"They say there is one British regiment of the line, one of the plumed regiments with bare legs, and one of the white Madras regiments; they have a few guns, a very few horsemen; that is all, while there are twenty thousand troops here. How can they hope to win?"

"You will see they will win," Bathurst said sternly. "They have often fought well, but they will fight now as they never fought before; every man will feel himself an avenger of the foul treachery and the brutal massacres that have been committed. Were it but one regiment that is coming up instead of three, I would back it against the blood stained wretches."

"They are fighting for freedom," Rujub said.

"They are fighting for nothing of the sort," Bathurst replied hotly; "they are fighting for they know not what—change of masters, for license to plunder, and because they are ignorant and have been led away. I doubt not that at present, confident as they may be of victory, most of them in their hearts regret what they have done. They have forfeited their pensions, they have thrown away the benefits of their years of service, they have been faithless to their salt, and false to their oaths. It is true that they know they are fighting with ropes round their necks, but even that won't avail against the discipline and the fury of our troops. I feel as certain, Rujub, that, in spite of the odds against them, the English will triumph, as if I saw their column marching into the town. I don't profess to see the future as you do, but I know enough to tell you that ere long that palace you can see through the trees will be leveled to the ground, that it is as assuredly doomed as if fire had already been applied to its gilded beams."

Rujub nodded. "I know the palace is doomed. While I have looked at it it has seemed hidden by a cloud of smoke, but I did not think it was the work of the British —I thought of an accident."

"The Rajah may fire it with his own hands," Bathurst said; "but if he does not, it will be done for him."

"I have not told you yet, sahib," Rujub said, changing the subject, "how it was that I could neither prevent the attack on the boats nor warn you that it was coming. I knew at Deennugghur that news had been sent of the surrender to the Nana. I remained till I knew you were safely in the boats, and then rode to Cawnpore. My daughter was at the house when I arrived, and told me that the Nana was furious with me, and that it would not be safe for me to go near the palace. Thus, although I feared that an attack was intended, I thought it would not be until the boats passed the town. It was late before I learnt that a battery of artillery and some infantry had set out that afternoon. Then I tried to warn you, but I felt that I failed. You were not in a mood when my mind could communicate itself to yours."

"I felt very uneasy and restless," Bathurst said, "but I had not the same feeling that you were speaking to me I had that night at Deennugghur; but even had I known of the danger, there would have been no avoiding it. Had we landed, we must have been overtaken, and it would have come to the same thing. Tell me, Rujub, had you any idea when I saw you at Deennugghur that if we were taken prisoners Miss Hannay was to be brought here instead of being placed with the other ladies?"

"Yes, I knew it, sahib; the orders he gave to the Sepoys were that every man was to be killed, and that the women and children were to be taken to Cawnpore, except Miss Hannay, who was to be carried here at once. The Rajah had noticed her more than once when she was at Cawnpore, and had made up his mind that she should go to his zenana."

“Why did you not tell me when you were at Deennugghur?”

“What would have been the use, sahib? I hoped to save you all; besides, it was not until we saw her taken past this morning that we knew that the Miss Hannay who was to be taken to Bithoor was the lady whom my daughter, when she saw her with you that night, said at once that you loved. But had we known it, what good would it have done to have told you of the Rajah's orders? You could not have done more than you have done. But now we know, we will aid you to save her.”

“How long will your daughter be before she comes? It is horrible waiting here.”

“You must have patience, sahib. It will be no easy work to get the lady away. There will be guards and women to look after her. A lady is not to be stolen out of a zenana as a young bird is taken from its nest.”

“It is all very well to say 'Be patient,'” Bathurst said, getting up and walking up and down with quick angry strides. “It is maddening to sit here doing nothing. If it were not that I had confidence in your power and will to aid me, I would go into the palace and stab Nana Sahib to the heart, though I were cut to pieces for it the moment afterwards.”

“That would do no good to the lady, sahib,” Rujub said calmly. “She would only be left without a friend, and the Nana's death might be the signal for the murder of every white prisoner. Ah, here comes my daughter.”

Rabda came up quickly, and stopped before Bathurst with her head bowed and her arms crossed in an attitude of humility. She was dressed in the attire worn by the principal servants in attendance upon the zenana of a Hindoo prince.

“Well, what news, Rabda?” Bathurst asked eagerly.

“The light of my lord's heart is sick. She bore up till she arrived here and was handed over to the women. Then her strength failed her, and she fainted. She recovered, but she is lying weak and exhausted with all that she has gone through and suffered.”

“Where is she now?”

“She is in the zenana, looking out into the women's court, that no men are ever allowed to enter.”

“Has the Rajah seen her?”

“No, sahib. He was told the state that she was in, and the chief lady of the zenana sent him word that for the present she must have quiet and rest, but that in two or three days she might be fit to see him.”

“That is something,” Bathurst said thankfully. “Now we shall have time to think of some scheme for getting her out.”

“You have been in the zenana yourself, Rabda?” Rujub asked.

“Yes, father; the mistress of the zenana saw me directly an attendant told her I was there. She has always been kind to me. I said that you were going on a journey, and asked her if I might stay with her and act as an attendant until you returned, and she at once assented. She asked if I should see you before you left, and when I said yes, she asked if you could not give her some spell that would turn the Rajah's thoughts from this white girl. She fears that if she should become first favorite in the zenana, she

might take things in her hands as English women do, and make all sorts of changes. I told her that, doubtless, the English girl would do this, and that I thought she was wise to ask your assistance."

"You are mad, Rabda," her father said angrily; "what have I to do with spells and love philters?"

"No, father, I knew well enough you would not believe in such things, but I thought in this way I might see the lady, and communicate with her."

"A very good idea, Rabda," Bathurst said. "Is there nothing you can do, Rujub, to make her odious to the Nana?"

"Nothing, sahib. I could act upon some people's minds, and make them think that the young lady was afflicted by some loathsome disease, but not with the Nana. I have many times tried to influence him, but without success: his mind is too deep for mine to master, and between us there is no sympathy. Could I be present with him and the girl I might do something—that is, if the powers that aid me would act against him; but this I do not think."

"Rujub," Bathurst said suddenly, "there must have been medical stores taken when the camp was captured—drugs and things of that sort. Can you find out who has become possessed of them?"

"I might find out, sahib. Doubtless the men who looted the camp will have sold the drugs to the native shops, for English drugs are highly prized. Are there medicines that can act as the mistress of the zenana wishes?"

"No; but there are drugs that when applied externally would give the appearance of a terrible disease. There are acids whose touch would burn and blister the skin, and turn a beautiful face into a dreadful mask."

"But would it recover its fairness, sahib?"

"The traces might last for a long time, even for life, if too much were used, but I am sure Miss Hannay would not hesitate for a moment on that account."

"But you, sahib—would you risk her being disfigured?"

"What does it matter to me?" Bathurst asked sternly. "Do you think love is skin deep, and that 'tis only for a fair complexion that we choose our wives? Find me the drugs, and let Rabda take them into her with a line from me. One of them you can certainly get, for it is used, I believe, by gold and silver smiths. It is nitric acid; the other is caustic potash, or, as it is sometimes labeled, lunar caustic. It is in little sticks; but if you find out anyone who has bought drugs or cases of medicines, I will go with you and pick them out."

"There will be no difficulty about finding out where the English drugs are. They are certain to be at one of the shops where the native doctors buy their medicines."

"Let us go at once, then," Bathurst said. "You can prepare some harmless drink, and Rabda will tell the mistress of the zenana it will bring out a disfiguring eruption. We can be back here again this evening. Will you be here, Rabda, at sunset, and wait until we come? You can tell the woman that you have seen your father, and that he will supply her with what she requires. Make some excuse, if you can, to see the prisoner. Say you are curious to see the white woman who has bewitched the Nana,

and if you get the opportunity whisper in her ear these words, 'Do not despair, friends are working for you.'"

Rabda repeated the English words several times over until she had them perfect; then she made her way back to the palace, while Bathurst and his companion proceeded at once to the spot where they had left their vehicle.

They had but little difficulty in finding what they required. Many of the shops displayed garments, weapons, jewelry, and other things, the plunder of the intrenchments of Cawnpore. Rujub entered several shops where drugs were sold, and finally one of the traders said, "I have a large black box full of drugs which I bought from a Sepoy for a rupee, but now that I have got it I do not know what to do with it. Some of the bottles doubtless contain poisons. I will sell it you for two rupees, which is the value of the box, which, as you see, is very strong and bound with iron. The contents I place no price upon."

"I will take it," Rujub said. "I know some of the English medicines, and may find a use for them."

He paid the money, called in a coolie, and bade him take up the chest and follow him, and they soon arrived at the juggler's house.

The box, which was a hospital medical chest, was filled with drugs of all kinds. Bathurst put a stick of caustic into a small vial, and half filled another, which had a glass stopper, with nitric acid, filled it up with water, and tried the effect of rubbing a few drops on his arm.

"That is strong enough for anything," he said, with a slight exclamation at the sharp pain. "And now give me a piece of paper and pen and ink."

Then sitting down he wrote:

"My Dear Miss Hannay: Rujub, the juggler, and I will do what we can to rescue you. We are powerless to effect anything as long as you remain where you are. The bearer, Rujub's daughter, will give you the bottles, one containing lunar caustic, the other nitric acid. The mistress of the zenana, who wants to get rid of you, as she fears you might obtain influence over the Nana, has asked the girl to obtain from her father a philter which will make you odious to him. The large bottle is perfectly harmless, and you can drink its contents without fear. The caustic is for applying to your lips; it will be painful, but I am sure you will not mind that, and the injury will be only of a temporary nature. I cannot promise as much for the nitric acid; pray apply it very carefully, merely moistening the glass stopper and applying it with that. I should use it principally round the lips. It will burn and blister the skin. The Nana will be told that you have a fever, which is causing a terrible and disfiguring eruption. I should apply it also to the neck and hands. Pray be very careful with the stuff; for, besides the application being exceedingly painful, the scars may possibly remain permanently. Keep the two small bottles carefully hidden, in order to renew the application if absolutely necessary. At any rate, this will give us time, and, from what I hear, our troops are likely to be here in another ten days' time. You will be, I know, glad to hear that Wilson has also escaped.

"Yours,

"R. Bathurst."

A large bottle was next filled with elder flower water. The trap was brought around, and they drove back to Bithoor. Rabda was punctual to her appointment.

"I have seen her," she said, "and have given her the message. I could see that she understood it, but as there were other women round, she made no sign. I told the mistress of the zenana that you had given me some magic words that I was to whisper to her to prepare the way for the philter, so she let me in without difficulty, and I was allowed to go close up to her and repeat your message. I put my hands on her before I did so, and I think she felt that it was the touch of a friend. She hushed up when I spoke to her. The mistress, who was standing close by, thought that this was a sign of the power of the words I had spoken to her. I did not stay more than a minute. I was afraid she might try to speak to me in your tongue, and that would have been dangerous."

"There are the bottles," Bathurst said; "this large one is for her to take, the other two and this note are to be given to her separately. You had better tell the woman that the philter must be given by your own hands, and that you must then watch alone by her side for half an hour. Say that after you leave her she will soon go off to sleep; and must then be left absolutely alone till daybreak tomorrow, and it will then be found that the philter has acted. She must at once tell the Nana that the lady is in a high fever, and has been seized with some terrible disease that has altogether disfigured her, and that he can see for himself the state she is in."

Rabda's whisper had given new life and hope to Isobel Hannay. Previous to that her fate had seemed to her to be sealed, and she had only prayed for death; the long strain of the siege had told upon her; the scene in the boat seemed a species of horrible nightmare, culminating in a number of Sepoys leaping on board the boat as it touched the bank, and bayoneting her uncle and all on board except herself, Mrs. Hunter, and her daughter, who were seized and carried ashore. Then followed a night of dull despairing pain, while she and her companions crouched together, with two Sepoys standing on guard over them, while the others, after lighting fires, talked and laughed long into the night over the success of their attack.

At daybreak they had been placed upon a limber and driven into Cawnpore. Her spirit had risen as they were assailed by insults and imprecations by the roughs of the town, and she had borne up bravely till, upon their arrival at the entrance to what she supposed was the prison, she was roughly dragged from the limber, placed in a close carriage, and driven off. In her despair she had endeavored to open the door in order to throw herself under the wheels, but a soldier stood on each step and prevented her from doing so.

Outside of the town she soon saw that she was on the road to Bithoor, and the fate for which she was reserved flashed upon her. She remembered now the oily compliments of Nana Sahib, and the unpleasant thrill she had felt when his eyes were fixed upon her; and had she possessed a weapon of any kind she would have put an end to her life. But her pistol had been taken from her when she landed, and in helpless despair she crouched in a corner of the carriage until they reached Bithoor.

As soon as the carriage stopped a cloth was thrown over her head. She was lifted out and carried into the palace, through long passages and up stairs; then those who carried her set her on her feet and retired. Other hands took her and led her forward

till the cloth was taken off her head, and she found herself surrounded, by women, who regarded her with glances of mixed curiosity and hostility. Then everything seemed to swim round, and she fainted.

When she recovered consciousness all strength seemed to have left her, and she lay in a sort of apathy for hours, taking listlessly the drink that was offered to her, but paying no attention to what was passing around, until there was a gentle pressure on her arm, the grasp tightening with a slight caressing motion that seemed to show sympathy; then came the English words softly whispered into her ear, while the hand again pressed her arm firmly, as if in warning.

It was with difficulty that she refrained from uttering an exclamation, and she felt the blood crimson her cheeks, but she mastered the impulse and lay perfectly quiet, glancing up into the face bent down close to hers—it was not familiar to her, and yet it seemed to her that she had seen it somewhere; another minute and it was gone.

But though to all appearances Isobel's attitude was unchanged, her mind was active now. Who could have sent her this message? Who could this native girl be who had spoken in English to her? Where had she seen the face?

Her thoughts traveled backwards, and she ran over in her mind all those with whom she had come in contact since her arrival in India; her servants and those of her acquaintances passed before her eyes. She had scarcely spoken to another native woman since she had landed. After thinking over all she had known in Cawnpore, she thought of Deennugghur. Whom had she met there?

Suddenly came the remembrance of the exhibition by the juggler, and she recalled the face and figure of his daughter, as, seated, upon the growing pole, she had gone up foot by foot in the light of the lamps and up into the darkness above. The mystery was solved; that was the face that had just leaned over her.

But how could she be interested in her fate? Then she remembered that this was the girl whom Bathurst had saved from the tiger. If they were interested in her, it must be through Bathurst. Could he too have survived the attack of the night before? She had thought of him, as of all of them, as dead, but possibly he might have escaped. Even during the long night's waiting, a captive to the Sepoys, the thought that he had instantly sprung from beside her and leaped overboard had been an added pang to all her misery. She had no after remembrance of him; perhaps he had swum to shore and got off in safety. In that case he must be lingering in Cawnpore, had learned what had become of her, and was trying to rescue her. It was to the juggler he would naturally have gone to obtain assistance. If so, he was risking his life now to save hers; and this was the man whom she despised as a coward.

But what could he do? At Bithoor, in the power of this treacherous Rajah, secure in the zenana, where no man save its master ever penetrated, how could he possibly help her? Yet the thought that he was trying to do so was a happy one, and the tears that flowed between her closed lids were not painful ones. She blamed herself now for having felt for a moment hurt at Bathurst's desertion of her. To have remained in the boat would have been certain death, while he could have been of no assistance to her or anyone else. That he should escape, then, if he could, now seemed to her a perfectly natural action; she hoped that some of the others had done the same, and that Bathurst was not working alone.

It did not occur to her that there could be any possibility of the scheme for her rescue succeeding; as to that she felt no more hopeful than before, but it seemed to take away the sense of utter loneliness that she before felt that someone should be interesting himself in her fate. Perhaps there would be more than a mere verbal message next time; how long would it be before she heard again? How long a respite had she before that wretch came to see her? Doubtless he had heard that she was ill. She would remain so. She would starve herself. Her weakness seemed to her her best protection.

As she lay apparently helpless upon the couch she watched the women move about the room. The girl who had spoken to her was not among them. The women were not unkind; they brought her cooling drinks, and tried to tempt her to eat something; but she shook her head as if utterly unable to do so, and after a time feigned to be asleep.

Darkness came on gradually; some lamps were lighted in the room. Not for a moment had she been left alone since she was brought in—never less than two females remaining with her.

Presently the woman who was evidently the chief of the establishment came in accompanied by a girl, whom Isobel recognized at once as the juggler's daughter. The latter brought with her a tray, on which were some cakes and a silver goblet. These she set down on an oak table by the couch. The girl then handed her the goblet, which, keeping up the appearance of extreme feebleness, she took languidly. She placed it to her lips, but at once took it away. It was not cool and refreshing like those she had tasted before, it had but little flavor, but had a faint odor, which struck her as not unfamiliar. It was a drug of some sort they wished her to drink.

She looked up in the girl's face. Rabda made a reassuring gesture, and said in a low whisper, as she bent forward, “Bathurst Sahib.”

This was sufficient; whatever it was it would do her no harm, and she raised the cup to her lips and emptied it. Then the elder woman said something to the other two, and they all left the room together, leaving her alone with Rabda.

The latter went to the door quietly and drew the hangings across it, then she returned to the couch, and from the folds of her dress produced two vials and a tiny note. Then, noiselessly, she placed a lamp on the table, and withdrew to a short distance while Isobel opened and read the note.

Twice she read it through, and then, laying it down, burst into tears of relief. Rabda came and knelt down beside the couch, and, taking one of her hands, pressed it to her lips. Isobel threw her arms round the girl's neck, drew her close to her, and kissed her warmly.—Rabda then drew a piece of paper and a pencil from her dress and handed them to her. She wrote:

“Thanks a thousand times, dear friend; I will follow your instructions. Please send me if you can some quick and deadly poison, that I may take in the last extremity. Do not fear that I will flinch from applying the things you have sent me. I would not hesitate to swallow them were there no other hope of escape. I rejoice so much to know that you have escaped from that terrible attack last night. Did Wilson alone get away? Do you know they murdered my uncle and all the others in the boat, except Mrs. Hunter and Mary? Pray do not run any risks to try and rescue me. I think that I

am safe now, and will make myself so hideous that if the wretch once sees me he will never want to see me again. As to death, I have no fear of it. If we do not meet again, God bless you.

"Yours most gratefully,

"Isobel."

Rabda concealed the note in her garment, and then motioned to Isobel that she should close her eyes and pretend to be asleep. Then she gently drew back the curtains and seated herself at a distance from the couch.

Half an hour later the mistress of the zenana came in. Rabda rose and put her finger to her lips and left the room, accompanied by the woman.

"She is asleep," she said; "do not be afraid, the potion will do its work. Leave her alone all night. When she wakes in the morning she will be wild with fever, and you need have no fear that the Rajah will seek to make her the queen of his zenana."

CHAPTER XX.

Prepared as the mistress of the zenana was to find a great change in the captive's appearance, she was startled when, soon after daybreak, she went in to see her. The lower part of her face was greatly swollen, her lips were covered with white blotches. There were great red scars round the mouth and on her forehead, and the skin seemed to have been completely eaten away. There were even larger and deeper marks on her neck and shoulders, which were partly uncovered, as if by her restless tossing. Her hands and arms were similarly marked. She took no notice of her entrance, but talked to herself as she tossed restlessly on the couch.

There was but little acting in this, for Isobel was suffering an agony of pain. She had used the acid much more freely than she had been instructed to do, determined that the disfigurement should be complete. All night she had been in a state of high fever, and had for a time been almost delirious. She was but slightly more easy now, and had difficulty in preventing herself from crying out from the torture she was suffering.

There was no tinge of pity in the face of the woman who looked at her, but a smile of satisfaction at the manner in which the potion had done its work.

"The Nana can see her now," she said to herself; "there will be no change in the arrangements here."

She at once sent out word that as soon as the Rajah was up he was to be told that she begged him to come at once.

An hour later he came to the door of the zenana.

"What is it, Poomba?" he asked; "nothing the matter with Miss Hannay, I hope?"

"I grieve to say, your highness, that she has been seized with some terrible disease. I know not what it is, for never did I see a woman so smitten. It must be an illness contracted from confinement and bad air during the siege, some illness that the Europeans have, for never did I see aught like it. She is in a high state of fever, and her face is in a terrible state. It must be a sort of plague."

"You have been poisoning her," the Nana said roughly; "if so, beware, for your life shall be the forfeit. I will see her for myself."

"She has had no poison since she came here, though I know not but what she may have had poison about her, and may have taken it after she was captured."

"Take me to her," the Rajah said. "I will see for myself."

"It may be a contagious disease, your highness. It were best that you should not go near her."

The Rajah made an impatient gesture, and the woman, without another word, led him into the room where Isobel was lying. The Nana was prepared for some disfigurement of the face he had so admired, but he shrank back from the reality.

"It is horrible," he said, in a low voice. "What have you been doing to her?" he asked, turning furiously to the woman.

"I have done nothing, your highness. All day yesterday she lay in a torpor, as I told you in the evening when you inquired about her, and I thought then she was going to be ill. I have watched her all night. She has been restless and disturbed, but I thought it better not to go nearer lest I should wake her, and it was not until this morning, when the day broke, that I perceived this terrible change. What shall we do with her? If the disease is contagious, everyone in the palace may catch it."

"Have a closed palanquin brought to the door, wrap her up, and have her carried down to the Subada Ke Kothee. Let her give it to the women there. Burn all the things in this room, and everything that has been worn by those who have entered it. I will inquire into this matter later on, and should I find that there has been any foul play, those concerned in it shall wish they had never been born."

As soon as he had left the woman called Rabda in.

"All has gone well," she said; "your father's philter is powerful indeed. Tell him whenever he needs any service I can render he has but to ask it. Look at her; did you ever see one so disfigured? The Rajah has seen her, and is filled with loathing. She is to be sent to the Subada Ke Kothee. Are you sure that the malady is not contagious? I have persuaded the Rajah that it is; that is why he is sending her away."

"I am sure it is not," Rabda said; "it is the result of the drugs. It is terrible to see her; give me some cooling ointment."

"What does it matter about her now that she is harmless?" Poomba said scornfully. Being, however, desirous of pleasing Rabda, she went away and brought a pot of ointment, which the girl applied to the sores, the tears falling down her cheeks as she did so.

The salve at once afforded relief from the burning pain, and Isobel gratefully took a drink prepared from fresh limes.

She had only removed her gown when she had lain down, having done this in order that it should not be burned by the acid, and that her neck and shoulders might be seen, and the belief induced that this strange eruption was all over her. Rabda made signs for her to put it on again, and pointing in the direction of Cawnpore, repeated the word several times, and Isobel felt with a thrill of intense thankfulness that the stratagem had succeeded, and that she was to be sent away at once, probably to the place where the other prisoners were confined. Presently the woman returned.

"Rabda, you had best go with her. It were well that you should leave for the present. The Rajah is suspicious; he may come back again and ask questions; and as he knows you by sight, and as you told me your father was in disfavor with him at present, he might suspect that you were in some way concerned in the matter."

"I will go," Rabda said. "I am sorry she has suffered so much. I did not think the potion would have been so strong. Give me a netful of fresh limes and some cooling lotion, that I may leave with her there."

In a few minutes a woman came up to say that the palanquin was in readiness at the gate of the zenana garden. A large cushion was taken off a divan, and Isobel was laid upon it and covered with a light shawl. Six of the female attendants lifted it and

carried it downstairs, accompanied by Rabda and the mistress off the zenana, both closely veiled. Outside the gate was a large palanquin, with its bearers and four soldiers and an officer. The cushion was lifted and placed in the palanquin, and Rabda also took her place there.

"Then you will not return today," the woman said to her, in a voice loud enough to be heard by the officers "You will remain with her for a time, and afterwards go to see your friends in the town. I will send for you when I hear that you wish to return."

The curtains of the palanquin were drawn down; the bearers lifted it and started at once for Cawnpore.

On arrival at the large building known as the Subada Ke Kothee the gates were opened at once at the order of the Nana's officer, and the palanquin was carried across the courtyard to the door of the building which was used as a prison for the white women and children. It was taken into the great arched room and set down. Rabda stepped out, and the bearers lifted out the cushion upon which Isobel lay.

"You will not be wanted any more," Rabda said, in a tone of authority. "You can return to Bithoor at once!"

As the door closed behind them several of the ladies came round to see this fresh arrival. Rabda looked round till her eye fell upon Mrs. Hunter, who was occupied in trying to hush a fractious child. She put her hand on her arm and motioned to her to come along. Surprised at the summons, Mrs. Hunter followed her. When they reached the cushion Rabda lifted the shawl from Isobel's face. For a moment Mrs. Hunter failed to recognize her, but as Isobel opened her eyes and held out her hand she knew her, and with a cry of pity she dropped on her knees beside her.

"My poor child, what have these fiends been doing to you?"

"They have been doing nothing, Mrs. Hunter," she whispered. "I am not so bad as I seem, though I have suffered a great deal of pain. I was carried away to Bithoor, to Nana Sahib's zenana, and I have burnt my face with caustic and acid; they think I have some terrible disease, and have sent me here."

"Bravely done, girl! Bravely and nobly done! We had best keep the secret to ourselves; there are constantly men looking through the bars of the window, and some of them may understand English."

Then she looked up and said, "It is Miss Hannay, she was captured with us in the boats; please help me to carry her over to the wall there, and my daughter and I will nurse her; it looks as if she had been terribly burnt, somehow."

Many of the ladies had met Isobel in the happy days before the troubles began, and great was the pity expressed at her appearance. She was carried to the side of the wall, where Mary and Mrs. Hunter at once made her as comfortable as they could. Rabda, who had now thrown back her veil, produced from under her dress the net containing some fifty small limes, and handed to Mrs. Hunter the pot of ointment and the lotion.

"She has saved me," Isobel said; "it is the daughter of the juggler who performed at your house, Mrs. Hunter; do thank her for me, and tell her how grateful I am."

Mrs. Hunter took Rabda's hand, and in her own language thanked her for her kindness to Isobel.

"I have done as I was told," Rabda said simply; "the Sahib Bathurst saved my life, and when he said the lady must be rescued from the hands of the Nana, it was only right that I should do so, even at the risk of my life."

"So Bathurst has escaped," Mrs. Hunter said, turning to Isobel. "I am glad of that, dear; I was afraid that all were gone."

"Yes, I had a note from him; it is by his means that I got away from Bithoor. He sent me the caustic and acid to burn my face. He told me Mr. Wilson had also escaped, and perhaps some others may have got away, though he did not seem to know it."

"But surely there could be no occasion to burn yourself as badly as you have done, Isobel."

"I am afraid I did put on too much acid," she said. "I was so afraid of not burning it enough; but it does not matter, it does not pain me nearly so much since I put on that ointment; it will soon get well."

Mrs. Hunter shook her head regretfully.

"I am afraid it will leave marks for a long time."

"That is of no consequence at all, Mrs. Hunter; I am so thankful at being here with you, that I should mind very little if I knew that it was always to be as bad as it is now. What does it matter?"

"It does not matter at all at present, my dear; but if you ever get out of this horrible place, some day you may think differently about it."

"I must go now," Rabda said. "Has the lady any message to send to the sahib?" and she again handed a paper and pencil to Isobel.

The girl took them, hesitating a little before writing:

"Thank God you have saved me. Some day, perhaps, I may be able to tell you how grateful I am; but, if not, you will know that if the worst happens to us, I shall die blessing you for what you have done for me. Pray do not linger longer in Cawnpore. You may be discovered, and if I am spared, it would embitter my life always to know that it had cost you yours. God bless you always.

"Yours gratefully,

"Isobel."

She folded up the paper and gave it to Rabda, who took her hand and kissed it; and then, drawing her veil again over her face, went to the door, which stood open for the moment.

Some men were bringing in a large cauldron of rice. The sentries offered no opposition to her passing out, as the officer with the palanquin had told them that a lady of the Rajah's zenana would leave shortly. A similar message had been given to the officer at the main gate, who, however, requested to see her hand and arm to satisfy him that all was right. This was sufficient to assure him that it was not a white woman passing out in disguise, and Rabda at once proceeded to her father's house.

As she expected, he and Bathurst were away, for she had arranged to meet them at eight o'clock in the garden. They did not return until eleven, having waited two hours for her, and returning home in much anxiety at her non-appearance.

"What has happened? Why did you not meet us, Rabda?" her father exclaimed, as he entered.

Rabda rapidly repeated the incidents that had happened since she had parted from him the evening before, and handed to Bathurst the two notes she had received from Isobel.

"Then she is in safety with the others!" he exclaimed in delight. "Thank God for that, and thank you, Rabda, indeed, for what you have done."

"My life is my lord's," the girl said quietly. "What I have done is nothing."

"If we had but known, Rujub, that she would be moved at once, we might have rescued her on the way."

Rujub shook his head.

"There are far too many people along the road, sahib; it could not have been done. But, of course, there was no knowing that she would be sent off directly after the Nana had seen her."

"Is she much disfigured, Rabda?" Bathurst asked.

"Dreadfully;" the girl said sorrowfully. "The acid must have been too strong."

"It was strong, no doubt," Bathurst said; "but if she had put it on as I instructed her it could only have burnt the surface of the skin."

"It has burnt her dreadfully, sahib; even I should hardly have known her. She must be brave indeed to have done it. She must have suffered dreadfully; but I obtained some ointment for her, and she was better when I left her. She is with the wife of the Sahib Hunter."

"Now, Rabda, see if the meal is prepared," Rujub said. "We are both hungry, and you can have eaten nothing this morning."

He then left the room, leaving Bathurst to read the letters which he still held in his hand, feeling that they were too precious to be looked at until he was alone.

It was some time before Rabda brought in his breakfast, and, glancing at him, she saw how deeply he had been moved by the letters. She went up to him and placed her hand on his shoulder.

"We will get her for you, sahib. We have been successful so far, be assured that we shall succeed again. What we have done is more difficult than what we have to do. It is easier to get twenty prisoners from a jail than one from a rajah's zenana."

"That is true enough, Rabda. At the moment I was not thinking of that, but of other things."

He longed for sympathy, but the girl would not have understood him had he told her his feelings. To her he was a hero, and it would have seemed to her folly had he said that he felt himself altogether unworthy of Isobel Hannay. After he had finished his breakfast Rujub again came in.

"What does the sahib intend to do now?" he asked.

"As far as I can see there is nothing to do at present, Rujub," he said. "When the white troops come up she will be delivered."

"Then will my lord go down to Allahabad?"

"Certainly not. There is no saying what may happen."

"That is so," Rujub agreed. "The white women are safe at present, but if, as the Sahib thinks, the white soldiers should beat the troops of the Nana, who can say what will happen? The people will be wild with rage, the Nana will be furious—he is a tiger who, having once laid his paw on a victim, will not allow it to be torn from him."

"He can never allow them to be injured," Bathurst said. "It is possible that as our troops advance he may carry them all off as hostages, and by the threat of killing them may make terms for his own life, but he would never venture to carry out his threats. You think he would?" he asked.

Rujub remained silent for a minute.

"I think so, sahib; the Nana is an ambitious man; he has wealth and everything most men would desire to make life happy, but he wanted more: he thought that when the British Raj was destroyed he would rule over the territories of the Peishwa, and be one of the greatest lords of the land. He has staked everything on that; if he loses, he has lost all. He knows that after the breach of his oath and the massacre here, there is no pardon for him. He is a tiger—and a wounded tiger is most dangerous. If he is, as you believe he will be, defeated, I believe his one thought will be of revenge. Every day brings news of fresh risings. Scindia's army will join us; Holkar's will probably follow. All Oude is rising in arms. A large army is gathering at Delhi. Even if the Nana is defeated here all will not be lost. He has twenty thousand men; there are well nigh two hundred thousand in arms round Lucknow alone. My belief is that if beaten his first thought will be to take revenge at once on the Feringhees, and to make his name terrible, and that he will then go off with his army to Lucknow or Delhi, where he would be received as one who has dared more than all others to defy the whites, who has no hope of pardon, and can, therefore, be relied upon above all others to fight to the last."

"It may be so, Rujub, though I can scarce believe that there exists a monster who would give orders for the murder of hundreds of women and children in cold blood; but, at any rate, I will remain and watch. We will decide upon what will be the best plan to rescue her from the prison, if we hear that evil is intended; but, if not, I can remain patiently until our troops arrive. I know the Subada Ke Kothee; it is, if I remember right, a large quadrangle with no windows on the outside."

"That is so, sahib; it is a strong place, and difficult indeed to get into or out of. There is only the main gate, which is guarded at night by two sentries outside and there is doubtless a strong guard within."

"I would learn whether the same regiment always furnishes the guard; if so, it might be possible to bribe them."

"I am afraid it would be too dangerous to try. There are scores of men in Cawnpore who would cut a throat for a rupee, but when it comes to breaking open a prison to carry off one of these white women whom they hate it would be too dangerous to try."

"Could you not do something with your art, Rujub?"

"If there were only the outside sentries it would be easy enough, sahib. I could send them to sleep with a wave of my hand, but I could not affect the men inside whom I

do not know even by sight. Besides, in addition to the soldiers who guard the gate, there will be the men who have been told off to look after the prisoners. It will require a great deal of thinking over, sahib, but I believe we shall manage it. I shall go tomorrow to Bithoor and show myself boldly to the Nana. He knows that I have done good service to him, and his anger will have cooled down by this time, and he will listen to what I have to say. It will be useful to us for me to be able to go in and out of the palace at will, and so learn the first news from those about him. It is most important that we should know if he has evil intentions towards the captives, so that we may have time to carry out our plans."

"Very well, Rujub. You do not expect me to remain indoors, I hope, for I should wear myself out if I were obliged to wait here doing nothing."

"No, sahib; it will be perfectly safe for you to go about just as you are, and I can get you any other disguise you like. You will gather what is said in the town, can listen to the Sepoys, and examine the Subada Ke Kothee. If you like I will go there with you now. My daughter shall come with us; she may be useful, and will be glad to be doing something."

They went out from the city towards the prison house, which stood in an open space round which were several other buildings, some of them surrounded with gardens and walls.

The Subada Ke Kothee was a large building, forming three sides of a square, a strong high wall forming the fourth side. It was low, with a flat roof. There were no windows or openings in the outside wall, the chambers all facing the courtyard. Two sentries were at the gate. They were in the red Sepoy uniform, and Bathurst saw at once how much the bonds of discipline had been relaxed. Both had leaned their muskets against the wall; one was squatted on the ground beside his firearm, and the other was talking with two or three natives of his acquaintance. The gates were closed.

As they watched, a native officer came up. He stood for a minute talking with the soldiers. By his gesticulations it could be seen he was exceedingly angry, and the men took their muskets and began to walk up and down. Then the officer knocked at the gate. Instead of its being opened, a man appeared at a loophole in the gate tower, and the officer handed to him a paper. A minute later the gate was opened sufficiently for him to pass in, and was then closed behind him.

"They are evidently pretty strict," Bathurst said. "I don't think, Rujub, there is much chance of our doing anything there."

Rujub shook his head. "No, sahib, it is clear they have strict orders about opening and shutting the gate."

"It would not be very difficult to scale the wall of the house," Bathurst said, "with a rope and a hook at its end; but that is only the first step. The real difficulty lies in getting the prison room open in the first place—for no doubt they are locked up at night—and in the second getting her out of it, and the building."

"You could lower her down from the top of the wall, sahib."

"Yes, if one could get her out of the room they are confined in without making the slightest stir, but it is almost too much to hope that one could be able to do that. The

men in charge of them are likely to keep a close watch, for they know that their heads would pay for any captive they allowed to escape."

"I don't think they will watch much, sahib; they will not believe that any of the women, broken down as they must be by trouble, would attempt such a thing, for even if they got out of the prison itself and then made their escape from the building, they would be caught before they could go far."

"Where does the prison house lie, Rabda?" Bathurst asked.

"It is on the left hand side as you enter the gate; it is the farthest door. Along that side most of the buildings—which have been used for storehouses, I should say, or perhaps for the guards when the place was a palace—have two floors, one above the other. But this is a large vaulted room extending from the ground to the roof; it has windows with iron gratings; the door is very strong and heavy."

"And now, sahib, we can do nothing more," Rujub said. "I will return home with Rabda, and then go over to Bithoor."

"Very well, Rujub, I will stay here, and hear what people are talking about."

There were indeed a considerable number of people near the building: the fact that the white prisoners were within seemed to exercise a fascination, and even women brought their children and sat on the banks which marked where gardens had once been, and talked of the white captives. Bathurst strolled about among the groups of Sepoys and townspeople. The former talked in loud tones of the little force that had already started from Allahabad, and boasted how easily they would eat up the Feringhees. It seemed, however, to Bathurst that a good deal of this confidence was assumed, and that among some, at least, there was an undercurrent of doubt and uneasiness, though they talked as loudly and boldly as their companions.

The townspeople were of two classes: there were the budmashes or roughs of the place, who uttered brutal and ferocious jokes as to the probable fate of the white women. There were others who kept in groups apart and talked in low voices. These were the traders, to whom the events that had taken place foreboded ruin. Already most of the shops had been sacked, and many of the principal inhabitants murdered by the mob. Those who had so far escaped, thanks in some instances to the protection afforded them by Sepoy officers, saw that their trade was ruined, their best customers killed, and themselves virtually at the mercy of the mob, who might again break out upon the occasion of any excitement. These were silent when Bathurst approached them. His attire, and the arms so ostentatiously displayed in his sash, marked him as one of the dangerous class, perhaps a prisoner from the jail whose doors had been thrown open on the first night of the Sepoy rising.

For hours Bathurst remained in the neighborhood of the prison. The sun set, and the night came on. Then a small party of soldiers came up and relieved the sentries. This time the number of the sentries at the gate was doubled, and three men were posted, one on each of the other sides of the building. After seeing this done he returned to the house. After he had finished his evening meal Rujub and Rabda came into the room.

"Now, sahib," the former said, "I think that we can tell you how the lady is. Rabda has seen her, spoken to her, and touched her; there is sympathy between them."

He seated Rabda in a chair, placed his hand on her forehead, and then drew the tips of his fingers several times slowly down her face. Her eyes closed. He took up her hand, and let it fall again. It was limp and impassive. Then he said authoritatively, "Go to the prison." He paused a moment.

"Are you there?"

"I am there," she said.

"Are you in the room where the ladies are?"

"I am there," she repeated.

"Do you see the lady Hannay?"

"I see her."

"How is she?"

"She is lying quiet. The other young lady is sitting beside her. The lower part of her face is bandaged up, but I can see that she is not suffering as she was this morning. She looks quiet and happy."

"Try and speak to her. Say, 'Keep up your courage, we are doing what we can.' Speak, I order you."

"I have spoken."

"Did she hear you?"

"Yes. She has raised herself on her arm; she is looking round; she has asked the other young lady if she heard anything. The other shakes her head. She heard my words, but does not understand them."

Rujub looked at Bathurst, who mechanically repeated the message in English.

"Speak to her again. Tell her these words," and Rujub repeated the message in English.

"Does she hear you?"

"She hears me. She has clasped her hands, and is looking round bewildered."

"That will do. Now go outside into the yard; what do you see there?"

"I see eight men sitting round a fire. One gets up and walks to one of the grated windows, and looks in at the prisoners."

"Is the door locked?"

"It is locked."

"Where is the key?"

She was silent for some time.

"Where is the key?" he repeated.

"In the lock," she said.

"How many soldiers are there in the guardroom by the gate?"

"There are no soldiers there. There are an officer and four men outside, but none inside."

"That will do," and he passed his hand lightly across her forehead.

"Is it all true?" Bathurst asked, as the juggler turned to him.

"Assuredly it is true, sahib. Had I had my daughter with me at Deennugghur, I could have sent you a message as easily; as it was, I had to trust only to the power of my mind upon yours. The information is of use, sahib."

"It is indeed. It is a great thing to know that the key is left in the lock, and also that at night there are the prison keepers only inside the building."

"Does she know what she has been doing?" he asked, as Rabda languidly rose from her chair.

"No, sahib, she knows nothing after she has recovered from these trances."

"I will watch tomorrow night," Bathurst said, "and see at what hour the sentries are relieved. It is evident that the Sepoys are not trusted to enter the prison, which is left entirely to the warders, the outside posts being furnished by some regiment in the lines. It is important to know the exact hour at which the changes are made, and perhaps you could find out tomorrow, Rujub, who these warders are; whether they are permanently on duty, or are relieved once a day."

"I will do that, sahib; if they are changed we may be able to get at some of them."

"I have no money," Bathurst said; "but—"

"I have money, sahib, and if they can be bribed, will do it; our caste is a rich one. We sometimes receive large presents, and we are everywhere made welcome. We have little need of money. I am wealthy, and practice my art more because I love it than for gain. There are few in the land that know the secrets that I do. Men die without having sons to pass down their knowledge; thus it is the number of those who possess the secrets of the ancient grows smaller every day. There are hundreds of jugglers, but very few who know, as I do, the secrets of nature, and can control the spirits of the air. Did I need greater wealth than I have, Rabda could discover for me all the hidden treasures of India; and I could obtain them, guarded though they may be by djins and evil spirits."

"Have you a son to come after you, Rujub?"

"Yes; he is traveling in Persia, to confer with one or two of the great ones there who still possess the knowledge of the ancient magicians."

"By the way, Rujub, I have not asked you how you got on with the Nana."

"It was easy enough," the juggler said. "He had lost all interest in the affairs of Deennugghur, and greeted me at first as if I had just returned from a journey. Then he remembered and asked me suddenly why I had disobeyed his orders and given my voice for terms being granted to the Feringhees. I said that I had obeyed his orders; I understood that what he principally desired was to have the women here as prisoners, and that had the siege continued the Feringhees would have blown themselves into the air. Therefore the only plan was to make terms with them, which would, in fact, place them all in his power, as he would not be bound by the conditions granted by the Oude men. He was satisfied, and said no more about it, and I am restored to my position in his favor. Henceforth we shall not have to trust to the gossip of the bazaars, but I shall know what news is received and what is going to be done.

"Your people at Delhi have beaten back the Sepoys several times, and at Lucknow they resist stoutly. The Nana is very angry that the place has not been taken, but from

what I hear the intrenchments there are much stronger than they were here, and even here they were not taken by the sword, but because the whites had no shelter from the guns, and could not go to the well without exposing themselves to the fire. At Lucknow they have some strong houses in the intrenchments, and no want of anything, so they can only be captured by fighting. Everyone says they cannot hold out many days longer, but that I do not know. It does not seem to me that there is any hope of rescue for them, for even if, as you think, the white troops should beat Nana Sahib's men, they never could force their way through the streets of Lucknow to the intrenchments there."

"We shall see, Rujub. Deennugghur was defended by a mere handful, and at Lucknow they have half a regiment of white soldiers. They may, for anything I know, have to yield to starvation, but I doubt whether the mutineers and Oude men, however numerous they may be, will carry the place by assault. Is there any news elsewhere?"

"None, sahib, save that the Feringhees are bringing down regiments from the Punjaub to aid those at Delhi."

"The tide is beginning to turn, Rujub; the mutineers have done their worst, and have failed to overthrow the English Raj. Now you will see that every day they will lose ground. Fresh troops will pour up the country, and step by step the mutiny will be crushed out; it is a question of time only. If you could call up a picture on smoke of what will be happening a year hence, you would see the British triumphant everywhere."

"I cannot do that, sahib; I do not know what would appear on the smoke, and were I to try, misfortune would surely come upon me. When a picture of the past is shown on the smoke, it is not a past I know of, but which one of those present knows. I cannot always say which among them may know it; it is always a scene that has made a strong impression on the mind, but more than that I do not know. As to those of the future, I know even less; it is the work of the power of the air, whose name I whisper to myself when I pour out the incense, and to whom I pray. It is seldom that I show these pictures; he gets angry if called upon too often. I never do it unless I feel that he is propitious."

"It is beyond me altogether, Rujub; I can understand your power of sending messages, and of your daughter seeing at a distance. I have heard of such things at home; they are called mesmerism and clairvoyance. It is an obscure art; but that some men do possess the power of influencing others at a distance seems to be undoubted, still it is certainly never carried to such perfection as I see it in your case."

"It could not be," Rujub said; "white men eat too much, and it needs long fasting and mortification to fit a man to become a mystic; the spirit gains power as the body weakens. The Feringhees can make arms that shoot long distances, and carriages that travel faster than the fastest horse, and great ships and machines. They can do many great and useful things, but they cannot do the things that have been done for thousands of years in the East. They are tied too fast to the earth to have aught to do with the spirits that dwell in the air. A learned Brahmin, who had studied your holy books, told me that your Great Teacher said that if you had faith you could move mountains. We could well nigh do that if it were of use to mankind; but were we to do

so merely to show our power, we should be struck dead. It is wrong even to tell you these things; I must say no more."

Four days passed. Rujub went every day for some hours to Bithoor, and told Bathurst that he heard that the British force, of about fourteen hundred whites and five hundred Sikhs, was pushing forward rapidly, making double marches each day.

"The first fight will be near Futtehpore," he said; "there are fifteen hundred Sepoys, as many Oude tribesmen, and five hundred cavalry with twelve guns, and they are in a very strong position, which the British can only reach by passing along the road through a swamp. It is a position that the officers say a thousand men could hold against ten thousand."

"You will see that it will not delay our troops an hour," Bathurst said. "Do they imagine they are going to beat us, when the numbers are but two to one in their favor? If so, they will soon learn that they are mistaken."

The next afternoon, when Rujub returned, he said, "You were right, sahib; your people took Futtehpore after only half an hour's fighting. The accounts say that the Feringhees came on like demons, and that they did not seem to mind our firing in the slightest. The Nana is furious, but they still feel confident that they will succeed in stopping the Feringhees at Dong. They lost their twelve guns at Futtehpore, but they have two heavy ones at the Pandoo Bridge, which sweep the straight road leading to it for a mile; and the bridge has been mined, and will be blown up if the Feringhees reach it. But, nevertheless, the Nana swears that he will be revenged on the captives. If you are to rescue the lady it must be done tonight, for tomorrow it may be too late."

"You surely do not think he will give orders for the murder of the women and children?"

"I fear he will do so," Rujub answered gloomily.

Each day Bathurst had learned in the same manner as before what was doing in the prison. Isobel was no longer being nursed; she was assisting to nurse Mary Hunter, who had, the day after Isobel was transferred to the prison, been attacked by fever, and was the next day delirious. Rabda's report of the next two days left little doubt in Bathurst's mind that she was rapidly sinking. All the prisoners suffered greatly from the close confinement; many had died, and the girl's description of the scenes she witnessed was often interrupted by her sobs and tears.

CHAPTER XXI.

While Bathurst was busying himself completing his preparations for the attempt, Rabda came in with her father.

"My lord," she said, "I tremble at the thought of your venturing your life. My life is of no importance, and it belongs to you. What I would propose is this. My father will go to Bithoor, and will obtain an order from one of the Nana's officers for a lady of the zenana to visit the prisoners. I will go in veiled, as I was on the day I went there. I will change garments with the lady, and she can come out veiled, and meet you outside."

"I would not dream of such a thing, Rabda. You would be killed to a certainty when they discovered the trick. Even if I would consent to the sacrifice, Miss Hannay would not do so. I am deeply grateful to you for proposing it, but it is impossible. You will see that, with the aid of your father, I shall succeed."

"I told her that would be your answer, sahib," Rujub said, "but she insisted on making the offer."

It was arranged that they were to start at nine o'clock, as it was safer to make the attempt before everything became quiet. Before starting, Rabda was again placed in a trance. In reply to her father's questions she said that Mary Hunter was dead, and that Isobel was lying down. She was told to tell her that in an hour she was to be at the window next to the door.

Rujub had found that the men inside the prison were those who had been employed as warders at the jail before the troubles began, and he had procured for Bathurst a dress similar to that which they wore, which was a sort of uniform. He had offered, if the attempt was successful, to conceal Isobel in his house until the troops reached Cawnpore, but Bathurst preferred to take her down the country, upon the ground that every house might be searched, and that possibly before the British entered the town there might be a general sack of the place by the mob, and even if this did not take place there might be desperate house to house fighting when the troops arrived. Rujub acknowledged the danger, and said that he and his daughter would accompany them on their way down country, as it would greatly lessen their risk if two of the party were really natives. Bathurst gratefully accepted the offer, as it would make the journey far more tolerable for Isobel if she had Rabda with her.

She was to wait a short distance from the prison while Bathurst made the attempt, and was left in a clump of bushes two or three hundred yards away from the prison. Rujub accompanied Bathurst. They went along quietly until within fifty yards of the sentry in the rear of the house, and then stopped. The man was walking briskly up and down. Rujub stretched out his arms in front of him with the fingers extended. Bathurst, who had taken his place behind him, saw his muscles stiffen, while there was a tremulous motion of his fingers. In a minute or two the sentry's walk became slower. In a little time it ceased altogether, and he leaned against the wall as if drowsy; then he slid down in a sitting position, his musket falling to the ground.

"You can come along now," Rujub said; "he is fast asleep, and there is no fear of his waking. He will sleep till I bid him wake."

They at once moved forward to the wall of the house. Bathurst threw up a knotted rope, to which was attached a large hook, carefully wrapped in flannel to prevent noise. After three or four attempts it caught on the parapet. Bathurst at once climbed up. As soon as he had gained the flat terrace, Rujub followed him; they then pulled up the rope, to the lower end of which a rope ladder was attached, and fastened this securely; then they went to the inner side of the terrace and looked down onto the courtyard. Two men were standing at one of the grated windows of the prison room, apparently looking in; six others were seated round a fire in the center of the court.

Bathurst was about to turn away when Rujub touched him and pointed to the two men at the window, and then stretched out his arms towards them. Presently they turned and left the window, and in a leisurely way walked across the court and entered a room where a light was burning close to the grate. For two or three minutes Rujub stood in the same position, then his arms dropped.

"They have gone into the guard room to sleep," he said; "there are two less to trouble you."

Then he turned towards the group of men by the fire and fixed his gaze upon them. In a short time one of them wrapped himself in his cloth and lay down. In five minutes two others had followed his example. Another ten minutes passed, and then Rujub turned to Bathurst and said, "I cannot affect the other three; we cannot influence everyone."

"That will do, Rujub, it is my turn now."

After a short search they found stairs leading down from the terrace, and after passing through some empty rooms reached a door opening into the courtyard.

"Do you stay here, Rujub," Bathurst said. "They will take me for one of themselves. If I succeed without noise, I shall come this way; if not, we will go out through the gate, and you had best leave by the way we came."

The door was standing open, and Bathurst, grasping a heavy tulwar, went out into the courtyard. Keeping close to the house, he sauntered along until he reached the grated windows of the prison room. Three lamps were burning within, to enable the guard outside to watch the prisoners. He passed the two first windows; at the third a figure was standing. She shrank back as Bathurst stopped before it.

"It is I, Miss Hannay—Bathurst. Danger threatens you, and you must escape at once. Rabda is waiting for you outside. Please go to the door and stand there until I open it. I have no doubt that I shall succeed, but if anything should go wrong, go and lie down again at once."

Without waiting for an answer, he moved towards the fire.

"Is that you, Ahmed?" one of the warders said. "We all seem sleepy this evening, there is something in the air; I felt half inclined to go off myself."

"It is very hot tonight," Bathurst replied.

There was something in his voice unfamiliar to the man, and with an exclamation, "Who is it?" he sprang to his feet. But Bathurst was now but three paces away, and

with a bound was upon him, bringing the tulwar down with such force upon his head that the man fell lifeless without a groan. The other two leaped up with shouts of "Treachery!" but Bathurst was upon them, and, aided by the surprise, cut both down after a sharp fight of half a minute. Then he ran to the prison door, turned the key in the lock, and opened it.

"Come!" he exclaimed, "there is no time to be lost, the guards outside have taken the alarm," for, by this time, there was a furious knocking at the gate. "Wrap yourself up in this native robe."

"But the others, Mr. Bathurst, can't you save them too?"

"Impossible," he said. "Even if they got out, they would be overtaken and killed at once. Come!" And taking her hand, he led her to the gate.

"Stand back here so that the gate will open on you," he said. Then he undid the bar, shouting, "Treachery; the prisoners are escaping!"

As he undid the last bolt the gate opened and the soldiers rushed in, firing at random as they did so. Bathurst had stepped behind the gate as it opened, and as the soldiers ran up the yard he took Isobel's hand, and, passing through the gate, ran with her round the building until he reached the spot where Rabda was awaiting them. Half a minute later her father joined them.

"Let us go at once, there is no time for talking," he said. "We must be cautious, the firing will wake the whole quarter;" for by this time loud shouts were being raised, and men, hearing the muskets fired, were running towards the gate. Taking advantage of the shelter of the shrubbery as much as they could, they hurried on until they issued into the open country.

"Do you feel strong enough to walk far?" Bathurst asked, speaking for the first time since they left the gate.

"I think so," she said; "I am not sure whether I am awake or dreaming."

"You are awake, Miss Hannay; you are safe out of that terrible prison."

"I am not sure," the girl said, speaking slowly; "I have been strange since I went there. I have seemed to hear voices speaking to me, though no one was there, and no one else heard them; and I am not sure whether all this is not fancy now."

"It is reality, Miss Hannay. Take my hand and you will see that it is solid. The voices you heard were similar to those I heard at Deennugghur; they were messages I sent you by means of Rujub and his daughter."

"I did think of what you told me and about the juggler, but it seemed so strange. I thought that my brain was turning with trouble; it was bad enough at Deennugghur, but nothing to what it has been since that dreadful day at Bithoor. There did not seem much hope at Deennugghur. But somehow we all kept up, and, desperate as it seemed, I don't think we ever quite despaired. You see, we all knew each other; besides, no one could give way while the men were fighting and working so hard for us; but at Cawnpore there seemed no hope. There was not one woman there but had lost husband or father. Most of them were indifferent to life, scarcely ever speaking, and seeming to move in a dream, while others with children sat holding them close to them as if they dreaded a separation at any moment. There were a few who were

different, who moved about and nursed the children and sick, and tried to comfort the others, just as Mrs. Hunter did at Deennugghur. There was no crying and no lamenting. It would have been a relief if anyone had cried, it was the stillness that was so trying; when people talked to each other they did it in a whisper, as they do in a room where someone is lying dead.

"You know Mary Hunter died yesterday? Well, Mrs. Hunter quite put aside her own grief and tried to cheer others. I told her the last message I received, and asked her to go with me if it should be true. She said, 'No, Isobel; I don't know whether this message is a dream, or whether God has opened a way of escape for you—if so, may He be thanked; but you must go alone—one might escape where two could not. As for me, I shall wait here for whatever fate God may send me. My husband and my children have gone before me. I may do some good among these poor creatures, and here I shall stay. You are young and full of life, and have many happy days in store for you. My race is nearly run—even did I wish for life, I would not cumber you and your friends; there will be perils to encounter and fatigues to be undergone. Had not Mary left us I would have sent her with you, but God did not will it so. Go, therefore, to the window, dear, as you were told by this message you think you have received, but do not be disappointed if no one comes. If it turns out true, and there is a chance of escape, take it, dear, and may God be with you.' As I stood at the window, I could not go at once, as you told me, to the door; I had to stand there; I saw it all till you turned and ran to the door, and then I came to meet you."

"It was a pity you saw it," he said gently.

"Why? Do you think that, after what I have gone through, I was shocked at seeing you kill three of those wretches? Two months ago I suppose I should have thought it dreadful, but those two months have changed us altogether. Think of what we were then and what we are now. There remain only you, Mrs. Hunter, myself, and your letter said, Mr. Wilson. Is he the only one?"

"Yes, so far as we know."

"Only we four, and all the others gone—Uncle and Mary and Amy and the Doolans and the dear Doctor, all the children. Why, if the door had been open, and I had had a weapon, I would have rushed out to help you kill. I shudder at myself sometimes."

After a pause she went on. "Then none of those in the other boat came to shore, Mr. Bathurst, except Mr. Wilson?"

"I fear not. The other boat sank directly. Wilson told me it was sinking as he sprang over. You had better not talk any more, Miss Hannay, for you are out of breath now, and will need all your strength."

"Yes, but tell me why you have taken me away; you said there was great danger?"

"Our troops are coming up," he said, "and I had reason to fear that when the rebels are defeated the mob may break open the prison."

"They surely could not murder women and children who have done them no harm!"

"There is no saying what they might do, Miss Hannay, but that was the reason why I dared not leave you where you were. I will tell you more about it afterwards. Now,

please take my arm, we must be miles away from here before morning. They will find out then that you have escaped, and will no doubt scour the country."

They had left the road and were passing through the fields. Isobel's strength failed rapidly, as soon as the excitement that had at first kept her up subsided. Rujub several times urged Bathurst to go faster, but the girl hung more and more heavily on his arm.

"I can't go any farther," she said at last; "it is so long since I walked, and I suppose I have got weak. I have tried very hard, but I can scarcely drag my feet along. You had better leave me; you have done all you could to save me. I thank you so much. Only please leave a pistol with me. I am not at all afraid of dying, but I will not fall into their hands again."

"We must carry her, Rujub," Bathurst said; "she is utterly exhausted and worn out, and no wonder. If we could make a sort of stretcher, it would be easy enough."

Rujub took the cloth from his shoulders, and laid it on the ground by the side of Isobel, who had now sunk down and was lying helpless.

"Lift her onto this, sahib, then we will take the four corners and carry her; it will be no weight."

Bathurst lifted Isobel, in spite of her feeble protest, and laid her on the cloth.

"I will take the two corners by her head," Bathurst said, "if you will each take one of the others."

"No, sahib, the weight is all at the head; you take one corner, and I will take the other. Rabda can take the two corners at the feet. We can change about when we like."

Isobel had lost greatly in weight since the siege of Deennugghur began, and she was but a light burden for her three bearers, who started with her at a speed considerably greater than that at which she had walked.

"Which way are you taking us, Rujub?" Bathurst asked presently; "I have lost my bearings altogether."

"I am keeping near the river, sahib. I know the country well. We cannot follow the road, for there the Rajah's troops and the Sepoys and the Oude men are gathered to oppose your people. They will fight tomorrow at Dong, as I told you, but the main body is not far from here. We must keep far away from them, and if your people take Dong we can then join them if we like. This road keeps near the river all the way, and we are not likely to meet Sepoys here, as it is by the other road the white troops are coming up."

After four hours' walking, Rujub said, "There is a large wood just ahead. We will go in there. We are far enough off Cawnpore to be safe from any parties they may send out to search. If your people take Dong tomorrow, they will have enough to think of in Cawnpore without troubling about an escaped prisoner. Besides," he added, "if the Rajah's orders are carried out, at daybreak they will not know that a prisoner has escaped; they will not trouble to count."

"I cannot believe it possible they will carry out such a butchery, Rujub."

"We shall see, sahib. I did not tell you all I knew lest we should fail to carry off the lady, but I know the orders that have been given. Word has been sent round to the butchers of the town, and tomorrow morning soon after daybreak it will be done."

Bathurst gave an exclamation of horror, for until now he had hardly believed it was possible that even Nana Sahib could perpetrate so atrocious a massacre. Not another word was spoken until they entered the wood.

"Where is the river, Rujub?"

"A few hundred yards to the left, sahib; the road is half a mile to the right. We shall be quite safe here."

They made their way for some little distance into the wood, and then laid down their burden.

They had taken to the spot where Rabda remained when the others went forward towards the prison a basket containing food and three bottles of wine, and this Rujub had carried since they started together. As soon as the hammock was lowered to the ground, Isobel moved and sat up.

"I am rested now. Oh, how good you have all been! I was just going to tell you that I could walk again. I am quite ready to go on now."

"We are going to halt here till tomorrow evening, Miss Hannay; Rujub thinks we are quite beyond any risk of pursuit now. You must first eat and drink something, and then sleep as long as you can. Rabda has brought a native dress for you and dye for staining your skin, but there is no occasion for doing that till tomorrow; the river is only a short distance away, and in the morning you will be able to enjoy a wash."

The neck was knocked off a bottle. Rabda had brought in the basket a small silver cup, and Isobel, after drinking some wine and eating a few mouthfuls of food, lay down by her and was soon fast asleep. Bathurst ate a much more hearty meal. Rujub and his daughter said that they did not want anything before morning.

The sun was high before Bathurst woke. Rujub had lighted a fire, and was boiling some rice in a lota.

"Where is Miss Hannay?" Bathurst asked, as he sat up.

"She has gone down to the river with Rabda. The trees hang down well over the water, and they can wash without fear of being seen on the opposite shore. I was going to wake you when the lady got up, but she made signs that you were to be allowed to sleep on."

In half an hour the two girls returned. Isobel was attired in a native dress, and her face, neck, arms, feet, and ankles had been stained to the same color as Rabda's. She came forward a little timidly, for she felt strange and uncomfortable in her scanty attire. Bathurst gave an exclamation of pain as he saw her face.

"How dreadfully, you have burnt yourself, Miss Hannay; surely you cannot have followed the instructions I gave you."

"No; it is not your fault at all, Mr. Bathurst; I put a great deal more on than you said, but I was so anxious to disfigure myself that I was determined to do it thoroughly; but it is nothing to what it was. As you see, my lips are getting all right again, and the sores are a good deal better than they were; I suppose they will leave scars, but that won't trouble me."

"It is the pain you must have suffered that I am thinking of," he replied. "As to the scars, I hope they will wear out in time; you must indeed have suffered horribly."

"They burnt dreadfully for a time," the girl answered; "but for the last two or three days I have hardly felt it, though, of course, it is very sore still."

"Do you feel ready for breakfast, Miss Hannay?"

"Quite ready, and for a walk as long as you like afterwards. I feel quite another creature after my dip. That was one of the worst things in the prison. We had scarcely water enough to drink, and none to wash with, and, of course, no combs nor anything."

They sat down together and ate the cold food they had brought, while Rabda and her father made their breakfast of rice.

"What has become of Mr. Wilson?" Isobel asked suddenly. "I wondered about him as I was being carried along last night, but I was too tired to talk afterwards."

"I hope he is either safe at Allahabad by this time, or is with the troops marching up. The Zemindar's son, who came down with us as an escort, and one of his men got safely to shore also, and they went on with Wilson. When he found I was going to stay at Cawnpore to try and rescue you, he pleaded very hard that I should keep him with me in order that he might share in the attempt, but his ignorance of the language might have been fatal, and his being with me would have greatly added to the difficulty, so I was obliged to refuse him. It was only because I told him that instead of adding to, he would lessen your chance of escape, that he consented to go, for I am sure he would willingly have laid down his life to save yours."

"I am very glad he is safe; he is very kind hearted and nice, Mr. Bathurst, and a thoroughly natural, unaffected young fellow, very loyal and stanch. I am quite sure he would have done anything he could, even at the risk of his life."

"I like him very much, too, Miss Hannay. Before the siege I thought him a careless, happy go lucky lad, but as I got to know him well, I found he was much more than that, and he will make a good man and an excellent officer one of these days if he is spared. He is thoroughly brave without the slightest brag—an excellent specimen of the best class of public school boy."

"And who are the troops coming up, Mr. Bathurst? How strong are they? I have heard nothing about them."

"About twelve hundred white troops and four or five hundred Sikhs; at least that is what the natives put them at."

"But surely they will never be able to fight their way to Cawnpore, where there are the mutineers and Nana Sahib's troops and the Oude men and the people of the town. Why, there must be ten to one against them."

"Not far short of that, I think, but I feel sure our men will do it. They know of the treachery of the Nana, they know of the massacre by the river, and they know that the women and children are prisoners in his hands, and do you think that men who know these things can be beaten? The Sepoys met them in superior force and in a strong position at Futtehpore, and they drove them before them like chaff. They will have harder work next time, but I have no shadow of fear of the result."

Then their talk went back to Deennugghur and of their friends there—the Doolans, the Hunters, the Rintouls, and others—and Isobel wept freely over their fate.

"Next to my uncle I shall miss the Doctor," she said.

"He was an awfully good fellow," Bathurst said, "and was the only real friend I have had since I came to India, I would have done anything for him."

"When shall we start?" Isobel asked presently.

"Directly the sun goes down a little. You would find it terribly hot now. I have been talking it over with Rujub, and he says it is better not to make a long journey today. We are not more than twenty miles from Dong, and it would not do to move in that direction until we know how things have gone; therefore, if we start at three o'clock and walk till seven or eight, it will be quite far enough."

"He seems a wonderful man," said Isobel. "You remember that talk we had at dinner, before we went to see him at the Hunters!"

"Yes," he said. "As you know, I was a believer then, and so was the Doctor. I need not say that I believe still more now that these men do wholly unaccountable feats. He put the sentry outside the walls of your prison and five out of your eight warders so sound asleep that they did not wake during the struggle I had with the others. That, of course, was mesmerism. His messages to you were actually sent by means of his daughter. She was put in a sort of trance, in which she saw you and told us what you were doing, and communicated the message her father gave her to you. He could not send you a message nor tell me about you when you were first at Bithoor, because he said Rabda was not in sympathy with you, but after she had seen you and touched you and you had kissed her, she was able to do so. There does not appear to me to be anything beyond the powers of nature in that, though doubtless powers were called into play of which at present we know nothing. But we do know that minds act upon each other. Possibly certain persons in sympathy with each other may be able to act upon each other from a distance, especially when thrown into the sort of trance which is known as the clairvoyant state. I always used to look upon that as humbug, but I need hardly say I shall in future be ready to believe almost anything. He professes to have other and even greater powers than what we have seen. At any rate, he can have no motive in deceiving me when he has risked his life to help me. Do you know, Rabda offered to go into the prison—her father could have got her an order to pass in—and then to let you go out in her dress while she remained in your stead. I could not accept the sacrifice even to save you, and I was sure had I done so you yourself would have refused to leave."

"Of course. But how good of her. Please tell her that you have told me, and how grateful I am for her offer."

Bathurst called Rabda, who was sitting a short distance away.

She took the hand that Isobel held out to her and placed it against her forehead.

"My life is yours, sahib," she said simply to Bathurst. "It was right that I should give it for this lady you love."

"What does she say?" Isobel asked.

"She says that she owed me her life for that tiger business, you know, and was ready to give it for you because I had set my mind on saving you."

"Is that what she really said, Mr. Bathurst?" Isobel asked quietly, for he had hesitated a little in changing its wording.

"That was the sense of it, I can assure you. Not only was she ready to make the sacrifice, but her father consented to her doing so. These Hindoos are capable of gratitude, you see. There are not many English who would be ready thus to sacrifice themselves for a man who had accidentally, as I may say, saved their lives."

"Not accidentally, Mr. Bathurst. Why do you always try to run yourself down? I suppose you will say next you saved my life by an accident."

"The saving of your life is due chiefly to these natives."

"But they were only your instruments, Mr. Bathurst; they had no interest in saving me. You had bought their services at the risk of your life, and in saving me they were paying that debt to you."

At three o'clock they prepared for the start. Bathurst had exchanged the warder's dress for one of a peasant, which they had brought with them. The woods were of no great width, and Rujub said they had better follow the road now.

"No one will suspect us of being anything but what we seem," he said. "Should we meet any peasants, their talk will be with you and me. They will ask no questions about the women; but if there is a woman among them, and she speaks, Rabda will answer her."

For hours they had heard dull sounds in the air, which Bathurst had recognized at once as distant artillery, showing that the fight was going on near Dong.

"The Sepoys are making a stout resistance, or the firing would not last so long," he said to Rujub, as they walked through the wood towards the road.

"They have two positions to defend, sahib. The Nana's men will fight first at a strong village two miles beyond Dong; if they are beaten there, they will fight again at the bridge I told you of."

"That would partly account for it; but the Sepoys must be fighting much better than they did at Futtehpore, for there, as you said, the white troops swept the Sepoys before them."

When they reached the edge of the wood Bathurst said, "I will see that the road is clear before we go out. If anyone saw us issuing out of the wood they might wonder what we had been after."

He went to the edge of the bushes and looked down the long straight road. There was only a solitary figure in sight. It seemed to be an old man walking lame with a stick. Bathurst was about to turn and tell the others to come out, when he saw the man stop suddenly, turn round to look back along the road, stand with his head bent as if listening, then run across the road with much more agility than he had before seemed to possess, and plunge in among the trees.

"Wait," he said to those behind him, "something is going on. A peasant I saw in the road has suddenly dived into the wood as if he was afraid of being pursued. Ah!" he exclaimed a minute later, "there is a party of horsemen coming along at a gallop—get farther back into the wood."

Presently they heard the rapid trampling of horses, and looking through the bushes they saw some twenty sowars of one of the native cavalry regiments dash past.

Bathurst went to the edge of the wood again, and looked out. Then he turned suddenly to Isobel.

"You remember those pictures on the smoke?" he said excitedly.

"No, I do not remember them," she said, in surprise. "I have often wondered at it, but I have never been able to recollect what they were since that evening. I have often thought they were just like dreams, where one sees everything just as plainly as if it were a reality, and then go out of your mind altogether as soon as you are awake."

"It has been just the same with me," replied Bathurst, "except that once or twice they have come back for a moment quite vividly. One of them I have not thought of for some days, but now I see it again. Don't you remember there was a wood, and a Hindoo man and woman stepped out of it, and a third native came up to them?"

"Yes, I remember now," she said eagerly; "it was just as we are here; but what of that, Mr. Bathurst?"

"Did you recognize any of them?"

"Yes, yes, it all comes back to me now. It was you and the Doctor, certainly, and I thought the woman was myself. I spoke to the Doctor next day about it, but he laughed at it all, and I have never thought of it since."

"The Doctor and I agreed, when we talked it over that evening, that the Hindoo who stepped out of the wood was myself, and thought that you were the Hindoo girl, but of that we were not so sure, for your face seemed not only darkened, but blotched and altered—it was just as you are now—and the third native was the Doctor himself; we both felt certain of that. It has come true, and I feel absolutely certain that the native I saw along the road will turn out to be the Doctor."

"Oh, I hope so, I hope so!" the girl cried, and pressed forward with Bathurst to the edge of the wood.

The old native was coming along on the road again. As he approached, his eye fell on the two figures, and with a Hindoo salutation he was passing on, when Isobel cried, "It is the Doctor!" and rushing forward she threw her arms round his neck.

"Isobel Hannay!" he cried in delight and amazement; "my dear little girl, my dear little girl, thank God you are saved; but what have you been doing with yourself, and who is this with you?"

"You knew me when you saw me in the picture on the smoke, Doctor," Bathurst said, grasping his hand, "though you do not know me in life."

"You, too, Bathurst!" the Doctor exclaimed, as he wrung his hand; "thank God for that, my dear boy; to think that both of you should have been saved—it seems a miracle. The picture on the smoke? Yes, we were speaking of it that last night at Deennugghur, and I never have thought of it since. Is there anyone else?"

"My friend the juggler and his daughter are with us, Doctor."

"Then I can understand the miracle," the Doctor said, "for I believe that fellow could take you through the air and carry you through stone walls with a wave of his hand."

"Well, he has not exactly done that, but he and his daughter have rendered us immense service. I could have done nothing without them."

The two natives, seeing through the bushes the recognition that had taken place, had now stepped forward and salaamed as the Doctor spoke a few hearty words to them.

"But where have you sprung from, Doctor? How were you saved?"

"I jumped overboard when those scoundrels opened fire," the Doctor said. "I kept my wits about me, and said to myself that if I were to swim for the opposite shore the chances were that I should get shot down, so I made a long dive, came up for air, and then went down again, and came up the next time under some bushes by the bank; there I remained all night. The villains were only a few yards away, and I could hear every word they said. I heard the boat come ashore, and although I could have done no good by rushing out, I think I should have done so if I had had any weapon about me, and have tried to kill one or two of them before I went down. As it was, I waited until morning. Then I heard the rumble of the guns and the wagons, and knew that they were off. I waited for another hour to make sure, and then stepped ashore. I went to the boat lying by the bank. When I saw that Isobel and the other two ladies were not there, I knew that they must have been carried off into Cawnpore. I waited there until night, and then made my way to a peasant's house a mile out of the town. I had operated upon him for elephantiasis two years ago, and the man had shown himself grateful, and had occasionally sent me in little presents of fowls and so on. He received me well, gave me food, which I wanted horribly, stained my skin, and rigged me out in this disguise. The next morning I went into the town, and for the last four or five days have wandered about there. There was nothing I could do, and yet I felt that I could not go away, but must stay within sight of the prison where you were all confined till our column arrived. But this morning I determined to come down to join our people who are fighting their way up, little thinking that I should light upon you by the way."

"We were just going to push on, Doctor; but as you have had a good long tramp already, we will stop here until tomorrow morning, if you like."

"No, no, let us go on, Bathurst. I would rather be on the move, and you can tell me your story as we go."

CHAPTER XXII.

Bathurst knew the Doctor well, and perceived that glad as he was to have met them, he was yet profoundly depressed in spirits. This, added to the fact that he had left Cawnpore that morning, instead of waiting as he had intended, convinced Bathurst that what he dreaded had taken place. He waited until Isobel stopped for a moment, that Rabda might rearrange the cloth folded round her in its proper draping. Then he said quickly, "I heard yesterday what was intended, Doctor. Is it possible that it has been done?"

"It was done this morning."

"What, all? Surely not all, Doctor?"

"Every soul—every woman and child. Think of it—the fiends! the devils! The native brought me the news. If I had heard it in the streets of Cawnpore I should have gone mad and seized a sword and run amuck. As it was, I was well nigh out of mind. I could not stay there. The man would have sheltered me until the troops came up, but I was obliged to be moving, so I started down. Hush! here comes Isobel; we must keep it from her."

"Now, Isobel," he went on, as the girl joined them, and they all started along the road, "tell me how it is I find you here."

"Mr. Bathurst must tell you, Doctor; I cannot talk about it yet—I can hardly think about it."

"Well, Bathurst, let us hear it from you."

"It is a painful story for me to have to tell."

Isobel looked up in surprise.

"Painful, Mr. Bathurst? I should have thought—" and she stopped.

"Not all painful, Miss Hannay, but in parts. I would rather tell you, Doctor, when we have finished our journey this evening, if your curiosity will allow you to wait so long."

"I will try to wait," the Doctor replied, "though I own it is a trial. Now, Isobel, you have not told me yet what has happened to your face. Let me look at it closer, child. I see your arms are bad, too. What on earth has happened to you?"

"I burnt myself with acid, Doctor. Mr. Bathurst will tell you all about it."

"Bless me, mystery seems to thicken. Well, you have got yourself into a pretty pickle. Why, child, burns of that sort leave scars as bad as if you had been burnt by fire. You ought to be in a dark room with your face and hands bandaged, instead of tramping along here in the sun."

"I have some lotions and some ointment, Doctor. I have used them regularly since it was done, and the places don't hurt me much now."

"No, they look healthy enough," he said, examining them closely. "Granulation is going on nicely; but I warn you you will be disfigured for months, and it may be years

before you get rid of the scars. I doubt, indeed, if you will ever get rid of them altogether. Well, well, what shall we talk about?"

"I will take pity on you, Doctor. I will walk on ahead with Rabda and her father, and Mr. Bathurst can then tell you his story."

"That will be the best plan, my dear. Now then, Bathurst, fire away," he said, when the others had gone on thirty or forty yards ahead.

"Well, Doctor, you remember that you were forward talking to the young Zemindar, and I was sitting aft by the side of Miss Hannay, when they opened fire?"

"I should think I do remember it," the Doctor said, "and I am not likely to forget it if I live to be a hundred. Well, what about that?"

"I jumped overboard," Bathurst said, laying his hand impressively upon the Doctor's shoulder. "I gave a cry, I know I did, and I jumped overboard."

The Doctor looked at him in astonishment.

"Well, so did I, like a shot. But what do you say it in that tone for? Of course you jumped overboard. If you hadn't you would not be here now."

"You don't understand me, Doctor," Bathurst said gloomily. "I was sitting there next to Isobel Hannay—the woman I loved. We were talking in low tones, and I don't know why, but at that moment the mad thought was coming into my mind that, after all, she cared for me, that in spite of the disgrace I had brought upon myself, in spite of being a coward, she might still be mine; and as I was thinking this there came the crash of a cannon. Can it be imagined possible that I jumped up like a frightened hare, and without a thought of her, without a thought of anything in my mad terror, jumped overboard and left her behind to her fate? If it had not been that as soon as I recovered my senses—I was hit on the head just as I landed, and knew nothing of what happened until I found myself in the bushes with young Wilson by my side—the thought occurred to me that I would rescue her or die in the attempt, I would have blown out my brains."

"But, bless my heart, Bathurst," the Doctor said earnestly, "what else could you have done? Why, I jumped overboard without stopping to think, and so did everyone else who had power to do so, no doubt. What good could you have done if you had stayed? What good would it have done to the girl if you had been killed? Why, if you had been killed, she would now be lying mangled and dead with the others in that ghastly prison. You take too morbid a view of this matter altogether."

"There was no reason why you should not have jumped overboard, Doctor, nor the others. Don't you see I was with the woman I loved? I might have seized her in my arms and jumped overboard with her, and swam ashore with her, or I might have stayed and died with her. I thought of my own wretched life, and I deserted her."

"My dear Bathurst, you did not think of your life. I don't think any of us stopped to think of anything; but, constituted as you are, the impulse must have been overpowering. It is nonsense your taking this matter to heart. Why, man, if you had stopped, you would have been murdered when the boat touched the shore, and do you think it would have made her happier to have seen you killed before her eyes? If you had swam ashore with her, the chances are she would have been killed by that volley of grape, for I saw eight or ten bodies lying on the sands, and you yourself were, you

say, hit. You acted upon impulse, I grant, but it was upon a wise impulse. You did the very best thing that could have been done, and your doing so made it possible that Isobel Hannay should be rescued from what would otherwise have been certain death."

"It has turned out so, Doctor," Bathurst said gloomily, "and I thank God that she is saved. But that does not alter the fact that I, an English gentleman by birth, thought only of myself, and left the woman I loved, who was sitting by my side, to perish. But do not let us talk any more about it. It is done and over. There is an end of it. Now I will tell you the story."

The Doctor listened silently until he heard of Isobel's being taken to Bithoor. "The atrocious villain!" he exclaimed. "I have been lamenting the last month that I never poisoned the fellow, and now—but go on, go on. How on earth did you get her away?"

Bathurst told the whole story, interrupted by many exclamations of approval by the Doctor; especially when he learned why Isobel disfigured herself.

"Well done!" he exclaimed; "I always knew that she was a plucky girl, and it needed courage, I can tell you, to burn herself as she has done, to say nothing of risking spoiling her beauty for life. No slight sacrifice for a woman."

Bathurst passed lightly over his fight in the courtyard, but the Doctor questioned him as to the exact facts.

"Not so bad for a coward, Bathurst," he said dryly.

"There was no noise," Bathurst said; "if they had had pistols, and had used them, it might have been different. Heaven knows, but I don't think that then, with her life at stake, I should have flinched; I had made up my mind they would have pistols, but I hope—I think that my nerves would not have given way then."

"I am sure they wouldn't, Bathurst. Well, go on with your story."

"Well, how did you feel then?" he asked, when Bathurst described how the guard rushed in through the gate firing, "for it is the noise, and not the danger, that upsets you?"

"I did not even think of it," Bathurst said, in some surprise. "Now you mention it, I am astonished that I was not for a minute paralyzed, as I always am, but I did not feel anything of the sort; they rushed in firing as I told you, and directly they had gone I took her hand and we ran out together."

"I think it quite possible, Bathurst, that your nervousness may have gone forever. Now that once you have heard guns fired close to you without your nerves giving way as usual, it is quite possible that you might do so again. I don't say that you would, but it is possible, indeed it seems to me to be probable. It may be that the sudden shock when you jumped into the water, acting upon your nerves when in a state of extreme tension, may have set them right, and that bullet graze along the top of the skull may have aided the effect of the shock. Men frequently lose their nerve after a heavy fall from a horse, or a sudden attack by a tiger, or any other unexpected shock. It may be that with you it has had the reverse consequence."

"I hope to God that it may be so, Doctor," Bathurst said, with deep earnestness. "It is certainly extraordinary I should not have felt it when they fired within a few feet of my head. If we get down to Allahabad I will try. I will place myself near a gun when it is going to be fired; and if I stand that I will come up again and join this column as a volunteer, and take part in the work of vengeance. If I can but once bear my part as a man, they are welcome to kill me in the next engagement."

"Pooh! pooh! man. You are not born to be killed in battle. After making yourself a target on the roof at Deennugghur, and jumping down in the middle of the Sepoys in the breach, and getting through that attack in the boats, I don't think you are fated to meet your end with a bullet. Well, now let us walk on, and join the others. Isobel must be wondering how much longer we are going to talk together. She cannot exchange a word with the natives; it must be dull work for her. She is a great deal thinner than she was before these troubles came on. You see how differently she walks. She has quite lost that elastic step of hers, but I dare say that is a good deal due to her walking with bare feet instead of in English boots—boots have a good deal to do with a walk. Look at the difference between the walk of a gentleman who has always worn well fitting boots and that of a countryman who has gone about in thick iron shod boots all his life. Breeding goes for something, no doubt, and alters a man's walk just as it alters a horse's gait."

Bathurst could not help laughing at the Doctor dropping into his usual style of discussing things.

"Are your feet feeling tender, Isobel?" the latter asked cheerfully, as he overtook those in front.

"No, Doctor," she said, with a smile; "I don't know that I was ever thankful for dust before, but I am now; it is so soft that it is like walking on a carpet, but, of course, it feels very strange."

"You have only to fancy, my dear, that you are by the seaside, walking down from your bathing machine across the sands; once get that in your mind and you will get perfectly comfortable."

"It requires too great a stretch of the imagination, Doctor, to think for a moment, in this sweltering heat, that I am enjoying a sea breeze on our English coast. It is silly, of course, to give it even a thought, when one is accustomed to see almost every woman without shoes. I think I should mind it more than I do if my feet were not stained. I don't know why, but I should. But please don't talk about it. I try to forget it, and to fancy that I am really a native."

They met but few people on the road. Those they did meet passed them with the usual salutation. There was nothing strange in a party of peasants passing along the road. They might have been at work at Cawnpore, and be now returning to their native village to get away from the troubles there. After it became dark they went into a clump of trees half a mile distant from a village they could see along the road.

"I will go in," Rujub said, "and bring some grain, and hear what the news is."

He returned in an hour. "The English have taken Dong," he said; "the news came in two hours ago. There has been some hard fighting; the Sepoys resisted stoutly at the village, even advancing beyond the inclosures to meet the British. They were driven

back by the artillery and rifle fire, but held the village for some time before they were turned out. There was a stand made at the Pandoo Bridge, but it was a short one. The force massed there fell back at once when the British infantry came near enough to rush forward at the charge, and in their hurry they failed to blow up the bridge."

A consultation was held as to whether they should try to join the British, but it was decided that as the road down to Allahabad would be rendered safe by their advance, it would be better to keep straight on.

The next day they proceeded on their journey, walking in the early morning, halting as soon as the sun had gained much power, and going on again in the cool of the evening. After three days' walking they reached the fort of Allahabad. It was crowded with ladies who had come in from the country round. Most of the men were doing duty with the garrison, but some thirty had gone up with Havelock's column as volunteer cavalry, his force being entirely deficient in that arm.

As soon as the Doctor explained who they were, they were received with the greatest kindness, and Isobel was at once carried off by the ladies, while Bathurst and the Doctor were surrounded by an eager group anxious to hear the state of affairs at Cawnpore, and how they had escaped. The news of the fighting at Dong was already known; for on the evening of the day of the fight Havelock had sent down a mounted messenger to say the resistance was proving so severe that he begged some more troops might be sent up. As all was quiet now at Allahabad, where there had at first been some fierce fighting, General Neil, who was in command there, had placed two hundred and thirty men of the 84th Regiment in bullock vans, and had himself gone on with them.

The Doctor had decided to keep the news of the massacre to himself.

"They will know it before many hours are over, Bathurst," he said; "and were I to tell them, half of them wouldn't believe me, and the other half would pester my life out with questions. There is never any occasion to hurry in telling bad news."

The first inquiry of Bathurst and his friends had been for Wilson, and they found to their great pleasure that he had arrived in safety, and had gone up with the little body of cavalry. Captain Forster, whom they next asked for, had not reached Allahabad, and no news had been heard of him.

"What are you going to do, Rujub?" Bathurst asked the native next morning.

"I shall go to Patna," he said. "I have friends there, and I shall remain in the city until these troubles are over. I believe now that you were right, sahib, although I did not think so when you spoke, and that the British Raj will be restored. I thought, as did the Sepoys, that they were a match for the British troops. I see now that I was wrong. But there is a tremendous task before them. There is all Oude and the Northwest to conquer, and fully two hundred thousand men in arms against them, but I believe that they will do it. They are a great people, and now I do not wish it otherwise. This afternoon I shall start."

The Doctor, who had found many acquaintances in Allahabad, had no difficulty in obtaining money from the garrison treasury, and Bathurst and Isobel purchased the two handsomest bracelets they could obtain from the ladies in the fort as a souvenir

for Rabda, and gave them to her with the heartiest expressions of their deep gratitude to her and her father.

"I shall think of you always, Rabda," Isobel said, "and shall be grateful to the end of my life for the kindness that you have done us. Your father has given us your address at Patna, and I shall write to you often."

"I shall never forget you, lady; and even the black water will not quite separate us. As I knew how you were in prison, so I shall know how you are in your home in England. What we have done is little. Did not the sahib risk his life for me? My father and I will never forget what we owe him. I am glad to know that you will make him happy."

This was said in the room that had been allotted to Isobel, an ayah of one of the ladies in the fort acting as interpreter. The girl had woke up in the morning flushed and feverish, and the Doctor, when sent for, told her she must keep absolutely quiet.

"I am afraid I am going to have her on my hands for a bit," he said to Bathurst. "She has borne the strain well, but she looks to me as if she was going to have a smart attack of fever. It is well that we got her here before it showed itself. You need not look scared; it is just the reaction. If it had been going to be brain fever or anything of that sort, I should have expected her to break down directly you got her out. No, I don't anticipate anything serious, and I am sure I hope that it won't be so. I have put my name down to go up with the next batch of volunteers. Doctors will be wanted at the front, and I hope to have a chance of wiping out my score with some of those scoundrels. However, though I think she is going to be laid up, I don't fancy it will last many days."

That afternoon a messenger from Havelock brought down the terrible news that they had fought their way to Cawnpore, only to find that the whole of the ladies and children in the Subada Ke Kothee had been massacred, and their bodies thrown down a well. The grief and indignation caused by the news were terrible; scarce one but had friends among the prisoners. Women wept; men walked up and down, wild with fury at being unable to do aught at present to avenge the massacre.

"What are you going to do, Bathurst?" the Doctor asked that evening. "I suppose you have some sort of plan?"

"I do not know yet. In the first place, I want to try whether what you said the other day is correct, and if I can stand the noise of firing without flinching."

"We can't try here in the fort," the Doctor said, full of interest in the experiment; "a musket shot would throw the whole garrison into confusion, and at present no one can go far from the gate; however, there may be a row before long, and then you will have an opportunity of trying. If there is not, we will go out together half a mile or so as soon as some more troops get up. You said, when we were talking about it at Deennugghur, you should resign your appointment and go home, but if you find your nerves are all right you may change your mind about that. How about the young lady in there?"

"Well, Doctor, I should say that you, as her father's friend, are the person to make arrangements for her. Just at present travel is not very safe, but I suppose that directly

things quiet down a little many of the ladies will be going down to the coast, and no doubt some of them would take charge of Miss Hannay back to England."

"And you mean to have nothing to say in the matter?"

"Nothing at all," he said firmly. "I have already told you my views on the subject."

"Well, then," the Doctor said hotly, "I regard you as an ass." And without another word he walked off in great anger.

For the next four or five days Isobel was in a high state of fever; it passed off as the Doctor had predicted it would do, but left her very weak and languid. Another week and she was about again.

"What is Mr. Bathurst going to do?" she asked the Doctor the first day she was up on a couch.

"I don't know what he is going to do, my dear," he said irritably; "my opinion of Bathurst is that he is a fool."

"Oh, Doctor, how can you say so!" she exclaimed in astonishment; "why, what has he done?"

"It isn't what he has done, but what he won't do, my dear. Here he is in love with a young woman in every way suitable, and who is ready to say yes whenever he asks her, and he won't ask, and is not going to ask, because of a ridiculous crotchet he has got in his head."

Isobel flushed and then grew pale.

"What is the crotchet?" she asked, in a low tone, after being silent for some time.

"What do you think, my dear? He is more disgusted with himself than ever."

"Not about that nervousness, surely," Isobel said, "after all he has done and the way he has risked his life? Surely that cannot be troubling him?"

"It is, my dear; not so much on the general as on a particular ground. He insists that by jumping out of the boat when that fire began, he has done for himself altogether."

"But what could he have done, Doctor?"

"That's what I ask him, my dear. He insists that he ought to either have seized you and jumped overboard with you, in which case you would both probably have been killed, as I pointed out to him, or else stayed quietly with you by your side, in which case, as I also pointed out to him, you would have had the satisfaction of seeing him murdered. He could not deny that this would have been so, but that in no way alters his opinion of his own conduct. I also ventured to point out to him that if he had been killed, you would at this moment be either in the power of that villainous Nana, or be with hundreds of others in that ghastly well at Cawnpore. I also observed to him that I, who do not regard myself as a coward, also jumped overboard from your boat, and that Wilson, who is certainly a plucky young fellow, and a number of others, jumped over from the other boat; but I might as well have talked to a post."

Isobel sat for some time silent, her fingers playing nervously with each other.

"Of course it seems foolish of him to think of it so strongly, but I don't think it is unnatural he should feel as he does."

"May I ask why?" the Doctor said sarcastically.

"I mean, Doctor, it would be foolish of other people, but I don't think it is foolish of him. Of course he could have done no good staying in the boat—he would have simply thrown away his life; and yet I think, I feel sure, that there are many men who would have thrown away their lives in such a case. Even at that moment of terror I felt a pang, when, without a word, he sprang overboard. I thought of it many times that long night, in spite of my grief for my uncle and the others, and my horror of being a prisoner in the hands of the Sepoys. I did not blame him, because I knew how he must have felt, and that it was done in a moment of panic. I was not so sorry for myself as for him, for I knew that if he escaped, the thought of that moment would be terrible for him. I need not say that in my mind the feeling that he should not have left me so has been wiped out a thousand times by what he did afterwards, by the risk he ran for me, and the infinite service he rendered me by saving me from a fate worse than death. But I can enter into his feelings. Most men would have jumped over just as he did, and would never have blamed themselves even if they had at once started away down the country to save their own lives, much less if they had stopped to save mine as he has done.

"But who can wonder that he is more sensitive than others? Did he not hear from you that I said that a coward was contemptible? Did not all the men except you and my uncle turn their backs upon him and treat him with contempt, in spite of his effort to meet his death by standing up on the roof? Think how awfully he must have suffered, and then, when it seemed that his intervention, which saved our lives, had to some extent won him back the esteem of the men around him, that he should so fail again, as he considers, and that with me beside him. No wonder that he takes the view he does, and that he refuses to consider that even the devotion and courage he afterwards showed can redeem what he considers is a disgrace. You always said that he was brave, Doctor, and I believe now there is no braver man living; but that makes it so much the worse for him. A coward would be more than satisfied with himself for what he did afterwards, and would regard it as having completely wiped out any failing, while he magnifies the failing, such as it was, and places but small weight on what he afterwards did. I like him all the better for it. I know the fault, if fault it was, and I thought it so at the time, was one for which he was not responsible, and yet I like him all the better that he feels it so deeply."

"Well, my dear, you had better tell him so," the Doctor said dryly. "I really agree with what you say, and you make an excellent advocate. I cannot do better than leave the matter in your hands. You know, child," he said, changing his tone, "I have from the first wished for Bathurst and you to come together, and if you don't do so I shall say you are the most wrong headed young people I ever met. He loves you, and I don't think there is any question about your feelings, and you ought to make matters right somehow. Unfortunately, he is a singularly pig headed man when he gets an idea in his mind. However, I hope that it will come all right. By the way, he asked were you well enough to see him today?"

"I would rather not see him till tomorrow," the girl said.

"And I think too that you had better not see him until tomorrow, Isobel. Your cheeks are flushed now, and your hands are trembling, and I do not want you laid up again, so I order you to keep yourself perfectly quiet for the rest of the day."

But it was not till two days later that Bathurst came up to see her.

The spies brought in, late that evening, the news that a small party of the Sepoy cavalry, with two guns, were at a village three miles on the other side of the town, and were in communication with the disaffected. It was decided at once by the officer who had succeeded General Neil in the command of the fort that a small party of fifty infantry, accompanied by ten or twelve mounted volunteers, should go out and attack them. Bathurst sent in his name to form one of the party as soon as he learned the news, borrowing the horse of an officer who was laid up ill.

The expedition started two hours before daybreak, and, making a long detour, fell upon the Sepoys at seven o'clock. The latter, who had received news half an hour before of their approach, made a stand, relying on their cannon. The infantry, however, moved forward in skirmishing order, their fire quickly silenced the guns, and they then rushed forward while the little troop of volunteers charged.

The fight lasted but a few minutes, at the end of which time the enemy galloped off in all directions, leaving their guns in the hands of the victors. Four of the infantry had been killed by the explosion of a well aimed shell, and five of the volunteers were wounded in the hand to hand fight with the sowars. The Sepoys' guns and artillery horses had been captured.

The party at once set out on their return. On their way they had some skirmishing with the rabble of the town, who had heard the firing, but they were beaten off without much difficulty, and the victors re-entered the fort in triumph. The Doctor was at the gate as they came in. Bathurst sprang from his horse and held out his hand. His radiant face told its own story.

“Thank God, Doctor, it has passed. I don't think my pulse went a beat faster when the guns opened on us, and the crackle of our own musketry had no more effect. I think it has gone forever.”

“I am glad indeed, Bathurst,” the Doctor said, warmly grasping his hand. “I hoped that it might be so.”

“No words can express how grateful I feel,” Bathurst said. “The cloud that shadowed my life seems lifted, and henceforth I shall be able to look a man in the face.”

“You are wounded, I see,” the Doctor said.

“Yes, I had a pistol ball through my left arm. I fancy the bone is broken, but that is of no consequence.”

“A broken arm is no trifle,” the Doctor said, “especially in a climate like this. Come into the hospital at once and let me see to it.”

One of the bones of the forearm was indeed broken, and the Doctor, having applied splints and bandages, peremptorily ordered him to lie down. Bathurst protested that he was perfectly able to get up with his arm in a sling.

“I know you are able,” the Doctor said testily; “but if you were to go about in this oven, we should very likely have you in a high fever by tomorrow morning. Keep yourself perfectly quiet for today; by tomorrow, if you have no signs of fever, and the wound is doing well, we will see about it.”

Upon leaving him Dr. Wade went out and heard the details of the fight.

"Your friend Bathurst particularly distinguished himself," the officer who commanded the volunteers said. "He cut down the ressaldar who commanded the Sepoys, and was in the thick of it. I saw him run one sowar through and shoot another. I am not surprised at his fighting so well after what you have gone through in Deennugghur and in that Cawnpore business."

The Doctor then went up to see Isobel. She looked flushed and excited.

"Is it true, Doctor, that Mr. Bathurst went out with the volunteers, and that he is wounded?"

"Both items are true, my dear. Fortunately the wound is not serious. A ball has broken the small bone of the left forearm, but I don't think it will lay him up for long; in fact, he objects strongly to go to bed."

"But how did he—how is it he went out to fight, Doctor? I could hardly believe it when I was told, though of course I did not say so."

"My dear, it was an experiment. He told me that he did not feel at all nervous when the Sepoys rushed in at the gate firing when he was walking off with you, and it struck me that possibly the sudden shock and the jump into the water when they attacked the boats, and that rap on the head with a musket ball, might have affected his nervous system, and that he was altogether cured, so he was determined on the first occasion to try."

"And did it, Doctor?" Isobel asked eagerly. "I don't care, you know, one bit whether he is nervous when there is a noise or not, but for his sake I should be glad to know that he has got over it; it has made him so unhappy."

"He has got over it, my dear; he went through the fight without feeling the least nervous, and distinguished himself very much in the charge, as the officer who commanded his troop has just told me."

"Oh, I am glad—I am thankful, Doctor; no words can say how pleased I am; I know that it would have made his whole life unhappy, and I should have always had the thought that he remembered those hateful words of mine."

"I am as glad as you are, Isobel, though I fancy it will change our plans."

"How change our plans, Doctor? I did not know that I had any plans."

"I think you had, child, though you might not acknowledge them even to yourself. My plan was that you should somehow convince him that, in spite of what you said, and in spite of his leaving you in that boat, you were quite content to take him for better or for worse."

"How could I tell him that?" the girl said, coloring.

"Well, I think you would have had to do so somehow, my dear, but that is not the question now. My plan was that when you had succeeded in doing this you should marry him and go home with him."

"But why, Doctor," she asked, coloring even more hotly than before, "is the plan changed?"

"Because, my dear, I don't think Bathurst will go home with you."

“Why not, Doctor?” she asked, in surprise.

“Because, my dear, he will want, in the first place, to rehabilitate himself.”

“But no one knows, Doctor, about the siege and what happened there, except you and me and Mr. Wilson; all the rest have gone.”

“That is true, my dear, but he will want to rehabilitate himself in his own eyes; and besides, that former affair which first set you against him, might crop up at any time. Other civilians, many of them, have volunteered in the service, and no man of courage would like to go away as long as things are in their present state. You will see Bathurst will stay.”

Isobel was silent.

“I think he will be right,” she said at last gravely; “if he wishes to do so, I should not try to dissuade him; it would be very hard to know that he is in danger, but no harder for me than for others.”

“That is right, my dear,” the Doctor said affectionately; “I should not wish my little girl—and now the Major has gone I feel that you are my little girl—to think otherwise. I think,” he went on, smiling, “that the first part of that plan we spoke of will not be as difficult as I fancied it would be; the sting has gone, and he will get rid of his morbid fancies.”

“When shall I be able to see him?”

“Well, if I had any authority over him you would not see him for a week; as I have not, I think it likely enough that you will see him tomorrow.”

“I would rather wait if it would do him any harm, Doctor.”

“I don't think it will do him any harm. Beyond the fact that he will have to carry his arm in a sling for the next fortnight, I don't think he will have any trouble with it.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

The next morning Bathurst found Isobel Hannay sitting in a shady court that had been converted into a sort of general room for the ladies in the fort.

"How are you, Miss Hannay? I am glad to see you down."

"I might repeat your words, Mr. Bathurst, for you see we have changed places. You are the invalid, and not I."

"There is very little of the invalid about me," he said. "I am glad to see that your face is much better than it was."

"Yes, it is healing fast. I am a dreadful figure still; and the Doctor says that there will be red scars for months, and that probably my face will be always marked."

"The Doctor is a croaker, Miss Hannay; there is no occasion to trust him too implicitly. I predict that there will not be any serious scars left."

He took a seat beside her. There were two or three others in the court, but these were upon the other side, quite out of hearing.

"I congratulate you, Mr. Bathurst," she said quietly, "on yesterday. The Doctor has, of course, told me all about it. It can make no difference to us who knew you, but I am heartily glad for your sake. I can understand how great a difference it must make to you."

"It has made all the difference in the world," he replied. "No one can tell the load it has lifted from my mind. I only wish it had taken place earlier."

"I know what you mean, Mr. Bathurst; the Doctor has told me about that too. You may wish that you had remained in the boat, but it was well for me that you did not. You would have lost your life without benefiting me. I should be now in the well of Cawnpore, or worse, at Bithoor."

"That may be," he said gravely, "but it does not alter the fact."

"I have no reason to know why you consider you should have stopped in the boat, Mr. Bathurst," she went on quietly, but with a slight flush on her cheek. "I can perhaps guess by what you afterwards did for me, by the risks you ran to save me; but I cannot go by guesses, I think I have a right to know."

"You are making me say what I did not mean to say," he exclaimed passionately, "at least not now; but you do more than guess, you know—you know that I love you."

"And what do you know?" she asked softly.

"I know that you ought not to love me." he said. "No woman should love a coward."

"I quite agree with you, but then I know that you are not a coward."

"Not when I jumped over and left you alone? It was the act of a cur."

"It was an act for which you were not really responsible. Had you been able to think, you would not have done so. I do not take the view the Doctor does, and I agree with you that a man loving a woman should first of all think of her and of her safety.

So you thought when you could think, but you were no more responsible for your action than a madman for a murder committed when in a state of frenzy. It was an impulse you could not control. Had you, after the impulse had passed, come down here, believing, as you might well have believed, that it was absolutely impossible to rescue me from my fate, it would have been different. But the moment you came to yourself you deliberately took every risk and showed how brave you were when master of yourself. I am speaking plainly, perhaps more plainly than I ought to. But I should despise myself had I not the courage to speak out now when so much is at stake, and after all you have done for me.

"You love me?"

"You know that I love you."

"And I love you," the girl said; "more than that, I honor and esteem you. I am proud of your love. I am jealous for your honor as for my own, and I hold that honor to be spotless. Even now, even with my happiness at stake, I could not speak so plainly had I not spoken so cruelly and wrongly before. I did not know you then as I know you now, but having said what I thought then, I am bound to say what I think now, if only as a penance. Did I hesitate to do so, I should be less grateful than that poor Indian girl who was ready as she said, to give her life for the life you had saved."

"Had you spoken so bravely but two days since," Bathurst said, taking her hand, "I would have said. 'I love you too well, Isobel, to link your fate to that of a disgraced man.' but now I have it in my power to retrieve myself, to wipe out the unhappy memory of my first failure, and still more, to restore the self respect which I have lost during the last month. But to do so I must stay here: I must bear part in the terrible struggle there will be before this mutiny is put down, India conquered, and Cawnpore revenged."

"I will not try to prevent you," Isobel said. "I feel it would be wrong to do so. I could not honor you as I do, if for my sake you turned away now. Even though I knew I should never see you again, I would that you had died so, than lived with even the shadow of dishonor on your name. I shall suffer, but there are hundreds of other women whose husbands, lovers, or sons are in the fray, and I shall not flinch more than they do from giving my dearest to the work of avenging our murdered friends and winning back India."

So quietly had they been talking that no thought of how momentous their conversation had been had entered the minds of the ladies sitting working but a few paces away. One, indeed, had remarked to another, "I thought when Dr. Wade was telling us how Mr. Bathurst had rescued that unfortunate girl with the disfigured face at Cawnpore, that there was a romance in the case, but I don't see any signs of it. They are goods friends, of course, but there is nothing lover-like in their way of talking."

So thought Dr. Wade when he came in and saw them sitting there, and gave vent to his feeling in a grunt of dissatisfaction.

"It is like driving two pigs to market," he muttered; "they won't go the way I want them to, out of pure contrariness."

"It is all settled, Doctor," Bathurst said, rising. "Come, shake hands; it is to you I owe my happiness chiefly."

"Isobel, my dear, give me a kiss," the Doctor exclaimed. "I am glad, my dear, I am glad with all my heart. And what have you settled besides that?"

"We have settled that I am to go home as soon as I can go down country, and he is going up with you and the others to Cawnpore."

"That is right," the Doctor said heartily. "I told you that was what he would decide upon; it is right that he should do so. No man ought to turn his face to the coast till Lucknow is relieved and Delhi is captured. I thank God it has all come right at last. I began to be afraid that Bathurst's wrong headedness was going to mar both your lives."

The news had already come down that Havelock had found that it would be absolutely impossible with the small force at his command to fight his way into Lucknow through the multitude of foes that surrounded it, and that he must wait until reinforcements arrived. There was, therefore, no urgent hurry, and it was not until ten days later that a second troop of volunteer horse, composed of civilians unable to resume their duties, and officers whose regiments had mutinied, started for Cawnpore.

Half an hour before they mounted, Isobel Hannay and Ralph Bathurst were married by the chaplain in the fort. This was at Bathurst's earnest wish.

"I may not return, Isobel," he had urged: "it is of no use to blink the fact that we have desperate fighting before us, and I should go into battle with my mind much more easy in the knowledge that, come what might, you were provided for. The Doctor tells me that he considers you his adopted daughter, and that he has already drawn up a will leaving his savings to you; but I should like your future to come from me, dear, even if I am not to share it with you. As you know, I have a fine estate at home, and I should like to think of you as its mistress."

And Isobel of course had given way, though not without protest.

"You don't know what I may be like yet," she said, half laughing, half in earnest. "I may carry these red blotches to my grave."

"They are honorable scars, dear, as honorable as any gained in battle. I hope, for your sake, that they will get better in time, but it makes no difference to me. I know what you were, and how you sacrificed your beauty. I suppose if I came back short of an arm or leg you would not make that an excuse for throwing me over?"

"You ought to be ashamed of even thinking of such a thing, Ralph."

"Well, dear, I don't know that I did think it, but I am only putting a parallel case to your own. No, you must consent: it is in all ways best. We will be married on the morning I start, so as just to give time for our wedding breakfast before I mount."

"It shall be as you wish," she said softly. "You know the estate without you would be nothing to me, but I should like to bear your name, and should you never come back to me, Ralph, to mourn for you all my life as my husband. But I believe you will return to me. I think I am getting superstitious, and believe in all sorts of things since so many strange events have happened. Those pictures on the smoke that came true, Rujub sending you messages at Deennugghur, and Rabda making me hear her voice and giving me hope in prison. I do not feel so miserable at the thought of your going into danger as I should do, if I had not a sort of conviction that we shall meet again. People believe in presentiments of evil, why should they not believe in presentiments

of good? At any rate, it is a comfort to me that I do feel so, and I mean to go on believing it."

"Do so, Isobel. Of course there will be danger, but the danger will be nothing to that we have passed through together. The Sepoys will no doubt fight hard, but already they must have begun to doubt; their confidence in victory must be shaken, and they begin to fear retribution for their crimes. The fighting will, I think, be less severe as the struggle goes on, and at any rate the danger to us, fighting as the assailants, is as nothing to that run when we were little groups surrounded by a country in arms.

"The news that has come through from Lucknow is that, for some time at any rate, the garrison are confident they can hold out, while at Delhi we know that our position is becoming stronger every day; the reinforcements are beginning to arrive from England, and though the work may be slow at first, our army will grow, while their strength will diminish, until we sweep them before us. I need not stop until the end, only till the peril is over, till Lucknow is relieved, and Delhi captured.

"As we agreed, I have already sent in my resignation in the service, and shall fight as a volunteer only. If we have to fight our way into Lucknow, cavalry will be useless, and I shall apply to be attached to one of the infantry regiments; having served before, there will be no difficulty about that. I think there are sure to be plenty of vacancies. Six months will assuredly see the backbone of the rebellion altogether broken. No doubt it will take much longer crushing it out altogether, for they will break up into scattered bodies, and it may be a long work before these are all hunted down; but when the strength of the rebellion is broken, I can leave with honor."

There were but few preparations to be made for the wedding. Great interest was felt in the fort in the event, for Isobel's rescue from Bithoor and Cawnpore, when all others who had fallen into the power of the Nana had perished, had been the one bright spot in the gloom; and there would have been a general feeling of disappointment had not the romance had the usual termination.

Isobel's presents were numerous and of a most useful character, for they took the form of articles of clothing, and her trousseau was a varied and extensive one.

The Doctor said to her the evening before the event, "You ought to have a certificate from the authorities, Isobel, saying how you came into possession of your wardrobe, otherwise when you get back to England you will very soon come to be looked upon as a most suspicious character."

"How do you mean, Doctor?"

"Well, my dear, if the washerwoman to whom you send your assortment at the end of the voyage is an honest woman, she will probably give information to the police that you must be a receiver of stolen property, as your garments are all marked with different names."

"It will look suspicious, Doctor, but I must run the risk of that till I can remark them again. I can do a good deal that way before I sail. It is likely we shall be another fortnight at least before we can start for Calcutta. I don't mean to take the old names out, but shall mark my initials over them and the word 'from.' Then they will always serve as mementoes of the kindness of everyone here."

Early on the morning of the wedding a native presented himself at the gate of the fort, and on being allowed to enter with a letter for Miss Hannay of which he was the bearer, handed her a parcel, which proved to contain a very handsome and valuable set of jewelry, with a slip of paper on which were the words, “From Rabda.”

The Doctor was in high spirits at the breakfast to which everybody sat down directly after the wedding. In the first place, his greatest wish was gratified; and, in the second, he was about to start to take part in the work of retribution.

“One would think you were just starting on a pleasure party, Doctor,” Isobel said.

“It is worth all the pleasure parties in the world, my dear. I have always been a hunter, and this time it is human 'tigers' I am going in pursuit of—besides which,” he said, in a quieter tone, “I hope I am going to cure as well as kill. I shall only be a soldier when I am not wanted as a doctor. A man who really loves his profession, as I do, is always glad to exercise it, and I fear I shall have ample opportunities that way; besides, dear there is nothing like being cheerful upon an occasion of this kind. The longer we laugh, the less time there is for tears.”

And so the party did not break up until it was nearly time for the little troop to start. Then there was a brief passionate parting, and the volunteer horse rode away to Cawnpore. Almost the first person they met as they rode into the British lines was Wilson, who gave a shout of joy at seeing the Doctor and Bathurst.

“My dear Bathurst!” he exclaimed. “Then you got safely down. Did you rescue Miss Hannay?”

“I had that good fortune, Wilson.”

“I am glad. I am glad,” the young fellow said, shaking his hand violently, while the tears stood in his eyes. “I know you were right in sending me away, but I have regretted it ever since. I know I should have been no good, but it seemed such a mean thing for me to go off by myself. Well, Doctor, and so you got off too,” he went on, turning from Bathurst and wringing the Doctor's hand; “I never even hoped that you escaped. I made sure that it was only we two. I have had an awful time of it since we heard the news, on the way up, of the massacre of the women. I had great faith in Bathurst, and knew that if anything could be done he would do it, but when I saw the place they had been shut up in, it did not seem really possible that he could have got anyone out of such a hole. And where did you leave Miss Hannay?”

“We have not left her at all,” the Doctor said gravely; “there is no longer a Miss Hannay. There, man, don't look so shocked. She changed her name on the morning we came away.”

“What!” Wilson exclaimed. “Is she Mrs. Bathurst? I am glad, Bathurst. Shake hands again; I felt sure that if you did rescue her that was what would come of it. I was almost certain by her way when I talked to her about you one day that she liked you. I was awfully spoony on her myself, you know, but I knew it was no use, and I would rather by a lot that she married you than anyone else I know. But come along into my tent; you know your troop and ours are going to be joined. We have lost pretty near half our fellows, either in the fights coming up or by sunstroke or fever since we came here. I got hold of some fizz in the bazaar yesterday, and I am sure you

must be thirsty. This is a splendid business; I don't know that I ever felt so glad of anything in my life," and he dragged them away to his tent.

Bathurst found, to his disappointment, that intense as was the desire to push forward to Lucknow, the general opinion was that the General would not venture to risk his little force in an operation that, with the means at his disposal, seemed well nigh impossible. Cholera had made considerable ravages, and he had but fifteen hundred bayonets at his disposal. All that could be done pending the arrival of reinforcements was to prepare the way for an advance, and show so bold a front that the enemy would be forced to draw a large force from Lucknow to oppose his advance.

A bridge of boats was thrown across the Ganges, and the force crossed the river and advanced to Onao, eight miles on the road to Lucknow. Here the enemy, strongly posted, barred the way; but they were attacked, and, after hard fighting, defeated, with a loss of three hundred men and fifteen guns.

In this fight the volunteer horse, who had been formed into a single troop, did good service. One of their two officers was killed; and as the party last up from Allahabad were all full of Bathurst's rescue of Miss Hannay from Cawnpore, and Wilson and the Doctor influenced the others, he was chosen to fill the vacancy.

There were two other fierce fights out at Busserutgunge, and then Bathurst had the satisfaction of advancing with the column against Bithoor. Here again the enemy fought sturdily, but were defeated with great slaughter, and the Nana's palace was destroyed.

When, after the arrival of Outram with reinforcements, the column set out for Lucknow, the volunteers did not accompany them, as they would have been useless in street fighting, and were, therefore, detailed to form part of the little force left at Cawnpore to hold the city and check the rebels, parties of whom were swarming round it.

The officer in command of the troop died of cholera a few days after Havelock's column started up, and Bathurst succeeded him. The work was very arduous, the men being almost constantly in their saddles, and having frequent encounters with the enemy. They were again much disappointed at being left behind when Sir Colin Campbell advanced to the relief of Havelock and the garrison, but did more than their share of fighting in the desperate struggle when the mutineers of the Gwallior contingent attacked the force at Cawnpore during the absence of the relieving column. Here they were almost annihilated in a desperate charge which saved the 64th from being cut to pieces at the most critical moment of the fight.

Wilson came out of the struggle with the loss of his left arm, and two or three serious wounds. He had been cut off, and surrounded, and was falling from his horse when Bathurst cut his way to his rescue, and, lifting him into his saddle before him, succeeded after desperate fighting in carrying him off, himself receiving several wounds, none of which, however, were severe. The action had been noticed, and Bathurst's name was sent in for the Victoria Cross. As the troop had dwindled to a dozen sabers, he applied to Sir Colin Campbell, whose column had arrived in time to save the force at Cawnpore and to defeat the enemy, to be attached to a regiment as a volunteer. The General, however, at once offered him a post as an extra aide de camp

to himself, as his perfect knowledge of the language would render him of great use; and he gladly accepted the offer.

With the column returning from Lucknow was the Doctor.

"By the way, Bathurst," he said on the evening of his return, "I met an old acquaintance in Lucknow; you would never guess who it was—Forster."

"You don't say so; Doctor."

"Yes; it seems he was hotly pursued, but managed to shake the sowars off. At that time the garrison was not so closely besieged as it afterwards was. He knew the country well, and made his way across it until within sight of Lucknow. At night he rode right through the rebels, swam the river, and gained the Residency. He distinguished himself greatly through the siege, but had been desperately wounded the day before we marched in. He was in a ward that was handed over to me directly I got there, and I at once saw that his case was a hopeless one. The poor fellow was heartily glad to see me. Of course he knew nothing of what had taken place at Deennugghur after he had left, and was very much cut up when he heard the fate of almost all the garrison. He listened quietly when I told how you had rescued Isobel and of your marriage. He was silent, and then said, 'I am glad to hear it, Doctor. I can't say how pleased I am she escaped. Bathurst has fairly won her. I never dreamt that she cared for him. Well, it seems he wasn't a coward after all. And you say he has resigned and come up as a volunteer instead of going home with her? That is plucky, anyhow. Well, I am pleased. I should not have been so if I hadn't been like this, Doctor, but now I am out of the running for good, it makes no odds to me either way. If ever you see him again, you tell him I said I was glad. I expect he will make her a deucedly better husband than I should have done. I never liked Bathurst, but I expect it was because he was a better fellow than most of us—that was at school, you know—and of course I did not take to him at Deennugghur. No one could have taken to a man there who could not stand fire. But you say he has got over that, so that is all right. Anyhow, I have no doubt he will make her happy. Tell her I am glad, Doctor. I thought at one time—but that is no odds now. I am glad you are out of it, too.'

"And then he rambled on about shooting Sepoys, and did not say anything more coherently until late that night. I was sitting by him; he had been unconscious for some time, and he opened his eyes suddenly and said, 'Tell them both I am glad,' and those were the last words he spoke."

"He was a brave soldier, a fine fellow in many ways," Bathurst said; "if he had been brought up differently he would, with all his gifts, have been a grand fellow, but I fancy he never got any home training. Well, I am glad he didn't die as we supposed, without a friend beside him, on his way to Lucknow, and that he fell after doing his duty to the women and children there."

Wilson refused to go home after the loss of his arm, and as soon as he recovered was appointed to one of the Sikh regiments, and took part in the final conquest of Lucknow two months after the fight at Cawnpore. A fortnight after the conclusion of that terrible struggle Sir Colin Campbell announced to Bathurst that amongst the dispatches that he had received from home that morning was a Gazette, in which his name appeared among those to whom the Victoria Cross had been granted.

“I congratulate you heartily, Mr. Bathurst,” the old officer said: “I have had the pleasure of speaking in the highest terms of the bravery you displayed in carrying my message through heavy fire a score of times during the late operations.”

Great as the honor of the Victoria Cross always is, to Bathurst it was much more than to other men. It was his rehabilitation. He need never fear now that his courage would be questioned, and the report that he had before left the army because he lacked courage would be forever silenced now that he could write V. C. after his name. The pleasure of Dr. Wade and Wilson was scarcely less than his own. The latter's regiment had suffered very heavily in the struggle at Lucknow, and he came out of it a captain, having escaped without a wound.

A week later Bathurst resigned his appointment. There was still much to be done, and months of marching and fighting before the rebellion was quite stamped out; but there had now arrived a force ample to overcome all opposition, and there was no longer a necessity for the service of civilians. As he had already left the service of the Company, he was his own master, and therefore started at once for Calcutta..

“I shall not be long before I follow you,” the Doctor said, as they spent their last evening together. “I shall wait and see this out, and then retire. I should have liked to have gone home with you, but it is out of the question. Our hands are full, and likely to be so for some time, so I must stop.”

Bathurst stopped for a day at Patna to see Rujub and his daughter. He was received as an expected guest, and after spending a few hours with them he continued his journey. At Calcutta he found a letter awaiting him from Isobel, saying that she had arrived safely in England, and should stay with her mother until his arrival, and there he found her.

“I expected you today,” she said, after the first rapturous greeting was over. “Six weeks ago I woke in the middle of the night, and heard Rabda's voice distinctly say: 'He has been with us today: he is safe and well; he is on his way to you.' As I knew how long you would take going down from Patna, I went the next day to the office and found what steamer you would catch, and when she would arrive. My mother and sister both regarded me as a little out of my mind when I said you would be back this week. They have not the slightest belief in what I told them about Rujub, and insist that it was all a sort of hallucination brought on by my sufferings. Perhaps they will believe now.”

“Your face is wonderfully better,” he said presently. “The marks seem dying out, and you look almost your old self.”

“Yes,” she said; “I have been to one of the great doctors, and he says he thinks the scars will quite disappear in time.”

Isobel Bathurst has never again received any distinct message from Rabda, but from time to time she has the consciousness, when sitting quietly alone, that the girl is with her in thought. Every year letters and presents are exchanged, and to the end of their lives she and her husband will feel that their happiness is chiefly due to her and her father—Rujub, the Juggler.

THE END.

Table of Contents

RUJUB, THE JUGGLER	1
PUBLISHERS' INTRODUCTION.	3
CHAPTER I.	5
CHAPTER II.	9
CHAPTER III.	19
CHAPTER IV.	30
CHAPTER V.	40
CHAPTER VI.	50
CHAPTER VII.	64
CHAPTER VIII.	74
CHAPTER IX.	86
CHAPTER X.	99
CHAPTER XI.	110
CHAPTER XII.	123
CHAPTER XIII.	134
CHAPTER XIV.	150
CHAPTER XV.	164
CHAPTER XVI.	177
CHAPTER XVII.	187
CHAPTER XVIII.	201
CHAPTER XIX.	214
CHAPTER XX.	226
CHAPTER XXI.	239
CHAPTER XXII.	250
CHAPTER XXIII.	261