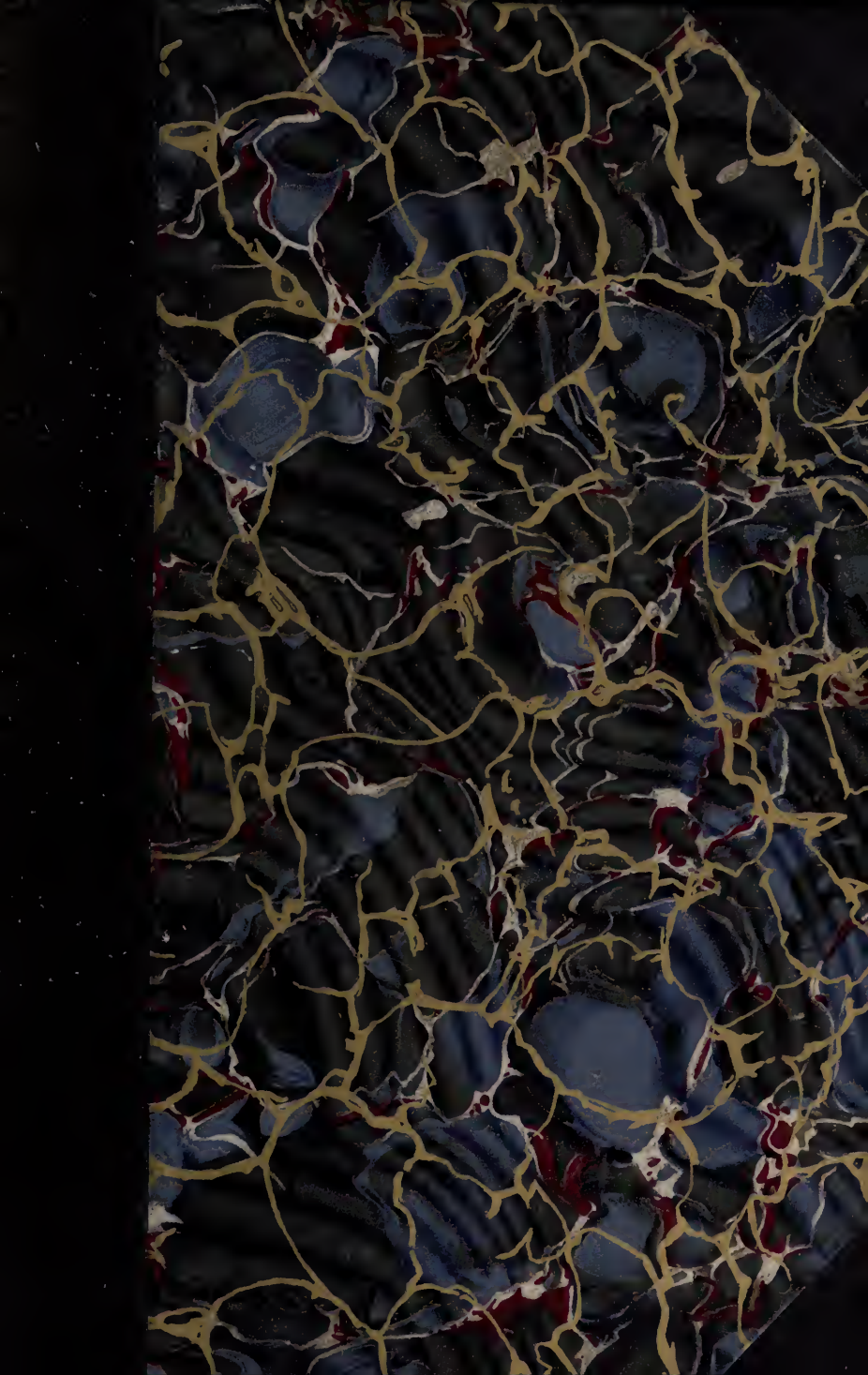

Tales from "Blackwood"

TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD"

Being the most Famous Series of Stories ever Published Especially Selected from that Celebrated English Publication

Selected by

H. CHALMERS ROBERTS

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J. LANDER

TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD."

SUCH PITY AS A FATHER HATH.

BY MRS W. G. SCOTT-MONCRIEFF.

THE grey downpour of a wet afternoon in late September gave a dreary look to the surroundings of Ballendoun farmhouse up on the hillside, and to the little village of Inchrye in the valley below. In the northern counties of Scotland in such weather, nature's face seems grim and careworn to her loving children; and even on those who profess a stoic indifference to her moods she has a depressing effect.

So down in the village the one long straggling street was empty even of the children, who on a less dismal day would have braved the rain and their mothers' admonitions alike. The smithy door, a favourite loitering-place, was deserted; there was no

one to be seen at the burn, where the parapet of the little bridge ended in a conveniently low wall on which sociably-disposed people might sit and talk. Only at the merchant's shop was there any stir of life. The merchant's shop in a Scotch village is, as far as his capital permits, an emporium, and even if your lack be only a lack of news, you will find that he retails it too, and gratis.

On this cheerless afternoon the merchant had some half-dozen customers,—one or two in search of pins or treacle, but most come to talk over the news. And for once they had weighty news to discuss—news which, as Affleck the innkeeper remarked, with a certain gloomy satisfaction, "would be in a' the papers the morn." Peter Sim, a local jack-of-all-trades, as accredited Inchrye correspondent of the weekly 'County Herald,' was already composing his account of the sad event, or tragic occurrence (he was not sure how to characterise it), and was quite alive to his increased importance in the esteem of his neighbours, as their mouthpiece on this occasion to the world.

"Ye maun min' an' pit in that he's some silly-like, Peter," said Mrs Rae, the merchant's wife.

"Silly-like!" interrupted her husband; "he's mair nor silly,—he's clean daft."

"The wunner to me is," said Peter, "no that the thing has happened, but that it didna happen afore."

"Ye're richt there, Peter," from Affleck; and a chorus of "Ay, ay," followed this remark, and there was another ruminative pause. They had had the news under discussion since morning; and although there was still much to think of, there was little left to say.

"There hasna bin onything like it in the place sin' that pedlar body was murdered at the cross-dykes," said Peter at length; "an' he was an orra sort o' cratur, that naebody kent much aboot. Noo, this is ane o' wersels."

"Fa was't murdered the pedlar?" inquired Mrs Rae.

"Oh, some o's ain freens, as far as I min'; it was efter some drucken quarrel they hed."

"Ye canna jist say that auld Grant's murdered, though," said Mrs Rae; "he's no deid yet, and Robbie Macbeth's wife telt me 'at he had heard the doctor say to auld Kirsty 'at he micht live gin they took awfu' care o' him."

"Teuch!" said Peter, contemptuously; "doctors maun gie folk hope, fatever's wrang, but we a' ken *that's* naething to gae by. Na, na; if this wasna a by-ordnar' thing, wad the doctor hae tauld Robbie to gang to Kirktown and see the fiscal aboot it? an' as sure's I'm sittin' here, that's far Robbie's gane."

As he ceased, the sound of quick footsteps coming along the uneven roadway roused a general expect-

ancy among the group; and Jean Raffan, the schoolmaster's servant, who was ostensibly there to choose some knitting-yarn from the piled-up bundles in the doorway, looked out to report, turning in again with a warning, "Preserve us! if it's no Meg Grant!"

The new-comer paused on the threshold to close her wet umbrella before entering the shop. She was a weather-beaten, elderly woman, very plainly dressed, in dark wincey, with a checked plaid covering her head and closely wrapped round her spare figure. Both dress and plaid were very wet, and her thick shoes were covered with mud. "A loaf o' white breid and a quarter o' tea," she said, as Mrs Rae came forward to serve her. She felt painfully conscious that her every word and movement were noted by those round her, but the somewhat ungracious reserve habitual to her race helped her to hide, under an impassive face and laconic tone, all the agitation they looked for.

"Is that a'?" asked Mrs Rae, when she had served her.

"Ay," was the answer, as her customer, gathering her purchases into the grey shawl, turned quickly to the door.

Peter Sim and Affleck shuffled out of her way; and, still with a tingling consciousness of their attentive eyes and ears, Meg Grant stepped out into the rain and hastened home. They were not unkindly people: if her unexpected advent had roused their

curious interest in her, as a partaker in that morning's tragedy, it had also served to quicken their sympathy; and when Mrs Rae said, "She was aye ane to keep hersel' to hersel', Meg Grant, but we maun a' feel for her noo, puir thing"—there was a general assent.

Meanwhile, leaving them to discuss her trouble, as she knew they would, Meg hastened home, past the church, prettier than most Scotch parish churches, but to-day sharing in the dreary aspect of the world—up the steep hill road, across the whin-hill as a short cut, and into the road again. It was a Highland road, and long sprays of wild-rose overhung the dyke on either side, while the rushes and marsh-fern fringing the ditches smelt sweet in the rain. Every stone in the wall, every bush she knew, and yet she seemed so far removed in her own consciousness from the days when they were familiar. They looked now as they had looked yesterday, but she felt herself so strangely different. The change, the horror which had in a few hours seized and made itself at home in her life, overshadowed all her thoughts as she walked. She tried to ignore it, she forced her mind to grasp and reiterate every trivial idea suggested by external things; she observed the cart-ruts, half full of rain, and wondered in a dull fashion if any cart had passed that day. The braid at the edge of her dress was frayed in front, and she made herself calculate how

much she would need to go round the skirt. She was trying to absorb herself in the question of whether she should take into common wear her purple wincey gown, and use this for her morning work, when the lurking consciousness of her trouble, which she had striven to keep out, overthrew all her feeble defences, and like a surrounding, inrushing tide, swept through her heart. Her father would die—why, it would be mourning she would be wearing next, and where would she be? Her father gone, and Willie—if they "did onything" to him she would be left alone, alone in the world.

The sight of the sodden corn-stooks in the fields as she passed seemed to have no meaning to her eyes. Yesterday they were her father's, the precious scanty results of the year's anxious farming; and she had watched for a drying wind, and rejoiced when it came — and hoped and feared: but now, now, her father was dying, and Willie in trouble, and what did it matter about the corn? The cart-track grew more steep and stony as she came near home, and ended in a narrow bit of open grassy field, at the farther side of which was the farmhouse and steading. Her heart had been dully beating in her ears all the way, like a whispered suggestion, "What if he is dead? what if he is dead?" and she dreaded to look, lest at door or window she should see some one watching to tell her. But all was still. Only Moy, the collie, with all a dog's sympathy, came to meet

her, looking in her face with troubled affection, and following her slowly to the door.

In front of the farmhouse was a little bit of garden, full of wet bushy plants: these grew lank and lush about the low windows, lessening the amount of light they gave, which was not much at best. On either side of the little pebble-paved path leading from the gate to the door, the borders were trodden down by heavy footmarks, and the climbing monthly rose-bush trained up the house wall had one long unfastened branch broken and trampled into the wet earth. The threshold was marked with muddy footsteps, and the few deer and sheep-skin mats laid on the stone floor of the little entrance lobby had been hastily pushed aside. Meg noted these signs of disorder with dull eyes. All the zeal for thrift and order which had hitherto kept her hands busy, and her home a credit to her — all her huswife pride seemed far away from her, and it was mechanically and without paying much heed that she lifted the broken rose branch and fastened it back before she went in. The keeping-room and a little-used parlour flanked the door on either side. A small staircase opposite gave access to the bedrooms; and a long, narrow, echoing passage, off which opened dairies and cupboards, led to the back kitchen. Meg stood and listened at the parlour door, where her father lay, but there was no sound. He had been carried in there in the morning, and the doctor had

forbidden her to attempt to move him. Hoping that he slept, she went as quietly as she could to the back kitchen. Here a peat-fire was smouldering on the open hearth, and beside it, slouching in a low arm-chair, sat a tall, heavily-built man, somewhat older than herself. It was her brother Willie.

"That's you, is't?" he remarked, hardly looking round. "Ye've gotten yoursel' real weet."

"Ay, it's jist me," said Meg, wearily, unfolding her purchases from her shawl; "has Kirsty been ben?"

"Ay, she was ben," he answered, indifferently; then observing the parcels, "Hae ye been doun a' the wye to the mairchant's? Fat for did ye no tell me ye were gaun? I wad hae gane for ye. I like fine to gang to the mairchant's, ye ken that," he went on, with a childish air of grievance.

Meg looked at him. She was filled with an aching sense of pity for him—his inability to understand what he himself had done. "He wad gang to the mairchant's!" she thought to herself, with almost a smile at his childishness, and then a sharp pang, as she pictured the sensation his appearance would have created among the gossips there. "It was bad aneuch me gaun," she added to herself, as she knelt on the hearth to blow up the fire.

"Fat was Kirsty seekin'?" she asked her brother.

"I dinna ken."

"Did ye no speer at her?" continued Meg, trying to speak lightly.

"No, I tell you; fat for should I speer?" he replied, roughly. "She said somethin' about fader wantin' his tea, and that you were ower lang—that's a' I min' o'. Fat for did ye no lat me gang to the mairchant's?" he continued, fretfully, harking back to his grievance.

Meg knew his ways, and that she must humour him to keep him quiet. "Weel, Wullie, fat wad ye hae gotten gin I had latten ye? Is't sweeties ye were wantin'?"

He nodded with a cunning look. "She aye gies me them when I gang,—ye ken that."

"Aweel, if that's a'," said Meg, "you blaw the fire, there's a guid laddie, till I gang up the stair and get aff thae weet claes, an' I'll fess down a gran' poke I got frae Glesgey tae ye."

Willie's eyes brightened, and he clenched the bargain by taking the bellows from his sister, leaning forward in his chair and blowing with a will. Meg hurried away to change her dress. Her bedroom was above the room where her father lay, and though she moved as lightly as she could, her footsteps apprised those below of her return. When she came down she found Kirsty, a stout old woman—their only servant—watching for her at the foot of the stair.

"Hoo's fader?" Meg asked, in an eager whisper.

"Ou, he's aye the same," answered Kirsty; "he's no sleepin', but he lies quaite aneuch."

"Was he speerin' for me?"

"He askit far ye was, an' I said ye wadna be lang, an' was he wantin' his tea? but he said he wad wait or ye cam'."

"I'll bring it ben in twa meenits; gang in an' tell him," said Meg, as she hastened to the back-kitchen. Willie had wearied of his task, but the fire had burnt up nevertheless, and the kettle boiled. Meg hurried to get the tea ready, laying on the table the box of confections she had brought down with her. "See, Wullie, there's for ye." It was a pretty little French-made box, with a picture of kittens on the top. Willie seized it with an exclamation of pleasure.

"Eh, see at thae bonnie little catties! Isna that real bonnie?"

He was still occupied with it, turning it over in his hands, taking out and replacing first one sweetmeat and then another, when Meg summoned him to the table.

"There's white breid for ye the nicht," she said, "an' ye like that. Come in ower and tak' your tea, and I'll send Kirsty to ye—I'm away ben wi' fader's."

She placed a tea-cup and some bread and butter on a small japanned tray which had been her mother's, and was kept as an ornament on the kitchen mantel-shelf. As she took it down and dusted it, with the sense of a great occasion justifying its use, she remembered how her mother used to speak of it with pride as "ane o' my mairriage presents." She carried it

along the passage, and gently opened the door of the room where her father lay. Kirsty was stirring the fire, which burnt in a dull and cheerless fashion. "I canna mak' it burn," she explained; "the vent's that damp wi' no being eesed."

"Are ye cauld, fader?" asked Meg, tenderly, as she laid down her tray and bent over him. He was an old man, but strong and hearty-looking, with a vigorous frame and sunburnt face. His thick grey hair was ruffled with the uneasy movement of his head on the pillow, and his eyes unclosed wearily as his daughter spoke.

"I think I maun hae been sleepin'," he said, in a puzzled tone. "Far hae ye been, Meg?"

"I gaed doun to the mairchant's. I wasna lang; and noo, here's yer tea, fader."

He lay on the sofa, which had been hastily converted into a bed for him. It was a hard, old-fashioned sofa, covered with horse-hair, but more roomy than a modern couch; and with blankets and pillows gathered in haste from the rooms up-stairs, Meg had made it fairly comfortable.

His eyes fell on the little tea-tray as she put it on a chair beside him. "That's yer mither's tray," he said, dreamily; and then with a faint smile, "Fat hae we gotten white breid for? I'm no a veesitor."

"I thocht ye micht fancy it, fader," she said, trying to smile back, "an' I haena bakit the day."

The room was so dark, from the shadow of the

elder-bushes in the garden, and the fire so cheerless, that Meg lit a candle, one of a pair in tall green-glass candlesticks on the mantelpiece, which was crowded with an array of little ornaments — three framed photographs, a pair of china watch-dogs with gilt chains, and a britannia-metal vase full of dried grasses mixed with silver moons of honesty from the garden.

Meg placed the candlestick on the top of a high chest of drawers, behind her father's head, and went to the window to draw down the blind. As she did so, she saw the figure of an approaching visitor opening the little gate.

"It's the minaister!" she said, half aloud, and turned to Kirsty. "Kirsty, thon's the minaister; he'll hae come to see fader, but ye maunna lat him in: say 'at the doctor said we were to lat naebody in; an' say I canna come to the door, gin he speers for me."

Kirsty rose from her knees before the fire, on which she had not effected any visible improvement.

"An', Kirsty," said Meg, following her as she went to the door, "ye maunna lat him ben to Wullie—ye maunna! Jist say 'at we canna see him the noo, nane o's, though we're muckle obleeged till him for coming."

A knock at the house-door summoned Kirsty. She hastily smoothed her apron and left the room, closing the door behind her. A rainy gust of wind shook it

as she opened the outer one to the minister's knock; and the old farmer looked inquiringly at his daughter, who came and knelt beside him.

"Fa's thon?" he asked, uneasily. "Wasna that some ane at the door?"

"Ay, it's jist Mr Robison come tae speer for ye; but she'll no lat him in. Ye maun keep quaite, ye ken, and try tae tak' yer tea, fader. Are ye no' carin' for't?"

"Ou, I dinna ken," he said, but he took the cup, and let her raise his head with her strong arm. She was a slender little woman this daughter of his, with a pale and thin but sweet face, and large grey eyes, full of expression. "There's mair strength an' sense baith in Meg's little finger than you'll ever hae," he had been wont to say, by way of reproof and incentive to Willie, when the two were children, and Willie's idiotcy had not seemed more than very backward intelligence; but the words grew so sadly true, that he had long ceased to say them.

Now, as Meg knelt beside him, with one arm under his head, and gently took the empty cup from him with her free hand, he looked fondly at her and stroked her cheek. "Ye were aye like yer mither, Meg," he murmured,—"douce and mindfu' like yer mither."

Meg's aching heart could hardly bear this unwonted tenderness. Like most Scotch country folk, they were silent and reserved in their deepest affections,

and it was very seldom that any caress passed between them. That her father should be so unlike himself, therefore, increased her terrible forebodings, until she could no longer fight them back: her lips trembled, her eyes filled, her heart ached, so that she longed to hide herself and weep; but she might not, for who could take her place?

As she knelt, the voices outside of Kirsty and the minister, unconsciously to themselves, grew louder. "Have the police been informed?" the minister was asking. They had moved as they talked into the shelter of the half-closed door, and both voices were distinctly heard. Meg instantly remembered Willie in the kitchen, and dreaded his overhearing them; but the same thing seemed to have occurred to Kirsty, and she heard her go and close the door leading to the kitchen passage before answering.

"Ou ay, sir; Macbeth, the constable, was up as sune's he heard, maybe a twa hours efter, an' he saw the doctor, efter he had been in like; and they said the shirra wad be comin' oot: it's an awfu' business."

"Very sad, very sad indeed," returned the minister. Meg began to apprehend a long colloquy between the two, and cast about in her mind how to stop it. Mr Robertson—or Robison as it was locally pronounced—was a kindly gossiping man, farm-bred and bucolic in his interests, a good judge of the temporal affairs of his parishioners, and able as well as ready to advise in regard to them; but not distinguished for

wisdom or sympathy, or any diagnostic power in spiritual things. To such a man, in such a position, the gossip of the country-side was of unfailing interest, and the news of the Grants' trouble had made him take Ballendoun on his way home, so as to hear particulars if possible at first hand. Kirsty might be trusted to keep him at the door, Meg knew, but the opportunity of so eager a listener was more than her talkativeness could resist. She was stout, and lame from rheumatism, and could not therefore be sent on errands demanding haste, such as Meg's to the village that afternoon. This was her first opportunity of pouring forth to an outsider a full account of the morning's events, and she was loath to lose it.

Meg knelt by the sofa watching her father's face, —he was a little dull of hearing, as they put it, but she thought he must hear now.

"Had Mr Grant any quarrel with Willie?" asked the minister.

"Na, na," said Kirsty, "it was naethin' o' that sort. Fa wid quarrel wi' the like o' him? It was jist a sudden bleeze o' anger. The laddie jist gied him a clart ower the heid—he didna like haein' to gang oot to's wark sae early like; he jist did it in a bleeze o' anger."

"Fader, I'll tell him to gang. Kirsty sudna haud him speakin' that gait," said Meg, with vexation, endeavouring to rise. But the old man caught her arm. "Lat a-be, Meg—lat a-be; we're maybe nane

the waur o' hearin' fat folk think o's, ance in a while."

"An' how is Mr Grant? is he conscious—was he stunned?" queried the minister.

"Dr Fraser said 'at he was dangerous," answered Kirsty; "he was afraid o' fivver comin' on, and we mustna lat naebody in tae see him, or else they wad hae been prood to hae seen ye, sir. Na, he wasna exackly stunned; he cried tae Wullie that he cudna rise, and Wullie he came rinnin' in to hiz, and tauld us a' aboot it."

"Do you mean that he confessed the crime?" inquired the minister; and in his tone Meg could detect that condemnation which he, and doubtless all the neighbours, would deal out to Willie.

"He couldna but tell's," explained Kirsty; "but it was no what you wad ca' confessin', sir, for he disna seem to ken he's dune wrang. He helpit us tae get the maister in. But he's sic a naitral—he forgets a'thing as sune as it's ower. He's no' responsible for it, though it's an awfu' bisness."

"I doubt whether the law will take that view of it, though," said Mr Robertson, pompously; "it's a murderous assault, any way you look at it."

He was beginning a fresh question, when Meg grew desperate, and, unable to free her arm, which was under her father's head, against his will, and while he held her hand to keep her, she called Kirsty to come to her in so peremptory a tone, that the

minister, with a hasty "There's Miss Grant calling: is he in there? I didn't know; say I just called to inquire,"—took his departure, and Kirsty reappeared.

"Gae ben an gie Wullie his tea, and dinna stand claivering wi' folk that gait. It isna fit," Meg added sadly, "fan we hae sick folk i' the hoose."

Kirsty shut the door and hirpled away to the back-kitchen, to take her tea with Willie. He was sitting at the table, dividing his attention between a thick slice of bread and butter and the box of sweets. "Isna that rale bonnie?" he said, with childish exultation, to Kirsty, holding out the box for her to see.

"Eh ay! siccan a bonnie box," she answered, with the tone of interest one uses to a child. "Far got ye that, Wullie?"

"Frae Meg," he said, nodding his head in the direction of the parlour. "She got it frae Glesgey: div ye see the wee catties on't?"

Kirsty admired it at due length, and accepted one of the sweetmeats, which Willie, with an air of importance, chose out from the rest with his big fingers, and placed in her hand.

"Thank ye, Wullie—I'll keep it till I've hed my tea," she said; and then they took their meal in silence.

Kirsty, as an old servant of the family, well accustomed to Willie and his ways, had almost come

to regard him as a child in years as well as sense. He was "the laddie" or "the boy" when they spoke of him—strong enough indeed to do a man's work, though very lazy over it, and not to be trusted to carry on any task without supervision. But he was very easily guided, and obedient on the whole, and had always been accounted harmless. All the neighbours knew his uncouth slouching figure, and had a kind word ready for him when they met.

Now, indeed, since his sudden assault on his father that morning, the news of which had spread like wildfire through the village, a feeling of uneasiness had taken possession of the neighbours. That one wild deed might at any moment be followed by another, and Willie become a dangerous lunatic, instead of a harmless "naitral," was their confident expectation; and the little gathering at the merchant's were still discussing Meg's appearance among them, and trying to extract from it fresh light on the situation, long after she reached her home.

"It stands to rizzon the auld man canna be in dainger, or she wudna hae left him," said Peter Sim.

"Ah, but she cudna send Kirsty, d'ye see?—she's that cripple; so she bud to come hersel'. I'm thinkin' that wud be the wye o't," interposed Mrs Rae. "It's no varra lang, just a twa-three days ago, sin' Wullie was doun here a message; she used aye to send him for ony little thing—puir falla!"

"She wudna send him the day, though," put in Peter Sim; "wull he be lockit up, think ye?"

This was a new idea, and much debated. Robbie Macbeth, as the constable was familiarly called, had been twice up at Ballendoun in the morning, and had been seen talking to the doctor on the latter's return.

"An' he went awa' to Kirktown by the twal' train, an' I ken this is no the day 'at he sud gang," added Rae, with some emphasis.

"He wad be gaun to gie a deposition, or fat is't they ca' it?" speculated his wife.

"*He* disna do that," said Peter Sim, in a tone of contempt for her limited knowledge. "That's fat auld Grant maun do afore he dees; but Robbie wad be gaun to get the shirra to tak it—*that's* mair likely."

"Aweel, the shirra canna come the day," remarked Affleck, "for there's no train frae Kirktown till the morn; they're unco ill aff for trains comin' this wye."

"He's bud to come, though, fan a man's deein', trains or no trains; and auld Grant's deein', or I'm much mista'en," said Peter Sim.

"It was an awfu' clart he got," said a stout matron, who had recently joined the conclave, on the pretext of an errand to "the shop." "Robbie Macbeth's wife telt me the cut was as lang's yer haun', and unco deep, richt across the back o's heid; and neither

wunner. Wullie's gey strong, an' he wad hae nae control o' himsel' when he was angert."

"See, fa's this comin'?" called Peter Sim from the threshold, where he stood smoking and looking out. There was a general rising, and crowding to the door, of the group within.

They saw a carriage coming along the winding road from Kirktown.

"That's varra like Macbeth on the box," said Mr Rae.

"An' it's varra like that new machine frae Davidson's at Kirktown," added Affleck. "It maun jist be the shirra. He'll hae posted a' the wye oot. They'll be comin' to huz. I'll awa'."

He hurried away to the inn to receive the arrivals, and the rest of the group of idlers slowly dispersed, some to find a post of observation near the inn, and the rest to watch from the doors of their own homes in the long village street.

The carriage stopped at the Inchrye Arms to water the horses. Macbeth, the constable, climbed down from the box, stiff and weary after the long, wet drive. A party of four occupied the inside seats: Mr Bruce, the sheriff-substitute of the county—a tall and fine-looking young man, with closely shaven face and keen eyes; with him the grey-haired old procurator fiscal, and a consequential-looking clerk. They had gone a little out of their way in coming to pick up Dr Fraser, who lived on the outskirts of

Inchrye parish. He was to act as medical officer for the Crown.

"Does your lordship wish me to accompany you?" asked Macbeth respectfully, at the carriage window.

"What do you say, Doctor?" said Mr Bruce. "You know the son's state of mind. You thought his arrest would do harm to the father?"

"Undoubtedly," replied the doctor, a red-haired Scotchman, rather brusque and energetic in his speech, but thoroughly kind-hearted; "it would kill him off straight. I must protest against it while there is the least chance of life for the old man."

"But," said Mr Bruce, slowly, "in a case of this kind we must consider other people. The son seems to have been harmless enough hitherto; but when he has made one savage assault of this nature, is it not highly probable he will soon follow it by others?"

"There is about one chance in a thousand," returned the doctor. "I know the man very well. I am satisfied it is not a case of brain disease at all. His sister has complete control over him. The assault was evidently from sudden irritation, as a child will strike you in a fit of rage. I saw him only an hour or so after—for they happened to hear I was in the village, and sent for me—and he was perfectly quiet, without the least trace of excitement. If you take Macbeth now to arrest him, you very

likely will throw him into a state of excitement very difficult to control, and you most certainly will hasten the father's death. He is greatly attached to his son. He calls him 'the boy,' though he must be over forty."

The fiscal had still to be convinced. "If he has any sense, he will be aware from the fact of our coming that his crime is of a very serious nature. They may help him to escape if we delay the arrest," he suggested.

"He has not sufficient sense for that," replied the doctor; "as you will see at a glance. He had no intention of injuring his father, and he did not in the least realise the strength of the blow he gave. I don't suppose he knows what a prison is, and if he does he will never dream of being sent there himself. Leave the constable here till we come back, and then you can give what orders you please."

To these arguments they yielded; and ordering Macbeth to await them at the inn when they returned, they drove on to Ballendoun.

Willie and Kirsty were still in the back-kitchen, the former hulking over the fire in comfortable contentment, while Kirsty moved to and fro, washing the dishes. Suddenly the sound of approaching wheels on the rough farm-road broke the silence, and Willie rose to look out. "It's a cairriage!" he said, gleefully—"a twa-horsed cairriage, an' it's comin'

straicht tae the hoose. I maun gang oot and see," and he hurried out bareheaded to the roughly paved yard. Kirsty's heart leapt to her mouth. Macbeth had said the sheriff would come, but she had thought not till the morrow, and now this must be he, for no carriage but the doctor's gig ever came their way. She stayed but one moment at the window to make sure: the carriage rumbled over the rough bit of causeway into the yard, and stopped. Willie went forward to meet it, the doctor's face appeared at the window, and behind him she could discern other figures.

She hastened to the parlour and knocked at the door gently, then opened it a little way. "Could I speak wi' ye, Miss Grant?"

"Wheesht! come in," returned Meg, almost in a whisper; "I canna leave fader."

Kirsty stood hesitating. "It's some one wantin' ye."

"I think fader's sleepin'," whispered Meg, "and I canna move my airm oot. Oh, dinna mak' a noise, Kirsty,—the sleep'll dae him guid."

But her patient had heard.

"Na," he said, "ye needna mind, for I wasna sleepin', jist thinkin', thinkin'. Fat is't, Kirsty?"

"It's the doctor," said Kirsty, desperately, "an' he's wantin' Miss Grant."

"Is there onybody wi' him?" asked the old man in a hoarse voice.

"I dinna ken fa it is," said poor Kirsty, afraid of the effect of her news. "It's a close cairriage, and I cudna see richt."

"It 'ill be the shirra," said the old farmer, with grim certainty. "They maun think I'm gaun tae dee."

Meg gave a choking sound of despair, and Kirsty put her apron to her eyes.

"Dinna greet, Meg," said her father, changing his tone to cheer her. "I'll maybe cheat them yet." Then, with greater energy and imperativeness than he had yet shown, he gave orders to Kirsty. "Gae ben and say she's comin', Kirsty, but we're no jist ready to see them yet; and see fat they'll tak," he added, with strong hospitable instinct. "You gie her the key, Meg." Meg obeyed mechanically. "Bring oot the wine to them; and noo, mind," called the old man, as Kirsty hurried away, "they're not to come or she comes for them."

"Meg," said her father, in a strange, dogged tone, when they were left alone, "I heard a' that chattering body was sayin' to Kirsty at the door. I'm no gaun to hae my son spoken o' that gait. There was nane o' ye saw hoo I cam by my fa', and Wullie sall no be blamit for it. I ken hoo tae tell what I hae to tell—and gin you come in wi' them, ye maunna interfere."

Meg did not understand what he would be at, but she signified assent, being afraid to vex him by any

question. He seemed greatly agitated, and his hands trembled. He watched her as she moved about tidying the room, but seemed satisfied with the readiness to acquiesce in his wishes expressed in her face. She smoothed the bedclothes over him, lit the other candle, and placed both on the table, and stirred the fire into greater brightness.

Sounds of heavy footsteps and voices echoed along the stone passage. Meg paused, and looked round the room. "Are ye a' richt, fader?" she asked. "I'll bring ben the doctor first, wull I?"

"It disna maitter," said her father absently, absorbed in arranging his thoughts for the interview. "Dinna be lang."

She left him, closing the door gently.

The little lobby was dark, but looking along to the kitchen she saw Kirsty lighting the lamp, and a man bending over some papers at the table. The blood, surging to her head, sang in her ears, and a deadly faintness benumbed her thoughts: groping for the wooden railing of the staircase, she sank on the lowest step for a minute, to recover strength. Her heart throbbed as if it were breaking. It could not be that her father lay there with no hope of life; that after this strange, swiftly-passing day, she would hear his voice no more; that these men had come to take Willie to prison, to be accused of murder! Was it she to whom all this had come?

"O God! O God!" she cried dumbly, rock-

ing herself to and fro; "it canna be! it canna be!"

A wail of one of the old Scotch psalms came to her mind distraught with trouble:—

> "Thy breaking waves pass over me,
> Yea, and Thy billows all."

The mournful old minor air to which she was accustomed to sing the words sounded in her ears, and, dwelling for an instant on the memories it recalled, she had a little rest and lull of forgetfulness.

"I should like to see Miss Grant now," she heard the doctor's voice saying, "before we go to her father."

Meg rose, and walked, as one in a dream, along the dark passage. She entered the kitchen, which seemed crowded. The grey-headed fiscal was talking in a low voice to Kirsty. The clerk stood at the table writing headings to some large sheets of paper unfolded before him. Dr Fraser greeted her sympathetically.

"Here is Miss Grant. I hope your father has passed a quiet day?" he asked.

Mr Bruce came in from the courtyard, closely followed by Willie, who had taken a fancy to him, and was asking questions as to where they were going, and how far they had come.

"There is the sheriff," said Dr Fraser; "he wishes to see your father as soon as possible, Miss Grant."

The sheriff bowed courteously, and looked at her with kindly pity. "I am very sorry to disturb Mr Grant," he said, "but it is necessary to have his evidence, and we shall take it first. Is he ready to see us?"

Meg tried to answer, but found she could not speak. Her colourless face attracted the doctor's notice, and he pushed her on to a chair. "You have overtaxed your strength, Miss Grant," he said; "you have had much to try you, but for your father's and every one's sake you must keep up now."

Kirsty had already set forth a bottle of wine and biscuits, and offered them to the company. The doctor forced Meg to take some wine. "I shall go to your father now," he said, "and come back for you. Don't be afraid; we shall not make him speak much."

He disappeared, and when he returned to summon them, Meg had gathered strength to go too. Willie was following, but the fiscal stopped him. "You wait here, my man; we are coming back again to talk to you." He hesitated, but a suggestion from Kirsty that he might help to put up the horses delighted him, and he hurried out at once.

The doctor led the way along the passage to the parlour, and they entered in silence. Meg would have moved forward the heavy horse-hair chairs which stood against the wall, but the doctor forestalled her. "We can do that," he said. "Where will you sit yourself?"

She took her place near the head of the sofa, and behind it, within touch of her father. Mr Bruce drew in a chair in front, the fiscal and doctor seated themselves on either side of the fire, while the clerk arrranged his papers with fussy importance at the table in the centre of the little room.

The candles shed a small circle of wavering light on the table itself, but the rest of the parlour was dark, except when a flicker of firelight lit up the corners and shone on the picture-frames, or revealed the pile of books above the tall chest of drawers, flanked by stuffed birds on little moss-covered wooden stands. A piece of old-fashioned white netting hung over the top of the drawers, and the starched window-curtains were of white netting too, and made glimmering points of light in the general shadow. The faces of the silent group were all in shadow except that of the old farmer, who lay looking towards the fire, the white pillows throwing into strong relief his weather-beaten, brown features. They had always, through a long and hard life, expressed strong self-reliance, and never more so than now. There was great and simple dignity in his manner as he briefly greeted Mr Bruce, and then waited for him to speak.

"I have called, Mr Grant," said the sheriff, "to receive your own account of the assault committed this morning. Dr Fraser certifying on soul and conscience that your injuries are of such a nature as

to endanger your life, we think it advisable to obtain your declaration without delay."

The old man lay still, and looked at him in silence. The solemnity of Mr Bruce's tone and of the whole proceeding gave Meg a strange feeling, as if she were present at some religious service.

"You understand the nature of an oath?"

The farmer signified assent.

"I caution you, in taking this oath, to remember your position as one, it may be, in prospect of death. Repeat after me, 'I swear by Almighty God, as I shall answer to God at the great day of judgment, I will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.'"

Mr Grant slowly repeated the words.

"What is your age?"

"Seventy-four, last March."

"Now, will you tell me exactly what happened this morning?"

The old farmer then gave his evidence in a slow but clear voice. "We went oot tae wark at six o'clock, or it micht be a few meenits afore it. I led oot the ae horse, an' Wullie was yokin' the ither. I had a spade ower my left shouther, an' that micht hae gien the horse a fricht, I canna say, but it gied a start, and I fell doun, an' I kent I was hurt some wye wi' the spade." He paused, and added emphatically, "There was naebody wi' me fan I fell."

His audience held their breath and looked at each

other, the story was so different from their expectation. The old man looked round at them, almost defiantly, and went on in the same measured tone, "There was naebody wi' me fan I fell, and naebody saw me."

The silence was only broken by the scratching sound of the clerk's pen. Meg sat in a whirl of bewilderment. What did her father mean? He had told them, when they ran out to him, that Willie had done it; every one knew—Willie said so himself.

Mr Bruce spoke. "I have cautioned you, Mr Grant, to remember the solemn nature of your oath. Do you, on oath, tell us there was no one with you, that no one struck you? Are you sure of it?"

"I am sure no one struck me," said the old man, doggedly; "it was jist an accident."

"How do you explain your injury, then?" put in the fiscal.

"I canna explain it—it was jist an accident," he repeated.

"You have told us," said Mr Bruce, "that your son went out with you to work: where was he when you fell?"

"He was in the stable yokin' the ither horse."

"About how far from you?"

"It micht be a maitter o' nine or ten yairds," said the old man.

Again there was silence, and the clerk wrote down his words.

"Had you had any quarrel with your son?" inquired Mr Bruce.

"Na, I never had ony quarrel wi' him that I min' o'."

"Was he angry about anything, then?" asked the fiscal.

"He wasna jist varra weel pleasit to gang oot sae early; he said there was nae need for us to begin suner than ithers."

"And what did you say?"

"Ou, I said little; I jist said we could stop the suner at nicht."

"And did that make him angry?" asked Mr Bruce.

"Oh, he wasna varra weel pleasit, but he was no to call angry."

"When did this conversation take place?"

"A wee whilie afore I got my fa'."

Dr Fraser had leant forward for some minutes watching the old man's face, and he now whispered to the fiscal, "Ask him if he did not complain to any one that his son had struck him."

The question was put.

"Na," was the emphatic answer, "I never said that."

The doctor rose and stood by the sofa. "Do you not remember," he asked in a very distinct voice, "telling me, when I bound up your head this morning, that your son had struck you with a spade, but you knew he had not meant any harm?"

A slight flicker of hesitation crossed the old man's

face. Here was an easy way of escape from the difficult task he had set himself, and putting it in that light, surely the law could not deal hardly with Willie; but it was only for an instant he wavered. He had made up his mind, and he would not change.

"Never!" he answered, looking steadily up in the doctor's face. "Ye *may* hae heard some ither body say so, but it wasna me. *Wullie had nae haun' in it*, that I'll sweer tae." Then he turned to his daughter, —"Gie me some watter, Meg; I'm no weel."

Meg hurried with trembling limbs to the back-kitchen for the water. Willie and the driver sat at the fire—the driver eyeing him with an air of dread and distrust, only allayed by the peaceful presence of Kirsty. Willie was full of clumsy friendliness in his way, and was talking in a rambling fashion, quite unconscious of the feelings he inspired. Kirsty followed Meg back to the door.

"I wad gang to the coo," she said, "but that driver body he's that feared, he winna bide alane wi' Wullie —an' he's sae weet, I cudna lat him stand oot-bye i' the cauld. Wull it be lang or they gang, mem?"

"I dinna ken," said Meg, distractedly. "Ye maun jist dae the best ye can." And she returned to the parlour. Her father drank the water thirstily. "Eh, that's fine," he said.

Meanwhile Mr Bruce and the doctor had a hasty consultation. "Do you think his mind is wandering?" whispered the sheriff.

"I think not, certainly not: he has some fever, which may increase during the night, but he seems perfectly sound at present. It is an attempt to screen the son," Dr Fraser concluded, "and he knew he was telling me a lie just now."

The sheriff looked puzzled and thoughtful as he returned to his seat by the sofa. The farmer turned to him. "I can gang on noo, sir, gin ye like; it was jist a dwam."

"I will read over your evidence to you," said Mr Bruce after a pause; "listen carefully, in case there is anything you wish to change or add." He turned to take the papers from the clerk, and read the declaration slowly, pausing at every sentence. The old man listened attentively without comment.

"Are you prepared to sign this as truth?"

"I canna write weel when I'm able," said he, "and I cudna sign it enoo; but I declare that it is the truth."

"Give me the pen," said Mr Bruce; and he signed the paper for him, passing it to the fiscal and doctor to witness. He then rose.

"Are ye awa'?" asked the farmer.

"We must see your son and take his declaration first," was the answer; "but we shall take it in the kitchen, and leave you to rest. Good night."

Mr Grant looked troubled. "It's little ees askin' him," he said earnestly. "Ye canna gang by fat he says—he'll tell ye a' wrang as like as not. He's no richt in his mind, sir; ye needna speer at him."

"We must take his declaration in any case," said the sheriff, soothingly, "as he seems to have been the only person near you at the time of your accident."

Dr Fraser stayed with Meg for a few minutes, directing her how to wet the bandages on her father's head without moving them, and again feeling his pulse. "You have excited yourself too much," he said, kindly; "try to put the matter out of your head now. This taking evidence is only a form, and no one will meddle with you or Willie: try to keep quiet, and do not talk."

When they were alone Meg looked at her father, afraid to excite him by speaking. He avoided her eyes, and lay quiet watching the glow of the fire. She was filled with trouble. Deeply as she had dreaded his death, it seemed as if worse evil had come now, that he should swear falsely.

He was suffering increasing pain from his wound, and yet too excited to rest. The words of the oath, as he had heard his own voice repeating them, rang in his ears. "As I shall answer to God," he had protested, and God knew it was a lie. "In the prospect of death," Mr Bruce had said, by way of warning. He was, like most old people who have had hard and weary lives, not unwilling to see what death had in store, and sufficiently stoical in his nature to face the incidental pains of dying; but to go out of life so, with a lie on his lips—he shrank from the dishonour. "But God canna want me to blame Wullie," he

thought. "He made him like's he is, an' He wadna hae me mak' him suffer for't, an' me no here to speik for him. God kens I wadna hae ony hairm come to Wullie. I wad rayther suffer for't mysel'. God canna want me to say 'at he did it," he repeated half aloud.

Meg bent forward to catch his words. "But, fader," she said, timidly, "He wadna hae you sweer tae a lee."

Her father looked at her—a long troubled look—and sighed. "Meg," he said, "it was for you as weel's Wullie I said thon, an' I'll tak' the wyte o't."

"For me, fader?" she asked, wonderingly.

"Div ye no see, lass," he continued, "fan ye haena me ye maun hae Wullie. Gin I had tauld them fa did it, they wad pit him in jyle as sune as I was deid, and gin they didna hang him, he wad be keepit somewhere a's life; and you," he said tenderly,—"you wad be a' yer lane, my puir lassie."

Meg shuddered at the thought of Wullie's fate; her own loneliness she did not think of.

"Oh, fader! dear fader! I wad say ye ken best, but I canna say it. It canna be richt, even though," and the words seemed to choke her,—"even though they did a' that to Wullie. Ye sud say a' the truth, when ye sweered 'at ye wad."

"I canna think God wad hae me ruin my ain son," persisted her father.

"But sud we no leave that tae Him tae see tae?" urged Meg. "He kens fat Wullie's like, better nor

you an' me." She was so accustomed to lean on and revere her father's judgment and opinion hitherto, that in a calmer moment she would have felt sure she must be mistaken if they differed. But now she grew urgent. "If it was for me 'at ye said it, no to leave me alone, dinna think o' that. I wad far raither ye tauld them a' the truth, and then we wad do the best we cud for Wullie efter. I canna think," she continued, gaining confidence, "they wad pit ane like him in prison—they wad a' see he cudna mean it." Her father's face changed as she finished speaking: he turned towards her and caught feebly at her hand. "It's just a dwam o' faintness," he murmured. Meg hastily used such restoratives as she had, and sat still holding his hand until his eyes opened again.

"Weel, fader?" she asked, tenderly.

"Aweel," he sighed, "it's dune noo, and we'se lat it be." She began to speak, but he checked her with a fretful "Wheesht;" and as he seemed much weaker since his last attack of faintness, she feared to distress him.

She could only sit in silence, grieving for what seemed to her his great mistake. And yet it was from his great love to Willie. She remembered how he had borne with endless patience all his trying ways, working hard and late at busy times to make up what Willie had left undone, and how careful he had been to provide him with little pleasures when he could. It had been a home of love and happiness,

the home of these three together, and now it seemed all to have fallen in ruins round her in one miserable day. Oh, how sweet and tranquil the long uneventful past seemed as she looked back! Only last night they had sat together, her father resting after a long day and reading the weekly paper, sometimes a bit here and there aloud. Willie sat smoking and listening too, and she had finished the first of her father's new socks, and set up the second one,—it was lying now in the kitchen drawer. As she sat holding her father's hand, thinking, the quiet was broken by the heavy sound of Willie's footsteps coming along she passage, and he stumbled against and opened the parlour door. "Meg!" he called.

"Dinna mak' a noise," she said, rising hastily.

"Lat him in," murmured her father. "Weel, Wullie, hae ye come ben to see me?"

Willie looked rather surprised at his father's position. "Hoo's yer heid, fader?" he asked, noticing the bandages; and then, without waiting for an answer—"The man wants to see fader's hat. I tauld him"—with an air of importance—"it was clean cut through, an' he said he maun see't; sae gie it to me, Meg."

Meg took it from a drawer. "See that!" said Willie, triumphantly pushing his fingers through a long cut in the crown and brim,—"I tauld ye!" Then observing a stain on his fingers, he said with a disturbed air, "Eh, but there's bluid on't!"

"Wullie," said the old man, "come near me,—I want to speik to ye. Did they ask ye fae was't hurt me?"

"I tauld them it was me," said Willie, "an' I took them oot and shawed them the place. The man said, Wasna I sorry I had hurted ye? but I tauld him I didna mean to dae it, and it was jist a mistake. Can ye no come ben, fader?"

"Na," said the old man, in so grave a tone that even Willie, eager to "tak ben" the hat, was arrested. "Na, Willie, I'm no able. I ken, my laddie, ye didna mean to hurt me sae mickle, but I'm gaun to dee—I'm gaun whaur yer mither is—but ye'll no forget me?"

"Na, fader, I winna. I'm real vext, fader, 'at I did it. Wull ye no be better the morn?"

"Maybe I wull," was the solemn answer. Meg looked from one to the other—how little Willie could understand!

"Weel, I maun awa' ben," he said, after a minute's silence. "Guid nicht, fader."

"Guid nicht, Wullie."

Meg sat quietly down again, after shutting the door, which he left open. Surely now her father would see that concealment was hopeless—that he would only burden his own conscience. "An' they a' ken," she thought; "the doctor, an' Kirsty, an' a' —an' me, if they askit me to sweer, I wad hae to tell them it was Wullie." She looked at her father: his face was working with deep emotion, and the slow,

painful tears forced themselves between his closed eyelids. "Meg," he said at last, with a kind of sob, "it gangs to ma varra hert that a' this sud come tae Wullie fan he didna mean it, and he kens sae little fat it a' means, my ain puir bairn. I sud hae guided him better, and he wadna hae dune it." The struggle between his unspeakable love for his son—heartless and unconcerned that son appeared to others, but intensely dear and pathetically helpless in his sight—and his sense of truth and righteousness, was almost greater than he had strength for.

"I thocht," he continued, in a broken voice, "God cudna want me to sweer against Wullie, even though it was the truth; but I see noo I was wrang. Wullie's a puir, feckless cratur, but he's better nor me: he's tauld them a', an' made nae lees. God forgie me—it's hard tae ken fat's richt, Meg. They say 'at a man sud 'sweer to's own hurt and chynge not,' but it's a muckle deal harder to sweer to the hurt o' ane that ye lo'e." Meg pressed his hand tenderly, too awestruck by the anguish and striving of his soul to speak. At length he said, with a great sob of yearning and grief, "Oh that I sud be the ane to bring it on him—me that's his fader!"

She burst into tears of sympathy. "Na, na, dinna say that; it's an awfu' trouble, but it disna come frae oursels. It's jist sent to us, fader, and we maun tak' it frae God."

"He kens," began the old man; then his voice

died away altogether, and his hand feebly grasped his daughter's, as if for help, and then relaxed. She hastily applied her restoratives and bathed his forehead with cold water, trying to lower his pillows as gently as she could. The pain of being moved seemed to help to restore consciousness, and again he opened his eyes. When he spoke, his voice was almost a whisper. "It was jist anither kin' o' dwam, but it was a warnin'. I'll no need to pit aff—ye're richt, Meg. I'll tell him noo, if he's no gane."

Meg knelt beside the sofa and laid her head on his breast; then she kissed him. "Dear, dear fader!" she said, her hot tears falling on his cheek, "I'll gang this meenit."

"Dinna lat them a' come," whispered her father; "jist the shirra."

She rose and ran to the kitchen. Mr Bruce and the doctor sat silently by the fire. The others were gathered at the table—the clerk turning over the hat Willie had brought in, and attaching a label to it. Meg went straight to the sheriff. "Fader wad like to see ye again, sir; he has mair to say to ye."

Mr Bruce and the doctor exchanged glances. "I will come," he said, rising.

"He wanted naebody but you, sir," she said; "he's gettin' awfu' waik."

"I must have one other witness besides yourself," he said. "You had better come, doctor." He took a sheet of paper from the clerk, and they went.

The old man was looking eagerly towards the door when they entered.

"I'm told you wish to see me," said Mr Bruce, instinctively lowering his voice and bending over the sofa.

"Ay, sir," was the answer; "sit ye doun. I'm that waik," he added, apologetically, "I canna speik hardly."

Dr Fraser interposed, and, feeling his pulse, advised a stimulant before he was allowed to say more. He went himself to the kitchen, and bringing a tumbler with some wine, gave him a few teaspoonfuls. "Now," he said, "go on."

"You wish to change your declaration?" asked Mr Bruce, encouragingly.

"Ay," said the farmer.

Mr Bruce folded the paper on his knee, and wrote in pencil the necessary preamble: "*At Ballendoun aforesaid*," &c., &c., "*the said John Grant, being at his own request re-examined, declares*——" Soon the old man spoke, but so low as to be almost inaudible —"It was the boy 'at did it; he cam' ahint me wi' a little spade—he struck me ower the heid an' I fell."

"By 'the boy' you mean your son?" asked the sheriff, writing.

"Ay."

"What was your reason for not stating this before?"

"I didna want to blame my ain son," whispered the old man.

"What is your son's age?"

"He's forty years auld, but he has a muckle want,—ye can see that," pleaded the father.

Dr Fraser now made a signal that the examination should end.

"Just one thing more," said Mr Bruce. "When you said that no one had struck you, and attributed your injury to an accident, you were not stating the truth?"

"I was not."

"And you declare what you have now told me is the truth?"

"Ay," repeated the old man, with a heavy sigh, "it is the truth."

Again the faintness overcame him, and he was longer in coming round.

"This faintness will probably recur, Miss Grant," said Dr Fraser as they waited, "and I must not conceal from you that I fear your father has only a few hours to live, at most. I may be wrong—I hope I am—but apparently the end is near. These attacks of faintness will probably recur; but as far as I can judge there will be no suffering, which would distress you more. I shall stay all night if you wish it."

"Oh, if ye wad be so kind, sir," said Meg. As she spoke, the hand she was holding stirred a little. "He's comin' roun' noo, sir."

The sheriff and Dr Fraser signed the declaration, and as her father clasped her left hand tighter when she tried to withdraw it to go to the table, the doctor brought the paper, and held it steady while she added her name.

"They winna tak' Wullie wi' them the nicht?" she whispered to him.

"No, no," said Mr Bruce, who heard what she said; "nothing will be done to agitate or distress Mr Grant. I am only sorry that my coming should have been unavoidable. I sympathise with you very much in your trouble. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, sir, and thank ye kindly."

Her father lay in what appeared to be a heavy sleep, only showing consciousness of her presence by holding her hand more firmly when she tried to withdraw it. After an hour of watching, the doctor bade her go and get some food, as she would need her strength through the night. She rose obediently, and he took her place. The old man opened his eyes drowsily when he felt the hand that held his changed. "Are ye awa'?" he whispered.

She looked appealingly at the doctor,—"Yes, go," he said.

"Ay, fader, but I'll no be lang."

She made up the fire, and set the room straight again, moving the candles so as to shade her father's face: then she hurried away.

Kirsty was out about the doors,—Willie was just

going to bed. "Tak' off yer sheen here," said Meg, "and dinna mak' mair noise than ye can help; an', Wullie, if fader wants ye I'll come for ye."

"What sud he want me for?" said Willie, staring at her.

"The doctor says he's gaun to dee," said poor Meg, with a choking sob. "Oh, Wullie! Wullie!" and she threw her arms round his neck in a passion of weeping. Willie stood motionless for a minute, and then began with clumsy caresses to soothe her. "Dinna greet, Meg, dinna greet," he said; and then, "Maybe he wunna dee."

But she could not at once stop her tears, and when Kirsty came in she turned to her and they wept together, as she told the doctor's opinion.

"I maun gang to him," said Meg, suddenly springing up.

"Oh, wait a wee, mem," cried the old woman, holding her. "He cudna hae a better body wi' him than the doctor,—he's jist as kind and conseederate a man as there is. I maskit a cup o' tea for ye as sune's they gaed awa', but I didna like to come ben, it was sae quaite,—I thocht maybe he was sleepin'."

"Sae he is," said Meg, drying her tears, and accepting the proffered tea; but she could not eat, the bread seemed to choke her. Kirsty promised to make supper for the doctor, and have a bed ready; and with a kindly "ye maun bear up for a' our sakes,

mem," from the sympathetic old servant, she went back to her long night watch.

The doctor came back from his supper, and sat with her for a time, but there was no visible change. Hour after hour passed by. The old man's breathing was quiet and regular, and they hoped he slept; but he always seemed conscious of any movement of Meg's hand clasping his.

At last she begged the doctor to go and rest. "I. wad ca' up the stair gin he needs ye; an' ye maun be weary, sir," she urged.

He had been up almost all the previous night, and was very tired, so he said he would go.

"If he wakens, get him to take a few spoonfuls of the wine," he said; "it will be better than anything else."

Meg promised, and he left the room. She heard his footsteps going softly up the little stair, and then the door overhead closed, and all was silent.

The fire had burnt very low, and she could hardly see her father's face. She knelt by the sofa, and laid her cheek softly against his wrinkled hand as it lay above the blankets, clasping the other in both of hers. There was rest and quiet now, after the distraction and grief of the day. He slept peacefully, and his peace comforted her heart. "This is what deith will be tae him," she reflected—"a peacefu' sleep efter the burden an' heat o' a lang, lang day."

She remained kneeling by him for a long time.

The candle burnt down, flickered, and went out; the fire was out too, but the growing light from the window which faced the east revealed more and more plainly the face she loved. As she knelt, at length her father's eyes opened, and looked at her with quiet recognition. He smiled a little, and, raising his hand, stroked her hair tenderly.

"I'm gaun awa' to yer mither, Meg," he said; and after a pause, laying his hand again on her head, he added, dreamily, "Ye'll min' an' say tae them 'at they maunna be hard on Wullie." Then he slept, and Meg knew it was now no passing slumber, but the rest so long and quiet, undisturbed by earth's many voices—the sleep which only death can give to the weary children of men.

COINCIDENCES ??

THE "long, long Indian day" is quickly falling. The retreating sun is darting Parthian shafts over the dusty *maidan;* and the life and movement of the cantonment, which have been dammed up during the scorching hours, are again astir. Punkahs have been stopped, and windows have been opened to admit the cool evening air. Smart soldiers, in spotless white uniform, are strolling from their barracks in search of fresh air, or perchance beer at the friendly canteen of a neighbouring corps. Lawn tennis is in full swing in the club compound. The band has begun to play at the station band-stand, and the Resident's barouche and the more modest "convaininces" of humbler Anglo-Indian life, are trundling dustily forth with pale-faced ladies, who are going to listen to its strains and enjoy the evening coolness.

I had only lately arrived in India, in command of

a draft, and had not previously done duty with the regiment in its Eastern quarters, having been for some years on the staff, though I had had, in earlier days of my soldiering, some experience of the country. I had paid most of the regulation visits, and felt that I might face the local society, without my conscience reproaching me with any social *lâches;* so as there was no counter-attraction, I thought I might as well spend the time before mess by following the carriages to the band-stand as in any other way.

As I sallied from my bungalow, in the coolest and lightest of garments, not unpardonably conscious that the said garments were fresh from the hands of a London artist, and therefore considerably superior to the kits of most of my brother officers, who had been obliged to supplement the ravages of the Indian climate and the Indian moth by the efforts of their *dirzees*, I hailed a brother captain, who was strolling aimlessly forth, and secured him as company, and to tell me who was who in the station fashionable circles. He was a good fellow, a peer's younger son, who, having passed a meteoric and somewhat expensive career in the Guards, had exchanged to a line regiment, and was expiating his London misdeeds by a few years in an Indian purgatory. He was a standing difficulty wherever he dined, or whatever entertainment he assisted at, as the Indian table of precedence became hopelessly confused over the

honourable prefix to his name; and whether he should be told off to a leading lady, or take charge of an undeveloped spinster, or even make one of the unattached crowd of single men who bring up the rear of every Indian procession to the dinner-table, was always a puzzling problem to be solved. Among his brother officers his accidents of birth did not confer any additional dignity, and he usually answered to the name of "Button."

There was little variety in the gathering that met our eyes at the band-stand from similar assemblages that I remembered in days "lang syne." There was the Resident's carriage, drawn by two goodish-looking Walers, with a fat Madrassee coachman in scarlet on the box, with his bare brown feet stuck out in front of him. The two scarlet-clad horse-keepers stood at the horses' heads, each armed with a *chowrie*, with which they lazily switched the flies which buzzed round their charges. Lady Winkle, the wife of Sir Rodolph Winkle, K.C.S.I., the Resident, sat quite the "Burra Mem Sahib," in a dignified attitude inside, conscious of the *éclat* conferred by the escort of two native *sowars*, who were formed up near, slouching in their ill-cleaned saddles, and still more conscious of the presence of the quiet-looking, grizzled old gentleman beside her, who was a member of the Viceroy's Council on an official tour, and whom she hardly knew whether to treat as an equal in the Indian hierarchy, or to conciliate as one whose

opinion might or might not be favourable to her husband's prospects. There was the Colonel's phaeton, with two well-bred cobs, and with harness that showed a little more careful fitting and cleaning than mere native supervision could have given. T-carts, pony-carriages, waggonettes, drawn by every variety of animal, Arabs, Walers, Burmans, and filled with the wives and families of the various secretaries, doctors, paymasters, &c., who made up our European station society. Then came the natives, in almost equal varieties. The fat Parsee, who kept the universal store for the cantonment, with his olive-coloured wife and swarm of black-eyed tawny children, with gold-embroidered caps surmounting their sharp, bright-looking faces, filled to overflowing the old victoria, which had been taken as part payment of a bill left by an ex-official, whose liver had finally succumbed, and who had been invalided home last year. *Tongas*, *jutkas*, and bullock-coaches were there in every stage of decrepitude, drawn by *tattoos* and bullocks, whose very existence should have, in most instances, provoked the interference of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Add to these the usual crowd of Europeans and natives on foot, with *ayahs* and babies innumerable, of all colours, white, brown, and black, some in perambulators, and some playing embarrassingly among the legs of the crowd, and we have the scene which presented itself.

I had written my name in the Residency visitors'

book, as in duty bound, and thought that this was a good opportunity to make the personal acquaintance of the great lady herself.

"Button," I said, "you know all the swells, introduce me to Mother Winkle." Thus disrespectfully, I regret, did the officers of H.M.'s regiment in garrison designate that noble person. Alas! poor worm that I was, how soon was I to be taught the real humility of my position! After we had made our way through the small crowd who were doing homage to the great lady, and Button, with his best bow, had said, "Allow me to introduce Captain Melville," I was treated to the most disdainful of inclinations—one which marked my exact position in society—and while I retired to meditate on my littleness, her ladyship turned to renew her conversation with a more important person. But my moment of compensation was at hand. The member of Council suddenly turned round and said, "Did I hear the name of Captain Melville of the —th?" I modestly replied "Yes," and he went on, "I have just come out from England, and saw the Prince before starting, and he told me to be sure to make your acquaintance, if possible, and to give his remembrances to his old friend."

I tried to look unconscious of the change that came over Lady Winkle's face as she overheard this short colloquy. She turned, and positively beamed on me, saying—

"I had heard that you had arrived at the station, Captain Melville, and have been so anxious to make your acquaintance. Sir Rodolph and I will be so delighted if you can arrange to come and dine with us some night soon. Good gracious! what's that?"

That was the arrival on the scene of a dogcart with a tandem of ponies, driven by one of our subalterns, accompanied by another, which, after wending a devious course from barracks, had finally pulled up with the leader's fore-legs in the Parsee's victoria, and the wheeler, with its ears back, showing every disposition to kick. By the exertions of the *syces*, however, and a liberal use of explanatory language from the ambitious driver, the complicated knot was untied, and order restored. The boys got out and joined in the chaffing crowd, which had collected to watch their approach. Among the ring of natives who had gathered round, my attention was much attracted by the appearance of a striking-looking old man, with fiercely twisted-up moustache, and long grey beard, who had pushed to the front, and seemed to take a marked interest in the scene. He looked like an old soldier, and his high features, tall stature, and muscular development spoke of a different race from the more peaceful-looking natives of the south by whom he was surrounded. I could not see that he carried any arms; but though he did not have quite the uniform disciplined air which marks the native army nowadays, he might have been a non-

commissioned officer of irregulars, or rather one of the semi-drilled and organised levies of a native ruler.

The youngest of the boys who had come in the tandem cart was one of the subalterns of my draft; a fresh, cheery youngster, the son of a very distinguished officer, who had been particularly commended to my care by his father, and who had been attached to my company accordingly. His father had been one of the heroes of the Mutiny, and had made a name for himself by his fearless gallantry in action, for the devotion of his native followers, and also in no small degree for the unsparing severity with which he had meted out justice to mutineers and rebels. He was equally well known in the army as "Mackinnon the brave," or as "the avenging Colonel." As the subalterns walked about, I could not help remarking that the old native seemed to take particular notice of this boy, and followed him wherever he went. Sometimes it seemed that he got between him and the crowd, and even made a sort of half-turn backwards, as if to protect him from another follower. With each movement, his expression appeared to change. When he looked at young Mackinnon, nothing could have been more benevolent and kindly; and when he turned to look behind him, he threw back his head and glared, stern, haughty, and defiant.

I knew that it was hopeless to appeal to Lady Winkle or my friend Button for any information

about a casual native, so I looked for some one more familiar with the frequenters of the bazaar. The station magistrate had just cantered up after his usual hard day's office-work, and I asked him who was the old Pathan who was following young Mackinnon.

"Pathan! my dear fellow, I don't see any Pathan."

"There," I pointed. "Perhaps he is not a Pathan, but he does not belong to this part of India. That tall old man with the small red turban and long grey beard."

Again he looked, and again declared that he saw nobody in the least like my description. I thought this odd, but only concluded that the good magistrate's sight was beginning to go, and that he was too proud of his personal appearance to appear in public with spectacles on the eyes whose glance made local malefactors tremble before him. However, the band commenced "God save the Queen." The crowd began to disperse slowly. The subalterns got their tandem under way towards barracks with some difficulty. I lost sight of the old native, and Button and I started on our homeward stroll under the sunniest of smiles from Lady Winkle, and repeated invitations to come and see her soon at the Residency, and on no account to content myself in the future with writing my name in her visitors' book.

"Very odd how that native stuck to young Mackinnon," I said to Button.

"My dear Melville, you must have made some mistake. I heard you talking about an old man with a red turban, and saw where you pointed; but, for the life of me, I could see nobody but the usual lot of idle coolies."

"Button, you know nothing about it. I believe you would hardly know the difference between a coolie and a rajah."

The usual routine of garrison life went on for several days after this, and the season was so hot that little was done beyond the most ordinary duty, which indeed came round rather heavily on all the officers who were not on leave, as there had been a smartish outbreak of fever, which some attributed to infection brought by natives from the bazaar, where there was always a certain amount of latent disease. Among others, the lad who used to drive Mackinnon about in the tandem cart was knocked over by a severe attack, and the doctors were doing all they could to patch him up sufficiently to move him to the hills and eventually to England. We were all getting rather hipped and low-spirited, and some excitement was much required to take our minds and conversation off the eternal subjects of the height of the thermometer and the doctor's daily report of the cases in hospital. It was much to our delight then that a message was received one day from Yussuf Ali, who commanded the irregular cavalry of the ruler of the native State near which we were serving,

to say that a panther had been caught alive in a trap, which he would have enlarged on the *maidan* half an hour before sundown, and asking any of us, who felt inclined for a ride to join in spearing it. Even those of us who could not command the services of a sufficiently trustworthy horse for such a risky sport, could at any rate look on; and those who had horses spent the rest of the afternoon in sharpening boar-spears and looking to the soundness of our saddlery. As the evening approached, the company began to gather on the *maidan*, about a mile from barracks. The *maidan*, the scene of action, was a rolling plain, rather long than wide, as the cantonment of the native infantry bounded it on one side, while the other was fringed at a distance of a mile and a half by scrubby and rocky jungle. Its length stretched away for miles; and in the distance we could only dimly see, blue in the evening light, a range of rocky heights, with one white *musjid* standing out in bright relief. The grass was brown, scorched, and dry; and, but that the dust did not rise in clouds, the appearance was that of a barren sandy plain.

Several ladies had come to look on, who were perched on elephants, out of harm's way. Lady Winkle was most imposing on a huge and steady animal belonging to the heavy battery. The *sowar* escort had been dispensed with; but Sir Rodolph was there himself, with a gleam of excitement and enthusiasm in his eye, for he had been a fine rider

and a bold *shikarri*, before accession of dignity and increasing years and waistband had made him withdraw from the delights of snaffle, spur, and spear, and devote his energies to administration alone. Lady Winkle was condescending enough to remember that her friendly interest had been aroused in me, and nearly fell out of the howdah in her anxiety to tell me how much she hoped I would get "first spear." As I was riding a commonplace old Waler, whose ideas of pace were most limited, I did not anticipate that I should be called upon to receive a crown of laurel or its Indian equivalent from her fair and pudgy hand.

Besides the ladies and some few other mounted European onlookers, there was the usual mob of natives which is to be found at every show; but these remained at a most respectful distance from the central spot, the black cart, on which was the huge wooden trap containing the panther.

There were six sportsmen who were going to join in the chase. Yussuf Ali himself, a lithe, light, active, and very handsome Mussulman—a magnificent horseman, and perfect master of all weapons—a polished gentleman in his quiet courteous manners, and withal a brilliant and dashing soldier. Bad was it for him that he lived while the Pax Britannica controlled India. If he had been born in the days of the old Mogul emperors, he was just the man to have carved his way to the rule of one of the great

proconsulates of which so many turned into independent kingdoms. He rode a high-caste flea-bitten grey Arab, whose lean head, iron legs, thin well-set-on tail, and muscular shape, covered by a skin which showed the tracery of veins underneath, marked the purest blood of the desert.

Almost as well mounted was young Mackinnon, who well maintained the credit of England in his firm and sporting seat and determined air. His rather ragged-looking Waler did not show the same quality as the grey Arab; but it had won several races pretty easily; and though his master carried a hog-spear for the first time, we all felt it was likely that the struggle for the honours of the day would be between him and the gallant Mussulman.

Next to him was Captain Johnson of the native infantry, one of the keenest sportsmen on our side of India, whose exploits in pursuit of great game were a constant topic of conversation and admiration. To him no kind of encounter with savage beasts could come amiss, and, under equal conditions, nobody present could have hoped to ride on more than equal terms with him. But he had only just returned from a distant sporting expedition, his own horses had not yet arrived, and he had been obliged to place his 6 feet 2 inches of bone and sinew on a friend's horse, which certainly could not carry him alongside the light weights. There remained to add to the field, Button, myself, and another of our officers, all three

determined to be in at the death if possible; but so moderately provided with horseflesh that we could hardly expect to be more than the reserve in the first attack.

The sun was rapidly sinking, and there was no time to waste; so all the spectators fell back to about a hundred yards from the cart carrying the trap, which remained black and solitary in the middle of the plain. We took up our position in line in front of the crowd, and could then see that a long rope was fastened to the trap, by pulling which a bolt would be drawn, and the side furthest from us opened. One of Yussuf Ali's servants ran forward, at a signal from his master, pulled the rope, and as quickly bolted back behind the shelter of the spears. I had never seen a panther enlarged before, and had expected the animal to bound forth at once, the moment the way to liberty was open. Our friend did nothing of the kind, however. He had been for two days in the trap, and was probably rather stiff, and certainly cowed and sulky. At last, after several stones had been thrown at the trap, and had rattled on its wooden sides, we could just see a long black-looking body gliding from the cart, and drawing itself sinuously along the ground. The native crowd set up a shout, and that and the familiar feeling of the ground beneath his feet made him quicken his pace. The light gleamed on his yellow sides, he looked round him to see the safest direction in which to shape his course, and bounded

towards the jungle. We instinctively drew our reins tighter, grasped our boar-spears firmer, pressed our legs to our horses' sides, and prepared for the gallop. The panther was half cantering, half bounding towards the friendly shelter which he had marked, and rapidly shaking off his stiffness and increasing his distance from us. We all turned to Yussuf, who was a perfect picture, as he sat with his spear held high in the air on his half-rearing horse, whose eye sparkled with the same excitement as his master's. The panther had got between three and four hundred yards' start, when Yussuf shouted "Ride!" We sat down to our work, and tore in pursuit.

As we expected, Mackinnon and Yussuf quickly shot ahead; but the stride of the Waler gave the latter the advantage, and besides, he was rather on the right, the side towards which the panther was bending, and had thus less ground to go over. Johnson was a bad third; but his cool and experienced eye had marked the panther's probable line, and his fine horsemanship enabled him to save every inch of ground, and would probably bring him up at the critical moment. The rest of us could only say that we had an excellent view of the chase, as we toiled in rear.

Mackinnon, with his spear ready for the thrust, was rapidly gaining on the panther, who looked over his shoulder and seemed to calculate whether he could cover the half-mile which lay between him and

safety before the thundering hoofs behind him should be alongside. All at once he stopped in his gallop and crouched, almost facing his pursuer, with bristles erect and glaring eyes. The Waler's heart failed him when he found himself face to face with the defiant beast. The horse shied to one side, crossed his legs, and made a tremendous stumble on to his nose. Mackinnon, who had been leaning forward with poised spear, was thrown on to his horse's ears. The panther's spring was delivered, and I felt my heart sink. Suddenly—could I believe my eyes? I could have sworn that there was no one on the plain a moment before—there was a native at Mackinnon's horse's head, whose ready hand on the bridle had saved the Waler from falling. The panther's spring had missed in consequence, and the lad managed to regain his seat. Yussuf's ready spear passed through the spotted body as he shot past, and a minute afterwards Johnson gave the *coup de grace*. The whole was momentary, and when I joined the group, the danger and excitement were over, and the panther lay in death before the snorting horses.

"Lucky for you, my boy," I said, "that that native saved your fall. You just escaped being badly clawed."

"What native do you mean, Melville?" Mackinnon replied. "This confounded brute gave an awful peck, just as I was going to take the spear, and it was all I could do to get him on his legs again."

"Well, I'll swear there was a native standing by at the time. I could just see a red turban over your horse's shoulder, though I could not distinguish his face."

"Any way, he can't be far off, and he is sure to come and ask for *backsheesh* for his services. He deserves something for his pluck, at any rate, in putting himself in our spotted friend's way." We looked round, but there was nobody. The shouting crowd of onlookers came up, and in the quickly closing night and the maze of turbans, red, blue, and white, that surrounded us, further search was impossible. I could not help feeling certain, however, that I was right, though both Yussuf and Johnson, who had been nearer to Mackinnon than I, assured me they saw nobody. The panther was padded on one of the elephants. Lady Winkle waved us a dignified adieu as she changed the rocking howdah for her easy rolling carriage, to return to the Residency. We lighted our cigars, and slowly rode homewards, the others discussing every incident of the novel sport, while I silently pondered over Mackinnon's escape, and tried to explain its circumstances satisfactorily to myself.

Again the dull and depressing routine of barrack life. We had got through the worst of the hot weather; but the brazen sun by day and the hot winds by night still made exertion wearisome, and sleep almost impossible. We looked eagerly forward

to the return from leave of some lucky brother officers, who had been bracing themselves in the hills, when some of us, at least, would be able to quit the sweltering cantonment in our turn. The happy day came at last, and Button, Mackinnon, and I were told that we might be off for a month. We were all pretty well in spite of the long grilling we had gone through; and we decided that we wanted change of scene more than change of climate, and that we would spend our time in the fresher, if not much cooler air of the jungle, and carry out a long-projected campaign against some tigers that we had heard of in a neighbouring district. We had been in communication with *shikarris* for some time, in case such a chance should offer itself, so we had little to do but to start off our tents and servants, and arrange for relays of horses to carry us over the first sixty or seventy miles from the station, when we should find ourselves nearly at our shooting-ground, and continue the march with our camp, which we should then have overtaken.

Behold us at last in the saddle, at one o'clock in the morning, or rather in the middle of a starlight night. The moon has sunk below the horizon, but the Southern Cross has risen and illumines our way. The sentry on the main guard challenges as we pass, and gives his parting benediction, "Pass, friend, and all's well." We clatter through the bazaar, disturbing troops of pariah dogs fighting and growling over the filthiest offal, and push into the silent country.

How weird and beautiful it all looks! The gnarled banyan-trees throw deep shadows here and there across the road, and everything that was burned and miserable-looking under the sunlight is covered with a mystic charm by the calm quiet night. On and still on we press, past native temples, whose ghastly images look still more ghastly than by day and glare stonily. Through small hamlets, nearly riding over the inhabitants, who are wooing the cool air, and are lying asleep in the roadway, wrapped in their white cloths. Past the Tapal runner, with letter-bag on his back, jogging along the road to the distant town. His tinkling bell is the only sound that breaks the silence, and we think of its old name, "the tiger's dinner-bell," and how often, on that very road, the post-runner had been missing, and a blood-stained letter-bag had been found, the only relic to mark where the man-eating scourge of the country-side had seized his prey. Past rocks and water-courses, over open cultivated country, and through jungle wood-land, till we arrived under the grim shadow of an old fort perched on a rocky eminence, where we found our first relay of horses waiting, and felt that we had covered twenty miles of our journey. What a de-licious and refreshing feeling it is to drop into a cool saddle and feel a fresh horse springing gaily under you, after the experience of the last five miles of a tired hack, keeping him on his legs on a rough road, and kicking him along to keep your time! Again

we press on to gain our halting-place before the sun comes out in power once more, and we do not draw rein till we arrive at the old hut, under the friendly shade of a *tope* of trees, where we intend to wait till night shades us on our onward way. Just six o'clock, and we have done forty miles—not bad going in the dark. We found our second relay of horses here, and, oh blessed sight! a small table with tea ready laid out. How good it was to sit and sip it under the leafy boughs! What would Indian wayfaring be without these *topes* at intervals along the roads, which are as well known to travellers as the wayside inns in England? Where would the European official or sportsman pitch his camp? Where would the humble wayfarer halt during the broiling hours to cook his *chuppatti* and have his mid-day siesta? and where could a reasonably cool draught of water be found but in the well under those pleasant natural arches, impervious to the darts of even an Indian sun? We settled down to get through the day, and, indeed, had small difficulty in doing so. There were some old *charpoys* in the hut, and, kicking off our boots, we collapsed into sleep, which passed the hottest hours most satisfactorily. At sundown we again got under way, and by nine o'clock saw our camp gleaming white in the moonlight before us. Bath and a light supper were most welcome, and we turned in, thinking over the campaign which we were about to commence. The jungle air felt fresh, and the

jungle wind comparatively cool; but every tent-door was opened wide, and curtains rolled up, to profit by it as much as we could. Closely tucked round with mosquito-net, I heard the insects of the night hurling themselves vainly against my couch, and chuckled drowsily at their discomfiture. Our followers lay round the camp-fire, and their snores rose in chorus with the slow chewing of the bullocks, the pawing of a restless horse at his picket-rope, and the unearthly shriek of the jackal prowling near.

The camp was astir with the first faint glimmer of dawn, and when we turned out among the already half-loaded baggage-carts, we found two *shikarris* squatted on the ground near our tents, waiting to give us their report on our chances of sport. Closely wrapped in their cloths to protect them from the morning air, these jungle sages were looking with contempt on the, to them, derogatory occupations of our domestic servants.

Our best hopes were realised when we were told that two tigers had been haunting a piece of jungle about seven miles distant, and that, if we would march on that day to the neighbourhood, they, the *shikarris*, would arrange to have buffaloes tied up during the following night round the likely haunts, and if one of this live bait was killed, we might hope to have a successful beat. Nothing could be more satisfactory, and our march was ordered accordingly. We moved off, a most imposing procession. Two

elephants, lent by the ever-kindly minister of the native State, camels, horses, bullock-carts, and a most miscellaneous assortment of followers, from the consequential belted *peon* and the grim-looking *shikarri*, with his old matchlock on his shoulder, to the lowest tag-rag of water-carriers and sweepers, completed by the inevitable native women, who followed their husbands, carrying curiously wise-looking babies on their hips, and all their worldly possessions in a bundle on their heads. Sooth to say, the three European sahibs were not the most respectable-looking of the crowd. Unshaved faces, rusty-looking *shikar* clothes, enormous and hideous sun-hats, formed an *ensemble* which might be comfortable, but was neither dignified nor becoming.

We had at last plunged into real jungle life and scenery; the quaint and picturesque cavalcade moved through a landscape in which the brilliant red blossom of the honey-tree, the rich green of the palms, and the bright emerald of the occasional paddy-fields were a beautiful mixture of colour in the tender morning light. The brick-coloured land and distant blue rocky hills, with the clear sky, filled up the background.

We pitched our next camp near an old and once strong, but now deserted and ruined fortress. People in England, who only know of the historic strongholds, have little idea of the number of elaborately strengthened places which have been formed in India,

and which under the strong and peaceful sway of Britain, have now lost their *raison d'être*, and are forgotten in the jungles. The one in question was an example. Two rocky and steep scarped hills about half a mile apart, connected by a bastioned line of walled fortification and a deep dry ditch. The hills, 400 to 500 feet high, with several lines of fortification upon them, and a large walled keep crowning each. The native village nestled inside the fortifications at their feet. Some old guns lay, mouldering and grass-covered, on the ramparts, whose sole warders were the troops of monkeys which little feared a stranger, and only acknowledged our presence by loud and general chattering.

Many were the lamentations over the destruction among the village herds which the *patel* poured into our ears when he came to pay his respects; and many were the hopes expressed that the noble sahibs would slay the two tigers which haunted the neighbouring jungle, and relieve the district from the fear of their ravages. Our hopes of brilliant sport rose with each tale of woe, and we waited with eager anticipations for the *shikarris'* next morning's report of the result of their preparations.

The next morning came at last, and with it the welcome news that one of the buffaloes, which had been tied up near the tigers' haunts, had been killed during the night, and that the slayer had been marked down in a ravine about a mile and a half

distant, whither he had carried his prey to gorge it at his leisure, and where he was probably now sleeping off the effects of his meal.

The beaters had been already summoned from the villages, and, headed by our friend the *patel*, they began to assemble at our camp, each group, as it came in, more motley and wild in appearance than the last. Our final preparations have been made, and we start for the scene of action. Our nondescript crowd follows — some, and they the proud ones, carrying rusty matchlocks, some with spears, some with sickles or knives tied to the ends of sticks. Tom-toms, horns, pipes, were not wanting, while the professional *shikarris* strove to keep order in the array, carrying bundles of native rockets, with the important air of lictors with their fasces.

A short walk, and we neared the ravine where the tiger had been marked down. It lay by a broken rocky hill, or rather cluster of hills, with trees and brushwood on their sides, and pieces of dense thicket in their hollows. At the distant side of the hills the ground sloped into a broken woodland, which stretched away for miles towards a blue range of high land in the horizon.

Our beaters were taken in charge by two *shikarris*, who were to dispose them so as to be ready to sweep the ravine and hills before them, while the guns stole quietly round the outskirts to the distant side where the game was likely to break. Then came the busi-

ness of taking up our positions. We drew for stations, and my lot fell on the right of the line. Mackinnon was on the left, and Button in the centre, and we were to be placed about 150 or 200 yards apart. I clambered into a tree with my gun-bearer, and took up a safe position, while Button and Mackinnon went on to be posted by the head *shikarri*. Then came the most trying time of the day's work—waiting for the beat to commence. A seat on a knotty branch of a tree is not a comfortable position, when perfect stillness is necessary, and every individual roughness on your perch seems to work its way more and more uncompromisingly into your undefended person. The Deccan hot-weather sun blazes overhead, his beams reflected with almost original intensity from the glowing rock hard by; and the thin, half-withered foliage of the jungle-tree, which gives a good sweep for a rifle, is far from being a sufficient umbrella in point of shade. It is quaint and interesting, however, to watch the animal life in the jungle, when all is still, and its inhabitants are unconscious of observation. First, a magnificent peacock, scenting danger in the wind, comes bustling down the hill, making so much noise that I almost think he must be the tiger. He catches sight of me in the tree, and is horrified to find himself committed to so short a distance from a human stranger. He takes flight, and floats gracefully away, without a movement of his wings, after two or three initial

strokes. Then a mungoos rushes across the open, full of important business. He disappears into a heap of stones, and a minute or two later again shows himself, and returns to his original cairn. A rustle of leaves—a squirrel has changed his quarters, and moved his monotonous cry from one tree to another. Another rustle. This time it is a large lizard that has left, with a flop, the stone where he has been sunning himself, and has bustled to other quarters.

Whir, whir, whir! tom, tom, tom! went suddenly the beaters' rattles and drums in the distance. The beat at last commenced. Wild shrieks and discordant yells, which might have represented every form of human agony, roused the echoes of the hills. Bang!—there a firework was thrown into a rocky cave. Stones are being rolled down the cliffs into unapproachable thickets, and every form of Hindoo objurgation and reviling is being shouted, to induce the lurking game to move forward where the rifles are prepared to receive him. The jungle tenants were awakened in earnest. A gaunt hyæna trotted by, looking fearfully over his shoulder. An old bear, with a couple of cubs, came rolling along, and passed within a few yards, complaining loudly at being disturbed. Suddenly a huge dusky form swung slowly through the bushes, about 200 yards from me. I grasped my rifle tighter, reckless that the barrels felt almost red-hot in the sun. I thought he must come down a pass in the rocks within easy shot, and I felt

certain that I could cover him, when a wretched native, who had been put in a tree some distance off as a look-out, with the strictest injunctions to silence, could not contain his excitement, and began holloaing and shouting at the top of his voice. Of course the tiger turned, and my chance was gone. He loomed as big as a bullock, a magnificent sight, as his striped side glowed red in the sunlight, while he passed to my left.

I waited for Button's rifle to speak, but heard nothing. There was almost silence for a minute, when I heard two shots in rapid succession coming from where I supposed Mackinnon to be. These were followed, after a pause, by two more. Another pause, and an English "Who-whoop!" rang through the jungle. The line of beaters came up, and told me that though one tiger had been killed, the other had sneaked off to one side, and made his escape towards the distant hills. There was nothing more to wait for, and I made my way in the direction that the sound of shots came from. There lay the tiger, terrible still in death. Button had the complacent air of the man who has fired the lucky shot, while Mackinnon looked a little pale, and his gun-bearer was holding forth most volubly to the beaters who had arrived on the spot. As I appeared, Button with equal volubility commenced to give his account of the death—

"What a sharp thing that was of yours, old fellow,

to send that *shikarri* to bring me to Mackinnon's post! I was sitting waiting for the tiger to show, when the nigger came and beckoned to me to follow him. I thought he must know all about it, so I slipped down from my tree and arrived just in time to see Mackinnon standing on that rock, and firing at the tiger within five-and-twenty yards. He must have hit the beggar, but not hard enough, for the brute was just going to spring, and I don't think Mac would have gone back to cantonments after it. I confess I felt a bit jumpy; but I took as quiet a shot as I could, and put an ounce of lead in the brute's brain and another in his throat, and turned him over. Mac had a narrow squeak. No wonder he looks a bit shakey."

"Lucky indeed you were there, Button," I said; "though I never sent to move you. But how on earth were you mad enough to leave your tree, Mackinnon? You must have thought yourself a better shot than most of us, to choose to meet a tiger on foot."

"Well, you see, Melville, after I had been sitting in the tree for some time I found there were red ants in it, or rather they found me out, and began to bite so viciously that I could stand it no longer, so I thought I would make a run for it, and try to find another perch. Just as I had got on to this rock, the tiger came charging down, and my only chance was to fire. I hit once, I know, but only enough to

make him put up his bristles. My gun-bearer had not followed me, and if Button had not come up at that moment, I should have been finished off long before now. I quite gave myself up."

"Well, it was a narrow shave. But, Button, show me the *shikarri* who moved you. He has deserved well of his country, at any rate."

"Oh, I couldn't mistake him—an old fellow with a grey beard and a red turban; seemed awfully keen and excited, but was sharp enough to make no noise."

I had seen all our *shikarris* in the morning, but did not remember one answering to the description. We got all our followers together, and there were certainly no absentees, as the danger was over, and they thought that perhaps pay-time had come. Even the fat *patel* arrived from the safe position which he had occupied far in rear of the fray, and added his "*shabash*" to the shouts of delight of the rest of the crowd.

Still, no one with a red turban. The *shikarris* swore that there was no *lal puggri wallah* amongst them. Who could it be, whose opportune interference had, in all probability, saved Mackinnon from a ghastly death? All declared that they had no hand in moving the sahib from his position. But Button stuck to his story, and said there could be no mistake.

"Do you think I would have been such a d——d

fool as to come down to the ground, if I had not been moved by a man who seemed to know what he was about ?"

Button's gun-bearer was looked for to see if he had recognised the mysterious messenger; but he was only now coming up in rear of the crowd, and frankly acknowledged that he had been in too great a funk to quit the tree, when he thought a tiger was on foot. He had seen his master suddenly jump down, without apparent reason, and was astonished when he went away. All's well that ends well, and Mackinnon's and Button's gun-bearers escaped the licking which they no doubt anticipated for not being handy at the critical moment. Indeed, one could hardly blame the poor wretches for not plunging into the jaws of danger in the reckless and apparently purposeless way that their masters had done.

While our followers were employed in slinging the tiger on a stout bamboo, to carry him home in triumph, we ensconced ourselves in a cool adjacent cave, hailed the coolie with the luncheon-basket, and prepared to slake our thirst in well-earned goblets. I was puzzling over the tale of the unknown *shakarri* and his timely appearance, when Button paused in lifting his tumbler to his lips, and said—

"Melville, I believe my red-turbaned friend is first cousin to the man you vowed you saw that day's panther-spearing."

Wild as the suggestion seemed, I could not help

feeling there might be a connection between the two events. Both were, at any rate, mysterious, and to neither was there to me any satisfactory solution. I could only say—

"My dear Button, you thought that day that I was dreaming. Perhaps you dream yourself sometimes."

No more was said, and we returned to our camp. The whole population of the village turned out to receive us—men, women, and children—all eager to see the dreaded monster, which had only been known to them as the stealthy and ruthless taker of black-mail from their herds, and which might at any time have made a *bonne bouche* of papa or mamma, or brother or sister. We felt very great and beneficent beings indeed, and promised ourselves many more moments of equal triumph before our leave was up. Alas? our hopes were soon rudely blighted. Behind the exulting and shouting crowd appeared a runner, who unrolled his turban, and produced a letter addressed to Captain Melville, with the ominous initials, O.H.M.S., on the envelope. To my disgust, it was from the adjutant.

"My dear Melville,—There has been an out-break among some fanatics about 150 miles from here, and the Resident has applied for a company to be ready to be sent down to support the native police, who don't seem to be worth much. We are ordered to furnish the company, and yours is the first

for detachment. The colonel, therefore, desires that you will return to headquarters at once. A *dawk* of horses has been arranged for you. Sorry to spoil your sport."

This was disgusting; and there was nothing for it but to obey, and bid farewell to our tented freedom and sport. Why could not those wretched fanatics have controlled their spirits till the drill season, when a little mild campaigning might have been a not unwelcome interlude in our usual series of battalion and brigade parades? The journey out to our shooting-ground had been fatiguing, but at any rate we had been buoyed up against weariness, and it had been made pleasant for us by the anticipation of the fun which we hoped to have; but the journey back, with the immediate prospect of an inglorious and rather distasteful duty, was very different. We got through it, however, and reported ourselves, to the intense delight of some of our friends, who had feared that the letter of recall might not reach us, and that they would have to go on coercion duty instead of us. Though we were held in readiness, the actual orders for our movement did not arrive till the second day after our return; but Mackinnon and I had our time fully occupied on the intervening day by parades and preparations.

Fortunately for us, there was a railway which could bring us within a few miles of the place where our

services were required; and still more fortunately, we were only a small body of troops to be moved, so we were not crammed with regulation tightness into the train, but both officers and men had ample room, a matter of no small consideration towards the end of the hot weather. My company was formed up at the station about six o'clock in the evening, so that we might run the troop-train through and get into camp before morning. There they stood, in cool and easy *khaki* clothes, with greatcoats rolled, haversacks over their shoulders, and their pouches bulging with ball-ammunition, while the active sergeants were telling off the parties to load the baggage in the vans, and allotting its proper complement of men to each compartment of the carriages. All looked serviceable and workmanlike; and though the men seemed at first sight a little drawn and black under the eyes from the effects of the long hot months, they were stalwart seasoned soldiers, whose stamina was at its best.

In these days there is one great satisfaction to a soldier, and especially a regimental officer, in serving in India, that when any troops are required for service, everybody is trained, fit and ready to go. There the army is on a war-footing always, and it is not necessary to break up a brigade to furnish a battalion, nor a battalion to furnish a company. Here are no batches of reserve men or detachments of volunteers from distant garrisons turning up at the

last minute, and breaking the hearts of officers and non-commissioned officers alike. Here is no confusion or uncertainty about the necessaries for a campaign, and the transport which is to convey them. Everything is clearly by regulation laid down and known, and though it may and sometimes does happen that there is a local difficulty in providing what is required, the Indian departments so well know their work that that difficulty is always quickly overcome. Add to this that the soldier in India receives in peace-time systematic training in packing loads and arranging them for whatever transport-animals are available — elephants, camels, mules, ponies, or bullocks—and it will be easily conceived how smoothly the military machine works, and how little friction or dislocation is caused by the sudden call to arms.

Mackinnon and I were the only two officers who went with the company, as the battalion was unfortunate in having some still on the sick-list. Button came to the station to see us off, and gave us his blessing, and, what was more to the purpose, put an ice-box with cooling drinks, and a luncheon-basket with dinner, into our carriage, to solace us on our journey.

We sped along through the night without *contre-temps*, and arrived at our destination in the grey of the morning. Early as it was, we found the Collector of the district awaiting us, who was profoundly re-

lieved that his hands had been strengthened, and that he might hope now to be able to restore order. The origin of the disturbances appeared to be that a fanatic Moslem, in a moment of religious frenzy, had killed a Hindoo. The murderer had been concealed by the people of his village, who, when a force of police were sent down to search and to enforce the law, had taken up arms, broken into open rebellion, and committed several deeds of violence. The native police had been defied and driven back, and the Collector and other magistrates stoned and threatened. It was now hoped that, if the police had the support of a few soldiers, it would be seen that resistance was hopeless, and that things would settle down into their usual course.

The headquarters of the rioters were rather more than twelve miles distant, and it was arranged that we should encamp for the day, and march in the evening to a village within two miles of their position, and attack them on the following morning, unless in the meantime they had seen the folly of their ways, ceased resistance, and given up their ringleaders and the original murderer. The Collector was very loath to proceed to extremities with them, and said that he would give them every chance of timely submission, by sending a message to tell them of the force which was now coming against them, and the serious consequences of continued resistance. I never expected that our services would be really required. Very few comparatively of the fanatics appeared to have fire-

arms, and the arrival of a train full of white soldiers, whose number rumour would no doubt multiply infinitely, seemed likely to make the desired impression on the country-side.

We set to work to pitch our camp, and make our detachment comfortable for the day, while the Collector sent off his ultimatum.

In the course of the forenoon we were joined by a large body of native police, and between four and five our small column moved off. It was a very trying march. The men were nearly ankle-deep in dust, and dusty clouds, kicked up by every footstep, filled our eyes, ears, and mouths, and made the heat of the atmosphere even more intolerable. We made steady progress, however. The police were some hundred yards in front of my company, as the Collector, who rode with them, wished the surrender to be made, if it was made, to the civil power, and to keep the soldiers as much as possible in the background.

"Oh, Bill! what would you give for a pot of canteen porter?" said one of my men huskily to his next file, as they made their way through the gritty atmosphere.

"*Les beaux esprits se rencontrent,*" said Mackinnon, equally huskily, to me; "I was just going to say that an iced whisky-and-soda would be heavenly."

We reached the edge of some cultivated ground after a time, however, and halted for a few minutes to let the men quench their thirst, and refill their

water-bottles at a neighbouring well. While we were thus employed, two or three faint reports of musket-shots were heard in the distance, and the police came tumbling back from the front in considerable confusion, the Collector bringing up their rear, brandishing a white umbrella, abusing them for their conduct, and adjuring them to come back and secure their opponents. The most striking objects in the crowd were the messengers who had been sent in the morning, and who now presented themselves, each with one of his ears in his hand, which had been cut off, and sent as sole receipt and answer to the summons which they had brought.

Things began to look more serious; and, as the colour-sergeant remarked, "it seemed as if there was some blood ahead of us."

The sun had sunk below the horizon, and little more could be done, as we had only moonlight to guide us on a not very well-known track. I sent a sergeant with a few men extended before us, to look out for any lurking adversaries, and we pushed on to the village where we were to bivouac, the police crowding together behind us. Our night was not too comfortable; but the men had their rations, and the Collector's *sowar*-camel came up, with ample supplies for himself, Mackinnon, and me. We hardly expected a surprise; but an inlying picket was told off, sentries posted, and the rest of us lay down in the best shelter we could find, wrapped in our greatcoats, to seek all

the slumber that was possible. Tom-toms and shouting in the distance showed that the rebels remained awake for long; but even this ceased after a time, and all was still.

All were on the alert, and ready to move between four and five in the morning. Every man had his coffee, to guard against the ill effects of the morning miasma; and as the police were not to be depended upon if there was any fighting, I made all the preparations for the advance. Mackinnon took the lead with five-and-twenty men, with orders to push through the broken forest-ground, and, if possible, rush the hamlet where the rebels were collected, while I followed close in support with the rest of the company. The Collector rode with the advanced party, while the police took up a safe position in rear of the column. We half anticipated that, when it was seen that we were really in earnest, everything would be left clear before us, and that the rebels would disperse and seek safety in distant retreats.

We moved on for more than a mile in silence, when I suddenly heard an irregular fusilade opened, followed quickly by the sharp reports of English rifles. I quickened the pace of my men, cleared the belt of forest, which had impeded our view, and saw a scattered crowd of natives keeping up a smart fire as they retired on the village, which was in sight half a mile distant. Mackinnon was following them rapidly, with his men extended at short intervals,

but well in hand, and kneeling and firing as they advanced. That it was not child's play was shown by two bodies of natives lying bleeding on the ground where they had fallen, and one of our men who came limping to the rear with a bullet through his leg. The Collector's white umbrella gleamed among the skirmishers as the oriflamme of our force, and his energetic gestures responded to the defiant shouts of our enemy.

My men doubled into line, and we pressed on to support Mackinnon, who was likely to encounter a heavier fire as he neared the village. The tide of the skirmish was too quick for us, however, and Mackinnon's party had it all to themselves. We could see, a little to the right of the village, a small temple, enclosed in high stone walls and surrounded with a cactus-hedge, towards which the stream of natives seemed to be turning, and I doubled my men forward so as to outflank the right of our advanced party and cover their movements with fire. The rebels closed on the temple, and Mackinnon's men gathered to pursue them into the enclosure. Now they were alongside of the laggers. I saw Mackinnon bound over the hedge, his sword gleaming in the air, and I felt sure that it descended not harmless. The bulk of the natives had got inside the walls of the temple, and some were closing the massive gate, while the rest poured a heavy fire over our men, who tried to keep the gate open and to make

their way in pursuit. It was all to no avail. The gate was closed and bolted, and Mackinnon had to fall back, under cover of the fire which we poured on the temple walls, with two more men wounded, and carrying the body of one poor corporal, shot through the head. We were checked for the moment, and as we had no artillery to blow open the gate, it seemed possible that we might be kept at bay for an indefinite time by a handful of ill-armed natives, and possibly have to reduce them by the slow process of blockade and starvation—a thing not to be thought of, if any other expedient could be found, as it would give time and encouragement to any other malcontents who might be in the district to rise also against the civil power. What made the matter more mortifying was to find that, when we examined the village, there were only about twenty-five men in all occupying the temple, though that number fortunately included the leaders of the disturbances, and also the particular malefactors who were to be arrested. The Collector wiped his streaming brow and looked nonplussed. Mackinnon was blown and tired, and could offer no suggestion but to attack again, and try to scale the walls with stormers climbing on the shoulders of other men. I looked at the confounded place and tried to think how we were to get inside without exposing our force to unnecessary loss from the desperate men, who were sure to fight to the last.

While I was considering, the colour-sergeant came up and saluted and said—

"If I might make the suggestion, sir, there are some big logs of wood lying behind us, where they have been cutting the forest. Half-a-dozen of us could easily carry one of them with a run and smash in that gate."

The idea seemed excellent, and indeed there was no other choice. I picked out a good stout well-trimmed log, and told off the men who were to carry this extemporised battering-ram. Half the company, including all the marksmen, lay down on the crest of the little knoll behind which we were, about 200 yards from the temple, with orders to keep up a steady fire on every one who showed himself over the crest of the wall. I took the remaining half with our ram, and made for the gate at a run. Mackinnon was a little to one side of me, and rather gaining ground. I turned to call to him not to get too far in front, as I did not want the attack to be made till the gate had been smashed in, when I saw a native following him closely. "One of our police," I thought, "who has plucked up more courage than his comrades, and is determined to show that there is good fighting stuff in some of them." Then it flashed on my memory that the police wore blue turbans, and this man certainly had a red one. We were covering the ground fast, however; the air was full of the noise of firing, the shouts of the defenders

of the temple, and the cheers of my men, and my whole attention was given to the business of the moment.

The ram was completely successful, and the gate was shivered by its blow. We crowded through the opening, and the place was taken. One volley was fired as we entered, and it struck me that the red-turbaned native and Mackinnon, who had been foremost in the race so far, were not actually at my side as we rushed in, which was certainly fortunate for the latter, as the poor fellow who took his place fell dead before the enemy's volley. No one else was hit. Several of the defenders were killed, still struggling, by the excited soldiers, and the others threw down their arms and cried for quarter. I was only too glad to order the work of slaughter to cease, and handed the prisoners over to the Collector, who grimly remarked that their fate was probably only deferred till they fell into the hangman's hands.

To our delight, we saw the pack-animals with our tents and baggage coming up, and we were able to pitch our camp and refresh ourselves after our little brush. As we sat round our breakfast-table, discussing the events of the morning, I asked Mackinnon what happened to him when we attacked the gate.

"Well, it was a confounded piece of cheek of one of the men. Just as I was going in with you, somebody caught my arm and pulled me to one side, and

I could not follow till you were all inside the walls. I wish I knew who did it? No one had any business to get in front of me."

"It was a lucky piece of cheek for you anyhow, my lad. Poor Sergeant Walker, who took your place, was killed by the last volley. I don't think it was one of our men either—it must have been that native who was alongside of you."

"There was no native anywhere near me, Melville. I saw nobody but the Collector here, and our own men."

"I never saw any native in the last attack," said the Collector. "I was watching our friend Melville with his tree; but I am almost certain that you had a native near you when we first began firing this morning, and he kept near you till the time when the gate was shut in your face and you had to fall back. I thought one of your servants was following you. He looked a respectable oldish man, with a grey beard."

"My servants are a deal too careful of their precious skins. None of them were anywhere handy, I'll be bound. Melville, do you know, it strikes me that this old man with the red turban seems to haunt me, according to your account, wherever I go."

"Haunt you; well, perhaps that is the real word to use."

As I spoke, the word raised a new train of thought in my mind. Could it be, in our prosaic days, and

in our ordinary practical life, that a visitor from another world could have in any way interested himself in the fortunes of the very reckless and unromantic subaltern who was sitting before me concluding a copious breakfast by burrowing into the recesses of a jam-pot? Surely not; and yet, why not? Four times had I known of this mysterious native's presence, and always when a special danger seemed to menace the boy. Four times had he been seen and recognised by somebody who was not in the least predisposed to look for his appearance. If he existed in the flesh, how did he appear at points so far apart, and on occasions so dissimilar? and above all, how was it that he never could be found or identified when the occasion of his appearance was past? Mackinnon himself evidently looked upon these circumstances in the most matter-of-fact way, and no suspicion of any connected mystery had occurred to him. I felt too uncertain on every point to venture to hint at the vague ideas which had struck me, and could only hope that some day all that was now inexplicable might find a simple key.

With regard to our present duty, the need for our services had quite passed away. The outbreak had been entirely suppressed, the ringleaders were in our power, and nothing remained to be done which could not be carried out by the police, who were now full of the most active zeal and energy. For the last two days, thick banks of clouds had gathered in the

evenings over the sky, and it was probable that the monsoon would break within a week in the western district in which we found ourselves, when it would be most inadvisable to keep European soldiers under canvas without absolute necessity.

A welcome order soon came, therefore, directing our return to headquarters, and we were quickly *en route*. How delicious the burst of rain was, and how grateful the coolness which spread over the parched and torrid land, as the thunder rolled away in the distance and was succeeded by the first monsoon shower! The spirits of everybody rose, and the inmates of the hospital decreased in number, as we bade adieu to the scorching days and weary nights of the hot weather.

To make things even brighter for H.M.'s —th, a rumour came that our forces in Africa were to be reduced, that our linked battalion would be set free for foreign service, and that the beginning of the cold weather might see us on our way back to England. There is nothing to tell about the intervening time; but rumour for once proved true—our best hopes were realised, and the first troop-ship of the season received us in its kindly embrace.

Soon after we landed in the old country, I received a most pressing invitation from old General Mackinnon to come and dine with him at his snug chambers in London, where he had brought his war-worn hulk to an anchor, within easy reach of

his club and the haunts of his old comrades and cronies. As he said, he wanted to thank me for all the care which I had taken of his son, and to hear, at first hand, whether his boy had proved a worthy chip of the old block.

One of my first spare evenings was devoted to the old man, who was delighted to recall the prime of his manhood and his campaigning days in discussing the doings and experiences of his son's regiment in the East, and to hear how things had changed in the military world since the great struggles in which he took part. Our party was only the father, son, and myself. The boy bolted off to a theatre as soon as we had dined, and the old General said—

"Now, Melville, let us draw our chairs to the fire, and have a quiet smoke. I am so horridly stiff and gouty, that I can't get up easily. May I trouble you to ring the bell for cheroots?"

As I rose, my eye was caught by a small and very rude sketch, hanging by the fireplace, of a native of India, in the dress of an irregular of the Mutiny time. Where had I seen any man like it, and how was it that the face and bearing seemed familiar to me? Suddenly came to my mind the occasions when I had seen, in time of danger, a native near the General's son. This was his likeness. There was the bold, soldier-like carriage of the head, which even the rude drawing could not disguise. There were the aquiline features, the fierce moustache, and

the long grey beard, the small red turban, and the clothes put on with military neatness.

"Who on earth is that the picture of, General?" I said, hardly nourishing a hope that I might have some explanation of circumstances which had puzzled me so much when they occurred.

"Oh, you are looking at the picture of old Ismael Khan. It was done at Lucknow by a native artist, and really gives a very good idea of one of the finest fellows that ever sat in a saddle. He was one of my regiment in '57, and did right good service before he died."

"Do tell me about him, General. He looks a class of man that is not very common nowadays."

"You may say that, Melville," said the General, lighting a cheroot. "I have had a lot of good fellows under my command at one time or another, but old Ismael was the pick of the basket.

"He was my orderly in the cavalry regiment which I commanded before the Mutiny. He was devoted to my poor wife and the children, and when the sister of that subaltern of yours was a few months old, he used to carry her about in his arms as tenderly as the best of nurses. When the Mutiny broke out, Ismael, who was a Pathan, was faithful to his salt, and refused to join the rest of my scoundrels, who went off to Delhi. He stuck to me through all the first troubles, and when I raised an irregular regiment, I made him a *jemma-*

dar, and right useful I found him in licking the raw levies into shape.

"I shall never forget his death. It was in the early part of '59, when the spirit of the Mutiny was crushed, and the courage of the enemy was broken. The principal duty of the cavalry was to wear them out completely, following the dispersed bands, which were still in the field, from place to place, and never ceasing to worry them till they were quite dispersed or destroyed. We had followed a body of the enemy, horse and foot, for several days, pushing them by forced marches, with few and very short halts. At last we overtook and surprised them. They broke, as usual, and bolted, and I pursued with a squadron. We did not show much mercy in those days, and those who were overtaken had short shrift.

"Most of our horses were dead beat, and I found myself with half-a-dozen men, among whom was old Ismael, close on the leader of the enemy, who had still about twenty followers with him. They got among some scattered trees, and seemed inclined to show fight. I gave the word to ride at them. They just managed to fire a straggling volley and continued their flight, but few of them got away. When I pulled up, old Ismael was not with me, and as I rode back, I found him lying gasping under a tree with a bullet through his lungs. I sent a man back to hurry up the doctor as quick as possible, and raised the old fellow's head, and took his hand and tried to stanch

his wound, and cheer him with hopes of getting over it. I had little confidence in his recovery from the first, when I saw the ashen-grey colour on his lips, and marked how faintly and with what difficulty he breathed.

"'It is no use, sahib,' he gasped; 'my time has come. You have been a kind chief to me, and I have tried to follow you faithfully. Tell the mem sahib, and the children, that Ismael died a soldier's death, and blessed them when he died; and, sahib, if I find favour where I am going, remember I will still be faithful to you and yours after death.'

"These were the last words he ever spoke coherently. He began to wander. His mind seemed to go back to the old days when he used to nurse the child, and he crooned an old native song he used to sing. Then, when the doctor came up, the rattle of horses' hoofs brought his fighting days to his mind. He grasped his sword and waved it, shouting loud and clear, 'Deen! Deen!' his old battle-cry, then sank back fainting. The doctor could do nothing, and in a few minutes one of the finest soldiers in our army passed away.

"Melville, that's an old story now, but it always makes me sad to recall it. I have often thought of the promise *to be faithful after death.* In the flesh or in the spirit there could be no truer soul than that of old Ismael Khan, and what he said he meant."

I need hardly say with what interest I listened

to the General's tale. In return, I told him of the experiences which have been related. The old man listened with rapt attention. When I had finished, he said, "Well, Melville, such a story will, no doubt, be easily explained by most people to whom it is told; but I don't think you and I will ever be convinced that it is a tissue of mere *coincidences.*

A DEAD MAN'S VENGEANCE.

BY CAPTAIN BIRD.

CHAPTER I.

I WRITE this confession in the hope that my sad example may prevent any over-confident and headstrong persons who may chance to read it from following the disastrous path of self-will and self-flattery which has led me into the misery which I now endure, and which will plunge me hereafter into punishments which I dare not think of. I know that I have no one to blame but myself. The power —the coveted possession of which has brought me down to destruction of both body and soul—is by no means inherited, but is the result of years of careful cultivation on my part. No hereditary second-sight, no mysterious biological power, no magic susceptibility has been left me as a legacy by my forefathers. On the contrary, the members of my family for

generations past have been easy-going respectable yeomen, contented with their placid country lives, and absolutely ignorant and careless of the ever-widening doctrines of modern schools of thought.

My father is a well-to-do and respected farmer in the west country, my mother a hard-headed, thrifty Yorkshire woman. Both are narrow-minded, intensely conservative, and absolutely devoid of all spirituality and romance. I am the youngest of five, sturdy uninteresting boys and girls—now men and women—of the heavy Anglo-Saxon type. In my boyhood I exhibited no distinguishing characteristics beyond a stubborn will, which brought me continually into trouble, and an unusually strong faculty of sympathy with other beings — both human and brute beasts. By sheer force of will and work I raised myself at a comparatively early age to the top of the grammar-school in the neighbouring town. My progress was considered to be so good that when I was of fitting age my father was persuaded to allow me to compete for an unimportant scholarship at one of the universities, and this I was fortunate enough to secure.

A few months after this success a circumstance occurred, trivial in itself, which created a considerable impression upon me, and had no small influence in shaping my destiny. One lovely summer morning—a Monday, I remember—in my first long vacation, having risen early, I went out to enjoy the cool

breeze on the dewless tor behind our old home. I fell to thinking on the text of the young curate's Sunday evening sermon, which had haunted me through the night. It was "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" Whether I had been inattentive, or whether the curate had failed to handle his theme skilfully or wisely, I do not know. But the effect of the sermon was to raise ambitions within me little short of blasphemous. With no very definite conception of the meaning of the text, and less of the conclusion to which my thoughts were leading me, the idea of our implied superiority to, and future power over the beings of another and a higher world fascinated me, and what was at first a whimsical fancy rapidly developed itself into desire, and soon I found myself—not without some sense of half-amused shame—almost mechanically willing that a heavenly being should acknowledge me now, while I was still in this life, as its judge and master.

I feel explanation is due here. When I was quite a young lad at the grammar-school, our little town was visited by a professed mesmerist, who claimed to exercise command over the minds and bodies of men and women by directing upon them the concentrated power of his will, which overpowering and beating down the volition of the persons on whom he operated, rendered them subservient to him in a greater or less degree, according to the extent of ascendancy which his will, naturally strong, and care-

fully trained to concentration, was able to obtain over the wills of those on whom he practised. His demonstrations were fairly successful; but the performance was not popular with the rustics, who were suspicious of witchcraft, and the professor left the town after giving only one exhibition of his powers.

I treasured up in my mind what he had said, and from that day began to practise pitting my will privately against the wills of all with whom I came in contact. When wanting anything done by human being or animal, I was not content to ask or to order, or where neither was possible to wish, but I formed the habit of willing with all my strength that the thing should be done. As time went on, I discovered that I had undoubtedly acquired a certain power over others, and the habit strengthened itself until I was unable to resist endeavouring to bend even events to my will.

And thus it was that I detected myself willing that some heavenly being should be my servant. I lingered for a short time on the hill-top, and then dismissing the absurd subject from my mind, began to descend towards home for breakfast. And now occurred the incident which has been the source of so much of my present wretchedness.

A long narrow lane with high banks and double hedges leads from the main road which winds round the foot of the tor to the outlying parts of my father's farm. Half-way the lane suddenly widens, and a

grassy patch, shaded by three huge beeches, affords a favourite camping-ground to gipsies, who were common enough in those days in our part of the country. As I passed this place I noticed that a few gipsies had arrived since I started in the morning. A hundred yards or so farther on I was suddenly confronted by a young gipsy girl about eighteen years old, tall, dark, handsome, and straight, with a singularly powerful face, and dark imperious eyes. She offered to tell my fortune if I would cross her hand with silver; and struck by her beauty and sweet voice, I laughingly assented, laid a shilling in her hand, and showed her my palm. She took my hand in hers, and had only glanced at it when I noticed her manner change from liveliness to considerable gravity, and even alarm. Gradually, as her scrutiny continued, she became more and more agitated, and at last, pale as death, she fell on her knees before me, placed my hand reverently on her head, and then rising again, moved silently away. I stopped her and asked what was the cause of her emotion. She turned round and faced me, raised her hands in a supplicating attitude, and whispered rather than spoke, "Lord of the Spirits, be merciful to me and to my father's house, for we are all your slaves to do with as you will." With that she bowed gracefully and deeply in semi-oriental fashion; and though I called to her more than once to come back to me, she disappeared into the double hedge of the lane, and I saw her no more.

This incident made a considerable impression on me at the time, and flattered my boyish vanity more than I cared to confess to myself. Later in the day I took an opportunity of passing by where the camp had been, but the gipsies had flown, and no trace of them was left.

The weeks passed by, and when it was time for me to return to college, the occurrence had nearly passed out of my mind. A few days after the commencement of term I happened to meet in a friend's rooms a man who had just come up. He was rather older than most of us undergraduates, and was in some ways a remarkable figure. Tall, dark, with a square-cut resolute face and flashing dark eyes, he impressed me at once as one who was my equal, if not my master, in strength of will; while there was something about him which showed he was a man of some knowledge of the world, which I was not. He seemed to recognise something sympathetic in my character, for before we had been many minutes in the same room we found ourselves talking to each other quite intimately. When I first saw him I felt there was something familiar in him, whether it was his face, voice, or manner, I could not tell. I knew I had never seen him before, yet he was not altogether a stranger to me. We thus became intimate rather rapidly, and in a short time it was agreed that, if possible, he should occupy the rooms next to mine, which by chance were vacant. To our mutual satis-

faction this was shortly arranged, and he soon became my constant companion.

One night we had been reading together, and were enjoying a quiet pipe after our labours, when our conversation turned upon the doings of the "thought-readers," whose performances were creating some stir at the time. My friend, whose name was Inglott, said that he did not believe it possible for any man to tell what was passing in the brain of another. I maintained that while "pin and pain finding" was, in my opinion, rather "spot-hunting" than "thought-reading," the perception of the unspoken thoughts of another man was by no means a thing to be considered outside the range of possibility. My discipline and practice of the past few years had indeed given me some facility in forcing those over whom I had gained ascendancy to adopt in conversation an unspoken word of my choosing. To my shame be it said, I had on more than one occasion, when a boy, made even the old rector (dead years ago) use perfectly irrelevant language in the middle of his sermon, to his own consternation and the boundless surprise of the congregation. It did not then seem to me impossible that a man should so train himself as to practise to a successful result the converse of the process with which I was so familiar. Indeed I flattered myself that I had already acquired the gift to a small extent.

I did not say all this at first to Inglott, but on his

pressing me for some time to give reasons for what he clearly considered to be an absurd belief, I made a clean breast of it, and told him of the mesmerist of my boyhood, and of my steady practice of the art of mesmerism. He appeared to be much interested, and we talked on the subject long into the night.

When he left my rooms, I went to bed but not to sleep. The curate's text and the words of the gipsy girl kept recurring to me, and they made me restless and wakeful. Towards morning I began to drowse, but was wakened very early by Inglott bursting into my room in a state of considerable excitement. It appeared that he, too, could not sleep, and he had now come to ask my assistance in a matter which concerned him very deeply. He told me something of his history, how he had been brought up in Syria, where his father had for years held a consular appointment, and where he himself had imbibed a strong belief in the powers of necromancy and magic, and had, further, had some practical training in these arts. He hinted at a sorrow which had overshadowed his life, and then, begging me to excuse him making any further revelation at the present moment, told me that he needed the help of a man with a strong and disciplined will to help him in a plan which he had roughly sketched out for lessening, and perhaps removing, the sad load of sorrow with which he was burdened.

I willingly promised him every assistance that I

could give, and it suddenly flashed across my mind that by the aid of Inglott's magical power, in addition to my own peculiar faculties, I might attain an influence over the beings of this world and the other, which might almost entitle me to the name the gipsy girl gave me. It was my turn now to tell a part of my story to Inglott, and in the end we agreed to aid each other, and to instruct each other in the peculiar arts of which we respectively had knowledge.

CHAPTER II.

Having made this compact, we lost no time in acting upon it. We began that same evening to practise the concentration of our wills upon some definite object, more especially with a view to the establishment of a close relation between each other's intelligences. For instance, I would silently desire him to do some trifling act, blowing out a candle, bringing me a book, or suchlike, and very shortly I found that I could not only make him comprehend what I wished him to do, but could compel him to do it. On his part, I found him to be an apt pupil, so that on the second or third evening of practice I perceived some slight stirring of recognition in my own mind of what he was silently desiring me to do. Inglott found these efforts of concentration very tiring, as he was quite unaccustomed to such mental

exertion, and when he began to feel fatigue, we turned to his branch of mystical science, and here I found I had everything to learn. I had had absolutely no experience in what is called "spiritualism," and the most trivial manifestations of the presence and material power of the inhabitants of the invisible world were amazing, and even alarming to me. The, to me, extraordinary mediumistic power shown by my friend in our earlier experiments very strongly moved my curiosity, and I determined to study necromancy and its allied arts deeply. For a long time I gave up nearly the whole of my days to reading such books on the subject of Black Art as I could obtain, and many weeks had not elapsed before I had a deeper theoretical knowledge of the subject than Inglott. In practice, however, he throughout had the advantage of me in his imperturbable calmness and readiness of resource. It was long before I could meet the spirits face to face without some degree of agitation, but I gradually overcame my weakness, and before the end of the term could face ordinary manifestations without betraying undue nervousness. While carrying on this branch of our studies, we had by no means neglected the other, and by degrees we had brought our minds into such close relation, that through mere sympathy each was not only able to perceive to a greater or less extent what was passing in the other's mind, but each was able at will to reflect upon the mind of the other what was passing in

his own. In fact, we had established a system of silent mental communication, which, however, was far from being perfect.

One night, when we had continued our studies several months, as we were holding our usual *séance*, we became aware that we were about to be favoured with a manifestation of greater importance than those to which we had been accustomed. There was a bright fire burning in the grate, although the weather was warm; but we had always found a fire an agreeable companion, inspiring confidence and lessening nervousness in our *séances*, and we were in the habit of lighting one whenever the heat was not actually oppressive. A sanctuary lamp, fed with a sweet-smelling oriental oil, was burning faintly in a recess in the wall; and a small brasier of lighted charcoal was smouldering on the round table before which we sat. During the day we had been studying together a strange little volume on necromancy, which Inglott had translated for me from the Syriac; and we had just performed, to the best of our ability, a curious incantation, said to be of Chaldean origin, which we had found in the book. We were awaiting the result in silence, when suddenly we heard a sound as of very distant thunder, and then a slight tremor seized the room. In less than a minute this ceased, and a deadly silence ensued. As the silence continued, an awful feeling of oppression settled down slowly upon my spirit, and this increased until the sense of being

overwhelmed was almost greater than I could bear. I looked across at Inglott, and I could see and feel that he was suffering very much in the same way that I was. It was only by exercising the greatest self-restraint that I could prevent myself from crying out, when, after a few minutes of this silence, I became conscious that the dim light in which we were sitting was being withdrawn. Slowly the light faded out of the fire and the lamp, and even the dull glow of the dying embers in the brasier ceased to be visible, while, to the terrors of our position, was added "the horror of great darkness." Just when the tension threatened to become quite unbearable, the strain on my nerves was suddenly eased, and from all parts of the room brilliant sparks of light, apparently chasing each other towards a point just above the cold brasier, became visible. These scintillations gradually concentrated themselves into a luminous floating globe, which hovered above us in a curiously persistent manner. Although the extreme tension on our minds was reduced, a very painful feeling of awe remained present with us, more especially as we found that we could influence this strange manifestation in no way.

I should here explain that we had long since discovered that, by concentrating our wills together in any prearranged direction, we were able to influence very materially the form and intensity of the manifestation at the moment presented to us. We rarely found much difficulty in, as it were, reducing the

forces producing the results before us to their elements—in resolving them and analysing them, so to speak. But in the present instance we found that our wills were opposed by some strong power which evidently was resisting us: in short that, instead of finding ourselves face to face with effects as hitherto, we were now in the presence of an active cause,—that, instead of dealing with mere phenomenal consequences, we now had to do with some mysterious originating power.

I was able to convey mentally to my companion a certain amount of what was passing through my mind, and I could feel that he had arrived at a similar conclusion regarding the unusual importance of this manifestation. We silently resolved to beat down the resistance of this phenomenon by the combined strength of our wills, and to force the originating cause to develop itself to us in some tangible shape. All our efforts were, however, unavailing. We attained no success that night, beyond compelling the luminous object to expand and contract, to remain quiet or to move at our will; and we retired to bed, quite worn out, as the early light stealing through the closed shutters warned us that the day had broken, and the time for practical experiment had passed. I should mention that as the daylight appeared the luminous object disappeared in a shower of brilliant sparks, and the light and heat gradually returned into the fire, the lamp, and the brasier. We both awoke late

in the morning, and spent the day in searching all our mystic authorities for directions as to the manner of treating such manifestations as the one presented to us the preceding night.

In the evening we repeated the same forms and incantation as on the previous night, and we were favoured with the reappearance of the same phenomenon. Perhaps it was because we were prepared for its mode of approach that we were not so painfully overcome as we were on the first appearance: our thoughts were more collected and our wills more powerful. By dint of exhausting efforts we succeeded before midnight in forcing the luminous object to resolve itself into the semblance of a vigorous old man, white-bearded, and patriarchal in all but his savage scowl and malevolent eyes. With evident reluctance, and plainly repressing a violent emotion of hatred, the old man, wrapped in a long oriental cloak or burnous, stood with his arms folded, and then, obedient to our silent desire, approached us, and saluting us with a surly obeisance, asked us what we wished of him. Not without some trepidation, which I concealed to the best of my ability, I bade him tell us who he was. He replied, with a strange foreign accent, that he was present to do our bidding to the best of his ability, but that it was no concern of ours who he was and whence he had come. He again asked us what we desired of him. We had at that time hardly contemplated such a result of our

nightly exercises and studies, and had decided upon no definitive plan of action. Seeing our hesitation, he asked permission to withdraw, promising to return the following night to receive our commands. We let him go, and spent the rest of our night in discussing how best to utilise our new servant in attaining the objects we had set before us.

Inglott now told me more of his story, which enabled me to understand what he desired and why he desired it. His father, it appeared, had been a well-known traveller, and in the course of his wanderings in the East, some little time before receiving his consular appointment, had met with and married under very romantic circumstances a Syrian lady, of high birth, great beauty, and rare culture, who had sacrificed her religion, position, and all that Orientals hold most dear to marry him. My friend Inglott and a sister considerably younger than himself were the only children of this marriage. These two had been brought up together in Damascus chiefly by the mother, owing to the long and frequent absences of the father, and had there learned much of the mystic or black art, which is so largely practised in that city. A very warm and close attachment had existed between my friend and his sister, which had been recently broken by the disappearance of the girl during a raid made by professional robbers on them when residing in the hills near the town, where they possessed a very beautiful and secluded summer re-

treat. My friend's father had been killed in the attack, and not long afterwards his mother had died broken-hearted, leaving to Inglott the sacred duty of recovering his sister and rescuing her from a bondage possibly worse than death, and of avenging the murder of his father. Inglott had spent a great portion of his patrimony in bribing the corrupt Turkish officials to aid him, but had hitherto failed to find any trace of his sister, or of his father's murderers. He had long suspected one of the chief local officials of complicity in, or at least of knowledge of, the crime, but he had not succeeded in bringing home any sort of proof against him. What my friend desired was help in redeeming his promise to his dying mother, and he now proposed to demand this aid from our new supernatural servant.

My own desires tended rather in the direction of attaining personal influence over others, and power over the inhabitants of the other world. But now that I seemed within measurable distance of at any rate a part of my desire, I felt no particular longing for its consummation. My good wishes were strongly enlisted in my friend's favour, and I was willing to waive my own claims to consideration, and was prepared to accede to any proposal he might make for utilising the unknown powers of our shadowy coadjutor. Consequently we determined to invoke his assistance only in our search for the missing girl, and agreed that we should combine our will-power to

force him to carry out our wishes, should he prove a reluctant servant. We had no prearranged plan of action, but relied on our individual tact and readiness, and on our acquired powers of mental intercommunication to shape in concert our action to our need when the time came and our strange servant was before us.

The next night saw us as usual in our dim studio, anxiously awaiting the arrival of our visitant. Within half an hour of our preparation being completed, our mysterious servant appeared, without the awe-inspiring manifestations which characterised his first appearances. Inglott at once spoke, and explained in a few words all that we desired. We demanded information regarding his sister, whether she were alive or dead—if the former, that she should be restored to Inglott; if the latter, that undoubted proof should be given of her death. In either case we insisted on an opportunity of revenge on the murderers of my friend's father and the abductors of his sister.

The old man, if I may so call one who had no connection with the world of men, smiled on receiving Inglott's curt instructions, and in a half-mocking voice replied, "You ask a hard thing, my masters; hard not only for me, but more hard than you imagine for yourselves. But I read in your hearts that you are bent upon having your will, and you shall have it. I engage that the missing girl shall be in this room in your presence three months from

this day; and that you, sir," turning to Inglott, "shall at the same moment and in the same place have before you the man who has done you the most deadly injury of all. But to do this I must have the help of one of you, who must change places with me for the time being, and become my servant, following implicitly and unquestioningly all my instructions, while the other must pledge himself to have no dealings with the spirit-world in the meantime."

Inglott promptly replied, "We agree, and I place myself unreservedly at your disposal."

But the Being said, "Not so fast, sir! It is for me to choose my assistant, and I select your friend. He will help me best; he has the stronger will, and, in this matter at any rate, the cooler head. Your duty will be to wait patiently, and to avoid all communication with the spirits, as you call them, as well as with your friend. If you attempt to deceive me, the penalty will be utter failure in your desires."

Inglott in vain tried to shake this resolution, and in the end we were forced to agree. The next day he went to America for a three months' visit, so as to be out of temptation's way, while I remained where I was to receive the instructions of our spirit-servant, who was for the time being to be my master.

I cannot conceal the fact that I awaited the coming of the Being with the most intense nervousness. I should be alone, and this would be the first solitary *séance* which I should experience. However, as is

often the case, the reality was by no means so awful as the anticipation. The night after Inglott's departure, he came quite quietly; and had he been an ordinary mortal, he could not have put me more quickly at my ease by the kind and courteous manner he assumed.

"My friend," he said, after a few minutes' desultory conversation, "you are young and full of youthful enthusiasm. Your attachment to your friend has enabled you most unselfishly to conquer your own inclinations, and to stifle your curiosity. But you shall not be unrewarded. I will give you your desire. You shall have a being from another world—an angel, if you prefer the term—to do your bidding, and shall earn the name, 'Lord of the Spirits.' Ah! you wonder at my knowing your boyish aspiration. I know more of you, you see, than you thought! You may trust me, and if you will only submit your powerful will entirely to mine, you shall see my promise to you as faithfully fulfilled as my promise to your friend Inglott."

I felt pleased and flattered; and though I failed to see how, in aiding me, my master, as I must now call him, was furthering Inglott's desires (and therefore, I hope, my own), I was unwilling to risk any unpleasantness by trying to suggest any course of action apparently better calculated to bring about the desired results. Besides this, I felt really too much in the dark in regard to the situation to form any

definite plans of my own; and beyond all, I began to be very distinctly conscious that now our positions were reversed, and that whatever supremacy my will may have had over the Being at the time when Inglott and I had apparently mastered him, I was at the present moment as a child in his power.

That night we talked long, and on many subjects, but not on the one in which Inglott was most interested. I felt that his object in this was to accustom me to his presence, and to strengthen his ascendancy over me in order to prepare me for the work that was to be done within the next three months.

Just before daybreak he said, "Now, my young friend, I must go. You mortals often summon us poor spirits from our rest to you. Now it is my turn; to-morrow night I mean to call you to the spirit-world. Do not hesitate or fear; you must come. You have pledged yourself to do my bidding, and you must not forget your promise to Inglott. Believe me, I am your friend so long as you do all I wish."

And with these words he left me suddenly.

CHAPTER III.

How I came there I know not. I was first oppressed with a vague consciousness of some resistless power which drew me with gentle yet overpowering

force out of myself. Then I felt myself gradually losing cognisance of the room in which I was sitting. At the same time I was overwhelmed with an impression of the shadowy presence of the Being, which gradually defined itself until I became unmistakably aware that it was his power silently summoning me from this world. After a momentary interval of complete unconsciousness, I slowly awoke to a pleasing perception of warmth and languid restfulness. A faint sweet odour, which I presently recognised to be that of roses, clung to the heavy evening air. I lazily opened my eyes, and before me in the strong light of the full moon lay unfolded a fair oasis in a vast desert, a tinkling stream rippling through an Eastern village nestling in rose-gardens backed by low hills, above which in the far distance rose a higher range, from which stood out one high snow-clad peak. I was alone in a wilderness of roses, a blaze of pink blossom spreading all around me.

All at once I heard a low, sweet, half-familiar voice singing near me a quaint rhythmic song in an unknown tongue. Presently a shadowy though well-defined form advanced into the bright moonlight, and I saw the *eidolon* of the gipsy girl who had met me in the narrow lane near my father's house the year before. In the spirit state, her form and features were purified and etherealised almost beyond belief, and she seemed to me like some angel from Paradise. Spellbound I gazed at her for some moments while

she crossed a bright patch of moonlight into the deep shadow beyond. Then, with a desperate effort, I roused myself, and, collecting my scattered faculties, willed with all my strength that she should come to me. Suddenly she stopped, and turning round like some startled antelope, faced towards me with a look of wonder in her great dark eyes. Slowly she moved out from the shadow of an old grey olive-tree, wreathed with a glory of pink climbing roses, and took one step towards me and then stood hesitating. I strove with all my force against the unseen power that kept me rooted to the spot, and after a fierce struggle so far freed myself as to advance a few paces. And now for the first time I realised that my master had kept his word, and that I too was but a spirit, shadowy and unsubstantial as the sweet form before me—for though a small mass of rock, breast-high, stood between the girl and me, in advancing I passed through it without pain or difficulty. The shock this discovery gave me must have affected the concentration of my will, for I began to feel once more overpowered by the strength of the Being, and was conscious that I was disappearing. Not, however, before the gipsy girl saw me, for I perceived an expression of recognition steal gradually into her eyes, and she smiled and advanced as if about to speak to me, when the whole scene vanished from before my eyes, and I became unconscious.

I knew no more until I found myself in my own

room, with the broad daylight staring in at the window. I felt weak and upset by the strangeness of my night's adventure. As the morning wore on, however, I felt stronger, and before long almost persuaded myself that my strange experience was nothing but a dream, and that memory and imagination had conspired to play me a trick.

About noon was handed to me a note, written in a cramped foreign hand, containing only the words, "Go immediately to Damascus and await me there." The message was not signed, but I knew at once that the letter came from the Being; and leaving explanations which I trusted would make my peace with the college authorities and my parents, I started the next morning for the East.

In due course I reached Damascus, and took up my quarters in the only fairly comfortable *serai* in the place, and for a few days wandered about the bazaars of "Es-Sham," as I soon learned to call the city, paid my respects to the consuls and other diplomatic officials in the place, saw the few sights of the city, and revelled in the orientalism of my strange surroundings. I found the heat considerable, although the cold weather was supposed to be upon us; and after I had been at Damascus for ten days or so, I was glad to accept our vice-consul's invitation to visit him at Salahiyyeh, a lovely cool spot some miles away among the nearer hills. Finding the place much to my lik-

ing, I established myself, when my visit was over, in a little house near my friend's place, judging that for my master's purposes Salahiyyeh was sufficiently close to Damascus, and that there could be no objection to my change of residence.

Until this time the strangeness of everything about me had entirely engrossed me, and it was not until I had fairly settled down at Salahiyyeh that I had leisure or inclination to consider the reason of my sudden visit to the East. But now one evening, as I was "enjoying my *kaif*"—taking my ease—in the cool air in the vine-covered bower at the end of my landlord's garden, and lazily thinking of Inglott and all that I was to do for him, I became suddenly conscious that I was not alone, and the well-remembered figure of my master was once more before me. I started to my feet, and he, greeting me with the dignified salutation with which my short sojourn in the East had made me familiar, beckoned me to accompany him. I followed him for a considerable distance along a narrow path which traversed a valley which I had not yet explored, and just as the new moon was sinking below the horizon we reached the opposite slopes of the hills on which my little house was built. The path descended rapidly through a thick growth of trees, and we shortly found ourselves in a deserted rose-garden, covered with a blaze of pink blossoms, which scented the air, and in the distance rose, cold and grand in the dim twilight, a snowy peak which I

recognised as the highest of the Lebanon range, visible from Damascus on clear days.

Advancing a short distance, we came to a small clearing in the middle of the jungly growth around, and suddenly I remembered the place as the spot in which I had found myself when called out of myself by my master. There was the old gnarled olive-tree under which I had first seen the spirit of the gipsy girl, and there the mass of rock through which I had passed. A fierce longing to see the girl again seized me, and with all my strength and mind I willed she should return. It was not long before I heard her singing the same sad-cadenced song she sang before, and then she stepped slowly out from the black shadow of the tree into the twilight. The master smiled encouragingly; but when I tried to go to her he warned me silently to pause. Profiting by the lesson of obedience I had learned on my last visit to the garden, I crept back and hid myself in the friendly shadow of the sheltering trees. But I could see her plainly. I was very young, and love comes suddenly to the young. My whole heart went out to her, and I turned to my master and prayed him to help me to win her. He laughed, and whispered, "Poor fool! she is a spirit, and you are a man. What has she to do with mere mortals, and what will it profit you to win a shadow?"

But his half-laughing refusal to help me made me only the more importunate. I implored him with all

the eloquence of which I was capable to aid me at least in communicating with her.

At last he yielded. "Very well," said he; "as you will. Do not attempt to speak to her to-night, and do not let her see you now. Come here alone to-morrow night. I must not be with you; but I shall not be far off, and shall be ready to help you if necessary."

I was sadly impatient, but felt it was no use to oppose him, and with the best grace I could muster went home again through the dark valley to dream of the lovely spirit form which I longed to meet again. How the long remaining hours of the night dragged! Never had I known so tedious a day as the next one. I could think of nothing but the gipsy girl and of her sweetness and beauty. At last the slow shadows lengthened out across the yellow plain below the hills, and I knew the time for seeing her again was near. The long twilight closed darkly in, and as the crescent moon neared the low sandhills lying north of the noble slopes of Hermon, I stole away with beating heart to meet the spirit of the gipsy girl.

I had no difficulty in finding the path through the wooded valley. But just before I reached the edge of the thicket which enclosed the old rose-garden, I met the master. He stopped me for a moment with a word of warning to be discreet.

"Beware," he said, "how you let your hot youthful fancies run away with you. Remember your new love

is a spirit, and you are but a man, with all the grossness of mortality within you. I have toiled hard for you since we parted, and she will think you a spirit like herself. Take care you do not undeceive her. Remember, I am your friend, and will help you to the best of my ability,—but you must be cautious."

With that he disappeared, and I moved eagerly on until I reached the little clearing in the wood. The air was heavy with the scent of flowers, and as I paused, a faint warm zephyr gently stirred the whispering trees, when suddenly the bulbul ceased to sing, for with a weird rustle, the half-transparent form of the girl glided out from the shade of the old rose-crowned olive-tree, and moved slowly into the open space beyond.

There she stood in the soft half light of the evening, so near me that I could see the little happy smile that parted her sweet pale lips. I was very nervous, but summoning all my fortitude I advanced, and at the sound of my approach she turned round, and, with a bright smile of remembrance, looked at me and said, "I am so glad you have come among us! I was thinking of you just before you came, for I thought I saw you here some time ago, and wondered if I was right. How did you find me? And are you not happy to leave the weary world?"

I was by no means sure how to answer her, for the Being had evidently told me the truth, and she thought she saw my spirit, as she had done on the

first night she had seen me here. But at last I replied, "Indeed I am glad to have found you again. How could I fail to seek you?"

"I don't know why you should look for me," she said, "when you must have so many friends here."

"Shall I always find you here?" I interrupted.

"Oh yes," she answered, with a look of surprise at my eagerness, "I have been allowed to come back to the home which I loved so dearly, and I always spend the night in this old rose-garden."

"When did you leave the world?" I asked. "It is so bright and beautiful; did you not dread death?"

"Oh no," she replied. "I used to love life at first when I was at home; but I was so very glad to leave the cruel gipsies, and now I am so happy. I did not stay long after that morning we met under the tor. But you have not told me how you came here."

"I came here to seek you," I answered, not without truth, though I am ashamed to confess I had quite forgotten the real reason of my coming to Es-Sham. "Did you think I could forget you or our first meeting? Do you remember what you said to me then?"

She smiled as she answered, "Your hand did not tell the truth, or my skill was at fault—for the first time in my life, I think. I am afraid you can never be a 'Lord of the Spirits' now, since you are one yourself!" and she laughed lightly.

I remained silent for some time. How had she deceived herself, and should I undeceive her? But I made some answer, and then we spoke on various subjects for a short time, as it seemed to me; but it must have been for hours, for at last she said hurriedly, "But we must both be going! See, the east is paling, for the dawn is near. Good-bye, good-bye, my friend!"

"Promise me, before you go, that you will meet me here again to-morrow," I cried passionately.

"Yes; I will come, of course," she said gravely, looking at me curiously, as if wondering at my warmth.

"Good-bye; do not fail," I said, as she turned away; and I watched her as she slowly disappeared through the olives, humming her favourite song.

No sooner was she gone than I became conscious that the master was with me. "Have I not kept my promise to help you?" he said. "She thinks you are a spirit like herself; take care how you undeceive her. You will meet her again to-morrow night, and I will help you further. Be a man, for you will need all your strength of will." Just as the grey dawn broke he too disappeared, and I was left alone to find my way home, which I reached just as the sun showed himself above the horizon. I was very weary and excited by all I had gone through, but I slept as soon as my head touched the pillow.

My first thoughts on waking were of the spirit of

the girl. How sweet and pure she looked in the ghostly starlight among the grey olive-trees! She had told me that her name was Safura, and I thought the name, spoken in her gentle voice, with her half-Arab lisp, the sweetest I had ever heard, and it thrilled in my ears even now. Her weird beauty, and the strange intangibility of her form, fascinated me, and filled me with a hopeless longing to possess and hold her as my own. All day my thoughts were of her, but the enigma—how to win her—was no nearer solution at the end of it than at the beginning, and when I went to meet her that night, my mind was sorely perplexed. My difficulties doubtless helped to fan the smouldering fire of admiration thus quickly into the fiercer flame of love.

How sweet she was that night, and yet how cold! She was very glad to see me, but it was with the gladness of a child pleased to see her friend. Freed from the trammels of the body, her spirit seemed to have lost all earthly taint. My love was not one to be satisfied with mere liking in return—it was, perhaps, more gross and earthly by reason of its rapid growth. But she had no suspicion. She thought me to be a spirit like herself, and little dreamed how much a part of me my worldly longings were. What we spoke of that night, or the many succeeding nights, I cannot remember. I only know that my passion grew stronger, as my hope of arousing a similar feeling within her grew fainter. With all the

strength of my will I resolved to win her heart, and make her love me as one mortal loves another. But as time wore on, I felt I was making no real progress. That I had obtained some influence over her I clearly perceived, but it was not the influence I desired. She yielded to my wishes, and accommodated her will to mine, more easily than she had done at first; but still I felt baffled, and conscious that the greater part of my efforts was being wasted on space, or at any rate in the wrong direction.

At last, in despair I summoned the Being, and invoked his aid once more. I showed him how difficult my task was — how impossible it was to infuse any spark of mortal love in a heart which, by reason of its freedom from all mortal contamination, had now no sympathy with, or power of feeling, human passion. He was not very sympathetic, and asked me what I could expect if I fixed my love on a being of another world. But his want of interest only increased my earnestness, and I begged him to exert himself to help me; and at last reminded him of what he had said to me when we made our compact, and insisted that he should help me to win the gipsy girl for my own.

The master smiled grimly, and said, "Have your own way, then. But after all, it is little I can do for you. Has love weakened your will, that you cannot force her to feel some sort of affection for you? Win ever so little of her heart (and she is not

yet so pure a spirit that this thing is impossible), and then it will be within your power to materialise her, and clothe her temporarily in human form; and woman as she was, and will be once more, you will be able to bend her easily to your will. I can only join my power of will to yours; and I will help you to the best of my ability, as I am bound to do. If you repent hereafter, don't blame me."

This was a new revelation to me, for I had never before seriously considered the possibility of reinvesting a departed spirit with flesh. Inglott and I, in the course of our studies, had seen such a thing hinted at; and we had once discussed the question, but sceptically—thinking the idea one of the many absurd and impossible suggestions which, unfortunately, abound in all books on occult science.

However, this gave me hope, and hope is everything in love, and is very strong in the breast of a young man. So I determined to try my best, and endeavoured to persuade myself that with the aid of the master I had a fair chance of success. At any rate, I felt I could have no rival, and this was a comforting reflection.

For many nights I put forth my utmost powers to win Safura's heart; and though I was not very confident of progress, I felt conscious that she was changing towards me, and this gave me strength to redouble my exertions. I was now sure that I was using my powers in the right direction, and that time

might give me an opportunity of winning the spirit-girl's heart in the way I longed to win it.

And so the weeks wore on. One night, when the moon was for the third time growing full and round, we had met as usual. The air was now much cooler than it had been when I came; and the roses, rejoicing in the less fierce sun, grew deeper in tint and richer in perfume than before, and ran riot over the old trees. We were wandering in the garden which we loved so much, and were talking of the life to which she thought we had both said farewell. Safura had previously told me something of her life, but very little. She had been, it appeared, but a short time with the gipsies, and had been unhappy with them: why, she would never tell me. Nor would she tell me anything of her earlier history—only that she had passed her childhood in this very garden, where the ruins of her old home were visible, charred and burnt; and that she had lost her father and mother in a very sad way, two or three years before she died. The whole subject seemed too painful for her.

That night I said to her, "Safura, did you never learn what love means, or have you only forgotten?"

She seemed startled, and hesitated for a moment, and then replied with a smile, "Love? of course I knew what that was; who that has had father and mother and friends could fail to know it?"

"But did you know no other love than that?" I

said. "That love you can feel now, can you not? Had you no feeling of love in life which you cannot feel here?"

She looked confused again, and for a moment paused. Then her lips parted in a slow smile, and she seemed about to speak again when she paused once more. Then in answer to my questioning eyes, and perhaps obedient to my will, said suddenly, "Yes, I did love once! . . . Well, it can do no harm now if I do tell you. Love like that can never trouble us here. Yes; I have loved. After I met you in the lane I could think of no one but you, and when I was dying I seemed to hear your voice calling me back to you as you did that day when I left you, and I felt once more all through me a thrill such as I felt when your hand touched mine. I think your voice and touch would have called me back from death itself. But it is too late now; all that is past for us both," she added sadly.

"Why is it too late?" I burst out, unable to restrain myself longer. "Safura, my darling! I have never ceased to love you—cannot you love me still? Because you have left the world must all that is of the world die out of you, and must you be cold and cruel to all left in the world? Come back to me once more. I am no spirit, and warm living love like mine is strong enough to bring you back to earth and make you live once more. Come, and I will teach you how happy life can be! come!" And as I spoke I felt my whole

being rush into one channel and all my energy of will sweep irresistibly down it towards one great and steadfast purpose. I felt the boundless strength of my mighty master urge me on, supporting me and adding a thousandfold to the almost superhuman force I put forth at this the supreme moment of my life.

Gradually a strange change came over her. Her shadowy form grew slowly denser, colour faintly tinged her lips, her eyes, her hair. By degrees the semblance of life came to her; in her dark eyes a look of tenderness appeared, which deepened and deepened until at last her whole face and figure were lighted up by the divine fires of life and love. My patience was rewarded, my agonising efforts were successful; her materialisation was complete; and with a trembling sigh she nestled in my arms, all warm and living, a true woman, whose soft lips shrunk coyly from mine as I pressed on them the first long ardent kiss of love, while she whispered, "You have brought me back to life, and I am ever all your own!"

CHAPTER IV.

One short rapturous week of bliss passed all too quickly by, and I had quite forgotten Inglott, the duty I had undertaken, and all but myself and my love for Safura. At the end of this time, as I was

walking slowly to my house in the grey dawn after bidding Safura farewell before she faded with the moonlight into her shadowy spirit-self and disappeared, I felt the unaccustomed presence of my strange master, and started suddenly from a deep reverie as he addressed me. My only thought at the time he spoke was of the next night's meeting; and my darling's farewell, as she had faded slowly from my close embrace, still thrilled in my ears.

"Well, friend," he said, "have I not been better than my word? Now it is your turn to keep your promise to Inglott and to me. Do you know that you have been amusing yourself here a good deal more than two months, and that you have only just time left to reach England to keep your appointment?"

"But I am not going," I cried. "I know nothing about Inglott's sister nor her abductors. You must manage to fulfil your promise to him without me. Leave me here in peace."

"This will not do," the Being said, sternly, "I have your promise, and you shall keep it. I have helped you, and you must help me. Your presence when I meet Inglott is absolutely necessary."

I argued and protested, but to no purpose. His will was stronger than mine. I begged for one more meeting with Safura in the old garden, but he was immovable, and would not allow it. Being untrammelled by the bonds of the flesh, except when I willed her to be otherwise, she could come to me as

well in England as in Syria. I must return to England and take up my residence in my old rooms without delay, otherwise I should be too late to help him in giving Inglott his revenge. All this the Being urged, and I had no power to resist. Further, he extracted an unwilling promise from me that I would not summon Safura without receiving his permission to do so; and enjoined on me not to see or speak to Inglott before the appointed night, on penalty of ruining all his hopes.

And so I started for England, haunted by visions of the sad face which I knew would look so wistfully for me that night in the dear old garden, where she would miss me for the first time for weeks past. The thought of the sorrowing spirit of the girl wandering through the trees searching for me in all our favourite nooks, and longing in vain for the power which alone could give back to her the enjoyment of warm human love, almost forced me to play traitor to Inglott, and to stay in Damascus with my shadowy mistress. But calling to my aid the whole strength of my will, and fortifying myself with the thought that I could summon her to my side in England as easily as I could in Syria, I compelled myself to start for home, and by degrees to think of other things. I dared not think too much of Safura for fear of summoning her, and of thus destroying Inglott's happiness.

And now for some days I had ample time to think of Inglott, and I promised myself a very pleasant

meeting with him, for I held him in sincere regard and esteem, and was truly rejoiced to think that he would so soon have his sister restored to him and be given an opportunity of avenging himself on those who had injured him so cruelly. My conscience reproached me a good deal for having thought so little about him during the past few weeks, and for having done, so far as I could see, absolutely nothing for him. But I consoled myself by remembering that, after all, I had done everything the master had asked me to do; and that, judging from the complete manner in which he had fulfilled all that he had promised me, he was not likely to fail Inglott.

On the whole, my return journey to England was pleasanter and less disturbed by vain longings after Safura than I had anticipated; and when I entered my rooms on arrival, I remembered with much pleasure that it was the day fixed by the master for our meeting with Inglott. I promised myself with confidence the enjoyment of seeing his happiness, and I determined to obtain my master's permission to see Safura at once, and, if he would not give it, I decided I would summon her in defiance of him, as, having fulfilled his covenant with Inglott, my rebellion could do no one any harm.

At last the time arrived for me to go to Inglott's room, as I had been accustomed to do before we separated. There I found him looking anxious and excited, walking restlessly up and down the room.

He greeted me cordially, but with a preoccupied manner. We had time only to exchange greetings, when, without warning, the Being appeared before us. A look of triumphant hatred gleamed in his stern eyes, and a terrible smile of satisfied revenge lighted up his face. There was such a devilish joy expressed in his whole appearance that my heart sank within me, and my gladness changed to fear and dismay.

He turned to Inglott with a sneer which appalled me, and said, "Now, my master, be pleased to lay your commands upon your obedient slave!"

Inglott briefly replied, "Remember your promise. Where is my sister, and where are my enemies?"

"Look at me!" said the Being, with a laugh as baleful as Mephistopheles's; "do you not recognise me now? I was known throughout Syria as El Akrab" (the scorpion), "in compliment to my amiable qualities," he said, with a vicious grin, "though I am not so bad as I was painted, as your friend here will testify. Stay where you are!" he cried, as Inglott started up from the chair in which he was seated, his face purple with fury; "do not think that the privilege of inflicting the supreme injury on you has fallen to me. Be silent, and do not dare to interrupt me again, or you shall never see your sister. Now, listen! When I was little more than a boy I loved your mother. She was betrothed to me, and would have been my wife but for that dog, your father, who lured away her heart and stole her from me. When

I discovered this I swore upon my father's grave that I would be revenged. I have been revenged already in part, but to-night my vengeance will be complete."

His manner as he said these words was so cruel and diabolical, and his face wore an expression of such satanic hatred, that my blood curdled with horror. Inglott sat motionless, but the great veins in his forehead seemed near bursting, and his eyes glared with a fury rivalling that of the awful Being.

He continued: "I planned and led the attack on your father's house. I killed him with my own hand as I would a dog; and I carried off your sister, sparing her for her mother's sake, because I had loved her once; but my hatred of your race was too strong to suffer me to spare her long. I could not bring myself to slay or torture her; so I sold her to the gipsies, trusting they would drag her down to a fate worse than death. You escaped me, and your mother's person was sacred to me for the sake of the love I bore her years before."

My heart stood still for a moment when he mentioned the gipsies, and then beat furiously. Could I then, after all, have been doing Inglott service when I was at Damascus? Was it for me to bring back his sister to him, even for a short time, from the grave? But I dismissed the idea in a moment, thinking how improbable it was that my master would have aided me to happiness in order to give happiness to one he hated so much.

He resumed: "And then your mother died, and when she died all my old love for her returned, and my hatred of you and yours redoubled itself. I sought out her grave, and on it swore an oath that, alive or dead, in the living world or in the next, I would revenge myself to the utmost on all belonging to your father. I tried to trace you, but you had left Syria, so had your sister, and I could obtain no clue to either of you. I was making the necessary preparations for going to Europe to seek you, when I myself was assassinated in my sleep. Nay, you have no cause to congratulate yourself," he said, as Inglott made some movement expressive of pleasure. "Had I not died then I should have lost the revenge I have had, and shall shortly have. Not long after my death I saw from afar the spirit of your sister among the pure and the happy; so I knew that she was dead, and had escaped unharmed from the life of misery I had destined for her. A sad and bitter blow for me, you may be sure! And I know not how I should have accomplished my vengeance on both her and you had not your own presumptuous actions put you in my power. Yes; writhe in anguish and fury as you will, but it will not alter the truth, nor diminish the sting that lies in it. Remember, too, that you are powerless against me, for I am far beyond your reach. I shall wreak my vengeance on you to the full, while you cannot touch me!"

Anything so pitiable as poor Inglott's condition

during this part of the Being's narrative I have never seen. He looked as if he were about to have a fit, his features and limbs working convulsively, all the wild passion of his semi-oriental nature striving to find vent in action, while he was powerless to move, spellbound by the Being's malignant power.

"Ah!" sneered the spirit, "I touch you nearly now! My revenge is close at hand! You sought the spirits, and would not let the departed rest in peace. One night I was sent to obey your call, and unwillingly enough I went. But when I saw you I recognised you, and reading both you and your friend like an open book, I quickly decided upon my plan of action. I promised to produce your sister and the man who has done you the deadliest wrong of all. Is not this so?"

Inglott was past speech, so I nodded assent. The spirit smiled and said, "Then before proceeding further I redeem my promise!" First muttering a few words which I did not understand, he said, in a low, distinct, commanding voice—

"Safura!"

Immediately a faint luminous appearance became visible. This grew more and more distinct, until in a few moments the spirit form of her whom I loved so well became clearly defined in the darkened room. But oh, how sadly changed she was! The sweet, happy expression was gone, and in its place was a sad, hopeless, suffering look, as of one who has under-

gone torture, and who knows it must be repeated again and again.

As soon as she appeared both Inglott and I leaped to our feet, and were advancing towards her with words of love on our lips, when the Being checked us by a gesture.

"Hold!" he said. "You have no part in her now. She is a fallen spirit, and is now mine to punish for the sin she has committed in our spirit-world. Pure and innocent on earth, she was removed far beyond my influence when she died, and would have remained so for ever but for your false friend here, who by the power of his wicked selfish will and uncontrolled passions forced her back to this gross material world once more, and filled her heart with love so earthly that she is now unfit for happiness beyond the grave, and must be cleansed and purged of her worldly taint through æons of misery before she can return to her former state of happiness and purity. And this task of purification by fire, Inglott, has been allotted to me, your arch-enemy, to carry out! Thoroughly shall I perform my task, although the thought that Safura is to be fitted again for happiness through my instrumentality is gall and wormwood to me. But what is my punishment compared to the joy of complete revenge on you and yours? I have slain your father with my own hands, broken your mother's heart, brought your only and dearly loved sister to almost everlasting misery by

means of your bosom friend, and now there is nothing left to you but agony of mind on earth and torture beyond the grave, because your own presumptuous sin alone has given me power to injure you and to glut myself with revenge on you and yours!"

As he ceased, Inglott rose slowly from the chair into which he had fallen, cowering and covering his livid face with his trembling hands during the last part of the Being's speech. For one moment he looked at me with bloodshot eyes, filled with reproach and contempt, and then he began to move unsteadily towards Safura, who crouched in one corner of the room in an agony of shame and remorse. But the Being held up his hand to forbid his further advance. Inglott turned swiftly upon him with a furious gesture of wild rage and despair; but before he could reach him, he fell to the ground at his feet, the blood streaming from his mouth, and a bitter curse upon his lips.

He never spoke again. As he fell, the malignant Being and poor Safura disappeared, this time for ever.

I gave the alarm, and tried to raise my friend, but he shrank from me with a look of horror in his glazing eyes, and I had no heart to force my unwelcome help upon him. Before medical aid could arrive he was dead, and the hands of a stranger and of his faithless friend laid his lifeless body on a couch.

An inquest was held, and, on the medical evidence, a verdict of death by the visitation of God was re-

turned. I was, of course, examined as the only witness of his seizure, but I had time to prepare some story—I forget what—and no mention was made of the Being and Safura. I knew that such a tale would not be believed. After the funeral, I went down into the country, but not to my home, for I cannot meet my family.

And here I remain, a broken man; broken in nerve, in spirit, and in health,—waiting for death, which I long for and yet dread, for I know that for me death is but the commencement of punishment even more severe and more awful than I now suffer. Yet, while I linger on earth, I am so haunted by the reproach and contempt conveyed in Inglott's last look; so weighed down by sorrow that my selfish conceit and overbearing passion should have been the instruments by which the accursed Being was enabled to strike the deadly blow; so stung by remorse that my sin should have dragged down Safura—whom I loved, and shall ever love, with all the undisciplined strength of a wilful man's heart—from purity and happiness to lasting woe and degradation; and so maddened by the knowledge that my own presumption has placed her for ever beyond my reach,—that a hundred times a-day I make up my mind to risk the unknown horrors of future punishment, to escape the maddening tortures of my present existence.

And yet, I dare not—I dare not.

THE STORY OF JAMES BARKER.

A TALE OF THE CONGO COAST.

BY J. LANDERS.

PART I.

KABOOKA BAY was a quiet spot on the desolate Congo coast. There was no European habitation within forty miles of it on one side or the other, and the whitewashed roof of the factory, or trading station there, could be seen from far out at sea, a solitary speck on the border of an almost treeless, barren-looking country.

The large wide bay itself was bounded at each end by low cliffs; and from dark seams in the sides of these exuded a thick shale oil, which lay yellow and greasy on the surface of the pools of sea water at their bases, amid the rocks round which the sea curled and poured.

Nevertheless the surf was neither so high nor so heavy at Kabooka as at many other places along the coast. Out seawards, instead of the usual lines of white dangerous water, were only here and there little patches of foam, where the rollers came upon the hidden rocks. Close inshore the breakers fell in almost gentle succession, and at last spent themselves on a beach of fine sand, strewn with coral-encrusted seaweed, pink, white, grey, grass-green, yellow, and purple in colour; while delicate sea-shells of all shapes, tints, and sizes, lay scattered about, and glistened in the rays of a tranquil sunset.

Drawn up beyond the reach of the water lay two gaily-stripped surf-boats, their sharp curved stems pointing seawards. Beyond them a pathway was worn through the bent grass, and led up a gentle slope to the factory.

On the planked verandah of the low wooden felt-thatched house sat two white men in the coast costume of a shirt and a pair of white duck trousers a-piece, enjoying the cool of the evening after the long heat of the day. And the two had had a piece of hard work, as upwards of a hundred tusks of ivory lying in the dark cargo-room of the factory testified. These had all been bought during the day, and probably more would be forthcoming from the native traders on the morrow. On this day, too, a steamer from Europe had been due at Kabooka, and it was the probability of her arrival before they should be ready

to ship their ivory by her that the two men had been discussing.

"Ah, well, when she comes," said the elder,—a dark, sallow-faced, but good-looking man,—"she will be the last but one before my relief arrives, and then 'hey for England, home, and beauty!' Eh, Master James Barker?"

"Ay," returned the younger; "and I don't know how I shall get on without you, sir," he added. "Since you took me, a sick ship lad, out of the old barque in Sharks' Creek, and nursed me to life again, when near every man aboard died of the 'bilioso' fever, you've been more than a father to me—you have, sir;" and the lad turned a glance full of gratitude and trust towards his companion.

"Tuts, tuts," replied the elder, shortly, "yours was the worst case, and you were the youngest on board; so naturally I took care of you. But what's more to the purpose, James, you've amply repaid anything I ever did for you since you've been in the service of the firm. You've turned out an honest, brave boy, an A1 trader, and a prime favourite with the natives; and I'll go bail you'll be quite indispensable to my relief when he comes; for I daresay he'll be some fellow quite ignorant of the trade and the way of the natives here," and Mr Monke's voice had in it a touch of sarcasm.

"Let me go home with you," suddenly pleaded the lad. "I will be your faithful servant; I will

not ask for wages from you if"—and he stopped—"if you will only allow me to be near you," he whispered.

Mr Monke stared. Here was evidence of attachment in all sincerity. He was flattered; but he said, "What, James Barker! *you* propose to be *my servant?* And what about your position on the coast? Why, you will be an agent in charge in course of time, with a station all to yourself, and your own master. If the firm had only taken my advice, they'd have put you in here until I returned; but they never do the correct thing until it is too late," he added, having another fling at his relief.

"I am sick of the coast; I hate it," returned the lad vehemently, the colour mounting in his face. "The same sea, sky, and land, day after day. Nothing but the prickly bush and the niggers to look at. Why, sir," he went on quickly, to hide what the other might possibly deem ingratitude, "we haven't seen a white man for three months, and not a white woman for as many years."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the elder man, kindly, seeing through the pretended disgust of the lad, "you've tired of it all very suddenly. And as for a white woman, wait till you have a beard. I never heard you mention the name of one before, James. You surely did not leave a sweetheart at home, eh?"

"No, sir," replied the lad, shortly, and rose as a native servant, clad in a white flowing cloth, caught

dexterously round his shoulders, came on the verandah, and after making a low salaam with the whitish palms of his hands turned outwards, announced that dinner was served. He then, with free stride, followed his white masters into the dining-room, his round black face and thick red lips showing in the lamplight like polished ebony and coral. There could not have been a greater contrast to him and the other three of his race who waited at the table—the counterparts of himself in the *physique* of their frames, and the unmeaning look of their broad faces—than the two white men. The latter, though thin and pale through the effect of the climate, and looking as if any one of their servants could have mastered them with ease, had yet in their clear-cut features, and, above all, in the quick intelligent look of their eyes, a something that gave warning not only of what they could do, but would attempt.

Yet between the two there was a great difference besides that of age. Monke's face was dark, thoughtful, and sarcastic in expression, seeing through things, as the natives well knew. The lad's countenance, on the contrary, was open and fair, his hair was light brown, almost yellow in colour, and there was a dreamy look in his blue eyes which contrasted oddly enough with his gaunt, awkward, growing frame, whose bones showed too plainly. Yet there was a gentleness about him which had first attracted his senior. In short, while the one was educated and

practical, the younger, ship-boy though he was, and rough and coarse in exterior, had the finer mind.

After their meal the two wearied men retired to rest through a night brilliant in moonlight, beneath which the phosphorescent waves glittered as they broke with the swell in the dark water of the open bay, and edged the beach with continual flashes of silver. On the shore there was not a sound heard save the murmur of the ocean and the melancholy cry of the watch set round the factory.

Even the vast shadowy background to the bay was silent. As the hours wore on and day broke, a heavy mist collected over the grey sea, and crept slowly inland, and the natives for the last watch drew their trade blankets about them, as they shivered with the cold. But as the sun showed himself the mist soon rolled away, and everything sparkled and revelled in the warm light of the early tropical morning. With it came a band of traders from the native village, numbering, with their bondsmen, fully one hundred. Between each two slaves, in a sort of wicker basket, was slung a heavy curved elephant's tusk, and in single line the men descended a path through the grass, and forded a river. The interpreters belonging to the factory and the masters headed this procession, holding long wands, with which they gesticulated and pointed as they walked, and the rear was brought up by a crowd of fighting men, whose duty it had been to guard the band on their journey, and who, now

their duty was over, beat tom-toms, blew horns, and made a great fuss.

All this excitement was by way of rejoicing over the arrival at the factory of another company from the far interior, whence, after many months' journeying through tribe after tribe and past danger after danger, they had emerged on the sea-coast, and had come to Kabooka to dispose of their produce. The men were, one and all, armed with knives and flat-headed spears, and some carried bows. Their knives they wore stuck through folds of native yellow grass cloth wound round their waists. The bondsmen and fighting men had no other clothing on their bodies, but confined their decorative talents to their hair, which they wore in the form of great trained bushes of wool. The masters, in whatever condition they had travelled, after their rest in the village of Kabooka, had arrayed themselves in long trailing pieces of European cotton cloths, and wore anklets and bracelets of brass, and strings of bright beads round their necks. All had flat features of the true negro type, and they differed outwardly only in colour, verging from a dark brown to quite a light bronze tint. Their frames were worn through their long march; but to them repayment for all their toil was soon to come through the instrumentality of the white trader.

Arrived within the yard of the factory, the bearers sat themselves down beside the walls, while the others

stood about in groups discussing prices while waiting for the white men. Presently the large doors of the cargo-room were thrown open, and immediately, irrespective of degree or rank, a rush was made through them to be brought up in front of a small desk, at which James was seated calm and ready. He motioned with his hand to the foremost men, who instantly squatted down on their haunches on the floor in circles, their tusks of ivory in the centre. The others blocked up the entrance to the room, and streamed out into the sunny yard, each man agog to catch the price of the first tusk sold, which would necessarily serve as a guide to the value of the rest. James rose and inspected one belonging to the group immediately in front of him. It was what was called a prime tooth, fully five feet in length, curved gradually and without knot or crack, although its dark-brown smooth surface was dented and scarred, and its point worn fine by use in far-off forests.

James signed to a native to put it in the balance, and it turned the scale at fifty pounds. Then he thrust a stout stick into the hollow root of it, and brought out the end of the stick covered with wet mud. A downcast look came over the faces of the owners as he smiled grimly and bade them clear the tusk. At most times he would have packed the group off, or made them wait till all were served; but as theirs was the first tooth, and a fine one, he passed over the attempt to cheat, and after the mud had been scraped

out of the tusk, took a good two or three pounds off the weight of it by way of retaliation, and then considered his offer. So many guns, so much powder, and so many "parts" of cloth, he cried out, after a brief calculation of the goods he had for barter; and immediately his voice was heard, it was answered by a derisive chorus of refusal from all parts of the room.

He sat down and waited calmly while the groups consulted among themselves and with the interpreters in a state of pretended frantic indignation. He feigned indifference. After a while, an offer to take a price exceeding his by fully a third was made by them, which he refused, and told them good-humouredly to speak their "last mouth" next time, or in another word *sense*. Upon this he was asked to name a fresh price, and after pretending to look with much seriousness at the slate before him, he increased his offer by a very little, informing them that he had now truly spoken his "last mouth." Then ensued another chatter, in which bondsmen and fighting men joined, so great was the eagerness of all to have a part in settling this most important question. James was implored and entreated over and over again to make yet another mouth, but he answered firmly, "What I have said I have said," and sat back in his chair with folded arms.

It was a sufficiently striking picture,—the long, low, wooden, whitewashed cargo-room, with the many

groups of stalwart black figures squatted before the solitary white man seated at his desk, and keeping the whole company in check, as it were; while behind him, for a background, were piled huge opened bales of gaudy-coloured cloths,—striped, checked, figured, flowered, or dyed wholly red or blue. Blankets, rugs, and shawls were spread beside gold and silver threaded dress-pieces, and soldiers' uniform coats—trappings gorgeous to the native eye. Stands of old flint muskets with shining barrels, some of which bore the Tower mark, were ranged along the walls, or lay in open cases. Bundles of glittering swords, spear-pointed knives, *machets*, and much other cutlery, were placed beside hundredweights of heavy brass rings, slender brass rods, flints, hoop-iron, and other hardware. Pottery of common sorts, and heaps of nick-nacks in the shape of toys, hand looking-glasses, and a great quantity of false jewellery, took up the whole of one corner, while another was occupied by boxes of beads. Cases of coarse liqueurs stood thick together, and stowed behind them loomed large puncheons of rum.

The sight of all these riches was perhaps too tempting to the crowd of savages, for at last, though with a tremendous show of reluctance, James's second offer was accepted by them, and a bargain struck for the number and quantity of muskets, powder, and cloth he had named, which articles would be afterwards exchanged for many others,

according to a fixed standard of values much in favour of the white trader.

The price of the first tusk sold having thus been ascertained, and received with a grunt by the natives, bargaining was speedily proceeded with, and Monke joining the lad, the two men toiled busily and eagerly for many hours, managing the increasing stream of sellers with consummate tact, ability, and good humour. Indeed, so much ivory was bought that the elder man began to have serious doubts of there being sufficient goods in the store to pay for it all, and he bade James stop buying and take a look round and give his opinion. James rose and was beginning to roughly calculate the contents of the bales and cases before him, when he happened to turn suddenly, and saw, in the little doorway which led to the dwelling portion of the house, the slender though tall figure of a white woman. He started backward as if shot. He could not at first believe his eyes. He stared, and slowly approached the figure, which looked at him. He gave an inarticulate cry to Mr Monke, who, turning, was also transfixed with astonishment. A lady! a white lady! It was the last object either had thought to see, and she stood before them, and quite close, having advanced into the room, and being brought to a standstill by a roar of surprise from the astonished natives.

James further approached her, and she put out

both her hands, which he took involuntarily between his own rough palms. There were tears in her eyes, and it was with difficulty she spoke. At last she cried, "Oh, you are English, are you not?" "Yes," answered James, "this is an English house, and we are both English, Mr Monke and I." Monke now came forward and told James to take the girl into the dining-room and attend to her, while he would go on with the work.

So the pair thus oddly brought together went out of the dark and now close-smelling cargo-store into the light and cheerful dining-room of the factory, and there James found a Dutchman leaning out of one of the windows, and talking at the top of his voice to a number of hammock-bearers outside.

Senhor Thoolen explained that he had conducted the lady to Kabooka. She had landed from the steamer that had passed down the coast two nights before. "The steamer is past Kabooka, then?" queried James. "Yes, but it is to call on its return from the south." Mees M'Gibbon had come out to her brother, and was forwarded by the Dutch house to the nearest English factory. He, Senhor Thoolen, had instructions to return with all speed, and would make his farewell if the Senhor English would provide him with four fresh bearers for his hammock.

"M'Gibbon!" ejaculated James, as he heard her name pronounced. Was it possible that she could be the sister of the notorious Bill M'Gibbon, well

known on all the coast betwixt the Congo and the Gaboon? "M'Gibbon!" again said James to himself—a Yankee in manner, a Scotchman by birth, an ex-soldier of the American war, whose face was scarred by the mark of a bullet-wound through the cheek, a swaggerer, a drunkard by reputation. Could so fair a being be of the same flesh and blood as he? And if so, how had he allowed her to come to so strange a land? It was cruel of him. And James poured out his inquiries in Portuguese to the Dutchman, who, surprised, shook his head slowly, and did not know any more about the matter than that the *senhora* had landed from the steamer, and that he had been ordered to deliver her safe and sound at Kabooka, which he had done. "But," and he drew James to one side, "is she not beautiful,—*loovely?*" And he grasped James hard by the arm, and his little eyes twinkled knowingly as he turned them up in his head until nothing but the white of them was seen, and kept them so long inverted that they began to look like fixtures.

The sooner he was out of the way the better, thought James; and sent for the bearers he wanted. Then the girl, who had stood by wondering, staggered the lad by asking simply to see her brother. James tried to explain. "Is he not here?" she asked, trembling violently. Nothing had been heard of him, confessed James. But Mr Monke would be only too glad to receive her until a messenger could

be sent to him. If she could trust herself to stay at Kabooka, that would be the best way. It might be a week or more before the messenger could return; but she might be sure he would go as quickly as possible. It was of no use. By some misapprehension she had expected to meet her brother, and her disappointment was too great. She sat down and burst into tears. She had already heard enough of the country on her passage out to know that probably she was the only Englishwoman in the land, and the thought frightened her. By the sight of her distress James was distracted. He did not know what to do. Smelling-salts, perfumes, he thought of; but there were none within a thousand miles of him. All he said to her seemed at first to increase her grief. He contented himself with cursing, to himself, the absent M'Gibbon. And yet he was conscious that he rejoiced at his absence.

At last she calmed down a little, and following up his advantage, he sat down beside her and soothed her as well as he was able in his awkward way; and she, becoming gradually interested in what he said, told him in return how and why she had been brought to the coast.

Her profession at home had been that of a governess. Her only brother had never taken any notice of her; but having lost a situation she had been in, and not being able to obtain another, she had written to his agents in England asking him, as her only

relation, to help her, and for a reply they had paid her passage out to him.

This surprised and puzzled James very much. What kind of life did M'Gibbon imagine she would lead on the coast? What could she expect to do there, and in its climate, if it did not kill her? As these thoughts ran through his mind, Margaret—for that was her name—plied him with questions as to her brother and his surroundings; and though the sympathetic lad gave her as good an account of the man as he could, and of his house and the place it was in, yet he could not help showing some of his anxiety to her, which she perceived, and he felt that she seemed to look to him for help. Mr Monke found the two together, and alone; and he smiled in spite of his curiosity to know the wherefore of the appearance of this waif from the civilised world. Upon being told, he was as much astonished as James had been, and then he was grave. There was something more than curious in the fact that a man like M'Gibbon should bring this young and educated girl out to the coast. She would undoubtedly be a restraint upon him, which his rough disposition could not but feel irksome. And, like James, Monke thought, What of the girl's fate in a spot far from any other woman?

However, he could do no more for her than to assure her that she was as welcome as possible until her brother came for her; and he despatched a

messenger to him at his factory on the Bay of Donde with the news of his sister's arrival and a letter from her. Then the two men, leaving Margaret alone for a time, went back to their work as if no unexpected interruption had come to the routine of their solitary lives,—at least the elder one did. As for James, already something led his thoughts astray.

That night, when the work was again done, Monke sat on his verandah in the shade and watched the two young people as they talked together, entirely forgetful of him, and already fast friends. Thoughts of far-off days many years past came to the man involuntarily. And James happened to rise and go out with the girl into the bright moonlight. The two strolled away together, and then they came back and stood by the verandah covering. Presently the lad turned his face up to the great orb, whose strong pure light brought out his every feature. There was an expression on his face which had never been there before, thought the elder man; and he leaned forward in his chair, breathless and startled in spite of himself, for the moment. The look of the lad had suddenly reminded him of some one, and he gazed, utterly transfixed, until James came on to the verandah again, when he dropped back into his chair with a sigh. "It was the expression, the very expression," he murmured to himself, half-affrighted. "Bah! the idea was nonsense," he muttered, recovering. It was only the effect of time and circum-

stance on his imagination, and he tried to dismiss the lad from his thoughts.

Yet that night the vision of a face came to him again and again, so that he could not sleep, and he rose and went outside. Just as he reached the edge of the verandah, he gave a little cry of surprise and partly of terror. There, before him in the moonlight, was the very face that had haunted him. But the next moment he recognised James; and, to cover his emotion, he asked the lad roughly what he did out so late, and on getting no answer, ordered him off to bed.

The sudden advent of the girl had unduly disturbed both the lad and himself, Monke concluded, and the sooner she was away the better. It was no business of his how her brother would behave to her; and with this decision he tried to sleep.

Nevertheless, not even James became more attentive to Margaret during her enforced stay than Monke. It was wonderful how readily he, so disinclined to be disturbed or roused, put himself about to accommodate her. He insisted on giving up his own room to her, and had all his bachelor belongings removed out of it into a little dark room. He found in his trunks collars and neckties of bygone fashions, and white drill-coats, and adorned himself, to the great envy of James, who possessed no such evidence of refinement, and had, to his great disgust, to appear at table in his usual costume of shirt and trousers and an old pilot coat.

All the native women about the factory were banished with the exception of one, who had strict injunctions to wait upon the *senhora* and do nothing else. James, whose duty it was to superintend the household arrangements of the factory, endeavoured to make up for his want of a white coat by extreme nicety in the supply of the table. He held long consultations with the cook and the cook's mate. He shot and dressed a bullock. He bribed the native hunters, with the result that little deer not much larger than hares, red-legged partridges, green pigeons, and other delicacies, were served every day after fresh oysters from the river. And for vegetables there were green corn, yams, and large red peppers. He went on board the steamer on its return; and after seeing two tons of ivory safely stowed away on board, returned with as many loaves of the ship's white bread, and bottles of pickles and sauces, and potted meats, as he could buy from the steward. At this improved fare Monke chuckled to himself, and wished the girl would stay a very long time to stimulate Mr James in his arrangements.

And to Margaret's great distress, a whole week passed away without any news from her brother. The first intimation that was received of the message being delivered, was the reappearance of the man who had carried it, as he crawled through the open doorway of the dining-room. Beside him strode one of the head-men of the factory, whose brazen bangles

and heavy coral necklet rattled as he pointed with angry gesticulation to the head of the messenger, which was bound up with a piece of blue *baft.*

His story was soon told. He had delivered his "book" (letter) on the third day after leaving Kabooka, and on its presentation had been paid his cloth. While resting after his quick journey, he had been summoned before the "mundella" (white man), who had struck at him and cut him—and the man's hands were lifted tenderly to his head. Then he had been seized, tied up, and lashed—and he turned his back to his audience and remained kneeling in that attitude. However, a cross-examination conducted through the head-man elicited the fact that Zinga, the bearer, had received two extra bottles of rum over and above his allowance, and as to what had happened after receiving those bottles of rum his memory was defective. He had been flogged, he explained. But that he had been drunk was suspected, and his case was dismissed amid many groans and complaints of injustice from him, which were summarily cut short by the head-man, who, when he found nothing was to be made out of Zinga by way of going shares in compensation for injuries received, laid his wand across the poor creature's sore back without compunction, and drove him out of the door.

The treatment the messenger had received gave Margaret but a poor idea of her brother. He had

been terribly severe with the poor negro, she thought, and his continued silence in regard to herself filled her with vague alarm. However, by James's advice, she tried to be hopeful, and was rewarded in two days by the sight of a white hammock, which was carried into thé yard of the factory amid a great noise, and came to a sudden halt before the door. Out of the hammock rolled M'Gibbon, and as he lighted on his feet he was conscious that a pair of soft arms were about his neck, and that a face so sweet, that it seemed to him a vision, was upturned to his own bronzed and bearded countenance. It was a face set in a frame of soft hair and gemmed by a pair of eyes of the colour of the ocean that rolled not fifty yards from him. So taken aback was the rough man with the beauty before him, that he kissed the face on the brow, and then, as if ashamed of the emotion he displayed, he thrust his sister a little way from him and stood looking at her through his grey eyes.

"By G——!" he exclaimed, partly in admiration and partly to himself. "How old are you?" he added, quickly.

"Twenty, Will," she replied, wonderingly.

"You are too young and too good-looking to be buried on this d——d coast," he answered. "I've made a mistake to send for you."

She trembled a little as she heard what he said, and she was bitterly disappointed by his manner;

but she bravely replied, "So long as you are near me, Will, what need I care?" and so saying clasped her hands caressingly on his arm. M'Gibbon hastily withdrew it, and muttering, "Well, as you are here, you'll have to stay," he went on to the verandah where Monke stood surveying him. That gentleman gave him the very tips of his fingers to shake, and was frigidly polite to him. There was not one thing in common between them save the fact that they had both failed in life: but Monke, though he had blundered, knew how and why he had blundered, and that his self-exile on the African coast was of his own doing. Whereas the other was a coarse bully, who had sinned, and would sin again. He felt most uncomfortable under the keen eyes of the trader, particularly when the latter chided him in his most sarcastic manner for his want of attention to his sister, and let him know he thought him most unfeeling. Then there was that matter of Zinga. But as for Zinga, M'Gibbon swore that if he caught the rascal he would repeat the flogging he had given him; for he had been discovered in an attempt at theft. And as in principle theft, or attempt at theft, was never allowed to go unpunished by the traders, Monke said no more on the subject, but privately sent a message to the erring Zinga to the effect that it would be as well to keep out of the white man's way for a little while to avoid unpleasant consequences,—a hint which Zinga at once took, and disappeared to his own village.

James, M'Gibbon treated with the greatest curtness, despite the lad's care for his sister, of which he was informed by Monke. The lad was but an "assistant" or trader's servant in the man's eyes. Nevertheless, when the little coasting schooner that was to convey the brother and sister to their destination dropped anchor in the bay, James was the first to go on board to make its little three-cornered den of a cabin, with its curtained berths and its single-peaked skylight, fit for her reception. In fact, he turned the skipper out of his cabin, much to that seaman's disgust at having to make way so unexpectedly for a woman. But when Margaret stood upon his quarter-deck, as he called it—three steps and overboard—he, in his own vernacular, clapped a stopper on his jawing tackle, and bowed her below.

Before she went down, James took her hand to say "good-bye;" and so beautiful did she look to the foolish boy, as she stood on the moving deck with the blue sky and the rolling sea behind her—things dear to him—that he was hardly able to say the word. But presently the rough growl of the skipper gave the order to up anchor, and the foresheet was loosened, and James went over the side. But when a little way off he bade the crew of his boat lie on their oars, and they waited beside the low black hull of the schooner, as it dipped to the swell into the clear water, until the clank of the windlass on board ceased, and her head pointed seaward. By the time James reached the

shore she was already a far-off speck upon the water, and before long had vanished out of sight—but not out of mind.

For three months nothing more was heard of Margaret, and her stay at Kabooka had come to be regarded as a far-off remembrance. Monke's leave of absence had now come, and with it his substitute. To him Monke praised James's zeal and judgment, and recommended the lad strongly; but to his surprise, when he told James of what he had said for him, he found him uneasy and dissatisfied. James did not like to offend his friend, that was evident, but there was something on his mind which turned that friend's kind words to gall, and Monke questioned him until he confessed that he too was going away from Kabooka. Monke turned on the lad, astonished. "What!" exclaimed he, "that silly notion again! Do not think of going home for many years, more than you've been here."

"I was not thinking of home," answered James. "I have no home," he added, simply.

"What, then?" asked Monke.

James placed a letter in his friend's hands, and on opening it Monke found it contained the offer from M'Gibbon of a situation on terms no better than the lad was receiving. The trader looked straight into James's face, and read him at once.

"It is that girl you are thinking of, you young fool," he said.

James did not reply.

"For the chance of seeing her you would sacrifice your prospects with the firm? Bah, it is the utmost silliness," and Monke laughed outright. The result of this was that James walked away seemingly not the less determined. Monke, seeing that ridicule would have no effect upon the lad, strode after him, caught him by the shoulder, and, turning him round, endeavoured to reason with him, but to no purpose.

"Yet you are as changeable as you can well be," said he at last. "Not long ago you wished to leave the coast to go to England with me, and now you wish to leave me to go to this M'Gibbon for a longer term of years than would see you master here. I am disappointed with you. However, you are nothing to me, to be sure," and Monke shrugged his shoulders, and turned away. "If you choose to make a fool of yourself, do so. Accept this berth," he added, with rising anger, "but do not call me your friend again."

"I have accepted it," said James, quietly.

Then the two faced each other; and Monke, in his anger, was about to say something bitter regarding the ingratitude that had been displayed towards him, when the pleading look that filled the lad's eyes struck his imagination with such force that he stepped back a pace or two almost in dismay, and was silent.

Recovering himself with an effort, he laid a kindly hand on the lad, for he could not be rough with him now. "Very well, James, have your own way," he

said; and without speaking more, went straight to his bedroom and sat down, amid the preparations for his departure. Placing his head between his hands, he fell into a deep reverie. He was more affected than he thought he could be. Was it possible? he reflected. No. He knew the lad's story, as James had often told it to him,—How his father and mother were dead; how he had been brought up by an uncle, a labourer in a bonded dock warehouse; how the child's earliest recollections were of the greasy, narrow, and filthy streets, close to the river, of a great town, and among the tall smoke-begrimed warehouses which overshadowed everything near them, except the flaunting gin-palaces, fed by the sailors, labourers, waggoners, and loafers, who pushed in and out of their greasy swing-doors in two almost never-ceasing streams; how three golden balls, poised aloft, were the only signs that rivalled those of the drinking-places; how the rumble and jolt of countless waggons, bearing merchandise in value untold, sounded from grey dawn to late night along those very streets, whose darkness, squalor, and wretchedness the lad had suddenly exchanged for the blue sea, the breezy sky, and the strong rushing wind, as he found himself on board ship.

These facts Monke knew, and they were commonplace and trite enough, and hardly to be twisted into any romance about James any more than the not less simple story of the little native boy, who on his knees was busily packing the great white man's boxes

as neatly as could be, his black eyes sparkling the while in anticipation of receiving an old shirt or coat in a present. Both he got, though what possible use the garments could be to such a mite of naked humanity, whose sole attire was a narrow strip of cloth over his loins, was not apparent. But he rose and salaamed for them gracefully.

A few days after this Monke had embarked, and James had set out on his journey by land, and the factory was left in other hands, to the great outward grief and lamentation of the head-men, who had certainly received enough parting gifts to console them, but who thought it politic to impress upon the newcomers a sense of the ineffable goodness of the white men who had gone, and the miserable inferiority of their successors.

At Donde all James's regret at losing his only friend was at once swept away by the mere sight of Margaret, who received him with an eagerness which brought a sparkle to his eyes. But he perceived at once that she looked pale and thin, and not at all so strong as when she had arrived on the coast, and there was in addition a wistfulness in her eyes which told his eager and concerned glance that something more than fading health affected her. He had not been many days in Donde before he found out that she had always been neglected and left alone in that solitary spot. It, like Kabooka, was a bay; but a beautiful one. It was land-locked, and surrounded

by steep hills, wooded down to a tiny strip of circular beach, upon which there was scarcely a ripple, so smooth was the water. It was so nearly round in shape, that from most parts of it appeared a half circle of the dense vegetation of the valleys and the more scattered hardwood forests on the hillsides, some of which were reflected in the pool of water, as it were, for the height of the hills dwarfed the size of the bay, so that it appeared much smaller than it really was, and not until one took boat and tried to reach an opposite shore was its size revealed. To the south-west a narrow opening led to the sea. The soil of the country was heavy and rich, and consequently the chief trade was in the products of it,—palm-oil, kernels, and earth-nuts. Of this trade M'Gibbon ought to have had the better share, for his only opponent was a Portuguese of the name of João Chaves, who lived in a mat-house surrounded by woods. But, as James soon found out, the Portuguese had the better trade, and what was more curious, the Scotchman, instead of being jealous of Chaves, spent no little time with him, to the neglect of his own business. Moreover, he was always assisting him with goods, for which he received apparently no return.

James could not account for all this. The Portuguese was known to him as one of the many convicts who are deported to West Africa by the Lisbon Government, and after a time are allowed to go at large, provided they do not return to Portugal. What

particular crime Chaves had committed James did not know; but his face, to the lad's eye, was not a pleasant one. And in truth he was cruelty itself to the natives he was possessed of. In frame he was a tall, loosely made, powerful man. From his straight heavy eyebrows his dark eyes flashed quick furtive glances, while his lips kept their alertness company with a shifty smile, which appeared to be always verging upon a snarl. This was partially concealed by a thick black moustache and a tangled beard. There was a something about his presence that always took James by surprise. It flashed upon the lad like that of some wild animal. Nevertheless, Chaves tried to be on good terms with James, and would bid him good-day, with a sweep of his *sombrero*, and the smile that was like a snarl, whenever he saw him, which was not often. Margaret shrank from the man.

M'Gibbon's neglect of his sister was James's opportunity, and Margaret and he became closer companions than ever. He soon worshipped the very ground she stood on, and while doing his work faithfully, tried to comfort and amuse her to the best of his ability. But somehow never did he show by word or deed what was in his inmost heart. He considered her too beautiful, too far above him for that, and she —well, she looked upon him only as a sailor.

As months flew on, the factory, denuded from time to time of goods, gradually fell into disrepute with the native traders, and the trade dwindled away slowly

but surely during all the wet season. James ventured to remonstrate about this, but was roughly told to keep a silent tongue in his head, and to do the best he could, which he did, until at last all the goods, except a supply sufficient to buy provisions with, had been either bartered away or sent to the Portuguese.

Then it was, after a week of nearly constant rain, one stormy night as the lightning zigzagged in the heavens in constant, broad, violet-white bands, blinding in intensity, and the heavy thunder rolled peal after peal right over the house, shaking it to its foundation of bricks, and the rain plashed down in almost solid sheets of water, that James was awakened during a slight lull in the storm by the sound of a woman's scream, followed by the noise of the heavy footsteps of a white man staggering along the verandah, and the patter of the bare feet of the black boys as they fled before him. To throw aside his mosquito-curtains and leap out of his bed, took the lad but a few moments; but during those moments the scream was repeated. He dashed into the chief room of the factory, and saw, by the light of the lamp that burnt there of nights, a sight that for a second almost paralysed him. Margaret was struggling in the arms of the Portuguese, and at one end of the room stood her brother, swaying to and fro, and fumbling at the lock of a revolver.

Without a thought James sprang upon Chaves, and struggled with him to bring him down, and so far

succeeded that Margaret was enabled to escape from him; but the strong man, recovering from the shock, threw the lad from him, so that he staggered and fell. The Portuguese then strode out of the room into the darkness, M'Gibbon daring him with many curses and flourishes of his weapon to return. At once James did his best to calm his drunken master, and relieving him of his weapon, got him out of the room and into his bed, and hastening back, he found Margaret in a faint. He bathed her face with water, and when she had recovered a little supported her to the door of her room. As she was about to enter it, she suddenly turned and clung to him convulsively. "You will not—you will not leave me?" she whispered, affrighted.

"No, no," he muttered; and then she told him in broken sentences what had happened.

She had awakened in the night, and feeling thirsty, had called to the little native girl who attended on her; but finding the child stretched across the doorway of her room fast asleep, she had stepped across her, and had slipped into the dining-room to draw the water herself from the round earthen jar which always hung there suspended from the roof. Suddenly, as her arms were stretched upwards, she found herself clasped in the embrace of the Portuguese. She struggled to escape, and then James entered.

This was her story, which she told amid the gradually decreasing noise of the thunder, and the fainter

lightning flashes, trembling violently the while as she half lay in James's arms. Thus he held her until, on his promise to watch over her for the rest of the night, she went into her room. He stretched himself before her door, taking the place of the little negro girl. His thoughts were troubled for her safety. He knew the nature of men like the Portuguese, and he knew also that the man had somehow a hold over M'Gibbon. The latter, in spite of his bluster, was afraid of Chaves, and if—if the latter had taken a fancy to Margaret! And, sickened by the thought of what might happen to her in such a case, James lay awake until the dawn.

When he saw Margaret again alone, she added to his suspicion by confessing to him that her brother had even gone the length of hinting to her that the Portuguese admired her, and it would be for her advantage if she did not discourage him; and he had backed his hints up by coarsely reminding her that she might any day find herself a beggar.

James's indignation at this knew no bounds, and on Margaret adding that her sole anxiety now was to leave the country, he, without a moment's hesitation, offered her the bill that represented the whole of his savings, to pay her passage. Even the generosity of this did not reveal to her all that was in the lad's heart towards her.

"Present the order to the captain of the next schooner that calls here," said he, "and get you away

while you are safe. The captain will take it, for it is on the firm I was with, is signed by their agent, and nearly due. But will M'Gibbon permit you to leave?" he added.

"He cannot surely prevent me," she replied, "except by force, and he could not use that. And you —you will be on my side, will you not?" and she laid her hands on his arm.

James smiled at the trust she had in him, and at the thought that he could be anywhere else except on her side, and then he told her how much he feared from the ascendancy the Portuguese had over her brother.

"Yes, yes," she answered, "there is something between them,—something that gives that man"—and she shuddered—"power over him. I had felt it before you came, and now I fear it."

"He has already about ruined him," said James.

"I fear he may do worse," she replied.

James said nothing more to her; but he resolved that that night he would, if possible, satisfy himself as to what bond kept the two men together. He had already a suspicion; but he was determined to verify it.

M'Gibbon, after having mooned about the factory for the whole of the day, and without referring to what had occurred the night before, or even showing that he expected it to be referred to, went as usual to the factory of Chaves. James waited until darkness

had well set in, and then placing Margaret in the charge of two brawny natives, armed with *machets*, followed him.

The single path wound gradually upwards past scattered trees and brushwood until above the point of the bay, near to which the house of Chaves stood. Then it descended into a valley where the forest was thick and tangled, and the trunks of the huge redwood trees so encircled by thick creepers, so matted and interwoven overhead, that the starlight only flickered through them here and there to make the darkness visible. On the opposite side of this valley the factory of the Portuguese was built, encircled by the forest except to within fifty yards or so of the house, where the ground was clear.

James, when quit of the wood, crept as softly as he could through the grass so as not to disturb the watch, and succeeded in passing the sentries unobserved. He halted beneath a single-tree on a small level space. All was silent about him except the ceaseless "tick, tick, tick" of the insects in the tree above, and the solemn "croak, croak" of the frogs in the marshy places far below. Before him the light given by a twisted rag floating in a dish of palm-oil, shone yellow and dim through the reed blinds of the open verandah of the house. He could hear his own breath. All at once the long-drawn moans of some one in intense agony fell upon his ear, and sounded as if from close beside him. He started, and peered

about, and again he heard a moan. Guided by the sound, he saw, a little way off, the punishment-post of the factory, and beside it lay the naked form of a negro, and a puff of wind coming from that quarter brought with it a sickening smell.

The man was chained to the post, and the moans he made were so distressful that James crept up to him. He was lying on one side fastened by his wrists tightly, so that he could hardly touch any part of his body with his hands. His ribs showed through his skin, which was covered with mud, wrinkled and cracked by exposure, and seamed by raw and partially healed welts where the lash had twisted round him. His arms and legs were wasted away, and his face was hollow. The only sign of life about him was his eyes, which glittered with a piteous stare as James knelt down beside him. This the lad was hardly able to do for the stench and filth about the slave, who must have been chained, exposed to sun, rain, and dew, for some weeks. There was a tiny cup with a little water in it, which James put to the lips of the man, who made one effort to swallow, but could not. He was evidently dying. James thought to put him on his back, and to support his head a little; but on placing his hand behind him, felt that it was covered with blood, and that little strips of flesh were adhering to it. The whole of the slave's back was one mass of deep cuts crossed and recrossed, as he had been flogged again and again, with just sufficient intervals between

each flogging to allow him to recover some vitality. This was a piece of the cruelty of Chaves, thought James, as he slipped a billet of wood under the man's head, and rose to leave him. He could do nothing for him, and he had yet to accomplish the discovery he had come to make.

Notwithstanding the want of cover, he managed to gain the edge of the floor of the verandah undiscovered. This was elevated a couple of feet or so above the ground, and he could hear the voices of the two men in the room inside. As he lifted a corner of the rattans, M'Gibbon gave a loud laugh. James paused and heard a slight rattling sound, followed by a second or two of silence, and then a low chuckle of exultation. He knew now what he had come to find out.

PART II.

The sound was the rattle of the dice, and M'Gibbon and the Portuguese were the gamblers. For some time the pair continued to throw — the Portuguese always in silence and determinedly, while M'Gibbon threw very slowly but with ill-concealed impatience, gloating over each turn of the dice. Each noted down his gains.

At length, after a run of ill-luck, the Scotchman's impatience culminated in a hoarse cry of disappointment, and throwing down the dice-box, he rose, went

to a side-table, and helped himself to spirits. The Portuguese sat with his legs stretched out before him, slowly adding up what he had won. Suddenly M'Gibbon returned to the table. "Again," he cried, in Portuguese, and pushed the box over to his opponent, who nodded, and began to play. Nothing was now heard for a long time but the almost continual rattle of the dice. At last the Portuguese, in his turn, threw down the box, and taking up a piece of paper, added some figures to it hastily, and threw it over to M'Gibbon, whose face paled.

"Fifteen hundred mil reis!" he murmured to himself in English.

"E verdade" (it is true), said the Portuguese.

James started. Fifteen hundred mil reis in the Portuguese currency of the coast was over £300 sterling; and where had M'Gibbon such a sum? Yet, as the two talked, he gathered that there had been many payments to account in goods. After a while the play recommenced, the Portuguese taking the whole matter lightly, and seasoning the course of the dice with reflections in his own language. And he could afford to do so; for fortune that night went over to his side so completely, and remained there so long, that the debt mounted up and up, until, for the second time, he refused to play on, though M'Gibbon, fairly exasperated with his ill-luck, challenged him to do so, and ended by throwing it in his teeth that he would not play because he was afraid of not being paid.

"Contas de perto e amigos de longe" (short reckonings make long friends), replied Chaves, coolly.

"How much is it now?" asked M'Gibbon, grinding his teeth.

"Quarto mil" (four thousand).

"My house is worth the money," returned M'Gibbon. "I will play you for it."

The Portuguese was surprised in spite of his self-control. Here was a man ready to risk his credit and very means of existence on the turn of the dice. Well, if he were willing, he should not be disappointed. And with renewed interest Chaves began to play. In less than ten minutes M'Gibbon was without house or home, and at last seemed to realise his foolhardiness—for he put his hands to his head, and did not speak.

"Quem tem quatro e gasta cinco, não ha mister bolsa nem bolsinho" (he that hath four and spends five, hath no need of a purse), soliloquised the Portuguese, tauntingly.

"Once more!" shouted M'Gibbon furiously, and seized the dice.

The Portuguese laughed. "Your grace," he said, in his own language, "forgets that you have no house, and that you are as yet indebted to your humble servant to the extent of four thousand mil reis—enormous,—to pay which you have nothing—nothing. Stop," he added suddenly; and fixing his eyes on his opponent as if to observe his state closely,—"yes,

you have one thing"—and as he leaned over the table to whisper, his eyes fairly sparkled, and he lost his cool manner; "you have one thing,—a sua irmã" (your sister).

James started to his feet; and if the Portuguese had not been engrossed by the thought of what he said, he would have surely heard the noise the listener made.

Not that the lad had understood at once all that the scoundrel meant. It was only as, sinking down again, he stared with fixed eyes through a chink between the rattans, and listened, that he comprehended the scoundrel's idea of playing M'Gibbon for the possession of Margaret.

That the brother did not at once take the brute by the throat astounded James; that he should hesitate even for a second was inexplicable to the lad; and he was about to rise and rush forth to denounce the villain himself when M'Gibbon began to speak. What he said James could not well catch, he spoke so low; but the interval gave the lad time to reflect that his best policy, for Margaret's sake, at present was silence; so he lay still, strained every nerve, and listened again.

"You do not know what she will say or do," at length spoke the Portuguese, in reply to the trader; "and your grace forgets you have no place for her. Mal via ao fuso quando a barba não anda em cima" (alas for the spindle when the beard is not over it)!

"She will be better off with me than without me;" and he laughed.

James bit his tongue to keep himself quiet. The savage beast! to speak so of Margaret—his Margaret! He listened again.

But the voice of the Portuguese sank to a whisper; and after some time, the lad, to his utter dismay, saw the two men deliberately set themselves to play. And now again the dice rattled in the box, as the bearded scoundrels bent over the table to watch their course, by the yellow light of the smoking wick, which left all but the space about them in deep shadows. At last the Portuguese rose with a triumphant smile.

"By G—, you shall not have her!" cried M'Gibbon, with compunction in his voice, and also rising. But the Portuguese looked at him; and there was a devilry in his look which showed that he meant the chance of the dice to be kept.

"Once more," groaned M'Gibbon, sitting down. "I will work any debt out—every real of it,—I will."

"You will give me your sister," replied the Portuguese. "Moreover, I will be liberal. You shall have five hundred in cash for yourself, provided you leave Donde for good," he added quickly and decidedly.

M'Gibbon's eyes glistened; the all-absorbing spirit of the gambler was strong within him.

"But," went on the Portuguese, "the sailor must be got rid of."

"Must he!" ground out James between his teeth; and then he grew cold at heart as he heard the details of a plan dastardly in its cool brutality.

"Then you will acquaint the Senhora Margarida with the regard of your humble servant," concluded Chaves.

"And if—if she does not—does not consent?" stammered M'Gibbon, glancing nervously at him, and stopping short.

"What have you to do with that?" returned Chaves, quickly. "She is not yours. Come, if you will leave Donde at once you shall have a thousand mil reis. I have five hundred by me," and he made a move to leave the room.

M'Gibbon did not stop him, and he went away. When he had gone, the ex-trader rose and walked unsteadily towards the edge of the verandah, where James was; and the lad had only just time to glide away into the darkness before the man put aside the blind and stood looking out into the night until the Portuguese returned, when he once more sat down.

The blind remained on one side, and James did not dare to venture near the little stream of light that shone on the ground; and he waited where he was until he saw the lamp burn low, flicker, and then go out, when he ventured to creep up to the verandah again. He saw in the darkness that M'Gibbon was lying sound asleep in a canvas chair, but that otherwise the room appeared to be empty.

Suddenly the voice of the Portuguese sounded, and James saw him bend over the sleeping man.

"Do coiro lhe sahem as correias" (the thongs come out of his own skin), he muttered, as he looked at him; and then he turned, and James heard his footsteps as he went into the inner part of the house.

It was now near morning, and the lad got away as quickly as possible, his thoughts full of alarm and rage. He came to the spot where the slave was chained, and turned to look at him: the man was dead.

All was quiet at the factory when he got back to it. Margaret was apparently asleep, and the two guards were watchful. But, exhausted though he was by the excitement he had gone through, James could not rest. His mind was torn by doubt, and he paced up and down the verandah for the remainder of the night.

That instant flight was necessary for Margaret's safety was distinct and clear to him. But how and in what direction? Even if she could get clear away, the stations along the coast belonged to Portuguese who would be certain to favour their countryman Chaves.

M'Gibbon did not return until late on the next day, and went straight to his own part of the house. Of this James was glad, for by that time he had made up his mind to a course of action, and he sought Margaret. He told her what he had been

a witness of on the previous night as softly as possible, and tried to soothe her agitation and alarm as she heard it; but in vain. She appealed wildly to him to save her, and cast herself at his feet in an agony of apprehension. Fearful of discovery, he hushed her cries and raised her tenderly—this coarse lad—and told her of his plan of escape to Kabooka, if she would trust herself with him. Or would she risk an appeal to her brother's better nature? For reply, she clung the closer to James, and he then and there bade her be ready at a moment's notice. "It shall not cost you a thought," he cried, "if you can only bear up against the fatigue." And then he gently thrust her into her room, as he heard the trader call loudly for him.

"Here, you, Barker," said that ruffian. "You're due a month's notice or a month's wages. I give you the cash, and you can go as soon as you can get away."

James's heart gave a sudden bound. He knew by the offer that the money of the Portuguese had been accepted, but he managed to stammer out an expression of surprise at his own dismissal.

"You must see," returned M'Gibbon, "that I have done no trade here for months; and therefore I can't afford to keep you, and feed you. The long and short of it is, I won't; and the sooner you go the better. No, I've no fault to find with you; but don't you see, Jim, I'm pretty well ruined already

by this d—— hole," and he turned away. "You can have a boat and the boys to take you where you like," he added, turning back. "And if you wish to go home, there's a steamer calling at your old place in three days' time. Eh, what do you say now?"

A gleam of hope sprang up suddenly within James's breast. One difficulty seemed almost dispelled—the difficulty of getting clear away. To conceal his joy, he pretended indifference to his own dismissal; and M'Gibbon, evidently pleased at the prospect of getting rid of him so easily, invited him into his room to take a *matabicho*, or "kill the worm,"[1] and even went the length of informing him, privately and in confidence, that he had sold the factory and its contents to the Portuguese, and was preparing to leave the place shortly with his sister, which was the reason why James had to go.

James made no remark, but swallowed his liquor, and said he would go and look out the boat-boys, and give them their rations, so that they might be able to start when wanted.

M'Gibbon consented to this, and the two men parted on good terms, James longing in his heart to tell his late master what a dastardly coward he was.

The journey from Donde to Kabooka usually necessitated the use of both boat and hammock: the boat for the first part, where it was difficult to go by land on account of the bad character of the natives,

[1] The Coast expression for a drink.

who were treacherous; and the hammock for the second part, some sixty miles from a solitary station, inhabited by a Portuguese, where bearers could be procured. James would fain have gone altogether by land for the sake of the increased speed; but he hesitated, for Margaret's safety, to take the risk. Moreover, it would be easier to get her away in a boat with him unperceived; and he trusted to the start he might have before her absence should be discovered, to reach his old factory in safety. He quietly summoned the head boat-boy, José, and bade him have his crew in readiness that night, and the heavy surf-boat hauled close down to the water's edge, with mast stepped and sail bent; and to ensure his orders being carried out, he gave him a piece of cloth for each of his boys, and several yards of saved list for himself, the last there was in the factory. He then stowed away in the boat's locker with his own hands a little meat, some loaves of bread, a breaker of water, and a small keg of rum for the boys. Whilst he was doing this they came trooping down to the beach; and he gathered from their talk, and the alertness with which they got the boat ready, that they were as glad to leave Donde as himself. This, although they were not natives of the place, was strange; and he questioned José, who suddenly became cautious, and would not say more than that the captain, "Jimmy Jim"—the name James went by—did well to go away.

"Why?" asked James.

José shrugged his shoulders, and a light came into his black eyes, but he only grumbled, "Despacha, despacha, Senhor." And with this answer James, though puzzled, had to be content. It was so far lucky that the men were willing to go.

All the following day M'Gibbon did not stir out of the factory, much to James's dismay, who apprehended a visit from the Portuguese and what his sharp eyes might discover. But as the hours wore on nobody came, and after his dinner the trader drew his chair close up to a table, put thereon spirits and water, and then proceeded to smoke in silence. He had not seen Margaret that day, nor had he once asked for her.

In this way he sat for some hours by himself, during which James kept a discreet watch upon him from outside the door of the room, turning in his walk along the verandah so as to be able to eye him through the trellis-work of the upper part of the room without exciting his suspicion.

But M'Gibbon had none, and towards midnight his bushy red beard sank on his breast, the pipe he had been smoking dropped from his hand, and he sank backward in his chair asleep. After gazing at him for some minutes to make sure of him, James judged that now the time for flight had arrived. Before another sun had set it might be too late. Therefore he went softly along to Margaret's room and tapped gently at her door. She was ready, and opened it at

once; and though she was pale and distressed with waiting, James was glad to feel that there was that in her manner, as she put her hand in his, which betokened her resolution. He took the pillows and blankets from her bed and then hurried her down to the beach. José and his crew at a signal followed swiftly from the hut in which they lived, the impassive negroes luckily not taking any particular notice of the white woman, to whose presence they had become accustomed. Indeed they were too eager to be off.

Of late the trader had sent away most of the factory servants, so there was no watch kept, and no onlooker saw the boat launched into the water that lapped upon the beach. James wished the moonlight had not been so brilliant, but the late storm had cleared the sky.

He arranged the pillows in the narrow stern of the boat, and then, taking Margaret in his arms, carried her through the water. The boys then put their shoulder to the craft, and in a few seconds she floated, and jumping into her they gave way, silently at James's warning, but with a will, stimulated by his encouraging promises.

Indeed, so smartly did the heavy boat start forward under their strokes, that in a quarter of an hour she was well into the neck of water that formed the opening into the sea, and James, looking back, could see no sign of life or movement upon the beach. So far

he had been lucky, and had no need of the rifle concealed beneath the blankets. Lifting the latter, he folded them tenderly round his companion, and she looked up into his face and thanked him sweetly—by which he was more than satisfied. And now the boat, leaving the shelter of the bay, began to feel the huge masses of sea as they passed beneath her, and shortly the roaring of the surf along the open shore of the coast was heard, and the white-crested waves were seen tumbling and bursting on the beach. But the boat's head was turned seawards, and having gained a sufficient offing, the lug-sail was set to a favourable breeze, as against a strong current running to the north. For the rest of the night the boat made fair way, rolling to the send of the waves; but just at the first break of day, without the slightest warning, the mast snapped by the thwart. James roused the sleeping boys, cleared the wreck, and did his best to splice the mast, but it had broken too short off to admit of a repair that would stand the pressure of the sail, so the boys unshipped it, and took to their oars, pulling a long slow stroke hour after hour until well towards noon, when, the sun being most powerful, they laid in their oars and ate greedily of the cassada meal and ground-nuts with which they had furnished themselves, washed down with a little water. James would fain have seen them eat something more substantial, for with the fall of the mast he had to depend entirely upon them for the further progress of

the boat. He served them out a cupful of rum apiece, and they fell to work again, singing cheerily, as they rowed, a song led by José.

But as the afternoon drew to a close, the vigour of their strokes, instead of increasing with the cooler air, died away, and James, distressed himself, could not help them. For the heat out on the smooth rollers, at first without shade, and latterly without a breath of wind, had been almost unendurable; and even Margaret, though she had been sheltered by the sail, which James had spread over the stern of the boat, lay pale and exhausted. Suddenly José cried, "Olha, Senhor!" and pointed to the north-west, where, far away in the sky, and just above the horizon as yet, stretched a long line of dense black clouds.

It was a tornado, or rain-storm, coming towards them, and at any rate would give them relief; so they waited for it, the boat dipping its bows to the loud swell of the sea. On it came, increasing in size and obscuring the half of the heavens with an inky lining, and dotting the surface of the sea with little splashes of white foam, which were instantly beaten down by sheets of hissing rain. Rapidly it caught up to the boat, and for nearly half an hour nothing could be seen overhead and all around but the great black cloud and the white tops of the waves breaking before its steady rushing wind. Then the storm passed over to the south-east, having cooled the air and refreshed the crew, who resumed their oars.

Towards the night, which was cloudy, they edged the boat near the low barren shore of the part of the coast they were off, until the sandy beach, with the great rolling breakers, could again be seen. Then they cast a large stone, fastened to a rope, into the sea, which brought the boat's head to the rollers, and she rode at ease. James did not hinder them, for he thought the position of the boat secure enough, and the men were so utterly done up that they could row no more.

Indeed, once anchored, they stretched themselves along the bottom of the boat and along the thwarts, and became oblivious, wrapped in that deep sleep common to negroes. Towards midnight James, wearied, also fell asleep. How long he slept he knew not; but he suddenly became conscious that he heard Margaret's voice, which made him broad awake at once. He looked over the side of the boat, and his eyes encountered a sight that made his heart stand still. By the light allowed by the clouds he saw that they were surrounded on both sides by breakers—great curling masses of water, whose crests shone phosphorescent and pale, and whose sides were moving sea-caverns, until they suddenly toppled over and dissolved in long lines of white surf. A *kalemma*, or sudden rise of the surf, had taken place with the wind, and the boat had drifted into too shallow water. It was a mere chance that right ahead of it there was more depth than on both sides; so that,

while all around was white water, ahead the rollers as yet passed by it unbroken.

James perceived that the safety of the boat was a matter of moments, and holding on to the gunwale of the pitching craft, crept forward and roused the crew, who leisurely took up the stone and pulled ahead; and so sound asleep had they been, that it was not until a line of foam rose high right before them, and a roller trembled for a moment, and then burst, nearly swamping the boat, that they seemed to realise their danger, and gave way with all their strength.

But so soon as they were out of the peril, and into deeper water, they shipped their oars, and prepared to let down the stone again. He was powerless to prevent them, but he resolved that the boat should not be allowed to drift again for want of watching, and when she was baled dry he sat up in the stern-sheets with one arm supporting Margaret. She had borne up bravely so far, but the last shock had been sudden; and when she chanced to look back at the wild seething sea behind her, which she had just escaped from, her heart failed her.

So the second night passed, and daylight, most welcome, broke again, when James set the crew to work, which warmed their stiffened limbs. He had hoped to make Cobra Grande, the point of the coast for which he aimed, and where he trusted to procure hammocks and bearers for the land journey before

the noon of the third day; but in spite of all the vigour the boys could put forth—and to the poor fellows' credit they rowed most stanchly—hour after hour dragged away, and night had almost come again before the boat, after a brief struggle with the sea, buried its nose in the sand of the beach at the base of a great bluff, shaped in the fancied resemblance to the head of a snake. James left the boys by their craft, which they drew up on the beach, and gave them the remainder of the spirits in the keg; and so pleased were they with the present, that they immediately forgot all their past troubles, and set themselves down in a circle on the sand to finish it, oblivious of him and his companion.

Owing to the increasing darkness, the arrival of the boat had not been noticed by any one on shore, and when James entered the factory, which was situated round a corner of the great cliff that rose out of the sea, he found it tenanted by a single snuff-coloured half-bred, with unmistakable wool on his little round head, which he scratched sleepily, as he welcomed James in Portuguese, evidently not exactly understanding where he had come from.

But when this youth perceived Margaret, who had at first remained outside the door, his surprise knew no bounds. He leaped clear into the air with astonishment, and with difficulty recovering, stood gazing at her open-mouthed.

So fair a creature, this poor half negro, half Portuguese, had never seen or dreamt of.

And she *was* different from the brown-eyed, woolly-headed mulatto girls he had known, in his rare visits to the town of St Paul de Loanda, or even to the ivory-tinted, black-eyed Portuguese ladies he had seen in that city, as, lying back in their *maxillas*, they passed him by in the streets. And, in truth, the three, as they stood in the lamplight of the rough wooden bungalow, made sufficiently distinct pictures. James, tall, brown-haired, and resolute; Margaret, pale and frightened; and in the background the short squat figure and dun-coloured face of the half-bred. Never had he heard of the presence of the Englishwoman on the coast, and now she stood before him.

James took him by the arm and shook him out of his trance, and then he became at once all hospitality. He bustled about and roused out all his servants, and quickly had the remainder of his late dinner put on the table—oily fried fish, oily fowl soup, and stewed fowls smothered in little round beans drenched in oil. He got out a jar of his favourite olives, and slipped them into a little basin of water, and with his own hands drew a large goblet of "vinho tinto," the best wine he had, from a cask that stood in a corner.

As for the Senhora proceeding on her journey that night, he could not hear of it. He should feel too

much responsibility if he permitted it,—he should indeed. And he placed a plump, brown, and dirty hand in the bosom of his coloured shirt, and bowed to the ground.

But James gave him to understand that it was imperative that the Senhora should go on, and that she would be much beholden to him if he would procure bearers for her; and Margaret looking acquiescence in this, Senho Pepe at once hurried outside, and after a while came back with the information that he had, much against his will, sent messengers to the native village for the bearers.

Then he returned to the duties of the table, and, waiting on Margaret himself, pressed her vigorously to eat of all the oily little dishes, only pausing to gaze at her with such serious admiration, that she could not help smiling at him, when he would nod and laugh in reply, and drink glass after glass of the "vinho tinto" to her health. But James was all impatience, and now the shuffling of bare feet was heard on the soil outside the factory, and stopped suddenly at the door, and guttural voices rose on the night air. Then torn cloths were tightened as rations were distributed by the Senhor Pepe, who disputed, argued with, and abused the bearers at one and the same time at the top of his shrill voice. At last, all preparations being completed to his satisfaction, Margaret lay in her hammock, her head pillowed on one of the little man's own greasy pillows.

There were six men to carry her, two at a time, and James was glad to see by the torchlight that they were all strong full-grown bearers, fit for the long journey before them. Thanking the little half-bred for his kindness, and shaking him heartily by the hand, he swung himself into his hammock, and gave the order to start. As Margaret was carried past the Senhor, she put out her hand, which he seized, and conveyed to his thick lips, bending low over it, and running beside her hammock as long as he could. When at last he relinquished it, he stood for a long while gazing at the lessening lights as they flickered through the brushwood, and then he returned slowly to his solitary house in a state of profound dejection.

As yet all had gone passably well with the fugitives, and James congratulated himself as the cool night air swept against his face, and the tall grass rustled swiftly past the sides of his hammock, while it was borne along the narrow bush path, the bearers running fresh and strong under his weight.

In this way the flight was continued for some hours, sometimes within sound of the sea, and sometimes diverging into the bush, until at last the party, after passing quickly through a native village, came to a halt on the bank of a broad stream, which flowed silent, dark, and treacherous between slimy mangrove-covered banks, and met the white surf about half a mile below where the panting bearers stood. On a

cleared space a canoe hollowed out of a great tree trunk was drawn up, and a little inshore of it was the hut of the ferryman, who, awakened by the shouts of the bearers, came crawling out of his grass-thatched dwelling rubbing his eyes and quite stupid from sleep, until shown some cloth James had brought from Senhor Pepe, when he brightened up and consented to launch his craft without delay. Into it four of the bearers and James and Margaret got, and were slowly punted over, the current carrying the heavy and narrow canoe down the stream and quite near to the breakers before the opposite shore was reached. Then the ferryman returned for the rest of the men, who embarked in safety; but as they were in mid-stream the pole with which the man punted snapped, and the canoe at once swung round with the stream. Then there was a wild shout for help from the men in the canoe to the men on shore; but the latter could do nothing. Nor could the men in peril aid themselves, for the hammocks with their poles had been taken over on the first voyage. The canoe drifted swiftly down towards the mouth of the river, and was almost at once lost to sight, and the cries of the men after a while were not heard. Though it was probable that they all swam ashore, yet not one of them was seen again on either bank of the river.

By this disaster, then, at one stroke James lost two-thirds of the bearers, and had not any way by

which he might replace them, for he could not cross to the village, and he dared not stay until daylight to be seen from the opposite bank. So he set out again with the remaining four men, but with a sinking heart. And soon he felt that they were not able for the task before them. The two who carried Margaret went lightly enough for a while, but his own boys almost at once began to lag wearily behind, and went slower and slower through the tiring long grass, studded with spiky palms and cactus-bush, until just before daybreak they came to a halt on rising ground, beneath a huge stout-limbed tree, and cried for help to those in front. But this James would not allow, and jumped from the hammock, when the poor sweat-soaked, sore-footed creatures threw themselves on the ground at the foot of the tree, and lay there as if they never meant to rise. It was only the urgent necessity of the case—how urgent he did not then know—that made James threaten to use blows to them to get them on their feet.

The men who carried Margaret, easily disheartened by this state of their comrades, now pretended to show distress, and it was with many protestations and much unwillingness that they took the hammock-pole upon their shoulders, and again went forward with her. James half walked, half ran, by her side, encouraging them, while his own men brought up the rear with his empty hammock. In this way another

start was made, and the men kept going through the early morning hours.

They had now got upon a long curve of sandy beach, and James calculated that there were not more than a dozen miles between them and Kabooka, and by-and-by he fancied he could see in the distance the nearest headland of it standing out above the slight mist. But after some time, happening to look behind him over the long stretch of glistening sand, with its tracery of surf, over which they had come, he thought he saw certain black specks a great way off moving along. He clutched the arm of the bearer nearest to him, and bade him look also as he ran; and the long-sighted negro at once said the black specks were men, and that they carried a hammock.

James said nothing, except to urge his men to go faster. He knew them too well to use violence to them at this critical moment, for with their friends in sight they would simply have stopped short; so he cheered them by voice and gesture, even joking with them. Yet the black specks grew steadily, and within two hours could be made out quite distinctly. There were eight of them carrying one white man. Consequently the bearers were changed so frequently that there was no chance of escape from them by flight, even if James's men had not told him they would stop. To this he responded by pointing to the headland, now quite clear, ahead, and promised to each man 150 yards of *panno da costa* (cloth of

the coast) if he made yet another effort. As this offer was something great in its liberality they all raised a shout, and starting forward did their best to increase their pace, and for some short time the sand flew beneath their feet; but suddenly the effort died away, and they came to a dead stop, completely done.

By this time the pursuers had come so near that their shouts were heard; and Margaret, who had hitherto lain quite still and silent, raised herself in her hammock and for the first time saw them. She divined at once who it was that followed, and whispering "Chaves!" clung to James's arm. It was the Portuguese. There was no mistaking his figure and face as triumphant he rose from his hammock and ran forward gun in hand.

Then James put into execution the plan he had kept to the last. He called the two men who had carried him, and placing Margaret in his own hammock he set all four men to the pole. "A casa! a casa!" (to the house! to the house!), he shouted; and the men, catching something of his excitement and meaning, with one effort staggered away along the beach.

The Portuguese had now come within fifty yards of the lad, who waited for him, and Chaves, seeing his advance barred, also halted, and the two men stood confronting each other, the black boys standing well to one side of their master. His irresolution was but

momentary, and summoning James in a hoarse voice to stand aside he again advanced. To this the lad responded by cocking his rifle and retreating slowly. His eyes were steady and his lips firm set, and there was not the slightest sign of flinching on his face, which was slightly flushed. "Guarda! guarda!" shouted the Portuguese, and brought his rifle to the present. All the natives fell flat on their faces on the sand. Both men fired simultaneously, and James flung up his arms, staggered convulsively for a second or two, and fell a huddled-up heap on the sand.

"Ah!" shouted the Portuguese, as he ran forward. There was neither sound nor motion from his prostrate foe, and stooping down he turned the body over. Then he thrust his hand beneath the rough shirt and withdrew it—it was bloody. After this he stood in the bright sunlight dazed for a few moments. He had not thought to kill the boy outright. But a quick revulsion of feeling seized him, and he spurned the body with his foot. Then he turned to call his bearers, but not one was to be seen. At the discharge of the firearms they had all run into the bush, and the only objects in view were the men who still carried Margaret. Roused by the sight, the Portuguese shouted for his slaves, and promised to cut them in pieces if they did not come to him; but there was no response. Full of the fury of disappointment, he pursued the flying hammock on foot.

But the bearers of it had by this time obtained a

good start, and on seeing him coming after them gun in hand, increased their pace through sheer fright and desperation, and he found he could not overtake them before they would make the headland of the bay where they would be in full sight of the English factory. So he was forced to turn back, and he sat down by the side of his hammock to wait. He knew his men would not go far into the bush on this strange part of the coast, and that they would return one by one when they found the danger past. As he sat, his fears for his own safety increased. Away close to the factory of the Englishmen he was in their power; but once in Donde, surrounded by his slaves, he could defy revenge, and in that No-man's-land laugh at justice, even if what he had done had not been in a fair fight. As these thoughts coursed through his mind, with a sense of dread creeping upon him in spite of the fierce determination of his character, he cast a furtive look now and again at the dead body, unconscious that already the faces of his men were peering at him through the tall grass.

Meanwhile the hammock that contained Margaret was carried across the bay, and drew towards the factory, and was seen. Moreover, the burden that it contained was noticed to be something unusual; and after a long look through a glass, one of the men in charge of the place cried out that it was a woman —a white woman! Upon this a tall sallow-faced man took the telescope, and looked eagerly through

it, supporting it with trembling hands against a post of the verandah. All at once Monke, for it was he, gave a great cry, called to the servants to bring him a hammock, and to the men beside him to follow him, and sprang down the steps of the verandah into the sandy yard. He had been on the coast only a few days, and had returned before his leave had expired, on a matter that had surprised and pained him infinitely.

When he met the hammock, Margaret summoned all her resolution and told him in a few brief words of the cause of her flight, of the pursuit, and of James's peril away beyond the cliffs; and Monke, at the bare mention of the lad's name, urged the men who carried him, forward, leaving his two companions to look to Margaret. One of them did so, while the other followed the trader.

On they went past the headland and along the shore; but much time had been lost, and when they saw the men they sought, the latter were already far ahead. With a feeling of disappointment Monke acknowledged to himself that, with the number of men he had, he could not overtake them. But what had become of James? Was the lad with the men away in the distance there? Then a native, who had been standing shading his eyes with his hand, sprang forward and pointed again, this time to something nearer,—something lying on the sand,—and they all saw it, and went towards it.

As they approached, they knew that it was the body of a white man, and a thrill of dismay ran through them as the face became visible. With one loud shout they all rushed forward, Monke leading. He recognised it; he threw himself on his knees beside it; he clasped it in his arms; he tried to raise it; he supported its head on his breast; he called wildly for water! brandy! he chafed its palms between his own; and then, when he became conscious the life was out of it, he threw up his arms with one loud cry of "James, James, my son!"

He remained by the body, and would not allow any one to touch it—motioning all away; and, in truth, his companion was too much astounded by the utterly unexpected discovery, and the vehemence of the grief displayed, to intrude upon him. Even the natives, stoical and indifferent to the sight of death, were struck by the sorrow of the white man for his brother, as they thought, and stood apart. At last his friend ventured to approach him and to take the body from him, when the grief-stricken man rose and followed the party back to the factory. After a while he spoke, and told his friend how he had discovered, when in England, that the lad whom he had known on the coast had been indeed his own illegitimate son; and turning, he halted, and in a sudden accession of grief, made him promise to give him his help and arms to pursue the Portuguese.

Margaret's grief was not less intense than that of

Monke. She knew now that the poor lad who had died to preserve her had done so out of his affection towards her, and she threw herself beside the couch on which they had laid him. There Monke found her, and gently raising her, looked into her face, and thenceforth the new love that both had begun to bear towards him formed a bond of union between them.

On the next morning James was laid to rest with the ensign over him. He was buried on the sea-slope of the southernmost bluff of the bay fronting the great ocean. All the head-men of the factory attended in solemn silence, and with a twinge here and there among them of regret; but death to them was simply the inevitable, and to be as quickly and easily forgotten as possible. Therefore, when Monke and his friend swept out of the factory gates with a strong body of bearers, they only stopped the games of chance they were playing with small cubes of wood on a square board for a moment to look after the departing party, and then with a shrug of the shoulders they resumed their play—the white men's quarrels were not theirs.

All that day Monke and his comrade travelled along the sea-shore, and through the grassy plains, and over the dark river, and arrived at Senhor Pepe's house. The little man was astounded to learn for the first time what had happened, and wrung his little hands in grief, only brightening up when he found

that the Senhora was safe. To his credit he willingly told the Englishmen that Chaves had been at the factory, and the hour of his departure, and he placed his boats and boats' crews at their disposal, though he knew he ran the risk of incurring the anger and revenge of his countryman by doing so.

Thus enabled to proceed without delay, and having the current in their favour, the pursuers entered the bay of Donde by the night of the second day, Monke's heart thirsting for revenge. It was just such a night as that on which James and Margaret had left it, and apparently all was as tranquil on shore. But suddenly, as the boat passed on, a glare of light shone for a moment on a hill-top, and then shot up a steady stream into the still night air.

"What does that mean?" ejaculated Monke.

"The factory of the Portuguese is on fire," returned his companion, excitedly. "That is his; M'Gibbon's is to the right."

"Pull, boys, pull!" cried Monke, fevered by the sight. "And God grant that I may not be too late to punish him!" he exclaimed to himself, gripping his gun nervously.

But quickly though the boat went through the water, the flames grew and spread, almost at once devouring the old cane-work of the house with a rapidity that showed it must have been set on fire in many places. Also the building was too far inland, and the boat too far off the shore, to allow any

sound to be heard; and the fire shone red and silent through the thick fringe of the forest.

But just as the boat touched the beach, the powder-house belonging to the factory blew up with a terrific roar. This had been situated some hundred yards from the main building, and its destruction surely showed that it had been fired purposely. The boat-boys were awed and cowed by the roar of the explosion and its shock; but the two white men rallied them, and led them with a rush up the hill and through the forest. They noticed as they went that from the spot where M'Gibbon's factory stood came neither sound nor light.

As they drew near to the burning house, shouts and yells were plainly heard above the roar and crackle of the flames, whose light fell upon fully five hundred natives in the cleared space, some of whom crowded and fought round broached puncheons of rum, while others danced or reeled about the factory yard clad in all the fine cloths and shawl-pieces they had been able to pillage from the bales lying about, and adorned with strings upon strings of bright beads, which glittered in the fierce light. Many kept up a perpetual fusilade, loading their muskets with handfuls of powder from open kegs that lay strewed about.

As a background to this stood the dark and silent forest, into which the more cautious and sober of the negroes were stealing with their booty and returning for more. So intent were all upon the spoil, that

the approach of Monke and his band was not noticed; and not until the two white men stepped into the circle of light made by the flames were they seen, when there was an instant stampede on the part of the marauders into the forest. Two of them were captured, and dragged on their knees before Monke, who had been driven back from the building by the intolerable heat; and on being questioned at the muzzle of a musket, they told how the slaves and the villagers had combined to rise against the Portuguese, and having surprised him, had tied him to his bed and then set fire to his house.

His cruelty had at last met with its reward. Monke, callous though he was to the severity of the fate that had befallen the man, could not help looking aghast at the house where the tragedy had taken place, and as he looked the roof fell in, and a shower of fiery particles rose up into the air, and the flames were dulled for a few moments, but only for a few moments. They shot up again fiercer than before.

The revenge of the Englishman had been suddenly snatched from him, yet it was with no feeling of disappointment that the task had not been spared to him, that he turned to the forest. And now the little band had to look quickly to their safety, for with returning courage the pillagers began firing their muskets, charged with slugs, as they advanced to the edge of the wood.

Not wishing either to confront or harm the mad-

dened creatures, Monke withdrew his men in the direction of M'Gibbon's factory, and sent two of them to search the house. They reported that it was empty, whereupon the party ran smartly along the beach for their boat, which they reached, the slaves following them down to the shore as if to cut them off; but suddenly they halted and turned back towards the Scotchman's house.

As the boat was pulled off shore, flames burst forth from the hitherto dark and tenantless factory. Of its owner nothing was heard or seen. Whether he was murdered, or whether he escaped from Donde, remained always a mystery. It was supposed, however, that he was taken inland by the natives, and there put to death by them, to prevent any tales being told.

With the destruction of the two factories, the Bay of Donde returned to the possession of the natives; for the houses were never replaced upon its shores, and the only craft to be seen on its placid waters are the canoes of the native fishermen of the village, dotting its expanse with tiny specks.

When Monke got back to Kabooka, he took Margaret under his charge and protection; and though at first it went hard with him to look at her without thinking of his son's death, yet as time passed that feeling passed away with it, and was replaced by the recollection that she had been the lad's favourite; and it was for her sake that before long he gave

up his charge of the factory, and returned to England.

Margaret, on her part, was well aware of the feelings with which Monke at first regarded her, and she would fain have left him; but since he had not permitted that, she, mindful of her error, set herself to make him love her, and with such sweetness and success, that the two became inseparable, and were known in the little country village to which they retired as father and daughter. This village was situated inland, far away from the sound of the sea, which was distressful to Monke and to the girl—for it reminded the one of his son, and the other of the days she had spent on the far-off lonely African shore. Yet, as time wore on, the memory of the lad who had died on that coast became fainter and fainter with both, and at last, as at first, he was forgotten.