HENTY GEORGE ALFRED

RUJUB, THE JUGGLER

George Henty

Rujub, the Juggler

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Содержание

G. A. Henty
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PUBLISHERS' INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

Strange as it may seem, the hero of the tale is a natural born coward, who cannot stand the noise of gunfire. He realizes his shortcomings, and they are frequently brought home to him through the taunts of his fellow soldiers. A doctor proves that the dread of noise is hereditary, but this only adds to the young soldier's misery. To make himself brave he rushes to the front in a most desperate fight, and engages in scout work which means almost certain death. In the end he masters his fear, and gives a practical lesson of what stern and unbending will power can accomplish.

In many respects "Rujub, the Juggler," will be found one of the strongest of Mr. Henty's works, and this is saying much when one considers all of the many stories this well known author has already

penned for the entertainment of young and old. As a picture of life in the English Army in India it is unexcelled.

CHAPTER I

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Send Khoosheal and Imambux here."

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

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

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

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

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

"Where have you been?" the Rajah asked.

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

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

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

"How goes it, Mukdoomee?"

"It is well, my lord; I have traversed all the districts where we dwelt of old, before the Feringhee stamped us out and sent scores to death and hundreds to prison. Most of the latter whom death has spared are free now, and with many of them have I talked. They are most of them old, and few would take the road again, but scarce one but has trained up his son or grandson to the work; not to practice it,—the hand of the whites was too heavy before, and the gains are not large enough to tempt men

to run the risk—but they teach them for the love of the art. To a worshiper of the goddess there is a joy in a cleverly contrived plan and in casting the roomal round the neck of the victim, that can never die. Often in my young days, when perhaps twelve of us were on the road in a party, we made less than we could have done by labor, but none minded.

"We were sworn brothers; we were working for Kali, and so that we sent her victims we cared little; and even after fifteen or twenty years spent in the Feringhee's prisons, we love it still; none hate the white man as we do; has he not destroyed our profession? We have two things to work for; first, for vengeance; second, for the certainty that if the white man's Raj were at an end, once again would the brotherhood follow their profession, and reap booty for ourselves and victims for Kali; for, assuredly, no native prince would dare to meddle with us. Therefore, upon every man who was once a Thug, and upon his sons and grandsons, you may depend. I do not say that they would be useful for fighting, for we have never been fighters, but the stranglers will be of use. You can trust them with missions, and send them where you choose. From their fathers' lips they have learnt all about places and roads; they can decoy Feringhee travelers, the Company's servants or soldiers, into quiet places, and slay them. They can creep into compounds and into houses, and choose their victims from the sleepers. You can trust them, Rajah, for they have learned to hate, and each in his way will, when the times comes, aid to stir up men to rise. The past had almost become a dream, but I have roused it into life again, and upon the descendants of the stranglers throughout India you can count surely."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER II

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, he is all that," the other agreed; "but he is a sort of fellow one does not quite understand. I like a man who is like other fellows; Bathurst isn't. He doesn't shoot, he doesn't ride—I mean he don't care for pig sticking; he never goes in for any fun there may be on hand; he just works—nothing else; he does not seem to mix with other people; he is the sort of fellow one would say had got some sort of secret connected with him."

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

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

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

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

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

"I never gave it a thought, one way or the other," Bathurst said, as he dismounted. "I fancy the horse would have let me know if the brute had been anywhere near. See that he is tied up in the shed, and has food and water, and put a boy to keep the flies from worrying him. And now let us get to business. First of all, I must go through the village records and documents; after that I will question four or five of the oldest inhabitants, and then we must go over the ground. The whole question turns, you know, upon whether the irrigation ditch mentioned in the Talookdar's grant is the one that runs across at the foot of the rising ground on his side, or whether it is the one that sweeps round on this side of the grove with the little temple in it. Unfortunately most of the best land lies between those ditches."

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

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

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

Lucknow it may all have to be gone into again; and if the decision is given against you, and as far as I can see it is just as likely to be one way as another, it will be a serious thing for the village."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Rujub."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Has he a girl with him, Jafur?"

"Yes, sahib."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"She will remain outside until I want her," the juggler said as he entered and squatted himself on the floor. "I am not going to juggle, sahib. With us there are two sorts of feats; there are those that are performed by sleight of hand or by means of assistance. These are the juggler's tricks we show in the verandas and compounds of the white sahibs, and in the streets of the cities. There are others that are known only to the higher order among us, that we show only on rare occasions. They have come to us from the oldest times, and it is said they were brought by wise men from Egypt; but that I know not."

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

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

"You see this?" he said.

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

"Will you come outside, sahib?"

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

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

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

"Now watch, sahib."

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

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

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

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

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

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

At last no response was heard.

"Now it shall descend," the juggler said.

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

"Where is Rabda?" Bathurst exclaimed.

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

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

"Assuredly, sahib."

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

"I will show you one other feat, my lord."

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

"Now turn out the lamp, sahib."

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

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

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

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

Bathurst almost mechanically did as he was told.

"Well, sahib, what do you think of the pictures?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER III

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

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

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

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

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

There was a general laugh from the others.

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

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

"Yes, it was a sad business. It was only just after I joined. He is three years senior to me in the regiment. He was appointed to it a month or two after the Colonel joined. Well, as I say, a month or two after I came to it, he went away on leave down to Calcutta, where he was to meet a young lady who had been engaged to him before he left home. They were married, and he brought her up country. Before she had been with us a month we had one of those outbreaks of cholera. It wasn't a very severe one. I think we only lost eight or ten men, and no officer; but the Doctor's young wife was attacked, and in three or four hours she was carried off. It regularly broke him down. However, he got over it, as we all do, I suppose; and now I think he is married to the regiment. He could have had staff appointments a score of times, but he has always refused them. His time is up next year, and he could go home on full pay, but I don't suppose he will."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, it was," the Doctor said dryly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Well, Isobel, I hardly expected that you were going to run the establishment just at first; indeed, as far as that goes, one's butler, if he is a good man, has pretty well a free hand. He is generally responsible, and is in fact what we should call at home housekeeper—he and the cook between them arrange everything. I say to him, 'Three gentlemen are coming to tiffen.' He nods and says 'Atcha,

sahib,' which means 'All right, sir,' and then I know it will be all right. If I have a fancy for any special thing, of course I say so. Otherwise, I leave it to them, and if the result is not satisfactory, I blow up. Nothing can be more simple."

"But how about bills, uncle?"

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

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

"Rumzan not let anyone rob his master."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Don't frighten her, Doctor."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You can take it easy this morning, Isobel," the Major said, when they were comfortably seated in the bamboo lounges in the veranda. "You want have any callers today, as it will be known you traveled all night. People will imagine that you want a quiet day before you are on show."

"What a horrid expression, uncle!"

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

"Trot me round, uncle?"

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

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

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

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

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

"How many ladies are there in the regiment?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"She is out and out the prettiest girl in the station," the Adjutant said to some of the officers who had not seen her. "She will make quite a sensation; and there are five or six ladies in the station,

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

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

There was a laugh.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IV

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

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

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

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

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

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

But Isobel had not stopped to hear the last part of the sentence, the door had slammed behind her. She was not many minutes alone upstairs, for Robert soon followed her up, for when she was at home he rarely left her side, watching her every look and gesture with eyes as loving as those of a dog, and happy to sit on the ground beside her, with his head leaning against her, for hours together.

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

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

"I can't help it when I am at home, Miss Virtue. I am sure I try to be good, but they won't let me. They don't like me because I can't be always tidy and what they call prettily behaved, and because I hate walking on the parade and being stuck up and unnatural, and they don't like me because I am not pretty, and because I am thin and don't look, as mamma says, a credit to her; but it is not that so much as because of Robert. You know he is deformed, Miss Virtue, and they don't care for him, and

he has no one to love him but me, and it makes me mad to see him treated so. That is what it was she wrote about. I told her they treated him like a dog and so they do," and she burst into tears.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Miss Virtue shook her head. "You must not talk so, Isobel. It is not right or dutiful, and you are a great deal too young to judge your elders, even if they were not related to you; and, pray, if you write to your uncle do not write in that spirit—it would shock him greatly, and he would form a very bad opinion of you."

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

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

The next five years were much happier to Isobel, for the thought of her brother at home without her had before been constantly on her mind. It was a delight to her now to go home and to see

the steady improvement that took place in Robert. He was brighter in every respect, and expressed himself as most happy where he was.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"If he lived, then, I felt you would not leave him, and that you would be right in not doing so, but even then it seemed likely to me that he would not grow up to manhood. From time to time I have been in correspondence with the clergyman he was with, and learned that the doctor who attended them thought but poorly of him. I had him taken to two first class physicians in London; they pronounced him to be constitutionally weak, and said that beyond strengthening medicines and that sort of thing they could do nothing for him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Not the military. We do the fighting, and get fairly paid for it. The civilians get five times as highly paid, and run no risks whatever. Why it should be so no one has ever attempted to explain; but there it is, sister."

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

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

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

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

"No doubt, madam, no doubt. All I can say is, if his recommendations are not the same as mine, he must be a downright fool. Very well, Miss Hannay, I think we understand each other; I shall be on board by eleven o'clock, and shall keep a sharp lookout for you. Don't be later than twelve; she

will warp out of the dock by one at latest, and if you miss that your only plan will be to take the train down to Tilbury, and hire a boat there."

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

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

"I think so, Dr. Wade."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Well, my dear, he didn't collect taxes or water rates or anything of that sort. A Collector is a civil functionary, and frequently an important one. I used to attend her at one time when we were in cantonments at Bhurtpore, where her husband was stationed at that time. I pulled a tooth out for her once, and she halloaed louder than any woman I ever heard. I don't mean to say, my dear, that woman holloa any louder than men; on the contrary, they bear pain a good deal better, but she was an exception. She was twelve years younger then, and used to dress a good deal more than she does now. That cloak and bonnet are meant to convey to the rest of the passengers the fact that there is no occasion whatever for a person of her importance to attend to such petty matters as dress.

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER V

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

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

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

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

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

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

Isobel shook her head decidedly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Why is that, uncle?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"That I will warrant you did, Norah."

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

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

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

Captain Doolan went off into a burst of laughter.

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

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

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

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

Several of the officers of the 103d had horses and ponies entered in the various races. There was to be a dance at the club on the evening of the second day of the races, and a garden party at the General's on that of the first. Richards and Wilson had both ponies entered for the race confined to country tats which had never won a race, and both had endeavored to find without success what was Isobel's favorite color.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Do the natives come much?"

"I should think so! All Cawnpore will turn out, and we shall have the Lord of Bithoor and any number of Talookdars and Zemindars with their suites. A good many of them will have horses entered, and they have some good ones if they could but ride them. The Rajah of Bithoor is a most important personage. He talks English very well, and gives splendid entertainments. He is a most polite gentleman, and is always over here if there is anything going on. The general idea is that he

has set his mind on having an English wife, the only difficulty being our objection to polygamy. He has every other advantage, and his wife would have jewels that a queen might envy."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Isobel looked alarmed. "I hope you don't rely on me for the arrangements, uncle. At each of the four dinners we have been to I have done nothing but wonder how it was all done, and have been trembling over the thought that it would be our turn presently. It seemed a fearful responsibility; and four, one after the other, is an appalling prospect."

"Rumzan will see to it all, my dear. He has always managed very well before. I will talk it over with him; besides, these will not be like regular set dinner parties. At race meetings everyone keeps pretty nearly open house. One does not ask any of the people at the station; they have all their own

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Doctor himself dropped in an hour later.

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

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

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

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

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

"No doubt, my dear, no doubt; and so would scores of other things, if you could but persuade the natives so. But this is really one of the most impracticable schemes possible, simply because

the whole of these unfortunate children get betrothed when they are two or three years old, and are married at twelve. Even if all parties were agreed, the husband's relations and the wife's relations and everyone else, what are you going to teach a child worth knowing before she gets to the age of twelve? Just enough to make her discontented with her lot. Once get the natives to alter their customs and to marry their women at the age of eighteen, and you may do something for them; but as long as they stick to this idiotic custom of marrying them off when they are still children, the case is hopeless."

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

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

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

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

"I will have a regular parade tomorrow morning after breakfast, if it would be convenient for you to look in then, and at the same time I will get you to have a talk with Rumzan and the cook. I am almost as new to giving dinner parties as Isobel is. When one has half a dozen men to dine with one at the club, one gives the butler notice and chooses the wine, and one knows that it will be all right; but it is a very different thing when you have to go into the details yourself. Ordinarily I leave it entirely to Rumzan and the cook, and I am bound to say they do very well, but this is a different matter."

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

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

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

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

"I said, Major, that a wise man was always ready to listen to good advice. I was not a wise man in those days—I was a pig headed young fool. I thought I knew all about it, and I was quite right according to my experience in London hospitals. In the case of an Englishman, the hand would have been amputated, and the man would have been all right three weeks afterwards. But I knew nothing about these soft hearted Hindoos, and never dreamt that an operation which would be a trifle to an Englishman would be fatal to one of them, and that simply because, although they are plucky enough in some respects, they have no more heart than a mouse when anything is the matter with them. Yes, if it hadn't been for the old Colonel, who gave me a private hint to say nothing about the affair, but merely to put down in my report, 'Died from the effect of a gunshot wound,' I should have got into a deuce of a scrape over that affair. As it was, it only cost me a hundred rupees to satisfy the man's family and send them back to their native village. That was for years a standing joke against me, Miss Hannay; except your uncle and the Colonel, there is no one left in the regiment who was there, but

it was a sore subject for a long time. Still, no doubt, it was a useful lesson, and my rule has been ever since, never amputate except as a forlorn hope, and even then don't amputate, for if you do the relatives of the man, as far as his fourth cousins, will inevitably regard you as his murderer. Well, I must be off; I will look in tomorrow morning, Major, and make an inspection of your resources."

"I am glad to see the Hunters are going to bring over their carriage," the Major said, two days later, as he looked through a letter. "I am very glad of that, for I put it off till too late. I have been trying everywhere for the last two days to hire one, but they are all engaged, and have been so for weeks, I hear. I was wondering what I should do, for my buggy will only hold two. I was thinking of asking Mrs. Doolan if she could take one of the Miss Hunters, and should have tried to find a place for the other. But this settles it all comfortably. They are going to send on their own horses halfway the day before, and hire native ponies for the first half. They have a good large family vehicle; I hoped that they would bring it, but, of course, I could not trust to it."

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

"How was that, Doctor?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I call that very disagreeable of you, Doctor," Isobel said, flushing, "and I shall not like you at all if you take such unkind and malicious views of people. I don't suppose such an idea ever entered into Mrs. Cromarty's head, and even if it did, it makes it all the kinder that she should think of offering me a seat. I do think most men seem to consider that women think of nothing but looks, and that girls

are always trying to attract men, and mothers always thinking of getting their daughters married. It is not at all nice, Doctor, to have such ideas, and I shall thank Mrs. Cromarty warmly, when I see her, for her kindness in thinking about me."

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"That is right, Doctor, you are just in time," Prothero said, as he entered. "Sinclair has given up his cue; he is going to ride tomorrow, and is afraid of shaking his nerves; you must come and play for the honor of the corps. I am being ruined altogether, and Doolan has retired discomfited."

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

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

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

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

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

"It would be time thrown away by both of us, Doolan. You would never make a pool player if you were to practice all your life. It is not the eye that is wrong, but the temperament. You can make a very good shot now and then, but you are too harum scarum and slap dash altogether. The art of playing pool is the art of placing yourself; while, when you strike, you have not the faintest

idea where your ball is going to, and you are just as likely to run in yourself as you are to pot your adversary. I should abjure it if I were you, Doolan; it is too expensive a luxury for you to indulge in."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I think it a good thing to take an interest in racing, Bathurst. Take men as a whole: out here they work hard—some of them work tremendously hard—and unless they get some change to their thoughts, some sort of recreation, nineteen out of twenty will break down sooner or later. If they don't they become mere machines. Every man ought to have some sort of hobby; he need not ride it to death, but he wants to take some sort of interest in it. I don't care whether he takes to pig sticking, or racing, or shooting, or whether he goes in for what I may call the milder kinds of relaxation, such as dining out, billiards, whist, or even general philandering. Anything is better than nothing—anything that will take his mind off his work. As far as I can see, you don't do anything."

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

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

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

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

By this time they were walking towards the lines.

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

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

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

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

"I fancy you irritate them as much as they irritate you, Bathurst. Well, here we are; now we will have a quiet cheroot and a peg, to quiet our nerves after all that din, before we turn in. Let us get off our coats and collars, and make ourselves comfortable; it is a proof of the bestial stupidity of

mankind that they should wear such abominations as dress clothes in a climate like this. Here, boy, light the candles and bring two sodas and brandies."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the hospital by half past six, and shall be in at half past eight to breakfast. You have only got to shout for my man, and tell him whether you will have tea, coffee, or chocolate, any time you wake."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And they went into the breakfast room.

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

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

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

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

"Wonderfully pretty, Doctor!"

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

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

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

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

"I do indeed, Miss Hannay; the Oude men are notorious brawlers and fighters, and I should say that the roughs of Cawnpore and Lucknow could give long odds to those of any European city, and three out of four of those men you see walking about there would not only cut the throat of a European to obtain what money he had about him, but would do so without that incentive, upon the simple ground that he hated us."

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

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

"There is Nana Sahib."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

round him must consider, foully wronged, should go out of his way to affect our society and declare the warmest friendship for us."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What is a sweepstake, uncle?"

There was a general laugh.

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

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

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

The slips were drawn.

"My horse is Bruce," Isobel said.

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

"What chance has he?"

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

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

"That is Delhi. Yes, it has good action."

"That is mine," the eldest Miss Hunter said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Perhaps I am, Doctor," she admitted.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bathurst laughed.

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

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

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

"Is that her husband talking to her?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What does he mean by hedge, uncle?"

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

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

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

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

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

"That is a libel, Mrs. Hunter, is it not?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Major was watching the horses through his field glass.

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

The horses were nearing the point at which they had started, when a shout from the crowd proclaimed that the blue jacket had come up to and passed the scarlet. Slowly it forged ahead until it was two lengths in advance, for a few strides their relative positions remained unaltered, then there was a shout from the carriages; scarlet was coming up again. Mameluke's rider glanced over his shoulder, and began to use the whip. For a few strides the horse widened the gap again, but Prothero still sat quiet and unmoved. Just as they reached the end of the line of carriages, Seila again began to close up.

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

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

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

CHAPTER VII

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

Isobel sat down feeling quite faint from the excitement.

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

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

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

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

"Six and a half, cream."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I am not nervous in that way," Bathurst said, with a laugh. "My pet horror is noise; thunder prostrates me completely, and in fact all noises, especially any sharp, sudden sound, affect me. I really

find it a great nuisance. I fancy a woman with nerves considers herself as a martyr, and deserving of all pity and sympathy. It is almost a fashionable complaint, and she is a little proud of it; but a man ought to have his nerves in good order, and as much as that is expected of him unless he is a feeble little body. There is the bell for the next race."

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

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

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

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

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

"What is your line, Mr. Bathurst?"

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

"I wish I had an army of ten thousand English ladies all speaking the language well to go about among the women and make friends with them; there would be more good done in that way than by all the officials in India. They might not be able to emancipate themselves from all their restrictions, but they might influence their children, and in time pave the way for a moral revolution. But it is ridiculous," he said, breaking off suddenly, "my talking like this here, but you see it is what you call my line, my hobby, if you like; but when one sees this hard working, patient, gentle people making their lot so much harder than it need be by their customs and observances one longs to force them even against their own will to burst their bonds."

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

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

Bathurst laughed and drew off.

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

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

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

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

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

She had as yet no distinct interest of her own, and Bathurst's earnestness had struck a cord in her own nature and seemed to open a wide area for thought. She put it aside now and chatted gayly with the Hunters and those who came up to the carriage, but it came back to her as she sat in her room before going to bed.

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

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

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

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

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

"How young do they marry?"

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

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

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

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

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