

# A Fascinating Traitor

Col. Richard Henry Savage

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A FASCINATING TRAITOR

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# AN ANGLO-INDIAN STORY

By Col. Richard Henry Savage

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## BOOK I. OUT OF THE DEAD PAST.

### CHAPTER I.

#### A CHANCE MEETING AT GENEVA.

"By Jove! I may as well make an end of the thing right here to-night!" was the dejected conclusion of a long council of war over which Major Alan Hawke had presided, with the one straggling comfort of being its only member.

All this long September afternoon he had dawdled away in feeding certain rapacious swans navigating gracefully around Rousseau's Island. He had consumed several Trichinopoly cigars in the interval, and had moodily gazed back upon the strange path which had led him to the placid shores of Lake Lemman! The gay promenaders envied the debonnair-looking young Briton, whose outer man was essentially "good form." Children left the side of their ox-eyed bonnes to challenge the handsome young stranger with shy, friendly approaches.

Bevies of flashing-eyed American girls "took him in" with parthian glances, and even a widowed Russian princess, hobbling by, easing her gouty steps with a jeweled cane, gazed back upon the moody Adonis and sighed for the vanished days, when she possessed both the physical and mental capacity to wander from the beaten paths of the proprieties.

But--the world forgetting--the young man lingered long, gazing out upon the broad expanse of the waters, his eyes resting carelessly upon the superb panorama of the southern shore. He had wandered far away from the Grand Hotel National, in the aimlessness of sore mental unrest, and, all unheeded, the hours passed on, as he threaded the streets of the proud old Swiss burgher city. He had known its every turn in brighter days, and, though the year of ninety-one was a brilliant Alpine season, and he was in the very flower of youth and manly promise, gaunt care walked as a viewless warder at Alan Hawke's side.

He had crossed over the Pont de Montblanc to the British Consulate, only to learn that the very man whom he had come from Monaco to seek, was now already at Aix la Chapelle, on his way to America, on a long leave. He had wearily made a tour of the principal hotels and scanned the registers with no lucky find! Not a single gleam of hope shone out in all the polyglot inscriptions passing under his eye! And so he had sadly betaken himself to a safe, retired place, where he could hold the aforesaid council of war.

The practical part of the operations of this sole committee of ways and means, was an exhaustive examination of his depleted pockets. A few sovereigns and a single crisp twenty-pound Bank of England note constituted the rear guard of Alan Hawke's vanished "sinews of war." The young man briefly noted the slender store, with a sigh.

"Twenty-five pounds--and a little trumpery jewelry--I can't ever get back to India on that!" He seemed to hear again the rasping voice of the vulpine caller at Monte Carlo: "Messieurs! Faites vos jeux! Rien ne va plus! Le jeu est fait!" And, if a dismal failure in Lender had been his Leipsic, the black week at Monaco had been his long drawn-out Waterloo! "I was a rank fool to go there," he growled, "and a greater fool to come over here! I might have got on easily to Malta, and then chanced it from there to Calcutta!"

The sun's last lances glittered on the waters gleaming clear as crystal, with their deep blue tint of reflected sky, and liquid sapphire! The gardens were becoming deserted as the loungers dropped off homeward one by one, and still the handsome young fellow sat moodily gazing down into the rushing waters of the arrowy Rhone, as if he fain would cast the dark burden of his dreary thoughts far away from him down into those darkling waters. But thirty-two years of age, Alan Hawke had already outlived all his wild boyish romances. The thrill with which he had first set foot upon the land of Clive and Warren Hastings had faded away long years gone! And, Fate had stranded him at Geneva!

As he sat, still irresolute as to his future movements, the dying sunlight gilded the splendid panorama of the whole Mont Blanc group. Rose and purple, with fading gold and amethystine gleams played softly upon the far-away giant peak, with its noble bodyguard, the Aiguilles du Midi, Grandes Jorasses, the Dent du Geant, the sturdy pyramid of the Mole, and the long far sweep of the Voirons. But he noted not these splendors of the dying sun god, as he stood there moodily defying adverse fate, a modern Manfred. "I might with this get on to London--but what waits me there? Only scorn, callous neglect!" His eye fell upon the statue of Jean Jacques, lifted up there by the sturdy men who have for centuries clung to the golden creeds of civil and religious liberty--the independence of man--and the freedom of the unshackled human soul. "Poor Rousseau! seer and parasite, fugitive adventurer, the sport of the great, the eater of bitter bread--the black bread of dependence! I will not linger here in a long-drawn agony! Here, I will end it forever, and to-night!"

There were certain visions of the past which returned to shake even the iron nerves of Alan Hawke! Face to face now with his half formed resolution of suicide, the wasted past slowly unrolled itself before him.

The brief days of his service in India, an abrupt exit from the service, long years of wandering in Japan and China, as a gentleman adventurer, and all the singular phases of a nomadic life in Burmah, Nepal, Cashmere, Bhootan, and the Pamirs.

He smiled in derision at the recollection of a briefly flattering fortune which had rebaptized him with a shadowy title of uncertain origin. Thus far, his visiting card, "Major Alan Hawke, Bombay Club" had been an easily vised passport, but--alas--good only among his own kind! He was but a free lance of the polished "Detrimentials," and, under this last adverse stroke of fortune, his poor cockboat was being swamped in the black waters of adversity. He had staked much upon a little campaign at the Foreign Office in London. The cold rebuff which he had received to there had carried him in sheer desperation over to Monaro and incoming onto Geneva, he had

"burned his ships" behind him. Ignorant of the precise manner in which his clouded reputation had stopped the way to his advancement in the English Secret Service, he remembered, even at the last, that a few letters were due to those who still watched his little flickering light on its way over the trackless sea of life. For hard-hearted as he was,--benumbed by the blows of fate, his heart calloused with the snapping of cords and ties which once had closely bound him--there were yet loosely knit bonds of the past which tinged with the glow of his dying passions--the unforgotten idols of his adventurous career!

He rose and walked mechanically along the Qua du Mont Blanc with the alert, springy step of the soldier. "Once a Captain, always a Captain" was in every line of his resolute, martial figure. His well-set-up, graceful form, his nobly poised head and easy soldierly bearing contrasted sharply with the lazy shuffle of the prosperous Swiss denizens and the listless lolling of the sporadic foreign tourists. Crisp, curling, tawny hair, a sweeping soldierly moustache, with a resolute chin and gleaming blue eyes accentuated a handsome face burnt to a dark olive by the fiery Indian sun. An easy insouciance tempered the habitual military smartness of the man who had known several different services in the fifteen years of his wasted young manhood. As he swung into the glare of the hospitable doorway of the Grand Rational, the obsequious head porter doffed his gold banded cap.

"Table d'hote serving now, Major!" With the mere social instinct of long years, Alan Hawke recognized the man's perfunctory politeness, tipped him a couple of francs, and then, mechanically sauntered to a seat in the superb salle a manger. "I'll get out of here to-night," he muttered, and then he bent down his head over the carte du jour and peered at the wine list, as the chatter of happy voices, the animated faces of lovely women and the eager hum of social life around, recalled him to that world from which he contemplated an unceremonious exit. It was in a deference to old habit, and the "qu'en dira't on," that he ordered a half bottle of excellent Chambertin and then proceeded to dine with all the scrupulous punctilio of the old happy mess days.

Something of defiance seemed to steal back into his veins with the generous warmth of the wine--a touch of the old gallant spirit with which he had faced a hard world, since the unfortunate incident which had abruptly terminated his connection with "The Widow's" Service. His eye swept carelessly over the international detachment seated at the splendid table. Lively and chattering as they were, it was a human Sahara to him. He easily recognized the "Ten-Pounder" element of wandering Britons; poor, anxious-eyed beings grudgingly furloughed from shop and desk, and now sternly determined to descend at Charing Cross without breaking into the few reserve sovereigns. Serious-looking women, clad in many colors, and stolid cockneys, hostile to all foreign innovation, met his eye. He sighed as he cast his social net and drew up nothing.

There was a vacant chair at his left. Very shortly, without turning his eyes, he was made aware of the proximity of a woman, young, evidently a continental, from her softly murmured French.

"Houbigant's Forest Violets," he murmured. "She is at least semi-civilized!" He was dreaming of the far off lotos land which

he had left, as he felt the rebellious protest of his young blood and the defiant spirit awaked by the mechanical luxury of the well-ordered dinner. "These human pawns seem to be all prosperous, if not happy! I'll have another shy at it! By God! I must get back to India!" The whole checkered past rushed back over his mind! The fifteen years of his "wanderjahre"! Scenes which even he dared not recall! Incidents which he had never dared to own to any European! He but too well knew the origin of his loosely applied title of Major--a field officer's rank more honored at the easygoing clubs of Yokahama, Shanghai, and Hong Kong than on the Army List--a rank best known at the ring-side of Indian sporting grounds, and only tacitly accepted in the extra-official circles of Hindustan. For it figured not in the official Army List, either as active or retired. The whole panorama of the mystic land of the Hindus was unrolled once more by the memories of fifteen clouded years. He saw again his far-away theater of varied action, with its huge grim mountains towering far over the snow line, its arid wastes, its fertile plains bathed in intense sunshine, its mystic rivers, and its silent, solemn shrines of the vanished gods.

Major Alan Hawke silently ran over his slender professional accomplishments. "I'm not too heavy to ride yet. I've a fair hand at cards--tough nerves, and even a bit of staying power. Luck may turn my way yet and there's always the Pamirs! At the worst, the Russians--the Afghans,--or those fellows up in Sikkim and Hill Tipperah! An artilleryist is always welcome there!" But even in his moral desperation, he hung his head, for a flush of his boyhood's bright ambitions returned to shame him. An old song jingled in his memory, "When I first put this uniform on." He lapsed into a bitter reverie!

The soldier of fortune was finally aroused from a brown study by the impassive steward presenting two great dishes. The clatter of some late convive seating himself also caused him to turn his head.

"Hello, Anstruther! You are a long way from staff headquarters here!" quietly said Hawke, as the new arrival gazed at him in a mute surprise.

Captain the Honorable Anson Anstruther put up his monocle and duly answered: "I thought that you were still in Calcutta, Hawke." There was a faint *noli me tangere* air in the young staff officer's manner, and yet mere propinquity drew them together in a few minutes. With the insouciance of men bred in club and at mess, the two soldiers soon drifted into an easy chat, meeting on safe grounds. They calmly ignored the surrounding civilians, regardless of the attractions of two falcon-eyed Chicago beauties, loud of voice and brilliantly overdressed, who were guiding "Popper" and "Mommer" over the continent. These resplendent daughters of Columbia already boasted a train consisting of a French count (of a very old and shadowy regime), a singularly second-hand looking Italian marquis, a wooden-soldier figured German baron, and a sad-eyed, distant-looking Russian prince, whose bold Tartar glances rested hungrily upon both Miss "Phenie" and Miss "Genie" Forbes.

The Anglo-Indians, however, calmly pursued their dinner and gossip regardless of the fact that Miss "Phenie" had violently nudged Miss "Genie," and whispered in a stage aside: "Say, Genie, look at those two English fellows! They are something like--I bet you that

they are two Lords!" The approval of the gilded Western maidens, whose father systematically assassinated a thousand porkers per diem, was lost upon the chance-met acquaintances. "I must get back to India, by hook or crook," mused Alan Hawke, and therefore, he very delicately played his wary fish, the sybaritic young swell of the staff. Captain the Honorable Anson Anstruther's reserve soon melted under the skillful bonhomie of the astute Alan Hawke. An easy-going patrician of the staff, he was in the magic circle of the viceroy. The heir to an inevitable fortune, and already vested with substantially stratified deposits at "Coutts" and Glyn, Carr and Glyn's, he would have been envied by most luckless mortals the heavy balances which he always carried at "Grind-lay's," a fortune for any less fortunate man.

He was already interested in the remarkably fetching looking young woman at Alan Hawke's left, being a squire of dames par excellence, while Major Alan Hawke himself wondered how Anstruther had drifted so far away from the direct line of travel to London.

Thawing visibly under the influence of Hawke's gracefully modulated camaraderie, the susceptible Anstruther was attentively examining his fair neighbor in silence, while he tried vaguely to recall some story which he had once heard, quite detrimental to the cosmopolitan Major.

He gave it up as a bad job! "Hang it!" he thought. "It may have been some other chap. Verylikely!" It was the strange story of a sharp encounter with the hostile Kookies, in which a couple of English mountain guns, long before abandoned by a British expeditionary force, had been served with due professional skill and most desperate dash by a reckless man, easily recognized as an English refugee artilleryman. The wounded escaped British soldier, who had died after denouncing the deserting adventurer, had left his parting advice to the Royal Artillery to burn the fearless renegade, should he ever be captured. It was the Story of a nameless traitor!

But, the vague distrust of the curled darling of Fortune soon faded away under Hawke's measured social leading. A silver wine cooler stood behind their chairs, and the old yarn of a British officer playing Olivier Pain became very misty under the subtle influence of the Pommery Sec. Alan Hawke guarded the expected story of his own wanderings, waiting craftily until Bacchus and Venus had sufficiently mollified Anstruther.

He duplicated the champagne, knowing well the warming influence of "t'other bottle." The Major of a shadowy rank had early learned the graceful art of effacing himself, and on this occasion, it stood greatly to his credit. Anstruther was now quite sure that the graceful head of the beautiful neighbor swayed in an unconscious recognition of his witty sallies. A true son of Mars--ardent, headlong, and gallant as regarded le beau sexe--he talked brilliantly and well, aiming his boomerang remarks at a woman whom he knew to be young and graceful, and whose beauty he was gayly taking upon trust; an old, old interlude, played many a time and oft.

"What is going on here in this beastly slow old town? Nothing much for to-night, I fancy," said the aid-de-camp, wondering if a promenade au clair de la lune or a carriage ride to Ferney would be possible! He already had noted the purity of the French accent



of the fair unknown. No guttural Swiss patois there, but that crisp elegance of tone which promised him a flirtation en vraie Parisienne.

"Only Philemon and Baucis, an antique opera, at the Grand Opera House, and sung by a band of relics of better days, wandering over here!" said Hawke.

And then it finally dawned upon the blase young staff officer that he had met Alan Hawke in certain circles where plunging had chased away the tedium of Indian club life with the delightful sensations of raking in other people's money.

"Better come up to my rooms then, and have a weed and a bit of ecarte!" slowly said Anstruther. "We may manage a ride afterward!" Alan Hawke nodded, and a thirsty gleam lit up his crafty eyes. He instinctively felt for the little card case containing that solitary twenty-pound note; it was a gentleman's stake after all. And the would-be suicide silently invoked the fickle goddess Fortuna!

Captain Anstruther, however, furtively murmured a few words to the solemn head steward and then leaned back contentedly in his chair. His ostensible orders for cafe noir and cards, as well as the least murderous of the obtainable cigars, covered the plan of using a five-pound note in an adroit personal inquiry. For, the Honorable Anson Anstruther proposed to ride that very evening, and he did not wish to bore Major Hawke with his company. He nursed a little scheme of his own. "Do you make a long stay?" carelessly said the wary Major.

"I intend to leave to-morrow night," gayly answered the other. "I came over here on a very strange errand. I've got to see an eminent Gorgon of respectability, who has a finishing school here for the young person [bien clevee]," said Anstruther, eyeing the unknown.

"Hardly in your line, Anstruther!" laughed Hawke, casting his eyes around the depleted table, for Miss Phenie and Miss Genie Forbes had vanished at last, leaving behind them expanding wave circles of sharply echoing comment. The noisy Teutons had devoured their seven francs worth, and the fair bird of passage on their left was left alone, woman-like, dallying with the last sweets and finishing her demi bouteille with true French deliberation. "It's a case of the wolf and the sheep-fold!"

"Not that; not at all!" gayly answered Anstruther. "I have a long leave, and I only ran over here to oblige His Excellency." He spoke with all the easy disdain of all underlings born of an Indian official life--the habitual disregard of the Briton for his inferior surroundings. "By Jove! you may help me out yourself! You're an old Delhi man!" He gazed earnestly at Hawke, who started nervously, and then said:

"You know I've been away for a good bit of the ten years in the far Orient, but I used to know them all, before I went out of the line."

"Then you surely know old Hugh Johnstone, the rich, old, retired deputy commissioner of Oude?" Alan Hawke slowly sipped his champagne, for his Delhi memories were both risky and uncertain ground.

"I fail to recall the name, Johnstone--Johnstone," murmured Hawke.

"Why, everyone knows old Johnstone; he is an old mutiny man. You surely do! He was Hugh Fraser until he took the name of Johnstone, ten years or so ago, on a Scotch relative leaving him a handsome Highland estate!" There was a warning rustle at Hawke's left, as the fair stranger prepared for her flitting.

"I was very intimate with Hugh Fraser in my griffin days. But I thought he had retired and gone back home. He is enormously rich, and an old bachelor! I know him very well; he was a good friend of mine in the old days, too!"

Anstruther leaned toward Hawke, as he signed to the waiter to refill his hearer's glass. "Well, I can surprise even you! He has turned up with a beautiful daughter--at Delhi--just about the prettiest girl I ever--"

"Je demande mille pardons, Madame!" politely cried Major Hawke, as his fair neighbor's wineglass went shivering down in a crystalline wreck.

"Pas de quoi, Monsieur," suavely replied the woman whom till now he had hardly noticed. A moment later the slight damage was repaired, and then Captain the Honorable Anson Anstruther had his little innings.

With courtly hospitality he offered the creamy champagne as a replacement for the lost vin du pays.

A charming smile rewarded the gallant youth, while Major Hawke turned with interest to the renewal of the interrupted narrative. He had caught a glance of burning intensity from the dark brown eyes of the lady a la Houbigant, which set every nerve in his body tingling. It was a challenge to a companionship, and, as he led on the triumphant Anstruther, he deeply regretted the absence of that most necessary organ,--an eye in the back of the head. He was dimly aware that his beautiful neighbor was very leisurely drinking the peace offering of the susceptible son of Mars. "I will bet hundreds to ha'pennies she speaks English!" quickly reflected the now aroused Major.

"You astound me, Anstruther," the Major said. "Not a lawful child! Some Eurasian legacy--a relic of the old days of the Pagoda Tree! Why, the old commissioner always was a woman hater, and absolutely hostile to all social influences!" The Captain was now stealing longing glances at the willowy figure of the beautiful woman whose glistening dark brown eyes were turned to him with a languid glance, as Alan Hawke leaned forward. To prolong the sight of that bewitching half profile, with the fair, low brows, the velvet cheeks, a Provencale flush tinting them, the parted lips a dainty challenge speaking, and the rich masses of dark brown hair nobly crowning her regal outlines, Anstruther yielded to the spell and babbled on. "The whole thing is a strange melange of official business and dying gossip!" dreamily said Anstruther with his eyes straying over the ivory throat, the superbly modeled bust and perfect figure of the young Venus Victrix.

He was duly rewarded by a glance of secret intelligence when he

leaned back, dreamily closing his eyes. "You see, they were going to make old Hugh Fraser or Hugh Johnstone, as he is now called, a baronet for some secret services to the Crown of an important nature, rendered about the time when mad Hodson piled up the whole princely succession to the House of Oude in a trophy of naked corpses pistoling them with his own hand." He ordered a third bottle of Pommery, with a wave of his hand, and proceeded: "Of course, you know, Her Majesty's Government always closely investigate the social antecedents of the nominee in such cases. The change of name is all right; it is regularly entered at Herald's College and all that sort of thing, but the Chief has heard of the sudden appearance of this beautiful daughter. Now, old Johnstone surely never looked the way of woman in India! It's true that he went back about twenty years ago to England on a two years' leave. He has lived the life of a splendid recluse in his magnificent old bungalow on the Chandnee Chouk."

Anstruther paused, fishing for another fugitive smile. He caught it behind the back of the wary adventurer.

"I know the old house well," said Hawke with an affected unconcern. "Men were always entertained royally there, but I never saw a woman of station in its vast saloons."

"Now there you are!" cried Anstruther, lightly resuming: "I was sent up to Delhi to delicately find out about this alleged daughter, for the Chief does not want to throw Johnstone's baronetcy over. The fact is before they packed the toothless old King of Oude away to Rangoon to die with his favorite wife and their one wolf cub out there, Hugh Fraser skillfully extorted a surrender of a huge private treasure of jewels from these people while they were hidden away in Humayoon's tomb. There's one trust deposit yet to be divided between the Government and this sly old Indo-Scotch-man, and I fancy the empty honor of the baronetcy is a quid pro quo." Alan Hawke laughed heartily. "It is really diamond cut diamond, then."

"Precisely," said Anstruther, as he most calmly waved his hand to the steward, who silently refilled even the glass of the Venus Anonyma. A slight inclination of the head and parthian glance number three, encouraged Anstruther to hasten and conclude, for the moon was sailing grandly over the lake now.

Love thrilled in the young man's vacant heart, sounding the chords of the Harp of Life. He had been in a glittering Indian exile long enough to be very susceptible. "I spent two weeks up there with the expectant Sir Hugh Johnstone," lightly rattled on the aid. "I verified the fact that the young woman is his acknowledged daughter. He has no other lineal heir to the title, for an old, dry-as-dust, retired Edinburgh professor, a brother, childless and eccentric, is living near St. Helier's, in Jersey, in a beautiful Norman chateau farm mansion, where old Hugh proposed once to end his days. It seems to be all square enough. I was as delicate as I could be about it, and the matter is apparently all right. The papers have all gone on, and, in due time, Hugh Fraser will be Sir Hugh Johnstone!"

Anstruther quaffed a beaker with guileful ideas of detaining his fair neighbor, now ruffling her plumage for departure, for only a sporadic knot of diners here and there lingered at the long table. "The girl herself?" asked Hawke, with a strange desire to know

more.

"Report has duly magnified her hidden charms," replied Anstruther. "She is called 'The Veiled Rose of Delhi,' and no manner of man may lift that mystic veil. I was treated en prince, but held at arm's length."

Hawke smiled softly, and said in a low voice, "I hardly see how all this brings you over here. The Rose blooms by the far-away Jumna."

"Then know, my friend," laughed Anstruther, "such a rose as the peerless Nadine Johnstone must have a duenna." He deftly caught an impassioned glance from the softly shining brown eyes, and hastily went on. "She was educated right here in this emporium of watches, musical boxes, correct principles, and scientific research. Mesdames Justine and Euphrosyne Delande, No. 122 Rue du Rhone, conduct an institute (justly renowned) where calisthenics, a view of the lake, a little music, a great deal of bad French, and the Conversations Lexicon, with some surface womanly graces, may all be had for some two hundred pounds a year. Miss Justine Delande, a sedately gray-tinted spinster, has been tempted to remain on guard for a year out in India, having safely conducted this Pearl of Jeunes Personnes Bien Elevees out to the old Qui Hai. I have been charged with some few necessary explanations and negotiations, the delivery of some presents, and, when I have visited this first-class institute, enjoying all the attractions of the Jardm Anglais and the Promenade du Lac, I shall flee these tranquil slopes of the Pennine Alps. Incidentally, the records of Mademoiselle Euphrosyne will confirm the very natural story of the would-be Sir Hugh, whose vanished wife no Anglo-Indian has ever seen. She is supposably dead. A last official note after I have run on to Paris will close up the whole awkward matter. I will call there tomorrow and then take the early train, as I am on for a lot of family visits and sporting events before I can settle down to have my bit of a fling."

"It's a very strange story," murmured Alan Hawke. "No man ever suspected Hugh Fraser of family honors."

"And 'the Rose of Delhi!' will probably marry some lucky fellow out there, as old Johnstone has lacs and lacs of rupees," said Anstruther, "for he cannot keep her in his great gardens forever, guarded by the stony-eyed Swiss spinster, or let her run around as the Turks do their priceless pet sheep with a silver bell around her neck. There was some old marital unhappiness, I suppose, for the girl is evidently born in wedlock, and the story is straight enough."

"Have you seen her?" eagerly inquired Hawke.

"Just a few stolen glimpses," hastily replied Anstruther, politely rising and bowing as the fair unknown suddenly left her seat, in evident confusion.

The two men strolled out of the salle & manger together, Major Alan Hawke critically observing the heightened color and evident elan of his aristocratic friend.

"Oh! I say, Hawke," cried Anstruther, "they'll show you up to my rooms in a few moments. I'll go and see the maitre d'hotel here!

The service is beastly--beastly!" and the youth fled quickly away.

Major Alan Hawke nodded affably, and slowly mounted the staircase to his room, wondering if the aid-de-camp was destined by the gods to furnish forth his purse for the return to India. "He's pretty well set up now, and he evidently has his eye upon this brown-eyed nixie. Dare I rush my luck? The boy's a bit stupid at cards." With downcast eyes the anxious adventurer wandered along the corridor in the dimly-lighted second story. It was the turning point of his career.

There was the rapid rustle of silk, the patter of gliding feet, a warm, trembling hand seized his own, and in the darkness of a window recess he was aware that he was suddenly made the prize of the fair corsair ci la Houbigant. "Quick, quick, tell me! Do you go with him?" the strange enchantress said, in excited tones, using the English tongue as if to the manner born.

"Madame! I hardly understand," cautiously said the astounded Major.

"I want you to help me! You must help me! I must see him! I must find out all." The sound of a servant's steps arrested her incoherent remarks. "Wait here!" the excited woman whispered, as she walked back down the hall. There was a whispered colloquy, and Alan Hawke caught the gleam of the silver neck chain of the maitre d'hotel. The sound of an opening door was heard, and, in a few moments the flying Camilla returned to her hidden prey.

"Tell me truly," she panted, "what will you do with him? He wishes me to ride with him; my answer depends on you. You are in trouble; I can see it in your haggard eyes. Help me now, and--and I will help you!" And then Alan Hawke spoke truly to the waif of Destiny, whom chance had thrown in his way.

"I only wish to play with him for a couple of hours; if luck turns my way, that will be time enough!"

"Ah! you would have money! Let him go away in peace! Help me to-morrow, here, and I will give you money!"

"What is your own scheme?" the doubting vaurien demanded.

"I must know all of this Hugh Johnstone, all about this girl," she whispered, her lips almost touching his cheek.

"Let me play with him to-night; I am yours as soon as he departs!" sullenly said Hawke.

"Then, finish in two hours," the woman said, gathering her draperies to flee away, "for I will ride with him to-night!"

"Just a bit unconventional," murmured Alan Hawke. "Who the devil can this French-English woman be anyway." He realized that some subtle game depended upon the memories of the past strangely evoked by the artless Anstruther's babble. As he strolled back to the smoking-room, he saw the maitre d'hotel slyly deliver a twisted bit of paper to the all too unconcerned looking young Adonis, and the gleam of a napoleon shone out in the grave faced Figaro's hand. "Now for our cafe noir, a good pousse cafe--and--a dash at the painted beauties.

I can't play very long," was Anstruther's salutation, as he complacently twisted his mustache en hussar. Major Hawke bowed in a silent delight.

And so it fell out that both wolf and panther--hungry vulpine prowler and sleek feminine soft-footed enemy--gathered closely, around the young British Lion, whose easy self-complacency led him into the snare, hoodwinked by the fair unknown Delilah.

Alan Hawke strode to the windows of Anstruther's rooms and standing there, watched the drifting moonbeams mantling on the spectral blue lake, while his chance-met friend rang for a waiter. There was the murmur of confidential orders, and then Anson Anstruther with a bright smile dropped easily into the role of host. The young staff officer was so elated by the apparently flattering selection of the fair anonyma that he never considered the idea of possible foul play. It was evident that Major Hawke had not noticed the little by-play which was the delightful undercurrent of the table d'hotel dinner. There was no time lost in the preliminaries of the card duel.

Through curling blue wreaths of aromatic incense, over the brandy-dashed coffee, the two men sententiously struggled for the smiles of Fortune, with impassive faces, in a rapid duel of wits as the fleeting moments sped along.

The tide of luck was set dead against Anstruther, who strangely seemed to be now possessed of a merry devil. He made perilous excursions into the land of brandy and soda, gayly faced his bad fortune, and feverishly chattered over the well-worn Anglo-Indian gossip adroitly introduced by the now nerve-steadied Hawke. General Renwick's loss of his faded and feeble spouse, the far-famed "Poor Thing" of much polite apology for her socially aristocratic ailments; Vane Tempest's singular elopement with the beautiful wife of a green subaltern; Harry Chillingly's untoward end while potting tigers; Count Platen's enormous winnings at Baccarat; Fitzgerald Law's falling into a peerage; and Mrs. Claire Atterbury, the wealthy widow's purchase of a handsome boy-husband fresh from Sandhurst. All this with Jack Blunt's long expected ruin, and a spicy court-martial or two, furnished a running accompaniment to Anstruther's expensive "personally conducted tour" into the intricacies of ecarte, led on by the coolest safety player who ever fleeced a griffin. Truly these were golden moments. The Major's cool steady eyes were sternly fixed on his cards.

The self-imposed sentence of suicide of the afternoon was indefinitely postponed when Alan Hawke amiably nodded as Anstruther at last apologized for glancing at his watch. "I've a bit to do to get ready for to-morrow, and we'll try one more hand and then I'll say good-night."

"Well, I'll give you your revenge at any time, Anstruther! By the way, what's your London address?" Hawke was complacently good humored as he glanced at a visiting card whereon sundry comfortable figures were roughly totted up.

"Junior United Service, always," carelessly said Anstruther. "They keep run of me, for I'm off for the woods as soon as the shooting season opens. Where will you be this winter?"

Major Hawke assumed a mysterious air, "That depends upon the Russian and Chinese game--the Persian and Afghan intrigues! You see, I am awaiting some ripening affairs in the F. O. I was called back on account of my familiarity with the Pamirs, and there's a good bit of Blue Book work that my knowledge of Penj Deh, and the whole Himalayan line has helped out." The captain was a bit agnostic now.

"You were---" began Anson Anstruther, timidly, the old vague gossip returning to haunt him. His ardor was cooling in view of the very neat sum of his losses in three figures.

"On Major Montgomerie's escort as a raw boy when I came out," promptly interrupted Hawke. "I went all over Thibet in '75 with Nana Singh as a youngster. He was a wonderful chap and besides executing the secret survey of Thibet, he ran all over Cashmere, Nepaul, Sikkim, and Bhootan, secretly charged with securing authentic details of the death of Nana Sahib." The cool assurance of the adventurer disarmed the now serious Anstruther, for both the sagacious English officer and his disguised assistant, Nana Singh, were both dead these many years. "Morley's is my regular address; I keep up no home club memberships now," coolly said Hawke, as at last they threw the cards down.

Anstruther picked up his marker card as he glanced at Hawke's ready money upon the table. There was a ten-pound note folded under the Major's neat pocket case and a plethoric fold of Bank of England notes bulged the neat Russia leather. He never knew that only thirteen one-pound notes made up this brave financial show of his adversary. Alan Hawke was a past master of keeping up a brave exterior and he blessed the Cook's Tourists who had that day left these small bills with the hotel cashier.

"Now, here you are," hastily said Anstruther. "Do you make the same total as I do?" The spoiled patrician boy carelessly shoved out sixty pounds in notes and rummaging over his portmanteau produced a check book. "There, I think that's right. Check on Grindlay, 11 and 12 Parliament Street, for four hundred and twenty-eight." Hawke bowed gravely with the air of a satisfied duelist, and then carelessly swept the check and notes into his breast pocket.

"Tell me, what sort of a girl is this Nadine Johnstone," the wanderer said, by way of a diversion.

"I can't tell you! Only old General Willoughby has pierced the veil. Of course, Johnstone could not refuse a visit from the Commander of Her Majesty's forces. In fact, Harry Hardwicke, of the Engineers, accompanied Willoughby. The old chief treats Hardwicke as a son since he bore the body of the dear old fellow's son out of fire in the Khyber Pass, and won a promotion and the V. C. Harry says the girl is a modern Noor-Mahal! But, she is as speechless and timid as a startled fawn! Now, Major, you will excuse me. I have to leave you!" There was a fretful haste in the passionate boy's manner. The hour was already near midnight.

"Shall I not see you to-morrow?" politely resumed Hawke. "You will not spend your whole morning with the stern damsel in spectacles and steel-like armor of indurated poplin?"

"Do you know I'm afraid I shall miss you," earnestly said the aide. "Hugh Johnstone wishes me to urge Mademoiselle Euphrosyne to allow her sister to remain in India, in charge of the Rose of Delhi until the old eccentric returns. Of course, the girl left alone would be an easy prey to every fortune hunter in India, should anything happen!" There was a ferocious, wild gleam in Alan Hawke's eyes as the aide grasped his hat and stick. "I wish to probe the family records and find out what I can of the 'distaff side of the line,' as Mr. Guy Livingstone would say. I have some really valuable presents, and I am on honor to the Viceroy in this, for, of course, a baronetcy must not be given into sullied hands. Johnstone will probably hermetically seal the girl up till the Kaiser-I-Hind has spoken officially. Then, if this delicate matter of the hidden booty of the King of Oude is settled, the old fellow intends to return to the home place he has bought. I'm told it's the finest old feudal remnant in the Channel Islands, and magnificently modernized. The government does not want to press him. You see they can't! The things went out of the hands of the hostile traitor princes, and Hugh Fraser, as he was, cajoled them from the custody of the go-betweens. We have never gone back on the plighted word of a previous Governor-General! The Queen's word must not be broken. I have a bit of persuading to do, and some other little matters to settle!"

"Well, then, Anstruther, we may meet again on the line of the Indus," said Hawke, with his lofty air. "I have always preferred the secret service to mere routine campaigning, for, really, the waiting spoils the fighting! Poor Louis Cavagnari! He confirmed my taste for silent and outside work! I was sent out from Cabul by him as private messenger just before that cruel massacre, a faux pas, which I vainly predicted. He taught me to play *ecarte*, by the way!"

"Then he was a good teacher, and you--a devilish apt scholar!" laughed Anstruther, as he politely held the door open for the man who had coldly fleeced him.

Alan Hawke's pulses were now bounding with the thrill of his unlooked-for harvest! He experienced a certain pride in his marvelous skill, and, restraining himself, he soberly paced along the corridor. The excited aid-de-camp stood for a moment with his foot on the stair, and then slowly descended. "He suspects nothing!" the amatory youth murmured, as he passed out upon the broad Quai du Leman.

He walked swiftly along, gayly whistling "*Donna e Mobile*," with certain private variations of his own, until he reached the splendid monument erected to the miserly old Duke of Brunswick, who showered his scraped-up millions upon an alien city, to spite his own fat-witted Brunswickers, and so escaped the blood-fleshed talons of the hungry-Prussian eagle.

Duke Charles I hovered amiably in the air, over a comfortable carriage wherein the "other little matters" were most temptingly materialized in the person of a lovely woman waiting there with burning eyes, her splendid face veiled in a black Spanish lace scarf. It was the old fate--"Unlucky at cards, lucky in love!" The staff officer's abrupt command to "drive everywhere, anywhere," until "further orders," was implicitly obeyed by the stolid cabby, who set off at once for a long round of the mild "lions" of fair



Geneva, nestling there by the shimmering lake.

The click of the horses' feet upon the deserted roadway kept time to the murmurs of a most coy Delilah, who molded as wax in her slender hands the ardent military Samson, who was all unmindful of his flowing locks! And the silent moon shimmered down upon the waste of waters!

Alan Hawke was seated for an hour alone in his room, enjoying the cigars offered up by the "Universal Provider," who had yielded up so liberally. The strong brandy and soda had at last restored his shaken nerves, for he had played with his life staked upon the outcome! He then grimly counted up his winnings. "Four-hundred and eighty-eight good pounds! That will take me back to Delhi in very good shape," he soliloquized. "I wonder if there is anyway to get at that girl? If I mistake not, she will have a half a million! The old Commissioner always liked me, too. By God! If I could only get in between him and this baronetcy I might creep in on the girl's friendship! But the old curmudgeon keeps her locked up! Rather risky in India!" He leaned back, enjoying memories of the women with pulses of flame and hearts of glowing coal whom he had met in the days when he was "dead square." This strange woman! Who is she? What does she know?

He dozed off until the clattering return of the Misses Phemie and Genie Forbes, of Chicago, aroused him. His broad grin accentuated the easily overheard strident remark: "Say, Genie, I wish we had had those two English Lords at our opera supper. They are just jim-dandies, that's what!"

"As long as the world is full of such fools, I can afford to live," he pleasantly remarked, as he turned in. A new campaign was opening to him. Far away, up the shores of the moon-transfigured lake, a hot-headed young fool was showering kisses on the hand of a woman, who sweetly said: "Remember my conditions! Prove yourself my friend, and I will meet you in Paris! Now, take me home." Samson was shorn of his locks, and the delighted Alan Hawke found a little note slipped under his door in the morning.

## CHAPTER II.

### AN OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE ALLIANCE.

When the now buoyant Major Alan Hawke was awakened by the golden lances of morning which shivered gayly upon the Pennine Alps he proceeded to a most leisurely toilet, having first satisfied himself that his winnings of the night before were not the baseless fabric of a dream. He smiled as he fingered the crisp, clean notes, and gazed lovingly upon the dingy-looking but potent check drawn on the old army bankers.

"No nonsense about that signature," he cheerfully said. "Anstruther is no welsher," and, as he rang for his hot water and a morning refresher, he picked up the little note with an eager curiosity.

"By Gad! she is a cool one! This is no vulgar darned occasion! I need all my wits to-day!" He was studying over the brief words when the ready waiter took his order for a cosy breakfast. He had deliberately moved out all his lines to an easy comfort, throwing out a line of pickets against any appearance of social shabbiness. "She said that she had money," he murmured, as he read the note again. "What the devil does she want, then, if she has all the money she needs! Perhaps some discarded mistress! Bah! The old man's heart is as hollow as a sentrybox, and, besides, he has not been in Europe for nearly twenty years. Ah, I see! Perhaps a bit of blackmail--some early indiscretion! She did speak about the girl! Then I must be the silent partner of her future harvest! She probably needs a man's arm to reach the wary old Baronet in future. My lady writes in no uncertain tone."

He carefully folded the note and bestowed it safely with the spoil of the young patrician. "Of course I must show up," he said as he betook himself to his tub whence he emerged shapely as an Adonis with the corded torso of an athlete. The appetizing breakfast put the Major in excellent humor, and he drew forth his "sailing orders" as he lit his first cheroot. Seated in a window recess, he watched the hotel frontage, while he read the imperative lines again. They were explicit enough and had been dictated en reine. "Meet me at the Musee Rath, in the vestibule at two o'clock. He leaves here at one-thirty. Keep away from the hotel and avoid us both. Go up to Ferney and come back on the one o'clock boat."

There was a neat carte de visite in the inclosure.

"Now, I will wager that is not her name," he smiled as he read the Italian script.

"I can certainly now afford to throw a day or so away on her. At any rate, I will let her make the game. I must wait a day or so to send on the Grindlay check," the wanderer mused, smiling genially upon the head porter. Major Alan Hawke casually inquired, upon his leisurely descent, "My friend?"

"Ah, sir! Paid his bill and left. Luggage already sent to the station labeled 'Paris.'" Alan Hawke most liberally tipped the functionary. "I think I will take a run of a few days up to Lausanne or Chillon myself; the weather is delightful." He strolled over to the local Cook's Agency and sent his treasure-trove check on to London for collection.

"I think that I will fight shy of this sleepy burgh," he ruminated, as the little paddle-wheel steamer sped along toward Ferney, leaving behind a huge triangular wake carved in the pellucid waters. "It might be devilish awkward if Anstruther should find me here, hovering around his fair enslaver. I may need this golden youth again, in the days to come! He will be out of India for a couple of years, but I will not trust Fate blindly. What the old Harry can she be up to?" He suddenly burst into a merry peal of laughter, to the astonishment of the crowd of passengers.

"Fool that I am! I see it all now! Anstruther cleared out early! The proprieties of the home of Calvin must be respected! After he has adroitly pumped the intellectual fountain of the past dry, then a quiet little breakfast tete et tete will give Madame Louison the time to fool him to the top of his bent! The sly minx! Evidently she is cast for the 'ingenue' part in this little social drama! And her trump card is to hide from me what she extracts from our Lovelace by the coy use of those deuced fetching brown eyes and--other charms too numerous to mention! But you shall tell me all yet, Miss Sly Boots!" And the Major dreamed pleasant day dreams.

Life now seemed so different to the hopeful vaurien, with the physical and moral backing of the four hundred and odd pounds! "I was a fool--a damned fool, yesterday," he cheerfully ruminated. "If I only handle this woman rightly, then I may get the hold I want on this old recluse Johnstone, congested with the fat pickings of forty-five years. A close-mouthed old rat is he, and yet it seems that he is vulnerable after all. If he is playing fast and loose with the government he will never get his honors before he gives up the sleeping trust of the forgotten years."

Major Hawke vainly tried to follow the exuberant Anstruther in his incursion into the placid temple of Minerva, where that watchful spinster, Miss Euphrosyne Delande, eyed somewhat icily the handsome young "Greek bearing gifts." Professional prudence and the memory of certain judiciously smothered escapades caused Miss Euphrosyne at first to retire within her moral breast works and draw up the sally-port bridge. For even in chilly Geneva, young hearts throb in nature's flooding lava passions, jealously bodiced in school-girl buckram and glacial swiss muslin. So it was very cool for a time in the august cavern of conference where Anson Anstruther, a bright Ithuriel, struggled with the cautious and covetous Swiss preceptress, and the swift steamer Chilian was far up the lake before Captain the victorious Honorable Anson Anstruther, sped away to the morning meeting with the woman who had seemed to lean down from the moon-lit skies upon her young Endymion in that starry night by the throbbing lake.

Major Alan Hawke, proceeding on his voyage, found a certain bitterness in the distant mental contemplation of Captain Anstruther's employment of his leisure till train time, not knowing that the young soldier's sense of duty led him first to dispatch several careful official dispatches, one to London, and the two others to Calcutta and Delhi, respectively. When Captain Anstruther finally deposited his mail with the head porter of the Grand Hotel National he deftly questioned that functionary. "My friend--Major Hawke?"

"Gone up the lake for two or three days, sir. Going to Lausanne and Chillon. Keeps all his luggage here, though. Shall I give him any message for you?" With a view to artfully veiling his coming meeting with the beautiful Egeria a la Houbigant, the captain deposited a card marked "P. P. C."

"A devilish pleasant fellow and a right stunning hand at ecarte." Anstruther prudently walked for a couple of squares, and then hailed a passing voiture, directing him to the very cosiest restaurant in the snug city of Bonnivard.

Major Hawke, far away now, entertained a slight resentment toward the man who had so coolly aspired to les bonnes fortunes, and ignored his own possible interference with the Lady of the Lake. It was with a grim satisfaction, however, that he saw on the boat the Misses Phenie and Genie Forbes, of Chicago, the bright particular stars of the traveling upper tendom. "Popper" and "Mommer" were deep in certain red-bound Baedeker's and busied in delving for "historic facts," while the artful Alan Hawke glided into a fast and familiar flirtation with the two bright-eyed, sharp-voiced damsels. Both the heiresses were dressed as if for a reception, with judiciously selected jewelry samples, evidencing the wondrous success of machine conducted pig demolition. They glittered in the sun as Fortune's bediamonded favorites.

And, so, while Madame Berthe Louison and Captain Anstruther lingered au cabinet particulier, over their Chablis and Ostend oysters, the recouped gambler extended his store of mental acquirement, by tender converse with the two sprightly belles of the Windy City. In fact, the whistle of the steamer was heard long before Alan Hawke could extricate himself from the clinging tentacles of the audacious beauties. He was somewhat repaid for his social exertions, however, as he sped back to keep his tryst at Geneva, by the acquisition of a large steel-engraved business card inscribed, "Forbes, Haygood & Co., Chicago," loftily tendered him by "Popper." He smiled at the whispered assurances of the Misses Phenie and Genie that they "should soon meet again."

"Bring your friend--that other Lord," cried the departing Miss Genie, waving a thousand-franc lace fan, as she sagely observed, "Two's company--three's none. We'll have a jolly lark--us four. Don't forget, now!" The polite Major laid his hand upon his heart and played the amiable tiger, although burning inwardly now, in a fierce personal jealousy of Anstruther as he wandered alone around the cold gray halls of the museum, and gazed upon the pinched features of the permanently eclipsed shining lights of the "Bulwark of Civil and Religious Liberty." There was no charm for him in the bigoted ferocity of Calvin's lean, dark face, smacking his thin lips over the roasted Servetus. He abhorred the departed heroes of the golden evolution from Eidegenossen into Higueros and later Huguenots. They interested him not, neither did he love Professor Calame's scratchy pictures, nor the jumbled bric-a-brac of art and history. None of these charmed him. He waited only for the gliding step, the clasp of a burning hand, and the flash of the lustrous dark-brown eyes. It was his own innings now.

He had referred to his watch for the fiftieth time, when, from a closed carriage, the object of his mental vituperations gracefully alighted at last. It was with the very coldest of bows that the irritated man received the graceful, self-possessed woman, whose lovely face was but partially hidden by her coquettishly dotted veil.

"She dresses like a Parisienne, walks like an Andalu-sian, and has all the seductiveness of a Polish countess!" the quick-witted rascal thought, as they strolled into the museum, which the departed General Rath knew not would be the scene of many a hidden love intrigue, when he endowed it with a benevolent vanity. The two wary strangers strolled along until they found a retired corner. Madame Louison seated herself, waving her lace parasol with the impatient

gesture of one accustomed to command.

Alan Hawke was in no gentle humor, and his cheeks reddened as he felt the calm scrutiny of the woman's searching glances. He was now determined to take the whip hand, and to keep it. His accents were staccato as he said, "Tell me now who you are, and what you wish of me!" A clock, hung high over them on the dreary, drab walls, ticked away brusquely, as the angered woman gazed steadily into his face.

"And so your little windfall of last night has already made you impudent? If you cannot find another tone at once, I will find another agent! The man whom you plucked has told me the story of your wonderful skill at cards!" The sneer cut the renegade like a whip lash, and Alan Hawke sprang up in anger. Madame Berthe Louison coolly settled herself down into the red cushions.

"The way to India is before you, but five hundred pounds is not a fortune for Major Alan Hawke! Listen! I watched you carefully yesterday, in your vigil upon Rousseau's Island. Your telltale face betrayed you. You were left stranded here in Geneva. An accident has brought us together. You cannot divine my motives. I can fathom yours easily. Tell me now, of yourself, of your past in India--of your present standing there. If you are frank, I may contribute to your fortune; if not--our ways part here!"

"And, if I warn Anson Anstruther that you are a mere adventuress, if I notify my old friend Hugh Fraser (soon to be Sir Hugh Johnstone), then your little game will be spoiled, Madame Louison!" defiantly said Hawke. The woman leaned back and laughed merrily in his face.

"You are like all professional lady killers, a mere fool in the hands of the first woman of wit. I dare you to cross my path! I will then join Captain the Honorable Anson Anstruther, in Paris, at the Hotel Binda! I will also see that you are excluded from every club in India! Your occupation will be gone, my Knight of Ecarte. Anstruther waits for me." She tossed him a card. "See for yourself. He was kind enough at breakfast, and, he will help me, if I ask him."

"And why do you not fly to his arms?" sneered Alan Hawke, who had quickly resigned the bullying tone of his abordage.

"Because he is a nice boy and a gentleman," the woman said, with a cutting emphasis. "Now, let me read you, Monsieur le Major, a lesson in manners. Never be rough with a woman! That is the road which always leads on to failure. I wish you a good appetite for your breakfast, which I have delayed, and for which I beg your pardon!" She rose and swept along with her Juno strides, and had reached the second Hall of Antiquities before Alan Hawke overtook her. It had flashed across his mind that he had for once in his life met a woman who was not afraid of the future, whatever had been her past. A single malicious letter from Anstruther would ruin him in India, for there was an ominous cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, lingering in that hiatus between his old rank of Lieutenant of Bengal Artillery, and the shadowy tenure of his self-dubbed Majority. This Aspasia hid none of her methods. She had boldly captivated the passing Pericles, and, evidently, she was the desired one.

"Let me explain," he began, as the woman looked calmly into his face.

"We are only losing time, Major," Madame Louison remarked, as she sought a corner. "I see that you have already repented. Do you know any one in Geneva?"

"Not one of the seventy-five thousand here," frankly answered Hawke. "The only man I came here to see, the English Consul, is away on leave."

"Then I can use you safely," answered the stranger. "Now, I owe you a breakfast. Will you put me in my carriage? I know the town thoroughly. Remember that it is only business that brings us together, and yet we may become better friends." In a half an hour they were seated in an arbor by the lake, where a homely German restaurant offered good cheer.

The Lady of the Lake did the honors ceremoniously, and Major Alan Hawke was permitted a cigar after the lake trout, filet, pears, cheese, Chambertin, and black coffee had been discussed. He was both conquered and repentant, and had adroitly atoned for his mauvais debut by a respectful demeanor, which was not feigned. He answered the running fire of questions which had led him from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas, and from Chittagong to the Khyber Pass.

"You are sure that no one in Geneva knows your face?" Berthe Louison asked at last.

"I have been here only two days, and it is twenty years since I first roved over Switzerland on schoolboy leave," was the truthful answer.

"Then I can use you if you will decide to aid me, after you have heard me. I know, already, all that young Anstruther knows of the whole Johnstone matter. I do not intend to meet him at Paris," she demurely said. "I am absolutely untrammelled in this world. I am free to act as a woman's moods sway her. I have plenty of money, a fact which lifts me above the degradation of man's chase, and I indulge in no illusions. I am a soldier's daughter, and my dead father was the son of one of Napoleon's heroes of La Grande Armee. My whole life has been most unconventional; and I am free to dispose of myself, body and soul, and will, but for one thing." She was pleased with Alan Hawke's mute glance of inquiry. "Only the business which brought me to Geneva! We are all the slaves of circumstance! The veriest fools of fortune! I do not blame you for your surmises! I had vainly sought, for two years, the very information which I gained last night by chance at a Geneva table d'hote. It was from Anstruther that I discovered the changed name under which Hugh Fraser's daughter has been hidden from me for years. For I owe this all to chance, to Anstruther's susceptibility, and to my playing the risqu'e part which you saw fit me so well." The woman's eyes were now flashing ominously.

"But you led me on--you deceived me!" stammered Alan Hawke.

"I had nothing to risk!" the resolute beauty replied. "My name is not Berthe Louison, as you may well imagine! As for the little

amourette de voyage, I will leave the laurels to your handsome young friend and yourself. I do not play with boys, and, as for you, I should always guard myself against you!

"Now, I will be practical! I know Europe; I do not know India! I need a man brave, cool, and unscrupulous; I need a resolute man to aid me in the one purpose of my life! I wish to go out to India to face this Hugh Fraser, to lift up the curtain of the dead past, and I need a protector--a paid champion--a man who values the only thing which is concrete power in life; a man who knows the power of money! For, gold is irresistible!" Her bright face hardened.

"My duties are, then, not to be of a tender nature," lightly hazarded Hawke.

"I can soon judge of your value by your adroitness, and you can make your own record!" smiled the strange woman waif. "Let me see how you would do this! I do not care to personally approach Mademoiselle Euphrosyne Delande, I would have a picture of the woman whom I seek--the lonely child whom I have hungered for long years to see! I do not care to expose myself here--"

"The Preceptress might telegraph out to India and the girl be spirited away!" broke in Alan Hawke.

"Very good! Precisely so!" said Berthe Louison, gravely. "I will tell you now that I have played perfectly fair with Anstruther! I have enabled him to assure himself of Nadine Johnstone's regular standing as the legal and only heiress of the would-be Baronet! I do not fear Anstruther! He is a gallant boy, worthy to wear a sword, and, he does not work for hire! He tells me that Euphrosyne Delande showed him the last pictures of the girl which were sent on before Hugh Fraser suddenly telegraphed to have his child 'personally conducted' on carte blanche terms out to join him."

Major Hawke buried his head in his hands and slowly said: "I can do it easily! We must not be seen together here! Go up to the Hotel Faucon, at Lausanne, and wait for me there for three days. I have to remain here at any rate to collect Anstruther's check in London. I have in my favor all the facts of Anstruther's story. I happen also to have Anstruther's P. P. C. card. I will bring you the picture you want, or a half dozen copies. Will you trust to me? I make no professions!"

"That is right!" sternly said Berthe Louison. "Let our casual association be one of a mere money interest. We can find each other out easily. You have no motive to injure me, your own interest now and always lies the other way. I only wish to have some one at hand when I am ready to face the embryo Sir Hugh Johnstone!"

"You are bold!" slowly said Alan Hawke. "If I should denounce you to Johnstone, himself! If he should be warned--"

"I hold him and his long cherished dream, the Baronetcy, in my hand," the brown-eyed beauty frankly cried. "I should not burn my ships in Europe! Even if I were to be betrayed, the purpose of my life will be carried out. I should leave here behind me the safest of anchors in other well-paid agents. Your rash meddling would only ruin your own money interests and not hurt my plans."

"Then we are to make an offensive and defensive alliance without trust or faith in each other?" agnostically remarked Hawke.

"Just so!" answered Madame Louison. "I can make it to your interest to serve me well, better than the man whom I wish to face. You know India--you happen to know Delhi. Your possible adversary is an old civilian, rich, retired, and unable to rake up trouble for you in military circles. I will do my work alone, but I shall want your aid, and I will pay you liberally. I will go up to Lausanne. You will find me at the Hotel Faucon. Bring up some route maps of India. We will go out as soon as possible. Do you wish any present money?"

Alan Hawke reddened as he shook his head.

"Then, Major Hawke, if you will take the first passing carriage, we will meet as soon as you have succeeded. Send me a telegram of your coming." The adventurer's low bow of silent assent terminated the strange breakfast scene, and at the gate of the vine-clad garden he turned and saw her seated there alone, with her head bowed in a reverie.

"Damme if she is made of flesh and blood!" mused the Major, as he drove back to the Hotel National. That very evening he revenged himself upon the callous-hearted stranger, by a reckless flirtation with the Misses Phenie and Genie Forbes, still of Chicago. It was not a matter of concern to any one but Paterfamilias Forbes that the Major indulged in a stolen moonlight excursion upon the lake in charge of two extremely prononcee Daisy Millers. The Major's slumbers, however, were of the lightest, for the face of the chance-met directress of his immediate future haunted his uneasy dreams. He was a model of respectable gravity, however, when he presented himself before Mademoiselle Euphrosyne Delande, at her Institute, when the bells clanged ten in the morning. Major Hawke at once impressed the sleek door-opener, Francois, by the ultra refinement of his demeanor, and the suave elegance of his French. "Evidently the one necessary Adam in this Garden of undeveloped young Peris," thought Hawke, as he gazed around the cheerless room, with its globes, busts of departed sages, topographical maps, and framed samples of the "Execution" of the jeunes personnes, with brush and pencil.

"Looks breachy, that fellow--they all have to sneak out to drink, and for les fetifs plairs! He may be made useful. I'll have a shy at him," mused the Major, now on his mettle. Francois stood there expectant of a tip, when he announced the regrets of Mademoiselle Delande, that class duties would detain her for a few moments.

"Would Monsieur kindly pardon, etc.?"

"Am I right in inferring that the ladies, are the daughters of the famous Professor Delande?" the Major hazarded, with a wild guess. Before the votary of Minerva finally descended, Francois had artfully "yielded up" much valuable information to the gravely interested visitor. The attendant was the richer by a five-franc piece when he retired to vigorously fall upon the Major's hat and brush it in an anticipatory manner.

It was but a half an hour later when Alan Hawke had concluded his



deftly worded compliments upon the justly famed Institute, and had subjugated the still susceptible spinster by his adroitly veiled flatteries. The easy aplomb with which he introduced the forgotten commission of Captain Anstruther was aided by the presentation of that gentleman's visiting card, and the charms of an interesting word sketch of Delhi and its surroundings.

The sound of distant girlish voices punctuated the refined murmur of the ensuing conference, which was an exposition of Mademoiselle Delande's grand manner! Hawke adroitly soothed the natural uneasiness of the cunning Swiss spinster as to her sister's comfort, safety, and

the surety of Hugh Johnstone's fabulously liberal money inducement to retain Miss Justine in his service for a year. The flattered woman fell easily into Alan Hawke's net, and she freely dilated upon the singular eccentricities of the Indian magnate as to his daughter's education.

There was a breaking light now illumining the strange childhood of a girl, nurtured by proxy, and kept in ignorance of her brilliant future and vast monetary inheritance.

"In fact, I have never seen the honored Mr. Hugh Fraser," concluded Miss Euphrosyne. "Nadine was brought to us a child of three by the wife of Professor Fraser, since deceased! And, by special arrangement, she was taken by us, and her whole girlhood has been passed in our charge. We have never seen her uncle, Professor Fraser, whose duties at Edinburgh University chained him down. It was her own father's written and positive direction that no one, whomsoever, should be admitted to converse with his child. And so Justine and myself have formed her entirely!"

Hawke's keen eyes glowed for a moment, in a secret satisfaction. "I have you, my lady! They wished to keep you away from this young Peri, formed upon such heroically antique models." Major Hawke gazed upon the leather-faced visage of the slaty-eyed woman, whose age none might venture to guess. An artless admiration of the absent Miss Justine's photographed charms, caused a faint glow to flicker upon the ancient maiden's cheek. When Alan Hawke drew forth a hideous carbuncle and Indian filigree bracelet (an old relic of bazaar haunting), the thin lips of the preceptress parted in a wintry smile.

With modest urging, he soon overcame the Roman firmness of Mademoiselle Euphrosyne, and, wonder of wonders, was honored by an invitation to dine with the austere Genevan maiden. The happy Major was soon triumphant at all points, and Francois was hastily dispatched to the Photographic Atelier to order a half dozen copies of the card portrait which displayed to Alan Hawke the rosebud face of the Veiled Beauty of Delhi. The adventurer made haste to excuse himself for interrupting the flow of the Parnassian stream, and walked backward from the presence of the poor old woman whom he had duped, as if she were a queen.

It was an easy matter for the Englishman to waylay and intercept the returning man-at-arms of this castle of cosmopolitan beauty. Francois had duly availed himself of his lengthened absence, and his thick tongue and swimming eye spoke of potations of the Kirsch-wasser dear to the Swiss heart. Major Hawke impressed the

servitor with the necessity of bringing the pictures down to his rooms upon the morrow, and then the Major judiciously duplicated his five-franc piece. The happy butler winked with an acute divination of the Major's purpose and went unsteadily back to the whirlpool of learning. The Major cheerfully went on his own way to meet Miss Genie Forbes, with whom he had established a private understanding as to a runaway visit to the Cathedral, to be followed by an impromptu breakfast. "I can stand the old Gorgon's dinner," mused the happy adventurer, "after a tete-a-tete with Miss Genie, and as for Francois, I will also waste a bottle of good Cognac on him. I think that I will start into this strange partnership with a better stock of family history than even this remarkably self-possessed young woman, who seems to be the heiress of some old family vendetta."

The Major laughed as he heard the mills of the gods grinding out a golden grist of the future. But lifted up beyond the impulses of his itching palm the sight of the delicate, girlish face of the Rosebud of Delhi had caused him to dream the strangest dreams. "Why not?" he murmured as he wandered back to the hotel and privately indulged in a petit verre before his rendezvous with Miss Genie, the belle of the West Side. Major Alan Hawke was in "great form" as he piloted the bright-eyed, willful Chicago girl through the dim religious light of the Cathedral. His mocking history of the gay life and racy adventures of Bonnivard, when posing as the rollicking Prior of St. Victor in the wild days of his youth, greatly amused the nervous American heiress.

"I should say that he was a holy terror," laughed Miss Genie, "and I don't blame the Bishop of Geneva and the Duke of Savoy for making him do his six years in that dark old hole at Chillon! He was a gay boy, you bet, and with his three wives and his lively ways, I reckon the Genevans were blamed sorry they ever let him out. He seems to have been a free thinker, a free liver, and a free lover!"

"And yet," mused Alan Hawke, "his writings to-day are the pride of Genevan scholars; his library was the nucleus of the Geneva University; his defiant spirit broke the chains of Calvin's narrowness, and his resistant, spiritual example caught up has made Geneva the home of the oppressed, the central, radiant point of mental light and liberty for the world! Geneva since 1536 has harbored the brightest wandering Spanish, French, English, and Irish youth! Even grim Russia cannot reclaim from the free city its wayward exiles. France, in her distress, has found an asylum here for its helpless nobles and expelled philosophers. I willingly take my hat off to brave little Switzerland, where Royal Duke, proscribed patriot, mad enthusiast, bold agnostic, and tired worldling can all find an inviolate asylum under the majestic shadows of its mountains--by the shores of its dreaming lakes!" Alan Hawke dropped suddenly from the clouds as the practical Miss Genie led the way to the breakfast rendezvous, cheerfully demonstrating her own bold ideas of social freedom by remarking:

"Say! what's the matter with a little day's run up to Chillon? Phenie is game for anything! You just get that other English Lord and we will dodge Popper and Mommer."

"I am sorry to say that my friend has left suddenly, bound for London," laughed the Major, gazing admiringly at this pretty feminine Bonnivard.

"That's awful bad luck!" gloomily remarked Miss Genie. "He was a regular dandy, and I liked him--but," she said, with a thirsty peck at a glass of champagne, as they waited for the breakfast, "Phenie will then have to give that long-legged Italian fellow the tip. The Marquis of Santa Marina! He's not much, but better than nothing at all. We'll have a jolly day!"

Major Hawke was mystified at the daring personal independence of the sprightly young heiress. She was a social revelation to him, and the sunny afternoon was not altogether thrown away, for they carelessly rambled over the proud old town together, doing all the sights. They visited the stately National Monument, the Jardin Anglais, the Hotel de Ville, the Arsenal, the Muse'e Foy, the Botanic Gardens, and the Athende. He gazed upon the fresh face of the rebellious young American social mutineer with an increasing wonder as they wandered alone on the Promenade des Bastions, and was simply astounded when he vainly tried to take advantage of a shady corner in the Musee Ariana to steal a kiss from the wayward girl's rosy lips. Miss Genie "formed herself into a hollow square" and calmly, but energetically, repulsed him.

"See here! Major Hawke!" she coolly said, "get off the perch! I don't care for any soft sawder! I'm a pretty good fellow in my way, but I know how to take care of myself!"

In fact, Major Alan Hawke at last recognized the existence of a species of womanhood which he had never before met. Miss Genie was frankly unconventional, and yet she was both hard-headed and hardhearted. When he carefully dressed himself for the intellectual feast of Mademoiselle Delande's "refined collation," he dimly became aware that the role of unpaid bear leader to the Chicago girl simply amounted to being an unsalaried valet de place! "As for compromising that devil of a girl," he growled, "she could have given the snake in the Garden of Eden long odds and beaten him hollow, in subtlety." This view of the impeccability of the Chicago epidermis was confirmed later when Hawke returned from the "Institute" at the decorous hour of ten that evening. He was thoroughly happy, for the sly Francois was ready to meet him at the door, whispering:

"I will be at your rooms at ten, and bring you the photographs. I have a couple of hours of freedom then."

Mademoiselle Euphrosyne's pale, anemic nature had bloomed out under the graceful attentions of the gallant officer, and gradually she expanded, little by little unfolding the desiccated leaves of her tranquil past, and, yielding, as of old, to the charm of youth and good looks, the faded spinster told him all.

"I will sell my precious knowledge, bit by bit, to Madame Berthe," he ruminated. "Evidently the Louison dares not face this stony-faced Swiss Medusa. The felites histoires of Francois will fill up my mental notebook." Major Hawke then sat down at ease in the cafe of the Hotel National to indite a dispatch of spartan brevity to "Madame Louison" at the Hotel Faucon, Lausanne. "The Cook's Agency tell me that the London draft will be paid to-morrow. Francois will deliver me the photographs, and relate his selected historical excerpts, and then I will be ready to have a duel of wits with

Madame Berthe." So he simply telegraphed to Lausanne:

"Successful--arrive to-morrow night." He then dispatched the head porter with the telegram, and while enjoying his parting brandy and soda, was suddenly made aware of the near proximity of Mr. Phineas Forbes of Chicago, who was anxiously drinking cocktail after cocktail in a moody unrest. The lank Chicago capitalist waved his tufted chin beard dejectedly as he answered the Briton's casual salutation. "I'm worried about the girls," he simply said. "They're off on the lake, with the Marquis de Santa Marina and that French chap, the Count de Roquefort. I don't more than half like it." The hour was late, and the heavy father glued his eyes upon the darkened window pane. "Is Madame Forbes with them?" murmured the Englishman.

"Oh, Lord, no!" simply said the Illinois capitalist. "The girls are used to going out alone with their gentlemen friends, but I'm afraid that these two damned useless foreigners will upset the boat and drown my two girls. I wouldn't care a rap if they were alone. But these Dago noblemen are no good--at least that's my experience. I indorsed a draft for one of them that Mommer and the girls dragged up to the house last year. Came back marked 'N. G.'--I wish to God the girls wouldn't pick up these fellows."

Alan Hawke hazarded the inquiry "Why do you permit it?"

The Chicago pork jammer thrust his hand in his pockets and whistled reflectively. "How the deuce can I help it?" he reflectively answered, "Mother and the girls go in for high society. What'll you have? You can talk French to this fellow. Now, order up the best in the house," Alan Hawke laughed and charitably divided the hour of long waiting with the simple-hearted old father. At half-past twelve, with a rush and a flutter, the two young falcons sailed into the main hallway and effusively bade adieu to their limp cavaliers, who slunk away, in different directions, when they observed the disgruntled parent and the heartily amused Briton.

"So they brought you home safely?" calmly remarked Hawke, as he watched the happy father gathering his chickens unto his wing.

"We brought them home safe," cutely remarked Miss Phenie. "Those fellows are heavenly dancers, but they are not worth shucks in a boat. I wish we had had you out with us. I like Englishmen!" with which frank declaration Miss Phenie and Miss Genie whisked themselves away to bed, Miss Genie leaning over the banister to jovially cry out:

"Don't you go away till we fix up that Chillon trip." Major Hawke and Phineas Forbes, Esq., drank a last libation to the friendly god Neptune, the old man huskily remarking:

"Say, Major, those are two fine girls, and they will have a million apiece. I want 'em to be sensible and marry Chicago men, but, they both go in for coronets and all that humbug." The laughing Major extricated himself from the social tentacles of the honest old boy, mentally deciding to play off Miss Genie against Mad-ame Berthe Louison.

"I will give these strange girls 'a day out.' It may reduce the nez retrousseoi my mysterious employer." And so he dreamed that

night that he was an assistant presiding genius of the great pig Golgotha, where Phineas Forbes was the monarch of the meat ax. "Right smart girls, and you bet they can take care of themselves," was the last encomium of their self-denying parent which rang in Alan Hawke's ears as he wandered away into the Land of Nod.

"They are a queer lot," laughed the happy schemer, as he woke next day to his closing labors at Geneva. "Now, for my check cashing, then, Monsieur Francois, a farewell visit to Miss Euphrosyne, and a secret council with the fair Genie," He merrily breakfasted, and was more than rewarded for his Mephistophelian entertainment of Francois. The sly Figaro "parted freely," and when he slunk back to the "Institute" he was the richer by fifty francs. Major Hawke was the happy possessor of the coveted photographs, and a private address of Francois, artfully informing that person that he was going to London, and on his return, in a few months, desired a cicerone in the hypocritically placid town. Francois's eyes gleamed in a happy anticipation of more Cognac and many easily earned francs. "Now, Madame Berthe, I think I have the key of the enigma! I see a year's assured comfort before me, for I can play the part of the Saxon troops at Leipzig," the schemer joyously ruminated.

His farewell to Miss Delande impressed that thrifty dame with the golden fortunes which had descended upon her sister. "Should you return to India, Major," she sibillated, "I will give you a confidential letter to Justine, for I know there is no one more fitted to remain in charge of sweet Nadine than my dear sister!" The Major blushing accepted the honor, and directed the letter to be sent at once to Morley's Hotel, for, as he mysteriously whispered,

"The Foreign office may send me back to India--in fact, I may be telegraphed for at any moment, and your sister will surely find a fast friend in me."

"Easily gulled!" laughed Alan Hawke. "I will sweeten' upon Miss Justine; those thin lips indicate the auri sacra fames. These miserly Swiss sisters may aid me to approach the veiled Rose Bird." His delight at fingering the crisp proceeds of Anstruther's check sent him to the Ouchy steamer in the very happiest of moods, and, his cup was running over when the birdlike Miss Genie Forbes descended upon him to announce a meeting on the morrow at Montreux.

"We can do the castle, and essay the airy railroad at Territet Glion, have a jolly dinner on the hill, and come home on the last boat! You be sure to meet Phenie and me." The astounded Major murmured his delight and surprise. "Oh! Popper will let us go up there. He likes you--he says that you are a thoroughbred. So, we'll cut the other fellows and come alone. Say, can't you scare up another fellow like yourself for Phenie?" Whereat Alan Hawke laughed, and promised to secure an eligible "fellow" among the migratory Englishmen hovering around Lausanne-Ouchy, and he pledged a future friendship with the patient Phineas Forbes, who lingered in the cafe, engulfing cocktails, while "Mother and Phenie were out shopping." The vivacious Genie had confided to her callous swain that she had watched him as he lingered on Rousseau's Island.

"I rather thought that you were sick and distressed, you looked so peaked like, and I was mighty near speaking to you. I was just bound to meet you." And upon this frank declaration, Alan Hawke

kissed her firm white hand, agreeing to her plans, and the glow of prosperity shone out upon his impassive face, as he glided away to meet the strange woman whom he distrusted. "I hold the trump cards now, my lady!" he cried, as he watched Miss Genie's handkerchief fluttering on the quay. Major Alan Hawke wasted no time in his three hours' voyage to Lausanne-Ouchy in carefully preparing for his interview with Madame Berthe Louison. He abandoned the idea of trying the "whip hand," remembering how suddenly he had descended from the "high horse." "Bah! She is about as sentimental as a rat-tail file. However, she is good for my passage to India, at any rate, and, the nearer I am to old Johnstone and this pretty heiress to be, the better my all-round chances are." So, he contented himself with watching the pictured shores of Lake Lemman glide by, and wondering if he might not turn aside safely to the chase of the bright-eyed, sharp-featured, Miss Genie Forbes. He had profited by Phineas Forbes's frank disclosures, and yet the Madame Sans Gene manners of the heiresses rather frightened him. He was aware from the amatory failure in the dim old cathedral that Miss Genie was armed cap-a-pie. "Those American girls, apparently so approachable, are all ready to stand to arms at a moment's notice." And so, he drifted back in his day dreams toward the Land of the Pagoda Tree, with Ouchy and Chillon. He studied the beautiful face of the lonely child from the school-girl photograph, and decided, in spite of hideous frocks and a lack of conventional war paint, that she was a rare beauty.

"Yes! She will do--with the money. All she needs is the art to show off her points, and that is easily gained. The recruits in Vanity Fair easily pick up the tricks of society, and old Hugh's money and prospective elevation will surely draw suitors around like flies swarming near the honey." The boat gracefully glided in to the port of Ouchy before Major Hawke's day dream faded away.

A flattering dream which led him on to a future gilded by Sir Hugh Johnstone's money. He longed to ruffle it bravely with the best. To hold up his head once more in official circles, and to smother the ugly floating memories of a renegade who had served those English guns under the fierce Sikkim hill tribes against his one-time fellow soldiers. "I must have that money, with or without the girl! There must be a way to it! I will cut through the barriers to get it!" There was a steely glitter in his blue eyes as he murmured: "Now for the fox's hide! She shall have her way--for a time! My play comes on later, when the deal is with me!"

He sprang lightly ashore, and was chatting with the gold-banded porter of the Hotel Faucon, when a lovely face, thrilling in its awakened emotion, met his glance at the window of a carriage. He dispatched his luggage to the Faucon, and sprang lightly in the carriage when the omnibuses had departed for the Lausanne plateau. Alan Hawke was carefully differential in his greeting and he meekly answered all the rapid queries of his mysterious employer.

"You have closed up your own private affairs?" she briskly queried.

"All is ready for the road in one day more. I have a private social engagement for to-morrow," he replied. "But I brought you all the sailing dates and the detailed information you requested."

"You obtained the pictures safely, then, and with a prudent caution,"

anxiously demanded Madame Louison.

"You shall know all soon. I hope that I have satisfied you!" he said, handing her a packet, failing to tell her that he had kept two pictures of the far-away girl for his own private use. They were now near the plateau where the Hotel Faucon shows its semi-circular front to the splendid panorama unrolled before its windows.

An afternoon concert was in progress at the Casino, near the local museum. "We will stop here for a few moments," said the excited woman. "You can go on alone, and walk over to the hotel and secure your own rooms. Then send your card up to me in the usual manner. To-night we will go out separately and meet for a conference. We can arrange all our business." The Major bowed submissively, and assisted the lady to alight.

Madame Louison dismissed her carriage, and the confederates-to-be entered the afternoon concert room. A superb orchestra was playing the finishing bars of the last number on the program, and the audience had dwindled away to a few knots of demure residents. Following his passive policy, the adventurer sat silently, stealing oblique glances at his companion as she nervously unfolded the wrappings of the coveted pictures. There was a gasp, a low moan, as the woman's head fell back. Alan Hawke's strong arms were clasped round her, as she leaned back helplessly in her fauteuil. But a smile of secret triumph was on his face as he quickly bore the helpless form to an anteroom at once opened by the frightened ushers. Berthe Louison's face was corpse-like in its pallor, as she lay there upon a divan, her fingers still clutching the photograph.

"There is a physician near by," hazarded a sympathetic woman who had crowded into the room. The music had stopped with a crash.

"Summon him at once!" energetically ordered Hawke. "Some brandy--quick!" he cried, listening to her agonized words, "Valerie! My God! It is Valerie herself! My poor sister!" In a few moments an elderly man parted the assembling loiterers. His bustling air of command soon dispelled the loiterers. A woman attendant was bending over the still senseless woman as the spectacled medico seized Alan Hawke's arm. "Has your wife ever had a previous heart attack?" he gravely asked, as he opened his lancet case. Major Hawke shook his head, and gazed pityingly upon the beautiful pallid face before him.

"Can I be of any use to Monsieur?" demanded the chef d'orchestre in evening grand tenue, his baton still in his hand.

There was a glance of wondering astonishment as the Englishman faced the speaker. "Wieniawski--Casimir, you here?" The other dropped his voice as the physician ripped up the sleeve of the patient's gown.

"Major Hawke, I thought you were still in Delhi? Your wife--" faltered the artist, as he listened to a low moan when the lancet blade entered the ivory arm of the sufferer. Then, with a backward step, he pressed his hands to his brows. "My God! It is Alixe Delavigne!" he brokenly said. But Hawke sprang to his side and quickly drew him from the room.

"Not a word! Not a single word to any one! Where are you stopping?"

I will come to you tonight!" the excited man sternly said, his firm hand still clutching the musician's arm.

"Here, at the Casino! Come in after ten! I will await you! But where did you meet her?" the Polish violinist cried, speaking as if in a dream.

"You shall know all later! I must get her to the hotel!" He returned to the physician's side, who authoritatively cried, "Now an easy carriage and to the Faucon, you said?" In half an hour, Berthe Louison was sleeping, a nurse at her side, while Alan Hawke counted the moments crawling on till ten o'clock.

### CHAPTER III.

#### AND AT DELHI WHAT AM I TO DO?

Major Alan Hawke was the "observed of all observers," in the cosy salon of the Grand Hotel Faucon, when the sympathetic hotel manager interrupted a colloquy between the handsome Briton and the Doctor. "A mere syncope, my dear sir. Perhaps--even only the result of tight lacing, or inaction. Perhaps some sudden nerve crisis. These are the results of the easy luxury of an enervating high-life. All these social habits are weakening elements. Now, fortunately, your wife has a singularly strong vital nature. You may safely dismiss all your fears. Madame will be entirely herself in the morning."

"Can I be of any service?" demanded the genial host, secretly urged on by a coterie of curious, womanly sympathizers in silk and muslin.

"I am the trustee of Madame Louison, in some important business matters, and not her husband," gravely remarked the Major. "I only came up here to confer with her upon some matters of moment." Both the listeners bowed in silence.

"Then, my dear sir, you can be perfectly reassured," the physician briskly concluded, tendering his card. "My professional conscience will not allow me to make even a single future visit, as doctor, to the charming Madame Louison. Should Madame awake in other than her normal health and spirits, I should be professionally at fault."

Major Hawke then led the doctor aside and pressed a five-pound note upon him. "Madame is of a wonderfully strong constitution. An heiress of nature's choicest favors," the happy Galen floridly said, as he took his leave.

"So she is," grimly assented Hawke.

The gossipy boniface was already spreading such meager details of the sudden seizure as he had been able to pick up, and, the words



"Polish noblewoman," "Italian marchesa," "French countess," were tossed about freely in the light froth of the conversation in the ladies' drawing-room.

Meanwhile, Alan Hawke was smoking a meditative cigar alone, while pacing the old Cantonal high road before the Faucon. "I think I will remain on picket here," he mused. "This fiddler fellow, Wieniawski, must not meet her. She must be led on to leave here at once. Constitution, nerve, aplomb; she has them all. She should have been born a man. What a soldier! One of nature's mistakes--man's mental organization, woman's soft, flooding emotions, and beauty's fiery passions."

"I must pump Casimir. He will be safely nailed to the platform by his duties, from eight to ten. I will not leave her a moment, however, till he has the baton in his hand. I will then watch him until ten--meet him down there, and, if he meets her after we separate for the night, he is a smarter Pole than I take him for. And now I must go and frighten her away from here."

Major Hawke was quick to note all the outer indications of man's varying fortunes. He had so long buffeted the waves of adversity himself that he was a past master of the art of measuring the depth of a hidden purse. He recalled the brilliant Casimir Wieniawski of eight years past--the curled darling of the hot-hearted ladies of Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Singapore. In a glance of cursory inspection Alan Hawke had noted the doubtful gloss of the dress suit; it was the polish of long wear, not the velvety glow of newness. There was a growing bald spot, scarcely hidden by the Hyperion Polish curls; there were crows'-feet around the bold, insolent eyes, and the man's smile was lean and wolfish when the glittering white teeth flashed through the professional smirk of the traveling artist. The old, easy assurance was still there, but cognac had dulled the fires of genius; the tones of the violin trembled, even under the weakening but still magic fingers, and the splendid sapphire and diamond cluster ring of old was replaced by a too evident Palais Royal work of inferior art.

"Poor devil! It is the downward fluttering of the wearied eagle!" mused Alan Hawke. "Women, roulette, champagne, and high life--all these past riches fade away into the gloomy pleasures of restaurant cognac, dead-shot absinthe, and the vicarious smiles of a broken soubrette or so! And all the more you can be now dangerous to me, Monsieur Casimir Wieniawski, for the old maneater forgets none of his tricks, even when toothless."

Casimir, the handsome Pole, glib of tongue, the heir to a thousand minor graces, reckless in outpouring the wine of Life, had truly gone the downward way with all the abandon of his showy, insincere race. Hawke well knew the final level of misery awaiting the wandering, broken-down artist here in a land where really fine music was a mere drug; where the orchestra was only a cheap lure to enhance the cafe addition. The "Professor" was but a minor staff officer of the grim Teutonic Oberkellner of the Brasserie Concert.

"But how shall I muzzle this Robert Macaire of the bow?" cogitated Hawke, as he anxiously eyed the two windows of Madame Louison's rooms, and then sternly gazed at the open front doors of the Hotel Faucon.

A light broke in upon his brain. "There is the golden lure of the Misses Phenie and Genie Forbes, of Chicago, U. S. A. Those madcap girls will be easily gulled. They arrive to-morrow at nine. A few stage asides, as to the stock romance of every Polish upstart, will do the trick!"

"Russian brutality, fugitive Prince, Siberian wanderings, romantic escape, killed the Russian general who burned his chateau; all that sort of thing will enchant these. This may occupy Casimir and leave me free. When the devil is idle he catches flies, and under the cover of this rosy glow of romance I will get away to India, but only after Madame Alixe Delavigne goes. I can afford to put in ten pounds on Casimir to loosen his lying tongue. In vino veritas may apply even to a gallant and distinguished Pole. If I can get the true story of Alixe Delavigne's life, then I have the key of the Johnstone mystery. Ah! There is now a duty signal for me!" The Major smartly approached the main entrance of that cosiest of Swiss family hotels, the Faucon, as the anxious face of a woman nurse appeared. "Madame veut bien voir Monsieur!" simply announced the servant. Major Hawke brushed by her with a nod and quickly mounted the stair. To his utter surprise, on entering Madame Berthe Louison's apartment, the signs of an approaching departure were but too evident. A stout Swiss maiden was busied stolidly packing several trunks in an indiscriminate haste, while the fair invalid herself sat at the center table poring over an opened Baedeker and the outspread maps brought on by her "business agent." Hawke's murmured astonishment was at once cut short by the decisive notes of Berthe Louison's flutelike voice.

"We have no time to waste, Major!" she said, with an affected cheerfulness. "I am all right now. There is an eleven-thirty train for Constance. I will take that, reach Munich, and get right over to Venice by the Brenner Pass, and thence go down to Aricona, and Brindisi. You can return to Geneva, and, by Mont Cenis and Turin you will reach Brindisi before me. So, I leave to-night; you can go up to Geneva to-morrow night. No one will possibly suspect our business connection in this way. I will have time to see you depart for Bombay, before I take the steamer for Calcutta. I have marked off the sailings. This little occurrence here to-night has brought us both too much under the eyes of other people."

"Bah!" said the astounded Major. "No one knows anything of us here. We are of no importance."

"You think so?" mused the woman, as if careless of his presence. "And yet I have seen a face here, rising out of a past that is long dead and buried. Now, are you ready to meet me at Brindisi?"

Alan Hawke blushed even through the sun-browned complexion of the Nepaul days, as the clear-eyed woman, faintly smiling, discerned his "hedging" policy.

"You will not be put to the slightest inconvenience." She opened a handsome traveling bag. The falcon-eyed Major Hawke observed the gleam of a pearl handled and silver chased revolver of serviceable make, and there was also a very wicked-looking Venetian dagger lying on the table, even then within the lady's reach! "Here is the sum of five hundred pounds in English notes," said Berthe. "That will

neatly take you to Delhi, and there is fifty more to liquidate my bill, and pay the medical expenses. I am not desirous that the landlord should know of my departure. You may bring all my trunks on. I will be waiting for you at the 'Vittorio Emmanuele' at Brindisi. Please do telegraph to me from Turin of your arrival."

Cool globe-trotter as he was, Alan Hawke was speechless. "Shall I not see you safely on board the Constance train?" he muttered.

"The nurse will attend to all that; money will do a great deal," the lady said. "I will send her back from Constance. Please do ring the bell." The Major was obedient, and he listened in dumb astonishment, as Madame Louison ordered a very dainty supper for two, with a bottle of Burgundy and a well-iced flask of Veuve Cliquot. When the door had closed upon the gaping servant, the lady merrily laughed:

"Pray take up your sinews of war, Major. I shall consider you as retained in my service, if I am obeyed."

Alan Hawke turned and faced the puzzling "employer" with a half defiant question: "And when shall I know the real nature of my duties?" as he carefully folded up the welcome bundle of notes, without even looking at them.

"Major, you are not an homme d'affaires. Do me the favor to count your money," laughed the mocking convalescent. "Thank you," continued the lady as he obeyed her. "Now I will only detain you here till ten o'clock. Then you must disappear and not know me again until we meet at the Hotel Vittorio Emmanuele at Brindisi. Should any accident occur, you are to take the Sepoy for Bombay direct and go on to Delhi. Leave me a letter at Suez and also one at Aden, care P. and O. Company. I will ask at each of these places. I will go direct to Calcutta, and will then meet you at Delhi. Arriving at Delhi, you may telegraph to me care Grindlay & Co., Calcutta."

"I wonder if she bled Anstruther," inwardly growled Hawke, as he recognized the name of that social butterfly's bankers. But the lady only sweetly continued: "I have some business in Calcutta. You can write to me at the general postoffice at Allahabad, and leave your Delhi address there. I shall probably telegraph for you to come down and meet me there."

Major Hawke, neatly entering the lady's directions in a silver-clasped betting book, murmured lazily without lifting his eyes: "You seem to know a great deal about Hindostan."

"I have made a careful study of it for years--long years," said the woman with a telltale flush of color, as the servants entered with the impromptu feast.

They were left alone, at an imperious signal, and Madame Louison bade Hawke regale himself en garçon. The Major paused with suspended pencil, as he quietly approached the decisive question: "And at Delhi, what am I to do?"

"You are to take up your old friendship with Hugh Fraser--this budding baronet," replied Berthe calmly. She was pouring out a glass of the wine beloved of women, but her hand trembled as she

hastily drank off the inspiring fluid. "All this is bravo--mere bravo! She's a very smart woman, and a cool customer!" decided the schemer, who had filled himself up a long drink. He took up at once the object-lesson. They were simply to be comrades--and nothing more.

"I will obey you to the very letter," he said simply, for he was well aware the woman was keenly watching him.

"Then that is all. There is nothing more," soberly concluded his companion. "The letters at Suez and Aden are, of course, to be mere billets de voyage. The correspondence at Allahabad may cover all of moment. Can you not give me a safe letter and telegraph address at Delhi?"

"Give me your notebook," said Alan Hawke, as he carefully wrote down the needed information: "Ram Lal Singh, Jewel Merchant, 16 Chandnee Chouk, Delhi."

"There's the address of my native banker; and as trusty a Hindu as ever sold a two-shilling strass imitation for a hundred-pound star sapphire. But, in his way he is honest--as we all are." And then Alan Hawke boldly said: "How shall I address you at Allahabad?"

The flashing brown eyes gleamed a moment with a brighter luster than pleasure's glow. "You have my visiting card, Major," the woman coldly said. "I travel with a French passport, always en regie."

"By God! she has the nerve!" mused Alan Hawke, as he hastily said: "And now, as we have settled all our little preliminaries, when am I to know whether you trust me or not?"

He was pressing his advantage, for her precipitate departure would rob him of the expected effect of Casimir Wieniawski's disclosures. "If I find you en ami defamille, at Delhi, so that you can confidentially approach Sir Hugh Johnstone, the ci-devant Hugh Fraser, your task will be soon set for you, and your reward easily earned; but under no circumstances are you to make the slightest attempt to a confidential acquaintance with this wonderful Nadine. That is my affair." The tone was almost trifling in its lightness, but Alan Hawke recognized the hand of iron in the velvet glove.

"And now, Sir," coquettishly said Madame Berthe Louison, "you have been a squire of dames in your day. Tell me of social India, for, while I shall get a good maid out at Calcutta, I must depend upon Munich, Venice, and Brindisi for my personal outfit. I know the whole United Kingdom thoroughly. The Englishman and his cold-pulsed blonde mate at home are well-learned lessons. The Continent, yes, even Russia, I know, too," she gayly chattered; "but the Orient is as yet a sealed book to me, and I would be helpless in Father India, without the womanly gear appropriate to the social habits of your countrywomen."

"You have lived in England?" briefly demanded Alan Hawke, in some surprise at her frank admissions.

"Yes, too long!" sternly answered Madame Louison, who was enjoying a cigarette, as she signed to the maid to leave them alone. "I detest the foggy climate," she added, a little late to temper the

bitterness of the remark.

"I will lull this watchful feminine tiger," the Major secretly decided, as he began a brilliant sketch of the social life of the strange land of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. "I presume, of course, that you do not care to appear with a fifty-pound Marshall & Snell grove outfit, as if you were the wife of an Ensign in a marching regiment. I will give you the real life our women lead out there. You could have secured a splendid London outfit by a little time spent in making the detour."

"I wish to appear en Francaise, my true character," smiled Berthe. "I never could sacrifice my Gaelic taste to the hideous color mixtures and utilitarian ugliness of the English machine-made toilette. An Englishwoman can only be trusted with a blue serge, a plain gray traveling dress, or in the easy safety of black or white. They are not the 'glass of fashion and the mold of form.' Now, Sir, let me see how you have profited by your wandering in Beauty's gardens on the Indus and Ganges?"

Alan Hawke knew very well at heart what the quickwitted woman would know. He sketched with grace, the natural features, the climatic conditions, the bizarre scenery of the million and a half square miles where the venerable Kaisar-i-Hind rules nearly two hundred millions of subjugated people. He portrayed all the light splendors of Mohammedan elegance, the wonders of Delhi and Agra, he sketched the gloomy temple mysteries of Hinduism, and holy Benares rose up before her eyes beneath the inspiration of his brilliant fancy.

The ardent woman listened with glowing eyes, as Hawke proudly referred to the wonderful sweep of the sword of Clive, which conquered an unrifled treasure vault of ages, annexed a giant Empire, and set with Golconda's diamonds the scepter of distant England. The year 1756 was hailed by the renegade as the epoch when England's rule of the sea became her one vitalizing policy--her first and last national necessity--for the Empire of the waves followed the pitiful beginning in Madras.

Temples, groves, and mosques peopled with the alien and warring races were conjured up, the splendid viceregal circle, the pompous headquarter military, the fast set, staid luxury-loving civilians, and all the fierce eddies and undercurrents of the graded social life, in which the cold English heart learns to burn as madly under "dew of the lawn" muslin as ever Lesbian coryphe'e or Tzigane pleasure lover.

The burning noons, the sweltering Zones of Death, the cool hills, the Vanity Fair of Simla, the shaded luxury of bungalow life, and the mad undercurrent of intrigue, the tragedy element of the Race for Wealth, the Struggle for Place, and the Chase for Fame. Major Alan Hawke was gracefully reminiscent, and in describing the social functions, the habits of those in the swim, the inner core of Indian life under its canting social and official husk, he brought an amused smile to the mobile face of his beautiful listener. He did not note the passage of time. He could now hear the music floating up from the Casino below. He had answered all her many questions. He described pithily the voyage out, the social pitfalls, the essence of "good Anglo-Indian form," and he was astonished at the keenness of the questions with which he was plied by his employer.

"You have surely traveled in India," he murmured, when his relation flagged.

"So I have, by proxy, and, in imagination," laughed Madame Berthe Louison, as she demurely held up her jeweled watch. "Ten minutes more, and then, Sir, I shall give you your ordre de route. For, I must go quietly. I trust to your experience and good judgment. There is nothing to say here. There will be no letters. My bankers have their orders. You must simply pay our bill, and depart quietly via Geneva. May I ask if you wish any more money? Some personal needs?"

Major Hawke shook his head. "You may rely on me to meet you, and to faithfully obey you," he gravely said. There were unspoken words trembling on his lips, which he fain would have uttered. "By Heavens! She is a witch!" he murmured, in a repressed excitement, as he walked quietly down the hallway to keep his tryst with Casimir Wieniawski. For Berthe Louison had at once divined the cause of his unrest.

"You think that I should tell you more? Why should I tell you anything? We are strangers yet, not even friends. You may divine that I trust no man. I have had my own sad lessons of life-lessons learned in bitterness and tears. I go out to your burning jungle land, with neither hope to allure, nor fear to repel. The whole world is the same to me. That I have a purpose, I admit; and even you may know me better by and bye! Till then, no professions, no promises, no pledges. I use you for my own selfish purposes, that is all; and you can frankly study your own self-interest. We are two clay jars swept along down the Ganges of life. For a few threads of the dark river's current, we travel on, side by side! You have frankly taken me at my word! I have taken you at yours! There is a written order to settle my affairs and remove my luggage. Of course, should you meet with any accident, telegraph to the Vittorio Emmanuele, at Brindisi. Money," she said, almost bitterly, "would be telegraphed; and so, I say"--he listened breathlessly--"au revoir--at Brindisi!" she concluded, giving him her hand, with a frank smile.

As Alan Hawke descended the stair, he growled. "A woman without a heart, and--not without a head!" As he calmly answered the manager's polite inquiry for Madame's health, the "heartless woman" whom he had left was lying sobbing in the dark room above--crying, in her anguish, "Valerie! My poor, dead Valerie! I go to your child!"

But, none suspected her departure, when the trimly-clad woman glided out of the entrance of the Hotel Faucon, at eleven o'clock. The maid was in waiting on the circular place in front with a carriage, and the key of the apartment lay in a sealed envelope on Alan Hawke's table, which proves that a few francs are just as potent in Switzerland as the same number of shillings in London, or dollars in New York. It was a clear case of "stole away."

When Major Alan Hawke leaned over the supper table at the Casino, pledging Madame Frangipanni's bright eyes in very fair cafe champagne, he nervously started as he heard the wailing whistle and clanging bells of the through train for Constance. He forgot the faded complexion, the worn face, the chemically tinted hair and haggard

eyes of the broken-down Austrian blonde concert singer, in the exhilaration of Berthe Louison's departure.

For he had not lost Professor Casimir Wieniawski from sight a moment since the hour of ten, and that "distinguished noble refugee" was now in a maudlin way, murmuring perfunctory endearments in the ear of the ex-prima donna, who tenderly gazed upon him in a proprietary manner. Alan Hawke had judged it well to ply the champagne, and, at the witching hour of midnight, he critically inspected Casimir's condition. "He is probably about tipsy enough now to tell all he knows, and, with an acquired truthfulness. I will, therefore, bring this festive occasion to a close." Whereat the watchful Lucullus of the feast artfully drew Madame Frangipanni aside.

"I have to go on to London, Chere Comtesse," he flatteringly said, "you must give me Casimir for a couple of hours to-night, to talk over the old times."

He lingered a moment, hat in hand, as he chivalrously sent Madame Frangipanni home in a carriage. The poor old singer's bosom was thrilled with a sunset glow of departing greatness, as she lingered tearfully that night over the memories of the halcyon days when the officers of Francis Joseph's bodyguard had fought for the honors of the carriage courtesies of the Diva. Eheu fugaces!

Closeted together, the minor guests having been artfully dispersed, Major Alan Hawke and his friend recalled the olden glories of Wieniawski's Indian tour. It was with a jealous hand that Hawke doled out the cognac, until Casimir abruptly said: "And now, mon ami, tell me what has linked you to Alixe Delavigne?" Alan Hawke had keenly studied his man, and found that the limit of the artist's drinking capacity seemed to be infinity, and so he leaned back and coldly scrutinized the musician's shabby exterior. "I think that I can risk it now," he mused, and then, in a crisp, hard voice, he suddenly said: "I don't mind parting with a twenty-pound note, Casimir, if you will tell me all you know about that beauty. You need it now--more than I. I am to be the judge of the value of your story, however. Mark me, I know the main features, but I also know that you have met her in the old days." The broken-down artist flushed under the changed relation of guest and paid tool.

He uneasily stammered, as he filled a brandy glass, "As a loan--as a loan!" But Hawke was sternly business-like in his reply.

"Don't make any pretenses with me. You are hard down on your luck, and you know it. This is a mere matter of business." He unfolded a bundle of notes and carelessly tossed two ten-pound notes over to Casimir, who seized them with trembling fingers. The pitiful sum represented to the artist two months of his meager salary. Here was absinthe unlimited, a little roulette, a new frock for Madame Frangipanni, perhaps even a dress coat for himself.

"How old do you think Alixe is?" unsteadily began the artist.

"I should say about twenty-five," gallantly replied the Major.

"We will premise that she is thirty-three," confidently began the musician, "or even thirty-five. When I was a young fool at Warsaw, eighteen years old," he babbled. "I was the local prodigy. My

first essays in public were, of course, concerts, and I was soon the vogue. And, later, asked as an artistic guest to the chateaux of the nobility in Poland, Kowno, Vitebsk, Wilna, Minsk, Grodno and Volhynia. I was a poet in thought, a lover of all womankind in my dreams, and a conspirator in the inmost chambers of my defiant Polish nature."

"They made me the cat's-paw of adroit adventurers who were filling their pockets from wealthy Polish sympathizers in France and America, and some of them were Russian paid spies. I braved all the risks. I was the secret means of communication of the highest circles of our cult of Rebellion. Fool that I was, wandering from province to province, I lived the life of a mad enthusiast. The proud memories of Poland were mine, the spirit of her music, arts, and poetry had cast its witchery over me. Her history, the tragedy of a crownless queen of sorrows, had transported me into a dreamy idealism. I was soon the confidant of our seductive mobile Polish beauties. Sinuous, insincere, changeful, passionate, and burning with the flames of Love and Life, I was, at once, their idol and their plaything, their hero, and their willing slave.

"For then, the spirit of old Poland rang out in my numbers, and I waked the quivering echoes of woman's heart at will. It was in seventy-three that I was sent on a special mission to Prince Pierre Troubetskoi's splendid chateau at Jitomir in Volhynia. The crafty Russians were watching us even there, and were busied in assembling troops secretly, at Kiev and Wilna. To another was given the proud place of secret spy over the higher circles of Wilna, while my duty was to watch Jitomir and Kiev. Troubetskoi was a bold gallant fellow, an ardent Muscovite, and had secretly returned from a long sojourn in Paris. He was in close touch with the Governors of Volhynia, Kiev, and Podolia, and we feared his sword within, his Parisian connections without. An evil star brought me into his household as his guest. For nearly a year I was kept vibrating between the points of danger to us, my personal headquarters being at the Chateau of Jitomir. And there I lived out my brief heart-life, for there I met Valerie Troubetskoi. No one seemed to know where Pierre had found her, but later I learned her story from her own lips.

"That is, all of the story of a woman's heart-life which is ever unveiled to any man! She was beautiful beyond--compare, her wistful tenderness shining out as the moon, softer than the fierce noonday glare of the passion-transfigured faces of our Polish beauties. For they loved, for Love's own sake, and Valerie Troubetskoi offered up the chalice of her own heart in silent sadness. I never saw so lovely a being."

"Did she look like that?" suddenly demanded Hawke, thrusting a photograph before the haggard eyes of the broken artist. He gasped, and tears gathered in his lashes. "Valerie, herself, and, as I knew her only before her fatal illness had marked her down. Did Alixe give you this?" He clutched at it with his trembling hands.

"Go on," harshly said Alan Hawke, "the hour is late!"

The Pole buried his face in his thinned hands, and then brokenly resumed: "The old story--the only one you know. She was about my own age; Troubetskoi was nearly always away; perhaps he thought



to trap all my traitorous circle through me, or else he was in the secret service of the hungry Russian eagle. Valerie roamed silently through the great halls of Jitomir, saddened and lonely, for their union was childless. My heart spoke to her own in my music; she knew the prayer of my soul, though my lips were silent. For I madly adored her. Then, then, I was a man! My life belonged to Poland, my soul to art, but my heart was a sealed temple of love, a temple where Valerie, the beloved, the secretly worshiped, sat alone on her throne.

"One day a woman, radiant in youth, and reflecting Valerie's own beauty, was brought to the chateau by Troubetskoi, who had journeyed on to Vienna. It was Alixe Delavigne, the woman whom I saw last with you. A month later Valerie called me to her side: 'My poor Casimir,' she said, as I knelt at her feet, 'I am dying! The struggle will not be a long one. I know the secret of your boyish heart. Your eyes have spoken and your music has reached my heart. Your love is written in your songs without words. When you have forgotten me, there is Alixe; she is alone upon earth. Let me seal your heart to hers, and even in death I shall feel that I love you both.' Then," the artist sobbed, "I lost my head. I told her all in mad, burning words. She raised her eyes to mine, and softly said: 'I shall see you no more unless Alixe is with us, for I love Pierre and he loves me. When I am gone, Alixe will be the only one who knows the secret of my life.'

"It was two months later--for I would not leave her side, even Pierre Troubetskoi could not see her passing away, for it was a mysterious malady--when a sudden alarm brought me to my senses. My secret society work was done, and yet I lingered there, at the very steps of the scaffold. Alixe Delavigne burst into my room at midnight.

"'Hasten!' she cried. 'Even now the Cossacks are surrounding the house!' She let me out through the secret passage of the old Chateau. A cloak was thrown over me by the Intendant. He was a Pole--and one true to the old blood. Alixe pressed a purse upon me. An address in Paris was whispered. 'I will write! Go! For Valerie's sake, go!'

"Forty-eight hours later I crossed the Galician frontier at Lemberg disguised as a Polish peasant. My guardian, the Intendant, turned me over to our friends in the valley of the Styr. After six months of wandering, I finally reached Paris in safety. There were sorrowful letters awaiting me. Valerie was hidden forever in the yawning tombs of the gloomy old chapel of Jitomir, and Alixe herself wrote of Pierre Troubetskoi's generous blinding of the pursuit. I was, however, prosecuted and hunted. I fled to America, for all our plans of revolt were miserably wrecked--and by Polish traitors!

"Two years later, I learned from a fellow refugee that Pierre Troubetskoi had been killed by accident in a great forest battle. And to Alixe Delavigne, all the wealth which would have been Valerie's was left by the lion-hearted man who awoke too late to the early doom of his beloved.

"I knew naught of the family history save that the sisters were the daughters of Colonel Delavigne, a gallant French officer, who was murdered by the Communists in seventy-one." Alan Hawke was now sternly eyeing the musician, who abruptly concluded: "I have never met Alixe Delavigne since. I dare not return to Poland. My own

course has been steadily downward, and, beyond knowing that she still possesses the splendid domains of Jitomir, we are strangers to each other. Polish refugees have told me that she has always administered the vast estate with liberal kindness to all. And now you will tell me of her?" The tremulous hand of Wieniawski raised a brimming glass of brandy to his lips. He stared about vacantly when Hawke said:

"Madame Delavigne left Lausanne this evening on a special mission. Her life is a sealed book to all, and a mere business interest has drawn us together." The Englishman went callously on: "There are a couple of mountainously rich American girls coming down here to-morrow at nine o'clock to spend the day at Chillon with me. I need a running mate. Will you then meet me at the Montreux Landing? You can have a day off, and these young fools are fat pigeons, ardent, and enthusiastic." Hawke saw the hesitation on the man's face.

"You can say to Madame Frangipanni that you are with me and that I will explain later at the dinner." With a glance at his watch, Alan Hawke rang for the Oberkellner. He was extending his hand in goodnight, when the refugee cried imploringly, "I must see her once more! Tell me of her journey!" and Major Hawke deliberately lied to the poor vaurien artist, the wreck of his better self. "The through train to Paris is her only address. I presume that Madame Delavigne will spend some time in a sanitarium after this heart attack, and she has my banker's address. It is only through them that we meet to arrange some affairs of business. Whether maid, wife, or widow, I know not, for you know what women are--sealed books to their enemies, and to their husbands and lovers--only enigmas!

"But fail not to meet me. I'll give you a pleasant day. You will find the two Americans both gushing and susceptible." Then as Major Alan Hawke stepped lightly away to the sedately closed Hotel Faucon, Casimir Wieniawski staggered back into the cafe.

His fit of passionate sorrow was brief, for in a half hour he was the king of a mad revel, where his meaner sycophants divided Alan Hawke's bounty. The cool Major strode along happy hearted to his rest, quietly revolving the plan of campaign.

"There was then a sealed chapter in Valerie Troubetskoi's life. And the key of that is in Berthe Louison's keeping. Now, my fair employer, it is diamond cut diamond. I think that I have done a fair day's work." And he thanked his lucky stars for the precipitate flight of his mysterious employer. "She evidently feared the noble Casimir following upon the trail. Strange--strange pathways! Strange footprints on the sands of Time! It is a devilish funny world, but, after all, the best that we have any authentic account of." And so he slept the sleep of the just, for he was making the woes of others the cornerstones of his newer fortunes.

Major Hawke arose with the lark, by a previous arrangement with the Hotel Bureau. His face was eminently businesslike in its gravity, as he summoned the porter and dispatched all his luggage to the care of the Chef du Gare, Geneva. "Business of extreme importance awaiting upon Madame's complete recovery had caused her to depart to consult an eminent specialist. Thank you, there will be no letters," said the Major, as he pocketed both receipted bills. He

amused himself while watching for the morning boat, as the mountain mists, lifting, revealed the glittering lake, in sending a very carefully sketched letter to Mademoiselle Euphrosyne Delande, No. 123 Rue du Rhone, Geneva. This letter was of such moment that it went on to London, to be posted back duly stamped with good Queen Victoria's likeness. A very careful Major!

The lofty semi-official tone, in which the writer spoke of a possible return to India "under the auspices of the Foreign Office," was well calculated to fill the spinster's bosom with the flattering unction that a mighty protector had been raised up for the adventurous Justine, now supposed to be environed with all the glittering snares of society, as well as enveloped in the mystic jungle.

A week later, when Euphrosyne Delande laid down the pen and abandoned her unfinished "Lecture Upon the Influence of the Allobroges, Romans, Provençal Franks, Burgundians, and Germans Upon the Intellectual Development of Geneva," she read Alan Hawke's letter with a thrill of secret pride.

The smooth adventurer had written: "If I have the future pleasure of meeting Mademoiselle Justine Delande I only hope to find a resemblance to her charming and distinguished sister. As my movements are necessarily secret, pray write only in the utmost confidence to Mademoiselle Justine. I hope to soon return and enjoy once more the hospitalities of your intellectual circle." The address given for India was "Bombay Club." Miss Euphrosyne gazed up at the stony lineaments of Professor Delande, her marble-browed and flinty-hearted sire, locked in the cold chill of a steel engraving. He was as neutral as the busts of Buffon, Cuvier, Laplace, Humboldt, and Pestalozzi, which coldly furnished forth her sanctum. She thought of the eloquent eyed young Major and sadly sighed. She proceeded to enshrine him in her withered heart, and then wrote a crossed letter of many tender underlinings to her distant sister. And thus the pathway was made very smooth for the artful wanderer, who had already stepped upon the decks of the Sepoy.

Major Hawke had dispatched an excellent breakfast before he stepped into the carriage to be whirled away to Montreux. His bridges were burned behind him. There was not a vestige of Madame Berthe Louison left to give the needy Pole a clue. "They are separated, and Anstruther and the Swiss schoolmistress are harmless. I have only my play to make upon the lovely Justine, and to retake up my old friendship with Hugh Fraser. Then I am ready to bit by bit unravel the story of Valerie Delavigne's child--the Veiled Rose of Delhi."

"Between a father with a secret to keep, and this strange woman with a purpose, there is a pretty girl and a vast fortune at issue, besides the prospective pickings of Madame Berthe Louison." These musings of the Major led him up to the question of his employer's false name, as he swept down to the nearby Montreux station. "She evidently had traced the child to Switzerland, and was upon a still hunt to find out the home of the growing heiress, and,--for what purpose? Ah! One day after another," he pleasantly exclaimed, as he saw the artist awaiting him. "Peu apeu l'oiseau fait son nid." He had already evolved a scheme to permanently separate Casimir Wieniawski from his own beautiful employer, who was now dashing along well on her way toward Munich. Alan Hawke was startled at the

distinguished appearance of the musician. An aristocratic pallor refined his face, he was neatly booted and gloved, the elegant lines of the Pole's supple figure were displayed in a morning frock coat, and his chapeau de soie was virginal in its gloss.

"Some of my own twenty pounds," mused Alan Hawke, as he gayly sprang out and saluted his dupe. "Ah! There you are. You look to-day the old Casimir. Let us have a few last words before the boat arrives."

Hardened as he was, Alan Hawke was surprised at the childlike lightness of the Pole's manner when they encountered the fresh young beauties who were already the cynosure of all eyes upon the morning boat. The storm of emotion had spent itself, and while Alan Hawke squired, the aggressive Miss Genie, Casimir Wieniawski was bending over the slightly dreamy and more romantic Miss Phenie! They distributed themselves in open order, as they strolled along toward the drawbridge of that most hospitable of old horrors, Chillon Castle.

It was a day of days, and the artful Hawke laughed as he smoked his cigar upon a rustic bench in the castle Garden. Miss Genie was at his side, pouting, petulant, provokingly pretty and duly agnostic as to the Polish prince.

A week later, Alan Hawke stood on the deck of the Sepoy, as that reliable vessel steamed out of Brindisi harbor for Bombay. He was watching a lace handkerchief, waved by a graceful woman, standing alone upon the pier. The adventurer drew a silver rupee from his pocket, and then gayly tossed it into the waves, crying, "Here's for luck!" as he watched the slender, distant, womanly figure move up the pier. There lay the Empress of India with steam now curling from her stacks, ready to follow on to Calcutta. "I have not broken her lines yet," murmured Major Hawke as he paced the deck, "but I have her pretty well surrounded, cunning as she is!" and so he complacently ordered his first bottle of pale ale.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE VEILED ROSEBUD OF DELHI.

The October winds were whirling the pine needles down the mountain defiles in the bracing Alpine autumn, as Alan Hawke sped on past Suez, gliding on through the stifling furnace heat of the Red Sea, past Mocha, and dashing along through the Bridge of Tears, to Aden. He left at Suez, and also at the Eastern Gibraltar of haughty Albion, the brief letters for his mysterious employer, and he mentally arranged the social gambit of his reappearance at Delhi in the nine days before the Sepoy steamed into the island-dotted bay of Bombay.

Sternly shunning, on his arrival, the local sirens, whose songs of

old fell so sweetly upon his ear, the determined Major sped away at once for Allahabad. He was on shaking social quagmires at Bombay. There were sundry little threads of the past still left hanging out in the shape of stray urban indebtedness, and he now scorned to throw away a single one of the crisp Bank of England notes showered upon him by Fortune. He was growing sadly wise. He had lately mused over the old motto, "Lucky at cards--unlucky in love!" The cool provision of the funds at Lausanne by Berthe Louison, her separate route to Delhi, her business-like coldness in their strangely frank relations, all these things proved to him that he was to be only an intelligent tool; not a trusted friend in the little drama about to open at the old capital of Oude.

Alan Hawke had already abandoned the idea of any sentimental advances upon Alixe Delavigne. "Strange, strange," he murmured; "a woman can sometimes easily be flattered into a second conjugation of the verb 'To Love,' but an internal previous evidence of man's unreliability can do that which no personal sorrow can effect. The key to this woman's behavior is in the story of her sister's shadowed life.

"The hiatus from Hugh Fraser to Pierre Troubetskoi covers the tragedy of Valerie Delavigne's life, the death blow was then struck, and the central figure is the child. So, with the strangely acquired fortune at her beck and call, Alixe Delavigne has consecrated herself to that most illogical of human careers--a woman's silent vengeance! That achieved, will the furnace fires of her stormy heart be lit by the hand of passion?"

He ruminated sagely over these matters as he sped on over the Great Indian Peninsula Railway. The western Ghats were now far behind him and their dark basalt crags. Bombay, Hyderabad, Berar, the Central Provinces, Central India, and the southern prong of Oude was reached. He was, however, no whit the wiser when he reached the Ganges and hastily sought the telegraph station at Allahabad. But he felt like a prince in the direct line of succession with his net eight hundred pounds still to the good. His first care was to telegraph to Madame Berthe Louison, to the care of Grindley, at Calcutta: "Waiting at Allahabad for your letters, and news of your safe arrival." While rushing past the Vindhya Mountains he had encountered several of his old Indian acquaintances. The mere hint of a secret governmental employ of gravity satisfied the languid curiosity of the *qui hais*. For a week he lingered in the "City of God," and daily haunted the post and telegraph offices.

He had sent on to the Delhi Club a note for the maw of the local gossips, and also had dispatched a skillfully constructed letter to the unsuspecting Hugh Johnstone. With a veiled flattery of the old civilian's wisdom and experience, he referred to his desire to consult him as to a secret journey in the direction of the Pamirs. The opportune windfall of Anstruther's *ecarte* and Berthe Louison's liberal advance enabled Major Alan Hawke to maintain a dignified and easy port as he wandered through Allahabad. Strolling by the waters of the Ganges and Jumna, he invoked anew the blessings of the goddess Fortuna, as he gazed out upon the majestic heaven descended stream. The daily tide of travel toward Delhi brought on each day some familiar faces, and yet Alan Hawke lingered gently, declining their traveling company. "Waiting orders," he said, with the sad, sweet smile of one enjoying a sinecure. His swelling outward port

thoroughly proved that the days were gone when he was to be scanned before the morning salutation. Les eaux sont basses, the impecunious Frenchman mourns, but there was a swelling tide bearing Alan Hawke onward now.

A hearty welcoming letter from the ci-devant Hugh Fraser was a good omen, for rumor of a thousand tongues had already invested the returning Major with an important secret mission. His epistolary seed planted in Delhi had brought forth fruit as rapidly as the magic of the Indian conjuror's mango-tree trick. It was already rumored even in Allahabad that "Hawke had dropped upon a decidedly good thing." The Major was busied, however, in analyzing the motives of Alixe Delavigne, in her change of name, her separate journey, her choice of the Calcutta route, and the inner nature of her projected enterprise.

"A woman in her position, easy as to fortune, will stoop to none of the arts of the blackmailer; she could choose a life of soft luxury, for she is yet in the bloom of vigorous early womanhood. To her the personality of Hugh Fraser is surely nothing. There are but two objects of attack--his proposed social elevation, the nattering title, and the peace of mind and future of the daughter, this lovely veiled Rose! Love, a natural love, even for the stranger child, would ward away the blow; but only an unslaked vengeance would point the shaft! The reproduction of her sister's face seemed to touch her to her very bosom's core. There is some fixed purpose in this cold-hearted woman's coming! Not a lingering annoyance, but some coup de main, a bolt to be launched at Hugh Johnstone alone!"

"I do not know how I can break her lines, unless she shows me some weak point," he mused. "But either her fortune or Johnstone's shall yield me a heavy passing toll. And, there is always the girl! There, I would have to meet Berthe Louison as a determined enemy!" In recognizing the fact that his employer must make the game at last, that she must lead out and so uncover herself, he saw his own masterly position between the two prospective foes.

"I can play them off the one against each other, at the right time, and, if they fight each other, with the help of Justine Delande, I may even make a strong running for the girl. I think I now see a way!" He felt that his wandering days were over. The dark days of carking cares, of harassing duns, of frequent changes of base, driven onward by the rolling ball of gossip and innuendo.

He felt strangely lifted up in the familiar scenes of his years of wanderings. For he was at home again. Alixe Delavigne, however carefully watched for her eastern adventure, was socially helpless in a land of strange alien races, of discordant Babel tongues, of shifting scenes, a land as unreal as the visions of a summer night.

But to Alan Hawke all this Indian life was now a second nature. The scenes of Bombay recalled his once ambitious youth, the days when he first delightedly gazed upon the wonders of Elephanta, and the gloomy grottoes of Salcette. From his very landing he had set himself one cardinal rule of conduct, to absolutely ignore all the lighter attractions of native and Eurasian beauty, and to let no single word fall from his lips respecting the sudden occultation of Miss Nadine Johnstone--this new planet softly swimming in the evening skies of Delhi. He felt that he was beginning a new career,

one in which neither greed nor passion must betray him. It was the "third call" of Fortune, and he had wisely decided upon a golden silence. "If I had only met the favored Justine, instead of that withered Aspasia, Euphrosyne, then, the girl's heart might have been easily made mine," was the unavailing regret of the handsome Major. "If I could have come out with them," he sighed. He well knew the softening effect upon romantic womanhood of a long sea voyage where the willing winds sway the softer emotions of the breast, and the trembling woman is defenseless against the perfidious darts of Cupid.

"My time will come," he murmured as the train rushed along through the incense breathing plantations. A richer nature than foggy England was spread out before him in treacherous Hindostan with its warring tribes, its dying creeds, its dead languages, its history sweeping far back into the mists of the unknown. For every problem of the human mind, every throe of the restless heart of man is worn old and threadbare in Hindostan, with its very dust compounded of the wind-blown ashes of dead millions upon millions. Gross vulgar Gold reigns now as King on the broad savannas where spice plantations and indigo farms vary the cotton, rice, and sugar fields. Wasted treasures of dead dynasties gleam out in the ornamentation of the temples abandoned to the prowling beast of prey. And riches and ruin meet the eye in a strange medley. Dead greatness and the prosaic present.

Modern bungalows, where the faltering conqueror watches the tax-ridden ryots dot the landscape, and an overweighted official system brings its haughty military, its self-sufficient civilians, its proud womanhood, to drain the exhausted heart of India. And the ryot groans under many taskmasters.

Lingering with a restless heart, in Allahabad, Alan Hawke roused himself as at a bugle call, when he received a telegram announcing the safe arrival of the Empress of India at Calcutta.

"La danse va commencer," he muttered, as he read the brief words of his employer: "Go on to Delhi, await me there. Telegrams to you there at private address. Leave letters." The signature "Lausanne" was a new spur to his well-considered prudence. And, so, the next day, Major Hawke sedately descended at Delhi.

There was nothing to distinguish Hawke from any other well-to-do European, as he stood gazing around the station, in his cool linens, his pith helmet and floating puggaree. The prudent air of judicious mystery lately adopted sat easily upon him as his eye roved over the familiar scenes of old with a silent gleam of recognition, he followed a confidential attendant who salaamed, murmuring "My master awaits the sahib whom he delights to love and honor."

"There is one card I must play at once," murmured Hawke, as the carriage sped along. "Mademoiselle Justine Delande must be my secret friend! I wonder if Euphrosyne really swallowed the bait! If she has fallen into the trap and written to her sister, then--all is well!"

His eyes roved over the familiar scene of the broad Chandnee Chouk, sweeping magnificently away from the Lahore gate to the superb palace. The sun beat down with its old ferocious glare on shop and

bazaar. Grave merchants lolled over their priceless treasures of gold and silver work, heaped up jewels and bullion-threaded shawls for princely wear. Under the awnings lingered the familiar polyglot groups, while beggary and opulence jostled each other on every hand.

"It's the same old road in life!" murmured Alan Hawke, "whether called Inderput, Shahjehanabad, or Delhi--the same old game goes on here forever, here by the sacred Jumna!"

He was dreaming of the artful part which he had to play in the fierce modern race for wealth. "They used to fight for it like men in the old days," he bitterly murmured. "Now, the only gold that I see before me is to be had by gentlemanly blackmail! Right here--between old Hugh Johnstone and this flinty-hearted woman avenger--lies my fortune. And I swear that nothing shall stop me! I will be the prompter of the little play now ready for a first rehearsal!" His eyes lighted up viciously as he was swept along past the great marble house, gleaming out in the shady compound, where the Rosebud of Delhi was hidden.

"Cursed old curmudgeon! To lock the girl up!" muttered the handsome young rascal. "Old Ram Lal must do a bit of spying for me!" Hawke could see on the raised plateau of marble steps all the evidences of the sumptuous luxury of the haughty Briton, "who toils not, neither does he spin." But, the dozen pointed arches on each face of the vast palace house of the budding baronet showed no sign of life. The clustered marble columns stretched out in a splendid lonely perspective, and the square inner castellated keep rose up in the glaring sun, but with closed and shaded windows. Dusky shapes flitted about, busied in the infinitesimal occupations of Indian servitors, but no graceful woman form could be seen in the witching gardens where a Rajah might have fitly held a durbar.

"I'll warrant the old hunk has Bramah locks and Chubb's burglar proofs to fence this beauty off!" growled the Major, as he sank back in the carriage. "I fancy, though, that a liberal dose of Madame Louison's gold, judiciously administered by me, in her interest, to Justine Delande, may open the way to the girl's presence! The mother's story may serve to win the girl's heart. If I can only busy old Hugh and the Madame in watching each other, then I can handle Justine."

"Yes," the satisfied schemer concluded, "the old man's game is the bauble title. Berthe Louison's must be some studied revenge. She is above all blackmail. I know already half the story of this clouded past. Madame Alixe Delavigne must yield up the other half, bit by bit. By the time she arrives, my spies will have posted me. I will have opened my parallels on the Swiss dragon who guards the lovely Nadine. Now to make my first play upon the old nabob."

Major Alan Hawke had studied skillfully out his gambit for an attack upon Hugh Johnstone's vanity. When he descended at the hospitable doors of his secret ally, Ram Lal Singh, he plunged into the seclusion of a luxurious easy toilet making. A dozen letters glanced over, a comforting hookah, and Alan Hawke had easily "sized up" the situation. For Ram Lal's first skeleton report had clearly proved to him that the coast was clear. "Thank Heavens there are as yet no rivals," Hawke murmured. "Neither confidential friend of the old



boy, no dashing Ruy Gomez as yet in the way." Hawke viewed himself complacently in the mirror. He was severely just to himself, and he well knew all his own good points. "Pshaw!" he murmured, "any man not one-eyed can easily play the Prince Charming to a hooded lady all forlorn, a mere child, a tyro in life's soft battles of the heart. I must impress this pompous old fool that I know all the intrigues of his proposed elevation. He will unbosom, and both trust and fear me. These pampered civilians are as haughty in their way as the military and be damned to them," mused Hawke, cheerfully humming his battle song, those words of a vitriolic wit:

"General Sir Arthur Victorious Jones, Great is vermillion splashed with gold."

"This old crab has quietly stolen himself rich, and now forsooth would tack on a Sir Hugh before his name. Ah! The jewels! I must delicately hint to him that I am in the inner circle of the cognoscenti."

And then Alan Hawke cheerfully joined his obese and crafty friend and host, Ram Lal Singh. For an hour the soft, oily voice of the old jewel merchant flowed on in a purring monologue. The ease and mastery of the Conqueror's language showed that the usurer had well studied the masters of Delhi. Sixty years had given Ram Lal added cunning. A crafty conspirator of the old days when the mystic "chupatties" were sent out on their dark errand, the sly jewel merchant had survived the bloody wreck of the throne of Oude, and from the place of attendant to one of the slaughtered princes, dropped down softly into the trade of money lender, secret agent, and broker of the unlawful in many varied ways.

It was Ram Lal's easy task to purvey luxuries to the imperious Briton, to hold the extravagant underlings in his usurious clutches, to be at peace with Hindu, Moslem, Sikh, Pathan, Ghoorka, Persian, and Armenian, and to blur his easy-going Mohammedanism in a generous participation in all sins of omission and commission. A many-sided man!

Alan Hawke heaved a sigh of easy contentment when he had brought the chronicle scandahuse of Delhi down to the day and hour.

"You say that she is beautiful, this girl?"

"As the stars on the sea!" nodded Ram Lal.

"And the Swiss woman?"

"Never leaves her for a minute. They see no one, for all men say the old Commissioner will take her home, to Court when he is gazetted!"

"None of the great people go there?" keenly queried Hawke.

"Not even the fine ladies," laughed Ram Lal. "The old fellow may have his own memories of the past. He trusts no one. The girl is only a bulbul in a golden cage and with no one to sing to." Hawke cut short Ram Lal's flowery figures.

"Does the Swiss woman trade with you?" he demanded.

"Yes, she buys a few simple things--my peddlers take the Veiled Rose many rich things. The old Sahib is very generous to the child. And the dragon loves trinkets, too!" Then Alan Hawke's eyes gleamed.

"She knows your shop here?"

"Perfectly," replied Ram Lal, "and comes alone--on the master's business. You know I had many dealings with Sahib Hugh Fraser in the old days," mused the jeweler. "He always admits my men. I have valued gems for him for twenty years."

"Good!" cried the happy Major. "I want to send a man now to her with a note. I am going to put up at the United Service Club, but I must see this woman first. I don't like to send a letter, though. If I had any one to trust--"

The merchant promptly said: "I will go myself! They are always in the garden in the afternoon. I can easily see her alone."

"First rate! Then I will give you a message," answered Hawke. "I must see her to-morrow early, for old Hugh will surely ask me to tiffin. And, Ram, you must at once set your best man on to watch all that goes on there. I have a good fat plum for you now--to set up a neat little house here for a friend of mine who is coming, and you shall do the whole thing!" The merchant's dark eyes glistened. "A new officer of rank?" he queried.

"It's a lady--a friend of mine--rich, too, and she wants to live on the quiet! She will stay here for some time!" The oily listener had learned a vast prudence in the days when he trod the halls of the last King of Delhi, so he held his peace and wondered at the suddenly enhanced fortunes of that star of graceful wanderers, Allan Hawke!

"I'll go over to the club now and get a room! Send all my things over!" said the Major. "I wish to let Hugh know that I am here. I will give you the directions about the house to-morrow. Make no mistake with this message now!" Whereat Alan Hawke repeated a few words which would awake the slumbering curiosity in the woman-heart of the lonely Justine Delande!

"Now, I will return and await your success," concluded Hawke as he read over a dozen times Madame Berthe Louison's long dispatch, ordering him to prepare her pied de terre in Delhi. "Gad! Milady means to do the thing in style," he murmured. "She is a deep one, and she must have a pot of money!" He lit a cheroot and sauntered away to show up officially at the club. Major Hawke soon became aware that nothing succeeds like success. Not only did all the flaneurs of the Chandnee Chouk seize upon him, but, from passing carriages, bright, roguish eyes merrily challenged him as the hot-hearted English Mem-Sahibs whirled by.

Rumor had magnified the importance of Major Alan Hawke's secret service appointment, and the wanderer was astounded when the highest official of the Delhi College gravely saluted him.

"By Gad! I believe that I am really becoming respectable!" laughed the delighted major. His uncertain past seemed to be fast fading away in the glow of the skillfully hinted official promotion. "I

wonder now if old Ram Lal has a hold on my canny friend, Hugh Fraser Johnstone--Sir Hugh to be! Perhaps they are like all the rest of us--rascals of the same grade, but only in different ways. The old jewel matters! I must look to this and watch Ram Lal!" The returned Anglo-Indian carelessly nodded to the group of men gathered in the club's lounging-room as he entered. Designedly, he loudly demanded to know if his traps had arrived. "Left all my odds and ends in store," he murmured to a friend, as he called for a brandy pawnee. "Beastly bore! Must wait orders here for some time!"

Skilled at tossing the ball of conversation to and fro, Major Alan Hawke, while at luncheon, artfully planted seeds here and there, to be neatly dished up later for that incipient baronet, Hugh Johnstone. And yet a graceful shade of dignified reserve lent color to his rumored advancement, and the schemer leaned over the writing table with quite a foreign-office air as he indited his diplomatic note of arrival to his destined prey.

With a grave air he selected his rooms and accommodations to suit his swelling port, and even the club stewards nodded in recognition of the tidal wave of Alan Hawke's mended fortunes.

With due official gravity the man "who had dropped into a good thing," disappeared, to allow the gilded youth of Delhi to carry the gossip to mess and bungalow. It was a welcome morsel to these merry crows!

It was late when the handsome Major returned to find a small pyramid of notes on his table and many letters in his box. He was in the highest good humor, for the wary Ram Lal had most diplomatically acquitted his task of opening a secret communication.

"Just as I thought," laughed the Major, as he sipped his pale ale in Ram Lal's spacious room of pleasaunce. "They all protest, woman-like, but they all come!"

The watchful Swiss exile's heart fluttered tenderly in the far-off Lotos land at the arrival of a secret friend of her sage sister. She longed for the morning to meet her new friend. Alan Hawke's irresistible attractions had pointed the praises which flowed smoothly over the double crossed letter which had preceded him! The oily Ram Lal, a veteran observer of many an intrigue, scented a budding rose of romance in the Major's adroit coup, and the arrival of the only lady whom Alan Hawke had ever socially fathered in Delhi.

"In three days I will be all ready! So you can telegraph to-night," reported the merchant, when the Major carefully went over all the details of the proposed temporary establishment of the disguised Alixe Delaviarne.

"Very good!" approvingly answered the dignified confidant and patron. "See here, Ram Lal! You have only to serve me well in these little private matters, and you shall handle all the coming Mem-Sahib's money business here! She wants to be quiet. I am to direct all her private matters! Not a word, however, to old Hugh!" The two men separated, Hawke with the knowledge that one of Ram's men had already glided into the swarming household entourage of Hugh Johnstone's stately home, and the spy was on every movement of the strange

interior, which defied the Delhi beaux.

"Not a bad day's work," mused Hawke, as he dined in solitary state. The hospitable bidding of the wealthiest civilian of Delhi to tiffin on the morrow brought him in touch with Alixe Delavigne's proposed victim once more. The delighted rascal mused: "I will surely have letters from her to-morrow, possibly even a telegram of her arrival. When the silly Swiss woman is the partner of an innocent secret, she is mine to control! Then the chase for a few lacs of rupees begins!"

Major Hawke was somewhat startled at the little avalanche of welcoming cards and notes. "Bravo! this will throw old Hugh off the track a bit also. The simple duty of piquing local curiosity shall open all hearts, hearths, and homes to me!" And then, Alan Hawke joyously realized how easily the light-headed world can be fooled to the top of its bent by the hollow trick of a bit of mystery play.

"This falls out rightly," he mused. "I will take up all the threads of my old society life and Madame Berthe Louison may deign to confide a bit in me the first half of the story forced from her, then I will guess out all the missing links of the chain. Once domiciled here, she is helpless in my hands, for I can either gain her inner secrets, or boldly checkmate her. And the veiled Rose of Delhi?"

Alan Hawke dreamed not of the sorrows of the restless heart beating in that virginal bosom. He paced the veranda of the Club gravely preoccupied till the midnight hour. Long before that, Justine Delande had sought her rooms in a feeble flutter of excitement over the harmless assignation of the morrow. There was a stern old man pacing his splendid hall alone, with an unhappy heart, that night, for Hugh Johnstone saw again in the sweet uplifted eyes of his beautiful child the old unanswered question!

He stood long gazing out upon the unpitying stars, while above him, lonely and lovely, Nadine recked not the queenly splendor of her magnificent apartment. Glittering wealth, splendid train of servants, the golden future stretching out before her, all this she noted not, for, even in the gray, colorless life of the pension school at Geneva, soft-eyed Hope whispered to her of a gentle and gracious mother! Loved--gone before, but not lost--and, here in the land of gaudy Asiatic splendors, a strange land of wonderment and fairy riches, she sobbed alone in her heart anguish:

"He will not speak! He tells me nothing! A marble palace this, but never a home!" The timid girl had seen no beloved woman's face upon the fretwork of the walls of this Aladdin's castle. And, in her own frightened heart, she remembered the ashen pallor of her father's face when she had faltered out the burning question of her yearning heart--the question of long years! The past was still a blank to her, while on this same night, crafty Alan Hawke in Delhi, and, in far Calcutta, a woman, pacing her boudoir in sad unrest, were both busied with the story of the vanished mother whom the Rose of Delhi had never seen!

Alixé Delavigne, lonely and resolute, was thinking of her departure on the morrow, to face the man who had locked his dead past in

his own marble heart, in his grand marble palace. Her busy days at Calcutta had astounded the senior manager of Grindlay & Co. The old banker marveled at the strange commissions and imperative orders of his beautiful business client, but many years had taught him much of the incomprehensibility of womanhood! Whereupon he marveled in silence, and bowing with his hand upon his heart, assured the lady of his absolute discretion, and the unbroken honor of the house. "Some very queer little life histories go on out here in India!" mused the old banker, as he handed the lady her special letter to the Delhi agents of the great house which he directed. "As beautiful as a statue, as firm as a flint! Where have I seen a face like hers?" mused the old man, as he sought his rest.

The "beautiful statue" was steadfastly gazing at the picture of the young Rose of Delhi, in her lonely boudoir. "She shall learn to love her! To love her--through me! And this man of iron shall yield! He shall hear my prayer! For, if he does not, then, he shall be struck to the heart--blow for blow! And Fate shall pass her over! I swear it by that lonely grave in far away Jitomir!" There were kisses rained upon the pictured face smiling up at her, the face which had called back to her the dead past, and then the "beautiful statue" tore aside her gown. She gazed upon a folded paper which had long lain upon her throbbing heart. "This shall speak for me--at the last! His pride shall bend! He shall not break the child's heart! For the mother's sake, I swear it! She shall love and be loved!" and as she spoke, in far away Delhi sweet Nadine stirred in her sleep, and smiled, with opening arms, for the phantom mother she fondly sought seemed to clasp her now to a loving breast!

In the Delhi Club there was high wassail below him, while Major Alan Hawke restlessly paced his spacious rooms above, watching the lonely white moon sail through the clearest skies on earth. The quid mines had all observed the patiently haughty air of the returned Major, and even the chattering club stewards marveled at the sudden efflorescence of Hawke Sahib's fortunes.

"Devilish neat-handed fellow, Hawke," growled old Major Bingo Morris, over his whist cards. "Close-mouthed fellow! Always wonder why he left the service! Neat rider! Good hand with gun and spear! He ought to be in our Staff Corps! He knows every inch of the northern frontier!" The old Major glared around, inviting further comment.

"Fellow in Bombay tells me he went a cropper about some woman or other, ten years ago," lisped a rosy young lieutenant who was spreading the golden revenues of a home brewery over the pitfall-dotted path of a rich Indian sub.

"Right you are!" sententiously remarked Verner of the Horse Artillery. "He went a stunning pace for a while, and at last had to get out. Big flirtation--wife of commanding officer! Hawke acted very nicely. Said nothing--sacrificed himself. That's why the women all like him. Very safe man. But, he's a shy bird now." They dissected his past, guessed at his present, but could not read his future!

And then and there, the man who knew it all, told of the mysterious governmental quest confided to Major Alan Hawke. "You see, he has a sort of roving commission in mufti, to counteract the ceaseless undermining of the Russian agents in Persia, Afghanistan and in

the Pamirs. We always bear the service brand too openly. It gives away our own military agents. Now, Hawke's a fellow like Alikhanoff, that smart Russian duffer! He can do the Persian, Afghan, or Thibetan to perfection! He has been on to London. Some morning he will clear out. You'll hear of him next at Kashgar, or in Bhootan, or perhaps he will work down into China and report to the Minister there. He is a Secret Intelligence Department of One, that's all!"

"That's all very irregular for Her Majesty's Service," growled an envious agnostic.

"Bah! Secret Service has no rules, you know," said the man who knew it all, thrusting his lips deeply into a brandy pawnee.

And so it was noted that Alan Hawke was a devilish pleasant fellow, a rising man, and one who had certainly dropped into an extremely good thing. The tide of Fortune was setting directly in favor of the man who, pacing the floor upstairs, unavailingly tormented himself with the subject of the missing jewels.

"If I could only get a hold on Hugh Johnstone!" mused the adventurer. "Berthe Louison knows nothing of these old matters. She only seeks to approach the child. And she will be here to watch me in a day or so. Ram Lal, the old scoundrel! Does he know? If he did, he would bleed the would-be Baronet on his own account. But he may not know of the golden opportunity, and the old wretch always has many irons himself in the fire. Hugh Fraser was a canny Scot in his youth. Sir Hugh Johnstone is a horse of another color. If old Johnstone has the jewels, why does he not yield them up? Perhaps he wants the Baronetcy first, and then his memory may be strangely refreshed."

As the wanderer strode up and down the room like a restless wolf, he returned in his memories to the strange intimacy of Hugh Fraser and Ram Lal. "I have it!" he cried. "I will kill two birds with one stone. My pretty 'employer' shall furnish the golden means to loosen old Ram Lal's tongue. This Swiss woman is fond of gewgaws, he tells me. I will let Ram Lal 'squeeze' the Madame's household accounts to his heart's content. If the Swiss woman is susceptible, she can be delicately bribed with jewels paid for by my haughty employer's money, and my feeding this 'bucksheesh' out to Ram Lal liberally may bring him to talk of the old days. I must give Hugh Johnstone the idea that I am inside the official secrets as to the affair of the Baronetcy. Fear will make him bend, if he is guilty, and I will alarm Ram Lal at the right time. If they have any old bond of union, the ex-Commissioner may turn to me for help, and all this will bring me nearer to the still heart-whole woman who is hidden in that marble prison. I will make my strongest running on the Swiss woman. Once the bond of friendly secrecy established between us, she can be fed, bit by bit, for then she dare not break away."

Ram Lal Singh was the last watcher in Delhi who coveted a glimpse that night into the dim future. The old schemer sat alone in his favorite den in rear of the shop. His round, black eyes surveyed complacently his faithful domestics, sleeping on the floor at the threshold of the doors of the four rooms opening into the central hall of his shop. A single clap of his hands, and these faithful retainers were ready to rise, tulwar in hand, and cut down any intruder.

The old jewel merchant's eye roved over the medley of priceless bric-a-brac in the main hall. The spoils of temple and olden palace cast grotesque, soft, dark shadows on the floor, under the glimmer of the swinging cresset lamp filled with perfumed nut oil. Seated cross-legged, and nursing the mouth-piece of his narghileh, Ram Lal pondered long over the sudden appearance of the rehabilitated Major Hawke, and the coming of the rich Mem-Sahib who was to be a hidden bird in the luxurious nest already awaiting its inmate.

Ram Lal was vaguely uneasy, as he glanced at the pretty pavilion in his own compound, where languid loveliness awaited his approach. He resigned himself with a sigh to his lonely schemes. He rose and with his own hand, poured out a draught of the forbidden strong waters of the Feringhee.

Dropping down upon the cushions, he reviewed the whole day's doings. "It is not for him, for Hawke Sahib, this bungalow of delight is made ready! And the old Sahib is to know nothing. Can it be a trap for him? I am to watch the old man for Hawke Sahib. This woman who comes. They say here he will go soon away, over the sea to the court of the Kaisar-I-Hind. He is rich, why does he linger? And perhaps not return.

"All these long years of my watch thrown away! For, never a single one of the sacred jewels has he shown me! They have never seen the light since the awful day in Humayoon's Tomb. Has he the jewels? Does he hide them? Has he buried them? Has he sent them away? If he has them, then he dies the death of a dog. The jewels of a king to be the spoil of a low tax-gatherer! The King of Kings.

"But why does he not go? I have watched him for years.

"There is some reason! Hawke Sahib shall tell me all! He must tell! He needs my help!" The old man's slumbers were haunted with the olden memories of a day of doom, the day when the bodies of the sacred Princes of Oude lay naked in the glaring sun as they were despoiled after Hodson's pistol had done its bloody work. "They may have taken them all from him, these English are greedy spoilers," muttered the crafty old man, as his head fell upon the silken cushions with a curse. He was a rebel still, as rank as Tantia Topee.

In the splendid marble palace of Hugh Johnstone, the startled Justine Delande was awake long before the dawn, thinking only of the meeting of the morning, her bosom heaving with its first questionable secret, but Major Alan Hawke smiled as he leisurely breakfasted later, reading a telegram just received. "On my way. Will come to private address. Send servants to Allahabad to join me. Silence and discretion.--Lausanne."

## CHAPTER V.

### A DIPLOMATIC TIFFIN.

Major Alan Hawke had designedly breakfasted in the stately seclusion of his rooms, and as he came gravely sauntering into the Club ordinary, was at once beset by a friendly chorus, as he carelessly glanced over the morning letters which attested his progress toward the social zenith. He, however, gazed impatiently at the club-house door, where a neat pair of ponies awaited him, with servants deftly purveyed by the subtle Ram Lal. His two body servants were also afrites of the same sly Aladdin. His swelling port duly impressed his old friends.

The man "who had dropped into a good thing" gently put aside sundry hospitable proffers, politely laughed away several tempting bargains as to horses, carriages, furnished bungalows, and offers of racing engagements, hunting bouts, and "private" dinners. "Waiting orders, d'ye see!" he gently murmured. "Not worth while to set up anything!" And then, with the air of a martyr, he disappeared, the ponies springing briskly away, leaving all baffled conjecture behind. The curious men who were left discussing a flying rumor that Major Hawke was authorized to raise a Regiment of Irregular Horse for a special expeditionary secret purpose, wrangled with those who maintained that a brilliant local civil-service vacancy would be theatrically filled by the man who now bore a brow of mystery. The advent of this prosperous Hawke had made the great social deeps of Delhi to boil like a pot. His mission was one of those things no fellow could find out.

Laughing in his sleeve, the object of all this sudden curiosity made a number of detours, and adroitly followed a native servant down an obscure rear street, after dismissing his pony carriage. The equipage was busied during the earlier hours of the day in leaving the visiting cards of the returned soldier of fortune in certain quarters well calculated to attract social notice.

Threading the spacious gardens in rear of Ram Lal's establishment, the artful Major entered the jewel merchant's abode without the notice of the morning gossips of the Chandnee Chouk. "All right, now," he laughed, as he bade the sly merchant set a private guard to prevent all intrusion upon their privacy. "I think that I have thrown these fellows off the track very neatly!" he laughed. "No one knows of your rear entrances at the club, I am sure!" It suited the luxurious old jewel merchant to hide the opulence of his secret life, and to veil the graceful lapses of his private code from the sober austerities of a dignified Mohammedanism.

"Look alive now, Ram Lal!" said Hawke, briskly, as he handed his confederate the telegram from Berthe Louison. "You see that the lady will arrive here tomorrow night! Some one must go down to Allahabad for her! Are you all ready for her coming?"

"Perfectly!" smiled Ram Lal. "The Mem-Sahib could give a dinner of twenty covers in an hour after her arrival! You know that the bungalow was fitted up for--" he bent his head and whispered to Major Hawke, who laughed intelligently and viciously.

"All right, then! Here is the address in Allahabad, where the lady



is to wait for her conductors. She seems not to wish me to come down. I will be at the bungalow, then, on your arrival! I will give you a letter for her," said Hawke. Ram Lal's eyes gleamed in anticipation of the fat pickings of the Mem-Sahib. He pondered a moment over the case.

"Then, I will go down myself," complacently said Ram Lal, with an eye to future business. "You can tell her to trust to me in all things. She shall travel like a queen!"

"That is better, and so I will telegraph to her, at Allahabad, this afternoon, that I have sent you to meet her! Have a covered carriage awaiting her here, and no one must be allowed to follow her to her hidden nest. It is the making of your fortune with her!" cried Hawke, as he lit a cheroot.

"Trust to me, Sahib!" answered the wily jewel merchant, relapsing into an expectant silence. He already connected the arrival of the beautiful foreigner with the destiny of the opulent man whom he had revengefully watched for twenty years. Hugh Fraser Johnstone had heaped up a fortune, but it was not yet successfully deported to England.

"And the Swiss woman, when may I see her; this morning?" demanded the adventurer, as he dropped into a cool, Japanese chair.

"My man will bring you the news of her coming!" answered the oily old miscreant. "I told him to watch her, and run on to warn me!" Ram Lal was a wily old Figaro of much experience.

"Good! Then go outside and wait for her," coolly commanded the young man. "When she comes, you can come in and warn me, and I will be ready." Ram Lal obediently left Hawke without a questioning word, and the busy brain of the adventurer was soon occupied with weaving the meshes for the bird nearing the snare. "This woman's help is absolutely necessary to me now!" he thought, as he contemplated his own handsome person in a mirror. "If she can only hold her tongue and keep a secret, she may be the foundation of my fortunes. I think that I can make it worth her while, but she must never fall under the influence of this she-devil in petticoats, who comes to-morrow night! And yet, the Louison knows she is here! A friendship between them must be prevented!" He closed his eyes dreamily, and studied the problem of the future attentively, revolving every point of womanly weakness which he had observed in his past experience.

He had finally hit upon the right thing. It came to him just as Ram Lal entered, with his finger on his lip. "She is in there, waiting for you, and she came alone!" said the crafty merchant. "I can perhaps frighten her with the idea that Madame Louison wishes to supplant her as lady bear leader. The future pickings of this young heiress would be then lost to her! Yes! A woman's natural jealousy will do the trick!" so sagely mused the young man as he walked out into the hall, where Ram Lal's treasures were heaped up on every side. There was no one visible in the shop, but Ram Lal silently pointed with a brown finger, gleaming with whitest gems, to a closed door. It was the entrance to the room specially devoted to the superb collection of arms, the regained loot of Delhi, slyly collected in the days of the mad sacking by the revengeful English soldiery. A bottle of rum then bought a princely token.

It had been with a guilty, beating heart that Justine Delande abandoned her fair, young charge to the morning ministrations of a bevy of dark-skinned servants. However, the sturdy Genevese waiting-maid who had accompanied them to India was at hand, when the spinster incoherently murmured her all too voluble excuses for an early morning visit to the European shops on the Chandnee Chouk, and then fled away as if fearful of her own shadow. She was duly thankful that no one had observed her entrance to the jewel shop, and the refuge of the room, pointed out by the amiable Ram Lal, at once reassured her. Justine was accorded a brief breathing spell by the fates as the Major settled his plans.

It did not seem so very hard, this first fall from maidenly grace, when Major Alan Hawke, entering the little armory chamber, politely led the startled woman to a seat, with a graceful self-introduction.

"I should have recognized you any where, Mademoiselle Justine," deftly remarked the Major, "by your resemblance to your most charming sister. You have, I hope, received some private letters from her, with regard to my visit?" The Swiss gouvernante faltered forth her affirmative answer, while secretly approving the enthusiastic judgment of her distant sister upon this most admirable Crichton of English Majors. "Then," said Hawke, alluringly, "we must be very good friends, you and I, for we are alone together, among strangers, in this far-away land!" Then he calmly dropped into an easy discourse, in which Geneva and Sister Euphrosyne punctuated the graceful flow of his friendly chat. There was nothing very sinful in the debut of this little intrigue.

"Let us always speak French!" said Alan Hawke, with a quiet, warning glance at the closed door. "These same soft-eyed Hindostanees are the very subtlest serpents of the earth. The only way to do, is never to trust any of them!" The Major was busied in carefully taking a mental measurement of Mademoiselle Justine, who, still well on the sunny side of forty, was really a very comely replica of her severer intellectual sister. Justine Delande still lingered in that temperate zone of life where a fair fighting chance of matrimony was still hers. "If a ray of sunshine ever steals into the flinty bosom of a Swiss woman, there maybe a gleam or two still left here," mused the Major, most adroitly avoiding all reference to Justine's rosebud charge, and only essaying to place her entirely at her ease.

But, in proportion as he gracefully labored, the frightened governess began to realize the danger of her situation.

"I hope that no one will observe us," she said, speaking rapidly and under her breath. "Mr. Johnstone is so eccentric, so haughty, and so very peculiar!" Her distress was evident, and the gallant Major at once hastened to allay her fears.

"I have already thought of that. My old friend, Ram Lal, has a lovely garden in rear of his house and there we will be entirely unobserved. For I have so much that I would say to you." It was with a sigh of relief that the frightened woman hastily passed through Ram Lal's spacious snugery in rear of his jewel mart and was soon ensconced in a little pagoda, where Major Hawke seated himself at her side and skillfully took up his soft refrains.

In half an hour they were thoroughly en ban rapport, for the graceful Major Hawke adroitly conversed with his laughing eyes frankly beaming upon the lonely woman. He had drawn a long breath of relief when he ran over the letter which the delighted Justine frankly submitted to him for his inspection. The fair Euphrosyne's secret advices justified his warmest anticipations. He had conquered her heart.

"I will not delay you longer this morning," he said at last, with an artful mock confidence. "I am infinitely grateful to you for so kindly coming to meet me here. And it is only due to you to tell you why I begged you to come here to-day. The nature of my important official duties is such that I am not permitted to exhibit my real character to any one here as yet. I am charged with some very delicate public duties which may force me to linger here for some time, or perhaps disappear without notice, only to return in the same mysterious manner. But in me you have a staunch secret friend always. I have already written to your charming sister, and I expect to receive from her letters which will be followed by letters to you from her. And I shall write to-day and tell her of your goodness to me." Miss Justine Delande's eyes were downcast. Her agitated bosom was throbbing with an unaccustomed fire, and the desire to be safely sheltered once more in Hugh Johnstone's marble palace was now strong upon her.

Hawke paused, still keeping his pleading eyes fixed upon the fluttering-hearted woman's face. "Miss Nadine sees absolutely no one!" murmured the governess, "and, of course, I never leave her. It is a very exacting and laborious position, this charge which I now fill, and of course the life is a very lonely one, though Nadine is an angel!" enthusiastically cried Miss Justine.

"And so," earnestly said Major Alan Hawke, "I am absolutely prevented from seeing you, unless you will trust yourself to me, and come here again." The frightened woman cast a glance at the unfamiliar loveliness of the secluded garden, with the hidden kiosques, sacred to Ram Lal's furtive amours.

"I dare not!" she said, with trembling lips. "I would like to come, but--"

"Listen!" said Alan Hawke, softly taking her unresisting hand, "I will confide in you. I must, even to-day, go to Hugh Johnstone's house. He has bidden me to a private interview. And he gives a tiffin in my honor. I have known him in past years. He does not as yet know of my official position. My duties are secret. My very honor forbids me to divulge it. I dare not openly acknowledge an acquaintance with you, with your sister. It rests with you that we meet again, for my sake, for your own sake, for your sister's sake. I cannot lose you for a mere quibble."

There was a genuine alarm in Justine Delande's voice as she started up, crying out, "You come to us to-day?"

"Precisely!" gravely said Major Hawke, as he tried a long shot. "Both Captain Anstruther and myself have the gravest secret duties in connection with Hugh Johnstone's future. He soon may be Sir Hugh, you know. And I dare not divulge to him my own delicate functions

in this matter. Now you understand me at last," said Hawke, warmly pressing Justine Delande's hand. "I feel that I must not lose you, because I have my duty to perform, and I trust my honor to you. All will be well if you will only favor me with your womanly kindness, and trust to me as frankly as I to you. We must meet to-day at Hugh Johnstone's as absolute strangers. We must also remain strangers to all appearances for a time," he said at last. The Swiss spinster gazed up at him piteously.

"May I not even tell Nadine?" she faltered.

"Ah!" carelessly said Alan Hawke, "she is a mere child; I shall probably never see her. It is you alone that I would trust. Will you not come here again? I dare not, for your own sake, detain you longer now." The timid woman glanced hurriedly at her watch.

"I have been here already too long, and I must go! And there is so much I would say to you!" She was almost handsome in her blushing confusion.

"Then you will come again, here? Ram Lal is my old factotum!" the young Major pleaded.

"I will come!" the half-subjugated woman whispered under her breath. "But when?" Her eyes were meekly downcast and her faltering voice trembled.

"The day after to-morrow, at the same time," said Alan Hawke, his heart leaping up in a secret victory, "but no living soul must ever know of it. I will be here in the pagoda, waiting for you. Ram Lal will wait for you himself and admit you. Do you promise?" he said, with a glance which set her pallid cheeks aflame.

"I promise! I promise! Let me go, now!" gasped the excited woman. With stately courtesy, the Major then led her back into the jewel merchant's luxurious lounging-room.

"Wait here for a single moment!" he whispered as he quickly poured out a glass of cordial. And, then, returning in a few moments, he clasped upon the woman's wrist a bracelet of old Indian gold, whose flexible links glittered with the fire of a row of old Indian mine stones. Justine Delande sat mute, as if dreaming.

"Our little secret is now all our own!" he pleasantly murmured. "Remember! Should we meet at the marble house, you do not know me! Can you trust yourself? You must--for my sake! This will help you to remember our first meeting."

"You may depend upon me, whenever you may wish to call upon me," she whispered. "I will come!" and then she fled away, with soft, gliding steps, to regain the safety of her own room before the trying hour of tiffin.

Major Alan Hawke closed the door, and laughed softly as he threw himself into a chair. "They are all the same!" he mused. "Not a bad morning's work! For she will never tell our little secret! And she will surely come again! She may be my salvation here! Madame Louison, I now debit you just thirty pounds!" laughed Major Alan Hawke, as he deftly blew a kiss in the direction of Allahabad. "You

shall pay for this bracelet, and much more! You shall pay for all! And I'll set this soft-hearted Swiss woman on to watch you, and you shall pay her well, too! Now, for my old friend, Hugh Johnstone!" He waited in a most happy frame of mind till his carriage bore him to the club for an elaborate Anglo-Indian toilet.

There was a crowd of eager gossips secretly tracking him who watched him roll away in state to the marble house.

"By Jove! I believe that he is the coming man!" said old Captain Verner. "I wonder if this handsome young beggar is really going in for the Veiled Rose of Delhi. Just his damned luck!" And then the loungers left the club window and drank deeply confusion to the would-be wooer's stratagems.

All unconscious of their busy curiosity, the gallant Major Alan Hawke calmly descended at the marble house, with a secret oath now registered to ignore the very existence of Nadine Johnstone, "The old man is always harping on his daughter," he mused. "I must throw this old beggar off his guard thoroughly to-day, once and for all. He must never think that I, too, am 'harping on his daughter.'

"But only let me get to the core of this old secret of the jewels, and I will find a way to frighten the baronet-to-be until he opens his miserly old heart." And so the wary guest sought his old friend's presence. When Major Alan Hawke's neat trap drew up before the marble house there was an officious crowd of Hindu underlings in waiting to welcome the expected guest.

Casting his eyes around the wide hall gleaming with its superb trophies of priceless arms, with a quick glance at the crowd of sable retainers, Major Hawke realized in all the barren splendors of the first story the absence of any womanly hand. As he followed the obsequious house butler into a vast reception room, he murmured:

"A diplomatic tiffin, I will warrant! The old fox is sly." He wandered idly about the Commissioner's sanctum, admiring the precious loot of years, displayed with an artfully artless confusion. On the walls, a series of beautiful Highland scenes recalled the Land o' Lakes. Pausing before a sketch of a stern old Scottish keep of the moyen age, Major Alan Hawke softly sneered: "Oatmeal Castle! The family stronghold of the old line of the Sandy Johnstone's, nee Fraser." And, picking up the last number of the Anglo-Indian Times, he then affected a composure which he was far from feeling.

"Damn this sly Scotsman! Why does he not show up?" was the chafing soliloquy of the Major, now anxious to seal his re-entree into Delhi society with the open friendship of the most powerful European civilian within the battered walls of the wicked city. He needed all his nerve now, for Hugh Fraser Johnstone was a past master of the arts of dissimulation.

In fact, the mauvais quart d'heure was really due to the innate womanly weakness of Mademoiselle Justine Delande. This guileless Swiss maiden had been carried off her feet by the romantic episode of the morning. Her cool palm still tingled with the meaning pressure of the handsome Major's hand! She had hastened away to her own apartment, as a wounded tigress seeks its cave for a last stand! The concealment of the diamond bracelet was a matter of necessity,

and, with a beating heart, she buried it deep under the poor harvest of paltry Delhi trinkets which she had already gathered, with a mere magpie acquisitiveness.

Alan Hawke had builded better than he knew, when he selected this same bauble. He had been guided by a chance remark of Ram Lal's. "Give her that," said the crafty old jeweler. "She has priced it a dozen times since her first coming here." It was the Ultima Thule of personal decoration to her. The Swiss governess reserved the secret delight of donning the glittering ornament until she was positive that no tell-tale spy had observed her innocent assignation with her sister's chivalric friend. "He must be rich and powerful," she murmured as she fled from her room to play the safety game of being found with the heiress when her Prince Charming should arrive. Miss Nadine Johnstone failed not to observe the unusual color mantling her sedate friend's cheeks.

"You look as if you had received some good news. Is the mail in?" queried Miss Johnstone.

"Not yet. I hastened back, for I forgot to take my watch and was belated. I fear I am late, even now, for tiffin," demurely replied the Swiss maiden, dropping for the first time in her life into the baleful arts of the other daughters of Eve. She had broken the ice of propriety in which her past life had been congealed and an insidious pleasure now thrilled her quickened veins, as she felt herself possessed of a secret, one linking her to an attractive member of the dangerous sex, and a hero of romance, a very Don Juan in seductive softness. Her knees trembled at a sudden summons to report to the Master of the marble house, forthwith.

Her bosom heaved with a vague alarm as she timidly descended the grand stair, and was conducted to the private snugery of the Commissioner adjoining his own apartments. "Does he know aught of the meeting?" she questioned herself, in the throes of a sudden fright. She was somewhat reassured as she observed the carriage drawn up in the compound and, by hazard, caught a glance of Alan Hawke's graceful martial figure, as he stood regarding her intently from the safe shelter of the darkened reception-room. Her heart bounded with delight as her Prince Charming smilingly placed his finger on his lip.

A sense of manly protection, never felt before, gave her the strength of ten as she then glided along boldly to face her gray-headed master. For now she knew that she had a champion at her side, a man professionally brave, both resolute and charming. Her promise to meet Alan Hawke again at the jeweler's now took on a roseate hue.

"I must surely keep my plighted word at all risks," she murmured to herself. For the sage reflection that she owed a sacred duty to her sister's friend, now came to comfort her, in her heart of hearts. It was almost a pious duty which lay before her now. And so she became brave in the knowledge of the innocent secret shared between herself and the handsome official visitor.

To her delight and relief she found it an easy task to face Hugh Johnstone, after that one reassuring glance. Her stern employer failed to pierce the muslin fortifications of her guilty bosom and

discern the moral turpitude lurking there. She stole a last anxious glance at her still plump wrist where the diamond bracelet had softly clasped her flesh, and then softly sighed in relief as the master calmly said:

"Miss Justine, I have a gentleman of some distinction to entertain to-day at tiffin. An official visitor. I would be thankful if you would do the honors. Will you kindly join us in the reception room in half an hour, and I will present Major Hawke, my old friend. He has just returned from England."

"And Miss Nadine?" meekly demanded the happy woman. The old Commissioner's brow darkened, as he shortly said: "My daughter will be served in her rooms, as usual on such formal occasions. These interlopers are no part of her life. We may soon leave for Europe, and she is therefore better off to remain a stranger to these merely local acquaintances. It is very unlikely that we shall ever re-visit India! Will you see her and say that I purpose driving out with her later?"

No woman in India was as happy, at that particular moment, as the Genevese, who merely bowed in silence, and glided softly away, having escaped the levin-bolt of Hugh Johnstone's wrath, ever ready, lurking under his bushy, white eyebrows. It was the work of a moment for her to fulfill her simple task as messenger, and this done, she burned to hide herself in her own coign of vantage, for certain new-born ideas of personal decoration were crystallizing in her excited brain. For the first time in her life, she would be fair to man's views; so as to justify the partner of her momentous secret in the complimentary remarks which, even now, made her ears tingle in delight.

"Do you know aught of this Major Hawke who comes to-day?" wearily, said the listless girl. "Some one of these red-faced old relics of my father's early life, I suppose!" The Rose of Delhi was gazing wistfully out upon the wilderness of beauty in the tangled gardens, sweeping far out to where the high stone wall shut off the glare and flying dust of the Chandnee Chouk.

"Certainly not, Nadine!" softly said the governess. "This is only a peopled wilderness to me!" Her heart smote her as the girl, with a sudden lonely sinking of the heart, threw her arms around the neck of her startled companion.

"I am so unhappy here--so wretched, this is but a gleaming white stone prison, Justine! I stifle in this wretched land! Why did my father bring me here to die by inches?" There was no pretense in her stormy sobs.

"We are soon going home, Darling!" cried the affrighted Swiss. "Just now your father told me that we were all to leave India forever, and at once." And so, gently soothing the unhappy girl, orphaned in her heart, Justine Delande escaped to the first essay of her life in high decorative art. "There is some strange mystery of the past in all this! He has a heart of flint, this old tyrant!" murmured Justine, as with fingers trembling in haste she completed a toilet, which later caused even old Hugh Johnstone to growl "By Gad! This Swiss woman's not half bad looking!" A last pang, caused by the keen secret sorrow of not daring to wear her diamond bracelet,

was effaced by the rising tide of indignation in Justine Delande's awakened heart. There were strange emotional currents fitfully thrilling through her usually placid veins as she stole a last glance at herself in the mirror. "A tyrant to the daughter. I warrant that in the old days he broke the mother's heart! He never mentions her! Not a picture is here--nothing--not even a memento, not a reference to the woman who gave him this lovely child! Her life, her death, even her resting place, are all wrapped in the selfish and brutal silence of a selfish tyrant! He should have been only a drill sergeant to knock about the half-crazed brutes who stagger under a soldier's pack over these burning plains!" It suddenly occurred to her that in some mysterious way Major Alan Hawke's coming would contribute to the rescue of the captive Princess.

Justine Delande really loved her beautiful charge with all the fond attachment of a mature woman for the one rose blossoming in her lonely heart. Their gray passionless lives had run on together since Nadine's childhood, as brooks quietly mingle, seeking the unknown sea! She now felt the wine of life stirring within her, and, seizing upon another justification for her dangerous secret association with Alan Hawke, she murmured: "I will tell him of all this. He has high influence with the Home Government. This Captain Anstruther on the Viceroy's staff is certainly his firm friend. We must leave here and return to dear old Switzerland. Perhaps the Major himself knows the secret of the family history!"

And there was a meaning light in her eyes as she stole back to Nadine's room when the silver gong sounded, and throwing her arms around the girl, whispered: "We are going home soon, darling! Be brave and trust to me! I will find out the story of the past and tell you all, my darling!" Justine Delande unwound the girl's arms from round her neck, while honest tears trembled in her eyes.

The low cry: "My mother! My darling mother! He never even breathes the name!" had loosened all the tide of repressed feeling long pent up in Justine Delande's heart.

"Trust to me! You shall know all, dearest! I am sure that Euphrosyne knows, and we shall see her soon!" So with an added reason for their second meeting, Miss Justine descended the grand marble stair, murmuring: "He shall tell me all he knows; he can search the past here! He can help me, and he must--for Nadine's sake!"

And as he bowed low before her in courteous acknowledgment of the master's presentation, Alan Hawke caught the lambent gleam of the newly awakened fires in Justine Delande's eyes. "She is another woman," he mused. With one silent glance of veiled recognition, Alan Hawke returned to his diplomatic fence with the wary old nabob who sat at the head of the glittering table. He was in no doubt now as to the second meeting at Ram Lal Singh's shop, for Justine Delande's eyes promised him more than even his habitual hardihood would have dared to ask. "What the devil's up now?" he mused, "Something about the girl, I warrant. I suppose that the old brute has exiled her here for safety." And then and there, Alan Hawke swore to reach the side of the Veiled Rose of Delhi, though the cold gray eyes of the host never caught him off his guard a moment in the two hours of the pompously drawn-out feast. Both the men were keenly watching each other now.



It had been no mere accidental slip of the tongue which guided Alan Hawke in his greeting of the old ex-Commissioner when Hugh Johnstone entered the reception-room, a study in gray and white, with only the three priceless pigeon-blood rubies lending a color to his snowy linen. "Upon my word, Sir Hugh, you are looking younger than I ever saw you," said the visitor gracefully advancing.

"You're a bit premature, are you not, Hawke?" dryly said the civilian, opening a silver cheroot box, once the property of a Royal Prince of Oude. Hugh Johnstone motioned his visitor to be seated, and keenly watched the younger man.

"I am on the inside of the matter," soberly said Alan Hawke. "It was an open secret when I left London, and I've heard more since. A brief delay only,--a matter of a few months--no more."

"Take a weed! They serve in half an hour!" abruptly said Hugh Johnstone, as if anxious to change the subject. The old man then strode forward and closed the door. Then, turning sharply upon his visitor, frankly demanded, "Now, tell me why you are here?"

"That depends partly upon your affairs," said Hawke, meeting his questioner's gaze unflinchingly. "I may have something to say to you about the Baronetcy, by and bye." He paused to notice the keen old Scotchman wince under the thrust, "but, in the mean time, I am merely waiting orders here, and I want you to post me about the condition of affairs up there." He vaguely indicated with his thumb the far-distant battlement of the Roof of the World. Hugh Johnstone rang a silver bell, and muttered a few words in Hindostanee to an attendant. "I must know more from Calcutta before I can explain just where I stand," said the renegade soldier, with caution.

Before the silver tray loaded with ante-prandial beverages was produced, Hugh Johnstone quietly turned to his guest. "Did you see Anstruther in London?" he demanded, with a scarcely veiled eagerness.

"We were together some days," very neatly rejoined the now confident Major. "In fact, I'm to operate partly under his personal directions. We are old friends."

"I wonder when he will return?" dreamily said Johnstone, as if the subject was growing annoying in its bold directness.

"I believe that he has a long leave--a furlough of a year," lightly answered the Major. "In fact, I am to carry on some official matters for him in his absence, but he is wary and non-committal."

"What is his English address?" abruptly said Johnstone, as they bowed formally over their glasses.

"I do not know," frankly returned Hawke. "I am to send all reports to headquarters in Calcutta."

"Are you going down there soon?" asked the old nabob, with a growing uneasiness.

"Not unless I am sent for by the Viceroy," quietly said the Major, with a listless air, gazing around admiringly on the magnificence of the apartment.

"I will give you a letter to my nephew, Douglas Fraser, when you do go," said Johnstone. "He is a fine youngster, and he will have charge of all my Indian affairs, if I go home. He is in the P. and O. office. I would like you to know him."

"I did not know that you had any family connection here," replied the Major with a start of innocent surprise.

"Only this boy," hastily replied the incipient baronet, "and my daughter. She is, however, a mere child--a mere child. I have seen the leaves of the family tree wither and drop off one by one." The host then stiffly rose, and formally said, "Let us go in!"

"You are good for a score of years yet," jovially remarked Major Hawke, as he gazed at the well-preserved outer man of his uneasy entertainer. "The harpoon is deeply fixed in the old whale," mused Hawke, as he followed Hugh Johnstone. "He begins to flounder now."

Conscious of the mental alarm which Hugh Johnstone could not altogether conceal, Major Hawke had simply bowed, in his grand manner, when the host presented his guest to Mademoiselle Delande. "I will let the old beggar lead out," mused Hawke. "This royal spread is an excuse for any amount of silence." And the Anglo-Indian renegade gazed admiringly at the thousand and one adjuncts of a blended English comfort and Indian luxury.

"Ever been in Geneva?" suddenly demanded Hugh Johnstone, with a glance at his two companions.

"He's an uneasy old devil. He is trying to trap me now," thought Hawke, who innocently replied: "Long years ago, when I was a mere lad. I'm told the town has been vastly improved by the Duke of Brunswick's legacy. I've not seen it in later years."

"Miss Delande is a Genevese," remarked the host.

"I congratulate you, Mademoiselle," politely said the Major. "It is a famous city to date from."

It was evident that the spinster was held in reverent awe of her employer, for she guarded a judicious silence, as with a formal bow she at last left the table at the graciously permitting nod of Hugh Johnstone. There was a cold and brooding restraint, which had seemed to cast a chill even over the sultry Indian midday, but Justine's smile was bright and winning as she faintly acknowledged with a blushing cheek Major Hawke's gallantry as he sprang up and opened the door for the retiring lady. "She will come, she will come," gayly throbbed the Major's happy heart.

Alan Hawke was now thoroughly on his guard. He had never lifted an eyebrow at the mention of Miss Johnstone. He had dropped Justine Delande like a plummet into the lake of forgetfulness, and watched Hugh Johnstone's listless trifling with the dainties of the superb collation. The raw-boned old Scotsman leaned heavily back in his chair.

His bony hands were thin and claw-like, his bushy white beard and eyebrows gave him a "service" aspect, while his cold blue eye

gleamed out pale and menacing as the Pole star on wintry arctic seas. His broad chest was sunken, his tall form was bent, and a visible air of dejection and unrest had replaced the sturdy vigor of his early manhood. He was sipping a glass of pale ale in silence when Hawke neatly applied the lance once more. "It must be a great change for you to leave India, Johnstone, but you need rest, and a general shaking up. You have a good deal to leave here. I suppose your nephew--"

"He's a good lad, but a stranger to me, Hawke," broke in the host. "The fact is, I am as yet undecided. I go home for my daughter's sake; it's no place for her out here," he sternly said. "You know what Indian life is?"

Hawke bowed, and mutely cried, "Peccavi." He had been a part of it. "I'm waiting for the action of the Government. This Baronetcy. I must talk with you about it. I might have had the Star of India. You see, it's an empty honor. And I hate to break away for good, after all. Do you know anything from Anstruther? He was up here, you know."

"I have him now!" secretly exulted Hawke, as he said gravely, "You know what duty is, I cannot speak as yet, but you can depend on me as soon as my honor will permit--"

"Yes, yes, I know," said Hugh Johnstone, with a sigh, rising from the table. "You must make yourself at home here. In fact, I am thinking of sending my daughter back to Europe. Douglas Fraser can have them well bestowed; that is, if I have to remain and fight out this Baronetcy affair, then I could put you up here." Alan Hawke bowed his thanks.

They had wandered back to the reception-room. With an affected surprise the Major consulted his watch. "By Jove! I've got a heavy official mail to prepare, and I'm to dine to-day with Harry Hardwicke, of the Engineers. General Willoughby wants a private conference with me, and Hardwicke is the only confidential man he has. He gets his Majority soon, and Willoughby will lose him on promotion. A fine fellow and a rising man."

"See here, Hawke! Come in to-morrow and dine with me at seven. I want to have a long talk with you," said the uneasy host.

"You may absolutely depend on me, Sir Hugh," heartily answered the visitor, with a fine forgetfulness as to the title. When he rode away, Major Hawke caught sight of a womanly figure at a window above him, watching his retreat in due state, and there was the flutter of a handkerchief as his carriage drove around the oval. "I wonder if Ram Lal knows about the jewels. I must buy him out and out, or make Berthe Louison do it unconsciously for me," so mused the victorious renegade. "He is afraid of me! Now to dispatch Ram Lal to Allahabad. I must only see Berthe Louison, at night, in her own bungalow, for my shy old bird would take the alarm were we seen together. What the devil is her game? I know mine, and I swear that I will soon know hers. I have him guessing now. I must hunt up Hardwicke and call on old Willoughby to keep up the dumb show. Johnstone may watch me--very likely he will. He is afraid of some coup de theatre." He drove in a leisurely way back to the Club and sported the oak after giving Ram Lal his last orders.

"I think I hear the jingle of gold 'in the near future,' as the Yankees say; and, Miss Justine, you shall open the way to the veiled Rose of Delhi for me, while Berthe Louison tortures this old vetch. Place aux dames! Place aux dames!" he laughed.

## BOOK II.

"A DEVIL FOR LUCK."

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE MYSTERIOUS BUNGALOW.

If the fates favored Major Alan Hawke upon this eventful day, for as he was contentedly awaiting the news of Ram Lal's departure for Allahabad, the card of Captain Harry Hardwicke, A. D. C., and of the Engineers, was sent up to him. With a neat bit of Indian art, old Ram Lal had sent the carriage around to report, as a mute signal of his own departure. It was a flood tide of good fortune!

In ten minutes, the Major and his welcome guest were spinning along in the cool of the evening, toward the deserted ruins of the old city of Delhi! As they passed through the Lahore gate, Hardwicke's pith helmet was doffed with a jerk, as a superb carriage passed them, proceeding in a stately swing. Major Alan Hawke bowed low as he caught the cold eye of the would-be Sir Hugh Johnstone.

"Who are the ladies, Hardwicke?" laughed the Major, as he saw the young officer's face suddenly crimson. "For a man who won the V. C. in your dashing style, you seem to be a bit beauty-shy!" They were hardly settled yet for their cozy chat. Hardwicke lit a cheroot to cover his evident confusion.

"I know" he slowly answered, "that one of them is Miss or Madame Delande, old Fraser's house duenna--I will still call him Fraser, you see--the other is the mystery of Delhi. Popularly supposed to be the old boy's daughter, and his sole heiress, Miss Nadine," concluded the young aid-de-camp. "The old curmudgeon keeps her judiciously veiled from mortal ken. No man but General Willoughby has ever exchanged a word with her. The dear old boy--his memory does not go back beyond his last B. and S.--he can't even sketch her beauty in words. And she is as hazy, even to the Madam-General--our secret commanding officer. There is a continuous affront to society in this old monomaniac's treatment of that girl."

"You would like to storm the Castle Perilous, and awaken the Sleeping Beauty?" archly said Hawke, as they rolled along under a huge alley of banyan trees.

"Not at all," gravely said Hardwicke. "She is only a girl, like other girls, I presume; but, this old fool is only fit for the old days, when the kings of Oude flew kites and hunted with the cheetah; or, half drunken, dozed, lolling away their lives in these marble-screened zenanas, with the automatic beauties of the seraglio. Our English cannon have knocked all that nonsense silly. Here is a high-spirited, Christian English girl, shut up like a slave. It's only the unfairness of the thing that strikes me." Hawke eyed the blue-eyed, rosy young fellow of twenty-six with an evident interest. Stalwart and symmetrical in figure, Hardwicke's frank, manly face glowed in indignation.

"You've won your spurs quickly out here," said Hawke. "You have not been long enough in India to case-harden into the cursed egotism of this hard-hearted land, and remember, age, crawling on, has indurated old 'Fraser-Johnstone.' He was never an amiable character. What do the ladies of the city say of this strange social situation? I never knew that the old beast had a daughter till to-day."

Captain Hardwicke wearily replied: "They all hold aloof, of course, after some very rough rebuffs, as I believe the old boy will clear out for good when he gets his baronetcy. It's possible that the girl is half a foreigner after all," mused Hardwicke. "The duenna is surely a continental."

"Yes; but she seems to be a very nice person. I was there to-day at tiffin," finally said Major Hawke,

"She had very little to say, and cleared out at once. I did not see Miss Johnstone." They fell into an easy, rattling chronicle of things past and present, and before the two hours' ride was over, the astute Major felt that he had divined General Willoughby's object in sending his pet aid-de-camp to reconnoitre Hawke's lines and pierce the mystery of his rumored employment.

"I suppose that you will come up and duly report to the Chief," rather uneasily said Captain Hardwicke, as they neared the Club on their return. Hawke cast a glance at the superb domes of the Jumma Musjid towering in the thin air above them, as he slowly answered:

"I am only here on a roving secret commission. I shall call, of course, and pay my personal respects to His Excellency, the General Commanding. I am an official will-o'-the-wisp, just now, but my blushing honors are strictly civil, and, by the way, in expectancy. Where does your promotion carry you?"

"Oh, anywhere--everywhere," laughed Hardwicke. "I may be sent home. I'm entitled to a long leave--there's my wound, you know. I've only stayed on here to oblige Willoughby." It was easy to see that the frank, splendid young fellow was but awkwardly filling his role of polite inquisitor, for they talked shop a couple of hours over a bottle at the Club, and Hardwicke at last took his leave, no whit the wiser.

"If he did not post me as to the heiress, at least, old Willoughby gets no valuable information," laughed the Major, that night. "The boy seems to be ambitious and heart-whole. Old Johnstone will soon clear out to the Highlands, I suppose, with this hidden pearl." But Major Hawke laughed softly when the morning brought to him a

personal invitation to dine "informally" with General Willoughby. "Wants to know, you know," laughed the Major. "All I have to do is to keep cool and let him drink himself jolly, and so, answer his own questions."

"That Hardwicke is an uncommonly fine young fellow." So decided the Major as he splashed into his morning tub. There was one man, however, in Delhi who now viewed Hawke's presence with a secret alarm, amounting to dismay. It was the stern old miserly Scotsman who had paced his floor half the night in a vain effort to reassure himself. "What does he know? I must have old Ram Lal watch him," mused Hugh Johnstone. "I was a fool not to have cleared out from here months ago, before these spies were set upon me. First, Anstruther; now this fellow, Hawke, and, perhaps, even Hardwicke. If it were not for the old matter I would go to-morrow, and let the Baronetcy go hang--or find me in the Highlands. But, I must make one last attempt to get them out. I must--" and the old man slept the weary sleep of utter exhaustion.

Before the nabob awoke, Captain Henry Hardwicke, swinging away on his morning gallop, had reviewed the strange attitude of Major Hawke. "He is very intimate with Hugh Johnstone, and he is a man of the world, too. I will yet see this charming child, when the ban of her prison seclusion is lifted." He vaguely remembered the one timid and girlish glance of the beautiful dark eyes, when he had been presented, pro-forma, to the Veiled Rose upon that one memorable state visit. He then rode out of his way to gaze at the exterior of the great marble house, and was rewarded by the sight of a graceful woman walking there under her governess's escort in the dewy freshness of the early morn.

He doffed his helmet as Miss Justine paused among the flowers, and then Miss Nadine Johnstone looked up to see the graceful rider disappear behind the fringing trees.

"That was Captain Hardwicke, was it not?" asked the lonely girl. Miss Justine was busied in dreaming of her meeting of the morrow.

"Yes, it was," she absently replied.

"They tell me that he nobly risked his life to save his wounded friend," dreamily continued Nadine. "He gave back to a father the life of an only son at the risk of his own. How brave--how noble." And Justine gazed at her charge in surprise, as the beautiful Nadine bent her head to greet her sister flowers.

The resolute Major Hawke, at his cheerful breakfast, was busied with thoughts of the coming arrival of Hugh Johnstone's secret foe. "I must have money from her at once to swing Ram Lal's Private Inquiry Bureau and to mystify these quid nuncs here. For I must entertain the clubmen a bit. It's as well to begin, also, to pot down a bit of her money for the future. She shall pay her way, as she goes." And, with a view to the further cementing of his rising social pyramid, he planned a very neat little dinner of half a dozen of the most available men whom he had selected as being "in the swim." "The next thing is to discover what the devil she really wants of old Johnstone! She must show her hand now, and then soon call on me for help."

He gazed at his little memorandum of "pressing engagements." "A pretty fair book of events. First, old Johnstone's dinner--more of the boring process--then to welcome my strange employer, and, after that, Mademoiselle Justine! Later, I'll have my own little innings with General Willoughby, and, finally play the gracious host while Ram Lal watches Madame Louison's cat-like play upon her victim. Money I must have, her money first, to pay the piper," he laughed, which proposed liberality was destined to doubly bribe the wily old jewel merchant. At that very moment Ram Lal, securely hidden away in the native compartment of the train, rushing on from Allahabad toward Delhi, was dreaming of the long-deferred triumph of a life!

"If he has them--if they can be traced--they shall be mine if every diamond gleams red with his heart's blood! Perhaps these two strange people have brought them. Who knows? They are rich; it may be the jewels!" And Ram Lal dreamed of a tripartite watch upon the three principal figures of the opening drama. "The jewels were a king's ransom. But I shall know all," he softly smiled, for every attendant of the beautiful recluse now burning to meet her advance spy was a sworn confederate of Ram Lal in a dark brotherhood whose very name no man even dared to lisp! And so the long, blazing day wore away, bringing the hunter and the hunted nearer together. The mysterious bungalow was now alive with the slaves of luxury, while Alan Hawke secretly inspected the last finishing touches, for he, alone, was master of the private entrance once used by a man whose glittering rank had lifted him presumably above all human weaknesses!

Major Hawke departed for the Club in a very good humor, after his hour of inspection of the jewel box bungalow now ready for his fair employer. It was a perfect *cachette d' amour*, and its superb gardens, so long deserted, were now only a tangled jungle of luxuriant loveliness! The light foot of the beauty for whom this Rosamond's Bower had been prepared had wandered far away, for a substantial block of marble now held down the great man, who had in the old days found the welcome of his hidden Egeria so delicious in this long-deserted bungalow. For the dead Numa Pompilius slept now with his fathers, in far away Merrie England, and--as is the wont--the mortuary inscriptions on his tomb recorded only his virtues. But both his virtues and failings were of no greater weight now to a forgetful generation, which knew not the departed Joseph, than the drifted leaves in the garden alleys where the romance of the old still lingered in ghostly guise! "There were no birds in last year's nest," but the mysterious bungalow had been hastily arranged for the lovely successor to the vanished queen of a cobweb Paradise. The bungalow, itself, was adroitly constructed with a special reference to seclusion as well as comfort. An Indian Love's Labyrinth.

"Just the very place!" murmured Alan Hawke, as he hastened away to dress for the *diner de famille*, with his timorous secret foe, Hugh Johnstone. "I wonder if my canny friend, in his humble days as Hugh Fraser, ever assisted at *lespelits diners de Trianon* here?

"Probably not, for friend Hugh was ever apter in squeezing the nimble rupee than in chanting sonnets to his mistress's eyebrow. How the devil did he ever catch a wife, such as Valerie Delavigne must have been? Either a case of purchase or starvation, I'll warrant!"

Ram Lal Singh was growing dubious as to the perfect sweep of his hungry talons over Madame Louison's future expenditures. He had noted, with some secret alarm, a grave-faced, sturdy Frenchman, still in the forties, who was cast in the role of either courier or butler for the beautiful Mem-Sahib, whose loveliness in extenso he so far only divined by guess-work.

In the stranger lady's special car there was also, at her side, a truculent Parisienne-looking woman of thirty, whose bustling air, hawk-like visage, and perfect aplomb bespoke the confidential French maid. "I must tell Hawke Sahib of this at once," mused Ram Lal. "We must, in some way, get rid of these foreign servants." The man had a semi-military air, heightened by the sweeping scar--a slash from a neatly swung saber. This purple facial adornment was Jules Victor's especial pride. In these days of "ninety" he often recurred to the stroke which had made his fortune in the dark reign of the Commune.

As a wild Communard soldier he had risked his life vainly to save the aged Colonel Delavigne from a furious mob, for the red rosette in the old officer's buttonhole had cost him his life in an awkward promenade, and this sent the orphans, Valerie and Alixe Delavigne, adrift upon the mad maelstrom of Paris incendie. While Ram Lal glowered in his dissatisfaction, Madame Berthe Louison complacently regarded her two secret protectors on guard in the special car. For the strange turn of Fortune's wheel, which had left Alixe Delavigne alone in the world, and rich enough to effect her special vengeance upon her one enemy, had given to Jules Victor and his wife Marie a sinecure for life as the personal attendants of the soi-disant Madame Berthe Louison.

Marie was but a wild-eyed child of ten when Jules had picked her up in the flaming streets of Paris, and they had graduated together from the gutters of Montmartre into the later control of Madame Louison's pretty little pied d' terre in Paris, hard by Auteuil, in that dreamy little impasse, the Rue de Berlioz. Neither of these attendants were faint-hearted, for their young hearts had been attuned early to the wolfish precocity of the Parisian waif. And they had followed their resolute mistress in her weary quest of the past years.

Berthe Louison smiled in a comforting sense of security, as she gazed listlessly out upon the landscape flying by.

The two servants, modestly voyaging out to Calcutta, on a telegraphic summons, to embark at Marseilles, had preceded the Empress of India by ten days. So, neither friendless, nor without untiring devotion, was the wary woman who had thus secretly armed herself against any "little mistake" on the part of Major Alan Hawke. Certain private instructions to the manager of Grindlay & Co., at Calcutta, had caused that respectable party to open his eyes in wonder.

"Of course, Madame, our local agent at Delhi will act in your behalf, with both secrecy and discretion. I have already written him a private cipher letter in regard to your every wish being fulfilled."

Such is the potent influence of a letter of credit, practically approaching the "unlimited."



"If I could only use Jules in the double capacity of gentleman and factotum, I would dress him up a la mode and let him approach Hugh Johnstone," mused the beautiful tourist, but I must be content to use this cold-hearted adventurer Hawke, for he has at least a surface rank of gentleman, and, moreover, he knows my enemy! I must keep Jules and Marie every moment at my side, for some strange things happen in India by day as well as by night. Sir Hugh may dream of some 'unusually distressing accident' as a means of safely ridding himself of a long slumbering specter."

"Of course, this sly jeweler is Alan Hawke's spy! A few guineas extra, however, may buy his 'inner consciousness' for me," she mused. And so it fell out that Ram Lal Singh was destined to drop into the secret service of both Hawke and the fair invader! And, as yet, neither of his intending employers could divine the dark purposes of the oily rascal who had stealthily watched Hugh Fraser for long years to slake the hungry vengeance of a despoiled traitor to the last King of Oude.

Major Hawke found the tete a tete dinner with Hugh Johnstone a mere dull social parade. There was no demure face at the feast slyly regarding him, for while the two watchful secret foes exchanged old reminiscence and newer gossip, Justine Delande was cheering the lonely girl, whose silent mutiny as to her shining prison life now reached almost an open revolt. It was a grateful relief to the Swiss woman, whose agitated heart was softly beating the refrain: "To-morrow! to-morrow! I shall see him again!" She feared a self-betrayal!

While the governess mused upon the extent of her proposed revelations to the handsome Major, that rising social star had adroitly exploited his long tete a tete with Captain Hardwicke to his host, and gracefully magnified the warmth of General Willoughby's personal welcome.

"You see, Johnstone," patiently admitted the man who had dropped into a good thing, "They all want to delve into the secrets of my mission here. You, of all men," he meaningly said, "cannot blame me for throwing the dust into their eyes. I detest this intrusion, and so in sheer self-defense I am going to give a formal dinner to a lot of these bores, and then cut the whole lot when I've once done the decent thing." Circling and circling, and yet never daring to approach the subject, old Hugh Johnstone warily returned to the suspended baronetcy affair, at last revealing his secret burning anxieties. But when Alan Hawke heard the train whistles, announcing the arrival of his beautiful employer, he fled away from the smoking-room in a mock official unrest.

"I am expecting dispatches from England, and also very important detailed secret instructions. I've had a warning wire from Calcutta."

He had broken off the se'ance brusquely with a design of his own, and he rejoiced as Hugh Johnstone brokenly said: "Let me see you very soon again. I must have a plain talk with you." The old nabob was in a close corner now. There had been a few bitter queries from the half-distracted girl which showed, even to her stern old father, that his position was becoming untenable.

"Damn it! I must either talk or send her away," he growled when

left alone. "I've half a mind to telegraph Douglas Fraser to come here and convoy this foolish young minx home to Europe. She may grow to be a silent rebel like her mother." His scowl darkened. "And yet, where to send her? I ought to go with them. Can I trust the Delandes to find a safe place to keep her till I come?" He was all unaware that his daughter Nadine was now a woman like her bolder sisters of society, but it was true. The chrysalis was nearing the butterfly stage of life and beating the bars with her wings.

The secret exultation of Justine Delande in her shadowy hold on Major Alan Hawke caused her to furtively lead Nadine Johnstone to the head of the great stairway, when Hawke made his adieux.

"He is a handsome young officer," timidly whispered the girl, shrinking back out of sight. "What can he have in common with my father? I thought he was some old veteran." And the awakened heart of Justine Delande bounded in delight. She would have joyed to tell Nadine of her own romantic budding friendship, but a wholesome fear tied her tongue, and she was only happy when caressing the diamond bracelet that night, which encircled her arm, while with dry and aching eyes she waited for the dawn.

While Hugh Johnstone paced the veranda of his lonely marble palace that night, a prey to vague fears, and unwilling to face the accusing eyes of his daughter, Major Alan Hawke, with a sudden astonishment, stood mute before the splendid woman who received him in the mysterious bungalow. There was scant ceremony of greeting between them, for Berthe Louison impatiently grasped his hands.

"He is here, and the girl, too," she said, with blazing eyes. She stood robed as a queen before her secret agent. "Where were you? You left me here to wait in a torment of anxiety."

"I have just come from his dinner table," quietly said the startled Major. "They are both here, and well. I am already intimate at the house, but I have not seen the girl. I feared being followed or I would have met you at the train." He marveled at her royal beauty. She was conscious now of the power of wealth, and some hidden fire glowed in her veins. "What can I do for you? He watches me. I can only come at night."

"Ah!" the lady sternly said, "we must then play at hide and seek!"

Ringling a silver bell twice, Madame Louison sank into a chair. Alan Hawke started up, inquiringly, as Jules and Marie entered the room from an ante-room, whose door was left ajar.

"Jules! Marie!" calmly said Madame Louison. "This gentleman is my secret business agent. He will call here in the evenings very often. He has pass keys of his own, and you need not announce him. He is the only person who has the right to be in my house--at all times." The husband and wife bowed in silence and, at a gesture from their mistress, departed silently, having mentally photographed the newcomer.

Gazing in open-eyed astonishment, the surprised Major faltered, "Who are these people? Why did you do this strange thing?"

"To assure myself of safety," quietly smiled Berthe Louison. "They

are my personal servants, whom I brought on from Calcutta, and I have reason to believe that Jules is both alert and courageous. He is a veteran of the Tonquin war, and that pretty scar was a present from the Black Flags. They were selected by one who knows the wiles of my desperate enemy Johnstone."

"Now, Major Hawke, let us to business" calmly continued Berthe, secretly enjoying Alan Hawke's dismay. "Tell me your whole story. Only the events since your arrival here. The rest counts for nothing. We are all on the ground here and I propose to act quickly. I learned some matters in Calcutta which have greatly enlightened me." The facile tongue of the renegade was slow to do the bidding of his unready brain. "Damme! But she's a cool one!" the ex-officer concluded, as he caught his breath. But, conscious of her watchful eye, he related all his adventures, with a judicious reserve as to Justine Delande. The burning eyes of Berthe Louison were steadily fixed upon the relator's face, and she was coldly noncommittal when Hawke paused for breath and a mental recapitulation. The Major now gazed upon her immovable visage. There was neither joy nor sorrow, neither the flush of anger nor the trembling of rage, awakened by the businesslike presentment of the social facts. "She is a human icicle," he mused. "She has some deadly hold on him!"

"Can you trust this Ram Lal Singh?" the woman demanded in a business-like tone. Alan Hawke nodded decisively.

"He knows Hugh Fraser Johnstone well?" queried Berthe.

"They have been companions in the mixed line or Delhi since the mutiny," earnestly replied Hawke, slowly concluding: "And Ram Lal has been Johnstone's broker in selecting his almost unequaled Indian collection. Ram is a thief, like all Hindus, but he is square to me. I hold him in my hand. You can trust to him, but only through me!" Berthe Louison raised her eyes and then fixed a searching glance upon Alan Hawke, as if she would read his very soul.

"And, can I trust you?" she said, almost solemnly.

"You remember our strange compact, Madame," coldly said Alan Hawke. "Here, face to face with the enemy, I expect to know what is required of me--and also what my future recompense will be."

"Ah, I forgot," mused the strange lady of the bungalow. "You have the right to teach me a lesson, in both manners and business. I forgot how sharply I had drawn the line, myself. Well, Sir, I will trust to you without any assurance on your part." She rang the silver bell at her side, once, and the silent Jules appeared, as attentive as Rastighello in the boudoir of the Duchess of Ferrara. "My traveling bag, Jules," said the lady, in a careless tone. There was a silence punctuated only by Alan Hawke's heavy breathing, until the silent servitor returned, bowing and departing without a word, as he placed the bag at Madame Louison's side. With a businesslike air, the lady handed Alan Hawke a sealed letter, addressed simply:

HUGH FRASER JOHNSTONE, ESQ., DELHI.

Near at hand, in the opened bag, the watchful Major saw the revolver and dagger once more which he had noted, at Lausanne.

"Let Ram Lal deliver that personally to the would-be Baronet, to-morrow morning at eight o'clock. He is to say nothing. There will be no reply," measuredly remarked the strange woman whose life as Alixe Delavigne had brought to her the legacy of an undying hatred for the man whom she was about to face. "This will bring Hugh Johnstone to me at once!"

"That is all?" stammered Alan Hawke, as he received the document, respectfully standing "at attention."

"No, not quite all!" laughed Berthe Louison. "Pray continue a career of judiciously liberal social splendor here, an external 'swelling port' just suited to a man whose feet are planted upon a financial rock. But do not overdo it! It might excite Hugh Johnstone's alarm. Here is five hundred pounds in notes. There will be no accounts between us."

"And, I am to do nothing else?" cried Hawke, in surprise. "I fear to have you meet this man alone! He is rich, powerful, and crafty. The nature of your business, I fear, is that of deadly quarrel. Remember, this man is at bay. He is unscrupulous. I fear for you!"

The renegade spoke only the truth. For dark memories of Hugh Fraser's bitter deeds in days past now thronged upon his brain.

"Fear not for me." cried Berthe Louison, springing up like a tigress in defense of her cubs. "Do you know that his life would be the forfeit of a lifted finger? Do you take me for a blind fool?" she raged. "Do you know the power of gold? Ah, my friend, there are unseen eyes watching my pathway here, and may God have mercy upon any one who practices against me, in secret! Any 'strange happening' to me would be fearfully avenged! As for this flinty-hearted brute, he would never even reach that threshold alive, if he dared to threaten! Go! Leave him to me. Come here to-morrow night. I shall have need of your cool brain and your ready wit! My only task was to find him and the girl together."

"And if I am questioned about you? If anything occurs?" persisted Alan Hawke.

"Simply ignore my existence; if we meet we are strangers!" gasped Berthe, who had thrown herself on a divan. "Obey me without questioning my motive! Each night you will receive orders for the next day, should I need your secret hand! Go now! I am tired! I must be ready to meet this man!"

Alan Hawke had reached the door, but he turned back. "And as to Ram Lal? What shall I do?" The woman's eyes flashed fire.

"Leave him also to me! I will handle him! A few rupees--will serve as his bait. Stay! You say that this Swiss woman, Justine Delande, is sympathetic, and seems to be a worthy person?" She was scanning his impassive face with steely glances now.

"She is younger than her sister Euphrosyne," gravely said Alan Hawke, "and not without some personal attractions. Her older sister

adores her. Even this old brute, Johnstone, seems to treat her with

great respect and deference."

"There is the only danger to us! Watch that woman! Mingle freely in the Johnstone household," said Berthe, wearily, "but never cast your eyes toward Nadine. Never even hint to this Swiss governess that you have seen her sister. After they return to Europe it is another thing. Silence and discretion now. Good night. Come to-morrow night at ten o'clock; all will be quiet, and you can steal away from the Club in safety."

Major Alan Hawke stole away to the hidden entrance like a thief of the night. He started as he saw the menacing figure of Jules Victor glide swiftly after him to the secret opening in the wall. The servitor spoke not a single word, but watched the business agent disappear. "I must watch this damned Frenchman," he mused, feeling for his packet of notes and loosening his revolver. "He may be set on by this she devil to watch Ram Lal." And then Hawke gayly sought the jewel merchant, lingering an hour in the very room where he was on the morrow to meet the heart-awakened Justine. Old Ram Lal grinned as he accepted the letter. He was happy, for he heard the jingling of golden guineas in the near future. "You have nothing to do with me, Ram Lal," laughed the Major. "The lady will give you your orders, only you are to tell me all for both our sakes. I will see you rewarded," and again Ram Lal grinned in his quiet way.

When Alan Hawke's head was resting on his pillow he suddenly became possessed with a strange new fear. "By God! I believe that she has been here before; she seems to be up to the whole game."

Alan Hawke's steps hardly died away in the hallway before the beautiful Nemesis made a careful inspection of her splendid reception-room. The splendors of its curtained arches, its fretted ceiling, and its frescoed walls were idly passed over, for the woman only made an exhaustive survey of its geometrical arrangement. Marie Victor was in waiting at her side, and the mistress and maid were soon joined by Jules. Throwing open the door of a little adjoining cabinet, Madame Louison whispered a few private directions to the ex-Communard. "Do this at once yourself; none of the blacks are to know. I trust none of them!" imperatively commanded Berthe. "Marie will receive him. You are to be here at nine o'clock, and be sure to let no one of these yellow spies observe you. Now, both of you. Here is the rearrangement of the furniture. This will be your first task in the morning. You can both use the whole household for these changes. They are to obey you in all. Let all be ready when I have breakfasted. Now, Marie, I will try and rest. Jules, inspect and examine the house; then you can take your post for the night at my door. Have you exhausted every possibility of any trickery in the sleeping room?"

"There's but the one door, Madame. Trust to me. I have sounded every inch of the walls, and even examined the floor." Jules Victor's romantic nature thrilled with the possibilities of the little life drama to come.

Berthe Louison departed to rest upon her arms the night before the battle. Much marveled the swarming band of Ram Lal's creatures that no human being was suffered to approach the Lady of the Bungalow but her two white attendants. Berthe Louison had not reached the

idle luxury of employing a dozen Hindus in infinitesimal labors near her person. For she fathomed easily Ram Lal's devotion to Major Alan Hawke.

The presence of keen-eyed Marie Victor's brass camp-bed in My Lady's sleeping-room was a source of wonder to the velvet-eyed spy who was Ram Lal's especial "Bureau of Intelligence." "Strange ways has this Mem-Sahib," murmured the Hindu when he craved to know if the Daughter of the Sun and Light of the World desired aught. "I will then have two to watch. The waiting woman has the eye of a tiger."

A personal verification of the fact that Jules Victor was encamped for the night, en zouave, on a divan drawn before the only door joining the boudoir and sleeping-room, caused the sly spy to greatly marvel, for the scarred face of the French social rebel was ominously truculent, and a pair of Lefacheux revolvers and a heavy knife lay within the ready reach of this strange "outside guard."

In the dim watches of the first night in Delhi, the same barefooted Hindu spy learned by a visit of furtive inspection, that a night light steadily burned in the boudoir where Jules was toujours pret. The sneaking rascal crept away, with a violently beating heart, fearing even the rustle of his bare feet upon the mosaic floor.

And all this, and much more, did he deliver with abject humility to Ram Lal Singh, when that worthy appeared the next day to crave his mysterious patron's orders. It seemed a tough nut to crack, this tripartite household arrangement.

The dawn found Madame Berthe Louison as alertly awake as bird and beast stirring in the ruined splendors of old Shahjehanabad. Long before the anxious Justine Delande arose to deck herself furtively for her tryst with Alan Hawke, Berthe Louison knew that all her orders of the night before were executed.

"You are sure that you can see perfectly, Jules?" said the anxious woman.

"I command the whole side of the room where you will be seated," replied the Frenchman, "and the ornaments and carved tracery cover the aperture. Marie has tested it and I have also done the same, reversing our positions. Nothing can be seen."

"Good! Remember! Nine o'clock sees you at your post! You are prepared?" The woman's voice trembled.

"Thoroughly!" cried the alert servitor, "Only give me your signal! I must make no mistake! There's no time to think in such cases!" He bent his head, while his mistress, in a low voice gave her last orders. Jules saluted, as if he were the leader of a forlorn hope.

"And now for the first skirmish!" mused Berthe Louison, as she personally examined some matters, of more material interest to her, in the reception-room.

The rearrangement of the furniture seemed to be satisfactory, and Madame Berthe Louison composedly busied herself with the arrangement of a writing case, and a few womanly articles upon the table which

she had chosen as her own peculiar fortification. A few moments were wasted upon trifling with a well-worn envelope, now carefully hidden in her bosom. This maneuver passed the time needed for a stately carriage to sweep up from the opened grand gate of the bungalow to the raised veranda steps. "There he is!" she grimly said. "Now, for the first blood!"

A man who was shaking with mingled rage and fear hastily strode across the broad portico, as Berthe Louison glided away from the curtained window and confidently resumed her own chosen chair. Her bosom was heaving, her eye was fixed and stern, and she steadily awaited her foe, for one last warning whisper had reached her hidden servitor.

When Marie Victor threw open the double doors of the reception room, on its threshold stood the towering form of the man whom Alixe Delavigne had known in other years as Hugh Fraser, the man whose pallid face told her that he knew at last that he was under the sword of Damocles! Clad in white linen, his sun helmet in his hand, steadying himself with a jeweled bamboo crutch-handled stick, the old Anglo-Indian waited until Berthe Louison's voice rang out, as clear as a silver bell: "Marie! I am not to be interrupted." she calmly said. "You may wait beyond, in the ante-room!"

The woman who had emerged from the dark penumbra of a dead Past, to torture the embryo Baronet, gazed silently at the stern old man glowering there.

Striding up to her, the insolent habit of years was, strong upon him, as he hoarsely said: "What juggling fiend of hell brings you here?"

Without a tremor in her voice, the lady of Jitomir replied:

"I came here to undo the work of years! To teach an orphaned girl to know that a love which hallows and which blesses, can reach her from the grave in which your cold brutality buried the only being I ever loved! She shall know her mother, from my lips, and not wither in the gray hell of your egoism. I have searched the world over, and found you, at last, together!"

"By God! You shall never even see her face, you she-devil!" cried the infuriated old man, nearing the defiant woman. "You were the go-between for your worthless sister and that Russian cur, Troubetskoi!"

"You lie! Hugh Fraser, you lie!" cried Berthe, in a ringing voice. "You crushed the flower that Fate had drifted within your reach! You turned her into the streets of London to starve! You robbed her of her child, all this to feed your own flinty-hearted tyrant vanity! She was divorced from you by a Royal Russian Decree, before she married the man whose heart broke when she was laid in the tomb. She rests with the princes of his line, and her tomb bears the name of wife!"

The old nabob crept nearer, growling:

"You shall never see the child's face!"

Then, Alixe Delavigne sprang up and faced him: "There she is! on my heart! Just what her mother was, before you sent her to an early grave. Valerie died hungering for one sight of that child's face!" Throwing the picture of Nadine Johnstone on the table, the lady of Jitomir said: "Pierre Troubetskoi left to me the wealth which makes me your equal. I fear you not! I shall see Nadine to-morrow!"

"Never!" roared Hugh Johnstone, now beyond all control. "I defy you! Beware how you approach my threshold!" His eyes were murderous in their steely blue gleam, and, yet, he met a glance as steady as his own.

"Listen," said Berthe Louison, sinking back into her chair, "I will tell you a little story." Hugh Johnstone was now gazing at the photograph, which trembled in his hand. "Once upon a time a man secreted a vast deposit of jewels, really the spoil of a deposed king, and, rightly, the property of the victorious British Government!" The photograph fell to the floor as the old man sprang up from the chair, into which he had dropped. "This paper, the receipt for the deposit, once delivered to the Viceroy of India--and the Baronetcy which is to be your life crown is lost for ever." The old man's hands knotted themselves in anger. "The lying story that the deposit was stolen by an underling will bring you, Hugh Johnstone, to the felon's cell! You shall live to wear the convict's chain! The Government is partly aware of the facts. It rests for me to give the Viceroy the receipt for your private deposit. The private bank vault in Calcutta has hidden your shame for twenty years. You know the condition of your settlement with the Government. Now, shall I see my sister's child? I hold your very existence here--in the hollow of my hand!" The dauntless woman drew forth a yellowed envelope from her breast. There was a smothered shriek, a crash and a groan, as Jules Victor, springing from his concealment, hurled the infuriated man to the floor!

With a knee on the panting nabob's breast, he hissed:

"Move, and you are a dead man!"

"Take the paper, Madame," calmly said the victorious Jules. Then Alixe Delavigne laughed scornfully.

"Let the fool arise. The contents are only blank paper. The document is where I can find it for use. Remain here, Jules," concluded the triumphant woman, as she replaced the photograph in her bosom. "Take the envelope--you know it, Hugh Fraser. I stole it the night you drove the sister I loved from our miserly lodgings in London." The furious onslaught had failed, and the old nabob was only a cowering, cringing prisoner at will. He dared not even cry out.

Hugh Johnstone groaned as his eyes turned from the woman, now laughing him to scorn, to the stern-faced Frenchman, who was covering the baffled assailant with the grim Lefacheux revolver.

"Send this man away. Let us talk, Alixe," muttered the astounded Johnstone. Then a mocking laugh rang out in the room.

"I am in no hurry now. I can wait. I like Delhi, and I shall find my way to Nadine's side, and she shall know the story of a mother's love. One signal from me, by telegraph, and the document goes to



the Viceroy. So, I fear you not, my would-be strangler! It is for me to make conditions! Listen! I will send my carriage and my man to your house to-morrow morning at ten. You will have made up your mind then. I have friends all around me, here, at Allahabad, and in Calcutta. If you practice any treachery on me you die the death of a dog, even here, in your robber nest!"

"I will come! I will come!" faltered Johnstone.

"Ah!" smiled the lady. "Jules, show Sir Hugh Johnstone to his carriage." And then turning her back in disdain, she vanished without a word.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE PRICE OF SAFETY.

When nabob Hugh Johnstone's carriage dashed swiftly down the crowded Chandnee Chouk, on its return to the marble house, the driver and footman, as well as the slim syce runners, were alarmed at the old man's appearance when he was half led, half carried out of his luxurious vehicle. The staggering sufferer reached his rooms and was surrounded by a bevy of frightened menials, while the equipage dashed away in search of old Doctor McMorris, the surgeon par excellence of Delhi. A second butler had hastily darted away to the Delhi Club with an imperative summons for Major Alan Hawke, who had, unfortunately, left for the day.

With a shudder of affright Mademoiselle Justine Delande had slipped into a booth on the great thoroughfare, only to feel safe when she glided into Ram Lal Singh's jewel shop, to be swiftly hurried into the rear reception room by the argus-eyed merchant, who had noted the swiftly passing carriage. Her womanly conscience was as tender as her heart.

"Lock the door, Ram Lal!" cried Alan Hawke, "We will be in the pagoda in the garden. Let no one pass this door, on your life!" When they were alone, Major Alan Hawke led the trembling woman away to the hidden bower, where Ram Lal had hospitably spread a feast of India's choicest cakes and dainties.

Only there, in that haven of safety, dared the excited Justine to falter. "If you knew what I have suffered! He drove almost over me as I crossed the Chandnee Chouk, and I had a struggle to leave Nadine. There is the curse of an old family sorrow there. The father and daughter are arrayed against each other."

"Forget it all, my dear Justine," murmured Alan Hawke. "Here you are hidden now and perfectly safe with me. Never mind those people now. Let us only think of each other. You were simply matchless in your behavior at the house."

"Oh, I fear him so! I fear that hard old man!" whispered the timid woman, as she dropped her eyes before Alan Hawke's ardent glances. He had noted the growing touch of coquetry in her dress; he measured the tell-tale quiver of her voice, and he smiled tenderly when she shyly showed him the diamond bracelet, securely hidden upon her left arm.

"I put this on to show you that I do trust you," she murmured. "And I wear it every night. It seems to give me courage." The happy Major pressed her hand warmly.

"Let it be a secret sign between us, an omen of brighter days for all of us. Stand by me and I will stand by you to the last. We will all meet happily yet by the beautiful shores of Lake Lemane!"

In half an hour, Justine Delande was completely at her ease, for well the artful renegade knew how to circle around the dangerous subject nearest his heart--the secret history of Nadine Johnstone's mother. He had dropped easily into the wooing and confidential intimacy which lulled Justine Delande into a fool's paradise of happy content.

She was sinking away and now losing her will and identity in his own, without one warning qualm of conscience. For Alan Hawke's dearly bought knowledge of womankind now stood him in great stead.

"One single familiarity, one questionable liberty, and this cold-pulsed Heloise would fly forever. She must be left to her day dreams and to the work of a sweet self-deception," he artfully mused. They were interrupted but a moment, when Ram Lal Singh glided to the door of the pagoda.

"I must now go to the bungalow to see Madame Louison and have her approve her horses and carriage. She has sent word that she will drive this afternoon. And," he whispered breathlessly, "Old Johnstone is very sick. He has sent all over the city to find you, and now his own private man bids me go there at once. He must have me, if he can't find you."

Major Hawke mused a moment. "Give me the keys! Put your best man on guard to watch for any intruders! Go first to the Mem-Sahib! Keep your mouth shut! Remember about me and--" He pointed to the governess, now timidly cowering in a shadowy corner. "Let the old devil wait till you are done with her! Pump the old wretch! Find out what he wants! Say that I went off for a day's jaunt!" Alan Hawke smiled grimly as he seated himself tenderly at Justine Delande's side. "Old Hugh did not last long! They must have had their first skirmish. If he is a coward at heart, she will rule him with a rod of iron. What is her hold over him? I warrant that the jade will never tell me. She will fight him to the death in silence, and try to hoodwink me. We will see, my lady! We will see!"

"Now, Justine," softly said the renegade, "tell me all of the story of this strange father and daughter! Ram Lal has reconnoitered! We are safe! Both Hugh and his daughter are at home!"

The reassured governess frankly opened her heart to her wary listener. It was an hour before the recital was finished, and Miss Justine

was gayly chatting over the impromptu breakfast, when the details of these last stormy days at Delhi were described. "I cannot make it all out. She is certainly his legitimate daughter. He is crafty, covetous, miserly, and yet he lives in a scornful splendor here. Both my sister and myself look forward to learning the whole story through my visit here. Of course, on our arrival, Nadine and myself wondered not at the gloomy solitude of the marble house. But the affronts to society, the practical imprisonment of this girl, this chilling silence as to her mother, have roused her brave young heart. Not a picture, not a single memento, not even a jewel, not a tress of hair, not even a passing mention of where that shadowy mother lies buried!" the Swiss woman sighed. "He is a brute and tyrant--a man of a stony heart and an iron hand!"

"You have never been made his confidante?" earnestly asked the Major.

"Never!" promptly replied Justine. "Beyond a grave courtesy and the curt answers to our reports, with liberal payment, we know no more now than when the prattling child of four was brought to us.

"She has no childish memories of her own. I have overheard all the unhappy scenes of the last month. There are the tearful prayers of Nadine, then the old man's harsh threats, and then only his cold avoidance follows. Strange to say--gentle and warm-hearted, formed for love, and yearning to know of the dear mother whom she has fondly pictured in her dreams, Nadine Johnstone has all the courage of a soldier's daughter, and her fearless bravery of soul is as inflexible as steel. She returns frankly to the contest, and his only refuge is the wall of cold silence that he has built up between them!"

"Has he tried to punish her in any way--to intimidate her?" eagerly cried the Major.

"Not yet," answered Justine. "She tells me all, and he knows it. I can see that his eyes are fixed on me now with a growing hatred. He fears that I uphold her in this duel of words, of answerless questions.

"He has threatened her roughly with sending her away to some place, to 'come to her senses,' alone, and--" the frightened woman said, "That is what I fear--some sudden, rough brutality. He despairs of making her love him. If she were suddenly removed--and I cast adrift on the world, alone, here, he would, I suppose, send me back to Switzerland. He can do no less, but I would lose her forever from my sight. I know that he hates me, and we have always hoped that he would make us a handsome present, on her marriage. Euphrosyne and I have been as mothers to her." There were tears in the woman's anxious eyes now. She was startled as Hawke bounded to his feet.

"By God!" he cried, forgetting himself. "That's just his little game! It must never be! See here, Justine! I have reason to think that you are right. He may try to spirit her away and separate her forever from you and Euphrosyne. He would cut off the only two friends who could connect her with this strange past. Yes, that's his little game! And--" he slowly concluded, controlling himself, "I have reason to think he may go about it at once. He is afraid of me, also, about some old official business. Now, I will watch over your interests. The least this old miser can do is to give

you a neat little home in Geneva, as a final recompense."

Justine Delande's eyes sparkled in gratitude. The acute Major had easily learned from the garrulous Francois that the "Institut Pour les Jeunes Dames" was an intellectual property only; the fine old mansion belonging to a rich Genevese banker. Major Alan Hawke was now busied in writing upon a few leaves torn from his betting book.

"Listen to me!" he gravely said. "Promise me that you will never let these papers leave you a moment."

"I will carry them in my passport case, around my neck," murmured Justine. "My money in notes, and a few articles."

"Good!" energetically cried Hawke. "I will write the same to Euphrosyne, and send it by 'registered post' to-day."

"Here!" he suddenly cried, "Just pencil a few words to her to say that you are with me, and that we understand each other; that our interests are to be one; and that she must keep the faith and help us both, for both our sakes. I will mail it so that old Johnstone will be powerless to injure any of us three." He gave her another leaflet from his book, and detached a golden pencil from his watch chain.

There was a crimson flush upon her cheek, as she vainly essayed to write. Her hand trembled, and then with a sob, her head fell upon her breast; with an infinite art, the triumphant renegade soothed the excited woman, and, it was only through her happy tears that she saw him, before her there, duplicating the secret addresses.

"Now, Justine; my Justine!" softly said Alan Hawke. "Here is a secret address in Allahabad, and a secret address in London. If this man decides to send Nadine away, he will do it secretly in some way. There are several seaports open to leave India. You will be, of course, sent out of Hindostan with her. It would be just his little game, however, to separate you at the first foreign port, to pay you off royally, and then--neither you nor Euphrosyne would ever see Nadine again. There is something hanging over him that he would hide from her. He fears me, also, for my official power. Remember, now! No matter whatever happens you can always find a way to telegraph to me. If I am in India, here to Allahabad; if in Europe, to London. Now, Euphrosyne will know always where I am. Telegraph me the whereabouts of Nadine Johnstone, or, where you are forced to leave her, telegraph the vessel you are on, and her destination, and, I swear to you, by the God who made me, I will track her down, and we three shall find a way to reach her later. He would like to lock her up in a living tomb, if he found it to be to his interest. A cheap private asylum in Germany, or some low haunt in France, perhaps hide her away in Italy as a pretended invalid. The man is mad--simply mad--about this baronetcy, and in some strange way the girl stands between him and it. Do you promise?"

"I promise you all!" faltered the excited woman. "Let me go now. Let me go home, Alan," she murmured, and there were no heart secrets between them any more, as the blushing woman, still trembling with the audacity of her own burning emotions, was led safely to the door of the jewel mart.

"Be brave, be brave, dear Justine," he whispered. "Old Johnstone has sent for me. You shall have your home yet; I guarantee it. I shall be frequently at the house in the next few days. Remember to control yourself, and to watch the sly game of this old brute. I will stay here and send off at once our first letter to Euphrosyne. This girl will have a million pounds. You and your sister must not be robbed of the recompense of nearly twenty years of tenderness. Cleave to her, heart to heart, and tell me all. I will make you both rich!"

"Trust me to the death! I understand all now," whispered Justine, her breast heaving in a new and strange emotion, flooding her chilly veins as with a subtle fiery elixir.

"Then go, but, dear one, be here two days from now at the same time. Should any accident happen, Ram Lal will then come and bear to you my message. You can trust him. I will stay here and send this registered letter from here at once. Then, Hugh Johnstone has three loving guardians to outwit before he can hide away your beautiful nursling!"

"For you." he softly whispered, as he slipped a little packet into her hand, when she stole out of the shop, after Alan Hawke had judiciously reconnoitered.

"Dear, simple soul!" contentedly reflected Major Hawke, as he busied himself with the important letter to the staid Euphrosyne. "She has given me her heart, in her loving eagerness to defend that child, and the key to the whole situation. It would be just like this old brute to spirit the girl away to baffle Madame Berthe Louison. That is, if he dare not kill or intimidate her. And that I must look to. I think that I see my way to that girl's side now. God, what a pot of money she will have!"

When Alan Hawke had finished his boldly warm letter to Euphrosyne, he sealed it and sent it to the post by Ram Lal's footman. The world looked very bright to him as, enjoying a capital cheroot, he studied for a half hour a wall map of India. "There's a half dozen ways to spirit her out of the Land of the Pagoda Tree. I must watch and trust to Justine. To-night I may or may not know what this devil of a Berthe Louison is up to. Will she try to take the girl away? That would be fatal."

"Hardly--hardly," he decided, as he mixed a brandy pawnee. He gazed around at Ram Lal's sanctum, in which the old usurer received the Europeans whom he fleeced in his nipoy-lending operations. "A pretty snug joint. Many a hundred pounds have I dropped here." It was neatly furnished forth with service magazines, London papers, army lists, and all the accessories of a London money-lender's den. When the receipt for his registered letter was laid away in his pocket-book, Alan Hawke calmly ordered his carriage. "I'll take a brush around town and show them that I am out of all these intrigues," he decided. It was six hours later when he drew up at the Club, having passed Madame Berthe Louison's splendid turnout swinging down the Chandnee Chouk. On the box the alert Jules, in a yager's uniform, sat beside the dusky driver, and, even in the dusk, he could see the neat French maid seated, facing her mistress. "By God! She has the nerve of a Field Marshal! She will never hide her light under a bushel!" he had gasped when Madame Louison, at

ten feet distant, gazed at him impassively through her *longue vue*, and then calmly cut him. He was soon besieged by a crowd of gay gossips at the Club upon dismounting from his trap.

"Tell us, Hawke, who is the wonderful beauty who has taken the Silver Bungalow," was the excited chorus.

"How the devil should I know, when you fellows do not," good-humoredly cried Alan Hawke, as the Club steward edged his way through the throng.

"There's a message for you, Major," said the functionary. "Mr. Hugh Johnstone is quite ill at his house, and has been sending all over for you."

"Ah! This is grave news" ostentatiously cried Hawke. "I'll drive over at once." And then he fled away, leaving the gay loiterers still discussing the lovely anonyma whose advent was now the one sensation of the hour. "Who the devil can her friends be?"

"She plays a bold game," mused the startled Major.

On her return to the marble house, Justine Delande had been welcomed by the anxious-eyed apparition of Nadine Johnstone, who burst into her room in a storm of tears. "I have been so frightened," she cried as she clasped her returning governess in her trembling grasp.

"My father has just had a terrible seizure--an attack while riding out on business. He will see no one but Doctor McMorris, and besides, he has the old jewel merchant searching all over Delhi for Major Hawke. You must not leave me a moment, Justine."

"Is he better?" demanded Justine, with guilty qualms.

"He is resting now, but he will not be quieted till he sees this strange man," answered the disconsolate girl.

"How beautiful she is," mused the Swiss woman, as Nadine Johnstone sat with parted lips relating the excitements of the morning. The wooing Indian climate was fast ripening the exquisite loveliness of eighteen. Her dark eyes gleamed with earnestness, and the rich brown locks crowned her stately head as with a coronal of golden bronze. The roses on her cheeks were not yet faded by the insidious climate of burning India, and a thrilling earnestness accented the music of her voice.

"What can we do, Nadine?" murmured Justine Delande.

"Nothing," sighed the motherless girl. "But when this Major Hawke comes, you must, for my sake, find out all you can. Ah! To leave India forever!" she sighed. Her marble prison was only a place of sorrow and lamentation.

Major Hawke's flying steeds reached the marble house, after a circuit to Ram Lal's jewel mart. Without leaving his carriage, he called out the obsequious old Hindu. The dusk of evening favored Ram Lal in his adroit lying.

He gave a brief account of Hugh Johnstone's strange morning seizure,

forgetting to divulge to Hawke that the old nabob had already bribed him heavily to watch the inmate of the Silver Bungalow, and report to him her every movement. Nor, did the Hindu divulge his secret report to Madame Berthe Louison, after her ostentatious public carriage promenade. He further hid the fact that Madame Louison had deftly pressed a hundred pounds upon him, in return for a daily report of the secret life of the marble house. But he smiled blandly, when Major Hawke hastily said "Will he die?"

"No; he is all right! He was over there with the Mem-Sahib this morning, and something must have happened."

"What happened?" imperiously demanded Hawke.

"I don't know," slowly answered Ram Lal.

"Don't lie to me, Ram Lal," fiercely said the Major. "I have a fifty-pound note if you will find out."

"He is going there to-morrow," slowly said Ram.

"All right, watch them both. I'll be back here. Wait for me." And then at a nod the horses sprang away.

"Fools! Fools all!" glowered Ram Lal, as he straightened up from his low salaam. "I'll have those stolen jewels yet. Now is the time to gain his confidence. He is an old man, and weak, and, cowardly."

When Major Hawke entered the great doors of the marble house, he was gravely received by Mademoiselle Justine Delande. "He has been asking every ten minutes for you," she said. "I am to show you at once to his rooms."

"Now, what's this? what's all this?" cheerfully cried the Major as he entered the vast sleeping-room of the Anglo-Indian. Old Johnstone feebly pointed to the door, and motioned to his attendants to leave the room. He was worn and gaunt, and his ashen cheeks and sunken eyes told of some great inward convulsion. He had aged ten years since the pompous tiffin. "I'm not well, Hawke! Come here! Near to me!" he huskily cried. And then, the hunter and the hunted gazed mutely into each other's eyes.

"What's gone wrong?" frankly demanded the Major. The old man scowled in silence for a moment.

"I have no one I dare trust but you," he unwillingly said. "You know something of my position, my future. I want to know if you have ever met this woman who has taken the Silver Bungalow--a kind of a French woman. There's her card." Old Johnstone's haggard eyes followed Hawke, as he silently studied the bit of pasteboard.

"Madams Berthe Louison," he gravely read. And, then, with a magnificent audacity, he lied successfully. "Never even heard the name," he murmured.

"Fellows at the Club speaking of some such woman today. Pretty woman, I suppose a *declassée*." Hawke, lifted his eyebrows.

"No, a she-devil!" almost shouted old Hugh. "Now, I want you to

watch her and find out who her backers are. She is trying to annoy me. Be prudent, and I'll make it a year's pay to you." Hawke's greedy eyes lightened as he bowed. "But never mention my name. Come here as often as you will. Go now and look up what you can. I'll see you to-morrow, in the afternoon. Don't scrape acquaintance with her. Just watch her. I'm going there to-morrow morning myself."

"You?" said Hawke.

"Yes," half groaned the old man, turning his face to the wall. "Come to-morrow afternoon. Spare no money. I'll make it right. Don't linger a minute now."

Major Alan Hawke was gayly buoyant as the horses trotted back to Ram Lal Singh's, where he proposed to await the hour of ten o'clock. "I fancy, my lady, that you, too, will pay toll, as well as Hugh Johnstone," he murmured. "You shall pay for all you get, and pay as you go." He cheerfully dined alone in Ram Lal's little business sanctum, and listened to the measured disclosures of the Hindu in return for the fifty-pound note.

"It's to-morrow's interview that I want to know about," quietly directed the major, whereat Ram Lal modestly said:

"I'll find a way to let you know all."

"That's more than she will, the sly devil," said Hawke, in his heart, as he leaned back in the consciousness of "duty well done."

In the Silver Bungalow, Alixe Delavigne sat in her splendid dining-room, under the ministrations of her Gallic body-guard. Her eyes were very dreamy as she recalled all the fearful incidents of the année terrible. The flight from Paris after their father's death, the escape to England, the refuge at a Brighton hotel--the sudden projecture of Hugh Fraser athwart their humble lives. When the returned Indian functionary abandoned all other pursuits and plainly showed his mad craving to follow Valerie Delavigne everywhere, then the younger sister had learned of his rank, of his long leave and wealth and future prospects. The man was most personable then. He was of a solid rank and a brilliant civil position, and the penniless daughters of the dead Colonel Delavigne were now reduced to a few hundred francs. The hand of Misery was upon them, poor and friendless. Alixe, with a shudder, recalled the two years of silence, since the ardent Pierre Troubetskoi had whispered to beautiful Valerie Delavigne in Paris: "I go to Russia, but I will soon return and you must wait for me!"

Day by day, when the skies grew darker, Valerie Delavigne had gazed with a haunting sorrow in her eyes, at her helpless sister. Some strange possessing desire had urged Hugh Fraser on to woo and win the helpless French beauty, whom an adverse fate had stranded in England. The mute sacrifice of the wedding was followed by the two years of Valerie's loveless marriage. It was an existence for the two sisters, bought by the sacrifice of one and Troubetskoi never had written!

Sitting alone, waiting for the morrow, to face Hugh Fraser once more, Alixe Delavigne recalled, with a vow of vengeance, that sad past, the slow breaking of the butterfly, the revelation of all Hugh Fraser's



cold-hearted tyranny, the sway of his demoniac jealousy--jealous, even, of a sister's innocent love. And that last miserable scene, on the eve of their projected voyage to India, when the maddened tyrant discovered Pierre Troubetskoi's long-belated letter, returned once more to madden her. Fraser had simply raged in a demoniac passion.

For the mistake of a life was at last revealed when that one letter came! The letter addressed to the wife as Valerie Delavigne, which had followed them slowly upon their travels, and, by a devil's decree, had fallen, by a spy-servant's trick, into Hugh Fraser's hands. It mattered not that the coming lover was even yet ignorant of the miserable marriage. The envelope, with its address, was missing, when the long pages of burning tenderness were read by the infuriated husband. "I have been buried a year in the snows of Siberia," wrote Pierre, "upon the secret service of the Czar. I was ill of a fever for long months upon my return, and now I am coming to take you to my heart, never to be parted any more." The address of his banker in Paris, all the plans for their voyage to Russia, even the tender messages to the sister of his love--all these were the last goad to a maddened man, whose raging invective and brutal violence drove a weeping woman out into the cheerless night. He deemed her the Russian's cherished mistress. With a shudder Alixe Delavigne recalled the white face of the discarded mother, whose babe slumbered in peace, while the half-demented woman fled away to the shelter of the house of an old French nurse.

The morrow, when Hugh Fraser bade her also leave his house forever, was pictured again in her mind, and the insolent gift of the hundred-pound note, with the words, "Go and find your sister! Never darken my door again!" She had taken that money and used it to save her sister's life.

The darkened sick-chamber, the flight across the channel, and the rugged path which led Valerie, at last, to die in peace in Pierre Troubetskoi's arms--all this returned to the resolute avenger of a sister who had died, dreaming of the little childish face hidden from her forever, "He shall pay the price of his safety to the uttermost farthing, to the last little humiliation," she cried, starting up as Alan Hawke stood before her, for the hour of ten had stolen upon her. "Nadine shall love her mother, and that love shall bridge the silent gulf of Death!"

"You have been agitated?" he gently said, for there were tell-tale tears upon her lashes. "Tell me, is it victory or defeat?"

"I shall see my sister's child, to-morrow," the Lady of Jitomir bravely said. "And he--the man of the iron heart--shall conduct me to his house in honor." There was that shining on her transfigured face which made Alan Hawke murmur:

"There is a great love here--greater than the hate which demands an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

He waited, abashed and silent, for his strange employer's orders of the day.

"Is there anything I can do for you to-morrow?" said Alan Hawke. "Do you find your arrangements convenient for you here in every

way?" The respectful tone of his manner touched Berthe Louison's heart. He was beginning to win his way to her regard by judiciously effacing himself.

"I am entirely at home, thanks to your thoughtful provision," she smiled. "There is nothing to-night. Have you seen Johnstone?" Her dark eyes were steadfastly fixed upon him now.

"Yes; he sent for me. He is very much agitated and, I should say, he is almost at your mercy. But beware of an apparent surrender on his part. He is--capable of anything!"

"I know it. I am on my guard," slowly replied Berthe Louison. She saw that Alan Hawke had spoken the truth to her--even with some mental reservations. "To-morrow morning will determine my public relations with Hugh Johnstone. Come to me to-morrow night, and do not be surprised if we meet as guests at Hugh Johnstone's table. You must only meet me as a stranger. I may leave here for a few days, and then I will place you in charge of my interests in my absence."

The Major gravely replied:

"You may depend upon me wherever you may wish to call upon me."

"Strange mutability of womanhood," he mused a half hour later as he left the lady's side. "There is a woman whom I should not care to face tomorrow morning if I were in Hugh Johnstone's shoes." It was the renegade's last verdict as he slept the sleep of the prosperous. The Willoughby dinner and his own feast now occupied his attention, for his mysterious employer had bade him to eat, drink, and be merry.

At ten o'clock the next day the "gilded youth" of the Delhi Club all knew that Hugh Johnstone had betaken himself to the Silver Bungalow, in the carriage of the woman whose beauty was now an accepted fact. Hugely delighted, these ungodly youth winked in merry surmises as to the relationship between the budding Baronet and the hidden Venus. Even bets as to discreetly "distant relationship," or a forthcoming crop of late orange blossoms were the order of the day. But silent among the merry throng, the handsome Major, making his due call of ceremony upon General Willoughby, denied all knowledge of the designs of either of the high contracting parties.

In due state, escorted by the alert Jules Victor, Hugh Johnstone entered the Silver Bungalow, to find his Cassandra silently awaiting him. There was no memory of the happenings of the day before in her unconstrained greeting. The door of the strategic cabinet was ajar, but the tottering visitor had no fears of an ambush. For Madame Alixe Delavigne calmly said: "Jules, you may remain within call, in the hall."

The old nabob's heart leaped up in a welcome relief at this command. His wrinkled face was of the hue of yellowed ivory, and his cold blue eyes were weak and watery, as he heavily lurched into a chair facing his hostess. Courage and craft had not failed him, for already Douglas Fraser was speeding on to Delhi from Calcutta, the sole occupant of a special train. In the long vigil of the night,

Hugh Johnstone had evolved a plan to ward off the blow of the sword of Fate! But watchfully silent he awaited his enemy's conversational attack.

"Damn her! I will outwit her yet!" he silently swore.

"Before you give me your answer, Hugh Fraser," said the calm-voiced woman, "I wish to tell you again what, in your mad jealousy, you would not believe. I swear to you that Pierre Troubetskoi's letter, written to my dead sister, was written in ignorance of her marriage with you. The frightful scenes of the carnage of Paris had tossed us to and fro, and the careless destruction of the envelope, addressed to my sister under her maiden name, prevented me from proving her innocence as a wife. Pierre Troubetskoi had long known my father, who had been an attache in Russia. He was Valerie's knightly suitor. And he fell into the estates which now burden me with wealth, while absent upon the Czar's secret affairs. My gallant old father was sacrificed to the frenzy of the time; his soldier's face betrayed him, his rosette of the Legion doomed him, Troubetskoi's letter to our father demanding Valerie's hand was returned to the writer, through the Russian Legation, a year later, after the reorganization of the Paris Post-office. I do not ask you to believe this, but by the God of Heaven, it is my warrant for forcing myself to the side of my dead sister's child. She shall yet have every acre and every rouble that Pierre Troubetskoi would have given to this child whom you hide. My sister died with her empty arms stretched to Heaven, imploring God for her child. And now, what terms will you make with me. In the one case, an armed peace; in the other, "war to the knife!"

"What would you have?" he stubbornly muttered. "You seek my ruin."

"I do not!" solemnly answered Berthe Louison. "God has blasted your life in denying you the love of your own child. You rule her by fear. You, in your selfish passion, once reached out your strong hand and crushed this girl's mother, a poor, fragile flower, in her girlhood. Valerie believed Pierre to be dead or false when she timidly crossed the threshold of the wedded home which you made a prison for her! You only care for this bubble Baronetcy and for your heaped-up hoards. The tribute of the shrieking ryot! Now, here are my terms: I will go down with you to Calcutta, and deliver over to you there the receipt for the deposit of jewels which holds back your coveted honor. You may do with them as you will! A visit to the Viceroy will at once clear the path. Tell any story you will of their recovery. An underling's unfaithfulness or the loss of the paper. You may remove them and surrender them as you will. Perhaps a fanciful discovery of their hiding-place here, their surrender by Hindu thieves, frightened at last; any of these conventional lies will clear your official record of the olden stain. Long years ago I would have treated with you, but I wanted to find the child. You hid her away from me. I found you out by chance in your changed name and new official residence."

"And your terms?" demanded Johnstone. He saw, with lightning cunning, a pathway leading him out of his troubles. The vigil of the night before had borne its fruit already.

"That I have free access to your house and home. That I shall be the honored guest at your table. That I shall be left in no dubious

social standing here. That I may see your daughter, learn to know her, and you may prudently arrange the story I am to tell her later. As Madame Berthe Louison, a tourist of wealth, an art dilettante, a French woman of rank and position, your social guaranty will keep the pack of human wolves away from my retreat here. I have my papers to prove all this."

"When must this be? Before I receive the jewels? Before my title to the baronetcy is perfected? What guaranty have I?" he replied.

"My honor alone! I pledge you now that I will not make myself known to Nadine until you have received the jewels and the Crown has obtained its long sequestered property. We are to come back here together. The future relations can be decided upon when I have satisfied my natural affection; when your innocently besmirched record has been righted." Hugh Johnstone's silvered head was bowed for a long interval in his trembling hands. "You will not betray me to the authorities, when all is done? Your lips shall be sealed as to the past?" Alixe Delavigne bowed in silence. "Then I accept your terms upon one condition only: That until we return from Calcutta, you will only see Nadine in my presence or in that of Mademoiselle Delande, her governess. It is only fair. When you have restored to me the jewels, you can then concert with me upon a plan to enlighten Nadine, with no scandal to me, no heart-break to her. The slightest gossip as to a family skeleton reaching the Viceroy or the home authorities would lead to my public disgrace."

Alix Delavigne paced the room in silence for a few moments, while Hugh Johnstone's eyes were fixed upon the opened cabinet whence Jules Victor had so fiercely sprung forth as a champion.

"Be it so!" sternly replied Alixe Delavigne. "And may God confound and punish the one who breaks the pact."

"When do you wish to come? When can you go to Calcutta? I would like to hasten matters," demanded the old nabob, with his eyes averted. The beautiful woman paused, and after a moment replied:

"To-morrow, come here and bring me to your house to dine. This afternoon you may call here and drive me over Delhi in your carriage. This will set a public seal upon our acquaintance. My maid can accompany us. This done, I will go to Calcutta with my two European servants, as you wish. You can take the train on either the preceding or the following day. It will avoid both spies and gossip."

"I will go before you and await you!" eagerly said Hugh Johnstone, rising. "I will ask another person to dine with us to-morrow, and this evening I will prepare my daughter for the dinner, so that your coming will be no surprise to her. Shall I bring my carriage here at four to-day?"

"I will await you," gravely said Alixe Delavigne, as she bowed in answer to her guest's formal signal of departure.

An hour later Jules Victor reported to his mistress: "We drove to the telegraph office, where I awaited the gentleman for some time, and then we repaired to his home."

There was a disgruntled man whose curses upon his kinsman's changing

moods were both loud and deep when Douglas Fraser received a telegram that night at Allahabad. "Is the old man crazy?" he demanded, as he read the words: "Wait at Allahabad for me. Keep shady. With you in three days. Telegraph your address." The canny young Scot thought of a coming legacy and obeyed the head of his clan.

Madame Berthe Louison, as Delhi was destined to know her, lingered long over her afternoon driving toilet. There was a recurring fear which made her tremble. "Would Hugh Johnstone divulge the facts as to the jewels to the Viceroy, and so gain his free rehabilitation-and then defy her? No-no! He never would dare!" she answered. "My agents are even now watching that bank. The bank would never give up the sealed packages contents unknown, save on surrender of the carefully drawn receipts." And then Berthe remembered her own secret work at Calcutta. The Grindlays knew of the surreptitious attempts made by the plausible Hugh Fraser to withdraw the deposit long before the baronetcy episode. And Berthe laughed, in memory of her capture of the receipts in the old days at Brighton, while looking for the stolen letter.

Long before that rising star of fashion, Major Alan Hawke, returned from General Willoughby's delightful dinner upon the day of Hugh Johnstone's crafty surrender, he knew that Hugh Johnstone had astounded Delhi by a personal exploitation of the Lady of the Silver Bungalow.

"By Gad! Hawke!" roared old Brigadier Willoughby, with his mouth full of chutney, "Johnstone is going the pace! First he produces a daughter, a hidden treasure, and now this wonderfully beautiful French countess."

"I suppose, General," lightly said the Major, "the old nabob will marry and retire to Europe on his coming baronetcy."

"Likely enough!" sputtered Willoughby. "You lucky young dog. I suppose you are in the secret?"

But neither that night, nor two days later, at Major Hawke's superb dinner at the Delhi Club, did the jeunesse doree of the old capital extract an admission from that mysterious "secret service" man, Major Alan Hawke. "You cannot deny, Hawke, that you dined at the marble house with the beauty whom we are all toasting," said a rallying roisterer. "And--with the Veiled Rose of Delhi!" said another, still more eagerly.

"It is true, gentlemen" gravely said Major Hawke, "that I was invited to dinner at the marble house, but Madame Louison is a stranger to me, and I believe a tourist of some rank. It was merely a formal affair. I believe that she brought letters from Paris to Hugh Johnstone." Late that night Alan Hawke laughed, as he pocketed his winnings at baccarat. "Three hundred pounds to the good! I'm a devil for luck!" And he sat down in his room to think over all the events of a day which had half turned his head. Warned by Justine Delande that Madame Louison was bidden to dine with Hugh Johnstone, Alan Hawke closely interrogated her. She evidently knew and suspected nothing. "Ah! Berthe plays a lone hand against the world," he smiled.

His mysterious employer had merely bidden him be ready to meet her there, without surprise. There was as yet no lightning move up on

the chess board, and in vain he studied her resolute, smiling face. "All I can tell you," murmured Justine to her handsome Mentor, in the seclusion of Ram Lal's back room, "is that this Madame Berthe Louison comes to spend the day in looking over Hugh Johnstone's art treasures. Nadine and I are to meet her, with the master. Do you know aught of her?"

"Nothing, dear Justine," unhesitatingly lied Alan Hawke. "Watch her and tell me all."

"I will," smilingly replied the Swiss. "I have a strange fear that Hugh Johnstone has known her before, that he intends to marry her, and then to send us two, Nadine and I, away to a quiet life in Europe." Whereupon Alan Hawke laughed loud and long.

"She is only a bird of passage, some wealthy globe wanderer, perhaps even a sly adventuress. No, old Johnstone will not tempt Fortune."

"He has been so unusually amiable," agnostically said Justine. "Of course he could hide such a design easily from Nadine, who knows nothing of love."

"She will learn! She will learn--in due time," laughed Hawke. "There is but one thing possible. This whole pretended visit may be a sham--she may even be the belle amie of this old curmudgeon."

"I will watch all three of them! You shall know all!" murmured Justine, as she stole away, not without the kisses of her secret knight burning upon her lips.

"What a consummate actress!" mused Alan Hawke, when, for the first time, since Nadine Johnstone's arrival, a formal dinner party enlivened the dull monotony of the marble house. The round table, set for five, gave Hugh Johnstone the strategic advantage of separating his secret enemy from his blushing daughter. Hawke demurely paid his devoirs to Madame Justine Delande, with a finely studied inattention to either the guest of the evening or the beautiful girl who only murmured a few words when presented to her father's only visitor. "I wonder if Justine, poor soul, will see the resemblance?" It had been a triumph of art, Madame Berthe Louison's magnificent dinner toilette, those rich robes which effaced the opening-rose beauty of the slim girl in the simplicity of her rare Indian lawn frock. Rich color and flowers and diamonds heightened the splendid loveliness of the woman who "looked like a queen in a play that night."

Alas, for Justine Delande, she was so busied with her mute telegraphy to Alan Hawke that she never saw the startling family likeness of the two women so eagerly watched by Hugh Johnstone. But the keen-eyed Alan Hawke saw the girl's fascinated gaze. He noted her virginal bosom heaving in a new and strange emotion. He marked the tender challenge of her dreamy eyes as Berthe Louison's loving soul spoke out to the radiant young beauty only held away from her heart by the stern old skeleton at the feast.

The long-drawn-out splendors of the feast were over, and the ladies had, at last, retired. Hawke observed the stony glare with which Johnstone whispered a few words of command to Justine Delande, when the two men sought the smoking-room.

The door was hardly closed upon them when the coffee and cigars were served, when Johnstone, striding forward, locked the door.

"See here, Hawke!" abruptly said the host "I want you to serve me to-night, and to stand by me while this she-devil is in Delhi. I've got to run down to Calcutta on business for a few days. She will not be here. She has some business of her own down there, also. First, find out for me, for God's sake, all about her. How she came here; where she hides in Europe; who her friends are. When you are able to, you can follow her over the world. I'll foot the bill, as the Yankees say.

"Now, to-night, I wish you to take your leave conventionally. Get away at once, and go immediately and telegraph to Anstruther in London. No, don't deny you are intimate with him. I know it. Telegraph him that I am in a position, now, to trace out and restore those missing jewels. The secret of their hiding is mine at last. Here's a hundred pounds. Don't spare your words. Within a month they will be in the hands of the Viceroy. I have to play a part to get them--a dangerous part. I pledge my whole estate to back this. But I must have my Baronetcy so that I can leave India, for I fear the vengeance of the devils who robbed the captured Princes of Oude.

"Once in England, I am safe. I'll not leave till I get the Baronetcy, and the jewels will not be delivered up until I get it. I am closely watched here."

Hawke's eyes burned fiercely. "And if I was to take the train and tell the Viceroy this?" he boldly said.

"Then I would say that you had lied--that is all."

"What do I get?" coolly demanded Hawke.

"Five thousand pounds the day that I get my Baronetcy," quietly replied Johnstone.

"I'll not do it," hotly cried Hawke. "You might say I lied," he sneered. "I want it now!"

The two men glared at each other in a mutual distrust. Hugh Johnstone pondered a moment, and said deliberately:

"I'll give you five accepted drafts for a thousand pounds each, when I return from Calcutta, on Glyn, Carr & Glyn, my London bankers, dated thirty days apart. That will make you sure of your money, and me, sure of my Baronetcy. Will you act?" Hawke knocked the ash off his Havana lightly.

"Yes, if you give me a thousand pounds cash bonus now! I am deliberately misleading Anstruther to help you. And I risk my own place to do it."

"All right," said Johnstone as he left the room, and in a few moments returned with a check-book. "There's your thousand pounds. Now listen. Not a word to old General Willoughby. He is a meddlesome old sot. I shall slip away quietly. To deceive the Delhi scandal-mongers

you must call here every day in my absence. Mademoiselle Delande will receive you. My daughter, of course, sees no one in my absence. And you can inform Delhi secretly, guardedly, that Madame Berthe Louison is an art enthusiast, a Frenchwoman of rank and fortune, and one who, in her short stay, only studies the wonders of old Oude. I don't want this damned pack of local lady-killers--the lobster-backs--to get after her. Do you understand? I'll have further use for you. I may retire to Europe. You can trust the Swiss woman. I will give her my orders."

"All right! I will go and telegraph as soon as I can make my adieux. When do you start for Calcutta?" Hawke asked warily.

"The moment you get Anstruther's reply," decisively replied Johnstone. "I'll be away for a couple of weeks in all!" Hawke turned paler than his wont, but he mused in silence and cheerfully finished his coffee and cognac. In half an hour, he left an aching void in Justine Delande's bosom, but some subtle magnetism had so drawn Berthe Louison and the heart-stirred Justine together that Hugh Johnstone was happy, when, with courtly gallantry, he escorted the beauty, who had set Delhi all agog, to her garden-bowered nest.

"Have I kept my compact?" said Berthe, as they stood once more in her "tiger's den."

"You have, madame!" said Hugh Johnstone. "I have been considering all. I will leave secretly for Calcutta in two or three days. You had better follow me in a week. I have some private business there. I will ask my friend, Major Hawke, to show you the environs. You can trust him. Telegraph me to Grindlay's Bank, Calcutta, of your arrival. I will meet you. Our business transacted, we can return together on the same train. All will then be safe." His own secret preparations were all made.

"I agree to all," said Berthe. "And, as to Nadine?"

Johnstone turned with blazing eyes, "You are to see her each day, at her own home, in the presence of Justine Delande. She will have my orders. Remember our compact! All your future association with her depends on your prudence. I will not be betrayed or openly disgraced!" His face was as black as a murderer caught in the act.

"I remember!" said the beauty of the Bungalow.

"To mystify the fools here, if I will bring my daughter and take you for a drive, each day at four, till I go," said Johnstone. "And, then, I'll have Hawke show you the city." He bowed, and at once disappeared, leaving his enemy laughing. But he grinned.

"If she knew that I go to meet Douglas Fraser, my lady would pass an uneasy night! I hold the trump cards now!"

Major Alan Hawke smiled grimly the next day, when he presented to Hugh Johnstone a neatly got up cipher, answering dispatch in code words which had cost Ram Lal just half of the bribe which Hawke gave him for the sly Hindu telegraph clerk.

"Ah! Anstruther was prompt!" said the neatly tricked nabob, when Hawke translated:



"Intelligence gratifying. Name approved and on list. Appointment sure!" Three days later, Delhi missed Hugh Johnstone from the afternoon drives, which showed Madame Louison and Nadine to an eager bevy of Madame Grundys. But the envied of all men was Major Alan Hawke, escorting Madame Louison for a week over the storied plains of the Jumna.

When Madame Berthe Louison and her two body servants took the Calcutta train, local society jumped to its sage conclusion.

"Old Hugh will lead the beautiful Countess to the altar, while Major Alan Hawke will bear off the Rosebud of Delhi, and so become the richest son-in-law in India." But the handsome Alan Hawke, each morning lingering with Justine Delande in the grounds of the marble house, never saw the face of Nadine Johnstone. The beautiful girl breathlessly awaited her new-made friend's return. But stern old Hugh Johnstone, at Calcutta, laughed as he thought of his own secret coup de main.

"Wait! Wait till I return!" he gloated. "She is powerless now!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HARRY HARDWICKE TAKES THE GATE NEATLY.

In the few days succeeding Hugh Johnstone's still unsuspected departure, the dull fires of a growing jealousy burned and smouldered in Captain Harry Hardwicke's agitated heart. The old nabob had neatly slipped away in the night, on a special engine, and the Captain heard all the growing tattle of Delhi, as to the social activity at the marble house. The open hospitable board of General Willoughby rang with the very wildest rumors. Alan Hawke seemed to be the "Prince Charming" of the hidden festivities.

Hardwicke, on the eve of his Majority, now darkly moped in his rooms, undecided to apply for a long home leave, unwilling to leave Delhi, and even afraid to ask his general for any positive favor as to a future station. Club and mess bandied the freest tattle as to old Hugh Johnstone's lovely "importation." Men eyed the prosperous Major Alan Hawke on his rising pathway with a growing envy. There was a smart coterie who now firmly believed that the Major's only "secret business" was to marry the Rose of Delhi, and then, departing on an extended honeymoon, leave the "Diamond Nabob," as the *ci-devant* Hugh Fraser was called, free to proclaim Madame Berthe Louison, queen of the marble house, and sharer of his expected dignity, the crown of his life, the long-coveted Baronetcy. When old Major Verner growled:

"That's the scheme, Hardwicke! My Lady of France makes the condition

that the young heiress shall be settled first. Gad! What a lucky dog Hawke is!" Then, Harry Hardwicke suddenly discovered that he loved the moonlight beauty of his dreams--the fair veiled Rose of Delhi. Hawke rose up as a darkly menacing cloud on his future.

His morning rides were now but keen inspections of the Commissioner's garden, and, lingering on the Chandnee Chouk, he knew, by experiments, conducted with a beating heart, just where Justine Delande was wont to wander in the lonely labyrinth, with her lovely young charge. A low double gate, a break in the high stone wall, often gave him glimpses of the two women in their morning rambles and, with a softened feeling, born of her own secret passion for Hawke, Justine Delande watched a fluttering handkerchief often answer Captain Hardwicke's morning salute.

"Tell me, Justine," said Nadine, the morning after Hugh Johnstone had stolen away, "Why does my father not ask Major Hardwicke to visit us? He is to be promoted for his superb gallantry, he is so brave--so noble! He certainly has as many claims to honor as this--this Major Hawke--whom my father has made his confidant. I don't know why, but I don't like that man!"

"What do you know of Major Hardwicke, as you call him?" cried Justine in wonder at Miss Nadine's growing interest.

"Ah!" the agitated girl cried with blushing cheeks, "Mrs. Willoughby told me how he dragged his wounded friend out of a storm of Afghan balls, and gave her back the child of her heart. It was General Willoughby who got him his Victoria Cross. And, she says that he is a hero, he is so gentle and manly--so gifted--a man destined to be a commanding general yet." The guilty Swiss woman dared not raise her eyes to watch the fleeting blushes on Nadine's cheeks.

"It is time, high time we leave India," she mused, and then, the thought of separation from Alan Hawke chilled her blood. "Let us go in," she said. "The grass is damp yet." Captain Hardwicke's argus eyes, love inspired, were now daily fixed on the marble house. He scoured Delhi and amassed a pyramid of detached fragmentary gossip in all his alarm, but one star of hope cheered him. Though Major Hawke was known as the only cavalier of Madame Louison, save the old nabob, now supposed to be ill at home; though Hawke drove out for a week with the lovely countess--to the great surprise of the local society, the handsome renegade had never once been seen in public with Miss Nadine Johnstone. Stranger still, the star-eyed Madame Berthe Louison had never accompanied the young heiress in the regular afternoon parade en voiture. "There's a mystery here," mused the lover. "Old Hugh and the Major appear daily with the Frenchwoman, but Nadine Johnstone has never been seen alone with anyone save her father, or this Swiss duenna. Hawke is making slow progress there, if any." Meeting old Simpson, the nabob's butler, Captain Hardwicke tipped him with a five-pound note. The old retired soldier grinned and opened his confidence.

"The Major! Bless your stars!" gabbled Simpson, "She's a straightaway angel, and not for the likes of him! Major Hawke has a dark spot or two in his record--away back!" grumbled Simpson, "No, Captain! Major Hawke has never set eyes on her for a single moment, but the one night of that dinner. By the way, it is the only one we ever gave!" The butler swelled up proudly.

"That night she never lifted her eyes, nor spoke even a word to him. He comes to see the Guv'nor on business, an' mighty private business it is. They're locked up together often."

"And, this marrying? The stories are now told everywhere?" queried Hardwicke, blushing, but desperately remembering that "all is fair in love and war." He, an incipient Major, a V. C.--"pumping" an old private soldier.

"Rank rot!" frankly said the butler, "They're all strangers. The French countess is only sight-seeing here and buying out old Ram Lal's shop. The old thief! She brought letters to the Guv'nor! That's all! He's no special fancy to her, and he set Major Hawke on just to do the amiable. The Guv'nor's far too old to beau the lady around. Marry?--not him! And Miss Nadine's just as silent as a flower in one of them gold vases. All she does is to look pretty and keep still, poor lamb. Her music, her books, her flowers, her birds. And as to Major Hawke and this Madame Louison--I've the Guv'nor's own orders they are never to see Miss Nadine. That is, Hawke not at all, and the lady only when Miss Delande is present! Them's my solid orders, and the old Guv'nor put my eye out with a ten-pound note--the first I ever got from him. No, Captain! You've done the handsome by me, and I give you the straight tip--wasn't I in the old Eighth Hussars with your father when we charged the rebel camp at Lucknow? I've got a tulwar yet that I cut out of the hand of a 'pandy' who was hacking away at Colonel Hardwicke."

"How did you get it, Simpson?" cried the young Captain.

"I got arm and all! Took it off with a right cut! You may know, Cap'n, that we ground our sabers in those old days! No, sir! Miss Nadine's for none of them people, and Hawke is only in the house for business. He's a deep one--is that same Hawke," concluded Simpson, pocketing his note.

Captain Hardwicke began to see the light dawning. "Alan Hawke has then some secret business scheme with the old money grubber that's all," mused the young engineer officer, happy at heart. "I'll fight a bit shy of him. His scheme may take the girl in. So, old Johnstone's away a few days. Perhaps settling his affairs before his departure. I think," the lover mused, "I will follow them to Europe, if they go, and, if they stay, Willoughby will ask for my retention, and, after all, 'faint heart never won fair lady.' Hawke is not an open suitor. If the old man should ever marry this French beauty, I may find the pathway open to Nadine Johnstone's side!"

So, with a "fighting chance," Captain Hardwicke determined that Miss Nadine should know his heart before long, and have also a chance to know her own mind. "The fact is, the old boy has lived the life of a recluse, that's all, but I'll find a way to pierce the shell of his moroseness. There's one comfort," he smiled, "No other fellow is making any running."

In these swiftly gliding days of absence, Ram Lal Singh and the watchful Major Alan Hawke conferred at length over narghileh and glass. A sullen discontent had settled down on Hawke's brow when Berthe Louison publicly departed upon her business trip with not even a fragmentary confidence.

"Wait for my return, and only watch the marble house," said the Madame. "Do not be foolish enough to attempt to call on Miss Nadine. I heard Johnstone tell the Swiss woman not to allow you to follow up any social acquaintance with his daughter. 'I want Nadine to remain a girl as yet,' growled the old brute. Now, the Swiss woman may be able to give you some information."

"I'll do what I can," carelessly replied Alan Hawke, but his eyes gleamed when she said:

"Do not sulk in your tent. On my return I shall have need of you. You can prepare to go into action then."

"Where shall I address you at Calcutta?" demanded Hawke. "Something might happen."

"Ah," smiled Berthe Louison. "Nothing will happen. Not a line, not a telegram; send nothing, come what will! I return here soon, and, besides, Old Johnstone might watch and intercept it. Remember, we do not know each other. It would be a fatal mistake to write." And so she went quietly on her way. The house was locked, the Indian servants having the Madame's orders to admit no one, on any pretense. "Damn her!" growled Alan Hawke, when the door was shut in his face. "She feared I would give her away to Johnstone. No address! Not a line or a telegram! Only wait--only wait!"

Ram Lal infuriated him later with the news that nothing could be learned from the baffled spies of the household in the Silver Bungalow as to the first or second interview of Johnstone and the resolute Alixe Delavigne. "Money will not do it! Not a lac of rupees. The Frenchman and woman never leave her day or night. He is on guard with weapons and a night light at her door, and the maid sleeps in the room.

"And she has other secret helpers!" groaned the baffled Ram Lal. "She is writing and receiving letters all the time. And yet none of these come or go by the post. She does not trust you, Major," said the jewel merchant, with a cruel gleam of his dark eyes. "I believe that she is some old love of Sahib Johnstone. They have deep dealings. She has bought a great store of jewels and trinkets from me."

"Hell and fury! I've been duped!" cried Hawke. "I see it. That damned Frenchman takes and brings the letters! But who is her local go-between? Perhaps the French Consul at Calcutta, or some banker here! I can't buy them all. She only needs me in case of a violent rupture with Johnstone. Damn her stony-hearted impertinence!"

And he mentally resolved to sell her out and out to the liberal old nabob. "He might then give his daughter to me for peace and safety. But I've got to do the trick before he finds out the falsity of Anstruther's so-called telegram. And, first, I must have something to sell. She is the devil's own for sly nerve, is my lady."

"She is too smart for us, as yet," soothingly said Ram Lal. "But wait; wait till they return! Pay me well and I will find out all that goes on. I can always get into the marble house at night. At any time, I may spy on old Johnstone and get the secret there.

I have a couple of men of my own in his house. They know where to leave a door, a window, an opened sash for me. And at the Silver Bungalow, I can go in and out secretly by day and night. She would not know. You would not wish anything to happen to her?" The old jewel merchant's voice was darkly suggestive.

"No! Devil take her!" cried Hawke. "What I want to know is hidden in her crafty head and stony heart. Death would bury it forever. Nothing must happen either to her or to him. It would spoil the whole game. Don't you see, Ram Lal, there's money in this for you and me just as long as we keep them all here under our hands. If they separate--even if one goes to Europe--you can watch one and I the other. You can always frighten money out of old Johnstone if we tell each other all, and I can follow that woman over Europe and dog her till she is driven crazy. She will fear me just as long as old Hugh Johnstone is alive, for I could sell her out to him. No one else cares. They must both live to be our bankers. Now tell me, why did either or both of them go to Calcutta--what for?" Ram Lal figuratively washed his hands in invisible water.

"Running water, passing silently, leaves no story behind, Sahib," he said, simply. "We have not caught our eels yet. But they are both coming back into our eel pot." And as the days dragged on Alan Hawke beguiled the time with the most energetic inroads into Justine Delande's heart.

"Some one must break the line of the enemy," darkly mused Alan Hawke, as in the unrestrained intimacy of their long, morning rides, he influenced the Swiss woman's heart, love-tortured, to a greater passionate surrender.

"It maybe all in all to me, in my secret career, your future fidelity," he pleaded. "It will be all in all to you, and to your sister. There will be your home, the friendship of an enormously rich woman! The girl will have a million pounds! And you and I, Justine, shall not be cast off, as one throws away an old sandal." The cowering woman clung closer daily to the man who now molded her will to his own.

The absence of Johnstone and Madame Louison seemed confirmation of the rumors of coming bridals.

"They will come back, as man and wife!" growled old Verner, to Captain Hardwicke, "and then, look out for a second bridal! Hawke and the heiress!" But Harry Hardwicke only smiled and bided his time. His daily morning ride led him to the double gateway, to at least nearby the isolation of the lovely Rose who was filling his heart with all beauty and brightness.

Major Alan Hawke had withdrawn himself into a stately solitude at the Club. His evenings were spent with Ram Lal, and his mornings with the deluded Justine, who dared not now write to the calm-faced preceptress in Geneva how far the tide of love had swept her on. In the long afternoons, Major Hawke was apparently busied with the "dispatches" which duly mystified the Club quid mines, as they were ostentatiously displayed in the letter-box. No one but Ram Lal knew of the abstraction from the mail, and destruction of these carefully sealed envelopes of blank paper. But the thieving mail clerk in their secret pay, laughed as he consigned them later to

the flames.

The astute Major was not aware that he was being daily watched by secret agents representing both the absent ones whom he desired to dupe. But a daily letter was dispatched by a local banker to a well-known Calcutta firm, which reached Madame Louison, and old Hugh Johnstone, busied at his lawyers, or sitting alone at night with Douglas Fraser in Calcutta, smiled grimly, when he, too, received his data as to Hawke's progress. A growing coldness which had cut off Hardwicke's friendship seemed to interest Hugh Johnstone. "I suppose that old Willoughby thinks Hawke is spying upon him. Just as well!"

There had been a lightning activity in the old man's movements before Madame Louison arrived in Calcutta. He was fighting for his future peace and his coveted honors. The lawyer with whom he spent his first day was astounded at the peculiar nature of the last will and testament which the old nabob ordered him to draft at once. "The steamer, Lord Roberts, goes to-morrow, and I wish a duplicate to be deposited here in the bank, under your care, as I shall write to my senior executor regarding it."

The nabob's remark, "Make your fees what you will. I give you carte blanche!" had silenced the remonstrances which rose to the lawyer's lips. "I know what I am doing, Hodgkinson," said Hugh Johnstone. "Blood is thicker than water! I can trust nothing else. These two men as executors will exactly carry out my wishes. In naming a guardian by will, for my daughter, I do not forget that she is yet a child at eighteen, and, at twenty-one, she may be the destined prey of many a fortune hunter! As for my directions and restrictions, I know my own mind!"

When Hugh Johnstone, Esq., of Delhi and Calcutta, had seen the fleet steamer, Lord Roberts, sail away for London, bearing a carefully registered document addressed to "Professor Andrew Fraser, St. Agnes Road, St. Heliers, Jersey, Channel Islands, England," he could not remember a detail forgotten in the voluminous letters of positive orders now also on their way to his distant brother. He smiled grimly as he entered the P. and O. office, and, after a private interview with the manager, called his nephew, Douglas Fraser, away to a private luncheon. They had first visited the one bank, which Johnstone trusted, and there deposited a sealed document to the order of "Douglas Fraser, executor." The young man had been alarmed at his stern old uncle's curtness, on the return trip from Allahabad, his strange manner and his grim silence. But he was simply astounded when his nabob relative quietly said:

"I have obtained a six months' leave of absence for you! Let no one know of your movements. Leave your rooms and baggage just as they are. I will now move in there, and put one of my servants in charge while you are gone. I have made my will and named your father as my executor and the guardian of my daughter, and you are to succeed, in case of his death! There will be a small fortune for you both in the fees, and neither of you are forgotten in the will! I have drawn two thousand pounds in notes for you, and here is a bank draft on London for three thousand more!" The young man was sitting in open-mouthed wonder, when the nabob sharply said: "Now! Have your wits about you! I bear all the expenses here, and your office pay goes on. You will be promoted on your return. The manager of the

P. and O. is my lifelong friend."

"What am I to do?" gasped the young man, fearing his uncle was losing his wits.

"You are to disappear from Calcutta to-night. Go without a word to a living soul! You are neither to write to a soul in India, nor open your mouth to a human being, in transit. You are to go by Madras, take the first steamer to Brindisi, and then hurry by rail to Paris and Granville, and to St. Heliers. You will find your detailed orders there with your father. Then stay there, await my orders from here, not leaving your father's side, a moment. Now, I tell you again, your future fortunes depend upon your exact obedience! I will give you my private wishes after we have had luncheon. The only thing that you will have in writing is an address to which I wish you to cable each day after you land at Brindisi, until you turn over your business to your father. You may cable also from Aden and Port Said."

The luncheon was "a short horse and soon curried." For a half an hour Hugh Johnstone earnestly whispered to his nephew, whose face was grave and ashen. At last the old man concluded, "Here is a letter to use at Delhi. There will be a telegram already in the hands of the two parties intended.

"Remember! You are to go, but once, from here to your lodgings. Then simply disappear! Take nothing but a mackintosh, an umbrella, and your traveling bag. Buy at Madras what you want. Here's a couple of hundred pounds. You will find the engine at the station now in waiting for you. The whole line is open for you. Do your Delhi work at night. The train will be made up for you the very moment you arrive at Delhi. I give you just one day to connect with the Rangoon at Madras. You are not for one single moment to lose your charge from sight till on the steamer. From Brindisi, the directions I have given cover all. Here is an envelope for the Swiss woman which will make her your friend. Now go, Douglas! This is the foundation of your fortune. If you succeed, you will have all I leave behind in India. In case of any trouble in India, telegraph instantly to this address, and I will join you at once. Memorize this address, and destroy it then! Telegraph to me from Delhi, but only when you start. And, when you sail from Madras, only the name of the steamer. The trainmen will do the rest. They have their orders already. Is there anything else?"

The young man pulled himself together. "It's like the Arabian Nights!"

"Go ahead, now, and show yourself a man!" cried Hugh Johnstone, almost in anguish. "I do not wish to see you again until you have earned your fortune! One last word: You are to make no explanations whatever!"

The young envoy grasped his kinsman's hands, crying: "You may count on me in life and death! I'll do your bidding."

Old Johnstone drank a bottle of pale ale and composedly smoked a cheroot, after he had watched the stalwart, rosy young Briton stride away on his strange journey. A robust, frank-faced, fine young fellow of twenty-six, with the fair brow and clear blue eyes

of the "north countree," was manly Douglas Fraser.

Toiling resolutely to rise, step by step, in the service of the Peninsular and Oriental Steamship Company, he had never dreamed of the sudden favor of his rich kinsman, and yet, loyal as the good Sir James Douglas, he silently took up his quest.

"I can't understand the old gentleman," he mused as he hurried a half an hour later into the station, though prudently selected by-streets. "There may be some old official entanglement hanging over him yet. Some reason why he would quit India quietly, or perhaps some one who owes him a grudge. At any rate I'll do my duty to him like a man--to him and to the others--like a gentleman."

Hugh Johnstone measuredly betook his way to Douglas Fraser's lodgings.

Before the old man was settled on Douglas's cozy wicker lounge, the pilot engine was tearing away with the young voyager, who had simply stepped out of his own life to make a sudden fortune.

"Now, damn you, Alixe Delavigne," hoarsely muttered the old man, when alone, "I will see you to-morrow! You shall rule me until I get these two coffers out of the bank, and until our home-coming at Delhi. Then, you jade," he growled, "Ram Lal shall do the business for you, even if it costs me ten thousand pounds!" which proves that an old tiger may be toothless and yet have left to him strong claws to drag his prey down. "Money will do anything in India or anywhere else!" the old nabob growled, forgetting that even all the yellow gold of the Rand or the gleaming diamonds of the Transvaal will not avail to fill the burned-out lamp of life!

The prolonged absence of the embryo Sir Hugh Johnstone was a matter of public comment in Delhi, while the knowing ones winked significantly at the almost triumphal departure of Madame Berthe Louison, whose special car and ample retinue made her a modern European Queen of Sheba. "Tell you what, fellows," said "Rattler" Murray, otherwise known as "Red Eric, of the Eighth Lancers," "the old Commissioner will return superbly 'improved and illustrated' with her, a new edition of the standard old work. You see, there's a French Consul-General at Calcutta, and then and there the matrimonial obsequies will be performed. But I'll give him just a year's life," and the gay lieutenant struck an attitude, quoting the menacing jargon in "Hamlet":

"In second husband, let me be accurst; None wed the second, but who killed the first."

"What infernal rot you do gabble, Murray!" suddenly cried Alan Hawke, dropping a double barrier of the newest Times, as he prepared to leave the clubroom in disgust. "Hugh Johnstone was only called down to Calcutta on some important financial business some days ago, and he went there simply to rearrange some of his large investments. Madame Louison is only a stranger here, a tourist traveling incognito, and connected with some of the best noble families of France." With great dignity Major Hawke stalked away to his rooms, leaving the club for a long drive in disgust.

By the next evening Madame Berthe Louison had been discovered to be



a noble relative of the Comte de Chambord, "traveling incognito," and then the clacking tongues of gossip rose up in a shrill chorus of greater intensity. Immense investments of the Orleans fortunes in Indian properties to be managed by Major Alan Hawke were discovered to be the object of her Indian tour, with wise old Hugh Johnstone as an infallible financial adviser. But Alan Hawke smiled his superior smile and said nothing.

All this and more soon reached the ears of Capt. Harry Hardwicke, whose fever of gnawing curiosity and romantically born love was now strong upon him. A second conference with his old friend Simpson enlightened the engineer officer upon many things, as yet "seen in a glass darkly." He began to fear that Alan Hawke was growing dangerous as the secret juggler in the strange social situation at the marble house. With the vise-like memory of an old soldier, Simpson had retained various anecdotes not entirely to the credit of the self-promoted Major Alan Hawke, and had partly supplied the hiatus between the sudden disappearance of the desperate lieutenant, a rake gambler and profligate, and the return of the prosperous and debonnaire Major en re'traite. "Don't let him work too long around Miss Nadine, Major Hardwicke," said the wary Simpson. "Sly and quiet as he seems, he's surely here for no good. I know him of old. He's forgotten me, though."

That night, the night when Berthe Louison, in her special car was nearing Calcutta, at last, Captain Hardwicke was haunted in his dreams by the sweet apparition of Nadine Johnstone, and her lovely arms were stretched appealingly to him. It was the early dawn when he awoke, and sprang blithely from his couch. "If that graceful shade crosses my path to-day, I'll speak to it in the flesh--though a dozen Hawkes and a hundred crusty fathers forbid," he gayly cried, for his entrancing dream had given him a strangely prophetic courage.

In the ambrosial freshness of the morning, a long gallop upon his pet charger, "Garibaldi," restored the equilibrium of the young officer's nerves. He had neatly taken the strong-limbed cross-country horse over a dozen of the old walls out by the Kootab Minar, and with the reins lying loosely on Garibaldi's neck, he rode back to the live city by the side of its two dead progenitors.

The bustle and hum of awaking Delhi interested him not, for a fond unrest led him down to the great walled inclosure of the marble house.

"Shall I see her to-day? Will she be in the garden?" he murmured in his loving day-dream.

The springy feet of the charger dropped noiselessly on the lonely avenue and already the double carriage gate was in sight. An instinct of martial coquetry caused Harry Hardwicke to gather up his reins and straighten lightly into the military position of eyes right. He was watching the gate of Paradise, a Paradise as yet forbidden to him.

Yes. There was the gleam of white robes shining out across the friendly gate.

Standing under a huge spreading camphor tree, a graceful form was there, clear cut against the dark foliage, and seeming to float

upon the tender green of the dewy grass. A nymph--a goddess, shyly standing there, was shading her eyes with one slender hand and gazing down the path toward the golden East which was bringing to the Lady of his dreams, a flood of golden sunlight and her secret adorer, the man whose lonely young heart had throned her as its queen. Hardwicke raised his head quickly as a wild shriek sounded out upon the still morning air.

The lover with one agonized glance saw the outspread arms of Justine Delande, and heard again a voice which had thrilled his soul in loving memory. It appealed for aid. Nadine was shrieking for help.

With one glance, the young soldier gathered his noble steed. There was but twenty yards for the rally and the raise, but the game old "Garibaldi" dropped as lightly on the other side of the closed carriage gate as any "blue ribbon" of the Galway "Blazers."

There was a moment, but one fleeting moment, given to the lover to see the danger menacing the woman whom he loved. His heart was icy, but his hand was quick. There, a few feet only from the horribly fascinated girl, a cobra di capello rising and swaying in angry undulations. The huge snake was angrily hissing with a huge distended puffed hood swelling menacingly over the dirty brown body. "Standfast!" yelled Hardwicke in agony.

There was a gleam of steel, the rush of a charger's feet, and as man and horse swept by the fainting girl--the swing of a saber, and the heavy trampling of iron-clad hoofs! Only Justine Delande saw the flashing saber cleaving the air again and again, as Hardwicke gracefully leaned to his saddle bow, in the right and left cut on the ground. And Garibaldi's beating hoofs soon completed the work of the circling sword.

And then as the Swiss woman broke her trance and turned to run toward the house, the young horseman leaped lightly to the ground. "Go on, go on!" he cried. "The other snake is not far off!" When Simpson and the frightened domestics rushed out to the veranda in a panic, they only saw before them a graceful youth with his strong arms burdened with the senseless form of the woman he loved--the woman whose life he had saved!

And, dangling from his right wrist, by the leather sword-knot, hung the saber which Colonel Hardwicke had swung in the mad onslaught on the mutineers' camp at Lucknow.

"Here, Simpson! Send for Doctor McMorris!" cried Hardwicke, as a dozen willing hands sprang to aid him. "Bring brandy, ammonia, and oil!" There was a bamboo settee on the veranda. It received the precious burden which the soldier had held against his heart. "Carry her to her rooms! Gently, now!" commanded the captain. Seizing Justine by the arm, he said: "I think that I arrived in time. Go! Go! You will find me waiting for you here! Examine her at once! The hot iron and artery ligatures alone will save her if she was bitten!" His brow was knotted in agony.

"You came between them!" gasped Justine. "The thing never reached her side!"

"God be thanked! Go! Go!" cried Hardwicke. "I have my work to do

here!" A black servant had already led the dancing Garibaldi out to the open safety of the graveled carriage drive. "Look to my horse!" cried Hardwicke. "See that he is not bitten!" and then he slowly walked over to where a dozen menials, with heavy clubs, had beaten the writhing cobra into a shapeless mass.

"Come away, all of you!" cried the captain, in Hindustanee. "Run, some of you, and get the snake catcher!" Doctor McMorris, arriving on the gallop, had reported the absolute safety of the frightened girl, when Harry Hardwicke, leaning on his sheathed sword, watched a slim, glittering-eyed Hindu, followed by a boy bearing an earthen pot, who had noiselessly reconnoitered the vicinity of the great tree. The boy most keenly watched all the movements of his white-robed master, who, drawing a little fife from his red cummerbund sash, began to play a shrill, weird tune. A frightened household coterie watched from a safe distance the thirty-foot circle of herbage around the shade of the giant tree trunk. A shudder crept over the watchers as a huge brown head, with two white circles on the back of the neck, rose slowly out of the grass, and two red-hot gleaming eyes blazed out, as an immense cobra swelled out its fearfully disgusting hood, and, rising halfway, bloated out its loathsome head, swaying to and fro, to the strange music. "There's the mate!" quietly whispered Hardwicke to Simpson. The snake now showed its greasy belly, like dirty stained marble, and the lithe boy, circling behind it, warily essayed to drop the red earthen pot over its head. But one of the excited servants, stealing up, had released a little mongoose, which now bravely darted upon its deadly enemy.

Seven times did the active little animal dart upon the huge reptile, in a confusedly vicious series of attacks and close in a deadly conflict, and, when, at last, the snake charmer walked disgustedly away, the little ferret's sharp teeth were transfixed in the throat of its dead enemy.

A handful of silver to the snake catcher and his boy sent them away delighted, while the wounded mongoose, having greedily sucked the blood of the dead cobra, wandered away in triumph, creeping on its belly into the rank grass in search of the life-saving herb which it alone can find, to cure the venom-inflamed wounds of the deadly "naja." The silent duel was over, and the bodies of the dreadful vipers were hastily buried.

"I shall call this afternoon, at five, to ask Miss Johnstone if she has entirely recovered," gravely said Captain Hardwicke to Mademoiselle Justine Delande, when the still excited Swiss woman poured forth her congratulations to the young hero of this morning's episode. Hardwicke was standing with his gloved hand grasping the mettlesome "Garibaldi's" bridle. Justine Delande threw her arms around the neck of the noble horse and kissed his sleek brown cheek. Then she whispered a few words to Captain Hardwicke, which made that young warrior's heart leap up in a wild joy.

He laughed lightly as he said: "Keep this quiet. Pray do not allow Miss Johnstone to walk any more in the dewy grass. These deadly reptiles affect moisture, and, strange to say, they love the vicinity of human habitations. As for 'Garibaldi,' good old fellow, I'll bring him this afternoon, but I'll not take him again over the gate. It was a pretty stiff jump for the old boy." When Simpson escorted the happy Captain to the opened carriage gate, he threw

up his wrinkled hand in salute.

"You're your father's own son, Captain, and God bless you and good luck to you and the young mistress."

There was no answer as Harry spurred the charger down the road, but Simpson pocketed a sovereign, with the sage prophecy that things were at last, going the right way.

The watchful Hugh Johnstone was already in waiting, on this very morning, at the East Indian station in Calcutta, with a sumptuous carriage; for a telegram had warned him that the woman whom he dreaded, and had secretly doomed, was fast approaching. His heart was resolutely set upon the master stroke of his life, for a private audience with the Viceroy of India had been graciously granted him at two o'clock. "I am saved--if nothing goes wrong," he murmured, as the Delhi train trundled into the station.

A steely glare lit up his eyes as he advanced with raised sun helmet to meet the Lady of the Silver Bungalow.

In the train were one or two of the curious Delhi quid nuncs, who smiled and exchanged glances as the embryo Sir Hugh led the lady to the carriage.

On the box Jules Victor sat bolt upright clasping a traveling bag, while Marie gazed at the swarming streets of Calcutta from her mistress's side. "She is on the defensive. I'll show her a trick," old Hugh murmured, as he noted the servants' presence.

A few murmured words exchanged between the secret foes caused Hugh Johnstone to sternly cry, "To Grindlay and Company's Bank."

The dark goddess Kali, patron demon of Kali Ghatta, was hovering above them in the pestilential air as the carriage swiftly rolled along the superb streets of the metropolis born of Governor Charnock's settlement in sixteen eighty-six. The gift of an Emperor of Delhi to the ambitious English, Fort William had grown to be an octopus of modern splendor. Down the circular road, past the splendid Government House, they silently sped through the "City of Palaces." Berthe Louison never noted the varied delights of the Maiden Esplanade, nor, even with a glance honored Wellesley and Ochterlony, raised up there in marble effigy. Her face was as fixed as bronze, while Hugh Johnstone, right and left, saluted his countless friends.

Men of the Bengal Asiatic, the Bethune, the Dai-housie, plumed generals, native princelings, gay aides-de-camp, grave judges, and university Dons eagerly bowed to the richest civilian in Bengal--the homage of triumphant wealth.

Stared at from club windows, Johnstone, with proudly erect head, nodded to fashion's fools, crowding there all eager to catch a glimpse of the lovely Lady Johnstone in posse.

For these last days of waiting had been only a mental torture to the nabob assailed by rallying gossipers. He was now counting grimly the moments till a telegram from Delhi should seal his safety for life. And then, his dark and silent revenge!

At Grindlay's Bank, Madame Louison quietly descended, leaning on the arm of Hugh Johnstone. There was hurrying to and fro on their appearance, and in ten minutes a second carriage received the disguised Alixe Delavigne, while the Manager of Grindlay's escorted her, under the eyes of her two guardians. The Golden Calf was the reigning god, even in these later days.

With a dignified pace, the carriage of Hugh Johnstone led the way to the Bank of Bengal, where a private room soon hid the three principal parties from the gaze of the multi-colored throng of clerks and accountants. A conference of the gravest nature ensued, as both the Bank Managers jealously watched each other.

Hugh Johnstone was as pale as a man wrestling with the dark angel when Madame Louison produced a faded document and a receipt of extended legal verbiage. The Manager of Grindlay's gazed, in mute surprise, when the highest dignitary of the Bengal Bank at last entered the room, followed by two porters bearing two brass-bound mahogany boxes of antique manufacture. Hugh Fraser Johnstone's stony face was carelessly impassive.

"Pray examine these seals!" the newcomer said, "and, remember, Mr. Johnstone, that we exact your absolute release for the long-continued responsibility. Here is a memorandum of the storage and charges. You must sign, also, as Hugh Fraser--now Hugh Fraser Johnstone."

Old Hugh Johnstone's voice never trembled, as he said, after a minute inspection:

"I will give you a cheque." Then, dashing off his signature upon the receipt tendered by Madame Louison, he calmly said: "These things are only of a trifling value--some long-treasured trinkets of my dead wife's. May I be left alone for a moment?"

The three silent witnesses retired into an adjoining room. In five minutes, Hugh Johnstone called the Bank Governor to his side. "There is your receipt, duly signed, and your cheque to balance, Mr. Governor. We are now both relieved of a tiresome controversy. Will you please bring in the others?"

With a pleasant smile, the flush of a great happiness upon his face, Hugh Fraser Johnstone remarked: "I desire to state publicly that Madame Louison and my self have, in this little transaction, closed all our affairs. I have given to her a quit-claim release of all and every demand whatsoever." With kindly eyes, Berthe Louison listened to a few murmured words from Hugh Johnstone. Bowing her stately head, she swept from the room upon the arm of the polite manager of Grindlay's.

"Home," said the genial banker, as he deferentially questioned the Lady of the Silver Bungalow. "Do you honor us with a long visit?" he eagerly asked.

"I return to-morrow evening, on the same train with the soon-to-be Sir Hugh. I only came here to attend to some business at the French Consulate and to adjust this trifling matter." Hugh Johnstone writhed in rage, as he saw the cool way in which Berthe Louison fortified her safety lines.

Before they were in the shelter of the banker's superb mansion, Hugh Johnstone was double locked within the walls of Douglas Fraser's apartment.

"I have two hours to work in" he gasped, after a nervous examination of the contents of the cases which had been placed at his feet in his carriage. "And, then, for the Viceroy! But first to the steamer and the Insurance Office!"

Not a human being in Calcutta ever knew the contents of the small steel strongbox which occupied the place of honor in the treasure room of the Empress of India on her speeding down the Hooghly. But a Director of the Anglo-Indian Assurance Company opened his eyes widely when Hugh Johnstone, his fellow director, cheerfully paid the marine insurance fees on a policy of fifty thousand pounds sterling. "I am sending some of my securities home, Mainwaring," the great financier said. "I intend to remove my property, bit by bit, to London. I do not dare to trust them on one ship." The director sighed in a hopeless envy of his millionaire friend.

Hugh Johnstone's Calcutta agent was also solemnly stirred up when his principal gave him some private directions as to the custody of his private papers and a substantial Gladstone bag, consigned to the recesses of the steel vaults. "I go back with these papers to Delhi to-morrow night. Give me the keys of my private compartment till then. In a few months I may be called to London. Douglas Fraser will have my power of attorney."

With a sunny gleam in his face, Hugh Johnstone then alertly sprang into his carriage, when he had finished his careful toilet, to meet the Viceroy of India. The two brass-bound mahogany cases were left standing carelessly open upon his table in Douglas Fraser's rooms, neatly packed with an assortment of toilet articles and all the multitudinous personal medical stores of a refined Anglo-Indian "in the sere and yellow."

"Five pounds worth!" laughed Hugh Johnstone, as he closed the door. "Now, in one hour, my Lady Disdain, I can say 'Checkmate.' Ram Lal shall attend to you later--behind all your bolts and bars. He will find a way to reach you."

It was a matter of profound speculation to the gilded youth of the Government House what strangely sudden friendship had blossomed to bring the august representative of the great Victoria, Kaiser-I-Hind, and Queen of England, as far as the middle of the audience room, in close colloquy with, and manifesting an almost affectionate leave-taking of, the silver-haired millionaire of Delhi.

But that night the most confidential General "at disposal" received from the Viceroy some secret orders which caused the experienced soldier's eyes to open widely.

"Remember! The personal interests of the Crown are involved here!" said the Viceroy. "Any mistake might cost me my Sovereign's confidence and you your commission, perhaps a Star of India!" he laughed, with an affected lightness.

In far-away Delhi, as the sun faded away into the soft summer twilight, Harry Hardwicke was sitting at the side of Nadine Johnstone, while

her stern father secretly exulted in distant Calcutta. He had already mailed by registered post a set of duplicated receipts and insurance policies for his last shipment addressed to "Professor Andrew Fraser" and his mind was centered upon some peculiarly pleasurable coming events to take place in the Marble House. But the dreamy-eyed girl watching the man who had so gallantly saved her life, thought only of a love which had stolen into her heart to wake all its slumbering chords to life, and to loosen the sweet music of her singing soul! They were alone, save for the bent figure of Justine Delande at a distant window, and the spirit of Love breathed upon them silently drew them heart to heart.

Here now, before the divinity so fondly worshiped, Harry Hardwicke lost his soldier's ready voice. "Say no more! You need rest, Miss Nadine! I shall only call to-morrow to assure myself of your perfect recovery. When your father returns I shall do myself the honor to ask his formal permission to visit you later." There was a sigh and a sob as Nadine Johnstone took her silent lover's hands and pressed them in her own, bursting into happy tears.

"I owe you my life--my father shall speak, but in my own heart I shall treasure your splendid bravery forever!" Her tall young knight stooped over the little hands, kissed them, and was turning to go, when the maiden slipped off a sparkling ring. "Wear this always for my sake; I can say no more till we meet again!" And, bending low, Captain Hardwicke stepped backward, as from a queen's presence, leaving her there, weak, loving, and trembling in a strange delight.

As he rode slowly homeward in the evening's glow, he passed Major Alan Hawke dashing away to the railway station in a carriage. Traveling luggage told the story of a sudden jaunt. A wave of the hand and the secret-service man was gone. Hawke growled: "Damned young jackanapes, I'll fool you, too; but what does old Johnstone want?" He was reading a telegram just received: "Come to meet me at Allahabad. Have brought the drafts. Want you for a few days down here."

At ten o'clock next morning, Simpson, his voice all broken, his old eyes filled with tears, dashed into Captain Hardwicke's office. "Dead?" cried the young soldier, springing up in a sudden horror. "No. Gone over night--both the women--God knows where, but they left secretly, by the Master's orders!" And then Hardwicke sank back into his chair with a groan. But, at Allahabad, Major Alan Hawke was raving alone in a helpless rage. There was no Johnstone there, and Ram Lal Singh had telegraphed him: "The daughter and governess went away in the night by the railroad--special train. A man from Calcutta took them away."

"You shall pay for this, you old hound!" he yelled, "Yes, with your heart's blood."

## CHAPTER IX.

### ALAN HAWKE PLAYS HIS TRUMP CARD.

When the Calcutta train rolled into Allahabad, two days after Harry Hardwicke's crushing surprise, Major Alan Hawke, the very pink of Anglo-Indian elegance, awaited the dismounting of the returning voyagers. He had passed a whole sleepless night in revolving the various methods to play off each of his wary employers against each other, and had decided to let Fate make the game.

"The devil of it is, I'm not supposed to know anything of the flitting!" he mused, after digesting Ram Lal Singh's carefully worded telegrams. All the light in his shadowy mental eclipse was the positive information that a special train had been made up for Bombay at the station, "on government secret service."

"The old man is preparing to fight, now," he decided. "His 'wooden horse' is within Berthe Louison's camp. If she is not wary, she may never leave India, Johnstone can be very ugly. But what must I do? Shall I warn Berthe, now? If I do, she will both doubt me and make a scene. Old Johnstone will then know at once that I have betrayed him." An hour's cogitation led Alan Hawke to decide to let the "high contracting parties" fight it out themselves at Delhi.

"I'll secretly join the winner and then bleed them both. I must be unconscious of all. Johnstone's money I want first, then, Berthe must pay me well for my aid." With an exquisite nosegay of flowers, he awaited the slow descent of the social magnates. A second telegram from Johnstone had warned him that the wanderers were on the same train. "He is a cool devil!" mused Hawke.

Radiant in beauty, pleasantly smiling, and watched by her French bodyguard, Madame Louison swept into the grand cafe room upon the arm of Hugh Johnstone, who deftly exchanged a silent glance of warning with the artful Major. The first intimation of Johnstone's craft was the fact that Alan Hawke found he could not manage to see Madame Louison alone, even for a single moment. There was a veiled surprise in her beautiful brown eyes, when the nabob led Hawke a few tables away for a conference in full view of the beauty, who was surrounded with a cloud of obsequious attendants. "As we have but one hour, Madame, pray at once, order a repast for us all. I must have a few words with Hawke." Johnstone was as smiling as a summer sea.

"We were delayed a day by my own private business," genially cried the nabob. "What's new in Delhi?"

It was the crowning lie of Hawke's splendidly mendacious career when he carelessly said, "Nothing. I supposed, of course, that you had grave need of me here."

"So I have," earnestly replied Johnstone, as the station master bustled up, scraping and bowing, with a bundle of letters and several telegrams. "Just look over these five drafts on Glyn, Carr & Glyn's, while I look at the letters," whispered Johnstone, handing Hawke an official looking envelope. Even while the adventurer carefully scanned the bills of exchange, he saw a gleam of devilish triumph



in the old man's eyes as he opened the telegrams, and with affected carelessness shoved his letters in his pocket. "See here, Hawke! You can even earn a neat 'further donation' if you will play your part rightly. General Abercromby, as personally representing the Viceroy, arrives here to-morrow night to adjust my accounts finally. He will be a week or so at Delhi. I want you to represent me and receive him here. I've telegraphed back to Abercromby that you will bring him up in a special car. He does not want old Willoughby to think he is nosing around Delhi. Now, do the handsome thing. Abercromby knows you. Here is a pocket-book. Lose a few fifty-pound notes to the old boy on the train. Amuse him, mind you, and set him up well! The car will be well stocked. I leave my two men here to wait on you and him. That's all. I want to go off 'in a blaze of glory,' as the Yankees would say. I will meet you at Delhi. Abercromby comes to my house. Can I depend on you? And, not a single word about the Baronetcy. The Viceroy has graciously sent a special dispatch to England."

"All right. Let us join the Madame," said Hawke, with an uneasy feeling of a coming tropical storm, "I'm glad to be out of it," mused Hawke. "If Abercromby stays a week, both parties will defer hostilities until he goes. If that soft-hearted Swiss fool only telegraphs! By God, I would have liked to have had one final tete-a-tete. She can make my fortune yet."

The flying minutes glided easily away, with Hugh Johnstone's old-time gallantry artfully separating the two secret conspirators against his peace. Alan Hawke lunched gayly, with but one lurking regret--a futile sorrow that he had not bent Justine Delande to his will. There was no dark pledge between them, no secret bond of a man's perfidious victory, no soft surrender, the seal of a woman's dishonor.

"Will she telegraph?" the adventurer asked himself with a beating heart and a burning brain. "If so, then I hold them both in my hands, and the game is mine." When the train drew out, the Major watched the disappearing forms of the mortal enemies in a secret wonder. "Have they made it up? Will they marry after all?" he growled, and yet he laughed the idea to scorn. "And yet fear, as well as love, has tied the nuptial knot before," he mused.

A new proof of Johnstone's craft was afforded him after he had, in a leisurely way, verified the regularity of his windfall in good London exchange, signed by the millionaire upon his home bankers, and duly stamped. A mental flash of lightning showed him how he was "sewed up," for Johnstone's all too polite servants shadowed him, alternately, in his every movement. He even dared not visit the secret telegraph address. "Old scoundrel!" raged Alan Hawke. "I will only get the first news after the fair and probably in a storm from Berthe. The denouement may occur with me languishing here in Capua. Suppose that this she-devil would bolt? Where would I land then?" He was most sadly rattled.

In the Delhi train, Hugh Johnstone busied with his late London papers, slyly smiled as he studied a route map and railway time table. He had received a single telegraphed word, dated Madras, and wisely left unsigned, but that one word was the keynote of his coveted victory--"Arrived."

"Ah! my lady," he mused, casting his eyes in the direction of Madame Louison's cozy private compartment. "To-morrow at Delhi, if Douglas Fraser is true to his trust, there will be the message which tells of a 'bark upon the sea,' which bears away forever all the brightness of your life--away from you, yes, forever! And Hawke, this smart cad, is powerless now, and both of them are outwitted. The Baronetcy is safe the very moment that Abercromby's work is done. I've paid Hawke now, and he has been very naturally brought down here, out of the way. Madame! Madame! Now to settle accounts with you the very moment that Abercromby has reported back from Calcutta. I think I will just have a good old-fashioned talk with Ram Lal Singh. I need his evidence to hoodwink this old cask of grog, Abercromby. I must blow off his vanity in great style."

While Berthe Louison slept, while old Hugh Johnstone plotted, while Ram Lal Singh fumed at Delhi, and Harry Hardwicke "mourned the hopes that left him," Major Alan Hawke retired to the Nirvana of a long afternoon siesta. There was a little departing detachment on this golden afternoon at Madras--two frightened women, now gladly seeking the shelter of their cabins, as the fleet steamer Coomassie Castle turned her prow toward Palk Strait. The terrible ordeal of "passing the surf" had appalled them, and the exhausted Nadine Johnstone at last fell asleep with her arms clasped around her sad-hearted governess. A hundred times had they read over together the old nabob's telegram: "Going home from Calcutta to settle the Baronetcy appointment. Will meet you in Europe." Nadine's letter from her stern father bade her implicitly trust to her new-found kinsman, Douglas Fraser. The old nabob's judiciously private letter had filled Justine Delande's sad heart with one twilight glow of happiness. A comforting cheque for one thousand pounds was contained therein.

The words: "Your salary and expenses will be paid by me in Europe. This is only a little present. Another may await you and your sister, if you fulfill your trust, that no man, not even Douglas Fraser, meets my daughter alone until you give her back to me. He is but my traveling agent. Nadine is in your hands alone. I have so written to her." With a breaking heart Justine Delande kissed her beloved gage d'amour, the diamond bracelet, murmuring: "Alan! Alan! To part without even a word!" She lay with tear-stained eyes, watching the low shores of Madras fade away, and listened to the sleeping girl's murmur: "Harry! Harry! I owe you my life!" Even the maid mourned a dashing Sergeant-Major! With a desperate courage, trying to fan the spark of love, which had slowly crept into her lonely heart, Justine Delande had timidly bribed a stewardess, going on shore for some last commissions, to telegraph to the secret address at Allahabad the words: "Madras steamer Coomassie Castle, Brindisi."

The signature, "Your Justine," brought a grim smile to Alan Hawke's face, the next night, when on the arrival of General Abercromby, he stationed Hugh Johnstone's secret spies on duty with the redoubtable Calcutta warrior. "By God! She is both game and true!" cried Hawke. "Here is my fortune, and Justine shall share my spoils yet!" As the special train rolled out into the starlit night the old nabob, in a paroxysm of delight, read in the marble house words telegraphed by the happy-hearted Douglas Fraser, now taking up his endless deck tramp on the Brindisi bound steamer. The young Scotsman, ignorant of all intrigue, was relieved to know that he had laid the firm

foundation of his future fortunes. His last shore duty was done when he had wired to his urgent relative in Delhi the glad tidings: "All right. Coomassie Castle. Orders strictly obeyed."

Even the astute Alan Hawke failed, after many days of futile private research, to trace the route of the train which had pulled out of Delhi in the dead of night, beat the record to Allahabad, and then, turning off apparently for Bombay, had curved, on a loop, to the Madras line, and surpassed all speed records on the Indian Peninsula. Even when he telegraphed to Ram Lal's friends at Madras, he could obtain no definite trace, the railway officials were silent, and the travelers had sought no hotel in Madras. Hugh Johnstone's well applied money had smothered all inquiry. Even the driver and stokers of the special train never knew who so generously presented them with a ten pound note apiece. "Some secret service racket," they laughed over their ale. Not a tremor of a single muscle betrayed Major Alan Hawke when he delivered over his official charge, Major General Abercromby, to Hugh Johnstone in the golden glow of Delhi's morning. "I've kept your interests in view," he whispered. "The old boy's just two hundred pounds richer. And, you may be sure, he wanted for nothing. I know all his damned old tiger and mutiny stories by heart. I'm going up to the Club for a good long sleep. My compliments to the ladies," lightly said Alan Hawke, as he gracefully declined Hugh Johnstone's invitation to breakfast. Then Johnstone bore off his purple prize, set in red and gold.

The wide ripple of excitement caused by General Abercromby's reported arrival had crowded the railway station. Hugh Johnstone chuckled, "Evidently Hawke knows nothing," as the two old friends drove away in splendid state. But Major Hawke, an hour later, at his Club, was suddenly interrupted in a cozy breakfast by the most unceremonious entrance of Major Harry Hardwicke, whose promotion was at last gazetted. "Hello! I see you're a Major now. Lucky devil! What can I do for you, Hardwicke?" cried Alan Hawke, eyeing the haggard and worn-looking young officer with a strange dawning suspicion of the truth. "Did he know, too, of the Hegira?"

Major Hardwicke threw himself down in a chair, curtly saying: "You can tell me who effectuated this lightning disappearance act of Madame Delande and young Miss Johnstone."

"You speak in riddles to me, Hardwicke," coolly said the wary Major. "I've just come in from Allahabad with General Abercromby, who is here to settle old Johnstone's accounts. I know nothing of what you refer to. I expected to meet both the ladies at dinner to-day."

"Then I will not uselessly take up your time, Major Hawke," gloomily rejoined Hardwicke, as he picked up his sword, and, with a cold formal bow, quitted the room.

"I must watch this young fool," growled Alan Hawke. "Thank my lucky stars, the woman is far away! But, he's well connected, has a brilliant record, and is a V. C. now for Berthe Louison and the fireworks! But, first, old Ram Lal! They bowled the old boy out! I suppose that he has already told Alixe Delavigne that she has been outwitted. I hold the trump cards now! No single word without its golden price! I must not make one false step! As to the club men, I only join in the general wonder." He made a careful and very studied toilet and sauntered out of the club en flaneur, and then

stealthily betook himself to the pagoda in Ram Lal's garden, where his innocent dupe had so often waited for him with a softly beating heart.

"I'm glad the girl is gone," mused Alan Hawke. "If she were here, the chorus hymning Hardwicke's perfections might set her young heart on fire." He was, as yet, ignorant of the tender bond of gratitude fast ripening into Love. For, Love, that strange plant, rooted in the human heart, thrives in absence, and, watered by the tears of sorrow and adversity, fills the longing and faithful heart, in days of absence, with its flowers of rarest fragrance and blossoms of unfading beauty. Nadine Johnstone, speeding on over sapphire seas, had already conquered the tender secret of the simple Justine Delande's heart; and in her own loving day-dreams:

"Aye she loot the tears down fa' for Jock o' Hazeldean!"

"I must see him again! I must see him!" she fondly pledged her waiting heart. With the serpent cunning of a loving maiden, she brooded like a dove with tender eyes, and so in her heart of hearts, determined to draw forth from her stalwart cousin, Douglas Fraser, the secret of their future destination. And the honest fellow became even as wax in her hands; while the gloomy Hardwicke, in far-away Delhi, eyed the parchment-faced Hugh Johnstone in mute wonder, at the long official reception in the Marble House. "Will he not vouchsafe to me even one word of thanks?" thought the young man, in an increasing wonder.

But, Ram Lal Singh, when Major Alan Hawke drew him into the sanctum behind the shop, showed a dark face, seamed with lines of care. "There will be some terrible happening!" muttered the smooth old Mohammedan.

He had good gift of the world's gear, and now preferred the role of fox to lion. "She knows nothing as yet. I waited till I could see you. I dared not to tell her. She only fancies that this official visit of the General-Sahib from Calcutta will, of course, take up all their time at the marble house. But she begs me to watch them all, and she has given me some little presents--money presents." Hawke winced, but in silence. His employer trusted him not. Here was proof positive.

"How in the devil's name did they get away without you knowing of it?" demanded Hawke. "If you are lying to me, Ram Lal, we may lose both our pickings from this fat pagoda tree. You see old Johnstone may slip away after the girl. He may leave here with Abercromby."

The jewel merchant's eyes gleamed with a smoldering fire. "Johnstone Sahib will not leave Delhi. It is in the stars! He has too much here to leave. There are many old ties which bind. No, he will not go like a thief in the night." Hawke was surprised at the old rascal's evident emotion.

"Then tell me what you think about the disappearance of these women," said Hawke, watching him keenly.

"I have seen all my friends in the station, even the mail clerks, telegraph men, and all," began Ram Lal. "A train 'on government service'--a special--came in that night from Allahabad at ten o'clock.

Then two small trains were kept in waiting for some hours; one left for Simla before daylight, and the other drew out for Allahabad. There was a crowd of ladies, officers' ladies, and some children and servants in the waiting-room. They like to travel at night in the cool shade. No one knew them. Now, at Allahabad, the east-bound train could branch off either for Calcutta, Madras, or Bombay."

"So you know not which way these women fled?" The old merchant seemed absolutely at sea. As Hawke shook his head the story was soon finished.

"My men at the marble house tell me that a strange young man arrived at ten o'clock. He was admitted by Simpson, the private man of Johnstone Sahib. The Swiss woman talked with him alone a half hour in the library, and then Johnstone's daughter came down there, but only for a few moments. My men watched him writing and reading papers in the library; then they all went away."

"That is all. I slipped into the house when Simpson went away next day. He often goes out to drink secretly, and he has a pretty Eurasian friend or two, besides, down in the quarter." Ram Lal winked significantly. "I went all over the upper part of the house myself. The women's rooms were left just as if they had gone out for a drive along the Jumna. If they took anything it was only a few hand parcels. Now you know all that I know. No one ever saw the strange man before. And these people are gone for good, that is all. Go now to the Mem-Sahib at the Silver Bungalow. I fear her. But tell me what I must say to her." The old man was evidently in a mortal fear. "There is that French devil--that old soldier. He is a fighting devil, that one, and the woman a tiger. The lady herself is a tiger of tigers!"

"Say nothing, Ram Lal," soothingly said Hawke. "Leave it all to me. I see it. Old Johnstone has sent the girl to the hills to keep her away from the young fellows who will crowd the house, while this General Abercromby is here. There'll be drink and cards, and God knows what else."

"I know," grinned Ram Lal. "I knew old Johnstone in the old days, a man-eater, a woman-killer, a cold-hearted devil, too! What does he do with this General?" The jewel merchant's eyes blazed.

"Oh! Buying his new title with some official humbug or another. I don't know. Perhaps he is really settling his accounts," laughed Hawke.

"I have a little account of my own to settle with him! I will see him at once! He, too, may slip away and follow his girl to the hills," quietly said Ram Lal. "I know his past. He is never to be trusted--not for a moment--as long as he is alive!" Alan Hawke stared in wonder at Ram Lal, who humbly salaamed, when he closed:

"See the woman over there--come back, and tell me what I must do or say. You and I are comrades," the jewel seller leeringly said, "and we must lie together! All the world are liars-and half of the world lives by lying." with which sage remark the old curio seller betook himself to his narghileh.

In a half an hour, Major Alan Hawke was wandering through the garden

of the Silver Bungalow with Alixe Delavigne at his side. Behind them, at a discreet distance, sauntered Jules Victor, his dark eyes most intently fixed upon the promenaders. Madame Delavigne was pleased to be cheerfully buoyant. She had silently listened to Hawke's recital of the probable causes of General Abercromby's visit. "I could see that Johnstone evidently wished to occupy us both at Allahabad. Your conduct was discretion itself! Have you seen him yet? Or the ladies?" She eyed her listener keenly.

"No, Madame," frankly said Hawke. "There is all manner of official junketing on here now. I am not, of course, to be officially included, as I am not on the staff of either the visiting or commanding general. I must wait until I am invited--if I am!" he hesitatingly said. "You know that my rank is--to say the least--shadowy!" The lady passed over this semi-confession in silence.

"It is not like Johnstone to let Nadine meet all the gay coterie which will fill the great halls," mused Madame Delavigne. "I suppose that the dear child will have a week of 'marble prison' in her rooms, with only the governess. I think I shall let General Abercromby leave before I call. What do you advise? Johnstone has always ignored the ladies of Delhi!"

"I really am powerless to counsel you," said Major Hawke gravely, "as I am outside of the circle. I would watch this man keenly. He bears you no good will. And now--what shall I do? Did your business at Calcutta bring me the summons to action?" There was no undue eagerness in his voice. He was gliding into a safe position for the future eclaireissement.

"Not yet. But it will come! It will come--as soon as this General goes. For I now will demand the right to drop Berthe Louison, and to be my own self. To be Alixe Delavigne to one bright, loving human soul only, in this land of arid solitudes, of peopled wastes. The land of the worn, scarred human nature, which, blind, creedless, and hopeless, staggers along under the burden of misery under the menace of the British bayonet."

"When do you leave it?" quietly asked the cautious Major.

"When my work is done!" the resolute woman replied. "I am here for peace or war! We have only crossed swords! I do not trust this man a moment! He is capable of any foul deed! Now, you must keenly watch the clubs, the social life. Find out all you can! Come to me here every night at ten. If I suddenly need you, then I will send Ram Lal!"

"By day or night I am ready!" gravely said Major Hawke. "I do not like to intrude upon you," he hesitatingly said.

"You will win your spurs yet in my service!" said Alixe. "The real struggle is to come yet. I am only knocking at the door of Nadine's heart. And the old nabob is but half conquered."

Major Hawke, with a bow, retired and wended his way to the Club, where he spent an hour in preparing a careful letter to Euphrosyne Delande. It was a careful document, intended to prudently open communication with Justine through the Halls of Learning on the Rue du Rhone, Geneva, but a little sealed inclosure to Justine was

the grain of gold in all the complimentary chaff. "Her own heart, poor girl, will tell her what to do," said Hawke, as he departed and registered the letter himself.

The passing cortege of General Abercromby, returning the visit of the local chief, excited Hawke's attention. He caught a glimpse of the silver-haired millionaire whom two widely different natures had denounced that day as "being capable of anything."

"And so old Ram Lal has it 'in for him,' too! What can he mean?"

With a sudden impulse Major Hawke drove back and made a formal call upon the ladies at the Marble House. He was astounded when old Simpson, with a grudging welcome, openly announced that the ladies were permanently not at home. "Gone to the hills for a month or two," curtly replied the veteran servant, and then, on a silver tray, the butler decorously handed to Major Alan Hawke a sealed letter. "I was to seek you out at the Club, sir, as this letter is important. I take the liberty to give it to you now. It was the master's orders: 'That I give it into your own hands!'"

Major Alan Hawke's face darkened as he read the curt lines penned by Hugh Johnstone himself. With a smothered curse he thrust the letter in his pocket. "Both of them are trying to keep me in the dark, I'll let Madame Berthe Louison run her own head into the trap. Then, when she pays, I will talk, but not till then." The careful lines stated that for a week the writer would be greatly engrossed with private matters, and at home to no one. "I will send for you as soon as I am able to see you, upon some new business matters."

The last clause was significant enough. "He prepared this to give me a social knockout!" coolly said the renegade. "All right! But wait! By Gad! I fancy I'll take a cool revenge in joining Ram Lal and Berthe Louison. Suppose that the old duffer were put out of the way? Could I then count on Justine, and my wary employer? There is a storm brewing, and breakers ahead. I must soon get my 'retaining fee' from the lady of the Silver Bungalow or I may lose it forever! And I will let her uncover the empty bird's nest herself! She must not suspect me!" And yet the curt letter of the old civilian wounded him to the quick. "What does this jugglery mean? He ought to fear me, by this time, just a little! He intends to crush Berthe Louison by some foul blow, and then will he dare to begin on me? I will double forces with Ram Lal. That's my only alliance!" The Major's soul was up in arms.

When the splendid reception at General Willoughby's was over, Hugh Johnstone cautiously approached Major Hardwicke. "I am just told that General Abercromby will remain and dine 'en famille' with his old brother in arms. Will you drive with me to my house? I have something of a private nature to say to you. I can give you a seat in my carriage." Major Hardwicke bowed and, obtaining his conge, sat in expectant waiting until the two men were comfortably seated in Johnstone's snugger in the deserted mansion. They talked indifferently over Abercromby's arrival till Simpson announced dinner.

"I would like you to dine with me, Major Hardwicke," said the old Commissioner, "for I have something now to say to you." He rang a silver bell, and, whispering to Simpson, faced his young visitor,

who had bowed in acceptance. The butler returned in a few moments with a superb Indian saber, sheathed in gold, and shimmering with splendid jewels. He stood, mute, as Johnstone gravely said: "I learned from Simpson, on my return from Calcutta, of your prompt gallantry in aiding my daughter in her hour of peril." He continued, "Simpson alone, was left to tell me, as I have sent the child away to the hills for a couple of months. For reasons of my own, I do not care to have a motherless girl exposed to the indiscriminate hubbub of merely official society. The young lady will probably not remain in India. I therefore sent them all away before this official visit, which would have forced a child, almost yet a school girl, out into the glare of this local junketing," he said with feeling.

"Take this saber, Major. It was given up by Mir-zah Shah, a Warrior Prince, in old days, so the legend goes. It is the sword of a king's son. It will recall your own saber play so neatly conceived, and, as a personal reminder, wear this for me! It is a rare diamond, which I have treasured for many years. And its old Hindustanee name was 'Bringer of Prosperity.'" Hardwicke bowed, and murmured his thanks.

The nabob slipped a superb ring from his finger, and then, as if he had relieved his mind forever of a painful duty, dismissed the subject, almost feverishly entertaining his solitary guest at the splendid feast which had been prepared for General Abercromby. It was late when the strangely assorted convives separated. "I will now send Simpson home with you, in my carriage," solicitously remarked Johnstone, as the hour grew late. "There is a prince's ransom on that sword--and, you did not bring your noble charger! You must treat him well for my sake--for my daughter's sake!"

"Will Miss Johnstone return soon?" said the heart-hungry lover, catching at this last straw.

"It is undetermined! I may send them home in a few months. But, if I have any little influence left, 'at Headquarters,' that shall always be exerted for you. I am always glad to meet you, your father's son, for Colonel Hardwicke was a true soldier of the olden days--brave, loyal, and beyond reproach."

The lover's beating heart was smothered in this flowing honey. "Ah! I must trust to Simpson!" he mused. "The old man is a sly one!"

Politely bowed out by the stern, lonely old man, Major Hardwicke departed, his conversational guns spiked with the deft compliments, as the mighty clatter of the returning General filled the courtyard of the Marble House.

In the soft, wooing stillness of the night, Simpson, at the young Major's side, found time to whisper: "Never let the Guv'nor see us together! He's a sly one! There's a honey-baited trap in this! The girl's been spirited off to Europe! I only know that--but, as yet, no more."

"What do you mean? Is he lying to me?" gasped Hardwicke, with a sinking heart.

"Rightly said!" huskily whispered Simpson. "Seek for her--London ways--I'll find it out soon where she is, and I'm just scholar



enough to write! Give me your own safe London address! I heard ye would soon take yer long leave. Bless her sweet soul! I'll tell ye now! She whispered to me: 'Tell him--tell Major Hardwicke--he'll hear from me himself, even if I was at the very end of the earth! and give him this!'" The frightened servant thrust a little packet into the officer's hand. "It was the only chance she had."

"That Swiss woman watched her every moment, and the man--the one the father sent from Calcutta. There was a telegram to her. I gave it to her myself! Major, my oath--they're on the blue water, now! I'll watch and come to you! Don't leave Delhi till I post you!"

"You're a brave fellow, Simpson. Keep this all quiet," softly said Major Hardwicke. "I'll follow your advice, and I'll not leave here till I know more from you. I'll follow her to Japan, but I'll see her again."

"That's the talk, Major!" cried the happy old soldier, who felt something crisp in his hand now. "Distrust old Hugh! He'll lie to ye and trap ye! Watch him! He's capable of anything." The carriage then stopped with a crash and Hardwicke sprang out lightly. "Make no sign! Trust to me! I'll come to ye!" was Simpson's last word.

Before Simpson had discovered in the marble house the pleasing figures on a ten-pound note, Harry Hardwicke, striding up and down his room, in all the ecstasy of a happy lover, had kissed a hundred times a little silver card case--a mere school girl's poor treasure, but priceless now--for within it was a hastily severed tress of gold-brown hair, tied with a bit of blue ribbon. A scrap of paper in penciled words brought to him "Confirmation stronger than Holy Writ." "I will write or telegraph when not watched. Do not forget. --Nadine."

The words of the old servitor returned to the soldier in a grim warning. "He is capable of anything."

"So am I," cried Harry as his heart leaped up. "I will find her were she at the North Pole. He cannot hide her from me. Love laughs at locksmiths!"

If the would-be Sir Hugh Johnstone had heard the three verdicts of the hostile critics of his being "capable of anything," he might have laughed in defiance, but after several friendly "night caps" with the slightly jovial General Abercromby, it might have seriously disturbed the host to know what hidden suspicions the Viceroy's envoy had brought back from a very secret conference with that acute old local commander, Willoughby.

"It sounds all very well, Abercromby, my old friend," said Willoughby, "but Johnstone, or old Fraser, as we call him, is a hitman shark! Without a list or some general details, he will surely rob the crown of one-half the jewels, you may be sure. His cock and bull story of their recovery is too pellucid. It's Hobson's choice, though. That or nothing. He, of course, slyly claims to have only lately made this bungling accidental recovery. If the return is a really valuable one, then all you can officially do is to accept it. But be wary! I can give you some friendly aid here, when you get all the returned treasure. I'll give you a captain's guard here. Bring all here at once. We, you, and I, will seal it up, and I'll

have old Ram Lal Singh secretly come here and value them. He's the best judge of gems in India, and he was once an official in the Royal Treasure Chamber of the old King of Oude. Less than fifty thousand pounds worth as a return would be a transparent humbug, and besides you can delay your signature for a day or so, till you and I, after listing the gems, see this old expert and have him examine them in our presence. No one need know of it but you and I, and His excellency, the Viceroy. As for Hugh Johnstone, he is simply capable of anything. I told the Viceroy's aid, Anstruther, so. And I'll be damned glad to get Johnstone out of my bailiwick, that I will."

With which vigorous "flea in the ear," General Willoughby dismissed his startled comrade to the society of his crafty old host. And, that night, strange dreams of unrest haunted the "modern Major General" in the marble house, while singularly gloomy misgivings weighed down the brave-hearted Berthe Louison, now heart-hungry for a sight of the doubly beloved child of the dead lady of Jitomir. She woke in the hot and clammy night to cry "No, no! He would never dare to! She is here! I shall go boldly and demand to see her to-morrow!" Her womanly intuition told her the lines were broken.

And so, robed in fashion's shining armor, Alixe Delavigne counted the moments, until at four o'clock of the next afternoon her carriage waited in the bower-decked oval of the marble house. A gloomy frown settled upon her face, as the impassive Hugh Johnstone approached her carriage, sun helmet in hand. She scented treachery now! There were a dozen brilliant young officers longingly gazing at this sweet apparition in the gloomy gardens. Even General Abercromby strutted out and displayed himself in the foreground, as Johnstone leaned over and gravely whispered to the pale-faced beauty:

"My daughter has been sent away from the city for her health! Her absence is indefinite. I will see you when General Abercromby leaves here in a week, and explain all. No, not before. It is impossible."

With a sudden motion of her hand to Jules, Alixe Delavigne leaned back, half fainting, upon her cushions. Her agitated heart was now beating in a wild tumult of rage and baffled hatred! "Home!" she cried, and then, as the marble house was lost to view, she harshly cried: "To Ram Lal's first! To the jewel store!"

There was a brooding death in her eyes when she sternly said to the merchant: "Send him to me at once! Send Hawke! Go! Waste not a moment!"

And then she swore an oath of vengeance, which would have made Hugh Fraser Johnstone shudder, as he sat drinking champagne cup with his guest. "One for you, my lady!" he had laughed, grimly, as the woman whom he had tricked drove swiftly away. And the grim fates laughed too, spinning at a shortening life web.

Major Alan Hawke was interrupted in his cosy nest at the Club by the hasty advent of Ram Lal. The old jeweler had for once abandoned all his Oriental calm, and he trembled as he muttered. "She demands you at once. I brought my own carriage. Go to her quickly. There will be a great monsoon of quarrel now. But her face looks as if she was stricken to the death, and something will come of all this. You must watch like the crouching cheetah!"

"What has happened?" anxiously cried Hawke.

"She has just found out the women are gone! She went up to the marble house this afternoon, and saw the old Sahib Johnstone. He did not even bid her to leave her carriage. One of my men ran over at once and told me. She drove to the shop on her way homeward and sent me here." The black Son of Plutus scuttled away, as if in a mortal fear. "I do not dare to face her--in her angry mood," was Ram's last word. He was only accustomed to baby-faced Hindu women of the "langorous lily" type, who hung on his every word--the mute slaves of his jaded passions. "This one is a tigress!" he sighed, as he fled from the Club.

"Ah! My lady is a bit rattled," mused Hawke as the carriage sped along. "Now is the time to catch her off her guard." And so he made himself sleek and patient, with the surface varnish of his "society manner," when Jules Victor, with semi-hostile eyes, ushered him into the presence of Alixe Delavigne, still in her robes of "visitation splendor."

"What is this devil's work done in my absence? This spiriting away of Nadine!" cried Alixe, grasping Hawke's wrist with a nervous clasp, which made the strong man wince. "This juggling in my absence?" Her eyes were sternly fixed on him in dawning suspicions.

"Madame," calmly said Alan Hawke, "if you had trusted to me, this would not have happened. But you have chosen to make an enigma of yourself, from the first. I am not tired of your moods, but I am of your cold disdain, your contemptuous slighting of my useful mental powers. You left me with no orders. I warned you that he was capable of anything. See how he has treated me," he continued, with a well-dissembled indignation. "He called me away to Allahabad to be bear-leader to Abercromby, and the brute has just shown me the door, to-day, openly saying that his daughter has gone to the Hills. I believe that he lies! I know that he does! If you had deigned to trust me, I would have followed on her track to hell itself, but you chose to play the woman--the catlike toying with men! Damn him! I owe him one now! If he had openly entertained me in this brilliant visit, I might have re-entered the staff service--in a week. And, you threw all my experience away in not trusting to me."

Alixe Delavigne looked up, with one piercing glance, as she sealed a note. "Go openly to him--to Johnstone! Bring him back at once with you! He dare not disobey this! I will denounce him, now, to-day! to both the generals, and go to the Viceroy myself! I care not what excuse he makes! BRING HIM!"

"And so I cut the last tie that binds me to a future reinstatement for you, a callous employer, and am left adrift without an anchor out for the future! You know that this man is a director of the Bank of Bengal! A multi-millionaire! He will chase me from India! I might trace the girl to her hiding-place for you! She has surely been sent home by sea!" Alixe Delavigne was gliding up and down the room as noiselessly as a serpent. She abruptly stopped her march.

"I will find her in Europe! What do you require to follow my orders for three months? To wait here and then to take the road or to join me in Europe! I pay all expenses and incidentals. What will make

you reasonably sure against fate--in advance?"

Alan Hawke dropped his eyes. Gentleman once, he was ashamed of the sordid implied threat of abandonment.

"Five thousand pounds!" he whispered. The stony-faced woman dashed off a check.

"Bring that man to me at once!" she cried, "and then go down to Grindlay's agency here, and get your money! Go openly!"

"Shall I come back with him?" demanded Hawke.

"No, bring him here, and then excuse yourself."

Alixé Delavigne watched the carriage dash away. Hawke was on his mettle at last, and he brutally enjoyed the little tableau, when Hugh Fraser Johnstone impatiently tore open "Madame Berthe Louison's" note. Hawke observed significantly that he had been shown into a small room, suited to semi-menial interviews. The additional slight maddened him. The clash of glasses and shouts of a gay crowd of military convives rose up in a merry chorus within. Across that banquet hall's draped doors the thin, invisible barrier of "Coventry" shut out the bold social renegade. "She'll have to wait, Hawke!" roughly said Hugh Johnstone, moving toward the door.

"By God! she shall not wait a minute, you damned old moneybags!" cried the ruined soldier, who had long forfeited his caste--his cherished rank. "You treated her like a brute to-day! She is a lady, and you can't play fast and loose with her! You insulted me by closing your damned door and sending me your offensive letter. Go to her now! If you do not, I'll send my seconds to you, and if you don't fight, by Heaven, I'll horsewhip you like a drunken pandy!" and the fearless renegade barred the door.

"Don't be a fool, Hawke," faltered Johnstone. "She has taken the whole thing the wrong way. I'll join you in a moment. I've got these men on my hands. What did she tell you?"

"Nothing!" harshly cried Hawke, "and I wash my hands of you and her. Settle your intrigues as you will!"

Not a word was spoken, as Alan Hawke gravely opened the door to Madame Berthe Louison's reception room. Hugh Johnstone's yellow face paled as the Major breaking the silence, coldly said: "Madame! I have broken a friendship of fifteen years to-day! Please do consider me a stranger to you both after today!" And then he walked firmly out of the house with a warning glance to Jules Victor, lingering in the long hall.

The quick Frenchman saw in Hawke's gesture the secret sign of a hidden friend, and he threw up his hand in a Parisian gesture of gratitude and comprehension, and failed not to report to his mistress, who saw Hawke's fine method with a secret delight.

Hawke drove to Grindlay's agency, where, in a private room, he promptly cashed his check.

"I'll take it in Bank of England notes!" he quietly said as the

clerk lifted inquiring eyes. "I am going to transact some business for the lady."

"Now, I can defy Fate!" he exulted, when he was safe out of the bank. "She will trust me now, and old Johnstone will fear me. A case of vice versa!" And, as he drove to the Club, he murmured, "I will never leave this fight now! Damme! I'll just go in and get the girl! Just to spite the old coward!"

Within the dreaming shades of the gardens hiding the Silver Bungalow, there was no sign of clamor. The beautiful little jewel-box of a mansion was apparently deserted, but a duel to the death was going on within the great white parlor where Hugh Johnstone stood raging at bay. He leaped up in a mad outburst of passion, when Alixe Delavigne cuttingly broke the silence. The old nabob knew that the desperate woman in her reckless mood feared nothing.--

"You have lied to me! You have tricked me! You have sent that girl away to Europe to hide her forever from me! I kept my pact, and, you deliberately lied!" She stood before him like an avenging fury, quivering in a passion which appalled him. But secure in his skillfully executed maneuver, he reached for his hat and stick.

"I defy you! I have no answer to your abuse! Draw off your fighting cur, Major Hawke, or I'll grind you and him in the dust!" The old man was frantic under the insult. He moved toward the door.

"Stop! You go to your ruin!" cried the irate woman. "Will you give me full access to your daughter?"

"Never! My Lady! Go and lord it over your whipped hounds in Poland--hide in your estates the price of the double shame of two most accommodating Frenchwomen!"

"By the God who made me" she hissed, "I will bar your Baronetcy forever! I will find out that girl, and she shall learn to love me and despise your hated name and memory! It is open war now! and,--mark you--liar and hound, these two generals, the Viceroy, and, all India shall soon know what I know!" Then, with a clang of her silver bell, she called Jules Victor to her side. "Jules," she said, "If this person ever crosses the threshold of my door again, shoot him like the dog he is!"

And then the black-browed Frenchman, holding open the door, hissed "ALLEZ!" as Hugh Johnstone saw for the last time the marble face of the woman who had doomed him to shame.

"Go and send Ram Lal to me at once!" sternly said Berthe Louison. "Then to Major Hawke. Tell him that I want him to dine with me, and I shall need him all the evening. Order my carriage for five o'clock!"

Alan Hawke had played his best trump card, and played it well, for the woman who had doubted him, gloried in his courage and hardihood. "I can trust him now!" she murmured when she drove to the Delhi agency of Grindlays and, two hours later, astounded the local manager by the executive rapidity of her varied business actions.

"What's in the wind?" murmured the bank manager. "A sudden flitting!"

He had been ordered to detail two of his best men to accompany Madame Louison to Calcutta, in a special car leaving at midnight. "Telegraph to your head office in Calcutta of my arrival. Major Alan Hawke will represent me here, under written orders to be left with your Calcutta manager. Send this on in cipher." She handed him a long dispatch to his chief.

Madame Berthe Louison was seen in Delhi, in public, for the last time, as she gazed steadily at the brilliant throng on the lawns of the marble house. A fete Champetre had brought "all of Delhi" together, and the conspicuous absence of "the French Countess" was the reigning sensation. The tall, bent form of Hugh Fraser Johnstone was prominent reigning as host, under a great marquee. Neither of the great generals were there, however, for Simpson had drawn Major Hardwicke aside to whisper: "A captain's guard came here to-day and took an enormous treasure in precious stones up to Willoughby's Headquarters!" and the two commanders were even then busied in listing the recovered loot, with a dozen yellow-faced Hindus and several confidential staff officers. "It's the last act, Captain darlin'," said Simpson. "Old Hugh has given me secret orders to get ready to go on to London. He only takes his personal articles. Young Douglas Fraser will come here and manage the Indian estates."

"Who's he?" eagerly cried Hardwicke.

"The fellow who carried the women away--the old man's only nephew."

"Ah! now I see!" heavily breathed Hardwicke. "I will take the previous boat, and wait for the old man at Brindisi! Post me! I'll keep mum!"

"Depend on me for my life itself," said Simpson; "but be prudent! I don't want to lose my life pension. He's been a good master to me. We've grown old together!" sighed the gray-headed soldier.

The frightened Ram Lal Singh was driven around Delhi this eventful day like a hunted rat. Suddenly summoned to General Willoughby's private rooms, escorted by a sergeant, who never left him a moment, the old Mohammedan was ushered into the presence of the two generals, who pounced upon him and showed him a great, assorted treasure in diamonds, pearls, pigeon rubies, sapphires, and emeralds of great size and richness. They were all duly weighed and listed, and duplicate official invoices lay signed upon the table.

"You were Mirzah Shah's Royal Treasure Keeper? Tell me. Are all his jewels here? The treasure that disappeared at Humayoon's Tomb before Hodson slew the princes in the melee?"

Ram Lal saw the frowns of men who had blown better men than himself from the guns in the old days, and he had a vivid memory of those same hideous scenes.

"They are about half here in weight and number; about a quarter of the value. There is a hundred thousand pounds worth missing!" said the jewel dealer, gazing on the totals of numbers and weights. "The historic diamonds, the matchless pearls, the never-equalled rubies--all the choicest have been abstracted, and by a skillful hand!"

"Go, then!" cried Willoughby. "Seal this in your breast! Speak to no one or you'll die in jail, wearing irons! Here!" A hundred-pound note was thrust into his hand, and he was whirled away to his shop.

"Ah! The gray devil! he has stolen and hidden the best! I will watch him like a ghoul of Bowanee, and they shall be mine! He would turn tail now and steal away!" Ram Lal laughed an oily laugh, and going to an old cabinet, took out a heavy krees. "The poisoned dagger of Mirzah Shah!" he smiled. "After many years!" It was Hugh Johnstone himself who sought Ram Lal in his pagoda that afternoon, and, after making some heavy purchases, finally drew out a list of jewels.

"I wish you to certify, Ram Lal," he cautiously said, "that these are all the jewels of Mirzah Shah, that you handled as 'Keeper of the Prince's Treasure,' before the Meerut mutineers rushed down upon us." Slowly peering over the paper, the crafty Ram Lal said:

"You forget, Sahib, that I was sent away to Lucknow and Cawnpore, by Mirzah Shah, with letters to Nana Sahib and Tantia Topee. I was shut out of Delhi till after the British were camped on the Windmill Ridge, and for months I never saw the royal jewels! Every moon the list was made anew. The mollahs and moonshees and treasurers took jewels for the Zenana every moon, and for the gifts of the princes. I could not testify to this!" The old man was on his guard.

"I will pay you well, Ram Lal. It is my last little matter to settle with the authorities! Then my accounts are closed forever! As Treasurer you could do this!" Old Hugh Fraser Johnstone was ignorant of the veiled scrutiny of his stewardship.

Ram Lal raised his head, at last, with something like defiance. "The better half is gone--the rarest--the richest! True, the princes may have divided them, they may have bribed their mutineer officers with some, but, a true list may be in the hands of these Crown officers here. They captured all the Palace papers. Now, I did not open them at Humayoon's Tomb. You know," he faltered, "how they passed through your hands!"

Hugh Johnstone, for the last time tried to threaten and bully. "I will have you punished. I paid you well--you must lie for me! We both lied then."

"Then the curse of Allah be upon the liar who lies now," solemnly said Ram Lal Singh. "I will not sign! I have the savings of years to guard. You will go away and the Crown will come upon me for the missing gems. I was absent five months from the Palace when you were in Brigadier Wilson's Camp! I will offer my head to these generals, but I will not sign! The Kaisar-I-Hind is just, and I will tell all!" With an oath of smothered rage, Hugh Johnstone strode away.

"I must try and make a royal present to Willoughby's wife,--a timely one--and lose a half a lac of rupees to Abercromby. They may find a way to pass the matter over." He dared not press Ram Lal to a public exposition of all the wanderings of Mirzah Shah's jewels. "If I had not told them that fairy tale, I might hedge; but it's too late now. I will go down to Calcutta, see the Viceroy, and then clear out for good. And I must placate Alan Hawke. I was a fool to ignore him. But, to make an enemy of him, on account of

that damned woman, would be ruin. He chums with Ram Lal. He might cable to Anstruther."

In fact Alan Hawke's bold social revolt had imposed on Johnstone. "He might help to cover all up if I induced Abercromby to get him back on the staff once more. I was a fool to slight him." Hugh Fraser Johnstone was dimly conscious that his own line of battle was wavering, and that his flanks were unguarded--his rear unprotected. "I will only trust my homeward pathway to Simpson, and my health is a good excuse for clearing out for good. I can easily locate on the Continent--in Belgium, or Switzerland--and out of reach of any little trouble to come. They've no proof. This fellow has no list, thank Heaven. I'll slip down to Ceylon and catch the first boat there to Suez. Then ho for Geneva!"

But Ram Lal Singh's slight defenses fell instantly before the golden battering-ram of Madame Berthe Louison's direct onslaught. "I was busied in the bazaars, buying jewels," he expostulated, when Jules Victor led him into Madame Louison's boudoir. Even then Major Hawke was curiously noting the dismantled condition of the reception-room, where Johnstone had at last thrown off the mask.

"I leave Major Hawke here to close all my business, Ram Lal," she said. "I go to Calcutta. I may be gone for some months. But I have watched you and him. You are close friends--very close friends. Now, remember that I pay him and I pay you. I wish you to give me--to sell me--the list of the jewels which Johnstone took away from you and hid, when he was Hugh Fraser." The old scoundrel began to protest. Berthe Louison rang her silver bell. "Jules!" she said, "I wish you to go to General Willoughby with this letter, and tell him to send a guard here to arrest a thief who has government jewels."

Ram Lal was on the floor at her feet, groveling, before she grimly smiled, as he held out a paper, quickly extracted from his red sash. "That will do, Jules." The Frenchman stood without the door. "You will not run away. You are far too rich, Ram Lal. And you will be watched every moment. Sign and seal the list, and date it to-day." The old craven begged hard for mercy. "Here is a hundred pounds. Hawke will pay you four hundred more when I am safely on the sea, but only then! He will close all my bills. Remember, I shall come back again. And," she whispered a word, "he will watch you closely." The jeweler sealed the document, and scribbled his certificate. "Not one word of my business, not even to Hawke, on your life," she said. "I shall come again! And General Willoughby will throw you in prison on a word from me."

Major Alan Hawke was astounded, after an hour's yielding to the social charm of Madame Alixe Delavigne, when the happy woman led him away from the dinner table. "Now for a half-hour's business chat," she gayly said. "No, no notes. We shall next meet at No. 9 Rue Berlioz, Paris. You will receive my sealed directions from Grindlay's agent here, with funds to settle my affairs. I go to-night to Calcutta, and thence to Europe. Obey my orders. You will get them, sealed, from the agent here. You can come on, by Bombay, when I cable to you. I will cable direct here to Grindlay's. They'll not lose sight of you," she smiled.

"And my relations with old Hugh?" he gasped in surprise.



"Just watch him and follow him on to Europe. Neither you nor he can do me any harm, but your reward for your manly stand to-day will reach you in Paris. I knew of it."

"Shall I not see you to the train?" Hawke stammered.

"Ah!" she smiled, extending her hand warmly, "I have a double guard and my servants. I will be met at Calcutta, and I go on my way safely now to work a slow vengeance!"

## CHAPTER X.

### A CAPTIVATED VICEROY.

There were several "late parties" in sumptuous Delhi, on the evening when Madame Berthe Louison drove quietly to the railway station at two o'clock. A little knot of tired officials were still on duty, and when some forerunner had given a private signal, a single car, drawn by a powerful locomotive, glided out of the darkness.

In a few moments a dozen trunks and a score of bags and bundles were tossed aboard the baggage van. Five persons stepped nimbly aboard, and then with no warning signal, the Lady of the Silver Bungalow was borne out into the darkness, racing on toward Calcutta with the swiftness of the wind.

Jules Victor, vigorous and alert, after several cups of cafe noir, well dashed with cognac, disposed his two Lefacheux revolvers in readiness, and then betook himself to a nap. His bright-eyed wife was in the compartment with her beautiful mistress, and ready to sound a shrill Gallic alarm at any moment. She gravely eyed the two escorting officials of the bank. Marie said in her heart that "all men were liars," and she believed most of them to be voleurs, in addition. Jules, when the little train was whirling along a-metals a score of miles away from Delhi, relaxed his Zouave vigilance, and bade a long adieu to Delhi, in a vigorous grunt. "Va bane! Sacre Canaille!"

There was silence at the railway station when the head agent wearily said, "I suppose the Bank is moving a lot of notes back to Calcutta! They are a rum slick lot, these money changers!" When all was left in darkness, save where a blinking red and white line signal still showed, Ram Lal Singh crept away from the line of the rails. The rich jewel vender clutched in his bosom the handle of Mirzah Shah's poisoned dagger, the deadly dagger of a merciless prince.

He had long pondered over the sudden demand made upon him by the Lady of the Silver Bungalow. And he greatly desired to re-adjust his relations with Hugh Johnstone and Major Alan Hawke. The daily

usefulness of "Lying as a Fine Art" was never before so apparent to Ram Lal. He slunk away on foot to his own bit of a zenana.

"I must try to deceive them both! Fool that I was not to see it before! These two Generals are her friends, of old! The secret protector of the wonderful moon-eyed beauty here is General Willoughby, and the other General will secretly help her down at Calcutta. She came up here, secretly, to see her old lover Willoughby, and that is why she would be able to have a guard arrest me. For she said just what they said about the prison. Willoughby goes down often to Calcutta! Ah! Yes! They are all the same, these English! Fools! Not to lock their women up, when they have once bought them, with a secret price! And now, Hawke must never know of this paper I gave her. She would find out, and then have the General punish me. Now I know why she went not to the great English Mem-Sahibs here! And these two great General Sahibs have had her spy upon this old man, Hugh Fraser--the man who would steal away with the Queen's jewels. They would have them. By Bowanee! I will have them first! For I can hide them where they never will find them! I will trade them off to the Princes, who know the old jewels of Oude. They will give me double weight, treble value." Ram Lal crept into his hidden love nest, his skinny hand clutching the golden shaft of Mirzah Shah's dagger. "I might surrender them later and get an enormous reward from the Crown," he mused.

At the Delhi Club, Major Alan Hawke, in a strange unrest, paced his floor half the night. "I stand now nearly eleven thousand pounds to the good, with outlying counties to hear from, as the Yankees say." He smiled, "that is, if the old fox does not stop these drafts. If he does, I'll stop him!" he swore. And yet, he was troubled at heart. "I know Alixe Delavigne will call me back and pay me well. How did she find out about my bold bluff to Johnstone? Some servant may have overheard, and she is a deep one. She may even have her own spies there!"

"Justine, I can count on you to help me later. But, how to treat old Hugh?" His dreams of an army reinstatement came back to worry him. "I might go to Abercromby and warn him about Johnstone. Damn it! I've no proof as yet! Berthe Louison will fire the great gun herself." The renegade fell asleep, torturing himself about the needless breach with Johnstone. "All violence is a mistake!" he muttered, half asleep. "The angry old man will keep me away from the girl forever, and the old brute is going to Europe. I have spoiled one game in taking one trick too roughly."

Another "late party" was at Major Hardwicke's quarters, where the loyal Simpson related to the lover all the gossip of Johnstone and General Abercromby, over their brandy pawnee and cheroots. Simpson was the eager servitor of the young engineer, whom he loved.

General Willoughby had a little fit of "work" which seized upon him, and so he toiled till late at night, sending some cipher dispatches to the Viceroy. "I may make a point in this, perhaps a C. B.," said the old veteran, who was sharper when drunk than sober. "I'll put a pin in Johnstone's game, and get ahead of Abercromby." This last old warrior had secretly vowed to force Hugh Fraser Johnstone to present him to the "little party in the Silver Bungalow." The Calcutta general was a Knight of Venus, as well as a Son of Mars, and had guarded memories of some wild episodes of his own there in

the halcyon days of the great chieftain who had builded it. A gay young staff officer whispered:

"Alan Hawke is the only one who really has the 'open sesame.' He knows that 'little party.' Didn't you see Johnstone hurry her away? The old nabob, too, is sly."

"Ah!" mused the General. "I'll make Johnstone have Hawke here to breakfast. Devilish clever fellow--and he'll take me there!" Alas! for these rosy anticipations. The "little party" was already at Allahabad before the gouty general awoke from his love dream.

And, last of all the "late parties" on this eventful night was Hugh Fraser Johnstone's little solitary council of war. He had, with a prescience of coming trouble, detailed two of his own keenest personal servants to watch the Silver Bungalow, from daylight, relieving each other, and never losing sight a moment of the hidden tiger's den. "I'll find out who goes and comes there! By God! I will!" he raged. After a long cogitation, he evolved a "way out" of his quarrel with Hawke. "Damn the fellow! I must not drive him over into the enemy's camp. I'll have him here--to breakfast, to-morrow. The jewels are safely out of the way now. For a few pounds he will watch this she-devil, and that yellow thief, Ram Lal, for me. My only danger is in their coming together. I'll get a note to him early." Seizing his chit-book, he dashed off in a frankly apologetic way a few lines. "There! That'll do! Not too much!" He read his lines with a final approval.

"Dear Hawke: I've been worried to death with a lot of people thrust on me. Mere figure-heads. You must excuse an old friend--an old man--and Madame Louison is like all women--only a bundle of nerves. Come over to the house to-day at noon and breakfast with Abercromby and myself alone. I'll send you back to Calcutta with him on a little run. I appreciate your manliness in keeping out of my little misunderstanding with the Madame. By the way, a few words from Abercromby to the Viceroy would put you back on the Army Staff, where you rightly belong. Let bygones be bygones, and you can make your play on the General, It's the one chance of a life. Come and see me. J."

"There! He will never show that!" mused Hugh Johnstone. "It touches his one little raw spot!" And calling a boy the old Commissioner dispatched the note, carefully sealed, to the Club. The last one to seek his rest in the marble house, old Johnstone was strangely shaken by the events of the day.

Berthe Louison's threats, Ram Lal's stubborn refusal, and the useless quarrel with Hawke had unmanned him. He drank a strong glass of grog and then sought his room. "All things settle themselves at last! This thing will blow over! I wish to God that she was out of the way! I could then handle the rest!" For in his heart he feared the defiant woman.

There were two men equally surprised when gunfire brought the "day's doings" on again in lazy, luxurious Delhi. Over his morning coffee, Major Alan Hawke thankfully cried: "I am a very devil for luck! This old skinflint is opening his bosom and handing me a knife. By God! I'll have my pound of flesh!" He leaped from his couch as blithe as a midshipman receiving his first love letter

from a fullgrown dame. There was great joy in the house of Hawke.

But when Simpson entered his master's room he was followed by a wild-eyed returning emissary, who waited till the old soldier had left the room. Hugh Johnstone suddenly lost all interest in the breakfast tray, the letters and his morning toilet, when the Hindu fearfully said: "They are all gone--the Mem-Sahib, the two foreign devils, and all their belongings!"

Johnstone was on his feet with a single bound. "Gone! What do you tell me, you fool?" He was shaking the slim-boned native as if he were a man of straw.

"They went to the railroad at two o'clock at night, the coachman told me. We only began our watch by your orders at daybreak. She had been then gone four hours." Johnstone foamed in an impotent rage.

"Who is left in the house?" he roared.

"Nobody, Sahib." tersely said the Hindu.

"Get out and send me Simpson!" the old man sternly said. "Go back and watch that house till I have you relieved. Tell me everyone who goes in or out!"

And then the horrible fear that Willoughby or Abercromby had

deceived him, began to dawn upon his excited mind. "Simpson," he cried, "there's a good fellow! Take the first trap and get over to Major Hawke. Tell him that I must see him here, at once, on the most important business. He must come. Then get to Ram Lal, and bring him yourself to your own room. Let me know, privately, when he is there. Never mind my dressing. Send me a couple of the others. Is the General awake?"

"Just coming down for his ride! Horses ordered in half an hour!"

Simpson fled away, muttering, "Hardwicke must know of this!"

Hugh Johnstone fancied that he was dreaming when he met his official guest, refreshed and jovial, but still under the spell of Venus.

"See here, Hugh!" said the gallant Abercromby. "I want you to present me to that stunning woman over there, at the Silver Bungalow, you know. They tell me she's the Queen of Delhi. You old rascal, I'm bound to know her! Can't we have a little breakfast there, under the rose?" A last desperate expedient occurred to Johnstone. His baronetcy was in danger now.

"There's but one man in Delhi can bring you within the fairy circle. That's Hawke--a devilish good officer too, by the way! Ought to be back on the 'Temporary Staff,' at least! He comes here to breakfast! I'll turn you over to him. He manages all the lady's private affairs. He is your man."

General Abercromby turned a stony eye upon his host. "Does Willoughby go there?" he huskily whispered.

"Never crossed the line! Hawke is far too shy. You see, Willoughby has not recognized Major Hawke's rank and past services!"

"Ah!" said the jealous warrior. "If Hawke is the man you say he is, I can get the Viceroy to give him a local rank, in two weeks! Send him down with me to Calcutta!" and the gay old would-be lover jingled away on his morning ride.

"This may be my one anchor of safety!" gasped the wondering Johnstone, as Alan Hawke came dashing into the grounds. In half an hour, the broken entente cordiale was restored, and Johnstone had slipped away and questioned the wary Ram Lal.

"All I know is that the lady hired the house temporarily from me, I am agent for Runjeet Hoy, who owns it now. She went without a word, and gave me three hundred pounds yesternight, for her rent and supplies. I asked the Mem-Sahib no questions. She went away all by herself, in the middle of the night."

"Ah! You know nothing more?" sharply queried Johnstone.

"Of course not! I thought you, or Hawke Sahib, or General Willoughby, was a secret friend." Slyly said Ram Lal.

"She owes you nothing? You do not expect her to return?" the nabob cried.

"I think she has gone to Calcutta! She came from there."

"Come to-night, privately, Ram Lal. I'll show you how to get in. Just tap at my bedroom window three times. Come secretly, at eleven o'clock, and find out all you can. Wait in the garden till the house is dark. I'll pay you well," continued Johnstone, leading the old jeweler to his bedroom. "I will leave this one window unfastened. So you can come in! The room will be dark!"

"The Sahib shall be obeyed!" said Ram Lal, salaaming to the ground, and he was happy at heart as he glided out of the garden. A ferocious smile of coming triumph gleamed in his dark face. "I have him now! He will never slip away in the night! But I must please him, and lie to him!" It was the chance for which he had vainly waited there many years, and Ram Lal prayed to great Bowaaee to aid him.

"Hawke!" said Johnstone, when his astounded listener heard all of Johnstone's proposed infamy. "I have telegraphed to Allahabad and Calcutta. This strange woman has gone down there. Now, I want you to fall in with Abercromby. He will go down in a few days. Bring them together in any way you can. The General and the beauty. No fool like an old fool!" he grinned. "Watch them and post me! Abercromby is already well disposed to you. Make a play on him. He will get you a temporary rank from the Viceroy.

"Your matchless knowledge of the Himalayas and the whole northern frontier will earn you a regular rank. Coddle Anstruther, too, and cling to the Vice-roy! I'll back you with any money you need. It's the one chance of a life!"

"And what am I to do for you, Johnstone?" quietly said the delighted

Hawke.

"Just stand by me about this baronetcy, and bamboozle this damned foolish woman, while I slip quietly away to Europe! She is mercurial and vain. Abercromby will get her into the fast Calcutta set, after one necessary appearance at the Viceroy's! She is, after all, only a woman. You can catch them with a feather, if you can catch them at all! Once properly launched by Abercromby, you are a made man for life! He will not dare to 'go back on you!' as our Yankee cousins have it. The Viceroy will do anything for him!"

"By God! Johnstone! I'm your man! Count on me in life and death!" warmly cried Hawke. The two men clasped hands.

There was a clatter and a jingle. The old warrior was on his return. "Here he comes now! Fall in with his humor, and success to you at Calcutta," whispered Johnstone. There was the very jolliest breakfast imaginable at the marble house that day, and that same afternoon Major. Alan Hawke rode all over Delhi as volunteer aide to General Abercromby.

Two nights later General Abercromby whispered to Hugh Johnstone, at a Grand Ball at Willoughby's Headquarters: "I've just had a telegram from the Viceroy to return at once. Your matter is now all right. I leave the property with Willoughby here. I'll go down in the morning, if you'll fix me up." And then, Johnstone signing to Major Alan Hawke, who had been the cynosure of all eyes, as he gracefully led Madame la Generale Willoughby through a lanciers, took the favorite of fortune aside.

"Make your adieux! Get out of here! Settle all your little affairs! Send all your traps over to my house! General Abercromby wants to slip away quietly in the morning! No one is to know! And you go with him, at his urgent request."

And that very evening at Calcutta, Alixe Delavigne would have laughed in triumph to know of Hugh Johnstone's strange eagerness to dispatch his amorous guest. For the lady--in the safe haven of the great banker's home--had just returned from a captivated Viceroy, who had instantly recalled Abercromby by a dispatch to be "obeyed forthwith."

"You, Madame, have laid me under an obligation which I can never forget," said the graceful statesman. The list of Ram Lal was in his hands now! And so Hugh Johnstone was highly pleased, and Madame Berthe Louison, still in her masquerade, was happy, and the watchful Commanding-General Willoughby was more than pleased; and the now doubly hopeful Major Alan Hawke rejoiced, while General Abercromby knew that the "little party" was waiting him in Calcutta. But most of all pleased was Ram Lal Singh, clutching in his dreams at the dagger of Mirzah Shah, lying there by his bedside. "He will be left alone, and he knows my signal--his own device--THREE TAPS AT HIS WINDOW! In Delhi there only lingered, sad and lonely, Major Harry Hardwicke, whose sighs were echoed back from afar by a starry-eyed girl watching the sandy shores of the Suez Canal.

"I dare not telegraph to him till we reach Brindisi," mused the loving girl. "After that our path will be plain, and Justine MUST help me! Then he can follow me--if he loves me!" She faltered, hiding

her blushing face. The only comforter of the lonely Hardwicke was "Rattler Murray." Red Eric, of the Eighth Lancers, had just fallen into a pot of money.

"Take your long leave, my boy!" he cried. "I've been nine long years a Lieutenant! I'll have my troop before my leave is out! And there's a loving lass awaiting me! One I love--one who loves me--one you must know, for you must be the 'best man'!"

"Wait, only wait a couple of weeks, Eric!" said the Major, whose eyes were now turned daily to Simpson. "Then I'll put in my own application, and we'll go home together."

This bright hope was duly pledged in many a loving cup.

General Abercromby was far away on the road to Calcutta when Major-General Willoughby sent, posthaste, for Major Harry Hardwicke of the Corps of Engineers. The puzzled Commanding General was racking his brains to find out if his old friend Abercromby had committed any fatal error during his somewhat bacchanalian visit on "special duty."

"I'm glad he is gone" mused the stout-hearted, thick-headed old Commander, as he read, over and over, the Viceroy's cipher dispatch to the departed General.

"Do nothing further! Turn over all property, on invoice, to General Willoughby, and report here forthwith. Hold no communication with Johnstone, and guard an absolute silence. Report in person, instantly on your arrival."

"Something has surely gone wrong!" at last decided Willoughby. "Old Hugh Fraser Johnstone may have been too much for him. Strange, the Viceroy says nothing of him!" And then he read a second dispatch, with the Viceroy's orders to himself. "Notify Major Harry Hardwicke, Royal Engineers, to report in person, to the Viceroy for special duty, prepared to go in a week to England on duty. Absolute secrecy required. His leave application will be approved for any period, to take effect on his completion of duties assigned, in London. Special cipher orders will be sent to him this A.M. Deliver them and furnish him the code No. 2. No copies to be retained. Furnish Major Hardwicke with a captain and ten picked men to escort the property received by General Abercromby to Calcutta. Invoices to you to be signed by him. Property to be sent down in sealed pay-chests, with your seal and Major Hardwicke's. Report compliance, and telegraph in cipher No. 2 Hardwicke's departure for Calcutta. Special transportation has been ordered."

"There, my boy, you have your orders!" an hour later said General Willoughby when Major Hardwicke reported. "I am glad to have the whole thing off my hands. Here is the double-ciphered code. You are to translate for yourself, and, remember, then destroy your translation. Remember, also, one single whisper of your destination, and you are a ruined man! Evidently the Viceroy is bent on trapping old Hugh Johnstone. Damn him, for a sneaking civilian! I never trusted him!" And the old General rolled away for his family tiffin. "I'll see you when you have translated the private orders. Thank God, the Viceroy keeps me out of this dirty muddle! You see, I have no power over Johnstone--he is a blasted civilian." Two hours

later, the grateful old General found Hardwicke pacing up and down impatiently. "I ought only to tell Murray," he murmured, "if I could! He is going home to be married, and I am to stand up with him."

"Just the thing!" gayly cried Willoughby. "Murray's captaincy is in the Gazette of to-day's mail. I will order him down with you, in command of the guard, and, at Calcutta, the Viceroy will release you from your promise, so as to let him know that you can meet him in London. His Excellency evidently wants to hoodwink all the gossips here, and, above all, to blind old Johnstone. Now, Harry, I feel like a brute to let you go without a poor send-off, but, by Heaven, the whole Willoughby clan will follow you in London, and pay off a part of our debt for that 'run-under fire' with my wounded boy. Name anything you want. Do you want any help to watch Johnstone?" The old General was eager.

"Ah! I fear that I must attend to him, alone!" sadly said Major Hardwicke, whose heart was racked, for a fair, dear face now afar must soon be clouded with sorrow and those dear eyes weep a father's shame.

"Call, day and night, for anything you want!" heartily said the loyal old father of the rescued officer. "The day before you go you must dine with us, alone, and Harriet will give you her last greeting."

As the day wore away, there was a jovial rapprochement in the special car where General Abercromby and Major Hawke were gayly extolling Madame Berthe Louison's perfections. "Mind you, General, I am no squire of dames," said the Major. "You must make your own running."

"Ah! my boy, you have earned your temporary rank as a Major of Staff, when you've introduced me. I flatter myself that I know women!" cried Abercromby as they cracked t'other bottle of Johnstone's champagne.

"Take me to her, and then, I'll take you to the Viceroy. I guarantee your rank!"

"It's a bargain!" cried the delighted Hawke. While Abercromby dreamed of the lovely lady of the Silver Bungalow, Major Alan Hawke leisurely examined a sheaf of letters from Europe which had been thrust in his pocket by Ram Lal at parting.

"Victory!" he cried, as he read a tender letter from Euphrosyne Delande, in which she promised her absolute compliance with his every wish. "Justine has written to me herself," was the underscored hint that the three might join fortunes. "It's about time for that Madras boat to get to Brindisi," mused Hawke, as they ran into Allahabad, "There maybe telegrams here now." And, while General Abercromby jovially feasted, Hawke ran over to his secret haunt to which he had ordered Ram Lal to send any telegrams, for one day only, and then, the rest would be safe with Ram's secret agent in Calcutta. "My God! This is my fortune! Bravo, Justine!" cried Hawke, "True and quickwitted. I now hold Berthe Louison in my hand."

He read the words--"Andrew Fraser, St. Agnes' Road, St. Heliers, Jersey." The dispatch was headed Brindisi, and signed "Justine."



"A man might do worse than marry a woman as true and keen as that," smiled Hawke. "I am a devil for luck!" And then he gayly drank Justine's health, in silence, when he joined the amorous Abercromby at the table.

But the "devil for luck" did not know of a little scene at Brindisi, where the blushing Nadine Johnstone hid her face in her friend's bosom. "It is my life, my very existence, Justine!" she pleaded. "I will never forget you; we are both women, and my heart will break if you refuse!" And thus Justine Delande had learned at last of Nadine's easy victory over the frank-hearted cousin's prudence.

"What's the wrong--to tell her?" he had mused, under the spell of the loving eyes. "We go straight through, and I am in charge till my father takes her out of my hands! Poor girl, it will be a grim enough life with him. Not a man will ever set eyes on her face without old Hugh's written order!" And it was thus that Justine was enabled to warn her own lover when she had slipped away and cabled by her mistress's orders to the young Lochinvar at Delhi:

"Captain Harry Hardwicke, Royal Engineers, Delhi: Letters for you at Andrew Fraser's, St Agnes Road, St. Heliers, Jersey. Come."

The Swiss woman shuddered as she boldly signed Nadine! And this same dispatch when received by the young officer, now busied with the Viceroy's mandate, brought the sunlight of Love back into his darkened soul! The minutes seemed to lengthen into hours until the special train was ready. At the risk of his military future, the Major gave to the faithful Simpson his London Club address. "If anything happens here, you must go to General Willoughby. Tell him what you want me to know. He will send it on, and give you a five-pound note. Remember! Simpson, you'll die in my service if you stand true!"

"That I will, for your brave father's sake, and for the young lady's bright eyes! Bless her dear, sunny face! Tell her that I will work for her in life and death!" And when, in a few days the lengthened absence of Major Harry Hardwicke and Red Eric Murray was noted, the groups only conjectured a little junket to some near-by station, or a long shikaree trip. But Simpson and General Willoughby knew better. Simpson was a "lord" in these days, in the quarter, for Hardwicke had not left Delhi with a closed hand.

And old Hugh Johnstone, greatly relieved at heart, was now busied in secretly arranging for his own flitting. "I'll run down to Calcutta, see the Viceroy, give Abercromby a splendid dinner, and then slip off home, on the quiet, via Ceylon. I'll send Douglas back when I get to Jersey, and then I can put those jewels where no human being can ever trace them! Once that brother Andrew has my full orders as to Nadine, I will bar this she-devil forever from her side! On the excuse of a leisurely contemplated tour, I can have the rich Jew brokers of Amsterdam and Frankfort, with their agents in Cairo and Constantinople, divide up the jewels among the foreign crown-heads. I am then safe! safe! No human hand can ever touch me now," he gloated.

There was a clattering of aides-de-camp and great official bustle at the Government House in Calcutta when General Abercromby reported to the great statesman Viceroy, dwelling in the vast palace, builded

by the Marquis of Wellesley.

General Abercromby, marveling at the abruptness of the Viceroy, was relieved to know that his "secret service" had been transferred to Major Hardwicke under the orders of Major-General Willoughby. His mind was intently occupied with the promised introduction to Madame Berthe Louison--"that little party"--and so he failed not to refer to the future value to the crown of Alan Hawke's services.

"He is here with me, Your Excellency!" respectfully said Abercromby, who had already posted off his leporello to call in due form at the banker's mansion, where the disguised Alixe Delavigne had taken refuge. "Send him to me at once, General. I need him! I will give him the local staff rank of Major and immediate employment. Willoughby has also written to me especially about his wonderful knowledge of our northern lines. Stay! Bring him yourself, to-morrow, at ten o'clock."

"Splendid! Splendid!" cried the love-lorn General, rubbing his hands, as he hastened away in his carriage to meet Alan Hawke! "I am ready for him, if he is ready for me! I wish she were at some one of the great hotels instead of being buried in the silver-gray respectability of the Manager's family circle. But--but--I will take her to the Viceroy. The bird shall then learn to test its wings. I will bring her out as a social star!"

Major Alan Hawke, with a beating heart, recounted to Madame Berthe Louison all the occurrences in Delhi, when they were left alone in the great banker's vast parlors. "She is a puzzle, this strange woman!" mused Hawke, for a serene and stately triumph shone in her splendid eyes.

Berthe Louison listened to all! "You will get your staff appointment," she smiled, "and I will help you! Bring your friend General Abercromby to see me here to-morrow evening! I will be amiable to him, for your sake, and for the sake of my future interests!"

The grateful young man, now on the threshold of reinstatement, in a sudden impulse cried, "I can, now, give you Nadine Johnstone's hiding place! You can trust to me and I will prove it, now! It is--"

"With Andrew Fraser, retired Professor of Edinburgh University, historian and philologist, ethnologist, etc.; St. Agnes Road, St. Heliers, Jersey," laughing rejoined Berthe Louison.

"You are a--witch, woman! A wonder!" cried the astounded adventurer.

"Ah! You see that I have trusted you!" she smiled. "Now, do as I bid you, and you will rise in the service! Remember! You are to do just what I say! The bank here, or in Delhi, will give you always my directions. Remember! I shall not lose sight of you for a moment, though near or far! And money and promotion will reward your good faith! Go now! my friend," she kindly said, extending her hand. "Bring the General, here, tomorrow evening, at eight! I will be busied till then! There is nothing for you to do now!"

The astonished schemer was in a maze as he dashed away to the Calcutta Club to meet General Abercromby. "She is a very devil and

a mistress of the Black Art!" he mused. "I will stand by her," he admiringly cried, "as long as it pays me." It was the honest tribute of a grateful scoundrel's heart!

While the happy Abercromby dallied with Major Hawke over a claret cup, an official messenger sought him out, at the Club. "There, my boy! You see that I am a man of my word!" cried the would-be lover. Alan Hawke's lip trembled as he tore open an envelope directed to him and marked: "On Her Majesty's Service." The first in many years. The walls spun around before his eyes when he read his provisional appointment, with an order to report forthwith, to the Chief of Staff, for private instructions. "Ah! I congratulate you, my boy!" heartily cried the happy General. "You are a very devil for luck! One toast to the Viceroy! I'll meet you here to-night!"

The happiest man in India sped away to his newly opened gate of Paradise Regained, while afar in the sweltering September sun, the gleam of rifles and red coats told of an armed escort on the train, bearing Major Hardwicke and Captain Eric Murray, on to Calcutta, with the swiftness of the wind. Neither of the officers for a moment quitted their compartment, and two chosen sergeants, revolver in hand, watched certain sealed packages lying beside them all there in plain view. Major Hardwicke's soul was now in his quest!

There was a gleam of romance in the great Viceroy's morning duties, while Major Hawke had hastened to the Chief of Staff's office.

Madame Berthe Louison, escorted by her guardian, the bank manager, had placed upon the Viceroy's table a little document which he studied with great care. "You are sure that there is no mistake?" the statesman said, gravely interrogating the banker. "I will guarantee it, Your Excellency, with its face value, fifty thousand pounds." answered the financier. It was the memorandum of a policy of assurance for a sealed package, on the steamer Lord Roberts, sent by Hugh Fraser Johnstone to Prof. Andrew Fraser, St. Agnes Road, St. Heliers, Jersey and now half way to England.

"I will act, Madame, at once!" said the holder of a scepter by proxy. "You are to guard this secret, both, upon your honor. Send the dispatch, as you have proposed. My official action is to follow this up. I will let the game go on in silence just a little longer. And now--" the Viceroy led the lady aside, whispering a few private words, which left her a proud and happy woman. "My special aid will call at your residence as soon as it is dark. The consular officials at Aden, Suez, Port Said, and Brindisi will all have orders regarding you. I am ashamed that the prudence needed in the official side of this affair prevents me socially honoring you as I would. The French Consul-General has given to me his official guaranty for you, which," he smiled, "was not needed. We shall meet again, and your conduct will not be forgotten."

Alixé Delavigne bowed with the grace of a queen and never lifted her eyes until her sober mentor had brought her to the shelter of his home. Before they were seated at tiffin the wires bore away this dispatch, which astounded its recipient:

"CAP. ANSON ANSTRUTHER, JUNIOR UNITED SERVICE CLUB,  
LONDON.

Meet me at Morley's Hotel, London. Will telegraph you from Brindisi.  
Official dispatches to you explain.

BERTHE LOUISON."

When the stars lit up the broad Hooghly that night, a swift Peninsular and Oriental Liner drew away down the river, with a smart steam-launch towing at her companionway. The woman who said adieu to the Viceroy's aid and her grave-faced banker in her splendid rooms had read the brief words of Captain Anstruther, telling her that the electric Ariel was true to his trust. "All right. Both dispatches received. Welcome. Anstruther." The official staterooms were a bower of floral beauty, and the gallant aid murmured: "I hope that nothing has been forgotten. The whole ship is at your disposal. The Commander has the Viceroy's personal orders. And, I was to give you the letter and this package!" When the banker had exchanged the last words of counsel and advice, he said: "Trust me! I know Hawke of old! We will let him go up the ladder of life a little, while the other fellow comes down!"

When the little steam-launch was a black blur on the blue waters, then Alixe Delavigne, standing alone at the rail, smiled as she saw the lean, straggling shores sweep by. "I fear that General Abercromby will deem me discourteous! But time, tide, and the P. and O. steamers wait for no elderly beau, however fascinating!"

It is a matter of local history in Calcutta that General Abercromby's remark: "Hawke! we have been a pair of damned fools! We are outwitted!" found its way at last into the clubs, and the attack of jaundice, followed up by a severe gout, which "laid out" the sighing lover for long months, proves, as of old, that stern Mars cannot cope with the bright and all-compelling Venus! But Major Alan Hawke, of the Provisional Staff, hearkened wisely to the banker's words: "Don't be fool enough to think that you can trifle with Madame Louison's interests. The noble Viceroy has placed you on duty, at her own personal request, to give you a last chance to regain all the promise of your youth. One word from her, and--and you will be suspended or, dropped! You will get your military orders from the Viceroy and her wishes from me."

Alan Hawke was paralyzed with astonishment the next day, when the Viceroy ordered him to proceed at once to Delhi, to report to General Willoughby, and to hasten to London, via Bombay, on completion of his secret service at Delhi."

"I am a devil for luck!" muttered Hawke. "But even the tide of Fortune can drive along too fast!" He had lost his head, and forgotten all his pigmy plans. A stronger hand than his own was secretly guiding his onward path, upward to the old status of the "British officer!" "What the devil do they want of me in London?" he mused.

And, chuckling over how easily he had made the lovesick Abercromby help him into his "military seat" once more, Alan Hawke betook himself forthwith to Delhi, to report to General Willoughby for instant service. When he descended at Allahabad, his undress uniform of a major of the Staff Corps brought down on him a storm of congratulations from old friends gathered there. "Sly old boy you were!" the service men laughed, over their glasses, while wetting his new uniform.

"A man must not tell all he knows!" patiently replied Major Hawke, with the sad, sweet smile of a man who had dropped into a good thing.

As he rolled along toward Delhi, he seriously cogitated "playing fair" in his new capacity. "Perhaps it will pay!" he mused. "But I will even up with that old hog, Johnstone!" He dared not contemplate now any substantial treason to Madame Alixe Delavigne. "She is a witch woman! She seems to have an untold backing! The Bankers, even, the Viceroy, and the French Consul-General, too. She could crush me! I must serve My Lady Disdain, and I will fight and die in her army!" Arriving at Delhi, Major Alan Hawke's first visit was to Ram Lal Singh, as he prepared to "report forthwith," in "full rig," to the local Commander. There was a strange preoccupation in the old jeweler which baffled Hawke. Ram Lal only humbly begged to have all his lengthened accounts with Madame Berthe Louison arranged, and Alan Hawke, with a few words, calmed the Mussulman's fears.

"I'll have it all attended to, to-morrow, when I look it over," said the Major, hastening away to the Club. "Ram has been at the hashish, or bhang, or the betel nut, or some of his recondite dissipations--perhaps he has enjoyed an opium bout in the Zenana," mused the new appointee, as he gayly "begged off" from a cloud of eager congratulations by promising to "blow off" the whole Delhi Club. "Business first, pleasure afterwards" said the resplendent Major Hawke, as he clattered away, a handsome son of Mars, to report to General Willoughby.

Major Hawke was secretly delighted with his cordial reception. "Come to me to-morrow at ten, Major," said the Commander, "I will have your first instructions, but remember absolute secrecy. This is a very grave affair to both of us--your coming employment."

"The tide of life is bearing me on, with a devilish rapidity, with favoring gales," the Major reflected. But beyond the clouds veiling the future he saw no farther shore.

In the dim watches of the night for a week past, Simpson, secretly busied with preparing Hugh Johnstone's flitting, was perplexed at the sound of shuffling feet and whispered voices in the master's rooms opening into the splendid gardens. "Who the devil has he there? Some woman!" mused the old veteran servant. Simpson had his own little "private life" to wind up, and so he was charitably inclined. It was his custom when all was still to slip away "to the quarter" where some lingering cords were now slowly snapping one by one. The old servant noted with surprise a dark form gliding on his trail in several of these goings and comings. Being of a practical nature, the man who had faced the mad rebels at Lucknow only belted on a heavy Adams revolver, and concluded at last that some others of the household were busied in secret dissipation or nocturnal lovemaking. "No one man has a controlling patent on being a fool," mused Simpson. "Black and white, we're all of a muchness." And as he knew they might now leave at any moment he sped away to his last delightful nights in Delhi.

On the night when Alan Hawke returned from Calcutta, the inky blackness of an approaching storm wrapped dreaming Delhi in an impenetrable mantle. Under the huge camphor tree where the cobra had risen in

its horrid menace before the frightened girl, a dark figure waited till a man glided to his side. His head was bent as the spy reported "Simpson is gone to the quarter. Two of our men have followed him, and, if he returns, he will be stopped on the way." The only answer was an outstretched arm, and the whispered words, "Go, then, and watch."

"It is the very night--the night of all nights!" muttered the watcher under the tree, and then, stealing forward, he tapped three times at the window where Hugh Johnstone stood with his heart beating high in all the pride of a coming triumph ready to open to the man who was settling his private affairs.

"No one shall know that I have stolen away," he mused. "Forever and in the night."

A light foot pressed the floor as the expected one glided over the low window sill. There was a night lamp burning dimly in a shaded corner. "Put out the light. I must tell you something. We are both watched and spied on!" whispered a well-known voice.

As Hugh Johnstone turned from the corner, in the darkness, there was a gurgling cry--a half-smothered groan--as Mirzah Shah's poisoned dagger was driven to the hilt between his shoulders. His accounts were settled, at last!

An hour later, a dark form crept through the gardens toward the gate where Harry Hardwicke had rode in to the rescue. There was a silent struggle as two men wrestled in the darkness, and one fled away into the shadows of the night. It was the chance meeting of a spy and a murderer.

And then Major Alan Hawke stooped and picked up a heavy dagger lying at his feet. "I have the beggar's knife," he growled. And, with a sudden intention, he vanished toward the Club, for the knife of Mirzah Shah was reeking, and Hugh Johnstone had gone out on his darkened path alone. He had left Delhi--forever.

### BOOK III.

#### PRINCE DJIDDIN'S VISIT TO ENGLAND.

#### CHAPTER XI.

"DO YOU SEE THIS DAGGER?"

Morning in Delhi! The fiery sun leaped up, gilding once more the far Himalayas and lighting the bloodstained plains of Oude. The golden shafts twinkled on the huge colonnade, the vast ruined arch, the crumbling walls, and the huge castled oval of Humayoon's tomb. In

the dark night, the monsoon winds wailed over the wreck of Hindu, Pathan, and Mogul magnificence. The dark demons of Bowanee rejoiced at a new sacrifice to the gloomy goddess; and the straggling jungle was alive again.

In the vacant caverns, whence the sons of Mohammed Bahadur were once dragged forth to die by daring Hodson's smoking pistols, their slaughtered shades grinned over the ghastly vengeance of the barren years.

The huge dome of the mosque hung in air over the vacant palaces of the great Moguls, and the far windmill ridge, and the bastioned walls of Delhi were bathed in golden light, while Alan Hawke slept the sleep of exhaustion. And while Ram Lal Singh, secure in his zenana, calmly greeted the cool morning hour with a smiling face and a happy heart, in the lonely marble house, stern old Hugh Fraser Johnstone slept the sleep that knows no waking.

The Chandnee Chouk awoke to its busy daily chatter, and old Shahjehanabad sought its pleasures languidly again, or bowed its shoulders once more under the yoke of toil.

The faithful sought the Jumna Musjid for morning prayer, and the nonchalant British officials began to straggle into the vacant Hall of the Peacock Throne.

Far away, the Kootab Minar, rising three hundred feet in air, bore its mute witness to the splendor of the vanished rulers of Delhi, the peerless Ghorî swordsmen of Khorassan. But, even as the soldiers of the old Pathan fort had marched out into the shadowless night of death to join Ghorî and Baber and Nadir Shah, so the spirit of the lonely old miser nabob had sought the echoless shore.

When Simpson had unavailingly endeavored to awaken his master, the locked doors were burst in at last by the anxious servants, and they found only the tenantless shell of the mighty millionaire, as cold and rigid as the iron pillar which veils to-day its mystery of a forgotten past, when the jackals howl in the ruins of old Delhi.

Then rose up a wild outcry, and the sound of hurrying feet. The alert old veteran servitor, with instinctive military obedience, dispatched two messengers, on the run, to notify General Willoughby and Major Alan Hawke. And then, with quick wit, he forbade the gaping crowd to touch even a single article.

Not even the stiffened body, as it lay prone upon its face, was disturbed. Simpson stood there, pistol in hand, on guard until properly relieved, and as silent as a crouching rifleman on picket. The whole room bore the evidence of a thorough ransacking, and the disordered clothing of the nabob proved, too, that the body had been rifled. The mysterious nocturnal visits returned to Simpson's mind. "Could it have been some once-wronged woman?" he mused while waiting for his "military superiors." For the simple old soldier scorned all civilian control. His keen eye had caught the strange facts of the fastened windows, the disappearance of the two mahogany boxes, and the startling absence of the key of the chamber door.

"Whoever did this job knew what they came for and when to come!" mused Simpson. He gazed at the window sill. There was the mark of

damp earth still upon it. "Just as I fancied!" growled Simpson. "They came in at the window, and when their work was done, left by the door. There was more than one murderer in this job!" And, then, certain old stories of a mysterious Eurasian beauty returned to cloud the old man's judgment. "Was it robbery, or vengeance?" he grumbled. "The black gang are in this, but their secrets are safe forever! They are a close corporation--these devils!"

With certain ideas of an endangered life pension, and a sudden yearning for the absent Hardwicke's counsel, stern old Simpson awaited the coming of his betters. And, the ghastly news of Johnstone's "taking-off" flew over Delhi to furnish a nine days' wonder.

There was a great crowd gathered around the garden walls of the Marble House, as an officer of the guard galloped up with a platoon of cavalry. "The General will be here himself, soon! What's all this terrible happening?" said the young officer, as he took post beside Simpson. "You have done well!" the soldier said, on a brief report. "Let nothing be touched. My guard will prevent any one leaving the grounds!" There was a sullen apathy as regarded the unloved old egoist.

Major Alan Hawke sprang to his feet, hastily, as the excited Club Steward, forgetting all his decorum, banged loudly upon the staff officer's bedroom door. The young man was still in the dress of night, as the Steward excitedly exclaimed: "Here's a fearful deed! Hugh Johnstone has been murdered in his bed, and--they've sent for you!"

Alan Hawke was staggered. "Get me a horse, at once! I must report to the General! When, where, how? Tell me all! Send off a man for the horse!" And, as Hawke hastily donned his uniform, he heard the Hindu servant's story.

"Be off! Tell Simpson I go first to the General, and, then, I will come over to the house!"

As Major Hawke strode through the clubroom, a half-dozen half-dressed clubmen seized upon him. He waved off their inquiries, as an orderly dashed up to the door.

"General Willoughby's compliments, Sir. You are to report to him instantly at the Marble House! You can take my horse, Major! I'll bring yours on." And so, lightly leaping into the saddle, the Major galloped away, with an approving nod. "There'll be a devil of a racket over this thing!" he reflected, as he dashed along. And he chuckled with glee at his prudence in hiding away the dagger which he had picked up in the garden. For, a moonlight-eyed Eurasian girl, hidden in a little cottage, was the only human being in Delhi who knew of the hasty visit her secret lover had made in the night. The jeweled dagger of Mirzah Shah was now securely locked in a little chest where Alan Hawke kept a few articles hidden away in the humble home of the passive plaything of his idle hours. As he caught sight of the Marble House, with its gathered crowds, he saw the gleam of musket barrels, as a company of foot were picketing the vast garden inclosure, and forcing back the excited crowd.

A non-commissioned officer swung open the heavy gates which would only turn on their hinges once more for Hugh Johnstone going out



on his last journey. "The General awaits you, Major," said the sergeant, touching his cap. "He has already asked for you." And as Hawke rode up to the front door he was suddenly reminded of his imperiled interests. "The drafts! They may be stopped now! By God! I must see Ram Lal! I need him now and he needs me."

With an unruffled professional calm, however, Major Hawke reported to the visibly disturbed General commanding.

With a single warning gesture of silence, General Willoughby drew the Major aside. "I shall put you in entire charge here. I have seen all the civil authorities. This is your affair. It touches your mission. The Viceroy has been telegraphed, and you are to guard the whole property here till we have his pleasure. Now come with me and let us question Simpson. The rest are merely a lot of apes."

And so Major Alan Hawke had ample time to arrange his private plan of campaign as he guarded a respectful silence during Simpson's long relation, for his thoughts were now far away with Berthe Louison, and the lovely orphan, whose only confidante was his tender-hearted dupe Justine Delande. But the acute adventurer's mind returned to fix itself upon Ram Lal Singh, now blandly smiling in his jewel shop, where the morning gossips babbled over Johnstone Sahib's tragic death. "I must telegraph to Euphrosyne," thought the Major, "and to 9 Rue Berlioz, Paris, for my will-o-the-wisp employer. But, Mr. Ram Lal Singh, you shall pay me for what ruin Mirzah Shah's dagger has wrought!"

The mantle of silence had fallen forever over the last night's rencontre in the garden. With dreaming eyes Hawke mused: "It would never do to tell any part of that story. What business had I there?" And, without a tremor, he stood by the General's side as they gazed on the dead millionaire's body still lying on the floor.

"I will now send for the civil authorities, and you, Major Hawke, will represent me in the investigation. Your military future hangs on this. Remember, now, that the Viceroy looks to you alone! I will return here after tiffin. I will have some personal instructions for you." And Alan Hawke now saw the farther shore of his voyage of life gleaming out as General Willoughby left him to confer with the arriving magistrates and civil police. "I shall marry you, my veiled Rose of Delhi, and be master here yet, in this Marble House, and, by God, I'll die a general, too!" he swore, with which pleasing prophecy Major Alan Hawke calmly took up the varied secret duties which joined a Viceroy's secret orders to the will of the General commanding.

"I am a devil for luck!" he mused as he gazed down on the old man's shrunken and withered dead face. "I will do the honors alone for you, my departed friend," he sneered, "for I am the master here now." The absence of all articles of value, the disappearance of Johnstone's three superb ruby shirt-studs, and his magnificent single diamond cuff-buttons, told of the greed of the robbers, presumably familiar with his personal ornaments, while the terrific stab in the back showed that the heavy knife had been driven through the back up to its very hilt.

"We must find the dagger!" pompously said the civil magistrate.

"Major Hawke, will you give orders to have the whole house and grounds searched?" And with a faint smile the Major politely rose and set all his myrmidons in motion.

Even then the telegraph was clicking away a message to Johnstone's lawyer and bankers in Calcutta, and to his young relative, Douglas Fraser, of the great P. and O. steamship service. Before night the crafty Calcutta lawyer had notified Professor Andrew Fraser, in the far-away island of Jersey, and before Major Hawke himself received the Viceroy's orders, through General Willoughby, Mademoiselle Euphrosyne Delande, of Geneva, and the household at No. 9 Rue Berlioz, Paris, both knew that the defiant old nabob had sailed the dark sea without a shore.

Most of all surprised was Captain Anson Anstruther in London, who pondered long at the United Service Club over an official message from the Viceroy, telling him of the startling murder. The young gallant's heart beat in a strange agitation as he examined the previous dispatches of both Berthe Louison and the Viceroy.

"She had no hand in it, thank God!" mused the young aide-de-camp. "Perhaps he was paid off for some of his old Shylock transactions--some local intrigue, or the jealous lover of some Eurasian beauty, dragged to his lair, has finished all, and revenged the accumulated brutalities of thirty years."

There was a loud outcry of horror and surprise sweeping on now from the social circles of Delhi to the clubs of Lucknow, Cawnpore, Allahabad, Benares, and Patna to Calcutta.

In a day or two, men from Lahore to Hyderabad, from Bombay to Nagpore and Madras, and in all the clubs from Calcutta to Simla, had paused over their brandy pawnee to murmur, "Well! The poor old beggar is gone, and now he'll never get his Baronetcy! Some of the niggers did the trick neatly for him at last. They must have got a jolly lot of loot!"

In which general verdict the glittering-eyed Ram Lal, hidden in his zenana, did not share. For, when he had rifled and destroyed the two mahogany boxes he summed all up his pickings with baffled rage. "A couple of thousand pounds of notes, a few scattered jewels, the sly old dog has spirited away his vast stealings! My work was all in vain, save the vengeance!" And the oily Ram Lal, in the zenana, drew a willing beauty of Cashmere to his bosom, and hid his face from the chatterers of street and shop. He was safe from all prying eyes in the Harem.

But, while the triumphant English Mem-Sahibs, of Delhi, shuddered at the bloody details of old Hugh Johnstone's taking off, they found abundant reason to point a moral and adorn a tale.

While the anxious Viceroy was busied at Calcutta, and General Willoughby and Hawke were engrossed with the pompous funeral preparations at Delhi, the ladies of the whole station unanimously condemned the departed. For a cold and brutal foe of womanhood had died unhonored in their midst, and none were left to mourn.

With much pretentious wagging of shapely heads, and much mysterious innuendo, they spoke lightly of the departed one, and failed not

to mentally unroof the Silver Bungalow. The baffled ladies scented a social mystery!

Wild rumors of splendid orgies, strange tales of a wronged woman's vengeance, lurid romances of the flight of the French Countess with a younger lover, after despoiling her aged admirer; all these things were "put in commission" and vigorously circulated.

The principal party interested in these slanders, was, however, now calmly gliding on toward Aden, while the dead millionaire was alike oblivious to the lovely daughter whom he had crushed as a bruised flower, the haughty woman who had defied him in his wrath, and the administration of the million sterling which was the golden monument over his yawning grave! The silk-petticoat Council of Notables in Delhi decided by a tidal-wave of womanly intuition, that the gallant and debonnaire Major Alan Hawke would marry "the lovely and accomplished heiress," and so the white-bosomed beauties of the capital of Oude turned again lazily to their respective sins of omission and commission, and to the glitter of their respective booths in Vanity Fair!

The club gossips waited in vain for the reappearance of Major Alan Hawke, whose entire personal effects were bundled hastily away to the marble house, where the adventurer now ruled pro tempore. It was late in the night when Major Hawke had achieved all the preparations for the funeral of the murdered man, upon the following day. Simpson and a squad of non-commissioned officers watched where the flickering lights gleamed down upon the dead nabob.

Making his last rounds for the night, Major Hawke, with a soldier's cynical calmness, enjoyed a cheroot upon the veranda, as he bade his captain of the guard take charge until his return. The Major had most carefully examined the five bills of exchange which now occupied his attention, and his mind was now busied with the dead man's golden store. He now contemplated a visit to a man whose conscience bothered him not, but whose bosom quaked in fear when Hawke's letter, sent by a messenger, bade Ram Lal await him at midnight.

"Does he know?" gasped Ram Lal, with chattering teeth, and yet he dared not fly.

An early evening interview with General Willoughby had disclosed to the Major the inconvenient fact that the dead nabob had left a carefully drawn will, whereof Andrew Fraser, of St. Heliers, Jersey, and Douglas Fraser, of Calcutta, were executors. "There is a duplicate will here in the Bengal Bank," so telegraphed the solicitor, "and I have now notified both the executors. I presume that Mr. Douglas Fraser will return here at once, as he is absent in Europe on leave. It may be a week or more until he receives the sad intelligence."

Alan Hawke softly smiled at those touching words, "Sad intelligence." It was only the perfunctory regret of the shark-like lawyer, and the secretly rejoicing heirs. "This is not a case where the one who goes is happier than the one that's left behind," mused Hawke. "I must settle matters rapidly with Ram Lal, for if the will leaves the property to Nadine, she must be mine at all costs!

"Shall I not send a well-armed man with you, Major?" asked the Captain. "It is very late!"

"Thanks, Jordan," lightly said the Major. "I've a good revolver and my service sword--a priceless old wootz steel tulwar. I'm good for a dozen Pandies! I'm used to Thug--and Dacoit, to bandit and ruffian. I have a little private business to attend to, and I'll come home in a trap!"

By a strange chance, Major Alan Hawke, the distinguished favorite of fortune, slunk along in byway and shadow till he reached the cottage, where a lovely woman, flower wreathed, with child-like face and timid, mournful eyes, anxiously awaited him. "I'll be back in two or three hours," he carelessly said, as he tossed her a roll of rupees. Then, with a long, slender package hidden in his bosom, he stole out after a long circuit and entered Ram Lal's compound by the rear entrance, always at his use.

"It is just as well not to make any little mistake just now," mused Hawke, as with cat-like tread he sped through the old jeweler's garden. And the "prevention of mistakes" consisted in the heavy Adams revolver which he carried slung around his neck and shoulder by a heavy cord, in the handy Russian fashion.

His left hand steadied the peculiar parcel which he had so carefully hidden. An amused smile flitted over his face when old Ram Lal opened the door of the snugger, where Justine had first listened to a lover's sighs. "Poor girl! I wish she were here to-night!" tenderly mused the sentimental rascal, as he waved away Ram Lal's bidding to a splendid little supper.

"I came here to talk business, Ram, to-night" sternly said Hawke, who had inwardly decided not to taste food or drink with the past master of villainy. "He might give me a gentle push into the Styx," acutely reflected the Major. "Sit down right there where I can see you," said Hawke, his hand firmly grasping the revolver, as he indicated a corner of the table, after satisfying himself that the shop door was locked. He then quickly locked the garden door and pocketed both the keys.

"What do you want of me?" murmured Ram Lal, who had noted the semi-hostile tone, and who clearly saw the butt of the revolver.

"I want to talk to you of this Johnstone matter," said the soldier, ignoring all other reference to the "dear departed." This coolness unsettled the wily jeweler, who trembled as Hawke laid a long red pocketbook down on the table before him.

The wily scoundrel shivered when the Major, with his left hand, pushed over to him five sets of Bills of Exchange for a thousand pounds each. Ram Lal's eyes dropped under the brave villain's steady gaze, and he slowly read the first paper. He well knew the drawer's writing:

DELHI, August 15, 1890.

L 1,000.

Thirty days after sight of this first of exchange (second and

third unpaid), pay to the order of Alan Hawke one thousand pounds sterling, value received.

HUGH FRASER JOHNSTONE.

To Messrs. Glyn, Carr and Glyn, London.

"What do you wish me to do, Sahib?" tremblingly faltered the old usurer, as he carefully noted the fifteen papers. A sinking at the heart told him that he was in the power of the one man in India whom he knew to be as merciless as himself, for a kindred spirit had fled when the drawer of the Bills of Exchange died alone in the dark, his bubbling shriek stopped by his heart's blood. The Major sternly said in an icy voice, as he fixed his eyes full on his victim:

"I wish you to indorse, every one of those papers. I wish you to make each one of them read five thousand pounds. You have done that trick very neatly before, and to put the additional Crown duty stamps upon them." Ram Lal had started up, but he sank back appalled as he looked down the barrel of Hawke's revolver.

"Keep silence or I'll put a ball through your shoulder, and then drag you up to General Willoughby. He will hang you in chains if I say the word." Alan Hawke was tiger-like now in his rapacity.

"I will leave the first set with you, and you will now give me your check on the Oriental Bank for five thousand pounds. The other drafts you will have all ready for me to-morrow and bring them to me at the Marble House."

The jeweler groaned and swayed to and fro upon his seat in a mute agony. "I cannot do it. I have not the money," he babbled.

"You old lying wretch. You have screwed a quarter of a million pounds out of Christian, Hindu, and Mohammedan here," mercilessly said the torturer.

"I will not! I cannot! I dare not!" cried Ram Lal, dropping on the floor and trying to bow his head at Hawke's feet.

"Get up! You old beast!" commanded Hawke. "By God! I'll shoot and disable you now and then arrest you! Tell me! Do you know that dagger?" With a quick motion, still covering the cowering wretch with his pistol, Hawke drew out the package from his bosom, clumsily tearing off a silk neck scarf-wrapper with his left hand. He laid down on the table the blood-incrusted dagger of Mirzah Shah. The golden haft, the jeweled fretwork and the broad blade were all covered with the life tide of the great man whom no one mourned in Delhi.

"Mercy! Mercy!" hoarsely whispered Ram Lal, with his hands clasped, as in prayer.

"I know whose it is!" pitilessly continued the tormentor. "You dropped it, you fool, when you ran against me in the garden in your mad haste to get away! One single rebellious word and I will march you to the nearest guard post! Now, will you do what I wish?"

"Anything, anything, Sahib!" begged the cowering wretch. "Put it away, put it away!"

"Now, quick!" said the Major. "First, give me the check! Then indorse all these drafts right here in my presence. I will negotiate the others myself. You can send on the first one through your bankers. Your name on all of them will make them go without question." The alert adventurer watched Ram's trembling fingers achieve the work. "Do not dare to leave your own inclosure till you come directly to me to-morrow, when you have altered all those drafts to read five thousand pounds each. I have charge of the estate of the man whom you butchered like a dog. I have a guard of two companies of soldiers, and you will be arrested as a murderer if you attempt to leave, save to come directly to me with these papers."

Alan Hawke lit a cigar and then took a refreshing draught from a pocket flask.

"Now open your strong box and show me your jewels! I want some of them!" The sobbing wretch at his feet demurred until the cold nozzle of the pistol was pressed against his forehead. "I will make the English bankers pay the other four bills; but, you brute, did you think that I would let you off with a poor five thousand pounds? Harken! I go to England in a week! Then you are safe forever! Bring out all your jewels! You got fifty thousand pounds from the old man! I know it!"

Begging and beseeching in vain, Ram Lal crawled to his great iron strong box studded over with huge knobs, and, after a half an hour's critical selection, Alan Hawke had concealed on his person four little bags, in which he had made the shivering wretch place the choicest of his treasures.

"Call up your man now. Do not stir for an instant from my side! If the drafts are not with me before sundown to-morrow, you will be hung in chains, and the ravens will finish what the hangman leaves! Remember--my boy! The rail and telegraph will cut off any little tricks of yours! And," he laughed, "you will not run away; you have too much here to leave. It would be a fat haul for the Crown authorities. I will keep my eye on you, near or far. I will be with you always. We have our own little secret, now!"

"I will obey--only save me! Save me, Hawke Sahib. I will do all upon my head, I will!" pleaded Ram Lal, whose vast fortune was indeed at the mercy of the law.

"Call up your servants. Get out the carriage. Go back to your women. Make merry. You are perfectly safe, but only if you obey me!" was the last mandate of the triumphant bravo. When he stepped out of the house, attended by the frightened murderer, Alan Hawke whispered from the carriage: "Your house is under a close watch--even now. Remember--I give you till sundown, and if you fail, I will come with the guard! I shall seal up the dagger and leave it here with a message to the General Willoughby Sahib to be given to him, at once, by one who knows you! So, I can trust you. Nothing must happen to your dear friend, you know!" he smilingly said in adieu, as Ram Lal groaned in anguish.

Alan Hawke had closely examined the vehicle, and he sat with his

drawn revolver ready as he drove down the still lit-up Chandnee Chouk. In a storm of remorse and agony, the plundered jeweler was now doubly locked up in his room. "I must do this devil's bidding!" he murmured. "Bowanee! Bowanee! You have betrayed your servant!" was his cry as he sought the safety of the Zenana.

Major Hawke tasted all the sweets of a great secret triumph as he cast up his accounts. "The five thousand pounds frightened from this old wretch, Ram Lal, really squares me with the estate of the 'dear departed.' The jewels are worth twice as much more, and, with Ram Lal's indorsement all the other drafts on Glyn's bank are as good as gold. There is twenty thousand clear profit. I will send them on now for acceptance, openly, through the Credit Lyonnaise when I get to Paris. For Berthe Louison will give me, also, a good character. Old Ram's indorsements make them perfectly good anywhere. I had better hide the details of this windfall, out here. And, now, thank Heaven, I am 'fixed for life,' and I can go in boldly and play the Prince Charming to Miss Moneybags, the fair Nadine." He tossed a double rupee to the driver, as the sentry swung the gate, but, hastily called him back as Captain Jordan said, hastening from the house:

"Orders are waiting for you now, with the General. Let me give you a trusty Sergeant. Drive right up there, Major. The General sent word that he awaits you." And so the Major sped away to his chief.

No human being in Delhi ever knew the purport of the orders which General Willoughby handed to Major Hawke, on this eventful evening, but much marveled all Delhi that the favorite of fortune was absent from the funeral of the late Hugh Fraser Johnstone, Esq., of Delhi and Calcutta. He had vanished, with no P.P.C. calls, and a hundred-pound note tossed to the poor little Eurasian girl in the cottage was her whole fortune in life now.

But a grave-faced civilian public official, with Major Williamson, of the Viceroy's general staff (a late arrival from Calcutta), ruled over the marble house in place of Major Alan Hawke "absent upon special duty." Only Ram Lal knew of the real destination of the lucky man, who was only free from care when he had sailed from Bombay direct for Brindisi, on the fleet steamer Ramchunder.

"I am safe now," laughed Alan Hawke, who rejoiced in the easy tour of duty before him. "To repair to London and to report to Captain Anson Anstruther, A.D.C., for special duty." Such were the Viceroy's secret orders. It was General Willoughby who had absolutely invoked secrecy. "Wear a plain military undress, and you must avoid most men, and all women. Keep your mouth shut and you may find your provisional rank confirmed."

To Berthe Louison's secret agents, the Grindlay Bank at Delhi, Major Hawke had delivered a sealed envelope. "Use this only at your sorest need. I will see Madame Louison probably before she has any orders for me, as to her private affairs." When the envelope was opened the words "Major Alan Hawke, Hotel Faucon, Lausanne, Switzerland," gave the only address which the adventurer dared to leave. And it was that which the cowering Ram Lal Singh copied when he brought to Alan Hawke the four sets of altered Bills of Exchange, and the Bank of England notes for the check of five thousand pounds.

Major Hawke surveyed the skillfully raised Bills of Exchange and carefully examined them in a dark room with a light, and also before the glaring sun rays. "A splendid job, Ram Lal," he gayly said. "You must have given them a coat of size and then moistened and ironed them." The old rascal gloomily accepted the professional compliment. "I observe that you have labored to protect your own indorsement," sportively remarked the Major.

"And now you will return to me my jewels?" timidly demanded Ram Lal.

"Do you wish me to send the dagger of Mirzah Shah to General Willoughby? It is deposited here, with a sealed letter," coldly sneered Hawke. "Should anything happen to me or, to these drafts, it would be sent to the General, and you would hang. No, I will keep the jewels."

And then Major Hawke thrust the shivering wretch out, having liberally paid to him, through Grindlay, the balance due by Berthe Louison.

"I swear that I did not get a single jewel from--from him. He has hidden them," pleaded Ram Lal.

"Ah! I must look to this" mused Hawke, when Ram Lal had been frightened away with a last stern injunction:

"Obey my slightest wishes or you will hang! I will have you watched till I return! There are eyes upon your path that never close in sleep!" Ram Lal shuddered in silence.

Delhi soon forgot the man whom the great stone now covered in the English cemetery, and only General Willoughby and the easy-going civil authorities knew of the cablegram: "Coming on with full power from Senior Executor.--Douglas Fraser, Junior Executor." The cablegram was dated from Milan, for two keen Scottish brains were now busied with plans to save and care for the worldly gear so suddenly abandoned to their care by Hugh Johnstone. Though Delhi was swept as with a besom, no trace of the cowardly assassins was ever found, and only old Simpson, waiting, in final charge as household major domo for Douglas Fraser's arrival, could enlighten the perturbed commanding General with certain vague suspicions. But Ram Lal slept now in a growing security.

"It is clear that the master was watched in his secret preparations for the voyage home," said Simpson, "and some outsiders, with the help of some traitor among the blacks, paid off an old score. I could tell of many an old enemy which he gained in these twenty years." sadly said Simpson. "I feel they only mussed up the room to give an appearance of robbery. The mahogany boxes were merely part of master's old wedding outfit in London, and I know that they were only filled with toilet articles and little medical stores. They only lugged them off to make a show."

And General Willoughby, following up Simpson's clues, easily discovered a shady side of Johnstone's past life, not compatible with the pompous panegyrics of the Indian press, the resolutions of a dozen clubs and societies, the minutes of the Bank of Bengal, and other mortuary literature of a complimentary nature. It was some old curse come down upon the defenseless man in his old age!



And so no one ever sought for the solution of the mystery in the deep dejection of Ram Lal Singh, who vainly mourned for his lost jewels and money. Fear tied his hands, and his tongue was palsied by guilt. He vindictively, however, raised his customary "rate of usance," and swore in his own hardened heart that the needy borrowers of Delhi should recoup him fully before a year. The one Star gleaming in the dark night of financial blackness was the vengeance upon the man who had tricked and despoiled a fellow-robber thirty years before.

Major Hawke on his homeward way counted up a goodly store of twelve thousand pounds in money, jewels of nearly the same value, and the skillfully raised and properly indorsed drafts on London for twenty thousand more. "If I can only get these passed by the executors I am a made man for life," mused the Major as the Ramchunder sped over the blue Arabian sea. "If I discover the secret of the stolen jewels, they must yield, to save both family honor and money; if I don't, then, Ram Lal must save his life and protect the drafts. I will negotiate them with the Credit Lyonnais, in Paris, and force Berthe to help me. No one shall rob me now," somewhat illogically mused the brilliant adventurer, proud of his life-work.

At Calcutta, the noble Viceroy had already given to Major Harry Hardwicke and Capt. Eric Murray his orders for their performance of a delicate duty.

"You will find Captain Anstruther to be my personal as well as official representative in London, and Her Majesty's service demands prudence in this grave affair. So but one set of confidential cipher dispatches have been sent on, and Captain Anstruther will have charge of the whole delicate affair. Should either of you meet Major Alan Hawke in London, or out of India, your commissions will depend on guarding an absolute silence as to the whole Johnstone affair. You are trusted, and not watched, gentlemen," said the great noble, "and he is watched, and not trusted. Now, I have done all I can for you, as this duty takes you home and brings you back at the expense of her Majesty's government. You will not fail to communicate with me from Aden, Suez, and Port Said, as well as Brindisi, and to report if Madame Louison has received at each place her telegrams and proceeded on her journey in safety. Her Majesty's consuls will, in each place, aid you in every way. Should I decide to drop or quash the whole affair, my young kinsman, Anstruther, represents me, personally as well as officially."

And so the gay young bridegroom-to-be sailed from Calcutta light-hearted, while Harry Hardwicke counted each day's reckoning as bringing him, by leaps and bounds, nearer to the dark-eyed girl now left alone in the world. "There shall nothing come between us now, my darling one!" was the young Major's fond vow confided to the evening star, glowing in its trembling silver radiance over the spicy Indian Ocean.

Alixé Delavigne was still "Madame Berthe Louison" to the glittering circle of passengers who envied her the state in which she traveled, the slavish obeisance of the ship's officers, and the deft ministrations of those admirable servants, Jules Victor and Marie. "A great personage incognito," was the general verdict, and so the luckless swains hovering around fell off one by one, as the beautiful woman seemed to be always wrapped in an unbroken

reverie. There was an anxious gleam in the lady's eyes, for she felt that she was going home to the sternest battle of her life, and she brooded now only upon the trials of the future. She never knew how near the dark angel's wing had swooped over her own defenseless head.

For the gray head now lying low had been secretly busied with plans for a huge bribe to Ram Lal which should buy him to the doing of a dark deed without a name. Only Berthe's determined attack on the granting of the baronetcy in London, and her own "lightning disappearance" had saved her from Ram Lal's cupidity. Master of the secrets of a dozen Eastern poisons, the artful confederate of her dark retinue in the silver bungalow, Ram Lal would have gladly worked Hugh Johnstone's will for his red gold. But the fierce quarrel and the precipitate flight of Berthe Louison had balked Johnstone, who fell by the very hand of the sly wretch whom he had designed to buy, as the murderer of another. The engineer hoist by his own petard. But, steadfastly looking to Valerie's child alone, she knew not the dangers which she had escaped.

"I was afraid they would kill you, Madame. Thank God, we are now safe at sea!" said Jules Victor.

"Who?" cried the startled woman.

"Why, that old wretch; he had money, and his spies were all around you," said Jules.

"Yes! Thank God! We are safe now!" mused Berthe Louison, and she bade a long adieu to the strange scenes of her pilgrimage. "I shall never see India again!" she reflected, when she passed, in a mental review, Calcutta, holy Benares, smoky Patna, brisk Allahabad, Cawnpore, where the white-winged angel broods over the innocent dead, heroic Lucknow, and crime-haunted Delhi--all these rose up in a weird panorama of the mind. Strange tales of wild adventure told by Alan Hawke returned to her now--the mysteries of Thibet, the weird ferocity of Bhotan, the quaint tales of the polyandrous Todas, and the strange story of Vijaynagar, the desecrated city whose streets are peopled but ten days in the year! A lotos land where crime broods, where the cobra hides under the painted blossoms of Death!

Glittering palaces of Agra, gloomy caves of Elephanta, the light and lovely Mohammedan architecture, the dark haunts of Kali and Bowanee, the thronged Ghats of the sacred rivers, the color medleys of the vast cities, all these busied her as she passed her days alone in study over the secretly gathered up collection of polychrome views which had taken her from the Neilgherries to Cape Comorin. Her dreams of all her subtle plans to counteract all of Johnstone's schemes, her tender intrigues to silently entrap Nadine Johnstone's girlish heart, her carefully plotted line of future action, all of these things vanished in a moment, at Aden, when a government launch steamed out, and an officer of the vessel led up Her Majesty's Consul to address the mysterious lady passenger.

There was a rush of volunteers when the woman, always brave in sorrow and ever fate defying, fainted away in a deathly trance as her eyes eagerly scanned the brief dispatch of the Viceroy. They were underway again when she realized the fearful decrees of a

merciless fate! She read with a shudder, the lines again and again, whispering: "Can it be?"

"Hugh Johnstone murdered by persons--unknown at Delhi? Hasten on to London. Anstruther will have full details. Please acknowledge!"

And it was half an hour before the beautiful Nemesis who had clouded Hugh Johnstone's life had penned her s

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