not wonder Edwin Arnold has set our American transcendentalists and Unitarians and freethinkers speculating about it all, and wondering whether the East may not have had men as great as Emerson and Channing among its teachers." I paused. My greatest fault is that if any one starts me upon a subject I know anything about, I immediately become didactic. So I paused and reflected that Isaacs, being, as he himself declared, frequently in the society of an "adept" of a high class, was sure to know a great deal more than I.

"I too," he said, "have been greatly struck, and sometimes almost converted, by the beauty of the higher Buddhist thoughts. As for their apparently supernatural powers and what they do with them, I care nothing about phenomena of that description. We live in a land where marvels are common enough. Who has ever explained the mango trick, or the basket trick, or the man who throws a rope up into the air and then climbs up it and takes the rope after him, disappearing into blue space? And yet you have seen those things — I have seen them, every one has seen them, — and the performers claim no supernatural agency or assistance. It is merely a difference of degree, whether you make a mango grow from the seed to the tree in half an hour, or whether you transport yourself ten thousand miles in as many seconds, passing through walls of brick and stone on your way, and astonishing some ordinary mortal by showing that you know all about his affairs. I see

no essential difference between the two 'phenomena,' as the newspapers call them, since Madame Blavatsky has set them all by the ears in this country. It is just the difference in the amount of power brought to bear on the action. That is all. I have seen, in a workshop in Calcutta, a hammer that would crack an eggshell without crushing it, or bruise a lump of iron as big as your head into a flat cake. 'Phenomena' may amuse women and children, but the real beauty of the system lies in the promised attainment of happiness. Whether that state of supreme freedom from earthly care gives the fortunate initiate the power of projecting himself to the antipodes by a mere act of volition, or of condensing the astral fluid into articles of daily use, or of stimulating the vital forces of nature to an abnormal activity, is to me a matter of supreme indifference. I am tolerably happy in my own way as things are. I should not be a whit happier if I were able to go off after dinner and take a part in American politics for a few hours, returning to business here to-morrow morning."

"That is an extreme case," I said. "No man in his senses ever connects the idea of happiness with American politics."

"Of one thing I am sure, though." He paused as if choosing his words. "I am sure of this. If any unforeseen event, whether an act of folly of my own, or the hand of Allah, who is wise, should destroy the peace of mind I have enjoyed for ten years, with very trifling interruption,— if anything should occur

to make me permanently unhappy, beyond the possibility of ordinary consolation,—I should seek comfort in the study of the pure doctrines of the higher Buddhists. The pursuit of a happiness, so immeasurably beyond all earthly considerations of bodily comfort or of physical enjoyment, can surely not be inconsistent with my religion—or with yours."

"No indeed," said I. "But, considering that you are the strictest of Mohammedans, it seems to me you are wonderfully liberal. So you have seriously contemplated the possibility of your becoming one of the 'brethren'—as they style themselves?"

"It never struck me until to-day that anything might occur by which my life could be permanently disturbed. Something to-day has whispered to me that such an existence could not be permanent. I am sure that it cannot be. The issue must be either to an infinite happiness or to a still more infinite misery. I cannot tell which." His clear, evenly modulated voice trembled a little. We were in sight of the lights from the hotel.

"I shall not dine with you to-night, Griggs. I will have something in my own rooms. Come in as soon as you have done—that is if you are free. There is no reason why you should not see Ram Lal the adept, since we think alike about his religion, or school, or philosophy—find a name for it while you are dining." And we separated for a time.

It had been a long and exciting day to me. I felt no more inclined than he did for the din and racket

and lights of the public dining-room. So I followed his example and had something in my own apartment. Then I settled myself to a hookah, resolved not to take advantage of Isaacs' invitation until near the time when he expected Ram Lal. I felt the need of an hour's solitude to collect my thoughts and to think over the events of the last twenty-four hours. I recognised that I was fast becoming very intimate with Isaacs, and I wanted to think about him and excogitate the problem of his life; but when I tried to revolve the situation logically, and deliver to myself a verdict, I found myself carried off at a tangent by the wonderful pictures that passed before my eyes. I could not detach the events from the individual. His face was ever before me, whether I thought of Miss Westonhaugh, or of the wretched old maharajah, or of Ram Lal the Buddhist. Isaacs was the central figure in every picture, always in the front, always calm and beautiful, always controlling the events around him. Then I entered on a series of trite reflections to soothe my baffled reason, as a man will who is used to understanding what goes on before him and suddenly finds himself at a loss. Of course, I said to myself, it is no wonder he controls things, or appears to. The circumstances in which I find this three days' acquaintance are emphatically those of his own making. He has always been a successful man, and he would not raise spirits that he could not keep well in hand. He knows perfectly well what he is about in making love to that beautiful

creature, and is no doubt at this moment laughing in his sleeve at my simplicity in believing that he was really asking my advice. Pshaw! as if any advice could influence a man like that! Absurd.

I sipped my coffee in disgust with myself. All the time, while trying to persuade myself that Isaacs was only a very successful schemer, neither better nor worse than other men, I was conscious of the face that would not be banished from my sight. I saw the beautiful boyish look in his deep dark eyes, the gentle curve of the mouth, the grand smooth architrave of the brows. No — I was a fool! I had never met a man like him, nor should again. How could Miss Westonhaugh save herself from loving such a perfect creature? I thought, too, of his generosity. He would surely keep his promise and deliver poor Shere Ali, hunted to death by English and Afghan foes, from all his troubles. Had he not the Maharajah of Baithopoor in his power? He might have exacted the full payment of the debt, principal and interest, and saved the Afghan chief into the bargain. But he feared lest the poor Mohammedans should suffer from the prince's extortion, and he forgave freely the interest, amounting now to a large sum, and put off the payment of the bond itself to the maharajah's convenience. Did ever an Oriental forgive a debt before even to his own brother? Not in my experience.

I rose and went down to Isaacs. I found him as on the previous evening, among his cushions with a

manuscript book. He looked up smiling and motioned me to be seated, keeping his place on the page with one finger. He finished the verse before he spoke, and then laid the book down and leaned back.

"So you have made up your mind that you would like to see Ram Lal. He will be here in a minute, unless he changes his mind and does not come after all."

There was a sound of voices outside. Some one asked if Isaacs were in, and the servant answered. A tall figure in a gray *caftán* and a plain white turban stood in the door.

"I never change my mind," said the stranger, in excellent English, though with an accent peculiar to the Hindoo tongue when struggling with European languages. His voice was musical and high in pitch, though soft and sweet in tone. The quality of voice that can be heard at a great distance, with no apparent effort to the speaker. "I never change my mind. I am here. Is it well with you?"

"It is well, Ram Lal. I thank you. Be seated, if you will stay with us a while. This is my friend Mr. Griggs, of whom you probably know. He thinks as I do on many points, and I was anxious that you should meet."

While Isaacs was speaking, Ram Lal advanced into the room and stood a moment under the soft light, a gray figure, very tall, but not otherwise remarkable. He was all gray. The long *caftán* wrapped round him, the turban which I had first

thought white, the skin of his face, the pointed beard and long moustache, the heavy eyebrows — a study of grays against the barbaric splendour of the richly hung wall — a soft outline on which the yellow light dwelt lovingly, as if weary of being cast back and reflected from the glory of gold and the thousand facets of the priceless gems. Ram Lal looked toward me, and as I gazed into his eyes I saw that they too were gray — a very singular thing in the East — and that they were very far apart, giving his face a look of great dignity and fearless frankness. To judge by his features he seemed to be very thin, and his high shoulders were angular, though the long loose garment concealed the rest of his frame from view. I had plenty of time to note these details, for he stood a full minute in the middle of the room, as if deciding whether to remain or to go. Then he moved quietly to a divan and sat down cross-legged.

"Abdul, you have done a good deed to-day, and I trust you will not change your mind before you have carried out your present intentions."

"I never change my mind, Ram Lal," said Isaacs, smiling as he quoted his visitor's own words. I was startled at first. What good deed was the Buddhist referring to if not to the intended liberation of Shere Ali? How could he know of it? Then I reflected that this man was, according to Isaacs' declaration, an adept of the higher grades, a seer and a knower of men's hearts. I resolved not to be astonished at anything that occurred, only marvelling that it should

have pleased this extraordinary man to make his entrance like an ordinary mortal, instead of through the floor or the ceiling.

"Pardon me," answered Ram Lal, "if I venture to contradict you. You do change your mind sometimes. Who was it who lately scoffed at women, their immortality, their virtue, and their intellect? Will you tell me now, friend Abdul, that you have not changed your mind? Do you think of anything, sleeping or waking, but the one woman for whom you *have* changed your mind? Is not her picture ever before you, and the breath of her beauty upon your soul? Have you not met her in the spirit as well as in the flesh? Surely we shall hear no more of your doubts about women for some time to come. I congratulate you, as far as that goes, on your conversion. You have made a step towards a higher understanding of the world you live in."

Isaacs did not seem in the least surprised at his visitor's intimate acquaintance with his affairs. He bowed his head in silence, acquiescing to what Ram Lal had said, and waited for him to proceed.

"I have come," continued the Buddhist, "to give you some good advice — the best I have for you. You will probably not take it, for you are the most self-reliant man I know, though you have changed a little since you have been in love, witness your sudden intimacy with Mr. Griggs." He looked at me, and there was a faint approach to a smile in his gray eyes. "My advice to you is, do not let this pro-

jected tiger-hunt take place if you can prevent it. No good can come of it, and harm may. Now I have spoken because my mind would not be at rest if I did not warn you. Of course you will do as you please, only never forget that I pointed out to you the right course in time."

"Thank you, Ram Lal, for your friendly concern in my behalf. I do not think I shall act as you suggest, but I am nevertheless grateful to you. There is one thing I want to ask you, and consult you about, however."

"My friend, what is the use of my giving you advice that you will not follow? If I lived with you, and were your constant companion, you would ask me to advise you twenty times a day, and then you would go and do the diametric opposite of what I suggested. If I did not see in you something that I see in few other men, I would not be here. There are plenty of fools who have wit enough to take counsel of a wise man. There are few men of wit wise enough to be guided by their betters, as if they were only fools for the time. Yet because you are so wayward I will help you once or twice more, and then I will leave you to your own course — which you, in your blindness, will call your kismet, not seeing that your fate is continually in your own hands — more so at this moment than ever before. Ask, and I will answer."

"Thanks, Ram Lal. It is this I would know. You are aware that I have undertaken a novel kind of

bargain. The man you wot of is to be delivered to me near Keitung. I am anxious for the man's safety afterwards, and I would be glad of some hint about disposing of him. I must go alone, for I do not want any witness of what I am going to do, and as a mere matter of personal safety for myself and the man I am going to set free, I must decide on some plan of action when I meet the band of sowars who will escort him. They are capable of murdering us both if the maharajah instructs them to. As long as I am alive to bring the old man into disgrace with the British, the captive is safe; but it would be an easy matter for those fellows to dispose of us together, and there would be an end of the business."

"Of course they could," replied Ram Lal, adding in an ironical tone "and if you insist upon putting your head down the tiger's throat, how do you expect me to prevent the brute from snapping it off? That would be a 'phenomenon,' would it not? And only this evening you were saying that you despised 'phenomena.'"

"I said that such things were indifferent to me. I did not say I despised them. But I think that this thing may be done without performing any miracles."

"If it were not such a good action on your part I would have nothing to do with it. But since you mean to risk your neck for your own peculiar views of what is right, I will endeavour that you shall not break it. I will meet you a day's journey before you reach Keitung, somewhere on the road, and we will