

sunrise in a very impracticable-looking country. The road had been steeper and less defined during the last two hours of the ride, and as I crossed one leg high over the other lying on my back in the grass, the morning light caught my spur, and there was blood on it, bright and red. I had certainly come as fast as I could; if I should be too late, it would not be my fault. The agent, whoever he might be, was a striking looking fellow in a dirty brown cloth *caftán* and an enormous sash wound round his middle. A pointed cap with some tawdry gold lace on it covered his head; and greasy black love-locks writhed filthily over his high cheek bones and into his scanty tangled beard; a suspicious hilt bound with brass wire reared its snake-like head from the folds of his belt, and his legs, terminating in thick-soled native shoes, reminded one of a tarantula in boots. He salaamed awkwardly with a tortuous grin, and addressed me with the northern salutation, "May your feet never be weary with the march." Having been twenty-four hours in the saddle, my feet were not that portion of my body most wearied, but I replied to the effect that I trusted the shadow of the greasy gentleman might not diminish a hairsbreadth in the next ten thousand years. We then proceeded to business, and I observed that the man spoke a very broken and hardly intelligible Hindustani. I tried him in Persian, but it was of no avail. He spoke Persian, he said, but it was not of the kind that any human being could understand; so we returned to the first lan-

guage, and I concluded that he was a wandering *kábuli*.

As an introduction of himself he mentioned Isaacs, calling him Abdul Hafiz Sahib, and he seemed to know him personally. Abdul, he said, was not far off as distances go in the Himalayas. He thought I should find him the day after to-morrow, *mungkul*. He said I should not be able to ride much farther, as the pass beyond Sultanpoor was utterly impracticable for horses; coolies, however, awaited me with a dooly, one of those low litters slung on a bamboo, in which you may travel swiftly and without effort, but to the destruction of the digestive organs. He said also that he would accompany me the next stage as far as the doolies, and I thought he showed some curiosity to know whither I was going; but he was a wise man in his generation, and knowing his orders, did not press me overmuch with questions. I remarked in a mild way that the saddle was the throne of the warrior, and that the air of the black mountains was the breath of freedom; but I added that the voice of the empty stomach was as the roar of the king of the forest. Whereupon the man replied that the forest was mine and the game therein, whereof I was lord, as I probably was of the rest of the world, since I was his father and mother and most of his relations; but that, perceiving that I was occupied with the cares of a mighty empire, he had ventured to slay with his own hand a kid and some birds, which, if I would condescend to partake



of them, he would proceed to cook. I replied that the light of my countenance would shine upon my faithful servant to the extent of several coins, both rupees and pais, but that the peculiar customs of my caste forbid me to touch food cooked by any one but myself. I would, however, in consideration of his exertions and his guileless heart, invite the true follower of the prophet, whose name is blessed, to partake with me of the food which I should presently prepare. Whereat he was greatly delighted, and fetched the meat, which he had stowed away in a kind of horse-cloth, for safety against ants.

I am not a bad cook at a pinch, and so we sat down and made a cooking-place with stones, and built a fire, and let the flame die down into coals, and I dressed the meat as best I could, and flavoured it with gunpowder and pepper, and we were merry. The man was thenceforth mine, and I knew I could trust him; a bivouac in the Himalayas, when one is alone and far from any kind of assistance, is not the spot to indulge in any prejudice about colour. I did not think much about it as I hungrily gnawed the meat and divided the birds with my pocket-knife.

The lower Himalayas are at first extremely disappointing. The scenery is enormous but not grand, and at first hardly seems large. The lower parts are at first sight a series of gently undulating hills and wooded dells, in some places it looks as if one might almost hunt the country. It is long before you realise that it is all on a gigantic scale; that the quick-

set hedges are belts of rhododendrons of full growth, the water-jumps rivers, and the stone walls mountain-ridges; that to hunt a country like that you would have to ride a horse at least two hundred feet high. You cannot see at first, or even for some time, that the gentle-looking hill is a mountain of five or six thousand feet; in Simla you will not believe you are three thousand feet above the level of the Rhigi Kulm in Switzerland. Persons who are familiar with the aspect of the Rocky Mountains are aware of the singular lack of dignity in those enormous elevations. They are merely big, without any superior beauty, until you come to the favoured spots of nature's art, where some great contrast throws out into appalling relief the gulf between the high and the low. It is so in the Himalayas.

You may travel for hours and days amidst vast forests and hills without the slightest sensation of pleasure or sense of admiration for the scene, till suddenly your path leads you out on to the dizzy brink of an awful precipice—a sheer fall, so exaggerated in horror that your most stirring memories of Mont Blanc, the Jungfrau, and the hideous *arête* of the Pitz Bernina, sink into vague insignificance. The gulf that divides you from the distant mountain seems like a huge bite taken bodily out of the world by some voracious god; far away rise snow peaks such as were not dreamt of in your Swiss tour; the bottomless valley at your feet is misty and gloomy with blackness, streaked with mist, while the peaks above shoot



gladly to the sun and catch his broadside rays like majestic white standards. Between you, as you stand leaning cautiously against the hill behind you, and the wonderful background far away in front, floats a strange vision, scarcely moving, but yet not still. A great golden shield sails steadily in vast circles, sending back the sunlight in every tint of burnished glow. The golden eagle of the Himalayas hangs in mid-air, a sheet of polished metal to the eye, pausing sometimes in the full blaze of reflection, as ages ago the sun and the moon stood still in the valley of Ajalon; too magnificent for description, as he is too dazzling to look at. The whole scene, if no greater name can be given to it, is on a scale so Titanic in its massive length and breadth and depth, that you stand utterly trembling and weak and foolish as you look for the first time. You have never seen such masses of the world before.

It was in such a spot as this that, nearly at noon on the appointed day, my dooly-bearers set me down and warned me I was at my journey's end. I stepped out and stood on the narrow way, pausing to look and to enjoy all that I saw. I had been in other parts of the lower Himalayas before, and the first sensations I had experienced had given way to those of a contemplative admiration. No longer awed or overpowered or oppressed by the sense of physical insignificance in my own person, I could endure to look on the stupendous panorama before me, and could even analyse what I felt. But before long my

pardonable reverie was disturbed by a well-known voice. The clear tones rang like a trumpet along the mountain-side in a glad shout of welcome. I turned and saw Isaacs coming quickly towards me, bounding along the edge of the precipice as if his life had been passed in tending goats and robbing eagles' nests. I, too, moved on to meet him, and in a moment we clasped hands in unfeigned delight at being again together. What was Ghyrkins or his party to me? Here was the man I sought; the one man on earth who seemed worth having for a friend. And yet it was but three weeks since we first met, and I am not enthusiastic by temperament.

"What news, friend Griggs?"

"She greets you and sends you this," I said, taking from my bosom the parcel she had thrust into my hand as I left in the dark. His face fell suddenly. It was the silver box he had given her; was it possible she had taken so much trouble to return it? He turned it over mournfully.

"You had better open it. There is probably something in it."

I never saw a more complete change in a man's face during a single second than came over Isaacs in that moment. He had not thought of opening it, in his first disappointment at finding it returned. He turned back the lid. Bound with a bit of narrow ribbon and pressed down carefully, he found a heavy lock of gold-white hair, so fair that it made everything around it seem dark — the grass, our clothes,



and even the white streamer that hung down from Isaacs' turban. It seemed to shed a bright light, even in the broad noonday, as it lay there in the curiously wrought box — just as the body of some martyred saint found jealously concealed in the dark corner of an ancient crypt, and broken in upon by unsuspecting masons delving a king's grave, might throw up in their dusky faces a dazzling halo of soft radiance — the glory of the saint hovering lovingly by the body wherein the soul's sufferings were perfected.

The moment Isaacs realised what it was, he turned away, his face all gladness, and moved on a few steps with bent head, evidently contemplating his new treasure. Then he snapped the spring, and putting the casket in his vest turned round to me.

"Thank you, Griggs; how are they all?"

"It was worth a two-hundred mile ride to see your face when you opened that box. They are pretty well. I left them swearing that the party was broken up, and that they would all go back to Simla."

"The sooner the better. We shall be there in three days from here, by the help of Ram Lal's wonderful post."

"Between you I managed to get here quite well. How did you do it? I never missed a relay all the way from Julinder."

"Oh, it is very easy," answered Isaacs. "You could have a *dák* to the moon from India if you would pay for it; or any other thing in heaven or earth or hell that you might fancy. Money, that is all. But,

my dear fellow, you have lost flesh sensibly since we parted. You take your travelling hard."

"Where is Ram Lal?" I asked, curious to learn something of our movements for the night.

"Oh, I don't know. He is probably somewhere about the place charming cobras or arresting avalanches, or indulging in some of those playful freaks he says he learned in Edinburgh. We have had a great good time the last two days. He has not disappeared, or swallowed himself even once, or delivered himself of any fearful and mysterious prophecies. We have been talking transcendentalism. He knows as much about 'functional gamma' and 'All X is Y' and the rainbow, and so on, as you do yourself. I recommend him. I think he would be a charming companion for you. There he is now, with his pockets full of snakes and evil beasts. I wanted him to catch a golden eagle this morning, and tame it for Miss Westonhaugh, but he said it would eat the jackal and probably the servants, so I have given it up for the present." Isaacs was evidently in a capital humour. Ram Lal approached us.

I saw at a glance that Ram Lal the Buddhist, when on his beats in the civilisation of Simla, was one person. Ram Lal, the cultured votary of science, among the hills and the beasts and the specimens that he loved, was a very different man. He was as gray as ever, it is true, but better defined, the outlines sharper, the features more Dantesque and easier to discern in the broad light of the sun. He did not