

scarcely closed over the straight white teeth. A wonderful and a fearful sight to see, that stately edifice of queenly strength and beauty thus laid low and pillaged and stript of all colour save purple and white — the hues of mourning — the purple lips and the white cheek. I have seen many people die, and the moment I looked at Katharine Westonhaugh I felt that the hand of death was already closed over her, gripped round, never to relax. John led me to her side, and a faint smile showed she was glad to see me. I knelt reverently down, as one would kneel beside one already dead. She spoke first, clearly and easily, as it seemed. People who are ill from fever seldom lose the faculty of speech.

"I am so glad you are come. There are many things I want you to do."

"Yes, Miss Westonhaugh. I will do everything."

"Is he come back?" she asked — then, as I looked at her brother, she added, "John knows, he is very glad."

"Yes, we came back this morning together; I came here at once."

"Thank you — it was kind. Did you give him the box?"

"Yes — he does not know you are ill. He means to come at eleven."

"Tell him to come now. *Now* — do you understand?" Then she added in a low tone, for my ear only, "I don't think they know it; I am dying. I shall be dead before to-night. Don't tell him that.

Make him come now. John knows. Now go. I am tired. No — wait! Did he save the man's life?"

"Yes; the man is safe and free in Thibet."

"That was nobly done. Now go. You have always been kind to me, and you love him. When you see me again I shall be gone." Her voice was perceptibly weaker, though still clearly audible. "When I am gone, put some flowers on me for friendship's sake. You have always been so kind. Good-bye, dear Mr. Griggs. Good-bye. God keep you." I moved quickly to the door, fearing lest the piteous sight should make a coward of me. It was so infamously pathetic — this lovely creature, just tasting of the cup of life and love and dying so.

"Bring him here at once, Griggs, please. I know all about it. It may save her." John Westonhaugh clasped my hand in his again, and pushed me out to speed me on my errand. I tore along the crooked paths and the winding road, up through the bazaar, past the church and the narrow causeway beyond to the hotel. I found him still smoking and reading the paper.

"Well?" said he cheerfully, for the morning sun had dispelled the doubts of the night.

"My dear friend," I said, "Miss Westonhaugh wants to see you immediately."

"How? What? Of course; I will go at once, but how did you know?"

"Wait a minute, Isaacs; she is not well at all — in fact, she is quite ill."

"What's the matter—for God's sake—Why, Griggs, man, how white you are—O my God, my God—she is dead!" I seized him quickly in my arms or he would have thrown himself on the ground.

"No," I said, "she is not dead. But, my dear boy, she is dying. I do not believe she will live till this evening. Therefore get to horse and ride there quickly, before it is too late."

Isaacs was a brave man, and of surpassing strength to endure. After the first passionate outburst, his manner never changed as he mechanically ordered his horse and pulled on his boots. He was pale naturally, and great purple rings seemed to come out beneath his eyes—as if he had received a blow—from the intensity of his suppressed emotion. Once only he spoke before he mounted.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Jungle fever," I answered. He groaned. "Shall I go with you?" asked I, thinking it might be as well. He shook his head, and was off in a moment.

I turned to my rooms and threw myself on my bed. Poor fellow; was there ever a more piteous case? Oh the cruel misery of feeling that nothing could save her! And he—he who would give life and wealth and fortune and power to give her back a shade of colour—as much as would tinge a rose-leaf, even a very little rose-leaf—and could not. Poor fellow! What would he do to-night—to-morrow. I could see him kneeling by her side and weeping hot tears over the wasted hands. I could almost hear his

smothered sob—his last words of speeding to the parting soul—the picture grew intensely in my thoughts. How beautiful she would look when she was dead!

I started as the thought came into my mind. How superficial was my acquaintance with her, poor girl,—how little was she a part of my life, since I could really so heartlessly think of her beauty when her breath should be gone! Of course, though, it was natural enough, why should I feel any personal pang for her? It was odd that I should even expect to—I, who never felt a "personal pang" of regret for the death of any human creature, excepting poor dear old Lucia, who brought me up, and sent me to school, and gave me roast chestnuts when I knew my lessons, in the streets of Rome, thirty years ago. When she died, I was there; poor old soul, how fond she was of me! And I of her! I remember the tears I shed, though I was a bearded man even then. How long is that? Since she died, it must be ten years.

My thoughts wandered about among all sorts of *bric-à-brac* memories. Presently something brought me back to the present. Why must this fair girl from the north die miserably here in India? Ah yes! the eternal why. Why did we go at such a season into the forests of the Terai? it was madness; we knew it was, and Ram Lal knew it too. Hence his warning. O Ram Lal, you are a wise old man, with your gray beard and you mists of wet white velvet and your dark sayings! Ram Lal, will you riddle me, also, my weird that I must dree?

A cold draught passed over my head, and I turned on my couch to see whence it came. I started bolt upright, and my hair stood on end with sudden terror. I had uttered the name of Ram Lal aloud in my reverie, and there he sat on a chair by the door, as gray as ever, with his long staff leaning from his feet across his breast and shoulder. He looked at me quietly.

"I come opportunely, Mr. Griggs, it seems. *Lupus in fabula*. I hear my name pronounced as I enter the door. This is flattering to a man of my modest pretensions to social popularity. You would like me to tell you your fortune? Well, I am not a fortune-teller."

"Never mind my fortune. Will Miss Westonhaugh recover?"

"No. She will die at sundown."

"How do you know, since you say you are no prophet?"

"Because I am a doctor of medicine. M.D. of Edinburgh."

"Why can you not save her then? A man who is a Scotch doctor, and who possesses the power of performing such practical jokes on nature as you exhibited the other night, might do something. However, I suppose I am not talking to you at all. You are in Thibet with Shere Ali. This is your astral body, and if I were near enough, I could poke my fingers right through you, as you sit there, telling me you are an Edinburgh doctor, forsooth."

"Quite right, Mr. Griggs. At the present moment

my body is quietly asleep in a lamastery in Thibet, and this is my astral shape, which, from force of habit, I begin to like almost as well. But to be serious —"

"I think it is very serious, your going about in this casual manner."

"To be serious. I warned Isaacs that he should not allow the tiger-hunt to come off. He would not heed my warning. It is too late now. I am not omnipotent."

"Of course not. Still, you might be of some use if you went there. While there is life there is hope."

"Proverbs," said Ram Lal scornfully, "are the wisdom of wise men prepared in portable doses for the foolish; and the saying you quote is one of them. There is life yet, but there is no hope."

"Well, I am afraid you are right. I saw her this morning — I suppose I shall never see her again, not alive, at least. She looked nearly dead then. Poor girl; poor Isaacs, left behind!"

"You may well say that, Mr. Griggs," said the adept. "On the whole, perhaps he is to be less pitied than she; who knows? Perhaps we should pity neither, but rather envy both."

"Why? Either you are talking the tritest of cant, or you are indulging in more of your dark sayings, to be interpreted, *post facto*, entirely to your own satisfaction, and to every one else's disgust." I was impatient with the man. If he had such extraordinary powers as were ascribed to him — I never

heard him assert that he possessed any; if he could prophesy, he might as well do so to some purpose. Why could he not speak plainly? He could not impose on me, who was ready to give him credit for what he really could do, while finding fault with the way he did it.

"I understand what passes in your mind, friend Griggs," he said, not in the least disconcerted at my attack. "You want me to speak plainly to you, because you think you are a plain-spoken, clear-headed man of science yourself. Very well, I will. I think you might yourself become a brother some day, if you would. But you will not now, neither will in the future. Yet you understand some little distant inkling of the science. When you ask your scornful questions of me, you know perfectly well that you are putting an inquiry which you yourself can answer as well as I. I am not omnipotent. I have very little more power than you. Given certain conditions and I can produce certain results, palpable, visible, and appreciable to all; but my power, as you know, is itself merely the knowledge of the laws of nature, which Western scientists, in their wisdom, ignore. I can replenish the oil in the lamp, and while there is wick the lamp shall burn — ay, even for hundreds of years. But give me a lamp wherein the wick is consumed, and I shall waste my oil; for it will not burn unless there be the fibre to carry it. So also is the body of man. While there is the flame of vitality and the essence of life in his nerves and

finer tissues, I will put blood in his veins, and if he meet with no accident he may live to see hundreds of generations pass by him. But where there is no vitality and no essence of life in a man, he must die; for though I fill his veins with blood, and cause his heart to beat for a time, there is no spark in him — no fire, no nervous strength. So is Miss Weston-haugh now — dead while yet breathing, and sighing her sweet farewells to her lover."

"I know. I understand you very well. But do not deny that you might have saved her. Why did you not?" Ram Lal smiled a strange smile, which I should have described as self-satisfied, had it not been so gentle and kind.

"Ah yes!" he said, with something like a sigh, though there was no sorrow or regret in it. "Yes, Griggs, I might have saved her life. I would certainly have saved her — well, if he had not persuaded her to go down into that steaming country at this time of year, since it was my advice to remain here. But it is no use talking about it."

"I think you might have conveyed your meaning to him a little more clearly. He had no idea that you meant danger to her."

"No, very likely not. It is not my business to mould men's destinies for them. If I give them advice that is good, it is quite enough. It is like a man playing cards: if he does not seize his chance it does not return. Besides, it is much better for him that she should die."

"Your moral reflections are insufferable. Can you not find some one else to whom you may confide your secret joy of my friend's misfortunes?"

"Calm yourself. I say it is better for her, better for him, better for both. Remember what you said to him yourself about the difference between pleasure and happiness. They shall be one yet, their happiness shall not be less eternal because their pleasure in this life has been brief. Can you not conceive of immortal peace and joy without the satisfaction of earthly lust?"

"I would not call such a beautiful union as theirs might have been by such a name. For myself, I confess to a very real desire for pleasure first and happiness afterwards."

"I know you better than you think, Mr. Griggs. You are merely argumentative, rarely sceptical. If I had begun by denying what I instead asserted, you would by this time have been arguing as strongly on my side as you now are on yours. You are often very near degenerating into a common sophist."

"Very likely, it was a charming profession. Meanwhile, by going to the very opposite extreme from sophistry, I mean by a more than Quixotic veneration for an abstract dogma you hold to be true, and by your determination to make people die for it, you are causing fearful misery of body, untold agony of soul, to a woman and a man whom you should have every reason to like. Go to, Ram Lal, adept, magician, enthusiast, and prophet, you are mistaken, like all your kind!"

"No, I am not mistaken, time will show. Moreover, I would have you remark that the lady in question is not suffering at all, and that the 'untold agony of soul' you attribute to Isaacs is a wholesome medicine for one with such a soul as his. And now I am going, for you are not the sort of person with whom I can enjoy talking very long. You are violent and argumentative, though you are sometimes amusing. I am rarely violent, and I never argue: life is too short. And yet I have more time for it than you, seeing my life will be indefinitely longer than yours. Good-bye, for the present; and believe me, those two will be happier far, and far more blessed, in a few short years hence, than ever you or I shall be in all the unreckonable cycles of this or any future world." Ram Lal sighed as he uttered the last words, and he was gone; yet the musical cadence of the deep-drawn breath of a profound sorrow, vibrated whisperingly through the room where I lay. Poor Ram Lal, he must have had some disappointment in his youth, which, with all his wisdom and superiority over the common earth, still left a sore place in his heart.

I was not inclined to move. I knew where Isaacs was, where he would remain to the bitter end, and I would not go out into the world that day, while he was kneeling in the chamber of death. He might come back at any time. How long would it last? God in his mercy grant it might be soon and quickly over, without suffering. Oh! but those strong people

die so deathly hard. I have seen a man — No, I was sure of that. She would not suffer any more now.

I lay thinking. Would Isaacs send for me when he returned, or would he face his grief alone for a night before he spoke? The latter, I thought; I hoped so too. How little sympathy there must be for any one, even the dearest, in our souls and hearts, when it is so hard to look forward to speaking half-a-dozen words of comfort to some poor wretch of a friend who has lost everything in the wide world that is dear to him. We would rather give him all we possess outright than attempt to console him for the loss. And yet — what is there in life more sweet than to be consoled and comforted, and to have the true sympathy of some one, even a little near to us, when we ourselves are suffering. The people we do not want shower cards of condolence on us, and carriage-loads of flowers on the poor dead thing; the ones who could be of some help to the tortured soul are afraid to speak; the very delicacy of kind-heartedness in them, which makes us wish they would come, makes them stay away.

I hope Isaacs will not send for me, poor fellow.

If he does, what shall I say? God help me.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE hours came and went, and though worn out with the exertions of the past days, and with the emotions of the morning, I lay in my rooms, unable to sleep even for a moment. I went down once or twice to Isaacs' rooms to know whether he had returned, but he had not, nor had any one heard from him. At last the evening shadows crept stealthily up, darkening first one room, then another, until there was not light enough to read by. Then I dropped my book and went out to breathe the cold air on the verandah. Warily the hours went by, and still there was no sign of my friend.

Towards eleven o'clock the moon, now waning, once more rose above the hills and shed her light across the lawn, splendid still, but with the first tinge of melancholy that clouds her departing glory. Exhausted nature asserted herself, and chilled to the bone I went to bed, and, at last, to sleep.

I slept peacefully at first, but soon the events that had come over my life began to weave themselves in wild disharmony through my restful visions, and the events that were to come cast their lengthening shadows before them. The world of past, present,