

# SITA

A STORY OF CHILD-MARRIAGE  
FETTERS



OLIVIA A. BALDWIN



Mrs Hattie La Roque.



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CHILD-MARRIAGE FETTERS



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CHILD-MARRIAGE FETTERS

By  
OLIVIA A. BALDWIN, M.D.



NEW YORK    CHICAGO    TORONTO  
Fleming H. Revell Company  
LONDON    AND    EDINBURGH



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New York: 158 Fifth Avenue  
Chicago: 123 N. Wabash Ave.  
Toronto: 25 Richmond St., W.  
London: 21 Paternoster Square  
Edinburgh: 100 Princes Street



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## CHARACTERS

SITA (pronounced Seeta), daughter of Pandit Janak.

TULSIA, Sita's mother.

BHURA, Sita's aunt.

PHUL KUAR, Dr. Doran's assistant.

KARUNA, a teacher.

MATIYA (Mütiya), matron of girls' orphanage.

MOHANI (Mohunee)

PRIYA (Preeya)

SONA

PARBÄTI

SHANTI

AMNI UMNI

BULBUL

JOY

KAMLIA, a pandita.

BHAKTI, a Bible woman.

MRS. GRACIE

MRS. FRISBIE

MRS. ASHLEY

MRS. DALE

MISS HARMON

MISS HILLIS

MISS VERNON

MISS RAY

DR. DORAN

RAM CHANDRA { Ram, a as in far  
Chandra, Chundra }, son of Narian.

NARIAN RAM CHANDRA LAKSHMAN BHARAT, a *tahsildar*.



- KRISHNA RAO, brother of Ram Chandra.  
 MOHAN LAL (Mohün) } brothers of Sita.  
 JANAK RAM (Jünak) }  
 HON. MOHAN CHATTERJI (Chatterjee) } barristers.  
 GANGA PRASAD (Günga) }  
 RAM DEV, a priest astrologer.  
 LAKSHMAN (Lükshmün) Mohani's brother.  
 BALI (Bülee), a friend of Ram Chandra.  
 SIVA CHARAN DE, an Arya Samajist.  
 ANJIT RAO, editor of a reform paper.  
 MUZOOMDAR, a Parsee reformer.  
 ABDUL KHAN, a Mohammedan youth.  
 MR. GRACIE } Deputy Commissioners.  
 MR. FRISBIE }  
 MR. ASHLEY } missionaries.  
 MR. STAFFORD }  
 ORPHANAGE GIRLS.  
 FAMINE PEOPLE.  
 MOB.

Mrs LaRogue.

*BOOK I*

A KING'S DAUGHTER



## SITA

IT is the last of April and is hot. The thermometer registers one hundred and twenty degrees in the shade; and the cattle, the flowers, and the grass register the heat much higher, for they are in the sun. The grass on the mission compound is parched and dead, and the few flowers that have survived the heat, withered and grey with dust, look as though they could not live another day.

Two cows stand panting under the stone wall of the compound, but the wall is too low to afford much protection. The *talaw* [reservoir of water], in which several buffaloes are standing, submerged except for nose and horns, has no attractions for the cows. One of the latter, an imported English animal, unused to the intensity of India's hot season, looks longingly and often at the mango grove adjoining the *talaw*; but the humped white native cow patiently closes her eyes and switches away the flies with her tail, chews her cud, and pants.

The mango trees of the grove appear not to mind the high temperature. They rustle their leaves contentedly in the hot wind, and, after turning them for protection against the fierce rays of the sun, seem really grateful for the heat. The mangoes are putting



out new leaves, whose pink, dainty freshness contrasts with the dustiness and dark green of the older leaves. For these old leaves, not content with their tenure of life, which the frostless climate makes a full year, hold on until the exuberant new growth crowds them off to their death.

In the edge of the *talaw*, on the far side, are two washermen, clad in loin-cloths, who, as they beat the clothes upon the rocks, grunt a tuneful accompaniment. In their neighbourhood, but not too close upon the water-loving buffaloes, are several men bathing; while on the near side, by a set of steps, a number of women are bathing, and at the same time washing the *saris* they wear, always keeping one end of the drapery wrapped about them.

On the steps of the tank stands a little girl. She has evidently been bathing, for her red *sari* shows dark and light streaks and her head is bared, exposing long, stringy dark hair. Presently, the tropical sun quickly doing its work, she draws her dry *sari* over her head, and going up the steps, stops and looks toward the grove, then turns her face toward the mission house. She pays no attention to the women who pass her carrying jars of water on their heads, but gazes steadfastly, wonderingly, at the mission premises. The parched grass of the compound is just the same as the grass outside, and the pipal, the cork, the gold mohur, and other trees are familiar enough. But the compound is large, the grouping of the trees and shrubs is distinctive; and the arrangement of the flower beds is new to her; then, though a number of the smaller



houses are purely native, the largest, the bungalow, in spite of its Indian pillared verandas and its roof of white Allahabad tiles, has a foreign air; moreover, she knows that foreigners live there, white-faced women such as she has never seen. She stands looking until a faint voice calling from the mango grove diverts her attention, then she runs quickly down the steps, fills her brass *lota* [drinking vessel], and carries it to a little child who lies on the ground in the shade of the trees.

At four o'clock the door of the mission house opens and a woman comes out upon the side veranda; a foreign woman, so say her white face and European dress. Simultaneous with her appearance there is a stir in the grove and the two hundred people who have been resting there, most of them sleeping after their dinner, now arise and start to the bungalow. Some hurry that they may be the first to receive attention, but most move slowly, dragging themselves over the ground.

The many feet so stir the dust of the crude road leading from the grove that as the crowd skirts the end of the compound they are completely enveloped in a cloud of their own making. But at the corner they strike the hard road and, entering the driveway of the compound, they leave the dust behind. As they emerge from the cloud some are seen to carry the usual bundle of earthen cooking and drinking vessels, though others have nothing except a drinking cup.

The company are wretchedly clad. A few of the



men have on, in addition to their loin-cloths, shoulder scarfs and turbans, but the others wear only loin-cloths. The women's *saris* of faded blue and red are ragged and of the scantiest pattern, reaching but little below their knees; while the children up to six or seven years old are quite naked. A glance at the emaciated bodies, sunken in the region of the stomach, and at the gaunt, haggard, hopeless faces is sufficient to proclaim the fact that these are famine sufferers.

As they near the bungalow, a few sing out with the twang and whine of the professional beggar, "We are very poor, give us food to eat." Some hasten their steps, and as the foreign lady goes forward to the edge of the veranda, salaam low, touching her feet and their foreheads alternately, crying, "Salaam, Miss Sahib, salaam, protector of the poor. Give us food to eat. Your honour is our mother and father. Give us food to eat."

In answer to these and to the more piteous appeals of the silent company, Miss Ray stands and smiles cheerily, saying:

"Salaam to you all! We are glad you have come and with great pleasure will help you every one. But you will need to be patient and wait your turn. You have all had dinner, have you not?"

"Yes, Miss Sahib. Yes, protector of the poor," came the reply from many voices.

"Good. Now you may sit down in the shade of the pipal tree there, and rest while I see the sick ones. All who are ill come to me now."

With brightening faces the gaunt company sat down



under the great tree which stretched its branches protectingly and easily shaded the two hundred sufferers who sought its shelter. One of these carried a coconut which, with trembling hands he broke and offered, prostrating himself before the beautiful tree. Miss Ray saw and looked troubled, then said softly, "It is small wonder that they worship the pipal tree."

In response to her call, a group of twenty or more moved slowly to the veranda, and several began at once to explain their ailments.

But the relief worker interrupted. "Wait a little, I am not the doctor. She is at the dispensary, over there. Here, Abdul, you go with them; but first order the cart for those who are not able to walk."

When Miss Ray called for those seeking work, more than one hundred and fifty people rose. "Not all at once," she said. "Bhagwani, count off ten at a time and keep the rest back under the tree."

Among the workers were many children, some of them not more than seven years old. With them, holding by the hand a smaller child, came the little girl who had stood on the steps of the tank. These kept apart from the others, the girl looking irresolute and pained; plainly she felt humiliated by her position. Presently, however, after a sigh from the boy, she set her lips, and leading him straight up to Miss Ray, salaamed politely, after the manner of the high-caste Hindus, without bending head or body. The boy, gazing at the strange dress and face of the foreign woman, forgot to salaam until reminded by his sister. These children looked different from the rest. Though they



were not in good condition, they did not have a famine-stricken appearance, and they were better dressed than the crowd. The boy wore a simple loin-cloth, an old embroidered cap, and a string of beads; and the girl's *sari*, though worn, was long, falling quite to her feet. These children were lighter in complexion than most of the others, fair with the fairness of the East Indian Aryan. The girl's eyes were a dark hazel, large and wide apart; her nose was slightly aquiline, her lips full and clear-cut; while the smoothly combed hair, a remarkable thing among famine sufferers, was drawn back, displaying a smooth high forehead. The boy looked much like his sister, though his eyes were smaller and nearer together. His head was tonsured, and from the crown hung a tuft of long dark hair, which was blowing about in the wind. He was perhaps five years old, while the girl appeared to be ten. Both were straight and well formed, and they carried themselves proudly.

When these children presented themselves before Miss Ray she returned their salutation but continued to give her attention to the group with which she was engaged. She had dismissed several when the little girl, who had waited with a perplexed frown on her face, said:—

“Miss Sahib-ji, I too wish to work.” Then, drawing herself up, she added, “We are Rajputs [of the King, or Military, caste].”

A faint smile crossed Miss Ray's face as she replied, to the claimant for caste recognizance: “Your turn will come soon, my dear; there are only three



more of this group." She was turning again to the waiting low-caste people, when the boy's wan face arrested the movement, and she asked: "Is your brother ill, daughter?"

"No, Miss Sahib-ji, not to-day; but he has been having fever since we left our house." The little girl's lips trembled as she spoke.

"No fever now? That is good. What is his name? And what is your name?"

"My brother's name is Mohan Lal and my name is Sita."

"Well, Sita, tell me where you live."

"We live in Raj Gaon. Our father is ill—he has been ill a long time. My mother could not leave him, and there was nothing to do there and so they sent me here to get work."

"Have you suffered for food?"

"We have had food every day, once; but there was only enough for three weeks more, so mother said we must go or—father——" She stopped, setting her trembling lips together firmly.

"I think you are not accustomed to coolie work?"

"No, Miss Sahib-ji, but I am strong, and I want to take care of my little brother."

"That is good talk, but I think—I fear—— My dear, if you do coolie work you will have to be with men and women coolies, and some of them are bad, bad."

"My father told me, and he bade me not to hear their talk."



"Your father is a wise man. But I think he did not know that we take care of children here."

"We are not beggars," responded Sita proudly.

"Certainly not. But there is food for you here, sent by kind people from my country and from England. They have heard of the trouble in India and have sent money and grain to help the *Sirkar* [government] care for the unfortunates for a time, until the famine is over."

"When the famine is over, my father will pay the *Sirkar*."

The little girl brightened, and then looking thoughtful, said: "But we must not break our caste rules, Miss Sahib-ji."

"There is no need, daughter. We have children of all castes here, but you can keep to yourselves as much as you like. A Brahman woman does the cooking for all."

"Good talk. And where would we live?"

"Right here in one of those houses at the back of the compound. That new house behind that clump of palm trees is for the girls who come in this week." Miss Ray pointed to a low rough mud hut, upon the roof of which two men were arranging red tiles. None of the houses boasted doors or windows, but in lieu of these only holes in the wall. Seeing a dubious expression upon the little girl's face, the relief worker explained that these were only temporary houses put up by the *Sirkar*. "The rains will soon come, no doubt," she concluded, with a smile, "and will end the famine."

“ Ji. Where do the coolie people live? ”

“ The coolie people camp under the trees. There are so many famine sufferers that we can provide shelter for the children only. I have the girls, and Mr. Ashley, the Padre Sahib, has the boys.”

“ Where do the boys live? ”

“ Near Mr. Ashley’s bungalow,” Miss Ray answered, indicating a group of houses a half mile to the east. “ However,” she added as the children clung together, “ your brother is a little fellow and is ill, and if you want to stay here, he may stay, too.”

“ Many, many salaams, Miss Sahib-ji,” the children answered together.

Then Sita, after looking at her brother’s thin face, now lighted with a smile, said:—

“ We will stay, then, Miss Sahib-ji, for a little while, until father comes for us.”



## II

### THE HIGHEST CASTE

UPON the third morning after the coming of the Rajput children, some twenty-five or thirty of the government wards were sitting in a wide broken circle under the palm trees in front of their huts. Apart from the others, sheltered from the sun by one of the palms, was Sita. Manifestly she had been talking, for all eyes were directed toward her. Manifestly, too, something displeasing had occurred, for there was upon her face a look of offended dignity as she said:—

“ I tell you that to me many beautiful wedding presents were given, *saris* red and green silk, and such a handsome amethyst necklace, and very many bangles of gold and silver. And there were anklets, heavy anklets of silver, and a nose ring of pearl and gold and——”

“ *Wah! Wah!* ” interrupted the girl on the far side of the circle. “ That is a big story you tell about silk *saris* and wonderful jewelry. But we have heard fine tales before.”

“ Amni, you low-caste one, I am not a liar.”

“ Who knows? Why did you not bring some of your fine things with you? *Wah!* who knows if there was any wedding? ”



"I have said that three years ago my wedding was." The little girl raised her bare right arm high above her head as she added: "And for three years I have worn this marriage bracelet."

The children gazed curiously at the plain iron ring and looked at Amni in amazement and condemnation—condemnation of her pretended doubt, and amazement at her audacity in attacking a high-caste girl.

But Amni, before the famine, had lived near Arampur; and her two years as a day scholar in the mission school had greatly modified the worshipful reverence for the high caste to which her people had from pre-historic times been trained. Moreover, among the government wards she was the acknowledged leader. Instead of confessing defeat, therefore, she tried again.

She jumped up and began to walk about Sita just inside the circle, her gaze, meanwhile, fastened upon the meaningful bracelet.

"Wah!" she said at last, her small black eyes snapping. "No doubt it is of purest gold."

"Owl! All but idiots know that a marriage bracelet is always of iron!"

"*Hài! Hài!* [Alas! Alas!] So it is of iron. But will not the princess deign to show us her jewels of silver and gold?"

"Thou \* knowest well, low one, that I could not wear my ornaments such times as these. And—and besides—most of the things were pawned after my father—after the famine got so bad."

Sita had forgotten the quarrel in thought of home.

\* The use of "thou" implies contempt, sometimes endearment.



Her voice faltered at the last, and at this reminder of their broken homes, tears came to the eyes of several of the group.

But it did not suit Amni to drop the quarrel, and she began repeating some of the things that Sita had said. Stopping suddenly, she asked:—

“And where is the *bahadur* [hero], the great man who lets his bride pawn her jewels and eat the bread of the Sirkar?”

This shot told. Some of the girls smiled.

Sita's frown deepened, and with the light gone from her eyes she answered: “Thou knowest well, —— one, that a man does not support his wife until after the second marriage ceremony, thou —— unmarried slanderer!”

“*Arè!* And you know well,” Amni retorted in high, treble tones, her black eyes flashing, “you —— vain boaster, that in these years of famine, people have not been able to feed their children, and how could they make marriages for them, you —— daughter of a woman without a nose!” \*

Sita's face turned ashen. For a moment she sat perfectly still, her manner quite controlled except for the quivering of her chin. She then replied in a low, intense tone, calling down curses upon her antagonist, upon her ancestors and her posterity.

Amni shivered and cried out, for Hindus believe in the power of a curse.

“Girls, enough!” sternly interposed Miss Ray, who,

\* It is a custom among the Hindus for a jealous man to cut off or bite off his wife's nose.



hearing angry voices while making her rounds, had joined the crowd. "Do you not know that *gali* [abusive language] is forbidden on this compound? Amni, Sita, come with me."

The girls followed the relief worker to the largest of the mud houses—the low-caste girl shamefaced and with hanging head, the Rajputni proudly erect. The latter had noted Miss Ray's presence before her last speech, but had not therefore restrained her anger.

Amni apologized and was sent away, but Sita protested that she had not done wrong.

"Should I eat abuse and say nothing? She tried to make the girls believe that I was lying and she dared to defame my mother."

"That was hard. But you—what did you say to her?"

"She deserves all that I said."

"Did you not curse her and her mother and all her people?"

"Ji. Should I eat her abuse and not cause her to eat double? She deserves my curses."

"No, daughter. No one deserves your curses. Amni did wrong, very wrong; but she is sorry and has asked your forgiveness at once."

"Miss Sahib-ji, I will not forgive her."

The relief worker noted the child's angry brow and her firmly set lips, and excusing herself, went out.

Left alone, the little girl stood for a time looking angrily at the floor. "She let Amni go and she keeps me here for punishment," she thought. But when pres-



ently she raised her eyes, they fell upon a picture on the wall, a copy of Raphael's Cherub, and as she gazed her brow cleared.

She awoke from her absorption upon hearing a wail outside, and hastening to the door, looked toward the porch of the adjoining house, where with several other ailing little ones she had left her brother asleep. He still lay quiet, and Sita now observed that Miss Ray had taken the wailing child into her arms and was soothing her into quietness.

"It is the little Rajputni who came to-day," commented the watcher as Miss Ray fed the starving one tiny bits of orange. She still gazed as the relief worker gave her charge into the hands of an *ayah* [nurse] and turned her attention to others. Mohan Lal awoke, and as Miss Ray gave him an orange, he sat up and gave back her smile.

"My brother is better, and the Miss Sahib is kind," the watcher said.

When the relief worker returned she found the little girl standing with rapt attention before the print of the great masterpiece, and seating herself in a country-made rocking-chair, she began to talk about the child-angel.

"It is beautiful," Sita said, "the most beautiful picture I ever saw." Then after a moment, "We have a picture of a baby at our house."

"What is it, daughter?"

"It is Krishna."

The child's face grew sorrowful. She was silent until Miss Ray asked her about the famine in Raj



Gaon, when she told a tale full of woe, but nothing of her own people.

“How is it that a little girl knows so much about the whole *tahsil* [division of a district]?”

“I have heard my father talk, and he knows everything. And the *tahsildar* [collector of revenue], my father-in-law, comes often to talk with him.”

“The *tahsildar* is your father-in-law?”

“Ji. He is a rich man. And to think that unmarried low-caste one should try to make the girls believe that I was lying about my marriage and my wedding gifts!”

“When was your marriage,\* daughter?”

“Three years since.”

“You were then how old?”

“Of six years.”

“Then you are only nine years old now? You look older.”

“I am of nine years and four months. My father says I am large.” The child smiled.

“How old is your *shadi-walla* [bridegroom]?”

“Of fifteen years.”

“What is his name?”

Sita hung her head, then answered:—

“Miss Sahib-ji, it is not the custom for a woman to speak her master’s name.”

“True. But you are only a child. Well, what does he do?”

\* The first marriage or betrothal is in the nature of an executory contract.



After further conversation, the relief worker asked :

“ If the *tahsildar* is a rich man, why does he not help *your father* ? ”

“ There was a—a—disagreement. ”

“ It should be a serious disagreement that would cause a man of wealth to allow his son's *shadi-walli* [bride] to—to suffer. Did it never occur to you that—that the *tahsildar* may intend to set aside this marriage ? ”

“ Miss Sahib-ji, my marriage was not a *kachcha* [raw] marriage, and a *pakka* [cooked] marriage cannot be broken. ” The little girl drew herself up with a look of offended dignity.

“ I do not doubt that it was a *pakka* marriage, my dear. But I have heard that the bridegroom's people may have even a *pakka* marriage set aside. ”

“ They would not dare ! My father is a great man and of a higher family than the *tahsildar*. Oh, it is cruel of them to let all this shame come upon us. ” As Sita spoke angry tears filled in her eyes.

“ What is your father's name, daughter ? ”

“ My father's name is Janak. He is of King Janak's line. ”

“ King Janak, the philosopher of Rajputana ? ”

“ Ji. My father's people came from Rajputana, and he, too, is a philosopher. ”

Miss Ray considered the grace with which the child wore her faded *sari*, her extraordinary command of language, the dignity of her bearing, and noted the fine brow and slightly aquiline nose.

“ I am glad, ” she said, “ to know a daughter of



King Janak, and I should like to hear more of your people."

Sita, moved by the sympathy of her companion, sat down at her feet on the bamboo matting, and putting aside her reserve, poured out her heart in the story of the famine as she knew it among her own relatives. She retained her self-control until she came to speak of her father's illness, when her chin began to quiver, and soon her voice broke. Then, though she saw tears on the missionary's cheek, she turned to the window to hide her own.

The relief worker cheered the little girl with the promise that she would speak to the Deputy Commissioner of the conditions in Raj Gaon; and confidently asserted her belief that the rains would come soon. Then she returned to the matter in hand.

"The girls here all have sad stories, and it pains me when they hurt each other by ugly quarrels. I hope, dear child, that the anger has gone out of your heart?"

But Sita remained silent.

"Do you mean me to understand that you really like to hear and to speak ugly words?"

"Oh, no, Miss Sahib-ji. I would never use vile words like that Amni did. My father would not allow me."

"You have a wise father," said Miss Ray, calling to mind that while Sita had not spared imprecation she had abstained from the unspeakably scurrilous language in which Hindus of all castes indulge.



"So wise and good. Miss Sahib-ji, should a daughter of a king eat the filthy abuse of a low-caste girl?"

"Amni is not to blame for being born in a lower caste than yours, any more than you are to blame because you were not born a Brahman."

"I wish I was a Brahman. No, I do not. King Janak taught the Brahmans philosophy; my father says so."

"So I have read. But have you never heard of the caste that is higher than Rajput or Brahman?"

"A higher caste than the Brahman?" Sita repeated incredulously.

"Yes, daughter; but one is not born into this caste. Its members may be of any caste or any country. They do not give, nor do they wish to give, *gali*."

"I might stop giving *gali*," the child said after a pause, "but the wish would be in my heart. Tell me about this caste."

"Did you ever hear the name, *Kshama Sagar*?"

"Ji; it is one of the names of the Great God."

"What does it mean?"

"Ocean of Forgiveness," answered the little girl slowly.

"Ocean of Forgiveness. The Great God forgives because he loves us. Well, this caste I tell you of is the Loving caste, and its members are the Sons and Daughters of *Kshama Sagar*."

When Miss Ray had explained, the little girl sat in silence, her face indicating that a struggle went on in her heart.

"Miss Sahib-ji," she said presently, "I am a king's

daughter, and I cannot forgive Amni; but I will obey your order. I will not quarrel again here."

"Very well; yet I hope, dear child, that some day you may belong to this highest of castes; that you may not only be a daughter of a king but a daughter of the King of kings, of the Great God who is the Ocean of Forgiveness."

When she went out again among the girls, Sita's face was thoughtful and wondering. But from Amni, who presently came up to her salaaming, she turned without a word.



### III

#### NEW INTERESTS

**O**N Sunday the arriving famine sufferers remained in the mango grove, leaving free the pipal tree on the mission compound; and in its shade on Sunday afternoons the government wards were accustomed to gather.

Soon after the noon siesta, upon Sita's first Sunday in Arampur, the children sought the pipal tree, and there, protected from the glare and heat of the sun, they chatted or sat silent in languorous content. They had been enjoying the tree for some time when a weary little voice piped out the wish that the Miss Sahib would come and tell them a story. Several echoed the wish, and Amni volunteering to act as a substitute, succeeded in pleasing the crowd.

Sita made no comment, but kept her eyes fixed on the mango grove. The story teller, observing her attitude, became nettled and, throwing back her head in such a way as to show off her saucy nose, said:

“Perhaps the Rajputni will give us a story?”

Now Amni was the only one of the company who cared to attempt a tale before the audience of a hundred or more, and she did not expect her challenge to be taken up.



"She can tell good stories," said one of the girls who belonged to the same segregated group as Sita. "She told us three or four yesterday."

"A story! A story!" the children chorused.

All were now looking at the Rajputni, who with her brother by her side was sitting close up to the trunk of the tree.

"I might try if you wish it," she said. They were eager, and she told an ancient folk tale of Rajputnana, "Where my grandfather's grandfather used to live," she explained. She was not in the least afraid, and she told her story with a charm of manner that delighted the children.

When they demanded another she chose an episode from the Ramayana, and as she related the daring deeds of Rama, held her audience spellbound. She was in the midst of the story when Miss Ray came, but as the latter nodded approval, went on to the end.

Until she had finished and the children had begun to cry out their appreciation, the green leaves overhead had rustled a soft accompaniment to her musical voice; then all at once a flurry of wind stirred them into sudden agitation.

At this the joyous excitement in Sita's face gave place to awe, and when the flurry had passed she said softly, looking up at the tree:—

"It is Vishnu. He is always pleased when we give Rama praise."

Her awed expression was reflected in the faces of many of her hearers. But Miss Ray, at this recogni-



tion of the tree as a manifestation of Vishnu, looked perplexed.

“ Rama, in the Ramayana,” she said after a moment, “ is a man of many fine qualities.”

“ Ji,” replied Sita, “ my father says that Rama was the perfect incarnation of Vishnu. See how he looked.” And the little girl sprang up and recited from the Hindu translation of the great epic:—

“ Known to the world by Rama's name,  
 With soul subdued, a chief of might,  
 In scripture versed, in glory bright;  
 His steps in nature's paths are bent,  
 Obedient, pure, and eloquent.  
 Tall and broad-shouldered, strong of limb,  
 Fortune has set his mark on him.  
 Graced with a coral-shell's triple line,  
 His throat displays the auspicious sign.  
 High destiny is clear impressed  
 On massive jaw and ample chest,  
 His mighty shafts he truly aims  
 And foemen in the battle tames.”

This effort inspired in the girls awe as well as admiration, for, excepting by a religious teacher, they had heard no one quote from their sacred books. Their awe, however, was soon dispelled by the childish manner of the little girl, who made much of the lines and little of her accomplishment. Her father had taught her, she said, in answer to Miss Ray's question. And when the latter asked her to repeat the first lines she did so again and again until several of the little girls could recite them. Then the relief worker interpreted their meaning, for many of the



words were high Hindu and to all but two or three of the children unintelligible.

She was still talking, when Sita, hearing a murmur of voices, turned her head, to see coming from the direction of the bungalow a long column of girls in white *saris*. Looking back, she saw that the column came from beyond the bungalow out of the gate of a walled enclosure, inside of which lived the mission orphanage girls. Moving along the driveway and approaching the pipal tree, the marching company paused for a moment and their glad faces broke into smiles, as bowing low they repeatedly salaamed to Miss Ray and to the government wards.

Sita joined her companions in answering salaams. "How strange!" she commented, as she intently regarded the passing company, led by two four-year-old children. "Girls of all ages and all castes, and all wearing those white *saris* with pretty borders." She withdrew her gaze for a moment to glance at the crowd about her. They, too, made a pretty picture in their red *saris*, many of them smiling as they salaamed to the white-garbed children.

Until the last of the line had passed Sita watched. "How different they look, Miss Sahib-ji, and how beautiful," she then said, with perplexed contracting of her forehead. "I never liked white *saris* before. And their faces—— Please tell me about your girls."

The government wards were now dispersing, and the relief worker had arisen from her chair.

"They are lovely, my dear," she answered with



her sunniest smile, "and it is not all the dress. I do think girls look better in white, but they are just as sweet on week days while wearing their red *saris*."

"They look happy and—different," Sita said, walking by Miss Ray's side. "Do your girls never quarrel, Miss Sahib-ji?"

"A few still quarrel, but most of them stopped that long ago."

Sita now inquired who the Miss Sahibs were who were driving by in a tonga.

"The elder lady is Dale Mem Sahib, who has charge of the zenana work. The other is Vernon Miss Sahib. She has the care of the girls at home and I have them at school."

"Miss Sahib-ji, you do not mean that your girls go to school like boys?"

"Certainly. Why not?"

"We never had a girls' school in Raj Gaon, and when I heard the girls here say something about school I thought it was a boys' school."

"I see. We have been having holidays this week."

"Miss Sahib-ji," petitioned the child, her voice tremulous with excitement as she joined the palms of her hands together, "might I—might I go to your school?"

"Surely, daughter, as soon as your time is up, your two weeks of segregation. I must keep the new girls to themselves for a time lest some disease be brought to us."

There was a joyous light in Sita's eyes as she counted on her fingers, and announced:—

“ In seven days then I shall go to school. Oh, wonderful! Many, many salaams, Miss Sahib-ji.”

And the child danced away to the pipal tree to tell her brother.



## IV

### SEEKING NEWS FROM HOME

**H**ER ability to hold her own in a quarrel, together with her other accomplishments, had won for Sita the high esteem of the government wards. Yet, even had she been willing to overlook caste differences, their lethargic content, following their cruel suffering, and aggravated by the blasting heat, would have made them uncompanionable to the Rajputni. Time dragged. Even her buoyant spirits were not proof against the general depression born of bitter experience and fed by fresh tales of woe from the new girls who were daily added to their number. While cheered by the sight of the relief work going on about her, she could not forget the helpless state in which she had left her dear ones and the remembrance brought with it heart-heaviness. In the three weeks that had passed since she had left them, no word from her parents had reached her; and so, when on Friday evening, just after the relief worker had made her visit, Sita heard one of the children say that the Miss Sahib was going to the bazaar next day, she ran after her and asked permission to go with her. "There may be some one from home," she said.

Miss Ray looked doubtful at the little girl's sugges-



tion that any one would come eighty miles to the bazaar. But when the tears came to the child's eyes, and when Mohun Lal, coming up with languid step, added his entreaties, she said, smiling:—

“They all want to go. But—— Why, yes; the boy needs an outing.”

When she went on to say that he should go with her in the tonga, and that Sita might walk with some of the mission girls, the children were overjoyed.

The weekly bazaar is in its growth like Jonah's gourd. Although its site had been pointed out to Sita on the day that she and her brother had arrived in Arampur, the bazaar itself she had never seen. It was, therefore, with the greatest interest that she gazed, on Saturday afternoon, as she drew near the market place. “Could it be the same,” she wondered as she called to mind the wide *maidan* [common] stretching from the river on the east to the first shop of the permanent bazaar on the west, and from the road back to the winding river again on the north. When they reached the bridge, however, she could see the shops far ahead, and there, just beyond the bridge, was the clump of trees where they had rested that day. Yet now she could catch only a glimpse of the river boundary to the north and nothing of the bare *maidan*, for to-day a throng of twenty thousand people met her eyes.

From time immemorial, bazaar day in India has meant to the labourer a holiday, and his only respite from toil. Its significance to the people is evidenced by their presence. For in spite of famine and famine



prices, in spite of choking dust and terrific heat, the crowd has come, afoot for the most part, from twenty miles around to attend the bazaar. Ostensibly they have come to trade, but in reality it is diversion and the social feature that attract the greater number.

Sita and her companions—Amni, two of the mission girls, and an *ayah*—sit down under the clump of trees by the bridge, chatting merrily. But the Rajputni is not long content to stop on the outskirts of the gathering crowd, and the group moves on. While she scrutinizes the faces, there is little of the scene that escapes her delighted eyes.

The bazaar is laid out something like a miniature town, in lots preëmpted for the half day by the *saudogar* [merchant]. One secures his lot, which may be four feet square, by taking possession. He usually places upon the ground a piece of bamboo matting and arranges on it his wares, behind which he squats. If enterprising he may have a second piece of bamboo propped up at his back for a screen. The lots are in irregular rows, with very narrow streets between for the accommodation of customers. The *saudogar* may be a seller of cloth, cotton or silk, of grains and nuts, sweets, pottery, trinkets, or what not.

No one is in haste at the bazaar. The crowd is there to see and, anyway, it is too hot to hurry.

The children, however, were wide enough awake, and the *ayah* with the mission girls good-naturedly set her pace to suit theirs and wandered with them in and out from booth to booth.

While Sita enjoyed the bazaar with the others,



she did not forget her quest. She paid little attention to the women arrayed in green or red or blue *saris*, for it was not likely that any woman of her acquaintance would come so far. But she allowed no well-dressed man to escape her scrutiny, nor did she pass over the ill dressed. For in famine times her friends might be among the latter. Moreover, she was ready to give a servant or even a coolie joyful greeting, if only he came from home. Yet when the time came to meet Miss Ray at the shop her heart sank within her, for of the thousands of faces into which she had looked, none had looked back recognition. Reluctantly and with her eyes still busy, Sita followed the *ayah* and the girls as they made their way through the crowd.

Once she got separated from the others, and Amni scolded; but Mohani, one of the mission girls, made excuses for her and kept near her thereafter. "Perhaps," she said presently, "perhaps you are looking for some one?"

And Sita, won by Mohani's gentle sympathy, explained to her what she had kept from the others, and felt comforted when her new friend, too, began to search the faces of the crowd.

When at last the little party reached the place appointed, Miss Ray had come and gone. She had, however, left Mohan Lal in the *dukhan* with the message that they were to wait her return. Since this *dukhan* was the first in the permanent bazaar, the *ayah* allowed the children to visit the booths in its shadow.

The boy, though he wanted to see, soon grew tired. However, when a man passed flying a half-dozen red



and blue toy balloons he cried out with delight and drew Sita along after him. She looked at her brother's joyous face, then gathering up a corner of her *sari* untied a knot in it and took out two *pice* [copper coins of the value of one-half cent each].

The *ayah* came to her assistance and began the usual dickering. But the eagerness of the boy, the large red banana in his hand, and the fresh *saris* of the girls—clean clothes and poverty are in India too often divorced—brought up the price of balloons, and it was not until Sita had proposed to seek another vendor that he came to terms.

Mohan Lal, joyfully floating his red balloon, now followed his sister to a shady nook between the *dukhan* and a booth adjoining. It was an excellent place for observation, and with renewed diligence she set herself to watch the stream of people passing from the one to the other booths. Her chosen nook was so close upon the street that beggars, looking upon the decent clothes and the clean faces of the girls, repeated the mistake of the balloon peddler and stopped to ask alms.

The *ayah* sent them away, but Sita looked troubled, and when Mohan Lal stopped dangling his balloon to ask her why she did not give to them as their mother did, her face lighted up, and followed by the other children and the *ayah*, she crossed the street to a money changer's booth. Assorted piles of rupees and smaller silver coins and a great heap of *pice* were displayed before him. But she had to go to another booth for her *cowries* [small shells used as money].



Returning with a hundred of these, for which she had given a *pice*, she smiled at the two waiting beggars as she gave each four or five *cowries*. They made an interesting picture, the little boy toying with his scarlet balloon, and the little girl with sweet happy face dispensing charity to the dirty, sad-faced mendicants, who went away blessing the children, and few were the passers-by whose faces did not brighten as they looked.

One woman who asked help carried a basket upon her head, and when Sita looked at it inquiringly, she carefully set it down upon the ground, showing as its contents a little naked baby, fast asleep.

"We have a baby at home, a big one," said Sita, with a sigh. She gave the mother some extra *cowries*, and Mohan Lal put the banana Miss Ray had given him into the basket by the baby.

His gift reminded his sister that he had carried the banana a half hour without tasting it, and she asked if he would not like some sweets. To this he assented, and with a *pice* in her hand she started at once to the candy vendor's, followed by Mohan Lal, Amni, and the other girls.

But the *ayah* here interposed, saying that sweets were forbidden to ailing children. Sita protested, then threw her arm about her brother, whose chin began to quiver as he looked longingly at the sweets. She stood silent for a moment, when she became possessed of a sense of some one gazing at her. The comely group continually attracted attention, but she looked past admiring glances to fix her eyes upon a tall boy



who was standing before a jewelry booth. He was just turning away, and she could not see his face, yet there was something about his manner and the way he wore his lemon-coloured silk *pagri* that struck her as familiar. At that moment two beggars, who had followed her up, claimed her attention, and when she turned again to the jewelry booth the customer in the yellow *pagri* had gone. Glancing quickly around, she caught a glimpse of him as he entered the first shop on the other side of the street. It was a tailor's shop, six foot front, and two-thirds of this space was taken up by a line of brilliantly coloured chintz cassocks. When she saw him, the youth was already upon the steps of the *dukhan* and in an instant after was behind the screen of dangling ready-made garments.

"It looks like——" she began; then turning to Mohan Lal, said: "Little brother, watch for some one from home. Watch hard!"

"I will, sister," he replied, and letting his balloon float as it would he slowly turned himself about, looking in all directions.

The position of the children near the candy booth enabled Sita to keep the tailor's shop in view. But when customer after customer came, and standing outside the shop in the usual fashion, haggled leisurely with the salesmen, then bought or went his way, she became weary of waiting for the reappearance of the one who had gone inside.

"There's a man over there staring at us," Amni whispered.



“Where?” the Rajputni eagerly inquired. But when she looked as directed and saw at the jeweller’s stall a dark youth wearing heavy gold earrings and a jauntily poised red fez, she could not keep her disappointment out of her voice, as she said:—

“Wah! He’s a Mohammedan!”

“*Arè! Bapre!* And did I say he was a Rajput?”

“You know that Hindus have nothing to do with Mohammedans.”

“He seems to want to have something to do with our crowd.”

“Wah! he’s only watching Mohan Lal and his balloon.”

“Sister, sister,” piped her brother’s shrill voice. “There’s Ram Chandra on the steps! There is your *shad*——”

“*Chup* [silence]!” said Sita as she took the child by the arm and turned him about. Yet her eyes showed no less excitement than his, for as he came out of the shop she, too, had seen the face of the youth in the yellow *pagri*.

“Let me go to him,” pleaded Mohan Lal.

“No, dear. We must wait. It is for him to seek us.”

The other girls had been engaged in watching a snake charmer, so that only Amni had heard the little lad’s outcry. With an ejaculation of surprise she stood gazing at the youth, who after stopping an instant on the steps of the *dukhan* moved along the street on the opposite side.

“So that is her *shadi-walla*,” she commented, noting



his fair complexion, his haughty carriage, his drapery and embroidered *pagri*. "He's a Rajput, all right, and rich. He's as tall as a man, but he's got a boy's face. Wah! but she is blessed of fate."

Sita's face had lighted up in recognition of the youth and she, too, watched until he crossed the street and stopped at a booth just beyond that of the jeweller. Then turning away, she looked for the *ayah* and the mission girls.

She found them a little back from the street, forming a part of the circle about a half-dozen hooded cobras which were performing under the direction of their exhibitor. He held on his knee a rude sitar and to its soft soporific accompaniment the cobras were moving in languorous, graceful undulations.

Sita and her brother joined the circle, while the little lad floated his balloon in measure with the music. The people in the vicinity, drawn by the sound of the sitar, had crowded about and were breathlessly watching the exhibit.

The Rajputni had only partially yielded to the spell, and when a low angry voice was projected into the stillness, she looked up to see Ram Chandra's angry face but a short distance away. His eyes and his speech were, however, directed not toward her but toward the Mohammedan who was now between her and the Rajput.

"Will your honour, doing favour, please keep your eyes upon the serpents?"

The reply was lost to Sita, but in a moment came the rejoinder.



“ I am asking you to keep your eyes to yourself.” There was something more in a lower tone.

“ Wah! and why——” the Mohammedan replied with a disdainful sound. “ If people do not want their women folk admired they’d better keep them in the zenanas as we do.”

“ You do not shut up children; and—Rajputs are not taking instruction from Mussulmans. You’d better——”

“ Better what?” There was mocking defiance in the speaker’s voice and he stared impudently at the girls.

Sita had not understood the conversation and she had all her life been used to admiration, yet she now felt uncomfortable. She gave no sign, however, but moving nearer to Mohani and farther from the boys, she fixed her gaze intently upon the undulating cobras. Almost immediately, however, the exhibitor varied the performance, and while he asked for *pice*, his assistant stirred up one of the reptiles, causing it to dart at the stick with open mouth and quivering tongue, while its eyes glared with fury. The demand for money, no less than the ceasing of the music, broke the charm that held the people and they began to disperse.

“ We’re too far from the *dukhan*,” said the *ayah*, and Sita, flinging her few remaining *cowries* to the snake charmer, arose with her companions. Although she had received from Ram Chandra no look of recognition, she did not doubt that he had seen and would seek her out, and with her brother she again lingered behind the girls. She was greatly vexed, therefore,



when she had gone but a little way, to come upon Amni chatting with a dealer in glass bangles.

"I was afraid you were lost again and came back to look for you," she explained, her eyes dancing with mischief. She looked beyond the Rajput children, then, admiring the pretty glass bangles the saleswoman was holding up to the light, she said: "I do wish the Miss Sahib would get us some bangles. I think she might!"

"Pig!" ejaculated Sita with emphasis, glad of the opportunity to vent her wrath.

"Wah! These are only glass, and she has lacs and lacs of rupees."

"Pig! She has not, and she gives everything to our starving people."

Amni's eyes flashed. "You——" she began, then stopped short. She was facing Sita and the stalls beyond, and she now exclaimed: "*Arè!* how that Mussulman did jump."

"Mussulmans do not like swine, nor do I."

But Amni did not hear. "*Bapre bap!*" she cried, "but your Rajput is mad. He looks like he could kill the Mussulman. Wah! He's going off now."

"What matter?" Yet it was with a sinking heart Sita turned to look after Ram Chandra. Could he be leaving and without one word to her? She breathed again when he stopped under a tree.

"*Arè!* but that Mohammedan can stare," Amni now observed.

"*Wah!* Why, then, do you look at him? What can it matter what the Mohammedan does?" answered



Sita crossly. Nevertheless she turned her back, and after a moment led her brother to the second booth, where the *ayah* waited with Mohani and Parbatti.

"Something is going to happen," whispered Amni excitedly a little later. "I saw a man come to your—to the Rajput under the tree, and he talked to him and frowned at the Mohammedan and he gave the man rupees—six—eight—ten rupees he poured from his *pice* bag!"

"Indeed? It is certainly strange that people should talk and spend money in a bazaar."

Sita's unconcern dampened Amni's ardour, and she gave her attention to the brass plates that the *ayah* was examining.

Mohan Lal, however, was keeping watch.

"Sister," he said presently, "he has come back and they've both come over to the bangle shop."

"It is no matter, little brother. Did you see that pretty urn? It has cobras for handles."

But the boy was not to be diverted.

"He's got his hand full of rupees," he commented.

"A true word," confirmed Amni, looking.

At that moment a man in the distance was heard calling: "Flesh of goats here—flesh of goats for sale."

It was unusual, this crying of flesh in a land where the priests regard meat eaters much as Europeans do cannibals, and with the meat peddler as a pretext Sita seized the opportunity to look in Ram Chandra's direction. He, too, with his back to the booth, was looking down the street. She felt the gaze of the Mohammedan, but the more fixedly kept her eyes upon the



meatman, who was now fast approaching. As the latter neared the jeweller's booth, Ram Chandra, yawning, stretched himself, extending both arms high above his head, and the little girl observed that his right hand held a number of rupees. As she looked the peddler called out:—

“Flesh of hogs for sale, flesh of hogs!”

At this the Mohammedan, who had before given no heed to his cries, started violently and looked toward him.

The meat vendor had left the middle of the road and was close at hand. Over the edge of his basket, which was covered with a cloth, hung a small hairy foot.

“Curse the infidel! It is a hog!” the Mussulman shrieked, then looked about for a way to escape. But everywhere the crowd pressed, and in desperation he darted out just in front of the peddler and dashed up the street.

The Rajput, a queer smile mingling with his frown, was close behind. As Sita watched she was amazed to see Amni scampering up the street with other excited children. Mohan Lal was tugging at her hand, and for a moment she was swayed by a strong impulse to follow. Then she drew back, saying:—

“No, brother. I am a Rajputni, and his—— No.”

“Look, sister, what ails the *gosht-walla*?”

The meat peddler had stopped in the street a little beyond them and she observed that he was ashy pale. When he started on he did not cry his wares, and she looked at the basket in vain for the hairy foot.



Miss Ray's tonga was now approaching and the *ayah* hurried the children to the *dukhan*. Upon hearing the report of Amni's truancy, the missionary despatched the *ayah* to look for her where a crowd had congregated. And, after making a few purchases, she herself followed with the other children.

Sita paid little attention to the many shops they passed, and before they reached the corner her eyes had lighted upon Amni, who, heedless of the *ayah's* entreaties, stood eagerly listening to a bareheaded lad who was talking breathlessly and pointing down the alley.

The culprit, when she saw Miss Ray, came at once with profuse apologies and made no demur when the relief worker told her that she could no longer go with the *ayah* but must remain with her.

Sita followed Miss Ray and Amni into a shop to hear the girl's story.

She told how she had kept near the Rajput until he reached the corner; that the wearer of the red fez, whose name she had learned was Abdul Khan, had gone a little farther and was talking angrily with a group of Mohammedans until the meatman came along, when he cried out and ran towards him.

"The meatman was passing me and I saw him stop by Ram Chandra, and his hand was shaking. Wah! but he was scared. But your—the Rajput spoke to him, and he cried out again, 'Hog meat.' Then the red fez stopped *jhatpat* [instantly] and the *gosht-walla* ran down the alley."

Amni went on to say that she had heard the Rajput



tell Abdul Khan that it was all a joke and that it was goat's meat the man had and a goat's foot; that the Mohammedan was furious and had dared him to fight, and they had run down the alley, followed by the crowd.

"They're at it now, the boy was telling me. Ain't you afraid?"

"Afraid of what?"

"For your—— The Mohammedan is the biggest."

"Wah! Did not Rama in the Ramayana conquer every enemy? I should despise him if he let that——"

"Sepoy! Sepoy [police]!" yelled some one outside.

In an instant Sita was at the door. Then seeing Parbatti and Mohani standing with the *ayah* at the little cloth store on the corner, she seized her brother's hand and hurried out to join them. She was just in time to see two *sepoys* in the regulation blue cotton uniforms turn the corner and walk rapidly down the alley. A curve soon hid them from view, but Sita noted that the shouts ceased even before the *sepoys* were out of her sight, and at once the crowd came pouring out of the narrow street.

"Sister, you are hurting me," exclaimed Mohan Lal. "Are you afraid?"

Sita let go his hand, and after apologizing, said:—

"I am afraid of disgrace."

"They did not get him," cried the boy, as a little later the officers came into view.

"They got the Mussulman, though, and he has eaten



punishment," exclaimed his sister, looking at the soiled clothes and bleeding face of the youth.

When near the mouth of the alley the prisoner begged for a hearing, and in a niche where the little shop joined the back-yard wall of the adjoining premises, the little party stopped.

From her post of observation, Sita heard the *sepoys* roughly order off the stragglers who began to collect about them; but to her gratification they gave no heed to the children on the corner.

Of the prisoner's story, as he gesticulated angrily, pounding the dust from his red fez, she heard little except "Rajput" and "hog." But the men's voices carried better.

"I say, Mopat, let him go. It was only a boy's squabble," said the older man, whose beard showed him to be a Mohammedan.

"Nay, Yuseph," replied Mopat. "We've taken him and we deserve the credit."

"Then we'll have credit for two. One of his caste people let the Hindu into his back yard, no doubt; but we'll find him and jail him. He was the real culprit. He was in with that hog peddler, sure."

"Owl, he was not; and, if he was, there was no hog. Did we not examine the basket and find a goat's foot?"

"It's not proved, infidel, that that was the basket, and even so it was no little joke. I'll raise every Musulman in the city with the story. We'll teach you infidel idolators——" Yuseph here poured out a volley of abuse which so engaged his companion that



he did not notice Abdul Khan as he walked softly away, the thick dust muffling all sound of his steps.

"He—he's gone," gasped the Hindu *sepo*y when he made the discovery.

"Yes, brother, both have escaped us." The Musulman smiled complacently.

"Wah! It was only a boy's squabble and quite unworthy of notice."

"Perhaps, Mopat. But less fire has caused a conflagration. There might have been a riot."

"It was not a hog's foot—it was not hog meat."

"Who knows? And to quell a riot means great honour, promotion perhaps. We'd better hunt up these prisoners—especially the Rajput, the ringleader in the fray."

"Nay, brother, they were only boys. And they'll take care to keep out of sight the rest of the day."

The *sepo*ys moved on, talking more amicably.

"*Hài, hòi!* 'Keep out of sight!'" repeated Sita, with a troubled brow. "Then how are we to hear from father?"

When the time came for the girls to go, Miss Ray, hearing Sita's story, said that she might wait and return with her. The half hour's respite, however, resulted in disappointment, and from their seats in the tonga, the Rajput children, while they drove the length of the bazaar, still anxiously scanned the faces of the throng: of the many in the street, now moving homeward; of others who still tarried for gossip, for the abatement of the heat, and for the rising of the moon.



They were nearing the bridge at the end of the bazaar, when the sound of music arrested their attention.

“What is that?” asked Mohan Lal, as they looked towards the clump of trees from which the sounds came.

Miss Ray explained that the instrument was a violin and that the player was Mr. Ashley, the Padre Sahib.

“Sister, there he is,” joyfully cried the little lad, a moment later. “There he is! under the tree! Ram——”

“Hush, brother; not so loud.”

But Ram Chandra, though he sat in the outskirts of the company near the road, did not seem to hear.

“Stop, *gariwan*,” requested Miss Ray in a clear, distinct tone. “We want to hear the music.”

Sita had never before heard such music and it held her entranced. But when the tall, dark-haired player put down his violin and began to talk, she glanced at Ram Chandra. His attention was still given to the missionary, and looking back she saw ten or twelve village men standing before him. One of them was speaking.

“Good, Sahib; we are ready to become Christians. Our gods are angry and of hunger we die. Give us work and we will join your caste. We will be Christians; we will eat your food and wear your clothes.”

The missionary lifted his hand and shook his head, while he replied:—

“Nay, brother. We will surely give you work and



look after your families until the famine is over. But to become Christians is quite a different matter."

Mr. Ashley took up his violin and played again, while a half-dozen well-grown boys sang with him a song, the refrain of which was:—

*"Bhesh badla kya, dil ka badalna chahiya."*

[To change the clothes is of what use? To change the heart is the necessary thing.]

As they sang Sita saw Ram Chandra start and frown, and then noted that he no longer wore his scarlet sash and that he had exchanged his yellow *pagri* for a white one.

After listening longer he must have concluded, the little girl thought, that the song had no personal application, for his brow cleared. The youth's position allowed him to include the tonga in his field of vision. Yet—he gave no sign of recognition; and when Sita presently saw that he was giving his attention to an old man at his side, she asked Miss Ray to wait no longer. But even as she spoke she saw that her brother had left the tonga and was running toward Ram Chandra.

"Mohan Lal," she cried; but the little fellow only ran the faster.

"Miss Sahib-ji," she said in much excitement, "he would not speak to us, and—and my brother has gone to him. Oh, the shame of it! Call him, please, call him back."

"Very well, daughter. I will send the driver for



him." However, seeing that the youth was talking to the child, she delayed a little.

"Miss Sahib-ji," she entreated, with the hand that lay in her lap tightly clinched, "he will think that I sent him."

When the driver was coming back with the boy, the latter called out: "Oh, sister, they are not starved. Mother and father are well."

Sita, without a look toward Ram Chandra, took her sobbing brother into her arms; and when the tonga went on, soothed him with tender words. After he became quiet, she sat for a time silent, then said:—

"If Mohan Lal had not run off we would have had no news—not one word. He is cruel, cruel."

"My dear," Miss Ray replied, "is it the custom for a young man to talk to his betrothed?"

"No, Miss Sahib-ji; but he never cared for the custom. He always used to speak to me."

They now came upon the *ayah* and the girls resting by the roadside, and when the tonga stopped for a moment Amni approached Sita and asked in a loud whisper if the Prince had escaped and if he had condescended to speak to his Princess.

"Of course," answered Sita quietly. "And he says that father is better and that mother and the baby are well."

"My dear," protested Miss Ray when they had started on, "my dear!"

"Must I tell all my shame to that low-caste ——? And it is not the custom."



She stopped, then looking uncomfortable, said: "I will walk now, Miss Sahib-ji—with your girls."

"All right. Send Amni to take your place. And, daughter, don't forget your good news."

"My father is better," said Sita softly, while a smile drove the frown from her face.

## V

### A NEW PUPIL

SITA'S determination to keep from Amni the knowledge that Ram Chandra had utterly ignored her presence in the bazaar, incited her to unusual efforts at cheerfulness. The good news from her people was a help in this direction as was the romantic interest with which the girls now regarded her. For Amni had reported what she had seen and heard of the young Rajput, and the story lost nothing in the telling. In fact it raised the youth to the status of a hero, and naturally his betrothed shared in his exaltation. All this pleased the high-born child and her demeanour gave no hint of her secret. Yet the thought of the *tahsildar's* son invariably revived in her feelings of anger and mortification.

Her unhappy state of mind made her impatient of present conditions and contributed, together with Mohani's talk on the day they had walked home together from the bazaar, to increase her eagerness for school and a new order of things.

When the promised day came, therefore, she was up betimes and ready at six o'clock to start. But when a little later she would have joined the orphanage girls as they passed, the matron informed her that



the government wards would not go for another half hour. To her inquiries as to why she might not go, she received the unsatisfactory reply that it was the Miss Sahib's *hukam* [order].

When at last the group of government wards approached the schoolhouse—a long one-story, plastered building with verandas on all sides—they heard the girls singing. The singing ceased as they entered the chapel, and the pupils passed at once to their recitation rooms. While Miss Ray conferred with the primary teacher, whose large class remained in the chapel, Sita and her brother were enjoying the coloured pictures of birds which formed a frieze on three sides of the room.

Afterward Miss Ray took them to her office, where she questioned the little girl as to her attainments.

“And you have never been to school?” commented the teacher.

“No, yes, Miss Sahib-ji. We have no girls' school in Raj Gaon; but my father is head master of the boys' school, and he used to take me with him when I was little. I learned my letters there and afterward I learned at home.”

“Your father is a wise, good man.”

“The wisest and best in all the world.” Sita's lips trembled.

“Well, Sita, you may try Karunabai's room. But you will have to do some extra work if you stay there.”

“And my brother, Miss Sahib-ji, what shall he do?”

“Why,” answered Miss Ray, smiling at the boy,



“he does not look strong yet. Let him do what he likes. He may stay with you or go back to see the bird pictures; or he may go out with the class under the trees, where there are real birds.”

“Very, very good, Miss Sahib-ji.”

The little lad elected to go outside and the missionary conducted his sister to a pleasant recitation room, where fourteen girls, from nine to sixteen years old, with books and slates, were seated, upon the cement floor, upon strips of bamboo matting.

The teacher, Karunabai, an alert, winsome young woman, welcomed Sita and, giving her a Fourth Reading Book, designated the lesson and bade her be seated.

The child salaamed to both teachers, then looked about her expectantly. At sight of the welcoming smiles on Parbatti's homely, and Mohani's attractive, face she smiled in return; then sitting down near the latter, began to read aloud, swaying her body as she read. Presently realizing that all were quiet except herself, she stopped, and looked up to find all eyes upon her.

The *munshine* [teacher] motioned to Mohani, and the soft-eyed girl explained in a low tone: “Sister, it is not our custom to read aloud.”

“*Wah!*—how—it's such a strange school!” Sita answered, perplexed; and then she sat curiously watching the girls while they read silently.

In the geography lesson, which was on Rajputana, Sita was delighted, but she looked on helplessly when the girls began to write rapidly from dictation; and the arithmetic lesson in complex fractions was quite



beyond her understanding. Her face clouded over, and when Karunabai came to her after school, she said despondingly:—

“ I can never learn that, Munshine-ji, and I shall not be here long and I want to learn.”

“ And why not, little sister? Ray Miss Sahib thinks you can make up the arithmetic with outside help. You read beautifully and you know more about Rajputana than any of the other girls.”

“ My father taught me,” said Sita, smiling. “ He says that a king's daughter should know all about her country.”

“ Good. And should not a king's daughter know arithmetic? ”

Although Sita looked doubtful, Karunabai went to her table, about which the bevy of girls had collected, to ask for volunteer tutors.

“ Amni is in the next room below,” thought Sita, with a frown, “ and Mohani here and——” Her eyes were arrested by a motto on the wall, “ God is love,” and then the girls laughing and crying out that they wanted to help her, came toward her with the *munshine*. And at that moment Miss Ray, with beaming face, appeared at the door.

“ It is the loving caste,” Sita said to herself, and then aloud: “ Miss Sahib-ji, I want to stay in Karunabai's room. May I not stay without studying arithmetic? ”

And when the teacher, still smiling, shook her head, the little girl replied:—

“ I hate arithmetic; but if I may stay here I will try



to learn it with body and mind [*tan man se*]. A king's daughter ought to know everything."

"Good talk," said the *munshine*.

"Good talk," repeated Miss Ray. "That is the way to learn everything."

That evening Amni was ripe for another quarrel. Vexed that Sita had been placed above her in school and miffed at her little airs of superiority, she repented her generosity to her rival in singing the praises of her betrothed, and she determined to check her increasing popularity.

She began after the six o'clock dinner, while a group of the children were sitting in the long shadow of one of the mud houses. Sita had been telling a story, and before the girls had voiced their pleasure Amni sharply criticised the tale as told, and when the story teller was silent, returned to the subject of the old quarrel. She had her doubts about that marriage; she had not seen the Rajput speak to Sita, and she did not believe that he did speak to her.

The Rajputni's face was ashen with anger. She most emphatically declared that the youth was the boy to whom her parents had married her. When her brother had confirmed her words, she began to reiterate what she had before said to Amni in regard to her interview with the *tahsildar's* son, when memory brought before her Miss Ray's surprised, pained face, and again she heard her words of remonstrance.

"You may believe what you please," she said after a short silence. "I promised our Miss Sahib that I



would not quarrel and I shall not break my promise for any low-caste girl." And unheeding her adversary's wrathful retort, she walked proudly away to the clump of palm trees.

The encounter, however, did not result in a victory for Amni, for she had herself accepted Sita's story for true; and the girls took her insinuation—which was only a random thrust—as sheer spite work. Besides they were all under bonds to Miss Ray to keep the peace, and some of them felt that it took courage to stop a quarrel when it was under way.

Yet Amni's thrust had gone home. It brought to Sita so keen a recollection of bazaar day that she endured again the pain and chagrin which Ram Chandra's conduct had caused her. It opened up again her wounds and it reopened the question as to the significance of the incident. As she moved restlessly among the palm trees, pondering the problem, the solution she had given to herself and to Miss Ray failed to satisfy her; yet she could find no other. Moreover, she felt that in some way she had come to occupy a false position before the girls. And so while they talked in groups, or played in the short twilight, she remained alone in bitterness of spirit.

When a little later her brother came to her, she fondled him with more than her usual tenderness. And when there came the sound of singing, and he said eagerly, "It is the mission girls," she went with him to the edge of the clump of trees and looked toward the high brick wall which surrounded the orphanage, and toward the buildings which arose dimly

beyond. The evening songs of the orphanage girls had for the children the delight of novelty, for they had never heard a chorus; and to-night the glad young voices rising in strange melodies or familiar *bhajans* were like balm to Sita's sore heart.

"To-morrow, little brother," she said as she took the child to bed, "to-morrow we are to go to school again with those singing girls who are not always quarrelling. And I shall learn everything—just like a boy."



## VI

### MURTI PUJA

“**W**HAT are you making, Sita?” Miss Ray asked one day as she saw the little girl intently at work upon a bit of clay.

“ I am making a *murat* [image].”

“ Why, child——” Miss Ray began, then stopped abruptly.

“ It is many days since we have done *puja* [worship], my brother and I; so I have asked the cook to give me half of our *dal bhat* [peas and rice], uncooked, that we may make an offering to turn away the anger of the gods.” She paused a moment, then as Miss Ray said nothing, asked: “ Do you think the rains will break soon? ”

“ I trust so, daughter; there may be news any day now of rains in Colombo. You know the rains there break two weeks before they do here.”

“ Yes, I know. Miss Sahib-ji, you do not do *murti puja* [image worship] ? ”

“ No, daughter.”

“ Why not? What is the Jesus worship? I would like to know about your gods.” The girl’s eyes were wide and earnest.

“ My dear child, I cannot tell you. We teach our

orphanage girls because they are to stay here and are given us to do with as we think best. But you children who are government wards are here for only a short time; your parents will come for you before very long."

"Ji, after the rains come," assented Sita.

"Well, they will want you back with your caste unbroken and your religion unchanged; and I promised the Great Sahib [the Deputy Commissioner] that I would not teach you the Jesus religion."

"Will you not please sing me the song I heard the Padre Sahib and the mission boys singing in the bazaar?"

"No, dear, I cannot; that would be breaking my promise; it is that you may not hear the songs of Jesus that I have you government wards come to school a half hour late in the mornings." The relief worker looked troubled and the child disappointed.

"How would the Great Sahib know?"

"He might not know; but he knew when I gave my promise that I would keep it. And, daughter, I would know, and God, the great God, would know." As she spoke the clear grey eyes of the teacher looked deep into the hazel eyes of the child.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, daughter," Miss Ray said after a moment's thought. "I want to teach my religion to you, to everybody. It is life—there, I must not talk now. But when your father and mother come for you and your brother, bring them to me, and I will tell to you all, the words, and sing to you the songs of Jesus."



“ Very good; I will, Miss Sahib-ji.”

“ And, dear child, do you not remember that Ram Chandra was a lover of truth? ”

“ Ram Chandra? Oh, you mean in the Ramayana. But he was a god.”

“ Do you know nobody who always speaks the truth? ”

“ Ji; my father.”

“ Then let his daughter speak the truth.”

“ But girls—women folk——”

“ Girls and women folk, too, every one should speak only the truth.”

As the teacher went on her way the child thoughtfully resumed her self-imposed task of moulding the clay into shape.

## VII

### FAMINE

“**R**AIN in Colombo. The monsoon has broken in Colombo.” In these headlines the Alahabad *Pioneer* announced its joyful message.

And then India held her breath for ten days. Would the rains break at the usual time? or would they come so late as to ruin the rice crop, as they did last year? or would they fail entirely, as they did the year before?

While the people waited they prayed in hope and agonizing fear. Millions addressed their prayers to Siva, the Hindu ruler of the elements, or to some other of the multitude of Hindu gods. Other millions prayed to Allah in the name of Mohammed. And a few entreated the Christian's God in the name of His all-compassionate Son. And God, the All-Father, heard the prayers of all of His children.

The ten days of interval were dreadful days. The heat, which had been intense before, now became intolerable. The sun blazed all the day long; and all the weary night the earth gave out her heat—the accumulated heat of three years. The night air, which had before held some coolness, now became stifling



because of the clouds, which day after day gathered volume. All India slept out of doors; or lay restless and panting, watching the darkening, piling, hope-laden clouds. And in the morning the people arose and moved wearily to their appointed tasks.

The famine-stricken continued to pour into the relief stations, those who had held out long and those who lived far away from the centres of aid, coming with their vitality exhausted. Some of these died on the very day of their arrival; others lingered only to succumb later to the slightest exposure, or to the lightest attack of disease. There were so many deaths that in some localities bodies lay for days unburied; and in the interior, beyond the pale of foreign supervision, conditions were far worse. This fact was made manifest when, the next cold season, the government officials, in making their inspection tours, and the missionaries their evangelistic tours, came upon bleaching bones in appalling numbers—bones of human beings, for whom the vultures, efficient aids to the *mehatars*,\* had performed the last rites.

The strain upon the diminishing corps of foreign relief workers became unbearable, and every day brought reports of the illness and death of missionaries and officials. Among the latter, in remote districts, were cases of suicide, and in both classes instances of insanity.

Many missionaries in the famine districts now gave their entire time to relief work; among them Mr. Ashley, who employed hundreds in the construction of

\* The *mehatar* is the sweeper or scavenger caste.



a school chapel. Miss Ray had enlarged her school-house and was now completing an addition to the girls' orphanage.

Both the girls' and the boys' orphanages in Arampur had been full for weeks and many unfriended little ones had been sent from this to other mission stations. The government wards increased until they numbered several hundred. Succour coming too late in many cases, death was a frequent visitor among the rescued children, and many who lived remained weak and sickly.

Dr. Doran, the medical missionary, found it necessary, at this time, to work night and day.

It was her wont, in case she could manage it, to take with her when she went to visit patients two or three of these ailing ones. And one day, soon after the bursting of the monsoon in Colombo, Sita and her brother were the privileged children. For with the advance of the hot season, Mohan Lal began again to droop.

During this drive his thin face lighted with gladness; for in spite of the scorching winds and the baked grey earth of the barren rice fields, there was much to enjoy. The large green trees that bordered the roads tempered the fierce heat of the sun and softened its glare, and he could look from beneath the white top of the tonga, far away over the plains.

Then, when in the outskirts of the town, the tonga stopped for a moment or two on a knoll, from which was a view of the low hills where lived his people. The children were talking of home when the doctor



stopped to make a call, and when she returned to the tonga the little lad was struggling with tears. Her own eyes grew moist as she marked in his wan face the signs of that cruel disease, so pathetic to see in little children, homesickness; and when Sita, having put aside her own heartache, had assured her brother that their father would come soon to take them home, the physician who had been in India but eighteen months began for diversion to ask questions about the birds and trees, and soon both children were blithely chatting.

Yet the drive was to have in it more of pain than pleasure. The meeting with wretched famine sufferers was depressing enough, yet, because of the children's familiarity with such sights, bearable; but once they passed the corpse of a man and again that of a woman lying unburied by the side of the road. At these times Dr. Doran had endeavoured to draw the attention of her charges to something else, and had succeeded with the boy.

"Children, shut your eyes," she cried suddenly, when on the way back.

But the warning came too late, for at that instant Mohan Lal cried out in terror and buried his face in his sister's dress. She held him close, but for an instant was unable to withdraw her fascinated gaze from a body of men coming up a crossroad. In that instant there was indelibly impressed upon her brain a dreadful sight. It was a nondescript funeral procession, such as may be seen only in certain regions in times of pestilence or famine. There were twenty



or more of the men paired off, each couple carrying between them a substitute for a bier—a bamboo pole to which was tied by the neck and knees an almost naked fleshless corpse. To add to the horror, the pallbearers chattered loudly, quarrelling or laughing as they walked.

Cruel, were they, and inhuman? Perhaps. Nevertheless, that they could laugh, that they could become so far deadened to the horrors of their occupation is a merciful provision of nature to save the reason of these *mehatars* whose caste makes it their business to bury the outcast and the friendless. And should these scavengers fail, India might be depopulated; for, to men of good caste it is forbidden to touch the dead of any outside of their own caste group.

When the funeral procession had passed, Sita asked with trembling lips:—

“Are there Brahmans there, and—Rajputs? Oh! Miss Sahib-ji, they will be low-caste in their next birth, or dogs, or ——.”

“They are low-caste,” answered the physician, administering a palliative dose which in her own case could have no power.

Sita drew a sigh of relief and soon began to second the physician's attempts to cheer her brother. This time they were not so successful as before, and when the drive was over and Sita was leading the lad away, she heard Dr. Doran draw a heavy sigh and stopped to look back. She echoed the sigh, and nodded her head in assent when she heard her say in wearying, pitying tones to her assistant:—



“Phul Kuarbai, it was too horrible. I shall take out no more children with me until this dreadful famine is over.”

The third night following the drive, as Sita lay restless and only half asleep, the sound of subdued voices aroused her into wakefulness. In the moonlight she saw the forms of two women coming from the direction of the orphanage. They were picking their way with care that they might not disturb the three hundred children who lay on the ground asleep. When they had come near, she recognized Miss Ray and Phul Kuarbai, and she heard the latter say:—

“She is *pagal* [crazy].”

“You mean delirious?”

“No, Miss Sahib, quite, quite *pagal*.”

When they had gone the little girl sat up, looked to see that her brother was asleep, then arose and, drawing about her her *sari*, which served for night as well as day attire, followed after them, past the sleeping children, over the border of the compound and into the hospital grounds. Her bare feet made no sound, and unnoticed she stopped in the shadow of a tree not far from a cot by the side of which she saw Dr. Doran.

Sita saw that the doctor raised her hand and that the two approaching women waited. Some one on the cot was muttering sleepily while the physician gently rubbed her hands. When she had grown quiet Phul Kuarbai took the doctor's place and the latter went a little way outside to talk to Miss Ray. Very soon the



patient started up with a wild cry, pushing her attendant aside.

“Where is my baby? What have you done with my baby?” She went on talking, and presently Sita heard her say: “The others starved, all of them, father, mother, husband, and children, all but my baby.

“Wah, I know now,” she said, growing quiet. “I saved him; I would not let him die of hunger.”

“Where is he, bai?” asked Dr. Doran.

“Where is he? Safe enough. I ate him, killed and ate him.” She fell back on the cot exhausted.

“Good God!” exclaimed the physician, under her breath.

“Ram, Ram,” moaned Sita. She had now come close to hear.

“Merciful heavens!” cried Dr. Doran, looking at Sita and putting her hand to her head. “Can none of the horrors be kept from the children?”

Miss Ray looked from the physician to the child; then said quietly:—

“These horrible stories cannot be true; the woman is delirious.”

“Indeed, Miss Sahib-ji,” Phul Kuarbai began, “I have heard the like——” But at a sign from Miss Ray she stopped.

Sita was trembling.

“I, too, have heard it in our district——” she began.

“My dear child,” interrupted the teacher, “you should not be here. I will take you back when I have put the doctor to bed. She is herself ill.”



Doctor Doran protested that she could not leave her patient and that she had only a sun headache.

"And no wonder, with all this work and your exposure to the sun, and this your first hot season on the plains. Come, my dear, you must rest. We'll call the civil surgeon for this patient."

And reluctantly the physician allowed herself to be led away. Her face, usually pale, was red, very red, Sita noticed as they passed her.

When Miss Ray came out she put her arm about the little girl and walked with her a few moments, talking hopefully of the famine, while the still, shadowy night fulfilled its soothing mission.

"The doctor is very ill, is she not?" questioned Sita.

"She has fever. I must take her to the hills where it is cool.

"Dear child," said the teacher finally, "forget that sick woman's wild words. She does not know what she says. And, my dear——"

"Yes, Miss Sahib-ji."

"Do not repeat this sorrowful story to the girls. I must keep them as happy as possible, and I want you for my little helper. Tell your gayest stories now until the rains come."

"Can I be your helper?" asked the child, delighted.

But when she was left alone, the face of the insane woman would come before her, and the funeral procession. She tried to think of stories to tell the girls, but her thoughts would wander. She lay some time pondering: "Vernon Miss Sahib became ill and went to the mountains. Now the Doctor Miss Sahib is ill



and must go to the mountains. Will she get well? Who will give medicine to the sick people while she is away? The Doctor Miss Sahib gave good medicine to my brother and made him well. She is kind. All the Miss Sahibs will be gone now but Ray Miss Sahib. Will she, too, fall ill? Then what will become of all the children and the famine people? Oh, that *pagal* woman! If the rains would only come soon. How is my father? Is he alive? Where are my mother and baby brother? Ray Miss Sahib said I was to think of the happy days. Oh, will the happy days ever come again?"

A wail from a two-year-old child, who had come that day, disturbed her meditations. "*Ma! Ma!*" the little one wailed, and Sita, too, began to cry; and presently both children sobbed themselves to sleep.

Those last dread days of the famine, none who lived through them can ever forget—the scorching heat of the day, the unrest of the night, the continued and increasing horrors of famine, the wan faces upon which was written intense anxiety and too often despair. The people counted the hours at the last. The tenth day came and brought no rain. Then faint hope grew fainter while anxiety and fear increased.

Miss Ray returned from her hard journey thinner and whiter than before. But if, in the privacy of her room, she sometimes trembled with weakness and faltered under the weight of her burden of care, none knew. If, heartbroken with the woes of her beloved adopted country, she sometimes cried out almost despairingly, "O Lord, how long, how long?" none



knew. They knew nothing of her time of wrestling—only one of the night nurses found her once still kneeling by her bed at midnight. But all fed upon the brightness of her face, the distressed ones to whom she ministered. For everywhere, among the children, the patients, and the famine sufferers, she carried a face shining with faith and courage. "God will surely send the rain," she reiterated a hundred times a day, with such assurance that many took comfort and gave back her cheery smile.

Of all the government wards none gave such sympathetic response to Miss Ray's efforts as did Sita. The child was very busy at this time, for besides giving extra time to her lessons, and to the amusement of her brother, she nightly entertained the girls with stories.

## VIII

### THE MONSOON

**T**HE rain came down in torrents in Arampur. The stately palms, choking with the accumulated three years' dust, eagerly held out to the rain their great fronds. The pipal and the mango trees turned their leaves now this way and now that, thankful for the generous draught for which they had so long thirsted. For three days the rain fell and the famished land drank up the water. Then there was an interval of two days and the earth steamed. It rained again and again, and all living things rejoiced. The dead grass revived, delighting the eye with its green. The vines on the bungalows and on the orphanage buildings day by day grew fresher, and the crotons and the coleus on the verandas more brilliant in colour.

The look of patient, hopeless suffering upon the faces of man and beast changed to gladness.

The advent of the rainy season did not end the famine, but gave promise of a future harvest; and with its coming hope entered into the hearts of the people. The grain merchants, too often grasping traffickers in human lives, no longer held their life-sustaining commodities at famine prices; and the people knew that



in a few weeks small garden stuff would be available, and would, with the addition of a little grain, support life until the rice harvest in October.

At the first rainfall in all parts of the famine region, the *ryots* left the relief works, and carrying with them seed, a little food and less money, supplied from famine funds, hurried to their desolated homes. Some of these whose children had been fed by relief money took them with them, while others begged to leave their little ones until they should have raised something to eat.

About fifty of those under Miss Ray's charge had been taken away by the second day of the rains, yet nearly three hundred remained. On that day the Deputy Commissioner made his monthly visit, and when he had called the roll and dismissed the children, he tarried for a few minutes on the veranda, talking with the missionary.

When he had gone some of the girls went outside, Sita among them. She saw that Miss Ray continued to stand where the Great Sahib had left her, her eyes upon the ground, her forehead contracted in perplexity.

"Is there trouble, Miss Sahib-ji?" inquired Sita, going up to her when she raised her eyes.

"Trouble? No. Have not the rains come?" Gladness spoke in the teacher's voice.

"Ji!" replied the child, smiling. "My father will come."

"And our people will come. Ji!" cried the other girls, laughing as they darted out for an instant into

the slackening rain and then back to the shelter of the veranda.

"You looked worried, Miss Sahib-ji," persisted the Rajputni.

"Did I? That was wrong. The Great Sahib tells me that he has no money for doors for these houses nor for rugs for you to sleep on. But there is no reason to worry. The money will come."

"From our friends in America?"

"I do not know. But we need it and I have asked ——, so it will surely come."

While they were talking some one announced the postman.

"Is he coming here? That means money," commented Miss Ray. "If he had letters only he would leave them at the bungalow."

The girls watched intently, as the uniformed postman, with his umbrella in one hand, approached the veranda, picking his way among the shallow puddles of water. And, as with no word but a salaam, he opened his money bag, they counted with him as at Miss Ray's feet he laid pile after pile of rupees.

"Two hundred rupees!" cried Sita as he closed the bag and handed the relief worker two letters. "Who sent the money?"

"God!"

"God?"

"Yes," answered Miss Ray. And after a glance at one of the letters, she added, "God put it into the heart of a woman who is a stranger to me to send



this money. It is for you children, and you shall have your rugs to-night."

The word spread in a moment among the hut full of girls and very soon to the others. Then as the sun shone out through a rift in the fast-flying clouds, the delighted girls swarmed out of the huts, and chattering of doors and rain and rugs and rupees, ran toward the teacher, salaaming hilariously.

They were still salaaming when shouts and laughter announced the coming of reinforcements, as from around the corner of a hut came a troop of merry children, accompanied by a barking half-grown dog and two capering baby goats.

"Look!" they shouted in chorus. "Look! Miss Sahib-ji!"

"See what we've got!" cried Mohan Lal.

"They are fish, real live fish," screamed Amni, while she and the others held out their hands filled with tiny wriggling fish.

"Where did you get them?" questioned Miss Ray as they drew nearer.

"Right here on the compound."

"It rained them," cried one, and the crowd echoed the words.

"They live in the clouds," volunteered some one.

"I have heard that tale before," laughed Miss Ray, "but it does not come into my mind."

"This is indeed a true word, Miss Sahib-ji," Amni explained, and three or four echoed her words. "A true word, Miss Sahib-ji."

"I have seen such fish in my village," Sita said



confidently, "and my father said it rained them, so they must live in the clouds."

"Did he say they lived in the clouds? How could they live there? Would they not fall?"

"Then how——" Sita began doubtfully.

"I have read that they are carried up by the wind sometimes from the rivers and creeks. What are you going to do with the fish?"

"Eat them," cried several.

"What, eat them? But you do not eat meat?"

"Wah! No, we do not eat flesh, but we eat fish," answered some.

"I see! Fish have no life, so it is not wrong to kill them," Miss Ray said, laughing. Then seeing their perplexed faces, she added: "Now, girls, you would better get into the house, as it is beginning to rain again."

"It is warm, Miss Sahib-ji, and we always play in the rain at home," protested Sita.

"It is warm, but wet clothing sometimes brings fever."

"It is true talk," answered the little girl, looking at her brother's bright but delicate face. "We will go in."

"You are to have the rugs to-night," repeated the missionary as she turned to go.

"Salaam, Miss Sahib-ji—many, many salaams, Miss Sahib-ji," the three hundred children cried gleefully, and as the rain began again to pour down, laughing joyously, they left the goats and the dog to their delight in the rain and scampered into the huts.



## IX

### MOHAN LAL WEARIES OF WAITING

“SISTER, I wish father would come.”

Such were Mohan Lal's words of greeting to Sita when she returned one afternoon from school.

“So do I,” replied the round-faced little girl, losing her smile as she looked at her brother, who sat listlessly on the dry end of the veranda of one of the mud houses.

But the smile returned when, putting her books away, she sat down by the little lad. She cuddled and caressed him, calling him “lotus-eyed,” and other home pet names, until he smiled in content.

But he soon began again.

“It is so very many days, sister.”

Something in the pensive tone startled Sita.

“Not so very many. You are tired of waiting? He must surely come soon, sweet brother.”

“Who knows? Yes, I am so tired and thirst strikes me.”

“I will get you some water.”

As she tended the little lad she touched his hand and found it burning hot. Although he had had fever before she was a little frightened, and suggesting that

he sleep, went inside the house, returning with the child's blue cotton rug and her own. These Sita folded and placed on the end of the veranda which the grass screens sheltered from the softly falling rain, and when her brother had lain down, began to press with both hands his chest, back, legs, and arms until he fell asleep.

Afterward Sita went to the *ayah* who had charge of the little tots and asked her to watch her brother while she went to the hospital. She was soon back with the medicine, but with the look of anxiety still in her face.

"Does Phul Kuarbai know to give medicine in a good way?" she inquired of the *ayah*.

"Yes, she knows. She cured my mother of fever. But, of course, she is not learned like the Doctor Miss Sahib."

The hospital assistant, when she visited Mohan Lal, found his fever high, but she assured his sister that it would leave him in the night. Yet when the next morning she saw him at the schoolhouse, where the government wards were now sleeping, she found his temperature several degrees above normal. He was moved to the hospital, Sita going with him.

He grew worse. He was very patient, but at times begged pitifully for his father and his mother. When he had been ill for a week, he said one day: "Sister, you see father did not come."

"Not yet, little brother, but he will come very soon," she answered, smiling confidently at the sick child.



"He didn't come," he repeated, and turning over, fell asleep.

The next day, when Miss Ray visited the little patient, she found him unconscious and Sita sitting by him wide-eyed but composed.

Upon leaving the room, Miss Ray sought the hospital assistant and inquired her opinion.

"My hope for him is this much," she replied, holding the tips of her thumb and forefinger nearly together.

"I, too, have little hope. Have you told his sister?"

"No, Miss Sahib-ji; it is very hard."

"It is hard," the missionary said with tightly closed lips. "But it must be done. If you will sit by the boy a little while I will tell her."

"Daughter," Miss Ray questioned, after speaking to the little girl about other matters, "you—do you know that your brother is very ill?"

"I know, Miss Sahib-ji."

"He is very, very ill," the teacher said again, her eyes filling with tears.

"I know," the child answered. Then after a moment she continued: "He waked once to-day and he said father was coming for him."

"For him?"

"Ji, for him, not for us. My father is dead and my brother will die to-night." The child spoke with a far-away look and an assurance that carried conviction.

"My poor little girl!" Miss Ray's tears fell, but



Sita stood dry-eyed with a pinched, hopeless expression.

At dawn the next morning the occupants of the mission premises were awakened by a sound all too familiar, the death wail of the mourner. Miss Ray, taking Mohani with her, hastened to the hospital to find that all was over; the suffering child was at rest. His sister was sobbing and crying and striking her head against the ground, giving free vent to her long repressed grief.

When she saw Miss Ray's sympathetic face, she turned from her with so violent an outburst that the missionary, signing to Mohani to remain on the veranda, hurried away.

"What can she do?" moaned Sita, when her grief had become less stormy. "Can she put breath in his body? Oh, if the Doctor Miss Sahib had not gone away! It is *Kismet* [Fate]. My brother, my dear, beautiful brother!" She grew quieter, and Mohani was about to go to her when she saw that she was rocking herself as she sat on the ground, chanting words to this effect. "How should she know how terrible it is? To think that he had to die without taking the sacred thread. How can a foreigner know about caste ways? How can my brother have funeral rites? He must be buried by low-caste men—and—for that he will be reborn low-caste many times—a thousand times. Oh, my poor, poor brother! What can I do? Oh, my mother! Oh, my father! Your son is dead! My brother is dead and I am alone—all alone."



After a time her comrade on the veranda heard her praying in trembling, broken voice: "Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram——" stopping at intervals to wail in tones of anguish, "My brother, my poor brother! What can I do? Mother, father, your son is dead and I am alone—all alone—— Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram——"

"Miss Sahib-ji, I cannot have my brother buried—like—like a *pariah*." Sita's manner, as she stood in Miss Ray's office, was controlled; but her tear-stained face, her trembling voice, her swollen and unlighted eyes, told of the passionate grief of the morning.

"What can I do? Daughter, there is no one here of your caste but Mohani"—Miss Ray, as she spoke, looked toward the door, where the tall, soft-eyed girl stood waiting—"and Mohani now belongs to the Christian caste."

"Without our caste people he cannot have correct funeral rites."

"What then can we do, daughter?"

"Cannot he be buried—in your way—with songs and talk? Mohani has been telling me."

"Do you think your parents would wish it?"

"Ji; they would like it better than—the other way—if they were alive." Both voice and face indicated utter hopelessness.

"They may be alive, dear child; they may still come. But I shall be glad to do as you wish if the Great Sahib will consent. He is to be here to-day; and I



think, daughter, it would be better for you to make the request."

"Very good."

Mohani watched with Sita, and as soon as the Deputy Commissioner arrived, went to him, and the bereaved child told her story.

"Your parents may still come," he said. "But—yes—if you wish it."

"Many salaams, Sahib-ji."

As the little girl turned away, she saw that Miss Ray had come up, and heard her say: "This means religious teaching, Mr. Gracie. Do you wish me to keep up your rule still?" Sita was going on with Mohani, when the word famine reached her ears and she stopped mechanically. "The famine," the Deputy Commissioner was saying, "is practically over; a little more rain will ripen the rice, and I fancy that few of those who now remain will be claimed. For this reason and because you are to keep the girls who are left homeless, I will remove all restrictions except as regards food."

Sita waited no longer, but followed Mohani, saying: "I see now why he said that my brother might be buried in your way; he thinks my people are dead."

"Why, sister," replied her comrade, "you are still to keep caste; you are to eat the food cooked by the Brahman servant. The Great Sahib said so, so of course he looks for some of the girls to be called for. Your father may yet come."

But the broken-hearted child answered with a hard, dry sob:—



“ My father will never come.”

At three o'clock the orphanage children, dressed in white, stood in regular lines in the school chapel. Sita, also wearing a white *sari*, loaned her for the occasion, stood with Mohani near the bier. This was simply a rude cot, turned upside down, but transformed into a thing of beauty. It was draped so as to be completely hidden, with folds of sheer snowy mull, and in the folds were placed a number of fern leaves.

The dead child, also in white, lay on his side as though asleep. In his hand was a cluster of jessamines, and another, nestling in green leaves, lay on his feet.

Sita looked with awed face, then listened intently while the girls sang, “ Jesus the Messiah Has Saved My Life,” and a translation of “ Jesus Loves Me.” After they were seated, Miss Ray read the raising of Lazarus; then spoke of the loving Father who had not destroyed His child in anger, but had called him Home where he would live always; where he would never again be sick, nor thirsty, nor hungry. Then she told the story of Jesus blessing little children and of His calling Himself a Shepherd who cares for men and women as His sheep, and for little children as His lambs.

As she talked, the sorrow and despair in the little mourner's face yielded to wondering surprise, which in turn gave way to hope. Then at the last, when the girls began to sing, “ Safe in the Arms of Jesus,” her face became illumined. At the close of the song, Sita,

Mohani, and two Brahman girls stood by the four corners of the bier, which others, lifting, placed upon their heads. Then they started to the cemetery, followed by Miss Ray and the larger girls, who sang again, softly, as they walked, "Safe in the Arms of Jesus."



## X

### WHITE PANSIES

**A** FEW days later, Sita was sitting alone in the mud hut where for so many days she had played with her brother, when hearing a step she looked up to see Mohani coming toward her.

“Sister,” she said eagerly, “Ray Mama-ji calls you. It is for a gardening class, and you will like it. We sow flower seeds to-day.”

Slowly and reluctantly the sorrowing child answered the summons. The joy that had come to her upon hearing of the Christian’s heaven had proved transient. It was so new and strange, while with transmigration and its terrors she had been always familiar, and her father who knew all things had never told her of the beautiful home above. And so in bitter loneliness she grieved and brooded over her brother’s unknown fate. Yet as out in the sunshine her comrade talked of the break in the rains and of seed sowing, she felt the brightness of the day, and when she approached the orphanage veranda she felt the gladness in the faces of the girls who were gathered about Miss Ray, whose genial smile—so it seemed to the child—enveloped them all. Nevertheless, Sita felt that there was something in the smile for her alone.



She looked on without interest until the children began preparing the flat earthen seed pans, when she asked of Mohani:—

“Why do you put in potsherds, sister?”

“Because it is mama-ji’s *hukam* [direction].”

“But I don’t understand why. Miss Sahib-ji, what is it all for? the hole in the pot and the bits of potsherd and the cocoanut hair?”

She listened attentively to Miss Ray’s explanation, then did as the others were doing, afterwards going with Mohani to the garden for soil. When she returned the teacher was distributing seeds. To one she gave the large glossy castor beans, to another, sweet peas, then she opened a package of petunia seeds.

“How can these littlest of all grow?” inquired Sita.

“That I do not know; nor yet how the larger ones grow. But these tiny seeds do grow and make great branching plants, too. But the baby petunias have no strength at all and must be looked after like real babies. Come, leader, please, these must be your special charge.”

“Ji,” replied a merry voice, and Sita, having followed the teacher’s glance, discovered its owner, Priya, who at once left the group, squatting not far from the veranda about red seed pans, and hastened with a halting gait to answer the call. Sita recognized in this young woman, who was close upon sixteen years of age, Priya, a classmate who had helped her with her lessons when she first entered school, and watching her approach remembered that her lameness was due to broken bones in her ankle, which, because there



was no surgeon in her town, had never been set. The child looked admiringly at the big girl, whose *sari* had slipped partly off her head, exhibiting beautiful waving hair such as is rarely seen in India. Priya by a quick motion of her hand laughingly adjusted the *sari*; then seeing Sita, she sobered instantly and gave her a kindly greeting.

While Miss Ray was giving directions, Mohani said to Sita:—

“Priya came back last night from the mountains with the Doctor Miss Sahib.”

“If the Doctor Miss Sahib had been here, my brother——” The little girl's voice trembled and her chin quivered, but she set her lips and soon had herself under control.

“What is that kind, Miss Sahib-ji?” she asked presently, when the teacher continued to give out seeds. “Is it not balsam?”

On receiving an affirmative reply, she said: “We always have them—had them at our house.”

The child's voice again faltered, but because of the look which Miss Ray gave her while she poured some of the seeds into her hand, her burden of sorrow seemed lighter as she went to Priya for directions.

“In a minute, sister,” answered the leader of the garden class. “I'm 'most through with this pan. Balsam? You should see them growing wild on the Himalayan mountains! Wah! The mountains around Mansuri are covered with them. The wild ones are not so fine and double, but they are pretty, and Doctor



Miss Sahib liked them, so we gathered loads of balsam and dahlias for her before she was able to go out."

"Are they quite well? the Miss Sahibs?"

"Vernon Miss Sahib is not yet strong. The Doctor Miss Sahib is well, only——" She stopped short, looking toward the bungalow, then cried: "Wah! there she comes now! May we go to meet her, mama-ji?"

"Surely; but hold on to your seeds," answered Miss Ray, and she followed the scampering children with Sita at a more leisurely pace.

"The Doctor Miss Sahib is well and has come back," thought the little girl. "But—too late——" Miss Ray placed a kindly hand upon her shoulder and her chin began to quiver. She could not join in the joyous greetings, but when the doctor spoke to her the child saw a quick change in her dark eyes which told her that she knew and grieved with her. After a few minutes' chat the girls went back to their work, while the missionaries talked about laying out the garden. Sita was aroused from her reverie by the teacher's voice:—

"Please bring me a pan, somebody; I have not yet sowed my seeds, and these are beauties." Taking from a corked bottle a small waxed package, she opened it, disclosing a small home-made seed package from which she poured into her hand a very few seeds.

"Why, they look like ——!" Mohani exclaimed as she came up to look. Then as the teacher smiled, she said: "Oh, I know what you mean—you mean the flowers are beauties."



“Yes, daughter, I mean the flowers. The pansy is, I think, the best-loved flower in the world—in the Western world, I mean.”

“We love the jessamine best,” said Sita.

“And the marigold,” Ammi cried, and several repeated the word.

“I love roses best,” said Priya.

“I, too,” several voices indorsed.

“All are beautiful,” Miss Ray replied, “but pansies are different from all other flowers, for they have faces—beautiful, sympathetic faces—and they seem to talk to one.”

“I never saw a pan-zee,” Sita said.

“Have you not seen the picture in my room? Then come now.” The teacher led the way to her room, where hung a small picture of pansies done in water colours.

Several remarked about it, but Sita only looked.

“Why,” she asked presently, “why, mama-ji, do they not have pan-zees here?”

“Because of the heat, daughter. They cannot endure heat.”

“Pansies do last only a little while here,” sighed Doctor Doran.

“Only a few weeks, but I enjoy them so while they live, and afterward I remember them and so enjoy them all the year.”

The girls of the class had now all come in and most of them had seated themselves around the missionaries' chairs, but Sita remained standing, gazing upon the picture.



“Doesn't it hurt,” she asked, “to remember them—to remember and to know that they are dead? dead and gone away so that you can never see them again?” She spoke with the far-away look in her eyes, with pain in her voice and a quiver of the chin, which told that she had forgotten the flowers and was thinking of her brother; and a hush fell on the little group of orphan children.

“I do not think of my pansies that way,” Miss Ray said gently. “I remember their dear faces and am thankful to God for giving them to me for a time. I had a white pansy last year, like the one in the picture—do you remember, girls? It was purest white, with a little yellow in the centre. It made me think of little Ruth Ashley, with her white face and yellow hair. Her face has some pink in it now, since she came from the hills, praise God!”

“She came near going like the pan-zee, did she not, mama-ji?” Priya inquired.

“Very near, daughter. Only not like the pansy, for she is different, you know. We will never see that pansy again, but we may see our dear ones who go from us.”

“Ji,” two or three girls said softly.

“But they will be changed.”

“Changed, and yet the same. I called my pansy seed beautiful. I have thought it so precious that I have kept it in a glass jar carefully sealed. Shall I still keep the precious seed?”

“No, mama-ji, plant it,” Parbatti replied.

“Why?”



"So it will grow into a white pan-zee."

"But the seed? What will become of the seed?"

"It will die, but there will be a plant and a white pan-zee," some one said.

"Will it die?" Doctor Doran asked Miss Ray.

"No, indeed. The seed will seem to die, but not really; it will change to a plant that will blossom. Which is more beautiful, the seed or the flower?"

"The flower, mama-ji. The pan-zee," several cried.

"And how about people, our loved ones?"

"They change, too, like the pan-zee seed," Priya answered.

"Have you ever heard anything like that? the change to a glorified body?"

"The grain of wheat," suggested Doctor Doran.

"The grain of wheat."

Sita stood listening with intent face while Miss Ray explained; then after another look at the picture, said:—

"My brother—will he be like the pan-zee?"

"As much as your brother was more beautiful than the seed, so much more beautiful will he be than the pansy. He is now more beautiful than anything you ever saw or can imagine."

"And joyous like the pan-zee?"

The teacher's face lighted up, as she replied:—

"Far more joyous than the pansy—always joyous."

A beam of light from the setting sun fell from the window upon the picture and upon Sita's face, irradiating both. All were silent for a moment, then Doctor

Doran's sweet, sympathetic voice rose in the strains of a song of hope:—

“There is a Reaper whose name is Death.”

“They shall all bloom in fields of light. I will give them all back again,” repeated Sita, wondering, then turning towards the doctor, said:—

“Oh, please, please sing it again, doctor-ji.”

While Doctor Doran sang again, the sunbeams faded, leaving the picture in shadow, but the face of the child held fast its radiance.



## XI

### KISMAT

**T**HIS time Sita did not relapse into her old desolation. Her old fear for a dread incarnation for her brother was gradually supplanted by the new hope. She mused much, picturing her brother sometimes as a cherub and again as the fairest flower in the heavenly garden.

Except for the modifying effect of the deep impression made upon her mind by the pansy story and the reaper song, together with her strong conviction that her father was dead, the news of his death must have come upon her with crushing force. As it was she grieved indeed, but as one who had hope, and soon she began picturing her father and brother well and strong, walking together the fields of light. They were ever joyous, and more, it seemed to her, when at times they turned upon her their glorified faces.

The missionaries were very tender of the bereaved child, and a few weeks later she had recovered from the first poignancy of her first grief and was again taking an interest in life, when one day she was summoned to Miss Ray's bedroom in the bungalow.

"May I come?" she questioned at the teacher's door.

In response to her invitation Sita raised the bamboo



screen and entered the room, letting the screen fall behind her. As she noted the plain chest of drawers, the simple desk, and the wide cot with its snowy cover, the little girl smiled and the teacher observed the deepening dimple in her rounding cheek, said:—

“My room pleases you? Sit down, daughter.”

“It seems very good to me. How pretty!” she said, glancing at the delicate green wall and a group of pictures. “Are you well again, mama-ji?”

“Yes, I am well every other day, you know,” Miss Ray answered, smiling. “I had just a little fever yesterday. I shall go to the orphanage to-day.”

“You are very white and thin.”

“I have lost flesh, but it will not take long to get it back again when the fever leaves.” She was silent a moment, with a look of compassion on her face, then said with evident effort: “Sita, please sit down; I have sent for you—to tell you something.”

“Ji,” the child responded, seating herself on the fresh bamboo matting.

“You know the Great Sahib was here to-day?”

“Ji. I saw him, and he looked at me when I salaamed to him—such a strange look he gave me.”

“He thought you were dead.”

Sita watched Miss Ray’s face intently.

“Daughter, I have heavy news to tell you.”

“My mother, my baby brother?” she inquired, springing up.

“Little girl, you know I have been sick and could not see the people who came for their children.”

“My mother came!”



"Yes, your mother came a week ago on bazaar day. Do you remember the other Sita died and was buried the day before that, on Friday?"

"My mother came and they told her that I was dead!"

"Yes, child." Miss Ray could no longer keep back her tears. But the girl's eyes were wide and dry.

"You know," continued the teacher, "that you went to the bazaar that day? It was while you were gone that your mother came with the Great Sahib's *chaprassi*. He had already told her that Mohan Lal had died before, but that you were here. When he asked Rupwati, the new helper among the government wards, she said she did not know the names of all the girls, but that one named Sita had died the day before. Then the *chaprassi* said that it was you. I suppose he looked no farther than the name, for the record shows two girls named Sita."

Sita stood with ashen face.

"I did not know this till to-day. The Great Sahib told me when he was here, after he saw you. He will send a letter to your mother at once."

"She will not come again. It is *Kismet* [Fate]."

How dreary was the face, how dreary the voice of the child!

"Why should she not come? Rupwati will go with you this afternoon to the Great Sahib's place that you may talk with the *chaprassi's* wife; she was with your mother, and can tell you all that she said."

"Good," the girl replied in a listless, mechanical way as she turned toward the door.



“And, daughter, you may stay here in the bungalow if you like, in my room or on the veranda. It will be noisy in the orphanage.”

“Ji,” she answered, and went out on the veranda.

It was a piteous face that she lifted when two hours later Miss Ray, accompanied by Mohani, went to her.

“Daughter, shall your friend ask the Brahman cook to bring your breakfast here?”

“Hunger does not touch me.”

“I know, dear. Little Tara will bring you water to drink.”

“Mohani,” Sita heard the teacher say when she had returned to her room, “I wish you would ask the sewing class to sing; the songs may comfort her. Songs are good medicine for sick hearts.”

“Ji,” the girl replied, and after her return to the orphanage the girls grew quieter and presently began to sing softly.

The next morning Miss Ray again sent for Sita. Though her face showed less poignant suffering, her voice was spiritless, and her eyes without lustre, as she gave her salutation.

“Salaam, dear; sit down, close to me.”

“Ji.”

“I have written a letter to your mother, telling her all about you; so cheer up, daughter; she will surely come again and take you home.”

“She will not take me home; I am to stay here.” The child spoke slowly, with her far-away look. “It is *Kismat*.”



“What did the *chaprassi's* wife tell you? What word did your mother bring from your people?”

“There is no real news. My father passed away the night before Mohan Lal died. He said father was coming for him.”

“I remember. Was he ill long? Did the woman know?”

“The *chaprassi's* wife knew nothing. But she took me to the house of the Rajput people where mother spent that night, and she told me, the Rajputni woman, that my father had been ill for months and that mother was very thin. They suffered terribly.”

“Was there no one to help them?”

The child's face grew dark as she answered.

“If the *tahsildar* had done right by my people, they need not have suffered at all from the famine. Oh, how could they treat my father so? They must mean to set aside the marriage.”

Sita had for a long time made no mention of her marriage.

“And if they do, will not that be the best thing for you? How could you be happy with such cruel people?”

“Happy?” asked the child in bewilderment. “I was thinking of the shame, the disgrace upon my father's name and caste, and my father of the line of Janak! I hate them. May Vishnu remember—I hate them!”

“No more, Sita. My dear, there can be no disgrace to you, except as it comes from your own wrongdoings.”

The rebellious child sat silent until grief dominated the anger in her face. Miss Ray in the meantime busied herself at her desk. She then inquired if there had been no news of the baby brother.

“He is still alive, Miss Sahib-ji. Oh! I so want to see him, I want to see my mother!”

“And why may you not? I have written to her. What good news it is that your mother and brother are alive!”

“But my mother is so sad. She fainted that day—after she left here. My mother is heartbroken and so poor—she is alone!”

Sita had been struggling bravely to keep her sorrow under control, but now her face was working, and when the teacher placed her hand caressingly on her head, calling her “poor little girl,” she gave up all effort at self-control and wept freely.

“My dear, you have borne your sorrow so bravely. I am sure you will master this disappointment. Your mother will come again for you.”

“She will not come back! I am cut off from my people! It is *Kismet*.”

“What is *Kismet*, daughter?”

“*Kismet* is—certain to come; it is written on our foreheads.”

“I have heard; you think the Fate God writes on the foreheads of all?”

“Ji, when they are five days old.” After a moment the girl inquired: “You do not believe in *Kismet*?”



"No, daughter; I believe in one God, the Great God, who rules the world."

"And is He *Kismet*?"

"No; there is no *Kismet*, I think, as Hindus believe."

"But—my mother—why did she not find me? Why was I away that day? Why did Rupwati and the *chaprassi* tell her I was dead? I shall not forgive them."

"I do not know. I think—— Tell me, daughter, what Karunabai is reading you in school from the *Dharma Pustak* [Holy Book]."

"She reads about Joseph."

"Tell me about him."

Sita repeated the main facts of the story, giving much of it in detail.

"You have told me up to the time the cup was found."

"Ji, in Benjamin's sack."

"What do you think of Joseph's brothers?"

"They were very, very bad."

"What do you think Joseph will do with them?"

"He will punish them, of course, and it will be good to do it. Only I wish—I hope he will let Benjamin go back to his father."

"Would you like to have my *Dharma Pustak* and finish reading the story?"

"Ji," replied the little girl, her eyes brightening as she received the large book.

Miss Ray presently observed that Sita's eyes were no longer on the book and asked how far she had read.

“ Joseph’s father has come,” she answered with tears in her eyes. “ It was good that he did not die before finding Joseph.”

“ What did Joseph do to his brothers? ”

“ He feasted them,” replied the little girl, looking surprised.

“ Yes; but you have not read all. After some years Jacob died and then Joseph’s brothers were afraid. The rest of the story is in the last chapter. Shall I find the place for you? ”

“ Ji,” the child said eagerly, and she read with a thoughtful face. “ Miss Sahib-ji, he forgave them,” she said presently, “ and they ought to have been punished.”

“ Would you like Joseph better if he had punished them? ”

“ No, Miss Sahib-ji,” the little girl spoke slowly. “ It was good of him to forgive them, but it was hard.”

“ Yes, it is always hard to forgive, until one grows large in heart like God, the Ocean of Forgiveness.” Miss Ray waited a little, then went on: “ What did Joseph say about punishment when his brothers asked him to forgive them? Read the nineteenth verse aloud.”

“ ‘ And Joseph said unto them, “ Fear not; for am I in the place of God? ” ’ ”

“ You see Joseph understood that it was God’s work to punish, and that his part—was to forgive.”

“ Ji,” the girl answered thoughtfully.

“ Did you find *Kismat* in the story? ”



"No, Miss Sahib-ji."

"Read the twentieth verse aloud. That tells what Joseph thought of *Kismat*."

"'And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.'"

After Miss Ray had explained, Sita asked: "Did God make Rupwati and *chaprassi* tell my mother that I was dead?"

"No, not that; but I think he wants you to stay here awhile. He has something for you to learn, to do for Him as He had for Joseph."

"Shall I be great like Joseph?" the child asked wonderingly.

"No—yes; not exactly like Joseph, but you will learn here many things, and who knows but some day you may do something great for your people?"

"I will learn."

"And remember, daughter, that the Great God is your father, more loving and tender than your own earthly father could be. He makes no mistakes."

Sita's tear-stained face continued to brighten as Miss Ray talked, and when she concluded by reciting a comforting promise, the child repeated it after her, but each time with the rising inflection: "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up."

## XII

### LETTERS

**T**HE next week was a week of changes. First came the formal transfer of the fifty-two remaining government wards to the mission orphanage. This change Sita welcomed because of the better accommodations and because of her preference for the society of the more cultured and sweet-spirited orphanage girls. Her one great regret was the Brahman cook who served as a connecting link with the caste of her past life. However, when assured that she need not eat meat she was content.

But when before she had grown accustomed to the new order of things, Miss Vernon returned and took over both school and orphanage that Miss Ray might go away for a rest, the little girl found it hard. However, before going she had engaged to write to the girls and had invited them to answer. Sita was among those who accepted the invitation. Others wrote more but none so often as she. The following are extracts from her letters:—

ARAMPUR, CENTRAL PROVINCES, Nov. 2nd.

TO MY DEAR MAMA-JI:

From your little daughter Sita, many, many salaams and much love. Mama-ji, be it known to you that all



of us are, by the favour of God, well, and we are holding the hope that God will quickly make you well.

Mama-ji, from your going away, sorrow struck me, but writing to you eases my heart's pain, and I am writing before any letter comes from you. Priya helps me, but I cannot write fast, and there are so many, many things I want to say to you, so I am going to write some every day.

Nov. 4th.

Your letter to us all came to-day. I am glad you put my name in. Many salaams, mama-ji. Doctor Miss Sahib took me and Mohani to see Ashley Mem Sahib to-day and little Ruthie. I never saw a white baby before, and she is whiter than all the Sahib people and her eyes are so blue and her hair nearly white, too. Such a strange baby. She salaamed to us when we left and put her hand in her curls. She is like the white pan-zee.

Nov. 8th.

Mama-ji, I help Priya with the garden every day in the evening, when I am through carrying water to the cook house. I like it. The baby plants are growing, but not all the last seeds came up in the pans. I think it is because you were not here to coax them. My balsams are four inches high.

Nov. 12th.

Salaam, mama-ji. Another letter came from you to-day for us all and a very little *chitti* [note] for me alone, but when I read it I can hear you say "Dear child," and I can see your sweet face. It made a happy



lump in my throat. I pray every day for you to get strong, and so do all the girls.

Nov. 15th.

Dear mama-ji. Vernon Miss Sahib has changed the classes and I do not like to grind wheat. I am in the grinding class now. You put me in the class of water carriers and I liked that. It was fun to get hold of the rope with eight or ten girls and run with it to pull up the buckets of water. I wish you were here now. I do not like it here without you. No letter has yet come from my mother.

Nov. 22nd.

Mama-ji, I have not been a good girl. I have given Matiyabai and Vernon Miss Sahib much trouble. It was that wheat grinding. I do not like it, so I didn't do it. But when Vernon Miss Sahib asked me if I wanted to be a drone and told me about the bees, I did try. But some wheat would be left nearly every day until one day she called me and big Sona to the office. Big Sona grinds with me and she is very strong, but she can't grind alone. The Miss Sahib told us that we could not go to school next day until all the wheat was ground, all for that day and all that had been left. I wanted so to go because I would miss both my arithmetic classes, and I told her that you had promised that as soon as I catch up I may study English; but she would not listen. Then I saw tears in big Sona's eyes and much pain came in my heart, for I knew that it was all my fault. I begged Vernon



Miss Sahib to let me grind alone, but she said that one could not grind alone.

Nov. 23rd.

I had to stop writing yesterday to help Priya. It is fun to irrigate. When I went away from the office that day big Sona stayed, and when she came out after awhile she was smiling. I thought she would scold me, but she did not. On the next morning I got up very early and was ready at daylight to grind. We did all that was left over first and then the day's portion. I was so tired, but we were only two hours late at school. Vernon Miss Sahib smiled when we went in, and so did Sona, and I did, too, though I didn't mean to.

Nov. 26th.

We have been another time to see little Pan-zee. She clapped her hands and sang "*Tali baja*" so sweetly. An ugly scorpion got on her and I knocked it off. I could not wait for a stick, because it was close to her neck. Mohani cried out when she saw the scorpion and the Mem Sahib and the Doctor Miss Sahib came to the door. The Mem Sahib cried and begged the Doctor Miss Sahib to put medicine on my fingers, though I told her the scorpion did not sting me. It was a black one and that kind might kill a baby. I don't know why she cried, because Pan-zee was not hurt. Dear little Pan-zee.

Nov. 29th.

I grind my whole time now and we do all of all every day. We sing as we grind, the twelve of us in

the grinding class, and we drown out the noise of the mills. I sit up until nine o'clock every night to study with the big girls. Vernon Mama-ji lets me because I am strong. I study arithmetic and shall be ready for English when you come back.

Dec. 2nd.

Mama-ji, I have broken my promise to you and have quarrelled with Amni again. She called me — it was all about meat. She went on at me because I would not eat meat and you said I need not eat it and Vernon Miss Sahib does not eat meat. She ridiculed my poor mother and called her a widow—a widow without a son.\* I could not hear my mother so dishonoured so I answered her. I said to end with: "May your mother be a widow this year and your aunts and your sisters and sister-in-law, and may you be a widow on the day of your wedding." Amni began to cry, and Matiyabai came and sent us to Vernon Miss Sahib. I am not sorry; she deserved it.

Dec. 6th.

Salaam, mama-ji. Your dear letter came to-day. I took it off in the banana grove and read it by myself. You talk of forgiveness and Miss Sahib talks of forgiveness, and Mohani and Karunabai. But, mama-ji, I cannot forgive Amni.

\* "Widow" is used as a term of reproach. A woman is supposed to lose her husband because of some crime she has committed in a former state of existence. A widow who has no son is under the extreme displeasure of the gods. "Widow" is often used as synonymous with wanton.



Dec. 8th.

I have had such a fright. They are cleaning out our well and we have to go to the well across the road for water, and the water carriers were having a hard time, so some of the girls offered to help, and I went with Mohani a few times. Well, you know they draw water over there with a sweep, and Vernon Mama-ji gave the order that none of the little girls should draw the water. There were usually some of the big girls there to draw it and to lift the *gharas* upon our heads, but once when I was the last, except for big Sona, she said she would carry one *ghara* while waiting, for there was much water needed. She had passed me and taken the short cut when here came Amni back. When she came up to me I asked what she was going to do and she said that she had stumbled and spilled her jar of water and was going back for more. I could have called to big Sona, but I did not. I thought Amni ought to do what I said, so I reminded her that Vernon Mama-ji had given the order that little girls were not to draw water.

She said that she was not a little girl and that she would draw the water in spite of my orders. Amni is a half inch taller than I, but she will not be long, for I am growing fast, and I play in the big gymnasium every day.

"You must not," I cried after her, but she went right on. I had started on, for I was angry and almost ready for a quarrel, when I heard a scream and a splash. I looked back and Amni was nowhere to be seen. Then my heart stood still, for my curses came



into my mind and I was afraid. I called loudly to big Sona, but she did not hear. Then I threw my *ghara* to the ground and ran hard. I did not know what to do, only I knew I must do something. I saw the long plank that lies by the well and I snatched it up and pushed it upon the mouth of the well. But it was so wide and the plank so heavy I thought I should never get it across.

I looked into the well while shoving the plank across and saw Amni's head. She cried out, then went down. I caught the rope and drew down the sweep until the bucket touched the water. Just then I saw Amni's arms, then her head again, and I called loudly to her and threw myself down across the board. She clutched the bucket before I was ready, and I thought I should go in, too; but I steadied myself and held to the rope. Mama-ji, it seemed like the girls would never come back and I was so frightened that my strength was almost gone. Then I prayed and promised the Great God that if He would save Amni I would never curse again. My strength came back then and I called to Amni to hold on tight, and we both held out until the girls came.

Amni was frightened, too, and she says that I saved her life. I didn't, you know. I only held the rope by the favour of God until the girls came to save her. But Amni seems different to me now.

Dec. 10th.

Mama-ji, up to now, from my mother no letter has come. Perhaps it is true that God wants me to stay



here to learn how to do something for my people. It is not so hard to stay here now. Vernon Mama-ji is kind and so are the girls.

I am very, very glad you are coming soon. I am now fastening up my letter with love. Whatever mistakes and faults there may be in the letter, dear Mama-ji, please, doing kindness, forgive.

To my beloved Mama-ji

From her loving daughter,

SITA.

P.S.—I have forgiven Amni.

SITA.

## XIII

### JOY DAY

“**W**AKE up! Wake up! Great Day has come! Great Day’s salaams! Great Day’s salaams!”

It was with these words from many voices sounding in her ears that Sita opened her eyes upon her first Christmas. The merry shouts came from the girls of another room, who, anticipating the call of the gong, had risen and were arousing their more sleepy comrades. Sita, amid laughter and greetings, speedily scrambled out of her cot and soon hurried out in the early dawn with Mohani to join the merry group in the largest dormitory. Then as the Christmas clouds changed from grey to red all turned their steps toward the orphanage chapel, and soon their glad voices rang out in the still morning air in the strains of that jubilant hymn, “Joy to the World.”

After the brief praise service the girls gathered about the missionaries, crying “Great Day’s salaams.” Rosy-cheeked Miss Hillis, a new teacher just arrived from America, delighted the children with her ignorance of and her interest in their country.

“Is it possible,” she asked, turning to Miss Ray. “Is it possible that you have no name for Christmas?”



"None but Great Day, and Hindus and Mohammedans have many Great Days."

"Preposterous! We must have a special name for our Great Day."

"Call it Joy Day," cried Priya, her face a picture of joy, as she adjusted her *sari* over her waving hair.

"Joy Day! how good," exclaimed Miss Ray and Miss Hillis together. "Joy Day's salaams!"

"Joy Day's salaams," chorused the girls, and presently they scattered over the compound to shout the new greeting to Matiyabai in the cook-house, to Doctor Doran in the dispensary, to Miss Vernon in the nursery, and to their comrades everywhere.

Miss Ray had decided upon an experiment for the day; to have the three large girls who were to sing Christmas trios at the other Sunday schools, sing for her boys as well. And two little girls were to go along to recite the story of "The Angels and the Shepherds." Those chosen were Mohani and Sita.

Miss Hillis accompanied the girls to Doctor Doran's schools, and then across the town to the large hut which housed Miss Ray's schools.

Upon Miss Ray's invitation a number of the mothers who had attended her girls' Sunday school stayed to the boys' exercises and their presence relieved the visiting young women of any feeling of self-consciousness. The teacher had fixed their thoughts upon their songs by the suggestion that these Hindu and Mohammedan boys had never heard Christmas songs.

The older boys, from fourteen to seventeen, took



their places quietly, making no sign of surprise, but the little fellows stared. Miss Ray at once explained that some of the mission girls had come to sing Christmas songs for her girls' Sunday school, and that she had requested them to remain and sing for the boys. They looked pleased, and when the three young women stood up in their fresh bright-bordered white *saris*, watched them intently while they sang. For the singers looked straight before them and the boys sat on the floor.

Sita when called upon to recite stood a moment with her head inclined slightly to one side, then rendered the passage in a clear musical voice. When she reached the end, Miss Ray remarked that the little ones did not understand and asked her to tell it to them. And the child, with a smile on her face which brought out the dimple in her left cheek, looked in the faces of the rows of little boys before her and told the story simply, using Hindu idioms. Her face was radiant at the last when she said: "And we call our Great Day, Joy Day, as the angel said: 'And behold I bring you tidings of great Joy, which shall be to all people.'"

When upon sitting down Sita observed the joy in Miss Ray's face, she thought it but natural. Yet wondered at Miss Hillis' look of surprise and the question she asked in an undertone.

"How old is she?"

The boys appeared impressed with the exercises; there was something new in their faces. The older ones received their presents of English New Testa-



ments with quiet, dignified salaams, but when the distribution of sweets began, one of the tiny little fellows laughed and salaamed noisily and repeatedly, and the spell was broken. While some of the mothers remained after dismissal talking to Miss Ray, Sita overheard the remarks of some of the older boys who had stopped outside the wall.

"I wish my sister could sing like that."

"I wish my sister could read like that."

"So she could if your mother and father would send her to school."

"But they won't. I shall ask them again, though."

"Our sisters don't look like those girls."

"Our sisters wouldn't show their faces; it is a shame for a woman to show her face."

"Wah! all foreigners do. It is all right for them; it is their custom."

"It is right for those girls, too. All Christians show their faces."

"My father says it is right for anybody—it is only a wretched custom we have."

"Custom is law with Hindus."

As they got into the tonga the little boys gathered around and while Miss Ray talked, Sita caught further scraps of conversation.

"I shall ask my mother and father to get me a wife that can read and sing."

"I wonder what angels are like?"

"Who knows?"

"I know; they are like the little girl. Did you not see how her face shone?"



Hearing this a strange feeling of elation was taking possession of Sita when the tonga started and Miss Ray said quietly:—

“What a happy time we have had with the gifts and the songs and the Bible Lesson. That story of the Angels and the Shepherds is so wonderfully beautiful that it makes the faces of those who tell it to shine.”

“Ji,” answered Sita thoughtfully.

After the return to the orphanage and the ten o'clock breakfast came the treat to the poor. The wretched, ragged crowd on the ground outside made a sad contrast with the girls on the veranda, with their snowy *saris* and joyous faces. The children took part in the songs and in the gifts as well, for they had contributed the oranges which Miss Vernon had provided for their Christmas dinner. Besides food, to each woman was given an inexpensive *sari* and to each man a waist cloth, and all went away calling down blessings upon the children and the missionaries.

Sita and Mohani had asked to help in distributing the Christmas gifts, and afterwards while the company dispersed they were attracted to a woman blind in the right eye and carrying a basket in her arms, who in passing by had lingered watching the white-robed girls as they passed from the veranda into the house. When she accosted them, asking what it might all mean, they eagerly began to explain, then led her to the veranda where Miss Vernon still lingered with Miss Hillis. Sita introduced the decently dressed, sad-faced woman as a Rajputni and listened intently while she talked



with the house-mother. When she had gone, Miss Hillis called the two girls, and said in a whisper:—

“Don't tell. Let's surprise the girls. In surprises lies half the delight of Christmas—of Joy Day, I mean.”

Listening, the children smiled consent to the plan, and how they did enjoy that secret—the two girls together. Amni saw them at the Christmas dinner smiling at Miss Vernon and Miss Hillis and at each other, and asked what it was all about.

“Oh, it is a secret,” laughed Sita. Then seeing her give Mohani an angry look—Amni was now Sita's devoted admirer and jealous of the camaraderie of the Rajput girls—she added: “You'll know at the Christmas tree.”

The word spread among the girls that there was to be some special surprise, and all through the exercises there was unusual excitement, but not until they were over and the last gift taken from the tree did the surprise appear. Miss Vernon now brought from the little side room a basket and announced with smiles that she had another present for the girls. A faint wail gave away the secret, and after the benediction the girls crowded about to welcome the baby, to bemoan its thinness, and to exclaim over its tiny feet and toes.

“What shall we call our Christmas gift?” inquired Miss Vernon.

“*Arrandi* [Joy],” replied Sita, and all echoed the name.

It was now playtime, and several of the missionaries went to the grounds to play with the boys and



girls. But some, a few, of the latter left the grounds, and going to Miss Vernon begged to be allowed to sew for Joy, and before dark two simple dresses, two petticoats, and a cap were ready. When the sewers took them to the house-mother they found her with a bundle just starting somewhere. When she told them that she was going to the mango grove to see the baby's grandmother and asked if they would like to go, they were delighted and went away to find some gifts to take.

Sita was not one of the sewers, but she came back with Mohani, eager to go, and exhibited as her present a tiny bazaar mirror. Miss Hillis smiled at the incongruity, and was astonished afterward when the half-blind old woman made more of the mirror than of any other gift.

She was pleased with everything and listened amazed while the girls told of the welcome given to the baby and of what they had done and meant to do for her. When Mohani showed her the soft flannel cap, she touched it wonderingly, and upon hearing that they had named the child Joy, looked dazed.

"Joy?" she repeated. "Joy? She has brought nothing but trouble to me and to all her people." She stood a moment, her eyes upon the stream, then added: "I intended that worthless to sleep in the river to-night. Perhaps—perhaps it is true, what you say, and there is a God who cares even for girl babies."

When they exclaimed in horror at her confession she was silent, then asked to speak to Sita alone. The little girl went with her to the other side of the tree.



While the others waited they watched wonderingly, in the dim moonlight, the figure of the woman and the child as their voices rose and fell. Presently they heard:—

“You are a daughter of Janak and you live in Raj Gaon? Well, this child is of the house of ——” Her voice sank to a whisper.

“What?” ejaculated Sita.

“Wah! You know them! I should not have told you. If ever you tell they will kill me for sparing the child.”

“I will keep your secret, mother\*; have no fear. You have spared the baby's life, and the gods—the Great God will bless your home.”

As a good-bye to the stranger the little group sang again the Christmas songs.

It was prayer time when they got back to the orphanage, and many of the girls, Sita among them, raised their voices in gratitude for all the wonderful happiness of Joy Day, in prayer for the poor grandmother, and in thanksgiving for the little Joy whom He had saved from the river for their Joy Day gift.

\* The term mother is in common use as a term of respect.

*BOOK II*

STORM AND STRESS



## I

### SITA'S MOTHER

**T**WO years after the first coming of Sita's mother, she again appeared at the orphanage in Arampur, accompanied this time by her son. During the long unbroken silence the little girl had held fast in her heart the hope that her mother would one day return, and upon her coming had received her with demonstrative joy. For Sita, eased of the burden of maintaining her caste dignity, and of the far more grievous burden of her early marriage, had, while she grew taller, grown more child-like in thought and manner.

Yet with her glad greetings were mingled sorrowful tears. For as they were clasped in each other's arms, her mother's coarse white widow's *sari* slipped back and exposed for an instant her piteous shaved head. This brought to Sita the full realization of her mother's sad estate and with it the reminder that the reunion was the reunion of a broken family.

But six-year-old Janak Ram was all joy and his exuberant spirits soon put sadness to rout. Sita, with the tears still in her eyes, smiled at his gleeful shouts as he entreated his mother's attention to the bevy of girls drawing water at the well close by. Then,



bringing a rug and cushion, she made her mother comfortable on the corner of the veranda which was shaded by the purple *bougainvillea*, and seating herself by her side drank in—the while attempting to cuddle her merry brother—the story of the years of separation.

It was not long, however, until little Joy, with never a doubt of her welcome, toddled up and found harbour in Tulsiabai's motherly arms. Then Shanti followed, searching for Joy, and she too joined the little group. Soon Sita saw Mohani and Amni near at hand and ran to tell them of her mother's coming, and to bring them to her corner. Thereafter, Sita, as they approached called to others to come to meet her mother. Janak Ram now went with Shanti to play and at once the wonderful news spread over the compound, and, it being playtime, the entire orphanage gathered to rejoice with their comrade and to do honour to her mother.

Tulsiabai was a refined gentlewoman and gave no sign of her astonishment at her daughter's associates of many castes, but greeted all graciously, her mother-heart discerning that the tears in the eyes of some of the children were for mothers who had never come to claim them.

Miss Ray's invitation,—Miss Vernon was at this time home on furlough,—to remain a day or two before making the return trip, Tulsiabai, who was weary with her eighty miles' drive in an ox-cart, gladly accepted. On Monday they were to have started but Sunday afternoon the little girl's eyes began troubling



her, and Monday morning Mohani made the report to Doctor Doran at the orphanage dispensary, "To Sita the eyes have come."

Tulsiabai had been given a one-room house in the orphanage compound, and to this instead of to the eye ward in the mission hospital, the patient was taken. Sita had never been ill,—except with the measles, which she had very lightly,—and so she had had little acquaintance with pain, and bore it badly enough. She not only made a great ado when the medicine was put in her eyes, but would not tolerate the hot fomentations until Doctor Doran repeated the order in person with the warning that unless the treatment was strictly followed her sight would be imperilled. This had the desired effect and the patient submitted, though with little grace; and as the inflammation increased she moaned continuously, declaring that she could not endure the suffering. This so increased the mother's anxiety, that when Priya and Mohani, the night nurses, had gone to the cook-house for hot water, she said:—

"My daughter, I have a little money, let me—let me make an offering for you to Ram."

The moans of the patient ceased abruptly.

"Oh, mother," she cried, "that cannot be. I am a Christian."

"I know, but I,"—her voice began to tremble as she urged—"your eyes are very bad, if—if——"

"But I shall not go blind, mother dear," said Sita, catching the thought that her mother, through fear that its expression should bring about the calamity



she dreaded, dared not put into words. "I am minding the doctor now."

"Daughter dear, I have known many, many people to go blind with the 'eyes.'"

"Ji, I know. But the Doctor Miss Sahib says that it is not the bad kind and that she thinks I shall get well, if I do all she says, and I will."

"She thinks, but I have seen. My dear, dear daughter, I beg that you will let me go. It can do no harm and Ram may be angry. I myself will make the offering."

"Mother, dear mother, I cannot, I cannot let you make an offering for me,—before—an—image. But the Great God will help me. I forgot to ask Him."

Sita placed her hands over her paining eyes and prayed aloud very simply and very earnestly. Thereafter she lay so quiet that her nurses, coming in, thought she was asleep.

"Ease is, daughter?" questioned her mother when she stirred as the girls came back.

"Some ease is, dear mother, but I am ready for the hot cloths. Priya, I can bear them hotter now."

When an hour later a moan escaped her, she said she still had pain but that it was easier to bear.

Her mother's suggestion had given Sita a shock. It was only a few months before that she had publicly professed the new faith, but from the time of her brother's death it had been her comfort, and living in its atmosphere, her faith had grown with the years.

She had told her mother the story of the Christ,



and had taken her to the girls' meeting and to the Sunday services. Tulsiabai had listened with interest and had consented that her daughter might remain a Christian after returning home. Yet just now she had asked to make an offering to an image! Sita continued to pray for healing and for patience, and that her mother might see and believe. She recalled, after a time, that her mother had said that she could be taken back into caste since she was still a child, and her heart was troubled, for returning to the former caste would mean giving up her religion. All this she thought out as she lay sleepless and suffering. The Doctor, on the morning following, pronounced her convalescent, and Tulsiabai rejoiced. It was necessary for the patient to remain for several days in a darkened room, and during these days she found opportunity to recite to her mother many passages of Scripture and to tell her many Bible stories.

Miss Ray, during Sita's illness, visited her and her mother often, as did Miss Hillis, and Mrs. Ashley came once with Pansy. Because of the danger of infection, neither Pansy nor any other child was allowed in the darkened room, but the little girl came to the door with smiles and flowers, then played with Janak Ram outside.

Tulsiabai's heart was touched by the attention shown to her daughter, and when one evening Miss Ray enquired about the home to which she was going, answered freely. And Sita, listening, found that her pictures of the old home-life were impossible of realization. As her mother talked a feeling of home-



sickness came over her,—homesickness for a home that had ceased to exist.

It was now nearly sunset and as her eyes could bear the waning light they went outside. Seeing Sita on the porch some of the girls ran to her. But once in an interval of their chatter she heard her mother say: "No, there is no school for girls"; and again, "Her father said so, he said she would be a scholar."

Sita remembered. But soon she became fully occupied with the chatter of her mates; so much so that she failed to notice that when Miss Ray went away her mother accompanied her.

It was quite dark when she returned and as Sita could not bear a light in the room they went at once to bed. When they had talked a little silence fell, and Sita's thought went back to the mother's words. She was striving to recall her father's pet names for her when a sigh from her mother arrested her attention.

"What is it, mother?" She spoke softly so as not to disturb her sleeping brother.

"Nothing—only—only I wish we had a school for you in Raj Gaon."

"I can study at home, can I not?"

"Perhaps." There was more doubt than promise expressed in the manner of utterance. Tulsiabai asked presently:—

"What would you have done, daughter, if I had not come for you?"

"I meant to keep going to school for three years so I could be a teacher. I thought you would come for



me some day, and I would go back and make a girls' school for Raj Gaon." Sita sat up in bed and talked eagerly.

"It was your father's dream,—a school for the girls of Raj Gaon."

"If I could study at home——"

"Your uncle's wife, my dear—she would think it a waste of time."

"Time—what was time for—what would her new life be?" Sita asked herself. She would be a dependent. Not her mother but her eldest uncle's illiterate wife would rule the household. Again a homesick feeling came over her. However, she soon dropped to sleep.

Toward morning she awakened to find her mother sitting in the doorway watching the broken moon. Sita fancied her mother looked sad in the moonlight, but when she enquired as to the trouble, Tulsiabai replied with a smile that being wakeful she preferred to sit up. She went to Sita and holding her close in her arms, said, "The gods,—the Great God has been good to me. He has given me to see my dear, dear daughter again, and He has saved her sweet eyes from blindness."

The next day Tulsiabai again talked with Sita about her school work and then said, "It will take three years, yet?"

"It would take three years, but I am going with you, mother dear."

"Perhaps—perhaps it would be better for you to stay."



Sita was astonished at the proposition and at first was most unwilling to consider it, but after further talk, and a conference with Miss Ray, she assented.

Janak's disappointment was mitigated by the gift of his sister's photograph and the promise that she would come home before very long.

When the boy and his mother stood by the cart ready to start, the latter said to the missionaries who were on the veranda to say good-bye:—

“May the blessing of the Great God be upon you for your goodness to my child.” Then looking toward the orphanage, “May His blessing be upon all the motherless children.”

Miss Ray responded:—

“Because of the sacrifice you have made to-day, my sister, the blessing of the Great God will be upon you and your home.”

When left to themselves, Tulsiabai, after a few parting words of endearment to her daughter, said:—

“You will come to me, my daughter, in three years. You will learn all things.”

“I will learn, dear mother.”

“And when you come you will teach us, your brother and me, about the Great God and your Jesus—and we will believe.”

Sita's sorrowful face became radiant as she heard her mother's words.

“You will believe? How good!”

During her visit Tulsiabai had only once made mention of Ram Chandra's people. “We never see the



*tahsildar* nowadays—nor any of the family.” And when Sita made no reply she added, “I fear that they—may not now wish the marriage.”

“Nor do I wish the marriage,” exclaimed the girl, “I hate them—hate them.”

## II

### TURMOIL

**W**ITH the consideration which every one showed the little girl who had found and so soon lost her mother again she quickly rallied from the disappointment and became again a happy child.

What her mother had said concerning the continued estrangement of Ram Chandra's people had confirmed the conclusion to which Sita had long before come, that they meant to repudiate the marriage. Her shadowy dreams of the future now began to crystallize about her mother, her little brother, and the girls of Raj Gaon, and the rapidly growing girl, on the playgrounds as merry as any, in study hours applied herself with increased ardour to her books.

There remained no trace of the moodiness of her first months in Arampur, and with her physical growth Sita's mind and heart were unfolding as naturally and as beautifully as the buds unfold in the springtime.

But now the orphanage entered upon a period of change. A month after Tulsiabai's visit, Miss Ray was attacked by her old enemy, malaria, and the doctor ordered her out of the country. She was averse to leaving before spring, the time appointed for her



already deferred furlough. Yet as the famine had not assumed great proportions, and as Miss Hillis came at once to take over the school, and as Miss Vernon was expected back in December, it was with a mind at ease that Miss Ray set sail from Bombay. Happily for her she could not foresee the future.

Miss Vernon having been pronounced by the Board physician unfit for service in India did not return for a year and the famine grew. During this year the orphanage had five different superintendents. At its close came a cheering letter which announced the return of Miss Ray and Miss Vernon together, and that they would sail in two weeks. This meant that they were already well on their way, and the girls rejoiced.

For before the coming of the letter Miss Hillis had fallen ill and gone to the hills, leaving only one of the zenana missionaries in the station, Doctor Doran. The physician was almost overwhelmed with her medical and famine work and Miss Hillis, before leaving, had put the school in Priya's charge, and, being in desperate straits because unable to secure a missionary for the place, had employed a Eurasian clerk from Calcutta, a Mrs. Grill, to look after the children.

Under her things went from bad to worse, and the day before Miss Ray and Miss Vernon were expected matters culminated in a violent quarrel between her and some of the older girls. Mrs. Grill had punished two of the little girls severely, when Sita made



a vigorous protest. Then Amni had joined in, and saucily threatened to report her to Dr. Doran.

Mrs. Grill struck Amni with the stick she held in her hand and, when Sita thrust herself between them, threatened to give both girls a beating.

“You will not beat me!” cried Sita as she started with Amni to the home of the matron, Matiyabai, who invariably took the part of the girls. “I will take no beating from you or from any one, you —— black Mem Sahib.”

“The missionaries are coming to-morrow, and I’ll report you!” shouted Amni. “You dare not beat us!”

Mrs. Grill, beside herself with passion, followed by all the children of the orphanage, ran after the culprits, threatening the while at the top of her voice.

“Just wait until you’re married and you’ll get a beating every day, you lying —— black girls, and I’ll give you a taste of it now.”

She brandished her stick and in spite of Matiyabai’s remonstrance advanced with the stick raised.

“I am going home,” cried Sita, making for the side gate, close at hand.

“I shall run away!” shouted Amni, following.

At this moment the gate opened from the outside and Miss Ray and Miss Vernon entered. They were greeted with laughter and tears from the girls, while Miss Ray explained their early arrival by saying that the steamer had arrived twelve hours ahead of time.

“Oh, it is good that you have come!” sobbed Priya.

“Now we shall have justice!” cried Amni, with a



look of triumph at Mrs. Grill, who stood amazed, still holding the stick in her hand.

"Ray Miss Sahib-ji, Vernon Miss Sahib-ji, let me introduce you to our orphanage superintendent, Mrs. Grill," said Sita composedly.

"Oh, mama-ji, she beats us!" piped up a shrill little voice. "She——"

Miss Ray raised her hand for silence. The missionaries greeted Mrs. Grill politely, then began talking of their journey.

It was weeks before the orphanage recovered its normal tone. Mrs. Grill was made assistant in the famine relief department, and the girls saw no more of her; but she had her followers among them and it was not until the missionaries put an interdict upon the mention of her name that the children ceased to quarrel over her. And it took time for Miss Ray and Miss Vernon to regain their old ascendancy over the children. Sita thought Miss Vernon had changed, and was rebellious when assigned, in the orphanage work, the leadership of a class of new girls. Nor would she work under a leader either regularly or harmoniously. She was not only herself unhappy, but was a disturbing element among the others.

Each of the big girls had been given from the new famine children a little "sister" to care for. Bulbul, Sita's charge, was often seen with hair uncombed and dress untidy. One night when Sita had gone to sleep, Miss Vernon called her up, took her out on the veranda, and showed her little Bulbul lying there asleep and uncovered. To the house-mother's inquiries

she responded sulkily that she could not find the child's rug and blanket, that she had forgotten, that Bulbul was black and had sores on her head, and that she did not want a little "sister" anyway.

"You certainly do not deserve one," Miss Vernon replied, and calling a younger girl gave the little one into her care. The new "big sister" took special pains with the child and soon her head was well, her dark skin satiny, and she was playing happily with the other children.

And Sita, except when in school, went about with a clouded brow, ashamed of herself and miserable.



### III

## THE COCKATOO

**I**T was about this time that a wealthy and grateful patient gave Doctor Doran a fine salmon-coloured cockatoo, which she in turn gave to the girls.

The bird's beauty, cunning ways, and, above all, his vernacular speech, delighted the children. Sita, charmed with the pet, hovered about him, repeating his favourite expressions and when the dinner gong drew the other children away she still remained talking to him. Here Doctor Doran found her when she came to feed him, and great was her astonishment when Sita asked to have the care of the *tota* [parrot]. But when she looked at the girl's enraptured face she had not the heart to refuse and, consulting with Miss Vernon, arranged that Sita should be one of two to look after the cockatoo. Priya was the other. The two tended the bird together, always feeding him before they ate in the morning. They had come to do this because of his insistence, for he knew when it was breakfast time, and if not fed first would scold at a great rate.

Sita's devotion to the cockatoo continued and great was her indignation when his privileges were curtailed. At first he was allowed the freedom of the



compound, but the girls found him one day helping himself from a big rice kettle and after that he was banished from the cook-house. Then he concluded to try his new bill on Miss Vernon's desk and he was invited to her room no more. Still they were great friends; he would follow the house-mother to her room and, taking offence when she closed the door, would stand and pout like a child. This amused the other girls immensely but Sita sympathized with the *tota* and thought Miss Vernon cruel. The parrot took great delight in running after the children and pecking at their bare feet. This the larger girls did not mind for they enjoyed the fun of skipping out of his way. But the little ones could not always avoid him, and after he had hurt several Miss Vernon ordered that he be kept on his perch, except at such times as some one could look after him. Sita thought this hard and she and Mohani spent part of their playtime each day with the *tota*. The children were all fond of the pet and he became one of the important personages of the household.

Now it came about in the holidays that Miss Vernon went to Calcutta, taking Priya with her to have her eyes fitted with spectacles. Very few of the girls had been to the great city, but Priya's pleasure in having the opportunity was tempered by her reluctance in leaving the cockatoo. She asked Mohani to take her place and her last words to Sita were, "Remember the *tota*."

But Mohani was taken ill the very day they went away and this left the entire care of the bird to Sita.



Four days later when Miss Vernon and Priya returned, Sita met them with the light gone out of her eyes and with the dead cockatoo in her hands.

“Mama-ji, I want to go home.” Though it was after dark, Sita was standing at the door of Miss Ray’s room in the bungalow.

“What is the trouble? Come in, daughter, and we will talk about it.”

Sita, a picture of dejection, entered and sat down at Miss Ray’s feet. When she raised her eyes they were without light as she said: “Mama-ji, my heart is broken.”

“Oh, no! I hope not. Hearts get some hard knocks in this world, but, my dear, hearts are not easily broken.”

But in answer to her genial smile no light came to the girl’s face, and Miss Ray questioned in earnest sympathy: “What is it? Do you not want to tell me, daughter? What has gone wrong?”

“Everything, everything.”

“But that cannot be. You are in fine health,—though few of us know how to appreciate good health until it is gone,—but you are doing beautiful work at school. I have been wanting to tell you how delighted I am with your progress. Why, at this rate, you will be ready for college in another year. I expect great things of you, daughter.”

The girl’s mournful face lightened for a moment, then her eyes became suffused with tears as she said,



“Mama-ji, do not expect anything of me. Oh, I am so miserable and everybody hates me.”

Miss Ray protested and then Sita told her story, her voice broken and trembling as she spoke of the pretty ways and wonderful doings of the cockatoo. “And he is dead, my *tota*,” she concluded, “and my heart is broken, and the girls all hate me and say that I killed him and they know that I only forgot.” She paused for a moment, then said: “Vernon Mama-ji and the Doctor Miss Sahib hate me too. I want to go home.”

“What do you mean, Sita? You talk nonsense.”

“The Doctor Miss Sahib said that I was a cruel girl and Vernon Mama-ji looked at me so with tears in her eyes. She hates me, I know. She makes me do work that I do not like. You know she kept me out of school a whole day!” The girl spoke resentfully.

The teacher stepped to the door and looked out into the moonlight, then turning to Sita proposed that she spend the night with her. She looked pleased at this rare privilege, and went at once,—she had left the orphanage without permission,—to ask Miss Vernon’s approval.

Upon her return with her bedding, she found her hostess on the veranda ready for a walk in the garden. As they walked, Sita listened with increasing interest to the talk, first about the stars, then the visit to America, and the girl presently found herself giving her version of life at the orphanage during this period.



It was a lively story she told of the five different superintendents.

The first, Miss Burns, a new missionary, had insufficient knowledge of the language and, too, she had had no experience in such work and was worried with the discipline, and by Christmas she had begged to be relieved, and Mrs. Dale, the zenana missionary, had given up her work and taken over the orphanage. The girls thought her very severe at first. "But," Sita went on, "Dale Mem Sahib kept things in fine order and when we got used to her ways we liked her and were sorry when she had to go. You know one of the missionaries in another station died, and another was taken ill and had to go home."

"I know."

Sita then told how for a time they had gotten along with only Matiyabai. "We big girls would not obey her. Yes, it was wrong," admitted the girl. "Then came dear Foley Miss Sahib. She was only a half caste, but she was beautiful and my friend." Sita was extravagant in her praise. "Oh, but my heart was heavy," she exclaimed, "when she had to go home to her sick mother."

Of Mrs. Grill Sita had not one good word.

"How she did hate me!" she cried, "but she never dared to beat me. She knew I would not take it!"

"But why did Mrs. Grill hate you? Did you give her cause?"

"Cause a-plenty!" said Sita, laughing, "but she gave me cause first. The second day after she came, mama-ji, I got sick, but I hated to miss the study hour



and so I said nothing about it until the hour was half over. Then I was in such pain that I could not study, so I asked Mrs. Grill to excuse me. But she would not believe that I was sick. 'You need not tell me,' she said. 'I know you black girls and your lying tongues, and you need not think you can feed me with deceit as you do the missionaries!' "

"Oh!" exclaimed Miss Ray, horrified. "How could she!"

"Her mouth was full of lies, and, mama-ji, the girls deceived her ten times as much as they do the missionaries. I never tried to please her."

"Perhaps you tried to displease her?"

"Yes, mama-ji, I did. I always took the part of the girls she punished and she did not dare beat the little ones when I was around."

"Anything else?"

"Ji," answered the girl slowly. "I would not do any kind of work I did not like and she could not make me. I worried her a lot at the last; but, mama-ji, I never did lie to her as many of the girls did."

"I am glad to hear that, more glad than I can say. Love of truth, daughter, is a beautiful thing." The gladness was evident in Miss Ray's voice as she put her arm about the girl, and walked with her commenting on the story.

Sita nestled close, happy in her teacher's fond praise, yet, when the latter, after a silence, mentioned the cockatoo, reminding the girl that all the children loved him, and asked if she was not sorry for them,



her voice was full of protest and she stopped short in her walk as she replied:—

“But, mama-ji, they make me so angry saying, ‘You killed the *tota*,’ when they knew how I loved him, and that I did not mean to hurt him.”

“My dear,” said the teacher presently, “you have heard the story of the false hermit who lived in a dark jungle, and who dug a well in the road?”

“Yes, I know the story. He was a robber; he watched the road, and when he saw a well-dressed traveller with a bundle, he ran and uncovered the well, so that the man might fall in and drown.”

“Well, have you heard the story of the true hermit who lived in another jungle? He dug a well that travellers might find water.”

“I have not heard. That was a work of merit.”

“Yes, a work of merit as Hindus believe. A work of mercy as Christians think. Well, the true hermit dug his well in the road so that no one should miss it. But the curb of the well was almost on a level with the ground, and the man took great care to cover it every night. This was at first, when it was new; later, the road being unfrequented and few persons passing, the hermit grew careless and sometimes neglected the matter. And one night, when the cover was off, a traveller came along and fell into the open well. He shrieked in terror as he fell and the hermit ran to save him.”

“Oh, I know how he felt—like I did when Amni fell in the well.”



"But the hermit was too late."

"Too late? How terrible!"

"Yes; the man drowned. The hermit was much troubled, and he sought out the dead man's family and had the body taken to them. His wife and daughters mourned but the men of the family had the hermit arrested."

"For murder?"

"Yes, he was arrested for murder, but was convicted of manslaughter, because he had not intentionally caused the man's death."

"Convicted and put in prison?"

"Yes, daughter. He was very, very angry, angry that he should be punished, and angry at the tears and reproachful looks of the drowned man's wife and children."

"He—did—not mean to do it."

There was a silence for a time as they walked, then Miss Ray stopped in a group of orange trees laden with fruit and asked her companion if she remembered when they were set out.

"Ji," she replied, "it was the year that I came; and two of them bore oranges the year you went home."

"Which ones?"

"These two near together on the east. I remember them well because that year they both were filled with bloom, and we thought there would be a lot of oranges. And don't you remember, mama-ji, this one bore only one or two, while the one you are under bore nearly a hundred?"



“I recollect. I know every tree in the orchard. That one was a disappointment; but see it now!

“My dear,” she began again, holding the girl close as they walked, “Vernon Miss Sahib and I planted an orchard of another kind, and we watered and dug and tended the young trees; and we loved them, and were not willing that any one else should have the care of our orchard. But it became necessary for us to leave it for a time, both of us; and under the new gardeners the young trees were neglected; some were stunted, and some that were straight and beautiful, putting forth an abundance of the fairest blossoms when we left, we found when we returned in fruit time, crooked and ugly and with little fruit.”

The child was silent for a while, then said with a quaver in her voice:—

“Mama-ji, I am the crooked, unfruitful tree, the ugliest of all.”

“No, not that, dear; the Sita tree has disappointed me more than I can say, perhaps because I expected too much. It was hard to have so many gardeners, but some of the trees have fruited beautifully. The Mohani and the Priya tree and others do not seem to have suffered.”

Sita began to say something about Mrs. Grill, when the missionary answered: “Mrs. Grill did much harm, unintentionally, of course, to very many of the girls. But to you, personally, Miss Foley, I think, did more injury than Mrs. Grill.”

“Miss Foley? Why! she was my best friend.”

“Miss Foley is a fine girl and will make one of our



best missionaries. She did excellent work. But she is very young and—a true friend is like a good mother. Do you think the mother who pets and humours her child like Puni is better than one like Miriam, who faithfully shows her children their faults and helps them to overcome them? The mother who helps her child grow so strong and brave that she presently delights in removing obstacles and doing disagreeable things,—she is the true mother.

“No one can make a success of life who cannot do unpleasant things, and endure deserved reproof. You deserve no credit for doing things that you must be made to do, and not until you make yourself do what you ought can you be a girl of real character—a true, whole-hearted Christian. Life is a warfare, and each of us must be a soldier.”

“I am a Rajputni born, I ought to make a good soldier.”

They walked for a time in silence, when Miss Ray spoke again.

“I must tell you something, my daughter. It was with my approval that Miss Vernon kept you out of school that day; we planned it together that our little girl might understand that to learn housework is more important to a girl than to learn books.”

“Oh, mama-ji!”

“I did not think so at your age and I sometimes neglected my work for my books.”

“I cannot think that you could neglect anything.”



After a time Miss Ray asked, "You wish to go home, Sita?"

"Not now, mama-ji. I am not ready nor fit now to teach my people the Jesus religion."

"If you should go, what about your marriage?"

"Why, mama-ji, my betrothed does not want me, and he could not marry a Christian."

"You know your mother was here again, just before I came?"

"Yes, and, word of sorrow! I was away!"

"I think you do not know why she came. It was to say that your betrothed calls you."

"Oh, mama-ji!" exclaimed Sita. "And his people did nothing for my father in the famine. I never want to see his face again."

"Yet the marriage may hold if he persists. However, Miss Hillis talked to your mother and we hope she may persuade Ram Chandra to give you up."

"They would want me to give up my religion. I can never go home, never."

It was an earnest, tear-stained face that met Miss Ray's eyes, when a little later they went inside. "I am sorry," the girl said before going to the dressing-room where she was to sleep, "I am sorry for Vernon Mama-ji and the Doctor Miss Sahib. I know they loved the *tota*."

"So they did, but their great grief, daughter, was not for the bird, as you suppose, but for our beautiful tree. However, we all think that after this loss our dear girl will be different. And our Sita is worth many parrots."

As Sita looked into the loving, tear-filled eyes, her chin began to quiver and she hurried to the adjoining room where she was to sleep.

An hour later she returned to find Miss Ray kneeling at her bedside. When she arose and smiled Sita took both her hands, and with radiant face, said:—

“You have helped me, mama-ji. This soldier shall be true. This tree shall bear fruit.”

“Much fruit,” responded Miss Ray.

“And I shall never forget my poor *tota*.”



## IV

### WHITE LILIES

**I**T was a year after the death of the cockatoo that Mr. and Mrs. Gracie invited the orphanage boys and girls to a picnic in their beautiful grounds, which covered about ten acres and consisted in part of woodland. No other such ideal place for a picnic was to be found in that region, and for this reason as well as on account of the honour conferred the children received their invitation with unbounded delight.

Mrs. Gracie, on the day appointed, met the girls at the veranda with a smile that went far toward dispelling their diffidence and went with them about the compound. Many of them in awe of the great lady clustered at first about Miss Ray and Miss Vernon, but increasing numbers joined the group near their hostess. Among these were Sita, Amni, and Mohani.

Amni, by this time the largest of all the girls, was at first silent and bashful, but Mrs. Gracie's kindness and Sita's easy manner put her self-consciousness to flight and soon, her eyes dancing with pleasure, she was chatting with her usual vivacity.

Between her and Sita was Mohani, still a slight girl, who said little and clung shyly to her friends, but her joy was manifested from the smile which played



over her regular features. Sita, now almost a half head taller than Mohani, and fully as tall as Amni, was so keenly alive to the beauties displayed that she had no room for thought of herself, and her face as well as her enthusiastic words expressed her appreciation. It was to this responsive group that Mrs. Gracie addressed most of her remarks. Many of the girls when they reached the rose garden forgot their shyness and cried out with delight and wonder at the collection and variety of colour, the profusion and the beauty of the roses. And when, a little later, their hostess gave them permission to go to the woodland hard by, the children salaamed repeatedly and then, their eyes shining with joy, sped away to the woods.

Sita, Mohani, and Amni stopped with the smaller children, whom they had volunteered to amuse, near the edge of the wood where Mrs. Gracie had ordered rugs and chairs placed for the ladies.

They had not been long at play when they saw the boys coming with Mrs. Ashley, Pansy, and a native teacher. The boys at once carried off Miss Ray and Miss Vernon to join in their play and when they had passed, Sita went to Mrs. Ashley to get Pansy, who was a favourite with the children.

When the frolic was at its height there came a startled outcry, then frightened voices screaming.

There was a rush in the direction of the alarm and as the excited crowd drew near they heard again, "*Samp!* [snake], call the Sahib! Call the boys! *Samp!*"

Then silence fell and when the ladies reached the



children they were standing in a wide circle with scared faces, while Sita in the centre was giving the finishing stroke to a tiny snake.

“The Kariats are deadly if they are small,” commented Mrs. Gracie, “and your big girl has done well to kill this one.”

Mrs. Ashley at once caught up her little daughter and when all began discussing the matter Sita slipped away with Joy and Bulbul, who still caught their breath in broken sobs.

It was perhaps two hours later that a second cry broke in upon the day's merriment, accompanied this time by a crash.

“Is any one hurt? What is it?” inquired Miss Ray, who happened to be near.

“The tree,” several answered, pointing to a fine tree from which dangled a broken limb.

“Who did that?” questioned the hostess sharply, coming up out of breath. “That is the Sahib's favourite tree and it belongs to the Sirkar.”

A solemn silence rested on the group of large girls and boys who stood near.

“Who did it? Did you? Did you?” asked the hostess of different children. “Of course no one did it,” she exclaimed as one after another made denial. “It broke itself. I wonder what I am to say to the Sahib.”

There were two girls who had not been questioned, Sita and Mohani. The former looked at her frowning hostess and Miss Ray's pained face, then with the light gone out of her eyes, spoke:—



“I was swinging, Mem Sahib-ji, when the limb broke. I am so sorry.”

“I too was in the swing,” added Mohani, tremulously. “Please forgive, Mem Sahib-ji.”

Mrs. Gracie’s face cleared as if by magic.

“Never mind,” she answered. “The Sahib will doubtless get over it and the Sirkar, too. I am glad to know, Miss Ray, that some of your orphanage children can speak the truth. It is a rare accomplishment in this country.”

“Very many of our girls and boys are truthful,” said Miss Ray, smiling. Then she cast a questioning glance at the group near the tree and added, “But some who mean to speak the truth may trip when taken by surprise. And, Mrs. Gracie, they were not all in the swing.”

“Oh, no, of course not!—yet—I fancy——” She stopped suddenly, not giving expression to her thought that the two girls had not of themselves done the mischief.

Nor had they. It happened in this wise; Amni and Mohani’s brother, Lakshman, were swinging the two girls when Sita began to rally the studious, slender youth about his delicate appearance. Goaded by her banter he had presently challenged Amni to a trial of skill in the attempt to reach the branch upon which the swing rope was tied. Amni laughingly accepted the challenge and the two straightway began their contest.

It was of short duration. In the second effort the youth touched the branch which Amni, her weight



and laughter against her, failed to reach. His success sobered her and next time she made an extraordinary effort and, Lakshman springing at the same time, they grasped the branch simultaneously, at the very instant that Sita, to avert the threatened disaster, put her foot to the ground and, exerting all her strength, brought the swing to a sudden stop. With the combined shock came the break and the crash, and all four tumbled to the ground. Amni had but just picked herself up when Mrs. Gracie appeared with her sharp question and to her lips rose instant denial.

The boy in falling had hurt his knee and, limping to one side, he sat down to rub it. The other children crowded about and screened him from view, and he escaped interrogation. In this, until he heard Sita's confession, he thought himself fortunate; then he wished that he had spoken first; but as he had not, he thought it too late to redeem himself; and, the girls not implicating him, he remained silent.

It was a silence that cost him dear.

The ladies at the time said nothing of their suspicions; and the children played on until the hour for the picnic luncheon or "crazy dinner," as they called it. This was served in the edge of the woods not far from the rose garden. Sita and Mohani had been placed by the hostess nearest to the group of foreigners, and to their conversation the interest of the girls was often attracted.

The Gracies had in past years made occasional calls at the orphanage; but, for a year, Mr. Gracie having supplied during this period for an official who was in



England on furlough, they had been at another station. Sita, who had not seen the Deputy Commissioner since his return, was pleased when, as he joined the ladies at tea, he recognized her with a smile and a nod; and while the "crazy dinner" progressed she glanced often at the kindly face and large shapely head of the man who represented the Sirkar. As he sat at the farther side of the group, she at first heard little that he said beyond an inquiry he made of Mrs. Ashley concerning her husband's tour in the district and something about his children at school in Scotland. But presently he took a seat by Miss Ray, and when they began to talk of the education of Indian girls, she became so absorbed that she forgot to eat. The subject-matter was one which the Deputy Commissioner had studied with extraordinary interest, and as for Miss Ray, it was her life.

After luncheon the hostess drew the attention of the children to a footstool upon which Pansy was sitting,—a stuffed elephant's foot. She told them that the elephant to which the foot had belonged was the wickedest ever known in this region and that he was reported to have killed fifty persons. "Many Sahibs hunted him," she concluded, "but it was Mr. Gracie who finally put an end to the brute."

The Deputy Commissioner, though embarrassed by his wife's praise, yielded to the requests of the ladies and the appealing faces of the children, and gave the story. He so told it, however, as to confer much of the credit on his one European and many native assist-



ants in the hunt. Nevertheless, in Sita's eyes the Great Sahib now became a hero.

After the story, Mr. Gracie invited the children to the conservatory, and when the little ones had been guided through, the older boys and girls were allowed to linger. Sita and Mohani were enjoying an especially beautiful corner when Lakshman came up. His sister talked with him, but her companion continued to give her whole attention to the plants.

"Please forgive me, Sitabai," he said presently, putting his hands together with a smile.

"Forgiveness is not," she replied.

Now Lakshman was a fine-looking youth, was of the Rajput caste and the brother of Sita's best friend. He was leader of the current class in the Boys' High School as she was in the girls' and he had found more favour with her than had any other of the boys. At her reply he turned ashen, and began to stammer excuses for his conduct. But as she gave no heed he made way for others and moved on.

The two girls were standing before a great pot of white lilies when Mr. Gracie came up.

"You admire the lily, girls?" he questioned.

"Ji," assented Mohani.

"Admire it, Sahib-ji?" Sita replied, "Oh, so much. It makes me feel—I cannot say it!" Her radiant face, however, spoke for her. The next instant she caught a glimpse of Lakshman's pale face and the light left her eyes.

"Sahib-ji," she said at once, "I want to tell you



that I was one of the culprits who broke your beautiful tree. It is ruined and I am so sorry."

Mohani, too, confessed and apologized.

"It is a matter of small moment. I have examined the tree and find that it can be trimmed into symmetry again. But I wonder that you two girls could break that great limb."

There was something in the magistrate's manner that suggested a question and the returning smile again left Sita's face, as drawing herself up and looking straight at him, she replied with set lips:—

"I helped to break the tree."

"Oh, I am not asking for information," the Deputy Commissioner replied, with an understanding smile, "for I know that to 'report' is, in India, even a more heinous offence than at home."

He now commended Sita for killing the snake and when she became confused remarked:—

"However, since you are a Rajputni and of the king caste, you come naturally by your courage."

"Oh, but, Sahib-ji, there are many of the girls of lower castes who are braver and far better than I. Ray Miss Sahib says we are all the Great King's daughters."

"True, and I am the Great King's son." He spoke reverently and both were silent.

Seeing Miss Ray approaching with a number of her charges, Sita asked about something he had said to her concerning the education of girls.

The Deputy Commissioner repeated his statement;



then including in his hearers the girls gathering about them, told them the eye of India was upon them, as the advance guards of India's young womanhood. Their faces brightened, while a number of boys in the background listened with no less intentness. As the magistrate talked, he observed that Sita's eyes were often upon the lily.

"The white lily," he said after a time, "symbolizes ideal young womanhood. You have, of course, read Longfellow's beautiful lines to 'Maidenhood.' Perhaps some of you can remember them."

There was a call from the girls for Sita and she, gazing upon the lilies, recited the poem. Her lips remained slightly apart as, with irradiate face, she concluded:—

"'For a smile of God thou art.'"

It was with a reverent expression upon his noble face that the Deputy Commissioner, with his eyes upon Sita, repeated after her, "'For a smile of God thou art.'"

Mrs. Gracie echoed the words and her eyes, too, were upon the King's daughter.

The girls had little more than reached home that evening, when a servant of the Great Sahib followed, bringing to them, as a souvenir of the occasion, the pot of white lilies.

They were given into Sita's charge and she watched and tended them with devotion. One day it happened when Miss Ray inquired for her that a child new to the orphanage answered, "I know where she is, mama-ji; she is worshipping the lilies."

The girls who heard laughed at the mistake, but the teacher went to see what had caused the strange announcement. She found Sita standing with rapt expression and face illumined before the snow-white lilies.



## V

### MOHANI'S BROTHER

**T**HE year that followed the picnic meant much to Sita. During that cold season Mohani's brother Lakshman beset her with petitions for forgiveness, and when she gave him no heed, but, instead, markedly avoided him, he wrote her a note.

Now although the boys and girls of the Christian community were free to talk to each other when they met at social, at Endeavour or other meetings, the writing of notes was interdicted and Sita was in a dilemma. She, with all the older girls of the orphanage, had promised Miss Ray to hand over to her any note that might come into their hands. But Mohani begged for her brother and made gentle suggestion that possibly her friend might have done wrong in refusing him pardon. The note contained nothing but avowals of penitence and appeals for forgiveness, and upon reflection Sita told Lakshman that his offence was not against her. She again became friendly with him and she kept the note.

Mohani was content, but not so her brother. Sita had not placed him upon the old footing; moreover, as he brooded over the matter and studied her beautiful face he began to wish for something more than

the old footing. He sent her a second note in which he protested that she had not forgiven him and entreated the favour of the Lotus-eyed.

This time she did not consult his sister but carried both notes to Miss Ray.

“They are from Mohani’s brother,” she said, “and I do not want to get him into trouble. Must you report him to the Padre Sahib? Cannot you talk to him yourself?”

“I’ll see; Mr. Ashley is still touring. You think the boy would rather fall into my hands?”

“Of course, mama-ji. It is good to come to you with anything. It is sweeter to be rebuked by you than to be praised by others. And, mama-ji—I wish you wouldn’t read the notes. I cannot explain them, and—and he is Mohani’s brother.”

Sita was surprised to see that tears stood in Miss Ray’s eyes, while she repeated with a smile:—

“He is Mohani’s brother, and Mohani is one of my dearest girls. I’ll see.”

The next week Mr. Ashley returned from a tour in the district and when he called at the zenana mission bungalow, Miss Ray sent for Sita.

As she came from the orphanage in answer to the summons she wondered if she was to be interrogated about the notes, and was relieved when the missionary told her that he had visited Raj Gaon on his tour and had seen and talked with her uncle and her little brother. When he had told her all the news about her mother and the family, he said:—



"By the way, I saw the fine house of the *tahsildar*, your father-in-law."

"Sahib-ji, he is not. I cannot have him for my father-in-law."

"I hope you may not, daughter. I hope they will not make any trouble. I went to Raj Gaon for the express purpose of learning if the *tahsildar* would release you from the marriage contract."

"And he would not?"

"He was away, and I did not see him. Perhaps—I have been thinking that it may be as well that I did not see him. If reminded of the matter he might claim you at once."

When Mr. Ashley had gone Sita went to Miss Ray and asked with thoughtful face:—

"Miss Sahib-ji, Mr. Gracie would not let them take me, and I a Christian girl?"

"I do not know. I do not see how he could, but the laws are made for men."

"And you, Miss Sahib-ji, would you let them take me?"

"If the struggle comes, I will defend you with all my strength. Do you not know it, daughter?"

"I know it, mama-ji."

Several times these days Sita met Lakshman's reproachful eyes and knew that he was in trouble. Later the look changed and she was not surprised when at a social he sought her out.

"I have done it at last, Sitabai."

"Done what?"

"Why, what you have been wanting me to do."



Ray Miss Sahib asked me to come to her one day, and when I went she gave me my *chittis* [notes] unread, she said."

"Ray Miss Sahib cannot lie."

"Do not I know? I told her that day all about it—the tree and everything. And when she asked me what I proposed to do, it was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. 'I cannot,' I said, and my mouth was so dry I could scarcely speak, 'I cannot tell him,—not at this late day.' Miss Ray smiled and said she was sure I would do the right thing. But I held out until my misery became unbearable and—and—I thought if I did not confess you would never forgive me, fully."

"You have not wronged me, but I am glad for Mohani's sake."

"I was grieved that you should give my *chittis* to Miss Ray." Lakshman drew nearer and lowered his voice.

"It was a promise," she repeated, moving toward Mohani.

"It was right, no doubt,—but—but—I have been so cowardly that you can never forgive me."

"You did act the coward and cowardice, I ——— and you Mohani's brother and a twice-born soldier."

"Twice born? I never took the sacred thread."

"I do not mean that you are a *dwij*\* [twice-born]."

"You mean that I dishonoured my Rajput birth,

\* A man of either of the first three castes of the Hindus whose investiture with the sacred thread is considered a second birth.



and that I forgot that I was a Christian? It is quite true, and there is never forgiveness."

"There is always forgiveness if—when we are—different. You will have many chances to prove yourself."

"Ray Miss Sahib told me that a soldier, to be seasoned, must bear cold and heat, hunger and thirst, long marches and fierce fighting——"

"*Thik* [correct]. I am sure you are going to be a brave soldier," Sita said.

"God helping me I will. And we shall be comrades again?"

But Sita had nodded him a dismissal and was talking with the girls.

About this time Miss Ray invited to Arampur the Pandita Kamliabai.

Though her time was short she gave two addresses to the mission high school and college. The older girls, too, had the opportunity of meeting her socially, and her theme, whether in public speech or private conversation, was ever the same, the higher education of girls.

Kamliabai's coarse white widow's garb served to depreciate rather than enhance what comeliness she possessed. Though of the Aryan complexion she was not beautiful of feature, yet her live soul lighted her face with rare loveliness.

The pandita was to Sita a revelation. It was not her erudition, not her renown as an educator, nor her eloquence as a speaker, nor yet the story of her



life, nor her consuming interest in her countrywomen—not one but all of these and more that contributed to her charming personality. Sita, in accordance with the belief of her people, had, when a child, regarded her birth as a girl in the light of a calamity. And though under the new teaching this thought had died, its root still survived, and it was not until she saw in the pandita, her own countrywoman, the embodiment of what East and West can do for Indian womanhood, that she realized that it was a glorious thing to be a woman, and to the appeal of the pandita's personality her whole being responded with exultant joy and a reverence almost worshipful.

"Mama-ji," she said to Miss Ray, after the pandita had gone, "I do not want to play any more and I want to sit up every night until midnight."

"Indeed. I thought you liked to play and to sleep."

"I do," admitted Sita, "I mean, I did, but now I want to be a pandita. And, mama-ji, I get up when the gong sounds now, most always."

"Be a pandita by all means, but girls of fourteen must sleep and play or they'll never be anything worth while."

"But, mama-ji, I am of fourteen years and two months and the strongest girl in the orphanage; Doctor Doran says so."

"And we mean to keep you so."

"Miss Sahib-ji, I must study Sanscrit hours and hours a day or I cannot be a pandita."

"My dear, I knew that you advanced girls would want to learn Sanscrit, and I have meant for some



time to add it to our High School curriculum. I have engaged the professor of Sanscrit in the Boys' High School and College to teach the class."

"Oh, mama-ji," cried Sita, her eyes shining, "can I ever thank you enough?"

"And I have arranged with Miss Vernon that the four girls in the Sanscrit class have no more housework until vacation, but instead of it gardening."

"Gardening is such fun, and we may sit up until twelve o'clock?"

"Until nine-thirty, my dear."

"Mama-ji," pleaded the girl, but looking into the clear, smiling eyes of her teacher, she knew that the answer was final. "Well, mama-ji, then I shall have to study hard, hard, hard. Many salaams, mama-ji," Sita replied, on the run before the words were out of her mouth. "Amni," she called as she ran, "come and play elephant," and of the voices that floated back in peals of laughter, none were fuller of merriment than that of the would-be pandita.

Mohani's brother sent Sita no more notes and if she read admiration in his eyes, she had all her life been accustomed to admiration, and when he spoke of comradeship she answered with talk about Sanscrit and the Pandita Kamliabai.

*BOOK III*

THE TRIAL



## I

### IN THE NAME OF THE *TAHSILDAR*

“**S**ALAAM, Miss Sahib. We have come for our brother's wife.” The speaker, a thin, scowling man with a sickly blotched complexion, stood on the front veranda of the bungalow in a white costume which was brightened by a yellow sash and a crimson turban, and embellished by a necklace of rubies, ear-rings of gold, and a variety of showy finger rings.

“Salaam,” replied Miss Ray, as she stood in the doorway with a smile of welcome for the speaker and his companion. “Please come in.” Then as they made no move to accept her invitation she spoke again:—

“May I ask whom I have the honour of addressing?”

“Our name is Krishna Rao.”

“Doing favour, allow me,” interrupted the second man, with a gesture of apology. Then, looking at the lady, he said: “This is Krishna Rao-ji, *bahadur*, Rajput, eldest and most worthy son of the renowned and illustrious Narian Ram Chandra, Lakshman Bharat, *tahsildar* residing at Raj Gaon.”

Miss Ray, upon hearing the last words, paled, but she still smiled as she continued to look at the second

speaker, a heavy-set man who was arrayed in flowing white vesture and black velvet cap which set off his intellectual face and added to his air of distinction.

“And your name?”

“We are Ganga Prasad, a Brahman and a barrister.” The manner of the speaker indicated excessive pride, and his soft voice which before, as he sounded conventional praises of his companion, rung a little false, now gave out a sincere tone.

“We do not wish to go inside; palanquins and attendants are waiting, we have come for the girl,” said Krishna Rao, in a harsh, insistent tone.

Miss Ray looked in the direction indicated and saw under the trees across the road two palanquins, about which a number of uniformed men squatted.

“Please do me the favour to be seated in the veranda, that we may talk about it.”

“Very good; your honour’s pleasure,” the barrister replied, taking one of the country-made chairs.

Miss Ray’s dignified bearing and courteous manner conquered the Rajput, and following Ganga Prasad’s example, he also sat down, saying as he did so:—

“Speaking words, Miss Sahib, is vain. Give us the girl and let us go.”

“Doing kindness, will you please tell me of whom you speak?”

Krishna Rao’s eyes flashed, and he began an angry reply when the barrister, signing to him to let him answer, said:—

“The honoured bahadur speaks of Sita, the wife



of his younger brother, Ram Chandra. We have come in the name of Narian, the *tahsildar*."

The missionary sat silent, looking apparently at the green grass and the trees on the compound. Then she asked, "Is it according to caste laws for a Hindu to marry a Christian girl?"

"She will not remain a Christian long in the *tahsildar's* house. She was a Hindu when Ram Chandra married her, and she can return again to her caste. It will cost many rupees, but it can be done, and it shall be done." A cruel, determined look about the man's mouth and in the smouldering eyes made him more repulsive than before and his soiled turban, upon which his well oiled hair had left dark streaks, added to the effect.

"But Sita does not wish to become a Hindu again; she no longer worships images."

"We understand that she has learned a new religion, but she will soon forget it. Women know nothing about religion anyway. Their religion is to obey their husbands and to worship \* them. Women are fools."

Miss Ray looked steadily at the speaker while his companion by a gesture deprecated his rudeness of speech.

"We mean our women," Krishna Rao muttered confusedly; "the women of this country."

"Surely you are wrong in your estimate of India's women. Do you know Pandita Rambibai and Dr. Ghose and Puniyabai, the barrister?"

\* Some Hindu wives literally worship their husbands with set ceremonies.



"We do not know them."

"Their great and notable fame has come to our ears," said Ganga Prasad. "The learned and illustrious pandita's schools for girls have received recognition from many famous men in high and honourable positions."

"I am glad to hear her praises, Mr. Prasad. She is well known in England and America and is highly esteemed for her learning, as well as for what she has done for her countrywomen. The illiteracy of Hindu women is due not to their incapacity but to their lack of opportunity."

While she talked, Miss Ray's attention was directed, in part, to a crowd of children who were pouring out of the orphanage ground, by the gate near the end of the veranda. When she turned again to her visitors, she observed that they too were looking intently at the girls as they formed into line, and seemed annoyed by the limited view afforded them. For the *bougainvillea* and *cisquailia*, with their luxuriant rainy season's growth, had climbed over the end of the veranda, and had spread until it was evident by the reaching out of their most ambitious tendrils, that they meant soon to join forces to form a solid screen.

"We do not approve of learning in women," Krishna Rao said with a frown.

"Then you would not approve of Sita. We keep all of the children under our care in school."

While she was explaining, two or three little ones, evidently tardy, came running through the gate, laughing and breathless, to join the array of orphan-



age girls, all wearing red *saris* and happy faces, and a moment later three pupil teachers in white took their places at the side of the column which had now moved into full view. The barrister gave an appreciative look at the inviting picture, with its background of rich green grass and stole sidelong glances at the older girls. But Krishna Rao, careless of Indian etiquette, which demands that men shall not look upon the faces of women, stared hard.

The latter, when Miss Ray finished speaking of Sita's education, answered, "She will forget it all when she has no books to read. Let me see my brother's wife."

"I do not consider the girl your brother's wife, Krishna Rao-ji, and you cannot see her for she is not here."

"Do not feed me deceit, Miss Sahib."

"She is not here."

"We will see," the Rajput replied with assurance, rising and looking toward the girls. "We will see—if—if you will give the order." The last words he added, hesitatingly, upon seeing Miss Ray's look of indignant denial, and the barrister's gesture of warning.

"It is not our custom to keep our girls hidden behind a *pardah* [curtain] as you do, but they never speak to strangers; and no gentleman,—of my acquaintance,—would attempt to speak to them. Pray be seated."

"Very right and proper," assented the barrister. "I am very sure my honoured client meant neither



harm nor offence. He is only and simply ignorant of, and unacquainted with the foreign and strange, though doubtless commendable, customs."

"If she is not *pardah* why may I not see her?" persisted Krishna Rao, sitting down discomfited.

"I have told you that she is not here." As Miss Ray spoke she looked straight at the questioner.

"Then where is she?" he inquired, evidently beginning to believe her.

"Doing favour, Miss Sahib-ji, please tell us the whereabouts of the girl," said Ganga Prasad.

"Doing favour, barrister-ji, please withdraw your question."

"You decline to answer?"

"I decline to answer." The words came slowly after a pause.

"Miss Sahib," came the wrathful rejoinder from the Rajput, "you have put us off for two years, and we will not wait longer. *Arè!* She is now of fifteen years, a woman grown for a bride! Unheard of! Wah! She will soon be an old woman."

Miss Ray remaining silent, Ganga Prasad said: "We shall be sorry, Miss Sahib, exceedingly sorry and distressed to trouble and harass you, but it will fall to us to appeal to the Government unless you will give up and surrender the girl; so says the *tahsildar*."

"Unless you will give up the girl," repeated Krishna Rao threateningly.

"That I cannot do. She has said that she does not wish to be Ram Chandra's wife. Still, I will write her and allow her to make the decision for herself."



“Make the decision for herself! What have a — girl’s fool wishes to do with her marriage?”

“Miss Ray,” began the barrister, “her very wise father arranged this marriage with the *tahsildar* many years ago and there is nothing for her to do but submit. You are kind, most kind to offer to write to her, but I fear,—please pardon me,—I fear that your writing would be vain and useless, so far as our interests are concerned. Doing kindness, allow the *bahadur*, the *tahsildar*’s son himself, Ram Chandra, to write a letter to his wife.”

Had the men been observing Miss Ray, they would have noticed a momentary gleam of hope in her face, but their eyes were upon the girls now moving off.

“If it is Ram Chandra’s wish to write to Sita I have no objections. Christian girls are not married without their consent.”

“Very good,” continued the barrister. “To what address shall the *bahadur* send his letter?”

“Here in my care. I will forward the letter.”

“That is too hard, you feed us deception,” said Krishna Rao, his eager look giving way to one of baffled resentment.

“No; I will forward the letter or letters if he wishes to write more than one.”

“And the answer?”

“The answer when it comes, I will forward.”

“Very good,” replied the barrister.

Then Miss Ray, judging from their silence that they had nothing further to say, gave them permission to go.

“Salaam, Miss Sahib-ji,” said Ganga Prasad, while his companion sullenly muttered “Salaam,” and the gentlemen took their departure.

As soon as they had left the house, Miss Ray called for her tonga, and while she waited its coming, stood looking after them with a troubled, thoughtful face. She saw, as the vehicle drove up, that they had stopped where the ways divided and were apparently debating which road to take. The white figure of the barrister stood in the one leading to the bazaar, while the crimson turban and yellow *cumberbund* [sash] showed that Krishna Rao had started on the other, the road the girls had taken.

The teacher at once stepped into the tonga, at the same time giving the order to drive fast.

Krishna Rao looked at the approaching tonga and again at the girls who were now close to the school-house, then walked with his companion toward the bazaar. The face of the *tahsildar's* son as he turned toward Miss Ray was overspread with a threatening scowl.



## II

### RAM CHANDRA

**I**T was perhaps a month after the occurrence of the incident related in the last chapter that, in the City of Calcutta, a distinguished Hindu gentleman was giving a series of lectures on social reform. The reputation of the speaker commanded a hearing from literate Calcutta, not indeed from the ultra conservatives, but from moderate conservatives as well as outspoken progressives. The student-body from colleges and from the great university were well represented.

The audience consisted, as a rule, of men, but to one of the lectures on the education of girls, the speaker gave a special invitation to women, and a number of Europeans and natives responded. For the convenience of *pardah* women a portion of the balcony, approached by a side stairway, was reserved and screened.

Among those who availed themselves of the opportunity of hearing the reformer, was the Pandita Kamliabai with eighteen or twenty of her girls. Among them was Sita. The group sat in the balcony, but without screen or veils. After the lecture, Kamliabai tarried with her girls until the audience had dispersed. As they were going down the stairs, however, they

heard the voice of the speaker, then saw that he stood on the opposite steps and that the entrance hall was packed with students. Evidently he was answering questions.

“I have not claimed,” he said, “that it is a simple problem that confronts us. It means the breaking away from traditions and customs of thousands of years. It means breaking away from the authority of the elders—our mothers and fathers, and their mothers and fathers. It means that we shall not remain all our lives children, but that we shall be *men*. It means instead of the peace and quiet that Hindus love, struggle—war with our nearest and dearest. But it means, hear me, you college men, you fresh young souls athirst for truth,—it means the elevation of our women, and consequently a New India, a Great India, which shall take her place with the proudest nations of the earth.”

“Will educated wives be content to serve their husbands as their masters?” questioned one of the crowd.

“No, no,” answered another, “our homes will be destroyed.”

“Nay, nay, let them alone. Women are fools,” cried another in angry protest.

At the voice and the words Sita started as though struck. For an instant she gazed at the crowd, then pale and agitated sat down upon the steps behind two of the teachers who stood in front.

“What is it?” asked the pandita, stooping over her.



“His voice,” she whispered. “His voice and his words,—the words of his letter.”

“What words?”

“Women are fools.”

“Wah! That is the common sentiment. Did you see him?”

“I am not sure.”

“It is not probable,—but——”

The lecturer was again talking, and talking of ideal womanhood. The pandita's party remained in the stairway until the hall was wholly empty.

Sita, held by the words of the speaker, moved with the others, subconsciously, but when she reached the door again the arresting angry voice smote upon her ear and involuntarily she paused upon the threshold. She had at first heard only the voice, but now came the reply close at hand and a rejoinder. The words she did not sense until afterwards.

“Wah! It is the custom for foreign women to go unveiled and our Christianized women, too. See, here's a crowd of them.”

“I say decent women will always veil their faces. Our mothers——” It was the first voice again. It stopped abruptly.

The full play of the electric lights from within and without the entrance fell full upon the girl in the doorway, upon her tall, graceful figure arrayed in snowy drapery, upon the beautiful rapt face still alight with highest aspirations.

“Sita,” called one of the girls in a loud whisper.  
“Sita, go on.”



She recovered herself in an instant and hastened on, but as she went she heard the voice repeat, in a dazed way, "Sita." She heard, too, the laughing rejoinder, "One would think from your amazement that it was the Goddess Sita, herself."

"I know some one—a girl named Sita—come."

"He is coming," whispered Sita, clutching Kamliabai's arm, "and he can take me."

"He shall not." The pandita spoke to a teacher in the group, then to Sita and her Mohani, and when the little company had passed into an unlighted street, drew the two girls with her into an alley.

The crowd moved on and the three in the alley, after going a short distance, waited. Soon they heard the young men talking, then in the dim light saw the faint outlines of their white draperies.

"Wah! Ram Chandra! What's the rush? Give us a light, I say! Well, if you've got to find her, I'll go along, but it's queer. I'm converted. It's better for women to keep their faces veiled, especially the goddess sort."

"*Chup*, you — babbler."

"Bear."

Sita, when the young men stopped, shivered, and, now as their retreating footsteps ceased to sound, drew a long breath.

"*Chup*," whispered Kamliabai, as Mohani began to ask questions. "Change *saris*."

Five minutes after the young men had passed three veiled [*pardah*] women emerged from the mouth of the alley and moved slowly up the street.



“If we miss this car we shall have to wait a half hour for another and there is no *gari* [cab] near. Gulab’s father should have met us.” This Kamliabai said aloud in the rude speech of uneducated women. In a whisper she added, “Stoop, Sita; don’t forget. Your figure alone will give you away. That is right. Keep so, mother of Gulab.”

They now heard the sound of an approaching electric car, and a moment after, upon turning a corner, saw a block ahead, under a dim gas light, two young men, and on the corner opposite, the college group. Drawing their *saris* farther over their faces they advanced slowly until the car stopped.

“She is not here,” Sita heard Ram Chandra say, Then she felt that he was looking at her group. Putting confidence in her red *sari* which covered her from head to foot, she advanced.

“Careful, don’t fall, mother of Gulab,” cautioned Kamliabai, and Sita remembered to stoop as with stumbling feet she took a seat in the back of the car.

“*Pardah!*” muttered the young man in the street corner.

“Lost!” cried Bali.

But Ram Chandra changed his mind at the last moment, and swinging himself onto the moving car sat down directly in front of Sita. His companion, who was inclined towards stoutness, followed, and when he had recovered his breath, began:—

“Wah, what next, moonstruck? You’re ——.”

“*Bus. Chup.* [Enough. Hush!]”



Bali then, following Ram Chandra's example, studied the faces of the college girls.

"The goddess is not here—let's get off," he suggested presently.

"Get off, pest. Another word and I'll pitch you off."

"Bear."

To the veiled women the young men had given only a glance but one of the teachers from the college group looked toward them questioningly and Kamliabai presently arose, rearranged her *sari* and said:—

"I hope, mother of Gulab, that your brother will meet us, but if not it is only a block or two to walk."

The young men gave no heed and so failed to see the signal given by the pandita. The teacher in authority had seen, however, and sometime before reaching the college, left the car with her charges.

While they were getting off the young men still watched and when one of the girls called to another Sita, Ram Chandra rose, then fell back in his seat, when a plain, awkward girl responded to the name.

"*Hài! Hài!* the light must have transfigured her, It is *maya* [illusion]."

"Owl."

The Rajput now sat in gloomy silence while the car sped on.

They had gone two blocks past the college before Kamliabai gave the signal to stop.

"Come," she said, "Careful, mother of Gulab. So your brother has not come, but it is only a little way. Come."



The young men too, alighted, but apparently without reason.

“She could not have sunk into the earth,” Sita heard Ram Chandra mutter.

“That is exactly what she would do—if it’s the Goddess Sita.”

“Owl,—you ——.”

Kamliabai started off at an all too leisurely pace to suit the anxious girl, and standing erect she drew the pandita along.

“They are coming,” she whispered. “They are following us.”

“Stand still, stoop,” whispered Kamliabai. “Mother of Gulab,” she continued aloud, coming to a dead halt, “I want to show you this famous house. It belongs to a friend of ours.” She went on talking to the girls in front of the house until the young men had crossed the street. The *pardah* women then started on, but, though they moved more slowly than before, there came to them in the still night air, from the opposite side of the street, the sound of leisurely footsteps; so very leisurely were they that they made sharp suggestion that their pace was gauged by their own.

“They must want to learn where we live,” said Kamliabai, presently. “Well, let them.”

Past squalid huts and palatial residences they went, while the soft night gave out from the gardens of the latter the scents from the tropical fruits and flowers, and trees and shrubs arose above the walls of the compounds.

Pausing before one of these residences, the pandita said aloud, "Here we are at last." She led the way up the driveway, then quickly on to the far side of the house and stopped among the shrubbery.

"It is Mr. Chatterji's house," whispered Sita.

"Yes, but we will not trouble him unless necessary. *Chup.*"

The girl breathed easier. For the Hon. Mohan Chatterji was not only a barrister of renown and a member of the viceroy's council, but her own legal adviser, retained when Miss Ray had written of Krishna Rao's threats. Then she listened with straining ears to rapidly approaching footsteps; and when they stopped at the gate, her heart almost ceased to beat. How long the stillness lasted she did not know; but after a time it was interrupted by the sound of low voices, one of which, she fancied, was that of Ram Chandra. A moment later there came again the sound of footsteps—receding this time. And when, soon after, the pandita cautiously approached the gateway and looked out, the street was clear; and unmolested, she conducted the girls to their college home.



### III

#### DECISION

**S**ITA had now been more than eight months in Calcutta.

Until her completion of the high school course she had been more than content with her life in Arampur; yet at the time of the pandita's visit she had set her heart upon going to college. Later, Mohani became possessed with a like desire and, coached by Sita, was enabled by taking some extra work the first year in the preparatory department, to enter college with her friend. Miss Ray encouraged the girls and arranged with Kamliabai for their maintenance.

In all Calcutta they knew only the pandita and were a help to each other while fitting themselves to their new and very different environment. Sita, as she became acquainted with the college students, met with keen disappointment; for she had anticipated a school made up of Kamliabais. Some, indeed, who had drifted into the college, seemed quite indifferent to their privileges.

As among birds which have been long kept in captivity, some, if suddenly set free, return again to the cage which has meant to them home, while others try their wings, then, almost bursting their throats as they warble their joy, soar away into the upper air; so



among women who have been for centuries suppressed, some, when their shackles are loosened and their weights are removed, are so stultified that they are incapable of appreciating their newly-found liberty, whilst others mount into the higher realm with the exultant joy of the freed birds.

Of the former class Sita had no understanding. She consorted with the free spirits, and, her soul athirst for the higher learning so long denied her countrywomen, threw herself with all her strength into the new life.

The new life comprised much that was beyond the college walls. The pandita numbered among her friends both Christian and non-Christian reformers and some of these the college girls were privileged to hear from the platform or to meet socially. Among these was the Honourable Mohan Chatterji, into whose compound she had guided Sita the night of the lecture, in order to escape the pursuit of Ram Chandra. Mr. Chatterji was a reformer and a Christian and it was because of his word of warning that the girl had fled before her affianced husband.

Miss Ray, when apprized of the young man's presence in Calcutta, hastened at once to the city and a consultation was arranged for the afternoon following her arrival.

Mr. Chatterji was accompanied by his wife, to the college, of which institution both were patrons; and, that they might see something of its working, they came before the time appointed and after a colloquy



with Miss Ray went with her to visit Sita's class in Sanscrit.

It so happened that in the lesson was a passage which for ages had been so interpreted as to sanction the low estate to which modern Hinduism has assigned women. To this section the pandita had given a new interpretation, and as she construed the passage and expounded its meaning, she was at her best. In the course of the recitation she directed attention to the author and called upon the class for other quotations attributed to the same *rishi* [sage]. Several of the girls responded, Sita with one which paid high tribute to women. When they could recall no more the teacher herself filled out the number, then bringing them all together demonstrated that, with one exception, an evident interpolation, none of these passages inveighed against women or held them in contempt; and that the old rendering of the section under discussion was opposed to the spirit of the other passages, while the new brought all into harmony.

Mr. Chatterji, being asked his opinion, approved the pandita's interpretation, and stated that several Sanscrit scholars had of late allowed that her rendering was permissible. "Perhaps," he added with a smile, "perhaps you can explain away all the passages derogatory to women—all in the Shastras?"

"Alas! no," the pandita replied, and again she asked the girls for quotations of the other sort, this time from different *rishis*.

Up to this point Sita's bright face had shown delight in the recitation, but when she recited a short dis-



paraging passage it was with an indignant frown, and with a voice that trembled.

The entire student body now gathered in the chapel where Miss Ray gave a brief address on Frances E. Willard, and Mr. Chatterji followed with one on The Pardah System.

Mr. Chatterji was of Brahman birth, and fair. He was of light build and average height, but his large head, strong chin, and keen eye, together with the marked dignity of his bearing, made him appear to excellent advantage on the platform. On this occasion he grew eloquent in his denunciation of the *pardah* system. Deploring its results he contrasted the pallid, stunted, and unenlightened "shut-ins" with the free, educated women, and concluded with a eulogy upon the teachers of girls whom he named the most potent factors in India's social regeneration.

Sita's face still reflected her spirit's uplift when, after the speaking, she and Mohani went out with Kamliabai and her guests into the walled compound.

The pandita was at once called away, and, abandoning the seats under the magnolias, the girls led the visitors about among the shrubs and flowers. The walk was the more pleasant because, while the freshness of the season was everywhere manifest, a two days' intermission in the rains had removed its wetness. Sita and Mohani took special pleasure in showing the college flower garden, a new feature in the institution, which they had introduced. Miss Ray approved with glad smiles; Mr. Chatterji, too, commended the idea of gardening for girls; while Mrs.



Chatterji enjoyed the result, the blooming flower beds.

“Now,” said Sita, “you must see the orchids! They are the best of all!”

She pointed out plant after plant in the tiny conservatory, and last of all showed hanging in one corner, a rare orchid of her own which she had obtained through a gardener in the Botanical Gardens. Forgetful of the guests she stood for a brief period, rapt, before its delicate indescribable beauty.

“That one,” she then said, drawing a long breath as with eyes shining she turned from it, “that one must have dropped down from the ‘fields of light.’”

When they left the orchid house, Mrs. Chatterji asked to see the crotons and Mohani went with her. Sita presently became separated from the others and soon after she heard Mr. Chatterji’s voice beyond a hibiscus hedge.

“No, Miss Ray,” he was saying, “that would not be advisable. You might, of course, send her to America, but if the government should demand her at your hands, you would have to produce her, even from the most distant part of the world.”

“Or go myself to prison. Mr. Chatterji, I mean to be law-abiding; resistance to the law of the land is not justifiable except when such law controverts a higher law. You have read about the slavery days in America and the excitement before the war over runaway slaves,—how, though against the law, some white people helped them on their way to Canada?”



Well, my mother's family are descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers, and my mother's father was a conductor on this underground railway. If my people were willing to suffer imprisonment for the sake of the negro, can I do less to save my high-minded, pure-hearted little girl from a worse slavery?"

"Slavery, Miss Ray?"

"Slavery, Mr. Chatterji, no less. Let the law take its course. Defend the girl with all your skill, but if you fail,—I shall be ready to pay the price of her freedom."

"I honor you, Miss Ray, but——"

Arrested by the impassioned words, Sita to this point had stood spellbound, then partially recovering herself, she hurriedly sought the privacy afforded by a mass of tall shrubbery.

When, a little later, she joined the company, they had gathered under the magnolias around a tea table from which Kamliabai was preparing to serve milk, tea, and biscuits. After a little chit-chat, during which Sita sat watching Miss Ray's face, the conversation turned upon "Young India," and the girl listened while Mr. Chatterji and the pandita talked of the future of the country. Presently, following the withdrawal of Mrs. Chatterji and Mohani, the barrister remarked:—

"By the way, who knows but this young man, Ram Chandra, may belong to the Young India type? It is quite possible since he is a student of the university."

"A student of Calcutta University?"



“Yes, Miss Ray. Had you not heard? I learn that he is in the Junior class.”

“Astonishing!”

“I fancy,” said the pandita, with a decided shake of the head, “I fancy that Ram Chandra is one of the many university students whose minds do not assimilate modern ideas.”

When Mr. Chatterji made his suggestion he had his eyes upon Sita, and he now waited for her to speak.

“Barrister-ji,” she answered, “he does not belong to ‘Young India.’ After listening that night to that wonderful appeal for the elevation of women, while others of the students out in the entrance hall were eagerly questioning and drinking in the replies of the speaker, he, the *tahsildar’s* son, bawled out, ‘Women are fools’!”

“His brother said the same to me,” commented Miss Ray, “The family must be anything but progressive.”

“True! That sentiment is strictly orthodox,” assented the pandita drily.

“It was that,” Sita went on, “that called my attention to him. He had written it to me in his last letter.”

“It is a common expression,” commented Mr. Chatterji. “By the way, Sitabai, I have not yet seen Ram Chandra’s last letter.”

The girl removed the letter from a small book she was carrying, and opening it at the barrister’s request, read aloud. While she read, her restrained feelings were evidenced in the modulation of her voice; and,



too, the cause of her emotion in the classroom was made manifest; for the letter contained the passage she had quoted from the sacred books:—

“ A faithful wife who wishes to attain the heaven of her lord,  
Must serve him here as though he were a god,  
And ne'er do aught to vex him, whatsoever be his state,  
Even though devoid of every virtue.”

“ Orthodox, again!” said the pandita.

“ Until the other night, Sitabai,” questioned Mr. Chatterji, “ you had not seen your—the young man for a long time, I think?”

“ For six years,—six years and more.”

“ How did he appear?”

“ He is like his brother. My father thought he would be different.”

“ And what is his brother like?”

“ A beast of a man!” replied Miss Ray as the girl hesitated.

“ My mother taught me,” she then said with a disturbed expression, “ that I must never speak of anything discreditable to my—to the *tahsildar's* family.

“ Of course, if the marriage is to hold; but if not, the more your counsel knows of the *tahsildar's* family the better he can defend your interests.”

After Kamliabai and Miss Ray had given their approval, Sita went on:—

“ Krishna Rao has a violent temper. He used to beat his little wife dreadfully and once he broke her collar bone and they had to call in a surgeon to set it.”



“They do not always call in a surgeon in such cases,” commented Kabliabai.

“Is there no redress for the wife?” asked Miss Ray, with horrified face.

“The husband might be punished,” said the barrister, “if the wife would complain.”

“But,” explained Kamliabai, “if she complains she is ruined. Her father, even, would not receive back a daughter who had so disgraced him. Practically an orthodox Hindu wife has no redress against ill treatment.”

“We will hope,” Mr. Chatterji said, “that Ram Chandra will not be like his brother.”

“I,” exclaimed Sita, her eyes flashing as she drew herself up to her full height, “I would take a beating from no man!”

“We will hope,” said Mr. Chatterji, “that they will drop the suit! But——” A look of doubt came into his face as he looked at the beautiful girl, and he asked:—

“Honoured pandita, are you sure that he saw her that night? That he got a good look at her?”

“Sure. She stood in the doorway in a blaze of light.”

“They have dallied so long that we might hope that they would give it up. But,—if he saw her,—What is your age, Sitabai?”

“I am of sixteen years, barrister-ji, lacking two months.”

“He will bring suit, and soon.”

The barrister now quietly stated the difficulties in

the case. "The question is," he said in conclusion, "has the girl the courage to fight against odds?" then turning toward her he said:—

"Sitabai, with an English judge, there is strong hope of your winning your case. But you must remember that, while you have good friends, they can do no more than assist you. It is your trial. If the decision goes against you, there will then be no one to help you, you alone must bear the results. Ram Chandra will, I am convinced, bring suit; and if he wins will undoubtedly demand that you again become a Hindu. What will you do? Take time to consider. Will you fight the case in the courts?" Sita rose, looked out at the compound a moment, then, with high purpose in her face, and without a tremor in her voice, turned to Mr. Chatterji, and said:—

"I need no time to consider, barrister-ji! One born into the Rajput [king or military] caste should not fear. And I cannot give up my religion. I will fight!"



## IV

### A MEETING

**M**R. CHATTERJI had advised Miss Ray to consult with a local pleader upon the first intimation that the *tahsildar* would bring suit. But there was no first intimation. Two weeks after Sita's encounter with Ram Chandra,—she had not seen him again, but had exchanged letters with him,—and close upon three months after his brother's visit to Arampur, an order of the court was served upon her to appear before the Deputy Commissioner to show cause why she should not go to the home of her husband, Ram Chandra. Or rather the order was served upon Miss Ray with the command to produce the girl. The order was dated the tenth and the case was set for the sixteenth of November.

The teacher wired Mr. Chatterji and Kamliabai, and in reply received word that Sita would be sent at once with an attendant and that the barrister would follow.

At the time appointed Miss Ray, accompanied by Parbatti and Amni, set out to meet Sita. Her train whistled while the tonga was yet an eighth of a mile from the station. This was due to the fact that one of the bullocks had, after trotting half the way, decided upon a rest before completing the journey, and it was



quite a little time before the *garizwan* could convince him that it would be as well to defer that pleasure.

“*Jaldi chalao* [Cause to go quickly],” cried Miss Ray upon hearing the train. And the *gariwan*, uttering the inimitable Indian cluck from his vantage ground astride the tongue of the tonga, gave the near bullock a kick with his left foot, and at the same time the tail of the off one a twist with his right hand; then reversing the process he twisted the tail of the near bullock, and plied the off one with his bare foot. Continuing the clucking, he laid on his whip,—a section of a bamboo pole with a bit of rope attached,—then with the bamboo part of it from which the usual nail had been removed, he prodded the bullocks; and the team, enlivened by these gentle hints, broke into a gallop which speedily brought the rocking tonga to the station entrance.

Parbatti and Amni had but a moment to glance at the substantial stone building with its ivy not yet half-way up the walls, at the railway creeper on the fence of the enclosure, and at the station flower garden, which, stretching in narrow confines on the right hand side of the building, through its mingled fragrance of jasmine and roses, invited the eyes in its direction.

“It has come! The rail-gari has come!” exclaimed Amni, as they passed through the wide arched passage.

“Here, coolies, come here; to us ten coolies are necessary,” now came a loud peremptory call.

“That is the Bara Sahib’s bearer, and that mem-sahib standing by the white first class carriage must



be his wife," Miss Ray explained to the girls as they came in sight of the train. "I will not stop to speak to her," she went on, "until we have found the girls."

They made their way slowly through the crowd toward the third-class carriage reserved for *pardah* [screened] women.

"Water, brother, give us water." The voices came from the brown intermediate and third-class carriage. And a water-carrier, with his heavy brass water vessel, moved slowly from window to window filling *lotas* and *sarais*, and received in return one or two coppers from each buyer.

"*Chapati!*" the bread peddler cried, while he went from carriage to carriage selling these cakes.

"Sweetmeat man here," ordered a Brahman whose caste rules forbade the eating of anything except candies while travelling. He bought pounds of the dainties for his little company, while passengers of every caste bought according to their ability, and the vender of sweets was kept busy until the train started.

"Where is my box? I cannot find my box," wailed a helpless old woman in bewilderment.

"What confusion!" Parbatti exclaimed as a child's shrill scream rose above the divers noises.

"There she is. I see Sita!" cried Amni excitedly.

"Mohani too," confirmed Parbatti, after a quick searching of the carriage windows.

"Softly, girls, we'll reach them in a moment, now," said Miss Ray.

But at that instant a palanquin was carried past and



set down between them and the door of the *purdah* compartment.

Sita, watching at the window of this compartment, had seen her friends and had already alighted, and smiling and eager, stood with one hand on the carriage door. She had grown tall, they observed, and indeed none of the women on the station platform could match her in stature or in grace of carriage. Her simple dark blue *sari* was worn with an air of distinction, and her dark hair peeping out from beneath the border of the *sari* made a pleasing background for her fair wheat-coloured complexion and large hazel eyes, alight with intelligence and affection.

While they waited, the crowd upon the platform thickened; the coolies swarmed about the carriages, eager for a chance to earn a few *pice*; the departing passengers, although Indians, and lacking the sense of time, were now in haste, for although they knew that the iron "devil-horse," which drew the rail-gari, sometimes stopped to drink, they knew, too, that he was unlike their patient beasts and tarried not for the convenience of any. They, therefore, hurried with box or bundle to the train, most of them to the third-class carriages and with repressed excitement stood at the doors watching the arriving passengers as they made their way out.

Sita at first had eyes for her friends only. But she could not reach them, and she presently noted among those who came to the second-class carriage adjoining the one by which she stood, a young man, the cut of whose long black satin coat and white



trousers, together with his red fez, announced him a Mohammedan. He did not enter the carriage, but having ordered a coolie to take care of his belongings walked slowly up and down the platform. Manifestly he did not share in the general excitement, and while the train tarried was seeking diversion. This he found, apparently, in the palanquin or the group about the palanquin, for at each turn he slackened his pace as he approached, and stared. Sita gave no thought to the traveller, for immediately her attention was given to a report that there was a very sick man on board. Then the station master ordered the people to go to the end of the platform beyond the arch and the word "plague" passed in a murmur through the crowd. There was instant obedience, and all watched breathlessly while a man with his face covered was taken, moaning, from the last carriage, placed upon a cot, and borne away.

It so happened that the zenana compartment was beyond the archway, and the people in its vicinity had no need to move. With her eyes Sita followed the cot-bearers until they passed into the archway. At that moment she caught sight of a man standing alone, close to the wall of the building. She did not allow her eyes to rest upon him and the only distinct impression that remained after her swift glance was that his gaze was directed toward her or to some one near her, and that it held intense anger.

Drawing herself up proudly she looked again at the girls, and was startled to see that the crowd had pushed them a little way from Miss Ray, and that



the Mohammedan had drawn very near them. She gave warning with a glance and a movement of her hand and Amni turned upon him a wrathful face just as with jauntily cocked fez he opened his mouth to speak. The crowd giving way, she took her comrade's arm and moved toward Miss Ray. The latter was looking toward them and her quiet call prevented the man from following them.

The aged Brahman, who had been hindered by the throng from getting his charge into the train, now observed the young gentleman close to the palanquin, and with a curse ordered him away.

Explaining that his presence in that quarter was due to the pressure of the crowd, the Mohammedan apologized. Yet there was an insincerity in his tone and a touch of insolence in his manner that made the Brahman grind his teeth.

The offender, upon turning to withdraw, stopped short for an instant, an expression of surprise on his countenance as he looked across the platform, muttering, "His wife, perhaps."

Sita heard and observed that his glance was in the direction of the angry Hindu. But the latter was facing her and she would not look toward him.

"Perhaps it is his wife in the palanquin," she thought. "But if so why does he not come to her?"

Miss Ray now conducted Parbatti and Amni around the palanquin to Sita, and they chatted busily until the Brahman had the palanquin moved a little way from the door so that the passengers might alight. While Mohani and the attendant were getting off and



looking after their luggage, there was a buzz of voices and the mission girls, seeking for the cause, at once discovered that the English lady, preceded by a uniformed bearer and accompanied by an *ayah* and child, was passing. Miss Ray went to speak to the lady and Sita occupied herself in watching the foreign child. Looking about him he saw her and raising his hand to the side of his face made the military salute, and said, "Salaam, *bibi* [lady]."

"Salaam, *baba*," she replied, her fine face lighting up.

She was still looking after the child and the ladies as they went toward the passage-way, when the Mohammedan, who had until now kept out of sight, walked slowly by, saying softly as he passed her, "Will the lotus-eyed deign me a smile?"

Sita now recognized in the young man Abdul Khan, the young man with whom her betrothed had quarrelled six years before.

Not replying or changing her position she looked intently beyond the man, but there was an indescribable stiffening of her body and a subtle change in the expression of her face. The light had left her eyes and her lips which had been curved in a slight smile, were still curved, yet they now expressed not pleasure but scorn.

His vanity, however, evidently suggested to the man that she might not have heard, and so, after passing her, he came back and bowing low, said "Salaam, beautiful one."

As Sita turned her back upon the Mohammedan she saw close at hand, standing by a door of the next



carriage, the angry Hindu, his hands now clinched and his eyes blazing. This time he caught her eyes and she felt that his wrath was against her. She paused only an instant, but in that instant she noted his dress of spotless white, his lavender turban and sash embroidered in gold, and recognized in the wearer Ram Chandra.

"Come, *ayah*," she said in clear incisive tones to her attendant who was coming out of the carriage. "We must get away at once. This place is infested with slimy reptiles and savage beasts."

Miss Ray quickly joined the girls, her face pale and indignant, showing that she had seen the salaam. A woman from the inside had also seen through the shutters for a low laugh from the zenana compartment followed Sita's words.

The Brahman who now had the screens quite ready for the transfer of the occupant of the palanquin, stopped to call the miscreant "a son of swine," and cursed the "slimy reptile" roundly. In his confusion as he hurried away Abdul Khan did not observe the extended foot of the angry Hindu, and tripping over it fell sprawling to the ground.

Again came a low laugh from the zenana carriage.

And Miss Ray, glancing at the prostrate figure, said, "It is a grievous thing to see one so high fall so low."

Up to this time the Mohammedan had so conducted his movements as to attract no general attention, but now, furious with anger, he arose and with his clothes covered with dust, advanced threateningly toward the



young Hindu while the Brahman smiled grimly, muttering, "Let him tackle the Rajput."

The words reached the Mohammedan at the same time that the warning gong sounded, and he hesitated for the one reason or the other as he looked from the angry face to the athletic figure of the man who had offered no apology for his offence.

The mission party, on their way to the arch, heard Ram Chandra say in a very low tone:—

"If you wish to miss your train, come on."

"Oh, if you are afraid——"

"Take care! We are of the Rajput caste and we have met before."

"Remembrance is," replied the traveller. Then, mounting the step he said, with furious anger, "and there will be a reckoning time, sure—sure—sure."

"Very good. Our name is Ram Chandra and we live in Raj Gaon. Inquire at the house of the *tahsildar*."

The mission party had paused as they entered the archway. "It is the red fez," whispered Amni. "Is it true that the Rajput is your ——."

Sita, as she took her place in the tonga, gave a sign of warning, for, looking up, she saw standing on the steps of the station, Ram Chandra, and by his side an older man, clad in elegant costume, and bearing an impressive air of authority. The young man was scowling while the older looked doubtful.

Sita's whole figure spoke unyielding resistance, as, when the tonga had started she replied, "It is true; and the older man is his father, the *tahsildar*."



## BEFORE THE JUDGE

**M**R. CHATTERJI'S warning as to the doubtful result of the trial, Sita had not taken to heart. She did, indeed, make a conscientious effort to weigh his words; but she placed on the other side of the scales her friends, the pandita, the missionaries, the barrister, and the judge; then, unconsciously added the hopefulness of youth and the strength of her unconquered will. Heaven, she could not doubt, was on her side. Sita came to her trial, then, with full expectations of victory.

When, therefore, on the morning after the girl's return, Miss Ray informed her that Mr. Gracie had the week before gone home to Scotland on furlough, the news came with the force of a blow. From this she had begun to rally when from the veranda where they sat, she saw a tonga approaching, in which sat Mr. and Mrs. Ashley, and blue-eyed Pansy. After hasty greetings the conversation turned upon the new Deputy Commissioner.

"Have you seen him?" asked Sita eagerly.

"I called upon him two days ago," the gentleman made answer.

"Please tell me about him, Sahib-ji. Is he like Mr. Gracie?"



“No, Mr. Frisbie is not like Mr. Gracie; he is, in fact, a very different sort of man.”

With manifest reluctance the missionary gave an account of his interview. The new Deputy Commissioner had announced himself a rationalist, and had stated that he was quite out of sympathy with mission work.

“We have never before had an English official of his type,” said Miss Ray. “How dreadful that he should come here, and just now.”

“If Mr. Gracie could have stayed——,” Sita began.

“What a pity,” added Mrs. Ashley, “that Mr. Gracie could not have remained until after the trial.”

They were still talking when Pansy drew attention to a boy in uniform walking up the driveway. He proved to be a telegraph messenger, and though Sita had never received a telegram, she felt that this one concerned her. She waited expectantly therefore until Miss Ray, having torn it open, handed it to her with the request that she read it aloud. She read as follows:—

“Cannot come. Detained for two days. Have case continued.

“MOHAN CHATTERJI.”

Dazed by this last blow falling so soon after the others, Sita withdrew to the end of the veranda where she stood looking towards the trees, and trying to think. Presently she said aloud:—

“The judge has gone to England, the missionaries



are without influence with the new judge, the pandita is ill, and my barrister has other business! All my friends have failed me! All!"

"There is God left."

Pansy divining that her friend was in trouble had softly followed and now sought to comfort her. Sita turned toward the child, whose slender figure in dainty frock of white made a picture of rare loveliness.

Lifting the fair face framed in yellow curls, Sita repeated, "There is God left, heartsease," and she drew the child to her side.

When she returned to the missionaries, she found them earnestly planning for the trial now but two days off.

At the appointed hour Miss Ray and Sita were in readiness at the *kacheri* [courthouse]. As, however, they expected the trial to be deferred, they remained in the tonga outside.

Rather than wait for the calling of the case and leave the matter in the hands of the pleader, it had been decided that Mr. Ashley should himself see Mr. Frisbie and broach the subject of continuance.

The Deputy Commissioner's tonga drove up just after the other, and Sita watched intently as he alighted, bowed to Miss Ray and, followed by Mr. Ashley, hurried inside. He wore an extra large *topi* which effectually concealed the greater part of his features. However, when on the veranda he removed his *topi*, Sita noted his thin lips, low forehead, his



leathery complexion, yellowed by many years' residence in malarial regions.

Just before he reached the door he jerked out his watch and remarked in a high, rasping tone:—

“It is just time for court to open, but these sluggish natives are forever late!”

A moment later Mr. Frisbie looked out at a window close at hand, and the rasping tone went on:—

“A continuance of your case? Not ready? What? Mr. Chatterji of Calcutta? My word, but you missionaries know how to spend money! You had better get a barrister out from London!”

For a moment there was an indistinct hum of voices, then Mr. Frisbie again looked out of the window.

“He is a Christian, you say, and a reformer? I had forgotten. I am quite out of sympathy, don't you know, with this fanatical scheme of foisting foreign religion on these people. Their religion is better for them—vastly better.”

Mr. Ashley's reply was not audible, but the Deputy Commissioner turned again to the window as he rejoined:—

“Oh, I do not expect you to agree with me—of course not, you are a padre. But about this case. You can have it continued if you insist upon it, but you'll gain nothing. Ah, here is a tonga and the laggard plaintiff, no doubt. My advice to you is to have it over at once and I can tell you that a dozen barristers would make no difference in my decision—not a whit!”

The voice of the Deputy Commissioner grew



higher and more rasping. As he concluded a tonga containing the *tahsildar*, his younger son, and a Brahman priest drove past and around to another entrance. The tonga was followed immediately by a palanquin carried by four men in crimson suits and yellow turbans.

“That is his mother’s palanquin, and—my mother!” exclaimed Sita, listening to a voice. She continued to look after the palanquin until the return of Mr. Ashley.

“If Mr. Chatterji were coming he should be here by this time,” he said. “But there is nothing to be gained by delay. This is a queer sort of a judge and if we insist upon a continuance he will certainly be angered and prejudiced. We’d better take his advice and do the best we can with a pleader.”

The girl, remembering the rasping voice and unfriendly words, reluctantly concurred in this judgment.

Sita had so far met among foreign men philanthropists only, and had subconsciously held on to the hope that the new Deputy Commissioner must be somewhat like Mr. Gracie. Before she entered the courtroom, however, this hope was fast ebbing; and before her pleader had spoken, even while Ram Chandra’s barrister was making his opening statement, when, for an instant, she met Mr. Frisbie’s gaze, she felt in it something so inimical to her well-being that she instinctively drew herself up as in preparation for defence.

Mr. Frisbie made quick work of the case. He



allowed the plaintiff's barrister to call but half his witnesses, and to Miss Ray and Sita he listened with manifest impatience.

"Do you acknowledge the marriage?" he asked of the latter, "the marriage to which your mother and your priest have here borne witness?" And when she assented, he allowed her to say no more.

"That will do,—that is quite sufficient," and without waiting for the attorneys' final arguments he proceeded with his summary.

"The *tahsildar's* son claims this woman Sita as his wife. She acknowledges the claim——"

"Oh no, Sahib-ji," the girl interrupted, and apologizing, she rose and stated with charming naïvete, but with a quiver in her voice, that she had committed a fault in that she had not made herself clear; that she had meant to acknowledge only the betrothal ceremony. She then protested that she denied its binding force and repudiated the claim of the *tahsildar's* son.

"The plaintiff claims the defendant as his wife," repeated Mr. Frisbie. "She acknowledges the claim,—the marriage. It is enough. Her voluntary remarks are entirely superfluous and irrelevant. Among Hindus the parents arrange marriages and the consent of the bride is neither required nor asked."

Through the open window from groups of litigants waiting outside there came a confused hum of conversation, and the magistrate stopped, annoyed, to order quiet.

Upon this moment's interim Sita seized to relieve her pent-up feelings.



“He is a Hindu, Miss Sahib-ji,” she said in a voice vibrant and tense from emotion as well as from the restraint she had put upon herself. “The Sahib is a Hindu, and a thousand rebirths would not make him like Mr. Gracie!”

Miss Ray, from the girl’s expressing her thought in the old terms of transmigration, understood the degree of excitement to which she had been wrought, and taking her hand in her own answered:—

“Truly they are millenniums apart, but, dear——”

“He cannot understand, he cannot see——”

So long and so grievously have men oppressed and degraded women that it is the rule among non-Christian people,—a rule to which there are notable exceptions,—and this is also true of the majority of the men of Christian nations, that they are so dead to the spiritual in women that they are, to certain wrongs of women, as unresponsive as a blind man to colour. And when such an one sits in judgment upon questions of justice between man and woman, the result is a foregone conclusion; the woman is invariably sacrificed.

Sita was feeling something of this as she listened to the magistrate. It was familiar enough to her, the child marriage custom and all the rest. For among Hindus, women have no rights that men are bound to respect. However, this bald statement, the utter lack of courtesy, the heedlessness of her human rights by an English magistrate who stood for Christian government,—the hardness, the cruelty, the injustice of it all, came upon her with tremendous force. She



clung to Miss Ray's hand, yet with every rasping word of the magistrate it seemed to her that the government of India was using its invincible power to drag her away from light and righteousness and thrust her down, and down, into the depths of darkness and degradation.

Mr. Frisbie was saying something about defrauding the plaintiff of his rights, when Sita, hearing the door open, turned toward it with instinctive impulse toward escape.

It was Mr. Chatterji just arrived on a belated train.

The magistrate was already announcing his decision when the barrister arrived, yet, at sight of him, Sita's hope instantly revived, and joy surging through her being, drove the blood again to her ashen face. She had known that in the event the suit was lost, an appeal was to be taken; but her pleader, having shown in conducting the case neither interest nor ability, and everything else having gone against her, she feared that through the inefficiency of this pleader or through some unknown power of the judge this design, too, might be frustrated.

Throughout the trial the girl had persistently avoided looking in the direction of her betrothed, but now, when the Deputy Commissioner sat down, and Mr. Chatterji arose, she allowed herself to meet his gaze, and as her barrister announced the purpose of his client to take an appeal she observed Ram Chandra's smile of triumph yield to an angry scowl.

Sita, accompanied by Miss Ray, now hastened outside to find her mother.



Tulsiabai had left the courtroom immediately after giving her testimony as to the legality of the marriage and was now just starting home.

“*Palki wallè* [Palanquin bearers], wait,” Sita called, and quickly stepping to the curtained palanquin she thrust a package inside, saying:—

“Honoured mother, dear mother, you surely are not going?”

“We must go,” interrupted a high voice inside which the girl recognized as that of her aunt.

“My daughter!” Tulsiabai replied, parting the curtains.

Sita had but caught a glimpse of her mother’s sad face and seized her hand when a peremptory command caused the palanquin bearers to start off at a brisk trot. It was the *tahsildar’s* son who gave the command from the courthouse door.

While the girl was following Miss Ray to the tonga, she heard a bystander inquire who she was.

“That,” answered her pleader, “is the Christian girl who flouts her Hindu husband.”

“There will be another trial,” remarked Ram Chandra.

“Then she will doubtless pay for her flouting,” said the pleader. “Wah! but she is handsome! Quite worth the trouble of fighting for.”

“*Chup!* Keep your eyes to yourself!” cried Ram Chandra.

Sita’s last glimpse of her betrothed as the tonga drove away showed his brow black and his eyes ablaze with anger.



## VI

### FLIGHT

**A**S it was Mr. Chatterji's judgment that the appeal could be deferred for six months, Sita begged to renew her studies with the pandita and after holidays she went again to Calcutta.

The girl's confidence had been rudely shaken, yet though disillusionized as to the very high character she had before accorded to all foreign officials, and though sore and bruised because of the sufferings she had undergone, she did not therefore become bitter in spirit.

"God had not allowed the unjust judge to prevail against her and she could never have such another; the next would be of the Gracie type. In six months she would be older, of sixteen years and four months, and no orthodox Hindu ever married a girl of that age. Ram Chandra would not want her. But if he did, and if the court again went against her, there was another land to which she might flee. She would not allow Miss Ray to risk imprisonment for her. She would not even let her know of her purpose; but if the worst came to the worst, she would herself seek asylum in America."

Combating it with these and other arguments, Sita gradually overcame the depression left by the trial,

and buoyed up by her youth and optimistic faith, she again looked with confidence into the veiled face of the future.

Ram Chandra, so Sita's friends ascertained, had after the trial gone back at once to the university. It was on this account that they had questioned the wisdom of her return to Calcutta. Yet while his presence was regarded in the light of a menace, its seriousness was greatly modified by the size of the city, the different circles in which they moved, the widely separated locations of the two institutions, and the evident fact that he had never discovered Sita's connection with the college. And after a time her friends yielded to the girl's strong desire. To reduce the risk to the lowest terms, Sita went out very little, and was now called by another of her names, Jànkī [Daughter of Janak].

For a time she was content with the compound and her out of door life there, but afterward she grew restless with longing for room and freedom and she continued to endure the restraint only because of her stronger desire for learning.

Among the new students of this semester was a young woman who, in order that she might have the advantage of the pandita's teaching in Sanscrit, had been placed in the college by a Calcutta missionary. Bhakti came from an orphanage and was fitting herself for a teacher in the girls' college of the mission to which she belonged. To this gifted student both Sita and Mohani were strongly drawn.



Because of the scarcity of zenana workers it had been arranged at the missionary's request, that Bhakti, while in college, should be allowed to give one afternoon each week to zenana teaching.

Sita, while in Arampur, had, with others of the girls, occasionally accompanied Mrs. Dale as she visited the *pardah* homes. She had helped with the singing and had received a share of the gratitude of the "shut-ins"—the ever grateful for a message from the outer world. Then too, hers was a *pardah* home and she knew the crying need. Without any definite resolve, Sita had meant, as a matter of course, to one day lend a hand in the impossible undertaking of carrying light to the many millions of India's *pardah* women.

She therefore asked of Bhakti each week a report of her visits, and when one afternoon the superintendent of zenana work stopped with her at the college in her return from zenana work, to call upon the pandita and upon Bhakti's friends, Sita listened with earnest attention, while she gave an enthusiastic report of the progress and interest of some of the women under her care.

The missionary grew sad when she spoke of the many homes asking for teachers, and when she stated that several calls had come from Hindi-speaking families, calls which she could not answer with her Bengali teachers, Sita exchanged glances with Mohani and said:—

"Then these calls are to me."

"And to me," added Mohani



After some discussion it was arranged that they should go once a week with Bhakti and an experienced Bible woman in a closed cab.

Sita taught in one Rajput and two Brahman families. The Rajputs were in Calcutta only temporarily for the purpose of educating their sons. Two of these were attending the university, and Sita's pupils were their wives; they were but little younger than their teacher, were somewhat advanced in their studies and eager to learn, and she thoroughly enjoyed the hour spent with them.

When she learned that the young men of the household were university students, Sita was startled, and for a time was on the alert while at the house. But, with the exception of the father, who sometimes came into the zenana and listened to the young teacher or engaged her in conversation, she saw nothing of the men of the family.

More than once, however, through the coarse, flimsy *pardah* [curtain] which served as a partition between the men's and the women's apartments, she heard a voice which struck her as familiar. This voice she did not succeed in placing for some months. One day when she was on the point of leaving, the aged grandmother entreated for more singing and she complied with the request. It was in the momentary silence that followed the song that she heard just beyond the *pardah* the low tones of two men in conversation.

"A fine voice," said the first. "Do your people sing?"



“Wah! Of course not. It is a Christian girl who comes here to teach.”

“A Christian! Who is she? I must see her!”

“Is it your goddess? Listen, she will sing again.”

The women were asking for another song, but Sita had recognized the second voice, the one she had before failed to place, as that of Bali, the companion of her betrothed on the night of the lecture, and the voice of the first as that of Ram Chandra himself; and, swiftly crossing the room that her adieus might not be heard, she pleaded the lateness of the hour, and abruptly made her salaams. When outside she ran to the cab a block away, where she found the other girls and the Bible woman awaiting her. As they started, she drew the cab curtain a little aside and looked out. There were no young men in sight.

After this incident Mohani visited the Rajput home in Sita's stead. However, not only her pupils, but the older women as well, had become attached to the first teacher and they continued to make eager inquiry about her, and soon they sent an urgent invitation to her to come with Mohani to a dinner.

Sita sent regrets and Bhakti took her place. Mohani had, so far, neither seen nor heard anything of the young men. But on the day of the dinner, which was served for the guests only, the girls sang several times at the request of the family, and twice in the intervals they heard beyond the *pardah* the smothered voices of men. They were somewhat disquieted by this evidence of listeners and not wholly unprepared when they left the house to find Ram Chandra and his



friend outside. Mohani recognized them and indicated to her companion their identity.

When the young men had eagerly scanned the faces of the girls they turned toward each other in evident disappointment. Then Ram Chandra muttered something and Bali politely inquired why his sister's first teacher had not come.

The girls gave no other reply than looks of indignant surprise.

Ram Chandra again urged his friend and he spoke once more, hastily, the girls now being a little in advance of him.

"I beg your pardon, honoured ladies, but you are not *pardah* like our women. Surely you will not take offence at my question. Has my sister's teacher left the city?"

"It is true," answered Bhakti as she stopped for an instant, "it is quite true that it is not our custom to veil our faces. Neither is it our custom to talk with strange men. Kindly allow us to go with our friend."

The Bible woman now joined the girls and went with them to the cab close at hand. After another parley both young men approached the cab and Ram Chandra spoke to the elder woman.

"*Bibi* [lady]," he began, "will you do us the favour to tell us the whereabouts of the other teacher? the one who first taught in the house?"

"Babu," she replied, "your request is most extraordinary. This is the first time our teachers have been molested. What is your interest in the party?"



“We should have explained,” he replied, evidently perceiving his mistake, “that there is a call for her to teach in another Rajput family,—in my uncle’s family.”

“Very well. What is your name? and what is the address of your uncle? I will give it to the zenana superintendent.”

Ram Chandra looked confused and disappointed for an instant; then, ignoring the first request, announced an address.

Bali again apologized, and as the cab started, Mohani, who was familiar with his voice, heard him say to Ram Chandra:—

“Wah, man! She has vanished. Your goddess has vanished again.”

At the report of this encounter, Sita was much disturbed.

“That call,” she said, “I shall not answer. It is to his uncle’s house and his father’s, and the true address is Raj Gaon.”

The address Ram Chandra had given proved to be that of a business house.

Sita visited no more zenanas and Mohani and Bhakti ceased their work for a time, then went to a different part of the city.

It was several weeks later that a renowned prelate, lately out from England, gave on Sunday afternoons a series of discourses on a United Church for India. Because of the theme, Sita was the more desirous of hearing the famous preacher. Although the public was invited, the great church, not less than the smaller one



which she was accustomed to frequent, was presumably ground safe from intrusion on the part of her Hindu fiancé, and the pandita consented that she should attend these meetings.

At the first of these the girl was watchful, but no Ram Chandra appeared and she lost her anxiety.

On the third Sunday afternoon as the prelate was concluding his sermon, Sita subconsciously yielded to an impelling force that drew her eyes from the speaker, and turning her head she met the fixed gaze of her betrothed. Greatly startled she drew back behind the pillar against which, with this contingency in view, Kamliabai had stationed her. To the pandita, who was next her, she made known her discovery with a word, and to Bhakti and Mohani with a look. The four sat together in the college group near a side entrance, and the instant the audience rose, went out.

At the door the girls drew their chaddars over their faces and hastened with the pandita to her carriage. She bade the other girls wait, and following Sita into the conveyance, gave the order to drive on. But at that moment a hansom dashed up in front of the carriage completely blocking the way.

“Too late!” said the pandita in a low tone, “you may as well raise your veil.”

The girl complied and, looking out of the carriage door which again stood open, saw Ram Chandra striding toward the waiting hansom.

“Oh, quick! quick!” she exclaimed, again veiling her face though not in time to prevent recognition.

Kamliabai, with a glance at the hansom, remarked



upon the fine horse, then began in a leisurely manner to talk to Bhakti and Mohani.

“Just stand where you are,” she concluded in a clear distinct tone, “and do not fear. Your friends will join you in a moment, and anyway no one will dare harm *pardah* women. I will see you again to-night.”

In Sita's highly wrought state every moment of delay seemed an hour. “What did the pandita mean? Her talk to the girls was utter foolishness. Why had she asked her to raise her veil at the wrong time? The cab had moved up and was no longer in the way. Why did she not start?”

Ram Chandra all this time stood outwardly calm, watching the church door. The moment the pandita again gave the order to her driver, however, he sprang into the hansom. It, too, was now hampered in its movements by a victoria and another cab approaching the curbstone, yet when the hansom had turned around, the carriage still stood in the same place. The veiled girls standing by felt that Ram Chandra looked suspiciously at them and at the carriage. But the pandita's raised voice was now heard through the closed door sharply berating the gariwan for his slowness and stupidity and urging him to the utmost haste; and when the carriage drove off at full speed the hansom followed hard after.

Notwithstanding the pandita's chiding of her driver, the carriage had not tarried without her orders; and Ram Chandra's doubts were not without foundation; for in the brief time occupied by the turning of



his cab, Sita and Bhakti had changed places. The girls were of about the same height, were dressed alike and veiled, and the pandita allowed the young man no time for close scrutiny.

As Sita stood by Mohani's side tensely erect, the ringing of the horses' hoofs sounded farther and farther down the street, sounded above the beating of her heart, and brought to her a sense of joyful relief.

They had waited but a moment when a man passed them. Without pausing he addressed them in a low tone:—

“Come to my house.”

“Ji,” responded Sita, for the voice was Mr. Chatterji's.

Immediately afterward one of the teachers came to the girls and conducted them, still veiled, to a public cab and then to the barrister's home.

During the dinner Sita made only a pretence of eating, and once she quite forgot her surroundings and sat pale and abstracted. Recovering herself, she apologized to Mrs. Chatterji and with evident effort joined in the conversation. But immediately after dinner she asked:—

“Mr. Chatterji, what would the Government do to him if he should kidnap me?”

“Why, daughter, I am not sure. Possibly they would do no more than impose a heavy fine. But it is now only a month until the new trial and Ram Chandra is not likely to resort to this expedient. You seem very fearful to-day. Come, Sitabai, be our brave girl again.”



"I do not want to be a coward," she replied perplexedly, "but, barrister-ji, I have got to be afraid of some things."

Providence had made Sita a woman and subject to fear—not indeed to the silly cultivated fear of mice and spiders affected by a certain class, but to the divine fear of having snatched from her the God-given right of every woman, her freedom.

"The *tahsildar's* son," Sita went on, "would not in the least mind a fine and he means to take me if he gets a chance. I saw it in his eyes."

"Well, daughter," the barrister said after a moment, "he has now seen you with the girls and the pandita—Perhaps——"

He was called to the phone and when he returned he said:—

"The pandita is with a friend five miles away. She says they had a lively drive and that the hansom still waits at the corner."

"Did she inquire about me—us?"

"She inquired about her birds and said the flutterer would do better in another cage."

"Ji," cried Sita.

"It shall be changed at once, I told her," Mr. Chatterji continued.

"At once," said the girl, rising.

An hour later Sita and Mohani were on their way to Arampur.

*BOOK IV*  
**THE APPEAL**



# I

## A BRIGHTER OUTLOOK

“**H**OW good it is that I am to have Mr. Gracie for my judge and how wonderful.”

It was the day of the trial and close upon the hour, three o'clock, and Sita, accompanied by Miss Ray, was on her way through scorching wind and choking dust to the *kacheri*. Sita, however, gave no heed to the discomforts of the drive, nor to the kicking, clucking driver, who sat before her brandishing his home-made whip over the panting bullocks. But when, as they passed a village, two musicians began a loud beating of tom-toms she started, and when a turn of the road brought the *kacheri* into view, the yellow plastered building with the usual crowd of litigants and witnesses waiting on the verandas and under the trees, there came over the girl, with the recollection of the former trial and its disappointing end, a feeling of apprehension. For only a moment she gave way to it, then rallying she said:—

“How good it is that I am to have Mr. Gracie for my judge and how wonderful.”

“Good, indeed! You could not have a more sympathetic judge. It is truly providential that he is back in India and that he has been promoted and is



now Commissioner. If it were not for his promotion your appeal could not come before him."

"True, and Mr. Chatterji is here. This trial will be very different from the other."

"Very different," assented Miss Ray, as confident as Sita.

As they approached the building, they saw on the veranda two men in white duck suits, one wearing a large pith hat, the other a cap. They proved to be Mr. Ashley and Mr. Chatterji. The former, when the tonga had come to a halt, assisted the occupants to alight, carefully shading them with a white covered sun umbrella. Miss Ray, although she had on a pith hat, was grateful for the added protection, while Sita, upon whose head was only one thickness of her thin *sari*, smilingly accepted the attention, but with the observation that she was not afraid of the sun.

Mr. Chatterji's remark as they were going in, that the plaintiff had not yet put in an appearance, caused Sita to draw a breath of relief. And when inside she found Mrs. Ashley, Karunabai, Matiyabai and Priya, her courage rose. Greetings had no sooner been exchanged than the sound of wheels was heard and the eyes of all were turned toward the outer door.

Some one opened the door, a moment later, to pass out, and Sita in the instant that it remained open, saw two tongas drive up and recognized the occupants of the first one: Ram Chandra, his brother, their great-uncle, and Ganga Prasad, the barrister. Krishna Rao was giving orders and something in his loud discordant voice sent a tremor through the girl, and in-



voluntarily, as the door opened again, she stepped behind Miss Ray and Mr. Ashley.

When the *tahsildar's* party had taken possession of a far corner of the room, Sita with her *sari* drawn well over her head again turned her eyes toward the door. She had observed that the second tonga was curtained and was not surprised when there entered two veiled women, one wearing a red, the other a coarse, white *sari*. With them was Janak Ram, now a tall lad ten years of age, who led them to a corner near Sita.

"Please come," whispered Sita to Matiyabai and the latter went with her to speak to the veiled women. The girl, however, did not address her mother until she had first spoken to the other whom she rightly supposed to be Bhura, her uncle's wife.

Tulsiabai partly lifted her *sari*, disclosing a thin, weary face with its piteous border of shaved grey hair. Her smile of joy upon seeing Sita was speedily followed by an anxious pleading expression.

"My daughter—I beg you, my dear daughter——" she began.

"So this is the rebel daughter?" interrupted the aunt, lifting her veil. "Wah! how tall! And what a wonder that the *tahsildar's* son is willing to take so old a bride. And she a grown woman! *Hài! Hài!* At her age I was the mother of three."

"The mission people have different customs," said Matiyabai.

"The mission people! But she is a Rajputni and a fine specimen, too. She is like her father's people.



It is not so very strange that he should want her, even if she is old. But it is by the mercy of Ram, and now, young woman, you've brought enough trouble and disgrace in the family and I advise you to give up right now before you're made to! and him the *tahsildar's* son and rich! You ungrateful——”

“Disgrace?” exclaimed Sita, turning to her mother.

“What else?” questioned the aunt. “*Hài! Hài!* Surely you know——”

“Mother, dear mother, you do not,—you will not be against me?”

“My dear, your father——”

A loud exclamation from the far corner arrested further speech and Tulsiabai hastily lowered her veil.

Sita looked across the room to see upon Ram Chandra's forehead a scowl; a scowl intensified by the heavy lines of paint which proclaimed the wearer a worshipper of Vishnu.

“Look!” he cried. “See them! See the widow! We ordered her not to talk.”

The girl had drawn herself up to her full height, and with one arm thrown about her mother, stood with ashen face and flashing eyes.

Krishna Rao was now loudly berating the women and commanding Janak Ram to take them away. The elder brother, too, and the priest and the aged uncle, who had come in the place of the father who was ill, wore the marks of Vishnu.

The boy looked at the angry man, at his aunt who was ordering and entreating Tulsiabai to go with her,



and at his indignant sister, and his brow clouded with perplexity and anger.

“Brother,” Sita said to him, “do you eat this abuse? Have you forgotten that you are Pandit Janak’s son, and the son of a King?”

Instantly the lad’s perplexity vanished and he stepped in front of his mother and sister, where he stood with military erectness.

“See what you have done!” remonstrated Ganga Prasad to Krishna Rao. “Doing kindness, allow me to manage the matter.”

His uncle, too, besought Krishna Rao, and he ceased to speak.

Miss Ray and Mrs. Ashley had at once joined Sita upon hearing Ram Chandra’s exclamation.

He had given them a glance and then again directed his attention to the girl. In the silence that now fell, she heard him say in a low, surprised tone, as though talking aloud:—

“The battle is joined and it is not to be fought with the missionaries—but with her.”

Ganga Prasad had, in the meantime, courteously invited Janak Ram to one side. Though he went with evident reluctance he returned almost immediately and conducted his mother and aunt to an unoccupied corner of the room.

The middle door into the courtroom now opened, and while a number of men came out, Mr. Chatterji informed Sita that it was time for her case.

“I hope,” he added, “that this skirmish has not made you regret fighting the suit?”



“Regret? You know, honoured friend, there was nothing else left me.”

“How did you succeed with your mother?”

“She—they are on the other side. I had no time——”

“Never fear. The other side gained nothing in that brush.”

The pandita and all of her friends now joined Sita and entered the courtroom. This room, Sita observed, was unchanged since her first trial. There were the same high cream-coloured walls, their bare expanse relieved by six large windows with transoms. Near the front was the *pankha*; and the long heavy teak pole with its linen frills formed the only ornament in the room. Beneath it on a platform was the judge's large, square desk and near this a table where sat the white-robed clerks. At either end of the *pankha* were tables and seats for the attorneys.

Facing the judge stood two groups of chairs. Those on the left side were at once appropriated by the *tahsildar's* party and when they were all taken, Krishna Rao sent a man to get chairs from the other side; and when he returned with the report that the chairs were occupied he exclaimed angrily:—

“*Arè! bapre bap!* What is this! What a word of shame for women to sit in the presence of men! These foreigners are turning our natural customs upside-down. Foreigners——”

The judge now called for order and, as Sita looked into his fine, benignant face, her hope for victory gained strength.



Mr. Ganga Prasad, in filmy white *kurta* and waist-cloth, patent leather English-made shoes and embroidered cap, with the paint of a Vishnu sect upon his forehead, stood with confident air, ready to open the case.

“Your honour,” he said, bowing and salaaming to the Commissioner, “it is my esteemed privilege to represent in this case the renowned *tahsildar*, his excellency Narian Ram Chandra Lakshman Bharat and his famous son, Ram Chandra. The case, your excellency, is exceedingly clear and translucent, simple and elementary; and, your excellency, in whom all wisdom and justice and equity reside, will, we are assured and confident, give to us who have the side of right and truth and justice, the wise and just decision, according to law.”

He then went on with a declaration of the case, asserting that the marriage was a *pakka* marriage; lawfully arranged by the parents of the boy Ram Chandra and of the girl Sita, according to the rules of their castes, confirmed by legal contract and religious ceremonies, and by feasts and gifts. He further stated that some years after the marriage, the girl's people, having become poor because of the famine, sent her to Arampur; that here she had fallen into the hands of missionaries, who had broken her caste, changed her religion, and refused to allow her to return to the house of her father's people, or to go to the house of her husband; and that said Sita had been so influenced by said missionaries that she had many times refused the requests and commands of



her mother and her husband to return to Raj Gaon for the second marriage ceremony. He asserted, moreover, that the said Sita having entered into correspondence with the said Ram Chandra, had finally given her absolute refusal to the second marriage ceremony, and so to the fulfilling of the contract made by her parents: that even after the very wise and just government had in a former trial decided against her she had persisted in this refusal.

“We have here,” he concluded, “many capable, competent, and trustworthy witnesses to give evidence and testimony which will prove clearly, conclusively, and beyond the peradventure of a doubt, that what we have stated is truth.”

The judge's face, during this speech, remained impassive.

The plaintiff sat with his black eyes expressing in turn anger, determination, and satisfaction. He listened to his barrister, but kept his eyes in Sita's direction. Her face, however, he could not see, as she kept her *sari* drawn well forward, and her chair was on a line with his.

Mr. Chatterji opened the case for the defence in a simple, impressive manner.

“Your honour,” he began, “we have much to say in reply. We admit that there was a marriage arranged between the plaintiff and the defendant. But we have in this country several forms of marriage and that this was a *pakka* marriage we wish to have proved. And even should it be shown that it was a *pakka* marriage we have to say that we are able to



give good and sufficient reasons why it should be annulled."

The counsel for the plaintiff called as his first witness Ram Dev, whom Sita recognized as a priest and astrologer of Raj Gaon, the family priest of the *tahsildar*. Ram Dev wore a flowing white loin-cloth, upon his head a white turban. His complexion was very fair and upon his brow were the marks of worshippers of Vishnu. He took his oath, as did all the Hindu witnesses, upon a bottle of Ganges water.

The priest certified that the marriage between the plaintiff and the defendant was *pakka*, that the ceremonies were according to caste rules and the religious rites of the sect to which the parties belonged, the sect that worshipped Ram Chandra as the true incarnation of the Great God Vishnu. Ram Dev further stated that he had been a witness to the payment of money in dowry and gifts, that to his knowledge the *tahsildar* had given money to the family of the defendant during the illness of the father, and that he had given aid to the defendant's brother. In answer to a question he stated the age of the defendant as fourteen years. Counsel for the defence allowed the priest to go without cross-examination, stating that he would recall him later.

A number of others gave evidence as to the status of the marriage and the generosity of Ram Chandra's people to the defendant's family during the famine.

All of these Mr. Chatterji let go without question.

"The next witness," said Mr. Ganga Prasad, with an air of satisfaction, "is the defendant's mother."



There was a slight stir in the room, due not only to the relationship of the witness to the litigants, but also to the rarity of the appearance of *pardah* women in court; and when a tinkle of bells was heard, all turned their eyes expectantly upon the door.

Janak Ram first entered, then stood aside for the women to pass.

His aunt, talking of the shame of it all, stopped in the doorway and the sound of bells ceased. She was covered with a crimson *sari* from head to foot, with the exception of one bare arm which escaped through the folds of her drapery, displaying a dozen or more bracelets and armlets and several finger rings. Her feet were bare and decorated with both toe rings and anklets. It was the latter that boasted the tiny bells, and when she moved on they again began their tinkling accompaniment.

Tulsiabai now appeared in the doorway, and she, too, stopped, as though loath to enter. Tulsiabai was of lighter build than her sister-in-law, and though slightly stooped, taller. Her coarse, meaningful *sari* of unbordered white was of scant fulness but draped in the usual fashion; her bare feet and her thin hand that hung trembling by her side were free of ornaments.

When the judge with gentlest courtesy had designated the place where she was to stand, her son escorted her to the spot and remained at her side. As, with her face veiled, she took the oath upon the bottle of Ganges water, the tremor in her voice and hand were so marked, that the judge, in order to give her time



to overcome her agitation, made business with the clerks.

Tulsiabai bore witness that she and her daughter's father had consented to this marriage, that they had expended much money in dowry, feasts, and gifts, that the *tahsildar* had likewise spent much money.

"And the plaintiff has done much for your son since his father passed away, has he not?" Mr. Ganga Prasad questioned.

"He has paid Janak Ram's fees at school, and bought him some books."

"And he helped you during the famine, you will remember?"

The witness was silent.

"You know Ram Chandra's father contributed to the care of Sita's father when he was ill?" persisted the barrister with assurance.

Mr. Chatterji objected to the form of the question and the objection being sustained, Mr. Ganga Prasad varied his query.

But Tulsiabai remained silent.

Krishna Rao's eyes glared angrily. "We can prove——" he began.

But here Ganga Prasad interposed. "We have already proved the point," he said with a bland smile. "It is of no importance, of no consequence, if she has forgotten some small and insignificant matter. She admits the fact of receiving much help, and that is amply and abundantly sufficient for that point. We will now proceed to prosecute our interrogations to better purpose. We understand, mother of Sita——"



“Mr. Prasad,” interrupted Ram Chandra, in a low tone which was, however, distinctly audible, “you will oblige me by omitting the use of my wife’s name.”

“Certainly; no offence intended. We understand, mother of Janak Ram, that you came to Arampur upon several occasions to get your daughter.”

“I came three times to Arampur.”

“And she would not return with you? The missionaries would not allow her to go? Did they not object to her marriage? Did the missionaries not tell you that she was dead?”

Again Mr. Chatterji protested and again his objections were sustained.

“Tell us about your first visit to Arampur.”

“The first time I came I was told that she was dead,—both she and Mohan Lal.”

“So we understand,—the missionaries were determined to keep her.”

“It was a mistake.”

“A marvellous and amazing mistake. The missionaries made the mistake of saying that she was dead when she was alive and well?”

“No, barrister-ji; I saw no missionary on this trip. It was the mistake of the Great Sahib’s *chaprassi*. Another Sita had just died and he told me it was my daughter?”

“Indeed. And who told him?”

“The *ayah* told him that one Sita had died and he read from his book and said it was my Sita.”

“And when you came the second time, when the



plaintiff's father sent you for the girl, why did you not get her?"

"The second time no one sent me. I came of myself. The *tahsildar's* people did not know that I was coming."

"Did you not come for your daughter? Why did you not get her?"

"I came for my daughter. But I stayed some days and I saw that she was happy; that she had good clothes and food, such as I could not give her. Besides she was learning in school every day, and she loved learning as her father did. Because of the school my daughter was willing to stay; and I did not find it in my heart to take her away."

"And when the plaintiff sent you again?"

"It was about a year later that the *tahsildar* sent me. Sita was not there at that time. She was away in the mountains."

"You did not see her, but you asked that she be sent to you as Ram Chandra's father requested?"

"I gave his message to the missionaries."

"You gave his message and demanded that the girl return home?"

"I gave his message," Tulsiabai repeated, then added falteringly, "I could not speak with great force because the girls, my daughter's friends, told me how happy she was and that she was learning her books in a wonderful way; and I had promised——"

"And did you agree to leave her?"

"I had agreed the year before to leave her for three years."



“Did you not demand her immediate return home?”

“I—no, I said that her husband called her, but that I,—myself,—did not call her.”

“—— false widow!” Krishna Rao ejaculated.

The judge gave him a stern rebuke which drew from Sita a look of gratitude.

“But the other times you demanded that she return,” the barrister now stated.

“I did not come again until the trial.”

“We understand that you now wish, that you command, your daughter to return to Raj Gaon, to fulfil the obligations made by her father?”

“Mother!” cried Sita, her heart’s protest in her voice.

Tulsiabai turned her veiled face toward her daughter and was silent until the barrister had twice repeated his question.

“I—did—wish it,” she then answered slowly and hesitatingly.

“Of course you do not wish your daughter to defy you, to disregard her father’s last wishes, to bring disgrace and stigma upon your people and caste and religion by getting a divorce,—and a shameful unheard of thing in your caste,—from her legal and true husband?”

“I,—no——” Tulsiabai answered faintly.

“Mother!” entreated Sita again.

“Of course you do not. You are a true Hindu, not a deserter to the enemies of our religion,—you are not a traitor to your country.” The barrister spoke strongly.



But Tulsiabai did not hear. The agonized appeal in her daughter's voice quite unnerved her.

"I—wish——" she began, then fell fainting to the floor.

Dr. Doran ran, but Sita was before her.

"Water," ordered the physician. "Don't raise her but help me lay her under the pankha."

The judge gave a recess and had the windows opened, letting in the hot winds. And when water was thrown in the face of the patient she began to revive.

"Water," she said feebly as soon as she could speak.

"Wait, Sita, do not give it," interposed her aunt in a flutter of excitement. "You will break her caste!"

"I forgot. You give it, honoured aunt."

"Ram forbid! This is her fasting time."

There was a moment's pause and the voice of Krishna Rao was heard saying:—

"Such a fuss to make over a widow's fainting. That is very ordinary in the hot season. They want to break her caste and make her a Christian."

"Dear aunt," pleaded Sita, "please give her water."

"And you people have polluted this water with your touch," said the woman.

"Give me the *lota*," demanded Janak Ram and taking it from his aunt he emptied it at a window, refilled, and held it to his mother's lips.

Sita was supporting her and comforting her with endearing words. But when, her eyes suffused with

tears, she thanked her brother, he set his lips and his eyes flashed anger and condemnation.

It was now late and court resumed only for the purpose of making a formal adjournment. Mr. Chatterji before the adjournment, however, gave notice that he would question the last witness on the following day.



## II

### AT THE SOCIAL PROGRESS CLUB

**T**HAT evening was the time for the regular monthly meeting of the Social Progress Club.

On account of the trial there had been some talk of postponing it, but the executive committee finally decided to go on with it because of the trial.

Sita's experience of the day had banished her interest in the club.

"Miss Sahib-ji, please let me stay at home to-night," she said to Miss Ray after their return from the courthouse. "I can get my mind upon nothing but my trial!"

"We'll see about it," the teacher responded, sending the girl to the garden where she presently joined her.

There Sita repeated her request with the explanation:—

"I think of nothing but my trial and my mother."

Miss Ray told her that she might do as she liked, but that her reason for staying away was an excellent one for going to the club. She then reminded her that the subject was the Elevation of Indian Womanhood.

"It will encourage the society," she added, "to have you there—my brave girl who dares to champion the cause of her countrywomen."

“ Oh, Miss Sahib-ji! I am not brave. I just could not keep still when my mother came out on his side! ”

“ Why should you? They would not let you talk to her. ”

“ And when she fainted, I could have cried out. ”

“ But you did not. Instead you took care of her. I heard Dr. Doran commending your presence of mind. ”

“ Did she? ” Sita smiled, then said with a heavy sigh, “ My mother is against me, and my brother; all of my people. ”

“ So they have been all the time; and since they are orthodox Hindus it is quite natural. ”

“ Those brutal men both called her a widow, shameless ruffians; and yet she is on their side! ”

“ Hindu widows are not accustomed to courteous treatment, and this alliance with a powerful family must seem a great thing to her now. ”

“ She has no sympathy for me. ”

“ I am sure she has. Her fainting was due to that, at least, in part. ”

“ If I thought that! My poor mother! ”

“ We all think so. But you must expect to be misunderstood by your people. That is the penalty people must pay for being ahead of their age. You know how the Jews maligned and destroyed their prophets, —and those prophets were the greatest reformers the world has known. ”

“ But I am not a prophet nor a reformer. ”

“ Perhaps you are both. ”

Sita looked mystified, then said:—



“Mr. Chatterji is a prophet.”

“Mr. Chatterji is India’s greatest prophet, and his speech at the trial will be read by thousands. But, without you, there could be no speech. Until India’s women will help themselves no one can help them. Your example, my dear, will do more to direct attention to the child-marriage evil than a hundred speeches by great men.”

“I do want to help, Miss Sahib-ji. Ever since that day you told me about Joseph and *Kismat*, I have dreamed of some day doing some great thing for my people.”

“I know, daughter, and it has been my hope: but—for great work one needs great preparation.”

“Great preparation. It will take years yet. I must finish my college course, then have special normal work. I want to go on with my Sanscrit too and always I mean to take new courses in Bible study.”

“Great preparation,” went on Miss Ray, “preparation of mind and heart. Do you remember, daughter, what the Master said to two of His Apostles when they proposed to do the chief work of His Kingdom?”

“You mean James and John?”

“James and John. He answered them with the question, ‘Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’”

Sita, after repeating the words perplexedly, said:—

“I may, I feel that I can—do something for my



people—after I am freed from this weight, this dreadful marriage.”

“That, my dear, will, I hope, be soon, very soon.”

Sita, when left alone, remained for a time among the trees of the garden. But when, after dinner, the older girls started with Matiyabai to Mr. Ashley's, where the club was to meet, she was among the number. In no humour for chatter she fell behind the others with Mohani, who understood her friend's mood. It was almost dark and as they walked, the familiar sights and sounds intruded themselves upon Sita's thoughts,—the small, baked, barren fields close at hand, the mud-huts and the drowsy life of a village further on, and all about, where nothing obstructed the view of the horizon, the haze of smoke, due to outdoor cooking, formed a dark dado against the blue of the sky. The moon, almost at the full, was only occasionally obscured by the light clouds which played about its face. As they approached the bungalow the beating of *tamtams* in a village beyond, announcing a wedding, rudely recalled to Sita her own marriage ceremonies and her present ordeal.

Preparations had been made for an out-of-doors meeting, away from the insufferable heat of the house. Over the parched grass in front of the bungalow cotton rugs were spread, upon which were arranged chairs, benches, and an organ draped with flags. Taking seats facing the house, the girls, while they waited, watched by the lights within the breaking up of a dinner party. This possessed special interest because it included as guests not only Miss Ray and Dr.



Doran but the Pandita Kamliabai and the Honourable Mohan Chatterji.

Priya, who had been married three years before, accompanied by her little son, now came up and spoke to the girls with her old merry laugh. When Kamliabai appeared on the veranda she said:—

“Oh, I wish the pandita would not keep her hair short and wear the coarse widow’s *sari*. Why does she? She is not a Hindu now.”

“It is for the sake of her influence,” replied Sita.

“She does not mind,” added Mohani.

“And her life,” Sita went on, “is anything but that of a despised Hindu widow. Her life is full of joy.”

The pandita, accompanied by Mr. Chatterji and Miss Ray, now came from the bungalow and after the latter had thanked Sita with a smile for her presence, and the others with words of praise, the girl began to be glad she had come. And when Pansy came dancing out announcing in high glee that she was to stay up until the club went home, and that she was going to sit by her Sita, the latter forgot her anxiety in the joy of the blithesome yellow-haired child.

“Pansy’s eyes are larger than ever,” she remarked to Mrs. Ashley when, a little later, the child was engaged in playing with Priya’s baby.

“It is because she is so thin. She ought to have gone home before, but we are going on Saturday.”

“I know, with Ray Miss Sahib.”

“Yes, and America’s cold winds will soon blow roses in my Pansy’s cheeks.”



Mrs. Ashley now presented to Sita Mr. Stafford, an English missionary from another station. He broached the subject of the trial and told her he had come to Arampur for the purpose of attending it, then heartily commended her courage in standing against child-marriage.

“I thank you, Sahib-ji,” she replied. “It is hard and I fear I would not have dared to do it were it not for my own selfish interest.”

“Are you certain it is for your interest? If you should not win——”

“I shall win! Judge Gracie and Mr. Chatterji—but even if I knew I should fail, I would do it—I mean I ought to do it for the sake of the others.”

“You are right; you are a brave girl.”

“No, Sahib-ji, I am not brave. I almost lost heart to-day in court, but Miss Ray is brave for me, and Kamliabai.”

“Well said, Sitabai,” Mr. Stafford replied, laughing. “That is a good way to put it. We all need that somebody should be brave for us and with us. I still believe you brave and you look it. I have many military friends and I know that the heart of the soldier sometimes quails. He needs the stimulus of music and of battle to bring out his courage. One of the bravest soldiers I ever knew told me that, although he had been in forty battles, he always in the beginning felt afraid.”

“Is it so? I thought a soldier was always courageous.”

Mr. Stafford now made way for a youth, who,



with another of the college boys, was talking to Mohani, but with his eyes upon Sita. It was Lakshman, now a well-grown handsome young man in the senior class. The moment the opportunity offered he was at Sita's side and with a tremor in his voice he assured her of his hope of a favourable outcome of her trial. While he talked, Sita's attention was drawn by the gaze of a bearded man who stood in the outskirts of the company in the shadow of a tree.

"It is my trial that has brought that strange man here," she thought and, annoyed, turned away.

The president of the club, who was the professor of Sanscrit, was waiting with his wife, and Lakshman gave them place. As they talked, Sita heard the sound of wheels and looking up saw the carriage of the Deputy Commissioner, and watching eagerly saw that its occupants were Mrs. Gracie and Mrs. Frisbie. Mr. Ashley took them to seats near the organ and the girl heard the Commissioner's wife say:—

"Mr. Gracie, of course, could not come, though both of us are members of your club. However, as we do not now live here, I protested against missing this meeting, and Mrs. Frisbie was good enough to accompany me."

After the missionaries had welcomed the newcomers, Mrs. Gracie observed Sita and Mohani and beckoned them to her side. When she presented them to the wife of the Deputy Commissioner, the latter regarded Sita curiously, then asked, in a perfectly audible voice:—



“Is she the one who is having the trial? My word, but she is bold to ask for a divorce.”

The girl felt chilled but when, presently, Mrs. Gracie drew her to one side and engaged her in conversation, her spirits arose.

All present came to speak to the great lady who took so much interest in their club, and the young men seized the opportunity of speaking to their comrade. There was one exception; the strange young man remained by the tree in the background and spoke to no one. In a lull in the conversation, however, Sita heard Pansy addressing him.

“*Bhai* [brother],” she said in her persuasive treble, “don’t you want to come too, to meet the big Mem Sahibs and our Sita?”

“No,” he replied gruffly, then added something she did not hear. The girl felt annoyed at the child and the man and at the continued beating of the *tamtam*.

“Why, Pansy dear,” she remonstrated when the child came back to her, “do you think this is a reception?”

“Sure, a reception for you and the big Mem Sahibs. The man says——”

“Never mind.”

Mr. Ashley now brought two strangers to the group.

“These are Arya Samajists,” he said, “and deeply interested in social reform.”

The younger man bowed, then stood silent with an occasional glance at the girl, while his father, Siva Charan De, talked with an alertness of look and man-



ner which sharply contrasted with the repose so usual in the East.

“Yes, Miss Ray,” he began, “your struggle is our struggle, this child-marriage custom is the curse of our land. If our people had but eyes, all that would be necessary to convince them would be a scene like this,” and he glanced at the young men and women who were conversing freely together.

While they talked, servants in snowy *pugris* and sashes of brilliant colours began with silent tread to pass among the guests with refreshments.

“You will not partake with us, Mr. Dè?” Sita asked, with an arch smile, as the sherbet and biscuits were passed.

“No, daughter,” he responded, a little confused. “Really I should like it, the iced drink would be delightful this hot evening. I don’t believe at all in caste, not more than you do, but it would not do. Wah! If I should partake of your refreshment I would be reported all over India as a convert to Christianity.”

“And that would be a calamity?”

“It would, Sitabai; my influence would be gone.”

“Mr. Chatterji still has some influence, I think,” she said, with a smile at the latter.

“Oh, yes, with Christians, with everybody in a sense, but—I beg his pardon—as an outsider, as a foreigner.”

“Not quite so bad as that,” Mr. Chatterji replied, “though enough to pain me deeply; but my influence is straight out for the truth.”



“Yes, yes, no doubt; but what is truth? That is the question. Had not our ancient writers the truth? Did they not teach one God and adult marriage and all these things? My aim, the aim of the Arya Samajists is to be loyal to our own religion and customs, and to restore them to their pristine purity and grandeur. We are reformers, but——”

Here the president of the club stood up and all conversation ceased. After a few words of welcome he stated that there were a number of people of distinction present who would favour the company with short speeches; that after a song by the college quartette, Mr. Stafford would give the opening address upon the subject, “Social Regeneration.”

“India’s imperative need,” he began, “is not, as some would have us believe, political revolution, but social regeneration.” He then recounted the reform measures passed by government and discoursed briefly upon the results of the government educational system.

Mr. Chatterji was the next on the programme, his theme, “The Women of India.”

He spoke of the honourable position accorded by Christian lands to women; of their former state in India as shown by ancient literature, then of their present sorrowful condition. He reviewed the progress made in the last half century and named with high encomiums some of his countrywomen, doctors and lawyers, city school superintendents and college professors. To the Pandita Ramabai, he referred as one of the great women of the world.



“Our women,” he said, “are learning, now and then one, to stand against the oppression and degradation of the ages, and except they so stand, both government and reformers are powerless to help them.”

He spoke in recognition of the invaluable service the missionaries had rendered India in the elevation of her women and mentioned Christian schools and colleges as a mighty factor.

“By the training,” he concluded, “that these are giving to the thousands of girls who are so fortunate as to fall into their hands they are creating for India a new and high ideal. Our girls, the Christian young women, in the measure that they are true, earnest, self-reliant, and self-respecting, are India’s hope! They are the vanguard, the prophecy of a future when India shall have a restored Young Womanhood, when her daughters shall be as corner stones polished after the similitude of a palace.”

The speech was an appreciation and Sita’s soul responded. Her thoughts were still upon Mr. Chatterji’s words when she heard her own name.

“It is requested,” the president repeated, “that Sitabai recite for us.”

“The Lily poem, by Longfellow,” explained Mrs. Gracie, leaning toward her.

Sita, arrayed in white draperies, her beautiful face radiant, recited the poem, closing with these lines:—

“Bear a lily in thy hand;  
Gates of brass cannot withstand  
One touch of that magic wand.



“Bear through sorrow, wrong and truth,  
In thy hand the dew of youth,  
On thy lips the smile of truth.

“O, that dew, like balm, shall steal  
Into wounds, that cannot heal,  
Even so sleep our eyes doth seal;

“And that smile, like sunshine dart  
Into many a sunless heart,  
For a smile of God thou art.”

“‘For a smile of God thou art,’” repeated Mrs. Gracie.

It so happened that when Sita recited she faced the tree beneath which the stranger sat. However, she did not observe him until she had finished, when she saw that he had come forward into the moonlight. Immediately he stepped back into the shadow, but not until he had given her the impression that she had somewhere seen him. At the same instant the disquieting beat of the *tamtams* intruded upon her consciousness. A moment later the sound of the organ drew her attention.

A foreign young man whom she did not know, a new missionary, was singing “Annie Laurie.”

The pandita after this gave a talk on, “The Part of Men in the Education of Women.” In substance it was as follows:—

“If I speak of our ancient civilization, which was beyond compare; or of our modern men of India, non-Christian and Christian reformers who are striving to assimilate the great things of Western civilization and literature, many who have in this attempt



sacrificed name and lands and home, some life itself,—what words can I find to define their heroism, to accord them honour?” She referred to Malabari and other reformers, then said, “We may well be proud of these men of India. But when in my mind I separate this handful, when I think of the men of India as a whole, I am ashamed.” The earnest voice grew low, and the erect head bowed as she went on, “No men among civilized nations have ever so oppressed and degraded their women as have the Hindus. I have but to say a word or two to bring up the hideous picture; infanticide,—for in spite of the law girl babies are still destroyed,—child-marriage,—including the unspeakable wrongs of child wives, child mothers, and child widows. Besides these we have the *pardah* and illiteracy, and these are perhaps the greatest wrongs, for they make possible all the others. They keep our women children and allow them no power to rise. But our wretched women have their revenge, for our men in wronging their women have, unwittingly, immeasurably degraded themselves. Yet,” she went on, “I blame my brethren less than an outsider must, for I know the conditions. It is fanaticism, superstition if you will; it is Hinduism that makes our men slaves and forbids their coming to the aid of the women. And Hinduism is the stubbornest foe ever faced by any people. She towers above our fair land, encased in such armour as the world has never seen,—the cast-iron caste system,—with her breast-plate deified custom, and her sword the subtlest of philosophies. Her eyes are



blinded and her ears deafened to the cries of her devotees, and her heart, from the endurance of years of unspeakable and unrebuked iniquity, has become harder than iron. But it shall not always be so; even now Hinduism reels as she stands, she is drunken with the blood of her victims; she staggers and will fall. Then, when India learns freedom from the Prince of Peace, then will our men, having placed their women by their sides, come into their heritage, and take again their true place, the peers of the greatest men of earth. Then and not till then will India take her rightful place among the greatest of the nations. For, as Tennyson has said:—

“The woman's cause is man's;  
They rise or sink together,  
Dwarfed or god-like, bond or free.”

When Kamliabai sat down, Miss Ray was at the organ and she at once led the chorus of voices into the triumphant strains of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” and Sita sang with her whole heart in her voice.

“We have with us to-night,” the president then announced, “Mr. Siva Charan De of the Indian Arya Samaj and an eminent social reformer. He will now speak to us on the ‘Future of India.’”

After some elaborate compliments, the reformer said, “Could we have such gatherings as this, such songs as these all over our land, I might predict her future glorious indeed. But such songs are unknown, and such assemblies among Hindus impossible, im-



possible. If they were possible, the men indeed might compare with the greatest here, but alas, for the gentler sex. Few Hindu women can even read, and as for such an array of culture, we cannot hope for it for many, many years to come. It is our women who weigh us down. If the government would only provide for universal education for our girls as well as for our boys, our Indian youth might acquire learning without the bias of the foreign religion of the missionary schools, and the problem would be half solved. As to the child-marriage question, the government could, at one stroke, raise the age by law to sixteen years. We Arya Samajists are at work on this line, but persuasion is slow indeed."

He spoke of the ancient custom when young women were chosen as brides, mentioning the marriage of Buddha Gautama Siddartha. Mr. De ended with the statement that the great desideratum for India was a return to ancient ways as recorded in her incomparable literature.

While the Arya Samajist was concluding Sita was startled to see standing in the edge of the assembly her solicitor, and close behind him Abdul Khan. The solicitor, she observed, stood but for a moment, then approached Mr. Chatterji. The latter gave him a chair, but apparently remained absorbed in the speaker.

After the address there followed a trio by Mohani and two other girls, and Sita noted that when they sang Abdul Khan came nearer. As he did so, she heard from the direction of the tree behind her a sup-



pressed ejaculation. The Mohammedan too, heard, and looked with angry surprise toward the tree. A moment later he hastily withdrew. Sita turned to look at the solicitor. He, too, had gone and so had Mr. Chatterji.

“What does it all mean?” she asked herself, disquieted.

Though Sita knew that there had grown up in certain quarters of India, notably in Bengal, a violent opposition to the government, and though she knew that the entire country was pervaded by a spirit of political unrest, she had never before heard any one so audacious in his criticisms as this Siva Charan De, and she had wondered while she listened what Mr. Ashley would say to his imputations against the government. But if it were possible! What a glorious thing it would be for India's women should the government in a day work this mighty revolution!

From this thought her attention had been distracted by the coming of her solicitor. Yet when Mr. Ashley rose to make a concluding talk, she turned toward him with eager expectancy.

The missionary expressed his pleasure in having presented to the club the interests of India from the different points of view of her lovers.

“We must remember, however,” he said presently, “that no government is perfect, but that all good governments go on to perfection, and as for universal education it is still an unattained ideal in Great Britain and America. We must not forget the state of education when the British came to this land.



There were then almost no schools among Hindus except for sons of priests and kings. As for making the education of the girls of India universal, or even general, it seems to me an achievement for the far future, when the zenana system shall have become a thing of the past. Government now plants and fosters girls' schools wherever the people can be induced to patronize them. But the results of the government girls' schools are disappointing in the main; for in these the chief factor in the success of the mission girls' school is absent, keeping before the pupils the highest Christian ideals.

"As to child-marriage, while none can deprecate the custom more than I, and while I have no sympathy with the sentiment which says to the government, 'hands off,' neither can I endorse hasty measures which must result either in open rebellion or in a law that is a dead letter."

"I wish they would risk a little more," said Miss Ray under her breath.

"And I," assented the pandita.

Sita heard and echoed the sentiment in her heart.

Mr. Ashley concluded with an earnest appeal that all lovers of India join hands in promoting the agitation of the living questions of the day, and so prepare not only for a strong demand for better laws, but for their intelligent enforcement.

All united at the last in singing, "God save the King," and "America," the lamps upon the organ lighting up the while the red, white, and blue of the Union Jack, and the Stars and Stripes.

Pansy, who in the extreme heat and enforced quiet had fallen asleep against Sita's arm, now awakened, and Sita arose with the rest.

While she sang, her hand rested lovingly on the damp curls of the sleepy child who shared her attention with the singing. The thought of the stranger recurred to her at once on rising, but it was not until the last song was near its end that she allowed herself a glance in his direction. He was no longer there. He was just going, however, for as she looked, she saw him stop beneath a tree beyond. When he emerged from its shadow he was without the beard, and behold, it was Ram Chandra.

"I knew it," she said, yet with a look of perplexity.

At this moment the song ceased and the company began to talk. But above the murmur of their voices Sita heard the monotonous beating of the *tamtams*.



### III

#### THE TAHSILDAR'S SONS

ON the following day court proceedings began with Krishna Rao on the stand.

The aged uncle had been comfortably placed among gaily-coloured cushions on a crimson rug at one side of the room near the front. Ram Chandra, to-day, sat by his side, from which position he obtained a full view of Sita's face.

As Krishna Rao took his place, Sita, conscious of his scowling gaze, looked intently out of the window; but when he turned his eyes in the direction of his barrister, she included him, as well as the judge, in her field of vision. She observed that he wore the same array of jewelry as on the day previous; the same yellow satin *angarkha* and crimson *pagri*, both now streaked with grease from his well-oiled hair, and she noted again the Vishnu marks on his forehead.

The witness gave his name as Krishna Rao Bahadur Narian Bharat. He told his story in his pompous fashion, angry gleams from his smouldering black eyes emphasizing his wrathful protest as he spoke of the enormous expense of his brother's wedding and of the shameless conduct of his faithless *shadi-zwalli*. He directly accused the missionaries of fraudulently hindering the marriage until she was

far past the proper and customary age for marriage and broadly insinuated that the government had connived with them to this end. Repeatedly, Mr. Prasad cautioned his client to carefulness of speech, and twice the judge called him to order.

Having concluded, he was about to leave the stand when the Commissioner inquired if the defence had any question.

"Yes, your honour," Mr. Chatterji made answer; "we beg the indulgence of the court while we put a question or two to the witness."

Krishna Rao looked with defiance at the defendant's counsel.

"Bahadur," inquired the latter, "what was the standing of the defendant's father?"

"Good. He was a member of the *panchayat* [council] and he had land and cattle. If he had not been of high family, my father would not have wished the marriage."

"Your father, then, suggested the alliance with this noble family?"

"Perhaps——"

"Was your father a *tahsildar* at that time?"

"He was a *malguzar* [land holder]. He had a half dozen villages then, now he has fifty."

"Since when did fortune awake?"

"Since the great famine. He received a government position at that time."

"What position?"

"He was famine relief superintendent for the *tahsil* [district]."



“And for this service, what salary did he receive?”

“I object; the questions are irrelevant and immaterial,” Mr. Ganga Prasad interrupted.

“It is of no consequence,” Mr. Chatterji responded. “It will be on the records.” He continued his cross-examination:—

“During the famine what did the defendant’s father do?”

Krishna Rao looked at his barrister before speaking who volunteered no more information:—

“He caused the boys to read for a time. Afterwards he was ill.”

“Then what happened?”

“When there was no grass, he sold his cattle.”

“Did he get a good price for them?”

“A good price? Yes, why not?”

“Do you know who bought the cattle?”

“My father bought them; he had watered land.”

“Did the defendant’s father keep his land?”

“No; he sold it after the cattle money was gone.”

Krishna Rao mopped the perspiration from his face with his handkerchief.

“Who bought it?”

“My——”

“I object. These questions are irrelevant and immaterial,” the counsel for the plaintiff protested.

The judge sustained the objection.

“Did the pandit’s family get on comfortably after that?”

“What do I know?” Krishna Rao answered, looking suspiciously at his interlocutor.

“Why did the defendant and her brother leave home?”

“It—it—came to my ears that there was a scarcity of food in her father’s house.”

“What happened to the family after the children left home?”

“Their father was ill until many days, then he died.”

“Of what disease did he die?”

“Wah! What do I know?”

At this point a faint inarticulate sound drew the attention to Sita, whose quivering chin indicated her inability to maintain her composure.

“What did your father do for the defendant’s family at this time?”

“My father gave them money and food.”

As he made this statement his eyes were upon Sita, whose face showed such scorn and amazement as to cause him to turn away in confusion.

“What do you propose, Mr. Bharat,” the barrister now asked, “as recompense to the missionaries, if you take away their charge? They have been to heavy outlay for her education.”

“Recompense! Education!” burst out the witness passionately. “Who wanted her to have an education? But she’ll speedily forget her learning when she has no books to read. Women are fools.”

The rasping of the pankha ropes emphasized the silence before the next question.

“When her natural protectors, her promised husband’s people forsook her, the missionaries watched



over and cared for the child. Surely the *tahsildar* will wish to reimburse them?"

"—— the missionaries! They have watched over 'the child' and hindered her marriage until she is a woman grown. What my brother wants—of—the—old thing is more than I know. But since he does want her, he shall have her in spite of the missionaries and her devilish stubbornness."

The judge here administered a sharp reprimand and the witness muttered a reluctant apology.

Mr. Chatterji went on with his cross-examination:—

"You have referred, Mr. Bharat, to the defendant's age. Do you know her age?"

"She is of fourteen years."

"When you visited Arampur last August, did you not say to Miss Ray that she was older?"

"I did not. It is an outrageous—she was then of thirteen years."

"That is all at present."

Krishna Rao, wiping the perspiration from his face, went muttering to his seat.

After a short intermission, during which Mr. Prasad consulted with his clients, he stated with more than his wonted suavity that he still had at hand many able and reliable witnesses but that, weighty as their testimony would be, it was wholly and entirely superfluous and unnecessary, and that after calling for one more most worthy and important witness, he would rest the case. "This last and most invaluable witness," he announced, "is no other than the



honoured plaintiff himself, Ram Chandra Narian Bharat."

As he took the oath, Sita listened with averted face, but when his counsel questioned him she observed the witness while looking toward the judge.

She took in at a glance his tall well-built figure, his fresh white draperies, his turban and sash of delicate lavender; and then, for the first time since she was a child, she gave his countenance careful scrutiny.

As she gazed an expression of surprise came over her face, and the lines she had so often recited as a child recurred to her,—the passage from the Ramayana descriptive of Ram:—

" All fairest graces join to deck  
His head, his brow, his stately neck,  
And limbs in fair proportion set,  
The manliest form e'er fashioned yet."

His counsel took him over no new ground, but this witness was the party seeking redress for alleged wrongs and Sita felt the response of the little assembly to the personal appeal; she felt, too, that the judge must be impressed by the dignified bearing of the younger brother.

Mr. Chatterji began his cross-examination:—

" I suppose that you, like other Hindus, never saw your *shadi-walli* until the marriage ceremony? "

" I did, many times."

" How was that? "

" I saw her at school. Her father was an eminent pandit and, as he taught in the town near by, my father



sent me to his school. It was there I saw his daughter."

"Indeed! was it a mixed school?"

"There are no girls' schools in that region. It was a boys' school, but she was a little child, and her father sometimes brought her with him."

"Did she learn anything?"

"Learn? Wah! She learned to read before any of the boys. It was the first I knew that girls could learn."

While he talked, tender memories of her father and his school crowded into Sita's mind. The voice and countenance of the witness brought back the face of the Ram Chandra of her childhood, the merry lad who one day brought her a *Sita-phal* [a fruit named for the goddess Sita, a custard apple]. Then her thoughts flew to the betrothal ceremony, that wonderful event in her life when for days she had been gaily dressed and feasted and given presents and made much of, while the *tamtams* beat their merriest.

A sudden silence broken by the rasping hum of the *pankha* rope startled Sita from dreamy reminiscence into present reality.

"I repeat my question," Mr. Chatterji said after a moment. "Do you approve of the higher education of women?"

Krishna Rao muttered and Mr. Prasad protested.

"The question has a bearing on my purpose of showing the utter unsuitableness of this marriage."

The judge sustained the objection, yet the witness answered, though with evident effort:—



“I—I—do not object to some education for women.”

The question had brought back to Sita instant reminder of the sentiments of her betrothed, sentiments she had heard expressed by his own lips, “Women are fools!” Through her memory flashed the words, destroying instantly her happy recollections. And to Ram Chandra’s hesitating admission she gave no credence.

“You mean that you are willing to take her in spite of her education?”

“I will take her,” the witness answered with set lips and a dark frown.

“About the school again. How long was it before the *shadi* that the defendant went to school?”

“Some time. A year or two perhaps.”

“How old was she at that time?”

“It is not known to me.”

“How old was she at the time of the *shadi*?”

“Of four years.”

“Then she was only two or three years old when she learned to read?”

“It is not known to me.”

“And you were of what age at the time of your *shadi*?”

“Of twelve years.”

“In what way do you know the defendant’s age?”

“I have heard the talk.”

“Have you any definite knowledge?”

“The *purohit* knows and he says so.”



"Do you know her age?"

"It is not possible that I should know, but the pur-ohit surely knows."

"Can you tell me how this incongruous marriage was arranged? I mean that a Rajput should marry a girl of a class superior, rather than inferior, to his own?"

The witness did not answer and his counsel made the usual protest against the question, adding, "It is ridiculously and grotesquely impossible that a boy of twelve should know these things."

But Ram Chandra's firmly set lips suggested that other reasons than ignorance kept him silent.

"He is now of twenty-two years," retorted Mr. Chatterji. "I will ask the witness if he is aware of the fact that the defendant has become a Christian?"

"I have heard so."

"Then why do you, a Hindu, persist in demanding this Christian girl in marriage?"

"It is my right." The witness's voice grew more defiant.

"Granting for the time that you were betrothed when children, I ask you in the light of all you have learned in the university and in mingling with the world, in the light of what you have learned of the chivalrous treatment of women in Western lands, I ask you, *bahadur*, do you think your course a manly one? Why do you persecute and drag into the courts an unwilling bride?"

Mr. Prasad made emphatic protest against the ques-



tion, and the judge sustained the objection, but Ram Chandra with a black frown answered that it was not his wish to go to law, but that the missionaries and the defendant had compelled him to resort to the courts to obtain his legal rights.

As he concluded the witness looked toward Sita, while his barrister came to his assistance by quoting a vile law.

Sita sat immovable, with the hand that lay in her lap tightly clinched; her lips, from which every vestige of colour had fled, were set and her eyes ablaze with anger, scorn, and repugnance; yet above all was an expression of suffering that was no less than anguish.

The young man, his own face ashen, turned toward a window and did not appear to hear the next question:—

“In case the defendant becomes his wife, is the plaintiff willing that she remain a Christian?” asked Mr. Chatterji.

“Remain a Christian!” burst out Krishna Rao. “Not while the *tahsildar* remains a Hindu.”

The counsel for the plaintiff objected, but the judge allowed the question.

It was repeated, but Ram Chandra still stood silent and frowning, while the rasping of the *pankha* ropes intruded loudly upon the tense silence.

“I am a Hindu,” he said at last, with evident effort, “and I desire that my wife, too, shall be a Hindu. My father will willingly pay to have her reinstated in our caste.”



"A half a lac of rupees," sputtered Krishna Rao, "it has all been arranged."

"Do you demand that she be reinstated in your caste?"

"I expect—I hope——"

"I demand it," vehemently cried his brother, "in the name of the *tahsildar!*" As he spoke Krishna Rao moved to his uncle's side, and touched his shoulder.

"I demand it in the name of the *tahsildar*," quavered the aged uncle from his cushions.

Sita's counsel now asked of the court permission to introduce as evidence the letters written her by the witness, and the request being presently granted, said:—

"We have heard from the representatives of the *tahsildar*. From the letters we may learn the real sentiments of the plaintiff."

Mr. Chatterji read a number of extracts, some of which follow:—

"It is nonsense for women to have an education. Their business is to look after the house and the children, and that they can do without an education. Women are fools. . . ."

"You ask if you will be privileged to remain a Christian. It is a monstrous thought. I demand that you give up your silly woman's notions of a new religion. My wife must be a Hindu."

"*Thik* [correct]," commented Krishna Rao.

But Ram Chandra was covered with confusion, and,

before leaving the stand, he angrily stammered out something about a change of mind.

“He is as bad as his brother,” thought Sita, “and less open. And if one must be a prisoner, to have a handsome jailer would bring small comfort.”

With the closing of the evidence for the plaintiff, court adjourned.

As the mission party were getting into their tongas, Krishna Rao, Ram Chandra, and their barrister passed. Krishna Rao was complaining, “What sense is there in our spending all this time here? This heat is unbearable and we might be sitting in our own house. We ought to have started with your woman yesterday. She shall pay for her obstinacy and for all the trouble she has caused us. What a look she gave me when I said—the bold-faced ——. We’ll teach her to cover her face when we get her home, the ——.”

The younger brother said nothing, but Sita observed that he wore a dark frown. Her face was ashen and her lips set, but she quietly replied to Miss Ray’s talk of the hot winds, whose heightened colour indicated that she, too, had heard the foul, menacing words.



## IV

### MISS RAY ON THE STAND

**W**HEN court resumed after *tiffin* [luncheon], the first witness for the defence, Miss Ray, was called. She wore a sheer white dress finished at the throat with a ribbon of pastel blue, which served to deepen the grey of her eyes and harmonized with the blue veins in her white forehead.

Although it was three o'clock and the heat of the day, and of the season, had reached its maximum fierceness, Miss Ray manifested nothing of the general languor, but instead inspiriting courage and strength.

Sita, as she looked into her friend's face, drank in hope. She felt, too, that there was in her barrister's voice, when after the administration of the oath he addressed the witness, a new note of confidence.

Miss Ray, in answer to Mr. Chatterji's questions, gave an account of the manner in which the defendant had come under her charge, told something of her life in the orphanage, and spoke of the visits of her mother.

Afterward the barrister asked:—

“How many years is it since the defendant came to you, Miss Ray?”

“It is seven years, Mr. Chatterji.”

“Of what age were the children when they came?”



“Sita said that she was nine and her brother five years old.”

“Did the girl appear to be of the age she gave?”

“But for her statement I would have judged her age ten years.”

“That is all,” announced Mr. Chatterji.

The counsel for the plaintiff now entered upon his cross-examination, the important features of which were as follows:—

“For what reason, Miss Ray,” he began, “did you suppose that child to be of ten years when she was only of seven years?”

“She was larger than the average Indian girl of ten and she showed a remarkable sense of responsibility in the care of her brother. She was well advanced, too, in her studies. I have never known any child of seven or eight to manifest the intelligence shown by this little girl.”

“You say she was nine or ten years old?”

“No, Mr. Prasad. What I say is, that I believe she must have been at least nine years of age, as she stated.”

“Oh, you believe, that is it? ‘How easy is a bush supposed a bear!’ as Shakespeare says. You believed the girl’s statement of her age, Miss Ray, not knowing that Hindu girls do not know their ages.”

The witness proceeded with great quietness to answer the implied question, while Sita looked at her with sympathy, the tenseness in her face showing her interest in the establishment of the point in question.

“I am quite aware, Mr. Prasad, of the fact that



birth records of girls of the lower castes are rarely kept, and that, as a rule, they do not know their ages. This I have learned in my ten years' experience in this country as a teacher. But Sita was positive. Had she been less so, I should have placed her age on my records for the reasons I have given, at ten years."

The barrister, when Miss Ray spoke of the rarity of girls' birth records among the lower castes half closed his eyes as he looked at her, a wary, questioning look on his face.

It lasted but an instant, but in that instant Mr. Chatterji had seen; and an almost imperceptible change came over his face, the shadow of a smile. This bright shadow Sita caught, and cognizant of the cause, became more confident.

"Girls neither know their ages nor the date of their birth," the counsel for the plaintiff said blusteringly, "and their testimony on this question is worthless, and of no account, absolutely and entirely worthless."

He went on with his interrogations, "You admit, Miss Ray, that you refused to give up the defendant to her mother, though she came for her repeatedly?"

"No," she replied, looking at her interlocutor, "I never refused to give her to her mother."

"How many times did you see the defendant's mother?"

"Once only."

"Where were you when she was told that the girl was dead?"

"I was here in Arampur, but was ill."



“You admit, then, that you were here at that time?” The barrister’s manner and tone suggested that he was about to compel the witness to make a compromising admission.

There was a slight flush upon Miss Ray’s face and her voice was lower than before, as she answered, “I have said that I was here.”

“You—ah, your servants—ah, made a—a mistake, —a small and slight mistake, in telling the defendant’s mother that her children—both her children—were dead?”

The witness explained that neither she nor her helpers had anything to do with the mistake.

“Indeed? And you made every effort, no doubt, took infinite and extraordinary trouble to correct the mistake?” The barrister’s soft voice insinuated disbelief.

“It was Mr. Gracie himself who discovered the error, and when he told me, I wrote at once to the little girl’s mother.”

Miss Ray bowed to the judge as she spoke his name.

“That was kind. And when her mother came to you, you doubtless urged her to take her daughter home?”

“I did not.”

“Indeed, and may I ask why not, when you had taken such marked and extreme pains to correct the—the—ah—error?”

“One reason was that the girl was in school, and that at her home she could have no school privileges.”

“So that was the reason you refused to let her go



and not that you might make her a Christian and a pervert from her country's religion?"

The flush upon Miss Ray's face deepened and her utterance was very distinct, and her voice, still pitched low as she said, looking straight at the barrister, "I did not refuse to let her go, and she had then been with me two and a half years, and had been a Christian for almost a year."

Mr. Prasad's eyes fell before Miss Ray's steadfast look.

"Will you tell us, and explain to us, then, Miss Sahib, what you did do to keep this girl?"

"The arrangements were all made for her to go with Tulsiabai, when I asked them to reconsider the matter, and told them why I thought it would be well for the child to remain."

"Wah! Does it not seem to you a strange and incomprehensible thing that the lonely, sorrowful mother, who had been separated from her little daughter, her only daughter, for near three years, should agree to a farther long separation? And that a child should so lose her affection that she would willingly consent to such an unnatural arrangement?"

"It was remarkable, most remarkable. Never in my life have I been more surprised."

"Indeed? And how, may I ask, do you account for this marvellous and unprecedented phenomenon?"

Miss Ray was silent a moment, then, with face alight, said in a tone that carried conviction:—

"I can account for it in but one way. It was God's



doing. God is able to do marvellous things. He had put into my heart a great love for this child, and a strong faith in her future; and He, at this time, I believe, put into my mouth the words that I should say, and He prepared the hearts of Tulsiabai and her daughter, to receive my words."

A solemn hush fell upon the little assembly, broken in a moment by the barrister. "You believe, then, that your God is opposed to this marriage?"

Miss Ray instantly began to reply, "I believe," she said, then paused, a shade of perplexity crossing her face. When she did speak, it seemed to Sita that she had in some way changed her answer, but her manner was again confident. "Certainly up to this time God has opposed the marriage."

"There certainly has been opposition from some quarters. Can you deny that you refused to give up the defendant to her husband?"

"I refused——"

"The witness admits refusing to give up the girl to her husband," cried the barrister triumphantly.

Mr. Chatterji was about to speak when the witness said, "No, Mr. Prasad, you misunderstand me. I admit refusing to give her up, upon Ram Chandra's demand. I do not admit that he is her husband. Moreover, in that interview with you and the *tahsildar's* elder son, I said that Sita should herself decide the matter and we arranged for a correspondence between her and the plaintiff. The letters can be produced."

"It is of no consequence," the barrister interrupted;



then he asked, "why you do not recognize the *shadi* as binding?"

"The first ceremony, as I understand it, is not a real marriage, but a promise of marriage. Then marriage among Hindus is a caste affair, and the fact of the girl's having become a Christian should annul the promise."

Ram Chandra's face darkened and his brother muttered under his breath.

After a whispered word to them the barrister questioned, "Miss Ray, did you not know the defendant was married, when she came to you?"

"She told me so, and she wore the wedding bracelet, and had the *shadi* mark on her forehead."

"Then why did you make her a Christian?"

"I could not, Mr. Prasad, make any one a Christian. Religion is not a matter, with us, of the kind of food or the manner of dress or of formal observances of any sort, but of faith. We teach the principles of our religion and preach Jesus, but each hearer must decide for himself whether or not he will accept as his Saviour the Saviour of the World."

"But you knew that this girl was married, that her husband might come for her? Why, then, did you teach her your religion?"

"I hoped that her people would come for her, and her brother. Hundreds of children came into my hands during that terrible famine, many of them little children whose pitiful cries for their mothers in the lonely night-time will sound in my ears while I live. And when surviving parents came for their little ones,



my heart was glad. When Tulsiabai came the first time, her daughter was still a Hindu, and her caste unbroken."

"*Achchha* [good]," some one said and several nodded their heads in approval.

"I had little expectation," Miss Ray went on, "after hearing Sita's story, of ever hearing from the plaintiff, and it was three years, yes, three and a half years after she came before he put in his claim for her. And as for teaching her religion, how could we teach other things and not the greatest thing of all?"

Hindus are, above all things, religious; and in the silence that followed Sita felt that there was approval of the teachers' course.

The silence was broken by a whispered consultation between Ram Chandra and his barrister, then the latter hesitatingly asked:—

"Do you not—ah—how much,—ah—what does the government pay you—how much apiece, for each convert to Christianity?"

Here the judge sternly interposed, "Whatever the ignorant may believe of that outrageous fabrication, educated men, Mr. Prasad, know that it is not true."

The barrister received the rebuke with humble apologies, "Please forgive, your honour. I beg many pardons, your honour,—but—this—this word concerning missionaries has come to me many times."

"It is false; the government is not concerned with mission work."

"I will surely remember. I beg pardon for my deleterious and egregious blunder. Miss Ray, will



you kindly state another of your reasons for refusing to recognize this marriage?"

"It was a child-marriage. The marriage contract was arranged by the parents when the girl was only six years old."

"When the girl was four years old. By their parents of course. But your religion, I am told, does not honour age."

"The Christian religion honours age but does not dishonour youth. Marriage, as we believe, is meant for adults and should not take place until the parties are old enough to decide for themselves, as they are the parties chiefly interested."

"So you think that the family and the caste community are not vitally interested in marriage?"

"Vitally interested, yes. But the community is best served by the perfecting of the individuals who make up the community."

"You would have a man to live selfishly for himself? You would have a man in his marriage to consider only himself? a woman to consider only her own wishes?"

"In any matter it is selfish to consider only one's self. Yet each has a right to opportunities for the fullest development. It is, I believe, to the highest interest of the individual and therefore of the community that in marriage the parties choose for themselves."

"Some, it seems, do not—ah—choose."

"Some do not choose," replied Miss Ray, only the tightening of her lips indicating that this shot had



told and had cruelly hurt, this reminder of the low esteem in which Hindus hold unmarried women.

“Some do not choose,” she repeated, “and though marriage is natural and right for most women, to make it compulsory, as is done here in India, is to rob a woman of her paramount inalienable right, is to make of her a slave of the lowest order. A woman is first of all a human being, and should be allowed to marry or not according to her own choice.

“There is a place,” she went on, “and a work for every one. Mine is with the girls God has given me to train. Most women find their places in their own homes, but every woman, whether married or not, should do what she can to make the world happier and better, and in the history of civilization no one has done more to make the whole world homelike than one who lived her life unmarried, Frances Willard.”

Some of those present had not heard of Frances Willard. But Miss Ray herself was well known and appreciated in the town and vicinity because of her several schools for their daughters as well as on account of her famine relief work. And in spite of the fact that Mr. Prasad had gone out of his way in his cross-examination to lessen the marked respect which was accorded her, she had come out of each contest with increased weight of respect. So Sita felt, and her heart was singing its joy.

But the barrister was to make one more effort. He now asked:—

“As to this marriage, Miss Ray, your scruples would doubtless be removed by the payment of the



money you have expended on the defendant. The *tahsildar* stands ready to make you a gift of three thousand rupees—for your schools, of course.”

Miss Ray looked at her interlocutor for an instant, then answered:—

“It has twice occurred in our orphanage when a parent of a half orphan has given us a child, and afterwards asked to have her back, that we have received from him the cost of her maintenance. But those were little girls and this is a different matter. From the *tahsildar* I will accept neither three thousand nor a lac of rupees. My Sita’s happiness is not for sale.”



## V

### THE ASTROLOGER

**T**HE heat and the crowd had made the courtroom unbearable and the judge now announced a short recess during which the windows were opened. The hot wind poured in, increasing the heat, indeed, but purifying the air. Those who had brought *sarais* of water, among them the missionaries, drank thirstily; but those who were unprovided hurried outside and drank with eagerness, while a water carrier filled their *lotas* or poured into their hands a stream of life-giving water.

Ram Chandra's great-uncle, who had been asleep among his cushions, now awakened with a loud yawn, and, stretching himself, plaintively called for water.

Sita heard and observed that the young man who had started out called out to the attendant, "Wait on him," and then hastened with his brother and barrister to the next room. Following the group with her eyes, she saw Krishna Rao put something in his mouth, while his brother protested angrily.

Again when she looked she saw her solicitor in consultation with Abdul Khan. To her annoyance he had been in constant attendance upon the trial. She now inquired of Mr. Chatterji as to who he was.

"He is the brother of your solicitor and is much



interested in the case. It was he who discovered that your mother had left the town."

Sita was at first distressed to learn that she had for an aid such a man, but presently remembered his quarrel with Ram Chandra, and his threat. "It is for revenge," she thought, "but I wish I had no such aid."

After the recess the counsel for the defence recalled as the next witness the purohit.

"You are, I understand, an astrologer as well as a priest?"

"I am." The witness spoke with pride, his head thrown back beyond the perpendicular. In spite of the heat he appeared cool in his white drapery.

"What have you to say, purohit-ji, as to the age of the defendant? Do you know her age?"

"I know. She is of fourteen years."

"What was her age when the *shadi* took place?"

"She was of four years."

"What can you say definitely in regard to the plaintiff's family giving aid to the family of the defendant?"

"Ram Chandra's father gave money several times."

"Can you mention any of the times?"

"Remembrance is not."

"Surely out of a number of times you can remember one or two?"

"He sends the boy to school."

"Yes. What else? Try to remember what Ram Chandra's father did for the family. Are you sure he gave them money? Do you know it?"



“ I know it. I was present.”

“ When were you present? On what occasion? ”

“ Remembrance is not.”

“ Think a little, purohit-ji. You are so positive about the matter. Surely there will come to you some remembrance of the circumstances.”

Mr. Chatterji fixed his keen eyes on the face of the witness, who looked persistently toward Ram Chandra.

Sita, following his gaze, saw that he was tensely alert. His uncle nodded uneasily. She looked toward Krishna Rao and saw that he was fast asleep, his head resting on the back of his chair. “ It was opium that he took. I thought so,” she said to herself.

“ Purohit-ji,” said the barrister, after further parley, and he waited until the eyes of the witness met his, then held his gaze with his own, “ Purohit-ji,” he repeated, “ doing kindness, allow me to remind you that there is a very great difference between giving money and paying money, and to call payment of money a gift is nothing less than *jhuti sakshi* [perjury].”

“ I protest; this is threatening and intimidation and against a holy man,” the plaintiff’s counsel interrupted.

“ Your honour,” Mr. Chatterji replied, turning to the judge, “ I protest against this charge. Intimidation has for its purpose to deter from speaking the truth, and my sole aim is to assist the memory of this holy man in order to bring out the truth.”

“The court does not understand that the counsel for the defendant has used intimidation,” the judge declared.

Mr. Chatterji continued his cross-examination:—

“Doing favour, purohit-ji, answer me this question: was the money the plaintiff’s father gave to the defendant’s father in the nature of a gift, or was it payment for property?”

The priest’s face had darkened with anger and he did not at once make answer.

“It—part was payment,” he said presently.

“For what purpose?”

“For cattle. The *tahsildar* bought some of the pandit’s cattle when he could find no purchaser.”

“Anything else?”

“For—fields.”

“Anything else?”

“Remembrance is not.”

“You say part was payment. What was the other part?”

“Part was gifts.”

“How much was the gift money, and on what occasion was it paid?”

“Remembrance is not.”

“Doing favour, purohit-ji, endeavour to remember; the plaintiff’s barrister has made a point of the *tahsildar*’s generosity. So far his generosity has appeared in a peculiar light, as one who took advantage of his friend in time of famine to secure his property at a nominal price. Have you anything further to say?”



After a silence the astrologer replied, "I remember—one time—the gift was a hundred rupees."

"When was that given?"

"When the girl's father was ill."

"Was it before she left home?"

"Yes."

"How long before?"

"Eight, ten days."

"Were you present and did you see Ram Chandra's father give the defendant's father one hundred rupees?"

"I was present and I saw."

"Did you see the defendant's father take the money?"

The witness was silent. After a repetition of the question, he answered, "I saw the *tahsildar* offer him the money."

"Did you see the girl's father receive the money?"

"I—I—remembrance is not." The priest looked in the direction of Ganga Prasad, his eyes snapping with anger.

"For what purpose was the gift?"

"Some proposal about the *shadi*. Remembrance is not. But the boy's father offered the girl's father a present of a hundred rupees."

"This handsome present pleased the sick man, no doubt?"

"No, the ingrate was angry."

"He was angry, yet he agreed to the proposal and received the money?"

"I object, this is intimidation and persecution,"

cried the counsel for the plaintiff, but without effect upon the judge.

“Remembrance is not.” The witness’s face was bathed in perspiration.

“Did he receive the money?”

“It—it is not known to me.”

“Did you see him take the money?”

“I was not looking continually.”

“Did you see him take the money?”

“I—did not see,” the witness answered with hesitation and a glance at Krishna Rao, whose angry mutterings Ganga Prasad made obvious efforts to restrain.

“Why did the defendant leave home?”

“It is not known to me.”

“You say that you are an astrologer. Are you the officiating priest in the family of the defendant’s people?”

“I am.”

“Were you the officiating astrologer in the family in the time of the Pandit Janak?”

“I was. I cast his horoscope.”

“And did you cast the horoscope for his children?”

“I did for his sons.”

“Did you caste the horoscope for his daughter?”

“I did not.”

“It is many years, perhaps you may recall——”

“I cast no horoscope for the girl.”

“Are you sure then about her age?”

“Sure. She is of fourteen years.”

“Do you know her age when she left home?”



“ She was of seven years.”

“ She was then seven years old, when the *tahsildar* made his proposition. About this proposition we will learn more presently. Now, purohit-ji, will you tell the court whether or not it is the custom for a Rajput girl of seven years to go to live in the house of her father-in-law? ”

The rasping of the pankha rope grew loud in the silence, while the perspiration streamed from the face of the witness as he looked in vain for aid from the plaintiff's barrister.

“ It—it is not unknown, and in some parts of the country——”

“ It is a sad fact, but do you know of any such case in Central Provinces? ”

“ I knew a case where the father was dead, where the girl was about that age.”

“ One case—and the girl ‘about that age.’ That will do.”

The day's work ending with a word from Mr. Chatterji as its finishing touch, left Sita strong in hope. In marked contrast with the depression of the previous afternoon and the anxious strain of the morning was the confident uplift of her mood. And as they drove homeward the droning beat of the *tamtams* well-nigh escaped her notice.

When, on alighting from the tonga at the bungalow, she made her salaams to Miss Ray she attributed the unfading flush upon her cheeks to nothing more than excitement. Then, too, when Sita had first known



her, the teacher's cheeks had been habitually rosy, and so her colour now did not strike her as unnatural.

But when, early in the evening, Dr. Doran came to her with the word that Miss Ray would retire at once, the girl's heart for a moment misgave her. She brightened, however, when the doctor told her she had brought for her a good-night message, and an invitation to come to her room early in the morning.

"It is all right," Sita said, "she surely needs rest to-night. But, oh, I hope this heat will not make her ill."

"It will be best for her to save her strength for to-morrow, 'triumph day,' she calls it."

"Triumph day it will be," the girl answered with a confident smile.

Prayer time that evening was a little prolonged. The Bible verses recited were concerning courage and confidence and several of the girls prayed for their comrade.

After this she went with several of them to the bungalow, to join the missionaries and the pandita in the evening songs, and again there were prayers for Sita. When a number of songs had been sung she asked for "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

"The music was left at Miss Ashton's," replied Miss Vernon.

"I could play it," said Miss Harmon, "if we had the words."

"I think I can repeat most of the words," Sita stated, and then after a moment's thought, her face



changing expression, indicating her appreciation, she recited.

“ Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,  
 He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath  
     are stored,  
 He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword,  
     His truth is marching on.

“ I have seen Him in the watchfires of a hundred circling camps,  
 They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and  
     damps,  
 I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps,  
     His day is marching on.

“ I have read a fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel,  
 As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall  
     deal.  
 Let the Hero born of woman crush the serpent with his heel,  
     Since God is marching on.

“ He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat ;  
 He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat,  
 Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him, be jubilant, my feet.  
     Our God is marching on.

“ In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,  
 With the glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me ;  
 As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free.  
     While God is marching on.”

At the conclusion of the song Sita went out into the orphanage compound, where she remained until bedtime walking among the trees.

## VI

### TULSIABAI'S TESTIMONY

**T**HE next morning when Sita awoke, the words of the hymn seemed still sounding in her ears and the keynote of her morning prayer was, "Be swift, my soul, to answer Him; be jubilant, my feet!"

When a little later she went to Miss Ray's room, Dr. Doran met her on the veranda, to tell her the fact that could no longer be kept from her, that Miss Ray had been quite ill with fever. She was, however, now free from fever, and sleeping, the doctor said comfortingly, and would see Sita when she woke.

A half hour later Miss Ray called and the girl went to her.

"Miss Sahib-ji, mama-ji," she said with a quiver in her voice as she looked at the white drawn face.

"Salaam, Sitabai," answered her teacher, and the 'bai' steadied the girl,—“I am all right now, dear, I have had no fever for several hours, and I have slept, so I shall be in fine shape for the *kacheri*, never fear.”

"But you ought not to go out in the sun. You ought to be in bed to-day."

"I am able to go, and I must not fail you to-day



of all days. God willing, daughter, I will stay with you through it all."

"Beloved mama-ji, I don't know how I could do without you, but—you must not go unless the doctor says so."

"She has consented."

"Mama-ji," Sita said presently, "do you know that I have seen my mother and I think she will be on my side?"

The young girl sat by the bedside of her friend and from her smile drank in courage while they held each other's hand and talked. Miss Ray said at last:—

"Have no fear, daughter, of what is before you to-day. This promise is for you: '*I will give you in that day the words that you should speak.*'"

When the mission party reached the *kacheri* at eleven o'clock they saw with surprise that there were standing in groups about the building, a crowd of perhaps three hundred men. Mr. Ashley, meeting the tonga, remarked Miss Ray's pallor and hurried the party inside. There they found waiting a number of missionaries, including Mr. and Mrs. Ashley. All greeted Sita cheerily.

"We came," Mrs. Ashley said, smiling, "to put you in heart. But I see you don't need us."

"Indeed, I am truly grateful for your coming. Your presence and your hopeful faces help me more than I can say."

Mr. Chatterji here joined the group bringing with him Siva Charan, Anjit Rao, and a stranger, Mr. Muzoomdar, a Parsee, from Bombay.



After greetings were exchanged the latter said to Sita, "I am proud indeed to meet a young woman so brave as to take the stand you have taken, and I hope, I strongly desire, daughter, that you will win your case."

"Your hope is my hope."

The Parsee after some conversation with the missionaries began conversing with Mr. Chatterji and other native gentlemen.

"This is the Hindu woman's friend," observed the pandita. "It was he who took the initiation in the child-marriage reform movement which resulted in the making the minimum marriageable age of girls twelve instead of ten years. He went to England several times to place the matter before the British people."

"I have heard many times," Sita answered, looking at the Parsee. He was asking Mr. Chatterji about the chances of the case.

"The chances are good," was the reply, "we have a strong case and an excellent man for judge."

"She would have no chance at all with a Hindu judge."

"None, unless he were one of the few reformers."

"Hindus would consider it divorce, and they would not grant a wife divorce or even separation on any grounds whatever."

"There have been cases," answered Mr. Chatterji, "decided in favour of the girl, by English judges." Then he said something about the judges fearing to antagonize the people.



“The people are illiterate and fools,” cried Anjit Rao, the editor of *The Indian World*.

“True talk. We must depend upon the educated,” assented Siva Charan.

“If our learned men,” Mr. Chatterji said, “were not so timid and if they had less prejudice against Western ideas, and would co-operate with the missionaries, the problem would be the sooner solved.”

“Co-operation, that is what we need,” replied Mr. Muzoomdar. “Co-operation of all with the missionaries and with all the friends of social reform.”

“The government could easily make a law to raise the age to sixteen at once,” cried Siva Charan.

“The government should keep hands off,” protested Anjit Rao. “This is no matter for government interference. Our people will not stand it. The reform must come from within, from our educated Hindus.”

“But reformation,” Mr. Chatterji went on to say, “is a slow process anywhere and must be especially so in India, unless our people will put aside their prejudices, and make common cause with the missionaries and the government officials.”

“That is it,” said the Parsee, “united effort is the great thing. Your paper, Mr. Editor, is doing great service.”

“Oh, thank you,” Anjit Rao responded deprecatingly. “I fear we are perhaps not doing very much. But my friends are good enough and kind enough to give me much praise, too much praise.”



"Who are those men coming in?" inquired the Parsee.

"They are the *tahsildar's* sons, the one in that scarlet vest is representing the father of the plaintiff in the case; the younger is the plaintiff, and the other is his barrister."

"That thundercloud the plaintiff? I hope he won't get that fine girl."

"I hope so, too," said the editor.

"I am glad you appreciate the situation, gentlemen," said Mr. Chatterji. Then, turning to the editor, "But it is not the girls you plead for in your advocacy of a riper age for marriage."

"No, that is a minor consideration. I take the men on the practical side, urging immature motherhood as the cause of the physical degeneracy of our people."

"Yes, the selfish side is the practical side, and it is wonderful how that argument is winning its way."

Mr. Stafford and Mr. Ashley joined the group, and Mr. Chatterji seized the opportunity of speaking to Sita.

"I am glad to see you so brave this morning."

"I have no fear now. Does not the Lord reign?"

"Keep that spirit. And let me warn you again not to let the tactics of the opposing barrister bring a shadow to your face. He will say ugly things, but remember that he thinks nothing about you personally, and cares only to win his case. In your replies remember that you, to-day, represent India's daughters,



India's women, struggling for their liberty, and tiny girls too weak to struggle."

"And remember," said Mr. Ashley, who had approached while they talked, "remember that to-day you stand for the Christ, and against Hinduism, and that in God's own time His Son must conquer the world."

The words brought to Sita's mind the words of the song, "He hath sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat, our God is marching on."

Here Judge Gracie entered the room and Sita noted with concern that he wore an anxious expression, which, however, disappeared as he bowed to acquaintances.

Sita was just entering the courtroom, when, looking back she saw her mother come in. She hurried toward her and whispered, "So glad, so glad, my mother, dear"; then rejoined Miss Ray.

"The next witness we have to examine," Mr. Chatterji began after the opening of court, "is Tulsiabai."

Ganga Prasad, upon hearing this announcement, lost, for the first time, his air of assurance, and he and his clients whispered and glowered menacingly upon the woman as she entered the room. But the veiled woman did not see. There was no sound, this time, of tinkling bells, for Tulsiabai was now attended by her son only.

"Now, Tulsiabai," Mr. Chatterji's voice was kind and respectful, "we shall have to ask you a few questions, but shall not be long. Give direct answers, and



do not be afraid. Will you please tell us, Tulsiabai, why you started to return home night before last, when I had said I wished to question you?"

"I—he—they sent me."

"Who sent you?"

"The sons of the *tahsildar*."

Krishna Rao muttered angrily.

"The sons of the *tahsildar*," repeated Mr. Chatterji, looking at the judge. "No doubt they had good reasons. Now, Tulsiabai, will you tell why your son and daughter left home during the famine?"

"Barrister-ji," she replied, a note of pain coming into her voice, "their father was ill a long time. Until many months he was unable to cause the boys to read, and we became very poor. For this we sent our children away to get food."

"Did not Pandit Janak own a house and fields?"

"Ji, and sheep, and five cows."

"What became of your cattle and lands?"

"We sold them. We could not feed the cattle after the first year of famine."

"To whom did you sell them?"

"To the father,—to the *tahsildar*," the witness said after a little hesitation.

"All of them?"

"Ji."

"And did not the sale of the cattle and fields bring you enough to buy food?"

"For a time; but fields have little value in famine times, and the cattle brought almost nothing."

"And then?"



“When only one cow and the food of twenty days remained, we sent away the boy and the girl. We kept the littlest.” The pain left the woman’s voice as she spoke of the son at her side.

“Of what age was the little one when you sent the other children away?”

“He was of three years, barrister-ji.”

“And the other son, the one who went with his sister, how old was he?”

“It was Mohan Lal who went away—to return no more. He was of five years, almost. He came to us in the rains.”

“How old was your daughter when she went away?”

“She was of nine years.”

“Lying word,” Krishna Rao muttered repeatedly.

“It is nothing,” Mr. Prasad said to him in an audible undertone. “To whom are girls’ ages known?”

When the judge had demanded order, Mr. Chatterji asked: “Did you have only the three children, mother of Janak Ram?”

“We had four, but the other quickly passed away.”

“Was this child a boy or a girl?”

“A boy, our first son.”

“How old was your daughter when this son was born?”

“She was then of two years.”

“A question, please,” said Ganga Prasad. “How do you know her age? Do you remember it?”

“I know well. Our first born, though a daughter,



was a welcome child, and her father had her horoscope cast, and we had a big dinner every year on the day of her birth."

The astrologer sat where Sita could see him and a perturbed expression, she fancied, rested for a moment on his face.

"And where," the barrister inquired brusquely, "where is this horoscope?"

"*Hài, hòi!* Word of sorrow! It is not known to me. We kept it in a little brass box, but when her father was ill it disappeared. I have asked for the records, but found nothing."

"Ah! Are you sure that the horoscope was not a figment of your imagination?"

"I am sure. The—it was consulted before the *shadi* was decided on."

"Wah! Among girls it is only daughters of priests and kings who have horoscopes cast. That is a wonderful and marvellous tale you have told us, a dream, a vision, no doubt. And, mother of Janak Ram, you know the exact time of this girl's birth, and how old she was when each of her brothers were born, and, at the same time, of her *shadi*, and her leaving home? Wah! It is highly probable for an illiterate woman. But pardon! Perhaps you are learned?"

The brow-beating barrister waited.

Like one detected in a crime, Tulsiabai replied with anxious hesitancy, "I—I used to read."

"*Arè!* This is indeed a surprise! It is small wonder, then, that you are a widow." The lawyer's



allusion was to the old Hindu belief that if a woman learn to read, her husband will die.

Tulsiabai shivered and swayed as from a blow. Janak Ram frowned at the barrister and stepped nearer to his mother's side.

"Mother," said Sita softly.

Tulsiabai now stood firmly though her voice trembled as she answered, "It is not true. That did not cause his death. He wished me to read and it was he himself taught me."

"Wah! trouble always comes to learned women."

Mr. Chatterji now went on with his cross-examination.

"To what caste do you belong, Tulsiabai?"

"I am a Rajputni."

"And Pandit Janak, was he of the same caste?"

"He was a Rajput of the purest blood; he was of the line of King Janak."

"Good. Now, will you tell me who compared your daughter's horoscope with that of the plaintiff to determine whether or not the signs were auspicious for their marriage?"

"It—it was an astrologer."

"Certainly. But what is the name of that astrologer?"

The witness was silent, and the trembling of the hand which hung at her side became more pronounced.

"Is the astrologer now present?" asked the barrister after several unsuccessful attempts to elicit a reply.

But the counsel for the plaintiff objected to the question and the judge sustained the objection.

He, however, told the witness that she need not fear and that it was necessary that she give the desired information. And thus urged, she finally admitted that Ram Dev was the man.

"Lying talk," cried Krishna Rao.

And the astrologer, when Sita looked in his direction, glared at her in a way that made her doubt the judge's statement to her mother that she need have no fear.

"Now, about the pandit, Tulsiabai. How long did he live after the children left home?"

"About four months."

"Did you, during this time, have enough to eat?"

"Enough to keep us alive, the boy and me. Ram Janak's father's brothers helped us or we should have all died."

"Did Pandit Janak's appetite keep good? Did his food please him?"

"After we had sold our land, he said he could not eat. I thought then, it was disease, but afterwards I knew in my heart that it was because there was not enough for us all that he refused to eat. He died that I and our children might remain alive."

Ram Janak's chin quivered and for a moment he turned his back upon the assembly.

Sita buried her face in her hands.

"Did no one help you?" Mr. Chatterji questioned in a husky voice, after a short silence.



“ Ram Janak’s uncles helped us, but they, too, had lost most of their property and could do but little.

“ Did no one else help you? ”

“ No one.”

“ Lying talk! My father helped,” Krishna Rao interrupted wrathfully.

“ Order in court,” the judge commanded.

Krishna Rao and Ganga Prasad consulted in a whisper, then the latter asked permission to put a question to the witness. His request being granted, he inquired in an insistent, persuasive manner, “ Mother of Ram Janak, do you not remember the *tahsildar’s* kindness to your son and his kind offer to Ram Janak’s father? ”

“ He has sent Ram Janak to school.”

“ What else? ”

“ Nothing else.”

“ Think, woman. You can remember well enough what the missionaries did. It is a fine tale you tell about leaving your daughter in the mission to study.”

“ Her father wished her to become learned, and she——”

“ What did Miss Ray give you that she might keep your daughter? ”

“ Not anything. She has fed my daughter and clothed her, and educated her all these years,—it is for me to give her money.”

“ Can you deny that your daughter has given you money? ”

“ I have no wish to deny it.”

“Wah! So the missionaries gave her the money to give you! It is all one. How much did she give you?”

“She gave me, the first time I went to Arampur, a silver piece of *char anna* [four annas], all she had,—and I have never spent it; I have it still.”

“What else?”

“The *sari* I am wearing.”

“Indeed? And when did she give you that?”

“Six months since,—after the first trial.”

“And what did she give you this time?”

“Not anything.”

“Now tell me what Miss Ray has given you?”

“Nothing at all.”

“Some witnesses have convenient memories. Try now to remember what Ram Chandra's father did.”

“Not anything.”

“Surely you can remember the magnificent gift, one hundred rupees, which Ram Chandra's father gave to the girl's father before she left home.”

“I have not forgotten.” The timid note passed from the voice of the witness, and she spoke with marked dignity and firmness. “I have not forgotten the offer he made. It was an offer that her father could not accept.”

“Why not?”

“Her father believed child-marriage a bad custom, and he made a contract when the marriage was arranged that she should not go to the house of her father-in-law before she was of twelve years. This is according to law, but——”



“Never mind extraneous and outside matters, tell about the gift.”

“It was according to law, but this law was then new and some of our caste people did not obey it. The *tahsildar* did not favour the law. When Ram Janak’s father was ill—after he had lost everything—he came to him about the marriage.”

“Who came?”

“Ram Chandra’s father.”

“And the *tahsildar* gave him a hundred rupees?”

“He offered the little girl’s father a hundred rupees on the condition that he would consent for her to go at once to live in his family.”

“A gift of one hundred rupees! Think of it. Who could forget such generosity and magnanimity?” and the barrister sat down.

“Tulsiabai, what did the Pandit Janak say to the *tahsildar*’s proposal?” asked Mr. Chatterji.

“He had fever that day and he became agitated. ‘My daughter,’ he said, ‘has not reached the legal marriage age and she is not to go to your house until she does’; and then Ram Chandra’s father said, ‘That is no matter. You can swear that she is of twelve years, the Sirkar has no right to change our marriage laws which are thousands of years old. Ten years has been our law and Sita is far past nine, and a fine large girl, she is as large as any *Angrezi* [English] girl of nine years.’” Tulsiabai stopped a moment, then continued, “Ram Janak’s father sat right up in bed. Great fear struck me when I saw him so excited. His eyes shone with the brightness of fever and he spoke



with great force. 'And what would a Sahib say if a man proposed to marry his nine-year-old daughter? He would think him *pagal* [crazy]. *Angrezi-log* [English people] do not marry off their daughters until they are of eighteen years or more. They would think a girl nine or ten better dead than married. And they are quite right, too. Child-marriage is an abominable custom, and I told you so when we made the *shadi*. We Hindus are *pagal* to ruin our girls by marrying them off when they are mere children; it ruins the girls, and it ruins the race.' "

"And then what happened?" questioned Mr. Chatterji, after waiting a moment.

"The *tahsildar* said: 'It is not marriage that is proposed, but only that the girl shall live in my house.' And then Ram Janak's father said: 'It is all one and you know it.' Here the *tahsildar* grew very angry. 'If you mean to imply,' he said, 'that my cousin's wife did not die of cholera——!' But Ram Janak's father interrupted: 'I mean that you could not protect my little daughter,—' and with his voice very low, he spoke straight to the *tahsildar*. 'I will not consent for my daughter to be married or to visit your house a day before she is of twelve years—not if we all starve.' "

The rasping of the *pankha* rope was the only sound heard in the courtroom.

Mr. Chatterji broke the silence with the question:—

"What answer did the *tahsildar* make?"

"He said 'Starve then,' and he went away cursing. He never came again."



## VII

### SITA SPEAKS FOR HERSELF

**D**URING the recess which followed Tulsiabai's testimony, a richly appareled *chaprassi* entered the courtroom, and, the crowd making way, walked haughtily to the judge's desk, when, salaaming low, he delivered to him a letter.

Mr. Chatterji studied the judge's face as he read until its perplexity was reflected in his own. Twice the judge stopped and looked out of a window at the crowd. The barrister followed his glance, then spoke with the solicitor, who immediately left the room.

These things Sita saw unheeding, for her mind was upon her mother's words. She remained so occupied until she heard her name. Her solicitor was talking with his brother back of the mission group.

"She will speak at once," he said in an undertone, "and if you go outside you'll lose your place. Those college boys are crowding in."

"Then I'll stick it out, though I am dying of thirst," she heard Abdul Khan reply.

Sita felt neither the heat nor the thirst, but she drank freely of the water passed her; then, as order was recalled, responded to the pressure of Miss Ray's hand. At the same instant her solicitor took his seat by his chief, as he said:—



“The letter was from the Chief Commissioner. He is now in the adjoining *tahsil*.”

Sita was now called to the stand, and with a touch of Miss Ray's hand and a look into Kamliabai's face, took her place. She wore a light-coloured cotton skirt and jacket, over which, almost concealing the dress, was gracefully draped a fresh *sari* of white mull. Her only ornaments were a half dozen silver bangles of Indian workmanship. Upon her feet were low leather shoes. Her style of dress, with the exception of her shoes, did not differ noticeably from that of her Hindu sisters. Hindu women do not, as a rule, wear shoes; and leather shoes are among the orthodox, taboo.

Her face was unveiled and, as she felt the gaze of the crowd, hostile for the most part, centred upon her, her heart misgave her, and with ashen face she cast her eyes upon the floor.

However, when a Bible was given her upon which to make her oath, she clasped it in both her hands and, without a tremor in her voice, responded with marked solemnity. The ordeal of the trial had given to Sita added womanliness, and she had never looked more beautiful or more a king's daughter, than when, still holding the book, she raised her eyes and allowed herself to meet, for an instant, the gaze of her betrothed. His brow was clouded, but in that instant there came into his face a startled look, a realization, she thought, of the gulf that lay between them.

“Tell your story, Sitabai, in your own way,” Mr. Chatterji requested.



“Ji,” she replied, with a glance about the room, which revealed to her that there were present, including the college boys, about twenty of her friends.

Then, looking at the mission group, she began. She spoke quietly and simply of her happy home life, of her marriage, of the famine, of her father’s illness and misfortunes; of her journey to Arampur with her brother; of his death; of the long waiting time for word from her sick father; of her mother’s first coming, and her own sore grief over the false report that had left her desolate and sent her mother away sorrowing. The girl retained her self-command throughout the recital of her story, while only the sympathetic glance at her mother and brother, who still remained in the room, and the modulations of her voice, evidenced the depth of its meaning to her. When she came to speak of her life in the orphanage, and of the school in Arampur and in Calcutta, a slight smile brightened her face, as she looked at Miss Ray and the pandita.

“Did your father send you to the mission orphanage?” questioned Ganga Prasad, when she had concluded.

“No, barrister-ji. He knew about it and told me it was a good place; but we were not orphans, and he expected to get well and to take us home in a few weeks. For this reason he sent us to the relief works of the Sirkar; I expected to do coolie work to support my brother.”

“Did you do coolie work?”

“I did not. My brother was ill and Miss Ray said



it was not necessary for me to work. She said that I was a little girl, and my brother needed me. I thought my father—I mean some day to pay back the Sirkar and the mission.”

“What did Miss Ray have to do with the government relief work?”

“When we went she had charge of all the famine children—the girls. The year before, the Sirkar had so much relief work that they had to send many of the girls and boys out to the jungle during the day with only a servant to look after them; and so Miss Ray offered to look after the girls until the end of the famine.”

“How many Christians did she make among the government wards?”

“Not one. She did not teach us her religion but looked after our food and clothing and gave us good talk. I asked her one day to tell me about her religion, but she said that she could not; that the Sirkar prohibited it.”

“Good talk,” several commented in an undertone, and there were many oblique nods of the head.

Mr. Ganga Prasad proceeded to inquire about her “detention” in the Arampur mission orphanage.

Sita’s replies confirmed the testimony of her mother and Miss Ray, and cleared the latter of all blame.

“Your mother,” the barrister stated, “and your husband, by visits and letters, have many times and repeatedly commanded you to return to your home that arrangements might be made for your second



marriage ceremony. Can you deny that the missionaries kept from you these visits and these orders?"

"They did not."

"You cannot deny that they broke your caste?"

"I was only a child. Yet, with Miss Ray's consent, I clung to every caste observance, even after we, the unclaimed government wards, were turned over by the Sirkar to the mission orphanage. I cooked my own food until long after my father's—until there was no longer hope that there was one beside my mother among all my caste people who cared whether I lived or died."

With deep grief for her father's cruel death and bitter memories of her childhood's sufferings written upon her face, Sita looked at her betrothed.

Ram Chandra moved uneasily, and, unable to endure her accusing eyes, turned toward his barrister.

"And then?" Ganga Prasad went on.

"Then I voluntarily ate of the orphanage food and put behind me all remembrance of my false friends."

"And so," cried the barrister, with an air of triumph, "the honourable missionaries did give you of their food, and did break your caste just as I have said."

From the mocking face of Ganga Prasad, who was now taking his seat, Sita looked appealingly to the benignant countenance of Judge Gracie.

"Sitabai," Mr. Chatterji now asked, "about your life at home again; when your father was ill, how did you live?"

"It was hard. We ate trouble at that time."



“Did you really suffer from the famine? Did you ever go hungry?”

“While I was at home, we always had one meal a day.”

“Was there no one to help you?”

“My father’s people did what they could.”

“Did no one else help your father?”

“No one.”

“May I ask,” interrupted the opposing barrister, “how a little child could know that?”

“I would surely have known. My father always liked me to be with him, and since I was his eldest child, he talked to me a great deal. And when we had but one meal a day, I asked him, daily, if help had come. Then when my mother and father decided to send my brother and me away, we did not want to go away, and leave father ill. And so he called me to him one evening, and talked to me a long, long time. He was not like other Hindus and, though I was a girl, he always explained to me the reasons of things. That evening he called me his big girl, his clever daughter,—that was because I could read,—then he explained to me that nearly everything was gone, and that soon there would be no food for mother and Janak Ram, if Mohan Lal and I did not go away to a relief station.”

The girl’s voice lost its firmness, and her lips trembled at the last, and when, upon speaking his name, she looked toward her mother and brother in the back of the room, her eyes were bright with unshed tears.



“Father said he would come for us,” she continued, “in the rains, just as soon as he was able. I have remembered the last part of the talk just as he said it, his voice breaking with love and sadness: ‘I know,’ he said, ‘that my learned daughter will understand and be brave; for, unless help comes, there is no other way, beloved; no other way.’”

“A marvellous memory has the learned defendant.”

“How soon after that did you go?” asked Mr. Chatterji in a matter-of-fact tone which at once restored Sita’s wavering composure.

“After five days.”

“You were of what age then?”

“Of nine years and four months.”

“What was your age at the time of your *shadi*?”

“I was of six years.”

“May I ask a question,” inquired the plaintiff’s barrister. “Will the ‘learned’ defendant be so kind as to tell how she can recall her age with such assurance when she was a little child, only of four years when the *shadi* took place?”

Sita set her lips together for a moment, and then replied, “I have explained that my father called me learned in play, because I was the only girl in Raj Gaon who could read, and to give me courage. I do not remember my age at the time of the *shadi*. What I do remember is what my father said about it.”

“Ah! she does not remember her age,” commented Mr. Prasad.

“Sitabai, please tell us what your father said,” requested her counsel.



The girl waited a little, then said: "These were the words—his last words—my father said, when I went to say salaam to him, 'Sita, daughter, you know your *shadi-walla's* father is wealthy. He can give you food, and milk, and fruits, and sweets; he can give you fine *saris* and rare jewels. And he will do this for you, if I consent to your going to his house to live. But I will not consent, not until you are twelve years.' Then he asked me how old I was, and when I said nine years, he said, 'Nine years and four months, daughter; you came to us, by the favour of God, in the cold season. Remember, beloved, that your *shadi* was three years since, and remember that the second ceremony must not come until you are of twelve years.' He charged me again and again, and made me say it after him, so many times that I have never forgotten. And that is how I know that I was six years old when the *shadi* was made."

"Amazing!" cried the opposing barrister; "What a wonderful and astonishing imagination—Ah! memory."

Mr. Chatterji appealed to the judge, who pronounced Ganga Prasad's sallies out of order.

"Sitabai," said her barrister, "your mother has lost track of your horoscope. Do you know anything about it?"

"Ji; I have my horoscope. It was my father's last gift." Sita, as she spoke, opened a small brass box and displayed a paper upon which were pictures and writing. "When he gave it to me, my mother was out cooking," she explained.



There was a stir of excitement in the room as Sita's solicitor took from her the horoscope and handed it to the judge. Ram Chandra muttered, his brother cursed, and the priest grew ashy pale. Even Ganga Prasad for a moment looked nonplussed. Then, with great serenity, he said, "It is of no consequence. It is not at all likely to be a true horoscope." Then he asked of the witness, "You admit this much, that your father arranged for the consummation of the marriage, when you were of twelve years, and that you are now two years past that."

"I am four years past that."

"Wah! You say so, and yet you despise your husband's and your parent's commands. This, your new religion teaches you, no doubt, as well as to call your people 'heathen.'"

"Never have I heard missionaries use that word. They say Hindus, polytheists, and, sometimes, idolators; because our people have forgotten, and in the place of the glorious revelations, have accepted foolishness."

"Our religion does not allow a woman even to read the sacred books," Ganga Prasad commented in a tone of irritation.

"Yet it has come to my ears, barrister-ji," Sita replied, after a moment of silence, "that there are hymns in the Vedas written by women."

"True talk," said the editor of *The Indian World*. "True talk," said Kamliabai. And two of the college professors echoed the words.

The barrister looked annoyed and said, sarcas-



tically, "The defendant is learned. She is a pandita."

"Oh, no, I am only a learner. I have studied Sanscrit less than three years. But my teacher is in truth a pandita," Sita replied, looking confidently at Kamliabai.

"Perhaps you have learned how our sacred books regard women?"

"I have learned. There are some fine things; such as, 'Where women are honoured, there the gods are pleased, but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields reward.' But Manu says, too, that, 'A wife who has committed faults may be beaten with a rope or a split bamboo.'"

"Good, entirely correct," muttered Krishna Rao, and there were several who gave approving sidewise nods of the head.

Into Sita's face there came a look of repulsion and resistance. After a moment her brow cleared, but her lips were firmly set, as she continued:—

"The Christian religion is different."

"Do you mean to say that no Christian man beats his wife?"

"There are men who wear the Christian name, who yet beat and maltreat their wives. But our Sacred Book gives no sanction to the outrage, as do the Hindu Shastras. There are, in the Hindu sacred books, things about women so bad that my lips refuse to frame the words."

"The Christian religion, no doubt, places the men in a subordinate position?"



Sita's face lighted up, as she replied: "Not subordinate, but our Sacred Book says, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female.' Christians nations hold women in the highest honour. They are made the equals of men socially and religiously. A Christian woman is not expected to stand fanning her husband while he eats and then eat his leavings in another apartment. In the Christian home the wife sits with her husband at meals, and he causes the servants to wait upon her first."

Sita's voice showed excitement, but she kept her eyes on the floor as she said with evident effort, "Respect and friendship between a man and wife are approved by the Christian religion, and it used to be so among our people. In the Ramayana, Rama says to Sita, 'You are my companion in virtue, and dearer to me than life.' In ancient times the girls were not married when children—and—and they—they were allowed to—to—choose their husbands as Christian women do now."

Krishna Rao muttered wrathfully and Ram Chandra's face was, as usual, black with anger.

"Perhaps—perhaps," interrupted Ganga Prasad, in his oiliest tone, "the defendant has reason for desiring the abrogation and nullification of this marriage; she is free, not *purdah* like our modest—ah,—over-modest Hindu women, and she goes about with her charming face unveiled. She is not a child, and she has seen many men. No doubt,—perhaps,—possibly, she has already made her choice



of a husband from among Christian—ah, *pariah bahadurs*.”

The room was very quiet, only the rasping of the pankha rope breaking the stillness, as Sita stood with set lips and quivering chin. After a little she raised her eyes, and looked into Miss Ray's, then into Kamliabai's face, and, regaining her self-control, answered in low and very distinct tones:—

“Christian native girls are not situated as Hindu girls and women are; these have little to occupy their minds, so their thoughts and their talk are often upon marriage. Then Hindu girls are married so very young. Miss Ray does not have her girls marry before they are of seventeen years and she permits those who love to study to wait until they are of nineteen or even twenty years. And Miss Ray teaches her girls not to talk much about marriage, but about books, and the beautiful things about us.

“As for me,” she went on more firmly, with more manifest constraint, “I have still two years in college if—if I complete the course as I hope to do. Besides, I know that I am not free. While I do not acknowledge the binding force of the *shadi* made in my childhood, I know that, unless it is annulled by the court, I am not free to think—of—of any other marriage.”

Sita had, up to this time, studiously avoided looking in the direction of the college boys, but now, for an instant, she allowed herself to meet Lakshman's gaze. His face was pallid, his eyes strained and burn-



ing; and she added firmly without pause, "I have thought of no other marriage."

Then as his face grew ashen, involuntarily she turned her eyes upon her betrothed just in time to see the tense scowl on his face give place to a look of satisfaction. And she added:—

"I have been fully occupied with my studies and have put from me all thoughts of marriage."

"And does your new religion teach you to despise the contract made by your mother and your dead father?"

"My mother does not wish the marriage."

"She did—she does wish it, but does not now know her own mind. And would you selfishly leave her in penury when she might live in affluence the rest of her life? Does your Christian religion teach you that?"

"My mother would not care for affluence at the hands of those who, in famine days, were pitiless. But I have earned a little money in the past year as a pupil teacher, enough to pay my expenses at school. I can now earn much more, since I have passed the teacher's examination. And if my mother will only come to me," she said, looking lovingly toward Tulsiabai, and pleadingly at the judge, "if only this *shadi* may be annulled,—I will gladly give up my plans for going to college, everything, and will, with my own money, take care of my mother." Sita spoke eagerly, with earnest, radiant face.

"If there is so much good," questioned Mr. Prasad,



“in the religion of your country, why do you abandon it for a foreign religion?”

“I no longer believe in many gods or image worship. I can never again be a Hindu, since I have learned a better way of serving God.”

“I understand then that you see only evil in the religion of your fathers?”

“No, barrister, there is much that is good; I have learned some beautiful passages from the *Dharma Shastras* [holy writings].”

“What passages?”

Sita recited one of the old Vedic hymns to the unknown God, closing with the lines:—

“Who is the God to whom we shall offer sacrifices?

He through whom the awful heavens and the earth were made fast.

He through whom the ether was established and the firmament;

He who measured the air in the sky.”

“Then this one is, I think, from the Upanishads:—

“‘There is one Rudra [God] only. They do not allow a second, who rules all the world by his prowess.’ And, too, in the Upanishads is this great thought:—

“‘The person, Brahm [God], under form of mind, light indeed, is within the heart, small, like a grain of rice or barley. He is the ruler of all, the Lord of all.’” Sita’s face was earnest as she added, “And this is true. God does live in our hearts.”

“Why, then, do you wish to give up this religion that you think so good?” questioned Ganga Prasad, with respectful and persuasive manner.



“ I give up nothing that is good, but keep all that is true. For God is one God, the God of all, and He has revealed Himself to all peoples, as they were able to receive His truth.”

“ Then, why are you unwilling to return to your allegiance to the religion of your fathers? ”

“ One of my objections to Hinduism is the caste system.”

“ And so caste is the bugbear that hinders and obstructs your way? Is it possible that the learned defendant is ignorant of the fact that caste exists in all countries, even in the great land of the foreign rulers of our India! ”

“ I know that there is class distinction in other lands; but nothing, I am told, like the Hindu caste system.”

“ There is some difference, no doubt; yet the difference is slight and of no importance, of no significance. Do you understand, may I inquire, that the *tahsildar* stands ready to pay your heavy fine, even a half lac of rupees for your reinstatement? ”

“ I understand.”

“ Then, it is the penances.\* Can it be that Pandit Janak’s daughter has not the courage—that she fears to undergo the simple and insignificant penances imposed upon recalcitrant violators of caste law? ”

Sita looked at her friends, and answered: “ If it

\* One of the requirements for restoration to caste is that the offender shall partake of the five products of the cow—milk, butter, cheese, urine, and fæces.



were only the disgusting penances, I would make no protest. But the Hindu caste system is selfish and unutterably cruel." Sita spoke of two instances of terrible suffering that had come to her knowledge, which might have been relieved except for caste laws, and mentioned the well-known fact that high-caste men, rather than break their caste by receiving food or water from the hands of the low-caste, have laid down their lives. She then told the story of the good Samaritan. "The Samaritan," she concluded, "was better than the priest or the Levite, who were of the highest class, like our Brahmans. Jesus taught them that God looked upon the heart, and is no respecter of persons."

"And your father, for whom you profess to care so much. Do you owe nothing to your father, that you forget and despise his last instructions?"

Sita stood silent, her chin a-tremble, and her eyes upon the floor. When she lifted them they were full of tears which she would not suffer to fall. Her voice, when she essayed to speak, was at first tremulous, but almost immediately grew steady.

"My father," she began, "my father was the best father that girl ever had. How much I owe to him I can never know. But this much I know: I owe him my freedom. With his dear life he purchased for me, his little daughter, freedom from the vilest slavery, for at least seven happy years."

"Then what is your duty to your father but to obey his last choice?"

"My father would not now wish this marriage."



There was a sound of angry muttering from the direction of the *tahsildar's* sons.

“Indeed!” exclaimed Ganga Prasad. “The learned defendant not only reads Sanscrit, but the minds of the departed and reincarnated soul. And, daughter of Janak, because of knowledge so obtained, would you set at naught the marriage your father made for you while here in this birth—the most desirable of alliances—with a young nobleman of wealth and education, a nobleman who is willing to overlook the scandal you have created, and to receive you as his honoured bride?”

A look of utter repugnance passed over Sita's face, then, with blazing eyes and pallid lips, she said in a voice restrained, but vibrant with emotion:—

“Willing to receive me? Willing? This brave *bahadur* whom you laud is more than willing. Would my father, pandit and philosopher, the son of King Janak, and nobler in heart than any king—would my dear father wish me to degrade myself by consenting to an alliance with one who had persecuted and dragged into court his fatherless daughter to shame her and to win her by compulsion of the law? One who, this day of enlightenment, when the slavery of men has been abolished the world over, still regards a wife as a chattel, who would imprison her in a zenana, put her in caste bonds, rob her of her liberty, and of her religion? Would Pandit Janak wish his daughter to degrade her womanhood by consenting to an abhorrent and unholy marriage?”

“You would, doubtless, prefer to this alliance with



one of our most excellent and most honoured families, marriage with a—ah—pariah.”

“Truly it were better to marry an outcast with a noble heart than a nobleman with a base one.”

Sita knew that her words were to caste Hindus inexplicable as well as unpardonable, and in the silence emphasized by the rasp of the pankha rope she looked toward Ram Chandra.

He sat with clenched hands, his eyes burning with passion well-nigh unbearable.

And Sita was glad.

“Truly your manner of honouring the great pandit, your father, is all your own.”

“Is not every Christian virtually an outcast? My father, in theory, did not believe in caste. And how can any one say that it is my duty to marry one whose father let my father die? My duty to my father is to do as he would have me do were he here to-day, with the light of to-day. My duty to my father is to live up to the light I have. I have tried so to live.

“I have tried to live the noblest, the very noblest life for the sake of my father, and for One greater than my earthly father. For the sake of my Heavenly Father who sent His Son to save me—to teach me that a woman is not accursed, is not the despicable thing that the Hindu religion would have me believe, but a daughter of God, of the great and only God. You think it perversity that brings me here. It is not. I stand here to resist unjust and cruel customs, to oppose child-marriage, and all marriage that is not with the consent of both parties. I plead not for my-



self alone, but for my sisters—for Indian womanhood. You think it easy for me to stand here to endure bullying and brow-beating. But I have not eaten shame. For my God has been with me and given me courage—my God to whom I had prayed to show me how I could do most for my sisters—to do most for the freeing of India's women from bondage. For the battle is on and they, too, shall be free, for God himself will lead the hosts. And the words of that great American woman, Julia Ward Howe, in the interest of freedom, are for India, too:—

'He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat,  
He is sifting out the hearts of men, before His judgment seat.  
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him; be jubilant, my feet.  
Our God is marching on.' "

"Let me go free from this hateful marriage and I shall be content to live with my mother, protected by the orphanage walls, and teach my little sisters all my days. And I will teach them, even without a thought of drudgery, their letters. I will teach them with passionate joy, knowing that these letters spell freedom.

"You ask me why I may not return to caste, and the religion of my fathers. You asked me to renounce the Saviour who came to teach that women are not accursed, but blessed children of God—the Son of God who, oh, wonderful deed of the ages, gave His life to save women eternally, and to save them now.

"Can I do less than offer Him myself? I am ready to follow where he leads and, whatever be the cost, to fight in any battles led by the Son of God.

'Be swift, my soul, to answer Him.' "



## VIII

### JUDGMENT

**M**R. CHATTERJI, immediately upon the judge's announcement of adjournment, had asked the privilege of stating that he had one more witness to examine. "That witness whom I wish to recall," he said, "is the honoured priest and astrologer, Ram Dev. However," he added, looking around, "he is not now present."

The barrister's manner plainly indicated his suspicion that the witness, who had been in constant attendance upon the trial, might be spirited away.

The judge's benign face, after a glance about the room, grew stern, as he regarded for an instant Ganga Prasad and his clients. And when he quietly ordered the constable to see that the recalled witness was on hand promptly at three o'clock, Judge Gracie's tone and manner indicated that he was in no mood to be trifled with.

At the opening of court Ram Dev was present. He had quite recovered his equanimity; and when on the stand he was handed Sita's horoscope, he boldly denied its genuineness. The signature, he admitted, was very like, yet he had no hesitation in pronouncing it a clear forgery.

After he had made repeated denials, Mr. Chatterji



produced three other horoscopes which he asked the witness to identify.

With a frown he received the horoscopes of Janak's sons and began to compare them with the one under dispute.

"The signature, you say, is a forgery," said Mr. Chatterji presently, "but what have you to say about the seal? The seals on the four horoscopes bear the same device and are in every respect identical. Is the document genuine or not?"

The astrologer evaded, doubted, demurred, but admitted under the barrister's cross-questioning that he might have forgotten, that he might have given it and finally, that, although he had no recollection of it, he might have cast the girl's horoscope.

As he made the admission, Sita heard a suppressed curse from the direction of the *tahsildar's* sons.

But her heart was singing for joy. With her joy written upon her face she met for an instant the eyes of the astrologer, eyes so full of hatred and menace that she shuddered. Then immediately she drew herself up. "The priest is furious," she thought, "and so are the *tahsildar's* sons. 'Tis well! They will not now wish the marriage."

Mr. Chatterji now announced that the defence was ready to rest the case. Thereupon the counsel for the plaintiff began his closing argument, urging precedent, ancient custom, and religious belief, all of which were to be swept aside for the whim of a foolish girl of fourteen years, a disobedient wife and unfilial and rebellious daughter, who had already brought dis-



honour and disgrace upon her family, her husband's family, her caste people, the land of India, and the ancient religion of her fathers. Although only four o'clock and the hot winds still blowing, the crowded room necessitated open windows and the throng outside could hear Ganga Prasad's impassioned utterances, and again and again a low murmur of approval reached the ears of those within. He spoke for an hour, ending with a quotation from the Queen's proclamation of 1858, which he recited in a loud voice: " ' We do strictly charge and require all those who may be in authority under us, that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects on pain of Our highest displeasure.' Your honour, I appeal to you to sustain, and uphold, and support our most ancient, most honourable, most righteous religion. For it is our religion that is called in question, marriage lying at the very foundation of our religion. I appeal to your honour to turn a deaf and unhearing ear to the strenuous but sophistic arguments of our friend, the counsel for the defendant. I appeal to your honour to stand by the most righteous proclamation of her most gracious majesty, the late Empress of India; to stand by your statements made during this trial that the government has nothing to do with missions. I appeal to your honour not to uphold the religion of the Christian missionaries, which religion is indeed good and excellent for foreigners, but unsuited to India,—but to uphold the national, indigenous religion of Hindustan, orthodox Hinduism."



As Ganga Prasad concluded, wild shouts of applause came from the concourse of people outside, mingling with the repressed exclamations of the plaintiff's friends within the courtroom.

The judge, hearing the cries, again glanced at his letter, then at the throng outside.

Sita sat tensely erect, her lips tightly closed and her eyes upon the Commissioner.

The counsel for the defence first called in question the interpretation put upon the words of the Queen:—

“I cannot do better,” he said, “than to quote, in this connection, the words of Sir A. R. Scoble, at one time Queen's Counsel:—

“‘It is intolerable,’ protested the great man, ‘that her majesty's gracious words should be perverted, as they have been on many platforms and in many newspapers, in order to support a charge of breach of duty by the government of India.’ If my honourable friend had had the candour to read all those parts of the proclamation which bear upon the argument, he would have found that her majesty declared it to be her royal will and pleasure that none be in anywise favoured, none molested nor disqualified by reason of their religious faith or observances, that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law.”

Mr. Chatterji maintained that the purpose of the proclamation was to promote religious liberty, not to rivet the bonds of evil customs. He cited cases in which the Indian government had acted in direct opposition to the Hindu religion,—both as to precept and



practice,—in prohibition of *sati* [widow burning], and of the offering of human sacrifices. He then explained that many of the leaders of thought in India had approved the action of the government in these cases, at the time, and that in after years such approval had become general. He further stated that there was in these decisions of government no violation of the spirit of the proclamation of the late honoured Empress of India.

The barrister then urged that the child-marriage question was more vital and incomparably more far-reaching in its consequences than either of the other questions, involving as it did, the welfare of the entire country. After an able dissertation on this theme, he stated Sita's case; contrasted her ideals and her faith with those of Ram Chandra, and pleaded for the annulling of the marriage on the grounds of her right to choose her religion and her right as a rational being of mature judgment, to decide the marriage question for herself. Mr. Chatterji stated that the letters of the plaintiff clearly indicated his belief in polygamy and as clearly demanded that the defendant give up her religion and be reinstated in her caste.

“We have shown,” concluded the barrister, “by irrefutable evidence that she is past sixteen years of age, and so entitled by law to choose her own religion. Moreover we contend,—and I was myself a Hindu until I reached my twenty-second year,—that it is an impossible thing for a Christian woman to live in a Hindu household and perform the duties required of a Hindu wife.”



At the close of Mr. Chatterji's speech there were nods of approval from the native reformers present, while the rest of the courtroom audience remained silent, some wearing thoughtful, some angry faces. The great throng without maintained a sullen silence.

When the judge arose to sum up the case there was a marked tenseness in the air. "Out of appreciation," he began, "of the importance of the case, in its bearing on living social issues, we have given an unwonted amount of time to its consideration, we have heard with patience and weighed with care the testimony and arguments of both sides. It is a difficult case, involving the question of religious liberty.

"The plaintiff in this suit maintains that the defendant is only fourteen years of age. If this were proved, she, according to the law, would be subject to her people in religion as well as in other matters. On the other hand, if she is sixteen years old she has the right of choice. The court holds that, considering the evidence presented, together with the appearance of the girl and her intelligence as manifested on the witness stand, her age has been established as fully sixteen. It is for her, therefore, to decide for herself whether she will be a Hindu or a Christian. The court, therefore, rules that the defendant, Sita, having chosen the Christian religion, shall be freed from the contract of marriage with the plaintiff, Ram Chandra, made by their parents, unless the plaintiff is willing to take her with the express understanding that she remain a Christian."

"Remain a Christian!" burst out Krishna Rao,



“Not in the house of the *tahsildar*; the—apostate ——.”

The judge demanded order; but this time the plaintiff's counsel failed to come to his aid, and before quiet could be restored, he was obliged to threaten.

But for the elder brother's anger Sita no longer cared. With exultant gladness she turned her eyes upon her betrothed. Evidently he was unprepared for the judge's decision; his lips were ashen and he appeared stunned. As he looked, Abdul Khan approached and spoke to him in a loud whisper. Though the words of her solicitor's brother did not reach the girl, his mocking grin and insolent bearing proclaimed their import.

Instantly the Rajput recovered himself. He gave the Mohammedan a look of furious anger; then turning, spoke to the friends grouped about him, his brother, his uncle, his barrister, and the astrologer.

“You hear,” he asked, in uncontrollable passion. “Shall Mohammedan dogs triumph while Rajputs lick the dust? Shall foreign law and foreign religion rob me of my bride? Foreign——”

Ganga Prasad with a look of fear now interrupted.

“This means, too,” Judge Gracie continued, “that the plaintiff, if he takes a Christian wife, must provide for her means of worship; must make some arrangements by which she may attend religious services. If there is no other way, he must himself support a Christian preacher in or near his own town.”

“Never! Never!” cried Krishna Rao, with an oath.

“Then——” the judge began.



“Is there no other alternative?” interrupted Ram Chandra.

“None,” replied the judge.

“One moment, please.”

Sita saw the young man arouse his sleeping uncle; then her attention was called to the priest whispering eagerly to Krishna Rao. As she looked he turned toward her with the same threatening sinister gaze as before.

“The plaintiff accepts the conditions,” Ganga Prasad then announced.

Sita, in amazement, turned her eyes upon the judge.

He grew pale as he heard, then looking at the angry, determined faces of the plaintiff and his friends, out of the windows at the silent, sullen faces of the ever-increasing crowd, at the open letter before him, and finally at Sita.

“There is yet another consideration,” he now stated with firmness. “Christians are not polygamists. The court, therefore, asks if the plaintiff has made any other *shadi?*”

Sita’s eyes were instantly upon her betrothed; her ears strained to catch his reply.

“I have no other wife,” he answered, without delay.

“He has no other wife,” corroborated the priest.

With sinking heart Sita turned again to the judge.

His gaze rested upon Ram Chandra, then upon the crowd outside, then upon a paragraph of the Chief Commissioner’s letter, which paragraph read as follows:—



“ I learn of considerable unrest in these provinces, occasioned by outbreaks in adjoining native states. Of these outbreaks the disaffected have taken advantage to stir up the people with wild rumours and inflammatory talk. I have, therefore, to ask that you will be pleased to urge upon all the officials of your district the importance of taking extraordinary care at this time, to avoid arousing an antagonistic spirit. Above all, let nothing be done that will give ground or pretext for the exhibition of religious fanaticism.”

The judge resumed his speech. After expressing sympathy for the defendant, and high esteem for the ideals of marriage presented by her and her friends, he declared that it was his hope that they might one day prevail. “ As for child-marriage,” he said, “ it is a monstrous custom, nor has the government hesitated to take steps towards abolishing it. The age for the marriage of girls has already been raised two years, and will be raised again as the sentiment of the country warrants. Reformatations are brought about in two ways, by compulsion and by education. The latter is the method approved by the government of India.

“ But as for this case, the defendant is now a woman grown, and the court finds no sufficient cause for annulling the marriage. The decision of the court is, therefore, with the aforesaid explanations and provisions, that the defendant Sita, about whom the government will throw its protecting arm, shall abide by the marriage contract made by her father and shall



accept as her legal husband, Ram Chandra, the plaintiff."

Sita looked at the judge in bewilderment.

"*Jai, jai, Ram ki, Ram ki jai*, [Victory, victory to the God Ram]," she heard the priest's exultant cry.

"'How long, O Lord, how long,'" moaned Miss Ray, with bowed head.

Mr. Chatterji now announced that the defendant would again appeal to a higher court.

And immediately the crowd outside, having caught the decision of the judge, repeated many times the cry of victory.



## IX

### DEFEAT AND VICTORY

“SALAAM, Miss Sahib-ji; salaam, pandita-ji; where is my sister?” Ram Janak ran breathless into the living-room of the mission bungalow, nor did he wait for replies to his salutations or questions but repeated his demand for his sister.

“She is here,” answered Miss Hillis, “What is it, Ram Janak?”

“He is coming, Ram Chandra is coming to take her!”

“Why—how——” she began. “There is to be another appeal. He cannot take her.”

“But he will. He is coming now!” The lad turned to Kamliabai, putting his hands together in entreaty. “Send her away. Oh, send her away quick.” As he spoke he saw Sita, who had just entered the room.

“We had better let her go,” said the pandita, “I can go with her and——”

“Very well,” answered Miss Hillis. “Son, call the tonga, and I will get your sister.”

The boy ran out and his sister turned to Kamliabai, who was putting on a red *sari*. “He cannot take me!” protested Sita, who had recovered from her dejection.

“Not legally; but it will save trouble, and you know Miss Ray——”



“Let us go at once,” the girl interrupted, “and not wait for the tonga.”

“I hear the tonga now,” Miss Hillis answered, “but—it is coming from the outside!”

The pandita stepped to the door, closed and locked it, then said:—

“We are too late.”

“Is there no other way out?” questioned the girl, with some excitement in her voice.

“No way,” replied Miss Hillis, “but this door and the orphanage gate, and both open upon the driveway. If we should start now he would seize you and be off.”

“He has come,” cried Ram Janak, running in from the back door.

“Yes, son, but he cannot take your sister,” explained Miss Hillis. “He may make some trouble, but if he does we will send for Judge Gracie. Now, Sita,” she went on, “you go back into the orphanage, and I will meet Ram Chandra. He has no right to take you, you know.”

“I know. Mr. Chatterji told me. But Ray Miss Sahib is so very ill——”

Miss Hillis now went out upon the veranda, and Sita heard Ram Chandra’s deep voice, and the words, “I have come to claim my wife.” She shivered, then ran quickly out of the bungalow, across the orphanage compound, and into the study hall, where Miss Harmon sat with the older girls.

“What is it? You did not go?” questioned the missionary in surprise, speaking low, so as not to dis-



turb the girls. Then, upon hearing Sita's explanation, she, after a thoughtful silence, smiled and said, "Never fear, little sister, God reigns and He is able to deliver."

"God reigns and He is able to deliver." As the girl spoke all fear left her face.

Miss Hillis now came in and reported that Ram Chandra had demanded his wife and insisted upon a direct answer from her.

"My answer is the same it has been all along. I do not acknowledge him as my husband, and I will not go with him." She spoke calmly, with marked emphasis.

"Quite right, Sitabai," both missionaries assented, and they went away to consult with Miss Vernon. When Miss Hillis came back to Sita and the girls, and they gathered about her eager for the news, she explained to them Ram Chandra's demand, then added, "A crowd has gathered outside, and word has come that Judge Gracie has gone into the district. He is to camp seven miles out to-night. However," she continued, seeing fear and anxiety on some of the faces, "we have sent for Mr. Stafford and Mr. Ashley." The faces cleared and one of the girls began to tell of an experience she had known, when a Brahman girl in the school at her home became a Christian. The Great Sahib in that case had come and sent away the people.

Miss Hillis now told the girls that they need not study, but would sing. "Sing 'Deliverance Will Come,'" said Mohani confidently. They sang the



song so named, and afterward began spontaneously to pray. Following the prayers, they recited Bible incidents which told of the wonderful deliverance of servants of God. Once an angry cry from the people outside arose, and Miss Hillis led the girls in another song. While they were singing, Kamliabai came in to report that Mr. Stafford had gone home, but that Mr. Ashley was coming over. Sita inquired of the pandita about Miss Ray.

"Her fever is high," was the answer, "and she is delirious. The outcries of the mob are bad for her."

"Delirious? Mob?" the girl said, with pale lips. "Oh, pray for her!" Kamliabai and Miss Hillis led the prayers of the girls, then Sita prayed with her whole heart for Miss Ray's recovery.

"May I not go to mama-ji?" questioned Sita, following Kamliabai as she left the room.

"Why, yes, little sister, if you wish; but not for long. It will not be safe."

As they passed through the dining-room of the bungalow, Sita heard Ram Chandra's voice from the veranda, now in angry expostulations.

"Wait? Have I not waited for seven years, and have not two foreign judges said that I should have her? Bring her out or I'll come in and take her."

"No, Ram Chandra," Miss Vernon answered firmly and distinctly, "You cannot come in; this is a zenana and does not admit men."

"I will have my wife."

"Come," said Kamliabai, as Mr. Ashley's voice



was heard, "Come, sister, the padre sahib is here."

With relief in her heart Sita went to Miss Ray. Gazing upon her purple cheeks and staring eyes, watching her restless tossing and listening to her rambling words, there came into Sita's face an expression of deep suffering. Presently there was a cry from the mob and the patient started violently, and cried, "Sita! Where is Sita?" And she gave no sign of recognition, though the girl took her hands and spoke to her entreatingly.

"God help her! God save her!" moaned Sita, sinking on her knees beside the bed, while Priya, who had been assisting Dr. Doran, knelt too, putting her arm about her friend, and they mingled their prayers and their hearts' sorrow.

Very soon Sita arose, and going to Dr. Doran asked, "Can mama-ji get well?"

"She is very ill," the doctor replied, "but—if she could have quiet the fever would go down."

"She must have quiet, yes." The girl looked a moment at the patient, then, going to Kamliabai, led her from the room. When in the dining-room she said, "Mama-ji must have quiet or she will die. I must get away, so the mob will go. Help me, pandita-ji."

While she was speaking Dr. Doran came out, and hearing Sita's words, nodded approvingly.

"If it could be done. You might try the wall at the back."

"Let us go," urged Sita.

"Good," answered the pandita. But hearing Mr. Ashley's voice in the drawing-room, they went in.



"We have sent for Mr. Gracie," he said, "but he is expected to go seven miles to-night, and the messenger cannot overtake him before he reaches camp."

"But you can hold them in check," said Miss Harmon; "surely you can hold them in check until the Commissioner gets here?"

"Perhaps; possibly. But it will take at least three hours."

"Ram Chandra must know that the officials are away," commented Miss Vernon.

"And," said the pandita, "he is not likely to wait patiently for his return."

"Can you not appeal to him, Mr. Ashley, or to the people?" questioned Miss Harmon.

"I will do my best with them, but he is determined, and a religious mob has neither head nor heart. I must warn you that there is danger, great danger for every one on the place."

A hunted look came into Sita's face as she listened. "Let us go; let me get away," she pleaded, and Miss Vernon and the pandita hastened with her out into the compound over the dried grass on the lawn, through the banana grove and the garden, the moon giving occasional light as it escaped the flying clouds.

"Wait until I look," said Miss Vernon, who was taller than the pandita, and stepping upon a box she had taken from the house, she reported, "All right," and gave place to Kamliabai.

But before the latter could get on the wall a warning *Chup* [Silence] came from farther down. The startled women were reassured when they recognized



Janak Ram, who, slipping from the wall, ran toward them, repeating his warning in a whisper. Listening intently they heard voices coming nearer, voices of men. When opposite the waiting group, the men stopped for a moment, but continued to talk in low tones. When they had passed out of hearing, Miss Vernon cautiously gave another look over the wall, then stepped down. "It is too late," she whispered, "there are men in both directions."

"Too late?" questioned Sita, her voice indicating that she knew the answer.

"Surely, Kamliabai," whispered Miss Vernon, "these men would not dare to touch the other girls!"

"You heard their threats and you heard Mr. Ashley. A frenzied religious mob will dare anything, anything."

"Too late!" repeated Sita. Then she added, "Go, please, to Miss Ray and I will come soon. Please go now and leave me." They hesitated to leave her, but the entreating voice was strained, and the girl's face,—the moon again gave her light,—showed an anguish of soul too great to be shared; and so they left her alone, but Miss Vernon watched from the veranda, watched and in the stillness of the night heard:—

"God! God! God!" came the despairing cry; then at intervals, other words reached the ear of the watcher:—

"Not this, oh God, not this!—"

"Oh, my Father, didst Thou not promise deliverance?—"



“Have I not tried, my God, to do Thy will? Have I not followed Thee, my Saviour, with my whole heart? Have I not studied that I might be able to name Thy name to my untaught sisters? I believed that Thou wouldst have me teach them and the little children to read Thy sacred book, to teach them to love Thy name, O Christ—and now there is nothing for me—nothing but to be a slave!

“‘*Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized—*’

“Oh, I am not able to drink this cup.

“Is there no other way, my Father?

“‘*Be swift, my soul, to answer—be jubilant, my feet—*’”

The words came mechanically, and were followed by a passionate protest; “No, Lord God! Never, never with jubilant feet.

“‘*Are ye able to drink—*’

“Must I go, my father, to be a slave? True, Joseph was a slave, and he did wonderful things; but Joseph was a man.

“Lord, Thy will,—no, I cannot say it!—Oh, those threats, those wicked men! Why did Mr. Ashley look at me when he said that all in the place were in danger? They are in danger because I am here? ‘*Be swift, my soul.*’ Help, O, Lord Jesus! Is it Thy will that I should go with this—man? This unholy marriage,—is there no other way?”

A loud cry from the mob was followed by a prayer for Miss Ray, “Mama-ji! Oh, my Father! Make her well, make her well!



“Is there no other way, my Father? No other way?”

“‘*The Lord reigns.*’ He might have made a way of escape and did not.”

“‘*Be swift, my soul!*’ Deliverance will come to her, for her—for all the rest, not for me. Thy will—‘*Be swift, my soul; be swift, my feet.*’”

When Miss Vernon saw Sita coming toward the house, her first impulse was to meet and take her in her arms. She had suffered with her, she was all a-tremble with sympathy, and her tears were flowing fast. But on second thought she stepped back into the shadow.

As Sita opened the door the light from within fell full upon her and Miss Vernon was startled by the change. Instead of the bright, hopeful girl she saw a stern, resolute woman. The light had gone from her eyes, and her tensely erect carriage enforced the protest of her face. Yet above protest was resolution; her set, ashen lips and the lines of her face and figure saying loudly, “I will, because I must.”

When she went again to the sickroom, Sita stood watching Mohani as she pressed the restless feet of the patient, while Miss Harmon, sponging her hot hands and face, stood watching the burning lips as they babbled nonsense.

“God,” Sita moaned—“that her lips should forget—the lips that have taught so much of truth, so much of wisdom.”

“How is she?” she asked of the physician, who,



with Priya, stood looking out of the darkened window at the mob.

“My dear,” she said, with a look of anxiety upon her face, “the fever does not go down, and I am afraid for her.”

Sita knelt by Miss Ray and buried her head in the bedclothes. She did not know when the doctor took Miss Harmon’s place. But presently she heard the latter speak her name in the next room, then Miss Vernon’s clear voice, saying, “Our Sita go back to Hinduism? There is no more danger of that than of my becoming a Hindu myself.”

“There is no danger of that; she would die first,” Kamliabai added.

“Then if she is safe from that greatest calamity that could befall her, who knows but she might be the means of converting those people?”

“Possible,” said the pandita, but her tone and inflection made it mean “impossible.”

“How could her life be in danger?” the new missionary asked. “The judge promised the protection of the government.”

“Yes,” the pandita answered, “but the power of the mighty British Government ends at the *pardah* door. The arm of the law is not long enough, nor strong enough to reach behind the *pardah*.”

“Pundita Kamliabai,” replied Miss Harmon, “I have been in your country but a short time and know nothing about zenana life, but I believe that the God who saved Daniel is able even to reach behind the Hindu *pardah*.”



“Truly, I would rather risk the lions,” the pandita answered, “but—your faith is a rebuke to my unbelief.”

“And to mine,” replied Miss Vernon. “I have heard such terrible things, but God’s power is not limited. And she will go, I am sure, to save the girls. I saw it in her face. She will go, even at the peril of her life. But I will never bid her go, whatever comes.”

“Surely not. But listen to the mob—He will take her. And God allows martyrdom,—her death might count for more than her life?”

“Her death,” answered the pandita, “would surely count for the abolition of the *pardah*. But oh, that our Sita should be the sacrifice!”

The words repeated themselves in Sita’s mind.

“‘Martyrdom’—‘to save the girls’—‘her death would count,’—‘to save the girls’—‘martyrdom’—‘*Be swift my soul, be swift, my feet*’——”

Again the pandita’s voice arrested her attention. “But her life, if by some miraculous means it might be preserved,—our beautiful Sita’s life behind the *pardah*, in the family of the *tahsildar*, would do more than anything else could for the freeing of India’s women.”

“‘Freeing India’s women,’” repeated the girl. “‘Our Sita’s life behind the *pardah* would do more than anything else for freeing India’s women!’ Why! that is what we have all been praying for! God allowed Joseph to be stolen for the sake of his people. He allows me to be taken for the sake of my people. It is God!”

Miss Ray’s moans became more frequent, and Sita



began to press her feet murmuring, "God help her; God make her well."

Dr. Doran again sponged the patient's face and hands, and she had grown quieter when a loud cry from the mob caused her to start to a sitting posture. With wild, frightened eyes, she called again, "Sita! my Sita!"

"I am here, mama-ji," the girl answered, composedly, taking the hands of the patient and stroking them.

"You are here, daughter?" There was consciousness in the eyes, but fright as well. "Why, I thought—I dreamed that wild beasts were tearing you to pieces and oh, how they roared."

"No, mama-ji. It is the fever that makes you dream. Do not fear for me. Sleep now. The noise will cease—shall cease," she added, under her breath. She continued her soothing ministrations and reassuring words until the patient appeared to sleep. Then she withdrew her hands, and after looking longingly at the closed eyes, turned to leave the room, when Miss Ray again opened her eyes.

"You have helped me, dear," she said, "you are my brave daughter, and you are not alone. I had almost forgotten and thought it was for me to save you. Jesus will save."

"Jesus will save," reiterated the girl. "'Lo, I am with you alway.'"

"'Trust ye in the Lord forever.'"

"'For in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.'"

"'Everlasting strength.'"



“ ‘ *Though He slay me, yet will I trust him.* ’ ”

“ Trust in Him—with you,” the weary voice faltered, and the fevered eyes closed.

“ Alway,”—a wonderful peace had come to the girl, and still softly stroking the hot hands she repeated again and again: “ All will be well; all must be well, all is well. Peace, all is well.”

When Miss Ray slept, Sita laid her hands on the white coverlet. “ I am going,” she said softly to Dr. Doran. “ She must not know.” She then salaamed silently to the doctor and the girls and went out.

In the drawing-room she found the pandita, Janak Ram, Miss Harmon, and Miss Vernon. The light had come back into the girl’s eyes, and with it a new light which illumined her face. “ I go,” she said to the little company, “ there is no other way. I endanger Miss Ray’s life by staying here, and my going will bring deliverance to her and to the girls. It is God’s will that I go.”

While Sita was speaking, the door was thrown violently open, and Ram Chandra burst into the room. Immediately behind him followed Mr. Ashley, who instantly closed and bolted the door.

The young man, arrested by the girl’s last words, stood staring at her as though dazed.

Turning she looked at him, her face fearless and still radiant as she said: “ I go with you, my lord.”

But there now arose a clamour outside, and Sita, hearing the indignant voices of the college boys, hastened to the door.



Ram Chandra, with the dazed look still on his face, followed her and her friends out upon the veranda.

Among the college boys who had been eager to fight Sita's battles was Lakshman, but at a word from Sita he and they quietly gave way.

The excited crowd fell back. Intruding upon the stillness, from a neighbouring village came sounds of merriment and the steady beating of *tamtams*. The dense clouds had lifted for the time and in the light of the full moon the people looked in bewilderment at the little group on the veranda, in the midst of which stood Sita, beautiful and radiant. The exalted joy on the girl's face was something quite different from the joy of a happy bride, something that filled them with awe.

She stood thus a moment, then spoke in low, clear tones, "I go with the *tahsildar's* son, and I go of my own will. My God, the Great God, bids me go; I have heard His voice."

Not a sound broke the stillness which followed and Sita quietly salaamed to her friends, and, unassisted, took her place in the waiting tonga.

Ram Chandra, recovering himself, gave the order to the driver and sprang in front. As the tonga started Sita gave a last look at her friends and dropped the tonga curtain.

"*Vishna ki jai, Ram ki jai!* [Victory to Vishnu, Victory to Ram]," cried several of the crowd, partially recovering from their bewilderment.

Sita's face held, however, nothing of defeat, but instead, victory. And as the mob slunk away with



a half-hearted repetition of their cry, the college young men who, five minutes before were ready to fight in the girl's defence, began at once to sing a song of victory. Among those who had been eager to fight Sita's battles was Lakshman; but among the voices that rose in the notes of triumph, she listened in vain for that of Mohani's brother.

The moon now entered the black clouds and the tonga disappeared in the darkness. But after it into the darkness followed the triumphant voices, singing:—

*"Jai Prabhu Yesu; Jai Adhi Rajah."*

[*"Victory to the Lord Jesus; Victory to the great King."*]



# GLOSSARY

## OF HINDUSTANI TERMS

- Achchha*, good.  
*Angrezi-log*, English people.  
*Arampur*, city of rest.  
*Ayah*, nurse, attendant.  
*Baba*, baby, child.  
*Babu*, a title.  
*Bahadur*, a hero, sometimes a title.  
*Bai*, a title of courtesy affixed to a woman's name.  
*Bus*, enough.  
*Bhai*, brother.  
*Bhajan*, a hymn.  
*Bibi*, a lady.  
*Chapati*, bread in the form of flat cakes.  
*Chaprassi*, a messenger.  
*Char anna*, four annas. An anna is Indian money of account, the sixteenth of a rupee, or about 2½ cents.  
*Chup raho*, be silent.  
*Dal bhat*, pulse and rice.  
*Dharma Pustak*, Holy Book.  
*Dharma Shastras*, Sacred Writings.  
*Dukhan*, shop.  
*Dwij*, twice-born.  
*Gali*, abusive language.  
*Gari*, a cart or other vehicle.  
*Gariwan*, driver.  
*Gosht-walla*, meatman.  
*Hài! hòi! alas! alas!*  
*Hukam*, order, command.  
*Jai*, victory.  
*Jhatpat*, instantly.  
*Jhuti sakshi*, perjury.  
*Ji*, the polite affirmative.  
*Ji*, honourable, used as an affix to a name.  
*Kachcha*, raw, unripe, unfinished.  
*Kacheri*, courthouse.  
*Kismat*, Fate.  
*Kshama Sagar*, Ocean of Forgiveness.  
*Kurta*, jacket.  
*Lac*, a hundred thousand.  
*Lota*, a drinking vessel.  
*Maidan*, a common.  
*Pagal*, insane.  
*Pagri*, turban.  
*Pakka*, ripe, perfected.  
*Panchayat*, council.  
*Pandit*, a learned man.  
*Pandita*, a learned woman.  
*Ram*, a proper name; an incarnation of the Hindu Divinity, Vishnu.  
*Sari*, a garment.  
*Shadi*, marriage, wedding.  
*Shadi-walla*, the boy or man to whom a girl is married or betrothed.  
*Sati*, the act of burning a widow on the funeral pile of her husband.  
*Sahib*, a title.  
*Samp*, snake.  
*Sepoy*, soldier, a policeman.  
*Tahsil*, district.  
*Tahsildar*, an officer of high authority in a district.  
*Talaw*, tank, pond.  
*Tan man se*, with body and mind.  
*Thik*, correct.  
*Tiffin*, luncheon.  
*Topi*, hat, turban.  
*Tota*, parrot.  
*Vishnu*, a Divinity of the modern Hindu triad.