



THE ADVENTURES OF A BIG DIAMOND.

A SLAVE, poor and naked, was toiling in the mines at Portreal in India, just as many thousands of others were toiling beside him, scraping up the pebbly soil, washing the mud, carefully looking for diamonds. Everybody was looking for diamonds, except those who were looking after the slaves. All the large diamonds belonged to the Mogul, but he never got them; all the lesser stones belonged to the Emir, who got very few of them; and none at all belonged to the slaves, who only stole them. To steal a diamond was the highest of crimes in Golconda and was often punished by death. And yet the slaves were continually stealing them. The slave of whom we speak was toiling, washing, and looking; and remembering how many had escaped with diamonds, he began to consider what he should do in case he found one. There would not be the least use in swallowing it.

"I have it!" he said, slapping his lean leg. "I have thought of a new way of hiding a diamond!"

That night, when all was still, he got a sharp flint and made a great gash in the firm muscle of the calf of his leg, and then carefully bandaged it up with some green leaves and an old cotton rag.

"What's the matter with your leg?" said the overseer in the morning.

"Oh, most excellent master! my unworthiness slipped and fell against a sharp rock in the night-time. See! the blood of your faithful slave flows from the wound."

He raised a corner of the bandage, and sure enough several drops of blood trickled down.

"Umph!" said the overseer, "I'm not going to let you off your work on account of that scratch."

"My faithfulness will work to the death for you, oh, noble master," said the slave.

And so he hobbled off to the diamond-washing. By-and-by he found some diamonds, but they were small, and not worth risking his life for, therefore the slave handed them in to the overseer, who also passed them on, as they were smaller than what he usually appropriated to himself. But a wonderful piece of good fortune befel the clever slave. One day as he washed his mud he noticed a large lump that did not wash down. He took it between his thumb and finger to crack the lump and lo! It would not crack.

The slave's heart gave a great leap of joy. His fingers had felt the greasy, slippery texture of a diamond, and had touched the sharp cutting edges of crystallisation. A diamond as big as a hen's egg! In a moment it was under the bandage of his leg, in another it was shoved bodily into the wound itself.

It does not make a sore in your leg any better to shove a big diamond into it. Next morning he was very bad and his leg was inflamed.

"What are you trying to sham for?" said the overseer. "I know what's the matter with you! You've been swallowing diamonds. I won't cut off your head this time, but you had better look out, and if it ever happens again—!"

He left him with a dark look and in a few

minutes returned with something in a bowl. It was a stiff emetic.

"Now then, swallow this, and you will be relieved of your pain," said the overseer.

"My faithfulness will swallow anything your nobleness gives me, but no diamonds will come," said the slave.

He was dreadfully sick, but no diamonds came, as there were none swallowed. The overseer said he would give him another dose the next day, but he took no notice of the sore in the slave's leg.

The next day brought the medicine, but no diamonds.

"Go die like a dog in the jungle," said the overseer angrily. "I don't know what is the matter with you."

The slave kissed the ground where the great overseer stood and crawled away, very lame indeed. By-and-by that lame slave, pretty nearly well, turned up at Madras. His leg got well when he took the diamond out of the wound. He had the largest diamond in the world to sell, and when he had done so he thought he would be a very great man, and have slaves of his own, and even an elephant too. He would do just as he liked for the rest of his life. He came across a ship captain to whom he showed the diamond.

"I sometimes buy stones like that," said the captain airily. He was nearly choking with surprise at the beauty and the enormous size of the gem. "Come down to my ship and we will see if we cannot come to a bargain." The captain was a seafaring man on land, but when at sea he was something more like a pirate, as the slave found out when he went down to his ship.

The captain was waiting for him, not with a bag of money, however, but with a club. The slave was killed and thrown overboard to feed the sharks, and that was the end of him and his fine dreams of wealth and happiness. The captain now wanted to sell his ill-gotten diamond. Jamchund, a merchant, gave him a thousand pounds for it, and whereupon he turned over the stone to that individual.

Fancy a piratical skipper with an evil conscience, and a thousand pounds in hand in one lump. What should he do to show his happiness but take to drink? He did so, and one fine day, mad with drink, he could not think of any other way to get rid of the haunting image of that wretched slave whom he had killed, than by tying a rope around his own neck, and drawing it so tightly that all images were for ever more blotted out. So the skipper hanged himself, and that was the second owner of the Big Diamond who had come to grief.

Now Jamchund thought he would go to the Governor of Fort St. George with his stone. Mr. Pitt was the governor, a sharp gentleman, who did a bit of trading on his own account.

"Oh, most gracious and noble of patrons! I have here a trifle I would gladly let you see. I would show it to no one else. Its beauty is reserved for your greatness to behold."

Thus Jamchund to Pitt.

"Come along now, and show whatever you've got to sell and don't keep me here all day."

Thus Pitt (approximately) to Jamchund.

There were also pipes and pauses in the conversation so that it took a long time in reality. Finally Jamchund opened a box and showed to Mr. Pitt the largest diamond he had ever seen, considerably larger than he had ever even dreamed of.

He gasped with amazement. Jamchund rejoiced inwardly.

"What is the price of that stone?" asked the Governor.

"Two hundred thousand pagodas," answered Jamchund sweetly.

"Two hundred thousand demons!" said the Governor. "What do you mean by naming such an impossible sum? Why don't you ask for the nearest star and have done with it?"

"Excellency, I should be ruined if I took less," said Jamchund. "Even so, I gain but a contemptible commission, hardly enough to live on. And it is only to your Excellency I offer it at so modest a figure."

To appreciate Jamchund's kind modesty, it will be well to reduce pagodas to pounds. Two hundred thousand pagodas is about £80,000. As he gave the skipper a thousand pounds, his commission and the insignificant nature of it can be seen at a glance.

"Jamchund, I will give you thirty thousand pagodas for that diamond and not a penny more," said the Governor.

"Excellency that would be pure destruction and destitution for me. I cannot do it, even for you," said Jamchund as he bowed himself out. He stayed away two months.

"Excellency, I have come back," he said on his return, "to say, that I could not rest easy in my mind if any one except your Nobleness should possess my inestimable diamond."

"Which means, you cannot find another purchaser," said the practical Governor. "What is your figure now?"

"Fifty thousand pagodas. It is beggary, but I shall have a clear conscience," said the humble Jamchund.

"Forty-five," said the Governor, inwardly observing that if the stone "were good, it must prove a pennyworth."

"Forty-nine thousand, Excellency! Just to save me from absolute penury," whined Jamchund.

"I'll give forty-six, and no more."

"Think of my risk, noble Excellency! Say forty-nine thousand."

"What is your risk? Did you steal it from the Mogul?"

"The sun, moon and stars listen to that! No, I bought it at a fabulous figure. But think of the risk I have run of having it stolen from me."

"Well, I'll give forty-seven thousand," said the Governor.

"And I have come down from two hundred thousand to forty-nine!" sighed Jamchund. "It is ruinous generosity! I will say forty-eight thousand to show my devotion to your Excellency's interests."

"Bosh!" said his Excellency, and turning to an English gentleman he asked him his opinion.

"My opinion," said that oracle, "is, that a

thing that is worth forty-seven thousand pagodas, is very likely to be worth forty-eight thousand."

"Thank you," said the Governor. "I never thought about it in that light before. I will pay forty-eight thousand pagodas then."

And he paid them.

The advice sounded foolish, but it proved valuable, for upon that diamond the fortunes of a great family were solidly founded. The Mr. Pitt who bought this diamond was grandfather to the great Earl of Chatham.

Behold now Mr. Pitt the possessor of the Big Diamond, and his troubles began almost as soon as that fact became known. When he returned to England he had his stone cut and polished. It took two years to do that, and at the end of that time Pitt's eyes were gladdened with the sight of the most dazzling gem the world had ever beheld.

"Who'll buy, who'll buy?" was now his cry. But though many would, nobody could. Kings and queens shook their heads sadly. It was beyond them. The Big Diamond became an awful burden to its owner. Everyone was a thief in his fancy. A learned German travelled to England and wanted to see Pitt and his pebble.

"Never!" said the harassed owner. "He will assassinate me." He fled to town, he changed his name, he fled back to the country, and changed his name again. The learned German considered such a life not worth living at any price. By this time Pitt never dared to sleep two consecutive nights in the same house.

He was always "moving on," pursued by the terrors of his own imagining.

At last somebody came forward as a purchaser. This time a real one. It was Louis, Duke of Orleans, Regent of France for the boy king Louis XV. Saint Simon, a wily courtier, tempted the duke to buy the Big Diamond.

The Duke of Orleans objected.

"We have no money in the treasury," he said.

"That is nothing! You can borrow," said the courtier.

"We have no credit."

"Still less important! Borrow from the people."

"The people are starving," said the duke.

"Highness, buy the diamond. The people will applaud your spirit. They will be proud to think their king wears a diamond that no other monarch dared to buy. The French admire a spirited policy. Buy it. They will never taunt you with it." Thus spoke Saint Simon, courtier and philosopher, thoroughly understanding his nation. The Big Diamond was bought and the sum paid to Mr. Pitt was £135,000 sterling. He had given Jamchund £20,000. Jamchund gave the skipper £1,000, and the skipper gave his life and so did the slave. A costly stone indeed!

Now a strange thing happened.

During the Revolution this Big Diamond was stolen along with all the rest of the French crown jewels. There was a terrific row, and political parties accused each other of the theft. Some said it was the royalists, and some said it was the republicans. However that may be the thieves were certainly Frenchmen, for a few days afterwards, the secretary of the Garde Meuble, got a note to say that

he had only to hunt in a spot carefully described in the Champs Elysées, to find the Big Diamond. A search was made, and sure enough, there was the diamond as bright as ever. The thief could not bring himself to rob France of the prize gem which placed her first of all the nations of Europe in the matter of diamonds. Even a thief was patriotic. Old Saint Simon was right. The people took the Big Diamond into its very heart. Napoleon pawned the stone and got in that way money for his first campaigns. The diamond may thus have been the beginning of his fortunes, and who shall say how many lives that cost.

Now does anyone want to see this Big Diamond? Let him go into the long gallery of the Louvre, and there he will see a glass case surrounded by a brass railing, inside of which stands an armed guard. In the middle of the case is a twinkling stone looking for all the world as if a star had fallen from the skies and lodged there, so bright, so beautiful, so flashing, is this point of light. Let him walk all around the case and notice the sparkles that dart from the facets of that diamond: sunbeams going outward towards the windows every colour in quintessence of brightness, shimmering, flashing, darting, in every direction at every moment. Let him look at and wonder at and admire the most beautiful diamond in the world, but let him ask no questions, for the armed guard scowls at questioners, and, as in the days of Pitt, suspects everyone that inquires about this wonderful stone. For this is a true story, and the name of the Big Diamond is "the Regent."

KEEPING IN THE SUNSHINE.



WE lived for many years in a house facing north-east, and being built in the old-fashioned style of only two storeys, and with a frontage of more than sixty feet, almost every room faced to the front, and we were doomed to very little sunshine. How eagerly we looked for its warmth and rays on the rare occasions when the sun shone on corners of the house, and how we revelled in the sunny south-west garden and lawn. In summer it was perfection, for while the house was cool and shady the garden was ablaze with the sunshine, except under the shade of the old fruit trees where we sat. But it was in the early spring and autumn that we envied our opposite neighbours whose houses faced the sun, and into whose windows it poured its life-giving beams. In due time our old house was doomed to destruction by a ruthless builder. Down it all came, and it nearly broke our hearts to see it. The lovely lawn, the rose walk bordered on each side with rose-bushes; the old apple-trees, yew-hedge, and old lilac-trees that had braved at least forty winters—all, all were uprooted, and we had to seek another home. Fortunately for us there was a house to let on the opposite and sunny side, one of a terrace it is true, and with no garden to speak of (and that facing north), no fruit-trees, and worse than all, no conservatory or greenhouse in which to rear our favourite plants. But with all these failings,

and they were serious, we were more than repaid by the advantages of being on the sunny side.

Every scrap of sunshine found its way into our windows, the world looked brighter and happier out of them, and if we were kept indoors by illness the outlook from our windows was a cheerful one. The drawing-room was large and lofty, and in the spacious window recesses we placed our plants, a very bower of greenery. The ferns all at the back facing north and the geraniums and other blossoming plants facing south-west in the front. We preferred plants to window curtains, and soon our friends got to know the house by its cheerful appearance. We had two very large geranium plants, quite fifteen years old, and these we placed one at each side window, and the one nearest to the hall-door greeted our visitors with clusters of its lovely rose-coloured blossoms. An asparagus fern on a stand drooped like a green veil above, and maiden-hair petunias, hyacinths, cyclamen, and even rare Indian blossoms in their turn cheered and interested us.

My mother, who had what we called "a magic hand" with plants, managed to raise a little vine-tree from the pip of a raisin, some little oranges from the pips of some Tangerine oranges, little chestnut-trees, and even a little olive-tree from a seed, besides many interesting plants from bulbs sent to us by friends from various parts of the world. These were of never-failing interest to ourselves and our visitors. Was it not worth while to have moved on to the sunny side? Besides this our health improved—low heavy colds which laid hold of us in early autumn and stuck to us till the late spring vanished in the warmth and brightness of the new home, and I understood for the first time the supreme importance of a sunny aspect.

Invalids and children walked on our side of the road rather than on the other, and it became quite a fashionable promenade on a bright day.

One of our neighbours however persistently kept some or all of their blinds down even on dull days, and I longed to have it out with them. They did not deserve their good fortune. What are faded carpets in comparison with health? Better have no carpets and no ornaments that fade rather than ill-health and depressed spirits. And this set me thinking of some people who, in spite of adversity and in the face of misfortune, present to the world a sunny front, whilst others with every comfort and advantage prefer the shade and even darkness, and their appearance is one of gloom. Do we not all know some of both kinds? To whom do we most readily go when in trouble and perplexity, the sunny happy person who is always ready to hear us and to cheer us and with a warm grasp of the hand sends us away comforted and refreshed, or the one who receives us with a chill and whom we leave with a sense of coldness and sadness?

Let us try each in our little way to present the sunny side to our friends. Draw up the blinds, let cheery faces be seen and a sense of welcome and friendliness pervade our home.

Let it be said of us: "It cheers us up to go and see them, they always do us good." But let us never forget who it is that makes us feel sunny. It can never be the true sunshine unless it is from the Sun above, the Sun of Righteousness, whose bright beams in our hearts are reflected in our faces, and who will keep us sunny to the last if we will but look up to Him for eternal sunshine, in whose presence there is fulness of joy.

SURSUM CORDA.