

“For a Charity.”

THE THEATRICALS WE GOT UP FOR IT IN AN INDIAN HILL STATION.

BY MRS. FRED MATURIN.

“**T**HE HIGHLANDS,” Jellapehar, Darjeeling. June 1st. —The rains have broken. It’s very dull. I was reading the *Belle of the Town* yesterday—a new lady’s paper just out from England—and saw that the Home of Reflection for Swearing and Backbiting Parrots is in great need of funds. The people who run it say that it is an excellent cause—that a parrot was brought there a few days before who knew its Catechism, and yet used the most shocking language, and finally, having over-eaten itself on the bonnet of the Lady Superior, died, using such language towards the jet ornaments on the bonnet that its end had to be mercifully hastened. Funds were earnestly pleaded for, but whether for a new bonnet for the Lady Superior, or what, the appeal did not clearly state.

I felt so miserable and dull that I thought, “Let’s get up some theatricals for this charity.” So we’re going to do it, and have written to the Branch Home of Reflection for the Parrots in Calcutta, and told them to expect a large cheque about the end of the rains, which is the time we have fixed for the performance.

They have sent us a lot of their little pamphlets, written by kind people for their Home, to paste up and send about the station, and a parrot sits on a ring in one corner with its head on one side, and the poetry is by people like Bishops and Lord Mayors and leaders of fashion, who are all interested in the charity, and it’s mostly supposed to be written by cockatoos and parrots and macaws, and all that sort of bird, appealing to the public to help them.

One piece of poetry, by a lady, begins (it’s Vol. xx.—86.

an address to the dead parrot which ate the bonnet) :—

Was it thou, profane bird,
Was it thou that I heard?

and it’s *awful rot*—between you and me.

June 3rd.—Rehearsals have begun—in my bungalow. Morton says he’d never have taken leave if he’d known this. There are twenty women in the tableaux and twenty-five men, and I had to give them all tiffin,



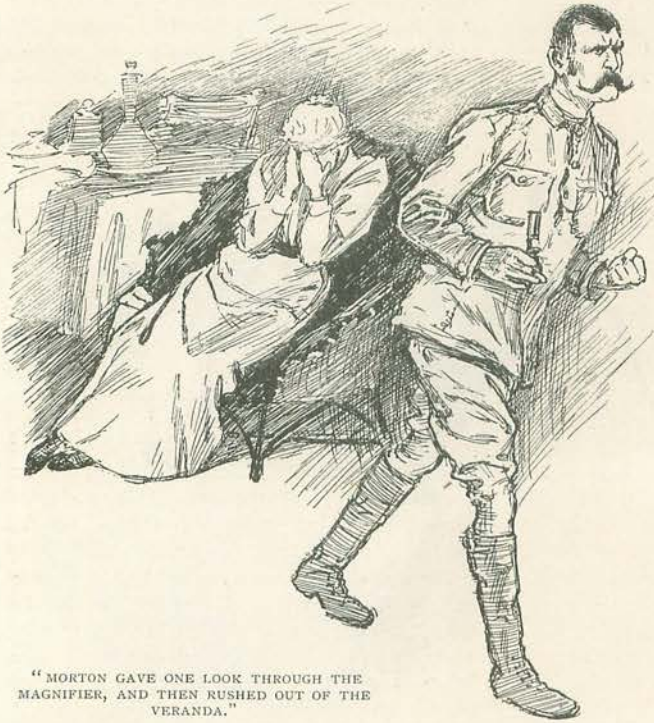
“THE PARROT HAD OVER-EATEN ITSELF ON THE BONNET OF THE LADY SUPERIOR.”

of course. They rode, and came up in dandies, from Darjeeling in torrents of rain. There was a lot of discussion about what tableaux to have, and it seems to me there’ll be rows before long, for everyone wants the best parts, and no one will do the old women, bystanders, and so on.

Some women are unreasonable, really. I à and I set the fashion in the station (of course, I don’t count that lump, Mrs. Horner, whose husband ships bananas to Trincomalee, and so can dress her nicely), and so, naturally, in “A Dream of Fair Women” I felt it my duty to be *Helen of*

Troy, and Lâ took *Cleopatra*; and Mrs. Horner, who longs to be somebody, was dreadfully offended because I gave her the part of *Cleopatra's* old black nurse.

I meant to give them all such a nice tiffin—I'm sure I spent money and time enough ordering it. The bazaar bill will be awful—and the whole thing was spoilt by the *Iss-Ster*, as the cook calls it. I said, "I wish Abdool wouldn't cram his stews with these little black things which have no taste. I can't imagine what they are." And Morton, always ready to contradict me, of course,



"MORTON GAVE ONE LOOK THROUGH THE MAGNIFIER, AND THEN RUSHED OUT OF THE VERANDA."

said, "Well, I call them excellent—nothing these poor beggars of servants can do ever satisfies you."

"They're very riling," says Captain Frere, determined to stand up for me, yet trying to be polite to everyone, because he wants Morton to be the *Wolf* in the burlesque. (He's stage-manager.) "Tell us now, Colonel, what's your opinion of the way we treat native servants out here? One hears such different opinions."

"If you ask me," says Morton, grumpily, "I think it's beastly. I never can understand great, hulking Englishmen kicking and knocking about these poor, lean, half-fed

beggars who *can't* retaliate! And, as my opinion is asked for, I call it unmanly, and nothing else."

"These little black spices," said I, changing the conversation, "look very funny, and I'm going to send for the children's magnifying-glass I gave Cedric on his birthday. Bearer, *jau beito juldee chota glass, tum sumsta deknee kevwustee.*"

"You've told him to go and sit quickly under the glass. Why the deuce, Hetty, don't you learn Hindustani properly?"

The magnifying-glass came, and I put it over one of the black things Morton said was so delicious, and it was an ant. We had eaten thousands—I don't know where they all came from. I gave one loud scream, and so did Lâ, and everyone covered up their faces. Morton gave one glance through the magnifier, and then rushed out of the veranda to the cook-house, dragging the cook forth by the hair of his head, and kicking him along as he went. The cook, who had just refreshed himself after his labours by washing his head in the soup-tureen, and had got a pudding-cloth tied round his head to dry it, came running along propelled by Morton's boot, and crying piteously that the sahib not be angry, ants all dead in the boiling.

The cook's form appeared for an instant to make a curve on the edge of the khud against the sky, and then went over the khud,

landing in a rhododendron below, and the pudding-cloth was left in Morton's hands.

So much for Morton's sermonizing.

June 15th.—Wouldn't anyone think that in a tableau called "Velvet and Rags" the person chosen for *Velvet* would rather be that than *Rags*? Morton and I have had a terrible scene; and really, if that hateful Mrs. Horner is going to have her own way like this, I'll throw up these theatricals, parrots or no parrots. As it is, I don't suppose there'll be half as much to send the charity as we thought, for everyone is choosing their own dresses, and as each woman has, of course, inwardly vowed not to be outdone by

the others, and all the bills are being sent in to Captain Frere, “to be paid for out of the proceeds,” I don’t know how much there will be over for the parrots, I’m sure.

As for the “Velvet and Rags,” I will *not* give in—*Rags* I intend to be, and if Mrs. Horner doesn’t care to be *Velvet*, let her go out of it altogether. The picture was in the Academy one year, and will make a lovely tableau. On one side sits a beautifully dressed, rather fat, well-fed, looking woman in a ball dress, by a roaring fire—she looks complacent and prosperous, and, with her fan in one hand, leans back in her chair languidly glancing, with a self-satisfied smile, over her ball programme. Her opera-cloak is thrown over a chair.

The other side shows the street outside her house. The snow is falling thickly—it is two in the morning—and sitting on the doorstep, exhausted with hunger and cold, leans a beautiful pale girl in a shabby black dress, her head against the hall door, a basket with withered bunches of violets in her lap.

We asked Mrs. Horner up to dinner with several others one night on purpose to ask her to take *Velvet*, and she flew into a temper. Là put it very nicely for me, and described the picture and expressions, and said, “You’re cut out for *Velvet*, with all your lovely clothes, and you have just the look, and the woman who does *Rags* must have a lot of expression and *Velvet* needn’t have any. Mrs. Langtry took *Rags* in Lady Weake’s famous tableaux, you know. And Hetty will do *Rags* and give you up *Velvet*, and you can show off one of your grand new dresses.”

Morton says he never heard anything more nastily put, and enough to rile any woman, especially after Là and I had taken care to explain that *Velvet* had to have “a smug expression,” which is what Mrs. Horner has to perfection.

I cried myself to sleep, but I won’t give up *Rags*.

June 16th.—Mrs. Horner has retired from the theatricals altogether, and has got Morton to promise he won’t do the *Wolf*. We have cut each other to-day riding on the Mall.

June 17th.—Mrs. Horner is back in the theatricals, and has consented to do *Velvet* if she may look “pensive” instead of smug. We said she might—if she could. She rode up here to chota-hazaree and began to cry, and Morton is making himself so disagreeable about the *Wolf* (and he’s the only man in the station who can howl like one, and the only one who will spend four evenings running with a wolf-skin and a mask on) that I

swallowed my feelings and made it up with her.

June 24th.—We are all so worn out with rehearsing that we are going to have a rest, and Captain Frere has got up an expedition for the whole company to go to Sandhook Phu, near the Snows. We start to-morrow morning with tents, coolies, ponies, and dandies. It seems as if there’s to be a week’s break in the rains, so I hope we shall have fun.

June 29th.—Sandhook Phu. We arrived here after an awful journey. It was fine the first day, and nothing especial happened except that Mrs. Horner’s luggage got lost—the coolies went the wrong road—and when we all turned up at dinner-time in the dāk bungalow in fresh muslin dresses she had to keep to her habit, which makes her look awfully fat, and she was in a horrible temper.

It began to rain again in the night. We ladies all slept in dressing-gowns in one big room, some on beds and some in the tables turned upside down, and suddenly Stella Wyndham awoke us all with a piercing yell. Two leeches were fastened to her face sucking her blood, and she said she’d swallowed another, and instantly we all found our faces covered with them too, and the floor was black with them out of the wet jungle around. Là seized hold of one of Stella’s leeches and Mrs. Ruthven the other, and tugged, but they hung on like grim death. So terrific were our screams that Morton and Major Ruthven rushed in with pistols and a blunderbuss, and the chokeydar and bearer and other servants rushed in too, and Morton, thinking it was *they* had been caught thieving, set to work to fell every servant to the ground before we could make him understand it was the leeches. By this time all the men had thrown on something and collected, and someone fetched salt and threw it over our faces, and the leeches dropped off. We are terribly disfigured.

We still had seven miles up the mountain-side to do, when it began to pelt torrents, and night found us Heaven knows where, for we had missed our way. We were in a thick jungle, and most of the ladies in dandies, and suddenly a huge grizzly bear appeared on the twilit path ahead. With one howl of “Allah” every dandie-wallah dropped his pole and bolted, and we all came to the ground with a crash. The coolies bolted too, pitching down our luggage, and I heard my portmanteau bouncing down the khud into the river below. In the con-

fusion no one noticed that the bear had bolted too, and we all fainted several times over before we would listen to the men, who kept shouting, "He's gone! It's all right! He's scooted! No danger! He was more frightened than you were, I tell you."

Mrs. Horner, we were told through the darkness, was seriously injured in her spine, through her dandie having dropped on a rock. No one had any matches that would light; they had all got wet. No one knew where we were or which turning to take, and it ended in our spending the night on

(which comes off in three weeks), for it seems there is great excitement about it in Calcutta, and the one little daily train would never hold half the crowds. We pay in advance for it—the charity won't lose by it, for everyone who uses the trains will pay us back, and we expect packed houses each night.

We have also taken the precaution to book the whole of Sorder's Hotel for the four nights. Sorder is selling the tickets for us and providing the meals. Some of us live so far, we have engaged the Town Hall and all the dressing-rooms from now up, and



"MR. HERBERT AND CAPTAIN FRERE HAD A SCENE ABOUT IT."

that path five feet wide, and a yawning precipice below us, and, for all we knew, the bear, his wife, and family all close by. It rained as it only can in the Himalayas. The leeches had a glorious time. You should have seen us all when the sun rose. We got here somehow at midday, and coolies have been sent running to Darjeeling to fetch two doctors—for *everybody* is ill of something.

July 19th.—Back in Darjeeling, after "many peradventures by the way," as my sister Nina used to say.

Captain Frere is engaging special trains to run Calcutta people up here for our show

Sorder sends meals there for us, and has fitted up beds and washing-stands in the dressing-rooms for the Edens and some tea-planters, who can't, of course, ride back thirty miles every day. Mr. Eden is growling, his wife says, because she's never home now, and everything is going to the dogs. She has frizzled in that odious tea-plantation of his for seven years, and now he grudges her the innocent amusement of being ballet-girl in the burlesque, and is trying to spoil the whole thing by forbidding her to kick higher than his nose, which is, of course, no way at all, and he and Captain Frere had a scene about it.

Captain Frere said if he liked to hang his nose up on the wings as a guide he'd try and oblige him, but otherwise he could have no interference; and Mr. Eden said that the parrots might swear themselves black in the face before he'd let his wife show her ankles before all Bengal.

Mrs. Eden swooned away when he made this brutal speech, for it was a hot afternoon, and she was the only one who couldn't pick up the Pigeon's Wing Step, which consists of jumping off the ground and flapping your feet together in mid-air, and then Catherine-wheeling off the stage. She said her back was ricked, and she felt one of the knobs of her spine moving about, but Dr. Saunders, whom Mr. Eden sent for, in a terrible fright, said it was the whale-bone of her dress broken in two.

Dr. Saunders still has Mrs. Horner under his care, and also Stella Wyndham, who will have it that the leech she swallowed is sucking her lungs dry; and he says he expects his bill alone will swallow up all the proceeds.

August 3rd.—Last night we had a semi-dress rehearsal of the show, and Captain Linden, in honour of it, gave us all a supper afterwards at Sorder's Hotel.

This morning there is a terrible uproar about the supper party, for Captain Linden and Mr. Floss must have had too much champagne, and threw things at each other till everything, windows included, was smashed, and Sorder has sent in the bill to Captain Frere. He has charged eighty rupees for an ostrich egg, which was in a glass case, and which Mr. Floss sat on for fun. Sorder showed it to us, and Mr. Floss said he was most unreasonable: he'd got his beastly egg hatched for nothing, and yet wasn't satisfied. Sorder said if Mr. Floss insulted him much longer he'd do something which would astonish him, and Mr. Floss said *nothing* could astonish him, not even if Sorder dressed up as the baby ostrich, and went round the Mall croaking, “Where's my pa?”

Sorder got so red, that Là and I jumped on to our ponies and rode off, and we last heard him saying he'd report Mr. Floss to the Commander-in-Chief, who I'm sure will stop these theatricals if he hears much more of them.

August 10th.—Our theatricals are in four days, and a most dreadful thing has happened. Là, who is very fair, has got freckled, riding up and down the mountain to rehearsals, and that spiteful Mrs. Horner told her of a woman in Calcutta who engages

for the sum of five hundred rupees, expenses, dhobee, and beer, to take the skin clean off your face and give you a new one which will be pure as a baby's. You've got to be shut up for a fortnight, because, when the top skin rolls off, which occurs the third day, you are raw for another eleven days, and if anything then touches your face, even a fly, you are scarred for life. So the woman has to shut up your head in a sort of meat-safe thing, made of wire and mosquito net, and food is handed in at intervals. In return for these trials, however, you emerge in a state of ravishing beauty, and Là declared she'd have it done in time for the theatricals.

Jim and Morton both tried to dissuade her, but Mrs. Horner kept it up and told her she was a fool with a rich husband not to insist on it, so Jim had to send a telegram to the woman to come at once “to skin a lady.”

The telegraph Baboo looked very uneasy, evidently fearing a cold-blooded murder was in the wind, but the woman arrived, and Là vanished from the world, and now, when the great day is arriving, and she ought to have a new skin all ready, we are told it hasn't yet arrived, and the woman doesn't know *what's* gone wrong, but Là is still quite raw, and it is probably the rarefied air up here, and it may take another year to grow. When Là heard this she threw herself on her bed, meat-safe and all, and screamed, kicked, and rolled. It was a most pitiful sight.

She cried that it was entirely Morton's doing.

“Good Lord!” he said. “Mine? And how?”

“How!” sobbed Là, sitting up and glaring at Morton through the meat-safe, her face looking just like a bit of raw steak inside. “Your beloved Mrs. Horner has done this—out of pure jealousy of my complexion. Fetch some rat-poison, bearer, from the bazaar—juldee, juldee, me want die.”

All the *Noker* had crowded into the veranda and were huddled up, gazing horror-stricken at the vision on the bed, and not at all sure whether this were a religious ceremony, or what. The woman, the skinner, was hastily packing her things in the dressing-room, Là having vowed she would murder her unless she was gone in ten minutes.

“It's a got-up thing,” she said, “between you and that fat arch-fiend in petticoats, Mrs. Horner—not a rupee shall you get.”

In the end Jim had to lift the woman bodily up in his arms, she clawing at his face, and put her into Là's dandie, telling the



"JULDEE, JULDEE, ME WANT DIE."

dandie-wallahs to see her into the train for the Plains. As fast as he put her in she jumped out, shouting "My money!" so he gave her a hundred rupees without Là knowing, and we got rid of her, and she is going to bring a lawsuit against him for the rest.

Jim galloped off for Dr. Saunders, who says if Là takes off the meat-safe and lets the air get at her her skin will be back in a week, and Jim must walk beside her with a fan, and sit up with her at nights, for fear of flies and things.

We've had to postpone the theatricals three days, and the telegrams all over India and new posters have cost 150 rupees.

August 17th.—Là's skin has grown again, but I'm sorry to say (owing to a fly alighting on her nose while Jim fell asleep exhausted one night) she has a little scar which Dr. Saunders says may disappear in twenty years.

Last night was the big dress rehearsal, and instead of having it down in Darjeeling on the proper stage, Captain Frere insisted on having it up here in Jellapehar, at the little soldiers' theatre, though Morton, who is commandant and responsible for everything, told him the stage wouldn't bear us all, and it didn't, and the wonder is anyone's alive to tell the tale.

Captain Frere did it so that the soldiers should get a chance of seeing the show, so Morton gave in, and in the Village Green scene, when fifty-nine people were on the stage, and the lime-light fizzing away on Captain Linden, as the *Grandmother*, doing a step-dance with *Red Riding Hood* (Captain Frere), and everyone else kicking in time, a crash rent the air and the boards gave way, and most of the company disappeared. The space below was about four feet only, so the audience could see the arms and legs and sun-bonnets all struggling, and the front soldiers jumped on to what was left of the stage and helped pull us out. Morton, as the *Wolf*, hadn't yet come on at all; he was sitting in the dressing-room, all ready in his skin and wolf-mask, drinking champagne, when the accident happened, and he tore through the wings to see what was up, but finding no room to stand, jumped over into the

audience, who, with one yell, believing it to be a real wolf (he had a self-wagging tail and jaws which moved), made for the doors shrieking "Murder—fire—police!" The soldiers' wives and children were trampled under foot, and two women had to be carried into hospital. One woman had her glass eye knocked out, and we must, of course, supply her with another, though that's a detail, for the total damages will come, Morton says, to something awful, for the stage is a wreck, and Dr. Saunders has his hands so full that another surgeon had to be wired for from the Plains.

We've had a letter from the Home of Reflection for Swearing Parrots saying they are anxiously awaiting news of the results of our noble enterprise, which shall be noised from one end of the world to the other, as soon as ever the expected cheque arrives.

We all went to bed feeling very cheap.

August 18th.—The grand day.

Là and I and Jim were sitting, very bruised, in the veranda, having chota-hazaree, and talking of last night, and hearing each other our parts, when Morton rode up in uniform, and jumped off his horse and said: "Here's a pretty go—while Frere, this last two months, has been jiggling up and down to Darjeeling, teaching you all how to make idiots of yourselves over these infernal

theatricals, the canteen-sergeant has been embezzling the whole of the canteen money, and decamped in the confusion last night. I've had to place Frere under arrest, and communicate with the Commander-in-Chief at Simla.”

“Arrest,” I cried, starting up; “then who's to do *Red Riding Hood* to-night?”

“Well, not Frere, I can promise you that.”

“Morton,” shrieked Là, “have you gone mad? Why, pray, is poor darling Willie Frere clapped into a dungeon because another man bolts with the canteen money? Answer me that.”

“Poor darling Willie Frere,” Mrs. Busting, was in charge of the canteen money, but he's had no time to look after that, or any of his military duties, teaching you all to dance and kick, and he left it all to Sergeant Wylie, and here's the result. I've had to do my duty. I'm sorry for the parrots.”

“But,” I gasped, “the special trains, the bills, the audience, the dresses!”

“And,” cried Là, “my new skin!”

And both of us burst into a storm of tears.

Captain Linden, also in uniform, rode up just then, and jumped off and came up saying on no consideration did Captain Frere wish the show stopped. In fact it must not be. We should all be bankrupt—and Mr. Floss must do *Red Riding Hood*. He had been at all the rehearsals as a yokel, and knew the play by heart; he was at present on parade, but would be up in a minute. He was nice and fat, and would look very well in the red cloak and hood and short frock and open-work socks.

“I tell you what it is,” said Mr. Floss, when he arrived, “it's all rot, you know. I can't get into Frere's clothes, I'm six times his size, and I can't and *won't* appear in a short frock and open-work socks.”

Mr. Floss is six-foot-two, and Captain Frere a small man—and Mr. Floss is *very* stout and broad, and Captain Frere very thin; but we all said he *must* do it, and we'd try on his things at once.

I sent the bearer running to Captain Frere's quarters for the *Red Riding Hood* clothes, and we got Mr. Floss into them somehow. When he saw himself in a long glass he again declared with emphasis that he would not do it; but we paid no attention, and I called in the Dersee to alter the things.

We ran him through his part and his

dances in the veranda, but he is very depressed.

An orderly came up from the barracks with a note from Captain Frere for Morton, asking him to stage-manage for him, and there were pages of “Don't forget this and remember that,” and one thing was, “Tell Flossie to mind and have the china eggs, and *not* real ones, in his basket, for his *pas de deux*, and I only hope the stage will bear him, but he'd better eat nothing after two, and if he sits on a charcoal stove for a couple of hours it will reduce him a bit.”

“A nice letter for an officer under arrest to write to his colonel,” growled Morton. “Frere's beyond a joke, upon my word. I'll stage-manage for him, but as I know absolutely nothing about it, don't blame me if it's not a success.”

“Orderly,” said I, addressing the orderly who stood at 'tention outside the veranda, “is Captain Frere very depressed? And what is his cell like?”

(I thought, of course, he was shut up in a dungeon with bars.)

“He seems very low-spirited, madam,” said the man, saluting, “but is trying to keep up his sperrits wonderful considerin'. An' when I left his rooms he was a-teachin' Sergeant Atkins and Private Bowen 'ow to go off the stage behind the ladies, on their hands, with their legs in the hair, an' I think they'll do it very well.”

“That'll do,” said Morton (who the orderly thought was writing a letter), “we've had enough of this buffoonery. Take that to Captain Frere, and go.”

August 19th.—It's all over. We were to have had four nights of it, but we dare not put it on again. It was a fiasco from first to last, and everyone is asking for their money back.

We had a big dinner before the show, and champagne flowed like water to keep everyone's spirits up. Two men of the company fell under the table, and had to have their heads dipped in buckets before they could even start dressing. It was a glorious real Himalayan night. The snowy range a hundred miles away looked *so* white and close in the brilliant moonlight, the stars shone with tropical brilliance, the dark mountain-sides and Mall were gemmed with the little moving red lights of syce and dandie lanterns!

Our hearts beat high, and on the scarlet programmes, headed “Home of Reflection for Swearing Parrots,” were inscribed Byron's famous lines beginning:—

To-night you throng to witness the *début*
Of embryo actors to the Drama new.
Not one poor trembler, only, fear betrays
And hopes, yet almost dreads, to meet your gaze !

It ended :—

Still let some mercy in your bosoms live,
And if you can't applaud, at least forgive.

Mr. Floss (who seemed to feel every word of these lines as applying to him) groaned, and glanced down at his fat bare legs, but he was hustled off to have his wig put on ; very soon the curtain went up, and from that moment everything went wrong.

The tableaux opened the show, and when the great "Velvet and Rags" came on, and the curtain rose on me and Mrs. Horner, I heard Morton roaring from the wings up to the flies overhead, where he'd sent our bearer and kitmudgar to sprinkle snow down on my side (the street side) of the scene. I sat on the doorstep with my dead violets, and wondered in an agony why the snow didn't begin. Là and I had taken days to tear up enough paper for it, and it's the making of the picture, but it didn't come. The band played "Velvet and Rags—so the world wags," pizzicato, and you could have heard a pin drop in the audience, and then evidently something did happen, for I heard Mrs. Horner give a shriek, and then another.

They tried to drop the curtain, but it stuck, and I burst open the cardboard hall-door, and those servants had made an *awful* mistake. They had poured the snow down on to *Velvet* in the room, instead of on to *Rags* in the street ; and, what's far worse, the khansamah, not half understanding my directions or else my Hindustani, had *boiled* the basketful of rice I had given him to bring down for the final wedding scene in "Red Riding Hood," and had climbed up into the flies, and poured the wet boiled rice, in mistake for the paper, down on to Mrs. Horner. Her velvet dress was spoilt, and you could hardly see her face. The wet rice had stuck to the grease-paint, and she lay fainting in her arm-chair, while Morton chased the bewildered khansamah round the stage trying to kick him. All this went on

in front of the audience, because they could *not* get down the curtain.

I never saw a woman go into such a temper as Mrs. Horner. She said it was all my doing, and was nothing but a mean revenge for Là's skin.

I said, "Nothing of the sort, though it's wonderful how Providence avenges these things."

"Providence," foamed Mrs. Horner, scraping the sopping rice off her nose with the ball-programme, at which she had been gazing "pensively" when it happened. "Your servants, you mean, set on to do it by you, Mrs. Ardash. Oh, I know."

"Well," said Là, losing her temper, "I can't help it ; I'm glad it's happened. It's



"NOTHING OF THE SORT."

no thanks to you, Mrs. Horner, that I hadn't to go about with my head in a meat-safe for a year."

"The best place for it," said Mrs. Horner ; "the mosquito net would hide some of the defects."

"Here, you ladies," said Morton, rushing on to change the furniture for the next tableau (they'd got the curtain down), "stop quarrelling, please, till all this is over, unless you want it to be a failure."

But the next tableau was coming on: "A Modern Honeymoon" on a bicycle made for two, and the curtain went up, and it really looked very pretty, and loud applause was beginning, when the bicycle, which had been hastily screwed to the stage, started off full pelt, over the foot-lights, and crash into the middle of the band below, and the *Bride* went head foremost into the big drum.

I can't remember now half the contretemps that kept on happening all the whole dreadful evening.

Amidst so many disasters it is satisfactory to be able to say that Mr. Floss as *Red Riding Hood* was splendid, and brought down the house, though he forgot the china eggs, and in the big ballet his basket flew off his arm, the eggs went right and left, and we were all streaming with yolk, but nothing seemed to matter by that time; the pats of butter, of course, fell out too, and the stage became like ice, and I'm sorry to say the ballet ended and the curtain finally descended upon half of us face downwards on the floor. What with wet rice, yolk of egg, and butter, they say it will take twenty coolies to get those boards right again; and talking of expense, here's the list, and as we only took 1,000 rupees I'm sure I don't know what's going to happen. Captain Frere has had a kind of stroke since Sorder and all the others sent their accounts in:—

To Theatrical Fund in Aid of Home of Reflection for Swearing Parrots.

	Rupees	Annas	Pie.
Dresses from Madame Esmée, of 12, Chowringee, for fourteen village maidens	500	0	0
Smocks for yokels	100	0	0
Other dresses	200	0	0
Wolf skin and mask from Mr. Pym's	80	9	2
Self-wagging tail for same	15	2	2
Telegrams, postage, and posters (twice)	400	0	0
Special trains on Himalayan Railway (passengers refused to pay us back)	500	0	0
Hire for two months of Town Hall (including performance) .. .	692	8	1

Meals from Sorder's hotel sent to hall	314	4	0
Bedroom and meals for one gentleman who said "It was all rot" and left without paying.. .. .	35	6	0
Ostrich egg and other breakages ..	120	0	0
Pale-green velvet dress for Mrs. Horner (spoilt)	400	0	0
To Drs. Saunders and Manders for professional services to Mrs. Horner's spine	99	4	0
To Drs. Saunders and Manders for ditto to leech swallowed by Miss Wyndham	52	8	2
Emetic for Miss W.	1	0	0
Ditto for other patients attended at Sandook Phu	100	4	3
Cost of building new floor to soldiers' theatre	453	0	0
New glass eye for soldier's wife ...	25	2	0
Fitting same	20	0	0
Soldier's wife's broken leg (damages claimed for same)	100	0	0
Medical attendance on Mrs. Eden for broken whalebone	5	0	0
Medical attendance on Mrs. Busting for new skin	35	0	0
Price of big drum broken by lady falling into it	400	0	0
Medical attendance on aforesaid lady	32	6	9
Damage to tandem bicycle broken	100	0	0
Medical attendance on bandsman sitting just under bicycle	20	0	0
Twenty coolies to scrub butter, eggs, and mashed rice off stage, at 2 annas a day	13	0	0
Total.....Rs.	4,814	6	7

And this is the end of it all. Besides all this, the skinning woman has filed a lawsuit against Jim for her money, and Captain Frere has to pay up the embezzled canteen funds. There's *nothing* to send to the Home of Reflection for Swearing Parrots, but Captain Linden wants us to bring an action against them for having incited us to all this, and we've written and said unless they can help us with funds to pay up all expenses incurred on their behalf we shall be reluctantly compelled to take some desperate step exposing them.

Morton says he's had enough of charities for a long time.