

The Adventures of a Man of Science.

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VIII.—THE MAN WHO SMILED.



HE *Crocodile* was one of the finest of the P. and O. steamers, and I had secured a comfortable deck cabin. I was on my way to India, partly in search of rest and refreshment, partly to renew my acquaintance with certain tribes in the Central Provinces, whom I used to know in my early days of adventure. They possessed some marvellous remedies for snake bites, wounds, and other casualties. These were, I was quite persuaded, unknown to the British pharmacopœia, and I hoped to beguile some of their most valuable secrets from them. We had just passed Gibraltar, and the ill-fated Bay of Biscay lay behind us. Favoured by a soft, southerly breeze, we were most of us on deck, and enjoying ourselves after our various fashions, when, as I stood in the neighbourhood of the companion-way, the following words fell on my ears:—

“I can find you a comfortable corner on the hurricane-deck, Lil, where we shall be quite alone.”

“I would rather not go,” was the quick reply. “I expect Mrs. Sully up every moment from her cabin. She has a great deal to tell me about Bombay. Her house at Breach Candy must be magnificent—and—why, what is the matter, Dick?”

“Nothing that I know of,” was the reply, sulkily uttered, and a tall man walked quickly past me to the other side of the boat.

I knew who he was, although up to the present I had not made his acquaintance. His name was Farquharson—he had a good appointment in the Civil Service at Bombay, and was taking his bride out with him. The bride in question was a pretty, bright, somewhat nervous-looking young girl. She was so gay, and her laughter so infectious, that she made a complete foil to her husband, who was about the most morose-looking man I had ever had the pleasure of seeing. His conversation, however, was genial enough, and I often heard people laugh as they listened to him; but his face, with the eyes full of gloom, the tense mouth, firmly and immovably set, the long, cadaverous cheeks, the surly set of the chin, was enough to depress anyone. I could not help at times

marvelling why his pretty young wife had married him.

When he moved out of sight now, she sat down on her accustomed deck chair. I moved off, and presently found myself close to Farquharson, who was standing near the rail of the hurricane-deck smoking a cigar and looking moodily out across the waves. When he saw me he made an observation with regard to the weather in a friendly manner, and then, still keeping his back slightly towards me, entered into a brisk and animated conversation. We discovered, as so many people do on board ship, that we had mutual friends. He told me a little about his history, which seemed to be in every way unremarkable, and finally proposed that he should introduce me to his wife. We went round to the part of the deck where Mrs. Farquharson was seated. When she observed us approaching, I noticed that her quick, bright eyes sought her husband's face with an eager look, expressive of apprehension and even of fear. This look, which passed as quickly as it came, puzzled me, but I had no time to dwell upon it then. Farquharson went up to her and introduced me in a brisk tone.

“Mr. Gilchrist, Lil. He happens to know the Farrants—you will like to hear him talk about them, I am sure.”

“I shall be charmed,” was the bright reply. Mrs. Farquharson stood up as she spoke and began to ask eager questions—the Farrants were some of her greatest friends, she had not met them for years. How were they getting on?—when had I last met them? As she spoke her face became full of vivacity, the eyes were as I had seen them half an hour ago, bright and shining, she laughed, and smiles accompanied each word.

“What a contrast this pretty girl is to her husband,” I could not help inwardly remarking.

As we talked together I noticed that Farquharson watched her. He was standing in such a position that he could only see her profile. When her merry laughter floated past him I wondered that he did not smile in response. I began even to think his an unpleasant face, not only on account of its melancholy, but because of the queer reserve



"MRS. FARQUHARSON STOOD UP AS SHE SPOKE."

or tension, which kept each feature more or less fixed. But for the eyes, which were dark, bright, and lively enough, it might have been characterized as wooden.

The following evening, just when the dusk was falling, a light hand touched me on my sleeve. I turned round and saw, to my astonishment, Mrs. Farquharson standing near me.

"I know you are surprised," she said; "but please will you walk up and down with me?—I want to say something—I am—a little frightened."

"What about?" I asked.

"Hush!" she answered. She looked behind her. "He did not notice that I came on deck," she said, in a tone of relief. "Let us walk just here. Talk to me about anything or nothing, only keep talking."

"But you have not told me what has frightened you."

She glanced again behind her and then bent towards me.

"I am afraid of Dick," she said. "I—I think he must be a little—mad."

"Oh, nonsense," I answered; "he is as sane as you or I."

"You would not say so if you knew everything."

"But what has he done?" I asked.

"He has done nothing, only looked *like a devil*." Here her voice shook. "He has looked like the Arch Fiend himself. Oh, the sight was horrible! I cannot live through it if he does it again."

Her agitation was all too real, and, believing it to be a case of nerves, I tried to turn

the conversation to indifferent matters.

"Don't," she said, in a piteous voice; "I must speak of it to someone, and you are the only friend I have on board. I believe my secret is safe with you?"

"If you really wish me to help you, you must be more explicit," I said. "Remember, you have not yet told me what has frightened you."

She laid her soft hand on my arm, and then withdrew it.

"I am frightened," she said, "because

Dick looked like a devil—it *was his smile*—oh, Heaven!" She shuddered from head to foot.

"Now that I come to think of it, I have never seen your husband smile," I said. "I have been struck from time to time with the extreme taciturnity of his face."

"I am not surprised. You cannot have failed to notice his melancholy. Well, he is not really sad. I used to think so at first, but after we were engaged, and when we were first married, I knew by the things he said that he had a contented, even cheerful, mind. I like his gravity—it is his smile which upsets me—I cannot love him if he smiles at me; and as to his laugh, once I heard it. Mr. Gilchrist, if I hear it again I shall go mad."

"But you cannot expect your husband never to smile, nor to laugh," I said. "It is your duty to be severe with yourself, and not to allow such trivial matters to influence you."

"You would not say so if you knew," she replied. She paused, as if considering.

"Will you take a message from me to my husband?" she asked. She told me what to say.

"You place a very hard task upon me, Mrs. Farquharson. No man would like to hear the things you beg me to tell your husband; to hear them from your lips would be hard, but from those of a stranger—"

"Never mind," she said, eagerly; "the case is unique, terrible. Someone must help me—you will do it, will you not? I would not ask you to take my part if I had another friend on board."

She looked so beseeching, so young, so terrified, that I could not help yielding.

"Very well, I will do what I can for you," I said.

"Thank you, from my heart," she answered. She held out her hand.

I took it in mine. The next moment she disappeared in the direction of the companion-way.

The electric light was now switched on, and the deck looked bright and animated. Awnings had been drawn overhead to keep out some of the night air, and couples began to appear from every quarter, talking, laughing, strolling up and down. A string band made excellent music, and I heard a girl propose dancing.

I stood leaning against the rail in exactly the position in which Mrs. Farquharson had left me. I by no means liked the task she had forced upon me, but my impression was that she herself was ill, and that it might be only a kindness to warn her husband with regard to her condition. Presently I saw his melancholy, taciturn face towering above the smaller men as he came on deck. I watched him look round, and I doubted not that he was expecting his wife to join him each moment. By-and-by Farquharson strolled over in the direction where I was standing.

"Halloa!" he said, "I did not know you had come up."

"I have been here for some time," I replied. "It is a beautiful night."

"But stifling under this awning," he said. As he spoke I saw him glance in the direction of the companion-way.

"You are looking for Mrs. Farquharson?" I said. "She has just been here, but has gone below."

"Have you spoken to her?" he inquired.

"Yes. She asked me to give you a message."

He did not inquire what it was, but looked me steadily in the face.

"She is not quite well," I continued.

"You will, I hope, forgive my interfering. I am not a medical man, but I know a good bit about medical matters, and I cannot help telling you that you ought to be very careful with regard to your wife."

Just for a moment he looked as if he meant to resent my intrusive remarks, but then his brow cleared.

"You spoke of Mrs. Farquharson having left a message for me. What is it?" he asked.

"It is important. Can we get away by ourselves?"

"Of course we can. The lower deck will be empty."

We moved off at once, and soon found ourselves in comparative solitude. The music played in the distance, the lapping sound of the waves came to our ears; we had got outside the awning, and the stars shone brightly overhead. It was a

lovely evening, tropical in its heat.

Farquharson drew a long breath and took off his hat.

"It is a comfort to get away from all that gossip and banality," he said; "but you spoke of a message from my wife. Will you kindly tell me what she has said?"

"I will do so, but first please let me repeat that I consider Mrs. Farquharson extremely nervous. She came to me a short time ago and confessed that she was frightened."

"Good heavens! Frightened!" cried Farquharson. He drew himself up stiffly and stood like a soldier at attention.

"And about a most extraordinary matter," I continued. "It seems that you have alarmed her. She said that she could not stand your smile. Of course, it is merely a case of nerves—but what is the matter? You don't look well."

"My smile?" said Farquharson. "Believe me, I never knew that I smiled; I hoped that I had not inflicted it on her. This is terrible. Poor girl—no wonder she is upset."

"It is a case of nerves," I said, misunder-



"WILL YOU TAKE A MESSAGE?"

standing him. "Mrs. Farquharson needs a tonic and a little care and watching."

"She does not," he answered.

"I am sure of it," I said. "Such a state as hers is not altogether uncommon."

He interrupted me with a harsh sound.

"Believe me, there is nothing whatever the matter with her," he said; "she only failed to endure what no woman in her senses could stand. I see, Gilchrist, that I must give you my confidence, and believe me, it is a horrible one. I had no right to marry that young girl. I was tempted, for I loved her, God knows how deeply. Still, I behaved like a selfish brute, and this is my just punishment."

To my amazement, the man was so overcome that great drops stood out on his forehead. All the time there was not a trace of expression in the face, the lips looked straight and fixed, each feature was as if carved in wood, yet one glance at the eyes told me that he was suffering torture.

"You have never come across a case like mine," he began. "I consider myself the most afflicted man in the world. Now, come here, just under this light—but first tell me, can you stand a shock?"

"What do you mean?"

"Are your nerves good? Can you stand something horrible?"

"I believe so," I answered; "I have had some tough seasoning."

He kept gazing at me as if he meant to read me through and through.

"My wife has explained to you that she dreads my smile," he said, at last; "the best way to show you why she dreads it is by illustrating it."

I did not speak. He continued, after another pause:—

"Some people wonder at my grave, immovable face. As far as I am concerned, they may wonder in vain. For you I lift the curtain."

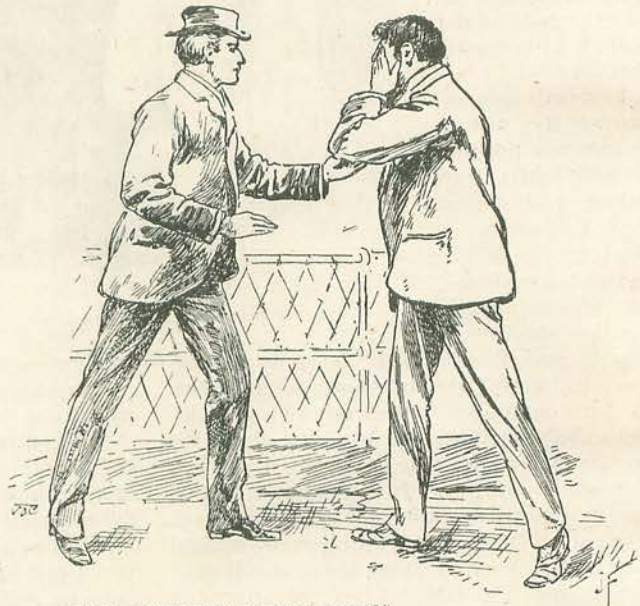
Suddenly his whole face underwent a complete revolution—the mouth was stretched wide, and literally seemed to open from ear to ear, showing his glittering, white teeth. The short hair on the forehead was brought down until it reached the eyebrows, and at the same time, by some extraordinary spasm of muscle,

the lower eyelids were everted, and the eye-balls rolled up until there was nothing visible but the whites. In this horrible contortion, which partook of the idiot and the monkey in its extreme horror, the real Farquharson completely vanished. Uttering a groan as his features recovered their normal attitude, the man turned aside and covered his face.

It was enough. I had seen something which caused my heart, accustomed as it was to shocks and adventures, to leap within my breast. A cold horror covered me. I had truly seen what might have been the face of a fiend.

"Man," I said, catching him by the arm, "what in the world do you mean?"

"I have illustrated my smile," he said. "That is the only way in which I can smile. Horrible, is it not?"



"WHAT IN THE WORLD DO YOU MEAN?"

"It is," I answered. "Fearfully so."

"As we are about it, Gilchrist, I will give you a further shock. Now, listen to my laugh—steady yourself, for the sound will not be pleasing."

He gave a sort of chuckle, low and deep at first, and resembling, to a certain extent, the baying of a bloodhound; but, as the laugh proceeded, it rose in strength and sound, until it at last resembled certain strings of the bass fiddle played in absolute discord. It came and went, rising in volume, until the agonized sense of every nerve jarred caused the listener to clap his hands to his ears.

I have heard madmen laugh before now, and have listened to the jackal in the jungle, but I never, from man or beast, was greeted by such a sound of horror as proceeded from Farquharson's lips.

"Now you know my secret," he said, resuming his usual automatic manner and immovable cast of face. "Let us walk up and down."

"But why do you do it?" I said.

"Because I cannot help myself. As a child, I am told that I was all right, but when very young I had a bad fall off a pony and had concussion of the brain. From that moment the horrible thing came upon me slowly but surely. I was taken to many doctors, but no one could help me, the general supposition being that I received some grave injury to the cerebral centres when I fell from my pony; at least, that was the understood pathology of my condition. One or two doctors said that it was caused by shock, and one man was sufficiently hopeful to hint that another and greater shock might possibly restore me—but that kind of thing cannot be done to order, and my case is without doubt incurable. Now, Gilchrist, the tragedy of the thing is this—that smile and laugh have nothing whatever to do with me: within I am like all other men. I am not the monster my smile would show and my laugh prove. I can love deeply, and I can be stirred to noble thoughts. No woman was ever better loved than my wife is loved by me. While I live I shall love her, and even if"—his voice faltered and broke—"Whatever happens, my love will remain unalterable," he continued. "For years I have trained myself never to smile, never to laugh—even the ordinary powers of expression are impossible to me, for the slightest movement of my face causes an intolerable grimace. Before we were married Lil often remarked on the immobility of my face, but I put her off the subject with tender words, and she learned to love me in spite of my ugly exterior. I often felt that I ought to tell her the truth, but the fear, the terror, that I should lose her kept me silent. I believed that she might safely marry me, for I resolved to be always on my guard. You can little imagine the torture of such a state. It is my lot to see humour with startling quickness, and my whole life is spent in a state of terror, fearing that I may indulge in the smile or laugh which would drive those mad who observed them. I am never quite at my ease except when the light is dim; and, although I may allow myself to change my expression then, and

even smile fearlessly, I have still to guard against laughter. I perceive that in an unexpected moment I betrayed myself to Lil. She is horrified, and little wonder. The stoutest nerves could not stand the infliction of such sounds and such looks as I can give."

"You are right," I replied.

"You have never seen anything worse?"

He looked at me with his immovable eyes, but I caught the pathos in his tone.

"It is a remarkable case," I said. "I earnestly wish it could be cured."

"That can never be—I must endure my burden, from which death alone can free me—but the immediate question now is, what is to become of my wife?"

"Tell her what you have just told me," I answered. "She loves you well and will learn to endure it."

"She cannot—you have said so yourself."

"You must be careful to inflict the pain upon her as seldom as possible."

"I have learned to be careful, but she knows now that the horror exists, and will watch for it. I shall become nervous; with her eyes watching me, I shall act the devil in spite of myself."

I did not know what reply to make. The case was all too tragic. Here was a man who must carry what was practically almost a dead face about with him: a man with keen wit, warm affections, even that last torture to one circumstanced as he was, a vivid sense of humour. He had married a young wife whose nerves were highly strung, and who had already discovered his secret.

We continued to walk up and down. Farquharson was now perfectly silent. The music came to us in waves of cheerful sound across the great ship. He suddenly stamped his foot.

"What an irony that music is beside a tragedy like mine," he exclaimed.

"Listen to me," I said, suddenly. "I grant that it is a tragedy, but I am certain there must be a way out of it. In the first place, I do not despair of your not being finally cured; but even granted that never takes place, you need not lose your wife's affections. The thing for you now to do is to tell Mrs. Farquharson the truth."

"How can I tell her? Remember, I cannot plead with eyes, voice, and expression like other people."

"She loves you," I said. "She loves you for what you are, not for what you look. She is, if I mistake not, possessed of nerve if she will only dare to use it—she can get accustomed to your condition."

"Never, never."

"I believe she can. Anyhow, let us try her—I will tell her, if you like. Will you allow me?"

"God bless you," said the poor fellow; "it would be an untold relief."

I went downstairs at once and entered one of the saloons. It was empty. I sent a servant to ask Mrs. Farquharson to come to me.

She came almost immediately; her eyes were red as if she had been crying, her face was pale.

"I have something to tell you," I said; "won't you sit down?"

"I cannot," she replied; "have you spoken to Dick?"



"HAVE YOU SPOKEN TO DICK?"

"Yes, and he has told me everything."

"Then he *is* mad?" She leant against a chair, trembling.

"He is as sane as you are; but all the same, it is a terrible story—it lies in your power alone to make it endurable to him."

I then related as briefly as I could the tragedy which I had just heard from Farquharson's lips. Mrs. Farquharson listened in absolute silence. When I had concluded she held out her hand to me.

"Thank you," she said, briefly. "I have nothing more to say. I believe I can do

what—he requires. I am going to him." She left the saloon and went on deck.

I did not see either of the Farquharsons again that night.

The rest of the voyage took place without anything special occurring, and when a couple of weeks later we reached Bombay, Farquharson and his wife came to bid me good-bye. I noticed that her face was pale, but her eyes had a brisk, resolved sort of look about them. She spoke cheerfully.

"You must come and see us, Mr. Gilchrist," she said. "Dick has a pretty house at Breach Candy—I shall be very proud if you will be one of our first guests."

I said I would call upon them, and it was arranged that I should dine at their house on the following day.

Farquharson held out his hand, which I wrung. The young wife smiled at me as I turned away. The husband with his immovable face stood close to her; even in his dark, deep-set, honest eyes I could not trace the faintest touch of expression.

At the appointed hour I went to visit the Farquharsons in their pretty house. Mrs. Farquharson ran out to meet me—she looked young, childish, and beautiful. She said that her husband had not yet returned home, but she expected him back in a few moments.

"I hope you will like the house," she continued. "We are going to make a tennis-court here. Don't you think it a nice

house and wonderfully European?"

She spoke rapidly, but I did not fail to notice the strained expression in her eyes. Farquharson presently appeared, and we went to dinner. During the meal, I observed that the husband and wife furtively watched each other, that Mrs. Farquharson's face was white, and that she played with her food. Soon after dinner, she left us, and Farquharson uttered a sigh of relief.

"Sit where you cannot watch my face, Gilchrist," he said—"it is perfectly stiff just now with the effort to suppress emotion."

"Pray, don't think of me, my dear fellow," I replied. "Remember, I have seen you at your worst; I believe I can stand you now whatever you are likely to do."

"You have not been tried," he replied. He moved his chair as he spoke and sat facing out into the garden.

I bade the Farquharsons adieu at an early hour, thinking it likely that I might never meet them again. I went back to my hotel and finished making arrangements for my journey to the Central Provinces.

The next day I was busy, but immediately after dinner a servant came to inform me that an English lady was waiting to speak to me in one of the saloons. I went into the room, and Mrs. Farquharson stood before me. She greeted me with a slight cry and gesture of relief.

"You must help me," she said, in an eager voice; "I have borne it up to the very last point—I cannot endure it any longer." Her voice was low and almost breathless in its eagerness.

"What has happened since last night?"

I spoke in as cool and calm a voice as I could command. There was nothing for it but to make light of poor Farquharson's affliction to his wife.

"I was brave last night," she said; "to-night I am a coward. Mr. Gilchrist, my nerves won't endure it any longer. I have come to beg of you to do something for me."

"And that?" I asked.

"You are going to Jubbulpore to-morrow: will you take him with you? Without him my nerves may get stronger—after a time I may get accustomed to this horror and be able to endure it. Just after you left last night I went into the room, and I saw him smile. He was standing by the veranda, and he was smiling to himself—oh, it was fiendish—I slipped away, I do not think he saw me, but as I went down one of the passages I heard him laugh: his laughter echoed in the empty passage; it haunted me, I heard it all night. If this goes on much longer, I shall *hate him!*"

She said the words with remarkable emphasis; her eyes were gleaming queerly, she was certainly by no means herself.

"When first you told me the whole dreadful history I thought I could bear it," she went on; "now I see it is beyond the strength of an ordinary woman. I am an ordinary woman. I love him well, but when he smiles at me I feel that I am looking at a devil. I wish I could go back to England. Whatever happens, we must live apart for the present.

Can you suggest anything? Even a fortnight's peace would be a boon."

"I will ask your husband to come with me to-morrow morning."

"But can you really bear his companionship?"

"Of course—in fact, I shall not mind it in the least."

This was not true, but I lied to the poor soul on purpose.

"I will go back with you now and see Farquharson," I said. "I will suggest to him that he comes straight away with me to-morrow. I expect to have some good sport; I doubt not he will enjoy the expedition."

"God bless you," she replied; "but please remember that he does not know that I came here. Can you manage to conceal the fact?"

"That being the case, you had better go back alone," I said, "and I will drop in incidentally in the course of the evening."

She left me, and about an hour afterwards I followed her. I found Farquharson on the veranda. Mrs. Farquharson was not in sight. He greeted me in his usual automatic style, but I knew by the pressure of his hand that he was glad to see me.

"It is good of you to call," he said. "I thought you would have no time on such a busy evening."

"I have come on purpose," I said. "I want you to come with me to Jubbulpore. I hate going on this sort of expedition by myself. Can you not manage to give me the pleasure of your company?"

"My company?" he said, with bitterness. "Are you sure of what you are saying? Why are you doing this thing, Gilchrist?"

"For various reasons; partly because I am a sociable person, and am convinced that you are a good shot; partly because I think the change will do you good (you will forgive me for saying that you look a bit hipped); and partly also because I am certain a short absence from your society will be of benefit to your wife."

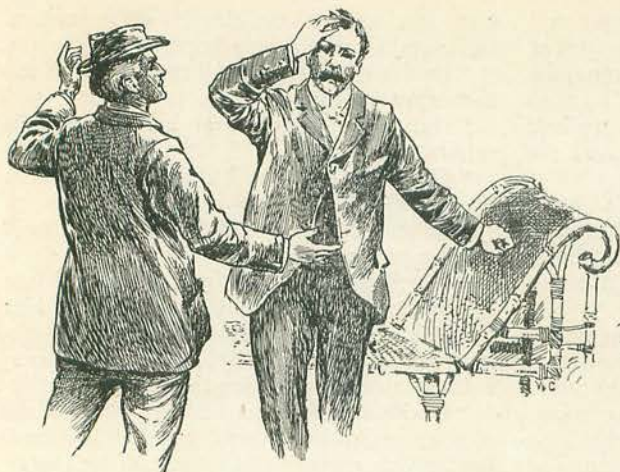
"Has she been complaining?" he cried, eagerly.

"Ask no questions," I answered. "Will you come or will you not?"

"I should like it of all things, and Lil could go to the Sullys. I could not leave her alone here. When do you start?"

"By the first train to-morrow morning. I have plenty of ammunition and rifles for us both."

"I have never been to Jubbulpore," he replied; "yes, I should like it. I will go and speak to Lil."



"WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS THING, GILCHRIST?"

"One moment first," I interrupted. "If you come with me, please understand that you can be, and I hope you will be, perfectly natural. When you wish to make grimaces, pray do so—when you wish to smile, smile freely, and also laugh when you are inclined. I want you to be natural—those are my conditions—will you grant them?"

He wrung my hand, his eyes spoke, though the rest of his face was immovable. He left the room.

In about five minutes he came back to tell me that the matter could be arranged, and that he and his wife would go at once to the Sullys, to ask if she might remain with them during his absence—in short, that I might expect him to join me at an early hour on the following morning.

There was no hitch in the way of this arrangement, and early next day Farquharson and I started for Jubbulpore. During our rapid journey I found my companion overcome by a melancholy so intense and profound that no effort could shake it off. He seldom spoke, and there was no chance of his inflicting his terrible smile upon me. I watched him with ill-concealed anxiety, and often sought an opportunity to beguile him into talking of his troubles—all in vain, he was in no mood to be communicative.

We spent a night at Jubbulpore and then went on to a small town in the vicinity, of the name of Morar. In the neighbourhood of Morar we should get the big shooting we were in search of. We had sent a telegram to Mrs. Farquharson during our journey, telling her that Morar would be our destination, and the following day a whole budget of letters arrived. There were some for me and

several for Farquharson. I saw his face change colour as he took one up and eagerly broke open the envelope. I guessed that it must be from his wife, and, going on to the veranda of the little hotel where we were staying, occupied myself reading my own correspondence. A sudden groan and stifled exclamation within the room caused me to quickly turn my head. I saw Farquharson seated by the breakfast-table, his face bowed in his hands.

"What is it, old chap? What is wrong?" I said, coming back to him and laying my hand on his shoulder. He did not shake me off, but neither did he make any reply. One or two more

deep groans escaped him, then he started to his feet.

"Look here, Gilchrist," he said, "I cannot talk of it. You had best know what is up by reading my wife's letter. God knows it is conclusive enough." He hurriedly left the room.

Mrs. Farquharson's letter was lying face downwards on the table. I took it up, and the following words greeted my eyes:—

DEAREST DICK,—It is not that I don't love you, but I am not strong enough to endure what you so constantly are obliged to inflict upon me. Neither, dear, can you bear it—you cannot stand the strain which must never be relaxed, and I cannot endure the constant suspense and the life of watching. I watch and watch to see *the devil come out in your face*, Dick, and Dick, dear, it is driving me mad. Please do agree that we shall live apart. Perhaps when I am older and stronger I may be able to bear what is now too much for me. Forgive me, Dick, and let me go. I shall return home by the next steamer—Your loving and most unhappy wife."

"Poor fellow! He had no right to marry her without telling her," I could not help commenting. I folded up the letter and then went in search of him.

He was standing under the portico, his hands thrust into his pockets, his eyes staring fixedly before him—his wooden face had never looked more absolutely wooden. When I approached he looked at me.

"Don't ask me to talk of it, Gilchrist," he said; "it is the sort of thing for which one has no words. I believe from my soul that Lil is right—she is best quit of me."

"You will telegraph to her—you will do something to stop this?" I exclaimed.

He shook his head.

"You must be mad," I cried; "you cannot consent to a separation without making some effort."

"I will atone, but not in that way. Forgive me, Gilchrist, I am in no mood for discussion; give me back the letter. Poor Lil! poor little girl!" His voice shook—the next moment he gave one of his terrible, nerve-jarring laughs.

"Merciful Heaven!" I could not help muttering to myself, "no wonder that young woman flees from him. He is the best of fellows, and yet to all intents and purposes he is little short of a monster."

His laughter kept on echoing and echoing. "Ha! ha!" I heard him saying. When he could recover himself, he turned to me, and spoke abruptly:—

"Have you arranged about the shooting?"

English sportsmen get rid of these terrors of the jungle. Hence the delight of the people at our arrival. This tiger had already killed twenty-seven inhabitants of the village. The natives were in a state of absolute panic, and were willing to put themselves altogether into our hands. They had many curious ideas with regard to the tiger, believing it to be possessed of unnatural power, and regarding it with superstitious awe. They were most anxious that it should die, but were unwilling to kill it themselves.

The chief of the party took us immediately to his hut, and very soon after our arrival one of the women of the tribe came to interview us. She had once been with a white lady as ayah, and could speak a little broken English. She told us that her husband and three children had been victims of the tiger—the poor creature was nearly mad with



"THE POOR CREATURE WAS NEARLY MAD WITH TROUBLE."

"Yes," I replied. "There is a small village called Rhanpore, about twelve miles from here, where good tiger-shooting is generally to be had. Shall we go there?"

"Yes, and immediately," replied my companion. He went into the house, calling back to me to get ready as quickly as I could.

Half an hour afterwards we were off. Rhanpore was a small hamlet, in the very thick of the swamp or grass jungle. The chief of the little village came out to welcome us with enthusiasm, the reason for which was soon made plain. There was a man-eating tiger in the vicinity. The Hindus know well the pluck and avidity with which

trouble, and gave us to understand that if we could get rid of the brute, she would regard us ever after as gods. Knowing that none of the tribe would dare to kill the monster, she looked upon our arrival as an interposition of God.

"We will have a try for the brute, and at once," said Farquharson, his eyes gleaming queerly in his head. A glance showed me that he was in the mood to do desperate deeds, and on this occasion I did not feel inclined to balk him.

"We will go into the jungle at once," I said; "how many men can go with us?"

But here an unexpected difficulty arose.

None of the inhabitants of Rhanpore were willing to run the risk.

"You do not expect us to undertake the destruction of so dangerous a brute alone?" I asked the chief. "Will no one accompany us?"

Several men who stood round shook their heads.

"All right, we will go for the beast by ourselves," said Farquharson.

Just then a tall, good-looking young Hindu touched me on the arm.

"I will show you the tread," he said.

"Let us start at once; the tiger never comes out until evening, so there is no danger of meeting him now. You can go and have a shot at him presently, if you like."

In less than half an hour, well provided with ammunition and our rifles, we set forth.

"This promises to be something like sport," said Farquharson to me.

I made no reply—we were crushing down the long jungle grass as we walked. Suddenly he spoke again.

"I have been thinking over that letter of Lil's."

"God knows you have," was my internal reply. I said nothing in words.

"And the more I consider it, the less I like it," continued the poor fellow. "I see plainly that she cannot put up with me; and, mind you, I am not a scrap surprised, nor do I blame her in the very least. I did wrong to marry her, and my just punishment has come upon me. But a girl who is separated from her husband, from whatever cause, however innocent, has a hard time in this censorious world. Now, if death—"

"Oh, come, none of that," I said, interrupting him almost roughly; "we have no time just now to think even of your most absorbing affairs—we carry our lives in our hands; a man-eating tiger is no pleasant monster to meet, and if I am not mistaken, this is a tiger's tread."

I looked upon the grass, which was torn and broken asunder. At the same moment the Hindu fell on his knees. He began to examine the grass and to sniff. Then he faced round and spoke.

"Here is the tiger tread," he said; "he comes nightly right through here, and goes to the pool there to the right to drink."

As the man spoke, he bent slightly forward and appeared to be listening.

"Do you hear anything?" I asked of him.

"Only the snapping of a twig," was the reply; "the tiger will not come out until to-night; we are safe, but this is his tread."

Again he bent and listened. Suddenly I noticed a queer change coming over his face—he glanced from Farquharson to me, and the next moment, before I had time to address a word to him, disappeared. I was just bending down to see where he had gone when a sudden and violent shock threw me to the ground, and my rifle was dashed from my hand: a huge tiger had leapt over me and was following the Hindu.

"Up a tree, for goodness sake, Farquharson," I gasped; "the brute will be on us in a moment." I rushed for my rifle, but before I could secure it, the tiger had turned and was making for me. A tree was near: I made for it and managed to climb up just in time. My sudden disappearance evidently puzzled my foe. He stopped, looking from right to left. I glanced round, and saw to my relief that Farquharson had also taken refuge in a tree. With the minuteness with which one does notice small particulars even in moments of extreme peril, I observed that the tree my friend had climbed into was almost too slight to bear his weight—he had established himself in a narrow fork, and was clinging on with one hand, holding his rifle with the other. I, unarmed, had taken shelter in a taller tree. My rifle lay quite ten yards away. As tigers are seldom climbers, I hoped that for the present we were both safe. I bent cautiously forward, therefore, to get a good view of the beast, who was standing still, glancing round him.

He was a full-grown tiger, of great beauty—a glint of sunshine had struggled through the thick, overhanging trees, and lit up his tawny coat. It is the nature of the tiger never, except on very rare occasions, to look up. He did not look up now, but he evidently suspected something, and also doubtless smelt us, for he made a sudden halt under the tree in which Farquharson was hiding. He now began to sniff the air, turning his head slowly first to right and then to left. I dared not utter a word, but I noticed, to my horror, that, owing to the smallness of the tree, Farquharson's legs were only from four to five feet off the ground. If the brute did happen to see him he would be in extreme danger of being torn from his hiding-place. For a moment I wondered that he did not fire, but then it occurred to me that he was acting wisely in not doing so. If he missed his prey, the tiger would turn, and in mad fury try to claw

him from the tree. The best chance for both of us was to remain motionless, trusting that the animal would presently stalk on in search of the water which he was coming to drink.

At that moment a covey of partridges, evidently disturbed by my possession of the tree, rose with shrill cries above my head and flew away. The tiger, attracted by the noise, raised his tawny eyes and followed them in their flight. He left his position under the tree, walking forward a few paces. At the same instant I saw Farquharson raise his rifle and fire. He shot the brute in the side, rolling him over. My first impression was that he had killed his game. Now was my chance to descend quickly and fetch my rifle. I was just about to do so when the beast, whom I had supposed to be dead, quivered violently and staggered to his feet. He uttered a loud growl, and, turning his bloodshot eyes, saw Farquharson in the tree. With a supernatural effort the wounded animal made straight for my friend—he sprang at Farquharson, and drove one of his great claws deep into the poor fellow's leg just above the knee. The flesh was immediately ripped down to the ankle, and then the brute stood growling, showing his teeth, and preparing for a further spring.

"Hold on, for Heaven's sake. I will get to him," I cried.

"No, I have him; it is all right," was answered back. The mouth of the beast was open—I saw Farquharson deliberately place the rifle between his teeth and fire. This ought to have finished the brute, but the bullet must have come out in the cheek, for the tiger only uttered growls of agony and rage, and making another spring, managed to wound Farquharson once again, clutching his leg higher up and tearing the flesh in a most horrible manner.

I leapt to the ground and had all but secured my rifle, when the tiger saw me. He wheeled round, made a sudden spring, and pinned me to the earth. Another instant, and all would have been over if I had not remembered my knife. I wrenched it from my belt and drove it deep under the brute's left ear, and with all my power severed his throat right across, cutting through the jugular vein; he stretched himself out, fell forward, and died. It did not take me an instant to

regain my feet. I was shaken, but unwounded. I saw that Farquharson was fainting from loss of blood.

"Cheer up, old chap, we have done for him," I cried. "Here, have a nip of this brandy." I managed to pour a little into his mouth, and then helped him down from the tree, but he had scarcely set foot upon the ground before there was renewed hemorrhage, and he sank back fainting.

Just then I felt myself touched from behind, and looking back saw the dusky face of the Hindu woman close to me. She held something in her hand, and pushing me away, knelt down by Farquharson and put some drops of liquid between his lips.

"Give me that handkerchief which is round your head," I said; "I must bind it round his leg and make a tourniquet to stop the bleeding."

She handed me her large, gaily-coloured



"THE ANIMAL DROVE ONE OF HIS GREAT CLAWS DEEP INTO THE POOR FELLOW'S LEG."

handkerchief without a word. I did what was necessary for Farquharson, the woman watching me silently. The light was now failing fast, but I saw through the brightly-coloured grasses of the jungle several more dusky faces peeping curiously at us. Amusement, horror, delight, were reflected on every countenance—the dead tiger lying in our midst was enough. Without uttering a word the natives came forward and helped me to carry Farquharson back to the village.

It is needless to say that we were the heroes of the hour, but I had little thought for anything but the terrible condition of my poor friend. I dreaded blood-poisoning, the result almost invariably of all bad tiger wounds, and in the morning saw from the high delirium and rapidly rising temperature that it had actually set in. I had none of the necessary remedies with me, and did not think it likely that Farquharson would survive. The native woman, Rhaneë Mee, had instituted herself his nurse.

"His life will be spared," she said, many times. "We have certain cures for tiger wounds in the jungle—we can soon check the fever."

I have a great belief in these remedies, handed down as they are from parent to son, and containing the germs, many of them, of our own most valuable medicines; but I perceived, to my consternation, that they had little or no effect upon Farquharson. Whether his state of nervous depression before the accident had an unfavourable effect upon him now I cannot say, but notwithstanding the skill of the Hindu, nothing could check the inflammation and fever.

Two or three days passed away, and my friend's condition was almost hopeless.

I was pacing about just outside the chief's hut, and wondering whether Mrs. Farquharson had already sailed for England, and what her feelings would be when the appalling news of her husband's terrible death reached her, when a clear English voice sounded on my ears, and, turning with a startled movement, I saw Farquharson's wife standing behind me.

"By all that is wonderful, how have you come here?" I cried. She held up her hand to interrupt me.

"Never mind that part now," she said; "I have come. They told me at Morar of the accident—is he alive?"

In her travelling dress, her face deadly pale, her eyes red as if she had been weeping; distraught, worn, and weary, I should scarcely have recognised her for the bright,

young-looking girl whom I had first seen on board the *Crocodile*. She came close to me.

"Is he dead?" she asked again. She did not wait for me to reply—but continued, speaking in a wild and yet automatic voice: "Listen. Since I wrote that letter I have been nearly mad. My misery and remorse grew beyond words. I suddenly made up my mind to follow you both to Jubbulpore. From Jubbulpore I came on to Morar—there the awful news of the accident and his dangerous illness met me. Now tell me, is he alive? I can bear it, but I must know the truth—is he living?"

"Just," I answered. "You must be prepared, Mrs. Farquharson, to see him greatly changed."

"I do not mind that if only his life may be spared. Now take me to him."

She held out her hand.

We went to the hut, in the door of which Rhaneë Mee, the black woman, was standing.

"Rhaneë," I said, "this is the memsahib, the good sahib's wife. She has come all the way from Bombay to see him."

Rhaneë Mee fixed her lustrous eyes on the white girl—the two exchanged long glances.

"Can you understand English?" asked Lil.

The black woman nodded.

"And you have nursed him?"

She nodded again.

"Then I will tell you everything. I have been a bad wife to the sahib—I have tortured him for that which he could not help. Save him for me—bring him back from the gate of the grave—do what you can. I must show him how sorry I am."

Rhaneë Mee's face grew graver and graver.

"The sahib is bad to-night," she said, in a solemn voice; "his fever does not yield to the remedies of our tribe—it may be that he will not recover." Then she glanced again at Lil, who stamped her foot in agony.

"He must recover, Rhaneë Mee," she cried. "I have often heard of the skill of your people. Use your great skill now, and give him back to me."

"I have done nearly everything," said the black woman. "I have tried nearly all our remedies."

"Nearly, but not quite?" said Lil.

"There is one thing left."

"Then use it; don't delay."

"There is one thing left," repeated Rhaneë Mee, "but I was keeping it for myself against the day of my own extremity." She looked again at Mrs. Farquharson, gave her a queer

and incomprehensible smile, and turning went back into the hut.

In a moment she came out again, holding in her hand a curiously-carved box.

"Open it," she said, pushing it into the hands of the wife.

Mrs. Farquharson did so. Inside there lay what appeared to be a solitary pearl of large size and beauty.

"That pearl is hollow," said Rhanee Mee.

"Within there lies a medicine more potent than anything I have yet used for the sahib. Take it, mensahib—I give it to you because you love him. Take it and try it. If anything can bring him back from the grave, that will."

Mrs. Farquharson's face grew whiter and whiter. Holding the box in her hand, she stared at Rhanee Mee.

"Go at once," said the woman, with an imperious gesture; "he is lying there inside the hut, go to him. Crush the pearl and then hold it to his nostrils. Let him inhale the fragrance. What is within is the most potent thing in all the world.

That pearl has cost many lives: it was taken from a neighbouring tribe with which our tribe was at war. It was given to me by my husband—I was to use it in my last extremity. The sahib avenged the life of the one who gave it to me—the extremity has come—the sahib shall have the medicine."

Lil seemed to understand at last. She shook herself as if out of a sort of stupor, and, not even waiting to thank Rhanee Mee, went into the hut. I followed her.

Farquharson was now lying in a state of complete collapse, his eyes were closed, his face was ghastly, his breath came at longer and longer intervals from his parched lips. He did not hear his wife's step or see her when she came into the darkened space. She knelt by the couch—I stood behind.

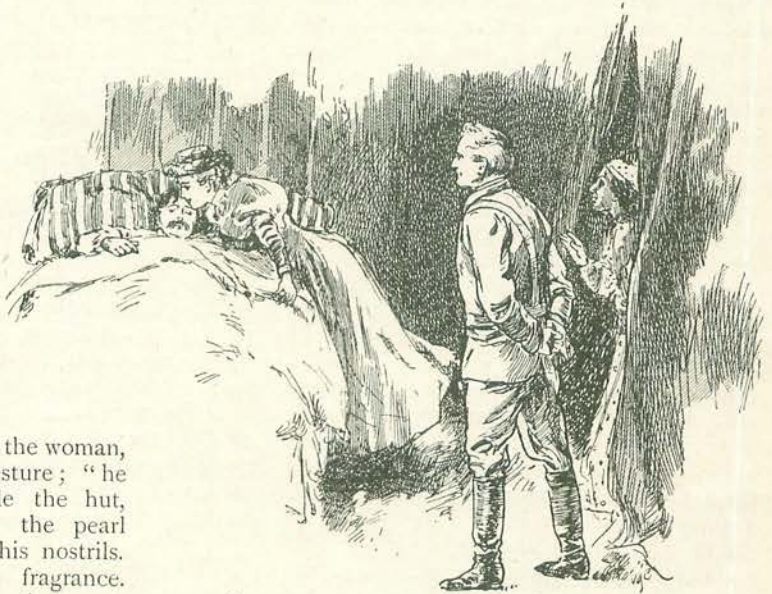
"Dick," she cried, bending forward and pressing her lips to the forehead of the dying man. "I could not do what I said I

would. I could not leave you—I have come back to you again. Smile or no smile, I cannot do without you; I have come back to you."

"Tell her to break the pearl, there is not a moment to lose," said Rhanee Mee.

"Do what she tells you," I whispered. "Break it and hold it to his nostrils."

Her fingers trembled, but she did what I told her. She crushed the hollow pearl, and



"I HAVE COME BACK TO YOU AGAIN."

immediately a gas, curious and volatile, escaped. It filled the room with a queer perfume—the sick man immediately opened his eyes.

"Why—Lil!" he said, with a smile.

He closed them again.

"He smiled," said Mrs. Farquharson, looking round at me. "He smiled like *anybody else*." She fell forward in a fainting fit.

Facts are stronger than theories. Just as there was no apparent reason for the subjective symptoms which comprised Farquharson's horrible malady, so neither was there any cause known why the shock which the tiger's wounds had inflicted should get rid of it. Such, however, was the case; he not only recovered his bodily health, but the dreadful grimaces and unnatural laughter never again troubled him. He laughs now as heartily and pleasantly as any man I know, and his smile, Mrs. Farquharson says, is like sunshine.