ALIVE IN THE JUNGLE

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A Story for the Young

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"Here is the child, Mr. Desborough," cried Oliver. Page 160

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Pre-title page

ALIVE IN THE JUNGLE
A Story for the Young

BY
ELEANOR STREDDER
Author of "Jack and his Ostrich," "Archie's Find"
etc.

"In the night, O the night.
When the wolves are howling."
TENNYSON.

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ALIVE IN THE JUNGLE.

CHAPTER I.
THE OLD GRAY WOLF.

Night was brooding over the wide and swampy Bengal plain. The moon had sunk low in the west, and was hiding behind a bank of threatening clouds. Darkness and shadow covered the sleeping world around. But the stilly quiet which marked "the darkest hour of all the night" was broken by the fierce growling of a tiger

and a buffalo, fighting furiously on the open highroad, within a dozen yards of Mr. Desborough's indigo factory.

The jackal pack were gathering among the distant hills, already scenting their prey. On they came, rushing down the nearest valley in answer to their leader's call—shrieking, wailing, howling in their haste to be in time to pounce upon the tiger's leavings; an ever-increasing wave of sound that startled the weary factory-workers, sleeping in their mud-walled huts under the mango trees. The pack sweep round the straw-thatched sheds belonging to the factory, and gather in front of Mr. Desborough's house.

This was a large one-storied building, looking very much like a Swiss cottage, with its gabled roof and white-painted walls. The broad eaves projected so far beyond the walls that they covered the veranda, which ran right round the house. Like the sheds of the factory, it was thatched. Beautiful climbing plants festooned the columns which supported the veranda, and flung their long trailing arms across the pointed gables. A whole colony of wild birds nestle in the reedy thatch, and find out quiet corners in the cool shadow of that wide veranda. A pair of owls are wheeling round and round. Kites, hoopoes, and blue jays find such comfortable homes beneath Mr. Desborough's eaves, and bring up such numerous families, that the whole place seems alive with twittering wings and chirping voices. But now the flying-foxes, which have hung all day head downwards from the trees like so many black bags, are screaming and chattering at their shrillest.

The hot May night seems more oppressive than ever. There is neither peace nor rest. Every door and window in the bungalow is wide open, for within the heat is intense.

The youngest child is ill with fever, and cannot sleep.

Like so many English fathers and mothers living in India, Mr. and Mrs. Desborough have lost several of their children. Grief for those that were taken from them makes them watch over the dear ones that are left with nervous anxiety. Mr. Desborough had put up a tent on the lawn, hoping the little sufferer might find rest in the fresher air, surrounded by the cool night-breezes and the sweet scent of the flowers.

The poor child was dozing on its mother's lap when the yell of the jackals arose. They were quite safe in their tent; for a mat was tied across the door, and nothing could get in to hurt them. But how was their boy to sleep in such a noise?

The fierce crescendo was reaching its loudest, when Mr. Desborough came out with his loaded gun in his hand, and fired it into the air, hoping the sound of a shot would scare the jackals away. He was right: the pack swept past with a mad rush, helter-skelter on the tiger's track. He paused on the steps of the veranda, and looked cautiously around him.

The dark shadows of the trees were thrown across the dewy grass. Over-

grown bushes, swaying in the night-wind, seemed to take to themselves fantastic shapes. His garden might well be described as one wild tangle of flowers. Roses of every shade, carnations, mignonnette, petunias, myrtles, choked each other: tall scarlet lilies and pomegranate flowers caught the twining honeysuckle, and taught its trailing branches to kiss the ground. Amidst this luxuriant profusion, in the glamour of a darkened heaven, it was no wonder Mr. Desborough did not distinguish the flick of a tawny tail, creeping stealthily behind a giant rhododendron. At the sound of the shot the old gray wolf skulked down amidst the folded flowers; and the father, after exchanging a word with his wife, went back to his bed comforted, for his darling, his little Horace, was conscious—yes, conscious—and crying for his twin-brother Carlyon. Racy and Carl, as they were usually called, had never before been parted.

Poor little Racy had not known much about it when his mother sent Carl into another room, and refused to let Kathleen give him one good-night kiss. Kathleen was their only sister—a soft-eyed, fragile girl, about nine years old. She had wept with her father and mother over an empty bassinet; and so, when two little brothers were given to her in one day, her delight knew no bounds. From the hour of their birth she became their devoted slave.

Carl, in the full wilfulness of his second summer, was too little to understand the reason why he was banished from his mother's lap and parted from Racy. He strutted about in his indignant anger, looking as red as a turkey-cock; and no one but Kathleen could do anything with him.

She invented some fresh amusement every time the clamour for Racy was renewed. Her last great success was the manufacture of a bridle of red ribbon for Sailor, a big black retriever, the favourite playfellow of the twins.

Kathleen, too, was wakened by the yelling of the jackals. She heard her father's step in the veranda, and listened to the sound of his gun as if it were a waking dream.

A voracious mosquito, which had crept inside the net curtains which enveloped her little bed, stung her cheek. Up started Kathleen, and called to the ayah, or native nurse, who slept on a mat by Carlyon's cot. Yes, there was something the matter; she was sure of it now. A small dusky hand put back the thin curtains; a gentle, smiling black face peeped at her; and cold water was sprinkled over the flushed forehead and burning pillow, until Kathleen felt refreshed. Her winged tormentor was caught and killed, and the ayah would have left her; but no. Kathleen was broad awake now. She was thinking about her father. Something was the matter. Racy was worse. She begged her ayah to go and see.

Carl was safe in his cot on the other side of the room, forgetting his baby troubles in happy slumber. So the ayah, who fully shared her little mistress's anxiety, ventured outside the curtained screen, or purdah, as they called it, which

was drawn half across the open doorway. The room was large and lofty. It was at the corner of the house, with doors opening into the veranda on two sides. This helped to keep it bearable in a usual way, with the help of a great white calico fan fixed to the ceiling. This was called the punkah. Two of the native servants were kept in the veranda all night to work it by turns. They were the punkah coolies. One of them was fast asleep on his mat, and the other was nodding as he lazily pulled the rope which moved the fan. They assured the ayah all was right. No one was afraid of the jackals. They seldom hurt any one unless they were interfered with.

Whilst she was speaking, Kathleen grew impatient, and, persuaded that Racy was worse, she threw aside the thin sheet, her only covering, and ran to the other door. She was not tall enough to look over the purdah, and slipped softly into the bathroom adjoining. All the doors had been set wide open, so she made no noise to waken her little brother. There was no glass in the window of the bathroom. It was latticed, but it too was wide open, and the blind was down. These blinds, or tatties, are made of grass, and are kept damp to cool the air passing through them.

The troubled child managed to unfasten it and push it just a little aside. There was the tent gleaming white beneath the spreading trees. She could hear her mother singing some soothing lullaby. The two tall carriage-horses were cropping the tender buds from the hedge of roses which divided the garden from their paddock. She could see the gleam of the lilied pool beneath the farthest trees, with the fire-flies dancing round its banks like an ever-moving illumination. She heard the cries of the tiger and the deep bellow of the vanquished buffalo, and ran back to her bed in a fright, leaving the blind awry.

They were safe from the tiger; for a tiger always turns away from a fence, and Mr. Desborough's grounds were surrounded by a high bank, with a low stone wall on the top, shutting in garden, paddock, and stable-yard, with only one gate for the carriage, and that was locked. How had the wolf got in—that grim, gaunt creature, which still sat washing its torn shoulder behind the rhododendron unseen by any one? It had had a round with the buffalo before the tiger came out for his midnight stroll, and got that ugly scratch from her antagonist's horn.

So the wolf left the buffalo to the tiger, and plunged into the stream which fed the pool. The water was low, and the wolf was wary. The dive was pleasant. A scramble up the opposite bank landed her in Mr. Desborough's garden. Kathleen's peep-hole did not escape the wolf's observation. She saw the child's white face, and thought of her half-grown cubs. She dashed through the window, under the loosened blind, leaped clear over the row of tall earthenware water-jars which stood before it, and followed the child into the sleeping-room. Her

unerring scent guided her to the cot where Carl lay tossing. He had thrown off the thin covering, and was fighting away the mosquito-net which enveloped his cot. She seized the child in her teeth, and was over the purdah with a bound.

Kathleen's wild shriek of terror called back the ayah.

The first fault gray of the summer twilight entered with her, and rested on Kathleen's long fair hair, but the empty bed in the other corner was still in shadow.

"Carl! Carl!" gasped Kathleen, and fainted in her nurse's arms.

The hubbub that arose among the coolies who were sleeping in the veranda, the frantic cries of "Sahib! sahib!" brought Mr. Desborough to the scene of dismay.

He had reloaded his gun, and snatched it up as he came, out of all patience at the ill-timed noise, when he had enjoined silence on every one whilst his darling boy was sleeping at last—a sleep which, undisturbed, meant life.

Seeing nothing to account for the consternation among his servants, he was on the point of refusing to listen to their entreaty.

"Shoot, sahib, shoot! a booraba by the nursery!"

"A booraba—a wolf!" he repeated, discharging his gun into the air with the rapidity of lightning, as anger changed to fear.

"Unloose the dogs!" he cried, preparing to give it chase, as his keen eye detected a break in the bushes of the garden, and the trampled heads of the flowers, which marked the track of the wolf. He knew very well that not one of his Hindu servants would dare to kill it, even if they had the chance. It was a matter of conscience with them. It was a thing they would not, dare not do, under any circumstances; but they flew like the wind to obey his commands.

The hounds came bounding round him, and were soon on the trail of their midnight visitor. They scented the wolf to the edge of the pool, and then paused at fault, poking with their noses among the water-lilies, and looking round at their master with short, angry barks.

Evidently the wolf had once more taken to the water, and the scent was lost. Mr. Desborough saw something moving on the other side of the pool, among the reeds and grasses.

He quickly readjusted the barrel of his gun, and was preparing to fire, when his chuprassie, the Hindu servant who carried messages in the day and watched the premises at night, caught his arm, exclaiming, "No, no, sahib! no shoot booraba."

Mr. Desborough shook him off angrily, and levelled his gun.

"Shoot booraba, shoot baby!" cried out another of his servants, who had just overtaken him. The poor fellow was trembling like a leaf.—-"Come to the beebee, Kathleen!" he entreated. "Come quickly!"

The truth flashed upon the father's mind—the wolf had already entered his nursery. He rushed to his wife's tent. His servants stopped him.

"The mem-sahib" (for so they called their mistress)—"the mem-sahib knows nothing yet. Spare her till we are sure."

One stride, and Mr. Desborough was over the veranda railing, parting the chintz curtains of the nursery purdah. The ayah threw herself at his feet, and began to tear her hair.

Now Mr. Desborough knew very well that his black servants exaggerated dreadfully. Their excited imaginations magnified everything. It is the way in the East, and a bad way it is. Having had two or three false alarms, he never believed more than half they told him. Could he believe them now? "Where is Kathleen?" he demanded sternly.

In another minute Kathleen's face was buried on his shoulder, as she sobbed out her piteous story. "A dog, papa—a huge, horrid, lean, lank dog—rushed out of the bathroom, and ran away with Carl."

CHAPTER II.
IN PURSUIT.

It was all too true. The punkah coolie was fanning an empty cot—the child was gone.

With Kathleen fainting in her lap, even the ayah had not missed poor Carl in the moment of her return. It was but a moment ere the alarm was raised, yet the wolf had carried off her prey.

Charging the servants on no account to let the mother discover that her boy was missing, until he returned, Mr. Desborough started in pursuit.

Like most English gentlemen in India, he was a keen sportsman, and loved to hunt the wild hogs in the bamboo swamps, with a party of his friends, and plenty of native trackers and beaters to find the game and drive it out of the thickets.

But he dare not wait to call his friends to his help. He started forth alone with his coolies, to find which way the wolf had gone.

Tall trees were growing on either side of the high-road, upon which his gate opened. A broad ditch behind them drained the road in the rainy season,

when floods arose so easily. It was many feet deep; and now the water ran low between its banks, dried up by the great heat. The jackal pack had retired with the growing daylight; the tiger had slunk away before the rising sun. Well might Mr. Desborough shudder and turn away from the remnants of the dead buffalo, as he trembled for the fate of his child. The country all around him was well cultivated. Rice and dall (another kind of grain much grown by the Hindu villagers) covered large fields along the course of the stream. They were interspersed by clumps of trees and groves of date-palms growing amidst patches of jungle and tangle.

But the increasing heat had reduced the watercourse to a succession of glistening pools, connected by a muddy ditch.

Already the hounds were busy among the fringe of bushes which overhung its margin. Mr. Desborough mounted his horse, and galloped after them, with the broad white hat belonging to the lost child in his hand.

He soon came up with the dogs, and whistling them to his side, he leaned down from his saddle, and made them smell the hat and sun-veil (or puggaree) little Carl had worn the evening before.

They sniffed it well over, looked up in their master's face with their keen, intelligent eyes, and started once again in swift pursuit.

They had passed the closed gates of the indigo factory, but encountered one or two of the native workers there, who had risen with the sun, and were watering their fields and gardens before the business of the day began. The district was studded with wells. The water was drawn by bullocks into huge skins.

But they left their skins on the brink of the well, and joined the servants, who were throwing stones among the bushes, and howling with all their might, to make the wolf show.

The noise brought out old Gobur from his little homestead by the riverside. Mr. Desborough paused by the bamboo paling which surrounded the little enclosure, which was neither yard nor garden, but partly both. He knew the aged Hindu had been a chakoo, or look-out, in his prime. The different hunting-parties in the neighbourhood used to hire Gobur to go before them into the jungle, to watch which way the wild beasts were roaming.

He was the very man to help him.

Within the bamboo fence was a tangle of wild roses and creepers, twining about the roots of the luxuriant fruit-trees shading the low mud hut in which the old man lived; a tiny well sparkled like crystal in the rosy light.

The old man was gathering sticks to light his fire in the one clear space beyond his trees.

He threw them to a graceful dusky figure just peeping out of the door of the hut, and came to the sahib's assistance. The shouts of Mr. Desborough's servants, as they hurled about the biggest stones they could raise, had told him

only too plainly what had happened.

All the native Bengalese knew well the dangerous propensity of the wolves in May, and guarded their babies with double vigilance.

He knew the hat in the father's hand, and with scant words but many gesticulations tried to make him understand the wolf was probably hiding in one of the coverts near. If they scared her out, she might drop the child; for it was that one dreaded month in all the year when the wolves take home their prey alive to their half-grown cubs.

There was hope in the old man's words, and the father caught at it. Yet he dared not fire into the dwarf cypress, where they all fancied the wolf might be. No; his gun was useless on his shoulder, for he might shoot his child. He could only follow the example of his coolies, and join his shouts to theirs, until they wakened the echoes. Jackal, wolf, and night-hawk had alike disappeared with the rising dawn. Gobur warned him a tiger might yet be moving, as the morning breeze blew cool and fresh after the sultry night.

"Well, Desborough," demanded the cheery voice of an English neighbour, "up with the sunrise, like myself, to catch a mouthful of fresher air after frying indoors all night? But what on earth is all this row?"

The speaker was an English officer who was taking his morning ride betimes, foreseeing still greater heat as the day advanced. He was followed by his syce, or native groom.

"The heat has done it," he exclaimed, as he heard the father's piteous tale. "The streams are drying up among the hills, and the wild beasts are driven to the cultured plains to seek for water. I heard a tiger grunting all night in the river; many may be lingering in the thicket for their mid-day sleep. Poor fellow! you'll see your baby no more."

The kind-hearted major turned his head away, he could not look the distracted father in the face, as he added, "Be a man, Desborough. Thank God for this fresh breeze; it will save your other child—think of that."

But his syce pressed forward, with a low salaam, to the unhappy sahib, to assure him he heard the cry of a child from the grass by the river, pointing as he spoke to a waving forest of graceful feathery blades, full twenty feet high.

"Cries of monkeys!" interrupted his master angrily, provoked to see his poor friend tantalized with hopes which seemed to him so utterly delusive.

He reined in his horse by his side, and tried to reason with him on the probable fate of his child. They passed a group of sleepy vultures, perched upon a boulder stone. If the poor baby had been dropped living amidst the fields, how could it escape destruction? Even Mr. Desborough was afraid to place much trust in the syce's words, with the ever-increasing chattering of monkeys and screaming of birds. He looked at the wide plains around him, and at the great

herds of graceful, delicate-limbed, smoke-coloured cattle, which were now being slowly driven out to pasture. For the brief tropical twilight was over, and day had fairly begun. The air was full of cries. The voices of the night had but given place to the myriad voices of the day. Was it possible for any one to distinguish between them? He heard, or seemed as if he heard, the shriek of his child mingling with every sound, and he knew it was not real. He heard it amidst the bellow of the fierce, ungainly-looking buffaloes, who were marching forth in troops from many a native village, followed by flocks of goats and bleating sheep.

With a hope which Mr. Desborough said hoarsely "was no hope," he rallied his men to beat the huge thicket of grass, and drive out any living thing lurking within it. Afraid of hurling stones at a venture into such a tangled mass, the coolies armed themselves with long sticks, which they struck with a sharp, ringing sound on the bark of the nearest trees. A scampering was heard. The grass swayed hither and thither. There was a cry.

"Nothing but the scream of a frightened pig," persisted the major. "It is the very spot for a wild boar's lair."

He reined in his horse, and stationed himself where he could command a good view of the thicket. Mr. Desborough had chosen his post already, on the opposite side, and was watching as if he were all eye, all ear. Old Gobur had gone round to the back of the thicket. Nothing could escape them rushing from it.

"Not too near," shouted the major to his friend. "Have a care for your own life! No one knows yet what it is we have dislodged."

As they watched the heaving grass, another cry arose in the distance, prolonged and hideous. But the friends knew well what it meant. A party of travellers were approaching, and their tired bearers were calling out for a relay of men from the village to come and take their places.

"Ho, coolie, coolie, wallah! ho-o-o-o-o!" seemed to ring through the air from all points, confusing every other sound. Mr. Desborough's eye never moved from the heaving mass before him. Out rushed a whole family of wild pigs—a "sounder," as the major called it. They were led by a grim old boar with giant tusks, the very picture of savage ferocity. He glared around him, ready to charge the enemy who had dared to disturb him. He was followed by pigs of every age and size, from a venerable sow, tottering along from her weight of years, to squealing, squeaking infants, who could scarcely keep pace with their mothers. Oh, the screaming and the grunting, the snorting and chasing, as the whole family of pigs rushed across the opening towards the nearest mango grove or tope!

Aware of the danger of facing such a formidable charge, both gentlemen wheeled round, and prepared to fire if necessary. The major was inwardly groaning for the boar-spear that was standing idle in the corner of his bungalow. He

looked up, and perceived the party of travellers coming along one of the narrow paths which divided the rice-fields, just in front of the bristling array of fiery eyes and curling tails. He saw a lady's dandy—that is, a kind of canoe-shaped seat with a canopy—carried on two men's shoulders. There it was in the line of the angry pigs. The danger to the unwary occupants was imminent. The little cavalcade had halted in dismay. The major thought of the naked legs of the bearers, who wore nothing but their white calico waist-cloths and cotton turbans, and galloped to the rescue, firing as he rode, to make the old boar change his course.

The weary bearers shrank back in terror, raising a wild howl for assistance, when a small lad, who was riding a little pony in the rear, pressed forward through the standing rice which had hitherto concealed him, and planted himself in the front of his companions, with no better defence than a huge bough he had broken from the nearest tree.

"Well done, my young hero!" cried the major as he rode up to them and waited; for dandy and bearers had retreated behind the screen which the green ears afforded, and safety was best secured by silence. The furious boar came on, foaming and champing his enormous tusks; but the well-timed shots urged him forward. He crossed the path of the travellers within a dozen yards of the hole into which the boy had pushed them, with nothing but the growing rice-straw for a shelter. The stampede of the pigs passed over. The boy still stood sentinel behind his bough.

"Trying the trick of Dunsinane," said the major, with a laugh he intended to prove reassuring to the unseen occupant of the dandy.

"Well content if they do take me for a young mango sapling," answered the little stranger, in the shy, blunt tones of an English school-boy. His broad sun-hat hid every bit of his face except the firm-set white lips. The major had seen enough. He dismounted, and assisted in lifting the dandy out of the rice. The blades were higher than his head, and the ground was more than muddy, for the field was undergoing its morning irrigation from the nearest tank.

"Tie-tara! tie-tara!" cried the black partridges they had unceremoniously disturbed. The birds, with a tameness which astonished the young travellers, fluttered about among the rice-stalks, pecking at the curtains of the dandy.

"Oliver, Oliver! where are you?" entreated a girlish voice from within.

"Safe, my dear young lady, quite safe," reiterated the major. "Let me ask if you were intending to change coolies at Noak-holly," pointing as he spoke in the direction of the village nearest to the indigo factory. "You had better join forces with us, as we were the unfortunate cause of your alarm, having dislodged those pigs whilst searching for a lost child."

"A lost child!" re-echoed the voice within. "Oliver, Oliver, can we help to find it?"

At that moment a great shout of triumph arose around the grass clump, and with one accord the little party pressed forward to ascertain its cause.

The sharp report of a gun sent the major spurring in advance. Had his friend forgot his caution? How had he dared to fire?

Another moment and he saw Mr. Desborough wheel round, raise himself slightly in his stirrups, and discharge his second barrel at a dusky speck emerging from the tufted grass. The tall blades swayed and quivered with the report. There was a smothered shuffling sound, a heavy thud upon the ground, a rustling in the quivering grasses. The native grooms ran forward eagerly, and dragged out the body of a satiated wolf.

"A cool shot, Desborough," observed the major.

"It may save another parent such a pang as mine, but it cannot give me back my child," groaned Mr. Desborough.

CHAPTER III.
HOW THE SEARCH ENDED.

Their work was not yet done. There were many narrow paths leading into the clump, which the wild beasts had made for their own convenience. Some of the grass had been cut down by the wild boar's tusks, and some of it had been trampled under-foot. Mr. Desborough dismounted, determined to penetrate the tangled mass, to see if any vestige of his little darling was to be found there.

The major followed him; old Gobur entered by another path.

"Let me go with you," entreated Oliver, as the coolies set down his sister's dandy under a tree, and flung themselves upon the ground to rest, waiting until some of the men in the nearest village should answer their summons, and present themselves according to custom, prepared to take their places.

Oliver had already picked up enough Indi to make his request intelligible; but forcing his way into the twisted grass was very trying. There were sudden drops into holes and unexpected scrambles up steep banks; whilst the twisted stalks, interlaced with most luxuriant wild-flowers, presented an impervious wall on either side, diversified by tufts of wild arrowroot and an occasional bramble. Now and then old Gobur paused to point out a porcupine's burrow, or to drag his young companion aside, as a hissing snake wound its green length across the

path; whilst the impudent monkeys chattered and screamed as they swung themselves high over Oliver's head, rejoicing in the sudden departure of their more formidable neighbours the great pig family. Bright and beautiful birds peeped at him out of their nests, unscared, with that happy boldness common to all the feathered tribes in India; because no Hindu boy would ever dream of hurting or teasing any living thing. As for old Gobur, he darted about like a monkey, dragging Oliver along with him until they reached a sort of grassy tent in the very centre of the clump. It was the wild-hog's lair, which they love to make in the midst of "thatching-grass," as Gobur called it.

The boy went down on his hands and knees and crept inside.

It was a sort of grassy tent which its hoggish owner had made by cutting down some of the grass with his teeth. One half he had trampled under-foot, and the other half he had heaved aloft with his head, as he walked round and round in a circle, until his grassy cave was complete.

An aspiring porcupine was just disputing with a giant rat which of the two had the better right to this deserted mansion, when Oliver poked in his head. Forthwith the rat, with his twelve-inch length of tail switching from side to side, made a grab at his hair; and the porcupine, bristling with spears, rushed at him. Oliver received the charge on his arm, which he hastily extended to save his face.

Gobur pulled him backwards; but the resolute boy refused to cry out, although the blood was streaming from his elbow to his wrist.

Oliver was wofully crestfallen at this unexpected disaster. There was nothing for it but to retrace his steps.

His silken shirt was torn to shreds, and his hat was left in pawn with the rat. His knees were bruised, with slipping into holes and crawling out again.

Old Gobur began to think it wiser to extricate his unknown companion than to continue a search which he knew to be utterly hopeless. When they got free of the grass at last, it was some small consolation to Oliver to find they had penetrated farther into the thicket than any one else. Mr. Desborough and the major owned themselves baffled, and were now trusting to the sagacity of the dogs.

Poor Oliver's appearance attracted Mr. Desborough's attention.

"Who is that boy?" he asked.

"A young stranger who joined in the search and got scratched by a sahee," explained the grooms.

Such being the case, Anglo-Indian ideas of hospitality compelled Mr. Desborough to offer him a bath and breakfast if he would return with them to Noakholly and have his arm bound up.

The major turned surgeon, and offered to do the job for him on the spot. He had taken to the boy, and wanted to know a little more about him.

One of the syces pinned up a large leaf with thorns, and fetched some water in it from the nearest well. The major tore his own handkerchief into strips, and bound up the lacerated arm with a wet bandage.

Taking the opportunity to satisfy his curiosity at the same time, he quickly ascertained that Oliver St. Faine and his sister Bona had come out to join an uncle, a deputy-judge, who was to have sent to meet them. They had travelled from Calcutta in a big box, with shutters in the sides, so the boy asserted, with a grimace at the recollection.

"Oh, of course," remarked the major; "that was what we call a *dak-gharri*, our Eastern equivalent to a post-chaise. Why did you leave it?"

"Because we were to leave at the last government bungalow, and take a short cut across the country to my uncle's; but it seems to be one of those short things which grow longer with cutting," answered the boy dryly. "There has been a muddle and a mistake. The gentleman who took care of us on our journey could come no farther, and some one was to have met us. But that some one did not come; so he got the pony for me, and hired these fellows to carry my sister, and I believe they have lost their way."

"Then we will put you in it again. Come on with us to Noak-holly; and when I have done all I can in this melancholy business to help poor Desborough, I will take you myself to Judge St. Faine in the cool of the evening," said the major.

Kathleen was watching for her father's return. Her sad eyes grew bright with excitement and hope as she heard the gate open. She was sitting by the gardener, in the midst of a heap of roses and carnations which he had just flung down, on the shady side of the veranda; for India is a very land of flowers. He had brought in his baskets full, as usual, to adorn the rooms, and was sitting cross-legged in his snowy turban, weaving them with his dexterous fingers into wreaths and bouquets of surpassing loveliness. But the sweet perfume and the fresh, cool touch of the leaves, which Kathleen loved so well, had lost their charm. The roses fell from her lap, and she trampled recklessly upon the glorious azaleas with which he had been trying to divert her.

She sprang into her father's arms. "Horace is better!" she cried. "He has slept; he will get well, papa. But have you found Carl?"

Her father pressed her to him and turned his head away as he answered, "We have been searching everywhere. No, darling; we have not found him yet. These people must all have breakfast. There! go to that young lady. In mamma's absence I must leave her to you.—I dare not tell her the worst," he added in a low aside to the major as he turned towards the tent, where the hardest task of all awaited him.

In shy obedience to her father's wishes, Kathleen followed the major to the gate. As Bona St. Faine was lifted out of her dandy, she too whispered something

about the sincere sympathy of a stranger, and her exceeding reluctance to intrude at such a time.

The major thought it a pretty little speech from a stranger; so he engaged her forthwith to do her best to comfort his little fairy Kathleen.

Bona promised readily; and Oliver, who gave no promise, did still more. They took the little girl between them, and would have led her to the house; but she hung back, intent upon the coolies, who were bringing home the dead wolf. She slipped her hand away from Miss St. Faine and ran to the gate.

"Fetch her back, Oliver," whispered his sister. "It is dreadful to let her see that brute. You say it has devoured her brother."

But he was too late to prevent it. Kathleen was peeping through the iron-work of the gate.

"It is the wolf," he said gently. "Your father shot it. It will never frighten you again. Come and tell us all about it."

"I can't," persisted Kathleen. "Let me look." She laid her hand on the iron. It was so hot to the touch in that burning sunshine it almost blistered her fingers; but she did not heed that. "Did papa shoot the wolf?" she asked, with a painful catch in her breath between each word. "Then where is Carl?"

Oliver dare not tell her, for he had heard what her father had said to the major; and being of a straightforward turn of mind, who naturally answered yes or no to every inquiry—"I will tell you" or "I will not tell you"—he was quite at a loss for a reply, not having the least idea how to evade a question.

"Why don't you speak?" she asked desperately.

Oliver muttered something, and creaked the gate, so that she could not hear what he said.

Out she flew panting, Oliver after her.

"What could he do that for!" exclaimed his sister, considerably chagrined. "How just like a boy! He always is so stupid. I believe he wanted to have a look at the wolf himself."

The syces had laid the dead animal on the bank which ran round Mr. Desborough's compound, and were standing under the shadow of the garden trees considering it. They called to the gardener to bring them some fern leaves and bushes to cover the wolf from the sun, until they knew whether the sahib wished to preserve its skin.

It was a savage-looking brute, young, for its prevailing colour was a tawny fawn, with a little gray on its back and inside its legs.

"That is not the horrid dog that ran away with Carl!" exclaimed Kathleen. "It was not a buff dog; it was a gray dog, with a great scratch on its shoulder. I should know it anywhere. I see it now—I always see it—stealing out of the bathroom."

The gardener pressed in between and threw his load of fern leaves over it, to prevent her seeing any more of the fierce booraba. Her own favourite syce, who drove her out in her little carriage every evening, tried to lead her away. Old Gobur stopped him.

"Let the little beebee [the little lady] look."

"It will only terrify her; and the sahib will be angry," urged the syce.

"Stop!" persisted Gobur, speaking in his soft Indi, which Oliver tried hard to follow; and then the old man explained—"The colour of a wolf tells its age: they all turn gray as they grow old. If a gray wolf carried off the child, it has carried it off alive. We must search again."

At this moment Bona St. Faine appeared at the gate, and taking little Kathleen's hand in hers, led her resolutely away, threatening the servants with their master's displeasure for suffering such a child to see the dead wolf.

"How wrong of you, Oliver!" she said, glancing at her brother reproachfully.

To avoid her upbraiding, which Oliver felt he deserved, he stepped behind old Gobur, who was forcing open the wolf's mouth and examining its teeth. He sprang up excitedly and pointed to the little bits of matted hair sticking about them.

"What is that?" he asked triumphantly. "Where did that come from? The buffalo hide. The wolves as well as the jackals follow the tiger to feast on what he leaves, as every hunter knows. The little beebee is right. We must search again."

How Oliver listened! These dark-skinned men, who were chattering round him so fast, had lived in the midst of wild beasts all their lives.

One was telling of a wolf which had stolen a baby from its mother's arm as she lay sleeping.

The gardener hurried away to find his master. The coolies who had carried Bona's dandy joined in the eager discussion; some were contradicting the old man's assertion, others were asking questions none of them could answer. Had any one heard the child cry? No, not even the coolies in the veranda. Why, they kept on fanning the empty cot! The child had been spirited away in its sleep. Only a clever old wolf could have done it.

"That scratch on its shoulder—was the blood dropping from it?" asked Gobur, almost breathlessly. "Wherever a drop has fallen you will find the black ants covering it by this time. Run and look."

Up sprang Mr. Desborough's own syce, followed by half-a-dozen others, gesticulating and talking all at once at the top of their voices.

"Stop that row!" exclaimed Mr. Desborough, who was bending over the cot of his other little boy, trying to prepare its mother for the dread disclosure.

Out went the major. "Two wolves indeed! Preposterous!"

The syce pointed to the patches of tiny black ants which he had found along

the veranda and across the grass, as Gobur expected.

"Sahib," he asked suggestively, "is it from the wolf or from the child?"

"From the child," answered the major, examining the rhododendron bushes, where the crushed flowers and broken stalks were thickly covered by the busy insects.

Both believed they had found the fatal spot to which the wolf had retreated.

Oliver had gone up to the fountain on the lawn, and was deluging his bandaged arm.

"Go indoors, my boy, and rest," said the major, as he passed him, "or you will suffer for it with that arm."

Oliver walked slowly on towards the veranda, examining for himself the little black patches that marked the trail of the wolf. He traced its course from the rhododendron to the window of the bathroom, then he discovered a second trail leading from the veranda to the pool.

He pointed it out to the gardener, who was returning.

"Wasn't old Gobur right after all?"

The punkah coolie joined them. He was certain he must have heard the snap of the wolf's teeth if he were behind that bush. For a wolf, they both asserted, bites with a snap, and clashes its teeth with as much noise as a steel trap. No; it had carried off the child alive to its lair.

Oliver bounded up the steps of the veranda, and ran into the hall. Kathleen was flitting restlessly from room to room.

"Be comforted, dear!" he exclaimed; "your brother is not killed. We may find him yet, alive in the jungle."

CHAPTER IV.
THE WOLF'S LAIR.

Yes, it was all true! That grim gray wolf was not seeking an early breakfast for herself, but a safe plaything for the five young wolflings which she loved so dearly. She cared but little for the scratch on her shoulder when she thought of their delight.

She snatched up Carl so stealthily, and with so soft a touch, he never wakened until he felt the cool breeze that arose with the peep of day, fanning his

hot cheeks as the wolf ran swiftly on. It was too dark for him to see where he was, or he might have been frightened into fits. He put up his two little chubby hands and felt the wolf's shaggy coat. He thought it was Sailor, and threw his arm lovingly round the big throat. He was far too sleepy to take much notice.

The wolf gave him a gentle swing, as she still ran at her fastest pace,—aware, by the way in which she looked over her shoulder, that the pursuers were already on her track. She could hear the baying of the dogs, and darting down the river-bank, hid herself in a natural hollow formed by the dripping of a little spring. She laid Carl down where the cool drops trickled on his head, and he was soon asleep again, sounder than before.

The wolf knew well what she was about. In that quiet water-cradle, with long trailing creepers for fly-curtains, and the softest of mosses for a bed, the child never roused to utter a sound.

Many a native mother tries the same plan, and puts her little black baby to sleep in a shallow watercourse when the heat and the insects become intolerable, and so secures a few hours' refreshing sleep for it on the most sultry days.

The dogs lost the scent when the wolf stepped into the water, and scoured the plain beyond her retreat. Then the wary creature took up her prize once more, and doubling cleverly upon her pursuers, made her way to the hills, where her mate was keeping watch over the precious wolflings. A run of five miles through the morning air was an invigorating experience after his fretful, feverish night, and Carl waked up at last, with a stretch and a laugh, quite unconscious of his perilous position.

They had entered one of the basins scooped in the side of the hills, where the wild beasts made their retreat. The gorge was narrow at the entrance, and partly filled up by dislodged stones and fallen rocks, now overgrown with tangle and jungle, and overshadowed by spreading trees.

These places are called *koonds* in India; and in the rainy season are well watered by a mountain torrent, dashing and foaming from the heights above. Beneath those precipitous rocks, and through the dense foliage which clothed them, the hottest rays of the midday sun could scarcely penetrate. Now, at that early hour, it was so dark Carl could distinguish nothing but a dog-like form. He was still dreaming of his faithful Sailor, and began to struggle and kick to be set on his feet. His hands had dabbled in the wolf's blood, and he rubbed his half-open eyes, wondering more and more why his ayah did not come and make Sailor leave go of him.

The rapid exercise had made the wolf's torn shoulder burst out bleeding again, and as they forced their way through a perfect sea of grass and fern and flowers, under bush and over brake, he became smeared all over. This was his safeguard. Wolves live for the night, and trust to their own keen scent to rec-

ognize each other, in the blackness of darkness which envelopes them, as they penetrate deeper and deeper into the innermost recesses of the koond.

It is a well-known fact that when a pack of wolves are out hunting, if one of their number gets into a fight, and becomes smeared with the blood of their prey, the rest of the pack mistake it for the object of their chase, and tear it to pieces instead.

We think only of the savage ferocity of the wolf when it is seeking its prey, but it has a warm and loving heart beneath its shaggy coat. The nobility of the dog is in it; and to each other they are as faithful, affectionate, and obedient, and even more intelligent.

The gray wolf stopped at last before a luxuriant korinda bush. The thick-leaved branches arched over until they touched the ground, forming a leafy tent so thick and dark and cool no rain could filter through, and the brightest sunshine could scarcely dart more than a flickering glimmer upon the snug nest it sheltered.

Such was the spot the wolves had chosen for their nursery. They had dug a hole and lined it with the softest moss they could find, and the wolf-mother had torn off the hair from her own coat to improve her babies' bed.

Five little heads popped up to welcome mother, as the gray wolf, with Carl in her mouth, pushed her way beneath the branches; and the grim, gaunt wolf-father, who had been guarding them in her absence. got up with a stretch as she dropped the child into the midst of the pricking ears and wagging tails. She had brought Carl to her wolflings as a cat brings a mouse to her kittens, to teach them how to kill and to devour; but the savage lesson was yet unlearned. They were more ready for play than for lessons, and found infinite delight in tearing his shirt to pieces, and freeing him from so strange an encumbrance.

They rolled over and over together as puppies love to do; and when Carl cried, not knowing what to make of such strange surroundings, the wolf-father in much perplexity sniffed all over him.

Could that smooth-skinned, hairless little creature be one of his cubs? How he pricked up his ears every time the small lips puckered, half in fear, and more than half in anger, because nobody came to fetch Carl! The deepening sobs ended at last in a roar that made the five strong wolflings howl in concert.

The shaggy mother stepped into her nest and cuddled her young ones lovingly in her rough paws. The sixth little head crept closer and closer until it also found a pillow on that hairy shoulder. Sleeping in the dark on the dewy moss, Carl dreamed of Sailor in a rougher coat, and waked to find his dream a reality. But his arms were round his hairy nurse, and the pouting lips were kissing her rough cheek, as if she really were his own dear old doggie.

Could he have seen the savage face, he might have been afraid.

Those who live in the land where wild beasts dwell, know that a loving caress will even induce a tiger to withdraw its teeth; but few, very few, have the courage and presence of mind to try it. It is just another proof that love, which is stronger than death, is also stronger than the savage instincts of wolves and tigers; reminding us of that millennial day when the wolf shall lie down with the lamb, and none shall hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain.

Rare as such instances are, they do really happen, and many a story is told under the banyan trees of Bengal of children who have been brought up thus in a wild wolf's nest.

From that hour the grim and savage creature looked on Carl Desborough as her own.

He waked up wide at last, hungry and thirsty. Old Gray Legs, the fierce wolf-father, cracked a marrow-bone with his formidable teeth as a boy might crack a nut, and gave it to him to suck. The wild honey trickled from the rocks above the korinda bush. Ripe mangoes dropped from the trees around, and lay ready to his baby hand in the drying grass, and other wild fruits ripened and fell around him as the summer days went on. It must have worried the wolf-mother that he cared so little for flesh, which her cubs begin to eat at five weeks. But nothing comes amiss to a wolf in the shape of food, so she let him help himself to what he liked best.

The wild birds sang overhead; the frogs croaked in the grass, and queer-looking lizards basked in the chinks of the rock; crawling snakes wound their slimy length about unheeded, as they hissed in anger or basked in some happy spot into which a straggling sunbeam happened to penetrate. Carl might shriek with terror when he heard the tigers grunting in the bed of the stream, as the search for water grew more difficult every day, or the "Ugh! ugh!" of a grizzly bear in search of the mangoes in which it so delights; but he was really safe, for the wolves never leave their young alone. If one parent takes a stroll, the other remains to watch over them, and at the sound of their cry the whole pack would rally to their defence.

Carl was so much weaker and so much more helpless than their other wolflings, that Old Gray Legs and his mate kept him close beside them when he ventured outside his mossy hole.

No human foot had ever penetrated this forest fastness, and if some echo of a hunter's cry did occasionally waken its solitudes, it was scarcely heeded.

It was as if poor little Carl had been transported to another world, beyond the reach of all who loved him so dearly. As the weeks went on he forgot his home, or remembered it only in dreams. Like a baby Robinson Crusoe,

"He was out of humanity's reach;

Must he finish his journey alone—
Never hear the sweet music of speech,
And start at the sound of his own!"

The young wolflings made him run on all fours; for if they saw him stand upright, one or other was sure to leap on his back and roll him over. Besides, it was often much easier to crawl than to walk in that trackless wild of fallen rocks and marshy swamps, where decaying tree-trunks barred the path, and unsuspected burrows perforated what might otherwise have been described as solid ground.

Like all wild beasts, the wolves retreated to their secret bower for a midday sleep, and took their stroll in the moonlight. So Carl was almost always in the dark, and his eyes grew so weak he began to blink like an owl in the sunshine. For sometimes he waked up when his wolfish companions were all fast asleep, and at such times he was apt to stray beyond the dense foliage of the korinda. Now and then the fierce blaze of the noonday sun shot a swift ray across the drying watercourse, where a fallen tree made a break in the thick masses of leaves that for the most part shut out sky and sun altogether. He would scramble over the rough ground, attracted by its brilliancy, and then, half-blinded by the unaccustomed light, stumble and fall. Many a sad hurt befell him, and many a time Old Gray Legs fetched him home; many a fight he had with chattering monkeys and sprightly-spotted fawns—fights which would have ended badly for Carl but for the vigilance of his foster-parents. But the scars and scratches, the bites and stings, taught him at last to find protection and safety by the gray wolf's side, until he became afraid to lose sight of her, and answered her slightest call as dutifully as the five strong cubs, who were now his sole playfellows.

He became the old wolf's constant care; for the perils which surrounded him increased when week after week wore away, and the ever-increasing heat dried up the last and deepest pool, which had remained to mark the course of the once dashing torrent. The blackening grasses rustled as the wolves rushed hither and thither, with their tongues hanging out of their mouths from thirst; and the young things cried for the water they could not find.

When the moon rose behind the rocky steeps which shut in the koond with its precipitous wall, the patriarch of the pack gave tongue, and called his hairy children to follow him out. The time had come for those five wolflings to obey the call, and Carl was as unwilling to be left behind as the gray wolf was to leave him. Out, out he went into the silvery moonlight, led by the two old wolves into the very midst of the pack, catching something of the excitement of the hunt as the wolves swept down the dried-up river-bed with an appalling howl, in pursuit of their flying prey. To keep up with them was impossible, and when he could

neither run nor crawl, in his terror he scrambled upon his foster-mother's back and rode.

When that appalling howl rang through the midnight air, every sleeper in Noak-holly wakened in trembling fear; and yet a bit of white rag fluttering at the end of a tall bamboo would have made so good a "scare-wolf" that it would have kept the whole pack at a respectful distance.

After nights like these, Carl grew vigorous and strong, bounding into the air, and leaping like the young fawn they were pursuing, and running on all fours with astonishing swiftness.

Once he was almost left behind, as the whole pack scampered off suddenly at the unwelcome sound of the hunting-horn of a Rana, or small hill chieftain.

The child was left staring wistfully at the Hindu train; for, like the wolves, the Rana had chosen the midnight to come out with his hog-spear and beat the jungle for his share of the game with which the hills abounded. But the sight of the turbaned heads and the dusky faces, the bare black arms poising the long bamboo-handled spears, and the sound of their unearthly cries, aroused no thought of home in the heart of the baby hunter. They only terrified him. The boy was growing wild. With a leap and a yell he bounded into the air, for the Rana's dogs were upon him.

Out from the towering moonje grass rushed the returning wolves, hemming him round as they would the weakest of the pack, and fighting off the hounds.

Carl was down; but Gray Legs stood over him and brought him out of the fray unhurt, although the Rana's spear stuck in the ground within an inch of his naked chest.

"There is a boy in the midst of the pack," said the Rana's jogie or beater, who had thrown the spear—"a child of the fair people"—for so the Hindus amongst themselves usually call the Europeans.

CHAPTER V.
NOAK-HOLLY.

Alive in the jungle. These words, which had brought such comfort to little Kathleen in her childish simplicity, were torture to Mr. Desborough, as he pictured his

boy dropped by the wolf in the midst of the pathless wilds, the dwelling-places of those ravenous beasts, and not of them alone. He thought of the birds of prey that lodged unheeded in those stately trees—the brooding vultures, the screaming kites. He seemed to see the poisonous hissing snakes, the stinging scorpions, and creeping things innumerable, that infest the trackless undergrowth of the hill forests.

"Tell me anything but that!" he exclaimed, shuddering. The search was renewed with an added desperation. By the water's edge, among the broad crinkly-edged lily leaves which starred the stream and formed fairy rafts for innumerable water-wagtails, he found a fragment of embroidered muslin, torn off by cruel teeth from Carly's tiny sleeve. He saw it was blood-stained. He saw no more, for the fierce sun shot its hottest rays upon his uncovered head. His hat fell as he stooped to secure it, and he sank unconscious on the slippery bed of the drying stream.

"Dropped with the heat," said the major, who thought all further search was vain, and he bade the servants convey their master home.

The house was now hermetically closed, every door and window shut up to exclude the heat. The well-moistened tatties cooled the hot air as it passed through them, and kept the darkened rooms just bearable.

It is the custom of most families in India to have two breakfasts: one quite early; the second, which is called *tiffen*, resembles the French *déjeûner*, and is ready a little before noon. The early breakfast had been forgotten by every one in Noak-holly that morning. The black servants were gliding noiselessly about; and when the major inquired for his little fairy Kathleen, they confidentially informed him that the little beebee would not eat.

"Bring her in to tiffen," said the major; and he strolled into the familiar dining-room, where he found his new acquaintance of the morning, Miss Bona St. Faine, seated in solitary state. At any other time, the odd expression of her face would have convulsed him with laughter. She was new to Indian ways, and was looking very blankly at an empty table to which she had been solemnly conducted by Mr. Desborough's butler, Bene Madho. She was feeling very hungry, understood she was summoned to breakfast, and saw nothing before her but flowers. Oliver, who had just emerged from the bathroom, appeared at another door.

"I wish," she said almost petulantly, "you would not leave me in such awkward fixes in a stranger's house. You might behave a little more like a gentleman, Oliver. In such circumstances as these no one likes to give trouble, but I am really getting ill for want of food."

"It is coming," said her brother, as the black servants, who had only been waiting for the major, made their appearance, handing round course after course

of fish and curry and game.

Down flew a whole troop of impudent young sparrows. Some darted after the dishes in the servants' hands, and others set to work on the crumbs by Bona's plate, quite unabashed by the near neighbourhood of her knife and fork.

Little Kathleen was brought in by her ayah, a coolie following, anxious to obey to the uttermost the incoherent charges of their prostrate master—"Take care of my little Kathleen."

The stately Bene Madho brought her plate of stewed fowl and rice, the usual diet of children in India; but it stood untasted before her. The major patted her feverish cheek, afraid to allude to her lost brother, for fear of bringing on another passionate outburst of her childish sorrow. He sent the ayah away, thinking the child would only copy the lamentations and cries in which she indulged—a display of grief very distasteful to the English officer. His young companions sat silent and constrained, watching Kathleen.

"She will fret herself into a fever before night," said the major. "Weeping becomes dangerous with the thermometer at 110°. I must intrust her to you, my dear young lady. Try and comfort her."

But from all Bona's endeavours Kathleen shrank. She did not want the strangers; she wanted her own mamma; she longed only to creep into some quiet corner and cry unseen. This was just what the major was charging Bona to prevent. The shy child fixed her large pleading eyes on the old soldier's face, and the white lips moved, but there was no word that any of them could understand.

They had fetched her away from her ayah, feeling as if the nurse must be in some way to blame for the catastrophe of the night, and was no longer to be trusted.

"She ought never to have the care of these children again," said Bona energetically. "Stranger as I am, I will remain with the little girl, if Mrs. Desborough wishes me. I will, indeed, if they are going to send the woman away."

"What a Job's comforter you are!" muttered Oliver, as the spoon fell from Kathleen's fingers in dismay.

"It was not my ayah let in the wolf; it was me," Kathleen sobbed. "Let me go and tell mamma all about it."

"Tell me," suggested the major, drawing her between his knees.

"O my dear!" exclaimed Bona, horrified. "Surely you never did. How could you be so naughty?"

Oliver got up and stood by the major, that he might not lose a single word of the faltering confession.

"I never can be happy until Carly's found—never, never!" murmured Kathleen, putting both her little hands into the major's, and repeating earnestly, "You will tell mamma it was all my doing."

The gravity of the look which stole over the major's face as he listened choked Kathleen's voice with sobs, for she felt every one would blame her, and she was shy and sensitive.

"How could you meddle with the blind?" exclaimed Bona. "Only think, my dear, of the terrible consequences!"

"Yes, talk to her, Miss St. Faine," said the major. "She must never do such a thing again."

Bona laid her hand on Kathleen's shoulder, but she shook it off, and darting away into the darkest corner of the hall, hid herself behind her father's door, dislodging a whole family of toads, who had crept indoors to find a shelter from the heat. Kathleen's kitten hotly resented this intrusion, and sprang after them with tail erect and bristling hair. The toads receiving many sharp pats on their broad backs from her uplifted paw, were driven across the hall, backwards and forwards, keeping Bona dancing on one foot as she tried to follow Kathleen. But at last she fled in disgust, as the whole toad family were sent leaping into her dress by pussy's officious paw.

"Oliver! Oliver!" she entreated.

He came to her help with a laugh, which seemed so out of place in the mournful house he felt ashamed of himself the next minute. He knelt down beside Kathleen. "I like you, my little woman," he whispered. "You took the blame on your own shoulders, like a brick. Oh, what little shoulders they are! Of course, a boy would have done so. Don't fret about how the wolf got in too much. They are awful creatures. I am a sailor boy. Terrible things happen at sea. My father was captain of a merchant vessel. I have been to Calcutta before with him. He died at sea. The mate brought the ship into port. Bona is only a school-girl, fresh from England. She was coming out to uncle, so they sent me on with her. Never mind her, she is such a fuss-fuss!"

Awkward as Oliver's attempts at consolation were, Kathleen felt they were sincere. She looked into his honest brown eyes and repeated her question—the question every one shrank from answering—"What will the big wolf do with Carly?"

"Iffley," called Mr. Desborough from the other side of the chintz curtain which did duty for a door, "stop those children's tongues, or I shall go mad."

The major laid an imperative hand on Oliver's arm and marched him off into the veranda, where a mat in a shady corner invited him to take the siesta he so much needed after his night-journey. The ayah carried Kathleen away in her powerful arms.

The stifling, burning heat grew more and more intense. The heavy sleep of sorrow slowly stole over the desolated household, and the weary day wore on. The coolies, who had been abroad since the dawn, returned one by one to

eat their rice and repeat the same tale—"No trace! no hope!" There was nothing more to be done. There is no land like India for sudden calamity. Those of us who pass many years among its rice-fields and banyan trees learn a resignation and a promptitude in action not common elsewhere. To do quickly all that ought to be done, before it is too late, is so imperative that no one was surprised when Mr. Desborough announced his determination to send Mrs. Desborough and the two children still left to them to the hills immediately.

"This very night, if it were possible!" he exclaimed, as he caught up Racy, only to grieve the more over the loss of poor little Carly. A terrible fear of another midnight alarm oppressed the whole household. The syces lighted fires close outside the compound, to scare away any wild beasts which might be prowling about in the groves and thickets. Every precaution was taken.

The sun was sinking. The brief ten minutes of summer twilight had come when every one in India hurries into the open air. The long white line of road winding between the shady rows of trees was alive with traffic. Bona and Oliver stood ready for departure, watching the novel scene.

Straggling groups of workers from the indigo factory loitered round the gates of Mr. Desborough's compound—hideous-looking creatures with waist-clothes, hands and faces all blue: a whole troop of Bluebeards, which Bona thought would haunt her very dreams. They meekly drew aside and salaamed to the ground, as a gilded carriage, drawn by a pair of white humped oxen, swept by. A long line of carts, creaking under their loads of indigo pulp, quickly followed. The scantily-clothed villagers who accompanied them were uttering most unearthly cries to encourage their weary beasts. A deafening sound of splashing of water and stamping of feet told of the near neighbourhood of a drove of buffaloes returning to their homes for the night.

Oliver looked for them in vain. They were making a pathway through the pool, and only the tips of their noses were to be seen as they sniffed the evening air, or snatched a mouthful of lily-leaves with snorts of rejoicing; while groups of merry children on the opposite bank were washing all the clothing they had—a broad white calico sash or waist-cloth. Their washing was a curious performance. They banged one end of the sash on a smooth stone, just under the water, until it fluttered before them white as snow, then they turned it and washed the other end.

A group of travellers, resting under a tree on the opposite side of the road, watched the lighting of the fires with evident curiosity, as they passed a friendly hookah, or pipe, from one to another. They smoked, and listened to the remarks of the indigo-workers, who were charging the children to hasten home before

the darkness gathered.

All were talking, all were discussing the disaster of the morning—rejoicing that the wolf had eaten the bullet of the sahib, and their children might sleep in peace.

Major Iffley was bargaining with a party of coolie wallahs, who had come from the village, to carry Bona's dandy to the judge's bungalow.

Mrs. Desborough put back the curtain of her tent, and waved a farewell to the brother and sister on the eve of their departure, and entreated the major to remain with them that night at least.

She was pale and calm, but the havoc which that day had made in her appearance had reduced her to a shadow of her former self.

"Not me only, but my loaded gun," he answered, as he hastened to assure her every precaution they could devise was already taken.

Bona and Oliver drew a few steps nearer, looking the sympathy they knew not how to express in words. But the curtain fell suddenly, and they saw no more of the mournful mother behind it. Even the major, old family friend as he was, would not, could not intrude on the sacredness of a grief like hers.

He shook hands with his new young friends, hoped for a happier meeting before long, and returned to the veranda of Mr. Desborough's bungalow. He loaded his gun with scrupulous care, and beguiled the weary night-watch by smoking an unlimited number of pipes, and growling at the numerous inmates of sun-cracked walls and retired corners, not to mention the disturbances of the punkah coolies, who cried out in terror every time a big Langour monkey stole across the lawn or a wild-cat leaped from the trees, one and all declaring that another wolf had ran away with the little beebee.

To have had a real skirmish with a wolf, a panther, or even a tiger, would have been less distasteful to the English officer than soothing the midnight fancies of the dismayed household, or escaping from the unwelcome attentions of Kathleen's pet lizard, which had left its favourite retreat behind the pictures in the dining-room for a midnight stroll in the veranda.

CHAPTER VI.
AWAY TO THE HILLS.

"Can you ever love me again, mamma?" asked Kathleen when Mrs. Desborough left the tent on the lawn for the first time, whilst the ayah took her place by baby Horace, who was slowly but surely recovering.

For three whole days, whilst Kathleen was left to herself, she had never ceased crying. The servants found her continually by the window of the bathroom through which the wolf had entered, leaning her burning head against one of the huge red pitchers which contained the supply of water for the day's use. Let no one say cold water, for there was nothing cold to be found anywhere. The bath towels were as hot to the touch as if they had been hanging in front of a blazing fire. The air was thick with tawny dust. The oppression was frightful. The excessive dryness made every breath feel like the blast of a furnace. Insect wings began to drop off all over the rooms, and were wafted into drifts by the waving fans from the ceiling, and their wretched little owners, who had lost them, were wriggling about the floor. The thousands of poor white ants had already done so much mischief that no one had any pity left for their forlorn condition. The bhisti, the coolie who does housemaid's work, came and swept them away. Wasps, crickets, and enormous horned spiders abounded, but were worse in the night than the day. Not one of the numerous families of birds which made their homes in the veranda would sing a note.

Sailor lay at his young mistress's feet, and followed her everywhere with a pertinacity that said very plainly, "She is all that is left to me."

The ayah had done her utmost to divert the child. Her dolls and playthings strewed the veranda.

Bene Madho brought her cakes and sweetmeats when he returned from the bazaar, which he visited daily. Four or five in the morning is the hour for marketing in India, and therefore the busiest time in all the day. He virtually kept his mistress's purse, and bought everything she wanted. His purchases that morning were numerous, for the preparations for the removal to the hills were hurried on by Mr. Desborough. He wanted to take Kathleen away, for in her great sorrow she would not eat or speak, and was always slipping off unseen, even from him. Children in India who are left to the black servants so often grow troublesome.

"See that she eats; mind and send her to sleep," he charged the ayah. But the ayah told him in her despair Kathleen would do neither.

The gentle touch of her mother's hand, and the fond, sad kiss on her parching lips, at last lifted the lead-like load which to Kathleen seemed breaking her heart, and she whispered tearfully, "Can you ever love me again, mamma?"

"Love you, my darling!" repeated Mrs. Desborough, in surprise at such a question. "Mamma must love her little daughter more than ever now, for she may soon have no one else to love."

"No, no, mamma, you do not know. I let the wolf in," lamented Kathleen under her breath.

"The wolf!" exclaimed Mrs. Desborough. "My child, the wolf that killed dear little Carly!"

"It did not kill him, mamma!" cried Kathleen vehemently. "The stranger boy said so. O mamma, could not God, who took care of Daniel in the lions' den, take care of our Carly in the wolf's mouth?"

The bhisti, who was coming in with his water-skin to fill up the great red pitchers against which Kathleen was leaning, ran to his mistress as she sank on the edge of the bath, overcome with the thoughts which Kathleen's wild words had suggested. It was the first hint which had reached her that there was any uncertainty about her poor little child's fate.

She could not in her motherly love take away from Kathleen the hope that Carly was still alive, the poor little sister's distress of mind was so great. But she saw Mr. Desborough's strong motive for hurrying them off to the hills. If the wolf which had seized one child was still prowling about the place, it might seize another in some unguarded moment.

"Let us take them away to-night," she said to him; and the effort to get ready, which had appeared so overwhelming when he proposed it, seemed now as nothing compared to the fear of the wolf's return. Beds were packed up. But beds in India are a simple affair. A thick quilted cotton *resais*, as they call it, serves for sheets, blanket, and mattress all in one. A supply of pillows is all that is necessary; bolsters are unused in India. They must also take calico for punkahs, and plenty of palm-leaf matting, which is so cheap it can be used for anything. Bene Madho had bought abundance of all these things, which the servants were packing in huge bundles, to be carried on poles between men's shoulders.

How they all worked throughout the day, despite the heat, and Mr. Desborough harder than anybody! An adventurous kite carried off a fork from the dinner-table, and a monkey sprang down from the roof of the veranda and snapped up Kathleen's doll, which it carried to the tallest tamarind tree in the garden. There it sat on one of the topmost branches, cuddling the doll in its olive-green paws, as if it were a great treasure. Kathleen did not mind it much. The gardener assured her he should find it, as he had found the fork, dropped among the flowers; and then it seemed so easy to Kathleen to think Carly might be found in the same sort of way. She never lost the hope which Oliver's words had put into her heart.

But to hear her say so was an added grief to Mr. Desborough.

In the evening, when they were dressed for the journey, papa took her on his knee and told her not to talk about the wolves to mamma any more. Then he bade her remember no one must believe all the servants were saying, for they

were idolaters. They thought that monkeys were better than men, and that some of them were sacred, and they really worshipped them. They did not know any better. No one could be sure whether the tales they told about the wolves were true or not, so he wished her not to repeat them; it would frighten Horace.

Yes, Horace was better—going with them.

"There he is," said papa, pointing to the ayah, who was carrying him up and down the veranda, before the windows of the drawing-room where they were talking. Away flew Kathleen, holding out her arms to take him, and covering him with kisses.

"She will soon be herself again, with change of scene, and Horace for a playfellow," Mr. Desborough continued, turning to his wife. "Thank God, my dear, if the one child has been taken from us, the other is left."

By the close of that busy day everything was ready for departure. The long procession passed through the gates of the compound just as the glorious sun was sinking in its bed of ebony and gold; for deep black bars of cloud were crossing the flood of light which covered the western sky.

Mr. Desborough's horse was prancing in its impatience, while the coolies harnessed themselves to the curtained dandies. There was one for Mrs. Desborough, with Horace on her lap, and another for the ayah and Kathleen, so that the children could sleep away the greater part of the journey. Until the heaving of burdens and the buckling of straps were concluded, the ayah amused Kathleen by pointing to the setting sun, and gravely assuring her there were twelve suns, brothers, who shone by turns. This one was going away, and his elder brother, who was so strong he could kill a man, would come in his place. The ayah was very glad they would all be safe on the hills before the strongest of all the twelve took his turn. The younger brothers were much weaker; the youngest of all was so weak he could hardly melt the snow that fell on the mountains.

Kathleen thought that this must be one of the tales papa referred to.

The syce, who ran by the horse's head with a fly-flapper in his hand, was shouting to it to be quiet until the sahib was ready to mount. "O son of a pig!" he was crying, "O faithless, perverse one! have ye never learned to be still?"

Away they all went at last, the bearers keeping time with a long, monotonous, grunting sort of cry, to which the horses were too well accustomed to be frightened. They soon left the highroad, going at the rate of four miles an hour, by narrow paths, too narrow for any cart or carriage. Mounting wave after wave of hill, higher and higher, sometimes winding by the edge of a precipice, or climbing the steep side of a giant cliff, then almost tumbling down some mountain valley, on, on they went, with a slow and even swing, whilst the coolies laughed and chatted as if they were almost enjoying the heavy burdens which English arms could never have lifted. Up and up once more, as the moon shone forth

with its silver radiance, bathing the stately forest trees with its soft, clear light, and making the dark shadows which rested on the deep ravines all the blacker by contrast. They were passing the two-storied stone-built castle of a mountain chief, perched like a gigantic bird's nest on the verge of a tree-crowned height. A bright and gurgling mountain stream was dashing and foaming by its side as it leaped from height to height. The travellers were sprinkled with its flashing spray as they crossed the edge of the torrent, little dreaming that news of Carl would await them there on their return. But now the scream of the night-owls, and the flap of the vultures' wings, and the ever-increasing cries of the jackals, echoed all around.

"But the darkest hour of all the night,
Is that which brings us day."

Oh, if Mr. and Mrs. Desborough could have understood the silent lesson that midnight journey might have taught them, it would have soothed their heartache. They could see no ending to their night of sorrow; they scarcely thought the soothing touch of time would ever dull the sharpness of their grief. But every night does end.

The first pale gleam of the coming day showed Kathleen the sloping roof of a white-walled bungalow, peeping amid a forest of pine trees high up overhead. Should they ever reach it? The flowers which covered those steep hillsides began to open their petals and drink in the drop of dew that was falling for each and all.

Racy woke up with laughing eyes and outstretched hands, clamouring for the bright, many-coloured dahlias which grew by thousands in their path.

The good-natured coolies stopped to gather them by handfuls, to Racy's infinite delight. The pleasure of pulling them to pieces and pelting the black shoulders of their bearers with them, found vent in little squeals of merriment that brought the first faint ghost of a smile to his mother's lips.

With the daybreak came many changes. Flocks of sheep and goats met them in the narrow path, making the crossing doubly dangerous. Some asses laden with grain were on their way to the Rana's castle, and their drivers drew aside to make their salaam to the English travellers, and exchange greetings with the coolie wallahs, and carry the news to the Rana's castle.

A most obstreperous cawing from hundreds of cunning-looking crows arose from the forest, whilst a regular chorus of wild laughter echoed through the darkest ravines. It was the morning song of the black-faced thrushes that congregate in unimaginable multitudes in these hidden solitudes. But sweeter

than all was the lengthened flute-like note of the black-headed oriole.

Suddenly the path changed. They were going downhill beneath magnificent trees, yews and oaks rising from an undergrowth of creepers and roses, checkered with multitudinous flowers that were unknown to Kathleen and her mother. On they went, swinging to the bottom of the valley, through whole fields covered with pale-blue foxglove, over which myriads of bees were flitting.

Horace began to mimic the cry of the black partridges which abounded. "Tie-tara! tie-tara!" rang on every side, as the footsteps of the coolies disturbed them in their lowly nests. One more toilsome hill, and then the coolies paused on a small plateau on the verge of the dark pine wood. Before them stood the pleasant bungalow, with its hospitable doors wide open to receive the travellers. Its white-washed rooms looked airy and clean. A few native servants who belonged to the place hurried out to welcome them; and Kathleen, who was leaning eagerly forward, could see the graceful figure of a Hindu woman making cakes, which she flattened between her hands with astonishing celerity, and flung into a brass pan which stood near her over a quaint-looking brazier. The dandies were set down, and Mr. Desborough came to lift his wife out.

"Too much cover for snakes," he said, as he cast a sharp eye at the thick, tall grass spreading from the steps of the veranda to the very edge of the precipice. The half-made garden was more indebted to nature than art; but that only heightened the peculiar charm that overspread the place. Here and there the great bauhinia creeper wreathed itself into delightful bowers above the moss-covered stem of a fallen pine. Its strong tendrils, like furzy brown horns, caught the overarching boughs of the tallest trees and bound them in leafy fetters. Proud peacocks strutted about at will. A stately old stork seemed untiring in its endeavours to find the snake Mr. Desborough dreaded to discover. But, above all, the fragrant breezes from the vast pine forest seemed an earnest of returning health.

CHAPTER VII.
THE RANA'S SONS.

The first thing which attracted Kathleen's attention, when her father lifted her out of her swinging carriage, was the sight of a Thibetan woman milking the cows. She was dressed in dirty rags, with a torn blanket thrown over her head.

But round her neck she wore three strings of beads, so quaint and curious Kathleen could do nothing but look at them. The beads were as big as hazel-nuts. One row was of coral and turkois; in another the beads were of a greenish hue, spotted all over like thrushes' eggs; the third was coral, with silver tags between. So the ayah took her to beg a cup of milk, whilst the breakfast was preparing. They made her a cup with a leaf and a thorn; and as the queer-looking milkmaid twisted it into proper shape round her slender fingers, she noticed the child's red eyes and colourless cheeks and heard the story of the lost brother. "O children of pigs!" she exclaimed. "To think a wolf in May would eat him up! No, no. There has been many a child brought up by the wolves, as I've heard tell. Perhaps it was its grandfather; who knows? It would not hurt it if it were."

She caught up Kathleen in her arms, and carried her to the edge of the cliff, pointing downwards to the tops of the mighty trees growing in the dark ravines between the hills they had been crossing—hills below hills, stretching away beneath their feet, so grand and vast and wild. The gray mud walls of the little Hindu village looked like an ant-hill in their midst. Kathleen felt dimly how the timid, gentle, imaginative Hindu men and women, who have lived all their lives within reach of the formidable beasts that range at will through those forest-glades, grow so afraid that their fear almost changes to reverence. They say they are all God's creatures, mightier and stronger than themselves. They dare not hurt them for the world; and they think when they die they shall be changed into them. They mix their fancies with all they see and hear, as her father had told her; but yet she could not help listening when the weird-looking milkmaid entreated her not to cry any more, but to see the glorious places where the wild wolves slept in the sunlight, and to think her little brother was there among them. Oh no; she did not believe he would want to come back. He would grow into a wolf, and be happy.

Kathleen felt frightened, for she saw that the ayah believed her. Then the Thibetan unloosed the wonderful beads from her neck and let Kathleen examine them. They were heirlooms which had been handed down for many generations. The coral and turkois had been worn by her great-grandmother; the coral with the silver tags came from her father's people. She always wore them; they were safer round her neck than anywhere. The ayah agreed with her.

Kathleen carried her leafy cup indoors, to show to her mother. A hasty breakfast was preparing—fowl and eggs, but no bread anywhere, only chupatties, the thin round cakes which the woman outside was making when they arrived. They very much resembled a dry crisp pancake. The fresh hill air gave the children an appetite, and they ate heartily.

"Papa," whispered Kathleen, "may I talk about the wolves to you?"

"Better not, darling," was the quick reply; "father is too busy to talk now."

Away went Mr. Desborough, ordering and arranging everything to insure the comfort of his wife and children; for he knew that he must soon leave them to enjoy their three months' gipsying among the hills. He trusted that picking flowers and chasing butterflies would soon occupy all his little fairy's thoughts, if he could but keep her from dwelling on the terrible remembrance.

Horace was soon fast asleep on his mother's lap, and Kathleen's eyes were blinking.

There were chairs and tables and charpoys in the bungalow, kept ready for the use of visitors. So as soon as breakfast was over, the ayah put Kathleen and Horace to bed.

The rooms were all on one floor, and as every door stood wide open, they were not out of Mrs. Desborough's sight a single moment.

The charpoy, or Indian bedstead, is only a wooden frame with cross-bars of webbing, and on this a mat or a resais is laid. The ayah fetched the pillows Bene Madho was unpacking, and all was ready. Going to bed is such a simple affair in India, for nobody undresses as we do in England. Dressing and undressing belong to the bath. The ayah covered the children with a large mosquito-net, and then flung herself on the matting beside them.

A few hours' refreshing sleep made them feel like different beings. But they were still very tired, and were quite content to sit together on the steps of the veranda, watching the mowers cutting the grass. It was happiness to Kathleen to have her little brother once again, and she devoted herself to the delightful task of making Racy laugh. There was a bird a little bigger than an English starling, with shining wings of copper colour, violet and blue, which hopped about their feet, and then flew off to perch on the cow's back, and good-naturedly catch the insects which were teasing it.

Presently they saw a curious procession coming up the hill—two Hindu boys riding on donkeys, with syces running beside them carrying scarlet umbrellas over their heads, ornamented with deep gold-fringes. Behind them rode their tutor, and after him four native Hindus, carrying trays on their heads, tastefully piled with fruit and vegetables and flowers.

"Early visitors," exclaimed Mr. Desborough, who was walking about directing the mowers.

The boys proved to be the two young sons of the Rana of Nataban, or "the brook of the forest," whose castle they had passed by the way.

"Look! look!" cried Racy, clapping his little hands, and making such a noise that all the strangers turned their heads and regarded him. The two young chieftains alighted, and advanced to Mr. Desborough, who held out his hand to the eldest, English fashion. The boy took it between both his own and dropped into it something which felt very like a little ball of cobwebs, but was in reality a tiny

bag of musk. He then directed his servants to place their trays on the ground at Mr. Desborough's feet. They were a present from his father, the Rana. They were bright-eyed, intelligent boys, but as delicate and graceful as girls. Their tutor was a clever young Brahmin, who had been educated in the government schools, and longed, above all things, to visit London. He could speak English, and was teaching it to his pupils.

This was quite a relief; and when the formal greetings were well through, and the boys were seated one on each side of Mr. Desborough, he sent Kathleen to fetch the jar of English sweets which Bene Madho had bought for her consolation. It was just unpacked, and stood on the table near the window by which they were seated, and he perceived the large, dreamy eyes of his youngest visitor rested upon it very curiously.

Whilst she was gone for it, Horace came and stood between his father's knees. He certainly mistook the two young ranas for big dolls, as they sat as stately and grave as they could in their saffron-coloured dresses, embroidered belts, and heavy silver bracelets. Horace, with his curly flaxen hair and blue eyes, was equally interesting to them, and the drum with which he was playing still more so.

The old trouble had returned to Kathleen's eyes as she ran in for her jar of peppermint lozenges. She was thinking of the Thibetan woman and all she had said. "Oh, if Carl were alive in the jungle, could not they find him and bring him home?" Her little heart was full. She longed to pour it out to her mother, but her father's words restrained her. Mrs. Desborough looked so ill, so sadly worn, and kissed her so fondly, Kathleen could only venture to entreat her to come and look at the strange milkmaid, with her wonderful necklaces. She was hoping the Thibetan would repeat to her the strange things she had said about Carl.

Mrs. Desborough promised at once; she had not the heart to refuse her darlings anything, for fear they, too, should be stolen from her. She followed her little daughter into the veranda, putting on her gloves. They were black. The youngest boy, Aglar, had never seen a lady's glove before. He watched her intently, as if he thought her hands had suddenly changed colour. He spoke to his tutor in his soft, musical Indi; who gravely informed her the young Rana had such a longing to feel the lady's hand, might he be permitted to touch it?

Mrs. Desborough smiled, and held hers out to him.

Aglar rose, made his salaam, and softly felt her fingers all over. It seemed to afford him infinite delight. So, to amuse him, Mrs. Desborough took off her gloves and put them on again. The long row of buttons pleased him exceedingly.

"Give them to him," suggested Mr. Desborough, who was wondering how he could return the Rana's present, having nothing with him but just the necessary things his family required.

The transfer was made; the mystery of the buttons made easy, too, by the addition of a tiny button-hook. The little fellow was in ecstasies. Not so Horace, who set up a clamour to have his mother's gloves back, which amused them all.

Mr. Desborough was talking to the elder, whose name was Rattam, about his lessons. He was fond of reading, had made some way in English and Persian, and was much gratified with the gift of an English book on botany, which Mr. Desborough had brought with him, hoping to interest his wife in the lovely plants and flowers she was sure to find among the hills. It was very doubtful whether the new owner could possibly understand it, but he liked to examine the plates.

Mr. Desborough thought they were getting on, when Horace renewed his clamour, pointing at Aglar, and declaring, "He is nobody but a native. He shan't have my mamma's gloves. He shan't!"

Mrs. Desborough grew pink with annoyance, for she knew their young visitors would be highly offended, if they really understood English well enough to know what the child was saying. In vain his father frowned. He would not be quieted. Kathleen slipped round and filled his mouth with her peppermint, to stop his tongue.

"We are all spoiling him as fast as we can," muttered her father, with a bitter sigh, as he sent her across to Rattam, who regarded Horace with pure amazement. No Hindu child is ever permitted to be rough or rude. Kathleen shyly offered Rattam her jar, trying to make up for Racy's naughtiness by behaving as prettily as she could. Rattam examined her peppermints curiously, and then drew back, afraid to touch one, for it might be degrading to himself.

He dare not taste one, he said, for fear of losing caste by eating anything which might be improper for a Brahmin.

This horror of losing caste—that is, of forfeiting his position as a Brahmin, one of the highest class of Hindus, to whom all the others look up with reverence—is the bugbear of a Hindu gentleman's life, and Rattam was fully impressed with its importance.

Yet he was gratified; and although no persuasion could induce him to touch the peppermint, he expressed his thanks with the air of a prince, adding, "You must permit me to send you a bird of my own training, to be my vakeel" ("Ambassador," interpreted the tutor), "and remind you of me," Rattam went on; "and, I assure you, he is a very amusing fellow."

He spoke so carefully and so correctly, it made Kathleen think he had learned his English sentences ready before he came. She wished she could ask her ayah how she ought to answer him in Indi; but that was out of the question. If he understood not her reply, he knew by her shy little smile she was pleased.

"It is a hill-mina from Nepaul, with a remarkably good, rich voice—" He looked to his tutor, perplexed for the next word. It was not forthcoming.

"Does the little beebee understand Persian?" he asked.

Mr. Desborough shook his head, relieved to find his guest's English was not yet perfect.

"Persian is our French," said the tutor, making a sign to Aglar, who had not yet finished his examination of Mrs. Desborough's hands; but when he caught his tutor's eye, he dropped down on the ground by her side, sitting cross-legged, as still and stately as a little statue. He never raised his eyes or uttered a single word until a second sign gave him permission.

When the ayah appeared with the children's box of playthings, the two young visitors forgot themselves and their grand manners in the wonders of Kathleen's magic top, and behaved with an easy grace which was natural to them, and much more prepossessing.

"Let Aglar take it away with him, Kathy," whispered Mr. Desborough; "I will buy you another."

Mamma had slipped out during the exhibition of the playthings to consult with Bene Madho about the tiffen. She thought he might know better than she did what such fastidious young princes would condescend to eat.

He told her they never touched anything but butter, sweetmeats, and vegetables or fruit. Butter Mrs. Desborough could procure in plenty, but the sweetmeats ran wofully short. Salad and syllabub, with some of their own beautiful fruit, had to suffice.

The amount of butter the little princes consumed was something astonishing. No wonder Rattam was so fat. Aglar's hoarse cough distressed Mrs. Desborough. She always carried a well-filled medicine-chest about with her, for the sake of her own delicate children. So she found him some cough-drops, and a porous plaster for the chest, to lay on the empty trays her husband was trying to refill.

Kathleen relinquished a great many of her toys to please their dusky visitors. Rattam liked everything in pairs. He was highly delighted with her doll's tea-cups, as he said "there were three pairs." But he returned her the teapot. One of a sort looked mean in his eyes.

When tiffen was over, their interesting neighbours rose to depart, with the demure gravity of old men.

CHAPTER VIII.
THE INVITATION.

The night before Mr. Desborough's return to Noak-holly, he called Kathleen to him as he sat dreamily watching the glorious landscape as if he saw it not.

"Can my darling sing to me?" he said, softly humming the first notes of a tune she had heard him sing in the old times, when Kathleen was "her daddy's ae bairn," and the cot stood empty.

He put his arm round her waist, and taught her as he used to do, beating time with his other hand.

"Go bury thy sorrow, the world has its share,
Go bury it deeply, go hide it with care."

She turned and looked in his face.

"Go on," he said, in the quiet, decided tone Kathleen always obeyed.

"Go think of it calmly, when curtained by night;
Go tell it to Jesus, and all will be right."

She sang it after him, drawing a little closer, for her father was not often like this, until they came to the last verse—

"Hearts growing a-weary with heavier woe,
Now droop 'mid the darkness—go, comfort them, go!
Go bury thy sorrows, let others be blest:
Go give them the sunshine, tell Jesus the rest."

"Is my little girl too young to understand what that means?" he asked, stroking her hair.

"Yes, I do understand, papa," she answered thoughtfully.

"Your mother's sorrow is heavier than ours," he went on, "just because she was Carly's mother; and Racy is pining for his twin-brother, just because he was his twin. It is that which makes him so techy and troublesome. Will my Kathleen try to comfort them when I am gone?"

Instead of the promise he expected there came a rush of tears, so hot and bitter he was taken aback.

"What is the matter, my love?" he asked.

"The dreadful misery to think I let the wolf in!" she sobbed.

"We will bury all that," he answered. "It will not bring sunshine to mamma

to see you crying. Think! what ought you to be to poor mamma?"

"Carly and Kathleen, too," she murmured. "But I can't undo it."

His arm went round her very closely; it answered her better than words. No fear of Kathleen talking to poor mamma about the wolves after that night. A new object was before her—how to give others the sunshine.

Her father had scarcely left them when Rattam's messenger arrived with the promised bird, and an invitation to the Sahib Desborough to visit the Rana at his castle. Aglar's mother, the Ranee, added her entreaties that the beebee, who had given her youngest son the little breastplate against the weather (which was endued with such a wonderful charm it had hushed the noise in his breast and given him the vivacity of a panther) would let a grateful mother look upon her face and beg a similar charm for her other son. "The women of your people, sahib," said the letter, which was evidently written by the tutor, "can come and go. It would demean ours to descend the stair of their own home; but they are dying to see more of the wonderful magic the beebee Desborough possesses."

The Rana's peon or foot-soldier, who had brought the letter, stood watching Mrs. Desborough as if she were some superior being. He had shuffled off his shoes as a mark of respect before he approached her, and now stood before her salaaming at every interval when she happened to raise her eyes.

Of course there were a few crows strutting about the veranda, and little fretful Racy was afraid of their sharp beaks. Kathleen was trying to tempt them away by scattering crumbs. They were so tame they soon ran after her to get them.

"More magic," thought the peon, bowing himself to the ground, as she came near to him to look at the wonderful bird Rattam had sent her.

It was jet black, with a coat as glossy as satin, and a lovely dark eye, full of fun and intelligence. Its beak and claws were deep orange. It was looking about very curiously, pricking its ear to every sound. Kathleen drew her finger across the gilded wire of its cage, and it called out in a rich, sweet voice—a wonderfully rich voice, and yet an odd one—"Ram, Ram, baher!" just as he had heard Rattam and Aglar call to one another. The ayah told her it meant "God, God, brother!" which is the Hindu way of speaking, just as English boys would say, "Good-morning, brother!"

With her nurse and her bird talking Indi, Kathleen thought she should soon learn enough to understand Rattam if he came again.

Mrs. Desborough wrote her reply, and promised to visit the Ranee when her husband returned.

Little mischievous Horace was fitting on the peon's slippers, and quite ready to dispute possession with the "man in petticoats," as he called the peon. Kathleen and the ayah pursued him half round the veranda. They would not have

got the slippers away then without a roar, if Kathleen's wonderful bird had not begun to make a creaking sound, like a rusty hinge, which it imitated exactly, and then as suddenly changed its note to the cheerful crowing of a cock. This diverted Horace amazingly. The peon recovered his slippers, put up his umbrella, and departed with the English beebee's answer.

But there was many a long day to wait before the visit could be paid. Mrs. Desborough was glad, for she had no heart for visits, although she thought it only right to go, as no one but a lady is scarcely ever permitted to enter the homes of the higher classes of Hindus. In the meanwhile the invigorating air of the hills was restoring the children to health and spirits. Mrs. Desborough hoped Horace would forget some of his provoking sayings, which he had caught up on the journey.

The Thibetan milkmaid had gone away to her own people before Kathleen could persuade her mother to go and talk to her.

But Kathleen would describe the dark-skinned woman, with her dirty rags and glittering beads, so earnestly and so frequently, that her mother began to suspect there was something more she had not told her. "Well?" she would say questioningly; and then Kathleen would stop short, remembering her father's words.

Mrs. Desborough asked the ayah what the Thibetan had said.

"Nothing, nothing," was the quick reply. "We only tried to comfort the little beebee, and stop her tears, that fell like evening rain."

The ayah was frightened, for her mistress turned pale and faint at the most distant allusion to her dreadful loss. So she led the children away, and filled their pinafores with rice to feed the fishes.

Whilst Horace was throwing it by handfuls into the basin of the fountain, which was soon a moving mass of heads and tails, the ayah drew Kathleen away.

"Look at the mem-sahib," she whispered, so that Horace should not hear. "It is the cry for the lost one shut in her heart that hurts. Don't wake it."

Kathleen hung her head; for the first time in her life it seemed wrong to speak out all her thoughts to her mother. But the hope still lived on—Carl would some day be found. It helped her to fulfil her father's parting charge, and try to give the sunshine to Horace and her mother. The dry heat of May gave place at last to the sultry, oppressive damp of the rainy season; and Mrs. Desborough

began to long for home.

CHAPTER IX.
OLIVER AND HIS UNCLE.

When Mr. Desborough returned to fetch his wife and children, he found his little fairy half a head taller and twice as strong as at the never-to-be-forgotten singing-lesson the night before he left.

"Well! and what have you been doing?" he asked, when he found himself seated once more, with a child on each knee. "Setting traps to catch the sunbeams to give away, eh, my precious?" he continued.

"But I think Racy got them all," Kathleen answered.

"*Via* Racy is one of the best of roads to reach mamma," smiled her father, as he stroked her hair fondly, and turned to his boy, who was clamorously demanding all his attention.

A game at horses round the white-washed sitting-room assured Mr. Desborough that Kathleen's traps had not been set in vain. Horace was riding triumphant on his father's shoulder, shouting at him after the fashion of the native drivers, in high glee, when the card of an English gentleman was brought in by Bene Madho.

Who should it be but the deputy-judge, who was going on circuit, and had just arrived to hold a "bed of justice," as the natives say, in the neighbourhood of Nataban.

"Well set to work, Desborough!" he exclaimed. "Have I followed my bit of pasteboard too quickly?"

"No, no," retorted Mr. Desborough warmly. "We are going away tomorrow. There are rooms enough here to accommodate all for a night."

"My fellows can sleep anywhere," continued the deputy, chucking Kathleen under her chin, and pointing to his train of servants, who were chattering without. "I and my nephew will do our best not to interfere with the ladies' comfort. Only say the word, and we will make quick work here, and hurry forward to our next station."

"Oliver!"

Mr. Desborough scrambled to his feet, and with Horace still tugging at his

watch-chain, held out his hand to the boy without recognizing him; but Kathleen knew him again in a moment.

"Mr. Desborough has forgotten you, my boy," whispered the deputy. "Do not refresh his memory; it will only revive a painful recollection."

Oliver nodded; and they all went in together to congratulate Mrs. Desborough on the improvement in her children.

When old neighbours meet there is no lack of conversation. The gentlemen sat long over the dinner, discussing the recent rains, the present attitude of Russia, and the success of the government schools for Hindu boys, in which the deputy was greatly interested. Kathleen sat beside her father, forgetting to eat. At the first movement she glided round to her mother's chair with a breathless request.

"May I show my bird to Oliver? and may we go for a walk—a long walk?" she asked.

"Certainly, my love, if he wishes," answered Mrs. Desborough.

Kathleen tripped on. A gentle pull at Oliver's sleeve made him look round. He was too good-natured to decline the shy invitation.

Life was very free and easy at the little hill-station. The whitewashed bungalow was neither inn nor lodging-house, but something between. When one party went away, there was usually another waiting to take their place, so that the servants who were stationary there were not disconcerted by the deputy's arrival. They were laughing and singing as they hurried about, contriving to make an unusual hubbub, as a sort of tribute to the dignity of the Stunt Sahib, as they called the deputy.

Some of the newly-arrived were seated in groups, cross-legged, on the grass, smoking a friendly pipe with their old acquaintances of a previous year. Oliver would willingly have lingered to watch them, so he divided his attentions between them and Kathleen's wonderful bird.

It was crying so like a child as they drew near its cage, Oliver was looking about for some squalling baby among the dusky smokers. Then it changed its note, and imitated the soft musical tinkle of the temple bell, where Rattam and Aglar went to see the sacrifices to their idol-gods. Oliver was enchanted. "It beats the parrots hollow!" he exclaimed. "It is something like a bird."

"I have not much left to give away," said Kathleen, thinking a little regretfully of all the toys she had bestowed upon the young princes; "but I'll give you my beauty mina, if you will take me for a walk, a very long walk."

"You!" he repeated in astonishment. "Which way do you want to go?"

She tripped down the veranda steps, and pointing to the wilder part of the ground, ran eagerly forward, looking back every now and then to see if Oliver would follow.

The ground around the house was partially gardened, but the further they

went the wilder it grew. All path was lost. Arrowroot and ginger plants sprang up spontaneously. By one of their tall green sheaths, with its droop of snow-white bells like a magnified Solomon's seal, Kathleen paused panting until her companion overtook her.

Off she started again.

"Is it a jolly game at hare-and-hounds or follow-my-leader that you are starting?" asked Oliver. "You are not quite right for either. We boys never played just so. In the first place, you should start fair."

"It is not play at all," answered Kathleen, slipping her hand into his and looking up beseechingly. "You do not mind, do you?"

"Not a bit," he retorted, holding back a mimosa bush to let her pass. She had led him on to a dangerous spot, where the ground sloped steeply down to the bottom of a ravine.

Dark shadows of bushes and plants unknown to him obscured its depths. A sound of gurgling water met his ear, but the gloom was so profound he could distinguish nothing.

"Is not that a place where the wild beasts sleep? Now will you take me as far down as you can?" asked Kathleen.

"No," answered Oliver bluntly—"no, indeed; you must be crazy!"

She drew her hand away, and leaning over the edge of the precipice, called, "Carl, Carl, are you there?"

Oliver caught hold of her dress and pulled her back. "You absurd little creature, you'll slip and fall if you do so!"

"Oh, never mind that. If I could make him hear me—if I could but make him hear!" she wailed. "But I am not to talk about the wolves—I'm not to talk."

"Yes, you may to me; you may say anything you like to me," interposed Oliver, resolutely turning her round and walking back towards the house.

"Do you speak the truth?" asked Kathleen.

"I tell you what, young lady: I don't admire your ways one bit. If you had only been a boy, I'd have bowled you over for that in less than a minute. What do you mean by asking me such a question?" he retorted in hot indignation.

"Then I may believe what you tell me, and you said he was alive in the jungle!" she exclaimed.

Oliver gave a long-drawn "Oh!" adding slowly, in a considerate tone, "Yes, I did. I said so because I thought so."

"And the milkmaid thought so!" she cried. Then for the fiftieth time she pictured the dusky face, with its rags and beads, and repeated the soft Indian words until the white walls of the bungalow were once again in sight.

"Now we must not talk any more," she exclaimed, "for fear mamma should hear us. There she is!"

Oliver looked up, and saw Mrs. Desborough seated on one of the fallen trees, talking to his uncle. The ayah was taking Horace for his evening walk. Being new to Indian life, Oliver stared in astonishment at the strange way in which she carried the child. Instead of taking him in her arms, as an English nurse would do, she had a nice little soft saddle strapped round her waist, on which he was riding. Her arm was round him, to keep him from falling, whilst his own clasped her neck, and his little feet were kicking her back and front. For Horace was as restless and fidgety as a young elephant, which every mahout (elephant-driver) knows never is at peace a single moment. It is always shaking its flapping ears, or switching its tail, twisting and untwisting its trunk, or stamping with one or other of its big feet. But the ayah was patience itself in her untiring devotion to her white baby.

"Look at that nephew of mine," laughed the deputy. "I shall have to start him off again to England, for a couple of years at the East India College, before I put him into harness. But Iffley has taken to him wonderfully. Now his sister—"

But Bona's perfections were cut short by a squall from Horace. The Rana's peon was approaching with renewed invitations to the whole party.

"We must go," said the deputy, who was bent upon cultivating friendly intercourse between himself and his dusky neighbours.

He had won their respect by his uprightness—perhaps even their esteem; "but to get a step beyond that beats me," he declared. "You must know as well as I do, Desborough, how these Orientals hedge in their private life with their ceremonies and formalities, and keep us all at a distance. Here I have been coaxing them out of their shyness and reserve for years. What way have I made? One-half the pains I've taken would have brought these monkeys from the woods around me as tame and affectionate as the kitten in your veranda at home. Now you ladies have a chance. The door of the zenana opens to you. That is why I want my niece. I want her to take her share in the Englishwoman's mission to her dusky sisters. You will go with us, Mrs. Desborough?"

"Yes," she replied. "I had intended to do so; but," she added, turning to Mr. Desborough, "we must take the children with us." The fact was, she dare not leave them behind.

"No objection to that, as far as I can see," returned the deputy; and so it was settled.

As Oliver was falling asleep that night, he seemed to hear nothing but the little sister's passionate cry, "Carl, Carl, come back!" How she had clung to the lingering hope his words had implanted! He almost wished he had never said them. Did he and Bona love each other like that? He saw nothing but the fluttering of Kathleen's sash and the flapping of her broad sun-hat as she rushed before him to the very edge of the precipice. How she must have longed to get there!

and it was such a dangerous place. Oh the innocence of the thought! The brave, faithful heart! Yes, that was it. Oliver hated himself for having spoken those misleading words. "But then I believed it after what old Gobur had said."

He tossed and slept, and dreamed of Romulus and Remus, and the old Roman fable of the she-wolf. When he waked at last, the day was well begun, and everybody around him was busy preparing for the visit to the Rana's castle. He wished his schoolbooks had not all been left behind him in another hemisphere. There was no Roman history to be found in the hill bungalow, or he would have refreshed his memory about that old-world tale of the founders of Rome. His uncle thought him unusually moody as he mounted his little pony and rode after him. It was a glorious morning. Mrs. Desborough's bearers were chanting gaily. Mr. Desborough, who rode behind her, turned his head to make some remark upon the indigo crops to the deputy, who was still descanting about "that fog-bank which always rises between us and the people of the land, do what we will."

Oliver yawned, feeling quite sure beforehand he should detest a fat boy who ate nothing but butter and sugar, and wouldn't and couldn't run a race if it were to save his life, whatever his colour might be. He was thinking of Major Iffley's impatient interruptions, when his uncle started his favourite topic before him.

"Let the natives alone, St. Faine. They are the most exclusive set on earth. It is all labour in vain, I tell you."

The road by which they reached the Rana's castle was very picturesque, shaded here and there by grand old forest trees and great clumps of waving bamboos. The village houses were very low, and their peaked thatched roofs covered with a climbing plant with melon-like leaves. Clusters of tamarind trees secured the necessary shade. Two men were ploughing in a field, and three more were idly watching their work. Several women were scouring their brass pans; at their feet lay their babies, cooing or fretting. Some graceful girls were drawing water at the village well. There was a native musician with his sitar, and a group of listeners round him, some smoking, and others playing a native game with little bits of wood.

They lifted up their eyes and saw the English party approaching. The women snatched up their infants and ducked under the mats, which serve for doors to their huts, as if to be seen were to be killed. The girls by the trickling water under the tamarind trees muffled up their faces and waddled away as fast as they could. To walk like a goose is a Hindu girl's desire. The very children, intent upon the manufacture of dust-pies, jumped up and hid themselves; whilst the men started, gave a pull at their clothes, pushed the sitar out of sight, threw away their pipes, and stood in a row, bowing like so many machines, humble,

shy, and mute.

The deputy's benevolent face wore nothing but smiles; but the poor creatures had received little but cruelty from the hands of foreigners for so many generations, they could hardly believe in a stranger's kindness. The headman of the village had bustled off to put on his company clothes, which he kept very carefully for state occasions.

He looked as if he had wrapped himself in a clean sheet; all his dignity lay in his belt, which had served his grandfather before him. However, he had found his tongue, as the children say, and came to meet the deputy with a string of compliments as extravagant as they were meaningless. Just then the long-drawn, quavering notes of some huge horns, drawing nearer and nearer, announced the approach of the Rana, who was coming to meet his visitors. Presently they saw him sweeping down the castle hill in his bullock-chariot, all brightness and gilding. Four of his men were holding over his head a huge scarlet umbrella with long glittering fringes; several more were running by his side. A small band of horsemen preceded this stately chariot, sounding their big brass trumpets from time to time; and behind it came a motley procession of his chief followers and relations. In the midst of them Oliver detected that fat boy he was so certain he must dislike.

CHAPTER X.
A VISIT TO THE RANA'S CASTLE.

The deputy being the chief of the English party, was pressed to take a seat in the chariot by the Rana's side. Then the runners and the riders turned their faces, and the long procession wound its way up the castle hill. All the dogs in the village collected to bark at the heels of the departing horsemen, and bright little eyes peeped round the corners to see them go. Then the girls returned to their pitchers, and the men to their music and play.

The strong and time-worn castle was all of stone, with rich, deep balconies and oriel windows. The carving of the stone screens which protected them was as delicate as point lace. Behind those splendid screens the ladies of the family were peeping as furtively and shyly as the village children, and quite as anxious to see without being seen. All Kathleen's attention was taken up by the dear little gray monkeys, who were playing at hide-and-seek with each other through the

beautiful tracery. Some noise within sent them off with a scamper. Their leader called them round him; and Kathleen soon saw them busy as ever in the court below, turning over stones, and hunting out beetles and scorpions, which they caught by the tail. The biggest of them was about the size of a bull-terrier; and their babies were the dearest little sweets in the world.

It was slow work defiling one by one across the bridge which spanned the stream in front of the castle. Mrs. Desborough and the children had entered the large, untidy court some minutes before Mr. Desborough and Oliver arrived; so they waited, looking round them at the novel scene. In the centre of the court there was a large group of horses picketed, who seemed very much annoyed by the descent of the small gray plagues from the balcony, who showed no respect for stamping hoofs or kicking heels. All round the court there were rows of straw-thatched huts and sheds, where the servants lived, next door to the animals in their charge. There were lynxes, kept for hunting hares; and splendid spotted leopards, tamed, and tied to strong posts, each with a leather hood over its eyes, to keep it from springing unawares. More than a hundred dogs of different kinds were kennelled in their midst. The yelling and the barking which arose on all sides so terrified Mrs. Desborough, that she positively refused to get out of her dandy or suffer Horace to be taken from her arms, although he roared in concert with all his might; so her bearers rested in front of the flight of white steps leading to the porch of the castle.

A group of servants had gathered round them—looking very haughty in their clean white dresses and turbans—who were announcing the arrival of the guests with eager cries.

When Mr. Desborough's puggaree appeared beneath the gateway arch, one of the peons stepped forward with his mace in his hand to meet him; and behind the peon, on the topmost step, stood the guest-receivers of the Rana—two fat little old men, dressed all in white—bowing low, and inviting him to enter.

But no; Mr. Desborough must first of all reassure his terrified wife and pacify his screaming boy. Oliver thought it only manly to follow his example, and stepped up to the other dandy, expecting to find Kathleen in a similar state. The ayah was leaning forward, with her finger on her lips to enjoin silence, and Kathleen was gazing breathlessly in her face.

"Hush!" she whispered, pointing to one of the Rana's men, who stood staring at Horace, as Mr. Desborough lifted him up, with a scared, startled look, as if he had seen some marvellous prodigy.

What was the fellow saying? The ayah knew, and Kathleen more than guessed. She had been learning Indi from her ayah ever since Rattam's visit. She understood it better than Oliver; a great deal better than her mother. She was trying to get out of the dandy in her impatience.

"Let me go! let me go!" she entreated. "I must go to papa."

Mr. Desborough was looking round to see if she were all right. He relinquished Horace to the ayah, and gave his arm to his wife.

"I'll take care of Kathleen," said Oliver, with the air of a grandfather. But she tried to escape from him.

"I must tell papa," she persisted.

"Nonsense!" he urged; "you can't."

He led her up the steps resolutely.

"Which are the Ranee's apartments?" asked Mr. Desborough of the servants.

"They are in that direction looking east; but we cannot point them out," was the deferential reply, with a horrified look, as if to be guilty of such rudeness as pointing out the window of a lady's room would indeed have been unparalleled.

But then they all entertained a private opinion that these English sahibs were utterly incomprehensible, and on some points downright lunatics.

Kathleen turned round, and pointing to the jogie, who still stood staring after them, she whispered to Oliver, "That is the man. He was looking at Horace, and he said, 'I saw that child last night come down the koond on a booraba'—that is a wolf, you know."

"Is it?" said Oliver, who did not happen to know that booraba was Indi for "wolf." "Well," he continued, "it is certain he did not see your brother there."

"No, not Horace," she cried, clasping her hands passionately; "but could it—could it be Carl?"

She was forced to be silent now. They were entering the Rana's hall of audience, a huge room, thirty feet high, with a gallery at one end, and at the other a much smaller, narrower room, with carved marble arches and glittering walls.

Here they saw the Rana himself, seated upon a large, low sofa, with the deputy by his side; and Aglar, as still and motionless as a lizard, was sitting cross-legged at his feet. A few stout old gentlemen, swathed in costly shawls, looked as if they were propped up against the wall, on English chairs. They had come to see the sahibs, and the Rana thought it only complimentary to provide English seats when English visitors were expected; but his uncles and brothers seemed to find them singularly uncomfortable. They balanced themselves on the edge of the chairs, and threw their heads back with great solemnity. But what to do with their arms seemed the difficulty. One old gentleman stuck his against his sides, and spread out all his fingers; another was vainly trying to rest his hands on his knees without leaning forward.

Horace began to point at them and laugh, and Oliver was nearly as bad, in spite of his uncle's frown.

Beneath the marble arches there were long flights of steps leading down to the gardens, which were overlooked by the back of the zenana, or ladies' rooms. The carefully-screened balconies looked like one splendid mass of stone lace. In the centre of the gardens there was an artificial lake, fed by the mountain stream, where golden fish were leaping in the sunlight, and stately swans were gliding. Around its banks, and almost built out into the water, at equal distances, there were white marble kiosks, or arbours; and high above the stately trees and luxurious wealth of flowers the jagged red cliffs were frowning. Mrs. Desborough was lost in admiration as she was pompously conducted down the snowy steps, across the velvet grass, to a low door leading to the Ranee's apartments, the ayah following with Horace, riding on his little saddle, and Kathleen shyly tripping by her side.

The low door was unfastened, and they entered a dark passage, with an earthen floor, leading to a long staircase, which was very dirty. The contrast to the hall of audience was so great, Mrs. Desborough thought there was some mistake, when out they stepped upon the cool and shadowy balcony. Little dark heads, with snowy whiskers, came poking through the interstices of the stone-work, to watch the English children, and absurd-looking monkey mothers tossed up their babies and jabbered unceasingly. The folding-doors of the Ranee's sitting-room stood wide open. Its Eastern loveliness was spoiled by some smart-looking English tables and looking-glasses, of which the Ranee was very proud. She was seated upon a velvet cushion, with her little girls by her side, and her servants standing round her. The Hindu lady looked so stately and calm and stern, as she surveyed her visitors with a fixed, cold stare, Kathleen was almost afraid of her. Her long black hair was twisted into a sort of coronet, fastened by a silver buckle, and set with large silver bosses. Her fixed and haughty eyes were dark with excessive brightness. Her proud, curving lips and set white teeth seemed as if they could scarcely permit the word of welcome to pass between them. A little girl, as beautiful as her mother, was leaning against her, and on the other side an elder sister sat with her arm round her mother's waist, embowered in shawls and her own long, dark, waving curls. They were still more fascinating children than their brothers. All the force and fire of the family seemed to have centred in its females. But the youngest girl hid her face in her mother's lap, and the other only ventured on a sidelong glance at the strangers—evidently terrified at Horace, who was manfully kicking at his ayah's waist. The sight of a splendid doll Mrs. Desborough was unpacking drew the shy little Orientals from their mother's side. The ayah was interpreter. Whilst the ladies were admiring each other's children, Kathleen took the doll on her lap, and showed the little sisters how to dress and undress it. Then they sent for their own dolls, and displayed the mystery of their tinselled robes and gossamer veils. Here at least was com-

mon ground. And perhaps those little Hindus loved their dolls even more than Kathleen did, for they had scarcely any other pleasure in their dull life; for while their brothers were made so much of by every one, nobody wanted them.

The gentlemen remained in the hall of audience, where the cup-filler and the hookah-filler were in attendance. Oliver had the best of it; for although he could do nothing but laugh at Rattam, in his saffron-coloured satin dress, and flowered silk trousers, and his turban hung round with tigers' teeth set in gold, not to mention his bracelets and chains, he found him a cleverer boy than himself. They went together into the Rana's armoury; and whilst Rattam was showing him swords of fabulous value, from the jewels in their hilts, and helmets of the strangest shapes imaginable, Oliver decided he was not half a duffer after all.

They were entering the room where the Rana kept his clocks; for he had a perfect passion for clocks, and had accumulated some dozens—French, Dutch, English, and American, all ticking. Oliver thought this a bit of a bore. "Couldn't we have a stroll out of doors?" he asked. Rattam agreed.

Oliver gave a tug at his own hair. It was a habit of his when he felt uncertain what to do. But the momentary hesitation passed over. He turned to Rattam and said, "Do you know that Mr. Desborough lost a child a month or two ago? it was carried off by a wolf."

"Ah!" interrupted Rattam.

"One of your fellows was saying something about a child in the jungle as we rode into your court. I want to ask him what it was," continued Oliver. "I'll tell you all about the loss of the poor little thing as we go along."

"Leave that to me," replied Rattam, waving his hand with the air of a prince. "You would scarcely understand the jogie's tale if you heard it. Our people are very imaginative. It may be nothing but moonshine and shadow. Leave it to me. Before you quit the castle, all he has to tell shall be known."

The boys had broken the ice of ceremony in which their elders were freezing, and agreeing that it would be cruelty to raise false hopes by speaking a word too soon to either Mr. or Mrs. Desborough, they parted. Oliver returned to the hall, to sit in irksome silence, while Rattam speedily vanished. The old gentlemen by the wall looked as if they were longing to slip off their chairs on to the floor, and take a rest after their own fashion. The appearance of the attendants with trays of sweetmeats was a welcome diversion.

The five shawl bundles munched contentedly, mumbling a word or two now and then, when another servant appeared carrying a vase of most overpowering scent. He made a dart at Mr. Desborough's handkerchief and deluged it. Oliver's not being quite so handy, he received a dab on the sleeve of his jacket, where it remained to torment him for many a long day, by its overpowering perfume, which nothing could get rid of. The deputy's handkerchief was forth-

coming in a moment. Like a prudent man who knew what he had to expect, he had provided himself with a second; and when he received it again well saturated, he quietly dropped it on the floor. Aglar was at play with his ball in the gardens, tossing it up to the balcony through which his little sisters and Kathleen were peeping, when Rattam reappeared.

He was anxious to show the young sahibs the wild beasts in the gardens; not only Oliver, but Horace also. That unmanageable young gentleman was clamouring for the ball, which bounded high over Aglar's head; so that Rattam's proposition was thankfully acceded to by all parties. The boys visited the dark dens, with their paved floors, well sluiced with water from the lake, which were built at intervals in the midst of myrtle bowers and clustering roses, and watched the fierce striped tigers, growling behind the strong iron bars which enclosed the front of the dens.

Rattam drew Oliver aside. "It is a tale of magic," he whispered, "in which all our people believe, but yours do not. Yet the beebee Desborough must possess some powerful charms. Think of the breastplate she gave my brother! A bit of sticky paper, but possessing such virtue."

"Bosh!" muttered Oliver. "It was a plaster, wasn't it?" and he laughed heartily.

"These charms that I wear," continued Rattam, touching the loops of tigers' teeth in his turban and the silver chains round his neck, "will keep me from all evil, unless I destroy their power by some act of my own."

"Then," retorted Oliver, "I should call them reminders to do right and fear no evil."

"Ah, you English have such different ideas to ours!" said Rattam. "But I have sent for an old man from the village—a hunter who has roamed the forests all his life. He knows the footprint of every animal that lives in them. I will send him into the jungle to see if there is a wild child about; such things do occasionally happen, as our people know."

Rattam had been working hard at his English since he brought the fruit and flowers to Mrs. Desborough, and he was an apt scholar; but he learned it all from books. As they were speaking, a remarkable old man entered the gardens, and approached Rattam, bowing to the ground.

CHAPTER XI.
THE FOOTPRINT.

"There he is!" said Rattam, waving his hand grandly. "Look at him well. Did you ever see such eyes? He is Tara Ghur, the oldest shikaree, or hunter, among the hills, and he does what few beside himself would dare to do. He goes alone into the forest for days, marking the tracks of the game, that he may know which way to lead the hunting-parties. He was ready to start when I sent for him."

Oliver looked curiously at the wiry figure before him, so unlike the rest of the Rana's servants. His eyes were light blue, with a piercing glance and a flash like burnished steel. His cap and waistcloth were a dull greeny brown, that yet approached to yellow in the sunlight. In fact, it was so exactly the same hue as the parched and dying leaves in the drought of summer, that when he was creeping among the bushes he could scarcely be distinguished from them. He carried a light bamboo over his shoulder, with a small water-pot slung at one end, and a skin of atta, or meal, at the other. This was all the food he took with him. His hunting-knife was in his hand, as if he had been trying its edge, but he stuck it in his belt and lowered his rusty matchlock to do honour to the son of his chief.

"He has the true Tartar eye," continued Rattam, "gifted with a power of sight that can detect the smallest speck in the distance and recognize it at once, no matter how far off it is or how queer it looks. He is never deceived, and we have never known him make a mistake. Now tell him what you like."

Oliver did not trust much to his own scant stock of Indi. He caught up the ball and sent it bounding before him. This, as he expected, set off Horace running after it, whilst Aglar called out to his bearer to pick up his "golee."

Down tumbled Horace. Oliver pulled him up, and taking off his hat, showed him to the shikaree. The old man surveyed him curiously.

"Child like this carried off by booraba. Search for any trace of it. Reward sure," said Oliver, asking Rattam to repeat his words for fear old Tara should not understand.

He did so, adding, "Search in the koonds by the ruined temple."

The old man's keen eye glittered as he salaamed to the very ground.

Oliver turned round to the fat boy in his silks and satins, and shook him warmly by the hand until he made the twining, serpent-shaped bracelets jingle. "We are going to be chums after this," he said.

"Chums!" repeated Rattam; "what are they?"

"Friends, if you like it better," retorted Oliver.

"Friends! ah, that I understand. That is good," replied the young chieftain, taking Oliver's hand between his own in his Eastern fashion. Happily for Oliver, no little bag of musk was near to drop into it. He was perfumed past all endurance already by "that beggar with the scent-bottle."

"Now," cried Oliver, "I should like to be off with the old man. I'm good for a ten-mile walk any day. What say you? Could we be back again before my uncle

starts?"

Rattam drew himself up with dignity. "It would hardly become me to walk," he said with emphasis.

Oliver's impatient shrug was cut short by a summons to the hall of audience. The deputy was going. It was Rattam's turn to sigh, for he was as weary of perching on a chaukee, or chair, as Oliver was of the scent-bottle. He managed to draw up one leg unseen by his tutor.

Mrs. Desborough was amused to discover the fabulous powers attributed to her, and soothed the Ranee's disappointment by sketching the three little girls as they stood together in the flickering light and shade cast from the fretwork of the balcony.

But now the word passed round that the sahib was going. A breath of life entered into the five shawl bundles. Rattam's other foot found its way to the floor. In walked the two stout gentlemen in white with a tray of wreaths. Oliver espied the scent-bottle in the back-ground, and thought about flight. The Rana took up a splendid wreath of weeping jessamine, with its pure white blossoms trailing loosely over his outspread arm, and dropped it solemnly over the deputy's head. He, poor man, was doing his utmost to preserve his gravity, and half succeeded. But Mr. Desborough's utterly failed when a superb circlet of white and orange *immortelles* found its way to his neck. He took refuge in a fit of coughing, which approached strangulation when he caught sight of Horace's face. The little fellow was just brought in from the gardens, and stared with wide-open eyes, literally struck dumb by his father's absurd appearance. For the five by the wall gravely left their chairs and followed the Rana's example, until Mr. Desborough's shirt front was lost to sight beneath the multitude of garlands.

The band was gathering in the porch, and the pompous peons were waiting.

"Good-night, gentlemen," said the deputy, shaking hands all round.

"By your honour's condescension, may your slaves be reserved in health," replied the five, salaaming to the ground, and they followed him to the top of the steps, where the Rana was standing.

The tomtoms and trumpets struck up with a sudden blare as the horses were led forward.

Oliver squeezed Rattam's hand as he whispered his last question, "When will the shikaree get back?"

"I shall send him to you," answered Rattam; and they parted.

Mrs. Desborough and the children were already in their dandies, crossing the bridge, as the horses cantered out of the castle gate sniffing the cool hill breezes.

"In pity, free me from this rubbish, boy," sighed the deputy, turning to his nephew; when he beheld ten coolies running behind them, carrying between

them jars of sweetmeats slung upon bamboos—a parting gift from the Rana.

"Uncle," said Oliver in a low voice, "I have something to tell you."

Whilst Mr. Desborough shunted wreath after wreath into his wife's lap, shaking himself after each surrender like a dog emerging from the water, Oliver was explaining to his uncle about Rattam and the shikaree.

Horace was fast asleep, and Kathleen's eyes were blinking, when they reached the bungalow.

"Cheer up, little woman!" whispered Oliver, as he bade her good-night; "Master Gravity, in his saffron satin, is going to find out what his fellows have really seen."

"You shall have my bird!" she exclaimed in her rush of gratitude.

"Nonsense, you silly little goose! You must not give away a keepsake. Do you think I am like those dusky beggars on the hill? My hands are empty enough, ready for work, and I mean to keep them so," retorted Oliver, stretching them out with intense satisfaction to prove the truth of his words.

He did not see her again, for by daybreak the Desboroughs were all *en route* for home, sweet home.

How happy the children were to see the many-gabled roof once more, embowered as usual in an ever-increasing mass of foliage and flowers, and replete with joyous life in every corner! The owl still sat in the entrance of his hole, blinking benevolently at Kathleen and Horace as they took their first run round the wide, cool veranda hand in hand, just to see if all the old pets were safe. Kites and hoopoes and blue jays were screaming and croaking to their hearts' content.

The ayah called Kathleen to look at her billee, as she called the kitten, which had grown immensely in their absence. Then she lifted up Horace to watch the gitchree, or squirrel, leaping from bough to bough among the garden trees, and to listen to the cooing of the jangalee, or wood-pigeon.

The dark faces of the gardener and the bhisti appeared at unexpected corners, with new treasures they had been saving for the little beebee.

One had tamed a moongus, a cat-like creature as big as a greyhound, and excellent for rats and mice, and equally good for cockroaches and many another insect pest which life in India knows only too much about.

Its soft gray coat and arching back, and all its amusing ways, won a smile from mamma as it ran about the house, sniffing at every new thing, and examining every hole and corner with the greatest curiosity. Finally, it set to work with teeth and claw, and dug itself a subterranean retreat by the door-step, where it could munch its dinner undisturbed by the liberties of its many neighbours. It was so clean, mamma had not a word to say against it. So with that and Kathleen's mina, who was trusted to leave his cage whenever he liked, the children had plenty of amusement, and the first few days at home sped rapidly away.

One evening, when they were returning from their walk, Kathleen with Sailor by her side, and a coolie holding an umbrella over them both, they were hailed by Oliver, who was driving in his uncle's boondee (a hooded gig drawn by two oxen) to the gates of the indigo factory. A long train of native carts, creaking under their load of indigo pulp, were waiting to enter. One ghareewan, or carter, had brought a rumour that a fair child had been seen by some hunters in the jungle. The tale had passed from lip to lip, until it had reached Mr. Desborough, who was pacing his office floor in unwonted agitation.

Oliver sprang out of the chaise and made his way through the press with most unusual energy for India. He entered the labyrinth of straw-thatched sheds, passed the great crushing-mill, which a party of half-dressed men were treading, and got splashed by the dark-blue stream issuing from it. Never mind; on he pressed, inquiring for the sahib. He was almost deafened by the hissing and sputtering of the steam from the huge boiling vat, when he became aware that on all sides the men were rushing from their work, and pointing to a dark reddish cloud that had suddenly appeared in the north.

He could not tell in the least what all this uproar could mean, so he tried to edge his way through the crowd of hideous blue figures who were gesticulating and screaming at their loudest. Then they began to snatch up the stones around them, which they poised in their hands as if prepared to hurl them at the skies. Oliver thought of a riot, and was thankful to perceive Mr. Desborough himself step out from one of the numerous sheds and glance hurriedly around. Just then a stick struck Oliver on the head. He looked round; a second was thrown at him. The men had not sent it, for it came from an opposite direction. He glanced upwards; another was hurled at his back. He did not like that at all. In spite of the agitation visible in Mr. Desborough's manner, he began to laugh as Oliver tried to run from his unseen persecutors, and pointed to the roof of a great shed out of which the busy workers were rushing pell-mell. Oliver looked up, and saw a troop of black-faced monkeys, big fellows three or four feet high, clambering over it. They caught his eye at last, and then the shower was renewed in earnest. He saw their switching tails and grinning teeth. And oh, the chattering and jabbering from five-and-twenty monkeys in a passion was something very tremendous indeed! Oliver gathered up a handful of the sticks which were showered around him, and shied them back again.

"Stop, stop, my lad!" shouted Mr. Desborough. "Throwing at monkeys will not do. Come in here."

Oliver darted into the counting-house, fully believing the riot he had been anticipating among the men was already in full swing among the monkeys.

"They are hunimans, my boy, the most sacred of all the monkey tribe. Had you hurt one of them you might have paid for it with your life. Timid and peace-

able as my men appear, they would have mobbed you in a moment," exclaimed Mr. Desborough.

"Peaceable!" repeated Oliver; "why, they are yelling like furies."

"Oh, they are watching the locusts. Can't you see them coming?" replied Mr. Desborough, pointing to the rapidly-moving cloud, which seemed extending itself in every direction, darkening the air as it came.

"Strange," said the boy; "but I have something here for you that is stranger still."

As he was speaking Oliver unpacked a lump of clayey earth, and showed it to him with an elation he could scarcely conceal.

"Look at that, Mr. Desborough. Do you see those marks? What are they?" he demanded breathlessly. "The print of a child's foot," he added, after a momentary pause. "The most sagacious hunter among the hills dug it up two nights ago at the entrance of the koond by the ruined temple. It is proof positive that a wild child is wandering in the jungle. Can it be your lost little one?"

The father's hand trembled as he held up the lump of earth to the fast-decreasing light.

"Send for Iffley!" he exclaimed.

"He is waiting for you, Mr. Desborough—waiting at my uncle's with the wonderful old man who dug up the footprint. We have gathered the most experienced beaters and trackers from the villages round. By the time we reach my uncle's bungalow he will have everything ready to beat the koond."

Mr. Desborough waited to hear no more. He was already striding across the open space between the sheds towards his home. Oliver hurried after him. The sky above them was darkened by a fluttering host of beating wings. Look which way they would, the air was thick with locusts, appearing like dark-red spots in the increasing gloom, but white as snowflakes where the sunlight still lingered.

The fearful hullaballoo the factory-workers were making to prevent the locusts settling down was caught up and redoubled by every ghareewan at the factory gate. The living cloud that now completely overhung the place was slowly and surely descending.

Up went the shower of stones, forcing it to rise some feet into the air and flutter further.

The men knew well if the locusts were once permitted to settle, not a green leaf would be left in the village, and the sahib's garden would become a barren waste before sunrise.

The exceeding singularity of the sight, which held Mrs. Desborough spell-bound on her veranda, was altogether lost upon her husband, who saw nothing but his children slowly returning from their evening stroll, like all the rest of

the world, gazing upwards. Oliver alone cast a wary eye at the monkeys, who, having given the young stranger notice to quit in their most peremptory fashion, were making off again to rob the nearest fruit-shop whilst its owner stood gazing at the wondrous insect army hovering in mid-air.

Mr. Desborough snatched his boy from under the ayah's arm, pulled off his shoes and socks, and bade him stamp his feet with all his might on the garden bed.

Mrs. Desborough called out in horror, for she thought some one of the myriad insects in earth or air would be sure to dart a fiery sting into the pretty "pink, five-beaded sole."

Determined to spare her the burning suspense which Mr. Desborough was telling himself was sure to end in the bitterest disappointment, he would not let Oliver enter the compound.

"Iffley has sent for me," was all the explanation he volunteered as he seized the gardener's spade, and dug up the clod upon which Horace had been stamping. He dared not tell her more, for he saw too plainly her grief for the missing little one was sapping her life. Any sudden shock and a spasm at the heart might snatch her from him in a moment.

CHAPTER XII.
BEATING THE KOOND.

As the boondee, with its two Mysore oxen, came in sight, Major Iffley, who had been watching for it at the gate of the deputy's compound, rode out to meet it.

"Come, old boy," he said to Mr. Desborough; "we are only waiting for you. Marching orders have been out an hour or more. Come in and change your coat. No use going on an errand like ours in any colour but dead-leaf brown. St. Faine has got one waiting for you. Only be quick, for the brutes have not yet left their lair, and we have a four-mile ride to reach it."

Out sprung Mr. Desborough. Dare he put so much faith in a few faint marks on a crumbling clod? Yet he was the first in the saddle as the hunting-train set forth from Runnangore. A most singular sight awaited them. As they looked down into the valleys they saw them filled with fluttering wings, and every mountain height encircled by its reddish cloud. All locusts, and nothing but locusts. Vultures and kites flew about in great disorder. A cold breeze from the

hills told of the probability of a coming storm. In sheltered places the oppression in the air was awful. The locusts called off the attention of the men, but they also concealed them from the keen, bright eyes that were waking up with thoughts of evening prey.

As they drew nearer the hills, the ground became so rough and broken the horses began to stumble. There was nothing for it but to dismount, leave the horses with the grooms, and proceed on foot. Tara Ghur, the old hunter with the wonderful Tartar eye, took the lead. On, on they crept in perfect silence, until they perceived the sheen of a pool of water sparkling at their feet. It lay at the base of a projecting spur of rock, and was overlooked by the picturesque ruins of a native temple. It was small, and overgrown with tall tropical weeds. The flight of steps to the temple court was half buried in mud. The white pillars of the colonnade which surrounded it were still unbroken, but the dome above the shrine had fallen in. Yew and cypress flourished on the spot where Hindu suppliants were used to bring their offerings to Mata Devee, the dreaded goddess of destruction.

How strange Oliver felt it to be living in a land where idols abound! One by one they climbed the broken stair, and gathering round the prostrate figure of the fallen idol, arranged their plan. From this ascent they looked down upon the sombre depths of the rugged koond. Round the shoulder of the hill, on the other side, was the entrance to a similar gorge. Tara Ghur led them towards the one in which he had dug up the footprint. He sent the jogies forward one after the other, like a living ladder, until they reached the topmost height of the precipice at the back of the koond.

Another division, who were to act as scouts, climbed the trees, some of them warily venturing further and further into the leafy abyss, leaping like monkeys from bough to bough.

Mr. Desborough, the deputy, and the major took up their position where the opening was the narrowest, so that no living thing hiding within the darkest recesses could rush out unseen. Mr. Desborough and the deputy were on one side; the major, Oliver, and the old shikaree on the other. The space between them was scarcely more than fifty yards across. Old Tara had marked the trees commanding the surest outlook. Mr. Desborough was the first to mount to his post of observation. The hunter handed him up his loaded gun.

"No, no," said the father; "no firing."

"No firing!" repeated the major. "Then how do you expect to recover the child from a pack of raging wolves? Face the truth like a man, Desborough. If your boy is alive in this jungle, some wolf has adopted him, and it will guard that child with all the affectionate fidelity of a noble-hearted dog."

"Ah! but you need the true, clear eye and unerring hand of a William Tell.

Not one of us possesses them. No, no; I dare not suffer a single shot to be fired," answered the father desperately.

"Well," interposed the deputy soothingly, "nothing of the sort may be necessary. We are not yet sure this child, if child there be, is yours. Trust us, we have come to save it, not to hurt it. Still, I say, we must rescue it at all risks."

"Time, sahib, time presses," urged the shikaree.

They climbed into their appointed places. The deputy and Mr. Desborough on their side commanded the better view. Then the jogies began their work at the back of the koond, hurling down fragments of rock and stones, striking and crashing among the trees, beating tomtoms and howling with all their might. The terrific row they made was repeated by the hollow echoes from the opposite side of the winding gorge, and was enough to scare even bears and tigers from their sleep.

The shouts redoubled. A tiny white flag, waving on the top of a long bamboo, fluttered above the tree-tops. It was the signal from the jogies on the heights. Something had been viewed. All the father's life seemed centring in his eye and ear. The cry of the jackals was beginning. The scream of the owls was echoed back from the temple ruins, where the bats were wheeling in endless circles. Then up rose the moon, flooding the temple hill with its silvery radiance, and giving an exaggerated profundity to the depths of the ravine. The pool, or jheel, below the overhanging rock shone like a burnished shield. In the open ground between, which the beasts must cross as they were driven out of the koond, any object could be clearly seen. Then the scouts who were posted in the trees by the sides, each with his matchlock, blazed away with powder only, to prevent any of the beasts rushing up the steep, and turn them back towards the watchers by the entrance. There was a crashing and heaving in the thick underwood. A tiger showed and hid again in the jow.

Oliver's heart gave a great bound. Oh no, it was not fear! But he felt the presence of danger, and his cheek grew pale with excitement. Not a shot was fired; not a sound escaped them. There must be nothing to intimidate the other inmates of the koond which might be following. The dead silence was broken only by the tiger's grunting. Did it scent its foes in the trees around? It did what nothing but a tiger could ever do—sent its innocent young cub before it into the danger. What a contrast between the tiger and the wolf! But for once the unsuspecting young one did not fall a sacrifice to its mother's selfishness. It ran towards the water, crouching in the moonje grass which tigers love so well. Another furious onslaught from the jogies, and the mother flashed past like lightning, rearing up and roaring as it plunged into the jheel. The scouts came down from the trees and began to talk. They were half afraid the tiger was the only game that would show that night. Should they move on to the second

koond to seek for the wolves? Then Tara Ghur bade all be still. His ear detected a movement in the distance—a tremor among the leaves, which no one else would have perceived. The scouts changed their places, flying back to the trees, and blazed away as before.

They were near to that korinda bush, but they did not know it. The tiger had started, and the patriarch of the wolves gave tongue from the other koond.

Mr. Desborough turned away from the darkness of the koond to watch the gaunt, lean, savage forms that were gathering on the moonlit ground to follow the track of the tiger. A movement in the tangle around escaped him. But Tara Ghur was aware of it. Oliver saw him bend forward, and his eye was quick to follow the hunter's. Tara knew that something was coming along the track where he dug up the footprint.

That footprint! The father was thinking of it. The trace was so slight, yet it was exactly like Horace's. His heart was sickening with suspense. Were they on a wrong scent, after all? thought the major, when out leaped the family from the korinda, with answering cries to the leader of the pack, who was rushing down the slope. The appalling howls of his following, as they gathered from brake and bush, might have chilled the stoutest heart. No child was there. The tall grass bent and swayed about the tree; then a small white form bounded from the midst of it like a kangaroo, but the old gray wolf was beside it.

Shouts from opposite sides of the ravine gave warning that something had been sighted. The small white thing dropped in the towering grass. A gun was fired. It was Major Iffley's. The wolf had pounced upon her nursling. The gun was loaded with small shot for the purpose. The major fired along the ground. The wolf received the charge in her shoulder. They could see her clawing the earth as she felt the pain, and then dropped down as if she were dead in the tufted grass. They could hear the screams of the terrified child.

"Carl! Carl!" Mr. Desborough called in coaxing tones of fatherly endearment, which rose to command as he met with no reply. The scouts were darting from point to point, as far as ground and jungle permitted. The three friends sprang down from the trees, only charging Oliver to stay were he was. They loaded their guns with ball, and advanced cautiously to within a yard or so of the giant grass tuft. They stationed themselves at even distances, that whichever way the wolf leaped out they might be ready to shoot him sideways through the head, so that the ball should not enter the tuft of grass. Their first object was to rouse the wolf and make it show. They trusted that terror would prevent the child leaving the shelter in which it lay concealed.

Tara Ghur had broken off a tall branch from the tree in which he had remained, and creeping along one of its mighty arms, peered down into the grass, but could see nothing. He stirred it up with the broken branch, but roused noth-

ing except a screaming pea-hen.

He leaped to the ground. "The wolf is gone!"

"But the child—the child!" gasped Mr. Desborough, laying down his gun and forcing his way into the tangled mass. No child was there. The wolf had doubled upon them so swiftly and so stealthily, it seemed as if the ground had opened to swallow it up. The scouts jumped down from their trees, and all separated, taking different paths, to try and find which way the wolf had gone,—all but the old shikaree and Oliver, who was still aloft. Mr. Desborough was foremost; he no longer waited for the hunter's guidance. Yes, he had seen his child. He believed now it was his fair-haired boy. He had seen him and lost him again. The thought was madness. The major, gun in hand, kept close beside him.

Tara Ghur, who seemed, like the owl, to possess the power of seeing in the dark, was tracing the way the wolf had come, not the path by which it had fled from them.

Oliver, beginning to be afraid of being left behind in so wild a spot, climbed down again and followed the hunter, who was the last to leave it. The sailor-boy had climbed so high into his tree, thinking to gain a more commanding view, that he had not seen all that was taking place at its foot. Having first met Oliver in the company of the Rana's son, old Tara Ghur regarded him with something of the devotion and respect he felt for his native chief. He knew the boy was safest by his side, and invited him by gesture to follow. So the two crept on through the pathless wild no foot but theirs had ever penetrated.

If Oliver had found it hard work forcing his way with Gobur through the grass clump by the river, it was nothing to the task before him now. There were sudden drops into unseen nullahs, or watercourses, and a dangerous climb in the darkness up the steep bank, facing rolling stones from the jagged heights above. Now and again their only course was to climb the trees, and swing themselves from bough to bough. But through it all the hunter traced out the path of the wolf with an unerring dexterity that was perfectly marvellous to Oliver, tracking its course to the sweeping boughs of the deserted korinda bush.

The bones about the gray wolf's home were gnawed and dry. It was evident the hungry mother had suppered her young family on snails and field-mice; and she must have gone far afield for these, for the hunting-grounds about the hairy nest had been clearing fast of late. Old Tara tried to explain his purpose, but Oliver did not half understand. He could only watch what the hunter was doing, and second his efforts whenever he could.

"Child been here, sahib!" exclaimed Tara Ghur suddenly, after carefully groping round and round the well-made lair.

But their object was to capture, not to kill, and Oliver began to wonder more and more how this could ever be effected.

The shikaree paused in perplexity. He had passed his life among the wildest fastnesses of the district. He had watched the ways of the living creatures who lorded it there. He had studied the tastes, habits, and disposition of every creature in the forest. He was well aware the wolves would draw to their lair with the return of day, and prepared to watch the night out by the korinda bush. Then a sudden thought seemed to strike him. He sprang up and began anew to examine the ground around the path the wolf had chosen. A deep hole, the burrow of some wild animal, gave him intense satisfaction. He heaved aside the decaying arm of a tree which had fallen across it. Oliver came to his help, and adding his strength to that of the wiry hunter, they dislodged it altogether, and laid the burrow open.

Oliver saw that it was a dangerous pitfall, and wondered what was to be done with it.

Tara leaped down and began to enlarge it with the hunting-knife he carried in his belt. Then he tore off a huge piece of bark from a neighbouring tree, and pulled up a shrub by the roots. With this impromptu shovel and broom he set himself to clear out the loose earth and stones which had collected in the bottom of the hole.

Oliver meanwhile was keeping guard over the shikaree's skin of meal and the earthen pot, which on this particular occasion did not contain water. What it did contain he could not imagine, for the edge was sticky in the extreme. Before the moon began to wane the burrow was enlarged to a good-sized pit. The shikaree grew exultant. He beckoned to Oliver to follow him, and the two wandered about among the trees until they found some giant leaves of a bauhinia creeper.

They stripped the stem as far as they could reach, and returned with their load of leaves to the edge of the pit.

The shikaree spread them on the ground before it. Then he smeared them over with the contents of his jar.

"What is it?" thought Oliver—"bird lime?"

Then he saw what the clever old man was about—making a wolf-trap.

CHAPTER XIII.
CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

Whilst Oliver and the old shikaree were working hard in the moonlight, Mr. Desborough and his friends were in hot pursuit of the flying wolves.

The major, who was the keenest sportsman of the three, gave it as his opinion that their wisest course was to keep the pack in sight. The wolf with the child was rushing from its covert in answer to the patriarch's call, and would be sure to join the others sooner or later.

Up came some of the jogies, breathless and panting, to declare they had heard the cry of the child far up the hill, toward the temple ruins. If so, the wolf must have been retreating to the second koond, on the other side of the hill. The deputy, who was anxious to pick up his nephew, turned back to beat it with another party of the jogies, who were examining the tracks about the jheel.

"Mind you beat up stream," shouted the major, as he sprang into his saddle, prepared to give chase to the wolves.

They came up with the pack at the head of a valley, where they were picking the bones of a spotted deer some tiger had brought down. But no child was among them. In a country so full of cover it was impossible to say where the little fugitive might be hiding. So they posted chakoos, or lookouts, all about, to give instantaneous notice if anything showed.

In the gray of the dawn, disheartened and weary, the friends drew together once again. Hunting-flasks were taken out, and counsel held in the weed-grown court of the temple.

"Our hour is coming," said the major cheerily. "Wait until the day is well up, and we shall find the child asleep under one of these bushes. Now for some lure to make it show. We must beat them all."

"And frighten him into idiocy, if his dawning sense has not been scared away already! He knew me no longer," exclaimed Mr. Desborough.

"Surely he would recognize his mother's voice," put in the deputy.

"I dare not risk the torture of suspense like this for her; but we might have Kathleen. If he remembers anything, it would be Kathleen," answered Mr. Desborough.

"Send for her at once without alarming Mrs. Desborough," said the deputy, taking out his pocket-book; and scribbling a note to his niece, he despatched his syce with it to Runnangore.

At a very early hour, Bona's dandy appeared once more at the gate of the compound at Noak-holly.

"I have come in the cool of the morning," she said, "to fetch your little girl to spend the day at Runnangore. You must not refuse her to me, dear Mrs. Desborough, for Mr. Desborough wishes her to accept my invitation."

But Kathleen did not much like Bona, and did not want to go, until Bona whispered, "Hush! not a word; but come you must. They are searching for Carl

in the jungle."

Oh how tedious it seemed to wait until the little beebee was bathed and dressed!

In the meanwhile Oliver was nodding in his tree, waiting for the shikaree's signal. The old man was listening for the faintest sound. Not a quiver in the bush below escaped him; not the beat of a weary wing as the night-birds drew to their haunts; not a tremble in the grass at his feet, where the children of the day were awaking.

The wind changed with the daybreak, and the wary hunter changed his position with it. He swung himself from tree to tree, leaving no footprint on the ground that the keen scent of the wolf might detect. Avoiding the trees where the branches grew low to the ground, he stationed the boy at a far greater distance than before. Again they watched and waited. A few sharp, trotting steps went by, and a dhole sprang from the thicket.

"Bear," murmured Tara, as the creature turned aggressive, and dashing out with a rush upon the wild dog, charged him fiercely.

In the noise of their scuffle other sounds were lost. But the flap of the vulture's wing, the scream of the kite, and the hoarse gobble-gobble of the still more numerous turkey-buzzards grew more and more distinct as the red light of morning painted the eastern sky.

The sun arose, and the furry tyrants of the midnight fled before it. The tiger was slumbering in the moonje grass he loves so well; the spotted leopard chose out his favourite tree, uprising from the thickest underwood, and coiled himself up for his mid-day rest; the bear trotted off to his den behind the fallen rock; the spotted deer roamed freely; and the peacocks, with which the jungle abounded, spread their glorious tails in the sunlight.

Then Tara Ghur descended his tree, and signing to Oliver to follow, stealthily approached the pit.

The large leaves of the bauhinia creeper and the pranes tree, a kind of sycamore, with which he had carpeted the path of the wolf, had been trampled down and displaced. Some had altogether vanished. The old man's eyes were flashing with their steeliest blue as he felt success was sure.

Avoiding the remnants of the bird-lime leaves, which were strewn about in all directions, he led his young companion to the other edge of the pit. Something had been caught. The sombre gloom around, the perpetual twilight which reigned all day in those deep recesses, prevented him from telling what it was. It seemed like blanket, not hair, that was covering a dark heap in the corner, besmeared with many a leaf. There was more than one denizen of the pit. How he smiled as he was bending over it! Oliver was watching a foolish hare, which came with a light bound across the treacherous pathway. As its feet touched a

well-smeared pranes leaf, they were set fast, and not all its frantic endeavours could free itself. It rolled over and over, lifting the leaf high into the air, as far as its paws could reach. It bit it frantically; lips and paw were glued together. It struggled harder still to regain its liberty, until it became a rolling ball of dirt and leaves, every movement bringing it nearer and nearer to the sloping edge of the pit, into which it must have fallen if Oliver had not caught it in his arms and set it free.

The hunter recalled his attention. A faint sound was audible, like the feeble fret of a weary child. Oliver's cap went high into the air. Tara reminded him of the necessity for silence by laying his finger on his lips. Then he took the hunting-knife from his belt and felt its edge.

Oliver's eyes were growing more accustomed to the all-pervading gloom, and he began to see more clearly. He leaned over the edge of the pit. There was the wolf crouching in one corner, and a shapeless bundle in the other. Many a treacherous leaf was sticking fast about the shaggy coat, and one hind leg was evidently broken by its fall. Was that a bundle of leaves it was cuddling between its fore paws, and washing so lovingly despite its pain?

"Child found—found!" whispered the old man triumphantly, as he returned his knife to his belt and began to descend.

Swift as lightning the young sailor-boy slid down before him. He guessed the hunter's purpose. He saw the gleam of the sharpened blade, and seized the old man's arm.

"No, no; don't kill the wolf!" he entreated.

"Maro! maro!" shrieked a voice behind them, and a woman's face peeped out of the dirty blanket. The jewels round her neck shone like stars in the darkness. "Maro!" she reiterated.

"Maro." Oliver knew that word—"Kill it." The old shikaree was muttering the same. But Oliver only grasped his arm the tighter. "Should we be harder-hearted than a wolf?" he urged. "What are we, if we reward the generosity that spared the victim in her very teeth, with the knife?"

Tara Ghur looked at him in astonishment. "But the mighty lords that are coming will make it eat their bullets," he answered under his breath.

Oliver knew he was arguing with a man who bent the knee to hideous idols without number. Yet he was a man, and deep down in his heart the law of God was written, "Do as you would be done by"—a law that is never quite obliterated in any human breast, however persistently disobeyed. Although of another race, Tara had learned something of the Hindu tenderness for animal life, and he listened when Oliver still went on: "You have caught the wolf so cleverly, Tara. If there is not another hunter in all the hills that could do it, I am sure that you can get the child away without killing the wolf, if you will only try. I want

it for Rattam," he added. The last argument was all-prevailing. The knife went back into the old man's belt. They looked around. Their first endeavour was to reassure the unfortunate woman.

She was crossing to Nataban, and had lost her way in the jungle, where she had been wandering about all night. Her feet slipped on the bird-lime, and she fell, as the wolf had fallen, into the hunter's trap, where she was forced to remain huddled up in her blanket, expecting every moment the brute would turn and devour her. But deliverance had come with the morning. Her gratitude knew no bounds. Oliver scrambled out of the pit, and gave her a hand from above, while Tara lifted her up on his shoulder; and so between them they dragged her back to the daylight, if daylight it might be called.

The dirty blanket was dropped in the pit, and the Thibetan woman stood before them in her necklaces and rags. Oliver had not forgotten little Kathleen and the mountain milkmaid. Could those three strings of beads belong to any one else? But he dared not stay to question. He left her seated and trembling on the root of a tree, and leaped down into the pit again. The wolf was blinded by the birdlime, but she had heard their voices. Like all wolves when caught in a pit, she was completely cowed. Instead of offering the least resistance, she stretched herself at the bottom of the pit, as if she were dead, with her fore paws over her nursling, hiding him all she could.

The hunter, who knew what wolves will do under such circumstances, guessed it was only pretence. She could not get out of the pit herself; and he had known wolves artful enough to let him drag them out, without showing the slightest sign of life, and when he had left them lying on the ground, believing they were dead, they would suddenly start up and run away.

Tara Ghur explained this to Oliver as well as he could, assuring him in this state she would submit to be handled. It was clear she had not attempted to touch the woman. Under any other circumstances she would have torn her to pieces.

The boy's heart gave a great leap of joy. He saw a baby's foot twitching between the outstretched paws. Old Tara saw it too. He took from the bosom of his loose brown vest, which is the Hindu's pocket, a coil of rope, and was tying a slip noose at one end, when Oliver guessed his purpose. In another moment the noose would have been round the gray wolf's throat. Oliver knew the old man was only doing his duty to those who had employed him to find the child and destroy the wolf, but he could not bear to see him kill the noble-hearted creature with the child in her paws—the child she had spared and cherished and guarded from unimaginable perils all those months! "We must, we ought to spare her in our turn," he cried, pushing back the noose as far as her jaw. "We will muzzle her; that's enough."

But the collar to fix the muzzle was wanting. Oliver was wearing knicker-

bockers and a loose brown blouse, belted round his waist. He tore off his belt and slipped the buckle down: there was the collar they wanted. Whilst Tara still held the ends of the rope, securing the wolf's mouth, Oliver slipped his belt under her chin, and buckled it firmly at the back of her neck. Then they drew the two ends of the rope over her forehead and knotted them to the belt, and the wolf was securely muzzled. With the end of the rope which he still held Tara pulled her backwards, and Oliver snatched up the child, all sticky with the birdlime, and covered with the dust and dirt in which it had been rolled; but its limbs were warm and strong, for it resisted his attempts to hold it. He was by far the stronger of the two, but the struggle might rouse the wolf to animation. Oliver slipped two fingers into his pocket, which he was in the habit of filling from the Rana's jars, and pushed a bit of the beautiful sweetmeats with which they were filled into the tiny mouth. The little creature, so long a stranger to the taste of sugar, sucked its lips with pleasure. It must have been hungry. He fed it with all he had, until Tara came and took it from him to carry it out of the pit. Oliver watched him scramble to the top with the child in his arms, but he did not follow when he saw them safely on the bank. There was something else he wanted to do. He was not going to leave the wolf down there, with a broken leg, to perish slowly from hunger and thirst: that would be cruelty indeed. He stood a while considering the broken limb.

"Sahib! sahib!" called the hunter. Oliver's plan was made; so he grasped the dusky hand which was stretched out to him, and clambered up.

The ragged woman had taken the child in her arms, and was trying to rub off some of the dirt which covered it with the corner of her chuddar, the loose garment the Hindu women wear. Her own had once been pink, but had now lost all trace of its original colour.

What child had they found? Was it black or white? Who could answer the question in its state of dirt in that dim twilight? Had it been so long with the wolves that it had learned their ways, or had it become dumb with terror? No sound came from its lips but a low fret.

Old Tara drew his fingers over its shock of matted hair and parted its toes; but its shape was enough for him—it was no Hindu. Not one white spot was to be seen about it. No matter; the old man was confident he had found the lost one.

They were now at the very head of the koond, far away from the rest of their party, who were vainly beating the bushes about the sloping ground below the temple. The long night-watch had made them hungry. Tara looked about for a breakfast for his companions. The chasm which divided the koond had changed to a rushing torrent during the rains, and he searched along its banks for the nest of the black goose.

Date-trees, which abound in every part of Bengal, were not far to seek. He

quickly wove himself a basket of leaves, and brought back his spoil in triumph. He found Oliver cutting up a strip of bark with his penknife, talking to the woman as best he could.

He had discovered that her name was Kopatree. She had been tending cows among the hills. A buffalo had attacked them; she fled for her life, and lost her way. If they could only guide her back to the road or to the village by the Rana's castle, she could find her way.

"Have you been working at the sanitarium high up on the hills?" asked Oliver.

"Yes; before the rains began." She remembered the weeping beebee, and her distress for the lost one.

All agreed it would not be safe to take the long walk through the jungle towards the ruined temple, as the child might set up screaming any moment, and bring the wolf's mate upon them, with the whole pack at his heels. No; they must steal away while the wolves were well settled in their mid-day sleep. Better climb the rocks under which they were resting, and seek hospitality at the Rana's castle.

When this decision was reached, Oliver slid down into the pit, with his strips of bark in his pocket. He had no scruple about appropriating the dirty blanket, resolving to buy its luckless owner a better in Noak-holly bazaar.

His father's sailors had so often brought back some strange pet from foreign parts, to amuse them on their homeward voyage, that he was not so afraid of touching the wolf as many boys would have been. Once they had had a lion cub, and twice a bear, so that he had had a little training as a menagerie-keeper. He tore off a strip of the blanket, and knelt down, with his little bundle of splints by his side, and set the poor broken leg as well as he was able, keeping the splints in place with his blanket-bandages. This done, he clambered out of the pit with the end of the rope in his hand, and tethered the wolf to the nearest tree, for the rope uncoiled to a considerable length.

Tara Ghur was impatient to be gone, for he knew that a storm was impending, was stealing over them, with the growing heat of the day. Suddenly in a moment the mighty trees of the forest swayed hither and thither, bowing their giant heads as a furious gust of wind swept through their leafy arcades; and he knew it was time to be gone.

Making prize of the remainder of the dirty blanket, he slung the child to his back. The bag of atta and the pot of bird-lime were left behind under a heap of stones. The old man led them by a path the wild goats had made. As they began to climb the steep ascent, he grasped Oliver by one hand, Kopatree seized the other, and so between them they almost carried him along, until the topmost

height was reached.

CHAPTER XIV.
THE HOMEWARD ROAD.

The old hunter's forethought was apparent now; for the child at his back began to howl most dismally as poor little Carl became aware that he was being carried away from his forest home. Oliver's sweetmeats were exhausted, and words, entreaties, and caresses were lavished on him in vain.

Through his wonderful power of observation, and the experiences of his adventurous life, old Tara knew as accurately as any scientific professor how surely sound descends. Ah, what if the wolves should awaken!

He knew the whole pack were sleeping in the dark shadows of the gorge where he had found the child, and he knew also that nothing makes a wild beast so angry as being wakened from its mid-day sleep. Carly's wild howl grew louder and louder—it might bring death upon them all—and nothing would still it.

But for the sudden breeze which had tempered the air, Oliver would have dropped with the noonday heat. As it was, he found it almost impossible to keep up with his companions. His thirst was becoming unbearable, when Tara espied in the distance one of the water-sheds which are built all over the sides of the hills where there is water. The little party made their way towards it, grateful for the refreshing shade its roof afforded. In the shed there was a range of stone troughs, filled from the running stream by which it was built; and round these troughs were a row of pipes, some made of reeds and some from hollow trees. It was a curious sight to see them spouting out water with a gentle, trickling fall. A native hill-man had brought up his oxen to drink, and whilst they slaked their thirst, he was smoking his pipe in the cool, damp shelter. Two women were filling their pitchers, and after the fashion of hill-mothers, they had laid their babies to sleep under the water-spouts. The Thibetan caught sight of the little black faces sleeping so peacefully, and ran to place their howling burden beside them. She laid little Carl down, with his head within a few inches of a spouting reed. The effect was instantaneous. The eyes and mouth closed slowly, and the child fell into a profound, sweet sleep, which she knew would last as long as they left him under the spout.

Tara Ghur was talking to the herdsman, who lent him his pipe. Oliver begged a draught of water from one of the women's pitchers, and washed his face and hands at one of the many rills that were flowing so prettily around him. He was thinking that Bona would consider herself a queen in the plainest of the necklaces worn by the ragged and dirty creature before him. He was wondering whether it would be safe to leave her with the sleeping child whilst he went on with the shikaree to the Rana's castle.

But no; he decided Mr. and Mrs. Desborough would never forgive him if he lost sight of their scarcely recovered treasure. No; he must wait until Carl was so soundly asleep that they could take him up and carry him away without waking him.

"Rest, sahib," urged the hunter, pointing to the trickling reeds.

Hungry as he was, Oliver laid himself down, intending to watch, not to sleep. But the heat and the drowsy influences of the gentle shower-bath overcame the boy, and he was soon as fast asleep as the child. After his night's adventures in the forest, the sensation was most delightful. Care and fear seemed to vanish, and his dreams transported him to the beauties of fairy-land. The horned heads of the oxen came alarmingly near, but they did not disturb the blissful tranquillity in which he lay, as if he were spell-bound.

Tara's hand upon his shoulder roused him at last. He heard the faint, low musical tinkle of a distant bell from the idol-temple, where the Rana worshipped his monkey-headed divinity; where he took his young sons to be sprinkled with consecrated water, and have their limbs touched with all imaginable substances, until Rattam was thoroughly cross. He was crosser than usual this morning, being bored out with the tedious childish ceremonies which he had had to sit through in stately silence.

It was delightful to receive a message from a native woman, as he came out of the temple, to tell him the hunter had returned, and was waiting with the young sahib at the water-shed.

When the shikaree touched Oliver on the shoulder, the milk-white ass, the gold-fringed umbrella, and the crowd of dusky attendants were advancing with Rattam across the intervening plateau.

"What does my brother in so mean a place," he asked, "when tiffin waits him in our castle-hall?"

Oliver stretched himself and rubbed his eyes, not at once remembering all that had happened. Then recollection came back, and he sprang to his feet, pointing to the sleeping child, and gave Rattam's hand a hearty Yorkshire grip.

The girlish young Oriental smiled, although he felt as if his fingers would all be out of joint: and pointing to a led ass behind him, signed to Oliver to mount.

The Thibetan had hid herself in the shed. But Rattam would not come near

poor Carl. "He will bite," he said warningly, and his attendants shared in his belief. Not one of them dared touch Carl.

"Give him to me," shouted Oliver; for it was easy to see the Thibetan was growing fearful by contagion.

Oliver tumbled into the saddle. The hunter gently lifted up the child and laid it across his knees. A running syce led the ass, and another carried an umbrella over it, shading Oliver and his novel burden from the dazzling sun. Rattam rode beside him.

Tara Ghur came up, bending to the very ground before them. He was anxious to be the first to carry the good news to the search-party below the koond. He was thinking of his well-earned reward, and he did not want another messenger to share it. So they bade him go.

Rattam called to his attendants to halt under the leafy arches of a banyan tree, that they might watch Tara leaping down into the koond, springing from bough to bough, as if food and sleep were luxuries, to be enjoyed in leisure hours alone. Then Oliver blamed his sleepy head that he had not spoken again about the wolf.

"O Rattam," he urged, "you have one empty den in the corner of your lovely gardens; will you have it there? Think of the love that could transform a wolf! You should have seen its face as I did, when we first looked down into the pit. It made me feel there is nothing in the world so beautiful as love—nothing so strong. And when we had got the child away, I could not bear to let Tara hurt the wolf. The same God who made us made it. God is love. Does not he care for the whole world around, for everything he has made? How will he look on the cruelty of leaving the noble brute to perish in the pit?—and I've done that."

"Forget it," said Rattam; "remember only you have rescued the child."

Oliver hugged the sleeping bundle of life in his arms. "Oh, don't mistake me!" he said passionately. "But now we have got him away, it is such cruelty to leave the wolf tied as I have tied it. Surely you must see it is. And I have let the hunter go."

Perhaps Rattam did not see just what Oliver desired he should; but the young idolater was struck by his companion's earnestness. With all a Hindu's reluctance to take the life of the animals around him, he had no care for the cruelty of leaving the wolf to perish; yet, like a flash in the darkness, a sense of the difference between him and the English boy was stirring in his heart.

"It is too much like striking a fallen foe," urged Oliver, as they resumed their journey.

"Nay," returned Rattam; "I accept the gift: the wolf is mine. There is my father."

The Rana in his everyday dress of ordinary white cotton could only be

distinguished from the headman of his village by the silver ring on his finger and the fineness of the shawl about his waist. He was driving back from the village when he encountered his son.

Meanwhile the old shikaree had raised the signal of success agreed upon. He had sent up a tall column of smoke whilst Oliver slept, by setting fire to a patch of grass. The nearest scout had seen and repeated it. The tiny flags on the long bamboos which his companions carried had waved the good news from the jagged cliffs across the temple ruins, from point to point along the broken ground, until it reached the father's ears.

The boys glanced round, and saw the wearied jogies swarming up the steep ascent above the koond, towards the slip of table-land on the verge of the forest behind the Rana's castle.

Foremost of all came Mr. Desborough up the precipitous path, until the footing for the well-trained mule he rode became too precarious. Then he sprang to the ground, flung the bridle to his syce, and hurried along on foot. The two friends following copied his example.

Rattam and Oliver turned back to meet them; then they perceived the old shikaree running before them as their guide. His tattered garments were so exactly the colour of the waving grass and scattered bushes through which he was leading them, that he looked more like some huge grasshopper than a living man.

They saw him pointing to the castle wall and gesticulating frantically in all the pride of his hardly-earned success, counting on the moment when he should lay the rescued little one in its father's arms. Then far down behind the lingerers of the scattered party they heard the echo of the dandy-wallahs' song. Despite the stubborn temper of the thing he was riding, Oliver did manage to press forward, and lifting up the sleepy child, he held it conspicuously before him. Of course he waked up Carl, and the howling wail again began.

Was ever any sound so grateful to Mr. Desborough's straining ears?

"There, there; listen!" he exclaimed, as he cleared the ground between them and came up panting.

"Here is the child, Mr. Desborough!" cried Oliver. "Now tell us, is he yours?"

"Turned nurse, my boy?" laughed the major.

Oliver answered with a shrug and a grimace, growing ridiculous, as he felt their task was accomplished.

Mr. Desborough sat down with the child on a lichen-covered stone. Where were the clear blue eyes? Gummed up.—Where was the soft fair hair? A shock of dirt.

The child snapped savagely at the hand that was fondling him, and renewed his wail.

"Take care," said Rattam. "I warned you it would be dangerous," backing his ass as he spoke.

"Quiet!" The single word fell from the major's lips in the stern tones of military command. The howl ceased, and the child lay passive in Mr. Desborough's arms. They soon found out how well it had learned the all-important lesson of obedience in the wild wolf's nest.

"A good scrub would be an improvement, I am thinking," remarked the deputy, with more drollery in the corner of his eye than Oliver had imagined him to possess.

The whole party were gathering now. They drew together under the banyan tree. In its grateful shadow there was room for all; for its arching branches had struck root as they touched the ground, forming a succession of leafy cloisters, until a grove had grown from a single tree. The overwhelming thankfulness in Mr. Desborough's heart lay far too deep for words as he looked the child well over, and felt it was his own—his Carl.

There were laughter and rejoicing all around him; but his brow was grave with the depth of his gratitude when the dandy-wallahs came up. As Kathleen peeped from her swinging carriage, she saw but one face, and that was her father's.

What did it mean?

He looked up and smiled at her. His eye was off the child just for one moment. Carl sprang into the air with a bound, leaping off like a frog to the tufted grass. Everybody ran—even Rattam. But Kathleen and her bearers faced him. They set the dandy on the ground, and ran round and round, scaring the queer little creature back, but not daring to touch him. Kathleen, peeping through the curtains of her dandy, saw it all. The great love that was throbbing in her childish heart shut out every thought of fear. The strange wild thing gave another leap. She tumbled out of the dandy, and as it touched the grass, with hands outspread, she caught it in her arms. The thing seemed nothing better than a human frog, with half-blind eyes and champing teeth. Save where the leaves clung to it, as if they had been glued, the little figure was completely naked and covered with slimy dirt. What did it matter? she loved him the more.

"You will have hard work to get the child home in safety yet," said Major Iffley; "you will have to secure it somehow. Borrow a cummer-band and swathe it round and round like a mummy."

"No bad thought," added the deputy; "something must be done."

Mr. Desborough was kneeling by his children. Before the major had finished speaking, an elderly bearer in Rattam's train, who looked as if he had huddled himself into a clean sheet to attend his young chieftain at the temple service, threw off this additional covering at a sign from his master and laid it at the

sahib's feet.

"Put it round us both, papa," said Kathleen, "and then Carl won't mind it." Mr. Desborough thought the sunbeam she had been trying to entrap had made its home in the happy eyes uplifted so pleadingly to his. "He will be good with me, papa; he always was," she added.

The deputy was searching in his niece's dandy. Yes; Bona had understood all his hasty directions. At the back of the cushions there was the store of cakes, sufficiently English-looking to delight a child. "Here, Oliver," he said; "feed it."

"It." The word jarred on Kathleen's ears. "It is not it," she persisted indignantly; "it is my pretty Carl."

Mr. Desborough took the cake from Oliver's hand and fed Carl himself.

The cake was devoured; and whilst he filled the hungry mouth, the major passed the long length of calico quickly round Carl's neck, enveloping arms and feet, until the wild little harlequin was reduced to a great white ball, at least in appearance. How fast the cakes were vanishing!

"O Bona!" muttered Oliver, too proud to take the share he was longing for, "she might have sent us more."

No one but Rattam heard the low-voiced grumble.

"Sahib," he said, "my father awaits you," waving his hand in the direction of the castle wall.

But home was the word. "Yes, home," repeated Mr. Desborough—"home to his mother."

"Try a tub first," suggested the major.

Rattam was speaking to his shikaree.

"You have done my bidding, and you have done it well," he said like a prince. "Now bring me home the wolf you have caught. Bring it home alive to the vacant den in the castle gardens."

Tara Ghur salaamed before his chieftain till the dust rose up in a cloud between them. Oliver grasped the hand of his dusky friend once more. How was it he was always feeling Rattam more of a man than himself, or far too much of a girl?

Now that poor little Carl was made safe, so that he could not hurt any one, Rattam alighted, and drew nearer to the group on the grass.

"Talk to Carly again, Kathleen," Mr. Desborough was saying; "I believe he knows you. But you must not kiss him until I tell you it is safe," he added quickly, as she threw her arms around her long-lost brother.

Kathleen paused, and looked up in her father's face, bewildered for a moment.

"Then I will not do it, papa. I'll never forget again to mind what you say."

The hand which had snatched her back patted her fondly on the cheek, and

the bitter pain which Kathleen had felt so long vanished altogether as her father answered,—

"Yes: I can trust you now, and I am going to trust you to take Carl home, my darling."

He put them both into the dandy, and drew the curtains closely round, so that nothing could be seen by the children. Bona's great bag of cakes was on Kathleen's lap, and her father showed her how to give Carl a bite without letting her fingers go near enough to his teeth to be in danger of an angry snap.

Mr. Desborough had left himself a peep-hole, so that his eye was never off his children for a moment as he walked by the side of the dandy. Had ever father such a journey before?

"Now, Kathy," he said cheerily, "you can do what no one else can do: you can make Carly listen. See how his eyes follow yours! Try and waken up his old love; you were with him to the last. Think of all that he was fond of in his nursery days; no one knows but you."

"Sahib! sahib!" entreated the coolies round, "no trust it with the little beebee—no trust it; grow angry, tear and bite."

Even the major and the deputy looked on doubtfully. They had known Kathleen only as a little wilful, heedless thing; but now they saw the better, higher nature in the child, expanding through the sorrow and the joy she had felt so deeply,—just as young plants grow and blossom when sunshine follows rain.

"I should think myself a happy man, Desborough, if I had such another fairy to call me father," observed the major, as they listened to Kathleen's cooing voice as she chattered on.

"O Carly, don't you know your own, own sissy? Now eat this, you dear, and Kath will give you plenty more, all so nice. There, there!"

"That sahib would blow the conch shell for a daughter," remarked Rattam thoughtfully. "I remember how our people blew it loudly for joy when Aglar was born; but when my little sister Deodee came, they all began to sigh and lament. I really think it would be well for us if that were changed."

"Then change it all you can," retorted Oliver. "Some day you and I will be men. But you need not wait for that; you are a brother now."

Rattam went home with a shadow on his brow, and a hunger in his heart for better things. We know of the promise that such hunger shall be satisfied at last; but Rattam knew only the favourite Hindu saying, "As it has always been, so it always will be," which fell like a wet blanket on his new-born wish to try.

Yet that one day had not been lived in vain.

CHAPTER XV.
A LITTLE SAVAGE.

As the search-party were descending the hills, the Thibetan peeped out from the water-shed. The sheen of her resplendent jewels caught Oliver's eye, so he sent his uncle's syce to persuade her to go with them to the Beebee Desborough, who knew her. She was mourning over her lost cows, which she feared some of the wandering robber tribes would drive away if they found them straying. They all wore necklets of red cloth, she said, which she had sewn with cowries in patterns.

Oliver was counting up his money, to see if he could buy her a cow, when one of the jogies declared he had seen them rush out from the jungle when they were beating the second koond. He was certain she would find them roaming amidst the bushes below the ruins. So on she went, for the vultures and kites were sweeping round and round in great disorder—a sure presage of the approach of the storm Tara Ghur had predicted. A gust of cold wind swept down from the highest peaks, driving before it a dark and whirling cloud, which covered the travellers with a thick pall of dust.

They groped their way, afraid to linger in the dangerous neighbourhood of the koonds, and still more afraid of losing each other.

Major Iffley rode about, looking up the stragglers; and making the men close round the dandy, they marched on. A brooding silence filled the air, only broken at intervals by the vulture's scream or the beat of retreating wings. Mr. Desborough parted the curtains of the dandy and felt about, to assure himself both children were safe. Carl waked with the darkness, and began to howl—the same wild howl which had frightened the old shikaree in the morning. He was not there now to point out its danger. But the Thibetan put her hand to her ear again and again as she listened. Was there an answer from the distant koond?

"Do you hear anything?" asked Oliver, as the first returning gleam of light showed them the gate of Mr. Desborough's compound. They had reached his home, and might have passed it unawares, so great was the darkness of the coming storm. The trees in his garden bent their proud heads, and swayed from side to side like jungle grass as the rain came down at last in a mighty torrent. There

was just light enough to distinguish the white columns of the veranda through the open gate. There was a general rush to shelter, for in those brief moments the carriage drive had become a rushing river. The gleam of the lighted lamps in Mr. Desborough's hall cast a glow of welcome on the sodden curtains of the dandy. Mr. Desborough made his men carry it right through the folding doors, and set it down on the middle of the floor, whilst he carefully closed them behind it. Major Iffley had divined his intention, and was already shutting every other door which opened into the hall. Oliver and his uncle were both shut out, and groped their way to the dining-room window, where Bona was standing watching the storm.

"You here!" they both exclaimed in surprise, as she opened it to let them in.

"Why, yes," she hesitated. "I grew so impatient I came across to see if you had got home. Have you found anything?"

"Yes, yes!" they reiterated, as Mrs. Desborough herself appeared behind her.

"Where is Kathleen?" she asked, looking beyond the deputy—whom she failed to recognize in the gloom of the storm—to the dripping coolies. The men were crowding in the veranda, rubbing their wet feet and wringing the water from their calico garments.

In the hubble-bubble of the many tongues she failed to understand anything.

"Kathleen is all right," said Bona quickly. "I told you she was with her father."

"Calm your anxiety, my dear Mrs. Desborough," began the deputy, with a seriousness which he intended should prepare the way; but it only startled her.

"What does all this mean?" she asked, looking from one to the other.

"It means—well, it means—" and the deputy coughed to gain time.—"Just see, Oliver," he added aside.

"Bother it!" muttered the boy; "I can't open this door."

Bona hastened to his help; but they pushed against it in vain.

Mrs. Desborough, always apprehensive since Carl was lost, was growing desperate. "Where is Kathleen?" she reiterated.

"Call her," suggested the coughing deputy to his nephew.

"Kathleen!" shouted Oliver. "Do come to your mother."

"Are the doors all shut?" demanded Mr. Desborough in return.

"Yes, yes!" echoed a chorus of voices as Mr. Desborough walked in, carrying what seemed to his wife to be nothing but a big bundle of calico.

Kathleen flew to her side. Mrs. Desborough caught hold of her by both hands.

"Do not look at me, mamma; look at what we've found," said Kathleen excitedly.

"A child," continued Mr. Desborough, speaking as quietly as he could. "Come and look, my dear."

A flash of lightning lit up the darkened room for one brief moment, and left it blacker than before.

"Bring lights," said Mr. Desborough.

"Yes; and order in the roast-joint, for this poor lad has scarcely tasted food all day," put in Major Iffley, laying his hand on Oliver's shoulder. "Besides," he added in a low aside, "nothing will be so attractive to that young animal as the savoury smell of the roast. I speak advisedly."

"Let us have our dinner, my dear," said Mr. Desborough, turning to Mrs. Desborough as she bent over the bundle in his arms.

The lights quickly appeared, followed by the ayah with sponge, soap, and towel.

He took the sponge from her hand, and gently washed the queer little face that was hiding itself from the light under his arm. He turned Carl slowly round towards Mrs. Desborough. But no amount of dirt, no scars, no scratches, could hide the truth from his mother. She clasped him to her, exclaiming, "It is ours—our own—our Carl!"

"Can it be possible?" cried Bona.

"With God all things are possible," said the deputy reverently. How Kathleen listened! The servants were hurrying in with the steaming dishes of roast-meat, game and fowl. The cloth had been laid an hour ago, awaiting the return of the gentlemen. There was little to do, but they made that little long in their eagerness to catch sight of the lost and found. At last they were all dismissed, and the doors made fast.

"Now, Iffley," said Mr. Desborough; and they began to unwind the length of calico with which poor Carly had been fettered. Between them they got him at last into a clean pinafore of Horace's which the ayah had brought.

Then his mother took him on her lap; but how to hold him was the difficulty. He wriggled and twisted himself into all sorts of contortions. He had struck with shoes and socks, and would have none of them, and began his fearful howl once more.

"Quiet!" said Mr. Desborough, in a quick, decisive tone; and the noise was hushed in a moment. But the light was obviously painful to Carl. He put up his hands, flickering his fingers before his eyes.

"He will howl again," said the major, "if we all stand looking at him."

"Give him a bone," suggested Oliver, who was going in for a good feed, a little quicker and faster than etiquette allowed; but a day's starvation is no joke, and everybody told him to help himself, and he was just doing it.

Carl slid down from his mother's lap and sat under the table sucking his

bone contentedly. Presently he gave a rough, hoarse cry that sounded very much like "More." It was his first attempt to speak. The wing of chicken on Kathleen's plate was in his other hand in a moment.

"We are getting on," said the major, looking down at the two small heads beneath the table, whilst the deputy was explaining to Mrs. Desborough where and how they had found her child. It was a never-to-be-forgotten hour: the storm was raging without, thankfulness and wonder reigned within.

Oliver grew eloquent as he described the amazing sagacity of Rattam's old hunter. It was happiness now to look back and see how slender was the thread on which the poor child's fate had depended, and how singularly it had been preserved in the midst of unheard-of perils. Mrs. Desborough's eyes were welling over as she thought of her long-lost darling, in the midst of the wild beasts in a trackless koond, yet fed and cherished! How?

By the mercy of our heavenly Father, as she truly said, in the fervour of her mother's love. But she did not see the way in which the wonderful escape had been brought about. She knew nothing of the double nature in the wolf; and they told her it was safe in Rattam's cage. That there was any danger yet for her child, from the very love of the wolves, never crossed her mind; how could it?

She had enough to think about. Her child was at her feet, but it had forgotten its home. She saw it, estranged and wild.

"Call him by his name," said Mr. Desborough. "Call him Carl every time you give him anything to eat, and he will remember his name; if not, he will soon learn it afresh. We must 'gentle' him, as the grooms say, my dear. Never fear; we shall bring him round."

Carl had taken the wing of the chicken Kathleen had brought him, and laid his other bone on the floor. Kathleen still sat on the carpet by his side, with a patience she had never shown to any one before. He had even rubbed his head against her shoulder, when the moongus, which had been asleep in one corner of the room, aroused, and seeing an inviting bone, stole up to it for a taste. Carl flew at it in savage fury, tearing and raging. The scuffle which ensued before the two were parted filled Mrs. Desborough with many fears for Horace, who was happily in bed and asleep before his brother was brought home. But to the surprise of every one present, when Mr. Desborough made his voice heard above the din of the combatants, Carl was silent in a moment, and dropped back on the floor in instantaneous obedience. After a little while he came creeping to his father's feet. Oh, it was piteous to see him so, and yet it was hopeful.

Kathleen, who was trembling all over, put her moongus out of the room, and ran back with her lap full of playthings. She had brought Carl's own old drum that he used to be so fond of, and his horse and cart, and a new steam-engine he had never seen. "Perhaps," she thought, "he may remember these. They

were his favourites; and Racy always loves my engine." She set it running on the floor before Carl's feet. The major lifted up his corner of the tablecloth, that he might watch the proceedings. Carl gave one of his frog-like leaps, pounced on the swiftly-moving toy, and snapped it in two with a cry of delight.

"Never mind, dear," said Mrs. Desborough, turning to Kathleen.

"Mind, mamma!" repeated Kathleen desperately; "can I ever mind anything he does, when I know that all this happened because I meddled with the blind? You told me never to touch it, and all my crying would not undo the mischief. Carl is better than I am, mamma, for he has minded every word papa has spoken."

"This comforts me, Kathleen, more than anything else," answered her mother fondly. "Always to obey is the one great lesson for every child to learn, and it cannot be learned too early. It is the foundation-stone of all that is good in after life—a young child's safeguard and its shield. If you both are careful to obey, we shall soon bring Carly round, and all be happy again."

Kathleen hung her head in her self-reproachful shame. She did not see the joy in her mother's eyes; for there is no joy so dear to a mother's heart as the joy of seeing her children try to overcome their faults, and turn to all that is right and good.

No one else understood the whispered conversation; they were all intent on Carl. Oliver took up the drum and beat a jolly tune.

Suddenly Carl sprang up and listened. Yes, there was a tiny creeping sound. It was only the lizard from behind the picture-frame that hung over the sideboard coming out for its crumbs, which Kathleen gathered for it every day after dinner. It was a pretty rose-pink creature, with a sharply-pointed tail and bead-like eyes. It had grown so tame it ran between the plates, helping itself as it liked.

"Tic-tickee!" cried Carl, calling it by the Hindu name his ayah had taught him, and grabbing at it with both his hands.

Strange that he should remember the lizard, when everything else was forgotten! Had he played with the lizards in the forest? Oh, horror! he was going to eat it. Bona nearly screamed. In her heart she was almost as afraid of him as the Hindu servants, and was thankful when the deputy talked of going, for the storm was over.

"If you want us, Desborough," said Major Iffley, "we are not so very far away. But you will tame your young savage all the better when you are alone."

They were careful even in the moment of departure not to leave a door ajar, for fear little Carl should try to rush out.

"Come and look at him to-morrow," replied Mr. Desborough, "when a warm bath and his mother's scissors have had their turn."

"Leave the shoes and socks for a day or two—that is my advice," laughed the deputy as he rode away, splashing through the flood that still surrounded the

compound.

The horse which had been found for Oliver was tired with its day's hard work, and would not keep pace with his uncle's and Bona's. As he lagged behind he heard a cow lowing in the moonlight. He thought of the Thibetan when he saw the horned head drinking at the stream which drained the road. He rode up to it, looking for the scarlet necklet she had described.

There it was, embroidered all over with tiny shells in a most fanciful pattern. Laughing heartily to think of so much ingenuity being wasted on a cow, he drove it before him into the gates of Runnangore, glad to have recovered one of the scattered herd for their luckless owner. He was sure that Mr. Desborough would look after her; but he meant to take her a new blanket all the same.

CHAPTER XVI.
THE CONCLUSION.

The sunrise found Old Gray Legs roaming through the koond in search of his missing mate, whilst the half-grown wolflings sat howling by the korinda bush until the sun was high. The time for sleep had come. They laid themselves down, but not to rest. The most adventurous of them all had his ear on the ground listening. It heard Old Gray Legs give tongue as he found himself at last on the track of his mate. Out they all rushed, scattering themselves over bush and boulder to join him. They were scenting the ground as they ran, and one of them alighted on the path which Carl had taken with his furry protector. Once on the scent of his lost playfellow, the keen young wolf pursued him through all its windings to the pit, which it had just light enough to avoid, then up to the heights, and back to the very gate of Mr. Desborough's compound, where it lay crouching among the ferns.

The native servants were at their usual work. Bene Madho was returning from the bazaar, with one or two of the coolies carrying home his purchases. The dandy-bearers, who went into the patches of jungle to cut grass for the horses every day, were coming back with their bundles on their heads. The Thibetan was with them. She had gone out hoping to see something of her straying cattle. Oliver, too, had risen early. He wanted to tell her to come over to Runnangore and claim her cow. In spite of her rags and her losses she was a rich woman. She had only to sell a few of her beads to buy a new herd. Bona would gladly

become their purchaser, so he made this a reason for presenting himself at the gate of Noak-holly by five o'clock in the morning. He did not expect to see either Mr. or Mrs. Desborough at such an hour, but he thought he might inquire of the servants how the night had gone.

In truth, it had gone queerly enough behind the nursery purdah, where both father and mother had been working at their precious little savage with sponge, soap, and towel. The cutting of his hair was terrible, and, worse than all, the cutting of his nails, which had grown into veritable claws. The poor wee child, so long a stranger to bath or hair-brush, hated both. If his father had not been there to hold him, it would not have been possible to wash him clean from Tara's bird-lime. Painful as the tedious process must have been, he was singularly obedient. He seemed to like nothing so well as coiling himself round on his mother's lap. But to get him to sleep was an impossibility. Oh how his father longed for the lulling influences of the water-shed on the hills! Carl was continually racing after the toads and spiders, making all sorts of strange noises, feeling his way about the darkened room, and howling at each unfamiliar sound. But morning dawned, and he began to yawn and blink in the growing light. Suddenly he gave one of his frog-like leaps, parting the chintz curtains of the purdah with his head, and peeping into the veranda. Mr. Desborough was nodding; but mamma was close beside her boy, wondering what he would do next. The servants were all astir, and the gate was locked, so she let him take his first look round by daylight.

Another bound and he was over the veranda railing into the garden, where he coiled himself round in the middle of a bed of mignonnette, and settled for sleep at last.

"Better not disturb him," thought Mrs. Desborough. "After so many months in the woods he could not sleep indoors."

So she opened a large white sunshade over his head, and sat down under an acacia tree to watch his slumbers.

Mr. Desborough was sleeping too, having had no rest for two whole nights. She could not bear to wake him, so she called up Kathleen. It was early; but the early morning in India is delightful. The ayah brought her, and returned to Horace, who had not yet seen his brother.

Swarms of young frogs had appeared in the veranda after last night's storm. The bhisti was gathering them up, sweeping them into a pail to carry away and put them somewhere outside the compound. Kathleen amused herself with watching the round, red insects which covered the grass, looking as if, instead of a hailstorm, there had been a shower of red velvet buttons, the rain had brought them out in such numbers. The gardener was hoeing within call.

"Yes," thought Mrs. Desborough; "all safe at home. All danger over now."

Yet she could not take her eyes off the little sleeper in the mignonnette.

"When he awakens," she said to Kathleen, "we will let him see Horace at play in the veranda. I fear they have forgotten each other; but they are twins, and the old love will revive. It will be safer to have the veranda railing between them at first. Racy is so trying, and if Carl grew cross he might fly at his brother as he did at your moongus. We will put the old red reins on Carl, so that he cannot leap away unawares. Being with Racy will bring Carl round sooner than anything else, if it is but safe to let them be together."

Whilst Mrs. Desborough was speaking the men came in with their bundles of grass. As the gate opened, in rushed the wolf with a cry. Up flew Carl with a bound of delight to meet it. They tumbled on the grass together in a tumult of ecstasy. Mrs. Desborough's first thought was to lift up Kathleen into the acacia under which they were sitting, while she shrieked for help. At the sound of her voice and of the running feet hurrying towards her from every direction, the wolf stopped in its gambols, seized Carl in its mouth, and was dragging him away. They were nearly at the gate.

"Come back, Carl! Carl, come back!" cried Kathleen from the acacia boughs.

Mr. Desborough ran out with his gun. He was levelling it to take deadly aim, when he perceived the close embrace with which Carl was clinging to the wolf, and lowered it in despair.

"Shut the gate!" he shouted.

Oliver and the Thibetan rushed into the garden.

Mrs. Desborough saw Carl turn his head at the sound of his sister's voice, and she repeated the call in her desperation. His name rang loud and clear above the clamour the servants were raising in their usual fashion. Carl came as a well-trained dog obeys his master, and, O horror! the young wolf with him. She showered the cakes she had brought with her across the grass towards him. Oliver snatched a pitchfork from one of the grass-cutters and ran; but the Thibetan, who was the nearest, seized the wolf by the hind legs and held it fast. Oliver put the arching tines of the pitchfork over its neck like a collar, and drove the points into the ground until its head was fixed but not hurt, and he leaned on the handle with all his strength to keep it there. Oh for Tara Ghur! but the old shikaree was far away, rejoicing in his well-deserved and ample reward. Was there nobody to help?

"Hold hard!" shouted Mr. Desborough, as he rushed up white and resolute to pull the child away. But Carl clung passionately to his furry playfellow. The wolf had ceased to struggle, but it held his pinafore in a grip of iron.

Mr. Desborough tore the thin muslin in two, and forced the child backwards. Mrs. Desborough was close beside him. She pushed the sweetest cake she had into Carl's mouth to try to divert his attention. He threw it to the wolf

as he struggled to free himself from his father's arm.

"Booraba no hurt child," said the Thibetan, who had watched the wolf and the child all night in the shikaree's pit. "Young booraba like its bahee [brother]. Hurt it, and child hate you all its life. Cage it, child stop, feed booraba; no run away from each other."

There was so much sense in what she urged so earnestly, Mr. Desborough was afraid to disregard it. He looked around him, not knowing what to do for the best. Then he shouted to the grass-cutters to fetch the iron hurdles which divided the paddock behind the garden. They ran across, pulled them up, and flung them over the hedge of roses.

Meanwhile Bene Madho had fetched old Gobur to the sahib's assistance. Mrs. Desborough had taken off Kathleen's sash and knotted it round Carl's waist, so that she could hold him whilst Mr. Desborough fixed the hurdles firmly in the grass.

Gobur came up with another pitchfork and put it over the wolf's hind legs, fixing them to the ground, as Oliver had fixed its head, to release the courageous Thibetan. It was a trying moment for Oliver when Mr. Desborough put down the fourth hurdle and shut him in with the wolf and Gobur. It was a tremendous effort to hold the wolf down, and he was getting exhausted.

Mr. Desborough saw this, and leaving his men to make a threefold fence round the wolf, he leaned over the hurdle and took the handle of the pitchfork from him. The boldest of the syces followed his example, and released Gobur. It was a moment of intense relief to Mrs. Desborough when she saw them both safely outside. The Thibetan was helping her to control Carl, who was struggling to get free. Five or six men were driving in the hurdles as fast as they could, and in the noise of their hammering Mrs. Desborough could no longer make herself heard.

By Mr. Desborough's orders every hurdle on the place was brought, until a perfect pyramid of iron was piled over the prostrate wolf. After the three-fold fence a row of hurdles were set endways between the lines, slanting inwards, and over these another tier was laid to form a roof, and another and another, crossing each other in every direction. Before the last corners were shut in the pitchforks were slowly withdrawn, and young Fawnie was left unhurt to examine the iron house which had been built over him.

One hurdle at the top was so placed that it could be withdrawn a little way, like a window-shutter. Gobur climbed up and let down a pail of water.

All the while the men were at work, Carl and the wolfling were crying to each other.

The wolfling was not yet six months old, and had not learned to be so wary as its mother. Yet it was strangely quieted when it found itself a prisoner. Not

so Carl: he stamped, and sobbed, and kicked in an agony of distress, because he was shut out.

"Give him his liberty," said Mr. Desborough. "Let him run up to it if he likes."

Carl flew to the hurdles and tried to push between their rails, whilst Fawnie, as Oliver called the wolfling, worked at them from the inside. But the iron walls of his prison were too firmly built to be shaken. A frog leaped out of the grass. Fawnie snapped it up, and brought it to give to Carl through his prison bars.

Then Mrs. Desborough realized how her darling had been fed and kept alive in the trackless jungle.

Oliver was telling her of the old gray wolf now in Rattam's cage, and the Thibetan repeated her story.

The mother's feelings can be better imagined than described when she saw thus clearly that the love of the wild wolves had saved her child. Could she doubt it?

"Ought we to think it impossible?" urged Oliver. "In spite of all its savagery, the dog's nature is in the wolf. It is the strong family feeling amongst them which makes the pack. You see, I have heard a great deal about them from Tara Ghur; and I shall never forget that old wolf's face as she turned to Carl in the pit."

Gobur and the gardener were cutting off some long branches from the nearest trees, to thatch poor Fawnie's pyramid and shelter him from the sun.

Oliver ran to help them, until Fawnie's den looked like a gigantic heap of boughs. Then Oliver fetched the gardener's syringe and drenched it.

When Fawnie found it growing dark and cool as the nest beneath the korinda bush, he laid himself down and fell into the sound mid-day sleep of the wild beast.

But nothing short of force could drag Carl away, and that was not to be thought of. Mr. Desborough saw it would only embitter the child, and rouse and exasperate the wolfling. He was hoping that if Carl were left to himself he too would fall asleep. But no; all sleep was gone. Carl kept on raging round and round the pyramid, tugging with all his might at the boughs which hid his furry friend.

Mr. Desborough lifted Kathleen down from the acacia. Her presence had helped him so much in getting Carl safely through his journey home. But her brave little heart was failing her; she had been terribly frightened at the sight of Fawnie, and she clung to her mother, trembling.

"Fetch Racy," said Mr. Desborough in despair. "The sight of his twin-brother may draw the child away. We must try something."

Mrs. Desborough went herself, not daring to trust any one else with the rebellious Racy in such circumstances.

She soon reappeared, driving him before her on his pretty bicycle-horse; while the ayah crept beside her, her black face puckered with anxiety and fear as she looked at the group on the lawn, and above all at the portentous pyramid.

Horace, who could not understand what had happened, flourished his whip and shouted to his heart's content. He was highly delighted at having got mamma to be his syce. She slowly drove him round the lawn. Of course, he wanted to gallop off at once to his father and Kathleen; but Mrs. Desborough turned him back, so that Carl might see him. The twins perceived each other at last, and drew together, staring.

"Look, Racy, who is that sitting on the grass? Can it be Carl—Racy's own lost Carl—come home at last?"

Carl's eyes followed every movement of the pretty brown horse with a strange bewilderment.

Kathleen, with her father's arm round her, felt her courage revive. She glanced up at him inquiringly. He nodded. Away she ran to meet the young equestrian, calling Carl to follow. Again he obeyed.

"O Racy!" she exclaimed, "we've found poor Carl. Let us put him on your horse, and you and I will drive him home, for fear we should lose him. You push, and I will hold him on. Quick, dear, quick!"

"God bless her," said Mr. Desborough; "she has done it again."

Racy tumbled out of his saddle. Mrs. Desborough and the ayah lifted Carl into his place. He made no resistance, but laid his face down and began to bite the horse's ears. Kathleen seized the bridle. Racy pushed manfully behind. Mrs. Desborough held one arm and the ayah the other. Up ran the bhisti, who stretched over Horace's head and lifted the horse and its rider right up the veranda steps. As usual, the hall door stood wide; in rode Carl, and Mrs. Desborough locked it behind him.

"What is up now?" exclaimed Major Iffley, as he stopped at the familiar gate. "You have found out something wrong about the place?"

"Yes, an imperative necessity to leave it. I want to make over the indigo factory to you for at least a twelvemonth, whilst I take holiday with my wife and children. We should never have rescued Carl if he had not learned to obey, and now distance is our best defence," said Mr. Desborough gravely.

"Done!" answered the major gaily.

"If you go," put in Oliver earnestly, "give Fawnie over to me. He is young enough to tame and train, and I should be proud to own him. With a stout chain and collar he will prove a noble dog."

THE END.

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