

THE BRITISH WORKWOMAN.



A Guess for Liberty.

That speak in the history of our Indian territories which immediately preceded their acquisition by the Crown of England, or rather, by the famous "John Company," there reared over an extensive province a certain powerful chief.

Like most other semi-barbarians who then swayed the destinies of those vast districts, he considered himself—*not*, indeed, to do him justice, did his practice belie the commonplace assumption—to be entitled to an immunity from restraint of any kind, either moral or religious.

It goes without saying that he was cruel—inhumanity, indeed, has seldom been an Eastern characteristic—but, the redeeming qualities which did him yeman's service in covering a multitude of sins, were a grim sense of humor, an occasional impulse of generosity, and the power of keeping his word.

Now, a few years before the date of my story, a corps of Household Troopers had been enrolled and specially commissioned by him, for carrying out the following duties—

To visit Lamas;
To collect Tributes;
and, cutting off any Europeans who were venturesome enough to make use of our fortifications in their travels, to conduct any such ill-starred wanderers to the "Bight" to treat at his discretion; in other words, to keep them in prison until their anxious friends should redeem the precious deposit.

It happened one day to these gentlemen, in the performance of their delicate business, to make a somewhat remarkable find. The discovery was a party of travellers, obliged by various reasons, personal to themselves, to adopt this particular route, although quite alive to the perils of the road, and who had agreed to travel together.

For mutual encouragement, it consisted of a Frenchman, a Hollander and his wife, a Neapolitan, a Jew from Germany, and, lastly, of an English lady and her daughter, an exceedingly pretty little girl, as lively as a kitten, and endowed with a degree of wit, and resource of character, than which no other member of the troupe could at least claim a larger share.

It is requisite to add that the intention of Mrs. Cameron (the Englishwoman) had been to rejoin her husband, lately made resident Consul to a Slavonian settlement in the South (whether, too, the second and third on our list were also bound), and who had naturally sent for his wife and (only) child to come to him on the first opportunity which seemed favorable for the journey.

Let us now suppose the Rajah's spies reached, under the square and matchlocks of their conveyer, by the captive, deploring for the most part their unhappy doom with all the energy of expression to which their respective tongues lent themselves, but

to the silent, yet no less real sorrow of our country-women.

As for Violet, the severity of the situation and the elasticity of youth, combined with the bliss, proverbially associated with ignorance, which the tenderness of her mother would not permit her to enlighten, increased, if possible, the natural good humor of that vivacious young lady, whose cheerfulness not only acted contagiously on the spirits of her companions in misfortune, but made an impression on the Captain of the Guard, not, as will be seen, without its significance.

Two days had now elapsed from the date of their

their crash or touch, an Ivory Box, six inches square. That any one or more of the spectators, discussing the contents of the casket, would be released and conducted safely to the frontier, and that the clue, in any of the party who might be clever enough to seize it, would be furnished by what they saw or noticed in their transit through the rooms.

They were not—and this was at first a condition of absolute ignorance—do confer, or approve, their release. Each must offer an independent and private solution, and the successful guesser or guessers alone, be entitled to liberty.

The prospect of being separated from her mother, should either happen to guess aright, and be sent forward against her will, while the other was detained, proved too much for poor Violet, none enlightened by her tears.

She accordingly made a piteous appeal to her friend, the Captain, as did also Mrs. Cameron, to induce his master to allow a fortunate guess by any one of the party to include the rest; a concession, which in full reliance on the toughness of the wall he had set them to crack, was ultimately accorded.

All preliminaries being settled, the troops were marshalled in Indian file, and a procession formed.

The first room into which they were ushered, appeared, as seemed to do, so little, if any attention

It was perfectly plain, and formed a remarkable contrast with those into which they were subsequently introduced, by its lack of absolute nakedness.

It was, in fact, a mere hall, but somewhat in the shape of an oblong oval, or, more, and fit from above by a dome-like circumference of glass.

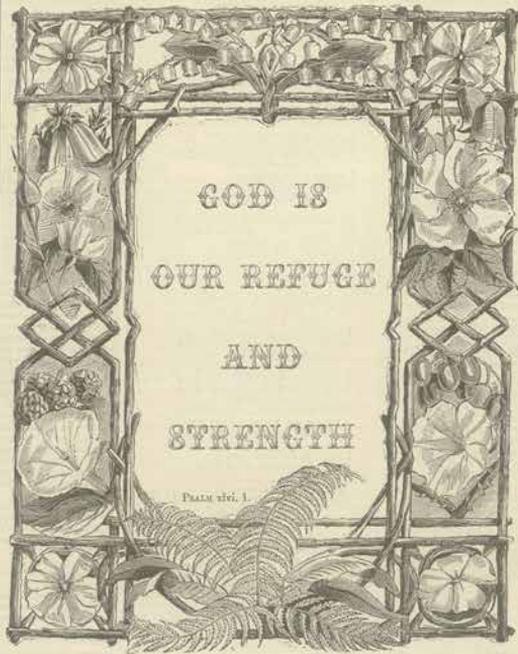
The floor of white marble, and to all appearance, formed of a single slab, presented, by its utter destitution of furniture—as did also the walls, by the absence of the least vestige of decoration—a strange introduction to the profusion of treasures which illustrated the next two apartments of the set.

For, suddenly, if the first room failed to reward the scrutiny of those anxious eyes by affording materials for any choice whatever, that in which they now found themselves, made a somewhat less embarrassing compensation for the disappointed one.

No. "3" seemed literally to glow with colour, and the air to be impregnated with the amalgamated brightness of innumerable gems.

Individual pearls, as well as what I believe are called "roper gems," of that jewel—rubies, emeralds, diamonds, the latter often uncut—were scattered several to heretic profusion.

Among the more peculiar examples of the jeweller's art was a facsimile of an Indian long neck, which, on being pressed under the wing of its natural noose; the base of its protuberant feathers being cunningly simulated by precise staves of various shades, similar after the fashion of a Japanese fan, and to which the eye of the beholder, than one of our Rajah's compulsory visitants turned in the speculative hope that in if they had divined the secret, and



entrance into —; when, on the morning of the third, a messenger appeared at the place of their captivity to command their attendance on the Prince.

In obedience to his behest, they were paraded in the great hall of the Palace, introduced into his "presence" and informed by the Captain, who seems to have been a sort of confidential factotum to the Court, that his Royal master had taken an unexpected fancy.

It had been resolved, he continued to explain, to allow the future destiny of his "guests" to depend on their ingenuity in solving a puzzle the knowledge of which was confined to the Prince alone. That, in accordance with this generous resolution (the kindness of which was really of the fulvous sort, which lends a sat to have a game of romps with a mouse before devouring it), His Highness is pleased to decree:

That they should be conducted through an unaltered series of apartments—four in number; that in the fourth and last of these would be seen, but above

that a replica of the marvellous bird reposed in the recesses of the varnished cabinet.

Already sufficiently enraptured by the multiplicity of objects which absorbed their gaze—many of which it was obvious could be contained within a receptacle of the dimensions indicated—the travellers now found themselves in No. 3. The appearance which this apartment presented failed at first sight, as the Frenchman expressed it, to respond to their solicitude, although a further knowledge tended to correct this impression.

It contained a heterogeneous medley of saddles, guns, swords, shields, spears, and hunting weapons, all of which were at once out of court as suggesting an idea as to the contents of the box.

And here it was amazing to notice—at least was wont to declare Violet to her children in after days, when telling them the story, and at which, even amidst the anxiety of the situation she could not help laughing—the unbecoming display of national tastes by various members of this quaintly assorted troop. A small hand-iron set in ebony and silver, which

The Neapolitan . . . By the Crystal Ball.
The Frenchman . . . By the Hand Mirror.
The Jew . . . By an Old-fashioned Malad Box.
Mrs. Canton . . . By the Bird.
Violet, at first (like her mother) . . . By the Bird.
By

And now the clash of spanglers, and the roll of drums proclaim the approach of the Rajah, who, preceded by his Vicer, and followed by his guard, takes his stand in the centre; but, just behind the centre, his soldiers closing up and forming a semi-circle, around

Silence proclaimed, each of the captives is called on in succession to announce his or her selection; and as the squabble of the Court did not, apparently, favour the charitable aphorism of "Place aux Dames," the Hollander is, first of all, desired to communicate his notion. An envious silence, and a wave of the royal hand to his wife to come forward and deliver her mind, showed the disheartened Dutchman that he was not infallible, and an equally prompt and

It not only conducted her and her friends, thus fulfilling his promise, in safety to the frontier, but presented Violet with the box itself, thus giving her an opportunity of relating the adventure to her children and descendants, one of whom at the present day rejoices in the possession of this well-won heirloom. — W. M. HAYDN.

PURE AIR.—The air of the sea, taken at a great distance from land, or even on the shores and in ports when the wind blows from the open sea, is in an almost perfect state of purity. Near continents, the land winds drive before them an atmosphere always impure; but at one hundred kilometres from the coast this impurity has disappeared. The sea rapidly purifies the insalubrious atmosphere of continents. Hence, every expanse of water of a certain breadth becomes an absolute obstacle to the propagation of epidemics. Marine steamships driven upon land purify annually the air of the regions which they traverse. This purification can be recognized as far as Paris.



BOATS AT SHOREWARD.

also struck the Frenchman as being suspiciously placed in the back-ground, furnished "memento" with the materials for his "lucky thought"; a phial, a legend on which affirmed its contents to be the concentrated poison of various snakes, had equal attractions for the Neapolitan judgment, while to the Dutchman the bowl of a pipe as plain as any pipey as himself, commanded half a crown's irresistible force, as the open-sesame to freedom.

Having conducted my troops through three apartments, it may be proper before they enter the faithful fourth, to recapitulate, or, in some cases, to detail the choice by which they had individually made up their minds to abide—

Stands by
The Dutchman . . . The Pipe Bowl.
His Wife . . . A spider in bronze, peering out of a silver flagon web.
So secretly was the artist's fancy resolved in the workmanship, that a long inspection hardly sufficed to uncover her as to the reality of the insect and of the web.

significant movement on the part of the Prince, a moment afterwards that his unfortunate Frau was so wise than himself.

The choice of the Neapolitan, of the Frenchman, as well as that of Mrs. Canton herself, were compensated with an impetuous air on the part of the poetess, as though their future had been in his judgment, a foregone conclusion, when Violet, who like her namesake, had hitherto remained modestly in retirement, is now summoned to tempt her destiny, no less than to the wonder of her companions, no less than to the profound astonishment of the Rajah himself, by declaring her conviction; and this she solemnly declared was the result of a sudden inspiration, as by a curious coincidence she had just at the last moment fixed on her mother's selection—the Bird; that, the contents of the first vases into which they had been directed, were also the contents of the Pipe, and that if the latter were opened they would find—Nothing!

She was right, and the admission of the Prince for her almost miraculous piece of divination—for it was hardly less—took a form of unprecedented liberality, spontaneously generous although he had often proved himself.

Dare-Deeds.

A STORY OF SUBMISSION.

"To bend is better than to bear; to bear is when a little hard! To bend implies a certain external weakness. . . The soil that endures feels the weight of the trouble. The soil that yields surrenders peacefully."

GOLD DUST.

"DIDN'T Mary look cross to-night?" said Harold, a tall, lively boy of sixteen, in a low tone, across the corner of the tea-table to his sister Bessie.
"Yes, she's a crabby thing," was the hasty reply.
The girl, Mary, who was pouring out the tea for her mother, aunt, sisters and brothers, certainly was looking unamiable at that moment. And her countenance by no means differed when she noticed the unobtrusive in which remarks were being made at the other end of the table.

