

brothers Gholab and Sochet Singh, he had risen to the highest positions of the state, had acquired extensive territories, and had formed a powerful party. His son, Heera Singh, a youth of singular talent and firmness, had been taken into the favour of Runjeet some time before his death, and had helped to extend his father's influence. His family now united against the new monarch, whose son, Prince Noo Nehal Singh, a young and dissolute man, readily entered into the design of the conspirators, whose first aim was to remove the obnoxious favourite of the monarch. A choson band, headed by Dhyan Singh himself, broke into the private apartment of the Maharajah at night, and, seizing Cheyt Singh, murdered him in his master's sight. The confederation was too powerful to be resisted, and from this time the power of Kurrick Singh virtually ceased. He was soon afterwards deposed, and Noo Nehal, without opposition, succeeded to the supreme authority.

The Rajah Dhyan was now successful; but he speedily found that the new Maharajah was little inclined to submit to the rule of himself and his family, and that he only retained his station and power through the extreme favour with which his son, Heera Singh, was regarded by the Maharajah. As weak as he was dissolute, the court of Lahore, under the rule of Noo Nehal, became a scene of the vilest debauchery. He vaunted loudly his intention to invade British India, and give it as a spoil to his troops, exciting in their minds a lust for plunder, which continued to grow until it burst forth in the recent invasion. It is said that on one occasion he drew his sword in open durbar, and swore never to sheathe it until he had conquered Hindostan. The wily and experienced minister, Dhyan Singh, must have laughed at these idle boasts, and perhaps to his contrivance we are to trace the startling events that followed.

Kurrick Singh died after a short illness in confinement. The popular belief was, that he died from the effects of slow poison administered by his son's orders. It was determined, however, that he should have a splendid funeral. The Maharajah attended it, seated in a silver howdah, on a magnificent elephant. Two victims threw themselves on the pile to burn with the royal corpse; but a greater sacrifice was in reserve. As the Maharajah was returning from the suttee, his elephant (this is the only account ever received of the transaction) struck against one of the pillars of masonry that form the gate of the royal palace of Lahore. Instantly the whole arch gave way. The Maharajah was mortally wounded by the falling pile, and never spoke afterwards; a nephew of Dhyan Singh, who was on the same elephant, was killed on the spot. Suspicion has pointed to the minister as the contriver of this frightful catastrophe, but no proofs have ever been brought forward in support of it.

Dhyan Singh and his family were now the virtual rulers of the kingdom. They determined on offering the crown to Shere Singh, a son of Runjeet, but never acknowledged by him as legitimate. After some opposition, they carried their point, and Shere Singh, who had hitherto remained in retirement, arrived at Lahore to be invested with sovereignty. But the Minister who had bred so many intrigues found himself now unable to repress the spirit he had raised. The kingdom was becoming disorganized, and the leading chiefs could no longer be induced to submit to authority. The mother of Noo Nehal asserted that the wife of her son, a girl of eight years of age, was with child. The story was disbelieved, but it answered its purpose. The mother of the deceased Maharajah gained many partisans, was nominated Queen Regene and all the orders of Government were issued in her name. Rather than risk a struggle, Shere Singh withdrew and Dhyan Singh at the same time retired, leaving to his elder brother, Gholab, the duty of watching his interests. This retirement was, probably, only intended to last until forces could be collected to oppose the dominant party. Shere Singh applied to the European officers who had been in the service of Runjeet, but they declined to interfere. Dhyan Singh acted more certainly by his intrigues. Shere Singh set off from his retirement attended by only 500 troops. At the gates of Lahore he was joined by 7,000 men, with their artillery; and a bombardment of the city was commenced. The Queen Regent expressed a wish to negotiate and Dhyan Singh became the mediator between the parties. The result was what might have been anticipated. Shere Singh's right to the crown was acknowledged; the Queen Regent withdrew, and was shortly after strangled by her own shawl-girls.

Dhyan Singh and his family, under the rule of Maharajah Seere Singh, held undisputed influence. But they found themselves unable to repress the disorders they had raised. The soldiery, now conscious of their power, demanded an increase of pay. One party seized and rifled a Government treasure chest. Other bands rose against their officers and murdered them. Lt. Col. Foulkes, a British officer in the Panjab service, commanding a large body of cavalry, was killed by his troops; and Lieut-Col. Ford, another British officer, after being plundered of all he possessed, even to the ring on his finger, escaped to Peshawar, only to die there of the ill treatment he had received. The governor of Cashmere was murdered by his soldiers in open court. At Lahore, the house of General Court, one of the most esteemed officers of Runjeet, was plundered of all it possessed, and the General himself narrowly escaped assassination. General Ventura, for many years the governor of Peshawar, who had retired to Lahore, barely escaped with his life. The army was completely disorganized, and the Maharajah and his Minister saw that their only chance of safety was to submit to all that the soldiery demanded. Their pay was raised,

and they received four months' leave of absence.

Relieved from the pressure of immediate danger, Shere Singh gave himself up to debauchery. Though destitute of the talent and firmness by which alone he could have maintained his station, he does not appear to have been wanting in sense. He strongly opposed all idea of invasion of Hindostan, expressed himself favourable to the English alliance, and freely allowed our troops under Generals Pollock and Nott a passage through the Panjab territory on their retreat from Cabul. His policy irritated the Sikh troops, and a plot was formed against him under the auspices of Ajeet Singh, his brother-in-law. Once more, but for the last time, Dhyan Singh took part against the master he served. The conspiracy was brought to a head by a rumour that the Maharajah was seeking the protection of the British Government.

In September, 1844, the Maharajah attended a review of the cavalry of Ajeet Singh, in a plain near Lahore. Ajeet, under some pretence, feigned to present an English rifle to the Maharajah but in the act turned the muzzle to his victim's breast, and shot him through the heart. His attendants were instantly overpowered, and his head, severed from his corpse, was carried on a pole around the camp of the murderer. Ajeet, with the minister Dhyan, returned to Lahore, triumphantly, in the same chariot. It is said that on the way a dispute arose as to the new form of government; but, however that was, it is certain that Ajeet at a moment when the rajah was unprepared, drew forth a dagger and plunged it in his heart. Thus fell the famous and favourite minister of Runjeet—a man of great natural ability who under another government might have risen to honourable greatness. But, except under the control of despotic power, it seems there is some restless devil in the spirit of an Asiatic which continually tempts him to treachery and intrigue. If the materials exist, the life of the Rajah Dhyan Singh would be well worth writing, as a memorable example of the rise, the fall, and the character of an Asiatic premier.

After this bloody act, Ajeet Singh entered Lahore in a merciless mood. He seized the whole family of the late Maharajah, and put them to the sword, even to an infant born in the Zenana that day. Then, shutting himself up in the citadel with his forces, he waited, with the ferocious indifference of a wild beast overgorged with blood, the coming of the foes who he knew would soon be upon him.

A large force was speedily collected by Heera Singh, burning with desire to avenge his father's murder. He invested the citadel, and opened a heavy fire of artillery on the walls. A breach was soon made and the fortress carried by assault. Ajeet, as cowardly as he was brutal, endeavoured to escape by letting himself down by a rope from an unfrequented part of the fortress. He was seized and his head presented to his conqueror, who rewarded the soldiers who brought it with 10,000 rupees.

After this conquest it was resolved in council to place on the throne a reputed son of the late Runjeet. This boy, Dhuleep Singh, was then ten years of age. Heera was appointed the minister. For a time there seemed a promise that this able young man would have succeeded in maintaining his position and in restoring order. The demand of the soldiery for a new increase of pay he was compelled to comply with, but he showed some wisdom in his other arrangements. The first serious danger with which he was threatened arose from the jealousy of his uncle, Sochet Singh, who left his province to endeavour to supplant his nephew as minister. Heera had hitherto managed so well that not a single soldier was found to join this new pretender. His retreat being cut off, he shut himself up in a temple near Lahore, and there perished with his followers, fighting to the last against the troops employed to subdue him.

Heera now found a new and more dangerous enemy in his remaining uncle, Gholab Singh. This chief headed a confederation against the young minister. A bloody battle was fought and Heera was again triumphant. A third combination, more formidable than the previous ones, at length overthrew him.

In the Panjab, as in all other countries, there are an aristocracy of birth and an aristocracy of fortune; there are peers and parvenues. It was the ill lot of Heera that he belonged to the latter class, and that he could trace his descent no higher than his grandfather. The old chiefs of the kingdom, proud of their hereditary honours, had always viewed the person and family of Dhyan Singh with dislike as new men. They now formed an alliance against the minister, engaging the mother of the young Maharajah in the design. The instant Heera heard of their plot he took prompt measures to disconcert it. He engaged a trusty body guard, and resolved on the seizure of one of the prime agents of the conspiracy, the Sirdar Jowahir, one of the young Maharajah's uncles. But this chief was too quick for him. He collected a chosen force, speedily, attacked Heera in his house, and compelled him to flight. Then, before the young minister could rally his party, his foes pursued him with an overwhelming superiority of force. His cousin, Sohan Singh (son of the Rajah Gholab), with a band of troops, was among his pursuers. With not more than 500 or 600 men, Heera at last turned; we have no authentic account of the conflict that ensued. One report says that Heera, after defeat, fled to a hut for refuge, which being surrounded with fire he came forth, and was instantly slain; another states that he died fighting hand to hand with his foes, and that great slaughter was committed before he was subdued. Thus perished the last man whose

authority might probably have restrained the troops, and have brought the affairs of the kingdom into some form of order.

The Sirdar Jowahir now stepped into the vacant place of first minister. His rule was instantly disputed by Gholab Singh, the last member of the family of Dhyan Singh now remaining. After some delay, Gholab came down from his mountain residence and encamped with his troops before Lahore. An arrangement was entered into between him and the minister, and Gholab entered Lahore; did homage to the young Maharajah, and afterwards withdrew to his domains of Jumnoo.

It would seem probable that the progress of internal strife was now checked by the preparations for an invasion of the British territory. This scheme has been long in contemplation. At a meeting of the Sikh chiefs, held under the presidency of Tej Singh, their commander, at the commencement of the last year, a resolution of war was almost unanimously come to. From the numbers of the invading force, from their unanimous action, and from the strength of their artillery and great store of ammunition, it is evident that the expedition is no sudden movement of a portion of the troops, but is an invasion deliberately planned and organized by the Sikh leaders. While we were congratulating ourselves on the temporary tranquility that prevailed at Lahore, the expedition was in progress that, descending suddenly and without warning on the territory of British India, has caused deplorable havoc in our brave army.

With this invasion the turbulence and ferocity of the Sikh chiefs and their followers must end. They must no longer be permitted to desolate the fairest plains of India by their violence, nor pursue a merciless career of slaughter and rapine. Runjeet Singh raised his army to a high point of efficiency, supplied it with splendid trains of artillery, well-officered and trained his regiments, and accustomed them to constant victory. Proud of their arms and numbers, they believed themselves invincible, and perhaps are hardly yet undeceived by the result of the late conflicts. It is sufficiently plain that British India can hope for no peace until their force is effectually broken up and disarmed, and their country occupied by British power. But for the concentration of a large force on the frontier, the Sikh army would have penetrated into Delhi, murdering and plundering as they went. Its course of aggression has been checked, though at a sacrifice of life which must inspire our Government with a determination that this most unprovoked and wanton aggression shall never be repeated.

Perhaps even in Asiatic history it would be difficult to find within the same period of time a parallel to the intrigues, revolutions, and massacres that have taken place in the Panjab since the death of Runjeet. With each act of outrage the insolence of the soldiery has arisen to a more unbearable height. It has long been foreseen that English interference would ultimately be inevitable. The intelligent foreigner from whose work we have so largely borrowed observes:—"The opinion of the best-informed authorities, namely, the European officers lately in the Lahore service, is, that tranquillity can never be firmly established in the Panjab until it fall under the firm rule of the British Government, whose interference, it is fully anticipated, will ere long, become unavoidable." That time has come.

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#### THE EVENING HYMN.

How sweet the fall of eve,  
When in the glowing west  
The sun has sunk to rest  
Yet still his shining foot print on the air  
Doth leave,  
While through the twilight, soft and low,  
The evening breezes come and go!

How beautiful, when light  
Hath fled, and leaf and stream  
Rest in a quiet dream,  
Within the chattering windows of the night,  
While companies of stars look down with dewy rays,  
And flowers droop their modest eyes beneath  
their gaze.

How quiet is the air!  
What spirit at such shrine  
But doth to holier thoughts incline?  
The ever tranquil night was made for  
prayer!

On the hushed earth, in the o'er arching sky  
Doth not a solemn benediction seem to lie?  
And when the hours of night  
Have slowly rolled away,  
And the victorious day  
Athwart the kindling air speeds arrowy  
light,

How gloriously, as in a second birth,  
Waken to radiant life the heavens and earth!

So, when life's eve shall fall,  
Peaceful within my breast  
Oh, may Thy presence rest,  
Soft as the hush of night, Father of all!

So from the sleep of death, with quickening ray,  
Wake me to glorious life, thou God of day!

ANNA BLACKWELL.

#### PLEASURES OF RAILWAY TRAVELLING.

Let us fancy a man timid, and unused to locomotion, who has perhaps been diverting his morning with newspapers accounts of railway accidents, arriving at the great terminus at Euston Square, bound on a nocturnal trip to Birmingham or Liverpool. Passing under an entrance as colossal and imposing as an Egyptian temple, he is hurried through the darkness to a spot which almost realizes the description of the hall of Eblis. Long colonnades of iron pillars support an iron roof, the intricate tracery of which fades away in gloom, while below the rows of brilliant gas lamps bewilder his suddenly expanded vision. Passengers more accustomed to the voyage than himself knock him about in their anxiety to secure their own places. Anon, porters pushing huge trucks come rattling down, and it requires all his activity to attend to the polite "Make way, if you please, sir," which attacks him on every side. When sufficiently acquainted with the place to find out an undisturbed spot for observation, he timidly glances out into the gloomy abyss which stretches away from the platform, and then his terrors will surely reach the climax. Great huge things like fiery dragons, prowl about—growling, blowing, panting, vomiting smoke and flame, and looking as if they had the will and the power to swallow up the train in which he is about to trust himself, passengers and all. Suddenly the bell rings, and our timid friend rushes to his carriage thinking all the while of Mr. Huskisson's fate, and tumbles affrighted into a most comendous receptacle, where he finds to his surprise, gentle young ladies composedly reading novels, and knowing ones of the rougher sex elaborately arranging their night-caps. He has selected the middle carriage for safety, and now, if possible, he secures the middle seat in that. If he has a fat fellow passenger on each side, and another in front, he feels somewhat reassured, and commences some ingenious mental calculations as to what extent his fat lateral friends may act as cushions should the train go off the rails, or in how far the elasticity of his portly vis a vis might constitute it an effectual buffer, for his head in the awful event of a collision. Another bell rings, and away they go at a pace which would leave the wild huntsman "nowhere;" and our timid traveller clings to his seat as comfortable as if perched on a cask of gunpowder with a lighted cigar in his mouth. But a man can sleep even on the night before he is hanged. Our friend slumbers off, lulled by the placid, contented snoring of one of his *compagnons de voyage*, when suddenly a wild unearthly scream breaks upon his ear; he starts up, convulsively exclaiming, "What's that?" and narrowly escapes a cut nose in his hurry to poke his head out of the window. The scream is repeated louder and shriller, and his fears throw off all restraint. He shakes the arm of one of the sleepers, wonders how he can sleep under such circumstances, and repeats his "What's that?" in eager and fear-impressed accents. The sleeper—some old commercial traveller, who can sleep anywhere—slowly rubs his eyes, gazes mechanically at the questioner, takes his guide book out of his pocket, and having referred to it, mutters the cabalistic word "Tring," "Watford," or "Wolverton," and composes himself again to sleep. If it be the last named place, our timid traveller has a gleam of comfort. He is allowed five minutes on *terra firma*, and quickly descending from his prison, he rushes into the refreshment room, where, to save time, the coffee is kept boiling hot for the accommodation of mail and express train visitors. He has had hardly time to scald his lips with the first mouthful, when another bell rings, and he runs away to look for his carriage. He has not taken notice of the number, and therefore runs about in wild dismay, at every door he looks in seeing strange faces and unrecognisable greatcoats, and at last finds his own seat, just as the levantine begins slowly to move away from the station.

Then comes the dark tunnel with all its horrors. The merry rumble of the train in the open air is changed for a sullen subterranean roar, the timid traveller looks out, and sees close to his face a slimy brick wall, while his memory reverts to the catacombs of Paris, and the skeleton which was found sitting bolt upright in the main sewer of Fleet street. He begins to wonder how he should feel if the whole superincumbent mass were suddenly to settle down upon him and his fellow travellers; and when he again emerges into upper air, he feels as if he had just escaped a most dreadful peril. His fellow passengers, who by this time have slept enough, brighten up, and beginning to find out their man, are most obliging in providing pabulum for his terrors. One describes a "smash" in which he was himself nearly killed; while another innocently says that they are just then approaching a most dangerous curve or steep embankment. Thus the timid traveller is kept continually on the tenter hooks as he drives through tunnels, or flies over embankments or viaducts, until at last he arrives, sound in body, but much distracted in mind, at the place of his ultimate destination.

#### COMPOSURE IN PERIL.

Although none of us had any idea that we should survive the gale; we did not think that our comforts should be entirely neglected; and an order was therefore given to the men to put on their best and warmest clothing, to enable them to support life as long as possible. Every man therefore brought his bag on deck, and dressed himself; and in the firm athletic form which stood exposed before me, I [Captain Lyon] did not see one muscle quiver, nor the slightest sign of alarm. The officers each sec-