

will find yourself in a spacious but very dirty courtyard, round which are ranged fifteen or twenty small rooms. The stench is sickening, the swarm of flies intolerable, and there is something strange and weird in the face of those coming in from the street. This is the establishment of another Government contractor, the opium farmer. At the entrance sits a comely, well-dressed native woman, whose husband is busy sorting the arriving customers into the least crowded of the side-rooms. Before her is a table on which are large bowls rapidly filling up with copper coins; like Matthew, of old, she sits at the receipt of custom, for half these coins go to the Government treasury at Calcutta, the other half going into the pocket of the Government tax-collector, the opium farmer. Enter one of the small rooms. It has no window, and is very dark, but in the centre is a small charcoal fire, whose lurid glow lights up the faces of nine or ten human beings, men and women, lying on the floor like pigs in a sty. A young girl, some fifteen years of age, has charge of each room, fans the fire, lights the opium pipe, and holds it in the mouth of the last comer, till his head falls heavily on the body of his or her predecessor. In no East-end gin palace, in no lunatic or idiot asylum, will you see such horrible destruction of God's image in the face of man, as appears in the countenances of those in the preliminary stages of opium drunkenness. Here you may see some handsome young married women nineteen or twenty years of age, sprawling on the senseless bodies of men, their fine brown eyes flattened and dull with coming stupor, and their lips drawn convulsively back from their glittering white teeth. Here is a younger girl, sitting among a group of newly-arrived customers, singing some lewd romance, as they hand round the pipes. There is a bonny little lad of six or seven, watching his father's changing face with a dreadful indifference. At night these dens are crowded to excess, and it is estimated that there are upwards of 12,000 persons in Lucknow enslaved by this hideous vice. Green hands get drunk for an anna, or even less, but by degrees more and more opium is needed, till hardened sots require two or three hundred drops of thick opium mixed with tobacco, to secure complete intoxication. An opium sot is the most hopeless of all drunkards. Once in the clutches of this fiend, everything gives way to his fierce promptings. His victim only works to get more money for opium. Wife, children, home, health and life itself at last are all sacrificed to his degrading passion.

Benares is the fifth city of India in size, population, and importance. It is a place of great wealth, full of noble mansions and 'palaces' of pious Hindu princes, rajahs, and bankers, who