

the intrigues and mysteries of the various native courts at which our *Political Residents** were accredited; and was also a high authority on all matters which came under discussion at their respective Durbars.†

The building contained one *sitting-room* (or "parlour" or "drawing-room," whichever you may please to call it), and three separate bed-rooms with a dressing-room and bath-closet attached to each. There was one other room, or rather "crib" which, being fitted up with shelves, we called *The Pantry*. The whole of these apartments were on the ground-floor; the upper storey (so to speak), or space between the ceiling and the apex of the roof, being hermetically sealed in perpetual gloom, and assigned to the incubations of the rats and snakes which held the undisputed fee-simple of that portion of the tenement.‡

The vacant bed-room which fell to my lot was, strange to say, the best situated, best ventilated, most convenient and most cheerful of the three! In the ordinary occurrences of life the last-comer usually takes the refuse or rubbish discarded by those who precede him, but my case was evidently a bright exception to that rule of selfishness which centres in the genus *homo*. Spiffin dwelt in touching pathos on the consideration due to an "illustrious stranger" (for such he termed me), and then expatiated in glowing terms on the disinterested abnegation of self displayed by him in not having hitherto appropriated those "splendid diggings;" while "Nosey" feigned the utmost bewilderment at the fact that *he too* had so strangely, so stupidly, omitted to "stick his spade in *that rare lot*" long before. In fine, the whole affair appeared (to *me* you know) simply unaccountable—incomprehensible! But, *more anon*!

The articles of furniture which ornamented the sitting-room were few and inexpensive. There was a *Side-board* (an "indispensable" in every Indian bungalow) which was well stocked with "first-chop" *Manillas* and with certain "other supplies," all of which were of the "choicest brands." There were also a half-dozen arm-chairs with cane bottoms (seldom used); 4 easy chairs, with their attendant hassocks (one for each of the *Sahibs*§ and one for any "pop" visitor who might "drop in"; a "Cleopatra" couch; a tea-poy; a card-table; an "Argand" lamp; a round blackwood centre-table; one or two side-tables; a few packs of playing cards; a cribbage board; and a book-case containing a fair selection of standard works, as also one copy of "*The Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner.*"

The bed-rooms were furnished as bed-rooms usually are, with the addition of mosquito-curtains, fly-traps, and other appliances which

* The position and duties of these officers are similar to those of British Ambassadors at Foreign Courts.

† The word "DURBAR" in its oriental sense signifies a COUNCIL HALL in which the affairs of the Government are discussed by the Head of the State in association with his Confidential Ministers. DURBARS held by the Governor-General, Governors, and Lieutenant-Governors, &c., of British India, are simply AUDIENCE CHAMBERS in which those exalted personages receive, on behalf of Her Majesty, the fealty and submission of the native Princes, Chiefs, and Nobles of the country. These pageants are usually conducted on a scale of great magnificence and oriental splendour.

‡ There are not (as a rule) any upper storeys in the houses occupied by Europeans, for the simple reason that THE FUN OF CLIMBING STAIRS IS NOT APPRECIATED in any country eastward of the CAPE OF GOOD HOPE.

§ A term of respect used in addressing persons of superior station. In the case of a lady the words "MA'AM SAHIB" are used.