

all these phrases and their signification are tabooed among the more ancient gentry of C——: and as to the newer residents of their class, they most likely have taken up their abode within its venerable walls because they like 'the tone of society' in the place, and the strictness with which social distinctions are preserved.

The three Misses Fitzlam were for years among the most energetic sticklers for a rigid exclusiveness, and in furtherance of this object they had constituted themselves the wardens of the gentility of their native city. They watched over Miss Megrim's school, and ferreted out the pedigree of every new scholar who arrived there, jealously guarding against the introduction of such a contamination as a tradesman's daughter among the pupils; by which *surveillance* Miss Megrim was kept in trepidation and poverty, with the empty consolation of teaching only gentlemen's daughters, and the prospect of an almshouse or governess' retreat as the abode of her old age. The seven tall daughters of Dr. Rawney, the chief medical man in the town, would on no account associate with or meet the five Misses Tiffany, the merry group who surrounded the parlour fire of the rich retired draper. The Rawneys resented as did the whole troop of half-pay officers and their families (C—— is rich in this class), the presumption of Tiffany in making a fortune, and then living in a handsome private house in the best street, under their very noses—the upstart! Even the religion—and very religious, indeed, the old city claimed to be—is tainted with this feeling. The congregation at St. Blazy Church diminished rapidly when a new curate came with the vulgar name of 'Stubbs,' and was discovered to be the very studious and deserving son of a Southampton tailor. As to the dissenters, they were, one and all, either ignored as schismatics that had no right to intrude themselves into a cathedral city, or scorned as levellers and vulgarians.

But on one fine autumn morning, nearly a year ago, the whole city was alive with bustle and excitement. There was to be a public meeting on Indian affairs. In no part of the British dominions was there greater interest taken in, or sympathy felt for the sufferers in the fearful oriental tragedy than in C——. Many of the resident gentry were widows and maiden ladies, deriving support from, or connected by relationship with India; and they were all hastening to the morning meeting, which was the genteel aristocratic gathering. In the evening, of course, plebeians would assemble, 'and indeed,' said Miss Penelope Fitzlam, with a condescending air, 'I hope they will gather in great force, poor things! only there's no need exactly, my dear, for our mixing with them; and she drew up the skirts of her dress with a dainty air, stepped into her reserved seat, and soon after, with a flush of angry crimson rushing over her face, and kindling into a bright illumination on the tips of her cheek-bones and at the end of her nose, she pointed, quivering with rage, to 'those odious Tiffany girls! What assurance to come in the morning, and to the reserved seats, too! It was past bearing.'

Yes, there they were looking so modest and neat that foolish Mrs. Major St. Leger said, to the horror of the Fitzlams, 'What a pity they're a tradesman's daughters! they really look like us.'

'It's a very long day, my dear,' replied her gouty husband, drily, 'Since you looked like them.'

One of the main topics of the meeting was the 'Caste,' prejudices of India. There was a missionary present who told of the absurd distinctions, and all the senseless and cruel details preserved by prejudice and folly in the East, under the name of religion. Nothing could exceed the interest with which these statements were listened to. The ladies, especially, were all ear, and testified, by gestures of surprise, indignation or contempt, their detestation of this 'vile Hindoo nonsense of *Caste*.' 'It must no longer be fostered or pandered to.' 'No, no! Away with such assumptions and arrogance!' was the thought in every mind, and the word on many lips. As the company retired, no one was more eloquent on the subject of this odious heathen prejudice than the Misses Fitzlam, as they contrived to surround themselves with their friends and to stop the main entrance when the 'Tiffany girls' were coming up, and by a quiet-but-manoeuvre compelled them, and a quick-looking lady they had with them, to leave by the side entrance.

'I'll tell you what,' growled Major St. Leger, as he waited in the lobby for the carriage, 'there's as much "Caste" in England as in India, only the difference lies in this: the Hindoo religion enjoins it, and the people are faithful to their creed; the Christian religion forbids it, and the people are faithless!'

'Dear me, what strange opinions!' said many voices, while a little titter went round, and a well-bred whisper circulated that 'the major's gout had made him testy.' Yet somehow the words struck home, and even the Misses Fitzlam felt uncomfortable, and resolved mentally not to oppose—as they had intended to do—the admission of the Misses Tiffany to a monthly working party for making winter clothing for the poor.

Among the gifts bestowed that day, with enthusiastic generosity, to aid the sufferers, was one most munificent in amount; the initials of the donor's name alone were given; P. L. S. Who could it be? Here was something for the gossips to sift out—a delightful little mystery, to employ and perplex the idlers of our quiet city. After a long round of morning calls, and many discussions and conjectures as to the modest donor of this munificent gift, the three Misses Fitzlam spent the evening with the St. Legers. The major was amusing for his very waywardness, and, stiff-starched as two out of the three sisters were, they had sense enough to like the flavor of the racy speeches they professed to be amazed at. So it happened that, as they drew around the cheerful fire, their host sitting in his easy chair, Mrs. St. Leger and her guests, for want of other topics, fell to canvassing their neighbors, as is the wont, 'tis said, of ladies in provincial towns. The morning wonderment was renewed, and the mysterious initials were again scanned.

'Oh, it was Frederick Lord Sandown,' said one.

'No, it was surely Felicia Louisa Suffington,' said another.

'Stuff!' said Major St. Leger; 'he's over head and ears in debt; and the widow Felicia will give to sufferers, all and sundry, what she can

