

tain erect, and every moment increasing in brightness ; and then, after a brief survey, he turned and whetted his knife on the sacrificial stone. After this he turned to me with his evil face, with the glare of a horrid death-hunger in his ravenous eyes, and pointed to the stone.

I stood without motion.

He repeated the gesture and said, "Lie down here !"

"I will not," said I.

"But it is on this stone," said he, "that you are to get the blessing of death."

"I'll die first !" said I fiercely, and I raised my rifle.

The Chief Pauper was puzzled at this. The others looked on quietly, thinking it probably a debate about some punctilio. Suddenly he seemed struck with an idea.

"Yes, yes," said he. "The woman first. It is better so."

Saying this, he walked towards Almah, and said something to the hags.

At this the chief of them—namely, the nightmare hag—led Almah to the nearest stone, and motioned to her to lie down. Almah prepared to obey, but paused a moment to throw at me one last glance and wave her hand as a last farewell. Then without a word she laid herself down upon the stone.

At this a thrill of fury rushed through all my being, rousing me from my stupor, impelling me to action, filling my brain with madness. The nightmare hag had already raised her long, keen knife in the air. Another moment and the blow would have fallen. But my rifle was at my shoulder; my aim was deadly. The report rang out like thunder. A wild, piercing yell followed, and when the smoke cleared away the nightmare hag lay dead at the foot of the altar. I was already