

THE ANTIDOTE

RECOLLECTIONS OF INDIA

AND

PEOPLE I HAVE MET THERE.

BY HURKARU.

Cornelius O'Brady was a Trinity College Dublin man; he had studied and been admitted to the bar in the Old Country, but having a natural aptitude and liking for acting had joined a troupe touring in the provinces. Not finding that the life was the El Dorado he had pictured it to himself he returned to the bar, came out to India, where he gained some repute in criminal practise as counsel for the defense, and where he had also acted as Police Magistrate in Bombay for about twelve months. O'Brady was well read, and in private life was an amusing jovial companion, somewhat too fond of his "peg" and well known for, what is called, pulling the long bow. After he had been telling us one night at the Byculla Club, how some years ago game was so plentiful, that he had shot black-buck while travelling in the railway train, he arrived at that happy stage of mind and body when it was only common prudence for Jack Stirling and one or two others, to whom O'Brady had been relating his fabulous adventures, to assist the learned gentlemen into his shigram and send him home to Mrs. O'Brady. It was no easy matter to place O'Brady in his shigram, for he was both large and heavy, but having after some difficulty wedged him securely between the seats, we could only wonder how he could ever be taken out again—probably the shigram-walla put his vehicle into the coach-house leaving his master "just as he found him—like a gentleman taking his snooze"—until morning; I cannot say positively, but Jack Stirling told me that when he went to attend O'Brady's child shortly afterwards, Mrs. O'Brady was a trifle particular in enquiring what hours we kept at the club, and asking Jack if he would be so kind as to allow (!) her husband to come away by eleven o'clock (it was half past ten when he was put into the shigram). Stirling had hard work to keep a decorous countenance for O'Brady himself was jesticulating behind his wife in a manner which would have done credit to Grimaldi.

It was grand and beautiful to hear Cornelius O'Brady, the day following his drive home in his shigram, denouncing to a jury the evils resulting from drink. The case was one for murder against an Italian scoundrel, who had been caught almost red handed in the act. The evidence was quite conclusive and there was really no defense, so that there was a doubt whether Cornelius O'Brady would make any speech on his client's behalf, but this doubt was quickly dispelled, for having a fine voice and good presence, of which he was perfectly well aware, O'Brady slowly rose and placing one foot upon a chair, he

flung his gown over his shoulder, much as a Roman on the stage would do his toga, (or my friend never forgot his acting propensities), and directing his glance at the jury began in solemn tones:—

"Gentlemen I am not going to insult the understandings of twelve intelligent men like yourselves, with the ordinary clap-trap used alas too often in cases like the present. No; I shall not pretend that the prisoner, my client, is an emblem of slandered innocence, for I regret to state he has led a vicious life." (The object of these remarks, from his countenance would certainly have given the lie direct to the "emblem of slandered innocence" theory and from his previous record appears to have been a most unmitigated ruffian.) "But gentlemen," continued my learned friend, "we must not forget that the wretched individual you see before you, in the dock, was once a little child and had a mother." At which undeniable though not uncommon fact O'Brady's voice trembled—he certainly was a good actor. "Ah yes, and what was it which has placed that miserable creature, once playing happily at the maternal knee, in the awful position in which you now behold him? What gentlemen but"—here O'Brady's voice assumed the tragic stage whisper—"grog, —grog,—grog,—the demon drink which to Saul's thousands and David's tens of thousands counts up its hundreds of thousands, aye and millions every year! Oh, as Shakespeare so aptly says 'that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains.' But gentlemen, I need not point out to your logical and well balanced minds that there is a vast difference, a tremendous gulf, between a drunkard and a murderer. Pause, I beseech you, 'ere you make 'confusion worse confounded' by supposing that because a man is a drunkard he must necessarily be a murderer —."

Here the judge interposed, and requested the counsel to confine himself a little more clearly to the point at issue.

"Certainly my lord," replied O'Brady, "I am much obliged for the reminder; and so gentlemen let us at once come to that point on the victim of this foul murder, which was struck by the knife of the assassin, and from which issued forth the life blood, or as his lordship has expressed it 'the point at issue.' Hold, no unseemly levity I beg, (as a smile hovered over the faces of the jury) this is far too serious a subject to jest about. One man's life has been taken, and another's is being hunted down, under the plea of justice, and to you gentlemen will belong the honor of denying that plea and vindicating my client. In the first place with regard to the wound, it was inflicted not by an Italian knife, though the prisoner is an Italian, but by an ordinary carving knife, such as you or I

might have used, and secondly, I am sure you all paid attention to that eminently scientific, yet beautifully lucid evidence, of my friend Dr. Stirling who was called in to examine the body. That evidence I listened to with deep interest, and I may say it has seldom been my lot to meet with so talented an exposition of the art of surgery, which, but for this unfortunate crime, would have been lost to the world. You have heard from Dr. Stirling that, in his opinion, the wound was caused by a common carving knife, and further he was willing to swear that the weapon could not have been an Italian stiletto. Here is a most interesting discovery"—and so Cornelius O'Brady rambled on, he had no case but thought he must do something for his money and also air his eloquence. Finally he concluded in some such words as these: "Now gentlemen, having satisfactorily shown you that, while deplored the besetting sin of drunkenness, a drunkard is not necessarily a murderer, and having further proved, by the evidence of one of the cleverest surgeons we have in India, that the wound which terminated the unfortunate murdered man's existence was not inflicted by an Italian knife or dagger, although the prisoner is an Italian, I confidently leave the case in your hands, knowing that you are not as Shylock was, but that your justice will be tempered with mercy and that the verdict you render will be worthy of yourselves, and the great country to which we belong." Of course the verdict was "Guilty" and was approved of by O'Brady immediately upon quitting the court, he declaring that the prisoner, from his acquaintance with him when Police Magistrate was, out and out, the blankest rascal in the Bombay presidency.

(To be concluded in our next.)

OFFERED AND TAKEN.

Magistrate (passing sentence).—Forty shillings or a month.

Irishman.—Faith, an' as Oi 'm mighty hard up, your honour, Oi 'll have the forty shillings for a change loike.

KNIGHTHOOD.

A knight of old to win his spurs
Did doughty deeds of gory fam',
When lance-heads stuck to him like burrs.
And battle axes dinged his frame.
And frequently some heavier blow
Had had some heavy goes at him,
Before the Royal sword was laid
Upon his shoulder fit and trim.
But now-a-days a knight is one
Of very diff'rent stuff than that;
No gory risks he cares to run,
As did the mediaeval "flat."
He schemes and jobs, and buys his way,
Till ministers have caught his name;
Then other wires come in play,
But still he "goes there just the same."