

made their bread out of what is called the glorious certainty.

There never was an hour that we had in ourselves, but in place of drinking and smoking away the time, he would go wandering by day or night among the ruins, poking about among the long-eared stone gods, and shoving his fingers into the scratches and lines on the blocks to clear out moss, and sometimes he would get quite nervous and shaky, like a man in a passion,—quite elevated,—as he went about among the secret inscriptions. Nay, when I sometimes would for banter's sake say I did not believe a word of all his yarns about the old gods, he would come out with a word or sentence in some strange gibberish to one of the Gentoo priests as they passed, that would make him start and stare as if he saw a ghost; while Flannel would go jeering and scoffing, swearing he had pronounced words which were only known to Brahmms of the highest order, and had been kept secret by the dreadfulest penalties for thousands of years.

Well,—once when we were lying at Benares, a place as full of old monuments as any churchyard, three or four companies of us were marched to a village about fifteen miles distant, where the ryots,—that's the small farmers like, though why they called them by that name I could never think for a more peaceable set of folks an' nowhere—well, these ryots were grumbling at a tax-gatherer that had been put over them, and it was thought that a sight of our red-coats would make them come down with their sicca rupees a little quicker.

We began our march on the morning early, and halted to pass the noon at a small collection of bamboo houses, about half-way. There was a little creek of a river ran thro' this place finding its way to the Ganges; not a muddy sort of thing, but quite clear, and fordable any where, though it was crossed by a wooden bridge built by the Company. Well, as soon as we had piled arms and dismissed for a time, this same corporal and I lighted our 'baccies,' and away we rambled up the banks of the creek.

When we had gone about a quarter of a mile from the road, we came to a low place, where there was a little hollow 'airy' by the stream, covered with long grass, and backed by a high precipice. Here we found a number of old stones lying about, some of them damming up the water, so as to produce a beautiful clear little basin to bathe in. They were very ancient, sunk into the ground, and overgrown with moss and brushwood.

The water, I have said, was very clear, and there was no mud or weeds about the banks, nothing but white sand and pebbles, nor was there any fear of water snakes, or anything of that sort, for we could see the bottom all about. The day was broiling hot, and the water looked so fresh and cold, and so rapid in its flow, besides the shadow of the trees was so cool, and the grass so long, damp and green, that we both resolved upon a bath. Off went our regimentals, and into the stream we plunged: and I'll declare to you that the whole skin of this same Nick Flannel was covered with the strangest figures and letters and pictures of creatures done in tattooing—there were squares and rings and triangles, and figures like the broad arrow, and pictures of all sorts of animals, dragons and flying serpents, and sphinxes and Hindoo gods, the same as were figured on old monuments, and suns, moons, and stars, and globes, covered with lines like, and snakes with their tails in their mouths, and birds, and oh, every kind of odd object. I'll be sworn he had not a

square inch of skin that was not stamed in this way.

Well—out we came shortly, for it an't good to stay long in the water in those parts, and just as we were shoving on our clothes I noticed this fellow struck all of a heap, like a man that comes suddenly on a venomous serpent. There he was quite yellow in the face, for these dark people don't become pale, like a Christian, but quite yellow and tawny—a sort of canary colour—there he was trembling, and his sharp black eyes glancing like the red end of a sheroot in a dark night; and he looked here and there among the blocks of stone, and pulled away the grass from about them, and then looked at the bare face of the rock behind, and then at the blocks in the stream, and then again at these among the grass. I was wondering what was in the wind, when he jumps away, and looks up the water, and down past the rock, and then mounts on the top and looks about, but there wasn't a soul to be seen. Presently down he comes to me, all in a hixteric way, and he says,

'Jim,' says he, 'did you ever hear of the Pitt diamond?'

'Why,' says I, 'I believe diamonds are all dug out of pits.'

'Pshaw,' says he, 'it was a stone that was sold by one Pitt to the Empress of Russia for half a million of money, and is worth double that any day. It was found, no one can tell how—but I can—in these parts by a common soldier—one like you and I. Now hearken to me;—there is within this little hollow what would make both of us richer than e'er a king in christendom, if we could manage to clapperclaw it without it's being known we did it.'

'Lord help me, Nick, you don't mean that?'

'Yes, but I do, though—it would take us both to come at it—one could not do it, for the difficulty is too much for the strength of one; besides, the danger is dreadful—you can't form no notion. If it were found out I did it, I would not be safe from death, and that a most horrible one, though I hid myself among the ice at the North Pole.'

'Bless my heart!' said I, and I began to get excited myself; 'what is it—how much—is it all fair and above board—I mean, is it all honest plunder?'

'I can't tell you; let us begone from this place for the present, for every moment increases the difficulty and danger.'

And away we paddled down the bank to the bridge, and to the little village where our comrades were lying in the shade, smoking and sleeping.

Well, till we got the word to fall in and march, he never ceased talking, telling me of the mighty treasure that was to be had where we had been, and of the secret marks on the rock and stones, and of the mortal danger that hung over those that even thought of making away with such things, and about secret societies, and Brahmms and gypsies, and masonry and carbonism, and devil know's what, till at last I got fairly tunked, and made a resolution to have nothing to do with it.

What was the use of riches to me, if I could not use it without the danger of waking with a knife between my ribs, or finding poison slipping down my gizzard. Besides, it might be all very fine for a fellow that knew everything, and something more, like Nick Flannel, but for a plain man like me, contented with my station, and comfortable, why the advantage to be gained was not equal to the risk; besides, was it not all very likely to be nothing but bosh.

So when, shortly after nightfall, Flannel comes to me and asks me if I'm ready to

go, I simply and plainly said, 'I won't go, nor have anything to do with the job at all.'

Then he begged and prayed, and implored me to go with him, and promised me immense riches; but still I would not agree, and time, which he said was of the greatest value, was running past. At last he began to call me coward and fool, so up I got and pitched into him, when he soon cried for quarter; and then shaking me by the hand, he bade me farewell.

'I'm going to make the attempt myself,' said he, 'and if I'm not back before daylight, you may report me to the sergeant; it's just possible it may do me some good in case I should be nailed.'

So off he set out into the darkness, and I never saw him in life again.

Well, next day when there was no signs of him returning, I went and made my report, and you could not imagine the surprise of the officers when I told the story. Some would not believe it, others thought it a scheme to desert; but the major ordered me to take a corporal and his guard with me, and go look for him about the bamboo houses and thereabout.

No sooner said than done. Away we marched in search of him; and I can assure you I felt very queer; for poor Nick, with all his ways of jeering and poking fun at a body, was a tiptop good fellow, and I had a very strong friendship for him; besides he was a step above me, and above most folks I have ever seen, in the way of brains and learning, so that I was a little proud I had been so much in his confidence.

We searched all over the bamboo houses and over the fields, but without success; we asked the people about if they had seen him, but not one of them had. At last I led the way, urged by a strange curiosity, and a kind of hope, that was not hope either, up the banks of the small stream, to the little mysterious hollow. As we rounded the end of the rock that shut in my eyes lighted upon a heap of clothes in one part of the place, among which his red jacket was plain, and over it his belt and bayonet, laid along with his cap and watch.

'I'm blessed if he has not gone in to bathe and been drowned,' cried one of us, by name Joe Morgan, a Welshman.

I thought so myself for a moment or two, and was going up to the clothes, when I observed, about a couple of yards distant from them, a heap of bones, quite fresh-looking, white and red, like bones laid aside in a butcher's stall—and Lord be with us! right in the midst of them was a human skull, with the eyes and all the flesh pared clean away.

I could now well conceive it was all up with poor Nick—but what next? About two yards from the bones was a third heap of bits of flesh, chopped neatly as small as minced-meat. Two eyes and ears were laid on top of the heap, and on the pieces of skin I could see the tattoos triangles and serpents, and suns and moons, and other figures which I had remarked when my poor comrade and I bathed the day before. Oh, it was dreadful! Upon my oath I felt in a mortal funk as I looked upon the remains of the poor fellow, and so did we all, though it was broad day-light and we had our arms.

There was an unhallowed neatness about the whole arrangement, that showed a strange coolness and deliberation in the perpetration of the deed; nothing was scattered about, but all the remains were packed carefully in one or other of the three heaps. The grass was not trodden down more than we had done with our own feet, or he and I on the day before when bathing. There