

"DEAR BROTHER:—

"The blow at last has fallen, our poor dear mother is now no more, and we are orphans, she died on the fifteenth of this month. Oh, how fervently she prayed that she might be spared until your return; and the last word she uttered was; our name. You are aware that her income was drawn in advance and died with her, and as she expired a few days prior to pay day, there is nothing to receive on that account, and after the funeral expenses were defrayed there remained but a few shillings. The Landlord, a hard, cruel man, seized and sold the furniture for some arrears of rent that was due; thus at one stroke I was rendered motherless and homeless, and thrown on the cold charity of the world; what I should have done I know not, but for the kindness of a poor neighbour. Our dear mother spared no pains with my education, and I believe myself competent to perform the duties of a Governess, or School Teacher, but alas, there are hundreds of others better qualified persons seeking for such appointments daily without success. Dearest Walter, I know that the kindness of your heart will prompt you to do all in your power for me; but, oh, if you could remit a little money to repay these poor people that have sheltered me, and can ill afford to do so, it may be an inducement to them to extend it until something turns up. I am too much overpowered by our loss and my sad situation to say more at present; but, oh, do write soon and relieve the anxiety and suspense of your

"Affectionate Sister,
"ALICE CRESSINGHAM."

Herbert quietly refolded the letter, and for a few moments made no reply, but continued to pace up and down the room in thought; suddenly he confronted Walter and said:—"Cressingham, we have been friends since you entered the service; you know my present position and future prospects; you have asked my advice and I now give it frankly and unhesitatingly; I have a sum of money in the paymaster's hands, this I would willingly lend you a portion of for your sister; but this would not be exactly what is now required, and you will be unable from your rank in the Regiment to spare a sufficient sum to support her. I see but one way to obviate this difficulty, that is this: write to Alice and explain exactly how you are situated—our long friendship—and tell her that I will, if she wishes it, remit to England a sufficient amount to pay her outfit and passage to join you, and that on her arrival at this station I will make her my wife, and sweep away the present difficulties. The suddenness of this proposition may at first startle her somewhat, but calm reflection will show her, I think, that the offer is made in all sincerity, and with the best of motives. Now, Walter, what do you say on the subject?"

"My dear Herbert," replied he, shaking his friend warmly by the hand, "I sincerely thank you for your generous offer, and I can assure you that nothing will give me greater pleasure than to see you united to my sister; it shall be as you propose; I will write and explain all to Alice, and leave it to her good sense for the acceptance of your kind suggestion in our behalf."

The next morning a letter was despatched to Alice, in which Herbert enclosed a draft on Forbes & Co., London, of sufficient amount to meet all requirements. In a few months

Alice's answer was received by her brother, in which she had consented to entrust her happiness to the keeping of her brother's friend; she had procured a passage on board the *Serringapatam*, East Indiaman, which vessel was expected to arrive at Bombay about the middle of the ensuing January, it was now late in November. Cressingham lost no time in communicating the news to Herbert Grey, and it was soon arranged that Walter should at once obtain leave of absence and proceed to the Presidency, to await the arrival of Alice. On his reaching Bombay he found that the *Serringapatam* had arrived, and that Alice had while on board been fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of an officer's family who were to remain a few weeks at Bombay prior to their journey up the country, and that they had invited her to stay with them until her brother could fetch her. This was all very satisfactory to Walter, and after visiting the fire Temples of the Parsees, the Towers of Silence as their burial places are very appropriately named, and other place of interest on the island, they set forth on their long and tedious journey to Zillapoor.

One morning after they had been ten days on the road, on entering the Dowk Bungalow they found one of the rooms occupied by Henry Dashville, Sergeant Major of Walter's Regiment, who had also been on furlough, and like themselves was on his way to rejoin; this was concluded to be a fortunate event; Walter introduced him to Alice and he dined and spent the day with them, when it was arranged that they should perform the rest of their journey together. During the evening as the young men were lounging and smoking in the verandah, Dashville said, drawing from his pocket a letter; "Here is something that I had forgotten until now, it will, I think, surprise you very much; it is from Sergeant Winter; read the concluding paragraph." Handing it as he spoke to Walter, who glancing over it read aloud these lines:—"The only news of interest here is that your friend Herbert, the Quartermaster Sergeant, was detected in an intrigue with one of the women of the Regiment by her husband; of course Herbert was arrested, tried by a Court Martial and reduced to the ranks. This affair caused quite a sensation in camp." Walter was thunderstruck, he could scarcely believe his senses; he read and reread the few lines, and each time he did so he felt the more confirmed. He apologized to Dashville for leaving him and sought his sister. She met him at the door of her room, and noticing his agitation, said:—

"Calm yourself, dearest Walter; seated reading at an open window I became unintentionally a listener and have heard it all. You take this matter too much to heart, for a man who could be guilty of such baseness is unworthy of your confidence, or my love, and he shall never be the husband of Alice Cressingham."

Her cheeks flushed and her eyes flashed

with indignation as she spoke. It must be remembered that Alice had not seen Herbert and knew nothing of him, but that he was her brother's friend, and therefore she had no difficulty in dismissing him from her thoughts. But not so with Cressingham, they had been so long acquainted, and to think that he should have so acted when his intended wife was within a few hundred miles of him, stung him to the quick, it was an insult to them both, and it was several hours before he could compose himself sufficiently to reason calmly on the strange turn events had taken.

They did not proceed on their journey till the following evening. The beauty and quiet manners of Alice made a deep impression on Henry Dashville, as was evident by the marked attention he paid her during the journey; in crossing the fords and where the roads were almost impassible, he was ever ready to assist and anticipate her slightest wish, paying those delicate attentions so pleasing to females in general. On some of the beautiful moonlight evenings Alice would alight, and in company with her brother and leaning on the proffered arm of Dashville, walk on a considerable distance; Dashville endeavoring to interest and amuse her; although young he had seen a great deal of what is called the world, had a fund of anecdote and agreeable rattle, and possessed the happy knack of suiting his conversation to the time and place. These attentions were not lost upon Alice, and on one of these occasions when Cressingham had dropped to the rear to give some instructions to the servant concerning the baggage, Dashville took the opportunity of declaring his attachment, and made Alice an offer of his hand and heart; so ardent and so eloquently did he plead his cause that she consented to his speaking to her brother on the subject. This he lost no time in doing, Walter at first demured, but on Dashville assuring him that he would on reaching camp, hand over to Herbert Grey the amount that he had advanced, his scruples vanished and he finally consented; and on their arrival at Mhow, a large military station about ninety miles from Zillapoor, they were united. This entailed a delay of a few days, and the trio then resumed their journey.

It was a beautiful morning, the sun had scarcely risen, the heavy dew hung upon the hedges, plants and flowers and grass which sparkled and glittered like diamonds in the sunlight; the air was impregnated with the odour of roses, jasmine and other flowers that bloomed in great beauty in the surrounding gardens. There had been a full dress parade and the officers were returning to their quarters as our travellers entered the cantonment. Walter and Dashville had alighted and were walking in advance of the Garrie, and on turning the corner of a compound they came suddenly upon Herbert Grey in the full dress of his rank, a Quartermaster Sergeant: "Oh Cressingham, I expected you in this morning, glad to see that