

storm was very near. Even the dull, brute nature of the man could not fail to read the palpable signs of the coming tempest.

"Curse the weather!" he growled, furiously, shaking his fist impotently at the blackening sky. "It's agin me, like all the rest. My feet feel like lumps of raw flesh, and I'm one bundle of aches and pains from head to foot. I wish I had never deserted. Grilling out yonder in India, and fighting those black devils of Sepoys, was better than this. I'll go no further to-night."

He halted suddenly and faced the woman. She stopped when he did, but still never opened her lips.

"Do you hear, you white-faced cat? I'm going to stop here till day-break, and the storm be hanged! Sit down there, you and your brat, and watch till I wake."

They were beside a thick holly hedge, with sheltering trees above, and a soft carpet of velvety moss beneath. He flung himself heavily, with a groan and a curse, upon the fragrant bed.

"Down with you there!" he growled as if to a dog; "and not a word out of your miserable head, if you don't want it broke! Wake me at day-dawn. D'ye hear?"

"I hear," she spoke, at last, in a hard, hollow voice. "Sleep, brute, beast, unworthy the name of man, and sleep your last. You will never see day-break again!"

The closing words were spoken under her breath, but the man would not have heard them had they been uttered aloud. Before his head had well touched the sword he was dead asleep.

Then the woman arose, white as death, terrible as doom. She laid the child on a little hillock, without one look at its quiet, sleeping face, and glanced around for what she wanted. She found it near—as near as if Satan had laid it ready to her hand—a long, sharp-pointed stone, deadly as a dagger. She lifted it and bent over the sleeping man breathing heavily and snoring in his sleep. His hat had fallen off; his grizzled, bearded, sunburned face was upturned to the night sky.

"And I loved this brute once!" the woman said in a hissing whisper; "and I gave up all for him—home, parents, friends, heart, soul! Why, it is no more crime to kill him than to shoot down a mad dog!"

With the horrible words she lifted the heavy stone and struck him with all her might upon the temple. There was one convulsive bound, one gurgling cry, a spout of hot, red blood, and then—

The woman turned away with a sickening shudder of horror