witnessed it she might have been greatly displeased.

CHAPTER VII.

"She's beautiful, and therefore to be woo'd;
She's a woman, therefore to be won."
—Shakespeare.
"King Henry VI.," Part I.

Nur Mahal was a Persian, not a native of India. In her wondrous face the Occidental blended with the Orient. Its contour, its creamy smoothness, the high forehead and delicately firm chin were of the West, and the East gave her those neatly coiled tresses of raven hue, those deeply penciled eyebrows, beneath whose curved arches flashed, like twin stars, her marvelous eyes.

Her supple body was robed in a sari of soft, deep yellow silk, bordered with a device of fine needlework studded with gems. It draped her closely, in flowing lines, from waist to feet, and a fold was carried over her right shoulder to be held gracefully scarfwise in one hand. An exquisite plum colored silk vest, encrusted with gold embroidery, covered her finely molded bust, revealing yet modestly shielding each line and flexure of a form which might have served Pygmalion as the model of Galatea.

On her forehead sparkled a splendid jewel, an emerald surrounded by diamonds set en etoile. Around her swan-like throat was clasped a necklace of uncut emeralds, strung, at intervals, between rows of seed pearls. She wore no other ornament. Her tiny feet were encased in white silk slippers, and, an unusual sight in the East, their open bands revealed woven stockings of the same material.

But the daughter of the Persian refugee who had risen to such high place in Akbar's court was bound neither by convention nor fashion. She fearlessly unveiled when she thought fit, and she taught the ladies of Agra to wear not only the bodice and the inner skirt but also a species of corset, whilst to her genius was due the wonderful perfume known as attar of roses.

Again, although more than twenty years of age at that time, she was unmarried, an amazing thing in itself when the social customs of Hindustan were taken into account.

Suddenly brought face to face with such a divinity, it was no small credit to Walter Mowbray that he kept his wits sufficiently to turn her laughing comment to advantatge.

The Sultana was graciously pleased to smile.

"If your wares comport with your manners," she said, "you will be welcome to the palace. We hold a bazaar there tomorrow, and novelties in merchandise are always acceptable on such occasions. Sher Afghan," she continued, "see that the strangers are properly admitted to the Hall of Private Audience at the first hour appointed for those who bring articles for sale."

The young nobleman bowed, as did Mowbray and Sainton, though the latter knew but little of the high-flown Persian in which the Sultana spoke.

Nur Mahal, who appeared to be on terms of great familiarity witih her august visitor, whispered something to Queen Mariam which made the good lady laugh. Obviously, the comment had reference to Roger, and that worthy blushed, for a woman's eyes could pierce his tough hide readily, there being no weapon to equal them known to mankind.

"She's a bonny lass, yon," he murmured to Walter, "and she has uncommonly high spirits. I never kent afore why a man should make a fool of himself for a woman, but now that I have seen one who is half an angel I am beginning to have a dim notion of the madness which seizes some folk."

"There are others, but why only half an angel?" asked Mowbray with a smile, for the Queen had turned to address the Diwan.

"Because that is all we have seen. The hidden half is the devil in her. Mark me, Walter, there will be heads cracked in plenty before that fancy wench stops plaguing mankind."

Courtesy was urging Sher Afghan to give some directions to the wanderers he had so greatly befriended, but inclination, always a willing steed, dragged him to the side of Nur Mahal.

"I came to ask what you needed most for the bazeer," he said anxiously.

"Naught that you can bestow," was the curt reply.

"Sweet one, your words chill my heart. 'Tis but a week since your father—"

She stamped a foot imperiously and clenched her hands.

"I am not one of those to be dealt with as others choose," she cried, though modulating her voice lest it should reach the Queen's ears. "Why do you pester me? Your tall sheepskin cap affrights me. Take it and your ungainly presence to far-off Burdwan. I mean to abide in Agra."

He bent low before her.

"A blow from the hand of my beloved is sweet as a grape from the hand of another," he said, conscious, perhaps, of the manifest injustice of the attack on his personal appearance. Physically, he was a worthy mate even for such a goddess, and he had already won great renown in India by his prowess in the field and his skill in all manly exercises.

"Gladly would I bestow on you a whole bunch of such grapes," she said, turning to follow the Sultana and her father. But a laughing shout from the interior of the house caused all eyes to seek an explanation.

"Well met, mother! Have you come, like me, to wring another lakh out of the Diwan?"

A young man, tall and well built and of pleasing aspect, notable for his broad chest and long arms, and attired in sumptuous garments, entered the garden. His words would have revealed his identity to Walter and Sainton had they not met him, two years earlier, at Surat. This was Prince Jahangir, the heir apparent.

His complexion was a ruddy nut brown, his eyes, if somewhat closely set, were strangely keen and piercing, and it was a peculiar and noticeable fact that he wore small gold ear-rings, in token of bondage to the great saint Sheikh Salem, to whose intercession, it was said, he owed his birth.

Jahangir did not trouble to conceal his emotions. His joyous glance, evoked more by the sight of Nur Mahal, it is to be feared, than by the unexpected presence of the Sultana, changed instantly to a scowl when he saw Sher Afghan. Moreover, he discovered the presence of the Englishmen, and he affected a tone of surprised displeasure.

"How now, Diwan!" he demanded. "Do you admit strangers to the privacy of your zenana?"

"These are merchants from Ahmedabad. The Queen has commanded them to show their wares at the palace," was the courteous reply of the aged Prime Minister.

Jahangir smiled contemptuously. The foreigners in no wise disturbed him. He knew quite well that his insult had reached the one man for whom it was intended. Sher Afghan's pale face grew dark with anger.

"Oh, it is matterless," said the Prince, flippantly, and he addressed Nur Mahal with a ready smile that utterly banished the anger from his expressive features.

"Fair lady," he said, "I have brought you a present. I know your fondness for all that is rare and beautiful. See if my gift will earn your approval."

He clapped his hands and a servant came, carrying a small gilded perch to which clung two snow-white pigeons, each fastened to the crossbar by a short silver chain.

Nur Mahal uttered a cry of pleasure. She ran to meet the man with arms outstretched.

"They are quite tame," said the gratified Prince. "After a little while they will come to your call and perch on your wrist."

She took the birds and caressed them softly. Suddenly, yielding to impulse, she unfastened a chain, and the pigeon, finding itself at liberty, darted up into the air and flew around in rapid circles, crying loudly to its mate the while.

"How did that happen?" demanded Jahangir.

"Thus," she answered, freeing the second bird.

"But they are unused to the garden as yet. You have lost them."

"Sooner than take away their freedom. My heart weeps for all who are destined to captivity."

"Then you weep for me, as I am truly your captive."

"Ah, my bondage would be pleasant, and, like the birds, you could fly away when you chose."

At that instant one of the pigeons dropped with angelic flutterings, and poised itself on the perch which the girl still held.

The other, timidly daring, followed its mate's example, but settled on the same side.

"See!" cried Jahangir excitedly. "The choice is made. They come back to their fetters!"

"Your Highness will observe that there are two to dispute the vacant place," interposed Sher Afghan.

The icy distinctness of his words showed that the significance of the little comedy played by Nur Mahal had not escaped him. The girl pouted. Jahangir wheeled about fiercely. A quarrel was imminent, but Queen Mariam stopped it.

"Sher Afghan," she said, "you, who are a soldier, should not take much interest in this idle playing with doves. As I return soon to the palace, go with the strangers and let them exhibit their wares there after the mid-day meal. That will better suit my convenience than the customary hour tomorrow."

Bowing silently, the Persian motioned to Mowbray and Sainton to follow him. He spoke no word, but a tumult raged within, and, at the gate, when a servant was slow in opening it, he felled the fellow with a blow. Instantly regretting the deed he gave the fellow a gold mohur, but his face was tense and his eyes blazed as he mounted his horse and rode silently with the two Englishmen through the midst of the gay retinue which had escorted Prince Jahangir from the palace. Guessing with fair accuracy the hidden meaning of the scene just enacted, Mowbray did not intrude on the sorrowful thoughts of his Persian friend.

"We are in luck's way, Roger," he said quietly. "We have escaped the Diwan and won the door of the Queen's apartments. If the good lady be as ready to pay as she is to buy, this bazaar tomorrow should ease us of all our goods."

"In which event we shall turn our faces westward?" asked Sainton.

"Assuredly. We must settle with Edwards, else I would take the river to Calcutta."

"Good! From the manner in which you gazed at that hoity-toity lass in yellow silk I thought you were minded to dally in Agra."

For some subtle reason the remark nettled Mowbray.

"We have already met two who are willing to come to blows about her," said he, tartly, "but I fail to see why you should hold me capable of the folly of making a third."

"Nay, nay," said Sainton, with irritating composure. "I credit thee with wisdom beyond thy years, but if Solomon, who had three thousand wives, could go daft about yet an extra woman, there is small cause why thou, who hast no wife at all, should not be bitten by the craze. I warrant you Prince Jahangir hath a bevy of beauties in his private abode, and this chuck who hangs his head so dolefully may have half a score or more waiting his beck and nod at home, yet they both are keen to fall to with sword and dagger to dispute the possession of the queen we have just quitted. 'Garden of Heart's Delight,' i' faith! The flower they all seek there is of a kind that stings in the picking."

Mowbray, conscious that the dethronement of Nellie Roe in his mind was but momentary, regained his normal good humor.

"You are in a mood for preaching this morning," he cried. "Now, had your tongue run on so smoothly when the Sultana was present, you might have won her favor, as the women have an eye for you, Roger."

"A murrain on the barbarous words that trip my speech! I could talk to her Majesty in honest Yorkshire, and I can make some headway in the language of the common folk hereabout, but when it comes to your pretty poesy of Shiraz I am perforce dumb as a Whitby mussel."

Here, Sher Afghan, rousing himself from a mournful reverie, began to hum a verse of a well-known Persian love song:—

"O love! for you I could die:
"Tis death from your presence to fly;
O love! will the pain never end?
Will our hearts ne'er in unison blend?"

They were crossing the bridge of boats at the moment, and the singer, more occupied with his thoughts than with external events, did not notice that a laden camel, advancing down the centre of the swaying roadway, gave the party little enough room to pass on one side.

Walter drew his attention to the fact. The Persian, disdainful of the lower orders as were all of his class, spurred his mettlesome Arab forward, caught the lounging unt by the halter and imperiously swung the beast to one side.

A shriek rank out wildly from behind the camel, whose load of firewood had struck a native woman walking on the side of the bridge. She staggered and fell. The infant she carried was jerked out of her arms into the river.

Walter, who saw what had happened, sprang from his horse, jumped into the water, which was deep enough at that point to drown a man, and caught the little naked child as it rose, struggling and gasping for breath. With a vigorous rtroke or two he reached the side of the nearest pontoon. Roger leaned over, seized the collar of his friend's jacket, and lifted him and the baby back to the firmer footing of the bridge.

The distraught mother flung herself at Mowbray's feet and wound her arms around his ankles, thereby embarrassing him greatly, as he was soaked from head to foot, and the dense crowd which gathered with extraordinary speed threatened to block the bridge for an hour.

Sher Afghan, who was divided between wonder that a man should take so much trouble to rescue a wretched infant and amazement at Roger's feat of strength, for Sainton had lifted Walter clean over the rails of the bridge with one hand, now awoke to actualities.

He beat a path through the gaping mob, extricated Mowbray from the extravagant gratitude of the Hindu woman, and quickly led the two Englishmen to the open road beyond the river.

"Did you not know that the Jumna swarms with crocodiles?" he asked, when they were all mounted again, and riding onward at a sharp pace.

"Yes," said Walter.

"Then, by the tomb of the Prophet, you did that which I would not have done for the sake of any brat in Agra."

"I gave no thought to it, or perchance I should have hesitated," was the modest reply.

The incident served one good purpose. It effectually banished Sher Afghan's love vapors, and he exerted himself so well in behalf of his new acquaintances that they and their packs (Walter having donned dry clothing) were admitted to the palace at the appointed hour, and marshaled past countless officials who would otherwise have barred their path.

The great fortress, in the centre of which lay the royal apartments, was a city in itself. Its frowning walls of dark red sandstone, sixty feet in height and defended by many a tower and machicolated battlement, surrounded a low hill. This was crowned by the famous Moti Musjid, or Pearl Mosque, an edifice as celebrated today for its perfect architectural proportions and refined taste in embellishment as it was when the Great Mogul, during his daily orisons, occupied the small floor slab nearest to the northwest, and, behind him, six hundred and forty-nine nobles bent in devout homage towards Mecca.

The Hall of Public Audience, a splendid structure, was separated from the mosque by a large garden. Near this rallying ground for all having business with the court stood the smaller but even more impressive Hall of Private Audience, to which there was direct access from the Emperor's personal apartments. The Zenana, marked by its exquisite Jasmine Tower, containing the Sultana's boudoir and giving a far-spread view across the Jumna, lay beyond.

These buildings, and many another, constructed almost exclusively of white marble and decorated with scrollwork festoons wrought wholly in precious stones, shone in the rays of the afternoon sun as the Englishmen passed through the sombre depths of the great City Gate and entered the open space surrounding the palace.

That they were the cynosure of many eyes goes without saying. But here, curiosity was restrained. The grave courtesy of an Eastern court was blended with the iron discipline enforced by a powerful ruler like Akbar.

"The King's orders," said Sher Afghan, and before the King's order every head bent.

Thus, avoiding the crowd which thronged the path leading to the spacious Hall of Public Audience, where the Emperor in person was then dispensing justice with that even-handed promptitude which won him the respect of all his subjects irrespective of class or creed, Sher Afghan led them to a secluded stairway.

Certain formalities needed fulfilment before the strangers or their goods were allowed to ascend. Guards with drawn swords stood there, and even Sher Afghan himself was compelled to satisfy the high-pitched questions of a gorgeously robed eunuch ere sanction was given to advance.

Mowbray and Sainton, eager to witness the successful end of their twelve hundred miles' journey, were more concerned, doubtless, to display their silks and spices, their rich store of Arabian and Persian goods, than to note the marvels in sculptured stone with which they were encircled. A mosaic pavement worth a monarch's ransom was to them only a fine space for opening out bales of cloth cunningly bedizened with gold thread, whilst a balcony of carved marble served excellently as a counter.

At last, when all was ready, a messenger was despatched to the Sultana. Queen Mariam came promptly, and with her were many ladies of the court. They were all veiled, as was the strict rule when the Emperor was near at hand, but among them Sher Afghan, and perhaps Mowbray, looked in vain for the sylph-like form of Nur Mahal.

The scrutiny commenced at once. "Shopping" was as dear to the heart of those Eastern dames as to their sisters of other climes and modern days. The babble of tongues waxed eloquent, and the two traders, comparatively new as they were to the occupation, saw with gratification that the Sultana was as loud in her appreciation of the novelties spread before her eyes as was the youngest lady in her train.

All was going well; Queen Mariam had asked the value of the whole consignment, and Mowbray, with some trepidation, had added half a lakh to the lakh of rupees with which he would be well content—expecting, indeed, to obtain more than the latter sum at the close of the bargaining—when a sudden hush, a drawing together of the women, a process suspended in its utterance, by the Sultana herself, announced that the elderly man dressed solely in white muslin, who entered the hall from a raised veranda at the further end, could be none other than the Emperor.

His appearance was at once engaging and dignified. Not so tall as his eldest son, he was even broader in build. Possessed of prodigious muscular strength, due to the great breadth of his chest and his long, sinewy arms and hands, Akbar looked a ruler of men both in physical and intellectual properties. His eyes were full and penetrating, with eyebrows that met in a straight line over his well shaped nose. His face, a ruddy brown in color, was yet kindly in expression. His forehead was high and open, and in the front folds of his white turban lay a single ruby in which the sun kindled a fiery glare.

He surveyed the scene in silence for a moment. Then, as his glance dwelt on Sainton, a somewhat prepossessed smile gave place to a look of genuine surprise. He turned and uttered some comment to one behind, and, as he strode forward, they saw that he was accompanied by the Prime Minister, Itimad-ud-Daula.

Every man present, save the armed guards and the two Englishmen, dropped to his knees and bent his forehead to the ground, but Mowbray and Roger, not accustomed to genuflection, contented themselves with bowing deeply.

The Emperor was in no wise offended. He smiled again, showing his teeth plainly.

"They told me you were a big man," he said to Sainton, "but are you a strong one? Big men are off like long-backed horses—they bend when the strain comes."

Luckily, Roger understood him, and, though his Hindustani was rude, be sure it never lacked point.

"I do not think," he said, "that my back is too long for my height, your Majesty. Be that as it may, they tell me there is no better judge of strength, whether of man or horse, than your Majesty in all India."

"By the shade of Nizam-ud-din, this giant is no fool!" cried Akbar, whose voice, though loud, was very pleasant. "Were I younger I would test thee, Elephant, but that day is past. Tell me, couldst thou shear two tiger's heads with a single stroke?"

"Yes, if your Majesty first tied both heads together."

"Allah, here is a spark after my own heart! What is thy name?"

"Roger Sainton, may it please your Majesty."

"Raja Sainton! If you be of noble rank why do you come hither in the guise of a trader?"

Sainton was puzzled, as Akbar's elegant diction rendered the mistake difficult to understand, so Mowbray, in a few well-chosen words, set things right.

The Emperor gave a quick glance at Walter, and seemed instantly to appreciate the relation between the two. But he addressed himself again to Roger:—

"You have traveled far, and are welcome. Today I am busy, or I would discourse with you further. Be here tomorrow, two hours before sunset, and we shall give each other entertainment. Meanwhile, what can I do for you and your friend?"

Sainton, filled with the sense of camaradiere which makes men of kindred sympathies quickly known to each other, realized that Akbar would not resent a little familiarity.

"Sir," he said, "if you buy our goods and give us good cheer we shall do that which those in your court ought to do every day, but fail therein most scandalously, I fear."

"And what is that?"

"We shall pray to God for your health and happiness."

Akbar grasped him by the shoulder.

"List, all of you," he shouted. "Here is our Elephant showing his wisdom. By the Prophet's beard, I regret, for once, that there is peace in our dominions, else you and I, Elephant, should go to the war ere you ever sailed away to your distant land. But we shall find sport, or my wit fails. You, sir," he went on, speaking to Mowbray, "shall tell us something of the ways of your country when the Elephant and I have wearied ourselves. Meanwhile, the Sultana will buy your wares at your own rates. I judge as much my the cackle of women's voices I heard as I came hither."

By way of a joke he gave Sainton's shoulder a farewell squeeze that would have dislocated many a man's bones. Roger, pretending he had not felt it, stooped and picked up a small brass jar which he grasped around its narrow neck.

"Let me give your Majesty a reminder of tomorrow's meeting," he said.

The Emperor, seeing more in the words than their mere purport, took the jar. Roger had bent the brass cylinder into a double fold.

"Thanks, friend," he said, quietly, "'Tis well it was not my neck which received that grip, else there would be a new ruler in India. And, by the Koran!" he added under his breath, "I am minded now of another matter."

He looked around until he caught sight of Sher Afghan, standing somewhat apart from the listening crowd.

"My young friend," cried he, "I have been discussing you with my trusted Diwan. He agrees with me that you should provide his beautiful daughter with a careful husband. Marry her forthwith! Tonight, if you be so minded! And lest anyone should dispute the prize with you take a troop of horse to escort you to Burdwan."

Bombs were hardly known in India at that period, but the explosion of a live shell in the midst of the company would have created a sensation little more profound than Akbar's words. Nur Mahal, that fiery beauty, to be wed forthwith to Sher Afghan! What would Prince Jahangir say?

CHAPTER VIII.

"The trenchant blade, Toledo trusty,
For want of fighting had grown rusty."
—Butler's "Hudibras,"
Part I, Canto I.

Yet all knew it mattered not a jot what Jahangir said. The Diwan had given his consent, the Emperor his approval, and it was common knowledge that both were acting for the welfare of the state in putting an effectual stop to the infatuation of the heir apparent for a girl with whom a recognized alliance was impolitic if not impossible.

But Queen Mariam, all of a tremble by reason of her fear lest Jahangir's madness should lead him to excess, ventured to utter a word of protest.

"My Lord," she said, "this decision hath been taken suddenly."

"Do you think so?" asked Akbar, pleasantly. His composure disconcerted her. Nevertheless, love for her eldest born and favorite son gave her strength.

"Yes," she cried. "I would force no maid to wed where her heart is not set. It oft leads to evil."

"Ah!" he answered. "You are becoming an old woman. Were I one also I might think like you."

The kindly tone of his words deprived them of their sting. When he clenched an argument in such wise Akbar had a habit of stroking a large wart on the left side of his nose, a slight disfigurement which astrologers assured him was a propitious sign. Gently rubbing the wart now he turned again towards Sher Afghan.

"Has delight rendered thee dumb?" he growled good humoredly.

"Not so, O King of Kings," cried the young Persian. "Fearing that my ears betrayed me I was silent. When your Majesty speaks all tongues are stilled. I have but two possessions which I cherish, my sword and my honor. The one has ninays been and will ever be at your Majesty's disposal; the other I fly to place at the feet of Nur Mahal."

By this fearless utterance, Sher Afghan accepted the Emperor's command and flung defiance to all others. Salaaming deeply, he withdrew. In the hush which had fallen on the assembly they heard him rush down the outer stairs, and, an instant later, the clatter of his Arab's hoofs as he rode towards the gate showed that the wedding ceremony would not be delayed by any dilatoriness on the part of the bridegroom.

Akbar vanished. The Diwan, who had not taken any overt part in the scene, followed him, and the Sultana, without another glance at the brave array of merchandise, withdrew with her retinue.

Mowbray and Sainton were left gazing blankly at each other, but an official, knowing better than they the domestic trouble which was brewing in the royal household, advised them to repack their goods, as, in his opinion, the bazaar projected for the morrow would certainly be abandoned.

"I thought for sure yon sloe-eyed wench would bring us no luck," muttered Roger when he heard Mowbray bidding their servants load up their mules again. "My mother always advised me to wed a homely wife if I wanted to be happy. Not that she was ill-looking herself, but I have heard her say that my father never had spirit enough to quarrel with anybody."

"On my word, Roger," laughed Walter, smothering his own annoyance at the turn taken by events, "you look as glum as Lot's wife when she lost the use of her feet."

"Who wouldn't!" demanded Sainton. "We had the silver as good as in our breeches pocket, when some imp of mischief set the King to scratch his nose and talk about marriage."

"All is not lost yet. I trust to your wits to make his Majesty realize tomorrow in what fashion he spoiled our market. At the worst, we retain our goods, and still can trade in the bazaar.

Two journeys through the tortuous streets of the city, joined to the labor of unpacking and packing their bales at the palace, had occupied so much of the short November afternoon that the sun was setting with the rapidity peculiar to the tropics ere they reached the caravansary.

The smoke of many fires clung to the ground, spreading over the streets and open spaces a hazy pall some ten feet in height. Beneath, all was murky and dim; above, the tops of trees and upper stories of houses were sharply silhouetted against the deep crimson-blue of the sky, whilst the stars were already twinkling in myriads overhead. This coverlet of smoke creeps nightly over every Indian town in the cold weather. It is disagreeable to the eyes and nose if not to the artistic senses, and the haze is ofttimes so dense during the hours before midnight that, in the crowded bazaar, the range of vision becomes lessened and even familiar objects cannot be recognized until they are close at hand.

The phenomenon was familiar enough to the two travelers not to excite their notice on this occasion save in one respect. It was essential that heed should be given to the foudness of native servants for appropriating articles which did not belong to them. Naught could be easier than for a pack animal to be slyly driven into a by-path, whence it would never return, whilst search for it and its valuable burden would be time wasted. So now, as on every other night when they chanced to be belated, Mowbray and Sainton kept a sharp eye on their train, and stood at the gate of the caravansary until each mule and bullock had filed with its portals.

They were engaged in this task when the chant of palki-bearers and the glare of torches lighting up the roadway apprised them that some person of importance was being carried toward Agra from the direction of Delhi and the north. The carriers were singing cheerfully, announcing in rhyme the close of a long march, and setting forth the joys of rice and ghi at the end of the day's toil.

But the verse stopped suddenly, and the rapid shuffle of naked feet through the dust gave place to the objurgations of the torch-bearers addressed to the muleteers and bullock tenders of the Englishmen's cortege. Native servants curse each other fluently on the slightest provocation, so a lively exchange of compliments affecting the paternity and ancestry of both parties instantly broke out. In reality, nothing could be done. The mulgs and bullocks, eager as their drivers to have finished with the day's work, were crowding into the caravansary, and the palki, or litter, could not pass for a minute or so unless the bearers quitted the beaten track and made a detour behind the mud hovels which faced the rest-house. Glad of a moment's respite the coolies preferred to halt, and wag their tongues scandalously.

Walter, somewhat amused by the scene, did not interfere. There was only one palki, but the number of retainers and loaded ponies behind showed that the traveler was some one of consequence.

The occupier of the litter, evidently wondering what caused the commotion, drew apart the curtains on the side opposite to that on which Mowbray was standing, Sainton, urging on the rearmost of their train, being at some little distance.

A Pathan torch-bearer approached the palki, and, as luck would have it, Roger came to Mowbray at that moment to tell him that his count tallied with their reckoning.

Something said by the Pathan caused his employer to withdraw the second set of curtains. Hence, the light of the torch illumined the interior of the litter and revealed most clearly the identity of its tenant.

Walter could scarce believe his eyes had not Roger muttered:—

"'Fore God, 'tis Geronimo!"

"He and no other," whispered Walter. "I knew there were Jesuits in Agra, but they are well spoken of, and I never dreamed that this wretch was numbered among them."

(To be coinued.)

NO WOMAN CAN BE STRONG AND HEALTHY UNLESS THE KIDNEYS ARE WELL

When the kidneys are ill, the whole body is ill, for the poisons which the kidneys ought to filter out of the blood are left in the system. Then how important it must be to see to it that this system of sewerage be not clogged up. Those who have never been troubled with kidney trouble know not the misery and suffering which those afflicted undergo.

Doan's Kidney Pills

are a specific for all kidney troubles. They begin by healing the delicate membranes of the kidneys and thus make their action regular and natural.

They help the kidneys to flush off the acrid and poisonous impurities which have collected, thus clearing out the kidneys, bladder and all the urinary passages.

Doan's Kidney Pills are entirely vegetable, and may be safely taken by young and old.

Let Doan's Kidney Pills do for you what they have done for thousands of others, that is, cure you. Mrs. John Young, Harwood, Ont., writes: "I was troubled with my kidneys for some time and my back was so lame I could scarcely get around. After using two boxes of Doan's Kidney Pills, I am completly cured. I find there is nothing like them for the cure of all kidney troubles."

Doan's Kidney Pills are 50 cents per box or 3 boxes for $1.25 at all dealers or mailed direct on receipt of price by The Doan Kidney Pill Co., Toronto, Ont.

LOCAL SHIPMENTS BY WAY OF SKAGWAY

A Letter of Interest to Victoria Merchants From Inspector Busby

The secretary of the Victoria Board of Trade is in receipt of a communication from Inspector of Customs E. S. Busby, which will be interesting to local shippers. It follows:

Vancouver, B. C., Dec. 1st, 1906.

Mr. F. Elworthy, Secretary Board of Trade, Victoria, B. C.:

Dear Sir,—I have the honor to state for the information of the merchants and shippers of the port of Victoria, that all goods shipped from Victoria during the past year to points in Northern British Columbia and Yukon Territory via Skagway, which have been detained by the United States customs authorities at Skagway, for not having complied with the United States customs regulations, have either been forwarded to destination or returned to your port.

The goods returned to your port (which was owing chiefly to the fact that they bore no marks or numbers) are, no doubt, in the hands of the transportation companies awaiting identification by the shippers.

I would despectfully beg to impress upon shipper consigning merchandise to the above stated points that each package of merchandise should be carefully marked clearly stating to whom consigned and where and that they be accompanied by the proper papers to insure their passing through the United States customs at Skagway.

E. S. BUSBY,
Inspector.

BRYAN SAYS SHAME ON CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Says There Is Much Good and Much Bad in Roosevelt's Message

Lincoln, Neb., Dec. 7.—Commenting on President Roosevelt's message, William Jennings Bryan says there is much that is good and much that is bad in it, but it may be regarded as the president's most important state paper. Mr. Bryan says:

"The message contains much that is democratic and for which the general public may well thank him. It contains some things that ought to arouse severe criticism.

"The president boldly appropriates some doctrines which the Democrats have been advocating, but on the other hand, he announces doctrines which are so absurd as to create amusement if the suggestions came from a less prominent source.

"In some cases he takes advanced ground; in some cases he retreats from ground already taken."

Mr. Bryan complains that what the president says on the subject of government by injunction will not be satisfactory to the laboring man or to those who respect the right of trial by jury. The president's stand on child labor is commended, as is also the position he takes on the eight-hour law and the right of the people to criticise a judge.

Referring to Mr. Roosevelt's reference to the Japanese question, Mr. Bryan says:

"He pays a deserved tribute to the progress of the Japanese nation and asks for legislation which will enable congress to preserve treaty rights of foreigners. That there should be such legislation cannot be generally disputed, but a great deal depends upon the character of the legislation. If any bills are presented in regard to this suggestion, they must be carefully scrutinized to be sure that they do not deny to the various states the right to protect themselves and their people in matters purely local."

Finally Mr. Bryan deplores what he calls the president's warlike attitude. He says in conclusion:

"There will be general disappointment at the warlike tone of his message, where he discusses the army and navy. He speaks of the navy as the surest guarantee of peace which this country possesses. Shame upon the chief executive, that he should place an instrument of brute force above the nation's sense of justice as a guarantor of peace.

"The best guarantor of peace is our nation's purpose to deal justly with other nations. War ought to be a last resort, not a first consideration. It is bad enough to have a few professional soldiers. It is not necessary that the whole nation shall be keyed up all the time to the fighting point."

HYDRAULIC MINING ON THIBERT CREEK

Manager of Company Submits Report of Operations in 1906 to Directors

The manager of the Berry Creek Mining Company, Limited, has just submitted to the directors his report of the operations of the Thibert Creek hydraulic mining during the season of 1906.

The total number of 24-hour days run during the season was 109, and the total value of gold recovered was $21,750. Describing the present condition of the mine and prospects for next season, the report says:

"The result of this season's work has, I think, fully confirmed former estimates of the values to be obtained from the gravels of this old river channel.

"The only new ground reached in the mine this year was in No. 2 and No. 5 pits.

"In No. 5 pit, out of a total run of 20 days, probably half the time was taken up in getting rid of an absolutely valueless mass of boulder clay, brought down by the slides already mentioned. Upper gravels and sand beds were washed during the remainder of the run, the bottom cement being barely touched, yet the returns from the 20 days' run showed an average of $105 a day. As yet this pit has only been worked in for about 140 feet from the northwest edge of the old channel. The face of the bank is about 60 feet high at present, but as the old channel here lies in a steep hillside, the height will increase rapidly as more ground is taken out. So far, only the outer edge of the old channel has been touched at this point.

"The work done in No. 2 pit gives the fairest idea of the values to be obtained from this deposit. Here the face of the bank is 400 feet from the outer edge of the old channel, and it is impossible to say yet how much wider it may be. The height of the bank is 210 feet, and all gravel, with no boulder clay covering.

"During this season there was a total run of 50 days on this ground and top, middle and bottom gravels were removed. The total return for that time was $17000, giving a daily average of $335. As I have already mentioned, about 15 days of this time were spent in washing top gravels from the ridge between Pits 1 and 2, and in removing some of the top gravel brought down by the big cave last year. The rest of the time was spent washing middle and bottom gravel. By middle and lower gravel I mean the lower 70 feet of the bank. The bottom gravel and cement averages about six feet thick, lying on the bedrock. For the last 26 days' run only this middle and bottom gravel was washed, and the daily average value obtained was $475.

"I have not been able to make a correct estimate of the number of cubic yards of gravel removed. To do this would require a careful survey of the ground before beginning the year's work, and another at the end of the season.

"If the nature of the deposit was much the same from top to bottom, one might estimate the number of cubic yards of gravel moved by the number of miner's inches of water used. But in this case that would not be correct, as much more of the loose upper gravels can be moved per miner's inch of water than if the heavier lower gravel and hard bottom cement. However, after testing many samples of the gravels at different heights and making a rough estimate of the quantity put through the boxes per day of middle and bottom gravel, I think a fairly correct estimate of the values would be as follows:

"Lower gravel and cement, average thickness 6 feet, value per cubic yard 25 cents.

"Lower gravels, thickness 70 feet, average value per cubic yard 14 cents.

"Upper gravel, average value per cubic yard 8 cents.

"In giving these values I believe I have underestimated the value of the bottom gravel and cement, but prefer to be on the safe side. There is no doubt that in places this bottom cement and gravel is very much richer than I have stated, running up to several dollars a cubic yard.

"This paystreak of rich bottom gravel and cement can be traced the whole length of the mine. The whole distance from No. 1 pit to the end of No. 5 is 1100 feet, and this paystreak shows wherever the bottom has been uncovered in all the pits.

"The condition of the mine at the end of this season gives a better prospect of a profitable season's work next year than it has ever done. There is now, between the high bank and the bedrock in the several pits a shelf of lower and bottom gravel and cement, with an average thickness of 70 feet and a width of 150 feet, and from No. 2 pit to No. 5 a length of about 1100 feet. This can be worked out with very little fear of a cave from the high bank at the back, except in No. 2 pit. Here part of the high bank showed signs of caving during the last few days of the season, and I think it will probably come down with the first thaw in spring, if it has not already fallen. This is all clean gravel, which will more than pay for working. Apart from this, the shelf of middle and lower gravel I have mentioned will give a total of about 400,000 cubic yards of material. This, at a very conservative estimate, should be worth at least 13 cents a yard all through, giving a total value of between $50,000 and $55,000.

"I have already mentioned that the surface of the hill slope above No. 4 pit has broken and sud down for a distance of 500 feet back from the top of the bank. This brings the break in the surface close to the line the continuation of the flume would take if it was carried down towards Boulder Creek.

"As the Berry Creek water supply would be essential to work the middle part of the company's ground, it will endanger the continuation of the present flume if future work should cause the breaking and slipping of the ground to continue further up the slope of the hill. So long as no more of the high bank is caved in the centre of the mine, above Pits 3, 4 and 5, I do not anticipate any danger of more surface slides occurring here.

"I ran a line of levels from the end of the present flume to Boulder Creek, on the same grade as the present flume, namely, 40 feet to the mile. The total distance is 3600 feet and the ground is either smooth hill slope or flat bench. There are no difficulties here such as the series of rock bluffs presented on the line of the present flume. No high trestles would be required, and when the present flume is extended to Boulder Creek, enough timber can be procured close at hand to furnish all that is wanted for posts, sills and stringers. The lumber would have to be hauled from the sawmill on Dease Lake.

"To open up new ground at Boulder Creek, making use of the present water supply by continuing the flume, would cost from $20,000 to $25,000.

"The ground is known to be good at Boulder Creek. The thickness of the old channel gravels there is from 60 to 100 feet, and there is no danger of serious trouble from bad caves or surface slipping down there, as the old channel occupies flat ground or lies on a very gentle slope."

CHILLIWACK COUNCIL ASKS FOR THE DREDGE

New Westminster Paper Says Silt Slinger Has Developed Tired Feeling

At the last meeting of the municipal council of Chilliwack a resolution was adopted that it be brought to the attention of J. B. Kennedy, M. P., and G. A. Keefer, resident engineer of the Department of Public Works, that the sandbar at the mouth of the Chilliwack river has grown to such proportions as to seriously impede navigation. The resolution also urges that the government take immediate steps to have the obstruction removed.

In this connection, the New Westminster Columbian says: About a week or so ago the dredge King Edward developed that tired feeling, and since that time it has been lying close inshore, having a new pump, or some other ponderous piece of machinery weighing nine tons, installed to replace something that was two tons lighter. In other words, the big silt slinger has been in her chronic state.

STORM OF VICISSITUDES BEATS DOWN ON CHURCH

Pope Appoints New Bishops for France and Refers to Great Misery

Rome, Dec. 7.—At the consistory which was held yesterday in place of the one previously planned, the pope recognized eighty-four bishops, including the Most Rev. James Blenk as archbishops of New Orleans, Mgr. John B. Morris as coadputor bishop of Little Rock, Ark., and Mgr. Guiseppe Aversa, papal delegate in Cuba, as archbishop of Sardi.

The most significant appointments were those of ten new French bishops, which were made without any opposition on the part of the French government. In his allocution the pope said that every day the increasingly sad storm of vicissitudes is beating down on the church involving great misery.

The genuine black finish for iron or steed, which is the dead black matt finish so popular with the dark oak of the present day is produced by heating the articles to redness in an atmosphere of steam. The result is the formation of blackoxide of iron, a permanent, durable finish.