

It was in vain that he wrote in answer that the superintendent's life would have been endangered by another operation.

His answer only brought another literary wiggling, in which he was curtly reminded that the British government expected its officials to do their duty irrespective of personal feeling or considerations of personal safety.

"Hang them for a lot of bloodthirsty swine," exclaimed Corbyn, for that was the surgeon's name. "They mean to have that ruby out of Valentyno, even if it costs him his life."

Then the Phoongyes got up a monstrous petition, signed by all the Buddhists, living and dead, in the whole Burman empire. It was cleverly worded, having been drawn up by a young Burman barrister, who was the gold medalist of his year in England.

The petition was to be forwarded to the viceroy through the chief commissioner and prayed that the superintendent of police, Valentyno, should be delivered over to them that they might regain the most sacred relic in all the Buddhist empire.

They were willing to pay an indemnity to his family, but the ruby they must have.

For a time it looked rather blue for Valentyno, for the viceroy was a man who had great ideas about the rights of the natives. In fact, he went in for it very much as a baboo plays lawn tennis, without much science in the game, but with his whole soul and ponderous body dead on the ball.

The papers at home took it up, and a nice gentleman one evening at Exeter hall pointed out to the B. P. that evidently it was another case of oppression of the poor native. One of their temples had been desecrated, one of their most sacred idols violated, and a jewel, to which they attributed miraculous powers, stolen, and the jewel was now in the possession of one of the government superintendents of police.

There was a cock and bull story he said, about it having been shot into his body, but even if it were so they could not set a whole nation of Buddhists by the ears for the sake of one man. In common honesty they must give the jewel up, and if this man couldn't part with it, why, he would have to go with it, that was all.

The viceroy seemed inclined to look at it in this light, too, and it really seemed awkward for Valentyno.

In the meantime a civil suit to recover the value of the ruby had been instituted in the courts in Rangoon against the government in general and Valentyno in particular.

Luckily for Valentyno the secretary of state was a hard headed man, not much given to nonsense, and he said in equivalent official language that he'd be damned if he'd see an innocent Englishman deliberately cut up to recover any fetich bauble.

But all the same the superintendent would have to be retired on half pay, for his usefulness was gone. The two could not be combined, the dual position of Burmesegod and superintendent of police, for the natives still persisted in reverencing him, though ready as soon as the word was given to cut him up.

Just when he thought his troubles were at an end and he might go home they applied for an injunction to prevent him from moving the ruby out of Burma. They showed to the court on medical authority that there was every possibility that the ruby might work itself out some day, and so be recovered; but if Valentyno were allowed to leave the kingdom the chances of the right-

ful owners ever becoming possessed of it were very slim indeed.

They undertook to pay Valentyno a salary of 10,000 rupees a year so long as he remained in Rangoon, and all they asked in return was the privilege of coming to worship the Beda at certain periods, and that a medical officer, appointed by them, should have free access to Valentyno's person with a view to keeping track of the perambulations of the ruby, and that when it made its appearance near the skin anywhere, so that it might be extracted without danger to him, that he would relinquish all claim upon it and allow the surgeon to hasten its appearance.

Valentyno's counsel, seeing which way the wind was blowing, agreed to accept this ruling of the court, only stipulating that Corbyn be appointed surgeon, for the nether stone had suffered most in the grind, and Corbyn was out of the service.

One little formality the court demanded, and that was that the archbishop and three or four of the chief Phoongyes should go on a bond for Valentyno's personal safety.

So the superintendent was lodged in a beautifully furnished bungalow and was treated very much like a distinguished state prisoner.

Life went very pleasantly with him, and it did not seem such a bad affair after all.

Mr. Mira was living in Rangoon, too, as it happened, and Hpo Thit, in consideration of his turning queen's evidence against himself re the ruby, was let off with two years in jail and was then busily engaged in pushing a conveyance cart about town with a clanking chain running from his waist to either ankle by way of ornament.

The Europeans in Rangoon, with oriental playfulness, bestowed upon Valentyno two or three names expressive of his occupation. He was known down at the "Gym" as the "Burmese god," "Beda," and the "Jewel Merchant."

The fellows were never tired of offering him as security, swearing roundly that he was worth two lakhs of rupees dead or alive.

One or two playful attempts on his life relieved the monotony of his existence, but as these laudable efforts were usually frowned down both by the Phoongyes and the officials, and as one of his assailants caught a cold steel in his right lung, they ceased altogether after a time, and he was leading a comparatively happy life.

He almost began to wish that the ruby would stay where it was. "V. e're fixed for life," he said to Corbyn, "if this Beda thing doesn't turn up I must be more careful of myself. I must stop riding, for the shaking up may dislodge the infernal thing and start it working out."

He had even got used to seeing the natives plump down in front of him and fall to praying.

Strangers always took him for the chief commissioner when they saw this sort of thing going on, and many were the mistakes made in consequence.

Once he received an offer from Burma at a salary which made his paltry 10,000 rupees look like pin money only. The enterprising American guaranteed to smuggle him out of Burma also, and pay all legal claims too.

After he had been in the business about two years he began to feel a pain in his back. He confided his fears to his attendant physician. "It's working out, I'm sure," he said sorrowfully.

And so it appeared, for a distinct lump was forming just below the shoulder blade.

The Phoongyes were notified, and there was great rejoicing among them. They came and beat tantams all night long in front of Valentyno's bungalow. This was to drive the Nahts away, so that they would not steal the Beda again.

Valentyno was loaded down with presents and feasted like a bullock for the sacrifice.

"I shall be a rich man," he said to Corbyn, "if the thing holds off for a time."

But the incessant drumming and poy making about his bungalow was driving him nearly mad for want of sleep.

Then one day Corbyn made a discovery. It was only a boil, the result of mango eating.

The Phoongyes were in despair.

Just about that time Hpo Thit walked into his bungalow one day and, bumping his forehead on the floor, begged Valentyno's forgiveness for wounding him. He had served his time and was going away. If he remained in Burma, they would kill him for stealing the Beda, so he was going to some other country.

And that was the last anybody ever saw of Hpo Thit in Burma.

Three years more of playing Buddha at the rate of 10,000 rupees a year passed, and this time there could be no mistake about it, so Corbyn said. The ruby was coming not far from the place where the boil had been. In fact, it was the irritation of the Beda that had most likely caused the boil.

It was the same old thing over again—tantams, and poyas, and presents, and much praying, and the working of charms to keep the Nahts away—only stronger than before, for they were sure of it this time.

Corbyn could take his fingers and push it about under the skin, and the grim, bitternut colored faces of the Phoongyes relaxed when they realized how close they were to getting the heaven sent relic.

Even the officials were pleased—pleased with Valentyno, pleased with themselves and with the way they had managed the affair. The Phoongyes would have their ruby back again, and Valentyno would have done well out of the deal. In fact, he might be reinstated in the service if this spirit of Buddha were cast out of him.

The chief commissioner graciously extended his patronage to the extracting of the stone.

Apart from all this it had a great surgical interest. All the medical fraternity in Pangoon asked Valentyno's permission to be present. In fact, if he had chosen to charge an admission fee of two rupees a head he might have had his compound filled at that price the day Corbyn summoned the Phoongyes to be present to take delivery of the ruby.

Everything was in readiness. The archbishop had brought a sacred dish that was supposed to have at one time belonged to Buddha Guadama, to receive the Beda in.

Valentyno's back was bared. Corbyn made an incision with his scalpel, pressed gently with the forefinger of his right hand downward, and in a second something lay in his left hand.

He gave it a little rinse in a bowl of warm water he had ready and held it up to the expectant gaze of the many craning heads.

It was a piece of oblong lead—a slug. Hpo Thit had lied, that was all, and had the ruby away with him—at least it was never found.

THE END.

#### Thoughts of a Bachelor.

Without life death wouldn't be worth dying.

Some men have corns on their souls, and their bodies hurt them.

A girl is never really in love till she feels herself blush when she says her prayers.

Widows get along best with men because they know enough not to aggravate them too far.

Socrates always claimed he married Xantippe for discipline, but probably she knew how to cry at the right time.

#### The Only Way to Get Married.

There is a virtue in the *ipsissima verba* prescribed for ceremonials which some people can never be got to understand, and at Peterborough this denseness led to the postponement of a wedding. In the church were duly assembled the guests, the officiating clergyman and the bride and bridegroom. The service commenced, and all went smoothly till the priest asked the question, "Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?"

"Yes," said the prospective husband, who evidently did not go in for archaisms.

It was explained to him that "I will" was the regulation reply. Whereupon the bridegroom began to argue about it, insisting that "Yes" was quite sufficient for the purpose, and that as he meant to do his duty by the girl the exact form of assent could not matter.

At last his attitude became so aggressively positive that the parson shut his book and refused to continue the service, and the couple had to leave the church unwed.—London News.

#### Blushing.

In a learned work on criminology it is stated that out of 98 young men criminals 44 did not blush when examined. Of 123 women criminals 81 per cent did not blush. From this it seems that writers of fiction are all in the wrong, and that, instead of making their heroines betray their emotions by blushing, they should leave that part of the regulation programme to their admirers of the other sex.

It is also noted by the author that women blush about the ears rather than on the cheek. Perhaps some time soon scientists will be able to tell us why, without apparent reason, one or other of our ears suddenly blushes and burns, and if, as the old wives tell us, it is a sign that some one is speaking of us how we can tell who it may be. We all know that it is "right for spite and left for love," but the knowledge is not very useful to us, and nowadays we like to know the why and the wherefore of everything.

#### Mrs. Gladstone as a Listener.

"Mrs. Gladstone cultivated the art of listening to her husband to a perfection that I never saw equaled," says an English writer. "When he spoke, her absolute attention was always at his command—in fact, I do not believe anybody ever was so absorbed as Mrs. Gladstone looked. I suspect that she had learned how to wear that absolutely listening air while her mind followed its own track. But it was a decided help to him, for it secured at table and elsewhere a general silence when he wished to deliver his opinions without any appearance that he personally was demanding it. Mrs. Gladstone's own little speeches to the women Liberals, too, were always on one topic, what her husband thought or how he was feeling. In short, for the old ideal of wifehood, Mrs. Gladstone was a perfect model."