

fingers was on her small throat, an' she was dead—dead as McGinnis is now.

"An' thin the ould woman, with the divil shinin' from her eyes, raised herself up on the mat-covered bed where she'd been lyin', an' cursed us in her Pagan tongue, an' held out her long, skinny hand like a bird's claw, an' clutched the air as though she'd took us be the throat. It was awful. I felt meself chokin' in the room, with the glassy eyes of the dead girl starin' up at us, an' the curses av the ould hag ringin' in our ears. The dhrink had turned McGinnis to a divil, an' he'd have brained the mother with his gun, but I threw him down the stairs an' nearly broke his neck, murderer that he was.

"An' that's what I see now, Hutch, the dead girl starin' at me from every bush an' every corner; an' whin I rush after her, sometimes, whin I'm on the post, she vanishes up the road. An' the night you come down she was there, an' turned into the cat ye heard.

"What else was it made McGinnis meow into my ear with *her* voice, an' made me hurl him to his death, but the banshee? It was not my doin', the murder; but I might have stopped him."

Peter sat silent and moody for a time, and neither of them spoke.

"Come an' ave a pint," at last said Hutch. "Yer must drop this bloomin' rot. Yer don't see no ghost—it's yer conscience a-prickin' of yer, that's hall."

Peter had the pint, but it lifted no load from his mind; that had come to stay.

On the seventh night from the day McGinnis was buried, the relief going the rounds found Private Peter Doane dead on his post. He was stone dead, and in the eyes the haunted look had grown deeper and deeper until it was horrible.

There were the marks of slender fingers upon his throat as though he had been choked to death by a woman's hand. But that was impossible; Peter was a giant, and no woman in all that land could have hurt him, even, with her slender fingers.

What Hutch knew he kept to himself. "Let the dead lie, that's my motto," he said. "Hit won't do him no good to tell hit, fer 'e's gone now hanyway."

"A devilish queer woman scrape," the Captain called it. Of course, the general impression was that half-a-dozen of them had managed it somehow on poor Peter. The sentry was doubled at this point for a few nights, but as nothing further hap-

pened things soon ran back into their old course again.

McGinnis had a double in the regiment, Private Armstrong, as like him in appearance as one pea is to another; but that was all—like him in appearance only. He was as good as the other had been bad.

Peter was dead two weeks the night Armstrong was on the same post. The night air was rustling among the closed tamarind leaves overhead, the moonlight breaking through the branches and lighting up the road in fitful patches. A pariah dog was howling mournfully down in the native village. Far out on the gliding waters of the river a belated native boat was darting past; the range guttural song of the boatmen came brokenly up the steep bank.

Suddenly a woman's scream cut through the droning song like a sharp knife; it came from down the road. A female figure rushed toward the sentry in the moonlight, and threw herself at his feet.

"Oh, Sahib, I am afraid; an evil spirit frightened me," she said.

"Perhaps it's the ghost," thought Armstrong. He lifted her up; she was trembling. With native versatility she explained that she'd been frightened by a spirit with three immense heads—a dragon-headed *nat*.

"What's your name?" asked Armstrong.

"Me-mah," answered the frightened woman.

Armstrong started. Surely the moonlight had played him a trick, or else his ears—which was it? He looked again at the face, closely, sharply; it was certainly old; but the voice was young—only a girl's. It was a trifling thing, but it put him on his guard. A sentry takes nothing for granted—it's too dangerous.

"You've got a soft voice, my Judy," he thought, "but the very fiend's in your eye."

It was true. There was a mad fury not at all like fright in the big, dark eyes of the girl. "It's murder, if I ever saw it," said Armstrong to himself.

Unconsciously it made him think of poor Peter's strange death, and the finger marks on his throat.

"You are frightened, Me-mah," he said. "Sit here under the tree. Somebody will come up the road, and you can go along with them."

She obeyed eagerly—too eagerly, he thought, but it did not matter; he could take care of himself, now that he was on his guard.

"How you tremble," said Armstrong. "A little brandy would steady your nerves if I had it."

"I have some, *Thakine*," answered Me-mah, taking a flask from the closed paper umbrella which she carried under her arm. "Will the *Thakine* take some from Me-mah, whom he has befriended? Me-mah was taking it home to her brother, who is a writer."

The voice was low and sweet, but Armstrong felt as though a cobra had blown its breath upon him. He took the flask and put it to his lips; the liquor ran down his throat, but on the outside. It was dark under the tamarind, and Me-mah's furtive eyes saw only that much had gone out of the flask.

The cold liquor on the inside of the khaki jacket caused him to shudder involuntarily.

"Is it not good, *Thakine*?" asked the soft voice.

"It burns!" answered Armstrong laconically. "You had better take some," he added, "to steady your nerves."

She put the flask to her lips. "That's a dry drink," thought the soldier. She held it there too long, the feint was too evident.

"I'm so sleepy," said Armstrong drowsily, stretching his arms. "I think you had better go—" but he lurched heavily forward before he had finished the sentence, and rolled over on his back; there he lay as one dead.

Me-mah sat silent for a moment, then rose, and coming cautiously over, with a cat-like movement, peered into his eyes, bringing her face down close to his.

His eyes were closed—there was no sign of life in the face. A small slender hand stole out from under the silken shawl which hung about the shoulders, and the fingers fastened upon his throat like the talons of a bird of prey. They were like steel in their intense strength, but a wrench from the sentry's powerful hand tore them away from his throat.

Me-mah was a prisoner, and Armstrong knew that he had caught the murderer of Private Peter Doane.

To the Colonel next day she told her story simply enough; and it was a queer tale of revenge.

It was she who had escaped from Peter's drunken grasp at Mandalay.

She promised the old mother to have revenge for the murder of her sister. Peter Doane had taken the drugged liquor, and the rest was easy enough. She did not know of McGinnis' death, and had taken Armstrong for the slayer of her sister.

Me-mah is now a life prisoner on the Andamans.

THE PASSING OF THE "TIMES."

By H. LINTON ECCLES.

MANY people rubbed their eyes as they read their newspapers over the breakfast-table on the morning of January 7. The action was not the outcome of sleepy-headedness, nor was it due to the announcement of some such natural phenomenon as, say, the Thames being frozen over within the London area. But the item that caused the manifestation of surprise was startling enough in all conscience. The "Times" had changed hands! The old "Thunderer," that had dictated policies of state, that had held the balance between peace and war, that had made and unmade Cabinets, was to pass out of the control of the Walter family, which had made it what it was. To pass into whose hands? Why, one of the most advanced of the younger school of the new journalism. Perhaps, after all, it did appear to be a phenomenon to those who had come to look upon the "Times," through every troubled phase of its recent existence, as nevertheless being stable as the Palace of Westminster itself.

The "Times" newspaper is more than a powerful organ of the Press; it is as much an English institution as Parliament, roast beef or football. As a newspaper alone, it is looked upon as the greatest in the world. No wonder, then, that the news that the control of the paper had passed into the hands of Mr. C. Arthur Pearson came as a shock to the British public generally. As Mr. W. T. Stead said when he learnt of it: "To hear about the 'Times' being sold depresses us as would the report that the Crown jewels had been pawned, or that Windsor Castle had been let for a first-class hotel."

And when the first shock had passed, people naturally began to ask, why was the change made, and what will be the effect of it upon the traditional character and position of the "Times"? To meet the new situation, it is interesting to consider the career of Mr. Pearson, in whose hands the destinies of the "Times" now lie.

Mr. Cyril Arthur Pearson is the son of a country clergyman, and was born near Wells, Somersetshire,



Mr. C. Arthur Pearson.

in February, 1866, so that he is only now in his forty-second year. If ever anyone takes up the pen of Dr. Smiles to write another "Self-Help," a special chapter will have to be devoted to Mr. Pearson, whose career, in some respects, at least, has been a romance after Dr. Smiles' heart. Mr. Pearson is credited by all who know him—and by many more who have reason to feel his influence—with amazing self-confidence, amounting sometimes almost to recklessness.

His first chance in life came to him at the age of eighteen, when he was adjudged the winner of a novel competition run by "Tit-Bits," the popular "snippetty" weekly upon which Sir George Newnes, M.P., founded his fortune. "Tit-Bits" offered, as a prize for the best answers to an examination paper, a position in its office, carrying a salary of ten dollars per week.

Mr. Newnes, as he then was, soon found that he had discovered a journalistic nugget, and a bright one at that. Young Pearson had not been with "Tit-Bits" twelve months before, an opportunity arising, he put in an application for the management of the paper. Sir George Newnes admits that the audacity of the application almost took his breath away. But, instead of treating the affair as a joke, he had a long talk with his enterprising young clerk, which resulted in Pearson being made manager of the paper at the mature age of nineteen!

He justified the confidence placed in him, kept his place for four years, and then left Sir George Newnes to start a similar venture on his own account—with borrowed capital. "Pearson's Weekly," as he called it, caught on with the public after a time, its circulation jumping up as the result of a succession of the popular competitions which are even now so prominent a feature in that and similar publications. So we see that young Pearson owed his two big first successes in life to this rather uncertain way of making money; first, his place