

into the last of the shadows ; and straightway for altogether.

Sir Lakshman, wondering and waiting in a pained suspense, never removed his gaze from the significant-looking figure in the doorway. If not India—what of the first position, unanswered so far ?

The question was almost on his lips when Nevil Si turned abruptly and spoke.

"You're right, sir. Absolutely right. For the present at all events, Bramleigh Beeches must stand back. There are difficulties, of course. It's a matter that can't be put up in five minutes. But I shall not change my mind until you can set yours at rest "

Sir Lakshman let out a breath of relief. "The Gods be praised ! I have not believed in you without good reason, Nevil. And I am the more thankful for your decision on my cause—not through any word from her—I have a thought that more than her health is concerned."

Nevil nodded. "Yes—yes. I admit things have been difficult—for us both, in many ways. Surface things—time will set right ; but still—— With me, as you are aware, her nationality simply doesn't count. She's here, and God knows a man need ask no more of her. But I shall make others see with my eyes all in a moment——"

He broke off with a start. For the door opened suddenly and Audrey stood before them ; a little pale, a little out of breath.

"Lilamani's not here ? " she asked.

"No," from both men at once, and Sir Lakshman spoke to his feet.

"I looked in on her to say good night," Audrey went on. "But her room was empty. D'you think—would she have gone out into the garden alone, at this time of night ? "

"Why d'you ask that ? " It was Nevil who spoke.

"Only because I saw someone in a cloak pass along