

CHAPTER XIX

"To shew our simple skill,
That is the true beginning of our end."

Midsummer Night's Dream, Act V, Sc. 1.

WHEN they reached Dilkusha they yet had much to talk about. During their absence Jahangir had departed with Nur Mahal, entering the palace by the Water Gate, so the Englishmen did not encounter the royal cortège. Worn out by fatigue, the Countess di Cabota was sound asleep, but Fra Pietro awaited them, being anxious to learn the fate of his co-religionist. He was devoutly thankful that Dom Geronimo was not dead, and his next inquiry dealt with the adventures of Roger throughout the day. Then the lively record of the fight at the gate must be imparted, and nothing would suit the friar, late though the hour was, but he must go and see the fallen elephant, which, guarded by a crowd of awe-stricken natives, still cumbered the entrance to the cypress avenue.

He gazed long at the mighty brute, whose bulk, as it lay, topped a man's height. Then said he to Sainton:—

"At what hour, friend, didst thou attack the camp of Fateh Mohammed?"

"It might be half-past eight of the clock."

"Ah! You forced your way in and out; you rode