

HOURS IN HINDOSTAN.

A FIFTH AT WHIST.

WE had been playing all the evening at whist. Our stake had been gold mohur points, and twenty on the rubber. Maxey, who is always lucky, had won five consecutive bumpers, which lent a self-satisfied smile to his countenance, and made us, the losers, look anything but pleased, when he suddenly changed countenance, and hesitated to play: this the more surprised us, since he was one who seldom pondered, being so perfectly master of the game, that he deemed long consideration superfluous.

"Play away, Maxey; what are you about?" impatiently demanded Churchill, one of the most impetuous youths that ever wore the uniform of the body-guard.

"Hush!" responded Maxey, in a tone which thrilled through us, at the same time turning deadly pale.

"Are you unwell?" said another, about to start up, for he believed our friend had suddenly been taken ill.

"For the love of God sit quiet!" rejoined the other, in a tone denoting extreme fear or pain, and he laid down his cards. "If you value my life, move not."

"What can he mean?—has he taken leave of his senses?" demanded Churchill, appealing to myself.

"Don't start!—don't move, I tell you!" in a sort of whisper I never can forget, uttered Maxey. "If you make any sudden motion I am a dead man!"

We exchanged looks. He continued,—

"Remain quiet, and all may yet be well.—I have a Cobra Capella round my leg."

Our first impulse was to draw back our chairs; but an appealing look from the victim induced us to remain, although we were aware that should the reptile transfer but one fold, and attach himself to any other of the party, that individual might already be counted as a dead man, so fatal is the bite of that dreaded monster.

Poor Maxey was dressed as many old residents still dress in India,—namely, in breeches and silk stockings; he therefore the more plainly felt every movement of the snake. His countenance assumed a livid hue; the words seemed to leave his mouth without that feature altering its position, so rigid was his look,—so fearful was he lest the slightest muscular movement should alarm the serpent, and hasten his fatal bite.

We were in agony little less than his own during the scene.

"He is coiling round!" murmured Maxey; "I feel him cold—cold to my limb: and now he tightens!—for the love of Heaven call for some milk!—I dare not speak loud: let it be placed on the ground near me; let some be spilt on the floor."

Churchill cautiously gave the order, and a servant slipped out of the room.

"Don't stir:—Northcote, you moved your head. By everything sacred, I conjure you do not do so again! It cannot be long ere my fate is decided. I have a wife and two children in Europe; tell them I died blessing them—that my last prayers were for them:—the snake is winding itself round my calf;—I leave them all I possess. I can almost fancy I feel his breath! Great God! to die in such a manner!"

The milk was brought, and carefully put down; a few drops were sprinkled on the floor, and the affrighted servants drew back.

Again Maxey spoke:

"No—no! it has no effect! on the contrary, he has clasped himself tighter—he has uncurled his upper fold! I dare not look down, but I am sure he is about to draw back, and give the bite of death with more fatal precision.—Receive me, O Lord! and pardon me; my last hour is come!—Again he pauses. I die firm; but this is past endurance;—ah! no—he has undone another fold, and loosens himself.—Can he be going to some one else?" We involuntarily started. "For the love of Heaven, stir not!—I am a dead man; but bear with me, He still loosens;—he is about to dart!—Move not, but beware! Churchill, he falls off that way. Oh! this agony is too hard to bear!—Another pressure, and I am dead. No!—he relaxes!" At that moment poor Maxey ventured to look down; the snake had unwound himself; the last coil *had* fallen, and the reptile was making for the milk.

"I am saved!—saved!" and Maxey bounded from his chair, and fell senseless into the arms of one of his servants. In another instant, need it be added, we were all dispersed: the snake was killed, and our poor friend carried more dead than alive to his room.

That scene I can never forget: it dwells on my memory still, strengthened by the fate of poor Maxey, who from that hour pined in hopeless imbecility, and sunk into an early grave.—*Bentley's Miscellany.*

Fraudulent debtors, like parching corn, make the greatest show after they have burst.