An Adventure of Sirdar Mohammed Khan.

BY LOUIS TRACY.

Pearson's Magazine.

It was very odd how the Sirdar Mohammed Khan and I became involved in the love affairs of Reggie Bingham, the handsomest and hardest-up subaltern of the Seventeen lancers.

The trouble all arose in the first instance through the known fondness of leopards for dining off puppy dogs.

A certain Mr. Septimus Browne, a millionaire ironmaster, had brought his daughter Edith to India for the cold weather. Her health had suffered from the too close prospect of marriage with an elderly, but distinguished, member of the house of lords. The doctor's orders were imperative, and Browne had no option but to take the girl for a long sea voyage and change of scene. Though he worshipped the ground she walked on, he gave her to understand that when they returned in the spring there must be no more nonsense about the wedding.

Under the conditions Edith Browne did not enjoy life as a sprightly young lady of her normal spirits and handsome exterior might be expected to. Indeed, the first sign of animation she gave was during her visit to Simla, where two squadrons of my regiment supplied guards and escorts for the viceroy.

Reggie Bingham was an extra aide to the commander-in-chief. As the Brownes were at once taken into the viceregal set, he made himself agreeable to the fair Edith. Her father, to prevent mistakes, took good care to announce her engagement to the antiquated earl.

Bingham commenced by being civil; he ended by catching a mad attack of a common form of heart trouble, and the miserable part of the business was that neither honor nor expediency permitted him to declare his affection.

All this preamble, as the lawyers say, is necessary to a proper understanding of that which follows, but I can promise you that the pace of the story quickens forthwith.

One day a viceregal picnic took place in a valley beyond Jutogh. By natural law Reggie and the girl went a faster pace than their elders, and got well ahead of them. The lancer was gulping down his admiration whilst he talked of campaigning in the hills, and Edith was wondering how it was that eligible peers were never good-looking, when suddenly a half-grown leopard sprang from the concealment of a rock and tried to grab Edith's fox terrier. The dog flinched, both ponies shied, Miss Browne fell in a dead faint, Bingham cut savagely twice with his riding whip at the astounded cub, who was just making a more certain spring at the puppy, his pony landed both heels with vigor and precision in the leopard's ribs, and the latter plunged into the jungle, hungry, but more than satisfied.

Reggie's kisses and the fox terrier's licking soon restored Edith's senses. She was unhurt, she declared, only terribly frightened. Then she and Bingham called each other "darling" several times, and the kissing was not quite such a one-sided affair. Indeed, the fox terrier and the leopard were quite forgotten until Browne, his excellency, and others, alarmed by the appearance of two riderless ponies, appeared upon the scene.

When the story was told, everyone said that it was very plucky of Reggie to tackle a leopard with a hunting-crop. Even Browne, who had seen more than he liked, was enthusiastic to a degree.

Once safely back at the hotel, however, he commenced to think more calmly, and made up his mind to a course of action. He sent Bingham a cheque for $25,000 with his compliments, and ordered a carriage at once to convey his daughter and himself to Umballa, then the nearest railway station to Simla.

The lancer received the cheque and knew what it meant. He took it back, and found the Brownes just starting, the father and daughter ensconced in a phaeton, and their luggage and servants piled into three tongas.

Miss Browne was nursing her fox terrier and crying; the iron-master was as rigid as a pig of his own best marketable brand, and Reggie had to bite his lips hard before he spoke.

Edith's presence made things awkward. So he simply said: "Good-bye, Mr. Browne. I am sorry you are leaving so soon. Good-bye, Miss Browne, our little adventure will cause you to remember Simla."

Then he turned on his heel, and round the next corner lit a cheroot with the cheque. The operation took some time, as he fumbled over striking the match. The fact is, there were tears in his eyes.

As the Brownes drove off amidst a crowd of salaaming natives, the father said to himself: "I somehow thought that chap would have returned the cheque. I am very glad he did not." And the girl sobbed quietly, for she knew that Reggie loved her.

The following afternoon I was sitting in my room at the club, wondering whether to pay some long-deferred calls or go for a ride round Jakko, when Reggie Bingham, haggard and wild-eyed, burst the door open with his foot and rushed in. He was carrying a fox terrier in his arms. The little animal was whimpering with pain, and its white hairs were soiled with clotted blood and dust.

"What's the matter?" I cried, astounded at the manner of his entrance no less than at his appearance. "Has some one run over your dog?"

"It is not my dog," he answered, speaking hoarsely and with difficulty. "It is Edith's—Miss Browne's."

Now, in Simla people always know everybody's else business; the events already narrated were practically public property.

"How has he come back?" was my next question.

"I cannot tell. I want you to help me. You know a lot about these infernal natives. Look here!" He tenderly turned the meaning terrier round so that I could see an unmistakable sword cut which had traversed the dog's loins and was evidently meant to cut him in two.

"But where did you find him?"

"I went for a stroll along the Keri Ghat road" (the road which commands a view of the plains) "when I met this little chap limping along up the hill. I knew him at once. Something must have happened, something terrible, or he would never have been parted from his mistress, and in this state. Help me, old chap, or I shall go mad."

Before I could frame any reply a knock at the door caused me to open it and see who was disturbing us.

The sirdar stood without. He would have given me some details of duty, but I dragged him into the room and hastily explained to him all that I knew myself concerning the departure of the Brownes and the finding of the wounded terrier. The sirdar, it may be explained, exercised a mysterious influence over the natives, and was held in great awe by them.

His eyes grew fierce as he listened. "It is an evil thing, Sahib," he said.

"Why do you think so?"

"Because Chundu, the dacoit, lost his two brothers in a fight with the police at Kalka a month past, and the talk in the bazaar is that he will have vengeance on the sahiblog, even if he has to attack the Lord-Sahib himself. This is his work."

"But what can we do? The whole party has probably been murdered long since?"

At this question even the astute Mohammedan was silent. Bingham, who did not understand Urdu, begged me to translate.

His eloquence made me act foolishly. Instead of leaving the affair to the proper authorities, I handed over my routine duties to the next in command, and within twenty minutes the three of us were going down the hill towards the Keri Ghat at a fast canter.

Fifteen miles down a precipitous road supply ample occupation for an hour, even when the cattle are good.

At the stage house we learned that the Brownes had passed at the expected time the previous evening, but news had just come that the phaeton and tongas and their occupants had not arrived at Solon, the next stage, and a search was even now being made for them. Even the slow-witted hillman in charge of the tonga service had come to the conclusion that twenty odd hours were more than sufficient for the performance of the intervening fourteen miles.

Perhaps the party had fallen over the Khud. When Mohammed Khan pointed out that four vehicles would hardly follow one after the other over the side of the precipice, the tonga master referred him to the mysterious ways of Allah.

"When did you cause a search to be made?" said the sirdar, with growing sternness in his voice.

"When the tonga was missed, protector of the poor."

"At what hour?"

"When it had struck three in the afternoon, your honor."

Mohammed Khan dismounted, seized the man by the neck, and shook him violently. "Listen, dog, Chundu, the dacoit, has done this thing, and thou knowest it. Speak; tell me all, else will I silence thee forever."

At the mention of Chundu's name the dark-skinned native bleached with terror.

"I will speak that which I know," he gurgled. "Chundu fell upon the party when they were passing through the wood two miles from here. He made the drivers turn off into the jungle, and then he and his followers slew all save the sahib and the miss-sahib. I found the bodies at dawn; but I dared not to cry out in the village lest Chundu should hear of it, and I should meet my death."

"How many did Chundu's band number?"

"I know not, Huzoor, but they were at least a score. Such is the talk of those who have seen them."

The sirdar flung the man off, satisfied that he had told all he knew. Bingham's bloodshot eyes sought mine, and I thought it best to tell him what he had learned.

He would have ridden on at once, but I pointed out the folly of such a proceeding. Night was approaching. Chudu and his captives must be miles away in the interior by this time, and, as this famous dacoit and his associated cutthroats were known to be well armed with modern weapons, the only chance of succor lay in organized pursuit by the military police.

I did not add that, in my own opinion, the case was hopeless.

The sidar agreed with me that our best course was to ride on to Solon and inform the authorities, whilst we must be content to accompany the armed force that would set out at dawn.

When our horses were breathed we started, at a quieter pace this time. As luck would have it, we reached the scene of the outrage just as the rapid advance of the Indian night was plunging all things in gloom.

The road was level here, and on both sides were patches of turf. Bingham reined in his charger for a little while, and out of sympathy with him we did the same. Suddenly the sirdar, whose keen eyes were ever on the alert, noticed something unusual on the roadside. He jumped from the saddle and grappled with the object, which proved to be a man lying at full length on the turf, where he had flung himself face downwards, with the object, seemingly, of escaping our notice as we rode past in the darkness.

He whined some explanation of his presence, but when I struck a match and we caught a glimpse of his evil face, Mohammed Khan cried: "By the beard of the prophet, 'tis one of Chundu's thieves."

It was a mere guess, but a lucky one. The fellow thought we were police officers, and he cried out that if we would spare him he would tell us everything.

The story was of the common order which is too familiar in those parts of India infested with gangs of dacoits. Once the hapless travelers were safely removed from the high road, Chundu and his followers had ruthlessly slain the drivers and servants before despoiling them of any little articles of value they possessed. The baggage was then ransaced, the phaeton and tongas thrown into a nullah, and the ponies served to convey Mr. Browne and his daughter, together with the plunder.

"How many go with Chundu?" asked the sirdar.

"Thirteen, not counting your honor's slave."

"And how came you here?"

"I carry a chit from the old sahib to a sahib in Simla."

"A chit! Where is it?"

The man produced a piece of soiled paper, which was rolled up and inscribed "R. Bingham, Esq., 17th Lancers."

Astounded at the turn taken by events, I lit match after match whilst Bingham deciphered the following note, written with a trembling hand in lead pencil:

Dear Sir: My daughter and I have fallen into the clutches of a number of robbers who have murdered our servants and treated us with every indignity. Their leader, however, gives me to understand, so well as I can follow his few broken words of English, that if you hand the bearer two thousand gold mohurs he will place Edith and myself within easy distance of the main road where we can find help. There must be no pursuit or any attempt to rescue, as he will kill us the moment there is any alarm. He will not allow me to write to any banker or official, but only to some friend who will give the money required and maintain silence with the authorities. I have little faith in him, but if I escape I will more than repay you, Mr. Bingham. For God's sake save my girl. My own fate matters little, as it can be but death. For her I fear more.

—Septimus Browne.

Reggie got out the last sentence with a great gulp, and when I told the Sirdar the contents of the note he said:

"There is no use waiting for the money, sahib. Chundu is using a trick to get the gold. He will become impatient and kill the Browne-sahib before the messenger arrives."

"And the miss-sahib?"

"She will kill herself. Your womenkind think differently to ours."

I was glad Bingham did not understand him, else we should have had a maniac on our hands, but I could have beaten my head against a wall in sheer rage at our impotence.

Mohammed Khan was more matter-of-fact. "Listen, thief," he said, hissing the words into the face of the cowering wretch, whom he held in his powerful grasp, "Dost want to die this moment?"

The man would have uttered a prayer for mercy, but the rissaldar-major heeded him not.

"If thou liest," he growled, "I will tear thy tongue out and throw it to the crows. Where does Chunda await thee?"

"He will await me at another place, but he sleeps tonight in safety not ten miles away."

"Ha, say'st thou? What manner of safety?"

"'Tis a guily in the hills known but to few. I can lead you thither, yet what can three do against so many?"

"Do they keep watch, then?"

"No, Huzoor, there is no need for watch. No man could find it who knew not where to go and how to get there."

"'Tis better so. Lead us. Thy life will be spared if thou keep'st trust. Fail not, or tomorrow's sun will show thy body to the kites."

Only the terror of evildoers in India, inspired by the native police, can explain the willing treachery of our strangely met guide. He believed his comrades already lost, and hoped to save his own miserable skin.

Fortunately for our quest the moon rose. Our horses, accustomed to journeys in the hills, scrambled through the rough defiles that led away towards the inner Himalayan range, where the Sutloj river pierces through the mountains from Thibet.

As we struggled, ever upwards, by valley, hillside and rock-strewn woodland, I marveled at the wild sequence of events which had drawn me from the civilization of Simla into the fierce barbarism of the East. Our mission was fantastic as any recorded by Arab chronicler. Plan we had none, to my knowledge, whilst probability pointed to the three of us giving our lives in a vain attempt at rescue.

Bingham rode on in a state of quiet frenzy, but the sirdar kept his prisoner taut at the end of a heel-rope, fastened to neck and wrists, with a calm certainty of getting the best of Chundu that shamed me into silence when I would have questioned the outcome of our expedition. For arms, Bingham and I had each a couple of revolvers, and the sirdar carried his inseparable sword and sheath-knife.

After nearly three hours of plodding march we reached a wooded valley, wide, precipitous and sombre, with a torrent dashing noisily through a tree-hidden channel, and snow-capped peaks glinting in the moonbeams beyond its confines.

Pointing to the eastern hillside, our captive explained that within 100 yards of the crest there was a hollow which would shelter a regiment, but it was so effectually screened by the trees that it could never be noted from any point of view. The approach was steep, though practicable for hill ponies, and within its shelter the dacoit and his gang, with their captives, were resting until dawn.

He had barely finished his recital when Mohammed Khan, without the slightest warning fell upon him, gagged him and trussed him like a fowl for the spit.

"Thou canst not betray twice," he muttered. "If thy tale be false we will kill thee on our return."

The man indicated with his rolling, terror-stricken eyes that he had not misinformed him, and I believed him, but the sirdar's precautions were nevertheless soldier-like.

"And now?" I said.

"Let us attack them," said Bingham.

"Let us look first and fight afterwards," said the cool-headed native.

We tethered our horses and commenced to climb. Once I held Bingham, who would have vainly spent his breath, and once I nearly shouted aloud, for a rock snake wrapped his coils round my leg, and it needed all my resolution to crush him quietly with the disengaged foot.

We had not understood from our guide's patois that the dacoit's hiding place was a glade, denuded of trees, and we should have blundered into the moonlit space had we not been warned by a slight descent that we were close to it.

Sure enough, there were eight ponies grazing within a few yards of us. On the further side, close to the wood, were a number of recumbent figures around the embers of a fire, and in the shade we could see Browne and his daughter lying on the roots of two trees, to which, presumably, they were tied.

It was a close thing. Edith's involuntary shriek of terror when someone bent over her with a glittering knife in his hand brought half a dozen of the robbers to their feet. Four of them fell at once.

The survivors, thinking that they were attacked in force, ran off at top speed. Indeed, I thought the fray over, when one of the wounded, recovering from the first shock of a bullet through his thigh, rose to his knees, seized a rifle, and aimed deliberately at Edith Browne. There could be no manner of doubt concerning his motive.

Vengeful as an infuriated tiger, he possessed the more terrible attribute of debased humanity, and sought to inflict the greatest injury upon his assailants by murdering her whom they came to succor.

We all saw him. I fired, but in my anxiety missed. Bingham, too, made an ineffectual effort to stop him, and at the same moment jumped in front of the girl, who had risen, and was gazing with wildly dilated eyes at her would-be slayer.

Chundu pressed the trigged as Reggie made his spring, and the latter spun round and fell. But the famous dacoit's head reached the ground first, for the sirdar came within striking distance ere the rifle left his shoulder.

Edith had long since recognized her lover, and when she saw him tumble over as one dead I expected to see her scream or faint, or burst into tears.

Had I guessed for the rest of my life I should never have approached within measurable distance of her real actions.

She knelt down and looked into Bingham's insensible face. Then she rose and walked to the place where her father, who had witnessed the whole incident, was lying in a hopeless struggle with the ropes that bound him. Bending down, and gazing steadily at him, she said:

"If he is dead it is you who have killed him, and I shall never own you again. He has given his life for me, and I am his, his only, forever!"

Her voice was clear and sharp as the clink of ice in a glass. From that moment the hard ironmaster and his daughter exchanged characters. The girl ruled, and I verily believed he liked it.

Meanwhile the sirdar was the only strategist on the field. To hurry up the retreat he turned the enemy's ordnance upon them. One of the flying gang pitched headlong into the grass and remained there, while a yell from another as he plunged into the forest showed that his flight had been momentarily accelerated.

All danger of renewed attack had now passed. Bingham's head was pillowed on Edith's lap, and I suppose there was some electrical influence in her touch, for, to my amazement, he opened his eyes, and murmured, with the ghost of a smile:

"It's all right. Only my collar-bone. Beastly nuisance."

Then Edith began to cry.

With some difficulty we got him on to one of the ponies, and gained our horses.

The rest of the story is orthodox. Reggie and the fox terrier were convalescent together, both being sedulously nursed by Edith; Browne was very proud of his prospective son-in-law; the sirdar drew among other sums the big reward placed by the government on Chundu's head; and I—got a gentle wigging from the chief for being absent without leave for forty-eight hours.

Beyond the Green Baize Door

London Tit-Bits.

There was mystery behind the green baize door; tangible or intangible nobody knew, since no one but Mr. Blakely ever saw the inside of the door which shuts his private room at Messrs. Blakely & Stephen's bank from the narrow passage connecting it with the general offices.

Mr. Blakely was sole proprietor of the bank, which was the only one in the town, and showed every semblance of the soundest financial basis.

Mr. Blakely was a man strangely devoid of eccentricities. The chief faults the bank staff found with him were his indefatigability and that whenever there was business to be done in London—selling or buying stock, buying cash, etc.—he invariably attended to it himself.

I was seated at the desk of the head cashier, who was away on a short holiday, one morning in September, when one of our clients entered the counting house.

"Mr. Boyton, look here," he said, slipping a crown piece upon the counter. "Where did you get it?"

"What's wrong with it?" I inquired, examining it closely without noticing any defect. "Did I give it to you?"

"Yes. Look at the edge; it's quite smooth."

I passed him two half crowns, and as he went away I slipped the crown into my pocket, intending to keep it as a curiosity. But later in the day, when Mr. Blakely was in the office, I showed it to him.

"Curious!" he muttered. "One of the experimental mint, no doubt, for it's dated 1896. Do you think we've any others similar?"

"No; I have been through them."

"Strange! Well, I'll keep it. It is probably unique."

I was disappointed with his decision, as I wanted the coin myself. It was against my principles, however, to protest. I forgot it entirely until some weeks later, when Mrs. Blakely, to the utter astonishment of the bank's staff, turned up an hour or so before luncheon time.

Up to this time, although she had been married more than ten months, Mrs. Blakely had never been inside the bank. Now, she drove up in her carriage, came in proudly and asked for Mr. Blakely.

I replied that if she would step into the waiting room I would summon him in the usual way.

"No. Show me into his private room. I am Mrs. Blakely," she said, hastily.

"I recognize you, madam," I replied; "but the rule is that all visitors, whoever they may be, are to be shown into the waiting room, where Mr. Blakely will interview them."

"Nonsense!" she ejaculated. "Such rules do not refer to Mr. Blakely's wife. The room is at the end of the passage, is it not?"

"You are putting me in an awkward position," I replied. "I am not allowed to let visitors approach the green baize door——"

"Ah," her proud eyes flashed. "So there is a green baize door which no one approaches?"

When Mr. Blakely came, he did so in his habitual leisurely manner, and he walked into the waiting room, leaving the door ajar.

"Mr. Blakely," she said, haughtily, "I have been insulted by one of your clerks. Since when has your wife been denied the right to enter your private room?"

"Ever since she wrongly assumed that she had such a right, Mary. My clerks have their orders; they obey them. You cannot blame them for upholding rules I myself have framed. What do you want? I am busy this morning. The market is unsteady just now."

"Tell me, Richard; had you known I was coming would you have allowed your clerk to deny access to your private room?" Mrs. Blakely inquired.

"The rule is of many years' standing, Mary," he said deliberately. "If it were set aside for you it would be the thin end of the wedge; my room would no longer be private."

"You indorse the clerk's insult?"

"I uphold my clerk who upholds the bank's rules."

I felt her brush past me as she came out of the room, and saw her walk round the desks, her lips tightly compressed, and her head high.

The following morning when I turned up at the bank the porter met me with the inquiry, had I seen anything of Mr. Blakely? No one had seen him since the bank closed the night before. He was not in the bank—had not been home—indeed, it was Mrs. Blakely who had driven down the first thing to inquire about him; and no one had seen him.

"Mr. Boyton," she asked, "have you seen my husband? You were the last to leave, I believe?"

"Yes, madam, but I have not seen Mr. Blakely since he put you into your carriage yesterday."

"That decides it," she muttered. "Something has happened to him in his room. The door must be forced. Porter, go for a carpenter!"

"You take the whole responsibility of forcing the green baize door?" I suggested.

"The whole responsibility," she replied, and turned away impatiently.

When the carpenter arrived Mrs. Blakely led him to the door and ordered him to force it. He smiled grimly as he looked the door up and down. He sounded it with a mallet, and his jaw fell.

"Iron!" he said laconically. "'Tisn't my job; you want a blacksmith."

The porter was sent off in the carriage to fetch a smith. When the man arrived he eyed the door critically and looked dubious.

For five minutes he dealt a rapid fire of blows and then the door began to tremble, then to shake. Finally, after ten or twelve minutes, it gave a shudder and came forward, swinging on its hinges.

Mrs. Blakely darted forward and stopped. Six feet farther down the narrow passage another door obstructed the way. She signed impetuously to the smith, who stepped forward and shivered the lock of the second door, which was only light wood. All was darkness beyond the door.

I turned to Mrs. Blakely, who stood gazing in wonderment into chaos.

"Porter," she said, in a hushed voice, "get me a lantern. Then you can both leave us. Mr. Boyton's will be all the help I shall need."

We passed through the doorway and into a small, dark room, poorly furnished with a little office furniture and littered with papers. There was no sign of Mr. Blakely.

"Look!" cried Mrs. Blakely. "Look! A trapdoor!"

I saw a square had been cut out of the carpet, in the center of which was a ring by which I raised the trap.

Looking through we saw a ladder leading down to darkness.

Going carefully down four rungs of the ladder I held the lantern out at arm's length and surveyed the scene.

A stone-walled chamber stretched before me like a large vault. In one wall was a low, barred door; in a corner was a small furnace. A peculiar looking machine stood in the middle of the vault, and upon a ledge of its frame rested a row of silver coins.

I went down, and, stepping as I thought to the ground, my foot encountered something soft. I sprang aside, avoiding it, and saw the body of Mr. Blakely huddled up in a broken bundle.

"Ah me! Ah, me!" she moaned, propping the head upon her knee with frenzied tenderness. "Richard, husband! You did not merely dream—you lived your crimes that night—and now! This is his secret! Last night—the night before, he was restless in his sleep; he talked of coining, years of coining—coining silver and reaping profit—profit. 'The mint makes profit on its silver coins, and why not I?' He said that, and as I lay awake I hoped he merely dreamed. Dead, dead! Yes, yes, and if you had lived these hands would kill you for the ignominy and shame! Richard! O, Richard! Richard!"

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Beyond the police, only Mrs. Blakely and myself know the true secret that hid beyond the green baize door.

DIDN'T WANT APOLOGIES.

But He Would Have Appreciated a Little Witch Hazel.

Buffalo Enquirer.

It was a railroad train in Georgia, where the berths in the sleepers are separated by curtains, instead of partitions. A woman was traveling in one of them from Atlanta to Augusta. She was preparing to retire, and was standing up wrestling with a refractory hook, when a sudden lurch of the train sent her reeling against the curtain at the head of the berth. Somebody in the next berth was upset by the same lurch, and two heads, separated by a curtain, knocked together with a bump that made the woman see comets. She is by no means a model of forbearance, and she has a voice that carries admirably.

"You clumsy brute!" she said.

"I beg your pardon," said a smothered voice in the next berth. "It wasn't my fault."

"It was, too!" snapped the woman. "You wretch!"

The wretch said nothing more, and the woman suddenly began to realize that she had said a deal too much. She kept silence for a moment. Then she said quite humbly:

"I apologize for what I said."

"I'd rather have some witch hazel than an apology," said the wretch in the next berth. The woman subsided into angry silence at that.

"Have you any?" went on the wretch

"No," she snapped. "I haven't."

"Too bad," said the man in the next berth.

The woman made no response to that, and resolutely composed herself to sleep. It was broad day, and the train was drawing into the station when she awoke. As she left her berth she noticed a card pinned to it. It bore on one side of it the name of a young Georgian who is an especial favorite in Washington. On the other side was written:

"It is the privilege of women to break hearts. My compliments to the unknown goddess who chooses to break heads instead."

Seventeen Years Lost

Philadelphia Item.

They were walking home from evening meeting.

"How long have we been engaged?" askd Ezra, after a silence.

Janet answered promptly. "It'll be fifteen years the tenth of next month."

"And the day after tomorrow I must start for Florida."

"Yes," she said. "I suppose it is best. It would be hard for you to stay here through the cold weather when you were so sick last winter. But you can come back in the spring," she added, trying to be cheerful.

"I have been thinking," said Ezra hesitatingly, "that fifteen years is a good while for an engagement to last. Don't you think it would be a good plan to end it before I go?"

She looked up at him quickly. "Do you mean that you wish to——"

"Be married? Yes."

"O," she said, "I did not know but that you might wish to be released."

"No," he returned emphatically, "you would be the one to wish that."

"I never have," she answered.

"Every one knows that I have the best of the arrangement—that you are smarter and better than I am. I have meant all these years to get something ahead, so that we could be married some time, and so that you would not have to do dressmaking. But I havn't managed right, or something, and now my health giving out has spoiled it all."

"I would have been ready at any time, Ezra," she said gently. "We would have got along."

"I had got so used to being engaged to you that I had almost become satisfied with there being nothing different. But now that I am going away and will not see you all winter long—I wish we could be married before I go."

"But there is so little time," she said, thinking of the pretty things she had hoped to make if this time ever came.

"I know," he answered, not understanding her. "I know you could not leave to go with me, but we could go to housekeeping when I get back. I wish you would do it," he ended, wistfully.

"I will," she consented, "if it will make you happier."

On the appointed day Ezra set forth on his way to Florida, leaving his bride behind to face the New England winter alone. At first she was lonesome, but when long letters began to come from Ezra she felt happier. He was a good letter writer, and before winter was past it seemed to her she had had more companionship with him than usual.

Ezra liked Florida and the climate agreed with him. He found work there, and when spring came he decided to stay on. He proposed that Janet should join him in the fall.

She agreed at the time, but when fall came she began to be dreadfully homesick. She finally wrote that as Ezra would probably come home by another spring she would wait for him.

But the next summer he spent in Florida also, and when fall came again and they had been married two years nothing was said about his returning or her joining him.

Janet, however, began to have a desire to see her husband. She determined to go to him and surprise him. So she packed her trunk and departed.

At the same time Ezra had a longing to see Janet, and he decided to go North and surprise her. They started at about the same time and passed each other somewhere in Virginia.

When they reached their destinations it is hardly necessary to say that they were both surprised—unpleasantly so. Each felt impelled to return over the way they had just come, but each reflected that the other might do the same thing, so they waited and wrote letters instead.

Janet liked Florida so well that she decided to spend the winter there.

As for Ezra, he declared that he never would leave the North again if he could possibly help it. It seemed like home to him. He stood the winter well and he looked forward to seeing Janet in the spring. But Janet thought she would try summering in the South.

Ezra sighed. Oh, dear," he said, "have we got to see-saw back and forth this way all our lives? By the time she gets sick of Florida I shall have to go there again, probably."

In April, however, a postal card came which made glad his heart.

"If you will stay North till I can get there I will start the minute I hear from you. It is so fearfully hot here that I can't stand it any longer."

Ezra met her in New York and they stayed there a few weeks seeing the sights. "This is our honeymoon," he said. They came home and went to housekeeping and were happy.

One evening they were coming home from church. They had not said much, but finally Ezra asked: "Do you suppose we ever would have married if it hadn't been for my going to Florida?"

"I don't know."

"Well, I don't believe we would. Just think of the time we have wasted. I have been an old fool for seventeen years."

Janet laughed. "I think I belong to that class, too," she said.

ANCIENT RELICS.

Taken From Graves Seven Thousand Years Old.

Prof. Flinders Petrie, who goes every winter to "spoil the Egyptians" of their prehistoric remains, has opened his usual exhibition in University college. The relics are chiefly from twenty miles of old cemeteries along the Western desert from Hu to Dendereh, and range from the prehistoric to the Roman period. The chief discovery of the year is the Libyan settlements in Egypt at the close of the middle kingdom about 2400 B. C. Two Libyan graves are shallow circular pits about four feet across and two feet deep. In these "pan" graves the bodies lie in a contracted position, as in prehistoric graves, but not all in the same direction.

The Libyan pottery is partly identical with that of the Twelfth Egyptian dynasty, and partly red or black, like the prehistoric, but of other forms. The Egyptian pottery and heads of these graves are Twelth Dynasty, and fix the age of the Libyan invasion. The fronts of animal skulls, for example, oxen, sheep, goats, daubed with red and black paint, were also found in the cemeteries. In some graves over 100 were found together. The backs of the skulls were cut away so that they could be hung up like Greek bucrania, which probably originated in Libya. The prehistoric Egyptians, who were mainly of Libyan race, also had the custom of hanging up skulls over the doorways of buildings. Prof. Petrie remarks that native plunderers had destroyed many Egyptian cemeteries last winter to get objects for tourists, and thus "perishes the history of 7,000 years, while transient politicians disagree."

Thibetan Week.

The Tibetans have a week of five days, named after iron, wood, water, feathers and earth.

German Impediment.

Every German soldier carries a four-ounce religious book with the rest of his personal equipment.

Snails Eaten in Paris.

Parisian gourmands devour 100,000 pounds of snails daily.

Dried Fly Statistics.

Among the exports of Mexico last year are to be noted two tons of dried flies.

"LAIT Larola" Reg'd

Keeps the Skin Cool and Refreshed

During the heat of summer.

REMOVES ALL ROUGHNESS, REDNESS, IRRITATION TAN, Etc

M. BERTHAM & SON, Cheltenham, England

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Impoverished Blood

is the secret of half the diseases known to humanity—rheumatism, dropsy, scrofula, stomach and liver troubles may in a majority of cases be traced to the circulatory system. They can be avoided and they can be cured by the use of a remedy that supplies the necessary elements to enrich the blood.

Dr. Williams'

Pink Pills for Pale People

increase the red corpuscles in the blood and thereby give it new life and richness. They also tone up the nerves and are a specific for many serious disorders.

From the Journal, Carterville, Mo.

Mrs. Joseph M. Evans, of Carterville, Mo., says:

"Two years ago I had dropsy of the left limb so severely that my physicians said I could not recover—that it would be impossible to give me any treatment that would afford permanent relief. I had been sick about a year, and most of the time was bedfast. My husband spent over $300 that year doctoring me, with the result that the treatment of the physicians did me no permanent good. I steadily grew worse.

"My brother insisted that I try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People. I did so with some reluctance and without much hope that they would benefit me, but the effect was almost marvelous. The first box effected a change for the better in my condition, and I continued to improve steadily.

"I took about six months steady treatment, and kept them in the house and took them at intervals for a year or more afterward. The result is that I do not now feel a trace of my former ailments."

MRS. LUE EVANS.

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a Notary Public, this 12th day of October, 1898. WM. B. WOLCOTT, *Notary Public.*

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People are sold by all dealers, or will be sent, postpaid, on receipt of price, 50c. a box or six boxes for $2.50 (they are never sold in bulk or by the 100) by addressing Dr. Williams Medicine Company, Schenectady, N. Y.

FREE ONE TRIAL BOTTLE FREE

THIS OFFER ALMOST SURPASSES BELIEF.

An External Tonic Applied to the Skin Beautifies It as by Magic.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE AGE

A WOMAN WAS THE INVENTOR.

Thousands have tried from time immemorial to discover some efficacious remedy for wrinkles and other imperfections of the complexion, but none had yet succeeded until the Misses Bell, the now famous Complexion Specialists, of 78 Fifth Avenue, New York City, offered the public their wonderful Complexion Tonic. The reason so many failed to make this discovery before is plain, because they have not followed the right principle. Balms, Creams, Lotions, etc., never have a tonic effect upon the skin, hence the failures.

The Misses Bell's Complexion Tonic has a most exhilarating effect upon the cuticle, absorbing and carrying off all impurities which the blood by its natural action is constantly forcing to the surface of the skin. It is to the skin what a vitalizing tonic is to the blood and nerves, a kind of new life that immediately exhilarates and strengthens wherever applied. Its tonic effect is felt almost immediately, and it speedily banishes forever from the skin, freckles, pimples, blackheads, moth patches, wrinkles, liver spots, roughness, oiliness, eruptions, and discolorations of any kind.

In order that all may be benefited by their Great Discovery, the Misses Bell will, during the present month, give to all callers at their parlors one trial bottle of their Complexion Tonic absolutely free; and in order that those who cannot call or who live away from New York may be benefited, they will send one bottle to any address, all charges prepaid, on the receipt of 25 cents (stamps or silver) to cover cost of packing and delivering. The price of this wonderful tonic is $1.00 per bottle, and this liberal offer should be embraced by all.

The Misses Bell have just published their new book, "Secrets of Beauty." This valuable work is free to all desiring it. The book treats exhaustively of the importance of a good complexion; tells how a woman may acquire beauty and keep it. Special chapters on the care of the hair; how to have luxuriant growth; harmless methods of making the hair preserve its natural beauty and color, even to advanced age. Also instructions how to banish superfluous hair from the face, neck and arms without injury to the skin. This book will be mailed to any address on request.

FREE Trial Bottles of Wonderful Complexion Tonic free at parlors, or 25 cents (cost of packing and mailing) to those at a distance.

Correspondence cordially solicited. Address

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THE MISSES BELL'S TOILET PREPARATIONS

ARE FOR SALE IN THIS CITY BY

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I have used Ripans Tabules and was more than surprised at the effect they had on me. I had the headache every morning, bad taste in my mouth, dyspepsia and heartburn, so that my food did me no good, and then I would have to go to bed and would be sick enough to die for two or three hours. I was told to try Ripans Tabules. I bought one small bottle and they helped me, and then I bought a box of them and have taken them all, and I feel like another woman. I keep the Tabules on hand, and take one every morning the first thing when I get up. I had previously tried everything I heard of, but nothing has done me any good except Ripans Tabules, and I shall always recommend them to my friends.

A new style packet containing TEN RIPANS TABULES in a paper carton (without glass) is now for sale at some drug stores—FOR FIVE CENTS. This low-priced sort is intended for the poor and the economical. One dozen of the five-cent cartons (12 tabs) so can be had by mail by sending four eight cents to the RIPANS CHEMICAL COMPANY, No. 10 Spruce Street, New York, or a sing carton (TEN TABULES) will be sent for five cents. RIPANS TABULES may also be had of grocers, general storekeepers, news agents, and at 45 liquor stores and barber shops.