

palace, one of whom was a noted herbalist and astronomer, from whom we learnt many things about the stars and ancient methods of healing with herbs. The mother of our little patient was a frequent visitor, and she put to us all kinds of questions about the outer world, which she longed to see. And yet it was by her own desire that she kept strict purdah. Her husband was really anxious that she should come out and take her place by his side in all the public State functions, but the ancient traditions of her race were too strong. Perhaps the chief reason lay in the fact that she knew very little English and next to nothing of the English manners and customs. We were always doubtful whether she appreciated our little curtsies when she greeted us of a morning, but there was so little to relieve the tedium of her cloistered life that we never failed to recognise her high birth and station.

All members of the family were presented with a sword at birth, which never left their side—wherever the child went, the sword must go—and it was some time before we discovered that our princess's sword was kept under her pillow, together with other amulets to which she was devotedly attached. When she got better she used to play cards and a gambling game on squares of calico, with the aid of dice, with her ladies-in-waiting. We taught her to do drawn-thread work, but her little fingers were not quick, and she soon tired of the task. Her mother was anxious to learn, too, but she preferred to do wool work on canvas, and made handsome waistcoats in bright green wool and gold thread for the Maharajah and her sons.

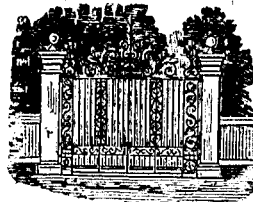
There was a sacred temple in the palace grounds, where the Maharani used to go to do puja! This was always a ceremony of importance, and the Maharajah's band used to come over from his palace, which was quite two miles away. This band was trained, and played European music to the best of its ability. The Maharani's band played native music, and both bands were requisitioned on these occasions of religious State ceremony. But the combined effect was not a happy one. Directly the Maharani's sedan chair, closely curtained, emerged from the courtyard of the Zenana, on its way to the temple, the joint bands played each their own National Anthem, and just as the strains of "God Save the King" were making you feel terribly homesick, the native band blazed out a weird discord which made you shudder.

The ceremony of greeting the new moon, whose advent was always signalled with gun-fire, was always strictly observed. Everyone loitered on the roofs in the hopes of being the first to see it, and then greetings were exchanged all round. When the princess grew better the Maharani issued invitations for an "At Home" to all her lady friends, who were nearly all relatives. They arrived about 11 a.m., dressed in their richest hued silks and most wonderful jewels. It was a perfect kaleidoscope of beautiful colour; and they were all so handsome—their clear olive skins and large luminous eyes were in perfect keeping with their Oriental dress and picturesque surroundings.

VIDA BAIRD.

Outside the Gates.

THE TALE OF A BLACK CAT.



There were three little red villas in a row, each with a green door and a shiny brass knocker. A grass plot more or less green separated each from the street, and trim green palings austere marked the dividing line. The curtains in the green framed windows were all immaculate and frilly; the doorsteps vied with each other in whiteness and the brass knockers twinkled in the sunshine.

It was a joy to behold the respective mistresses of these abodes setting forth of an afternoon; each with the latest thing in costumes and parasols, and a nose carefully tip-tilted at her neighbours' windows; the first departure scornfully watched from behind two sets of frilly curtains, the latest conscious of but an empty triumph.

The Number Twos were the latest comers, and there had been in the beginning some rivalry between the Number Ones and Number Threes (who had not been on speaking terms for twelve months) as to who should first obtain a footing in the diminutive drawing-room of a Number Two, with all its privileges of weak tea from the best china, and assorted cakes from a wicker stand that fell if you looked at it. Then came an incident that almost established an *entente* between the old inhabitants at the expense of the new comer.

One afternoon Mrs. Number One and Mrs. Number Three happened to close their front gates at the same time, shortly after Mrs. Number Two had gone forth with calling cards and daintily lifted skirts (the road in front not having yet emerged from the primal chaos of a newly built district.) Mrs. Number One ventured an opinion on the weather, with which Mrs. Number Three, somewhat dubiously, concurred. The first lady followed this up by asking if Mrs. Number Three had yet met Mrs. Number Two, to which Mrs. Number Three replied that she had called, that her call had been returned, and that she was even then meditating another sortie in the course of a few days.

Said Mrs. Number One:—"I was wondering if you happened to know anything about them. Of course, I'm not snobbish, but Alfred is rather particular who I mix with."

Quoth Mrs. Number Three: "I don't know who they are at all. Why? Have you heard anything?"

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