

*Chapter 18*

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**In Active Public Service,  
As Soldier And Statesman**

THE ANGEL OF MIDNIGHT—THE RUINS—JUGGLERS—  
CHUNDRA UN DEEN—EVER LONGING TO SEE BEYOND THE GRAVE.

**F**or several years after my departure from England, I became a traveler through various countries of the East, and for the most part was engaged, as stated in a former chapter, in the busy and exigent cares of active public life. Few who remember the dreamy somnambulist of the Berlin Brotherhood, would have recognized in him the stern soldier, earnest statesman, and energetic worker in many directions. As I considered the numerous spheres of activity in which I seemed destined to become immersed, I could not but think that Felix von Marx had kept his word that he had indeed died to add his noble manhood to my constitutional weakness, and that I must be indebted to the influence of his towering spirit for the capacity to achieve an amount of physical and intellectual labor under which many a more vigorous physique would have sunk.

But although I never allowed myself even to pause in the career of urgent life-work I was pressed into, neither did I lose sight of the one great end and aim of my earthly pilgrimage, which ever has been to obtain positive knowledge on the mystery of the unseen universe. I had lived to be assured there were many phases of spiritual life open to the understanding of man besides those which formed the subject of study and practice, amongst the Berlin Brotherhood. During my residence with my esteemed friend, John Dudley, I knew that his pure and innocent family delighted themselves in the sweet intercourse they maintained with their spirit friends. I never joined their happy seances, nor sought to impose my restless nature and troubled moods upon their harmonious gatherings; but I often hovered around them in spirit, and from thence, as well as in many less holy scenes, have learned the methods of communing with spirits, through the simple telegraphy induced by automatic passivity in what is called spirit mediumship.

I knew, too, that without circles, invocations, or formulae of any kind, my own beloved friends could reach me from the far side of that mystic river, on the shores of which they had disappeared from my straining eyes, but from whence they have all returned, one after the other, keeping watch and ward over my stormy life, with even more than the fidelity of their earthly care and tenderness.

The beautiful and gracious Constance, my brave father, my fair and gentle mother, my young brother, and many kind friends and companions who had fallen in their tracks, leaving me alone ere I knew the strength as well as the weakness of an isolated manhood—all, all

have come back to me, speaking in the tones of old, and hovering around my footsteps like beams of sunlight as they are; making me realize the full meaning of the sublime words, "the ministry of angels." Felix von Marx, too—he, the very pulse-beat of my heart, he has never left me, never failed me. In experiences nearer, dearer, and more sacred than any besides, he has still continued to pour out upon me that deep, unselfish love, which inspired in him the wild desire to give his life for me.

And yet who will sympathize with or understand me, when I own that the apparitions of these precious beings, with all their varied and ingenious methods of unsought, uninvoked telegraphy, could not always satisfy or convince me of my own soul's immortality, or their continued identity beyond a brief span of evanescent spiritual existence, a transitory state in which that identity might be preserved for a while, to be engulfed, swallowed up, cancelled again, by the horrible necessity of running the rounds of never ending, material existences. I apologized to myself and to my beloved comforters for these morbid fantasies—fantasies which fled like the shadows of night before the sunlight of their glorious presence, and yet returned again and again to haunt me when my feverish spirit was left to prey upon itself. That for which my soul hungered, was a grander, broader perception of the divine scheme than I could realize from the spheres of being absolutely known to us. I longed for a philosophy of life here and hereafter, to perceive the finger of Deity pointing to the beyond, beyond the grave, beyond the origin and ultimate of a single life, and I would far rather have been assured I should soon "sleep the sleep that knows no waking," than to be tossed thus restlessly on an ocean of speculation without compass, rudder, pilot, or anchor.

Sometimes I saw, felt, and encountered, face to face, my own "atmospheric spirit." I realized no loss of physical strength from this mysterious manifestation of duality, but it never occurred without impressing me with an unaccountable sense of awe, I might almost add, a nameless fear, which caused me to shrink away from this presence as if I were facing my worst enemy. Sometimes this hateful vision addressed me, using the language of rebuke, scorn, and irony, and commenting upon its relationship to me, like a mocking fiend, rather than the astral essence of my own spiritual body.

The spirits of those I most loved and could have trusted, conversed with me and often manifested intelligence foreign to my own consciousness, and such as proved the identity of the special individuals who rendered it; but that which they communicated failed to elucidate the mysteries by which I was surrounded.

Although they were constantly demonstrating by a thousand ingenious modes the fact that a foreign intelligence addressed me and a halo of unceasing love and watchfulness surrounded me, their revelations in other respects were slight and inconsequential, consisting for the most part of petty items of information, monitions, warnings, and prophecies, all of which I soon found to be true; yet beyond these and other small platitudes there seemed to be no common ground of ideality between us.

I longed, oh, how passionately I longed for something higher! but when I pressed home my urgent pleadings for light upon my spiritual visitants, an unaccountable weariness possessed me, and compelled me to suspend an intercourse which seemed impossible to maintain and live. Sometimes the terrible theory of the Berlin Brotherhood recurred to me, and I would be almost disposed to believe, with them, that these apparitions were in reality nothing more than "astral spirits" exhaled from the material casket in death, but that the soul was, like the body, dissipated into the elements, or else was taken up again in fresh forms with which its past existence maintained no sympathetic relations. Let me add at once that these vague and most miserable theories were sure to be refuted almost as soon as formed,

for some blessed messenger from the life beyond would present itself immediately, and after proving how completely my thoughts had been scanned, give me slight but deeply significant tokens, connecting them with the continued life individuality, and personal ministry of my angel visitant, and leaving me, for the time being, firmly fixed in the assurance of immortal life and love beyond the confines of the grave. Besides the various societies for the study of occultism to which I belonged in Europe, I became affiliated with many others during my wanderings through the East.

Like most persons interested in the occult side of nature, I had no sooner returned to India, where indeed, my earliest days of childhood had been passed, than I became fascinated with the extraordinary and preternatural powers displayed by Oriental ecstasies. Had I published these pages ten or twenty years ago I might have acceptably filled a volume with a record of the marvels I witnessed. As it is, every cheap periodical has become so redolent of East Indian magic that the gamin who polishes your boots in the streets of Paris or London, will tell you half-a-dozen snake-charming stories in as many minutes; the smirking damsel who hands you a light for your cigar will recite to you more tales of exhumed fakirs than she can count Havannas in her show-case; and the friseur who trims your beard will descant upon the facility with which dervishes can cut off heads and put them on again, how mango-trees can be grown in a given number of seconds, or thieves discovered by self-locomotive cups and balls.

The public mind in Europe has been filled ad nauseum with such wonders but whilst listening to details which I have myself beheld enacted with ever-deepening interest, taken part in, and spent years in searching out the producing causes of, I do not find this same glib-tongued, popular voice of rumor giving any philosophical explanation of how these phenomena occur. Of course we must acknowledge that their only importance is derived from the fact that their causation is occult, and transcends the power of the most enlightened scientists to explain. Even when referred to legerdemain as the easiest way of disposing of a problem which science is too ignorant to master and too proud to study out, I do not find the marvels of Oriental spiritism reproduced on any other soil, and as I know they are in many instances, at least, indications of the occult forces in nature, it may not be wholly uninteresting to touch upon the methods which I myself adopted to master the secret of their production.

My first step was to secure the services of two of the most accomplished as well as respectable members of the fakir fraternity, and having taken all the available means at command to attach them to my interest, not forgetting to separate them from each other, so as to avoid the possibility of collusion or a systematic attempt to deceive me, I had opportunity enough to observe many of the most astounding evidences of the power these men possessed, as well as to analyze at leisure their claims for its origin. In each case, as well as in numerous others, where incredible feats of preternatural wonder were exhibited, the fakirs assured me the pitris, or ancestral spirits, were the invisible wonder-workers.

Again and again they protested they could do nothing without the aid of these spiritual allies. Their own agency in the work, they gave me to understand, consisted in preparing themselves for the service of the pitris. They alleged that the material body was only a vehicle for the invisible soul, the spiritual or astral clothing of which was an element evidently analogous to the "spiritual body" of the Apostle Paul, the "magnetic body" or "life principle" of the Spiritists, the "astral spirit" of the Rosicrucians, and the "atmospheric spirit" of the Berlin Brotherhood. This element the Hindoo and Arabian ecstasies termed Agasa, or the life-fluid. They said that in proportion to the quantity and potency of agasa in the system, so was the power to work marvels by the aid of spirits. Spirits, they added, used agasa as their

means of coming in contact with matter, and when it was abundant and very powerful, the invisibles could draw it from the bodies of the ecstasies and perform with it feats only possible to themselves and the gods. "Mutilate the body, lop off the limbs, if you will," said a Brahmin, whom I had also enlisted in my service as a teacher of occultism, "and with a sufficient amount of agasa, you can instantaneously heal the wound. Agasa is the element which keeps the atoms of matter together; the knife or sword severs it, the fire expels it from its lodgement in those atoms; put the agasa back to the severed or burned parts before they have had time to fester or wither, and the parts must reunite and become whole as before."

It is by virtue of agasa that the seed germinates in the ground and grows up to be a tree, with leaves, fruit, and flowers. Pour streams of agasa on the seed, and you quicken in a minute what would else, with less of the life-fluid, occupy a month to grow. Charge stones or other inanimate objects with agasa drawn from a human body, and spirits can make such objects move, fly, swim, or travel hither and thither at will; in short, it is through the power of agasa—by which I mean force, the life of things—that all the most intelligent Hindoos with whom I studied, insisted that preternatural marvels could be wrought, always adding, however that pitris must assist in the operation, first, because their spiritual bodies were all agasa, and next, because they had a knowledge of this great living force and how to apply it, which they could not communicate to mortals.

The methods of initiation into these wonder-working powers were, I was assured, asceticism, chastity, frequent ablutions, long fasts, seasons of profound abstraction, a spirit exalted to the contemplation of deity, heaven and heavenly things, and a mind wholly sublimated from earth and earthly things. By these processes, it was claimed, the body would become subdued and the quantity of agasa communicated through the elements and by favor of the gods, would be immensely increased. It would also be more readily liberated, and under the control of spiritual agencies.

"Behold me!" cried one of my instructors on a certain occasion. "I am all agasa. This thin film of matter wherewith I am covered, these meshes of bone that form my framework of life, are they not fined away to the tenuity of the elements? They hinder not my flight through space, neither can they bind me to the earth I am casting off."

He proved the truth of his boast by springing upwards from the ground which he spurned with his foot, when lo! he ascended into mid-air, and whilst his entranced eyes were rolled upwards, and his lean, rigid arms and thin hands were clasped in ecstasy above his head, he continued to soar away nearly to the roof of the vast temple in which we were. I have already alluded in the earlier chapters of this work to the methods by which many Eastern ecstasies promoted the "mantic frenzy," such as leaping, dancing, whirling, spinning, the use of drugs and vapors of an intoxicating character, noise, music, and all other methods which might tend to distract the senses and stimulate the mind to temporary mania.

Another and very general mode of wonder-working amongst Eastern ecstasies is by illusion, a word which but ill expresses the extent of the psychological impression which a powerful adept can produce upon a number of persons at one time. It is almost impossible to describe the methods by which this haze, hallucination, or enchantment can be spread over a whole assembly, compelling them to see the chief operator in an illusory light, and imagine he is visible or invisible, or performing wholly impossible actions with wholly impossible instruments, just as he wills the spectators to believe. Those who are most successful in this species of illusion are not only "mediums" for spirits, and powerful psychologists, but they have a faculty of so enclosing themselves in agasa (spiritual atmosphere) that they can present almost any illusory appearance they please.

By way of experiment, some of the best practitioners of this singular species of enchantment have, on more than one occasion, magnetized me—I use this modern phrase for the sake of being better understood—that is to say, they have whirled, spun, and danced around me, pointing their lean fingers the whole time towards me, until, when they left me, giddy, speechless, and fixed, yet fully conscious of my curious situation, I have seen several persons pass without perceiving me, and when invited by the fakirs to describe my appearance, the strangers they addressed have stoutly affirmed there was no visible object on the spot of ground where I stood. Again, on some occasions, these men have not only clothed me, but other persons, with this atmosphere of invisibility.

They have also caused an immense assemblage gathered together in one of the temples of Siva, at Benares, to see tigers, lions, and other terrific sights, when there was positively no such objects at the spot indicated. To perform these acts of illusion successfully, the operator must be a good psychologist, surround himself with powerful bands of spirits, prepare his body by a long fast, excite the mantic frenzy by pungent essences and anointings, and thus accumulate that powerful charge of agasa which will enable his spirit band to work through him as their human instrument. When I add that the natives of the East, with their slender, lithe forms, and natural taste for such exercises, delight to practice the arts of legerdemain, until they arrive at a degree of skill wholly unknown to the people of other lands, I believe I have presented to the curious reader the rationale of all the methods in which Oriental marvels are performed.

Let us not mistake or confound, however, the acts of the professed juggler with those of the religious ecstatic. The two classes are not only distinct in their modes of performance, but in their aims and the motives that possess them. The juggler is so by profession. He is wonderfully skillful in his art, skillful enough, indeed, to impress many an astute beholder with the belief that he must be aided by, or in league with supermundane powers. Still, those who, like myself, will take the trouble to follow, his performances carefully and pay him sufficiently for the information, will find that he is but a juggler after all, and that his exhibitions are prompted by no higher motives than to obtain the petty remuneration which his skill commands.

Despite the fact that many of the East Indian ecstasies prostitute their remarkable powers to the most abject system of mendicity, there are still a numerous class who are moved by far higher motives, the culminating point of their incredible acts of asceticism and self-inflicted torture being the realization of exalted religious aspirations. As the most accomplished adepts in Oriental marvels do not exhibit their power for alms, except in behalf of the temple, lamasery, or monastery to which they belong, they do not migrate into remunerative spheres of action, like other exhibitors, and their arts acquire a certain amount of dignity from their association with the rites of temple services.

It was under the conviction that there were spiritual forces involved in many of the wonderful phenomena I witnessed, and that, inconsequential as these were in the results obtained, they indicated an array of unexplored powers yet latent in human experience, that I determined to devote one consecutive twelve months and as much time as I could spare besides, to the study of this subject and a thorough personal experience of its methods of procedure. It was with this view that I abandoned my pleasant suburban residence at Benares and took up my abode with a company of devotees in the gloomy subterranean crypts of a vast range of ancient ruins, where the spirit of a grand, antique faith pervaded every stone and hallowed the scenes which were once consecrated to the loftiest and most exalted inspiration. I am bound in honor not to reveal the methods of initiation by which I graduated into the dignity of a "full-fledged ecstatic," under the guidance and instruction

of self-devoted, self-sacrificing men, who had themselves attained to the mastery of the mightiest spiritual forces.

It is enough to say I became all asceticism; spent my time in the prescribed duties, and even exceeded in rigidity the discipline laid down for me. My capacity as a "natural magician," so my teachers informed me, shortened the term of my probation and modified the severity of the exercises enjoined, and amongst the Buddhist priests—with whom I studied, as well as the Brahmins—would have elevated me to any rank in prophetic dignity to which my ambition might have aspired.

Amongst the Brahmins, my lack of caste excluded me from priestly office, but my superiors entreated me to remain with them, tempting me with prospects of spiritual distinction held out to very few.

I need hardly say my purpose was achieved when I mastered the secret of true occult power. I proved, tested, tried, and practiced it, and I know that every element in being can be made subject to the human soul; every achievement of spiritual or even deific power is attainable to man. All this, and much that I am pledged not to reveal, and which in our present corrupt and licentious condition of society, would prove a curse rather than a blessing, and convert the earth into pandemonium rather than heaven, I learned, proved, tried and practiced. These experiences were not undertaken during the occasion of my first visit to Hindostan, when the career of military life enjoined upon me by my family and connections enabled me to devote only a very limited amount of time to such studies; my principal successes in these directions were achieved during a second and more recent visit to the East, and I only anticipate that period by alluding to the results I obtained in this chapter. What I learned and the powers I attained to, however, were not cheaply or easily acquired. It is enough at present to declare I exchanged for the comforts of home and civilization, a life of discipline which would make most luxurious Europeans shrink back aghast and horror-struck.

In the inscrutable methods of Providence which seem to work all things together for good, I have sometimes thought I was permitted, if not impelled, to act out the desperate attempt, at self-destruction induced by my frenzy of grief for the loss of my beloved friend, von Marx, chiefly to prepare me for the tremendous austerities demanded of me, ere I could cross the threshold of humanity and enter upon "the life of the gods," at least, in respect to the spirit's mastery over the hinderances of matter. Although, like most persons of "mediumistic" or naturally prophetic tendencies, I inherited a very poor constitution, it was wonderful to me at the time, wonderful to me since to remember, with what extraordinary powers of endurance I sustained the enormous penalties I had to pay for spiritual light and prowess. Whilst many other neophytes associated with me failed utterly, and others withdrew with broken health, shattered minds, or even yielded up life itself on the altar of their vain endeavor, I passed through every ordeal like one upborne in the arms of mighty spirits, and sustained by a power which I can never attribute to merely human effort. All felt, though I alone knew individually the power that sustained me, and that I was permitted to pass through such extraordinary ordeals simply to demonstrate the triumph of spirit over matter, and the force by which the human soul can transcend all the limitations of time and space.

From the first moment of my arrival in Hindostan—in fact, throughout my whole career—I have spent my life in alternate devotion to spiritual experiences and the more material activities of such duties as circumstances impelled me to undertake. Notwithstanding the fact that I became immersed in public life, and that of the most stormy and exigent character when I joined my father's connections in India, just so long as health and strength permitted I never relinquished my Spiritualistic pursuits or researches, nor did I find them

incompatible with the routine of other occupations. I was frequently obliged to reside in several of the large cities of Hindostan and the Deccan, besides spending some time with those relations to whom I have alluded in the commencement of these sketches, but my "Patmos" was a suburban residence near Benares, where I found all the incentives in surroundings and association to prosecute my favorite studies.

Throughout the length and breadth of India I ever encountered undying witnesses to the fervent faith and heartfelt devotion with which the ancient Hindoo cherished the principles of his religious belief. Every colossal monument, gigantic pagoda, or stupendous cave temple, is an offering, sanctified by the heart's best blood of adoring millions, to the fire-gods of antique worshippers.

Hindostan has of late years been the theme of such magnificent word painting and glowing literary imagery, that I forbear from the attempt to offer any addition to the innumerable accounts already extant of its sculptures and monumental glories. Like the performances of wonder-working fakirs and dervishes, the splendors of Elephanta, Ellora, Carli, and Orissa have become popular themes in the mouths of literary gossips.

From the learned archaeologists to the humblest school child, the gigantic elephants, colossal sphinxes, mighty sculptures, and awful caverns of this solemn old land have been canvassed in large and small talk in every country of civilization. With throbbing heart and dazzled brain the traveller may wander beneath the shadows of the grim idols, the darksome caverns, the mighty banyan groves and memory-haunted forests, but the glories and wonders of ancient India have been so thoroughly popularized by measuring tourists and surveying explorers that any well-educated young lady from a London or Paris seminary will tell you the exact dimensions of the Kailasa better far than I could who have spent long days and lonely nights wandering amidst its superb colonnades of sphinxes and elephants.

During the hours which I devoted to meditation amidst these stupendous relics of a faith which has rendered its gods immortal by the miracle of its own immortal genius, it was not on measurements or styles that my mind brooded. I longed to pierce the mystery of the inspiration which suggested those sublime structures; to unveil the gigantic spirituality that embodied itself in the colossi around me; to know the mystery of that central spiritual sun whose Protean forms of representation, mirrored forth the lofty imaginings of the antique mind from all the grim, grotesque, sublime, and wonderfully varied forms of sculpture around me. Sometimes I declaimed in wild and passionate accusation against the silent sky and speechless stars, that had revealed so much to the seers and prophets of old, and yet were so dumb to me. In their solemn brightness the ancient priest had been inspired to read the mystery of the Alpha and Omega; why were they now so coldly unsympathetic to my appeals for light? How still and motionless they seemed to my straining gaze! How swift, mighty, and powerful I knew them to be under the rule of the eternal hosts who commanded and marshaled them into living rank and file! Here, in the midst of those gigantic forms in which the mind of elder ages has veiled the secrets of deific being and embodied its perception of godlike power and godlike dealings with men, is there no vibrating echo of the voices which once resounded through these colossi, interpreting the mystery of being to rapt and listening disciples—not a tone left to answer my passionate and urgent appeals for light?

During a residence of some months in the province of Arungabad and whilst lingering in the ruinous city of Dowletabad, I rode over nearly every night to the mountain region of Ellora, and frequently remained there wandering amidst its silent monuments or sheltering during the livelong night in one of the numerous grottos that had once been the abode of the anchorites or of priests, whose duty it was to minister in the neighboring temples.

One night, when I had resolved to return to my residence, I lingered at the entrance of a low crypt, which I had fitted up in my own fashion with a couch of sweet-scented leaves and herbs, and where I was accustomed to pass many hours of my nightly wanderings. For some time I stood gazing abstractedly over the table-land which formed the central enclosure of a chain of mountains whose cathedral-like masses, towering up to the skies in a vast amphitheatre, were pierced in every direction with the openings to crypts and grottos, or adorned with those colossal sculptures which indicated the entrances to the temples.

The moon shone full, white, and glaring over these awful solitudes, more awful by far in the desolation which man had left, than in the pristine grandeur of nature. It was strange to observe how tremblingly the moonbeams lingered around the dark, cavernous mouths of crypts and temples, but never pierced the unlighted gloom within, as if her holy light was repelled by the mysterious secrets to which those solemn scenes were dedicated. A thousand fanciful shapes seemed to me to press back her flood of soft radiance, lest the light should fall on an arcanum veiled even from the speechless witness of the lamps of heaven.

My horse, which had become almost as accustomed to pilgrim life as his master, had strayed from the large grotto I had appropriated as his stable and was quietly cropping the scanty herbage of a moonlit plateau. Suddenly the sensitive creature raised his head and moved his ears with that peculiar action which announces an unusual presence approaching, long ere our duller senses can recognize it. At the same moment a shadow passed across the illuminated ground, and the figure of a man appeared, issuing from a cleft in the mountains, and for a few seconds lingering, like myself, in abstracted contemplation of the solitary scene. Presently he quitted the spot where I had first observed him, but instead of striking the path to the right which led off from the amphitheatre of mountains, he came towards me, evidently purposing to cross the plateau in the line of which I was standing.

As he neared me I observed that his monastic habit and cowl proved him to be one of those ascetics who so frequently sojourn amidst these desolate regions, not unfrequently spending their lives within the shelter of some lonely grotto or secluded crypt.

I was at no loss to guess the secret of his appearance at such an hour, believing that he, like myself, was intent upon communion with the spirit of the scene. Desiring to afford the stranger the same uninterrupted seclusion which I myself sought, I was retreating noiselessly into my hermitage, when he came towards me, with a swift and sudden action, and pausing opposite where I stood, so that the light of the moon might fall directly on my face yet leave his in shadow, he said in a sweet and winning tone, speaking in my favorite dialect, the Shen Tamil, "Forgive me, sir, if I congratulate you on choosing so fair a night for a visit to this impressive scene." Ordinarily I would have resented this unwelcome invasion on my beloved solitude; besides, it was the well-understood custom of visitors to these deserted cities of the dead never to intrude upon the meditations of those who must have come there for any other purpose rather than that of social intercourse. I remembered, however, that I had left home late in the evening, and that without finding time to assume my usual travelling dress; hence, that my military attire, plainly enough disclosed by the broad glare of the moonbeam, would prove that I was no ascetic, whilst my horse in the distance showed that I was a mere transient visitor to the scene. It struck me at once then, that it was the monk rather than the soldier, who might be expected to feel annoyance at the presence of a stranger, and besides this, there was something so sweet and refined in his pure accent and winning voice that I could not refuse an exchange of courtesy with him. Determined, however, to ascertain his right to become my associate, I said, abruptly enough, I suppose, "My father is free of this holy city. Is he then a dweller within its deep shadows?"

Without following my lead in the somewhat constrained style suggested by the poetical dialect in which he spoke, he replied simply "Do you see yon black spot up there, far up on the mountain side? Nay sir, not there—be pleased to step a little farther out into the moon-light—there, just where yon dark line divides that clump of bushes."

"I perceive," I said. And I did perceive that he was critically scrutinizing my dress, whilst he was pointing off to the spot he wished me to notice.

"Well, sir," he rejoined, "there is the Dharma Sala in which I have found shelter for many a long year, when on my return from distant pilgrimages I have yearned to indulge that universal weakness to which our poor frail humanity is most subject, namely, the love of home."

"Home!" I involuntarily exclaimed. "Is that hole in the mountain side your home?"

"Even so."

"You are then—" I paused, for despite the dark shroud which enveloped his whole form and face, there was something in the bearing of this stranger which would not admit of questioning.

"I am," he rejoined, in a quiet tone, "a native of a distant province, a Vaidya" (one who practices the art of the mediciner, the son of mixed castes), "but I am drawn hither by sympathy and some other motives. I have many deep interests in these mountain caves and temples, but the one nearest to the selfishness of human nature is the love of home, and in yon hole in the mountain, as you so graphically term my retreat, that one personal interest finds its satisfaction. Don't you love home, your self, or are you so immersed in the excitement of your noble profession (pointing as he spoke to my sword), that you would prefer the battlefield to the rest of home?"

"I have no home but the camp," I answered, brusquely; "I seek none but the grave."

"Too young in age, too old in wisdom for such an answer as that," he replied gravely.

"Listen: Home is the soul's rest, not a locality; it is the scene where the wandering Yogee and the sainted Irdhi will find rest in the infinite soul; it is the goal of all the self-inflicted tortures that fakirs and lamas put upon their miserable bodies. Rest in Brahm is the aim which enables the Bodhisattvas to extinguish the perfume of the senses, the ecstasy of the emotions, the luxury of thought, and the sensibility of self-recognition. Home is soul absorption in the central source of being; in short," he added, starting, and changing the wild monotone of ecstasy into which he seemed to be soaring, back to the simple phraseology of the cosmopolite in which he at first addressed me, "in short, Chevalier, mask our aims in what abstractions we will, whether we pursue love of woman or love of God, love of gold or love of renown, the goal of our affections, whenever we attain to it, is home, and, here or hereafter, our home will be where our treasure is. Am I not right?"

"Pardon me, sir," I replied, without noticing his rhapsody, "you called me by a title I am little accustomed to hear from the lips of a stranger. Do you then know me?"

"You are accustomed to be addressed in military phraseology," he replied, at once naming my rank in the army. "Excuse my indiscretion."

"But who is it, then," I cried, somewhat piqued to be so completely mastered, "that is discreet enough to mask himself, yet unmask me?"

"The distinguished ones of earth marvel to find that the humbler classes look up to them as the ant regards the elephant," he answered, in a tone which matched the satire of his words; "nevertheless, if it be worth your while to know the dweller of yon Math, know me as Chundra ud Deen. To be more in the line of your own civilization, should you condescend to grant the request I shall presently make, call me, if you please, Byga (mediciner); and now for my request."

He then, in the most careless and off-hand way, invited me to visit him in his "hole," which he so pretentiously called a Math or circle of huts, such as is devoted to the use of a spiritual teacher and his disciples, but in the words of invitation he addressed to me, he interwove in a pointed way, impossible for me to mistake, the watchword of an association whose solemn bonds had set such a seal of secrecy even upon my very thoughts, to say nothing of my lips, that I started and shivered whilst the words fell on the listening air, as if their commonplace expression had been the deepest blasphemy. Had a peal of thunder broken the stillness of that breathless moonlit night, I could not have been more startled than to hear those forbidden words. Few there are on earth who know of the existence of such an association, fewer still who can claim fraternity with it; yet of that few, one stood before me now that was inevitably proved. Other words and signs were interchanged, yet we did not touch each other. It was enough, and without further hesitancy I agreed to renew our acquaintance at the same hour and place on the following night; and thus we parted, he disappearing in the impenetrable gloom of a neighboring temple, I signalling my horse to my side and preparing for a midnight ride home to Dowletabad.