

**A TALE OF THE GREAT
MUTINY. VOL. III. THE
GAGE OF HONOUR**

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A tale of the great Mutiny. Vol. III. The Gage of honour by Anonymous

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THE GAGE OF HONOUR.

A Tale of the Great Mutiny.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF 'THE EASTERN HUNTERS,' &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE GAGE OF HONOUR.

CHAPTER I.

‘ Let him but live, and both are Thine,
Together Thine—for blest or crost,
Living or dead, his doom is mine,
And, if *he* perish, both are lost !’—*Lalla Rookh.*

I do not propose entering into any of those revolting details which characterized so many outbreaks. If the imagination of any of my readers is so morbid as to require such stimulating food, I refer them to the Indian newspapers of the time. In some of those painful nar-

ratives the most exacting seeker of the unwholesome excitement of pure sensationalism will find enough to gratify a jaded appetite. At the same time, to that gratification will be added the knowledge that fact there stands for fiction.

All who escaped from the first attack made off towards the fort. Some skirted the cantonments, some dashed right through, and others again sought, by a circuitous route in the country, or across the river, to gain the object of their flight.

The General with all of his staff reached it in safety, as did most of those with whom my narrative has specially dealt. But poor Captain Goodall never made his appearance. He was shot down before he cleared the parade-ground ;

Douglas at the same time narrowly escaping by the speed of his horse. But he had the satisfaction of pistolling the man who, as far as he could judge in the confused *mêlée*, was Goodall's actual murderer.

The course of my tale, however, leads me to another quarter.

According to a custom recently established, St Clair had, a short time before the events just narrated, ridden forth with a small party of a dozen Sikh troopers to patrol the various roads between the fort and cantonments. On this occasion he first took that which led most directly from the town towards the isolated dwellings of the two principal civil officers, intending thereafter to

sweep round and inspect the others.

It was the last evening on which Mr Selby was to remain in his house ; but he was anxious to stick to his post as long as was possible, and his daughter had absolutely refused to leave him. Mrs Atherton had a day or two previously taken possession of tents pitched for her under the fort walls, and had unavailingly endeavoured to persuade her friend Norah to accompany her. Miss Selby would on no account desert her father, and the latter was fully persuaded that the mutiny was not so imminent as it proved to be.

As Major St Clair rode meditatively on, followed by his handful of troopers, his attention was aroused by what seemed the suppressed and distant hum of men in

front. This was almost immediately followed by a streak of vivid light which shot up into the air from the direction of cantonments. Hastily calling on his men, he trotted forward, and soon the signal-gun roared forth its summons to plunder and murder, and additional flames announced the further progress of destruction.

The human hum in front now changed into the noisy turmoil of a shouting multitude, and St Clair knew that Mr Selby's house was attacked. As he now rapidly approached, the glare of torches, and shortly flames from the burning out-houses, lighted the way. The dwelling itself, being an old palace of two storeys, flat roofed, and firmly cemented, without any

thatch, was not so easily ignitable as more ordinary bungalows.

St Clair was aware that a small guard of seven men was located on the basement of the building, and he remembered with satisfaction that these were of his own regiment, under an old duffedar he had specially selected. Inimical as the Sikh is, equally to Mussulman as Hindoo, they had little chance of quarter in case of capture, and would fight to the last. But what were so few against the host now shouting and firing in front of the house, intent, apparently, on assaulting the front door?

Every now and then, indeed, a yell announced that a shot fired from some of the windows had told. This was an-