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1891

EIGHT DAYS:

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON

SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE

1891

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Two dapper syces or grooms have brought up a couple of ponies. We do not speak from any personal knowledge, but still we are perfectly sure that the visits of his Grace the Duke of Westminster to the stable of Bend Or were not more frequent, or more productive of pride and pleasure and satisfaction, than were the visits of Tommy Walton and Loo Hill to the stables of these two animals.

The three horsemen have soon reached the road which runs along the top of the Ridge, and as Colonel Grey—he has a small and slight but well-knit figure, and a bright, clever, handsome face, broad-foreheaded, blue-eyed, aquiline-nosed, broad-chinned, with a sweeping moustache curling up at the ends and yellow-coloured, of which same colour is his hair—gives the reins there to his splendid Arab horse, a dark bay with black points, they have soon passed over it. This road ends in another which leads out from the Ajmere gate of the city. This they follow, not city-wards, but the other way, countrywards, until they come to a high brick wall running along

its edge. They pass in at a high gateway, by which stands a sentry. The grounds they have entered on exhibit a combination of park and garden, and, as the Babe remarks to Loo Hill, recall to mind 'the Zoo ;' for under these lofty trees stands a zebra, and under these other trees is chained a rhinoceros ; here, in a strong wooden cage, a magnificent Bengal tiger is pacing to and fro ; in this little tank strange water-fowl are floating or wading ; here is an aviary, there a monkey-house ; beneath these mango-trees is tethered a twelve-tined stag ; here is a black bear, with his pit and his pole ; they pass by an enclosure in which stand some spotted deer ; and in this paddock paces about that huge, strange animal, the English dray-horse. The road they are on, after winding round a large circular flower-garden, enclosed by a thick laurel hedge, leads up to the fine, tall-columned portico in front of the mansion, which, though only one-storied, well deserves for its size and stateliness the name of 'mahal' or 'palace,' by which it is commonly known. But Colonel

Grey leaves it and enters on a smaller side road which runs towards a bungalow situated in a separate corner of the grounds.

The Rajah Gunput Rao, to whom this palace belongs, is remarkable for his friendly relations with the English ; he is very fond of their society, has almost daily intercourse with them ; he plays cards and billiards with them ; has coursing matches and cock-fights with them ; goes to their entertainments and gives them entertainments in return ; he often has them to live with him, but not under his own immediate roof—differences of manners and customs, and personal habits and personal requirements, social and religious prejudices, forbid that. He has had this separate bungalow built and furnished for their special use and accommodation ; here they may eat and drink and sleep in their own elaborate and uncomfortable, and in many respects to him horrible, fashion. ‘ ‘Tis our hunting day ! had sung one of the light-hearted lads, and they find the hunting-party assembled in front of this bungalow—three or four of thei.