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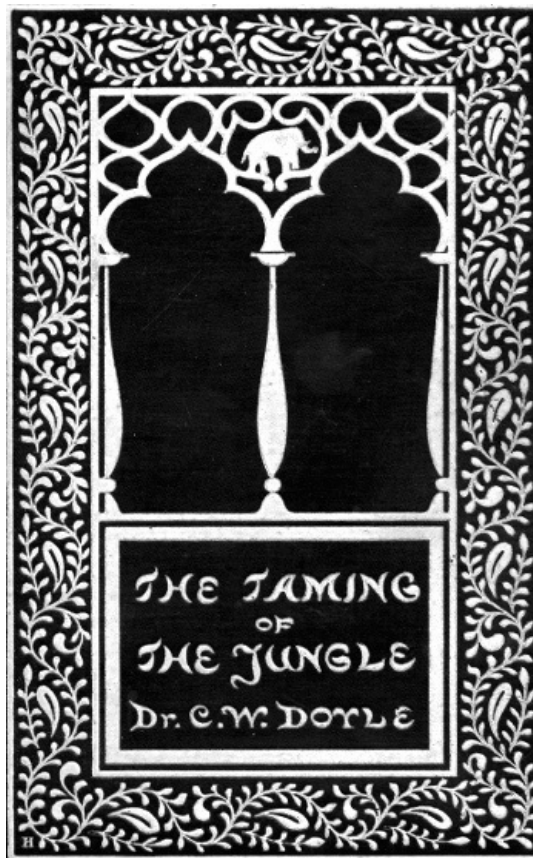
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# THE TAMING OF THE JUNGLE

BY DR. C. W. DOYLE

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# Preface

For a better understanding of this story, it will be necessary to say a few words concerning the people of the Terai,—the great tract of jungle that skirts the foothills of the Himalayas, in the Province of Kumaon. They are a simple, primitive folk, and migratory in their ways: inhabiting the interior valleys of the hills in the hot weather and the monsoon, and the foothills and the Terai during the winter.

In official reports they are described as "low-caste Hindoos;" but they are as far removed from the low-caste Hindoos of the plains, on the one hand, as they are from the high-caste Rajpoots, who are the gentry of Kumaon, on the other. The monstrous Pantheism of the Brahmin is unknown to them, and the ritual and severe limitations of caste that shackle the former in all the relations of life have no influence on the Padhans of Kumaon. Tending their flocks and their herds, and cultivating their terraced fields in the summer and their patches of rye and corn in the winter, they pass lives of Arcadian simplicity among scenes that surpass Ida and Olympus in beauty, and which vie with the glades of Eden, as Milton and Tennyson described them.

"Me rather, all that bowery loneliness,  
The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,  
And bloom profuse, and cedar arches charm."

Tennyson might have written that of the Terai in midwinter. And its people conform, as might be expected, to their environment. Life among them is found at first hand: their loves and hates are ingenuous, and present social aspects that must vanish before the march of civilization.

The critics may object to the manner of the courtship of Tara, as not being in accord with the marriage customs of the natives of India. To them I would reply, that the experience of a dozen years spent in intimate relations with, and in close observation of, the Kumaon Padhans, has satisfied me that these children of nature are guided strongly by their natural feelings; and that, in the selection of their wives, they are as often swayed by their affections as we are.

C. W. DOYLE.

SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA, January, 1899.

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## CHAPTER I

### *A Jungle Vendetta*

"This was the way of it," said Ram Deen to a circle of listeners sitting round a fire by the side of the jungle road near Lal Kooah. Ram Deen drove the mail-cart in its final stage to Kaladoongie, and with his relay of fresh horses was awaiting the arrival of the mail. He was, next to the Assistant Superintendent of the Forest Department of the District, a power on the road, and his audience, accordingly, listened to him with due respect. "This was the way of it: I owed Bheem Dass one rupee and six annas for flour and pulse and ghee, and my donkey fell sick, so that he could not be forced by goad, nor by the lighting of a fire beneath him, to rise; and I could not convey my earthenware to Moradabad and sell it, and so remove the galling of Bheem Dass's tongue.

"Then the Thanadar came, and read script to me that was written on government paper, whereof I understood but little, save that the words were Urdu, and sounded very terrible to me, who speak Gamari only, and am a poor man. And he took my potter's wheel from me, and bade his chuprassi beat me then, and daily thereafter at noon—twelve strokes each day—till I made restitution to Bheem Dass.

"Brothers, we be all poor men here, and ye know that God hath not given us understanding save to suffer stripes like beasts of burden, and to sleep and eat when we can, and beget children to succeed to our blows."

There was a deep "humph" of assent when he had ceased speaking. The little man who freighted village produce from Kaladoongie to Moradabad by bullock-cart said, as he handed Ram Deen the hookah that was circling round the fire, "A knife-thrust in the dark has settled heavier scores than thine;" and one suggested a blow from a weighted bamboo club, and another the evil eye; but Ram Deen smoked in silence, and after they had all had their say he passed the hookah to his neighbor and went on:

"Whenas my back smarted shrewdly that night from the blows of the chuprassi's shoe, so that I could not sleep, I took the oil from my chirag and anointed my back therewith. As soon as the false dawn blinked in the east I made a fire and light, without waking my son—my babe, Buldeo, and he without a mother—and I made store of chupattis with all the flour that was left, putting the remainder of the ghee on the first batch. Then I dug up three rupees and two annas that I had buried under the hearth, and waking Buldeo I fed him; and whilst he ate I made a bundle of such things as even a poor man has need of,—a blanket, a hookah and lotah, and shoes to wear through the villages, and the food I had prepared.

"And ere the village cocks waked or the minas and crows and green parrots opened council in the peepul trees, Buldeo and I were footing the jungle path to Nyagong, he holding his hand over his head to reach mine, for he was but three years in age.

"And when we had proceeded a mile or twain into the jungle Buldeo spake and said, 'Thy man-child is tired.' And I set him on my shoulder, and so carried him until the sun began to shoot slant rays from the west. Whereon we stopped and ate; and, after, I fastened him with my waistband in the fork of a tree, saying, 'Son of mine, bide here till I return, and be not afraid.'

"Then, collecting grass and scrub, I made a circle of fire round the tree, and sped back to the village; and as the bell tolled the hour of ten that night a flame leaped up from the hut of the bunnia, Bheem Dass, to whom I owed money.

"Ere I returned to the jungle path I could hear Bheem Dass shout as a man being beaten, 'ram dhwy! ram dhwy!' and the smart on my back waxed easier."

By this time the hookah had made the round of the circle and once more reached Ram Deen, and as he paused again to "drink tobacco" his listeners made comment:

"Wah! coach-wan ji," said the little carrier, "knives may be blunt and clubs cracked, but fire loveth stubble and thatch. Ho, ho!"

And Ram Deen smiled grimly as he passed the hookah to his neighbor, who said as he took it, "And what of thy man-child, Buldeo?"

Ram Deen tucked the ends of his parted beard under his turban, and spitting bravely into the fire to conceal the tremor in his voice, he said, "As the dawn broke I reached the tree whereon I had fastened my son. When I came near a pack of jackals that had been worrying something under the tree slunk away. The child was not to be seen, but the bark of the tree was scored with the talons of a leopard, and at its foot was a small red cap and a handful of fresh bones."

Ram Deen puffed the hookah in silence when it reached him again.

By and by, in response to the expectation of his listeners, he said, "Bheem Dass rode after me on the mail-cart to Kaladoongie that night. I knew he would come, and therefore I brake the telegraph wire and fastened it across the road a foot above the ground. When the horse stumbled over it and fell the driver was thrown on his head and killed. But Bheem Dass lay groaning on the road with a broken thigh-bone.

"And I held a lamp taken from the cart to my face, so that he should know me, and I spat and stamped on him; and thereafter I mounted the mail-cart and drove it over his skull as he screamed for mercy.

"I took the mail to Kaladoongie, and it was told the sahib-log that the mail-cart had been overturned and the coach-wan and Bheem Dass killed; and they made me driver because the road was unsafe and I had shown them that I was not afraid.

"Ye are poor men and know naught,—knowledge dieth suddenly!"

And the bullock driver said, "Ho, ho! coach-wan sahib, we be poor men and know nothing, and are fain to live."

The mail-cart drove up in a few minutes out of the darkness, the horses were rapidly changed, and Ram Deen dashed off into the jungle with a brave tarantara.

## CHAPTER II

### *Hasteen*

"Ram deen," said the stout Thanadar of Kaladoongie, "it is by the order of the sircar (government) that I question thee concerning this jungle wanderer. Whatsoever thou sayest will be set down by the munshi and laid before the commissioner sahib."

The "wanderer" put one hand on a tubby stomach that ill-assorted with his attenuated limbs, and with the fingers of the other in close apposition he pointed to his mouth, whining and saying to those round him, "Oh, my father and my mother, we be hungry,—Hasteen and I."

He was a wee little manikin of the chamar (tanner) caste, and about six years old. There was not a rag on him, save a sorry whisp of puggrī that made no pretence of covering the top-knot of hair which all Hindoos of the male sex, and of whatever caste, wear on their heads as a handle for the transportation of their souls to heaven.

He crouched in front of the fire of cowpats and grass, holding up his little hands to the blaze, and beside him lay a huge pariah dog with its head on his lap. One of its ears had been recently cut off close to the skull, and it moved the bloody stump to and fro as the heat of the fire fell on it. When any one approached the little chamar the dog growled threateningly, and the small crowd of listeners was fain to keep at a respectful distance.

"Thanadar ji," replied Ram Deen, the redoubtable driver of the mail-cart to Kaladoongie, "the night air is shrewd, and it were well to feed the little one and to put a blanket round him ere I tell you of his finding."

"Ay, and forget not Hasteen," said the small chamar, pointing to the dog. When the great beast heard its name it slapped its tail against the ground.

A woman standing on the outskirts of the crowd took off her chudder and passed it to Ram Deen, who, keeping a wary eye on Hasteen, wrapped it round the little waif; and Tulsi Ram, the village pundit, also handed his blanket to Ram Deen. By the time the little one was duly happed up, Gunga Deen, the fat sweetmeat vender, returned with a tray of cates and milk, sufficient for three grown men, and set it before the new arrival, who, to his honor be it told, shared bite and bite with his four-footed friend. And between mouthfuls he answered questions and told his story to the Thanadar:

"My name, Most Honorable, is Biroo, and we be chamars of the village of Budraon,—my father and mother, Hasteen and I. There were none others of our family, and Hasteen and I be brothers, for we sucked the same pap, and that my mother's, as she hath so often told me. I am the older by three months, wherefore he mindeth me.

"Whence is Hasteen's name? How should I know, Protector of the Poor? I am but a poor man and know naught."

Tulsi Ram, the pundit, ventured to throw some light on the derivation of Hasteen's name. He hoped, ere he died, to pass the entrance examination of the Calcutta University; and, after the manner of his kind, he was preparing himself for it by the slow and steady process of learning the prescribed text-books off by heart.

"Thanadar ji, the dog hath its name from Warren Hasteen, the great sahib who killed the Kings of Delhi, as thou wottest, and daily fed on young babes, whereof midwives and old women who saw him tell to this day. And, moreover, he was a great fighter."

"Wah, Tulsi Ram!" exclaimed the Thanadar, "thou shalt yet become a baboo in the post-office at Naini Tal."

"But there never was fighter like Hasteen," said the little chamar, whose courage rose as his hunger abated, and rolling up a chupatti he gave it to the dog, who made one mouthful of it. "He hath blackened the faces of all the dogs of our village," he went on; "and last winter he overcame a dog of fierce countenance and crooked legs, that belonged to the sahib who camped near our village, and left it for dead on the plain; and the sahib would have beaten me, but Hasteen rose upon him and threw him down, and stood over him till I smote Hasteen with my bamboo club and dragged him off the sahib. Ah, thou wicked one, thou budmash!" and the great beast cowered before the wee man's threatening finger and licked his feet. "And therefrom came all our woes, for our folk drave us from Budraon, fearing trouble for the killing of the sahib's dog, and my father would have slain Hasteen, but I restrained him. So we went to Nyagong, and there thieves came by night and would have despoiled us of our hides, but Hasteen prevented them; and thereafter the son of the Jamadar of Nyagong, who was a vain fellow and wore his turban awry, walked lame for many a day; and the bunnia (shopkeeper), who is the Jamadar's brother, put ground glass in the raw sugar he sold us—for so my father said—and my mother died.

"Last week my father came not home, and for three days I saw him not; then—I looking on—they drew a man out of the village well with his hands tied behind his back and a great stone fastened to his feet,—and it was my father!

"And this night a flame leaped up from our hut, and Hasteen went swiftly forth into the moonlight, his crest standing on his neck and back. I followed with what haste I could, and thereafter I came up with Hasteen, and he lay beside a dead man, whose eyes were wide open and on whose lips was froth, and a sharp knife in his hand;—and it was the son of the Jamadar!

"Thereupon I caught Hasteen by one ear and smote him on the other,—for he had done this killing; and the hand wherewith I smote him was covered with blood, so I saw his hurt, and that he had lost an ear.

"And the villagers waked whenas they heard the crackling of the flames from our hut and the barking of the village dogs; and Hasteen and I ran towards the road that leads to Kaladoongie, being more fearful of the men of Nyagong than of the wild things of the jungle.

"When we came to the bridge over the Bore Nuddee my feet were tired, and calling Hasteen to me for warmth I set my back to the wall of the bridge and so fell asleep; and now that I have eaten of thy bounty I would fain sleep again," and the little man yawned in the presence of the most august assembly he had ever faced.

"It was thus I found him, Thanadar ji," said Ram Deen, "and I came none too soon. A mile from the bridge I heard the hunting bay of a gray wolf, and when I came nearer I could see in the moonlight, crouched beside the end of the bridge, some great beast that leapt into the jungle as the cart approached; and then the mail of the Rani (Empress) of Hindoostan was stayed by a graceless pariah dog that guarded this jungle wayfarer, and, frightening my horses, denied me passage over the bridge. I could not have brought in the mail to-night had it not been for this Rustum, who beat the dog and restrained him. Is it not so, O Terror of Nyagong?"

But the little man was fast asleep by this time, and Ram Deen, by permission of Hasteen, who followed close at his heels, carried the small chamar to his own hut and put him into his own bed; "for that he was of the age," he said to himself, "of Buldeo, my son, who was lost to me three years ago,—and he without a mother."

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## CHAPTER III

### *The Hunting of Cheeta Dutt*

A few nights after the finding in the jungle of Biroo, the little chamar (tanner), by Ram Deen, who drove the mail-cart from Lal Kooah, the notables of Kaladoongie were gathered round a fire in front of the police-station. The Thanadar (chief of police), as befitted his rank and dignity, sat cross-legged on his charpoi, smoking gravely, whilst the rest of the company squatted on their heels, after the manner of the natives of India, passing a hookah round the circle and discussing in a desultory fashion the current events of that section of the Terai.

A faint bugle-note far off in the jungle announced the approach of the mail-cart, and soon after the distant rumble of the wheels was heard as Ram Deen drove over the Bore bridge. When he was within a quarter of a mile of the village he blew a brave blast, and presently dashed up at full speed into the firelight, Biroo standing between his knees, and a huge pariah dog bounding along by the side of the cart. Soon after Ram Deen, followed by Biroo and the big dog, joined the circle round the fire.

"Salaam, malakoom!" said Biroo, gravely saluting the Thanadar, and including the rest of those assembled in his sweeping salute.

"Malakoom, salaam!" returned the Thanadar. "So thou hast brought in the Queen's mail safely, my Rustum?"

"Hasteen and I," began the little fellow, putting a caressing hand on the head of the great dog, who lay beside him winking at the fire, "Hasteen and I fear nought that moveth in the jungle, save only the men of Nyagong;—and then, too, there was Ram Deen."

This was said so seriously that the men sitting round the fire laughed at the little man's gravity; and Ram Deen smiled as he spread an armful of dry grass on the ground, into which he tucked the little fellow, and wrapped him up in his blanket. Hasteen settled himself beside Biroo, and they soon became oblivious of the circle round the fire.

"How likest thou the little jungle waif, Ram Deen?" inquired the Thanadar.

"Thanadar ji, he is to me as mine own son, Buldeo, come back to life; and he knoweth not fear. As we drove through the jungle yesterday and to-night he turned his face towards Nyagong and cursed that village, and sware that he would burn it to the ground when he had a beard; and 'tis like as not that he will do so when he is a man grown."

"Durga aid him in his attempt!" said fat Gunga Ram, the sweetmeat vender; "that village hath always bred rogues and budmashes, before and since Cheeta Dutt, the son of the last Jemadar (head man of the village), committed a deed of hell in the jungle thereby."

The silence of those who sat round the fire was a mute request to Gunga Ram to tell the story

thus prefaced.

"Brothers," he began, "'twas in the second year after the great mutiny that a young Englishman came into the Terai to look after the sâl trees, which always seemed a foolishness to me till I learned that sâl timber is good for the building of the ships that cross the Black Water.

"And he had but little to do, save to shoot black partridge and spotted deer and watch the Padhani women crossing the ford in front of his camp; that was the evil of it.

"In those days I was but a span round the waist, and the best shikari (hunter) and tracker in these parts; and Bonner Sahib—that was his name—hired me to show him where game was to be found. But he soon tired of shikar (sport), and fell to playing the songs of the Padhani women on his cithar, the like of which I never heard before.

"One day, after he had eaten his morning meal and swam in the deep pool above the ford of the Bore Nuddee, he lay on the grass by the stream smoking, whilst I cleaned his guns by the side of his tent. Presently, when I looked up, the sahib was gazing from under his hand at certain wayfarers who came down the slope on the other side of the stream towards the ford; and on his finger there glittered a stone that took mine eye even at that distance. In front there rode on a hill-pony, loaded with household goods, Cheeta Dutt, the son of the Jemadar of Nyagong, and he wore the garments of a man who taketh his wife home for the consummation of his marriage. Behind him walked Naringi, his wife, the daughter of the Jemadar of Huldwani. She was well named 'Orange Blossom;' and though I live to a thousand years, yet shall I never see the like of her as she walked behind Cheeta Dutt with a small bundle on her head and lifted her sari as she took the ford with her bared limbs.

"Brothers, she was but sixteen years in age, and in the budding of her beauty; and it seemed as though the morning shed all its joys about her feet. What wonder, then, that even a young Faringi (Englishman) should look upon her with admiration?

"When she was half-way across the ford her foot slipped, and the bundle she bore fell into the stream. Wullahy, but these Faringis be fools! Eyes may look, and thoughts may fall about the face of a fair woman, though she be another man's wife, but only a Faringi would do what Bonner Sahib did. Kali Mai afflict the race! Women were made but to carry burdens and bear children. Nowhere can it be shown—not even in the Shastras, wherein I, Gunga Ram, have read—that a man should demean himself to serve a woman; but Bonner Sahib leapt into the stream and recovered the young woman's bundle. Worse than that, as she stood beside her husband's horse, wringing the water out of the hem of her garment, he put her bundle in her hand, and Cheeta Dutt scowled at him.

"'Protector of the Poor,' said I to the sahib, as I dried his feet and changed his shoes, 'thou hast not done well.'

"'Wherefore?' he replied, sending the smoke of his cheroot skywards.

"'Because Cheeta Dutt (well is he named Hunting Leopard) may repay thee hereafter in his own way for thy service to his wife this day. Belike, he may render her nakti (noseless), and so send her back to her father's house. But the sahib is a great lord, and a nakti Padhani woman more or less concerneth him not, for they be bought and sold like cattle, and the sahib hath the price of many such on his little finger.—But I speak like a fool, sahib, for I am a poor man and know nothing, save how to serve thee.'

"But he only laughed and stroked the yellow beard on his upper lip.

"A moon thereafter our camp was pitched near Nyagong. As ye know, the Terai thereby is full of shikar, and I showed Bonner Sahib where to find black partridge. One day, as we set our faces campwards,—I following the sahib with his spare gun and the morning's kill,—the voice of a young woman singing a Padhani song suddenly rose from a thicket near by, and the jungle became silent to listen to her. Bonner Sahib parted the tall grass with his hands, and I, looking over his shoulder, beheld Naringi, the wife of Cheeta Dutt, seated on a fallen tree trunk in an open glade, tending a flock of goats. As she sang she strung together flaming cotton-wood flowers, whereof she had placed one behind each ear.

"When she had finished her song the sahib took it up, stepping at the same time into the clearing; and Naringi fled like a roe hunted by wolves.

"'The shikar is shy, Gunga Ram,' said the sahib.

"'Tis dangerous hunting, Protector of the Poor,' I replied. But the sahib only laughed and lit a cheroot.

"And thereafter he sought the black partridge unattended by me, for he set me morning tasks to fulfil within the camp. But, brothers, he brought not so much as a jungle-fowl home for more than a week, and I was fain to know what the sahib hunted.

"So I followed him unperceived one morning, and he went straightway to the clearing wherein we had seen Naringi with the goats. When I looked through the grass, behold! I saw Bonner Sahib seated on the fallen tree trunk, wearing a necklace of red flowers, and Naringi sat on his knee with an arm round his neck! Toba, toba! what fools these Faringis be, who know not that the birds of the air carry messages when a sahib stoops to a woman of our people."

"The jungle hath many eyes," said the Thanadar, sententiously.

After Gunga Ram had refreshed himself with the circling hookah, he went on: "As I looked and listened there was a rustling in the grass on the other side of the clearing, and the sahib's dog dashed into the jungle in pursuit of something. The next moment it yelped as a dog that is sorely stricken, but the sahib, who was toying with Naringi, heard nothing.

"Then Naringi, stroking the sahib's golden beard, said, 'My Lord, Cheeta Dutt beat me last night because I spake thy name in my sleep. Look,' and she lifted the hair from her forehead, whereon was a bruise; and as she turned her face to the sahib I saw that she had been weeping, for her eyelids were swelled.

"'He is swine-born,' said the sahib; and as he spake his face flushed like the morning sky. Then he folded her in his arms and saluted her mouth after the manner of Faringis; and when she was comforted he said, 'Naringi, my Blossom, thy husband is a dog. To-night will I take thee hence and make thee envied of the mem-sahibs of Naini Tal. Wilt thou trust thyself with me?'

"For answer she threw herself before him and clasped his feet, but the sahib raised her up, saying, 'Beloved, I will come for thee to-night on the stroke of the tenth hour by the village bell. Gunga Ram—my shikari—and I will wait for thee with a covered byli (cart) at the foot of that tall sesame tree thou seest yonder on the open plain. And for pledge that I shall be here, see, I set on thy finger this ring, which all the villages in the Kumaon Terai could not buy; and if I fail to come my punishment is in thy hands. It is a thousand years till I see thee again, little one.' Then he folded her in his arms once more and set his face homewards, shouting to her from the end of the glade, 'Fail me not, my Wild Rose!' For answer, she swept the ground with her salaams.

"Hastening campwards by a path that skirted the other side of the glade, I came across the sahib's dog. It was shorn in twain by the stroke of a khookri, and I knew that Cheeta Dutt, The Leopard, was a-hunting.

"'What shikar?' asked I of Bonner Sahib when he returned to his tent.

"'Thou art a liar, Gunga Ram. The jungle hereabout is barren of game, and it is in my mind to send thee with a note to the Thanadar of Kaladoongie commending the soles of thy feet to the bamboo staff of one of his men;' and, laughing, he threw himself into a long chair.

"'I am sorry for thee, sahib,' I said in reply, 'for not only art thou empty handed this day, but thou hast lost the great stone that shone on thy finger when thou wentest forth this morning. Toba, toba!'

"'Tis in my pocket, O Chattering Jay.'

"'Perchance the sahib shot his dog this morning, seeing that the game was scarce?' I said.

"'Hath he not returned, Gunga Ram?'

"'Ere I answer thee, sahib, 'twere well to drink some brandy-pani;' and I mixed the liquor as he had taught me.

"'It is well, Provider of the Poor,' I went on, 'it is well to be young and well favored, and the special care of thy gods who have bestowed on thee wealth and a moonstone that all the villages in the Kumaon Terai could not purchase,'—hereat the sahib looked at me out of the corner of his eye,—'but it is not well to look for partridges where great beasts hunt. Thy dog was slain in the jungle this morning by a leopard. He lieth outside the tent, and 'twere well the sahib should see what a leopard can do.'

"Following him out of the tent, I uncovered the dead dog. The sahib clutched at his throat and would have fallen, so I put my arm round him and laid him on his bed.

"'This is the work of Cheeta Dutt, sahib. Said I not that perchance he would hunt some one hereafter for thy service to his wife at the ford last month?'

"Rising from the bed, the sahib drank another draught of the strong waters. 'Cheeta Dutt's back shall smart for this,' he said.

"'And then, sahib, he will slay his wife because of thy ring in the pocket of her bodice.'

"'Budmash, thou hast been playing the spy!' and turning upon me like a wild boar, his face aflame, he caught me by the beard.

"'Sahib,' I said, 'I am but a poor man, and thou of consequence in the Terai, but, man to man, thou durst not lay thy hand on my beard in the jungle and away from thy camp. I fear not to tell thee, sahib, that I did, indeed, watch thee this morning; but the jungle is full of eyes, not the least keen being those of Cheeta Dutt, who slew thy dog this morning, and who will slay the woman thou lovest, or do worse to her, ere he sleepeth, as is his right.'

"'Gunga Ram, thou art a man, and I ask forgiveness of thee for blackening thy face, but I am moved from myself by great fear for what may befall the woman. Tell me what is to be done, for thou knowest the ways of these jungle folks better than I;' and the sahib walked the floor as one distraught.

"'Will one thousand—will ten thousand rupees save the young woman?' asked the sahib.

"The honor of a Brahmin is not to be appraised in money, sahib,' I replied.

"Will he fight, Gunga Ram, as a Faringi would under like circumstances?"

"He will fight, assuredly, sahib; but he will fight after the manner of his kind, and in the dark.'

"Much talk had we, but we could only hope that Cheeta Dutt may not have witnessed the meeting that morning."

Gunga Ram stopped to "drink tobacco" once more, whilst the little bullock driver, who would start in the morning with freight for Moradabad, said, "That was a poor hope, O Seller of Cates, for the jungle hath ears and tongues as well as eyes."

"Therefore, byl-wan," rejoined Gunga Ram, "I saw to it that my gun was properly loaded as we went in the byli that night to the place of meeting.

"The moon was almost in mid-heaven, in an unclouded sky, when we reached the sesame tree, and it was a time for the deeds of Kama, but Kali Mai was abroad in the jungle that night.

"The sound of the distant village bell striking the hour of ten had scarcely died away when there rose from the glade the voice of a young woman singing a Padhani song.

"Heart of my Heart, she cometh!" said the sahib. 'Oh, Gunga Ram, she is safe!' and he lifted up his voice, singing the refrain of her song.

"He had scarcely ceased by a breath, when he was answered by the scream of a woman who looks upon Terror and Pain hunting together.

"Like an arrow from a bow he sped across the plain and entered the glade, I following with what haste I could. As I set foot therein there arose a yell the like of which was never made by jungle beast, and, brothers, my heart stood still with fear. I could hear the sahib crashing through the underbrush, and I followed, but the glade was in deep darkness by reason of the thick foliage of the trees overhead that stayed the moonlight, and my pace was slow.

"Presently I saw the sahib in the open space where was the fallen tree trunk that had served him for a seat that morning. He stopped suddenly within a few paces of the log, like a stricken man. Falling on his knees and clasping his hands together, he bowed his head thereon; and in that instant a dark figure leaped upon the sahib from behind a tree, and I saw the flash of a khookri in the moonlight.

"I raised my gun and fired as I ran, but I was too late.

"When I came up to the sahib his head lay two paces from his body.

"On the fallen tree trunk, with the sahib's moonstone glittering on its forefinger, was the small hand of a woman that had been lopped off above the wrist, and which still dripped blood."

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## CHAPTER IV

### *The Spoiling of Nyagong*

Goor Dutt, the little bullock driver, who was on his way to Moradabad with the effects of one of the clerks of the Lieutenant-Governor's office, reached Lal Kooah long after sunset. It was his intention to travel through the night, but he could not resist the temptation of joining the circle round the fire in front of the bunnia's hut whilst his bullocks ate their meal of chaff and chopped hay.

The bunnia had given up his charpoi to Ram Deen, who drove the mail-cart to Kaladoongie, and who was a man swift of anger and dangerous to cross, but not altogether hard. Had he not, but three days since, found and adopted Biroo, the little chamar (tanner) waif, who lay asleep by the fire with a huge pariah dog stretched beside him?

"Salaam, coach-wan ji," said Goor Dutt, saluting Ram Deen, "I have news for thee: the Commissioner Sahib hath sent word to the Thanadar of Kaladoongie that he should make inquiry concerning the finding of Biroo's father in the well at Nyagong."

"Tis well, Thwacker of Bullocks. And when goeth the Thanadar thither?" inquired Ram Deen.

"Belike he is there now."

"Oh, that a man were here to take the mail to Kaladoongie to-night!" exclaimed Ram Deen.

"The man is here," piped the little carrier, "if some one will tend my cattle till I return."

"That will I," said the bunnia, with the stress of Ram Deen's eyes on him.

When the mail-cart drove up Ram Deen took the reins, with Biroo, wrapped in a blanket, between his knees, whilst Goor Dutt climbed to the back seat. The big dog, Hasteen, ran beside the mail-cart and woke the jungle echoes with his bark.



"How didst thou fare last night, coach-wan ji?" asked the bunnia, next evening.

"As should innocence wronged, and avenging strength."

When none of those sitting round the fire spoke, Ram Deen went on: "As we came nigh to the path leading to Nyagong, Biroo turned his face thereto and spat vehemently; and I said, 'Son of mine, canst thou lead me to Nyagong?' and he replied, 'Of a surety; the path is here.'

"Thereat we got down from the cart—Biroo and I; and I bore the bugle hanging at my side and a stout bamboo club in my hand. As we picked our way along the jungle path, Hasteen ran beside us, growling; and when the moon gave light I saw the crest on his back bristling, and his teeth gleamed through his lips.

"When we reached Nyagong I put an armful of grass on the fire that was still smouldering in front of the Jemadar's house, and, as the flame leaped up, I blew upon my bugle. Straightway the village watchman, who had been sleeping in his hut, after the manner of his kind, came running forth bravely; but when he saw who it was that stood by the fire he salaamed, and whined, saying, 'Great pity 'tis that Ram Deen, Lord of Leopards, should be put to the trouble—and at this unseasonable hour!—to return to our village this small villain and budmash, who is worse than the evil eye.'

"For answer, I felled him to the ground, and Hasteen stood over him. So he dared not move.

"Then came the Jemadar and the men of the village and stood round us; and the former said, 'Wah! Ram Deen, coach-wan, is it well to disturb peaceful folk at night and rouse them from their sleep? What wouldst thou with us?'

"Justice to this little one, whose father and mother ye and your people have slain,' I answered.

"And what of my son, found dead, and with teeth-marks about his throat?' he asked.

"Jemadar Sahib,' I replied, 'Kali Mai gave thy son, her follower, fitting end. As he lived, so he died. 'Tis well.'

"Dog!' he exclaimed; 'darest thou to speak thus to me in front of mine own people?' And he ran upon me.

"So I took him by the beard and laid him at my feet; and the men of Nyagong feared to help the Jemadar, for Hasteen growled fiercely over him.

"Fetch the bunnia,' I demanded; 'and lose no time, O Swine of the Terai, or I give your Jemadar to the dog.'

"They brought him trembling before me, and he folded his hands and bowed his head in the dust at my feet, crying, 'Ram dhwy! ram dhwy! the great and strong are ever merciful. What wouldst thou with me, coach-wan ji?'

"The bhalee of raw sugar,' I answered, 'from which this man-child's mother got her death.'

"She died of Terai fever, Most Worshipful, as the old woman who was with her will tell thee.'

"Nevertheless, Biroo and I will go to thy shop with thee, in the matter of that sugar, whilst the dog seeth to the Jemadar. Proceed.'

"But, Coach-wan Bahadoor,' said the Jemadar, 'thou wilt not leave me to be devoured by this beast?'

"Lie very still, Jemadar Sahib, very still. The dog is a good dog, and was never known to harm an honest man. But let no one come to thine aid, lest there be nothing of thee left to take to the burning ghat.'

"Go away, brothers,' wailed the Jemadar to his people; 'go away, lest evil befall me.'

"But I said, 'Nay, not so. Stay till I return, O Village Thugs, for I would speak with ye.'

"At the bunnia's hut Biroo pointed out the bhalee from which he had received the portion of raw sugar whereof his mother had eaten; but the bunnia denied, saying that he had already sold all that remained of that bhalee. So I broke off a piece of it and gave it to the bunnia, saying, 'Eat!' Whereat he clasped my knees, begging for mercy, and I knew Biroo had not erred.

"Swine-born!' said I, 'set panniers on thy ass.' And when the ass was brought to the door of the hut I made the bunnia load it with such produce as he had, till it could scarce stand.

"I am fain to borrow fifty rupees of thee, bunnia ji, on behalf of this motherless child,' I said.

"Whereon he wailed, saying, 'Ram Deen, Compeller of Elephants, there is not so much money in all the village stalls of the Terai. What I have I will give thee;' and he laid one rupee and nine annas in my palm and a handful of cowries.

"He lieth, my father,' said little Biroo, drawing forth a cocoa-nut shell from beneath the bunnia's seat,—and it was full of silver!

"Bap re bap!" moaned the trader, "'tis all I have against mine old age; and the men of Nyagong despoil me; and my milch cow died last week. Aho! aho!"

"It is a very little child, bunnia ji; and consider he hath nor father nor mother. God will repay thee for thy kind loan to the orphan,' and I tied the money in the corner of my waistband.

"But, Ram Deen, Sun of Justice,' whined the bunnia, 'there be one hundred and thirty-seven rupees, some of it in gold mohurs, in thy waistband. Take fifty, and return the rest.'

"Thank Nana Debi, Bunnia Sahib,' I rejoined, 'for having put it in thy power to do so much more for the fatherless than thou didst first intend. It will comfort thee in thy old age to think thereon.'

"But this is robbery,' he said, desperately, 'for which I will have thee cast in the great prison at Bareilly.'

"There be gallows there, too,' I retorted, 'for such as put ground glass in gur, Mea ji. Ho, ho!"

"So he said no more, but, at my command, put panniers on another ass, which I had in mind to have loaded by the men of Nyagong.

"When we returned to the fire, the dog Hasteen and the Jemadar were as we had left them; and the Jemadar's teeth shook in his head with fear and cold. So I called Hasteen to me, and when the Jemadar had risen from the ground and put his turban on, I spake:

"O Jemadar, and ye, O men of Nyagong, I would have ye witness that I brought this bhalee of sugar from the bunnia's stall. Is it not so, O great mahajun (banker)?"

"And the bunnia assented. So I placed the great lump of raw sugar in a bag which I had brought from the bunnia's shop. Then, at my bidding and in the presence of his people, the Jemadar sealed the bag with his seal, which was well known to the Thanadar of Kaladoongie.

"Then I spake thus to those assembled there: 'Jemadar Sahib, and men of Nyagong, ye have brought shame on the Kumaon Terai, and, in the eyes of all men, ye have blackened the faces of those who dwell in this paradise of God. This child that ye see here—and he is a very little child and hath nor father nor mother—came amongst ye but a moon since, and ye slew those who fed and cared for him. And him—his milk-teeth still in his mouth—ye would have burnt to death in his sleep had Nana Debi and this dog slept, too. It were a good deed done to burn your huts about your ears, and give your fields to the wild boar and to the Thanadar of Kaladoongie, who is my friend and the friend of this little one, and who would say that a jungle fire had swept your village away; but I am more merciful than ye. Inasmuch, then, as ye took the bread from this little one's mouth, and slew his people, it is but right that ye should feed him, and be his father and his mother. The bunnia hath already made some small reparation for the sudden taking off of the little one's mother. What will ye do for him whose hut ye burnt? Or would ye that the Thanadar of Kaladoongie should ask, or the Commissioner Sahib, he who can put ropes round the necks of murderers, how it was that the corpse of this child's father had its hands tied behind its back and a stone fastened to its feet?"

"Then the Jemadar, clasping suppliant hands, whined, saying, 'Ram Deen, Rustum of the Terai, gentle as thou art brave and strong! the child's mother died of Terai fever, as thou knowest; and his worthy father, the chamar, leaned too far over the edge of the well in drawing up his lotah, and so fell in. Why speak to us, then, of slaying? We be sorry for the little chamar, Brahmins though we be, and we would have been father and mother to him, but he ran away, and the village mourned, thinking he had fallen a prey to the jackals. To none else but thee would we give up the boon of rearing him. Brothers,' he went on, turning to those about him, 'naught can restore a child's father to him, but a brass lotah with sufficient coin therein, and a necklace of gold and plum-seeds, such as I will bestow upon him, may help him in time of need, and, mayhap, resolve the Thanadar not to visit our village. Eh, coach-wan ji? Brothers, see to it that our much-loved orphan goeth not empty-handed from the generous village of Nyagong.'

"So it was that the other ass groaned beneath a weight of silver bangles and toe-rings still warm from the taking off, blankets and hide-sewn shoes, sweetened tobacco and unbleached cotton cloth, and many a purse filled with two-anna pieces.

"And when the ass's knees shook, by reason of the load on his back, I said, 'Men of Nyagong, perchance the Thanadar of Kaladoongie may have an asthma to-morrow.'

"And one said, 'Of a surety he hath scant breath. Ho, ho!"

"Then I set Biroo upon the second ass; and when we had reached the Bore Nuddee I blew upon the bugle.

"When the Thanadar of Kaladoongie came out to meet me I put my hand on Biroo's shoulder, saying, 'Much care awaiteth thee, Thanadar Sahib, in tending this little budmash, whose merchandise this is. Moreover, he is a mahajun now, and hath much money to lend.'"

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## CHAPTER V

## *The Woman in the Carriage*

When Ram Deen's bugle was heard at the Bore bridge, the munshi from the post-office came across the road and joined the group sitting round the fire in front of the police-station, at which only the great felt free to warm themselves.

The munshi was struggling with "the po-ets of the In-gel-land," as he expressed it in Baboo-English, and did not often take part in the proceedings round the Thanadar's fire; but that night he took his place with the assurance of one who has something to tell. A mem-sahib, in evident distress, with a very young baby in her arms, and unattended, had taken special passage to Moradabad on the mail-cart; and Ram Deen, the driver, would therefore have to return to Lal Kooah that night without any rest. Such a thing had never happened before, and beards wagged freely round the fire in all sorts of surmisings. For once in his life, the munshi, whom Kaladoongie had always looked upon as a mere rhyme-struck fool, held the public eye, and moved largely and freely among his fellows.

Beauty in distress appeals even to the "heathen in his blindness," and the munshi drove round to the dâk-bungalow to receive and translate the lady's final instructions to Ram Deen. Not that there was any occasion for his services, for the lady with the fair hair and blue eyes used excellent Hindustani; her soft "d's" and "t's" showed that she had been born in India, and that she had spoken Nagari before she acquired English.

She was waiting on the veranda with her baby in her arms when the mail-cart drove up; and, ignoring the fussy little munshi, from whom no help could be looked for in the troubles that beset her, she spoke to Ram Deen, who soon won her confidence, for he showed himself to be thoughtful and a man of resource.

"The mem-sahib must be well wrapped up to-night," he said, "and the little one too, for it will be exceedingly bitter as soon as we pass through the timber and arrive at the tall grass. And the babe seemeth very young from its cry."

"It is but two weeks in age, coach-wan, and we are well wrapped up; but make haste, oh, make haste!"

When Ram Deen had lifted her on to the seat, he fastened her to the back of it with his waistband, and wrapped her feet up in his own blanket. "There be ruts and stones on the road," he explained, "and the mem-sahib will have to hold the little one with both arms, and very close to her to keep it warm."

By the time they had reached the level plateau beyond the Bore Nuddee, the horses, at her urgent and repeated request for more speed, were being driven as fast as Ram Deen dared to drive, seeing there were ten miles to be covered by the same team.

As they proceeded, the lady showed her distress by an occasional deep sigh; and once, when Ram Deen looked at her face, dimly illuminated by the lamps of the mail-cart, he saw the gleam of a tear on her eyelashes. He was glad when she spoke and gave him an opportunity of trying to distract her mind.

"Sawest thou any travellers on the road to-day, coach-wan?" asked the lady, timidly.

"Yea, Most Worshipful. A carriage, with a sahib and an English woman, stopped by the well at Lal Kooah this evening; and the sahib warmed himself at the bunnia's fire and bought milk, whilst his man-servant made preparation for their evening meal."

"What manner of man was he, coach-wan; and didst thou learn his name?"

"The servant told me that the sahib's name was Barfield,—Captain Barfield,—mem-sahib, and that he was going to Meerut to join the regiment to which he belongs. Moreover, he said that the woman in the carriage was not his master's wife—but, toba, toba! what am I saying? This is shameful talk for the mem-sahib to hear, and I ask the forgiveness of the Provider of the Poor for my stupidity."

"Go on, go on, coach-wan," she said, eagerly, laying a hand on his arm. And as he talked, she fell aweeping bitterly, and Ram Deen knew not how to comfort her, for he had never spoken to a mem-sahib before. So he blundered into speech again.

"What manner of man, Most Worshipful, was the sahib? As he stood by the fire, I saw that he was nearly as tall as I,—and I am a span higher than most men; the beard on his upper lip was very fair, and his face showed red in the firelight; furthermore, he smelled of strong waters. He stood awhile, unmindful of those about him, twitching his beard and digging his nails into the palms of his hands; and he looked as a man who hath a new sorrow."

"Oh, coach-wan! that is the first good word I have heard this day. It shall enrich thee by ten rupees ere the sun rise."

"Presently," resumed the driver, "as the sahib stood before the blaze, the woman in the carriage began to sing, and it was as the song of one who hath smoked opium or bhang. Then the sahib stamped his heel on the ground, and with an oath—such I took it to be, for it sounded terrible—he went towards the carriage; and the woman, opening the door thereof, put forth her head, and we saw that her hair was unloosed and hung about her shoulders."

"She fell to scolding the sahib, who thrust her back into the carriage, so that we should not look upon her disorder. Then he fastened the doors, so that she could not open them. Whereon she fell to screaming and beating on the sides of the carriage like a wild beast newly caged.

"So the sahib, being shamed, gave orders, and his horses, which were already spent, were again yoked to the carriage; they departed slowly into the darkness, and we could hear the woman scolding long after they had passed out of sight."

"What time was it when they left Lal Kooah, coach-wan?"

"About the seventh hour, and now some two hours ago, mem-sahib."

"Oh, make haste, make haste, coach-wan! Twenty rupees to thee if we overtake them ere they reach Moradabad!"

"Fear not, mem-sahib. We shall come up with them or ever they get to the next chowki, where fresh horses await the mail-cart."

"Oh, coach-wan, it is my husband we follow! The woman with him is of those who steal men's senses from them and rob women of their husbands. Oh, make haste, make haste!"

They flew along the road. And when the light of the wayside fire at Lal Kooah gleamed in the distance the lady said, "Thou wilt not leave me here to another driver, coach-wan?—Thou art a man, and I may need a man's services to-night."

"Mem-sahib, I am thy servant even as far as Moradabad if it be necessary."

"God reward thee!" she exclaimed.

And then Ram Deen woke the jungle echoes with a brave blast.

The hostler at Lal Kooah had fresh horses ready by the time the mail-cart drove up, and in less than five minutes Ram Deen and his charge were speeding along the level road.

The jungle had now ceased, and they were in the region of the tall plumed grass. The stars twinkled frostily, for the night was bitterly cold, and the clatter of the horses' hoofs on the hard road rang out sharply.

"The little one,—is it well wrapped up, mem-sahib?" asked Ram Deen.

"It is asleep, and quite warm, coach-wan. Proceed."

When they had left Lal Kooah two or three miles behind them, Ram Deen's keen eye caught the glimmer of a fire through the tall grass that came up to the edge of the road where it curved.

"We have found those ye seek, mem-sahib," said Ram Deen, bringing his horses to a stand-still.

Through the quiet night came the voice of a drunken woman singing a ribald barrack-room ditty interspersed with fiendish laughter and oaths:

"I'm the belle of the Naini Tal mall.  
Houp la!  
Not a colonel nor sub at the mess  
But makes love when he can to sweet Sal.  
To their wives do they dare to confess  
That I'm belle of the Naini Tal mall?  
Yes, I'm belle of the Naini Tal mall.  
Houp la!"

Then the singer called aloud, "Captain! Captain Barfield!" But, getting no response, she beat a furious tattoo on the wooden panels of the carriage, shouting at the top of her voice, "Pretty sort of a jaunt to Moradabad this is! You're a liar, captain! But I'll tell your doll-faced wife how you treated her when her baby was only two weeks old." She then swore a round of torrid oaths, and wound up with a scream that might have been heard a mile off.

"Mem-sahib," said Ram Deen, "bide here with the hostler till I have tamed that she-devil, and then I will take thee to the captain sahib. The little one,—is it warm?"

"Quite warm, and still asleep, coach-wan. Go, and God advance thee!"

Ram Deen found the captain seated on a log in front of a blazing fire. With his elbows on his knees, the captain pressed a finger to each ear to escape the tirade of the terrible woman in the carriage. A touch on his shoulder made him start to his feet, and as he turned round Ram Deen salaamed gravely.

"I thought the sahib slept. No? Her speech galled thee," pointing to the carriage, "and thou wast fain not to hear it?"

The captain nodded assent. He was worn with the trying position his folly had placed him in, and, at another time, he might have resented the touch on his shoulder, but the tall native in front of him spoke with dignity and a quiet assurance indicative of a large fund of reserve force,—and he might be helpful.

"Where are thy servants, sahib?"

"They fled when she cursed them. May the devil take them!"

"I am the driver of the mail-cart on this road, sahib, as thou mayest see," said Ram Deen, pointing to his badge and bugle, "and this woman's tongue stayeth the Queen's mail; for on my cart, which I have left behind the bend of the road yonder, is a mem-sahib who perchance knoweth thee, for she, too, cometh from Naini Tal, and 'twere well she should not hear thy name on this woman's lips. She must not be kept waiting long, sahib, for the babe in her arms is but two weeks in age" (the captain started), "and the night is exceedingly bitter. Have I the sahib's permission to drive his carriage beyond the hearing of those who are fain to pass?"

"Drive her to Jehandum, coach-wan, so she come to no hurt."

Thereupon Ram Deen approached the carriage, and tapped on the door, saying, "Woman, it is not meet that the worthy traffic of the Queen's highway should be disturbed by thy unseemly conduct."

For answer he received a volley of curses in broken Hindustani, such curses as are in vogue in the barracks of English regiments in India; and the woman in the carriage wound up with a request for more brandy.

"Nay, it is not brandy thou shouldst have, but water,—cold water to cool thy hot tongue," and mounting the carriage Ram Deen urged the jaded horses into a trot.

Two hundred yards farther on the road crossed the Bore Nuddee, now a sluggish river about four feet deep. Leaving the road Ram Deen drove down the bank and into the stream. When the woman in the carriage heard the splashing of the horses, and felt the water rise to her knees, she screamed with fear and became suddenly sober.

"Hast had water enough to cool thy tongue?" asked Ram Deen, tapping on the roof of the carriage.

"Stop, stop!" she entreated, frantically. "I will do whatever you wish."

"Canst thou forget Captain Barfield's name, or must I drive into deeper water?"

"I know not whereof you speak."

"'Tis well! And who is thy husband?"

"A soldier whose regiment is at Delhi, whither I go."

"Thou must be true to him hereafter.—Ho there, horse! the alligators cannot swallow thee!"

"Alligators! Are there alligators in this river?" whined the woman in the carriage.

"There is scarce room for them within its banks."

"Oh, sahib, I am fain to go to my husband, whom alone I care for. Proceed, for the love of God!"

So Ram Deen drove her through the stream and up the opposite bank on to the road. When he had tied the horses to a tree by the highway, he said, "There will be travellers going thy way presently, and they will drive thee to Moradabad. Remember, I may have business in Delhi very soon. Salaam, Faithless One."

And the woman responded in a very meek tone, "Salaam."

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"Come, mem-sahib," said Ram Deen, as he resumed his seat on the mail-cart; "the captain sahib awaits thee."

When they were abreast of the fire, she called in a faint, tremulous voice, "Harry, Harry, my dear husband! I am very tired, and very cold. Won't you come to me?"

Leaving the hostler in charge of the mail-cart, Ram Deen followed the captain as he carried his wife to the fire.

Seating her on the log, Captain Barfield knelt beside his wife, chafing and kissing her hands.

"Thank God, you found me!" he sobbed.

"The ayah told me a few hours after you left me that that—that woman had been seen to join you beyond Serya Tal; so I and the baby came to help you. You still love us, dearest?" she asked, pleadingly.

"My beloved, I am not worthy of you! There is a sword in my heart!" And he bowed his head on her lap and wept, whilst she stroked his hair with a slender hand.

"God has been very good to me to-night," she said, softly.

Soon after, removing the shawl from the little one's face, she said, "Kiss your baby, Harry."

His lips touched the little face.—It was very cold. He started back, and, taking the child from its mother's arms, he held it near the firelight.—It was dead!

As they looked across the little limp body into each other's eyes with speechless agony, Ram Deen bent over them and took the little one tenderly from the captain's hands.

"Attend to the living, sahib; I will see to thy dead," he said, softly.

He turned away his face from the sorrow that was too sacred to be witnessed by any one save God.

As Captain Barfield folded his young wife in his arms, a deep groan rent his breast at the thought of his folly and its consequence.

"Thou wert very tender—a mere blossom—and the frost withered thee," said Ram Deen very gently, composing the baby's limbs.

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## CHAPTER VI

### *For the Training of Biroo*

"Ah, small villain, budmash! must I send thee back to Nyagong, thee and thy dog, to learn respect for thy betters? The Thanadar's son hath the ordering of thee, and thou hast beaten him,—toba, toba!"

"My father," replied Biroo, respectfully, to Ram Deen, "Mohun Lal took my kite, and when I strove to hold mine own he smote me, whereon I pulled his hair; and 'twas no fault of mine that it lacked strength and remained in my hand. So he set his dog on me; but Hasteen slew it. Wherein have I offended, my father?"

And the Thanadar laughed, saying, "Ram Deen, Mohun Lal but received his due." To the "defendant in the case" he said, "Get thee to sleep, Biroo; and be brave and strong; so will Nana Debi reward thee." Then turning to those who sat round the fire, he went on, "Brothers, 'tis late, and I would have speech with Ram Deen. Ye may take your leave."

When they were by themselves, the Thanadar spoke. "The man-child waxeth fierce and strong, my old friend; 'twere well he were restrained. He will be wealthy by thy favor, and the favor of Nyagong, when he cometh to man's estate, and 'twere pity that he should lack courtesy when he is a man grown."

"Thanadar ji, thou art his father as much as I am. Thou shouldst correct him with strokes whenas I am on the road and carrying the Queen's mail."

"Blows but inure to hardness, and—Gunga knoweth!—little Biroo is hard already. Why dost thou not give up the service of the Queen, and——" He paused, and after awhile asked, "What didst thou receive from Captain Barfield?"

"The gun thou hast seen, Thanadar ji; but from his mem-sahib five hundred rupees, a timepiece of gold, and whatsoever I may want hereafter. The money lieth in the hands of Moti Ram, the great mahajun (banker) of Naini Tal."

"Wah! Ram Deen, thou art thyself rich enough to be a mahajun. Consider, too, the kindness bestowed by Nyagong on Biroo at thy asking,—two hundred rupees and over, and much merchandise. Leave the road, my friend, and put thy money out at usury. A woman in thy hut to cook thy evening meal, and mend Biroo's ways, were not amiss. Eh? The daughters of the Terai are very fair, as thou knowest, coach-wan ji."

"The road hath been father and mother to me, Thanadar Sahib, since I lost my Buldeo, who knew not his mother; so I may not leave it. And when I think of Bheem Dass, bunnia and usurer of the village whereof I was potter three years ago, and whom ye found dead on the road the day I brought in the mail, and was made driver, as thou rememberest, I may not live by harassing the poor and the widow and fatherless. God forbid! As for women,—they be like butterflies that flit from flower to flower; perchance, if I could find a woman who cared not to gossip at the village well, and had eyes and thoughts for none save her husband, I might—but I must be about my business on the road, and I have no time for the seeking of such a woman. Wah! I have not, even as yet, tried the gun Barfield sahib gave me."

Soon afterwards, by an alteration of the service, Ram Deen brought the mail to Kaladoongie in the early afternoon, and availed himself of the opportunity thus afforded of rambling about during the rest of the day in the jungle with Biroo and Hasteen, in search of small game.

One day they came upon a half-grown fawn, at which Ram Deen let fly with both barrels; but as his gun was loaded with small shot only, the deer bounded away apparently unhurt, with Hasteen in hot pursuit, whilst Ram Deen and Biroo followed with what haste they could.

Presently, they could hear the baying of the great dog and the shrill cries of a woman in distress. Directed by these sounds, they crossed the road that leads to Naini Tal, and, scrambling up the

bank and over a low stone wall, they found themselves in a neglected garden, in the middle of which was a grass hut, whence issued the cries that had quickened their steps. They arrived just in time, for Hasteen had almost dug himself into the hut.

Calling off the dog, Ram Deen hastened to allay the fears of the woman in the hut, who was still giving voice to her distress in the Padhani patois. "The dog will not harm thee; see, I have tied him with my waistband to a tree."

"Who art thou?" asked the woman. The tones of her voice, when she spoke, were exceedingly soft and pleasant, and made one long to look upon the face of the speaker.

"I am Ram Deen, the driver of the mail-cart, and well known in Kaladoongie."

"I have heard of thee and thy doings, and will come forth. But the dog (Nana Debi, was there ever such a dog!—he almost slew my fawn), art thou sure he cannot harm us?"

"Kali Mai twist my joints, if he be not well secured."

Whereupon the door of the hut was opened a few inches. Having satisfied herself that all was as Ram Deen had said, the young woman came out of the hut with one arm about the fawn.

She was a Padhani, and in her early womanhood. The simple kilt she wore allowed her shapely ankles to be seen, and her bodice well expressed the charms of her youthful figure. Ram Deen thought her eyes were not less beautiful than the fawn's.

After salaaming to him, she looked at her pet. "Oh, sahib, she bleeds,—my Ganda bleeds!" she exclaimed, pointing to a slender streak of red on the fawn's flank.

"Belike some thorn tore her skin as she fled," said Ram Deen; but he knew that at least one shot from his gun had taken effect.

"'Tis a sore hurt, Coach-wan sahib. Will she die?"

"Nay, little one, 'tis nought. See!" and with a wisp of grass Ram Deen wiped the blood from the fawn's skin.

"But the dog, coach-wan,—thou wilt not permit him to fright my Ganda again?"

"Of a surety, not." Then, with a hand on the fawn's head, he rebuked Hasteen, saying, "Villain, the jackals shall pursue thee if thou huntest here again!" And Hasteen hung his head, putting his tail between his legs; and the young girl knew that Ganda was safe thereafter from the great dog.

As they talked together, a very decrepit old man appeared at the door of the hut; after peering at Ram Deen from under his hand, he spoke in the flat, toneless voice of a deaf man: "Tumbaku, Provider of the Poor, give me tumbaku."

Ram Deen put his pouch of dried tobacco-leaf in the old man's hand, and looked inquiringly at the young woman.

"It is my grandfather, and he is deaf and nearly blind,—and a sore affliction. Give back his tumbaku to the sahib, da-da," she said in a louder voice to the old man.

"Nay, nay, let him keep it!" said Ram Deen; then after a pause, and by way of excuse for staying a little longer, he inquired the old man's name.

"Hera Lal, Coach-wan sahib; our kinsman is Thapa Sing, of Serya Tal, who was accounted rich, and planted this garden and these fruit trees many years ago. We stay here by his leave in the winter time, to keep the deer and wild hog out. My name is Tara, and I sell firewood to Gunga Ram the sweetmeat vender."

Whilst she was speaking, Biroo had approached the fawn with a handful of grass.

"Is this the little one they say ye found on the Bore bridge, sahib?" inquired the young Padhani.

Ram Deen nodded affirmatively.

"Poor child!" she exclaimed, and, moved by a sudden impulse of pity, she knelt beside Biroo, and smoothing the hair from his face she put a marigold behind his ear.

Next day, after he had delivered the mail, Ram Deen, making a bundle of his best clothes, started off into the jungle. When he was out of sight of the village, he donned a snowy tunic and a scarlet turban, and encased his feet in a pair of red, hide-sewn shoes. When Tara, on her way to the bazaar with a load of firewood, met him soon after, she thought she had never seen any one so bravely attired, and stepped off the path to make room for him to pass.

"Toba, toba!" he exclaimed; "it maketh my head ache to see the load thou bearest. Gunga Ram will, doubtless, give thee not less than eight annas for the firewood."

"Nay, Coach-wan sahib, Gunga Ram is just, and besides giving me the market price,—two annas,—he often bestoweth on me a handful of sweetmeats."

"Thou shalt sell no more wood to Gunga Ram. He is base, and his father is a dog. Set thy load at my door; here is the price thereof," and Ram Deen laid an eight-anna piece in her palm. Before she could recover from her astonishment he said, "The fawn Ganda, is her hurt healed?"

"It is well with her. And what of Biroo, sahib?"

"He is a budmash, Tara, and I repent me of befriending him."

"Nay, Coach-wan sahib, he is but little, and hath no mother."

"That is the evil of it," said Ram Deen, leaving her abruptly.

When Tara returned to her home that evening, she noticed the footprints of a man's shoes in the dust in front of the hut; her grandfather, looking at her cunningly, smoked sweetened tobacco that was well flavored, and the clay bowl of his hookah was new and was gayly painted.

A similar scene was enacted on the jungle path the next day, and many days in succession, and the tale of Biroo's iniquities grew at each recital. Every day there was some fresh villainy of his to relate, and each day Tara's grandfather waxed in affluence, which culminated one day in a new blanket and a small purse with money in it.

"Tara," said Ram Deen one day, "put down thy load; I have bad tidings to tell thee concerning Biroo. He and Hasteen killed a milch-goat to-day belonging to the Thanadar."

"'Twas the dog's doing, Ram Deen."

"Nay, Biroo is the older budmash, and planneth all the villainies. To-morrow I must pay the Thanadar three rupees and eight annas, or Hasteen will be slain and Biroo beaten with a shoe by the Thanadar's chuprassi."

"Biroo shall not be beaten for a matter of three or four rupees, sahib. Lo, here is the money," and Tara, taking a small purse from a tiny pocket in her bodice, held it out to him.

"Nay, listen further!" exclaimed Ram Deen, holding up his hands; "thou knowest I am wifeless, and I might have the best and fairest woman in the Terai for my wife; but she liketh not Biroo, and will not share my hut because of him. Verily, I shall return him to the men of Nyagong."

"Thou art, doubtless, entitled to the best and the fairest wife in the Terai," said Tara, with a sudden catch in her voice; "but Biroo goeth not back to Nyagong as long as our hut standeth and as long as Gunga Ram, who is a just man and a generous, will pay me two annas each day for wood." She turned away her face, so that Ram Deen should not see the tears that suddenly filled her eyes.

"'Tis well, Tara; thou shalt have him, but thou must beat him every day, and often, to make an upright man of him."

"Nana Debi wither the hand that striketh him! He is not a dog to be taught with stripes." Then, after a pause, she went on, "And the—the woman who is to be the best and fairest wife in the Terai,—what manner of woman is she?"

"She is about thine age."

"Yes?"

"And as tall as thou art."

"Proceed."

"Her voice is soft and sweet as a blackbird's, and her eyes are like a fawn's. Her name is——"

"Well, what is her name?"

"'Tis the most beautiful name that a woman can bear. Nay, how can I tell thee her name if thou wilt not look at me?"

When she had turned her eyes on him, he put his hands on her shoulders, saying, "Her name is Tara, star of the Terai."

And Tara put her head on his breast, and was very happy.

"Thou must beat Biroo, Beloved, or he will be hanged."

"Thou wouldst have been hanged, budmash, hadst thou been motherless and beaten by strangers. Biroo's mother will make him a better man than thou art, O Beater of Babes."

"And thou takest me for love?"

"Nay, coach-wan ji, but for the training of Biroo."

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## CHAPTER VII

### *Chandni*

About a mile below the eastern gorge of Naini Tal, the favorite hill-station of Kumaon, is a Padhani village overlooking Serya Tal. It is inhabited by a few score of low-caste hill-men, who



earn a living, they and their women-folk, by carrying rough-hewn stones from the hillsides for contractors engaged in building houses, or by selling fodder-grass and firewood to the English residents.

When a Padhani has accumulated sufficient means he purchases a wife and stays at home every other day; and when he has attained affluence and bought two wives, he stays at home altogether; which accounts for the fact that a large majority of these carriers of wood and stone are women.

It is not to be supposed that the Padhani women look upon their toilsome tasks as a hardship: nature, and the decrees of evolution, have endowed them with superb health and strength, and they are wont, as they carry the most astonishing loads, to sing joyous choruses, and so lighten their toils. Every one who has been to Naini Tal is familiar with the sight of a string of Padhani women, short-kilted, showing a span of brown skin between their bodices and skirts, and singing in unison.

They never seem to weary of their choruses, and Captain Trenyon of the Forest Department, and his *khansamah*, Bijoo, never tired of looking at them as they passed below his bungalow with swaying hips and jaunty carriage. They were a trifle darker than their Rajpoot sisters (*quod tunc, si fuscus Amyntas*), and they might have been akin to Pharaoh's daughter, she who was "black but comely."

Now, Bijoo was a Padhani, and he took more than a casual interest—such as Captain Trenyon's, doubtless, was—in the laughing and singing crowd that filed below the captain's house several times a day. Chiefest among them, and distinguished by her beauty and her stature, was Chandni; and, ere the season was over, Bijoo purchased her from her crippled father for ten rupees, and, thereafter, Captain Trenyon turned his back on the Padhani traffic of the Mall to watch Chandni instead, as she helped Bijoo to clean the silver; and the songs of the Padhani women attracted him no more.

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The following year, before the snows of February had cleared off from Shere-ke Danda and Larya Kata, Chandni returned alone to the house of her father, Thapa, at Serya Tal. It was night when she pushed back the thatch door of his hut, which was in darkness within, and called him by name:

"It is I, father, Chandni, thy daughter."

"Moon of my Heart!" said the old man, waking from his sleep, and he would have "lifted up his voice and wept," as is the manner of all orientals when greatly moved, but she prevented him by the impressiveness of her "Choop, choop! father; proclaim not my return to the village!"

"Where is Bijoo, the man thy husband?"

"Nana Debi alone knoweth, my father, and I have come back to thee."

"Is he dead, little one?"

"He is dead to me, da-da; and I have returned to cook thy food and carry wood and stone for thee, if thou wilt let me."

"Let thee, O Spray of Jessamine!" and the old man caught his breath, and once more she had to check his emotions with an imperative "Choop, choop!"

He left his charpoi, and raking together the embers in the chula, he blew on them till they kindled into a blaze, at which he lit a smoky chirag, whose dim light showed Chandni sitting on the ground with her back towards him, swaying to and fro, and crying softly "Aho, aho, mai bap!"

He sat by the fire patiently, waiting for her to speak, his hands trembling with apprehension.

When her composure was sufficiently restored, she said, "Thapa Sing, my father, Nana Debi hath no ears for a woman's prayers; do thou, therefore, sacrifice a goat to him to-morrow at Naini Tal, and entreat his curses on all Faringis. See, here is money," and she threw a small bag of coins towards him.

He picked up the purse, and after a pause she went on:

"My father, the Mussulmanis do well to veil their women's faces. Trenyon sahib looked upon me ere I was married to Bijoo, and since then, daily, in his jungle camp hath he scorched me with his eyes, till my cheeks felt as though the hot wind had blown on them.

"One day, Bijoo came home with a coin of gold in his hand, such as I had never seen before, and which, he said, the sahib had given him; and he bored a hole through it and hung it on my forehead, and bade me wear it there at the sahib's request; but he stabbed me with his eyes as he put it on me.

"And the next day, Bhamaraya, the sweeper's lame wife, (Kali Mai afflict her with leprosy!) came to the door of our hut, Bijoo being gone to the village market for food supplies, and she extolled my beauty, and showed a picture of myself made by Trenyon sahib by the help of the sun; and thereafter I veiled myself when I went abroad.

"She came again the next day, and whensoever Bijoo was away from home, always praising my lips and my eyes, and telling me what Trenyon sahib spake concerning me. And yesterday she came to me and said, 'Chandni, O Moon of the Jungle, Trenyon sahib would fain have speech with thee. To-night will he send Bijoo with a message to the thana at Kaladoongie, and when he is gone and the other servants be asleep I will conduct thee to the sahib's tent. See what he hath sent thee,' and she placed at my feet a gold bangle.

"When I would have spurned her and her lures from my door she laughed wickedly, saying, 'Ho, ho, my Pretty Partridge! if golden grain will not catch thee, assuredly thou art entangled in the snare of necessity, thou Wife of a Thief!' and she pointed at the coin on my forehead.

"Then, as my heart turned to water, she went on: 'To-morrow the Thanadar will return with Bijoo, and, unless thou asketh the clemency of the sahib, Bijoo will be charged with theft and taken back to Kaladoongie as a prisoner.—The Sircar sends men across the Black Water for lesser offences than this!'

"And being a woman, and fearing I knew not what dangers for Bijoo and myself, I entreated Bhamaraya to take me to the sahib's tent, promising to say naught to Bijoo.

"And thus it fell out, Bijoo being away, that I went with the lame she-wolf to Trenyon sahib's tent last night to make appeal for my husband."

She paused in her narrative once more, swaying herself to and fro and moaning, "Aho, aho!" Then, after a while, she went on:

"When we were in the sahib's presence Bhamaraya plucked the chudder from my face, saying, 'Lo, sahib, I have brought thee the Rose of the Terai!' Whereon he filled her palms with rupees. And as she left the room she spake to me, saying, 'The saving of Bijoo were an easy task for thy beauty, thou Flower-Faced Chandni.'

"And I stood suppliant before the sahib, with folded palms and downcast eyes, and in the silence I could hear the beating of my heart. After a while, and because he spake not, I looked up and met his eyes that burned upon my face; and then I knew the price that was set on Bijoo's safety.

"Falling before him, I clasped his feet, saying, 'Provider of the Poor, let thy servant depart in honor, and so add one more jewel to the crown of thy worth. See, here is the coin Bhamaraya says was stolen from thee by the man Bijoo, my husband.' And, unwinding the gold piece from my head, I laid it at his feet.

"Thereupon he raised me from the ground, and because great fear was upon me, and because my limbs shook, he seated me upon his bed, whereon was a leopard's skin. Then, filling a crystal vessel with sparkling waters that bubbled and frothed, he bade me drink. And my courage revived, and once more I made plea for Bijoo.

"And then I noticed, for the first time, that the air of the tent was heavy with the odor of attar; slumbrous music came from a magical box on the table, and the thought of Bijoo seemed to go far from me, as though he were in another land, and I became as one who had smoked apheem or churrus. Then the sahib bound the gold coin on my brow again, and spake words to me such as I had never heard from man, assuring me of Bijoo's safety, and calling me Queen of the Stars, Dew of the Morning, Breath of Roses, and putting a strange stress upon me that cared not for any consequences.

"When I had flown, as it seemed to me, to the highest peak of elation, he gave me another draught of the sparkling waters, and, as I sank back on the pillows, the last thing I had sense of was his hand on mine. Oh, Nana Debi, that I had never waked again! Aho, aho!"

And once more the woman stopped to indulge her grief.

"When I waked again," she resumed, "the sahib sat by the table, asleep, with his head on his arm, the light still burning brightly over him. A bird cheeped uneasily in the peepul-tree above the tent, and through the chink of the doorway I could discern the faint glimmer of the false dawn. Fearing to be seen in or near the sahib's tent by the servants, who would soon begin to stir, I made shift to rise from the bed, but my head swam from the effects of the strong waters I had drunk, and I fell back on the pillows and shut my eyes for a few moments.

"When I looked again Bijoo stood within the doorway. Holding up a menacing finger that enjoined silence, he advanced stealthily on Trenyon sahib with an unsheathed khookri. Arrived within striking distance, he touched the sahib on the shoulder, and, as the sleeper raised his head from the table, the heavy blade descended on it and shore it from the shoulders, and Trenyon sahib passed from sleep to death without any waking.

"Tearing the coin from my forehead, Bijoo wound his fingers in my hair and bade me follow him without any outcry on pain of instant death.

"When we had passed into the jungle a mile from the camp he bade stand, and then, O my father, he inflicted the punishment our men exact from unfaithful wives."

"O Moonlight of my Heart, say not thou art a nakti! Not that! not that!"

For answer she rose slowly to her feet and turned towards him. Drawing from her face the chudder, which was soaked with blood, she disclosed to his horrified gaze a countenance with a

hideous gap between the eyes and mouth, and bearing no resemblance to that of the once beautiful Chandni.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### *One Thousand Rupees Reward*

The Terai was in consternation: Captain Trenyon of the Forest Department had been killed by his khansamah, Bijoo; the latter's wife, Chandni, had been horribly mutilated by her infuriated husband in accordance with an immemorial right claimed by the men of the Terai in such cases, and the government had offered a reward of one thousand rupees for the capture of the injured husband.

"Are we dogs?" said Ram Deen, indignantly, when the Thanadar had displayed a notice of the reward printed in Nagari that was to be posted throughout the Terai. "Are we dogs, brothers, that the sircar should tempt us with base money to betray men for exacting just retribution from those who wrong them?"

"We be men, coach-wan ji," said the bullock driver, valiantly; and whilst he spoke the great dog, Hasteen, who lay at Ram Deen's feet, pricked up his ears and growled as a shadow crept along the ground from the peepul tree in front of the village temple to a clump of tall grass some fifty paces from the Thanadar's fire.

"Peace!" exclaimed Ram Deen, venting his spleen on the dog with a blow from his shoe; "dost thou not know a jackal as yet?" Then to those assembled round the fire he went on, raising his voice: "Kali Mai wither the hand that betrayeth Bijoo, and fire consume his hut! There is contention even in my house, because the woman Chandni is kin to my wife, who believes in her innocence; but better such contention, and bitter silence for kindly speech, than that brothers should sell brothers, and so make light the honor of men in the Terai!"

"Nevertheless," said the Thanadar, "this notice must be posted wherever men pass or congregate throughout this Zemindaree."

"Nevertheless," retorted Ram Deen, bitterly, "without disrespect to thee, Thanadar Sahib, it shall be told throughout the Terai that Ram Deen spat on the notice of the sircar and tore it in shreds," and the driver of the mail-cart proceeded to make his words good.

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Next evening, when the mail-cart drove up to the post-office, little Biroo plucked Ram Deen's sleeve as he dismounted. "Thou must come with me," he said, simply.

"Must, Little Parrot?"

"Ay, father mine. Tara wanteth thee; and there is pillau for thy evening meal."

Now Ram Deen had fed on Gunga Ram's stale cates the evening before for having expressed approval of the mutilation of Chandni, and this prospect of pillau, besides appealing shrewdly to his eager stomach, was, perhaps, a sign of capitulation on the part of the young wife he had but lately wedded.

As he approached his hut his nostrils were assailed with the odors of a great cooking.

"Thou seest, my father," said little Biroo, with the ineptitude of infancy, "thou seest what awaits thee inside."

When Ram Deen entered his abode a woman's voice came to him from the inner apartment, saying, "Feed, Big Elephant, stupid as thou art tall!"

As Ram Deen fell to, Biroo also dipped his hand in the dish, mouthful for mouthful; and when his little stomach was pleasantly distended, he paused and said, "Where didst thou sleep last night, my father?"

"'Twere better to eat pillau, little Blue Jay, than ask questions that may be answered only through the soles of thy feet," replied Ram Deen.

"O valiant Beater of Babes!" said the voice from the inner room, "were it not for Biroo, I would return to my grandfather's house; but thou wouldst starve and ill-use the little one."

"Nay, my Best Beloved," said Ram Deen, in a conciliatory tone, "thou art not even just to me. Listen——"

"I will not listen, O Brave to Women, till thou hast answered Biroo's question."

"My Star, an' you should tell it abroad that I did not sleep in mine own house last night, it would blacken my face in Kaladoongie."

"Thou wilt say, perchance, that I gossip at the village well. Go on, what next?"

"Nay, then, if thou must know it, I slept in Goor Dutt's bullock-cart."

"'Twas well, Lumba Deen (Long Legs). Ho, ho, ho! Thy case was that of a ladder balanced across a wall. Proceed."

"The grain bags I lay on, Heart of my Heart, were stony, and the night was full of noises."

"Yes. And thou wast warm?"

"Nay, Beloved, for there was not room for the drawing up of my knees between myself and Goor Dutt, so my feet were frozen, and Goor Dutt ceased not from snoring."

"'Twas well, Oppressor of Women and Children. And thy evening meal?"

"Light of the Terai, Gunga Ram's stale pooris were ill-bestowed on a pariah dog,—but the savor of thy pillau hath effaced the wrong done to my stomach last night."

"Ah! And now what thinkest thou of my kinswoman Chandni?"

"Tara, Light in Darkness, thou art dearer to me than life itself, and I would not lightly vex thee. What is done is done; why slay me with thy questions? I were not worthy of thee if I answered thee differently concerning the price to be demanded for the virtue of a woman; nay, do not cry, little one."

A sound of wailing came from the inner room, where two women were weeping in each other's arms. "Aho! aho!"

"Tara," exclaimed Ram Deen, starting to his feet, "who is the woman with thee? and why is she here?"

"It is I, Chandni," said a thick, muffled voice, "and thou doest me wrong, coach-wan ji. Listen! Then the strange woman proceeded to tell Ram Deen of the slaying of Trenyon sahib, and of her own horrible mutilation.

When she had finished, Ram Deen said, "It was a brave stroke that Bijoo gave the sahib."

"It was well done, khodawund."

"And thou art not sorry for the killing of the sahib?"

"Doorga restore me and afflict me again, if I do not think it was a good killing!"

"They will hang Bijoo for it; a thousand rupees hath been offered for his taking, alive or dead."

"Aho! aho!" wailed the strange woman. "Men will be wicked for even ten rupees."

"But he robbed thee of thy beauty," remonstrated Ram Deen.

"'Twas right to do so, in his eyes," was the reply.

"And 'tis true thou wast in Trenyon sahib's tent for the helping of Bijoo?"

"As Nana Debi is my witness. And I know not all that happened, for the sahib gave me strong waters to drink that robbed me of my senses."

"Toba! toba!" exclaimed Ram Deen, walking towards the outer door. "Wife, see to it that thy relative is properly lodged this night."

"And to-morrow night?" queried Tara.

"To-morrow night I would eat of a kid seethed in milk and stuffed with pistachios by thy honorable kinswoman. Moreover, I will make provision for her ere the week is out."

"My lord is good as he is great," said Tara, as Ram Deen left the hut.

The next night, as they sat around the fire, Ram Deen waited till the shadow crept from the peepul tree to the clump of tall grass.

"Brothers," he began, speaking deliberately and in loud tones, "the woman we spake of last night is guiltless of wrong, as I now know. She is here and in my hut, and an honored guest." He paused and looked round the circle grimly.

"We be poor men, coach-wan ji," said the little driver, deprecatingly, "and thy honorable kinswoman is deserving, doubtless, of thy exalted consideration."

"She is deserving of the consideration due to a woman who was greatly wronged by the villain who was slain, and by the madman, his slayer. She was lured, brothers, into the sahib's tent by the sweeper's wife, Bhamaraya,—who is a lame she-wolf!—for the purpose of pleading for her man, Bijoo, who was accused of theft; and then she was robbed of her senses by the sahib's strong waters, and hath done no wrong; let no man in the Terai gainsay it!"

Ram Deen paused awhile to "drink tobacco," but nobody made comment on a matter in which he was so greatly interested.

"Bijoo's life is forfeit," he resumed; "and the rope that shall hang him is already made, for the sircar never fails to find whom it seeks. But Bijoo, alive or dead, is worth a thousand rupees to the man who shall take him. 'Twere pity that the money should go to some jackal of a man, for it belongs, of a right, to Chandni, whom he hath wrongfully mutilated; but he is a man, and will, doubtless, make the only reparation in his power, and yield himself up, for her sake, to some one who will bestow the blood money upon her."

The shadow rose from the tall grass and speedily disappeared in the darkness. Soon after, those who sat round the fire heard the dreadful lamenting of a strong man who walks between Remorse and Despair.

"Brothers," said Ram Deen, as he rose to go to his hut, "alive or dead, Bijoo will be here to-morrow night."

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At the fire, next evening, no one spoke; they were waiting for the fulfilment of Ram Deen's prediction, and the bugle-call of the fateful man had just been heard in the direction of the Bore bridge.

"Bijoo hath come, Thanadar ji," said Ram Deen, as he dismounted from the mail-cart.

He then proceeded, with the help of his hostler, to lift a heavy burden covered with a cloth from the back seat of the mail-cart. The limp hands trailing on the ground as they carried it showed their burden to be a corpse. They laid it in the firelight; and Ram Deen, drawing the covering from its face, disclosed the dreadful features of a man who had been hanged; part of the rope that had strangled him still encircled his throat.

"This was the way of it," began Ram Deen, after due identification had been made and the corpse had been carried to the thana; "this was the way of it: this evening, just before we began the descent that leads to the Bore bridge, a man sprang from the darkness in front of the horses and stayed the mail-cart below the great huldoo tree that stretches its arms across the road. The light of the lamps showed him to be Bijoo. So I sent the hostler forward to the bridge to await my coming, for Bijoo and I were fain to be alone for that which had to be said between us.

"When we were by ourselves I bade him mount the mail-cart and sit beside me. As he took his place, he said, 'Wah! coach-wan, dost thou not fear to be alone with a hunted man on a jungle road? I might slay thee now, for I am armed, and so remove the only man who can match me in the Terai.'

"'Nevertheless,' I replied, 'I will take thee to-night to Kaladoongie with my naked hands, if need be.'

"'We will speak of that hereafter,' said Bijoo; 'but now tell me of her.'

"'She is as you made her,—nakti and poor and a widow; for thou art but a dead man, Bijoo.'

"'And you spake the truth, last night, when you said she went to the sahib's tent to plead for me?'

"'Taking one of the lamps, I held it to my face, saying, 'Draw now thy khookri, Bijoo, and slay me if thou thinkest I have lied.'

"'Tis well,' he replied, sheathing his weapon. 'And what will become of Chandni?'

"'She shall dwell honorably with her kinswoman in my hut, and respected of all men as long as I live; but the road is not safe, Bijoo, and bad men and jungle fever and wild beasts have slain better men than I; and, bethink thee, by yielding thyself my prisoner thou canst bestow one thousand rupees on Chandni, and so set her beyond the reach of want and scoffers till her end come.'

"He mused awhile, and then replied quietly, 'I will go with thee. Proceed. I know thou wilt bestow upon her the reward offered by the sircar.'

"'But they will hang thee, Bijoo.'

"'Of a surety. Proceed.'

"'Tis a shameful death, for the hangman is a sweeper,—some brother to Bhamaraya, perhaps.'

"'Nevertheless, proceed; but promise me that thou wilt trap the lame witch in some pit of hell, Ram Deen.'

"'Fret not thyself on that score, Bijoo; I have already given the matter thought. But why should the sircar hang thee? They—would—not—hang—a dead man;' and I flicked a branch that overhung us with my whip.

"'Thou art right, Ram Deen,' he said, quietly; 'but, lo! I have not slept for many nights, and my thought is not clear.' He then stooped downward, groping in the bottom of the mail-cart, and drew forth one of the heel ropes of the horses.

"Throwing one end of the rope over the branch that was above us, he fastened it thereto with a running loop, and then encircled his neck with a noose at the other end.

"As he stood up on the seat, he asked, 'Thou wilt give me honorable burning, Ram Deen?' And I replied, 'I will be nearest of kin to thee in this matter.'

"'Tis well. Thou wilt not forget thy reckoning with Bhamaraya?'

"But ere I could make reply, the gray wolf that hunts beyond the bridge bayed, and the horses broke from me in their fear, so that I could not stay them till we reached the Naini Tal road."

"Yea, brothers," said the hostler, at whom Ram Deen looked for confirmation of this part of his story, "I had scarce time to leap to one side, as the mail-cart sped past me whilst I waited on the bridge."

More he would have said,—for he had never before enjoyed the privilege of speech at the Thanadar's fire, and the occasion was epochal,—but he saw in Ram Deen's face that which made him whine and say, "But I am a poor man, and know nothing, and my sight is dim by reason of sitting overmuch by grass fires,—only Ram Deen, Bahadoor, could not stay the horses, though he cursed their female relatives for many generations, and——"

"So, Thanadar ji," interrupted Ram Deen, "as soon as I could restrain the horses I turned them back, and, after picking up the hostler (who, because he is more silent, is wiser than most poor men who are ever talking of what they know not), I drove to the huldoo tree where hung Bijoo as dead as you saw him but now."

Then, after a pause, he said, "Brothers, let it be told in the Terai that Bijoo came back as befitted an honorable man."

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## CHAPTER IX

### *The Rope that Hanged Bijoo*

"Thy man-child is very beautiful, my lord," said Tara.

Ram Deen was sitting outside of his hut on a charpoi, whilst Tara rubbed their month-old babe with "bitter oil" in the forenoon sun.

The little brown manikin, without a stitch on him to conceal God's handiwork, sprawled on his stomach across his mother's knees, making inarticulate noises, and wriggling after the manner of infants when it is well with them, for the sun was pleasantly warm, and his mother's rubbing appealed to his budding sensations.

"It is not so beautiful as its beautiful mother," said Ram Deen.

"Thou Worthless!" exclaimed Tara. "Sawest ever such hands?" and she put a finger into the wee palm that clasped it by "reflex action."

"Toba! toba!" swore Ram Deen. "Nana Debi send grace to evil-doers in the Terai in the days to come, or else shall they be undone by these hands. Why, they might almost crush a fly!"

"Nevertheless, coach-wan ji, my lord, thy son shall be taller than thou when he is a man grown."

"Khoda (God) grant it, for thy son must drive the mail-cart in the time to come, and the Terai is full of dangers."

"But he *shall not* drive the mail-cart," said Tara; "he shall be Thanadar of Kaladoongie, and he shall feed his father and his mother when his beard begins to sing on a scraping palm. Eh, my butcha?" and the young mother, after the manner of young mothers the world over, bent her head and kissed the little one's dimples.

"He shall be rich, too, coach-wan ji," said a tall woman with a beautiful figure appearing in the doorway of the hut. Her eyes made beholders long to look upon the rest of her face; but that was closely veiled, for it was horribly mutilated.

Her voice was thick and muffled, and she spoke with difficulty. It was the unhappy Chandni.

"He shall be rich, if a thousand rupees can make him rich, and the wishes of thy humble servant. Tulsi Ram, pundit, hath this day indited a letter for me to Moti Ram, the great mahajun of Naini Tal, directing him to hold the money, that was the price of Bijoo, for thy son till he comes to man's estate."

"Now, nay, Chandni," remonstrated Ram Deen; "I am richer than most men in the Terai, and, through the advice of my friend, the Thanadar, my wealth groweth apace, and my son shall lack nothing. Biroo, too, is provided for; thou mayest need the money thyself, for the thread of life parts easily in the Terai, as thou knowest, and the shelter of my hut may be wanting to thee some day."

"Nevertheless, my lord and my master, thy lowly handmaid must not be thwarted in this matter," and Chandni disappeared into the hut.

"Let her have her will, my lord," pleaded Tara; "we owe her much," and with a sweeping gesture

she indicated the garden in which they sat and which was Chandni's special care.

The enclosure in which Ram Deen's hut stood used to be, ere the days of Tara and Chandni, the most neglected spot in the village; but, after the arrival of the latter, it gradually began to assume an appearance of neatness and thrift that made Ram Deen's home-coming a daily delight to him.

The young peepul tree in front of the hut was aflame with a gorgeous Bougain-villea, and the flower-beds laughed with marigolds and poppies of many hues sown broadcast. A little runnel sparkled through the garden, and, in one part of its career, chattered pleasantly over a tiny pebbly reach artfully contrived to produce the "beauty born of murmuring sound," which is nowhere more grateful than in the domain of the Hot Wind.

In one corner of the garden were planted radishes, and turnips, and carrots, with their delightful greenery. Chili plants and Cape gooseberries abounded, and many a potherb pleasant to behold and good in a curry. Every plant and shrub gave evidence of loving care, and repaid the tilth bestowed upon them with lavish interest.

A little machand (dais) of plastered mud, under the peepul tree, had been specially built for little Biroo, who decorated it, after the manner of the small boy, with bits of gayly-tinted glass and potsherds, bright feathers and cowries, and such other gauds as appeal to his kind.

In another corner of the compound was a tiny hut, wherein Heera Lal, Tara's old grandfather, lived in such ease and affluence as he had never dreamed of in his wildest imaginings. His day was setting in scented clouds of sweetened tobacco, and he had tyre to eat every morning. Every week he added two annas (six cents) to the hoard under his hearth; it was saved from the allowance made to him by Ram Deen; and he owed no man anything. Moreover, in Ram Deen he had found one who could be most easily overreached, and Ram Deen delighted to be swindled by the old man in matters involving small change.

Even Hasteen had not been forgotten in the improvements made in the enclosure: in one corner a small space had been carefully lepoed (plastered) and roofed with thatch for him. Farther on, Nathoo, Biroo's kid, was tethered to a stake; and beyond that the fawn, Ganda, had a little paddock to herself.

The whole compound was fenced in by a flourishing mandni hedge, which gave Ram Deen a fuller sense of possession. As he sat on the charpoi, lazily smoking his hookah and drinking in the beauty of the garden and of the day beyond, he was the happiest man in all the Terai. When Tara had finished the baby's simple toilet and put it to her breast, the thought passed through Ram Deen's mind that, if God ever smiled, it must be when he looked on a young mother suckling her first-born.

"Respect the aged and infirm," said a whining voice, breaking in upon Ram Deen's pleasant reverie. The speaker, who stood outside the hedge, was an old mendicant equipped like his kind, with an alms-bowl containing a handful of small copper coin and cowries. He was smeared with wood ashes, and his tangled, grizzly hair hung to his waist.

"Respect the aged and poor, Ram Deen, for the sake of the beautiful babe." (Tara immediately covered it with her chudder for fear of the evil eye.) "Listen, I have tidings for thee."

"Speak, swami," replied the driver, throwing him a small piece of silver.

"Bhamaraya, the lame mehtrani, cometh this way. She is on the road on the hither side of Lal Kooah, in a covered byli whereof one of the wheels has come off. The byl-wan walked into Kaladoongie with me this morning to seek assistance, leaving the old woman on the road."

"'Tis well, jogi ji. Durga will doubtless protect her own. Salaam," said Ram Deen, dismissing the mendicant.

The time had come for the fulfilment of his promise to Bijoo. What he should do when he came across the mehtrani who had wrecked Chandni's life would doubtless be suggested to him by the circumstances of the place and the hour, but for the present he was satisfied that she was completely in his power.

That day Chandni was absent from the mid-day meal.

The Hot Wind blew fiercely, rattling the leafless branches of the forest trees. The Bore Nuddee, below the head of the canal that supplied Kaladoongie, had shrunk to a few scattered pools that became shallower every day.

"Nana Debi send thy kinswoman is in a cool shade this day," said Ram Deen, addressing Tara.

"She hath doubtless gone to the ford of the Bore Nuddee to bleach her new chudder," explained Tara.

But when evening came and Chandni had not returned, the driver became alarmed. After he had made his preparations for taking the mail to Lal Kooah he joined the circle in front of the Thanadar's hut.

The Hot Wind had abated its fury to little puffs that came at intervals and seemed to sear the skin, and the sun had set like a copper disk in the haze that overhung the western sky. As the hostler brought the mail-cart round, Ram Deen told the Thanadar of Chandni's absence, and received his assurance that immediate search should be made for her.

As they spoke together a little puff of wind came out of the west, laden with the smell of fire. They instinctively turned their faces windwards. The glow of the setting sun, that had but just disappeared, seemed to be returning in the west and illuminated the under surface of a huge black cloud that was growing rapidly in size.

"The jungle through which thou must drive is on fire, Ram Deen, and thou must make haste if thou wouldst take the mail to Lai Kooah to-night."

"But thou must not go to Lai Kooah to-night," said little Biroo, running up to Ram Deen. "Chandni said so ere she went away this morning. I was to tell thee, but I had forgotten till I saw just now the money she gave me for the telling of this to thee;" and opening his hand he showed the men a rupee.

"Therefore must I go, Thanadar ji," said Ram Deen. "Had this little budmash spoken sooner Chandni had been home now, and not on a quest that belongs properly to me. Toba, toba!" he exclaimed, as a tongue of flame shot high into the air, "was ever such fire lit for the purification of the jungle? But I must make haste if I would save Chandni;" and the next minute Ram Deen was speeding towards the Bore bridge. Two miles beyond the bridge they reached the hither end of the fire, which was now being driven furiously by a storm of its own creation towards the road, from which it was distant about half a mile. The hostler leaped to the ground, refusing to go any farther; but the element of danger and the risk to Chandni only stirred Ram Deen's pulses into activity, and he shook the reins and urged his horses into a headlong gallop.

The wild things of the Terai fled in front of the fire and across Ram Deen's path, heedless of the presence of man, who was but a pygmy to the wrath behind them. The roar of the giant fire put a great stress upon the fleeing animals, so that they were as of one kin in the presence of a common danger. A herd of spotted deer, with a leopard in their very midst, dashed across the road in front of the mail-cart. A wild boar came next in headlong fashion. Jackals, hares, nyl-gai followed each other pell-mell, making for the shelter of the bed of the Bore Nuddee, whilst overhead was seen the flight of the feathered denizens of the Terai.

All this confusion and rush but accented the roar of the pursuing fire. When Ram Deen looked back for an instant he saw that it had leapt across the road at a point he had passed but a minute before, and now he knew that he was running for his life.

A quarter of a mile farther on the road turned to the left, thus increasing his chance of reaching the southern limit of the fire, which was travelling due east. By the light of the flames he could see a tall woman sitting on the parapet of a small culvert, about one hundred yards in front of him. On the edge of the jungle beside her was an overturned byli, and from it there came the most appalling screams that could be distinguished even through the din of the fire.

The woman on the culvert saw him as soon as he turned the bend of the road, and forthwith mounted the parapet; and he saw it was Chandni. As the mail-cart swept past her she sprang towards it, and Ram Deen passed an arm round her and drew her on to the seat beside him.

"For the love of God, Chandni, for the love of God!" screamed the woman in the byli as a burning branch fell on it. But the mail-cart sped away, and presently only the roar of the angry fire could be heard.

A quarter of a mile farther on they had passed the southern edge of the fire, which was within fifty yards of the road when they reached safety.

"The woman in the byli?" asked Ram Deen.

"Bhamaraya," was the quiet reply.

"And why came she not forth?"

"Because of the rope that hanged Bijoo."

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## CHAPTER X

### *Coelum, Non Animum Mutant*

The Commissioner of Kumaon had arrived at Kaladoongie in the course of his winter tour of inspection, and the same evening Joti Prshad, his butler, sat beside the Thanadar on a charpoi and smoked with metropolitan ease amidst the awe-struck notables of the jungle village.

Ram Deen alone was not abashed, and puffed his hookah unconcernedly, although Joti Prshad told many wonderful things of the sahiblogue, and spoke concerning the doings of the great world of Naini Tal during the greater rains.

Joti Prshad was a small man, and Ram Deen's *blasé* mood galled his sense of superiority; it was but right that he should snub this exasperatingly cool villager.

"Thanadar ji," he began, "thou and I know that nowhere in Hindoostan is there such greatness assembled as at Naini Tal during the Greater Barsât."



"Men say that the governor-general still goeth to Simla, but, doubtless, the sirdar knoweth best," said Ram Deen.

"The Lât-sahib, indeed, goeth to Simla, but those with him be mere karanis (clerks), and shopkeepers, and half-castes. 'Tis plain thou hast not seen Naini Tal, coach-wan."

"The Terai sufficeth me, Joti Prshad."

"They say," piped Goor Dutt, the little bullock driver, "that the mem-sahibs at Naini Tal bare their shoulders and bosoms and dance with strange men. Toba, toba!"

This being an indisputable fact, and one to which Joti Prshad had never reconciled himself, the latter did not speak, and the diversion thus made by the byl-wan was felt by all to be in Ram Deen's favor.

Taking advantage of the silence of Joti Prshad, Ram Deen went on: "The people of Naini Tal come and go, but the children of the Terai never forget their mother. What sayest thou, Thanadar ji?"

"'Tis even so, brothers," said the Thanadar, with the gravity of one who is in authority and under the stress of weighing his words.

As they evidently waited for him to proceed, the Thanadar continued: "The jungle is our father and our mother, and the huldoo trees our near kin, O my brothers; and we who have once seen the beauty of the morning in the jungle, and the rye-fields laughing in the clearings in the winter, may not live elsewhere."

"Ay, Thanadar ji," said Ram Deen; "and, moreover, the senses of those who live in bazaars are asleep as with bhang, and they cannot see nor hear the wonders of God."

A general "humph" of assent followed Ram Deen's speech.

"If the sirdar will stay with us we will show him whereof we speak," said the Thanadar. But the butler had fond recollections of Oude and the rose-fields of Shahjahanpoor, where they make attar, and shook his head dissentingly. So the Thanadar went on: "Many seasons since, a holy man—a Sunyasi—who had given up his wife and children and lived in a hollow tree by the Rock of Khalsi (whereon are written the laws of the great king Asoka) returned to Gurruckpoor, his native village, when he felt the Great Darkness coming on. He told the village Brahmin that he longed for death, but that he could not die outside of the Terai."

After a pause, during which the bubbling of his narghili was heard, the Thanadar said: "It is the same with all who are born in the Terai,—Faringi and Padhani, Brahmin and Dome, Sunyasi and fair woman,—all are alike in bondage, and return, sooner or later, to their jungle mother. Listen. Twelve years ago there came to Gurruckpoor to hunt big game an Englishman named Fisher Sahib. He was of those favored by God who have much wealth, and to whom sport standeth for occupation. As he was accustomed to fulfil his heart's desires, he hired two shooting elephants from the Rajah of Rampore,—one for himself and the other for his mem-sahib, who accompanied him. And he had a great camp, and many servants, and beaters, and shikaris, chief of whom was Juggoo, whose fame as a hunter reached from Phillibeet to Dehra. He it was who always rode with the sahib in his howdah, and he had command from the mem-sahib never to leave the sahib's side in the jungle, in that he was rash and loved danger, and many a time fell into it unawares by reason that he saw not clearly except he looked through a piece of glass that he wore in one eye.

"One day the sahib had shot a deer, and let himself down from his elephant—Juggoo going with him—to give it hallal, according to the rule of the Koran,—for he intended the deer as a gift to the Mussulmanis in his camp. As he bent over the deer to cut its throat with his khoorkri, a great boar ran upon them from a thicket. Juggoo uttered a cry of warning, but ere the sahib could find his sight the boar was upon them, and Juggoo thrust himself in its way and got his death, or the sahib had been killed.

"So they carried the dead man to the camp, where his daughter, Chambeli, having cooked his evening meal, awaited the return of her father. She was fifteen years in age, and a widow,—for her betrothed husband and all his people had died five years before of The Sickness (small-pox); so she had returned to her father, and had cared for his house ever since. And Kali Dass, who was learning jungle-craft from her father, would have had her to mistress. 'Come and live with me, my beloved, beyond the head-waters of the Bore Nuddee,' he had pleaded; 'and when thy hair hath grown again none shall know thou art a widow, and the people of the foothills shall wonder at thy beauty.'

"'But I shall know and Nana Debi,—and the others matter not, Kali Dass'" she replied firmly.

"So Kali Dass went his way; and the young man and Chambeli looked at each other, but spake no more together.

"The mem-sahib it was who told Chambeli of her father's death, Kali Dass standing by, and she turned on him like a leopard bereft of its young and upbraided him, saying, 'Hadst thou been a man, Kali Dass, my father were still living.' Thereafter she swooned, and the mem-sahib laid her on her own couch, and held her in her arms and comforted her, because Juggoo had died to save the sahib.

"Then for that she was childless and very wealthy, and could do whatsoever seemed good in her

eyes, the mem-sahib took Chambeli across the Black Water. They brought her up as their own kin, teaching her whatsoever it is fitting the daughter of a Faringi should know, and training her to work amongst our women and children when they should be afflicted with sickness; and, furthermore, she was to turn them from Nana Debi to the God of the Faringis.

"Moreover, to aid her in her work she was married to a young English padre; and they came to Kaladoongie six years ago, when the next new-year festival of the Faringis shall arrive. And because we knew her and still remembered Juggoo, her father, we of Kaladoongie waited on her at the dâk-bungalow on the day she returned.

"She came out to us on the veranda, dressed in the garments of a mem-sahib, and we saw that she was a woman grown and in the mid-noon of her beauty. She was glad to see us, calling us all by our names, and we greeted her with such gifts as we could,—fruit and flowers and sweetmeats. Last of all came Kali Dass, and behind him four men bearing a leopard but newly slain, slung from a pole.

"They laid the beast at her feet, and Chambeli laughed and clapped her hands till the little padre, her husband, frowned at her; whereon her nostrils twitched and she looked at him in wonderment, as though she saw for the first time that he was a small man with a pale face, and void of authority.

"Then turning to Kali Dass she said in our Terai tongue, 'Is it well with thee, shikari ji? Thou art doubtless married and happy?'

"And he said, 'Nay; I have no spouse, save only my jungle-craft.'

"'And the jungle?' she asked, looking on the ground.

"'It is my father and my mother, and fairer than any of its daughters, mem-sahib. But thou hast been in great cities, and across the Black Water; thou hast read in books, and hast changed thy gods,—what shouldst thou care for the jungle?'

"'It is the garden of God, Kali Dass, and I am fain to see it again, for I am a Padhani born, and a daughter of the Terai.'

"Ere she gave us leave to depart it was arranged that she and the padre sahib, accompanied by me and Kali Dass, should start in the early morning and follow the Bore Nuddee backward into the foothills.

"Kali Dass was at the dâk-bungalow before me in the morning; and he was dressed in holiday clothes; his face shone, and behind one ear he had placed a marigold.

"When the padre and his mem-sahib came forth from their chamber, behold! she was dressed as a Padhani; and she was the Chambeli we knew of old, only taller.

"'I am but a Padhani,' she explained, 'and shall get nearer to my people the more I am like to them.'

"It was a time of great stillness when we started, for the morning was just born, and the dew lay on all things. Taking the road to Naini Tal, we struck into the jungle when we came to the path that leads to the ford of the Bore Nuddee, and Chambeli alighted from her pony and walked in front of the rest with Kali Dass. A faint flush showed in the east, and presently a jungle-cock greeted the dawn. Chambeli stopped, and, with joy in her face, she turned round to the padre sahib, exclaiming, 'Didst hear that?' And he laughed, saying, 'It was but the crowing of a cock.'

"'But it came out of the stillness of the morning, and the dew accorded with it,—and it was a wild thing,—but how shouldst thou understand? thou art not of the Terai,' she said.

"Soon the glow in the east became brighter, and the jungle burst into its morning song. Chambeli stopped and put her hands to her forehead, as if she would remember something; then she said to the shikari, 'Something is lacking, Kali Dass; what is it?' And even as she spake there came the call of a black partridge from a thicket near by: 'Sobhan teri koodruth!' Brothers, ye know that the black partridge is the priest of the Terai, and at its voice Chambeli fled with a cry of joy from the path and into the thick jungle.

"The little padre sahib, knowing not what to think, urged us to follow her. When we came up with her, Kali Dass stood by regarding her with a smile, whilst she lay on the ground with her face buried in the dewy grass, moaning and saying, 'O Jungle Mother, I will never leave thee again, I will never leave thee again!' And the little padre chid her in his own tongue; whereat she rose shuddering; and brushing the dew and the tears from her face, she returned to the path.

"She had eyes and ears for everything that morning, and was as a wild thing that had just fled from captivity.

"When we came to the brow of the hill that slopes down to the ford, the sun rose over the tops of the trees and laid a gleaming sword across the stream; and as we looked at the brightness and wonder of it all there came to us the song of a string of Padhani women approaching the ford. In an instant Chambeli took up the song, and set off swiftly down the narrow path, we following as we could.

"As she neared the ford she lifted her sari and took the water with her bare limbs; and I looked at the little padre, who seemed sore amazed.

"When we had all crossed the ford, Chambeli and Kali Dass were not to be seen on the road that ran by the stream. A traveller on his way to Kaladoongie said he had not met them, and as we questioned him there came the report of a gun.

"Kali Dass hath met game, padre sahib,' said I.

"Find them, and bring them back instantly, Thanadar,' commanded the holy man, and his voice shook with anger.

Following the direction of the shot, I came upon their tracks, and thereafter I found a handful of fresh feathers. A few paces beyond lay a small book; it was the sacred book of the Faringis printed in Nagari, and on the first leaf, which was held down by a stone, was writing in English. On the path a pace farther were two sticks crossed, and beyond that other two; and I knew it was the warning of Kali Dass, who must not be followed.

"So I returned with the little book to the padre sahib. And when he had read what was written on the first leaf he trembled and clutched at his throat, and I caught him in my arms as he fell from his horse.

"I returned with him to Kaladoongie; but Chambeli and Kali Dass never came back.

"I showed the writing in the book to Tulsi Ram. Speak, pundit, and tell our brothers what it meant."

Tulsi Ram, pleased and proud to give an exhibition of his scholarship, replied, "Brothers, and you, O Joti Prshad, the writing said: 'Like to like: Kali Dass is of my blood, and the great jungle hath claimed her daughter this day.'"

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## CHAPTER XI

### *The Lamé Tiger of Huldwani*

It was in the middle of May—just before the beginning of the lesser rains—that Ram Deen and certain wayfarers sat round a handful of fire at Lal Kooah from mere force of habit, for the heat of the evening was great, and not a breath of air stirred in the jungle. The sâl trees had lost their leaves and looked like ghosts; the grass had been burnt in all directions; and as the sun set in the copper sky, it lit up a landscape that might have stood for the "abomination of desolation."

The dry chirping of the crickets, just beginning to tune their first uneasy strains, accorded with the unholy scene. Even the horses waiting for the mail-cart were imbued with the depressing influence of the season, and hung their heads with a sense of despair, as though they thought the blessed monsoon would never set in.

No one spoke, and the hookah passed from hand to hand in a dreary silence. Suddenly, the attention of those assembled was attracted by the curious action of a bya (tailor) bird in a neighboring mimosa tree. It was calling frantically, and dropping lower from bough to bough, as though against its will.

"Nâg!" exclaimed the bunnia; and, directed by his remark, all eyes were turned to the foot of the tree, where an enormous cobra with expanded hood was swaying its head from side to side, and drawing the wretched bird to its doom through the fascination of fear.

Ram Deen, whose sympathies were always with the weak and defenceless, rose to his feet, and, throwing a dry clod of earth at the reptile, drove the creature from the tree; whilst the bird, released from its hypnotic influence, flew away.

"Brothers," said Ram Deen, "fear is the father of all sins, and the cause of most calamities. He who feareth not death is a king in his own right, and dieth but once; but a coward—shabash! who can count his pangs?"

"Ho! ho!" chuckled the little bullock driver; "Ram Deen, The Fearless, shall live to be an hundred years old."

"Nay, Goor Dutt," said Ram Deen, gravely regarding the little man, "I, too, have known fear. No man may drive the mail to Kaladoongie without looking on death."

Ram Deen smoked awhile in silence; and, when the expectation of his listeners was wrought to a proper pitch, he went on: "Ye all knew Nandha, the hostler, who used to go with me last year from this stage to Kaladoongie?"

"Ay, coach-wan ji," responded the carrier for the others. "'Tis a great telling, but not known to these honorable wayfarers who come from beyond Moradabad."

"Brothers, ye saw the plight of the bya bird but now; so was it with Nandha," said Ram Deen.

"One evening, ere the mail arrived, he called me to where he stood by the kikar tree yonder, looking down at the ground. In the dust of the road were large footprints.

"These be the spoor of a tiger lame in its left hind foot,' I said to Nandha; 'see, here it crouched on its belly, and wiped away the wheel tracks made by the mail-cart this morning.'

"'Tis the lame tiger of Huldwani, coach-wan; he is old, and he hunteth man. Gunga send he is hunting elsewhere to-night!' replied Nandha.

"When we came within a mile of the Bore bridge that night, the horses stopped suddenly; they were wild with fear, and refused to move. The night was as dark as the inside of a gourd, and beyond the circle of light made by our lanterns we could discern in the middle of the road two balls of fire close to the ground.

"'Bâg! (tiger),' said Nandha, as he climbed over into the back seat; 'we be dead men, Ram Deen.'

"'Blow!' I commanded, giving him the bugle; and as he startled the jungle with a blast, I gathered up the reins, and, adding my voice to the terrors of Nandha's music, I urged the horses with whip and yell to fury of speed; and the light of the lanterns showed the great beast leaping into the darkness to escape our onset.

"Nandha ceased not from blowing on the bugle till I took it from him by force at the door of the post-office at Kaladoongie.

"They gave him bhang to smoke and arrack to drink ere he slept that night, for his great fear had deprived him of reason for awhile; and he looked round him as though he expected to see the tiger's eyes everywhere.

"'The bâg followed me to the hither side of the Bore bridge,' he said to me next morning, as we prepared to return to Lai Kooah. But I laughed at his fears, to give him courage.

"'It is a devil,' he whispered, looking cautiously round him, and I saw that the light of his reason flickered.

"When we came to the Bore bridge, Nandha leaped to the ground, and in the dim light of the morning I could see the tracks of a great beast on the ground, to which he pointed; and, even as we looked, there came the roar of a tiger. I could scarce hold the horses whilst Nandha, whose limbs were stiff with fear, scrambled into the back seat of the mail-cart.

"When a tiger puts its mouth to the ground and gives voice, no man may tell whence the sound comes; so I stayed not to see, if I might, where the danger lay, but gave the horses free rein.

"As we cleared the end of the bridge, Nandha screamed, 'Bâg, bâg!' and glancing back, I saw the tiger in full pursuit of us, and within a hundred paces.

"'Blow!' I commanded, handing the bugle to Nandha; but, though he took it from me, he appeared not to understand what he was required to do.

"'Blow!' said I, once more, shaking him; but he took no heed of me, and was as a man who walks in his sleep. So I put my arm round him and lifted him on to the front seat beside me; and even as I pulled him to me, his head was drawn over his shoulder by the spell of fear. There was a foam on his lips and on his beard, and he shook so that I feared he would fall off the mail-cart.

"'Be brave, Nandha,' I shouted to him, 'the beast is lame, and we shall soon leave it behind.' For answer, he turned his face to me for one instant, and his lips framed the word 'bâg,' but no sound came therefrom.

"Suddenly, he laughed like a child that is pleased with a toy, babbling, and saying, 'How beautiful is my lord! Soft be the road to his feet! But, look! my lord limpeth; belike he hath a thorn in his foot.' As he rose, I put an arm round him and forced him down again; and at that instant the tiger uttered another roar. The horses swerved, and would have left the road in their fear, had I not put forth the full strength of both my arms; and as soon as Nandha felt himself free, he leaped to the ground, and advanced towards the tiger. He walked joyously, as a loyal servant who goeth to meet his lord.

"Looking over my shoulder (for now the horses were in the middle of the road, which here stretched straight ahead of us), I beheld Nandha proceed towards the tiger, which now crouched in the road, waiting for him, its tail waving from side to side. When he was within five paces of the beast, he salaamed to the ground, and as he stooped the tiger sprang on him with another roar, and throwing him over its shoulder it bounded with him into the jungle.

"More there is to tell concerning the lame tiger of Huldwani, but here is the mail-cart, and here is that which had saved Nandha's life had I not also looked upon fear that morning."

Putting the bugle to his mouth, Ram Deen blew a blast that would have routed any jungle creature within hearing, and which made the leaves of the peepul tree overhead rattle as he dashed away on the mail-cart.

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## CHAPTER XII

### *How Nandha was Avenged*

The travellers from beyond Moradabad having reached Kaladoongie, were discovered to be men of consequence by the Thanadar, and were invited by him to join the circle of the great round his fire on the evening of their arrival.

It was very warm, and the dismal silence was only accented by the distant howl of a lonely jackal. The sheet lightning flickered fitfully over the foothills, mocking the gasping Terai with its faint promise of a coming change.

The conversation round the fire flagged, and the hookah passed languidly from hand to hand. Those present would have retired to sleep, had sleep been possible; but as that was a consummation not easily attained at this season of the year, they preferred their present miseries to those that come in the wakeful night watches when the Terai is athirst.

Ram Deen's arrival was a nightly boon to those who were wont to assemble round the Thanadar's fire; there was always the possibility of his having news; and, besides, men seemed to acquire fresh vitality from contact with his vigorous personality.

The strangers were especially grateful for his arrival; and when he had taken his usual place beside the fire, the hookah was at once passed to him.

"Any tidings, coach-wan ji?" inquired the Thanadar.

"None, sahib; save that the great frog in the well at Lal Kooah—who is as old as the well, and wiser than most men—gave voice just ere I started, and the bunnia said it was a sure sign of rain within two days, as the frog's warning had never been known to fail."

"Nana Debi send it be so," exclaimed the little carrier, "for my bullocks be starved for the lack of green food, and *bhoosa* (chaff) is past my means."

"Thou shouldst not complain, Goor Dutt," said Ram Deen, with a smile; "their very leanness is thy passport through the jungle. Fatter kine had been devoured, and their driver with them, long ere this."

Hint of danger that might be encountered in the jungle having been thus given, one of the strangers was moved to ask concerning the lame tiger of Huldwani, part of whose biography they had heard from Ram Deen at Lal Kooah on the previous day.

"Coach-wan ji, wast thou not afraid to carry the mail after the slaying of thy hostler, Nandha?"

"Those who carry the Queen's mail may not stop for fear. Nevertheless, fear rode with me a day and a night after the death of Nandha."

"It is a great telling," said the little carrier, nodding at the wayfarers, whilst Ram Deen "drank tobacco."

When Ram Deen had passed the hookah to his neighbor, he went on:

"Brothers, on the day that Nandha was carried off by the tiger, I sent word to the postmaster of Naini Tal concerning the killing, and the out-going mail brought me word that the sircar (government) would send me help.

"Ye know that a tiger kills not two days in succession; so I had no fear when I traversed the road to and from Lal Kooah till the second day after the slaying of Nandha. Ere I started on that morning, the munshi told me to drive to the *dâk-bungalow* for a sahib who had been sent to slay the slayer of men.

"Brothers, when I went to the *dâk-bungalow*, there came forth to me a man-child—a Faringi—whose chin was as smooth as the palm of my hand.

"I would have laughed, but that I thought of the tiger that, I knew, would be waiting for us; and taking pity on him, I said, 'The jungle hereabout is full of wild fowl, sahib, an 'twere pity, when shikar is so plentiful, you should waste the morning looking for a budmash tiger who will not come forth for two days as yet.'

"He answered me never a word, but went into the *dâk-bungalow* for something he had forgotten; and, whilst he was gone, his butler spake to me, saying, 'Coach-wan, make no mistake; thy life depends upon thy doing the sahib's bidding. He is a very Rustum, and he knoweth not fear, for all he is so young.'

"'He is a man after my own heart then, sirdar; but, mashallah! I would he had a beard,' I replied.

"Presently the young sahib came forth with an empty bottle in one hand and his gun in the other. Throwing the bottle into the air, he shattered it with a bullet ere it reached the ground. Startled by the report, a jackal fled from the rear of the cook-house towards the jungle, and the sahib stopped its flight with another bullet. Then, replenishing his gun, he took his seat beside me on the mail-cart, saying 'Blow on thy bugle, coach-wan, and announce our coming to Shere Bahadoor, His Majesty the Tiger.'

"It was a brave jawan (youth), brothers; but he was very young, and, belike, he had a mother; so I swore in my beard to save him, whatever might befall.

"As we proceeded, he questioned me concerning the killing of Nandha, speaking lightly, as one who goeth to shoot black partridge.

"He is lame, coach-wan, and will doubtless be waiting for us by the Bore bridge,' said the sahib. 'As soon as he appears, stay the horses for an instant whilst I get off the mail-cart, and then return when your horses will let you.'

"Bethink thee, sahib,' I answered; 'the Lame One of Huldwani is old and cunning; it is no fawn thou seekest this morning. Perchance the sircar will dispatch some great shikari to help thee in this hunting. Gunga send we may not meet the tiger; but if we should, shame befall me if I permit thee to leave the mail-cart whilst the horses are able to run!'

"For answer, my brothers, the sahib flushed red, and, calling me coward, he drave his elbow into my stomach with such force that the reins fell from my hands. Taking them up, the while I fought for my breath, he turned the horses round, saying, 'A jackal may not hunt a tiger! I have need of a man with me this morning, and Goor Deen, my butler, shall take thy place.'

"The sahib, being a man, will not blacken my face in the eyes of Kaladoongie,' I said. 'I spake for thy sake, sahib; but I will drive thee to Jehandum an' thou wilt,—for no man hath ever called me coward before.'

"Then the sahib looked in my face, as I tucked the ends of my beard under my puggri; and seeing that my eyes met his four-square, he gave up the reins to me, saying, 'If thou playest me false I will kill thee like a dog;' and he showed me the hilt of a pistol that he had in his pocket.

"We spake no more together, but when we came to the Bore bridge I shook the jungle with a blast from my bugle.

"Shabash! coach-wan,' exclaimed the sahib; 'thou art a man, indeed, and shalt have Shere Bahadoor's skin as recompense for the hurt to thy stomach. Bid him come again.'

"Half a mile beyond the bridge, as we sped along the level road above the river, I again blew upon the bugle. The sound had scarcely ceased, when we heard the angry roar of a charging tiger.

"Stop!' exclaimed the sahib; and I threw the frightened horses on their haunches, whilst he leaped to the ground.

"Then, whilst the horses flew along the road, I looked back over my shoulder and beheld the Lame One bound into the middle of the road; and the sahib blew on his fingers, as one would whistle to a dog. The great beast stopped on the instant and crouched on the ground, ready to spring on the sahib as he advanced towards it, and I prayed to Nana Debi to befriend the young fool.

"When he was within thirty paces or so from the tiger, the sahib halted and brought the gun to his shoulder. The next instant there was the crack of a rifle, and the Lame One leaped straight into the air.

"I knew the tiger was dead; and immediately thereafter the mail-cart ran into a bank and spilled me on the road. Leaving the stunned horses tied to a tree, I proceeded to seek the sahib.

"Wah ji, wah! brothers, we must pay taxes to the Faringis until we can raise sons like theirs. When I joined the boy sahib he was smoking, and taking the measure of the tiger with a tape!

"His bullet had struck the beast between the eyes, and the Lame One had died at the hands of a *man!*"

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## CHAPTER XIII

### *An Affront to Gannessa*

"A little brother hath come," said Biroo, as Ram Deen dismounted from the mail-cart. The tall driver snatched up the little boy and hurried to his hut, over the door of which was affixed the green bough that is customary on such occasions, and whence came the wailing of a new-born child.

The inner apartment was guarded by a lean old woman, who refused Ram Deen admittance thereto, and who would have prevented even speech on his part had she been able. But Ram Deen was not to be denied such solace as could be gained from the voice whose accents had taken him captive the first time he had heard them.

The feeble wailing of the babe made the strong man tremble.

"Tara, Light in Darkness, is it well with thee?" he asked.

"Quite well, my lord and my master," came the faint answer. "Thy handmaid hath bestowed a man-child upon thee, and Nana Debi will require a kid of thee in recompense."

"He shall have a flock of goats, Heart of my Heart——"

"Nay," interrupted Tara; "it is a very little child and a kid will suffice; but go now, my master, I

am very tired and would fain sleep."

"May the stars in heaven shower their blessings on thee, my Best Beloved;" and with this invocation Ram Deen left the hut, leading little Biroo by the hand.

"See what Gunga Ram gave me but now, father mine," said Biroo, unfolding a plaintain leaf wherein was wrapped a sweetmeat made of rice and milk; "and he hath a great cooking forward to-night."

"Wherefore?" asked Ram Deen.

"For that a man-child hath come to Nyagong, as well as Kaladoongie, this day."

"Oh, ho," said Ram Deen, chuckling softly, "we will have speech with Gunga Ram."

When they had arrived at the methai-wallah's booth, Ram Deen, looking on the thalis (trays) heaped with sweetmeats crisp from the making, said, "Wah ji, wah! Gunga Ram, is the Hurdwar mela (fair) coming to the Bore Nuddee, that thou shouldst make such preparations?"

"Nay, coach-wan ji, but a man-child hath come to the house of the Jemadar of Nyagong, and he hath commanded fresh sweetmeats and cates for a feast in honor of an honorable birth."

"There is no honorable thing done in Nyagong, Gunga Ram. They be all thugs and thieves there, and it shall not be said that Ram Deen's friends at Kaladoongie ate stale pooris whilst the Jemadar of Nyagong, whose face I have blackened, set fresh cates before his guests. Therefore bid carry these sweetmeats to my friends who sit round the Thanadar's fire, and to-morrow thou shalt make enough for all the people of Kaladoongie, so that they may know that a son hath been born to Ram Deen."

"But, coach-wan ji," remonstrated Gunga Ram, "the Jemadar's men wait to carry these things to Nyagong."

"Tell them, Gunga Ram, that I had need of them; but, nevertheless, for the kindness the men of Nyagong did to little Biroo last year, send them, on his behalf, two rupees' worth of gur and parched gram;" and Ram Deen laid the money in the sweetmeat vender's palm.

To the impromptu feast round the fire that evening Ram Deen contributed also a chatty of palm-toddy that Goor Dutt had brought for him from Moradabad. By the time the circling hookah had crowned the feast beards were wagging freely round the fire; and even Tulsi Ram, the village pundit, most modest and unassuming of men, was moved to unusual speech. Once more Ram Deen had told the story of the avenging of Nandha; and the Thanadar, whose utterances were always sententious, owing to the responsibility and dignity of his office, said, "Verily, the young and not the old Faringi is the true subduer of Hindoostan."

"Thou sayest it, Thanadar ji," assented Tulsi Ram. "I knew such a young sahib as he who slew the lame tiger of Huldwani when I worked as munshi at Hurdwar for certain Faringis who had business there. He I speak of feared not even the Gods."

When all eyes were turned upon the pundit, and he found himself in the trying position of one who was expected to give proof of his opinion, his natural modesty overcame him and he was suddenly silent. It was not till he had swallowed a generous draught of the toddy that his courage revived to the point of telling the following narrative, for which his audience waited patiently:

"Brothers," he began, "some three years after the great Mutiny there came to Hurdwar two Faringis, by name Scott Sahib and Wilson Sahib, of whom the latter was a great shikari, as all Hindoostan is aware, and who was further known amongst the Faringis as 'Pahari Wilson.'

"They hired me to cut down sâl timber on the upper waters of the Gunga and float it down to Hurdwar, where they established a post, over which they set in charge a young Faringi named Clements Sahib, whose munshi I was, and whose duty it was to stamp the timber with the seal of his employers and make it into rafts that were then floated on to Allahabad.

"Clements Sahib had been found by Pahari Wilson Sahib in one of the villages of the Rajah of Tiri, whither he had fled from Cawnpore, where his father and mother had been killed by the people of the plains during the season of the Mutiny.

"He was a man grown when he came to Hurdwar, speaking Nagari and Padhani, and knowing well the ways of our people. And wherever he went men's eyes followed him, for he walked amongst them with the air of a master. His face was scarred with small-pox; his nose was curved like a hawk's, and his nostrils were terrible to behold when he was angered, which was often, for he lacked patience with men of our race, because of the slaying, and worse, of his mother, which he had witnessed; and his words did not often go before his blows, which were weighty by reason of his great strength. He limped, for that his right leg had been broken by a bear whilst he lived amongst the hill men.

"But, great and terrible as he was on land, the wonder of him when he swam in the Gunga, as he did daily, man never saw before.

"He feared nothing, brothers,—neither man nor beast, nor even Gannesha, upon whom he put an affront one day, when he beat his priests in the temple and in the presence of the God.

"This was the way of it: There passed daily through our compound, on its way to the jungle, a

young, sacred bull that was fed by the priests of Gannessa; and its horns had silver tips, whereon was graven a picture of the God bearing an elephant's head. And because the bull pursued one of his dogs, one day, the sahib shot it; and the bazaars of Hurdwar buzzed with angry men.

"Sahib,' said I to him, 'this is not well done; the Gods never forget an insult.' But he only laughed.

"That evening, as the sahib ate his meal, the lamps being lit, there came an arrow through an open window and transfixed the dog which was lying at his feet.

"The beast yelped as one that is stricken to the death, and I, who sat at my book in the adjoining room, looked up as Clements Sahib, snatching up a gun from the corner, ran to the veranda and fired at a man who passed swiftly through the darkling garden. For answer there came the lowing of a bull; and the sahib, being lame, soon gave up the chase and returned to the house.

"By the light of a lantern we searched the garden, and when we found drops of blood on the ground the sahib laughed, and said, 'Aha! Tulsi Ram; I wounded the shikar, after all.'

"'Tis bad hunting, sahib,' I made reply.

"The next moment he stopped, and held the lantern to a necklace of plum seeds and gold that hung on the branch of an orange tree. To the necklace was attached an agate, whereon was graven the head of an elephant."

"When we returned to the house the sahib drew the arrow from the dead dog, and on the bolt of that, too, was graven the head of Gannessa. And I said, 'Thou hast affronted the Gods, indeed, sahib! 'Twere well to restore his beads to some priest of Gannessa.'

"Of a surety,' he replied, 'when I find the owner; but, till then, I will wear the thing round my own neck.'

"The next morning, as we rode on an elephant through the jungle to the river, there came the lowing of a bull from a thicket, and an arrow whistled through Clements Sahib's sola topee, and another struck the cheroot from his mouth. So I said, 'The man with the bow could slay thee, sahib, had he a mind to do so.' But the sahib flushed like an angry dawn, and gave the mahout orders to beat through the thicket for the man with the bull's voice; whereon the bellowing came from behind us. Now it was here, and now there, but never where we looked for it, and, whenever the sahib fired into some likely thicket, the archer gave us further proof of his skill.

"To the temple of Gannessa!' shouted the sahib, roused to frenzy, and there was that in his face that forbade speech.

"When we reached the city, the main street was already packed with a menacing crowd,—for word of our coming had gone before us, and the thoroughfare resounded from end to end with lowings as of a thousand bulls. The weight of the great beast that bore us alone took us through the crowd.

"When we reached the gate of the temple of Gannessa, behold! the priests formed a lane through the court-yard, and the crowd fell back at their bidding. We alighted from the elephant, and walked through the priests till we came to the inner door of the temple, where stood a venerable jogi naked, save for a loin-cloth, and covered with wood-ashes from his head to his heels.

"Welcome, brother,' he said, as Clements Sahib approached him; 'but thy rosary will not admit thee farther than this, and 'tis not fitting that thou shouldst enter the presence of Gannessa without thy *teeka* of purification;' and, with an agility that was surprising in such an old man, he sprang towards the sahib and touched him on the forehead, at the same time snatching at the necklace. But the sahib swept him aside, and the next moment we entered the temple, the door of which closed with a threatening crash as the last of the priests followed us in.

"When they saw the sahib advance with set purpose towards the great god Gannessa, they raised a shout and ran upon him; and I, being unarmed and a man of peace, and, moreover, a Brahmin, slipped behind a pillar and watched the beginning of a great combat, wherein one man fought with twenty, and they with staves in their hands.

"And the sahib waited not for his foes, but, firing his gun at their legs, he whirled it aloft and hurled it into the crowd that advanced upon him; wherefore three priests lay on the ground and were as dead men. And, ere they could recover from their confusion, the sahib ran in upon them with clinched hands, and his face was terrible to look upon.

"So thick were they that many of them fell from their brothers' blows; and whenever the sahib struck, a man fell to the ground and remained there. Toba! toba! never saw I such fighting.

"When there were but three or four of them able to stand, they broke and fled to an inner shrine, whence they besought the sahib to depart and molest them no more. But he said, 'Nay, not till ye have delivered up to me him to whom this rosary belongs.'

"It is mine, Faringi dog,' screamed the old jogi, darting upon the sahib from behind a pillar, a long knife in his hand. The sahib had scarce time to turn, when the knife passed through the fleshy part of his arm. The next instant the sahib wrenched his weapon from the old jogi, and, putting the necklace round him, he bore him to a window and threw him into the river which flowed below, saying, 'Gunga will doubtless succor a follower of Gannessa.'

"After I had tied his handkerchief round his arm to stay the bleeding he took up his gun, and,



opening the door of the temple, he went forth. And the people marvelled to see him come out again.

"Having mounted his elephant, he spake to those standing round, saying, 'Dogs and swine! neither ye, nor your priests, nor your Gods can avail against a Faringi. Go into the temple and see for yourselves if I speak not the truth. Let no man of Hurdwar cross my path hereafter, or I will scourge the streets of your city.' So the crowd opened before us, and we returned in peace.

"And as the sahib dismounted from the elephant, I said, 'The teeka, sahib: it is still on thy forehead.'

"'Ah,' he exclaimed, 'that was what the old jogi put on me.' And he plucked it off. It was made of silver and stamped with the image of Gannesha on both sides, and the impress of the stamp showed red on the white skin of the sahib's forehead.

"The next morning, when I went to my work, the sahib called me into his room, and behold! the stamp of Gannesha showed as brightly on his forehead as it did the day before! and I feared greatly for the sahib, for it is no small thing to affront a God.

"For a whole week the mark remained on the sahib, and he wore his hat before all men. None dared to speak to him, for he answered mostly with blows.

"'Tulsi Ram,' said he to me one day, 'tell the old jogi of the temple of Gannesha that I desire speech with him.'

"And when the old man had come the sahib spake: 'So Gunga bare up thy chin, swami?'

"'Ay, ji; and I told him much concerning thee. Thine arm?'

"'Tis well,' replied the sahib. 'But now remove me the mark from my forehead.'

"'I may not do anything without the permission of Gannesha, whom thou hast angered. He must be propitiated in a manner befitting the sahib's station,' returned the jogi.

"'State thy demands, swami,' said the sahib.

"'Now, nay, not mine, sahib, but Gannesha's,' remonstrated the old jogi. Then, after musing awhile, he went on: 'The God requireth of thee two hundred rupees for the use of his temple, and ten rupees a month, for twenty months, to salve the hurts of his twenty priests.'

"'Tis well,' said Clements Sahib, opening a drawer of the table whereat he sat, and pushing two hundred rupees across to the old man. 'Proceed.'

"After the jogi had tied the money in his loin-cloth he touched the mark on the sahib's forehead with his finger, and, lo! at the touching it disappeared.

"'And what if I should not pay thee the rest of thy demand?' asked Clements Sahib after he had looked in a mirror and seen that the mark of Gannesha was gone.

"'Thou art a Faringi ji, and wilt not fail of thy word,' replied the jogi.

"'There be bad Faringis, swami, and my heart inclineth me to their number.'

"'Twere easy to persuade thee to a right course, sahib,' said the old man, pointing his finger at Clements Sahib. 'Behold!' And the livid mark leapt out on the sahib's forehead again.

"After the mark had been removed once more by the jogi, and as he was preparing to depart, Clements Sahib said, 'Come for your monthly payment when the new moon shows, but cross not my path at any other time, or harm shall befall thee.'

"'Brave words, sahib,' returned the mendicant; 'and be careful, thyself, not to insult the Gods. Salaam,' and he went forth. So there was peace between the Gods and Clements Sahib until the jogi had received three payments.

"Then, on a day, the sahib bade me accompany him to the Hurke Piree, for he was fain to catch the great mahser that abound there, where they feed on the offerings of the pilgrims.

"And I would have prevented him, saying, 'The fish, Provider of the Poor, are tame; 'twere no sport to catch them. Besides, the Hurke Piree is holy, and 'twere not well to pollute the great steps with the killing even of fish.'

"'Therefore it is in my mind, O Brown Mouse, to catch fish for my evening meal,' replied the sahib, his nostrils twitching; so I spake no more.

"When the sahib had drawn forth the first fish that took his bait, there came the voices of an angry crowd, and, looking up, behold! the great stairs were black with people; and, taking four steps at a bound, there came towards us a young priest stripped for bathing, and it was Salig Ram, the greatest pylwan (wrestler) in Hurdwar.

"Ere the sahib could guess the purpose of the priest, the latter sprang upon him, and they twain fell together into the deep water.

"When they came to the surface again, the sahib had an arm round Salig Ram's throat, and was beating him with his clinched hand till the blood ran down his face, and he spat forth a handful of

teeth. The priest was as one who is amazed, crying feebly, 'Ram dhwy, ram dhwy!' and he was as a frightened child in the sahib's hands.

"Thinking that the sahib would slay their champion before their eyes, and so desecrate the gates of heaven, two or three score of angry Brahmins leapt into the river to the rescue of Salig Ram, and I followed, likewise, to see the end of the matter.

"Releasing the young priest, the sahib swam away easily from those who followed, slipping off his upper garments as he proceeded down the river, and then his shoes, which he threw in derision at those who followed.

"Now, when he came to the temple of Gannessa, there appeared in the window that overlooks the river the old jogi, who swung something round his head that glittered in the sun; and he shouted aloud, 'Gunga, take thee! Gunga, take thee!'

"The sahib turned his face towards the temple, and, as he did so, the jogi threw the thing he swung at him. It flashed as it circled through the air, and settled over the sahib's head; and, in that instant, he threw up his arms and disappeared, and thereafter a few bubbles came to the surface.

"Two days afterwards, the dead body of a Faringi was found ten miles below Hurdwar and taken to Roorkee, whither I went by order of the sircar, to assist in the identification of the dead man.

"Brothers, the corpse was that of Clements Sahib. Round his neck was a rosary of gold and plum seeds, with an agate amulet; and on his forehead was the presentment of an elephant's head, the seal of Gannessa, whom no man may affront."

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## CHAPTER XIV

### *A Daughter of the Gods*

To those in evening conclave round the fire came a long refrain sung on one high note by Goor Dutt, as his bullock-cart approached the village. "She died in the night of co-o-o-old," he keened. There was a pathos in his voice which told of his own sufferings, for the night was frosty, rather than those of some fictitious person.

"What freight to-night, byl-wan?" inquired the Thanadar, when he came within speaking distance.

"Vessels of clay, and a dead man," replied the little bullock driver.

Some one held a torch to the thing that lay across the end of the bullock driver's wagon, shrouded in a white cloth, on which was a red wet stain as big as a man's hand.

"'Tis Lakhoo, the dacoit," said the Thanadar, when the face of the corpse had been uncovered; "now, Nana Debi be praised for his taking off! Some one will be the richer for this deed by five hundred rupees."

Below the left breast of the corpse, and beneath the stain on the cloth that covered it, was a little hole that would scarce admit the tip of a man's finger, but whence, nevertheless, had issued the life of one of the terrors of the Terai. The dead man had been the head of a daring band of dacoits, whose depredations ranged from Rajpore to Bareilly, and on each of whose heads was a large reward, for they had not hesitated to commit murder when committing theft.

After Goor Dutt had refreshed his inner man and taken his place at the fire, he began: "This was the way of it: This evening, as I came hitherwards, there passed me two doolis, and he who held the torch to light the way was Lakhoo, whom I had seen once before at the thana at Moradabad, whence he afterwards escaped. As the doolis passed, he held the torch to my face, but I feigned sleep, and so he did not molest me.

"The baggage, slung on poles across the shoulders of the bearers, showed the people in the doolis to be Faringis; and I was minded to see what would happen, and, if need were, bring thee early word, Thanadar ji, as to Lakhoo's doings. So I tied my bullocks to a tree and followed the doolis, treading where the dust was thick and the shadows deepest.

"When the doolis arrived at the path that leads to Nyagong, men came out of the jungle and stopped the bearers; and I crept behind a bael tree on the edge of the road and within fifty paces of the travellers, so that I could see and hear all that passed, for the torch was bright and the night was still, and Lakhoo spoke as one who knoweth not the need for speaking low.

"And when those who carried the doolis knew that it was Lakhoo who had borne the torch for them, and that they were in the midst of his men, their livers turned to water. One, less frightened than the others, attempted to flee, but a bamboo lat descended on his skull, and he lay as one dead, and the rest moaned, 'Ram dhwy, ram dhwy!'

"'Ye Sons of Jackals! ye have naught to fear,' said Lakhoo. 'What were your miserable dole for the carrying of these doolis to me? But, remember, ye have nor eyes nor ears now if ye would have them hereafter!'

"And they whined, saying, 'We be blind and deaf, Bahadoor; and we know nothing, for we be poor men.'

"Therefore are ye safe, ye sons of mothers without virtue, for they who sleep in the doolis are rich, and the family of the sahib who hanged my brother last year. Who would crack dry bones for sustenance when savory meat is at hand?"

"Thereafter he tapped on the roof of one of the doolis, saying, 'Wake, mem-sahib, wake!'

"What is the matter, dooli-wallah?' was the reply, in the feeble voice of a sick woman.

"This is the chowki, khodawund; but the fresh bearers are not here, and those who brought thee hither are spent and cannot proceed farther. But there are those here who will bear thee on thy journey for a proper price.'

"So she called aloud in her own tongue, and there came forth into the night, from the other dooli, a young lad rubbing the sleep from his eyes and yawning; and whilst he parleyed with his mother, the curtain of her dooli was lifted, and a young mem-sahib rose from it and stood beside the boy, and we could see they were brother and sister, but she was the older and taller by a span, and in the budding of her womanhood. The hair, that fell to her waist, was as spun gold in the light of the torches; rings and stones flashed in her ears and on her fingers, but they were nothing to the glances of her eyes, which met four-square the eyes of those to whom she spoke; and she looked at those who were present as though they were there to do her bidding.

"When the sick mem-sahib in the dooli had finished speaking, the younger one addressed the masalchi (torch-bearer), saying, 'How far is it to the next chowki, and what do you ask for taking us there?'

"Two kos (six miles), mem-sahib, and the hire of my men is fifty rupees,' answered Lakhoo.

"And what did you get for bringing us here?' asked she, turning to the dooli-bearers who stood round them.

"They are poor men, missy baba, and know nothing,' said Lakhoo, at whom the dooli-bearers looked for instructions.

"Son of a Pig!' exclaimed the young lad, taking a leather bag from his sister's hand and throwing the money, a rupee at a time, on the ground; 'there are fifty rupees. Proceed, for the mem-sahib, my mother, is sick, and must be on the hills ere the morning sun give heat,' and his face flushed in the torchlight.

"So Lakhoo tied the money in his waistband, and, without further speech, sat down and smoked the hookah that was passed to him.

"And after awhile the baba (boy), who had been walking to and fro with the young woman, his sister, stopped opposite Lakhoo, and spoke, saying, 'Why do you not proceed, dooli-wallah?'

"Because I am waiting for my hire, baba ji,' replied Lakhoo.

"I paid you but now,' exclaimed the young sahib.

"The sahib is scarce awake,' said Lakhoo, in a bantering tone, 'and hath been dreaming.' And his men who formed the outer circle laughed insolently.

"Liar!' shouted the young sahib, bursting into tears and clinching his hand; but his sister laid a restraining finger on his arm, and whispered in his ear.

"We will give thee thy due, masalchi,' she said, as she went to her mother's dooli.

"When she returned, she put a three-cornered bag of leather in her brother's hand.

"The young mem-sahib is as generous as she is beautiful,' said Lakhoo, fixing hot eyes on her, whereat her nostrils twitched; 'and her hair is more precious than gold.' And as he spake, he laid a desecrating hand on her locks.

"Swine-born!" shouted the young lad, and drawing from the bag in his hand a toy that glittered in the torchlight, he put it to Lakhoo's breast and fired. The tall man bounded into the air like a stricken deer, and fell prone on his face. As the dacoits rose to their feet, I smote on the branches of the bael tree that sheltered me with my bamboo staff, shouting like three men, 'Thieves, thieves!' So Lakhoo's men fled headlong, and I came forth from my shelter, and salaamed to the baba and the young mem-sahib.

"Thou hast earned five hundred rupees, sahib,' said I, 'by the killing of the great dacoit, Lakhoo.'

"We had been slain, an' it had not been for thee,' said the young mem-sahib. 'Who and what art thou?'

"Goor Dutt, byl-wan, mem-sahib,' I replied; 'and it is my highest reward to have served thee and thine.'

"Now, nay, byl-wan, my brother, Charlie Sahib, herewith bestows on thee whatsoever reward is due for the killing of this dog.'

"Ay, and this pistol, too,' interrupted the young lad, putting his glittering toy in my hand. And he

showed me the wonder of it,—how it spake five times, if need were, and how to charge it.

"Then they put the dead man on my bullock-cart, which one of those present had been sent to fetch. And when the bearers took up the doolis, they shouted, as one man, 'Chali Sahib ke jhai!'"

"Wah, byl-wan ji, wah!" exclaimed Ram Deen, when Goor Dutt had finished, "thou art taller than most men. Let us honor a man, my brothers."

And those who sat round the fire sprang to their feet, and woke the slumbering village with the heartiness of their salutation, as they shouted, "Goor Dutt ji ke jhai!"

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## CHAPTER XV

### *"Ich Liebe Dich"*

Early one morning in December, in the year 186—, I left my camp with a pointer at my heels to explore the foothills to the northwest of Nyagong. The region abounded with iron ore, and the mining syndicate I represented instructed me to conduct my prospecting in a way that would not arouse the suspicion of the manager of another company that had already established iron works at Kaladoongie. So it speedily became noised about in that section of the Terai that I was one of the many Englishmen who spend their leave of absence in the jungle for the purposes of sport.

There was a shrewd nip in the air when I started, and the barrels of my gun were so cold that I was glad I had put on a pair of thick gloves.

The jungle was hardly awake when I struck into the path that skirted the Bore Nuddee. Presently, a green parrot "kr-r-r-d" tentatively, as a faint flush appeared in the cloudless east. A wild boar jumped a fence a few hundred yards ahead of me, followed by the sounder, of which he was chief, as they left the fields they had been marauding during the night. A nilghai, with his wicked-looking horns, soon followed, and lumbered noiselessly away. These were the thieves of the Terai, and they were, naturally, hurrying to their coverts before the coming day should be upon them.

Suddenly, the dewy silence was broken by the invocation of a black partridge,—the muezzin of the jungle. "Sobhan theri koodruth!" How solemnly, and with what splendor of utterance and pause this voice of the Terai announces the miracle of the morning! The cry was taken up and passed on with a significance that dwarfed the passing of the fiery torch as told by Scott in "The Lady of the Lake." And immediately thereafter the jungle was singing its many-voiced matin, not the least "notable note" of which was the challenge of the jungle-cock, who is a native of the Terai, and whose vigorous voice is not raucous with the civilized laryngeal affections of the "tame villatic fowl."

And then, in the awakening of the forest, there came—Italian opera! A well-poised soprano voice silenced the jungle choir by a brilliantly executed chromatic scale, as though the singer were trying her voice. Finding it flexible enough for her purpose, she launched into the difficult—and abominable—aria, "Di tale amore che dirsi" in "Il Trovatore." She suddenly stopped, as though she were ashamed of the rubbish she sang; and, after a pause of half a minute, my soul was stirred by the air of Beethoven's immortal "Ich Liebe Dich," sung to the following words, which were beautifully enunciated:

I love thee, dear! All words would fail  
To tell the true and tender theme;  
Such ardent thoughts, and passion pale,  
And humble suit, I fondly deem,  
Would need a poet's rapturous mind.  
Oh! if fit words could but be bought,  
If Love's own speech I could but find,  
I'd sell my soul to express my thought,  
So you should in Love's toils be caught!

Oh! then a kindlier sun would shine,  
The vermeiled flowers would look more fair,  
The common world would seem divine,  
And daily things appear most rare;  
My soul, a soaring lark, would rise  
To greet the morning of thy love  
So sweetly dawning in thine eyes,  
And in thy smiles, which should approve.

The tender charm of the sweet old song—now utterly neglected for more brazen utterances, and which only Beethoven could have written—was thoroughly appreciated by the singer.

Wishing to see her without myself being discovered, and hoping to hear her sing again, I "stalked" her—and, behold, she was a Padhani! I couldn't be mistaken, for she was singing David's "O ma maitresse," as I watched her from behind the bole of a great huldoos tree.

A little boy, about three years in age, played beside her as she sat on a fallen tree trunk and took part in the matin of the Terai. There was a noble breadth between her eyes that reminded one of the Sistine Madonna, and an air of repose about her figure which was set off by her simple garments.

She was, without doubt, Chambeli, the Padhani protégé of the Fishers, whose flight from her husband, the Rev. John Trusler, immediately after her return to the Terai, had been the sensation of the season at Naini Tal a few years ago.

Snapping a dry twig with my foot to attract her attention, I stepped into the open and approached her. Her first impulse was to flee, but she quickly regained her composure and awaited me, standing, her eyes meeting mine without the least embarrassment.

"Your singing attracted me," I began, taking off my hat to her.

"Yes?" she replied, evidently not at all anxious to come to my relief in the awkward position I had sought.

"It was very beautiful——"

"And it is finished," she interrupted. There was a slight tone of contempt in her voice as she thus gave me to understand that my presence was unwelcome. But, as a student of psychology, I was not to be so easily moved from my design of "investigating the case" before me.

"The Rev. John Trusler is dead." I paused awhile to see how she would be affected. Then, as she gave no sign of emotion, I went on, "He hanged himself a few days after you left him."

"My God!" she exclaimed, putting her hand to her side and seating herself on the fallen tree.

The child, who had been clinging to his mother's dress and regarding me with round, brown eyes, began to cry when he saw his mother's sudden emotion. She took him up in her arms and cuddled his head to her bosom, saying in the Padhani patois, "Mea mithoo, mea mithoo! hush, my butcha."

In the silence that ensued after the child had been quieted there came the regular stroke of a woodman's axe, and presently the refrain of a Padhani song sung by a man.

When the woman had regained her calm, she looked up at me somewhat defiantly and said, "What business had they to come between me and my jungle mother? What right had they to impose moral shackles on one who was above their petty codes?"

"The Fishers were moved by kindness, surely; they educated you, and Christianized you, and through them you met and married an honorable man."

"Educated me, forsooth!" she exclaimed with scorn, her nostrils twitching; "they robbed me of my five senses, and gave me instead—accomplishments. Can you tell the time of the day from the sun, sir? Can you say when the sambhur passed whose track is at your feet, and how many wolves were in the pack that followed him? Would your sense of smell lead you to a pool of fresh water in mid-jungle? Can you feel the proximity of a crouching leopard without seeing it? What sort of education is it that neglects the senses? Oh, the highest product of your civilization—your poet-laureate, Tennyson—felt the same thing stir in his pulses when he wrote 'Locksley Hall,' and deprecated the 'poring over miserable books' with blinded eye-sight."

"'Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay,'" I quoted, as she paused in her rapid discourse.

"For the European, perhaps; not for the Chinaman. No, I have no feeling of gratitude towards those you speak of; for the large freedom of the Terai they gave me a brick cage in London; they gave me endless crowds of miserable men and women for these, my green brothers, who are always happy," and she put out her hand and caressed a tree that grew beside her.

"As for Christianity," she resumed, "it is but one facet in the jewel, morality. Christ was but an adept, I take it, who attained to his miraculous powers—as do our rishis and jogis—by prayer and fasting and meditation. I cannot see that Christian vices are fewer or more venial than those of our people."

"But don't you miss your books, and the keeping in touch with the progress of civilization?" I asked.

"Must I quote 'books in the running brooks' to you? What book is there like this book of God's?" and she swept her arm round her. "And if my son grow up to be brave and strong, that will be civilization enough for me."

"But your music?"

"Ah! that is the only thing I miss. But I recollect all of Schumann's songs and Schubert's, some of Beethoven's—and then I make songs of my own to fit the moods of my jungle mother, and I have some small skill in weaving words for them."

"And the man who hanged himself?"

"He was no man," she flashed; "who had not the strength of a girl, and who was as weak-eyed as the bat in daytime! You shall see a man indeed, one who fears not to track the tiger afoot, and who even beats me when he sees fit," and she called aloud, "Aho! Kali Dass, aho!"

The sound of the woodman's axe ceased, and presently we heard some one approaching through the jungle.

"'Twere better that he should know from me that you and I had had speech together, than that he should learn it from the Terai, for our men are very terrible when they are wrought upon by jealousy." Then, after a pause, she went on, "Don't speak to me in English in his presence. He won't like it."

She rose and half veiled her face with her chudder, as a splendid young Padhan bearing an immense load of wood entered the glade. He threw down his burden as soon as he perceived me, and, snatching up his axe, advanced menacingly towards me. He was a bronze Apollo, with the air of freedom that is native to mountaineers and woodsy folks.

"The sahib intended no harm, Kali Dass," began the woman; "and he hath given me tidings of *his* death."

"What of it? He was but a quail."

"But now canst thou become a Christian, and—marry me."

"Marry one who was twice a widow? Nana Debi forbid! I must admonish thee when we return to our hut. Come."

Fearing that any further interest in the case on my part would but increase the severity of her punishment, I turned down the jungle path.

Just before leaving the glade I looked back; the woman had one knee on the ground, and with outstretched arms she was balancing the load of wood that Kali Dass was putting on her head.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### *The Smoking of a Hornets' Nest*

"The 'big rains' will begin to-night," said the bunnia at Lal Kooah, as Ram Deen took his seat on the mail-cart.

"And there will be much lightning and thunder," added one of the by-standers, "the night is so still."

The sky was inky, and the Terai awaited the coming storm in a breathless silence which was only emphasized by the parting blasts of Ram Deen's bugle. The horses had their ears twitched forward apprehensively, and started, every now and then, at the objects revealed by the light of the lamps. A mile or so beyond Lal Kooah a few heavy drops of rain pattered on the broad leaves of the overarching huldoos. Suddenly the sky was rent by a streak of lightning,—the *avant courier* of the mighty monsoon,—and it was immediately followed by the terrific thunder that bayed at its heels.

In the intensified silence that ensued Ram Deen blew his bugle to reassure the frightened horses. He had barely ceased when there came the sharp crack of a pistol-shot, and a far cry, "Ram dhwy! ram dhwy! Aho! Ram Deen, aho!"

"Tis the voice of Goor Dutt," said the hostler, "and he looketh on fear."

Ram Deen urged his team into a flying gallop as the storm struck the jungle and woke its mighty voices. Wind and rain, and trees with leafless branches for stringed instruments, made an elemental orchestra that discoursed cataclysmic music.

Whilst the thunder crackled and crashed overhead to the steady and sullen roar of the rain the horses came to a sudden stand-still. In the feeble lamplight Ram Deen discerned a man lying in the middle of the road. Taking one of the lamps, he held it to his face. It was Goor Dutt, the little bullock driver. He was unconscious, and had a deep wound on his head from which the blood was still welling.

Hanging on a wild plum-tree that grew on the edge of the road was a bloodstained turban that fluttered in the storm. Tying it securely to the branch whence it hung, Ram Deen placed the unconscious bullock driver at the bottom of the mail-cart, the hostler supporting his head.

Arrived at Kaladoongie, Ram Deen roused the native apothecary at the dispensary. Goor Dutt was carried in and laid on a charpoi, and whilst the apothecary attended to his hurts Ram Deen knocked on the Thanadar's house, saying, "Wake, Thanadar ji. There be bad men abroad to-night, and blows to pay."

When the two friends returned to the dispensary Goor Dutt was looking about him in a dazed fashion. The stimulant administered to him had begun to take effect, and the sight of the tall driver roused him to a recollection of the events of the night.

"Lakhoo's men," said he, feebly. "I counted five by the light of the torch they burned. They beset me, and doubtless I had been slain, but they heard thy bugle, and, whilst they hesitated, I

shouted to thee, and, freeing one hand, I drew the pistol Charlie Sahib gave me and fired once, and then a great darkness fell upon me."

Whilst the Thanadar roused a couple of his men Ram Deen slipped into his own garden to release Hasteen, for the great dog would be needed in the hunting of that night.

The sky was emptying itself in great sheets of rain as the mail-cart sped away with the dog running beside it. When they reached the tree to which the turban was tied Ram Deen removed it and held it out to Hasteen, who, after sniffing at it for a moment, started off at a trot, with his nose to the ground. But the scent was bad, owing to the heavy rain, and the dog began to run round in widening circles in his search for a trail, whilst the men stayed on the edge of the road. Suddenly the dog bayed, and, following the direction of the sound, they came up with him as he stood by Goor Dutt's cart, from which the bullocks had been removed.

"The man stricken by Goor Dutt rode hence on a bullock," said Ram Deen, who had been examining the tracks in the mire with a lantern; "there be signs of but four men going hence, Thanadar Sahib, whereas five walked beside the wagon till it stopped here."

The cart was in the jungle about a hundred yards from the road. The noise made by its progress had been entirely drowned in the roar of the storm, so that Ram Deen had not heard it.

"See, sahib," said Ram Deen, pointing to the trail made by the heavy animals in their course through the jungle, and which not even the rain had effaced, "we shall not need Hasteen's nose, but his teeth, ere the daybreak."

Fastening the turban taken from the tree round Hasteen's neck, Ram Deen struck into the trail, the dog walking beside him, whilst the others followed in single file. The tall driver stopped occasionally to examine the ground with his lantern. He had with him the revolver given to him by Captain Barfield, but his main dependence was on the long bamboo club, loaded with lead, which he carried in his right hand.

The events that followed were thus told to Captain Fisher, the deputy commissioner of the district, who came down the next day from Naini Tal to investigate them.

"Sahib," began Ram Deen, whose left arm was in a sling, "it was thus: We followed the trail that led along the right bank of the Bore Nuddee, till we came to the ford, where the stream was now a roaring torrent owing to the great rain, which never ceased to drum on the Terai all that night.

"Here those we sought had crossed to the left bank, and then continued up the hill to the garden of Thapa Sing; through the door of the hut, wherein Heera Lal, who is kin to me, used to dwell, there came the gleam of firelight.

"Then the Thanadar bid stand, saying, 'Twere well to take them alive, Ram Deen, so that the sircar may not be despoiled of the hanging of them. What sayest thou?'

"Such as these cannot be taken alive, Thanadar ji,' I replied.

"What would you?' he inquired.

"They be hornets, khodawund,' I made answer, 'and must be smoked out of their nest. When they come forth we will take them as we best may.'

"So we proceeded without noise to the hut, and when we reached it the lantern showed us that the Thanadar, and I, and Hasteen, whom I had unloosed, were alone. For, behold, the policemen had fled, not having stomachs for blows; their blood had turned to milk and their livers to water. For their fathers are jackals and their mothers without honor; and the sahib will doubtless bestow upon them the reward due to their valor.

"And the Thanadar growled in his beard at the baseness of his men, and whispered, 'Those dogs of mine have made it necessary that we should slay these within, Ram Deen, should they refuse to surrender, instead of taking them alive;' and I nodded assent.

"We could hear the wounded man groan inside the hut, and one said, 'Never mind, Kunwa, I slew Goor Dutt for thy hurt, and had these who are with us been men instead of children, we had slain the driver of the mail-cart, whose voice is greater than his strength, and his legs but female bamboos.'

"Thou art a liar!' I shouted, kicking in the thatch door of the hut, which fell in the fire on the hearth. In a moment the hut was in a blaze. Two men ran forth through the doorway, and, in the light of the burning hut, I could see other twain breaking through the wall of thatch at the rear, whilst Kunwa, the wounded man, who was unable to move, greeted with appalling screams the death that approached him.

"I will attend to these, Thanadar Sahib!' I shouted; 'do thou and Hasteen look to those that escape from the rear.' And the Thanadar, calling the dog, ran to the back of the hut.

"Seeing but one man in front of them, the dacoits—strong men and tall—ran in upon me. I anticipated the blow of one, and he fell to the ground without even a cry; but the club of the other had crushed my skull, had I not warded it with my left arm, which was broken thereby; and ere my assailant could again swing his weapon I had stretched him beside his companion.

"From the other side of the burning hut came the sounds of a terrible combat and of heavy blows.

I made what haste I could, and as I turned the corner of the hut I stumbled over the body of the Thanadar. Six paces beyond was Hasteen, and he was serving the sircar as he best might. He stood over one of the dacoits, whom he held by the throat, whilst the other rained blows on him, till I made the fight an equal one between dog and man; and then, because my arm pained shrewdly, I was fain to sit on a fallen tree, whilst Hasteen finished the fray in his own manner; the man in the hut, meanwhile, uttering screams that even a strong man might not hear unmoved.

"But he on the ground could not scream by reason of the fangs at his throat; he only gurgled, and rattled dreadfully, and the foam flew from his lips as the great dog shook him from side to side. When his head swayed helplessly I knew he was dead, so I bade Hasteen release him; and the man in the hut having ceased his outcries, I made shift to raise the Thanadar, and lo, he was dead, and the Terai bereft of a great and a good man, and I of the best of friends. And now, as the sahib knoweth but too well, there be none in the Terai to maintain the orders of the sircar."

"Nevertheless, Ram Deen," said Captain Fisher, "the sircar will look to you in the future to be a terror to evil-doers, and here are papers making you Thanadar of this district. What say you?"

"The sircar is my father and my mother, Fisher Sahib; but this thing may not be. I have neither learning nor wisdom to uphold the English raj as it should be upheld. Besides, who is to drive the mail-cart?"

"There be drivers a-plenty, Ram Deen, but not many who will strike a blow for the right and defend the poor and the fatherless. Thy munshi will instruct thee in the duties of thy office. But beyond all things, remember this: There must be no budmashes in thy district, Ram Deen, Thanadar." Then, before Ram Deen could make reply, he went on, "Oh, yes, the reward; thou wilt receive from the sircar two thousand five hundred rupees for the slaying of Lakhoo's men."

"But Goor Dutt slew one of them, Captain Sahib, and Hasteen another."

"Well, give Goor Dutt what thou wilt and bestow a collar of honor, with spikes of brass, on Hasteen. Thou art Thanadar henceforth, and the sircar expects you to be just in all your dealings."

And as he finished, word having gone through Kaladoongie that Ram Deen was now Thanadar, the men who crowded round the Deputy Commissioner's tent raised a mighty shout: "Ram Deen, Thanadar, ke jhai!"

"What meant that shout?" asked Tara, when Ram Deen returned home an hour later.

"Congratulation to thy Lumba Deen (long legs) for a trifle of money and some little honor as salve for a broken bone, Light in Darkness."

"What honor?" she inquired, eagerly.

"But the money was the greater, my Star——"

"Now, nay, my lord trifles with me. The honor, the honor!" she demanded.

"And if I were to tell thee that they have made me Thanadar of this Zemindaree?"

"'Tis but thy due, my lord; and thou hast but prepared the way for thy man-child. Said I not many moons ago that he should be Thanadar of Kaladoongie one day!"

"See to it that he is brave and strong, Heart of my Heart, else were he better dead."

"I will help her in the bringing up of thy son," said a tall woman,—she of the muffled face,—coming into the room; "and he shall be worthy of thee, who art now as great as thou hast been always good."

## **THE END.**

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE TAMING OF THE JUNGLE \*\*\*

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