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Mutiny, by Frederick P. Gibbon**

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INDIAN MUTINY \*\*\*

## THE DISPUTED V.C.

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**HE DROPPED THE LIGHTED CANDLE ON  
THE THIN TRAIL OF POWDER**

*Page 88      Frontispiece*

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## **THE DISPUTED V.C.**

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A Tale of the Indian Mutiny

BY

FREDERICK P. GIBBON

*Illustrated by Stanley L. Wood*

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LONDON AND GLASGOW

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*BOYS*

**The Disputed V.C.**      Frederick P.

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Gibbon.  
**The First Mate.** Harry Collingwood.  
**The Boy Castaways.** H. Taprell  
 Dorling.  
**"Quills".** Walter C. Rhoades.

*GIRLS*

**The Youngest Sister.** Bessie  
 Marchant.  
**A Princess of Servia.** Bessie  
 Marchant.  
**A True Cornish Maid.** G. Norway.  
**Meriel's Career.** Mary B. Whiting.

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## CHAPTER I

### Ted Disapproves

Ted Russell, ensign of the 193rd Bengal Native Infantry, stationed at Aurungpore, in the Punjab, was disgusted and irritable on this first day of the never-to-be-forgotten year of 1857—a year destined to bring untold misery to thousands of homes and families, and to many a race and creed throughout Hindustan and the British Isles; a year that would henceforward lie as a dark stain across the page of history.

But our young friend's ill-humour could be traced to a much simpler cause than a mere prophetic dread of the future. Ensign Russell had not been in India many months, and during the whole of that short period he had looked forward with lively and pleasant anticipation to a visit from his brother Jim, whom he had seen but twice in the past ten years, and who was quite a veteran warrior in Ted's admiring eyes. For Captain Russell had been engaged in the Sikh war as well as in several affrays with the border Pathans; he was the proud possessor of more than one medal, and had quite a prominent scar across his face—the mark of a Khyber knife. For the past twelve months he had held the rank of captain in the ten-year-old corps of Guides, stationed near Peshawur across the Indus, the town that guards the Khyber Pass—the gate of India.

At length this hero-brother had obtained leave of absence to visit Aurungpore, and great was the delight of both.

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Now, here is what had disgusted the ensign. Before the stalwart captain, who had successfully held his own against Sikhs and Afghans, had been with Ted a couple of days, he had actually suffered defeat at the hands of a slip of a girl of twenty-one—a girl about five feet in height, the daughter of Ted's colonel! Jim, who of all men should have been proof against such silly nonsense—such idiocy!—had succumbed at first sight, and instead of spinning yarns about his campaigns and his defence of Chiras Fort, he was mooning about all day long in the wake of this Ethel Woodburn.

Ensign Russell quickly found that, whatever plans he might make for the day, his brother would be sure to demur, unless the programme provided some chance of their meeting or seeing Miss Woodburn. He would plead fatigue or lack of interest, and then propose as an alternative something either much more fatiguing, or—in the boy's eyes—much less interesting. The paltry excuses he made for altering the plans! Poor fellow, he thought that the "kid" would not see through his transparent subterfuges; but that sharp-witted youngster was not so easily befooled, and he voted the proceedings slow, and did not fail to express the opinion that his brother was no better than a milksop.

"You say you don't 'feel inclined' to ride to Khasmi to-day," exclaimed Ted in disgust, "because your horse is not quite fit! Bosh! Nimrod never was better in his life, and he's just eating his head off. I was looking at him this morning; he's in the pink of condition, and he simply begged me to take him out. Would he be in any better condition, I wonder, if Ethel Woodburn was likely to be there?"

Jim turned red, and sharply asked: "What had Miss Woodburn to do with it?"

"That's what I should like to know!" Ted retorted. He then looked up at the ceiling, placed his hands in his pockets, and calmly observed: "You've no chance there, Jim, she's hooked already."

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"What d'you say?" exclaimed the excited captain. "It's not true. What d'you mean?" he repeated. "You don't say that Miss Woodburn is engaged?"

"Oh, never mind Miss Woodburn!" drawled Ted in his most exasperating manner. "What's she got to do with it? The question is whether we ride to Khasmi or not."

"Tell me what you mean, you little beggar," Jim went on, half angry, yet laughing in spite of himself.

Ted crossed his legs, and, still gazing at the ceiling, drawled: "Why, be calm, Russell Major. You just asked what she had to do with the matter of our ride to Khasmi. Why this sudden interest?"

Captain Russell kept his temper and laughed.

"Don't try to be too smart, young 'un," he advised. "But it isn't true that she's engaged to be married, is it?"

"Well—p'r'aps not exactly that she's engaged," Ted admitted.

There was a tone of pompous condescension in his voice as he went on: "But I hear that Sir Arthur Fletcher, the commissioner here, you know, is gone on her, and, of course, as he's a splendid catch, the 'old man' will want her to marry him, and I don't suppose she'll need much pressing, for he's a jolly decent fellow. And besides him, half of our fellows are in love with her, though I don't know why. I don't see much in her myself; she seems a very ordinary sort of girl to me. And she's such a little thing, you know!"

"You conceited young booby!" Jim laughed. "I shall have to take the bounce out of you, young

man.”

Captain Russell began to hate the Commissioner of the Aurungpore district very cordially, as well as all the unmarried officers of the 193rd—half of them for daring to aspire to the hand of his charmer, and the other half for being such soulless clods as to refrain from kneeling before the shrine at which he worshipped. Needless to add, then, that he spent a most unhappy day and sleepless night.

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Jim was the eldest son, and Ted the third, of Major-General Russell, a soldier who had distinguished himself as a youngster in the Gurkha war of 1815, and later in the Afghan and Sikh campaigns. Jim had been ten years in India, and had fought against the Sikhs and helped to conquer their country, the Punjab, before he had been out many months. A year or two later he and his cousin, Charlie Dorricot, had been shut up in the small fort of Chiras, with a mere handful of sepoys, and they had come through the siege with credit. Dorricot was now a lieutenant in the Sirmur Battalion, stationed in the Dehra Dun, near Simla.

The evening following the above conversation, Jim burst into Ted’s quarters. His face was flushed but beaming, and his eyes seemed to dance through sheer happiness. By way of brotherly greeting he struck the ensign in the chest.

“Well, young ‘un,” he cheerfully exclaimed, “you may congratulate me!”

“I’ll—I’ll knock you down!” answered Ted, staggering from the blow. “You bully, why am I to be permitted to congratulate you?”

By way of reply, Jim took hold of his scandalized brother and whirled him round the room.

“Because I’m engaged to be married, Ted, to the dearest, sweetest, best girl in the world!”

“Oh!” gasped Ted. He had divined the cause of Jim’s excitement, but the opportunity for making fun of his senior was too good to be thrown away. “And what’s the dearest, sweetest, best, loveliest, most adorable girl in the world thinking of to have you? Besides, what about Miss Woodburn? I thought you were sweet on her, you know.”

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Captain Russell was a sterling good fellow, but his nature was somewhat slower than that of his brother. He stared at the cheeky youngster for a moment before he grasped the meaning of the sarcasm. He recollected that these events formed privileged occasions for youthful wit, and grinned affably; having gained his heart’s desire he could afford to be easy-tempered and tolerant of satire.

“You young cub,” he laughed, “you’re too facetious for a small boy. It’s Ethel Woodburn I’m engaged to, as you know very well.”

“Oh!” said Ted slowly. “I didn’t recognize her from that glowing description.”

Russell Minor dodged out of reach, keeping the table between them.

“Pax, old man, I’ll apologize; I s’pose she’s not a bad sort—for a girl. So I congratulate you—that is, if you *had* to go and get hooked I don’t know that you could have done better. Have you written home yet?”

“Do be sensible. How could I? Only settled it a couple of hours ago, and I’m going to write now. Wonder what the mater’ll think!”

Captain Russell sat down and took out a pen and some writing-paper. He shortly rose, however, and pushed the paper from him.

“No, I’ll wait till to-morrow,” he muttered. “I’m not quite sure that I’m not dreaming now, so I’ll go and walk it off.”

This was going from bad to worse, thought Ted, as two more days passed and his brother was spending all his precious leave walking or riding about with the girl, who seemed just as stupidly happy as he. Though Ted believed (in spite of his chaff) that no one could help liking and admiring his brother, he could not see the sense of this falling in love. Why on earth was this foolish Ethel Woodburn continually casting hurried glances across the room at Jim? Still more incomprehensible was the look of gloom that settled on his brother’s face whenever Ethel quitted the room for however short a period, or the sudden access of joy when she returned.

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“Thank goodness, I shall never make such a fool of myself!” he reflected; but even this thought did not console him for the loss of his brother’s society. True, both Jim and Ethel frequently asked him to join in their rides and walks, but, recognizing the truth of the old saying that “two’s company, three’s none”, he decided not to become a nuisance to the lovers. He was far from satisfied with the new conditions, however, and considered himself ill-used.

“Why should Ethel Woodburn come between us in this way,” he grumbled to himself, “when I’d been looking forward to such a good time with old Jim? I wish she’d stayed in England.”

He became morose and irritable, answering curtly when Jim spoke to him, and keeping out of Miss Woodburn’s way as much as possible. Captain Russell was too happy to take much notice of the change in the “young ‘un’s” manner, but Ethel observed it with pain. She liked Ted, and had always considered him the nicest boy in the regiment, and her love and admiration for Jim and the pleasure she found in being with him made her see more clearly how the ensign felt the loss

of his brother's society. She hated the idea of causing a coolness between them, and determined to do her utmost to gain Ted's friendship and reconcile him to the inevitable.

She therefore took the first opportunity to speak to him when Jim was not present.

"Ted," she began, "won't you come a ride with us to-morrow? I wish you would."

"Oh, you won't want me!" the ensign ungraciously replied. "I shall only be in the way."

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"But we do want you, really. Jim came here to see you, and it seems horrid of me to monopolize him as I have been doing, when you ought to have the first claim. You know," she continued with a sparkle of fun in her eyes, "that one can't help falling in love, so you must not be too hard on us. You and I are to be brother and sister, and I do want us to be good friends, and I wish to know you better, Ted. Do join us to-morrow!"

"Would you really like me to?"

"I should, honestly. You'll come, won't you?"

"Thank you very much, Ethel,—only I don't want to be a nuisance."

"And I don't wish you to think me a nuisance. Thank you, Ted; it's very decent of you to come."

When she had gone, Ted was undecided whether to be pleased or not. In common with many others he found a certain unhealthy enjoyment in cherishing a grievance. Our hero was a good specimen of the type of boy from whose ranks the British ensign was recruited. Rather tall for his age, he was well built and proportioned, not weedy; fairly good-looking, though by no means handsome, with honest eyes that could look one straight in the face. A good athlete and gymnast, he had been regarded as the strongest forward in the school fifteen. He was also a good bowler, and the best outfield in the school, though he did not shine with the bat. His intellectual attainments had perhaps been less striking, though no one had ever classed him as a "duffer". Many a scrape had he been in, and many a punishment had he received, and he had never tried to clear himself by means of a lie.

Being therefore a healthy-minded boy, he saw clearly, when Miss Woodburn had left him, that his fit of sulks and jealousy had been rather foolish, and that his grievances against her were imaginary. No one likes to appear a fool even to one's self, so, not unnaturally, false pride set to work to seek excuses for his conduct, and when the time came to join them, he was still undecided, and almost ready to take the first opportunity to desert them.

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They trotted away from cantonments, past the tank, and along a road that led between stretches of level fields green with the young corn. The faint breeze brought with it the clean smell of damp earth, recalling to Ted's mind many a ride at home when the wind blew from the south-west. Ethel and Jim were in the highest of spirits, and they chaffed one another freely, greatly to the edification of the ensign, who had anticipated unlimited "spooning"—a state of mind he loathed. He quickly made the discovery that his future sister-in-law was by no means bad fun, and when he and Jim entered into a dispute respecting the merits of the Guides as compared with the 193rd, Ethel took his side against her lover, wittily supporting the ensign's arguments and making fun of the Guides. Strange to say, Captain Russell appealed to like and admire the raillery of the girl he worshipped.

Ethel Woodburn was not merely a good-looking, dainty, and sweet-tempered girl—she was good throughout; and as she was not above taking pains to gain the approval of her lover's brother, she rapidly won a place in that youth's by no means too susceptible heart.

Ethel was a graceful horsewoman, and this accomplishment told in Ted's eyes, for he himself was an uncommonly good rider to hounds. Accustomed to horses from his earliest childhood, he loved and understood the noble creatures. When home from school in the winter he had rarely missed a meet of the Cheshire hounds, and had more than once been in at the death. So fond was he of horses that he had set his heart upon joining a cavalry regiment, but Major-General Russell had decided against that expensive luxury.

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He therefore approved cordially, and with open admiration, of Ethel's fearless riding and firm seat, and, muttering to himself "She'll do!" he began to acquiesce more willingly in the new order of things.

Ted's horse—"Tommy Dodd"—a powerful roan purchased quite recently, was young and foolish, and started violently on the slightest provocation, swerving from one side of the road to the other, or prancing on hind-legs with frightened eyes and twitching ears. But the boy kept his seat with unperturbed face, soothing the steed until Tommy had recovered from his alarm. Ethel, for her part, watched his perfect mastery of the animal with undisguised admiration.

"You're fond of horses, Ted; ain't they glorious?" she asked, stroking her chestnut affectionately. "I'm glad we have tastes in common."

"Yes. I think I like riding better than anything else," the ensign replied with enthusiasm.

"Ted's a good rider!" Jim observed approvingly; "a good deal better than I am. He took to it like a duck to water."

"By the way, Jim, you're staying over the races, ain't you?" the younger brother enquired.

"Let me see, when do they come off? To-day week?"

"Yes, you *must* stay!" declared Ethel.

"I think I can manage it, but I must certainly leave on the following day."

"Shall we carry off the cup, Ted?" the girl went on, appealing to the ensign's *esprit de corps* with a smile that went to his heart. The Aurungpore cup was now in the mess-room of the 193rd, and strenuous efforts were to be made to wrest it from the regiment.

"I don't think anything is likely to beat 'The Padre' if Markham's knee will only get better."

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"Is the regiment putting its trust in Captain Markham's mount, then?" asked Jim.

"Yes," replied the girl. "We have two other horses entered, but they say that neither of them will have a chance against Lieutenant Harrington's of the Ahmednuggur Irregulars, or Mr. Vernon's 'Flying Fox'."

"Who's he?"

"Mr. Vernon? Oh, he's a civilian—a 'duck'."

"Madame!" exclaimed Jim, pretending to appear shocked beyond measure.

"Yes, sir; a duck!" Ethel repeated, unabashed.

"Please understand, madame, that you must henceforward apply that endearing epithet to no one save your affianced husband," Jim peremptorily ordered.

"I shall certainly not apply it to you, Jim," replied the laughing girl. "I do respect you a little, you know."

"That's so," interposed Ted. "Old Jim's a good bit of an ass, you know, but he's not quite idiotic or depraved enough to be likened to a duck. Is Mr. Vernon a fool that you call him that?"

"By no means; he's a most charming man. I simply intimated that until recently he has been employed in the Company's service in the Bombay Presidency. Haven't you learned that slang yet, Ted?"

"No! What on earth do you mean?"

"Well, if a man serves in Bengal he's a *Qui hy*; in Bombay he becomes a *duck*, and in Madras he's *benighted*. You know that you're a *griffin*,<sup>[1]</sup> I suppose?"

[1] A new-comer—equivalent to the American "tenderfoot".

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"Oh, yes! I know that much."

"In reply to your question, then, Jim, Mr. Vernon has not been here long; he owns a good horse, and he's a first-rate rider. One of your Guide officers is in too, is he not?"

"Spencer means to have a try, and he'll take a lot of beating. The men of the Guides cavalry can ride, understand, and you ought to feel honoured that one is going to take the trouble to patronize your races."

"Ah, well! the 193rd don't fear any officers of the Guides; do we, Ted?"

"Not a bit! The Guides are only a lot of brigands!" he made answer.

"Exactly. I keep telling your brother that it will go against the grain to marry a man in such a disreputable corps."

Jim grinned. "Then give me back my freedom," said he.

"I don't know what we shall do," continued the girl, treating this remark with the contempt it deserved, "if Captain Markham's knee refuses to get right. He's a perfect steeple-chaser, and it's as much through his handling as the merits of his horse that we hope to win the day. 'The Padre' is a most lovable animal, but this is his first steeple-chase."

"Can no one take Markham's place, then, if he should be unable to ride?"

"I'm afraid not. You see, none of our officers is first-class at the sport, and the two best are already engaged to ride their own mounts. So if 'The Padre's' owner doesn't ride—why, we shall lose the cup."

Suddenly a bright and joyful idea seized upon the girl.

"Why, Ted," she exclaimed, "I believe you could ride him!"

"Oh, no! I don't know the horse, and I've never ridden in a flat race, much less a steeple-chase."

"You'd do it very well," affirmed the elder brother, and praise from Jim was praise indeed. It was the first compliment he had paid the "young 'un" during the visit.

"I'm sure you would, Ted," the girl affirmed. "Do—for the honour of the 193rd!"

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Flushed with excitement and with the glow of perfect health, Ethel Woodburn looked charming that winter morning. Needless to say that one man in the world thought so. Ted blushed at the compliment to his riding.

"But what about Markham?" he objected. "I suppose you'll consult him first? It's hardly likely that he'd trust me on 'The Padre'."

"That will be all right. I can manage Captain Markham."

"Oh indeed, madame!" observed Jim. "Another wretched victim of your wiles, I suppose?"

"Exactly so, sir. I trust this will show you the necessity for good behaviour if you wish to remain honoured by my favour."

Ensign Russell was beginning to think that after all engaged couples did not of necessity behave in quite so silly a fashion as he had imagined. Certainly these two seemed to enjoy poking fun at one another, and showed no signs of "spooning", each treating the other as the best of friends. Ethel was undoubtedly an uncommonly jolly girl, quite without "side", and the boy was enjoying the ride immensely. How they behaved when he was not present he had no means of judging. Possibly he would have changed his opinion had he known.

By this time the three had returned close to the regimental parade-ground, and, obedient to the pressure of Ted's right leg, "Tommy Dodd" wheeled and trotted towards his stable.

Captain Markham was only too glad to learn from Miss Woodburn of our hero's riding capabilities and willingness to mount "The Padre". The owner explained to Ted that he had bestowed this name on the animal on account of its wonderful good temper and gentle nature.

"If ever there was a genial horse it's 'The Padre'. Whatever happens, you feel that you simply can't lose your temper whilst you're riding him, he would be so shocked and hurt."

"You should mount Tynan on him, then," suggested Ted, in allusion to a brother ensign, a lad of seventeen, who rarely omitted to include a few blackguardly oaths in his conversation.

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"That little wretch! I wouldn't allow him to touch 'The Padre', even with his gloves on. I shall be kicking that sweet youth one of these days—hard! I wish he would see the advisability of exchanging into some other regiment."

"The Padre" was a gray four-year-old thoroughbred; a compact horse, to whose bold, friendly, wide-apart eyes Ted at once took a liking. His long lean head and well-shaped neck, firmly set on good sloping shoulders, augured a first-class chaser, as did also his powerful back and loins, strong quarters, and short flat feet. Ted looked him over, and knew enough to appreciate these points, and was also glad to notice that there was plenty of length from hip to hock.

"The last half-mile of the course is downhill," Markham informed him, "and that is where 'The Padre's' shoulders will come in."

Ted mounted the gray, and almost before his knees had gripped the saddle he felt that he had never been on so noble a beast before. He trotted and cantered up and down the parade-ground before giving the horse his head, and then returned to the owner flushed and joyful.

The captain's eyes twinkled.

"You'll do, I think, Russell; I can easily see that you like one another."

"He's just grand!" was the boy's enthusiastic comment.

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## CHAPTER II

[Pg 22]

### An Exciting Day

Every morning saw the boy thoroughly practising his mount, encouraged by the owner, and at length the eventful day arrived.

A large and gay crowd had gathered about the course, and included every white man and woman in the station, not to speak of the thousands of Sikhs, Punjabis, Afghans, and Hindus who had assembled to witness the Englishman's sport. The 193rd Native Infantry had turned out in hundreds, keen on the victory of Markham Sahib's horse, and ready to applaud until their voices gave out. There were officers in uniform and officers without uniform; many coming from distant stations to witness the race, which was the most important in that part of the Punjab. Several of the British, and one or two of the native officers of the Ahmednuggur Irregular Cavalry, had travelled down to back Lieutenant Harrington. A wild-looking native officer of the Guides, who had come to watch Spencer Sahib win the cup, was pointed out by Jim as a celebrated robber and cut-throat, Bahram Khan by name.

"Rummy beggar is Bahram Khan!" declared the captain. "Dick Turpin was an infant to him. Look how the Punjabis and Hindus are gazing at him, and how he grins back—and then they



begin to shiver."

"Why? Are they afraid of him?"

"Rather. I'll tell you who he is afterwards."

"A pleasant type of man to have in one's regiment, Ted," was Ethel's comment in a stage aside.

"Disgusting!" was the laconic response.

On the outskirts of the crowd several Pathan dealers were taking advantage of the presence of so many lovers of horses to sell their ponies and country-bred steeds to the unwary. Nor were the inevitable jugglers and snake-charmers wanting. The fences were stiff, even to the lad who had hunted over the best country in Cheshire, and the water-jumps were big, though no wider than some he had taken "The Padre" over during the past few days. The course was rather more than three miles, the last six hundred yards being a straight run to the winning-post.

A native officer came out of the throng and caressed "The Padre".

"Mind you win, Ensign Sahib," laughed Subadar Pir Baksh, "for the honour of the corps."

"I will try my best, Subadar," Ted assured him; and Pir Baksh showed his even white teeth as he playfully threatened the ensign should he lose.

"Now, old boy," was Ethel's greeting, "never speak to me again if our 'Padre' loses—he's the horse of the regiment, you must remember. Whatever you do don't let that horrid Guide man win. An upstart corps like that, recruited from Thugs and Dacoits, must never get the better of the old-established 193rd."

"'Horrid Guide man' indeed!" laughed Jim. "Spencer's one of the best men I know; and remember, my lady, that you will be a Guide woman very soon."

Changing the subject he added: "You're only fifth favourite, Ted."

"Didn't know I was so high as that. Who's favourite?"

"The 'horrible Guide' horse and the 'Duck's' mount, 'Flying Fox', are equal, the Ahmednuggur comes next, and you are fifth."

"Never mind, Ted," said Ethel encouragingly. "'The Padre' was second favourite when it was thought that Markham would be up, and you're lighter than he."

"But that won't make any difference; I shall have to carry the extra weight."

"Oh, will you? That's not fair!"

Jim laughed. "Go and talk to the handicapper, Ethel; use your wiles on the innocent man and explain the unfairness! I intended to put a couple of rupees, young 'un, on Spencer's 'Cabul' for the sake of the corps, but this tyrant has forbidden the transaction. Never get engaged, lad; you see what it's brought me to—I have to obey. She says that she objects to betting, but in reality she objects to my sticking up for my own regiment."

"I'm ashamed of your relative, Ted," the girl asserted. "He's no brotherly feeling. Fancy wanting to bet against your mount!"

"It's just like him!" the ensign feelingly declared. "I don't understand how anyone so dainty as you, Ethel, could stoop to such an Orson."

Ethel blushed and Jim exploded.

"Here, drop that, young 'un; you mustn't trespass on my preserves. Fancy the kid paying a compliment of that kind! Why, little woman, he told me about ten days ago that you were 'a very ordinary sort of girl', and that 'he didn't see much in you'."

"Well, he's made up for it now. It was a very pretty compliment, Ted, and I thank you.... I often wonder myself."

After the preliminary canter Ted brought his horse to the starting-post, where seven other competitors had already assembled. "The Padre" was not the technical favourite, yet he was decidedly the most popular horse there, for Captain Markham was better liked by the sepoy of the 193rd than any of the officers, although Colonel Woodburn and several of the others were highly popular with the men. The sepoy quite drowned all the other noises of the crowd by their vociferous acclamations, and the young rider was the recipient of numerous encouraging remarks and hearty good-wishes from his brother officers and from the ladies of the Aurungpore station.

Lieutenant Spencer's black horse "Cabul" had now advanced to the position of first favourite. "Cabul" was easily the best-looking horse present, as his rider was the most handsome and perfect horseman. The officer of the Guides Cavalry sat like a centaur, and our hero saw at a glance that he could not hope to compete in "noble horsemanship" with his brother's comrade. The black, however, seemed nervous and fretful, and his shoulders were lightly flecked with foam. Bahram Khan, the famous brigand chief, sat by Spencer's side before they prepared for the

start, soothing and caressing the noble beast as he talked earnestly to its rider.

"He's a good horse," observed Markham, "but he's not perfect; his shoulders can't compare with 'The Padre's', and I doubt whether he's quite so game, for mine enjoys it, and that's not common in steeple-chasing. You should beat him down the hill."

Mr. Vernon's light chestnut was also a handsome animal, far more so than the lean gray of the Ahmednuggur Irregulars.

The ensign's nerve was largely affected by the unwonted excitement as he reined his mount alongside the others; an indistinguishable mass of white and brown humanity appeared to float before his eyes; and all he heard of the shouts and comments was a confused and distant murmuring, or rather buzzing. Mechanically he prepared for the start.

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The flag dropped, and the starter scurried to one side; "The Padre" leapt from under him and plunged away, the spectators seeming to swim past. He shook off the trance and partially recovered his self-possession. In front were Mr. Vernon's "Flying Fox", and another and darker chestnut. Aligned with him were the Ahmednuggur gray and a bay; the remaining three were slightly to the rear, for the pace was one that would soon tell.

Miss Woodburn watched with much anxiety as they came to the first fence, and began to regret that she was responsible for inducing the boy to take part in the dangerous pastime. But "The Padre" went over like a bird, and no one came to grief. The second and third obstacles were well taken by the whole field, but the leading chestnut (the horse of a comrade) fell at the fourth and was out of it. At the next—a water-jump—the Ahmednuggur gray swerved and lost ground, and a moment later the bay, who had got in front, carried away one of the hurdles—the easiest obstacle of the course. Ted was now calm enough to take all this in, and he became aware that he had only two horses to fear, "Cabul" and "Flying Fox". The black was now about a length behind, whilst the chestnut was almost as much in front of him.

More than two miles had been covered before "Cabul" began to forge slowly ahead of "The Padre", and to gain gradually on "Flying Fox", who, by his tail's convulsive twitching and his heaving flanks, was beginning to throw out signals of distress.

Even at that exciting moment the boy could not but admire the strong seat, light firm hands, and splendid horsemanship of Lieutenant Spencer. They had approached a hedge side by side, and though "The Padre" was going quite as well as, if not even better than "Cabul", the latter seemed to glide over the obstacle and was away on the other side a good yard in front. The boy knew that the time was lost in collecting his horse for the jump, and after landing on the other side, and as he felt convinced that his mount was speedier and quicker on his legs than Spencer's, and had better shoulders for landing, he could not understand how his rival managed to fly the fences with so little decrease in his speed and collect himself and get away on the other side without a pause. And it seemed no effort!

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The last jump was taken by the black a length in front of the gray, who in his turn had beaten the chestnut by nearly as much. No other horse was within thirty yards of the leader. But whereas Spencer had driven his steed speedily at this wide water-jump, and had cleared it in gallant style, "The Padre" jumped slightly short, and though he quickly pulled himself together, he was now nearly two lengths behind. Still he was going merrily and gamely, with any amount of spring and stay, and the ensign recognized despairingly that he bestrode the swifter and more clever horse, and was being beaten by his rival's horsemanship and superior judgment.

And it is now a straight run to the judge's stand. Ted fancies to his delight that "Cabul" appears somewhat done, and his rider is undoubtedly having to urge him along for the first time. But with Spencer—in striking contrast to the rider of the bay who came to grief at the solitary line of hurdles—there is no flourishing of the whip, no nervous jerking of the reins: the officer of the Guides preserves his calm and impassive demeanour, for he understands his mount. In his excitement the boy speaks to "The Padre", and that willing beast seems to comprehend and gallantly responds.

From her horse's back, on a little mound near the judge's box, Ethel Woodburn cranes forward eagerly. Yes, down the hill the gray is slowly gaining on the black!

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One hundred and fifty yards away and "The Padre's" head is level with "Cabul's" tail. They see Ted for the first time touch the horse lightly with his heels, the spur pricking a handbreadth behind the girths; a couple of quick strokes with the whip and the clever gray knows that the time has come, and they see him bound forward. Eighty yards away and Ted's knee is in line with "Cabul's" tail. The black is labouring hard, and under an ordinary rider would have given in, but Lieutenant Spencer is no ordinary rider.

Two more strides and the riders are level, and amid a roar which breaks out on every side, and which the boy only hears as a distant murmur, "The Padre" wins by a neck.

## Ted does not think much of the Guides

Quite dazed and half-unconscious Ted was lifted from the saddle. As in a dream he heard the prolonged applause of his mess-mates and the shrill yells of delight raised by the swarthy men of the 193rd. Lieutenant Spencer held out his hand to the victor and looked him approvingly in the face.

"You young scoundrel!" he cheerfully exclaimed, "I congratulate you. You deserved to win."

Ted heartily returned the handshake of his brother's friend, and muttered something to the effect that the horse should be given all the credit, not the rider. So great a triumph he had never before known, yet he bore his honours modestly. Colonel Woodburn, Major Munro, Captain Markham, and other mess-mates were quickly on the spot, patting and praising both horse and rider. The thumps on the back given to Ted were rather more vigorous than those awarded to "The Padre", and the ensign had little breath wherewith to make suitable reply to the shower of congratulations. Pir Baksh, the subadar, waved his sword wildly and led the sepoy in their volleys of deafening applause.

There was one jarring note. A brother ensign who was strolling moodily past the group moved a step nearer to Ted and snarled in an undertone:

"I've dropped two hundred rupees to-day, thanks to you."

It was Harry Tynan—a tall, handsome lad with dark hair inclined to curl, and big brown eyes; the type of boy who from childhood is petted and spoilt by mothers and aunts. Unless such an one possesses an exceptionally strong character the result is fatal, and Tynan showed a weak mouth and chin.

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"The Padre's" owner caught the whisper.

"More fool you, you young idiot!" Markham genially observed, as the silly youngster turned away with a muttered curse.

Miss Woodburn's congratulations were even more welcome than the praises of his comrades.

"I'm proud of my future brother," she said. "You rode just splendidly. Oh, it was exciting! I gave up all hope at the last water-jump.... And then when you began to overhaul him down the incline! Didn't the shouting affect your nerves?"

Ted shook his head. "I don't remember hearing anything. For all I knew there might not have been a single person within miles except me and Spencer—I mean Spencer and I—Spencer and myself, I should say."

"I could hardly hold myself in," went on Ethel. "I was dancing up and down—screaming, I'm afraid."

"You were indeed, madame," interposed Jim. "You were making a most discreditable exhibition."

"Ted," exclaimed the girl, "will you marry me? I'm tired of your brother."

"That I will!" replied Ted. "To-morrow if you like. I never could imagine what you could see in that chap, you know."

"Very well, I'll abandon him to his fate. He was actually cheering on that Guide fellow during the last hundred yards."

"The brute!"

"Isn't he?"

"Who—the Guide fellow?"

With this embarrassing query Lieutenant Spencer joined the party. Ethel blushed crimson, and for once in her life was at a loss for a remark. Jim chuckled away to himself at his sweetheart's discomfiture in most brutal fashion.

"That's right, Spencer," said he. "Come and back me up, I'm in a minority here."

Miss Woodburn recovered from her confusion. She had already been introduced by Jim to "that Guide fellow".

"I really beg your pardon, Lieutenant Spencer. We were indulging in a little inter-regimental chaff and abuse. Captain Russell had dared to applaud you rather than his brother at the final burst. And you don't understand how fond we all are of 'The Padre'. He's the regimental horse."

"Please don't apologize," Miss Woodburn. "I quite understand and sympathize with you. Indeed, I'm glad you're scorching him, for he needs it. And so he was cheering me in preference to your favourite? He must have most execrable taste."

"Thank you, Spencer!" Jim hurriedly and joyfully broke in. "Thanks!... Be grateful, Ethel. Don't you see how very complimentary to you that remark is?"

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For a few moments Miss Woodburn struggled with her amusement, but laughter mastered her, and she could not speak before Spencer had partially recovered his senses and recognized what a left-handed compliment he had paid her. The Guides lieutenant was far more confused and nervous now than at any time during the steeple-chase.

With crimson face he offered reparation.

"It's my turn to apologize now, Miss Woodburn. I think you'll forgive me, though. It's my misfortune that I'm not very intelligent."

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"I couldn't dream of doing so, Lieutenant Spencer," Ethel asserted, still laughing. "You paid me out nicely, and I'm sure you did it wilfully; it was far too smart to be unintentional."

"'Pon my honour, I didn't. I'm not half sharp enough to say anything of that kind except by accident. One can't be perfect, you know, and we must take into account that Russell did show poor taste in applauding the inferior horse and rider—especially going against your opinion, though we must acknowledge his perfect taste in at least one respect."

"I must forgive you after that, Mr. Spencer, though it was rather crude," said the girl, shaking her head.

"And I say, Spencer," Jim interposed, "don't talk about 'inferior rider'. We all know, and Ted knows, that you are a far better horseman than he."

"Of course I do," the ensign heartily agreed.

"Too much praise isn't good for a youngster," the elder brother sagaciously opined.

Spencer placed a hand on Ted's shoulder.

"All the same, young 'un, you won the Aurungpore Cup, and you deserved to win."

The party of four came to a halt opposite Colonel Woodburn's bungalow.

"What time shall we start back for Murdan to-morrow?" asked the lieutenant.

"We must leave early," Jim replied. "Will eight o'clock suit?"

"Very good," Spencer assented; "the young 'un and I will leave you here."

"But you must not think of leaving us yet, Mr. Spencer. Won't you come in? My father would be delighted to know you."

"Couldn't dream of it, Miss Woodburn, delighted though I should be to make the colonel's acquaintance. It will be some time before Russell gets leave again, and your last evening shall be sacred. Good-bye, Miss Woodburn! I'm very glad to have met you. And may I congratulate you both? I've known Russell well for some years, and I can congratulate you, and—forgive me for saying it—I've known you for a couple of days, and I do most sincerely congratulate him."

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Ethel pressed the "horrid Guide man's" hand, and when he and Ted had departed, observed:

"Whilst congratulations are passing round, Jim, I congratulate you on your friend."

Ted shared a small, one-story residence just outside the town with his chum Ensign Paterson. His bedroom was only just large enough to allow sleeping-room for Jim, but hearing that Captain Russell's comrade of the Guides was coming to Aurungpore, Paterson had placed his equally limited accommodation at Spencer's disposal. Arrived at home, Ted doffed the pigskin and discussed horses and riding with his guest until the time came for them to sally forth once more. A dinner was to be given by the officers of the 193rd in honour of the triumph of their regiment. For the third time in succession they had won the Aurungpore Cup, and Ted was the hero of the hour. He enjoyed the rôle until, his health having been drunk with acclamation, he was called upon for a speech.

Such an ordeal had never been contemplated, and he had to be dragged to his feet, a victim of nervous funk. As he faced his quizzing comrades his mind was a blank; he stammered a few incoherent sentences intended for thanks, and abruptly sat down again, feeling convinced that he had qualified for a place in any home for the feeble-minded. Yet the older officers liked him better for this lack of self-confidence than had he shown no sign of confusion. In reply to the toast, "Our Guests", Lieutenant Spencer made a neat and witty speech that set everyone at his ease.

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The ordeal over, Spencer, Paterson, and Ted returned to the little bungalow, and settled down to await Jim's arrival. Lieutenant Spencer filled his pipe and lay back in the one chair that the apartment boasted, Paterson sat straddle-legged across a camp-stool, and Ted squatted on a box with his back to the wall and his legs dangling. The room was lighted by a candle stuck in a bottle, for were they not in the "Gorgeous East" where luxury and splendour reign supreme?

"So you fellows of the 193rd are proud of your regiment!" the Guides' officer observed.

"It's a first-class corps," Ted replied. "They fought like good 'uns throughout both Sikh wars. You see, we've Bhurtpore as well as Sobraon, Moodkee, and Gujerat on the colours; and the colonel says he'd lead 'em anywhere—they'd follow their officers to the death. Markham's the favourite with the men, though they're very fond of the 'old man' and Major Munro."

"Yours is a queer corps, is it not, Lieutenant Spencer?" Paterson asked.

Spencer chuckled.

"It is! But I'm proud of being in the Guides."

"They say," continued the Scotch boy, "that you have all the frontier races in the corps—Afridis, Afghans, and other Pathan tribes, Sikhs and Gurkhas—and that some of them have been robbers and outlaws, and murderers even. Is that true?"

Spencer chuckled still more.

"Quite true. We have all sorts—men with the best of characters, men with the worst, and men with no characters at all. We've outlaws and dacoits, thieves and murderers—though they don't call themselves murderers; they resemble the border raiders of Scotland of some hundreds of years ago. But every man who joins the Guides has to be strong, healthy, active, brave as a lion, able to track like a Red Indian, climb mountains, and think for himself. Lumsden gets hold of the most daring men on the border, such as Dilawur Khan and Futteh Khan and Bahram Khan, and makes Guides of them. They don't get coddled; and I guess we shall have more work to do in the future than any regiment in India. We've men of all races and creeds and men of no race or creed—mostly big truculent Pathans, and nearly a hundred jolly little Gurkhas sent us by the King of Nepal at Sir Henry Lawrence's request. Oh, it's a grand corps! and we can get as many men as we like—scores apply for every vacancy. Why, there are dozens of fellows learning the drill at their own expense, both cavalry and infantry, waiting for an opportunity to join us. There's no other regiment in India or England can say the same."

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"Well, I'd rather serve in the 193rd B.N.I.," Ted declared. "I shouldn't care to trust your Guides very far. Why, many of your Sikhs must have fought against us eight years ago; and as for the Afridis and Yusufzais, they're always raiding British territory and killing our men, whilst the sepoy of the 193rd have fought under British colours for half a century."

"That's right, young 'un; stick up for your regiment."

"Jim was going to tell me," Ted remarked, "something about that Pathan officer who was speaking to you this morning. Who is he?"

"Bahram Khan, do you mean?"

"Yes, that's the man. We noticed the natives shrinking from him when he looked at them. Why was that?"

The lieutenant lay back in his chair and smiled.

"His is a queer story and typical of the Guides," he replied. "A few years ago he was a well-known outlaw and brigand chief, who raided and burnt villages and robbed right and left. We could never catch him, so Lumsden, our colonel, offered to make him an officer if he'd join the Guides, and he consented and brought his brigands with him."

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Paterson regarded the speaker curiously.

"Is that a fact?" he asked.

"It is an absolute fact."

"We'd keep that sort of ruffian out of the 193rd, wouldn't we, Paterson?" Ted asserted. "Aren't you afraid that you'll wake up some morning with all your throats cut?"

"Not in the least. I'd rather be with the Guides than any corps. With all respect to your sepoy of the 193rd, they've neither the stamina nor the resource of our fellows."

"H'm! you're welcome to them. Eh, Paterson?"

"I agree with you, Ted. Have you ever seen Colonel Nicholson, Lieutenant Spencer?"

"Jan Nikkulseyn? Rather. I sha'n't forget the first time I met him. It was south of Peshawur, close to the border, where a gang of Afghan labourers were making a road, protected by a half-company of sepoy under an English subaltern, for it was in a wild district. It was just after the rains, and a bullock-cart had stuck fast in the deep mud; and the bullocks, not having the grit of a horse, wouldn't make any efforts. I happened to be riding past with a couple of troopers. A big fellow standing by in civilian dress had taken his coat off and put his shoulder to the wheel, but they couldn't move it. This civilian, whom I took to be the man in charge of the work, then asked the lieutenant and the sepoy to lend a hand. But the sepoy coolly informed him that they had enlisted to fight, not to do menial work, and the officer said:

"It's no business of mine. I'm here to protect the road-makers, not to do their work."

"I dismounted, and so did one of my two men. The other, Hafiz Khan, bent down and whispered:

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"I go to get help, Lieutenant Sahib'; and before I could stop him he was galloping away. Well, we two turned the scale—though the big civilian was worth us both—and at last we got the cart out and trotted away. A mile or two farther on we saw Hafiz Khan waiting for us, and when I slanged him for not staying to help us, he replied:

“But he once threatened to hang me, Lieutenant Sahib, and Jan Nikkulseyn never breaks his word’.

“Who?’ I asked, quite taken aback.

“Jan Nikkulseyn. I am not afraid of a little pushing and pulling, but of Jan Nikkulseyn are we all afraid.’

“The civilian was Colonel Nicholson. Hafiz Khan had been engaged in two or three raids before he had enlisted, and, bold as they are, there’s not a Pathan along the border dare look Nicholson between the eyes.”

“And what became of the lieutenant?” asked Ted.

“He applied for an important appointment at Peshawur a month later. He found out his mistake then, and felt sorry he’d ever been born.”

A clatter of hoofs interrupted their talk, and Ted ran to the outer door to admit his brother. Captain Russell was quiet and grave, for his happy days had come to an end, and to-morrow the dull routine of regimental work would begin again. He was evidently little inclined for conversation, and before long the four officers passed off into the adjoining bedrooms.

Captain Russell was well liked by about one-half of his acquaintances, and disliked by a good proportion of the remainder. His friends knew him for a brave, good-hearted, conscientious man, and his detractors termed him a prig. The fault was in his manner, at times heavy, awkward, and solemn, largely the result of shyness, for with intimate friends he could be lively and full of fun.

Serious thoughts occupied his mind as he undressed. Ought not he, the elder brother and man of experience, to give the youngster a few words of advice, before leaving him, on some subjects more serious than steeple-chasing? But how to begin? Jim Russell knew his own failings, and dreaded lest Ted should sneer at him as a prig; and he envied his chum, Spencer, who, he felt sure, could have given the lad sound advice and warning without the least suspicion of preaching. However, Jim was conscientious, and he resolved to take the risk.

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The ensign’s evident *esprit de corps* and delight in his regiment furnished an admirable opening, and sitting on the low bed half-undressed, the elder brother spoke like a father to the younger concerning his duty to the regiment.

Then, as the captain was an enthusiastic admirer of the great brothers Henry and John Lawrence, and of their band of devoted followers, the first topic naturally led to a eulogy of the Punjab leaders; and Jim explained to the ensign how Henry Lawrence had begun, and how John Lawrence was now carrying on the work of showing to the wild Sikhs, Jats, and Mohammedans of the Punjab the highest ideal of British justice and uprightness.

Ted listened attentively, but said nothing. He too was already filled with admiration for those Christian soldiers and statesmen who were soon to save India.

“Not that I want you to be an objectionable young prig,” the captain went on; “there’s a big difference between that and the genuine article. You know what I mean?”

The ensign nodded, and Jim continued:

“I like your chum—Paterson; he seems a very decent lad. And I noticed on one occasion that he showed he was not ashamed of his religion. Why should we so-called Christians be so afraid of acting up to what we profess to believe? Look at the Lawrences and Herbert Edwardes, three of the greatest men in India! They are true Christians, and where could you find finer soldiers and braver men? It’s a poor soldier who’s ashamed of his colours.”

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Ted nodded assent, and, feeling that he had done his duty, Jim bade him good-night and blew out the candle.

An early breakfast next morning, and our ensign and his two visitors were in the saddle by seven o’clock. Ten minutes later Ethel Woodburn cantered up, attended by a sais, and Spencer and Ted ambled along, keeping well ahead of the lovers.

“I suppose that’s the fort over there?” Spencer asked, and pointed to an ugly square building of dark sandstone that dominated the town.

“Yes, it’s an arsenal too. There’d be a big smash in Aurungpore if it was to blow up,” said Ted, who little thought of the influence that forbidding fortress would exert upon his career.

“It has half-ruined the town already by its ugliness,” Spencer mused. “That mosque on the left is a little gem, and that dome is perfect, but the arsenal spoils them as completely as a factory chimney spoils a view at home. The Moslems beat us at architecture.”

“I think I must be turning back now,” Ted presently observed, “I have plenty to do before parade.”

They came to a halt and awaited the arrival of the others. The lovers parted, Ted shook hands with Jim and Spencer, and nodded in response to his brother’s parting injunction to take care of Ethel. Miss Woodburn stayed, waving her handkerchief, until a bend of the road hid her betrothed from view. Joining Ted, she touched her bay lightly with the whip, and they trotted

## CHAPTER IV

### The Fanatics

In spite of our hero's recent disgust he had quickly become reconciled to the sweet girl who was to be his brother's wife. There was no resisting her charms. He found her as full of fun and as fond of adventure as any boy could wish, and he soon grew very anxious to win her good opinion, even attempting to show off occasionally for her benefit. Ethel had become no less attached to the honest, healthy-minded, plucky lad, and wrote warningly to Jim that she had fallen desperately in love with his jolly young brother.

A few weeks had elapsed since Captain Russell's departure, when something happened to attach them still more closely. One beautiful winter day Ethel asked the ensign if he would care to stroll through the native *bazar* with her, and the lad willingly complied.

Not being of a very curious disposition, he had hitherto neglected this quarter of the town, and had spent most of his leisure time riding and shooting in the country beyond. But on this occasion the girl was able to make the visit much more interesting than he had anticipated. She knew the people and more than one of the many dialects fairly well, and she pointed out to her companion the men of various nationalities and religions who swarmed in the narrow streets. He noticed with amazement the difference between the strong fighting men of the North-west—the sturdy Jat and stalwart Pathan—and the fat, mild, shrinking Babu from Bengal, or the slender and weaker Hindu from the South.

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This part of the town was quite distinct from the quarter in which the Europeans lived, and was much more picturesque, if also more dirty. In the narrow streets all the goods of the small shops were exposed to the passer-by. Workmen could be seen plying their trade, undisturbed by the inquisitive glances of the lookers-on. And what clumsy tools they had! It would have been impossible for such delicate, exquisite work to have been turned out therewith, had not the artisans put their whole soul into the labour: for to do his work thoroughly and beautifully is a religious duty with the Hindu.

Passing the stalls of the money-changers, fruit-sellers, and dealers in native sweetmeats, their attention was attracted by certain curios in one of the queer shops, and our ensign looked about for something worth sending home. He fixed upon a queer silver bangle, set with turquoises. The setting was uncommon, but the stones were only poor. The turbaned, white-robed shopkeeper rose and came forward at once, salaaming profoundly, and putting on one side the hubble-bubble he was smoking. After a lengthy argument, in which Ted failed to understand the man's rapid utterance, and his own Hindustani was beyond comprehension, Miss Woodburn came to the rescue, fixed the price, and concluded the business.

Attracted by the sahib's curious rendering of their native tongue, a number of the many idlers around had drawn near. At a corner of the narrow street, not fifty paces distant, voices had been meanwhile raised in earnest and violent harangue. Having learned even during his short sojourn in the land how furious an altercation may arise over a matter of a couple of annas, Ted had not paid much attention to the noise; but now the speakers rose and came towards them. Foremost was a tall, half-naked man, with long and flowing beard—a mass of dirt and evil smells; for with these strange people cleanliness is not on speaking terms with godliness, and the most holy men are the most filthy. His eyes were inflamed, and his looks and gestures wild. Ethel, from her longer experience, saw that the mullah had rendered himself mad with bhang, and that two of his companions were in a similar condition.

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Pointing to the Feringhis, the mullah's voice rose to a wild shriek.

"What do these offspring of the evil one here? O followers of the Prophet, how long will ye allow yourselves to be denied by these kafirs. The time is even now at hand when Allah shall no longer permit this: then shall his wrath fall upon them, and they shall be swept from the face of the earth. The hundred years of the white man's *raj*<sup>[1]</sup> are fulfilled, and the curse shall be lifted from us!"

[1] dominion.

The fanatic's voice rose to a wild shriek as he concluded the harangue. Ted could not follow the speech: he could only gather from the tone and gestures that he and his companion were the objects of abuse, and he guessed from the half-angry, half-cringing manner of the tradesman that something serious was being said. Ethel, however, understood every word, and was alarmed.

They tried to leave the *bazar*, but found their progress barred.

"Out of the way, there!" the ensign commanded, but no one moved.

"Kill the kafir pigs!—there is no one to see!" called out a voice from the rear.

"No, no!" objected others hastily. "What harm have they done? And will not the vengeance of the Whites be upon us all? Make way there for the sahib-log!"

But another of the bhang-drugged fanatics, who had been swaying to and fro in his delirium, screamed:

"Aye! Why not kill now?" and he roughly seized the white-faced girl.

With a savage exclamation the English boy sprang forward and struck the speaker behind the ear with all his force. Not for nothing had Edward Russell been trained in gymnastics, in boxing and fencing—the fellow dropped like a log. But before Ted could turn or draw his sword the mullah had plucked a knife from beneath his scanty garment and plunged it in the lad's side.

"Die, unbeliever!" he cried.

As the ensign pressed his hands to his side and dropped to the earth with a feeble moan, the screaming and jabbering of the by-standers ceased as if by magic. Even the mullah and his disciples drew back appalled at what they had done, while the more timid of the crowd fled to their homes in dread of the consequences and the sure wrath of the sahibs, fearing lest vengeance should fall on innocent and guilty alike for this murder of a white man. The merchants before whose shops the act had been committed wrung their hands in despair, shrieking imprecations down upon the heads of the fanatics, who stood gazing at their handiwork.

The mullah's hesitation lasted but a second. He turned towards the trembling girl, and called to his abettors:

"Finish off the lad while I slay the woman!"

Ethel Woodburn was a soldier's daughter: she had more than once looked danger in the face bravely and calmly. Had she been alone she might have hesitated, or had her companion been in a condition to protect her she might have relied on him. But, seeing the boy of whom she was so fond stretched at her feet, cruelly wounded and helpless, and at the mercy of these madmen, her instinct prompted her to do the right thing without a moment's hesitation, and she blessed the father who had taught her to carry and use a pistol.

The little weapon was hardly more than a toy, but it checked the assassins sufficiently to enable her to bend down swiftly and snatch Ted's sword from its scabbard. The murderer was but a pace away when she pulled the trigger and stepped back. He fell, writhing, the bullet in his chest. The second received the point of the sword under his arm-pit as he raised his hand to strike. The third assailant, dazed by the blow from Ted's fist, had now risen, and was hesitating as to his next step, when a couple of native police, attracted by the report and noise, ran up, and, being Sikhs, they had no hesitation in securing the uninjured Mohammedan, and they also prevented the crowd from carrying off the wounded Wahabis.<sup>[1]</sup>

[1] The most fanatical and implacable Moslem sect.

Never losing her presence of mind, Ethel bound the unconscious lad's wound to stop the bleeding, and ordered the by-standers to carry him to his quarters, where the regimental surgeon attended to the injury. The bangle had disappeared.

A few weeks later, when the injured persons had recovered, the three would-be assassins were tried on the charge of attempted murder, and were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

Some time elapsed before Ted was able to get about as usual. Had it not been for the bandage so promptly applied by Ethel he must have bled to death, so she had saved his life in two different ways. During his slow and painful recovery he was nursed untiringly by his new sister; and though she made light of her heroic deed, the girl's courage and presence of mind were the chief themes of conversation with the officers who frequently visited his bed-side, and the ensign's lucky brother became more envied than ever. Ethel invariably checked his expressions of gratitude, and would not allow him to talk about the incident.

"Bosh, Ted!" she would say; "I was in such a state of abject fear that I didn't know what I was doing. I only shot the man because my hand trembled so that the trigger went off, and he happened to be in front."

"Certainly, Ethel, I quite understand. I'll just read you a letter I had this morning from Jim. You'd p'r'aps like to hear his opinion?"

"Oh, that boy's demented! I had a note also from him this morning. He's quite wild."

"Good chap Jim,—knows a thing or two!" said Ted, nodding his head sagely.

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## CHAPTER V

### The Cad of the Regiment

"This is the place where I was knifed, Paterson," said Ted, "and there's the old boy I had been



bargaining with. Watch him eyeing me; he looks rather scared, don't he?"

The wound was now quite healed, and impelled doubtless by a magnetic attraction, akin perhaps to that said to be exercised on murderers by the scenes of their crimes, our ensign had induced his chum Paterson to stroll with him through the *bazar* one evening after duty was over for the day.

While Ted had been down with his wound Alec Paterson had opened out in a remarkable manner and thrown down the last barriers of reserve. Ensign Paterson had only recently admitted Ted into close friendship. He was a Scottish lad, hailing from Lanarkshire, and no better choice of a friend could have been made. Physically he was tall and well-formed, intellectually he was ahead of most of his brother ensigns, and in moral character strong, upright, and healthy. He was very reserved, difficult to know, chary of his intimacy, and slow of speech. Tynan termed him a "saint", and cordially disliked him; and in return Paterson disproved the accusation of saintliness by being obnoxiously polite and somewhat ponderously playful in his dealings with the regimental *bête noir*.

"He does look scared," Alec replied. "He must think you were killed, and that your ghost has come to jump down his throat or ride on his back, or whatever it is that their evil spirits do. You had better speak and reassure him."

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As Ted approached the stall, the hand of the sleek Hindu shot forth across the boards on which his wares were displayed and snatched something from the front row. Not, however, before our hero had recognized the identical bangle that he had bought and paid for on the occasion of his previous visit. His face flushed.

"That is mine," he asserted. "I bought and paid for it."

Understanding that the bangle had been seen, and that denial was useless, the shopkeeper salaamed and unabashed replied: "Nay, sahib, the one you bought you took away, and I have never set eyes on it since."

"But you told me it was unique—that there was not another like it in the country."

"I am the sahib's slave, and I spoke truth. There was not another like it in the Punjab. But since the Heaven-born's visit a Kazilbash merchant from Kabul, with whom I deal in turquoises, has sold me this. It is indeed similar to the one I sold the sahib, but the turquoises are larger and better. Welcome is the sight of the Heaven-born in the eyes of his servant, who has suffered great anxiety."

"What's the row, Ted?" Paterson asked. And matters being explained, he at once enquired of the Hindu why he had been so anxious to prevent the bangle being seen if he had come by it honestly. But the "Aryan brown" was more than their match in guile.

"In truth I remembered how the former one had brought ill-luck to the young sahib, and I feared lest he might take a fancy to this one also. And I know that the sahibs are reckless in such matters, not believing in omens. Rather would I lose business than bring misfortune upon the head of the young sahib."

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Alec Paterson laughed.

"I'm afraid it's no go, Russell," he whispered. "The rascal is too deep for us, and we cannot prove that it really is the same article."

"But it's robbery pure and simple!" Ted indignantly declared. "I know it's the same that I lost during the scuffle."

The shopkeeper regarded them gravely and sadly, as though he felt deeply the doubts they had cast upon his honesty. He produced one article after another, tempting them in vain to buy. At length, guessing that the boy had set his heart upon the bangle, he offered him the pretty toy for thirty rupees, assuring him that he had given twice that sum to the Kazilbash.

"I'll give you fifteen," said Ted, "and not an anna more."

The Hindu shook his head.

"I am poor man," said he, "else would I gladly beg the sahib to accept it as a present."

"Very well," Ted firmly rejoined. "Come along, Alec."

They turned to go, but the Hindu hastily recalled them.

"Nay," said he, "I had forgotten that the sahib had to suffer the loss of the first one. For twenty rupees will I sell it, or, in truth, give it away, rather than that the Heaven-born should be disappointed."

"Fifteen," was all Ted's answer; and once more the bangle changed hands, and the ensign left the shop. On the way to cantonments they overtook Harry Tynan, the object of their mutual dislike, and were about to pass with a nod as devoid of cordiality as decency would permit, when Tynan spoke, or rather sneered: "Why, Russell, I thought you always took a girl to protect you whenever you went into the *bazar*!"

"Did you really now?" asked Ted banteringly. "Wasn't it an effort?"

"What do you mean? Was what an effort?"

"To think—so unusual, you know, for you."

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"Oh how clever you are! But how aren't you keeping an eye on Brother Jim's future wife, according to instructions? I saw her this evening flirting as usual with the Commissioner Sahib. You are not doing your duty. Captain Russell 'ud be angry if he knew."

"Come along, Russell; what's the use of talking to that cad?" whispered Paterson. "Contemptible toad!"

But his friend's ire had been aroused by the last remark. He halted and faced Tynan.

"What d'you mean?" he demanded.

Tynan slowly drew a huge cheerot from his lips and attempted to blow rings of smoke before replying.

"You know well enough. Stunnin' little flirt is Ethel—deuced stunnin'! Shouldn't be surprised if she threw Brother Jim over!"

"What do you mean?" repeated Ted with still greater heat.

"Don't be an ass, Ted. Leave the cad alone," Paterson again whispered.

Tynan was Russell's senior by nearly a couple of years, and he stood a clear three inches taller. Ted's anger amused him.

"Why—don't you know?" he innocently enquired. "You see, our little Ethel had been setting her cap at Sir Arthur Fletcher for months before she saw your brother. But Arthur knows what's what, and the little darling has had to put up with a mere captain of the Guides. But she still hankers after the commissioner, and sighs for the handle to her name."

"Ye leein' hyæna!" Paterson burst out, his native dialect rising to the surface in his excitement. "Keep a ceevil tongue in your heid, or I'll knock ye down!"

"No, you don't, Paterson," broke in Ted. "That's my business. You cad, to lie like that about a girl you're not fit to speak to! Take that!"

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Our ensign struck his comrade across the face—a resounding smack with the open palm.

The fight was very short. Though tall enough, Tynan was weedy and unfit. For several years he had considered himself a man of the world, and one of the chief aims—if not *the* chief—of his life had been to convince his associates that he was well qualified for that dignified position, and the attainment of this object had, of course, necessitated abundant smoking and drinking. Wonderful to relate, no one had so far seemed greatly impressed!

Five minutes after the first blow, with bleeding nose and damaged eye, the contemptible fellow was sullenly admitting that he had had enough.

"Think it over the nicht," Paterson suggested. "If ye hev not I'll just gie ye seemilar satisfaction. And I'd hev ye obsairve it wad be safer to cam' oot wi' no mair lees o' that sort. Cam' awa', Russell!"

"Wait a moment, I've not done yet," said Ted. "Let me inform you now, you cad, what I would not waste my breath in telling you before—that Miss Woodburn had refused Sir Arthur Fletcher before she became engaged to my brother, and that he has congratulated my brother, and is a loyal, honourable gentleman, of whose friendship Miss Woodburn is proud; and don't let me hear you speaking of her again as you did just now."

The chums left the miserable being—neither man nor boy—to follow as he chose.

"What garred ye say that last, Russell?" asked the Scottish lad, who was still labouring under strong excitement, as soon as they had passed out of hearing.

"What? About Fletcher?"

"Yea You'd no right to drag his refusal into the affair!" Paterson dropped the tell-tale accent as he spoke more slowly. "That's between him and Miss Woodburn, and he wouldn't thank you if he knew, nor would she. It was perhaps very satisfying to you, but they don't need to be defended from a fellow like our friend yonder."

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"I'm very sorry—I'm a fool! I was so angry I didn't stop to think. Bah! he leaves a bad taste in the mouth, that fellow!"

"We should have passed him without taking any notice," Paterson went on. "But it served him right!"

For the future Tynan gave his conqueror a wide berth, and Ted ignored his existence as far as their respective duties, would permit.

Returning from the officers' mess that evening, Ted was accosted by Pir Baksh, the Mohammedan captain.

"I saw you fight with Ensign Tynan," said he. "He is the kind of officer to ruin a regiment.

Once he dared to call me a *soor* (pig) before my men, and I thank you, sahib, for teaching him a lesson."

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## CHAPTER VI

### The Outbreak of the Mutiny

On the night of Monday, May 11, some weeks after Ted's recovery, Ethel's twenty-first birthday was celebrated, Colonel Woodburn entertaining the officers and British residents of Aurungpore. The season was too warm for more than occasional dancing, and conversation was the order of the night—conversation serious and frivolous, harmless flirtations between the younger members, and solemn interchange of views concerning the rumoured dissatisfaction prevailing amongst the native troops, a subject pooh-poohed by some and laughed at by others, but gravely regarded by a few—when an orderly entered and handed a missive to the colonel. As he opened it and read he gave a start, and his face paled for one brief second, but soon resumed its ordinary aspect as he slowly folded the paper and placed it in his pocket.

A few moments later he crossed over to Major Munro, who at once left the room after speaking to the adjutant and another officer. These two also took their departure before long, and one by one the remainder of the officers were spoken to and retired to their mess-room, where they were shortly joined by Colonel Woodburn.

"I have terrible news," he informed them, "but we must try to avoid alarming either the ladies or the sepoy. The 3rd Native Cavalry and the 11th and 20th Native Infantry have broken into mutiny at Meerut, killed some of their officers, and, so the message runs, are sacking the town and murdering right and left."

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"At Meerut!" gasped Major Munro. "How at Meerut of all places? They couldn't—it's simply impossible!"

"It must be true," declared the colonel, "though it certainly does seem impossible. One would think they would have broken out at Cawnpore, or Benares, or Allahabad, or here, or anywhere rather than Meerut. But this report must be exaggerated! How could they sack the town and murder in the face of those English regiments and the Artillery? It's incomprehensible!"

Now even Ensign Russell, a mere griffin, knew that Meerut—a large station more than fifty miles north-east of Delhi—was considered a model cantonment, and contained the strongest British force in all India. Could a revolt seem more hopeless than at this station, where the three native corps were more than counterbalanced by a regiment of British dragoons, the 60th Rifles, and two batteries of the finest artillery in the world—a force sufficient to repress any rising within ten minutes—whereas throughout the seven hundred and fifty miles of territory along the Ganges, in the districts containing the large towns of Agra, Allahabad, Benares, Cawnpore, Lucknow, and Patna, there were only three weak British corps to oppose nearly a score of sepoy regiments and many thousands of armed rebels?

"There's no saying how it will spread," continued the colonel. "We must take all precautions, though I believe our men are perfectly trustworthy. There must be some mistake, and I've no doubt that we shall hear to-morrow that the rebels have been cut to pieces. I'm afraid the silly fellows will be slaughtered by hundreds."

But the news of the morning and of the succeeding days was no less hard to understand. Eighty-five men of the 3rd Native Cavalry (a corps composed of Hindus and Mohammedans) had refused to use the cartridges served out, alleging that the fat of pigs and of cows had been employed in the manufacture.

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As most readers will know, the pig is regarded as unclean by all Moslems, and the cow is holy to Hindus, so that to touch the fat of these animals would imperil their salvation and shut them out of Paradise. The mullahs and fakirs had been poisoning the minds of the soldiers by asserting that the government was taking this means of uprooting their religion and converting them to Christianity by destroying their chance of salvation as Moslems or Hindus. If they had no future to which to look forward as Mussulmans or Brahmans, they would be the more ready to listen to the Christian doctrine which might give them some hope.

Unfortunately there is reason to believe that some foundation for the rumour existed, owing to carelessness on the part of those responsible for the manufacture, and to senseless, most blamable, disregard of the sepoy's religious susceptibilities. But these few unclean cartridges had been withdrawn, and those which the men were required to use contained no offensive grease, but merely oil and bees'-wax. The childish, credulous, superstitious sepoy were, however, only too ready to believe all idle tales: they accepted the statements of the fakirs, that by means of charms and witchcraft the English would transform them into animals; that their children would be born with tails like monkeys, and other stories equally absurd.

The sepoy were now in such a panic of fear lest their precious caste should be defiled, that they began to suspect some attempt to destroy this inheritance (without which life was not worth

living) in everything prepared for them by the government. The new cartridge-paper had a glazed, greasy appearance. This was enough! Here was another subtle attempt to make them Christians! In this fashion they argued and persuaded one another like foolish children, though in reality the paper was entirely free from fat.

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Many years before this a report had spread throughout Hindustan that the English rulers were collecting the salt (a very precious commodity in the East) into two heaps: over that intended for the use of the Mohammedans the blood of pigs was sprinkled, and over the other the blood of cows. This "salt" panic had occurred many years ago, but now in 1857 an equally incredible story was believed by hundreds of thousands, namely, that the government had caused the bones of bullocks and of pigs to be ground and mixed with the flour served out to the troops. For days following the rumour no flour was used, the sepoys preferring to starve rather than eat what they believed to be defiled food.

But these matters of the greased cartridges and bone-flour were by no means the only cause of the great mutiny: they were simply the pretexts for bringing matters to a head. The sepoys had been treated in widely different ways at various times, being now spoiled and petted, and now dealt with haughtily and occasionally unjustly. When first the native army was raised the men were allowed to dress after their own fashion, but early in the nineteenth century many changes had been initiated, and the soldiers began to be clothed and drilled according to the European model.

They were forbidden to wear the cherished caste-marks on their foreheads; the ear-rings to which they were fondly attached, and which the Moslems regarded as a charm against evil spirits, were no longer permitted; they were deprived of the beards of which they had been so proud, and were forced to shave their chins like the "unclean" Englishmen; and upon their head the national turban was replaced by a stiff round cap. Now, not only are hats and caps the outward and visible signs of Christianity (for Christians are known as *topi-wallahs*, or hat-wearers), but this uniform cap contained leather made either from the hide of the abominable hog or from that of the sacred cow. Thus the new head-dress was an offence to Moslems and Hindus alike.

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A further cause of discontent arose from the decline in the importance of the native officer. In the early years of the British-Indian army the native officer had been a great and important man, but at this period his standing had declined. The English officer of sixteen had authority over the grizzled Rajput captain who had served the Company for thirty years. The native officers were not saluted by British privates, and frequently when they visited the tents of their white brother-officers, the latter had not the courtesy to offer them chairs, regarding them, indeed, as in no way different from the common sepoy. The native officers grumbled to one another in indignant tones over these grievances.

"It is better," they said, "to serve in the armies of the native states, where elephants and palanquins and sumptuous tents are provided for the officers, than in the army of 'The Great Lord Company', in which we are compelled to live with the common sepoy when on the line of march."

Again, most of the Hindus had enlisted on the understanding that they were to serve in Hindustan only and not across the sea. Now to cross "The Black Water" is likewise a defilement forbidden to Brahmans, and great dissatisfaction had been caused a few years previously because certain regiments had been ordered to Burma; and during this campaign the Brahmans had been compelled to work as labourers in the construction of barracks. The British soldiers had fallen to with a will, as had the low-caste Madras sepoys, but the men from Bengal demanded to know whether Brahmans and Rajputs were mere coolies that they should so defile themselves.

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In addition to the above causes of disquietude, the King of Delhi—a quiet old gentleman who dabbled in poetry—had been recently deprived of certain privileges. This monarch was the descendant of the great Mogul emperors, whose sway had been acknowledged by far more kings, princes, and nations than that of any European sovereign.

Yet the heir to this magnificence was now merely the pensioner of a company of merchants; though permitted to dwell in an enormous palace—almost a town in itself—with the empty title of king, he possessed no real power and no authority. This fact rankled in the minds of all Mohammedans. In one important respect, however, the Company had deferred to the king's wishes. He had begged that none of their troops should be quartered in the imperial city, so that he might at least make pretence to be the real master thereof. The request was granted, and with the exception of a handful of men to guard the great Delhi arsenal, neither sepoys nor British soldiers were stationed in the town, but, instead, had their cantonments on the destined-to-be-famous ridge outside.

Then, again, the great province of Oudh had been recently annexed, and certain privileges had been taken not only from the king thereof, but from the large landholders; and though in the course of time these changes would undoubtedly work for the good of the majority, still they pressed heavily on a certain class; and the poorer people, for whose benefit the changes were made, could not understand, and therefore disliked them. The King of Oudh, like his master the Emperor of Delhi, was a Mohammedan.

There was also a Mahratta rajah, known as Nana Sahib, who had many grievances against the English. The Mahrattas were a powerful Hindu confederacy that had overawed even the Grand

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Moguls until Wellesley and Lake had broken their power.

Trouble had arisen in many corps over the question of pay. For services outside India the sepoy was paid more than in Hindustan itself. After the annexation of the Punjab in 1849 this extra pay was dropped for regiments serving in the province, and the sepoy could not understand how, if the Punjab was not in Hindustan when they entered, it could become part of Hindustan because the government chose to term it so. They argued that even if the Punjab had become merged in the Indian Empire, it was still a foreign country in their eyes; that they were still serving away from their native land, and were therefore entitled to extra pay. Some regiments had accordingly refused to obey orders.

The Brahman priests thereupon warned the Indian Government that if they (the priests) chose to forbid Hindus to enlist, the British would have to make shift without a sepoy army. This threat rather frightened "John Company", but not Sir Charles Napier, the commander-in-chief at the period. He promptly took matters into his own hands, and disbanding the 66th Native Infantry, which had refused to obey orders, he gave their title and colours to the Nasiri Gurkha Battalion, who thereupon became the 66th Infantry of the Line.

This step scared the Brahmans, for they saw that if the government was minded to fill their places with Gurkhas, those intrepid little mountaineers would be only too delighted to enlist in the regular army instead of in irregular battalions with less pay, as at present. The occupation of the Brahman sepoy would then be gone, at least to a larger extent than they desired.

Now, in India the status of a soldier is a most honourable one, and the army is not mainly recruited from the lower classes, as in England, but from the most respectable natives of the middle and higher ranks of life; and families consider it a great privilege to have a son in the army, even as a private. Judged by Indian standards the pay is very good, and the pension will keep a family in ease and comfort. The British soldier often enlists because he has no taste for settled employment, or because he has been tempted by coloured placards setting forth "the advantages of the army", or has been attracted by the ribbons of the recruiting-sergeant. Perchance he has been jilted by his sweetheart, or done something of which he is ashamed, and so has run away from home. Often he has taken another name, and has lost sight and touch of the parents at home.

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But the sepoy, as soon as his name is on the regimental roll, becomes the pride and prop of his house. He visits home regularly and is regarded as a great man in his village, and his family comes under the special protection of the state. Many families boasted that they had eaten the salt of "The Great Lord Company" from generation to generation. The sepoy usually had a real pride in their colours; they rejoiced in the honourable and well-paid service that was sought by the very flower of the people, by the highest castes in Bengal.

Napier's prompt action checked the spread of revolt, but dissatisfaction still rankled in the sepoy's breasts. In 1857 each injustice was recalled to mind, and thousands of the mutineers honestly believed that they had been very badly treated.

A further incitement to revolt was this. The Moslems cherished a prophecy that India would be ruled by the Feringhis for exactly one hundred years, after which the Mogul Empire would resume its sway. The year 1857 was just a century after Plassey.

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## CHAPTER VII

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### Weighed in the Balance

The principal causes of the great mutiny having now been explained, let us go back to Meerut and its eighty-five mutineers. These men were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, and in the presence of the sepoy regiments the fetters were placed upon their limbs. The sight of the degradation angered and alarmed their comrades, and rumours spread through the town to the effect that all the black soldiers were to be disgraced in the same way, and at this date no report was too ridiculous for the sepoy.

On the Sunday evening, 10th May, the 60th Rifles assembled for church parade. At once the rumour flew round that the white soldiers were preparing to fall upon their brown comrades, and the absurd tale gained ready credence. The sepoy was taunted by the women of the town, were called cowards for permitting their comrades to suffer disgrace; and no sooner had the Rifles marched off to church than the native troops lost all control of themselves, broke open the jail, set their eighty-five comrades free, and, encouraged by the convicts, they began to fire on the white residents.

All the *budmashes* of Meerut joining in, pandemonium ensued. Houses were broken into and set on fire; Englishmen and women were brutally murdered. Yet whilst this was going on in one part of the town, in another quarter the sepoy of the same regiments were saluting their officers and guarding the Treasury as usual.

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Back came the 60th Rifles from church and quickly reassembled with arms and ammunition,

but by this time the mutineers were on the road to Delhi. Though the British dragoons were at once ordered out, their commanding officer could not grasp the need for prompt punishment. He allowed the roll to be called in the ordinary way, wasting precious moments, whilst the rebel sepoys were hastening nearer and nearer to the imperial city.

Night fell quickly, and as the general commanding did not know which way the rebels had fled, he did not order pursuit, arguing that the troops must remain behind to protect the residents of Meerut from the thousands of *budmashes* and escaped jail-birds.

Had the dragoons at Meerut been ordered down the road to Delhi (for the general might easily have guessed that the rebels would take that direction), the 60th Rifles and the Artillery were strong enough to have swept all the *budmashes* in Meerut out of existence; and the dragoons would certainly have overtaken and destroyed the two foot regiments, and might have come up with the 3rd Native Cavalry. In the face of the British horsemen the populace of Delhi would not have dared to sympathize with the mutineers; the revolt would perhaps have died out, and the terrible massacres of Delhi, Cawnpore, and other places might never have occurred. But it is easy to be wise after the event, and the general commanding at Meerut, though a brave man, was not a far-seeing one. He was content to save and defend his own station, failing to recognize that a spark kindled in Delhi, the real capital of India, would set the whole land ablaze. As it was, the mutineers, scared out of their wits by the fear of a terrible retribution, hearing in their frightened imaginations the thundering of the dragoons behind them, got safely into Delhi and attempted to rouse that city against the Feringhis. But the people of Delhi said one to another:

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“No! The English will be here presently with their terrible horsemen and still more terrible artillery. Let us take no part in this!”

But not a British soldier was in sight next day from the city walls, and the rumour soon gained ground that all the white troops in Meerut had been slain, and that Allah had taken from them their vigour and their courage. “The Feringhis are *lachar*<sup>[1]</sup>!” was the cry.

[1] helpless.

And the populace and the sepoys around Delhi joined their brethren from Meerut, proclaiming Bahadur Shah, the old gentleman poet, “Emperor of all India”; they massacred the fifty English men and women in the city, and before many days had passed most of the regiments throughout Bengal and the Punjab were on the brink of mutiny, hesitating to take the plunge. Had there been at Meerut on that fatal Sunday a Lawrence or an Edwardes, a Cotton, Nicholson, or Neill, the revolt might have been crushed with one decisive blow.

So the news brought to our friends at Aurungpore was too true. Through the whole land, from Peshawur to Calcutta, spread the black terror, and though most officers of sepoy regiments trusted their own particular corps, each feared lest other regiments should throw off their allegiance and murder without remorse not only the officers, but the Christian women and children of the towns.

The colonel and officers of the 193rd never doubted that their beloved regiment would prove true to its salt, for the most friendly feeling existed between officers and men. Some of the former had more than once risked their lives for their men, and in return several of the sepoys had rescued their officers from situations of great peril by their pluck and devotion.

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Terrible as were many of the acts committed by the mutineers, we must not consider them as so many fiends in the shape of men, nor must we believe that their delight was to shed human blood. In 1857 the sepoy was a madman inflamed with rage and bitter hatred against those whom he mistakenly considered his oppressors; and many who suffered most from his fury were in truth his best friends and well-wishers.

Most inconsistent were his actions, and his character was a mass of contradictions. He was simple and credulous as a child, and at the same time crafty and designing; his cruelty was frequently evident, and never more so than in this terrible year, yet as a rule he was gentle and kindly. It was no uncommon sight for the hardened sepoy warrior to be found watching beside his English officer’s sick-bed, and no woman could be a more gentle nurse; he was devoted to his sahib’s children, and loved to make them happy. Generally he was languid and indolent, yet capable of being roused to passionate energy; at times light-hearted and cheerful, at times depressed and given to brooding over his wrongs, both real and fancied. Mutinies had not been unknown before the year 1857, but on previous occasions the outbreaks had resembled the naughtiness of a child, and like a child the sepoy usually injured himself more than others.

Though no condemnation of those who participated in the murdering of women and children can be too severe, yet we must not paint the sepoy in colours too black. Let us try to put ourselves in his place, and see what it meant. Suppose that he honestly believed that the English were seeking his destruction, can we not imagine his despair and panic? Many of the mutineers, however, believed the explanations of their English officers, and felt assured that the cartridge-paper contained no offensive matter, and these men tried to put everything right. And what was the result? Their comrades believed that these sensible sepoys had sold themselves to the Feringhis; they were taunted and jeered at as Christians; they became outcasts, and none would eat with them. Not only did their fellow-soldiers shun them, but also their parents and brethren and the people of the village who used to crowd round and bow before them when they visited their homes. They all refused friendship and connection with the outcasts; the letters written home were never answered, and no wonder that these well-meaning fellows were terror-stricken

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at the thought of their shameful position, and cursed the English and their unclean ways that had brought this to pass.

Three days after the Meerut revolt Colonel Woodburn addressed his men on the subject of the crisis. Assuring them of the mighty power of England, and of the terrible punishment that would be meted out to rebels, he reminded them of their glorious regimental history, and asked if they would willingly tarnish their good name. Ted's heart glowed as he listened to the stirring speech, and the men broke into a shout of enthusiasm, cheered their colonel, and Pir Baksh, stepping forward, expressed their willingness to march against the mutineers. At mess the officers congratulated one another, overjoyed at the splendid spirit animating those under their command.

With renewed courage and in the highest spirits they buckled on their swords for the next morning's parade.

"I hope we shall get orders to march against the mutineers," Ted confided to Paterson as they walked towards the parade-ground in front of the arsenal.

"And what would happen to our countrymen and country-women at Aurungpore if the regiment left?" his chum asked with a laugh. "Would you make the rebels a gift of the fort and arsenal?"

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Ted was crestfallen.

"Oh! I'd forgotten them," he replied. "Still, half the regiment would be enough to defend the town. I'm jolly glad our men are showing such a good spirit, but I'm afraid for Jim and Spencer. I don't suppose their Guides are likely to remain loyal very long."

"I've been thinking of them all morning," Alec observed musingly, "and of all Spencer was telling us the night he was here. I don't think there's much doubt but that those fellows will sell themselves to the highest bidder, and he will be the emperor at Delhi. They may pull through all right though, if they are within reach of Nicholson. He and Edwardes will be towers of strength along the frontier."

"Don't it make you mad to think of the way they bungled it at Meerut? Whoever was responsible for such a fiasco ought to be kicked out of the army."

"Now, Ted Russell, you know nothing about it," the cautious Scot reproachfully asserted. "It's very easy to say afterwards what ought to have been done, but we don't know all the circumstances. Here's the colonel. He's a fine-looking man, and no wonder the sepoy are proud of him."

The companies were called to attention, numbered, and wheeled into line. Before the wheel was completed a sepoy suddenly levelled his musket and pulled the trigger. Two officers at once rushed towards the would-be assassin, but were met by the fire of some twenty men of the same company, and fell riddled with bullets.

One-half of the sepoy stood irresolute—some fingering their triggers menacingly; others, taken by surprise, screamed, "No, no, we must not slay our officers!"

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"Nay, slay them all!" roared a subadar, "whether we love them or not! If we do not kill them they will persuade us against our will!"

And a shrill clamour approved the advice.

Still five hundred men hesitated. Some of the waverers shouted to the Englishmen, urging them to run. It was as though they had been bitten by a mad dog, and, while yet sane, knowing that the poison was working in their veins, they wished to save bloodshed before the madness should overpower them and render them pitiless.

Almost broken-hearted by this proof that his trusted regiment had mutined, Colonel Woodburn lifted up his voice in a last appeal to their loyalty. Before he had spoken a dozen words, Pir Baksh—dreading lest the colonel's influence should wreck his plans, even when success seemed assured—stepped behind a crowd of gesticulating sepoy and took deliberate aim.

Colonel Woodburn fell from his horse grievously wounded, and Ted and one of the subalterns dashed forward to convey him to a place of safety. Captain Markham placed himself at the head of his own hundred men and appealed to them, for the sake of all they had gone through together, to remain loyal and true. His company, composed of Hindustanis—mostly Rajputs—stood silent and puzzled, undecided how to act, when shots from some Mohammedans of the flank company answered his appeal, and the well-loved captain fell.

There was no longer any indecision among Markham's Rajputs. Pity for the murdered officer who had done so much for them, anger that he should be shot by the Moslems whom they did not love, these feelings turned the scale. Hastily closing round their captain they guarded his body and menaced the mutineers. The remaining officers, seeing one faithful company, placed themselves at its head, and called on the other Hindus to remain loyal and fight the Mussulmans. But the madness had worked by now: all the rest cast in their lot with the murderers, and, firing a few shots at Englishmen and faithful sepoy, whom they dared not charge, so great was still the influence of the officers, they rushed off to loot the town and shops.

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Including Markham, three officers were killed and two badly wounded, two of the slain being brother ensigns of Ted—poor little “griffins”, who had been out but a few months.

Then swift as lightning came the thought, “What of the women and children and civilians?” The appearance of the revolted sepoy would be the signal for all the *budmashes* of the *bazar* to join in the rioting and murder.

A noise of firing and a babel of fiendish yells from the English quarter of the town, in close proximity to the fort, told their own tale. The white residents were being attacked!

“Lieutenant Lowthian,” commanded the major, “remain here with Ensigns Tynan and Russell and about twenty men! We’ll take our wounded with us, the women will attend to them; and when we’ve cleared the streets we’ll bring the civilians into the fort.”

Exhorting the faithful Rajputs to remain true to their salt and so win eternal fame, the major ordered bayonets to be fixed, and headed the charge down the street, the wounded with their guard bringing up the rear.

A disorderly crowd of sepoy and riff-raff of the town had assembled in front of the large house of Sir Arthur Fletcher, the Commissioner of the district. The windows were being fired into and the doors battered down, in spite of a determined resistance from the inmates. Into the crowd charged the loyal sepoy. Firing a single volley at close quarters they at once let the rioters taste cold steel, and beneath the gallant major’s sword fell more than one of the ringleaders.

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Major Munro was known as one of the strongest officers and best swordsmen in the army, and the mob gave back before his flashing steel and the glistening bayonets of his followers. But as the sepoy recoiled, a number of Wahabis, showering curses upon the faint-hearted, poured with knives and swords down upon the little band. The leader was all but lost. Separating him from his men, half a dozen fanatics set on him at once, yelling triumphantly. But the two who first came within reach of that mighty arm quickly lay in the dust; the third received the point in his heart, and a fourth was cloven almost in twain.

Aghast at the fate of their comrades the others faltered. But Munro did not wait to be attacked; stepping over the prostrate bodies he followed up the advantage gained, and the pandies shrank from that fatal sword. Joining forces once more, the sturdy band reached the house, and, standing with backs to the wall, they poured volley after volley—irregularly, but coolly and rapidly—into the dense, disorganized rabble, until at length the barricades were taken from the door, and one by one they were admitted.

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## CHAPTER VIII

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### The Fight in the Arsenal

“They are having a hard fight for it,” Ted observed to Lieutenant Lowthian. They stood on the walls that surrounded the courtyard of the fort, watching the progress of their comrades through the crowded streets. Lowthian nodded, but, absorbed by the struggle, made no reply.

“Yes, and they’ve left us here to be killed like rabbits,” muttered Tynan.

“Shut up! Don’t whine!” Lowthian scornfully exhorted him.

Ted’s anxiety had so far been largely centred in the safety of Ethel Woodburn, the charge placed under his protection; and having rightly guessed that the Commissioner’s house, surrounded by the clamouring mob, through whose masses Munro was breaking his way, contained the Europeans of Aurungpore, a load was lifted from his mind. The rebels had quitted the immediate vicinity of the fort, and the comparative tranquillity close at hand had made him forget his own danger. Tynan’s remark and Lowthian’s curtness startled him.

“They won’t be long in escorting the women here,” he cheerfully opined. “And a hundred of us ought to hold this place easily.”

“Yes, but twenty cannot,” Tynan sneered. “If it’s as much as Munro can do to force his way through now, how’s he going to manage it with a crowd of women to protect?”

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Tynan had gauged the situation more correctly than Ted. Reckoning overmuch on the prestige of British arms, Munro had calculated that the removal of the civilians to the fort would be an easy matter. Most of the disloyal sepoy had disappeared, having scattered in order to loot the shops and the European bungalows. They were now returning by twos and threes, some laden with plunder, others savage and sullen through disappointment, having found the bungalows deserted and the coveted jewels and money saved from their clutches.

“Here comes that scoundrel Pir Baksh,” said Lowthian as the Moslem subadar appeared on the scene. He began to shout some commands unintelligible to the watchers on the walls, and soon succeeded in forming the scattered groups into a dense throng.



"I always detested that fellow," Lowthian continued, "and I believe he's at the bottom of this dastardly business."

"He's got Miss Woodburn's horse too!" Ted cried in an excited voice, as he recognized the bay. "Look! he's pointing towards the fort It's our turn now!"

Pir Baksh was haranguing the sepoy, gesticulating wildly, first towards the strong white building in which the Europeans had taken shelter, and then in the direction of the frowning fortress whose guns commanded Aurungpore, and the air was filled with shouts of "Din, Din, Allah Akbar!"<sup>[1]</sup>

[1] "The Faith," or "For our Faith, God is Great."

"They're coming at us," Tynan whispered. There was no need to whisper, for the fact was only too evident. The impressive nature of the peril had made him unconsciously lower his voice.

"Are the guns loaded?" he added, nodding towards the half-dozen cannon, whose grim black muzzles stared through the embrasures.

"No, and it would take us an hour to load them," Lowthian replied.

As a measure of precaution, all munitions for the cannon had been stored within the arsenal.

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The Rajputs on the bastions that flanked the main gate began to fire wildly as the rebels approached within range.

"Steady, men, steady!" the commandant ordered. "Each cover his man before he fires! That's the way! Well aimed, Ambar Singh!"

The loyal sepoy had pulled themselves together, and there was no further waste of ammunition. Rebel after rebel rolled over in the dust or limped into cover, and the rush was checked. The assailants slowly backed away from the walls, each man trying to dodge behind his neighbour to keep a shield before him as he took aim. Ted looked for Pir Baksh, but that astute pandy, having no intention of exposing himself so prominently on horseback, had dismounted, and was lost amid the mob.

At last the ensign marked his quarry. For a second's space the ringleader had come into view to urge his reluctant hordes to the assault. Hastily covering him, Ted pulled the trigger. A rebel fell, but it was not Pir Baksh. Like the coward he was, he had skipped into safety behind a group of sepoy, and now the front ranks of the mutineers had pressed back upon the rearmost until all were beyond effective range. Brown Bess could not be trusted to carry far.

"If there is one of the curs I should like to kill it's that traitor Pir Baksh!" Tynan declared with an oath. "I hope I'll live to see him hanged! It was he who shot the colonel; I saw him."

"Are you sure of that?" Lowthian and Ted both asked.

"As sure as that I am here.—What are they up to now?"

Baffled for a moment, the subadar had abandoned the idea of a direct assault, and was seen to be exhorting the men to some new method of attack, for the pandies presently dispersed right and left. A hot fire was still kept up through the windows of Fletcher's house. Lowthian quietly gave an order.

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"Tynan, take eight men to the southern bastion, and don't show yourselves until you can strike home. Dal Singh, you keep watch from the north-west tower, and give the alarm if they gather in that direction."

A number of the sepoy were reassembling at the top of the main street where it debouched into the open space facing the main gate. Ted and Lowthian exchanged a meaning look as they perceived that some had brought short ladders and were busily lashing them together.

"If they've any grit they'll soon be over the walls," the senior whispered. "Ha! they mean to attack Tynan's post first."

Under the impression that the garrison was too weak to be distributed, some hundred rebels with a ladder made a dash for the southern wall of the courtyard, keeping out of range from the main gate as they ran. They were within twenty paces when Tynan opened fire. Still they kept on, and planted the ladder against the wall. A second volley rang out, and the pandies hesitated, for the fire had been concentrated on the ladder-bearers, and those who were nearest to them edged farther away, pressing against the walls. They reasoned that it was death to touch the ladder, and many of their comrades were already dead. But by now another rush had been made for the main gate, and though a dozen fell in the assault, the sepoy were more in earnest and they thirsted for revenge. Two of the Rajputs were knocked over, and Pir Baksh yelled gleefully as he planted a bullet in Lowthian's shoulder.

Still the fort was not yet won. Encouraged by the resolute bearing of their officers, the loyal men continued to fire coolly and rapidly; and the mutineers lacked the inspiration of a leader ready to sacrifice himself for their cause. They again retired out of range, and the cheer raised by the Rajputs at the main gate was echoed back by Tynan's men.

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That cheer was ill-timed. Hardly had it died away before an answering yell from the north,

savage as a war-whoop, chilled the blood in their veins, for it came from inside the courtyard! A scaling-party had made the circuit, and were already beneath the north-western bastion when Dal Singh reached his post. He looked forth, and before he could give the alarm a bullet struck him in the forehead, the single distant report passing unnoticed amid the noise of battle.

"Inside the fort, lads!" Lowthian shouted. "All together!"

The garrison hastily descended, and, joining forces, charged across the courtyard to escape being cut off. But the rebels were the nearer, and should even one or two of them enter first and bar the door, the garrison was lost. In ten minutes there would be a couple of hundred sepoy inside the courtyard.

One rebel was almost in. Ted stopped, flung his musket to his shoulder, and the man toppled over. Four more pandies were close upon his heels. As the leader fell, the hindmost of these, dreading the same fate, looked back over his shoulder. A trifling incident, yet that glance cost him dear, and was worth untold gold to the white-faces in Aurungpore. For as the fellow turned he unconsciously checked his pace, and a lean Rajput, straining every nerve, closed with the faint-hearted traitor before the entrance could be gained. A bayonet-thrust, a scream, and the wretch staggered forward and fell upon his face.

But the other three were inside, and so was Karan Singh the Rajput, alone with his back to the door, cut off from his comrades. A barrier of some thirty exultant rebels had thrust themselves in front, and ladders were even now being set up against the walls by the main gate. If the thirty pandies could keep the loyalists at bay for another five minutes they would all be butchered like goats at the Dasher Festival. Then came the clang of steel, as bayonet crossed bayonet; the three officers emptied and reloaded their pistols, and a yard or two was gained.

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Suddenly Ted dodged to the right, and darted at full speed round the pack of sepoy, as a three-quarter back, smartly fed by the half who has picked up the ball from beneath the feet of the scrummagers, circles round his opponents before they know what has happened. He had caught a glimpse of the plucky Karan Singh maintaining the unequal combat, and the Rajput was sore wounded though one of the pandies had fallen to his bayonet.

While still a few strides from the doorway, Ted Russell witnessed the death of the Hindu hero. As one sepoy kept Karan Singh at bay the other managed to reload and let fly, the muzzle barely a foot from the Rajput's breast. The brave man dropped like a log, and his body fell across the threshold. Though they hastily thrust the corpse aside, Ted was upon them before the heavy door could be closed.

The enemy had not dared to pursue the ensign, fearing to turn their backs lest the British should be let in. His pistol was empty and his musket had been cast aside. One of the sepoy lunged. Ted skipped aside, and, turning on his heel, struck wildly at the other's bayonet that was darting towards his chest. The weapon was turned aside, but though his tunic alone was ripped and he himself was untouched, his cherished sword had broken off at the hilt, and he was disarmed.

For the fraction of a second he stood helpless. So lightning-like is thought, that he had time to long for a kick at the slovenly workman who had turned out a weapon as untrustworthy as himself.

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"Quick! Close the door, Bakir Khan, while I slay the whelp!"

Ted swerved, grasped the speaker's musket-barrel with his left, and with his right hammered the face of the bewildered sepoy, who howled, but held on to the weapon. The iron-clamped door slammed and the heavy bolts groaned as Bakir Khan shot them home and turned to assist his comrade. Ted tugged at the musket with all his strength, and suddenly saw at his feet the firearm of the dead pandy. He swooped down, seized the weapon, and jumped backwards just in time, as the bayonet-point flashed harmlessly in front.

A loud pounding of musket-stocks upon the door announced that Lowthian's handful had broken through, or else had all been slain. For an instant the sound stayed the fight inside. Was he alone left after all? Or did it mean that, could he open the door before numbers overwhelmed them, they might all be saved? Hope lent him strength. There was no bayonet to his new weapon, so he gripped it by the muzzle, and, swinging it above his head, he knocked the Brown Bess out of Bakir Khan's hand as that false sepoy made a second lunge. Again he brought the butt-end down, this time with a thud upon the head of Bakir Khan. The second pandy recoiled, still half-dazed by the blows from Ted's sword-hilt. There was no way of escape for him, however, and he sprang like a tiger-cat at the ensign. A third time the musket was swung aloft, and the sepoy reeled and toppled over, stunned.

Ted sprang to the door, and had drawn one of the bolts when a wild fear took hold of him. Who were on the other side? In all probability they were rebels thirsting for English blood, and why should he let them in? Through the thick door he seemed to see them, pitiless as famished wolves. Why not hide in the vast arsenal and slip out at night?

In less than a second such thoughts had flashed through his mind before he recollected that duty bade him take the risk. The last bolt was shot back; he sprang aside, ready for a charge as the door swung back, and gave a gasp of relief as Tynan and his Rajputs dashed inside.

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At their heels came the rebels, and a few got through before Ted and Ambar Singh could close

and bar the door. The fight inside the passage was soon over, and the Rajputs sank upon the floor and gasped for breath.

Barely five minutes had sped since Karan Singh's body had fallen across the threshold, yet it seemed many hours. Ted could hardly realize that the main body of assailants under Pir Baksh had only just succeeded in storming the walls (for they had hesitated, fearing a trap) as he cracked the skull of Bakir Khan. Had that fourth sepoy not looked back the arsenal would have been lost.

"Lowthian's done for, I'm afraid!" panted Tynan.

Following his gaze, Ted saw that the Rajputs had brought their commandant in. He knelt down by the side of his friend and found Tynan's surmise only too true, for Lieutenant Lowthian had already breathed his last.

"Shot just as we reached the doorway," Tynan explained; "and half a dozen men killed or badly wounded. What must we do, Russell? They can't get in except through that door, can they?"

"It won't take long to batter the door down if they shape," Ted replied. "Luckily we've heaps of ammunition here, and any number of muskets. Look, this room off the passage commands the door, so set two or three men to bring up firearms and we'll load a few dozen."

Before Ted had finished speaking, the spirited Rajputs were emptying their muskets through the narrow slits that loop-holed the thick walls, and the rebels who had been clustering round the door, vainly attempting to batter it down, left the spot in a hurry—at least all did who were able. Ted then posted a couple of men to watch the north-western face of the building and give the alarm if necessary. Blood had been flowing freely down the ensign's face, and he now found time to staunch it. He was not sure when he had received the wound, but at some time or other during the struggle in the passage a bayonet-point had torn the skin from mouth to ear.

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The lull in the storm lasted for nearly an hour. Many of the pandies contemptuously flouted the commands of their officers, and, giving up the attack on the fort, began to seek fresh plunder in the town, or joined in the half-hearted attempts to render the English house untenable. The remainder of the force, gathered together by Pir Baksh, kept up a long-range fire through the loopholes, in the hope that some bullets might find their billets.

"Why don't Munro come to the rescue?" Harry Tynan bitterly demanded. "With eighty men he could break through this gang of cowards, if only he had the pluck to try."

"He can't," Ted retorted; "they're penned in there like sheep. And how could he break through with nearly a dozen women and kids to protect? Would you have him leave them to their fate?"

"Half his men could do it."

"Not they—nor twice his whole force. It's a soldier's risk that we bargained for when we took our commissions. We may win through yet; and if not, we must just stick to it as long as we can. Well, what's the matter now, havildar?"

Ambar Singh had left his post.

"The dogs are about to make a rush, Ensign Sahib. They have brought logs and beams and mean to batter down the door. Listen! They are volley-firing to keep us from the loopholes."

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The fusillade had suddenly redoubled—steady volleys this time—and a hail of lead pattered against the walls, and a few bullets smacked against the sides of the slits and cannoned shapeless into the room.

"Quick, upstairs, you three!" Ted cried. "Take as many muskets as you can carry and fire rapidly!"

Three sepoy's nodded significantly and ran up the stairs. In another moment a succession of reports from above announced that they understood their business. As our hero had intended, the rebels jumped at the conclusion that their fire having become too hot, the garrison had shifted, so they changed their aim.

Instantly the abandoned loopholes were occupied, just as two parties, each of six or eight men bearing improvised battering-rams, charged the door at full speed. Crack went eight muskets together, and half a dozen fell. Fresh firearms were handed to the marksmen, and the logs were dropped as the few survivors scuttled away. For a third time the reports rang out, and only one of the log-carriers rejoined his comrades.

"Down, men!" Ted gave warning, as the rebels savagely changed their aim once more and swept the lower embrasures with their fire. One poor fellow was not quite quick enough. Before he could duck a bullet had entered his forehead. Setting aside the two Rajputs who were dangerously wounded, there were now twelve sepoy's and two English lads to defend the place, and of these fourteen five were wounded.

"Curse the bloodthirsty ruffians!" Tynan hissed.

His blood was up. Springing to a loophole he fired twice, bringing down a man each time.

"Be careful," Ted cautioned him. "That won't pay."

"The sooner it's over the better," Tynan replied, but took the advice all the same.

The hostile fire gradually slackened, and the garrison were shortly enabled to watch the proceedings of their adversaries. They could see Pir Baksh vainly exhorting the mutineers to make a second attempt. But the sepoy's shook their heads. The danger was too great, or why did not Pir Baksh himself lead them, they asked. Their English officers were wont to share the danger with the sepoy's, but he, Pir Baksh, was careful to keep out of range whenever he sent them forward. No, they preferred to wait for night, when the risk would be small.

Judging that they would be safe for another hour at least, the two Englishmen ordered food to be prepared. They anticipated that the crisis would come with the sunset, and strength must be kept up.

"What are you grinning at?" asked Tynan, as they sat cross-legged over the meal.

"I was thinking what a rummy go it is," Ted replied, "that we two of all the officers should be here together. We haven't been friends, Tynan, but if ever we get out of this hole I hope we will be. And if we don't get out, I trust we can die without any bad feeling between us. Shake hands on it, old chap."

Tynan leant forward to meet the proffered hand.

"All right, Russell! I'm agreeable. It ain't my fault that we've not been friends."

This was not a very gracious speech, and Ted's ardour was damped. He shook hands, however, saying:

"We must back one another up to-day."

"Right! But look here, you mustn't forget that I'm senior officer here. You've been giving orders pretty freely."

"Because you didn't seem ready with any suggestions."

"It's my turn now, remember," Tynan asserted in an aggrieved tone; and Ted felt sorry he had spoken, as the other seemed incapable of sinking his personal feelings even at such a time. Unless his senior officer showed more sign of rising to the occasion, he determined to continue to issue orders.

Though the magazine at Aurungpore was not a large one, its capture would prove an enormous boon to the rebel cause, for therein was stored a quantity of ammunition and material of war. Armed therewith, all the rabble of the town would soon be equipped as soldiers, and our ensign understood what would then become of his friends and comrades, and above all of his brother's sweetheart. A shiver ran down his spine as he remembered Jim's parting whisper, and there rose before him the picture of the girl who had saved his life and whom he secretly adored. He vowed to do his duty manfully, and never to despair while there remained the least hope of preventing the ravening wolves outside from gaining access to the stores.

"What the deuce are you up to now?" Tynan broke in.

The senior ensign had been regarding the junior's meditations with considerable curiosity, wondering how he could become so absorbed at so critical a time. His query had been called forth by a sudden change of expression that had overspread his comrade's features. Ted's eyes had opened wide, and he had given an almost imperceptible gasp, sure signs that some startling idea had come upon him unawares.

"What is it, Russell?" Tynan repeated.

"Oh, nothing, nothing!" Ted hastily assured him. "I was just thinking what an awful business this is."

"Has that only just occurred to you?" his comrade sullenly inquired, convinced that Ted was keeping something back.

And so he was. Not that he wished to mislead his brother officer but rather because the idea that had so unceremoniously thrust itself in front of him, suggested an action so appalling as almost to stupefy him. He must think, think, think. Could he bring himself to do it? Ought he to do it?

Hardly the place or time this for quiet meditation, for the weighing of pros and cons. One of the watchers signalled that the pandies had again lost patience, and to confirm his words the heavy fusillade recommenced, and the ensign ceased to ponder and began to act. The rebels had now got the range with deadly accuracy, and unless he courted death, none of the garrison dared return the fire.

Our hero did make one such attempt, and reduced the number of one of the battering-crews. But before he could get in a second shot the muzzle of his musket was struck and dented, and a bullet whistled through his hair, grazing the skin. He crouched down and put his hand to his head, fearing he was done for. A soft thud and rattle beside him announced the fall of a sepoy who had followed the rash example with fatal courage. Forgetting his own wound the ensign knelt beside the Rajput and raised his head. The poor fellow still breathed but was going fast, and a shudder ran through the boy as the man died in his arms, true to the end.

"Are you hurt?" Tynan asked.

"I'm not quite sure. I don't think so."

"Let me see. Oh, it's only a scratch."

The sepoy in the room above, less hampered by the rebel fire, were answering back to some purpose until they too were silenced, one of their number being mortally wounded. A crash against the stout door seemed to shake the house, and before the vibration ceased another bang was heard. Englishmen and Rajputs were firing hastily whenever an opportunity occurred, but the pandies now held the upper hand. A splintering noise followed the next crash.

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"What can we do, Russell? What can we do?" Tynan cried. "They'll be in in a moment!"

Backed by the strength of half a dozen men the logs crashed once more against the barrier, and the hearts of the garrison were heavy as lead.

"We're not done for yet," Ted stoutly replied. "We must wait for them in the passage. We may yet hold the passage, Ambar Singh; and should we die, men will speak of your deeds from generation to generation."

"We can hold them back for a time, sahib. Come, my children, and thou, Bisesar Rai, and thou, Dwarika Rai, load and pass us the muskets as we lie in the doorway."

Of the twenty-two Rajputs ten were still able to fight, and three others remained alive though sorely wounded. They were now all together, and Ted, Ambar Singh the havildar, and as many others as could crowd in, were lying full length before the wide-arched entrance to the room. From the slowly-yielding door the passage ran straight for a few paces before curving to the right, and an enemy coming round the bend would be at a great disadvantage, for the best marksmen of the garrison waited with ready muskets, their elbows on the threshold, their bodies within the room. Behind them two comrades stood, a loaded musket in each hand, to exchange for the emptied weapons, and beside them knelt Bisesar Rai and Dwarika Rai busily loading the firearms. The pandies could not take aim without coming into full view, but the defenders could fire with a minimum of exposure, and could draw back their heads into safety whenever they saw a musket-barrel pointing at random towards them.

A louder crash, a shrill yell, and a mob of maddened sepoy swept inside and round the bend. Six muskets cracked at once, and the yells changed to howls of dismay. A second volley—not in unison this time, but no less effective—and the sepoy turned and fled. The victory was not to be so easy as they had imagined. Had the garrison been armed as were they, with one Brown Bess apiece and a limited supply of ammunition, it would all have been over long ago they told themselves, but when volley followed volley with such rapidity, it was like facing a regiment. The sepoy were not cowards as a rule, but they knew they were playing a traitor's part. In a good cause, well led, they would have risked the danger, even as the handful of loyal Rajputs were devoting their lives to their duty.

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A nerve-ruining silence, broken only by the moans of the wounded who lay on the floor, followed the shrill outcries. The rebels were baffled but not defeated. Slowly, painfully the minutes dragged, then two black heads showed round the bend, and two spurts of flame flashed out. Before the reports had reached them, Ted and Ambar Singh had pressed their fingers, and two sepoy fell forward on their faces. The defenders were untouched, the rebels having fired at random, and for a while none dared follow their example.

In despair several of the raging mob pushed their musket-barrels round the bend and let fly, in the hope that an occasional bullet out of many might reduce the number of their dogged antagonists. But Ted drew his men back from the doorway until the sepoy were tired of this amusement.

Each rebel urged his neighbour to face the fire of those death-dealing muskets; each man knew that the end was at hand, and preferred to hold himself back that he might share in the plunder. Now that they were no longer a glorious regiment but a mere mob of rebels, none was ready to give his life for the cause. The garrison also knew that the end was drawing near, and were in no way deceived by the momentary calm.

"Hullo!" Ted cried, and stared open-mouthed. "What's that for?"

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A white cloth tied round the barrel of a musket had been poked round the corner.

"A truce, sahibs!" a voice called in Urdu. "We wish to treat with you and save your lives. May I step forward in safety?"

"One man may," Tynan replied, "but he will be a dead man should there be any sign of treachery."

"Sahib, there will be none; I give my word of honour."

So saying, Pir Baksh stepped round the bend, armed only with a smile that he doubtless intended to be ingratiating.

"Ye are gallant warriors," he began, when Ted, interrupting the flow of words, ordered the rascal to speak in English, not Urdu. The subadar showed the whites of his eyes as he smiled, and grimly shook his head. For the benefit of the Rajputs he resumed in the vernacular:

"Ye cannot hope to hold out much longer, so let there be no further bloodshed. Surrender the fort and we will spare your lives."

"What do you think, Russell?" Tynan hurriedly whispered. "Do you believe they mean it?"

"Not they!" was Ted's scornful reply.

"Perhaps they do, though. I'll ask him what they intend to do with us."

"Why, you can't mean to give up the magazine under any conditions?" our astonished ensign demanded, his eyes contracting as he stared at his senior officer.

"They'll have it all the same if they kill us, though," Tynan muttered, lowering his eyes, unable to meet his comrade's gaze. "So what's the odds. May as well save our lives while there's a chance."

He thereupon made answer to the jemadar.

"If we surrender, what will you do with us?"

"We will keep you captive, but promise you your lives," came the prompt reply.

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"Will you allow us to join our friends over yonder? If not, we shall still fight, and we are not so helpless as you think." Tynan was not quite a coward, and he used the threat with some show of spirit.

"I cannot promise that without consulting my friends."

So saying, the subadar retired for further instructions. Ted had had time for reflection.

"Tynan," he announced, "I sha'n't agree to surrender. We've no right to do it! Look what a lift it would give them if they could get all these arms and ammunition."

Our ensign had quite made up his mind what to do. If his death would make more secure the position of his comrades in the town he was prepared to die. There was satisfaction in the reflection that Ethel Woodburn would know that he had been staunch to the last. Poor Tynan had no friends among the officers of his corps, and consequently there was nothing to uplift his soul above the fear of death, and he had clutched eagerly at the straw of hope held out by Pir Baksh.

"Well, they'll get it all the same after they've done for us," he bitterly replied. "May as well live to fight another day. I was a fool ever to come to this accursed land. What right had Munro to leave us here?"

Before Ted could reply the white flag was thrust round the corner and the subadar returned.

"We agree to what you ask," said he. "We will permit you to rejoin your friends in safety."

"I tell you I shall not agree to surrender," the junior ensign angrily declared.

"You fool! What's the good of holding out any longer? Well, I shall surrender, and I'm chief here."

"You're not! You're under Munro's orders, and those were to hold the fort until he sends help. If you attempt to surrender you're a traitor."

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Ted turned to Ambar Singh and the sepoy.

"Do not listen to the dogs," said he. "Let us fight to the end, as your forefathers did against the Moguls. They are not to be trusted; they will assuredly slay us if we yield."

The sepoy stoutly assented. They had little faith in the Mohammedans, who were seeking their lives,—the men who had murdered Markham Sahib.

"You are right, sahib," said the havildar, "and we will fight by your side. That low-caste hound," pointing to Pir Baksh, "is afraid of us, and wishes to disarm us with soft words, but we know him."

Tynan saw his authority taken from him, the sepoy understanding and looking to Ted as their leader.

"How dare you?" he hotly demanded.

"Oh, go away! You've nothing to do with this business." Ted sneered, not too generously, for Tynan had disgusted him. With the same breath he ordered Pir Baksh to clear away, and the firing recommenced.

The time had come for him to act upon the resolve he had made, a resolve to sacrifice himself and his already-doomed handful, rather than allow the capture of the stores to endanger the safety of his countrymen. The idea of blowing up the magazine had come upon him suddenly as he remembered the news that had arrived yesterday from Delhi,—how Lieutenant Willoughby and his nine heroes had blown up the immense arsenal there and destroyed hundreds of rebels.

The entrance to the magazine was through the room in which they lay. The rebels were quiet, plotting some new move, no doubt, so, leaving the trusty Ambar Singh in charge, Ted proceeded to the spot and began to lay a train of powder to connect the barrels with their post. Before the

others had guessed his intention he had brought the train within the room, and the white-faced senior ensign, who had lost by now the last remnant of his pluck, jabbered incoherently and attempted to interfere, until Ted roughly threatened to blow his brains out. Dazed and trembling the wretched boy shifted as far as he could from the black trail. The Rajputs looked on with frightened eyes, half-paralysed by the shock of this new terror; and Dwarika Rai fell on his knees and begged the ensign to have mercy, for such a fate meant more than death to these Hindus.

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For a moment the boy's heart failed him; the thought was too awful. To be blown into a hundred pieces, how terrible it seemed! And what right had he to condemn these faithful men to such a death?

Then out spake the havildar.

"If we have to die, let us die like men. Fire the train, sahib!"

"Nay, not yet. Our duty is to stand by our post until the last. No man must leave the room, though."

He lighted a candle and placed it within easy reach, that the flame might be ready on the shortest notice.

"Ha!" whispered Ambar Singh, and there was a reckless note in his voice. "The jackals are cunning. See!"

Round the bend was pushed forward a large sack full of sand, then another; and soon a third filled up the space. As the last was clumsily poked into its place between the others it tottered and overbalanced, and a couple of pandies leant forward to lift it up. Two muskets spat forth flame and the rebels rolled over in a heap, upsetting another sack. Quick as thought, as the sepoys were engaged in pulling their wounded comrades back, Ted ran with light steps down the passage, keeping close to the farther wall, and seizing a sack with either hand, dragged them away before the amazed mutineers had time to fire.

To make doubly sure of his safety Ambar Singh and his men let fly, and the bullets, sweeping across the bend, covered the lad's return. Amid the cheers of the loyalists the bags were propped in the doorway to serve as a rampart for them, and they began to mock the traitors.

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But this triumph could merely put off the evil moment. In another half-hour fresh sand-bags had been brought in, and before long the pandies were in a position to command the doorway. As the news spread that the end was near the mob of sepoys increased, and Ted smiled to himself. He addressed the Rajputs:

"You have done your duty in a manner worthy of your ancestors, and I am going to do mine. Run for your lives!"

"No, Russell, you sha'n't!" cried Tynan, whose nerve had completely broken down. "I surrender,—Pir Baksh, I surrender!" He tried to snatch the light from his comrade's hand. Ted covered him with his pistol, and, pointing across the passage, said simply:

"Run for your life!"

Hot all over, his fingers tingling and his head ringing—partly dread of the horror and partly a glorious exultation—the boy dropped the lighted candle on the thin trail of powder, and darted from the room as a horde of sepoys rushed in.

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## CHAPTER IX

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### Defence of the Commissioner's House

When Major Munro's eighty officers and men arrived inside the house of refuge, they found that the few civilians, ladies, and children of Aurungpore had all escaped thereto, having been warned in time. At the first sign of outbreak they had found access to the fort impossible, and had taken refuge in the Commissioner's house, the largest and strongest in the town, situated within easy reach of all the European bungalows, and close to the fort itself. They were in sore plight when the soldiers forced their way in—another half-hour would have been too late.

From roof, loophole, and sheltered parapet blazed the muskets of the Rajputs, lending their aid to the rifles of the English gentlemen, and the mob drew back, raging furiously, but afraid to strike at close quarters. The sad story was told; dry-eyed but heavy-hearted the residents heard of the murder of their friends. The wounded men were speedily given every possible assistance, and the ladies left nothing undone to alleviate their pain. To tend the sufferers was their first care, but the great-hearted Englishwomen insisted on taking their share in the defence, refusing to leave the posts of danger for the comparative safety of the inner rooms whilst there were rifles and muskets to load and hand to the marksmen.

Greatly to his dismay Munro found it quite impossible to send aid to the little garrison of the fort, the route being blocked by hundreds of fanatical savages. If he should despatch even half his

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command to break their way through they would be destroyed, and the remaining half would fall an easy prey to the triumphant rebels.

The continued fusillade from the direction of the fort told him that the handful of defenders he had left behind was being hotly assailed, and he sadly feared that he had left them there to die. Bitterly the major regretted his error. Such concentrated fury on the part of the inhabitants had never been anticipated; he had felt sure of clearing the street and bringing the party safely back, and he had made a mistake.

Colonel Woodburn's wound, though serious, was not dangerous, and before long Ethel was able to leave him for a short time. Whilst the soldiers were breaking their way through the crowd, she had seen her father carried in their midst, and had eyes for none but him. Now she looked around for Ted and could not see him.

"Where is Ted Russell, Major Munro? He's not—surely he has not been murdered!"

Munro was agitated, and showed it.

"He's in the fort, Ethel; I left Lowthian, Tynan, and Russell with a few sepoy to guard it, and they're being attacked. Listen! I ought not to have left 'em. Leigh," he exclaimed, turning to an officer beside him, "is there nothing to be done? Can we leave those fellows to die? And if the fort is captured there is no escape for us!"

Lieutenant Leigh shook his head.

"We are helpless, sir. If we make a sortie not one of us would reach the fort, and the women would be left without protectors."

Still the rattle of musketry kept up, and the inmates listened with troubled hearts for the firing to cease—the signal of the capture of the fort and the death of its garrison.

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"It's stopped!" groaned Sir Arthur Fletcher, and a shudder ran through the house.

Ethel Woodburn turned pale, shuddered, and gripped the table for support. Ted Russell murdered by those savages! She recalled the ensign's merry looks and honest nature, and realized what a place the boy had won in her heart. Could it be possible that she would never see him again? How terribly cut up Jim would be!

Jim! Aye, what of him? If her own trusted, well-tryed regiment could so suddenly transform itself into a horde of fiends, what might not have happened to the Guides, that collection of outlaws and robbers? In all probability her lover had already been murdered. Her grief for Ted gave way to a greater anxiety regarding the fate of her betrothed. She walked aimlessly towards the window and looked out upon the distant mob, her thoughts far away from Aurungpore.

"Miss Woodburn, for heaven's sake come away from the window!" Sir Arthur Fletcher almost shrieked as he planted himself in front of the girl. "They are not firing now, but—"

A bullet crashed through the shattered window, and passing within an inch of the Commissioner's head, flattened itself against the far wall. Ethel awoke and skipped aside, and, seeing that she was safe, Sir Arthur followed suit. She had forgotten her own danger; she had not reflected that, even had the Guides proved true to their salt, nothing seemed less likely than that Jim Russell would ever see her again. She thanked Sir Arthur mechanically, and began to wonder how poor Jim would bear the news of her death. Having no doubt of his great love for her, her grief was more for him than for herself, horrible as the outlook was.

Led by Major Munro, the men grimly went on with their work of strengthening the defences of the house, whilst their picked shots replied to the random firing.

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Suddenly another volley rang out from the direction of the fort; then a second; then the loud irregular firing of the pandies.

"They're not done for yet!" Munro cried. "Thank God, there is still a chance!"

For half an hour the distant firing was heard, and intense anxiety prevailed as it gradually died away. The tension was nerve-shattering; so much so, that a half-hearted attack upon the house came almost as a relief from the suspense. Strong in their defences, they once more beat the rebels back with heavy loss, and another weary period of waiting ensued.

Volley after volley, regular and disciplined as though with blank cartridge on parade, caused their hearts to beat more wildly. What could it mean? The volley was too heavy to have been the work of the little garrison, and so far the traitors had fired independently, as each man thought best, without regard to any word of command. Could help have come?

They looked out towards the parade-ground, and the unconcerned appearance of the groups that moved restlessly up and down destroyed this wild hope. Besides, who could possibly have come to the rescue? They had heard the cracks of the volleys that covered the first rush of the battering crews. Unable to fathom its meaning, they rejoiced therein as a proof that their comrades still held out.

Again a lull, and again an assault upon their own stronghold, directed this time against the rear of the house. For a space they had no time to think of the fort, so hotly were they engaged; but the rabble lacked resolute leaders, and the budmashes would obey no commands. Thirty of



their bravest were slain, and the others sneaked away like a pack of wolves, beaten and cowed. So far the garrison had lost only two men killed and one badly wounded.

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The sun was wheeling slowly downwards beyond the fort, and for a time no sound had been heard save the yells of the excited mob ebbing and flowing through the streets.

"It seems wicked to stay here in safety, Major," Ethel whispered, "and to think of our plucky fellows at the mercy of those fiends."

The major made no reply. For hours that same thought had made him wretched, but he knew better than she how helpless was their own position.

"Could we not make a sortie?" the girl continued. "Might it not be possible, as soon as darkness comes, for us all to make a rush for the fort? We might take them completely by surprise, and once inside, a hundred could hold it for weeks. If only we could get the guns!"

Munro shook his head sadly.

"A hundred to one that we should find the rebels in possession, Ethel," he made answer, "and then all would indeed be lost. But we should never get so far. Here we may hold our own for days—unless indeed the pandies take the fort and are able to load the guns—but not for half an hour in the street with women to protect and wounded men to carry. No, it is not possible; would it were! Believe me, Ethel, there is not a man here but would gladly take the risk if we had only ourselves to think of."

"I know it well," she admitted, "and I know you are right; but it is horrible, horrible to think of, and it is our fault. If we were not here you men could rescue them. That seems so hard."

"Listen!" said Leigh. "I think I hear the sound of firing again. It is very faint."

Everyone listened intently, and Ethel could hear the ticking of her watch. She was the first to break the silence.

"I think I hear it. The sound comes from inside the fort."

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She had hardly spoken the words when the roar of a tremendous explosion filled their ears and almost deafened them. The house shook, and a column of dense smoke rose where the fort had been. They looked at one another with blanched faces and then at the ruin in front. That portion of the fort which contained the magazine was demolished, and some buildings that had partially obstructed their view were dismantled or levelled with the ground. Streams of natives rushed to and fro in wild confusion, shrieking with pain and fear. Masses of timber and masonry fell around, killing numbers in the closely-packed streets, and the scene was one of destruction and desolation.

Major Munro clapped his hand to his thigh; his face glowed with admiration and enthusiasm.

"Lowthian's done that!" he exclaimed. "He's saved the arsenal from their clutches.—Gallant fellows!"

"But what of Ted Russell?" Ethel breathlessly asked. "And of Lieutenant Lowthian and the others?" she added as an afterthought.

Munro hesitated before replying.

"I'm afraid there's little hope for them, my dear Ethel; though they do say that those nearest sometimes escape better than others farther away." This was also an afterthought, added from a weak desire to cheer.

The girl turned away her head to hide her emotion and returned to her father's room. In awed whispers the men discussed the glorious act, and various conjectures were hazarded as to the manner of its doing and the possibility of their comrades' escape.

Away in the west the sun had just vanished below the horizon and darkness set in swiftly. The vicinity of the Commissioner's house seemed deserted, and no fresh attack was made that night. Evidently that bloodthirsty crew was awed and its ardour damped by the appalling vengeance taken by the unbeaten handful. Scores had been killed, and yet more injured, by the force of the explosion.

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They had been taught the lesson that it does not pay to push white men too far, and Munro felt assured that for that night at least the house was safe. Yet he neglected no precaution, and guards were set on every side, whilst the remainder of the garrison were ordered to rest whether they wished to or not. Few could sleep, try as they would, and a loud challenge by one of the sentries at the rear brought men and women flocking to the scene, ready for the fray.

Ethel hastened to the spot, in time to see the door thrown open, and two ragged figures, black with smoke and grime, enter the house. A loud cheer was raised as the door was shut and barricaded.

"Ted!" she joyfully cried. "You, Ted?"

To our hero's embarrassment she stepped forward and kissed his smoke-begrimed countenance.

Yes, Ensign Russell had escaped! Strange to say, he and Havildar Ambar Singh, the other survivor, had been the nearest to the magazine when the explosion occurred, and yet they had escaped its worst effects. The havildar had pluckily waited for the ensign when the others ran for safety, and, as they dashed out of the room, they crashed into the thick of the triumphant pandies.

But no attempt was made to kill them. The rebels had pulled up short as they saw and heard the spluttering powder, wild terror in their eyes; and the foremost tried to back away from the spot. The crush was too great, however, though Ted and Ambar Singh had time to bore their way into the crowd. They remembered no more. When they came to themselves it was dark, and they were lying amid a heap of killed and injured men, with stones and bricks scattered all around. They were both cut and badly bruised, and Ambar Singh's foot was crushed. In the darkness they had been able to steal away, stumbling over dead bodies and wrecked masonry, until they found themselves in the open. So great was the awe that had come upon the rebels that the neighbourhood was deserted, so they crept stealthily through the streets, the havildar nearly dead with pain. Accosted once or twice, Ambar Singh had answered, passing himself and his companion off as rebels.

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As Ted was speaking the plucky Rajput sergeant fainted away, and was carried to the hospital-room. Munro interrupted the congratulations and showers of questions by ordering everyone to lie down again, except the guards. Ted at least was not sorry to obey the command.

Next day he told the tale of the defence of the fort, of the death of Lowthian, and of the heroism of Ambar Singh and his Rajputs. Men and women forgot their own danger for a space, and crowded round to listen to the ensign's story. No need to say that he was silent respecting Tynan's willingness to surrender to Pir Baksh. He used the word "we", not "I", throughout.

"But who first thought of destroying the magazine?" asked the commandant. "You say 'we' decided to do it. The thought would not occur to both Tynan and yourself at once."

Ted admitted that the plan was his; also, in reply to the next question, that it was he who had fired the train.

"But it was Tynan's job as senior officer to do that."

"Well, you see, sir, I was the one to—to suggest it; so it was only fair that I should carry it out."

"Humph!" said the major, who had his own opinion about the affair.

"You're a plucky fellow, Russell, and it's possible that you've saved us all. The pandies seem thoroughly disheartened to-day."

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Paterson passed his arm through Ted's and whispered:

"Well done, old man! I—I can't say what I think about it;" and as he caught Ethel's glance of admiration, approval, and affection there was no prouder officer in all India than Ensign Russell.

"I hope that rascal Pir Baksh has been killed," he said presently. "Did you know, Major, that it was he who shot the colonel?"

"No. Are you sure, Ted? He always seemed such a plausible fellow."

"I didn't see him myself, but Tynan told us that he saw the deed. Certainly Pir Baksh seemed to be the leader in the attack on the fort."

"Pir Baksh!" said Havildar Ambar Singh as he limped into the room. "The hound is surely dead. Major Sahib, I have written down the names of all my men who perished in the fort yesterday, so that their families may get the pension if you English win, and that their names may be recorded as true to their salt."

"Thank you, Havildar! It's a good officer who thinks first of his men. How is your foot to-day?"

"Better, sahib; better, thanks! I do not grudge the injury if that son of a hyena, Pir Baksh, has been killed. If the young sahib here had not been resolute and taken over the command, he would have deceived Tynan Sahib, and we should have been delivered into their hands to be murdered."

"Ah!" said Munro, pricking his ears; "so Russell Sahib had to take over the command? How was that?"

"The other was scared, Major Sahib. True, he was but a lad, and it is hardly to be wondered at. But Russell Sahib refused to surrender, and appealed to us, and we put aside the other and looked to this one as our leader. Ha! Russell Sahib played the man, for he threatened to shoot his comrade when the other objected to being blown up. He will make a general, will the Ensign Sahib."

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"Is this story true, Russell?" demanded Munro.

"It's true, sir; but you oughtn't to be hard on Tynan. He was plucky enough most of the time."

"John Lawrence shall know about this if I live," said the major with unwonted emphasis. "All England shall know about it."

"But you won't say anything about Tynan, sir?" Ted asked.

"No, that wouldn't do. We must treat him as dead—ignore his presence in the fort altogether."

Colonel Woodburn's condition was hopeful. The bullet had been successfully extracted, and he was doing well. He sent for Ted, and made him tell the story from beginning to end. Our hero was getting rather tired of it, and Ethel was merciless. She would not allow him to cut out the least incident. The colonel was mightily pleased.

"Do you know," the ensign observed as they quitted the invalid's room, "in the midst of the crowd I noticed the three fanatics who set on us in the bazaar. I expect the poor beggars are blown to bits by now."

"I suppose there is no chance," Miss Woodburn asked, "that that poor boy Tynan has survived?"

"I'm afraid not. I think the havildar and I are the only survivors, but of course there was no time to make certain."

"Poor Tynan!" she murmured, more to herself than to her companion. "I have always felt so sorry for the boy since he joined us."

"Have you? Why? Don't think me a brute, Ethel, if I say that since that event most of our fellows seem to have pitied the regiment most."

"You have no right to say that, Ted," Ethel declared, her clear, steadfast eyes regarding the ensign reproachfully. "Tynan has lost his life, we believe, and you know the Latin tag about speaking good or nothing at all of the dead."

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Ted was rather surprised. A few moments ago he had tried to omit all mention of Tynan's cowardice, but she had insisted on the whole truth. He recollected having read that even the most charming members of the sex were changeable and unaccountable.

"I'm sorry," said he. "I won't say anything harsh about Tynan; but why were you so sorry for him all along?"

"Because it struck me as so pitiable that he made no real friends, and I never once noticed him looking downright happy. The most he seemed to get out of life was a miserable pretence of enjoyment—a mere attempt to persuade himself that he was having a good time. His has been such a wasted life, Ted. I have thought a great deal about it this morning and last night, and it has seemed so very sad. None of the healthy pleasures and pursuits that have meant so much to you and Paterson appealed to him in the least."

"What have Russell and I been doing now, Miss Ethel?" a well-known voice broke in, and Paterson joined them.

Miss Woodburn hesitated and turned red. To speak freely with her future brother-in-law was one thing, to discuss serious subjects with a couple of light-hearted ensigns at once was quite another. Ted came to the rescue.

"Miss Woodburn was saying how sorry she has always been for poor Tynan," he explained.

"So have I," said Alec slowly; "at least at times, when he was not in the way, but I'm sorry to say I couldn't stand him when he was close at hand. I wish now that I hadn't tried so hard to be sarcastic."

"You would have risked your lives to save him from death or danger," said Ethel, "but it was harder to try and save him from himself. At least I found it so, for more than once I resolved to try to gain his confidence and interest him in more sensible pursuits, but being too cowardly and selfish, I was too easily discouraged."

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"He was hardly the sort one could make a friend of," Paterson mused aloud. "You're right though, Miss Ethel, it was just selfishness and conceit on our part to regard ourselves as superior beings just because we didn't happen to like the sort of things he cared about."

"We looked at everything from a different point of view," Ethel resumed after a pause, "and got more enjoyment out of life."

"I never saw it in that light before," said Ted, "but I think I know what you mean. For instance, when we were all so excited over the race, he had no sympathy whatever with the horses or riders, but just regarded the affair as so much money to be won or lost."

"Yes, but don't be scornful, Ted. Think of all he has lost during his short lifetime by not having a healthy mind. Think of all the happiness you have enjoyed from your love of sports and games, through your friendships and your admiration for what is good and right. But you are rather young quite to grasp what I mean."

Ethel Woodburn, aged twenty-one, spoke as though she felt the wisdom of ages within her, and the boys could not help glancing at one another. She caught the glance, and her eyes twinkled as she continued:

"One could easily see that Tynan was a spoiled child, cursed with foolish parents. I think, Ted, that of all selfish people, those parents who are too generous to deny their children anything, or

too tender-hearted to punish them, are the most criminally selfish. And that's what made me so sorry for the boy. Once or twice I was on the point of asking you to give him a bit of your friendship, but somehow I didn't quite like to do it."

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"Well," said Ted, "I'm sorry for my share in any rows we had, and I forgive him his share."

"Rather easy for us to forgive one who is dead, is it not, Ted? Can we forgive now, at this moment, those rebels who want to kill us?"

"I suppose that you forgive 'em, Ethel, but I can't say that I do."

"But I didn't forgive Tynan, Ted. I heard of that fight you had; in fact, I met Tynan just afterwards, and very tactlessly asked him what had happened, supposing he had met with an accident. Unluckily he had not had time to cool down, and—well, he laughed in my face and forgot himself. You see, his people are wealthy, but not quite—you know what I mean?—he's not a gentleman, and he hinted at the cause of your fight."

"The cad!" said Ted.

"Steady, old boy! I felt as if I could never forgive him, so please don't imagine I'm making myself out better than you. I feel bad about it now, and if by any chance he should escape I should find it easy to forgive him, though there's little credit in that."

"I didn't think he could have done such a thing," said Ted. "I forgive that mullah and his friends who knifed me, so long as I think they've both been killed, but if I should see 'em tomorrow I'm afraid I should still remember that I owe 'em one."

"Yet, as I said before, you'd risk your life willingly enough to save theirs, just as they do in the story-books." Miss Woodburn laughed as she went on: "I must say that it annoys me to read those tales entitled *A Noble Revenge* or *Coals of Fire*, or something of the kind, where someone who has been greatly injured takes his revenge by saving his enemy from drowning, or climbs to the top story of a burning house and rescues the evil-doer, who promptly repents. It's all very noble, of course; but it's such a thorough vindication, and such glory for the rescuer, that a more complete triumph over one's enemy couldn't be wished for. What could one desire better than to make your enemy feel small, and acknowledge how much nobler you are than he?"

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"I should like," said Ted, with feeling, "to make these beggars outside feel small. We've drifted into a curious talk, considering our situation."

"Not a bit of it," said Alec. "I quite agree with you, Miss Ethel. I must go and relieve Leigh now, and you relieve me in a couple of hours, Ted. Miss Woodburn, I'm glad we've had this talk, and I sha'n't forget it."

"And I must go back to father now," said Ethel, whereupon Ted turned to accompany her.

The colonel was fast asleep, breathing easily.

"Good-bye for a few hours, Ethel!" said the ensign; and added in a low, hesitating tone, "You're a saint."

"I! Oh, Ted, you little know me—you and Jim. It's easy to forgive one who can no longer injure you, but it's hard to live your ordinary life with a person who wishes to injure you, or who has done so, and who hates and despises you. What a terrible prig you must think me, Ted! I know I can't feel like that myself. I only wish I could."

Ted glanced guiltily round. There was no one in the room save Colonel Woodburn, and he was sleeping, undisturbed by their whispering. Seizing the girl's hand he kissed it, awkwardly and nervously, then hastily dropping it blushed furiously.

"There!" exclaimed the ensign jerkily. "I knew I should do it some day. I'm sure Jim never did that."

"Oh—?"

Ethel's face was also flushed, and she looked radiantly charming as she gave utterance to the long-drawn, quizzing exclamation, and a new light broke in upon Ted.

"What! Old Jim?" he asked. "Well, who'd have thought it? Lucky beggar! It's a dainty little hand."

"Silence, sir! I must ask you to leave the room."

"Good-bye, then, little sister!"

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## CHAPTER X

### Hope and Despair

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Two more weary days passed inside the fortified house. Numerous attacks had been made, and though they had invariably failed, some damage had been inflicted on the besieged. As the assailants were retiring in disorder after one of these futile attempts, a big, light-featured man in scanty costume sidled up to the house, waving a sealed letter.

“Quick! let me in!” he shouted. “I’m a sepoy of the Guide Corps!”

The door was hurriedly thrown open, but not before the besiegers had divined the man’s intentions, and bullets whizzed perilously near his head before he was safe inside. Espying our hero, the Guide handed him the letter, and Ted recognized the fellow as Faiz Talab, his brother’s orderly.

He opened the note, and his face glowed. He whistled, then shouted in great excitement, “Hurrah! the Guides are coming!”

“The Guides!” echoed Sir Arthur, and a joyful light came into Ethel’s eyes. Faiz Talab, the Pathan, grinned gleefully.

The letter, dated from Manghur, thirty-two miles away, ran as follows:—

“We were starting for Delhi when the Aurungpore news arrived, and as we pass so close I obtained permission to detach 120 men to your aid. A greater number cannot be spared, as Delhi is all-important. So, old man, tell Ethel I’ll soon be with her.”

The great news quickly spread from one end of the big house to the other. Food was prepared for the bearer of good tidings, and Faiz Talab, Yusufzai, was fêted as he had never been before. He described the route by which the Guides would come, and stated when they might be expected.

“Russell Sahib will be here to-morrow, and by the beard of the Prophet, we shall teach these curs a lesson!” he concluded.

“You seem to know this district well,” said the Commissioner. “You have been here before,” and the man grinned slyly.

“I was a youngster, sahib, when first I saw Aurungpore. We Yusufzais came down at night and lifted the cattle and raided the villages, and we laughed at Ranjit Singh’s army that followed, for we knew that we had a good start, and the Sikhs would not venture into the hills. Ah, those were the good old days! Yet people say they have come again, and that Delhi is a richer town to loot than Aurungpore.”

The Yusufzai smacked his lips at the prospect. Here, thought Ted, was another sample of the robbers that apparently formed the backbone of the Guide Corps. The brightness of the prospect revealed by Faiz Talab’s message was fast fading away, and as the garrison had time to think it over there came a diminution of enthusiasm. Ted voiced the general opinion when he abruptly asked:

“But of what use is a single company against such swarms of rebels and budmashes, even if they are to be trusted?”

“But we are the Guides, sahib,” said Faiz Talab proudly.

That self-same day came tidings that more than destroyed the hopes raised by Jim’s letter. Into Aurungpore marched the 138th Bengal Native Infantry, rebels and murderers, flushed with success. They had shot down their officers and looted the treasury, to guard which had been their duty. Dire was the consternation caused by the arrival of the new contingent, and great was the dismay.

But when, next morning, our friends noticed that the six 9-pounders of the fort were being moved by certain of the new-comers into a position whence their place of refuge could be bombarded, dismay gave place to utter despair. The sepoys of the 193rd did not understand the handling of these guns, and had regarded them with some awe as fearsome weapons that might turn against themselves. But the 138th counted a couple of hundred Sikhs amongst their number.

Now the Sikh maharaja, Ranjit Singh, had maintained a splendid force of artillery, and many of the Sikh sepoys, who had enlisted under British colours, had previously been gunners in the army of the Khalsa,<sup>[1]</sup> and they saw at once how the little garrison might be speedily destroyed. A few hours’ search brought to light a quantity of material that had not been demolished in the explosion. All day long the exploration went on, and plenty of ammunition to feed the guns was soon stored close at hand.

[1] The title of the Sikh Confederacy.

The time of the expected arrival of the Guides drew nigh.

“Better that they should not come,” Major Munro wearily opined. “They would only share our fate. What chance would they have against 1500 trained soldiers?”

“Do you think they will turn back, sir, when they hear of the arrival of this fresh lot?” Ted enquired in an anxious tone.

“I certainly do. It would be foolish—idiotic—to attempt a rescue in the face of such odds. Were

I in your brother's place I should feel it my duty to government, as well as to my men, not to throw them away on so helpless an undertaking. It will be very hard for him to leave his affianced wife in such dreadful peril, but that is one of a soldier's risks. His men belong to the government, not to him, and he has no right to risk them where there is no chance. We are short enough of men as it is."

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Ethel, standing by, grew pale as she thought of the danger to her beloved. Her own peril, and even her father's, were forgotten for the moment.

"Oh, Major Munro," she exclaimed, "let us hope that they will turn back! They cannot do us good by throwing their own lives away!"

And this was the opinion of all.

The devoted Rajputs of Captain Markham's company never for a moment wavered in their allegiance. They fought and took their turn on guard, and fought again as staunchly as the white men, and many were the acts of heroism they displayed. Twice was the staff of the Union Jack, that still floated above the house, broken by missiles, and on each occasion some of the intrepid Hindus volunteered to splice the wood. In full sight of the enemy, who fired wildly at them, they achieved this, and again the silken folds waved freely in the breeze.

Again and again the mutineers advanced on every side, with great noise and waving of weapons. Again and again they approached more peaceably, shouting to the Hindus that they should come out and join their comrades, promising them gold and silver in abundance should they deliver the white men into their hands.

Each attack was met with steadfast courage; the noisy firing was answered by a steadier rattle of musketry, and the rebels dropped fast; unwavering fidelity rejected both bribes and friendly advances; and on more than one occasion a determined, vigorous sortie was the only reply vouchsafed by these gallant dark-faces.

Slowly and anxiously the day wore on. Care-worn faces wistfully regarded the threatening nine-pounders that would soon begin to pour destruction upon them. For a moment the attacks ceased as the rebels crowded round the guns that were placed upon an open eminence overlooking the house.

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Fascinated by the sight, the whole garrison gathered before the windows, powerless to avert their gaze from the instruments of destruction.

But what means that sudden commotion—that loud shrill cheering? The mob is seen to part right and left, the rebel sepoy fling their caps in the air and wave their muskets excitedly as a body of fine, well-set-up men, fierce of aspect, turbaned, and clad in drab uniforms, marches into the courtyard of the fort. Though no word of command is given, the fresh arrivals there halt, fall out, and at once begin to fraternize with the mutineers. Behind the tall men appear a score of much smaller figures, clothed in the same uniform, and these shout and gesticulate more wildly than any.

"The Guides!" gasps Lieutenant Leigh.

"Traitors, by George!" thunders Major Munro, with intense and vehement bitterness. "Traitors!"

A long pause followed. The Britons gazed upon one another with blank, haggard faces. The whole Indian Empire was tumbling down, and none was loyal! Until this moment not a man amongst them but had known some ray of hope, however feeble.

"Are they truly the Guides?" asked one. "Who, then, are the little beggars?" pointing to the rearmost.

"Gurkhas of the Guide Corps," answered Leigh, no less bitterly. "And their officers have always maintained that Gurkhas can be trusted when all others fail. Well, we live and learn."

"Aye, we learn,—but not the other," was Munro's grim aside.

Momentarily forgetting their predicament, Ted stared with great interest at the short figures and Tartar laces that grinned in fiendish anticipation; for his father had often spoken in terms of the highest praise of these reputedly fearless Himalayan mountaineers, against whom he had fought, and whom he had afterwards led.

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"Well, if those are Gurkhas, I don't think much of 'em," said the ensign, his critical spirit asserting itself even at this crisis. "Our seventy Rajputs could tackle a hundred of them."

As for Faiz Talab, his eyes seemed to be starting from his head.

"The pigs! the curs!" he gasped at length. "What can it mean?"

As the Yusufzai spoke he grasped an Enfield rifle, brought it to his shoulder, and fired at the mass of drab uniforms, then fell to cursing his comrades afresh for the shame they had brought upon their corps. The onlookers could distinguish their own disloyal men pointing out the British stronghold to the Guides, who seemed to be examining the situation with keen interest. The siege was temporarily raised, whilst a general confabulation took place among the rebel leaders.

"Faiz Talab, what have they done to my brother?" asked Ted.

The Yusufzai shook his head. "I know not," said he.

"Hadst thou no word or hint of this intended treachery?"

"Neither word nor hint, sahib. Surely I must be dreaming, for yesterday we were all loyal to the backbone, and we loved thy brother greatly. I do not understand it."

"Yesterday," interposed Lieutenant Leigh, "they had not heard of the mutiny and entry of the 138th. Perhaps that decided the rascals to throw over the British raj."

"It must indeed be so, yet it does not seem possible."

"Think you they have allowed the Captain Sahib to escape?" asked Alec Paterson, guessing that Ted could not bring himself to ask this question for fear of the reply.

"Nay, that could hardly be. If they have been so base as to prove untrue to the salt they have eaten, they would not hesitate to kill their officer."

"Though you pretend that they loved him?" Ted bitterly demanded.

"The better reason for slaying him. They would kill him first of all, because they loved and honoured him, so that he might never know their shame. Yet I cannot believe it. May my father's grave be defiled if I do not kill some of the traitors before I die!"

Ted walked to the window and gazed forth upon the distant hubbub. Paterson followed, and laid his hand upon the shoulder of his chum.

"It will be worse for the poor lassie, I'm thinking, Ted," he said.

Our hero nodded, but could not trust himself to speak.

"We must keep the news from her as long as we can," Alec continued. "She is with her father now, and has not heard. The others will not tell her."

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## CHAPTER XI

### In the Clutches of Pir Baksh

Three hours after Ensign Russell and Havildar Ambar Singh had entered the besieged house, a swarthy man in the uniform of a native officer picked himself tenderly up from the ground, and wondered to find himself still alive. It was Pir Baksh the subadar. For hours he had lain unconscious, deaf to the moans of the maimed and dying men who lay stretched on every side amid the chaos of shattered timber and masonry.

His right arm was broken, his head bleeding, and the fallen beam that had caused the fracture had lain all night across his body, bruising him sorely. He wriggled from underneath, and finding himself too weak to rise he called loudly for help.

But what was this thing so soft below him, that had served as a pillow for his head all night? He passed his hand lightly over the object. It was a corpse—no, the flesh was warm! He placed his hand on the mouth and nostrils, and found that there was still breath in the body. His hand passed higher up until he touched the hair, and Pir Baksh gave a start. It was one of the two accursed Feringhis to whom he owed the agony he was now enduring. He sought for a knife, a bayonet, to plunge again and again into the unconscious body.

But Pir Baksh changed his mind. No, he would wait until the Englishman could feel and taste the bitterness of death. Revenge would be as nothing unless the victim could feel pain as great as his own. He there and then resolved to save the life of his enemy until he could plan and carry out his vengeance, for Pir Baksh had less pity than a tiger.

Again and again he called for help in the name of Allah, and at length his cries were heard. A few sepoy of his company approached with great caution, for day had not yet come.

"Who is there?" they called.

"It is I, Pir Baksh. Water!—bring me water if ye are followers of the Prophet!"

The cry for water from one Mussulman to another cannot be neglected, and a sepoy ran for a water-skin, while the rest made their way to the injured officer.

"All my bones are broken, I think," said he. "Ye have been long in coming. Look! here is a Feringhi boy still alive. Nay, do not kill him; he shall die more slowly."

He drank the water feverishly.

"Now, carry us to my brother's house, and do not let all the people know that we have a prisoner, lest in their rage they should straightway kill him, for I mean to torture him by raising

hopes. Bear me gently.”

As they raised him the subadar fainted away. Tynan—for he, of course, was the Englishman—was still unconscious, and before the light that precedes the dawn had shown across the sky, the pair had been safely and secretly conveyed into the house of Muhammed Baksh on the outskirts of the town.

The sun had risen and was high in the heavens before Ensign Tynan recovered consciousness. He raised himself painfully in the creaking string bed, and gazed in a bewildered manner, like an owl in the sunshine, around the small unfurnished room in which he lay. The shutters were closed, darkening the chamber, and, unable to make out his surroundings, and too weary to attempt to solve the mystery, he sank down again with a smothered groan. His head was badly cut; he had lost a lot of blood; and, though no bones were broken, he had hardly a sound, unbruised spot on his body. The roar of the explosion was ringing in his ears, and he still shivered with fright.

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For a long time he could not sleep, though, after what seemed to him an eternity of suffering, he at length fell into a fitful slumber, waking up between his nightmares in a cold perspiration of dread.

During one of these intervals the door opened, and a Mohammedan sepoy entered bearing a little bread and a brass vessel containing water. Tynan devoured these to the last drop and crumb.

“Who are you?” he asked the man. “Tell me, where am I?”

The sepoy answered not a word and left the room. The food and drink had done the ensign good, brain and body becoming more brisk. He rose groaning from the bed and tried the door. It was locked, and he understood at last that he was a prisoner. A tremor ran down his back, and he felt cold, though the room was like a hothouse. A captive among the mutineers! Horrible prospect! But why should they have brought him here? he asked himself. Why not have straightway killed him? Could it be that they meant to torture him? The wretched boy groaned aloud, and in a frenzy of rage and despair kicked and beat the door, though every blow was anguish.

He had not long to wait. Muhammed Baksh, his host, called angrily to Ghulam Beg, the silent waiter, and together they entered the room and began to belabour the unlucky ensign with long bamboo canes.

Tynan fiercely sprang at his assailants, but being in no condition to do battle, he was soon driven ignominiously into a corner, where he cowered and shrieked for mercy. One of his tormentors pointed to the bed; Tynan crawled upon it, and without having spoken a word the two quitted the room.

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Again the boy rose and dragged himself towards the window, where his last spark of hope died out. The shutters were clamped down, and even had he been fit and strong he could not have removed them without the aid of tools. He sank down upon the charpoy, a prey to the most realistic horrors that could be conjured up by a dull imagination. How long he lay there, miserable in mind and aching all over, he knew not. It seemed that whole days must have passed before the silent Ghulam Beg brought in a meagre supper. Worn-out nature then reasserted itself; as he lay on the bed his aching head seemed to grow larger and larger, filling all the room, and soon he was lost to consciousness.

Aroused by the entrance of his breakfast of chupattis and water, he implored the sepoy to speak to him and let him know his fate. But the man might have been a mute. Without a word, or gesture, or sign of comprehension Ghulam Beg left the prison-chamber, and another day of horror was passed, and a night in which blessed sleep almost forsook the captive boy.

The sound of a key creaking in the rusty lock aroused him, and he rose to his feet as the sepoy attendant brought in the unappetizing fare. Behind him Pir Baksh stalked in, his arm in a sling, his cruel eyes leering horribly as he gazed upon his victim.

“I trust, Ensign Sahib,” said he with much politeness, “that my servant has been courteous and attentive, and has not disturbed your repose by chattering too much. I am greatly honoured that the heaven-born should deign to share our humble roof, and I trust that our guest has been comfortable.”

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The unceasing pain and the solitude had taken most of the spirit out of poor Tynan. Instead of resenting this insolence he implored the brute to tell him what his fate was to be.

“Ungrateful Feringhi!” exclaimed the subadar indignantly. “Not a word of thanks for my hospitality! Art thou aware that I have saved thy life?”

“Indeed, subadar, I thank you,” said Tynan humbly.

“And I thank thee,” said Pir Baksh, pointing to his injured arm, and continuing:

“Yea, I thank thee for this, and for many an hour of pain. ’Twas a clever trick to blow up the arsenal, but thou didst little think, infidel dog, that there would be a heavy price to pay. Thou didst reject my offer of terms, and all that I have suffered since, aye, and double and treble that, thou shalt know before death shall mercifully release thee.”



Tynan trembled in every limb, and weakly replied:

"It was not I who blew up the magazine. I was against the deed. And dost thou not remember, subadar, that I would have surrendered to thee had not the other prevented me?"

"Well, he is dead, and thou shalt pay for the sins of thy brother."

"Nay, spare me, and my father will pay thee well."

A sudden thought seemed to strike the subadar. He reflected for a few moments before answering the appeal.

"Wilt thou swear thou hadst no hand in the explosion?" he asked, after a pause.

"I will—indeed, I swear it."

"I must needs think it over," said Pir Baksh musingly. He quitted the room, leaving the boy torn by conflicting emotions. The consciousness that he had not played a manly part, the conviction that his rival Ted Russell would never have been so weak, gave a sharper point to his fears and troubles. On the other hand, had he not been given a faint hope of escape? Do not judge the lad too harshly. It was not death alone, but the prospect of torture that had unnerved him; and remember that the pain of his injuries and the workings of his imagination during the past two days of solitary confinement were calculated to break the spirit of any man above the average, and poor Tynan had hardly the makings of a hero in his character. His case was one for pity rather than contempt. Only those who would have withstood the temptation have the right to despise him utterly, and they would be the last to do so.

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His hopes of mercy were misplaced. The amount of that quality nourished in the breast of Pir Baksh would have shamed a famished wolf. The rascal had changed his tone because he recollected that the greater his victim's hopes, the more poignant would his suffering be on finding himself deceived. Next evening he again visited the prisoner, and brought paper, pen, and ink.

"What was that sound of cheering an hour or two ago?" asked Tynan. He had heard the acclamations that had greeted the arrival of the mutinous Guides, and wondered if help had come.

"It means that we have had reinforcements, and that within twelve hours not one of your friends will be alive."

Tynan looked keenly at the speaker as he continued.

"Perhaps there may be one Feringhi left alive in Aurungpore; it depends on thee. I have been thinking it over, and am inclined to save thy life. We both hate Russell Sahib, and we may prove useful one to another."

The prisoner's heart began to beat more hopefully, and he expressed his thanks towards the callous brute.

"But on conditions," resumed Pir Baksh. "First, I must have five thousand rupees—a promise in writing for that amount."

"You shall have it," said Tynan eagerly. "My father will not grudge it."

The subadar nodded his head solemnly and went on:

"Secondly, thou must write me a *chit* in English and Urdu, acknowledging that thou dost owe thy life to my mercy and loyalty."

"I will do that, and never shall I forget thy goodness."

"Thou shalt also write that I, Pir Baksh, was loyal to the Kumpani Bahadur, though forced to appear disloyal. That I tried to restrain the sepoys during the attack on the fortress, and to save the lives of the English officers, but was prevented by the rebels, who threatened to kill me as a traitor ... What! Thou dost hesitate?"

Tynan had turned pale. Could he sign that lying document and be himself a traitor? Had not Pir Baksh shot the colonel?

"No, subadar, I cannot do that," he said, with hesitation, not decision.

"Very good, sahib."

The fierce light that came into the eyes of Pir Baksh sent a thrill of despair through Tynan's breast. He began to find excuses. He told himself that the proposed statement would be partly true, for Pir Baksh had offered to spare their lives. He caught at that weak saving-clause, and enlarged upon it until he had almost persuaded himself that he could only be blamed for exaggeration, not for downright lying. Then he remembered how Pir Baksh, by shooting the colonel, had brought the mutiny to pass, and was guilty of all the bloodshed.

The subadar noted his indecision, and said:

"There will be none to contradict, your countrymen are as good as dead."

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"I will write as you say," said Tynan slowly, "if you will swear to save my life."

He had decided. He was ready to sign a paper absolving this villain from the reward of his treachery and blood-guiltiness. And the final inducement had been the assurance that the traitor's plot would be crowned with such success that all Tynan's compatriots would be slain. And this was the man he was ready to hold up as a loyal subject fit to be rewarded for his fidelity!

"By the Prophet's beard I will do my best to save thee," the subadar declared. "We must escape from the town, or I too shall suffer the penalty."

Seizing pen and ink in feverish haste to get it over, Tynan wrote as the Mohammedan directed him. First, the promise to pay five thousand rupees on one sheet of paper, and then a document that might save Pir Baksh from all consequences of mutiny and murder in the event of his capture by the British. When he had finished, his gaoler took the pen and wrote in Urdu at the foot:—

"I, Pir Baksh, subadar of the 193rd B.N.I., do solemnly promise, on my oath as a Moslem, to do my best to effect the escape of Ensign Tynan of the same regiment, a prisoner among the rebels in Aurungpore. Filled with admiration of his courage in risking his life in the execution of his duty by planning and carrying out the blowing up of the magazine, I also risk my life to save his."

"But I've already told you I didn't do that," the ensign protested, as he read the added words. "It was Russell's doing altogether."

"No need to say so, sahib," said Pir Baksh. "He is dead, and so indeed will all the Feringhis be to-morrow, and no one can claim the credit. Russell Sahib I hate, for do I not owe him this broken arm and bloody head? And if I mistake not, he is no friend of thine, so why not take the credit of the deed and be promoted and raised to honour? Help me, sahib, and I will help thee."

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Tynan found nothing to say in reply. He remembered the many injuries he fancied he had received at Russell's hands—the thrashing of a week or two ago, the contempt with which he had been treated in the fort when his junior took the command from him and threatened him in front of the men. Why not pay him out? After all, what did it matter now? It could be put right if necessary when he should have reached a place of safety. The first consideration was to save his own life.

"We shall slip away to-morrow," said the subadar. "I will go and make all arrangements now. Remember that my life also is sacrificed if we are discovered."

So saying the double traitor took his leave. Outside the door he chuckled grimly and proceeded to tear up the "promise to pay" the five thousand rupees. For a very good reason he had no intention of claiming that, but the other papers he carefully preserved. After the boy had been murdered, he could easily make up some story and fabricate some evidence to show that they had been followed and attacked, and that he escaped by the skin of his teeth, more alive than dead, and never saw the ensign again. Pir Baksh meant to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds so long as the British held their own.

But most of all he meant to kill Harry Tynan.

Left to himself Ensign Tynan sat down upon the string bed, and leant forward to think it all over, elbows on knees and his chin resting in the palm of his right hand. As a rule he was not a very thoughtful person, but the nightmare of the past few days might well effect a change. Of habit, not of character though! Peril, suffering, and anxiety may develop the good or bad that is there already, but will hardly transform a weak character into a strong one.

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For a long time the boy sat motionless, wondering what Pir Baksh really meant. Was he genuine? Did he mean to save him? Tynan did not trust the man, yet he assured himself again and again that the Mohammedan must be intending to try, or why should he have demanded the promise of a reward—a document useless unless he was actually saved. And what about that other paper? Ted Russell would never have signed it, conscience whispered.

"I only wish Russell was here instead of me," he muttered, and gave the bedstead a vicious kick.

"But he's dead," came a reminder from his better self, and there followed a recollection of the statement added by the subadar, the lie that robbed the dead of the credit of a glorious deed.

"Everything seems to go wrong with me," he sullenly muttered. "I've no luck like other people. Never mind, it's not of much consequence. What I've got to think about is how to get out of this hole. I believe after all that that black brute means to murder me. Well, I'll try to sleep on it."

He lay down, and an idea occurred to him. Rising to his feet he knelt down in the attitude of prayer. Hardly ever since he had left home for school had he so much as made believe to pray for help and guidance, but now he wondered he had not thought of it before. Had he lived two or three hundred years ago he would have vowed invaluable offerings to the shrine of his patron saint, and, the danger over, would as promptly have forgotten to fulfil the vow.

Parrot-like, he repeated the Lord's Prayer without considering in the least its meaning, and then he prayed wildly to be saved from death. But not once did he dream of asking earnestly for forgiveness, not once did he seriously repent his foolish, harmful life, nor did he make the least resolve to cancel in the morning the lies to which he had signed his name that night.

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## CHAPTER XII

### The Treachery of the Guides

The shadows were slowly lengthening, and the whistling of the kites that circled overhead, waiting until the groups of sepoy should disperse, was being supplemented by the querulous howls of the equally impatient jackals. Yet no fresh attack had been made upon the English post, though more than an hour had passed since the Guides had joined forces with the mutineers. That they had not been idle, however, was testified by the stack of round-shot and grape rescued from the fort and piled ready to hand behind each cannon.

A guard had been mounted over the guns and ammunition to check any desperate sortie that might be made by the besieged, and the town gradually became less riotous. This restoration of order only intensified the despair of the Europeans, who drew the conclusion that the rebels were now being controlled by men more able—and therefore more dangerous—than their late leaders. The more capable their enemies, the more perilous the situation of the garrison.

That is, if anything more perilous could be imagined.

Just after sunset, and before darkness had set in, a Hindu sepoy was observed creeping stealthily towards the house, apparently anxious to attract the attention of the inmates, and equally bent on avoiding observation from outside. As the man drew near, Ambar Singh and Ted both recognized him as Dwarika Rai, one of their comrades in the arsenal. He was quickly smuggled inside, and told the story of his escape from death and concealment up to the present, when duty had urged him at all risks to inform his comrades and the Englishmen of the changed situation.

He explained that the detachment of the Guides had mutinied as soon as they heard of the arrival of the 138th; they had murdered the only white officer with them, and had appointed Ressaïdar Bahram Khan as commandant. The announcement was not unexpected, yet up to this moment Ted had hoped against hope that Jim had escaped.

"Art thou certain, Dwarika Rai, that they have slain my brother?" he asked after a painful pause.

"Quite, sahib; they make boast of it. And look, their leader is wearing his uniform."

Ethel Woodburn had entered the room unobserved, and, standing behind them, had overheard. She grasped a chair to steady herself, and shook her head as Ted besought her to retire to the ladies' room. There was a long silence.

"Bahram Khan?" enquired the major presently, hardly knowing what to say. "Is that he, then, in the English officer's uniform and wearing his medals?" pointing to a muscular man who could be made out in the distance apparently ordering the sepoy about.

"That is the hound, sahib," replied Dwarika Rai. "He has sworn to exterminate you all before noon to-morrow. He has taken command of all the treacherous curs."

Ethel, half-stunned by the terrible tidings, was now seated, and Ted leaned against the girl's chair, gently stroking her hand,—dimly recognizing that her sorrow was even greater than his own. The shock of Captain Russell's murder was too sudden for her to realize fully, and the rest of the news seemed dwarfed to mere insignificance. The poor girl attempted to pull herself together by thinking how greatly her helpless father stood in need of her.

"Bahram Khan!" said Ted bitterly. "Why, he is the cur who was present at the steeple-chase,—a robber and outlaw! However could such a crew have been trusted?"

"It was Sir Henry Lawrence's doing," said Leigh. "It's rare for him to make a mistake, but here is the result of his great 'Guides' scheme. Evidently they don't mean to make the grand assault until to-morrow."

"I wish they would," said Ted with feeling; "and end it, to-night."

To give the boy credit, he was thinking more of the hours of bitter grief Ethel Woodburn was doomed to endure than of himself.

It may be readily surmised that very few of the garrison contrived to sleep that night. Soon after sunrise all—women, civilians, black soldiers, and white officers—were gathered together to watch the mutineers assemble for the final assault. Of its issue there could be no doubt. As they stood there awaiting their fate Ethel Woodburn could not remain insensible, even at so trying a moment, to the beauty of the early Indian morning. The slanting rays of the Eastern sun were gilding the mosques and minarets of the town and lighting up with lurid glow the reddish buildings behind the fort, and the thought of Nature's beauty added to her sorrow. But the greater number of those doomed people had weightier matters to occupy their thoughts.

In and around the courtyard of the fort itself all was bustle and confusion; some could be both seen and heard giving commands, and others obeying the same, though the vast majority of the assembled hundreds appeared to display a total lack of discipline. Inside the commissioner's house the feeling of helplessness and suspense was horrible. The wisdom of a sortie, a mad rush on the guns,—to die fighting rather than cooped up and made a target of,—was debated, and not a man there but would have preferred the chance of striking back. There were women, however, to be considered, and to leave them was out of the question.

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"Whilst there's life there's hope," declared the Commissioner, with an attempt at cheerfulness. "The house is not destroyed yet."

He barely succeeded, however, in convincing even himself that there was the faintest glimmer of hope. No British troops were within three days' journey. The handful of unfortunates bade good-bye to one another, shook hands all round, and prepared to meet their death with a smile upon their faces, without flinching or showing the least sign of weakness before the eyes of their gallant and devoted Rajputs. Nor were the women behind the men in respect of courage.

Major Munro, after consulting his officers, had advised the faithful sepoy to save their lives as best they could, either by cutting their way through at night, or by pretending to desert and to fall in with the views of their rebel comrades.

To give them this chance was only fair, thought the major; the Rajputs, having done their duty, deserved consideration, and though the Englishmen could not leave the wounded and the women, yet the dark-faces, now that resistance was hopeless, should be allowed to save their lives. To Munro's delight, however, the gallant fellows announced a firm resolve to stand by their duty to the last. They took their places shoulder to shoulder with the pale-faces, grimly waiting and watching now that the last glimmer of hope had died out.

For in the great square of the fort more than two thousand men were under arms; and in another moment the nine-pounders were charged with grape, under the supervision of Bahram Khan and a score of picked Sikhs and Pathans of the Guide Corps—men who had served in the old Khalsa Artillery and who thoroughly understood their work.

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Behind the guns and flanking them the remaining hundred men of the Guides, conspicuous by their powerful and soldierly bearing, maintained some appearance of discipline, whereas the majority of the sepoy and of armed fanatics and budmashes were acting as seemed best in their own eyes.

Ressaidar Bahram Khan, however, insisted with many threats and much strong language on some kind of order being maintained. He placed the 193rd Sepoy in one position, the poorbeahs<sup>[1]</sup> of the 138th in another, and the Sikhs of the latter corps to the right front of the guns.

[1] A name given to the Oudh sepoy.

"When the guns have battered down the walls," thundered the rebel commandant, "then must ye take the house by storm. The Feringhi dogs prevail against us because they trust to the bayonet, instead of staying to fire as ye do, for the bayonet is more certain than the bullet. We must learn from them and attack as they would, for our aim must be to destroy utterly the hated tyrants; not one must escape our vengeance."

The mob applauded, shouting "Din! din! Death to the Feringhis!" And the ressaidar went on:

"Take, then, the charges from your muskets, lest ye be tempted to stop and fire, for if ye do that doubtless many of the dogs may escape our wrath. Trust to the bayonet! Kill the infidels with the steel! Now, unload!"

The charges were withdrawn.

"That dacoit fellow has some idea of discipline; he seems to know what he's about,—though he's placing some of his men in queer positions, to be sure!" commented Major Munro stoutly, bent on showing an undaunted front to the end.

"Oh for a good, wholesome, red-coated regiment," sighed Lieutenant Leigh, "to wipe these fiends off the earth! Watch that treacherous, murdering Pathan! What's he up to now?"

"Trusting to the bayonet!" exclaimed Munro in astonishment. "That's not like an Asiatic, but he's right."

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They heard but could not distinguish Bahram Khan's commands, and saw the sepoy empty their muskets and begin to fix bayonets. Their hearts were beating wildly, and small shame to them, for they were helpless and could not strike back—as helpless as condemned criminals bound and gagged. Would the word never be given to fire? What was the matter now?

Waiting in silent agony for the fatal word, they perceived the Pathan commandant turn hastily to his gunners, who stood port-fire in hand.

Quick as thought, before rebels or onlookers could realize what was taking place, the muzzles of the guns were turned slightly to the right and lowered, and ere the assemblage had time to wonder, a shower of grape was belched forth into the clustered ranks of the faithless Sikhs of the 138th. At the very same instant, before sepoy or besieged were able to take in what had

happened, the hundred men of the Guides—or as many of them as were not helping their gunner comrades—brought their rifles (for theirs were still loaded) to the shoulder, and blazed away into the helpless mass of brown humanity. The rebels fell in scores, mown down by the heavy discharge. One or two of the native officers attempted to rally them, but the cannon, well and promptly served by the Guides, cut lanes through the mob; and the well-aimed, disciplined volley-firing of the Pathans and Gurkhas augmented the confusion.

For some seconds open-mouthed wonder kept all our friends silent. The whole world seemed topsy-turvy.

Then one man grasped the situation.

“Oh, splendid!... Well played, Guides, well played!” shouted Leigh; and the garrison screamed and danced in a delirium of enthusiasm as their senses came back to them, and they understood.

“What is it? What does it mean?” demanded Ethel breathlessly and the sick from the hospital-room echoed the cry.

“It’s the Guides!” was shouted back. “The Guides have been shamming mutiny. They’ve got possession of the guns, and have turned them on the traitors!”

Thrice did the mutineers attempt a rally, but the Sikhs—the staunchest of the rebels—had been almost blown away by the discharge of grape, and the poorbeahs dared not face that terrible fire—those spurts of flame that blazed forth, section by section, without hurry and without confusion, from the steady, levelled rifles.

In the Commissioner’s house the Pathan messenger howled and shrieked in his excitement, then, snatching up rifle and sword, he darted from the sheltering walls and cut his way through the terrified rebels to the side of his comrades.

“Look!” cried Lieutenant Leigh. “Bahram Khan has given over the command—to a private soldier, too!”

He pointed towards a dark-visaged man, of middle height and sturdy build, in the uniform of a sepoy of the Guide Corps, who was now directing the sectional volley-firing. At the same moment the mutineers broke away in all directions—two thousand men cowed by six score!

“Why, that’s Jim!—that’s my brother!” screamed our ensign joyfully. Ethel gave one look, recognized the long scar that showed on the stained face, and sank down, and to Ted’s bewilderment burst into tears.

“Well, that’s a rummy go!” he murmured under his breath. “What on earth should she blub for now that she knows he’s safe?”

As the flying, panic-stricken mutineers approached the beleaguered house, they received a fresh and hardly less deadly fusillade from the jubilant garrison. They scattered in all directions, staggering in blind terror. Through the narrow streets ran and stumbled the defeated sepoys, and after them rushed fifty of the terrible men in drab, the active little Gurkhas being ever to the front. So thorough was the panic evoked by the surprise, that here and there a dozen or even a score of the rebels might be seen running with terrified eyes and panting breath from a single fierce Afridi or Yusufzai of the hills, or still fiercer Gurkha from the Himalayan snows; and Ted acknowledged his error of judgment as he saw one of these little Nepalese Highlanders charge single-handed a group of ten or a dozen Wahabi fanatics who were attempting a rally. Cutting down four in rapid succession with his kukri, heeding the long knives no more than cardboard, the fearless little fellow scattered the remainder like sheep, and chased them until their long legs carried them far out of his reach.

Up flew the Union Jack to the top of the fort flagstaff, and Captain Russell, recalling his pursuing men, posted guards around the place. The loyal Rajputs, rejoicing now that they had not accepted Major Munro’s permission to desert, had not dared join in the fray except by their fire from windows and roof, for had they shown themselves outside they would undoubtedly have been slain by the rescuers.

But now the little garrison marched out in safety, carrying the wounded in their midst, for not a rebel was to be seen. Never had surprise been more complete! At the same moment Captain Russell issued forth at the head of half his men to escort the survivors inside the wing of the fort that had not been demolished.

There was no time for more than a hasty grip of the hand and a look exchanged between two pairs of eyes, telling more eloquently than any speech of the lips its tale of love, anxiety, and deep, grateful joy. Ethel had thought her lover dead; Jim had hardly dared to hope that both sweetheart and brother had survived the massacre. We can imagine the unspoken joy. Leaving Leigh and Ted with a strong guard within the fort, Munro, Captain Russell, and Paterson sallied forth at the head of one hundred and fifty Guides and no less eager Rajputs, and chased the panic-filled pandies from street to street to prevent them from reassembling. Long before mid-day the rebels had streamed out of the town in all directions, a wholesome fear planted deep within their breasts.

One room had been apportioned to the ladies, and others to officers and sepoys, but all the Europeans came together to cheer their rescuers. Colonel Woodburn was now well enough to

greet his future son-in-law, whose exciting story all gathered round to hear. Jim told it simply.

"Well, for a gang of double-dyed traitors commend me to the Guides and their English and native officers!" exclaimed Munro, his eyes twinkling with delight at the thought of the trick.

"All Bahram Khan's idea," laughed Jim. "We'd sent scouts ahead, and yesterday we heard of the arrival of the 138th and learned that they possessed artillery. I felt that I'd no right to risk my handful against such overwhelming odds, so I consulted the ressaidar<sup>[1]</sup>. That gentlemen also thought the task hopeless at first, then he suddenly burst out into a demoniacal laugh.

[1] A native officer of cavalry.

"Why, Captain Sahib," said he, "why shouldn't we mutiny? We could kill you and make friends with the poorbeahs. Then I'd take command of the rebels—the curs will only be too glad to have me—and I could get possession of the guns and post the men as I choose. With our men at the guns and behind the guns, we can sweep the poorbeahs from off the earth!"

"It was a glorious idea; we explained it to the men, who took it in like so many school-boys. Those little Gurkha fiends turned somersault as they thought of the pandies<sup>[1]</sup> being taken in; and they laughed till the tears rolled down their smooth cheeks. I stained my face and put on one of the men's uniforms, whilst Bahram Khan squeezed himself into mine, and everything worked beautifully."

[1] A nickname for rebels. Mongol Pandy was the name of the first noted mutineer.

"And did no one suspect?" asked the major.

"Not a soul! You see, there never were such rabid haters of the British as we have been for the past twenty-four hours! We were quite willing to eat you all, either cooked or raw; no half-measures with the Guides!"

"You disgustin' treacherous brutes!" chirped our ensign, who was in a state of wild and gleeful excitement.

Bahram Khan stood by, grinning, well pleased with his handiwork, as were all these stalwart soldiers of the Guide Corps. Jim Russell's story ended, the deputy-commissioner passed his arm through Munro's, and, announcing that he wished to consult him with respect to granting a reward to the loyal Rajputs, he led the major from the room. The remark was accompanied by a significant look, and, taking the hint, the remaining officers made some excuse to leave.

The ladies saw and understood, and in a few moments Jim and Ethel were left alone. They were grateful, yet for some moments not a word was uttered by either. The precious time was not exactly wasted, though.

"My poor girl, what you must have suffered!" Jim murmured as he held her hands within his own and fondled them.

"Are you really here, Jim, or am I dreaming? It seems too good to be true."

"I think I really am here," was the reply, and Jim set to work to convince her.

"You have heard how poor Markham was killed, and Tynan and Lewis and Arden?"

Jim nodded and tightened his grip of the hands until she winced.

"What a brute I am!" he penitently exclaimed, covering the little hands with kisses.

"I—I liked it, Jim.— But you know you oughtn't to reward yourself for being a brute."

There was another interval of silence.

"And so the young 'un has behaved like a brick!" said Jim at length. "I'm proud of the kid."

"I should just think he has. I really believe I shall have to marry you, Captain Russell, if only to have Ted for a brother. I think he likes me now."

"I'll punch the young 'un's head if he doesn't," declared the brutal Jim. "It's very decent of the others to give us this good time, little woman."

"It is, indeed. Oh, Jim, are you sure we're not dreaming? Can you stay here with your men?"

The captain shook his head sadly.

"I don't know what to do until I have consulted Munro and Fletcher and your father. We must follow the rest of the corps as quickly as possible, and I think the best plan will be for you all to come with us, if we can obtain horses and ekkas for the wounded and the ladies, until we can drop you at the first safe place."

"Cannot Sir Arthur, as head of the district, countermand your orders to join the Guide Corps at once? If he says that you are needed here, I should think he has authority to detain you. Besides, you and your men are now under father, or rather under Major Munro, whilst you remain here, and you will have to do as they order."

Jim laughed.

"I wish it were so; but it happens to be John Lawrence himself who has sent us to Delhi, and he said he wanted us to get there quickly. And when Jan Larens says 'do this' you've got to do it, and do it smartly. The major is a brave man, and so is Fletcher, but I shall be very much surprised if either of them dare trifle with Jan."

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Major Munro had assembled the loyal Rajputs and thanked them in a straight soldierly speech that touched their faithful hearts and brought a glow of pride to their eyes. The Commissioner, moreover, deemed it well to let congratulations take a more substantial form. He therefore distributed the sum of five thousand rupees amongst the seventy survivors—a welcome reward for their loyalty and courage.

On the following morning Jim's anxiety and hesitation were removed, as a detachment of the 4th Sikhs—a glorious, loyal regiment—marched in and maintained order in the town.

Miss Woodburn's safety being thus assured, Captain Russell at once set out to rejoin his comrades in their seven hundred and fifty miles' march to the Mogul capital, and, to the delight of Ted and Paterson, the colonel allowed the boys to accompany the gallant corps.

We shall hear later on of that memorable march of the Corps of Guides to Delhi—the finest march in Indian history, if not indeed in the records of any army—as well as of their doings during the famous siege.

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## CHAPTER XIII

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### Tynan makes his Choice

The door of Tynan's prison opened and the captive's heart beat wildly. Was it life or death? Only Ghulam Beg bringing his chupatties and water.

"Where is Pir Baksh?" he enquired. "I want to see him."

"The Subadar Sahib has gone out," replied the sepoy, leaving the room before any other questions could be asked. Tynan turned to his humble fare and regarded it with disgust. He felt wronged that he should be fed so meanly by the man he was to reward so handsomely. It was all there was, however, and hard bread was better than nothing, so he devoured it to the last crumb.

What was that? The loud booming of cannon roused him to his feet, an Englishman again, and he made desperate attempts to force open the shutters. The sharper crack and rattle of musketry—volley upon volley—followed the booming of the guns; then the cannon spoke again, and loud cries of alarm, exhortation, and triumph filled the air.

Surely it must be a rescue! He stamped up and down the narrow chamber like a caged wild beast, fuming and raging. Still no one came; he shrieked and stormed in vain.

His suspense was not for long. The door was flung open, and Pir Baksh, followed by his brother, Muhammad Baksh, Ghulam Beg, and another sepoy, rushed into the room. Tynan assumed an attitude of defence.

"Fool!" cried the subadar, anger and impatience in his voice. "I am come to save you. Quick! put on these clothes."

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He flung down the garments of a sepoy, and Tynan hesitated. Why was Pir Baksh so excited? There was fear also in his eyes.

"What mean the noise of cannon, Pir Baksh?" he demanded.

"Quick, on with the uniform or we shall all be slain!" the Moslem angrily replied. "The rebels are mad, and they suspect that I have saved a Feringhi, and will soon be here, though I know not who has told them. The noise thou didst hear was the cannon with which they have utterly destroyed the house of the Commissioner Sahib, and they have killed every man, woman, and child therein. Hasten! Hasten! In the name of the Prophet, hasten or thou art lost, and I too for being so foolish as to help thee!"

Another bitter disappointment for the lad. Hurriedly doffing the uniform of his rank and donning the disguising raiment, he followed his four warders outside, and away from the town—and from safety—the wild yells becoming fainter and fainter.

Presently the subadar turned into a road that led northeastwards, and slackened the pace to a walk, neither he nor his prisoner being in fit condition to run far. They walked on and on at a quick swinging stride, every step causing intense pain. Though Tynan begged them to rest awhile, Pir Baksh refused. His limbs and body had been rubbed and anointed; his bruises were nearly healed, and the rate of marching did not affect his broken arm. The lad's anguish was pitiful to see.

"Have we not gone far enough?" whispered one of the sepoys at last. "Let us halt here and put the cub to death. There is no one to interrupt."

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The subadar was not so sure. The fact that he, Pir Baksh, had contrived to get hold of one of the Feringhi officers was not such a secret as he had led Tynan to believe, and he knew that some of his neighbours, in order to curry favour with the winning side, would probably impart the news to the Commissioner Sahib. Being an arrant coward he feared lest a rescue party should be following on his trail, and he knew what trackers the Gurkhas were. Until his anxiety on this head should be lifted, he did not mean to rid himself of his hostage.

He pressed the party forward until close upon sunset, when Tynan was absolutely incapable of another step. The heat had told upon his wasted strength, and he was on the point of fainting. Nothing save the hope of escape could have kept him up so long. They halted in a small clearing among the trees.

"For heaven's sake, subadar, let me have something to eat!"

"I think the place will suit our purpose," Pir Baksh observed, calmly ignoring the boy's request.

The words and tone struck Tynan as a whip-lash across the face. He looked round for a way of escape, and his arms were seized from behind.

Unnecessary precaution! He was much too weak to resist, and Ghulam Beg threw him roughly to the ground. Pir Baksh contemptuously kicked his fallen enemy.

"Fool!" he snarled. "Didst thou think to escape my vengeance so easily?"

The wretched boy saw the look of hatred in the brute's eyes, and felt that he was doomed. There was no hope of mercy there. He knew at last that the blackguard's object had been to increase his misery by raising his hopes, and the vile scheme had succeeded.

"Remember your oath," the ensign gasped. "Remember the reward, Pir Baksh."

"And dost thou think," the traitor retorted with an air of virtue that sat badly upon his vicious face, "dog of an unbeliever, that we of the Faith would sell our souls for money?"

Again he kicked the prostrate Tynan.

"In what manner shall we slay him?" asked Muhammad Baksh.

"Bury him alive," suggested Ghulam Beg.

"With our bayonets?" sneered the third sepoy. "Let us talk sense."

"Tie him to yonder tree, then," said Tynan's late attendant, "and make a target of him. Fire first at hands and feet and legs and arms."

"Aye, and make a noise that may be heard for miles?" the leader angrily retorted.

Pir Baksh had his reasons for wishing to put his victim away more quietly. In a state of abject terror Tynan listened to the horrible suggestions. The nightmare of suspense and despair experienced in his prison chamber was as nothing to this.

"I have a better plan," said the subadar quietly. "Ye will tie him hand and foot to yonder tree, gag his mouth, and leave him there. There will be little left of him in the morning except bare bones, and clever as the Feringhis are, they will find no mark of knife or bullet should they chance to come across what is left. Ye have the cords. Tie him up."

Tynan shouted for help until a cloth was bound over his mouth. Then the frenzy of despair lent him strength, but the struggle was short, and he was quickly pushed and pulled towards the tree indicated by Pir Baksh.

Something moved in the undergrowth behind, and a squat little man stepped into the light. A musket was in his hand, and a grin upon his hairless face. In an unknown tongue he addressed a question to the men who held the struggling Tynan, and being regarded with a stare of mingled amazement and terror, he peered into the face of the captive. Then the grin died out of his face, for he saw the white skin of an Englishman and understood.

Again he jabbered in the strange language, then quick as thought he drew from its scabbard a curved knife, whose keen broad blade flashed thrice like a heliograph as it caught the slanting rays of the disappearing sun. The sepoys had let go their hold of Tynan, and had raised their muskets, but before the triggers could be pulled the vicious kukri blade had descended twice, and the traitors sank on the sward, cut through the shoulder.

Crack went the musket of Muhammad Baksh, and a bullet skimmed over the cap of the ugly little stranger. Before the echo had died away an answering report rang out, and as Muhammad Baksh paid the penalty of his treachery, a second Gurkha stepped from behind a tree-trunk within fifteen paces of Pir Baksh. The subadar turned and ran.

"Shoot, brother!" sang out the Gurkha, whose musket was empty.

The first-comer's weapon was already covering the runagate. He pulled the trigger, and when the smoke had rolled away, there lay the arch-traitor writhing upon the ground, alternately calling down curses upon the little mountain demons who had frustrated him, and calling upon the Englishman for mercy. Evidently he was not very badly wounded, or he could not have made



so much noise.

The Gurkhas trotted towards him with bared knives, and though the Mohammedan still held his loaded musket the little hillmen never hesitated. Pir Baksh was consistent in his cowardice. Dropping the weapon he held up his hands in token of surrender, and called upon Tynan Sahib to save him from the fiends.

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Harry Tynan had barely realized what had happened, and what a very narrow squeak he had had.

“Do not kill him!” he shouted in Urdu, as he limped towards the wounded savage. He wanted to see what Pir Baksh would have to say for himself before he handed him over to be hanged or blown away. The fact must be admitted that Tynan meant to gloat over the failure of the subadar’s vile plans.

The Gurkhas did not understand the words, but they divined his meaning.

“Sahib,” implored the subadar, “save me from these demons. I spared your life, so do not leave me to be murdered.”

“You spared my life!” Tynan indignantly repeated. “You mean you brought me here to torture me.”

“Sahib, you wrong me. I did but pretend. I had no influence over those three curs who lie dead—praised be Allah!—and they insisted on slaying you. They would have murdered me had I not feigned to fall in with their plans, and we must all safeguard our own lives first. But I meant to save you, and that is why I rejected their proposals as to the manner of death. I would have tied you to the tree, and, after giving them the slip in the darkness, would have returned to set you free.”

“But you kicked me and spat upon me.”

“That was to remove their suspicions. The more I seemed to hate you the more easy would it be to help you.”

Not being a particularly intelligent youth, Tynan began to think there might be something in what the subadar said.

“Well, thou art my prisoner now, and for the present I will save thy life. Where is thy wound?”

“Indeed, sahib, I fear they have slain me.”

Pir Baksh placed his hand to his leg and indicated the nature of the wound. One of the Gurkhas bent down, sliced off some of the cloth with his kukri, and burst out laughing.

“The *kafar* (coward)!” he cried to his companions.

The bullet had grazed the rebel’s thigh, tearing off a little strip of skin. Feeling the sharp sting, Pir Baksh had clapped his hand to the spot and drawn it away covered with blood. Concluding that he was done for, he had tumbled over and howled.

“Get up!” said Tynan brusquely. “You’re not hurt.”

Turning to the Gurkhas he motioned them to lead the way. Picking up the four muskets, the party set forth, the prisoner in the midst rendered very unhappy by the knowledge that a loaded musket was within a few inches of his backbone, and he dreaded carelessness on the part of the Gurkha. The precaution was unnecessary, for the roaring lion of half an hour ago was now as harmless as a dove.

An hour’s walk brought them within sight of camp fires, and before long they had passed the sentries, and Tynan was in the commandant’s tent. He was a small wiry man of about twenty-five, tough as whip-cord.

“Hullo!” he cried, holding a lantern above his head so that the light fell full upon Tynan’s face. “Who are you?”

“Ensign Tynan of the 193rd. I’ve just been rescued from a gang of cut-throats by these two men of yours. They tackled four and killed three.”

“Take the prisoner to the guard-tent.”

The Gurkha saluted and retired, and the officer continued: “Now, Mr. Tynan, you’ll be hungry, so just fall to. If you’d come half an hour ago there would have been a better spread.”

“I’m very hungry, thanks. What force is yours?”

“Oh, I beg your pardon! I’m Captain Hornby of the Kumaon Gurkha Battalion. I’ve a hundred men here, and we are *en route* for Sadalpur. We are expecting orders from John Lawrence—for Delhi, I hope. I won’t listen to your tale until you’ve finished.”

The meal over, the fugitive narrated his adventures since the outbreak of the mutiny until the moment of his rescue. When he came to the account of the explosion he hesitated, and finally said: “We decided to blow it up rather than allow it to fall into the hands of the rebels.”

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Ted Russell had also used the word “we”, but from what different motives!

“You were senior officer?” questioned the captain.

“Yes.”

“Good!” Hornby held out his hand. “I’m proud to shake hands with you. I heard a rumour yesterday that the Aurungpore arsenal had been blown up.”

Harry Tynan felt ready to sink into the ground with shame. His hand fell limp from the grasp, and he hastily resumed his story.

“I can’t make up my mind about Pir Baksh,” he said. “He may have been only pretending to fall in with the views of the majority, but if so, he was a very good actor.”

“You’ve had a rough time, youngster, so just lie down and sleep as well as you can. There’s my mattress, and I’ll get another. Good-night! I’m going the rounds.”

The camp was astir soon after sunrise. Hornby asked how the ensign had slept, and explained that the two rescuers had informed him how they had tracked the party and followed them for nearly a mile, but had not been able to fathom their proceedings until they had seen the white skin. Pir Baksh was conducted before Captain Hornby to be examined with regard to his share in the mutiny. Before any questions could be asked, the traitor drew forth the documents signed by Tynan, and handed them to the Gurkha officer.

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“There, sahib, they will prove I am a true man. Tynan Sahib has reason, I admit, to doubt me, and I should have whispered my intentions to him as we ran away, had not my comrades kept close at hand all the time, being suspicious.”

Captain Hornby read the papers, and regarded the ensign with a puzzled expression.

“This is your signature?” he asked; and Tynan, who was nervously toying with his sword-hilt, stammered an admission of the fact.

“H’m! It certainly seems that the fellow’s story is true, though I don’t like his looks. However, if he tried to save your lives and to restrain his comrades, it looks as if he really meant to be loyal, does it not?”

Tynan agreed that it did, and as he recollected how the treacherous subadar, now bowing and salaaming with an ingratiating smile, had shot down his colonel and helped to murder Lowthian, he cursed the lies he had signed. Yet he had not the moral courage to disavow them, and so lay himself open to the charge of cowardice.

“And of course,” went on the captain, “of course he treated you badly in the house in order to allay the suspicions of his men, who might otherwise have murdered you. It was rough on you, but probably for the best.”

Tynan acquiesced with a nod, and felt very uncomfortable. Hornby read for a second time the note added by Pir Baksh, and said:

“I see why you hesitated when you were speaking of the explosion, and I respect your modesty. So it was your plan to blow up the magazine, and no wonder he admired you for it. The other ensign was killed, I suppose?”

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“Yes; I think I am the only one saved.”

“Poor beggar! Well, you must stop with us until I can hand you and the prisoner to Colonel Bratherton at Jehanabad. These papers should certainly save him from death, and I should say that he deserves a reward.”

Tynan looked utterly miserable, and there is no reason to doubt that he was. How he wished he had never signed that fatal paper! How he wished he had had the pluck to tell the whole story to Hornby last night, admitting that he was half-mad with pain and fear when he signed the statement! But no; he had lied to Hornby then, and had backed up the lie in the morning through cowardice, and the wretched boy now resolved that the easier course would be to stick to the lie. No one could contradict him now, except the subadar. As the thought occurred to him that Pir Baksh knew the truth, and that unless he, Tynan, was prepared to state on oath at the trial that was bound to take place, that the subadar had saved his life and attempted to save them all—unless he did that, the prisoner could and would ruin him, he groaned to himself and kicked viciously at the nearest object. One lie had led to another and yet another, and he had made a net for himself, from whose entanglement he saw no way of escape.

Yet, bad as the prospect seemed to him, he little guessed the real state of affairs.

And Pir Baksh understood as well as he. As this hopeful gentleman had been led back to the guard-tent he had winked slyly at the ensign, clearly intimating that they would stand or fall together. It was a sickening thought. Having had time to think it over, Tynan felt sure that Pir Baksh had meant to murder him, and he bitterly regretted having moved a finger to save him from the Gurkhas. He had not even the consolation of thinking that he had shown mercy to an enemy, for he had only saved him then in order to have him hanged.

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Ten minutes later camp was struck, and they moved off towards Jehanabad.

## The March of the Guide Corps

Four days after Jim and Ted Russell and Alec Paterson had set out from Aurungpore with the detachment of the Guides, they overtook the head-quarters of their regiment. The rapid rate of marching, the excitement of recent events, and the prospect of taking part in the assault on the capital of Hindustan and in the crushing of the mutiny, had proved sufficiently exhilarating to keep up the spirits and health of the boys in spite of the great heat.

Both Ted and Alec had been provided with horses before leaving Aurungpore, "Tommy Dodd" having been stolen by some budmashes; and they found the march enjoyable at times, especially in the cool of the morning before the sun had mounted high, and on moonlight evenings. Of course their detachment was lightly equipped, and had little impedimenta to carry, whereas the rest of the corps had to drag along and guard their tents, commissariat, baggage, and ammunition, otherwise they would never have been overtaken.

Right across the vast Punjab swept the famous corps of Guides, through shady groves of peach and apricot trees, and over dusty plains destitute of shelter; across the five rivers to which the land owes its name,<sup>[1]</sup> each day bringing the stalwart frontiersmen nearer to the goal of their desire. Every man in that band was eager for the fray.

[1] Punjab means "the country of the five rivers".

Afridis, Afghans, and the various Pathan tribesmen of the corps looked forward to the sacking of the wealthy city. For centuries past their forefathers had marched down at frequent intervals to plunder the rich plains of Hindustan, and, as children, they had listened to glowing accounts of the vast wealth of the Mogul capital. The Sikhs of the corps were equally ready to loot, for the Sikh is nearly as rapacious as the Pathan, and much more miserly. They remembered also the bitter enmity between their ancestors and the Mohammedan rulers of Delhi, and their persecution at the hands of the Moslems. The single company of little Gurkhas, though by no means grasping like their comrades, were no less eager to come in contact with the mutinous hordes. The "Irishmen of Asia" these short-legged warriors might be called, from their readiness for battle and love of a fight at all times and seasons.

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The Guide Corps consisted of three troops of cavalry and six companies of infantry, about eight hundred men in all, under the command of Captain Daly. The greater part of both infantry and cavalry were Pathans, and they were the best irregular horsemen in the world. The troopers supplied their own horses, and were men of some wealth and standing in their own country. As the fierce borderers rode and marched along, laughing as they spoke of the fun they would have at Delhi, Bahram Khan grimly told of the punishment meted out to the rebels of Aurungpore, and boasted of having played the most important rôle in the hoax.

"Truly it was all my idea, not Russell Sahib's," he repeated. "But for me all the Sahib-Logue would have been dead ere this."

"Tell us, how did it all happen, cousin?" enquired a duffadar, a relation of the ressaidar's, Nawab Khan by name.

"When Ishar Das brought the news that another rebel regiment had marched into Aurungpore," began the quondam bandit, gratified by the opportunity thus afforded of displaying his triumph, "assuredly we knew not what to do. Russell Sahib called a halt, and there we consulted together. Truly brothers, for a moment even I thought we must give up the attempt. But what is impossible to the true believer? and the idea came into my mind, placed there doubtless by the Prophet. Thereupon I advised our officer to call the men together, that we might instruct them secretly to prepare for mutiny. Then with many oaths we slew Russell Sahib and threw his body into the ditch"—(here the Pathan chieftain chuckled gleefully and his comrades laughed out loudly)—"then we dressed him up as a sepoy, and darkened his face, whilst I robbed him of his watch and his sword and took the command, and we marched along swiftly in great disorder, proclaiming that Bahadur Shah was king in Delhi, and that not a Feringhi should escape our swords. Truly, my brothers, we were fiercer and more bloodthirsty than any of the real rebels. The mutinous dogs, as they heard of our approach, sent out men to meet us, and we rejoiced with them, though we should have greatly loved to slay them. As we entered the courtyard at Aurungpore they greeted us with cheers and great praise, and I spoke scornfully of their methods of fighting. Yea, I laughed in the face of their commandant, for he had no authority, and told him, so that all might hear, that he would never exterminate the infidels. Therefore they placed me in command, as I intended they should, and because I treated them as little better than curs, they became my dogs, and allowed me—the fools!—to place my men, with Sultan Jan and Dayal Singh the Sikh in command, in charge of the guns.

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"They watched over them all night, and when morning came—ho! ho!—I made the madmen—surely the Prophet had smitten them all with madness—I made them, I say, empty all their firearms in the air, pretending that we must trust in the bayonet as soon as the cannon had done their work.

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“‘Aye,’ said I, ‘if your muskets are still loaded ye will lie down and fire as they escape. Ye must surround them with a ring of steel,’ I said. So the madmen delivered themselves into my hands! Then I gave the order, and Sultan Jan of Kohat and Dayal Singh the Sikh cried out, and we let fly into their midst, first destroying the Sikhs, for they are true soldiers, though unbelieving dogs, and the others were but children. Yea, by the beard of the Prophet we destroyed them! Aye, we swept them away, mown down like the yellow corn in the Tirah before the strokes of the sickle.

“So they ran, and we followed; through the streets they ran screaming and throwing down their weapons, and we slew them by scores and by hundreds. But ‘twas I, Bahram Khan, who saved Aurungpore. By the Prophet’s beard, ‘twas I!”

Loudly the Afghan horsemen applauded the strategy of the ressaidar. They laughed and shouted with glee as they listened, and greatly they regretted that they had not been present to participate therein.

Bahram Khan also told his countrymen how the boy-officer riding beside them—younger than any of their own officers, for the Guides required strong men to handle them—had blown up the magazine and miraculously escaped death; and the stern warriors looked approvingly at our hero, and one remarked in English, “Truly, we shall make a Guide of you, sahib!” Officers as well as men treated him as an equal, because of the experience he had gained, and the way in which he had looked death in the face.

For Captain Daly, Ted soon felt an ardent admiration. Said this gallant soldier to the lad on the day that the main body of the regiment was rejoined, “Well, youngster, do you know that you’re taking part in what is going to be the best march in Indian history?”

“I’m glad I’m here, sir,” replied Ted; and indeed he looked content.

“Yes,” continued the commanding officer; “seven hundred and fifty miles is the distance from Murdan to Delhi, and I’ll do it in thirty days. We shall probably be the only native regiment that can be trusted to take part in the siege.”

Ted had looked in vain for his brother’s friend Spencer, until Jim explained that this unlucky officer had been shooting in Kashmir when the outbreak occurred, and so had not yet been able to rejoin his regiment. Ted admired Spencer greatly, and was very sorry to miss him. He was soon attracted, however, by a new acquaintance, Quintin Batty, the noble and well-loved lieutenant of the Guides, whose name was soon to gain such tragic fame.

Through Attock and Rawal Pindi along the frontier, through the large Sikh capitals of Ludhiana, Amballa, and Kurnaul, had marched the famous corps, and wherever they went the Sikh and Punjabi inhabitants looked on in wonderment. As the great troopers in khaki (for the Guides were the first to wear that uniform), sitting their horses as though born in the saddle, rode haughtily past the gaping countrymen, at whom they hardly deigned to look, or as with firm step the six hundred infantry marched easily through the villages, the knots of men gathered under the shade of the banyan-tree discussing the fall of the English raj,<sup>[1]</sup> would quickly disperse to their houses, and from that shelter watch the regiment swing past.

[1] Government or dominion.

“Ah! did I not tell thee, Maun Singh, that the English had not all been swept away?” one would say.

“True, brother. Let us mind our own business and look after our fields, it is not safe to meddle with the Feringhis,” would be the reply.

“Who were they, Father?” a youngster would ask. “Were not our countrymen amongst them? But many were Afghan dogs!”

“Those are the Guides, my son. They have told us lies who said the English had lost their power. Consider, my brothers. How could the Guides be spared from the frontier unless the Sikhs and the Pathans, the Afghans and the Afridis, were on the side of our white rulers? Let our village have no part in this rebellion, else shall we all suffer.”

So province after province was passed, and the people, noticing how proud and confident the Guides looked, thought, “Surely the English are still masters of India.”

And old Sikh and Jat soldiers of “John Company”,<sup>[1]</sup> men who had been hesitating, who had been offered bribes to fight against the Feringhi, and who had been told that the whites were all being swept into the sea, hesitated no longer. They cleaned their swords, harnessed their horses, and veterans brought their sons, requesting permission to enlist in the new Punjab regiments which John Lawrence, the mighty commissioner of the Punjab, was raising for the reinforcement of the army before Delhi.

[1] The Honourable East India Company, also called “Koompanie Bahadur”, or “The Great Lord Company”.

“The Punjab,” said the leader of the Guide Corps, “is paying back India all she has cost her, by sending troops stout and firm to her aid.”

While still more than a hundred miles from Delhi, the Guides were required to quell a disturbance in a neighbouring district. Captain Daly, impatient at the delay, desired to forward

despatches to General Anson, whose army lay some miles to the north of the great city. He consulted Captain Russell.

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"Your brother is a plucky youngster," he remarked, "but what is his friend like? He hasn't much to say for himself, but I think he's to be trusted."

"Paterson seems one of the quiet sort you can depend on," Jim replied. "If you are thinking of sending them on to the commander-in-chief, I think they'd enjoy the job and would carry it through. I suppose you would give them an escort?"

Daly beckoned the two ensigns, and handing the papers to Paterson, he explained the mission, and advised them to ride as much as possible at night.

"You shall have half a dozen troopers as escort," he concluded. "The country will be quiet until you get near Delhi. No monkey tricks, mind, youngsters, and don't stop to blow up any arsenals on the road!"

The boys and their six Pathan troopers hastily provisioned themselves, and, pricking their steeds, dashed joyously away. A ride of a hundred miles with no one to give them orders! They commanded the party, and the general himself was not half so proud of his command as our ensigns of foot were of their half-dozen huge, wild, black-bearded troopers. For a day and two nights they rode without incident, but on the morning of the third, as they drew near to Alipore, and saw the towers and minarets of Delhi glittering in the sun a dozen miles to the south-east, they heard the sound of firing. Proceeding cautiously, they presently perceived a number of rebel horsemen flying before a body of English dragoons, as the eight topped the crest of the slight incline which had hidden them from view. The Carabineers had already given up the pursuit, and were sending a few shots after the galloping rebels, who, seeing the dark-faced, turbaned horsemen, took them for men of the mutinous irregular cavalry, and raised a cheer.

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Ted looked hopefully at Alec, who hesitated for an instant. He was as keen as Ted, but ought he to risk his men and the safety of the despatch?

"Now, sahibs!" whispered Nawab Khan, the Pathan duffadar (corporal).

That decided the young commandant.

"Charge, men!" Alec cried, and waved his sword. "Charge!"

Eight blades flashed in the sunlight, as with a wild yell the little band hurled themselves like a thunderbolt into the midst of the bewildered sepoy. Ted, Nawab Khan, and a trooper, their chargers straining to the utmost, rode side by side, the other five close behind, and the rebel rank broke at once. A dozen men of the 3rd Native Cavalry—the regiment that commenced the great mutiny—fell before that charge, the leader being unhorsed and severely wounded by Ted himself, and before they could recover from their confusion the Carabineers were on their heels. Without waiting to take revenge on the insolent handful, the rebel cavalry scattered and galloped away, the ensigns and the Pathans following hard. At Paterson's command five men ceased their pursuit, but the duffadar, engaged in a running fight with two pandies at once, would not turn back. At length one sowar<sup>[1]</sup> dropped with cloven skull, and the other—a rebel captain—was being disposed of, when a dozen sepoy turned their horses round to help their officer. Quick as thought the Pathan seized the wounded subadar by the collar and jerked him out of the saddle; then, leaping from his own horse on to the rebel's, he laughed at the sepoy, and quickly rejoined his comrades. "He had wounded my horse, sahib, and his was the finest steed I've seen, so I prevailed on the dog to exchange, ho! ho!" and Nawab Khan laughed. And well he might; the beast, a beautiful dark chestnut, was indeed a grand charger.

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[1] A native trooper or horse-soldier.

"Well, of all the cool cheek!" exclaimed the officer of the 6th Dragoons (known as the "Carabineers"), laughing as he came up. "Anyone hurt?"

"None of us, sir," replied Ted with a grin; "but I fancy some of the rebels are."

"And who on earth are you?" was the next question.

"Guides, sir," was Paterson's laconic but very proud answer.

"Guides! Is this all the regiment?"

"I should think not!" exclaimed Ted indignantly, and Paterson proceeded to explain his errand.

"Well, are the rest like these?" asked the astonished captain, who was but newly from England.

"Quite as good. You'll soon see, sir," Ted confidently assured him, whilst the Pathans slowly looked the Carabineers over from head to foot, and evidently approved of the inspection—a compliment returned by the British troopers. Together they entered the camp.

## Ted's First Battle

General Anson, Commander-in-chief in India, had died a few days previously; his successor, General Barnard, received and read the despatch in silence.

He then looked up with stern face, but twinkling eyes. "Do you think, young gentlemen, that it shows good judgment to charge seventy horsemen with only six?" for the captain of the Carabineers had reported the incident to his chief.

Ted stammered out, "We didn't think, sir."

"Think! I should imagine not. You must learn caution, if ever you hope to get on in your profession."

The boys saluted and turned to go, when the general continued:

"Let me see; which of you was it who blew up the magazine at Aurungpore?"

Ted blushed as Alec replied. The general rose from his chair, shook hands solemnly as with an equal, and the ensign departed, his heart nearly bursting with pride. No amount of praise could have pleased him so much as did this simple act.

The dragoon captain found sleeping quarters for them and for their men, and they made a tour of the encampment. In the camp the British soldiers (for their six men were the only dark-skins), horse and foot, were gathered in groups talking over the strange changes that had occurred, and eagerly discussing the latest tidings. The slaughter of the helpless ladies and children in the city before them had maddened the men, and all vowed vengeance on the cruel foe.

"There's not a black regiment to be trusted, I don't care who they are," declared one.

"Oh, there may be some who are all right! we mustn't condemn the lot," replied another.

"Indeed! Who are your precious heroes, then?" sneered a third.

"Well, I don't know," the more hopeful red-coat replied; "but they say that the Guides and the Sirmur Battalion of Gurkhas are coming to help us."

"Guides and Gurkies be blowed! You'll just see; the niggers'll come as far as it suits them, then they'll kill their officers and march into Delhi. They ought to have been disarmed, Guides and Gurkies and everyone else, straight away."

"Hear, hear!" joined in the others. "We don't want no niggers helpin' us."

"They don't know much about the Guides, do they, Ted?" Alec whispered.

"They don't. But they spoke of the Sirmur Gurkhas. I wonder whether they are coming here? My cousin Charlie Dorricot is with them, so I hope they are. He's a jolly beggar is Charlie."

"They say Gurkhas are always to be trusted," Alec replied; "and from what these fellows say, it's evident they haven't mutinied so far.... Hullo! what's up now? The 'Alarm'! By Jove, the pandies are attacking us!"

A bugle had sounded the 'Alarm'; the men sprang to their feet, rushed for their arms, and prepared to fall in. In an instant the whole camp was alive.

"What is it? Who are they?"

"Over there! Look! It's an attack on our rear."

The bugle blew again, and the alarm gradually subsided. All eyes were directed towards a body of men marching wearily, but with correct, well-drilled step, along the road leading towards the British camp. They seemed dark, very short of stature, and curiously attired, and that was all that could be made out. Though not Europeans, they were evidently friends, because the "Alarm" sounded by the first bugle had been contradicted by the second call.

And now that the sepoy regiments were proving false right and left, what Asiatic corps except the Guides could be trusted so near the head-quarters of the rebels? John Lawrence would take good care that no doubtful regiments should be sent to Delhi, and that no Mussulman nor Brahman of the Bengal army should be given such an excellent chance of turning traitor at the critical moment.

The strangers drew nearer, and the camp turned out to meet them. Then the word passed from lip to lip that these were the Gurkhas—Reid's Gurkhas.

"It's the Sirmur Battalion, Alec," said Ted; and he executed a little *pas seul* to proclaim his delight.

"Who are they?" asked some of the Tommies. "Where 'ave they come from? Can they fight?"

"Fight? Can't they just!" replied one of the knowing ones, a sergeant with a dozen years' Indian experience. "They come from Dehra Dun, up in the hills."

"I wouldn't give a dog-biscuit for all the native regiments in India," a young private declared.

"They're all rotten with treachery."

"You'll never be commander-in-chief, Sammy," the sergeant retorted. "You know a dashed sight too much, and yet not 'arf enough. If you wasn't so ignorant you'd know that these Gurkies ain't natives but furriners in Injia same as us, livin' in a furrin country called Nepal, up amongst the Himalayas, which you've never 'eard on, I dare say. And the Gurky king ain't a subject of the queen, like the Injian rajahs and nawabs and nizams and such, but free and independent, like voters at an election. I've fought side by side with 'em, Sammy, and they're as good pals on a battle-field as any chaps from Battersea."

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Ted and Alec laughed at the sergeant's harangue, and strolled down the road to meet the reinforcements. The short-legged, tough, little Gurkhas were almost dropping from fatigue and heat. They had marched many, many miles that day under the scorching Indian sun, and they were no more accustomed to the heat of the plains than were their British comrades.

"Hurrah for the Gurkies! Three cheers for the little 'uns!"

The cry was taken up by hundreds of the red-coats, who were now lining both sides of the road, cheering again and again as the weary Mongolians marched sturdily through their ranks with soldierly swagger. The little fellows grinned and tried to cheer and joke in return, but, being dead beat and almost famishing, the attempt was a failure. Many British soldiers ran out to help their new allies along, by lending the support of an arm or shoulder.

"That's him, Alec!" Ted, regardless of grammar, informed his chum.

He made straight for a lieutenant of the Gurkhas, a tall, jolly-looking man of about five-and-twenty, and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Please, sir," said the ensign, with great deference and as vacant an expression as possible, "is there an officer of this regiment of pandies named Dorricot, because he's wanted in camp."

"Pandies! you impudent puppy!" the enraged lieutenant replied. "Pandies! I like your cheek! My name's Dorricot. Who wants me?"

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"Please, sir, I think it's a tailor with a lot of unpaid bills—"

The lieutenant opened his mouth, and, gripping Ted's wrist, looked him squarely in the face. He burst into a laugh.

"Ted Russell! What on earth are you doing here, you cheeky chimpanzee?"

He wrung Ted's hand heartily, and was unceremoniously introduced to Paterson.

"What are you doing here, Ted?" Dorricot repeated. "Your regiment has mutinied, has it not?"

"Yes. Seeing we were at liberty, the general sent for Paterson and me to come and give him a lift. We're his military advisers, ain't we, Alec?"

"Oh, Ted's altogether too modest," said Paterson. "In reality he's the actual commander here, and General Barnard takes orders from him."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" Dorricot replied. "Well, look here, come to my tent as soon as we've settled down. I want to have a talk with you."

The Sirmur Battalion passed within the lines, and General Barnard himself came out to welcome them.

"Get something to eat sharp!" he exhorted Major Reid. "Sorry you're dead beat, but we may have to turn out at any moment."

Luckily this was not necessary, as the expected attack did not come off, and the tired Gurkhas were granted a few hours' well-earned rest. Soon after they had settled down our two ensigns paid the promised visit to Lieutenant Dorricot, and fought their battles over again, talking and laughing over their several adventures, interrupting, contradicting, and agreeing with one another as they discussed the situation and the causes that had combined to bring it about.

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The elder cousin was full of a natural curiosity concerning Jim's engagement, soon persuading the ensign—and in truth it was no difficult matter—to give his opinion of Miss Woodburn, her accomplishments and attractions.

"Hullo!" interrupted Charlie, as the boy waxed particularly eloquent on the subject. "You're sure it's Russell Major who's in love, and not Russell Minimus."

Ted blushed, laughed outright, and sought to change the subject; but Charlie was determined to extract further information relating to his cousin's love affairs—a matter on which he was conventionally facetious.

"So you really think that old Jim's done well—eh, young Solomon?" Dorricot resumed after a few moments' reflection.

"I tell you he's a jolly lucky chap!" declared the ensign emphatically. "Jolly lucky, I should say. You should just have seen her when she whipped her pistol out as soon as that beggar had knifed me in the *bazar!*"

“What was that, Teddy? You never told me about that.”

So our ensign related the incident with great gusto, and the elder cousin whistled as he heard of the girl’s coolness.

“She’s the right sort for Jim,” he agreed, as Ted concluded the narration. “But I must be toddling off to bed now, I’m badly in need of some sleep. By-bye, young ‘un!”

“Good-night, Charlie! It’s just stunning to see you again. Jim’ll be downright glad when he comes; he’s bound to be here in a day or two now.”

“His men must be rattling good marchers if he is! I hardly think it possible.”

With a hearty handshake the cousins separated, the ensigns returning to their own quarters in the highest possible spirits, looking forward with great eagerness to the coming struggle.

A few days later General Barnard advanced and gave battle to the enemy at Badli-Ka-Serai, six miles from the city. Not a soldier there but was burning to meet the traitors, but none was more keen than the little Gurkhas, who, to the delight of the amused Tommies, turned somersaults and played leap-frog when they heard that an attack was to be made.

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**BATTYE ROSE IN HIS STIRRUPS AND  
THUNDERED FORTH THE ORDER TO  
CHARGE**

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The multitudes of sepoys fought with courage and fierce determination, but were hurled back by the little army, which occupied position after position as the mutineers recoiled. At his cousin’s request Ted was allowed to act with the Sirmur Battalion until the arrival of the Guide Corps, whose absence the boy greatly regretted.

“How mad they will be to have missed this!” he whispered to Charlie as they led the Gurkhas at the double to the foot of the ridge, where they halted and attempted to dislodge the enemy by rifle-fire. The bullets whistled around, and many a gallant fellow fell, and it must be confessed that our ensign felt uncomfortable. He hoped that this waiting “would jolly soon be over”, but, with the eyes of the little Mongolians upon him, he scorned to show signs of flinching even when a bullet flattened on the stone beside him. The fire had little effect on the rebel regiments above; the swarthy faces seemed to glare down upon them in demoniacal fashion, defying their approach.

At length came the welcome order to storm the ridge. With a cheer Britons and Gurkhas rose and dashed up the slope, racing like school-boys for the top. The Gurkhas yelled and shrieked, challenging the 60th Rifles to the race; the English had no breath left for cheering, but they put in all they knew, not to be outdistanced by “them Gurky chaps”. The little mountaineers,



however, had had far more practice in rapid climbing than their British comrades, and were soon well in front, with Major Reid and Lieutenant Dorricot at their head. Though Ted toiled manfully forward, he could only arrive at the top with the rear sections of his regiment, with whom were mixed the dark-coated English riflemen. The sepoys were standing no longer. Their ranks broken up by the furious charge from right and left, their guns taken and leaders slain, they dared no longer face the glistening bayonets and determined faces of vengeful Englishmen and furious Gurkhas, but broke and fled towards the city. After them ran the infantry, and in the plains below the cavalry charged and re-charged the flying mobs, scattering them again as they tried to reform. The battle of Badli-Ka-Serai was over.

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## CHAPTER XVI

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### The Post of Honour

A great victory had been won! The temper of the men had been tested and found true as steel; the only loyal dark-faced battalion had been tried and found worthy to rank side by side with the steadiest of English or Highland regiments. The praises of the Gurkhas were in every mouth.

Besides these tests two great material advantages had been gained. This was the first. Less than a mile from the walls the Aravelli range of hills ended, and underneath this ridge lay the place where the troops had dwelt before the mutiny. Had the enemy not been driven from the Ridge, the old cantonments and parade-ground could not have been occupied, as they would have been swept by the fire from above.

Now that the Ridge had been won, however, the army could safely rest below, protected by the high ground from the fire of the heavy guns on the Delhi bastions.

In the second place, the rebels had not only been disheartened by their first defeat, but the tidings would quickly spread all over India that the English were still strong enough to defeat thrice their number. This news would be worth a thousand men, for people were saying that Allah had deprived the Feringhis of their strength, that they were *lachar* (helpless), and could no longer fight.

The rebel stronghold lay before the victors, vast, powerful, and filled with myriads of brave and warlike men. Well might they be defiant, for what could that tiny army achieve against their great strength. For you must know that by all the rules of warfare an army attacking a strongly-fortified place should be much more numerous than the defending host, and have more powerful or quite as powerful artillery. The assailants should be able to surround the place to prevent the entrance of food or reinforcements. But the walls of Delhi measured seven miles in circumference; the army investing it could with difficulty guard its own quarters, and rebel reinforcements entered as they pleased. Though we were supposed to be engaged in an assault on Delhi, yet in reality, during that summer of 1857, we were on our defence—the defenders of the Ridge against countless rebel attacks.

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At the southern extremity of the Ridge stood a large mansion, built many years ago by a Mahratta gentleman named Hindu Rao. This house, strong and well built, commanded a good view of Delhi, and all movements could be observed therefrom. No force could issue from the walls to surprise the camp or retake the Ridge without being noticed by the picket holding the position. So Hindu Rao's house became the post of honour, and the post of honour is always the post of danger. Less than 1200 yards from the mansion the 24-pounders of the Mori bastion overlooked the Ridge, and the house presented an easy target for the shot and shell of the huge guns.

The little cannon of our soldiers were as pop-guns compared to these monsters, and not only was the advantage in size, but the sepoys possessed a dozen heavy guns for every light one of ours, besides vast stores of ammunition and material of war. The walls had been further strengthened not many years before by English engineer officers, who had made a glacis that protected all except the top ten feet of the walls from injury by shot or shell.

A glacis is a huge bank of earth sloping outwards from the walls, and not only does it shield the lower portions, but, should an enemy attempt to escalate the walls or carry the city by assault, they would first have to run up this glacis, and there they would present such a target that trained gunners could sweep the assailants away by hundreds. The engineers, who had so skilfully and carefully constructed these defences, little thought that their handiwork would merely serve to keep India in a ferment for many months. The batteries were manned by artillerymen who had learned their profession—and learned it, alas! too well—under the tuition of English officers. Within the walls were more than 20,000 trained and disciplined sepoys, men who had proved their valour on many a well-fought field, not to mention thousands on thousands of armed fanatics, warriors by birth and by tradition. All these fought under shelter, which our brave fellows lacked. But ours were British, “strong with the strength of the race to command, to obey, to endure”, save the one Gurkha battalion and the Guide Corps (now close at hand), and these were soon admitted as equals by the British soldiers.

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The British army was small—very small—but the lack of powerful artillery was an even greater source of weakness. An army without artillery, matched against even an equal force well supplied with powerful guns, would have as much chance of success as a man armed with a light cane fighting another possessed of sword and revolver.

Thousands of people in England and in India, who eagerly devoured the news and anxiously awaited the fall of the capital, impatiently asked, "Why are they so long? Why don't they take the city?" These worthy folks could not understand the difficulties; they could not realize that mere pluck and endurance avail nothing against stone walls and mighty cannon. As the weeks rolled by and Delhi was still untaken, other persons, still more ignorant, exclaimed, "Why don't they leave Delhi if they can't capture it, and go and help Sir Henry Lawrence at Lucknow?" They did not see that even if that small army appeared to be doing little, it still kept shut up in the city forty thousand armed rebels who might otherwise be spreading over the country conquering and slaying. Nor did they grasp the fact that had the English army left Delhi unconquered the warlike Punjab, and then all India, would have risen. To have left the Mogul capital would have been a confession of weakness; it would have been to say: "We are beaten, we can do nothing here", and when once the English say that in India, their empire will collapse.

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So, though Barnard's handful was attacking Delhi contrary to all the rules of war, we must remember what Mr. Rudyard Kipling has pointed out, that had our British generals never acted against those rules the boundaries of the empire would have stayed at Brighton beach.

It will be readily understood, even by boys who have engaged in no battles save those in which snow-balls form the most dangerous missiles, that this ridge of elevated ground was of the highest importance. Had the rebels been able to retake it and plant guns thereon, the British camp would have been at their mercy, and the Punjab would have been ablaze. As the Ridge defended the British army, so Hindu Rao's house defended the Ridge.

Let us rejoin the comrades we had left victorious after the battle of Badli-ka-Serai. The army now occupied its old parade-ground below the Ridge, and our friends, who had escaped uninjured, were awaiting further orders, when Major Reid, who had been conversing with the general, came towards them, his face aglow.

"Grand news, Dorricot!" he shouted. "The Sirmur Battalion is to defend that house," pointing to the distant mansion of Hindu Rao.

"Score for our Gurkhas!" Dorricot shouted back.

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"What do you think of that, youngsters?" he continued, turning to Ted and Alec. "I feel as though I'd been made a K.C.B. at least. We must fall the men in and be off."

The Gurkha bugles sounded and the battalion fell in, whilst their commandant informed them that the general had paid them the great compliment of selecting them for the post of honour, and he had no doubt that they would show themselves in every way worthy to uphold the traditions of their race. The little men grinned, well pleased, as their officer went on to warn them that it would also be the post of danger; that upon the house of Hindu Rao would fall the brunt of all the rebel attacks, and that the building would be the main target for the Delhi artillery.

The little men huzzaed at the prospect. The fiercer the battle waging around them the better pleased would they be. They meant to hold their post tooth and nail.

"What plucky little fiends they are!" Alec whispered. "Danger evidently appeals to them as a most delightful prospect."

When the news spread that the Gurkhas had been awarded the post of honour, the soldiers assembled to cheer their comrades from the mountains of Nepal as they marched away. Never did general make a wiser selection. Prominent amidst the glorious achievements during the siege of Delhi stands out the dogged pluck of the Gurkha picket, who successfully held the house of Hindu Rao during a hundred days of terrific fighting and bombardment, though only a handful escaped death or wounds.

Rooms were apportioned to the various ranks, and the Sirmur men were speedily settled in their new quarters. Ted and Charlie strolled round the mansion, and, gazing upon the Imperial City, entered into an argument respecting their distance from the big cannon of the Mori bastion.

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They were still disputing, when a pleasant-looking, gentlemanly young Gurkha officer joined them, and, jerking our ensign round by his jacket collar to face the new-comer, Charlie observed:

"I ought to have introduced you two before. Gorla Thapa, can you guess who the ensign sahib is? He is Ensign Russell, son of your father's comrade, of whom you have often heard. Ted, this is Jemadar Gorla Thapa, son of Jaspao Thapa, your guvnor's great pal of 1815."

Gorla Thapa's jolly countenance became wreathed in grins. He held out his hand, saying:

"I have heard much of thy father, Russell Sahib, who was my father's brother. I am glad to fight side by side with thee as our fathers fought."

Ted pressed the young jemadar's hand. This was, then, the grandson of the famous Nepalese general, Amir Sing Thapa, who had kept our troops at bay for so long a period in the year of Waterloo. Ted had often heard the story, and was glad indeed to meet the hero's grandson.

That night the troops slept soundly both on and below the Ridge. In the early morning the Gurkha picket heard the sound of cheering from the British camp, and the report ran round that the Guide Corps was marching in. Ted, Paterson, and their four Pathans—two had fallen on the previous day—went down to rejoin their regiment, which was being greeted with the same enthusiasm that had been accorded to the Sirmuris a few days before.

Though the Guides had taken no part in the battle they had already covered themselves with undying glory. Daly had promised that the seven hundred and fifty miles should be covered in a month, and he had done it in twenty-eight days. The stately height and military bearing of the frontiersmen and the perfect horsemanship of the cavalry took everyone by surprise, and such exclamations as "A splendid lot!" "Fighters every inch of them!" were heard on all sides. Though they had accomplished the magnificent march—a march that still holds the record—during the hottest season of the year, they came in, as an onlooker remarked, "as firm and light of step as if they had marched only a mile".

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The Guides had barely arrived before they contrived to give the Delhi rebels a taste of their temper. Large bodies of horse and foot had been sent out from the city to harass our advanced posts, and, full of a fierce joy, the Guides were ordered to the front.

Charlie was engaged in chaffing his cousin, Ted throwing in a word here and there, when Lieutenant Quintin Battye strolled up, a smile on his handsome face. He nodded towards the two ensigns.

"I've a bone to pick with you two," he gaily remarked. "What do you mean by risking the lives of my best troopers by charging a regiment with half a dozen men? Throw your own lives away if you like, but remember that our sowars are of value to the state."

Ted had a joke on the tip of his tongue before the slower Paterson had framed any suitable reply, when the order came for the Guides Cavalry to advance.

Battye rose in his stirrups, and, thundering forth the order to charge, dashed straight for the ranks of the mutinous 3rd Native Cavalry. The sabres of the loyal and disloyal crossed, and down went man and horse before that furious onslaught. Through the second ranks of the rebels crashed those Pathan and Sikh troopers, their steel flashing in the sunlight as the sabres rose and fell again, now tinged with red, in the fierce conflict. Ever in the forefront rode Quintin Battye. Captain Daly, with the infantry, looked on in admiration at his subaltern's charge and could not contain himself.

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"Gallant Battye! Well done, brave Battye!" he cried in his enthusiasm.

At that very moment a rebel turned round, and, riding straight for the English subaltern, discharged his piece into Battye's body from a distance of twenty yards. The deed was avenged! Subadar Merban Sing, captain of the Gurkha company of the Guides, had dashed forward and cut down the sepoy as he fired, but too late to save that precious life. Battye was carried off the field, wounded mortally; and as he lay dying in terrible pain, he turned to the chaplain who attended him, and smiling said: "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori!*"

Thus died a gallant officer and true gentleman. Since that date there has hardly been a campaign in which the Guides have not been officered by a Battye.

The Guides Infantry were now allotted a position on the Ridge, under the orders of Major Reid, who had been placed in command of the advanced posts. Two companies of the 60th Rifles also took up their quarters in Hindu Rao's house, for it soon became evident that the Sirmur Battalion would have to bear the brunt of all attacks.

But the little Himalayans did not grumble at that.

On the very first opportunity that presented itself, our three friends foregathered to talk over the events of the past few years. The two seniors placidly smoked their pipes and congratulated themselves on belonging to regiments that had proved their loyalty.

Jim was forced to submit, with as much good-temper and cheerfulness as could have been expected under the circumstances, to his cousin's quizzing enquiries and humorous comments in the matter of his love affair and engagement. Charlie simply wanted to know everything, and, with as good a grace as possible for a shy young man, Jim laughingly endeavoured to parry the embarrassing questions.

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"Well, tell me what she's like, man, can't you? Teddy here can't say anything concerning her appearance, except that he's head over heels in love with her himself.— And I'm sure that's no recommendation for any girl!" Captain Dorricot added, as an afterthought.

Ted hereupon indulged in an exclamation and gesture expressive of dissent, and of the supreme contempt in which he held his cousin.

"What's that, Ted? You never said anything of the sort? Why, you young bargee, of course you did!" went on the tormentor. "You talked of poisoning Jim's grub, and what not.— Well, Captain Russell, once more: Are her eyes black, blue, brown, purple, violet, green, yellow, red, or a mixture, or perchance, is she an albino?"

"Oh, I dunno! Something between green and blue, as you seem so anxious to know."

“Peacock-blue, shall we say? That’s a pity! Violet is the favourite hue with lady novelists—either violet, or purple, or heliotrope. Did you ever see a woman with eyes of heliotrope hue, young ‘un?”

“No, nor don’t want to.”

“That’s very decided. Now then, Jim, cut along! Eyes, peacock-blue; nose, Roman, Grecian, snub, or what? Grecian? Right. Jot it down. Size? Ted says she’s a dwarf. What? Ted a liar? Surely the boy has not been deceiving me who trusted in him?”

“I never said anything of the kind!” interrupted Ted indignantly. “Don’t believe a word he says, Jim.”

“Oh, Teddy, Teddy, this to your loving cousin? Now, you know that you said she was smaller than you!” Charlie asserted with a show of indignant surprise at the ensign’s perfidy.

“Well, we’re getting at it slowly,” Dorricot continued. “Nose Grecian; peacock-blue eyes; size five feet nothing; hair brown; rides well; shoots mullahs in the *bazar* for sport, failing partridges; loads rifles with considerable ease—for a woman; sings divinely—isn’t that the expression?”

“Hold on, old man, that’s the whole catalogue!” interrupted Jim. “You’ll see her some day, I hope. Now what about this present business?”

Captain Russell then proceeded to give an account of their great march, and Dorricot told of the temptations placed before his men.

“As we halted one day on the march down to Meerut,” he informed the brothers, “a number of sappers who were on the point of mutiny approached our lads and began to talk earnestly to them. We pretended to take no notice, but when the sappers had left, Reid called a couple of the Gurkhas to him. The little men trotted up, quivering with anger and indignation.

“Well, what did those fellows want, my lads?’ he enquired.

“They asked us if we were going up to Meerut to eat the *ottah* (flour) sent up specially by government for the Gurkhas,’ one of them replied. ‘And they said that the *ottah* at Meerut was nothing but ground bullock bones, and that we should be defiled.’

“And what was your answer?’ asked Reid.

“The little beggars drew themselves up proudly.

“We said that we were going wherever we were ordered; that our regiment obeys the bugle-call!”

“Good little men!” commented the captain of the Guides, as his cousin concluded. “Our own Gurkha company would be hard to beat. Look at Subadar Merban Sing! the man who tried to save poor Battye. His men simply adore him; they’d do anything for him, and go anywhere with him. But aren’t your ‘almond-eyed Tartars’ Hindus by religion? How did they take the greased-cartridge yarn?”

“They’re Hindus, right enough, but they are soldiers first. They don’t worship either Siva or Vishnu one-half so fervently as they adore their rifles and kukris. So they simply said that they would believe whatever Major Reid told them, and when he assured them that the cartridges and the cartridge-papers were free from offence, they replied, without a moment’s hesitation:

“Then serve them out to us! We’ll use them, and everyone may see!”

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## CHAPTER XVII

### With the Gurkha Picket

On the morning of the 12th of June our friends on the Ridge were out soon after dawn, visiting their respective pickets and receiving reports. All was quiet. They gazed with admiration on the wonderful panorama, at the stately mosques, minarets, and towers of the royal city, at the huge mass of walls bulking in threatening manner before them, at the king’s palace—a town in itself—that stood to the far side of the city, and at the blue waters of the Jumna glittering and sparkling in the sun, washing the opposite walls to those whose heavy guns had poured shot and shell at our men but a few hours ago. To the south of the Ridge lay the picturesque suburbs of the Kishengang and the Sabzi-mandi, with their magnificent buildings, walled gardens, and shady groves.

The peaceful scene was not of long duration. The guns of the Mori and Kashmir bastions presently belched forth a shower of shot and shell, and, under cover of the heavy fire, two large bodies of mutineers poured out to the attack, one charging the Gurkha picket, the other pushing its way through the gardens, sheltered by trees and walls. Those sepoy regiments attacking Hindu Rao’s mansion saw only dark faces between them and their desire.

"Come over to us!" the Brahmans shouted to the Gurkhas. "Come over, and we'll reward you; you shall have treasure and honour. You are of our religion. Siva, the Destroyer, is fighting on our side. Join us in driving away the white men. Come!"

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"Yes, we are coming! Wait for us!" shouted back the Nepalese. And they went, with bayonets fixed and kukris bared; but the rebels waited not. Terrified by the determined faces and gleaming steel, they turned and fled, pursued for some distance by the fierce little mountaineers. Thenceforward the Gurkhas were hated with a hatred as bitter as that accorded to the British.

"Those monkeys of Gurkhas are renegades to their faith!" declared the Brahman priests to those mutineers in Delhi who were of their persuasion. "They prefer to receive the Englishman's pay rather than follow the dictates of their holy men. Let them be outcasts! Spare them not! When we have destroyed the white men, then shall we deal with them, if any have escaped by that time!"

The attack made at the same time on the troops stationed below the Ridge met with no better success. The British soldiers down there were no less eager than their comrades up above to give the foemen a taste of their quality. After some hours' hard fighting, the rebels were repulsed with heavy loss, and our men began to feel happy, fondly imagining that the tide was already turning in their favour.

The unthinking ones and the least experienced talked confidently of entering Delhi in a few days, or a week or two at most. They underrated the strength of the enemy, and also the determination of the mutineers,—a mistake the British soldier is wont to make.

Undismayed by this reverse, the enemy came out to attack our posts every day between the 12th and 17th of June, and every day they were beaten back. Time after time they flung themselves in heavy masses against the small force defending the Ridge, only to be hurled back again and again by the Gurkhas, the Guides Infantry, and the Englishmen of the 60th Rifles, who all fought with equally unflinching gallantry.

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But on the 17th of June, Major Reid, to his delight, was ordered to act on the offensive. The enemy had commenced to erect batteries outside the walls, in the Kishengang and Trevelyan-gang suburbs, commanding the British positions, and this could not be allowed. Reid's men, with another column from the main force, sallied forth and stormed the positions, routed the foe, and destroyed the works. But not without loss was this accomplished. Our foemen were no cravens; they flung themselves not once but many times with desperate courage against their assailants, making little impression, however, on the stern warriors of England, Scotland, and Ireland, of the Punjab, and of Nepal.

When morning dawned next day the officers reminded the British soldiers that this was Waterloo-day, and the remembrance of that glorious victory, and of the valour of their fathers, roused a new enthusiasm. On this day the Guides Cavalry had their turn, and acquitted themselves like the heroes they were. But once more they paid a price for so distinguishing themselves, for Captain Daly, their gallant leader, was carried away severely wounded.

The knowledge that his men had proved themselves so worthy consoled Captain Daly in his pain. There were few soldiers in the force now who were not ready to admit, and to back their opinion with curious and unnecessary oaths, that these two native regiments were an invaluable acquisition to the force—that Guides and Gurkhas were worthy to uphold the reputation of the British army.

Little of importance happened during the next three or four days, though the batteries were continually playing on the Ridge. One round-shot came crashing through the portico of Hindu Rao's house with terrible effect, killing an English officer and eight Gurkhas.

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On June the 23rd the rebels made a vow. This day was the centenary of the battle of Plassy. For just one hundred years had the Feringhis' dominion lasted, and now, according to the Moslem prophets, their time was come. So the sepoy, maddened by the resistance offered to their attacks, furious that these Gurkhas should persistently remain at their post, ever watchful and ever eager for the fray in spite of the incessant cannonade, vowed that on this day Hindu Rao's house should be captured.

About mid-day the attack on the Ridge began, the insurgents swarming up on every side. Beaten back, but reinforced by fresh hordes, they again came to the attack with desperate valour, to be once more repulsed by the Gurkhas. Foiled but not done with, the enemy recommenced a brisk cannonade of the handful who opposed them. Under cover of this fire a fresh assault was made, and for a moment the post seemed lost. The dark uniforms of the English riflemen, the drab of the Guides, and the ugly dress of the Gurkhas, seemed lost amidst those swarming thousands. Somehow Ensign Russell found himself in the front with the Gurkha company of the Guides. Little Subadar Merban Sing, the captain of the company, stood at his elbow, as mild in appearance as usual, smiling pleasantly and serenely as he watched the straining and tugging bodies, the uplifted and downfalling arms, the musket flashes on every side, the thrusting of bayonets and slicing of kukris, and, as calmly as if on parade, he gave directions to his men.

Inspired by his companion's coolness and absolute lack of fear, Ted fought manfully at his side. A Guide in front of him stumbled, badly wounded. It was Merban Sing's brother. Quick as thought Ted dashed forward and stood over the body as half a dozen sepoy ran to thrust their bayonets into the helpless Gurkha. With his pistol Ted shot one, gave another the point of his

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sword, and Merban Sing, again at his side, struck down two more whose bayonet-points were almost plunged in the ensign's breast. The Gurkha subadar, felled from behind, dropped over his wounded brother, who at the same time received his death-wound. A rush from behind brought a dozen more Guides around the lad, who saw steel flash in front of his face, and felt a burning sensation in his cheek; then his head seemed to split, and he remembered no more.

With yells of triumph the myriad enemy pushed forward, but not to victory. Major Reid's voice rang out clear, keeping his men together, and with a cheer the gallant fellows responded. The riflemen closed up, shoulder to shoulder, and, first pouring a withering fire into the mass, dashed forward with the bayonet, followed by the Guides, who also used that best of weapons. The little Nepalese, throwing down musket and bayonet, drew their razor-edged kukris and plunged into the thick of their opponents, hewing them down and scattering them on every side by the fury of their charge. The foe gave ground and the crisis had passed. The officers cheered, the men responded, and again a bayonet and kukri charge drove the pandies farther back. Then the Rifles and Guides, kneeling down, sent volley after volley into the mass of wavering sepoy, and followed up their advantage by again charging home, and the danger was passed. But the enemy, though disheartened, were not routed; the conflict still raged fast and furious. The rebel guns, which had ceased firing during the hand-to-hand fighting, again gave tongue with deadly effect. Taking advantage of the diversion thus created, the plucky sepoy made a last desperate effort to fulfil their vow, only to receive further punishment. As the sun went down and the light faded, the rebels lost heart and retired, discouraged and cowed, to the shelter of their walls, hastened on the way by the bullets which dropped amongst them.

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Everywhere had the attack failed, both on the Ridge and below. But though a severe blow had been dealt to the mutineers, too many of our own had been slain; for the sepoy in Delhi could better spare a thousand men than could the army before Delhi afford to lose fourscore. To resist an attack was one thing; to storm the city successfully would be quite another.

When Ensign Russell came to himself he was back in the Mahratta's mansion, his brother and cousin by his side as the doctor examined him.

"Thank God that you've a thick head, young man," observed that official; and turning to the others he added, "He'll be all right in a few days."

"What's the matter?" asked the boy. His head was ringing and singing, and he felt sick.

"Crack on the head with the butt-end, Teddy," answered Charlie. "It knocked you senseless, and Gorla Thapia carried you out of danger. Good job you've got the Russell skull. I expect the musket was smashed to bits! Without joking, old boy, you've had a narrow escape."

"What's the matter with my cheek—it's stinging frightfully?" asked Ted.

"Your cheek?" replied Jim, laughing. "Oh, nothing's the matter with that! It's as big and fine and well-developed as usual." Jim then placed his hand on his brother's brow. "A sword or bayonet has just grazed your cheek, Ted, old man, and taken the skin off. It will be painful, but you'll hardly feel it in a week's time. Now, go to sleep."

"But how did the fight go after I was dropped, Jim? Was Merban Sing killed?"

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Captain Russell related the stirring incidents of the day, and told how Merban Sing and two of his brothers had laid down their lives to defend their trust.

For some time after this determined assault the rebels became more cautious, whilst our men sat tight, waiting for reinforcements and for a siege-train with which to batter those heavy walls whereon our little guns made no impression.

When off duty, officers and men would stroll from one regiment's lines to another, the chief meeting-place being the Flagstaff Tower on the north end of the Ridge, well out of range. Games at cricket and quoits, as well as polo-matches and races, were arranged. Numerous were the visitors to Hindu Rao's house, as men from all the regiments came to see this important outpost, to note the damage done by shot and shell, and to scrutinize those wonderfully tough little Gurkhas who were the first line of defence, and who were enjoying themselves hugely.

But though Major Reid<sup>[1]</sup> had many visitors, he himself never once left his post during these months of bitter fighting. He was guardian of the Ridge, and cricket, quoits, and races appealed to him in vain.

[1] Afterwards General Sir Charles Reid, K.C.B.

The 60th Rifles and the Sirmuris had become the best of friends and closest of chums, and in the early days of the fighting, when tobacco was still to be obtained without difficulty, little Gurkhas and heavy Yorkshiremen or sprightly Cockneys might be seen sitting side by side, smoking their pipes contentedly, and offering one another tobacco by signs, being unable to exchange a word.

By the end of June the casualties among the Rifles, Guides, and Gurkhas had been terrible, and the top room of the house had been turned into a Gurkha hospital, for the wounded Nepalese refused to leave their post. Their British comrades offered to carry them to the big hospital in the cantonments below, where comparative peace and quietness reigned, and where they might have the best medical aid, but the Gurkhas would have none of it. They preferred to stay by their

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comrades, to listen to the shot and shell whistling around, to hear the news each day—who had distinguished himself, and whether their beloved Major Reid and his officers were still unharmed. So Reid, with tears of pride in his eyes, yielded to the wish of his children, and there they stayed.

The troops had been reinforced, but no siege-train had arrived. At their various posts in the Punjab John Lawrence, Herbert Edwardes, and John Nicholson were recruiting the wild Sikhs and still wilder Pathans into regiments of irregular cavalry and infantry. Edwardes, Nicholson, and Brigadier Cotton, in command at Peshawur, the gate of India, had so impressed the tribes under their sway with the might of England, that these fierce men, though at first ready to join the rebels, had changed their tone, and now volunteered to fight against the sahibs' enemy.

Old men, young men, and men of middle age brought their horses and weapons before these great Englishmen, and begged to be allowed to enlist. So week by week some Punjabi,<sup>[1]</sup> Sikh, or Pathan regiments of foot or horse would march proudly to the Delhi camp, sent down by command of John Lawrence, who himself could ill afford to spare them. The first reinforcements to arrive were the 1st and 2nd Punjab Infantry and the 4th Sikhs. The 1st P.N.I. were commanded by Major Coke, and were known as "Coke's Rifles" or as "Cokeys", and a gallant lot they proved, as did indeed their comrade corps.

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[1] The Punjabi corps would consist chiefly of Mohammedan inhabitants of the Punjab, Sikhs, and Pathans, with some Jats and Dogras.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### Ted's Hopes are raised and dashed to the Ground

"Have you seen the new arrivals, Ted?" asked Jim, as he came back from a visit to cantonments one day.

"No, who are they?"

"Hodson's Horse, the 'Flamingoes' as they've been nicknamed, from the colour of their sashes. Go down and look at them; they're worth seeing, and so is Hodson, their commandant."

"Is he the Lieutenant Hodson who once commanded our regiment?" asked Ted, who had heard of the famous freelance.

"That's the man. He got into trouble with the Guides, and now he's been allowed to raise this regiment of horse."

So the two chums waited until both were free from duty, and went down to look at the stalwart Sikh and Pathan horsemen, who afterwards became known to fame as the 9th and 10th Bengal Lancers throughout Hindustan and its frontiers, and in China, Egypt, the Soudan, and Abyssinia. A crowd had gathered round the gaudily-attired "Flamingoes", who sat their horses proudly, much gratified by the reception. They were about to exercise the horses.

"Not so bad," said Ted approvingly; "but not quite up to our Guides—eh, Alec?"

"They look good soldiers," Paterson replied. "Why,—well, I'm blowed! What's Boldre doing there?"

"Who?"

"Claude Boldre! See, that kid on the rat-tailed dun, with a Flamingo sash. I left him at school, and didn't even know he'd got a commission. His father's the colonel of a regiment that mutinied recently, I heard. He's a decent sort."

Paterson walked behind his friend, who had not yet perceived them, and dealt him a sounding smack on the thigh.

"Come down off that horse, Boldre!" was his salutation. "Do you imagine yourself a Flamingo?"

"Who are—why, if it ain't Alec Paterson, by all that's wonderful! How did you come here?"

Alec explained briefly, and introduced Ted.

"Oh, I've heard of you, Mr. Russell," said the horseman, "and I'm proud to meet you."

"Well, explain what you are doing here in that uniform. Didn't know they had ensigns in Hodson's."

"I'm a loot'nant," laughed Boldre; "that is, temporary rank conferred by John Nicholson. I've no commission at all really, but I helped to raise a troop or two of these fellows by sheer good luck."

"You helped to raise them?"

"Yes; I'll tell you the story some other time. They had captured me, and were about to shoot me, when the news of Nicholson's disarming the sepoys at Peshawur came to hand. Then they changed sides cheerfully, and wanted to enlist under Nicholson, and I brought them along to Peshawur. They are rummy beggars! It's first-class being with them. Where are you now—upon the Ridge?"

Ted explained their position, and Boldre promised to look them up as soon as he could. Hodson then appeared on the scene, and the Flamingoes trotted away.

Early in July General Barnard died of cholera after a few hours' illness. His successor, General Reed, had to relinquish the command through ill-health before the middle of the month, so Sir Archdale Wilson was appointed. He was the fourth general who had commanded the force within the space of ten weeks.

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Now and again Ted was sent by Major Reid to bear his reports to the general in command. On one of these occasions he had no sooner entered the head-quarters tent than General Wilson greeted him with the amazing words:

"Ensign Russell! This is fortunate, for I was about to send for you."

"Yes, sir," Ted replied, and wondered what was coming.

"You distinguished yourself at Aurungpore, I understand?"

"I was at Aurungpore, sir."

The general regarded him curiously for a moment before he resumed.

"Major Munro, who commanded your late regiment after the disablement of the colonel, has recommended you for the Victoria Cross. I have looked into the matter carefully, and cordially approve the recommendation, so there is little doubt that you will obtain the decoration. I congratulate you, Ensign Russell; you acted as an English lad should."

Sir Archdale Wilson shook hands, and at the same time a man rose painfully from his chair by the general's side—a man lame and feeble, worn out by disease; a man who should have been in hospital, had not his spirit been stronger than his body. He grasped the boy's hand, and cordially exclaimed, "Well done, youngster! well done!"

That man was Colonel Baird Smith, the great engineer, the man in whose hands General Wilson had left all the operations for the capture of Delhi; the man who was even now forming his great plan and scheming his wonderful works for the assault.

Ted left the tent, walking as if in a dream, hardly knowing whether he stood on his head or his feet. The V.C.! He, Ted Russell, to have the V.C.!

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He hurried back to consult with Alec, and it seemed as though every man, horse or foot, officer, private, or humble bhisti, was looking at him and discussing his good fortune. He started and came to himself as Claude Boldre touched him on the shoulder.

"How do you do, Mr. Russell?" he said. "If you are going up towards the Gurkha picket I should like to go with you. Alec Paterson used to be a great chum of mine at school. Oh! allow me to introduce you to Lieutenant Roberts of the Bengal Artillery."

Ted nodded to Boldre's companion, a young man, slight and short of stature, with a frank, open countenance that told of an active, intelligent brain, and a brave, true heart. He was attired in the handsome uniform of the dashing Artillery Corps, and Ted liked his new acquaintance at once.

"I've only just arrived," said the gunner, "and I want to see everything. Tell me all about Hindu Rao's house."

Glad of the opportunity, the ensign told the story of the Ridge, and for a few moments forgot the V.C.

"You seem to have enjoyed yourself," Boldre commented.

Ted blushed. "Well, it has been rather exciting, and you see I've not suffered. It's different for those fellows who have."

The artillery lieutenant smiled as he looked at the boy's cheek.

"You seem to have had one cut at least," he observed.

"Oh, that was nothing!" Ted replied.

They had approached the Valley of the Shadow of Death, as a hollow on the Ridge was called on account of its exposure to the rebel fire, when a shell burst not forty yards away. Ted noticed with admiration that though Boldre and he both started as if hit, the gunner officer never turned a hair, but calmly completed the remark he was making. The boy felt that he was in the presence of no ordinary man. Before taking his visitors into the house Ted pointed out the different gates and bastions of the city. As they were surveying these, Alec and Charlie came up. Lieutenant Roberts looked steadfastly at the latter and exclaimed:

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"Hullo, ain't you Lieutenant Dorricot?"

Charlie looked keenly at his questioner.

"That's my name, but I don't know you from the Grand Mogul."

"That's not strange; I was only thirteen and in the fourth form at Eton when you left. I'm Fred Roberts, and we were both under the same tutor, the Rev. Eyre Young. You were some years older than I, and I chiefly remember you because I admired the way you once gave a jolly good thrashing to a bully—I forget his name, but he was ill-treating a youngster."

Charlie laughed and shook hands, saying, "Turkey Bletcher, you mean! So you remember that? What are you doing here?"

"I've just come. Been with the Movable Column, but applied to come here, and they gave me permission."

"Are you on the staff?"

"Yes; I've just applied for the post of deputy-assistant-quartermaster-general for artillery, and I've been lucky enough to get it."

"So you're the D. A. Q. M. G., are you?" said Dorricot, with some respect that one so young should have obtained this important post.

They little thought that this slight and young lieutenant was destined to become one of Britain's greatest and best-beloved soldiers, Field-marshal Earl Roberts of Kandahar and Pretoria, V.C.

"So you've been with Nicholson?" said Paterson, who was a great admirer of that frontier hero and demi-god. "He's a wonderful leader, I suppose?"

"The finest soldier in the world!" Lieutenant Roberts quietly asserted.

"Rather!" chimed in Claude Boldre. "He's a grand man. I've been lucky in experiencing what the Pathans along the frontier think of him. They consider him a sort of second Mahomet."

"I suppose he's performing miracles in the Punjab," said Alec. "Is it really true that they worship him as a god?"

"Up in Hazara," replied the artilleryman, "they've formed a sect called the Nikkulseyns, and though Nicholson only thrashed them when they worshipped him, they considered it an honour to be whipped by him, and those who didn't get a licking envied their more fortunate neighbours. The fakir who founded the sect bothered Nikkulseyn to give him his old beaver hat, and as he received no encouragement, the wily old gentleman procured one like it. He then went the round of the shops at the busiest time of the day, and placed the hat in the doorway, so that none might leave or enter without removing or kicking it over. When customers were about to enter, the fakir called out, warning them not to desecrate the topi which had been worn by the great and mighty and holy Nikkulseyn. Nicholson was such a power in the land that none dared remove it, and at last the old fraud consented to take it away on being paid one rupee by the shopkeeper. He would thereupon proceed to another shop and repeat these tactics. When Nicholson heard of this he gave the fakir and his disciples a sound hiding all round, but they only sang hymns of praise to him."

"He was worshipped in Bunu almost as much as in Hazara, was he not?" enquired Paterson; and Claude Boldre replied:

"Yes, he was both worshipped and feared. Before he went there, an orphan boy had been cheated out of his land by his guardian uncle, named Allodad Khan. A few years later the young man went to law in order to recover his property, but Allodad Khan, who was a rich powerful man, had bribed and threatened all the village, and none would give evidence against him. Nicholson heard of this, and guessed how matters stood. One morning, just after dawn, a villager, going out early, was spell-bound at seeing Nicholson's well-known white mare cropping the grass outside the village. He ran back and breathlessly told the news. All the inhabitants turned out to gaze, and someone quickly perceived Nicholson himself tied to a tree close by. Their first thought was to run away, but a few plucked up sufficient spirit to go tremblingly to the commissioner's aid. In terrible wrath Nicholson asked who had dared to treat him like this. They bowed before him, but so terrified were they that no one could answer. 'Whose land is this, then?' he demanded. 'The owner of the land is responsible.' The villagers pointed to Allodad Khan, who fell on his knees, declaring, 'No, no, sahib, the land is my nephew's. He is responsible for the outrage.' Nicholson sternly made him swear to this before the whole village, and then the ruffian saw that he'd been made a fool of. So the nephew got possession of the estate and money, and Allodad Khan, finding the village too warm for him, went on a pilgrimage to Mecca."

"He must be a wonderful man," Alec murmured half to himself. "I wish he'd come to Delhi."

"He will," said Claude Boldre. "He as good as told me so when he sent me off with the Flamingoes."

Ted was all impatience to impart his great news, but modesty forbade him while the strangers were present. The two visitors having inspected the defences of the famous mansion, and criticised most favourably the appearance of the Rifles, Guides, and Gurkhas, took their

departure.

"The general's told me that I'm to have the V.C., Alec," Ted whispered.

"Honour bright?"

Our ensign nodded.

"Congratulations, old man,—and I think you deserved it. Ensign Russell, V.C.!... Splendid, Ted!"

"What's that?" asked Jim, who had joined the group. "You're to have the V.C., young'un?"

Ted then related what had passed, and Charlie Dorricot thumped him violently in the small of the back.

"Well done, Ted!" he shouted excitedly. "I am glad; you deserve it, you cheeky little beggar!"

Ted being called away for a moment, Jim gravely observed:

"Well, I'm not so sure that I'm glad. He's having too much luck, and will be thinking no end of himself unless he's careful. Of course I'm very proud of him, but I'd have preferred him to win it a few years later."

"Oh, Ted's all right!" Charlie assured him. "He won't be spoiled. He's a sterling sort of kid."

At that moment the subject of the conversation returned, and a pause ensued before the elder brother spoke.

"Ted, I was just saying that I'm not quite sure whether I am very glad or not."

The ensign's face fell.

"You won't misunderstand me, old chap, or think I'm jealous, but you're very young, and too much luck is apt to turn our heads. I'm not saying that you didn't deserve it, but don't go about thinking that you're a very wonderful youngster, for there's many an ensign here would have done the same. If it makes you conceited, Ted, it will be a very bad thing for you ever to have won it. But if you're a man, and if you don't put on 'side', all of us will rejoice in your honours."

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Ted was silent for a few moments, then held out his hand to his brother.

"I understand, old man; I know there are many who'd have done it, and perhaps done it better. I'll try to remember that."

"Well done, Ted!" cried his cousin. "I think you'll do, young 'un. Jim's rather inclined to preach, but he's all right."

Ted and Alec repaired to the Flagstaff Tower, the meeting-place of the British camp, situated on the Ridge about a mile north of the Gurkha picket, overlooking the artillery lines and the headquarters camp, the latter being about half a mile farther to the north-west. From the Flagstaff Tower the road ran straight to the Kashmir Gate, and as the ground was high and the place well out of range, it was a favourite spot whence to gaze at the rebel town.

Ted was very thoughtful, and Alec very silent. The former's ardour had been damped by his brother's speech, and he wondered whether Jim really was jealous of his good fortune. He dismissed the idea as unworthy of Jim, whose honour and grit he appreciated fully. Still, it was rather a damper, and he could not help wishing that his brother had been less candid.

It was at the Flagstaff Tower that our friends of the Gurkha picket were accustomed to hear the news of the camp. There they learned of many deeds of valour; of the wonderful daring of Tombs of the Artillery, how he had rescued his equally brave subaltern, Hills, from certain death, and how he had had five horses shot under him already. "One almost every time he goes out," commented Ensign Collins of the 8th Foot. It was there they had heard of the arrival of Colonel Baird Smith, the chief engineer. "He's the man who'll take Delhi," a youngster of the "Cokeys" had prophesied; and that lad was not far wrong.

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But on this day the bearers of news from camp wore troubled looks. Some unwelcome tidings had evidently arrived since Ted's visit below.

"Anything wrong to-day?" Alec anxiously enquired.

"Cawnpore has fallen, and the black fiends have murdered the whole garrison, women and children too—the hell-hounds!"

Ted shuddered as he listened to the details of that awful butchery.

Edward Russell was a lad who had faults enough, but he had never been cruel. He would not needlessly torture the humblest of God's creatures, yet he felt, as he listened to the horrible tidings, that nothing would give him greater pleasure than the blowing up of Delhi and of every sepoy therein. Unhappily this red-hot indignation was nursed by many Englishmen until they forgot the traditions of their race.

The few hundred Englishmen in Cawnpore had been attacked by Dundu Pant, Rajah of Bithur, better known as the infamous Nana Sahib, a man who had posed as a civilized Asiatic, an imitator

of the English. The garrison, composed of detachments of several regiments, of civilians, and of officers whose regiments had risen, was trapped in a position unsuited to a long defence. After a gallant stand, General Sir Hugh Wheeler was convinced that in another day or two all would be over, and for the sake of the women and children, who numbered more than three hundred, he agreed to make terms. Dundu Pant swore that if they would give up the entrenchment, the guns, and the treasure, he would have them all conveyed in boats down the Ganges to a place of safety. The black Mahratta's promises and protestations deceived them all, and they embarked. The boats were taken out into mid-stream, when suddenly a bugle blew; the boatmen sprang into the river, and from both banks lines of hidden sepoy marksmen began to pick off the betrayed Feringhis. Four Europeans escaped to tell the tale. The lucky ones were those who were killed by the bullets. Many were taken alive from the water, and of these the men were murdered at once; the women and children were led away to endure a captivity of more than a fortnight's duration. Hearing of Havelock's approach, Dundu Pant then performed the second act of the ghastly tragedy which has made his name world-infamous. The poor captives, numbering perhaps two hundred, were hacked to death, and their bodies thrown down a well.

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Small wonder that British blood should boil over when the story was told; small wonder that the men of the 60th Rifles should shake their fists as they looked from the Ridge into the rebel capital, towards the distant palace and home of vice, and should vow vengeance on every faithless sepoy, be he Mohammedan like the King of Delhi or Hindu like the Mahratta rajah.

And Cawnpore was not the only scene of murder and outrage. The army before Delhi was cut off from Calcutta and the Gangetic provinces, and news did not come every day. But with the tale of the vilest tragedy of all came also the bad tidings from Allahabad, where the poor ensigns were foully murdered, from Benares and Jhansi, from Fyzabad, Shahjehanpur, and Dinapur. Right along the Ganges the provinces and towns seethed with mutiny and murder, regiment after regiment having risen against the alien; and Oudh, the kingdom from which the Native Bengal Army was chiefly recruited, was ablaze from one end to another, the people joining hands with the rebels in their hatred of the foreigners who had dethroned their wicked king.

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There was one patch of blue in the lowering sky. Lucknow, the capital of Oudh, was holding out bravely. There the best and greatest and most loved man in India was holding the rebel troops at bay with his handful of Englishmen and a number of loyal sepoys, who thereby won everlasting honour. This was Sir Henry Lawrence, the elder brother of John Lawrence. He it was who had pacified the Punjabis, and first taught the stout Sikhs and Pathans and Jats that Englishmen ruled for the benefit of the natives. He it was who gathered round him and trained that band of noble men who ruled the Punjab in such manner that Englishmen came to be respected and honoured and even loved by those who had hated the Feringhis most, a few years before. Men like his brother John, John Nicholson, Herbert Edwardes, and others who became famous as great soldiers and the best administrators the world has ever known—they were all proud to call themselves the disciples of Henry Lawrence. Henry Lawrence governed the Punjab as supreme ruler—as king, in fact, though not in name, when the Punjab was the most turbulent and unruly kingdom in Asia, and he had made it the best-governed. When he was called away his brother John had worthily filled his shoes, and but for the devotion and genius and goodness of heart of these two brothers, England might have lost India.

When the mutiny broke out, Henry Lawrence was Resident of Oudh. Had he been there a few years longer, the men of Oudh would not have entertained that hatred of the British which now filled their hearts, but his beneficent rule had hardly had time to make itself felt. He alone—though he sympathized with and loved the natives of India more than any other Englishman—had foreseen the possibility of the rising, and he had taken steps to meet it in Lucknow. Owing to his foresight and generalship the Residency had been fortified and provisioned, and when the rising took place all the Europeans were within the fort, and the mutineers raged furiously but in vain.

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Our friends at Delhi learned that Havelock and Neill were leading a small column to the rescue of Lucknow, fighting every inch of the way. Neill had been hastily summoned from Madras with his gallant regiment, and had already done splendid work. Lord Canning, the viceroy, had risen to the occasion. Without hesitating he had brought back Outram's Persia Expeditionary Force, and had courageously taken upon himself to stop at Colombo the ships which were taking troops to China, and divert them to Calcutta. China might wait, India could not.

In the Punjab the poorbeahs had shot their bolt and had missed. First Chamberlain and then Nicholson, with the movable column, were giving the rebels no rest, harrying them from one province to another, and punishing them severely.

It was not at the Flagstaff Tower, but at their own post that they heard the news that made each man feel as if he had lost a dear friend. Henry Lawrence was dead. Yes, one of the pillars of the empire had fallen, and even the roughest soldiers felt the shock.

"Ah, he was a man, he was!" murmured a rifleman. "We sha'n't see another like him."

A sergeant of the 60th gazed thoughtfully over the city.

"My two kids are in that asylum he built up at Sanawar," said he. "He was the sojer's friend. The kiddies 'ud have bin dead by now if it hadn't bin for 'im."

"You're right there," said another non-commissioned officer, shaking his head. "He's done more for us than any man. Who cared what became of the poor little beggars, whether they died like flies or not, till he raised the money for the asylums?"

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"What asylums are them?" asked a young private.

"Have ye no' heard o' the Lawrence Asylums?" demanded a man from Lanark. "They're built on the hills, whaur the air is as guid as at Rothesay, an' they're for the soldiers' bairns."

"Aye!" said the sergeant; "and though he was only a poor man for one in his position, they said he spent nearly all his salary in charity."

"Lucknow won't be long now he's dead," muttered another. "They can't hold out for ever, and the rebels are swarming round Havelock. He's had to fall back."

But Lucknow was not destined to fall.

"Well, I'm not a cruel man," muttered the young private, "but I could kill a few o' them sepoy with pleasure, the black-earted villains!"

We may regret this longing for vengeance, but can we wonder at it? The men had heard of their comrades murdered in cold blood, of the women and children tortured and slain most barbarously, and their blood boiled at the outrages. Afterwards it was found that the tales of torture and cruelty had been exaggerated, and that the helpless women and children had been slain quickly and not after prolonged suffering. But even then matters were black enough to excuse the cries for vengeance. Many good and usually gentle men steeled their hearts at this time and gave no quarter to rebel soldiers, but let us thank God that there were many brave Englishmen—the Lawrences foremost among them—who forgave a great deal to the sepoy, and who took into account their temptations and their untamed nature, and who would much rather have won the rebels over by kindness than by slaughter had it been possible.

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But that was not possible.

A number of the older soldiers of the Guides came up as the riflemen were still discussing the latest news. A veteran native officer, grief depicted on his weather-beaten countenance, addressed Captain Russell in tones of mingled sadness and anxiety.

"Is it true, Captain Sahib, that Henry Larens is dead? Tell us it is false."

Jim's voice faltered. Henry Lawrence had been the hero he had worshipped.

"It is true," said he, simply.

"I would have given my life to save his, sahib," said the old Sikh. "His was the brain that raised the Corps of Guides, and he it was who gave me my commission. Oh, my brothers, a great man is dead! Let us go and mourn for Larens Sahib."

The veteran drew his sword and shook it at the sepoy on the walls.

"Wait a little while," he added, "and there will be many mourners in that den of jackals."

The heat was now terrible—a torture that could not be imagined by the people at home; that took the life and energy from the strongest, while as for the others—well, they must suffer the fate of the weak. In the daytime the pitiless Indian sun blazed down upon them, awful in its power and wrath, and at night they gasped for air, and choked, and cursed, or grimly joked, or called upon God, according to their nature.

Ted Russell, healthy and in good condition, with no superfluous flesh, suffered less than most. He had one slight attack of cholera in the early days of July. One day, having been on duty all night, he lay within the house, in little more than bathing-costume, vainly trying to snatch an hour's sleep, for the Mori guns were hard at work. Overhead the sky was of a uniform deep-blue, broken only by the mass of fire almost directly above, and by the haze along the horizon.

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As if by magic, the thundering of the guns from the Delhi bastions ceased, and the well-known strains of our National Anthem were wafted by the south wind from the Mogul city.

"'God Save the Queen!'" gasped Ted. "What's the meaning of that?"

All listened in bewilderment. What could it mean? Had the sepoy suddenly repented and become loyal again? As the band ceased, the big guns of the city thundered forth a royal salute, and then were silent as the band again played "God Save the Queen!"

"What cheek! What awful cheek!" Alec indignantly exclaimed. "Well, that beats everything!"

"What is it?" asked Ted again. "What are they playing that tune for?"

"They are mocking us," Claud Boldre angrily replied. "They have heard what we heard this morning. The curs have captured Agra town, and now I suppose they're gloating over their victory and making fun of us."

His guess was true; the sepoy had taken this strange method of celebrating their triumph. It shows they were not without some sense of humour.

Among the crowd attracted to the "Flagstaff" meeting-place by the unusual strains were many of our hero's new chums. Both he and Alec had formed close friendships with a number of the junior officers from the camp below the Ridge, and Ted particularly had become very popular. He had both proved himself courageous and shown good commonsense, and he never once

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attempted to put on "side". The terrible danger he had gone through at Aurungpore had steadied down his love of fun and joking, and made him realize his responsibilities. Had he come straight to Delhi without having undergone that trying experience in the arsenal, he would soon have found some mischief in which to entangle his Guides and Gurkhas. They would have been only too delighted to have joined in any fun, however rash and hazardous.

"I say, Russell," observed Ensign Collins of the 8th Foot, "you're a lucky beggar, you know. You've had your fair share of the fun."

"Fair share!" growled Claud Boldre. "Why, in his twelve months' service he's had more than most colonels can boast of in as many years. First he goes exploding magazines up and down the country, and instead of being blown up he gets the V.C. Then he's boxed up and besieged, and thrillingly rescued like a scene out of a melodrama; after that he's lucky enough to take part in the grandest march on record; and now he's on duty at Hindu Rao's picket, where all the fighting is. Fair share, indeed! It ought to have been divided amongst half a dozen of us."

"And it ain't that he's particularly handsome," laughed Alec.

Ted grinned. He was too decent a fellow to become conceited, and he admitted that he had had more than his share of the luck.

They were still joking when something happened that tended to confirm their belief in our ensign's luck. One of the general's aides came up and told Ted that Sir Archdale wished to speak to him at once.

"You'll come back a lieutenant at least, Ted," was Alec's unasked-for opinion.

"Lieutenant indeed!" laughed Collins. "I expect he's going to order Russell to blow up Delhi à la Aurungpore."

"Or else resign the command in Russell's favour," was Boldre's suggestion.

Ted grinned back at them all, but his heart beat somewhat rapidly as he was ushered into the head-quarters tent, and it was to beat much more wildly before he left.

Sir Archdale looked up as the boy entered, and went on with his work for some moments, and Ted stood at attention and wondered what was going to happen. At length the general again glanced up from his papers. He was evidently very busy.

"You sent for me, sir?" Ted faltered.

"Yes. I am sorry that my duty is much less pleasant than on the previous occasion, when I prematurely raised your hopes of the V.C."

Ted gasped.

"I hope it may still be all right," General Wilson continued, "but this morning I received notice from Colonel Munro that there is another claimant to the honour of having exploded the magazine at Aurungpore."

Ted was utterly bewildered. He could not find a word to say.

"It seems that another officer of yours—let me see," the general took up a letter that lay on the table, and referred thereto. "Ah, Ensign Tynan!—was taken prisoner by the sepoy, but rescued; and his story is that he was in command of the party holding the fort, and that it was he who fired the train. His account is confirmed by a native officer who saved his life, and who was present."

"Why, sir, there was no native officer in the party," Ted exclaimed, "no one higher than a havildar, and he was with me all the time.—So Tynan is really alive, sir?"

"Evidently. Of course, I am in no position to judge between you, and I know nothing beyond the bald facts just related. If you dispute his statements an enquiry will have to be held later."

"His statements!" said Ted indignantly. "Why, sir, he implored me to surrender, and not to fire the train, and Ambar Singh, the havildar, will bear me out. Thinking he was dead, I never told that to a soul, sir; but if he has lied in this way, he deserves to be shown up."

"I trust that no British officer would act as you allege, Ensign Russell," said the general coldly. "At present I can say nothing more, and I am very busy. Rest assured that justice will be done."

Ted saluted stiffly, and walked out. If he had felt dazed on the previous occasion, what were his feelings now? Full of indignation against his dishonourable messmate, and of intense disappointment because of the probable loss of the coveted honour, he strode back to the Gurkha picket, and told Jim and Paterson what had happened.

They could hardly credit the story. They both knew Tynan's character, and Alec had heard Ambar Singh's free version of the incident, and they felt no doubt regarding the result of any enquiry.

"Don't be downcast, Ted, old boy," said Jim affectionately. "It will soon be all right."

"But who can the native officer be?" Alec wondered. "It's a mystery."

"I can't make it out," Ted replied. "Anyway Ambar Singh and Dwarika Rai will give evidence, and then where will Master Tynan be?"

"But look here, Ted," said his brother in an agitated voice. "Where are those two? They may have been drafted into some other regiment and sent a thousand miles away, or both may be killed. Or they may have been allowed to return home, and have left no trace. In that case it would be your word against Tynan's, and though no one who knows you both could have any doubt, yet his word will be as good as yours at the enquiry. I do hope it will come out all right, old boy."

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"I'm sure it will," said Alec. "Cheer up, Ted!"

More easily said than done, and our ensign went about his work with a heavy and angry heart. Fortunately for his peace of mind, when the news spread, Boldre, Collins, and all his chums rallied round him, and voted the absent Tynan a beast and a liar.

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## CHAPTER XIX

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### Ted's Friends are Bewildered

The 4th Sikhs had left Aurungpore for Delhi, and the fort was garrisoned by a corps of the newly-recruited Punjab Irregulars, of whom Major Munro was in command, with Leigh as his second in command. Colonel Woodburn was now able to hobble about, helped by a stick and his daughter's arm. Sir Arthur Fletcher had resumed the administration of justice, the shops were open once more, and the town had settled down almost to its normal state.

One day late in June Ethel and her father were seated in the officers' quarters of the fort, whither the colonel was wont to resort daily to talk over the latest rumours and reports. Munro and Leigh were lamenting their fate, tied down to police and depot duty, when they wanted to be up and doing before Delhi.

"I am sending a draft to Delhi to-morrow," said the major, "and there's a new batch of recruits due to-day—raw peasants, who must be polished up."

"It is rough on us being shut up here," said Leigh, "drilling and training the raw material, and as soon as they are soldiers, comes an order from John Lawrence saying, 'How many can you send to Delhi?' Still, if we were not here, there'd soon be a rumpus again."

"How many do you send off to-morrow?" the colonel asked.

"A hundred; all Sikhs, and fine men too. They go to Lahore first to be inspected by Sir John, and then they join other detachments going to Delhi.— Well, what is it?"

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An orderly had entered.

"The draft has arrived, sahib."

"Very good. Send the officer in charge to me."

Who should enter the room but Ensign Tynan? The four occupants started to their feet. They had not heard of his escape from death, and firmly believed he had been blown to pieces, his body never having been found, for the best of reasons. Tynan was white, and looked ill both in body and mind, and he trembled from head to foot.

"Tynan! Can it be possible, my lad?" cried Colonel Woodburn, holding out his hand. "I never thought to see you again."

Tynan saluted his colonel, and bowed to Ethel. He hesitated, however, and his face flushed as she stepped forward with outstretched hand to greet him. Stammering some more or less appropriate reply, he sat down in a palpable and inexplicable state of nervousness.

In reply to the shower of questions, he told the story of his rescue. Not the true story, but one he had had plenty of time to fabricate, and had repeated over and over again to himself in readiness for the dread moment. He was committed now to the statements contained in that detestable document—the trap set for him by the unscrupulous Pir Baksh. The paper had passed from hand to hand, from one officer to another, and he would have to attest its truth before Colonel Woodburn and Major Munro. No wonder he was agitated. Before strangers he had repeated the lie with comparative calmness and confidence, but the officers of the 193rd knew both Russell and himself too well, and he had little doubt whom they would be most ready to believe.

He had only recently heard that Ted and the two sepoy had also been saved from destruction, and he did not know what account of the incident Ted had given to the world, neither was he aware that his cowardice had been reported by Ambar Singh.

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He told the story of his escape with unusual caution and deliberation, and painted in more glowing colours the services rendered by Pir Baksh, to whom he gave credit for risking his life in

order to save Tynan's. His audience opened their eyes, and Munro interposed:

"But Russell distinctly stated that Pir Baksh was one of the ringleaders."

"So he appeared to be, sir, but he was forced to play that rôle. He tried to save us in the fort, but Russell would not trust him. I felt sure that he was genuine, and was doing his best to hold the others back."

"Oh, indeed!" said the major drily; "yet Russell informed us that you told him and Lowthian that you saw Pir Baksh shoot the colonel."

"Russell told you that, sir!" Tynan replied with an air of great surprise. "He must have misunderstood me completely."

Tynan had forgotten his unlucky remark, and bitterly he repented the cowardice that had landed him in this net. It was the old story of the first easy lie that had to be supported and buttressed by innumerable untruths.

"Not Pir Baksh, sir," he continued hastily. "It was Abdul Din who shot Colonel Woodburn. I think I see how it was. When they were attacking us, Abdul Din stood by the side of Pir Baksh, and when I pointed, saying, 'That's the fellow who fired the shot!' they must have thought I meant Pir Baksh."

"Oh!"

His hearers hardly knew what to think. Tynan's tale was plausible enough, and Ted might easily have been mistaken. Perhaps after all Pir Baksh had been judged too hastily, and had been less of a scoundrel than they had imagined. He had always seemed a friendly fellow, apparently proud of his regiment.

"And after your rescue by the Gurkhas?" asked Colonel Woodburn.

"I had the fever for at least a fortnight, sir. My first thought when I heard that Aurungpore was saved was to report myself, and I received orders from Colonel Bratherton at Jehanabad to take Pir Baksh with me, as an investigation of his conduct must be held by his C.O. We were to have accompanied the 49th Punjabis, but at the last moment they were ordered to Delhi, so I was told to wait for this draft and bring them here."

"I suppose," asked Colonel Woodburn "that some enquiry was held, considering the suspicious conduct of Pir Baksh at the moment of your rescue?"

"Yes, sir;" and Tynan's agitation increased. "I have to hand you the statement signed by the officer whose men rescued me, and of course the subadar's character must be cleared."

He handed various documents to the major, and broke into a perspiration as he anticipated the coming amazement, incredulity, and growing suspicion. He hated Ethel Woodburn for being there, and would have given anything to have induced her to leave.

It was surely by the irony of fate that Tynan, being in command of the draft, was also responsible for the safe custody of Pir Baksh, whose final disappearance he longed and prayed for. The Moslem had tried hard to find some excuse for slipping away, but Captain Hornby had kept him under arrest, and so had Colonel Bratherton, both having their own opinion of the fellow's loyalty. Pir Baksh was no more anxious to be off than was Tynan to rid himself of his "old man of the sea".

In fact the subadar of the 193rd was having a less anxious time than his accomplice, for he still hoped, by force of lying, to pull through the enquiry. He reflected that in all probability he had not been recognized by anyone except Russell, who was at Delhi, having been more concerned with the attacks on the fort than with those on the house, and neither he nor Tynan were aware that Ambar Singh and Dwarika Rai had been saved. Of course the budmashes of Aurungpore would know the part he had played, but they would say nothing for fear of incriminating themselves.

Major Munro first read through Colonel Bratherton's covering letter and looked hard at Tynan, who was sitting in profound contemplation of his boots, and boorishly repelling the friendly advances made by Ethel. Munro then read Hornby's report of the rescue, and finally the remarkable papers signed by Tynan and Pir Baksh. Colonel Woodburn, watching him narrowly, saw that the major was striving hard to overcome some strong emotion. The contents mastered, he handed the documents to his former colonel without a word.

"I don't believe a word of it," said the latter, throwing the papers on the table.

Tynan flushed.

"My word should be as good as Russell's," he muttered; "but he was always in favour, and you were always down on me."

"It has been your fault, Tynan," said the major mildly, "if we have had a higher opinion of Russell than of you. Russell said nothing about this affair, and gave you as much credit as himself, until Ambar Singh told us the whole story."

This was another blow for Tynan, for he had not heard that Ambar Singh was to be reckoned

with. He was becoming more and more entangled in the meshes.

“Ambar Singh?” said he after a moment’s hesitation. “I expect he did it to curry favour by praising Russell.”

It was now Ethel’s turn to flush. She was on the point of expressing a very decided opinion, when a look from her father checked the words. It was no business of hers at present.

“That is not very likely, Tynan,” the major replied. “To speak plainly, this won’t wash with us, though it may do for strangers who know nothing about the matter. You’ve had fever, and you’ve imagined all this and forgotten what really happened.”

Tynan heartily wished that this had been the case, and the colonel pointed out that the document was signed before the fever, not after.

“But I expect the poor fellow was raving,” said Munro, “after the shock and the blow on his head.”

“It’s perfectly true,” Tynan vehemently asserted as the major’s words gave him an idea. Dull though he was, like many foolish people he had a certain amount of cunning.

“Why should it not be true?” he continued. “I don’t wish to say anything against Ted Russell, but I don’t see why he should have the credit that’s due to me.”

“Tell us, then,” suggested Colonel Woodburn, “what really did happen in the fort, and when the idea of blowing up the magazine first occurred to you.”

“As soon as we got inside,” Tynan doggedly answered, “I whispered to Russell that perhaps we should be reduced to that. I whispered, because I did not wish the Rajputs to suspect. Then during one of the quiet intervals I slipped away and laid a trail of powder from the magazine to the door of the room we were holding. I didn’t carry it farther, for the same reason—fear of our sepoys’ terror.”

Tynan had now completely abandoned himself to the father of lies, and he went on recklessly.

“When Pir Baksh offered to save our lives I felt convinced that he really wished to help us. Russell and I quarrelled because he would not trust him.”

“Then you admit that you would have surrendered the stores and munitions had it not been for Russell?” the colonel coldly remarked.

“No, sir, I would not. I should first have made conditions that before we marched out the sepoys must clear away and leave the streets clear for us, and I believe Pir Baksh could have induced them to agree, and I should have lighted a slow match as we left the place and run for it. But Russell would not give me the chance of explaining, and he influenced the sepoys against me and closed the negotiations before I’d any chance of showing what I meant.”

“Well, go on,” said the colonel more kindly.

“Well, sir, I will say this for Russell, that he was very plucky, and at the end, when all was hopeless, he finished the powder-trail. Until then Ambar Singh and the others had not dreamt of my plans.”

He broke off abruptly, and, as though suddenly enlightened, continued:

“I see it now! I dare say that Ambar Singh really did think that Russell alone was responsible. When it came to firing the powder I claimed the right to do it, but he had hold of the candle, and said he had taken over the command, that he’d deposed me, and he would do it. We had a bit of a scuffle, and he threatened me with a pistol. So he set the powder alight. But I claim that I was in command; it was my suggestion, and I laid most of the train, and therefore I should have the credit. I will say for Russell that he backed me up well, and was plucky. That’s all I’ve got to say.”

Woodburn and Munro were silent for some time. Tynan’s tale was certainly plausible enough, and it seemed as if there might have been misunderstanding. Perhaps Ted had been too hasty in thinking that Tynan was willing to surrender unconditionally. Still, it was very strange that he had never mentioned that Tynan had first suggested the explosion, and that he had laid the train. Though, now they came to think of it, Ted had at first said “we”. They had put it down to modesty, yet the words might have been correct. Could it be that when Ambar Singh had given his version, the temptation to take the credit to himself, now that he believed Tynan dead, had been too strong for the boy?

This was not like Ted, but in justice to Tynan they must admit that it was possible.

“We must consider your report, Tynan,” said the major. “If any wrong has been done to you, we will try our best to get at the truth without any favouritism. Go and see to your men now. We dine in an hour.”

“Well, Woodburn, what do you make of it?” he continued, when the ensign had departed.

“I can’t make head or tail of it. There is evidently room for doubt, and it may have been as he says.”

“I’m afraid I was hasty in sending off that recommendation for the V.C.,” said Munro,



"because if Tynan's tale is true, Ted will not be entitled to it."

"You'd better put that right at once," advised the colonel. "Write and explain that there is some doubt."

"I will at once. I hope the letter may be received before anything has been said to Ted. It would be cruel to raise the lad's hopes."

"I don't believe a word of what Tynan has said," Ethel declared. "I'm sure he was lying. I was watching his eyes all the time, and there was no truth in them."

"It may be so, but I must write," said Munro.

For a long time the major wrestled with pen and paper before he composed a letter to his satisfaction. The contents we already know, and how they dashed Ted's hopes to the ground. The missive sealed, the colonel observed:

"I suppose we can trace Havildar Ambar Singh? His evidence will be wanted."

Ambar Singh had returned to his home in Merwar. The 193rd had been disbanded, and the few who remained loyal had been drafted into the newly-raised corps. But the havildar was not in a fit condition to endure the strain of a campaign, so he had gone home to recruit his health. However, they thought they knew where to find him.

"We can hold no enquiry," said the major, "until Delhi has fallen and Ted is free again, and the case ought certainly to be tried before officers other than those of the 193rd. We are hardly impartial, our sympathies being with Ted. Luckily Dwarika Rai is still here, and he may throw some light on the subject."

For Dwarika Rai, the fourth survivor of Lowthian's handful, had been promoted to the rank of havildar, and was now employed in drilling the raw material and teaching them the beauties of the goose-step.

"I'll drive Ethel home," said the colonel, "and come back presently with Sir Arthur, and we'll examine Dwarika Rai."

When the Woodburns had gone, Tynan returned to dine with Munro and Leigh. The colonel and the deputy-commissioner entered as the officers were smoking after their meal, and Dwarika Rai was sent for.

The Rajput entered the room, and in the act of saluting started back on beholding Tynan, who also gave a start and rose to his feet.

"Why!" he gasped, for no warning had been given him, "what is he doing here? I thought only Russell and I and Ambar Singh were saved."

Dwarika Rai still stood open-mouthed as though he had seen a ghost.

"He also was saved," explained the major. "Dwarika Rai, it is indeed Tynan Sahib."

"I am rejoiced to see him, for I thought he was dead," said the soldier simply.

"We wish to recall to your memory some of the events that took place in the fortress when you were attacked," Munro began. "Didst thou notice the part taken by Pir Baksh during the fighting? Was he a ringleader?"

"Indeed, sahib, I'm not sure. Russell Sahib and Ambar Singh considered him so, but I could not help thinking that he wished us well. He seemed to fire without aiming, and never hit anyone, and I verily believe that he wished to save our lives. But the others would not trust him, and perhaps they were right."

Munro and the colonel looked at one another.

"Your opinion, then, was that he had been forced to rebel?"

"I thought it might be so, Colonel Sahib; in fact, once after the firing had been hot, Bisesar Singh whispered to me that the heart of Pir Baksh was not in the affair. When I asked him why, he replied that the subadar had covered him with his musket, and then winked at him and fired high. Yet sometimes he appeared to lead the dogs; but perhaps that was to divert suspicion, perhaps he had to feign to be as faithless as themselves whenever they were watching him."

"That is probable enough," Sir Arthur whispered to his colleagues. "Under the circumstances I can quite understand a man doing that."

"Yes, so can I," the colonel agreed. "Ted and Ambar Singh might easily have been mistaken, and have misjudged him."

When Leigh had finished recording the evidence, Major Munro asked Tynan to retire for a few moments. He then questioned Dwarika Rai as to who laid the powder train.

"Russell Sahib, I think," was the reply.

"Did you notice Tynan Sahib enter the magazine?"

"Yes, sahib, before they battered the door in. He was away some time, and I wondered why."

The major turned to his colleagues and observed in English:

"Tynan's tale is true so far;" and the others nodded assent.

"Tell us, then," asked Leigh, "is it true that Tynan Sahib tried to prevent Russell Sahib firing the train?"

"In short," said the deputy-commissioner, "did Ensign Tynan act as an officer or as a coward?"

"Nay," the man earnestly replied, "I do not like Tynan Sahib overmuch, greatly preferring Russell Sahib, but he was not a coward. He was very much excited, as we all were, and he tried to snatch the candle from his comrade's hand. But I thought they were contesting who should light the train, as if it matters who did it. The important thing is that it was done."

The Englishmen whispered together, and presently Munro said: "You may go, Dwarika Rai."

"I must say," began Colonel Woodburn, "his evidence confirms Tynan's in every important respect. I'm afraid we've done the lad a serious injustice."

"Yet his account differs from Russell's in point of actual fact, not merely in the interpretation put upon facts," the deputy-commissioner argued.

"Ted was probably excited, and the shock may have temporarily affected his memory," Leigh suggested.

"Ted is certainly to blame," said Munro. "He may easily have mistaken Tynan's excitement for terror."

Said Leigh:

"We forget. Ted Russell never accused Tynan of cowardice. That was Ambar Singh."

"But Ted did not deny it," said Munro, "and he ought to have done so. But when asked, he did state implicitly that the suggestion was wholly his. Either he or Tynan is lying. We must have a full enquiry, and meanwhile Tynan must be treated as 'not guilty' of cowardice."

"My humble opinion," said Leigh thoughtfully, "is that I'd believe Ted Russell's word against Tynan's oath. I don't understand it."

Had he seen Dwarika Rai's cheerful nod, as, returning to the men's quarters, he passed Ensign Tynan, he might have understood it better.

The havildar was a brave and loyal fellow, but he was a Hindu with a Hindu's respect for truth. Tynan, returning after the first interview with his superior officers, had almost run into Dwarika Rai as he entered the men's quarters. The surprise was great on both sides.

"I'm done for," was the first thought of our unscrupulous ensign. "This fellow will knock my tale on the head." His next was: "Why not bribe him to confirm what I have said?"

No one was looking on; he drew the Rajput aside into the orderly-room from which he had just emerged, and offered him a big bribe to bear false witness. The sepoy was greatly in want of money. In common with so many others of his class, the fields owned and tilled by many generations of his forbears were hopelessly mortgaged to the money-lending parasites, the curse of Hindustan. Here a sum was offered that might redeem them, and save his family from disgrace and ruin.

He hesitated. Would his evidence injure Russell Sahib? Tynan assured him it would not, he simply wanted a share of the credit for himself; and the Rajput consented. Tynan warned him what questions would be asked, and coached him to give suitable replies. He cunningly advised him not to appear too eager, and not to pretend to know too much, the chief points being that Pir Baksh was to be absolved, and that he, Tynan, was to have a share of the credit attached to the destruction of the magazine. The sharp-witted Hindu quickly understood his part, and improved upon his teacher's suggestions.

"It will do Russell Sahib no harm," he reflected.

Tynan then warned him that when they should meet in the room they were both to express the utmost amazement, and Dwarika Rai nodded in acquiescence.

He thoroughly earned his pay, as Tynan discovered when he rejoined his comrades.

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## CHAPTER XX

### An Adventure on the Ridge

The attacks on the Ridge outposts had become less frequent and less dangerous, though the cannonade was as brisk as ever.

Early on the morning following the receipt of the amazing news from Aurungpore, Ted Russell of the Hindu Rao picket was roughly aroused from slumber. All was hurry and scurry as company after company of the Guides and Rifles ran to the assistance of the Gurkhas, who were bearing the brunt of a cleverly-designed attack by ten times their number. Jim, Alec, and Ted raced to the scene of action, arriving just in time to pursue the already defeated foe.

"Charlie means to have that rag," Ted panted to his chum, as they raced side by side.

Shouting, "Follow me, lads!" Dorricot had made a dash for the colours of a rebel regiment, and was rapidly overhauling the flying standard-bearer, a score of mixed-up Rifles, Guides, and Gurkhas following as best they could. The fight and pursuit were being carried on over a great extent of ground, and only the few in Dorricot's immediate neighbourhood knew what was taking place. Seeing that the pursuers were so few in number, a large body of the enemy interposed between the officer and his followers, barring their progress. Charles Dorricot broke through, cut down the colour-bearer, grasped the standard, beat back his assailants, and for a few moments cleared a space around him. But what could one man do against so many? Before help could come Dorricot was beaten to his knees, sorely wounded, though still attempting to defend himself.

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He collapsed, a sword-thrust through his breast, just as Corporal Thompson, a huge rifleman, forced his way through the mob by sheer strength and weight and judicious use of the butt-end. In the wake of the corporal came Motiram Rana, a Gurkha, and Hassan Din of the Guides, but, as they got through, the rebels closed up again behind them, baffling the efforts of Ted and his men to follow. Whether their officer was dead or wounded the three knew not; they meant to guard his body with their own. At bay they stood back to back—representatives of the three regiments that had held the Ridge—and, facing them, the rebels snarled like a pack of wolves around a wounded lion. Those behind pressed on those in front, and sepoy after sepoy fell before the weapons of the dauntless three, the Englishman trusting to the butt, the Pathan to the bayonet, and Motiram Rana, of course, to his patron saint, the kukri. The rifle in the Gurkha's left hand was still loaded. Using the weapon as a pistol, the little man pulled the trigger, and the bullet passed through two pandies at least. Having now more room, the gigantic Thompson swung his rifle round and round and up and down like a flail, and cleared a breathing space. The stock broke into splinters, but before the mutineers could get in he snatched a musket, cracked the owner's head, and the pandies again recoiled.

"He's down!" Ted gasped. "At 'em, Guides!"

He and Alec with their Guides around them were pushing and thrusting and smiting their way through the opposing crowd, the pandies on this portion of the sloping ground having rallied round their standard. Suddenly the mob bulged in close by where they fought, as a pricked tennis-ball when squeezed; and amid a babel of shrill yells and jabberings in an unknown tongue, a lane was opened up. A Gurkha corporal had passed the word that Dorricot was down, and, collecting a couple of dozen furious men, had charged at their head. The vicious kukris flashed and flickered and bit deep, and the sepoys fell to right and left of that living wedge of Himalayans. Behind them Ted and Alec, Guides and Riflemen, found their way, and the sepoys broke and fled.

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Ted was quickly beside his fallen cousin, and gave a little cry of joy on finding that Charlie still breathed. The cry was echoed by the Gurkhas, who started in pursuit now they were assured of their officer's safety, but Ted restrained them. Dorricot's hand still grasped the colours for whose capture he had risked so much, for which he might yet have to pay with his life.

Ted signed to the Gurkhas to help him carry back their wounded officer. Motiram Rana proffered his aid, but Thompson motioned him back, saying:

"Tha needs carryin' thysen, Johnny; tha'rt bleedin' like a stuck pig."

Up came Major Reid, bringing his men forward at the double from another part of the battle-field where the enemy's rout had been complete. His face fell as he caught sight of his sorely-stricken comrade.

"The rash fellow!" exclaimed the commandant. "He had no right to push the pursuit so far with such a handful. I cannot spare Dorricot. Carry him gently; and you, Paterson, run and bring a doctor to the house."

Right glad was Ted, and hardly less glad were the Gurkhas, when the doctor promised hope in spite of no fewer than four sword or bayonet wounds.

"I have not an unwounded officer left, youngster!" exclaimed Major Reid dolefully. "Would you care to serve with me again?"

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"There's nothing I should like better, sir." And then the boy paused. "Except that I should be sorry to leave the Guides."

"Well, go to Daly; he's better off for officers than I am, and ask if he'll transfer you for a few days."

Ted obeyed. Permission was granted, and he again found himself with the Sirmuris.

There were scenes in camp of a less tragic nature witnessed daily by our two ensigns from

Aurungpore. The peculiar methods of fraternizing adopted by the British riflemen and the Asiatics of the Guide Corps and Sirmur Battalion provided plenty of amusement for the onlookers. The Gurkhas soon picked up a smattering of English, and a few began to speak the language fairly well, whilst on the other hand the English riflemen gave vent to their feelings in words which they imagined were Hindustani. "Good-morning!" the little men would say with a cheerful grin; and the riflemen, not to be outdone, would reply: "Ram Ram, Johnny Gurkha! Ram Ram!"

Mixed groups would gather after any severe fighting to discuss the conflict and the conduct of the various regiments engaged, amid roars of laughter at the interpreter's attempts to translate the remarks. They were, indeed, the best of comrades; for brave men, of whatever race or creed, cannot but admire one another.

One evening in early August, Ted and Alec, after a long visit to poor Dorricot, joined their good friend Jemadar Gorja Thapa, who was sitting on the shady side of the house-fortress watching the men larking. He gave the new-comers a welcoming grin.

"Good little man is Gorja," whispered Ted. "We may as well sit by him. Those chaps are enjoying themselves, ain't they? Ram Ram, Jemadar Sahib!"

Gorja Thapa returned the greeting, and enquired after the health of his wounded officer and friend.

"He's doing splendidly, thanks! He must be as strong as a horse and as fit as a—what's the native for fiddle, Alec?"

"Dunno; call it a tom-tom. Are you having a good time, Jemadar Sahib, or do you wish you were back in Nepal?"

Gorja Thapa grinned broadly.

"I like it," said he simply.

"Hullo, Paterson!" broke in Claude Boldre, who had just strolled up. "How's your cousin, Russell? I came to ask after him."

"Doing finely considering, thanks! Look at these chaps. They're as fond of horse-play as a lot of kids."

It was certainly an amusing scene, and though the merest clowning, even this kind of fooling serves to keep men in good spirits and temper.

The corporal, Thompson, who had carried the wounded Dorricot out of the fight, stood 6 feet 4½ inches in his stockings, and was perhaps the biggest man in the Delhi force. The men were sitting about in groups playing practical jokes, and Thompson caught hold of Karbir Burathoki, the smallest Gurkha there, a lad under five feet high, and led him to an open space within sight of the others. He there offered to teach the Gurkha how to box, and Karbir quickly entered into the joke. Both pulled off their jackets, and the Gurkha's face was entirely hidden by his grin. The difference in build between the two men was too much for the spectators, who shouted and yelled—"Go it, little 'un!" "Jump up and 'it 'im in the face!" "Fetch a step-ladder!" "Now, corpril, go on your knees and give 'im a chanst!"

After a lot of preliminary feinting and puffing and blowing and striking high above the Gurkha's head, the giant began to retire backwards, Karbir following amidst roars of laughter, the Nepalese spectators being quite as delighted as their English comrades.

At length Thompson caught hold of the little man and held him in the air, kicking and shrieking in pretended wrath. As the corporal put the little Himalayan down, he laughingly remarked: "Na, Johnny, tha con haud me up like if tha wants thee revenge."

The Gurkha examined him from head to foot.

"Hould the spalpeen up, Johnny, ye scutt!" advised an Irish corporal. To the astonishment of all, the little man calmly proceeded to place the giant on his back like a sack of potatoes. Thompson offered no objection, and Karbir was soon staggering from one group of laughing spectators to another. Suddenly upsetting the rifleman full length on the ground, he sat on his chest and proceeded to light his pipe, whereupon the onlookers shrieked. Thompson arose, tossing the Gurkha from his perch, and the two strolled back arm in arm, attempting to keep step, and quarrelling every few yards as to whose pace was at fault.

Reid had come behind the ensign, and was looking on with twinkling eyes. Noting that Ted appeared astonished at Karbir's strength, he observed: "They're terribly strong are Gurkhas in the back, loins, and legs."

When they had settled down again one of the Nepalese observed:

"This war will soon be over. Jung Bahadur is going to march down to Lucknow with his army."

"An' 'oo the dickens is young Bardoor?" asked a rifleman.

"He is our prime minister and commander-in-chief in Nepal. He offered to bring an army down to help you English two months ago, and now the government has accepted his offer."

The Gurkha did not understand all this.

"What chance will those dogs have," said he, "against ten thousand Gurkhas? Truly, he will slay them all!"

"Bedad, then," interrupted an Irishman, "tell him, will ye, wid me compliments—Privut O'Brien's compliments—to lave a few fer us. Sure, we're wishful to git hould av some av thim Cawnpore and Lucknow haythen. Tell him to bear that in moind."

Then the Gurkhas began to speak of their own beloved country of Nepal, by the mighty snow-clad Himalayas, of its wonderful beauty, and of its unequalled sport and wealth of animal life; and the Englishmen tried to explain the extent of their empire and the wonders of London, and told of their mighty ships of war and great sea-borne commerce. They also related the histories of their regimental colours, of the recent Crimean War, and of the fights between Wellington and the French. The Nepalese were very much interested in all the tales of war, for they also had tattered regimental colours of which they were very proud, and which had cost them many lives.<sup>[1]</sup>

[1] Before the end of the siege Riflemen and Gurkhas spoke of one another as "brothers", and at the close of the war the Sirmur Battalion begged that it might be granted a uniform similar to that of their brethren of the 60th, the request being willingly granted. The 2nd Gurkhas are very proud of the little red line on their facings, and the uniform thus gained at Delhi they wore in London at King Edward's Coronation forty-five years later.

By this time the Gurkha hospital was very full. More than half of those five hundred men had been stricken down, and the Guides had also suffered severely. And the great city still defied the British power.

A few more reinforcements were coming in, but no heavy guns had yet arrived. One or two new Sikh and Mohammedan cavalry corps and Punjab infantry regiments, recruited from the Sikhs, Punjabi Mohammedans, Jats, Pathans, and Dogras, as well as the Kumaon Gurkha Battalion (now the 3rd Gurkhas), were fighting on our side. The big Sikh horsemen, who were proud of their new uniform and despised the rebel cavalry, quickly snatched at opportunities to cover themselves with glory. The "Flamingoes", as Hodson's Horse were called, had not been in camp many days before they were in action, distinguishing themselves in a way that none but the very best of troops dare attempt. Faced by a greatly superior force, Hodson, with supreme confidence in the steadiness and valour of his men, feigned a retreat, and when he had drawn the enemy into the open by this manoeuvre, the Flamingoes turned round at his command and charged into the black mass. The foemen hesitated, confused and bewildered; they glanced at the steady line of stalwart, bearded cavaliers, heard the thunder of the galloping horses almost upon them, and were routed, broken and scattered before the oncoming of those determined Sikhs and Pathans.

Though daily witnessing such instances of dash and courage, Ted Russell marvelled less thereat than at the quiet indifference to peril displayed by the native servants. These men were not of the fighting castes: a dozen of them would have fled cringing from the anger of a single Englishman, Pathan, Sikh, or Gurkha. Yet, in such different ways is courage shown, they performed without flinching duties which most Britons would have shrunk from. They would sit at their work or at their meals in the most exposed places, with bullets flicking up the dust all round, no more concerned than a bullock would have been.

To bring meals and provisions to Hindu Rao's house they were forced to cross the dangerous "Valley of the Shadow of Death". Any soldier who might have to pass this spot would await the opportunity to dart across; but these mild non-combatants would calmly walk over, and should any of their number be struck down, would stop to shed a few tears over the corpse and then resume the even tenour of their way.

The army before Delhi was absolutely dependent on these servitors. In that terrible heat the English could not have existed without them; and yet, it must be sorrowfully confessed, they were occasionally ill-treated by some of the more churlish and lawless of those to whose wants they ministered. The boy who bullies at school remains often enough a bully when he has grown up. Bullies are generally stupid fellows, and in the eyes of such men one "nigger" was much the same as another, and the faithful brown servants had to suffer for the sins of the Cawnpore murderers. There was one man in particular, a major of the 15th Derajat Infantry, whose bullying propensities had more than once aroused indignation in the breasts of Ted's friends. Fortunately there were not many Englishmen of his stamp.

One day Ted was told off for picket duty with half a dozen men some distance from the "Sammy" House. When close to his lonely post his attention was attracted by the strange demeanour of a group of wild-looking frontiersmen, assembled in a sheltered hollow. He drew nearer, and perceived to his disgust that a miserable native servant had been tied up and was being flogged with bamboo rods, while a white officer looked on approvingly. Ted recognized the man, and his blood boiled. Taking no account of the difference in rank, he hastened to the spot, and hotly demanded what the poor fellow had been doing to deserve such treatment. The major of the Derajats—for he it was—opened his eyes in amazement, and his face became convulsed with anger. Controlling his rage he contemptuously asked:

"And who are you, little boy?"

Thereat one or two of the Punjabis laughed.

"I'm in command of this picket, sir, and I can't allow this where I'm responsible. Look! the poor beggar is fainting!"

The officer looked round—first at the miserable Hindu, whose back was a mass of bleeding weals, and then continued to gaze about him as though in search of someone.

"Where is she?" he asked at length. "I can't see her."

"Whom do you mean, sir?" asked Ted in bewilderment.

"Why, your nurse, of course; she'll be looking for you everywhere."

Our ensign's face flushed, and his temper rose at the insult. He turned to the Gurkha *naik*<sup>[1]</sup>.

[1] Corporal.

"Karbir, cut that man loose!"

The little man promptly drew his kukri and cut the thongs. One of the Panjabis stepped forward and laid his hand on the *naik* to prevent him. Karbir turned on him like a tiger, with kukri uplifted, and the Punjabi jumped back. The major could no longer restrain his anger. He stepped up to Ted and struck him across the mouth with clenched fist, loosening a couple of teeth and felling the lad to the ground. Quick as thought Karbir dashed at the Englishman, but Ted, from the ground, shrieked out just in time:

"Back, Karbir, you must not touch him!" and the little man reluctantly obeyed. Ted rose, now as white as he had before been red. The major laughed.

"Consider yourself fortunate, young man, if I take no further notice of your insolence. Do you know that you have been guilty of mutiny—rank mutiny—and that I could have you dismissed from the service? Now, you may go, and explain the loss of your teeth as you best please. No—stay! I've not done with you yet. I'll teach you the difference in our rank. Order that corporal of yours to tie up that beast again, and then command each of your men to give him half a dozen strokes."

Ensign Edward Russell cared a deal for his commission, and had no wish to be broken for disobedience, but this order he would not obey. His eyes gleamed as he scornfully cried:

"You great detestable brute! Break me if you can! I'd rather lose my commission as an officer than forget my duty as a gentleman!"

"Did you hear my command?" the major repeated.

Ted was silent. He glanced around, and beheld a tall, bearded man, whom he had never seen before—a man with stern and forbidding look, in untidy civilian attire. The major's glance followed, and an expression of annoyance came into his face as he noticed the stranger.

"Well, my good fellow, what do you want here?" he exclaimed.

"I? Oh, I'm just looking round."

"Oh! Then you'd better get back to whatever your business may be."

The man was silent for a moment.

"Won't that lad obey you?" he asked presently.

"No, that I shall not," Ted asserted firmly, though feeling very miserable.

"What right have you, lad," continued the stranger sternly, "to question your superior officer's commands? Your business is to obey."

"And obey he will," the major declared with an oath, "or I'll know the reason why!"

"That's right, sir," agreed the tall man. "Always insist on obedience from your juniors."

Ted was becoming nervous and feeling very lonely. Though assured he was in the right, the boy could not but feel unhappy.

The batteries of the Mori Bastion once more commenced their horrible work. Round-shot and grape whistled overhead.

"What does it matter to you, young man, whether you obey the command or not?" asked the tall man harshly. "That *bhisti* will be flogged just the same; he won't benefit by your refusal."

"No, that he most certainly won't!" asserted the major with a repulsive laugh. "Nor will he thank you for your interference."

"I'm an officer, not a hangman," said Ted stoutly.

"Well, you will not be an officer long," declared the major.

The stranger had approached, and now stood by their side.

"If you won't obey him," he said in tones of authority, "you must obey me! I order you to place that man under arrest," pointing to the major. "Do you hear me, boy?" as Ted hesitated in his bewilderment.

The major swore furiously. "Who on earth may you be? What do you mean by this impertinence, you drunken civilian?"

The tall man took not the slightest notice. He looked at the boy with stern set face, and there was something in his look that enforced obedience. Still doubtful, but unable to resist the tone of authority, Ensign Russell stepped towards the bully, saying:

"You must consider yourself under arrest, sir."

Naik Karbir understood some English, and was attentively following the course of events. He whispered to his men, and a couple at once placed themselves, with bayonets fixed, on either side of the Englishman. The prisoner foamed at the mouth.

"What do you mean by this outrage, you young whipper-snapper? Take your men away! You'll repent this, you impertinent hound!"

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Our hero looked towards the stranger, who fixed his eyes on the boy, but took no further notice. Then the major appealed to his men.

"My lads, drive these Gurkhas away, and take that English cub prisoner. Kill those little fiends if they resist!"

Nothing loth, ten men of the 15th Derajats sprang forward, and the Gurkhas closed round their officer. The stranger raised his hand imperiously.

"Stop, my children! Come back!" cried a shrill voice, that quavered with fear; and the Punjabis pulled up short and regarded the speaker with amazement as profound as that of Ted. His new ally was the native officer of the party, a grizzled Waziri from the Bannu district.

"It is an order, my children; we must obey," the old man continued to the wondering sepoy.

Their own subadar and chieftain on the side of the Gurkhas and of that infidel dog of a *bhisti*! What could it mean? But most astounded of all were the major and the ensign.

"What! Ahmed Khan!" exclaimed the bully. "Wilt thou suffer me to be insulted in this way?"

"What can I do, sahib? It is an order," the Waziri answered in troubled tones.

Then the stranger spoke again.

"Ensign, you are on duty here, and here you had better remain. I relieve you of the prisoner." Turning to the Waziri subadar he continued: "Ahmed Khan is thy name?"

The subadar fell on his knees. "It is thy servant's name, O Hakim<sup>[1]</sup>!"

[1] Lord.

"Ahmed Khan, I see that thou dost know me, and therefore thou wilt obey. I charge thee to escort this officer—thine officer no longer, whose commands thou must not obey—to the tent of General Wilson, and there say who sent thee. Also, see that this *bhisti* is carried gently to the hospital, and treat him well. It is my command."

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The Waziri salaamed.

A shell whistled overhead and burst some way in front. A second quickly followed, and splinters flew around.

"This is becoming warm, youngster," remarked the tall man, smiling. "Ahmed Khan, begone quickly!"

The subadar whispered to his men, who thereupon glanced hurriedly, with awe-stricken eyes, at the bearded Englishman, placed two on each side of the prisoner, with bayonets fixed, and gave the word to march. The escort moved rapidly away, the major too dazed and cowed to attempt resistance.

The stranger advanced and placed a hand on Ted's shoulder. His face was no longer stern and forbidding; it was the face of a great and good man.

"My lad," he said kindly, "let this be the last time you disobey your senior officer. On this occasion you were right No gentleman, no Christian, could have obeyed his brutal order. But such a case rarely happens, and you must beware lest you take too much upon yourself."

Ted bowed his head. He knew already that he was in the presence of the greatest and noblest man he had ever seen.

The stranger continued:

"I see you are with the Sirmur Battalion. I have heard of their glorious deeds."

Ted, full of the subject, and more at his ease now, poured forth for five minutes an account of the valour displayed by Rifles, Guides, and Gurkhas, then stopped, ashamed at having spoken so much. But, moved thereto by the kind expression of interest in the man's face, he added:

"When are we to make the assault, sir?"

The stranger's countenance lighted up.

"It will not be very long now, lad; the time is at hand. Well, I have much to do; good-bye, ensign!"

The man held out his hand, adding, "Remain a true, God-fearing gentleman, of whom your country may be proud, as it is not of that man who has just left us."

"Good-bye, sir!— But would you tell me your name?"

"I am Brigadier Nicholson," was the simple reply.

Ted's heart glowed with pride and pleasure. He had shaken hands with this famous man; he had actually enjoyed ten minutes' private talk with him—a thing half the officers in the camp would have given much for. The name of the young general was on everyone's lips. Over the heads of his seniors in rank John Nicholson had been given the command of the Punjab Movable Column, and wherever that column had marched victory had crowned its arms, no matter what the odds. Along the frontier of the Indus, amidst the wild robber clans of Bannu, he was worshipped as a deity; and Ted now understood what had been incomprehensible before, namely, the strange behaviour of the subadar, and the sudden awe that had fallen upon the Pathans as soon as Ahmed Khan had whispered the magic words "Jan Nikkulseyn".

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## CHAPTER XXI

### "Wombwell's Menagerie"

On his return in the early morning of the following day, Ted related his adventures to brother and cousin, and told of his interview with the hero of the Punjab.

"Yes," replied Jim, "Nicholson has been here inspecting our defences and examining our men. He's left his column behind and galloped on to confer with our general. Lucky for you, young 'un, that he happened to be present. But, then, you are such a lucky beggar!"

"I wonder what they'll do to your friend the major?" observed Charlie, whose splendid constitution was doing wonders for him.

"Ask him to resign, I expect," Jim opined.

But that officer of the 15th Derajats had already resigned. Before he and his escort had left the Ridge a shell from one of the Mori 24-pounders exploded in their midst, killing the major and one sepoy and wounding four others. Ted, however, did not learn this until the following day, and at the same time he heard that Nicholson had left the camp and ridden out to bring in his column, which was now close at hand.

"Before I forget, here's something for you, Ted," Jim exclaimed, after the three had discussed the ensign's adventures at some length. "The mail came while you were away, and I had a letter from Ethel enclosing this for you."

Jim handed his brother a note, which Ted promptly opened and read.

"It's very jolly of her! The colonel has nearly completely recovered, she says, and they are quite safe. Will you swop letters, Jim?"

"Wouldn't you like to? Cheeky young cub!"

Charlie laughed.

"I've already offered him half my daily pay for a sight of the precious document, and he's waiting for me to raise the bid. He's been looking so radiantly absurd, young 'un, since he received it, that I've been longing to throw my boots at him, but unfortunately I can't get at them."

Jim winked solemnly at his cousin, and appeared far too happy to be abashed by the satire of his facetious relatives.

Before long news reached the Ridge that the Punjab Movable Column was coming in. The whole camp turned out to meet Jan Nikkulseyn's ever-victorious men. Brigadier Nicholson was, of course, under General Sir Archdale Wilson, yet the whole army looked upon him as the man destined to lead them to victory. All felt that a great soldier was in their midst—nor were they disappointed. Hardly had he arrived before he led them out to attack the foe at Nujufgurh, where a splendid success was won, and the enthusiasm of the wearied troops was aroused.



On the 4th September the last reinforcements came in. The remainder of the 60th Rifles arrived from Meerut to join their brethren, the comrades of the little Gurkhas at the house of Hindu Rao, as well as a contingent from the Dogra ruler of Jammu and Kashmir. But the whole camp turned out to cheer a still more welcome reinforcement which accompanied these.

Escorted by the Rifles came the guns—the big guns, the siege guns, the real guns at last! With slow and stately tread, as though conscious of their importance and of the impression they were making, the massive elephants—two harnessed to each gun—appeared in sight, hauling the ponderous cannon to the place that needed them so much. With what delight the long-looked-for guns were greeted may well be imagined. The fortunate soldiers of 1857 had never heard the classic phrases “Now we sha’n’t be long!” and “Let ‘em all come!”, but if they had, they would certainly have used them.

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In the thick of the crowd was Ted, who had got leave of absence from the Ridge, and as Alec could not accompany him, he looked out for any other chums who might be there, and soon caught sight of the khaki and blazing scarlet of Claude Boldre, gay with the colours of the “Flamingoes”. They greeted Lieutenant Roberts, who was busy with his multifarious duties as D. A. Q. M. G., but cheerful and brisk as ever, and stood behind a group of hilarious Tommies.

“Here come the guns at last!” cried a carabineer in an ecstasy of enthusiasm.

“Git away wid ye, it’s Wombwell’s menagerie comin’ to give us an entertainment!” declared an Irish private.

“Nice little ponies them are, drorin’ them!” was another comment.

“What—the uttees? Three cheers for the bloomin’ uttees!”<sup>[1]</sup>

[1] “Uttee” is Mr. Thomas Atkins’ rendering of “hathi”, the Hindustani for elephant, as readers of *The Jungle Book* will know.

“What’ll we do wiv the huttees when we’ve got the guns fixed hup? They’ll heat their ‘eads hoff ‘ere. There won’t be none of hus left for fightin’; we shall hall ‘ave to go hout foragin’ for food for the helephints hall day,” observed a soldier of Cockney extraction.

“Ay,” a friend replied, “and they’ll want exercising. Bill, you’ll ‘ave to go and take ‘arf a dozen helephints for a run every mornin’ before breakfast, same as you used to do them fox-terriers you used to have.”

Bill was wont to boast of the ratting qualities of his dogs at home.

“Ay, Bill,” chaffed another. “Go an’ take ‘em rattin’ along the banks of the Jumner; they’re beggars for rats are uttees.”

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Bill was equal to the occasion, however, and readily replied:

“Nothin’ of the sort! General told me has the helephints was comin’ to-day, an’ ‘e says to me, ‘Bill,’ sez ‘e, ‘wot are we to do with them uttees when they come?’ ‘General,’ sez hi, ‘why not mount the Gurkeys on ‘em an’ make ‘em into light horsemen?—there’s nobody else’s legs ‘ud go round a huttee.’ ‘Bill,’ sez ‘e, ‘you’re a genius!’”

The laugh that followed showed that Bill had scored, and a group of officers standing by, who had up to this point tried to preserve a sedate demeanour, joined in the merriment at the thought of a little Gurkha perched astride one of the monsters. Regardless of the jests at their expense, the huge pachyderms came steadily on through the clustered ranks of interested and gaping spectators.

“By gum, boys, them are guns! We’ll soon be in Delhi now!”

“Three cheers for the Bengal Artillery! and three more for John Lawrence who sent them!”

The cheers were lustily given, for hopes ran high.

“They ought to make short work of the walls,” said Claude. “I think we’re going to have a look in at last.”

“Yes; we’re all getting a bit sick of waiting. Hope we can get a good place in the stalls when the theatre doors open,” Ted replied.

“And I hope Nicholson leads us. By the way, I suppose you’ve heard nothing fresh from Aurungpore?”

“Nothing.”

“That’s rough on you. It must be horribly upsetting to have the matter hanging over so long.”

“It is. I’m glad we’re kept so busy, though, as I haven’t much time to think of it.”

“Never say die! Truth will out, you know, and you’ll be all right. Alec Paterson told me the whole story. That chap Tynan must be a pretty average cad. More guns coming!”

“Ullo!” exclaimed our friend Bill as the end of the procession came into sight, “where’s the rest of the show? There’s nothing but huttees!”

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"No more there isn't. This is a bloomin' fine circus, this is!"

"Here, you!" shouted a dragoon to a dignified mahout, "where's yer giraffes, an' 'ippopotamusses, an' ricoconoseroses, an' kangeroos? Why, there ain't no clowns nor hacrobats!—this is a fraud! Gimme me money back, I can see a better menagerie than this in Hengland!"

"Ay, give us our money back!" chimed in the others in tones of simulated indignation; and roars of laughter went up, to the astonishment of the staid Sikhs and Punjabis, and to the delight of the jolly little Gurkhas.

But though the whole camp was in such high spirits, the more knowing ones understood that Delhi had not fallen yet, and that these cannon were no bigger, and were greatly inferior in number to those mounted on the city walls. Also that the mutineers' guns, being sheltered by the solid masonry, were twice as effective as their own unprotected armament.

During the next few days the whole camp helped the Engineers to put into execution the plan of attack which Colonel Baird Smith's masterly brain had planned. At dead of night the soldiers constructed batteries and shelter-trenches between the English camp and the walls, in positions where it would have meant death to have worked by daylight. Before long thousands of gabions<sup>[1]</sup> and acres of fascines<sup>[2]</sup> had been made for the protection of gunners.

[1] Gabions are hollow cylinders of basket-work filled with earth.

[2] Fascines are large bundles of brushwood faggots.

On the eventful morning of 8th September, 1857, Major Brind of the Artillery—a man concerning whom an officer present observed: "Talk about the V.C., why, Brind should be covered with them from head to foot!"—is given the honour of commencing the bombardment from No. 1 Battery, only seven hundred and fifty yards from the walls. In spite of all Brind's labours of the night, the sun rises before his battery is ready for action, and the mutineers at once perceive his designs. Pitiless showers of well-directed grape plunge in and around the battery. Though but half-sheltered from this terrible fire, Brind's gunners, assisted by a detachment of the Gurkhas of the Kumaon Battalion, go on with the rapid completion of the work. At length a single howitzer is dragged into position, and the first shot of the real bombardment is fired. It is but a feeble retort to the thundering giants of the Mori and Kashmir bastions, and the foemen laugh as they continue to pound the gallant little band with round-shot, grape, and shell. Ted from his post on the Ridge looks on with disappointed eyes.

But before long a second gun is on its platform, and then a third, and the rebels laugh no longer. And soon the battery is complete; five 18-pounders and four 24-pounders, magnificently aimed and served, are replying in earnest, as though the very cannon knew how long the army had been waiting for them, and had resolved to do their duty and show that the waiting had not been in vain. With high hopes and expectations thousands of British, Gurkha, Pathan, Sikh, and Dogra soldiers look on at the awful duel. Idle spectators are they, unable to assist, and safe from the venomous fire of the rebel cannon which are now all directed to the destruction of this impertinent No. 1 Battery. The insurgents stand manfully to their guns, but the finest artillerymen in the world are serving under Brind, and at length, to the delight and amid the resounding cheers and hurrahs of the spectators, the massive masonry of the Mori Bastion, that looked but yesterday strong enough to defy an earthquake, begins to crumble away. The answering fire slackens and dwindles down.

By this time No. 2 Battery (Campbell's) is ready, but is directed to wait until No. 3 can also be prepared, in order that the enemy's surprise may be the greater. With No. 2 is a party of the Jammu contingent, who are at first unwilling to ply spades and shovels or pile sand-bags, murmuring that they are come to fight, not to do coolie work. As the mutineers blaze away, these Dogra Rajputs, throwing down shovels, seize their muskets and fire harmlessly at the stone walls, to the great danger of the artillerymen. They are at once told by Major Campbell that they are there to work and not to play at fighting, and they manfully settle down to the uncongenial task.

The attention of the foe having been purposely attracted by No. 1 Battery, No. 3 (Scott's)—partially prepared during the night, and concealed by grass and branches of trees—has been secretly at work, and is ready on the morning of the 12th. Dangerously near to the rebel cannon is No. 3; less than two hundred yards separate the British gunners from their antagonists. Almost at the same moment No. 4 Battery (Major Tombs') prepares for action. To achieve the secret completion of these batteries has been the brilliant work of Colonel Baird Smith and of his worthy second in command, Engineer-Captain Alexander Taylor.

For three days Brind's guns have been reducing the gigantic and formidable Mori Bastion to powder, whilst the other three batteries have been preparing to lend him a hand.

"Not much left of our old friend!" observes Major Reid cheerfully to a small group of his officers, who stand gazing upon the work of destruction on the evening of September the 11th.

As Reid speaks, another shell strikes their ancient antagonist, the Mori Bastion, towards which he is pointing.

"They're defending it well, though, sir," replies Captain Russell, as gun after gun is brought forward by the rebels, who are making praiseworthy efforts to silence Brind. "We've got so used to the old bastion that one feels almost sorry to see him going to the dogs in this way."

"He's losing flesh rapidly," Ted joins in, as yet another of Brind's kind regards is sent crashing against the once rock-like wall and a fresh shower of dust is thrown up.

"I can't say that I feel much pity for him," Reid grimly declared. "He has too many of my brave lads' lives to answer for," the commandant added with a tinge of sadness in his voice.

"Well, the rest will be merely child's play, I fancy," conjectured a young lieutenant standing by.

Major Reid solemnly regarded the author of this remark for a few seconds before replying.

"You think so, young man?" he asked. "Better keep the playing until it is over. The hard work is yet to come."

Whilst the bombardment proceeds, the Ridge is tolerably safe, for the Delhi guns are too much occupied with Brind's pestilent battery to pay much heed to any other place. The duel continues, waxing hotter and still more hot.

"Splendid practice our fellows are making!" says Jim presently.

"They're a long time with those other batteries," our ensign hazards. "I wish to goodness they'd hurry them up, and then for storming the place!"

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"Don't be impatient, youngster," Reid replies. "If we play our part as well as the Artillery and Engineers are doing theirs, our country will have precious little cause for complaint. They are doing their work magnificently; they've already accomplished wonders, and it's a lot more easy to talk about it and to criticise them, than to get guns into position in the face of those bastions."

Feeling somewhat abashed by his chief's rebuke, as he doubtless deserved to be, Ted discreetly remains silent.

Darkness closing in brings the artillery duel to an end, and the troops lie down for the night.

Not all, however.

Under cover of the night the sappers and miners and gunners are hard at work completing the preparations for batteries Nos. 3 and 4. Our fellows work like true Britons, for their hearts are in their labour. Encouraged by Captain Taylor, who superintends the work, and by their other officers, all of whom lend a hand like the meanest private, they toil on with steadfast, energetic purpose, and daylight finds them prepared.

Word has mysteriously reached the Ridge that to-morrow's sun will see a bombardment the like of which has never before been known in the East, and our friends are stirring soon after sunrise, waiting in exultant anticipation.

"Is it true, sir," asks Ted, "that all four batteries will be playing on the town this morning?"

"I'm hoping so, but I can't say how far they got last night."

At length the longed-for moment arrives. At eight o'clock on the morning of the 12th nine 24-pounders of No. 2 Battery open fire simultaneously on the Kashmir Bastion. Ringing cheers of triumph greet this, the greatest salvo of the whole war, for, as the smoke clears away and the deafening thunder and reverberating echoes die down, our friends and their fellow-spectators see that this very first discharge is bringing down huge masses of masonry.

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A moment of profound silence follows: then a mighty cry of exultation bursts forth.

"Ah! Well done! Well aimed, Campbell!" scream the enthusiastic onlookers.

But the insurgent guns hotly and strenuously reply, and Campbell's battery seem likely to suffer severely, for the rebel fire is not only hot, but is also exceedingly well directed.

"They're keeping their tails up pluckily enough. Villains though they are, they're not cowards," murmurs one.

"That's true! Seems to me that No. 2's in a tight place enough. I only hope—"

What that officer hoped will never be known.

A deafening roar from another direction interrupts his expression of opinion and announces that Major Tombs' Battery (No. 4) is dealing with the rebel guns.

"Hurrah! Tombs is givin' it 'em 'ot! Tombs 'e's a-silencin' of 'em!" shout the riflemen.

"Ulu-ulu-ulu!" scream the delighted Gurkhas.

"Ah!" gasp the astounded Sikhs and Pathans, who have never before seen cannonade like this.

Whilst the British riflemen estimate and argue the distance of the battery from the walls and the probable duration of the bombardment, the Guides and Gurkhas chatter and scream with excitement. Many of these allies of ours have been somewhat prone to consider themselves quite as good soldiers as their employers, but now they are beginning to understand a little more clearly the extent of the British power and resources. And such consideration is good for them.

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Again Tombs's gunners fling their iron hail against the Delhi cannon, putting them out of

action one by one.

“Why, Tombs has got within two hundred yards!” a spectator guesses.

“No, hardly so close as that,” declares a second.

“Well, he ain’t much farther away,” another joins in. And exclamations of “Well done, Tombs!” “Well aimed, sir!” ring out from the Ridge unheeded, because unheard by the gunners steadily plying their grim trade. For Major Tombs is a general favourite; stories of his prowess and daredevilry have spread throughout the British camp, and the approving cheers are echoed from scores of throats.

“Might this be a cricket match?” suavely enquires a captain of the 60th Rifles as he smiles at the enthusiasm.

The mutineers are aghast! How have those batteries been brought there and concealed and protected? And then, only one hundred and sixty yards from the Water Bastion, No. 3 unmask. But, alas! the work has necessarily been done at night, and in the darkness a serious mistake has been made. The big piles of covered sand-bags, which had been placed to hide the guns from the watchful enemy, as well as to protect our gunners from their fire when the moment should come for unmasking, are found to have been carefully piled in a wrong position, so as to obstruct the aim of our guns. For men to go outside the shelter in order to remove the obstruction will not only take a long time, but will expose to almost certain death any brave enough to venture out. So thinks the heroic commandant of the battery, who fears nothing for himself, but hesitates to order his men to be shot down one by one, for so close are they under the walls that the rebel gunners can hardly miss them. But while he pauses in doubt, a Sikh sapper calmly springs outside and commences to throw down the pile before his own gun. With one accord the other sappers and gunners follow the noble example, and the clearance is effected with such rapidity that the guns are ready to open fire before the sepoys have grasped the fact of the battery’s presence.

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Then is hurled forth such a shower of shell and heavy shot from that short distance that the traitors are filled with dismay. The iron hurricane teaches them at last what English artillery can do even in the face of such tremendous odds. This salvo of heavy guns heralds the turning-point of the Sepoy war, and determines the fate of the Indian empire. As the huge Water Bastion crumbles into a shapeless mass of masonry and is crushed into atoms by these 18-and 24-pounders, so the great mutiny is crushed and crumbled at the same time. The last hope of the mutineers is quenched; they may fight on, they may inflict great damage on the Feringhi, they may still accomplish further murders and massacres in various places throughout the land, but all hope of final triumph, all chance of overthrowing the British raj is gone for ever, destroyed by the fire of this magnificent artillery.

In Hindustan news travels from mouth to mouth over hundreds of miles almost as quickly as by telegraph; so north and south, east and west, flew the tidings that the walls and gates of Delhi were being battered down, that in the course of a few days the great city would be in the hands of the sahibs and the Mogul emperor a captive. Amongst the Pathan tribes along the Punjab frontier, in Afghanistan, Beluchistan, Waziristan, Kashmir, the Black Mountain country, and in Nepal, the news was told, and Afghan, Beluchi, Waziri, Afridi, Mohmand, Bunerwal, Swati, Yusufzai, Mamund, and Punjabi, who would most eagerly have helped to rout and destroy the British had our army retired beaten from Delhi, now scornfully turned a deaf ear to all appeals of the mutineers to come over and help them. For the Pathan worships success and despises the fallen.

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“Nay,” said they, “if you with forty thousand men and nearly two hundred cannon, entrenched behind strong walls and with every advantage, if you could be held in check for weeks by two or three thousand British and five hundred Gurkha monkey-men, and a few hundred more of our brethren of the Guides whom ye could not defeat, and then suffered your walls to be battered down as soon as this small army had been reinforced by more of our countrymen and neighbours, what chance will ye have now, driven out of your stronghold? And are not fresh red-coated regiments and corps of fierce, tall men in women clothes even now arriving from beyond the seas? Nay, we will not join you; rather will we fight on the side of the *kafirs*,<sup>[1]</sup> together with the Gurkha pigs and vile Sikh infidels.”

[1] *Kafir* (infidel) is a term frequently applied by Mohammedans, to denote a European.

So the tribesmen now offered their services in such numbers that they had to be refused. They brought wild horses that would not suffer any man to mount them, and they came with ancient, worn-out steeds, blind, lame, and weak at the knees, swearing and protesting that these were all splendid chargers, perfectly trained and in superb condition. With these they would fight the mutineers, if only the great sahibs, Edwardes and Jan Larens, would give them a soldier’s pay. So John Lawrence, Commissioner of the Punjab, was enabled to send down more than fifty thousand men to uphold the British raj.

Day and night throughout the 12th and 13th of September the breaching operations continued, fifty guns grinding mercilessly at the rock-like walls. Though defeat stared them in the face the sepoys showed a courageous front to the end, and as their cannon were one by one knocked out of action, they brought fresh guns up and returned a rapid and well-aimed fire. Their sharp-shooters were told off to pick out the English gunners, and no easy task had those gallant fellows. To our hero and to the hundreds of onlookers the bombardment formed a grand but

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awful spectacle. Fascinated by the sight, they watched the salvos of artillery directed at the bastions, every shot striking home, sending up clouds of dust, and followed often enough by a fall of masonry. The rebel shots whistled and rattled in the air, guns flashed and shells exploded both over their own men and over the doomed city. From the highest to the lowest, from the general in command to the youngest drummer-boy, all knew that this was the crowning work of anxious months of toil. Proud men were the engineer officers, Baird Smith and Taylor, one the brain, the other the hand that had thought out and directed this supreme finish. Proud also were Brind, Tombs, and the other artillerymen, for without their magnificent heroism and skill the plans of the engineers would have come to naught.

One building there was in Delhi close to the Kashmir Gate and the Water Bastion, which the Sikhs and Pathans and Gurkhas, and the rebel sepoys themselves, began to regard with awe—a white-domed edifice not unlike a mosque, save for the cross surmounting its cupola. It was the English church; and though shot and shell had crashed around and over it, the cross remained untouched.

On the 13th of September Captain Taylor declared that the breaches in the walls were large enough to admit of a successful assault, so Baird Smith, ill and harassed, weak and lame as he was, mapped out precise directions for five columns to attack the city at various points. Nicholson was appointed to the first column, and when the others should join him in the city he was to take command of the whole force.

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## CHAPTER XXII

### Ted Distinguishes Himself

Our friends were with the 4th Column. This force, of which Reid (though but a major) was made commandant in consideration of the splendid way in which he had held the Ridge, consisted of detachments of European regiments, the Sirmur Battalion, the Guides Infantry, and the Rajah of Jammu's contingent. Its duty was to sweep through the suburbs of Paharunpur and Kishengang, clearing these of the enemy, and then enter the city by the Lahore Gate. Major Reid gathered his officers together to give them final instructions, and then, accompanied by Ensign Russell, entered the Gurkha hospital, where he told his wounded heroes the plans for the morrow. The scene was one that cut Ted to the heart. Of those five hundred men, whose proud arrival he had witnessed three months ago, only five score remained fit for duty, and many even of this hundred had been wounded or were now suffering from injuries which the tough and indomitable little fellows did not consider sufficiently severe to keep them from their work. On the floor (for there were no cots) lay one hundred and fifty badly-wounded and maimed Gurkhas—the remainder had lost their lives guarding their trust. The hearts of the officers could not but be greatly touched by the sight of such suffering so nobly borne, but Reid's sadness was mingled with pride that he commanded so gallant a regiment. The Gurkhas glanced up at their officer with dog-like looks of affection, and right proud they were too of such a commandant. Sorrowfully he told the men lying there, listening, regardless of their pain, that only one hundred of his own plucky lads would be able to follow him to the assault. As though the word of command had been given, every little Gurkha in that room sprang up or painfully rose to his knees and vowed to follow the chief, even if he had to crawl or limp to the attack. Tears came to the eyes of both Englishmen at the sight of such loyal devotion, and they endeavoured to dissuade, but the little hillmen insisted. Of those hundred and fifty men who had been reported by the doctor as unfit for service, ninety-five were allowed to go,<sup>[1]</sup> and we can guess what torture from unhealed wounds and from sickness they must have cheerfully undergone. But go they would, for the honour of the Sirmur Battalion, and Reid's heart was cheered by the thought that he had now two hundred of his own mountaineers at his back.

[1] This incident is literally true.

Next morning an order was given; the roar of the heavy guns ceased as if by magic; and Nicholson's column, springing up with a shout, rushed to the assault in the teeth of a tremendous and deadly fire. Up the slope of the glacis they rushed and on they surged, fired at by musketry and grape, thrust at by bayonet and spear, with showers of bricks and stones from the crumbling walls hurled down on their heads. At the other gates the 2nd and 3rd Columns behaved with equal gallantry, and the small force left to guard the ridge and camp watched their progress with interest and anxiety. Up the glacis and through the breach of the Kashmir Bastion they rushed, appearing at that distance like a swarm of bees clustering on the slope, then, reaching the top, they disappeared into the town.

But the adventures of these columns, stirring though they were, cannot be related here; we must return to Reid's force, where our friends are. Through no fault of their plucky leader, the 4th Column was soon in difficulties. It should have been supplied with artillery to clear the suburbs, but though three guns were lent to them, no gunners were present. Now, special training is required for the working of artillery, and guns are useless without trained gunners, so Major Reid sought high and low for men to work the guns, but none could be found, and reluctantly, as though giving up hope of real success, he left the cannon behind. They had not

proceeded far before they found barricades and breast-works erected in the way, and, sheltered by these, thousands of rebels poured forth a heavy fire from every side. The Gurkhas and Guides, dashing forward at the double, quickly dislodged the sepoy, put them to rout, and cleared the way; but farther on they found the foe in much greater force. Had Reid possessed gunners the barricades would soon have been cleared, but nothing less than a cannonade would now dislodge them, for more than ten thousand men opposed him. Unfortunately the Jammu contingent formed the larger part of his force, and though Dogras make gallant and loyal soldiers, these men had not had the benefit of British training, so they became confused, and fell back in disorder. Britons, Guides, and Gurkhas fought magnificently to retrieve the day, but what could they do against such odds? Their progress was stayed, and worse was to follow. The gallant Reid was struck in the head by a bullet, and fell unconscious. Forty of the few Gurkhas were slain and scores wounded, the Rifles and Guides were also losing heavily, though without flinching, and the Rajah of Jammu's troops were doing more harm than good. Major Reid's successor reluctantly gave the order to retire, and, followed by thousands of the triumphant foe, the 4th Column fell back in good order, fighting to the last.

The pressure became more and more severe, and the men of the Jammu contingent were fast getting out of hand. Large bodies of the mutineers pushed forward on both flanks, forming a semicircle that threatened to envelop our men. Several parties from the stauncher battalions were detailed to delay these flanking movements, and of one of these, composed of about thirty picked shots of the Gurkhas, Ted was placed in charge, with Gorias Thapa as second in command. He was sent some distance to the left, with instructions to roll back the right flank of the enemy for as long a time as possible. A stone breastwork, abandoned by the sepoy earlier in the day, was pointed out to him, and he had orders to rejoin the main body with all haste as soon as his position should become really dangerous.

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Ted's command, bending low, scurried to the breastwork, and found not only good shelter, but a favourable position commanding the enemy's advance on this flank. Their muskets began to speak, and the discourse seemed persuasive. Throughout the whole length of the horse-shoe the action was resolving itself into a series of detached and separate engagements. Ted's gallant fellows broke up one party after another of the pandies, aiming with such cool accuracy that every bullet seemed to find its billet. But while the enemy's right was held at bay, their centre and left swarmed forward, and our hero, holding on too long, presently found himself in danger of being cut off.

Meanwhile the main body continued its retirement, the Rifles now forming the centre of the rear-guard. The British soldiers soon began to find the ground unfavourable, and the enemy pressed the more eagerly.

Inspired to greater audacity by their success, a large body of mutineers made a plucky dash forward, and surrounded a half-company of riflemen and a few Guides in a deep nullah, from which they were in the act of retiring. These men of the Rifles had been fighting gloriously, and had spent their last cartridge before they grasped the fact that they were unsupported and the sepoy were upon them. Hidden from view of their comrades by the high sloping banks that enclosed the broad river-bed, now almost dry, they fought for their lives with the overwhelming foe, and prepared to die like the heroes they were.

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The wild charge of the pandies was checked half a dozen paces from those lines of quivering steel. The hesitation was but momentary. With yells of triumph the sepoy rushed upon the bayonets, only to be hurled back. They recoiled, and those in the rear lay down and fired from between their comrades' legs, and man after man of the Rifles dropped. The lieutenant gave the order to charge, and back they crashed over the stony bed; and the pandies gave way, separated, and fired again and again as they kept clear of the bayonets. It seemed only a question of moments before the detachment should be exterminated. Already the young Englishman in charge of the half-dozen Guides was down, when a score of Gurkhas, led by Ensign Russell, suddenly topped the bank of the nullah, and tumbled in upon the rebels. In a moment all was confusion. Unprepared, the sepoy turned upon their new assailants, and the kukris were keen. Huddled together as the rebels were, the bullets went through more than one body.

Twenty men were all that Ted had left, but so sudden and unexpected was their descent upon the scene that the charge was equal to that of a whole company. How many were following, the sepoy did not know, and a panic set in. The riflemen rose to the occasion, and before the mutineers could rally, or realize how insignificant was the reinforcement, British bayonets were hustling them to and fro, and their leaders had fallen. The spurt of pluck—of their old courage that had stood England in good stead on many a hard-won field—had died away; they had no British officers to inspire and lead them, and a blind panic set in. Each flashing bayonet, each shimmering kukri seemed multiplied twenty-fold to the eyes and senses of the terror-stricken rebels.

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Ted was hotly engaging a lean pandy subadar, a typical Oudh Mohammedan. The man was slowly giving way as Ted pressed upon him with rapid thrusts, when the subadar snatched off his turban and caught Ted's blade upon it. Before the boy could divine his intention he was at the rebel's mercy.

Not quite, though. The subadar stumbled awkwardly, let go turban and sword, and Ted took the opportunity to run him through before he understood what had happened. Stretched on the ground behind the subadar lay Alec Paterson, the wounded officer of the Guides. Summoning all his remaining strength, he seized the sepoy's foot as he was in the act of slicing at his chum, and

so upset his balance. The dead man fell across Alec's chest, and he fainted away.

Within three minutes from Ted Russell's arrival not a pandy remained in the hollow who was able to leave it. The lieutenant called his men together, nodded approvingly towards Ted, and gave the order to continue the retirement. They joined the main body without encountering any dangerous opposition.

"Well, you are cool customers, you and your Gurkhas!" remarked the subaltern in command of the 60th's detachment, as soon as he could find time to make comments. "Pluckiest thing I've ever seen, to storm a position like that with such a handful."

"It was nothing," Ted muttered, turning away.

"It probably saved us a few lives, young man, and I'll take care that it is reported."

As he spoke, the officer who had succeeded to the command of the column when Major Reid fell hastened to the spot, and hurriedly enquired:

"What happened just now? I was looking on, unable to send you help, when I saw some Gurkhas come up from behind and drive the pandies from that nullah."

"He was in command," the subaltern replied, nodding towards the ensign. "Had about twenty men with him. I never saw such a thing, and how he managed to escape unhurt I can't understand."

The enemy again began to press, though not so dangerously. Yet every yard had to be contested, and the odds against our fellows were enormous.

Of all those gallant officers and men none fought more pluckily than Captain Russell of the Guides; animating and encouraging his splendid fellows, he was ever nearest to the foe, as many a mutineer found to his cost. Inspired by the example, Ted emulated his brother's courage, and with the Gurkhas did his best to retrieve the day, and always by his side fought the young officer Jemadar Gorja Thapa, son of his father's friend. As they retired towards the Ridge the boy was more than once engaged in single combat. Two assailants he had placed *hors de combat* with sword or pistol, when he perceived that his brother was struck, though Jim, stifling his pain, continued to fight and to inspire the men. Ted, gazing anxiously at his brother, forgot for a moment his own dangerous position, when Gorja Thapa knocked him roughly on one side. Just in time! A bullet flew through the air where Ted's head had been, and his career would have been ended there and then had not the young Gurkha officer been on the alert. At the same moment two sepoy, one being the fellow who had fired the shot, rushed at the boy, who vainly strove to fend their bayonets with his sword. One of the mutineers soon broke down his guard and lunged. The steel passed through the fleshy part of Ted's arm, and the sepoy fell at his feet, slain by the sword of Gorja Thapa. The second pandy turned to flee, but a Gurkha standing near bowled him over also, and again the little force fell slowly back, the pandies snarling just out of musket-shot, waiting for a leader brave enough to inspire them.

Our ensign's wound was extremely painful. He tied a handkerchief round the arm, and remembering his brother's example, gave no sign. As they drew nearer to camp, two hundred men of the 9th Lancers and four hundred Sikh horse poured out to their support, charging like a thunderbolt into the enemy's masses, whilst the few Guides and Kumaon Gurkhas, who had been left to protect the Ridge, also came out to check the rush of victorious sepoy. At that moment Jemadar Gorja Thapa sank to the ground with a bullet in his thigh. Here was Ted's chance to repay his debts! Forgetting his wounds, he dashed at the three men who were rushing to polish off the Gurkha, and again his life hung by a thread.

But a couple of his Sirmur men had sprung after him, and with their kukris they quickly despatched two of the pandies. Then with Ted's assistance the wounded man was hurriedly carried away into the midst of their Kumaon countrymen, and safety was reached.

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When Major Reid recovered consciousness, he found himself on the back of one of his faithful Gurkhas, who had carried him out of the fight. The wound, though severe, was happily not mortal. The Nepalese crowded around, their eyes plainly expressing both alarm and grief, and the man who had had the good fortune to carry their beloved chief to safety became an object of envy to his comrades.

"What a lucky fellow," thought they, "to have had the glorious privilege of saving the life of our wounded leader!"

When Reid became aware of all that had happened since his fall, his disappointment was intense, and the bitter sorrow occasioned by his failure to assist the other columns aggravated the pain of his wound. No less bitterly mortified were all his comrades, the surviving officers and men of the 4th Column, both British and Asiatic, the reflection that without artillery to aid, their attempt was doomed to failure, consoling them but little. Their defeat was the more grievous because of the high hopes and anticipations engendered by the striking success of the bombardment. It was generally thought that this would have filled the rebels with terror, and that the opposition offered to an assault would have been much less sturdy.

"Are you badly hurt, Jim?" asked Ted, as they looked on while the surgeon dressed the wounds of their much-injured chief.

"No, not badly. No bone touched. You're not hit, are you?"

"Sword-cut here, but it's only a scratch. It hasn't bled much. Will he do well, doctor?"

"Sure to. Now I'll have a look at your scratches! Oh, you're right for once, youngster. It is only a flesh wound, though I guess it hurts."

He pronounced Jim's injury rather worse than Ted's, and ordered him to take things quietly for some days. Ted accompanied his brother to the Guides' post to see how Alec was getting on.

"I wonder what's happened to the other columns?" said Ted as they left their wounded commandant. Jim grunted, and vouchsafed no reply. He was in a sullen mood, defeat being particularly bitter after such high hopes.

"Dare say they met with no better success," hazarded the ensign. "What the dickens were they doing to send us out without guns?—the idiots! It's a badly managed business anyway!"

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"Oh, don't talk so much," Jim replied. "We'll know about the other columns soon enough—they're all right! And don't be so ready with your 'idiots'. A man directing operations on this large scale has a lot more to think about than an ensign has, you know; though perhaps he don't know quite as much as some, to hear you youngsters talk! Do your work, and don't growl!"

Ted shut up. He would have dearly liked to say something cutting, but could not think of any suitable retort on the spot. And by the time a brilliant repartee had come to him, he had perceived that his brother was at least as much upset as himself. Thereupon he remained discreetly silent.

"There's Alec lying over there. He looks bad."

"Well, Alec, old chap, not very bad, I hope?"

"Not dead yet! They've got the bullet out all right, and I'll soon be about again. By Jove, Ted, you're a wonder! It was a mad thing to do, but rather a good job for all of us."

"What was that?" asked Jim in great surprise. He had not yet heard of Ted's great feat.

"Nothing; it's all bosh," interrupted Ted, colouring and looking somewhat sheepish.

"What! Do you mean that you haven't heard?" Paterson demanded, and proceeded to relate the story of their rescue by the Gurkhas. "It was one of the pluckiest things I've heard of," he concluded, "to charge a couple of hundred with twenty. You've saved fifty lives, and ought to be sure of the V.C. now, in spite of Tynan."

Jim rose from his seat, and solemnly shook hands with his brother. "Ted," said he, "I'm sorry I was such a beast just now."

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Ted turned very red, and his hand remained limp as Jim shook it. His chum's very evident admiration did not seem to give him any pleasure.

"I s'pose you've not heard anything of the other columns yet?" asked the invalid.

"Not yet.... I'm afraid we shall hear soon enough."

On the following day, news of the achievements of the other columns arrived; good news mixed with bad, for Nicholson lay dying, shot through the body as he headed the charge and led his men to victory.

Soon came also tidings of the glorious acts of the heroes of the 3rd Column, of Lieutenants Home and Salkeld, of Sergeants Burgess, Carmichael, and Smith, and of Bugler Hawthorne—the heroes who had taken their lives in their hands and had blown up the Kashmir Gate, after overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles, a deed with which all England rang. Of these six men, four were subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross; and the other two, Burgess and Carmichael, would have been honoured in the same way had they survived.

Truly, even in this year of heroes and heroic deeds, the story of these glorious men and of their act of devotion stands out clear to dazzle our imaginations, to lead us to thank God that they were of our breed, to make us wonder what we of the same blood would have done had we been in their place. Then let us hope we become more humble in our pride.

By the 18th of September the Lahore Gate and Bastion were also captured, and on the 20th the whole of Delhi was in our hands.

The Palace taken and the king a prisoner, the Indian Mutiny had lost its sting.

Yet, in spite of victory, gloom was over the camp, for a hero lay dying, and there was no hope of saving his life. John Nicholson's wound had proved mortal: a life that had promised to be of unusual brilliance would soon be cut short, even before its work was more than half done—but that half had been done well. The career of this dying leader of men had been unique, even in the annals of British rule in India, whose pages teem with the deeds and lives of heroes in the noblest sense of that word—men worthy of all admiration, men whose lives inspire others to follow the

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**CHAPTER XXIII****Ted Extinguishes Himself**

"Where shall I find Ensign Russell?" enquired a messenger from head-quarters as he approached the outpost. Ted was quickly found, and his agitation may be imagined when he learned that General Nicholson had sent for him. Nervously, reverently, and full of sorrow, he entered the tent. The somewhat stern and haughty look, so well known to all evil-doers who had chanced to cross his path, had vanished from the great man's countenance as he greeted the boy.

"So, young man, you've escaped unwounded?"

"Yes, sir, ... at least only very slightly."

"Ah, your arm, I see!" began the general. "Perhaps you can guess why I sent for you? Somehow I took a strange liking to you that day I arrived on the Ridge, ... though I ought not to approve of disobedience," continued the wounded man, smiling.

Ted bent his head and was silent.

"You are the son of Major-general Russell, I hear? I knew your father well. I served with him in Afghanistan, and he will be a proud man when he hears that by an act of conspicuous bravery you perhaps averted a disaster to a whole column."

John Nicholson was silent for a few moments before resuming:

"I have since heard how you distinguished yourself when your regiment mutinied. You have begun well, keep on in the same way. Put duty first, and your country may one day be proud of you, as she is to-day of Tombs and Brind and Reid."

Here the wounded general was interrupted by the entrance of Sir Archdale Wilson, who, with grave and anxious face, had come to enquire as to the condition of his second in command.

Nicholson turned to him.

"This is the lad, Wilson, of whom we were speaking yesterday. You received a report from the officer commanding the 4th Column, stating how Ensign Russell had helped to bring it safely in."

Ted stood by with downcast eyes, and as he fumbled nervously with his sword-hilt he looked anything but a hero. Once or twice he opened his mouth as though he wished to speak, but could not overcome his nervousness.

General Wilson spoke cordially and kindly to him.

"So you are Ensign Russell? I must tell you that your storming of that nullah was worthy of the best traditions of our young officers. I am proud of commanding an army in which deeds of heroism are of daily occurrence, and young as you are, on General Nicholson's advice, I intend to mark my appreciation by recommending you for promotion. Whilst awaiting formal confirmation, I take upon myself to raise you to subaltern rank. Good-day, Lieutenant Russell!"

"Good-bye, lad!" echoed Nicholson.

"Thank you, sir!" Ted mumbled and moved away, then stopped in some confusion, and again made as if to speak, but the eyes of the two generals were turned away.

Anticipating some such reward for his brother's display of courage and resource, Jim had accompanied him to the camp, and was now walking up and down at some distance from the general's tent.

"Well, what is it, old boy?" he asked excitedly, for Jim was feeling proud of his younger brother's distinction.

For a few paces the boy walked on without replying. Then he said quietly and wearily:

"They complimented me about something or other. I'm sick of it."

"What's the matter, young 'un, you look miserable? Is your cut smarting, or had you set your heart on promotion and feel disappointed? It's a shame! I think you ought to be promoted!"

"No, it isn't," Ted contradicted testily.

"Ted, whatever is the matter?"

"Oh, I'm not well, Jim! I'm sorry I'm such a brute."

"You look bad, young 'un; you must have that cut seen to. I thought you were queer as we came along."

Ted turned on his heel.

"Don't wait for me," he muttered, and retraced his steps towards the tent he had just quitted, leaving Jim staring in bewilderment. Recognizing the ensign, the sentry gave admittance without question. General Wilson was still with his junior, and both turned their heads as he entered.

"Well, Russell, what is it?" General Wilson asked with surprise.

"I'm very sorry, sir," faltered Ted, "I've been deceiving you."

"How? What do you mean?"

"I never meant to attack that nullah or rescue the fellows in it," the boy replied, now speaking eagerly and hurriedly. "I never knew there was such a place. I had lost a lot of my men, sir, and as the enemy were being reinforced in front, I ordered the men to double back to where I thought our supports were. The ditch was hidden from us by an embankment, and we stumbled into the midst of the rebels, and if it hadn't been that the Gurkhas are so sharp and never get flurried, we'd all have been cut up, sir. As it happened, the pandies were more surprised than we were, and they thought, I suppose, that we were in force, and so they cut away. And everyone thought I had done it on purpose, and they didn't give me a chance to explain. And then, as everyone has been congratulating me, and I hadn't denied it at once, I found it still harder to explain afterwards. And—well, sir, after what you and General Nicholson said just now, I couldn't stand it any longer. And I'm very sorry, sir."

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General Wilson glanced at General Nicholson, who laughed. The former laid his hand on Ted's shoulder.

"Don't be alarmed, youngster," he said; "I think I see how it was. Of course I can't send in the recommendation now. You understand that, of course?"

"Of course, sir."

"Come here, Ensign Russell," said John Nicholson.

Ted approached.

"I like to shake hands with an honest man. Oblige me by taking my hand—I can't take yours very well."

Gently and reverently Ted pressed the hero's hand, then silently turned and left the tent, lighter at heart than when he had entered it.

Almost boisterously he greeted his brother, who had anxiously retraced his steps, and was now awaiting him.

"I'm all right now, Jim!" he cried, and proceeded to relate the whole story, concluding:

"You'll explain to Charlie and the others, won't you? I don't like to. There's a good fellow!"

"I'm rather glad it's turned out this way, young 'un," said the elder. "I knew you were plucky enough before, now I know you're something better."

"I say, Jim," Ted blurted out after a few moments' silence, "suppose Tynan's been done the same way?"

"Done? What way?" asked the slower Jim.

"I mean that perhaps someone began praising him for something he'd never done, and didn't give him a chance to put it right at once, and then he stuck to it for fear that people would blame him for not denying it straight off. If it has happened that way I'm sorry for him, for he'll be jolly miserable."

"It's hardly likely," said Jim.

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Outside the dying man's tent a few fierce tribesmen from Hazara and wild cut-throats from Bannu (in these two provinces Nicholson had been commissioner) had collected from the various Punjab regiments, and were loudly lamenting the supposed death of their idol.

"Jan Nikkulseyn is dead! The great sahib is no more!" they wailed, as Ensign Russell appeared before them.

"Tell us, *huzoor*<sup>[1]</sup>" a veteran native officer eagerly demanded, "is he indeed dead?"

[1] A title of respect.

Ted assured the men that their idol still lived; but they shook their heads, crying that the English were merely trying to keep the death a secret, and the wailing recommenced still more noisily. A loud voice from the other side of the canvas thundered:

"Budmashes! Why do ye disturb my peace with that unseemly noise? Wali Khan, drive the rascals away and thrash them well! Know ye then that Jan Nikkulseyn is still very much alive!"

At the sound of the well-known voice a cry of joy went up, and Wali Khan, the old subadar-major, at once proceeded to carry out his order with vigour. So he mercilessly thrashed those whose chorus he had just been leading, scattering them in all directions.

"Allah be praised!" yelled the men of Bannu, as they jumped out of reach of Wali Khan's stick. "Allah be praised! Nicholson Sahib is indeed alive!"

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He only lingered, however, for a very short time. On the 23rd September, 1857, John Nicholson died at the early age of thirty-five, having done his duty to God and to his country. Heavy were all British hearts that day, not only with the Delhi army but throughout the Punjab. May our country never lack such a son in time of trouble!

The tidings of his death were soon proclaimed along the border, and men went about heavily as though mourning for a father. Many a villainous fellow, whose evil ways and dark deeds had incurred the displeasure of the commissioner, felt a sense of personal loss now that Jan Nikkulseyn—his father and mother and hero—was no more.

Shortly after the arrival of the news, a number of his devotees in Bannu (a place which has been described as a "hell upon earth", because of its wickedness, before Nicholson was made commissioner thereof) gathered together to mourn their beloved chief. A *malik*, or headman, rising, spoke of the general's virtues, his love of truth and justice; then, suddenly ending, cried:

"Oh, my brothers, what good is there in life now that our sahib is dead?"

As he uttered the last word, the malik drew a knife quickly across his throat, and fell in their midst—a corpse.

"He speaks truly! What is there to live for now?" cried others. But a pious man of great influence arose, and, stretching forth his hands to restrain them, spoke:

"My children, think ye that our dead master would approve of this? Our brother was mistaken; that is not the way to honour him. Let us rather seek to learn something of the God who was worshipped by Nicholson Sahib."

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The listeners considered and approved this idea, and forthwith a number set out for Peshawur. From that town a visit was paid to the nearest missionary, with the result that several were converted to the Christian faith.

To this day, when the wind blows strongly between the mountains, men along that frontier declare that they hear the tramp of Nicholson's war-horse.

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The heroes of the Siege of Delhi were without number, but of all the regiments engaged, the Sirmur Battalion had carried off the highest honours. With tooth and nail had they defended their post, by day and by night, for more than three months. No fewer than twenty-six distinct and determined attacks (one lasting all day and all night) had been made on them by overwhelming hordes of the enemy, by brave men bent on obtaining possession of that all-important post, and twenty-six times had they been hurled back by the handful of loyal, steadfast little highlanders.

Their dogged achievements were not passed by unnoticed.

Twenty years later, when the Prince of Wales paid his visit to India, he held a review of British and Native troops on the historic Ridge, and the 2nd Gurkhas (the old Sirmur Battalion) were given the place of honour in front of Hindu Rao's house, the post with which the corps will ever be associated.

On that spot the prince spoke to them of the heroic deeds of their predecessors, and conferred upon the regiment the title of "The Prince of Wales' Own Gurkhas"; and you can imagine how the little men, listening on that spot to the words of the great Queen's son, would feel their hearts stirred within them, and would resolve that they would play their part as their fathers had done, that the regiment might never suffer disgrace.

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The Guide Corps was also awarded a special recognition of their services (though not at the same date), the queen granting them the title of "The Queen's Own Corps of Guides", a compliment of which they are justly proud. The king is now the colonel of both the "Guides" and the 2nd Gurkhas, the latter being the corps that distinguished itself so greatly with the Gordon Highlanders at the storming of Dargai a few years ago.

To return to our story. The capture of Delhi broke the back of the mutiny. By that feat the British gained the upper hand and kept it, and thenceforward their part was to attack and hunt the rebels from one place to another, instead of being constantly attacked and pressed themselves. The regiments that had taken part in the siege of the Mogul capital were despatched to various points, to join the different forces engaged in subduing the revolt.

Charlie Dorricot was too seriously injured to take any further part in the campaign, and he had left for England before Lucknow was finally relieved. Alec Paterson had been less seriously injured, and was on his feet again within a fortnight.

Captain Russell and the Guides returned to the Punjab, for that corps, as well as the Sirmur

Battalion, had suffered terribly during the three-months' fighting, and they were not employed in Sir Colin Campbell's campaign along the Ganges. Jim, however, succeeded in obtaining his majority towards the conclusion of the Sepoy war, and not very long afterwards he was given the command of one of the newly-raised Punjab infantry regiments.

Ted, with his usual good luck—as his brother did not forget to inform him,—was remembered by General Wilson, and was attached to one of the regiments that was now ordered to reinforce the Lucknow Relief Force.

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But before he could join his new regiment an order came for him to proceed to Lahore, where a court of enquiry would decide whether he or Tynan was unfit to wear Her Majesty's uniform. The court consisted of Colonel Bratherton and two captains. Tynan, Pir Baksh, and Dwarika Rai swore on oath to the truth of the statements made before their officers at Aurungpore. Colonels Woodburn and Munro gave evidence as to the character borne by the two ensigns, and related all they had gathered from Ambar Singh. Ethel Woodburn and Sir Arthur Fletcher corroborated.

Unfortunately for Ted, Ambar Singh, the havildar, could not be traced. He had evidently been restored to health, for all that could be discovered pointed to the fact that he had re-enlisted in one of the newly-enrolled regiments, and was probably with Sir Colin Campbell.

In his evidence Ted flatly denied all Tynan's statements, one by one.

First, he swore that he was positive Tynan had pointed out Pir Baksh by name as the man who shot Colonel Woodburn; secondly, that Tynan had cursed Pir Baksh more than once as a ringleader; and thirdly, that Tynan had never suggested blowing up the arsenal, nor indeed had any idea that such a step was contemplated. Fourthly, that Tynan had tried to prevent him from lighting the train, and that there could have been no possible doubt of his intention when struggling for possession of the light.

Ted's evidence and the manner in which it was given impressed the court favourably. Tynan's did not. His manner was not convincing, and it was evident that he shrank from the gaze of the other ensign. Still, there were three witnesses for him, and Ted's word stood alone.

Then came new evidence to spring a surprise upon Ted's party. Two sepoy of the Rajputs deposed that Ambar Singh had confessed to them that his conscience upbraided him for having taken money from Russell Sahib to blacken the character of the dead ensign—meaning Tynan Sahib.

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The feeling in court at once swung round in Tynan's favour, and the officers of the 193rd looked at one another aghast. Sir Arthur Fletcher smiled. He knew something about native witnesses. Ethel quietly whispered to Lieutenant Leigh, who was acting as counsel for Ted, and his face brightened.

"Admitting the probability of bribery," he said, "what, then, is the evidence of these two men worth? Mr. Tynan has had better opportunities and more time than Mr. Russell to resort to such means—and, I may say, a far greater supply of the wherewithal to bribe."

But in reply to questions of the opposing counsel, Munro admitted that when Dwarika Rai first gave evidence there was practically no possibility of collusion with Tynan. Dwarika Rai had at that moment heard that he was alive, and Tynan was evidently greatly surprised to see Dwarika Rai.

The court retired to consider their judgment. The evidence was in favour of one—the bearing and character in favour of the other. They reported to Sir John Lawrence that they could arrive at no decision in the matter. The great man listened attentively, and proceeded to give the matter his consideration. Something must be settled without delay, he resolved, for the position was intolerable for that one of the two ensigns who had right and justice on his side.

Sir John requested the senior of the three officers to remain when the others retired. Colonel Bratherton was a power in the district, with an excellent reputation among the Sikhs and an unusually intimate knowledge of the men he commanded.

"Tell me your private opinion about this affair, Bratherton?" asked the chief commissioner.

Colonel Bratherton was silent and thoughtful for some time.

"Well, Sir John, the evidence is against young Russell, but somehow I'm convinced that he's straight and that the other is not."

"Um!"

A look of annoyance came over those masterful eyes, and the broad brow was knit in perplexity. But not for long. A humorous twinkle took the place of the frown, and the ruler of the Punjab presently whispered to the soldier, whose expression of deep concern gradually resolved itself into a smile in sympathy with his chief. They conferred for at least ten minutes before the colonel rose to take his leave.

"I'll arrange it all, Sir John," said he. "There will be little difficulty, for I have the very men we want. Kendal will do it admirably, and he can make up to the life. Where shall we be, though, if they both hold out?"

"Both?" Sir John's eyes sparkled as he added: "You forget there will be a third—Pir Baksh. But

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### Pir Baksh renders Tynan a Service

This conversation with the chief commissioner took place one morning in late September. In the afternoon of the same day, Ted Russell was ordered to attend upon Sir John Lawrence. The great man looked at the boy with a keen penetrating glance, which, though it seemed to pierce him through and through, yet brought with it an assurance of confidence and kindness.

Sir John seem pleased by the inspection.

“So you are the lad who blew up the arsenal?” he asked, a wonderfully pleasant smile lighting up the rugged face.

“It’s still in dispute, sir,” said Ted, smiling in spite of his trepidation.

“What do you suppose has caused Ensign Tynan to make this claim?”

“I wish I knew, sir. Whilst watching them in court yesterday the idea struck me that Pir Baksh, the mutineer, had somehow got a hold over him.”

“Ah!”

“Yes, sir. He was watching Tynan as a cat watches a mouse, and it struck me that he had made some sort of a bargain with Tynan to save him from death at the hands of the rebels if Tynan would whitewash his character. And it struck me that Tynan was sorry he’d ever been trapped into such a bargain.”

Sir John’s elbow was on the table and his head rested on the palm of his hand. Ted felt that he was reading his inmost thoughts.

“And perhaps,” he remarked at length, “perhaps Pir Baksh considered that such whitewashing would be of little avail if it could be shown that Tynan had been guilty of cowardice, and so the lad has to pose as a hero? ... Um! It’s just possible.”

“I never thought of that, sir,” said Ted with obvious admiration.

“I do not doubt your honour, Ensign Russell, and I mean to employ you upon an errand needing strength of character. Take this sealed letter to the officer in command at Amritsar. It is in cipher, and the key is found by reading every sixth word beginning at the end. The road, though safe enough for large bodies, is perilous for a small number; but Colonel Bratherton can only send two troopers with you. Go to him at once for horse and escort.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And understand, Ensign Russell, that should you be captured and have no time to destroy the letter, you must on no account disclose the key—on *no* account!”

“I will not, sir.”

Ted saluted and withdrew, greatly pleased by this signal mark of the confidence reposed in him. An hour after he had started, Ensign Tynan in his turn was standing before Sir John Lawrence.

“And so you believe that Russell meant to ruin your reputation out of spite? That is a very grave accusation, young man.”

“I can’t help it, sir. It’s a fact, and my word is as good as his, and I have witnesses whilst he has none.”

“Native evidence, I must remind you, Mr. Tynan, is not difficult to obtain. However, I cannot decide between you, and I have not sent for you to discuss that affair.”

He proceeded to give Tynan a similar letter and precisely the same instructions and warning as those given to Ted. Tynan repaired to Colonel Bratherton, who supplied him with an escort consisting of Pir Baksh and two troopers, and with these he set out for Amritsar.

Night closed in with Indian abruptness before Tynan had covered half the distance. Suddenly a body of horsemen blocked the way. Tynan drew a pistol, but before he could take aim his arms were seized by the troopers of the escort, and he was roughly dragged to the ground. A search was made, and the letter was quickly brought to light.

Pir Baksh had been seized in like manner and was dropped beside Tynan, bound hand and foot. Tynan recognized the uniform of his assailants as that of the 60th Native Cavalry, and he remembered hearing that this rebel corps had been hovering about this stretch of the Grand Trunk Road for some days. The two troopers of his escort declared for the rebels at the first hint

of danger. Somehow Harry Tynan was much more cool and collected than on the last occasion of a similar experience, and he was not nearly so frightened. Perhaps the explanation can be found in the fact that his present state of existence was so miserable that no change could be greatly for the worse.

The sowars took little notice of their prisoner. Two native officers, who seemed to have some knowledge of English, were eagerly scrutinizing Sir John's communication, the rest looking on. But the missive was evidently a poser, and the expressions of triumph changed to annoyance and chagrin as they shook their heads and gave up the puzzle.

"They will understand it," said one. "Make them explain."

The speaker nodded towards the prostrate captives, who were quickly kicked into a sitting posture and ordered to supply the key to the cipher. Pir Baksh was eagerness itself. He hastened to assure them that nothing would delight him more.

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"This pig beside me," said he, "he knows the secret, and will quickly inform if you threaten him. As for me, I hate the Feringhis, having been their prisoner. Set free my hands, and I myself will question this cur and make him confess. Ugh! the very sight of him makes me ill. Coward, liar, and traitor is he!"

"If thou dost hate him so," asked a Mohammedan ressaidar, "why wert thou riding by his side as a friend? Thou canst not take us in so easily."

"Because my own safety obliged me to call him friend. This fellow blew up the Aurungpore magazine—he says he did so. Of course we must believe him, though I myself saw him trembling like a leaf begging for mercy. By me was he saved from the debris, saved that I might have the better revenge; and first I humbugged him into giving me a *chit*, saying I was loyal—I, Pir Baksh, leader of the rebels in Aurungpore!"

The subadar related the whole of the miserable business.

"It is true," said Tynan with quiet despair. "Save his life, for he is the blackest villain in Asia, and I had rather die alone than with him as comrade. Kill me and I shall be glad to get away from him."

A native officer cut the bonds, and bade Pir Baksh get up.

"Get the key from the cub, then. If he gives it willingly his life shall be spared. If not, do as thou wilt."

Pir Baksh smiled in pleasant anticipation, and humbly addressed his quondam officer.

"Will the protector of the poor deign to supply his slave with the explanation of that letter?"

Harry Tynan looked him straight between the eyes and said never a word. The poor lad had suffered much during the past three months, and again and again his own vileness had been laid bare to him. He had enough of good in his nature to shudder at the prospect. The lies he had told, the public whitewashing for his own ends of the villain Pir Baksh, the bribing of Dwarika Rai and the other Rajputs, all these had gone against the grain, but never had he seen his own meanness so clearly, until now that he knew that even this most contemptible scoundrel regarded him with far greater contempt.

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Pir Baksh had rendered Tynan a service at last, for he had made a man of him. Then and there the ensign resolved that nothing should drag from him the secret of the cypher—that Pir Baksh should understand he was not wholly a coward. The rascal poised his sword above the boy's head.

"First I am going to slice off the right ear, then the left. If that is not enough, Ensign Sahib, I fear that the nose must go. After that—" Here he smiled and added: "But I think the sahib will not be so discourteous as to refuse his slave's request. Speak quickly or thine ear goes!"

Tynan turned a few shades paler, but he bit his lip and answered not a word. Amazed at this unlooked-for defiance the subadar hesitated—and someone sprang in front of Tynan, a fist shot out and was stopped by the nose of the Mussulman, who toppled over, and was instantly disarmed by two sowars, who knelt upon the traitor's chest and mocked his cries of rage.

"It's all serene, Tynan, old chap!" cried the voice of Ted Russell. "We're going to scrag that brute!"

He cut Tynan's bonds, whilst others trussed up the rebel, and I fear that no trouble was taken to spare him discomfort.

"It's all been a put-up job," Ted went on. "They collared me in the same way, meaning to test us by threats, to find out if either would betray the cipher. This is Lieutenant Kendal who's in command."

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A short and rather "tubby" figure, arrayed in a rebel garb, came forward from the background and apologized for having been compelled to treat them roughly. He was obeying instructions, and assured them of his pleasure that neither had betrayed the trust.

"Yes, but you know everything now," said Tynan sullenly. "It was mean of you, Russell, to play

this trick.”

“I had no hand in it, Tynan, and was treated in much the same way an hour ago, except that they only threatened me with death, not torture; so you came out of the ordeal better than I, and I respect you for it.”

“That’s all very well. You come out with flying colours and I’m ruined. I say, Lieutenant Kendal, let me clear away. I don’t care what happens to me, but I simply can’t face the fellows who knew me. Only let me go, and I’ll disappear completely.”

“Sorry I can’t do that, Mr. Tynan, but I have orders to take you back before Sir John. By Jove, I’ll say all I can for you, though, and though Jan Larens can be stern he’s really kindness itself. Make a clean breast of it, youngster.”

They rode back in silence, and the pretended rebels repaired to their comrades of the Sikh Cavalry to relate a marvellous story of the wisdom of Jan Larens, from whom nothing could remain hidden. The great statesman was still hard at work at his unending task, but when he heard the lieutenant’s tale he bade him send Tynan in. He greeted the boy with mingled kindness and sadness.

“This is a pitiable tale, youngster,” he said, “though you have done your best to redeem it to-night, I am told. Tell me all about it, and keep nothing back. Regard me as one who wishes to help you.”

Tynan broke down under the prolonged strain, and, bursting into tears, sobbed like a child. Bit by bit the grim though kindly ruler drew forth the whole story of temptation, hesitation, and fall, of misery and of lie upon lie that had gradually sunk the boy deeper in the morass.

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“Sit down,” he said. “You have been punished. Are you sorry it has all come to light?”

“Indeed I am not, sir. I feel as though a great weight had been taken away. I suppose I shall be hounded from the service at least, sir.”

“I hardly think you would wish to remain in the army?” said Sir John gravely.

“I want to get away from everyone, sir, and I know I don’t deserve any consideration. But I never meant to do it, sir. He led me on, and got me in his power.”

“You have been punished—and you may be thankful for it, my lad, for you will have a better chance of a happy useful life than had your claim proved successful. This evening you acted like a man, and I will take upon myself to accept your resignation.”

“Thank you, sir!” said Tynan joyfully, for he had never expected this. “Oh, thank you, sir! I will try to do better.”

“You may set out again for Amritsar this night, and join Green’s column at Umballa as a volunteer under an assumed name, if you can overtake them. I will give you credentials, and when the mutiny is crushed you may leave the country as you think best. My advice is to do your duty like a man as long as there is fighting to be done, and then return at once to England.”

“Thank you, sir! I could wish for nothing better, and it’s more than I deserve. I’ll be a different man after this lesson. Indeed I will, sir.”

“God help you to keep that resolution, my lad! Good-night!”

Breakfast was just over when the summons came for Ted. Sir John motioned him to take a seat.

“You have been thoroughly vindicated, Mr. Russell. Tynan has told me everything, and I congratulate you on having done your duty. You have suffered great anxiety and disappointment, but there is no doubt that you will obtain the reward you so highly deserve.”

This virtual promise that the former recommendation would hold good, and that the Victoria Cross—most coveted of honours—would be his, dazzled our hero for a space. To Ted’s credit be it said that his next thought was for poor Tynan.

“Thank you, sir! I—I hope Tynan won’t be disgraced, sir. It was not altogether his fault.”

“It will be necessary,” said Sir John gravely, “to make public sufficient to clear your character. I have allowed him to resign, and he clears out to-night. I am glad, my lad, that you should have considered him.”

“Wait a moment,” said the ruler of the Punjab as Ted rose to go. “How would you like a commission in a corps of Irregular Horse?”

“Punjabis, sir?”

“Yes. Colonel Boldre, whose regiment has mutinied, is raising a corps in the Balandghar district, and he has written to ask me if you may join him. I think it would be a good thing, and should advise you to jump at the chance.”

“Is there any likelihood of seeing active service with them, sir?”

The great statesman burst into one of his hearty laughs. He remembered the days when he

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was the age of Ted Russell—how he had longed to be a soldier like his father, who had led the forlorn hope at Seringapatam, or like his hero-brother Henry. The chuckles ceased, giving place to a sad smile as he thought of those past days. "A soldier I was born, and a soldier I will be!" he had declared as a lad, for all his family were soldiers. But the Lawrences were poor, and the civil service gave better remuneration than the military, and for his mother's and sisters' sakes John Lawrence had put aside the dream of his boyhood that he might earn enough to keep them from want. He knit his great brows and looked Ted up and down, and the boy did not know whether the grim administrator was pleased or displeased with him.

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"So you have not smelt enough powder, eh?" he asked at length.

"I want to do my share, sir."

"Boldre's Horse are going to Cawnpore to join Sir Colin Campbell at once. The colonel will be setting out from Balandghar in a day or two, with perhaps a couple of hundred sowars, Sikhs, Pathans, and Punjabi Mohammedans. Mr. Jackson is raising a few score Sikhs and Dogras for him in the Jalandar district, and you are to set out at once to take charge of them, joining your commandant at Delhi."

"Thank you, sir! it's just what I should have chosen."

"Very good! but remember this. Do your duty with just as much thoroughness whether it seem attractive or the reverse. Should your fate tie you to duties of an uneventful nature, should you be out of the fighting and excitement, and have little chance of distinguishing yourself, remember that your work may be quite as necessary and useful, if not so showy. So, whatever you may be called upon to do, do it gladly. I will write to Jackson.— Oh! I forgot—I am sending Colonel Boldre a couple of Sikh native officers for his regiment, tried men who have been proved and found faithful. They will go with you. They are good men; remember that. Good-day!"

Delighted with the turn of events Ted hastened to call upon the two Sikh officers. "Jim was right," he said to himself as he swung his leg over the saddle, "I am a lucky beggar. It's better being in a British regiment than in a poorbeah lot, but better still to be with Sikh and Pathan cavalry or Gurkha infantry, because Tommy has to be taken such care of, or he'll have sunstroke or cholera, or he'll wander away and get his throat cut, or else walk into an ambush. But these Cossacks of the Punjab are in at most of the fun, and they catch Pandy in snares instead of being caught by him."

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Colonel Bratherton presented him to the two Sikhs. They were brothers, and in spite of a few years' difference in age, he could hardly tell one from the other. Each was dressed in white—no colour being more popular among the Sikhs—the snowy turbans setting off the triangle of dark face left visible, with piercing eyes, deep-set and determined, the well-shaped nose, tight mouth, and long beard and moustache twisted and turned upwards over the ears. They were tall and strong, with thin but sinewy legs—in fact, all that Sikhs should be.

Ted asked their names. Govind Singh was the elder, named after the last of the Sikh high-priests; Hira Singh the younger. He told them who he was, and that they must set out for Jalandar that night; and they looked him up and down with doubtful eyes, evidently not too favourably impressed by his youthful appearance. Ted found himself somewhat afraid of those eyes; they seemed to hold so much in reserve. But he felt that in a tight place he would be glad to be backed by men with eyes like theirs.

"When will you be ready?" he asked.

"Now," said Govind Singh.

"Then we set out after sundown."

"Very good, sahib! We go to Lucknow to help Henry Larens."

"But he is dead," Ted informed him.

Govind Singh shook his head.

"That is a poorbeah lie," said he. "As if those jackals of Oudh could kill the great chief!"

Astounded by the Sikh's incredulity, Ted asked if he had seen Sir Henry Lawrence.

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"I? I knew him well, and so did Hira Singh, my brother. When the English fought the Afghans, nearly twenty years ago, we were at Peshawur in the Sikh army under Avitabile. The Sikh government had granted you Feringhis a passage through the Punjab, but we Sikh soldiers preferred our old enemies the Afghans, and we refused to fight on your side. We were ready to eat up your Khyber column in those days, and would have done it too, but for Henry Larens Sahib, who won our hearts, so that we fought for him, aye, even to Kabul. Then when we challenged you to war six years later and were beaten, he ruled the Punjab justly and with righteous dealing, as his brother does to-day. Jan Larens is a good and great man likewise, but Henry we loved most. We knew him well."

"It is true," echoed Hira Singh. "If all the Feringhis were like unto Henry Larens there would have been no mutiny. Just is he, and he understands us and knows our ways of thinking as no other white man has ever done. He loved us, yet was he firm—firm as is his brother, and never was there a braver man. How he defied us all at Peshawur, though at our mercy! And so great



was his ikbal (prestige), that he forced us to aid him even against our will. Jan Larens is a just and good man, but for Henry Larens we would gladly lay down our lives. I know that he is dead, but my brother will not believe it."

"We will be ready before sundown, sahib," Govind Singh assured Ted as he left them, greatly impressed by this evidence of the influence of one good man, who had so won over his former enemies that they had become his staunchest friends.

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Ensign Russell's kit was not extensive. He was now quite an old campaigner, having learned at Delhi how to do without many luxuries that he had formerly considered necessities. He gave his Mohammedan servant instructions to prepare for a long journey, and Kasim Ali received the news as a matter of course. Strange must be the lives of these Indian servants, who are ready to change their place of abode at a moment's notice for another hundreds of miles away. At Delhi, after the capture of the town, Ted had picked up a bargain in the shape of a nice Arab, good-tempered, robust, and speedy. But he also needed an animal for Kasim Ali, and another for his kit and supplies, so he now called upon an Afghan dealer whose horses he had previously noticed. The Afghan brought out one sorry brute after another and tried to pass them off as veritable treasures, such as Aurungzebe himself might have envied. Ted looked guileless, and the Afghan was pained to hear him remark:

"I'm in a hurry. If you have no horses, say so, and I'll go elsewhere."

The wily coper began to see that his customer was no ignorant griffin, so he changed his tone, dropped his protestations, and finally brought out a couple of serviceable beasts, not showy, but strong and in good condition. Ted at once declared that they would suit, and named the sum he was prepared to give; and the Afghan, seeing that it was "take or leave", ceased to haggle, and closed the bargain, not dissatisfied with the profit he had made. Kasim Ali led the steeds away.

"Must go and say good-bye to Ethel and the colonel next," said the ensign to himself.

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Colonel Woodburn and his daughter had remained in Lahore after the unsatisfactory conclusion of the trial, in order to be able to give the lad any advice or assistance within their power. They were staying with a civilian friend of the colonel, towards whose bungalow Ted turned his horse's steps. The news that he had been cleared was already out, and Ethel waved her hand joyously as he hove in sight. Sending a servant to take the horse, she motioned the ensign to join her in the verandah.

"I am delighted, Ted!" she began. "Do you feel like a free man again?"

Ted sank luxuriously into the easy-chair.

"Ethel," he said with unwonted seriousness, "I feel like the man in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, whose burden has rolled from his shoulders. I suppose you have heard how the truth came out?"

"Yes; Lieutenant Kendal has told us the whole story this morning. But what has become of Tynan? What is to be done with him? Poor lad! he's had a harder time than you, Ted."

"Yes," Ted slowly answered, "I know he has. I'm sorry for him, and I don't know what has become of him. I don't think that Sir John has been hard upon him. Perhaps he's been able in some way to give him another chance. Sir John was very kind to me."

"They say he is stern, but I've never found him so.— Well, father, here's the innocent victim of conspiracy, righted at last, and let off on condition that he won't do it again."

Colonel Woodburn and his host had entered the verandah. They congratulated Ted, and Mr. Moncrief added:

"You'll have tiffin with us, Mr. Russell? Make yourself at home here while you stay in Lahore."

"You're very good, Mr. Moncrief, but I'm leaving in a few hours. I'll stay to lunch, though, thanks!"

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"That's right. Where are you going, then?"

Ted related the offer made to him by Sir John, and expressed his delight at the prospect. He had come to say good-bye.

"Colonel Boldre is a very nice man," Ethel said meditatively. "Father knows him well. I suppose you're an ensign no longer, then? I am glad to meet you, Lieutenant Russell."

Ted laughed.

"It's a promotion in a way, I suppose," said he, "but I'm not gazetted lieutenant yet."

"You soon will be, though," Colonel Woodburn assured him. "Your appointment is practically equal to promotion. Boldre is a good soldier. I wish I were equal to it."

"Do you still suffer any pain from the wound, colonel?" Ted asked.

"Hardly now, Ted. Still, I'm not fit for active service, only for garrison and depot."

"Tiffin is ready," Mr. Moncrief announced. "Lead the way, Miss Woodburn."

By seven o'clock Lieutenant Edward Russell, Risaldar<sup>[1]</sup> Govind Singh, Ressaidar Hira Singh,

and Kasim Ali were on their way to Amritsar by the very road along which Ted had journeyed twenty-four hours ago. Jalandar was reached on the second day without mishap, and without any incident more exciting than a half-hour's alarm occasioned by the approach of a body of Native Horse. They turned out to be a detachment of the force maintained by the Sikh Raja of Kapurthala, a loyal prince who, in response to John Lawrence's invitation, had assisted the British at Delhi, and whose men were now engaged in keeping a portion of the great highway clear of budmashes and guerrilla mutineers.

[1] The cavalry ranks of *Risaldar* and *Ressaidar* correspond in some degree to the English *Major* and *Captain*. The senior native officers, however, rank below the Junior British officers.

Ted was hospitably received by Mr. Jackson, a civilian official of the Cis-Sutlej States, who had enlisted some forty or fifty horsemen—Sikhs from the Jalandar Doab and Dogras from Kangra. A few days were needed in order to give the levies a little polish and complete their equipment, and during this period Ted stayed with Mr. Jackson. Then they set out for Delhi, through Ludhiana and Amballa.

Five months before a certain ensign had ridden along that road with the Corps of Guides, a lad in the highest of spirits. "Glory of youth glowed in his soul", as he rode by his brother's side and surveyed that splendid regiment, the pride of the Punjab, and, engrossed in the splendour of the martial array, he had given little thought to the horrors.

Five months ago! At times it seemed as many years, and yet again, as they passed some landmark, and a vivid recollection of some chance remark flashed across his brain, at such a time it seemed but yesterday. His spirits were still high, but experience had somewhat sobered him. He thought of the great events of that fateful period, of the scenes of carnage, of the lost friends and comrades, of the great Nicholson, of the plucky little Gurkhas, and those days at the house of Hindu Rao. How many of those grand men of the Guides, with whom he had ridden across the Punjab, had gone back to their depot at Hoti Mardan? How many of the little Gurkhas, whose arrival in the British camp he had witnessed, had marched back to their station in the hills of Dehra Dun? What months those had been for India and for himself! Then the rebels were winning at every point, except in the Punjab. Now the Mogul capital was once more in the hands of the British, the emperor was a captive, and though much remained to be done, the end of the great mutiny was in sight.

In the towns along the Ganges and its tributaries the sepoy hordes still held the upper hand, and their numbers were daily increasing. Gallant Havelock and chivalrous Outram had at length broken their way through and relieved the intrepid garrison of Lucknow, but the mutineers had closed behind them, and they in their turn were shut up in the Residency, and Henry Lawrence, the best-loved Englishman who had ever set foot in India, was dead. Hardly a big town along the Ganges but had its tale of murder and black treachery to unfold.

Delhi had been captured, but its swarms of mutineers had gone to augment the ranks of the sepoys who were holding a reign of terror in Oudh; and though Sir Colin Campbell was at the head of a fine army, there were still threescore rebels against each white man.

Arrived at the Mogul capital, Ted learned that Colonel Boldre had gone on to Agra, whither he was to proceed with all speed. The route thus far was open, for the Delhi column under Hope Grant and Greathed had cleared the way, and fifty mounted Irregulars had little to fear from undisciplined and cowardly budmashes.

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## CHAPTER XXV

### To the Rescue

The sun had just risen when Hira Singh, riding fifty paces ahead of the cavalcade, suddenly waved his hand as a signal to halt, leapt from his horse, and led it behind the bushes that bordered the road. His companions reined in their steeds and awaited the explanation.

The Englishman threw his reins to the nearest sowar and stealthily joined the *ressaidar*, who was peering through the bushes. They were passing through a well-wooded tract, abounding with mango, pipal, tamarind, and other trees, with plenty of tropical undergrowth, giving good cover.

"What is it?" Ted asked.

"I don't know," said the Sikh. "The dust hides everything."

About half a mile away dense clouds of dust were rising in the air and falling again to the rear, concealing all traces of the makers of the disturbance, except that a few armed horsemen in front were partially visible.

"I thought at first it might be a body of rebel horse," observed Hira Singh, "but it moves too slowly for that."

"Bullock-carts, I should say," suggested the young officer, as he trained his glasses on the

spot.

"That is what I think. There is an escort, so perhaps they carry the poorbeahs' stores or ammunition or loot. Anyhow, we had better mount and capture it."

They were now within about thirty miles of Agra, and the sun's rays were darting through the foliage, the golden light playing upon the flashing sabres and glittering lance-points as the troop swept forward. Ted's men were curiously equipped, some with shields, a number with carbines; some had sabres, others lances, and many had both; and all were seated upon native saddles of felt. Yet Ted was a proud boy that morning, for, motley as was the collection, they were fine-looking men, and were they not acting under his orders! He would have been less proud had he known what his men were charging.

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The fine dust deadened the drumming of the hoofs, and until half the intervening distance had been covered the cloud in front moved forward, and rose and fell with regular cadence. Then the procession halted; they had been seen or heard.

Hira Singh laughed, and, lowering his lance-point, tightened the grip of his knees on the saddle.

"Only a rebel escaping with his goods and family," said he; "but we may as well slay them, sahib, for without doubt they deserve it."

"Not so, Hira Singh. Let us speak them fair. We cannot tell who they are."

There were two curtained *gharris* or carts, each drawn by two soft-eyed bullocks. Protecting these rode three horsemen, who now stood awaiting the onslaught, two with levelled muskets, the third with drawn sword. It was evident that the *gharris* contained their womenfolk, as for nothing less would they have stood their ground against fifty.

Crack! Crack! At two hundred yards' distance they had fired into the cloud of dust, and a bullet struck Ted just below the heart. He doubled forward with the pain, nearly losing his grip, and the bullet quietly dropped upon the saddle. He glanced at his tunic; there was not a tear, and he slowly realized that he was still alive. The bullet was spent, and it had struck him with no more force than a thrown stone of the same size. He was hurt, but not injured.

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Hira Singh's lance was couched again, and the horses were at the gallop. The shots had roused the fierce Sikh blood, and it would have gone hard with the horsemen had not Ted sufficiently recovered his wits, and, spurring his Arab to the front, had called upon the *ressaidar* to pull up his horse to a walk.

He was puzzled that the three should have stood their ground so valiantly when escape would have been easy, and he did not mean to suffer friends to be slain. Besides, the carts probably contained women, who would not be safe from the fury of his wild levies once they had tasted blood. He caught Hira Singh's bridle and shouted the command to halt, and the troop pulled up about thirty paces from the daring wayfarers. Ted rode out in front of his men.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

Instantly the strangers lowered their loaded muskets, and the handsome old man in the centre took his sword by the blade and held the hilt towards the Englishman.

"Allah give you victory, sahib!" said the old man, stroking his gray beard with nervous fingers. "I thought ye were budmashes who had cut us off. I did not see that thou wast a Feringhi until this moment."

"We hope that no man was hurt by our shots," added the youngest of the three, a slight but muscular and well-made man, twenty years of age perhaps. There was something in his appearance that took Ted's fancy—a dignified bearing and demeanour.

"But what do ye here?" asked our lieutenant, "and why should ye fire at strangers?"

"I am Yusuf Khan of Paniwar, and these are my sons. In the bullock-*gharris* are our womenfolk. We have fled from our home through fear of the anger of the rebels. Know then, young sahib, that I have raised my voice on the side of our alien rulers, warning and advising our young men to abstain from acts of madness. The stain of blood is not on my hands."

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He stretched out his open palms as he spoke. There was an honest ring in the old man's voice, and his eye was open and steady.

"It is true," said Ramzan Khan, the younger son. "We have remained loyal to the Sirkar."

"I am from Paniwar," continued the old Mohammedan, "but for years I was surveyor with Henry Lawrence Sahib, from Gorakhpur to Allahabad, and I swore that his people should be as my people, and that for his sake would I help any Feringhis who might be in need. He was my master and my true friend, and I loved him."

The fierce-eyed Govind Singh walked his horse to the side of Yusuf Khan and looked him between the eyes.

"So thou art also Larens Sahib's man?" he chuckled. "I also. Thou art an eater of beef and I an accursed infidel, yet for that we are bound by the same ties to the same master—we are brothers."

Dost thou believe that he is dead?"

"Aye, I know that he is dead, alas!"

"Thou art a faint-hearted disciple, old man. He lives, I say.... Well, tell me thy story."

The Mohammedan turned once more to the English officer and continued:

"The men, and the women also—and their abuse was the harder to bear—taunted me, called me an unbeliever and a renegade, a taker of English gold, because that I opposed the hot-heads. And then it came to pass that I did that which caused all my neighbours to hate me. We found—I and my sons—a small party of English men and women wandering about the jungle, having escaped the fate of their murdered countrymen, and we guided them safely into Agra Fort. All would have been well had I not foolishly given my name to an Englishman who asked for it, and their gratitude led them to recommend me to government for a reward. But for that my neighbours would never have known.

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"And this is the reward, that we have been stoned and our lives threatened, and to save ourselves from worse we left home last night with what valuables we could bring away, and set forth for Agra."

"But," objected Ted, "you are going towards Delhi, not Agra."

The old man turned and pointed backwards.

"Over there," said he, "half an hour's walk away, our road from Paniwar joins the Agra-Delhi road, and we turned to the right instead of to the left in order to escape our pursuers. For my son, Ramzan Khan, had lingered near the village to see if we should be followed. We had a few hours' start before we were missed, and, guessing whither we were journeying, a number of the rascals followed, some on horseback, others on foot. With bullocks we cannot travel at more than a snail's pace, and we were unable to procure horses for the carts, so capture was certain. But Ramzan Khan, having a very swift horse, overtook us just after we had turned into the Agra road. Hearing the news that he brought, we tried to throw them off the scent by facing about towards Delhi instead of going on to Agra."

"I came much quicker than the budmashes," put in Ramzan Khan. "Some of them were on foot, and the horsemen were trotting slowly to allow the runners to keep up with them, thinking that they could not fail to overtake the bullocks."

"What, then, do ye intend to do?" asked Govind Singh. A trooper to whom he had been whispering dismounted, and, leaving the dusty road, stole forward under cover of the trees and undergrowth.

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"Allah knows," replied Yusuf Khan. "Perchance, having picked up our trail, they will ride on in their haste towards Agra without taking further notice of the tracks we leave in the dust. If so, we may hide until the danger is past. If, however, they notice that we have doubled back, all will soon be over unless ye choose to help us. When we fired we thought ye were the very sons of Shitan themselves, who had worked round and cut us off."

"Ah!" said Hira Singh reprovingly, "that was not a soldierly thing to do, to fire before making sure."

"But," said the stranger, "did we not see you charging upon us with spears and swords?"

"He is right," said Ted, with a laugh at Hira Singh's expense. "Why, ressaidar, didst thou not wish to slay them all without stopping to make sure?"

Rishan Chand, a Dogra, stepped forward with a suggestion.

"Let the women descend from the carts," said he, "and place some of us inside, and let the bullocks retrace their steps. The troopers and you, sahib, keep out of sight, but near enough to aid. Then when the budmashes come, the zamindar (farmer or yeoman) and his sons, and the drivers, can pretend to run away and leave the women at the mercy of the rebels. Then shall we surprise them when they peer in through the curtains, and before they can escape ye should be upon them."

"The Dogra has sense," said Hira Singh. "Let it be so, sahib."

"If the zamindar approve, it shall be done. What sayest thou, Yusuf Khan?"

"It is good; all except that we should run away, I and my sons. We do not run from jackals."

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"Nay, but they will suspect otherwise," Ted explained. "And if ye resist they will fire at you and at the carts, and all will be spoiled. Ye must consent to play the coward."

"Sahib, it is for me to obey you," said the zamindar.

The three refugees walked their horses to the side of the conveyances, from behind whose curtains veiled faces were already peeping in anxious bewilderment; and presently an elderly dame and three younger ones descended and were led by the elder son—a married man—into the shelter of the bushes. Sikhs and Dogras began to peer inside the vehicles, and two of the former jumped in. But Govind Singh was too quick for them.

"Outside, dogs!" he shrilled. "Put back that which ye have stolen. Are there not enough enemies from whom to steal that ye must rob friends, and one who has served with Larens Sahib? Outside, I say!"

Inside the carts was strewn in confusion as much of the old Mohammedan's portable property as could be put together in their haste. Abashed, the Sikhs dropped the few ornaments they had seized, and came out with sullen, crest-fallen expressions.

"Ho, zamindar!" called the risaldar. "Wilt thou or one of thy sons go in this cart to see that naught is stolen? Our men are thieves; they are but recruits who know no better."

"Nay," replied the old man, with simple dignity. "Ye are my friends. If they save my honour, I do not grudge them my goods."

"If so much as the value of an anna is taken," said Ted sternly, "the thief shall answer it. Let three or four of the Dogras get in each cart; they ate smaller than ye Sikhs, and will have more room to aim. Tumble in!"

"Hide, you rascals, hide!" broke in Govind Singh abruptly. He pointed eastward, whence the scout was running towards them, in and out among the tree-trunks, gesticulating as he ran.

"He is signalling us to take cover," continued the risaldar. "Sons of owls, disappear among the bushes before ye are seen! Inside the carts, ye Dogras! Quick!"

The Dogras squeezed inside and drew the curtains across; and in a moment all the troopers had disappeared, leaving Ted, Govind Singh, and the two Mohammedans beside the carts to await the scout.

"They are within sight from up there," he informed them. "I climbed a tree and saw the dust they raised. They come at a trot, and will soon be here."

"What shall we do, sahib?" asked the zamindar. "We obey thy orders."

"Go forward as before, thou and thy sons," said Ted. "We shall hide on both sides of the road. When the budmashes come close, fire at them, and then set spurs to your steeds, keeping straight along the road, not into the bushes where we hide. We can see to the rest, can we not, risaldar?"

Govind Singh grunted acquiescence, and with Ted left the glaring road for the shade of the trees, and the little caravan went on.

"Will they not mark the track of our horses?" Ted asked, being apprehensive lest the plot should fail.

"Once they see their prey they will take no further heed to the trail. Dismount here, sahib; we can see without being seen."

A view-haloo from the distance, faint yet savagely exultant, told that the pursuers were within sight of the slowly-trudging bullock-carts. A moment or two of suspense, then a shot rang out. A second report, and two horsemen flashed round the bend and galloped past the watching officers. Ted and Govind Singh were less than a hundred yards from the road; the rest of the troop, dispersed over a large area, were rather farther back on either side, hidden in groups behind clumps of trees and patches of bush.

"There's the cart," whispered Ted, as the zamindar and his son dashed past them.

With a twist of the bullocks' tails to urge them forward, Yusuf Khan's two servants left their charges and scuttled into the woods. The stolid bullocks, unmoved as ever, went forward snail-like, and the foremost pursuers ranged alongside.

Lieutenant Russell trembled with excitement. The Dogras were at the mercy of the blackguards, should they have courage enough to take revenge for the trick played upon them, rather than seek first to make good their escape.

The first four or five leapt from their horses, jabbering something that the watchers could not make out. Their actions, however, were easy to understand. They tore aside the curtains, laughing noisily; a silver streak flashed forth from each window, and a couple of the scoundrels staggered aside and rolled over heavily. Their comrades jumped back as though stung, and the expression of blended terror and amazement depicted on their faces caused Govind Singh to give utterance to a low pleased chuckle. Said he:

"It is the story of the hunter who chased the sambhur deer, and when he was close upon her, and sure of his prey, she vanished amid the bushes, and lo! he was face to face with a tiger.— Ha!— badly aimed! They have shot but two of the curs."

As their assailants recoiled the Dogras had fired. Some of the budmashes, their courage quickly cooled by unexpected resistance, seemed anxious to leave the scene without striking a blow, but the handful of revolted sepoy who were with them were less cowardly, and they who had muskets were already loading their weapons. Meanwhile Hira Singh and a dozen troopers were rapidly skirting round to the rear, and Ted knew that the time had come. He gave a clear whistle, and the rebels turned abruptly round.

Wild and shrill were the yells of those troopers as they sprang to the saddle and converged from various points upon the mutineers, spoiling their aim, so that not a Dogra was touched. The budmashes had no mind for further lingering. But they had hesitated too long. The lances were already couched and sabres bared, and the Sikhs close upon them, and the troopers' horses were fresher than were theirs, and better animals withal. Down the Agra road clattered the would-be murderers, Ted, Govind Singh, and Ramzan Khan at their heels. Round the bend they went, and, behold, the road was blocked by Hira Singh and his dozen Sikhs, who awaited the mob with levelled carbines.

The terrified rascals tried to turn aside, and the carbines cracked and the lance-points fell and rose again, and Ramzan Khan's tulwar was merciless. There was no fight left in these rebels. They had set out to murder and despoil those weaker than themselves; they had hunted the deer, as Govind Singh had said, and had caught the tiger.

"Have mercy! Have mercy!" they whined, throwing down weapons and holding their hands aloft, and Ted commanded that the fight should cease. He was obliged to repeat the order more sternly and accompany it by a threat, and even then the command might have availed little with the fierce Sikhs had the young lieutenant not been backed up by the veteran brothers. As for Yusuf Khan, the zamindar, the moment Ted had spoken, he had wiped his blade and thrust it back into the wooden sheath. His were the wrongs, but, thought he, it was not for him to disobey the countryman of Henry Lawrence, who had come to his help in time of sorest need.

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The prisoners numbered sixteen; eight or ten were slain, barely half a dozen escaping. The mounted men were ordered down from their seats and tied in fours, right wrist to left wrist, and bade march in front. The women were replaced in the carriages, and the procession moved forward at a walk, three or four sowars scouting in advance.

"Sahib," said the old Mohammedan, "we are grateful. You have saved us from a great evil."

"Ye also saved the lives of my countrymen," Ted replied, "so ye owe me naught. Indeed, ye have lost by your deed of kindness; I have lost nothing. Believe me, I will tell your story at Agra, and the government will not forget you when the rebellion is over."

The zamindar engaged his sons in a whispered conversation. After a few moments he said:

"Your servant is not a fighter, sahib,—that much I have seen. Take my son, Ramzan Khan, as orderly, to fight by your side. He is a good swordsman, and not without courage."

Ted jumped at the offer. Ramzan Khan met his gaze and said:

"I am your servant, sahib. I cannot forget what you have done for us."

And so it was settled that Ramzan Khan should accompany Lieutenant Russell to Lucknow.

Next day they crossed the Jumna by the bridge of boats, and Ted landed his convoy and his prisoners safely in Agra Fort, where he was warmly welcomed by Colonel Boldre, who was introduced by no less a person than Claude himself. Ted's new colonel was a little man, of slight build, and of rather insignificant appearance, until one noted his eyes and mouth. Ted soon perceived that he was active and alert, with an air of decision, and the lieutenant took to his commandant at once. Colonel Boldre listened to the youngster's narrative, and laughed at the story of the trick played upon the rebels. He inspected his new troops, and was particularly pleased with the look of Govind and Hira Singh, whose hearts he quickly won. Colonel Boldre had a thorough knowledge of Sikh character, and understood their ways, and when his poorbeah regiment had mutined, the Sikhs had remained loyal, and had saved their colonel's life.

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Ted made a good meal of salt beef and pickles, and when tiffin was over he and Claude left the colonel and strolled outside the rambling building.

"I never expected to see you here," said Ted as they quitted the room.

"I suppose not. As soon as I heard that the pater had been given permission to raise a corps I asked him to apply for my exchange. He did so, and here I am. Knowing that you would prefer this sort of work to being in the regulars, I asked him to put in a word for you also. I cracked you up no end as a horseman and soldier."

"You're a brick! It was jolly good of you to think of it. I suppose you didn't much care to be under Hodson after what's happened?"

Claude Boldre turned on Ted with a queer expression in his eyes—half vexation, half amusement.

"You're alluding to the shooting of the old emperor's sons, I suppose?" said he.

Ted nodded. "Hodson's a brave man—there's no one who risks his own life more; but one can hardly respect an English officer who could deliberately shoot his prisoners in cold blood."

"Cold blood be hanged, Russell! Your blood wouldn't be very cold if you were faced by ten times your own number, clamouring for the rescue of your prisoners."

"Perhaps not, but they were not resisting. They were not showing fight, and he ought not to have killed them. They were men like himself, but he showed no more compunction than if they'd been wolves or tigers."

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"Those prisoners were a jolly sight worse than wolves or tigers, Russell, a jolly sight more wicked. I don't think you can know the whole story. Hodson has a number of enemies because he's been so prominent, and he is rather arrogant and zubberdusty (high-handed) at times. He has trodden on other people's corns, and they've been too ready to believe the worst without taking all the circumstances into account."

"But, you know, he got into trouble over the Guides," Ted interrupted. "Falsified the accounts and collared the money, or something of the sort."

"Not a bit of it. He had a row with one of the Pathan officers, and he was rather zubberdusty; but as for the dishonesty, that was only a tale set afloat by busybodies. The affair was investigated by Reynell Taylor, and you'll admit that he would never condone anything wrong."

"Yes," Ted agreed, "if he absolved Hodson it's all right."

"Well, he did so. He said there was not an anna not accounted for, and that the books were badly kept, because Hodson wasn't cut out for a clerk, being always in the saddle, doing police and soldier work. Now, as to this other business. It was Hodson who captured the old Mogul when perhaps no other man could have done it, and he didn't put him to death. Then he offered to go and bring in the princes—the vicious brutes who'd murdered the English men and women in Delhi. With a handful of his troopers he set out for the tiger's lair and captured them. They begged him to spare their lives when they surrendered, but he resolutely refused to give any promise. On the way back he was cut off by a mob of armed fanatics, who were keen on rescuing the princes. Hodson's own account, and that of his sowars, is that if he had hesitated a moment he would have been overwhelmed and killed and they would have escaped, and he was determined that the vile murderers should be punished and made an example of. Without hesitation he answered the clamour of the mob by shooting the princes himself; and his promptness cowed the fanatics. They melted away, and not one of his men was hurt."

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"Yes; but was he not exaggerating the danger?" contended Ted.

"He's the only one who can judge of that," Boldre replied. "And with all his faults, I believe Hodson to be an honourable man. The prisoners were bound to be hanged. No one even attempted to deny their guilt, and their lives being forfeit, I don't suppose Hodson considered it wrong to anticipate their fate by a day or two, when by so doing he could save the lives of his own men."

"It was a big responsibility," Claude continued as Ted remained thoughtful, "and he had the courage to take it, believing it to be the right course. He may have been wrong. I admit I don't like the thought of it, but it was done from no motive of cruelty."

"You've put the affair in a new light," Ted confessed; "but all the same, I wish he had not done it."

"So do I," agreed Boldre. "But look here, Russell, suppose the princes had been rescued to spread rebellion by the magic of their name as the descendants of the Grand Mogul. Would not those who are now decrying him most have been the first to attack him for having allowed them to escape?"

"Well, perhaps they would," said Ted.

"No, I did not exchange because of that," Claude went on, reverting to Ted's earlier question, "but because I wished to serve under the pater. I've seen so little of him for years, and he's a good soldier, everyone say so. Very few of the Company's colonels have been given new commands, you may have noticed, and the pater is one of the few."

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"Yes, it's rather marked that the newly-raised regiments are mostly commanded by lieutenants and captains."

A hand tapped Ted's shoulder. Turning, he perceived his new orderly, Ramzan Khan. In reply to the look of enquiry the Mohammedan said:

"It is not safe to go so far from the fort, sahibs. The people of Agra do not love the English."

"He's right," said Claude. "We'd better get back."

"Is there any—" Ted stopped short with a little gasp. He stood staring with wide-open eyes, and his companions followed his gaze.

"Is that the famous Taj Mahal?" he asked in a tone of awe; and Claude nodded.

Our lieutenant of Irregular Horse having become accustomed to the wonders of the East was not easily moved to admiration thereby. But now he was spell-bound by the beauty, the exquisite perfection of that lovely dream-palace, perhaps the most awe-inspiring work of men's hands. In the ardour of argument he had not noticed the wonder, and now he could not take his eyes from that central dome, white and ethereal against the deep blue of the Indian sky, with its cluster of smaller pearly domes, the whole great and grand and yet unreal, as if the vision must shortly fade away. Men have attempted to depict the Taj Mahal in prose and poetry and painting, and have all admitted the feat impossible. "Go to India," Lord Roberts has said; "the Taj alone is worth the journey."

This vast tomb, known as the Taj Mahal, was built by the Emperor Shah Jehan in memory of

his wife, and finished about the year 1640, when the Moslems were the great architects of the world. Forbidden by their religion to make images of men by painting or sculpture, they devoted their genius to architecture; and the mosques and tombs of Hindustan, and the Alhambra and other Moorish buildings in Spain, bear witness to their surpassing power.

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Ramzan Khan looked downcast as they turned away.

“Ah!” said he sadly, “in those days were the true believers the leaders of mankind. We are unworthy children of our great fathers.”

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## CHAPTER XXVI

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### Lucknow Relieved

Pushing forward with all speed past Mainpuri and Bewar, Colonel Boldre arrived in the British camp on November 13th, shortly after Sir Colin Campbell had assumed command of the Relief Force. The column was encamped within and around the grounds of the Alambagh, a big mansion enclosed by a high wall, three or four miles south of Lucknow. Here they met many of their Delhi friends, who had come down with Colonel Hope Grant, and one of the first to greet them was Alec Paterson. There was plenty to say on both sides.

Ted found that Alec, who still limped a little in walking, had been appointed an extra aide-de-camp by the brigadier, who had noticed the lad's great energy and thoroughness at Delhi. Alec told his chum how glad he was that his name had been cleared, and wanted to know all about the trial at once; but Ted was too anxious to look round the camp and find out the notables, so, observing that the story would keep, he asked Alec to act as guide. Paterson, by the way, did not mention the little fact that he had greatly distinguished himself under Greathed at Agra on the way down, and had been recommended for promotion. Ted found that out from another source.

“We advance to-morrow,” the aide-de-camp informed his chums, and broke off abruptly to call their attention to a big, square-shouldered man in blue tunic, white cords, and jack-boots. “Here, do you see that man with the reddish hair and beard? He's a plucky chap. He's a clerk, not a soldier, but he's done a feat that any man might be proud of.”

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“What's he done?” asked Claude.

“Well, he don't look much like a mild Hindu or any other sort of Asiatic, does he? But he volunteered to disguise himself and break through the rebel lines with a note from Outram and plans of the enemy's weak points and advice for Sir Colin. And he did it. Fancy a man of his build and hair and features disguised as a native of Oudh! He must have a nerve. But he got through, and the general now has the plans; and if we succeed, Kavanagh will deserve a share of the credit. He's in the Volunteer Cavalry now.”

“I want to see Sir Colin,” said Ted. “Is he likely to be about?”

“I'll point him out if we see him. And who do you think is going to conduct the force to-morrow?”

“Who? How should I know?”

“Why, Lieutenant Roberts, the Artillery D.A.Q.M.G. at Delhi. That young man will be a major-general before any of us commands a battalion. He's a wonderful fellow, but so modest that nobody is jealous.”

“Fine-looking lot those Highlanders!” Alec observed as they passed a group of men wearing the kilt and bonnet and white gaiters.

“They're the 93rd, I suppose,” said Ted. “Hoot, mon, what for do ye no don the kilt yourself, Sandy?”

“I should like to,” Alec replied. “The 93rd's a grand regiment, and I'm proud of being a countryman of theirs.”

“Hear, hear!” said Ted. “They look fit.”

The three friends entered the Alambagh enclosure.

“Who are those two?” asked Claude, nodding towards a couple of distinguished-looking officers who were walking about slowly, in earnest conversation.

“Ssh!—not so loud. Why, the older man is Sir Colin himself, and the taller one with glasses is General Mansfield, his chief of staff.”

“Oh!”

The boys looked with keen interest upon the commander-in-chief. They saw a spare man, with a slight stoop, but a soldier to the backbone—an elderly man with furrowed brows, bearing the

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marks of long and arduous service; but there was no sign of weakness about the firm mouth, or the eyes so clear and alert.

"Yes, that's the commander-in-chief," said Paterson again. "Now, Ted, I've shown you round, and it's your turn to enlighten me now. I only know the bare facts that you have been cleared, and that Tynan is a howling cad."

So Ted had once more to tell what had befallen Tynan and himself at Lahore, and when he had finished the narrative, Alec asked:

"And what became of Pir Baksh?"

"He was condemned to death and shot the day before I left Lahore. Colonel Woodburn and Munro were almost as pleased as I was when the truth came out, for I really think that they believed that I had been unjust to poor Tynan. But Ethel Woodburn had stuck up for me through thick and thin."

"Miss Woodburn is the nicest, jolliest girl in India," said Alec with conviction, "and your brother's a jolly lucky fellow."

"He is so. Yes, she's all that and more, and she kept my spirits up when I was feeling jolly well down in the mouth. Wasn't she glad when I was cleared! It was almost worth while having gone through it all. I don't suppose I'll ever see Tynan again. Poor beggar, I'm sorry for him, for I don't think he ever meant to do it."

"What became of those Rajputs he'd bribed?"

"They were dismissed from the service. Dwarika Rai begged my pardon before he went. He said that he hadn't understood that his evidence might disgrace me until it was too late for him to draw back, and I believed him."

"It was a funny business altogether," was Claude's opinion, given in a tone of unusual thoughtfulness. "The man must have been mad."

"He was a born cad," said Paterson, "and deserved the same fate as Pir Baksh."

"I don't agree with you," said Ted. "I think there's some good in him."

"Precious little. But I haven't time to argue; I must make a strategical retirement. See you tomorrow."

After Alec's departure Claude and Ted found their way to the roof of the Alambagh, where were one or two officers whom they did not know. Over the expanse of wooded plain they caught glimpses of the mosques and minarets and gilded spires of Lucknow, rearing their heads above the abundant foliage of the parks and great gardens. The city seemed to stretch as far as the eye could reach, and they both experienced a curious thrill as they gazed thereat.

"And that's where Sir Henry Lawrence died, and where Outram and Havelock are now," observed Ted, almost in a whisper.

"Eighty-seven days they held out before Havelock got through," Claude reflected aloud. "It was a grand defence. I wonder whereabouts the Residency is?"

"Over there, due north," said a voice beside them.

"Thank you!" Claude replied; and they looked at the speaker, a clean-shaven man with hair inclined to wave, attired in a dress that seemed singularly out of place there, even among so great a variety of uniforms. He wore a blue frock-coat, and his white trousers were unstrapped; there was a white cover to his cap, and hunting-spurs adorned his shoes.

"Where are you youngsters from?" he asked.

"Delhi," Ted replied. "We've just arrived with some Irregular Horse."

"Delhi! And you two had the luck to take part in the siege?"

"I served all through," Ted answered with a little pride. "I went there with the Guides."

"Lucky young cub! Wish I could have taken my boys there."

"Rummy customer!" was Claude's comment, as the stranger turned away. "Who is he?"

"I wonder. Looks more like a sailor than a soldier. But whoever he is, he's accustomed to command; I could see that. But I fancy it's time to find our way back to our own lines."

At 9 a.m. next day the column moved off in high spirits, Lieutenant Roberts conducting the advance, with the aid of a native guide he had secured. The enemy had been led to believe that the movement would be made direct, by the northern route taken by Havelock two months previously. But from the Alambagh the column struck eastwards for the Dilkusha (Heart's Delight) Palace. The ruse was successful. Having made their plans to meet the direct assault, the sepoy were not prepared for the flanking movement, and no time was given them to strengthen the defences of the positions now threatened. Outside the wall of the Dilkusha Park the column halted until a large enough breach had been made by the guns, and Ted watched the Highlanders of the 93rd pulling up carrots in a field, and, after a hurried scrape, munching them with great

The obstruction was short; a portion of the park wall was soon broken down, and in went the Highlanders, eager to close. But the rebels had fled. A staff-officer, short and slight, trotted past as Ted's Arab was picking its way over the fallen masonry.

"There goes plucky wee Bobs!" he heard a sergeant of the 93rd remark to his mate; and Ted recognized the officer as Lieutenant Roberts. It was the first time he had heard the affectionate nickname bestowed upon the much-loved hero by the soldiers of forty-five years ago. Roberts, an artillery officer, had, of course, never served with the 93rd, but the "Scotties" had seen much of him lately, and even so early in his career he had won a place in their hearts rarely filled by any whose name is not prefixed by "Mac". "Bobs" they had christened him, "Plucky wee Bobs". To be known by such a name among these gallant fellows of the 93rd—the famous Thin Red Line of Balaclava—told of unusual coolness and daring.

Ted saw Lieutenant Roberts shoot ahead to reconnoitre, a native trooper following. The artillery officer halted, gazed in front, and signalled for the guns to advance. As he did so the roar of cannon thundered from behind the yellow palace. The rebels had opened point-blank upon the two solitary horsemen from a hidden battery, cutting the orderly's horse in two, and the trooper fell beneath his dead steed. Roberts was seen coolly to dismount in the face of the guns, and a loud huzza rose from the throats of the Highlanders as he dragged the orderly from under the weight, though the grape whizzed about them.

Under his direction the guns advanced, and the mutineers did not stay to test the British marksmanship, but made off with all speed in the direction of the Martinière. Almost without a pause the cavalry cantered across the high swards of the Dilkusha Park, the startled deer scudding away on all sides in vain endeavour to escape the noise.

As the Horse Artillery and cavalry drew nearer, the Martinière was quickly deserted, and Boldre's Horse and a few squadrons of regulars and irregulars pursued the sepoy as far as the canal. There was no dressed line of thundering horses, for the troopers broke off in threes or fours, whenever they saw a chance of engaging the pandies; and Ted, spurring after Govind Singh, who, having the start of him, was hotly in pursuit of one body of rebels, suddenly saw his friend Boldre busily engaged with three faithless sowars and in sore plight. Turning to Claude's aid, he drew off one, and, with a clever thrust, was able to disable the man's sword-arm. Boldre, who was no swordsman, by good luck cut down a second, and the third fled as Ramzan Khan came up at a gallop.

"Thanks, Russell!" said Claude. "But look out! here are half a dozen more."

Perceiving that the two Englishmen were separated from their comrades, a number of rebel troopers—men of the Irregular Cavalry who had deserted Henry Lawrence at Chinhut five months before—charged down upon the little group with sharp, angry cries. Before the lads had resolved how to withstand the shock, Ramzan Khan shot out to meet the pandies, and there was nothing for it but to back him up.

"Plucky beggar! He'll be killed!" groaned Claude; but to their amazement the orderly showed himself a consummate wielder of the sword. He swerved aside as they bore down upon him, and slashed at the nearest rebel as he passed, the man tumbling like a sack of flour from his horse. Parrying a blow, he disarmed another by a turn of the wrist, and smote a third over the shoulder just as Ted arrived on the scene and made for the pandy on his orderly's right. Ted swung his sword aloft—and then his head seemed to split, and he saw the stars dancing in their courses. The sword fell from his grasp, but his knees instinctively retained their grip, and the blood streamed down his face.

"I'm not killed anyhow," said he to himself, and began to look about him. Ramzan Khan was engaged with two at once, and the cruel-looking little pandy at whom he had ridden was clearly getting the better of Boldre. Ted urged his restive Arab alongside the sepoy's horse, and, having no sword, clutched the man by his tunic collar and under his left arm, and putting forth all his strength, he swung him from the saddle. Before he could drop him, the sowar, turning half round in the air, got his knee on the neck of Ted's horse and aimed a vicious cut at his captor. The blow would have done for Ted, had not Claude been able to strike up the sword and give the point, and the pandy sank at the horse's feet. Ramzan Khan's remaining opponents had fled.

"You've saved me twice to-day, Russell," said Boldre quietly. "Are you hurt?"

"I don't know. Something struck me in the face, but I can't imagine what it was. It seems as if my nose is bleeding."

Claude roared most ungratefully.

"Why," said he, "as you charged the pandy, he suddenly backed his horse away from Ramzan Khan, and your Arab cannoned into it, and, half-rearing, he threw up his head and caught you full on the nose as you were leaning forward. Then I drew the pandy's attention from you."

"Is that how it was? Where did my sword go?— Ah! there it is; but what an ass I am!"

"Why particularly so?"

"I never had the sense to use my pistol." He took out his Deane and Adams revolver and

fingered it regretfully, adding to the orderly as they turned back towards the Martinière and again joined their comrades:

"We owe our lives to your courage and skill, Ramzan Khan. You are bleeding. Are you hurt?"

The Mohammedan grinned, showing his even teeth and the whites of his eyes.

"It is nothing. I owed you a debt, sahib, so let there be no talk of thanks. It was for this purpose that my father sent me to ride by your side."

"I thank you no less," Ted assured him; and added, "You can use your sword."

"Ah! my father taught us. He is indeed a swordsman. He will be pleased that I have proved of service."

As they drew near to the Martinière Claude exclaimed:

"Hullo, there's our friend of yesterday! Why, of course it's Peel! What duffers we were not to guess!"

Peel! Captain Peel of H.M.S. *Shannon*, commanding the famous Naval Brigade with the big guns from the man-of-war at Calcutta. Yes, he it was who had shown them the position of the Residency. Right glad were the troops in Ladysmith of the aid of the sailors and their splendid guns, and glad were the raisers of the Lucknow siege when Peel and his jolly tars came to bear a hand.

The sailors had unyoked the stolid bullocks—"cow-horses" they contemptuously termed them—and were hauling on the drag-ropes, drawing the mighty engines of destruction along as though they were but wooden toys, and the Punjabis of Boldre's Horse gazed in bewilderment at this new species of Feringhi. Shorter men than themselves, but what giants in strength!

"Who are they, sahib?" asked Govind Singh. "Is it a new kind of soldier like those big warriors in petticoats we first saw yesterday?" And Ted tried hard to explain to the Sikhs how Britain's chief strength lay, not in her comparatively small army, but in her glorious navy.

"But why are they doing coolie work? They are indeed strong as bullocks."

"Do bullocks take a pride in their work, or can they do it half so well?" Ted replied. "These men love their guns, and they rejoice in their strength, and so they are invincible."

In all probability Ramzan Khan had saved our hero's life that November afternoon, but the same night he was fighting desperately against an equally remorseless foe, against whom his orderly's swordmanship was of no avail. For he was again down with cholera, and this time a far worse attack than the slight one at Delhi, and when his chums left his bedside next morning they hardly dared hope to see him again. For days he lay between life and death, and then, thanks to a tough constitution and a healthy life, he rallied and began to pick up.

The Martinière, in which he lay, was a vast palace built by Claude Martin, a French adventurer who had amassed great wealth in Lucknow. It was a curious building, with statues placed wherever they would stand, in grotesque profusion. The Frenchman had hoped to sell the palace to his friend the King of Oudh, naming a price of one million sterling. But the monarch had laughed at the idea, informing old Monsieur Martin that by their law the property would belong to the sovereign on the death of the owner. So Martin determined to outwit the king, and prepared his own tomb within the building. In due course Claude Martin died and was buried therein, thus circumventing his royal master, for no Mussulman dare live in a building in which the body of an unbeliever has lain. Previous to the siege the Martinière had been used as a school for the children of soldiers.

As Ted lay in helpless pain the booming of the guns never seemed to cease. In spirit he was back again with the Gurkhas on the Ridge, watching Brind's battery pounding at the walls of Delhi. At last the thunder of the cannon ceased, and he fell asleep. When he woke up Alec Paterson was talking to the doctor, and he heard the latter say: "I think he's all right now; he's had a bad time, though."

"Hullo, Alec! Has Brind breached the walls yet?"

"Brind? You're wandering, old man; we're just outside Lucknow." And, faintly remembering, Ted began to collect his scattered wits.

"I've been dreaming," said he. "I thought we were still on the Ridge. I remember now. Sir Colin is attacking to-day, isn't he?"

"Not to-day; we're retreating to-day."

"What? D'you think you can pull my leg so easily?"

"It's a fact. The force is retiring, and I've come on with instructions. Listen! Those are Blunt's guns."

"And do you mean to say that we're leaving Lucknow to the rebels?"

"I do."

"And Outram and Havelock, and the women and children?"

"No," laughed his chum; "we've brought them away. I've just ridden from the Dilkusha, where preparations are being made to receive them. I've been ragging you. We have relieved Lucknow, but, not being strong enough to hold the town, Sir Colin is retiring on Cawnpore. He means to send the women to Allahabad and wait for reinforcements. You've missed a lot, old man. Your luck deserted you this time."

"How did our fellows behave?"

"Boldre's Horse? Hardly engaged. The brunt of the work fell on the 53rd, 93rd, and 4th Sikhs. It was fine to see the two last regiments storm the Sikanderbagh, the Sikhs going off with a rush and the Highlanders after them, racing like mad. A Highlander jumped first through the breach and was killed, then Sikhs and Pathans and Highlanders all mixed. It was fine! The Englishmen and Irishmen of the 53rd did some good work too."

"Have you seen Havelock and Outram?"

"Rather! Saw the meeting between them and Sir Colin and Hope Grant. Havelock looks bad; I'm afraid he's a dying man. I wouldn't have missed these last few days for anything, Ted. Did you hear where I went the night you were taken bad?"

"No. Were you on a *daur*<sup>[1]</sup>?"

[1] A surprise expedition on a small scale.

"Not exactly. We had run out of ammunition almost, and Sir Colin was mad with the responsible artillery officer. He sent for little Roberts, and asked if he could find his way back to the Alambagh in the dark with a mob of camels to bring back the ammunition before morning. It was a dangerous bit of night-work, but Roberts said he'd do it. So the chief told him to get one hundred and fifty camels and an escort from Grant, and also take back the wretched artillery officer and leave him at the Alambagh in disgrace. Roberts had left his native guide in charge of some Afghans, but the fellow had given his guard the slip, and he was floored. However, without letting on, he asked for an escort of native cavalry. Grant wished him to take English lancers, but Roberts said Englishmen were too noisy and jingly, and helpless if separated. In charge of the escort were Younghusband and Gough, and I begged leave at the last moment.

"Roberts was in a sweat. Before the previous day he'd never been over the ground, and the night was black, and we were liable to wander in any direction but the right one, and unless he got back with the ammunition within a few hours all the general's plans would be upset. However, with his usual genius for doing the right thing, he landed us within a short distance of the Alambagh, and went on alone to explain, being afraid lest the garrison, mistaking us for rebels, should fire and stampede the *oonts* (camels), and then we should be left. He soon came back to say that they were getting the ammunition-boxes ready, so we quickly loaded the camels and got back in good time. Sir Colin was awfully pleased with him. It was rather exciting. If young Roberts lives long enough he'll be a great man."

"He's a jolly decent fellow."

"Yes, I saw him do another fine thing a day or two ago. We'd captured the mess-house close to the Residency, and Roberts planted the Union Jack on the top as a signal that we should soon rescue them. He was exposed to the rebel fire, and they soon bowled the flag over. Up he went again, and though they missed him they brought the staff down again. He set it up a third time, and for the third time they knocked it down. But he beat 'em in the end."

"Good!"

"There was a drummer-boy named Ross," Alec continued, "who did a similar thing. When the Shah Nujif, the highest mosque in Lucknow, was captured, he climbed like a monkey to the very top, and there he blew the 93rd's bugle-call towards the Residency while the pandies were making a target of him. Only a kid of twelve too! But I must go now, old chap. Hope you'll be all right for the final assault."

A few days after the arrival of the rescued garrison of Lucknow at the Alambagh, Ted Russell was on his legs again, and the risaldar Govind Singh was describing the part Boldre's Horse had played in the assault. The veteran's deep-set eyes flashed as he spoke of deeds of daring, when suddenly he changed his tone and his countenance softened.

"He is indeed dead, sahib," he said quietly. "I saw his grave, and they tell me that the English words on the tombstone mean that he tried to do his duty. The old Mohammedan was right."

Ted understood that the grim Sikh was referring to his hero, Sir Henry Lawrence, and he asked Govind Singh to tell him more about the saintly warrior. They strolled into the grounds, and in the square their attention was attracted by a solemn group, who stood bareheaded and downcast. Ted approached, in time to see a coffin lowered.

"Who is dead?" he asked in a whisper of a sergeant of the 93rd, who stood by. The Highlander looked dourly at his questioner.

"Wha should it be but the best of a'?" said he.

“Not Havelock?”

The Highlander nodded, and continued to gaze into the grave. It was indeed the hero of the First Relief of Lucknow who had died, and disappointed the millions who had looked forward to welcoming the victorious soldier home to England.

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## CHAPTER XXVII

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### An Encounter with the Nana Sahib

Knowing that his present force would be lost in the mazes of Lucknow, Sir Colin awaited reinforcements. Jung Bahadur, the Gurkha prime minister and commander-in-chief, was marching down to his assistance with a strong column of the Nepal army, and Lord Canning, the governor-general, had advised Sir Colin to wait for the Gurkhas, as their general was keen on taking part in the siege, and Jung Bahadur would be annoyed if he had to return to Nepal without having had a share in any important fighting, and his friendship was worth something to the British. The troops were therefore employed in keeping open communications, and in small expeditions to Bithur, where Nana Sahib lived, and whithersoever the rebels were gathered in force.

Christmas came and went, and a new year opened, before Ted Russell took part in another fight. In the early days of January, 1858, the rebels were attacked at the village of Khuda-ganj, north-west of Cawnpore.

No sooner were the troops within range than the native gunners opened fire, and showed how excellent had been their training. The shells whizzed viciously overhead, and one burst with a crash between Ted and Ramzan Khan, who were within ten paces of each other, the fragments whirring about their ears without touching man or beast. Boldre's Horse were ordered to retire out of range, and the Horse Artillery began to talk back, and Peel's tars came running up, dragging their big guns along without apparent effort, and, wheeling them smartly into action, were soon pumping shot and shell into the rebel stronghold.

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The rest of the troops were ordered to take cover and lie down until the cannon should have played havoc among the mutineers, and prepared the way for a bayonet charge. And now Ted and Claude, from behind the sand-hills, witnessed an unusual incident, no less than open defiance of the commander-in-chief himself, by an English regiment—flat mutiny in fact.

The men of the 53rd firmly believed that Sir Colin favoured the Highlanders unduly, and gave them more than their due. Having learned that he had selected the 93rd for the honour of leading the stormers, they quietly determined to baulk their rivals. The rebel fire was still unsilenced—indeed both Sir Colin and General Hope Grant had just been hit by spent bullets—when one of the 53rd rose and ran forward yelling. A howl of triumph and a cheer, and the regiment dashed after him.

Sir Colin was furious—but the 53rd must be supported, even though they had upset his plans. He gave the 93rd the order to back them up, and Hope Grant advanced his cavalry.

A thrill of delight passed through the nerves of our two lieutenants as the “Charge” was sounded, and the line of British Lancers and Sikh and Pathan Irregulars shot forward at a gallop, knee to knee as though on parade, the earth quivering beneath the hammering, the horses straining as if they entered into the feelings of their riders. It was a supreme moment, and Ted could tell that his good Arab was as excited as himself as the line thundered onwards. And then the regularity of the gallop was spoiled and the better-horsed shot ahead, for the lads of the 53rd had broken Jack Pandy's heart, and he was already scudding away with his guns. One party of rebels after another was overtaken and scattered, and on went the cavalry until all the guns were captured and hardly a rebel was left in sight. Then they turned and charged back upon those who had escaped the first shock.

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“Hurt at all?” asked Ted as he came up with Claude Boldre.

Boldre pointed to his leg, from which the blood was welling. “Bit of a bayonet prick from a pandy who was down. I don't think much of it.”

“Better have it bathed, though.— By Jove, look there! Roberts is a dead man—no, he's cut the sepoy down!”

The troop of native cavalry with which the future hero of Kandahar and Pretoria was riding had come across a body of mutineers, who, unable to escape, had turned and fired, mortally wounding Younghusband, the commandant. Roberts was hurrying to his friend's aid, when he noticed a pandy in the act of slaying one of his troopers. He instantly engaged the rebel, and, cutting him down, saved the life of the Punjabi. Turning round Lieutenant Roberts perceived a couple of sepoy's hurrying off with a standard, so he pursued and overtook them, and, seizing the standard with his left hand, he killed the bearer. As he did so the other sepoy let fly, his musket barely a foot away. Luckily for England it missed fire, and the second opponent was speedily

disposed of, and Lieutenant Roberts bore away the standard and thereby gained the V.C.

"Well done, Roberts!" exclaimed Ted as they watched him ride away.

"Didn't you shiver when you saw the pandy pull the trigger?"

"I went cold all over. I thought he was done for. But come along and bathe your cut if you don't want to be laid up."

"I don't want that, thanks—not until we've driven the beggars out of Lucknow.

"I like that nag of yours better every time I see him," observed Boldre, as his own horse stumbled towards camp, winded by the long gallop.

"Yes, he was a bargain. I should like to know who owned him originally. By the way, I wonder what Sir Colin will do to the 53rd. The chief can be a peppery old gentleman when he likes, and I expect there'll be a row."

"Yes, I shouldn't care to be in their shoes."

They were not present to witness the scene, but for once in his life Sir Colin was vanquished. Whenever he attempted to "dress down" the regiment, the "bhoys" of the 53rd, highly elated by the success of their trick, would interrupt with shouts of "Three cheers for the commander-in-chief, boys!" And so rapturously did they applaud and with such hearty good-temper that the old general was forced to laugh in spite of himself; and after that it was no use to pretend to be angry. He rode away amid a storm of cheers. The 53rd had won.

After a prolonged stay at Fatehghar, Boldre's Horse returned to Cawnpore. Now for the first time Ted had leisure to look round this town, so sorrowfully interesting to the English race. Alec knew the place well, having stayed there before Ted came down from Lahore; so he took his chum to the ghaut where the massacre had begun, and then to that last sad scene of the murder.

There were gruesome sights still to be witnessed in Cawnpore, and, partially inured as the lads now were to the horrors of war, there was that in Cawnpore to make them shudder—bones bleaching on the many sand-banks of the broad river, and corpses floating down its sacred stream.

But the saddest sights of all were those which recalled the foul treachery of the previous summer. Nowhere did the British soldiers so long to close with the sepoy, hand to hand and steel against steel, as at Cawnpore. Ill fared it, then, with any natives of that town whom the soldiers suspected of having helped, or even looked on, at that dire tragedy. It is to be feared that the innocent sometimes suffered for the sins of the guilty, for the soldiers were not in a mood to discriminate, and they did not know then that sepoy, even of the rebel regiments, had absolutely refused to obey the Nana, when he gave the order for the women and children to be murdered.

The Sikh and Pathan allies had old scores to pay off against the Oudh sepoy, and they were with difficulty restrained. More than one harmless Hindu, who had taken no part in the outrage—who had perhaps risked his life for his master—fell a victim to their vengeance.

Our two Aurungpore officers were gazing upon the waters of the Ganges, some distance east of the ghaut, silent and meditative. Ted was picturing the scene of the massacre, and the terrible agonies of the women as they saw their husbands being killed off by the concealed marksmen without a chance to retaliate; and the horror of all as the survivors were dragged to shore amid the gleeful shouts of the ruffians. Perhaps a pandy had been lying down there where he and Alec stood. His hand went to his sword-hilt at the thought.

Paterson on the other hand was trying to realize that this muddy stream was actually the great Ganges, the wonderful river of which he had heard and read so much in childhood—Mother Ganges, the deity of the Hindus.

A nearly-naked Hindu entered the sacred stream, a brass vessel in his hand. Wading until his knees were covered he dipped the loto in the filthy water and drank therefrom, or rather filled his mouth and let it trickle out again. Then he splashed his body from head to foot, and presently crouched down in the water and prayed to Mother Gunga.

"Well," observed Ted with disgust, "if that chap ain't poisoned he deserves to be purified. Ugh! drinking that filth!"

"He keeps looking at us," said Alec. "I wonder what he wants."

"No good, I'll be bound. He's praying now."

The devotee came to the bank and began to smear himself with holy mud, facing in turn north, east, south, and west. A number of Hindus were now in the water, but none was so devout as he, whom the others watched in respectful admiration. Quite suddenly he raised his arm on high, and, fixing the two with his rolling eyes, he cursed them aloud. Pretending not to notice, the boys turned away, but the *yogi* ran after them, the holy water dripping from his hair and body as he ran.

Calling them to halt, he fired off another volley of curses in a high shrill voice, greatly to the delight of his co-religionists. He called heaven to witness that he hated the unclean Feringhi, and vowed that destruction would come upon them suddenly unless they gave heed to him and

returned to their own country.

By this time the yogi had approached within a pace or two of the lads, who were quickly walking away from the scene, and fifty yards to the rear followed admiring groups. The yogi leaned his head forward, spitting forth his curses, and then ostentatiously drew a knife from the folds of his loincloth, and changed his tone in a most unexpected manner.

"Take me prisoner! Quick, sahibs!" he hurriedly whispered. "I have news for you. Your pistols, quick!" and then he made pretence to strike at the nearer boy.

Alec was the quicker to act. He whipped out his revolver, and, springing towards the yogi, who had recoiled, placed the muzzle against his head. The group of Hindus howled with rage.

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"Come along, you rebel dog!" Alec shouted in Urdu. "Well see how you like being shot out of a cannon."

"That's right," whispered the yogi encouragingly, and aloud he shrieked appeals to his gods to destroy the Englishmen. Ted had now hold of one of the strange fellow's arms, and together they dragged him along, he making pretence to resist.

"What do you want?" Alec whispered.

"I am loyal, but I am suspected, and there are spies perhaps watching even now. If I had come to the English camp with the news, or even spoken to you in a friendly manner, I might have lost my life. Three times have I performed *puja* here in the hope of a chance of speaking to an English officer unsuspected. My news is that Dundu Pant of Bithur is at Pindijang. Now let me wrest myself free, and you must chase me."

"How can we know that your news is true?" asked Ted dubiously.

"Ask Lawson Sahib if he will believe Pancham Tewari. He will know."

An adroit twist and wrench and the yogi was free and running down the road. Ted fired—and missed—and Alec followed suit, both taking care not to hit the man. The onlookers howled with delight at the supposed discomfiture of the Feringhis, and the yogi turned and cursed them afresh, and the boys judged it best to retire when they saw the mob pick up stones and advance to protect the holy man.

"We'd better clear away," said Alec. "I know Major Lawson; he'll tell whether the man is genuine."

"Hope his news is true. It'll be a feather in our caps if we help to catch the Nana. Where is Pindijang?"

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"No idea. It's rather a fishy business altogether, and I'm afraid it's a trap."

"I shouldn't be surprised," Ted replied. "I hope not, though, for it may be a great score for us if we help to catch the ruffian."

They lost no time in reaching camp, and Alec led the way to Major Lawson's quarters, where they told the story of the encounter with the mysterious yogi, and how they had been referred to him for a character.

"Pancham Tewari is to be trusted," said the major. "He's an old friend of mine, and he loves the Nana Sahib about as much as we do, for the scoundrel has dispossessed the Tewari family of their lands by fraud some time ago, and Pancham would do anything to get even with him. I'll see this matter through. Not a word to a soul, mind."

They kept their own counsel, and had heard no more about the matter when they turned in for the night. But Ted Russell felt sure that something was in the air, and could hardly sleep for excitement. He dreamt that he was engaged in hand-to-hand conflict with a yogi, who quite casually changed to the infamous Rajah of Bithur, and, emerging from the bed of the Ganges, chased him for many miles, finally tripping him up; whereupon Ted caught him by the throat, and the murderer began to groan. He awoke and listened. Surely someone was groaning close at hand! Alec had of late been sharing his tent, and he stretched out his hand and groped for his chum.

"What's wrong?" came a growl.

"Listen!"

"It is only the silly camels warbling. Go to sleep."

"So it is. You can whiff 'em, too! We get too much camel here. I wish the wind 'ud change."

The camel, that useful but detested animal, grunts and grumbles all night long, and the soldier blesses him in picturesque language. The fact that, moreover, "e smells most awful vile" does not tend to increase his popularity.

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"I wish you wouldn't spoil my beauty-sleep whenever you have a nightmare," Paterson sleepily grumbled, as he rolled over and became blissfully unconscious.

But Ted was restless and could not sleep. The camels kept up their serenade until he longed to

sally forth with a whip. Presently a footstep was heard outside and the tent-flaps parted. Ted rose to a sitting posture and laid hold of his pistol.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

"'For Valour'!" came the cool reply. "Why, my V.C. winner, you're as frightened as a babu! Get up! we're going on a daur."

It was Claude Boldre. Giving Alec a joyous kick, Ted hurriedly dressed and went out. The sun had not yet risen, but the camp was fitfully lighted by the wood-fires, around which half-clad native servants squatted and shivered. Others were running to and fro, aimlessly to all appearance, and the horses had begun to neigh. Away to the right he could make out against the walls of white canvas the dark forms of Govind Singh and Hira Singh superintending the preparations of their men.

"Come along, Ted, and have some breakfast," said Claude, appearing from behind the tents. "Your horse is being looked after. We start in half an hour."

Linking his arm in Ted's he marched him into the colonel's tent, calling to Paterson to follow. As they entered, Colonel Boldre looked up from his map, nodded, and motioned towards the breakfast-table. The coffee-pot was steaming thereon, and the boys did not hesitate. The tent was not more than a dozen feet square, and there was only one spare chair. Claude sat on the pallet-bed and Ted on a trunk.

"Are we going to Pindijang?" asked the latter, "and if so, where is it?"

"Why!" exclaimed the colonel in surprise, "how did you know?"

Ted and Alec laughed.

"This is our daur, colonel. Didn't you know?"

"Your daur! What on earth do you mean?"

"We brought the news last night that the Nana was there," Alec replied. "We had it from a spy."

Colonel Boldre regarded them with interest.

"You never told me," said Claude.

"We were told to keep it quiet," said Ted.

"Quite right!" observed their commandant. "Pindijang is about nine miles away, and this is to be a cavalry affair. Our fellows are going, with a detachment of Hodson's and Probyn's, and a squadron of the 9th Lancers, and a troop of Horse Artillery."

"The pater's in command," whispered Claude.

"I congratulate you, colonel," said Alec promptly.

In came Major Lawson, and the boys cleared out. The wild-looking men of Boldre's Horse had broken their fast and were eager for the fray, chattering in groups, discussing the probable destination, and hazarding all kinds of wild conjectures. A few moments later without any sound of bugles, the regiment was in the saddle and trotting away to the north-west.

Paterson sorrowfully watched them depart, for he had not obtained permission to accompany the force.

"Where are the others?" Ted enquired of Claude.

"Don't know.... Who are these?—oh! the Flamingoes, and there are the Probyn ruffians. We've done it very quietly."

A blurred mass appeared presently away to the right.

"Those will be the Lancers and the guns," Ted hazarded his opinion. "Yes, there's no mistaking that music. Good old Horse Artillery!"

With joined forces the little flying column pushed forward at a trot, the pleasant clatter of hoofs and jingle and rattle of the guns forming an accompaniment, inspiring with its martial noise.

A flash of yellow light gleamed far away on the eastern horizon, as the metal upon one of the tall minarets of Lucknow caught the first rays, and the sun had risen. There before them lay the fortified village of Pindijang in the dip hollowed out by the shallow tributary running south-east to join the Granges. The place was walled, and they could see the black muzzles of cannon peeping from the embrasures. The neighbourhood was well wooded, affording good cover for sharpshooters.

Colonel Boldre grumbled at his hard luck. Half an hour earlier and he could have taken the village by surprise. The fault was not his, for the map showed Pindijang as nine miles from Cawnpore. It had proved not less than a dozen, and would have to be taken by hard fighting, not by a *coup*.



He sent the Lancers with two of the horse-guns away to the right to cut off retreat in the direction of Lucknow, the Irregular Horse remaining concealed by a wood until the flanking party should be ready to co-operate. Ted and Claude stood watching the Englishmen ride off, admiring the gallant bearing of the splendid Bengal Horse Artillery, a corps that has given so many famous men to India. The lances of the cavalry flashed and glittered as the steel points caught the sun, making, with the picturesque trappings of the Artillery and the fascination of their guns, one of the bright and beautiful scenes of war. The other side of the picture was presently to be seen.

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"We're quite on a hill here," said Ted. "I should not have thought the ground dipped so much. They're out of sight."

"There will be a stream to cross down there."

Presently a myriad flashing of tiny points of moving fire, like the facets of waves dancing in the sun, and the Lancers were seen emerging from the hollow and trotting up the slight incline. But the guns were not with them, for the wheels had sunk deep in the mud of the far bank. A score of the Lancers had remained to help, while the remainder trotted across the plateau to cut off the retreat.

Suddenly a bank of smoke obscured the trunks of the trees, and the ranks of the Lancers seemed to break up, as the crash and rattle of musketry rang in the ears of the distant onlookers. Then were seen gaps and empty saddles and maddened horses. The officer in command, himself wounded, could be seen steadying his men, and, resisting the temptation to charge in among the trees, he drew them off rapidly and in good order, and brought them under cover, where they dismounted, and their carbines began to seek out the hidden pandies.

Colonel Boldre was visibly agitated. The sepoys had seen their approach and laid a trap, and, should they be strong enough to overwhelm the cavalry, the stuck guns would be lost.

He was about to give the order to support the Lancers, when there was heard a clang and a clatter and a rattle, and a whirl of dust was seen rushing up the slope, as though wind-impelled.

"B. H. A. for ever!" Ted exclaimed. "By George! they are going!"

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The sound of firing so close at hand had put double strength into the backs of the gunners, and they tugged and pushed, and the plucky horses also heard the sound, and out of the mud came the guns. Mounting rapidly, the drivers cracked their whips and urged forward their teams of six good horses. The dust rose and enveloped them as they bounded along; then they wheeled, stopped sharply, and unlimbered.

Colonel Boldre's face relaxed, and he gave no command. The watchers saw the gunners busy as ants; then came a flash and a roar as a shell hurtled among the trees, and a second was in the air before the first had burst.

With hardly a pause a third and fourth shell exploded among the pandies, apparently with deadly effect. Their fire slackened, died down; they wavered, and another shell fell amongst them. Panic-stricken they streamed away towards the sheltering walls. The Lancers mounted their horses; the guns scattered another shell or two amid the fugitives, and, limbering up, rattled after them.

But the surprise had failed, and there was now little chance of capturing the arch-traitor. With poignant disappointment Colonel Boldre saw the troops pouring out of the village through the north-western gate, the exit farthest from them. He gave the word, and the Irregulars galloped away to their left front to cut them off.

Ted's Arab was both fleet and great-hearted, and he and Govind Singh were soon to the front, half a length in advance of the ragged line. It was a race, not a charge, and Ted remembered with a smile how he had once guided "The Padre" to victory. The pace of the runaways was checked by the river which, bending from the north-east, looped round the western and southern sides of the village, leaving only the eastern side open, and *there* were the British Lancers, now quite near to the walls. Close behind him Ted could hear the jingle of a gun and the mad galloping of its team, tearing the big weapon along with jolt and clatter. Few sights are there to surpass horse artillery galloping into action, and few sounds more musical; and the noble horses seem inspired thereby, and enter into the spirit of the movement with a zest as great as that of the men.

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They were now level with the ghaut, or ford, and a few hundred yards to the west thereof. The guns unlimbered, and, after sending a couple of shells after the leading fugitives who had made good their escape, they opened on the ghaut and got range with the second shot. More than half the pandies were checked; on the one side were English cavalry and a couple of those deadly guns, on the other the only way of escape was a death-trap. Colonel Boldre despatched a body of Probyn's Horse and of his own men under Claude to ride down to the ghaut and take charge of the prisoners. The rest continued in the track of the Nana.

Ted, Govind Singh, and a handful of the better-mounted men had kept on their way without a pause, and they quickly perceived that they were overhauling the sepoys, the hindmost of whom presently began to scatter across the fields and swampy ground, making for the woods and jungle. And after them went most of the pursuers.

But Ted and Govind Singh with some of their Jalandar men kept straight ahead. They had noticed that amongst the runagates who had stuck to the road were two or three men of

consequence, to judge by their costumes and the comparisons of their steeds. And some instinct told our ensign that he in the middle of the group, decked out in a conspicuous saffron shawl, with a glittering turban, was none other than the Nana himself. Heedless of all other considerations he urged his handful onward, speeding farther and farther away from the main body, intent only on slaying or capturing the Mahratta ruffian.

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They were now within a hundred yards of their quarry, and almost up with the laggards, some of whom broke away into the paddy-fields, while those who were not quick enough received short shrift from Govind Singh's compatriots. With hardly a pause the Punjabis again swept forward, their number reduced by one. As they lessened the distance separating them from the rear-guard a couple of pandies swiftly swerved aside, off the track, and fired as the Sikhs, unprepared for the manoeuvre, flew past in a bunch. The sowar on the right of Govind Singh reeled in his saddle and then his horse shot to the front, relieved of its burden, and Ted noticed that a second of his men winced, let his carbine fall, and clapped a hand to his side.

"Forward!" shouted the young officer as the men began to pull on the reins. "Forward! Never mind those two; there's a big reward for him who catches that saffron fellow in front!"

With much reluctance the Punjabis allowed the two pandies to continue their flight unmolested. The chieftain and his body-guard were within pistol-shot, and Ted fired twice, and unhorsed the sepoy who rode next to the leader, at whom he had aimed. And suddenly the rebels turned and with savage yells charged back upon their pursuers. Ted again aimed at the leader and again missed, and the Nana's men were upon them, three to one.

With a yell as savage as theirs Govind Singh rose in his stirrups and felled his nearest opponent with one mighty blow, and, leaning forward, buried his tulwar in the shoulder of another. Before he could recover his blade a lance was thrust into his breast, and he dropped like a log. Ted saw the fall of his right-hand man, and was near enough to cut down the striker just as another of the mutineers rode full tilt at him.

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The lance-point grazed his tunic, and he caught the shaft under his arm-pit, gave the pandy his point, and went forward, straight for the man with the saffron shawl, who was keeping well in the background. He cut at the villain's head, but a tulwar interposed, caught his blade, and snapped it off at the hilt. And at this moment, when the superior strength and size and courage of the Punjabis were barely enabling them to hold their own, the two pandies who had escaped had now wheeled round and charged to the aid of their comrades, taking Ted's two or three unexpectedly in the rear and deciding the issue.

A tremor of cold fear ran through our hero's frame as he found himself armed only with a useless sword-hilt wherewith to defend himself. The vile Mahratta raised his pistol, and, at a distance of three paces, fired point blank at the lad's breast. Ted Russell's career would have ended then and there had not his Arab, at the very moment that the trigger was pulled, trodden on the edge of a naked blade. The horse reared, received the bullet in its head, and rolled over dead, almost crushing its rider.

One Sikh and one only of the reckless few who had galloped in the wake of Ted and Govind Singh remained alive, and he was unhorsed and fighting valiantly on foot. He hacked his way to the rescue of his officer, and wounded the pandy who, having disarmed Ted, was about to deal a finishing blow. Then he in his turn was laid low. Ted still had his revolver; raising himself on his elbow he took aim at the Nana, who instantly set spurs to his horse, and his two surviving retainers followed his example. But Ted had the Mahratta rajah covered. Filled with exultation at the thought that the murderer was at last at his mercy he pulled the trigger.

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There was no report, and he realized with a heavy heart that the weapon's chambers were all empty, that the arch-traitor had escaped, and that he was helpless!

He rose and looked about him, and a reaction of thankfulness followed the bitter disappointment as the thought stole upon him that he had escaped with no injury more serious than a scratch or two. He perceived that it was lucky that his enemies, as well as he himself, had been under the impression that the revolver was still loaded. What would have been his fate had they known the truth?

He began to search for Govind Singh's body. The veteran risaldar had ceased to breathe; he had died as he would have wished, fighting against odds. The boy had come to regard his grim old comrade with an affection that had been returned by the risaldar. The other Sikhs were also all dead, so fierce had been the hand-to-hand combat; and of the Nana's following at least a dozen were slain or were dying. One of the latter, a youngster barely sixteen, was regarding the Feringhi with eyes in which hatred and a desire to propitiate struggled mutely for mastery. Ted divined the meaning of that look and hastened to hand his water-bottle to the sufferer, who greedily gulped the water down and regarded his benefactor with gratitude.

"Tell me," said Ted, "who was he with the saffron shawl?"

"That was the Rajah of Bithur," replied the wounded lad.

With a glance of regret towards the good Arab that had served him so well, Ted mounted Govind Singh's horse, which was standing beside its dead master, and sped away to rejoin his comrades, some of whom could be seen in the distance returning from the chase. Colonel Boldre had many prisoners and several guns to show as the result of the day, but the main object of the

expedition had escaped.

"I was afraid you had been killed, Russell," said he.

"I've lost Govind Singh, the risaldar, and a good many men, sir, and we just missed the Nana. He unhorsed me, and I should have shot him if I'd had the sense to reserve a bullet for him."

"Unhorsed you? Dundu Pant himself?" exclaimed the commandant.

Ted reported the affair, and Colonel Boldre, uncertain whether to praise or blame, remained deep in thought.

"You had a narrow squeak," said he at last.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII

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### The Final Scene at Lucknow

Lieutenant Boldre lolled back in his camp-chair and smiled a superior smile, while Ted Russell scratched his head and gazed with puzzled expression at the carved pieces upon the chess-board.

It was undoubtedly checkmate, and he asked himself, almost angrily, how on earth he could have allowed himself to be outmanœuvred and surrounded, and his communications cut off, in so absurdly simple a manner. Now that it was too late to avert defeat, he could clearly see how his opponent's attack could have been met and repulsed.

"You've licked me this time," he acknowledged. "I'm playing like an *oont* this morning."

The tent was Claude's, and it was pitched to the rear of the Dilkusha, or "Yellow Bungalow" as the soldiers called the palace. Ten days had passed since the raid on Pindijang, and many things had happened in the meanwhile.

Having received reinforcements, Sir Colin had once more occupied his old position a few miles south-east of Lucknow. He meant the final attack upon that city to be deliberate and scientific, not a wild rush, entailing perhaps the sacrifice of thousands of lives in the narrow, winding streets, where Englishmen would be at a disadvantage. There was plenty of time, therefore, for an occasional game of chess.

"Have your revenge?" asked Boldre confidently; and Ted replied that he was willing, when in stalked Paterson.

"Well, how's the deputy-assistant, extra-honorary, supernumerary aide-de-camp? Is he acting as postman?" asked Ted, noticing that Alec had brought letters.

"The mail has just come in, so I picked yours out to save time. Catch!"

"Thanks, old man!" said Ted, as he picked up the scattered missives. "I'll do as much for you some day, if ever I become a great man. Here's one for you, Boldre, from Simla."

"That's from the mater, and I owe her one or two already. It's no end of a fag writing letters. Are yours from home?"

"One is," Ted replied. "The other is from Aurungpore;" and silence prevailed for several minutes.

"Good news from home, Ted, I hope?" said Alec presently.

"Yes, they're all well. The pater is wishing he was here with us. He's been particularly interested in my last letters telling of our doings with the Sirmur Battalion, because he was taken prisoner by the Gurkhas in the Nepal war of 1815, and made friends with a lot of them. The mater is wishing I was back at home. Why do women cross their letters so much, Alec? It's worse than a Chinese puzzle."

"Nay, Ted, don't ask me. I don't get shoals of letters in feminine handwriting."

Ted turned red, laughed, and changed the subject.

"This reads very funnily now. They write to say how glad they are that Delhi has fallen, and that Jim and I escaped without harm, and they suppose that by now the fighting will all be over."

He opened the second envelope, and Alec winked at Claude, who raised his eyebrows enquiringly.

"Surely it ain't?" said he, rising quickly to the joke; and Ted looked up in feigned bewilderment.

"Of course it is," Alec answered. "Don't he look rapturous?"

"And so young!" murmured Claude.

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"Yes; he cut me out too. She preferred the colour of his hair, and fancied that she detected more signs of a moustache."

Alec dodged, as Ted most irreverently threw a bishop at his head, and resumed:

"A nice little girl too, daughter of one of our officers. Does she send any message for me, Ted?"

Our hero was blushing violently. He sprang to his feet suddenly, caught his chum by the collar, and rolled both him and his seat over the floor of the tent, smashing the stool and damaging Claude's bed. Then, feeling better, he resumed his seat, and Alec picked himself up, laughing.

"It's a bad case, Claude," said he. "What does she say, Ted?"

"Well, if you want to know, she asks if I still chum with that ass Paterson, or whether he's been knocked on the head by a praiseworthy pandy, and a good job too!"

"That's fiction," commented Alec solemnly. "Go ahead."

"She says that the weather is sometimes fine, though not so hot as it will be in June."

"More fiction. Seems suspicious, Claude, that he should have to extemporize."

Claude nodded acquiescence.

"He's in a bad way, that's plain," said he. And Ted went on unheeding: "And that Colonel Woodburn is hardly inconvenienced by his wound; that she herself is very well, and has seen Jim several times lately; and that everything is quiet along the frontier; and that Jim is continually wishing that the Guides could have been spared for Lucknow; and that she's heard of what you did at Agra."

Here was Alec's turn to blush.

"Never mind all that," he interrupted hastily. "What we want to know is what she says about you."

But Ted winked, and, pocketing the letter, once more assumed an aggressive demeanour.

"Pax!" said Alec, retreating. "I'm not going to fight a chap who's in the habit of exploding gunpowder beneath his opponents. By the way, have you seen our allies?"

"Not yet. Shall we pay them a visit? Come along."

Among the latest reinforcements were Brigadier Franks' column and Jung Bahadur's army from Nepal. Franks had been operating with great effect in Eastern Oudh, from the Nepal border, and his men were mostly Gurkhas, lent by the Nepal Government. They had done excellent service, and had won one or two quite remarkable victories. Jung Bahadur's force, nearly ten thousand strong, had just come in, and as the army was aware that Sir Colin had been waiting for these Gurkhas, it was expected that the real struggle was about to begin.

The three lieutenants strolled down to the Gurkha camp to inspect the new-comers, and Ted thought of that day on the Ridge when Reid's little Mongolians were indulging in horse-play with their comrades of the Rifles, and he remembered how one of the Gurkhas had foretold that Jung Bahadur would bring his troops to assist the British. He little thought then that he should be present to witness the arrival of the famous *shikarri*.

The Nepalese allies did not, in Ted's opinion, look quite so tough or so soldierly as his friends of the Sirmur Battalion, and their officers compared unfavourably with Merban Sing and Gorja Thapa. There was plenty of good material, but the average, though taller in stature, seemed less sturdy and considerably dirtier. These Nepalese were not all the true Magar and Gurung Gurkhas; there was a mixture of other clans and races, with a bigger proportion of Hindu blood. These were not quite so ugly as little "Johnny", and they did not possess the true military swagger and jolly recklessness. Approaching a group whose faces seemed to bear the right stamp, he addressed them in Magar-Kura, of which tongue Gorja Thapa had taught him a smattering.

The Gurkhas were delighted at being spoken to in their own dialect, understood by so few foreigners, and they responded eagerly. He tried to explain how he had served with their brethren at Delhi, and it chanced that when he mentioned the name of his friend Gorja Thapa, one of the new arrivals repeated the name, and it turned out that he knew the Sirmur officer, and Ted Russell at once became their blood-brother.

As they conversed, barely half understanding one another, the men round about sprang up to attention, and Alec Paterson nudged Ted in the ribs with his elbow. Turning to see what Alec wanted, he perceived Sir Colin, and by the general's side rode a distinguished-looking, dark-skinned man, clad gorgeously, and ablaze with diamonds.

It was the Gurkha prince himself, one of the bravest of the brave, as Ted had heard, but by no means a merry, good-natured personage, such as his friends of the Ridge. Jung Bahadur motioned one of the Gurkhas to his side, and, looking suspiciously at Ted, he whispered to the man, who informed him in reply how it came about that this English youth had picked up enough

of their language to converse with them.

Sir Colin beckoned Ted to approach, and asked questions similar to those being answered by Jung Bahadur's informant.

"Went all through the siege of Delhi, eh?" said he, when his enquiries had been satisfied. "And your friend also? Acting as lieutenants of Boldre's Horse now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Were you the fellows who got that information about the Nana a week or two ago?— You were, eh? You seem to know the natives well. Wish more of my officers did. I'll see about— Well, what does Mr. Jung want now?"

The Gurkha prince rode up and addressed Ted in Urdu.

"You were with my countrymen at Delhi?" said he. "How did they fight?"

"Like heroes," Ted replied.

"Ah, that was a fight of giants!" exclaimed the Gurkha with animation. "Would I had been there! But I heard about it, and the death of Nikkulseyn."

The generals rode on, the boys saluted, and Ted said ruefully:

"I believe he was going to say that he would see about confirming our appointments when old Jung interrupted."

"Russell," said Claude solemnly, "I'm going to kidnap that Gurkha chap some dark night with a few of our Sikhs. Did you notice his diamonds? He just dazzled. Hullo, who's this?"

With a group of English officers who had witnessed the incident was a gentleman wearing an unmilitary frock-coat and Hessian boots, whom Ted had observed more than once in intimate conversation with the commander-in-chief. He now greeted the boys, and courteously asked what had interested the Maharaja so. Ted explained, and the stranger thanked him, and after a few moments' conversation, in which he drew out the youngsters to speak of those things which interested them most, he rejoined his friends.

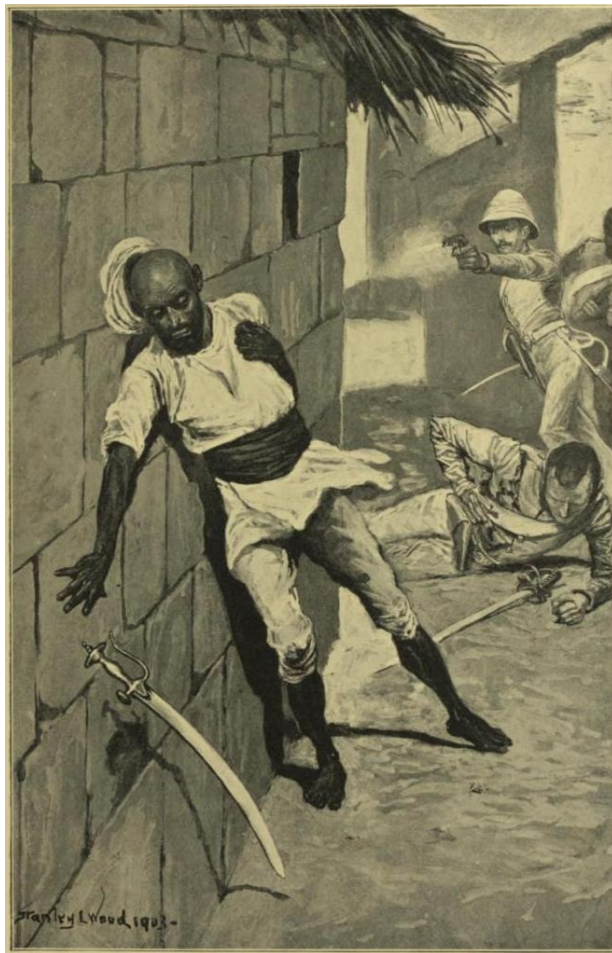
"Who's that, Alec?" asked Ted. "He seems a clever chap. Decent too."

"Don't you know? It's your namesake of the *Times*."

"What? Dr. Russell?— Crimea Russell?"

"That's the man. Sir Colin seems to think a lot of him, and trusts him absolutely with his plans."

Next day began the movements on Lucknow. On the morning of March 6th, Outram, with Hope Grant as second in command, set out to make a flanking movement and co-operate with Sir Colin from the north bank of the Gumti. They were to work along the north-east and north of the city with a strong column, while the main force pushed forward from the east and south-east, the two armies being in touch and their artillery able to play upon the same positions from different sides. The rebel defences, it must be borne in mind, were vast and strong.



**THE REBEL REELED AGAINST THE WALL**

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Outram's force marched away to the east, and to those ignorant of its destination it appeared to be deserting Lucknow. Before reaching the southward bend of the river the engineers constructed a bridge of floating barrels, over which the column crossed and proceeded northwards, and presently wheeled to the west and encamped, having completed the half of a circle. Alec Paterson was with Outram, Boldre's Horse with the Southern Army.

On March 9th a Union Jack floating over the Chaka Palace told that Outram had captured an important outpost, and that night he almost completed the circle, and encamped hardly more than a mile due north of Sir Colin, on the other side of the Gumti. The two armies were soon in direct communication, and as a consequence the rebels abandoned their first line of defence. The British loss was slight, but Sir William Peel, the newly-promoted seaman, had been mortally wounded.

On the 11th began the first serious fighting for the southern force. Sir Colin gave Jung Bahadur's army charge of the operations along the south-eastern line of defence, across the canal, whilst he attacked from the east, in touch with Outram. The Begum Kothi, a fortified palace which blocked the way, was stormed with splendid gallantry by Highlanders and Sikhs, the rebels being driven out after they had lost many hundreds of their comrades. A number of guns were captured, and Hodson was slain whilst performing one of his typical feats of valour.

Boldre's Horse had little to do, the work lying with the artillery and infantry until the rebels fled, when the cavalry completed the rout. It was not safe to pursue too far, and Ted's Punjabis had the order to retire, when their young officer chanced to notice that in the confusion a handful of Gurkhas, whose zeal had outrun discretion, were faring badly at the hands of a number of better-armed pandies. He clapped spurs to his steed, and called on his men to charge. A Gurkha officer, his back to a wall, was defending himself gamely against five sepoys with bayonets. In the nick of time Ted sliced at one who, having reloaded, was in the act of firing, and his horse bowled over a second, while the lance of a Dogra sowar disabled a third.

The long lances of the Punjabis and the force of their charge prevailed, and, taking the surviving Gurkhas in their midst, they trotted back amidst a shower of badly-aimed bullets. Ted then perceived that the Gurkha officer was the man who knew Gorla Thapa. His gratitude was great, but there was little time for speech-making.

The capture of the Begum Kothi was not only a brilliant, but also a useful, piece of work, by which they were soon to profit. The way was almost opened to the Kaiserbagh Palace, now a huge fortification mounting very powerful cannon, and this was the key to the position. But before this all-important defence could be carried by storm, it was first necessary to gain possession of the Imambara Mosque, and the infantry were held back for a time until Outram's guns from the north and Lugard's from the east should have made some impression upon the

thick walls of the two stout buildings.

When the time did come for the infantry to act, a glorious response was made. General Franks sent forward the 10th Foot to support. For a time the resistance was fierce and courageous, but the English and Punjabis would not be denied. Pressing forward sternly, the rear ranks filling the gaps as the leaders fell, their determination at length cowed the pandies, and their bayonets cleared the Imambara. Then the way lay open to the Kaiserbagh, and British hearts beat high.

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Sir Colin had not intended that his brigadier should attempt more than the Imambara that day, but seeing that the pandies had lost heart, Franks wisely took upon himself to strike a more decisive blow. While hotly pursuing the rebels from the Imambara the British troops had penetrated to a strong position overlooking the Kaiserbagh. It would be a thousand pities to relinquish this advantage. So Franks pushed forward reinforcements, and within a few hours the Kaiserbagh was in our hands, and to all intents Lucknow was gained and a decisive victory had crowned the British arms. The day had been brilliant and decisive, but marred by one unfortunate result of the commander-in-chief's over-caution.

Had Outram been allowed to swoop down from the north upon the broken rebels their collapse would have been complete; in fact the rebellion in Oudh would have been smashed. Outram was not only prepared, he was most anxious to do this. But Sir Colin, hardly realizing how thorough was the demoralization of the pandies, how real was their dread of the British bayonet, feared lest Outram's men should suffer heavily in securing the iron and stone bridges over the Gumti for the passage of his troops. He therefore gave Outram strict orders not to cross the river until he could do so without the loss of a single man. Outram could do nothing but obey and look on while the glorious chance slipped away.

There was still fighting in the streets of Lucknow, though the mutineers had lost their hold on the great city. Next in importance to Nicholson's storming of Delhi, the capture of Lucknow was the most severe blow the sepoys had received. Though the army would be employed for months sweeping the sepoys into the Terai jungle across the Nepal border, where Nana Sahib was finally lost, and though Sir Hugh Rose should chase the Nana's slim general, Tantia Topi, from pillar to post throughout the spring and summer of 1858 as Kitchener's generals chased De Wet, everyone understood that all danger to the British raj was over through this day's work.

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Ted Russell was on foot in the streets of Lucknow with two or three Sikhs as Claude Boldre swept past with threescore troopers behind him.

"Horses been shot?" he called out in passing; and Ted nodded that it was so. Any attempt to pursue on foot would be useless, so they were turning back towards the Kaiserbagh, where the soldiers, Englishmen, Highlanders, Irishmen, Punjabis, and Jung Bahadur's Gurkhas, were busy looting the treasures of the palace. There were no pandies in sight, and Ted's dismounted sowars left their officer and ran off to share in the plunder.

The solitary Englishman was not unobserved, though there seemed to be no enemy at hand; in fact this particular street was deserted, except for a group or two of Englishmen and Irregulars several hundred yards away in the direction of the Kaiserbagh, and Ted's sowars, now half-way between these groups and their officers.

So the young Feringhi seemed an easy prey to the three concealed pandies who were furtively watching him from behind the curtains. A gleam of hateful satisfaction lit up their dark faces as they noiselessly slipped out of the house. Too late to draw his pistol, Ted heard the stealthy tread, but he had kept his sword drawn, and, turning quickly, he raised his blade to guard his head and ward off the blow that instinct told him was being aimed thereat. The tulwar, instead of cleaving his skull, glanced off the sword, and with diminished force bit into his shoulder. He sank with a moan of pain, and the traitor raised his weapon for a deadlier stroke.

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But before the blow could be repeated a pistol rang out, and the rebel reeled against the wall, then sank to his knees and tried to crawl away. His companions, who had been a few yards to the rear of their comrade, hesitated, trying to make up their minds whether to run at once or first to despatch the wounded enemy. An Englishman in volunteer uniform and one of Ted's Sikhs, who had turned back, threw themselves upon the pandies, who hesitated no longer but fled like hares. Before a dozen steps had been taken in pursuit, one of the pandies turned, and, still running, fired. The Englishman staggered, spun round and dropped dead, and, as he fell, Ted saw his face, and knew that Tynan had wiped out the blot upon his honour. Then the ensign fainted away.

The Sikh brought back his comrades, and they carried their officer to the nearest surgeon, who was fortunately able to take the case in hand at once, or the boy would have died ere the sun rose upon another day.

Owing to the ignorance of the Sikhs the gush of blood had not been staunched, until the doctor, with quick grasp of the situation, did what was necessary to retain the young life that was fast ebbing away.

Next day Ted Russell was removed on a doolie to the Dilkusha, and he took no further part in the fighting that ensued before the Mutiny was finally extinguished. Recovery was slow, and a couple of months elapsed before he was able to walk even a short distance without fatigue. But no permanent injury had been caused by the blow, and by the end of July he could get about as usual, both on foot and on horseback; and on the day that he reported himself as fit for duty, he received the intimation that both he and his chum Paterson had been officially gazetted as

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## CHAPTER XXIX

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### Jim Disposed Of

That dignity had hardly been attained when an interesting ceremony, in which Ted played but a subordinate part, took place in Simla. Major Russell and Ethel Woodburn, finding how much they had to talk about, and how many thrilling experiences must be related, very sensibly came to the conclusion that their best course would be to marry with as little delay as possible.

Colonel Woodburn's natural objections to such haste had first to be overcome, but having at length become reconciled to the idea of losing his daughter, he allowed the date to be fixed. Charlie and Ted were sent for, and at the latter's urgent request, Subadar Gorla Tapa was invited to the wedding. The Sirmur Battalion's head-quarters were then, as now, situated at no great distance from Simla, so that neither Captain Dorricot nor the subadar found any difficulty in attending. Captain Spencer was another guest whom Ted was glad to meet again. Rapidly as he had returned from Kashmir on hearing the news of the outbreak, he had been too late to join his regiment and take part in the march to Delhi. John Lawrence had found employment for him with the Movable Column, and he had been badly wounded in the fighting that took place while Nicholson was in command.

Three days before the wedding date Ted entered Simla and greeted his brother with a salute. Now that the dull days of exile and inaction had come to an end he was in the merriest of moods.

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"Come to report myself, sir," said he with a solemn face.

"Hullo, Lieutenant Russell, V.C.!" was his brother's greeting as Jim looked up from a table strewn with papers. "Glad you're looking fit again. I'm blest if I know what you want here, but Ethel would have you. Nice nuisance you'll be, I know."

The words of this truly fraternal greeting were belied by the hearty handgrip. Ted retorted in kind.

"Well, that's brotherly love if you like," said he. "Wretched man! Here I've come, my heart swelling with sympathy and pity for you, and this is your return. I won't be sorry for you any longer, not one bit. Serves you jolly well right. Hope you forget the ring, and gash yourself whilst shaving, and that you're late, and that you get stuck in the service, and that your collar comes undone, and your tie crawls round your neck."

"Much obliged, I'm sure," replied Jim, laughing at his brother's boisterous spirits.

"Bless you, Major Russell, you're very welcome."

Jim winked with much deliberation, whereupon Ted thumped him between the ribs and continued his chaff.

"Cheer up, old man; it'll soon be over, and p'raps you'll recover. You're not the first fellow to be married, though I suppose you imagine that there's never been such an important affair upon this poor old globe before. Cheer up! I've heard of fellows who've survived it."

"Thanks! I'm fairly cheerful considering, but being with the Lucknow Army don't seem to have improved your at-no-time very admirable manners."

"Never had any. Everybody used to tell me how much I took after my eldest brother. Seriously, Jim, I wish you'd been with us at Lucknow. I've had a great time."

And Jim listened, leaning back with legs crossed and hands clasped behind his head, while Ted recounted some of the most striking episodes of the campaign and of his own adventures.

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"You're a decent sort of kid, Ted," the elder brother allowed. "I wish the Guides had been there. Now I believe you're dying to have a chat with Ethel, and I know she's as anxious as can be to see you again. So go and find her, young 'un. I'm horribly busy and can't go with you. I would if I could, you may be sure."

"I will go and condole with her. *She* needs some genuine sympathy and consolation, and she shall have it. How far is it? Worth taking the horse out again?"

"No, not five minutes away."

Before Ted had proceeded a couple of hundred yards, he beheld the object of his search riding towards home, her thoughts uplifted far above the humble wayfarer whom she was about to pass without recognition.

"Evening, Miss Woodburn!" said Ted.

Ethel gave a start and reined in her horse.



"Why, Ted, I didn't know you'd arrived."

"Just come. Affectionate brother intimated that, as he had no room for thinking of anyone but you, I disturbed him."

"So you were coming to see me? You are looking well, Ted. I half expected to see a decrepit invalid with crutches and bandages."

"I'm all right now. Should have come though to see you married if I'd had to be brought on a doolie."

He assisted the girl to dismount, and, giving the horse in charge of the sais, they entered the house.

"I am glad you look so well," repeated Miss Woodburn. "Paterson kept us posted up as to your state so long as he remained at Lucknow. We had an anxious time for a week or two."

"You heard about Tynan, I suppose? He proved a brick in the end, did he not?"

"Yes, I was glad when I read Alec's account of how he died. That is—you know what I mean?"

Ted nodded.

"Had you not seen him since that night at Lahore?" Ethel continued.

"Never once until that moment. I've not been able to find out anything about him either. He must have enrolled in the Volunteers, under an assumed name, of course."

Colonel Woodburn, looking his old self again, was genuinely pleased to welcome the boy. For half an hour he drew him out on the subject of the Lucknow campaign, and then Ethel claimed her brother-in-law again.

"Come and see my presents, Ted," she ordered.

"With pleasure—oh, by the way, I've brought my little contribution. Hope you'll like it."

She gave a little scream of delight as he handed her an open box.

"Oh, how beautiful! How lovely! Ted, you shouldn't have given me anything like this. It's much too good."

"It's not half good enough."

"Look at this necklet, father! Is it not exquisite?"

Colonel Woodburn examined the present, and gave a whistle of amazement.

"Ted, my boy, wherever did you get this?" he asked. "It's worth hundreds or I'm no judge. Diamonds and rubies of this size! And what workmanship!"

"It's from Lucknow, colonel. Loot, I'm afraid."

"Loot?" The colonel looked more serious, as he asked the question.

"I'm not certain—only circumstantial evidence. You see, there was a lot of looting when we entered Lucknow, and the Sikhs and Jung Bahadur's Gurkhas got nearly everything. Jung's men took several thousand carts filled with loot back to Nepal. A day or two before I was wounded I happened to save the life of one of Jung's Gurkhas who was being set upon by a crowd. He seemed to be an officer of good standing, and he was very grateful, and when I spoke to him in Magar-Kura, he was just delighted. When I was well enough I found that this parcel had been handed to me, and this necklace was inside, and not a word of explanation. So I guess they came from him, but couldn't make sure as he'd gone. It was probably one of many things he'd picked up in the palace, but I don't know that for certain. They were allowed to loot for a little while to repay their services, so it's come by perfectly honestly, Ethel. I offered it to the general of our column for him to send to the common stock, but he sent back word that it was mine, right enough. So it's quite right, isn't it, Colonel Woodburn? Mayn't she accept it with a clear conscience?"

"Certainly, except that it's much too costly a present to accept, Ted."

"It is indeed, old boy. I'm very, very grateful, and it's very generous of you, but you must keep it. You'd be sorry in a year or two, and you'd blame me for taking it."

Ted began to grow angry. "If you won't take it, Ethel," he sullenly declared, "I'll throw it on the fire. I mean it."

"But, Ted, you'll be married some day, and think how you would like your wife to have this—and she *ought* to have it. Then you would think it mean of me to have taken it."

He laughed scornfully.

"Marry? Me? I'm not going to get married! I don't want anyone to have it but you; I meant it for you as soon as I saw it."

A way of escape occurred to the girl.

"Let us strike a bargain, old boy. If I accept it now, will you allow me to present it to your wife on the day you get married?"

Again Ted laughed, this time with light heart.

"I agree to that—it amounts to the same thing."

"Do you approve of the arrangement, father?"

"Trust a woman to find some way out," said the colonel. "I think the arrangement a good one. Honour satisfied on both sides."

"Now, Ted, I can thank you properly—especially for your thought on first seeing the necklet. But come and see the rest of the 'loot', as your unprincipled and shameless brother calls it."

"He calls it that, does he? Good judge, Jim."

"Yes, his first daily enquiry is, 'Any more loot to-day?' After being satisfied on that point he condescends to enquire after me."

"I shouldn't have thought he was ever 'satisfied on that point'."

Ethel Woodburn laughed merrily.

"Quite true, he's not. He invariably grunts, 'Is that all to-day?' and tells me that I ought to have laid myself out to be particularly nice to everyone for the past fortnight."

"Greedy brute, isn't he? But I say, Ethel, isn't he content with these? I call it a jolly good show considering that the presents from England haven't come yet. I s'pose it's just Jim's peculiar way of expressing his gratitude."

"Have you shown him the necklet?"

"No fear; he'd have collared it and stuck to it, and pawned it before you could see it. He wouldn't have had your scruples."

"I'm afraid that you have a very poor opinion of my husband that-is-to-be, Lieutenant Russell."

Ted laughed, and most rudely winked.

"About as bad as your own, I guess, Mrs. Major Russell."

Ted walked round from table to table reading the cards and asking who was who.

"Sir Arthur Fletcher," he read out, halting before one of the presents. "That's jolly nice of him!"

"I see Charlie Dorricot's sent nothing yet?" he added. "He's due to-night, isn't he?"

"Yes, I expect to make his acquaintance shortly."

"Ripping good chap, Charlie! You'll like him."

"He's very anxious to inspect you," the young subaltern continued. "He did all he could to draw Jim out about you, but it was no go—Jim just gazed amiably upon him. Then he drew a fancy picture of you."

"Who did? Jim?"

"Don't jeer! You know who I mean. He also offered bribes to read your letters—precious small bribes, though! But nothing could make Jim wrathful when he was reading the epistles of Ethel."

"You helped him, I suppose?"

"Helped Jim—to read them? Who's mixed with the personal pronouns now?"

"From your account of your cousin," Ethel observed, disdaining to answer the gibes, "I think it very doubtful that I shall like him. He appears to have been—well—impertinent."

"Regular impudent beggar he is! I knew you'd think so; that's why I told you. Never mind, Ethel, you may be sure of this, that he'll like you. Besides, I stuck up for you, as Jim wouldn't."

"I am indeed grateful, Lieutenant Russell."

"You do look nice when you laugh, Ethel. Ah! here they are, I can hear Charlie's voice."

They went down to greet the new-comers.

"I seem to know you quite well already, Captain Dorricot," Ethel remarked as they were introduced.

"I'm afraid I can hardly say that I know you at all," Charlie replied, "as Jim would never venture on a description, however greatly I encouraged him, feeling, no doubt, his inability to do the subject justice."

"That's really rather nice, you know," Ted commented, with a grave air of abstraction; and the girl blushed becomingly.

An awkward pause ensued. Then four people spoke together. Three stopped respectfully.

"Can you guess, Jim, what Ted has given us for a present?"

"That's a hint for you, Charlie. Open your packages at once. I am about to marry a most sordid little woman, whose absorbing thought is: 'Presents, and how to obtain them'."

"Sir, you speak that which is not true. Look at this!"

"Whew! You've been looting, young man. Where?"

"Not at all—present—Lucknow—Gurkhas. By the way, Charlie, did you know that young Roberts, your school-fellow, won the V.C.? Won it twice over, in fact—I saw him."

"Well done, D.A.Q.M.G.! That young man will make his mark in the world. He's a man that understands men—and things."

Ethel then related Ted's story of the jewels and the bargain made, and Charlie presented his gifts, a pair of paintings brought back with him from England two months before. To everyone's surprise he next dragged out a pair of silver-mounted kukris, Gorla Thapa's present to Major Russell, in memory of their father's friendship.

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Charlie and Ted returned to Jim's quarters, leaving the lovers half an hour of solitude.

"My stars, Ted, that's a pretty girl!" observed the former.

"Isn't she stunning? She's no end fun either, though she looks so demure."

"Jim has displayed unusual discrimination, I must say."

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The day, by custom termed "auspicious"—though why the bridegroom cannot tell—came round at last. Major Russell appeared as joyous as could reasonably be expected—and no more. Whilst awaiting the bride's appearance Captain Dorricot, as best man, apparently considered his a most gladsome task. Why does "a best man" consider it necessary to be ribald?

"Major Russell," he whispered, "are you or are you not going to hold yourself straight? Think of me! You're disgracing me before all these people. Don't look so cheap, man; you'll get used to it!"

"Now remember my advice and start from to-day as master; let her see that you won't be trodden upon."

"Oh, don't be an idiot!"

"Bless us, he thinks, poor fellow, that it'll be rather nice to be trodden upon by her! Quick! She's coming! Take your eyes from the roof and try to look as though you'd been here before and could do it on your head."

Good as the advice was it passed unheeded, for all eyes were now turned towards the church porch as Ethel Woodburn entered—charmingly sweet, and shyly happy.

The ceremony over, our friend Ted forgot his new-born dignity and became a boy again, and a perfectly irrepressible one, until Jim and his dainty wife had driven away in the direction of the everlasting hills.

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Then came the reaction of depression that must inevitably attend the happiest and best-suited marriages.

"Poor old colonel seems cut-up!" said Charlie, as he and Spencer and Ted lounged in the veranda some hours later gazing at the spangled velvet of the sky.

"No wonder," mused Spencer. "He's left alone now, poor fellow! It's hardly a joyful occasion for him. Have a cheroot, Russell?"

"No, thanks!" Ted replied.

"Teddy's a good boy," Dorricot laughed.

"He's quite right," said Spencer. "Nothing to be ashamed of in knowing that one is not old enough to have stopped growing."

"She's a pretty girl!" Dorricot observed thoughtfully after a pause. "Hope I may do as well as Jim when my time comes."

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Ted Russell's adventures as a boy were over. Readers interested in his subsequent career, if any such there be, may care to know that shortly after his return to India after serving under Sir Hope Grant in China, he obtained twelve-months' home leave. While in England the necklet, curiously enough, did again change hands, and Captain Edward Russell was by no means so

greatly astounded by the circumstance as, to judge from former declarations, he ought to have been.

Throughout the Second Afghan War he commanded one of the regiments of Roberts' army, and Colonel Paterson distinguished himself during the same campaign at Ahmed Khel, his regiment being with Sir Donald Stewart. The old friends met at Kabul, and Ted took part in the famous march to Kandahar, whilst Paterson proceeded with his general to the Kyber, and thence to Peshawur.

A few years later Colonel Russell was in command of a brigade in one of the North-west Frontier expeditions, and he finally retired from the army with a hammered slug in his right leg, as Major-general Russell.

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