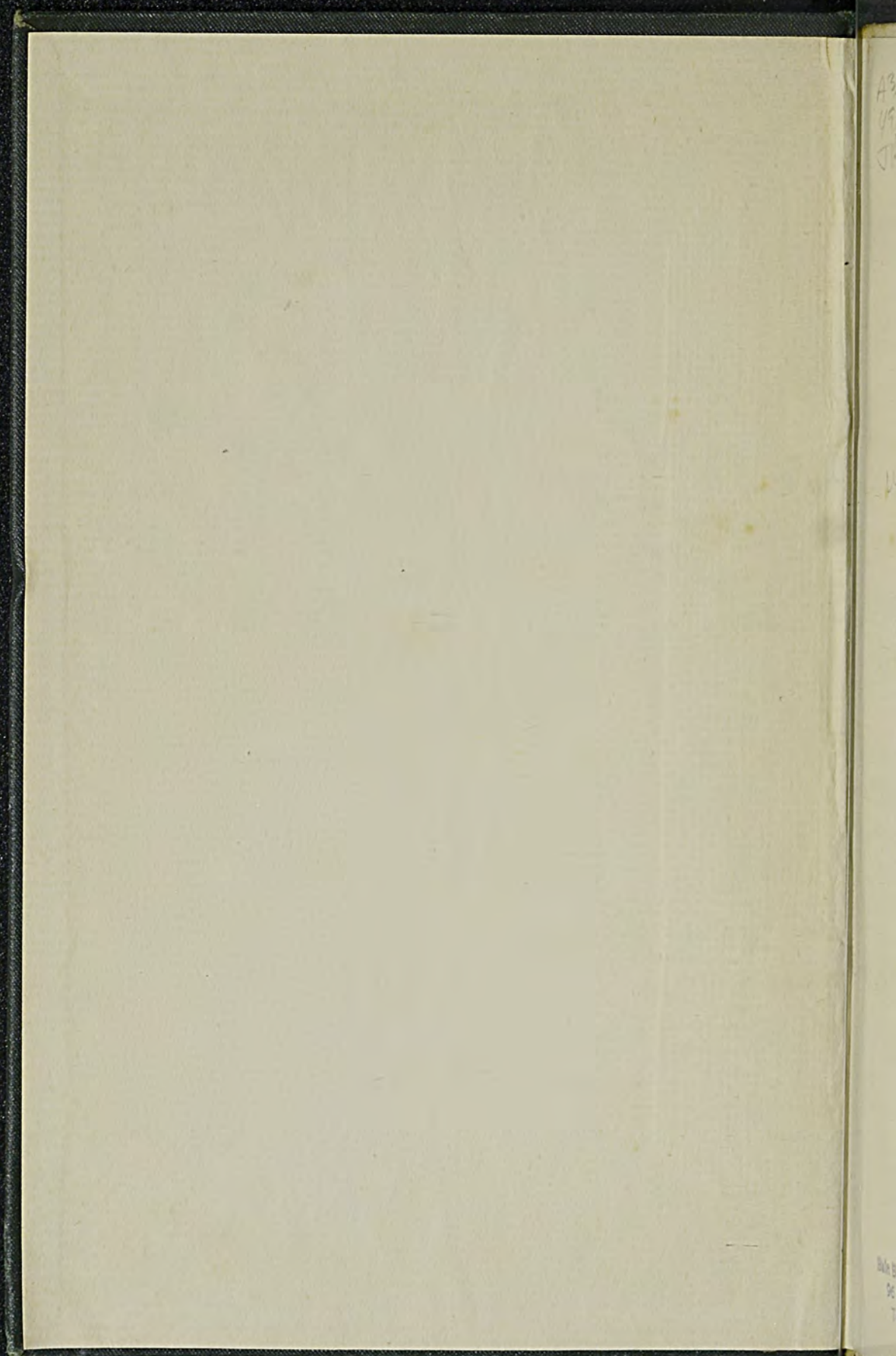


THE EYE OF A GOD



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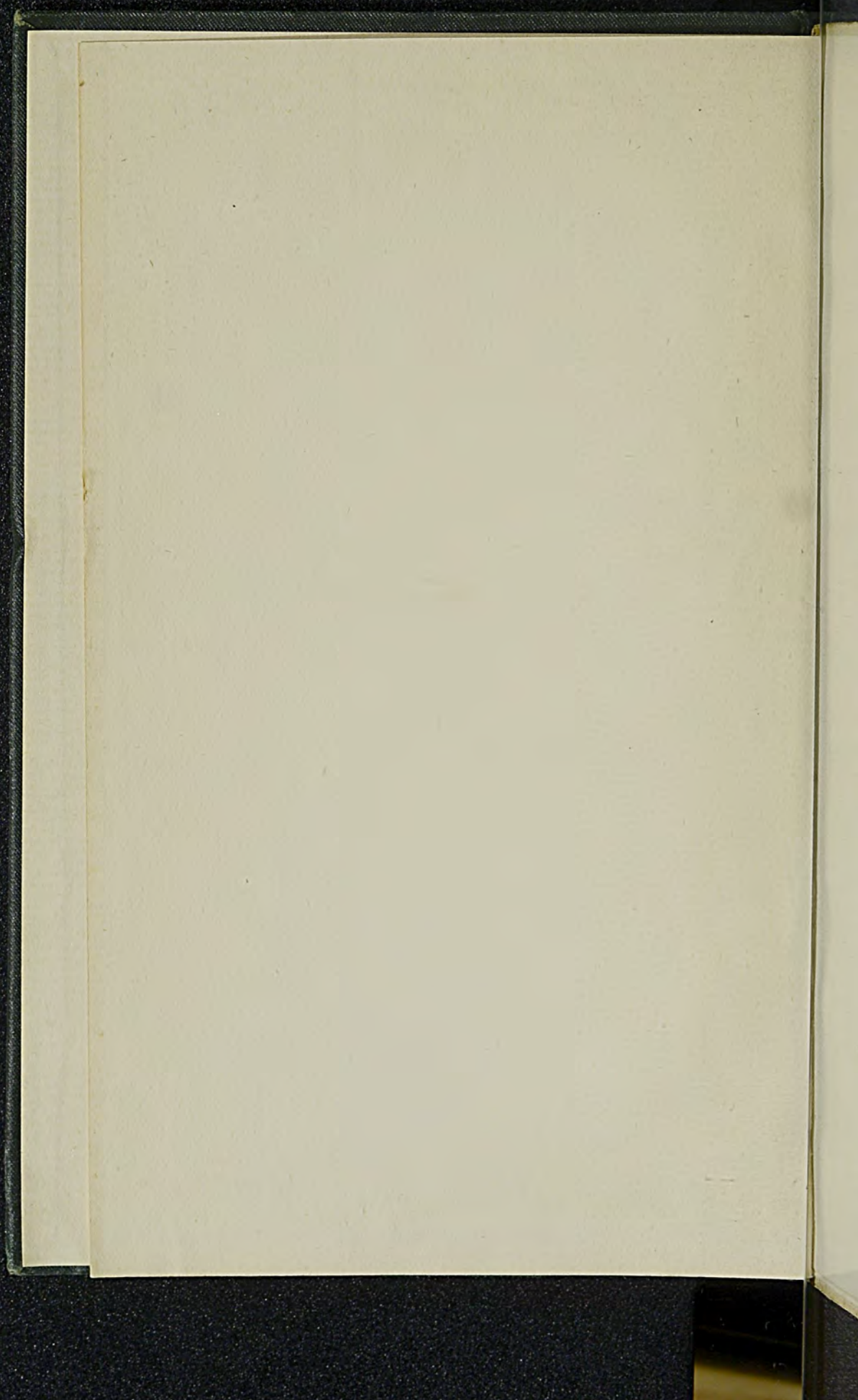
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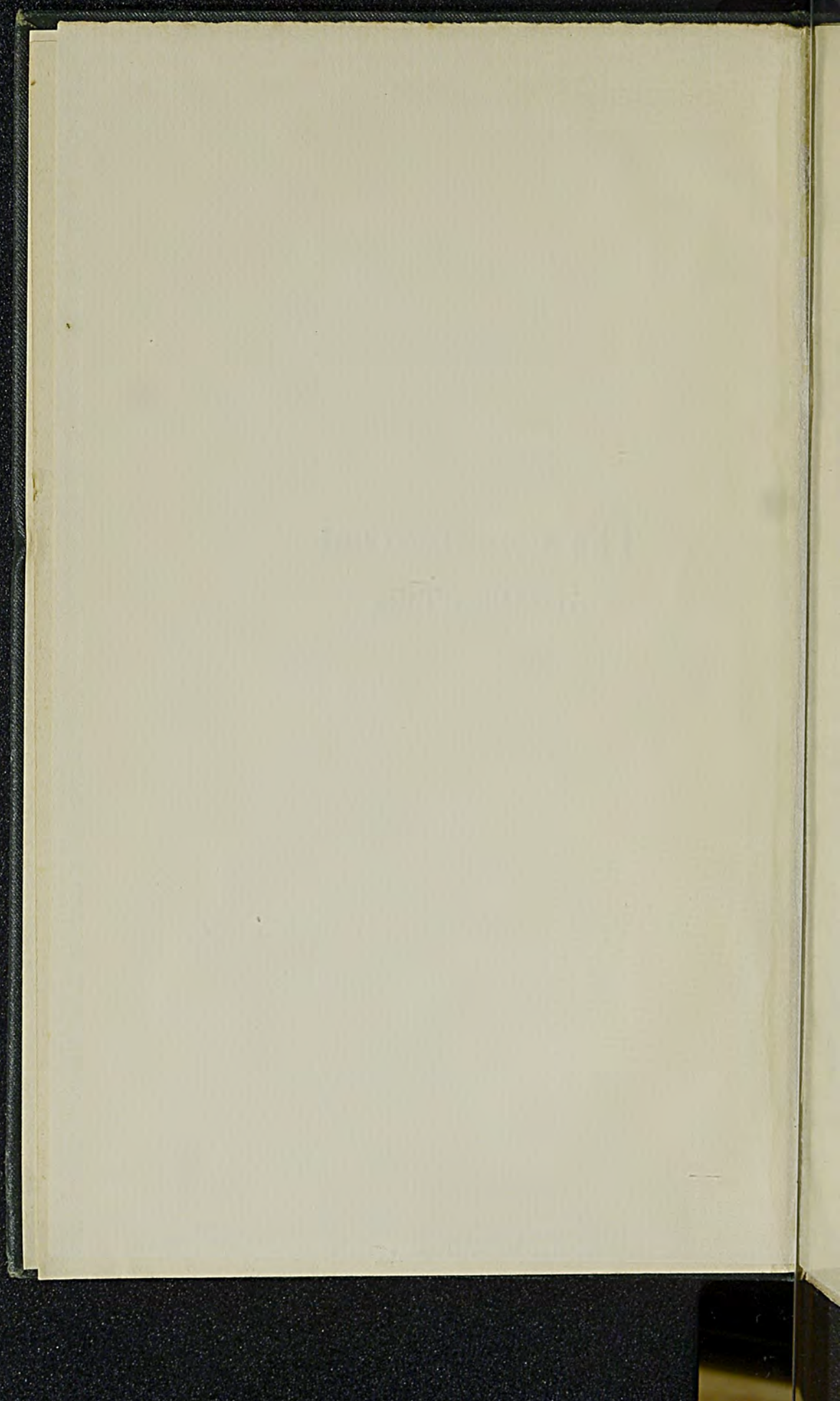
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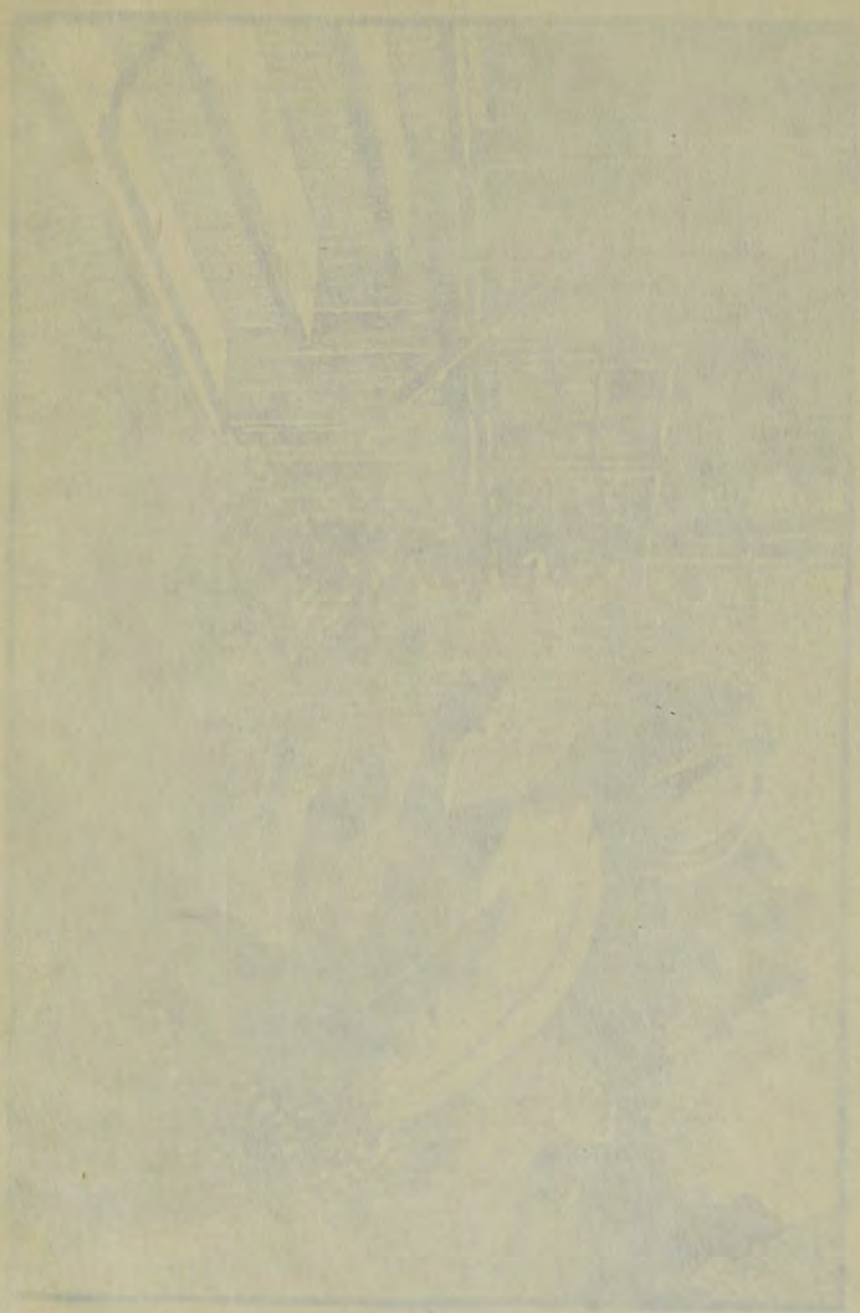
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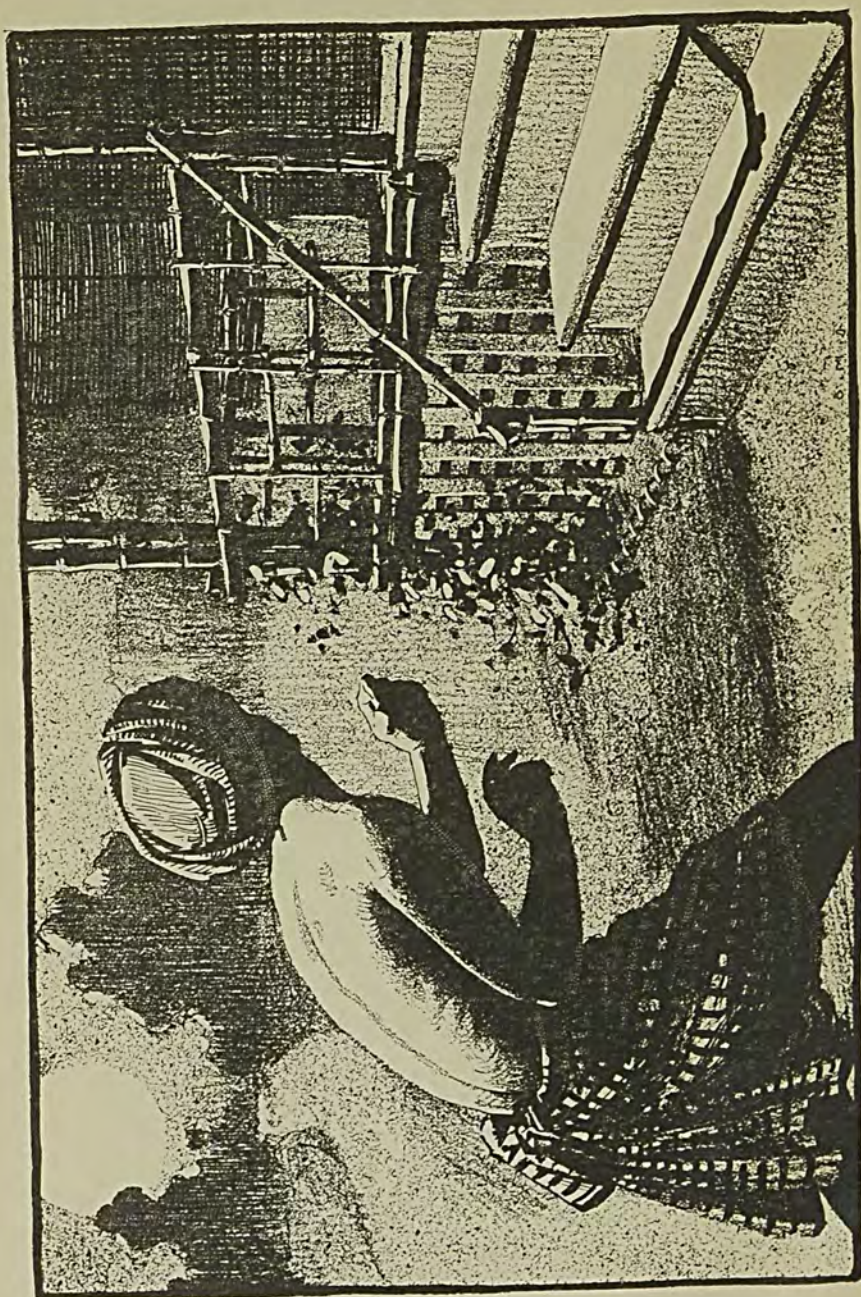
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The Eye of a God
And Other Tales







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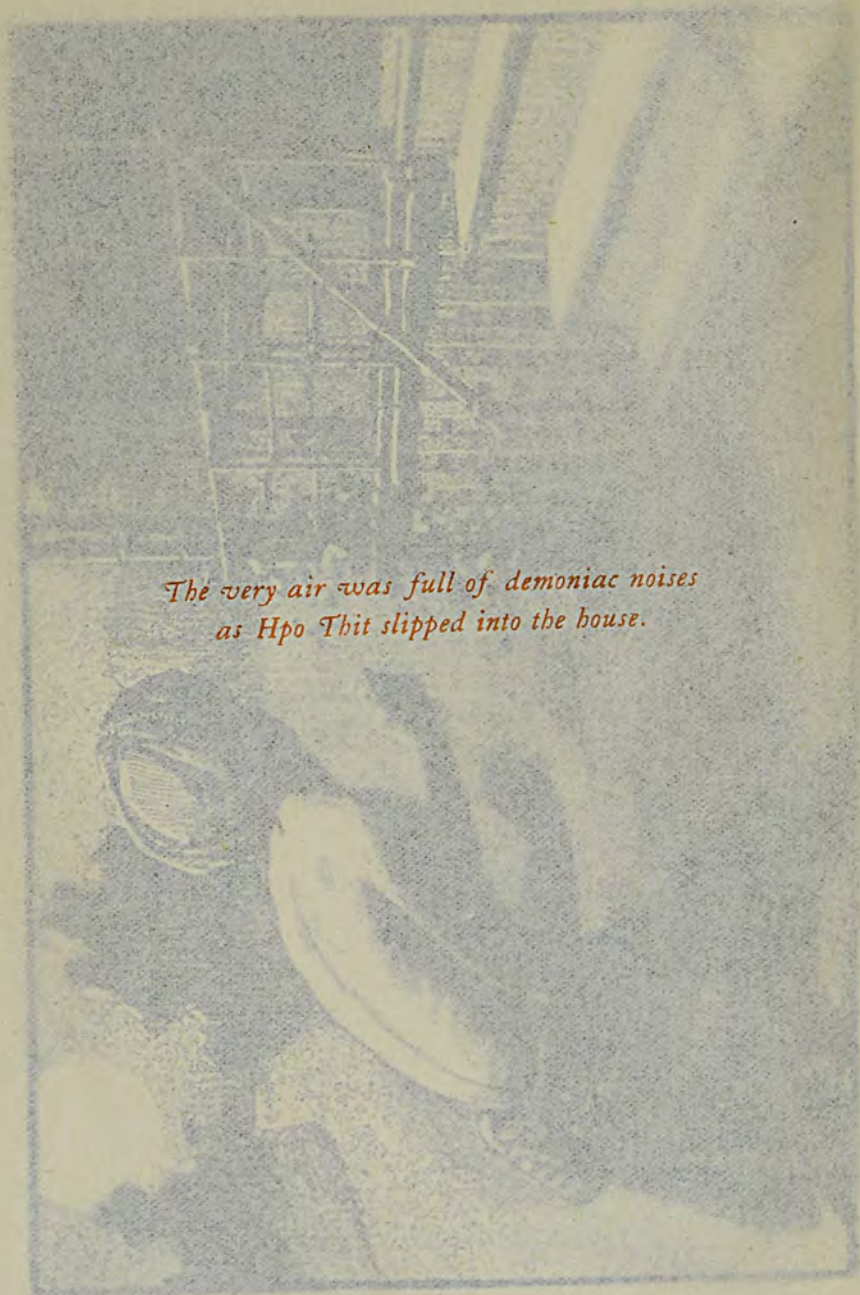
And other tales
of East and West

By
W. A. Fraser

The very air full of demonic noise
as Hpo Tidd slipped into the house



New York
Doubleday & McClure Co.
1899



*The very air was full of demoniac noises
as Hpo Thit slipped into the house.*

The Eye of a God

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asked Valentyne. "Did you put the beastly stuff there yourself, and then come to cackle of the eggs of your own laying?"

"No, sir. Abdul, who is a dog of a Mussulman, saw MOUNG OURAY take it off the 'fireboat' which goes up the river."

"Did Abdul, who is a Mussulman, see where OURAY hid the opium?"

"No, sir; but will not a Burman put his jewels in the strong box that he keeps near his bed?"

There was a soft rustle just beyond the plaited bamboo wall, close behind Valentyne's head. It was the soft rustle of silk as MI MRA wrapped the lemon-colored scarf about her throat, and slipped like a gentle shadow down the back steps of the bungalow.

Valentyne gave a toss in his chair, and coughed long and lustily. That

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was diplomatic, for jungle men, like Hpo Thit, have sharp eyes.

In and out among the mango-trees the girl's slight figure flitted, as she sped swiftly through the grove toward MOUNG OURAY's little bamboo house.

"The Thakine, who makes Mi Mra laugh, asked Hpo Thit if he had laid the eggs in brother's box. Perhaps he did; we shall see—ha, ha, ha!" and her teeth, which were pink from the juice of the supari, gleamed like coral beads.

Valentyne pondered for a few moments over what Hpo Thit had told him. His duty was straight enough, but—but— "It's a put-up job!" he muttered to himself. "It's the same old bazaar trick of ruining a man."

And also was not MOUNG OURAY Mi Mra's brother?

"I suppose I've got to help this

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blackguard in his villainy, though," he thought; and calling his orderly, told him to bring the sergeant and a couple of police from the jail.

Together they marched down the metaled road, between the peepul-trees; just where a sweet-scented champac grows opposite the Beda Pagoda they stopped. MOUNG OURAY'S bungalow lay just beyond.

"Not got opium, sar," said OURAY, in his knock-kneed English, when the police filed into his little room, and VALENTYNE told him what was wanted.

When the box was unlocked, on top lay his handsome silk gown; then one after another the jaunty little jackets and divers other things were laid on the floor.

In the bottom was a big round lacquer box. When the sergeant lifted the lid, there were four balls there — four oval,

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white balls, as unlike opium as they could well be, for they were eggs.

Now MOUNG OURAY knew that he had not put the eggs there; he did not make a pantry of his clothes-box. Also had not HPO THIT left them. The balls he had slipped into the lacquer box while MOUNG OURAY was down at the play were round and black, not at all like eggs.

The two Punjabi policemen were grinning from ear to ear. Valentyne gave a sarcastic little laugh, and asked HPO THIT if that was the opium he had seen MOUNG OURAY carrying off the steamer.

"Here is not got afm," said the sergeant; and asked if he should search further.

Before Valentyne could answer, a fiendish uproar smote upon his ears. It was as though the play and the whole clash of bazaar noises had been suddenly emp-

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tied into the compound of the Phoongye Kyoung across the road.

It was a proper Oriental babel, the cry of "thief" cutting through the general noise like a sharp-edged knife.

"The bazaar budmashes [blackguards] are killing some one," said the sergeant.

"We 'll have to go and look into that first," said the superintendent: "we 'll come back here and finish the search after. You must come, too, Ouray, so that this devil cannot say that you had a chance to hide anything."

That also was diplomatic; but it was the little slip of losing track of Hpo Thit that gave the nahts (spirits) chance to work more mischief.

"Somebody is murdering a phoongye" (priest), he said to the sergeant as they reached the road.

Rushing into the pagoda, he found the phoongyes in the temple clustered

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about the big Buddha, the "Beda Buddha," as it was known.

The priests were prostrated at the feet of the great image, raving and lamenting, and shrieking in despair.

"What 's the matter?" asked Valentyne.

"A thief has stolen the Beda, the eye of the god, the ruby!"

And they pointed to a great hole in the forehead of the Buddha, where the sacred "Beda Ruby" had been for twelve centuries.

How calm and dignified the alabaster god seemed, sitting there with his hand resting in his lap! Through twelve centuries of strife and passion, and blood and carnage, had it looked with calm serenity upon the struggles of the little men who had come and gone.

Twelve hundred years before had

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King Uzzana given it to the Talopins of Panja—Uzzana, the son of Mienzaim, and Poaza, the Chinese princess.

The seven great Kyoungs of Talopins which Uzzana founded gained him great merit, so that when he died the “Beda Buddha” worked miracles.

And now for twelve hundred years had the sacred eye, the “Beda Ruby,” done even so.

The mad frenzy of the priests seemed like the petulant temper of children; their thin brown bodies, draped with the sacred yellow robe, swayed and rocked in the weird light of their flickering earth-oil lamps, as they called the curse of their offended godhead upon the sacrilegious thief who had stolen the ruby—taken the sacred Beda.

Valentyne was horror-struck at the audacity of the thief, for the Beda Buddha was the most sacred image in

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all Burmah. Pilgrims came from all over the Burmese empire to strike with the stag's horn the crescent-shaped gong hanging there at its side, and then plead, with forehead prone on the cemented floor in front of the god, for the intercession of the Beda with Buddha Gautama.

The phoongyes watched it night and day, and how any one had managed to steal the ruby, Valentyne could not understand.

In the meantime Hpo Thit had glided silently back through the crotons, and into the bungalow once more.

The very air was full of demoniac noises as Hpo Thit slipped into the house, for the crows, aroused by the phoongyes' uproar, were screaming and shrieking in a big tamarind that towered high above the champac.

Within all was quiet, and Hpo Thit

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lost no time in making his way to the box they had so lately searched for the opium.

The little lamp was still burning, so he could see just where to put the small round packet he took from the roll in his cloth just at his waist.

He put it down in a corner of the teak-wood box; then, actuated by a sudden resolve, he picked it up, unrolled the little piece of yellow cloth in which it was wrapped, and took a long, loving look at it. As he rolled it in his hand near the flickering cotton dip, the little room seemed bathed in a flood of warm, blood-red light. Great ruby-tinted rays shot hither and thither, until the dazzling brightness lighted up the uncertain gloom, and it was as though red wine had been thrown high in the bright, noonday sunshine.

It was the stolen ruby; and night

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was being made hideous with the din across the road in the Phoongye Kyong.

There was so much of terror, so much of menace, in the hoarse roar of the phoongyes, and the crowd of Buddhists who had been attracted by their cries, that his heart failed him—he dropped it again in the box, and passed silently, swiftly out into the Burmese night.

As he disappeared a small figure glided out from behind a Penang mat which served as curtain to a doorway, and, kneeling over the box, searched for that which Hpo Thit had put there.

It was Mi Mra. “Ho, ho, Hpo Thit! Because Moun Ouray told Mi Mra that you are always smoking at the opium, and because of that Mi Mra would have nothing to do with you,

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you would have Valentyne Thakine make a thief of MOUNG OURAY."

Then she disappeared behind the curtain again, and the oil dip flickered lower and lower, and only the outside clamor crept into the house — it was so still.

Soon there was the steady tramp, tramp of men that are accustomed to marching, and once more the superintendent and the sergeant and the police came up the steps; and also were MOUNG OURAY, and HPO THIT, and the phoongyes, and others there.

"We shall find the opium," HPO THIT was saying, "or else MOUNG OURAY has given it to some one, to some of the opium-eaters to steal the ruby for him — the great ruby which was in the forehead of the God BEDA. If the opium is gone we shall find the ruby. If the ruby is not here, we shall find the

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opium. I do not know all things like the Thakine; but that is the way of our people."

"I think that this is no end of a fool's game," said Valentyne to the sergeant; "but we might as well finish our search while we are at it. Where shall we look first?"

"In the box, Thakine," eagerly interposed Hpo Thit. "If the opium is not there, and he has the ruby, there shall we find it."

So once more the sergeant continued his interrupted search of the box. There was nothing beyond a pair of Chinese patent-leather shoes, a palm-leaf Buddhist Bible, and MOUNG OURAY'S silken head-dresses, many of them packed away in the bottom.

"There is nothing here, Hpo Thit," said the superintendent, brusquely. "What I really ought to do is arrest

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you, Hpo Thit, for a dangerous lunatic; but I'll see to that to-morrow. In the meantime, sergeant, just beat up the surrounding country for the budmash that has taken the ruby."

That the ruby was gone was a facer to Hpo Thit; first, the balls of opium had disappeared, but that he had attributed to MOUNG OURAY; now the ruby had vanished, and MOUNG OURAY had been with the police all the time.

Then he saw something which gave him a clew. It was an innocent looking circlet of jessamine flowers lying in front of the box. It was such a circlet as the girls wore on their hair, and it had n't been lying there when they searched the box before.

"Of a certainty MI MRA has taken the ruby," murmured Hpo Thit, "and has gone to the house of San Shwe, who is her father. If San Shwe will keep it,

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there will it rest; but if his heart fail him, then will he tell her to take it to the police Thakine." There was no time to be lost, for it would be discovered that he had stolen it, and he would also lose the ruby.

His opportunity to steal the jewel had come to him just as he was leaving MOUNG OURAY's house, after having put the opium in the box. For some unknown reason, probably owing to the poay, he had found the temple deserted for a few minutes, and had knocked the ruby out of the alabaster with his sword. Then the sudden fear, and the chance to implicate MOUNG OURAY as the thief, his other scheme having failed, led him to put it in the box. Now he knew that MI MRA must have seen him put it there, and as he would be accused of stealing it anyway, he meant to get the ruby back.

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Slipping away from the others as they came out of MOUNG OURAY's house, he quickly sped to SAN SHWE's bungalow.

As he approached cautiously, he could see MI MRA and her mother and father sitting on the bamboo floor earnestly discussing something. "They will decide; I will wait," he muttered, squatting on his heels at the side of the road.

Then MI MRA came out, and started off across the dried maidan toward the superintendent's bungalow.

That was HPO THIT's chance.

"If you tell about it," he said, as he left her, "I will swear that you and MOUNG OURAY stole it and gave it to me. Then the judge THAKINE will ask how you should know that I had it if you had not given it to me."

MI MRA went back to her father's house; she wanted to think, wanted to do that which was the least trouble.

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In the morning she told Valentyne about it, and in an hour he and the sergeant and a file of police were chasing after Hpo Thit. But Hpo Thit had gone. One more dacoit had been created. His brother, the Thuggie's, gun had gone with him. The Thuggie did n't know that, for Hpo Thit had stolen it. It was an old-fashioned muzzle-loading musket.

It is difficult to run down a Burman in the jungle, and it was the next day before they came up with their quarry.

He had a couple of shots at them in a blundering sort of way with the old musket without hitting anybody; but just as Valentyne charged in on him at the head of his police, Hpo Thit fired again at close quarters, and the superintendent went down, shot in the shoulder.

Only for the sergeant Hpo Thit would have been carved up into regu-

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lation slices; only for the sergeant and Valentyne, too, for he bellowed out: "Don't kill him! Take the beast alive!"

"Bring him here and search him at once," said Valentyne, who was sitting up now, though feeling deuced groggy; and while the sergeant bound up his wound they stripped Hpo Thit clean as a whistle. But there was no ruby—nothing but much tattooing discovered.

"What have you done with the red stone?" asked the superintendent; but Hpo Thit would n't answer.

Then they got back to Thayetmyo as quickly as they could, carrying Valentyne on an improvised dhooly, in the shape of a charpoy, which they got from the woon of a neighboring village, by the gentle art of compulsion.

When Hpo Thit was brought back by the police, he was met by a recep-

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tion committee composed of orthodox Buddhists, who were gathered together with the avowed object of honoring him with the crucifixion.

To guard against his attaining Nirvana by a fluke, as it were, he was to be crucified head downward.

Valentyne, who was very weak by this time, had great difficulty in explaining to them that the government could not allow such a thing to take place.

“Have patience, good friends,” he said — “we must be merciful”; and he talked cheerfully of the lifelong years of living hell Hpo Thit would surely get on the Andaman Islands for his part in the little circus.

In a general sort of way the sergeant explained to them that they, who knew little about such things, could only make Hpo Thit wish he had not done

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this thing for a very few minutes at the outside. But the Thakine, who was the Government, could cause Hpo Thit to revile the day he was projected into the world by a thief of a jackal, for years and years.

So Valentyne was taken to the hospital, and Hpo Thit was put in a cage behind iron bars, just like the mangy tiger they had seen down at Rangoon.

"I'll have the bullet out of you in a jiffy," said the Civil Surgeon to Valentyne, as he rolled up his sleeves and opened his case of shining instruments.

"Damned if I can understand it, though," he said, as he probed away; for the jiffy time had gone by and he had n't even touched the bullet yet. "It must be one of those infernal skew-gee slugs of theirs that he has pumped into you. It seems to have struck you in the arm as you were flourishing that

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sword of yours, and then traveled on down along your ribs. God knows where it is now, for I can't find it. You 've lost enough blood over it for just now, anyway; but if there seems to be any complication setting in, I 'll have another try for it."

The surgeon saw it was about time to desist, for Valentyne was looking pretty well used up.

Then Hpo Thit was brought up before the Deputy Commissioner for a committal hearing, as it were, charged with stealing the sacred ruby, and with attempting murder of the superintendent.

But the priests were clamorous for the ruby eye of their Buddha — for the matter of Valentyne dying or not they did not bother their heads: even they would let Hpo Thit go free, so be it they could come by the sacred gem again. The Burmese archbishop, the

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Thathanabaing, had come down from Ava to see about the recovery of the stone.

They begged the Deputy Commissioner to give Hpo Thit promise of pardon if he would only disclose where he had hidden the Beda.

"I can't do that," he said, "for the wounded sahib may die; the doctor has fished for the bullet and can't get it, and it looks bad for the superintendent's life. If he dies, Hpo Thit will have to swing."

But if the Beda might be recovered they would pay to Valentyne's family his full value in good English sovereigns.

The Deputy Commissioner was as anxious to recover the jewel as they were; so he promised Hpo Thit that if he would tell where it was, it would help him much when the time of his sentence came.

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"I will tell," said Hpo Thit, "because it will be easy for the Thakine to get it; and then the Thakine will remember at the time of the sentence."

The priests craned their thin, shaven, buzzard-like heads eagerly forward; even the Deputy Commissioner was intensely excited, for if he should recover this sacred Beda it would be well; if not, the papers all through India would have their fling at it, and his life would be made miserable answering inquiries from the government.

The court was as silent as the graven image of Buddha itself, as they waited for Hpo Thit to speak.

Putting the palms of his hands together in front of his face in the form of supplication, Hpo Thit said: "The red stone which I took from the Ky-oung, even from the forehead of Buddha, is in the police Thakine's body."

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I fired it from my gun the last time, because I had no bullets, and because if it could work a miracle it would stop the police that I might get away."

This statement took away the breath of the court. The silence was unbroken for a full minute; then the chief phoon-gye said: "Hpo Thit is telling lies; he has hid it. We must swear him."

"Yes," said the Deputy Commissioner, "he must make oath to that, for things were better done judicially."

He ordered the clerk to swear him on the palm-leaf Burmese Bible.

"No, Thakine," said the priest, interrupting, "he is not a disciple of Buddha. He is a jungle man, and we must swear him on a branch of the leppan."

But after the oath it was the same — the red stone was in the police Thakine's body.

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"I think it is the truth," said the Deputy Commissioner.

"It is true," said the priests; "and the police Thakine must give up the Beda."

"Well, we 'll see what can be done in the matter," answered the Deputy Commissioner; and Hpo Thit was remanded to await developments.

"By Jove!" said the surgeon, when he heard about it, "that accounts for the infernal thing taking that corkscrew course."

"You 'll have to get it out of him some way," said the Deputy Commissioner, "for it 's worth about two lakhs of rupees; and, besides, it won't be healthy for Valentyne to live in Burmah with the eye of a Buddhist god in him."

"Look here, Grey," said the surgeon; "I am jiggered if I probe for the cursed thing again. I nearly let Valentyne's

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life out of him the other day for fear of poisonous consequences, for I thought it was a slug. But if it 's a good, clear-cut ruby it will probably never hurt him, and I 'm not going to take any chances."

The Deputy Commissioner was in despair. The phoongyes, headed by their archbishop, haunted his office and his bungalow night and day, clamoring for the ruby, for their sacred Beda, for the eye of their Buddhist god.

But the surgeon was obdurate.

"Valentyne is a friend of mine," he said, "and I 'm not going to murder him to please any yellow-robed phoongye. I would n't do it even if he were an enemy. I 'd leave the service first."

Of course the Deputy Commissioner had to report it to the Commissioner, and he to the Chief Commissioner.

The report read: "That the sacred

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Beda, the famous ruby, had been stolen from the forehead of the image of Buddha in the pagoda, there, by a hill man, Hpo Thit. Hpo Thit had been captured, and the ruby traced to the possession of the superintendent of police, Mr. Valentyne. That it appeared from Hpo Thit's evidence that he had fired it from a musket into the superintendent's body; but as to whether Hpo Thit's evidence could be accepted, and the superintendent held to be in innocent possession of the stolen goods or not, or whether he should be arrested as a receiver of the stolen goods, he was not prepared to say. That must rest with the higher authorities to decide. He suggested that it might be better to refer it to the Judicial Commissioner."

Valentyne in the meantime had to be guarded at the hospital, for Mi Mra discovered that the phoongyes had set

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a scheme on foot to kidnap him, and, incidentally, carve him up to find the sacred stone.

There were many reasons why they should recover it as soon as possible. Their Buddha had lost all prestige since his maltreatment, and no pilgrims came now to lay their generous offerings at his great square feet. The pagoda had ceased to do a paying business, for Uz-zana's ruby had been a drawing card. It had been a good investment, that for twelve centuries had gone on making money for the priests.

Valentyne applied for, and obtained, sick leave, handicapped with an order that he must not take the ruby out of the jurisdiction of the Burmese courts.

It was a splendid bit of judicial ruling that, and the Deputy Commissioner smiled grimly when it passed through his hands.

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The surgeon swore like a trooper when he heard about it, for he had ordered Valentyne off to Darjeeling for a change. "You can't stop here," he said, "because if you don't die of fever, they'll murder you sure. By Jove! Your body will be worth something for dissecting purposes, though, if they don't get the first slash at you."

But Valentyne steadily improved. The wound was healing up nicely, the ruby seemingly giving him no trouble whatever.

As soon as he was able to sit up and move about he discovered a new source of annoyance. Devout Burmans were constantly coming and prostrating themselves at his feet, touching their foreheads to the ground and muttering their prayers.

"What does it all mean?" he asked Moungh Ouray.

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"Sar, they are worshipping the Beda, which you, by the grace of the god and that wicked Hpo Thit, have got."

"This is intolerable," thought Valentyne. "I am a ruby mine, and a Burmese god, and a receiver of stolen goods, all in one."

As he got better, the beauty of his new life was further enhanced by the deluge of official correspondence that commenced to pour in upon him.

By order of the Chief Commissioner, he was asked to explain how he meant to make good to the pagoda the value of the ruby he was still retaining on his person. It was cheerfully pointed out that if half his salary was escheated for this purpose it would take at least forty years to make up the value of the jewel.

A delay of this sort would hardly be fair to the phoongyes; besides, in that uncertain climate, his salary might cease

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at any moment. At any rate, under the fifty-five years' service rule, he could not retain his position in the service for that length of time, and his pension would be barely enough to live upon.

The Civil Surgeon was raked over the coals for not acting upon the Deputy Commissioner's suggestion, and probing the matter to the bottom as it were — for not making another effort to recover the jewel.

It was in vain that he wrote in answer that the superintendent's life would have been endangered by another operation.

His answer only brought another literary wiggling, in which he was curtly reminded that the British government expected its officials to do their duty irrespective of personal feeling or considerations of personal safety.

"Hang them for a lot of bloodthirsty swine," exclaimed Corbyn, for that was

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the surgeon's name; "they mean to have that ruby out of Valentyne, even if it costs him his life."

Then the phoongyes got up a monstrous petition, signed by all the Buddhists, living and dead, in the whole Burman empire. It was cleverly worded, having been drawn up by a young Burman barrister who was the gold medalist of his year in England.

The petition was to be forwarded to the Viceroy through the Chief Commissioner, and prayed that the superintendent of police, Valentyne, should be delivered over to them, that they might regain the most sacred relic in all the Buddhist empire.

They were willing to pay an indemnity to his family, but the ruby they must have.

For a time it looked rather blue for Valentyne, for the Viceroy was a man

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who had great ideas about the rights of the natives: in fact, he went in for it very much as a baboo plays lawn-tennis, without much science in the game, but with his whole soul and ponderous body dead on the ball.

The papers at home took it up; and a nice gentleman one evening at Exeter Hall pointed out to the B. P. that evidently it was another case of oppression of the poor native. One of their temples had been desecrated; one of their most sacred idols violated; a jewel, to which they attributed miraculous powers, stolen, and the jewel was now in the possession of one of the government superintendents of police.

There was a cock-and-bull story, he said, about it having been shot into his body, but even if it were so, they could not set a whole nation of Buddhists by the ears for the sake of one man. In

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common honesty they must give the jewel up; and if this man could n't part with it, why, he would have to go with it, that was all.

The Viceroy seemed inclined to look at it in this light too, and it really seemed awkward for Valentyne.

In the meantime a civil suit to recover the value of the ruby had been instituted in the courts in general, and Valentyne in particular.

Luckily for Valentyne, the Secretary of State was a hard-headed man, not much given to nonsense, and he said in equivalent official language "that he 'd be damned if he 'd see an innocent Englishman deliberately cut up to recover any fetish bauble."

But all the same the superintendent would have to be retired on half pay, for his usefulness was gone. The two could not be combined—the dual posi-

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tion of Burmese god and superintendent of police; for the natives still persisted in reverencing him, though ready, as soon as the word was given, to cut him up.

Just when he thought his troubles were at an end, and he might go home, they applied for an injunction to prevent him from moving the ruby out of **Bur-**
mah. They showed to the court, on medical authority, that there was every possibility that the stone might work itself out some day, and so be recovered; but if Valentyne were allowed to leave the kingdom the chances of the rightful owners ever becoming possessed of it were very slim indeed.

They undertook to pay Valentyne a salary of ten thousand rupees a year so long as he remained in Rangoon; and all they asked in return was the privilege of coming to worship the **Beda**

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at certain periods, and that a medical officer, appointed by them, should have free access to Valentyne's person, with a view to keeping track of the perambulations of the ruby: and that when it made its appearance near the skin anywhere, so that it might be extracted without danger to him, that he would relinquish all claim upon it, and allow the surgeon to hasten its appearance.

Valentyne's counsel, seeing which way the wind was blowing, agreed to accept this ruling of the court, only stipulating that Corbyn be appointed surgeon; for the nether stone had suffered most in the grind, and Corbyn was out of the service.

One little formality the court demanded. That was that the archbishop, and three or four of the chief phoongyes, should go on a bond for Valentyne's personal safety.

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So the superintendent was lodged in a beautifully furnished bungalow, and was treated very much like a distinguished state prisoner.

Life went very pleasantly with him, and it did not seem such a bad affair after all.

Mi Mra was living in Rangoon too, as it happened; and Hpo Thit, in consideration of his turning queen's evidence against himself or the ruby, was let off with two years in jail, and was then busily engaged in pushing a conservancy cart about town, with a clanking chain running from his waist to either ankle by way of ornament.

The Europeans in Rangoon, with Oriental playfulness, bestowed upon Valentyne two or three names expressive of his occupation. He was known down at the "Gym" as the "Burmese God, Beda," and the "Jewel Merchant."

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The fellows were never tired of offering him as security, swearing roundly that he was worth two lakhs of rupees, dead or alive.

One or two playful attempts on his life relieved the monotony of his existence; but as these laudable efforts were usually frowned down, both by the phoongyes and the officials, and as one of his assailants caught a cold — steel in his right lung, they ceased altogether after a time, and he was leading a comparatively happy life.

He almost began to wish that the ruby would stay where it was. "We 're fixed for life," he said to Corbyn, "if this Beda ruby does n't turn up. I must be more careful of myself. I must stop riding, for the shaking up may dislodge the infernal thing and start it working out."

He had even got accustomed to see-

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ing the natives plump down in front of him and fall to praying.

Strangers always took him for the Chief Commissioner when they saw this sort of thing going on, and many were the mistakes made in consequence.

Once he received an offer from Bar-num at a salary which made his paltry ten thousand look like pin-money. The enterprising American guaranteed to smuggle him out of Burmah also, and pay all legal claims too.

After he had been in the business about two years he began to feel a pain in his back. He confided his fears to his attendant physician. "It 's working out, I 'm sure," he said sorrowfully.

And so it appeared, for a distinct lump was forming just below the shoulder blade.

The phoongyes were notified, and there was great rejoicing among them.

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They came and beat tom-toms all night long in front of Valentyne's bungalow. This was to drive the nahts away, so that they would not steal the Beda again.

Valentyne was loaded down with presents, and feasted like a bullock for the sacrifice.

"I shall be a rich man," he said to Corbyn, "if the thing holds off for a time."

But the incessant drumming and song-prayer making about his bungalow was driving him nearly mad for want of sleep.

Then one day Corbyn made a discovery. It was only a boil, the result of mango-eating.

The phoongyes were in despair.

Just about that time Hpo Thit walked into his bungalow one day, and, bumping his forehead on the floor, begged Valentyne's forgiveness for wounding him. He had served his time,

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and was going away. If he remained in Burmah they would kill him for stealing the Beda, so he was going to some other country.

And that was the last anybody ever saw of Hpo Thit in Burmah.

Three years more of playing Buddha at the rate of ten thousand a year passed, and this time there could be no mistake about it, so Corbyn said. The ruby was coming right enough this time. It was coming not far from the place where the boil had been; in fact, it was the irritation of the Beda that had most likely caused the boil.

It was the same old thing over again, — tom-toms, and poays, and presents, and much praying, and the working of charms to keep the nahts away, — only stronger than before, for they were sure of it this time.

Corbyn could take his fingers and

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push it about under the skin, and the grim, butternut-colored faces of the phoongyes relaxed when they realized how close they were to getting the heaven-sent relic.

Even the officials were pleased — pleased with Valentyne, pleased with themselves, and with the way they had managed the affair. The phoongyes would have their ruby back again, and Valentyne would have done well out of the deal; in fact, he might be reinstated in the service, if this spirit of Buddha were cast out of him.

The Chief Commissioner graciously extended his patronage to the extracting of the stone.

Apart from all this it had a great surgical interest. All the medical fraternity in Rangoon asked Valentyne's permission to be present; if he had chosen to charge an admission of ten

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rupees a head he might have had his compound filled at that price the day Corbyn summoned the phoongyes to be present to take delivery of the ruby.

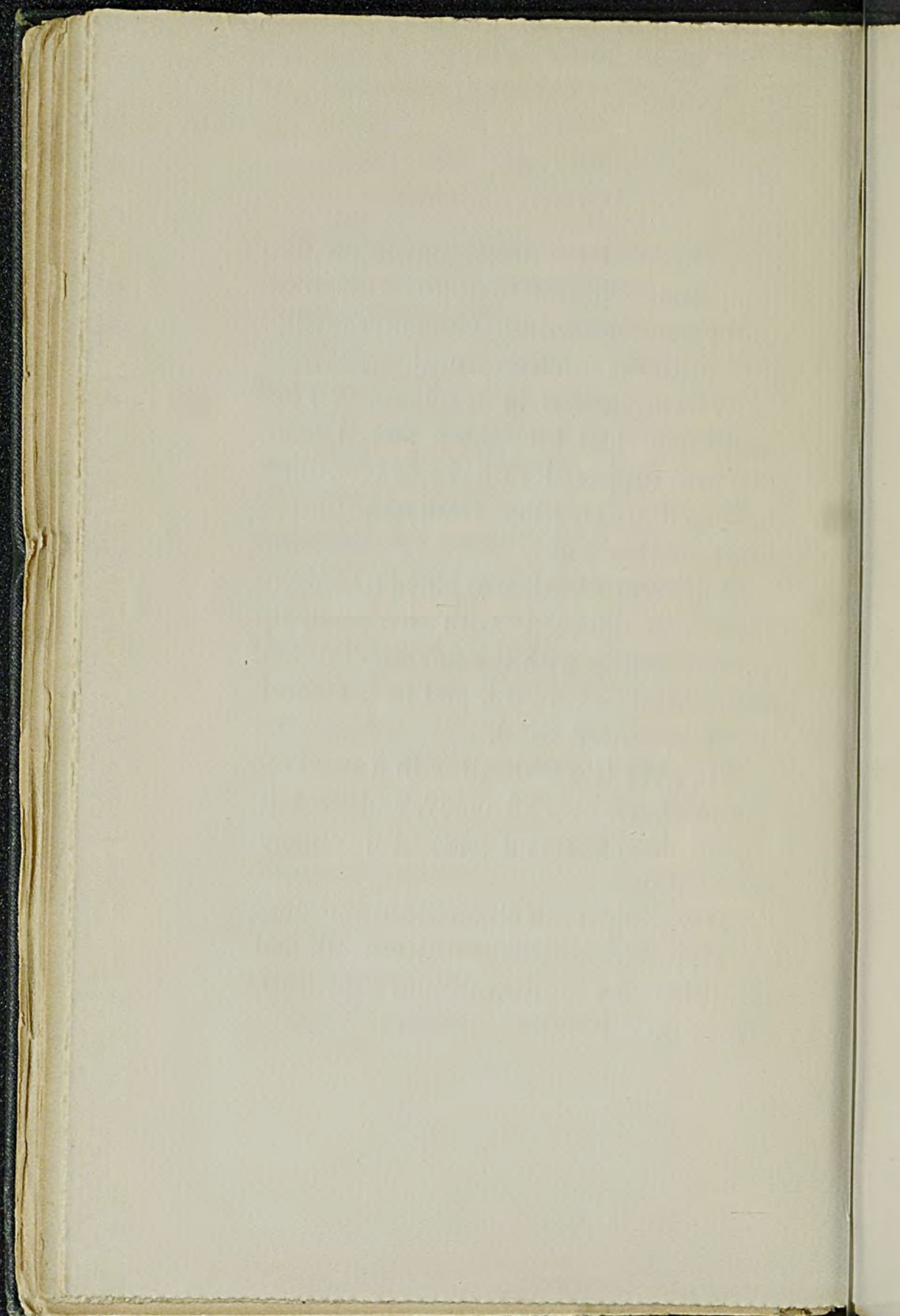
Everything was in readiness. The archbishop had brought a sacred dish that was supposed to have at one time belonged to Buddha Gautama, to receive the Beda in.

Valentyne's back was bared; Corbyn made an incision with his scalpel, pressed gently with the forefinger of his right hand downward, and in a second it lay in his left hand.

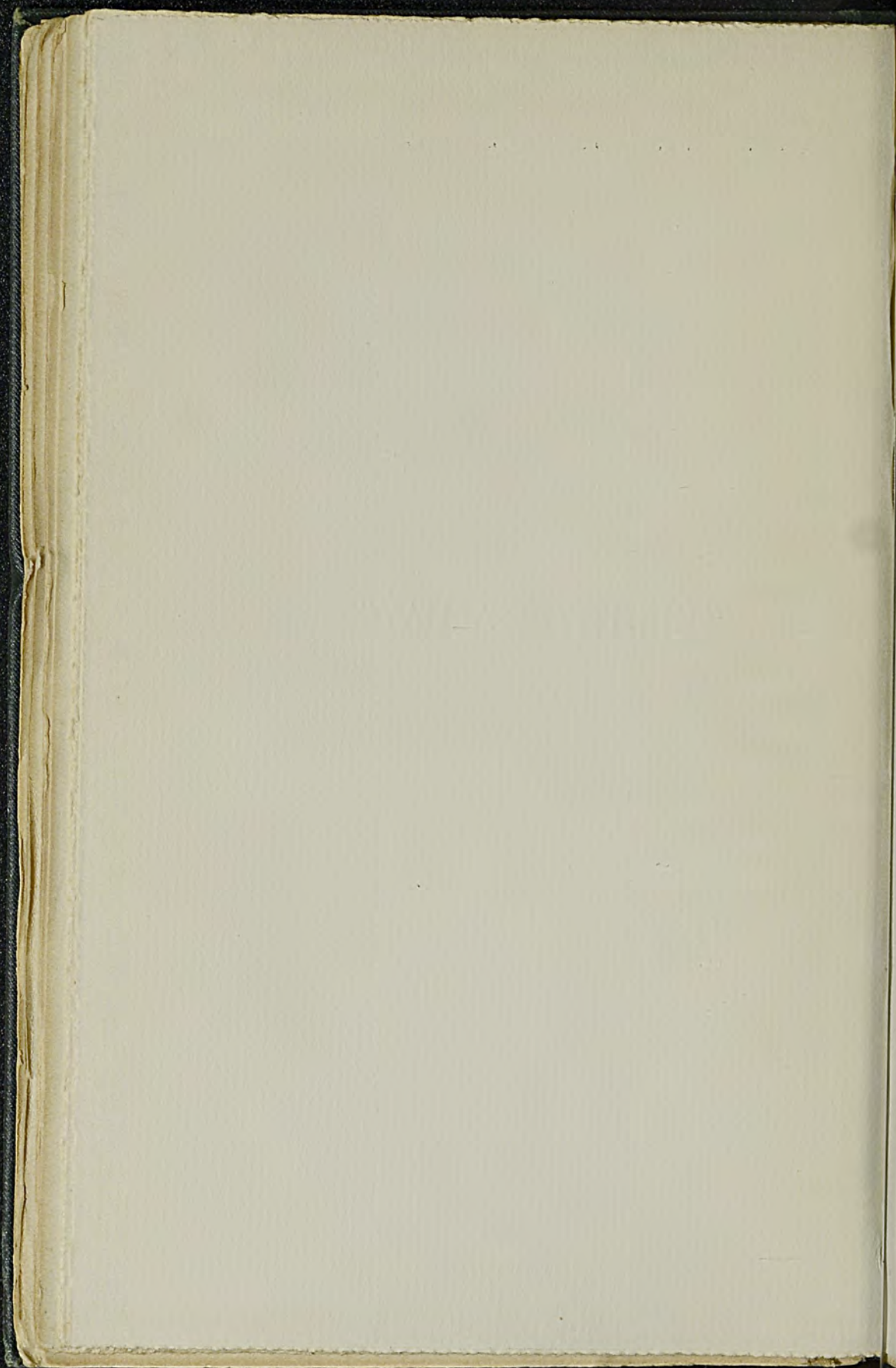
He gave it a little rinse in a bowl of warm water he had ready, and held it up to the expectant gaze of the many craning heads.

It was a piece of oblong lead—a slug.

Hpo Thit had lied, that was all, and had the ruby away with him—at least, it was never found.



“KING FOR A DAY”



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As you walk up the many score of steps leading to the Golden Pagoda in Rangoon, and come out upon the cemented flat in front of the tapering spire itself, you will see a Burmese temple a little to the right. Among other gods rested there once a small alabaster figure of Buddha, stained yellow, and with a hideous dragon head; but it is not there now. And because of that alabaster god, these things happened.

Sir Lemuel Jones, C. I. E., was Chief Commissioner of Burmah. Lawrence Jones, captain of the tramp steamer *Newcastle Maid*, was his brother. More

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than that, they were twins, as like as two drops of water. It was kismet that Sir Lemuel should rise to be Chief Commissioner, while it was Larry's own fault that he was only captain of a freighter. But they both enjoyed themselves, each after his kind.

One morning in November the *Newcastle Maid* glided up the Irawadi and swung to moorings just off the main wharf at Rangoon. Larry had not seen his brother for years; and, for the matter of that, did not care if many more years passed before he saw him. Their paths ran at right angles. He was there for a cargo of rice, not to renew family ties.

It was because the chief engineer of the *Newcastle Maid* was a man after his own heart that he said, before going ashore: “I don't want to get into a gale here, for I've had a letter from the own-

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ers over that last break I made in Calcutta; if I come off seas over, just lock me in the cabin, and don't let me out. No matter what I say, keep me there until I 'm braced up."

Then the captain went ashore. "I want to see the Golden Pagoda," said he, as he chartered a gharry.

"Come quickly, I 'm waiting," whispered the yellow image of Buddha, the alabaster god, in his ear. It was there, in the funny little temple all decked out with Chinese lanterns, and tinsel, and grotesque gods. Straight the influence led him to it—to the dragon-headed god.

Stealing was not one of Larry's vices, but what matter man's ways when the gods are running his life for him? It scorched his fingers when he touched it; and when it was in his pocket it scorched his mind. The demon of impulse took

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possession of the captain. “I must do something,” and he thought of the usual routine—whisky. It held out no pleasing prospect. “Something else, something else; something worthy of Captain Jones,” whispered the little god.

He took a drive out through the cantonments. As he bowled along in the old gharry a new experience came to him. Gentlemen lifted their hats; and ladies driving in their carriages smiled and bowed in the most gracious manner.

“I wonder if there ’s anything sticking to my face,” thought Larry, and he passed his hand carefully over its rounded surface; it seemed all right.

But still they kept it up—everybody he met, and one officer, galloping by on his pony, took a pull at the animal’s head and shouted, “Are you coming to the club to-night, sir?”

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"No!" roared the captain; for he had n't the faintest idea of going to a club without an invitation.

"They 'll be awfully disappointed," came the echo of the officer's voice as the gharry opened up a gap between them.

"Very kind," muttered Larry; "but I fancy they 'll get over it. Must have taken me for somebody else."

And the dragon grin on the face of the alabaster god in his pocket spread out until it was hideous to look upon. Larry did n't see this; he was busy staring open-mouthed at the image of himself sitting in a carriage just in front. The carriage was turning out of a compound, and blocked the road, so that his own driver was forced to stop. He recognized the other man. It was Sir Lemuel, his twin brother.

The recognition was mutual. The

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Commissioner bowed quite coldly as the captain called out, "How are you, Lemuel?"

Then the big Waler horses whipped the carriage down the road at a slashing gait, and Larry was left alone with The Thing in his pocket.

"So that 's why they 've been taking off their hats to me," he mused. "They take me for Sir Lemuel. Great time he must have ruling these yellow niggers out here. I 'd like to be in his shoes just for a day, to see how it feels to be King of Burmah."

All the way back to the hotel he was thinking about it. Arrived there, he wrote a note addressed to the Chief Commissioner, and sent it off by a native. "That will bring him," he muttered; "he always was a bit afraid of me."

It was six o'clock when Sir Lemuel

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arrived in his carriage. There was a great scurrying about of servants, and no end of salaaming the "Lat Sahib"; for it was not often the Chief Commissioner honored the hotel with his presence. He was shown to Captain Jones's room.

"Take a seat, Lem," said Captain Larry, cheerfully. "I wanted to see you, and thought you 'd rather come here than receive me at Government House."

"Please be brief, then," said Sir Lemuel, in his most dignified manner; "I have to attend a dinner at the club to-night in honor of the return of our Judicial Commissioner."

"Oh, Sir Lemuel will be there in time for that," chuckled the captain. "But first, Lem, for the sake of old times, I want you to drink a glass of wine with me. You know we took a

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drink together pretty often the first year of our existence." Then he broke into a loud sailor laugh that irritated the Commissioner.

"While I don't approve of drinking to the extent you have carried it," said Sir Lemuel, with judicial severity, "still I can't refuse a glass proffered by my brother."

"Your twin brother," broke in Larry; "of whom you 've always been so fond, you know."

"I really must be going, so please tell me why you 've sent for me." But when he had drunk the glass of wine, he gave up all idea of going anywhere but to sleep — for it was drugged.

Then Captain Larry stripped his brother, peeled the august body of the Commissioner as one would strip a willow, and draped him in his own sailor outfit. "You 're a groggy-looking cap-

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tain," he said, as he tried to brace the figure up in a big chair; "you 're a disgrace to the service. You 'll have your papers taken away, first thing you know."

He had put the alabaster god on the table while he was making the transfer.

"This is all your doing," he said, addressing the figure.

When he had arrayed himself in the purple and fine linen of the Commissioner, he emptied the contents of the bottle of wine through the window. Then he went below and spoke to the proprietor. "The captain up-stairs, who had an important communication to make to me, has become suddenly most completely intoxicated. Never saw a man get drunk so quick in my life. Can you have him sent off to his ship, so that he won't get in disgrace? It 's my express wish that this should

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be done, as he has been of service to me."

"All right, sir," exclaimed the hotel-keeper, touching his forehead with his forefinger in salute, "I will get Captain Davin, who is a great friend of his, to take him off right away."

"Most considerate man, the Chief Commissioner," remarked the boniface, as the carriage rolled away.

The carriage swung in under a shed-like portico at the front of a big straggling bungalow. The driver pulled up his horses; the two yaktail-bearing footmen, who had jumped down from their places behind as the carriage turned in off the road, ran hastily up, opening the door, and lowering the steps for The Presence, the Lat Sahib, the Father of all Burmans. Only, Father and all as he was, none of his children served in

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the house, the captain noticed. All the servants were from India.

“Hallo! there ’s the ship’s log,” exclaimed the captain, looking at the big visitors’ book in the entrance. “Wonder where I ’ve got to sign that. The ship musters a big crew,” as he ran his eye down the long list of names.

“When does The Presence want the carriage?” asked a ponderous, much-liveried native servant, making a deep salaam.

The captain pulled out his watch — Sir Lemuel’s watch. “It ’s a beauty,” he mused, as his eyes fell on its rich yellow sides. “Right away, mate — I mean bos’n — that is, tell him not to go away. Wonder what that fellow’s proper title is on the muster?”

“Ah, you ’re to dine at the club to-night, Sir Lemuel,” a cheery English

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voice said, as a young man came out of a room on the right.

"I know that," angrily answered Larry. "I don't have to be told my business."

"Certainly, Sir Lemuel; but you asked me to jog your memory, as you are so apt to forget these things, you know."

"Quite right, quite right," answered the captain. "If you catch me forgetting anything else, just hold out a signal—that is, tip me the wink, will you?"

"We 've had a telegram from Lady Jones, Sir Lemuel—"

The cold perspiration stood out on the captain's forehead. This was something he had forgotten all about. A bachelor himself, it had never occurred to him that Sir Lemuel was probably married and that he would have to face the wife.

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“Where is she? When is she coming back?” he gasped.

“Oh, Sir Lemuel, it was only to say that she had arrived safely in Prome.”

“Thank God for that!” exclaimed the captain, with a rare burst of reverence.

The private secretary looked rather astonished. Sir Lemuel had always been a very devoted husband, but not the sort of man to give way to an expression of strong feeling simply because his wife had arrived at the end of her journey.

“Do you happen to remember what she said about coming back?” he asked of the wondering secretary.

“No, Sir Lemuel; but she ’ll probably remain till her sister is out of danger—a couple of weeks, perhaps.”

“Of course, of course,” said the captain. “Thank the Lord!—I mean I ’m so glad that she ’s had a safe voyage,”

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he corrected himself, heaving a great sigh of relief. "That 's one rock out of the channel," he muttered.

A bearer was waiting patiently for him to go and change his dress. The captain whistled softly to himself when he saw the dress-suit all laid out and everything in perfect order for a "quick change," as he called it. As he finished dressing, the "bos'n," he of the gorgeous livery, appeared, announcing, "Johnson Sahib, sir."

"Who?" queried Captain Larry.

"Sec'tary Sahib, sir."

"Oh, that 's my private secretary," he thought.

"I 've brought the speech, Sir Lemuel," said the young man, as he entered. "You 'll hardly have time to go through it before we start."

The captain slipped the speech and the little alabaster god into his pocket, and

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they were soon bowling along to the official dinner. "Look here, Johnson," he said, "I think fever or something 's working on me. I can't remember men's faces, and get their names all mixed up. I would n't go to this dinner to-night if I had n't promised to. I ought to stay aboard the ship — I mean I ought to stay at home. Now I want you to help me through, and if it goes off all right, I 'll double your salary next month. Safe to promise that," he muttered to himself. "Let Lem attend to it."

At the club, as the captain entered, the band struck up "God save the Queen."

"By jingo, we 're late!" he said; "the show is over."

"He *has* got fever or sun, sure," thought his companion. "Oh, no, Sir Lemuel; they 're waiting for you, to sit

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down to dinner. There 's Mr. Barnes, the Judicial Commissioner, talking to Colonel Short, sir," added the secretary, pointing to a tall, clerical-looking gentleman. "He 's looking very much cut up over the loss of his wife."

"Wife dead, must remember that," thought Larry.

Just then the Judicial Commissioner caught sight of the captain, and hastened forward to greet him. "How do you do, dear Sir Lemuel? I called this afternoon. So sorry to find that Lady Jones was away. You must find it very lonely, Sir Lemuel; I understand this is the first time you have been separated during the many years of your married life."

"Yes, I shall miss the little woman. That great barracks is not the same without her sweet little face about."

"That 's a pretty tall order," ejaculated a young officer to a friend. And

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it was, considering that Lady Jones was an Amazonian type of woman, five feet ten, much given to running the whole state, and known as the “Ironclad.” But Larry did n’t know that, and had to say something.

“Dear Lady Jones,” sighed the Judicial Commissioner, pathetically. “I suppose she returns almost immediately.”

“The Lord forbid — at least not for a few days. I want her to enjoy herself while she ’s away. You will feel the loss of your wife, Mr. Barnes, even more than I; for, of course, she will *never* come back to you.”

To say that general consternation followed this venture of the captain’s is drawing it very mild indeed, for the J. C.’s wife was not dead at all, but had wandered far away with a lieutenant in a Madras regiment.

“It ’s the Ironclad put him up to

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that. She was always down on the J. C. for marrying a girl half his age," said an assistant Deputy Commissioner to a man standing beside him.

The secretary was tugging energetically at the captain's coat-tails. "What is it, Johnson?" he asked, suddenly realizing the tug.

"Dinner is on, sir."

"Rare streak of humor the chief is developing," said Captain Lushton, with a laugh. "Fancy he 's rubbing it into Barnes on account of that appeal case."

Owing to the indisposition of the Chief Commissioner, by special arrangement the secretary sat at his left, which was rather fortunate; for, by the time dinner was over, the captain had looked upon the wine and seen that it was good—had looked several times. What with the worry of keeping his glass

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empty, and answering, with more or less relevance, respectful questions addressed to him from different parts of the table, he pretty well forgot all about the speech lying in his lap. Once or twice he looked at it, but the approaches to the facts were so ambiguous, and veiled so carefully under such expressions as, "It is deemed expedient under existing circumstances," etc., that he got very little good from it. One or two facts he gleaned, however: that owing to the extraordinary exertion of the Judicial Commissioner all the dacoits had either been hung, transported to the Andamans, or turned from their evil course and made into peaceable tillers of the soil; their two-handed dah had been dubbed up, more or less, into a plow-share.

"Glad of that," thought the captain.
"Hate those beastly dacoits. They 're

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like mutineers on shipboard. The padre-like lawyer must be a good one."

Another point that loomed up on his sailor vision like the gleam of a lighthouse was a reference to a petition calling attention to the prevalence of crime connected with sailors during the shipping season, and asking for the establishment of a separate police court, with a special magistrate, to try these cases.

"Shall we have the honor of your presence at the races to-morrow?" pleasantly asked a small, withy man, four seats down the table.

The captain was caught unawares, and blurted out, "Where are they?"

"On the race-course, sir."

The answer was a simple, straightforward one, but nevertheless it made everybody laugh.

"I thought they were on the moon," said the captain, in a nettled tone.

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A man does n't laugh at a Chief Commissioner's joke, as a rule, because it 's funny, but the mirth that followed this was genuine enough.

“Sir Lemuel is coming out,” said Captain Lushton. “Pity the Ironclad would n't go away every week.”

In the natural order of things, Sir Lemuel had to respond to the toast of “The Queen.” Now the secretary had very carefully and elaborately prepared the Chief Commissioner's speech for this occasion: Sir Lemuel had conscientiously “mugged” it up, and if he had not at that moment been a prisoner on board the *Newcastle Maid* would have delivered it with a pompous sincerity which would have added to his laurels as a deep thinker and brilliant speaker. But the captain of a tramp steamer, with a mixed cargo of sherry, hock, and dry monopole in his stomach, and a mis-

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chief-working alabaster god in his pocket, is not exactly the proper person to deliver a statistical, semi-official after-dinner speech.

When the captain rose to his feet, the secretary whispered in his ear, "For heaven's sake, don't say anything about the Judicial's wife. Talk about dacoits"; but the speech, so beautifully written, so lucid in its meaning, and so complicated in its detail, became a waving sea of foam. From out the billowy waste of this indefinite mass there loomed only the tall figure of the cadaverous J. C.; and attached to it, as a tangible something, the fact that he had lost his wife and settled the dacoits.

It was glorious, this getting up before two strings of more or less bald-headed officials to tell them how the state ought to be run — the ship steered, as it were. "Gentlemen," he began,

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starting off bravely enough, “we are pleased to have among us once more our fellow-skipper, the Judicial Commissioner.”

“The old buck ’s got a rare streak of humor on to-night,” whispered Lush-ton.

“His jovial face adds to the harmony of the occasion. I will not allude to his late loss, as we all know how deeply he feels it.”

“Gad! but he ’s rubbing it in,” said Lushton.

“I repeat, we are glad to have him among us once again. My secretary assures me that there ’s not a single dacoit left alive in the province. There ’s nothing like putting these rebellious chaps down. I had a mutiny myself once, on board the *Kangaroo*. I shot the ringleaders, and made every mother’s son of the rest of them walk the

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plank. So I'm proud of the good work the Judicial has done in this respect."

Now, it had been a source of irritating regret to every Deputy Commissioner in the service that when he had caught a dacoit red-handed, convicted, and sentenced him to be hanged, and sent the ruling up to the Judicial for confirmation, he had been promptly sat on officially, and the prisoner either pardoned or let off with a light sentence. Consequently these little pleasantries of the captain were looked upon as satire.

"There is one other little matter I wish to speak about," continued the captain, in the most natural manner possible, "and that is, the prevalence of what we might call 'sailor crimes' in Rangoon." He told in the most graphic manner of the importance of the shipping interests, for he was right at home on that subject, and wound up

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by saying: "I've been presented with a largely signed petition praying for the establishment of another assistant magistrate's court to try these cases, presided over by a man more or less familiar with the shipping interests. Now, that's the only sensible thing I ever heard talked of in this heathen land. Set a thief to catch a thief, I say. Put the ship in charge of a sailor himself—of a captain. None of your land-lubbers."

His theme was carrying him away; he was on deck again. But the others thought it was only his humor; the strange, unaccountable humor that had taken possession of him since the Iron-clad had let go her hold.

"Now, I know of a most worthy captain," he continued, "who would fill this billet with honor to himself and profit to the Judicial. His name is

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Captain Jones—a namesake of my own, I may say—of the *Newcastle Maid*, 2000 tons register. I’ve known him ever since he was a babe, and the sailors won’t fool him, I can tell you. I’d a talk with him this evening down at the hotel, and he’s just the man for the job. I’d sign the papers appointing him to-morrow if they were put before me. He ought to have a good salary, though,” he said, as he sat down, rather abruptly, some of them thought.

The secretary sighed as he shoved in his pocket the written speech, which the captain had allowed to slip to the floor. “It’ll do for another time, I suppose,” he said wearily; “when he gets over this infernal touch of sun or Burmah head.”

People in India get used to that sort of thing happening—of their older officials saying startling things some-

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times. That 's what the fifty-five years' service is for—to prevent it. The other speeches did not appeal to Captain Larry much; nor, for the matter of that, to the others either. He had certainly made the hit of the evening.

“It 's great, this,” he said bucolically to the secretary, as they drove home.

“What, sir?”

“Why, making speeches, and driving home in your own carriage. I hate going aboard ship in a jiggledy sampan at night. I 'll have a string of wharves put all along the front there, so that ships won't have to load at their moorings. Just put me in mind of that tomorrow.”

Next day there was considerable diversion on the *Newcastle Maid*. “The old man 's got the D. T.'s,” the chief engineer told the first officer. “I

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locked him in his cabin last night when they brought him off, and he 's banging things around there in great shape. Swears he 's the ruler of Burmah and Sir Gimnel Somebody. I won't let him out till he gets all right again, for he 'd go up to the agents with this cock-and-bull story. They 'd cable home to the owners, and he 'd be taken out of the ship sure."

That 's why Sir Lemuel tarried for a day on the *Newcastle Maid*. Nobody would go near him but the chief engineer, who handed him meat and drink through a port-hole, and laughed soothingly at his fancy tales.

After chota hazri next morning, the secretary brought to Captain Larry a large basket of official papers for his perusal and signature. That was Sir Lemuel's time for work. His motto

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was, business first, and afterward more business. Each paper was carefully contained in a card-board holder secured by red tape.

"The log, eh, mate?" said Larry, when the secretary brought them into his room. "It looks ship-shape, too."

"This file, sir, is the case of Deputy Commissioner Grant, 1st Grade, of Bungaloo. He has memorialized the government that Coatsworth, 2d Grade, has been appointed over his head to the commissionership of Bhang. He's senior to Coatsworth, you know, sir, in the service."

"Well, why has Coatsworth been made first mate then?"

"Grant's afraid it's because he offended you, sir, when you went to Bungaloo. He received you in a jah-ran coat, you remember, and you were awfully angry about it."

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"Oh, I was, was I? Just shows what an ass Sir Lemuel can be sometimes. Make Grant a commissioner at once, and I 'll sign the papers."

"But there 's no commissionership open, sir, unless you set back Coatsworth."

"Well, I 'll set him back. I 'll discharge him from the service. What else have you got there? What 's that bundle on the deck?"

"They 're native petitions, sir."

Larry took up one. It began with an Oriental profusion of gracious titles bestowed upon the Commissioner, and went into business by stating that the writer Baboo Sen's wife had got two children by "the grace of God and the kind favor of Sir Lemuel the Father of all Burmans." And the long petition was all to the end that Baboo Sen might have a month's leave of absence.

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Larry chuckled, for he did not understand the complex nature of a Baboo's English. The next petition gave him much food for thought; it made his head ache. The English was like logarithms. "Here," he said to the secretary; "you fix these petitions up later; I'm not used to them."

He straightened out the rest of the official business in short order. Judgments that would have taken the wind out of Solomon's sails, he delivered with a rapidity that made the secretary's head swim. They were not all according to the code, and would probably not stand if sent up to the privy council. At any rate, they would give Sir Lemuel much patient undoing when he came into his own again. The secretary unlocked the official seal, and worked it, while the captain limited his signature to "L. Jones."

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“That ’s not forgery,” he mused; “it means ‘Larry Jones.’”

“The Chief’s hand is pretty shaky this morning,” thought the secretary; for the signature was not much like the careful clerkly hand that he was accustomed to see.

Sir Lemuel’s wine had been a standing reproach to Government House. A dinner there either turned a man into a teetotaler or a dyspeptic; and at tiffin, when the captain broached a bottle of it, he set his glass down with a roar. “He ’s brought me the vinegar,” he exclaimed, “or the coal-oil. Is there no better wine in the house than this?” he asked the butler; and when told there was n’t, he insisted upon the secretary writing out an order at once for fifty dozen Pommery. “Have it back in time for dinner, sure! I ’ll leave some for Lem, too; this stuff is n’t

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good for his blood," he said to himself grimly.

"I 'm glad this race meet is on while I 'm king," he thought, as he drove down after tiffin, taking his secretary with him. "They say the Prince of Wales always gets the straight tip, and I 'll be sure to be put on to something good."

And he was. Captain Lushton told him that his mare "Nettie" was sure to win the Rangoon Plate, forgetting to mention that he himself had backed "Tomboy" for the same race.

"Must have wrenched a leg," Lush-ton assured Larry when "Nettie" came in absolutely last.

It was really wonderful how many "good things" he got on to that did run last, or thereabouts. It may have been the little alabaster Buddha in his pocket that brought him the bad luck;

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but as the secretary wrote "I. O. U. 's" for all the bets he made, and as Sir Lemuel would be into his own again before settling day, and would have to pay up, it did not really matter to the captain.

The regiment was so pleased with Sir Lemuel's contributions that the best they had in their marquee was none too good for him. The ladies found him an equally ready mark. Mrs. Leyburn was pretty, and had fish to fry. "I must do a little missionary work while the Ironclad 's away," she thought. Her mission was to install her husband in the position of port officer. That came out later — came out at the ball that night. The captain assured her that he would attend.

There is always a sort of Donnybrook Derby at the end of a race day in Rangoon. Ponies are gently sequestered

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from their more or less willing owners, and handed over, minus their saddles, to sailors, who pilot them erratically around the course for a contributed prize. When the captain saw the hat going around for the prize money, he ordered the secretary to write out a "chit" for two hundred rupees. "Give them something worth while, poor chaps," he said.

"And to think that the Ironclad has kept this bottled up so long," muttered Lushton.

"I always said you had a good heart," Mrs. Leyburn whispered to the captain. "If people would only let you show it," she added maliciously; meaning, of course, Lady Jones.

The Chief Commissioner was easily the most popular man in Burmah that night. It was with difficulty the blue-jackets could be kept from carrying him

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home on their shoulders. "I hope Lem is looking after the cargo all right," murmured the captain, as he drove home to dinner. "I seem to be getting along nicely. Lucky the old cat 's away."

The captain danced the opening quadrille at the ball with the wife of the Financial Commissioner, and, bar a little enthusiastic rolling engendered of his sea life, and a couple of torn trails as they swept a little too close, he managed it pretty well. The secretary had piloted him that far. Then Mrs. Leyburn swooped down upon him.

There is an adornment indigenous to every ballroom in the East, known as the *kala jagah*; it may be a conservatory or a bay window. A quiet seat among the crotons, with the drowsy drone of the waltz flitting in and out among the leaves, is just the place to work a man.

“King for a Day”

I 'm telling you this now ; but Mrs. Leyburn knew it long ago : moons before Captain Larry opened the ball with the Financial Commissioner's wife. Not that Mrs. Leyburn was the only woman with a mission. Official life in India is full of them ; only she had the start — that was all.

“It's scandalous,” another missionary said to Captain Lushton. “They 've been in there an hour—they 've sat out three dances. I 'm sorry for poor dear Lady Jones.”

Among the crotons the missionary-in-the-field was saying : “I 'm sure Jack ordered the launch to meet you at the steamer that time, Sir Lemuel. He knows you were frightfully angry about it, and has felt it terribly. He 's simply afraid to ask you for the billet of port officer ; and that horrible man who is acting officer now will get it, and poor

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Jack won't be able to send me up to Darjeeling next hot weather. And you 'll be going for a month again next season, Sir Lemuel, won't you?"

Now, as it happened, the captain had had a row with the acting port officer coming up the river; so it was just in his mitt, as he expressed it. "I 'll arrange it for Jack to-morrow," he said; "never fear, little woman." ("He spoke of you as Jack," she told Leyburn later on, "and it 's all right, love. Lucky the Ironclad was away.")

A lady approaching from the ball-room heard a little rustle among the plants, pushed eagerly forward, and stood before them. Another missionary had entered the field. "I beg pardon, Sir Lemuel," and she disappeared.

"Perfectly scandalous!" she said, as she met Lushton. "Some one ought to advise dear Lady Jones of that designing creature's behavior."

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“For Cupid’s sake, don’t,” ejaculated Lushton, fervently. “Let the old boy have his fling. He does n’t get out often.”

“I’ve no intention of doing so myself,” said his companion, with asperity.

But all the same a telegram went that night to Lady Jones at Prome, which bore good fruit next day, and much of it.

When they emerged from the crotons, Mrs. Leyburn was triumphant. The captain was also more or less pleased with things as they were. “Jack will probably crack Lem’s head when he does n’t get his appointment,” he thought.

The band was playing a waltz, and he and Mrs. Leyburn mingled with the swinging figures. As they rounded a couple that had suddenly steered across the captain’s course, his coat-tails flew out a little too horizontally, and the

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yellow-faced alabaster god rolled on the floor. It spun around like a top for a few times, and then sat bolt upright, grinning with hideous familiarity at the astonished dancers. Not that many were dancing now, for a wondering crowd commenced to collect about the captain and the grotesque little Buddha. The lady-who-had-seen took in the situation in an instant; for jealousy acts like new wine on the intellect. She darted forward, picked up the obese little god, and, with a sweet smile on her gentle face, proffered it to the captain's companion, with the remark, "I think you 've dropped one of your children's toys."

Captain Larry was speechless; he was like a hamstrung elephant, and as helpless.

A private secretary is a most useful adjunct to a Chief Commissioner, but a

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private secretary with brains is a jewel. So when Johnson stepped quickly forward and said, "Excuse me, madam, but that figure belongs to me; I dropped it," the captain felt as though a life-line had been thrown to him.

The secretary put the Buddha in his pocket; and it really appeared as though from that moment the captain's luck departed. He slipped away early from the ball; it seemed, somehow, as though the fun had gone out of the thing. He began to have misgivings as to the likelihood of the chief engineer keeping his brother shut up much longer. "I'll get out of this in the morning," he said, as he turned into bed. "I've had enough of it. I'll scuttle the ship and clear out."

This virtuous intention would have been easy of accomplishment, comparatively, if he had not slept until ten

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o'clock. When he arose, the secretary came to him with a troubled face. "There 's a telegram from Lady Jones, Sir Lemuel, asking for the carriage to meet her at the station, and I 've sent it. She 's chartered a special train, and we expect her any moment."

"Great Scott! I 'm lost!" moaned the captain. "I must get out of this. Help me dress quickly, that 's a good fellow."

An official accosted him as he came out of his room. "I want to see you, Sir Lemuel."

"Is that your tom-tom at the door?" answered the captain, quite irrelevantly.

"Yes, Sir Lemuel."

"Well, just wait here for a few minutes. I 've got to meet Lady Jones, and I 'm late."

Jumping into the cart, he drove off at a furious clip. Fate, in the shape of

“King for a Day”

the Ironclad, swooped down upon him at the very gate. He met Lady Jones face to face.

“Stop!” she cried excitedly. “Where are you going, Sir Lemuel?”

“I ’m not Sir Lemuel!” roared back the disappointed captain.

“Nice exhibition you ’re making of yourself—Chief Commissioner of Burmah!”

“I ’m not the Commissioner of Burmah. I ’m not your Sir Lemuel,” he answered, anxious to get away at any cost.

“The man is mad. The next thing you ’ll deny that I ’m your wife.”

“Neither are you!” roared the enraged captain, and away he sped.

Lady Jones followed. It was a procession; the red spokes of the tom-tom twinkling in and out the bright patches of sunlight as it whirled along between

“King for a Day”

the big banian-trees; and behind, the carriage, Lady Jones sitting bolt upright with set lips. The captain reached the wharf first. He was down the steps and into a sampan like a shot.

It was the only sampan there. The carriage dashed up at that instant. There was no other boat; there was nothing for it but to wait.

“Come, Lem, get into these duds and clear out!” cried the captain, as he burst into his cabin.

“You villain! I ’ll have you sent to the Andamans for this,” exclaimed the prisoner.

“Quick! Your wife ’s waiting on the dock,” said Larry.

That had the desired effect; Sir Lemuel became as a child that had played truant.

“What have you done, Larry?” he

"King for a Day"

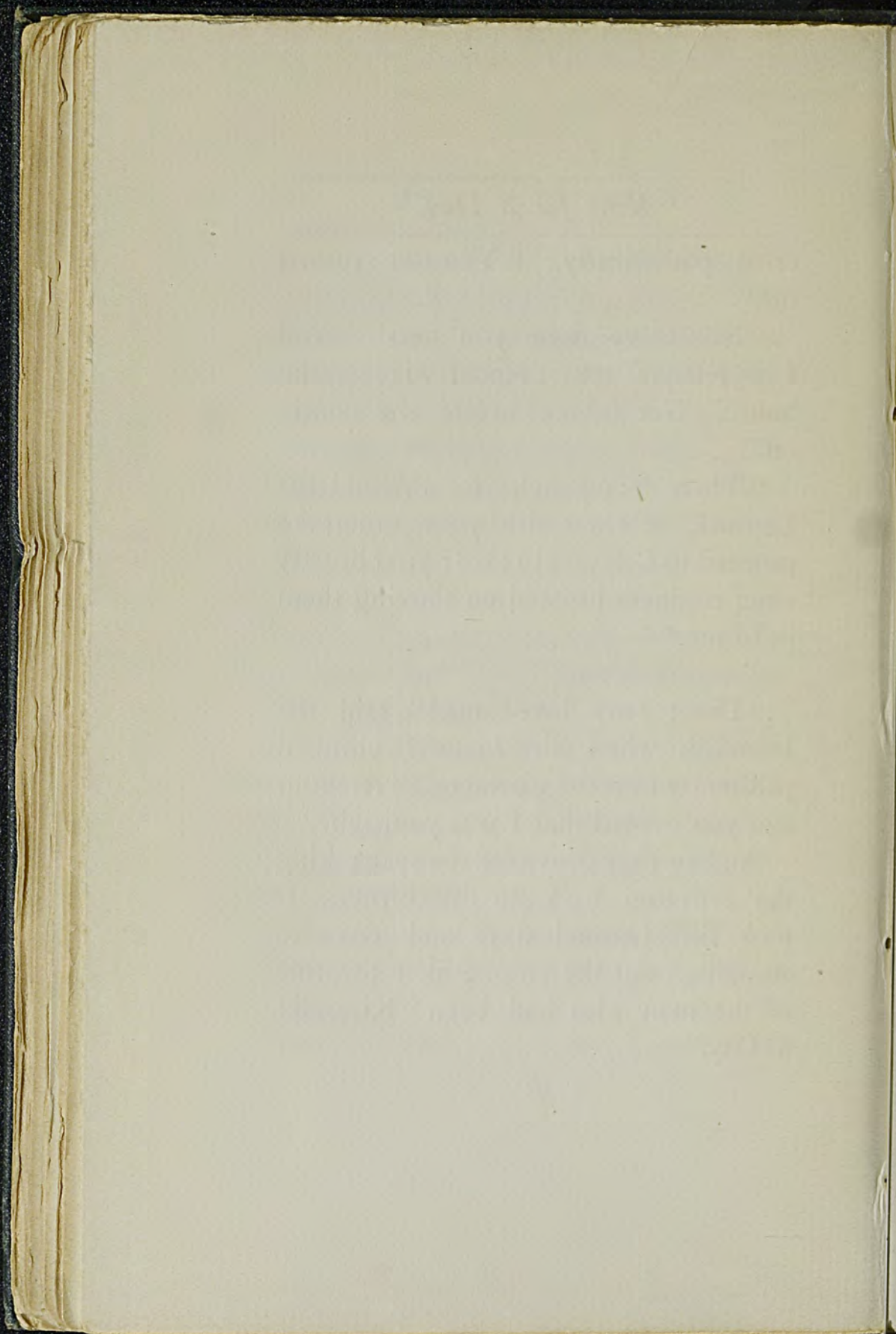
cried pathetically. "You 've ruined me."

"No, I 've done you good. And I 've left you some decent wine at the house. Get ashore before she comes off."

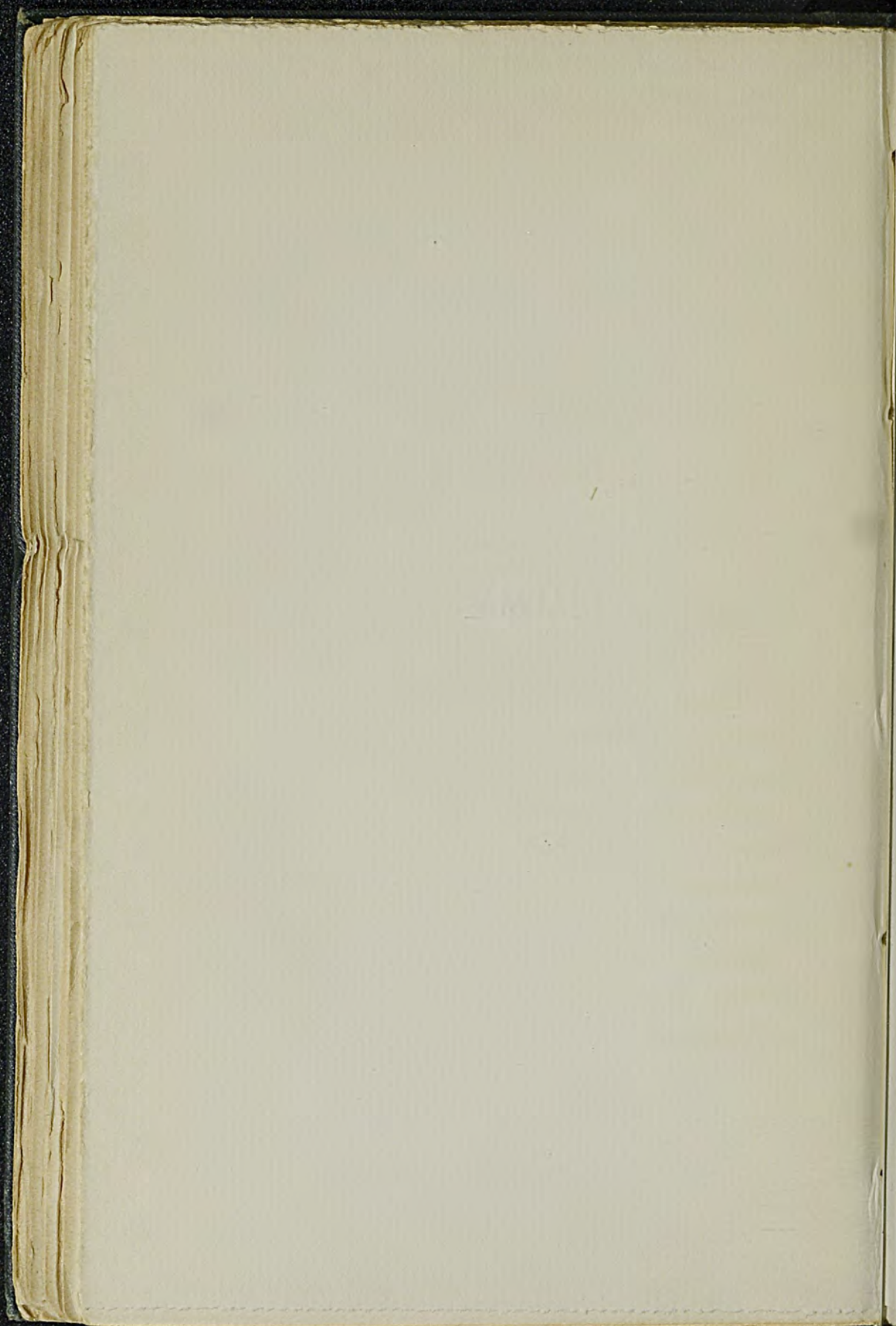
"There 's no help for it," said Sir Lemuel. "There are your orders to proceed to Calcutta to load; your beastly chief engineer insisted on shoving them in to me."

"Don't 'my love' me!" said the Ironclad, when Sir Lemuel climbed penitently into the carriage. "An hour ago you denied that I was your wife."

And so they drove off, the syce taking the tom-tom back to its owner. It took Sir Lemuel days and days to straighten out the empire after the rule of the man who had been "King for a Day."



DJALMA



DJALMA

CHAPTER I

THE MESS, 97th LANCERS,
FRYABAD.

Kismet not in it. Blitz, Nina, Lall Wallah.
LUSHTON.

THAT was the legend of the tah — the bit of yellow paper stuck up on the cardboard in the officers' mess.

When the Colonel came in, he turned the full flare of his glass upon its somber reading; then dropped into a chair with a groan. A dozen men in uniform had done the same; then he did as the other dozen had done — he ordered a "stiff peg."

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"Bowled on a sure thing, sir!" said Captain Stewart, laconically, pulling his eyebrows down in the direction of the bilious looking telegram on the board.

"Huh!" grunted the Colonel, hunting in his cheroot case for the blackest Burmah there; "he 'll have gone a cropper over this, I 'm afraid."

"Got cold going up in the train," said one.

"Got a bad send-off," said another; "must have been left at the post."

There were a dozen reasons expressed for the defeat; but presently a drawling voice droned out: "You fellows have got the wrong sow by the ear this time; it was that sevenfold sinner Hashim who pulled the pony. That 's what kept Kismet from winning, and what will keep us from banking the Lucknow Johnnie's rupees this trip."

It was Captain Learoyd who let these

Djalma

words of wisdom slowly find their way from under his blond mustache.

“You need n’t tell me that a pony that goes out here on our sand track and runs the three-quarters in one-nineteen, with ten stone up, and a griffin like Campbell, there, in the pigskin, is n’t going to get a place in the ‘Cup.’ He ran Silver King to a head in his trial; and I’ll bet the King against an ekka pony that that black devil Hashim pulled him.”

Waterloo had come to Fryabad — had come down over the wire in that beastly tah; and things were in a bad way. To a man they had gone down on Lushton’s gray Arab pony Kismet.

Sundry bits of paper had been negotiated by the Bunyas, and the coin had been dumped into the laps of the bookies up at Lucknow — dumped into the sea, as far as Fryabad was concerned.

Djalma

"Half the fellows will have to sell out," said Learoyd to Lushton, when the latter came back from his "Civil Service Cup" hunt; "but that is n't your fault, old man," he added, as he saw a distressed look come into Lushton's face.

It was an open secret that Lushton was pretty well gone on Ruth Stevens, the Collector's winsome daughter; and, as one's monetary matters are always public property in India, it was known that he could not marry on his pay, which was all he had. The fellows were all sure that he had made a big play for a small fortune over the "Cup," at Lucknow; and in his failure they knew that he would probably give up Miss Ruth.

Lushton himself thought bitterly how little he could do with his paltry four hundred rupees a month toward giving

Djalma

Ruth anything like the comfort she had been accustomed to.

He had seen it all before, knew just how it went. Cheap servants, but a bungalow full of them to eat up the rupees. And then when the hot winds came scorching across the flat, parched land, it would bleach the rose-tinted cheeks and leave them bluish white.

And the little toddlers who had romped and played out in the compound with the ayah and the bearer would get a far-away look in their pinched faces, and would "shout less and day-dream more." The yellow-wheeled dog-cart, with the long-necked, lop-eared, country-bred tat between its high shafts, would be seen oftener and oftener under the thatched entrance to his bungalow. The doctor's tanned face would grow kindlier and sadder each time Lushton put the daily ques-

Djalma

tion to him about the butchas, until finally, one day, the doctor would answer with a smothered groan and a strong grip of the hand, and pass out from under the leafy thatch, not to return until the *next* needed him.

And the mother's face would grow so wan and white, and the great mass of brown hair would lie wet and matted against the pillow, from the dripping of the ice-bag across the burning brow.

That was why Lushton made the plunge; and, incidentally, went a cropper. If he had pulled it off, the hot winds might blow and the sun glare on the baked plain below, but Ruth would be away up at some hill-station, or in dear old England.

It had n't come off, so he would simply drop out of the running and let some other fellow have a chance. It was very simple logic this; but that

Djalma

was the man's nature — strong, and simple, and true.

He had his own suspicion about Hashim's handling of Kismet, and his relationship with Grant, the Deputy Collector; but he kept his tongue between his teeth — kept it closer than he had kept his money.

Then before the settling was done with, Lushton had to sell his ponies. And Kismet, with his silver skin, and tail sweeping the ground, was bought from under the hammer by Grant.

That night at the mess there was some pretty plain gup; and Grant came in for a little rough handling.

Learoyd made up his mind to a few things on his own account. He determined to get at the bottom of the pulling of Kismet; and he also meant to see to it that Lushton did not lose Ruth.

Djalma

Lushton had told him that Kismet seemed very sluggish on going to the post; so he concluded that Hashim had given him one of those native drugs they always have, in obedience to a command from Grant.

Lushton met Miss Ruth often, but only once did he speak to her before the hot season drove her and the other ladies to the hills.

It was when the polo team from Curryabad played Fryabad, Lushton got a tremendous fall by his pony putting his foot in a hole. He felt his pony going down under him, and then there was a surging as of great waters closing in about him. As he lay on his back in the big marquee, he was dimly conscious of a sea of peering faces, and they angered him. But he could not collect his scattered senses. The faces came and went in strange

Djalma

confusion, and the murmur of voices was as the roar of a cataract.

How he wished they would go away! If he could only speak he would order them about their business — deuced bad form, he thought it, on their part.

Then a soft, musical voice arrested his attention; and a pair of merciful gray eyes, soft and pitying, came between him and the hated faces — it was Ruth asking the surgeon in low, sweet tones if he were much hurt.

With a mighty effort he steadied himself, and keeping his wavering senses close to those wondrous eyes for a second, answered, “I ’m all right, Miss Stevens”; and then he went to pieces again — went to pieces for long enough, for it was a deuced close shave of fracture of the skull.

Then there were days of nursing; and much ice, many flowers, and the

Djalma

good friendship which strong men give and get when things go wrong.

One day the flowers ceased to come, and he knew that Ruth had gone away to the hills.

Then for months the caldron seethed, and the hot winds swept across the sun-glared plain; and to the daily routine of army life there came not any relief. Then the furnace went out; the cool winds blew; and the people from the hills trooped back again, bringing the perfume of the deodars in their hair, and the enamel of the mountain breezes upon their cheeks.

Grant had been one of the few men who had gotten away to the hills. All the fellows joined in fervent prayers that he might drop over a cliff; not *too gently*, either, for they were all shy of him. But he turned up like the others — fresh as a mango.

CHAPTER II

ABOUT a month later, as Lushton was sitting in his bungalow one evening, his bearer came and reported that a syce wanted to speak to him.

"Send him in," answered Lushton.

A tall, north-country Hindoo soon stood before him. He salaamed to the ground, and something in his face appeared familiar to Lushton.

"Does the Sahib remember Ramadine?" he asked.

"I remember about forty Ramadines," replied Lushton; "but your particular form of it does not outline itself on my memory with any degree of clearness. Did you ever work for me?"

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Then the gaunt, weird-looking syce recalled to his memory a certain night some years since, upon which he had rescued Ramadine—the Ramadine who stood before him—from three drunken soldiers who were abusing him. And it had taken a few straight punches from his well-trained arm to convince them that it was not fair for three of them to abuse a poor Hindoo.

Then Lushton remembered him.

“I suppose you want a post as syce, or a chit from me to some one. Is that it?”

“No, Sahib Huzoor, your slave is in the hands of the Collector Sahib’s Missie Baba as syce, and except that my country is far away, Ramadine is pleased.

“Huzoor, the Collector Sahib bought a tattoo [pony] in Simla, as strong as a hagh [tiger] and as swift, to carry the

Djalma

great weight his goodness has brought him from the gods.

“Djalma has a back broader than the Sahib’s shoulders, and legs of iron. He is of Indistan, but his legs do not knock together behind like unto a cow’s, as do the horses of this land. He stands with his hocks far out like an Arab; and great is his strength, O Sahib! And if the Sahib will pass a string from where the joint is in the wither, along the neck, between the ears — the small ears like bits of silk — down to the nose, he will find it long — a full half hand longer than from there to the tail. Did not Sheik Hafiz show the Presence how the Arabs judge the strong runners, when he was in Bombay? Raise your arm, *so*, Sahib; that ’s the way my Djalma’s shoulders slope; and the Sahib, who knows a horse as Ramadine knows his brother, knows that that is speed.”

Djalma

"But how came you to be with this tat, Ramadine?" asked Lushton.

"I did not go to Djalma, Huzoor; my gods were pleased because I gave to Shir—the 'Brahminy Bull' that comes each day to see that Djalma and Ramadine are well—half my share of dan for one whole moon, so they brought us together."

"But why does n't the Sahib ride this peerless horse, Ramadine?" queried Lushton.

"Huzoor, he did one day; and as another passed him my Djalma flew. How fast he went I know not, for soon poor Ramadine had lost them both. I looked long for Djalma, my pearl, but found him not; then I looked for the Sahib, and found him where the Sahib goes shikari for his snipe. And half a biggah of paddy land was ruined where the Sahib had fallen from Djalma's back.

Djalma

“And then Grant Sahib wanted to try the ‘brute’—he called my pearl a *brute*; but Ramadine put more dan where Shir, with the eyes of a god, comes; and once more Ramadine’s kismet was good.

“Djalma came walking back to Ramadine; but it took four stout chuprassies to carry Grant Sahib from where my pearl had thrown him.

“And when I took off the saddle there lay a twig of the biting vine next my pet’s tenderskin. The gods put it there, Sahib.

“The Missie Baba said she was not afraid of Djalma; and Djalma told Ramadine that he would carry the Bilatti Begum as gently as a mother carries her child. Now they are always together—the Missie Baba and Djalma; but the Collector Sahib says, ‘By Damn; Djalma must go as soon as any one will buy him.’”

Djalma

Lushton sat back in his chair, smoking his cheroot and listening patiently to Ramadine's Oriental-clothed tale. He had experience enough of the natives to know there was something behind all this. He knew that the wild-eyed Hindoo, squatted on his heels like a monkey, had had some object in keeping anybody but Ruth from riding Djalma. It was Ramadine's hand that had placed the prickly creeper under the saddle to give Grant his spill.

"How do you know that he is swift, Ramadine?" he suddenly asked, sending a sharp glance into the dark face in front of him.

"Surely he is like the wind, O judge of horses! When the Sahib has seen, then he will know that Ramadine has spoken true. If he is swifter than the silver Kismet, that was once the

Djalma

Sahib's, will not that surely do? Will not the Sahib buy him?"

"I am too poor now to buy any race-horses, Ramadine," said Lushton, with just a touch of regret in his voice.

Then with a grave salaam Ramadine passed noiselessly out into the night.

"By Jove!" said Learoyd, next day, when Lushton told him about his interview with Ramadine. "The gods have taken pity on you, and thrown this in your way to make up for your bad luck. I'll have a look at the gee-gee; and if he shapes well we must get hold of him, and get our stuff back from the Philistines who have despoiled us."

"We can't do that," replied Lushton; "it would be like *robbing* the Collector to buy his pony for a song, if he is such a good one. Besides, if I were to appear anxious to get the pony, I believe

Djalma

the black devil would make him run away with Miss Stevens."

"That would never do," said Learoyd, as he tickled his pony's ribs with a spur and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

Next evening Learoyd rode back from polo with Miss Ruth and had a good look at Djalma. He was horseman enough to note the high courage showing in the big eyes set in the lean, bony head; the wide nostrils that went with the deep, powerful chest; and the massive muscles of the arm. Short coupled, with a tremendous reach underneath, and an almost English blood neck, he showed to Learoyd's practised eye all the points of a miniature thoroughbred. It was just such a powerful pony as this that was needed to stay the tiring three-quarters of the Civil Service Cup—raced, as it was, from end to end, and always with a big field.

Djalma

Learoyd's report to Lushton that night fairly made his ears tingle; but still he refused to have anything to do with him. "I won't touch him," he said; "I am out of the running."

Some days later Lushton was walking in the early morning, when he came across Ramadine holding Djalma's head under a mango-tree by the roadside.

"Where is your mistress?" he asked.

"Huzoor, she is gone to see the mem sahib who is sick over there," replied Ramadine.

"And that is Djalma — eh, Ramadine?"

"Ha, Huzoor, of a certainty! There could only be one such. And will the Sahib not buy him from the Collector Sahib, and win the big race at Lucknow, and many lakhs of rupees?"

"No, Ramadine, I will not buy him. I have no doubt he is a good one, for

Djalma

he looks it, but would I not be like a Pindari thief to buy him for a small sum from my friend if he is so good?"

Just then Djalma pricked his ears and gave a little neigh, but there was no one in sight.

If Lushton's eyes had been as keen as Djalma's scent he would have seen a slight figure in a white drill riding-habit, just beyond the myriad sword-like blades of the aloe hedge; only for an instant had the figure been there, looking for an opening to get through; but fate often crowds the essence of a lifetime into a minute, and Ruth, for it was she, had heard enough to bring a hot flush to her cheeks, and the glint of a resolve into the kindly gray eyes.

But Lushton saw not anything as he turned up the road; and Fate danced on top of the prickly sword-points, and slapped his thigh in glee—only no one

Djalma

saw him, not even Djalma, who was watching the hedge with an arched neck, and an eager, side-long look.

Then Fate stopped his jig for a moment; and, with stately bow, pointed out the narrow opening Ruth had been looking for; then he stuck his tongue in his cheek as she vanished in the cloud of mist Djalma was swirling into the air with his powerful feet.

The resolve that was in Ruth's busy brain traveled down her arm, and got into the firm fingers grasping the reins, and Djalma knew that there was something up. He unstrung his great muscles, and gave them full play, until the red rubble road smoothed itself out and became a ribbon running through a woof of green.

Then the reins slackened a little, a soft, gloved hand reached down and stroked the glistening neck, with its

Djalma

veins standing out like cord, and Djalma eased down his mad gallop. Once or twice a drop of warm rain splashed on his neck ; but the sky was clear, and probably there was not a rain-cloud within a hundred miles of them. Djalma, with his limited intelligence, could not make it out, so he simply rattled the snaffle in his teeth by way of comment.

"There, father," said Ruth, as she dismounted, "I shall not ride Djalma again. You may sell him as soon as you wish."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the Collector. "I thought you would get enough of that budmash. He's got a mouth like iron, and Shaitan himself could not hold him when he takes it into his pig's head to go."

"I dare say that Mr. Grant will buy him, father," said Ruth, with just the suspicion of a query in her voice.

Djalma

"What a feeler!" chuckled Fate to himself; for, fast as they had come, he had kept up with them.

"I dare say he would—just for the fun of shooting him," answered her father, grimly; "but not to ride him, oh, dear, no!"

So a notice was sent around to the Mess and the Gym that Mr. Stevens had a C. B. pony, 13.2, up to any weight, for sale; sound in wind and limb, and fast; only known fault being a vicious temper.

All the Collector asked for him was Rs.300; but nobody would have him at any price.

At last Learoyd went to the owner, and said: "Your pony is very fast. I think you are foolish to sell him for so small a sum."

"Nobody knows that better than I do, my dear boy, for I rode him at the

Djalma

rate of a mile a minute, much against my will though it was. I had to pay five rupees for the paddy I destroyed in my fall. It's just because he *is* so fast, and so handy with his speed, that I want to sell him. If I can't sell him I shall give him away. Even Ruth won't ride him any more; and I never knew her to funk any horse before. He's simply a new kind of devil on *four* hoofs."

That settled it. Leroyd and Lush-ton became joint owners of Djalma.

Ramadine went with the pony.

On the third evening after the sale, Ramadine was ushered into Lushton's presence by the bearer.

"Ramadine will speak, Huzoor," he began.

"What is it, Ramadine?"

"Sahib, Ramadine has seen this thing with his own eyes. Your slave saw Djalma and Kismet struggle together

Djalma

for full two kos. Of a certainty did Djalma carry full eight seer more than the other. And how far did he gallop in front? Only Ramadine and Ramadine's brother know that. Djalma went first, and the other came after, as runs a syce behind. Such strength is his, Huzoor! I never saw such strength!"

"You were a fool, Ramadine—a perfect puggle, to let Grant Sahib try his pony with Djalma."

"Speak softly, O Sahib. You who are my father and my mother, have patience with your slave. The Sahib, the Dep'ty Sahib, was resting from the ride my Djalma gave him; and only Ramadine's brother and himself and the gidro saw the two ponies as they flew faster than the wind. Ramadine's brother is syce to Kismet; and he it was who rode him, and your slave rode Djalma."

After the syce had gone, Lushton sat

Djalma

long pondering over what he had heard. It was wrong on the part of Ramadine to take the ponies out of the stable and try them, but that had been before he had owned Djalma, so it was not quite his business to say anything about it. Besides, he felt sure that Grant had bribed Hashim to pull Kismet the year before; so it but served him right now. But what a good one Djalma must be if he could carry sixteen pounds more than Kismet and beat him; for Kismet was very fit.

Then he fell asleep, and dreamed that he was galloping along on Djalma's back; but he was terribly handicapped by the lakh of rupees that he was carrying as saddle-weights. Then one of the bags of rupees burst, and the jingling of the coins, as they fell, woke him up with a start. The rupees had fallen — slipped from his pocket on to

Djalma

the hard floor; but they were several thousand short of a lakh. A shattered glass lay on the floor, where he had knocked it off the arm of his chair while doing that sleep gallop.

The next day Lushton told Learoyd about the trial.

"My own opinion is," said Learoyd, "that Djalma could do it. I gave him a breather for three quarters of a mile yesterday, and he galloped like a Waler under me. But it's no end of a mystery to me why in thunder Miss Stevens parted with him. This morning she came cantering into the compound on that knock-kneed Cabuli she has got, to ask if I had sent to Calcutta for the wigs for the performance. That is what she said she was after; but she hung around till she got a chance to rub Djalma's nose, and the pony was just as bad about her.

Djalma

“But what we must do, old man, is, give him a pukka trial with the King, or something else,—that is, as soon as he is fit. But we can’t do it on the maidan; it ’s too full of holes, and we must have the distance right. I have been thinking it over, and as it ’s not safe to trust this Hashim jat, it will be better to put a couple of the jockeys up when they come up for the Sky races next month. The boys will think we are trying something for the races here. I can ride him at work myself, in the meantime; for Ramadine has spread the report that I have to take Djalma out into the country, and let him run away with me for ten or twenty miles before I can do anything with him. Grant has entered Kismet for the Cup again; but I think we ’ll pip him with Djalma this time.”

Djalma

So it was settled that he was to be tried at the time of the Sky races; and Learoyd went on training him.

"You 're working for your mistress still, old man," he said to the gray, as he loosened the girth after a hard gallop; "for if you win the Cup, I'm thinking your mistress and your half owner will be one."

But with the mistress (Ruth) life was not all attar. Grant was a great favorite with her father. He was a perfect glutton for work. His mean, savage nature took an unholy delight in wading knee-deep in the troubles of the natives. The more they thronged his court, the happier he grew. His was a nature which feasted on the deceit, and the misery, and the extortion which was daily laid bare. He loved to gloat with a ghoulish delight over the suffer-

Djalma

ings of the people; so he worked and delved with a feverish interest —“zeal,” his superior officer called it.

Ruth did not know all this; but she knew that his presence caused her to shudder.

She saw very little of Lushton, for he took a Quixotic pleasure in keeping himself in the background—giving other fellows a chance, he called it.

CHAPTER III

It was when the time for the Sky Meet had come around that Learoyd said to Lushton:

"We must have our trial to-night, old man. I have arranged everything. I have got Dick Rich and Donald Green to ride the trial. They are stopping at the dak bungalow, and will be at the course at three o'clock in the morning. It will be bright moonlight then, as clear as day. I have hung around the course for a week, early and late, and I never could find three minutes of daylight that there was n't some one mooning about there.

Djalma

I believe that Grant has Hashim and one or two others subsidized to watch that we don't pull off a trial. I 'm cock sure that he thinks there is something in the wind."

"You can slip away from the ball to-night — for this is the night of the 'Station Ball,' you know — say about two o'clock, and Ramadine will meet you with the ponies. I 'll take the hurdles down; they are only wings put up to keep the horses in work from cutting up the course. You start them, and I will see them at the finish.

"Dick is about seven pounds heavier than Donald, and I will put seven pounds of lead in Djalma's saddle-cloth; so he will be giving the King about a stone. If he can live with him then he will do for the Cup."

It was all so beautifully arranged that it was a pity Fate should take his

Djalma

die from his pocket, give it a twirl on the cement floor of the veranda, look at the little black spots on the white cube for a moment, and then pocket it again with a leer on his set face. And he hummed:

Threes are yours
And fours are mine ;
Low *you* win,
And *Fate* gains high.
Thus I twirl and spin the die.

When the floor and the music are good, and there are enough uniforms sprinkled among the black evening coats to set off the white dresses of the ladies, it is a pretty strong touch of fairyland; that is, if a man's digestion is all right, and he is not jealous. But that was just what was the matter with Grant—the heart, not the liver part of it.

Djalma

"Miss Ruth is flirting outrageously," he said to himself; and the men seemed leagued together to keep him from getting a dance with her. Even then, as he stood with a lurid gleam in his pig-gish eyes, she was talking to Lushton; and he could see with half an eye that her face was lighted up with an expression that never came into it when he was talking to her. He tried to edge a little closer without being observed, for he would have given worlds to have heard what they were saying. He was sure it was something spoony; but it was n't, really; it was only racing.

"But you will run Djalma in 'The Cup,' won't you, Captain Lushton?" Ruth was saying.

"Oh, yes," answered Lushton, forgetting for a moment that he was talking to Ruth, and going at it as though he were taking a water jump. "I mean

Djalma

to have one more try for her — for, for the Cup, I mean.”

“Devilish near made a mess of that,” he said to himself, feeling the roots of his hair stewing in a hot rush of blood.

She seemed not to have noticed his slip, so he braced himself up to ask, “But why did you sell Djalma, Miss Stevens?”

“Because I am not a racing man,” she laughed; “but I really did n’t sell him; it was father who sold him.”

“But why did you allow him to sell him?”

“Because —”

“Because what?” he queried.

“Do you know,” she said, changing the subject suddenly, and looking over toward the door where Grant stood watching them with a vicious side-look, “why a Mussulman will not eat crabs? Our old boberchie was telling me to-day.

Djalma

It is because they have a peculiar mark on the back, just as though a cloven hoof had left its imprint there. It may have been made by a pig or by Sheitan [the devil]; but it was pretty much all the same, he said, for the pigs were all possessed anyway. It was the sight of a face which I saw just now that made me think of this; it made me shudder. Some men carry this mark on their face."

Then he lost her. One of the uniforms had gotten her for a waltz.

"There is something up," muttered Grant, as he watched Lushton and Learoyd talking together. "When Lushton is n't with Miss Stevens to-night he's hatching deviltry with that fool friend of his." And he made up his mind to watch them, and see what was in the wind.

But though he watched close enough,

Djalma

he presently became aware of the fact that Lushton had disappeared.

"Damn him!" he muttered, "he has given me the slip; but whatever 's on, the other one is in it too, and one is easier game to track."

Presently Learoyd strolled out to the buffet, had a peg, lighted a cheroot, and wandered aimlessly off into the grounds surrounding the hall; but the pig-like eyes were following him now, and whether he walked slow or whether he walked fast they would never lose sight of him until that night's work was done, whatever it was.

Once clear of the lights, Learoyd quickened his pace, and made straight for the course.

"Oh, ho!" sneered Grant to himself, "that 's your little game, eh? A moon-light trial. I like that better than dancing. I 'll assist, on the quiet."

Djalma

Like a hyena he slouched along behind the tall figure swinging along through the mango tope to the course.

Crouching behind the mud embankment thrown up at the lower turn of the course, Grant saw Lushton take the hurdles up one by one and place them to one side. When he had finished and gone up to the grand stand, the figure stole out from the shadow of the bank, and, taking one of the hurdles, put it back in its place again.

"Curse them!" he muttered; "that will bring them down. I see what it is now; they are going to ride a trial. If Lushton breaks his neck, 't will be because Learoyd has forgotten to take it down, that 's all." And he gave a ghoulisn chuckle.

Then he stooped under the rope which was strung through the posts in a circle around the course in lieu of a

Djalma

rail, and laid down close to the hurdle to watch the result of his deviltry.

Thus I twirl and spin the die.

Grant heard it; but he thought it was the night winds sighing through the rope almost over his head.

When Learoyd reached the stand Lushton was there with Ramadine and the ponies; then the boys turned up and were mounted, with instructions to go across to the three-quarters.

"Break away as soon as you can, and come home as fast as the gee-gees will carry you; but don't hit him, Dick, for he will do all he can without that. Just sit tight, and steady his head; for I fancy he's a bit kacha on a pukka race-course."

Lushton sent the ponies around and cut across to the three-quarter post himself.

Djalma

"May I be fired in both shins if here is n't one of those Johnnies from the hop, so beastly full of simpkin that he 's mooning about here on the course to cool his official head," he exclaimed, as the figure of a man loomed up in the light mist which was creeping over the maidan.

But it was only Craig, Craig the one-time trainer and jockey. Of late years he had been riding the fiery steeds which are stabled in bottles. Riding for Exshaw, he called it.

In his brief spells of sorrowful soberness he slept in the grand stand and touted. The sometimes donation of a rupee, which Lushton was in the habit of indulging in, had garnered a harvest of gratitude; and as soon as Craig saw that it was his benefactor he hastened to do him a good turn.

"Grant's ponies are here for a trial,

Djalma

sir," he began; "I saw them going around the course just now."

Lushton knew that they were n't Grant's; but reflecting that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, he wisely refrained from enlarging on the subject. Instead, he took Craig along with him so that he should not see the finish.

"Let 's go over and see them start," he said laconically.

When he got over to the post he could see the ponies back a little, see-sawing back and forth, waiting for the word.

"Go down and see whether they have taken up the hurdles," he said to Craig, by way of getting him out of the way at the start.

"Sober, he 's all right," he reflected; "but drunk, he might blab."

"Come on!" he called to the boys;

Djalma

and they broke away at a furious clip; the delay had put the game little ponies on their mettle, and as they rushed by him Djalma was fighting for his head.

"God! I never saw such a mover in my life!" he ejaculated, as he watched the gray disappear into the uncertain moonlight and mist.

Just then Craig came rushing back, his alcoholic breath almost emitting a sulphurous flame.

"Grant will break his cursed neck *sure*, Captain! and the station will be well rid of him. But God help his mate, whoever he is, for there is a hurdle up on the bottom, and they will never see it till it breaks their ponies' legs."

"My God! why did you not take it down, man?"

"Not me! I 'm even with Grant now. I asked him to give me some work the other day and he threatened

Djalma

to put me in the thanna as a vag. Besides, he put Hashim up to pull your pony last year, Captain. I know that, though I can't pro —"

The words choked in his throat as a crashing noise came borne over the maidan on the dead night air; but above the crash came an agonized cry as though a spear had been driven home in a fighting boar.

"Damn you! you've murdered some one!" Lushton yelled at Craig, as he rushed past him in the direction of the cry. As he hurried along, the figure of a horse loomed up in the ghostly moonlit mist; somebody was in the saddle, and a man was running alongside, with his hand on the stirrup to keep up his pace. It was Learoyd running beside Donald on Silver King.

"I'm afraid Dick's killed, sir," said Donald; "there was a hurdle up and

Djalma

my mount went right through it, but Dick's pony shied and went over the rope."

Now they could see something on the ground ahead of them.

Lushton pressed forward to where he could make out the figure lying so still. "Great God! what fiend's work is this?" he exclaimed; "there are two men lying dead within an arm's length of each other!"

Then he knelt down beside the smaller figure and put his hand over the heart. How cold and ghastly the poor pinched face looked, upturned to the moonlight, with just a tiny stream of blood running from the corners of the mouth!

"It's Dick, poor old man! I'm afraid he's done for — Here, Craig! have n't you got a bottle of whisky anywhere?"

Djalma

"Wait!" said Craig, and disappeared on the run.

"I can't make out who the other is," said Learoyd. "He 's stone dead, and his face is smashed beyond the telling of it. The horse has galloped square on top of him with his iron hoofs; but the queerest part of it is that he is *dressed*. He must have been at the hop."

When Craig brought the whisky they found that Dick was not dead; a little poured down his throat started the silent machinery again. They soon had him sitting up in a dazed, helpless sort of way, muttering incoherently about going to ride a trial. But the other — the man with the face battered almost beyond all resemblance to humanity — had given no sign.

The whisky poured between the crushed lips did not revive him.

"I think I can feel a faint move-

Djalma

ment," said Learoyd, after holding his hand for a long time over the heart. "By Jove! it's a deuced queer thing his being here. I suppose we had better try to get a dhooly sent down from the hospital for him."

"Better take him to my bungalow; it's not far away. Dick has pulled himself together enough to walk, I fancy, and we can carry this poor chap, whoever he is."

So they started with that limp figure between them.

"I wonder where Djalma is?" said Learoyd. "He came a tremendous cropper; the posts are all torn up for many yards."

"Ramadine is off after him," answered Lushton. "He does n't care who's killed so long as Djalma is all right."

When Craig had gone for the surgeon, and the two boys had gone to their hotel, Learoyd said to Lushton:

Djalma

“Look here, old man! we shall find that this wrecked piece of humanity is Grant. I took down all those hurdles, as sure as shooting, and this creature put that one up again. All the same I shall mount the King, and ride over for the doctor myself; he ’s a crusty old cuss, and may not turn out for Craig. Mind, when he comes, we had no trial! This man, whoever he is, got thrown from his horse riding home from the dance.”

After Learoyd had left, Lushton had time to reflect over the extraordinary fate which had delivered over to him his enemy to probably nurse back to life.

Thus I twirl and spin the die.

Yes, it was a queer fate.

It was a terrible retribution.

This man had put up the hurdle to probably murder them, and he had been caught in his own trap.

CHAPTER IV

"**H**E 'll pull through," said the doctor ;
"but he 'll carry a terrible scar. The
horse has planted his hoof square on his
face."

Of course there were queer tales about
the accident. That was one of Frya-
bad's industries — the manufacturing of
queer tales.

That he had been trying Kismet, and
that the pony had savaged him, was the
tale that found the best market.

Those who went to Lushton's bun-
galow came away as they had gone.
He did n't know anything about it.
The man had been brought to his bun-

Djalma

galow as it was the nearest to the course. He explained that it was against the doctor's orders for any one to see the patient.

For days and weeks Grant lay hovering between life and death. Delirious all the time, and racing always — nearly always; and when not appealing to Hashim to “pull the beast,” he was talking of Ruth. And there were threats and piteous pleading to Hashim not to give the secret away.

But Lushton guarded the delirious man's secret as jealously as though he were his greatest friend.

“Not when he 's down,” he used to say to Learoyd. “It was his kismet that he should be given into my hands — not that I wanted the beast, goodness knows!”

One day Fate delivered Hashim into Lushton's hand also. He had come to

Djalma

get some orders from his master, if he were well enough to give them, anent the ponies.

It so happened that the fever was at its best, and Grant was as mad as a ghazi.

But this suited Lushton; he took Hashim into the sick man's room.

Then Hashim listened while his master and partner in iniquity spoke of the drug they were to give Kismet. He heard, with livid face, the torrent of threats the crazed man poured out. He was fascinated by fear; his gaze was riveted upon those staring, lurid eyes which burned into his brain with a cobra-like intensity.

A hard, metallic voice roused him. It was Lushton speaking; in his hand he held a heavy riding-whip.

"Have you heard, Soor? Come here, son of the devil!" And a hand,

Djalma

heavy as the paw of a tiger, dragged him by the shoulder out into the compound.

Yes, he yelled a good deal; but that did him no good.

“That is one party paid off,” muttered Lushton, throwing the whip down in disgust, as he came into the bungalow again. “The other — God knows! I suppose I must go on nursing him until I can turn him out. I suppose I’m no end of a fool; but I’m damned if I can send him up to the hospital while he’s that way.”

The Collector was huffy because Lushton would not let him see Grant.

“Deuced queer when a man can’t see his own people,” he said. “When Lushton’s not there his big orderly bars the door and simply says, ‘Sahib’s hookem.’ Hang the Sahib’s orders! Grant’s not in the force — he’s *my* man.”

Djalma

Lushton put a servant on guard who spoke no English, and the orders for the others were to keep out of the room.

They *would* keep out, too!

Servants did n't disobey Lushton often — when they did it was their bad fortune.

"He can be moved to his own bungalow now," said the surgeon; "move him in the cool of the morning."

That was after he had lain four weeks — four weeks nursed by his enemy.

Thus I twirl and spin the die.

Lushton kept out of the way the next morning. He had nursed the man and guarded his black secret, because he had been cast at his feet like a trampled rat; but he would not take his hand at the parting and wish him God-speed. He had rather take a cobra in his hand.

Djalma

When Ruth saw Grant she shuddered. The hoof-mark that she had fancied she could see on his face before had become a reality.

Late in January Lushton took Djalma up to Lucknow for the big event. They had asked him "the question" along with Silver King, and he had answered it in a way which made their hearts sing. That was when Grant was on his back and Hashim too badly frightened by his interview with Lushton to be much in the way.

It would not take much money to win all he should need, for it would be long odds against his entry, he knew.

It would be straight this time, too, for Dick Rich was to ride him.

In Lucknow the 17th Lancers were on Blitz, the previous year's winner, to a man. And when the lotteries were on, and the ivories clicked, and the hawk-

Djalma

featured auctioneer bawled himself hoarse in selling the ponies' chances for the Cup night after night, it was all Blitz, Bob, or Shere Ali; hardly a mention of Djalma as he was knocked down quickly to some one who was always buying him for a song.

For two nights the lotteries were held on the races—particularly on the Civil Service Cup. Lushton sat in the same seat at the long table both evenings; both evenings a stranger to him sat on his left, and continually toyed with a single die. Sometimes he hummed a few lines of something; Lushton could only hear the last line:

Thus I twirl and spin the die.

Once he leaned over toward Lushton and said, "*Threes* are yours, *fours* are mine."

As the die rolled over it showed an ace.

Djalma

"Djalma for sale and two thousand rupees in the pool," bawled the secretary. Lushton bought him for twenty rupees.

"You won the throw and bought that pony," said the stranger. "Your luck 's in — you 'll win the prize," and he smiled at Lushton — a devilish kind smile it was, too, Lushton thought.

When a man drew Djalma in the lottery he cursed his luck; when Lushton bought him each time for twenty rupees he blessed his patron saint; and all the time the other, with the single die, sat with a sinister leer on his pale face.

The day before the race Learoyd came up. Together the two friends went down to see Djalma bedded for the night.

"Huzoor!" began Ramadine, as he ran the muscle side of his forearm up

Djalma

and down Djalma's ribs in the final rub-down for the night — "Huzoor, has the Sahib ever seen such legs on a pony? Like the legs of a leaping cheetah are the legs of Ramadine's brother, Djalma. Ramadine's heart pains with joy, for Djalma will run strong — so swift and strong that the other horses' livers will turn to water. The Sahib will not forget Ramadine's hundred rupees which he has placed in the Sahib's hands to stake on Djalma. Of a surety will Ramadine go home to his mulk, and with the gain from Djalma's running take the piece of land which was his father's. See, Sahib, there, close to Ramadine's hand, are the hens which yield the fresh eggs which Djalma eats raw every morning. Of a surety is his wind good for ten kos." And as Ramadine pinched the mighty little horse's ribs in play, Djalma lashed out his great

Djalma

sinewy legs until the two friends jumped back in consternation. Ramadine threw his arms around the pony's neck lovingly, and chuckled softly to himself. He was only showing the Sahibs that those powerful limbs were as supple as silk.

"No danger of a drug this time, I fancy," said Learoyd, as they walked back to their quarters.

"No," answered Lushton; "Ramadine sleeps in the stall, and nobody will get at him unless they kill the old chap first. Somebody's backing Kismet," he added; "Grant, I suppose; but we're a stone better than him, anyway."

"Miss Stevens is up for the meet," said Learoyd; "her father put her in my charge coming up. She told me point blank that she was coming up to see Djalma win the Cup."

CHAPTER V

ON the second day of the meet twenty-four glorious little horses paraded before the Grand Stand ere they went out to do battle for the greatest race of the year, the Civil Service Cup — the blue ribbon of the pony kingdom. From almost all quarters of the globe they hailed — English, Australian, Arabian, and Indian born, or “Country Breds,” as they were called. The whole world had sent its fastest ponies there to battle for the prize.

A mighty cheer went up as Blitz passed with the stately grace of a fawn; his satin skin of pink shone through

Djalma

the silver-white of his silky coat, giving it a faint rose tint, and as he walked his long tail swept the ground. He was a dream of equine beauty; generations of the purest desert blood had contributed beauty and courage and speed in this lion-hearted Arab.

As the roar of applause reached his delicate, pointed ears, he turned his great honest eyes toward the stand as though he would acknowledge the greeting. Twice before had he won the Cup, and the nine stone ten which he carried that day would not stop him, his friends said.

The others were pretty well known, too: Bob, the Australian, Lord William's horse — almost as game as his master; Ram Presad, "the gift of God"; and all the rest of the twenty ponies which passed down the course ahead of Djalma.

Djalma

"That 's the horse Lushton, of the Fryabad contingent, brought up, and is backing to win," said a voice in the stand.

"Yes, that 's what he did with Kis-met last year, and wound up in the mulligatawny," answered another.

The owner of the first voice turned his face around to see the odds marked on the book-makers' boards over in the inclosure behind the stand. It was a racy, hard face, with a drooping, blond mustache.

"I 'll take two to one that Lushton has to send in his papers after his pony fails to win the Cup," he drawled in a lazy, nasal tone, looking at the second speaker.

"He won't be the first to do that," said the other, with a disagreeable laugh. "You know how that is yourself, I fancy."

Djalma

Then a strident voice came riding over the babel of small chatter, yelling the odds: "Twenty-five to one outsiders!" the voice said. "Fifty to one!" was the next call.

"Yes, and that 's just what makes fellows with dough heads send in their papers—those damned alluring long odds," sneered the blond mustache; "that 's just what put Valentyne over there by the steps in hock two years ago,—long odds,—he and Fergus, who went on his paper. I 'm going down to back the favorite, now that they 've gone down to the post, and there's no eleventh-hour change —no dark horse unmasked."

And he went, burning up much money that was lawful of the realm.

He had to elbow his way in to get his money on; and he was working like a mole to get out of the shoving, surging crowd, when he saw something

Djalma

which made him pause. He saw Lushton and Learoyd together, note-book in hand, having what he had called an eleventh-hour plunge on Djalma.

A tall, cadaverous-looking bookie was saying to Lushton: "Captain, you must get back some of that stuff you left with me last year. Let me lay you the whole of my book about your pony. I have n't written his name yet — not once, sir, may I be jigged if I have. Twenty-five to one is the limit outsiders, or I 'd lay you a hundred, I would — honest. Twenty-five to a hundred I 'll lay you five times over."

Lushton nodded, and the bookie whispered to his clerk standing behind him.

"Now I 'll lay you again, the same." It was good business this, this getting of good money in on a "dead one," as he classed Djalma.

Djalma

"I 'll take the bet," said Learoyd; "twenty-five hundred to one, five times over."

"It 's booked, sir."

The two moved off to the next book-maker.

"Deuced queer!" muttered the blond mustache. "They seem cock-sure about this thing. They must have got a pretty good line on the pony somehow or another. Damned if I don't have a bit of that twenty-five to one myself."

"Come on now, old man," said Learoyd to Lushton; "we 've got these fellows pretty well salted if the thing comes off. We had better go down to the far end of the stand where we can get a good view of the ponies. There 's Miss Ruth sitting there in the front row," he exclaimed, as they passed her.

Yes, Ruth was there. She had been

Djalma

there when the ponies passed on their way to the post. Her heart had given a little cry of delight when Djalma had swung by in that easy, powerful canter she knew so well. How fit he was looking; like whip-cord were the muscles showing all over his body. Down the long quarters "the water-line" ran, showing that all the fat had been worked off. Well she knew that he would battle for the man she loved until his stout heart would break. She felt like rushing down to him and giving him a reassuring caress; but pshaw! he needed not that—neither that, nor whip, nor spur; nothing but the guidance which he would get from the small figure sitting like part of the whole machine on his back.

But now that they were down at the starting-post, her heart was thumping, and the queer choking which comes

Djalma

from over-excitement was in her throat. Away down at the farther end of the three-quarters, where the starters' flags, one white and one red, were fluttering in the breeze, the many-colored jackets of the jockeys were flitting in and out, in and out, like the bits of colored glass in a kaleidoscope. It was confusing.

Ruth took up her glass and looked long and earnestly for the red jacket with white sash which were Djalma's colors. Ah! there they were. "He is standing quietly by the post like the gentleman that he is," she whispered to herself. Surely his cool courage would stand him in good stead in that big field.

"They're off!" a dozen voices yelled at once, as the intricate mass of blue and red and yellow was seen to bunch up and move toward them, with just one or two colors stringing out behind like the tail of a comet.

Djalma

"A false start!" some one said; and it was seen that one or two ponies were standing quite motionless at the start. The red flag, the one which was nearest the stand, had not gone down.

The ponies went back again. Once, twice, a dozen times, this was repeated.

"It 's that devil Hashim," said Learoyd, as he lowered his glasses for a minute. "He 's breaking away in front every time; he 's using his pony up, though, and I can't make out what he 's up to. Djalma 's as steady as the old Colonel's charger on parade."

Lushton was sitting down, with his eyes fixed on the slender girlish figure leaning over the rail.

"They 're off! A beautiful start!" called down Learoyd to him. "Djalma 's well away, and going great guns. Dick is sitting as still as a wooden god. The pace is a cracker, too, for Hashim

Djalma

is making the running as though it were a quarter-mile dash. Some of them are out of it already — can't live the pace. *More* of them will crack up, *too*, at that rate of going —

“Great God!” he exclaimed, with a passionate outbreak that made Lushton jump. “That fiend Hashim has pulled right across Djalma and fouled — take that, damn you!” he hissed through his clenched teeth. “Dick has given him the whip right across the face, and there 's the devil of a jumble on. All right, old man!” he added, the next instant. “Dick and Djalma have gotten through their horses and are coming away. They 're leading; and I think Hashim and Kismet are down. Good boy, Dick! The best diamond I can buy is none too good for you if you win this. I'll give Hashim something, *too*!” he muttered.

Djalma

Ruth had seen the scarlet and white in the lead just after the start; then something white had shot across, and blotted out the scarlet, a hopeless mixing of the colors, and then the jacket she was watching for had shot out in front and she was happy. Good old Djalma was coming with that powerful stride of his, and behind him whips and arms were sawing the air, and heads were bobbing up and down past stooped shoulders, as the riders urged on their mounts behind that scarlet figure sitting so still in front of them.

On they came, the scarlet still in front. They were near now, and the stand could make out the leaders.

"The favorite 's beaten! Djalma wins! 'Rah for the outsider!" went up from every side.

They were almost up to the stand now, and Ruth could see a little bay

Djalma

pony creeping up from among the others. It was Nina, and her jockey was riding her to overtake that scarlet jacket in front; riding her, and nursing her with hands and feet, but no touch of the whip—that was for the final rush home, when he had stolen up alongside the leader. Dick seemed unaware of anything near him; he sat like a graven image, so still was he—so sure of victory.

“He ’s winning hands down,” said Learoyd.

But the little bay mare: her nose was already on the leader’s flank. Inch by inch she was gaining; and look! there was Blitz coming like a sand-storm on his own native desert; his nose was on the mare’s quarters, now he was at her girth, and she always creeping up on the other, on Djalma. Surely Dick was taking too great a

Djalma

chance. How white and set his face was! Why did he not urge his mount! Had he sold the race? All the noise had died out now; all the babel of voices was still; men held their breath and waited — almost held their hearts still as they watched the struggle before them. All eyes were riveted on the pale, set face of the boy on Djalma. The misery and despair written there told those who understood these things that there was something wrong, and that he was riding for his life.

In the stand the white heat of *silent* frenzy had settled over the mob; no one spoke, no one moved.

Over the paddock rail a swarthy face was thrust, and a pair of baleful, gleaming eyes, full of menace, were watching Djalma's rider. "Ah, little brother," Ramadine was saying to himself, for it was he, "if you let those sons of pigs

Djalma

beat my Djalma, you will ride no more. You will ride fast and alone over the dark river to-night."

Ruth had pulled down her veil. Tears on a race-course were not good form, but tears they were — hot, scalding tears; for had she not prayed that Djalma might win? Yes, even *prayed* that he might; there was no harm in that. Her nails were driven tight into the palms of her hands. It was all over now. As they flashed by her, a dozen feet from the finish, she had seen that Blitz was winning. Then the pent-up excitement burst forth; there was a mighty cheer for Blitz, and the hurrying of hundreds of feet down the stone steps to the inclosure. People were saying that the favorite had won; even *he* was saying it — she could hear his voice just behind her. "I suppose the poor boy was tired out," he was saying.

Djalma

"I 'm in 'queer street' now, right enough; but I don't blame the boy for it—he 's too honest for that. Why in thunder are they so long in putting the numbers up, though?"

"Hello! By jingo! Look at your card, Learoyd! That is *our* number they 've put up. Seventeen they 've hoisted, and seventeen we are on the card. There go the other numbers—four, nine! Seventeen, four, nine; that reads, Djalma, Blitz, Nina."

"Thank God!" the other man was saying as they passed out of ear-shot.

There was no doubt about it now. It had taken the judges a minute to decide over the second and third places, for the finish had been a desperate one. There was no doubt about Djalma being first, for he had kept that velvety nozzle in front with a bull-dog tenacity. The mistake of the Grand Stand had

Djalma

been one of angles. As they had passed the stand the outside horses had appeared to shoot ahead.

It was a dead-lame horse that Lush-ton led up to the weighing-scales. That was why Dick had sat so still — that was why Djalma had only just managed to keep his nose in front.

“I got mixed up in the scrimmage,” said Dick, “and Kismet struck Djalma on the shoulder, knocking him out of his stride. But Djalma was too strong, and galloped over him. When we got settled down again I could feel my mount hitching a little, and I knew that he had wrenched one of his legs. When they commenced to creep up on me I tried to shake him up a little, but I only threw him out. Then I sat tight, and I knew that my face got white, for I was in hell for half a mile. It seemed a thousand years, sir.

Djalma

“But he’s the gamest bit of horse-flesh that ever locked through a bridle. My word! when Vinall got at his throat-latch with Blitz, I felt him struggle a little under me, and then we drew away a little; only a little—just a short head; and there we stayed, and I knew that he would drop dead or keep that nose in front.”

“We’re all well out of it, Dick; and you’ll be glad you rode him when it comes to settling.”

“They’ll have me up before the stewards for cutting Hashim across the face, I’m afraid, sir.”

“I’ll take care of that, Dick; Learyd saw him foul you, and will clear you with the stewards.”

The flanks were heaving, and little tremors were running all over the wet, satin skin of Djalma, as he stood balancing himself on three legs in front of

Djalma

the weighing-room, with just the toe of his off-fore touching the ground.

A girlish figure slipped quietly up to him, and taking his wet, drooping head in her tiny gloved hands, kissed him on his velvety nose, all unmindful of the grime and the foam crystallized there by the race-course dust.

Djalma answered with a whinny of delight.

"Are you crowning him with better than laurel, Miss Stevens — crowning him with love?" she heard a strong voice say.

She did not look up. She knew who it was carrying the saddle- and weight-cloths from the scale.

"I am petting him for his grand race, and pitying him for his poor, injured limb," she replied, still holding the great wet head in her arms. "I have a great favor to ask, now that

Djalma

you are in the generous mood of victory. Will you sell Djalma back to me to take care of, for he is broken down, and too lame to race again?"

"I will speak to Learoyd about it; and I am sure he will be glad to let you have him. You know we never should have had him if it had not been for you."

CHAPTER VI

"I CAN see only one way to fix it up," said Learoyd, when Lushton spoke to him about it.

"She can't look after a lame pony; and you would not care to leave him to the tender mercies of a syce. Take my word for it, old man, there is only one way out of the difficulty." And he closed one eye and looked solemnly at his friend.

Before Lushton had time to knock his friend down, a man passed humming a bar of a doggerel ditty.

He turned and nodded pleasantly to Lushton. It was the man who had sat next him that night at the lottery.

"Your friend is right," he said, show-

Djalma

ing his even white teeth in a smile. As he passed on the last line of his ditty came floating lazily back to the two standing there :

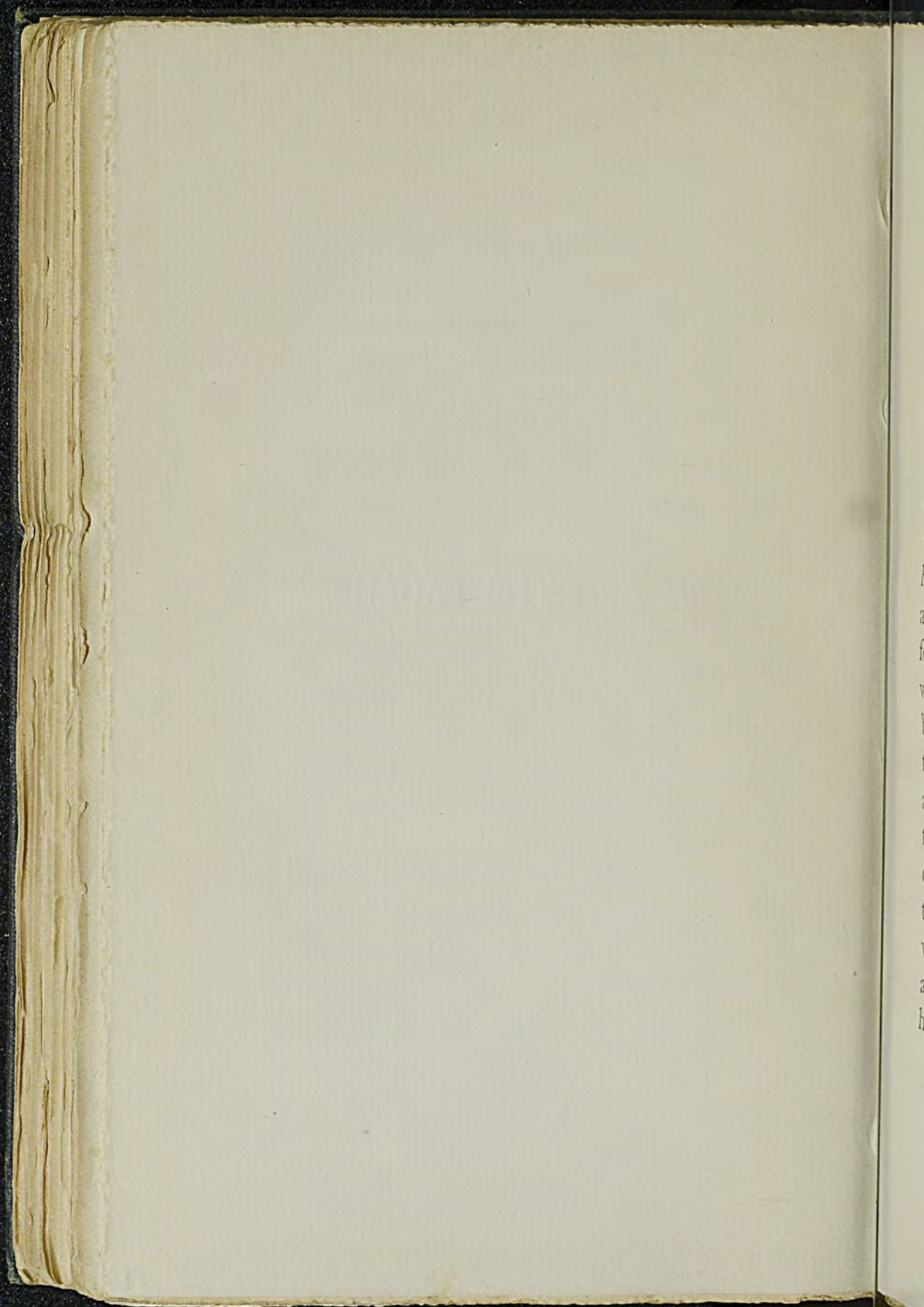
Thus I twirl and spin the die.

What more is there to say? Nor love, nor money, would buy Djalma now. There is no lack of either of these cheerful commodities in the white bungalow gleaming through the trees of the mango tope, just back of which the gallant pony has his quarters.

They both, Fred and Ruth,—the same Fred being the Lushton of this tale,—love the old warrior as truly as when he won the whole world for them—won it on three legs, Fred says.

His leg has got all right again; but Ramadine says that he will not go to his own mulk until Djalma dies, for fear the leg would need his care again.

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FATHER LACOMBE was as broad on the chest as a buffalo bull is deep. That was because of the great heart that had thumped and thumped at the ribs, and driven them far out to make room for the working. Of the same build was the great dome-shaped head, and because of that was all narrowness not therein. Broad and free was the thought, and strong was the heart; therefore was the love of his people, the copper-colored Crees, great and enduring. Even the whites, they who preached from without the pale, were wont to forget all else but that Father Lacombe was human — intensely human.

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So when John Bernard, the Rev. John Bernard, came to Father Lacombe with his heart's sorrow tugging at the tendrils of his brain until it was numb, it was only natural.

"Six months have gone by, Father Lacombe," he said, "and they have done nothing. No one has seen or heard of Ruth Asquith since the Blackfoot swept our post from the face of the plain. It is six months to-day since Assiniboia was burned and Ruth carried off, and we are no nearer her rescue now than we were."

"She is alive," said the priest; "the Blackfoot do not war on women; they capture them, but do not kill them. Besides, also, I have heard a little. The birds which fly northward have sung to me that she is there."

"Now, Father Lacombe," said John, "you alone of all the whites can go far

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out among the people of this land; Cree or Blackfoot you pass unharmed; and to you I have come to ask, in the name of humanity, if you will lift this load from our hearts, will find for us this sister who labored as one of us for the good of these poor peoples."

Thus the one paid tribute to the other. Creed stepped to one side, and man spoke to man in his trouble.

Deeply the priest pondered for a little, and then he spoke again. "My time is not my own; I work for my Master, and I can but go where many call."

The young minister interrupted him with a pleading gesture. "Many hearts are sad because of Ruth's fate. It is not I alone, but all who are Christians ask this of you."

Father Lacombe held up his hand as though he would stay the impatience

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of the younger man, and continued, his dreamy blue eyes looking far out across the shoreless sea of buffalo meadow toward the south.

"Where many call me I go; and these poor people, the Blackfoot, have been calling me in every wind that blows up from across their lodges. Some time I must go: I will go now," he added simply, still looking across the stretch of grass-land.

When Father Lacombe faced about, the dreamy look was gone; the blue eyes were grayer—gray with the light of resolve. Two days later he was on his way to Mountain House, near the foothills of the Rockies, with "Stony Jack" his sole companion. Jack, being a Stony Indian, might also go among the Blackfoot, as the two tribes were allied. Jack believed in Father Lacombe in the main, and the Christian

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religion as a side issue. His code was very simple — Father Lacombe.

At Mountain House, as the priest anticipated, they found a party of Blackfoot warriors trading buffalo pelts at the Hudson Bay Company's post. A few presents obtained for him permission to return with them to the Blackfoot camping-grounds.

But before they started there were many bacchanalian days. A place where for a single buffalo skin one could obtain bottled happiness enough to blot out the memory of months of cold and hunger was not to be lightly left. The skins were so easily got, too: a tightly drawn cord, a twang, and with a feathered arrow piercing from side to side, the carrier of the skin lying there in the dust—that was all. Only sometimes, when the buffalo were scarce and ammunition plenty, the guns spoke,

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and the killing was speedier and more murderous. They had many skins, and that was the rate — a soda-water bottle full of the liquid fire for one skin. It took days to trade on that basis; also when they started out was the commissariat light, because of the liquid payments.

An Indian will share his food with a hungry stranger always; with equal avidity will he share the stranger's food when *he* is hungry. So, at the end of two days, Father Lacombe's provisions were being carried jauntily along in twenty Blackfoot stomachs. After that came the hunger, for the buffalo they had confidently expected to find had wandered afield. For three days they lived on the remembrance of that ecclesiastical meal, tracking their way to the south and east over the snow which was steadily falling.

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“It is because of the little pale-face medicine-man,” said Man-who-dreams; “because of his coming with the forked tongue have the buffalo been driven away by Manitou, who is angry.”

Man-who-dreams was a great medicine-man among the Blackfoot; so the braves listened and grunted approval. He had told them that the buffalo would be plentiful where they were then, and now no buffalo were to be seen. Surely Manitou was angry with them — angry because they had taken among them the prophet of the pale-faces’ God.

On the fourth day one of two things was destined to happen, though the priest did not quite know it: either the buffalo would be encountered, or Father Lacombe’s mission would cease on that date. Half of the fourth day the outfit dragged slowly its snail-like course over

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the white bosom of the sky-kissed plain. Eagerly the hunger-strained eyesscanned the ever-rising horizon for the cluster of little brown specks, for the herd of buffalo their medicine-man had promised them.

"Manitou is surely angry," Man-who-dreams said, as they "spelled" with nothing to eat, "because of the forked-tongued pale-face we have taken to tell us of a false God. If we destroy him the buffalo will come."

Then Father Lacombe knew, for this was said openly, so that he might hear.

Perhaps it was the prayer, perhaps it was only chance; but away on the distant snow line there appeared a little jagged edge—an edge that vibrated like dried grass stirred by the wind. "My Master has not forgotten me," murmured the priest, and he pointed

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toward the spot that was now a little darker.

Then the mad racing, and the spitting of bullets into the black maw of the muzzle-loading guns, as the Indians loaded while they galloped. That was their primitive breech-loader; they carried the "trade balls" in their mouths, and rammed them home on top of the powder without wad or paper. And the blazing of powder so close that it singed the brown, curled hair, and the twanging of bow-strings, and the rounded brown hummocks that meant a buffalo left for the squaws to skin; and after that the feasting, and the softening of hearts, and respite for the priest.

And the Master remembered Father Lacombe still a little again; or was it only chance that Three Bulls cut an artery in his leg with his hunting-knife? Chance or the other, the life was going

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fast out with the red blood spurting and crimsoning the white snow; going out so fast that Three Bulls' friends were already clamoring for him to divide his worldly goods among them before it was too late. Surely his lodge in the Happy Hunting-Ground was standing wide open to receive him!

Man-who-dreams could arrange matters with Manitou, but he could not stem that crimson tide. Father Lacombe's surgical knowledge was great — almost as great as his spiritual. "Through their bodies I reach their souls," he had often said of his people; and now he brought Three Bulls back from the foothills of the Happy Hunting-Ground, and made him whole again — closed the little leak in the dike. And because of this chance were the blue eyes more hopeful, and many thorns withdrawn from his crown.

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“Ugh! the pale-face medicine-man is good,” grunted Three Bulls, stoically.

When they came to the banks of the Bow River, where the smoke-tanned buffalo-skin tepees of the Blackfoot nestled their pyramid shapes in hundreds on the russet earth,—for the snow had not traveled so far south yet,—Father Lacombe tarried for many days. He saw that Ruth Asquith was not there. While he labored hopelessly, bravely, for some spiritual awakening among the Indians, he was ever listening, watching for news of the white captive. At every turn he was thwarted by Man-who-dreams. He knew that what Stony Jack said was true: that Man-who-dreams only waited a chance to discredit him and have him driven forth or tied to the stake. But that made no real difference to Father Lacombe; all his life it had been that way; it

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made his work more difficult, that was all.

Then when the moon was full, the crash came. The deviltry that Man-who-dreams had been hatching sprang into life. The moon was still chiding the laggard winter's sun in the dull gray, when Man-who-dreams mounted his powerful blue-roan and started on his crusade. Round and round the camp swung the medicine-man in all his barbaric plumage, his deep, bull throat sending forth in bellowing tones the summons to all to come and hear the pale-face prophet speak of Manitou. The blue-roan swayed and rocked in and out among the tepees, his saucer-wide hoofs pounding the hollow-sounding turf until it echoed like the roll of drums.

Roused from their morning slumbers, tall, gaunt Indians streamed from their

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lodges, their blanket coats lapping at the prairie wind like the tongues of thirsty dogs beating the running water. Squaws and children and dogs all hurried to gather in front of the tepee wherein rested Father Lacombe. Next to the running of buffalo, the baiting of the pale-face priest would be glorious sport.

When they had gathered, the blue-roan was led away; Man-who-dreams strode forth from among the braves, and stood tall, majestic, an imposing, sinister figure. When Father Lacombe came from his lodge Man-who-dreams addressed him with savage courtesy. "Will the pale-face priest speak first of Manitou; or shall Man-who-dreams speak to his brothers, and after the pale-face has heard, will he answer?"

Wondering what trap the other had laid for him, Father Lacombe expressed

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his willingness to listen to the words of wisdom that might fall from the lips of the Blackfoot.

Drawing himself up to his full height, so that he towered above the tallest of the warriors there, the medicine-man began his address.

“Brothers, warriors, Blackfoot, ye who have driven the Crees from the face of the buffalo plains until they cower and hide among the trees beyond the waters of the Red Deer, have ye now come to sit at the feet of this pale-face prophet who speaks with the forked tongue—he who is the friend of your enemies, the Crees, who come in the night and steal your horses? He says Manitou has sent him here—the pale-face God, the Great Spirit.”

He turned fiercely toward Father Lacombe, his black eyes flashing with fanatic fury, and asked: “Have you

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seen the Great Spirit? Did your God speak to you and tell you to come here? Were you with the Great Spirit, or did the Great Spirit come to earth and speak to you?"

The priest remained silent, and Man-who-dreams turned again to his warriors.

"See, the forked tongue is still. He cannot answer these simple questions. We know that all the pale-faces are liars, that their tongue is forked, that their life is sin, the sin from which our women suffer; that they have brought no good to us; that their guns, which speak loud, are for destruction; and their fire-water destroys our bodies, and makes our hearts bad.

"Is it their Manitou that teaches them this — gives them strength to take many lives with their loud-speaking guns, and make the fire-water which

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turns us to beasts? Is it their Great Spirit who teaches them to sin with our women until our hearts call for revenge? And the pale-face prophet who is sent here by their Manitou will teach us these things. Will my brothers learn to worship this spirit, who is the spirit of the pale-face?

“Listen, Blackfoot, braves, and Man-who-dreams will tell you of the chief of the Kootenay, White Eagle. The pale-face medicine-man spoke to him with a forked tongue until he forgot the Great Spirit of his forefathers; forgot the Manitou of the Indians, and became even as a pale-face. When he died he journeyed over the trail which leads to the Happy Hunting-Ground. Soon he came to where the trail forked, and he stopped to consider which was the path to the pale-face Hunting-Ground. He saw his white brethren going to the right;

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he followed that trail. When he came to the gates—for it was closed in with a great stockade, like the Company's fort—the gate opened and he stepped in. The pale-faces were playing on the fiddles, and dancing and singing, all together, men and women, and drinking the fire-water, and doing even as you have seen them at the time of their great gathering when the winter is half gone. And beyond was their Great Spirit, their Manitou, sitting on a seat that was of gold, even the yellow iron that they dig up out of the river sands.

“The great chief stood there, and no pale-face said to him, ‘Come here, brother, and eat’; and his heart was sad, for he saw none of his own people—all the faces were white. Then he stepped in among them; and one white warrior asked him why he came there—one red man among all those that were

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white. He answered, 'I am your brother, and the prophet of your Manitou was sent to bring me here.'

"Then they laughed, and made to drive him forth with curses; even as you have been driven from the Company's fort when your skins were all gone. 'Oh, Manitou,' he cried, 'pity me! When I was among mine own people the medicine-man you sent made me give up the Great Spirit of my tribe, and I worshiped you.'

"Then the God of the pale-faces spoke in anger. 'Some one has spoken to you with a forked tongue. I sent no one to your people. They have their Happy Hunting-Ground, and their own Great Spirit; the pale-face people are my people.'

"Then they drove him forth in anger, and he stood again where the trail forks. He turned to the left, and journeyed

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along until the smell of the sweet-grass and the sage smote upon his nostrils, and he knew that he was coming to the **Happy Hunting-Ground** of his own people, the Indians.

“Like the noise of the wings of the great birds that make the thunder was the sound of the hoofs of the buffalo, that were even as the sands in the river, as the spirits in the **Happy Hunting-Ground** ran them in the chase. When he had come a little way into the plain which is the **Happy Hunting-Ground**, he saw the buffalo plentiful as the leaves of the trees, and the braves were riding horses faster than the gray-winged birds which fly over our heads when the summer fades. The bows were of wood that gleamed even as the gold of the pale-face, and the arrows were darts of fire. The braves pointed them at the buffalo, and they dropped

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as they ran. Like the passing of the hand through the air, it was so quickly done the knife stripped the hide from the meat. The meat needed not cooking, but melted in the mouth like honey.

"But no one spoke to the Kootenay chief, nor said, 'Come and eat, brother'; and he was hungry. Then he spoke to one he knew, who had been of his own tribe.

"The brave said, 'Who are you?'

" 'I am White Eagle, chief of the Kootenay,' he answered.

" 'Then why do you come here? White Eagle has listened to the pale-face medicine-man, and must go to their Happy Hunting-Ground.'

"And he who had been a chief, the chief of a tribe whose children are as plentiful as the birds of the air, stood alone on the outside of the Happy

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Hunting-Ground like a hungry wolf hovering near a camp that is filled with fresh meat. Then he fell down on his face, and cried to the Great Spirit: 'Father, I am of your people. The false prophet spoke to me with lies, and I did not know.'

"The heart of the Great Spirit, which is good, went out a little toward this desolate man, for he had been a great warrior, and he said: 'I will give you life again. You may go back to your people, the Kootenay; and if you live as your forefathers have lived, when I call you again your lodge will be prepared here.'

"Now, brothers," continued Man-who-dreams, "the chief of the Kootenay lives among his people beyond the snow-covered hills, and he has driven the pale-face prophet forth from the lodges of his tribe. Will you be like

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this, and listen to the voice of the pale-face who says that God has sent him here, and stand like hungry wolves on the outside of the Happy Hunting-Ground when the Great Spirit calls you away?"

When the impassioned voice of the speaker, sonorous as the cadence of a cataract, died away, there was a moment's silence, so great that the whispering of the wind as it played in and out among the warriors grouped about could be heard. Then a murmuring sound of approving grunts issued from their deep throats, as this Seneca of the Blackfoot stepped to one side to make room for Father Lacombe to answer.

The mighty heart of the good priest faltered for once in its many years of striving. Never before had he heard such eloquence—never before met an Indian whose power of graphic de-

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scription was so great. The Happy Hunting-Ground and the white man's heaven were living pictures. The language and the gestures of this high priest of paganism had brought the whole scene so close to the understanding of the simple-minded savages that anything Father Lacombe could say now would be unreal and visionary. Inwardly he prayed: "O God, my Master, help me now! This is the hour of my trial. Help me, my Master."

A still, small voice seemed to whisper: "Wait; have patience yet a little."

He stepped forward, and facing the throng of dark-browed listeners, and meeting the triumphant eye of Man-who-dreams with a calm, steady look, said: "I cannot answer now. Your words of eloquence require much pondering over. In two weeks I will prepare my answer."

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A derisive shout of triumph went up from the disciples of Man-who-dreams.

"The forked tongue is stilled now; the lying mouth is closed," was heard on every side; and in the hour of his defeat Father Lacombe went sadly back into the lodge the chief had set apart for his use. That night Stony Jack disappeared, and also the pony the priest had bought for him when they started out on their journey.

Day after day the priest suffered a humiliating persecution; the squaws spat at him, and the boys stoned him; the very dogs of the camp snarled at him and snapped at his heels as he passed — snarled and snapped unmolested, for even a dog was better than this false prophet, this false guide, who had sought to lead them away from the Happy Hunting-Ground. "Even the Stony, who has listened to his voice

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before, has left him — has slunk away like a coyote from a dry-picked skeleton," sneered Man-who-dreams. He was given the entrails of the buffalo for food — for why did he linger among them?

Day after day the great heart kept the face smooth and untroubled; day after day the deep, sweet voice called to his Master for strength to bear it all. On the night of the eleventh day, Father Lacombe's cayuse, which was picketed close to his lodge there on the outer rim of the encampment, neighed joyfully. The priest threw ashes over the little blazing camp-fire, and stole out into the darkness. After a little he returned. In the morning, before the sun had yet roused the sleepy Indians, he mounted his pony and galloped in and out among the tepees, as Man-who-dreams had on that other day.

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Strong and clear was the voice of the priest calling: "Hi, hi! Ho-o-o, brothers! Come forth and hear the answer I have prepared for Man-who-dreams!"

"At last the little priest has loosed his forked tongue," sneered Man-who-dreams.

Lazily the Indians turned out from their tepees, cursing the white priest for disturbing them; and many a grim resolve was made in the discomfort of the cold morning — resolves that boded ill for Father Lacombe if his answer was not a good one. When the Indians had all gathered in front of his lodge, Father Lacombe spoke.

"Brothers, you who are children of my Master, you have heard your medicine-man tell how White Eagle, chief of the Kootenay, died and went to the Happy Hunting-Ground. If that is true, I have no answer to make. If it is not

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true, then *he* speaks with a forked tongue. He is a liar, and has deceived you."

As these words dropped from his lips there was a rustle at the opening to his lodge, and three Indians stepped forth. The first one was Stony Jack; the other two, as could be seen by their dress and mode of wearing their hair, were from the land of the Kootenay. Father Lacombe, with true theatrical genius, professed to be surprised.

"Who are you? Where do you come from?" he asked.

The one who wore the eagle feathers of a minor chief spoke and said: "We are from the Kootenay. I am son of the great chief, and this is his nephew."

Father Lacombe turned to the astonished Indians. "The Great Spirit has sent these men here. Now we shall have confirmation of what Man-who-dreams has told you.

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"How long since your father died and went to the Happy Hunting-Ground?" he asked of the Kootenay chief.

A smile parted the thin lips of the Indian as he answered: "My father did not die; he did not go to the Happy Hunting-Ground; he has been with us always."

"What the chief says is true," answered the other Indian, when Father Lacombe questioned him. "His father, our chief, has been with us always."

Then Father Lacombe preached to those Blackfoot as he had never preached before. Great as had been the eloquence of Man-who-dreams, it was not more powerful than the impassioned utterances of the priest, who had lain twelve days sore at heart.

"If my Master has not sent me among you," he asked, "why have I

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come? Why have I given up the luxury of a comfortable home, where there are warmth, and plenty to eat and to drink, and friends and brothers and sisters, and father and mother, and people who worship the same God that I do? For what have I given all these up? Is it to share your cold and your hunger, to be abused even as one of your hogs? Is it for this—to lie on the ground? Is this better than the other life—the life among my friends? If my Master, God, who is the Great Spirit, had not sent me, should I be here? It is because He loves you that He has sent me.”

For twenty years Father Lacombe had studied the alphabet which is writ in the face of the red man, and when, exhausted with the vehemence of his eloquence, he ceased to speak, he read that which was solace to his tired heart.

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An Indian would demand truth even of the gods, and their medicine-man had lied to them. Not that they flocked to Father Lacombe's standard; but he had run the gantlet, and now they took him as a friend, as their enemies, the Crees, had done.

The first-fruits of his conquest came to him that night, when Crowfoot's brother, whose life he had saved, lifted the flap of his tepee, and stood beside the fire.

"The white medicine-man seeks for the pale-face captive. She is with Old Sun's band, and they are camped on the Battle River. If the father wishes, one of my braves will show the trail."

It was four days to Battle River, and on the fifth night Father Lacombe sat in Old Sun's lodge.

He did not speak of Ruth to the chief; it was best not. If she was

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there, he would see her next day. Just before he said his prayers, the priest stood outside the tepee and looked up to the sky. The stars had gone out—blotted out by the gray of a winter's night. The snow was falling softly, silently; a great peace had settled down over the earth, as the shroud was spread over its dead body. Yes, peace; but within a stone's throw hid four hundred Cree warriors, with their horses, waiting—waiting for the Blackfoot to sleep.

The priest folded his cassock and made a pillow of it. Just across the fire slept Old Sun and his squaw. It seemed to Father Lacombe that he had been sleeping but a minute when he was awakened by something. A dog was smelling about the fire. He saw Old Sun rise on his elbow, and heard him hiss: "A Cree dog! A Cree dog!"

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We are betrayed. Hi-hi!" his shrill voice rang out. "Up, braves, the Crees are here!"

There was an answering yell of defiance from three sides of the threatened camp—the Cree war-cry; but not a rifle spoke yet. They were waiting for the Blackfoot to get on their feet, so that their bullets might find a better target. With savage cunning they knew that shooting at men lying down and in the dark is waste of ammunition. In his frenzy Old Sun reached over and grabbed the priest by the scalp, dragging him out after him as he brandished his gun and yelled defiance to the Crees. Then a volley rang out from the guns, and a shower of arrows came hurtling among the tepees.

It was an unequal fight, fifty against four hundred; but they stood them off all night. The Blackfoot were camped

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on a poplar bluff, which gave them some protection. On their flank was the frozen face of the Battle River, so the enemy had to attack them from the open plain which ran up to the bluff. The Crees, being wood-dwellers, had not much heart for fighting in the open while their enemy was under cover; so this prolonged the uneven combat.

Just before daylight, Stony Jack came rushing up to Father Lacombe, and said: "Come quick, father! I have found her, but I am afraid she is dying."

The priest followed his guide among the trees, and into a darkened tepee. As he entered, he stepped on something round and slippery; it glided from underneath him, bringing him to his knees. His hand touched the something; it was wet. As he hastily pulled his hand away, a mass of soft, silky hair passed through his fingers.

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"My God!" he cried, "it is she! At last I have found her, and she is dead. Oh, Father, grant that it be not so! I must have a light," he said to Stony Jack.

"If the white father makes a light, the tepee will become a bright mark for all the guns of the Crees. But Jack will arrange something." And gathering up some of the blankets that were still lying in the lodge, he circled them about the head of the wounded girl, while the priest struck a match within.

"It is she," he said, "and God is good, for she still lives."

Intermittently the battle was still raging on the outside, and at daylight, when he had done all he could for the wounded girl, he went out on a mission of peace. Tying his handkerchief to a small stick, he marched straight past the line of the Blackfoot, pay-

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ing no attention to bullets and arrows, till he came to the top of a hillock, from which his voice could reach the Crees. Holding his flag of peace high up, he called with his deep, strong voice: "Ho, brothers! Why do you shed blood? Why do you make your children fatherless, and your mothers to weep for the braves who will not return again to their lodges? Ho, my children! It is I, your friend, Father Lacombe, who asks you to go away in peace."

For an instant the Crees hesitated; but blood had been shed; many of their number lay dead and dying. And were not the Blackfoot caught there in a trap between them and the river, like a herd of buffalo driven into a corral? Silently the priest stood, beseeching his Master again to help him and to avert the slaughter.

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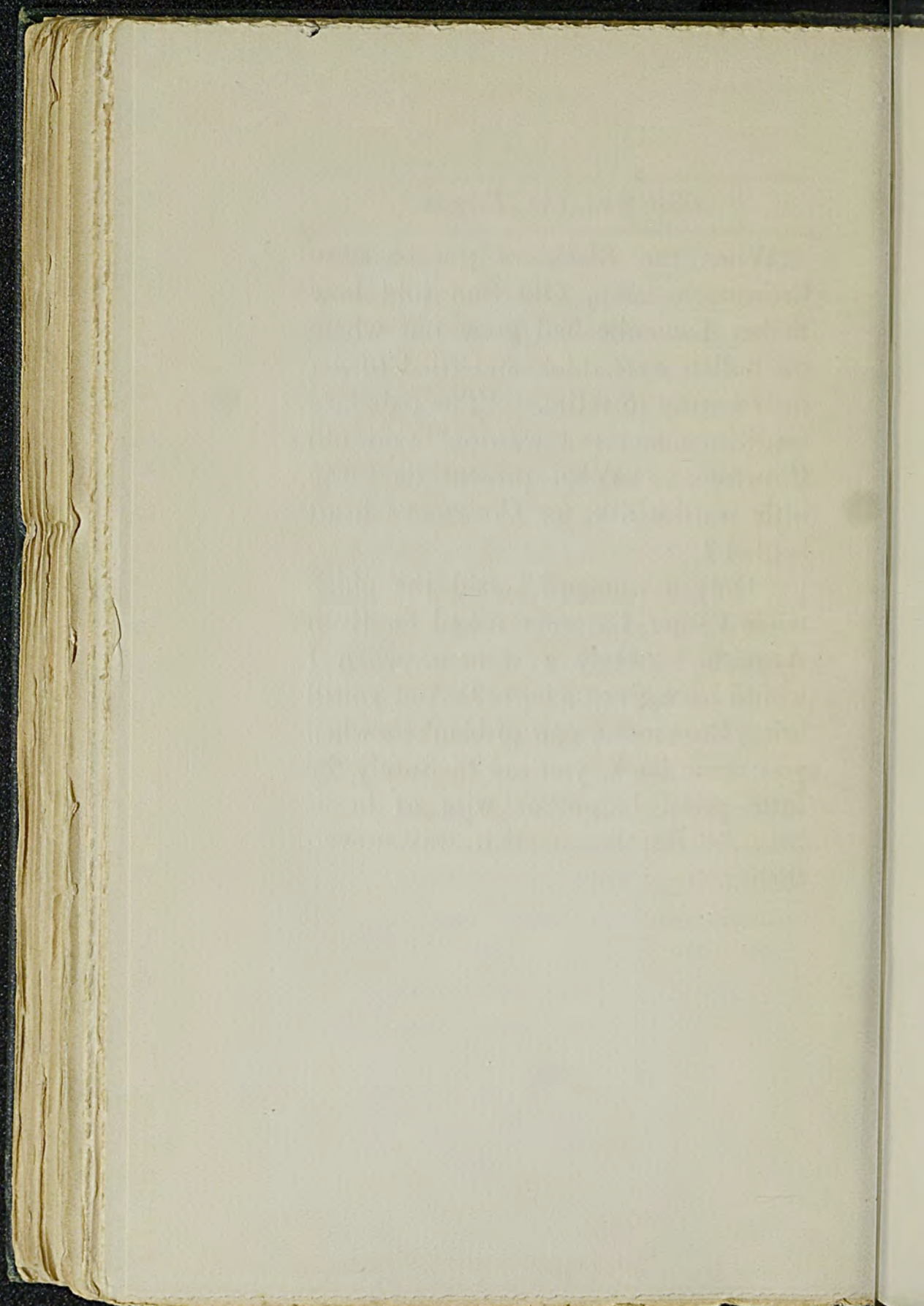
Meanwhile a dark body had been moving up over the white expanse of snow; but the fighting warriors, occupied with the battle, had not noticed it. Suddenly with demoniac yells it swept down on their flank. It was a party of Blackfoot hunters who had been attracted by the firing. From every side the lurid war blazed forth with increased fury. A bullet struck the priest in the shoulder. Stony Jack, seeing his master fall, rushed out and carried him bodily back into the shelter of the trees. Soon he revived, for the wound was not a serious one.

There was fighting all that day, for the two parties of Blackfoot had united, and together they held the Crees in check. That night the Crees silently crossed the frozen river and got away. Much horse-stealing and little fighting were more in their line.

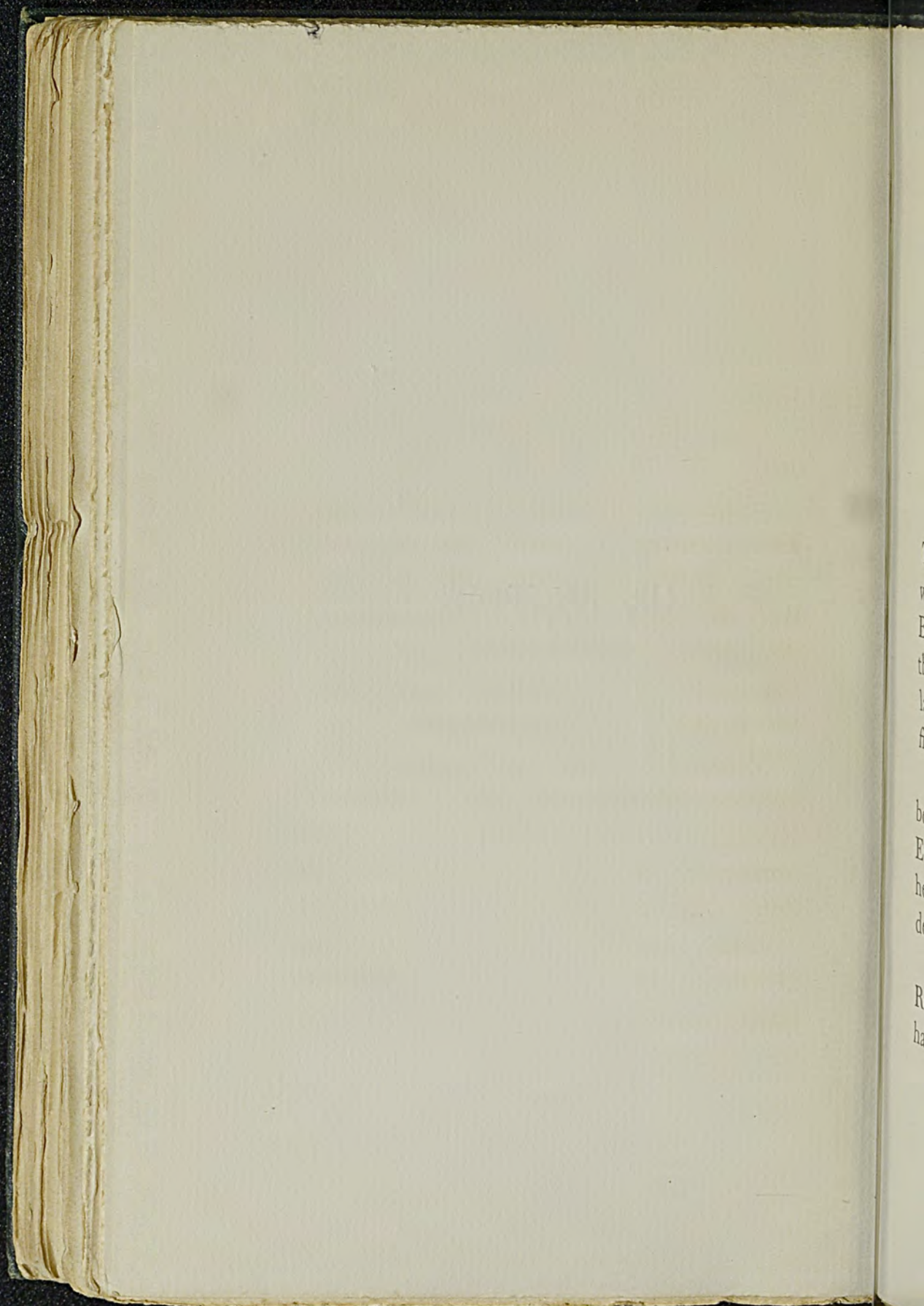
God and the Pagan

When the Blackfoot got back to Crowfoot's camp, Old Sun told how Father Lacombe had gone out where the bullets were thick and tried to get their enemy to retire. "The pale-face medicine-man is a warrior," said old Crowfoot. "What present does the little warrior ask, for Crowfoot's heart is glad?"

"Only a woman?" said the chief, when Father Lacombe asked for Ruth Asquith. "Only a woman, when I would have given a horse? And you'll bring Crowfoot a pair of blankets when you come back, you say? Surely the little priest is not as wise as he is brave." But it was that way, nevertheless.



HIS PASSPORT



HIS PASSPORT

It was so cold that winter in Canada! They said that I would be all right when the warm weather came in spring. But the cold lasted so long that I thought spring would never come. At last I fell asleep. When I awoke, the first person I saw was Pathanine.

When I had known Pathanine years before in Burmah, he was a Buddhist. Even at that time I had suspicions that he was a Christian according to my ill-defined lights — a Buddhist Christian.

I had always understood from the Reverend Hoskins that the Buddhists had absolutely no chance whatever of

His Passport

acquiring anything but unmitigated torture.

Hoskins was the regular station padre at Yenan. He was a small, thin man with a small, thin mind, and sometimes I used to think that perhaps, after all, he might be mistaken.

But bearing in mind Padre Hoskins's version, you may understand I was very much surprised to see Pathanine where he was.

Later I met others there who were as unorthodox as any Buddhist, but my wonder at first was concerned with Pathanine alone.

Pathanine's face had always been one of the most amiable that I 'd ever seen, and when his eyes fell upon me advancing toward him, it took on a delightfully sweet look of pleased recognition.

"I am so glad that you have come

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here, sir," he said, just as he used to when I returned to Yen-an after being absent for some time. "I was a little lonesome, sir," he continued, in his delightfully simple, straightforward way. "So few of those I knew before are here. Perhaps some will come by and by."

Everything was so confusing. I had always been so mistrustful of myself that when I woke up there I was almost afraid there was some mistake. And then to meet an out-and-out devotee of Buddha in a place that I'd always been taught was reserved for Christians alone, was certainly perplexing.

I asked Pathanine about it.

"I don't know, sir," he answered; "I felt like a little rest, and when I awoke I was here. I hope Ma Thee won't be long coming—Ma Thee and Mindah."

Ma Thee was his wife; Mindah, his daughter.

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But it was about his faith that I questioned him most.

He had not changed any; he had sung the same guttural Buddhist prayer up to the very last.

"Hoskins Thakine did not make a Christian of you, then — did not prove to you that Gaudama was wrong?" I queried.

"No, sir," answered Pathanine; "but my brother, Boh Pyu, who was a wicked fellow, tried to do a great wrong to the Padre.

"You remember Boh Pyu, who was a captain with King Theebaw before the British destroyed his army?

"Boh Pyu was a great soldier, but a bad Buddhist; for when the war was all over, he continued fighting on his own account, and became what the English call a dacoit.

"Sometimes he came to me, because

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he was my brother, you know, sir, and I begged him to be less wicked and stop dacoiting, or never come to see me at all.

“But the wrong he tried to do the Padre Thakine was this way, sir, and because of me; and for that I had much guilty fear.

“You remember I was the Woon of Yen-an, and Hoskins Thakine was always writing to the Commissioner that I was not making my official work proper.

“Also my people were telling me that the Padre Thakine was speaking ill of me, and saying that if they believed in me and my false gods,—even the sacred Gaudama,—they would all be burned with a greater heat than was in Yen-an the hot days before the rains.

“When they spoke of Nirvana, he told them there was no Nibban — no

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Nirvana; nothing but torture and unrest for all who died in my faith—the faith of my fathers.

“But when they did not believe what the Padre spoke, he said that it was because of me; and wrote to the Commissioner that I was always putting his work to the wrong side.

“I was not angry, for I knew he thought he was right, and was serving his Master even as I was serving Gaudama. That was his way. My way was not to take life, not to eat meat, nor eggs, nor anything that had life, and to give alms.

“To his church I gave too, for they were trying to do good to my people. He did not know; because if I spoke of it, he might tell the Commissioner that it was bribery.

“One time a Burman, Nat Glay, who had joined the faith of the Padre,

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spent money on foolishness that belonged to the Padre's church.

"Nat Glay came to me because of this, and he was afraid of going to jail. I paid the rupees for Nat Glay because if the case were called in court — my court, you know, sir — there would be much disgrace to the Padre's church, and Nat Glay and my people.

"But Padre Hoskins did not know all these things, and still wrote to the Commissioner that I was a bad man, and what he called a 'pagan.'

"When Boh Pyu came in the night to Yenan to see me,—for he was my brother,—Pho Yet, whose tongue is like a tucktoo's, always croaking of evil things, told Boh Pyu that Hoskins Thakine had made trouble for me.

"Then my brother, who was also a dacoit, went back to the jungle, and I did not know.

His Passport

“Many times after I got letters from the Commissioner to not make trouble for Padre Hoskins, and all the time I was telling my people to do good things for him.

“One night when I was sleeping Pho Yet came to my bungalow, and his tongue was speaking with much fear. Boh Pyu, my brother, was hiding with his dacoits down where the tamarind- and mango-trees are thick — just where the paddy-fields come up close to Yenan. You remember, sir, it was where the three little white pagodas rested on the hill. Well, Boh Pyu was hiding there till my people would all be sleeping, then he would steal down to the church bungalow, and kill the Padre. That was what Pho Yet said, and his voice was so low I could scarcely hear him, for he was afraid. I, too, was much troubled, sir; for there were none of the

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Sircar's police at Yenau. They were at Minbu, twenty miles from Yenau. Then I spoke to Pho Yet. 'Sabah will gallop to Minbu in two hours, for he is strong. Will you go, Pho Yet, and bring the Police Thakine?' But Pho Yet was like a bazaar pariah, a skulking dog. He would yelp, but was afraid. He would not go because of the dacoits, and because of the evil spirits — the nahts of the jungle. Then, sir, Pathanine's little daughter, Mindah, rode Sabah away at a gallop into the dark night.

"I took the gun which the government allowed me to keep because I was a Woon, and went and spoke to some of my people. They, too, were afraid. If the dacoits came to their houses they would run away, because the government had taken their guns. Anyway, if they had guns they would

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not stop to be killed; for the dacoits could shoot straight — it was their business to shoot straight. Also, they had not much to lose; and if the dacoits came they would give what they had — that was their way. It was easier. If Boh Pyu killed the Padre, that was not of their doing; and if they were there, Boh Pyu would kill them too. Also, Boh Pyu was their friend and my brother. He did not steal from the poor; but if any man were hungry, Boh Pyu would give him rice — that was Boh Pyu's way.

“I went down by the mango tope where it is so dark, near the paddy-fields, and called for Boh Pyu; but no one answered. The sound of my voice raised only the crows, which sleep in the big tamarinds there in thousands, as you know, sir. They screeched back at me like a thousand evil spirits till

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my voice was drowned. Then all the pariah dogs in the village took up the cry, and howled as they do when a great phoongye dies and goes to Nirvana. I called many times, and looked, but I found no one. The dacoits are like the cobra—they hide, and you cannot see them till they sting.

“Then I went to the church bungalow, for I knew the dacoits would go there too. I will talk to Boh Pyu, who is my brother, I thought, as I walked along, and keep him from doing this evil thing. I was thinking, too, of the Padre Thakine’s wife and little girl, who was almost of the age of Mindah. The dacoits would also kill these women; even the little girl with the hair like gold from Shwebo. When I told the Padre of the dacoits he was angry. That was his way. He said it was my treachery—

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that I had brought them there to drive him from Yen-an, so that my pagan gods, even Buddha Gaudama, might destroy the souls of the people. I was not angry, for I could see that he thought this was so.

"It will be four or five hours before the police can come, I told him. We must shut the doors, and drive the dacoits back until we hear the beat of their ponies' hoofs. We hung a light out on the veranda, just at the top of the steps. Inside the bungalow was dark. By and by, while I was watching, I saw dark figures moving in and out among the crotons in the compound. They were coming closer to the bungalow. One man crept up the steps to the veranda. It was Boh Pyu. I called to him: 'Ho, brother! It is I — Pathanine. Go away, if you have come for evil!' But he only laughed,

His Passport

and spoke as the Burmans do, using bad words. I said I would shoot him, and then he crept down the steps again, and it was still for a time. They were talking. It was so odd, Sahib, my brother Boh Pyu, who had come to kill the Padre because of me, was there in the dark, and soon we would be fighting like enemies, trying to kill each other. And in the bungalow, beside me, was Padre Hoskins, watching lest I do him treachery.

“Only the little girl that was like Mindah came and said that Pathanine would drive the dacoits away. My heart grew much stronger because of that. Mindah had started at ten o’clock, and while Boh Pyu was talking in the compound with the other dacoits, the Padre’s clock, which was on a table, struck twelve. ‘Mindah is at Minbu now,’ I told the Padre. ‘In two hours,

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or, perhaps, three, the police will come.'

"'If the dacoits break in before that,' asked the Padre, 'what will they do?'

"'They will crucify you with your head down,' I said.

"'And the women?' he asked.

"'I don't know,' I answered. That was a sin, Sahib, to tell that lie, for I did know, but I thought it would be much wrong to tell them what I knew—the mother and the girl that were like Mindah.

"'And you?' he again questioned.

"'I shall be dead.'

"Just then I saw the figures creeping close to the steps again—three of them. When I called to them, they shouted, 'Strike! Strike!' in our tongue, and rushed up on the veranda, firing the old muskets they had. I fired, too, and one of them dropped

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just across the top of the steps. The others went back into the darkness again. When they fired, I felt my arm as though some one had drawn a sharp nail down along the skin — a hot nail. When the dacoits went back I looked, and there was much blood. Something from one of the muskets had torn my arm. The girl who was like Mindah cried when she saw it, and helped her mother bind it up, while I watched at the door — the wooden door with lattice in it.

“Three times the dacoits came back just the same way, sir, only fiercer and more wicked each time. The last time another piece of lead from a musket went through my body; and my heart grew heavy, for I was getting weak, and I could not yet hear the gallop of Sabah, though it was close to the time for the police.

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“And the Padre, he too fought the dacoits even as he fought against Buddha, with wicked determination. He had no gun; but once, when two dacoits had forced the door open a little, he rushed at them with a dah I had given him, and smote one of them so strongly that he lay on the veranda dead. That time, too, they were beaten back, and we waited for the sound of the gallop of Sabah. Even while we waited, I saw a light at the posts on which the veranda rested. While the others fought, Boh Pyu had set fire to the bungalow.

“‘I will put it out,’ I said.

“‘You will be shot—it is my place to go,’ said Hoskins Sahib; and with a blanket in his hand, he dashed through the door.

“I, too, went, because if they attacked him I could shoot. But Boh Pyu, who

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had fought much in the jungle, had planned it that way.

"You can't shoot a tiger in his lair, he knew; but if he comes to the bait it is easy. So they waited till we got close to the light of the fire, and then they shot with many guns, and rushed upon us. The Padre Sahib fell because of the gun-shots; and I, too, fell because of another bullet. I was dizzy, but I rose to my knees and shot, once, twice, just as they were reaching Hoskins Thakine. I thought of the little girl who was like Mindah, and called aloud to Gaudama to help me. I heard Sabah galloping, for the road is hard where it sweeps up past the church bungalow; and then there were many shots. I heard an English voice crying: 'Thank God! We're just in time.'

"Then the fighting and the noise pushed farther off into the dark; and

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the superintendent, Gordon Thakine, came running up the steps to where we were both lying. And Mindah came too.

"I grew more dizzy, and I could see only Mindah and the girl who was like Mindah kneeling beside me. And Mindah's arm was under my head, and just as I fell asleep Mindah and the other girl kissed me.

"When I woke up, I was here.

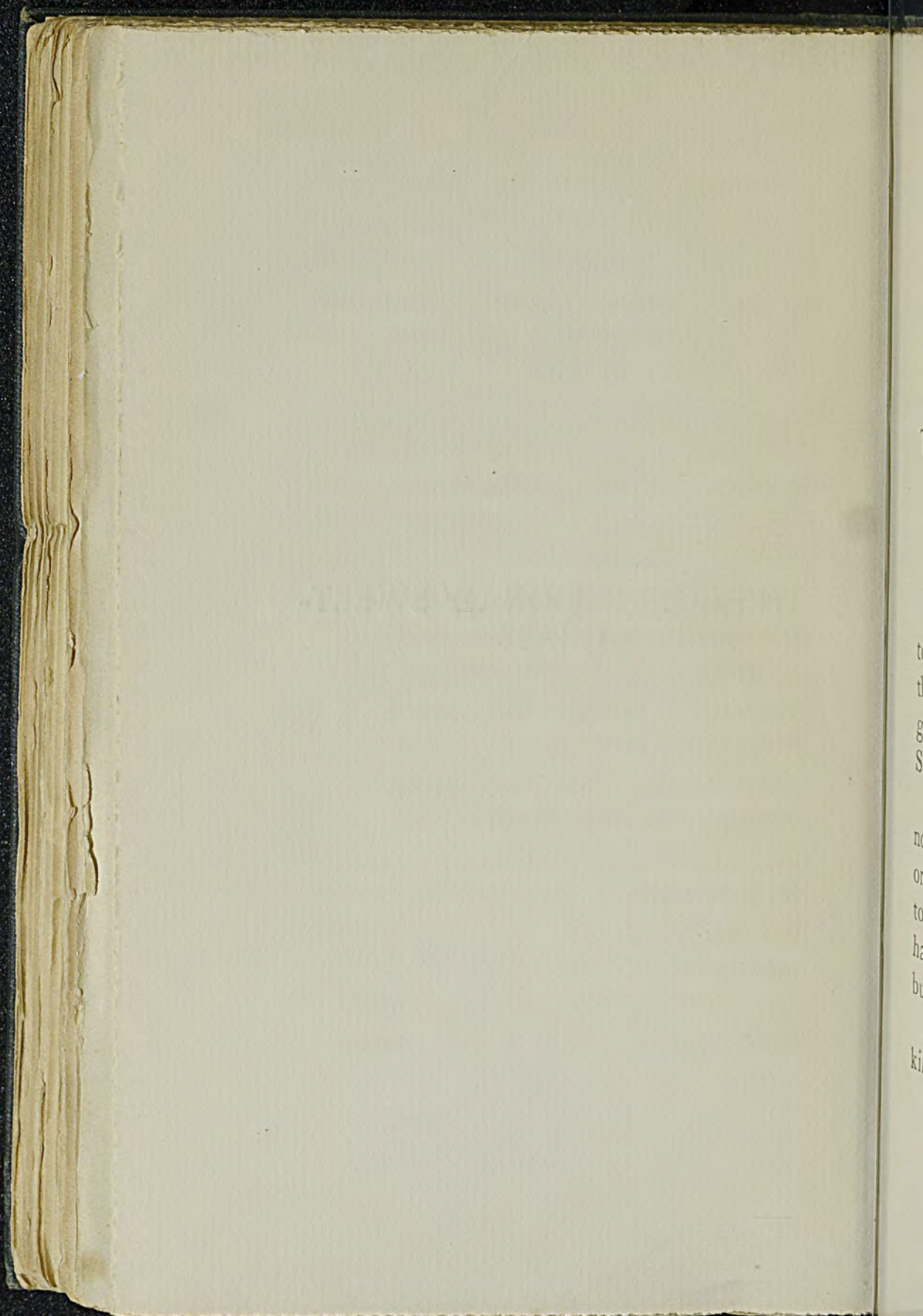
"And Padre Hoskins—" I asked of Pathanine — "was he killed?"

"He is not here. If he, too, had fallen asleep, he would be here. He did not mean to do wrong, and thought to do good for my people."

Then I knew why Pathanine was there.

Padre Hoskins meant well, but did not know.

THE CONVERSION OF SWEET-
GRASS



THE CONVERSION OF SWEET-GRASS

THE CHILDHOOD OF SWEET-GRASS

WHAT the great Chief Crowfoot was to the Blackfoot was Sweet-Grass to the Crees. He was the Seneca of this great tribe. That was when he was Sweet-Grass.

At the beginning he was next to nothing — a wee mite of a copper-colored pagan Cree. His father had been too indifferent to even fight well, so he had been slain like an obese buffalo bull.

In the hunt there was no warrior to kill the buffalo for the widow's wigwam.

The Conversion of Sweet-Grass

She followed up the others, and gleaned what they left. In times of plenty this was not so difficult; but when Hunger stalked through the flapping tepees of the Indians in the winter months, the gleaning was nothing, and existence for the squaw and her little brown papoose became a struggle with the coyote-like dogs of the camp for the things the others threw away.

That was the childhood of Sweet-Grass. He did not even own a name. He was only the Nokum's child. Nobody had time to even dream a name for him. If in the scramble for bits of jerked buffalo he and the dogs fell out, and he struck his canine rivals, somebody would retaliate—the dogs were in the right of it. It was only the Nokum's child, anyway. The dogs belonged to somebody, after a fashion—so many to each tepee; but Sweet-

The Conversion of Sweet-Grass

Grass was only the Nokum's child. His mother carried wood and smoked meat for others, stripped the red willow, and made kinnikinick for lazy braves with lazier wives; and in return she was allowed to poke through the offal and find her living there, if she could. She was like the village poor-woman, with the usual boy, who scrubs and washes and does all the village chores.

Sweet-Grass was the boy. As soon as he opened his eyes on the pleasant world, he began to discover that life was a fight. This conviction deepened as he grew older; and the village outcast always grows old fast. His years outstretched his stature. At fourteen he was small, but hard as nails. Fighting for existence did not tend to soften him.

At fourteen he said to the Nokum: "Mother, I am now a warrior. I have not even a name. As I lie on my buf-

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falo-skin at night, the wind whispers to me through the grass and the purple moose-flowers, and asks me what is my name. What can I answer, mother?

“I answer that I am the Nokum’s child, and the wind laughs and sweeps away, and the pack-dogs howl, and my heart grows black with anger. If I were a maiden, the water would trickle from my eyes, my heart grows so sad. But I am a warrior, mother — a brave; and my heart beats hard and fast against my ribs, and I know that it is knocking that it may grow — grow big and strong and fierce like Black Wolf’s. Yesterday a big black eagle flew over the snow mountains, and his shadow swept like a cloud across the grass that is like the yellow gold. He flew toward the sun, mother,— south, toward the land of the Blackfoot, and he called to me. I looked up, and I saw his eyes.

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They were bright and fierce, just like Black Wolf's. But he was looking at me, mother; and he whistled shrill and sharp, as though the Great Spirit called me to follow. To-night I am going, mother. In five nights, if I do not return, it will not matter, for I have no name. I will bring a name, if I come back."

The Nokum's eyes were old and blurred, the pupils were glazed with a bluish cast, and the whites were streaked yellow and red, so not much expression could creep into them. They did not tell what she thought. They were like badly colored beads. Her tongue did not know how to give expression to sentiment; her poor old heart tugged and strained at its lashings and hurt her; but she was used to pain. It never occurred to her to complain because of pain.

The Conversion of Sweet-Grass

So the boy looked in the poor, gnarled eyes, and saw nothing. The white, withered lips told him nothing; yet he thought: "The Nokum is glad; she would like her boy to have a name."

He took his bow and his knife and his tenderly feathered arrows, and held them in his arms, as a lover fondles the roses he takes to his lady-love. It was a man's bow, for the boy's arms were like steel, got of the fighting with the dogs and everything else in the camp.

Cheap little bits of finery he toggled himself out with — trifles of brass tied in his long, black, shining hair; a little remnant of bead-work, blue and yellow and black, that his mother had saved from the deer-skin shirt of his worthless father, he fastened about his neck. When he was ready to start, the Nokum made his young heart bound with delight when she handed him a pair of

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delicately beaded moccasins—they had been worked for a young chief.

“For when you are coming back,” she said.

Then the sky swallowed him up. The Nokum saw only millions of stars blinking at her as she sat in the rent of her battered old tepee and looked toward the land of the Blackfoot.

Thus the childhood of Sweet-Grass.

THE NAMING OF SWEET-GRASS

THE Chinook wind blew through the feathers of the boy's arrows and rubbed against his cheek. How light his heart was! For fourteen years he had fought for existence without a name; in a few days he would come back again with one, and wearing the beautiful moccasins now tied up in the little pack on his back. He reached up his hand

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and patted them affectionately. As he did so he came to earth with a smash that shook his body—he had put his foot in a badger-hole. As he rose he chided the rose-pink flowers which hid the hole. They were the badger-hole sentinel—the cleome.

“Why did you not tell me, little brothers?” he said, as he tore them up by the roots reproachfully. “They could not tell me because I had no name, I suppose,” he muttered, as he sped on again.

The thought stopped him; he turned and called back to the crushed blossoms: “When I come again this way you will know my name.”

All night he traveled, his feet crushing eagerly through the bunch-grass and the silvered wolf-willow; the long, purple-tipped wild pea caught at his legs and caressed them gently. The

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gaillardias and the daisies stared sleepily at him as he passed like a gray shadow. When the light began to steal up in the east he crawled down into a coulée, and hid himself like a coyote, and slept.

That night he traveled again — across the shallow “Battle River” and the shallower “Nose Creek”; before morning he knew that he was close to Sounding Lake, and closer still to the Blackfoot encampment he had been traveling toward. In a little bluff of white poplar he hid and waited for the coming of day—the day that was to give him a name or see his scalp hang drying in the tepee of some Blackfoot. Close to where he crouched the Indians’ ponies were herding. How his heart throbbed with exultation as he watched them passing in and out among each other as they fed!

As the gray light began to turn the

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dark brown of the earth to orange, his eyes singled out the leader of the herd, a heavy-quartered chestnut. Beyond the horses, a quarter of a mile away, were the Blackfoot tepees, cutting the bright horizon like the jagged teeth of a saw. Like a general he waited, and strung his bow taut, as a musician keys up his harp.

"They will come to the horses," he thought — "some of them, for I must have scalps as well as ponies."

His heart grew warm as he thought of what it meant for the Nokum. With a name as a brave he would take part in the hunt, and a share of the buffalo would fall to the lot of his mother. She would always have plenty to eat. Something gorgeous caught his eye. It was a medicine-man in all the awful grandeur of his barbaric splendor. Eagle feathers, paint, bead-work, and charms

The Conversion of Sweet-Grass

seemed to have been poured upon his tall figure like fruit from a cornucopia. He was coming straight toward the boy—coming to commune with the Great Spirit in what was evidently his private prayer-ground. On a gray willow bush, forty yards from where the boy crouched, three pieces of red cloth hung limp in the morning sunlight. It was one of the medicine-man's propitiatory offerings. Behind the medicine-man stalked a brave.

"He is coming to round up the horses," thought the boy.

He took an arrow from his quiver, held it up toward the east, and let the sunlight kiss its V-shaped head. Then he placed it to his heart. That was that it might go with unerring aim to the heart of the medicine-man.

Then he knelt reverently and kissed the earth.

The Conversion of Sweet-Grass

The steel-nerved arm drew the bow-string until the arrow-head came back against the hand that grasped the bow. The medicine-man was standing in front of his red-streaked bush, his lips muttering an incantation to the particular spirit he was having dealings with. His broad chest, thrust well out, seemed to invite the death-shaft.

"For mother's sake!" hissed the boy; and "twang!" went the stretched sinew string. The jagged iron head of the arrow tore a ghastly hole just where a streak of yellow beads cut through a bodyground of blue, almost in the center of the strong chest of the Blackfoot priest.

Never a sound he gave—only a little hoarse gurgle as he fell forward in a crumpled heap, and writhed over on his back, where he lay staring up at the smiling sky.

The Conversion of Sweet-Grass

The boy's brain surged hot with a blood-like fury. He rushed from his concealment and pulled the feather of another arrow to his ear as the dead Blackfoot's companion faced him. It, too, found a mark, but only through the shoulder; and, too eager for further combat of this sort, he and the brave drew their knives and closed in upon each other. But the devil was in the boy — he had been blooded; while the other man had an arrow in his shoulder, which is not so good an incentive to fight. In a few minutes two Blackfoot scalps were dangling from the boy's shirt-front, and he was taking breath after his fierce struggle. He was mad with delight — the delirium of triumph was strong upon him. He felt like rushing upon the whole encampment; he wanted to kill, kill, even if he died killing. He pulled a handful of sweet-

The Conversion of Sweet-Grass

grass and dabbled it in the blood of the medicine-man. He held it aloft and screamed in his triumph. His high falsetto voice trilled the "Hi, hi!" of the Cree battle-song.

That was the first sound the camp heard from the battle-field.

He thrust the wet grass in his breast and raced for the horses as an answering cry came back from amongst the blue columns of upward-curling smoke.

In his pack was a little woven horse-hair halter. He pulled it out as he ran. He had lived among the ponies and dogs in his own camp—their ways were his ways. Two or three of the ponies were hobbled as sheet-anchors to keep the others steady. He tore the hobbles off—from the chestnut stallion last; then, grasping the strong mane, he swung himself on to the eager back and started the herd.

The Blackfoot warriors were running

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from their tepees, but the Cree laughed in victorious glee. Round the herd of ponies he dashed on the chestnut with a wild yell; and when they were fairly stampeded he swung into the lead. Their fast-beating hoofs pounded the grass-knit turf until it gave forth a sound like the roar of many drums. A shower of arrows came hurtling after him. A few of the Blackfoot had muzzle-loading guns. A little puff of smoke here and there among his pursuers, a tiny white cloud of dust thrown up to one side or in front of him, told of the useless shots. They were pursuing him on foot—they had no choice, for he had all their horses. As he drew rapidly away, he uttered once more his shrill note of triumph. Then he sat down on the stallion and rode with judgment—eased him up a little.

All that day and all the next night he rode, resting his band of horses after

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he had forded the Battle River the first evening. At daybreak on the second day he sighted his own camp. The appearance of so many horses in the distance excited the Crees; they thought their enemy the Blackfoot had swooped down upon them.

When the boy rode into camp at the head of his footsore troop of ponies, the warriors swarmed about him. Modestly he told his story, for the long ride had quieted down his spirits. He showed them the scalps and his band of loot.

The braves pressed about him closely, and felt his arms and his legs to see where the strength had come from. Suddenly there was a little commotion. An opening was made in the crowd, and the Nokum pressed forward to the feet of the tribe's idol.

"My boy, my boy —" she stopped short; her eyes caught sight of the blood

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on his breast. "Are you wounded?" She thrust her hand in at the opening of his deerskin shirt, and drew it back, clutching a mass of blood-stained grass.

"No," replied the boy; "that 's Blackfoot blood, Nokum."

"It 's sweet-grass," she echoed exultingly, holding the well-known grass aloft in her hand.

Contagiously the others took up the cry, "Sweet-grass! Sweet-grass!"

As by inspiration, the tribe medicine-man stepped forward and said: "He is a brave now. He must have a name. Let his name be Sweet-grass."

Thus was the naming of the great "Chief Sweet-Grass."

THE RULING OF SWEET-GRASS

THAT was the beginning. Sweet-Grass had graduated from his dog's life.

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The braves that had been before were as nothing to what Sweet-Grass became. Black Wolf, who had been his model, was soon outclassed by the pupil. Brains, and pluck, and muscles of steel made the little man the greatest among all Crees. He was an ideal pagan; no glinting of a light that illuminated the wrong-doing side of horse-stealing and killing shot athwart the narrow pathway of his pagan mind. If there were any commandments inscribed in the Cree pantheon, they were aimed at the extinction of the enemies of the tribe—the Blackfoot.

So Sweet-Grass served the Great Spirit with an eager vigor that left many scalps hanging in his lodge. He stole horses until the medicine-man classed him as the greatest pagan of them all. While he reduced the census of his neighbors, his own tribe waxed popu-

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lous and rich through his wisdom. Then came the day when he was chosen chief; and even as he had been the greatest warrior, so he became the greatest chief the tribe had ever known.

And the husks had all passed away from the Nokum; for Sweet-Grass honored her in his prosperity, even as she had toiled and slaved for him when they fought with the dogs for the scraps.

THE CONVERSION OF SWEET-GRASS

FATHER LACOMBE was as great a warrior as Sweet-Grass. He, too, was a fearless brave. His bow was the Christian religion, and his arrows God's love, feathered by his own simple, honest ways.

Through the Cree's tepees he wandered at will; and with the Blackfoot

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he slept back to back on the sky-kissed prairie.

As a rule, an Indian does not receive religion with open arms—he is not looking for it. He has other things to think of. And though they received the father for his own sake, his Master's commands they cared not much about.

Father Lacombe was working his way southward through the Blackfoot country one morning in May. He came upon a small party of Blackfoot. With them they had a captive—a Cree maiden.

Practical Christianity was part of the father's creed, and he determined to rescue the girl if he had to pawn his Red River carts to the Indians. "Camp here," he said to them; for a bargain with Indians is like a Chinese play—it will end only when there is nothing more to be said on either side. So

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they encamped where they were, among the spring flowers, and smoked the pipe of peace and bargained for the girl. The priest meant to have her free at any cost, but it was also legitimate to get her cheaply. In the end he gave an order on the Hudson's Bay Company for a sum sufficient to bankrupt his small means. He took the girl with him on his southern trip, for there was no way of sending her to her people till he should return in the autumn.

It had been the usual order of Black-foot enterprise: the war party had swooped down upon the few Crees she had been with at the time, and killed them all but herself. Her parents had not been of the party.

In October Father Lacombe went north again — back among the Crees. One evening, after he had camped, he saw a large outfit of Indians trailing to-

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ward him. He hid the girl under a cart the sides of which were draped by a large canvas. It was Sweet-Grass's party. They encamped beside the father for the night.

To Father Lacombe the Indians were as children; to him their lives were an open book, and the misery that was in one old couple's hearts was soon poured into his sympathetic ear. To an Indian there is no loss so great as the loss of a child; even horses are less to be lamented. And Many-Herbs had lost a daughter; the Blackfoot had attacked the party she was with in the spring, and all had been murdered, even the daughter. Father Lacombe had opened up a gold-mine, and he knew it. The priest had several gifts besides his great generosity and his wide humanity. He had that fine dramatic instinct which makes the most of an opportunity. Evidently

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God had delivered the captive into his hands that good might come of the evil which had been done. That was the priest's way — profit for his Master. Another would have calculated how many furs the girl would exchange for.

When the father spoke of hope, Many-Herbs scoffed. Alive there might be hope, yes! but was not Two-Winds dead? Could the priest take a stripped wand of the red willow and change it into the form of Two-Winds, and alive? Was not Sweet-Grass also like a stricken buffalo? Two-Winds was to have gone to the chief's lodge even at that time — at the time of the great hunts.

"Surely," thought the priest, "the Father has given these people into my hands." If Sweet-Grass also loved the maid, much good must come of the rescue.

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Then he spoke aloud to the Crees and prayed silently in his heart the while. Eloquently he told, in the short, terse sentences of the Indian, the infinite power and mercy of the Lord; that if they would only listen it would heal the arrow-wounds in their hearts.

"Will your God, who is so powerful, give me back Two-Winds?" cried Many-Herbs.

"Or bring her to my lodge?" asked the little Sweet-Grass.

"Have patience, my brothers," said the priest. "You have forgotten one thing—you have forgotten the power of this!" And he held aloft the black cross which was tucked in his girdle.

The light from the aspen camp-fire flickered against the brass image of the Saviour drooping from the cruel, holding nails. Surely the light of his mission was in the gray eyes of the black-cassocked man, as he drew himself up

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to his full height and held the figure toward the Indians with a commanding supplication.

It was Sweet-Grass who said: "Call on your medicine-man to give us Two-Winds. If he can do that, I will believe—I and my tribe. The Little Father shall have five horses if he can do this thing. I have spoken."

The chief and the priest were old friends—almost old antagonists on the question. Père Lacombe knew that Sweet-Grass's words were like the flow of the Saskatchewan—a thing to be depended upon.

"And I have heard!" he said, as the Cree chief ceased speaking and placed the long stem of his pipe between his lips—"I have heard, and my Master has heard, and the power of the Cross is for good!"

Among the whites Père Lacombe was the one man Sweet-Grass trusted; and as the priest spoke he started for-

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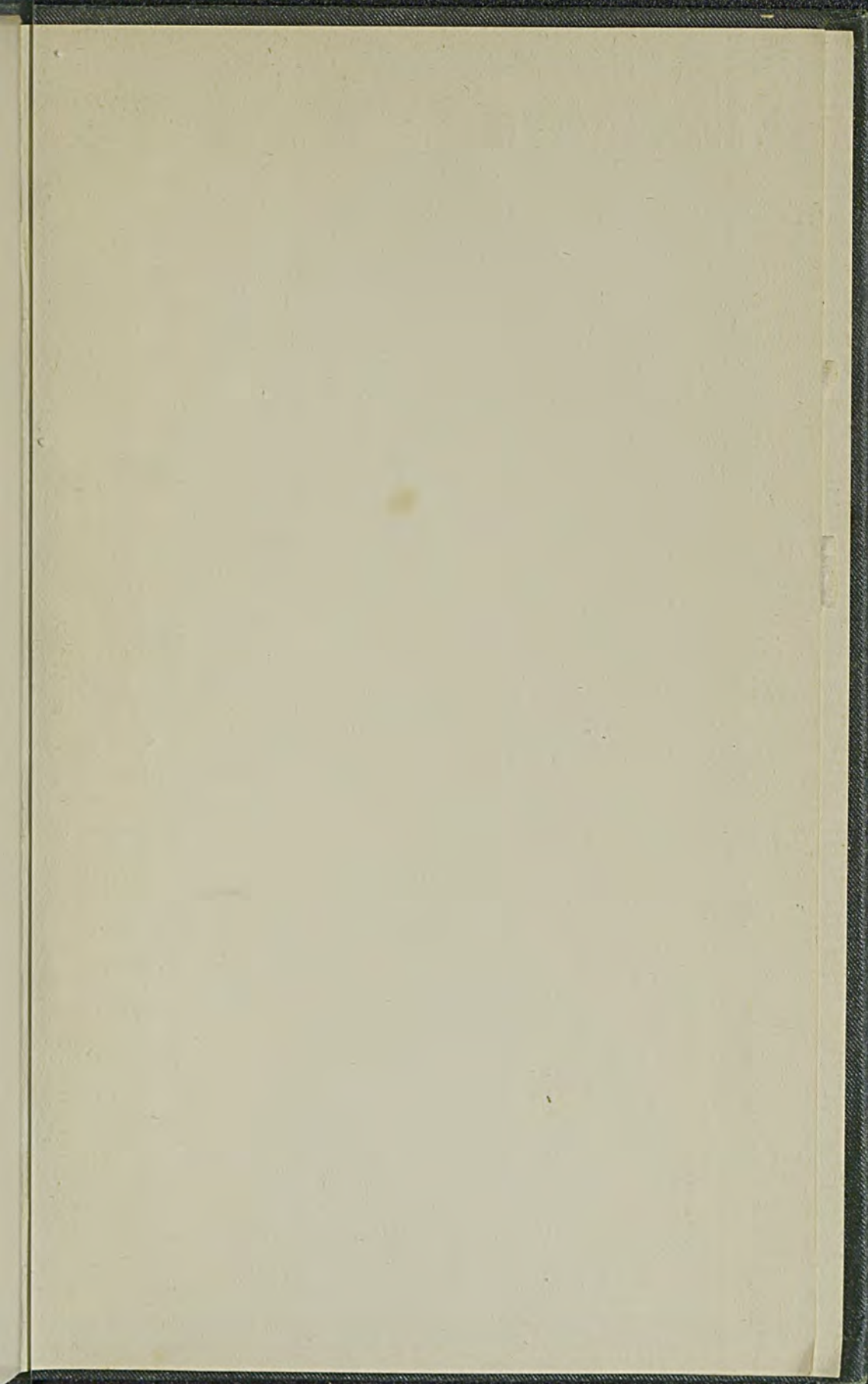
ward eagerly in a half-famished way, as a gaunt wolf eyes a life that is just out of his reach. "Two-Winds?" he whispered huskily, expectantly.

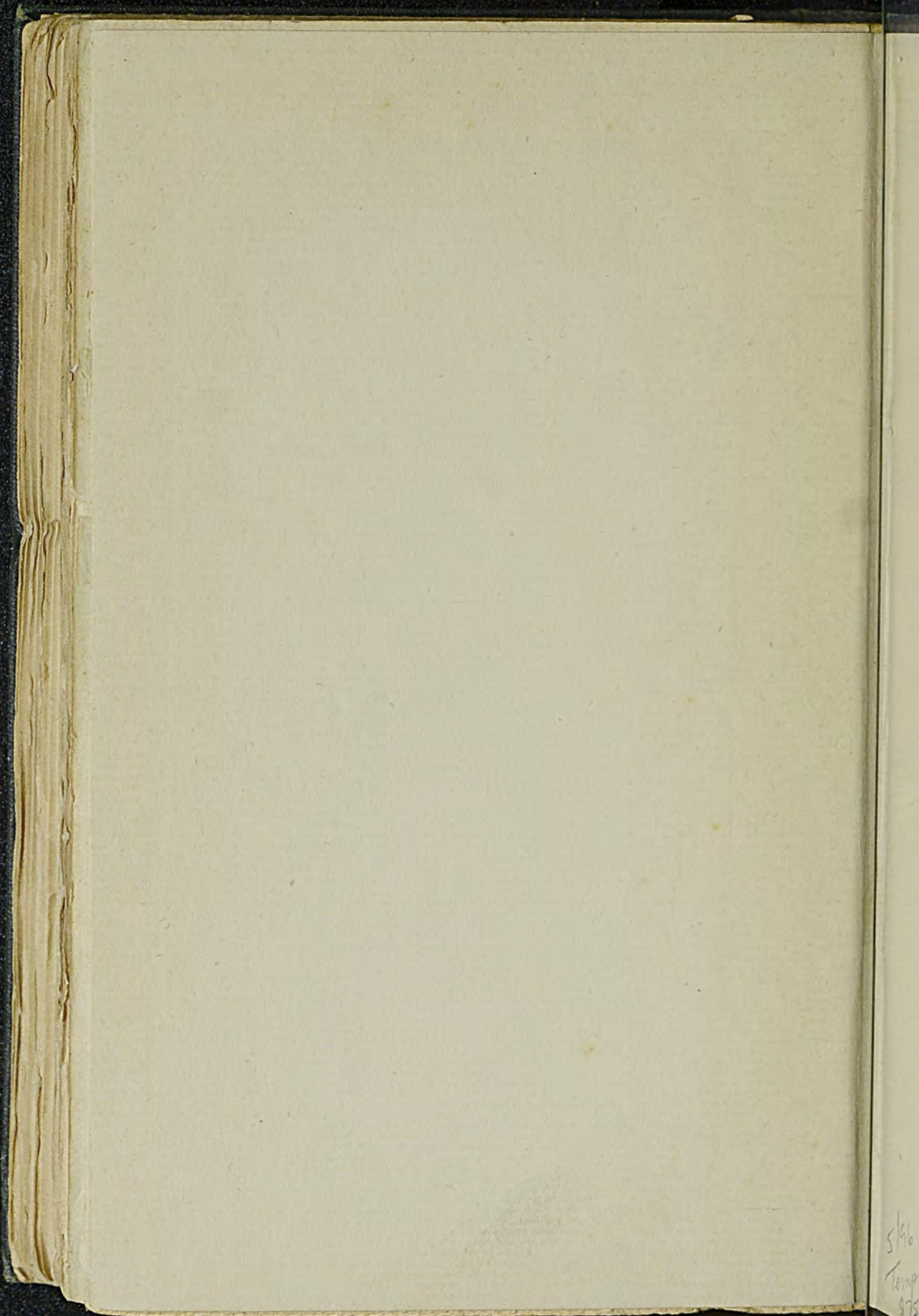
"Yes!" answered the priest, in his deep voice, as he drew aside the canvas of the cart.

It was as though God had looked down and smiled upon the camp as Two-Winds came and stood in the light of the camp-fire; the same light that had flicked at the brass Saviour streaked with bronze the black mass of her hair and showed the great love-light in the sparkling eyes.

Père Lacombe stood a little to one side with bowed head, his hands crossed lovingly over the brass Saviour as he held it against his breast. The power of the Cross had come to pass.

Thus was the conversion of Sweet-Grass.





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