## ling of the Khyber Rifles Talbot Mundy Copyright by the Bobbs-Mertill Company

## Story That Combines the Thrill of Modern Detective Fiction With the Romance of Arabian Nights Tales

PTER XVII-Continued. -11-

ch the peaks with rosy jew-

cold. She came and snuge peaks grow gray again, she

at are you thinking?" she at last. a, princess." of Indla?"

s helpless."

ou love India?"

all love me better! You shall etter than your life! Then, me, you shall own the India you love! This letter shall tapped her bosom. "It is t you off from India first. lose that you may win!" up and stood in the gap.

ockingly, framed in the darkcave behind. erstand!" she said. "You are my enemy. Love and

r lived side by side. You

ds slipped into his, soft and eyes fastened on his and And as they did so King a sack half-empty and topsidewise on the floor asleep. her dreamed nor was conanything, but slept like a having fought against her harder than he knew.

en, generals, outlaws, all big mistakes and manage Very nearly always it is le at the time, that grows

at last and utterly in her ing down the trail. nereas in truth he was only of being carried, nor of f anxiety, nor of anything.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

ng awoke he lay on a comat there was no trace of Yasof the men who must have to it. He had no idea how d slept. It did not matter. robed Khinjan caves, and whole purpose for which the usands had been gathering the road is clear!" athering still. Remained, to it purpose. He began at ng, where he stood.

im in a corner at the back was a narrow fissure, hung her curtain, that was doubtor into Khinjan's heart; but y to the outer air was along ove a dizzying precipice, so the huge waterfall looked stream below. He was in e's aerie; the upper rim of orge seemed not more than f a mile above him.

ood a guard, armed to the a rifle, a sword, two pistols curved Khyber knife stuck is girdle. As he locked, a ssion of women, led by a up the ledge. The man was the women were burdened n belongings-the medicine saddle and bridle-his unpack. They came past the on guard and laid them all et just inside the cave.

d, with that genial, facesmile of his that has so d a road for him through But the man in charge en did not grin. He was He growled at the women. nt away like obedient anthalf-way down the ledge ther orders. He himself

follow them, and the t women and man pass pping one pace forward last entirely voluntary

the caverns into which the

er the sun has risen, because tion always is to do the wrong thingpices shut it out. But the to cap wrath with wrath, injustice with nals, every side are very beacons vengeance. That way wars begin and nge at the earliest peep of are never ended. King beckened him hals. But he knew too that in Yassilence they watched day's into the cave, and bent over the chest mini's power, her prisoner, he had no of medical supplies. Then, finding the rs-she waiting as if she ex- light better for his purpose at the en- plans. Having grounded on the bote marvel of it all to make trance, he called the man back and tom of impotence, so to speak, any tide made him sit down on the box.

to him, and it was so they especially edifying in itself; but that nothing, and to be particularly unthe sparkle of dawn's jewels particular minor operation probably aware that the Pathan, with a rifle saved India. But for hope of it the in each hand, was pretending to come arm on his shoulder and man with the boils would never have her golden hair blown past stood two turns on guard hand running and let the relief sleep on; so he rifle. In another minute the mullah



Thou Liest! It was My Men Who Got the Head That Let Thee In! Else Why Are Thou Here?"

atly little mistake that does | would not have been on duty when the age in the end, something message came to carry King's belongings to his new cave of residence. rical proportion, minus in There would have been no object in killing the dumb man, and so there made her little mistake that would have been an expert with a loadbelieving King was utterly ed rifle to keep Muhammad Anim lurk-

Muhammad Anim came-like the may be that she gave him devil, to scotch King's faith. He had is sleep, after the accepted followed the women with the loads. mesmerists; but if she did, He stood now, like a big bear on a reached him; he was far mountain track, swaying his head from button. There was a second shirt unleep. He slept so deep and side to side six feet away. King derneath, and to that on the left breast was not conscious of men's jumped, nearly driving the lance into were pinned two British medals. new place in his patient's neck.

> "Let him go!" growled Muhammad Anim. "Go, thou! Stand guard over the women until I come!"

The mullah turned a rifle this way and that in his paws, like a great bear d in a cave he had never dancing. The very Orakzai Pathan this side of the border. It was no af- if she heard of itwho had sat next King in the Cavern fair of the British. But I was seen, of Earth's Drink, was creeping up be- and I entered this place. It is a devil hind the women and already had his of a place." rifle leveled at the man with boils,

King's eyes. "He has done well, and

Pathan was in command of two rifles, holding King from among the women, whom he seemed to regard as his plunder too. The women appeared supremely indifferent in any event. King nodded back to him. A friend is a friend in the "Hills," and rare is the man who spares his enemy.

"None comes to earn a living in the 'Hills,'" growled the mullah, swaying his head slowly and devouring King e corner, ten feet from the with cruel calculating eyes. "Why art thou here?"

"I slew a man," said King.

"Thou liest! It was my men who got the head that let thee in! Speak! Why art thou here?"

But King did not answer. The mullah resumed.

"He who brought me the message yesterday says he has it from another. who had it from a third, that thou art here because she plans a simultaneous rising in India, and thou art from the Punjab where the Sikhs all wait to rise. Is that true?"

"Thy man said it," answered King. "Then hear me!' said the mullah. "Listen, thou." But he did not begin to speak yet. He tried to see past King into the cave and to peer about into the shadows.

"Where is she?" he asked. "Her man Rewa Gunga went yesterday, with guard did not pay much three men and a letter to carry down the Khyber. But where is she?"

So he had slept the clock round! ge to make more room. King did not answer. He blocked the way into the cave and looked past the mullah. The Orakzai Pathan crouched ddenness that disarmed all among the women, and the women he other humped himself grinned. The mullah stared into wall and bucked into the King's face, with the scrutiny of a back, sending him, trader appraising loot. Fire leaped up d all, hurtling over the behind his calculating eyes. And without a word passing between them, King ed thousands of feet away. knew that this man as well as Yasullian spat after him, and mini was in possession of the secret back to where King stood. of the Sleeper. Perhaps he knew it I me my bolls!" he said, first; perhaps she snatched the keepfast, doubtless from pleas- ing of the secret from him. At all He was the same events he knew it and recognized smoot on guard at the King's likeness to the Sleeper, for his when ismail lea King eyes betrayed him. He began to stroke

out to see the Cavern of Earth's Drink. | his beard monotonously with one hand. | 'Hills.' I am minded to go back and | gagged him. At a word from Muham- | midst of a cluster of a dozen sentries, The temptation was to fling the The rifle, that he pretended to be hold-

King knew well he was making sigchance at all of interfering with her that would take him off must be a good The business of lancing bolls is not tide. He pretended to be aware of casually up the path.

In a minute he was covered by a had lashed his hands. In five minutes more the women were loaded again with his belongings and they were all half-way down the track in single file, the mullah bringing up the rear, descending backward with rifle ready mini and her men to pounce out any minute to the rescue.

They entered a tunnel and wound along it, stepping at short intervals over the bodies of three stabbed senthe body of a fourth man and fell with | came bearing gifts." his chin beyond the edge of a sheer

They were on a ledge above the waterfull again, having come through a am the dreamer, am 1?" projection on the cliff's side, for Khin-

They soon reached another cave, at pile all their loads inside. Then he the Hills." took the women away and went off muttering to himself, swaggering, swinging his right arm as he strode, in

a way few natives do. "Let us hope he has forgotten proudly. these!" the Pathan grinned, touching the pile of rifles. "Weight for weight For a mullah he cares less for meat touched him."

"What is that, under thy shirt?" King asked.

The Pathan grinned, and undid the

"Oh, yes!" he laughed. "I served the raj! I was in the army eleven years." "Why did you leave it?" King asked, remembering that this man loved to hear his own voice.

"Oh, I had furlough, I knifed a man

Now the art of ruling India consists "Aye!" said the mullah, watching not in treading barefooted on scorpions -not in virtuous indignation at men who know no better-but in seeking The man with boils offered no fight, for and making much of the gold that He dropped his rifle and threw his lies ever amid the dross. There is hands up. In a moment the Orakzai gold in the character of any man who



What Is Under Thy Shirt?" King Asked.

once passed the grilling tests before enlistment in a British-Indian regiment. It may need experience to lay a finger on it, but it is surely there.

"I heard," said King, "as I came toward the Khyber in great haste (for the police were at my heels)-

"Ah, the police!" the Pathan grinned some time or other he had left his mark on the police.

has offered pardons to all deserters who return." "Hah! But thou art a hakim, not a

"True!" said King.

the law. There is no law here in the less mullah. They had bound and

seek that pardon! It would feel good mad Anim they loosed him; and at a close to a tamarisk to which a man's looks down into Khinjan brute after his victim. The tempta- ing really leaned against his back and to stand in the ranks again, with a threat the hairless one gave a signal body hung spiked. That the man had with the free hand he was making sig- stiff-backed sahib out in front of me, that brought the great stone door slid- been spiked to it alive was suggested and the thunder of the gun-wheels going by. The salt was good! Come thou with me!"

> "The pardon is for deserters," King objected, "not for political offenders."

> "Haugh!" said the Pathan, bringing down his flat hand hard on the hakim's thigh. "I will attend to that for thee. will obtain my pardon first. Then will I lead thee by the hand to the karnal sahib and lie to him and say, 'This is the one who persuaded me against my will to come back to the regiment!

"Thou art a dreamer!" said King. Untle my hands; the thong cuts me."

The Pathon obeyed. "Dreamer, am I? It is good to dream such dreams. By Allah, I've a mind to see that dream come true! I never slew a man on Indian soil, only in against surprise, as if he expected Yas- these 'Hills,' I will go to them and say, 'Here I am! I am a deserter. I seek that pardon!" Truly I will go! Come thou with me, little hakim!"

"Nay," said King. "I have another thought. You who were seen to slay ries. The Pathan spurned them with a man, and I who am a political offendhis heel as he passed. In the glare at er, do not win pardons so easily as the tunnel's mouth King tripped over that. They would hang us unless we

> "Gifts? Has Allah touched thee? What gifts should we bring? A dozen stolen rifles? A bag of silver? And I

"Nay," said King, "I am the dreamjan is all rat-runs and projections, like er. There are others in these 'Hills'a sponge or a hornet's nest on a titanic others in Khinjan who wear British

The Pathan nodded. "Hundreds. which the mullah stopped. It was a Men fight first on one side, then on the dark ill-smelling hole, but he ordered other, being true to either side while King into it and the Pathan after him the contract lasts. In all there must be on guard, after first seeing the women the makings of many regiments among

King nodded. He himself had seen the chieftains come to parley after the Tirah war. Most of them had worn British medals and had worn them

"If we two," he said, speaking slowly, "could speak with some of those in silver they will bring me a fine men and stir the spirit in them and price! He may forget. He dreams, persuade them to feel as thou dost, mentioning the pardon for deserters and money than any I ever saw. He is and the probability of bonuses to the mad, I think. It is my opinion Allah time-expired for re-enlistment; if we could march down the Khyber with a hundred such, or even with fifty or with twenty-five or with a dozen menwe would receive our pardon for the sake of service rendered."

> "Good !" The Pathan thumped him on the back so hard that his eyes watered.

> "We would have to use much caution," King advised him, when he was able to speak again.

> "Aye! If Bull-with-a-beard got wind of it he would have us crucified. And

> He was silent. Apparently there compass his dread of her revenge. He was silent for ten minutes, and King sat still beside him, letting memory of other days do its work-memory of the long, clean regimental lines, and of order and decency and of justice handed out to all and sundry by gentlemen who did not think themselves too good to wear a native regiment's uniform.

"In two days I could do the drill again as well as ever," he said at last. Then there was silence again for fifteen minutes more. "I could always shoot," he murmured: "I could always shoot."

When Muhammad Anim came back they had both forgotten to replace the lashing on King's wrists, but the mulah seemed not to notice it.

"Come!" he ordered, with a sidewise jerk of his great ugly head, and then stood muttering impatiently while they

They marched downward through interminable tunnels and along ledges poised between earth and heaven, until they came at last to the tunnel leading to the one entrance into Khinjan caves. Just before they entered it two more of the mullah's men came up with them, leading horses. One horse was for the mullah, and they helped King mount the other, showing him more respect than is usually shown a prisoner in the "Hills."

Then the mullah led the way into the tunnel, and he seemed in deadly fear. The echo of the hoof-beats irritated him. He eyed each hole in the roof as if Yasmini might be expected to shoot down at him or drench him with boiling oil and hurried past each of them at a trot, only to draw rein immediately afterward because the noise was too great.

It became evident that his men had been at work here too, for at intervals along the passage lay dead bodies. Yasmini must have posted the men there, but where was she? Each of them lay pleasantly. The inference was that at dead with a knife wound in his back, and the mullah's men possessed themselves of rifles and knives and car-"I heard," said King, "that the sirkar tridges, wiping off blood that had

scarcely cooled yet. When they came to the end of the tunnel it was to find the door into the mosque open in front of them, and twenty more of Muhammad Anim's "In India I carned my salt. I obeyed men standing guard over the eyelash-

ing forward on its oiled bronze grooves.

Then, with a dozen jests thrown to the hairless one for consolation, and a smallah led on down a lane through the an utter indifference to the sacredness of the mosque floor, they sought outer open cave at the far side, in which a air, and Muhammad Anim led them up bonfire cast fitfut 5ght and shadow. the Street of the Dwellings toward Khinjan's outer ramparts. They reached the outer gate without inci- notice. dent and hurried into the great dry valley beyond it. As they rode across the valley the mullah thumbed a long string of beads. Unlike Yasmini, he was praying to one god; but he seemed to have many prayers. His back was a picture of determined treachery-the backs of his men were expressions of the creed that "he shall keep who can!" King rode all but last now and had a good view of their unconsciously vaunted blackguardism. There was not a hint of honor or tenderness among the lot, man, woman or mullah. Yet his heart sang within him as if he were riding to his own marriage feast!

Last of all, close behind him, marched his friend, the Orakzai Pathan, and as they picked their way amony the bowlders across the milewide most the two contrived to fall a little to the rear. The Pathan began peaking in a whisper and King, riding ith lowered head as if he were studying the dangerous track, listened.

"She sent her man Rewa Gunga tovard the Khyber with a message," he whispered. "He took a few men with him, and he is to send them with the message when they reach the Khyber, but he is to come back. All he went for is to make sure the message is not intercepted, for Bull-with-a-beard is growing reckless these days. He knew what was doing and said at once that she is treating with the British, but there were few who believed that. There are more who wonder where she hides while the message is on its way. None has seen her. Men have swarmed into the Cavern of Earth's Drink and howled for her, but she did not come. Then the mullah went to look for his ammunition that he stored and sealed in a cave. And it was gone. It was all gone. And there was no proof of who had taken it!

"Hakim, there be some who say-and Bull-with-a-beard is one of them-that she is afraid and hides.

"His men say he is desperate. His own are losing faith in him. He snatched thee to be a bait for her, having it in mind that a man whom she hides in her private part of Khinjan must be of great value to her. He has sworn to have thee skinned alive on a hot rock should she fail to come to

## CHAPTER XIX.

The march went on in single file until the sun died down in splendid fury. Then there began to be a wind that were no words in his tongue that could they had to lean against, but the women were allowed no rest. At last at a place where the trail be-

> gan to widen, the mullah beckoned King to ride beside him. It was not His own rifle lay on the ground behind that he wished to be communicative, but there were things King knew that of the fire. he did not know, and he had his own way of asking questions. "D- hakim!" he growled, "Pill-

man! Poulticer! That is a sweeper's trade of thine! Thou shalt apply it at | What a sickness! What running of the my camp! I have some wounded and some sick."

King did not answer, but buttoned his coat closer against the keen wind. The mullah mistook the shudder for one of another kind. "Did she choose thee only for thy

face?" he asked. "Did she not consider thy courage? Does she love thee well enough to ransom thee?" Again King did not answer, but he

watched the mullah's face keenly in with folded arms and dared them the dark and missed nothing of its expression. He decided the man was in doubt-even racked by indecision.

"Should she not ransom thee, hakim, thou shalt have a chance to show my men how a man out of India can die! By and by I will lend thee a messenger to send to her. Better make the message clear and urgent! Thou shalt ly, then set the pot between his knees state my terms to her and plead thine own cause in the same letter. My camp lies yonder."

He motioned with one sweep of his through what was left in it and the arm toward a valley that lay in shadow far below them. As they approached his gorge rise; so King thanked him it the rock clove in two and became two great pillars, with a man on each. And between the pillars they looked down into a valley lit by fires that burned before a thousand hide tents, with shadows by the hundred flitting lowed to climb up and lie down, he was back and forth between them. A dull not allowed to sleep-nor did he want roar, like the voice of an army, rose out of the gorge.

"More than four thousand men!" aid the mullah proudly.

"What are four thousand for a raid into India?" sneered King, greatly daring.

"Wait and see!" growled the mullah; but he seemed depressed.

He led the way downward, getting information. off his horse and giving the reins to a n water-course between two spurs of a India? Is that it? hillside, until they stood at last in the

by the body's attitude.

Without a word to the sentries the midst of the camp, toward a great Watchers sitting by the thousant tents yawned at them, but took no particular

The mouth of the cave was like a ion's, fringed with teeth. There were men in it, ten or eleven of them, all armed, squatting round the fire.

"Get out!" growled the mullah. But they did not obey. They sat and stared at him.

"Have ye tents?" the mullah asked, in a voice like thunder. "Aye!" But they did not go yet,

One of the men, he nearest the mulah, got on his feet, but he had to step back a pace, for the mullah would not give ground and their breath was in each other's faces.

"Where are the bombs? And the rifles? And the many cartridges?" he demanded. "We have waited long, Mu-

hammad Anim. Where are they now?" The others got up, to lend the first man encouragement. They leaned on rifles and surrounded the mullah, so that King could only get a glimpse of him between them. They seemed in no mood to be treated cavalierly-in no mood to be argued with. And the mullah did not argue.

"Ye dogs!" he growled at them, and he strode through them to the fire and chose himself a good, thick burning brand. "Ye sons of nameless mothers!"

Then he charged them suddenly, beating them over head and face and shoulders, driving them in front of him, utterly reckless of their rifles.



"So Thou Art to Ape the Sleeper In His Bronze Mail, Eh!"

him, and King kicked its stock clear

"Oh, I shall pray for you this night!" Muhammad Anim snarled. "What a curse I shall beg for you! Oh, what a burning of the bowels ye shall have! eyes! What sores! What boils! What sleepless nights and faithless women shall be yours! What a prayer I will pray to Allah!"

They scattered into outer gloom Defore his rage, and then came back to kneel to him and beg him withdraw his curse. He kicked them as they knelt and drove them away again. Then, silhouetted in the cave mouth, with the glow of the fire before him, he stood shoot.

After five minutes of angry contemplation of the camp he turned on a contemptuous heel and came back to the fire, throwing on more fuel from a great pile in a corner. There was an iron pot in the embers. He seized a stick and stirred the contents furiousand ate like an animal. He passed the pot to King when he had finished, but Angers had passed too many times very thought of eating the mess made and set the pot aside.

Then, "That is thy place!" Muhammad Anim growled, pointing over his shoulder to a ledge of rock, like a shelf in the far wall. But though he was alto sleep-for more than an hour to come.

The mullah came over from the fire again and stood beside him, glaring like a great animal and grumbling in his beard.

"Does she surely love thee?" he asked at last, and King nodded, because he knew he was on the trail of

"So thou art to ape the Sleeper in man. King copied him, and partway his bronze mail, eh? Theu art to come sliding, part stumbling down they to life, as she was said to come to life, found their way along the dry bed of and the two of you are to plunder

(TO BE CONTINUED.)