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CHAPTER XI.

THE GREAT AGRA TREASURE.

Our captive sat in the cabin opposite to the iron box which had done so much and waited so long to gain. He was a sunburned, reckless-eyed fellow, with a network of lines and wrinkles all over his mahogany features, which told of a hard, open-air life. There was a singular prominence about his bearded chin which marked a man who was not to be easily turned from his purpose. His age may have been fifty or thereabouts, for his black, curly hair was thickly shot with gray. His face in repose was not an unpleasant one, though his heavy brows and aggressive chin gave him, as he had lately seen, a terrible expression when moved to anger. He sat now with his hands clasped on his lap and his head sunk upon his breast, while he looked with his keen, twinkling eyes at the box which had been the cause of his ill-fortune. It seemed to him that there was more sorrow than anger in his rigid and contained countenance. Once he looked up at me with a gleam of something like humor in his eyes.

"Well, Jonathan Small," said Holmes, lighting a cigar, "I am sorry that it has come to this."

"And so am I," he answered, frankly. "I don't believe that I can swing over the job. I give you my word on the book that I never raised my hand against Mr. Sholto. It was that little bell-banded Tonga who shot one of his cursed darts into him. I had no part in it, sir. I was as grieved as if it had been my blood-relation. I wanted the little devil with the sack end of the rope for it, but it was done, and I could not undo it again."

"Have a cigar," said Holmes, "and you had best take a pull out of my flask, for you are very wet. How could you expect to stand a man as this black fellow to overpower Mr. Sholto and hold him while you were climbing the rope?"

"You seem to know as much about it as if you were there, sir. The truth is that I hoped to find the room clear. I knew the habits of the house pretty well, and it was the time when Mr. Sholto usually went down to his supper. I shall make no secret of the business. The best defense that I can make is just the simple truth. Now, if it had been the old major, I would have swung for him with a light heart. I would have thought no more of knifing him than of smoking this cigar. But his cursed hand that I should be lagged over this young Sholto, with whom I had no quarrel whatever."

"You are under the charge of Mr. Athelney Jones, of Scotland Yard. He is going to bring you up to my rooms, and I shall ask you for a true account of the matter. You must make a clean breast of it, for if you do I hope that I may be of use to you. I think I can prove that the poison acts so quickly that the man was dead before ever you reached the room."

"That he was, sir. I never got such a turn in my life as when I saw him grinning at me with his head on his shoulder as I climbed through the window. It fairly shook me, sir. I had half killed Tonga for it, if he had not scrambled off. That was how he came to leave his club, and some of his darts too, as he tells me, which I dare say helped to put you on our track; though how you kept on it is more than I can tell. I don't feel no malice against you for it. But it does seem a queer thing," he added, with a bitter smile, "that I, who have a fair claim to night upon half a million of money should spend the first half of my life building a breakevener in the Andamans, and an illie to spend the other half diggin' drains at Dartmoor. It was an evil day for me when first I clapped eyes to the merchant Aghmet and had to do with the Agre treasure, which never brought anything but a curse upon the man who owned it. To him it brought murder, to Mr. Sholto it brought fear and guilt, to me it has meant slavery for life."

At this moment Athelney Jones thrust his broad face and heavy shoulders into the tiny cabin. "Quite a family party," he remarked.

By party," he remarked "I think I shall have a pull at that flask, Holmes. Well, I think we may all congratulate each other. It was a shock to me to hear that I had placed my friends in such horrible peril."

"That's all over," I answered. "It was nothing. I will tell you no more gloomy details. Let us turn to something brighter. There is the treasure, what

could be brighter than that? I got leave to bring it with me, thinking that it would interest you to be the first to see it."

"It would be of the greatest interest to me," he said. There was no eagerness in her voice, however. It struck her, doubtless, that it might soon be ungrateful upon her part to be indifferent to a prize which had cost so much to win.

"What a pretty box!" she said, stooping over it. "This is Indian work. I suppose?"

"Yes, it is genuine metal-work," I answered. "If you had helped justice, instead of thwarting it in this way, you would have had a better chance at your trial."

"Justice!" snarled the ex-convict. "A pretty justice! Whose look is this, if it is not ours? Where is the justice that I should give it up to those who have never earned it? Look how I have earned it! Twenty long years in that fever-ridden swamp, all day at work under the mangrove tree, all night chained up in the filthy conviet hut, bitten by mosquitoes, raised with ague, and by every cursed black-faced policeman who loved to take it out of a white man. That was how I earned the Agre treasure, and you talk to me of justice because I cannot bear to feel that I have paid this price only that another may enjoy it! I would rather swing a score of lines, or have one of Tonga's darts in my hide, than live in a conviet's cell and feel that another man is at his ease in a palace with the money that should be mine. Small had dropped his shackles of stolidity, and all this came out in a wild whirl of words, while his eyes blazed, and the hand which clenched together with impassioned movement of his hands. I could understand it. I saw the fury and the passion of the man, that it was no groundless or unaccountable terror which had possessed Mr. Sholto when he first learned that the injured convict was upon his track.

"You forget that we know nothing of all this," said Holmes, quietly. "We have not heard your story, and we cannot tell how far justice may originally have been on your side."

"Well, sir, you have been very fair spoken to me, though I see that I have you to thank that I have these bracelets upon my wrists. Still, I bear no grudge for that. It is all fair and above-board. If you want to hear my story I have no wish to hold it back. What I say to you is God's truth, every word of it. Thank you, you can put the glass beside me here, and I'll put my lips to it if I am dry."

"I am a Worcestershire man myself—born near Pershore. I dare say you would find me a small living here now if you were to look. I have often thought of taking a look round there, but the truth is that I was never much of a credit to the family, and I doubt if they would be so very glad to see me. They were all steady, chapel-going folk, small farmers, well known and respected over the country-side, while I was always a bit of a rover. At last, however, when I was about eighteen, I gave them no more trouble. I got into a mess over a girl, and could only get out of it again by taking the quack's shilling and joining the Third Buffs which was just starting for India."

"I wasn't destined to do much soldiering, however. I had just got past the goose-step and learned to handle my munitree, when I was fool enough to go swimming in the Ganges. Luckily for me, my company sergeant, John Holtzer, was in the water at the same time, and he was one of the finest swimmers in the service. A crocodile took me, just as I was half way across, and as a surgeon could have done it, I got above the knee. What with the shock and the loss of blood I fainted, and I should have been drowned if Holtzer had not caught hold of me and paddled for the bank. I was five months in hospital over it, and when at last I was able to limp out of it with this timber toe strapped to my stump I found myself invalided out of the army and unfitted for any active occupation."

"It was, as you can imagine, pretty down on my luck at this time, for I was a useless cripple, though not yet in my twentieth year. However, my misfortune soon proved to be a blessing in disguise. A man named Abelwhite, who had come out there as an indigo-planter, wanted an overseer to look after his coolies and keep them up to their work. He happened to be a friend of our colonel's, who had taken an interest in me since the accident."

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warning; the great misty broke upon us. One month I had to lay on my back, and I could see no more of the country; the next there were two hundred thousand black devils let loose, and the country was a perfect hell. Of course you know all about it, gentlemen—deal more than I do, very likely, since reading is not in my line. I only know what I saw with my own eyes. Our plantation was at a place called Swarta, near the border of the north-west province. Night after night the whole sky was alight with the burning bungalows, and day after day we had small companies of Europeans passing through our estate with their wives and children, on their way to Agre, where were the nearest troops. Mr. Abelwhite was an obstinate man. He had it in his head that the affair had been exaggerated, and that it would blow over as suddenly as it had sprung up. There he sat on his veranda, drinking whisky pegs and snoring cheerily while the country was in a blaze about him. Of course we studied by him, I and Dawson, who, with his wife, used to do the bookwork and the managing. Well, one fine day the crash came. I had been away on a distant plantation, and was riding slowly home in the evening, when my eye fell upon something all huddled together at the bottom of a steep hill. I rode down to see what it was, and was cold struck through my heart when I found it was Dawson's wife, all in white ribbons, and half-eaten by jackals and native dogs. A little further up the road Dawson himself was lying on his face, quite dead, with an empty revolver in his hand and four Sepoys lying across each other in front of him. I reined up my horse, wondering which way I should turn, but at that moment I saw thick smoke curling up from Abelwhite's bungalow and the flames beginning to burst through the roof. I knew then that I could do my employer no good, but would only throw my own life away if I meddled in the matter. From where I stood I could see hundreds of the black fiends, with their red coats still on their backs, dancing and howling round the burning house. Some of them pointed at me, and a couple of them began to pace my hand; so I broke away across the paddy-fields, and found myself late at night safe within the walls at Agre.

"As it proved, however, there was no great safety there, either. The whole country was up like an swarm of bees. Wherever the English could collect in little bands they held just the ground that their guns commanded. Everywhere else they were helpless fugitives. It was a fight of the millions against the hundreds; and the cruelest part of it was that those men that we fought against, foot, horse and gunner, were our own picked troops, whom we had taught and trained, handling our own weapons, and blowing our own bugles call. At Agre there were the Third Dragoon Fusiliers, some Sikhs, two troops of horse and a battery of artillery. A volunteer corps of clerks and merchants had been formed, and this I joined, wooden leg and all. We went out to meet the rebels at Shabragu early in July, and we beat them back for a time, but our powder gave out and we had to fall back upon the city. Nothing but word were made to us from every side—Which is not to be wondered at, for if you look at the map you will see that we were right in the heart of it. Lucknow is rather better than a hundred miles to the east, and Cawpore about as far to the south. From every point on the compass there was nothing but torture and murder and outrage."

"The city of Agre is a great place, swarming with fanatics and fierce devil-worshippers of all sorts. Our handful of men were lost among the narrow, winding streets. Our leader moved across the river, therefore, and took up his position in the old fort of Agre. I don't know if any of your gentlemen have ever read or heard anything of that old fort. It is a very queer place—the queerest that ever I was in, and I have been in some rough corners, too. First of all, it is enormous in size. I should think that the inclosure must be acres and acres. There is a modern part, which took all our garrison, women, children, stores and everything else, with plenty of room over. But the modern part is nothing like the size of the old quarter, where nobly gons and the cantonment is all full of great deserted halls, and winding passages, and long corridors, twisting in and out, so that it is easy for folks to get lost in it. For this reason it was seldom that any one went into it, though now and again a party with torches might go exploring."

"The river washes along the front of the old fort, and so protects it, but on the sides and behind there are many doors, and these had to be guarded, of course, in the old quarter as well as in that which was actually held by our troops. We were short-handed, with hardly men enough to man the angles of the building and to serve the guns. It was impossible for us, therefore, to station a strong guard at every corner of the innumerable gates. What we did was to organize a central guardhouse in the middle of the fort, and to leave each gate under the charge of one white man and two or three natives. I was selected to take charge during certain hours of the night of a small isolated door upon the southwest side of the building. Two Sikh troops were placed under my command, and I was instructed if anything went wrong to fire my munitree, when I might rely upon help coming at once from the central guard. As the guard was a good two hundred paces away, however, and as the space between was cut up into a labyrinth of passages and corridors, I had great doubts as to whether they could arrive in time to be of any use in case of an actual attack."

"Well, I was pretty proud at having this small command given me, since I was a raw recruit, and a game-legged one at that. For two nights I kept the

watch with my Punjaubees. They were tall, bare-looking chaps, Mahomed Singh and Abdullah Khan by name, both old fighting men who had been an agent as at Chillianwallah. They could talk English pretty well, but I could get little out of them. They preferred to stand together and jabber all night in their queer Sikh lingo. For myself, I used to stand outside the gateway, looking down on the twinkling lights of the great city, the beating of drums, the rattle of tom-toms, and the yells and howls of the rebels, drunk with opium and with being, were enough to remind us all night of our duty. Every two hours the officers of the night used to come round to all the posts, to make sure that all was well.

"The third night of my watch was dark and dirty, with a small driving rain. It was dreary work standing in the gateway hour after hour in such weather. I tried again and again to make my Sikh talk, but without much success. As two in the morning the rebels passed, and broke for a moment the windows of the night. Finding that my companions would not be led into conversation, I took out my pipe, and laid down my munitree to strike a match. In an instant the two Sikhs were upon me. One of them snatched my flask up and leveled it at my head, while the other held a great knife to my throat and swore between his teeth that he would plunge it into me if I moved a step.

"My first thought was that those fellows were in league with the rebels, and that this was the beginning of an assault. If our door were in the hands of the Noppy the place would fall, and the women and children be treated as they were in Cawpore. Maybe my gentlemen think that I am just making out a case for myself, but I give you my word that when I thought of that, though I felt the point of the knife at my throat, I opened my mouth with the intention of giving a scream, if it was my last one, which might alarm the main guard. The man who held me seemed to know my thoughts; for, even as I opened my mouth, he said: 'Don't make a noise. The fort is safe enough. There are no rebels down on this side of the river.' There was the ring of truth in what he said, and I knew that if I raised my voice I was a dead man. I could read it in the fellow's brown eyes. I waited, therefore, in silence, to see what it was that they wanted from me."

"I am not the ordinary case where the difference of opinion in the motions turns upon the men to be selected, and not upon essential measures. Where that is the case, it is not so objectionable to admit the representation of States that will certainly vote against the ticket, since the system may be cordially devoted to the cause, which animates the majority of the party, or they may be divided on the issue. This was the case in 1864, when the united South declared the nomination of Mr. Van Buren. The annexation of Texas was the great purpose of the Southern Democracy; the northern wing of the party was divided upon it, and the Democratic nomination of Van Buren, by the aid of the Free-Thirds Rule, won the day, defeated Van Buren, and nominated Polk.

But the South cannot win now, in such a struggle with its Northern allies. It then had the all powerful institution of slavery at its back. Now it is the North that is backed by the vast money power of the world. There is, therefore, but one resource left. The South should refuse to go into a convention, thus constituted, and refuse to support any man who is not in favor of the free coinage of silver."

CHARLOTTE OBSERVER.

In a recent speech at Hartford, Conn., Governor McKinley declared that the Harrison administration going out March 4, 1895, had turned over to its successor a surplus of \$124,000,000. Touching this declaration, the Philadelphia Times makes a statement which is of common knowledge when it says: "In a communication to the Chief of the Bureau of Printing and Engraving, under date of February 20, 1895, Secretary of the Treasury Charles Foster urged the preparation of the design for the 3 per cent bonds 'in advance of the enactment of the sundry civil bill, then pending.' All this was within two weeks of the close of Mr. Harrison's term and after Mr. Foster had notified Congress that there might be a surplus of \$17,000,000 in the Treasury at the close of the fiscal year, but that the situation was one demanding serious consideration." The response by Congress was to place in the sundry civil bill authorizing the issue of 3 per cent bonds.

These matters are, as we have said, of common knowledge. The Harrison administration found the Treasury full and left it empty. A gentleman of position ought really to be more careful about his facts.

Cleveland Star.

The King's Mountain Manufacturing Company held their annual meeting on the 17th inst. and declared a dividend of 1 1/2 per cent on the entire investment, which is \$78,000. This company was organized seven years ago and the mill has been prospering. The stock holders are all well pleased with the result and the same officers were re-elected.

The Enterprise Cotton Mill held their annual meeting on the 19th inst. and the old officers were re-elected for another year. It was declared, after discussing it freely, to discontinue the present company by making \$200,000 in dividends. This will make the work of the mill be even more satisfactory to those interested.

The Standard Mercantile in the First Street, Independence Journal.

It's time to get the organ ready, and one who has done well, and the name and the town.

Mr. J. H. Cobb, publisher of the Mirror, at Brockton, N. Y., says: "For nearly two years the Mirror has been publishing the advertisements of Chamberlain's Remedy. A few days ago the writer was suffering from a bad cold and throat, and resorted to an old remedy which did not prove efficacious. Finally he tried Chamberlain's Cough, Cholera and Diarrhoea Remedy and two doses did the business, checking it completely. For sale by CUREY & KENNY, Druggists."



"THE TREASURE IS LOST," SAID MISS MORSTAN.

these riches, sealed my lips. Now that they are gone I can tell you how I love you. That is why I said 'Thank God.'"

"Then I say 'Thank God,' too," she whispered, as I drew her to my side. Whoever had lost a treasure, I knew that night that I had gained one.

CHAPTER XII.

THE STANDESTORY OF JOKATHAN SMALL.

A very patient man was the inspector in the cell, for it was a weary time before he rejoined him. His face clouded over when I showed him the empty box.

"Where goes the reward," said he, gloomily. "Where there is no money there is no good. This night's work would have been worth a better one than to see you and me if the treasure had been there."

"Mr. Thaddeus Sholto is a rich man," I said. "He will see that you are rewarded, treasure or no."

The inspector shook his head dejectedly, however. "It's a bad job," he repeated, "and so Mr. Athelney Jones will think."

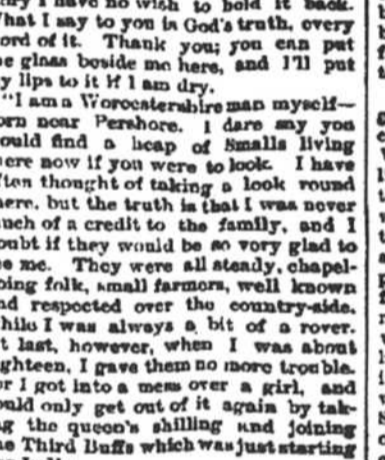
His forecast proved to be correct, for when I got to Baker Street and showed him the empty box. They had only just arrived, Holmes and I, so far as to report themselves at a station upon the way. My companion lounged in his armchair with his usual listless expression, while Small sat stolidly opposite to him with his wooden leg cocked over his sound one. As I exhibited the empty box he leaned back in his chair and laughed aloud.

"This is your doing, Small," said Athelney Jones, angrily.

"Yes, I have put it away where you shall never lay hand upon it," he cried, anxiously. "It is my treasure; and if I can't have the lot I'll take darned good care that no one else does. I tell you that no living man has any right to it, unless it is three men who are in the Andaman convict barracks and myself. I know now that I cannot have the use of it, and I know that they cannot. I have acted all through for them as much as for myself. It's been the sign of four with us always. Well, I know that they would have had me do just what I have done, and throw the treasure into the Thames rather than let it go to left or right of Sholto or of Morstan. It was not to make them rich that we did for Achnet. You'll find the treasure where the key was, and where the little Tonga is. When I saw that your hunch must catch us, I put the lot in a safe package. There are no rupees for you this journey."

"You are deceiving us, Small," said Athelney Jones, sternly. "If you had wished to throw the treasure into the Thames it would have been easier for you to have thrown box and all."

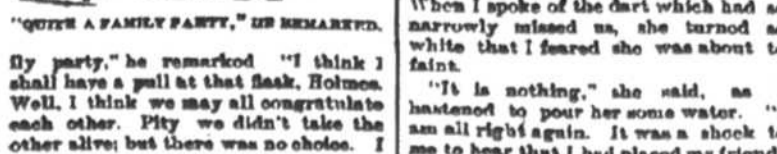
"Easier for me to throw, and easier for you to recover," he answered, with a shrewd, sidelong look. "The man that was clever enough to hunt me down is clever enough to sink an iron



HOW HE LOST HIS LEG.

To make a long story short, the colonel recommended me strongly for the post, and as the work was mostly to be done on horseback, my leg was no great obstacle, for I had enough knee left to keep a good grip on the saddle. What I had to do was to ride over the plantation, to keep an eye on the men as they worked, and to report the fillers. The work was fair, I had comfortable quarters, and altogether I was content to spend the remainder of my life in indigo-planting. Mr. Abelwhite was a kind man, and he would often drop into my little shanty and smoke a pipe with me, for while folk out there feel their hearts warm to each other as they never do here at home.

"Well, I was never in luck's way long. Suddenly, without a note of



"QUITE A FAMILY PARTY," HE REMARKED.

By party," he remarked "I think I shall have a pull at that flask, Holmes. Well, I think we may all congratulate each other. It was a shock to me to hear that I had placed my friends in such horrible peril."