

# The BRONZE BELL

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WALTERS

## SYNOPSIS.

David Amber, starting for a duck-shoot, is met by a young lady, Quain, who has been dismounted by her horse becoming frightened at the sudden appearance in the road of a lady in a high rank and wearing a mysterious little bronze bell. "The Token," into his hand disappears in the wood. The girl calls Amber by name. He in turn addresses her as Miss Sophie Farrell, daughter of Col. Farrell of the British diplomatic service in India, and visiting the Quains. Several nights later the Quain home is burglarized, and the bronze box stolen. Amber and Quain go hunting on an island and become lost and Amber is left marooned. He wanders about, finally reaches a cabin and recognizes as its occupant an old friend named Rutton, whom he last met in England, and who appears to be in hiding. When Miss Farrell is mentioned Rutton is strangely agitated. Chatterji appears and summons Rutton to a meeting of a mysterious body. Rutton seizes a revolver and dashes after Chatterji. He returns wildly excited, says he has killed the Hindu, taken poison, and when dying asks Amber to go to India on a mysterious errand.

## CHAPTER VI. (Continued).

The servant brought from Rutton's leather trunk a battered black-japaned tin box, which, upon exploration, proved to contain little that might not have been anticipated. A bankbook issued by the house of Rothschild Freres, Paris, showed a balance to the credit of H. D. Rutton of something slightly over a million francs. There was American money, chiefly in gold certificates of large denominations, to the value of, roughly, \$20,000, together with a handful of French, German and English banknotes which might have brought in exchange about \$250. In addition to these there was merely a single envelope, superscribed: "To be opened in event of my death only. H. D. R."

Amber broke the seal and read the enclosures once to himself and a second time aloud to Doggott. The date was barely a year old.

"For reasons personal to myself and sufficient," Rutton had written, "I choose not to make a formal will. I shall die, probably in the near future, by my own hand, of poison. I wish to emphasize this statement in event the circumstances surrounding my demise should appear to attach suspicion of murder upon any person or persons whatever. I am a widower and childless. What relations may survive me are distant and will never appear to claim what estate I may leave—this I know. I therefore desire that my body servant, Henry Doggott, an English citizen, shall inherit and appropriate to his own use all my property and effects, providing he be in my service at the time of my death. To facilitate his entering into possession of my means, whatever they may be, without the necessity of legal procedure of any kind, I enclose a cheque to his order upon my bankers, signed by myself and bearing the date of this memorandum. He is to fill it in with the amount remaining to my credit upon my bankbook. Should he have died or left me, however, the disposition of my effects is a matter about which I am wholly careless."

The signature was unmistakably genuine—the formal "H. D. Rutton" with which Amber was familiar. It was unwithdrawn.

The Virginian put aside the paper and offered Doggott the blank cheque on Rothschild's. "This," he said, "makes you pretty nearly independent—rich, Doggott."

"Yes, sir," Doggott took the slip of paper in a hand that trembled even as his voice, and eyed it incredulously. "I've never had anything like this before, sir; I hardly know what it means."

"It means," explained Amber, "that, when you've filled in that blank and had the money collected from the Rothschilds, you'll be worth—with what cash is here—in the neighborhood of forty-five thousand pounds sterling."

Doggott gasped, temporarily inarticulate. "Forty-five thousand pounds!"

"Mr. Amber," he declared earnestly, "I never looked for nothing like this. I—I never—I—" Quite without warning he was quiet and composed again. "Might I ask it of you as a favor, sir, to look after this—he offered to return the cheque—for a while, till I can make up my mind what to do with it?"

"Certainly," Amber took the paper, folded it and placed it in his card-case. "I'd suggest that you deposit it as soon as possible in a New York bank for collection. In the meantime, these bills are yours; you'd better take care of them yourself until you open the banking account."

"I'll keep as well in 'ere as anywhere," Doggott considered, relocking the box. "I haven't ardy any use for money, except, of course, to tide me over till I find another position."

"What!" exclaimed Amber in amazement.

"Yes, sir," affirmed Doggott respectfully. "I'm a bit too old to chynge my ways; a valet I've been all my life and a valet I'll die, sir. It's too late to think of any else."

"But with this money, Doggott—" "Beg pardon, sir, but I know; I could live easy like a gentleman if I liked—but I wouldn't be a gentleman, so what's the use of that? So the w'ye I look at it, there's naught for me but

go on valeting until I'm too old; after that the money'll be a comfort, I daresay. . . . Don't you think so, sir?"

"I believe you're right, Doggott; only your common-sense surprises me. But it makes it easier in a way. . . . Amber fell thoughtful again.

"Ow's that, sir—if I may?" "This way," said Amber: "Before he died, Mr. Rutton asked me to do him a service. I agreed. He suggested that I take you with me."

"I'm ready, sir," interrupted Doggott eagerly. "There's no gentleman I'd like to valet for better than yourself."

"But there will be dangers, Doggott—I don't know precisely what that's the rub; we'll have to travel half-way round the world and face unknown perils. If Mr. Rutton were right about it, we'll be lucky to get away with our lives."

"I'll go, sir; it was 'is wish. I'll go with you to India, Mr. Amber." "Very well. . . ." Amber spoke abstractedly, reviewing his plans.

"But," he enquired suddenly, "I didn't mention India. How did you know—?" "Why—I suppose I must 'ave guessed it, sir. It seemed so likely, knowing what I do about Mr. Rutton."

Amber sat silent, unable to bring himself to put a single question in regard to the dead man's antecedents. But after a pause the servant continued voluntarily.

"He always 'ad a deal to do with persons who came from India—niggers—I mean, natives. It didn't much matter where we'd be—London or Paris or Berlin or Rome—they'd 'unt 'im up; some 'e'd give money to and they'd go aw'y; others 'e'd be locked up with 'is study for hours, talking, talking. They'd ardy ever come the same one twice. 'E 'ated 'em all, Mr. Rutton did. And yet, sir, I always 'ad a suspicion—"

Doggott hesitated, lowered his voice, his gaze shifting uneasily to the still, shrouded figure in the corner.

"What?" demanded Amber tensely. "I always thought per'aps 'e was what we call in England a man of color, 'imself, sir."

"Doggott!" "I don't mean no 'arm, sir; it was just their 'ounding him, like, and 'is being a dark-complected man the same as them, and speakin' their language so ready, that made me think it. At least 'e might 'ave 'ad a little of their blood in 'im, sir. Things 'd seem unaccountable otherwise," concluded Doggott vaguely.

"It's impossible!" cried Amber. "Yes, sir; at least, I mean I 'ope so, sir. Not that it'd myke any difference to me, the w'ye I felt towards 'im. 'E was a gentleman, white or black. I'd 've died for 'im any 'd'y."

"Doggott!" The Virginian had risen and was pacing excitedly to and fro. "Doggott! don't ever repeat one word of this to man or woman—while you're faithful to the memory of Mr. Rutton."

The servant stared, visibly impressed. "Very good, Mr. Amber. I'll remember, sir. I don't ordinarily gossip, sir; but you and him being so thick, and everything 'appenin' to-night so 'orrible, I forgot myself. I 'ope you'll excuse me, sir."

"God in heaven!" cried the young man hoarsely. "It can't be true!" He flung himself into his chair, burying his face in his hands. "It can't!"

Yet irresistibly the conviction was being forced upon him that Doggott had surmised aright. Circumstances backed up circumstance within his knowledge of his experience with the man, all seeming to prove incontrovertibly the truth of what at the first blush had seemed so incredible. What did he, Amber, know of Rutton's parentage or history that would refute the calm belief of the body-servant of the dead man?

And then Amber's intelligence was smitten by a thought as by a club; and he began to tremble violently, uncontrollably, being weakened by fatigue and the strain of that endless, terrible night. A strangled cry escaped him without his knowledge; "Sophia!"

Sophia Farrell, the woman he had promised to wed, nay even the woman he loved with all his being—a half-breed, a mulatto! His mind sickened with the horror of that thought.

His very soul seemed to shudder and his reason cried out that the thing could never be. . . . Yet in his heart of hearts still he loved her, still desired her with all his strength and will; in his heart there was no wavering. Whatever Rutton had been, whatever his daughter might be, he loved her. And more, the honor of the Ambers was in pledge, holding him steadfast to his purpose to seek her out in India or wherever she might be and to bear her away from the unnamed danger that threatened her—even to marry her, if she would have him. He had promised; his word had passed; there could now be no withdrawal.

An hour elapsed, its passing rancously emphasized by the tick clock. Amber remained at the table, his head upon it, his face hidden by his arms, so still that Doggott would have thought him sleeping but for his uneven breathing.

At length the young man called

him and Doggott found him sitting up, with a haggard and careworn face, but with the sane light of a man composed in his eyes.

"Doggott," he asked in an even, toneless voice, "have you ever mentioned to anybody your suspicion about Mr. Rutton's race?"

"Only to you, sir."

"That's good. And you won't?" "No, sir."

"Have you," continued Amber, looking away and speaking slowly, "ever heard him mention his marriage?"

"Never, sir. 'E says in that paper 'e was a widower; I fancy the lady must have died before I entered 'is service. 'E was always a lonely man, all the 15 year I've been with 'im, keepin' very much to 'imself, sir."

Doggott disappeared to prepare a meal, but within five minutes a gunshot sounded startlingly near at hand. The Virginian's appearance at the door was coincident with a clear hail of "Aho-oy, Amber!"—unmistakably Quain's voice, raised at a distance of not over 200 yards.

Amber's answering cry quavered with joy. And with a bear-like rush Quain topped the nearest dune, dropped down into the hollow, and was upon him.

"By the Lord Harry!" he cried, almost embracing Amber in his excitement and relief; "I'd almost given you up for good and all!"

"And you," said Amber, watching curiously and somewhat distrustfully a second man follow Quain into the vale. "Who's that?" he demanded.

"Only Antons. We've him to thank. He remembered this old camp here—I'd completely forgotten it—and was sure you'd taken refuge in it. Come inside." He dragged Amber in, the Portuguese following. "Let's have a look at you by the light. Lord! you seem to be pretty comfortable—and I've been worrying myself sick for fear you—"

He swept the room with an approving glance which passed over Doggott and became transfixed as it rested upon the hammock-bed with its burden; and his jaw fell. "What's this? What's this?" He swung upon Amber, appraising with relentless eyes the havoc his night's experience had wrought upon the man. "You look like hell!" he exploded. "What's up here? Eh?"

Amber turned to Doggott. "Take Antons out there with you and keep him until I call, please. This is Mr. Quain; I want to talk with him un-

snapped the high nervous tension which had sustained Amber. He was now on the edge of collapse and showed it plainly. But two circumstances aided him to recover his grip upon himself: Quain's compassionate consideration in forbearing to press his story from him, and Doggott's opportune appearance with a pot of coffee, steaming and black. Two cups of this restored Amber to a condition somewhat approaching the normal. He lit a cigarette and began to talk.

For all his affection for and confidence in his friend, there were things he might not tell Quain; wherefore he couched his narrative in the fewest possible words and was miserably in detail. Of the coming of the babu and his going Amber was fairly free to speak; he suppressed little if any of that episode. Moreover, he had forgotten to remove the Token from his finger, and Quain instantly remarked it and demanded an explanation. But of the nature of the errand on which he was to go, Amber said nothing; it was, he averred, Rutton's private business. Nor did he touch upon the question of Rutton's nationality. Sophia Farrell he never mentioned.

Nevertheless, he said enough to render Quain thoughtful. "You've set on this thing, I suppose?" he asked some time after Amber had concluded.

"Set upon it, dear man? I've no choice. I must go—I promised."

Quain went to the hammock-bed, turned back the sheet, and for several minutes lingered there, scrutinizing the stony, upturned face.

"So!" he said, coming back. "Here's news that'll help you some. You were blind not to see it yourself. That man's—was, I should say—a Rajput." He waited for the comment which did not come. "You knew it?"

"I . . . suspected, tonight."

"It's as plain as print; the mark of his caste is all over him. But perhaps he was able to disguise it a little with his manner—alive; undoubtedly, I'd say. He was a genius of his kind—a prodigy; a mental giant. That translation of the 'Tantras'—! Wonderful! . . . Well, he's gone his own way; God be with him."

"As soon as possible—sooner. I've not a day to lose—not an hour."

"Urgent as that, eh?" Quain

peered keenly into his face. "I wish I knew what you know. I wish to heaven I might go with you. But I'm married now—and respectable. The morning train leaves Nokomis at 7:30. You can make that, if you must. But you need sleep—rest."

"I'll get that on the train."

"Knew you'd say that. Very well. This is Tuesday. The Mauretania—or the Lusitania, I don't know which—sails tomorrow. You can catch that, too. It's the quickest route, eastwards."

"But I've decided to go west."

"That means a week more, and you said you were in a hurry."

"I am; but by going westwards it's barely possible I may be able to transit or wind up the business on the way."

As a matter of fact Amber was hoping the Rolands, with Sophia Farrell, might linger somewhere en route, remembering that the girl had discussed a tentative project to stop over between steamers at Yokohama.

"Very well," Quain gave in; "you're the doctor. Now as for things here, make your mind easy. I'll take charge and keep the affair quiet. There's no reason I can see for its ever getting out. I can answer for myself and Antons; and the two of us can wind things up. Get ready now to trot along, and I'll take care of everything."

"There's no way of thanking you."

"That's a comfort. Call Doggott now and tell him to get ready. You haven't much time to lose."

While they waited for the servant to pack his hand-bag—it being obvious that to take the trunks with them was not feasible; while Quain was to care for Amber's things at Tanglewood until his return from India—Quain was possessed by an idea

which he was pleased to christen an inspiration. "It's this," he explained: "What do you know about Calcutta?" "Little or nothing. I've been there—that's about all."

"Precisely. Now I know the place, and I know you'll never find this goldsmith in the Machua bazar without a guide. The ordinary, common-or-garden guide is out of the question, of course. But I happen to know an Englishman there who knows more about the dark side of India than any other ten men in the world. He'll be invaluable to you, and you can trust him as you would Doggott. Go to him in my name—you'll need no other introduction—and tell him what you've told me."

"That's impossible. Rutton expressly prohibited my mentioning his name to any one in India."

"Oh, very well. You haven't have you? And you won't have to. I'll

take care of that, when I write and tell Labretouche you're coming."

"What name?" "Labretouche. Why? You don't know him?"

"No; but Rutton did. Rutton got that poison from him."

Quain whistled, his eyes round. "Did, eh? So much the better; he'll probably know all about Rutton and'll take a keener interest."

"But you forget—" "Hang your promise. I'm not bound by it and this is business—blacker business than you seem to realize, Davy. You're bent on jumping blindfold and with your hands tied into the seething pool of infamy and intrigue that is India. Don't think for an instant that I'm going to let you go without doing everything I can to make things as pleasant as possible for you. . . . No; Labretouche is your man."

And to this Quain held inflexibly; so that, in the end, Amber, unable to move him, was obliged to leave the matter in his hands.

A sullen and portentous dawn hung in the sky when the little party left the cabin.

Between two sand hills the Bengali lay supine, a huddled heap of garish color—scarlet, yellow, tan—against the cold bluish-gray of snow.

At a word from Quain the Portuguese paused and began to dig. Quain, Amber and Doggott went on a little distance, then, by mutual consent, halted within sight of Antons.

"I wouldn't leave him if I were you," Amber told Quain, nodding back at the Portuguese. "It mightn't be safe, with that other devil skulking round—heaven knows where."

"Right-O!" agreed Quain. His hand sought Amber's. "Goodby, and God be with you," he said huskily.

Amber tightened his clasp upon the man's fingers. "I can't improve on that, Tony," said he with a feeble "Goodby, and God be with you." He dropped his hand and turned away. "Come along, Doggott."

The servant led the way baywards. Behind them the angry morning blazed brighter in the sky.

In the edge of the shore they found a rowboat and, launching it, embarked for the power boat, which swung at her mooring in deeper water. When they were aboard the latter, Doggott took charge of the motor, leaving to Amber the wheel, and with little delay they were in motion.

As their distance from the shore increased Amber glanced back. The island rested low against the flaming sky, a shape of empurpled shadows, scarcely more substantial to the vision than the rack of cloud above. In the dark sedges the pools, here and there, caught the light from above and shone blood-red. And suddenly the attention of the Virginian was arrested by the discovery of a human figure—a man standing upon a dune—some distance inland, and staring steadfastly after the boat. He seemed of extraordinary height and very thin; upon his head there was a turban; his arms were folded. While Amber watched he held his pose, a living menace—like some fantastic statue bulking black against the grim red dawn.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Fences Ward Off Rabbits.

Owing to the increase of rabbits in certain parts of Australia a movement has been started in the Armidale district to construct a barrier fence along the eastern side of Central New England. This will serve to ward off the rodents, which now abound in the rough country along the edge of the tableland. These rabbits are beginning to crowd westwards, and are already making their presence felt on the adjoining country. The suggestion is to link up the rabbit-proof fences which already exist along the edge of the more settled area from Walcha to Glen Innes districts, and thus cut off the rough country where the rabbits are thick, and where there is no chance of keeping them under.

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# THAT AWFUL BACKACHE

Cured by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound

Morton's Gap, Kentucky.—"I suffered two years with female disorders, my health was very bad and I had a continual backache which was simply awful. I could not stand on my feet long enough to cook a meal's victuals without my back nearly killing me, and I would have such dragging sensations I could hardly bear it. I had soreness in each side, could not stand tight clothing, and was irregular. I was completely run down. On advice I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and Liver Pills and am enjoying good health. It is now more than two years and I have not had an ache or pain since. I do all my own work, washing and everything, and never have the backache any more. I think your medicine is grand and I praise it to all my neighbors. If you think my testimony will help others you may publish it."—Mrs. OLLIE WOODALL, Morton's Gap, Kentucky.

Backache is a symptom of organic weakness or derangement. If you have backache don't neglect it. To get permanent relief you must reach the root of the trouble. Nothing we know of will do this so surely as Lydia E. Pinkham's Compound.

Write to Mrs. Pinkham, at Lynn, Mass., for special advice. Your letter will be absolutely confidential, and the advice free.

Plenty of Stability.

A western mining prospector was paying his first visit to New York.

"What do you think of it?" asked the proud Gothamite as he pointed out the skyscrapers.

"Well," replied the miner, "it looks like a permanent camp all right."—Success Magazine.

Reason Enough.

"What's the matter, old man?" asked the sympathetic friend.

"Well," answered the judge, "you see, my wife and I have never been able to get along very well. The relationship has become so unbearable that we both want a divorce."

"I see," answered the friend. "Then why don't you get one?"

"Because," answered the judge, sadly, "I have sent all the bogus divorce lawyers to the penitentiary."

EASY.

Jessie—How does Sue manage to win so many guessing contests?

Joe—Her father is in charge of the local weather bureau, and she gets him to predict the result of the contest, and then she guesses the other way.

AT THE PARSONAGE.

Coffee Runs Riot No Longer.

"Wife and I had a serious time of it while we were coffee drinkers."

"She had gastritis, headaches, belching and would have periods of sickness, while I secured a daily headache that became chronic."

"We naturally sought relief by drugs without avail, for it is now plain enough that no drug will cure the disease another drug (coffee) sets up, particularly, so long as the drug which causes the trouble is continued."

"Finally we thought we would try leaving off coffee and using Postum. I noticed that my headaches disappeared like magic, and my old 'trembling' nervousness left. One day wife said, 'Do you know my gastritis has gone?'"

"One can hardly realize what Postum has done for us."

"Then we began to talk to others. Wife's father and mother were both coffee drinkers and sufferers. Their headaches left entirely a short time after they changed from coffee to Postum."

"I began to enquire among my parishioners and found to my astonishment that numbers of them use Postum in place of coffee. Many of the ministers who have visited our parsonage have become enthusiastic champions of Postum." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pgs. "There's a reason."