

# King of the Khyber Rifles

## A Romance of Adventure

By TALBOT MUNDY  
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### CHAPTER XVI—Continued.

"Listen, while I tell you all from the beginning! The sarkar sent me to discover what may be this 'Heart of the Hills' men talk about. I found these caves—and this! I told the sarkar a little about the caves, and nothing at all about the sleepers. But even at that they only believed the third of what I said. And I—back in Delhi I bought books. When I had read enough I came back here to think. I knew enough now to be sure that the sleeper is a Roman and the 'Heart of the Hills' a Grecian maid. She is like me. That is why I know she drove him to make an empire, choosing for a beginning these 'Hills' where Rome had never penetrated. I have seen it all in dreams. And because I was all alone, I saw that I would need skill and much patience. So I began to learn.

"Times I would go to Delhi and dance there a little, and a little in other places—once indeed before a viceroy, and once for the king of England. And all the while I kept looking for the man—the man who should be like the sleeper, even as I am like her whom he loved! There was none like the sleeper until you came. And when the world war broke—for it is a world war, a world war, I tell you—I thought at last that I must manage all alone. And then you came!

"But there were many I tried—many—especially after I abandoned the thought that the man must resemble the Sleeper. There was a prince of Germany who came to India on a hunting trip. You remember?"

King pricked his ears and allowed himself to grin, for in common with many hundred other men who had been lieutenants at the time, he would have given an ear and an eye to know the truth of that affair. The grin transfigured his whole appearance, until Yasmini beamed on him.

"I'm listening, princess!" he reminded her.

"Well—he came—the prince of Germany. I offered him India first, then Asia, then the world—even as I now offer them to you. The sarkar sent him to see me dance, and he stayed to hear me talk. When I saw at last that he has the head and heart of a hyena I spat in his face and threw food at him.

"He complained to the sarkar against me, so I told the sarkar some—not much, indeed, but enough—of the things he and his officers had told me. And the sarkar said at once that there was both cholera and bubonic plague, and he must go home! His officers laughed behind his back. Ever since that time there have always been Germans in communication with me, and I have not once been in the dark about Germany's plans—although they have always thought I am in the dark.

"I went on looking for my men. There came that old Bull-with-a-beard, Muhammad Anim. He thinks he is the

bombs! Dynamite bombs have been coming into Khinjan month by month these three years! Bombs and rifles and cartridges! Muhammad Anim's men, whom he trusts because he must, hid it all in a cave I showed them, that they think, and he thinks, has only one entrance to it. Muhammad Anim sealed it, and he has the key. But I have the ammunition!

"There was another way out of that cave, although there is none now, for I have blocked it. My men, whom I trust because I know them, carried everything out by the back way, and I have it all. We, my warrior, when Muhammad Anim gets the word from Germany and gives the sign, and the 'Hills' are afire, and the whole East roars in the flame of the Jihad—we will put ourselves at the head of that Jihad, and the East and the world is ours!"

King smiled at her.

"The East isn't very well armed," he objected. "Mere numbers—"

"Numbers?" She laughed at him. "The West has the West by the throat! It is tearing itself! They will drag in America! There will be no armed nation with its hands free—and while those wolves fight, other wolves shall come and steal the meat! The old gods, who built these caves in the 'Hills,' are laughing! They are getting ready! Thou and I—"

As she coupled him and herself together in one plan she read the changed expression of his face—the very quickly passing cloud that even the best-trained man cannot control.

"I know!" she asserted, sitting upright and coming out of her dream to face facts as their master. She looked more lovely now than ever, although twice as dangerous. "You are thinking of your brother—of his head! That I am a murderess who can never be your friend! Is that not so?"

He did not answer, but his eyes may have betrayed something, for she looked as if he had struck her.

"Oh, I have needed you so much, these many years! And now that you have come you want to hate me because you think I killed your brother! Listen!

"Without my leave, Muhammad Anim sent five hundred men on a foray toward the Khyber. Bull-with-a-beard needed an Englishman's head, for proof for a spy of his who could not enter Khinjan caves. They trapped your brother outside All Masjid with fifty of his men. They took his head after a long fight, leaving more than a hundred of their own in payment.

"Bull-with-a-beard was pleased. But he was careless, and I sent my men to steal the head from his men. I needed evidence for you. And I swear to you—I swear to you by my gods who have brought us two together—that I first knew it was your brother's head when you held it up in the Cavern of Earth's Drink! Then I knew it could not be anybody else's head!"

"Why did he throw it to them, then?" he asked her, and he was aware of her scorn before the words had left his lips.

She leaned back again and looked at him through lowered eyes, as if she must study him all anew. She seemed to find it hard to believe that he really thought so in the commonplace.

"What is a head to me, or to you—a head with no life in it—carrion—compared to what shall be? Would you have known it was his head if you had thrown it to them when I ordered you?"

He understood. Some of her blood was Russian, some Indian. She stood up, and of course he stood up, too. So, she on the footstool of the throne, her eyes and his were on a level. She laid hands on his shoulders and looked into his eyes until he could see his own twin portraits in hers, that were glowing sunset pools. Heart of the Hills? The heart of all the East seemed to burn in her, rebellious!

"Are you believing me?" she asked him.

He nodded, for no man could have helped believing her. As she knew the truth, she was telling it to him, as surely as she was doing her skillful best to mesmerize him. But the secret service is made up of men trained against that.

"Come!" she said, and stepping down she took his arm.

She led him past the thrones to other leather curtains in a wall, and through them into long hewn passages from cavern to cavern, until even the Rock of Gibraltar seemed like a doll's house in comparison. She showed him a cave containing great forges, where the bronze had been worked, with charcoal still piled up against the wall at one end. There were copper and tin ingots in there of a shape he had never seen.

"I know where they came from," she told him. "I made it my business to know all the 'Hills.' I know things the hillmen's great-great-grandfathers forgot! I know old workings that would make a modern nation rich! We should have money when we need it, never fear! We shall conquer India while the English backs are turned and the best troops are overseas."

Then she called him her warrior and her well-beloved and took him down

a long passage, holding his hand all the way, to show him slots cut in the floor for the use of archers.

"You entered Khinjan caves by a tunnel under this floor, well-beloved. There is no other entrance!"

By this time "well-beloved" was her name for him, although there was no air of finality about it. It was as if she paved the way for use of Athelstan and that was a sacred name. It was amazing how she conveyed that impression without using words.

"The Sleeper cut these slots for his archers. Then he had another thought and set these cauldrons in place, to boil oil to pour down. Could any army force a way through by the route by which you entered?"

"No," he said, marveling at the ton-weight copper cauldrons, one to each hole.

"And I have more than a thousand Mauser rifles here, and more than a million rounds of ammunition!"

She showed him a cave in which boxes were stacked in high, square piles.

"Dynamite bombs!" she boasted. "How many boxes? I forget! Too

many to count! Women brought them all the way from the sea, for even Muhammad Anim could not make Afridi riflemen carry loads. I have wondered what Bull-with-a-beard will say when he misses his precious dynamite!"

"You've enough in there to blow the mountain up!" King advised her. "If somebody fired a pistol in here, the least would be the collapse of this floor into the tunnel below with a hundred thousand tons of rock on top of it. There is no other way out!"

"Earth's Drink!" she said, and he made a grimace that set her to laughing.

But she looked at him darkly after that and he got the impression that the thought was not new to her, and that she did not thank him for the advice. He began to wonder whether there was anything she had not thought of—any loophole she had left him for escape—any issue she had not foreseen.

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Past caves where provisions of every imaginable kind were stored, sufficient for an army, she led him to where her guards slept together with the thirty special men whom King had brought with him up the Khyber.

"I have five hundred others whom I dare trust to come in here," she said, "but they shall stay outside until I want them. A mystery is a good thing! It is good for them all to wonder what I keep in here! It is good to keep this sanctuary; it makes for power!"

Pressing very close to him, she guided him down another dark tunnel until he and she stood together in the jaws of the round hole above the river, looking down into the Cavern of Earth's Drink.

Nobody looked up at them. The thousands were too busy working up a frenzy for the great Jihad that was to come.

Stacks of wood had been piled up, six-man high in the middle, and then fired. The heat came upward like a furnace blast, and the smoke was a great red cloud among the stalactites. Round and round that holocaust the thousands did their sword-dance, yelling as the devils yelled at Khinjan's birth. They needed no wine to craze them. They were drunk with fanaticism, frenzy lust!

"You know where is Dar es Salaam?" asked Yasmini.

"East Africa," said King.

"And English warships watch the Persian gulf and all the seas from India to Aden?"

King nodded.

"Have the English any ships that dive under water, in these waters?"

"I think not. I'm not sure, but I think not."

"The grenades you have seen, and the rifles and cartridges were sent by the Germans to Dar es Salaam, to suppress a rising of African natives. Does it begin to grow clear to you, my friend?"

He smiled as well as nodded this time.

"Muhammad Anim used to wait with a hundred women at a certain place on the seashore. What he found on the beach there he made the women carry on their heads to Khinjan. So they worked, he and the Germans, for I know not how long—with the English watching the seas as on land lean wolves comb the valleys."

"What were the terms of the German bargain?" King asked her. "What stipulations did they make?"

"With the tribes? None! They were too wise. A Jihad was decided on in Germany's good time; and when that time should come ten rifles in the 'Hills' and a thousand cartridges would mean not only a hundred dead Englishmen, but ten times that number busily engaged. Why bargain when there was no need? A rifle is what it is. The 'Hills' are the 'Hills'!"

"Tell me about your lamp oil, then," he said. "You burn enough oil in Khinjan caves to light Bombay! That does not come in by submarine. The sarkar knows how much of everything goes up the Khyber. I have seen the printed lists myself—a few hundred cans of kerosene—a few score gallons of vegetable oil, and all bound for farther north. There isn't enough oil pressed among the 'Hills' to keep these caves going for a day. Where does it all come from?"

She laughed, as a mother laughs at a child's questions, finding delicious enjoyment in instructing him.

"There are three villages, not two days' march from Khabul, where men have lived for centuries by pressing oil for Khinjan caves," she said. "The Sleeper fetched his oil thence. The Sleeper left gold in here. Those who kept the Sleeper's secret paid for the oil in gold. No Afghan troubled why oil was needed, so long as gold paid for it. And I know where the Sleeper dug his gold!"

They sat in silence for a long while after that, she looking at the table, with its ink and pens and paper, and he thinking, with hands clasped round one knee; for it is wiser to think than to talk, even when a woman is near who can read thoughts that are not guarded.

"Athelstan!" she said at last. "It sounds like a king's name! What was the Sleeper's name? Was there such a name in Rome?"

"No," he said.

"What does it mean?" she asked him.

"Slow of resolution!"

She clapped her hands.

"Another sign!" she laughed. "The gods love me! There always is a sign when I need one! Slow of resolution, art thou? I will speed thy resolution, well-beloved! You were quick to change from King of the Khyber Rifle regiment, to Kurram Khan. Change now into my warrior—my dear lord—my King again!"

She rose, with arms outstretched to him. All her dancer's art, her untamed poetry, her witchery, were expressed in a movement. Her eyes melted as they met his. And since he stood up, too, for manner's sake, they were eye to eye again—almost lip to lip. Her sweet breath was in his nostrils.

In another moment she was in his arms, clinging to him, kissing him. And if any man has felt on his lips the kiss of all the scented glamour of the East, let him tell what King's sensations were. Let Caesar, who was kissed by Cleopatra, come to life and talk of it!

King's arm is strong, and he did not stand like an idol. His head might swim, but she, too, tasted the delirium of human passion loosed and given for a mad, swift minute. If his heart swelled to bursting, so must hers have done.

"I have needed you!" she whispered. "I have been all alone! I have needed you!"

Then her lips sought his again, and neither spoke.

Neither knew how long it was before she began to understand that he, not she, was winning. The human answer to her appeal was full. He gave her all she asked of admiration, kiss for kiss. And then—her arms did not cling so tightly, although his strong right arm was like a stanchion. Because he knew that he, not she, was winning, he picked her up in his arms and kissed her as if she were a child. And then, because he knew he had won, he set her on her feet on the foot-

stool of the throne, and even pitted her.

She felt the pity. As she tossed the hair back over her shoulder her eyes glowed with another meaning—dangerous—like a tiger's glare.

"You pity me? You think because I love you, you can feed my love on a plate to the Indian government? You think my love is a weapon to use against me? Your love for me may wait for a better time? You are not so wise as I thought you, Athelstan!"

But he knew he had won. His heart was singing down inside him as it had not sung since he left India behind. But he stood quite humbly before her, for had he not kissed her? He knew he had won. Yet if anyone had asked him how he knew that he had won, he never could have told.

"If you were to go back to India except as its conqueror, they would strip the buttons from your uniform and tear your medals off and shoot you in the back against a wall! My signature is known in India and I am known. What I write will be believed. Rewa Gunga shall take a letter. He shall take two—four—witnesses. He shall see them on their way and shall give them the letter when they reach the Khyber and shall send them into India with it. Have no fear. Bull-with-a-beard shall not intercept them, as I have intercepted his men. When Rewa Gunga shall return and tell me he saw my letter on its way down the Khyber, then we shall talk again—you and I! Come!"

She took his arm, as if her threats had been caresses. Triumph shone from her eyes. She tossed her brave chin and laughed at him, only encouraged to greater daring by his attitude, and by the time they reached the ebony table and she had taken the pen and dipped it in the ink, she was chuckling to herself as if the one good joke had grown into a hundred.

She wrote in Urdu, with an easy, flowing hand, and in two minutes she had thrown sand on the letter and had given it to King to read. It was not like a woman's letter. It did not waste a word.

Your Captain King has been too much trouble. He has taken money from the Germans. He adopted native dress. He called himself Kurram Khan. He slew his own brother at night in the Khyber pass. These men will say that he carried the head to Khinjan, and their word is true, for I, Yasmini, saw. He used the head for a passport, to obtain admittance. He proclaimed a Jihad! He urges invasion of India! He held up his brother's head before five thousand men and boasted of the murder. The next you shall hear of your Captain King of the Khyber rifles, he will be leading a Jihad into India. You would have better trusted me.

YASMINI.

He read it and passed it back to her.

"They will not disbelieve me," she said, triumphant as the very devil over a branded soul all hot. "They will be sure you are mad, and they will believe the witnesses!"

"Rewa Gunga shall start with this today!" she said, with more amusement than malice. After that she was still for a moment, watching his eyes, at a loss to understand his carelessness. He seemed strangely unabashed. His folded arms were not defiant, but neither were they yielding.

"I love you, Athelstan!" she said. "Do you love me?"

"I think you are very beautiful, princess!"

"Beautiful? I know I am beautiful. But is that all?"

"Clever!" he added.

She began to drum with the golden dagger hilt on the table, and to look dangerous, which is not to infer by any means that she looked less lovely.

"Do you love me?" she asked.

"Forgive me, princess, but you forget. I was born east of Mecca, but my folk were from the West. We are slower to love than some other nations. With us love is more often growth, less often surrender at first sight. I think you are wonderful!"

She nodded and tucked the sealed letter in her bosom.

"It shall go," she said darkly, "and another letter with it. They looted your brother's body. In his pocket they found the note you wrote him, and that you asked him to destroy! That will be evidence. That will convince! Come!"

He followed her through leather curtains again and down the dark pas-

### CHAPTER XVII.

minutes, gazing at the Sleeper and his queen. And from the new angle from which King saw him the Sleeper's likeness to himself was actually startling. Startling—weird—like an incantation were Yasmini's words when at last she spoke.

"Muhammad lied! He lied in his teeth! His sons have multiplied his lie! Siddhattha, the Buddha, was before Muhammad and he knew more! He told of the wheel of things, and there is a wheel! Yet, what knew the Buddha of the wheel? He who spoke of Dharma (the customs of the law) not knowing Dharma! This is true—of old there was a wish of the gods—of the old gods. And so these two were. There is a wish again now of the old gods. So, are we two not as they two were? It is the same wish, and lo! We are ready, this man and I. We will obey, ye gods—ye old gods!"

She raised her arms and, going closer to the bed, stood there in an attitude of mystic reverence, giving and receiving blessings.

"Dear gods!" she prayed. "Dear old gods—older than these 'Hills'—show me in a vision what their fault was—why these two were ended before the end!"

"I know all the other things ye have shown me. I know the world's silly creeds have made it mad, and it must red itself, and this man and I shall reap where the nations sowed—if only we obey! Wherein, ye old dear gods, who love me, did these two disobey? I pray you, tell me in a vision!"

She shook her head and sighed. Sadness seemed to have crept over her, like a cold mist from the night. It was as if she could dimly see her plans foredoomed, and yet hoped on in spite of it. The fatalism that she scorned as Muhammad's lie held her in its grip, and her natural courage fought with it. Womanlike, she turned to King in that minute and confided to him her very inmost thoughts. And he, without an inkling as to how she must feel, yet knew that she must, and pitied her.

"Have you seen that breast under the armor?" she asked suddenly. "Come nearer! Come and look! Did she kill him? Was that a dagger-stab in his breast? I found perfume in these caves—great jars of it, and I use it always. I think that scent is the preservative. Athelstan—listen! I think she stabbed him rather than see him fall, and then swallowed poison! Afterward their servants laid them there. She smiles in death because she knew the wheel will turn and that death dies too! He looks grim because he knew less than she. It is always woman who understands and man who falls! I think she stabbed him. She should have loved him better, and then there would have been no need. I will love you better than she loved him!"

She turned and devoured him with her eyes, so that it needed all his manhood to hold him back from being her slave that minute. For in that minute she felt no charm exercised—sex—mesmerism—bestly—flattery (her eyes could flatter—as a dumb dog's flatter a faintman)—grace unutterable—mystic—she used every art on him she knew. Yet he stood the test.

"Even if you fall me, well-beloved, I will love you! The gods who gave you me will know how to make you love; and lessons are to learn. If you fall me I will forgive, knowing that in the end the gods will never let you fall me! You are mine, and earth is ours, for the old gods intend it so!"

She seemed to expect him to take her in his arms again; but he stood respectfully and made no answer, nor any move. Grim and strong his jaw was, like the Sleeper's, and the dark hair three days old on it softened nothing of its lines. His Roman nose and steady, dark, full eyes suggested no compromise. Yet he was good to look at. She had not lied when she said she loved him, and he understood her and was sorry. But he did not feel sorry, nor did he offer any argument to quench her love. He was a servant of the raj; his life and his love had been India's since the day he first buckled on his spurs, and Yasmini would not have understood that.

Nor did she understand that, even supposing he had loved her with all his heart, not on any conditions would he have admitted it until absolutely free, any more than that if she crucified him he would love her the same, supposing that he loved her at all. Nor did she trust the "old gods" too well, or let them work unaided.

"Come with me, Athelstan!" she said. She took his arm—found little jeweled slippers in a closet hewn in the wall—put them on and led him to the curtains he had entered by. She led down the steps, and at the foot told him to put on his slippers, as if he were a child. Then, hurrying as if those opal eyes of hers were indifferent to dark or daylight, she picked her way among bowlders that he could feel but not see, along a floor that was only smooth in places, for a distance that was long enough by two or three times to lose him altogether. When he looked back there was no sign of red lights behind him. And when he looked forward, there was a dim outer light in front and a whiff of the cool fresh air that presages the dawn!

She led him through a gap on to a ledge of rock that hung thousands of feet above the home of thunder, a ledge less than six feet wide, less than twenty long, tilted back toward the cliff. There they sat, watching the stars. And there they saw the dawn come.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

'Arking Back.

The Vicar—What a dreadful plague of caterpillars, John!

John—Ah; an 'oo let loose the first pair of 'em? Noah!—Sketch.

They will Lay Waste India! They Will Butcher and Plunder and Burn! It Will Be What They Leave of India That We Shall Build Anew and Govern."

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Yasmini shouted in her ear; for the din, mingling with the river's voice, made a volcano chord. "They will lay waste India! They will butcher and plunder and burn! It will be what they leave of India that we shall build anew and govern, for India herself will rise to help them lay her own cities waste! It is always so! Conquests always are so! Come!"

She tugged at him and led him back along the tunnel and through other tunnels to the throne room, where she made him sit at her feet again. The food had been cleared away in their absence. Instead, on the ebony table there were pens and ink and paper.

They sat in silence for a long while after that, she looking at the table, with its ink and pens and paper, and he thinking, with hands clasped round one knee; for it is wiser to think than to talk, even when a woman is near who can read thoughts that are not guarded.

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Your Captain King has been too much trouble. He has taken money from the Germans. He adopted native dress. He called himself Kurram Khan. He slew his own brother at night in the Khyber pass. These men will say that he carried the head to Khinjan, and their word is true, for I, Yasmini, saw. He used the head for a passport, to obtain admittance. He proclaimed a Jihad! He urges invasion of India! He held up his brother's head before five thousand men and boasted of the murder. The next you shall hear of your Captain King of the Khyber rifles, he will be leading a Jihad into India. You would have better trusted me.

YASMINI.

He read it and passed it back to her.

"They will not disbelieve me," she said, triumphant as the very devil over a branded soul all hot. "They will be sure you are mad, and they will believe the witnesses!"

"Rewa Gunga shall start with this today!" she said, with more amusement than malice. After that she was still for a moment, watching his eyes, at a loss to understand his carelessness. He seemed strangely unabashed. His folded arms were not defiant, but neither were they yielding.

"I love you, Athelstan!" she said. "Do you love me?"

"I think you are very beautiful, princess!"

"Beautiful? I know I am beautiful. But is that all?"

"Clever!" he added.

She began to drum with the golden dagger hilt on the table, and to look dangerous, which is not to infer by any means that she looked less lovely.

"Do you love me?" she asked.

"Forgive me, princess, but you forget. I was born east of Mecca, but my folk were from the West. We are slower to love than some other nations. With us love is more often growth, less often surrender at first sight. I think you are wonderful!"

She nodded and tucked the sealed letter in her bosom.

"It shall go," she said darkly, "and another letter with it. They looted your brother's body. In his pocket they found the note you wrote him, and that you asked him to destroy! That will be evidence. That will convince! Come!"

He followed her through leather curtains again and down the dark pas-

minutes, gazing at the Sleeper and his queen. And from the new angle from which King saw him the Sleeper's likeness to himself was actually startling. Startling—weird—like an incantation were Yasmini's words when at last she spoke.

"Muhammad lied! He lied in his teeth! His sons have multiplied his lie! Siddhattha, the Buddha, was before Muhammad and he knew more! He told of the wheel of things, and there is a wheel! Yet, what knew the Buddha of the wheel? He who spoke of Dharma (the customs of the law) not knowing Dharma! This is true—of old there was a wish of the gods—of the old gods. And so these two were. There is a wish again now of the old gods. So, are we two not as they two were? It is the same wish, and lo! We are ready, this man and I. We will obey, ye gods—ye old gods!"

She raised her arms and, going closer to the bed, stood there in an attitude of mystic reverence, giving and receiving blessings.

"Dear gods!" she prayed. "Dear old gods—older than these 'Hills'—show me in a vision what their fault was—why these two were ended before the end!"

"I know all the other things ye have shown me. I know the world's silly creeds have made it mad, and it must red itself, and this man and I shall reap where the nations sowed—if only we obey! Wherein, ye old dear gods, who love me, did these two disobey? I pray you, tell me in a vision!"

She shook her head and sighed. Sadness seemed to have crept over her, like a cold mist from the night. It was as if she could dimly see her plans foredoomed, and yet hoped on in spite of it. The fatalism that she scorned as Muhammad's lie held her in its grip, and her natural courage fought with it. Womanlike, she turned to King in that minute and confided to him her very inmost thoughts. And he, without an inkling as to how she must feel, yet knew that she must, and pitied her.

"Have you seen that breast under the armor?" she asked suddenly. "Come nearer! Come and look! Did she kill him? Was that a dagger-stab in his breast? I found perfume in these caves—great jars of it, and I use it always. I think that scent is the preservative. Athelstan—listen! I think she stabbed him rather than see him fall, and then swallowed poison! Afterward their servants laid them there. She smiles in death because she knew the wheel will turn and that death dies too! He looks grim because he knew less than she. It is always woman who understands and man who falls! I think she stabbed him. She should have loved him better, and then there would have been no need. I will love you better than she loved him!"

She turned and devoured him with her eyes, so that it needed all his manhood to hold him back from being her slave that minute. For in that minute she felt no charm exercised—sex—mesmerism—bestly—flattery (her eyes could flatter—as a dumb dog's flatter a faintman)—grace unutterable—mystic—she used every art on him she knew. Yet he stood the test.

"Even if you fall me, well-beloved, I will love you! The gods who gave you me will know how to make you love; and lessons are to learn. If you fall me I will forgive, knowing that in the end the gods will never let you fall me! You are mine, and earth is ours, for the old gods intend it so!"

She seemed to expect him to take her in his arms again; but he stood respectfully and made no answer, nor any move. Grim and strong his jaw was, like the Sleeper's, and the dark hair three days old on it softened nothing of its lines. His Roman nose and steady, dark, full eyes suggested no compromise. Yet he was good to look at. She had not lied when she said she loved him, and he understood her and was sorry. But he did not feel sorry, nor did he offer any argument to quench her love. He was a servant of the raj; his life and his love had been India's since the day he first buckled on his spurs, and Yasmini would not have understood that.

Nor did she understand that, even supposing he had loved her with all his heart, not on any conditions would he have admitted it until absolutely free, any more than that if she crucified him he would love her the same, supposing that he loved her at all. Nor did she trust the "old gods" too well, or let them work unaided.

"Come with me, Athelstan!" she said. She took his arm—found little jeweled slippers in a closet hewn in the wall—put them on and led him to the curtains he had entered by. She led down the steps, and at the foot told him to put on his slippers, as if he were a child. Then, hurrying as if those opal eyes of hers were indifferent to dark or daylight, she picked her way among bowlders that he could feel but not see, along a floor that was only smooth in places, for a distance that was long enough by two or three times to lose him altogether. When he looked back there was no sign of red lights behind him. And when he looked forward, there was a dim outer light in front and a whiff of the cool fresh air that presages the dawn!

She led him through a gap on to a ledge of rock that hung thousands of feet above the home of thunder, a ledge less than six feet wide, less than twenty long, tilted back toward the cliff. There they sat, watching the stars. And there they saw the dawn come.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

'Arking Back.

The Vicar—What a dreadful plague of caterpillars, John!

John—Ah; an 'oo let loose the first pair of 'em? Noah!—Sketch.

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