

KING DON:

A STORY OF MILITARY LIFE IN INDIA.

....BY MAJOR ALLAN....

CHAPTER I.

Don Gordon came out of the mess-room of the regiment at Rawal Pindi and, vaulting the horse his native servant held in readiness for him, took his way through the balmy Indian spring evening toward the pretty bungalow of Capt. Derwent of the Gordon Highlanders.

Don's pale cheek was flushed, and he carried his slim young figure, in its Kharki uniform, with more of its old majestic swagger than had characterized it for many weeks, for he had been twice in hospital since he had volunteered from home for active service on the frontier with the first battalion of the Sherwood Foresters.

He had only now just recovered from a severe gunshot wound from an Afridi rifle, received whilst leading a score of his brave Derbyshire company on a foraging expedition.

But the exhilaration of hope more than of renewed health was accountable for his springing step and the light in his large brown eyes.

The British mail had brought him a letter from his cousin Roddy, which afforded him much satisfaction, for it contained the announcement of Roddy's engagement to Don's sister, Diana, thereby setting at rest forever a lurking fear in Don's heart that Roddy's thoughts were centered on Capt. Derwent's fair daughter, Lillie.

The "White Lily," she was not inaptly called in the cantonment, whither she had accompanied her father from Aldershot some months ago.

Don rode at a brisk canter through the lines toward the green compound, where teak and peupal trees rose darkly against the clear blue sky, and the red fireflies flashed in and out among the slender shafts of the graceful bamboos.

But in the mind's eye of the soldier it was another scene which suddenly rose before him.

He seemed to see a beloved and lovely landscape in fair Aberdeenshire. He heard the murmur of a river and the song of thrushes from the privet hedges. He looked upon the lordly Scottish home of Gadie Ha', to which he had grown up from infancy to believe himself the heir, and his grip on his mare's rein tightened, and the still unconquered bitterness of fierce disappointment swept his heart anew.

His mother's deathbed confession had proved his foster-brother, Roddy, to be the heir; but it was not against Roddy that Don felt any personal grievance—Roddy, one of the gay Gordon Highlanders with whom he had fought side by side through the recent campaign of the Tirah field force, and who had heroically saved Don's life in the deadly thick of battle.

No; it was against the cruelty of circumstances which had robbed him at one fell blow of rank and wealth and that natural case so dear to his inmost soul.

For "King Don," as his brother officers jokingly termed him, was born to rule with a high-handed self-righteousness, and to his proud spirit disinclination had well-nigh been more bitter than death. His uncle, the present Laird of Gadie, might still allow him ample means out of the Gadie revenues; but to Don it were small compensation for his forfeited rights of heirship.

He might yet succeed in winning the peerless, heiress, Lillie Derwent, for his bride; but as Don knew in his secret heart, it was only when Lillie Derwent had unexpectedly become an heiress his thoughts had ever turned to her with anything akin to love, and once already he had well merited her rejection of his proposal.

Alas! and alas! for it was love's acutest suffering alone was to prove to Don at last.

Not to understand a treasure's worth 'Till time has stolen away the slightest good.

Is cause for half the poverty we feel, And makes world the wilderness it is. As Don neared his destination he rode forward more slowly, for he was now conscious of a little quickening of his pulse.

In the circle of home society, an already disappointed man would scarcely return to his fair one, like a moth to a candle, after a lapse of months; but circumstances as he and Lillie were, now cast for the time being together in a foreign land, matters seemed very different.

Capt. Derwent was absent with the field force; Lillie was alone in a strange country, at present sharing her bungalow with the young widow and baby boy of an officer recently killed on the front, and to whom Lillie's heart had gone out in deepest sympathy.

Don was subtly conscious that the Lillie Derwent of to-day was a very different Lillie from the coquette who had toyed in the past with his Cousin Roddy's boyish love, or even the Lillie who had repudiated his own offer of marriage with such scorn. For he realized now that Lillie had come to know the solace of reliance upon that Divine Anchor, whose storm-tossed souls are never shipwrecked.

Don knew himself to be but a rudderless barque, drifting on a shoreless sea; but though faith awoke no responsive echo in his own heart, he desired Lillie none the less for the change which had made her a truer

and nobler woman than the thoughtless, somewhat heartless maiden of the past.

The interest she had manifested in his—Don's—convalescence, and his career altogether, lent impetus to the thought that she would not refuse him her hand a second time.

Marriage with Lillie would mean to him affluence equal to the rent rolls of Gadie, and—well, he admired Lillie as much as Don felt it incumbent upon him to admire any one, to the exclusion of the overruling idol of his life, and that was self.

But it was almost with the air of an ardent lover Don drew rein before the spacious white house surrounded by a cool veranda, between whose slender columns green blinds of split bamboo excluded the heat of the sun by day.

"Yes, the memsahib was at home," he was informed by the durwan—door-keeper—who hurried to his summons.

A gong was banged to announce a visitor, and thereupon another native, red-turbaned and white-caftaned, appeared on the threshold and saluted Don Gordon through the white vestibule toward a delightful apartment, which proved to be untenanted. It was a veritable lady's boudoir, furnished with European taste and Oriental splendor combined.

On the walls were dotted valuable prints in English frames, which Don remembered to have adorned Capt. Derwent's private quarters at home. They had a touch of pathos as seen in conjunction with the great gilded punkah which hung overhead.

About the room were scattered the books and thousand and one knick-knacks which betrayed that even in far northeastern India an English lady must have her drawing-room. It is her own especial kingdom, where she can gather together and enshrine in constant remembrance all the pretty trifles which make up the larger comforts of the mother country.

Don Gordon, standing in the center of the room for an instant irresolute, took in all the details at a glance. Then he walked to the large window opening into a garden. It was still light enough for the lamps to be unlit, and the scent of the orange blossoms and the tuberoses stole softly in on the air.

He was usually self-governed to a fault; but the sight of this English room had stirred anew deep thoughts of that distant Scottish home he told himself he could never bear to look upon again.

A silk curtain which draped the door suddenly rustled, and, turning quickly, Don found the girl he had come to see advancing to meet him.

Lillie Derwent wore a simple gown of washing silk, which came close about her slender throat; but it was of spotless white, and the fine mold of her sloping shoulders and rounded arms showed dazzlingly through its delicate texture, and her abundant golden hair formed a coronet with which no jewels could have vied.

As he looked at her Don felt his heart stirred with admiration, for she was a vision of loveliness of which any man might be proud, much more a would-be lover.

And Lillie, who shall say what were her swift thoughts of the tall, slim soldier, looking doubly handsome at that moment in his Kharki uniform, one hand holding his helmet, the other resting lightly on the hilt of his sword.

The next instant the helmet was laid on the floor, and he was taking both her hands and retaining them, with an unmistakable emotion.

"I hope you don't mind me coming so awfully late, Miss Derwent; but I was on duty off and on till mess, and then some fellows detained me so long till I had simply to rush away and ride here post haste."

She smiled as she seated herself on a divan and motioned him to a chair near her.

"But, indeed, it is not at all late, and I am very pleased to see you, Capt. Gordon." Then she added, with a spice of her old coquetry: "And what urgent necessity that could not wait another day brought you here post haste?"

Don felt his breath come quicker, for, despite those visits and presents of fruit and invalid dainties with which she had honored him in hospital, he was not at all sure how high in her esteem he had reached.

"I fear I made it a point of necessity," he answered bluntly; "but I had a letter from home today, Miss Derwent, and—and the fact is I couldn't sleep till I'd had five minutes' private conversation with you. You won't refuse me it?" he broke off, with a look in his dark eyes she could not mistake.

She flushed and looked down before that ardent gaze.

"Mrs. Franklin is always engaged with Ceil and his ayah just now," she said softly. "We shall not be disturbed."

Don rose and drew his chair nearer hers; but the tete-a-tete was disturbed in a very commonplace way neither had thought of at that tense moment. Darkness had suddenly set in, for there is no twilight in India. A servant was noiselessly lighting the lamps, and the huge punkah had begun to swing to and fro overhead to temper the added heat.

It was when tea and coffee were be-

ing served Lillie broke the somewhat awkward silence which had fallen upon her visitor and herself by saying sotto voce:

"I think one thing that makes one appreciate Indian life is to have one's comforts attended to as these natives do it. Really, we cannot rely upon such faithful service from our own countrymen."

It was the keynote for Don's waiting eloquence.

"That's rather rough on present company, is it not?" he objected. "You know, or you ought to know, Miss Derwent, I am ready to serve you anywhere in the wide world."

She blushed crimson.

"Oh, but you misconstrue my meaning altogether, Capt. Gordon. I was only talking of hired service, not—"

She stopped in some confusion and hurriedly added: "Not friendship," whilst she blushed deeper than ever.

Don put up his right hand with a little gesture of languid beseeching as he poised his tiny cup of coffee in his left palm and leaned back restfully in his softly cushioned chair, for that bright blush, which made his hostess look so bewitching, had added much to his composure and confidence.

Yes, she was really very pretty, and he was not sure but that he loved her very deeply indeed.

"Don't throw the devotion of your slave back in his face by calling it friendship," he said. "Lillie!" He laid down his cup now, and leaned toward her to get a glimpse of the fair face behind the fan she had opened and was fluttering nervously.

"Lillie, won't you believe me? You hold my happiness in your hands; my life is yours to do what you will with; but I want my wages as much as any one of your natives—I want the gift of this hand and the heart that owns it!"

He had risen now, and, standing over her, had imprisoned the white fingers that held the fan with a masterful air that bespoke all the ardor of a determined lover. Did Lillie's thoughts fly back to another night in the far past, when thus another Gordon had stood over her and claimed the love he believed to be his?

But this was not the same Lillie who had allowed Roddy Gordon to think her heart won to his keeping who looked up now in the eyes of Roddy's kinsman.

Love had taught her its mystic lesson, and she knew now that it was to Don Gordon alone her heart must be surrendered for all time.

CHAPTER II.

And Don must have read that unspoken confession, for suddenly he sank down on the divan beside her, and his arm went round her and drew her golden head to his shoulder.

"You will promise to be my wife, Lillie?" he whispered.

Despite its tenderness, the question lacked the passion for which her own great love clamored, and she answered it with another, of shy hesitation:

"Don, do you really, truly love me?"

Don bent his lips to hers with an ardor that carried conviction with it, for the moment was full of intoxicating sweetness, and till now he had cherished his freedom too dearly to know anything of the rapture of "love's young dream."

"My darling," he spoke, reproachfully, "don't shame me with the remembrance of that day when I asked you to be the future mistress of Gadie Ha'!"

The ignominy of that hour, when Don knew he justly deserved her repudiation, was too indelibly branded upon his memory to be ever altogether effaced. Lillie's eyes filled with quick tears for having caused her lover that momentary pang.

"Oh, indeed, I never meant to do that, Don!" she cried, generously, "only—"

"Only?" he repeated, with a jealous note of inquiry. "Don't tell me, Lillie, for pity's sake, that you care a scrap for that happy fellow, Roddy?"

(To be Continued.)

BASELESS FABRIC OF A DREAM.

Convict's Illusion of Freedom and Wealth Ruthlessly Dispelled.

The day of my discharge has come. How happy I am. How proud I feel as I stand with my face to the wall near the cellhouse door, awaiting the summons to go to the storeroom to change my clothes. It seems that the men will never cease their tramp, tramp, as they file from the cellhouse on the way to the shops. But the last of them finally goes out the door and I am hustled to the storeroom. I array myself in my "store" clothes, then make my way, eager and trembling with excitement, to the front office. There, after a few preliminaries, I am handed my discharge and my money and joyfully go forth to battle once more with the world. How brightly the sun shines. How fresh and invigorating the air. It actually smelled better than the air behind those ugly frowning walls. And now that I am once again free where will I go and what will I do? Ah! a thought strikes me. I have not yet breakfasted. Where is there a good restaurant? Right down the street. I enter and give an order that makes the waiter stare in astonishment. Ha, ha! He will stare harder than that when he sees me get outside of that breakfast. Beefsteak, fried potatoes, eggs, ham, hot rolls, butter, coffee, and—

But while the cook is hustling around making ready the feast I will take a drink. Is there a saloon near? Yes. Just two doors below. Thither I go and feeling rich enough (for haven't I twenty-five big American dollars in my pocket?) I ask everybody up to drink. All accept. The drinks are placed on the bar. The barkeeper is making change for a ten, we raise the glasses to our lips, and—

Clang!! goes the gong, and I rise and dress, and, as usual, go to my daily grind.—Minnesota Prison Mirror.

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CHAPTER II.—(Continued.)

She looked up in his face with a little smile that would have appeased a very martinet in love.

"I am very sure that Roddy does not care a scrap nowadays for me," she said demurely, adding, with sweet contrition, "and I am not surprised, after the way I treated him. But I was only a thoughtless girl in those days, and I know he has forgiven me."

"How long ago is it since 'those days'?" queried Don, toying with a golden strand of her hair. Her words had restored his reassurance and calm.

"I try to think it is a long, long time, Don," she answered gravely, "for then I never thought of right or wrong, or how beautiful it makes life if we try to serve God rather than self. Oh," she broke off, with a thrill of emotion in her voice, "sometimes I pray I may live to be an old woman, just to try to make up for all those wasted years."

"And so I, too, pray that you may, though it were only to solace the declining years of a lost sinner like myself, sweet saint," he rejoined, lightly.

"And now, my darling, since I know your heart is mine, beyond retraction, I can risk to tell you my news from home today. That faithless Roddy is about to be espoused to my sister, Di."

"Oh, I am so glad—so glad!" she exclaimed, and there was no mistaking the genuine warmth of her words.

"You will tell him that when you write, won't you, Don? And I myself will write to Di. Oh, Don, I think Di is one of the noblest women in the whole world. But for her example I should never have learned to remember our lives are not our own."

Don rose from her side with a momentary flush on his cheek.

"You were not always such a little Puritan, Lillie," he rallied her, "or, don't you know, 'pon my word, I should have been afraid to think it possible you would ever look at such a reprobate as me, for—you know I am not a hypocrite, Lillie—I'm not a good fellow by any means, and, to tell the truth, I don't want to be one."

It was a bold thing for him to say in the face of her guileless professions of faith; but love made Lillie blind to everything but the bliss of knowing he had claimed her heart forever, and that into his hands had been put the wondrous power of making his chequered life blessed.

She rose, too, and put her hands out to him with a sweetness that banished all thought of alien opinion.

"Some day, Don, perhaps you will come to know, as I do now, that this world is not everything; and so long as you love me I am content to wait for I know that God will make it plain to you in His own good time."

Don's arms closed around her with more demonstrative tenderness than he had yet shown.

"My white Lily, I am perfectly certain we shall prove a model Darby and Joan, for, since you will have me, what do I care for anything else?"

And then he kissed her again, and murmured "sweet nothings" in her ear that brought the color fitting happily to her lovely cheek. Lastly he drew from his little finger a gold band, bearing a diamond ivy leaf, and inscribed inside with the single word "Byand"—steadfast—the Gordon badge and motto.

And when he had placed it on the third finger of Lillie's fair hand, she repaid him by throwing her arms about his neck and giving him the first shy kiss of love.

"Oh, Don, may we be like the ivy, and always cling close to each other. May nothing ever come between us two!" she cried.

Those words of deepest love might perhaps have fallen more fitly from the man's lips than the girl's; but Don read in their sweet solemnity the hidden meaning of a hoped-for higher bond of union, and he only smiled contentedly as he held her close and returned her kiss with liberal interest.

"I hope," he said playfully, "that means you never, never would be so cruel as to jilt me as you did old Roddy. There! forgive me, sweet, I'm a brute to have reminded you of those days when you were such a dear little coquette. Are you quite sure you are not afraid of giving yourself to such a jealous beggar as I am, Lillie? For you know I am jealous."

"Do you know why I didn't tell you of Roddy's engagement till I knew that I had won your dear heart? Because I didn't want to be taken out of pity."

"You need never be jealous of me any more, Don," she said, with sweet earnestness.

"What of His Highness Prince Clement Sing, who your father told me sent you lately a present of a certain cashmere shawl, and a champac necklace?" he queried, laughing.

But the question turned Lillie's blushing face for the instant pale. It had suddenly reminded her of Captain Derwent's favor of this would-be suitor for her hand. Prince Clement Sing, though a native of the Punjab, had European blood in his veins, and had lived from boyhood in England, and graduated at one of the English universities.

"I would have returned the presents, but father explained to me it would give serious offense," she said deprecatingly. "It was unpleasant to have

to accept them; but if it is the custom of the country to give costly things like that as we give flowers and trifles at home—"

"I was only joking," Don interrupted her calmly. "But this reminds me, love, I shall have to get your father's consent, I suppose, before I can ask you to name the happy day? For you know of old I'm not a patient fellow, Lillie. I like things to be assured and smooth-sailing. I stick to the fine old maxim: 'If 'twere well 'twere done, then 'twere well it were done quickly!'"

She looked up in her tall lover's face with a piquant, dubious smile.

"That sounds almost like getting over a disagreeable duty," she objected. "And I am sure my father won't want me to run away from him just yet—not till this disturbance on the frontier is over, and he is ready to take me home."

For to the heart of a Briton, in whatever foreign clime, the sacred name of "Home" belongs to the beloved British Isles alone.

For answer Don drew her once more within his arms.

"I can't wait for that, Lillie." And if his mastery arose more from the dogmatic will of the man than the impetuosity of the lover, there was no doubt about his earnestness. "If you ever go back home, it must be as my wife; but, Lillie, I won't promise you I would take you. I could not bear it, for I am a homeless wanderer now."

The quiver in his voice moved her profoundly.

"We will make a fresh home, Don, you and I, wherever you like in the whole world," she said.

Even Don, self-absorbed as was his nature, was touched by her devotion.

"You are very generous, my darling, and I am going to take you at your word by asking your father to give you to me before the summer. I hope to see him in a very short time, for I have just had orders to take a relief draft of our Derbys out to join his camp to-morrow."

She turned pale as her clinging gown.

"To-morrow? Oh, Don, why didn't you tell me before you were going to leave me to-morrow?"

"Because ill news is told all too soon," he answered gently. "But cheer up, child, I don't expect to be gone more than three or four weeks at the most."

But she clung to him, with the tears swimming in her beautiful blue eyes.

"Oh, Don, my dearest, I shall be dreading all sorts of things happening to you on the way! I used to feel so frightened when my father went out first; but now I know he is safely in camp it is different. Oh, Don!" she broke off, "if you never come back to me it would break my heart!"

"My darling," he reassured her, "the tribes have surrendered, and the war is practically over. There's really nothing to be nervous about."

"You must think of me killing time counting the hours which will bring me back to the dear little woman who is going to open a paradise for the poor outcast wanderer."

She put up her little hand to his lips.

"Don't call yourself that, Don. As we hope to be forgiven, forgive and forget the wrong your mother did you when she brought you up as Gadie's heir. Remember it was all for love of you she sinned."

"What then, sweet pleader, would you have it that love condones a sin?" he queried, capturing the hand and covering it with kisses.

"God forbid!" she answered earnestly; "but surely, because of that love, forgiveness should be easier?"

Ah! how both were to remember that conversation in a bitter day to come!

All too soon came the final moment for last caresses and parting words, for presently the red-turbaned native announced that "Gordon sahib's horse was at the gate as ordered, and his cloak also, as dew was falling."

Lillie picked up a silk coverlet from the divan, and throwing it over her shoulders, accompanied her lover to the veranda.

The moon had risen, and in its clear light her lovely face, with its aureole of golden hair, shone radiant with its love, but quivering with the pain which this moment of farewell brought.

The red fireflies were flashing, the perfume of rose and pink oleander wafted from the garden on the hot air. On the far-stretching terrace of the bungalow a great adjutant bird, with its head nesting under its wing, was silhouetted against the silvery expanse of sky.

From the prickly-pear hedge of the compound rose anon the melancholy howl of a jackal.

All unconsciously, scene and hour were to be fixed irrevocably upon Don Gordon's memory down to the veriest trifle.

He took his cloak from the native's hand, and, throwing it on, stood trifling with its clasp to prolong the exquisite fascination of the spell which had suddenly fallen upon him and held him in its grasp.

Was it the mystic secret of love which was coming to him there on the silvery wings of the tropic night. He stood at last and gathered the

trembling girl in a lingering embrace. "What message shall I take to the father, little one?"

"That I love you," she answered simply, "and that I only live for you both to come back to me."

He sealed the confession with a passionate kiss, and tore himself away, to spring lightly to the saddle.

For an instant he paused on his prancing steed with bared head, his brown eyes bent upon her, and a smile on his moustached lips.

"Till we meet again." He spoke softly then, as, kissing his hand to her, he resumed his helmet and galloped away into the moonlit night.

"Till we meet again!"

She lifted her tear-dimmed eyes to the star-spangled heavens in a mute supplication that the Father of all would watch between him and her till that day came.

Ah! she little knew what the interval held in store.

CHAPTER III.

"Impossible, my dear sir—impossible!"

It was Captain Derwent who spoke in that decidedly aggressive tone of decision, and he whom he addressed was Don Gordon, as they strolled in company along a narrow track by the side of a winding nullah, on their way back to mess at the Tirah camp.

It was nearly three weeks since the lover had bidden Lillie farewell, and she it was who was under discussion now.

Don's cheek was flushed, and his dark eyes glowed ominously as their glance followed the clouds of pale smoke from the cheroot he puffed for several minutes in proud silence.

That he had never contemplated Captain Derwent's blunt refusal of his suit was very certain, by the easy assurance with which he had courted and won Lillie's own consent.

"You say it is impossible your daughter should ever be my wife?" Don spoke at last, with painful distinctness.

It was characteristic of Don's nature that he was rarely roused to passion; but, once roused, it was deep and lasting; and by the pallor that had replaced the flush upon his face it was too evident he was moved to passion now.

"Perfectly impossible, my dear fellow, though I hate telling you so, don't you know?"

"Since you have told me so much, I should like that you will tell me more," said Don, in that calm voice that little betrayed the fire at his heart. "May I ask why it is perfectly impossible?"

"My dear sir," exclaimed the elder officer, somewhat sharply, "if your own common sense does not tell you my chief reasons, then you must pardon my being outspoken. You've said yourself you haven't a rupee beyond your pay and what your uncle, Colonel Gordon, chooses to allow you yearly. Now, honestly, do you consider you are at all a suitable match for my little girl, who, you must remember, is now an heiress. Had you been heir of Gadie—"

"Thanks," said Don curtly. "I do not need to be reminded of my reversed fortunes, and, I will confess, I should never have asked Lillie to share my poverty. It is only the fact of her being an heiress makes it possible she could ever become my wife."

"Pon my word, sir, you're frank!" exclaimed Captain Derwent, irritated by what he deemed effrontery on Don's part. "My daughter should be honored to know that, had she been a 'tocherless lass,' as we say in the north, you would have had none of her."

He laughed, as if to pass the matter off as a joke; but he was genuinely annoyed.

(To be continued.)

The Spread of Contagious Diseases.

The responsibility of those persons who supply the public with food and drink is not sufficiently realized by the community at large. Not long since a number of cases of diphtheria broke out in a neighborhood. The disease was of a very severe type, and, in several instances, proved fatal after two or three days' illness. It seemed impossible, at first, to trace the contagion to its source, but after a thorough canvass of the vicinity it was discovered that a dealer in milk had in his family a couple of cases of diphtheria. He professed ignorance of the cause of the children's sickness, and even when assured of its nature, claimed that he had no idea that it could be conveyed in milk. The fact that parents do not know how children could have contracted this disease often acts as a check upon any efforts to combat it, insisting that as the little ones have not been exposed to this malady it certainly must be something else that ails them. When illness of this sort breaks out in a family the only proper course is to have it investigated at once. Delays are quite sure to be disastrous if not fatal, and in the present condition of medical knowledge on this subject, there is reasonable hope of relief if attention is given when the first symptoms of illness manifest themselves.

All Kinds.

Snobson (to inhabitant of out-of-way seaside resort)—"What sort of people do you get down here in the summer?" Inhabitant—"Oh, all sorts, sur. There be fine people an' common people, an' some just half and naif, like yourself, sur."—Punch.

Love's Playfulness.

"And there's nothing more between us?" he asked. "No, Harry, dear," she replied, nestling against his shoulder; "I can't get any closer to you."—Philadelphia North American.